

THE END OF THE WORLD

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

ROLEPLAYING GAME







趣味の風



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THE END OF THE WORLD

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION6

Introduction	10
What Is an RPG?	10
Getting Started	12
What's in This Book?	12
Why Zombies?	13

PLAYING THE GAME14

Performing Tasks	17
The Test	18
Opposed Tests	20
Creating Characters	21
Step 1: Determine Characteristics	21
Step 2: Choose Features	22
Step 3: Record Equipment	23
Step 4: Record Traumas	23
The Character Sheet	24
Categories	24
Features	25
Positive Features	25
Negative Features	26
Equipment and Supplies	27
Gear	27
Weapons	28
Armor	29
Stress, Death, and Traumas	30
Stress	30
Death	31
Traumas	32
Conflict	34
Timing	34
Tasks	35

RUNNING THE GAME38

Story Structure	41
Encounters	41
Narrative	42
Running Tests	44
When to Add Positive Dice	44
When to Add Negative Dice	44
Determining Results	45

Managing NPCs	46
NPC Profiles	46

The Campaign	47
Campaign Length	47
Advancing Characters	47

SCENARIOS48

Night of the Meteor (Apocalypse)	52
The Experience	54
The Truth	55
Timeline	58

Night of the Meteor (Post-Apocalypse)	64
One World, under E.D.E.N.	65

No Room in Hell (Apocalypse)	70
The Experience	72
The Truth	74
Timeline	76

No Room in Hell (Post-Apocalypse)	82
The Dead Own the Earth	83

Pandemic (Apocalypse)	88
The Experience	90
The Truth	92
Timeline	94

Pandemic (Post-Apocalypse)	100
The United States of Nothing	102

It Ends with a Whisper (Apocalypse)	106
The Experience	108
The Truth	110
Timeline	113

It Ends with a Whisper (Post-Apocalypse)	118
So Much for Modern Life	119

Under the Skin (Apocalypse)	124
The Experience	126
The Truth	128
Timeline	130

Under the Skin (Post-Apocalypse)	136
Some Sort of Contingency Plan	137
The Cost of Survival	138

Index	142
-------------	-----

Character Sheet	144
-----------------------	-----



INTRODUCTION





"Shoot it in the head—that works in the movies!"

—A survivor who is more right than he knows

I'll tell you what, Jed, I can't for the life of me figure out why days like this always happen on Fridays. I mean, I get it, sure, people want to cut loose because it's the weekend, but why do they have to get out of their heads and ruin it for everyone else? I mean, he freaking attacked the delivery guy! Right in the street. It's nuts. Whatever. I'm home and you haven't destroyed the place—have you boy? Good boy!—and everyone's headed over to play. Oh! and Woody's bringing the pizza.

Why are you looking at me like that? What? Yeah, he attacked Steve. You know Steve. The delivery driver; he gave you that biscuit last week. Anyway, yeah, I'm at the shop, just got the lights on and the doors unlocked and there's Steve with our latest shipment. Mostly the usual stuff, that new RPG and a few other things, that new card game that Milla wanted. Steve and I chatted for a while, nothing major. He was telling me about that chemical spill on the south side. Sounds like we might just have to write off the river entirely.

Hey, do you remember what kind of pizza Woody said he was bringing? Of course you don't, it all just smells like people food to you anyway. Man, I could eat!

So anyway, Steve heads back to his truck and I start diving into the new inventory, when WHAM! Out of nowhere, this guy tackles him. Steve is freaking out! He's doing his best to get this guy off of him, but the dude is nuts! He's thrashing and snapping at him. Seriously! Snapping at Steve like he's trying to freaking bite him!

Don't give me that look! Yeah, of course I helped him. No one else was around, so I bolt out and try to haul this dude off of Steve. He must have been drunk or high or something. Either way, I was barely able to get ahold of him to get him on the ground. He didn't even seem to notice me. He was really going after Steve!

I don't know if I could have held him very long, but lucky for us, some cops drove by and Steve flagged them down. The cops were able to get the psycho cuffed. He wasn't saying a single thing I could understand the whole time. Just growled and snapped. Freaking nutjobs!

One of the cops said that this was the third time they'd gotten a report of this sort of thing. She said they had gotten a warning from their lieutenant that morning that something like this might happen. New drugs on the street or something. Who knows. Anyway, so one of them takes the dude away, and the other takes a look at Steve. Fortunately, the dude was more crazy than dangerous, but they called up an ambulance and took Steve to the hospital, just in case.

Okay, where are those guys? I need to get some pizza in me. Seriously, I'm freaking starving.

So, after all that went down, I went back inside, and I mean, what else was I going to do but go back to work? But as soon as I got inside, I noticed that crazy dude scratched up my arm but good. Seriously, it hurt like hell. Wasn't so bad as to need stitches or anything, but still, like hell.

I finished unboxing the order, and even got a few hours to look through that new RPG and get things ready for the session tonight. I thought I had made it through the day without any more insanity but then I'm headed home and I see, like, eight cop cars flying down the street, and like half a dozen accidents on the highway. What is going on today? Honestly, why Fridays?

And my arm is killing me, and I think I'm coming down with a fever, and I'm freaking starving! What the hell! Where are those guys? And where's Woody with that pizza? If I don't get something to eat, I might literally die!

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME to **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**. By picking up this book, you've doomed yourself and everyone you know to a horrible end. But don't worry—it's all in good fun. **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** is a roleplaying game in which you and your friends try to survive the end of the world while you avoid being eaten by zombies (a key aspect of survival, of course). Unlike other games, **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** has players portray not mighty heroes or dangerous outlaws, but themselves! Likewise, the locations and other characters they encounter during the game are largely based on people and places they know in real life. So, in a game of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**, the players portray themselves trying to survive, running and fighting their way through familiar streets as zombies invade their town during a horrifying event. An easy-to-learn, flexible, and narrative-focused rules set propels the action, keeping the focus on the story and the players' actions without bogging things down in unnecessary bookkeeping.

If you've ever wondered how you and your friends would survive the zombie apocalypse, keep reading and find out!

WHAT IS AN RPG?

Although millions of words have been spent debating the answer to that question (mostly on Internet forums), for our purposes, a roleplaying game, or RPG, is a shared storytelling experience in which a group of players build a narrative by taking on the roles of characters in a fictionalized situation. A set of rules helps the players to determine the success of their various actions and decisions (and hopefully helps them avoid the kinds of arguments they got into while playing pretend as kids). In addition to rules and a setting, an RPG has three key elements: some players (three to five is usually a good number), a Game Master, and a scenario.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THE END OF THE WORLD?

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE is the first in a series of roleplaying games called **THE END OF THE WORLD**. Each game in the series presents a stand-alone play experience, but together they share a set of simple, narrative rules and the titular theme. Each book in the series explores a different, exciting way the world of humans might come to an end. This first book deals with, obviously, zombies and how a zombie plague might happen. Subsequent books will cover different threats and, like this one, each will explore multiple scenarios involving various takes on the danger.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

In an RPG, most players create a Player Character, also known as a PC, to control during the game. The PCs are the protagonists of the story and the players' primary means by which to influence its events. PCs each have a set of numbers, called characteristics, that represent their relative strengths and weaknesses, and determine their likelihood to succeed at a given task. Most games would mention at this point that PCs are given their own fictional backstories and motivations, but in **THE END OF THE WORLD**, the PCs are based on the players themselves! Obviously, getting into the head of, well, yourself should come more naturally than contemplating the mind-set of a thousand-year-old elven warrior-mage.

Like the characters in any good horror movie, the PCs are not the first people to die in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**. But they also might not all survive. It is the end of the world, after all.

THE GAME MASTER

One person in the group must assume the vaunted mantle of Game Master, or GM, rather than create a Player Character. Although the GM is taking part in the game, we make a distinction between the GM and players because the GM is running the game and not just playing it. The GM describes the world, narrates the story, presents obstacles and challenges for the PCs, and portrays all the story's other characters (known as Non-Player Characters, or NPCs). The GM is also responsible for applying the rules of the game and making a decision when a question about the rules arises.

Being the GM comes with more responsibility, but it can also be very rewarding. Further, in this game, it means you get to describe all kinds of horrible things happening to your friends without it being "weird."

SCENARIOS

Obviously, a roleplaying game isn't going to be very exciting if the PCs don't do anything. And while PCs do have a tendency to cause trouble, it's generally best if the GM is prepared with some sort of situation with which to challenge them. A game scenario is like a movie's story: it describes what is happening and the sorts of problems and enemies facing the protagonists. While other games often feature adventures in which the PCs attempt to achieve some noteworthy goal, this is not the focus of **THE END OF THE WORLD**. Instead, the PCs are simply trying to survive to see another day.



This book features five scenarios describing different ways zombies might bring about the end of the world. These scenarios include all the information the GM needs regarding what the zombies are, what they do, and how their activities destroy the world, but the GM needs to fill in the details about people and places, since the game takes place wherever the players happen to be. In addition to these scenarios, GMs can come up with their own takes on the zombie apocalypse to really keep players on their toes.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME DIFFERENT?

THE END OF THE WORLD is different from other RPGs you may have played for a few reasons. Possibly the most unique aspect of the game is the nature of the Player Characters. Rather than being heroic (or anti-heroic) characters with special skills and abilities based on a sci-fi or fantasy setting or a genre of fiction, the PCs in **THE END OF THE WORLD** are actually based on the players. In effect, the PCs are not only the players' avatars in the game world: they *are* the players, or at least fictionalized versions. And the game world isn't a far-off land or alternate universe: it's wherever the players really live. The events of the game unfold in the players' town or city, with the GM describing the destruction wrought by the apocalypse.

Because of its theme, **THE END OF THE WORLD** is intended for shorter, more defined play experiences than many RPGs, which often assume long-running campaigns or sweeping story arcs. Depending on your group's preferences and play style, you could wrap up an apocalyptic scenario over the course of two or three sessions, or even a single night. Of course, the game can go on for as long as it needs to, and it could last much longer if everyone enjoys living through the apocalypse and the following years in detail—and the PCs live that long.

Whereas RPGs often focus on some goal or mission, be it saving the world from supervillains or just acquiring a lot of treasure, **THE END OF THE WORLD** is really about putting the PCs in a difficult situation and seeing how they deal with it. They're not going to be stopping the apocalypse—the PCs are regular people, and the best they can hope for is to be among the few to survive.

THE END OF THE WORLD features a fast, narrative rules set to keep the players engaged and the story moving. While tactical, detailed combat works great for some games, that's not the focus here. You don't want to get into a protracted back-and-forth fight with a zombie—you want to shoot or bash it in the head and keep moving. If you get stuck in close with a zombie, you've probably already lost.

The same goes for the other actions PCs might attempt. We know more or less what we're capable of, so with PCs representing the players, a quick roll is all it takes to determine whether they succeed at a task and what the outcome is. Also, PCs in this game aren't powerful heroes: they can't be hit with swords and bullets and lose some arbitrary life points, with no other effects. PCs get worn down, not just from injuries in fights, but also from the stress and strain of dealing with the events of the apocalypse and even with their fellow survivors. The cumulative effects of stress and trauma help to reinforce the grim reality of being there when the world ends, and they have a significant impact on the ongoing story. PCs with a lot of injuries or stress might decide it's better to hole up and wait for help rather than try to make it to some other destination.

Players use the same characters for all five scenarios—after all, they're playing themselves. Each scenario presents a different take on the zombie apocalypse, making for five very different game experiences. In effect, each scenario hits the reset button and changes

reality. This puts the players in the unusual situation of experiencing a similar situation, but with different details. This keeps things fresh (or appropriately putrid) without requiring the players to learn new rules or a new setting, or even to create new characters. Of course, the PCs, like the players, are going to be familiar with the idea of zombies, and even the zombie apocalypse. But they don't immediately know what kind of zombies they face. Figuring out how to kill them and avoid becoming one presents a great opportunity for players to use their own knowledge of the genre without "cheating."

GETTING STARTED

We know you're anxious to start playing, but first things first. The Game Master—probably whoever bought this book—needs to become familiar with its contents. In particular, the GM should read **Chapter I: Playing the Game** and **Chapter II: Running the Game** (for obvious reasons). In addition, the GM should completely read whichever scenario will be played first. **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** includes five different, unrelated scenarios. These can be played in any order, so it's not necessary for the GM to read them all before the first game session. The first few pages of **Chapter III: Scenarios** provide an overview of the different scenarios and the types of zombies in each, which can help the GM decide which one to play first. Of course, it doesn't hurt to read them all first if the GM has time; one advantage of this is that bits and pieces from different scenarios can be mixed and matched if the GM wishes.

The GM should be familiar with the rules but doesn't have to memorize them before playing. It's not a bad idea for the players to read the rules as well, but it's not necessary. By no means, though, should the players read **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios**. A big part of the players' fun is figuring out what kind of zombies their PCs are up against, and looking at The Scenarios would ruin that. So, if you're a player, do not read the scenarios! That would spoil everything. If you're the GM, read the scenarios all you want.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE is divided into three chapters. (It also includes lots of pictures so you don't get bored.) The GM should become familiar with the whole book, or at least the rules and the first scenario to be run, but players absolutely should not look at **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios** (especially not the scenarios).

CHAPTER I: PLAYING THE GAME

This chapter describes the rules and core mechanics of the game, including everything the players and GM need to know to resolve actions, fight zombies (or run away), and track the consequences of wounds and stress. It also explains how to create characters, including their characteristics, features, and equipment.

CHAPTER II: RUNNING THE GAME

The second chapter is specifically for the GM. It includes plenty of useful advice on running **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**, including how to tailor the game to your players and town, pace the story and encounters, use the rules to enhance the story, and adjudicate rules questions (and anything not covered by the rules).

CHAPTER III: THE SCENARIOS

The final chapter presents five different scenarios in which zombies bring about the end of the world. The scenarios present different takes on the idea of the zombie apocalypse—and what happens after. Each one features a different kind of zombie, from the familiar slow zombies, to fast zombies, to voodoo zombies, and zombies with even stranger origins. The scenarios each include all the information the GM needs about how the zombies are created, how they can be killed, and how things escalate once they first appear. Each scenario presents new surprises and challenges for players. Playing them all allows the players to see how different survival strategies work out and to explore different parts of their world during and after the apocalypse.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PLAY?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You'll need the following to play **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**:

- ☒ This book (check!)
- ☒ At least two other people (preferably living).
- ☒ Three or four hours set aside to play (or more, if the world really has ended and you have the time).
- ☒ A handful of six-sided dice of two different colors (or sizes, as long as you can tell them apart).
- ☒ Some paper, pencils, and erasers (ink is a bit too permanent on the character sheet).
- ☒ Snacks (raw meat, though thematically appropriate, is not recommended).

Snazzy-looking character sheets and other play aids are not necessary, but they sure are fun. You can photocopy them from the back of this book or download them from the Fantasy Flight Games website (www.FantasyFlightGames.com). Maps of your town are available at your nearest convenience store. Although not necessary to play this game, a map will be very handy when the world actually does end and your GPS device stops working.

WHY ZOMBIES?

Why **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**? On a practical level, the zombie apocalypse is a doomsday scenario that everyone is at least somewhat familiar with. Movies, television, novels, comic books, and video games have all explored the concept, with various twists and varieties of zombies. Most such stories center on a small group of survivors, often everyday people, trying to pull through the disaster alive—a perfect setup for a roleplaying game, particularly one in which the players play as themselves. There's a good chance your players have even spent some time wondering how they might fare in the face of a zombie doomsday. Their knowledge of zombies could just save their characters' lives.

Zombies are the perfect manifestation of the end of the world. Inexorable, unstoppable, contagious, and beyond understanding—whatever scares you, whatever you think could destroy the world, it's represented through zombies. For everything from drug-resistant superdiseases and environmental disasters to murderous ideologies, there's a metaphor to be found in tales of the living dead. Zombies represent all the worst aspects of humanity pushed to eleven: unreasoning, self-destructive, merciless. It's not hard to relate to the survivors in a zombie story. They are among the only rational people left in the world, surrounded by mobs of brain-dead consumers. And if you're not careful, you'll lose your individuality, too. It might even be tempting to just give in and join them.

Mortality is our ultimate fear, and zombies are the ultimate expression of it. They are truly death incarnate: that which awaits us all. Just like death, they come after us slowly but unceasingly. They represent the mistakes of the past and the doom of the future. And as far as metaphors go, zombies allow for buckets of blood and outrageous gore. Whether that's incorporated for horror or shocking humor, at least you know you're exploring the human condition and all that.

And most importantly, zombies are cool.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It should go without saying that the events of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** are fictitious. Zombies aren't real (at least not yet), and the world (probably) won't end because of them. This is a game, and it's meant purely for fun. Of course, a resemblance to real people, both living and undead, is not a coincidence in this case, which can blur the lines in a way other games don't. Before playing, it's a good idea to talk with the other players about expectations for the game, to make sure no one is upset by events described during play. If some players aren't comfortable with detailed descriptions of people they know being devoured by zombies, leave it vague. If someone wants to play a more fictionalized version of themselves than the others, that's fine. The events of a zombie apocalypse are pretty horrifying if taken literally, so don't be afraid to approach them in a lighthearted, even comical way, if that's what your group prefers. The important thing is that everyone has fun, and the PCs all have at least a fighting chance to survive.

Voodoo is real, but it's nothing like in the movies (or this game). So don't worry about that, either.

THEY'RE (NOT) COMING TO GET YOU



PLAYING THE GAME





CHAPTER I

"We just gotta survive. If we can hole up, we'll be fine. The government will handle this. I mean, we're just regular people—what could we possibly do?"

—A survivor who hasn't quite grasped the situation

PLAYING THE GAME

WELCOME to the **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**! As a player, you can find everything you need to know to play the game in this chapter. If you are the Game Master, you should familiarize yourself with this chapter and also read **Chapter II: Running the Game**, starting on page 41.

In **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**, you play as yourself as you attempt to survive in an apocalyptic world plagued by the undead. As a player, you control the actions of your

character (you). You listen to the narrative presented by the Game Master (GM) and indicate how you react to the events as they unfold, rolling dice to determine how well you perform at the various challenges you face. In the end, shaping the story in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** is a collaborative process, in which you and the other players work with the GM to create the most thrilling, horrifying, and entertaining end of the world possible.

PERFORMING TASKS

WHenever you attempt a task in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** that has some chance of failure or of causing stress or injury to yourself, you must make a test. A test involves rolling several six-sided dice and interpreting the results to see whether you succeed at the task and if you suffer any stress as a result of your actions.

The GM decides when you need to make a test, though you should feel free to suggest one when you think it would be appropriate. In general, tests should be reserved

for important or exciting moments, when your success or failure matters to the story or to your character. Note that the same task might require a test in one context but not in another. For example, if you are running for fun or exercise, whether or not you complete your run successfully is unlikely to have a significant effect on the story, so you would not make a test. However, if you are running while being chased by a horde of ravenous undead, how well you can run suddenly matters a lot more, and you will likely need to make a test.

THE TEST

Tests are designed to be quick, easy, and fun. They allow you to roll the dice, integrate the results into the story, and continue on with your narrative. Once you have determined the task you are trying to accomplish, the test takes three steps:

- ❖ The GM determines the characteristic appropriate for the test.
- ❖ You assemble a pool of positive and negative dice.
- ❖ You roll the dice and, after all factors have been accounted for, if at least one positive die has a result equal to or lower than the target characteristic, the task succeeds.

Once the test is finished, the GM narrates the outcome of your actions based on the results of the roll. The test can also have effects beyond simple success or failure, depending on what you are attempting. See the following sections for full details on each of the three steps.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THE DICE

Tests in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** require you to roll two different types of six-sided dice (or d6s): positive dice and negative dice. To roll for a test at the table, you will need several d6s of two different colors. Contrasting colors, one to represent "positive" and the other to represent "negative," are recommended, but you may use whatever color d6s you have on hand.

STEP 1: DETERMINE THE TASK

When the GM calls for you to make a test, you typically have some idea of what you are trying to do. This might be attempting to jump between two crumbling buildings, hacking into a secured computer, talking down a hostile survivor, or any number of other things. Before the dice are rolled, you should specify exactly what it is you are attempting, so that the GM has a clear picture of what you are doing.

Once you have specified your activity, the GM decides which of your six characteristics (see page 21) most appropriately apply to the task.

STEP 2: ASSEMBLE THE DICE POOL

For every task you attempt, you always start with a dice pool comprising a single positive die. You and the GM then add a number of positive and negative dice to the pool, based on several factors.

Positive dice represent training or circumstances that can help you complete a task. Adding positive dice greatly increases your chance of success and helps you avoid suffering stress from negative complications. The following elements can add positive dice to the pool:

- ❖ **Positive Features:** Each positive feature on your character sheet that could help you perform the task adds a single positive die to the pool. Usually, this feature shares a category with the characteristic being used for the test. However, if the GM allows it, you may use applicable features from other categories as well.
- ❖ **Equipment:** Each piece of readily available equipment that can help you with the task adds a single positive die to the pool.
- ❖ **Assistance:** Each additional character who assists you with the task adds a single positive die to the pool.
- ❖ **Situational Benefits:** Each environmental effect present that could make the task easier also adds a positive die to the pool.

Negative dice represent personal weaknesses or unfortunate circumstances that make the task more difficult or dangerous to complete. Negative dice have a chance of canceling positive dice results after rolling, and they can cause a character to suffer stress from attempting the task. The following elements can add negative dice to the pool:

- ❖ **Task Danger and Difficulty:** The innate danger or difficulty of the task can add one or more negative dice, depending on what you are attempting. The higher the task's probability of causing you physical, mental, or social stress, the more negative dice are added. (See page 44 for more specific guidance on adding negative dice due to danger or difficulty.)
- ❖ **Negative Features:** Each negative feature on your character sheet that could hamper you in performing the task adds a single negative die to the pool. As with positive features, a negative feature likely shares a category with the characteristic being used for the test. However, features from other categories can add negative dice if they are applicable to the task.
- ❖ **Traumas:** Each trauma that currently affects your character and shares a category with the characteristic used for the test adds a single negative die to the pool.
- ❖ **Situational Hindrances:** Each environmental effect present that could make the task more difficult or stressful also adds a negative die to the pool.

Many different factors can add positive or negative dice to a pool. You are encouraged to come up with creative reasons to add additional dice, but the GM is the final arbiter on whether or not a die may be added (see page 44 for guidance on GMs' management of dice pools).

STEP 3: ROLL AND RESOLVE

Once the dice are assembled, roll the entire pool and resolve the results. The first step in resolving the pool is to remove matching negative and positive dice. Once you remove these dice, you then determine whether the test succeeded and how much stress you suffer for having performed it.

To remove dice from the pool, look for any negative dice that have the same result as a positive die. If any negative die result matches the number on a positive die, remove both dice from the pool. A negative die can remove only a single matching positive die. For example, if the pool has two positive dice, each with a result of “3,” and only one negative die with a “3” result, the negative “3” and one positive “3” are removed, leaving one positive “3” remaining in the pool.

Once all matching pairs of negative and positive results have been removed from the pool, if any of the remaining positive dice have a result that is equal to or lower than your characteristic chosen for the test, the task succeeds. Otherwise, the task fails.

In some cases, you or the GM might want to know how well you succeeded at your task. In these instances, you can count the total number of successes you scored on your test. Each positive die left at the end of the test with a result equal to or lower than the chosen characteristic counts as one success. The number of successes is primarily used to resolve attacks and opposed tests, but it can be used in any instance in which you are curious about just how well you performed at a task.

In addition to determining whether or not a character succeeds at a task, a test also indicates how much stress is suffered as a result of the attempt. Upon concluding a test, the character suffers a number of stress points equal to the number of negative dice remaining in the pool. (See **Stress**, on page 30). This stress is suffered in the category matching the characteristic used for the test. Note that the stress is equal to the number of dice—the results on those dice have no bearing on the amount of stress suffered.

EXAMPLE

The group, fleeing from several shambling undead, reaches the door of an abandoned house. Finding the door locked, Milla attempts to pick the lock quickly before the zombies reach the group. George, the GM, has Milla make a Logic test to pick the lock. Milla starts with the single positive die and then adds two additional positive dice: one for her Quick Fingers feature and another for a bit of stiff wire that Simon hands her to help. Then, the GM adds two negative dice to the pool: one for the innate difficulty of picking the lock and the other for the pressure Milla feels as the zombies close in.

Milla rolls the dice, getting “2,” “2,” and “6” on her positive dice, and “2” and “5” on her negative dice. She removes the negative “2” along with one of the matching positive “2” results. Milla has a Logic characteristic of 3, so the one remaining positive “2” in her final pool means Milla succeeds at the test and the door opens! However, the remaining uncanceled negative die indicates that Milla takes a single mental stress point due to the pressure caused by the approaching undead.

PUSHING YOURSELF

When attempting a task, you can push yourself beyond your normal limits, increasing your chance of success but also exposing yourself to increased risk. If you choose to push yourself when performing a test, add one positive die and one negative die to the pool before rolling. You may do this only once per test.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



OPPOSED TESTS

Opposed tests occur when the task you are trying to perform is directly opposed by another character—usually an NPC controlled by the GM. An opposed test can be used for any task in which there are two or more competitors, from an arm-wrestling contest to a competition for someone's affections.

To perform an opposed test, both you and the other character make the appropriate test as outlined on page 18, and whoever scores the greater number of successes wins the challenge. If the result is a tie, whoever has the higher value in the characteristic used for the test wins. If it is still a tie, or if you both fail the test, the contest is a draw. (If there absolutely must be a winner, the GM can have you both reroll the test until there is a victor, ignoring any stress indicated by the rerolled tests.)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MULTIPLE OPPONENTS

On occasion, opposed tests may be made between three or even more characters. All participants make the appropriate test, and the character with the highest result is the winner.

EXAMPLE

A soldier is handing out food to survivors but only has enough left for one group. Woody is elbow-to-elbow with another survivor as they both try to convince the soldier to give their respective groups the food. George calls for Woody to make an opposed test against the other survivor using Charisma (a characteristic in which Woody has only a 2). George lets Woody add a positive die to his pool for his One of the Gang feature, as he tries to buddy up with the soldier. However, George adds a negative die to Woody's pool because of the noise of the crowd around him.

The other survivor has a Charisma of 3, and adds two positive dice to his pool: one because he has children to feed, and the other because he is offering some ammo in trade for the food. However, this survivor also gets one negative die due to the noise of the crowd.

Both players roll their dice. Woody rolls a positive "5" and "6" and a negative "5," canceling out any stress, but failing the test. The other survivor rolls a positive "3," "3," and "4" and a negative "5," suffering one stress but getting two successes. With two more successes than Woody, the other survivor wins and gets the food from the soldier.



CREATING CHARACTERS

THE very first thing your group should do when you sit down to play **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** is create characters. Character creation is a collaborative process that can be just as much fun as playing the game itself!

The premise behind **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** is that you are playing yourself, thrust into these imaginary scenarios and forced to contend with the horrors of the end times. The process outlined in this section allows you to work with your friends to create an accurate portrayal of yourself in the game. If at any point you don't know what to write down on your sheet, feel free to ask everyone else at the table. They are sure to have some good suggestions!

The character creation process is broken into four steps. First, your group gets together and takes turns voting on each other's characteristics. Then, after the voting, each of you will break off and decide on your personal features, record any equipment you are currently carrying, and write down any traumas you are currently affected by *and* feel comfortable mentioning and including as part of the game.

Once all of these steps are finished, you are ready to take on the **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**!

STEP 1: DETERMINE CHARACTERISTICS

Your characteristics are the basic building blocks of your character. They are numerical representations of your natural abilities, measured on a scale of 1 to 5. You have six different characteristics—one “offensive” characteristic and one “defensive” characteristic in each of the following three categories.

PHYSICAL

- ✱ **Dexterity (offensive):** Dexterity is your coordination and general motor skills. Balance, speed, and grace are all governed by Dexterity.
- ✱ **Vitality (defensive):** Vitality is your physical strength and toughness. It determines elements of your character ranging from how much weight you can lift to how well you resist disease and toxins.

MENTAL

- ✱ **Logic (offensive):** Logic is your awareness of your surroundings and ability to think on your feet. If you are hacking into a secure computer system or noticing an ambush, Logic is the characteristic you are using.
- ✱ **Willpower (defensive):** Willpower represents your memory and mental resilience. Everything from resisting the horrors of the world to recalling specific information from years ago uses Willpower.

SOCIAL

- ✱ **Charisma (offensive):** Charisma is your general demeanor and social skills. It governs how easily you can use words and actions to sway others, whether through careful negotiation or harsh threats.
- ✱ **Empathy (defensive):** Empathy is your ability to understand and sympathize with others. From determining whether someone is lying to predicting an adversary's next move, it can be very useful.

FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Some groups may wish to play **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** as fictional characters instead of versions of themselves. This is totally fine and can result in a completely different game experience. Playing as fictional characters gives you the opportunity to explore the apocalypse from a totally new perspective. You could play as military personnel, as politicians, or just as fictional characters from the town in which you live.

It is recommended that everyone in the group play the same way—either all making fictional characters or all playing as themselves. Your group should sit down together before the first session of play and decide what kind of characters you would like to use. Making this key decision beforehand allows for a more cohesive game experience, and makes the GM's job much easier.

If you decide to play as fictional characters, steps 1, 3, and 4 of character creation are done a bit differently. First, before the group votes on your character's characteristics in step 1, you will have to explain your character concept to the group so players know what they are voting on. Second, during steps 3 and 4, you will have to be creative and come up with your character's equipment and traumas yourself. Try and be as true to your character concept as possible—your accountant probably wouldn't be carrying a chainsaw around the office!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To determine your characteristics, first you spend a number of points to set them at the values you think most appropriately represent you (or the character you are playing). Then, the rest of the players at the table all vote on how well they believe the characteristic values you chose in each of the three categories represent you. Based on the results of the vote, you increase or decrease your characteristics and adjust the number of features you will receive in their corresponding categories during the next step of character creation.

DISTRIBUTE POINTS

You start with a score of 1 in each of your six characteristics and ten points to distribute among them to increase their value. Each point distributed to a characteristic raises it by one. No characteristic, however, can be raised to a score higher than 5. Remember, you are trying to create an accurate representation of your own abilities. If you exaggerate your abilities in a particular area, you are likely to get voted down in that category.

VOTE

Once all the players have distributed their points, they take turns voting on each other's characteristics. To vote, each player will need one positive die and one negative die (see **The Dice**, page 18), and the group will need a bag or box in which to secretly place the dice for the vote.

One at a time, the players present their characters to be voted on. Each character undergoes three voting rounds, one for each of the three categories. When it is your turn, read off the values you chose for the two characteristics in your first category. Then, the rest of the players should pass around the bag, placing dice into it based on their votes:

- ✱ **Positive Die:** One of the two characteristics in the category should be raised.
- ✱ **Negative Die:** One of the two characteristics should be lowered.
- ✱ **Both Dice:** The two characteristics should stay the same.

Once all of the votes have been collected, mix up the dice and dump them out on the table. Count up the total number of positive and negative dice. If there are more positive dice, raise one of your characteristics in that category by one point (without raising a characteristic above 5). If there are more negative dice, lower one of your characteristics in that category by one point (without lowering a characteristic below 1). If there are an equal number of positive and negative dice, leave your characteristics in that category as they are.

Once the votes are tallied, collect the rest of the dice secretly, and then redistribute them for the next vote. Make sure to record whether the group voted to raise or lower that category or keep it the same, as the result of that vote will affect how many features you receive in that category in step 2. Repeat the process for your other two categories.

STEP 2: CHOOSE FEATURES

Once you have determined your characteristics, you need to choose your features for each category. Features represent important aspects of your character and can be far more detailed or specific than a general characteristic assigned a specific numeral. Each feature is a word or phrase describing a strength, weakness, or eccentricity that affects you in a particular category.

There are two different types of features: positive and negative. Positive features represent strengths or special skills that can aid you, while negative features represent specific areas of weakness that may hinder you. For more information on features, as well as specific examples, see pages 25 and 26.

At character creation, you start with one positive and one negative feature in each of your three categories. Then, based on whether the group chose to raise or lower one of your characteristics in a category, you either lose a feature or gain an additional feature in that category:

- ✱ **If the group voted to raise a characteristic:** Either add an additional negative feature in this category, or remove your positive feature in this category.
- ✱ **If the group voted to lower a characteristic:** Either add an additional positive feature in this category, or remove your negative feature in this category.

Once you know how many negative and positive features you have in each category, you can decide exactly what those features will be, using the examples on pages 25 and 26 for guidance. There are no formal limits on what your features may be; they can be as varied and different as your imagination allows. However, if you are playing yourself, you should try to keep them true to your actual strengths and weaknesses. All features are subject to the GM's approval; if you are unsure about how they can apply to your character you should review them with the GM during the process.

STEP 3: RECORD EQUIPMENT

Now that all of the intangible details of your character are on paper, it's time to record the tangible facts that could affect your survival. First, you have to record all of the equipment you currently have with you. Since you are playing yourself and the apocalypse is starting immediately, look around you: this is what you've got!

In the equipment section of your character sheet, record any important items you have on your person or very close to you *right now*. Make sure not to leave out the details, either. How much battery does your cell phone have left? How much money is in your wallet right now? Do you have a replacement for that pair of contacts you're wearing? Any and all of these details can (and probably will) come up.

Maintaining supplies and outfitting oneself during the apocalypse is a hallmark of the survival horror genre. Depending on what the GM has in store, what you have and how clever you are at putting it to use can be the difference between life and a gruesome death.

For more information on equipment and how it's used, see page 27 through 29.

STEP 4: RECORD TRAUMAS

The last step in creating your character is to record any traumas you currently have that could affect you in the coming apocalypse. Traumas are physical, mental, or social "wounds" that will influence your performance but can be healed over time. Use only those traumas you feel comfortable discussing with other players and including as part of the game. **GMs should make it clear to all players that they are not expected to include traumas they prefer to keep private or that would spoil their enjoyment of the game.** For more information on traumas, and for specific examples of traumas, see page 32.

Do you have a twisted ankle you are still recovering from? Are you exhausted from too many late-night shifts at work? Did you just suffer a bad breakup with your significant other? Any of these things could be represented as traumas you start with at the beginning of the game.

The traumas you choose to start with should reflect real-world afflictions that currently affect you. You can start with up to one trauma in each of your three categories. Each of these starting traumas has a severity of 2 (unless, in a special circumstance, you and the GM decide another value is more appropriate).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Traumas in the game system represent the sorts of physical and psychological dangers that characters face during the horrors of **THE END OF THE WORLD**. Remember that the aim of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** is to play a fictional version of oneself during an extreme situation for the sake of a fun couple of evenings. To this end, players and GMs should never feel compelled to divulge any personal information they wish to leave out of the game. Indeed, physical and mental trauma can be a sensitive issue for many people and should always be treated with respect.

PERSONAL INFORMATION



THE CHARACTER SHEET

YOUR character sheet allows you to record and track everything you need to know about your character during the game: physical and personality traits, strengths and weaknesses, stresses and injuries, and so on. It's a good idea to use a pencil (rather than a pen) when writing on your character sheet—you never know what might change about your character as you struggle to survive the apocalypse!

A blank copy of this sheet can be found at the back of the book on page 144 or at www.FantasyFlightGames.com.

CATEGORIES

All of the character aspects outlined below contain elements that fall into one of three categories: physical, mental, or social. Each of these categories has a corresponding column on the character sheet. Whenever you acquire a skill, become stressed, or sustain an injury, it is classified under one of these three categories and is recorded in the appropriate column. If you are unsure which category is appropriate, discuss it with your GM.

1 CHARACTERISTICS (PAGE 21)

Characteristics are numerical representations of your natural abilities. Each one has a descriptive name and is assigned a number between 1 and 5. You have six different characteristics: one “offensive” characteristic and one “defensive” characteristic in each of the three categories. When you perform a task related to a specific characteristic, your characteristic determines how likely you are to succeed.

2 FEATURES (PAGE 25)

Features represent your specific strengths and weaknesses beyond your raw characteristics. Each feature, which can be either positive or negative, is a word or phrase describing a strength, weakness, or eccentricity of the character that can affect the character's day-to-day life. When recording features, mark a “+” in front of positive features and a “-” in front of negative ones to note the difference.

3 STRESS (PAGE 30)

Stress is a numerical representation of the strain your character has undergone due to physical, mental, and social trials. Your stress is tracked on three “stress tracks,” one for each of the three categories. Each stress track consists of nine boxes divided into three tiers of three. When you undergo a certain amount of stress, represented by stress points, you fill in an equal number of boxes, starting with the first tier, proceeding up to the second once all three boxes in the first are full, and so on.

4 TRAUMAS (PAGE 32)

Traumas represent the tangible repercussions of sustaining too much stress. They are physical, mental, or social “wounds” that affect your actions and take time to heal.

Each trauma has two parts: a word or phrase naming it and a severity. The name of a trauma describes its effects, such as “Broken Ankle” (a physical trauma) or “Paranoia” (a social one). The severity, a number between 1 and 3, is tracked in the three boxes next to the name.

5 EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES (PAGE 27)

This section allows you to keep a list of all the useful items you (and thus your character) have readily available. You can record specific pieces of equipment under the categories in which they are most likely to help you (for example, a book on survival techniques would go under the mental category). However, equipment tends to be pretty flexible in its use. The category under which a piece of gear is recorded should have no bearing on how you choose to use it.

CHARACTER SHEET:

THE END OF THE WORLD

NAME: _____

1	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	SOCIAL
	AGILITY VITALITY	LOGIC WILLPOWER	CHARISMA EMPATHY
2	FEATURES	FEATURES	FEATURES
3	STRESS & RESISTANCE	STRESS & RESISTANCE	STRESS & RESISTANCE
4	TRAUMAS		
5	EQUIPMENT		

FEATURES

CHARACTERS are far more than a simple array of numbers defining their abilities. While characteristics exist to set the foundation for a character, features build upon that foundation and make each character truly unique. Features define a character's strengths, weaknesses, and eccentricities. They are not predetermined rules chosen from a list, but unique elements of your character that you define. The only limit to features is your own imagination.



Each feature falls into one of the three categories and is a short word or phrase describing an aspect of yourself. Not only do they describe something about you as a character, but they can affect how well you do on tests. There are two types of features: positive features that help you by adding positive dice to tests (recorded with a "+" before the feature name), and negative features that hinder you by adding negative dice to tests (recorded with a "-" before the feature name).

POSITIVE FEATURES

Positive features represent natural strengths, specialized training, or unique abilities you might have in the related category. These indicate more than just being very strong, smart, or charismatic: they are specialized edges that set you apart from your peers.

Whenever you make a test in the same category as a positive feature, that positive feature can add a positive die to your test if it could help you better perform the task. Feel free to discuss with the GM how you feel your positive feature can help you complete the task or avoid unnecessary stress from performing it. For instance, if you chose Long-Distance Runner as a physical feature, you would gain an extra positive die when making tests to do such things as outrunning a pursuing zombie horde, enduring the climb up a ruined building, or performing any other act of endurance.

When choosing your positive features, think about what sets you apart from the other players at the table. What skills, strengths, or abilities do you have that make you special? **Table 1: Positive Feature Examples** offers a list of positive features to use as inspiration when creating your own features. Do not feel restricted to the features suggested here; simply use them as a jumping-off point as you work with your GM and the other players to create features perfect for you.

TABLE 1: POSITIVE FEATURE EXAMPLES

PHYSICAL FEATURES	MENTAL FEATURES	SOCIAL FEATURES
DISTANCE RUNNER	HUMAN CALCULATOR	ALWAYS SMILING
WEIGHT LIFTER	TIRELESS READER	SNAPPY DRESSER
VERY FLEXIBLE	NURSING DEGREE	EXCELLENT LIAR
MARTIAL ARTIST	EAGLE SCOUT	WHEELER AND DEALER
CRACK SHOT	WELL-READ	NATURAL LEADER
IRON STOMACH	WORLD TRAVELER	EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE



NEGATIVE FEATURES

Negative features, on the other hand, represent your weaknesses, insecurities, or unique quirks in a given category. As with positive features, these indicate more than just being out of shape or uncomfortable in social situations: these are traits and idiosyncrasies unique to you. Your negative features should represent singular challenges you face in your day-to-day life.

Whenever you make a test in the same category as a negative feature, that negative feature adds a negative die to your test if it could hurt your chance of succeeding or cause additional stress. Usually, when you perform a test, the GM will ask you what your negative features are in the category being used for the test. Once you list them, you and the GM can discuss whether or not they could affect your performance on that test. For instance, if you have Terrible Liar as a social feature, you get a negative die added to your pool when making tests to deceive other characters.

When choosing your negative features, think about what unique challenges you face compared to the other players at the table. What weaknesses, phobias, or quirks do you struggle with? As with traumas, use only those negative features you don't mind disclosing to players and includ-

ing in the game. If it would spoil your ability to enjoy the game, there is no need to use it as a feature. **Table 2: Negative Feature Examples** presents a list of negative features to use as inspiration when determining your own features. Do not feel restricted to the features suggested here; simply use them as a jumping-off point as you decide upon features appropriate to you.

TABLE 2: NEGATIVE FEATURE EXAMPLES

PHYSICAL FEATURES	MENTAL FEATURES	SOCIAL FEATURES
ALLERGIES	AVOIDS MATH	ANXIETY
SEDENTARY	NO SENSE OF DIRECTION	TOO HONEST
BAD BACK	EASILY BORED	SHORT TEMPER
VERY NEARSIGHTED	PRONE TO DISTRACTION	EASILY PRESSURED
INJURED EARDRUM	EASILY SURPRISED	TERRIBLE LIAR
WEAK STOMACH	COMPULSION	MISANTHROPE

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

As the world starts to collapse around you, the items you have with you may become critical to your survival. Things once commonplace in your daily life take on a new importance as travel becomes dangerous and access to replacements can no longer be taken for granted. As distribution breaks down and resources get increasingly scarce, people may become willing to kill over nothing more than a can of food or a gallon of gasoline.

You can track the equipment you are carrying in the equipment section of your character sheet. If any of your items could realistically help with a test you are performing, you may add a positive die to the pool for their assistance. Possessions beyond those you carry are allowed in the game. While you should keep track of these and their locations, do so on a piece of scratch paper or the back of your character sheet; you should reserve the equipment section of your character sheet for items you have with you, where they are easily accessible for help with tests.

