



HELL ON EARTH™
The Last Crusaders



The Last Crusaders

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Dedicated to: My Dad, Cecil Hensley, Past
Commander, Cyrene Commandary, and District
Deputy of the Virginia Knights Templar.

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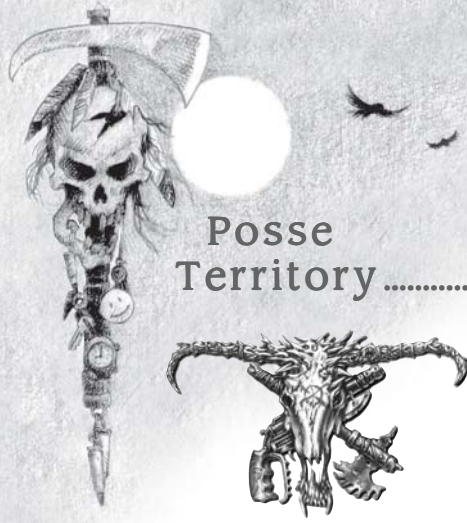


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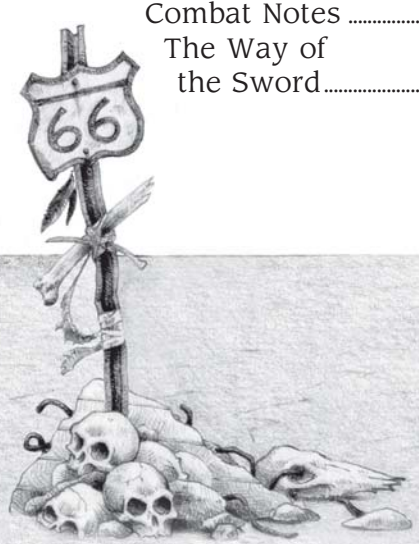
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Posse Territory



The few, The Proud



The Few, the Proud, the Templars

It was a dark and stormy knight.
Get it? Templars used to be “knights?”
Oh, never mind, brainer.

Jo here. You may have read my notes on the “Wasted West” I put together when I thought I was dying a few months back. Guess what? I lived. Sorry to disappoint you if you’re one of those wasteland cretins always hoping for the death of another Templar.

Anyway, Simon Mercer, the Grand Master of the Templars, read my report and thought it was keen, so he asked me to do another one. Who would have thought a housewife from Minnesota would become a knight *and* an author? Not me. Hell, the only thing I ever planned on fighting for was after-Christmas sales.

This time I get to narrow the field a little. Instead of talking about the whole freaking wasteland I’m just supposed to talk about us—the Templars. Where we came from, how you become one of us, why we like hacking things up so much, that sort of thing.

I probably shouldn’t be so glib. The world’s in pretty bad shape, and we Templars are the best thing going. Hell, we just might be the only force who can stop the Combine, the Cult of Doom, and the half-jillion-and-one monsters, muties, and misfits roaming the wastes.

That’s why this little guide is pretty important. Think of it as a training manual for all you bright-eyed young heroes who want to be Templars.

The Real Templars

Let’s start with where we come from. The real “Knights Templar” got started during the crusades sometime back in the days of knights and dragons and stuff (yeah, I know dragons aren’t real, but these days, I wonder...).

I’m not going to dwell on this for a long time because I don’t think it’s very relevant to what we are now. We take our name and a few ideals from the Templars, but that’s about it. If you want to know more about them, scava a history book somewhere or better yet, beat up a Librarian.

Okay, so here’s what’s important to know about the Templars. A long time ago, starting in 1095, a bunch of Christians in Europe decided to take back the Holy Land of Jerusalem. You know, the places Jesus Christ walked, lived, and died. The problem was there just happened to be a whole bunch of people living there—Muslims—and the land was just as sacred to them as it was to the Christians.

The Christians decided the only way to get the Holy Land back was to take it.

There’s all kinds of reasons why they did it—the Pope wanted all those troublemaking knights out of Europe, the Christian Emperor of Byzantium needed help fighting off the invading Turks, and rumors were floating around that these same Turks were murdering Christians and desecrating churches and other holy sites, getting everyone all riled up.

The Few, The Proud

Unfortunately, it was the common folks who packed up and headed south first. They formed a huge mob of 60,000 or more, with hardly a real soldier among them. The real knights tried to get these folks to wait, but their leader, a monk named Peter the Hermit, said God told him the pilgrimage must begin immediately.

So off they went, a huge army of thousands to go beat up on people they didn't know and take "back" lands they had never set foot on or even seen before. They called the people of the Middle East "Saracens," though I understand that was actually a bit of a misnomer. No problem—the Saracens called all the crusaders "Franz" (Franks, for the French, even though the crusaders were also English, Germans, Normans, Saxons, and Italians). This little misunderstanding foreshadowed what was to happen for the next 200 years.

Along the way, the rabble realized they didn't have enough food and other provisions for the trip, and McDonald's were a little scarce back then. So they sacked a few villages in Hungary, which just so happened to be part of the Empire of Byzantium—a Christian nation. The Hungarians were understandably upset and

began picking off and murdering stragglers from the main horde. The "peasant army" returned the favor by massacring entire villages. Yep. The first people the crusaders killed were fellow Christians. You just can't make this stuff up.

So the Emperor of Byzantium gave the mob food and told them to get the Hell to the Holy Land and out of his backyard. They did, and were basically wiped out a few weeks after arriving in the Holy Land.

The real army of knights came just a few months later. They fared a little better, and by 1099 they took Jerusalem. Oh, then they promptly slaughtered all the inhabitants. This was the problem with the crusaders—their quest for land and power sometimes overwhelmed their Christian ethics.

The Lesson

It's easy to see how Simon came up with his ideas when you know a little about the crusades.

Lesson number one. If the common people had a trained body of "knights" to lead them, they would almost certainly have been victorious.

Lesson number two. The fight can't be about land or loot, it has to be about ideals.



The knights Templar of old, hard at work in the Holy Lands.

Birth of the Templars

The original Templars were formed around 1118 by two French knights, Hugh de Payens and Godfrey de St. Omer. Their purpose was to protect pilgrims making their way to the Holy Land. These guys were actually fairly pious. They didn't own land like the other knights, but instead took vows of poverty and relied upon gifts from the various royalty of Europe for their arms, armor, horses, and staff.

They were headquartered in the royal palace of Jerusalem, which was rumored to have been built on the site of the Temple of Solomon. Thus was born the name, the "Templars."

The fierce "warrior monks" who made up the ranks of the Templars were fanatics in battle. Used as heavy shock troops, they were heavily armed and armored, and usually capable of taking on twice or more of their number. They soon became the backbone of the many armies raised in the various crusades.

Jacques De Molay

The true Knights Templar died out in 1314 with the execution of Jacques De Molay, the last Grand Master. He was burned at the stake at the behest of King Phillip the Fair (right!) and Pope Clement, who claimed the Templars worshipped demons. I'm no historian, but the books I read about this stuff say it was all a sham by the King and the Church to get the vast lands the Templars had accumulated over 200 years. See, the only way you could confiscate lands back then was if the guilty were charged with heresy.

De Molay got his revenge, though. Just before he died he cursed both Phillip and Clement, saying they would join him in death within the year. They did. Weird, huh?

Parallels

The Templars were, at times, fanatical and ruthless bastards. They had to be. They were outnumbered in a land of the enemy.

We're the same way today. There's maybe a couple hundred Templars now, but thousands of Black Hats, monsters, and wasters looking to kill us. That's why we have to be a little harsh sometimes. Simon doesn't want us to wind up like the original crusaders. To waste our lives on foolish causes only endangers our order, the West, and the world itself. Don't think we like turning our back on people. We just have to conserve our resources to ensure our very survival. And yours as well.

The New Templars

So why is this little history lesson so important? Only because the leader of the new Templars, Simon Mercer, was intent on not repeating the follies of our ancestors. He would not declare a "crusade" against some unknown group, nor would he get involved with religion. Neither would there be huge armies led by competing generals. Most importantly, the Templars would answer to no one. Simon hates the heat, and he doesn't want to wind up burned at the stake like De Molay.

That's what he decided the Templars wouldn't be. What we would be—and are—are guardians. Simon is determined that the purpose of the Templars is to guard the pilgrims.

Let me explain. See, the pilgrims are "good" people. Innocent, normal folks just trying to get by. They're not Christians, Muslims, mutants, norms, or any other organized group. They're just good people. If they're able, they also have to be strong. A perfect community that does nothing to help other communities around it doesn't count. Turning your back on other pilgrims who need help is almost as bad as attacking them yourself. That's why you'll often hear of Templars making villagers fight alongside them, particularly against really big road gangs and the like.

Of course, real pilgrims go on "pilgrimages." Simon says the pilgrims we're protecting are those who are heading into the next era. Don't get all "Cult of Doom" on me. We don't mean the next evolution of humanity. We're simply talking about the generations who are going to rebuild and redefine the world. Simon wants them to do it right, without repeating all the same mistakes people made the last couple of thousand years. You know, no more wars, no more massacres, and most importantly, no more freakin' atomic bombs.

I know what you're thinking. Who's to decide who the pilgrims are? We are. The Templars. A little self-righteous. Absolutely. High-handed? Definitely. Is it right? Maybe not. But every one of us has decided it's the only way we can guarantee a good foundation for the creation of the new world. The next generation simply has to be held to a higher standard. And Templars who get out of line get the worst treatment of all (more later, brainer).

So if you're a pilgrim, we're your friend. If not, if you've strayed from the path to the next era, the Templars are your worst nightmare.

Simon Says So

So where did Simon get all his ideas? That's a long story. To fully understand it, you have to go back to before the bombs; when Simon, like most of us, had a normal life.

Simon was an accountant in Boise, Idaho.

Pretty heroic stuff, huh? He was out on a job in the country when the bombs fell. His whole family got wiped out, just like mine, yours, and most every other person over 25 years old. If that includes you, brainer, you know what it does to a person.

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Simon dealt with his grief by wandering. He traveled all over the West, lost and confused. He looked like a bum. Rarely was he welcomed into a community and made to feel like a human being.

One day Simon was in Near Pueblo, Colorado, a fairly large survivor settlement south of Denver. The town had long been delivering tribute to those bastards at the Combine, and it was literally starving them to death. The townsfolk wouldn't share much with Simon, so he was about ready to move on when a tough



Simon, about to have an epiphany.

lady Law Dog named Jenny Hise showed up in town. Very quietly, the town's leader (actually their Sheriff), asked the Law Dog for help. Jenny tipped her hat, said she'd see what she could do, and rode off into the night.

The next morning, the town woke up to hear Jenny's motorcycle running at full throttle, heading straight for their gates. Behind her were a couple of dune buggies and a half-dozen more bikes. Black Hats. She'd messed with 'em all right. Probably killed a few and was hoping to lead the rest into the town where the villagers would help her slaughter them.

Jenny rode up to the front gates, screamed for the sentries to let her in, then watched in horror as the Sheriff shook his head. Jenny cursed the town, drew her two six-guns, and went down fighting.

Black Hats are stupid, but they aren't that stupid. They knew the town had sent her after them so they whipped out a couple of rocket launchers, took out the guard towers and gates, and came in shooting. Men, women, and children all died because they wouldn't stand up to fight for themselves. Simon fought as well as he could without any real weapons, but eventually went down, unconscious and looking dead.

That's why he was the only survivor. The Black Hats thought anyone missing a chunk of scalp like that must be dead. It was the single greatest mistake of their sordid history.

Back to Boise

When he woke up several days later, he was lying in an abattoir. The only other living souls were the buzzards feasting on the dead. It was a traumatic scene, especially for someone who still hadn't gotten over the loss of his own family. So he staggered out into the wastes sick, wounded, and alone.

Simon had wandered quite a bit before. This was 2084, three years after the bomb, so he'd already been around. Before, he had always stuck to the well-traveled routes. This time his delirium escorted him smack into the wastes. And that's not a fun place to be, friends. We're pretty lucky he survived. He was unarmed, didn't have any of his Templar powers yet, and was wounded and out of his head to boot.

Simon and the Walking Dead

Sounds like a rock group, doesn't it?

I know a lot of you still don't believe the dead walk. It seems about a third of the folks I meet have killed scores, another third have

never seen a single one. The last third got eaten, I guess, so they didn't report in. Think what you want, but I've hacked enough zombies in two to tell you for damn sure they're out there.

Simon was scavving a candy bar machine at an old Exxon when he heard a rumble from the back room. He still wasn't quite in his right mind, so like a newbie squire, he opened the long-locked door. Sure enough, a pair of stinking zombies poured out!

Simon whacked one with a crowbar he found nearby. Knocked its head right the frag off. Did the same to the next one. I don't think he really knew what he was doing, his mind was just so numbed by terror that his reflexes took over.

When he finally got over the immediate horror, Simon looked in the room the gruesome twosome had come from. Seemed these two had locked themselves in the back room of their office. It had a steel door, so Simon later figured they were holing up from looters in the early days after the bomb. The pair of shotguns, ammo, and old food containers backed up his theory.

So did the half-eaten remains of their third companion. I guess they started on this guy when they couldn't get out, then killed each other over who was next. Wanna know the really funny part? Back in the Old West, there was a group of settlers called the "Donner Party" that got stuck in the mountains and wound up eating each other to survive. The name of Simon's gas station was "Donner's Exxon." Ironic, huh?

Simon's Lessons

Simon left Donner's Exxon with two important lessons. First: the walking dead can be put down if you crack open their noggins and stomp their brains out. Always good to know, 'cause there's a lot of those grinning bastards out there.

Second (and more importantly): he realized the value of a good hand-to-hand tool. His ammo would run out quick, but if he got good with the crowbar, it might last him forever.

I seriously doubt he was thinking those things consciously yet. In fact, he claims he barely remembers the rest of his trek to Boise. All he knows is that when he got there, his shotgun was empty and his crowbar was coated in blood and ichor. (What's "ichor?" That's how you tell if some critter is a monster or not. If you cut off its head and it bleeds some kind of colored goo (ichor), it was a monster. Otherwise it was just a mutated varmint.)

Boise

Boise wasn't. I mean, it got nuked hard, just like every other city. Simon hadn't been here in three years, and the ruins brought back a violent flood of memories. By his own admission, he sank to his knees and cried like a baby at the rubble streets and swirling ghost-rock maelstrom in the distance.

He couldn't take his eyes off the storm. He'd heard rumors that the screaming white streaks in the dark clouds were the souls of those who'd been killed in the bombs. Could some of those shrieking spirits be those of his family? For my younger readers, it's a thought many of us who survived have had.

It's a good thing Simon was out of shotgun shells. He might have ended it all right there. Fortunately for the rest of us, he decided to throw himself into the maelstrom. He thought it would kill him—most folks do the first time they have to go through one—but of course, it didn't. It still hurts like Hell, though. Having a couple thousand screaming demons slamming through your soul can't be good for you.

Into the Maelstrom

If you've ever been through a maelstrom, you know what Simon went through. For those who haven't, imagine walking naked into a hurricane filled with hail. Now imagine the icy hail doesn't just sting your skin, it stings your insides as well. Your bones, your brain, your heart—maybe even your soul. A lot of folks die. Simon lived, but just barely.

Like most maelstroms, the inside of this one is calm. Eerily calm. You can still hear the whirlwind, but it seems distant. Almost like instead of screaming, it's whispering to you—which is just as disturbing, by the way.

Simon was very lucky he wasn't found by the things that lived inside the Boise Deadland. He would meet them later, but I'll get back to that.

For now, Simon just staggered deeper into the ruins. Eventually, he reached the center of the downtown blast site. A handful of buildings still stood around ground zero, mostly stone structures slightly shielded by larger buildings that had stood in front of them. Simon recognized one of these buildings immediately—it was the old Freemason's lodge. There wasn't much left of it, but it was shelter. Our hero hobbled toward it, made his way into the inner meeting room, and collapsed.

The Delirium

Simon probably laid there for a few weeks. He doesn't know. All he remembers is staring at the paintings on the meeting hall walls. The Freemasons had something called "York Rites," which is a secondary organization that pays homage to the Knights Templar. Some of the paintings on the walls featured those knights, and I guess the images burned themselves into Simon's fevered brain.

Like most inductees, Simon had wanted to know more about the real Templars, so he had read a few books. You know, those boring history books you used to get your dad at Christmas. I guess men like them because they're filled with exciting tales of hand-to-hand combat and desperate last stands. Macho crap if you ask me, but Simon bought into it hard. He dreamed of new Templars, armed with swords and guns, reclaiming the Wasted West and protecting travelers from evils like the Black Hats, the walking dead, and umpteen billion other evil pieces of crap sliming around the wastes.

Of course, he was the Grand Master of this new order.



The first time I ever met Simon. Can you believe that's me in the back?

In his dreams, Simon imagined the Templars had magical powers. They could cure the sick, imbue their swords with holy might, and even dance through hordes of enemies with superhuman speed and grace. Sounds silly, doesn't it? Maybe, but Simon's dreams were soon to become reality.

Simon's Sword

I'm getting ahead of myself. When Simon was finally able to get up, he smashed open an old display case sitting at the head of the Mason's meeting hall, where an old Civil War saber had somehow not yet been scavenged. He needed a tabard to truly fit the image, so he ripped up an old sheet and painted a cross on it. Simon figured if he was to truly resurrect the order, there was no more fitting weapon and uniform to do it with. It didn't take him long to try out his new role.

Wearing the tabard and with sword in hand, Simon walked outside and straight into trouble.

Most maelstroms have a local population of muties living in their calm sweet spots. This one was no exception, as some normie scavengers were discovering. Two of the scavs were down when Simon spotted them; a woman and another man were struggling to defend their bodies from the hungry muties that had surrounded them. Simon started carving, snick-snack (that's the sound a spine makes if you cleave it clean).

A couple of maimings and mutilations later, and Simon's a big hero (to the local norms, at least). Turns out the scavvies were from a nearby settlement: Near Boise, as it was called back then.

The scavs thanked Simon, but were upset about the two friends still lying bleeding on the ground. Simon knelt to one of them and saw a sharpened iron pipe had been rammed into his ribcage. Our hero tried to pull the pipe out, and just about stained his tabard when his hands started glowing yellow! The pipe slid out like a straw and gushed blood. Simon instinctively put his hand over it to stop the bleeding, and was once again amazed to see it glow brilliant yellow. The blood slowly stopped. Fifteen minutes later, Simon took his hand off and marveled at what had happened. The man had a large bruise and a faint scar—but no two-inch gaping pipe-hole. That fellow lived, and turned out to be Sheriff Murray of Near Boise.

The other fellow was a junker. He'd been brained by a piece of rock. Nothing serious, but very painful. Simon tried his trick again and

soon Doc Young was sitting up and asking him all sorts of questions.

Needless to say, everyone was curious. Simon wasn't a Doomsayer and he wasn't a syker. He had passed through the storm, though, so Doc Young figured his new power must be some sort of mutation. Simon had other suspicions. They were confirmed a few minutes later when the muties he'd chased off came back with reinforcements.

There were twenty or so this time. Sheriff Murray plugged a couple with his SMG, and Doc Young showed everyone how great the new plasma rifle he'd been working on could cook flesh. The other two scavengers did the best they could, but one was a punk-nosed kid of about 16 and the other was a former housewife more accustomed to beating eggs than the odds.

Simon stepped up and started carving. His speed was incredible—superhuman even—and he knew it. You could see it in his eyes as he sliced and diced. The muties knew it too. They ran, and Boise's been mutie-free ever since.

The four townies were impressed. Enough so that they asked Simon to help them with their real problem—the reason they'd been scavenging inside a ghost-rock storm in the first place.

See, Doc Young was working on a new weapon, one to defeat a nearby horror so deadly it had already wiped out half our town.

Yeah, I said "our" town. See, I was that housewife, in case you hadn't figured it out, brainer.

I told you a little about myself in my original journal, *The Wasted West*, so I'll keep it short. My story's like most others. My husband, Roger, died in the war. I was at his funeral in the country when the bombs hit. In a way, he saved my life. The rest of my family didn't make it long after that. There are just as many human monsters out there as supernatural ones.

Anyway, I don't want to talk about it. Besides, this book is about Simon and the Templars.

Oh, the last scavenger, the punk, was Aaron McConnell. He was your typical young male—looking to be a hero by blowing some bad guy away, never realizing that the real heroes stay home and raise the kids while their spouses run off to Kansas to fight the Rebs.

Sorry. Men have been that way for a couple millennia, and I don't think my ranting is going to change anything.

Back to the story. Me, Simon, Aaron, Sheriff Murray, and Doc Young headed back to our town. Along the way, Doc Young told Simon about the Soul Taker.

Baphomet

If you don't believe in walking dead, you sure as Hell won't believe in Baphomet. I'll just assume your brainwaves aren't flatlining and tell you about him. It. Whatever the Hell it was.

About a hundred miles north of Boise is Hell's Canyon. It's a real state park—not some melodramatic name we made up. Check an old atlas if you don't believe me. It had been a spooky place for a long time—go figure with a name like that. Back in normal days, hikers, rangers, and others would go missing in this huge area and never be seen again. It never got a lot of attention in my day except in rags like the *Epitaph*. The last few years, however, we heard a community of survivalists had holed up in there. They thought it was the perfect place—secluded, plenty of game, and easily defensible. They were right, except they were the game.

Turns out there was this "thing" in there. An ancient creature that had dwelled in the canyon since Indian times. It looked like an effeminate man, with a long black cape that covered its tall body like a stiff dress. The cape's collar rose to a weird hood that either formed a pair of horns, or covered the real ones. Its face was a pale lilac—like the color someone's skin turns when he's suffocating. Its eyes were completely black, like a shark's. I remember it well because I saw it. But I'll get to that in a minute.

The "Green-Glowing-Eyes" Thing

The thing did its dirty deeds by possession. It could somehow reach out to people (way out—remember its lair was a hundred miles away) and take them over. Or more like infect them. Something. We never were quite sure.

All we knew is that folks would sometimes get this greenish tint to their eyes, then do something horrible. They didn't have the green thing going on all the time, and they weren't under its control all the time either. It was more like this force could control them whenever it wanted, and they wouldn't even know what they'd done afterward. Once it got its hooks into a person, it seemed to just sit back and wait to do something mean. And it was very good at that.

The possessed weren't obvious about it. I mean, they didn't just pick up a gun and go postal. They'd wait 'til they were alone with a friend, then, if the friend got in some kind of danger, the victim would push them further into it.

The Few, The Proud



The trip to Hell's Canyon was just full of wonders.

Here's an example. Fred Young (Doc Young's brother) was a farmer outside of Near Boise. He had the only working thresher in the area. One day, he and his son James were working in the field. Fred heard something thunk in the blades of the thresher and got out to see what he'd hit. While he was standing in front of the thresher, James crawled in and hit the gas. Fred got baled. It would have looked like an unfortunate accident if Aaron McConnell hadn't been in the cornfield that day and seen the whole thing.

Another example was the time Manny and Gloria Wells were picking berries. These things grew on the sides of cliffs, so Manny had his wife, Gloria, drop him over the side with a rope. Sure enough, she just let him drop. I happened to be the witness for that one. I saw Gloria's eyes glow green, then she just picked up a knife and worked at the rope 'til it went snap. I ran straight back to town and told the Sheriff. He said he suspected something like that was going on in town—there'd just been too many fatal accidents lately. So we called in Doc Young. James had already been cleared, but we didn't tell Gloria we saw what she'd done (she wouldn't have known anyway, but we didn't

know that then).

Doc Young set out to make a sort of "tracer" to find out what was causing all this evil. He thought he could trace the supernatural energies from the victims to its source. Trouble was, he'd need some parts from Boise, and then he'd need to use his device on a person when they were taken over.

Of course, Boise was inside the maelstrom and chock full of flesh-eating muties. Murray met the challenge head-on and assembled a posse to help him. He chose Doc Young 'cause he needed him. Me and Aaron also got drafted because we must have been clean or we wouldn't have told him about what we saw. Aaron could shoot a gun, but I was mostly worthless back then. Murray gave me a shotgun and I just prayed the shells weren't dried up.

Getting the parts out of Boise wasn't easy. We probably wouldn't have survived if it hadn't been for the timely "awakening" of Simon. I've already told you what happened at this point.

We kept the scavenging trip a secret, knowing that Gloria was one of "them." Sheriff Murray then arranged to have her "help" him clean the shotguns. She was a good girl, so Murray

prodded a bit. He told her he thought there was some sort of presence infecting the town. Sure enough, a few minutes later, her eyes glowed green and she leveled a shotgun at him. Fortunately he'd taken all the powder out of the shells.

In a flash, Sheriff Murray jumped on top of Gloria and slapped his cuffs on her. At the same time, Doc Young, hiding in the next room with his gizmo, detected a strange signal. It disappeared instantly, but as he suspected, it started again in a few moments. The thing was probing its minions, trying to find out what was going on. It stayed out of Gloria, though, just in case. It was smart that way.

The Sheriff wanted to put together a group to track down the signal and find out what was sending it. Doc Young knew this was a bad idea, however. If one of the posse turned out to be infected, it would know they were coming and stop sending out its supernatural signal. Then they couldn't track it and kill the thing.

He had me, Aaron, and Doc Young, but wanted more help. Someone from outside who couldn't already be infected (we hoped).

Simon's Quest

In his current "I'm a hero" state-of-mind, Simon was more than willing to undertake this important quest. Sheriff Murray couldn't leave the town, so me, Aaron, and Doc Young got to go with him.

It was slow going. Doc Young's device only worked when the monster was active, and the signal led us over country that had few roads but plenty of other horrors. I think the first time I saw a zombie I hid behind a tree. I figured Simon would smack me with the flat of his sword for that, but he didn't. Nope. He came over and put his hands on my back. Said he felt my pain and was sorry I was put in this situation. He was a lot nicer to me than I would have been. Now, anyway.

Maybe there's something to be said for all that, 'cause the next time we ran into a horror—this big, nasty tree-thing—I was the first to open up with my shotgun. The others said I let out a shout so loud the forest shook. Maybe it was all the rage and fear I'd built up since Roger and my kids died. Maybe I was just tired of being scared all the time. Or maybe I just wanted to see what a can of whoop-ass tasted like.

Whatever, I came of age that day. It was a good thing, because the trip only got worse.

Still with me? Good. I know you're wondering

when I'm going to get back to the Templars. Be patient. You gotta know all this stuff, or else what Simon did later just won't make any sense.

The Cabin

So there we were, trekking through the forests of Idaho. You'd think we'd be excited being out in nature away from the ruins of the cities, but we weren't. The forest was a Deadland. Trees were gnarled and deformed, the trunks all broken in so they looked like those spooky trees you see in creepy cartoons like *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (my kids loved that one).

Then we come upon this old cabin out in the woods. We'd found a few survivalist camps on the way and scrounged up some old milrats and ammo, so we thought we'd give this one a try too. Turns out there was an occupant.

She was sitting in an old rocking chair with a shotgun across her lap when we threw open the door like common thieves. Notice I said "across her lap," not "pointing at us." The woman, Althea Butterworth (hey, I didn't name her) said she'd lived here a long, long time, and sometimes she was able to see things. I'd dismiss that as an old wives' tale, except that what she said left no doubt she was some kind of oracle.

Granny Butterworth (as she called herself) said we were seeking an ancient creature, one that had plagued these parts for a couple hundred years. Doc Young recorded all this on his palmcorder, so I'll just paste the transcript into this file and let you read it yourself. I know she's a little hard to understand, but stick with it, brainer. (And if you're a Librarian, I hope it wrecks your machine. Stinkin' bookworms.)

Granny Butterworth's Tale

I've already told you I got the gift o' seein'—my momma said I was born with a "blue veil" over my face. Now you better believe it, Simon Mercer! I kin see in your eyes that you don't. You is on the verge o' greatness, Simon Mercer, but part o' you is dead inside. Your compassion. You been hurt so much by the war you're afraid to feel anymore. You're thinkin' 'bout fightin' evil and slayin' monsters, and that don't leave no time for children or ol' ladies. Maybe you got good reasons to be hurt, Simon Mercer. But losin' Stephanie and the kids didn't hurt you no worse than Josephine losin' her family. Or Doc Young losin' his brother. You gotta get your compassion back, child, or it's gonna be your

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downfall. They's things out there that're gonna prey upon your coldness.

All right. I'se tired o' preachin'. You're here to find out about the monster, so that's what I'ma gonna tell you.

It's an ancient thing. It was here when the Indians was. Maybe even before. My granny said it was a demon straight from the pits of Hell. She said sometimes these things get rewards from ol' Lucifer hisself and get to come to the world for a while. They come right up outta the pit and set to makin' mischief.

This one does it by ridin' inside folks. It us'ta only see inside Hell's Canyon. Some crazy fool'd go back in there, hikin' or fishin' or huntin', and the demon'd get in his mind and make him do terrible things. A hunter might shoot his friend in the backside or push him right off a cliff. The demon delights in all the pain and guilt it causes.

Fo'tunately, it was stuck in that canyon for the last couple hundred years. One o' them funny rules demons and angels live by, I reckon. But then we done blowed up the planet and all those survivalists moved in there. The demon'd never had so much fun, and I guess it liked it.

Those folks weren't as bright as you 'n me. It

took 'em a long time to figure out all those accidental shootin's and people fallin' off cliffs wasn't just accidents. When they did, they decided to up and leave. But the monster weren't havin' none o' that. It went down among the survivors and killed those it couldn't control with its own hands, ever last one.

That changed the thing somehow. It still couldn't leave the canyon, but it could send folks away and use its powers through 'em. Your town down there by Boise. Some of the folks used to be survivalists, didn't they? Those was the ones it controlled. Who brought the monster in. Don't blame 'em though—they's just its puppets is all.

But now you got yourself a real hero. Maybe a couple. An' you can go in and finish that demon once and for all. It's gonna take that fancy sword, Simon Mercer, and it's gonna take that scattergun, Josephine Wales. Doc Young and Aaron McConnell are gonna have to fight too. But no matter what, one o' you is gonna die if Simon don't do right. I can't tell you no mo'. All I can do is give you a warning. Don't do the Devil's will, chil'un. Think on it hard, 'cause this is just the beginnin' of the beginnin'.



Granny Butterworth.

Pressing On

What do you say to that? "It was nice meeting you?" I mean, this old lady knew our names, where we were going, what we were doing, and maybe even something about our future. She turned out to be right about everything, too.

I think Simon was more shook up than the rest of us. This old lady had just told him he had some great destiny to fulfill. He wanted to hear that, but he didn't care much for the lecture about him needing to regain his compassion. I sympathize. I'm a little short of it myself these days. Losing your world will do that to you.

Anyway, we tried to ask Granny Butterworth some more questions but she wouldn't answer. She did make us an incredible meal though. Beans, corn, bread. It was a feast. I remembered how I'd taken home cooking for granted before the War. Tasting Granny's spread reminded me how much I missed my own mom's cooking.

Aw Hell. I'm getting off-track again. I'm bad for that. Sorry.

The skinny of it is that Granny Butterworth didn't say another useful thing. She just filled our tummies and sent us packing. So that's what we did. We grabbed what leftovers would keep and headed straight into Hell's Canyon.

Hell's Canyon

I've said this before, but if you ever get the chance to name some place, don't call it "Hell's Canyon" or "the Devil's Backbone" or the "Forest of Death." How could you not have monsters in places like that? If you get to name something, call it the "Happy Place." Or the "Peaceful Forest Where There Are No Freakin' Monsters!" What critter in its right mind would take up residence there?

Anyway, Hell's Canyon lived up to its name all right. I've never seen so many walking dead. The first batch we encountered were former soldiers. A platoon of Northern Alliance troops must have holed up and gotten killed back here, 'cause there was a good 15 or 20 of the suckers. They were packing, too. Assault rifles, body armor, grenades. They set an ambush (those zombies often seem to keep the nastiest of whatever skills they had when they were alive) and would have wiped us all out if Doc Young hadn't whipped out his plasma rifle again. It ripped right through those corpses and took out all the heavy weapons before it ran out of juice. Then it was up to the rest of us. Simon hacked, I blasted, and Aaron did the two-gun-kid thing. Doc Young was fresh out of gizmos but he had an old revolver in his pack and it turned out he was pretty handy with it.

We came through alive, but Aaron had taken a 7.62mm round in the guts. Simon fixed that right up, just like he'd done back in Boise. You can guess how that made us feel. We thought we were invincible.

Then we hit the survivalists. They were just more walking dead, but they were tricky bastards. The soldiers were more dangerous straight up, but these zombies set traps, fired on us from the canyon rims where we couldn't get at them, and even hid in the earth itself to pop out and take us from behind.

I don't know how we survived all that, but we did. And all the while, Doc Young's detector would occasionally pick up the demon's energy reaching out. It led us right to the north end of the canyon. Where the thing lived.

We never expected the last of the monster's defenders.

The Mouth of Hell

The detector led us to a tall cave in the north face of the canyon. It would have been impossible to find without Doc Young's gizmo. You have to realize Hell's Canyon isn't like the

Grand Canyon—it's not just one massive gash in the ground. Hell's Canyon is covered in trees, for one thing. That makes it hard to see more than a few hundred feet at a time when you're down in it. It's also riddled with side-canyons, gulleys, and streams that turn it into a maze.

When we got there, we expected more walking dead. We did see people standing just inside the cave, but they weren't dead. They were alive.

Simon warned them to stand aside. He had come for the demon and he aimed to kill it. I guess the people were the survivalists it had taken over before. One of them, a big bald guy, was even a syker. He shook his head and leveled an auto-shotgun at us.

"I don't want to kill you," Simon said, but the bald guy just stood there.

Then suddenly, this weird creature comes out of the shadows behind them. The damn thing reminded me of one of those Disney villains. It was tall, dressed in a blue gown or robe, and had an almost porcelain face—stiff and unmoving. Its eyes were coal black with no pupils, like a shark. On top of its heads were horns, though they may just have been some weird decorations from its bizarre hat.

It looked out at us and its eyes glowed green. We probably would have started firing if the survivalists hadn't been in the way. No one wanted to start shooting this close, and it didn't seem like the monster was doing more than looking at us anyway. I can't speak for the others, but I felt it look into my head. I felt cold clammy fingers touch my brain. I tried with all my might to force it out, and it worked! It withdrew in a panic like a teenager having sex.

Simon must have felt it too because he charged forward. The big bald guy jumped in the way, but Simon put his sword right through him. The big man didn't go down, but instead cracked Simon across the skull with his big weapon. The two squared off as the demon backed away to watch the fight.

Everyone else opened up at the same time. It should have been instant death for everyone. I mean, we were only a few yards apart. It reminded me of the way you always see the "Shootout at the OK Corral" in the vids. A group of people close enough to spit on each other unload their guns but with only a few rounds actually hitting anyone. It's just freaking unbelievable, but there it was.

The bad guys' luck gave out first. My pump shotgun cut a woman with an SMG in half.

Aaron's pistols finally hit something and turned a guy's head into a melon.

Doc Young got hit next. A rifle round went straight through his throat. He fell back gasping and bleeding like a blood fountain, gurgling and choking all the way.

Aaron ran empty and ducked down to change clips. I had two rounds left. I put one into the guy who'd hit Doc and hurled another at some young girl with a jammed automatic pistol. I missed. The girl finally cleared her jam, then raised her pistol to finish me off. I looked straight into her eyes as my shotgun's hammer fell on air. There was a shimmer of green there. She was terrified and didn't want to be there. Suddenly, Simon came out of nowhere and stood between us. I looked to see the syker had finally fallen, his bald head neatly separated from his brawny body.

Simon did the girl one worse. He stared her down and backed her into a corner. I can't tell you what he saw when he looked in her eyes, but I heard her whisper "please." Then Simon raised his sword and slammed it into her shoulder and all the way down through her crotch.

I went to Doc Young and put my hand on his throat to stop the bleeding. It was useless. I yelled for Simon to come save him, that he was dying quickly, but studly couldn't stop himself. He turned on the demon and backed it into the cave.

Then I saw the strangest damn thing. Simon advanced with his sword out and the monster just stood there. I'd swear the bastard was even grinning. I couldn't hear, but Simon later said the creature told him its name before he killed it. *Baphomet*. Then Simon raised his sword with both hands, screamed, and smashed it into the side of the monster's skull. It shattered into a thousand pieces, just like you might imagine from the look of its doll-like face. In fact, the fiend's whole body shattered like that. The shards were hard, like porcelain, and rained down noisily on the stone floor of the cave for what seemed like minutes but must have only been seconds.

Simon just stood there looking at the shards until I finally screamed at him. Slowly, he turned and saw Doc Young twitching and gurgling on the floor. He dropped his sword and put his hands on the junker's throat, but it was too late. Doc Young shot a desperate, pitiful look at both of us, kicked one last time, and died.

I was furious. I told Simon if he had let me or

Aaron finish the monster, he could have healed Doc Young. Aaron didn't say a word. He just sat there avoiding eye contact and reloading his clips.

Simon didn't say anything either. He just stepped back out of the cave and looked out over Hell's Canyon.

It seemed a little less dark now. It wasn't clean, not by a long shot. But I could see the death of Baphomet had an effect on the land. A lot of us know that's how it works now. Kill off a big bad guy and the whole region gets a little brighter. At least until another big bad guy comes along. I guess that kind of soothed us. Me. So I didn't say anything else. Simon knew he'd screwed up. Cost Doc Young his life. He'd lived up to Granny's prophecy and done the right thing, though. At least, I guess that's what she meant by killing Baphomet.

Home

The trip home was almost as bad. We didn't run into any more walking dead, but we did cross paths with more than a few critters. With Simon's powers, Aaron's guns, and me being somewhat competent by now, we managed to survive. We tried to stop at Granny Butterworth's cabin and tell her what had happened, but we couldn't seem to find it. She probably knew anyway, so we just kept trucking on back to Boise. We finally made it, with Doc Young's body, and buried him in the cemetery.

Aaron really did a number then. He told everyone what we had done. He went especially crazy over Simon, who was his hero now, I suppose. The people bought the whole story, and even gave Simon a huge feast. Sure, me and Aaron were "guests of honor" as well, but it was Simon who everyone wanted to talk to. I guess they felt they already knew me and Aaron, and we had just gone along for the ride.

To top it all off, we had never officially named Near Boise anyway—that's just what people called it. Aaron said we should officially name it Simon's Rock. So we did.

Simon's Long Walk

The town was in good hands now. Sheriff Murray was a competent leader, and Simon even said that I was getting to be one Hell of a fighter. He was going to go off into the wastes and find others who needed help. Aaron begged and begged to go with him, and Simon finally



agreed to take him along. Aaron said he would be his "squire," like the ones who served the knights of old.

The rest of us sent the pair off with a big feast but didn't hear back from them for a year. During that time, Simon honed his skills, learned about the powers he'd been blessed with, and even recruited others with similar values. When the big hero came back, Aaron wore the tunic, as did a handful of other men and women in tow. None of them had powers at this point, but they were committed to the cause and had proven themselves to Simon over the last months.

Simon said that from now on, he would be the "Grand Master" of the Templars. He would train these men and women and teach them how to tap the incredible power of the saints. Then his band of chosen knights would venture out into the West and try to reclaim it.

All of us thought we'd seen the beginning of a genuine legend in Simon. Kind of like our own Joan of Arc. To hear him say he was going to create a whole order of heroes like him was incredible. We were in shock. An army of angels was coming to save us from this Hell on Earth. The Templars were going to fight a very just and righteous war, and they even had the power of *something* holy behind them.

That night we celebrated Simon's return. Sheriff Murray uncorked enough wine to get everyone smashed and properly welcome the new recruits to our fold.

Simon's never been a drinker, but he's never gotten in the way of a good party either. That night, while I was buzzing pretty hard on some 10-year old Zima, Simon dropped a city-buster on me. He asked if I would come with him to Boise and become one of the first Templars.

My brain said no. Things were pretty good here in Simon's Rock. I hadn't picked up a shotgun since our adventure, and I wasn't sure I was still the same brave little soldier I'd been back then. But my heart (and maybe the Zima) said yes before my brain could stop it. I'm like that.

Simon smiled in a way I didn't catch then, but would later on. He was falling in love with me.

The next day, after everyone finally came out of their hangovers, Simon addressed the town and vowed to protect it in exchange for a small amount of food and occasional assistance. The first such task would be to help him rebuild the old Masonic lodge in the ruins of Boise. A good number of folks agreed and went to work that very day.

The New Templars

Several of Simon's knights were already competent fighters, survivalists, and even medics. The rest were gifted amateurs, like me. The veterans trained us day and night, teaching us how to fight with swords and guns, how to find food and water in the wastes, how to treat wounds, and everything they could come up with on the horrors that seemed to be crawling out from under every rock since the bombs fell. Simon taught all of the virtues of our new order, and slowly but surely, how to tap into the phenomenal power of the saints. Aaron was the first to demonstrate his ability to lay on hands. I was the second. It was grueling, 20-hour a day training, but those who finished came out tough-as-nails and twice as sharp.

At the end, Simon gave us each a sword. He'd scavenged plenty during his travels. Then we made our own tabards and painted the Templar's red Maltese Cross on them.

The way new Templars train is quite different now. Let me finish the last bit of history and I'll tell you all about it.



The first batch of Templars (there's me again) prepares to set out.

The Temple

By this time it was 2088. The people of Simon's Rock, helped by more than a few squires, finally finished the Temple. Most folks come to Boise thinking they're going to see the Taj Mahal or the MGM Grand in Vegas. (I know you architectural purists are dying at the comparison, but did you ever see the Grand?)

The thing you have to remember is that the "Temple" used to be the Boise Freemason's Lodge. I'm not saying the Masons were cheap, but their lodge was nothing to get worked up over. It was a good, solid building with plenty of meeting space, however, and that's what Simon needed. He and the others made a few structural changes when they rebuilt it, but it's basically the same old building.

The thing most people notice first about it is the difference between the old stonework and the new. Several times a former architect or construction worker has offered to re-stone the Temple to make it match, but Simon says no. He wants people to remember what the bombs did. Leaving the Temple as is serves as a powerful symbol of the old world and the new.



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Temple Interior

Inside, the Temple is only a little more elaborate. The central meeting hall has been opened up, walls were knocked out, and supports added. A ragged red carpet runs down the middle of the aisle to a short platform and an uncomfortable stone chair. A white tabard hangs overhead, and rows of mis-matched pews taken from nearby churches fills the gathering area. Paintings of the real Knights Templar, mostly scavenged from museums and other lodges around the West, line the side walls.

Hearing Petitioners

The most common use of the Temple is the thing Simon does every day—receive petitioners asking for help. Every morning at the crack of dawn, Simon goes to the Temple. Any healthy Templars who happen to be in town are also expected to be on hand. They sit in special pews behind Simon facing the crowd, though they may get up and talk to the people waiting, clear the line by healing those who need comfort, and so forth.

Simon sits on the "throne" when hearing pleas from visiting survivors. It would be easy to think of Simon as a pompous dictator here, but you can tell he's not because he sits on the

edge of his chair. See, an arrogant "king" concerned only with power and wealth would sit back and listen apathetically to those who have come to him for help. Simon sits on the edge of his seat, listens intently, and becomes noticeably upset when a petitioner has a particularly disturbing tale. He even gets up and goes into the line to lay hands on someone who is obviously suffering.

If he can do something about a problem, he does. Simon finds a Templar to accompany the petitioner, or hires healers, farmers, or mercenaries to solve more mundane problems.

Other Uses of the Temple

Minor ceremonies are also conducted at the Temple. When a waster is named a Companion, he's presented with the red cross in this chamber. This happens fairly frequently. You'd be surprised how important this makes folks feel.

A Templar who completes a particularly difficult assignment or task might also be formally congratulated in the Temple.

Simon also uses the throne to sit in judgment when a Templar is accused of betraying his oath. Such affairs are always public, and the Boise hangers-on love to sit in the back rows and watch the debates. There are no lawyers (thank God) when such a thing occurs. Everyone is expected to represent himself, tell his side of the story, and then abide by Simon's decision.

The Hall of Heroes

Up on a hill overlooking the Temple is the Hall of Heroes. Shortly after rebuilding the old Freemason's Lodge, the workers decided they hadn't sweated out enough blood, so they fixed up an old church and the cemetery around it as well. The dead had long since got up, chased folks around a bit, and promptly got their heads chopped off, so it was relatively safe. The crew still dug the broken coffins out of the graves and filled them in with dirt just to be sure. You can never be too safe around cemeteries these days, especially in a Deadland.

Squires and Companions who fall get buried in this hallowed graveyard—if we can find their bodies, that is. The tombstones are sanded and then inscribed with the names and deeds of the new corpses.

The inside of the church is reserved for the Templars themselves. See, if someone brings your corpse back to Boise, Simon has it cremated in a formal ceremony, then placed in

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an urn (if we can get our hands on a real one—if not, you might get stuck in a cookie jar, spittoon, or something). Then Simon and whoever's on hand says a few kind words over your ashes and shoves them in a hole in the wall.

Biletnikoff the Librarian then places a plaque over your hole that lists your name, date of birth, date of presentation, date of death, and any deeds they happen to know about.

The Martyrs

Standing below these plaques are busts of the "Martyrs." I'm going to tell you more about them soon, but for now, just realize some of the saints who give us our power take a more active role in things.

One of the Downtowners is a handy sculptor, and he carves a likeness of each Martyr, which is then placed along the walls under the plaques of the fallen Templars. In case you're wondering, we get their pictures either from the library at Sacramento or from descriptions by those Templars who have been blessed by them. There's around a dozen Martyrs right now, with room for another 20 or so.

The last feature is a huge book at the back of the room. This is the *Book of Martyrs*, which records all we know of these heroes. If Biletnikoff will help me, I'll try to include the entire text of the *Book of Martyrs* at the end of this report.

The Hospice

The Hospice was once an old apartment building. Simon and the other locals restored it in 2089. It's divided into two sections. There are over 50 units, and they're available to visiting petitioners for up to a week at a time. The rooms are simple but clean, and sometimes a little weird. We scavenged decent furniture from outside the blast zone, but it's mismatched to say the least. Your room might have a beat-up sofa from an old one-room efficiency alongside a mahogany dresser from an expensive downtown hotel. Hey, it's the Apocalypse. What d'ya want?

The rooms do have running water, but no electricity. Simon's never allowed a generator to be put in because he doesn't want to become dependent on ghost rock. Personally, I think he's



Boise, as it now looks. Home sweet home.

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The Hall of Heroes, where we Templars honor our fallen.

actually repulsed by ghost rock. A lot of folks are these days. Who can blame them?

About 10 of these rooms are used to treat those few sick who cannot be cured by our miracles. In case you don't know it, sometimes our healing doesn't work. We can usually try again the next day, though, and this is where patients wait when that happens.

The Barracks

We Templars get to stay in an old hotel we call the Barracks when we're in town. Whoopee. The visitors get comfy sofas and running water. We get old army cots and one community shower. The cots came from a military hospital they set up here during the Last War. They're comfortable enough if you don't use them. Actually I don't mind the community shower so much. We Templars ain't all that pure.

Oh, and there's rats in the walls. They're not radrats or anything, but I guess I have a little yuppie housewife left in me 'cause I still hate the little bastards.

If there's any consolation it's that Simon lives here too, just like the rest of us. His room's a

little bigger, and it's got a desk, some books, and other personal items, but it's definitely nothing special.

Biletnikoff, the Librarian I'll tell you about soon, has the big room. He knocked out a couple of walls and built himself a decent little apartment. There's always a waist-deep stack of papers, maps, books, and dataslugs he's either studying or scanning in for the Librarians.

Downtown Boise

The area around the Temple and the Hall of Heroes is just called "Downtown." There's four- or five-hundred "Downtowners" there at any given time. Maybe 50 or so are permanent residents—hangers-on who've created their own little community in the Temple's shadow. Some of them actually work for Simon, hunting, fishing, or making tabards or sharpening swords, but most just live here.

Because of the frequent visitors, the regulars get along pretty well. Downtown's a carnival every day of the week. The Downtowners set up little carts or tents and sell food, traveling equipment, and even pictures and other

souvenirs of Boise. A few sell supposed relics as well—mundane weapons used by Templars, pieces of their tabard, bones—whatever they can get hold of. When we catch someone with something he shouldn't have, we boot 'em.

The Grand Master doesn't rule Downtown, but he does boss the Downtowners around when he feels the need. Right now, everyone in Boise who isn't a Templar is considered a guest, and they're subject to their host's whims.

Eventually, Downtown will get big enough that someone will have to take charge. Knowing Simon, he'll probably allow the people to appoint their own leader. I think that's a mistake, and I've told him so. I think we should tell those folks that as long as they live in the Templar's front yard, we're the boss. Some day, some big army's going to come rolling through Idaho and we're going to need every swingin' thingie that can hold a weapon. Before that happens, we ought to put these people to work building us a wall, installing some guns, and forming a militia. Maybe someday Simon will listen to reason.

The Town Square

That's what we call it, anyway. Having a town square makes us feel like Downtown's actually a place instead of a place's leftovers.

In truth, the town square is what used to be the intersection of two major streets. Most of the buildings around it were blasted to the ground floor. Before Simon and the others fixed up the Temple, they cleared the rubble and pitched hundreds of US Army tents they'd found somewhere for temporary homes. The tents are small, but waterproof and comfortable even in winter. Thank the military for that.

These days, the tents are available to visitors when the Hospice is already full. They pitch them all around the square, but not inside as it's far too busy.

A lot of kids looking to be squires live in "tent city" until they're finally taken in as Templars. They're not allowed to stay in the Hospice more than a week, and most wait for nearly a year before landing a mentor, so they borrow a tent. It's almost a test in and of itself. Those who can't handle living in a tent for a year aren't likely going to make good Templars.

The Water Tower

Among the crew who helped Simon rebuild Boise was a civil engineer named "Big" Bob Johnson. He's the one who restored the running water in the Hospice. He also constructed a

water tower for the rest of us, and installed a solar-powered filtration system. Clean, clear water is free now, though the filtration system needs frequent maintenance from Bob.

The Boise Maelstrom

Petitioners and squire-wannabes have one major obstacle to go through when entering Boise—the maelstrom. Fortunately for them, our storm's not as bad as most—probably because all the Templars drained most of the fear out of downtown—but it's still nothing to sneeze at. If a regular maelstrom is a high voltage fence, ours is one of those electric ones they use to keep cows in. Just don't piss on it.

Is the storm actually dying down? No one knows of one that's stopped yet. Sure, they were supposed to. The whole point of using ghost-rock bombs was to leave the land in good shape so the enemy could later occupy it in a few years. But the Reckoners evidently tricked us all, because every storm caused by the bombs still rages today. Ours doesn't so much "rage" as "tantrum," so maybe it is truly dying. I'm sure some junker will come in and figure it all out eventually.

But if the storm is abating, it begs the question: is Boise still a Deadland? Most of us, including Biletnikoff the Librarian, think not. We all know eliminating fear "heals" an area and hurts the Reckoners in the long run. Maybe the Templars have done enough good in Boise to erase all that. Or maybe we've just turned it down a notch. In any case, things are pretty good here—except when the Boise Horror strikes. I'll get to that soon enough.

Martyrs

By 2089, news of Simon's new order reached the ears of the Librarians in Sacramento. The Head Librarian, Marcus Liebowitz, dispatched a senior Librarian, Brother Frederick Biletnikoff, to learn all he could about these post-apocalyptic knights.

Biletnikoff arrived in Boise just as a horde of mutants tried to attack Simon's Rock. Several Templars and a small army of hopefuls showed up just in time to turn the raiders away with ease. Biletnikoff saw the whole thing from a nearby hillside and knew he must chronicle the Templar's adventures.

Biletnikoff recorded most of the battle on his palmcorder and then followed the trail of the



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Templars to the Boise storm. He knew the risks of passing into the storm but pushed through anyway. The howling spirits nearly tore his sturdy body to pieces, but he staggered onward and eventually found himself at the Boise temple. Simon himself came forward and healed the unfortunate traveler, causing Biletnikoff to become even more enchanted with these almost-Arthurian heroes.

When he was able, Fred told Simon that he had come to find out about his order. Simon told him the bare essentials—not wanting to reveal too much to the outside world at this time. In exchange, Simon asked Biletnikoff what he knew of the world, for the Templars needed every bit of information possible to succeed in their quest to rebuild the world as a strong but peaceful place. The Librarian agreed, and the two spent most of the night sharing stories.

Over the next few weeks, they became trusted allies. As Templars came to Boise and shared their adventures, Biletnikoff decided Boise was as good a place as any to gather information for the Great Library in Sacramento. He sent his report through a trade caravan to Marcus Leibowitz himself, and concluded by

requesting permission to stay in Boise permanently. Leibowitz agreed.

Who in Hell is Ronan Lynch?

