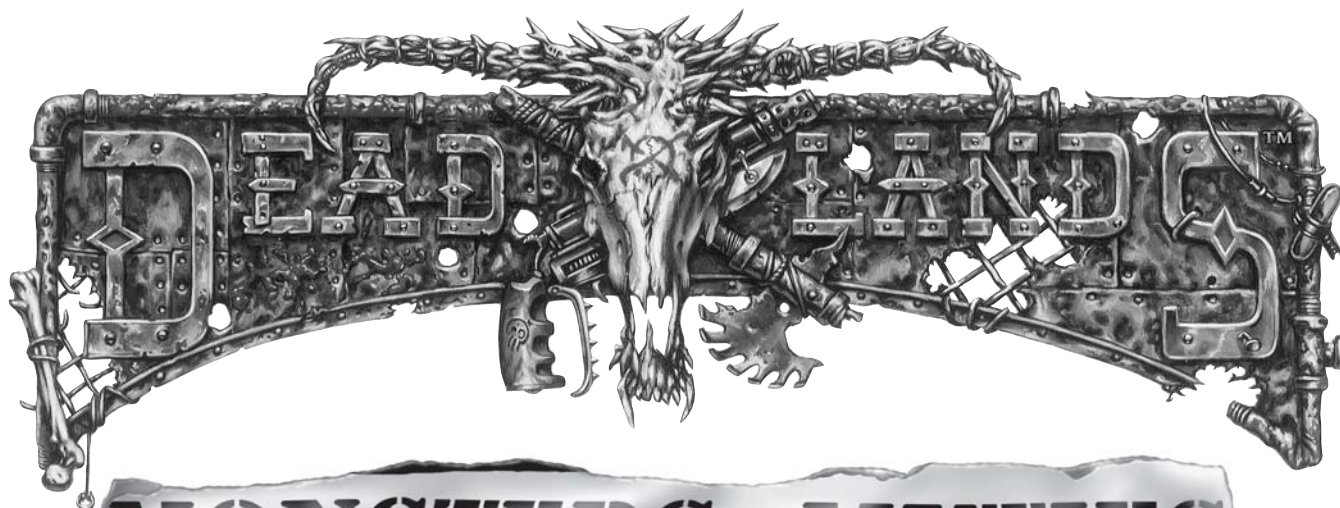


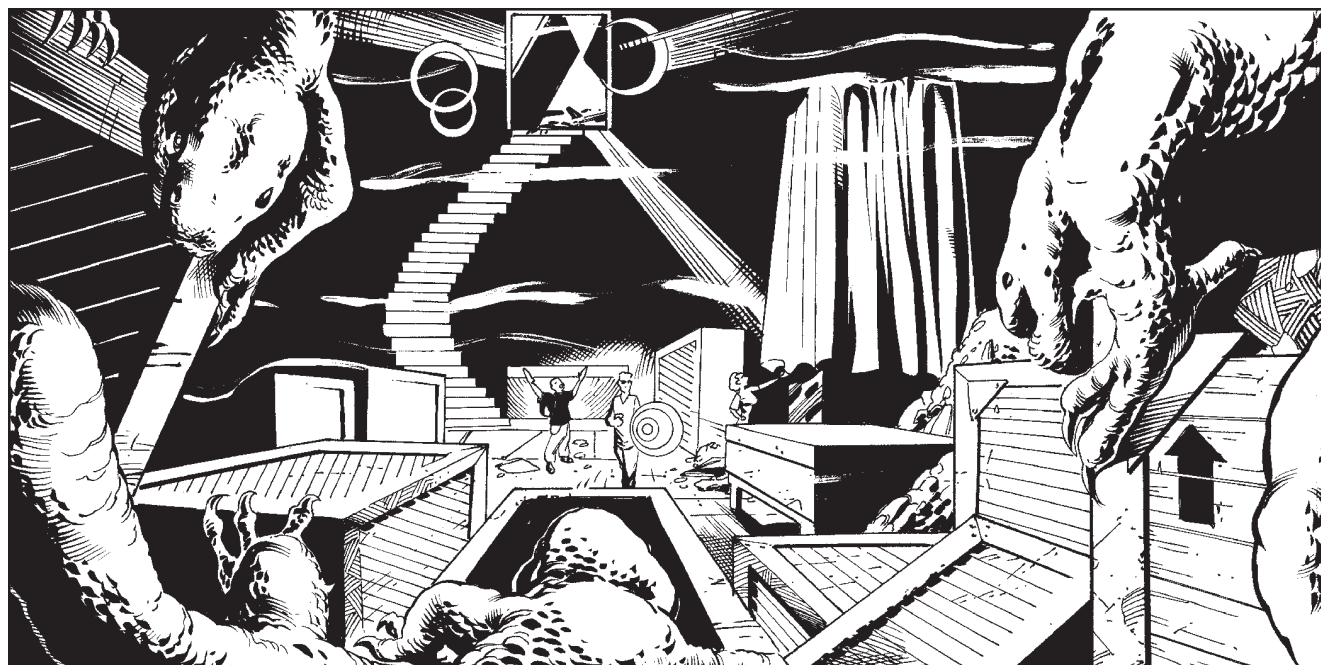
MONSTERS, MUTIES & MISFITS



HELL ON EARTH
Laws, Ryan, Sudlow, Vaux, Wolf & Hopley



MONSTERS, MUTIES & MISFITS



**By: Robin Laws, Charles Ryan, Paul Sudlow,
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Monsters, Muties & Misfits