This section goes over some recommendations for common gear that is fairly likely to be found in a game of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**. It also covers some additional rules for handling the effects of weapons and armor.

GEAR

The possibilities for gear you might end up using in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** are nearly endless. Things quickly packed up from your own home, items scavenged from abandoned stores, valuables stolen from other survivors—nearly anything can become useful when you're struggling to survive the end times. You are encouraged to find creative uses for any gear you find on your journey. You will need all the help (and positive dice) you can get!

Despite the nearly infinite variety of items you may end up using on your journey, certain items are seen more often than others. Whether equipment most people carry on them every day (such as cell phones) or items that become more necessary as the world ends (such as medical supplies), many common items are carried by a majority of survivor groups. In fact, acquiring these critical items could end up being a significant driving force for you early in the game.

Table 3: Common Gear offers suggestions on different pieces of common gear a group of survivors might end up needing or using. It also recommends the category

TABLE 3: COMMON GEAR

GEAR	HELPFUL CATEGORY	SUGGESTED USES
CELL PHONE	SOCIAL	COMMUNICATING LONG DISTANCE (BEFORE THE CELL NETWORKS GO DOWN)
WALKIE-TALKIES	SOCIAL	COMMUNICATING LONG DISTANCE (AFTER THE CELL NETWORKS GO DOWN)
FIRST AID KIT	PHYSICAL	HEALING PHYSICAL TRAUMAS
FICTION BOOK	MENTAL	HEALING MENTAL TRAUMAS
TEXTBOOK	MENTAL	PERFORMING SPECIFIC MENTAL TASKS, DEPENDING ON THE BOOK
JEWELRY	SOCIAL	TRADING FOR SUPPLIES OR INFORMATION
PLAYING CARDS	MENTAL/SOCIAL	TO EASE TENSE SOCIAL SITUATIONS OR RELIEVE MENTAL STRAIN
LIGHTER	PHYSICAL	STARTING A FIRE OR SPOTTING THINGS IN THE DARK
POCKETKNIFE	PHYSICAL	MANY DIFFERENT PHYSICAL TASKS, ALSO USED AS A WEAPON IN A CONFLICT
WATER BOTTLE	PHYSICAL	STORING AND TRANSPORTING WATER
IODINE	PHYSICAL	PURIFY WATER (ELIMINATE NEED TO MAKE TEST TO RESIST CONTAMINANTS)
ROPE	PHYSICAL	CLIMBING RUINED BUILDINGS, SECURING SUPPLIES OR CAPTIVES
FLASHLIGHT	PHYSICAL	SPOTTING THINGS IN THE DARK

each piece of gear would likely be most helpful in, as well as the different tasks it could specifically benefit. Don't feel restricted to the gear or uses suggested here; simply use them as a jumping-off point. Any and all uses of supplies you find on your journey are encouraged—do whatever you need to do to survive.

NOT ALL GEAR IS CREATED EQUAL

Two pieces of gear might perform very similar functions, but one could be significantly better at it than the other. For instance, everyday adhesive bandages help wounds heal faster by protecting them from exposure, but rolls of gauze and disinfectant would be significantly better. In these cases, the GM may decide that the superior piece of gear can add two positive dice to the dice pool instead of just one.

CARRYING CAPACITY

Depending on how lucky you are in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**, you can quickly accumulate a large quantity of resources as you scavenge for supplies. However, you are only human; you have a limit as to how much stuff you can bring with you, especially on your immediate person.

There are no strict rules regarding exactly how much different items weigh or how hard they are to carry, but you and the GM should work together to decide how much gear you can keep on yourself at one time. As a rough guideline, average humans can comfortably carry up to a third of their body weight in an appropriate backpack or bag.

WEAPONS

Protecting yourself is an important part of staying alive in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**. As such, even the most peaceful characters often find themselves carrying a weapon just in case. Because weapons have such an impact on your performance in combat, and because combat incidents can be important and tense moments in the game, weapons have some additional rules beyond those for other pieces of gear. A weapon contributes two things when you use it to attack an NPC or PC: it modifies your dice pool in some way, and it changes the amount of stress you deal to your opponent with your attack. (See **Attacking**, page 36.)

Much like normal pieces of gear, weapons which make attacks much more effective can add positive dice to your dice pool. However, using certain weapons can be much more difficult or dangerous than simply using your fists. To reflect this, not all weapons add a positive die to your pool—some add no dice at all, and others can even add negative dice.

While some weapons are more difficult to use, they can be more effective at harming your opponent. Each weapon has a damage value. This value is a positive or negative number that alters the amount of stress you deal to opponents when you attack them (see **Attacking**, page 36). Positive numbers increase the stress dealt to the target by the corresponding amount, while negative numbers reduce the stress dealt (to a minimum of 0).

Table 4: Weapons, on page 29, lists a number of recommendations for various weapons you might acquire. These are simple and general recommendations for entire categories of weapons. If you or the GM feel that a specific object or weapon doesn't fit into one of these categories, you can give it whatever stats you and the GM agree on. (Though, as a general rule, a weapon should never add more than two dice of either type or more than +4 damage.)

TRACKING SMALL DETAILS

Depending on what kind of campaign your GM wants to run, you may need to track more information about your gear than simply whether or not you have it. Once the power grid goes out, things such as the battery life of electronics you carry with you become very important, and tracking such elements can really add to the game. Other things, such as unspoiled food and potable water, are necessary to track in almost any game of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**, as such resources become very scarce. Some common things the GM may have you track are:

- ☒ Number of replaceable batteries remaining
- ☒ Battery life on electronic devices (cell phones, tablets, etc.)
- ☒ Total gasoline left in car
- ☒ Amount of drinkable water
- ☒ Amount of edible food
- ☒ Matches/lighter fluid remaining
- ☒ Units of ammunition in weapon and carried

Such items can be tracked in different ways. Items that get used up slowly and are tracked session-to-session should have quantities recorded in writing; items likely to be useful for only a few hours can be tracked by other means, such as spare dice or counters.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

TABLE 4: WEAPONS

TYPE OF WEAPON	EXAMPLES	ADDED DICE	DAMAGE
SMALL-BLADED MELEE	POCKETKNIFE, KITCHEN KNIFE	1 POSITIVE DIE	+2
LARGE-BLADED MELEE	MACHETE, HEDGE CLIPPERS	2 POSITIVE DICE	+3
SMALL IMPROVISED MELEE	BEER BOTTLE, TIRE IRON	N/A	+1
LARGE IMPROVISED MELEE	CRICKET BAT, CHAINSAW	1 NEGATIVE DIE	+4
THROWN OBJECT	ROCK, TOASTER, VINYL ALBUM	N/A	-1
PISTOL	GLOCK 19, M1911	1 POSITIVE DIE	+3
SHOTGUN	REMINGTON 12 GAUGE	N/A	+4
SINGLE-SHOT RIFLE	AMERICAN LONG RIFLE, WINCHESTER 1866	2 POSITIVE DICE	+4
AUTOMATIC RIFLE	M4, AK-47	1 NEGATIVE DIE	+5

WEAPON RANGES

From the reach of a bloody baseball bat to the trajectory of a thrown brick to the firing distance of a high-powered rifle, weapons have a variety of ranges. Further, elements ranging from wind to visibility can factor into how far a weapon's reach extends in any given situation. Because of the narrative nature of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**'s combat, weapon ranges aren't specified in the game. Whether or not your weapon has range to a target depends on the situation you are in and is up to the GM. However, as general guidance, here are some average ranges of different types of weapons:

- ✪ **Pistol:** 50 meters
- ✪ **Shotgun:** 35 meters
- ✪ **Single-Shot Rifle:** 1,000 meters
- ✪ **Automatic Rifle:** 400 meters

If you attempt to make a shot far beyond the average range of your weapon, the GM may add a negative die to your pool to reflect the increased difficulty. On the other hand, if you are making an incredibly short-range shot, the GM may add a positive die to reflect the ease of the shot.

ARMOR

While very few people will find themselves wearing any form of armor when they become aware the world is ending, armor can quickly become necessary to survival. Armor might not be actual medieval armor or bulletproof vests, but simply heavy, protective clothing that will help guard you against the dangers you face every day. When you are wearing any armor sturdy enough to protect you from physical harm, it adds a bonus to your physical resistance value (see **Resistance**, page 31). This bonus is usually pretty small but can make a huge difference in the long run. **Table 5: Armor** lists some examples of different armor types and the resistance bonuses they provide.

TABLE 5: ARMOR

RESISTANCE BONUS	EXAMPLES
+0	REGULAR CLOTHING
+1	FIREFIGHTER'S SUIT, BULLETPROOF VEST
+2	FULL BULLETPROOF ARMOR, RIOT GEAR, FULL MEDIEVAL ARMOR

STRESS, DEATH, AND TRAUMAS

As you weather the threats and challenges of the Apocalypse, you will be pushed to your breaking point. You will be injured, insulted, and brought to the brink of insanity. To reflect this constant strain and danger to your body, mind, and spirit, you suffer stress and traumas. Stress represents the damage you accumulate on a day-to-day basis from everything you do, while traumas represent the tangible repercussions and permanent effects of that damage.

Stress and traumas are tracked separately for your three different categories, reflecting the detrimental effects on the three different parts of yourself.



STRESS

Stress represents the damage and strain you undergo on a day-to-day basis in your three categories. Physical stress represents cuts and bruises, twisted ankles, broken bones, and any other physical damage. Mental stress represents psychological strain, shock from traumatic events, and general damage to your mental health. Lastly, social stress represents anxiety, damage to your trust in others, and an increasingly bitter attitude toward the world. That being said, stress is very much an abstract measure of these effects; it doesn't represent any single injury as much as the building repercussions from multiple small events.

Stress is tracked numerically in a set of boxes called the stress track. Whenever you acquire points of stress, you fill in that many boxes in the stress track in the appropriate category. The more stress you endure in a category, the more resistance you build up against further stress. However, if you ever completely fill up a stress track in a single category, you run the risk of dying or sustaining an extreme trauma.

THE STRESS TRACK

All stress is tallied on one of the three stress tracks in your three categories. Each stress track consists of nine boxes, which are divided into three tiers of three boxes each. Whenever you take points of stress, fill in an equal number of boxes on the stress track in the appropriate category, starting with the boxes in the first tier, proceeding up to the second once all three boxes in the first are full, and so on.

If all nine boxes in a category are full, you immediately die or experience a serious trauma (see **Death**, page 31).

SUSTAINING STRESS

Stress comes from two primary sources: performing difficult or dangerous tests, and experiencing traumatic events.

Whenever you make a test, you gain a number of stress points equal to the negative dice left in the pool. This stress is taken in the category matching that of the characteristic used for the test, and it represents the general strain or damage resulting from performing the task. Perhaps the weight you were attempting to lift caused you to pull a muscle, or hours spent studying has really stressed you out, or the sleazebag you were dealing with really got under your skin.

The other main causes of stress are traumatic events brought about by outside sources. Examples include being attacked by an opponent with a weapon, witnessing a horrifying sight, or being betrayed by a trusted

friend. When such an event occurs, you immediately take points of stress. This value could be determined by the game rules (such as during attacks), or it could be dictated by the GM based on the situation. (GMs: see page 45 for guidance on choosing stress amounts.)

Regardless of what source deals you stress, reduce the amount you receive by your resistance in that category before you record the stress on the stress track.

RECOVERING FROM STRESS

In general, stress cannot be readily healed. Stress is an abstract level representing the damage you have accumulated from the adversity you have faced. To reduce accumulated stress, you first need to diagnose the problem and realize how it is affecting you. By spending a short time analyzing how it has affected you, you can convert your stress into a trauma. This removes your stress from that track, but gives you a trauma in the same category. Traumas can hurt your performance by adding negative dice to tasks you attempt. However, they can also be cured over time. See **Traumas** on page 32 for further information.

RESISTANCE

As you accumulate stress in a category, you become more inured to the related dangers. Someone whose sanity has been tested by witnessing death over and over no longer recoils as quickly at the sight of a corpse. Someone who has been betrayed by comrade after comrade is no longer surprised when betrayed again. After a person has been beaten into submission, another hit is just a drop in the bucket. This is represented by resistance.

Whenever you are dealt stress from any source, you reduce the amount of stress you receive by your resistance in the matching category. Your resistance is equal to the number of tiers in the matching stress track that have all three boxes filled in. Thus, if you have three or more points of stress in a category, you have one point of resistance; if you have six or more points of stress in a category, you have two points of resistance.




Other things, such as armor, can provide additional resistance in specific categories (see page 29).

EXAMPLE

Bruce is having a bad day. He has accumulated 7 physical stress in an altercation with a hostile group of survivors and is now running for his life. He finds himself cornered on the roof of a one-story building, and he decides to jump rather than face his pursuers. He lands hard, suffering 3 physical stress from the impact. However, he already has two tiers of his physical stress track filled in due to his 7 stress, and so has two points of resistance. He subtracts his 2 resistance from the stress sustained, reducing it to just 1. Now at 8 physical stress, Bruce is injured after the fall, but still alive!

DEATH

Death is common in the **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**. People perish all around you as you struggle to survive. But for the purposes of playing the game, "death" doesn't refer strictly to complete, physical death. Instead, it refers to several different ways your character can be retired from play. When you sustain enough stress to fill a stress track, you die, but the *kind* of death you undergo depends on which category of stress causes you to die:

-  **Physical:** This is normal, physical death. Your heart stops beating, and you die.
-  **Mental:** You are driven into irreversible insanity. Your mind is gone.
-  **Social:** You fall into an inescapable catatonic state. Your faith in humanity has utterly failed.

Even your death is part of the ongoing narrative. However you end up being removed from the game, make it your own. Tailor it to your character and whatever caused you to suffer that last bit of fatal stress. Deaths should be dramatic, unique, and memorable moments.

But while deaths are important, you are a main character in the story, and you have a chance to cling to life, even at the end. Whenever you completely fill a stress track, you don't necessarily have to die, but can try to cling to life by making a test using the defensive stat from the category in which you suffered the stress. If you succeed at the test, you are still removed from play in the way appropriate to the category in which you acquired the stress, but you are removed only temporarily. You immediately take a severity 3 trauma in the matching category and remove all stress from the top two tiers of the maxed-out stress track, leaving the three boxes in tier 1 filled in. You remain removed from play until the end of the current encounter—either unconscious, insane, or unresponsive—but then you return once you have a chance to collect yourself.

If you already have three traumas (of any severity level) in the category and cannot take on additional traumas, you cannot cling to life, and have no choice but to die.

OVERFLOW STRESS

It is not uncommon for a single source to deal enough stress to complete a stress track and "overflow" it, inflicting more stress than there are boxes left to fill in. If you cling to life and have overflow stress, that overflow stress is recorded on your stress track after you remove the stress from the top two tiers. You do not apply your resistance to this overflow stress, since your resistance was already applied to the Stress when it was originally dealt.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

TRAUMAS

While stress is a simple, numerical representation of the strain and damage you have sustained, traumas represent the tangible repercussions of that stress after it has built up. By taking some time to analyze the effects the stress has had on your body, mind, and spirit, you can convert that stress into a trauma. This removes the stress from your stress track, but introduces a narrative effect that will weigh on you as you try to recover from it.

Each trauma has two parts: a word or phrase naming it, and a severity. The name of the trauma describes its effects on you. For example, “Broken Ankle” describes a physical trauma that leaves you limping, and “Paranoid” indicates social trauma that causes you to trust no one. A trauma’s severity, on the other hand, is a number between one and three, tracked in that trauma’s three boxes, which are filled in from left to right. When you remove your stress to acquire a trauma, that trauma’s severity is equal to the number of tiers in the stress track that had any boxes filled in. The trauma’s severity determines just how hard that trauma will be to heal.

Traumas act a lot like negative features (see **Negative Features**, page 26). Whenever you make a test that could reasonably be hindered by trauma, you add a negative die to that test. Particularly severe traumas can add even more negative dice, at the GM’s discretion.

You can never have more than three traumas (of any severity level) in a category at once. If you ever suffer a fourth trauma in a category, you immediately die without any chance to cling to life (see **Death** on page 31).

ACQUIRING TRAUMAS

There are two ways to acquire a trauma. Usually, you acquire one by converting your stress into a trauma, which relieves your stress and helps you start to recover from the damage you’ve taken. Alternatively, certain special enemies can cause you to automatically undergo a specific trauma.

To convert your stress into a trauma, you have to have at least five minutes of downtime to spend analyzing how your stress has affected you. This process could take the form of looking over your wounds after a battle to see what is hurt, meditating on the mental strain you’ve been under, or confronting your trust issues. You can do this whenever you want, as long as you have the time. You can choose to remove your stress early and often, building up a large number of small traumas that are easy to heal but weigh on you. Alternatively you can ignore your injuries, avoiding immediate setbacks but risking their becoming even more severe before you have a chance to start dealing with them.

After spending the five minutes to look yourself over, you remove all of the stress in a single category. You then record a single trauma in that category with a severity equal to the number of tiers in that stress track that had any boxes filled in. Next, you determine the exact nature of the trauma and how it will affect you. This should be based on its severity and how you received the points of stress that were removed. If you sustained the stress due to falling out of a building, perhaps it results in a “Broken Leg” trauma. Or if you suffered the stress from witnessing your best friend die in front of you, maybe it induces a “Can’t Make Friends” trauma.

Table 6: Trauma Examples presents a list of traumas to use as inspiration when deciding what the nature of your trauma is. Do not feel restricted to the traumas suggested here; simply use them as a jumping-off point as you work with your GM to devise a trauma appropriate to your situation and character.

TABLE 6: TRAUMA EXAMPLES

SEVERITY	PHYSICAL TRAUMAS	MENTAL TRAUMAS	SOCIAL TRAUMAS
1	TWISTED ANKLE, FIRST-DEGREE BURN, INFECTED WOUND, SICKNESS, BLURRY VISION	FEAR OF THE DEAD, PREOCCUPATION, FORGETFULNESS, ACTIVE DENIAL	INDIFFERENCE, DISLIKE OF A PARTICULAR TYPE OF PERSON, UNEASE, WARY AROUND PEOPLE
2	BROKEN ANKLE, SECOND-DEGREE BURN, FESTERING WOUND, FEVER, PARTIAL BLINDNESS	DREAD OF THE DEAD, FIXATION, MEMORY LOSS, DENIAL	APATHY, HATRED OF A PARTICULAR TYPE OF PERSON, ANXIETY, DISTRUSTFUL OF PEOPLE
3	BROKEN LEG, THIRD-DEGREE BURN, GANGRENOUS WOUND, SEVERE FLU, BLINDNESS	PHOBIA OF THE DEAD, OBSESSION, AMNESIA, DELUSIONS	DISASSOCIATION FROM REALITY, RESPONDS WITH RAGE TO PARTICULAR TYPE OF PERSON, PANIC, PARANOID OF OTHERS

RECOVERING FROM TRAUMAS

Fortunately, most traumas can be healed over time. How you go about healing your trauma depends on what category the trauma is in and its exact nature as determined when it was incurred. The treatment might be first aid and medicine for a physical trauma, relaxation and personal reflection for a mental trauma, or the help of people close to you for a social trauma. The amount of time the treatment takes depends on the severity of the trauma, and whether or not it succeeds is determined by a test.

When you decide to begin treating one of your traumas, specify to the GM what measures you are taking to do so. You then must undergo the treatment for the amount of time specified for a trauma of that severity, as listed below (required treatment time is also marked in the severity boxes on the official character sheet):

- ⊗ **Severity 1:** One day
- ⊗ **Severity 2:** One week
- ⊗ **Severity 3:** One month

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PERMANENT EFFECTS OF TRAUMAS

Some traumas, such as losing a limb, can never be fully healed. The wound can heal over, and you can adapt to the disability, but your limb will never grow back. In extreme situations such as this, the GM may decide to add a negative feature to your character as the result of a specific trauma. For example, if you were to lose your arm, you could gain both a "Lost Arm" trauma and a "Lost Arm" negative feature. Over time, you could recover from the "Lost Arm" trauma, healing the wound fully, but you would never recover fully from the "Lost Arm" negative feature. The GM should reserve the addition of negative features from an injury for truly exceptional circumstances.

This time doesn't need to be one hundred percent committed to curing the trauma; you can do other things while you recuperate as long as they don't directly interfere with the treatment or make the trauma worse. For example, treating a broken leg might involve some form of cast or splint and refraining from putting too much weight on it for a month. This treatment wouldn't be interrupted by going about your daily life, but it would if you removed the cast or tried to run on that leg.

Once the entire treatment time has elapsed, you must make a test to see if the treatment succeeded. This test uses the defensive characteristic from the same category as the trauma (Vitality for physical, Willpower for mental, or Empathy for social). As with any test, this test gains positive and negative dice from any circumstances



affecting the treatment. For example, positive dice can be added due to helpful equipment or the assistance of allies, and negative dice due to interruptions or complications of the treatment.

If the test succeeds, reduce the severity of the trauma by one. If this reduces the severity of a trauma to zero, the trauma is healed and can be removed from your character sheet. If the test fails, or if the trauma still has a severity, you can continue treatment until it is fully removed. At the GM's discretion, when the severity of a trauma is reduced due to treatment, you can alter the nature of the trauma based on the in-progress healing. This may mean changing your "Broken Leg" trauma to a "Weak Leg" trauma as the healing progresses, or reducing your "Acrophobia" to a simple "Fear of Heights" to indicate that it is now a bit less severe.

CONFLICT

MOST scenes in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** will play out narratively, with the GM narrating the story and calling on various PCs in your group to make tests as you decide to perform different tasks. However, surviving in the apocalypse can often be tense, and you might quickly find yourself in conflict with hostile characters or thrown into a dangerous circumstance in which every second counts. In these situations, it's helpful to have a bit more structure to the storytelling, guaranteeing that everyone in the scene gets a chance to contribute to the story and that all their actions time out evenly and fairly.

TIMING

As soon as a conflict (or any time-sensitive action scene) breaks out, the normal flow of the narrative stops, and the game enters “structured time.” In structured time, the game unfolds in a series of rounds. During each round, each character involved in the scene gets to take one turn. Once all characters have taken their turns, the next round starts. This continues until the action has concluded. Each round represents about ten seconds of in-game time, with all of the characters acting simultaneously during those ten seconds.

Whether your group or the opposing group goes first is determined by which group has initiative at the start of the combat.

DETERMINING INITIATIVE

If two or more opposing groups of characters are involved in a conflict, the order in which they get to take their turns each round can mean the difference between life and death. The first thing the GM must determine when the game enters structured time is which group has initiative—in other words, what order the groups will be acting in.

This initiative order is determined based on the circumstances that started the conflict. Whichever group “got the jump” on the other—or has a general advantage—acts first. If you and the other PCs end negotiations with another group of survivors by attacking them, you will have the initiative and will get to act first. However, if you are ambushed by a particularly quiet group of undead, they will have the initiative over you.

Once the GM has determined the order in which the various groups involved in the scene are acting, each character and NPC takes a turn. Each character in the first group can take his or her turn in any order he or she chooses (keeping in mind that each character can only take one turn per round). Once they have all finished their turns, the next group takes its turns, and so on.

TAKING TURNS

When it is your group's time to act in a round, you and your group members each take one turn. These turns can be taken in any order your group decides based on the situation, but each character must complete his or her turn before the next can go.

During your turn, you have approximately ten seconds (in game) to attempt whatever you want to do. This is usually enough time to move around a bit and then attempt a single task. In general, you have enough time in a turn to attempt no more than a single task that requires some form of test. If you describe to the GM what you want to do with your turn, and it seems like it would require more than a single test, it is likely something that needs to be broken into multiple turns. For more guidance on exactly what you can fit into your turn, along with recommendations on how to handle several common tasks, see the **Tasks** section, on page 35.

Once you describe what you are doing with your turn, including any movements, and you make whatever test might be required, the GM narrates the results of your actions based on the outcome of your test and any other details relevant to the situation. Then, your turn is over.

STANDOFF

While who has the initiative in most situations is usually fairly obvious, there are some instances in which everything explodes into chaos at once, and it isn't apparent which group should go before the other. In these cases, the GM can call for an opposed Dexterity test (see **Opposed Tests**, page 20). One member of each group is nominated to take the test. This represents that character taking the lead in the situation, guiding fellow group members in the group's response to the ensuing combat. The GM then determines the order in which the groups act based on their representatives' performance on the test, with the winner of the test going first.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



TASKS

As a general guideline, when you attempt tasks during a single turn of structured time, you can accomplish two things. First, you can do one minor task, usually movement-based. This might be ducking behind cover, backing away from your enemy, closing a door, or any number of other contextual actions. This minor task should be something that can be accomplished in a couple of seconds, should not require your full attention, and should be something that you would reasonably succeed at the majority of the time.

Second, you can attempt one major task. This is something that requires the majority of your attention and some amount of skill or luck to pull off. The most common example of a major task in combat is attacking an opponent. Because this action is so common, and because it can take many forms, there are specific rules for performing attacks; these are outlined in **Attacking**, on page 36. However, attacking is only one of an infinite number of things you can attempt to do during your turn. **Other Example Tasks**, on page 37, goes over several other common tasks that you might want to perform during your turn and offers recommendations on how the GM could handle them.

MOVEMENT AND POSITIONING

Most of the moving you do during a turn in an action scene doesn't require a test, and it can be performed in addition to whatever major task you are attempting to accomplish. This might mean slowly walking while you fire your gun, running up to your target before attacking, or just moving from room to room in an abandoned building. Usually, for this kind of minor maneuvering, an average character can move about twenty meters through an open area. However, the GM may decide that you cannot move as far due to environmental effects such as darkness, weather, or unstable footing.

On top of simply moving from one place to another, this minor task on your turn can also include one additional small, incidental thing you may want to do. Some suggestions include:

- ✱ Ducking into cover
- ✱ Pulling out a piece of gear
- ✱ Opening or closing a door
- ✱ Dropping prone or standing up
- ✱ Speaking to other characters

While a lot of movement during conflict can be handled as minor tasks, occasions may arise when you want to dedicate your full attention and energy to sprinting as fast as you can. In these instances, the simple act of moving that quickly through a tense situation requires a Vitality test and takes your full attention for your turn. On a success, an average character can move about sixty meters through an open area. On a failure, the GM can make you come up short (forty meters or less), receive physical stress, or even trip and fall, depending on the situation.

ATTACKING

The zombie apocalypse is by no means a peaceful event. For better or worse, when confronted with moaning horrors hungry for flesh, it is human nature to react violently, either toward the horrors themselves or towards fellow human beings in the frenzy of flight.

Probably the most common task you will attempt during conflict is attacking adversaries. Whether you are throwing a brick, shooting a gun, or swinging your fists, attacks are resolved using the same base rules—though they can be modified by the GM to fit the situation.

When you make a physical attack against another character, you roll a Dexterity test. You add positive and negative dice to this test just as with any other test; these can be due to features, environmental effects, cover, or any other effects. However, instead of adding the usual single positive die for having a piece of equipment, weapons add different types and numbers of dice based on how easy they are to wield (see **Weapons**, page 28).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NON-PHYSICAL ATTACKS

The rules presented here for making an attack don't necessarily apply just to physical attacks. In certain circumstances, the GM may have you make similar rolls when you are mentally or socially "attacking" your target, such as when you are interrogating a prisoner or arguing with a rival. In these cases, follow the same rules outlined here for making an attack, but use the offensive stat from the appropriate category (Logic for mental or Charisma for social), and deal the resulting stress to the target's matching category. Obviously, physical weapons don't affect such a roll in the same way they affect physical attacks, but otherwise the test works in the same way.

If a Dexterity test to attack succeeds, your target immediately gains a number of points of physical stress equal to the total number of successes you scored on the test. This can be further modified by the weapon you are using. The stress suffered by your target follows all the normal rules for sustaining stress, such as being reduced by resistance (see **Sustaining Stress**, page 30).

To make an attack roll in the first place, you must be able to perform the attack. This means being physically capable of pulling it off, being aware of your target, and being in range with your intended method of attack. If the GM allows it, you might sometimes be able to attempt an attack even if you don't meet all of these conditions, but with extra negative dice added to your pool to represent the additional challenge. Examples include wildly swinging in a pitch-black room or firing at a noise you heard in the bushes.

EXAMPLE

The group finds itself surrounded by a gang of undead in a basement it has been looting. Milla pulls out the pistol she lifted from the sporting goods store and starts firing to cover her friends' escape. She adds three positive dice to her pool: one for the pistol, one for her Crack Shot feature, and one for being at nearly point-blank range. Then, George (the GM) adds one negative die to her pool for the darkness in the basement.

Milla rolls the dice, getting a "2," "3," "5," and "5" on her positive dice, and a "2" on her negative die. With her excellent Dexterity of 5, she is left with 3 successes and no stress after canceling the "2" results from her pool. She then adds +2 to her total successes, thanks to her pistol, dealing 5 total physical stress to the closest zombie.



OTHER EXAMPLE TASKS

The possibilities for things you might attempt to do during one of your turns are nearly endless. You should work with the GM to decide exactly how to resolve whatever task you want to attempt, choosing the most appropriate characteristic to use and adding positive and negative dice to the pool as appropriate. **Table 7: Example Tasks** offers a few recommendations on how to handle common tasks that you might want to try. However, these are just suggestions and can be changed to fit whatever scenario you find yourself in.

Any trying action performed during structured time can be resolved with a task. During the course of the zombie apocalypse, the characters are likely to face all manner of trials and hardships, especially while under the stress of imminent attack from either the walking dead or their fellow humans. For more information and guidance on adjudicating and interpreting tests during tasks, see **Running Tests** on page 44.

TABLE 7: EXAMPLE TASKS

TASK	RELEVANT CHARACTERISTIC	ADDS POSITIVE DICE	ADDS NEGATIVE DICE
CLIMBING, JUMPING, OR TUMBLING	DEXTERITY	ROPE, SOFT LANDING	SLIPPERY SURFACE, BEING UNDER ATTACK
HIDING FROM THE ENEMY	DEXTERITY OR LOGIC	DARKNESS, CONCEALING TERRAIN	BRIGHT LIGHT, IN DIRECT SIGHT OF ENEMY
SPRINTING (MOVING MORE THAN 20 METERS IN ONE TURN)	VITALITY	RUNNING DOWNHILL, RUNNING FOR YOUR LIFE	RUNNING UPHILL, SLIPPERY GROUND
PICKING LOCK	LOGIC	SIMPLE LOCK, LOCK-PICKING TOOLS	DIFFICULT LOCK, BEING UNDER ATTACK
COERCING ENEMY INTO SURRENDER	CHARISMA	YOU HAVE ADVANTAGE IN FIGHT, ENEMY HAS A REASON TO LIVE	ENEMY HAS ADVANTAGE IN FIGHT, ENEMY IS BEYOND REASON
TALKING ENEMY DOWN	EMPATHY	YOU HAVEN'T YET KILLED ANY OF THEM, YOU PUT AWAY YOUR WEAPON	ENEMY HATES YOU, ALLIES ARE ACTIVELY FIGHTING THE ENEMY



RUNNING THE GAME





CHAPTER II

"We've got everything we could ever need here. All we gotta do is bar the door, board up the windows, brick up the chimney, seal the air vents, and make sure nothing—and I mean nothing—can see us moving in here. It's basically paradise."

—A survivor who has clearly thought of everything

RUNNING THE GAME

THIS section of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** is all about being the Game Master (or GM). If you are the GM, your job is a bit different from that of the other players. It's your job to run the game; narrating the story as it unfolds, playing the roles of all Non-Player Characters

(NPCs), and deciding on the outcomes of the players' tests and actions. The basic role of the GM is outlined in the **Introduction** (see page 9), but this chapter goes into greater detail, offering guidance on how best to use the resources and adjudicate the rules provided in this book.

STORY STRUCTURE

As Game Master, your primary goal in a game of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** is to tell a story together with your players. This story might be anything from a hyper-realistic simulation of life during the apocalypse to a farcical romp through a world gone mad, but it is a story nonetheless. Your job is to convey this story in a fun and interesting way and to involve your players by giving them meaningful actions to perform and choices to make as they work their way through the narrative.

The encounters the Player Characters (PCs) undergo link together to form the overall narrative of the game. This could take place over the course of anything from a single session to a long, multi-session campaign.

ENCOUNTERS

In a roleplaying game, the action is broken up into individual segments called "encounters." An encounter is the equivalent of a scene from a book or movie—one segment of action that progresses the story or adds context in some way. Encounters can last anywhere from a couple of minutes to many hours, and they usually focus on the characters' attempts to accomplish a specific objective. It is up to you to determine when one encounter ends and another begins, which usually happens organically with little fanfare.

As a general guide, encounters tend to fall into one of four categories: social, exploration, survival, or downtime.

SOCIAL

Social encounters involve the PCs talking back and forth with other characters, who are usually NPCs that you control. As the conversation unfolds, both sides might need to make various tests using their social or mental characteristics to achieve their desired result in the conversation. Social encounters usually end with either the conversations wrapping up amicably and both groups moving on, or the conversations going wrong and transitioning into combat!

EXPLORATION

During exploration encounters, the PCs navigate their environment, scout new locations, or search for supplies. Typically in encounters like this, you describe the area around the PCs and then allow them to make decisions on how to proceed. You then narrate the results of the PCs' actions, redescribing the area as their actions affect it or revealing new, previously unexplored locations as their endeavors take them onward.

SURVIVAL

Survival encounters include any time-sensitive encounters in which the PCs are in danger. They may be engaging in combat with hostile characters, surviving environmental effects such as treacherous weather or fire, or dealing with any number of other threats. These encounters are usually played out using structured time (see **Conflict**, page 34), with the PCs taking turns to resolve the action moment by moment as it occurs.

DOWNTIME

Between the desperate struggles for survival, intense arguments, and careful exploration, there are often lulls in the action. Downtime encompasses all of these lulls, from traveling cross-country for several days to resting for a few minutes after an intense moment. These are situations that have little to no significance to the overall plot; you can cover them with simply a few quick statements summarizing the passing of time. Downtime is when the PCs can worry about things like converting their stress into traumas (see **Acquiring Traumas**, page 32) or healing their traumas over time (see **Recovering from Traumas**, page 33).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Starting the apocalypse at the gaming table leaves one loose end for you to deal with: you're there, too. You don't want to have to deal with controlling yourself as a Player Character as well as managing the story for all the other players. Besides, keeping your character around can create a conflict of interest.

So how do you deal with this issue? Well, there's a pretty easy solution...but you might not like it. Most characters in zombie movies are skeptical of the severity of the outbreak until they witness its brutality first hand. What better way to introduce the zombie outbreak to your players than with yourself? A zombie could ambush the group and take a big bite out of your jugular vein. Or you could come to the session complaining about some agitated person on the street who suddenly lunged at you and bit you while you were out last night. When you inevitably succumb to your injury, you become the first zombie your PCs have to deal with! Alternatively, you could always just have your character quickly leave to find a loved one when the news of the apocalypse hits, but where's the fun in that?

NARRATIVE

As you link together encounters over the course of the game, you form an ongoing narrative: a story of the PCs' struggle for survival. This can be one of the most difficult tasks for you as a GM, but also one of the most rewarding. It requires you to balance planning ahead against adjusting on the fly to your PCs' actions. Usually, it is best to help the PCs set several concrete goals for their survival that feel appropriate to the scenario they are facing. You can then plan around these goals, using the locations provided in this book and others of your own creation to set the scene for the various encounters.

THE BEGINNING

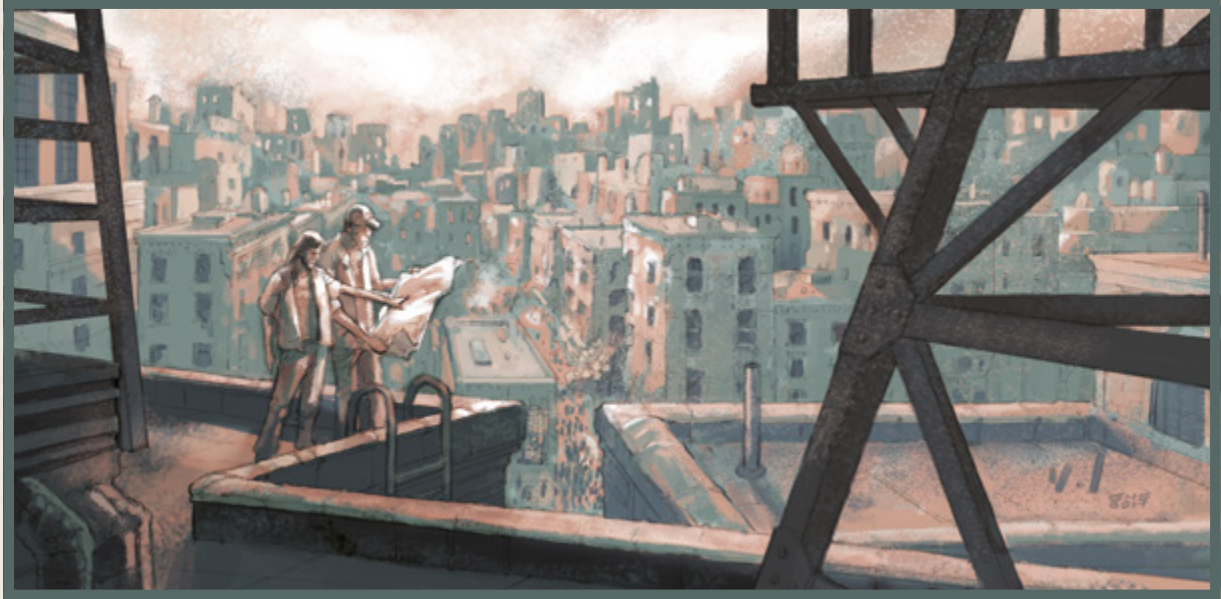
How you start a game of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** sets the tone for your entire campaign. Will you open with the world being thrown into complete chaos, or will you have the zombie outbreak slowly consume the world over the course of days? However you decide to unfold the given scenario, you still need to start the game in a way that brings the PCs together for the ensuing action. For this, it is recommended that you have your story begin at the very gaming table you and your players are all sitting at. You can open the story with the game you are currently playing being interrupted (inside the story) by the first news of the coming apocalypse.

Starting the game in this way allows you not only to begin with the PCs together in one location, but also to more easily determine the PCs' initial states. What stuff do they have on or with them right now? That's their equipment. Are any of them currently experiencing the effects of a trauma? If the trauma isn't private and the player is comfortable including it, make sure it gets recorded on the character sheet!

SETTING GOALS

As the world begins to end, everything is thrown into complete chaos. To keep their heads straight, and to help drive the story forward, it's good if your PCs have some concrete goals they want to accomplish. While goals can vary wildly from group to group, scenario to scenario, and location

WHAT ABOUT ME?



to location, there are several overarching needs that most groups must work to fulfill in games of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**:

- ✱ **Acquire Weapons:** Once the first zombies appear, weapons beyond a frying pan become a necessity. The first outing to a sporting goods store or a relatives' house to find guns can be the most dangerous, since most of the PCs won't be armed yet.
- ✱ **Gather Food and Medicine:** Everyone has to eat. Scavenging food, water, and medicine is usually the primary motivation at the beginning of a game. Finding renewable sources of these things is a good goal later on. You can create new driving forces for the PCs by depleting one of these resources or having a PC fall ill mid-game.
- ✱ **Establish a Safe House:** With the world gone to hell and the dead roaming the streets, finding someplace safe to stay, even if only temporary, is a necessity. Properly outfitting a location for more long-term use is a good objective for an ongoing game.
- ✱ **Find Long-Term Safety:** Ultimately, the PCs will want to find a permanent solution for their survival—a goal beyond that of escaping death each day. Depending on the scenario, a solution might be to start a community amid the rubble of civilization, or to find a military base that is still functional. Goals like these are good for campaigns in which the PCs have survived the initial pandemonium of the undead apocalypse and must now look to the future.

When your group is first thrown into the events of the apocalypse, many group members will likely gravitate toward these objectives, and those who don't can be pushed in that direction with some subtle use of NPCs or story events. That being said, there is no "right" or "wrong" way to play **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**; you and your players can set whatever goals you want. The goals presented here are simply the ones most prevalent in most apocalyptic stories.

USING LOCATIONS

Each scenario in this book delineates a series of locations to help you in setting up encounters for that scenario. Each location is presented as an example of a type of area your PCs might find themselves in while playing the game. These location descriptions are left generic enough that they can be adapted to your area of the world. For example, in the **Pandemic** scenario, one of the locations is a highway; this can easily be adapted to represent whatever local highway your PCs find themselves on in your game.

Each location presented here includes a description of what that place is like as well as a list of ideas for events and encounters your PCs might have while there. Each of these ideas is just a jumping-off point that may lead to an entire small adventure in itself. Let your PCs react to whatever comes their way and make decisions on their own. They will often get themselves into plenty of trouble without a lot of encouragement from you.

TRACKING TOOLS

Since the need for resources such as weapons, food, water, and medicine is a primary driving force behind the PCs' goals, it is important that you track and use these resources to motivate them. You can track them using whatever method works best for you, from tokens or spare dice to scratch paper. Additionally, you can have individual players track their characters' personal resources (such as batteries or bullets) themselves. For more information on keeping a handle on such items, see **Tracking Small Details**, page 28.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

RUNNING TESTS

LUCKILY, coming up with the outcomes of choices and actions the PCs make throughout the game isn't all up to you. The game mechanics determine whether characters succeed or fail at what they are attempting through the use of tests (see **The Test**, page 18); all you need to do is decide what each of those successes and failures entail. Quick and simple, tests give you an easy way to represent characters' attempts at various tasks and to determine their outcomes.

The key to using tests effectively in your story is timing. Overwhelming your PCs with too many tests bogs down the game and makes individual outcomes less meaningful, while never requiring tests makes the PCs feel powerless and detached from the game. The key is to have characters make tests whenever the success or failure of an action they are attempting will contribute something meaningful or interesting to the story.

What test to choose for a given task requires some creative interpretation. Think about what the character is trying to accomplish and which of the six characteristics (see **Step 1: Determine Characteristics**, page 21) would help the most with that task. If you are having trouble deciding, consider these two questions: Is the task physical, mental, or social? Is the action aggressive or defensive? If you are stuck between two different options, ask the players. They are sure to have a preference!