A few months after Biletnikoff's arrival, Simon quietly told him that he sometimes received visions of a gunslinger from the Old West. The Grand Master didn't know how he knew this, but the man's name was Ronan Lynch. In Simon's dreams, Ronan battled horrors in the boomtowns and deserts of the West sometime during the First Civil War. The strangest thing about this lightning-fast gunfighter, however, was that he was a walking dead man. Simon knew of the Harrowed, but to see one in action was still a shock.

More importantly, there had been a rare few occasions when Simon thought his number was up. Then, just as some horror or waster was about to finish him, he had pictured Ronan Lynch. By some miracle, he then managed to escape what should have been certain death. It was almost as if Lynch's spirit had been watching over him and provided him with some small but important ability to escape his predicament.

Biletnikoff's jaw dropped, but he said nothing. The next day, he sent a private message to Leibowitz requesting a complete copy of all the *Tombstone Epitaph* articles dealing with Ronan Lynch. Even better, Leibowitz sent a dataslug collection of old dime novels, the star of which were Ronan Lynch himself. Lynch was a real person, and according to the stories, he really had battled the creatures of the Reckoning before the War.

When he showed the articles to Simon, both men were amazed. They poured through the tales like mad and pieced together the gunfighter's tale. Was it possible that Lynch was one of the so-called "saints" Simon said provided the Templars with their power?

The Grand Master called in another of his Templars, Aaron McConnell, and asked if he ever had visions of the enigmatic gunfighter. Disappointingly, McConnell said no.

McConnell's Martyr

Aaron did have another story, however. There had been a time in the woods of Washington state when he had helped the local hunters battle a creature called a wendigo. Shortly after slaying the beast, Aaron experienced visions of a woman dressed in furs standing beside a giant white wolf. He didn't know how he knew it, but her name was Jenna Dean.



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Aaron McConnell gets a little help with a Wendigo.

Several days later, another wendigo appeared. This one was larger, more ferocious, and covered in snow-white fur. McConnell and the hunters rushed headlong into battle but found this creature was far stronger than the black-furred variety they had encountered earlier.

As the last of the hunters died, Aaron looked up past his own battered body and saw an amazing sight. A ghostly she-wolf stood over him—just like the one from his dreams. The wendigo screamed at the spirit, but did not advance. The she-wolf pounced, and the two incredible creatures battled. Though the wendigo was invulnerable, and the she-wolf a ghost, both bled as they tore patches of flesh from their snow-white fur.

McConnell struggled to his feet, staggered toward the raging battle, and plunged his blade straight through the massive shoulder of the white wendigo. The she-wolf faded from his sight as McConnell slumped to his knees, exhausted, but triumphant.

The Martyrs

Biletnikoff and Simon called in more Templars, and found that many of them had visions of heroes from other times, fighting the same kinds of horrors they confronted. Over the next two years, the two put together a list of the saints who had appeared to the Templars, and compiled information from the Great Library and other sources about their lives.

While there were likely thousands of saints who had fought the creatures of the Reckoning on occasion, those saints who appeared to the Templars had a few things in common.

First, there had no doubt been many individuals who had battled some dark creature as it intruded into their lives. All of the Martyrs, however, once exposed to the world's secretive dark side, had dedicated their entire lives to fighting the forces of Darkness.

And second, all of the Martyrs had eventually fallen at the hands of these dark powers.

For this reason, Simon stated there were many saints, but those few who were known by name and had chosen to somehow intervene on the Templars' behalves from the afterlife would now be called the Martyrs.

The Deeds

By the end of 2090, Simon and Biletnikoff had interviewed nearly every living Templar. They found many of the knights had visions of the

same saint. A few had visions of several, and claimed that these mysterious patrons had even aided them on occasion.

Even more startling, the Templars who shared a patron saint had each performed some similar deed. Three of the Templars who had ventured into the wendigo war raging in Washington State, for instance, had received visions and aid from Jenna Dean and her she-wolf.

Biletnikoff realized it first. When a Templar performed a particular deed, the Martyr would take notice and forever after come to the hero in times of need.

This was very important news, one that demanded the attention of all the Templars.

The Great Council of '91

Simon called a great council of every Templar he could get word to. On a cold night in January of that same year, Simon announced that the saints were indeed real, and that some of them, the Martyrs, sometimes watched over their living descendants of spirit. From that point forward, every Templar would be required to learn about the lives of the known Martyrs. Doing so might gain Templars the Martyrs' blessings if they honored their memories by replicating their deeds.

Simon appointed Frederick Biletnikoff as the Chronicler of the Martyrs. It was his job to gather information on any of the saints the Templars had claimed appeared to them. He was then to keep the saints' histories in the Book of Martyrs. New Templars would be required to read the book, and could thus appeal to these saints should they one day replicate their great deeds.

Simon and Me

So there we were, fat and happy. We had a Temple, a small but solid group of knights, and the support of a great town to provide us with food and other necessities in exchange for our protection.

By day, I was just another recruit (now a Templar). At night, once we got a little time off, Simon got chummy. He's going to kill me for printing this, but it's part of the story, so I'm going to do it. (Simon, if you get really pissed about this, I can always edit it out. Hell, maybe it'll help you.)

By night, Simon got personally involved in my training. We'd duel, wrestle, heal, and even do what he called the "storm run." That means you

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jump into the maelstrom, but instead of heading for the other side, you turn clockwise and run around its circumference for a hundred yards or so (I wonder if they run counterclockwise down south?). It hurts like Hell, but for some reason, none of us Templars ever died from it. One time, I challenged Simon to complete an entire lap. Now remember that while the Boise storm is easier than most, it still feels like standing naked under Niagra Falls. We did it, but we shouldn't have. Even after laying our hands all over each other we were laid up for a week.

That's when we got close. Too close. I looked up to Simon as some sort of living saint. He saw me as a woman. Or maybe a little reflection of his old life before all this Hell. Personally, I think Simon has more trouble dealing with his personal demons than the rest of us. Hell, I'm a bitter bitch myself. I miss Roger and my kids and I've taken out my anger on more than a few monsters and muties who got in my way. Some of the other Templars are like that too. We're only human, and every one of us has as much pain in our past as you likely do.

But Simon has somehow placed the weight of the world on his shoulders. He feels it's up to him to make the world right. Not right "again," mind you, because the new world we're going to forge won't be anything like the last one. We all know how that ended.

That's a tall order. I only had one college psych course, but if I had to analyze Simon, I'd say he's made dealing with his grief dependent on something else. That works for some of us. Like when one of your parents die, the funeral serves as a "milestone." You get through it and a little of your grief passes. Things are a little better, even if it's artificial.

Unfortunately, Simon won't get over his grief until he fixes the world. And that just ain't gonna happen. I mean, I'm as dedicated as the next Templar to working toward utopia, but let's be realistic. It's not going to happen in our lifetime, and things will never be perfect. It can definitely get better, maybe even better than it was before the War, but it'll never be perfect. And all this strict discipline we try to enforce will one day become just another totalitarian regime. Don't get me wrong. I think we're exactly what the world needs right now, but someday, if we're successful, we're going to have to leave the world to its own fate. If you've ever been a parent, you know how that feels.

Simon's love for me was a temporary touchstone to heal his pain, but saving the world would always be his first priority.

One Knee and I'm Outta Here

When the first "graduating class" got their swords, Simon gathered everyone together and gave us a speech. He said we were all ready to go save the world, so get out there and do it. Okay, he was a little more inspiring than that (and long-winded), but that was the gist of it. Right after, he called me aside and asked me something I thought I'd never hear again.

Simon got down on one knee, pulled out a huge rock (that's a diamond ring, brainer), and asked if I would stay in Boise as his wife.

Okay, I admit it. I freaked out. I half-nodded, half-shook my head, mumbled something about having to think about it, and scooted off into the darkness. I hadn't realized where our night-time "training" sessions were heading. Or maybe I did, but I was afraid to touch the sun, if you know what I mean. I was all willing to bask in its light, but marrying it, having sex with it, treating Simon like a person instead of some Chosen Saint, that was another thing altogether. In fact, I think the moment Simon proposed, I realized he was just another man. An incredible man, sure, but mortal just like the rest of us. And that shattered the security blanket I had knitted since joining the Templars. I was all wrapped up in the ideal, maybe even thought we were semi-divine beings ourselves. Suddenly we were all too human again.

The next morning, as the Templars packed up their few belongings and set off on their own, I was with them. I didn't say anything to Simon, but the pack on my back said it all. He wished the group well and we vamoosed. I didn't come back for two years.

The Boise Horror

I got this next bit of history second-hand, so if something's not entirely accurate, don't blame me. I heard the tale from several sources, and they don't all agree on the details. The gist of the story is the same, however.

We left on June 2nd, 2088. The next batch of squire wannabes (still mostly locals at this point—remember, this was back even before Biletnikoff arrived) moved into town on June 8th. As I told you earlier, hopeful recruits stay in Tent City. The handful of other residents live in nearby apartment buildings we cleaned up.

On the morning of July 4th, one of the squires, Jeanette Willis, didn't show up for roll call. The rest of the group figured



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she got cold feet about the training and took off. Three days later, they found her body in a ruined store a few blocks from the lodge. She had been torn to pieces.

Simon gathered everyone together, armed them all to the teeth, and set about trying to find whatever creature had done this. The posse searched all day but didn't turn up a thing.

Then Teller came to town. I don't know if you've heard of this guy, but he's a storyteller. He fights horrors just like we do, but then he goes and brags about it to everyone. He says spreading tales of "hope" to the masses erodes their fear, and that's what the Reckoners feed on. I agree that they feed on fear, but I'm not sure spreading tales of monsters actually gives anyone hope. In fact, I think it scares the bejeezus out of them. Simon's always been a little wary of spreading our secrets. Even this file you're reading is intended for us, not the general public. Mind you, I don't see what the big deal is, but you know how men are with their secrets.

Anyhoo, Teller had heard about the Templars and wanted to learn all about us. Simon let him hang around, but didn't volunteer any information. Eventually, Teller hears about the death of Jeanette and gets nosy. He disappears for a while, then comes back and tells everyone he thinks there's a werewolf in Simon's Rock.

About a third thought he was crazy, another third thought he was just wrong, and another third started scavenging for silver. Teller proposed a trap. He wanted to start simple. Stake out a couple of pigs on the path between Simon's Rock and Boise, chum up the ground a bit with blood and other smelly bits, then see what came calling. That might bring the creature out—if it was just a savage animal. If it was smarter, they'd have to try something different.

Simon agreed and they went to work. He, Teller, and all three of his remaining Templar trainers sat inside the lodge and watched the street through the night. Nothing happened. At least not in Boise.

The next morning, they found out another of the recruits, also a woman, was missing. They put the group together again, combed the ruins, and sure enough, found the body of Lynn Graves. Only this time, it hadn't been shredded. Her throat had been ripped open and her blood drained. A vampire, sure as spit.

I can just picture Simon and Teller standing there—Simon scratching his head like he sometimes does and Teller rubbing his chin. A vampire *and* a werewolf?



The Boise Horror strikes.

Teller said he thought he knew what was going on, but he was cryptic as always. He told Simon to separate the recruits, lock them in their barracks rooms, and wait 'til the next full moon (about three weeks off). Two weeks went by without further incident. Then one morning, they found Sally Merchant with her throat ripped open and drained of blood.

Nothing happened again for a week. Then the full moon came. Teller, Simon, and the veterans, along with a posse of locals from town (including acting Sheriff Tate who was filling in for Murray because he had a bad case of the runs) staked out the pigs again. This time, the Boise Horror (Teller named it), struck.

Turns out the thing was a "bloodwolf," a sort of vampiric werewolf. They're people by day, vampires by night, and bloodwolves during the full moon. Nasty cusses. I've not killed one myself yet, but I've heard of them several times during my wanderings.

The posse followed the thing out through the storm and into the plains where it dove into a thicket of bloodvines. Being a blood drinker itself, I guess these normally dangerous plants had a certain kinship with it.

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The group surrounded the thicket. One of the deputies, a newbie who didn't know the wilderness very well, pushed into the bloodvine. Teller and the others cried out a warning, but the stuff wrapped around him and drained him dry in a heartbeat.

For whatever reason, the bloodwolf chose that moment to bound out of the thickets. It ripped up Sheriff Tate and a couple of others. The crossfire from the poorly positioned posse killed two more (Sheriff Murray would never have done something so stupid).

Teller carried a couple of silver bullets with him for these kinds of emergencies, and finally managed to put the thing down. When it died, it turned out to be Larry Fisk, an otherwise promising young squire from SoCal.

That should have been the end of it. It wasn't.

Son of the Boise Horror

One month later, during a full moon, there was another incident. Another promising recruit, this time a male, was found ripped to pieces. It's happened most every full moon since. The folks in tent city even lock themselves in the Temple, the Barracks, or the Hospice for the night, but somehow the Horror always finds meat.

Some say it's the ghost of Larry Fisk. Maybe so. I've seen stranger things. But why did Larry's taste change from goose to gander? And why can't a lodge full of men and women blessed by some sort of higher power stop him? It's a mystery that must be solved soon, friends. People are starting to lose faith in the Templars' abilities. I mean, if we can't stop one little ghost in our own backyard, how are we supposed to clean the whole world of all its monsters?

Becoming a Templar

So I've told you how the first of us became Templars. These days, we rely on taking squires—snot-nosed wannabes who think they've got what it takes to be one of us.

All Templars are encouraged to have potential recruits accompany us on our journeys. We train them, teach them our particular code of ethics, and sometimes use them as bullet stoppers when they're not working out. Don't worry, I don't mean we deliberately get them killed. When squires screw up, we tell them we're not going to present them as Templars. They can either hit the road or hang out as a sort of "retainer." Of course we don't pay, but a lot of

us come into loot in our adventures, and with our vows of poverty, that leaves a lot leftover for those who serve alongside. Call them mercenaries if you want, but most who are in the fight only for the loot don't last long.

New recruits are usually found out in the field, but many simply come to Boise and ask. Simon puts the wannabes to work until a traveling Templar shows up, and boots any who turn out to be real losers. Those with potential get to hang around until a Templar shows up. Simon then asks the Templar to take the most deserving brat of the lot as a squire. It doesn't matter who showed up first—the kid who works the hardest and somehow catches Simon's attention gets the nod. Even then, the visiting Templar might say no. It's up to each of us whether we feel like taking on a babysitting job. I like working alone, so I try to steer clear of squires, but even I agree every other year or so. It's a big world out there, and sometimes even Templars die. We need as many strong hands and pure hearts out there swinging swords and teaching right as we can get.

Companions

Not everyone can hack it. And not every hero wants to be a Templar. Those who help our cause but can't or won't become one of us are sometimes made "Companions."

A sponsoring Templar or even another Companion takes the waster to Boise and tells the Grand Master why the hero's so great. If Simon agrees, he schedules an induction at the Temple. There the Companion gets a small red cross he can sew onto his clothes. He never gets Templar powers, but he can gain Martyrs' blessings just like the rest of us.

There are two things a squire must master before he becomes a Templar: our philosophy and a certain set of skills we've found are necessary to survive out there in the wastes.

Philosophy

Templars have a strict moral code. It's hard to define, and even harder to teach our young squires. It's hard for them to throw away the old ideas about being a hero. They want to help everybody because they think that's what heroes should do.

I told you about the sacrifice of Jenny Hise, the Law Dog Simon watched throw her life away defending some ungrateful town from Black Hats. I also told you Simon pledged not to

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repeat such a foolish mistake. Would a Templar have helped that town? Hell no. Nor would we get ourself into that situation before determining whether or not the people deserved our help and would contribute to their own defense once we got the fight started.

Here's the way we see it. The old world was full of greedy, violent people. It was also full of lazy bags of crap who knew the world was going to Hell and didn't do a damn thing about it. The small minority who stood up against evil, who sacrificed everything to fight oppression, didn't usually get much help.

Templars have vowed not to let this happen again. We don't fight for those who won't help themselves or their neighbors. The only "meek" we protect are those who are truly defenseless: children, the sick, and so on. I'm sure Gloria Steinhem and the Devlin girls didn't mean it like this, but we're not sexist either. Don't think we're going to risk our necks for you just because you're wearing a skirt. (And if that's really the case, put some pants on, for God's sake! Haven't you noticed there's an Apocalypse on?) That said, some of the male Templars still can't quite get over that old chivalry thing. Lunkheads. If you're one of those chicks who won't even try to protect herself 'cause you're afraid to break a nail, don't count on my help. Toughen up, sister. I did. I was a sorority sister, cheerleader—the whole nine yards. You don't see me cowering behind some testosterone-laden manmeat, do you?

Wow. I do rant sometimes, don't I?

The Test of Worth

Of course, the question from the beginning has been how to tell who's worthy and who's not. Sometimes you can just talk to a person and find out. Even that's hard, though. They could be lying. Especially once they've seen you're a Templar. "Um, yeah. We're 'good people.' Could you kill those wormlings for us?" Right.

We needed a way to find out if a person, and more importantly groups of people, were worth risking the lives of the truly valiant, selfless fighters—the Templars. Sound hypocritical? By the old standards, yes. The good guys were supposed to be altruistic. Like the Sheriff in the Old West who gets himself killed protecting a known murderer from a lynch mob. Or a Japanese Admiral gutting himself because he failed one time. It just wastes precious resources, and doesn't make much sense. This world needs all the heroes it can get. It doesn't

need one more fat-ass who won't fight for himself because of laziness. And it sure doesn't need more selfish, thieving murderers.

Here's our answer to the problem. We disguise ourselves. Most of us travel about as invalids, mutants, or weaklings. Then we try to get into a settlement, live there for a while and show that we are willing to work, fight, or do whatever is required of the community to fit in. If they treat us right, we make a note and help them out should they ever need it. Some Templars even keep a little notebook or dataslug telling them where the worthy villages are. Most of us just remember.

An Example

Let me give you an example to illustrate my point. Squires who read this should pay particular attention, because it addresses a lot of the questions you'll inevitably bug your mentor about.

A Templar named Hillary (that's a guy, by the way) often travels around disguised as a hunchback. On his back, under his coarse burlap robes, is a golf bag—that's what gives him his hunch. Inside the bag are his sword, guns, ammo, and trademark golf club. Recently, he heard that the town of Trinity Springs was having trouble with the Combine. He went there and found it walled. The guards at first told him to go away. He said he was a hard worker, and asked if they would give him a chance to prove his worth to the community. If he did not live up to his promises, they could always throw him out again. The guard summoned up Sheriff Greer (who runs the place), and they agreed to let the hunchback in.

It's important to note that Hillary didn't just turn around and walk off when the guard first said no. You can't blame a settlement for being tight on who it lets in. Of course they also have to be willing to help those who'll pull their own weight. That's why Hillary asked them to give him a chance. They did, and he was soon put to work.

Hillary spent the better part of the next two days listening in on what was happening. The people of Trinity Springs were worried because they had repelled a band of unusually determined Black Hats, and they were afraid a stronger bunch would come soon.

Hillary found a few who weren't willing to fight, but most everyone was determined to help Sheriff Greer and the militia stand up to the marauders. He then spent a little time getting to know the people. He asked for simple jobs

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around the town in exchange for food and water. Most everyone treated him kindly and paid in full when he completed his tasks.

These people were golden. When they met later that day to plan the town's defenses, Hillary took off his disguise and revealed himself as a Templar. He healed up those who had been wounded in the last Black Hat assault, helped the town form their plan, and pledged he'd stay with them until the situation was resolved or he was dead. (He did in fact die. It turned out what happened there was much bigger than he'd first thought—but that's another story).

Templar Skills

So what skills do we teach our squires? About a million things. How to wash off rads, how to eat rats when you have to, how to swing a sword, how to tell when someone's lying, how to kill a werewolf. You name it, it's probably come up in just about every case. But there are four very specific things Simon insists the squire become good at: disguise, fighting, healing, and survival.



Takin' on the Black Hats. I hate those guys.

Disguise

I already told you why this one's so important. You can't judge people when you're wearing a tabard. They'll tell you whatever they think you want to hear just to get your help. So we disguise ourselves to see how they behave "off-camera."

Fighting

A Templar has to be able to use a sword or other hand weapon of some sort. He should also be able to fire most any kind of gun competently. It's not enough to shoot bottles off a fence. A real Templar has to be able to stand her ground, keep her cool, and still hit what she's aiming at even under the most chaotic conditions. A knight who can't hold her own against half a dozen trogs is dead meat.

Healing

Laying on hands is great, but it has limitations. Non-Templars don't know this, and we don't usually advertise, but it can only be used once per day on any given person. Why? Who knows—why can't we just wipe out all evil with a thought? I don't know. The cosmic rules on all this holy power stuff are just plain weird.

Laying on hands can be tricky because a friend who just broke his leg might wind up getting a much worse injury later on. I've seen it happen. Once I was hunkered down in an old bunker with four companions. We were surrounded by walking dead, most of them former soldiers with guns. One lousy round somehow got through the bunker slit, bounced around, and nailed a gunslinger friend of mine right in his gunhand. I healed him up and we didn't think any more about it. A couple of hours later, the dead we hadn't put down yet make a final charge. They burst in and raised all kinds of Hell before we put them down. I look over and the gunslinger's got a chunk of throat torn out. He's spurting blood like a lawn-sprinkler and all I can do is apply pressure. If I hadn't laid my hands on him earlier, I could have saved him. Take some advice from a vet. Use your abilities wisely. This is why we all learn traditional medicine as well. Learn to fix up a person without your powers and save the big mojo for life-or-death situations.

The Occult

Most of the time, we Templars spend our energy carving up dumb-ass bikers, gangers, and raiders. Sometimes, though, we come across

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weirder stuff. You know about bloodwolves and the walking dead now, but do you know about wormlings, toxic zombies, Doombringers, and bloats? Probably not. But they're out there. Trust me. And forewarned is forearmed. (Or four-armed if you're a mutant Templar—no, we don't discriminate against muties.)

A lot of these critters are impossible to take down with normal blades and bullets. You have to figure out their weaknesses. That's why whenever we return to Boise, which is usually at least once a year, we pass on everything we've learned about the creatures we've encountered. We also take a look at the record and learn what all the others have battled. Ignore the hard-learned lessons of others and you're monster-kibble. We pass on all this information to our squires as we travel.

Survival

Templars have tough feet. We travel all the time, and because of our disguises, it doesn't really work for us to have vehicles. We can't—there's no rule against it or anything—but it's hard to look like a tramp when you come rolling into town on a hoverbike. If you're car-crazy, hide it outside of town before going in, brainer.

All this running about looking for worthy people to save works up an appetite. Trouble is, there aren't as many McDonald's and Jack-in-the-Boxes as there used to be. So a Templar is forced to get creative about what she eats. Simon knew some of this because he was a Boy Scout Master before the War. He picked up the rest from a NA training manual, plain old experience, and the wisdom of some of the first Templars we recruited (one of whom was a Navy SEAL).

That training helps us find grub, shelter, water, and even predict when violent storms are heading our way. Sure, you may wind up eating grub worms and washing it down with your own purified piss, but it's better than dying. Or so I'm told.

The Presentation

Once a squire has served for a while, at least a year, and his mentoring Templar feels he's ready, the pair make their way back to Boise. There the squire is presented to Simon and asked of his adventures. If all goes well, Simon tells the squire he will become a Templar the following day in the Hall of Heroes. He also tells him who's sword he gets.

See, we don't have lots of really good swords, so when we recover the weapon of a dead Templar, it's given to a squire as his own. When that happens, the squire must learn the deeds of the fallen Templar (as recorded on his plaque) and recite them at his initiation. If it is a "new" sword, he must recite the deeds of one of the Martyrs.

He does this at an official ceremony at the Hall of Heroes. The squire and his mentor (if possible) walk slowly from the lodge to the Hall. The townspeople, petitioners, and visitors line the walk for the new recruit. It's tradition for them to remain quiet and somber during the walk, and for the squire and his mentor to avoid eye contact with them.

Then the pair enter the Hall of Heroes. As many full Templars as happen to be around wait inside in attendance. Simon stands at the head of the aisle where the church altar once stood. When the squire reaches the Grand Master, he stops. Simon then recites our oaths and gives a short speech. Here. I'll paste in a recording of the last initiation I attended.

The Knighting of Margaret Fleming

Simon: Welcome to the Hall of Heroes, brothers and sisters. Today, Margaret Fleming asks to join our ranks. She has served her mentor well, proven herself in martial combat, and satisfied this Grand Master of her appreciation for our way of life.

Now I ask you, Margaret, to swear to uphold the Vow of Poverty. Templars are the righteous fists of the new world. It is our duty to cleanse the land by might, and by example.

With our might, we destroy the foul things of this earth, both human and otherwise.

By our example, we show others that terror must not be tolerated. The destroyers of peace must be fought, and only those who are willing to partake in this battle shall enjoy the leadership of the Templars. One cannot battle evil with might if he is intent only on gathering material things. Neither can a proper example be set for those others who join our fight against evil. For these reasons we shun material things. We shun wealth. We shun greed. We shun gathering more than a person needs to survive and to fight.

Do you, Margaret Fleming, swear this vow of poverty?

Margaret: I do.

Simon: Ours is a pious order. Those who join our ranks have proven themselves to other

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brothers and sisters. They have weathered the storm of evil and triumphed. And they have made great sacrifices.

For those sacrifices, we are rewarded with Holy strength. We ask not where these powers come from, and we do not worship its source. But we do praise and remember the men and women who fought the powers of darkness before our time. These are the Saints, and we owe them for their struggles against the darkness.

Do you, Margaret Fleming, swear to uphold the virtues of the Saints?

Margaret: I do.

Simon: Despite the divine presence in our lives, occasionally even Templars must fall from grace. Some become disillusioned, falling prey to the sometimes overwhelming power of evil in this world. Some are wily tricksters to begin with, and somehow manage to fool their mentors, and even the Grand Master. Such is the power of evil in this age.

When Templars embrace the darkness, when they break the Vow of Poverty, when they shelter the undeserving, when they fail to protect the righteous, when they prove

themselves beyond redemption, it is our sad duty to cleanse their memories in blood. Traitors are to be slain and their bodies left to the scavengers. Their swords are to be returned here, to this Hall of Heroes, and cleansed of their taint by the Grand Master.

Should you encounter such a traitor in your wanderings, Margaret Fleming, it is your duty to slay him. Know too that should you turn from the path of virtue, your brothers and sisters will hunt you down as well.

Do you, Margaret Fleming, swear this Oath of Blood?

Margaret: I do.

Simon: Our deeds are the stuff of legend, but that is not why we perform them. We do not struggle merely to have our names hallowed until the end of time. Yet we pay homage to those who have gone before by remembering their names and their deeds.

Margaret Fleming, you are to be given the sword of Templar Azrael Marks. Honor her memory.

Margaret: It is my honor to tell the tale of one very remarkable Templar, Azrael Marks. Though born into a life of violence and crime, she overcame adversity long before joining our ranks, and lived long enough to redeem herself through her deeds.

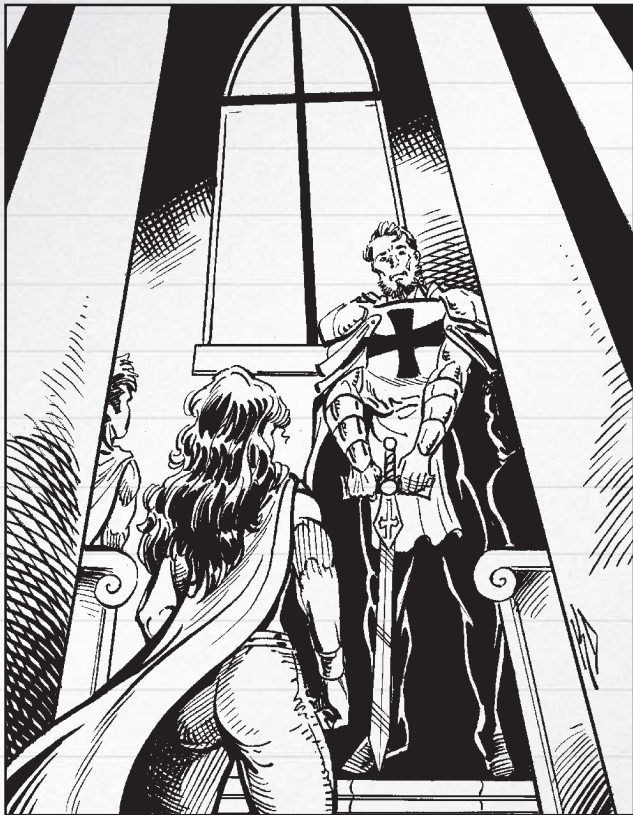
Azrael came from a poor neighborhood in New York. Her parents were addicts, and her neighbors were drug dealers, gangers, and thieves. Azrael fell into this life of crime. She was imprisoned by the age of 14, and returned there many times. Later, she turned to violence, assaulting those she robbed. Eventually she was deemed a habitual offender and placed in the permanent prison population.

When the Northern Alliance became desperate for troops, Azrael was assigned to one of the penitent battalions. An explosive chip was placed inside her skull. She was taught to fight, to shoot, to kill.

In the last year of the war, Azrael and those in her battalion became family. She rose quickly, became their platoon sergeant, and took on an almost motherly role to her damned legion. By the end of the war, she had learned to love and trust others.

When the bombs fell, Azrael's unit, of their own free will, decided to redeem themselves for their previous crimes against humanity. They threw themselves in the path of the Reckoner called War. Only a handful survived.

Those who did wandered the wastes for a while, scavenging for survival and eventually



A squire is about to be inducted into the ranks of the Templars.

The Few, The Proud

aiding the fledgling Law Dogs. Years later, Azrael once again found herself alone. Until she met a man named Simon Mercer.

Simon Mercer told her that he had pledged himself to fighting evil, and helping the truly deserving build a new world better than the old. Azrael joined him, probably for loot at first, but grew stronger in both spirit and morals as she fought beside the Grand Master. She was one of the first of our order, and she fought beside Simon, Jo, Aaron McConnell and the others in numerous battles.

Azrael left Boise in 2088. Within a year, reports came back that she was with the resistance in Denver. I am sorry to say we do not know the full extent of her deeds there, but a resistance member told us she died battling the Combine's automatons. The Denver Resistance was so impressed with Azrael's bravery that one of them risked his life to return her sword and tabard to our order.

Simon: This is the sword of Azrael Marks. It is my honor to bestow it unto you, Margaret Fleming. May you do service to its memory.

I also present to you this tabard. The mark upon it is the Maltese Cross, an ancient symbol of our order. You will not worship it, and you will not use it for personal gain. You will wear it as a sign that you are one of the leaders of the new world. One of the few who will punish the wicked and protect the good so that the future of all humanity will not end this way again.

There is no greater challenge in this ruined world than joining our order. You will endure many hardships. You will sacrifice all for the good of many. You will turn your back on the unworthy. And you will most likely suffer a painful death for your efforts.

But know that it is the sacrifice of heroes that will build a new world, one in which men and women are free from the oppression and horror of the present and the bleak omens of the future.

Turn and face your comrades, Margaret Fleming. For you are now a Templar.

Knighting

Pretty intense, huh. After Simon gets tired of hearing himself talk, he takes out his sword, touches the squire on both shoulders, and proclaims her a Templar. From that moment on, the recruit is a Templar. She gets all the perks that comes with wearing the tabard, and can even heal people by laying on hands right then and there. It really is something of a miracle.

After nodding in reverence to the Grand Master, the recruit turns around to face the group, then walks slowly outside. The doors open, and the crowd applauds and welcomes the new Templar into her "home." There's almost always a big feast and celebration then as well. More than a few Templars spend their first nights celebrating and their first mornings regretting it.

If whoever reads this one day becomes a Grand Master, I urge you not to stop this rowdy celebration because you're some uppity teetotaler. Remember that training to be a Templar takes a year of incredible sacrifice—that's longer than most militaries' special forces used to take. And all while "under fire" from raiders, mutants, and monsters to boot. The recruit has earned a night of being bombed out of his gourd, so cut him some slack. Us veterans need the downtime as well. Sometimes it's hard to turn your back on the "unworthy," especially when all they've done is allow themselves to be terrified into inaction. We need to forget that once in a while.

The Baby Bird Leaves the Nest

Within the next few days, the Templar sets out on his own. There's nothing official about it, but new Templars have a tradition of leaving town alone and in their full garb (no disguise).

What he does from that point on is up to him. He travels from place to place, looking for trouble and then trying to decide if whoever needs help deserves it. Most don't. At least that's my experience.

Every year, the Templar is supposed to come back to Boise and check in. That way we know who's alive and what's going on out there. If the Templar isn't currently involved in something, Simon might ask him to help out one of the people hanging around the Temple.

The Templar gets to hang out a few weeks, learning what's going on with his brother and sister Templars and resting up. He might also present a squire to Simon if he's got one ready for the initiation.

Relations

There are a lot more people out there than a look at the nearest ruined city might suggest. There's hundreds of survivor settlements, thousands of mutant enclaves, huge convoys, nomadic Indians, and groups like the Combine, Law Dogs, and the Cult of Doom. A Templar's going to encounter lots of these folks as he travels. Here's how we feel about some of them.

Caravans

No survivor settlement is self-sufficient. That means they have to trade with other settlements. Maybe a settlement trades food for weapons, or expertise in civil engineering for water. Just about any practical commodity can be traded. Ghost rock and spook juice are common, as are electronic parts, food, water, ammunition, weapons, vehicles, and clothes.

The wastes are too dangerous to travel in small groups, so all that trade means caravans. This is a fantastic way to travel. You can disguise yourself as a wasteland waif, then hire on as a guard. That will earn you some grub and get you to survivor settlements that may need help. A word of warning, however. Don't reveal yourself as a Templar to a caravan if you can help it. If you do, you can bet your secret will get out the moment it arrives in a settlement. People love to gossip, and caravaners have big mouths. That can make your job of determining a settlement's worthiness very hard.

If your disguise prohibits you from working as a guard, you still might hitch a ride on a caravan. Ask the caravan commander if you can

pay or even work for your transportation. Most caravans won't turn away passengers even if they can't make the fare. They put them to work foraging, scavenging during the trip, loading and unloading when they reach settlements, and other menial tasks. Passengers are expendable, so even if they don't make much transporting people, the caravan can use them to gather useful goods along the way, or to free up more capable travelers to fight should trouble start—as it often does.

We Templars consider caravans very important to rebuilding the world. Protect them as best you can, even if you sometimes have to cut them a little slack on the whole “worth” thing.

Traveling with Caravans

A few words of advice. Caravans are frequently ambushed by raiders, mutants, and intelligent horrors. That's why there is never any shortage of jobs for caravan guards. These attacks are good places to ply our particular trade. You can hack up bad guys as well as monsters. Of course, that makes caravans very dangerous as well.



Our buddy Cole Ballad. openin' a can of whoop-ass on some raiders.

I've found it best never to ride in the caravan's most heavily-armed vehicle. Raiders usually open ambushes with big stuff—like rocket launchers—to take out the heavy resistance. I recommend riding in whatever vehicle is hauling the goods. Raiders won't blow up their loot if they can help it.

The Combine

Some day, I imagine all the “good guys”—the Templars, the Schismatics, the Law Dogs, and whoever we can draft into an army—are going to wind up fighting Throckmorton's unholy machine.

As I said in the *Wasted West*, the Combine was founded by General Throckmorton, a former Confederate prison commander. After the bombs, he liberated his prisoners and equipment, added them to his own troops, and headed out of the remote Rocky Mountain prison facility. There's some debate about his early goals, but he wound up taking over Hellstromme's old automated factories on the outskirts of Denver. His techs got the things going again, and soon it was churning out automatons, raptors (flying automatons), warbots, and weapons. To this mechanical army he added a couple of thousand waster scum and gave them booby-trapped vehicles and weapons (so they couldn't wind up in enemy hands). These are the so-called “Black Hats.”

Publicly, Throckmorton says it was the war that tore our nation apart. No scheisse, Sherlock. He claims that only by ignoring the antiquated ideas of nationalism can we heal the people. Thus he created the “Combine,” meaning he wants to combine all the people into one group. I wonder if he actually thought about what a “combine” is to a farmer. You know, it's one of those big threshing machines that chews up everything in its path and jams them into little uniform cubes of hay. Whether he meant it or not, the Combine was a perfect name for his “new world.” His Black Hats and automatons chew up everything that gets in their path and adds the survivors to their movement. “Liberated” settlements must pay tributes of food, salvage, and ghost rock to Denver.

Throckmorton uses the Black Hats as expendable scouts. Platoons of them cross the West causing trouble and demanding tribute to see who'll pay and who'll fight. My guess is Throckmorton uses the Black Hats to find out who's really going to resist him when his robot army finally pours out of Denver. Remember,

Black Hats are just wasteland scum who've joined up because they like the work. They weren't Throckmorton's original soldiers, and I haven't met one yet that actually gave a crap about whether the world was reunited or not. They just want free guns, food in their stomachs, and a license to push folks around.

Fortunately for us, that means there usually aren't hordes of reinforcements rushing to their aid. You have to be careful though, because individual Black Hat lieutenants sometimes make deals with other platoons nearby. Twenty of those suckers are bad enough. Forty is a nightmare, especially when they're all spraying lead on full-auto 'cause they don't have to scrounge it like the rest of us.

Our outlook on the Black Hats is fairly bloody. If we cross their trail, we do what we can to take them out unless we've got something better to do.

Convoy

A few months back I found out there's this huge group of truckers, bikers, and other folks. Unlike most road gangs, this one's peaceful—as long as you're on the right side of the highway, if you catch my drift.

The convoy searches out isolated survivor settlements, lets them know they're not alone, and helps them establish trade with their neighbors or with Junkyard (a frequent stop).

The best part about the Convoy is their “Law of the Road.” They obligate themselves to helping those in trouble. While it's not officially part of their doctrine, in practice, they think much like the Templars. They help those who deserve it, but they won't waste their resources to help out a bunch of savage cannibals being picked on by wormlings.

The Convoy is led by a trucker named Goose. He's laid-back about most things, but don't get him started on biker gangs or reconstruction. He's got some strong opinions on these subjects and expounds on them to anyone who'll listen.

The Cult of Doom

I *hate* fighting these bozos. Fighting any kind of magic-user pretty much sucks. Sure, we Templars have a little mojo of our own. We can heal, fight like demons, and even live through stuff that would kill most anyone else. But we can't cause freakin' nuclear explosions! Not without a nuke, anyway.





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Silas Rasmussen's whackos can. And they enjoy it too. These nutjobs worship radiation (they call it the "Glow"), and have found a way to channel it through their bodies to cause all kinds of Hell. Most of their powers are destructive.

Some cause mutations or cook your flesh with microwaves. A very few are actually useful or even helpful, but you'll never see Silas' minions use their powers to help good folks, especially non-mutants. Oh, and if you happen to be a mutant yourself, don't buy into that line of buffalo-puckey Silas preaches. He's not out to save mutants, he's out to take over the world for himself. The only difference between him and Throckmorton is theme. One of 'em uses radiation priests and bloodthirsty mutants, the other uses robots and war machines.

That said, let me tell you a little about the kinds of Cult of Doom minions you might meet.

Doomsayers

First you got your Doomsayers. There are good ones—the Schismatics. They're handy to have around, even if they cause trouble sometimes.



Good Doomsayers are okay, but watch out for the green robes.

The bad ones wear green robes and prove they're unfriendly by hurling all sorts of radioactive death your way. You'll often see bands of flunkies in tow. The Doomies call 'em "vengants." I think it means they're going to get revenge on the norms for whatever it is they hate us for.

Trogs

If you see really disgusting muties in tow, likely armed only with hand weapons, they're probably "trogs." That's short for troglodytes. People call 'em that because they're so freakin' ugly. Watch out though—they're dangerous in large numbers. They're dumb as a bag of hammers but strong as oxes.

Grundies

Slightly more normal but really large mutants might be Grundies. We just learned about these guys—I haven't even seen one myself. Evidently, they're mutants born with something Silas calls "Solomon Grundy Syndrome." So far, the disease is only found in Lost Vegas. It ages a newborn really fast, turning it into a full-grown adult in just a few years. The worst part is that Silas takes these innocent children and trains them to be bloodthirsty killers. The Doomsayers don't trust them enough to handle firearms, so like trogs, they just give them hand-weapons.

Mutated Critters

I've also heard that Silas has been experimenting with creatures as well. Don't be surprised if you start seeing Doomsayers with big mutated dogs and other varmints. I just hope those damn lions and tigers in Vegas bit the big one. I'd hate to see what Silas could do with those babies.

Doombringers

The most dangerous cultist I've encountered is the Doombringer. This isn't common knowledge, but they're undead. They're not Harrowed, and they're not zombies. They're something entirely different. Their powers are just like those of regular Doomsayers, though they seem to be able to use them a little longer than the living. Also, I killed one of these suckers once. I know it was dead-dead because I cut its head off. Two weeks later, it was back again. I tracked it down, got the snot beat out of me (that's when I recorded the *Wasted West*), but managed to kill it again. This time I burned the body. Damnedest thing is, the locals told me it was back a few weeks later. By the time I got

back to it, a Schismatic Doomsayer named Grissom had killed it again. This time it stayed dead (at least I haven't heard of that particular Doombringer again). Seems to me the only way to put one down forever is with radiation magic.

So what's the policy on cultists? Kill 'em all and let the Glow sort 'em out. They're as bad as Black Hats. Maybe worse.

Junkers

Ever see those weird "mad scientist" types scavving the ruins? Those are "junkers." Most of them make wild devices and try to sell them. I'd stay away from paying for one of their gizmos. They sometimes cost a fortune in ghost rock to maintain, have a tendency to blow up, and cut out on you when you need them most. If you can talk a junker into accompanying you, however, they can be very useful. I told you how Doc Young created a device that let us track the Soul Taker to Hell's Canyon. I've seen other junkers make flamethrowers, laser cannons, and more impressive devices that can help take a bite out of the bad guys. In fact, junker devices may be your only hope when faced with a really big threat, like a rattler or a wormling nest.

Oh, and if you have a car, a junker can not only repair it when the gangers get in a lucky shot, but he might be able to soup it up for you as well. I had a 2079 Road Hog for a while. Sweet as sugar. Roll bars, improved frame, nitrous oxide, twin .50 caliber machine guns, even a rear-mounted flamethrower. That bitch could run. I was running with a group of wannabe heroes at the time, and one of them, Thad, was a junker. He kept the hog in tip-top shape 'til he got wasted fighting zombies one day. Next time my hog broke down, I couldn't fix it. Remember, I was a freakin' housewife before the war. Roger always fixed the cars. Besides, I doubt even Mr. Freakin' Goodwrench himself could have figured out what Thad did.

The best part about having a pet junker is that all you have to do to keep them happy is toss them whatever electronic doo-dads you come across in your adventures. It's not like you need that junk anyway. Give 'em to a junker and he thinks you're Santa Claus.

The only thing you have to watch out for is the ones with "overzealous, gun-crazy freak" stamped on their foreheads. Okay, they don't really have anything stamped on their foreheads—as a rule—but they ought to. See, junkers consort with spirits to make their

infernal devices. Some of these spirits are devious and mean, and they can make junkers that way as well. Those who make a lot of weapons are particularly dangerous. I guess the spirits who impart this kind of knowledge to them are the meanest of the bunch.

Junkyard

Junkyard is the largest city I know about in the Wasted West. It sits just outside the old ruins of Salt Lake City in Deseret.

The Junkyarders make spook juice there, and even sell guns and ammo, refitted cars, and most anything else you could want. Junkyard is so successful they trade with just about every other sizeable settlement in the West. If you see a caravan on the highways, there's a decent chance it's eventually headed either to or from Junkyard. All that trade is good for lots of reasons. First, it puts folks back in touch with each other. I'm sure you know how important it is for people in a town to know they're not isolated. They need to know there are others out there sharing the same fate. They also need to keep in touch in case the Combine or the Cult of Doom ever gets off its ass and goes on a rampage. When that happens, the caravans will be the fastest way to get word around and start forming an army of resistance.

Here's my only beef. They trade with anyone, and that includes the numerous local gangs. This doesn't make much sense to me. I mean, these are the very raiders who attack Junkyard's caravans! Something's going on here, and I intend to find out what eventually.

Cole Ballad

The local Law Dog, Cole Ballad (more on him under **Law Dogs**), must not be in on the secret, because he kills more raiders a week than I have scars. The gangs hate him. Sometimes they even set elaborate traps for him. Unfortunately for them, Cole's as lucky as he is stupid.

I'll add a section to this report if I ever find out what's going on here.

Law Dogs

Misguided schmucks. That's what the Law Dogs are. I already told you the story of Jenny Hise, the Law Dog Simon watched die before he founded the Templars. These bozos are still just as stupid. Oh, I guess a few are a little more selfish (as they should be), but most are living



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Cole and me on the job.

by the old rules. They fight for justice no matter what the cost or who's asking. Most won't stop a bloodwolf from tracking a murderous biker gang, but they will protect a town from raiders even if the people haven't proven themselves worthy of the effort.

I know a lot of you think that's all noble and stuff, but what's going to happen to the world if all the good and decent people throw their lives away on worthless causes? Think, people! This isn't just some ethical theory—this is the very survival of the human race! And these dumb-ass Law Dogs, who ought to know better, are getting killed daily for stupid causes!

Let me give you an example: Cole Ballard, the guy I just mentioned. You might have heard of him—folks call him "Nemesis." The Director (that guy in MovieTown who keeps making vids) has even done seven or eight films about this muscle-bound steroid-junkie. Cole's one of those "good bad-men." See, he was one of Throckmorton's boys in the early days, but split when he saw the General was off his rocker. Now he's a Law Dog operating around Junkyard. Those people actually sell spook juice to the

local road gangs. Cole fights when the gangs attack convoys bound for Junkyard or raid an outlying settlement, but he tolerates them when they're not making trouble. Have you ever heard anything more ridiculous? He knows they're going to cause trouble eventually, but he actually lets 'em do it before busting their heads! I just don't understand. When I run across a road gang I know's going to cause trouble, I poison their water, kill them in their sleep, or whatever. I don't wait 'til innocents have been killed to exact "justice."

There's a few Law Dogs out there who aren't so stupid. Kath Turner, a former Texas Ranger who operates in the Maze, is one. By and large, though, the Law Dogs make good temporary allies. Hang with one too long and he'll just make your life Hell.

Librarians

I told you all about these hosers in my *Wasted West* book. What I failed to mention, as Simon pointed out, was that Templars are supposed to help these mealy-mouthed bookworms. God, that irks me. I mean, I appreciate what they do, I just hate the way they do it.

Need to save a village? Fine, just remember the library is more important than the people. Going into the ruins? Pick me up all the books you can lug out while I sip mocha. Yeah, thanks for the help. Okay. I've vented.

Officially, you should help these guys out as much as you can. Their goal is to gather information so that we don't suffer a "dark age." They're also handy for finding out about stuff. Need to know how to kill a penangallen? Or even what the Hell one is? They'll probably have something on it. And if you can find a Librarian willing and able to fight while he's gathering information, hang on to him. Librarians like that are worth their weight in books. What, I can't make jokes?

We Templars are lucky because we have a permanent Librarian in Boise: Fred Biletnikoff. He's a pretty good one, too, but maybe that's just because he's not out in the field where he can get in the way. He records the tales of the Templars and our saints as well. He's the one who started keeping the Book of Martyrs. That's important because the Martyrs only grant blessings to Templars who perform very specific deeds. If you're smart, you'll memorize the tales of the Martyrs and learn their deeds. If the opportunity presents itself, you can perform the deed and get a blessing from a genuine spirit.

Biletnikoff is also a great way to learn the weakness of some weird creature you encounter in the wastes. Assuming you've got the time to send a message to Boise before you have to deal with the unruly varmint, there's a small chance Biletnikoff has information that can help. I say a small chance because there's a lot of weird stuff out there. If you're dealing with a unique creature, you're probably out of luck. If you just aren't sure how to kill a bloodwolf, someone's already done that and Biletnikoff's got the info in his vast datastores. It's always worth the chance if you've got the time.

Mutants

This is a tough one, because people mean lots of different things when they say "mutants." I even use the term several ways myself. If you tell me someone is mutated, I could care less. Tell me there's a tribe of mutants nearby, I get a little worried, but I'll reserve judgement til I meet 'em. Tell me there's a horde of muties, and I go for my gun. Did you get that? I know it's subtle. Most of us call people mutants when we're unsure whether they're violent or not. We start calling them muties when they go all savage.

Let's talk about that. People with one or two mutations are just that—people, who've had the bad luck of seeing their bodies changed by radiation. It's been my experience in the past, however, that once a brainer gets lots of mutations, the gray matter suffers as well. It drives them insane, I think. Look at the trogs. All they are is muties who've suffered so many mutations they're hardly human anymore. And they're *all* violent. I haven't met a trog yet who didn't want to crush my skull and eat my flesh. That tells me one of two things. Either people just can't handle being transformed into a monster and become what they see, or the mutations—caused by supernatural forces, remember—are just another taint of the Reckoners. If that's true, then all mutants eventually become muties.

My advice is to forget about mutations altogether. Just look at the person. If he's got a leg-bone in his hand and he's trying to hit you with it, you'd better cut him up. If he's asking about the weather and picking the nose on his second head, cut him some slack instead.

One word of warning. I've heard people talk about how the mutants are like the Indians

were in the Old West. Some are friendly, some will scalp you given half a chance. That's true, and we all know how things with the real Indians went: a war every couple of years with lots of slaughter and no real gain. Let's make sure we don't repeat that with the mutants. If you discriminate against them, if you fail to help those who are in need (when they deserve it), and if you encourage other survivors to hate them, you're doing the Cult of Doom's work for them. And one day, the mutants may outnumber the rest of us. Let's make sure they're our friends, not our enemies.

Ravenites and the Sioux

I haven't encountered too many Old Wayers. As far as I can tell, they haven't changed much since the old bow-and-arrow days. There are rumors of some sort of split—something about new animal spirits and summoners called spooks or something—but I don't know much. Truthfully, as long as they stay in their own domain, I don't much care.

The Ravenites are a different story. These guys and gals were some of the most selfish, arrogant, materialistic sons-of-bitches before the war. I told you about them in the *Wasted West*, but in brief, these were the Indians who threw off the Old Ways movement a long time back and claimed Deadwood as their own.

The Ravenites weren't regulated by anyone, so they pretty much built whatever made them the most money off white tourists. Many of the Ravenites bought ghost rock mines in the Black Hills. Others turned Deadwood into something like Las Vegas. It had huge gambling casinos, mega-hotels, and more strip shows than you could shake a dollar at. Some of the big Ravenite corporations later turned their Midas touch to arms sales as well.

Deadwood got nuked, but a lot of Ravenites survived because they had already been chased out of their city by some bizarre horror—a charred corpse in a loincloth that shot fireballs from its fingertips. Freaky, huh?

A couple hundred thousand tourists escaped the town too, but they got drafted by a local army commander into helping fight the War. The richest Ravenites were a little smarter and took off before they got drafted too. They claimed they weren't citizens of the US and so couldn't be drafted. That wouldn't fly now, but back then, people were still thinking about countries and stuff. The less-wealthy Ravenites and most all the tourists got wiped out a few weeks later.



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The Few, The Proud

The rich Ravenites who escaped are the ones you're most likely to run into now. These guys are former executives, arms dealers, and casino managers. After the bombs, a lot of them went to their own private shelters or the ruins of their former companies and scrounged up the best arms and personal armor they could find. Even better, part of their old heritage never died—they knew how to use this stuff. Evidently it was a point of pride among the Ravenite social elite to prove their skill in high-tech arms.

Those Ravenites who still have all this high-tech wealth are extremely valuable—if you can put up with them. See, as former executives, they're used to giving orders, not taking them. Still, when one of your troops has a full suit of body armor, an assault rifle with tons of ammo, and the skill to use it, they can be damn handy when you're fighting off hordes of bad guys.

One thing to be careful about with either type of Indian. Don't go into the Nations with a Ravenite in tow. And don't go asking a Ravenite for help if you've got an Old Wayer hanging out with you. They mix like oil and water—that is to say, they don't.



A syker in action. Good help if you can get it.

Sky Pirates

If you're ever around the Rockies, you might occasionally see aircraft flying in the sky. It's not a mirage, friend, or even wishful thinking about days long past. Those are very likely the sky pirates.

The pirates used to raid the survivor settlements west of the Rockies, but then the Combine came after them in earnest and they decided to make nice with Junkyard and some of the other survivor settlements. These days they mostly raid the Combine and any Black Hat patrols trying to pass through the Rockies.

We Templars keep the pirates at arm's length. We want their help in battling the Combine when it eventually comes pouring over the mountains to crush the rest of us, but we also know they'll go back to raiding real people the day after the war's over. For now, make nice and use them when you can.