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Deadlands: Hell on Earth created by Shane Lacy Hensley.

Dedicated to: All the Marshals out there that keep their heroes scared and their abominations well fed.

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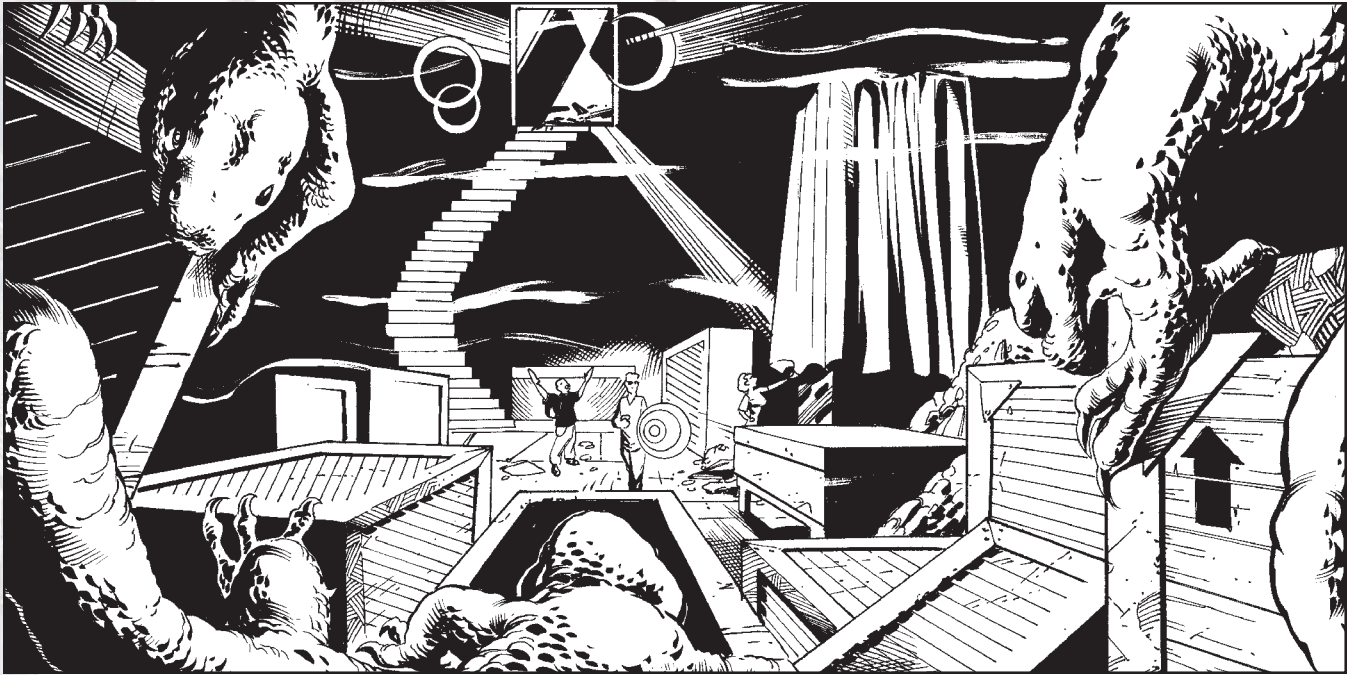
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Welcome to the Zoo!