WHEN TO ADD POSITIVE DICE

Positive dice are added to a test's dice pool to represent any circumstances that could be helpful to the character making the test (see **Step 2: Assemble the Dice Pool**, page 18). When a PC performs a test, you will rarely have to suggest reasons to add positive dice—players will look for every edge they can get to succeed! Often, you will have to make a judgment call as to whether or not a proposed factor should contribute a die or not.

Use positive dice to reward planning ahead and creative thinking. If a player devises a really clever plan or does a great job acting in character, reward that player with an extra positive die to encourage good roleplaying in the future.

One common source of positive dice is assistance. Are the PCs having trouble finishing off a zombie? Instead of them all attacking the zombie separately, recommend they team up for a single attack, each assisting PC adding an additional positive die. Are zombies not threatening your armored PCs anymore? Roll a single attack for a group of zombies, adding an additional positive die for each zombie in the horde. Feel free to impose common sense limits on assistance, however. Only characters who could realistically assist should add positive dice to a check.

WHEN TO ADD NEGATIVE DICE

Negative dice are added to a test's dice pool to represent any circumstances making the task more difficult or dangerous for the character to perform (see **Step 2: Assemble the Dice Pool**, page 18). Players are less likely to jump at the chance to offer reasons for adding negative dice to their pools; you will often have to add all the negative dice to a pool yourself. The primary reasons for adding negative dice to a pool are the character's related negative features and traumas, as well as the innate difficulty of the task.

When players perform a test, they are unlikely to suggest adding negative dice to their pool due to their features or traumas. As such, it's good practice to ask them what their negative features and traumas in the test's category are as you are assembling the pool. This way, you can ensure you aren't forgetting anything, and you can prompt the players to handle tracking their own characters' particular traumas and features on their own.

Once you have added all the negative dice appropriate to the character's features and traumas, you should add any dice indicated by the difficulty of the task. Difficulty can be affected by environmental conditions or hazards, or it may simply reflect a task's inherent challenge. In general, this should be somewhere between one and three dice, depending on the nature of the task. See **Table 8: Difficulties** for suggestions on setting task difficulties.

DIFFICULTY WITHOUT STRESS

On occasion, a PC may attempt a task that is incredibly difficult, but wouldn't cause a dangerous amount of stress to perform. In these cases, instead of adding a large amount of negative dice to the pool, you can require the PC to generate a certain number of successes on their roll to succeed (see **Step 3: Roll and Resolve** on page 19).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PACING NEGATIVE DICE

Since negative dice commonly result in a character suffering stress, they are a great way to manage tension over the course of a game. Keep an eye on your PCs' stress tracks and use them to guide you in adding negative dice to their pools. If you want to increase the tension, start adding more negative dice to tests until the PCs have a decent amount of stress. If, on the other

TABLE 8: DIFFICULTIES

ADDED NEGATIVE DICE	DIFFICULTY	EXAMPLES
0	SIMPLE: NO CHANCE OF CAUSING STRESS OR INJURY TO THE CHARACTER	RUNNING THROUGH AN OPEN FIELD, PLAYING A FRIENDLY GAME OF CARDS, BARGAINING WITH A MERCHANT
1	EASY: DAY-TO-DAY STRESSFUL TASKS	LIFTING A HEAVY OBSTACLE, PICKING A LOCKED DOOR, LYING TO SOMEONE YOU KNOW
2	HARD: REQUIRES THE CHARACTER TO PUSH BEYOND NORMAL CAPABILITIES	HOLDING A DOOR CLOSED AGAINST A HORDE OF ZOMBIES, HACKING INTO A COMPUTER, COERCING A PRISONER
3	DAUNTING: VERY STRESSFUL, WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF CAUSING ONGOING INJURY OR STRAIN	JUMPING OFF THE ROOF OF A BUILDING, DEFUSING A LIVE BOMB, NEGOTIATING WITH HOSTILE SURVIVORS HOLDING YOUR FRIENDS HOSTAGE
4+	INCREDIBLY DANGEROUS: ALMOST CERTAIN TO CAUSE SOME FORM OF ONGOING DAMAGE TO THE CHARACTER	CLIMBING THROUGH A BURNING BUILDING, WITNESSING YOUR ONLY FRIEND GET EATEN ALIVE, LEADING A SMALL FORCE AGAINST AN OVERWHELMING HORDE OF UNDEAD

hand, you want to give your PCs a break, dial back on the number of negative dice so they don't max out their stress tracks.

Keep in mind that as a stress track fills up, the character increases resistance to further stress (see **Resistance**, page 31). This means that once a character has 6+ stress in a category, it takes being dealt 3 stress to add even one more point to the character's stress track. If you want a character with a resistance this high to feel pressured by a scenario's tests, you need to add at least three negative dice to the pool.

DETERMINING RESULTS

The full rules for resolving the mechanical results of a test are presented on page 19, but interpreting the outcome can go far beyond simply tallying up successes and stress. The results of a dice pool are a great storytelling opportunity, giving you lots of resources to help you craft a creative outcome. Each die is added to the pool for a reason; similarly, the result of each die can have a purpose in the story as the pool is resolved.

For example, say a player adds a positive die to the pool for a Dexterity test thanks to her Gymnastic Training feature, but then adds a negative die due to a Twisted Ankle trauma she is suffering from. Then, when the task is resolved, you remove a matching negative and positive die. Remembering that dice were added for both those reasons, you can narrate the action, explaining as the dice are removed that the character manages to use her gymnastic training to stay off her bad ankle, avoiding the stress it would have caused.

While it's realistically very difficult to track or remember which die was added for what reason, you can still use the results to tell an interesting story based on the factors that fed into the pool in the first place. It doesn't matter that the dice canceled in the above example probably weren't the specific ones added for those particular reasons, just that *some* dice were added to the pool for those reasons. By narrating the action in this way, you make the different factors that added dice feel more meaningful, and you paint a more intricate and narrative picture of the action.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The horrible things that survivors of the apocalypse have to do and witness to survive often push at their sanity. Depending on the type of game you want to run, the mental stability of your PCs could be an integral part of the game experience. When having PCs make tests to withstand the horrors they see around them, use the Willpower characteristic. These tests should often have quite a few negative dice added to represent the mental strain of dealing with these issues, and even if a PC remains composed, the experience can still cause some serious mental damage.

Since PCs suffer longer-term stress or trauma due to the experience either way, their success or failure on the test determines only their immediate reaction to the events they've witnessed. With a success, PCs manage to withhold their reactions and keep calm for the moment despite the mental strain. With a failure, however, a PC might immediately run screaming, collapse into a quivering ball, or vomit in fear. In instances of mortal terror such as this, it is ok to narrate some involuntary actions the PC is taking, as temporary loss of control can be one of the results.

TESTING INSANITY

MANAGING NPCs

WHEN you act as the Game Master, one of the greatest tools at your disposal is the cast of Non-Player Characters (NPCs) you can create and control. NPCs are any characters in the story that aren't controlled by one of the players. They could be other friendly survivors, hostile gang members, or even the mindless hordes of zombies. You decide their actions, act out everything they say and do, and track their characteristics and other stats.

NPC PROFILES

NPCs follow all the same rules as Player Characters, for the most part. They have characteristics, features, and equipment, and they can suffer stress. However, the majority of NPCs in **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** don't need to be tracked at the same level of detail as a PC. Most of them only matter for an encounter or two and then are never seen again. Because of this, most NPCs don't need a full character sheet like a PC; instead, they are represented via a profile indicating all of their relevant characteristics, features, equipment, and so on. Each scenario provides profiles for NPCs relevant to that setting. When you use these NPCs, you can reference their profiles in the book for their relevant stats and record any stress they suffer on a piece of scratch paper.

NPC SPECIAL ABILITIES

The NPC profiles provided in the scenarios in this book differ in one major way from Player Character profiles: many list special abilities that change the way the game rules work for the corresponding NPCs. These special abilities are unavailable to PCs and set those NPCs apart, often demonstrating their unique, supernatural nature. Some NPCs are able to ignore certain types of stress, while others cause characters they hit in combat to automatically suffer custom traumas that afflict the characters in unique ways.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Over the course of most games of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**, you will likely create or develop several NPCs that are more important than the other supporting characters the PCs interact with. For these individuals, you may decide that you want to track their stats with more detail than that for an average NPC. You can treat these key characters like PCs, making full character sheets for each (instead of using a single profile for multiple NPCs of the same type) and tracking everything about them individually. This can really help them stand apart over the course of the game, reinforcing their importance to the story.

Each special ability outlines exactly what the NPC can do differently and how it affects the rules. If a special ability contradicts something stated in the rules for the game, the ability's text takes precedent for that character.

NPCS AND TRAUMAS

To simplify the amount of tracking you have to do during the game, it is recommended that you don't keep track of traumas for less important NPCs. There is no reason to know whether or not the zombie a PC just took down has a broken leg or not. Once it is out of the way, it is no longer important to the story. When these minor NPCs fill up one of their stress tracks, don't allow them to "cling to life" (see **Death**, page 31). Instead, just have them die.



THE CAMPAIGN

WHEN your group sits down to play **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**, it's good to have a plan as to how long you want to have the story continue. Is this going to be a quick diversion or an ongoing commitment? You can tell a short story in a single session of play, or you can unfold a whole narrative across a campaign of many sessions in which your characters grow and evolve. Whichever you decide, it is good to go in with a rough idea of how long you want your campaign to last, so that you (and your players) can plan accordingly.

CAMPAIGN LENGTH

The flexibility of **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** allows you to play any type of campaign you want. It is perfect for impromptu, single-session games on a rainy day or at a convention, but it also supports groups that want to stick with their characters over the course of a long, epic narrative.

In general, the lengths of campaigns you can run with **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** are broken into three categories:

- ❖ **Single-Session:** Also known as "one-shots," these are stories that last for a single session. These usually deal only with surviving the initial disaster and immediate aftermath. Single-session games can often end with many of the PCs dying in dramatic fashion.
- ❖ **Multi-Session:** Usually taking between two and four sessions, multi-session campaigns let you tell a complete story arc with a definitive end. One great way to run multi-session campaigns is to run one or two of the sessions using one of the **Apocalypse** sections of **Chapter III: Scenarios** and then run the other one or two sessions with a **Post-Apocalypse** section. You can have a substantial amount of game-world time pass between the two sections of the campaign, allowing you and your group to explore how your characters change over that time as they struggle to endure in the post-apocalyptic world.
- ❖ **Ongoing Survival:** Ongoing survival campaigns last five or more sessions, and they often don't have a predetermined endpoint. In these campaigns, your PCs are challenged with surviving long-term in the end times, starting with the initial zombie outbreak and going from there. These campaigns usually transition naturally from the **Apocalypse** sections into the **Post-Apocalypse** sections of **Chapter III: Scenarios**, with the PCs facing ongoing challenges to endure the end times.

Whatever the length of your campaign is, make sure to let your players know ahead of time. Players who think they are playing in a one-shot will make very different decisions than players who want to keep their characters alive for an ongoing campaign.

ADVANCING CHARACTERS

Over the course of a campaign, the PCs grow and change. They gain new skills and abilities, but they also suffer setbacks and losses. To reflect this evolution of their characters, each session of an ongoing campaign should end with a discussion of how the group thinks each character has changed over the course of that day's play.

For each Player Character, the group discusses and decides on two features that best represent the PC's performance that session, one positive and one negative. These can link back to specific anecdotes from the session, but they should be expressed as general features, like the ones chosen during character creation (see **Step 2: Choose Features**, page 22). For example, the group might suggest that the character showed good leadership that session and decide on the Great Leader positive feature, or it might note that the character collapsed during a tense situation and decide on the Buckles Under Pressure negative feature. These don't need to be features the PC already has, but they can be. If the group can't decide between two different options, a vote can be held either secretly (using dice, as in **Step 1: Determine Characteristics**, on page 21) or publicly with a show of hands. You, as the GM, decide any ties.

Once the group has decided on one or two features that best represent that PC's performance, the player in question changes the PC's character sheet accordingly:

- ❖ **If the PC doesn't have the feature:** The player adds the feature to the PC's character sheet, marking it negative or positive, as appropriate.
- ❖ **If the PC already has the feature:** The player chooses one of the characteristics in the corresponding category, adding 1 to the characteristic if the feature is positive, or subtracting 1 if the feature is negative. This change cannot lower a characteristic below 1 or increase a characteristic above 5. If adding or subtracting would do so, then the characteristic remains the same.



SCENARIOS





CHAPTER III

"I mean, are we talking brain-eaters? Demon possession? Rage zombies? How does it transmit? Through bites? Scratches? Blood? Bacteria? Radiation? Rock music!? I need to know what I'm dealing with!"

—A survivor who's seen far too many movies

SCENARIOS

OVER the years, there have been countless zombie disaster scenarios played out in film, television, literature, and graphic novels. The zombie apocalypse has become one of the most well-known subgenres of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Of course, with the sheer amount of airtime and page count devoted to it, the global cataclysm that accompanies the rising of the dead has taken many, many different forms.

Five such scenarios are detailed in the pages that follow. Each scenario covers the events of the apocalypse and the days, weeks, months, and years to come, including the specifics of each scenario's particular breed

of zombie. A timeline provides details of the broader events of each scenario, and lists of locations and NPCs give the GM the tools to lay the groundwork for the players.

The last section of each scenario is dedicated to the state of the world in the post-apocalypse, after the human race has either lost its place as the dominant force on the planet or clawed its way back against the tides of the undead to a position of relative safety. Post-apocalypse locations and NPCs offer a framework upon which GMs can build stories that take place in the aftermath of the end of the world.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

IT WORKED IN THE MOVIE!

There are a number of tried-and-true approaches horror movies use to build tension and suspense: fake scares, ominous noises, and—of course—the musical score. Although some of these translate well to roleplaying games, others do not. For instance, although many GMs play appropriate background music during their games, it's unlikely that you can time a sudden crescendo with a surprising event in-game (except as a happy coincidence). Another problem is that many of the classic tricks rely on the characters' ignorance of the threat facing them. So, while a character in a movie who sees a recently deceased ghoul might mistake it for a sick person, a player is likely to catch on as soon as the GM mentions a blank expression, pale skin, or other such features. Even if darkness or some other cause obscures the walking corpse, players are likely to figure it out from the slightest clue, or feel cheated if the GM doesn't at least mention the person's shambling gait.

Of course, it's often necessary in RPGs to separate player knowledge from character knowledge. And doing this can result in the "right" behavior from PCs, even if the players know better. However, this doesn't always work, especially for **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE**. After all, the players are portraying fictionalized versions of themselves, and it's more than likely that players are well familiar with the concept of zombies. As such, they probably should reach the conclusion that zombies are what they're facing much faster than a character in a movie would. Of course, this shouldn't make things any less terrifying. Likewise, there are a lot of takes on the living dead out there; it should take the players some time to figure out what particular variety of zombie they currently face and what its characteristics are.



NIGHT OF THE METEOR

NIGHT OF THE METEOR

APOCALYPSE



It all began with a strange meteor shower. They said it would be the astronomical event of the year. Amateur stargazers gathered to watch it, while pretty much everyone else ignored it. Maybe if they had known what would come with it, they would have paid more attention. Not that they could have known—no one could. But sure enough, almost immediately, weird things started happening. We thought the first cases represented a freak rabies outbreak, but that theory went out the window with the first confirmations of human attackers. Of course, the cure for these crazies and mad dogs is the same—a bullet in the brain.

I'll never forget the first ghoul I saw. I was out driving at night and a deer stepped out in front of me. I stopped the car to see the damage and make sure it really was just a deer. Then I saw it in the headlights. It was a deer, alright—but it was rotten, putrid. It looked like it had been decaying for days. And then, it slowly got up to its feet—and came right at me!

THE **Night of the Meteor** begins as a pretty normal night for the Player Characters, but things quickly spiral out of control. Whether the PCs are intentionally staying up to watch the meteor shower or are completely unaware of it, it changes everything forever. The celestial event brings with it an unknown type of cosmic radiation, which in itself would be a big enough deal for scientists without the “side effects.” Within hours, the effects of the radiation become apparent, although no one puts two and two together at first. Well, some do, but it sounds so crazy. Sure enough, the dead begin to rise, pulling themselves free from freshly dug cemetery plots, morgue coolers, and shoe boxes buried in backyards. And the radiation doesn't just affect human corpses. Why should it?

Under the otherworldly influence of the meteoric radiation, the dead of all species rise, hungering for the flesh of the living. As the radiation's effects slowly spread over the globe, the legions of the undead bring the world to its knees. This isn't just the recently deceased, after all, but everything from roadkill, to long-dead corpses with just some stringy dried meat on their bones, to mummies in museum displays. And it isn't only those killed by the ghouls who rise again, but anyone who dies for any reason.

The PCs must struggle to survive in the face of hordes of ghouls ranging from their former neighbors to once-beloved pets. All of them are now the living dead—soulless and mindless animated corpses, raised in spite of the laws of nature by an energy from beyond Earth. Their rotting forms feel no pain, and there are only two ways to permanently stop them: destroy the brain or sever the head.

It's going to be a long night.

THE EXPERIENCE

The events of **Night of the Meteor** begin with the arrival of the meteor shower. Depending on the interests and proclivities of the PCs, however, GMs might prefer to start the game slightly before that, perhaps as the PCs prepare to watch the shower. Even if that's not an activity they are likely to spend their evening on, the PCs are almost certain to have heard that a meteor shower will be easily visible in the early hours of the night.

The PCs' town or city is the epicenter of events. Although the radiation spreads to blanket the globe, the meteors initially fall over their area. To really bring things home for the PCs, the GM might even have a meteorite land close to them, hurtling into the yard outside one of their homes or crashing nearby as they walk down the street.

Whether they witness the shower or not, it shouldn't be too long before the PCs encounter their first ghoul. This is because the radiation reanimates animal corpses as well as human ones. Unless the PCs are close to a hospital, funeral home, or graveyard, they are unlikely to see a walking human corpse right away. However, dead animals are bound to be somewhere close (as much as people might not want to think about it). If even a small wooded area is nearby, it's certain to contain some recently (or not so recently) deceased critters. Even in suburban areas, there's bound to be roadkill by a street or some small animal under a house. In urban areas, rats and other pests exist in much larger numbers than most people dare contemplate. The point is that whether it's a squirrel or a horse, the PCs' first encounter with the living dead probably involves the animal kingdom.

WHAT THE PLAYER CHARACTERS SEE

After the meteor shower, events start off slow but steadily escalate. The GM can use this time to build tension. If the PCs talk with others, turn on the news, or check the Internet, they might hear stories of strange things happening, such as attacks by wild or even domestic animals. In addition, they might personally experience strange sounds and glimpses of movement as undead vermin scratch at the walls or perch in the trees. They could also encounter evidence of recent violence—bloodstains, broken windows, and such—or even notice that a dead animal they saw on the roadside just a few hours ago is gone without a trace.

Eventually, the PCs have to encounter a ghoul, probably an animal. A ghoul is a disturbing sight, the degree of horror and disgust it causes tied directly to the length of time since the thing died and its cause of death. Those that died recently and of natural causes are clearly not well, but a viewer might not initially even realize they are dead. One might mistake the pale, cold skin; blank, glassy eyes; and vacant expression for illness. After all, the truth here is not the kind of thing that immediately pops into the minds of rational people, unless they've already been exposed to it.

In other cases, the ghouls' nature is quite clear. Those that have been dead for some time show all the signs of decay, while those that died violently still bear their wounds. GMs can use this opportunity to really disgust their players. To this end, GMs should feel free to get creative in describing the ghouls' appearance, from missing limbs to rotting flesh, empty eye sockets, and anything else that fits the scene (as long as the players are comfortable with it, of course!) Some ghouls might also bear defensive wounds from their victims, ranging from gunshot wounds to knives buried in their torsos.

It takes some time for the radiation to seep into the ground, and buried corpses, particularly those in advanced stages of decay, must work harder to dig themselves free. Consequently, initial encounters with human corpses are primarily with the recently deceased, although animals may be in any stage of decomposition. As events progress, the PCs should encounter more ghouls showing advanced decay and covered with the soil they were buried in. These ghouls are actually less dangerous in some ways, because their decayed muscles are less effective and their rotten flesh and brittle bones are more easily torn and broken. However, their appearance—and smell—are even more horrifying and grotesque. The smell alone can overcome even the most disciplined individual.

HOW IS EVERYONE ELSE HANDLING THIS?

As one might expect, people do not deal calmly with the revelation that the dead are rising and feasting on the flesh of the living. Some react with disbelief, either suggesting alternate explanations or outright refusing to acknowledge the situation, sometimes until it's too late. Most have no choice but to accept the truth, if not due to media coverage, then at least once they witness the undead themselves. After all, before long the ghouls are everywhere, as is the evidence of their passing.

With the high exposure of the “zombie apocalypse” concept in popular culture, many people escalate from fear to complete panic quite quickly. Particularly as news filters in that the effects are not isolated to the PCs’ area, many proclaim that the end of the world has arrived. Some abandon hope, giving up all too quickly on their own survival. Perhaps bizarrely, others find the idea liberating, deciding to make the most of their limited time left on Earth with nonstop partying and raucous living.

A large percentage of the population—perhaps even most of it—refuses to accept the end of the world so quickly. This is not to say that their fear doesn’t provoke some foolish or dangerous behavior. Many individuals board up their homes or some other secure location, looking only to their own survival and that of their immediate family. Others reach out to their communities for mutual assistance and support.

Inevitably, many people become quite helpless in the grips of their sheer terror of the undead. Their reactions may include panicked, irrational behavior that draws the attention of the ghouls, opens up a previously secure location, or otherwise risks the safety of others. If the PCs are cooperating with any NPCs, such an incident might be a serious challenge to overcome. Some individuals simply give in to despair and refuse to contribute to survival efforts, while others become completely catatonic. Caring for such individuals, or making the choice to abandon them, can provide another challenge for PCs.

WHAT CAN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DO?

Aside from concentrating on their own survival, PCs are likely to try to ensure the safety of friends and family. They will probably work toward getting out of town or finding a secure location and further fortifying it. They might also want to figure out what’s going on. Of course, many PCs are likely to put the facts together pretty quickly and realize that the meteor shower that occurred just before the ghouls appeared is no coincidence; however, that doesn’t answer the question of how they are connected. Although the PCs may come up with all sorts of theories, they probably have to wait until the experts reach a conclusion if they want solid information.

Particularly proactive players might want to locate and isolate or destroy the meteorite fragments. Although a reasonable response, it is ultimately futile. Even if the PCs have a way to somehow contain the radiation, they can only find a few of the fragments, as the meteors dispersed countless shards far and wide when they crashed.

THE TRUTH

It takes years before scientists even come close to discerning the nature of the radiation. Its origin remains a mystery, but it is the cause of the events that threaten to destroy mankind. The highly radioactive meteoroid originated somewhere beyond the solar system and broke apart as it entered Earth’s atmosphere, scattering radioactive particles widely. Although the authorities quickly move to isolate and contain meteorites from the event, this does little or nothing to halt the effects. When the meteoroid entered Earth’s upper atmosphere, it dispersed the radiation widely. Within weeks, there is nowhere on the globe untouched by the unearthly fallout.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Through a process that might never be fully understood, the radiation reactivates dead brain tissue, causing neurons and synapses to fire once again. Bereft of memory or higher function, the animated corpses are driven only by a base instinct to feed. For reasons that are unclear, this hunger is solely for living flesh.

The radiation is extremely potent, but it appears to have no harmful effects on living tissue. It does, however, irradiate living beings, without any apparent effects until the creature dies from some other cause, at which point it reanimates within minutes. In fact, anyone with a Geiger counter or other appropriate instrument can detect that nearly everyone is practically glowing.

With the initial dispersal of the radiation, existing corpses come back to a semblance of life. The radiation affects corpses in any condition or state of decay, as long as the brain and spine are mostly intact. This means that ghouls are seen missing limbs, severed at the waist, or missing all their major organs. So long as some muscles remain to propel them, they are a threat. Likewise, ghouls can be shot, dismembered, disemboweled, and more, and continue to come after the living, as long as they have most of their brain left and their head on their shoulders.

Ghouls come in all forms, but the state of a ghoul’s body does have some effects. Fresh, intact corpses tend to be stronger, more resilient, and slightly quicker, at least relative to their more decayed counterparts. Even a recently dead ghoul with no major wounds moves slower than a living person, with jerky, uncoordinated movements due to its damaged brain and atrophied muscles. These effects apply to animals as well, but relative to a living example of the species—a ghoul dog is still faster than a human.

IS IT CONTAGIOUS?

No, what makes the dead rise is not a disease or anything of the sort. Everyone is already affected by the radiation; it just doesn't have any visible effect until a person dies. Being bitten by a ghoul doesn't turn someone into a ghoul; that only happens if the victim dies. Of course, bites and other injuries inflicted by ghouls are very, very likely to become infected, which might well prove fatal. Human and animal mouths are usually full of bacteria, and it only gets worse when they're dead. This is mundane bacteria, though; it doesn't turn people into ghouls, and even an untreated infection could still take some time to kill someone.



As long as a ghoul-inflicted injury isn't fatal and receives proper treatment (although that's kind of unlikely, given the circumstances), the victim is not in danger of becoming a ghoul. However, especially in the early days and weeks of the event, the cause and nature of the ghouls is often misunderstood. Some people take their misconceptions of zombies from popular culture, while even some so-called experts attribute the ghouls to disease. So, for a number of reasons, various people incorrectly believe that ghouls have an infection that they transmit through bites. Sadly, this leads to many cases of people killing victims "for their own good"—victims who might otherwise have lived.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

The ghouls lack intelligence; even basic problem-solving is beyond them. Combined with their lack of fine motor skills, this means that even a latched door or gate can significantly slow down a single ghoul. Eventually, though, enough ghouls will accumulate to break down almost any obstacle.

Ghouls hunger for living flesh. They ignore other ghouls, and would probably ignore corpses that aren't fresh if there were any, but, of course, corpses arise as ghouls before they even cool. Ghouls don't distinguish between types of flesh; they eat animals as well as humans. There's no discrimination here: animal ghouls attack living animals and living humans, while human ghouls attack both humans and animals—whatever is available will serve. They only show interest in raw, fresh flesh, however. Prepared meats of any kind have no appeal, even raw cuts in a butcher shop.

Even ghouls with intact sensory organs show a reduced awareness of their surroundings, probably due to the lack of mental acuity. Loud noises attract them, as does physical movement, but for the most part the ghouls only focus on stimuli in their immediate vicinity. This extends to food, with ghouls targeting the closest available victim. In fact, when a ghoul catches a victim, human or animal, other ghouls in the vicinity cease their pursuit of other prey in order to join in the feeding frenzy, feasting until there is nothing left.

HOW TO KILL THEM

The cosmic radiation jump-starts ghouls' brains and allows them to somehow motivate the rest of the body in spite of the condition of their other organs and tissues. The only way to kill a ghoul, as survivors quickly discover, is to destroy its brain or sever it from the body. Anything else can, at best, only slow down or hamper a ghoul. As long as the brain stem and spine are somewhat intact, what's left of the ghoul will continue in its mission to feed on flesh. However, limbs severed from the body die. Without the impulses from the undead brain, they revert to being just dead flesh. In some

circumstances, residual signals or nerve activity continue to motivate a severed limb or digit for a short time, but without purpose or direction—although it could still pose a risk to an unaware victim.

Ghouls with wounds, whether acquired antemortem or postmortem, do show effects of the injury, depending on its nature. Ghouls without eyes are at a distinct disadvantage, though their sense of smell is usually sufficient to find prey. Similarly, ghouls missing limbs compensate to the best of their ability, dragging themselves by their hands if missing legs, or relying more heavily on their teeth to attack if missing one or both arms. However, ghouls don't need any of their internal organs (aside from the brain and spinal cord), and attacking a ghoul's torso is the least effective approach. Removing a ghoul's stomach does nothing to reduce its ravenous hunger for flesh.

All this means that ghouls are very resilient, not because they are harder to injure than a living human—in fact, the more decayed ghouls are easier to damage—but because they don't feel pain or any ill effects from injuries, except where they lose a limb or sensory organ. However, the ghouls also have a number of weaknesses that PCs can exploit. They are slow-moving, unthinking, and uncoordinated. Climbing a ladder is beyond a ghoul, and some even have trouble with stairs. PCs can take advantage of their own speed and agility when evading ghouls, or even when fighting individual ghouls or small, dispersed groups of them. However, large hordes of ghouls can quickly overwhelm the PCs. Positions of high ground or sturdy construction can offer a good defense, but once ghouls locate potential food, they tend to stick around, which attracts additional ghouls. Even if a group of ghouls can't penetrate the PCs' defenses despite its large numbers, a group of such size leaves the PCs with few options for escaping or breaking out to gather supplies.

THE INITIAL RESPONSE

The authorities' initial response to the effects of the radiation is, understandably, somewhat confused. After all, who could believe reports of corpses getting up and walking around, let alone attacking the living? Dispatch is overwhelmed by the calls, and some emergency personnel initially theorize that a major gas line leak is the cause of mass delusions (although no one can explain why everyone is having the same hallucination).

The fact that most initial incidents involve animal ghouls only exacerbates the problem. Most people have trouble identifying what species an animal is when encountering it unexpectedly at night, let alone its state of health. And whereas there is something recognizably

wrong with the pallor of a human ghoul, a witness is likely to miss such signs completely in an animal ghoul, or to simply attribute them to sickness. Further, when an animal attacks a person or another animal, it is much easier to write off the problem as being due to rabies or a feral response than it is to explain away a human ghoul attack. Animal control, police, and medical personnel attribute initial attacks to this type of cause, explaining that the animal ghouls' strange, violent behavior has been prompted by mange or simple injuries. As calls continue to pour in, animal control personnel suspect some sort of chemical cause or a rabies outbreak of unprecedented size.

Should the PCs go to the authorities in the hours immediately following the meteor shower, it's unlikely anyone will believe them. If they are insistent or panicked enough, they might even find themselves either arrested on suspicion of being under the influence of drugs or involuntarily subjected to medical or psychiatric evaluation. However, even if this happens, in a few more hours the police or medical staff will either let them go in light of the undeniable veracity of their claims or simply forget about them as they deal with bigger problems.

As events escalate, the ever-increasing number of ghouls swiftly overwhelms the authorities. What begins as several individual incidents quickly snowballs into an overwhelming tide, as older corpses pull themselves from graves, both marked and unmarked, and the ghouls' victims, both human and animal, swell their numbers exponentially.

A SLIGHT PEST PROBLEM

In both cities and rural areas, what usually exists as a largely unseen nuisance erupts as an all-consuming threat. Anywhere human beings live, there are rats. Lots of them. And that means lots of dead rats. It's not a pleasant thought, but it's even worse when those dead rats come back to life, hungry for human flesh. Although many vermin and animals, from pet dogs to pigeons, pose a significant threat as ghouls, in many areas rats present the most numerous ghouls.

Although not particularly threatening individually, ghoul rats and other small animals tend to attack in packs, even swarms. In addition, their small size and propensity for chewing holes in building materials allows them to access places that survivors might think are safe from attack because human and larger animal ghouls cannot get to them.

TIMELINE

After the meteor shower, events start off slowly but soon become overwhelming as more and more ghouls emerge from cemeteries and forgotten graves, and their victims join the ranks of the undead. Until a solution can be found, simply surviving is a nightmare.

00:00:00	A much-anticipated and highly visible meteor shower occurs shortly after sunset, to the excitement of amateur stargazers and surprised witnesses.
02:18:00	The first corpses begin to reanimate. The radiation's effects are first seen in small animals, as it takes additional time to irradiate the brain cells of larger animals.
02:33:00	911 dispatch and animal control receive calls of strange and unprovoked animal attacks, including inside homes.
03:49:00	Corpses begin to reanimate in neighboring cities and states.
04:12:00	The first human victim of a ghoul dies.
04:18:00	The first human victim reanimates.
05:06:00	Witnesses report suspicious activity at local cemeteries.
07:22:00	Hospital morgue employees are surprised to find their patients up and about.
08:41:00	Authorities receive a number of calls reporting random attacks and home invasions by apparent cannibals.
09:52:00	Paramedics responding to emergency calls are attacked by apparently deceased victims.
10:04:00	Hospital staff and emergency personnel attempt to evacuate the surviving patients.
11:38:00	Exterminators are overwhelmed by calls for rat and other pest eradication.
12:17:00	Several exterminators are eaten alive by undead rats.
14:47:00	The police department dispatches all available officers, calling in those off duty, to deal with the huge number of violent incidents.
18:12:00	Medical officials record the first officially confirmed case of a reanimated human corpse.
22:09:00	The governor advises all citizens to remain in their homes or proceed to the nearest emergency shelter.
23:56:00	The state government declares a state of emergency.
DAY 2	Many businesses close or fail to open. Those that remain open are typically understaffed.
DAY 2	Although effects are delayed in some areas, by this time ghouls are present in all of North America.
DAY 2	Looting begins, primarily targeting grocery stores, tool stores, and other businesses with useful supplies.
DAY 2	A medical expert on the local news states that the only way to kill a ghoul is to destroy its brain or remove its head.
DAY 2	The first living person is shot and killed after being mistaken for a ghoul.
DAY 3	Hordes of ghouls fill the streets, while the cemeteries are mostly empty.
DAY 3	The federal government declares a state of emergency.
DAY 4	Some individuals begin throwing "apocalypse parties," often including all manner of illegal activity.
DAY 5	Widespread power outages occur, due to both damage to lines and facilities and a lack of personnel to maintain power plants.
DAY 6	Tests reveal widespread presence of an unknown type of radiation in animals and humans, both living and undead.
DAY 7	The PCs' city, like many residential areas, is largely deserted by the living.
DAY 8	State National Guard forces deploy to protect the capital and other areas of strategic importance.
DAY 11	Testing of meteorite fragments confirms the meteorites as the origin of the newly discovered radiation.
DAY 28	The federal government declares martial law.
DAY 49	Across the country, military forces deploy in force to combat the ghouls. Military actions are limited to major cities and areas of strategic importance, leaving most citizens without readily available military assistance.
DAY 327	Like many countries, the U.S. wages a war against the ghouls on its own soil. Civilian casualties remain high.
YEAR 2	E.D.E.N. publicly announces it is working to develop a solution to the ghoul problem, although the initial announcement receives little attention (partially because there are few remaining media outlets).
YEAR 3	E.D.E.N. founder and CEO George O'Bannon meets with the U.N. to demonstrate the efficacy of his solution.
YEAR 4	At great cost to national governments, E.D.E.N. establishes numerous vaccination centers and launches a series of decontamination satellites into orbit. E.D.E.N. attorneys work with governments to arrange methods for repayment.

FARM



FARMS exist to provide food, so perhaps it's no surprise they make excellent buffets for ghouls. Animals in pens, coops, runs, and other enclosures have no way to get away from ghouls, whether human or animal. And as the ghouls begin to feast, the partially devoured livestock soon join them.

Although farms attract ghouls, so does every other location with living inhabitants. Farmers are often self-sufficient and equipped for emergencies with guns, ammo, sturdy vehicles, and supplies. This, and the fact that many farmers are hesitant to abandon their land, means that the residents of farms are likely to make every effort to defend their homesteads from the hordes of undead.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ❖ A farmer offers to provide the PCs with shelter if they help him defend his farm from attacking ghouls.
- ❖ The PCs must run across a field to a truck in order to escape from ghouls, but can they make it before the ghoul horses catch them?
- ❖ The farm is near an old rural cemetery, and its inhabitants soon arrive.
- ❖ The PCs find a seemingly abandoned farm that might hold useful supplies, but undead livestock soon make an appearance.
- ❖ The PCs encounter a farmer desperately trying to protect his livestock from ghouls. If they don't help him or convince him to abandon the animals, he's a goner.
- ❖ A family is trapped on the upper level of a farmhouse or barn, surrounded by animal ghouls, pleading for help.
- ❖ The slaughterhouse probably contains some highly effective weapons, but it is home to some particularly gruesome ghouls.
- ❖ A crater far out in the field contains a large meteorite fragment. Perhaps the PCs can help the situation if they do something about the meteorite.

HORDE OF GHOUL RATS



SOMETIMES, the defining characteristic of a location isn't so much where it is, as whether or not it's full of undead rats trying to eat your flesh.

Undead vermin are easily the most populous type of ghoul in most areas, whether small towns or big cities. Rats are everywhere, which means dead rats are also everywhere. And once one rat becomes a ghoul, the rest soon follow.

A horde of ghoul rats could attack the PCs almost anywhere, but the sewers are a particularly likely and fitting location. Wherever the rats are, the PCs probably hear the skittering of hundreds of tiny claws before they see, or smell, the undead vermin. The sight of hundreds or more ghoul-rats is as horrifying as one might expect. This isn't just another quick encounter with some ghouls; this is a major event that could kill all the PCs if they don't act fast.

Although individual ghoul rats are barely a threat, there's really no way to fight a whole horde of the things, at least not unless the PCs have some serious firepower, like a flamethrower. Even if the PCs do kill all the rats they encounter, it could be the case that those rats were just the initial wave and that a fresh horde is poised to emerge right on their heels.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ❖ While exploring the sewers or another dark location, the PCs' light source fails just before they hear the sounds of approaching rats.
- ❖ As they explore another location, the PCs encounter one ghoul rat, then another, with the frequency increasing until a swarm of the things appears.
- ❖ A couple is screaming for help as a horde of rats pulls them down, and the PCs must decide what to do.
- ❖ A horde of ghoul rats is blocking the way to somewhere the PCs desperately need to go, or it is crawling around on top of some object they need badly.

HOUSE



HOUSES and other residences are meant to help people feel safe, but that doesn't mean they're built to keep out hordes of flesh-hungry ghouls. Nevertheless, most houses provide a reasonably effective defense if some additional measures are taken, such as boarding up windows and doors. As in any siege, the attackers are most likely to gain entry when the occupants make a mistake, while sanitation and food are among the greatest concerns.

Whether the PCs decide to hole up in one of their homes or end up in an abandoned (or not) residence, they are likely to find themselves in a house under attack by ghouls at one point or another. Depending on how much time has passed and what's already taken place in the home, it might be well-stocked, clean, and inviting, or boarded over, ransacked, and filled with the smell of blood and death.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs find an abandoned house, but the occupant, in fact, killed himself and soon comes back as a ghoul.
- ✱ With a horde of ghouls outside and the house possibly even boarded up, the building somehow catches fire, either due to carelessness or the ghouls' actions.
- ✱ The PCs set up in an apparently empty house, only for the living owner to return a little later—and he's not happy about it.
- ✱ Although the house is boarded up tight, ghoul rats and other small animals still find their way in. Now the survivors might be trapped.
- ✱ With the ghouls waiting outside, the PCs and anyone else with them realize that they desperately need food, water, medical supplies, or some other necessity. Someone suggests drawing straws to see who has to go on a supply run.

MALL



THE mall has almost anything you could conceivably want, but everyone else knows that, too. The mall is well-stocked with food, clothes, camping supplies, and even weapons, but that's exactly why it might be the target of looting early on. Even if it is, though, something's bound to have been left behind for the PCs, and other looters might target more convenient stores, or at least those that don't have multiple floors.

Whether it's just like it was before the disaster or is trashed and ransacked, the mall offers a lot of useful tools and goods, as well as places to hide from ghouls. However, it also contains a lot of ghouls, whether people who died while shopping, ghouls that chased survivors there, or zombies that simply returned due to some dim memory or instinct.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Someone suggests sealing up the mall and living in it, but there are a lot of potential entrances to worry about. What if some less friendly survivors have a similar idea?
- ✱ The PCs head to the mall looking for supplies, only to find it completely overrun with ghouls. They'll need to somehow lure them out or sneak past them.
- ✱ Another group of survivors has already cleared out the mall and claimed it for their territory. They have more stuff than they could ever use, but they don't plan to share.
- ✱ Some people are trapped on the second floor of the mall, and only the PCs can help them.
- ✱ The mall seems deserted until the PCs enter to look for supplies, then, ghouls begin to emerge and surround them.
- ✱ The PCs pass a pet store full of ghoul animals of all kinds.

HOSPITAL



THE hospital was hit hard and early by the ghouls. As one of a few places containing fresh bodies, the hospital was one of the first places to come under attack by human ghouls—from within, no less. Add to this the victims who were brought in and themselves soon became ghouls, and the hospital soon fell into chaos as the staff faced a threat that denied everything they knew about medical science.

In the confusion of the initial ghoul attacks, communications failures meant that paramedics and other emergency responders continued to bring victims to the hospital even after ghouls overtook it. Helpless patients and unprepared hospital staff soon swelled the ghouls' ranks, making the hospital one of the most ghoul-infested places in the area. However, the hospital also contains much-needed medical supplies.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ❖ A PC or ally is injured, and the group must retrieve specialized medical equipment or supplies if there is to be any hope of saving the convalescent.
- ❖ In the confusion of the initial rising, authorities mistakenly believe the hospital is the source of some kind of disease responsible for the ghouls. They assume that anyone inside is probably infected, and they order police to allow no one out.
- ❖ The PCs hear (false) rumors that the hospital is the safest place in town, or even that the doctors there have access to a cure.
- ❖ The PCs encounter a doctor in a secure wing of the hospital. Although he initially seems helpful, he actually has completely lost his mind and believes he can discover the cause of the ghouls—if he could experiment on living subjects.
- ❖ Patients are trapped in their rooms or some other part of the hospital, and only the PCs can save them from the undead hospital staff.

SEWERS



IT might not seem like a good idea to enter a dark tunnel during a ghoul apocalypse, but since human ghouls can't climb ladders, the sewers could actually be one of the safer places. Of course, some ghouls might fall into open manholes, and some ghoul animals can crawl down there, but when the streets are filled with hordes of shambling corpses, traveling through the sewers might seem a much more attractive option.

The sewers are dark, smelly, and damp. And for someone without experience doing so, they are very hard to navigate. Nevertheless, a PC with a map or a good sense of direction can get almost anywhere while avoiding the hordes of ghouls and other survivors. It's still a creepy place, though.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ❖ The PCs see a dead body face down in the water. If they wait around or investigate, they'll see one very bloated ghoul.
- ❖ The PCs find themselves on a street and completely surrounded by ghouls. Their only escape route is through the sewers.
- ❖ A light up ahead announces the presence of other survivors. But are they friendly?
- ❖ Running into rats in the sewers is never a pleasant experience, but it's so much worse when those rats are flesh-hungry ghouls. Especially in numbers (see **Ghoul Rat Swarm**, on page 63).
- ❖ Several ghouls burst out of the sewage, surprising the PCs.
- ❖ Some object the PCs could really use is visible on the other side of the canal, but what if something is lurking under the water?