Sykers

Maybe you've never seen a syker before. There aren't many left. Most of the ones I've met returned from the war on Faraway after the bombs fell. Hell of a homecoming, huh? They evidently didn't have a good time up in space fighting anouks. I'm sure coming home to the end of the world didn't help much either. Talk about attitude—these guys hate everyone, especially authority figures. I guess they got used and abused by their commanders on Banshee, so they don't like taking orders from anyone anymore.

That sometimes makes it tough to work with these guys when they're on your side. You're trying to get the town in position to repel an assault and the syker's busy mindwashing some poor girl he wants to sleep with. Tell him to get in position and he makes you dance like a chicken. I *hate* that.

If you can get them to work with you, sykers are damn handy. Give them a little time and they can infiltrate your enemies and find out what their plans are. If you really trust one, and he's sympathetic to our particular "world view," you might get him to read the minds of those you want to help. He can tell you in a hurry if they're worth your effort by determining their sincerity about whatever you've asked them.

My advice is to use sykers if you can, but don't depend on them. That way you won't be stranded if they cut out on you. Or their heads explode. It happens, friend.

Black Sheep

There used to be this cola—Bubbly Fizz. I hated the stuff. Stupid name, bad taste, and enough carbonation to make a duck fart. Roger (my husband) loved it. I'd catch him sneaking in a case every now and then when I was busy flipping through *Vogue* or *Better Homes & Gardens*. The worst part about Bubbly Fizz was that at least one can in every case would just freakin' explode. I'm not talking about leaking around the seal like you see in older cans today. I'm talking about you open the case, pull out a can and look at it funny and the damn thing erupts like Old Faithful right there in your kitchen. Bubbly Fizz on the fridge, Bubbly Fizz on the stove, Bubbly Fizz on my new perm. God, I hated that stuff. What's my point? In every case there was at least one bad soda. In every group, there's bound to be at least one bad seed as well. We have two.

Blackballing

Sometimes a Templar's judgment fails him. Maybe he condemns a village he should have helped, or he's too stern in his punishment. Most of the time, the rest of us leave him alone and let the brother live and learn from his mistakes. Occasionally, however, a Templar doesn't seem to learn. Maybe his situation is more dire than most, or maybe his foes have so blinded him with fury that he loses his judgement. In those cases, a Templar is oath-bound to step in and quietly offer a warning.

Those Templars who choose to ignore such warnings are given one last chance to appear in Boise and answer for their actions. If they fail to show within some reasonable amount of time (which depends entirely on circumstance), or if they will not come, Simon "blackballs" them.

Every Templar who visits Boise is then told of the fallen brother or sister. Simon doesn't spread the news outside the order—it doesn't help our reputation to tell people some of our knights have "gone rogue."

Those Templars who know of the fallen knight's transgressions are expected to fulfill the Oath of Blood. Of course the hunter is expected to listen to the hunted's story if he has one, but otherwise, he's duty-bound to slay him. The blackballed Templar's tabard and sword are returned. The sword is broken and hung in the Hall of Heroes as a warning to all others who would stray from the path.

Anti-Templars

Once in a great while—okay, twice that we know of—a Templar turns *really* bad. The powers of evil, the Reckoners, I guess, jump on these fallen heroes like prairie ticks on milk cows.

These "anti-Templars" retain their powers, though they lose the blessings of the Martyrs. Simon can't quite figure this out. If our rewards are granted by the saints—who fought against evil in their lives—how come anti-Templars get to keep them? I think they don't. Not exactly, anyway. I think the Reckoners give simply take over the job. I think that's why the Martyrs stop granting blessings but the "saints" don't. Our local Librarian, Fred Biletnikoff, agrees with me.

You might think this makes the anti-Templars a little weaker than the rest of us. You'd be wrong. They actually get more power, and more easily. Again, blame the Reckoners. I don't know exactly how it works, but the one anti-Templar I've come up against kicked my ass—and that's an accomplishment, friends.

I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me tell you how this whole anti-Templar thing got started.

Julia Aiken

Julia Aiken was one of that second batch of Templars Simon trained after I left. I never met her, but those who knew her say she was one of those eternally optimistic, goody-two shoes. I think she was a pediatrician—that's a baby doctor, brainer—before the war.

One day she's in this piss-ant survivor settlement, Sierra City, California. A woman was about to give birth and Julia thought she'd help. No one else would, because they said the girl had humped a genuine demon. Julia said that was crazy talk and stayed with the woman until she was ready to pop.

Turns out the locals were right. The baby was born a monster. Not a mutant—a monster. This thing was all claws and teeth and meanness. It ripped it's way to daylight, jabbed one of Julia's eyes out, tore out another girl's throat, and then went to work on its momma. You'd think Julia would put the thing out of the world's misery, but as a former baby doc, she just couldn't bring herself to do it. She took the critter off into the mountains to raise. Word got back to Simon and he had little choice but to blackball her.

A few months later, Julia comes back down out of the hills with a whole litter of these

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monstrous toddlers! They wiped out Sierra City before word got back to Simon. He sent five Templars who happened to be in Boise to put an end to the embarrassment.

They tracked her to her lair somewhere in the Sierra Nevadas and found she had taken up residence with that demon. This thing looked mortal and was actually quite handsome, I understand. I guess Julia had mated with it just like that other woman had done, and produced a monstrous litter of these things for God-knows-what reason.

It took all five Templars to take the freaky family down. The first fell to the babies, the second to the demon-thing, and the third and fourth to Julia's sword. The last Templar, Brad Modeen, finally managed to slice her in half with his battle-ax, "Despair."

Brad Modeen

Modeen returned from his quest and reported what had happened to Simon. He said Julia had gained more power than any Templar besides the Grand Master himself. He couldn't help but believe the powers of darkness—the Reckoners—



Julie Aiken and her brood of kiddies.

had somehow sensed this powerful weapon had turned against its makers. Then it had rewarded her for that treachery by granting her Templar powers faster than should have been possible.

Modeen turned over her sword. Simon broke it over his knee and started to have it melted, but decided instead that it should hang in the Hall of Heroes. It would remind others of Julia's efforts before she went bad, and serve as a warning to what would happen to those who abused the incredible power they'd been given.

Modeen's Fall From Grace

Brad Modeen left Boise with a troubled heart. How could Aiken have become so powerful? I'm sure he was dwelling on that when he came to Quissling, Nevada.

Quissling sits in eastern Nevada. It was one of those towns that had knuckled under and paid tribute to the Combine. Modeen showed up in disguise, and learned several patrols of Black Hats used Quissling as a base. Not only were the townsfolk sending monthly caravans of ghost rock to Throckmorton's goons, but they were providing them with food and shelter as well.

Brad was about to take off when the Cult of Doom attacked. As Simon taught, he stayed out of the fight—those losers didn't deserve his help. But when the fight started, according to him at least, he saw that the lightly-armed townsfolk were really caught in a crossfire between the powerful Cult of Doom and the heavily-armed Black Hats.

Brad didn't see any way out for these people, and it looked like the mutant horde outside, led by Doomsayers, was going to win. So he whipped off his robe and joined the Black Hats in defending the town.

Unfortunately for him, his side won.

A few months later, Modeen returned to Boise and made the mistake of telling Simon what he'd done. The Grand Master was furious. Simon said the Black Hats, their accomplices, and the Doomsayers might have wiped each other out if he hadn't foolishly intervened.

Modeen didn't see it that way. He made a big speech about how Simon was no hero, and that he was just another deluded wasteland warlord. Then Brad tore off his tabard, said he would no longer be part of this madness, and left.

I was one of the next to run into Modeen. I found him outside Pocatello, Idaho (where he lived before the War, I think). He wore a black tabard and had gathered a group of others wearing similar outfits. Most of them had axes like Modeen's as well.

I asked him what the Hell was going on, and Brad said he was tired of the Templars' totalitarian regime. He was founding the anti-Templars. They would be much like the Templars, but would defend and protect all but the worst of the wasteland's survivors.

I knew it was trouble, but he was sincere and Boise was just a few hours away, so I decided to go tell Simon and see what he wanted me to do. He said I should fulfill the Oath of Blood. I argued—Brad had a point, though I didn't agree with it either—but it was no use. Simon was adamant. In fact, he came with me. We were going to execute Modeen *and* his followers.

I had a very bad feeling about it, but was prepared to do my duty. Fortunately, the anti-Templars were gone.

The Trouble with Anti-Templars

We heard stories about Modeen and his new knights for the next year. A few of our order even joined him. Remember, most Templars are real heroes, and sometimes this whole "test of worth" stuff really gets us down, so I guess it's understandable why they'd be curious.

Then we heard some settlements Templars had helped before turned against these black-clad imitators. There were fights, people died, and Simon had no choice but to declare all anti-Templars our enemies. A few of us wound up in fights with Modeen's growing band, and—here's the frightening part—lost. As I mentioned at the top of this section, the Reckoners had already sunk their claws into these guys and given them power much more easily than the saints give us.

Not fair, is it? Not much is these days.

Anti-Templars

Anti-Templars don't start out evil. A lot of them truly believe in the basic idea of the Templars but think Simon is a tyrant. The problem is, once they put on that black tabard, something happens. I think the Reckoners tempt these guys somehow. Maybe they get their power by doing bad things. Eventually, they become true villains.

What kinds of bad things? I'm not talking about virgin sacrifices—most of these guys still think they're heroes. They do things like side with the Combine. They say Throckmorton has a vision of restoring the world that includes everyone. When the Black Hats massacre someone for not participating in their master's vision, the anti-Templars claim these lackeys

were just defending themselves, or perhaps were just overzealous and under-trained. Right.

The anti-Templars also kill any Templars they see, and sometimes declare war on anyone who stands with them as well. In some cases, that includes whole settlements.

Dress and Habits

All those who call themselves anti-Templars wear black tabards. A lot of them carry axes in honor of the father of their movement, Modeen. They never wear disguises.

Each anti-Templar keeps a group of 10-20 other fighters in tow. This is their "warband." The group wanders the West, looking for monsters to fight and settlements to save. Oh, and Templars to kill, of course.

The "squires" in the anti-Templars' warbands can become anti-Templars themselves. It usually takes our squires a year. It takes anti-Templars about three months. That's why they're gaining on us in number so fast.

Modeen

The anti-Templars say Brad Modeen, now the Destroyer, is their founder, but there is no formal order, no central meeting area, and no real traditions—at least not yet. Evidently, the Destroyer plans on taking over Boise and adapting our old traditions to his new ideals. Of course, that means killing Simon and any other Templars who might be there. Not that Modeen would care. From what I've heard lately, he's gone completely over to the "dark side."

Modeen has some other anti-Templars in his horde, but he's sent most away to continue the cause in case Simon somehow defeats him.

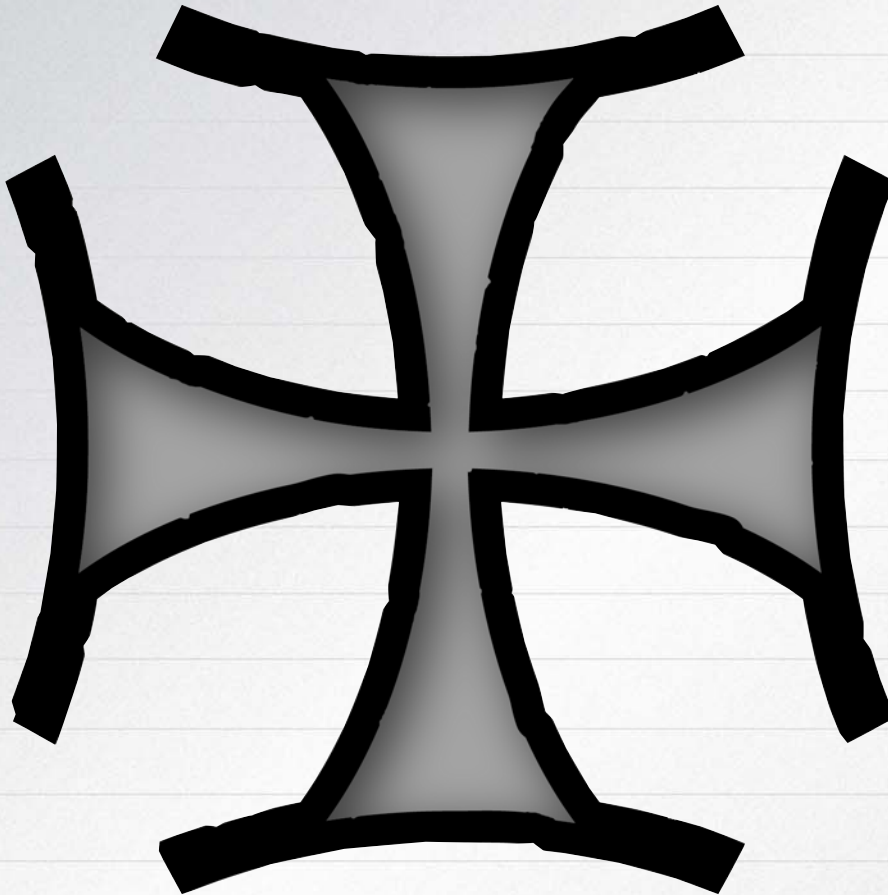
The End

That's it, friends. I've said all I can think of and I need to get packing before Simon picks a job for me. Or hits on me again.

The only thing I haven't discussed is what's going to happen when Simon dies. It will happen someday, and I'm afraid our high-minded lot might just fight over who should be the next Grand Master. I'm going to state here that I think Simon should name his successor—secretly. That way his successor won't start plotting our hero's death.

Maybe I'm worrying about nothing, but I want to know who my next boss is going to be. And I don't want to see the greatest force for good left in this world tear itself to pieces.

The Book of Martyrs



As compiled by Frederick Biletnikoff,
in the year 2091.

by permission of the worshipful
Grand Master of the Knights Templar, Simon Mercer.

Being an Living Account of those revered Saints, the Martyrs, who, by their ultimate Sacrifice in the fight against Evil, have passed on into the realm of Spirits, and through Strength of Will, look down upon our ruined world to aid and guide their mortal sons and daughters of the Knights Templar.

Katy Blaze, Saint of Confidence

Most of those who have fought against the Reckoners do so quietly. Like the Agency or the Texas Rangers before the War, they believed that spreading tales of the darkness would only give it more power. A few however, knew tales proving that ordinary people could win out over evil would actually deprive the Reckoners of their much-needed fear. One such heroine was Katy Blaze, the daughter of a wealthy German industrialist in the mid 2000's.



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The Martyr battled evil in the guise of "Blaze," a costumed vigilante who traveled the world fighting monsters and cultists. Her costume, like her personality, was flamboyant and direct. Blaze exuded confidence in everything she did, including hosting a late-night television show documenting her adventures. Unfortunately, this was an era when computer graphics technicians could make anything appear real, so she was accorded no more respect than other so-called "documentaries" that proved the existence of UFOs, faeries, and celebrity pornography.

Though her credibility was always in question, her fame never was. Her tantalizing costume and bold personality spawned movies, comic books, games, and novels that generated millions of dollars in revenues.

Before her death in 2060, Ms. Blaze gave birth to a daughter, Kyla Blaze. She trained her daughter to follow in her footsteps, and it is our great honor that this brave young woman survived the war and joined our order in 2090. Like her mother, Kyla is full of bravado and compliments her combat skills with her feminine wiles. It was Kyla who first reported that her mother has appeared to us as a Martyr.

The Deed

Saint Blaze has so far appeared only to her daughter and one other woman. Both are attractive and confident, but it is unknown exactly what deed attracts her divine attention.

Clara Clark, Saint of Mercy

Near the millennium's end, the New York City Community Hospital (NYCCH) was one of those dirty, creepy places that wouldn't look good even by today's standards. Bad things happened there. Immobile patients were found dissected in their beds, life-support machines became unplugged, and the morgue in the basement spewed forth horrors and undead regularly.

New York City policeman Dorsey Gates (another of our sacred Martyrs who is revered elsewhere in this tome) knew of the Reckoning. He brought patients with unusual ailments to the hospital, not for its apathetic doctors, but for a nurse named Clara Clark. Clara could heal much like the Templars of today, at least according to the old *Tombstone Epitaph*.

Clara eventually became heavily involved in fighting the occult with Dorsey Gates. These two were the only champions willing to save the poor and homeless huddling in the dark alleys and miserable ghettos of New York.

Clara eventually met her death at the hands of a serial killer. A fiend the *Epitaph* called "the Butcher" was shot by Dorsey Gates and brought to the NYCCH. Clara healed the murderer, perhaps in an attempt to learn information for Saint Gates. Later that night, the Butcher escaped his room, slaughtered several guards in the hospital, and eventually cornered Clara somewhere in the vast boiler room of the hospital's basement. Detective Gates' journal indicates he was the one who found her mutilated body. The Butcher escaped.

The Deed

Clara is an unusual Martyr in that her blessings seem somewhat erratic. Those Templars who have felt her merciful touch have done so after healing a horrible wound. But almost all Templars have done so many, many times. What makes her choose a particular occurrence is unknown.

Jenna Dean, Saint of Winter

Jenna Dean was a mail-order bride, sent west in the 1870s to marry a trapper. Jenna traveled west by train, caught a stage from Denver to the foothills, and then traveled with a guide from there to her prospective husband's cabin in the woods. When she arrived, she found only ruins and human bones. It was cold and late, so Surefoot, her Sioux guide, suggested they build a fire in the ruins for the night, then set out in the morning to find her missing husband.

Late that night, a terrible howl pierced the darkness. From the cold forests came a hideous white-furred creature with horrendous claws and a round mouth as wide as a barrel and filled with rows of sharp, frosty-white teeth. The Indians call these monsters wendigos.

The abomination burst through the wall of the cabin and stuffed Surefoot into its gaping maw. Jenna ran blindly into the night. Through the thick pine forests she stumbled, lost and

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afraid, until she came to a short cliff. She had no choice but to jump. Jenna landed hard, snapping one of her legs at the shin. When she cleared the tears from her eyes, she saw she was surrounded by wolves! Like the wendigo, these creatures had pelts of purest white. There were a dozen or so of them, and they stood about her as if to *protect* her.

One of the wolves, a massive she-wolf, licked at her bloody leg. Jenna jerked backward, still terrified, but the pain overwhelmed her and she fainted. She awoke in a shallow but warm cave surrounded by wolves.

Days later, Jenna limped back to the cabin to gather provisions when a howl sounded in the distance. The she-wolf tried to drag Jenna back to the pack, but her broken leg proved too much. The mail-order bride ducked down in the ruins, hugged the Winchester she found, and prayed. The monster came fast and furious.

As before, the rifle proved worthless. This time, though, the she-wolf was there to help. She launched herself at the wendigo, her sharp teeth tearing away patches of bloody, stark-white fur. The wendigo shrieked, amazed that this creature could do it such lethal damage.

Jenna watched as the two snow-white creatures tore each other to bloody shreds. When the fight finally stopped, the wendigo fell backward and “melted” into the form of her missing husband. Jenna turned away in shock.

The she-wolf still breathed, but the end was coming. Jenna lay down beside the wolf and stroked her mane, then kissed her softly on her shattered skull. Finally, the mail-order bride said a quiet goodbye to her savior, and used the Winchester to end the she-wolf’s misery.

Jenna moved from the Rockies into the Pacific northwest. Her experience in Colorado must have hardened her, because this young lady from Back East couldn’t keep a husband. She eventually wound up a trapper and hunter in the Cascades and even Alaska. Stories from the *Epitaph* tell of Jenna fighting creatures all over the northwest, dealing death to the minions of darkness as well as any veteran frontiersman.

Some of the stories claim Jenna traveled with a white wolf, but the references are always sketchy and impossible to verify. The Martyr disappeared into the Cascade Mountains in the early 1880s, perhaps involved in a war between the wendigos and sasquatches



The Winter Wolf comes to Jenna Dean's rescue.

The Deed

Jenna appears to Templars who slay wendigos. According to Templar Aaron McConnell, our brothers and sisters should beware, for there are many varieties of these creatures. Even the least powerful species, the black wendigo, is a ferocious predator that can slay an army. The more powerful type are white, and are invulnerable unless one already has Jenna's blessing.

Once blessed, her followers can survive better in winter, eat less than most, and have an edge against wendigos. This can be critical when operating in the northwest, where the wendigos now war against humanity.

Wyatt Earp, Saint of Composure

Wyatt Earp was quite famous in the annals of the Weird West, and there are numerous references available on his many deeds.

When the First Civil War broke out, Saint Earp was eventually drafted and assigned to a military police company. There are few records of his time there, and the next we hear of him, Wyatt was married. His wife died from some strange disease caused by a minion of Pestilence, and our saint wandered lost and confused for several years.

Eventually, Saint Earp recovered from his loss and took to law enforcement. He started in places like Abilene and Dodge before eventually moving to the Confederate boomtown of Tombstone in Arizona Territory. His brothers and the famed "Doc" Holliday joined him there, and fought in the celebrated "Shootout at the OK Corral." Saint Earp's life was well-documented and can easily be accessed from the central records in Sacramento.

The Deed

Saint Earp has so far only appeared to one Templar. This man is known for his coolness under fire, and in fact, is called the "Iceman" by those who know him. Since then, the Iceman claims he has walked through a hail of bullets without being hit, much like our revered Martyr did on several occasions.

Dorsey Gates, Saint of Justice

Dorsey Gates is one of Simon's Martyrs, and thus quite popular with many Templars. Information on this individual is scarce, as he lived in New York City in the late 1980s, and records from the devastated East are almost

non-existent. What we do have are several articles from the *Epitaph*.

According to these archives, Detective Gates first learned of the powers of darkness when the homeless and destitute went missing at an alarming rate. This was a dark time in the overpopulated mega-city, and it seems few who might do something about the situation cared to take action. Saint Gates eventually discovered that a cult of ancient nosferatu had moved into his district, feeding off those no one would miss as they had for hundreds of years.

The detective caught 13 of these terrible creatures in a shelter that was supposed to feed the homeless, but was instead feeding *on* them. He locked the doors, set it afire, and burned the horrible monsters alive.

As with so many of our Martyrs, it seems Saint Gates' first encounter with the supernatural only led to further occult adventures. Many of these encounters ended with the detective suffering from mortal wounds. Fortunately, he had befriended another of our Martyrs, Clara Clark, a nurse who had the gift of healing.

Though the Martyr had many adventures, his most frequent foes were the nosferatu. They hunted him at every turn, slew his partners, and in the end, turned his true love against him by making her one of their own.

This woman, Roxanne, proved to be our Martyr's end. He could not bring himself to kill her, so she killed him. It is said the cult feasted on his mortal remains, a ritual the nosferatu reserve for their most hated foes.

The Deed

Saint Gates appears to those who stand up for others with no voice of their own. As with many of our Martyrs, defining the exact conditions under which his blessings are received is impossible. He aids his followers by granting them wisdom in matters of justice and strength against the undead.

El Gato, Saint of Daredevils

Another Martyr from what the papers call the "Weird West" appears to those Templars unafraid of taking extreme chances. He was a Mexican, so we have few accounts of his adventures in America. We also do not know his true name, but the papers called him "El Gato."

The *Tombstone Epitaph* says El Gato came to America to prove he was the fastest gunfighter in the West. He wanted to start his career by

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dueling the famous "Wild Bill Hickok." El Gato soon had a change of heart, however. While in Deadwood, Dakota Territory, he foiled a plot to assassinate Sitting Bull that would have plunged the Indians into war with the North.

He was rewarded with a job as a Deputy US Marshal. For the next few years, the gunman traveled the West seeking out evildoers and bringing them to justice. In his adventures, El Gato proved something of a daredevil. He was constantly jumping onto runaway stagecoaches, driving steam wagons over cliff-top roads in hot pursuit of some brazen bandit, and shooting it out even when outnumbered five to one.

El Gato met his end during one of these daredevil stunts. According to the *Epitaph*, he died fighting the "blood worm" in Utah.

The Deed

Only a Templar who performs a near-impossible daredevil stunt, and lives to tell it, captures El Gato's attention. Exactly what this entails seems up to the Martyr's whim.

It is certain that Saint El Gato watches over those who continue to push their luck. Followers be warned, however. There is some



Dorsey Gates' first meeting with the Nosferatu.

evidence the Martyr does not benefit those who risk their lives frivolously. Only when such chances are taken in the course of true heroics does this long-gone hero act as guardian angel.

Maggie Grimes, Saint of Stealth

Martha "Maggie" Grimes was born and raised in Deseret in the 1900s. Her family was abducted by what the *Tombstone Epitaph* called "rattlers." The Nauvoo Legion, who fought the creatures through the years, told the 18-year old Martha that her parents were eaten while tending their crops. Maggie knew otherwise, for she could "hear" her mother still crying out for help.

Most disbelieved Maggie's claim as the wishful thinking of a young girl who had just lost both her parents, but she finally persuaded a preacher named Canon to accompany her into the depths of the earth in search of her mother and father. It turned out Maggie was correct. Her parents were some of the first humans captured by the great worms in their quest to produce the wormlings. Saint Grimes rescued her parents and, with the help of Reverend Canon, destroyed the nest where they had been held.

Canon reported Maggie's incredible psychic powers to the Elders and she was used as an investigator and interrogator for the church until the outbreak of World War II. In 1941, Deseret assembled a "Mormon Battalion" of priests and special agents like Maggie.

Maggie was particularly distinguished. She was trained to use her psychic powers to aid in stealth and pyrokinesis, and became a very successful saboteur. We have few records of her accomplishments, as they were considered "black ops" by the Allies, but we know she specialized in detonating "buzz" bombs on their launch pads. It also seems she was instrumental in shattering a Nazi cult known as the "Thules," who were attempting to summon some otherworldly creature to slay the Allies.

Maggie was captured and executed shortly after the invasion of Normandy. It is said her last deed was to destroy a massive rocket that could have destroyed all of London.

The Deed

Maggie blesses those Templars who accomplish their objectives through stealth, deceit, and destruction. The lone Templar she has appeared to was not a syker. This follower now claims that with some effort, he can become almost invisible when attempting to sneak past hostile guards and creatures.

Jenny Hise, Saint of Sacrifice

Our founder, Grand Master Simon Mercer, first realized the duty of the Templars when he saw the sacrifice of a "Law Dog" named Jenny Hise. This determined young woman gave her life defending a village from the so-called "Black Hat" patrols of the Combine.

Because Saint Hise battled evil after the Apocalypse, there are no written records of her deeds. All we know of her comes from the dreams and visions of the two Templars she has appeared to. According to these knights, Saint Hise was a thin but sturdy woman with almost elfin features, black hair, and pale skin. She was drafted late in the war but fought with the Southern Alliance in only a few battles before the bombs fell.

She is angry that her death was the foundation for our order's "test of worth." She realizes the importance of the Templars, however, and appears to those few who occasionally break our own rules.

This contradiction has been noted by our Grand Master. He does not condemn those Templars to which she has appeared, but instead thanked them for honestly reporting the conditions of her patronage. He realizes the role of a Templar is a difficult one, and exceptions must sometimes be made to the order's rules.

The Deed

To gain Saint Hise's blessing, a Templar must make a sacrifice our order would not normally condone. One might stand up for a less-than-deserving settlement, for example, or save the life of a villain he feels may be redeemed.

Saint Hise aids our cause by somehow transferring a knight's misfortunes onto his foes, a benefit quite handy in battle.

Laquitia Jackson, Saint of Rage

During the Last War, both the Northern and Southern Alliance became desperate for an edge. This led to the development of "super-soldiers," men and women injected with various growth hormones, steroids, and muscle enhancers. The original formula seems to have been concocted by the Nazis in World War II. That serum met with little success, but future attempts had better results, particularly in the final days of the Last War.

Laquitia was a front-line combat soldier and a sergeant in the 3rd Alabama Infantry. She had already been awarded several silver stars for

valor when she became infected with a strange disease that atrophied her muscles. Laquitia could have sat out the rest of the war in bed, but she was an angry soul. She had no love of "Yankees" to begin with, and she now believed that the Northern Alliance was responsible for biological warfare on civilian targets as well (she was right, though of course her own government was also involved in such covert operations).

The only hope Laquitia had in rejoining the war effort was the super-soldier program. Previously, only penitent battalions of super-soldiers had been formed. A high percentage of these "volunteers" had died, and an even higher percentage had gone mad. Perhaps only half of those subjected to the treatment had become the living weapons the Confederates had envisioned. Laquitia took the chance.

Fortunately for her, the serum took with only one side-effect. Her hatred for the North was intensified, and it seems to have enhanced her strength and endurance in combat. Unfortunately, she could barely contain her rage. She was assigned to the 1st Arizona Penitent Battalion, and terrified even these hardened criminals.

When engaged in battle, Laquitia became a "berserker." She would charge blindly across the battlefield, fire her rifle until it was empty, grab another weapon and empty it, then bludgeon to death any foe who was left.

Saint Jackson died during a raid on Denver. The Confederate Covert Operations Director had intended to allow these former murderers and thieves to commit whatever atrocities they wished against the civilians to break civilian morale.

But Laquitia could not bring herself to massacre civilians. On April Fools Day, 2081, she turned against her battalion in the middle of a "battle" against the people of Denver. She tore into her former comrades with her usual bloodlust, shattering the battalion before she was shot by a Denver police officer who mistook her for one of the rampaging criminals.

We revere Saint Jackson for overcoming her hatred and focusing her rage on those who truly deserved it.

The Deed

Laquitia appears to those who overcome their own personal biases and fears to do the right thing. To these fortunate few, she gives incredible strength and ferocity in hand-to-hand combat.



Ronan Lynch. Only Simon has been visited by this great Martyr.

Ronan Lynch, Saint of Death

Ronan Lynch was a great gunfighter in the late 1800s, the so-called "Weird West." He served with the North in their great war to reclaim the Confederacy until the Battle of Washington in 1870. It was there that the young lieutenant commanded a cavalry troop pitched against Hunley's Devils, a Confederate unit equipped with experimental flamethrowers. Ronan's company was annihilated. Out of nearly 80 men, only 17 remained, including Lt. Lynch.

Saint Lynch left the service shortly thereafter. He left the devastated East and headed straight into the West. As has been recorded elsewhere, death is not always the end for some of the world's heroes. When Ronan was killed, he returned from the Pale and avenged his own murder.

Ronan's adventures continued for many years thereafter, and are, in fact, documented in a series of Dime Novels. While they are likely based in fact, the stories themselves are no doubt heavily dramatized. The complete series is on file at the Great Library in Sacramento. In them one can read about Saint Ronan's fight against horrible nosferatu, werewolves, and the capture of the Butcher, a serial killer who turns up repeatedly in our collections.

Through it all, Ronan seems to have survived his adventures due to his incredible Harrowed powers. We know that he could regenerate his wounds and that he was lightning fast with his six-gun. We also know that like most Harrowed, Ronan occasionally lost control to the demon within him.

We have no record of Ronan's true death. In fact, a rumor surfaced in 2093 that the undead gunslinger still stalked the west. This cannot be true, for several of our Templars claim him as a Martyr.

The Deed

Unknown. Our great Grand Master does not know why he was blessed by Saint Ronan, and no other Templar has yet reported visions of this legendary gunfighter. We have named Ronan the "Saint of Death" only because he was known to be Harrowed.

Elot Ness, Saint of Morality

In 1921, the United States began "prohibition," an act that made selling or drinking alcohol illegal. Criminals from all over North America flocked to the North to import bootleg whiskey,

beer, and other beverages from Canada, the Confederacy, and overseas. Many of these criminals eventually formed large syndicates of power. In many cases, they controlled the police, the customs agents, and the very cities in which they lived. Few ever suspected that many of these gangsters secured their incredible luck, fame, and fortune by embracing the darkness of the Reckoners. Mob boss Alphonse Capone of Chicago was one of these twisted souls.

The government could not count on the local police to control him, so they sent in one of their own. They assigned Agent Eliot Ness of the F.B.I. to the case. Secretly, however, Agent Ness worked for the Agency.

Ness proved uncanny in his ability to raid Capone's speakeasies, warehouses, and smuggling operations. His secret was to gather a small and completely trustworthy band of police officers to avoid the inevitable tip-off to Capone and the other Chicago mobsters. These men became known as the "Untouchables."

Ness' job proved incredibly difficult. Not only was there a never-ending supply of killers eager to work for the mob, but it was also virtually impossible to arrest Capone. Ness could never prove he controlled the mob, nor could he go public with the crime boss' allegiance with occult forces (such was the Agency's policy at the time). Finally, Ness had to settle for prosecuting Capone on tax evasion.

Having failed his dark masters, Capone eventually died of syphilis. Capone's gang was shattered, but the mob unfortunately lived on until the Apocalypse.

Ness is one of the few Martyrs who lived to old age. Even then he continued fighting the Reckoners by doing research and recording all of his strange adventures for the Agency.

The papers claim he died of natural causes, but it is more likely some nefarious creature finally claimed our beloved Martyr.

Throughout his life, Saint Ness never capitulated to the dark forces aligned against him. Though they threatened his career, his life, and even his family, he never strayed from the straight and narrow. He never took a bribe, looked the other way, or allowed even a minor criminal to escape.

The Deed

Ness favors those who display rigid morals. This is difficult to objectify, but if you never allow your morals to waver, Ness may one day grant you his blessing.

Doc Norman, Patron Saint of the Lost

Gerald "Doc" Norman was a US Marshal of some reknown in Kansas in the 1860s, a rough and stoic man revered by his friends and respected by his enemies. In 1871, while in pursuit of a mysterious gang of kidnappers, he found himself face-to-face with a creature of Indian myth called a Two-Face. That was his first encounter with the supernatural, and he was fortunate to escape alive. A local Cheyenne shaman told him that the Two-Face had been plaguing his tribe. When Doc pursued the Two-Face again, he killed it, but not before it mortally wounded him.

That was the old Doc Norman—not exactly the saint we revere. You see, Doc was revived by the same shaman he had aided, but somehow the spirit he called back was not the right one. The new "Doc" had no recollection of either life—Marshal Norman's or his own—but he was definitely a different person.

The new Doc resigned his post as US Marshal and set out in search of his own identity—a search that frequently brought him into conflict with the supernatural. Armed with a gritty disposition, the tenacity of a pit bull, and the old Doc's fearsome reputation, he became known as a great gunfighter and tireless hunter of the arcane. How he died is a mystery, as is whether he ever found out who he really was.

The Deed

Doc blesses those who find themselves truly lost, either physically or spiritually. To those he grants aid, insight, and his intense personal grit.

Nevada Smith, Saint of Intrigue

Nevada once worked for the Pinkerton Detective Agency when that company served the United States Government during the First Civil War. He frequently used disguises to infiltrate criminal organizations and other strange cults. Nevada became known as the Man of a Thousand Faces when he was covertly assigned to investigate and watch over the infamous Doctor Darius Hellstromme, then a resident of the Mormon nation of Deseret.

Soon after, the Northern government created the Agency. The Pinkertons had served them well, but there were occasionally questions as to who the agents worked for—the company or the government. Nevada embraced the change easily. His loyalty was always to the government. It was a trait noticed by the mysterious Ghost, the

The Few, The Proud

head of the Agency's Western Bureau. The Ghost and Nevada formed a fast friendship, and the two performed many great deeds for their nation.

Later, Saint Smith became prominently involved in a little-known conflict to find the "Hearts of the Old Ones." The governments of the North and South officially entered the fray when Reverend Hezekiah Grimme, whom secret government reports claim was not a savior but a cannibalistic madman, assembled an army to gather these powerful relics.

Smith proved instrumental in eventually defeating Grimme, and we have record of a posthumous nomination for the Medal of Honor. Most likely, this nomination was never submitted for approval because the Agency could not tell the public exactly what he had done to earn it.

Though Smith's exact fate and even his real name are unknown, he disappears from the records about the same time Reverend Grimme vanished in a religious riot of the Lost Angels.

The Deed

Saint Nevada appears to those who have accomplished some great scheme through elaborate deception and disguise. He aids them in maintaining their disguises and ensures their complex schemes are rewarded.

Rex Stern, Saint of Ruthlessness

The fight against the Reckoners did not end when the Last War started. Both the Texas Rangers and the Agency continued their covert roles throughout the war, rooting out terrors, exterminating them, and keeping the general populace from learning that such things existed.

The situation became extremely horrifying near the end of the war. Battlefields littered with fallen soldiers spontaneously gave rise to entire armies of the walking dead, the wormlings first emerged in force, and giant creatures that once dwelled only in shadows came forth to slaughter the innocent.

Major Rex Stern, a commando for the Rangers, was one of those in charge of handling such outbreaks. He was especially successful in dealing with large outbreaks of undead, wormlings, and other hordes. He worked closely with Colonel Steele Green, whose syker unit could wipe memories from people's minds. When there were far too many witnesses to an event, Major Stern dealt with them in other ways. On more than one occasion, he quarantined entire towns and sent each family

to live in a new location so that their "fear" would be diluted. Some of these families were sent as far away as the planet Banshee. Adults were often drafted and thrown into the front lines to die.

It also appears that on several occasions, when the outbreak of some creature or monsters could not be contained, Major Stern ordered an "Extermination Order." This was an order only the President, the head of the Rangers, and Major Stern could issue. It called for an entire area and everyone within it to be destroyed, either by fire-bombs early in the war, or tactical nuclear weapons later on when use of those devices became relatively common.

Some may call Major Stark's actions murderous. Perhaps they were. Our task here is not to judge, but to simply repeat the history of the Martyr and grant our brothers and sisters some insight into gaining their divine assistance.

The Deed

Saint Stern blesses those who are willing to sacrifice others for the greater good of all. Of the two Templars to whom he has appeared, one trapped an entire band of mutants in a building and set it on fire. These mutants were peaceful, but had been infected with a hideous and highly contagious wasting disease from the Reckoner Pestilence that may well have killed thousands more. Another Templar, on learning his closest companion had become Harrowed and lost complete control to the demon inside, was blessed by Saint Stern after sending the friend to his final end.

It is said the Martyr lends strength and willpower to his followers, and comforts those tormented Templars who must destroy some for the good of all.

John Wayne, Saint of Grit

During the 1930s through the late 1970s, a popular actor fought the evils of the Reckoning as he traveled about the globe making films. This actor was born Michael Marion Ross, but was best known as John Wayne.

It is perhaps ironic that Wayne starred in so many westerns, and is probably one of the best known "cowboys" in history, yet he lived long after the age of the Weird West.

The stories of the *Epitaph* say the actor read of the horrors of the West while studying for the role he played in *The Searchers*. It was many years later before he actually encountered the forces of darkness.

The Few, The Proud

While shooting a film in the deserts near Alamogordo, New Mexico (previously a testing ground for Confederate ghost-rock bombs), Wayne and the crew were attacked by a race of ancient gargoyles. It seems the creatures had lived in the earth under Alamogordo for millennia, and the bombs had created tunnels to the surface. Far more frightening was that the atomic bombs mutated the gargoyles, as well as some of the local creatures. Giant scorpions, two-headed rattlesnakes, and other such creatures plagued the set in the days before the real trouble with the gargoyles began.

Fortunately, Saint Wayne turned out to be the hero he played on screen. He loaded the prop department's pistols, rifles, and shotguns with all the real ammo he could find, armed the crew, and staged a brilliant defense of their besieged camp. After the production, Wayne escorted a detachment of Texas Rangers into the gargoyles' lair and wiped them out.

He continued to fight the horrors of the Reckoning throughout his incredible career. Wayne's battles were waged mostly in the American West, but he also traveled to Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and even China to hunt the creatures of darkness.

Throughout his battles, Wayne's greatest asset was his "grit" (as the cowboys used to call it). No matter how tough things became, no matter how beat up the grizzled veteran was, he always toughed it out and found a way to win.

Wayne passed away in 1977. The records claim he died of cancer, perhaps because of his experience at Alamogordo. It is more likely some nefarious terror finally claimed its revenge on this great hero.

The Deed

Wayne smiles upon those who persevere even when suffering greatly. It is unknown exactly how one gains his blessing, but it comes after victory in the face of great pain.

Sgt. York, Saint of Sykers

Albert York was a brave but simple man from the hills of Kentucky. He had, among other things, a natural talent for supernatural powers already, and with a little training, he became the world's first real "syker."

The Confederate Army kept York's powers a secret from his fellow infantrymen (at this time they had little concept of using sykers as commandos, and simply inserted them in front-line infantry battalions instead).

One fateful day in 1918, York's platoon was pinned down by a German machine-gun position. His friends and companions dropped like flies until York used his abilities to sneak into the German trench-lines and create dozens of mirror-images of himself. The enemy surrendered and York became a hero for "single-handedly" capturing 132 Germans.

It wasn't long after that Sgt. York encountered the undead in the trenches of Flanders. These muddy, corpse-filled fields reeked of death. Fear literally saturated the muddy flatlands. Machine gun bullets claimed thousands, craterous mudholes claimed hundreds more. No Man's Land became a Deadland where the dead—and worse—crawled from their swamp-like graves.

One night, dozens of undead slithered into the trenches. Only one of York's powers proved effective on the dead soldiers: one the sykers call "boneripper." He used it to shatter the skeletal troopers' bones and save his companions, but his strength began to wane. Suddenly, a grim patrol of veterans appeared along the trench line. They showed the surviving infantry of York's company how to deal with these freaks of the night by firing at their heads and cracking open the skulls of the undead fiends.

When the smoke cleared, a grim British Colonel in a black overcoat approached the battered survivors. He told them that they could not be allowed to rejoin their battalion after what they'd seen. They must join his "special" brigade and fight the horrors of the night whenever and wherever they arose. He asked the survivors who would be their leader, and they immediately named Sgt. York.

York and his Confederate companions went on to fight in the allies' "special detail," combatting the forces of the Reckoners for another three months before most of them were finally wiped out by some horror in Beuleau Woods. York survived however, and eventually became a teacher at the Confederate Syker Academy in 1924.

The Deed

Saint York has only appeared to one of our brothers so far. Brother Jacobs was born with the ability to use powers much like those of the sykers. Soon after becoming a Templar, Brother Jacobs received a vision of Sgt. York. Though he never had formal training as a syker, the young knight has since been able to use powers he has never been taught, as well or even better than trained sykers.

Knights in White Tabards





Chapter Two: Knights in White T'abards



Now you know all about the Order of the Templars. You know the training the squires must go through, the difficult decisions the Templars often face, and the demands placed upon them by a shattered world desperate for saviors. You also know a little of the Templar's dark side—the story of Aiken and Modeen. Still want to don the tabard?

Okay. Don't say we didn't warn you. Here's how you do it.

Playing a Templar

To be a Templar, your character must be at least 18 years old and purchase *arcane background: Templar*. She must also have certain skills that allowed her to pass from squire to full Templar, as shown below. Your character must also be relatively good-hearted. No cannibals or raving lunatics need apply.

Templar Skills

Skill	Minimum Level
Academia: occult	2
Faith	3
Fightin': any hand weapon	4
Medicine	2
Survival	2

Academia: Occult

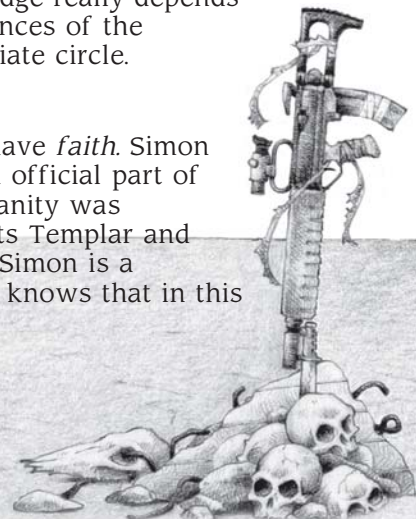
A Templar's basic knowledge of the macabre comes from his time spent as a squire. He knows the Reckoners exist, that monsters are created from fear, and that manitous are the spirits which deliver raw human fear to their masters. Templars also know of the Harrowed, and that it usually takes a blow to the head to kill them.

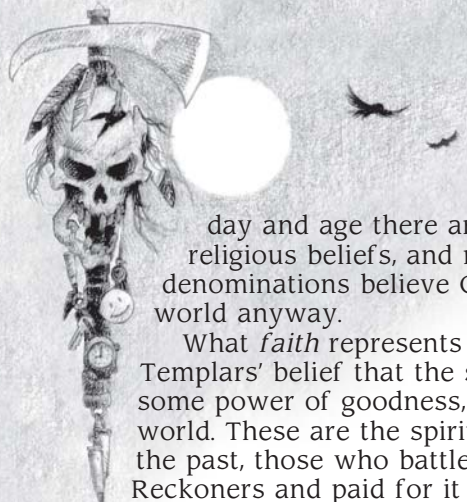
Note that most folks who have learned *occult* knowledge on their own don't know all this information at level 2 (as discussed in the *academia: occult* sidebar in Chapter Two of the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook).

Templars, however, pass this specific knowledge on to those who join their organization. A particular Templar might not know more about other supernatural phenomenon than someone with the same skill level, however. Because it is not often discussed, *occult* knowledge really depends on the particular experiences of the character and his immediate circle.

Faith

Your character must have *faith*. Simon has not made religion an official part of the order, though Christianity was integral to the old Knights Templar and the Freemasons as well. Simon is a Christian himself, but he knows that in this





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day and age there are many other religious beliefs, and most all denominations believe God has forsaken the world anyway.

What *faith* represents in this case is the Templars' belief that the saints, or at least some power of goodness, watches over the world. These are the spirits of fallen heroes of the past, those who battled the evils of the Reckoners and paid for it with their lives.

Anti-Templars have *faith* in the saints as well, though their brothers in white believe they are more than a little misguided. In fact, Templars say the "ax-murderers" (as they like to call them because of their fondness for battle axes) worship "false saints." Some even claim their black-clad brothers worship the Reckoners themselves.

Fightin'

As a squire, a Templar-in-training learns to use some kind of weapon. Most prefer swords because they are relatively simple to use, have a good reach, and provide a decent defense against opponent's weapons. They're also easy to carry, much easier than an ax, spear, or other heavier weapon.

That said, a Templar can actually choose *any* hand weapon. It even gets blessed by Simon, as discussed under **Swords**, below.

Medicine

One of the most important duties of a Templar is to heal the sick and wounded. The miracle *lay on hands* is the best way to do it, but there are dangers—mainly that it can only be attempted on a particular person once per day. That means a Templar should be very careful to use mundane first aid whenever possible and save the "big guns" for truly life-threatening injuries.

Part of a squire's training is to learn first aid and basic medical skills. Those who cannot heal the flesh cannot hope to heal the world.

Survival

The last mandatory skill a squire must have before becoming a Templar is *survival*. It's a necessary skill for any traveler, and Templars wander more than anyone. Food and water are scarce, so any nomad who can't live off the slim pickings of the land and the few scraps left in the ruins does not last long in the savage wastes.

Survival requires a concentration. Most Templars choose the plains because that's where they spend most of their time. It

really doesn't matter, though, because even making a "related" skill check is better than making a default roll.

Perhaps even more importantly, though, the Templars must show others how to glean food and water from the land. A person well-versed in which plants are edible might find entire fields of berries, roots, or plants a few hundred yards away from a starving settlement.

Other Useful Skills

The following Aptitudes aren't mandatory for a Templar simply because Simon hasn't made them so. They are just as important, however.

Disguise

A Templar's primary tool in determining whether or not a person, family, or village is worthy of his presence is to visit them disguised as a mutant, an outcast, a diseased soul, or some other pitiful wretch. If those in need treat him poorly, he usually leaves before they even know they were on the brink of salvation. If, instead, they are sympathetic and compassionate to the disguised Templar, he may choose to reveal himself and pledge his sword to their cause.

Disguise is not a required skill because it doesn't take much to make oneself look dirty and pathetic. Should a time come when the Templar comes under close scrutiny, however, he'll certainly wish he knew more about how to hide his weapons, his tabard, his true condition and so on. In case you haven't guessed, we're not telling you your character *must* take *disguise*, but we highly recommend it.

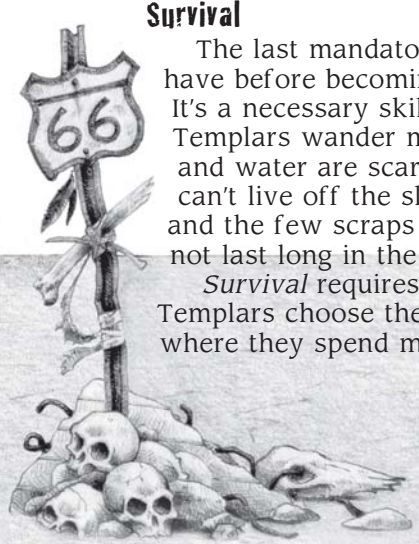
Shootin'

Again, Simon doesn't require any sort of marksmanship test to knight a Templar. That said, most folks don't make it a month as a squire without knowing how to handle a gun.

Also, while most people think of their swords when they think of the Templars' fighting prowess, they forget that the epic hand-to-hand battle comes only after most of their foes have been dropped by gunfire. A Templar too eager to wade into a fight with only his sword is likely to have a very short career.

Recommended Edges & Hindrances

Now let's talk a little about what your character gets from being a Templar, and what his specific obligations are.



Knights in White Tabards

Arcane Background

Obviously, a Templar must have *arcane background: Templar*. Is it possible to have other *arcane backgrounds* as well? No, and yes.

Doomsayers can't be Templars. They just can't serve two masters.

Regular sykers can't be Templars either. Most hate authority too much to try. Those very few who have tried found that the supernatural pathways in their brains (meridians) have already forged themselves in a certain way, and the rewards of the Templars just don't come to them. A *greenie* syker can become a Templar, however. See *Brainburners* for the details.

Junkers face the same problem. They already channel supernatural energy from the Hunting Grounds and just can't seem to make Templar rewards work for them.

The same goes for characters with other *arcane backgrounds*, such as the blessed, hucksters, mad scientists, shamans, and even hougans. For the most part, once folks wrap their mind around one particular way to receive power from the Hunting Grounds, they just can't seem to open them up in another. There have been exceptions, but those are rare and something the Marshal must decide on a case-by-case basis.

Companions

There have been a few sykers and junkers (no Doomsayers, as yet) who tried to become Templars. When they found out the power of the saints wouldn't take, Simon determined such individuals could not be called Templars, but would be given the honorary title of Companion.

Companions must uphold the order's values, but do not have the ability to gain Templar rewards. They can gain the blessings of the Martyrs, however. See the *Companion Edge* later in this chapter for details.

Oaths

Templars and their squires are bound by two oaths: poverty and blood.

The Oath of Poverty states that a Templar must gather only those goods and provisions necessary to carry out his duties and survive. A Templar may own a vehicle to help him travel quickly across the wastelands, but such wealth often makes it hard to disguise oneself, so vehicles are rare or kept well-hidden while the hero is incognito. Templars are also expected to keep themselves well-armed and protected, so don't feel guilty if your hero carries a small

arsenal with him. What the Oath of Poverty really means is that Templars shouldn't look for loot, and they shouldn't load themselves down with worthless trinkets.

The second vow is the Oath of Blood. Simon has tried to rescind the powers of a few Templars he felt did not uphold the ideals of the order, but without success. Once granted, their rewards are permanent. The blessings of the Martyrs, however, are not. A Templar who turns from the path of righteousness finds himself without the aid of those powerful spirits.

Blackballed Templars are to be brought in alive if possible, dead if not. If they resist without good reason, fellow Templars are obligated to bring them in by any means necessary. When rumors come of a Templar straying too far from the path, Simon dispatches another Templar to find the errant knight and find out what's going on.

When Simon receives confirmed reports of Templars who have strayed, he blackballs them. Other Templars are told of the misdeeds and expected to fulfill the Oath of Blood if they should encounter them. Rarely is it practical for



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a Templar to contact Simon and get his approval to hunt another Templar. That's why the knights are expected to judge their brothers and sisters for themselves.

All this means your hero must take the Templar's Oath, which includes a vow to help only the worthy, the Oath of Poverty and the Oath of Blood. All together, this is a -5 point *oath* Hindrance. All Templars have this *oath*. Those who violate it—and are caught—quickly gain a -5 point *enemy* instead.

Swords

Templars' swords serve as a symbol of their station and as a useful backup when bullets are scarce. Every Templar starts with a "free" sword awarded to him by Simon himself.

Actually, some Templars prefer other weapons. Modeen, now an anti-Templar, preferred a battle-ax. Another Templar uses a spear. Simon is usually willing to bless any type of weapon his knights are most comfortable with, though nine times out of ten, it's a sword.

Templars consider hand-to-hand combat a sign of bravery, but they don't hurl themselves headlong into a fray when guns serve them better. They generally use their swords to save precious bullets, when they want their foe to taste the fear of retribution before they perish, or when they face overwhelming odds and want to go down swinging.

Partly due to Simon's blessing and partly because Templars live with their weapons in hand, they add +1 to their *fightin': sword* and *quick draw: sword* rolls. The *quick draw* bonus applies only to the Templar's chosen weapon, but not other weapons (even of the same type) he happens to carry.