The *Hell on Earth* world is a dangerous place, filled with malevolent creatures, power-hungry madmen, and all manner of deadly hazards of natural, supernatural, and man-made origins.

Of course, if you've played or Marshaled the game for any amount of time, you already know that.

Monsters, Muties, & Misfits takes you on a guided tour of the freak show that is the Wasted West. Contained in these pages are some of the deadliest and most terrifying abominations that the Reckoning has yet spawned. If you're a player, your hero had best keep his guns well-oiled and his eyes peeled, because these critters aren't big on second chances. If you're a Marshal, it's time to teach your posse a few lessons in humility.

Chapter One starts the ball rolling with eyewitness accounts of some of the horrid Hell spawn stalking the western states. Well, in truth, a number are secondhand stories because many of the eyewitnesses ended up as so much monster guano.

You player types should read everything in this chapter with a salt shaker or two—people tend to get details confused when they're being shoved in some worm-thing's toothy maw. Don't get cocky either, because not every abomination in the Marshal's section is mentioned in Chapter One—some critters have a 1.000 batting average.

Chapter Two has all the details needed for your hero to pick up a furry or feathered sidekick. (Sorry, no scaly companions. We apologize to those brainers who wanted to carry their goldfish Marvin around the wastes.) This section covers everything from teaching old dogs new tricks to showing old tricks to new dogs.

Chapter Three is in Marshal country. This section discusses the ins and outs of creating new abominations to slaughter, I mean challenge, your posse with, and some of the strategies for getting the most mileage out of your homegrown monstrosities.

Chapter Four contains all the info you need to include these new abominations in your game. There are also updates on some old critters who've been hanging on since the six-gun days, and, as we mentioned earlier, a number of creatures that the heroes have been given no hint of.

So make sure you've got a full clip and dive on in!

Posse Territory





Monsters, Monsters Everywhere

Librarian's Note: The following is a series of reports relating to supernatural activity and strange creatures that have been reported in various regions in the years since the Apocalypse. It was compiled over a period of seven months, simultaneous to my travels in search of information on the Cult of Doom. The raw transcripts can be found in files M100.1, M100.2, M100.3, and M100.4.

Librarian Robert Goodwin

A Rovin' Law Dog's Tale

They asked me to tell you about some of the things I've seen on my travels—some of the weirdness and horror spread across this country. I suppose I've gotten more than my share, although I'm still alive to talk about it, which is more than a lot of people can say.

Librarian's Note: What follows is an interview with Gary Stifles, a self-styled "Law Dog" who claims several encounters with supernatural creatures.

I guess I'm what you'd call a "wandering Law Dog." Like the Templars, I suppose, but without the steel rod up my butt. I've been from one corner of the Wasted West to the other—just

doing my share, helping folks out, trying to make life less miserable. It's not safe, but what the Hell, I can take it. Besides, it's let me see things that no one else can ever imagine. Some good, some bad. I'm here today to talk to you about the bad things—the kind that rise up and take a bite.

Stormwracked

Hellstorms. Those Hellstorms are alive, you know. Not literally—but in every other way that matters, they're alive. Ask anybody who's ever survived one—great, huge, living things. They got moods, emotions that you can read, and, if you're lucky, survive. They get angry and strike you down; they can be subtle and make you think you're safe. They even have a voice: that horrible scream of wind that lets you know you're in the beast's belly. They're like sharks, great huge predators spreading across the sky in a dark wave. And like sharks, they got other living things following them around like parasites. Ready to pick up the scraps they leave behind.



I call these parasites “stormcrows,” although they aren’t birds and never have been. They’re not in every storm, but I’ve seen enough of them to worry. They only appear when the fireworks are done; when the Hellstorm’s through being angry at you and moved on to more pressing targets. You come out of your shelter into the calm, clear daylight, and you think everything’s okay. That’s when the stormcrows hit you.

I first saw ‘em after a bad storm in Nebraska. We got caught unawares and took shelter in this small town. Wasn’t even a town really—more like a collection of shacks that people were staying in. There were about 25 of us. Most managed to make it to shelter, but a few were caught in the open and reaped the whirlwind. A couple of others picked the wrong buildings to hide in and paid the price. Those lean-tos blew away in the first big gust. The rest of us, we hunkered down and tried to make the best of it. A few hours later, the rain died off and we could hear the storm slowly moving away. The beast was done playing with us.