GHOUL

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	4	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Horrifying, +Unyielding, –Mindless, –Shambling.

Equipment: Filthy clothes.

It Won't Die!: Ghouls have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29) due to their inability to feel pain or be killed by conventional means.

Destroy the Brain: When a ghoul is attacked, if the attack test rolls doubles on uncanceled positive dice, the ghoul's brain is destroyed; it automatically dies, regardless of its current stress.

GHOUL DOG

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Fast, +Horrifying, +Unyielding, –Mindless.

Equipment: Teeth (2 positive dice, +2 damage).

It Won't Die!: Ghoul dogs have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29) due to their inability to feel pain or be killed by conventional means.

Destroy the Brain: When a ghoul dog is attacked, if the attack test rolls doubles on un-cancelled positive dice, the ghoul dog's brain is destroyed; it automatically dies, regardless of its current stress.



GHOUL HORSE

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
4	5	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Fast, +Horrrifying, +Unyielding, -Huge, -Mindless.

Equipment: Hooves (1 negative die, +4 damage).

It Won't Die!: Ghoul horses have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29) due to their inability to feel pain or be killed by conventional means.

Destroy the Brain: When a ghoul horse is attacked, if the attack test rolls doubles on uncanceled positive dice, the ghoul horse's brain is destroyed; it automatically dies, regardless of its current stress.



GHOUL RAT SWARM

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
4	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Horrrifying, +Swarm, +Unyielding, -Loud Chittering, -Mindless.

Equipment: N/A.

Swarm: Whenever a ghoul rat swarm is dealt physical stress greater than 1, it suffers 1 physical stress instead.





NIGHT OF THE METEOR

NIGHT OF THE METEOR

POST-APOCALYPSE



George O'Bannon and E.D.E.N.'s treatment worked. Within weeks, the rate of reanimation was down more than thirty percent. After a few months, the deanimation phenomenon began, with ghouls spontaneously collapsing and, well, just going back to being dead. After three years, there wasn't a single ghoul left.

Of course, some people say we're all walking dead of a different kind now. They say this only where the drones and spies won't hear, of course, unless they want to spend the rest of their now-short lives in one of E.D.E.N.'s re-education facilities.

E.D.E.N. had something the world needed—needed like never before. O'Bannon had the only thing that could save what was left of the world. So, E.D.E.N. could charge whatever it damned well pleased, and the governments, what with the sorry state they were in, had to agree. Did the governments realize what they were agreeing to? Probably a lot of the details weren't really hammered out until later. The point is that they didn't have a choice. The point is everything belongs to E.D.E.N. now.

Everything, and everyone.

ONE WORLD, UNDER E.D.E.N.

THE effects of the meteorites' radiation brought the world to its knees. All around the globe, ghouls overwhelmed militaries and brought nations crashing down into chaos. In most places, the undead humans alone outnumbered the living, and that's not even including the animal ghouls of all kinds, which outnumbered them many times over. The world would have ended, at least as far as human existence was concerned, if it hadn't been for the efforts of one corporation and its founder.

George O'Bannon and his company, E.D.E.N., developed a way to neutralize the radiation and even counteract its effects. Not only did this prevent people from becoming ghouls when they died, but it eventually even returned the existing ghouls to their natural state. O'Bannon is a businessman, though, and he wasn't about to give away the most valuable commodity in human history for free. (Actually, "businessman" might not be the right word: "megalomaniac" might be more fitting.) Yet, even if it were possible to put a price on ending the ghoul apocalypse, the overstretched, tattered governments of the world wouldn't have been able to pay it.

In the end, governments paid for their share of the solution in a number of ways. Among them? IOUs the size of GDPs and exclusive contracts for everything from mil-

itary equipment to food to local security forces. Armies of lawyers drafted hundreds of thousands of contracts. Some of them seemed insignificant on their own, but most were unprecedented in scale. Millions of words to state one simple fact: E.D.E.N. runs it all.

In some countries, a civil government still ostensibly holds power while E.D.E.N. is the body that actually runs everything, in one way or another. In many countries, flags bearing the E.D.E.N. logo fly above capitol buildings. The fact is, whether or not public officials admit it, E.D.E.N. effectively governs the world. In third world countries, it runs all the factories and keeps all the profits. In democracies, it decides who wins office. Europe, Russia, China, Japan—their economies are E.D.E.N. In the U.S., E.D.E.N.'s attorneys write the legislation, and its board of directors decides what passes. George O'Bannon and E.D.E.N.'s board of directors are, without a doubt, the most powerful and influential people ever to live.

A WATCHFUL EYE

Most people agree that the situation is better now than it was during the ghoul years, but they know things aren't like they were before. E.D.E.N. saved the world from the ghouls, and now it protects the populace from every other threat, whether it wants that protection or not. E.D.E.N.'s drones and corporate police are everywhere, monitoring people's activities and reminding them to stay in line. There are still ostensibly public police forces in some places, but everyone knows they report straight to E.D.E.N. The only difference between the corporate security and police is the uniform they wear.

Nearly everyone works for E.D.E.N. in one capacity or another. Through a bewildering array of contracts, subsidiary companies, affiliate corporations, mergers, stock purchases, and every other business maneuver conceivable, all business leads back to E.D.E.N. somehow or other. It doesn't matter which brand of soda you buy, what mortgage lender you choose, or what clothes you wear—you're giving your paycheck right back to E.D.E.N.

The drones and corporate security do everything from watching for violent crime (after all, if someone's injured, it's going to hurt productivity) to monitoring for disloyalty against E.D.E.N. People who are problem employees might also find themselves receiving a visit from security forces.

KING OF THE WORLD

The PCs, like most people, are unlikely to ever meet George O'Bannon personally. But, as he is with everyone, he's a constant presence in their lives. O'Bannon's face is always there: on TVs, on billboards, on magazine covers, on massive video screens on the sides of skyscrapers, on computers and handhelds, and of course on monitors throughout most E.D.E.N. offices. His voice is omnipresent, too, on those same video broadcasts, radio, PA announcements at E.D.E.N. facilities, and public service announcements, to name just a few sources.



In these audio and video messages, O'Bannon constantly reminds people what he and E.D.E.N. have done for them, and continue to do for them every day; providing safety, security, employment, and all the goods and services everyone needs for a happy life. He also reminds them that hard work is fulfilling, and that E.D.E.N. cares about them.

As improbable as it might seem for them to meet the CEO of planet Earth, PCs tend to get some crazy ideas into their heads, and they could certainly make it happen if they commit to it. O'Bannon's a busy and justifiably cautious man who makes few public appearances. He does, however, travel the world to meet with executives and survey operations for E.D.E.N. and its many affiliates and subsidiaries. If the PCs happen to be in the right place at the right time, or somehow get their hands on the highly protected details of O'Bannon's travel and meeting schedule, they could arrange to get close to him. Of course, what they hope to accomplish in doing so is another question.

LONG LIVE THE RESISTANCE

Not everyone is pleased about E.D.E.N.'s unlimited power and control over their lives. In fact, a lot of people aren't, but most of them are too scared to do anything. Some, however, would rather risk their lives than live under E.D.E.N.'s rules. These people meet secretly, at great risk to themselves and their families, to make plans to strike against their corporate overlords.

There is no single unified resistance, in part because E.D.E.N.'s control over communication is so strong, and also because dissidents have different ideas about how to resist and what they hope to accomplish. Resistance groups vary in size from a handful of people in a single town to hundreds, even thousands, organized across continents and communicating through networks of dead drops and hackers skilled enough to evade E.D.E.N.'s detection.

Resistance members are condemned as terrorists by E.D.E.N. and every government on the planet. In truth, some do turn to radical means, even sacrificing innocent lives to strike a blow against E.D.E.N. and its infrastructure. For them, the ends justify the means. Many, however, see such murderous actions as hypocritical and self-defeating; they want to free people from E.D.E.N.'s control, not hurt them. Even the most peace-minded resistance groups, however, must be willing to fight and kill when facing E.D.E.N.'s merciless corporate security. There are a number of gray areas and difficult questions that such freedom fighters must contend with. For instance, they are likely to run afoul of local law enforcement. These police could truly mean well, wishing to protect and serve the public, but in the end they answer to E.D.E.N., whether or not they realize it.

THE CITY



E.D.E.N. controls the world, but nowhere is its presence felt more strongly than in the cities. Here, drones monitor everyone's activity everywhere, while corporate security patrol every street. On billboards, monitors, posters, and more—just about anywhere a person's eyes could alight—are advertisements for E.D.E.N. and its products (as if consumers had an alternative).

In some ways, the city seems safer and more secure than it ever did before. The drones, corporate security, and police—with additional funding and equipment generously donated by E.D.E.N.—efficiently and mercilessly crack down on crime. Offenders usually are sent to re-education facilities so they can become valuable members of society. But people disappear all the time, and everyone knows why, even if they don't say it aloud.

Under constant observation, citizens shuffle silently to and from their jobs, homes, and stores, all owned by E.D.E.N. in one way or another, looking like nothing so much as a horde of mindless ghouls.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- The PCs witness a pair of corporate security officers violently restraining an elderly person.
- The PCs are almost caught in the blast when a building explodes. Is it a terrorist attack by the resistance, or an E.D.E.N. operation gone wrong?
- A drone starts following the PCs. Whether they were doing anything suspicious or not, this can't end well.
- The streets are closed off, and security is out in overwhelming force. George O'Bannon is visiting the city today, but no one is quite sure why.
- A group of workers decides to protest working conditions, and the PCs witness E.D.E.N. security's brutal crackdown, so it's a sure bet that management sees them as a loose end.

RESISTANCE BASE



THE resistance against E.D.E.N.'s control comprises numerous groups, some working closely together and others completely unaware of each other. Although their tactics, resources, and numbers differ, they all oppose E.D.E.N. and the limitless control it exerts over every nation of the globe, and over each citizen.

For obvious reasons, the resistance fighters must conceal the locations of their bases from everyone else, often including new recruits. Even a well-meaning friend or ally could tip off corporate security without realizing it, or lead a drone straight to the hideout. Of course, even a committed member of the resistance might give up vital information under duress, so most groups relocate their bases often.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ After witnessing an attack on E.D.E.N. facilities, the PCs are captured by resistance fighters and brought, blindfolded, to their base. The resistance doesn't want to kill innocent bystanders, but they also can't risk discovery.
- ✱ The PCs make contact with a resistance group, but before they gain admittance, they have to earn their trust.
- ✱ An E.D.E.N. agent approaches the PCs. It looks like an old friend of theirs is now a major figure in the resistance, and E.D.E.N. wants their help to bring the conspirator down.
- ✱ A recent resistance action failed spectacularly, and it looks like E.D.E.N. knew they were coming. It must have been a traitor, and everyone's a suspect, including (or especially) the PCs. Can the PCs even trust each other?
- ✱ The resistance has found out that George O'Bannon will be in the area soon. They want to assassinate him, and they need volunteers for this potential suicide mission.

RE-EDUCATION CAMP



E.D.E.N. hates to waste resources, and that includes potential labor. Although prison populations continue to grow (with E.D.E.N. holding all the contracts or running them for profit), both the corporate security and the traditional judicial system assign some offenders for re-education at E.D.E.N. work facilities instead. In some ways, the biggest difference between the two is that re-education camps require a lot more hard labor.

Theft, vandalism, and even anticorporate sentiments are the kinds of offenses that might see someone assigned to a re-education camp. There, workers labor in grueling conditions, stopping only to eat and sleep. Workers are under constant, close scrutiny (even by E.D.E.N. standards). Work tends toward the physical, with manufacturing roles common, but can include other types as well.

Ironically, those who protest or simply complain overmuch about labor conditions at an E.D.E.N. company might find themselves at a re-education camp, where the conditions are exponentially worse.

The PCs might find themselves sent to a work camp for some crime against the company, real or not. Alternatively, they might visit one to free a friend, complete a resistance mission, or even perform an assessment for their E.D.E.N. superiors.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Guards find contraband in one of the housing blocks, so they lock down the facility and subject everyone to a search.
- ✱ One of the "residents" fights back against a guard, leading to a full-scale riot.
- ✱ E.D.E.N. suits visit the facility for an inspection, but they seem much more interested in the residents' physical health than the building or the work, requiring numerous tests for many of the workers.
- ✱ The guards suspect a member of the resistance has intentionally been assigned to the center for some purpose, and they crack down hard on the residents.

E.D.E.N. EXECUTIVE

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
1	2	5	2	4	2

Features: +Ambitious, +Devious, +Great Liar, –Condescending, –Paranoid, –Soulpatch.

Equipment: Black turtleneck.



E.D.E.N. DRONE

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	4	3	N/A	1	1

Features: +Hovering, +Mechanical, +Surveillance Software, –Bound to Logic.

Equipment: Defensive shock-prod (1 negative die, +3 damage), metal plating (+2 physical resistance), enhanced optics.

Observe and Protect: E.D.E.N. drones are designed to observe the populace. They hover through crowds and report anything suspicious back to E.D.E.N. using a wireless connection, so that E.D.E.N. can dispatch enforcers.

E.D.E.N. ENFORCER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	3	4	2	1	2

Features: +Dedicated, +Military Training, +Tech Savvy, –By the Book, –Obstinate.

Equipment: ES413 smart rifle (2 positive dice, +5 damage), body armor (+1 physical resistance), digital optics suite, drone uplink (allows E.D.E.N. enforcer to see through the eyes of E.D.E.N. drones and control them remotely).





NO ROOM IN HELL

NO ROOM IN HELL

APOCALYPSE



Judgment Day. That's what a lot of people called it. They said it was the end of the world, and they were probably right. This isn't the world I knew, that's for sure. This is hell on Earth. Maybe literally, if the believers are right. I don't know if it was really punishment for humanity's sins. I don't know what to believe, and I don't think we'll ever really know why it happened: why the dead came back to life—or at least something like it.

I do know that they aren't the people they once were. They look like them, but not like them. Like mockeries. They don't think, or at least they don't seem to. But they're hungry, so hungry—for us. Do they need to eat? Probably not. They're dead, after all. But that's all they want, to eat the living, to make the living join them.

If you think about it, the dead always outnumbered the living. It just wasn't a problem when they stayed dead. Now it's all too clear that there's more of them than of us. And as our numbers shrink, theirs grow.

No Room in Hell presents the PCs with a waking nightmare in which the bodies of the dead inexplicably rise and seek to devour the living. Simple survival is the order of the day; in many ways it is every person for himself, even though the authorities attempt to maintain the appearance of control.

Without warning, the dead have begun coming back to life, hungry for the flesh of the living. It's a singularly horrifying experience, and a lot of people completely lose it before they ever even see a walker up close.

What makes these events so acutely terrifying is perhaps that there is no apparent cause. No chemical leak, no sign from the heavens, no individuals claiming responsibility. Many survivors seek to make some sense of the horror, wishing to assign some greater meaning to it. Some blame science, the government, or big business, calling it toxic chemicals, secret experiments, and more. But many attribute it to a religious cause, seeing it as a punishment for humanity's sins or simply the long-awaited end of days. As the weeks go by with no explanation from the government or scientists, this idea becomes ever more popular.

Events transpire quickly, and the PCs witness their city or town rapidly descending into chaos as the dead walk and attack the living. The federal government responds to this unprecedented disaster with military force, seeking to protect the citizenry by any means necessary, whether they want the protection or not. Of course, the military isn't prepared to protect the country from its own dead, and it finds itself stretched thin. As insanity and chaos surround them, the PCs must do whatever it takes to ensure their own survival, counting only on themselves.

THE EXPERIENCE

Destruction and panic surround the PCs as the dead rise and attack the living. The events of **No Room in Hell** begin abruptly, with no apparent cause or trigger. One day, the dead simply come back to life, or some semblance of it, and seek to feed on the flesh of mortals. At first, the dead are small in number. Scattered corpses rise from graves, morgue slabs, and even the scenes of automobile wrecks. In all cases, the dead show only one motivation—to eat living human flesh. Without a prospective victim, they tend to wander aimlessly or simply stand about.

The numbers of the living dead quickly grow, as further bodies emerge from graveyards, mortuaries, and even medical supply warehouses. For the most part, those whom the dead kill soon rise again. As the number of undead rises, it becomes harder and harder to escape them and survive.

The Player Characters could be anywhere, doing anything, when the dead start coming back, but it's best if they are already together or can reach each other quickly. Regardless of where they are at the time, the PCs should be among the earliest to encounter the living dead, rather than simply being bystanders as events begin to unfold. It can serve to raise tension and excitement if the PCs hear of the undead before seeing them face to face, perhaps from eyewitnesses or rumors. However, this probably shouldn't continue too long before the PCs encounter one for themselves, whether in the form of a walking corpse or a wounded or dead victim who will soon become one.

SIGHTS, SOUNDS, AND SMELLS

The sight of walking corpses is as horrifying as one might expect, to say nothing of the smell. When events begin, the number of living dead is relatively small, and the PCs are likely to encounter the dead individually or in very small groups (perhaps arriving one at a time), but this should be plenty. Simply controlling their fear long enough to attack the walkers or escape should be enough of a challenge.

As the hours and days go by and things get increasingly out of control, the dead appear in greater numbers. Hordes of the living dead occupy the streets, and encountering only a solitary walker should be something of a relief.

Aside from ever-increasing numbers of walking dead, the PCs can witness the shrinking numbers of the living, and the correlation should be obvious. Signs of life, from people and traffic in the streets to lights in homes, become fewer, while signs of violence and corpses, both moving and truly dead, appear everywhere.

Initially, the PCs' town or city looks much as it normally does. But as events progress, the houses, streets, and buildings begin showing signs of damage. The living dead themselves lack the ingenuity, motivation, and strength to inflict major damage to property, though when they gather in large enough numbers they might shatter glass or break down doors to get to their victims. Most of the damage to the city instead is caused by the living. Panicking individuals crash vehicles or shoot up buildings, and the area might start to resemble a war zone when the military arrives and turns its weaponry on the walking corpses.

Perhaps the most obvious sign that something is amiss is the smell. Although the living dead are often out of sight once most of humanity becomes loath to go outdoors, the smell of rotting flesh becomes omnipresent within days, and even hours. The smell of decay can serve as a warning before a walker attacks, but with so much carnage about, there is often too much "back-ground stench" for the PCs to rely on this.

WHAT CAN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DO?

As one should expect in an apocalyptic scenario, the PCs' primary goal is simply to survive. There is nothing they (or anyone) can do to stop the dead from rising, or to end their hunger. The most obvious challenge to survival is the risk of attack. PCs must be constantly on the alert for walkers, which have a tendency to emerge when least expected. The walkers are slow and, individually, pose a threat only if they have the element of surprise. Although they tend to moan and rasp, they can also move quite silently at times. Some tend to remain motionless in one location until a potential food source arrives. Whether they truly lie in wait for prey or simply become inactive without some sort of stimulus is unclear. Of course, large hordes of dead are easily spotted, but less easily avoided.

Aside from avoiding becoming a meal, the PCs' main concerns are supplies and shelter. Sturdy shelter can provide some degree of protection, as the walkers lack the strength and intelligence to gain entry to a well-fortified building. The need for supplies becomes more evident as the days wear on, but even in the first hours of the apocalypse, weapons, ammunition, medical supplies, and gasoline are in great demand. Food and potable water, which so many people take for granted, become scarcer as the disaster continues.

In addition to seeing after their own needs, the PCs might take on responsibility for protecting others, whether friends and family or even complete strangers. Even if they don't deliberately set out to aid the desperate, the PCs are bound to find themselves in situations in which they could provide badly needed assistance or intervene to save a life. Of course, such intervention exposes the PCs to risk, and the decision to help or pass on by is not always easy.

Although in some cases teaming up with other survivors can provide the PCs with useful backup, survivors who are not so capable could easily prove a liability. In addition to using up supplies, such individuals require the PCs' attention, potentially distracting them from threats. There are numerous ways a panicking person might seriously jeopardize the PCs' safety, from attempting to flee a fortified position and letting the dead in, to simply attracting walkers with terrified screams.

WHAT IS EVERYONE ELSE DOING?

Unsurprisingly, many people are unable to deal with the horrible truth of what is happening, panicking and acting rashly or even completely losing their minds. Some lapse into catatonic states, while others become paranoid or delusional, posing a threat to their fellow survivors.

Those who do retain their faculties deal with the situation in a variety of ways. Some board up their homes, isolating themselves from their fellow humans as well as the walking dead. Others flee in their vehicles, either mistakenly believing the event to be limited to their town or hoping to find some remote place in which to wait out the storm. Many people make supplies a top priority, and as stores close in light of the danger, some turn to looting to obtain necessities or even luxury goods they have no need for. The arrival of military forces does tend to curtail such activities, but it doesn't stop them.

Police and emergency personnel swiftly are overwhelmed. Although officers responding to initial 911 calls believe the attacks to be muggings or domestic disputes, the scenes of horror they find quickly disabuse them of such notions. Within a few hours, the gravity of the situation starts to become clear, as authorities piece together the separate incidents. It's not long after this when the media begins reporting on the calamity, both locally and on national stations. Combined with cell phone footage uploaded to the Internet, the news quickly spreads, and people panic.

THE CAVALRY

As the growing numbers of living dead overwhelm local authorities, the National Guard and other military branches mobilize. Military forces sweep into major cities across the country, evacuating them and gathering citizens into refugee camps, where they can more easily protect them. Many people object to being forced from their homes, despite the clear danger. The military response also feeds right into the fears of conspiracy theorists, many of whom are certain the federal government is behind events.

Although some welcome the arrival of the National Guard and Army, others resist the evacuation attempts, either hiding in their homes or even fighting back. This leads to violent incidents, further swelling the outrage against the military. Making things even worse, some soldiers desert and, in some cases, use their training and weapons to maintain advantage over other survivors in the struggle for resources.

THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

There is no apparent cause of the horrifying events, but many theories are floated. Whether they are engaged in such hypothesizing or simply trying to survive, the PCs are bound to hear some of the ideas others put forth. Of course, trying to understand what is happening doesn't much help when a living corpse is trying to eat your flesh, but perhaps it makes psychologically dealing with the horror of it all a little more manageable.

For many people, the fact that only human corpses come back serves as evidence of a spiritual or theological cause. If it were another cause, they say, it would affect animals too. Clearly, the soul is key. Of course, what exactly that means is a point of contention. Do the undead have souls? Do they have something else where their souls once were? The theories and claims are endless, as variations on this idea are the most prominent. Once television and radio personalities and local believers begin to latch onto the idea, it is soon everywhere.

Televangelists, street preachers, and ordained clergy all take up the call for repentance. From pulpits, street corners, and screens, they exhort their flocks to repent of their sins and seek salvation. Unfortunately, for many, this quest for atonement becomes a distraction from seeking to procure the necessities for survival. Some deluded individuals even try to minister to the undead, hoping to save their souls. These misguided faithful seldom live long.

Other theories as to the cause posit a new disease, a terrorist attack using a biological weapon, and, of course, a secret government experiment. Without any evidence, though, most people accept whatever explanation speaks best to their sensibilities. For no small number, this means trying to reconcile events with their religious beliefs. Since most religions include a concept of the apocalypse, it is not difficult for many clerics to offer an explanation of events that ties into these beliefs.

THE TRUTH

There's no scientific explanation for why the dead rose up one day. Or for why they hunger for human flesh. Since there's no scientific, natural explanation, there must be a spiritual one—a supernatural one. Perhaps hell really is full, and damned souls are returning to their bodies, hungry for nourishment they can never obtain. In the end, though, humans can never know, as long as they're alive—and the dead aren't talking.

THE DEAD WALK THE EARTH

The living dead are human corpses animated by unknown means. Without warning, they arise everywhere around the globe—though long-distance communications quickly become unreliable, leaving many in the dark as to how widespread the disaster is. The dead are relentless in their pursuit of human flesh, ignoring gunshots and gruesome injuries, and unable to comprehend the idea of giving up. When they see, smell, or hear the living, the otherwise vacant expressions of the walkers fixate on the potential meal.

The initial wave of living dead comprises primarily the recently deceased. Yet, whatever the cause of their reanimation, it also affects bodies that have been dead for some time, as long as the brain is mostly intact. For the most part, this means that the more rotten and putrid corpses don't have enough brain matter left to allow them to rise. Further, some that do may not have enough muscle to dig themselves out of their graves. Nevertheless, some horrifically decayed corpses emerge to join the ranks of the living dead, perhaps because sheer chance has left them with an intact brain stem.

Although there is no biological reason for the dead to walk, their decaying flesh does present some limitations. They move slowly and clumsily, incapable of running, jumping, or fine motor skills. They can go up and down stairs and even climb ladders, albeit slowly, but they are unlikely to do so unless a living victim catches their attention. Individually, they are not particularly dangerous—they are no stronger than a living human—and might even seem pitiful.

For the most part, anyone who dies for any reason soon returns as one of the living dead. However, a rare few individuals actually remain dead. Some say these lucky souls are those virtuous enough to reach paradise in the afterlife, rather than return to hell on earth. There's no way to verify this, of course.

Although anyone who dies is likely to rise again, the bite of the living dead is a certain death sentence. A bite wound deep enough to draw blood (and there is really no other kind when talking about the living dead) leads, within hours or a few days at most, to feverish symptoms and death. Shortly afterward, usually within mere minutes, the corpse reanimates, hungry for mortal flesh.

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

The walking dead hunger for living human flesh. This is their only motivation. Unlike living beings, they need no sleep, shelter, water, comfort, or even oxygen. In fact, they don't need food. Although they clearly have an all-consuming hunger for human flesh, they derive no nourishment from it. Even one without a stomach or an intact mouth attacks humans in a vain effort to devour their flesh.

The dead show little or no intelligence or initiative. Without a potential victim to pursue, they tend to either roam without purpose or stand more or less stationary. Some remain motionless or concealed, perhaps where they died, until a potential victim comes in range, although this is likely due to chance rather than planning. These "lurkers" are a major threat even to those prepared to fight the



undead. Letting one's guard down for even a moment is long enough for them to bite, and one bite is all it takes.

Light, movement, and sound can all catch a walker's attention. Survivors can use this to their benefit, but it can also be a hindrance. Whether due to a remnant of their former personalities or to some other cause, some dead show more curiosity than others. Once something grabs their attention, they pursue it relentlessly until they confirm that it is not food. In general, however, the dead are easily distracted, which the PCs can take advantage of with various sensory stimuli. Of course, nothing grabs a walker's attention like living flesh. Once they do catch a victim, the walkers stop to feast. As gruesome as this is, such an event can give other humans a chance to get away. Although it might seem heartless to leave a comrade behind in such circumstances, a single bite is all it takes to doom someone, so there really is no hope for a victim of the undead.

KILLING THE DEAD

It probably won't take long for the PCs to figure out how to permanently kill the living dead: destroy their brains. After all, like the players, the PCs have seen their fair share of horror movies. Anything less only slows them down. Although the walkers' bodies are no more resilient than living flesh, and often less so due to decay, they feel no pain and don't rely on their organs or even limbs. Even a walker without anything in its chest cavity still moves—and still hungers for flesh. Similarly, one missing legs or arms does its best to propel itself and attack with its remaining limbs.

Decapitation is fairly effective, since it means a walker can't attack with its limbs. With the head removed, a walker's body returns to a state of true death, but the severed head still remains animated as long as the brain is intact. Although it can no longer move around under its own power, it could be a nasty surprise for someone who steps too close.

BETTER OFF DEAD (THAN UNDEAD)

Once it becomes clear that bites are a death sentence, many people prefer to die rather than become one of the living dead. The only way to ensure victims don't come back is to destroy their brains. Of course, a bullet is the most humane way to do this. Most of those bitten who understand the consequences ask their friends or allies to show them the mercy of death; those who don't have anyone willing to give them the *coup de grace* are likely to end their own lives.

Some people can't or won't accept the fact that they, or a friend or loved one, are going to come back. This can lead to tense and difficult situations, as others must try to convince them of the necessity or, failing that, put the wounded out of their misery in spite of the protests. In the worst situations, such conflicts might even lead to survivors turning on each other.

THE FEDERAL RESPONSE

Although the local authorities do their best to deal with the ever-increasing numbers of undead, they simply don't have enough resources or personnel to do so. During the initial stages, the police don't understand what they are facing. Even after some officers report walking corpses attacking the living, the higher-ups discount the possibility. By the time the authorities start to accept what is happening, the ranks of the living dead have swelled to truly overwhelming numbers.

Because the undead phenomenon is not limited to the PCs' locale, the federal government actually responds to the threat quite swiftly. After all, the dead are prowling the streets of Washington, D.C. just like in the rest of the world. Although military leaders offer numerous proposals for dealing with the problem, the fact that no cause is apparent presents a pretty sizable hindrance.

Even as officials from the White House, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and other federal branches hold press conferences and issue statements urging the populace to remain calm while scientists research the issue, the military dispatches soldiers to major cities and population centers across the country. Military forces quickly move to erect secure camps outside of the cities. Although the military acts to neutralize the undead whenever the opportunity arises, their primary objective is to evacuate the survivors and get them to the secure camps. This is because commanders wisely realize two things. First, that the living dead are too numerous, too disorganized, and too lacking in reason or goals to fight like a traditional enemy. Second, every civilian killed becomes another enemy to fight.

Although many appreciate the aid and protection of the military, others object to the mandatory evacuation, and even more so to the encampments. From independent survivalists to college students, a sizable minority protests the military's actions, and organized demonstrations begin almost as soon as the military makes its first move.

TIMELINE

The dead arise without warning, and although they move slowly, events move rapidly. Many of these events are obvious to almost everyone, and news about them spreads quickly by word of mouth. Other items on the timeline below are known only to those directly involved or in positions of authority. However, even these events have repercussions that could affect anyone, including the PCs.

00:00:00	The recently deceased start returning to a semblance of life and immediately begin searching for living victims.
01:41:00	The dead begin to attack the living in scattered incidents. Initial locations include hospital facilities, morgues, cemeteries, and homes near such locations.
02:11:00	The hospital receives an influx of patients suffering from human bite wounds.
02:43:00	Hospital staff discover several recently deceased patients moving inside morgue coolers, apparently suffering from severe brain damage. They try to keep the incident quiet as they investigate.
03:27:00	911 operators receive an increasing number of calls about violent, cannibalistic attacks and assailants trying to enter homes. Some callers describe the attackers as injured or sick.
04:39:00	Responding to a call, a police officer receives a deep bite from the suspect.
05:18:00	Doctors at the local hospital confirm that the patients previously believed to be dead are, in fact, still dead, with no vital signs whatsoever, despite the fact that they are capable of movement and showing some degree of awareness. After conferring with civil authorities, medical professionals are told not to release this information.
06:04:00	Automobile accidents become frequent due to panicking or bitten drivers. Several utility poles are damaged, leading to telephone and power interruptions.
06:28:00	Rumors of living corpses spread rapidly by word of mouth and Internet communication.
06:51:00	Some people begin loading up on supplies and barricading their homes.
07:23:00	An officer bitten during a previous call attacks a fellow officer. He bites three officers before one shoots him in the head.
09:30:00	Local government officials issue a statement urging citizens to remain calm and stay in their homes.
10:11:00	Walking corpses are now visible on most streets.
11:33:00	Local and national TV and radio stations switch almost entirely to news coverage of the ongoing disaster.
13:56:00	Surviving police and state troopers deploy in full force in an attempt to deal with the increasing numbers of living dead threatening citizens.
15:30:00	The state government declares a state of emergency (as do most other states before long).
18:02:00	Despite news reports revealing that corpses across the country, and not just locally, are returning to life, many people prepare to flee their homes.
DAY 2	With few exceptions, businesses and schools all close. Essential local government branches and utility companies remain in operation, but many employees fail to report for duty.
DAY 2	Large groups of undead prowl the streets, with individual corpses appearing nearly anywhere. Gunfire from law enforcement and armed citizens is frequently audible.
DAY 3	Elements of the state National Guard arrive in cities across the state.
DAY 3	Military forces begin to evacuate cities across the state and country. Despite the official emergency declaration in place, many people object to the mandatory evacuations.
DAY 4	Protesters demonstrate in cities across the country, objecting to the forced evacuations and military camps.
DAY 6	The Reverend Walton Greggs, a popular televangelist, states on his program that the walking dead are a punishment from God, sinners who can't die because there's no more room in hell. The idea quickly gains popularity.
DAY 7	Certain members of Congress call for an inquiry into the "unprecedented violence" of the living dead.
DAY 9	Different members of Congress call for an inquest into the deads' legal status as citizens.
DAY 19	Military forces begin falling back from most cities and attempting to establish cordons to contain the living dead.
DAY 33	Several military bases fall after soldiers conceal their bite wounds until it's too late.
DAY 56	In his last broadcast, Walton Greggs announces his intent to form a community of believers in a defensible compound to "live faithfully and pray for redemption."
DAY 322	As entire military units desert and survivors compete for resources, the last of the refugee camps fall into anarchy.
YEAR 2	The federal government and military forces of the United States are functionally nonexistent. Some individual facilities continue to operate, but without hope of resupply or relief.

THE BIG CITY



BECAUSE of their highly concentrated populations, big cities are the hardest hit in the early days after the dead begin to rise. As the first of the living dead bite others, their numbers begin to increase exponentially. Gangs involve themselves in the violence, either taking advantage of the chaos or even trying to help, further swelling the body count.

Although the big city has a large police force and the military soon arrive, the vast and increasing numbers of undead are still too much for them to contain. The PCs might see this firsthand if they live in the big city or travel there seeking aid, only to find chaos.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- Early on, the streets are swarming with undead, and the only way past might be the subway, which is far from empty.
- The PCs are caught in the middle of a firefight between the military or police and an armed gang.
- Near a bank, the PCs find an abandoned armored truck. It could be full of cash, but what if other survivors also have their eyes on it?
- Someone suggests that the top floors of a skyscraper are the safest place to hole up. But is that true, or does it just leave them with no way to escape from the living dead?
- Undead start raining down from the sky, still hungry and (somewhat) mobile after the long fall. Are they stepping through windows to get at the humans below, or is someone pushing them out?
- The PCs arrive at the city after many days of travel only to find it abandoned—except for hordes of the living dead.

COUNTRY ROAD



WITH the interstates either gridlocked or closed off for military use, the smaller roads and rural highways seem like the only option. But many people have this idea, which leads to traffic jams in many areas, especially those around cities and towns, from which people are evacuating. In some places, the traffic comes to a complete stop due to mechanical problems, abandoned cars, or attacking undead.

Of course, traffic keeps moving on some roads, and some particularly rural routes might even appear empty. But these areas hide dangers of their own.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- Traffic comes to a complete standstill, trapping the PCs' vehicle as living dead begin to appear from the roadside.
- The PCs' vehicle runs out of gas, and the only gas station nearby is either out, or the owners decide they can name any price they want.
- The PCs encounter another group of travelers, who suggest teaming up. But can they really be trusted?
- While the PCs are stopped for some reason, a person with a gun approaches them, demanding they give up their vehicle.
- Just when it seems things can't get any worse, a National Guard squad arrives. But rather than helping the PCs, these deserters intend to rob them.
- An out-of-control vehicle with a living corpse behind the wheel threatens to run the PCs off the road.
- Thieves (or worse) set tire spikes across the road to waylay travelers.
- An apparently abandoned gas station offers free supplies and gas, but the living dead soon appear as if from nowhere.

MILITARY EVACUATION



WHEN the military arrives in a city or town, its first act is to begin a mandatory evacuation for the good of the residents. After all, not only are the living dead a threat to the citizens, but the military need to be able to engage the enemy without fear of putting civilian bystanders in the crossfire. They load people up in buses, trucks, and Humvees and take them to refugee camps. Even people with their own vehicles who are planning to leave town are instead diverted to the refugee camps, despite their objections.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ With the living dead closing in, the PCs witness a soldier shooting someone who resists the evacuation.
- ✱ A pair of soldiers in a Humvee stop the PCs and demand they come with them. The soldiers don't take "no" for an answer.
- ✱ Some armed people hole up in their home and refuse to vacate, shooting if the soldiers come close. The PCs might be caught inside, whether they want to stay or not.
- ✱ The PCs come across an apparently abandoned military vehicle.
- ✱ A panicking person asks the PCs for help hiding from pursuing soldiers.
- ✱ The PCs find some dead soldiers who still have all their equipment and weapons. The gear could be very helpful, but might get the PCs in big trouble if any soldiers see them with it.
- ✱ A soldier, clearly on edge and close to the breaking point, yells at a woman with a crying baby, telling her to "shut it up." He gets angrier and angrier as the wailing goes on.

PROTEST



PROTESTS soon spring up everywhere, but especially in the big city. Some are fairly organized, while others are complete chaos. In many cases, there isn't a single message; different protesters protest different things. Some protesters aren't even sure what they're trying to accomplish; it's just how they react to the chaos and confusion.

Most demonstrators protest either the mandatory evacuation or the military's handling of it. Some demonstrate for the rights of the undead, protesting the military's "murder" of them. These people might claim that the undead still have rights, or simply that it's inhumane to kill them before a cure can be found.

Some protests are religiously motivated, calling for repentance and spreading the message that the plague of undead is God's judgment.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ A large group of protesters blocks the PCs' way. If the PCs try to force their way through, it could cause trouble with the protesters or the authorities who are trying to break up the demonstration.
- ✱ The PCs witness the police or military tear-gassing and beating protesters who refuse to break it up or evacuate. Even if they don't try to help, they might be mistaken for more protesters.
- ✱ A group of protesters chain themselves around a building to prevent the police or military from killing the numerous living dead inside.
- ✱ The PCs are caught in a tense standoff between protesters and police or military. Everyone is on edge, and a single wrong move could spark violence.
- ✱ An organized protest turns chaotic when the living dead appear and attack the crowd.
- ✱ Religious protesters block the PCs' path, shouting that they must repent or join the walking dead.

REFUGEE CAMP



CITIZENS rounded up in the evacuation are brought to refugee camps. Some people arrive voluntarily, hoping for the military's protection. They don't always realize that there's no option to leave once there. Although constantly reminded it is for their own good, they are essentially prisoners.

The camps have a high military presence guarding against the living dead, but also making sure no refugees leave. Surrounding the camp is a fence, which might even be electrified. Most of the shelters are simple tents, and people are grouped together with whomever they arrived with. Movement between the tents or around the camp is heavily restricted.

As the days wear on, the camp might get quite dirty and overcrowded, as more refugees continue to arrive, voluntarily or not. Clean water and food begin to run short, leading to further restlessness among the refugees and soldiers.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ☛ The PCs evaded the roundup, but friends or family are being held in the camp.
- ☛ Someone in the PCs' tent asks for their help in escaping.
- ☛ One of the PCs' fellow refugees seems sick, or is even bleeding. He claims he wasn't bitten but refuses to get medical treatment.
- ☛ A refugee tries to flee the camp, and the PCs witness the guards violently restraining him.
- ☛ The living dead overwhelm the guards and enter the camp.
- ☛ A rabble-rouser begins inciting the refugees at the mess tent to anger, threatening to start a riot. The PCs might not object in principle, but how will the soldiers react?

SMALL TOWN



THE military more than has its hands full with the cities, leaving small, remote towns to fend for themselves. People who object to the military's actions see this as a good thing, and some who escape the military roundups head for such towns. In some ways, the towns' smaller populations work to the inhabitants' advantage. The number of dead to deal with is smaller, and with the advantage of plentiful guns, the residents might be able to keep the problem in check.

The PCs might live in such a town, or they might flee to one after the dead begin to rise.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ☛ The PCs arrive in a small town, only to find that the residents don't want strangers in their community. Soon the living dead arrive, and the residents blame the PCs for leading them there.
- ☛ The violence of the living dead has reignited an old feud between two families, and the PCs are caught in the middle.
- ☛ Friendly-seeming residents try to scam the PCs, intending to take everything they have and kick them out on their own at gunpoint.
- ☛ The town's residents, heeding the words of televangelists, believe that only sinners come back from the dead. Rather than fighting the undead, they decide to let themselves die and face judgment.
- ☛ The PCs find a town where people are trying to restrain the living corpses of their family members, refusing to kill them or allow anyone else to do so.
- ☛ The military finally arrives to evacuate the town, but the well-armed residents are having none of it.



CIVILIAN

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	3	2	3	2	3

Features: +Strength in Numbers, -Panicked.

Equipment: Cell phone, wallet, nice clothing.

Day Job: Civilians each have one additional positive feature based on what they did before the apocalypse (such as "+Surgeon" or "+Police Officer").

PROTESTER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	2	1	3	3	2

Features: +Indignant, +Strength in Numbers, -Abrasive.

Equipment: Smelly bandana, misspelled sign.



SOLDIER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
4	3	2	3	2	2

Features: +Military Training, +Voice of Authority, -By the Book.

Equipment: M16A4 rifle (1 negative die, +5 damage), one remaining magazine, helmet and pads (+1 physical resistance), uniform, MREs, canteen.



ZOMBIE

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
1	4	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Unyielding, +Horrifying, -Mindless, -Shambling.

Equipment: Filthy clothes.

It Won't Die! Zombies have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29), due to their inability to feel pain or be killed by conventional means.

Bite of the Living Dead: When a zombie deals physical stress to a living character with a melee attack, there is a chance it bit the character. When a character gains a physical trauma, if any of the stress removed to gain the trauma was caused by a zombie's physical attack, roll a d6. If result of the roll is a 1 or 2, the trauma gained is a "Bite" physical trauma, which follows different rules than a normal trauma (on any other result, gain a standard trauma).

The bite of a zombie is a slow, painful death sentence. A character suffering from a "Bite" trauma cannot recover from it or any other physical trauma he or she is suffering.



NO ROOM IN HELL

NO ROOM IN HELL

POST-APOCALYPSE



They said it was the end of the world, and they were mostly right. The planet is still here, and even some of the people, but nothing is like it used to be. The cities still stand, but their occupants are all dead—standing, walking dead. Maybe there are fewer than there used to be, but then again, there are also a lot fewer of us. The best way to stay alive is to avoid the cities and stick to back roads and rural areas, where there aren't as many walking around and survivors have done a good job clearing them out.