Templars don't like to lose their swords. They revere their brothers' and sisters' swords, so when one falls, other Templars eventually come to claim it. These are taken to the Temple in Boise and hung in the Hall of Heroes. The fallen Templar's name is then inscribed upon it so that it can one day be given to a new Templar, who must learn the deeds of those who's names appear on her weapon.

Disguise

Templars live by disguise—it's their primary tool in assessing the worth of a community.

Living in disguise can be a trying existence. Imagine a person who looks like a filthy beggar, a leper, or a mutant all day. Even "good" people

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won't have much to do with him. Hopefully they'll treat him kindly, but they won't confide secrets or share important information. They certainly won't turn to such a person for help, or consider him an asset, until he reveals himself as a post-Apocalyptic knight.

That's tough to handle—a Templar must be both humble and patient. But a great hero must be ready to beg to clean horse pucky out of the stable for a few scraps of food. And to resist dropping his disguise every time someone *doesn't* treat him kindly instead. It's not as easy as it sounds. Heroes who are really just looking for lots of perks to hack things up should beware.

Attitude

With all the Templars' power comes a lot of responsibility. The hard part about being a Templar isn't helping out every waster that comes along—it's turning them down.

Think about it. Say a settlement in the Maze is looking for someone to save it from croakers. Your hero can't just jump on top of the town walls and dare the fishmen to get him like he would if he were a Law Dog. Instead, he'll have to infiltrate the town, talk with the civilians, and then find out if they're worth risking his life for. And that's what it all comes down to: a good Templar doesn't think of it as "his" life. It's the world's. He's been entrusted with the power of goodness in a world of evil. There are only so many weapons like him, and if he risks himself on some unworthy cause, the darkness may lose the battle but win the war.

Think "selfish." That's what the Templars are. At least until they judge a cause worthy of their effort. Then they become utterly *selfless*. That's tough to play sometimes. As a human being, you may want to help a family of ranchers threatened by hordes of undead. If you later find out the family likes to hunt mutants for sport on weekends, you might have to say adios. Even if there are innocents at risk, like the ranchers' children. You might make the mother and father do all the dangerous stuff while you stay back to protect their kids—that fits the Templar philosophy. But even then you risk making orphans of the innocents, and that's almost as monstrous as turning your back on them.

These are the moral dilemmas a Templar face every day. That can be a real challenge to roleplay. Sometimes your friends will think your character's a complete bastard. Other times, she's Joan of Arc herself.

New Hindrances

Blackballed

3

Not all Templars who incur Simon's wrath become anti-Templars. Most are simply warned, then given time to explain themselves or make amends.

In the interim, however, the Templar is *blackballed*. His brothers and sisters of the order are duty bound to bring him in—alive if possible, dead if not. This is the Oath of Blood.

Hated

1-5

Templars are harsh saviors. They do not willingly invite death upon themselves, nor do they show remorse when victims are deemed unworthy of their help.

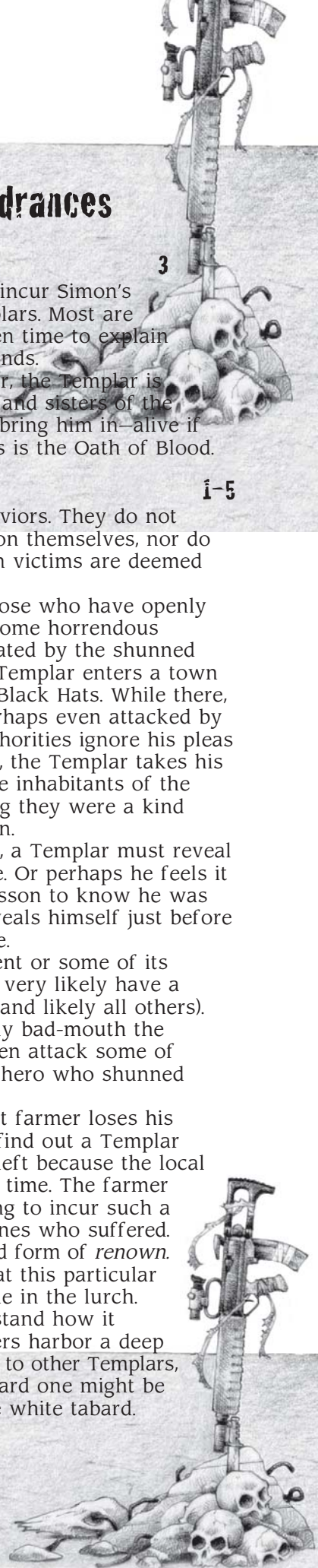
Hated Templars are those who have openly turned their back upon some horrendous situation, and are now hated by the shunned victims. Say a disguised Templar enters a town about to be attacked by Black Hats. While there, he is treated roughly, perhaps even attacked by local toughs, and the authorities ignore his pleas for help. In the best case, the Templar takes his punishment and exits, the inhabitants of the settlement never knowing they were a kind deed away from salvation.

Occasionally, however, a Templar must reveal himself to defend his life. Or perhaps he feels it will teach the locals a lesson to know he was almost their ally, and reveals himself just before leaving them to their fate.

Assuming the settlement or some of its inhabitants survive, they very likely have a *hatred* for that Templar (and likely all others). Such people just generally bad-mouth the Templars. They might even attack some of them—but they'll kill the hero who shunned them on sight.

Imagine some poor dirt farmer loses his family in a raid, only to find out a Templar almost helped them but left because the local bullies gave him a rough time. The farmer and his family did nothing to incur such a fate, yet they were the ones who suffered.

Think of *hated* as a bad form of *renown*. Word's gotten around that this particular Templar left needy people in the lurch. Some folks might understand how it could happen, while others harbor a deep hatred. That could extend to other Templars, meaning that hatred toward one might be directed at anyone in the white tabard.



Knights in White Tabards

New Edges

Anti-Templar

5

There are some who believe in the ideals of the Templars but cannot bring themselves to follow Simon's strict "test of worth." Some of these become anti-Templars. They willingly join this movement to reclaim the Wasted West and oppose the "tyrannical" Templars.

If you're feeling brave, you might want to play one of these heroes. It'll be tough, though. Most people consider anti-Templars deluded at best; evil at worst. And many of the people who see your hero as a savior are those the real Templars have already deemed beyond salvation.

On the plus side, your knight will get powers easier than his Templar foes. We can't tell you how here, because then all those other goody-two-shoes would read it. Just ask the Marshal *after* you've decided you're going to walk this dangerous path and play an anti-Templar.

Here's what else comes with this package. First, your character sees real Templars as the bad guys. They are tyrants who despoil the very power of the saints themselves. Don't plan on having a Templar and an anti-Templar in the same party. Sure, it's happened on a few rare occasions for *very* specific reasons, but there's no way these two would ever work together without a more pressing threat hanging over their heads. In fact, most Templars and anti-Templars simply attack each other on sight.

Second, most folks don't like your hombre. Subtract -4 from any *persuasion* rolls when dealing with ordinary folks. On the flip side, if whoever your hero is dealing with hates the Templars, you can add +4 to your rolls.

Finally, your anti-Templar needs to wear his black tabard most all the time. Anti-Templars are fierce in their hatred of Simon and his order, and they show it by their costumes.

Anti-Templars can have any of the rewards in this book. The saints, or something, still provide them with arcane abilities. They cannot, however, gain the blessings of the Martyrs. They have their own benefits, however, as the Marshal will tell you only after you've decided to play an anti-Templar.

One last warning, friend. Most of those who become anti-Templars *do* eventually turn to evil. You've been warned.

Blessing

3

The saints watch the affairs of man from the Hunting Grounds. A few—those who dedicated their lives to fighting the Reckoning and eventually died for it—sometimes take a more active role. These are the "Martyrs," as Jo explained earlier in this book.

In the game, once a Templar, squire, or Companion has performed a certain deed (usually known only to the Marshal), the Martyr gives him his blessing and the hero can then call on the saint to give him certain benefits by spending Fate Chips. This is all explained in Chapter 3, though you shouldn't read that section until your Marshal gives you permission.

By taking this Edge, your character starts the game with one of these blessings. Read the Martyr's basic information in the *Book of Martyrs*, then tell your Marshal which saint you'd like your Templar to be blessed by. If the Marshal approves, you can then read the exact game effects for that Martyr in Chapter 3.

A squire, Companion, or Templar can start the game with one Martyr's blessing. Templars who are *veterans o' the Wasted West* may start the game with two Martyrs' blessings (at a cost of 3 points each).

This Edge can *never* be purchased after the game starts. The blessings of the saints must be earned from that point on.

Anti-Templars may purchase this Edge as well, though they have an entirely different set of "saints" who bless them. Only after you have committed to playing an anti-Templar should you read the rules for their strange patrons.

Companion

i

Not everyone can be a Templar. Sometimes a character just isn't everything he should be. Most often this is because the individual is not strong enough to make the hard moral choices of the Templars. Perhaps the hero has performed all his tasks admirably, but just cannot bring himself to turn his back on others, regardless of whether or not they truly deserve his help.

Other times, a character with all the right values has already developed some sort of supernatural powers. These folks, for whatever reason, cannot acquire the rewards of the order.

When Simon feels that such an individual is a valuable ally, but he cannot make him a Templar, he often makes him a *Companion*. This

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is a formal title, and entitles the character to all the benefits and responsibilities of the Templars. The only difference between the hero and a regular Templar is that the *Companion* receives no rewards, and does not have to purchase *arcane background*. Since he is not undergoing the formal process of becoming a Templar, a *Companion* does not have to have the skills required of a regular Templar either.

Finally, Simon does not award a tabard to *Companions*. Most wear small red crosses on their bodies—patches, emblems, and even tattoos are common, but there is no formal design.

Relic

1-5

Templars are often given the swords of their fallen brothers and sisters, whose names are engraved upon the blades. It is the new owner's duty to memorize the deeds of the former owners and hold himself to the high standard set by his predecessors.

Some of these swords are imbued with more than just memories: they have magical powers as well. Most simply add +1 to the wielder's attack and damage rolls. Each +1 is worth 1 point in this Edge. Only a Templar, squire, or Companion can claim this bonus.

Many other abilities are possible. Think of the benefit you want the sword to possess then let the Marshal determine the point cost. A sword with a cost higher than 5 shouldn't be bought with this Edge. Such a powerful *relic* should be found during play instead.

If the sword is ever destroyed, the character may return to Boise and ask the Grand Master for another. The Marshal should then provide a suitable replacement.

Squire

A squire is a Templar-in-training. Squires try to prove themselves to older Templars so that they may one day become members of this post-Apocalyptic order. If you want your Templar to *have* a squire, read this section for some ideas, then create him with the *sidekick* Edge. This Edge is for those who wish to *play* a squire.

A *squire* has one year to go before he can be presented to Simon. During this time, he must gain all the required skills at the minimum levels and prove his understanding of the Templar's ways to his mentor. Yes, that means your hero *has* a mentor. There must be a full



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Templar in your posse to be a squire—no exceptions. You have two choices here.

The Templar can be a character under the Marshal's control. A better way, however, is to attach yourself to a player character Templar. That can take a level of maturity some players might not have, so don't go jumping into this role without thinking about it a good bit first. Playing someone else's student is a real challenge, but can also be pretty cool.

Squires aren't "servants," by the way, but since the relationship is not well defined or codified by the order, each Templar pretty much treats his squire as he wishes. If a squire doesn't like the way he's being treated, he can talk about it with his mentor and try to work it out, or he can quit. He could take up with another mentor if he wanted, but that hasn't happened yet, and the first mentor might not take it well. Of course, getting a new mentor to take over for an old one can be pretty tough. Most would just think the squire couldn't hack the life of a Templar and turn him away.

Though your character isn't a slave, do expect to be the one who gathers the firewood, cleans the weapons, and does all the other menial chores. Mentors often stick their squires with these tasks just to see if they can hack the frustration and hard work it takes to be real Templars. Combat-crazy squires get lots of menial labor. Mentors like to teach hack-and-slash types a little patience.

Assuming your hero manages to put up with his new master, he can be presented to Simon in roughly one year. The mentor can discharge his squire at any time, though, and he doesn't have to present him to Simon in a year—that's just the bare minimum. If the mentor feels the squire is a pud, but promising enough for a second chance, he'll probably give the squire a few extra months to prove himself before either dumping him or making the trek to Boise.

Should a mentor die during a squire's training, if the squire is abused by his master, if he witnesses him doing something unworthy, or if the Templar is *blackballed* by the order, the student may return to Boise and petition his case to Simon. The Grand Master may then release the squire to find a new mentor. Or he may simply banish him from Boise if he feels that the squire is simply looking for power from an easier source. Established squires awaiting new masters get priority over newcomers.

Warband

5

A Templar is allowed to train only one person at a time, and that takes a full year. Anti-Templars are encouraged to expand their ranks as rapidly as possible. They often gather large warbands or posses of skilled warriors about them to serve as their "anti-Templars in training."

If you are playing an anti-Templar and you would like to have a warband, there are a few ways you can go about it. The first is to acquire your warband members through play. Convince some wasters that your hero has it going on, and they might hang around to see if it's true. Another option is for your anti-Templar's "warband" to be the rest of the player characters. Oh, they might not see it that way at first, but they'll come around eventually.

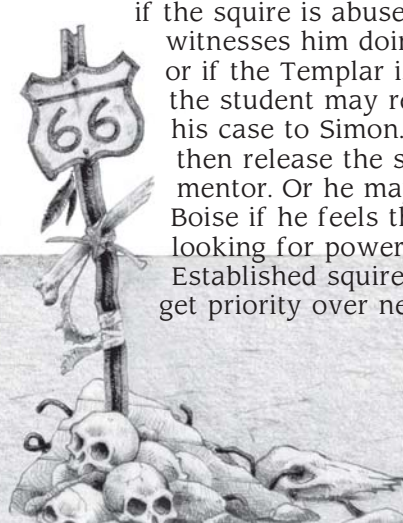
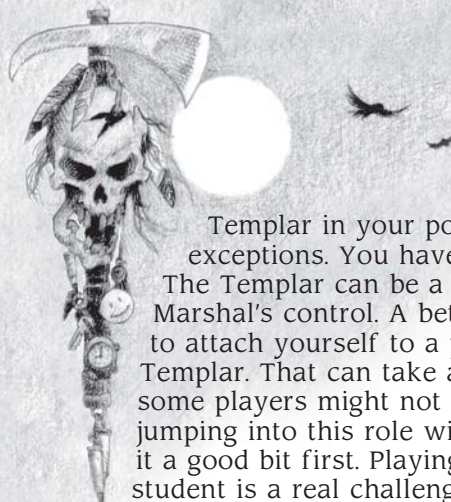
If you'd like to start play with a gang of non-player toughs in tow, that's cool too. A *warband* costs 5 points for every 1d6 worth of followers, up to a maximum of 20 points spent on the *warband*. These wasters are pretty much scum, though there are likely a few honest souls among them. They'll follow your hero's orders as long as they make sense and get them some loot, power, and personal gratification. They'll also turn on their master given the right opportunity.

After three to four months and several missions together, the Marshal might decide some of these followers are worthy of becoming anti-Templars themselves. Most manifest their new powers after some important victory, such as the defeat of a fearmonger or a Templar. A few minutes later, one or more of the anti-Templar's most accomplished warriors may suddenly feel a surge of power and become an anti-Templar. This is called the "Becoming."

Soon after, the new anti-Templar is to be awarded a black tabard by his master and released. He is now expected to leave his master's company to raise a warband of his own.

Ask your Marshal before taking this Edge. He may not want the hassle of running a handful of thugs along with the rest of the posse. If you do have a *warband*, make sure to help your Marshal run them.

Use the **Squire** archetype for the warband members' statistics. Remember they're not usually the bright-eyed innocents real squires are. Most of them are raiders looking for an arcane edge to help them gain more loot and power.



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New Skills

Fightin': Florentine

A lot of wasters fight with two weapons at once. Few of them truly know how to take advantage of them, however. A fighter with the *florentine* concentration has trained extensively not only with each of his two hand weapons, but also in using them together.

The *florentine* concentration doesn't work alone. The character has to have some other kind of weapon concentration such as another sword, club, ax, and so forth. As long as the weapons in his two hands are covered by his other concentrations, he can take advantage of the *florentine* concentration.

Using it is simple. When the character hits with one or more raises, he can use them to affect the Hit Location as usual, or he can use the first raise to say that the second weapon hit as well. Additional raises can be applied to the Hit Location roll of either weapon as the attacker desires. Ignore the off-hand penalty when using the *florentine* concentration.

For called shots, resolve the attack as usual. If successful, the first weapon hits the targeted area. The second weapon hits a random area, though additional raises can be used to move the second weapon closer to the target area if desired.

A character *cannot* make two separate attacks on one action using the *florentine* skill. For that he uses the normal rules for attacking with two weapons as detailed in Chapter Five of the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook.

Combat Notes

Templars love their swords. That means they wind up in hand-to-hand combat (fancy types call it *melee*) all the time. Usually, the Marshal will keep fights like this fairly generalized. Everyone makes their *fightin'* rolls to see who gets hacked to bits. Sometimes, though, you might want a little more detail. This can be particularly useful when Templars are involved in hand-to-hand fights and they want to use clever tactics to help them beat a better-skilled or more numerous foe. That requires slightly more detailed rules than we gave you in the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook.

Below are some clarifications and elaborations of existing rules. The Marshal should feel free to integrate them into his game



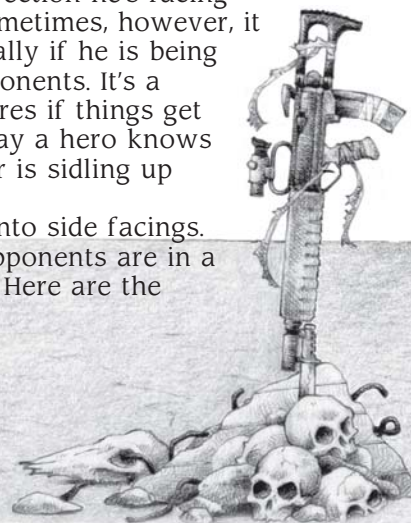
as he sees fit. We mean that. You shouldn't check to see if someone goes prone every time they get stunned. In fact, the Marshal might not even want to check for stun all the time. That's fine—the extra detail is there for when it's important. When it's not, just roll some damage and get on with the game. When it is really important, however—when the odds are desperate and clever players are trying to stack every possible advantage in their favor—the extra detail is there.

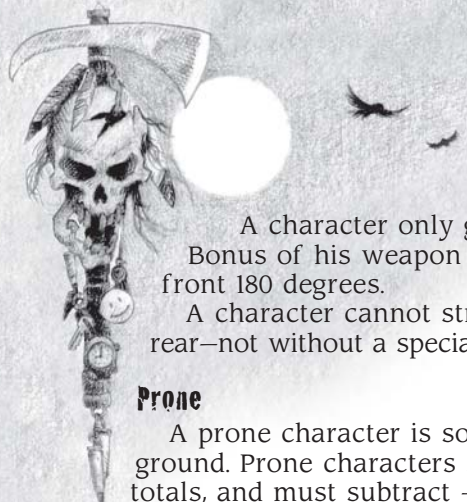
Or at least it is now. Read on, amigo.

Facing

A character can face any direction on his action, so the specific direction he's facing isn't usually an issue. Sometimes, however, it can be important, especially if he is being attacked by multiple opponents. It's a good idea to use miniatures if things get this complicated. That way a hero knows what sort of nasty critter is sidling up behind him.

We don't need to get into side facings. It's enough to know if opponents are in a character's front or rear. Here are the effects:





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A character only gets the Defensive Bonus of his weapon against foes to his front 180 degrees.

A character cannot strike at a foe to his rear—not without a special maneuver, anyway.

Prone

A prone character is someone lying on the ground. Prone characters suffer a -4 to *fightin'* totals, and must subtract -4 from Hit Location rolls as well, due to their low angle of attack.

Attacking a prone character is easy. Add +2 to the attacker's *fightin'* total.

Characters might be knocked prone by being stunned or as the result of an opposed *fightin'*: *brawlin'* maneuver.

Stun

A stunned character does not add his *fightin'* levels to the TN to be hit. He also does not get the DB of his weapon.

If the Marshal wants, he might also require a character to make a Fair (5) *Strength* roll for a character to stay on his feet immediately after becoming stunned. This should usually be applied only to damage from weapons that deliver kinetic energy, such as hand weapons and gun shots.

The Way of the Sword

Templars don't rely entirely on their swords. A submachine-gun on full-auto clears a room full of trogs much faster and with less risk to the sword-slinger. Ammunition is often scarce in the Wasted West, though, so Templars find themselves falling back on their swords more often than they'd like.

That means they get in a lot of practice, and find themselves in unusual situations where a clever flick of the blade can save their lives. The greatest sword-slingers in the order tell others of their trademark moves, to ensure their brothers and sisters have every edge possible in combat.

Here's how all these fancy maneuvers work in the game. These aren't powers—they're just nifty tricks of swordplay. Any Templar—in fact, anyone with the *fightin'*: *sword* aptitude—can use these techniques.

Disarm

A bad guy without a weapon is about as dangerous as a, well, a bad guy without a

weapon. Skilled Templars can use their weapons to take a foe's pointy-thing away, which can prove quite handy when trying to capture a foe alive.

A disarm maneuver works by pitting the attacker's *fightin'* against the defender's. A win with no raises means the defender's weapon is knocked aside temporarily. The defender must re-ready the weapon, and is at -2 on his next action if he attacks with it (he can ignore the -2 otherwise).

With a raise, the attacker disarms the defender and sends the weapon flying in a random direction (roll a d12) for d6 yards. With 2 or more raises, it flies in the direction the attacker intends.

Feint

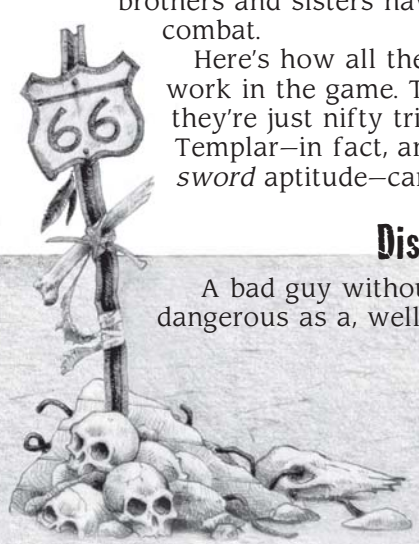
A *feint* is a quick motion in one direction followed by an even faster strike in another. A fighter might pretend to aim for the head, for instance, but then switch his momentum and drop the sword into his foe's guts. If the opponent raised his own weapon to parry a high blow, he's probably looking at last night's dinner spewing out in front of him.

The trouble is that it's harder to *feint* against both more experienced veterans and newbies. Veterans are, of course, more difficult to fool because they're looking for it, but why newbies? Because they aren't fast enough to fall for the fake strike in the first place. In either case, the effort spent to pull the other fighter off-guard subtracts from the attacker's inertia, thus causing less damage the harder the *feint*.

A character can only *feint* against an opponent armed with a hand weapon. He does so by adding the opponent's *fightin'* level to the hero's attack total. That same amount is then subtracted from the damage. A Templar *feinting* against a trog with *fightin'* 3, for example, adds +3 to his attack roll, but subtracts -3 from his damage roll.

If a foe is using a weapon but does not have the right concentration for it, don't worry about it—use the foe's basic *fightin'* level anyway. A trog with a sword, for example, is still thinking like it's a club, so he can still be drawn off by a successful *feint*.

In either case, the opponent can still attempt an active defense by vamoosing. He just figures out he was suckered at the last moment and throws himself aside. The fighter who threw the *feint* still gets to count the foe's *fightin'* levels as a bonus to his own roll, however.



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Figure Eight

The *figure eight* is great for holding people at bay—especially a hostile crowd that you might want to talk to before they try to rip you to shreds. It's performed by swinging the sword in a wide figure eight (hence the name, brainer). If someone moves into the arc of the sword's movement, they're going to get hit (though not as hard as by a directed attack).

Here's how it works. It takes an action to start, and no other attacks can be made while it's in effect. However, if at any time someone attempts to close with the hero, passing into the sweep of the *figure eight*, the hero gets an automatic roll to hit him, but with a -2 penalty. If that hit connects, roll damage normally but subtract -2 from the total (the *figure eight* doesn't take full advantage of the character's *Strength*).

Any time an opponent is hit, the sword-slinger must make an immediate *Strength* roll against the severity of the wound he just inflicted. Use the standard healing TNs for the wound (Wind is 3, light wounds 5, and so on). If the character makes it, the *figure eight* is still in effect. If he fails the roll, the blow disrupts his maneuver and it is no longer in effect, though he may start again on his next action.

Double Figure Eight

It's also possible to do a *double figure eight* with two swords. This works the same way, except that if the character hits with a raise, both swords hit. Roll hit location, damage (don't forget the -2), and *Strength* checks for both.

If one figure eight is interrupted (by hitting someone), the other sword stays in motion.

Reverse Thrust

Sometimes a person knows a bad guy is behind him but doesn't have time to spin around and carve him up like a Thanksgiving turkey. That's when a quick *reverse thrust* comes in handy.

It's performed by quickly switching to a down-grip, then stabbing backward between the character's own arm and side. For extra thrust, the sword-slinger can pound on the pommel of his sword with his other palm.

This move simply allows a character to stab someone directly behind him. It can be handy in those rare cases when he's surrounded and doesn't have enough room for a *spinning reverse thrust* (just below). Subtract -2 from his *fightin'*

total because of the lack of visibility. Because the character cannot gain his usual momentum from the thrust, also subtract -3 from the usual damage, or -2 if the character's other hand is free and he pounds it in with his empty hand.

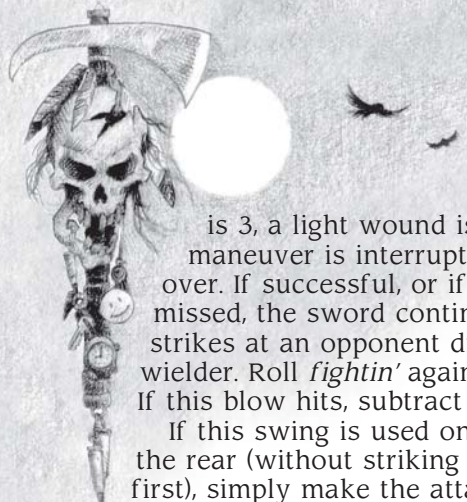
In either case, subtract -2 from the Hit Location roll due to the angle of the attack.

Spinning Reverse

The *spinning reverse* is a little more dramatic than the *reverse thrust*. It allows a character to combine a rearward swing with an attack on a foe to her front, essentially getting a free attack. However, it takes a lot of room, and can't be performed in a narrow space like a simple *reverse thrust*.

The character performs this maneuver by swinging his sword in a loop in front of him and then following through with a low swing to his rear. In game terms, he makes an attack against the front target normally. Roll *fightin'*, and do damage as usual. Then, if the first attack was successful, roll *Strength* as well. The TN is the same as the wound level just caused (Wind





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is 3, a light wound is 5, etc.). If failed, the maneuver is interrupted and the action is over. If successful, or if the first attack missed, the sword continues through and strikes at an opponent directly behind the wielder. Roll *fightin'* again, but at a -4 penalty. If this blow hits, subtract -2 from the damage. If this swing is used only to hit a target to the rear (without striking a target to the front first), simply make the attack roll as usual, but with a -4 penalty to the *fightin'* roll and -2 to the damage total.

Sweep

What's a Templar to do when he's out of bullets and surrounded by a horde of muties? He should try a *sweep*, of course.

A *sweep* is merely a wide swing designed to hack at multiple targets standing in close proximity to each other. It doesn't have the force of a full swing, but with a little luck, it might cause enough damage to several opponents at once to get them all to back down.

Here's how it works. The character swings his sword at the first opponent. He gets +2 to hit because of the wide arc of his blow, but causes -2 damage should he connect.

If the blow hits the target, resolve damage and have the Templar make a *Strength* check against the TN of the wound. If he makes that roll, the weapon continues on its swing and the fighter can roll to hit another foe within his arc.

Unfortunately, this leaves the hero wide open, so anyone taking a poke at him before his next action gets a +2 to hit him as well.

The Marshal gets to decide if the bad guys are lined up right for this maneuver, but it should almost always work against a mob, assuming the Templar isn't already overwhelmed and unable to properly raise his sword.

Sword Throw

We've all seen it a dozen times in the vids. Some hero's just about to lose the climactic battle. Out of desperation, he throws his sword. It flies end-over-end (usually with the camera right behind it) and plunges through the villain, skewering him like a Moroccan shish kebob.

Here's how it works in the game. As you might guess, throwing a sword requires the *throwin': balanced* Aptitude. Broadwords and the like have a Range Increment of 2; sabers an Increment of 3. Light fencing

weapons can't be thrown—they just don't work that way. You need both hands free to throw a sword, though the Marshal might cut really strong characters a break (d12s or better in *Strength*).

The damage for throwing a sword depends on how it hits. A success with no raise means the sword hit pommel-first. It does only *Strength* +1d4 damage. With a raise, the sword does its normal damage.

Trap

A good swordsman can bind a foe's weapon so that it cannot strike.

Trapping is a straight contest of *fightin'* rolls. If the Templar wins with no raises, it results in a *face-off* (just below).

With a raise, the swordsman has trapped his opponent's weapon. Follow the normal guidelines for opposed rolls here. One raise means the opponent can keep struggling. Two or more raises means he'll need to wait until some other opportunity arises to free his weapon. Or, of course, he could just let go.

A florentine fighter can have both his weapons trapped, but it's hard. The attacker must get an additional raise to trap the second weapon. Decide how effective the *trap* is by looking at the number of raises over and above the two needed to trap both the weapons.

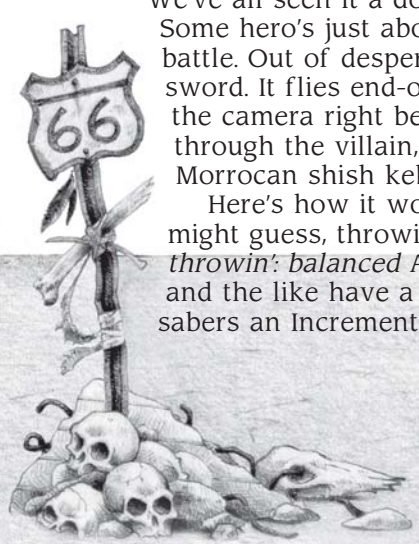
Face-Off

A *face-off* is one of those deals where two swordsmen get all tangled up with each other and wind up face-to-face, grunting and swearing curses as they try to push each other away and off-balance. It happens when one of them attempts a trap and doesn't quite make it.

Once a *face-off* results, both fighters make *Strength* rolls on their next actions. They remain locked this way until one of them wins with a raise. This is a simple task, so either fighter can attempt some other action during the struggle if he wishes (it's a great time for *overawe* or *ridicule* attempts). If the action requires the other hand, however, you suffer a -4 to your *Strength* roll.

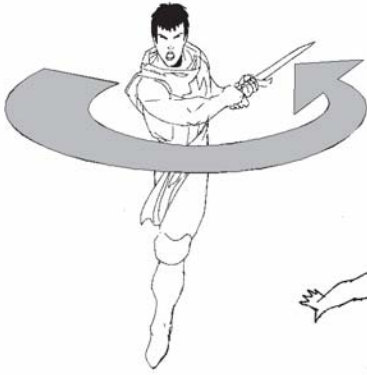
When one of the fighters eventually wins, the other is knocked backward and falls prone if he doesn't make a Fair (5) *Nimbleness* check.

Either fighter can drop his sword to escape the trap at any time, though this likely leaves him unarmed. That's also a simple task, so he could drop his sword and attempt to run, smash his foe with his fist, or even *quick draw* a pistol and fire it.



Sword Maneuvers

Sweep



Disarm

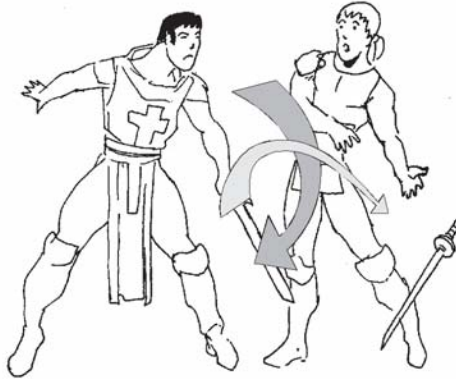
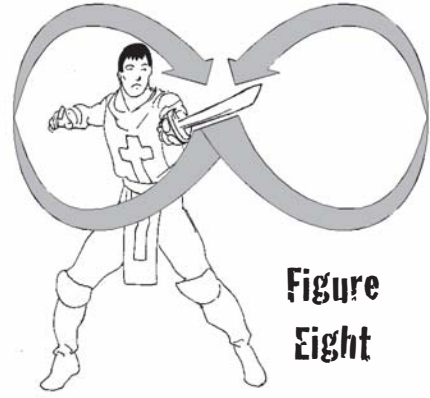


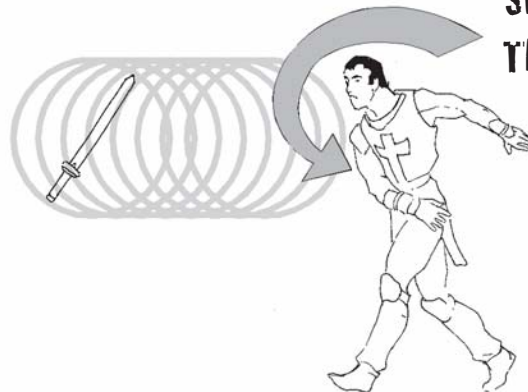
Figure Eight



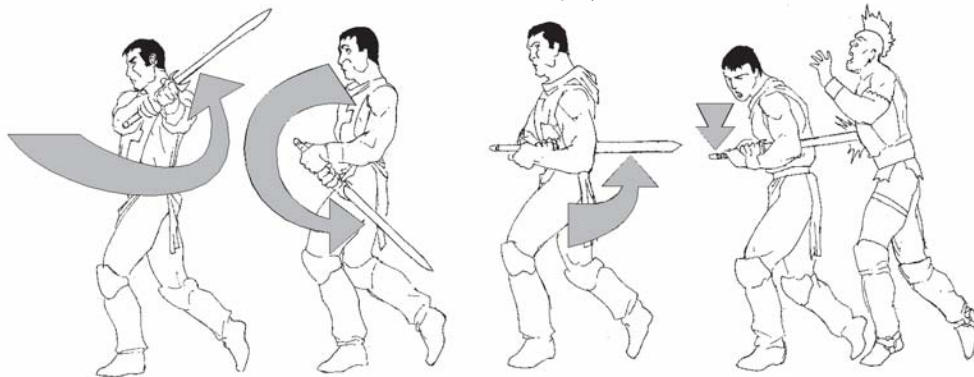
Feint



Sword Throw



Reverse Thrust



Archetypes

Anti-Templar

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 1d6

Shootin': pistol 2

Nimbleness 2d12

Climbin' 1

Dodge 3

Fightin': ax,
brawlin' 5

Sneak 3

Strength 1d8

Quickness

4d10

Vigor 4d6

Cognition 3d6

Scrutinize 1

Search 3

Knowledge 3d8

Academia: Occult 2

Area Knowledge 2

Language 2

Mien 3d6

Smarts 1d6

Survival: plains 2

Spirit 2d10

Faith 3

Guts 2

Wind 16

Pace 12

Edges:

Arcane Background: Templar 3

Hindrances:

Enemy: Templars -3

Intolerance: Templars -3

Vengeful -3

Ugly as sin -1: a scar from a fight with a Templar runs down your face.

Rewards: Armor of the saints 3, fury of the saints 2

Gear: A great ax and \$50.

Personality

You fool! I'm no *Templar!* Can't you tell the difference! My tabard is black, and it will remain so until the tyranny of Simon and his "knights" have been wiped from memory.

I know of their spite firsthand. Several years ago, my family lived in a small village in the Maze. Croakers attacked with their shraks and shamans and wiped us out,

then took our women and returned to the sea. One of those women was my wife.

As I stood there, helpless, a recent traveler stood and dropped his filthy coat and hat. Beneath these tattered clothes was the hated white tabard. The Templar said he did not help us because we knew the croakers were raiding other villages nearby and had refused their requests for aid. Can you

believe the pig? Asking why we didn't help those other folks when he wasn't willing to help us himself?

And this on the day my wife was likely eaten—or worse—by those hideous fishmen.

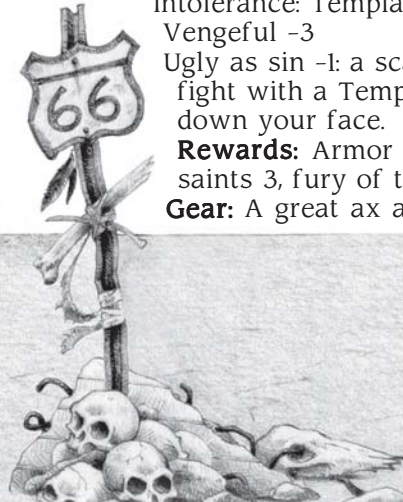
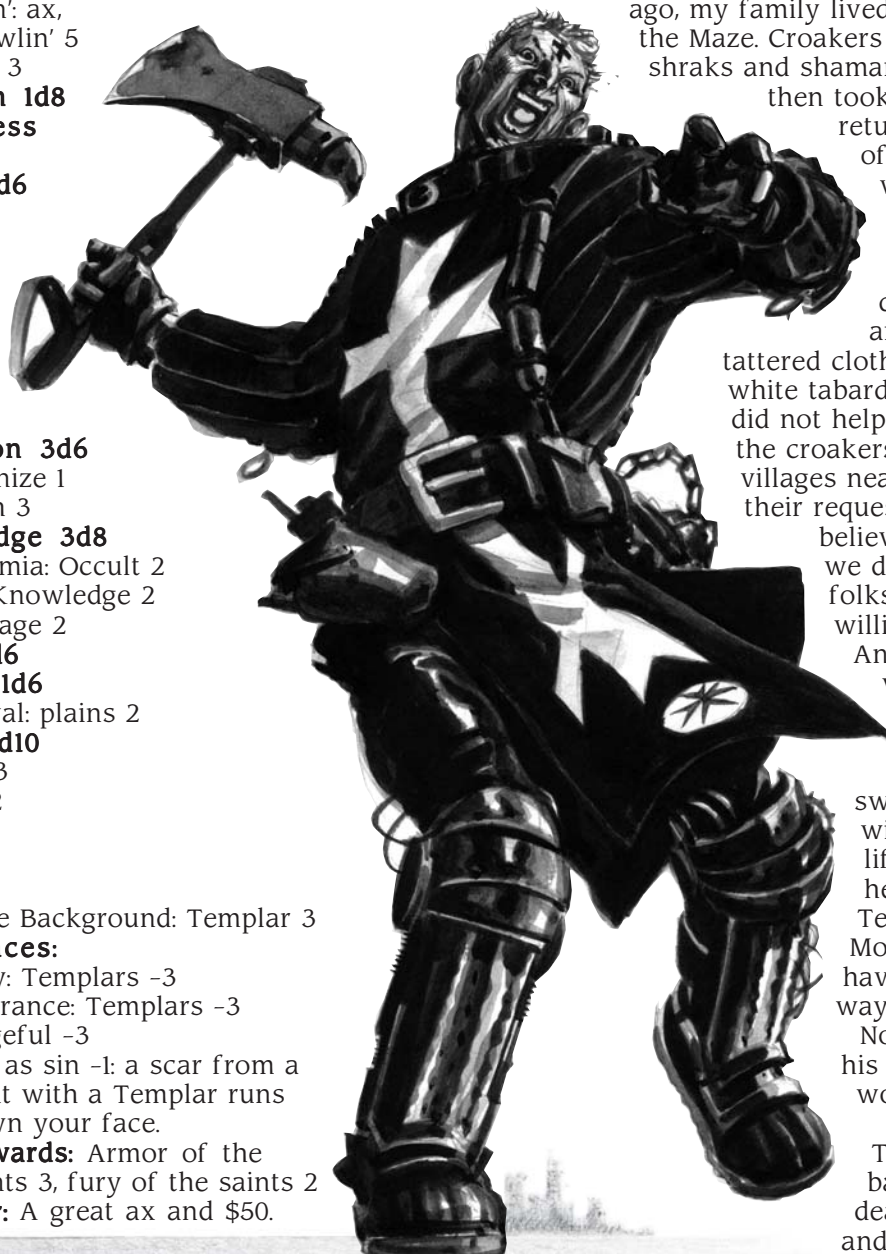
I attacked the swine but was beaten to within an inch of my life. Months later, I heard of the anti-Templars. The great Modeen and his faction have shown us the true way.

Now I wield my ax in his honor, and for the world's future.

And as for the Templar who turned his back on my wife? His death made me stronger and faster than I ever was before.

Quote: "I've got an ax to grind."

Posse: 68



Archetypes

Companion

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 1d8

Shootin': SMG 4
Speed-load: SMG 1

Nimbleness 3d6

Climbin' 1
Drivin': car 3
Fightin': brawlin' 3
Sneak 1

Strength 2d10**Quickness 4d6****Vigor 4d10****Cognition 3d6**

Search 2

Knowledge 1d6

Academia: Occult 1
Area Knowledge 2
Language 2

Mien 2d12

Overawe 4

Smarts 1d6

Survival: urban 2

Spirit 3d8

Faith 2
Guts 3

Wind 16**Pace 12****Edges:**

Blessing 3: Saint Gates
Companion 1

Hindrances:

Big 'un: husky -1 (Size +1; Pace 4)

Intolerance -1 (people who ask why you're not a real Templar)

Miser -3

Slowpoke -2 (you don't run anywhere.)

Vengeful -3

Gear: An NA Commando SMG with 2 full spare clips.

Personality

I ain't got the patience for it. That's why. Don't ask stupid questions. 'Sides. It's good enough. I been blessed by a Martyr. If I'm good enough for Saint Gates, I oughta be good enough for you.

Anyway, I'm too old to be a squire. These young Templars don't want some middle-aged veteran tagging along behind them telling 'em what to do. They're s'posed to tell *you* what to do, an' I sure as Hell ain't got the

patience for that.

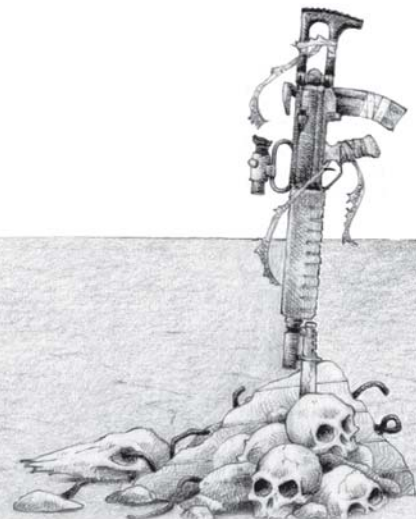
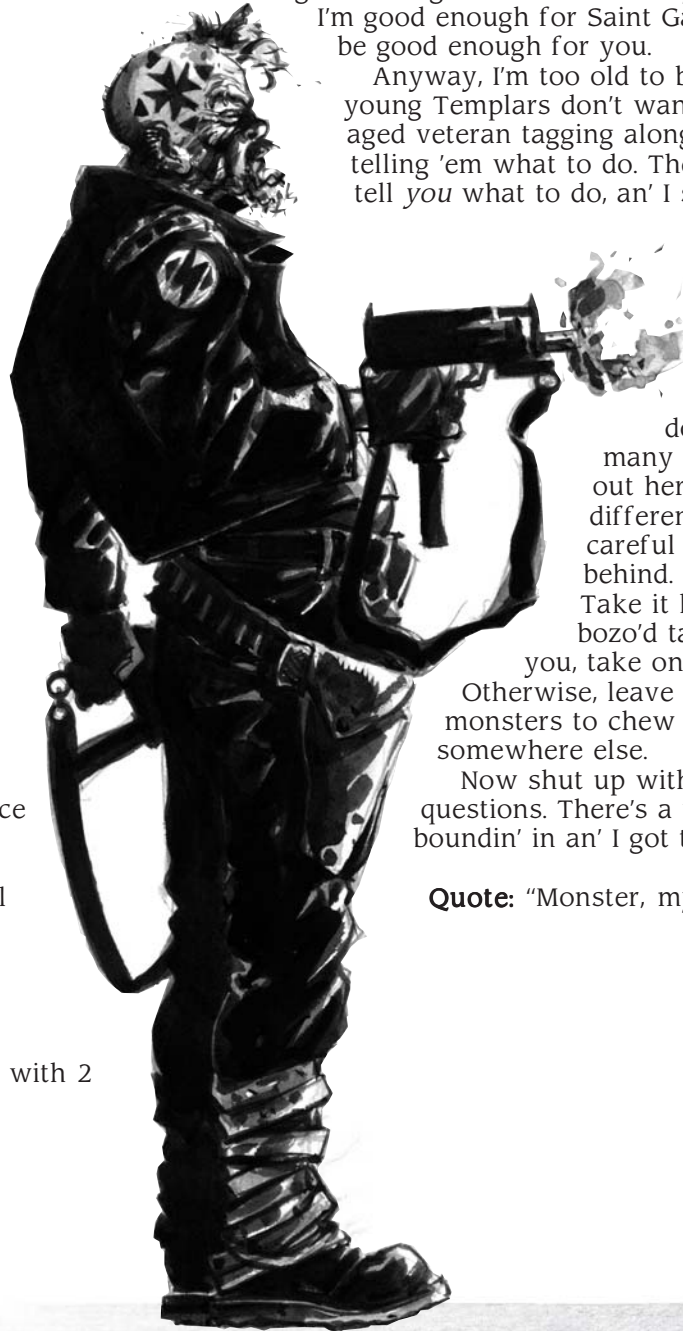
'Course, Simon's got the right idea. I

done seen too many good folks die out here to think any different. You gotta be careful who you stand behind. How do you tell? Take it literally. If the bozo'd take a bullet for you, take one for him.

Otherwise, leave 'im for the monsters to chew on while you go somewhere else.

Now shut up with all the questions. There's a wormling boundin' in an' I got two full clips.

Quote: "Monster, my ass."



Archetypes

Squire

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 3d8

Shootin': rifle 2

Nimbleness 2d12

Climbin' 1

Dodge 3

Fightin': brawlin' 3

Sneak 3

Strength 1d8

Quickness 4d10

Vigor 4d6

Cognition 3d6

Scrutinize 2

Search 3

Knowledge 1d6

Academia: Occult 2

Area Knowledge 2

Language 2

Mien 3d6

Smarts 1d6

Ridicule 3

Survival: plains 2

Spirit 2d10

Faith 1

Guts 3

Wind 16

Pace 12

Edges:

Arcane Background:

Squire 0

Blessing 3: Saint Hise

Hindrances:

Curious -3

Stubborn -2

Templar's Oath -5

Gear: A golf club, a police pistol,

10 spare rounds (loose),

running shoes (+1 Pace), and

\$30.

Personality

Thanks, boss. That was great. I needed the practice. Now don't get me wrong—I like the lessons—but maybe next time we could start out on something... well, not quite as tough as those zombies. Like maybe watermelons or something that doesn't fight back. I'm missing half an arm here. I know you can fix it but...

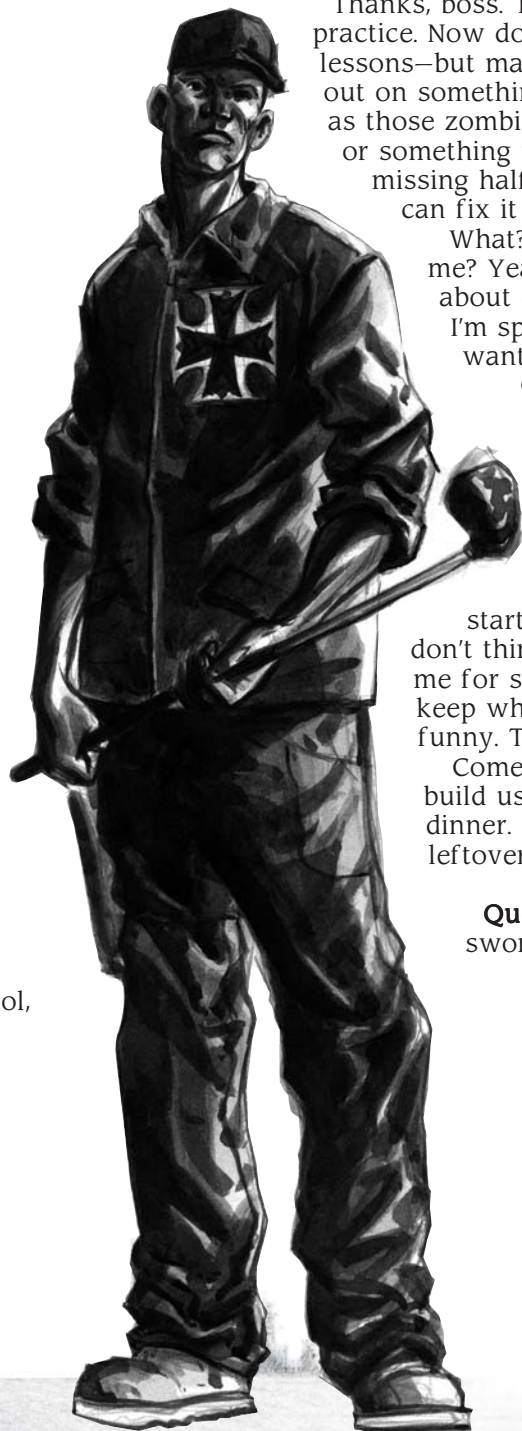
What? You're not going to heal me? Yeah, I know what you said about conserving our power, but I'm spurting blood here. You don't want me to die, do you?

Okay, I'll wait a while. I just hope I don't get blood on that pretty tabard of yours. Want me to shine your boots now? I've still got one good hand.

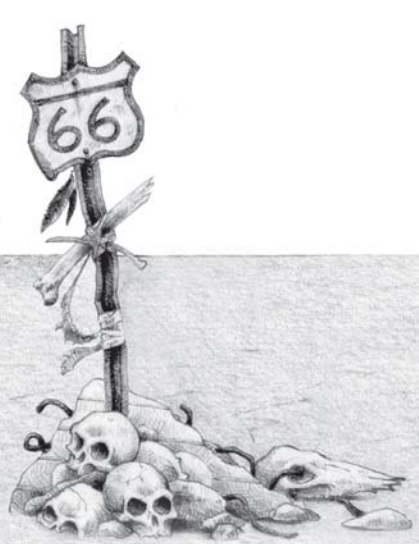
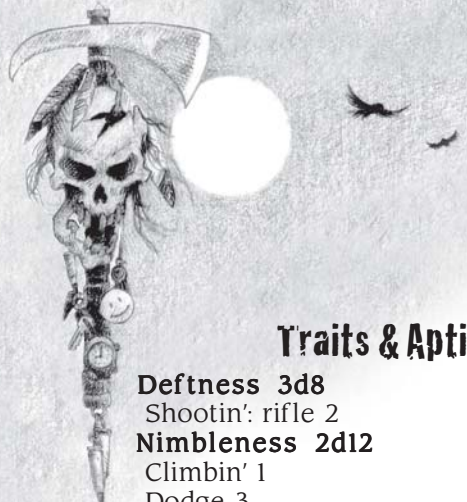
Sorry. I know sarcasm isn't "becoming," but I'm starting to feel faint. Huh? No, I don't think the Duke's gonna bless me for sitting here bleeding. "Not if I keep whining." That's funny. Really funny. Thanks.

Come on. Just heal me up and I'll build us a fire and fix us some dinner. I got some jackalope meat leftover! Your favorite, *you bas...*

Quote: "Hey, can I borrow your sword?"



Posse: 70



Archetypes

Veteran Templar

Traits & Aptitudes

Deftness 4d6

Shootin': pistol 5

Nimbleness 2d10

Climbin' 1

Dodge 3

Fightin': brawlin', sword 5

Sneak 2

Strength 3d8**Quickness 3d6****Vigor 4d10****Cognition 3d6**

Scrutinize 2

Search 3

Knowledge 1d6

Academia: Occult 3

Area Knowledge 2

Language 2

Medicine 2

Mien 1d6

Overawe 3

Smarts 2d12

Survival: plains 2

Spirit 1d8

Faith 5

Guts 4

Wind 16**Pace 8****Edges:**

Arcane Background 3:

Templar

Blessing 3:

Saint Earp

Sidekick 5: Squire

(use the Squire

Archetype for

this character, or

design your

own)

Veteran o' the

Wasted West

(Tell the

Marshal to

draw a card

for this Edge.)

Hindrances:

Lame -3 (Pace 8)

Stubborn -2

Templar's Oath -5

Gear: A sword, 2 police pistols, 2 spare clips, and \$22.