We gave it another hour or so, then stepped out into the light. We thought we’d be safe. Idiots.

Electrical Death

The first stormcrow had already gotten there by the time we emerged. A big glowing ball of lightning, it was, spouting arcs of electricity from every angle. It was tearing into the bodies of the unfortunates who didn’t make it, wrapping them in its arcs like a blanket. You could smell the meat burning. When it got done with one, it would drop him and move on to another corpse. It didn’t leave much, just a charred skeleton and a few scattered ashes.

It was so taken with the goodies it had that it didn’t notice us for a bit. When it did, it came right at us, flashing electricity like one of those mad scientist gizmos from last century. Caught some poor girl by the throat with one of them tentacles and roasted her like a pig. Two others tried to run and it cut them down too. (I hear one of them’s still alive, but he can’t talk any more. The epileptic fits get worse every day.) The smartest ones dove back under cover before it noticed them. The rest of us had to

deal with it the best we could. It killed six more before someone produced a grounded electrical cable from God knows where. We threw it head-on into the crow, and that seemed to take the steam out of its stride. It sort of shriveled up after that, like a light-bulb burning out in slow motion. Good riddance, I say.

Deal with the Devil

Stormcrows at least have the good manners not to make bargains with other people. That way, you know who’s on your side. With other critters, you aren’t so lucky. You got a lot of weak, spineless people out there, willing to cut a deal with the devil. And let me tell you, there’s plenty of devils out there ready to bargain.

We were on a convoy out of Junkyard, carrying guns and other essentials west towards the Maze. Three or four of us had been delayed and fell behind the other trucks. We were hurrying to catch up, which meant we weren’t looking. These things were smart. They laid a trap for us and waited until it was snapped to move in. I think the first truck hit a mine of some sort. It went up like a firecracker. Then the crew behind them got out to see what could be done. That’s when they hit us. Came out of the desert in scuttling pairs, throwing metal spears at anything that moved. God, there were a lot of them.

Death on Eight Legs

They looked like tarantulas—big, man-sized spiders with bristling hair and multiple insect eyes. But they moved upright and their top four limbs could grab things—like those spears they were throwing. They scuttled across the shifting sands and made these weird hissing noises when they hit us. Half the guys were down before we knew it; I think the spear-tips had some kind of poison on them. The other guys fought back, and took a couple down, but it weren’t any use. Too many of them and too few of us... God, it was ugly.

The driver, Stan, and I, we were in the last truck in the line, and got missed in the initial rush. When things started getting ugly, he took off; turned the truck around and made a beeline back the way we came. I tried to get him to



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stop, but he wouldn't hear of it—I would've had to shoot him to calm him down. In retrospect, I wish I had. It would've been better for him.

Sweetwater was just a few miles behind us, and he figured we could hole up there, get some reinforcements maybe. We got into town and started yelling our heads off, brought every mother's son of them out. When he heard about the attack, the mayor said not to worry. He said they had run-ins with these things—called 'em "sand spiders"—and that they knew how to deal with them. He took us back to his house, told us to relax. He'd come back for us in a little bit.

Doublecrossed

A couple hours later, we heard him come back. The door shut, and it sounded like he had some people with him. We got up to see what they had done, and it took a minute to realize: they weren't "some people." They were those spider things. Three of them, standing behind the mayor like they were lifetime buddies.

"Sorry about this, son," he said. "But they got a holy day comin' up, and you two are on the menu."

One of the spiders leapt forward and sunk its fangs into Stan's arm. He screamed and I could see something green and noxious dripping from its fangs. That was enough for me. I capped off a round from my shotgun into its skull, then switched to full auto. I think I caught the mayor right in his lying gut. Hope so. Anyway, it bought us enough time to hightail it out of there into the desert—I wasn't about to take on the whole town. I had to carry Stan most of the way. His arm had swollen up all green and his face muscles weren't working right. We finally found a cave where we could hide, and covered the entrance with rocks. I think the wind covered our tracks. Stayed there the whole night.

I did what I could for Stan, but that toxin was too much. He died about 3:00 a.m., raving and spitting green foam from his mouth. It was as ugly a way to go as I've ever seen. I buried him in the cave and took off at dawn; made it back to the trucks by eight or nine. They had taken the bodies, but the equipment was still there—I guess their friends in Sweetwater were too busy hunting me to come back and strip it. I fired up one of the trucks and never looked back.