I don't think anyone knows how many people are still alive. Communication is unreliable and getting worse all the time. We haven't seen another group for two weeks. For all I know, everyone else is dead by now. But I don't think so. We've seen fortified camps of ex-soldiers; they seemed pretty secure. I know the military failed back when things first began, but that was different. The military was still playing by the old rules, not like now.

There's also the religious nuts. I try to stay away from them and suggest you do the same. Sure, they offer a safe place for the night and a hot meal, but I've known too many people who took up that offer only to never leave. They said it was their choice, but I knew something was wrong.

WHETHER sent as a judgment from above or not, the dead claimed the Earth, and civilization ended. Governments collapsed long ago, and the few people left are too busy simply surviving to worry about rebuilding society—at least not a society like there once was. Several religious groups—some might call them cults—including the followers of Walton Greggs have formed their own communities. Some of these have even grown pretty big, but they're insular. They don't want things back the way they were; they're more concerned with what comes after death. But don't they see that it's staring them right in the face?

THE DEAD OWN THE EARTH

After the military failed to halt the living dead and all levels of government collapsed, there was no one left to oppose the hordes of walking corpses. Although bands of survivors are still around, they survived not by fighting the endless numbers of living dead—an impossible task—but by fleeing the population centers, where the dead were most numerous, and either establishing defensible positions in isolated regions or staying on the move. Both of these options have their own dangers. Some survivors establish semi-permanent camps, realizing that they might have to abandon the camps if a large number of the dead ever find them.

In places where the dead have not seen a fresh meal for some time, they often become sedentary, even lying

down as if they were truly dead. Consequently, survivors who enter a city or town might see no initial signs of the living dead—no corpses shambling in the streets or hordes of them standing about. There could be a few seemingly dead corpses in sight, or the place might seem eerily empty. This could lull the PCs into dropping their guard, a potentially fatal mistake. For when these living souls make their presence known, the dead rise and come after them. This might happen suddenly, a large horde of undead rousing if the survivors make a commotion, or it might happen slowly, with individual walkers ambushing them when they enter buildings or other confined spaces.

TRUE BELIEVERS

Some of the largest, most well-organized and well-supplied groups of survivors are religious sects, such as those organized by Walton Greggs and others taking their inspiration from him. These groups are fanatically devoted to their leaders, believing that their teachings hold the key to salvation. The community and promise the religious cults offer have always attracted people. This effect is only heightened now that the perils of sin are so visible, at least according to the prophets, preachers, and beloved leaders. Hell is full, so sinners, unable to enter heaven, are cast back into their bodily forms and driven by all-consuming hunger. The leaders of these sects and cults offer various explanations for why the living dead are mindless and hunger for human flesh; most have something to do with the fact that, according to them, the undead sinners allowed their bodily desires to rule them in life and so are cursed to continue hungering in death.

Such groups are so well-supplied and efficient because of the fanatical devotion of the followers. Their leaders preach salvation as the result of hard work and virtuous living, and their adherents are glad to comply. Whereas other groups of survivors are prone to strife, disagreements, and competition for leadership, the cults do not have these problems. Salvation is always a strong motivator, especially when the alternative is unlife as a walking corpse. Cult members fulfill any demands the leaders place on them. Guarding compounds, tilling fields, even preparing and serving meals. The cult leaders enjoy lives of luxury (at least as much as is possible in these difficult times) built through the back-breaking labor of their followers.

PCs are probably unlikely to join a cult, but then, almost no one does intentionally. The cults lure people in by posing as benevolent religious groups, and some might even play down their true beliefs until a potential member falls further under their sway. PCs might run into conflict with a cult because they accept the cult's hospitality and then try to leave, or perhaps simply in the course of competing for resources.

PRAGMATIC SURVIVALISTS

Most survivors have no aspirations of redemption or salvation. Instead of thinking about the afterlife, they focus only on staying alive as long as they can. Such groups run the gamut from humanitarian idealists ready to assist anyone in need to piratical raiders looking out only for themselves and victimizing any who cross their path. Most people who have survived this long are very capable or resourceful—or remorseless—and many of them have a military background. Others are self-trained or have simply benefited from the protection of others.

Survivalist groups are commonly led by individuals with a background in the military or police forces. Whether these people still wear their old uniforms to inspire respect in others, or whether they abandon their old life completely, depends entirely on the individual. Some groups lack a clear leader; either several individuals are locked in competition for the spot or the survivalists operate on group consensus. Both approaches can cause problems when life-or-death decisions must be made in a hurry.

These groups vary wildly in size from a handful of individuals to communities of dozens. The larger groups are relatively rare and more likely to have a stationary, defensible position of some sort. The PCs constitute a small group of survivors on their own, but they might also decide to team up with other survivors. It's possible they might stick with people they met during the early days of the apocalypse or whom they already knew. If they are on their own, however, they are likely to eventually run into other groups of survivors, who might suggest joining forces. If the PCs prefer to build their own group from scratch, they can encounter isolated survivors, whether specifically looking for them or by sheer chance.

REMNANTS

Although the branches of the United States military no longer exist as institutions, there are a few units of varying sizes still operating, from understrength squads to companies or larger military formations. What sets these members of the military apart from other groups of survivors, many of which do include ex-military, is how they view and comport themselves. They still consider themselves the military of the United States, answerable to protocol, the chain of command, and the rule of law. Of course, without the ability to communicate with the larger government, if it still exists, the commanding officers of these units must make their own decisions. Some units hole up in fortified bases, waiting for a day when they receive orders. Others scour the countryside, putting down the dead and searching for survivors to assist. Not all survivors are inclined to trust military forces, though, either due to bad memories of the military's actions at the beginning of these dark times, or because of encounters with deserters behaving like thieves.

If the PCs cooperated with the military evacuation and their refugee camp, it's possible they might still be under military protection in the years following the apocalypse. As before, this offers the advantage of well-armed soldiers to defend them from the undead, but the drawback of limited freedom to move about on their own and make decisions about survival strategies. Alternatively, the PCs might come across such a unit and hope to take advantage of the protection it can offer.

Military units could operate very differently at this time, depending on the unit's condition and the outlook of its leadership. As far as protection goes, if the soldiers are running low on supplies, ammunition, and personnel, they might not be able to offer the security they once did. Some military units, considering the circumstances, might be inclined to cooperate with civilians, treating them nearly as equals, perhaps out of the necessity of replenishing losses. However, without the oversight of higher-ups in the military or the rule of law, some might instead mistreat civilians, viewing them either as a burden or as free labor.

THE ABANDONED CITY



THE city has changed quite a bit since the time before the dead rose. The buildings are still mostly the same, if a bit dirtier, but some show damage where the military brought out the big guns to deal with the living dead after evacuating the civilians. In some cases, they reduced buildings to rubble to eliminate the dead inside, rather than risk room-to-room combat, where ranged weapons provide less of an advantage.

The signs of the battle against the undead are everywhere: burned out cars, abandoned Humvees and tanks, collapsed tents, moldering sandbags, and desiccated bodies and skeletons. Now, the city belongs almost entirely to the dead. It might not be apparent at first glance, but they are everywhere, lurking, waiting for the living to return.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ☛ The PCs must enter a city to find some much-needed equipment, perhaps medical supplies or abandoned military weapons or gear.
- ☛ The PCs hear a rumor that the city is clear of zombies and people are moving back in and rebuilding. It turns out to be very, very false.
- ☛ The PCs become the targets of a group of people who have lost all vestiges of their humanity, surviving by acting like the enemy. They are filthy, smeared with waste and blood, and survive through cannibalism.
- ☛ The dead are walking around the streets almost like they are going somewhere. On further inspection, some of them are going through routine motions that correspond to their ragged clothing—mail carriers are opening and closing mailboxes, street vendors are pushing carts, and office workers are holding cellphones.
- ☛ The PCs spot a helicopter on the roof of a building. It might be the only way to escape the necropolis—if it has fuel.

CULT COMPOUND



THE cult compound looks like paradise, at least compared to the rest of the world. It's well kept; the people are clean, friendly, and organized, and there's even fresh food. It's also secure, with fences, gatehouses, and armed guards on duty at all times.

The compound might be built around an existing church, or the cult might have repurposed a building for their temple. The compound includes lush fields that the adherents cultivate, lending a suspiciously idyllic tint to the whole place, despite the devastation and danger lurking just outside the fences.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs discover that an old friend or relative is a member of a cult and is being taken advantage of by its leaders. The friend's life might even be in danger.
- ✱ A group of faithful survivors generously invite the PCs to dine with them and rest in their secure compound. However, they intend to indoctrinate the PCs, one way or another.
- ✱ Whether the PCs are visiting or just passing through, the sect's leader takes an interest in them, offering up a prophecy about their part in important events.
- ✱ The PCs encounter bounty hunters working for a violently radical cult that holds that all nonbelievers must die.
- ✱ The cult's leader dies and reanimates, leading to a complete collapse and chaos as the members' beliefs shatter.
- ✱ The compound comes under attack by a rival sect that can no longer tolerate the "heresy" of the first group.
- ✱ The cult's leader claims to receive a vision and decrees that the entire group must abandon everything they have worked so hard for and go on a pilgrimage.

REFUGE



REFUGES take a variety of forms, from rolling caravans of RVs, trucks, and other vehicles; to fortified buildings; to entire towns fenced off to keep out the undead. Regardless of the form the refuge takes, the survivors within it are desperate, struggling to make it through each day. They must constantly worry about resources and the threat of the undead.

The PCs might be established members of a refuge, or they might visit one during the course of their travels. Regardless of how well they know the other residents, the atmosphere is almost always tense, and things can always get worse.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Either by random selection or because it's their turn, the PCs must leave the refuge in search of specific, needed supplies.
- ✱ The PCs are accused of being spies for a radical cult or a rival group.
- ✱ Due to carelessness or an act of sabotage, a horde of living dead gain access to the refuge.
- ✱ The refuge's leader decides to attack a cult compound for their supplies and land, even though they haven't made any threatening moves.
- ✱ Several of the occupants fall severely ill. Some of the others want to kick them out before it spreads, or even because of the danger they'll die suddenly and reanimate.
- ✱ Several people are competing for the position of leader, and it won't be long before things get violent.
- ✱ Someone snaps and decides everyone would be better off dead than living in this world.
- ✱ The survivors pick up a radio broadcast with a repeating message promising a safe place with plenty of supplies, power, and even running water in a particular city. The group is split on whether it's worth the risk of traveling to reach this location.

RELIGIOUS PROPHET

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
1	2	2	4	5	3

Features: +Demagogue, +Fanatical Followers, +True Believer, -Hubris.

Equipment: Expensive clothes, religious pamphlets, symbol of faith.

Path to Eternal Rest: Characters who die in the presence of a Religious Prophet do not come back as zombies.



MILITARY LEADER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	2	4	5	4	1

Features: +Military Training, +Natural Leader, +Tactician, -Overbearing, -Ruthless.

Equipment: Beretta M9 (1 positive die, +3 damage), dress saber (2 positive dice, +3 damage), dress uniform.

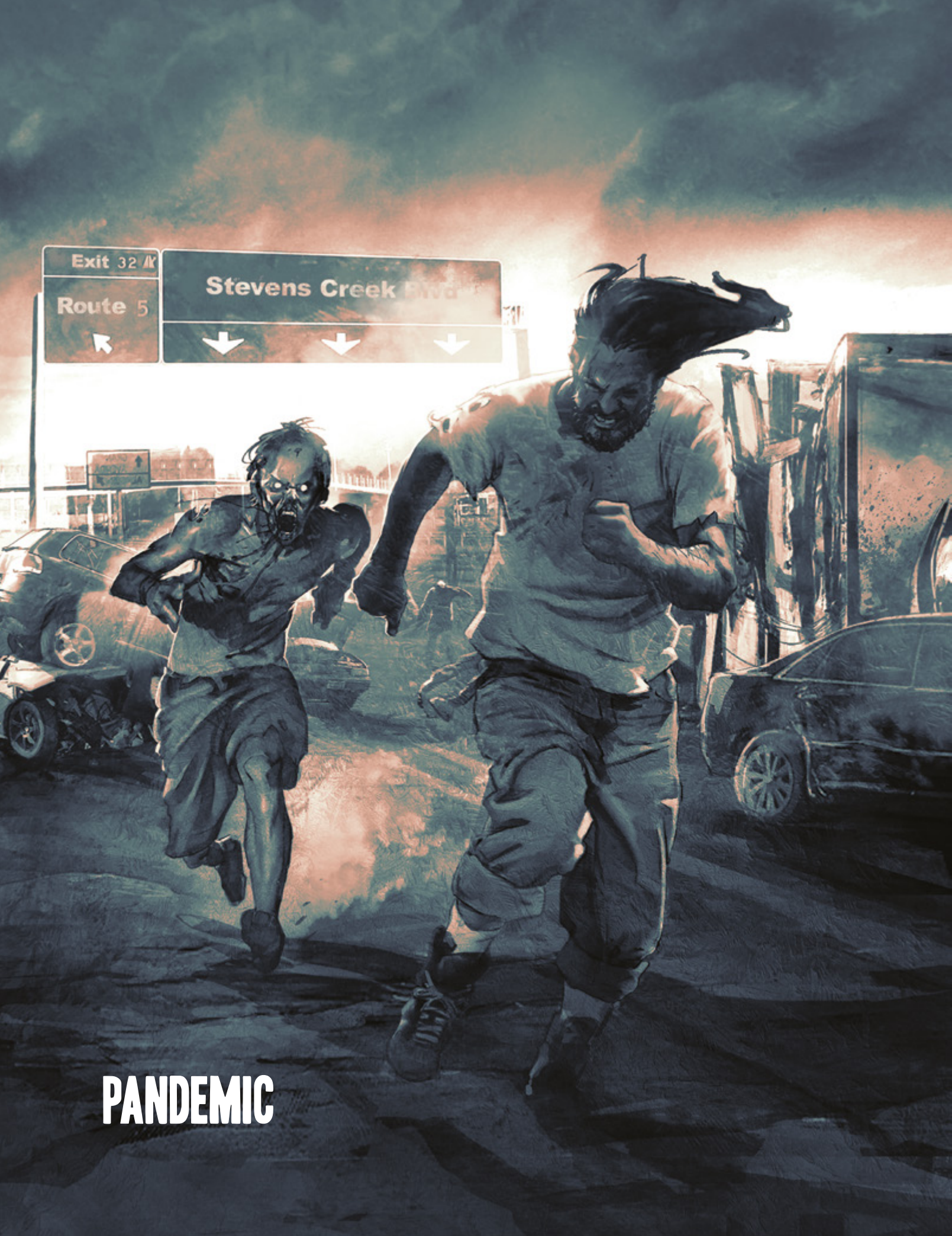
CULT BOUNTY HUNTER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
4	3	2	2	3	1

Features: +Live Capture, +Tracker, -Loyal to No One.

Equipment: M16A4 rifle (1 negative die, +5 damage), taser (1 negative die, +3 damage), bulletproof vest (+1 physical resistance), cable ties, symbol of faith.





Exit 32
Route 5
Stevens Creek Blvd

PANDEMIC

PANDEMIC

APOCALYPSE



There have been plagues before, but nothing like this. If the people who got sick could just die, without taking all their neighbors down with them—literally—that would be just great. But that's not how it is. No one knows what this is, or where it came from, but the so-called experts think it's a virus. "Possibly an evolution of the rabies virus," they say. But then why does it only affect humans? No answer for that one. How it spreads is clear enough, though. Infected saliva or blood. So don't get bitten by an Infected, or let one bleed on you. In fact, probably best just to keep your distance from the Infected to begin with. Yeah, if only it were that easy. Those things are fast.

Things fell apart pretty quick. By the time anyone had any idea what was happening, the Infected were everywhere. Where did it start? Maybe no one really knows—it spread so rapidly—but signs indicate that patient zero was a perfectly normal someone in a perfectly normal town.

IN **Pandemic**, the Player Characters find themselves trapped at the epicenter of the outbreak of a new and unprecedented disease, a viral plague that turns victims into frenzied and homicidal animals with no fear, no thoughts of self-preservation, no sense of pain, and no pity. Their only drive is a thirst for violence, an all-consuming desire to vent their rage on un-Infected humans.

These are not the living dead, at least not in the traditional sense, but living humans driven into unthinking frenzy and stripped of their personality by a virus. Even a scratch or the slightest contact with infected blood is enough to transmit the virulent disease, which has an incubation time measured in mere hours. It spreads quickly, overwhelming the civil authorities before they can put any sort of effective quarantine in place.

And these are not the shambling, dimly aware zombies of midnight movies. The Infected are fast, cunning predators. The virus pushes their bodies to their limits and beyond, imbuing them with adrenaline-fueled speed and heightening all their senses. There is nowhere to hide, and nowhere to run. The Infected don't get tired, they don't care if their feet are worn raw and bloody, and they don't give up.

The Infected appear human, and their bodies are those of living, breathing humans, with beating hearts pumping diseased blood through their veins, but their minds are irrevocably damaged. They have lost all sense of self and of others: everything that makes them human. Although medically speaking, they are as alive as they have ever been, perhaps they really are the living dead. Perhaps it was inevitable that the smallest of microorganisms would bring the end of civilization.

THE EXPERIENCE

The infection first appears in the PCs' town or city, placing them right in the thick of things before the authorities have time to stage a response. This means the PCs are some of the first witnesses to the horror of the outbreak, if not the very first. Patient zero might even be someone the PCs know, in which case the game could begin with their witnessing this person's strange conduct prior to succumbing completely to the virus, such as exhibiting frenetic behavior while at the same time running a high fever. Alternatively, the GM might allow events to build somewhat before directly affecting the PCs. Maybe a coworker or acquaintance suddenly came down sick and had to be rushed to the hospital, or just disappeared overnight.

The PCs' first encounter with an Infected could occur almost anywhere—they might all be gathered at someone's home (maybe even for game night), out in a public place, or at work, as long as there's a reason for them to all be together. The encounter should take place before complete panic has overcome the community, although the GM could have the PCs hear some rumors first to build tension. Rumors might come from friends, news reports, or online. No one knows what's happening at first, and details are sketchy and contradictory. The PCs might hear stories of a rabies outbreak or news that someone they know went crazy and killed family members before being gunned down by the cops, or any number of other similarly shocking accounts of unexpected violence.

WHAT THE PLAYER CHARACTERS SEE

Initially, the PCs' town or city will appear just as it always has, and the GM should reinforce this to remind the players that the events of the game take place in the world they inhabit every day. Mentioning familiar sights, sounds, and people helps immerse the players in the game. It also helps to highlight the changes to the environment as events unfold. As the outbreak begins in earnest, the first out-of-the-ordinary-things the PCs see are either the Infected themselves or the reactions of other residents, depending on how the GM decides to introduce the situation. Showcasing the panic of others as they board up their homes, clean out grocery store shelves, or even load up their cars to leave town can help raise the tension and get the players anxious about what's happening. On the other hand, if everything seems more or less normal, having a frothing, murderous neighbor burst through the window is even more terrifying.

The Infected themselves are a frightening sight, even more so when they are people the players know. Their eyes are bloodshot, or even bleeding, with no intelligence behind them, only a bestial rage. Each Infected is unique, but most are covered with scratches, scrapes, cuts, and other minor wounds, while some have severe injuries, from deep bite wounds to broken bones poking through their skin. These wounds come from a variety of sources, including the attacks that infected them in the first place, victims defending themselves, and objects in the way of their pursuit of prey, as the Infected have no mind to preserve themselves from harm. They are streaked with blood, both their own and victims', and their fingers and mouths are often ragged and bleeding.

The PCs probably have heard of zombies, and they might conclude pretty quickly that this is what they're dealing with. The Infected might be mistaken for the walking dead at first by someone who thinks in such terms. After all, they are smeared with blood and worse, appear mindless, and often have severe visible wounds. After a few encounters, though, it should become clear that the Infected are not dead. This might become evident if the PCs witness an Infected dying from blood loss after being wounded (possibly even from the initial wound that infected it), or if they begin noticing that victims who are actually killed simply stay dead.

Another clue comes from the fact that the Infected move with the same speed and agility they previously had, if not more. The Infected are fast, moving like someone high on adrenaline and with no regard for their personal safety. They aren't all Olympic sprinters, though. The Infected still have the same bodies they did before contracting the virus, but they push those bodies to their limits and beyond. Sprained ankles, concussions, even fractured or broken limbs do not slow them down, at least not much—they ignore the pain and just keep going until their hearts stop.

WHAT IS EVERYONE ELSE DOING?

As one might expect, different people respond to the unfolding events in different ways. Some ways are reasonable, even smart. Others come from a place of sheer panic and fear. Even if the PCs try to keep to themselves and avoid others as things play out, they are bound to have to deal with their fellow citizens at some point. They might find themselves trapped somewhere with other survivors or trying to get past a police roadblock. The actions of others can also affect the PCs indirectly. For instance, if they wait even a few hours before going to a supermarket or other store, there might not be any food or useful supplies left—or any un-Infected employees, for that matter.

Paranoia overcomes many people, who refuse to cooperate with others due to the risk that they might be infected. For these individuals, protecting their family is the only goal, and they might even be willing to kill an un-infected human if they think it necessary. Those

with a strong survivalist mentality are likely to fortify their homes and refuse admittance to anyone, declining to share their stockpiles of food and other supplies and threatening others with a gun if they come close. Some of these types of citizens might have already been prepared for a disaster with stockpiles of food and gear, while others were the first to empty the shelves at supermarkets and other stores. They might resort to looting, but only if it's clear that a business is unable or unwilling to accept their money or work out some other kind of deal. If the PCs are in need of supplies and unable to find them elsewhere, they might come into conflict with these sorts of individuals who hoard provisions and are now unwilling to share.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who fall helpless in the face of the danger and chaos, unwilling or incapable of harming another person, even when that person is frothing at the mouth and trying to tear their face off! These people rely on the authorities for help or, if the authorities are unavailable, look to their more confident and seemingly better-prepared neighbors for guidance and protection—if they even survive that long. Such individuals are unlikely to pose a danger to the PCs, but they might become obstacles nonetheless. They might simply get in the PCs' way at inopportune times, or they might appeal to the PCs for help and protection, either directly or by showcasing their own complete lack of ability to care for themselves in the apocalyptic conditions.

As people become aware of what is happening, they start using a number of terms to refer to those affected by the virus. The most common, especially once the authorities confirm that a viral outbreak is the cause, is "Infected." Other terms include "Cannibals," "Runners," and "Biters." The NPCs whom the Player Characters encounter could use any of these terms or others, depending on their personalities and understandings of the situation.

ANYTHING GOOD ON?

A good way for the PCs to keep informed of just what is going on in the early days of the apocalypse is through the media—TV, radio, Internet sites (including social media), and more. This is just a smart idea from the characters' perspective, but it also gives the GM a convenient way to fill them in on important details and on the bigger picture (at least as much as anyone knows). The GM could also introduce complications to the narrative by feeding the PCs misinformation through the media. However, this is best in small amounts; if the PCs hear a lot of false information through the media, they might stop trusting it completely, which limits its usefulness from the GM's point of view. One way to avoid this is to offer the players conflicting information from two different media sources and leave it up to them to figure out for themselves. For instance, the local news blames the latest designer drug, whereas some people on social media are saying it's a virus the government is testing (well, they're half right, not that the PCs can really confirm or deny the other half).

If the PCs turn on the news during the first day of the outbreak, they hear reports about domestic incidents and violent muggings, but the reports just treat them as isolated incidents, and the details are still sketchy. If reporters interview an eyewitness who talks about the attackers biting and scratching, the hosts just blame it on whatever the drug scare happens to be this week (PCP, bath salts, maybe ecstasy or meth, depending on the town).

By the end of the first day of the outbreak, it's more than clear that something very bad is happening. At this point, the reporting is chaotic and confused, with TV and radio programs reporting details, often contradictory, as they come in. Turning to online sources, including social media, gets the PCs new information a bit faster, but with even more contradictions and falsehoods.

Eventually, these methods of communication go down, due to both technical problems and a simple lack of anyone to operate or utilize them. TV stations are the first to stop broadcasting, switching to an emergency broadcast before going down completely. Radio follows quickly, although some unauthorized operators continue to transmit long after those recognized by the FCC go down. The Internet remains a somewhat reliable method of communication for a time, but without anyone around to maintain servers and facilities, it becomes harder and harder to find a working connection.

WHAT CAN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DO?

The major objective for most PCs is simply to survive. This means evading or fending off Infected while trying to find safety, either shelter somewhere in their city or a way out of the affected area. Unless one of the PCs happens to be a genius virologist, there's not much they can do to stop the spread of the infection. They can kill every Infected they find, but there are far too many of them, and the virus is spreading far too fast. Even the military doesn't have enough ammunition to deal with them all.

The PCs' objectives might include finding and protecting friends and loved ones, or even strangers they happen to cross paths with. Goals might also include getting out of their city or town and as far away as possible in the hope that the infection is isolated. (This is somewhat true, at least at first, but a few Infected individuals who are not showing symptoms leave town in the early stages of the outbreak, so it quickly spreads to neighboring areas and expands from there.)

Initial goals for the PCs should include obtaining provisions, weapons, and other equipment, and finding shelter of some kind. Shelter might take the form of a vehicle, trading some amount of protection for mobility and the option to (hopefully) find a safe zone outside of town. Several of the locations listed on pages 96–98 provide possible sources of shelter.

THE TRUTH

No one expected the pandemic, and a lot of misinformation gets passed around in the early weeks, even from the most educated and well-meaning sources. This section explains what is really going on, but the PCs have to figure it out for themselves.

PATIENT ZERO

Whether or not the PCs are there to witness it, once the virus's incubation period is over, patient zero begins attacking friends and family—whomever is close—in a mindless rage. Even if subdued quickly, patient zero manages to bite or scratch at least one person. Since no one has any idea what's going on, even if any initial victims get medical attention, it doesn't help. The next attacks might very well occur in a hospital. Overnight, the virus takes hold and, before dawn, the first Infected are breaking into nearby homes and businesses and attacking others. By daybreak, the infection is starting to spread throughout the community.

As the virus expands its reach, panic grips the community, and life falls into chaos. Neighbors, friends, and family are completely losing control of themselves and, bizarrely, attacking everyone in sight, tearing and clawing and biting. According to some reports, they are even *eating* their victims. The authorities don't know what to do. Although some experts posit that a disease might be the cause, there's no known virus that incubates so fast and has such an effect.

WHAT ARE THEY?

There is no conspiracy here: the virus evolved naturally. It's an evolutionary breakthrough, really. The virus replicates almost impossibly fast and overwhelms the victim's immune system, quickly short-circuiting the brain. Within hours, or a day at most, the Infected becomes a frothing killer, driven by pure rage and desiring only to vent that rage on other humans. Through bites and scratches, the infection spreads. Eventually, an Infected's brain fries out completely and its body shuts down, but by then it might have spread the infection to dozens of others, and that's all the virus needs.

A victim who is killed stays dead. It's those poor unfortunates who are injured but survive who also become infected. If the Infected always killed their victims, the outbreak would sort itself out in short order. The problem is that they usually don't; after all, that wouldn't be in the virus's best interests. Instead, the virus drives the Infected to attack other humans, biting them and tearing at their flesh, and then to move on to the next victim. Only when the Infected are starving do they stop to feed on their prey, and even then it's usually just a few bites, potentially leaving the victim alive to become another Infected. They don't feel pain, and they don't feel much hunger, either, eating just enough to keep their strained



bodies going and spread the virus. The rage is what drives them, not hunger, and they never stop looking for new victims.

Infection doesn't have to occur from an attack, although it is the most common way for the virus to enter someone's bloodstream. The virus lives in the Infected's blood and saliva, so any bite that breaks the skin is almost certain to cause infection. Infected also usually have dried infected blood under their fingernails, or possibly fresh blood, since they have no regard for the well-being of their hands and use their bare fingers to break glass, tear wood, and more. So all it takes for an Infected to pass on the virus is just to scratch someone hard enough to break the skin. A person can even contract the virus by killing an Infected. If infected blood gets in someone's mouth, eyes, nostrils, or any open wounds, the virus can take hold.

An Infected can sense when someone is carrying the virus, even before any symptoms are visible. Although this is not completely reliable, most of the time an Infected will not attack a person who has already contracted the virus. The longer the virus incubates, the safer the Infected individual is from attack. Once people start to figure this out, it feeds into their paranoia. A lot of people who are lucky enough to get through an encounter unscathed find themselves accused of infection and might be killed by their friends or other survivors.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

A mindless and all-consuming rage drives the Infected. This is how the virus spreads, by causing its victims to lash out violently at everyone around them. Infected are running on ultimately fatal levels of adrenaline, so they never stay still. If they do not see any potential victims around them, Infected keep moving until they find one.

Although driven by inchoate anger and incapable of speech, the Infected do retain some degree of their memories but act on them only at an instinctual level. They know where humans can be found, which is why they rampage through residential areas and search homes and other structures for victims instead of just running off into the wilderness. Individual Infected show varying degrees of ingenuity. Most Infected are capable of opening doors, although they are just as likely to bash them down or smash through a nearby window. Some Infected even utilize simple tools and weapons, employing blunt objects to break glass or wielding knives or axes. This level of functioning is generally the case only in the recently Infected, as the virus continues to damage their brains as time goes on.

HOW TO KILL THEM

In reality, the Infected die just as easily as any uninfected person (and human beings are really pretty fragile). What makes them seem so tough is that they are so brain-fried and running on so much adrenaline that they don't feel pain and just ignore anything that doesn't kill them outright. If a regular person jumps out a window and fractures a leg, the pain is going to take that person out of commission. If an Infected does the same thing, it just gets right up and keeps running, completely heedless of the fact that each step is making its injury worse. It will just keep going until the leg breaks completely. Even then, an Infected just drags itself along as best it can.

Hacking off an Infected's arms or legs will kill it eventually, once it bleeds out. In the meantime it will just keep coming, although it will either move slower or have one fewer weapon for its opponent to worry about. Really, only destroying its brain or heart (or separating its brain from the rest of its body) is certain to kill an Infected right away. Damage to the spine might slow one down, but it's no sure thing.

THE INITIAL RESPONSE

The response from the local authorities is confused at first, treating the attacks as separate incidents. While doctors at the hospital are trying to figure out what's wrong with a thrashing, enraged patient, the police are responding to reports of domestic assaults, muggings, and seemingly random attacks in streets, parks, and other public places. However, after the first few hours, the unprecedented violence in the city makes it clear that something is very wrong.

Even before the true extent of the outbreak is apparent, the police and EMTs are stretched thin trying to deal with the barrage of 911 calls. The police are not prepared to deal with something like this, and not just because there is no scanner code for it. The Infected do not respond to anything less than lethal force, and they are usually unarmed. This puts officers in a difficult position when dealing with a single Infected, while a group can quickly overwhelm individual officers or pairs before they can even call for backup. Although SWAT teams are quickly mobilized, even they are unprepared to deal with the Infected. After all, these aren't criminals with logical motivations, or even isolated maniacs, but a pack of frenzied killers that swells their ranks faster than police can put them down.

Within days, the National Guard is called in, followed by the Army. However, the military does not train for fighting like this. The enemy is unarmed, disorganized, relentless, and completely without fear or interest in its own safety. Even worse, the Infected look just like civilians. In fact, they are civilians. That's part of the problem: officers aren't going to authorize their soldiers to fire on unarmed civilians suffering from some sort of illness. A few soldiers do it anyway, and even some officers, either intentionally disobeying orders because they realize the severity of the situation or simply panicking in the face of a terrifying threat. Even once it becomes clear that the Infected must be treated as a hostile force, standard tactics simply do not work. Attempts at suppressing fire are futile, and there are too many Infected to gun down. Flanking the enemy is not an option; the Infected don't seek cover or stay in one place long enough for it to matter. And while this lack of any regard for their own safety might seem to present an advantage, the speed of the Infected and the fact that only kill-shots have any effect mean that hordes of Infected quickly overwhelm soldiers.

INFECTED PRIMES

While most Infected do not display any exceptional abilities, there is a small subset of ones that actually do. A genetic predisposition in some individuals results in additional and more extreme changes due to the virus. These Primes are even faster, inhumanly strong, and able to attack by projectile vomiting infectious stomach acid. This last ability leads to the nickname "Spitters" once the Primes become known. However, this takes some time, as the Primes are so lethal that most attacks leave no survivors.

Their abilities give Primes a number of advantages over other Infected. Their strength and agility allow Primes to scale sheer surfaces, gaining access to locations that survivors might think safe from attack. They also dis-

play a greater degree of cunning than most Infected; they are more likely to use tools and bypass clever defenses such as locked doors and makeshift traps. When Primes do break through defensive measures, they are almost always followed by a horde of other Infected.

The PCs should be quite surprised the first time they see a Prime, and if they hear stories first, they might not even believe them. After all, the other Infected are just humans; they don't have any special abilities. Consequently, the PCs' initial encounter with a Prime (and all the subsequent ones, really) should be suitably terrifying. One way to maximize the Prime's impact is to have the PCs encounter it just when they think they've figured out what's going on, having determined that the Infected don't have any extra abilities beyond those of normal humans other than a capacity to ignore pain.

TIMELINE

Events unfold rapidly after the initial infection, some plain for all to see, others known only to those in certain positions or occupations, if anyone. Depending on the needs of the game, the GM can begin the timeline at any point during the day, but the default assumption is that patient zero displays a full-blown infection a few hours after dark.

00:00:00	The first Infected begins showing symptoms: running a fever, feeling its heart racing, unable to keep still, responding to everything with unprovoked anger.
04:06:00	Patient zero succumbs to the virus and begins viciously attacking everyone in the vicinity. Completely unprepared for the assault, the initial victims (whether family, hospital staff, or strangers) are left injured, confused, and terrified.
05:38:00	The initial victims begin showing symptoms. Some head to the emergency room; others just take some over-the-counter medication and try to sleep.
09:00:00	The initial victims develop full symptoms and begin mindlessly attacking anyone they can find, frantically searching for victims if none are immediately available.
11:11:00	Police respond to reports of initial attacks. One officer reports being forced to fire on a suspect and needing to "empty the mag" to stop the assailant. The coroner's report states that the deceased received seven gunshot wounds before death.
16:29:00	All available police and emergency personnel are called in as the authorities try to isolate the event and determine its cause.
18:53:00	The mayor declares a state of emergency. During the following press conference, the Infected attack the assembled officials and members of the press.
20:44:00	Any businesses that have not already closed (either due to the danger or simply due to lack of available employees) do so.
Day 2	Personnel from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) arrive in the area of the initial outbreak and attempt to determine the cause.
Day 2	Residents begin fleeing in increasing numbers, resulting in traffic jams and a high number of automobile collisions. With first responders already stretched thin, many injured go without aid, leaving them even more vulnerable to attack.
Day 2	Infected rampage throughout the gridlocked traffic, shattering windows and attacking those trapped in their vehicles or trying to flee.
Day 2	The governor declares a state of emergency.

DAY 2	CDC scientists determine that an unknown virus is the cause of the incident.
DAY 2	All traffic into or out of the state is prohibited.
DAY 2	Brownouts begin to occur throughout the area.
DAY 2	Looting and rioting becomes widespread.
DAY 3	Blackouts begin to occur; telephone service suffers interruptions.
DAY 3	The National Guard is deployed to the area of the initial outbreak.
DAY 3	The CDC announces publicly that a virus is the cause of the violent behavior, and that citizens should avoid any physical contact with Infected individuals and especially their bodily fluids.
DAY 3	Neighboring states begin issuing state of emergency declarations.
DAY 5	Blackouts become widespread in the vicinity of the initial outbreak and throughout the surrounding area, as power plants have been running without staff now for some time.
DAY 5	Cell phone service becomes increasingly unreliable.
DAY 6	Increasing numbers of police officers, hospital staff, and other emergency services personnel abandon their duties in order to flee.
DAY 7	Survivors in the areas surrounding the initial outbreak turn on each other in increasing numbers, violently competing for gas and other resources.
DAY 10	The first confirmed outbreak occurs in another country.
DAY 13	The federal government declares a state of emergency.
DAY 15	Canada imposes quarantine, closing the borders and banning all travel to or from the United States. Mexico shortly follows suit.
DAY 41	The President and Vice President of the United States evacuate the White House for an undisclosed secure location.
DAY 42	The Department of Defense imposes quarantine on the Pentagon: Military police enact a thorough sweep of the building, and all staff submit to testing.
DAY 43	The President of the United States is bitten by a member of his Secret Service detail.
DAY 66	The last survivors at the Pentagon, locked inside with hundreds of Infected, take their own lives.
DAY 105	The island of Great Britain suffers a complete civil collapse as Infected overwhelm the military and government. Chaos and panic grip the streets as citizens flee London, only to encounter more Infected in other cities and the countryside.
DAY 171	CDC scientists, in collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), prepare a report predicting that Infected will outnumber non-Infected within 180 days. It is never published officially.
DAY 244	Most branches of the federal government shut down completely. Communication between, and within, remaining branches is unreliable.
DAY 303	The nation and neighboring countries fall into complete anarchy.
YEAR 2	Some survivors begin to form communities. However, resources are scarce and violent gangs quickly out-compete groups that behave peacefully with other survivors.
YEAR 2	Infected begin dying in large numbers as a result of the damage the virus wreaks on the body. Remaining Infected continue to spread the virus, but at a reduced rate due to the smaller and more dispersed population.
YEAR 3	Remaining initial Infected die from the virus. Subsequent generations of Infected continue to spread the virus, although their numbers are greatly diminished.
YEAR 4	The surviving un-Infected population of what was the United States stands at roughly twenty percent of pre-outbreak levels.

APARTMENTS AND HOUSES



APARTMENTS and other homes are likely places of shelter for PCs, but they are far from secure against the Infected. Whether the PCs begin the game in a house or apartment, or enter one seeking shelter as events unfold, private residences can afford only temporary protection at best, and might become deathtraps, depending on layout and accessibility.

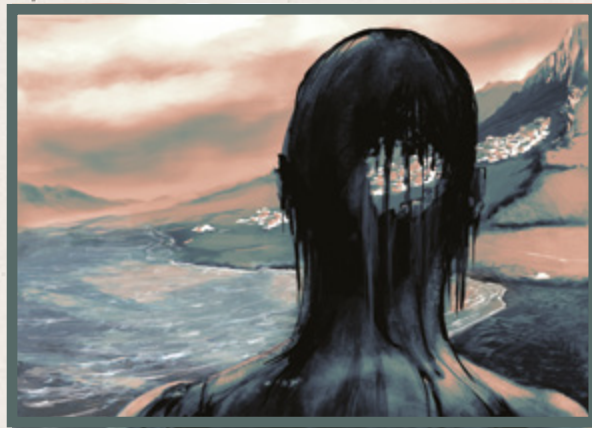
Many residents barricade their homes, attempting to bar entry to fellow survivors as well as Infected. Such attempts might work for a time, but the Infected, being strong and tenacious, are bound to get through eventually. And even if they don't, that leaves the occupants to starve to death.

An apartment building or a home taller than a single story can provide a good vantage point from which to watch for Infected but also has few avenues of escape should Infected invade the structure.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The game could begin in the residence of a PC or friend, with the PCs unprepared for an attack.
- ✱ The PCs search the apartment for supplies, including food, basic tools, and possibly even weapons.
- ✱ The PCs have taken shelter in an unoccupied residence that is not their own. The real residents return from a supply run to find the PCs in their home, and they get angry. The PCs must defuse the situation or flee.
- ✱ Rampaging Infected knock over candles or lanterns, rupture gas lines, or cause an electrical short, starting a fire and forcing the PCs to leave their residence.
- ✱ The apartment is surrounded by Infected in the hall and neighboring units, and the PCs have to get out. The only way is for someone to exit through a window and come back with a vehicle. Alternatively, the house is surrounded by Infected. The PCs must escape via the roof to the nearby, unattached garage and get to the vehicle inside before the Infected get to them.

COAST



As the virus spreads, survivors flee their homes, seeking unaffected areas. With the highways clogged and airports shut down, many head for the coast, hoping to find passage on a ship to a location safe from the virus's impact. However, there are far more would-be passengers than there are available vessels, leading to conflict and chaos on the shoreline. Meanwhile, the Navy and Coast Guard desperately try to clear the area for their own purposes. Should the PCs successfully travel by ship, they will eventually find themselves arriving at another coast, with its own set of problems.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Panicking people wade out into the ocean, desperately trying to climb aboard departing ships as Infected chase them to a watery grave.
- ✱ With a federal order imposing quarantine, Coast Guard and Navy personnel attempt to block any civilian vessels from departing, even boarding them or firing on them if necessary.
- ✱ A seemingly abandoned ship drifts just off the shore. The PCs might be able to swim to it, but what is waiting for them aboard?
- ✱ As Infected slaughter helpless people in the water and the military guns down Infected, the waters fill with blood, attracting sharks or other predatory marine life.
- ✱ As the PCs make their way along the beach, hidden Infected burst out of the sand to ambush them.
- ✱ The PCs are stranded at the end of a pier with other survivors as Infected close in.
- ✱ The PCs find a small outboard prop motor in a dockside garage, which might make an effective, if messy, weapon.

HIGHWAY



As the outbreak spreads, people flee the city in droves, clogging the highways and bringing traffic to a standstill in many places. The highways quickly become impassable due to wrecks and multivehicle pileups. These are the results not only of panicked and careless drivers, but also of drivers' succumbing to the effects of the virus while on the road. Not knowing the conditions ahead, drivers continue to head for the highways, making things increasingly worse and providing a ripe killing ground for the Infected.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ⊗ An out-of-control vehicle is coming right at the PCs as its Infected driver succumbs to the virus's effects.
- ⊗ The PCs see someone trapped in a wrecked vehicle, screaming for help as Infected close in.
- ⊗ Gasoline pools around wrecked vehicles, forming a dangerous fire hazard.
- ⊗ The PCs' vehicle becomes trapped in the gridlock. Behind them, other cars are blaring their horns and revving threateningly, while up ahead they can see traffic completely stopped and Infected rampaging among the vehicles.
- ⊗ As the PCs finally hit a stretch of open road, a passenger in their vehicle begins to show symptoms.
- ⊗ As they idle in traffic, a group of survivors attacks them, trying to steal their vehicle.
- ⊗ A number of wrecked vehicles completely block the road. The PCs must either abandon their vehicle, find a way to move the vehicles, or somehow exit the highway.
- ⊗ A burning tractor-trailer barrels down the highway, smashing through everything in its path.
- ⊗ The PCs find an apparently abandoned RV full of supplies.