Personality

You want to be a Templar, huh? What do you know about it? Do you know how lonely it is? Do you know how terrible it is to have the weight of the world on your shoulders? To know you can save an entire town if you put your heart into it, but you won't, 'cause they're just desert scum?

You young punks. All you see is our white tabards and gleaming swords. You don't see us when we're dressed as lepers or muties to see if anyone will help us. Ever think about that, kid? I thought not.

I was there at the start. When Simon first came back from his long walk.

A lot of good people died since then.

What

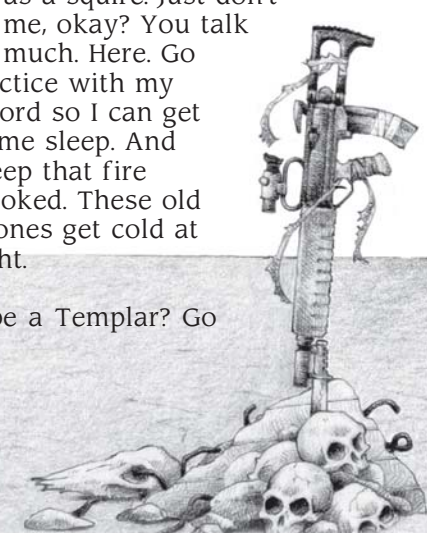
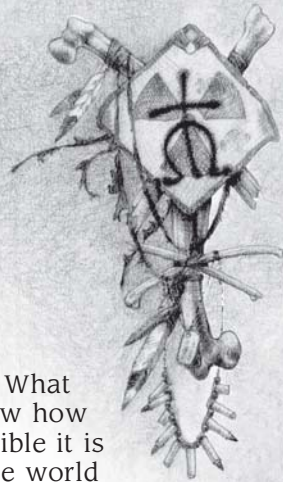
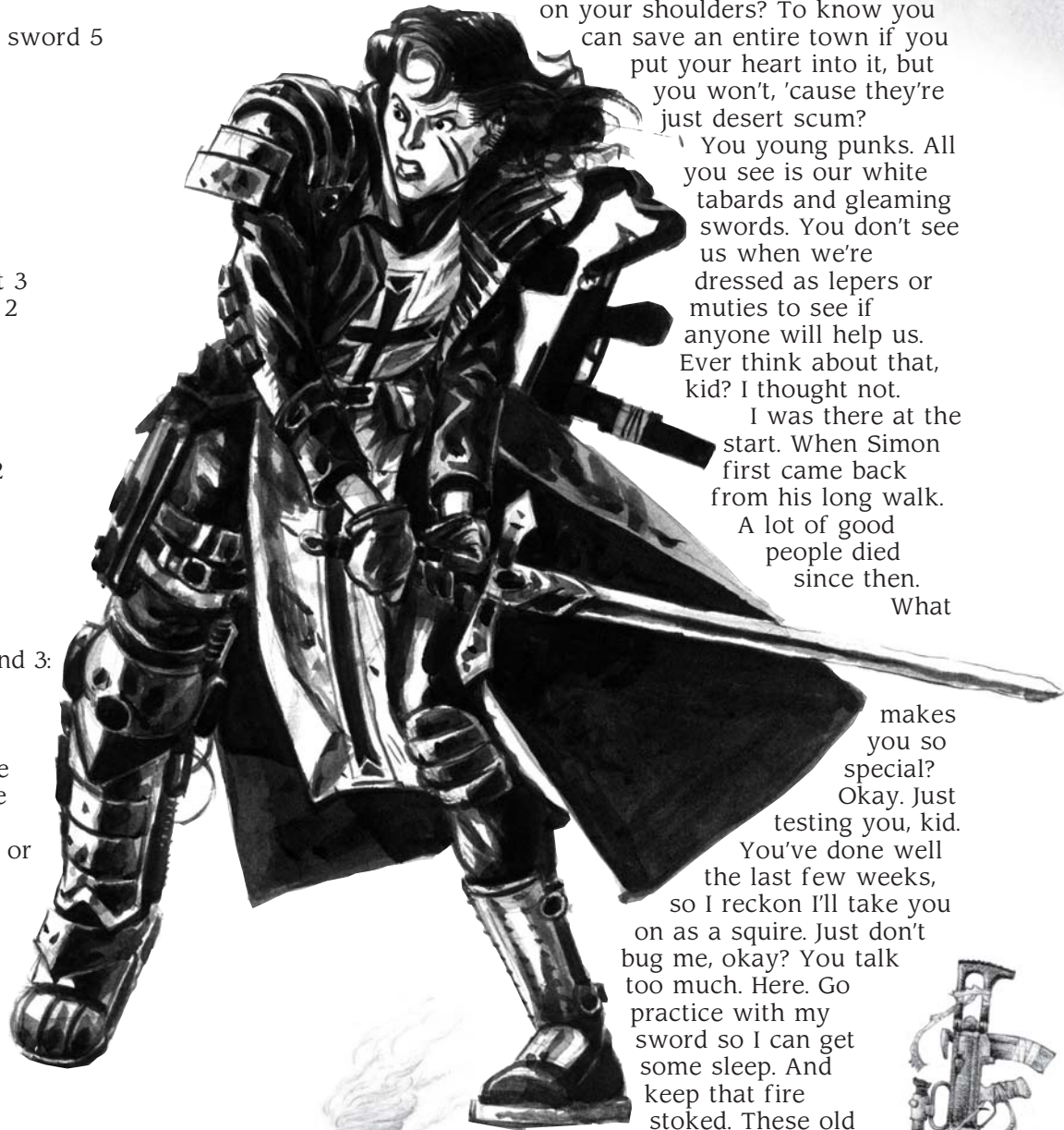
makes you so special?

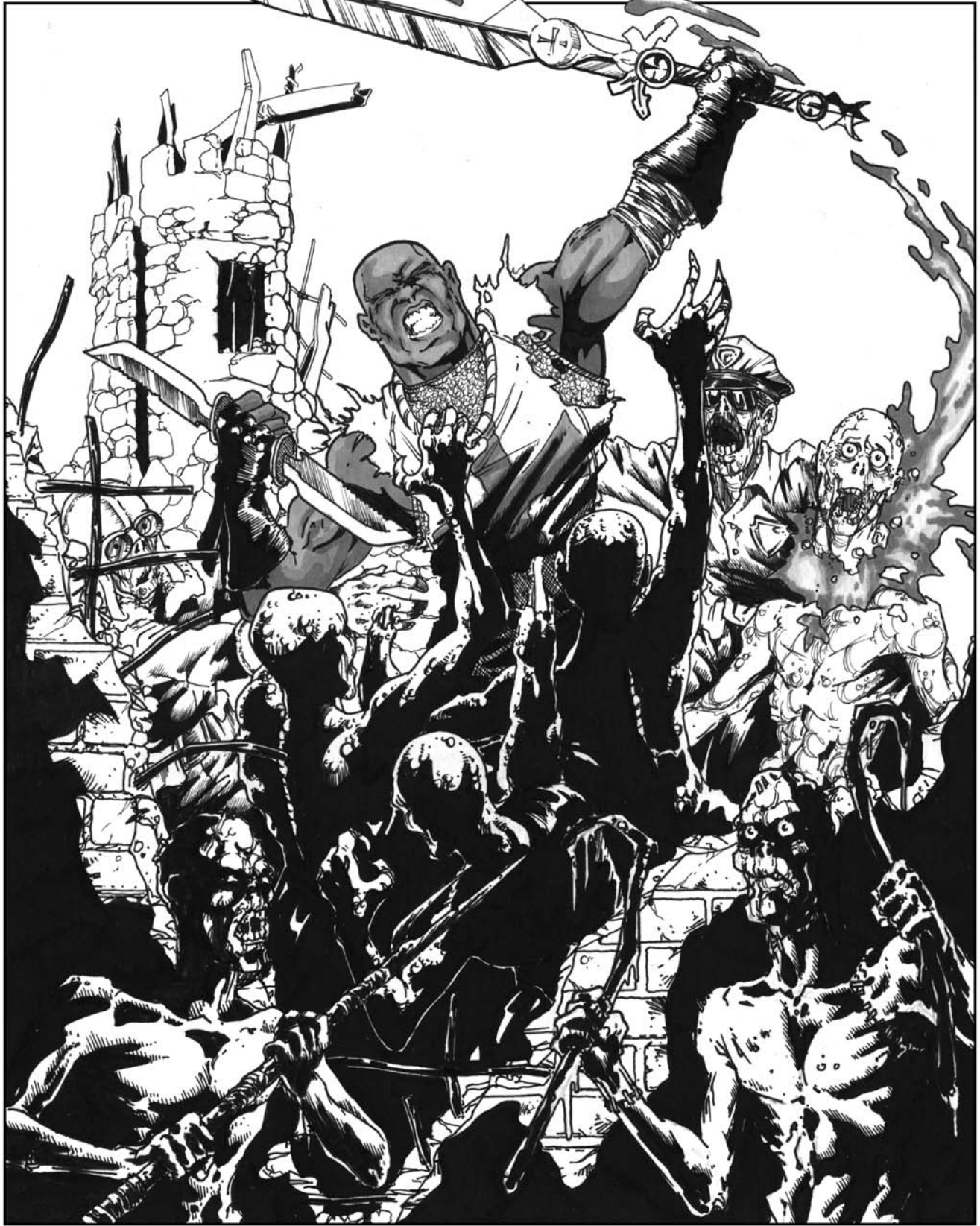
Okay. Just testing you, kid.

You've done well the last few weeks, so I reckon I'll take you on as a squire. Just don't bug me, okay? You talk too much. Here. Go practice with my sword so I can get some sleep. And keep that fire stoked. These old bones get cold at night.

Quote: "You wanna be a Templar? Go kill that thing."

Posse: 7i







Chapter Three: Rewards & Relics



So now you know what it takes to be a Templar, and what you do with your nifty skills and abilities. But what do you *get* out of the deal? We've got ya covered, partner. This chapter covers Templar rewards and even a few of the relics they've made their own. Lets start with those: a handful of powerful swords floating around the Wasted West.

Relics

Templars live and die by the sword, so it's no surprise that the order has come into possession of some very special blades. What follows are a few of those. They're examples of the sort of thing your hero might start the game with if she's got the *relic* Edge, or which might be found in her adventures or in the hands of important Templar non-player characters.

Billings' Blade

Lt. Colonel Ralph Billings was a real leader of men. The CO of a Confederate infantry battalion, he always insisted on leading his unit into combat, waving his ceremonial officer's sabre over his head as he stood in the hatch of his armored personnel carrier. His men were intensely loyal, and had an astonishing success rate in battles that chewed other units to pieces. "Ol' Bill" survived eleven battlefield wounds before he and his loyal "Raiders" were vaporized by a tac nuke strike in the final weeks of the war.

No one knows why he didn't take his sabre into battle that day, but it stayed back at headquarters and survived the war. It's typical of the ceremonial swords issued to US and Confederate officers: lightweight and ornately engraved.

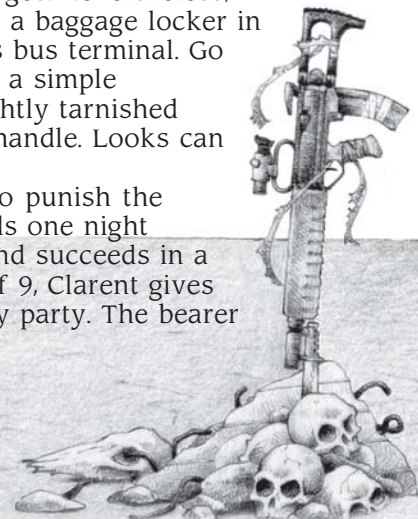
Power: Billings' Blade offers its bearer two benefits: a +2 to all *fightin'* sword rolls; and, when in hand, a +4 to all *guts* checks made by the bearer's companions. The bearer does not get the *guts* bonus, which is negated if he fails his own *guts* check.

Clarent, Sword of Justice

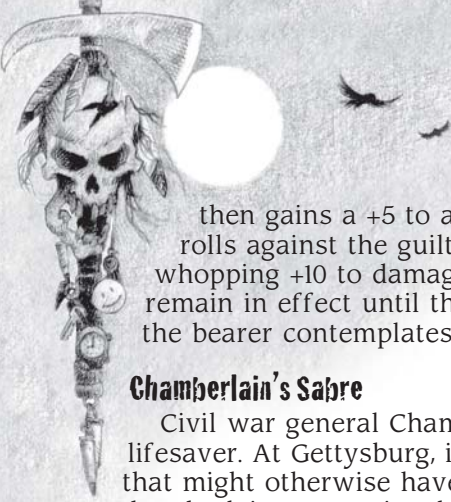
Most people don't know that King Arthur owned not one but two powerful swords. Before the Lady of the Lake tossed him Excalibur, Arthur carried Clarent, his Sword of Justice.

No one knows exactly how this sword surfaced in the Wasted West—it had been missing since the Dark Ages. Nevertheless, some scavvie found it in a baggage locker in the ruins of the St. Louis bus terminal. Go figure. Clarent looks like a simple medieval longsword, slightly tarnished and a little loose in the handle. Looks can be deceiving, however.

Power: Clarent lives to punish the guilty. If its bearer spends one night meditating on a crime, and succeeds in a *Spirit* roll against a TN of 9, Clarent gives him a vision of the guilty party. The bearer



Rewards & Relics



then gains a +5 to all *fightin': swords* rolls against the guilty party, and a whopping +10 to damage! These bonuses remain in effect until the target is dead or the bearer contemplates a different crime.

Chamberlain's Sabre

Civil war general Chamberlain's sabre was a lifesaver. At Gettysburg, it stopped a bullet that might otherwise have killed the general. Chamberlain was seriously wounded in a later battle, but he used his sabre as a crutch and stayed on his feet to command his forces for hours, despite the massive loss of blood.

The sword was in a Texas museum before the war, recovered by scavengers, and ended up in the hands of early Templar George Lablanc. It is a conventional Civil-War era officer's sabre, complete with tasseled scabbard.

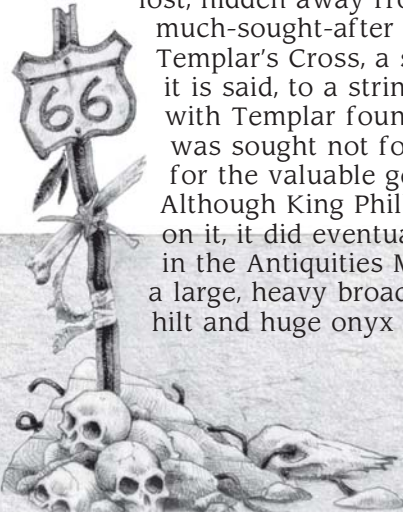
Power: The bearer of Chamberlain's sabre cannot drop below 0 Wind. At 0 Wind, he can only perform simple actions, and cannot participate in combat. But he does remain conscious and does not bleed to death.

The False Excalibur

No-one knows what became of the real sword of King Arthur, if it ever even existed at all. This sword isn't the real McCoy, but it's the next best thing: the prop sword used in the 2053 hit film, *Arthur's Vengeance III: the Bloodfest*. It belonged to the Director, who gave it to Templar Leslie Young in exchange for a brief appearance in his vid *Knights of Battle*. It looks a lot like a real medieval sword, or at least what Hollywood thinks a medieval sword should look like.

Power: The False Excalibur is an inspiring instrument. Its bearer gains +4 to all *bluff*, *leadership*, *overawe*, and *performin'* rolls made while the sword is in hand.

The Templar's Cross



When the last real Templars were burned at the stake in 1314, many of their treasures were lost, hidden away from their enemies. One much-sought-after artifact was the Templar's Cross, a sword that had belonged, it is said, to a string of knights beginning with Templar founder Hugh de Payens. It was sought not for its symbolic value, but for the valuable gem embedded in its hilt. Although King Phillip never got his hands on it, it did eventually resurface, ending up in the Antiquities Museum in Shan Fan. It is a large, heavy broadsword with an ornate hilt and huge onyx pommel.

Power: The bearer gains a bonus equal to her *faith* for both her *fightin': sword* and damage rolls. The sword's defensive bonus is also equal to the bearer's *faith*.

Rewards

Templar magic isn't nearly as spectacular as that of Doomsayers or sykers. Most of their "rewards" are small blessings that affect only the Templar himself. Offensive rewards don't strike enemies down. They augment the Templar's own prowess or perhaps deliver some sort of additional effect when a Templar smites a foe himself. Defensive powers aren't glowing shields able to keep out tank rounds. They're small improvements in the Templar's own body that help him resist shock and heal slightly faster than usual.

Rewards are measured in levels from 1 to 5 (they don't go any higher). The higher the level, the more powerful and beneficial the reward.

A beginning Templar receives 5 levels divided between *lay on hands* and any one other reward.

Gaining & Improving Rewards

A new reward can be bought at level 1 for 5 Bounty Points. This takes the Templar a full day of meditation.

Improving a reward costs double the new level and requires a like number of hours in meditation. Thus, raising *lay on hands* from level 1 to 2 costs 4 Bounty Points and requires four hours of meditation. As with Traits and Aptitudes, only 1 level in a power can be raised between game sessions, no matter how many Bounty Points the hero might have.

Greater Rewards

After a Templar reaches level 5 in a particular reward, there is one extra perk to be gained: the greater reward.

Greater rewards are obtained by completing noble and important quests. Your Templar may automatically choose a greater reward for any power he has at level 5 when he or his posse receives a Legend Chip. There is no Bounty Point cost for this reward.

The powers on the following pages all list their greater rewards. When one is granted, the Marshal must figure out exactly how the new blessing manifests itself—no bathing in golden rays of light. Greater rewards usually manifest in subtle and humble ways, such as a dream, a

Rewards & Relics

sudden revelation, or—as in the case of *beast friend*—a critter that suddenly shows up and takes a liking to your hero.

Armor of the Saints

The Saints look after their own.

Each level in *armor of the Saints* reduces any damage the Templar takes by a like amount. At level 5, for instance, 23 points of damage is reduced by 5, to 18 points of damage.

Greater Reward: The Templar gains 1 point of real, honest-to-God armor. If the hero also wears any other type of armor, it adds to it. A Templar in a Kevlar jacket, for example, has an Armor level of 3: 2 for the jacket and 1 for his Greater Reward. And yes, he still also subtracts -5 (-1 for each level in *armor of the Saints*) from whatever damage manages to get through.

Beast Friend

The Wasted West is a fearful place for critters as well as people. Templars with this gift seem to have as comforting an effect on animals as they do on people.

A Templar with this reward gains +1 per power level to all *ridin'*, *teamster*, and *medicine: veterinary* rolls.

Greater Reward: the Templar can “bond” himself to a particular creature. The animal isn’t supernatural, though it does become a little smarter than the average dog, horse, bear, hawk, or whatever once bonded. The animal can understand simple commands from the Templar and obeys as best it can.

The statistics for several common animals can be found in Chapter 17 of the *Hell on Earth* rulebook. The Templar can choose the type of beast to bond himself to, and can wait until he finds that particular creature before declaring his bond.

Celerity

By clearing their thoughts of distractions and exercising their incredible wills, Templars can increase their effectiveness in stressful situations, such as combat. Each level in *celerity* allows a Templar to discard one Action Card and draw another in its place. Jokers may not be discarded, but any other card, high or low, may be.

Greater Reward: The Templar gains one additional Action Card in combat. This allows him to have 1 more than the usual maximum of 5 cards in a single round.



Rewards & Relics



Command

Templars are stern taskmasters. When one says jump, most folks do it. *Command* doesn't turn a person into the Templar's puppet, but it can make a scavvie drop his gun or a mutie run for the hills.

Each level of *command* adds +1 to the Templar's *leadership*, *overawe*, and *persuasion* rolls.

Greater Reward: The Templar gains temporary but powerful control over a single individual. He can issue a single simple command as an action by making an opposed roll of his *faith* versus any human target's *Spirit*. This reward has no effect on creatures without a human spirit (so walkin' dead are immune, but Harrowed are not!). If the Templar succeeds, the target loses an action. With a raise, the victim must carry out a single, short instruction.

Victims of the *command* can still refuse to do anything to directly injure themselves, but they can be made to harm others, including their close companions. In rare cases, such as *commanding* a victim to harm a loved one, the target gets a second chance to resist.

Deadeye

The only thing better than a hail of bullets is a hail of well-aimed bullets. *Deadeye* helps, but only at a distance.

Each level of *deadeye* negates 1 point of range penalty when firing a gun, crossbow, missile launcher or other ranged weapon. Note that this doesn't actually add to his total, it just negates the penalty for the Range Increment. That means the minimum TN to hit something (before counting other factors) is still a 5.

Greater Reward: The Templar gains the ability to pull off trick shots. By spending a single action drawing a bead, he can then use his next action to take a bizarre shot, such as ricocheting a round off a rock around a corner, using a mirror to hit someone behind him, and so on. The Templar still can't make a shot that's actually impossible, but he can make one that is even *theoretically* possible. The base TN for the shot is Incredible (11), and it is further modified by range and other circumstances. The Templar's five levels of *deadeye* still negate the first 5 points of range penalty as usual.

Figure in all other factors when determining the final TN. To hit someone around a corner, for instance, add the -6 modifier for hitting a hidden opponent.

Deflection

Templars very often come up against practitioners of the black arts and monsters hurling arcane bolts of energy. *Deflection* allows post-Apocalyptic knights to sometimes hurl those deadly magicks back at their casters.

Deflecting an attack requires two things. First, the Templar must discard an action card as a "vamoose." Then he makes a *faith* roll versus the opponent's "casting" roll result (be it *faith*, *blasting*, or whatever), with a +1 for each level of *deflection*. If the creature doesn't make a roll to cast its spell, it makes a *Spirit* roll instead.

If successful, the spell affects the caster in whatever manner it would have affected the Templar. This can get pretty tricky with really bizarre spells, so the Marshal might have to do some fast-thinking. Note that this applies only to spells cast directly at the Templar. A fireball cast at the ground at his feet wouldn't count, but if it was aimed at him, it would.

Greater Reward: The Templar can deflect any spell he sees, whether it is cast at him or another. The procedure remains the same. The only catch is that the Templar must somehow know the spell was cast.

Endurance

Many times through the years, a young Templar has come to Simon privately and told him of her sorrows and travails. Sometimes bearing the load of the world on one's shoulders can wear down even the hardened knights of the order. On these occasions, the Grand Master has listened sympathetically, patted the despairing Templar on the back, and comforted her with a single word: "Endure."

This is easier said than done, of course. There is little anyone can do to relieve the mental woes of being the world's judge and jury, but the saints have at least granted some post-Apocalyptic knights the gift of physical stamina. Each level in *endurance* adds +1 to the Templar's Wind.

Greater Reward: The Templar's *Vigor* raises a die type permanently.

Fury of the Saints

The heroes the Templars revere as Saints were those gallant souls who fought the horrors of the Reckoning—and died. Of course, most of those heroes were mean sons-of-bitches, so being killed just pissed them off. This reward allows them to give a little back to the unholy horrors that put them six feet under.

Rewards & Relics

Fury of the saints allows the Templar to reroll a damage total. Say he rolls STR+2d8 and gets a 5 on his *Strength* total and 3 on his sword damage. Not so hot. So he uses *fury of the saints* and rolls over. This time he gets a 12 on his *Strength* total and a 12 on his sword damage.

The power's level determines the number of times per day the character can use this ability. If he has 2 levels in *fury of the saints*, he can discard and reroll his damage no more than twice every 24 hours.

Greater Reward: The Templar gains one additional die of damage whenever he uses his primary hand weapon (the one blessed by Simon). If his sword normally causes 2d8 damage, it now causes 3d8.

Note that it is not the sword that is blessed by the saints, it is the Templar. So another character wielding the weapon would not receive the bonus.

Gallantry

The horrors of the Wasted West are many, and no one sees more of these abominations than the Templars. To help them cope with these horrors, they draw on the courage of the saints. *Gallantry* adds +1 per level to the hero's *guts* totals.

Greater Reward: When the Templar is negatively affected by fear, he has a momentary vision of some event from the lives of the saints. The vision shows the saint in one of his worst predicaments, scared witless, but somehow managing to persevere despite his terror. The message is very clear: "If you're not afraid, you're a fool. But you may still survive if you keep your head."

Such a vision occurs whenever the hero suffers from the effects of fear. If he fails a roll, and then suffers for it by being forced to run, endure a negative modifier, suffer a heart attack, or any other result of fear, whether from the **Scart Table** or some specific result caused by a weird creature or power, he can make a second *guts* check immediately. The only catch is that there are no *gallantry* bonuses to the roll this time. He'll have to do it on his own.

Guardian Angel

Though they are now spirits, the saints remember all too well the frailties of human flesh. *Armor of the saints* is a wonderful way to reduce the damage the forces of evil inflict on the saints' avatars, but it's better if the mortal hero isn't harmed in the first place. These



guardian angels cannot protect their servants from all harm, but they can "tweak" Fate a bit and reduce the number of lucky and random hits directed at their Templar champions.

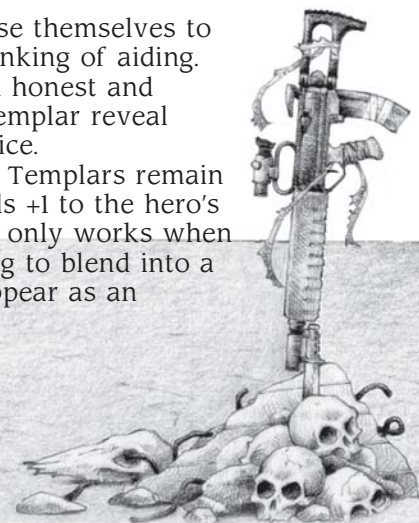
Each level in *guardian angel* subtracts one from an opponent's attack roll, whether it be *fightin'*, *shootin'*, or *throwin'*. It does nothing to protect against attacks that aren't specifically directed at the Templar, such as explosives.

Greater Reward: The Templar can cancel Fate Chips spent to increase an attack (or damage if the villain has that ability) that directly targets him. He does so simply by spending a like number of Fate Chips.


Guise

Templars often disguise themselves to watch those they are thinking of aiding. Only if those folks seem honest and compassionate does a Templar reveal herself and provide service.

This reward helps the Templars remain incognito. Each level adds +1 to the hero's *disguise* skill. The bonus only works when the Templar is attempting to blend into a crowd or, more often, appear as an



Rewards & Relics



afflicted beggar or mutant. *Guise* never helps a Templar pretend to be a specific person. It could be used to look like just another bandit in a large gang of road warriors, but not to slip into one of Throckmorton's 20-man patrols because they all know each other.

Greater Reward: The Templar's *guise* actually becomes an illusionary ability he can adapt at will (Speed 1). This may be used to impersonate particular targets. No props, clothes, makeup or other "special effects" are required. His bonus to *disguise* is still +5 (+1 for each level he now has in *guise*), but most folks don't even attempt to *scrutinize* the Templar unless they have good reason to.

Inner Strength

The power of righteousness lends great strength.

—Simon Mercer, 2088

Simon's words must be true. Each level of *inner strength* adds +1 to the Templar's *Strength* rolls, including those made to cause damage.

Greater Reward: The Templar's *Strength* actually raises a step permanently. Remember that if your hero already has a d12 in *Strength*, one additional step raises it to d12+2.

Persuader

The saints do not grant Templars the ability to tell truth from lies. They do help them notice tell-tale signs humans subconsciously give when they lie, however. Deceivers' eyes may dilate unnaturally, they may glance away as they weave their false tale, or they may have some characteristic "tell" when they deliberately bluff or mislead.

Persuader gives a Templar +1 per level to his *scrutinize* roll. The power only works when the knight can see the subject's features. Generally, he has to be within a few yards, close enough to see his pupils. The Marshal may allow the Templar to be a little further back if the subject has a very obvious "tell."

Greater Reward: The Templars are not always kind, benevolent heroes. They believe that the end—the total reboot of a strong and lawful society—justifies their often heavy-handed means. Many people disagree, of course—especially those who have suffered from their sometimes Gestapo-like tactics. No reward better

illustrates the harsh methods of the Templars than the greater reward of *persuader*.

The Templar lays his sword upon the flesh of a subject and asks a question. If the victim lies, the sword nicks the flesh and it begins to bleed so profusely that it causes one wound to the subject's guts area.

This act is subject to two conditions. First, the subject must be subdued (though not necessarily bound). It's not a reward a Templar could ever use in combat. The Templar must be able to actually rest his blade on the subject's skin and allow it to cut on its own.

Second, the victim must be told what will happen if he lies. If not, or if the victim doesn't understand the Templar, the power also fails.

Pluck

Templars have many gifts and powers with which to battle evil. But sometimes dumb luck intervenes and causes disaster to the forces of good. The saints frown upon this sort of thing. While they cannot alter fate for their chosen warriors, they can sometimes nudge it in the right direction.

Pluck is a very special reward that grants the character a little extra luck in emergencies. In game terms, each level in this reward gives him 1 reroll per game session. Each reroll can be used to reroll any one die that would normally be rolled by the player. This doesn't add a die to a roll like white Fate Chips, it simply allows him to pick up any one die (per level) and roll it again.

The Templar can use as many rerolls as he has levels per day, and can use them all on one roll or break them up over several rolls. He may also spend them one at a time, and can even use a reroll on a reroll if he wants. Again, this doesn't *add* additional dice, it just changes the result of one or more die rolls.

Unlike Fate Chips, these rerolls may be used for *anything* the player would normally roll, or for an effect his character caused. The player could choose to reroll a die used to determine a result on a random table (if his hero caused the roll), reroll damage dice, or even a hit location result (assuming his Templar made the attack).

Greater Reward: Once per game, the Templar may affect a roll caused by someone else (as long as his character is aware of the action). Thus a Templar who just got shot in the head could force his attacker to reroll hit location. Or an evil junker could be forced to reroll a dangerous malfunction check.

Rewards & Relics

Lay on Hands

The first reward Templars learn is how to heal. Only after this ability is mastered and the Templar's *faith* and compassion are proven does Simon invest the hero with more sacred power.

To use this power, the Templar makes a *faith* roll against the TN of the victim's highest wound level, as shown on the table, adding +1 for each level in this reward.

If he makes the roll, every area on the victim improves a level. If the Templar fails the *faith* roll, the victim is not healed, and the hero cannot attempt to aid him again until 24 hours have passed. Failure when trying to heal a maimed limb means it's a permanent wound.

A Templar can use the power on any particular victim only once per day. He can also use his power on himself.

Lay on Hands

TN	Wound Level	Time
3	Wind	1 minute
5	Light	5 minutes
7	Heavy	10 minutes
9	Serious	15 minutes
11	Critical	20 minutes
13	Maimed (limbs)	30 minutes

Greater Reward: The Templar gains the ability to cure ailments too. The TN of his *faith* test depends on the severity of the toxin.

Once someone has attempted to cure an ailment by supernatural means, it can never be healed by those methods, though it may heal normally if that is possible. What we really mean is that once *lay on hands*, *touch o' the Doomsayers*, or *fleshknit* fails, those magical powers won't cure that ailment. A very special magical cure, such as a wish or the blessing of a divine being, should still work, however.

Curing

TN	Toxin
3	Colds, most nonfatal poisons
5	Common viruses
7	Most natural poisons, such as snake venom; infections
9	Radiation, chronic infections
11	"Supernatural" diseases; tummy twisters; faminitism; any plague started by Pestilence or her minions

Magic Resistance

Templars are often called upon to defeat some nefarious creature. Many of their most dangerous foes are the most intelligent, and they often use magical powers. This reward helps the knights of the Apocalypse resist such eldritch attacks.

Each level in *magic resistance* adds +1 to the character's roll if the spell has an opposed effect. If it is a damage-causing effect, the reward also subtracts 1 point per level from the damage total.

Finally, if the spell is not resisted and does not cause damage, but does directly affect the Templar, the spell-caster must subtract the hero's *magic resistance* levels from his roll.

Magic resistance does not affect spells that aren't directly targeted at the Templar. It would still soak some of the damage resulting from such an attack, however. Thus a knight would still gain armor against an explosive ball of doom aimed at the ground near his feet, but the enemy spellcaster would not have to subtract from his casting roll.

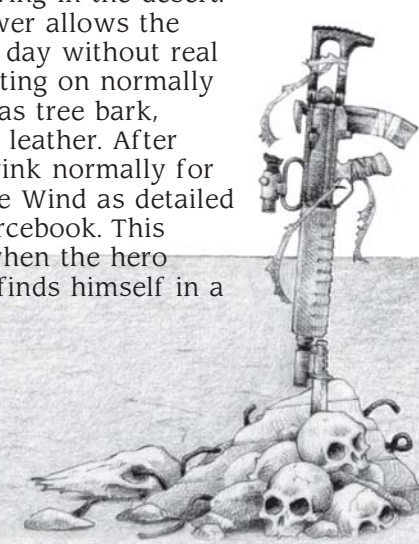
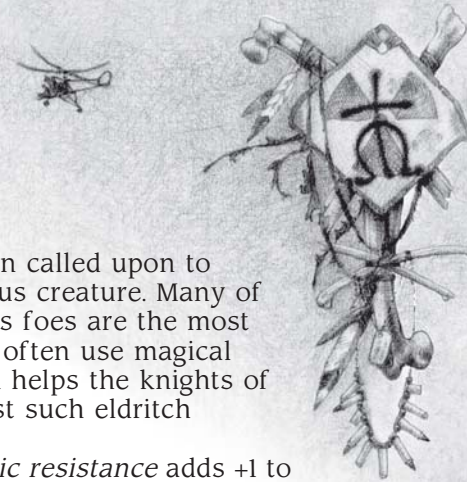
Greater Reward: The Templar can automatically redirect any spell cast in sight to affect him instead of its intended target. Some gift, huh? His friends might appreciate it.

Manna


Templars are supposed to learn how to find food and water in even the harshest conditions. Sometimes it just doesn't happen, however. The devastation of the world has killed thousands of species of game, wiped out entire species of plants, and generally made staying alive hard as Hell. Literally.

Manna protects against starvation and dehydration. It's not a reward many Templars rush to get—everyone wants more strength to kill things with—but they often wind up wishing they'd paid more attention to basic survival skills when they're starving in the desert.

Each level in this power allows the Templar to go an entire day without real food or water by subsisting on normally inedible materials such as tree bark, grass, or even scraps of leather. After that, he must eat and drink normally for at least two days or lose Wind as detailed in the *Wasted West* sourcebook. This reward is right handy when the hero needs to travel light or finds himself in a devastated wasteland.



Rewards & Relics



Greater Reward: The Templar can eat anything he can chew, and it provides complete nutritional value. He is completely immune to poisons or diseases transferred by ingestion. He can be affected by poisons that are injected or transmitted by bites, claws, dart guns, and so forth. Think of the hero's stomach as a filter. If it passes through there, it's harmless. Otherwise the poison affects him normally. One last perk. Templars with this reward are completely immune to the effects of faminites, hunger spirits, and creatures which kill by causing intense hunger or famine.

Purity

The world is filled with irradiated horrors and the strange energy that made them. The Cult of Doom embraces and even worships this power, but most survivors avoid its mutating caress. The saints must feel the same, because *purity* helps their avatars avoid this energy.

Whenever the Templar is subjected to harmful radiation, his *purity* level adds to his resistance roll. This adds to opposed rolls, and also acts as "light armor" against harmful radiation damage (including most Doomsayer spells). A Templar who is also *rad-tolerant* is a deadly weapon against the vile minions of the Cult of Doom.

Greater Reward: If the Templar ever suffers a random mutation, he can draw an additional card and choose which one affects him.

Scavenger

The knights of the Apocalypse find themselves in all kinds of strange situations. To save a village, they may have to find a generator one day, a cache of arms the next, or a replacement firing pin for the town's heavy machine gun the next. Fortunately, the Saints seem to smile on those who wear the tabard.

Each level in *scavenger* adds +1 to the Templar's *scroungin'* rolls.

Greater Reward: The Templar can find just about anything. It might take him a while, but if he searches hard enough, he can probably find a working hover tank, a rocket launcher, or even a Tickle-me-Elmo.

These items aren't "manufactured" by the saints, they just lead their vassals to the location of the needed device through signs and clues. The Marshal should set a simple TN for mundane or relatively common items. Finding more exotic items should be a quest in itself.

Say a Templar needs to find the wreckage of Air Force One. He doesn't just start walking toward the Rockies, or even get a vision of the jet's final resting place. Instead, he asks around, listens to rumors, and conducts research. While doing so, he just happens to run into a former air traffic controller who knows how to access the old radar records at the Cheyenne International Airport. Armed with a general location, he heads into the mountains and runs into some veteran mountain men. They give him more clues, and eventually he gets close enough that he sees something glint on a high mountainside. He whips out his binoculars and sure enough, finds the wreckage.

Sixth Sense

The men and women of Simon's order work long and hard to become Templars. Then they strive day after day to heal the world and expunge the evils that eat away at it like cancer. When these dark forces do not play fair, by attacking from ambush or sniping a dedicated hero from a distance, the saints sometimes provide a supernatural warning.

Whenever the Templar is about to be adversely affected by a situation he does not know about, such as when he's about to enter an ambush, eat poisoned food, or get shot at by a sniper, the Marshal should secretly make a *Cognition* roll against a TN of Incredible (11). Add +1 to this roll for each level the Templar has in this reward. If successful, the knight feels a tingle at the back of his neck. Against an attack, it means he gets to make a *dodge* or simply avoid surprise in the first round of an ambush. With a poisoned dish, booby-trapped vehicle, or other situational circumstance, the character must determine what he does with his warning.

Greater Reward: The Templar is so in tune with his danger sense that he can actually anticipate more immediate threats. He may add +4 to his Defensive Bonus and *dodge* rolls. The hero may also add this bonus to any other "defensive" skill roll or other total where his anticipation might help him (Marshal's call).

Speed

They say speed kills. Maybe "they" saw a Templar with this reward.

Speed makes the Templar move faster. That's handy when he's out of ammo and some brainer's going for his gat. Then the Templar has to close the distance quickly and get to hacking with his sword.

Rewards & Relics

Each level of *speed* adds +1 to the Templar's basic Pace. If a knight has a *Nimbleness* of 8 and 3 levels of *speed*, his Pace is 11. If he runs, he can move up to double that total as usual; 22 in this case. That's fast, friends.

Greater Reward: The Templar can "bolt." If he chooses, he can divide his Pace over his actions however he wants. He may even use all of his Pace on a single action if he likes. That can make him drastically faster than the other brainers around him if you (the player) take proper advantage of it.

Of course, this reward only benefits you when the Marshal is detailing the combat and sticking to the exact movement rules (which he may not always want or need to do).

Here's an example of how it can benefit you when these occasions do arise. A Templar with a Pace of 6 and 3 actions in a particular round would normally move 2, 2, and 2 at a walk, or 4, 4, and 4 at a run (double his Pace). A Templar with the same Pace, 5 levels of *speed* and its greater reward has a total Pace of 11. He could walk all 11 yards on his first action. Or run 22 yards on the first action. Or run 21 yards on the first action and 1 on any other action. Got it?

Survivor

Templars are hard to kill. This reward proves it. Immediately after a Templar dies, he draws a number of cards equal to his level in this power, plus another for every point of Grit.

If no Joker is drawn, the character dies.

If a red Joker comes up, the Templar clings to life. Maybe he lies in the desert for hours or days before a friendly band of nomads finds him. Maybe he drags himself into an old cave and lays in delirium for a week. Perhaps a seemingly terminal fall deposits him in a snowdrift. Whatever the case, he hangs on to life by the slimmest thread until help finally manages to arrive.

A black Joker means he's coming back from the Great Beyond in a different way. Marshal, this reward replaces the usual Harrowed draw. Don't do it twice.

Greater Reward: Even after a Templar takes a maiming wound to the head or guts, he can keep fighting as long as he makes an Incredible (11) *Vigor* roll on his first action of each round. Afterward, he drops to the ground like any other brainer and draws as described above.



Rewards & Relics

Templar Rewards

Reward	Description	Greater Reward
Armor of the Saints	Reduces damage by the number of levels in this power.	Adds 1 point of Armor.
Beast Friend	Adds +1 to <i>ridin', teamster,</i> and <i>medicine: vetrinary</i> rolls per level.	The Templar can bond himself with an animal.
Celerity	For each level, the hero can discard an Action Card and draw a fresh one.	The Templar gets +1 Action Card every turn.
Command	Each level adds +1 to the hero's <i>leadership, overawe,</i> and <i>persuasion</i> rolls.	The Templar gains temporary control over an individual.
Deadeye	Negates 1 point of range penalty for each level.	The Templar can pull off "impossible" shots.
Deflection	Deflects magical attacks cast at the Templar back at the caster.	Deflects any visible magic back at the caster.
Endurance	Adds +1 to the Templar's Wind for each level.	Adds +1 step to the Templar's <i>Vigor</i> .
Fury of the Saints	The Templar can reroll one damage result per day for each level.	Adds +1 die to the damage of the Templar's primary weapon.
Gallantry	Adds +1 to the Templar's <i>guts</i> die rolls for each level.	Allows a second <i>guts</i> check to avoid running from previous <i>guts</i> check result.
Guardian Angel	Subtracts -1 from an opponent's attack roll for each level.	The Templar can cancel opponents' fate chips with his own.
Guise	Adds +1 to the Templar's <i>disguise</i> for each level.	The disguise becomes an illusion.
Inner Strength	Adds +1 to the hero's <i>Strength</i> die rolls.	Adds +1 step to the Templar's <i>Strength</i> .
Lay on Hands	The hero can heal self and others.	He can cure ailments, too.
Persuader	Adds +1 to the Templar's <i>scrutinize</i> die rolls for each level.	The hero can use his sword as a lie detector.
Pluck	Lets the hero reroll one of his dice per game session for each level.	Lets the Templar reroll <i>any</i> one die each game session.
Magic Resistance	Adds +1 to rolls to oppose the effects of magic for each level.	The Templar can deflect any spell to affect him.
Manna	The hero can survive one day without food and water for each level.	The character can eat anything, and is immune to poisons or taints in food.
Purity	Adds +1 to resist radiation effects, subtracts -1 from radiation damage for each level.	The Templar draws two cards for random mutations, and takes the best one.
Scavenger	Adds +1 to the Templar's <i>scroungin'</i> die rolls for each level.	The hero can find anything... eventually.
Sixth Sense	Gives the Templar some warning when in immediate danger.	Adds +4 to defensive rolls.
Speed	Adds +1 to the Templar's Pace for each level.	The Templar can divide his Pace up however he wants between Action Cards.
Survivor	Helps the hero hang on to life.	Allows the hero to fight on, even when mortally wounded.

No Man's Land



Martyrs





Chapter Four: Martyrs



The power of the Templars comes from those heroes who died fighting the Reckoners. That's the source of the Templars' miraculous gifts. Some of the "saints," as the Templars call such fallen warriors, take an even more active role. These long-dead heroes are the Martyrs.

The Theology of the Martyrs

The saints *are* real—or at least the powers they grant are. A few skeptics say they may not be the actual spirits of those who have gone before, but instead are manifestations of some greater force of good. They take the shape of saints because that is the way Simon has envisioned them.

Both Jo, Aaron McConnell, and the Librarian Biletnikoff believe Simon is correct. If not, the Martyrs would have originated with Simon instead of being culled from the minds of others. They believe Ronan Lynch, Dorsey Gates, and the Duke really do peer down from the heavens and grant their blessings to those who follow in their footsteps.

So why do some saints become Martyrs while others do not? Who knows? The powers of good are even more mysterious than the Reckoners. Perhaps some "earned" the honor by the number of "scalps" they collected in life. Or maybe they're so mean they keep on fighting the bad guys even after they've died. Twice in some cases.

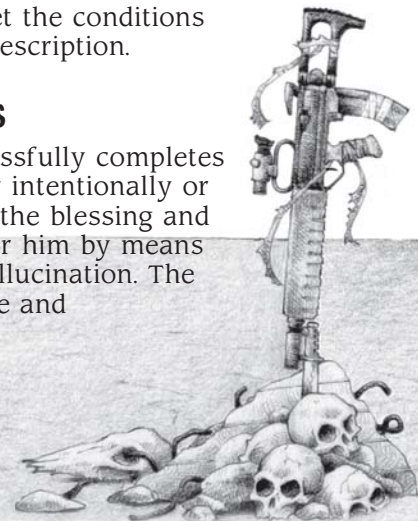
Gaining Blessings

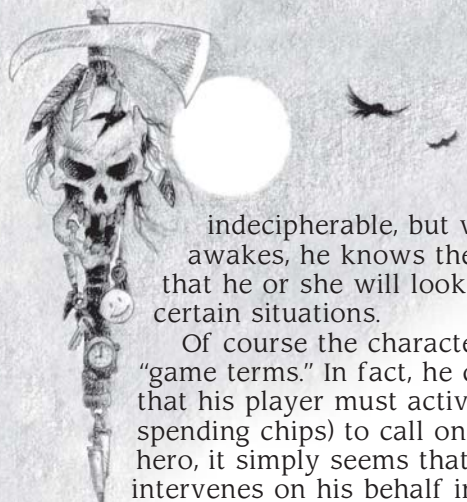
Templar characters gain the blessings of new Martyrs by performing deeds. Some of the requisite deeds are very specific, some are not. There's enough information in the first chapter for players to know what kinds of deeds their heroes must perform to garner the attention of the saints. When they believe they may have performed an appropriate deed, the Marshal should check the **Deeds** section of each Martyr's description. If the Templar has met those conditions, she gains the Martyr's blessing. That's all there is to it. The character doesn't have to spend Bounty Points or perform any rituals—completion of the deed is good enough.

Some of the deeds are very specific, such as killing a wendigo. Biletnikoff and the Templars have an easy time figuring those ones out. Most of the Martyrs' deeds are much more subjective, however. The Marshal must decide whether or not a Templar has met the conditions listed under the saint's description.

Visions

Once a Templar successfully completes a Martyr's deed (whether intentionally or by chance), he learns of the blessing and what the saint can do for him by means of a dream, vision, or hallucination. The dream itself seems vague and





Martyrs

indecipherable, but when the Templar awakes, he knows the saint's name and that he or she will look out for him in certain situations.

Of course the character doesn't think in "game terms." In fact, he doesn't even know that his player must actively call on fate (by spending chips) to call on the saint. To the hero, it simply seems that the Martyr intervenes on his behalf in certain situations.

The Marshal's Role

Marshal, once the character gains the blessing, go ahead and let the player read the Martyr's description in this chapter.

If a player wants his character to start the game with a particular saint by means of the *blessed* Edge, you could let him read this chapter. But we recommend that you preserve the mystery of the saints for a while by only letting him read the information in the **Book of Martyrs** and choose his Templar's blessing based on what he reads there.

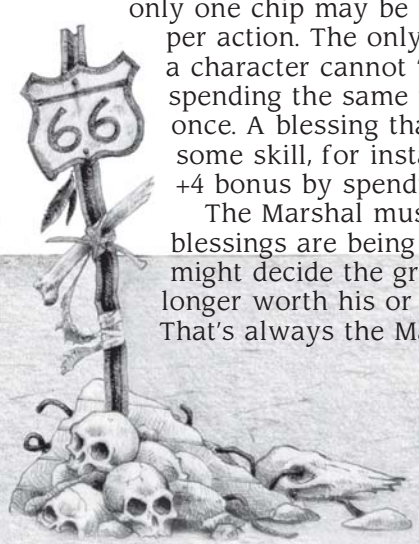
Remember, the people in your group who play Templars don't know anything about the Martyrs until you introduce this book to your game. We recommend you take that opportunity to put a little mystery and theology into the campaign for a while. When the saints have become "old news" and everyone knows how they work and what most of them do, feel free to let players read this whole chapter before they choose.

Blessings

Once a Templar has captured the Martyr's attention, he may call on him or her for divine assistance on occasion. He does this simply by spending a Fate Chip. A white chip has a small effect, red chips are more dramatic, and so on. Using a Legend chip has a very dramatic and obviously supernatural effect.

Calling on a saint is a simple task, though only one chip may be spent to call on a saint per action. The only other restriction is that a character cannot "stack" effects by spending the same type of chip more than once. A blessing that adds a +2 bonus to some skill, for instance, could not grant a +4 bonus by spending 2 chips.

The Marshal must decide if the Martyr's blessings are being abused. If so, the spirit might decide the greedy character is no longer worth his or her divine attention. That's always the Marshal's call.



Creating New Martyrs

We've come up with a handful of saints who gave their lives fighting the Reckoners. You can create your own Martyrs as well. We'll tell you how right now.

Martyrs from the Weird West

One of the coolest things about the world of *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* is that it has a real history. Those of you who have been with us from the beginning know that many of the story elements introduced in *Deadlands: the Weird West* were eventually wrapped up here in 2094. Many of the saints we introduce in this chapter came from the stories we've told of the Weird West. Ronan Lynch, for example, is the main character of our *Deadlands: the Weird West Dime Novels* (just like Teller is the hero of our *Deadlands: Hell on Earth Dime Novels*).

Both the players and the Marshal can use the Weird West background to come up with new saints. We didn't talk about Velvet Van Helter, Ronan's hex-slinging companion, but you could! Even better, if your group actually played in the Weird West, you could immortalize one of your fallen heroes as a saint. That's a great way to pay tribute to both your character's efforts, and your efforts as a player.

Other Martyrs

Other Martyrs come from almost any walk of life. Most of them tend to be policeman, soldiers, or other "fighters" who have reason to combat the horrors lurking at the edges of society. That isn't always the case, however. Many ordinary people have come into contact with the supernatural terrors of the Reckoners. Clara Clark, for instance, was a nurse whose ability to heal dragged her into conflict with the forces of darkness (see her entry in the **Book of Martyrs** for the whole story).

The only real qualifications are that the saint battled evil on several occasions and had a significant impact on fear in his or her area. The saint must also be dead, of course.

Blessings

We've given you the specific blessings of the Martyrs we've created, but how do you figure out what a saint you've created can do? The easiest way is to start by writing down the story of the character. Take Jenna Dean, for

Martyrs

example. It wouldn't make much sense to just say Jenna was a hero from the Weird West, and her rewards protect Templars from starvation, gives them the power of a wendigo, and allows them to call on a ghostly she-wolf for help. If we told you that, you'd just say "Huh?" But once you know her whole story—that she was "baptized" as a heroine after battling a wendigo alongside a pack of seemingly intelligent and perhaps supernatural wolves—her blessings make sense.

Both the Marshal and the players are encouraged to create their own Martyrs and detail the blessings they give for each type of chip spent. Of course, the Marshal's word is law, so if she thinks the blessings are too powerful (or not powerful enough!), she should change them as she sees fit.

Falling from Grace

Much has been made of the anti-Templars and the fact that Simon cannot repeal their rewards once gained. That is not the case with Martyr's blessings. Perhaps the Martyrs are more active than the vast body of saints that provide the Templars with their powers. Or perhaps the Martyrs just operate by a different set of "cosmic rules" than the host of less-active saints.

In any case, the Martyrs have a much more direct role in blessing their followers. Those who live life by their rules retain their rewards. Those who stray from the path are often forsaken.

It is even possible for a hero to be forsaken by a Martyr while fulfilling his duty as a Templar. The spirit of Major Rex Stern might not care that a knight turns his back on a settlement he doesn't feel is worthy, but Clara Clark might forsake a hero that she feels is too harsh.

Along with the description of each Martyr's blessings, you'll also find an entry called *vexations*. This tells the Marshal and the player what kinds of deeds angers the Martyr and causes him to withdraw his blessings. This is almost always a subjective decision, so the Marshal must decide how a character's Martyr reacts when the hero performs a questionable action.

Atonement

Fortunately, the Martyrs are far more concerned with continuing their fight against the Reckoners through their mortal vassals than they are about holding a grudge. They punish

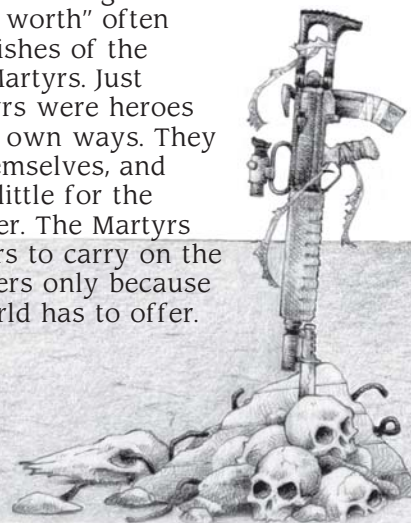


rarely and forgive easily, as long as the Templar has not truly given his heart to the forces of darkness.

When a Templar is forsaken, he can regain his Martyr's blessing by accepting the fact that he may have made a mistake. Then he must try to repair whatever damage he's caused. That doesn't necessarily mean reversing his actions. A Templar who has abandoned a town in need might gain his blessing back by at least evacuating the women and children.