A stormcrow attacks.

If you're traveling alone in Deseret—or anyplace else for that matter—take care in any small towns you come to. Your hosts may have trouble remembering that you're a fellow human being.

Texas Razors

Neither those spider things nor the stormcrows, though, hold a candle to this last critter. Sure they're nasty, but they just seemed to be doing what comes naturally. Hunters, you know, like lions or bears. Not that I wanted to be on the menu, but at least you can see where they're coming from. They had to eat just like everybody else. That thing I saw in Texas, though, it was just plain evil. It wasn't killing folks because it had to. It was killing them because it enjoyed it.

I had heard stories of farms in the area being attacked by some kind of psycho killer. Of families torn to pieces and flung around their houses like confetti. The local town (a squirt in the dirt called Hopton) sent out a call for help, and I was the Law Dog lucky enough to answer.



Whatever it was, it sounded a lot nastier than some mutie nutcase, so I packed the heavy artillery just in case. Probably saved my life.

A Mere Psycho Killer This Ain't

I got to Hopton hoping to get some background and maybe convince a few folks to help me. What I found was another massacre. Apparently, the thing had moved up from single houses, and Hopton was its graduation present. There were 50-odd people in the main street, slaughtered like sheep. You couldn't tell one from the other; just a pile of guts and limbs cut into tiny pieces. It wasn't finished with the job, either. As I sat there, lookin' at the bodies of the people who had asked for my help, I heard the screams and cries of survivors comin' from inside the town.

I got my first look at it a couple minutes later. Some poor guy scampered out of a building, looking desperately for cover. It came 'round the corner like a hurricane, and I spotted him in a flash. It looked... I don't know, like



Food processor gone bad?

some twisted fusion of flesh and machine. Not a cyborg—nothing so crude—but a biomechanical monster; a slab of living steel. It had a wide mouth full of shiny fangs and smiled at me while it took this guy down. A cruel, gleeful smile that said it was havin' the time of its life. Instead of limbs, it had these tight ropes of shiny material up and down its sides. Like thick coils of razor-wire, bundled up tight.

While its target screamed and tried to run, it shot those coils out at the speed of sound. They whipped around him in a tight ball, then jerked tight. Snap! Instant paté. The poor man sort of slurped to the ground in a pile. Then it launched itself at me.

Time for the Big Guns

I cut loose with the grenade launcher the minute I saw it. Emptied an entire clip down the street in its path. It didn't seem overly perturbed, but the explosions were enough to knock it off course. It skidded into one of the buildings and brought the whole thing down on top of it. By the time it fought its way loose from the debris I was gone.

Things were dicey there for a while until one of the townsfolk lit out on a hoverbike to draw its attention. It took the bait and flew out after him, gunning towards the horizon fast as a whip. I had no idea something so big could move so fast. I knew the poor guy never had a chance, but he'd bought us some time, and I planned to make the most of it. I got six, maybe seven people out of there before it came back. I think that was all of them. The rest got left to rot, spread out under the Texas sun like the devil's picnic. As we put the town behind us, we could hear it starting its rampage again. As far away as we were, it still sent shivers down our spines.

I don't know what the hell it was, but I hope I never see it again.

Starvin' Time

My last little bit's from a small town in Nebraska, which came under attack by a horde of ravenous monsters. Out of all of them, this was the scariest thing I've ever been through, and I still don't know how we survived.



The above ground granaries were gone that first night. As in completely wiped out—everything the town had. Four bloatbellies—that's what we got to callin' them—got in there and took it all before we put them down. That's right, just four. We'd already heard about them, and we knew there were a lot more on the way.

I figure these bastards serve the Reckoner Famine. You've heard about the Reckoners, right? Like War, Death, all those guys right out of the Bible? Well, these bloatbellies hafta work for Famine. They look like mutie corpses, skeletal and emaciated like they're starving to death. They got three big claws and huge glowing blue eyes—you can spot them with one look in the dark. But the most telling thing about them is their stomachs: swollen, distended, bloated up with gasses like they're ready to burst.

Yeah, that's why we call 'em bloatbellies.

Head Shots. Only!