DEVASTATED HOSPITAL



As a destination for those who begin showing symptoms during the initial stages of the outbreak, the hospital is hit hard and hit early. As their symptoms progress, these patients begin attacking hospital staff and other patients, and the entire campus is soon overrun by Infected. Within days, the hospital, once a place of healing, is a nightmare of mutilated corpses, its halls littered with overturned gurneys and medical waste, and smeared with blood. However, the hospital is still a prime source of much-needed medical supplies, drawing survivors in spite of the dangers.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ⊗ The PCs hear that CDC scientists working out of the hospital were close to, or even had developed, a cure for the virus. The only way to be sure is to go there and search for it.
- ⊗ One of the PCs or another member of their group is severely injured, and only proper medical supplies can possibly save the character's life.
- ⊗ The PCs find a ward with dozens of thrashing Infected strapped down tight. The sight, or smell, of un-Infected humans drives them even deeper into their rage, and it's only a matter of time before they snap their bonds. To make things worse, the PCs might have no choice but to cross this potential deathtrap.
- ⊗ A ragtag militia has claimed a wing of the hospital and is refusing to share medical supplies.
- ⊗ Thanks to quick-thinking hospital staff who barricaded the doors of the wing, some of the sick and injured patients still survive. However, the Infected are battering at the entrance. Those inside don't have long to live, unless the PCs help.

OLD FORT



ALTHOUGH it has been little more than a tourist destination for years, the old fort really did once serve as a defensible position, at least in theory. These days, it probably wouldn't stand up to modern military weapons—but it might serve to hold off the hordes of rampaging Infected.

The old fort has a number of doors, and if these are secured, Infected have a difficult time breaching the perimeter. Parapets provide survivors with safe positions from which to monitor the activities of the Infected as well as to fire from, if they have guns.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ⊗ Other survivors have already barricaded themselves inside the fort, and the PCs must convince them to unbar the gates.
- ⊗ The PCs find antique weapons and replicas in display cabinets or backroom storage areas, including sabers and even a few firearms kept in working condition for demonstrations.
- ⊗ Vending machines and gift shops provide a significant supply of food and drink.
- ⊗ Inside the fort, one of the survivors begins showing signs of infection, and the PCs must keep the paranoid occupants from turning on each other.
- ⊗ Although they can't get through the gates, the Infected are swarming the fort in such numbers that they form a living tide, allowing some to reach the top of the wall.
- ⊗ The Infected break through the glass door of the gift shop, forcing the PCs and other survivors to fall back to a higher level of the fort.
- ⊗ The PCs discover old tunnels below the fort. These might provide an escape route, or they may already be overrun with Infected.
- ⊗ Soldiers arrive, intending to occupy the fort and establish a base camp. They might order the PCs to leave or they might offer protection.

SHIP



WHETHER on the ocean or an inland waterway, travel by ship is possibly the safest method of travel. Although Infected can swim, they are far from skilled at it, and climbing aboard a boat is difficult. Watercraft, from small fishing boats to large seagoing vessels, make for a superior defensible position, and they offer perhaps the only real chance of escaping from the area of infection.

Depending on the size of the ship and the PCs' own skills and training, they might crew the vessel on their own or simply become passengers on anything from a small fishing tug to a cruise liner.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ⊗ Once the voyage is well underway, one or more of the passengers or crew start running a fever, which they try to hide from the others.
- ⊗ Pirates—possibly fellow survivors—attack, after the PCs' ship or provisions.
- ⊗ One or more Infected claw their way from the water onto the ship before anyone sees them, and the PCs must fight them off before the vessel is overwhelmed.
- ⊗ A Navy or Coast Guard ship radios the PCs' vessel, ordering them to turn back.
- ⊗ The PCs' ship receives an SOS from another vessel. They must decide whether to investigate and risk the possibility of exposing themselves to Infected.
- ⊗ Far from shore, the ship begins to run out of provisions, confronting the passengers with the threat of starvation or dehydration.
- ⊗ The PCs arrive at their destination, only to find their access barred due to the threat of infection. They must somehow get past the authorities and reach the shore.

INFECTED

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
4	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Feels No Pain, +Horrible, +Relentless Pursuit, -Single-Minded.

Equipment: Filthy clothes.

It Won't Die! Infected have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29), due to their inability to feel pain or be killed by conventional means.

Infected Wound: When an Infected deals physical stress to a living character with a melee attack, it infects the character with its disease. When a character gains a physical trauma, if any of the stress removed to gain the trauma was caused by the physical attack of an Infected, the trauma gained is an "Infection" physical trauma, and it follows different rules than those for a normal trauma.

The infection is aggressive, and it can only be stopped with immediate treatment and a bit of luck. Regardless of the severity of an "Infection" trauma, the character can attempt a test to treat the trauma after only a day of treatment, but must add negative dice to the test equal to the severity of the trauma. If the character fails the test, or if the treatment for the day is interrupted, the infection worsens and the character gains an additional "Infection" physical trauma with the same severity as the original. If this would put the character above three physical traumas, he or she dies (see page 31).



INFECTED PRIME

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
5	4	3	N/A	N/A	N/A

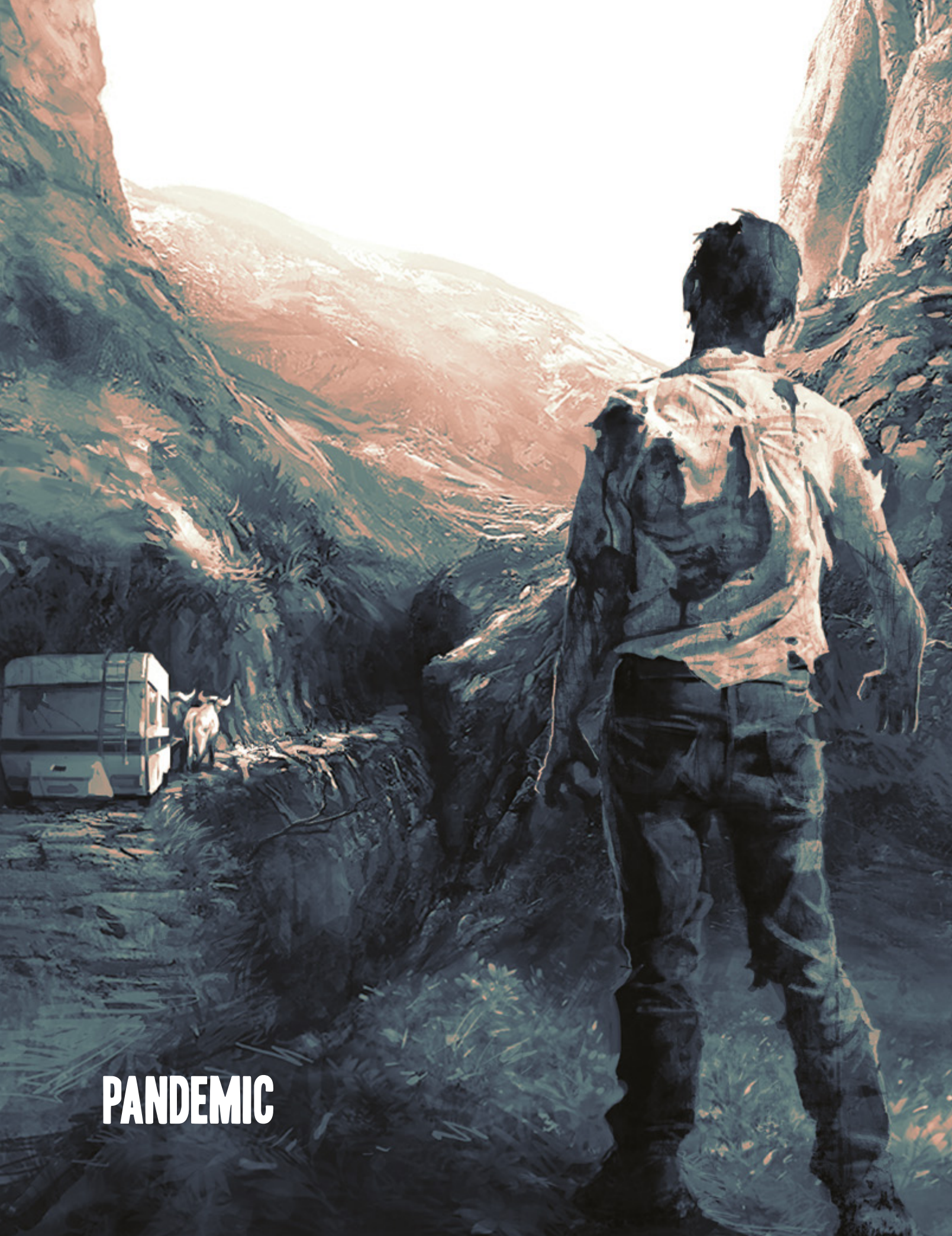
Features: +Feels No Pain, +Horrible, +Relentless Pursuit, +Unnatural Athleticism.

Equipment: Filthy clothes.

It Won't Die! Infected Primes have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29), due to their inability to feel pain or be killed by conventional means.

Spew Bile: Infected Primes can spew bile from their mouths, infecting those it comes into contact with. As its action for the turn, an Infected Prime can spray bile up to 10 meters. Any character who is in the path of the bile must make a Vitality test with 1 added negative die. Any character who fails this test suffers infection and will gain an "Infection" trauma as his or her next physical trauma (see **Infected Wound** below).

Infected Wound: See Infected NPC profile above.



PANDEMIC

PANDEMIC

POST-APOCALYPSE



The tide of Infected eventually receded, but by that time, the damage was already done. In just a few short years, the virulent plague decimated the population and collapsed government, society, and civilization. With no infrastructure, survivors must scavenge supplies while producing what little food they can, ever watchful for attacks by Infected or vicious gangs of raiders. The last vestiges of true civilization are gone, and most survivors have seen—and committed—indescribable horrors just to stay alive.

Without means of long-distance communication, many residents of the former United States have no way to know if things are this bad everywhere, or only in their area. However, the reports that came in before everything fell apart completely did not sound good, as the virus had spread to countries around the world. Nevertheless, some make their way down the desolate highways in an

attempt to find somewhere safe from the outbreak, or at least not completely ravaged.

As bad as things are, an unexpected boon came from the very nature of the virus, as it eventually kills off Infected. Although the possibility of Infected still threatens the survivors at every moment, the number of the Infected is nothing like those of the massive hordes that brought the country crashing down. Perhaps there might even be hope to rebuild the country, if the land were not in the grip of the gangs. In the power vacuum left after the collapse, gangs of all stripes have claimed power, and many now terrorize other survivors. Some of these gangs are every bit as vicious and remorseless as the Infected, proving once again that human beings don't need a mind-altering microbe to behave like monsters.

THE UNITED STATES OF NOTHING

The plague wiped out most of the country's population. Most whom the Infected didn't kill outright joined their ranks, only to die at the hands of un-Infected survivors or when the virus wore their bodies out. Those who are left can broadly be distinguished as survivors and gangs, the distinction being that survivors do just that—survive—while gangs take advantage of the anarchy to claim power.

Now, isolated pockets of survivors eke out a living in remote areas while gangs roam the highways and Infected hunt for prey through empty cityscapes. Although the Infected are much fewer than a few years ago, there are still plenty around. The urban areas are their favorite hunting grounds, perhaps because of dim memories of the kinds of places in which humans congregate. When the panicked population evacuated, they stripped the cities and towns mostly bare of provisions and anything useful, while some even looted useless junk like TVs and other electronics. Of course, there are bound to be still-untouched supplies in a few overlooked warehouses and corpse-choked bomb shelters, but finding them, gathering the provisions, and getting out safely is no small feat.

For the most part, the outbreak didn't cause significant structural damage. Infected broke a lot of windows, occasional panicking or Infected drivers crashed into buildings, and the military response inflicted considerable collateral damage in certain areas, but the towns and cities are still standing, just empty and dark. The power plants all shut down early on. Portable generators can be useful, but fuel is hard to find, and gangs are more than willing to kill for it.

THE INFECTED

There might very well have been no un-Infected survivors remaining were it not for the long-term effects of the virus itself. The brain damage and constant barrage of adrenaline ravage the body, leading Infected to eventually burn out and die. Within a few years, all those infected during the initial weeks and months of the outbreak died off. Although subsequent "generations" of Infected continue to pose a considerable threat, they are rarely encountered in large numbers. Individual Infected are just as dangerous as they ever were, but survivors have become adept at evading them or attacking from a position of strength. Those who did not acquire such skills did not survive to the present day. Survivors are wary and always alert for any sign of Infected, and most know what precautions to take to avoid contact with infected blood during a fight. Consequently, new infections are occurring less frequently, even as the existing population of Infected dies off.

Perhaps the greatest factor currently shrinking the ranks of Infected is the many gangs that control the continent. Not only are the armed and violent gangs capable of defending themselves quite reliably against Infected

attacks, but many of them actively engage in hunting down and eliminating Infected. Whether the motivation for this is the survival of humanity, anger and fear, or simply a grotesque source of entertainment depends entirely on the individual gang.

While all this seems to point to a coming day when the Infected will no longer pose a threat, it is more likely that the virus will never be completely eradicated. True, the remaining Infected are small in number compared to previous years, but the surviving human population is also a mere fraction of what it once was. It is perhaps more likely that the ever-decreasing number of survivors and Infected will continue to kill each other off until no humans, Infected or not, remain alive.

THE GANGS

After the collapse of society and all levels of government, the dominant forces across much of the world are the gangs. Gangs exist in huge variety. Perhaps the only universal defining feature is that they are semi-organized groups founded on violence and capable of displaying the force necessary to protect themselves and force their will on others. Some gangs existed as criminal groups before the outbreak; others formed from survivors afterward. Many gangs are highly mobile, mounted on an assortment of vehicles, especially motorcycles. This mobility allows them to stay ahead of the Infected and competitors for resources. Many gangs of this kind have no defined territory, as they are constantly moving in search of additional food and supplies.

Some gangs have stationary bases of operations, fortified positions with heavily armed guards patrolling at all hours of the day and night. These range from remote compounds to re-purposed police stations and even military bases. Some such gangs take a combined approach, maintaining a base from which they set out to patrol their territory and raid surrounding areas, either on foot or in converted paramilitary vehicles.

The gangs vary in other ways, too. For many, the catch-all term "gang" doesn't quite fit. Some protect communities and survivors who are unable to protect themselves, expecting only that the communities provide whatever assistance they can in the form of food or other resources. On the opposite pole are vicious bands of raiders, and even cannibals.

Such gangs are likely antagonists for the PCs in the years following the apocalypse, blocking their path, targeting their resources, or extorting them. However, it's also possible that some PCs might join a gang, possibly as a survival necessity, or even out of a genuine desire for such a lifestyle.

THE OTHER SURVIVORS

Although a few survivors scrape by independently, most have to form communities to survive. These range from a handful of individuals—perhaps just a couple of families—up to large groups of dozens or more. Most survivors must move frequently in order to evade the Infected and the gangs, but some establish remote or otherwise defensible compounds. Some such communities raise crops and even livestock. Although this self-sufficiency is preferable to scavenging for old canned goods and other provisions in the cities, these communities are tempting targets for the gangs.

Survival means making the best use of resources and wasting nothing. Most groups must frequently scavenge for supplies and provisions. Even isolated wilderness settlements must occasionally send a few members out for supplies, particularly medical supplies. Running into such a scouting party is one way the PCs might come into contact with a settlement, if they aren't already part of one.

To survive, groups must be constantly vigilant. Whether always on the move or at an established settlement, survivors must have an adequate guard on watch at all times, preferably from suitably elevated positions, to watch for any signs of Infected or gang attacks.

Unless it can find a truly isolated spot in which to hide, any group of survivors eventually finds itself at the mercy of a gang. If they are lucky, it might be one of the better ones, providing protection from rival gangs and the Infected in exchange for assistance with cooking, tailoring, and other support activities members don't have time for or just don't want to do. If the survivors are not so lucky, they might find themselves wishing they had just been torn apart by Infected.

After three years, it's likely the PCs have already joined a survivor community; surviving on their own is extremely difficult. If they have managed to make it independently, joining a community can still make things easier, should they get the opportunity. Even if the PCs prefer to remain independent, such communities make good trading partners and might reward the PCs for assistance with problems they can't solve on their own. However, survivor groups do not survive by being careless; they are likely to be very wary of the PCs, perhaps suspecting them of planning to steal supplies, or even of being gang members (whether true or not).

DESERTED HIGHWAY



THE highways are the abodes of the gangs. Groups of raiders and gangers on bikes and in trucks are a regular sight, roaring up and down the highways in search of victims and plunder. Although some other survivors have working vehicles, they have few options for using them. They are less likely to encounter gangs on the back roads, but many of these are impassable or hunting grounds for Infected. The highways are usually safe from Infected, and they are the only reliable roads for long-distance travel, tempting some survivors to try to outrun the gangs.

Not long ago, the highways were littered with broken-down and abandoned vehicles, but the gangs have mostly cleared them, repairing the vehicles for their own use or stripping them for parts.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs find an abandoned vehicle that seems to be in working order. Or is it a gang trap?
- ✱ A gang mounted on motorcycles and other vehicles overtakes the PCs, but if the PCs impress the leader, they are offered a place in the gang instead of death.
- ✱ An overturned tractor-trailer still holds nonperishable foods or other useful supplies, but before the PCs can retrieve them, a large group of Infected attack.
- ✱ A gang stops the PCs, demanding a toll for the use of the road.
- ✱ A multivehicle caravan is traveling the roads, heading for the coast; they've heard rumors of a makeshift town on an old oil rig.
- ✱ A group of travelers offers to hire the PCs as guards to protect them from gangs and Infected.

OFFSHORE OIL PLATFORM



IN the early days of the outbreak, many people fled their homes on ships, hoping foreign shores would be safe from the plague. These hopes were in vain, for all nations soon found themselves overwhelmed by the virus. However, a few realized that the only truly safe location is one completely cut off from the outside world, reachable only by sea or air. This offshore oil rig is such a location, and it has become a refuge for survivors. Accessible only by boat, it is safe from attack by Infected, as long as the occupants carefully screen all new arrivals. To this end, the occupants of the rig have a strict quarantine policy for would-be residents, isolating them and monitoring them for the first few days to ensure they show no sign of infection.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs hear rumors of a secure community aboard an oil platform and must find a way to reach it.
- ✱ As the PCs' boat approaches the rig, a severe storm catches them, threatening to capsize the boat.
- ✱ One of the residents develops a full-blown infection of the virus. It isn't enough just to kill the Infected; the residents must quickly discover the source or risk losing everything they have built here.
- ✱ A gang learns of the platform's location and attacks with a small flotilla of ships, intending to pillage the rig and enslave the residents.
- ✱ The community's provisions are running low; leaders ask the PCs to travel to shore and retrieve vital supplies.
- ✱ One of the PCs is accused of showing signs of infection.
- ✱ Something is killing or scaring off the fish that the rig's residents rely on for food.

WOODS



CITIES are home to the largest concentrations of Infected, while highways, towns, and suburban remnants are gang territory. Woods and other natural areas offer the protection that only isolation can bring; in such places entire communities of survivors live their lives far from the ruins of civilization, hidden from raiders. However, this lifestyle is far from easy or simple. Survivors used to the comforts of modern life often have difficulty adapting to the ways of their ancestors. Even for those not seeking a place to settle, forested areas offer alternative routes for avoiding gang territory and patrols.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs find an injured person who pleads for help. However, Infected are close by, and this newcomer would slow them down.
- ✱ While hunting for food, the PCs come across a gang hideout, dangerously close to the nearby settlement.
- ✱ The PCs come across an isolated cabin. It appears to have been abandoned since before the outbreak, and it is stocked with supplies.
- ✱ The PCs encounter an abnormally vicious wild animal that pursues them relentlessly. Is its behavior due to rabies, or has the virus mutated and spread to the animal world?
- ✱ The PCs find the crash site of a small plane, which might have useful supplies. Upon closer inspection, it's clear the crash was fairly recent. Where did the plane come from, and does this mean there's still civilization out there?
- ✱ An isolated group of survivors has turned to cannibalism and set its eyes on the PCs.
- ✱ The PCs come across a number of mutilated animal corpses, indicating the presence of Infected in the area.

GANG LEADER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	3	2	4	3	2

Features: +King of the Road, +Rules through Fear, -Obstinate, -Prone to Violence.

Equipment: Motorcycle, sawed-off Winchester Model 21 (+4 damage), knife (1 positive die, +2 damage), heavy coat (+1 physical resistance).



GANG MEMBER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	3	2	3	2	2

Features: +Strength in Numbers, -Desperate, -Prone to Violence.

Equipment: Uzi MP-2 (1 negative die, +4 damage) or tire iron (+1 damage), pack of cigarettes.

CANNIBAL SURVIVOR

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
4	2	3	3	2	1

Features: +Militia Training, +Silent, -Antisocial, -Cannibal.

Equipment: Hunting bow (+3 damage), Bowie knife (1 positive die, +2 damage), camouflage, necklace of ears.





IT ENDS WITH A WHISPER

IT ENDS WITH A WHISPER

APOCALYPSE



It's funny. There was a time, not long before the end, when all people wanted to talk about was the "zombie apocalypse." For a lot of people it was just a joke, but even those who talked about it seriously proposed theoretical scenarios about disease outbreaks, toxic chemicals, stuff like that. Everyone seemed to forget where the whole concept came from—Voodoo. Even if they didn't forget, they thought it was just superstition, not a plausible end-of-the-world situation. Even Hollywood movies no longer gave the idea any credence.

Maybe that's why no one saw it coming, or even realized what was happening. Maybe it wouldn't have taken so long to figure out—or we might even have been prepared—if everyone wasn't so quick to look for a scientific explanation. Something in the water, a biological agent, a terrorist attack, mass psychosis—all attempts to provide a scientific explanation for a power older than science.

They couldn't have been more wrong.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

FICTION VERSUS REALITY

This scenario deals with an aspect of zombie mythology that deserves special treatment by players and GMs alike. Zombies and Voodoo have shared a great deal of screen time and page count throughout the history of popular media, and so when presenting different zombie apocalypse scenarios, we would be remiss if we didn't pair the two. However, the practice that is commonly called "Voodoo" in popular fiction and film bears little resemblance to the real-world religions of West African Vodun, Haitian Vodou, Louisiana Voodoo, or Southern U.S. Hoodoo from which it has been constructed. This scenario is based on this popular fictional depiction of Voodoo, and is not intended as a commentary, analysis, or expression of any real-world religion, belief, or cultural practice.

It Ends with a Whisper begins when priests and priestesses of Voodoo across the Americas and around the world simultaneously put into action a plan they had been preparing for years—maybe even decades. Its goal? To bring modern civilization crumbling down. Despite all of the contemporary world's technology and science—in fact, because of it—civilization is unprepared for such an assault. Taking full advantage of this lack of preparedness, the attackers target the leaders of the institutions that most of humanity depends on for guidance and protection.

Invoking the spiritual realm, the priests and priestesses of this enigmatic religion reach out and silently speak into the minds of their initial victims, supplanting their targets' wills with their own and turning them into loyal servants. This possession of living victims is only part of the threat, however, as the Voodoo practitioners also know the rituals to raise the dead as mindless automatons. These undead zombies spread their curse through bites, increasing their numbers exponentially. Between the hordes of shambling undead and the strategically possessed living servants, there is little hope for an effective resistance, even from governments and militaries.

The Player Characters find themselves faced with hordes of the undead and the living puppets of the Voodoo masters. Slow and mindless, the dead are led by the possessed, who instruct them in the best ways to overcome the defenders. Together, these two kinds of zombies pose a greater threat than the sum of their parts (and not just because some of the dead ones are missing their respective parts).

In addition to the threat of living corpses and possessed humans, the PCs must defend against attacks on their very own minds, especially if they prove themselves to be a particular threat to the extremist Voodoo practitioners' plans. Even if they can retain their own minds, who else can they trust? Any fellow survivor could be a possessed spy, and anyone else might succumb to such possession at any moment. The PCs must watch their backs—and each other—carefully.

THE EXPERIENCE

It Ends with a Whisper's onset is sudden, but its events start small. Before the true threat or cause even becomes clear, the possession of key individuals subverts the authorities' ability to mount a defense or understand the threat. As confusion reigns, the Voodoo curse spreads, until hordes of shambling undead fill the streets, mindless corpses acting at the direction of possessed living surrogates for the true Voodoo masters. By the time it's clear that something very, very serious is happening, it's too late to stop it.

The events begin in many places around the globe almost simultaneously, and the PCs' area is one of the first to be affected. What this means is that although some people might receive advance warning through the media or official channels, the PCs and their local government are not among these (slightly) lucky ones. The PCs must witness events as they unfold and try to figure out for themselves what is happening—and what these strange, mixed-up creatures are.

With all the confusion, the PCs might not even realize how widespread the problem is. Not that they could do much about it; they have plenty to deal with just trying to understand what's happening around them and to survive it.

WHAT THE PLAYER CHARACTERS SEE

The PCs' first clue that something is wrong should come in the form of strange behavior from living individuals possessed from afar by Voodoo masters. Of course, there's no way for them to know it's possession, but it should be clear that something is wrong. The possessed zombies are still living humans, but their minds are not their own. They're intelligent and retain their memories, but they are completely under the control of the Voodoo priest or priestess pulling their strings.

There are several indicators that something is wrong in people who have been possessed. Targets' faces take on vacant, distant expressions, and their eyes appear unable to



focus. Their reactions often show a slight delay, as if they were half-asleep, and their movements might be clumsy or awkward. They also frequently forget both minor and important facts, such as names, faces, and how to complete common tasks. In particular, they tend to lose their capacity to use technology. During conversation, a possessed person seems distant, unfocused, and often confused.

Most obviously of all, the possessed divert all their attention and activity to completing whatever tasks their Voodoo puppeteers have in mind. After all, the Voodoo priests aren't using their powers without a goal. The possessed disregard anything that might normally require their attention, including jobs, friends, family, and even their own safety, in order to complete their assignments. In some cases, the possessed might need to continue with their normal duties for a brief time in order to accomplish some objective; for instance, a government official or police officer might need to maintain cover long enough to perform an act of sabotage. However, it is quite clear to those observing the person, especially if the observers are familiar with the individual, that something is very off.

Depending on how the GM wants to pace things, the PCs might see a lot of clues in the form of possessed individuals before it becomes obvious that something very dangerous is happening. This could include strange behavior from friends and coworkers, as well as from strangers. In fact, the first real threat could even come in the form of an attempt to possess one of the PCs (see **In Your Mind**, on page 114). Eventually, the PCs should witness some particularly telltale behavior from someone possessed: perhaps murder, or even a ritual act to raise a corpse.

After the possession becomes evident to the PCs, even if they don't understand exactly what it is or what's causing it, they should get their first glimpse of an animated corpse. The undead zombies are clearly a very different case from the possessed living people. Their appearance depends, of course, on how they died and how long ago, but even the recently dead have an unhealthy pallor and glassy eyes, and they move slowly, with a shambling gait and clumsy, exaggerated movements. They might also have obviously fatal wounds and show signs of advanced decay. Most wear ragged clothing smeared with blood, either their own blood or their victims'.

As events continue, it should become evident that the undead zombies outnumber the possessed ones. The PCs might also witness the possessed living zombies clearly leading and issuing instructions to their undead counterparts, as well as enacting rituals to reanimate dead bodies. In both cases, the possessed use a combination of gestures and verbal proclamations. In many cases, the voices do not seem to be their own, and the words are a mysterious and ancient tongue.

WHAT IS EVERYONE ELSE DOING?

Most people are slow to respond to the Voodoo assault, since it begins so subtly. Although many people are aware of the strange behavior of the possessed, they tend to either keep their observations to themselves or simply gossip about it, offering a wide range of explanations, from alcohol, to drugs, to drugs and alcohol.

Once the possessed begin killing people and raising undead zombies, the general reaction shifts from amused or frightened curiosity to complete panic. Making things even worse, the police and emergency services, as well as the other civil authorities, are botched up early on due to sabotage by possessed individuals among their ranks and leadership. This leads to a poorly coordinated response to the deaths and increasing chaos in the streets, leaving many people to fend for themselves. Although individual police and paramedics continue to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, the collapse of their leadership leaves them for the most part just as confused as everyone else.

Compounding all this is the mounting paranoia among both the authorities and general citizenry. Suspicions of possession lead to immobility—with so much mistrust, most people can't work together on even the simplest of survival strategies. This leads many to isolate themselves and their families, refusing to assist or cooperate with others. In the most extreme cases, innocent people even die at the hands of former friends or neighbors with unfounded suspicions.

There are a wide range of responses to these events, depending on individuals' personalities and their particular experiences. Seeing corpses get up and bite people and seeing loved ones acting without recourse to their own will are very different, though perhaps equally terrifying, events. Some people react with complete disbelief, psychologically unable or unwilling to react to the situation and thus leaving themselves at the zombies' mercy. Others might plead with a possessed zombie to explain what it's doing, or try in vain to convince it to stop.

The varied and mostly unproductive reactions are due in part to a lack of understanding about what is happening and what the zombies are. Many people who encounter one kind of zombie then assume that all zombies represent that kind. For example, someone who fights off some undead zombies might go on to kill possessed zombies without realizing the implications. Conversely, other people might mistake a not-too-decomposed undead zombie for a possessed person, and put their own lives and those of others at risk trying to subdue it without harming it, or they even might try to get the zombie to "snap out of it."

WHAT CAN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DO?

The PCs' primary goal should be surviving. Figuring out what's going on is a worthy objective too, if for no other reason than that it makes surviving more likely. Of course, the PCs are likely to want to help friends and loved ones, so seeking them out might be an early goal. The fact that anyone, at any time, might succumb to possession certainly complicates things, however.

There are certain necessities for surviving any major disaster that the PCs must acquire. These include food, potable water, and shelter. Under current circumstances, that means a shelter capable of keeping out zombies both dead and living. If they were just mindless, dead zombies, that could be pretty doable. However, the possessed, living zombies are still intelligent; they are simply powerless to resist the commands of their Voodoo masters (who can even see through their servants' eyes). What this means is that keeping the zombies out isn't as simple as merely boarding up the windows. Of course, the PCs might not know this until they learn the hard way. The only real limitations the possessed exhibit are a deficiency in fine motor skills and a delayed reaction time. They might direct hordes of undead zombies to attack weak points, or they might personally use a crowbar, ax, gun, car, or any other weapon they can get their hands on when the time comes to do their masters' bidding.

Surviving also means figuring out how to defend oneself from attack. To do so, the PCs have to determine how to kill the zombies. In the case of the possessed zombies, it shouldn't take long to figure out their crucial weakness—death. That is, anything that kills a normal human also kills a possessed one. Of course, if the PCs realize that these foes are still living humans, and ones acting against their will at that, they might very well not want to kill them. This is particularly true if they know that it's possible for the possession to end, returning such persons to their old selves. Obviously, contemplating killing a person who only potentially and temporarily poses a threat—albeit perhaps an imminent and deadly one—is a serious moral issue. Some PCs might believe that the dire situation justifies such harsh measures, but others might be understandably uneasy and seek to incapacitate the possessed without harming them.

Killing the undead zombies is a trickier proposition in practice, but at least it doesn't come with a moral quandary. After all, they're already dead. Permanently incapacitating them might technically violate some law against desecrating corpses, but the cops seem to have their hands full. Regardless, killing an undead zombie requires destroying its brain.

If the PCs figure out that someone is controlling the possessed zombies, they might think to try to locate and stop those responsible. Although it is possible to find the local priests and perhaps even to shut them down (see page 117), the problem is far too widespread for this to ultimately have much effect. However, that shouldn't keep the PCs from trying, even if attempts to halt the unfolding apocalypse will ultimately prove futile.

WHAT POWER? THE POWER OF VOODOO

It is not immediately obvious what is happening. In fact, it takes quite a while for anyone, especially the authorities, to figure it out. PCs are usually pretty clever, though, displaying knowledge that might seem more suited to an omnipresent observer than someone caught in the middle of terrifying and unnatural events. That is to say, the PCs might figure things out faster than others, piecing together such clues as the two types of zombies, the apparent mystical rituals the possessed conduct to animate corpses, and the language employed. They might even witness a Voodoo priest or two going about their work.

Of course, figuring out the truth and convincing others are two entirely separate issues. Most people, especially the authorities, are more concerned with logical explanations like nerve gas or disease; even the ludicrous concept of an alien parasite might be easier for them to believe. For many, Voodoo is either a Hollywood fantasy or a folk superstition. In any case, this modern world-view blinds people to the true nature of the threat facing them, leaving the PCs in a difficult situation.

THE TRUTH

At the appointed time, hidden Voodoo priests and priestesses throughout the Americas and around the world unleash their powers on an unprecedented scale. Initially, this consists of possessing a small number of living individuals, including many in positions of authority or importance. At their masters' bidding, these initial possessed zombies perform the rites to raise corpses as undead creatures, which further spread the Voodoo curse through their bite.

Although relatively small in number, the Voodoo practitioners maximize the effectiveness of their attack by targeting key individuals for possession, including government and military leaders. This throws governmental and defense forces into chaos, leaving the world vulnerable to the zombie assault.

Confusion is rampant, especially in the early days of the events; no one except the Voodoo masters can claim to truly understand what's happening. The following provides a glimpse at what's really going on. The PCs might very well learn some or even most of the information below, but not quickly or all at once. It's not common knowledge by any stretch, and it should take some effort to discover.

WHAT ARE THEY?

The zombies are the creations of powerful masters of the arts of Voodoo. There are two distinct types of zombies: living people possessed by Voodoo practitioners, and re-animated corpses. The Voodoo priests and priestesses can create either type of zombie through their mysterious ceremonies, but the specifics vary. They can enter the minds of living people and control them from a great distance, but they must be in the presence of a corpse to raise it. This is one of the reasons they primarily utilize possessed living people at first. As extensions of their masters' will, the possessed zombies are also capable of enacting the necessary rites to reanimate those they kill and other fresh corpses. Directing the possessed to do so allows the Voodoo practitioners to create undead zombies while keeping themselves concealed and safe from retribution.

Additionally, the undead zombies transmit their curse through bites. Those whom a reanimated corpse bites soon fall ill and die, after which they almost immediately rise again as undead corpses themselves. People who die from other means do not necessarily become zombies. For instance, if a possessed living zombie kills someone, that person does not rise from the dead unless the possessed zombie performs the proper ritual (which the possessed zombie usually does unless prevented).

Voodoo possession is not necessarily permanent or continuous. Possession can come and go. In rare cases, an individual's will is strong enough to fight off a possession for a short time. Alternatively, possessions might be withdrawn for a time when Voodoo practitioners turn their full attention elsewhere. However, in either case, it is easier for a Voodoo priest to re-establish control over someone previously possessed than it is to establish the possession initially.

The undead zombies move slowly, as one might expect from a corpse. Their movements are awkward, exaggerated, and shambling. The possessed zombies move comparatively much faster and with more agility, closer to the gait of an average human. However, they still move a little slower, with delayed reactions and problems with fine motor control, due to the fact that they are not moving under their own volition.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

Although people usually think of zombies as mindless or driven only by a desire to feed, there's a lot more going on here. These zombies, whether living or undead, obey the will of their creators and therefore work toward those ends, although they do not possess individual goals and do not understand the broader scope of their mission. The Voodoo masters despise the modern world, particularly mankind's destructive behavior toward the environment. They seek to bring an end to the soulless civilization of contemporary society and to return humanity to what, in their eyes, is a more natural, moral state—one of living in harmony with the natural world instead of subduing it.

The living zombies are not only the eyes and ears of their Voodoo masters, observing the progress of their assault on civilization, but they also serve as their voice. The possessed zombies can quite literally speak with the voices of their masters, in order to command their undead minions, perform rituals to raise undead zombies or for other purposes, or even simply to communicate with other humans. As an alternative to their offer of a swift death to those who surrender, the Voodoo priests might offer a place in their post-apocalyptic world to those they see as worthy and redeemable.

Possessed zombies lead hordes of undead corpses, but only under the orders of their masters. They are very much surrogates, allowing the zombies' true leaders to be there in all but physical presence. Even in cases in which a Voodoo priest personally leads undead forces, the priest relies on possessed zombies to help enforce attention to the mission and to perform tasks requiring dexterity or speed that the undead zombies lack.

When in the presence of a Voodoo master or one of their possessed puppets, the undead zombies obey blindly and to the best of their (somewhat limited) abilities. Without someone to issue orders, the undead zombies tend to either stand about idly or wander aimlessly. However, they do attack any humans they perceive, seeking to bite them and spread the Voodoo curse. These walking corpses do not eat their victims; they do not need nourishment and don't feel hunger. Biting is simply their preferred and most effective means of attacking, and the primary way the Voodoo curse spreads.

HOW TO KILL THEM

Possessed zombies are still just living humans, albeit ones whose minds are not their own. They are just as susceptible to injury and death as anyone else. The mind control they are under allows them to ignore pain to an extent; they still feel it, but they might not react, because their Voodoo master's will compels them to ignore it. However, extreme pain can incapacitate or slow a possessed zombie; their possessed minds can still handle only so much. Additionally, broken bones and other injuries slow them down almost as much as they would an ordinary person, only slightly less because the pain isn't as much of a problem. They can die from losing blood, and they can even be knocked unconscious.

The undead zombies really are corpses, animated by the power of Voodoo. Although severe injuries, such as lost limbs, can slow them down (and they are already pretty slow), they are much harder to "kill." The undead zombies don't suffer any ill effects from losing blood or major organs, and not even damaging their brain is necessarily enough to kill them. These zombies move and fight in ways contrary to all the rules of biology; it's something spiritual, not physical, that animates them, bypassing the usual biological requirements for life. It requires a great deal of physical trauma to drive out the spiritual force animating one

of these zombies. Decapitation or thorough destruction of the brain is usually sufficient, but not always, and simply shooting one in the brain is often not enough. This inconsistency in what kills a zombie is likely to frustrate survivors, but there are many factors at work, including the proximity of Voodoo masters, the amount of Voodoo power present in the area, and the skill and power of the one who performed the ritual to animate the zombie in the first place.

FIGHT VOODOO WITH VOODOO

Although most people, sadly, do not see any distinction, not all practitioners of Voodoo are the same. In fact, most are peaceful and pose no threat or ill will to the rest of the world. Only a small minority who scheme to end the modern world. In many ways, these are not true practitioners of Voodoo at all, but heirs to an older and darker power. Perhaps these individuals took the mantle of Voodoo priests and priestesses in order to take advantage of the faithful, to convert them to this cause.

In any case, most Voodoo practitioners are just as appalled and horrified as everyone else at what is happening, if perhaps not quite so skeptical about its spiritual origins. They see it as a great crime and misuse of power. Those practitioners with the skill and strength to do so try to help others learn to protect themselves and fight back. Many of the people they try to assist unfortunately shun these efforts or even attack the benevolent Voodoo priests. Nevertheless, many practitioners do manage to convey a method of protection that proves invaluable: that of the gris-gris.

A gris-gris is a potent talisman that can protect the wearer from evil spirits and curses. In this case, it protects against possession and the zombie curse. Of course, it can't protect someone from dying at the hands of a zombie, whether undead or living. The gris-gris does, however, prevent its wearer from becoming a zombie after having been bitten by one. At first, most people are quick to dismiss such "superstitions." Others who believe in the power of the spiritual world might instead think the well-meaning Voodoo practitioners offering the gris-gris are actually trying to trick them, and that wearing a gris-gris is what turns someone into a zombie. Eventually, however, people start to see the efficacy of the gris-gris. As word spreads, a huge demand grows. Some Voodoo priests go so far as to exhaust themselves crafting talismans as quickly as possible, doing so out of a sense of responsibility, a simple desire to help, or fear of retribution.

THE INITIAL RESPONSE

The Voodoo masters behind the zombie attack are smart, and they planned their assault carefully. As bad as hordes of zombies would be even without direction, wandering aimlessly and swelling their ranks with random victims, the extremist Voodoo priests increase their effectiveness many times over. By coordinating their attacks and using living zombies to sow confusion among the authorities, they neutralize any chance for an effective response. At the local level, Voodoo practitioners start by possessing members of the police force and local government, possibly including the chief of police or mayor. Even if the Voodoo masters are unable to exert their will directly over an important individual, possessing a trusted subordinate is enough to ensure the death of the true target.

By using their powers to possess or remove key individuals and sow confusion among emergency responders, civil authorities, and the media, the Voodoo masters ensure that no one is able to make a coordinated defense against the coming apocalypse. Even before undead zombies begin rampaging through the streets, assassinations and sabotage by possessed zombies causes panic among the populace.

As well as simply evoking panic, confusion, and fear, the extremist Voodoo priests in the PCs' area might use their powers to sow misinformation by possessing news staff or government officials. Such misinformation could include announcements that the crisis is over, official orders for citizens to surrender, or other strange proclamations.

As the National Guard and other military forces respond, they face the same difficulties as police and other local authorities. In fact, once again, the extremist Voodoo masters are a step ahead of the military forces, using their powers to possess officers and sow confusion throughout the ranks. Even generals are not immune to Voodoo possession, leading to disastrous orders and decisions at the strategic level. In the best cases, their behavior causes confusion that leads to delays until other officers, whose minds are their own, figure out what's happening. In the worst cases, it leads to disastrous orders ranging from deploying troops in the wrong areas to firing on civilians or other soldiers, further aiding the extremists.

As it becomes clear that no one is immune to the influence of the Voodoo masters, paranoia runs throughout the ranks. Soldiers refuse to obey orders, and many individuals, even entire units, desert. As things get worse and the extremist Voodoo forces win battle after battle, they push the military back to defensible positions. But nowhere is entirely safe, as careful possession allows Voodoo masters and their zombie legions to enter anywhere, opening the gates of even the most secure military bases.

TIMELINE

The events of the Voodoo apocalypse begin suddenly, but they are also undetectable at first. The insidious nature of the advance is such that by the time the country knows it is under attack, it has all but lost already. Although incursions around the country might not all begin at precisely the same time, it should be assumed that the PCs' area is at least among the first affected.