If the damage cannot be repaired, the Templar must prove he's learned his lesson the next time he's confronted with that situation.

This is all very subjective stuff, and it's not entirely fair. The Templars' strange code of ethics and their "tests of worth" often directly contradict the wishes of the meddling but powerful Martyrs. Just remember that the Martyrs were heroes and they did things their own ways. They were never Templars themselves, and some of them care very little for the selfish nature of the order. The Martyrs have chosen the Templars to carry on the fight against the Reckoners only because they are the best the world has to offer.



Martyrs

The Martyrs

What follows is a list of all the Martyrs mentioned in Biletnikoff's **Book of Martyrs**. The story is detailed there; all you'll find here are the specific *deeds* a Templar must perform to gain the saint's attention, and a description of what the various Fate Chips do when spent to call on a Martyr.

Vexations are the kinds of actions that might cause a Martyr to withdraw his blessings. All the Martyrs forsake characters who truly turn to evil. A few are also bothered by actions that Simon and the Templars might approve of.

Katy Blaze, Saint of Confidence

This rich adventurer was truly as amazing as her self-promoting movies, television shows, and novels made her out to be. A Templar visited by Saint Blaze is treated to the many exciting episodes of her life.

Deed: The character must successfully reduce the fear level of an area through *tale-tellin'*. In his story, the Templar must also be the "star" of the tale, and it must be essentially true. A little dramatic embellishment is okay though.

White: The hero gains +4 to a single *tale-tellin'* roll. The chip can be spent after the total is otherwise determined.

Red: With a few minutes of preparation and some appropriate "rips" in her outfit, the character becomes incredibly sexy and irresistible to the opposite sex. This gives her +4 to *persuasion* and other appropriate rolls for her *faith* in minutes.

Blue: The hero becomes preternaturally sexy, and even gains a limited "charm" ability for her *faith* in minutes. This is just like spending a red chip except that if the victim loses an opposed *persuasion* roll, he will do almost *anything* the Templar asks. A guard won't kill himself or a loved one, but he would shoot a close friend, wound himself, keep quiet while a Templar walks past his station, or otherwise do whatever he's told to win the Templar's affections.

Legend: With a Legend Chip and a successful *persuasion* roll versus an opponent's *Smarts*, the victim becomes a complete and total slave for the Templar's *faith* in minutes. The slave will do anything during this time, including take his own life. He should get another roll if ordered to slay a loved one, however.

Vexations: Katy Blaze instantly withdraws her blessing from any Templar who defeats a major threat (a fearmonger) and does *not* attempt to reduce the fear level by spreading the news. The Martyr allows only a few days for the Templar to start preaching before she forsakes her.

Clara Clark, Saint of Mercy

Clara truly was a selfless soul. Of all the Martyrs, she is the least fond of the Templars' methods. To true healers, however, she is a Godsend who allows them to become a virtual one-man hospital.

Deed: Gaining Saint Clark's blessing is actually very easy—keeping it is much more difficult, as you'll see under **Vexations**, below.

To gain the Martyr's blessing, a hero simply needs to use *lay on hands* to heal a critical or maiming wound, getting 2 raises on the roll.

White: The Templar adds +4 to his *lay on hands faith* roll. This chip may be spent after the *faith* roll.

Red: The Templar gains +4 to his *medicine* and *lay on hands* totals for his *faith* in hours.

Blue: The Templar may use his ability to *lay on hands* on someone he's already used it on that day, including himself. He may heal that person again and again just by spending additional blue chips.

Legend: The Templar can resurrect the dead. The deceased must not have been dead for more than the Templar's *faith* in hours. The body must be in reasonably good shape. Parts that were incinerated, disintegrated, or completely destroyed cannot be restored. If such areas include vital organs, there is no hope for the character. The resurrected character arises one hour after the Templar spends the Legend chip. She is heavily wounded and must heal naturally. No amount of supernatural healing (except that of an even higher power) can eliminate this damage.

Strangely, if used on a Harrowed, the character gets an immediate chance to regain Dominion. This power cannot resurrect a Harrowed, however.

Vexations: Clara remits her blessings for Templars who too often turn their back on those who need help. This is the Marshal's call. She also withdraws her aid from any hero who is asked for medical aid and does not grant it regardless of whether that person is friend or foe. Killing a prisoner or other helpless person also causes Clara to forsake the Templar.

Martyrs

Jenna Dean, Saint of Winter

Any Templar who frequently travels the Northwest will find this Martyr a true lifesaver, especially if he finds himself fighting the incredible winter war raging between the wendigos and the human enclaves of the Cascades. In that conflict, Aaron McConnell (Saint Dean's first vassal) and one other have proven the Saint of Winter's blessing is more valuable than an army of veterans.

Deed: A Templar may gain the attention of this saint by slaying any type of wendigo.

White: The character is immune to the damage or ill effects of hunger or hunger-based attacks for 24 hours. He reduces the damage of cold or cold-based attacks by half.

Red: The Templar is immune to all damage or ill effects caused by starvation or exposure from cold for his *faith* in days. He is immune to all damage from supernatural cold-based attacks for his *faith* in minutes.

Blue: The follower of saint Dean gains the fury of the wendigo. His *Strength* and *Vigor* rise 4 steps, he doubles his current Wind, and he may ignore all wound modifiers. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Templar's *faith*. This power doesn't turn the Templar into an unthinking "berserker." It simply grants to him the raw strength and power of the supernatural wendigo.

Some types of wendigos are immune to normal damage. Spending a blue chip also allows a Templar to harm a particular wendigo with his hands, or with any hand-weapon (no ranged attacks), for his *faith* in days.

Legend: Calling on the saints and spending a Legend Chip brings the spirit of Jenna's she-wolf into being. Templars call this mystical and beneficial creature the "winter wolf."

The winter wolf is similar in stats to a regular wolf (see the main rulebook), although she is in effect a magical creature, and therefore able to damage abominations (such as wendigos) that can normally only be harmed by magical weapons. Though the winter wolf is a very intelligent spirit, she is still an animal spirit. Don't expect to call on her to defuse a bomb. She might be able to carry a bomb away, however. And she loves to rip the Hell out of wendigos.

Vexations: Jenna withdraws her blessing from anyone who kills a wolf, even for food or to kill off packs that might be harassing nearby survivor settlements. Only direct self-defense is an adequate excuse to her.

Dorsey Gates, Saint of Underdogs

Detective Dorsey Gates was a true hero. In a city of darkness, he was one of the few to shine a light and prove that humanity had a chance against the Reckoners.

Deed: Dorsey blesses those who perform either one of two deeds. The first deed is the slaying of 13 nosferatu, as he did to begin his journey into the occult. The second method is entirely subjective and must be judged by the Marshal. A Templar who helps others who have been refused help from everyone else, including the local authorities or protectors, may find himself visited by the spirit of Dorsey Gates. The situation must be truly desperate, and the lack of aid truly unjust. If the sheriff doesn't help someone because he was busy helping others, the victims' plight is not unjust, it's just unfortunate.

White: The Templar can tell if a particular character within his *faith* in yards is undead.

Red: The hero can spend 6 "points" worth of chips (6 white, 3 red, 2 blue, or any combination), plus the red chip that evoked this power, as if they were a Legend chip. This can only be done once per game session, however.

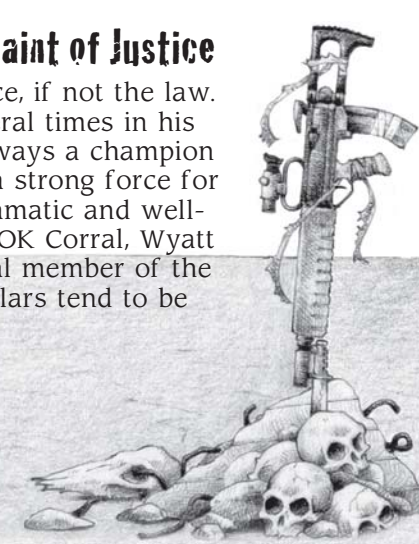
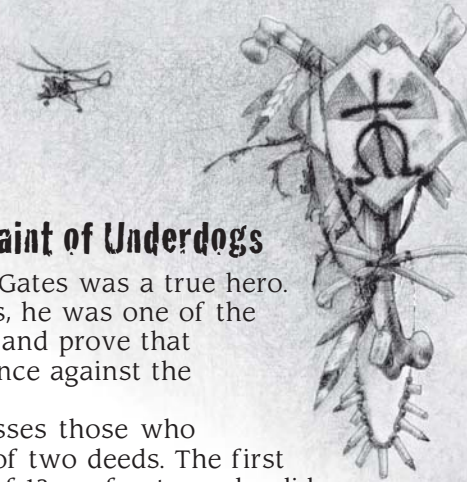
Blue: Mindless undead (such as walkin' dead) cannot cause direct harm to the hero for his *faith* in rounds. Soulless undead may make opposed *faith* rolls to cause the Templar harm.

Legend: Whenever the Templar is the underdog, usually by being outmatched or outnumbered, a Legend chip allows him to add up to +/-10 to *all* dice totals the player makes for 1 entire round. This modifier may affect Trait or Aptitude checks, damage, or even rolls on special tables. The only qualification is that the roll is one directly caused by the Templar, or is a roll normally made by the player.

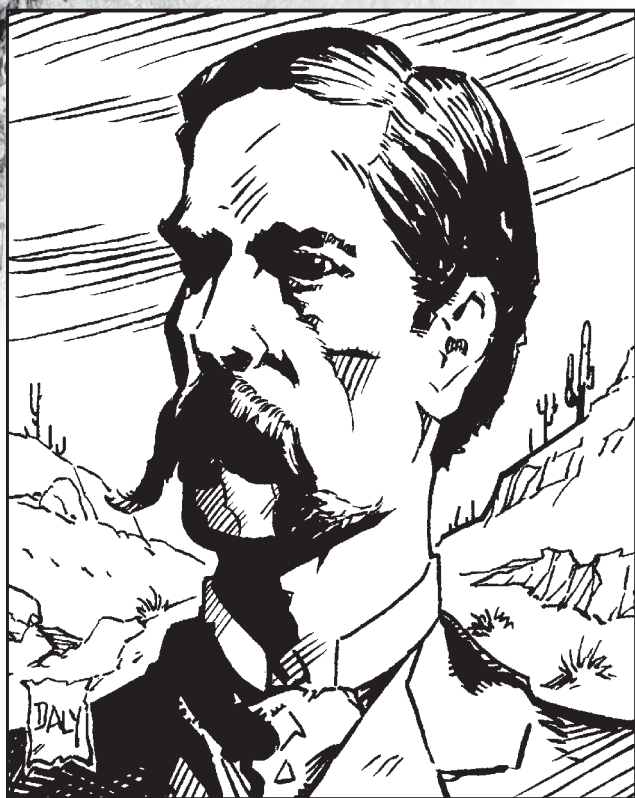
Vexation: Dorsey is quick to forsake Templars who abuse their station or fail to protect the weak.

Wyatt Earp, Saint of Justice

Wyatt stood for justice, if not the law. He broke the latter several times in his long life, but he was always a champion of justice. He was also a strong force for vengeance. After his dramatic and well-known shootout at the OK Corral, Wyatt hunted down every local member of the Cowboy gang. His Templars tend to be *vengeful* as well.



Martyrs



Deed: Wyatt blesses Templars who bring justice to the wastes. Just as he wiped out the Cowboy gang, a Templar who eliminates a similar threat to a survivor settlement might find himself visited by the ghost of Wyatt Earp. There are a few conditions, however. Number one, the Templar must first try to solve the problem without killing anyone. Wyatt was quick to “buffalo” his foes with the butt of his pistol, but amazingly, he never killed a man until the infamous shootout at the OK Corral. If the Templar simply wipes out the local trouble without attempting to bring them to justice, Earp will not share his divine aid.

Earp is a little faster in blessing Templars who are *vengeful* or follow the *Law o’ the West Hindrances*. A hero with both these Hindrances should gain Earp’s blessing after a victorious encounter with just about any type of gang, such as raiders or Black Hat patrols.

White: The Templar gets an extra action card. This can give a player more than 5 cards. This power may be invoked after cards are drawn, but may only be used once per round.

Red: While in combat, the Templar can discard his lowest action card to act twice on any other card, including a cheat card. He essentially turns the lower card into an exact duplicate of the higher card. This ability may only be used once per round.

Blue: The Templar cannot be harmed by any sort of ranged attack—even those not directly aimed at him—for one entire round. Even explosions cause only half damage (halve the total, not the dice rolled).

Legend: The Templar gets to act twice on any non-face cards he drew this round, just as if each were two separate actions.

Vexation: Strange as it may sound, Wyatt Earp was a “violent pacifist.” He only killed a handful of men, and all of them were related to the Tombstone shootout. A Templar who kills too easily is quickly forsaken. Killing wasteland scum isn’t necessarily frowned on by the order, so occasionally the ways of Saint Earp interfere with the Templars’ quest to scour the Wasted West clean of its many human jackals.

El Gato, Saint of Daredevils

El Gato was actually Emilio Rodriguez. He started his career as so many young men of the period did—looking to prove he was the fastest gun in the West. Fortunately, he realized that goal would lead to cold-blooded murder just before he reached Deadwood (where he planned on challenging Wild Bill Hickok). From that point on, he pledged his dual six-guns to the cause of righteousness. His followers learn this when the saint appears in their dreams.

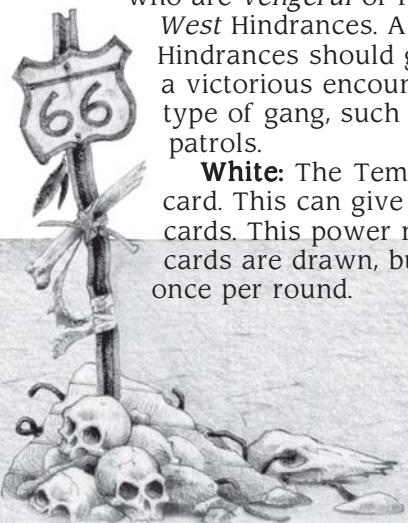
Deed: El Gato blesses a Templar who has just survived a life-threatening stunt of some sort to perform some good deed. The action must take place in the line of duty—bungee jumping for fun won’t cut it.

Ordinary dangers such as facing overwhelming odds or staring down a crowd don’t count either. The hero must perform a truly amazing and spectacular physical stunt.

White: The hero adds +4 to any Corporeal Trait or Aptitude roll. This may be added *after* the total has otherwise been determined.

Red: The Templar is granted a second chance at a risky stunt he has just failed. Reroll as if the previous roll never happened, even if it was a bust.

Blue: The Templar can discard a black Joker drawn during initiative, ignoring its effects and drawing again.



Martyrs

Legend: The daredevil raises his *Nimbleness* (and *Pace*) by 4 entire steps for a number of rounds equal to his *faith*.

Vexation: El Gato was often disparaged for being a Mexican in the Old West. If the Templar ever uses a racial slur of any kind, the Martyr's blessing is instantly revoked. He never blesses characters with racial *intolerances*.

Maggie Grimes, Saint of Stealth

Maggie was always stubborn, even before her powers manifested. Afterwards, she learned to get her way by reading people's thoughts and, later, controlling them.

Deed: Maggie appears to those who destroy some important objective with fire and explosives. The objective must be very large and very important, such as the nest of a wormling horde, a camp used by well-organized raiders, or the temple of some bizarre wasteland cult. The sabotage must be "clean" as well. If any innocents are slain in the course of the operation, Maggie turns a blind eye to the careless Templar.

White: The Templar may add +4 to his *sneakin'* totals for his *faith* in minutes.

Red: The Templar may use a one-ounce chunk of ghost rock as a grenade, imitating Maggie's syker power to *detonate* this supernatural material. Such grenades cause 4d12 damage and have a 5-yard burst increment. Larger chunks can be detonated, but only one ounce of the stuff actually explodes. The rest simply scatters and does not detonate or even ignite.

Blue: The hero may use, one time, any one of the following syker powers: arson, chameleon, detonate, pyro, shh!, silence, skinwalker, or slow burn. Check out the *Brainburners* book for descriptions of these powers. The Templar uses her *faith* instead of *blastin'*. In most cases, Strain isn't an issue for the single use of a power, but if you have to keep track of it (for an ongoing power, or if the Templar invokes this power more than once before her strain might recover), it's equal to the Templar's *Vigor* as usual, and replenishes at the normal rate.

Legend: The Templar actually becomes invisible for a number of rounds equal to her *faith*. Most attacks just miss outright, but if an antagonist has some idea where the Templar is, he may make attacks at +10 to his TN.

Vexation: Maggie was a devout Mormon. Any Templar who speaks ill of the Latter Day Saints is immediately forsaken.

Jenny Hise, Saint of Sacrifice

It is quite ironic that Jenny Hise would become one of the Templars' Martyrs. She made the ultimate sacrifice defending a town that wouldn't even open its gates to her. The townspeople stood upon their high walls and watched as she was gunned down defending their worthless hides. Her last brave but perhaps foolish act was directly responsible for the creation of the Templars.

Now Saint Hise cannot help but look down from her vaunted position in the Hunting Grounds and grimace as what she sees as a mess. She knows the salvation of the West, perhaps the world, is in the hands of the Templars, however. So she must attempt to guide them away from turning their backs on the "unworthy," and toward being the true heroes she feels the world needs to lead it by example.

Deed: Jenny Hise manifests to any Templar who knowingly and willfully violates the order's "test of worth." Anyone who defends those who may not deserve it, for good reason, is likely visited by the Martyr. The knight cannot simply turn his back on his responsibilities; he must truly believe he violated his oath for a good cause.

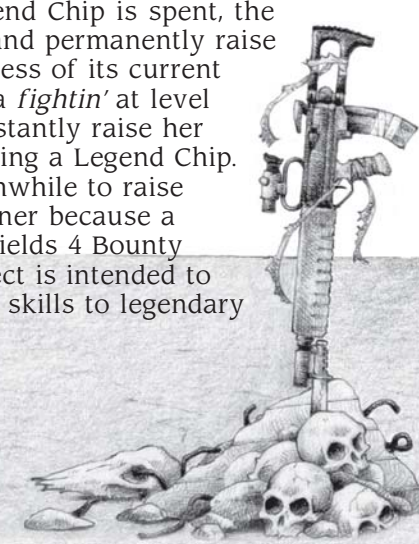
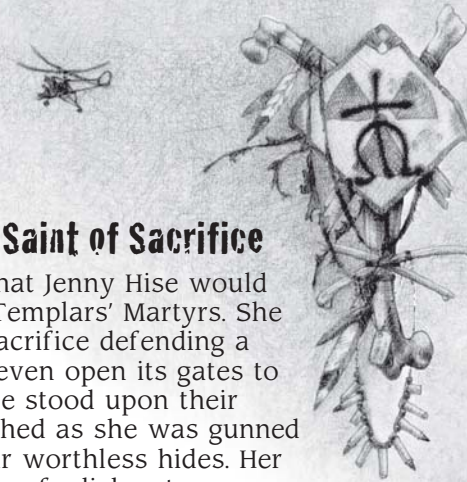
As usual, the Marshal has to determine when such an event occurs, and if it is truly worthy and painful enough to garner Saint Hise's attention.

White: The character may add +4 to any *Vigor*-based roll. This may be added *after* the total has otherwise been determined.

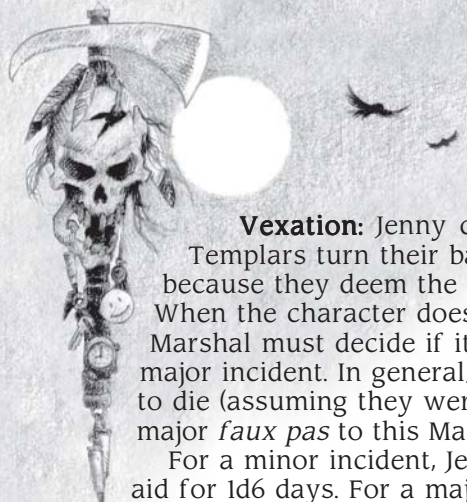
Red: Any character of the hero's choosing may draw a red chip from the pot (or you can simply hand the red chip you're spending to evoke this power to the player in question).

Blue: The follower of Saint Hise negates five wound levels, or 25 Wind, instead of the usual three that would be normally be negated with a blue chip.

Legend: When a Legend Chip is spent, the hero may immediately and permanently raise a skill one level, regardless of its current level. A character with a *fightin'* at level 5, for instance, could instantly raise her skill level to 6 by spending a Legend Chip. Obviously, it's not worthwhile to raise lower skills in this manner because a Legend Chip normally yields 4 Bounty Points anyway. The effect is intended to raise the hero's primary skills to legendary levels.



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Vexation: Jenny detests the way Templars turn their back on a cause because they deem the victims “unworthy.” When the character does such a thing, the Marshal must decide if it was a minor or major incident. In general, allowing someone to die (assuming they weren’t total scum) is a major *faux pas* to this Martyr.

For a minor incident, Jenny withdraws her aid for 1d6 days. For a major incident, she forsakes the character until he essentially gains her blessing a second time.

Laquitia Jackson, Saint of Rage

Were Laquitia still alive, she would almost certainly have been a Templar. She was truly a terror on the battlefield, but knew her rage should be directed toward the enemy, not the innocents who happened across her path.

Deed: Laquitia appears to those Templars who turn on their comrades or employers for the cause of right. Even Templars, as careful and picky as they are, sometimes find they’re working in the cause of the unworthy. Those brave enough to change course, especially under duress, earn Laquitia’s attention.

White: The character may add +4 to any *Strength*-based roll (including a damage roll). This power may be invoked *after* the total has otherwise been determined.

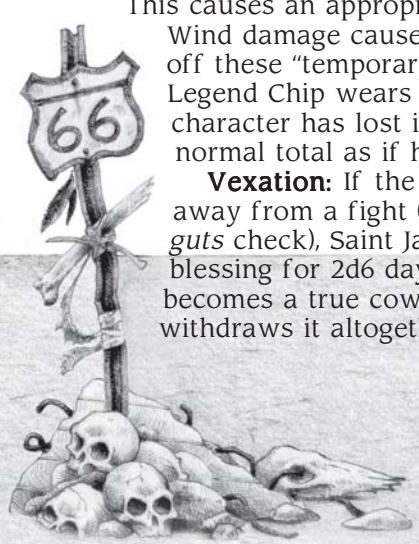
Red: The hero may +1 die to any damage roll. This power may be invoked *after* the total has otherwise been determined.

Blue: The hero can counteract up to 3 “points” worth of chips spent by an opponent to cancel wounds. Say the Marshal spends four white chips to save some dastardly villain’s hide. This power would cancel three of those chips. The last white chip would still cancel one wound, of course, but *all* the chips go to the Fate Pot.

Legend: The Templar is imbued with the fury of Saint Jackson. Her *Strength* and *Vigor* rise 4 steps for a number of rounds equal to her *faith*. This causes an appropriate rise in Wind as well.

Wind damage caused during this time comes off these “temporary” points first. When the Legend Chip wears off, all the Wind the character has lost is applied against his normal total as if he’d just suffered it.

Vexation: If the character ever runs away from a fight (usually due to a failed *guts* check), Saint Jackson withdraws her blessing for 2d6 days. If the character becomes a true coward (not likely), she withdraws it altogether.



Ronan Lynch, Saint of Death

Those of you who read our Weird West Dime Novels know all about Ronan. In fact, these adventures are the very visions Ronan sends to his followers in their dreams.

Does this mean the star of our Weird Western serial is eventually going to kick the bucket? Sure. Even dead men die again someday.

We’re afraid the benefits he grants are strictly for the Marshal, however. Sorry, partner. Trust us though—once blessed, a Templar with Saint Lynch on his side is one tough melon farmer.



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Eliot Ness, Saint of Morality

Eliot was as honest and forthright as they come. The visits he pays his followers in their dreams convince them of that. There he shows them the many times he was offered bribes or threatened and stuck to his guns. It seems the Martyr feels this will help a Templar resist the temptations his sword and tabard sometimes afford him.

Deed: Saint Ness appears to Templars who have resisted some great temptation that would have brought them personal gain. As with so many of the Martyr’s deeds, the Marshal must determine when such an event has occurred. The offer should be very painful or dangerous for the Templar to refuse, however. Declining a simple bribe is rarely worthy of Ness’ attention—most Templars stick to their oaths of poverty anyway. A more likely sacrifice, and one much more difficult for a heroic soul to abide, is continuing a battle against a foe who directly threatens a close friend. If the Templar has a chance to avoid this situation, he should, of course. If he must choose between his friend or the good of a larger group, and chooses the group, Ness will very likely enter his dreams soon.

White: The character’s personal integrity shines through. Everyone who comes in contact with the hero notices his honesty and sincerity. He gains +4 to his *persuasion* and other applicable rolls for his *faith* in hours.

Red: With a few minutes of short conversation, the Templar will know if someone he is talking to is lying to him. Even if the subject isn’t actually lying, the Templar gets a sense of the target’s true feelings and intentions.

Blue: Calling on Ness’ strength allows the Templar to completely resist any charm, command, or control ability for a number of

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rounds equal to his *faith*. He may evoke this power even if he is already under control. This reward works against a syker's mind control, voodoo, another Templar's *command* reward, and even weird science.

Legend: For one entire round, the character becomes "untouchable." Nothing on Earth can hurt him.

Vexation: A character who turns his back on what he knows is right for personal gain, no matter how small the matter or how great the gain, is instantly forsaken by Saint Ness.

Also, a character who drinks even a drop of alcohol loses the Martyr's blessings for one entire week.

Doc Norman, Patron Saint of the Lost

The Doc that we know was something of a lost soul his entire life. Like an actor who finds himself on stage with no idea of his lines—or even what play he's in—he struggled constantly to figure out who he was, and to make people believe that he was the man they thought they saw. That probably accounts for his other defining feature—the intense power of his personality.

Deed: Saint Norman blesses those who become completely, hopelessly lost. We're not talking "can't find the local gas station" lost here, we're talking "200 miles out in the desert—sure wish I had some water left" lost. A severe spiritual crisis—one that truly causes the Templar to question his own identity or deepest-held values—might also do the trick.

White: The character may add +4 to any *Mien* or *Spirit*-based roll. This power may be invoked *after* the total has otherwise been determined.

Red: A stranger meeting the hero for the first time mistakes him for someone he knows. Usually it's someone good, but it might not be.

Blue: A hero who is lost or in grave danger is given a sense of where to turn for safety. "Safety" is, of course, a relative term, and the hero isn't led by the nose out of all trouble. But Doc will steer him toward the best shelter he can.

Legend: With a few moments' concentration, the character can learn one key fact about the past of any other person (alive or dead—this power works on bodies as well as living people) that he touches. He may or may not get the answer to a specific question, but he'll definitely get something important to the subject's life.

Vexation: Doc was self-reliant to the extreme. He remits his aid from any who turn unnecessarily toward others for aid.



Martyrs

Nevada Smith, Saint of Intrigue

Nevada was the prototype for the "James Bonds" of later wars. He had more adventures than even Ronan Lynch. Many of these were later revealed to the general public through dime novels. What only a handful of officials in the Agency knew was that the author of those dime novels was none other than Smith himself.

Deed: A Templar who pulls off an incredibly elaborate deception gets the Man of a Thousand Faces' attention. The deed must be truly extraordinary, the kind of plot a really well-written MovieTown thriller might take two hours to develop.

As usual with this kind of subjective condition, the Marshal must determine when a deed is worthy of Saint Smith's notice, but it should be something fairly elaborate.

White: The character adds +4 to his *disguise* skill for his *faith* in hours.

Red: As long as there is a crowd of more than five people about, the Templar can instantly "blend" into the group. If no one is specifically looking for him, there's no real chance anyone will notice his presence unless

they start counting, go over job assignments, or otherwise go through the gathered faces one by one.

If the hero had already been spotted, a foe must make a Fair (5) *Smarts* roll to pick him out of the crowd. The Marshal has to use a little common sense here. If the Templar is being shot at by a band of thugs and uses this ability, they may be confused but they'll probably realize the guy on the other side of the room shooting back at them is a target. If the hero mixes with the crowd at all, however, every goon in the bunch must make the *Smarts* check to pick him out.

Blue: Nevada was an incredible investigator, though he would be the first to admit much of his luck was just that. By spending a blue chip, the character gets a lucky break in an ongoing investigation. This may not happen right away, but when the knight and his companions are stone-walled, this is a great ability to give the group a new lead.

Legend: Given a single round (5 seconds) of concentration, the Templar can change his appearance to match any roughly humanoid being within 2 points of his Size. The hero must have seen the person he is imitating. The guise is physically perfect, and even gives the knight the target's voice. This lasts for the Templar's *faith* in minutes, though it may be extended for an additional minute per Wind spent.

Vexation: Nevada has no particular pet peeves, though like most of the heroes who became Martyrs, he is quick to forsake Templars who abuse their power.

Major Rex Stern, Saint of Ruthlessness

The three Templars who have been blessed by Saint Stern claim he reminds them more of a professional wrestler than a Major.

They also claim Stern has something of a guilt complex for some of his legendary deeds. The most common dream they have of him concerns a town somewhere in Georgia. A breed of walkin' dead had arisen, and when they killed, the victims arose as undead as well. The contagion got out of control, and Major Stern was forced to call for a tactical nuclear strike on the town.

Deed: Stern visits Templars who prove their ability to sacrifice the few for the good of the many. The sacrifice must be painful, and it must signal certain doom for the "civilians" in question. The end result does not necessarily have to mean death for the sacrificial lambs, but such a fate must be very likely.



Martyrs

White: Stern had incredible willpower, and he instills in the hero +4 to any opposed roll. This chip may be spent *after* the total has otherwise been determined.

Red: The hero is unaffected by nightmares, including *night terrors*, for one night. Also, nightmare creatures—monsters somehow drawn directly from dreams—cannot harm the hero for a number of rounds equal to his *faith* after evoking this power.

Though Stern never told a soul, the decisions he was often forced to make haunted him endlessly, so he was no stranger to nightmares.

Blue: The Templar automatically makes a failed *guts* check, even if he went bust. Stern had no fear.

Legend: A Legend Chip causes a mighty but subtle miracle. When a Templar is forced to turn his back on one group to save another, if he is successful in saving the latter, the former *somehow* miraculously persevere as well.

Vexation: Stern doesn't tolerate weakness. If the Templar allows a situation that threatens others to persist (such as allowing a faminite to escape out of "pity"), he'll forsake the hero.

John Wayne, Saint of Grit

The Duke was truly the man millions of movie-goers saw on screen, but even he didn't realize his *True Grit* would affect the world even after he passed on to the Great Beyond.

Deed: The Duke blesses Templars who prevail in a mission while enduring great pain. A hero who suffers a critical wound or other extremely painful injury, and then must fight or push on under terrible strain, is chosen by Saint Wayne. The Templar can't do this intentionally—he can't choose not to *lay on hands* before entering the climax of a battle or riding miles for aid just to attract the Martyr's attention. The situation must develop naturally, and the hero's sacrifice must be the only way to accomplish the objective.

White: The Templar can ignore any and all pain modifiers for a number of rounds equal to his *faith*.

Red: The hero negates three wound levels, or 15 Wind, instead of the usual two that would be negated with a red chip.

Blue: The Templar doubles his base Wind for a number of minutes equal to his *faith* level. Subtract any Wind already lost from this new total. Make sure any Edges or artificial Wind increases are doubled as well. When the effect is over, apply all Wind lost to the character's normal total as if it had just been suffered.

Legend: When the character is about to be killed, he can spend a Legend Chip instead. That negates the wounds, however severe, that caused his death. Pretty sweet power, but that's not all. For the remainder of this fight, if the Templar is "killed" again and does *not* cancel the damage with Fate Chips (of any kind), the hero fights on for a number of rounds equal to his *faith*. During this time, he ignores Wind and all pain modifiers, and may raise one Trait of his choice by 4 steps. Each additional attack, blow, or effect that would normally kill him instead reduces the duration of this power by one round. When all the heroics are over and the duration has expired, the Templar dies.

Vexation: The Duke doesn't tolerate quitters or sissies. If the Templar ever shies away from a fight due to cowardice, the Martyr withdraws his blessings.

The Duke is also quite a patriot. He'll bless Confederates and even foreigners as well as Northerners, but the moment either one badmouths the USA, he'll turn a blind eye to them for 1d4 days.

Sgt. York, Patron Saint of Sykers

Templars sometimes find Sgt. York a curious saint. Sure, he was a great hero and made the ultimate sacrifice fighting monsters in the trenches of Europe, but what can a syker do for Templars? Truthfully, not much unless the character is a greenie syker. For those rare few, York grants the following rewards:

Deed: Sgt. Alvin York appears to greenie sykers who develop their capability into real skill. Any Templar who begins his career as a greenie syker gains York's aid when he raises his *blastin'* skill to level 4.

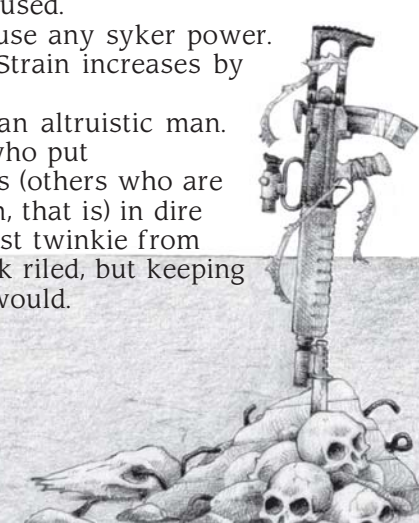
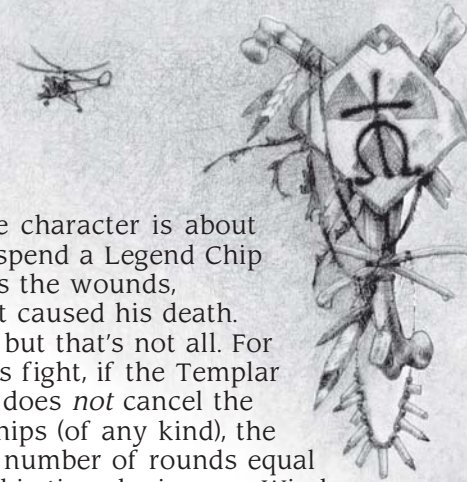
White: The syker gets +2 to his *blastin'* rolls for his *faith* in minutes.

Red: The Templar has 5 Strain to use as he pleases. This power cannot be invoked again until these 5 points are used.

Blue: The syker can use any syker power.

Legend: The syker's Strain increases by +1 permanently.

Vexation: York was an altruistic man. He forsakes Templars who put themselves above others (others who are worthy of his protection, that is) in dire situations. Taking the last twinkie from the posse won't get York riled, but keeping it from a hungry child would.



A Walk on the Dark Side





Chapter Five: A Walk on the Dark Side



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Anti-Templars aren't such bad guys. Most start out thinking, "I want to help people just like the Templars, but who am I to judge which people are worthy?" Even an anti-Templar won't go out of his way to save a band of murderous raiders from a horde of undead, but he would fight to defend a town against Black Hats, even if that town had a "Death To Muties" sign on the front gate.

The saints must not have a problem with this attitude, because they continue to grant rewards to the anti-Templars. Proof positive, right?

This is how player character anti-Templars feel. They're still heroes—they just disagree a bit with Simon and his "goons" on what being a hero means.

Fortunately, power comes much more easily to anti-Templars than to their white-clad enemies. Though this is undoubtedly proof that the saints prefer the anti-Templars, it also allows some common thugs to gain their powers as well. Serving an anti-Templar is a way for them to gain incredible power without becoming a mutant or spending years of training as a syker.

Of course, no good anti-Templar would keep such cretins around, but the bad ones do, and they just keep making more. These bastards go on looting, raping, pillaging and giving the anti-Templars a bad name.

The worst part is that the saints continue to reward these less-than-pure servants even when they go astray. Simon can't figure this out, and the good anti-Templars can't either.

Modeen, the father of the movement, says it is not the anti-Templars' place to question the saints' mysterious ways. They should simply do what they feel is right, and protect the world from Simon's heavy-handed "knights."

The Martyrs

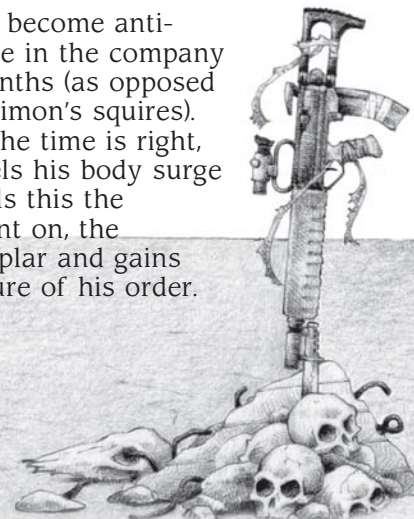
Strangely, the highest of the saints—the Martyrs—do not seem to look favorably on the anti-Templars. No matter how well an anti-Templar performs a Martyr's alleged deeds, the Martyr does not grant the anti-Templar blessings.

Fortunately, the anti-Templars are able to tap into an even greater power. We'll get to that in a minute, friend.

The Becoming

Warriors who wish to become anti-Templars need only serve in the company of another for a few months (as opposed to the year required of Simon's squires).

When the saints feel the time is right, the warrior suddenly feels his body surge with energy. Modeen calls this the Becoming. From that point on, the character is an anti-Templar and gains true insight into the nature of his order.



A Walk on the Dark Side

Characters as Anti-Templars

A player character anti-Templar is one of the good guys who truly believes Simon is a tyrant and that Modeen's approach is better for the world.

Immediately after the Becoming, the warrior gains 5 levels worth of any rewards—five different rewards or a single one as he chooses.

Required Aptitudes

There are only two skills an anti-Templar must have: *academia: occult* and *faith*.

Anti-Templars usually learn their occult knowledge from their masters. Some information is gained through stories; others through intuition and prophetic nightmares. Before his Becoming can occur, an anti-Templar must have *academia: occult* at level 2 or better.

Anti-Templars have *faith* in the saints just like Templars. They must have at least 2 levels of *faith* to undergo the Becoming.

Getting the Ax

When the follower of an anti-Templar finally feels the power of the saints surge through him, he is recognized as an anti-Templar.

He makes his own black tabard. His preferred hand weapon is enchanted by his Mentor, granting him +1 to his *fightin'* and *quick draw* rolls when wielding it.

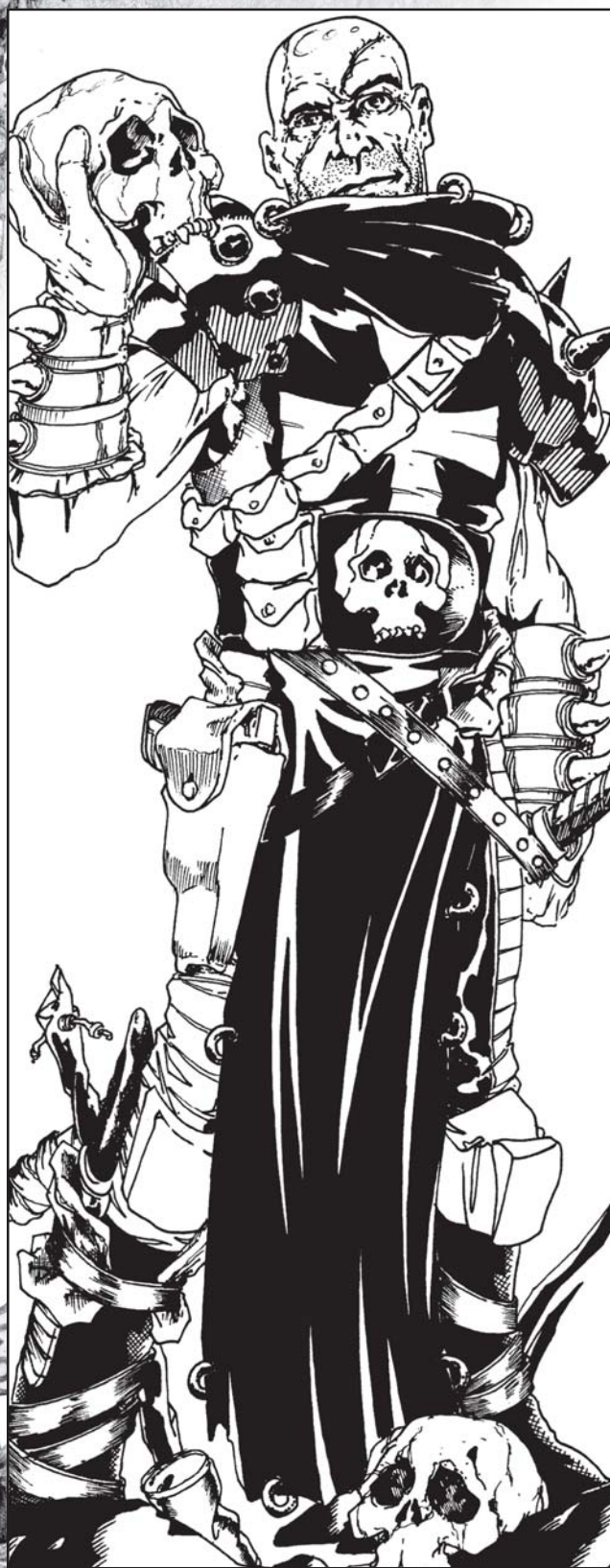
Anti-Templars have a strong tradition of wielding great axes, like Modeen the Destroyer, but any hand weapon can be blessed. Even chainsaws and weed whackers have served the anti-Templars.

Rewards

Anti-Templars gain rewards in the usual fashion. They can purchase new rewards and raise them just like their white-clad cousins. They gain Greater Rewards when their group receives new Legend Chips as well.

The real advantage to being an anti-Templar is that they have a second way of receiving Greater Rewards as well. Anytime the character kills a Templar, squire, or Companion, he gains a Greater Reward. The reward can come from any gift he has at least one level in, but he *does not* need all 5 levels of the gift to claim the reward!

Even better, the anti-Templar can claim the Templar's "coup" if he is within a few feet of the villain when he dies. He doesn't actually have to kill the tyrant himself. Smart anti-Templars let their warbands do the hard work.



A Walk on the Dark Side

Anti-Templars & Martyrs

Modeen was upset that the Martyrs had forsaken him. He brooded for many months until he suffered a vision of Julia Aiken, the first anti-Templar. In the dream, Julia said that she had drawn power directly from the Reckoners themselves! This not only drained the Horsemen's power, but gave her energy to fight their minions as well! She had, in effect, used the monsters' own might against them.

Alas, she said, she had drawn too much power and become corrupt. It didn't have to be this way, however. With care, Julia claimed, the anti-Templars could draw on the very power of the Four Horsemen themselves to fight the forces of darkness, and Simon's tyrants in particular.

Modeen saw the wisdom of using Hell's power against itself. The next time he found himself in battle, he opened himself to this dark energy. It coursed through him and allowed him to slaughter a creature that would have killed scores.

Modeen told others, and soon all the anti-Templars knew they had the ability to use the Reckoners' power against them. Unlike the Martyrs, which grant blessings to squires and Companions as well as to Templars, the Reckoners grant blessings only to full anti-Templars, not the warriors in their warbands.

Calling Down the Thunder

Calling on the power of the Reckoners works just like asking for a saint's blessing. The anti-Templar simply spends a chip and waits for the effect to kick in.

As with the Templars, the anti-Templars may only spend one chip per action.

Welcome to the Dark Side

The only problem with using the Reckoners' power is it taints the anti-Templar's soul a tiny bit. Most of the blessings granted have effects that are dirty at best, and downright evil at worst. If the hero isn't careful, he can actually turn into an instrument of evil.

Whenever you spend a chip for your character to call on the Reckoners, write down its "value" (whites are worth 1 point, reds are 2, blues are 3, and Legend Chips are 4). These are "Corruption" points. As an anti-Templar accumulates more Corruption, he becomes more and more aligned with the Reckoners, and that much closer to becoming truly evil.

So how much is too much? That's hard to say precisely. Suffice it to say that when your Corruption reaches your Spirit die type, bad things start to happen. From there it's a slippery slope.

Reducing Corruption

Reducing Corruption is very simple mechanically, yet very hard in practice. You can reduce your character's Corruption by one point by *spending* a Legend Chip. An anti-Templar who draws the Legend Chip during a game and wants to reduce his Corruption simply throws the chip back in the pot (at any time) and reduces his Corruption by one.



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The Horsemen Are Waiting

Here are the powers the Reckoners are willing to give the anti-Templars. All heroes can call on *any* of the Four Horsemen. No deeds need be performed, and the horsemen will never forsake them.

Be careful, friend. Your hero must walk a fine line. Using these powers against the evils of the wastes is great. Get too greedy, though, and you'll find your hero has become one of these villains.

Death

The anti-Templar may spend Fate Chips on damage rolls just as he would on Trait or Aptitude rolls. A white chip allows the character to roll and replace a die, red and blue chips add to the total of one die.

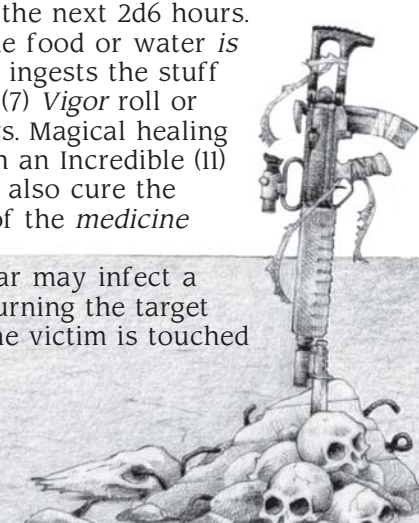
As usual, all whites have to be spent before any reds, and reds spent before blues.

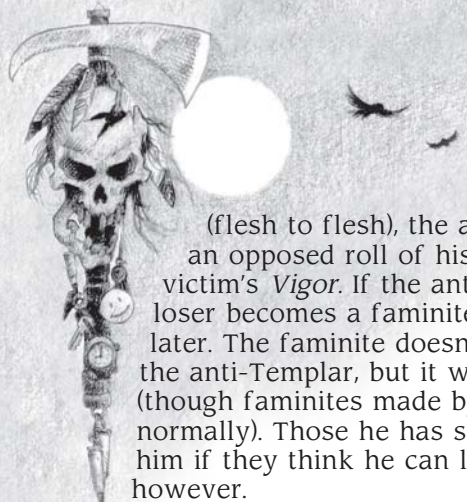
Famine

White: The character may spoil 1 pound of meat or 1 gallon of water per *faith* level. The food is not truly poisonous, but anyone who eats it must make an Incredible (11) *Vigor* roll or become violently ill for the next 2d6 hours.

Red: As above, but the food or water *is* poisonous. Anyone who ingests the stuff must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll or die in the next 2d6 hours. Magical healing can stop the illness with an Incredible (11) roll. Normal healing can also cure the patient, though the TN of the *medicine* roll is increased to 13.

Blue: The anti-Templar may infect a living target by touch, turning the target into a faminite. When the victim is touched





A Walk on the Dark Side

(flesh to flesh), the anti-Templar makes an opposed roll of his *faith* versus the victim's *Vigor*. If the anti-Templar wins, the loser becomes a faminite roughly 12 hours later. The faminite doesn't become a slave of the anti-Templar, but it won't hurt him either (though faminites made by others attack him normally). Those he has sired may listen to him if they think he can lead them to food, however.

Legend: By eating an ounce of human flesh, no matter how fresh, the anti-Templar may raise any one Trait by 4 steps for his *faith* in hours.

Pestilence

White: The anti-Templar can infect any living target within his *faith* in yards with a minor but instant flu. Make an opposed *faith* roll versus the victim's *Vigor*. If the anti-Templar wins, the foe suffers a -2 modifier to all his Trait and Aptitude rolls for the next 24 hours.

Red: With a touch, the anti-Templar can cause a horrible but non-fatal disease. After touching the victim, the character rolls his *faith* versus the foe's *Vigor*. If the servant of Pestilence is successful, painful, oozing sores erupt all over the victim's skin. Besides the obvious roleplaying effects, the pain and pus inflict a -4 modifier to most any Trait or Aptitude check. The disease passes without further harm in 1d6 hours.

Blue: Just as with a red chip, the touch of the anti-Templar (and a successful contest of *faith* versus *Vigor*) results in a horrible disease. This time, it's fatal, eventually. The character immediately gains the *ailin*: *chronic* Hindrance.

Legend: A Legend Chip infects a living person with a deadly virus that turns the target's innards to goo. Blood gushes from his orifices and he dies a horrible, messy death in seconds. The anti-Templar spends his chip and makes an opposed *faith* roll versus the foe's *faith/Vigor*. If he wins, the victim dies in 1d4 rounds. Only magical healing and an Incredible (II) casting roll can stop the fatal finish to this spectacular disease.

War

White: The anti-Templar can add +4 to any sort of attack roll. This power may be invoked after the total is otherwise resolved, but it can only be invoked once per attack.

Red: The anti-Templar may choose the hit location of any attack he makes. He can do this after rolling the location randomly,

or even if he called a shot and made the roll to hit the intended point, but would rather hit some other point instead. In general, the specified location is restricted to the standard body areas. The character could choose to hit the target in the head, for example, but can't automatically hit square in the eye to cause instant death. He gets the standard bonus damage for the head shot, though, and if the damage is good, the Marshal can *interpret* that it hit the eye.

Blue: The character's attack steers toward a truly vital area, causing an extra 3 dice of damage.

Legend: The character can raise the dead to fight alongside him. Each Legend Chip spent raises the anti-Templar's *faith* in walkin' dead, creatures similar to, but slightly more capable than, the standard walkin' dead covered in the *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* rulebook. These unholy creations are the anti-Templar's obedient servants for one battle, after which they fall lifeless once again. The blessing does not create corpses—the "hero" must provide those himself.

Anti-Templars' Walkin' Dead

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, S:3d10, Q:2d10, V:2d8
Climbin' 1d8, dodge 2d8, fightin': ax, brawlin' 3d8,
shootin': (any) 2d6, sneak 3d8, swimmin' 1d8

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d6, M:1d8, Sm:3d6, Sp:NA
Overawe 5d8

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: NA

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Fearless.

Spirit: Any attacks or contested rolls made against the walkin' dead's Spirit is actually made against the anti-Templar's Spirit, though the result always affects the walkin' dead.

Weapons: These walkin' dead use whatever weapons they can get their slimy, rotten hands on, preferring guns or, if none of those are handy, axes. They're not concerned with saving ammo for later, since they usually aren't around for too long.

Undead.

Description: These nasty fellows look much like standard undead. Their appearance varies depending on the condition of the bodies from which they arose, but even freshly-killed bodies look unusually sinister, putrid and evil as walkin' dead.



The Marshal's Handbook



Dirty Laundry





Chapter Six: Dirty Laundry



Most cordial wasteland greetings, Marshal. We were hoping you'd show up back here. See, the Templars have some dirty laundry we want you to help us wash. Their leader, Simon, for one is—

Hey. You look like a player. You shouldn't be here. It's bad mojo. And we just might have to let the muties have their way with you if you don't beat it.

That's better. We don't want those nosey player-types knowing the Templars' dirty secrets, because they're going to have big effects on the future of the Wasted West.

We're going to tell you a good portion of those secrets now. The rest will be revealed as the story of *Hell on Earth* continues.

So let's start by scavving some dirt on the head honcho himself: Simon Mercer, the Grand Master.

Simple Simon

Okay, there's actually nothing simple about Simon at all. He's a very complicated man. In some ways he's the most selfless person in the entire West. In others, he's the most ruthless—maybe more ruthless than even Throckmorton or Silas Rasmussen.

Simon may also be more dangerous than those two nutcases. That's right, we said *more* dangerous. See, Simon has the keys to the kingdom in his hand. Of all the organized groups

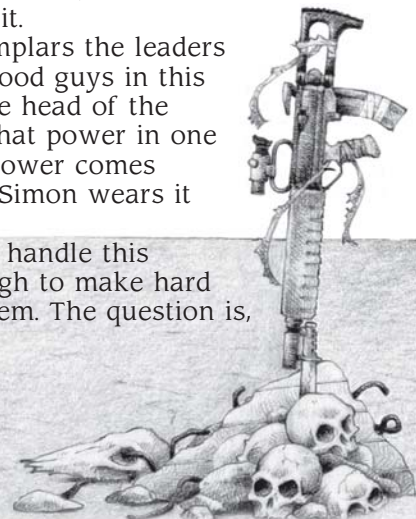
that have sprung up since the West got wasted, the Templars are one of the few that work for good.