Anyhow, it's those guts you gotta watch out for. The gas inside them is toxic and can spread real fast. You can shoot 'em in the head or the limbs and they bleed just fine. But puncture that stomach, and suddenly you're sittin' in a cloud of this noxious gas, like some sort of nerve gas from the war. It attacks your skin and lungs, eating through tissue like battery acid. If you're not in a gas mask and covered from head to toe, you're going to feel every searing bite of it. They can shoot that gas out of their noses and mouths, too, although it doesn't spread as far as a ruptured gut does.

It does the same thing to food, only worse. Meats, grains, anything edible that touches the gas gets turned to poisonous sludge. The critter so much as coughs on it, and it's done. Even canned goods and freeze-dried stuff gets spoiled; don't ask me how. You get a bloatbelly in shouting distance of any kind of food, you'll be eating boiled sand all winter.

They Know What They're After

Those four who got in past the wall that night knew what they were doing. They made straight for the grain silos; had the whole harvest turned to muck by the time we got there. You'd think the damage had been done,

but things got worse. The first team didn't know what they were dealing with, and walked in blind. Bobby got scratched by one of them; the flesh around the wound shriveled up like leather. Another guy got a face full of gas; melted through to his brain. By the time we got there, we couldn't tell which puddles were food and which were the first team. All of that was from a scouting party. From what we'd heard, there were almost 60 of them massing for the real attack.

Then they came. We lasted the night, and only took about 20 or 30 casualties, but the bloatbellies managed to take out most of the remaining food supplies. The community broke up soon thereafter. Last I heard, Mr. Rhodes, the guy that was in charge of that town, was up somewhere near Omaha. He's a good source of information on these creatures. If you need more, it might be worthwhile to look him up.

A Saloon Girl Speaks

I've been a saloon gal what feels like a long time now, and I seen and heard all kinds of strange things. I'm in the mood to talk, so if you're in the mood to listen, you might as well.

Librarian's Note: These are the words of Cynthia Billings. She works at a bar in Near Wichita. There she comes into frequent contact with travelers, Convoy drivers, and others with specific experience with unusual creatures.

Jumpin' Jehosephat!

Y'ever hear tell of the candiru? It's something to think about, especially you male types, when you're out in the wilderness and you decide to head down to the creek when the bladder calls your name.



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The Little Fish

First there's your regular candiru, a tiny little fish the size of the first two joints of your baby finger. I hear that before everything got all messed up, they lived in the Amazon River, but now somehow they've ended up in America, in scattered rivers here or there. The candiru has an unwelcome habit, you see. It tends to swim up the human—whaddaya callit?—oh yeah, the urethra. It swims up your urethra. I don't think

it means to do it—it's just that it can sense temperature changes in the river water. Usually it uses this sense to zero in on the gills or whatever of other, bigger fish. But when it detects the warmth of a fresh stream of urine, why it swims right up the stream and shoots up into that there urethra. And from there, things actually get worse. It puffs out a whole bunch of spiny stickles, lodging itself right there in the midst of your privates, so that there's no way on earth it's coming back out the way it came in. The only way to prevent yourself from getting fatal blood poisoning when your system backs up is to have a doctor amputate your thingus.

Sorry, boys—I can see this topic is making you squirm around on your bar stools. But that isn't the half of it. That's just the regular candiru. Then you got your mutated candiru.

It Just Gets Worse!

There's the driller candiru, that leaps up at you and tries to bore into your flesh. They've got these hard, bony noses that can pierce through thick cloth, so you get a spiny fish stuck into your flesh like it was shot out of a gun at you. And again, the only way to get 'em out is to have a doc cut out a whole, big chunk of flesh. Sometimes you'll run into trogs or walkin' dead which are full of these driller candiru, I'm told. The candiru only live in those kinds of hosts as a last resort. They like warm flesh better. So they'll unhook themselves from their hosts, squirm around, and dive right back at you in the middle of a fight. You'll be worried about the zombie or mutant on one hand, while at the same time trying to dodge these killer missile fish.

You look really ill, boys. I won't tell you about the giant flying candiru, then. What else can I tell you about instead?