00:00:00	Possession affects the initial victims, who begin making preparations for the attack.
02:35:00	Possessed individuals in the local government begin subtle acts of sabotage, the effects of which are not seen until the emergency response begins.
04:27:00	Possessed zombies with access to fresh bodies perform rituals to raise the recently dead.
05:56:00	Possessed zombies begin to kill and ritually reanimate their victims in secret.
07:18:00	In one of the more shocking incidents, someone reports that a ninety-year-old relative ate the family dog.
08:22:00	911 receives reports of suspicious disappearances and a number of violent incidents.
10:10:00	Officers responding to a call later report that the corpses of victims stood up and attacked them. One officer receives a deep bite wound.
12:41:00	City officials announce that the stories of the dead walking are unsubstantiated rumors.
13:17:00	The chief of police calls a separate press conference to announce an emergency situation, urging people to remain in their homes and to report any suspicious activity.
13:45:00	The chief of police calls another press conference to announce that his previous announcement was a mistake, nothing unusual is happening, and residents should go about their day normally.
14:01:00	Undead zombies begin attacking in large numbers throughout the area.
14:33:00	Hospitals in the area are overwhelmed with an influx of wounded.
15:09:00	Several doctors begin ending the lives of patients. Those patients soon emerge as walking corpses.
15:46:00	While most businesses close, several restaurants and groceries remain open, with employees almost aggressively pushing free samples. Those who take the samples soon develop signs of the zombie curse.
16:28:00	Local and national news media begin covering reports of widespread violence and reanimated corpses.
18:59:00	The military base comes under attack from within and without, suffering great losses and confusion.
DAY 2	Many residents barricade themselves in their homes. Many flee, though there is no respite elsewhere.
DAY 2	Soldiers arrive, but in smaller numbers than anticipated.
DAY 3	The attenuated military fights desperately against hordes of undead zombies led by possessed individuals.
DAY 4	The local government all but collapses due to sabotage, deserting staff, and numerous deaths.
DAY 4	The federal government declares a state of emergency.
DAY 4	The President rescinds the state of emergency declaration and announces that the danger has passed.
DAY 5	Radio and television emergency broadcasts direct citizens to designated shelter areas. This is a trap, and zombies wait at those locations to "convert" whoever arrives.
DAY 5	The Vice President is taken to a secure, undisclosed location. The President refuses to leave the capital.
DAY 6	Military leaders disobey the commands of the President in order to begin deploying forces across the country. Numerous incidents at bases and changes of orders lead to delays, friendly fire incidents, and general chaos.
DAY 8	Zombie work crews and possessed military units begin to inflict wanton destruction on the area, from shelling homes to collapsing buildings. Surviving soldiers and police fight to stop these attacks.
DAY 14	The local government ceases to exist for all practical purposes. Remaining officials are powerless to have any decisions they make implemented or enforced.
DAY 99	Government at all levels collapses entirely.
DAY 192	Most cities and towns are largely abandoned. Some residents hold out in homes or other structures, but zombies continue to overwhelm defenses.
DAY 247	Additional cities and military bases fall. Some redoubts, both bases and other fortified positions, hold out, thanks in large part to the use of gris-gris to resist possession.
DAY 290	Voodoo leaders, both benevolent and extremist, begin inviting survivors to join them, promising no harm will come to anyone who does.
YEAR 2	Surviving military leaders and units seek to gather other survivors together for protection and assistance.

IN YOUR MIND



ONE of the PCs might face Voodoo possession, particularly if that PC proves to be an effective zombie killer or otherwise a problem for the extremist Voodoo masters' plans. The victim becomes trapped in his own mind, cut off from the outside world and unaware of what his body is doing.

Willful individuals (which we'll just assume includes the PC) have a chance to fight off a possessor's control. The battle could take any of countless forms, influenced by both the Voodoo master's preferences and the subconscious of the victim. The battle of the two minds influences the mental landscape as well as the forms of the conceptual combatants.

Although the PC must really fight alone, the other players can and should still be involved. Rather than playing their actual PCs, they can portray the defending PC's mental impressions of each player, assisting the PC in the imagined arena. Since these are one character's idea of the other PCs, their personalities and other traits could be greatly exaggerated, even to the level of caricature. The players and GM should all work together to play up the fact that, for the moment, the other PCs are just figments of one character's imagination!

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs (including the imaginary ones) must fight mental representations of the extremist Voodoo forces through a series of important memories.
- ✱ The Voodoo master takes control of the mental impressions of the other PCs, and they try to convince the targeted PC to give in to the possession.
- ✱ The PC's body acts out the mental battle, and the other characters must restrain the PC.
- ✱ The PC battles the Voodoo master over the form of the imagined landscape.

MILITARY BASE



THE military base was built for defense and security, but possessed personnel opened the gates and allowed the entry of the zombie hordes. Now, the base is either an active war zone or a grisly battlefield. Either soldiers fight desperately against possessed and undead zombies, many of which have been their fellow soldiers, or all that is left are the signs of violence and just a few bodies (since most got up and walked away).

The PCs might go to the base thinking that it's safe, in which case they are sadly mistaken. They could also go to the base during an evacuation, or even arrive while it is still secure. Although human vulnerability compromises the base's defenses, it is still home to trained soldiers and plentiful weapons and ammo.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ An extremist Voodoo master possesses a tank's crew, and the destructive war machine leads the hordes of zombies in their assault.
- ✱ The base seems deserted, but as the PCs begin helping themselves to guns and ammunition, military police appear.
- ✱ A series of acts of sabotage derail the base's defenses. A possessed soldier must be responsible, but who is it?
- ✱ A possessed commander orders troops to attack police forces or civilians.
- ✱ After the battle, a combination of possessed soldiers and undead troops garrison the base, protecting the Voodoo priest at its center.
- ✱ The PCs come face to face with an undead zombie soldier fumbling with a live hand grenade.
- ✱ As the country descends further into chaos, an officer conscripts the PCs to help fill out the diminished ranks.
- ✱ With violence and chaos still rampant, the commander invites the public onto the base for protection. But is he genuine, or has he fallen to possession?

POLICE STATION



DURING the crisis, many people visit the police station seeking protection or to report strange activities. The police station is no more immune to the Voodoo power than anywhere else; extremist Voodoo masters exert their influence over high-ranking officers in order to plunge the station, and the rest of the force, into confusion.

The police station offers a secure location, but one that can't protect against possessed traitors within. Depending on when the PCs visit, the station might be a whirl of activity as officers and dispatch try to deal with the emerging threat, or it might be eerily empty, with signs of violence everywhere.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ A police officer either arrests the PCs or takes them into custody, allegedly for their own safety, but a possessed officer kills the arresting officer shortly after they arrive at the station.
- ✱ The police station contains a lot of weapons and other gear that could be invaluable to survivors.
- ✱ Suspects in holding cells beg to be let out. They're helpless against the zombies in their current position.
- ✱ A uniformed cop is locked in a cell. The cop claims to have been locked in there by a possessed zombie, but could it be the cop who is actually the possessed one?
- ✱ The police desperately try to hold off a horde of undead zombies led by a possessed cop.
- ✱ As things get worse, many residents come to the police station seeking shelter, crowding it beyond capacity.
- ✱ After a series of incidents, some officers begin assuming any civilians are possessed until proven otherwise.

THE STREETS



A lot of the violence takes place on the streets, and getting from point A to point B is difficult even along routes the PCs have traveled many times before. The scene on the streets changes as events progress. Depending on what has happened so far and the particular street, the PCs might see hordes of shambling zombies, or the street might be deserted, with everyone inside their houses, their doors locked.

Any time the PCs need to get from one place to another, whether on foot or in a vehicle, they face complications and dangers.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs see an extremist Voodoo priest moving through the streets and reanimating dead bodies.
- ✱ A paranoid mob is rampaging through the streets accusing innocent people of possession, and the PCs are next.
- ✱ The streets are filled with zombies and fleeing survivors, and some panicking motorists don't discriminate when driving through.
- ✱ A gang puts its weapons to use killing zombies. The PCs might want to ally with them, or the gang might mistake them for possessed zombies.
- ✱ A horde of zombies is pursuing the PCs, but no residents are opening their doors to help.
- ✱ A possessed zombie is driving a car after the PCs, even trying to run them over.
- ✱ A huge group of people is running, panicked, from something, but no one will stop and explain what.
- ✱ The PCs see someone they know running from zombies down a side street.
- ✱ Police officers, soldiers, or other authorities with megaphones on two different streets are announcing contradictory instructions to civilians.

VOODOO DEN



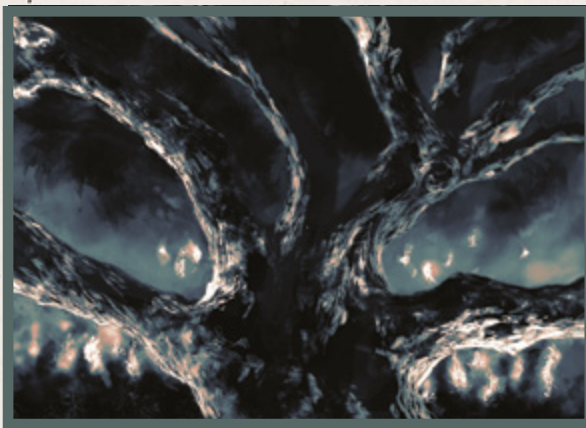
ONCE they figure out what's going on, proactive PCs might want to track down the Voodoo master responsible for the local disturbance. The extremists' Voodoo den might be concealed or hiding in plain sight, depending on whether the Voodoo priest operates openly as such. If the PCs don't already know of such a place, they might find out by asking around.

Whether a hidden chamber or a tourist attraction, the Voodoo den is filled with talismans, skulls, candles, occult paraphernalia, and possibly chickens (living or dead). If the PCs have not yet figured out what the cause of the zombies is, stumbling upon this location, perhaps while seeking the aid of this spiritual person, might give them a clue.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ A PC who resisted possession has fragmented memories, which are not the PC's own, of the Voodoo den and its location.
- ✱ Letters or other correspondence with other Voodoo masters shows that the impending attack is large-scale and coordinated.
- ✱ The Voodoo master tries to convince the PCs that he is not responsible and can help them, but this is a trick.
- ✱ The Voodoo practitioner really is innocent, but can provide the PCs with useful information and gris-gris.
- ✱ The Voodoo master is gone, but clues might indicate what the extremist's next plans are.
- ✱ Although most of the tools and components of Voodoo require specialized knowledge, gris-gris can protect the PCs if they simply wear them.
- ✱ As the PCs explore the den, zombies suddenly emerge and attack them.
- ✱ A hidden room houses several bound captives, possibly intended as sacrifices for a powerful ritual.

VOODOO PLACE OF POWER



SOME areas are wellsprings of natural power. Whether centers of geomagnetic energy, ancient burial grounds of powerful spiritualists, abodes of very old trees, or places of spiritual significance for other reasons, these sites provide power that Voodoo practitioners can call on to amplify their abilities. As the Voodoo attack gains momentum, Voodoo masters must go to such locations in order to initiate the next steps of their plan.

Although they can take many forms, these places of power are almost always natural environments. A natural cave is possible, but most are exposed areas, which could present a unique opportunity to attack the Voodoo master.

If the PCs do stop the region's Voodoo master, and especially if they destroy the master's place of power, they might gain a temporary reprieve for the residents of that area. However, another Voodoo master soon arrives to take the defeated master's place, and this master might only be one of several already in the area.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ A PC who was possessed temporarily, or who successfully resisted, feels a mystical draw to the place of power.
- ✱ Some zombies ignore the PCs, or stop short just before attacking them, and instead shamle off somewhere else. The PCs can follow them to the place of power.
- ✱ A Voodoo priest or priestess is conducting a powerful ritual. Whatever results are expected, it can't be good, and the PCs are the only ones who can stop the practitioner.
- ✱ After the Voodoo master's death, the undead zombies continue to follow the last instructions they were given, or they simply congregate at the place of power.
- ✱ Some zombies capture people (possibly even the PCs) instead of killing them, and then take them to the place of power.

POSSESSED HUMAN

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	3	2	N/A	1	N/A

Features: +Command the Dead, +Remorseless, + Slavishly Loyal, –Vacant.

Equipment: Disheveled clothes.

Eyes and Ears: A Voodoo puppetmaster can see and hear everything a possessed human sees and hears. Additionally, the puppetmaster can take control of its possessed humans, having them perform any actions she could perform herself (including using her special abilities).



REANIMATED CORPSE

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
1	4	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Horrificing, +Slavishly Loyal, +Supernaturally Resilient, –Mindless, –Shambling.

Equipment: Filthy clothes.

It Won't Die!: Reanimated corpses have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29), due to their inability to feel pain or be killed by conventional means.

Cursed Bite: When a reanimated corpse deals physical stress to a living character with a melee attack, there is a chance it bit the character. When a character gains a physical trauma, if any of the stress removed to gain the trauma was caused by a reanimated corpse's physical attack, roll a d6. If result of the roll is a 1, 2, or 3, the trauma gained is a "Cursed Bite" physical trauma, and it follows different rules than those for a normal trauma (on any other result, gain a trauma as usual).

A cursed bite is incurable without the proper Voodoo magic, and the curse will quickly consume the bitten character. A "Cursed Bite" trauma cannot be healed unless the character is wearing a gris-gris. A character suffering from a "Cursed Bite" trauma dies within three days of receiving the trauma unless he or she is wearing a gris-gris.

VOODOO PUPPETMASTER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	2	4	5	4	1

Features: +Master of Rituals, –Hates Technology.

Equipment: Gris-gris, Voodoo priest's raiment, sacrificial knife (1 positive die, +2 damage).

Possession: Voodoo puppetmasters can possess other characters, turning them into possessed humans (see profile above) by performing a five-minute ritual. This requires some form of physical object from the victim. The ritual automatically works on NPCs, but when used on PCs, the process should be treated as a narrative event, giving the PC a chance to resist possession (see page 44).

Profane Resurrection: Voodoo puppetmasters can raise corpses from the dead by performing a five-minute ritual. The ritual, which must be performed in the presence of the corpse, transforms the dead body into a reanimated corpse (see profile above).





IT ENDS WITH A WHISPER

IT ENDS WITH A WHISPER

POST-APOCALYPSE



It was the end of the world, at least as most people knew it. Who could have expected that Voodoo, which had been merely a curiosity or even a joke, a cliché of old movies, to so many people, would be what did civilization in? Well, it was. There just wasn't any way to fight an enemy that could get inside our heads. Of course, eventually we figured out some tricks, thanks to other practitioners of Voodoo, no less. But by that time, a lot of people weren't at all willing to trust them, and they ignored these new tools. Even if they hadn't, it was already too late. Civilization was falling apart, and the legions of the undead had us on the ropes.

It wasn't complete annihilation. Some people survived, and maybe that's even how the Voodoo priests wanted it. After all, a lot of people embraced Voodoo teachings. I don't know if that was just so they wouldn't get killed by zombies. Maybe I'm just cynical. For some, maybe it was the beginning of a new, "better" world. Or maybe a return to an older, "better" way.

As for the rest of us, we live in constant fear that our friends, or our minds, will turn on us. Or that walking corpses will batter down the door and drag us all to our doom.

IN the aftermath of the apocalypse, the PCs must get by in a world of militant survivors and Voodoo adherents. In a lot of ways, the war is still going on. Those who don't choose a side might find themselves an enemy of both, and that's not a fun position to be in.

SO MUCH FOR MODERN LIFE

The Voodoo priests and priestesses wanted to put an end to modern civilization, and they did. The government of the United States was unprepared to fight back against the spiritual power to possess minds and raise the dead, and city after city fell. Targeted possession ensured that some of the most strategically important cities were the first to fall, and they now belong only to the dead, who guard against the return of the living.

In many places, the Voodoo masters instructed their zombie servants to tear down buildings and otherwise deconstruct the edifices of civilization. In some cases, this work is ongoing. Other cities simply remain abandoned, as survivors know that to go to them is to invite retribution.

Survivors must either adopt a rustic way of life, living off the land like their ancestors did, or scavenge

for supplies amid the ruins of civilization. Those who abandon civilization in favor of a pastoral lifestyle find that the Voodoo leaders and their zombies no longer threaten them. They might even receive peaceful visits from Voodoo priests, who invite them to embrace the ways of Voodoo. Those who instead insist on clinging to the past remain enemies, targeted by zombie attacks.

So, the battle continues, the Voodoo believers with spiritual power on their side, the resistance with modern weapons and technology. As each year goes by, technology becomes less reliable, with less fuel available, no replacement parts, and the simple wear of use. Meanwhile, the Voodoo powers actually gain in strength as an increasing number of people subscribe to the belief and the traditional way of life.

VOODOO VICTORIOUS

The extremist Voodoo practitioners who created and led the zombie apocalypse got what they wanted. Modern society collapsed, leaving survivors with no choice but to live a simpler existence. Factories, labs, factory farming, genetic modification—all those abominations of modern civilization that the Voodoo priests so abhorred are gone.

Whereas they concealed themselves at the beginning of their attack, the Voodoo priests now live openly, leading communities of adherents. Many people profess faith in Voodoo because they see no other choice. Besides, the truth and power of Voodoo is clear to see, even for people who miss the conveniences of what used to be modern life. Most Voodoo communities accept anyone who asks to join, as long as they respect Voodoo beliefs and power.

The residents of the Voodoo settlements live simple, peaceful lives, in harmony with nature. Some people long for the days of cell phones and TV, of the times when women rarely died in childbirth and infant mortality was low, when antibiotics, insulin, hearing aids, and other staples of modern medicine were available. Nevertheless, many find a fulfillment in this new existence that they never knew before. Some are genuinely appreciative of the Voodoo leaders for taking the measures that returned humanity to what they see as its natural, proper existence.

In these communities, people's places are based on the needs of the group and their contributions. It doesn't matter what jobs people held in their previous lives. Everyone lives as equals, harvesting the fields, hunting game, and caring for the children and elders. The exceptions are the Voodoo priests and priestesses, who hold positions as the leaders of the communities. However, their part in day-to-day life mostly consists of seeing to the communities' spiritual needs.

WHAT ABOUT THE ZOMBIES?

Zombies are still very much present, serving their Voodoo masters in a variety of ways. These include fighting against survivors who continue to resist and try to preserve technology and other aspects of what was once the modern way of life. Zombies also work at more mundane tasks. Many Voodoo communities, however, use zombies less for labor and other tasks once they obtain a sizable population of living inhabitants.

Undead zombies without orders to the contrary might remain in one location or wander the countryside. In either case, they can threaten PCs at unexpected times. Most undead zombies, however, continue to obey the orders of their Voodoo masters, possibly as relayed through a possessed zombie. They protect Voodoo communities, guard the ruins of cities, and attack camps of survivors.

Possessed zombies tend to have some specific purpose. Those who have been possessed since the beginning often appear quite malnourished. In some cases, Voodoo priests release their grip on the minds of their possessed servants once they no longer need them. Some of these individuals remain in Voodoo communities, while others escape to isolation or to try to join a survivor camp. However, camp leaders are unlikely to tolerate those whose past is known, as someone once possessed can be possessed again. For many, the absence of possession actually is only a temporary reprieve, and the possession returns as soon as the Voodoo master has need of the former servant.

Many individuals released from possession have been fundamentally, and often permanently, altered by the experience. They might devolve to a feral state, posing a potential danger to anyone they come in contact with. Others might not know what to do with their autonomy and long for the control of a Voodoo master. Still others might seek revenge on the remnants of a civilization that abandoned them.

CAMP LIFE

It's likely that the PCs—like many survivors—now live in one of the camps maintained by what remains of the military. These camps take a number of forms in both social and physical structure. Some are run with the discipline of military bases; others are much more "civilian," although with former soldiers in positions of leadership. Some are very much makeshift camps, formed of tents, simple construction, and repurposed vehicles. Others utilize old military bases, places of worship, bomb shelters, or any other defensible location providing shelter.

These military camps represent, in many ways, the last remnants of civilization. Occupants remember the world as it was, and many hope to one day rebuild that world. They utilize remaining technology, including radios and even computers, to the best of their abilities. Power comes from a variety of salvaged generators, and obtaining enough fuel is a constant struggle.

All residents of a camp must always be watchful for signs of possession. The survivors learned the lessons of the Voodoo War well, and they realize that a single possessed person can allow the zombies in and doom a camp. Indeed, the war is still going on, and Voodoo priests continue to possess individuals in pursuit of such goals. This leads to a tangible atmosphere of paranoia in most camps. However, extensive use of gris-gris provides protection as long as all residents wear theirs at all times. Indeed, beneficent Voodoo practitioners even live in some military camps, serving as advisors on combating the enemy as well as lending their own spiritual powers to the defense effort, including the production of gris-gris.

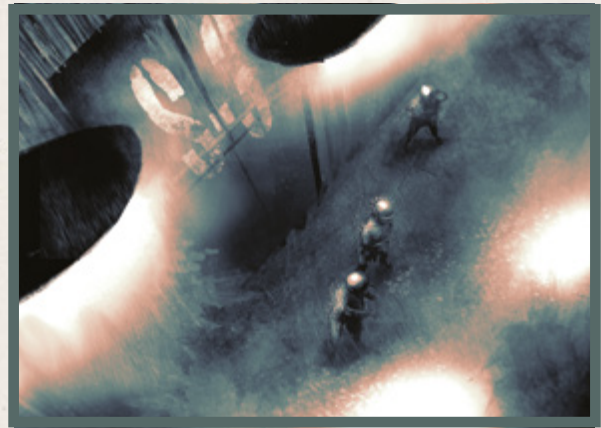
Some people—a lot, even—are uncomfortable about the presence of Voodoo practitioners in their camp. Some still don't trust their motives, or even believe in the gris-gris' efficacy, despite years of evidence. Some camps have dealt with incidents sparked by mistrust and misunderstanding.

EVERYBODY ELSE

Not all survivors live in the military camps. Some simply don't know about them, while others make the deliberate choice to avoid them. Many such individuals figure that if the military couldn't protect them at the height of its power, it certainly can't be trusted now. Others actually find some pleasure, whether they admit it or not, in the freedom they enjoy in this post-civilized world. Although they don't adhere to the beliefs of the Voodoo communities, they also don't have any interest in fighting them.

These survivors can be much more vulnerable to zombie attacks, especially if they don't have access to gris-gris. However, they are also less likely to be a major target for the Voodoo masters. As long as they are cautious to avoid zombies, they might be able to scrape by, scavenging and stealing what they need while remaining effectively neutral in the ongoing war between those who brought down civilization and those who cling to it.

MILITARY CAMP



MOST survivors live in camps run by what remains of the United States' military. Although some consider themselves "ex-military," most hold that the branches of the armed forces and the government of the United States itself still exist, so long as groups like theirs continue to perform their duties.

Usually, the most senior officer is the de facto leader of the camp, overseeing a combination of soldiers and civilians. Of course, everyone must be willing to do their part to ensure the camp's survival. As well as simply surviving, the leaders of these camps see it as their duty to continue the fight against the Voodoo forces, and they regularly dispatch soldiers to do just that.

The PCs might already be part of such a camp, or they might find one during their travels. Joining a camp provides security, but it also means following orders.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The PCs are asked to assist some commandos in a raid on a nearby Voodoo settlement.
- ✱ Someone accuses one of the PCs of being possessed.
- ✱ One of the commandos returning from a raid is bleeding but trying to hide it. Did a zombie bite the commando?
- ✱ The camp recently got some new members, but there aren't any gris-gris for them. The PCs must find someone capable of making gris-gris (or the necessary components).
- ✱ The camp is running out of fuel for its generators. Without power, it will be much more vulnerable.
- ✱ Zombies have been spotted closer and closer to the camp. Is an attack imminent?
- ✱ Some new arrivals show up at the camp, but there's something suspicious about them.

ON THE HUNT



Most military camps regularly send out groups of commandos and volunteers to hunt for zombies and Voodoo practitioners. This serves to protect the camp by keeping the surrounding area clear of "wild" zombies and halting any impending attacks. In addition to these routine sweeps, more specific missions might be assigned to similar groups.

Hunting parties often consist solely of specially trained commandos or other military personnel, but not all camps have enough military for the job. When necessary, volunteers receive training in stealth, combat, and other important skills to assist in the hunts.

One issue facing each camp is how to handle possessed zombies. Some hunting parties attempt to restrain such individuals and bring them to the camp, particularly if they have access to a Voodoo practitioner who can exorcize the possession. Others feel the most efficient, even merciful, thing to do is to end the possessed zombie's life.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Before the PCs can go on a hunt, they must complete survival, stealth, and weapons training.
- ✱ The PCs accompany a group of hunters and discover a Voodoo camp. The group begins planning an attack, but the camp includes children and the elderly, and the residents seem to be content and peaceful.
- ✱ The PCs encounter another group of hunters, who suspect them of being spies.
- ✱ One of the camp's residents has left without warning, and the leaders fear the resident is possessed, or even a spy. The PCs' hunting group must find the person before the camp's secrets are revealed to the enemy.
- ✱ The PCs come across a group of dead commandos. They didn't return as zombies, so who or what killed them?

VOODOO CAMP



The Voodoo priests and their followers dwell in very basic communities, living off the land and avoiding any trappings of what used to be modern life. The Voodoo camps take various forms, but often consist of simple tents made from natural materials. Some camps are stationary, but others move with the seasons.

After the collapse of civilization, many individuals have proclaimed allegiance to the ways of Voodoo, if only to ensure their continued survival. Regardless of their previous lives, these people find a home in the Voodoo camp.

If the PCs visit such a camp, seeing the peaceful lives of the inhabitants might confuse the PCs' sense of justice. Did the ends justify the means? Unlikely, but the PCs might grow to sympathize with the Voodoo masters and their reasons for doing what they did.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

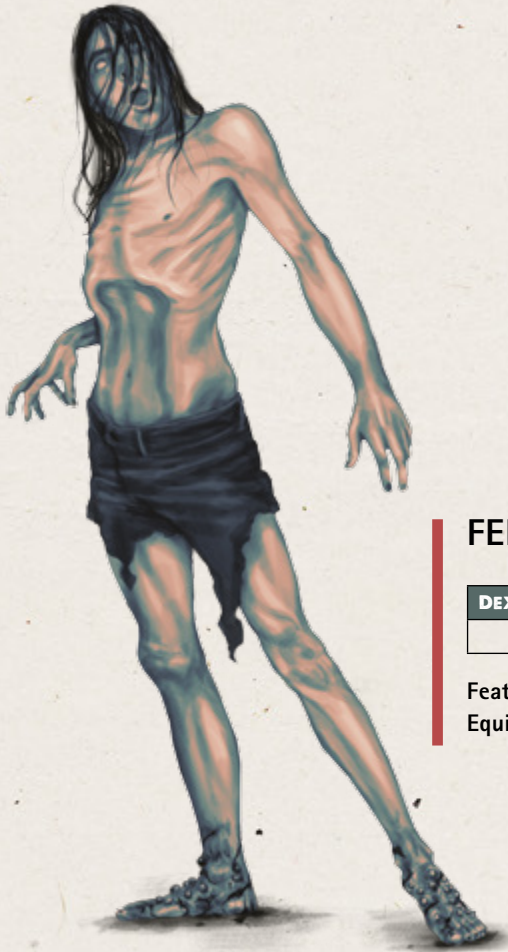
- ✱ One of the camp residents is found with a technological item and faces banishment or worse.
- ✱ The leaders of their military camp ask the PCs to infiltrate a Voodoo community as spies.
- ✱ The PCs see an old friend or relative living in a Voodoo camp. This person is in grave need of modern medical care. Do the PCs make contact or even try to "rescue" the person?
- ✱ The camp's only Voodoo priest dies, or simply disappears. Will the community continue on without the priest's guidance and avoid the temptations of modernity, or will they attempt to integrate aspects of modern technology with their new agrarian lives?
- ✱ The Voodoo leader is becoming increasingly strict, and those who displease the leader soon reappear as zombies.
- ✱ Volunteers must hunt game using only hand-crafted weapons.
- ✱ The PCs are captured and brought to the Voodoo camp. They can either willingly join the community, or do so as zombies.

CAMP LEADER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	3	3	4	3	2

Features: +Military Training, +Survivalist, –Distrustful.

Equipment: Remington Model 710 rifle (2 positive dice, +4 damage), armored uniform (+1 physical resistance), gris-gris.



FERAL EX-POSSESSED

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	2	1	3	1	1

Features: +Vengeful, –Malnourished, –Stark Raving Mad.

Equipment: Filthy rags.

VOODOO PRIEST

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	2	4	5	3	4

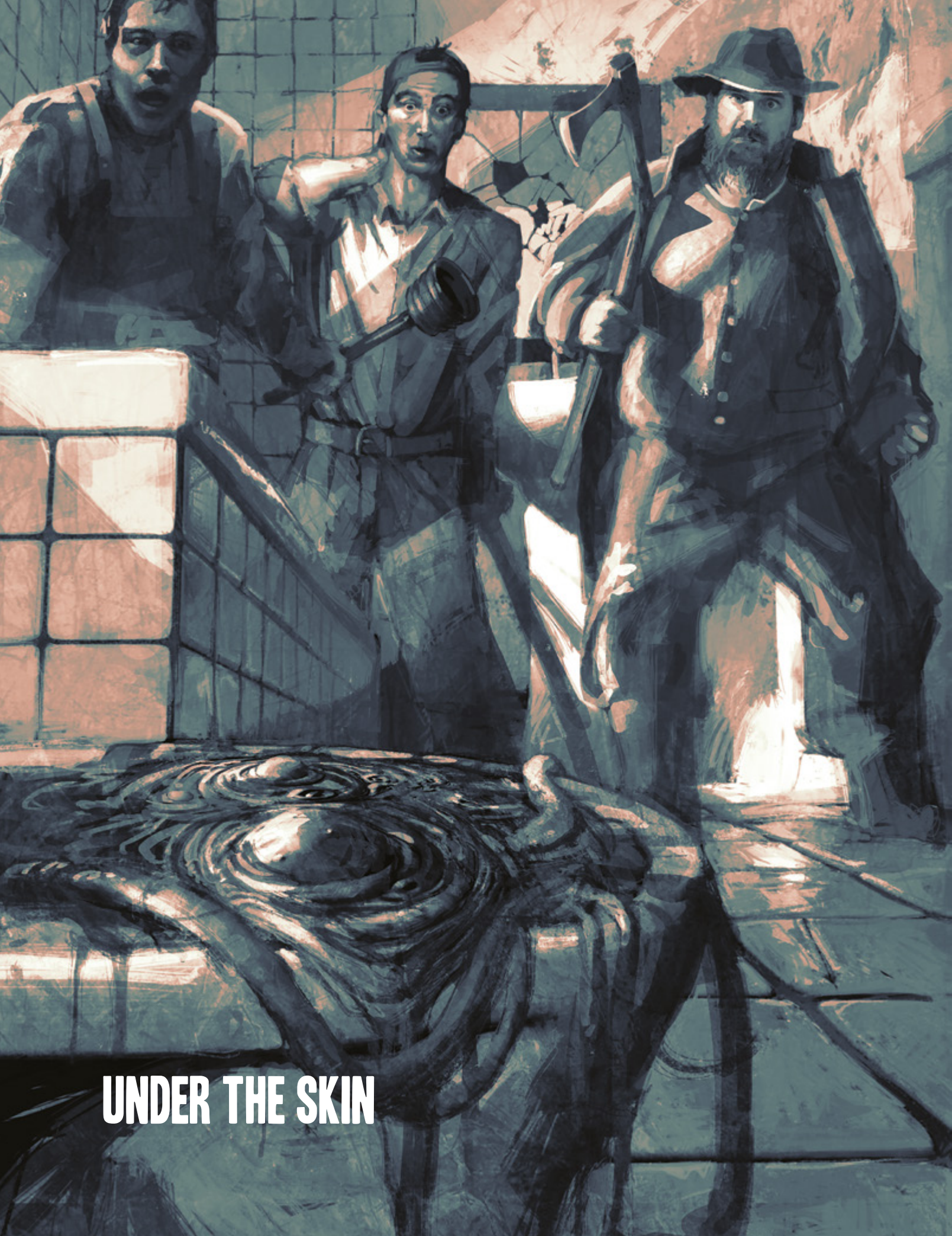
Features: +Master of Rituals, +Spiritual Leader, –Feared by Society.

Equipment: Voodoo priest's raiments, gris-gris.

Gris-Gris Crafter: Voodoo priests can create new gris-gris to help protect others from the curses of the rogue Voodoo practitioners. Crafting a gris-gris takes the priest several hours and the required materials.

Lift the Curse: Voodoo priests can break curses placed on people and corpses by Voodoo puppetmasters by performing a five-minute ritual. The ritual, which must be performed in the presence of the subject, frees the subject from the curse, returning free will to the possessed or laying a reanimated corpse to rest.





UNDER THE SKIN

UNDER THE SKIN

APOCALYPSE



What if, all of a sudden, your friends and family weren't themselves? And not just them, but your neighbors, coworkers—everyone. Even your pets. They still look like themselves, and even talk like themselves (except your pets, obviously)...mostly. But something's off. That's bad enough, but it gets so much worse. There's something under their skin.

Some...thing...was found below the ground, something old and hungry. It gets inside people, and it messes with their minds. It also messes with their bodies. They seem pretty normal at first, but they act weirder and weirder. Their skin gets pale and waxy, their eyes sallow, and then they start rotting. Walking around, talking to you, and rotting like corpses. Except they're not really rotting...it's eating them from the inside. You can tell when it starts eating their brains, because they stop talking. They just come after you, hungry.

The only way to get through this nightmare is with people you can trust, really trust. But the thing is, can you trust anyone anymore?

IN *Under the Skin*, the PCs must survive an invasion of flesh-hungry creatures. These aren't your typical zombies, though. There are no corpses rising from their graves, no super-rabies. This might be worse, actually.

Released from deep beneath the Earth's surface, a strange parasitic organism swiftly infects both humans and animals. The hapless victims fall under the parasite's sway, often without even realizing it. Slowly at first, it alters their behavior, even as it begins consuming their flesh from the inside out.

Everything seems normal at the onset, but the PCs soon notice strange behavior from those around them. As the parasite develops, it feeds on its host, causing what looks a lot like the decay of a dead body.

But these aren't shambling, mindless corpses, at least not at first. As the parasites' influence further affects their hosts, the hosts develop an overpowering urge to consume brain tissue, preferably human. And they want a lot of it—they're eating for two now, after all.

Formerly docile animals begin attacking, hungry for human brain tissue. Maybe even worse than the animals are the human hosts. What makes them so dangerous is



that they retain their faculties and intelligence, at least at first. That means these brain-hungry living corpses are smart, and they also have the memories to use that intelligence to the fullest.

As the infections progress, the hosts look more and more like walking corpses. And they basically are. On the bright side, that means their rotting flesh is easily damaged, even by scavenged weapons like bats and two-by-fours. A hard enough hit can even knock their limbs off. The not-so-great news is that those limbs keep moving, and they keep coming after you. Turns out that the hosts are easy to tear apart, but the parasites are damn near impossible to kill.

THE EXPERIENCE

In *Under the Skin*, the PCs find themselves right in the middle of an outbreak of an unknown parasite, its nature completely unprecedented in recorded history. It's not new, though—far from it. It's something very old, buried for countless millions of years. Did the organism evolve on Earth? No one knows, but this thing is so terrifying that the alternative almost seems more believable. Of course, it takes awhile for even these scant facts to become clear. And there is a lot of blind panic before that.

The parasite's effects begin subtly. Before they must fight for their lives, the PCs should witness strange behavior among those around them. Coworkers, neighbors, friends, strangers, even animals—all are acting oddly in a variety of ways. At first, it's a small handful of people, but as time goes on, an increasing number become hosts to the parasite. Of course, as the parasite spreads to others, its effects become more pronounced in the initial hosts. People and animals infected with the parasite begin to decay while still alive, soon entering a grotesque undead state in which the parasites puppet their semi-corpses.

It should become clear to the PCs that something is amiss long before rotting half-corpses begin attacking them. Of course, there isn't much they can do with just their suspicions. Soon enough, however, what had merely been bizarre behavior turns to violence, as the hosts succumb to their hunger for living brains.

Because it takes time for the parasites' influence to become obvious, the events of the game could start at almost any time, anywhere. The PCs might witness strange behavior throughout their day, or hear rumors, or encounter even weirder stuff. Of course, there's not really much happening yet (at least, not above the surface), so these events shouldn't take much game time; the GM might simply describe a few such events to the players as the game begins.

WHAT THE PLAYER CHARACTERS SEE

The infestation begins pretty slowly. The people who initially unearthed the parasite likely don't even realize they are now sharing their bodies with uninvited guests. Even if they understand that they found something unusual, they probably don't know how dangerous it is. The point is, there's no initial cry of alarm. Although a few people might know something strange is happening, they probably don't know or tell the PCs. There are, however, a few exceptions. If one or more of the PCs has a job that is related to whatever activity releases the parasites, those PCs could be present during the discovery. Alternatively, the PCs could simply happen to be near the discovery site at the right time coincidentally—perhaps they're just hiking or taking a walk, or visiting a friend who lives or works near the site. This might not be likely to happen, but if the GM thinks it would increase the tension or enhance players' experience, it's certainly feasible. See page 128 for more on the parasites' release.

Assuming they don't witness the initial event, the PCs' first clue that something is wrong comes from the strange behavior of the hosts they encounter. These people exhibit a wide range of oddities. They seem vacant and absent-minded, forgetting common facts like names, or where they work, but then just as quickly remembering them and returning to normal. They might step out into traffic, oblivious, or sit and stare at a sandwich for minutes at a time.

As the parasite works its tendrils farther into its host, the host begins physically changing. Organs start to shut down, made unnecessary as the parasite becomes the only thing keeping the host "alive."

Hosts in the advanced stages look very much like walking corpses. Their skin takes on a deathly pallor as their hearts stop pumping blood, their eyes become glassy and sunken, and their movements become slower and less coordinated. Most horrifying of all, their skin bulges as the parasite writhes visibly beneath the surface.

Eventually, a host attacks the PCs. The form of the attack depends on how "decayed" the host is. Those that look like true walking corpses have little of their own brains left, and as such attack mindlessly. However, hosts in the earlier stages of the infection can be quite clever in their attempts to gain access to the PCs' skulls. They attempt to get PCs alone, or to talk their way into any sort of defensive position the PCs may have taken. They are also likely to use weapons, anything from kitchen knives to guns. However, they prefer to subdue their victims instead of killing them, so they can eat their brains while the victim still lives.

YOU DON'T LOOK SO WELL...

At first, alongside their strange behavior, people appear sick. Some might exhibit more symptoms of illness but less strange behavior, while others might seem physically well but act in bizarre ways. Shortly after contracting the parasite, most hosts exhibit symptoms in the forms of fever, sweating, and trembling, which come and go. During this stage, hosts still retain control of their mind, and they might be quite concerned for their own health. As the parasite grows and takes firmer control, a host's symptoms go away for a time, although the host's behavior continues to get stranger and stranger. At this point, the person dismisses any concerns about health, as the parasite has its tentacles deep in the host's brain.

When dealing with hosts in these early stages, it should be clear to the PCs that something is wrong, but there might not be much they can do about it. At first, a physical examination and even blood work are unlikely to turn up any clues, in part because doctors aren't looking for the right signs. Once the parasite develops to the point that an examination could reveal it, the host is unwilling to submit to such treatment.

WHAT IS EVERYONE ELSE DOING?

Not surprisingly, there is a lot of confusion, especially in the early stages of the parasite's invasion. The initial attacks occur while the hosts still appear to be more-or-less normal humans. Rumors quickly spread of formerly peaceful people turning violent out of the blue and engaging in cannibalism, leading to all sorts of theories about the cause.

As it becomes clear that these attacks are not merely isolated incidents, the local population starts to panic. In the confusion, some people kill others whom they mistakenly believe to be under the effects of whatever is causing the violent behavior. Paranoia runs rampant even before the parasite reveals itself.

Many people lock themselves in their homes and start boarding up windows as the violence spills out into the streets. Others raid stores for foodstuffs and other essentials. For every person who keeps a cool head, at least one other loses it to some degree or another. Some simply panic and make rash decisions; others curl up on the floor and make no decisions at all. The most extreme cases are those who turn on their fellow uninfected humans, killing innocent people for perceived strange behavior.

ANYTHING GOOD ON?

Beginning with the initial attacks and running through the full-blown infestation, the media provide constant, if not always accurate, coverage of events. Initial reports focus on separate violent incidents without drawing any connection between them. As events continue, the media cover various theories that have been put forward, and they eventually report on the necrotic appearance of attackers.

The GM can use media coverage, including print, TV, radio, and the Internet, not only to keep the PCs informed of the parasites' progress, but also to highlight the rampant confusion and misconceptions spreading everywhere. It's even possible that the PCs could figure out the cause of the events first, while the news is still speculating about chemical weapons, mass hysteria, and other possible causes. Eventually, however, the news media (and social media) get some blurry footage of a parasite in action, bursting out of a wounded host. This might or might not be the PCs' first glimpse of it.

WHAT CAN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DO?

Once the parasite is set loose, there is really no stopping it. Hosts spread it far and wide before anyone suspects what is going on. Even if the PCs figure things out right away, convincing others is going to prove difficult. Consequently, the PCs' main concerns are probably simply remaining parasite-free and keeping their brains firmly in their skulls.

There are a number of ways a person can contract the parasite (see **How Do They Spread?**, page 129). While news coverage might provide some useful information about precautions, it also includes a lot of nonsense; it is primarily up to the PCs to figure out for themselves how to stay, well, themselves. This could be a major focus of the game, as PCs piece together clues and come up with their own theories on how to avoid an unpleasant fate. It's possible they might figure out a parasite infestation is causing the attacks before the authorities do, in which case the PCs might try to convince others and spread the word.

If the PCs can keep their bodies parasite-free, they still have to worry about staying alive. Hosts begin developing a hunger for brains pretty soon after infection, but the ways they go about sating that hunger depends on the stage of the parasite's development. Initially, the hosts' brains are still intact, but the parasites' influence drives them to take any measures necessary to fulfill their grotesque desire to eat living brains.

Hosts in the later stages—those visibly infected—lose their ability to speak and reason, becoming animalistic and savage. These simply head toward the closest living thing, forgoing weapons and tearing into their victims' skulls with their teeth. Animals, of course, also pose challenges. Although infested animals are not nearly as clever as humans, unwary victims might well let their guard down around a domestic animal.