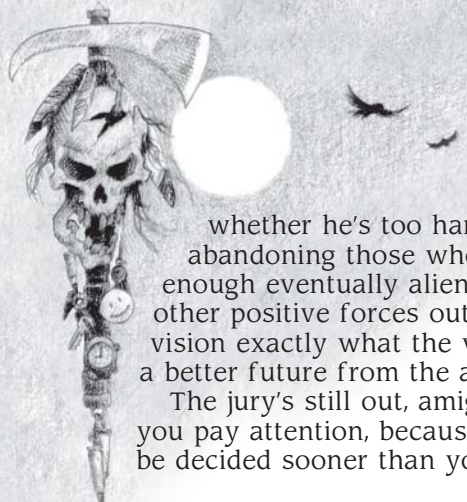
The Librarians and the Convoy are definitely positive forces, but they're not the kind to come running to a settlement's defense when they're getting overrun by Black Hats.

The Law Dogs are also good, and most of them are worth ten times their number in a fight, but they don't have any special gifts or powers. Besides the obvious disadvantages, having no mojo means folks don't give them the kind of respect a Templar gets. Not only do Templars heal sickness and fight like demons, but they have those nifty tabards and wicked swords. Folks can't help but idolize them. It's hard for the Law Dogs to compete with that. Most of them are just ordinary men and women. To top it off, they don't turn their backs on the "unworthy" like the Templars do, so they wind up in trouble a whole lot more, and have fewer tools to deal with it.

So that makes the Templars the leaders of what passes for the good guys in this blasted land. Simon is the head of the order, and that puts all that power in one man's hands. With that power comes great responsibility, and Simon wears it like a slave's yolk.

The Grand Master can handle this burden. He's strong enough to make hard decisions and stick to them. The question is,





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whether he's too harsh. Will his policy of abandoning those who aren't "good" enough eventually alienate and splinter the other positive forces out there? Or is his vision exactly what the world needs to create a better future from the ashes of the past?

The jury's still out, amigos. Just make sure you pay attention, because Simon's fate will be decided sooner than you might think.

What's He Doin' With That Thing?

You know what Simon's long-range plans are. What about his immediate concerns? Besides the daily grind of administering his order and assigning Templars to aid petitioners, what does the Grand Master see as his most pressing concerns?

Those are good questions, so let's deal with them from top to bottom.

The Boise Horror

As you'll see later on this chapter, the bloodwolf Teller and the others killed was not the Boise Horror. This thing is still very much "alive," and is causing Simon no end of pain.

The Boise Horror is not the greatest danger in the Wasted West—at least not directly. It seems to be a very localized threat, and it only kills someone every couple of months. That's pretty good as local horrors go.

The problem is that its domain is the home of the Templars. That's just plain embarrassing to the post-Apocalyptic knights. Simon needs to find out what this creature is and defeat it. Fast.

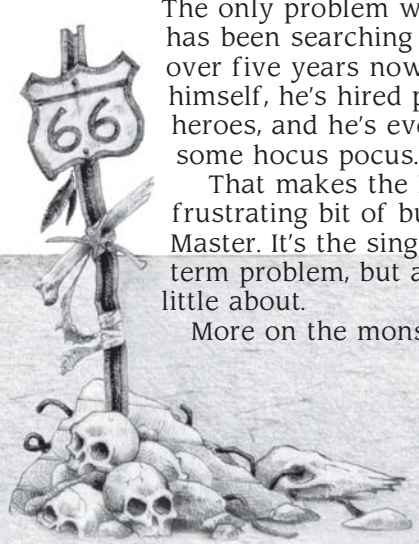
Right now, most of the people who have heard of the Horror have also heard that it was defeated by Teller. That'll fly for a while, but the rest of the story is starting to pass on from the Downtowners to the occasional caravans, and from there to other survivor settlements.

Besides the bad press, the Boise Horror is starting to increase the Fear Level as well. That's really bad news for the Templars.

The only problem with all this is that Simon has been searching for the thing for well over five years now. He's tried to find it himself, he's hired posses of renowned heroes, and he's even had a Doomsayer try some hocus pocus. Nothing has worked.

That makes the Boise Horror a very frustrating bit of business for the Grand Master. It's the single most important short-term problem, but also one Simon can do little about.

More on the monster in a bit.



The Anti-Templars

The anti-Templars are growing faster than boils on a famine. A lot of the folks who join the order just cannot live up to the harsh test of worth that Simon requires. A few Templars have simply stopped reporting in and been blackballed. A few others have adopted the black tabard and taken up with Modeen.

We'll get back to these guys later on in this chapter.

The Combine

Simon is well aware that the Combine isn't building its army and scouting the West with Black Hat patrols for their health. One day, they'll come pouring out of Denver to take over the West. Simon has little hope in fighting Throckmorton's troops east of the Rockies—there are few organized forces there. Instead, he plans on joining with the people of Junkyard, the Sky Pirates, and any other troops he can muster to stop them moving West through the Rockies. The bulk of the Combine's troops must come through the narrow passes, and these will be the best defensive positions the forces of good can hope for.

The Cult of Doom

Simon seriously underestimates the power of Silas Rasmussen. It's not that he doesn't fear the Mutant King's Doomsayers, Doombringers, and war parties—he fought them enough in his early days to properly respect their abilities. What Simon underestimates is Silas' ability to rally the mutant masses to his side someday. When the Combine finally mobilizes, forgetting about this large faction centered in the "allied" rear may prove to be a fatal mistake.

Simon's Profile

We're going to follow our long-standing tradition here. See, we believe that if we stat something, you crazy kids will kill it. We don't want you to do that to Simon. Not yet, anyway.

Think of him as a plot device, not a set of numbers. Let him succeed when he needs to, and fail when it's critical to the plot.

As to his rewards, he's got them all, with their greater rewards as well. He also has the blessings of Ronan Lynch and Major Rex Stern. He hasn't garnered any other Martyrs' attentions because he doesn't leave Boise anymore.

The Grand Master's sword has become something truly special. It adds +6 to his attack and damage rolls, and has one other nifty effect

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as well. When the sword causes a wound to a truly wicked individual or creature, the wielder can spend a white chip to heal a like number of wounds himself. If the hero caused 3 wounds, for example, he could heal a heavy wound to his guts and half of a heavy wound to his arm with just one white chip.

Simon usually has 1d10 Templars around Boise to help him out as well.

Jo

Like Simon, we're not going to give you the stats on Jo. She's one tough broad, and we'd hate to see you kill her off. If you need a list of her rewards and blessings, however, we can accommodate.

Jo doesn't have every Templar reward as Simon does, but she's got most of them, along with the blessings of numerous Martyrs. Marshal, feel free to make her as powerful as you need her to be—remember, she's more a plot element than a character to be defeated.

Baphomet

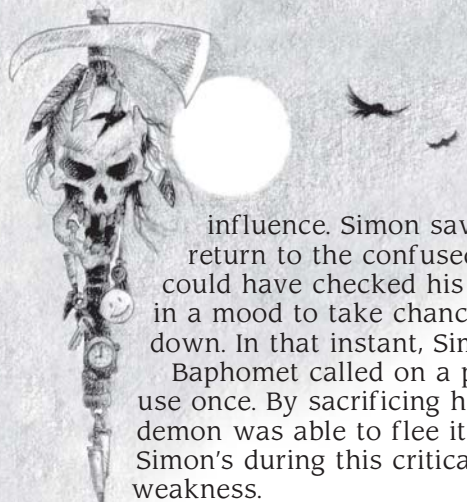
Baphomet was truly a demon from Hell. He's been on Earth for nearly a thousand years now, and finally became bored with living in isolated Hell's Canyon.

Here's what happened. When Simon came to Hell's Canyon, Baphomet saw an opportunity to travel outside his natural prison. Escape was a bit tricky, however.

Demons can't do much on their own. Most of their really cool powers require free will on the part of their victims. Baphomet had watched Simon for the days leading up to his arrival at Hell's Canyon, and knew he was a very special person. The demon also figured out Simon that had a hole in his heart. The loss of his family, and indeed, his world, had created a dark void in Simon's soul. For the most part, Simon ignored his anger and rage by concentrating on his mission to save the world. Occasionally, however, he gave in to his baser instincts and took out his aggression on those who stood in his way. Most of the time, his opponents deserved what they got. Sometimes, however, Simon's zeal meant the weak and innocent suffered alongside the guilty.

Baphomet took advantage of this weakness by releasing one of his servants in the climactic battle with Simon. Just as the Grand Master defeated one of the demon's servants, a young woman, Baphomet released her from his





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influence. Simon saw the humanity return to the confused woman's eyes and could have checked his swing, but he wasn't in a mood to take chances, so he cut her down. In that instant, Simon damned himself.

Baphomet called on a power he could only use once. By sacrificing his physical form, the demon was able to flee its body and enter Simon's during this critical moment of weakness.

Simon is not "possessed" in the traditional sense of the word. Baphomet resides inside his psyche much like a manitou in a Harrowed.

The effect of this is something we just can't tell you yet. We hate to say "buy another sourcebook to find out," but we just can't spill all the beans yet. Trust us, though, it's worth waiting for.

In the meantime, run Simon just as you'd think and don't worry about the timebomb ticking inside him. When it's time for the heroes to play the bomb squad, we'll let you know.

Boise

Fear Level 3

Boise is a strange place. The Temple and the Hall of Heroes are solemn monuments to Simon's efforts, yet the streets in between are filled with an almost carnival-like atmosphere.

Though neither Jo or Simon know it yet, there's actually quite a large "black market" in smuggled goods flowing through the town. Most of these are sold quietly in the scores of booths, carts, and kiosks that fill the town square and surrounding streets. A Marshal with a mean streak might find it entertaining to have one of these vendors offer a trinket to one of the Templar's companions. If discovered, both the seller and the buyer are booted and asked never to return.

Sam Hinkelman

The most notorious of the black marketeers is Sam Hinkelman. Publicly, he sells lizards-on-a-stick and other "delicacies." Quietly, he sells Templar relics to the unscrupulous, and especially the desperate petitioners who come to Boise seeking aid.

Here's a list of his wares:

Lizard-on-a-Stick: \$2. The lizards are tough, leathery, and not particularly nutritious.

Hinkelman's Amazing Soda Pop: \$25. Sam claims this foul-tasting concoction rids

a body of harmful rads. It doesn't. A lot of younger people in town, thinking his soda is like those the olders always talk about, spend a lot of money trying to acquire a taste for this stuff.

Templar Bones: \$1000. Sam's real money comes from the sale of Templars' bones. He never says where he gets them from because he knows Simon might do worse than exile him. In truth, the bones *are* really those of a Templar. Sam dug up a single corpse, that of Johannes Faulk, and has been selling bones and fragments of bones for almost a year now.

Anyone who has one of these bones on their person gains +2 to *any* sort of opposed roll, be it physical, mental, or otherwise.

The Boise Maelstrom

The Maelstrom here is slightly less dangerous than most, because the Templars have successfully lowered the Fear Level within the Boise maelstrom.

Whenever anyone crosses through the storm, draw two cards and apply the lowest as damage. Only if both Jokers are drawn can the victim suffer a mutation.

For Templars, squires, and Companions, draw 5 cards and take the lowest. They never suffer mutations.

Storm Laps

Welcome to the masochist olympics. "Storm laps" are races run *within*—not just through—the maelstrom wall.

There's no real rules to it; the brainers just jump in and start running along the storm wall, taking damage each round until one of them can't take it anymore and jumps out.

The cool part is that the locals take bets on who can last the longest. This might be a good way for a posse to have a few laughs and make a few bucks at their Templar's willing to risk his life.

Simon frowns on storm laps, but can't say too much since he and Jo were the ones who started this insane contest.

The Boise Horror

Okay, we know a few of you are going to groan and think we're just trying to make you buy more sourcebooks, but once again, we're going to have to withhold the truth from you for a bit longer. Remember, this book is about how to play a Templar, not a Boise sourcebook.



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The truth about the Boise Horror, and Baphomet as well, are revealed in the upcoming super-adventure for *Hell on Earth* called, appropriately enough, *The Boise Horror*.

In the meantime, characters who try to investigate won't meet with any success. The monster strikes sporadically with no real pattern, and never leaves a trail. It often leaves clues, but they are false and confusing. Most of the time, those it kills seem to have been slain by a vampire, werewolf, or some similar creature. It usually acts on the full moon, but not always. It does always strike at night, however.

We can tell you the bloodwolf killed by Teller was *not* the Boise Horror. It was responsible for the death of Lynn Graves (the second victim), however.

Son of the Boise Horror

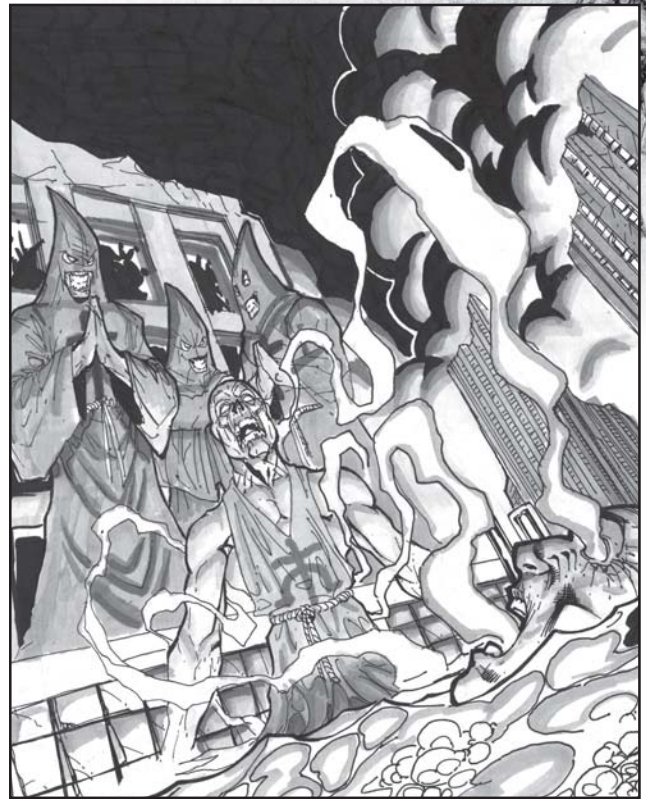
The "son" of the Boise Horror is the horror itself—it has not yet been slain or even discovered. Neither Jo nor Simon have figured this out yet.

The Combine

Jo doesn't know this yet, but the rise of the anti-Templars and their frequent alliances with the Combine have led Throckmorton to issue a general order about the Templars: they are to be shot on sight. That's not a big change—Black Hats and Templars were never close pals anyway.

The real problem is that every settlement that's kowtowed to the Combine is supposed to report the whereabouts of any Templars who happen by, and quietly kill them if possible. Black Hats have also been authorized to pay a \$5000 bounty for the bodies of Templars. As a result, it's becoming common for Templars to find themselves betrayed by a few greedy bastards lurking on the fringes even when they're helping out "good" settlements. There's a few bad apples in even the best of bushels.

Besides the reward, it's become common knowledge that killing a powerful Templar gets a waster promoted quickly. A gang who shows up in Denver with a Templar strapped to the hood might just get trained and armed as Black Hats on the spot. Okay, if the bastards were tough enough to go killing Templars, they'd probably get to be Black Hats anyway—Throckmorton never has enough thugs—but Throckmorton's operatives sure make them feel special for bringing in such a trophy.



The Cult of Doom

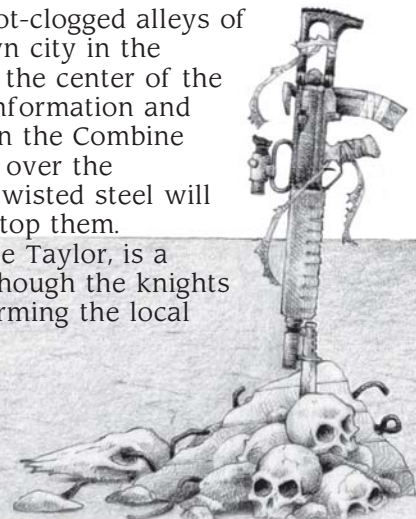
Silas Rasmussen, the Mutant King, also grows tired of the Templars' constant interference. He has instructed his minions to treat Templars as they would Schismatics—nuke first and don't bother to ask questions later.

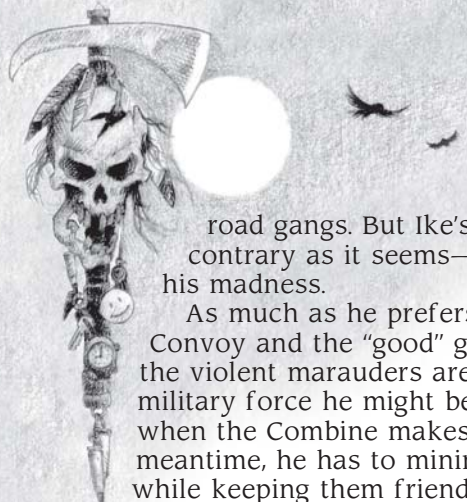
The Mutant King doesn't offer a reward for Templar heads, but those who defeat these powerful knights are rewarded with promotions and the warm caress of the Glow.

Junkyard

The salvation of the Wasted West lies in the grimy streets and soot-clogged alleys of Junkyard. The only known city in the Wasted West is not only the center of the survivors' trade, but of information and news as well. Soon, when the Combine eventually comes rolling over the Rockies, this bastion of twisted steel will be the only obstacle to stop them.

Junkyard's foreman, Ike Taylor, is a friend of the Templars, though the knights do not approve of him arming the local





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road gangs. But Ike's plan isn't quite as contrary as it seems—there's a method to his madness.

As much as he prefers dealing with the Convoy and the "good" gangs, Ike knows that the violent marauders are the most powerful military force he might be able to call upon when the Combine makes its push. In the meantime, he has to minimize their damage while keeping them friendly to Junkyard. On the surface, he trades openly with them. But in reality, when a gang known to be raiders pulls in, the spook juice reserves are mysteriously low, ammunition is short, and so on.

The Templars just can't go along with Ike's way of thinking. They don't believe in arming thugs and murderers regardless of the reason. Cole Ballad, the local Law Dog, agrees. He goes after any gang suspected of raiding and wipes them out to the last man.

It's hard to say who is right. Ike's way may be best, but the balance is so precarious it may be a moot point. If the gangs raid too heavily, the caravans will stop coming and Junkyard will die. If they're wiped out, a potential ally in the fight against the Combine disappears.

Time will tell.

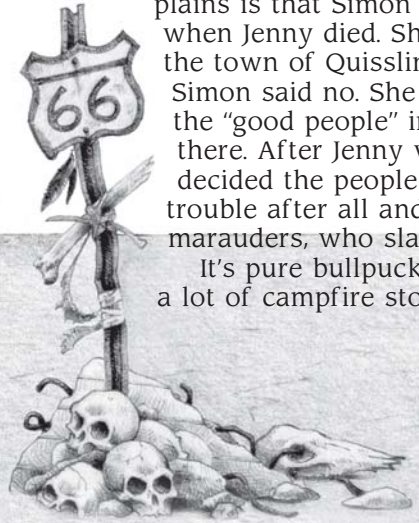
The Law Dogs

Most Law Dogs think working with a Templar is like walking around with your revolver cocked. They're always looking for trouble, but half the time, they run off when they find it.

When a mutie horde attacks, Law Dogs don't waste time worrying about who's worth saving and who isn't. As long as the defenders are probably decent people, they deserve help. There's just nothing more frustrating than getting involved in that kind of situation, then seeing a very powerful asset just walk away.

The tale of Law Dog Jenny Hise has been somewhat corrupted by some folks. One version of the story currently circulating the irradiated plains is that Simon was already a Templar when Jenny died. She allegedly stood outside the town of Quissling asking for help and Simon said no. She had started trouble and the "good people" inside didn't want her there. After Jenny was killed, Simon decided the people inside weren't worth his trouble after all and left them to the marauders, who slaughtered them all.

It's pure bullpuckey, of course, but so are a lot of campfire stories.



Mutants

By and large, mutants are afraid of Templars. There are just too many tales of Templars battling their way through mutant hordes, cutting down scores of savages with their magical swords. Given a chance to think about it, any mutant in his right mind ought to realize that these tales are just norm talk—any mutants attacked by Templars were probably of the flesh-eating, bone-chucking variety, not the just-some-guy-with-a-third-nipple sort. But perception is far stronger than reality, so mutants are suspicious, fearful, and angry toward the post-Apocalyptic knights.

Silas Rasmussen, the Mutant King, encourages this fear. His Doomsayers spread false tales of Templars killing all mutants they encounter.

The Anti-Templars

The world is in a lot of trouble in case you hadn't noticed, and right now, Simon's way is the right way. People who aren't part of the solution are part of the problem. Anti-Templars don't buy this, so the Martyrs forsake them.

The Reckoners, however, are more than willing to step in and take over. They provide unearthly powers to the anti-Templars, and very slowly, very subtly, take control. The pure-hearted resist as best they can. Those greedy for power do whatever they feel might reward them.

Corruption

Most all anti-Templars, player-types included, just can't resist using those nifty Reckoner blessings. We told the players something bad would happen when their Corruption equaled their *Spirit* die type, but we didn't tell them what.

Here's the scoop. For each Corruption point over his *Spirit* die type, the anti-Templar gains a new Hindrance from the following list: *big 'un*, *obese*, *bloodthirsty*, *death wish*, *grim servant o' death*, *mean as a rattler*, *scrawny* or *tuckered* 3.

Remember that these Hindrances don't usually just appear instantly—a character doesn't suddenly become obese the instant he gains that critical Corruption point. Instead, perhaps he starts feeling insatiably hungry over the course of the next few days, growing huge over a week or so. These Hindrances can be bought off normally (double the usual cost), though obviously this drains a whole lot of character points. When the character gains *all* of these Hindrances, he becomes a villain under the

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Marshal's control. Yup. Take the character sheet from the player—you now have yourself one grade-A villain who knows the rest of the posse's most intimate secrets and weaknesses. You can let the lost soul keep playing for a bit to keep things interesting, but once discovered, he should be retired from the posse and treated as a villain.

This is true even if the character had some of these Hindrances prior to becoming corrupted. If he gets them all, regardless of how, he becomes a fully-corrupted bad guy.

The most powerful of these true anti-Templars usually become servitors (see **Servitors** in Chapter Four of the Wasted West worldbook).

Hey, we warned those guys not to jump in the deep end of Hell.

Non-Player Character Anti-Templars

Once an anti-Templar becomes an apostle of the Reckoners, don't worry about keeping track of Corruption anymore. They're bad guys and they can use the Reckoners' blessings at will.

Modeen

The leader of this evil movement is, of course, Brad Modeen. The sad part is, he was true to Simon until the incident at Quissling. That's when he decided to become an anti-Templar. He was still basically good for the next several months until he found out about the power the Reckoners were willing to offer.

The outcast used the power wisely for a while. Each time he'd come close to death, however, he'd draw just a little more energy to save his skin. Soon, it became second nature to will the power of the Four Horsemen to course through his body. Eventually, his soul turned black as ghost rock. That's when he became the Destroyer.

Later on, Modeen told an idealistic young anti-Templar about the power the Reckoners offered. The youth reacted badly, and the surprised Modeen was forced to cut him in half. That's when the Destroyer realized he'd have to wrap the truth in a more attractive wrapper. He made up the lie about Julia Aiken appearing in his dreams and spoon-fed his enthusiastic followers what they wanted to hear—that all the power at their fingertips was just a way of using the Reckoners' power "against them."

Of course there is some truth to it. The Horsemen's blessings can be used for any purpose—there are no restrictions. An anti-

Templar just has to know when to use it and when not to. That's harder than it sounds.

Now for some big news. The adventure at the end of this book is all about Brad Modeen. In fact, with a little luck on the posse's part, he'll be slain.

That's okay, because Modeen has already played his greatest role by creating the anti-Templars. His deeds will leave a terrible stain on the Templars and their valiant efforts of restoring the Wasted West.

Ronan Lynch, Saint of Death

Thought we forgot about old Ronan, didn't you? No way, partner. Here's the scoop on the one Martyr that has—so far at least—appeared only to Simon himself.

Ronan is the patron saint of the doomed. He appears to those heroes whose deaths have already been set into motion. All Templars live on the edge, but Ronan only aids those whose doom is already set. Does this mean Simon's days are numbered? You figure it out.

Deed: Ronan appears to any Templar who, due to the deliberate plotting of the Reckoners or their minions, is inevitably going to die. It doesn't matter whether death is eight minutes or eight months off—what matters is that the clock is ticking, and the death cannot be avoided. By the way, even Simon doesn't know this yet. There's no reason a character visited by Ronan needs to know why.

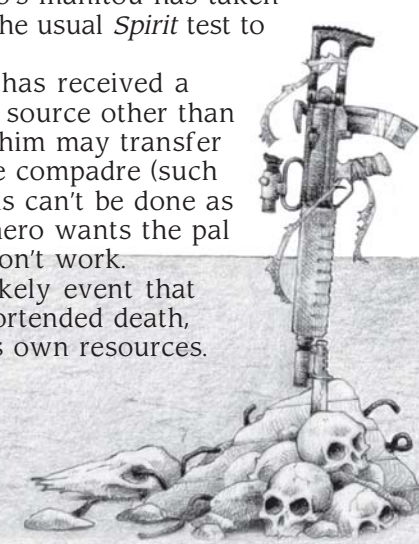
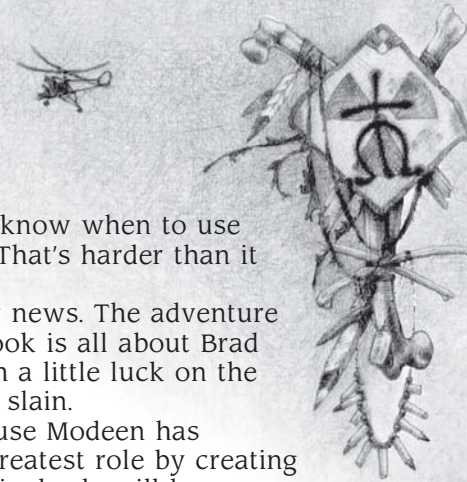
White: The character may make a natural healing roll. This power may only be invoked once every 24 hours, though it can be done in addition to *lay on hands*.

Red: The hero can use any Harrowed power one time, up to a maximum duration of his *faith* in rounds.

Blue The hero, or anyone he's with, gets a free attempt to resist possession. For example, a Harrowed character whose manitou has taken over gets a free shot at the usual *Spirit* test to regain control.

Legend: A hero who has received a killing wound from any source other than what is destined to kill him may transfer the damage to any close compadre (such as a posse member). This can't be done as a deliberate act—if the hero wants the pal to be hurt, the power won't work.

Vexation: In the unlikely event that the hero survives the portended death, Ronan leaves him to his own resources.



The Destroyer



Marshal: 110



Chapter Seven: The Destroyer



Evenin' friends. Gather 'round the firebarrel and let us tell you a tragic tale of a Templar gone bad. A tale of misery, of woe, and of the start of a whole new chapter in the saga of the Wasted West. A tale of Modeen.

The Story So Far

We told you the story of Julia Aiken and Brad Modeen earlier in this book. Go back and read up on them if you forgot, because knowing the origin of the anti-Templars, and Modeen the Destroyer in particular, is especially important to this story.

A few days prior to the start of the adventure, a trade caravan heading for Simon's Rock was creeping over the busted highways around Twin Falls, Idaho. Among the ruined outlying suburbs, they were attacked by a large and well-organized biker gang. The caravan was protected by several posses of hired guards, and they were holding up pretty well until something... well, unusual happened.

A dozen bikers, dressed in chain mail and armed with machine guns, came pouring over the horizon. These bikers were good shots, and nearly impossible to kill. Most frightening of all was that they wore black tabards with white crosses. Most in the caravan had heard of the anti-Templars, realized that's what these riders were, and knew they were trouble.

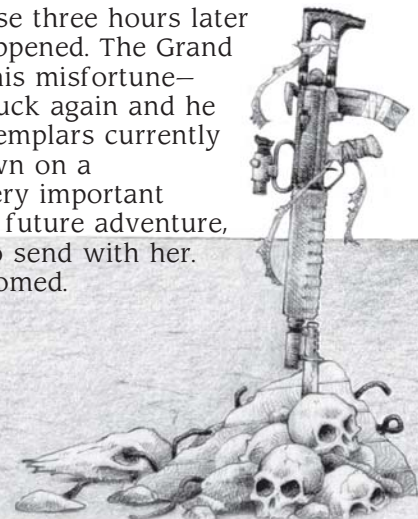
Finally, the caravan was forced to surrender or be destroyed. The survivors were rounded up and surrounded by the anti-Templars. Then, from a nearby hilltop, a lone rider dressed in heavy black armor and carrying a large battle-axe approached. He said he was the Destroyer, Brad Modeen, and he had a message for the caravan to deliver to the Templars in Boise.

The Destroyer threw a bag at the caravaners feet, pointed at the youngest of the survivors, and told her to deliver it to the Grand Master in Boise. He would keep the rest of the survivors, and starting tomorrow, would kill one caravaner each nightfall until the Templars responded to his message.

The girl, Daphne Dumar, had no idea what he meant by "respond," but it was obvious the blood-soaked bag had a head inside. All she could do was grab one of the caravan's remaining motorcycles and ride as fast as she could for Simon.

Daphne arrived in Boise three hours later and told Simon what happened. The Grand Master couldn't believe his misfortune—the Boise Horror had struck again and he had dispatched all the Templars currently in Boise to parts unknown on a mysterious mission (a very important mission we'll reveal in a future adventure, amigo). He had no one to send with her. The caravaners were doomed.

Marshal: ïïï



The Destroyer

The Setup

Then the heroes show up. We assume your group has one Templar and perhaps a few companions. If there is more than one Templar, that's fine. If there is no Templar and you still want to run this adventure, that's okay too, but you'll have to figure out what Simon is willing to pay for the posse's help. Also, he won't even ask for help from a particularly mercenary or incompetent group. They have to be basically good and very competent to be of any help. Otherwise they'll just get themselves *and* the caravaners killed (not to mention give a bad rep to the Templars).

Welcome! Sit Down. Shut up. Listen.

As soon as Simon becomes aware a Templar has entered Boise, he heads out to find him. Read the text below to the heroes a few minutes after they enter downtown Boise.

The ruins outside the Boise maelstrom looked like those around most other cities. Buildings lay rubble and blasted, scores of scorched cars filled the streets, and here and there old signs of the aftermath—battles fought between mutie bands over the last scraps of food—were evident.

Then you stepped through that raging, violent maelstrom. It hurt—like it always does—but seemed a knot or two slower than elsewhere. Maybe the Templars have something to do with it. Maybe you just got lucky.

Either way, you're through it now. Where you expected either more rubble, or perhaps a gleaming city of gold, there is neither. Instead, there are a few stone buildings and countless tents, lean-tos, and shacks made of scavenged debris. In this sea of temporary homes are several hundred people. Most mill about hastily-built kiosks, bargaining for food with bags of salvage. Others sit despondently, waiting to petition the Grand Master for aid. A much smaller number of young men and women look as if they hope to be squires. They duel with each other, most armed with little more than sticks or iron pipes. Compared to the semi-permanent population of aid-seekers, your band must look like veteran warriors. And you, the Templar, might just

be the one who takes them away from their misery and gives new meaning to their lives.

Give the heroes a moment or two to look around. With a Hard (9) *Cognition* roll, one of them might notice a young boy scamper off toward the Temple. There he alerts Simon that a Templar has arrived in town. A few minutes later, he returns and tells the heroes that the Grand Master would like to meet with them immediately. When they agree, read on.

The Temple is little more than a long meeting hall with several other rooms leading off the rear. The stone floor and walls emanate cold. You imagine that electric heaters once warmed this place in winter, but the gray stone looks as if it would never truly be comfortable. Much like the Templars relationship with the world itself. Necessary in personality. Tolerable in method. But cold.

Such thoughts are shaken from your skull when you see Grand Master Simon Mercer sitting upon a raised podium at the back of the room. Beside him is a man in a simple brown robe, like a robe of old. This is Librarian Fred Biletnikoff.

Simon nods, and begins.

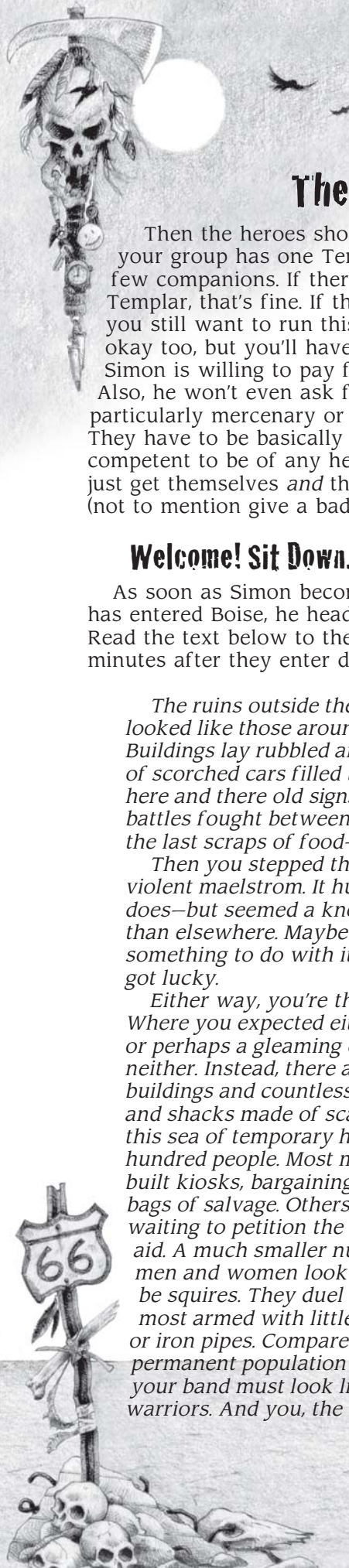
"Welcome, friends. Brother Templar. I'm sorry, but you have little time to spend here. We have a most dire emergency that must be dealt with immediately.

"Yesterday, a caravan heading for these parts was ambushed by a large gang. Leading this gang was a villain we call the Destroyer. He is an anti-Templar named Brad Modeen. We need to bring this murderer and thief to justice immediately.

"The Destroyer has taken the remaining caravaners hostage, and will kill one at nightfall each day until we 'respond' to this." Simon points to a table nearby. On it sits a gruesome head on a wet, bloody bag.

Have the Templar of the group make a *Knowledge* roll, but don't tell him the TN. Unless he goes bust, he makes it—the roll is just for show. He recognizes the head as that of Tim Brown, a fellow Templar.

Simon points to a young girl standing near the Templar entrance. "That is Daphne Dumar," Simon continues. "The



The Destroyer

Destroyer allowed her to live so that she could deliver his 'message.' She can guide you back to the site of the ambush. I need you to accompany her at once and bring this fiend to justice.

"I cannot offer you any help. I believe the Destroyer wishes to take the Temple, and I must organize a defense and gather any other Templars I can before he arrives. The people here are untrained and mostly unarmed so I'll need every last one of them here to hold the place.

"I can risk only you," Simon says to the Templar, "and your friends. Your small group may be able to do what an army can't: kill Modeen. If you can strike down the Destroyer before he moves on Boise, we will save many lives."

Simon looks to those of you who do not wear the tabard of the Templars. "If you succeed in this quest and honor our order, I will make you Companions. This is a great gift, for it allows the sacred Martyrs to smile upon you in times of need."

"Go now, my friends. And do not fail."

Simon Says

A Templar has no choice but to follow his Grand Master's direct orders. If his friends hold out for pay of some kind, Simon refuses. He believes his Templar is better off without such greedy companions.

A posse without a Templar can negotiate a bit. Simon doesn't like hiring greedy mercenaries, but he's not so stubborn he'll sacrifice the lives of the caravaners or risk the fall of the Temple for that principal. In fact, he's just using one unscrupulous force against another, and that's perfectly fine with him.

If the heroes have no Templar but seem good-hearted and recognize the importance of their mission, Simon still offers to make them Companions. You might want to point out to those who don't know that Companions can call for aid from the order, and more importantly, gain Martyr's blessings.

At any rate, the order has been given or the bargain struck. The heroes should leave for Twin Falls immediately. They have until nightfall of the following day before a caravaner is sacrificed, but as Simon and Daphne point out, they need plenty of time to scout out the "Destroyers" (as she calls them) and determine how best to defeat them.

Chapter One:

Twin Falls or Bust

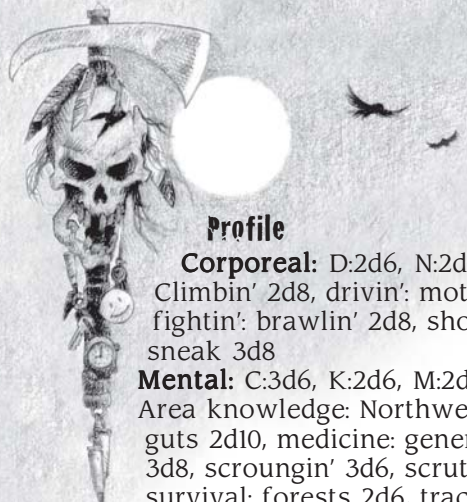
It's time to head for Twin Falls. The route is easy—just take old I-84 East, with an occasional detour to avoid the ruins and ghost-rock storms along the way.

Daphne doesn't know where the Destroyers' camp is. She's sure they'll be easy to track though—there were over 20 regular gangers, 13 anti-Templars, and the Destroyer himself.

Daphne Dumar

Daphne has traveled with the caravan for several years now. Her adopted father drives one of the team's semis. He's now a hostage, so she's anxious to make sure he survives this ordeal. For that reason, she won't put up with much stalling on the part of the posse. If they hang around Boise too long, she'll eventually take off without them. She's willing to stay with them, and even help out (she'd be a useful guide), if the heroes seem to know what they're doing. If not, she'll first attempt to hurry them along, then set off by herself if need be.





The Destroyer

Profile

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, Q:3d6, S:2d6, V:3d6

Climbin' 2d8, drivin': motorcycle, car 3d8, fightin': brawl in' 2d8, shootin': pistol, rifle 3d6, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d10
Area knowledge: Northwest 3d6, gamblin' 1d6, guts 2d10, medicine: general 2d6, persuasion 3d8, scroungin' 3d6, scrutinize 2d6, search 3d6, survival: forests 2d6, trackin' 2d6

Edges: Purty 1

Hindrances: Loyal 3, stubborn 2

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 16

Gear: A motorcycle. Her weapons and possessions were taken by the raiders.

I-84

I-84 is not a pleasant drive. It follows the Snake River Plain in a half circle from Boise down to Twin Falls and clear through to Montana. To the north of the highway are tall mountains, and to the south is the Snake River along with numerous canyons and vast expanses of soggy prairie. The rain from the mountains washes down through the plateau to the river and constantly warps the highway. During more civilized times, road crews kept it in good condition. These days, between the water, the ghost-rock craters, and the damage caused by occasional battles of the Last War, it's more like an obstacle course than a road.

It's 130 or so miles from Boise to Twin Falls. Daphne made good time on her bike—about five hours. If the heroes have bikes, they can do almost as well. It's relatively easy to swerve through the wrecked cars blocking the occasional town on a 2-wheeler.

If they have 4-wheeled vehicles, they'll make the trip in about eight to 10 hours due to the many detours they'll have to take.

On foot, the journey is five or six days at least (check out the traveling rules in the *Wasted West* for guidelines). This'll be a long adventure if the posse doesn't have a vehicle.

Each time the posse makes this trip (they'll do it more than once), have each character who is driving a vehicle make a Fair (5) *drivin'* roll for every four hours on the road. A driver who fails dings up his vehicle weaving in and out of the various obstacles, potholes, and craters along the

highway. Roll 1d6 damage to the vehicle, +1 per point the character missed the roll by. Make sure to reroll any Aces on the d6. It's possible to total a car running through a pothole that was deeper than it looked, but not real likely.

On a bust, the vehicle plunges through what looked to be a broad puddle, but turns out to be a massive crater several feet deep. The vehicle takes 3d6 damage, or 6d6 if the posse was pushing for speed. In any event, the vehicle becomes stuck in the crater. It takes some work to get it free. The roads are dangerous these days.

As if that isn't bad enough, somewhere outside of the town of Mountain Home (about halfway to Twin Falls), the posse is once again reminded of the true nature of the Reckoning.

Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-Bats, Man!

The Church of Christ sits just outside the Mountain Home maelstrom. Its shattered steeple towers over the landscape and pierces the winter sky. A bell can be seen just inside the tower, and it begins to ring as the posse passes by.

The bell rings whenever strangers come to town, all on its own. Stuff like that happens in a Deadland. This wouldn't be so bad if it didn't stir up the death bats that dwell within the steeple.

The bell tolls exactly 12 times, then stops for a 10-second pause—just enough time to lull the nervous party into thinking nothing happened.

Suddenly, hundreds of bats (actually, three hordes of Death Bats) fly from the steeple, darkening the sky around it. If the posse hasn't already scrambled for cover, they'd better. The horde of death bats soars high into the sky, then swoops down for the kill.

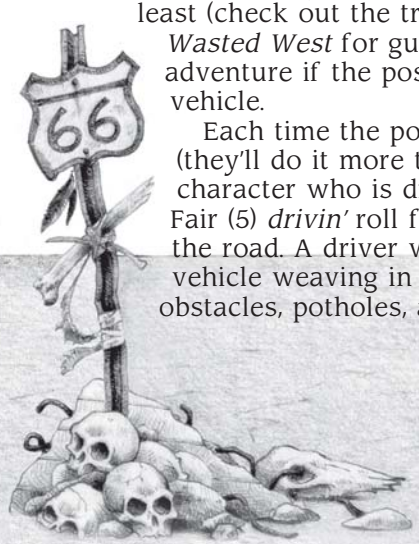
The bats attack the posse, and continue to do so until defeated or someone dies (see the profile, below), the tower bell is rung, or the posse escapes—the bats won't pursue the heroes more than five miles from their tower.

Observant characters (those making Hard (9) *Cognition* checks) might spot two skeletons on the pavement before the church, as if they'd fallen as they struggled to reach the bell tower.

Because the bats regenerate, they'll most likely be back the next time the heroes pass Mountain Home. Welcome to the Deadlands.

Some heroes might be tempted to solve the mystery of the Death Bats right away, but smart characters will remember that they have pressing business elsewhere. Maybe you'll want to develop the bats into an adventure of their own to follow this one, Marshal.

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The Destroyer

Death Bats

Corporeal: D:NA, N:4d10, Q:2d6, S:1d4, V:1d4

Fightin': brawlin' 2d10, flyin' 4d10

Mental: C:1d10, K:1d4, M:2d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d6

Pace: Special (see Special Abilities)

Size: Special (about 10 yards across)

Wind: NA

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Horde: The bats aren't individual creatures; rather, each horde is a single abomination. A horde can take 100 points of damage and receives a single Action Card. Projectile attacks cause 1 point of damage per bullet or magical bolt fired, or 3 points of damage per shotgun shell fired. Explosives and other area-effect attacks cause full damage. Wind damage doesn't affect them at all.

Life Drain: A Death Bat horde attacks by draining the life from its victims. Every living thing within the horde loses 1d4 Wind on the horde's actions. Armor protects only if completely sealed. Multiple hordes cannot cover the same area. The victim takes a wound to the guts for every negative multiple of his Wind lost.

Pace: Death Bats can go as fast as necessary to keep up with their prey, but they won't stray more than five miles from their tower.

Regeneration: Regardless of how badly they're hurt, the bats reform, unharmed, in their belltower at midnight.

Tenacious: Death Bats normally only return to their lair when someone dies. This horde has one other trigger—they'll retreat into the belfry if the bell rings again. Up to 11 tolls sends them back to their lair. On the 12th toll, they'll fly out again to look for prey.

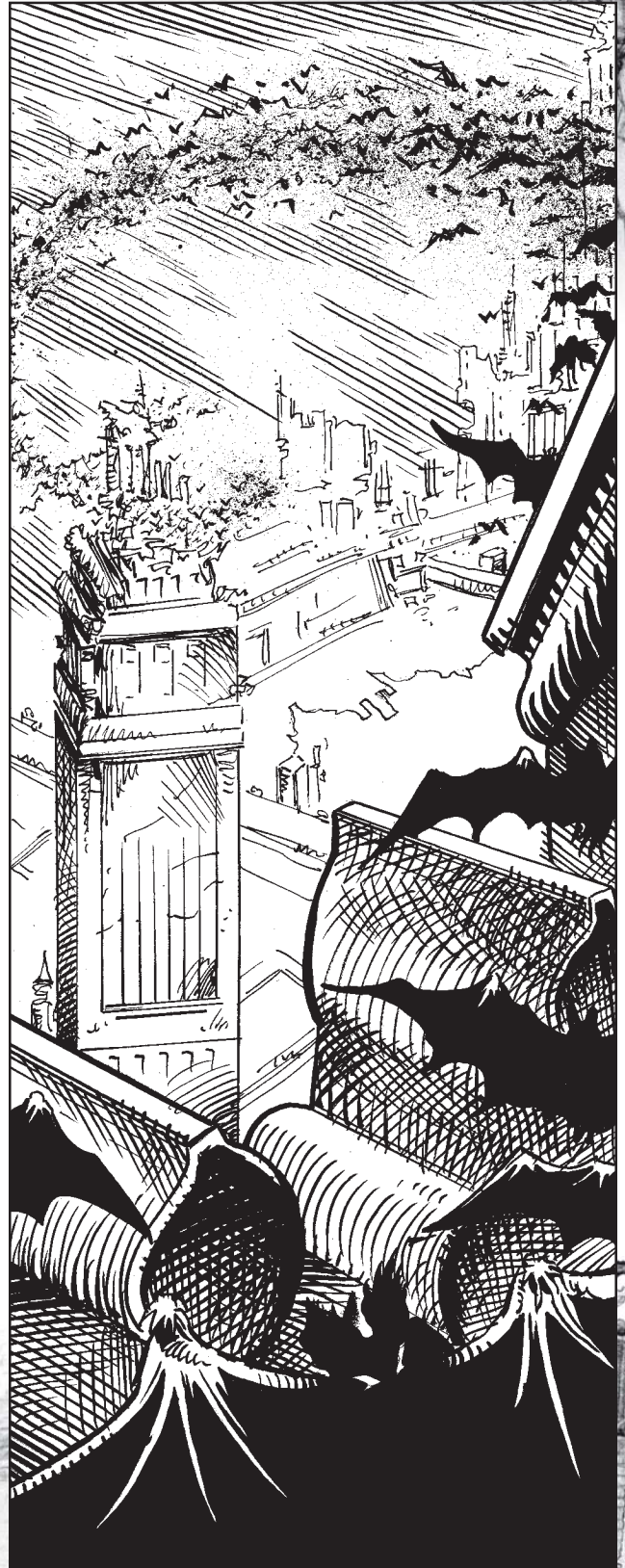
Description: From a distance a Death Bat horde looks like a dark cloud of perhaps 200 bats, but up close the individual bats look ragged and shapeless; more like flapping shreds of black cloth or plastic bags than actual animals.

Bounty

Accepting the mission without question: one white chip for the Templar.

Eyes on the prize: one red chip for heroes who remember that their business is elsewhere, and don't get hung up on the bats.

Ringin' the bell: one blue chip for the brainer who figured this one out and pulled it off.



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The Destroyer

Chapter Two: Orchard of Despair

Hang onto your Stetson, Marshal. This chapter is fairly momentous as adventures go. We're about to kill off a fairly major character in the history of the Templars. If you remember, when Simon first emerged from the lodge in Boise, one of the young men from the village was so impressed with him that he followed him for the next few years. This young man was Aaron McConnell, and he would become the first Templar after Simon.

He was a powerful knight for many years—until this unfortunate chapter. Read on and we'll tell you all about it.

Twin Falls Blues

The heroes approach Twin Falls along I-84 from the northwest. Describe to them the ruins of a major freeway, complete with pile-ups and crumbling overpasses with semi-trucks hanging perilously overhead.

Daphne directs them through this maze of destruction as best she can. They'll have to leave the road and go down through a gully or two where the overpasses are crumbled, but for the most part, they can stay on the highway.

Have vehicle drivers make one final Fair (5) *drivin'* roll. Those who fail suffer 1d6 damage to their vehicles as they push through rubble, drive down a gully, or get hit by falling debris from an overpass above.

On a bust, the vehicle is passing below an overpass when it nudges an overturned Volkswagen. The car spins slowly, dramatically, before its bumper hits a fractured support column for the overpass above. The overpass shudders, a semi perched precariously on the edge trembles, and the whole thing crashes down like thunder. The driver can make one last Incredible (11) *drivin'* roll to avoid the debris.

Those who don't make it take 20d12 massive damage—almost certain death. Light armor offers no protection against this crushing avalanche, but rigid armor works normally.

This Must be the Spot

Eventually, Daphne leaves the ruined highways for a more tolerable secondary road. A few miles north of Twin Falls, in a wide, soggy, prairie on the Snake River

Plateau, she points to a flock of buzzards circling over the next treeline. As the party clears the small woods, they see a number of charred, ruined vehicles—the remains of the caravan.

Investigating the Caravan

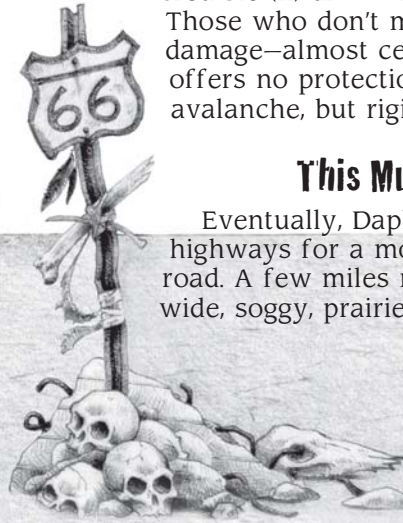
Daphne says she knows there were some explosions, but her father made her duck down and she has little idea what kinds of heavy weapons the Destroyers used to bring down the caravan. Smart player characters might be able to figure out what they're up against by examining the wreckage.

That's a grisly task, for the wreckage has just now cooled down enough for the scavengers to get to work. Several wild dogs, ranging from poodles to Great Danes, pull bodies apart, buzzards peck out eyeballs, and even a number of domestic cats paw through the scene, licking blood from the charred, steaming corpses. Obviously, humanity's former pets are just as lost and hungry as their masters. It's enough to make even a hardened veteran sick: have all characters make Fair (5) *guts* checks. Daphne's check is Hard (9) since these were her friends and "family."

Those who can stomach the carnage can now search the ruined vehicles for clues. Have anyone who does so make an Onerous (7) *search* roll. Those who are successful spy several large and deep blast holes in the largest trucks cabs—obviously the work of light missiles or rocket launchers. There are also a number of old and new bullet holes. With a raise, the heroes can determine that all the holes are of various calibers, but some of the newest ones are from a large machine gun, such as a .50 cal or a 20mm flak gun.

Most of the bodies were killed by gunshots or fire from their vehicles. A few have been cut deeply, as if by swords or battle axes. In fact, one of the corpses is that of a syker wearing the emblem of the Fightin' 43rd. Daphne says he and a few of the other bodies had hired on as guards. Let this be a warning to the posse.

The syker was one of those who survived to be captured. Daphne says the Destroyer saw the mind freak among the captives and had him separated from the others. Then, without another word, he swung his great ax and sliced the startled syker in half. Obviously, the Destroyer didn't care to have such a powerful prisoner. There was a purple-robed Doomsayer in the syker's party as well, but Daphne didn't see what happened to her.



The Destroyer

Difficulties with Daphne

The grisly scene puts Daphne in quite a mood. At first she's sad and doesn't say much. If the party dawdles, she begins looking for the Destroyers' tracks, finds them, and insists the group set out at once. She mounts up and heads north on her own if they don't. The heroes would do well to grab her before she gets too far, as she's likely to just get captured and warn the gang of the posse's approach.

A raise on a *persuasion* roll will keep Daphne in line for a while. Of course, the smooth-talker may have to catch her first if the posse is dragging its feet.

Trackin'

The Destroyer's tracks lead through an old corn field and onto a secondary road. Fortunately for the heroes, several of the raiders' vehicles are leaking oil. An Onerous (7) *trackin'* roll will keep the heroes on the greasy trail.

The heroes can't make very good time, however, because the tracker needs to look for oil drops at every intersection.

The trail ends up on a dirt road leading into an old apple farm.

The Orchard

Fear Level 4

The road passes into an orchard, where the heroes are met with a gruesome sight. Bodies hang by their necks from every tree. Some of the heavier corpses have stretched the necks so far they no longer look human. A very few have even separated.

A place like this should be filled with scavengers, but strangely, the only animals to be seen are black crows. There are hundreds of them sitting in the branches, watching the heroes. Oddly, there ground is littered nearly as densely with dead birds as it is with rotten apples (which the heroes are constantly stepping on)—this place is so tainted with evil that even the crows sicken and die here.