THE TRUTH

The true enemy in **Under the Skin** is not immediately visible. Although half-living humans and animals are the obvious threat, they become brain-eating monsters due to the influence of another organism, a prehistoric parasite that slowly consumes them from within while directing their behavior.

Of course, the PCs don't know all this right away, and they should have quite a time discovering all the grisly facts.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

The living corpses threatening the PCs and the world are the hosts for a previously undiscovered parasitic organism. Considering the parasite's huge ecological impact, it's surprising that scientists have never discovered any evidence in the archaeological or geological record. As the parasite certainly predates the evolution of humans, it's also possible it never received the opportunity it now has to spread and infest living hosts. Perhaps this is even because it is extraterrestrial in nature, and fell to Earth only to lie dormant for an epoch before awakening.

Although it slowly but surely spreads to infest every corner of the country, the parasite initially is found somewhere in the PCs' vicinity. There are a number of ways the parasite could be awakened, and the GM should choose something appropriate for the PCs' location. Oil drilling, mining, logging, an archaeological

excavation, even the digging of the foundation for a new shopping mall are all possibilities. Of course, it's possible that no one, or at least not the PCs, ever discovers where the parasite came from, so GMs can simply leave it a mystery if preferred.

WHAT ARE THEY?

The seemingly undead creatures threatening the PCs and everyone near them are actually human and animal hosts for a previously undiscovered parasite. The creature begins its life-cycle as a microscopic single-celled organism, but it steadily grows once it has a host. The parasite can enter a host at nearly any stage in its development, not only in the single-cell stage. The microscopic parasites are especially insidious, however, as the host might very well have no idea that an alien organism has invaded his body. The parasite initially attaches to the host's brain stem, growing from there to infect and affect every aspect of the host's biology.

The parasite itself is not intelligent, and it merely influences hosts' behavior, rather than thinking for them. Instinct drives the parasite to find a host, to spread to new hosts, and to use those hosts to consume living brain matter, which is particularly useful for the parasite's growth and necessary for it to enter the final stages of its development—which are not pretty.

Different hosts respond somewhat differently to the parasite, depending on a variety of factors including brain chemistry, source of infection, and the stage of the parasite's development when it enters a host's body. For instance, some hosts might not realize anything is wrong, as the parasite "short circuits" the part of the brain that tells them it's abnormal to crave human brain tissue. Others, however, might be aware of the ethical implications of their strange new urges and react with appropriate horror to the changes they are undergoing. Others might not realize anything is wrong at first or might simply keep it to themselves, until the physical changes to their body become obvious.

As the parasite grows, it feeds on the host's body, effectively eating it from within. This results in the host's appearing to decay while still alive and the cessation of most signs of life in the host, such as pulse and breathing. In fact, at some point during this process, it's safe to say that the host truly dies. However, the moment is difficult to pinpoint, as the parasite, which by this time occupies up a large portion of the host's interior, takes the place of or bypasses the need for organ functions. The division between host and parasite becomes impossible to detect.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

Within a few hours of contracting the parasite, and often in conjunction with or following a severe fever, vomiting, and other symptoms of illness, the host's behavior begins to change. As the parasite grows and ex-

erts greater influence, it physically changes the host's brain, leading to an increasingly overwhelming desire to consume living brain tissue, preferably human. Animal hosts act on this desire in fairly obvious and direct ways, attacking other animals and humans whenever possible. Humans, at least at first, retain their reasoning ability, memories, and at least some of their personality.

This means that human hosts in the earlier stages of the process, while still mostly appearing to be their normal selves, use any number of tricks to get close to their prospective victims and manipulate them into lowering their defenses. Hosts might try to divert suspicion onto other people, propose seemingly logical yet false "tests" to prove they are not infected, or simply beg and plead with a target to open the door and let them enter before the zombies arrive. Once in position to attack, hosts are also likely to use weapons to subdue their intended victims. However, they prefer to consume living brains, and so tend to use nonlethal weapons or attempt to cause injuries that leave their soon-to-be-meals alive.

As the parasite further damages the host's body, eliciting the appearance of a walking corpse, it also eats away at the host's brain. Consequently, the more decayed-looking a host, the less intelligent it is. This loss of brain function is a gradual process in which the host progressively loses its problem-solving abilities, understanding of cause and effect, ability to use tools, memories of life as a human, and ability to speak. During this process, hosts transition from using deception and subtlety to making direct attacks. They might even call out directly for the object of their desire—brains, and perhaps even "more brains." Even some particularly decomposed hosts continue to call out for "brains," as what's left of their own minds focus solely on this thought.

HOW DO THEY SPREAD?

There are several ways in which the parasite spreads, but no reliable ways to remove one from a host. Single-celled parasites live in the blood and saliva of hosts, so a bite from a human or animal host that breaks the skin is almost certain to spread the parasites. Similarly, any contact with a host's blood could lead to infection, particularly if the blood touches an open wound or the mouth, nose, or eyes.

A larger specimen of the parasite can also enter a new host directly. A parasite without a host crawls along until it can find a living creature to inhabit, at which point it tries to enter through an open wound or the creature's mouth, nose, or ears. Failing that, it can even burrow through flesh if the would-be host doesn't stop it quickly.

Throughout the infection process, the parasite continues to eat away at its host's body, causing the signature living-death look of the advanced cases. Eventually, what's left of the host's body falls apart, collapsing into

a disgusting pile of flesh, bone, and parasite. From here, the parasite consumes the remains of the host while continuing to grow, spreading to cover the surrounding area like a fleshy vine. In this state, the parasite lashes out with its tentacle-like growths to trap and infect any animals or humans that enter its vicinity.

HOW TO KILL THEM

With regard to killing things, the PCs have two slightly different concerns: killing the hosts, and killing the actual parasites. Neither is particularly easy, but killing the parasites is nearly impossible.

In the very early stages of infection, before the host starts displaying physical signs of decomposition, killing the host is just like killing a normal human or animal. That's because the parasite is still small and has yet to infest the host body to the point that it can take the place of actual organs. However, killing the host does not kill the parasite. Depending on how long it takes the host to die, how damaged the corpse is, and how comfortable the parasite has made itself, it might take moments, minutes, or even longer for the parasite, or a part of it, to crawl out and begin looking for a new host.

When it comes to killing a host in the early stages, there are moral questions that should probably concern the PCs, especially in the case of human hosts. Even if hosts have started displaying behavioral changes, they are still people, after all, and still themselves (mostly). The forms that ethical considerations tend to take depend on how much the PCs know about the cause behind victims' bizarre behaviors. If they don't know about the parasites yet, they might think about trying to detain any would-be cannibals until a cure becomes available. If they are aware of the parasites, they might reason that it's possible to extract them. Again, depending on what they know, they might think it's worth trying this themselves, or they might want to restrain the host, hoping the authorities come forward soon with a treatment.

There is actually little distinction between where one parasite ends and another begins. Each parasite, whether a single-celled organism or large fleshy tentacle, is actually one small part of a greater whole. It's more accurate to think of each cell as part of a single, enormous organism, whether those cells are joined together within a host or separated by vast distances.

The bizarre, communal nature of the parasites is what makes the hosts so difficult to kill in the advanced stages. It's not that it's difficult to damage the hosts—far from it. The visible decay from the parasite feeding on the host is very real, and the host's flesh and even bones rip, tear, crack, and generally come apart much more easily than when part of a living body. (In the latter stages of infection, it's even possible to simply pull off a host's limbs.) However, when a host is dismembered, shot apart, blown up, or broken up in any way, each separate piece continues to "live," animated by the parasite fragment within.

When a parasite, whether inside or outside a host, is cut or otherwise divided into pieces, it doesn't die, or even show any sign of injury. Instead, each fragment continues to function as a separate parasite, either seeking a new host or continuing in its growth, as the case may be. A host's severed arm, for instance, continues to crawl around seeking brains for the parasite within to feed on. Ultimately, the parasite is nearly impossible to kill, as it must be completely destroyed to the last cell. Incineration is the only reliable method, although complete submersion in certain acids might achieve a similar result.

EMERGENCY SURGERY?

Unfortunately, there's no good way to remove the parasite from a host, save in the very early stages. By the time a host shows any signs of the infection, parasite cells have already spread throughout the body, seeding it for further development as the parasite "colony" in the brain begins its work. Yet, within moments of the initial infection, particularly from a bite, amputation can be an effective (if messy) means of separating parasites from their would-be host before they have a chance to take root.

Also, brain surgery is hard.

TIMELINE

After the parasite is released, it takes some time for the true consequences to become apparent. The following timeline covers some of the important events that might impact the PCs directly, or at least influence events around them.

00:00:00	The parasite is released from its long hibernation. The individuals initially exposed to it become hosts, although they do not realize it.
11:06:00	The last humans and animals present at or near the site of the parasite's discovery unwittingly become exposed to the infestation.
12:23:00	The initial hosts begin showing signs of the parasitic infestation, including fever, tremors, and unusual behavior. Flushed or discarded bodily waste exposes vermin, their predators, and other animals to the parasite.
16:49:00	Initial hosts' symptoms worsen, and some begin to indulge their hunger for brains. Most human hosts take precautions to conceal their actions.
22:58:00	The parasite spreads through numerous nonfatal animal attacks. Victims receive treatment for wounds and begin rabies shots, but doctors do not detect the parasite now within them.
DAY 2	911 receives a steadily increasing number of calls about animal attacks and domestic incidents, and at least one missing persons report.
DAY 4	The initial hosts begin showing signs of decomposition while still alive.
DAY 5	A host is admitted to the hospital involuntarily. Doctors are stumped by the necrotic symptoms.
DAY 6	Doctors discover the parasite's presence in a violent patient.
DAY 7	First reports of severed limbs and fragments from infected individuals gathering together.
DAY 8	Dismembered hosts and parasite fragments continue to gather together.
DAY 9	A gargantuan amalgam of decayed flesh and parasites begins to wreak havoc.
DAY 26	The parasite's influence is everywhere in the vicinity of its place of discovery. Hosts outnumber the uninfected, with fleshy parasite "nests" a common sight.
DAY 57	Parasites and hosts continue to form ever-larger colony creatures, which swiftly spread the parasite through surrounding areas. Even when military forces destroy one of the creatures, it scatters parasites across the area.
DAY 111	The parasite spreads to affect all of the United States and is seen in neighboring countries.
DAY 235	With conventional weapons seemingly useless against the parasite, the military's morale collapses. Additionally, infected soldiers and officers continue to turn on their comrades, leading to rampant paranoia and desertion.
DAY 296	Parasite infections affect all branches of government at every level, threatening to collapse society.
YEAR 2	Across the country and around the world, the parasite infestation continues to grow, with both hidden infections and massive colony creatures causing great destruction and loss of life.
YEAR 2	The United States government meets with representatives from several other countries to coordinate the construction of underground shelters.
YEAR 2	The government begins selecting and screening citizens for relocation to subterranean refuges.
YEAR 3	The world's surviving uninfected population estimated at approximately forty-seven percent of that prior to the parasite's discovery.
YEAR 3	Approximately sixty percent of the world's uninfected population now resides in secure underground shelters.
YEAR 4	The militaries of several governments initiate an atomic "scorched earth" policy to eradicate the parasite.

COLONY CREATURE ATTACK!



THE parasites might not be intelligent, but they are instinctively drawn to one another. As hosts lose body parts, those fragments seek each other out, joining together to create huge Horrifying Monstrosities (see page 135). In these terrifying towers of putrid flesh and wriggling parasites, it's impossible to tell where one parasite or body part ends and another begins. Like individual hosts, these creatures are almost impossible to destroy, as shooting holes in them or removing individual parts does nothing to stop them—and these have plenty of parts to spare.

Like individual parasites, the abominations seek to spread and infect others, but they have the body mass and power to go about this a bit differently. The monster holds down or even envelops victims to infect them. It also causes a lot of collateral damage along the way.

Although not a physical location, the colony creature poses enough of a threat to become the defining feature of any place in which the PCs encounter it.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ❖ As people gather together under the watch of police or military forces, a towering column of flesh erupts from the sewers, tossing cars about and decimating the assembled group.
- ❖ Fleeing the monstrosity, the PCs hide in a building. But the composite flesh-beast is amorphous, and it flows inside.
- ❖ A large crowd is fleeing the monster, but it's gaining on them and will kill them all if the PCs don't act fast.
- ❖ The military is preparing to attack the creature with heavy ordnance, but the PCs realize that doing so will only spread the parasites around.
- ❖ For some reason, the towering parasite sets its focus on the PCs, pursuing them no matter where they go.

INFESTED FARM



ALTHOUGH isolated, the farm is hit by the parasite just like everywhere else. It might not be apparent at first. Due to the large concentration of animals living in close proximity, the parasite spreads quickly once it arrives, infesting the livestock and turning them against their owners. Although the farmers might be well-armed and prepared to put down their infected animals, shotgun blasts to the head do no good against the hosts. It's only a matter of time before the ravenous livestock consume the brains of the humans.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ❖ Fleeing the violence, the PCs arrive at a farm where the friendly occupants invite them for dinner and rest. Of course, the farmers are already hosts, and the PCs are now on the menu.
- ❖ Cows bar the road in front of the PCs. Actually, the cows are hosts, and they quickly move to surround the PCs and attack them.
- ❖ A farmer begs for the PCs' help to save the rest of the farm animals after one starts showing signs of infection.
- ❖ The fields that once held grain or produce now contain nests of parasites, intermixed with the remains of host animals and humans.
- ❖ Despite the increasing chaos, a local farmer is working nonstop to provide fresh meat and produce to survivors and refugees. Even after thorough cooking, the food has an odd taste, and those who have been eating it are acting a bit strange.
- ❖ A very complacent farmer is loading his truck with odd-looking vegetable pods.

NEIGHBORHOOD



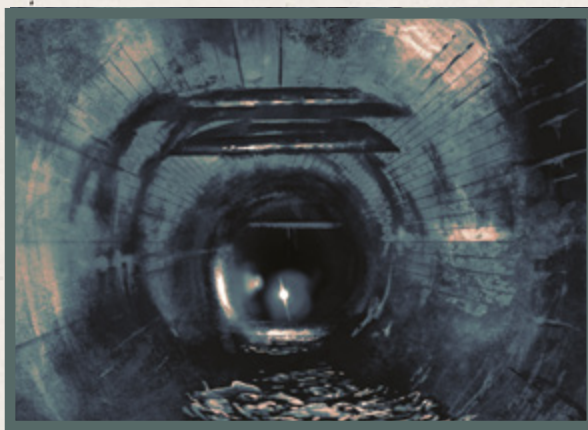
FROM the poorest slums to the wealthiest gated communities, all neighborhoods feel the full effects of the parasite sooner or later. Hosts, hungry for brains, attack neighbors. Meanwhile, paranoid neighbors turn on each other, even when neither is infected. Some neighborhoods become war zones, even though working together might keep the residents alive just a little longer.

The PCs might return to their own neighborhoods after events begin, and might witness drastic changes. The signs are everywhere, from broken windows to parasite nests growing up the sides of buildings. Even more disturbing, some of the neighbors might still be home, acting as if nothing is wrong...

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ While the PCs try to meet up with friends or relatives at their home, a huge colony creature appears and begins devastating the neighborhood.
- ✱ A bunch of hungry hosts are chasing the PCs, but no people are willing to open their door to help.
- ✱ A particular neighborhood seems untouched by the events, with no signs of violence. In fact, the residents seem a little too calm and satisfied...
- ✱ While the PCs are hiding out or looking for someone, SWAT teams enter the neighborhood, going door to door. Are they looking for survivors, or are they shooting first and asking questions later?
- ✱ The neighbors of one of the PCs come to them for help, begging the PCs to follow them, but not explaining what's going on. Is it a trap, or are they simply panicked?
- ✱ The neighborhood seems abandoned at first, but suddenly hosts and parasite fragments emerge from all around.
- ✱ An escaped tiger from the zoo is prowling the neighborhood. Is it also a host?

SEWER TUNNELS



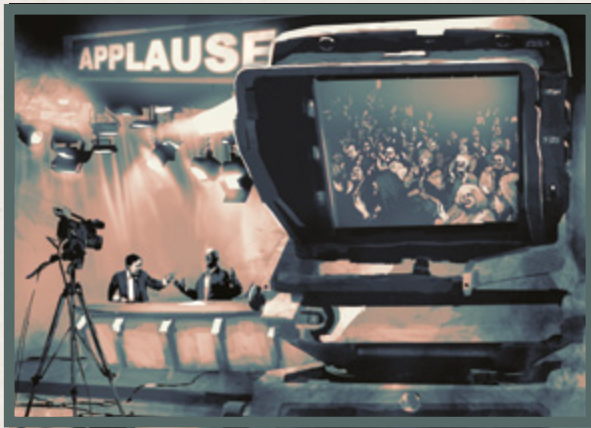
WHETHER seeking to escape from brain-hungry parasite hosts, paranoid neighbors, or overzealous police, the PCs might think the sewers seem like a promising option. As the chaos spreads, the streets become increasingly unsafe, leaving the sewers as perhaps the best way to get around.

The sewers are dark and, not surprisingly, smell horrible. Of course, with all the death and decay above, nowhere smells particularly good. Whether the PCs enter the sewers by choice or because they have nowhere else to go, the place is far from pleasant—or safe.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The batteries in the PCs' flashlights start to die, and there's no other light source down in the sewers.
- ✱ The only way to proceed is to walk through knee-deep sewage. But could there be parasites in it?
- ✱ The passage ahead is blocked by a wall of pulsating flesh—a massive parasite nest.
- ✱ While trying to take a shortcut through the sewers, the PCs become hopelessly lost.
- ✱ The PCs encounter another group of survivors moving through the sewers, but are they actually hosts?
- ✱ Severed limbs, scraps of flesh, and wriggling parasite fragments pass by the PCs, all but ignoring them. They are heading deep into the sewers to combine with an already-forming colony creature of immense size.
- ✱ The sewer connects to a bomb shelter, but the occupants aren't willing to open up.
- ✱ The sewer connects to a recent excavation site for the foundation of a new building; this site is the one where the parasite was found.

TV STATION



THE TV station houses a studio where a local news program is filmed. As the parasite begins affecting the area, the station broadcasts almost nonstop to cover the ongoing events. Danger and fear are great for ratings, and the current crisis is unprecedented. The local talk program that takes up most of the broadcast time features a live studio audience who believe themselves to be safe from what's happening outside as long as they stay in the studio.

The PCs might interact with the TV station in two primary ways: by viewing broadcasts on televisions in homes or shop windows, or by visiting the station in person. They could glimpse the program many times on televisions before actually traveling to the studio.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ The anchors of the local program are spreading dangerous misinformation about the crisis. If the PCs know better, the only way they can correct it is to visit the station.
- ✱ On live TV, one of the stars or guests leans over and takes a bite out of another's head.
- ✱ An expert guest on the program is deliberately spreading drastically misleading information, because the expert is already a parasite host.
- ✱ One or more of the audience members begin to look sicker and sicker, but everyone else is too distracted by the stage to notice.
- ✱ The PCs catch numerous glimpses of the show, and each time one of the speakers looks increasingly sweaty and ill and acts stranger.
- ✱ After a series of accidents and acts of sabotage, the TV studio is now the only place with equipment to communicate with the outside world.

ZOO



THE animals at the zoo had nowhere to run when the parasite came for them, and the infection quickly spread. The aftermath is obvious, as corpses in various conditions litter the area, while animals, now hosts to the parasite, prowl behind some of the enclosures. Other gates sit wide open, the inhabitants long gone.

The PCs might travel through the zoo as a shortcut or while fleeing pursuers. The zoo seems deserted at first glance—although the police and military know dangerous animals have escaped, they have their hands full elsewhere. The zoo closed as soon as the gravity of the situation became clear, but some loyal employees stayed behind to tend to the animals. It did not go well for them.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Several survivors have locked themselves in the gift shop, but it's only a matter of time before the infected animals get in.
- ✱ As the PCs make their way through the zoo, they realize something is stalking them—an infected tiger.
- ✱ An alligator lying still appears to be dead—until anyone gets too close.
- ✱ A zookeeper is feeding human flesh to the animals. He's either a parasite host or has completely lost his mind.
- ✱ The water in one of the enclosures is dark and murky, with slithering movement visible just below the surface. But it looks like several animals have been drinking from it...
- ✱ While the PCs travel through a dark or enclosed area of the zoo, severed body parts of several kinds of animals attack without warning.
- ✱ In an aquarium, a huge mass of tendrils and flesh appears and begins throwing itself against the glass.
- ✱ A particularly horrifying creature lurks in the shadows inside the cage labeled "Sumatran Rat-Monkey."

INFESTED HUMAN

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: Early-stage Infested (+Subtle Infection, +Predatory, –Single-Minded), Late-stage Infested (+Horrifying, –Mindless, –Shambling).

Equipment: Filthy clothes.

Falls Apart: Whenever an infested human suffers physical stress, an infested piece of flesh falls off of its body, creating an infested fragment at that location (see **Infested Fragment** profile, below).

All Is One: If ten or more infested creatures (excluding fragments) are in the same location, the parasites inside them can fuse together, effectively destroying the host bodies but forming a huge, conglomerated abomination. This destroys all of the infested creatures, but creates a Horrifying Abomination at their location (see **Horrifying Abomination** profile).

Infestation: When an infested human deals physical stress to a living character with a melee attack, it infects the character with the parasite. When a character gains a physical trauma, if any of the stress removed to gain the trauma was caused by an infested human's physical attack, the character gains the negative physical feature "–Infested" along with the normal trauma. Characters with the "–Infested" feature are slowly taken over by the parasite, becoming aggressive against living humans. Whenever a character with the "–Infested" feature suffers physical stress, an infested piece of flesh falls off of their body, creating an infested fragment (see **Infested Fragment** profile, below).

The only way the character can avoid becoming infested is by removing the injured limb before the parasite can spread. When a character would gain the "–Infested" feature, the character may instead choose to remove the limb, gaining a severity 3 physical trauma (see the **Permanent Effects of Traumas** sidebar, on page 33).



INFESTED FRAGMENT

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Hard to Kill, +Skittering, –Mindless.

Equipment: N/A

Small: Each of an infested fragment's stress tracks only has one tier of three boxes. Once all three of these boxes are filled, the infested fragment dies.

Infestation: See **Infested Human** profile, above.

INFESTED COW

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
2	5	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Horrifying, +Sturdy, –Mindless.

Equipment: Cowbell.

Sturdy: Infested cows have +1 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29), due to their sturdy bodies.

Falls Apart: See **Infested Human** profile, above.

All Is One: See **Infested Human** profile, above.

Infestation: See **Infested Human** profile, above.





INFESTED TIGER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
5	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Horrifying, +Predatory, +Stealthy, -Mindless.

Equipment: Claws (1 positive die, +2 damage).

Falls Apart: See Infested Human profile, above.

All Is One: See Infested Human profile, above.

HORRIFYING ABOMINATION

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
6	6	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Features: +Amorphous, +Horrifying, +Massive, -Shambling.

Equipment: Crushing appendages (3 negative dice, +8 damage).

Massive: Each of a horrifying abomination's stress tracks has five tiers of three boxes each. Once all fifteen of these boxes are filled, the horrifying abomination dies.

Near-Indestructible: Horrifying abominations have +4 physical resistance, as if they were wearing armor (see page 29), due to their near-indestructible, amorphous bulk.

Assimilation: When a horrifying abomination deals physical stress with a melee attack to a character, that character is absorbed into the mass of liquid flesh and parasitic organisms and permanently dies, regardless of traumas or stress. The horrifying abomination then heals 3 physical stress due to absorbing the new flesh, removing the stress from its track.



NATO SOLDIER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	4	2	3	2	2

Features: +Military Training, +Voice of Authority, -Chain Smoker, -Jaded.

Equipment: HK416N rifle (1 negative die, +5 damage), body armor (+1 physical resistance), cigars, medkit.



UNDER THE SKIN

UNDER THE SKIN

POST-APOCALYPSE



There was no stopping the parasites once they were loose. Shoot them, chop them, blow them up—nothing worked except for complete incineration. And how's the Army supposed to do that when the things are everywhere? They just kept spreading, infecting more people and killing more people. Eventually, every part of the environment was showing some change—trees, plants, rivers, lakes. It was everywhere and in everything.

All that creeping infestation was bad enough, but then there were those huge, disgusting monsters made up of all the parts that got shot or chopped off of the individual hosts. Not only did they inflict major damage, but even the biggest guns the military brought out could do nothing but blast them into smaller parts, which would gather back together or just crawl off and infect more people and animals.

I guess it shouldn't be surprising that the government took drastic measures, but I still can't believe so many countries agreed on it so fast. There were a lot of people still up top when it happened, but they told us everyone left was already a host, and that a cure was impossible. I don't believe that—either part of it. If they'd put as much effort into finding a cure as into preparing the shelters and the "extermination" plan... Of course, the shelters were ready pretty fast. Suspiciously fast, some say.

SOME SORT OF CONTINGENCY PLAN

As the parasite's reach spreads across the globe, unimpeded by the world's militaries, representatives of the most powerful countries met behind closed doors to debate potential solutions. Certain individuals put forth a contingency plan for just such an eventuality. This plan had already been explored extensively, with top secret studies on every aspect of its implementation and effects. These studies were unknown even to many of the highest officials in the countries involved.

Officially, work began immediately on subterranean shelters, deep and strong enough to protect the occupants from any disaster that might befall the surface. These shelters included accommodations for animals and the most sophisticated greenhouses and hydroponic systems. The shelters would be extensive, with facilities of varying sizes located below many of the world's countries, but without the concern for territorial demarcation that once seemed so important.

In fact, construction on these shelters had begun long before these meetings, even before the parasite's discovery. Allegedly, they were a precautionary measure: a backup plan to allow the human race to survive any number of potential disasters, natural or otherwise. Of course, most of these hypothetical scenarios, assumed the surface would be rendered uninhabitable by some uncontrollable event, not through a concerted effort by the world's major governments.

As shelter construction neared completion, governments began collecting citizens and subjecting them to a thorough screening process to ensure no parasites entered this new world. Even after testing, potential selectees were quarantined for several days and monitored for signs of infection. It was an unpleasant and frightening process, but not nearly as terrifying as what most people had already seen either firsthand or on the news.

Anyone who wanted a place in the shelters had to give up any pretense of personal rights or privacy. Some complained or objected, and they were turned away in favor of more agreeable citizens. In the United States, some groups attempted to take legal action, but with all that was going on, little remained of the courts, and personnel were far too busy with other matters. Although suits were filed, they never went anywhere.

The level of cooperation between countries was unprecedented. Although all member states of the United Nations eventually agreed to the activities, to the surprise of outside observers, in many ways, the United States government provided the impetus for the project. At the time, most people, if they were even aware of events outside their own communities, attributed this previously unheard-of cooperation between nations to the incredible scale of the threat facing all of humanity.

THROWING THE PLANET OUT WITH THE BATHWATER

The plan agreed upon by the United Nations member states called for the complete eradication of the parasite. With the parasite's incredible durability and thorough infestation of the environment, a targeted attack was deemed unfeasible. With the normal rule of law suspended in many countries, including the United States, a relatively small group of individuals was ultimately responsible for the decision to purge the surface of all life.

This ultimate scorched-earth operation saw many military forces working in concert and used a combination of thermonuclear bombs and experimental weapons. The result was the apparent destruction of all life on the planet's surface: animal, plant, and otherwise.

Of course, many people are deeply disturbed by what happened. Scores of survivors exhibit disbelief or shock at the scale of the destruction. The decisions were made and actions taken relatively quickly, and most of the remaining population has yet to comprehend the enormity of the events.

COMPLETE ERADICATION (PROBABLY)

Despite the measures taken to thoroughly destroy all life on the surface, and some distance below it, there is no guarantee that they successfully accomplished the goal of eliminating the parasite. Considering how the parasite was initially discovered, some fear that specimens might survive. Of course, most people don't know how the parasite was released, and even fewer have any idea where it originally came from.

Teams of scientists are regularly dispatched to the surface. Among other duties, they search for any signs of surviving parasites. Even if living parasites are discovered, it's doubtful this news would be widely circulated. The remaining bodies of government would hardly want to announce that they destroyed the planet for nothing.

THE COST OF SURVIVAL

The human race survived, but only barely, and at great cost. Only very influential individuals have any idea of the true cost in life from both the parasite's invasion and the nuclear firestorm that cleansed its presence from Earth. Best estimates place the surviving, subterranean population at about twenty percent of the world's pre-parasite inhabitants. Numbers of animal and plant specimens are significantly lower, with countless species now extinct.

The PCs were lucky enough to survive, for whatever reason. It's possible they were simply in the right place at the right time, rounded up by NATO forces and shuffled off to a testing and quarantine center. They might have been selected for some specific skills, genetic traits, or simply because their families knew the right people. It's even possible that the PCs had to sneak into the queue, although that would have been quite difficult.

LIFE UNDERGROUND

Living underground is not pleasant, to say the least. Aside from the lack of natural sunlight, the largely unrecognizable or synthetic foods, and the fact that so many family members, friends, and colleagues are now dead, life is hard. Everyone has a job to do to ensure humanity's continued survival and to expand and make the most of the limited living space. The consumer economy is gone. Most facets of life are controlled directly by shelter governments, with local leaders appointed by the United Nations.

Although democracy and the traditional rule of law in the United States was postponed prior to the relocation, many people assumed it would be reinstituted once the populace was safely at home in the underground shelters. This is not the case. The state of emergency is indefinite, and while it continues, people are heavily monitored and restricted. Of course, the problem isn't simply that people aren't allowed to leave their local habitation and community areas—there's nowhere else for them to go anyway. However, it would be conceivable for people

to have the freedom to move between different shelters to visit friends and loved ones. Allegedly in the interest of safety, this isn't happening. Movement is highly restricted; most residents are able to travel only from their dwelling space to their work area and a limited number of community recreational areas, including public dining centers.

Like everyone else still alive, the PCs have assigned jobs based either on their skills or the needs of the shelter. They don't get paychecks, as there is no functional economy. Workers receive a place to sleep (usually a chamber shared with others, often strangers), regular meals (as unappetizing as they usually are), and the option to spend their off-duty hours in designated recreation areas.

During the relocation, people were allowed to bring only very limited possessions, generally what could fit into a single small suitcase. While necessities, including basic, functional clothing for sleeping, working, and recreation, are provided, most people greatly miss their former homes, especially family memorabilia and other sentimental objects that were too large to bring or had been destroyed in the crisis. Unsurprisingly, individuals with influence and the right connections had greater latitude in this; the habitation areas of the leaders and the influential are more spacious and better provisioned. Some are comparable to a five-star hotel, at least compared to the dwellings of the majority of survivors.

STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN

Politicians continue to promise that things will get back to the way they were, and public areas display conceptual renderings for the massive, green, utopian underground communities of the future. This is a long way off, though, and for now people must work long days, their only reward being a place to sleep, food to eat, and the knowledge that they are working toward a better future.

While most people work on making life possible and somewhat bearable underground, the government is already dispatching teams of scientists, escorted by soldiers, to the surface. In addition to testing to determine the levels of fallout and predict when the surface might be habitable again, they also look for any evidence of surviving parasites. The government would certainly keep such a discovery secret. The consequences of finding surviving parasites are hard to predict, but possibilities include anything from additional thermonuclear bombardment to a decision to make the underground dwellings permanent.

OUTSIDE



THERMONUCLEAR destruction has rendered Earth's surface an uninhabitable, radioactive wasteland. It is scorched barren, with no plant or animal life to be seen. Even the lakes and oceans are all but bereft of life. For obvious reasons, only authorized personnel are permitted access to the surface, and only with protective equipment. Even authorized personnel are only to travel to the surface on specific assignments. Scouting parties usually comprise scientists accompanied by soldiers (both to protect the scientists and to monitor them), who leave the safety of the shelters in order to conduct tests on the condition of the surface.

Unless the PCs have considerable training with scientific instruments or are soldiers, they are unlikely to receive authorization to visit the surface. They might do so anyway, either to satisfy their curiosity or for some other purpose.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Getting to the surface without authorization requires bypassing substantial security, including armed guards and secure airlocks. Electronic locks at checkpoints require numerical codes or even retinal or fingerprint authentication.
- ✱ A team of scientists has failed to return, and the authorities have also lost contact with the soldiers subsequently dispatched. The PCs are conscripted to join the search party, but they aren't told what's happening.
- ✱ Although the surface is said to be sterile and they go through testing and decontamination procedures afterward, one of the scientists or soldiers is acting awfully strange after a trip.
- ✱ Rumors are circulating that some animals and even humans survived up top, but that now they're horribly mutated.
- ✱ After angering the wrong person or asking too many questions, the PCs are made to disappear by being kicked out to the surface and left to die.
- ✱ Some people who weren't selected for the sanctuaries survived on their own in private bomb shelters or other locations. They want inside with everyone else, but officially, they don't exist.

SECRET GOVERNMENT FACILITY



AFTER the discovery of the parasites, the governments of the world came together like never before, acting as one to secure the surviving population and purge the surface. In the absence of the press and with a leadership offering no transparency to speak of, most people now have little understanding of the current state of the government, knowing only that it is operating in a state of emergency. Those who ask too many questions, or invoke their Constitutional rights, tend to receive an unpleasant visit from shelter police.

This secret government facility provides a level of comfort that the average sanctuary resident can only dream of. Politicians meet here to review the latest findings on the condition of the surface and discuss other, more secret projects. Without deference to democracy or the Constitution, these select individuals decide the fate of the remaining population.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ One of the PCs is selected to spy on fellow residents and report on any rebellious activities.
- ✱ The PCs are chosen to meet with a politician in the politician's office so that the leader can address any concerns their community has.
- ✱ The facility contains evidence that not only is the United States no longer a sovereign nation, but that a world government existed long before the parasite's release.
- ✱ Files and documents show that the world government knew about the parasite before its supposedly "accidental" discovery.
- ✱ A secret laboratory deep in the facility contains living parasite specimens. But why would they keep them after destroying the surface to eradicate them?
- ✱ An alarm sounds, indicating that the PCs' presence has been detected. Soldiers and police begin combing the facility for the intruders.

SHELTER



THE expansive, yet still very confining shelters are where the remnants of humanity live. People must now spend their whole lives within just a few square miles or less of rooms and corridors. The shelters are a combination of natural caverns, old mine shafts, and new construction. The best areas are quite pleasant, with plants and climate control, while most are uncomfortable and dirty.

Although many people are glad to just be alive, there's no escaping the fact that these shelters are not unlike prisons in their construction and governance. For some, the loss of the world before and the current conditions are just too much to bear.

EVENTS AND ENCOUNTERS:

- ✱ Shelter police are thoroughly searching each habitation area, despite occupants' objections, and they're not saying who or what they're looking for.
- ✱ One of the residents snaps and begins attacking neighbors.
- ✱ Unhappy residents begin planning a revolution and invite the PCs to join.
- ✱ A politician calls a community meeting to answer questions and resolve the residents' concerns. He's charming, but his responses and deflections don't really answer anything.
- ✱ Klaxons and warning lights suddenly begin flashing, and soon people in hazmat suits enter the shelter and begin detaining residents.
- ✱ Someone tells the PCs that the United Nations was a puppet of the world government, and everything that has happened was part of some plan. The person claims to know there's evidence in a nearby facility but needs help to get it.
- ✱ The PCs are selected for the hard labor of excavating a tunnel expansion. While excavating, they reveal a chamber containing parasites. The government moves quickly to eliminate them, as well as any other witnesses.

SHELTER OVERSEER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
1	2	4	2	4	2

Features: +Charming, +Natural Leader, -Radiation Exposure, -Ruthless.

Equipment: Nice suit, flask of moonshine, .357 Magnum revolver (1 positive die, +3 damage), 1 bullet.



SHELTER ENFORCER

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
3	2	1	3	1	2

Features: +Weight Lifter, -Radiation Exposure, -Ruthless.

Equipment: Nightstick (+1 damage), taser (1 negative die, +3 damage), shelter uniform.



SURFACE PATROL

DEXTERITY	VITALITY	LOGIC	WILLPOWER	CHARISMA	EMPATHY
4	2	3	2	1	3

Features: +Natural Sense of Direction, +Survival Training, -Radiation Training.

Equipment: M16A4 rifle (1 negative die, +5 damage), gas mask, radiation meds, expired can of soup.

INDEX

A

Apartments and Houses (Location)	96
Assistance	18, 44
Attacking	36

C

Campaigns	47
Camp Leader (NPC)	123
Cannibal Survivor (NPC)	105
Carrying Capacity	28
Characteristics	21, 24
Mental	21
Logic	21
Willpower	21
Physical	21
Dexterity	21
Vitality	21
Social	21
Charisma	21
Empathy	21
Civilian (NPC)	80
Coast (Location)	96
Colony Creature Attack (Location)	131
Conflict	34
Country Road (Location)	77
Cult Bounty Hunter (NPC)	87
Cult Compound (Location)	86

D

Death	31
Deserted Highway (Location)	103
Devastated Hospital (Location)	97
Dice	18
Dice Pool	18
Negative dice	18, 44
Pacing	44
Positive dice	18, 44

E

E.D.E.N.	65
E.D.E.N. Drone (NPC)	69
E.D.E.N. Enforcer (NPC)	69
E.D.E.N. Executive (NPC)	69
Encounters	41
Downtime	42
Exploration	42
Social	42
Survival	42
Equipment	18, 23, 24, 27
Armor	29
Gear	27
Weapons	28
Ranges	29

F

Farm (Location)	59
Features	22, 24, 25
Negative Features	18, 26
Positive Features	25
Feral Ex-Possessed (NPC)	123
Fictional Characters	21
Fort (Location)	98

G

Game Master	10
Gang Leader (NPC)	105
Gang Member (NPC)	105
Gangs (Pandemic)	102
George O'Bannon	65
Ghoul Dog (NPC)	62
Ghoul Horse (NPC)	63
Ghoul (NPC)	62
Ghoul Rat Swarm (NPC)	63
Gris-gris	112

H

Highway (Location)	97
Horde of Ghoul Rats (Location)	59
Horrific Abomination (NPC)	135
Hospital (Location)	61
House (Location)	60

I

Infected (NPC)	99
Infected Prime (NPC)	94, 99
Infested Farm (Location)	131
Infested Fragment (NPC)	134
Infested Human (NPC)	134
Infested Tiger (NPC)	135
Initiative	34
Insanity	45
In Your Mind (Location)	114
It Ends with a Whisper (Scenario)	107
Apocalypse	107
Post-Apocalypse	119

M

Mall (Location)	60
Meteor	53
Radiation	53
Military Base (Location)	114
Military Camp (Location)	121
Military Evacuation (Location)	78
Military Leader (NPC)	87
Movement	35

N

NATO Soldier (NPC)	135
Neighborhood (Location)	132
Night of the Meteor (Scenario)	53
Apocalypse	53
Post-apocalypse	65
Non-Physical Attacks	36
Non-Player Characters	10
Managing	46
Profiles	46
Special Abilities	46
Traumas	46
No Room in Hell (Scenario)	71
Apocalypse	71
Post-apocalypse	83

O

Offshore Oil Platform (Location)	104
On the Hunt (Location)	122
Outside (Location)	139

P

Pandemic (Scenario)	89
Apocalypse	89
Post-apocalypse	101
Timeline	94
Parasite	125
Patient Zero	92
Player Characters	10
Advancing	47
Police Station (Location)	115
Positive Features	18
Possessed (NPC)	117
Protest (Location)	78
Protester (NPC)	80
Pushing Yourself	19

R

Reanimated Corpse (NPC)	117
Re-Education Camp (Location)	68
Refugee Camp (Location)	79
Refuge (Location)	86
Resistance	36
Resistance Base (Location)	68

S

Scenarios	10, 51
Secret Government Facility (Location)	140
Sewers (Location)	61
Sewer Tunnels	132
Shelter Enforcer (NPC)	141
Shelter (Location)	140
Shelter Overseer (NPC)	141
Shelters	137
Ship (Location)	98
Situational Benefits	18
Situational Hindrances	18
Small Town (Location)	79
Soldier (NPC)	81

Stress	24, 30
Overflow	31
Recovering	31
Resistance	31
Sustaining	30
The Stress Track	30
Surface Patrol (NPC)	141

T

Tasks	35, 37
Danger and Difficulty	18
Results	45
Tests	18
Opposed Tests	20
Running Tests	44
The Abandoned City (Location)	85
The Big City (Location)	77
The City (Location)	67
The Resistance	67
The Streets (Location)	115
Traumas	18, 23, 24, 32
Acquiring	32
NPCs	46
Permanent Effects	33
Recovering	33
Severity	32
Turns	34
TV Station (Location)	133

U

Undead	
Ghoul (Night of the Meteor)	54
Host (Under the Skin)	126
Infected (Pandemic)	92
Possessed (It Ends with a Whisper)	108
Reanimated corpse (It Ends with a Whisper)	108
Zombie (No Room in Hell)	74
Under the Skin (Scenario)	125
Apocalypse	125
Post-apocalypse	137
Using Locations	43

V

Virus (Pandemic)	92
Voodoo Camp (Location)	122
Voodoo curse	108
Voodoo Den (Location)	116
Voodoo Masters (malevolent voodoo)	110
Voodoo Place of Power (Location)	116
Voodoo practitioners (benevolent voodoo)	112
Voodoo Priest (NPC)	123
Voodoo Puppet-master (NPC)	117

W

Walton Greggs	83
Woods (Location)	104

Z

Zombie (NPC)	81
Zoo (Location)	133

NAME: _____

PHYSICAL

DEXTERITY

VITALITY



FEATURES

3

2

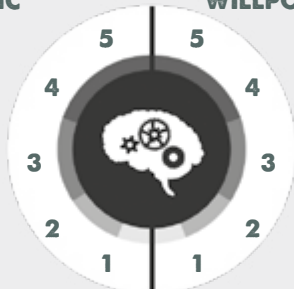
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STRESS & RESISTANCE

MENTAL

LOGIC

WILLPOWER



FEATURES

3

2

1

STRESS & RESISTANCE

SOCIAL

CHARISMA

EMPATHY



FEATURES

3

2

1

STRESS & RESISTANCE

TRAUMAS

1D 1W 1M

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EQUIPMENT

THE END OF THE WORLD is a series of roleplaying games unlike the traditional games you are used to. In THE END OF THE WORLD, you don't play a figure out of history or fantasy, you play yourself!

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