The crows don't attack, but the heroes shouldn't know that. Have the flock watch every move they make. Every sound threatens to fill the sky with this black host (much like the death bats did earlier). Heroes climbing trees (to cut down bodies, perhaps), a few score of crows move threateningly closer. Use the crows to establish tension and creep the posse out.



The Destroyer

That's Gotta Hurt

Once it is apparent the Destroyers aren't about, Daphne anxiously runs from tree to tree, looking for her father. She doesn't find him, but she does find one of the caravaners. It's the missing Doomsayer, a woman in her mid-forties named Barb. She has on ordinary clothes instead of her purple robe, but Daphne's sure it's her. As she tells the party her news, the Doomsayer suddenly starts kicking and gasping for air. She's still alive!

Barb managed to perch her toes on the tip of a branch, but it gave out a few minutes before the heroes arrived. They have about 30 seconds to rescue her or it's good night, Barb.

You think she'd be grateful, but as soon as she's cut down she starts to yell:

"Stay away!" she screams at the Templar. "Your kind has already come once. That's why they hung me. Stay away! Stay away! You'll only bring more death!"

Barb's a little on the hysterical side for a few minutes. A raise on a *persuasion* roll can help her calm down. Assuming they are successful, the party's Templar is likely to try to *lay on hands*. Unfortunately, a person hung in the orchard cannot be healed by magical means—not by Templars, Doomsayers, or any other magic-using type. A syker hung in the tree can't even heal himself. That's part of the curse of this floral Deadland. Victims hung here can heal normally, but any wounds suffered prior to being hung in the orchard cannot be healed by any kind of magic.

Anyway, when Barb calms down, she gives a little more useful information:

"I threw a few nukes at the bastards when they attacked, but I ran out of juice. When they captured us, they saw my friend Jimbo was a syker. I just happened to be wearing my "civvies" and I decided to keep my mouth shut about being a Doomsayer. Thankfully, the rest of the caravan played along.

"The raiders took us all to a field somewhere north of here. They had us fenced in the open in an old cow pasture. It was cold. Freezing. The gang camped out all around us, roasting God-knows-what on spits on their warm fires, taunting us with the heat and smell of food.

"Then there came the sound of fighting. We looked and saw a Templar cutting his way through several bikers. Several of us rushed to help, but the rest of the gangers already had their guns on us. I would have blasted them, but I was still short on juice.

"The Templar got to the Destroyer's tent before he was surrounded by the 13 black riders. He said he was Aaron McConnell. He had been tracking the Destroyers for months and had come for vengeance. He challenged the Destroyer to fight him alone.

"The Destroyer came out of his tent and said, 'You're the best Simon could do? Come on then, Aaron.' Just like he knew him. Then he walked out into the pasture and took off his helmet. The Templar said something then, but I couldn't make it out.

"Then the two of them went at it. The Destroyer had that huge ax and Aaron had a thin but fast sword. We all cheered for him, and it looked like he got the better of it for a while. Then the Destroyer laughed and dropped his ax. Aaron moved in like lightning and put his sword straight through the bastard's heart.

"The Destroyer staggered backward and grabbed the hilt. Then he pulled it free and laughed again, like the villain in some old movie. Aaron stood stunned as the Destroyer snapped his sword over his knee and threw the lower half at the Templar. It caught him in the gut and Aaron fell to his knees.

"The Destroyer said one of us would hang for this. I volunteered, both because I had agreed to protect the caravan, and because I thought my powers might come back in time to give us a chance.

"They brought Aaron and me here. They hung him first, in that big tree on the hill. The Destroyer did it himself. He told him something just before he let him drop, but I couldn't make it out. Then they all walked down the hill and brought me out into the orchard.

"I had enough juice for one last blast, but after seeing what they did with the Templar, I got another plan. It was obvious they didn't stick around to see what happened, so I decided to just let them hang me and hope they rode away. Then I'd use my healing powers to save myself, and maybe the Templar too. Then we could make it to Boise and get a whole freakin' army of Templars!

The Destroyer

"The Destroyers did just what I hoped. They hung me, mounted up, and rode off before I stopped kicking. I managed to balance myself on a branch and tried to use my powers, but nothing happened. My hands were bound so I couldn't even blast myself free. Just a few minutes ago, my branch finally broke and I started to strangle. I reckon I'd be dead now if you hadn't come along.

"I don't think there's much hope for the Templar now, but we should check. He's on that big tree at the head of the orchard.

Barb of Doom

Barb has little else useful to say. In fact, the heroes should run immediately to the Templar's Tree at the head of the orchard to check on Aaron. When they do, Barb hobbles after them as best she can. She's got a heavy wound to the head (her throat) and she's down to 1 Wind, but otherwise, the Doomsayer is in relatively decent shape.

Profile

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d6, Q:3d6, S:3d6, V:3d10
Climbin' 1d6, dodge 3d6, drivin' car 3d6, fightin':
brawlin' 3d6, sneak 3d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:3d8, M:2d8, Sm:2d10, Sp:3d10
Academia: physics 3d8, area knowledge: Nevada
2d8, demolition 2d8, faith 5d10, guts 4d10,
medicine: general 3d8, persuasion 3d8,
scroungin' 3d10, scrutinize 2d8, search 3d8,
survival: desert 2d10, trackin' 2d6

Edges: Arcane background 3: Doomsayer, luck
o' the Irish 3

Hindrances: Enemy 3: Cult o' Doom, loyal 3,
oath 3

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 20

Special Abilities:

Doomsayer: Strain: 10. Powers: Atomic blast,
deathspeak, nuke, sustenance, tolerance,
touch o' the Doomsayers

Gear: Barb has nothing but the clothes she used
to wear under her robe.

The Templar's Tree

At the head of the orchard, on a small knoll, sits a lonely, gnarled tree. With twisted, gnarled branches that spread broadly about it, it looks like something transplanted from the Serengeti—one could almost expect to see big cats lying on the branches or under its boughs.

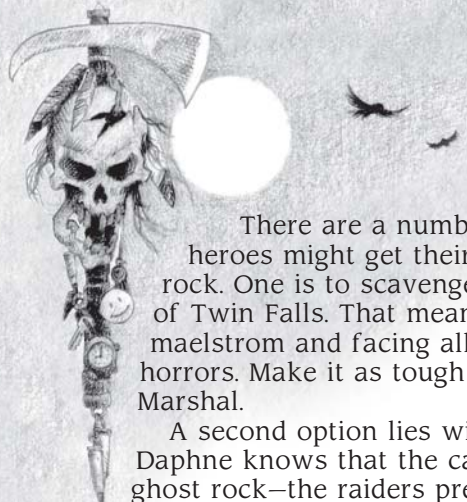
Hanging from the tree are three bodies, all of them dressed in Templars' tabards. The one closest to the front is that of Aaron McConnell, the first Templar trained by Simon. Any Templar can make a Hard (9) Knowledge roll to recognize him (make it easier if one of the heroes has actually met Aaron). Any hopes the posse has of saving Aaron are dashed as soon as someone checks him. He's dead, Jim. This should be a powerful sign to any Templars in the posse that the Destroyer is not to be taken lightly. Even worse, Daphne points out, they'll never know why his sword-thrust didn't kill the Destroyer.

"Not so fast," Barb says as she hobbles up the hill. She tells them that if they can get her an ounce of ghost rock, she can speak to Aaron's spirit. At worst, he'll have some last words to impart. At best, he might have some insight into defeating the Destroyer.

Is There Any Ghost Rock in the House?

If the posse has some ghost rock, you can move right on to the "canned speech" below. Otherwise, the heroes will have to come up with some—Barb needs it for her *deathspeak* miracle.





The Destroyer

There are a number of ways the heroes might get their hands on ghost rock. One is to scavenge for it in the ruins of Twin Falls. That means crossing into a maelstrom and facing all sorts of potential horrors. Make it as tough as you care to, Marshal.

A second option lies with the raiders. Daphne knows that the caravan had some ghost rock—the raiders presumably took it. With some scouting around, the heroes can find a small group of them camped about a mile from the orchard, keeping watch of Route 93 where it approaches from the south. How the heroes deal with them and what results depends on your players' decisions (use the profiles on page 127, but the camped raiders do have three ounces of the looted ghost rock on them.

Famous Last Words

Once Barb has some ghost rock, she spends a few minutes kneeling beside Aaron's body. Suddenly, the ghost rock in her hand ignites and begins its characteristic wail. Read the following when you're ready. We recommend dimming the lights and turning on some creepy music here.

"Who summons me from the light?" says the wailing ghost rock.

"Friends," says Barb. "Friends who want to avenge your death. What can you tell us of the one who slew you?"

"He is Modeen, the Destroyer. He has given himself to the powers of Hell in return for incredible power. He is what the Librarians call a 'servitor,' and can only be killed by the sword of the first anti-Templar. This he told me as he hung me from this accursed tree. He believed this knowledge would be kept secret for he knew I was doomed. Your spell, Doomsayer, has changed the balance. Those among you can end this blasphemy's life with this knowledge. You must hurry, though, for Modeen has set events in motion that even he does not understand.

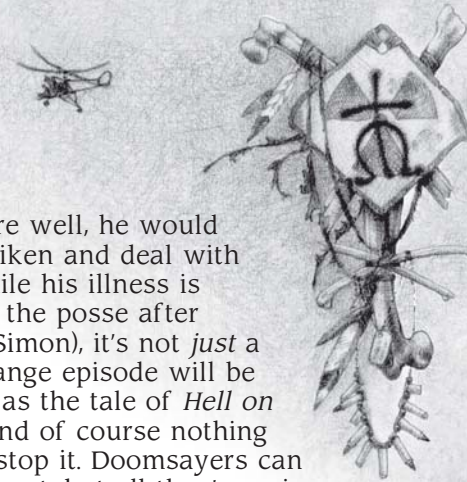
"That is all I know. Let me rest in peace now."

At that the light goes out.

It's Templar tradition to return the bodies of fallen Templars to Boise as soon as possible; in addition to Aaron there are three others.



The Destroyer



Loose Lips Kill Servitors

Modeen has made a fatal mistake in telling Aaron about his weakness. That's ironic, because Modeen read as many books and watched as many movies as anyone before the War. He knew the downfall of the villains was that they always revealed their plans, put the heroes in some sort of death trap, and then walked away only to be killed by them later. He swore he'd never do something so foolish.

So he told Aaron of his weakness and hung him. Combined with his fatal wound to the stomach, Modeen knew the Templar would die in just a few minutes—and he did. He just never figured that the miserable “civilian” he'd chosen to hang as well was a Doomsayer.

Such is fate. The good guys occasionally catch a break even with *Hell on Earth*.

Now the task is to get the sword of the first anti-Templar. A Templar who's read the player's section of this book, as we intended, knows all about the first anti-Templar. Her name was Julia Aiken, and it was Modeen himself who put an end to her. Aiken's sword should be back in Boise.

The Destroyer has already hung someone tonight, so the heroes have until the following night before another innocent caravaner is killed. They'd best get on the road.

Bounty

Tracking the Destroyers: One white chip for the hero that did the tracking.

Saving Barb: One red chip.

Barb casts *deathpeak*: One white chip, plus an extra to the hero (if any) who ponied up her own ghost rock for the miracle.

Chapter Three:

Back to Boise

The Death Bats are still at Mountain Home, and if midnight has tolled they're all ready for the posse to pass by again. You might hit them with another encounter or two on the way, as well. And of course they need to make their two *drivin'* rolls like they did on the way to Twin Falls. Traveling the wastes is tough business!

When they finally make it to Boise, they are met by Biletnikoff, the Librarian. He says that Simon cannot meet with them, for he is in the throes of some strange disease. It's true. Simon lies in his simple bed, tossing and turning

deliriously. If he were well, he would take the sword of Aiken and deal with Modeen himself. While his illness is convenient (it sends the posse after Modeen, instead of Simon), it's not *just* a plot device. This strange episode will be explored more fully as the tale of *Hell on Earth* goes on. Oh, and of course nothing the posse does can stop it. Doomsayers can *touch* him all they want, but all they're going to get is jollies.

If someone looks into Simon's brain somehow, they'll see a nightmare reminiscent of that experienced by the Harrowed. In Simon's dreams, he battles the creature known as the Soul Taker over and over. His comrades—Jo, Aaron, and Doc Young—are with him. They die over and over, sometimes by the minions of the Soul Taker, sometimes as it takes them over and Simon is forced to kill them himself. Freaky, huh?

Biletnikoff Fills In

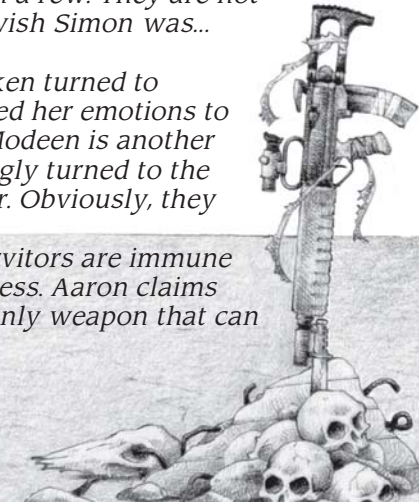
For now, Biletnikoff is more than able to help the heroes out. There are still no other Templars in Boise (mainly because Modeen has already intercepted and slain four who were heading there), but he can give them the sword of Aiken—as long as there's a Templar in the party. If there's not, you've got a problem, Marshal. There's two ways to fix this. First, if one of the heroes is very virtuous and Biletnikoff has seen or heard some example of his courage, he'll give up the sword. Second, the heroes can simply steal it. They'll just need to break into the Hall of Heroes, not an incredibly difficult task, and look for the broken sword. It even says “Julia Aiken” under it if the posse has a brain embolism once they get inside.

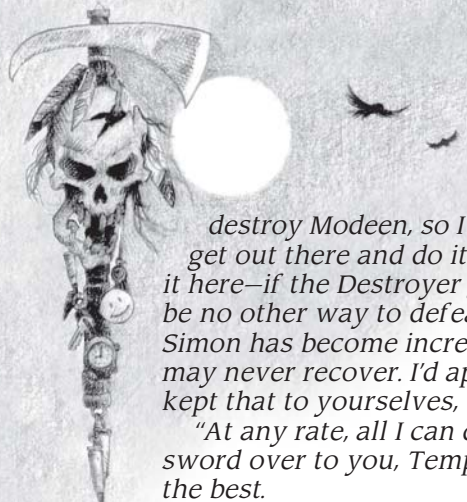
Assuming there is a Templar in the group, read the following as Biletnikoff leads them to the Hall of Heroes and says the following:

“A servitor. That would only make sense. I've studied several of these horrors. Simon has even slain a few. They are not to be trifled with. I wish Simon was... well.”

“I suspect Julia Aiken turned to darkness—she allowed her emotions to get the best of her. Modeen is another matter. He has willingly turned to the Reckoners for power. Obviously, they listened.”

“As you know, servitors are immune to all but one weakness. Aaron claims Julia's sword is the only weapon that can





The Destroyer

destroy Modeen, so I guess you'd best get out there and do it. I prefer to keep it here—if the Destroyer gets it, there may be no other way to defeat him. Still, Simon has become increasingly ill, and he may never recover. I'd appreciate it if you kept that to yourselves, by the way.

"At any rate, all I can do is hand this sword over to you, Templar, and hope for the best.

The Librarian unlocks the door to the Hall of heroes. He leads you to the back, behind the raised platform, to a long, wide wall where the swords of fallen Templars are placed. No more than a dozen hang on the wall, though there are places for thirty or more. Beneath each sword scion is a list of names and dates, the owners and the dates they fell.

One of them is broken at the middle. Beneath it are the words, "Julia Aiken, 2091."

"As you know," Biletnikoff explains, "Simon broke Julia's sword when Modeen returned it to us. Simon declared that it would not be passed on further.

The Librarian reaches for the sword but stops, almost as if he is afraid to touch it. Then he simply points at the thing. "There. Take it."

Biletnikoff turns and walks toward the door. "Good luck."

The Sword of Aiken

A Templar who handles the sword gets a cold chill up his spine. Maybe it's just superstition taking hold. Right...

The sword is tainted as Hell. It's the weapon of the first anti-Templar. You expect any less? Thought not.

Here's the deal. The fact that it can kill Modeen is *his* weakness—not a power of the sword. It is a relic, however, and a wicked one at that.

Julia's sword was a US Marine dress saber. It's broken about 18" from the pommel and ends in what looks like a clean break, but is actually jagged and cuts anyone who touches it (this isn't enough to cause a *Vigor* check as described below, however—it's just a creepy effect).

The sword, though truncated, can be used as normal. It causes STR+1d6 damage against most foes. Against Templars, it has an additional effect. Every time it causes at

least 1 Wind or any level of wound, the Templar must make a Fair (5) *Vigor* check or die. When he dies, the sword sticks for a moment and literally sucks out his life force, leaving behind a shriveled, grotesque husk. Each Templar killed by the blade raises the TN of the *Vigor* checks by +1, to a maximum of 15 after 10 Templars have been spitted on its jagged edge. Nasty, huh?

The sword has *no* special effect on anti-Templars (except Modeen, of course). It does, however, work on blackballed Templars or others of the order who have fallen from grace, but haven't donned the black tabard or sold their souls to the Reckoners.

One More for the Road

Sword in hand, the posse must travel back to Twin Falls one last time. As before, Marshal, hit them with a couple of *drivin'* rolls, another round with the Death Bats, and maybe another encounter or two.

Bounty

Recovering the sword of Aiken: One white chip each.

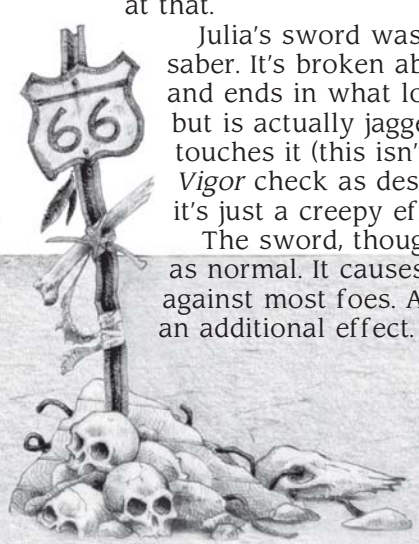
Getting into Simon's head: One blue chip for the syker (or other character type) who peeped into Simon's psyche. That oughta scare him.

Chapter Four:

Warmup

Observant heroes have a chance to even up the odds a bit. As they near Twin Falls, have the heroes make an Onerous (7) *Cognition* roll to spot a group of 30 or so Destroyers in a copse of woods a few hundred yards off the highway. They're refueling their bikes at their secret cache of spook juice.

Not knowing if Modeen is in this group, the posse will probably want to jump these guys. It turns out Modeen isn't here, though one of his anti-Templar followers is. That's okay. This is a good chance for the heroes to warm up, to take out half of the Destroyers before the big fight, and, if any of the bad guys survive, to find out exactly where Modeen's camp is. (If Barb is still around, she can show them the way (she watched very carefully), but she's pretty certain that was a temporary camp—the gang has probably moved by now.)



The Destroyer

One last point. If the heroes mix it up with the anti-Templar leading this bunch, they'll find out just how tough a fight they're in for.

Ske-Boom!

Clever heroes might see an easy way to get most of the bikers and the anti-Templar down fast. An incendiary round or an explosive has a very good chance of detonating the spook juice inside the old truck that serves as the gangers' storage tank. A junker or road warrior type might even make a Fair (5) *Knowledge* roll to smell the juice and verify that's what's in the truck.

The heroes still need to be careful here. First, spook juice probably won't ignite if it's hit by a normal bullet (give it a 1 in 10 chance). Again, a junker, road warrior, or any character who's been in many road battles might know this. An incendiary round is exactly the opposite. It has a 9 in 10 chance of igniting the spook juice. Conventional explosives like grenades have a 3 in 10 chance of setting off the juice, as long as they go off within their first burst radius of the truck (these demolitions are mostly concussion and shrapnel with very little fire). An explosive

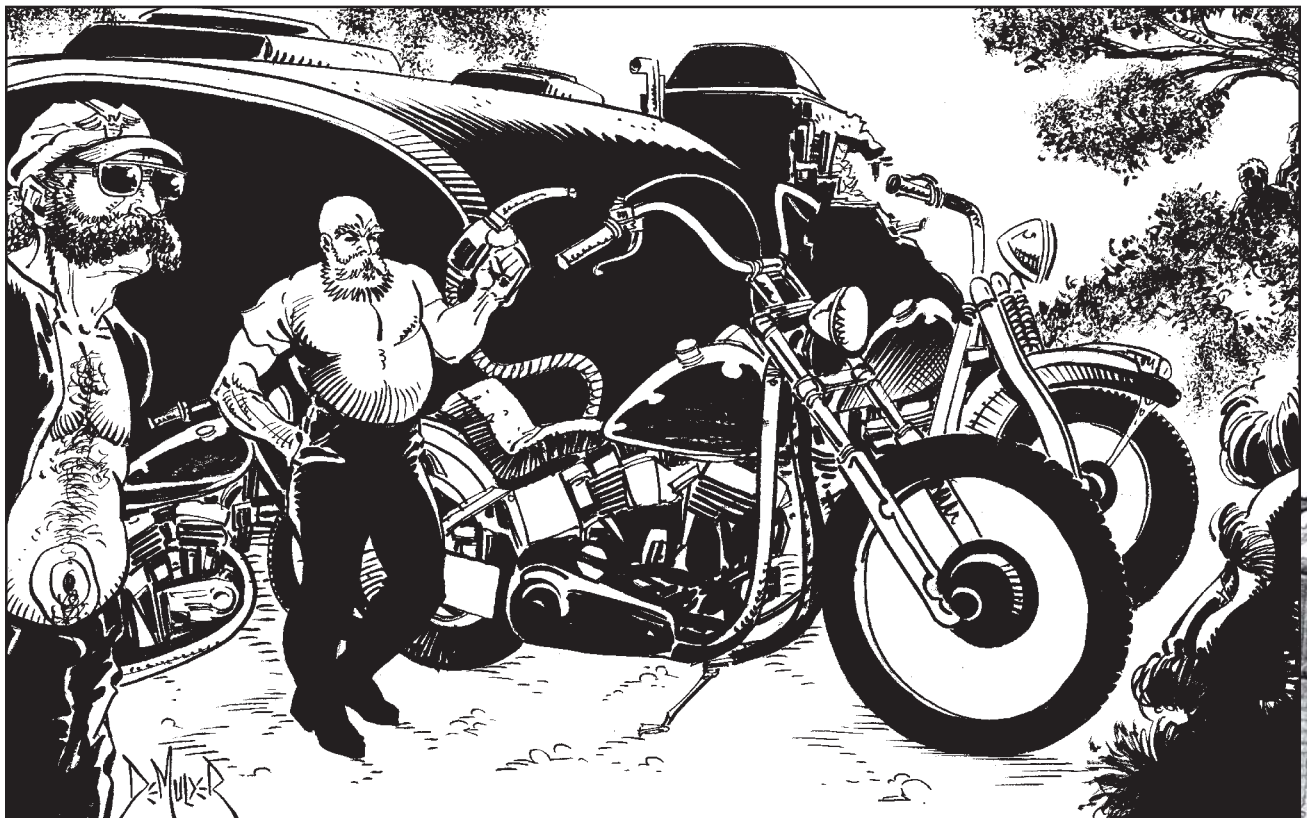
that generates open flame or intense heat, like a Molotov cocktail or a *nuke*, has a 7 in 10 chance of going kaboom.

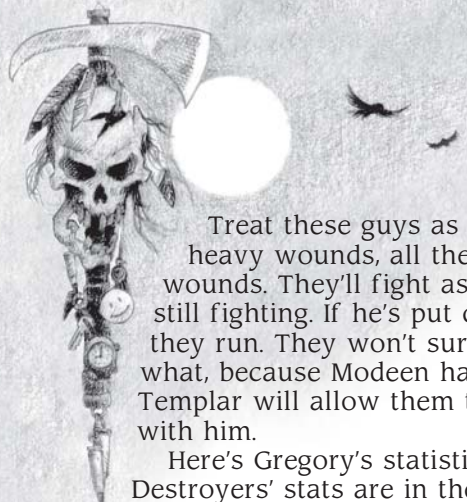
If and when the spook juice is ignited, it causes 15d20 damage with a burst radius of 5 yards. Calculate out the damage if you want, but if the heroes are in cover, it's best just to say they're safe while the bad guys are leveled with a few survivors, and these guys are in no shape to keep fighting (except for the anti-Templar, see below).

If the heroes aren't too lucky—if they pop rounds into the truck expecting a MovieTown explosion and nothing happens—they've just given the Destroyers a warning. The gangers charge the posse with guns blazing. Oops!

Gregory, an Anti-Templar

Regardless of what happens, Gregory, one of Modeen's anti-Templars, survives. If the posse wiped out the rest of the gang with the explosion, he's got a heavy wound to his left arm and a light wound to the head and guts. He's up and ready to fight 1d4 rounds after the big bang. Another 2d4 gangers rally to his side.





The Destroyer

Treat these guys as thugs. Two have heavy wounds, all the rest have light wounds. They'll fight as long as Gregory is still fighting. If he's put down or captured, they run. They won't surrender no matter what, because Modeen has warned them no Templar will allow them to live after running with him.

Here's Gregory's statistics. The rest of the Destroyers' stats are in the next chapter.

Profile (Gregory)

Corporeal: D:1d10, N:2d8, Q:3d10, S:4d8, V:3d10
Climbin' 3d8, dodge 5d8, drivin': car, motorcycle 4d8, fightin': brawlin', sword 5d8, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:2d6, K:3d6, M:2d8, Sm:3d8, Sp:2d10
Academia: occult 4d6, area knowledge: upper West 4d6, faith 5d10, guts 6d10, overawe 4d8, scrutinize 4d6, search 3d6, shootin': pistol, rifle, shotgun, SMG 5d10, survival: desert 2d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: anti-Templar, thick-skinned 3, Grit 2

Hindrances: Loyal 3, oath 3

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 20

Special Abilities:

Templar: Rewards: Armor of the saints 5, celerity 3. Greater Rewards: Celerity.

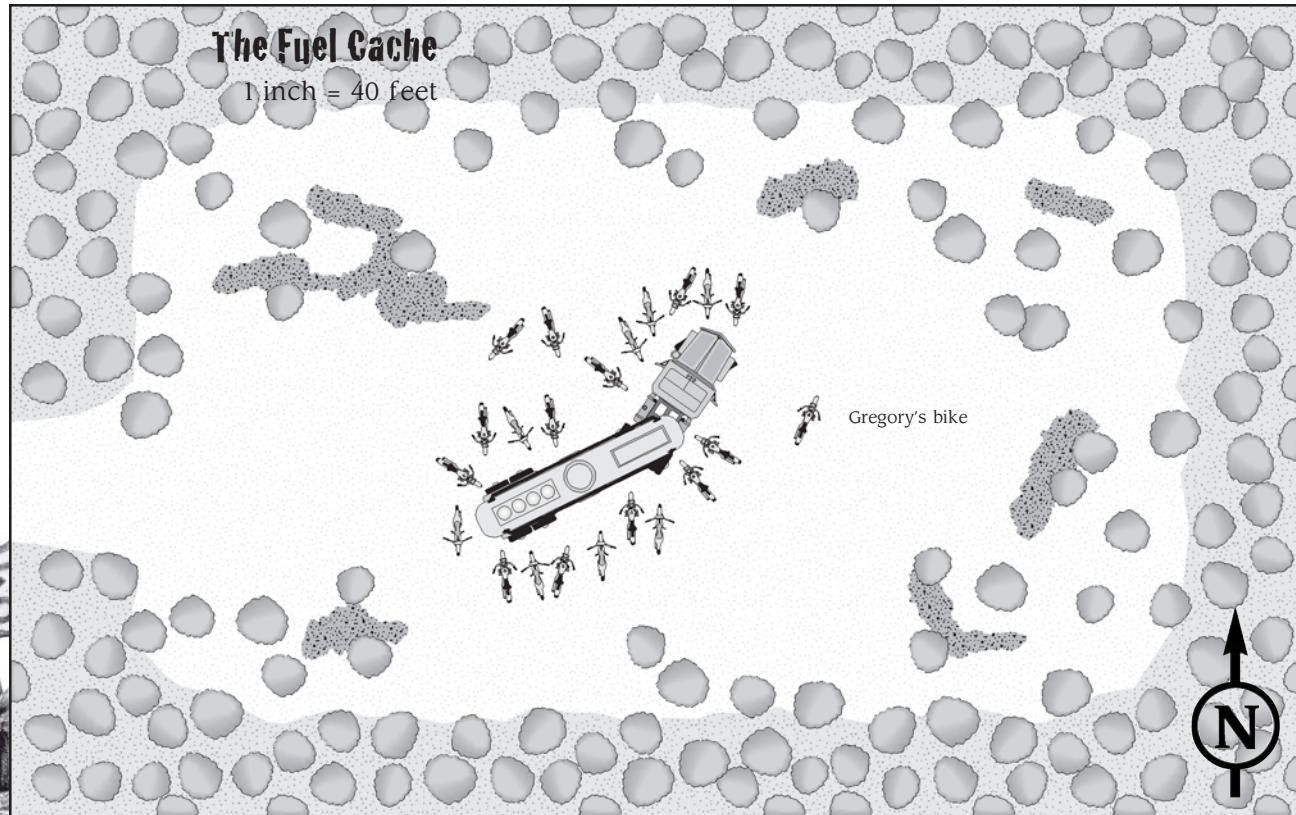
Blessings: Gregory won't hesitate to call on the Reckoners for aid.

Gear: An ax (STR+2d8) and a pump shotgun with a full magazine plus 11 additional rounds.

The Prophecy

Gregory takes a good deal of "prompting" before he'll talk. Any of the other gangers (assuming Gregory's out of sight) will spill their guts in a heartbeat if they think it'll keep them alive. The gangers know what Gregory knows, but won't be quite so dramatic in their telling. If your heroes get the story from these lowers, paraphrase the information below. If they make the anti-Templar talk, he takes the opportunity to do a little preaching. Read the text below:

"I used to live in Hunter, SoCal. We had a couple hundred survivors there. It was off the beaten path so we had little trouble from raiders. Some of our neighbors weren't so lucky."



The Destroyer

"Then the local muties rose up. They wiped out a town near us, then headed our way. A Templar showed up. She said she could save us, but she wouldn't. She said we hadn't helped out neighbors when they asked for our aid, and now we could suffer for it.

"Some hero, huh? I think she was just a coward. That's how they do it, you know. They pretend to go around helping people, but they really just take the job when it's easy. If it looks like they're gonna loose, they just take off and say you don't deserve their help.

"So our town got wiped out. Me and a few other survivors wandered for a while before we got captured by the Destroyer. He said the self-righteous Templars were the true evils of the world. They pretended to fight for good though they turned their backs on those who needed them most. The Destroyer vowed that he would destroy the selfish fools and remake the world in his image, where the strong didn't serve the weak—we would rule them!

"The Destroyer said he was the first true anti-Templar. And those who fought beside him would one day serve beside him. The best of us could become anti-Templars ourselves, and one day rule our own kingdoms with him as our King.

"Now it is time. The Destroyer has prophesied that Simon will die before the dawn breaks! Either he will come to us, or we will go to him!

Gregory doesn't volunteer any more information, but with a little more "prompting," he or one of the gangers will eventually say that the gang is meeting at the orchard in less than an hour. Now that he's decided to head to Boise and he no longer needs the hostages, the Destroyer is going to hang the remainder of the caravaners among the evil apple trees. If Simon doesn't show by the time the last hostage dies, the gang will move on Boise.

Big Talk

Modeen has taken a big chance. He figured Simon himself would come tonight. If the Grand Master didn't show, the Destroyer could simply claim he was a coward, then use it as an excuse to march on Boise with his gang—which is exactly what he's now going to do. If Simon did

show, Modeen is confident that the Grand Master couldn't possibly know of the servitor's one weakness, so he would win the fight.

It was a fairly safe bet—except that Simon couldn't come because of his mysterious illness, and Barb's use of *deathspeak* has let the cat out of the bag about Modeen's weakness.

Move It, Heroes!

The heroes had best get moving if they want to save the caravaners. If they're slow in acting and Daphne's still around, she'll pull her usual stunt of pushing the gang until she gets frustrated enough to run off on her own.

Bounty

Detonating the fuel truck: One red chip for the brainer that comes up with the idea, and a white one for everyone else—provided it works and most of the Destroyers go down without a fight. We like explosions!

Greg spills the beans: One white chip for the interrogator.

Chapter Five:

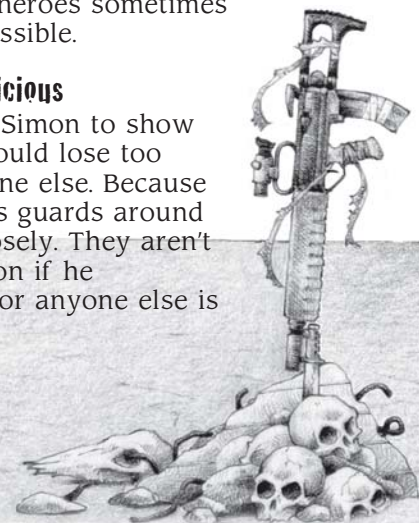
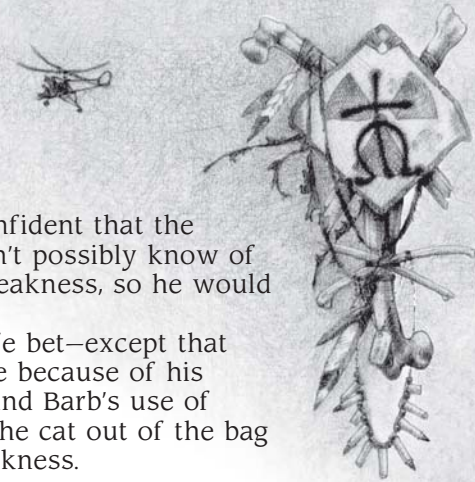
Modeen

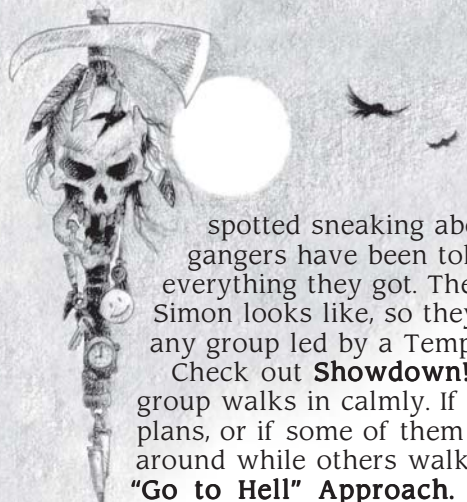
As Gregory or the gangers said, the rest of the Destroyers are heading to the orchard to hang caravaners like Christmas ornaments. Modeen is going to rope up one every hour until Simon shows up.

Besides Modeen, there are 20 well-armed gangers and three more anti-Templars. The rest of the anti-Templars have already been sent away to spread their cause. Modeen wants to ensure that the anti-Templars live on in case Simon should somehow defeat him. He's read enough fiction to know heroes sometimes win even when it's impossible.

Shoot 'em If They Act Suspicious

Modeen truly expects Simon to show up. The Grand Master would lose too much face sending anyone else. Because of that, he's stationed his guards around the orchard to watch closely. They aren't supposed to fire on Simon if he approaches singly. If he or anyone else is





The Destroyer

spotted sneaking about suspiciously, the gangers have been told to open up with everything they got. They don't know what Simon looks like, so they'll hold their fire if any group led by a Templar walks in calmly.

Check out **Showdown!** (just below) if the group walks in calmly. If they have other plans, or if some of them get caught sneaking around while others walk in calmly, read **The "Go to Hell" Approach**.

Showdown!

Modeen accepts any challenge to personal combat by a Templar. If the challenger isn't a Templar, Modeen lets him get close, then orders the gang to open up. Remember, this guy's canny and smart. He wants to put on a show for his gang so he'll accept some risk, but he isn't willing to die for it.

When he sees the broken sword, he instantly recognizes it as Julia Aiken's. A Hard (9) *Cognition* check, onlookers might see the hastily-masked look of shock on the anti-Templar's face. It's bad enough the sword can kill him, but how on earth could the heroes have found out? He's only told one person—Aaron McConnell—and he was definitely dead minutes after the gang hung him from the tree.

The Destroyer's first tactic is to laugh, but a Hard (9) *scrutinize* roll detects a little nervousness to it. Then, if the rest of the gang is watching (as opposed to fighting), he backs away and says "I came here to kill Simon, not his lackeys!" When this happens, give the characters about five seconds to respond while Modeen turns and walks away. Then he says "Kill them," and the gang starts shooting. Read **The Go to Hell Approach**.

If the heroes act fast during that five second interval, they might be able to goad the Destroyer into a one-on-one match. He doesn't want to, but if they successfully *ridicule* him with at least one raise, he'll be forced to turn and fight or lose face with the gang. Even then,

once in single combat, he'll look for a way to start the rest of the group fighting so he can make his escape. If none of those occasions arise, he'll fight for a round or two to see if maybe he can win. If he can, he presses the attack. If he can't, he says (lamely) "They're in the trap, men! Kill them!" and backs away.

In the end, just remember that Modeen isn't going to stand there and duke it out with someone who has the only item on

Earth that can kill him. Play him smart, Marshal. Pretend he's your character and figure out how you'd get him out of this situation.

Having said all that, we fully expect Modeen to die. In fact, he should lose to give your Templar character one very cool reward (we'll get to that soon). He won't go gentle into that good night, either. We're not talking about just fudging dice rolls and spending chips to keep him alive. We're talking about using genuine wits. We know you've got a lot to keep track of, but when Modeen's actions come around, think hard, think mean, and think survival. He really doesn't want to lose face here, but if he has to, there's a lot more scum to be recruited in the wastelands.

The "Go to Hell" Approach

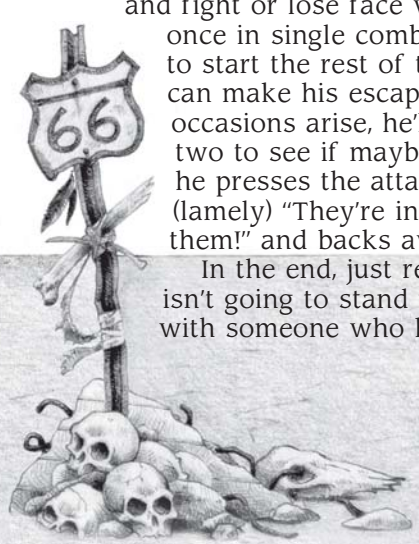
Here's what happens if the posse tries something other than just walking up and challenging Modeen. They might attempt to surround the gangers, for example, or infiltrate the group, and so on. You'll have to play it by ear for the most part, Marshal, but here's the basic situation:

The Destroyers hang one caravaner every hour. There are 11 left, including Daphne's stepfather, Sean Dumar. If Daphne's around, she won't allow a single caravaner to die before doing something. You'll have to determine what, Marshal, but she may even do something as drastic as grabbing the sword and running at Modeen. Even if the posse somehow holds her back, just about no force on Earth can stop her from doing something when it's her stepfather's turn at the rope.

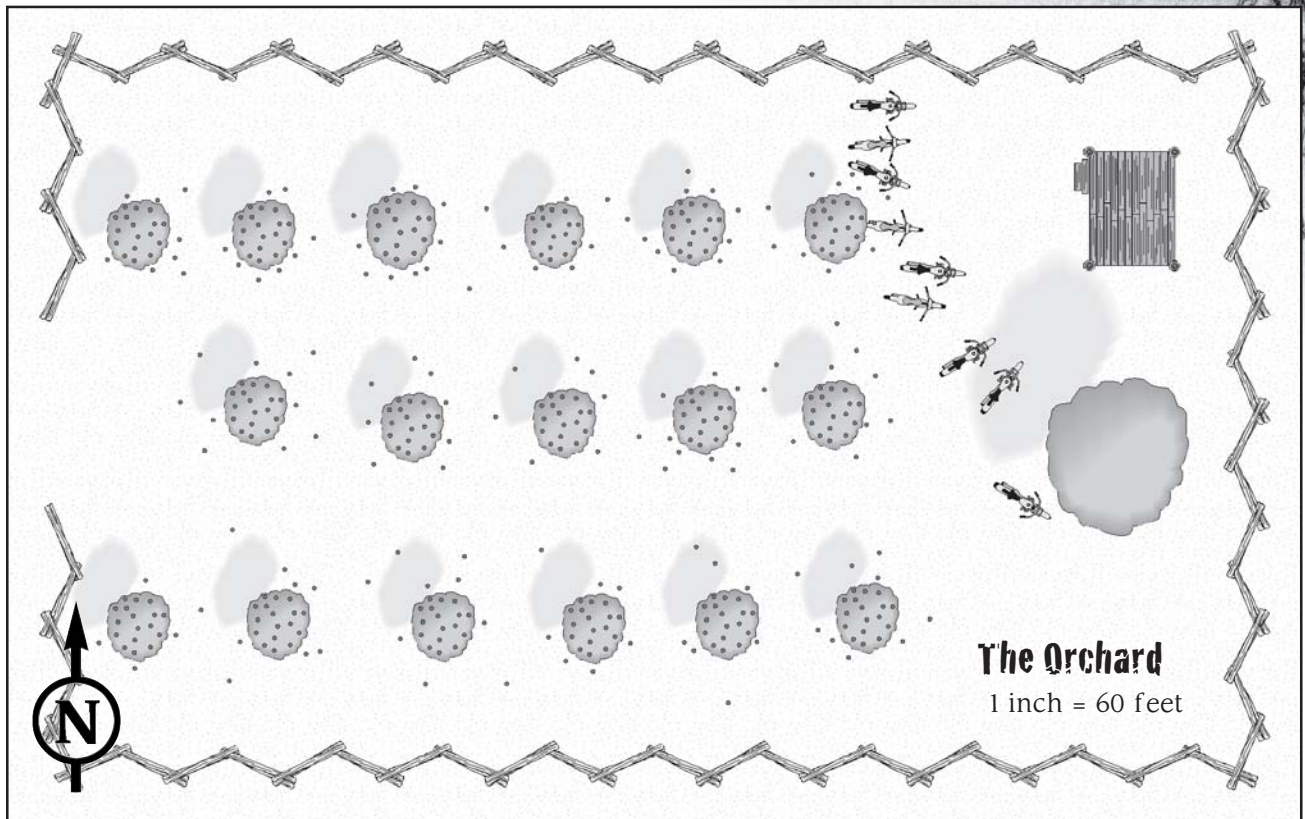
The Big Fight

The Destroyers are on high alert, so any little slip-up is likely to result in a very large combat. Hey, there's nothing wrong with that. In fact, as we mentioned before, we like lots of explosions. Be warned, though, that the Destroyers are one nasty bunch. They're likely to tear the posse a new cornshoot if you run them with even a little tactical ability.

When all Hell does break loose, Modeen goes after any Templars in the group himself (remember, he gets rewards for killing these guys). His remaining three anti-Templars do the same, and only back off once he tells them to. All of them prefer to use their guns to kill off the most dangerous foes, then cripple the weaker ones so they can move in with their axes and hack them up.



The Destroyer



The rest of the gang organizes into little “teams” of three to five Destroyers each. This isn’t anything formal—they just tend to buddy up with the gangers they hung with before they joined Modeen’s group. Most of these teams get into cover and fire everything they’ve got at the heroes. A few grab hand weapons and charge.

A few of the gangers may chuck grenades. They won’t intentionally catch their companions in the blast unless their friends are already down (and useless). They also won’t throw pineapples if they’re winning—those things are expensive!

Marshal, keep track of the wounds of Modeen, of course, and his three anti-Templars as well. Use the quicker system of generic wounds for the thugs.

Roll *Quickness* as usual for the Destroyer, but just give the three anti-Templars 2 cards one round, 3 the next, then 2, then 3, and so on. The thugs get 2 cards each round.

Finally, if a black Joker is dealt to the thugs, choose one ganger. He loses his turn as he runs out of ammo. Draw a new card for the rest of the losers. Do the same with a red Joker. Let one ganger go when he wants but draw a new card

for the rest of the bunch.

Profile (Brad Modeen, the Destroyer)

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d12, Q:4d10, S:4d12+4, V:4d10
Climbin’ 1d12, dodge 5d12, drivin’: car, motorcycle 4d12, fightin’: ax, brawlin’ 8d12, shootin’: MG, pistol, rifle, shotgun 4d8, sneak 2d12

Mental: C:3d10, K:3d8, M:5d12+2, Sm:3d8, Sp:2d12
Academia: occult 4d8, area knowledge: upper West 5d8, faith 6d12, guts 6d12, overawe 6d12+2, scrutinize 4d10, search 4d10, survival: desert 3d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: anti-Templar, Grit 5, purty 1, “the stare” 1

Hindrances: Curious 3, yearnin’ 5: to wipe out the Templars

Pace: 8

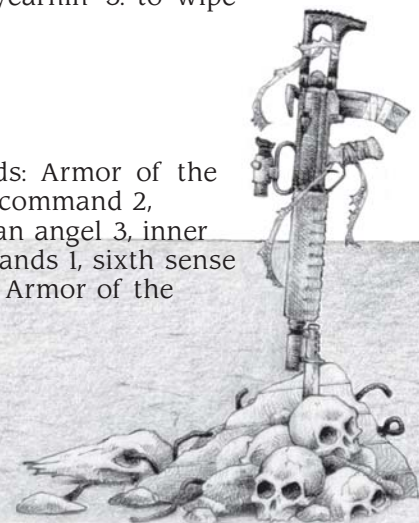
Size: 6

Wind: 22

Special Abilities:

Anti-Templar: Rewards: Armor of the Saints 5, celerity 5, command 2, deflection 5, guardian angel 3, inner strength 3, lay on hands 1, sixth sense 3. Greater Rewards: Armor of the

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The Destroyer



saints, celerity, command, guardian angel. Blessings: Modeen is a servitor and can call on the Reckoner's blessings at will. He no longer gains Corruption for doing so. He's too far gone for that.

Coup: The hero gets a very special but very dangerous coup. She can call on the Reckoners' blessings just like an anti-Templar (anti-Templars get no coup from killing Modeen). The hero must keep track of corruption as usual, and might someday just turn to the "dark side" as Modeen did. This is Modeen's final curse upon the earth.

Gear: Modeen's weapon of choice is his great ax, "Despair" (STR+3d10). It's become a relic, causing STR+5d10 damage to Templars. He also has an SA SMG with 3 full magazines. His armor is actually a black infantry battlesuit fitted with metal plates. It's normally AV 2, but unless the shot was called, there's a 50/50 chance an attack hits one of the metal plates, raising the suit's armor to 3 for that attack.

Description: Modeen is a large man with dark, shaggy hair framing a sullen expression. He wears heavy black body armor with plates reminiscent of medieval

plate mail, and carries a huge, two-bladed battle ax.

Profile (Anti-Templars)

Corporeal: D:1d10, N:2d8, Q:3d10, S:4d8, V:3d10
Climbin' 3d8, dodge 5d8, drivin': car, motorcycle 4d8, fightin': brawlin', sword 5d8, shootin': MG, pistol, rifle, shotgun 5d10, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:2d6, K:3d6, M:2d8, Sm:3d8, Sp:2d10
Academia: occult 4d6, area knowledge: upper West 4d6, faith 5d10, guts 6d10, overawe 4d8, scrutinize 4d6, search 3d6, survival: desert 2d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: anti-Templar, grit 2

Hindrances: Loyal 3, oath 3

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 20

Special Abilities:

Anti-Templar: Rewards: Armor of the saints 3, inner strength 3, fury of the saints 4.

Greater Rewards: Armor of the saints.

Blessings: The knights have turned to evil and use the Reckoners' blessings freely.

Gear: Kevlar vests (AV 2), great axes (STR+2d8), and a mix of SMGs, assault rifles, and pump shotguns with 20 rounds each.

The Destroyer

Description: These guys are all ex-gangers, and they look the part. They're a motley group, decorated with biker tatoos and earrings.

Profile (Destroyers)

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d6, Q:3d6, S:3d8, V:3d6
Climbin' 1d8, dodge 3d6, drivin': car, motorcyle 4d6, fightin': brawlin' 4d6, shootin': any 4d8, sneak 3d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d6, M:3d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d6
Area knowledge: various 2d6, gamblin' 3d6, guts 4d6, overawe 3d6, ridicule 3d6, scroungin' 3d6, search 2d6, survival: various 2d8

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 12

Gear: Most carry pump-action shotguns, hunting rifles, NA assault rifles, or NA SMGs. Three are armed with pistols and carry axes (they're trying to become anti-Templars and want to impress the boss). A few have hand grenades as well.

Description: if you think typical road gang, you can't go too far wrong. Studded leather, body piercings, and tattoos are the uniform of the day.

Modeen Gets the Point

For once, we're turning you loose to kill off one of the big bad guys. We've got even bigger tales to tell of the Templars, and Modeen's actions in this adventure have already served their purpose. If he dies, that's fine. The heroes get some nifty rewards and feel like they're truly a part of the *Hell on Earth* story. If Modeen lives, that's fine too. He'll retreat into the wastes to gather another army and try again. Perhaps he'll make an exercise out of tracking down the posse to train his new warband.

Seeds of Evil

Modeen has instructed his anti-Templars to flee should he be slain, so they can continue the battle at a later date. They'll run for their motorcycles and hit the highway if possible, or slip into the darkness on foot if not.

Needless to say, the posse hasn't heard the last of these bastards.

Aftermath

If the heroes return to Simon and tell him what has happened, they can claim whatever other rewards he has offered them. Most likely,

he makes the non-Templars Companions. Before he does so, however, he must have the endorsement of a Templar. If the posse's Templar was killed during the battle, he won't be able grant them this advantage.

If a character dies during this adventure, and the posse manages to get her back to Boise within six hours, the hero's in for a break. Simon has never been able to call on Saint Clara Clark because of his harsh dictates, but a visiting Templar, Kyla Blaze (daughter of the Martyr Katy Blaze), can. She has one Legend Chip and a *faith* of 6d12, and will try to raise any character who died in this adventure, assuming his corpse is still relatively complete and she is convinced the person is worthy of her efforts.

Aaron McConnell, Saint of Vengeance

Surprised? Aaron McConnell, the second-ever Templar, becomes a saint. If one of your heroes took down Modeen, she might be the first to be visited by Saint McConnell.

Deed: McConnell appears to those who have slain an anti-Templar.

White: The hero can sense the general direction of any and all anti-Templars within his *faith* in yards x10.

Red: The hero gains 1 point of armor versus an anti-Templar or any his minions for one round.

Blue: The Templar can negate any and all of an anti-Templar's powers for one entire round.

Legend: If the warrior causes a single wound to an anti-Templar, regardless of his powers or immunities, the anti-Templar dies. This includes Harrowed anti-Templars. The Legend Chip may be spent after the wound is caused.

Vexation: McConnell deserts any Templar who willingly works with an anti-Templar for any reason.

Bounty

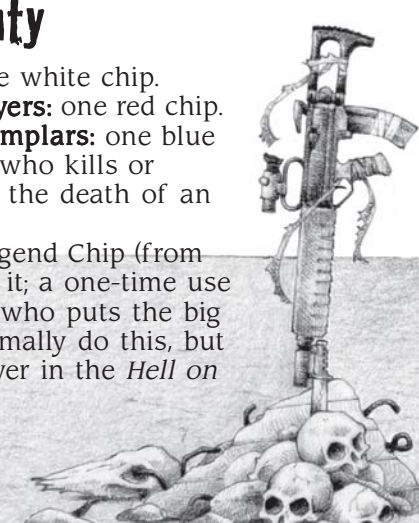
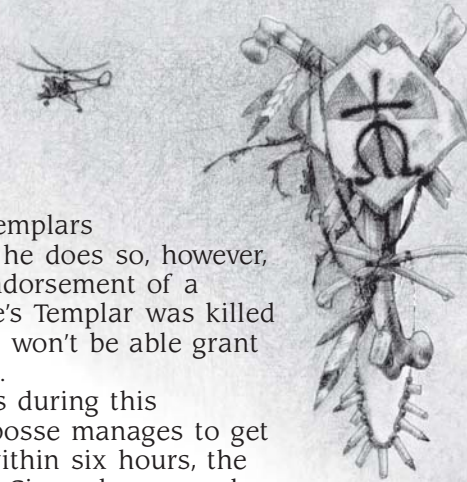
Simply surviving: one white chip.

Defeating the Destroyers: one red chip.

Defeating the anti-Templars: one blue chip for each character who kills or seriously contributes to the death of an anti-Templar.

Killing Modeen: A Legend Chip (from the pot if there's one in it; a one-time use chip if not) to the hero who puts the big guy down. We don't normally do this, but Modeen is a critical player in the *Hell on Earth* history.

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