Soda Pop Junkies

Oh, there's the fizzers. They're a bit gross, too, though. Pale complexions. Glazed, sunken eyes. Flat, lifeless hair. Awful clothes—always pre-War T-shirts, three sizes too small, peppered with holes and stained with Bubbly-Fizz Cola. But that's not what I was talking about

when I was talking about gross. The pus, that's gross. I'm not sure whether it's the oozing, volcanic zits that bubble and fizz from every inch of exposed flesh, or the little daubs of dripping green goo that bead along their rancid gums where their rotted teeth used to be. If they didn't travel in packs, and weren't insanely violent when you cross them, I wouldn't let no fizzers come into this saloon at all.

Every week or so they come by, always with the same question. Do I have any Bubbly-Fizz Cola? They know we don't. They can smell Bubbly-Fizz Cola half a mile away. But they're unable to restrain themselves from checking, just in case. They're addicted to the stuff. They kill for it. It's like they worship it, even. They live together in roving colonies, always hunting for more. Sometimes they hunt a long time. All the Bubbly-Fizz bottling plants were leveled during the war, of course, so they live to find bottles and cans produced back in the old times.

Just Leave It Out for 'Em

Couple months back, a tribute caravan came by here. Soon as I saw the ancient carton with the red and green B-Fizz logo, the staff and all the regulars dashed for the fortified basement we got here and locked ourselves in. In retrospect, we should have let the stupid bastards in the shelter with us, leaving the cans outside. Not a concern-for-my-fellow-man thing so much as nerves. Hearing the howling of the fizzers nearly drove us beyond the bend. From the sounds of the gunfire, the caravaners put up a valiant fight. But there were too many of the fizzers. There always are. Then came the echoing fizzer yelps as they battled one another to suck down the precious carbonated liquid. We didn't venture out for days. The shelter in the basement is well-stocked, you see.

What kind of mutation makes you hanker for a particular soda pop? Good question. Whatever it is, it breeds true. You've never been revolted until you've seen a zit-spotted infant fizzer sucking on its mother's festering teat, wishing it was drinking Bubbly-Fizz, the Cola What Is. Social niceties, forget it. They can barely carry on a conversation. When they do talk to you, the subject always turns around to B-Fizz. Mostly they chant the old slogans. "Be the Fizz." "Add Fizz to Your Life." And it's not like they're

good neighbors when the soda isn't around; they're vicious raiders and scavengers who respect nothing but what's inside the barrel of your gun. The only difference is, when the Fizz isn't involved, they're cowardly slimeballs who'll fight only when cornered.

You think I only tell revolting stories? I get no thrill from nauseating people. Okay then, I'll tell you a sad story. About what happened at the last place I worked.

The Sob Sister

Not sure why I survived this one. Maybe because I was still mourning my little Rocky.

When she walked into the place, all the heads turned. Not just the men's heads, neither. A striking-looking woman, she was. Neatly dressed, though with a bit of dust on her old duds.

Hair up in a bun. Little glasses.

Wasn't her appearance that got everyone's attention, though. Something in the air. This terrible sense of sadness around her. One minute everyone had

110 been laughing and boozing and kicking it up. Not me, though—I was polishing glasses and thinking of the sound of Rocky's feet running all around. Then she came into the place and everything got all quiet like. Automatically you knew she was grieving for something. You wanted to help her, ease her mind.

Mr. Crown went to her first, took her hand, led her to the bar. The Vertebreaker gave her a hanky, which he had to take from Lilith. Arnie offered her a drink on the house; all she wanted was water. Everybody in the whole place gathered round her.

She said she was glad for our kindness. Told us not to bother ourselves. She'd be on her way, soon as she quenched her thirst. But everyone insisted. Asked her for her name. It was Annie Suggins. Arnie pressed some sandwiches on her. They tried to get her to tell them what was saddening her. But she was tight-lipped. Finally, Vertebreaker, who's lacking for subtlety, up and asked her what it was. Just everything, she said.

She tried to leave then, but Arnie said she was obviously tired and needed a room for a bit of sleep. He offered it to her free of charge, though usually he's the kind of man who'd shoot you and then send you a bill for the bullet. She protested, said she wasn't tired, then



Beware women with a tale of woe.

undercut her own argument by falling away into a dead faint. They took her upstairs to the Presidential Suite.

Great Gobs o' Goo

It was while she was upstairs that people started to melt. First they got sweaty, then they got shaky and couldn't move too good.

It was Deadbolt Clements who said it: "Oh, it's the Sob Sister." We hadn't heard of her, but apparently she'd walked into other places, getting everybody to feel sorry for her, then melting them. The ones that'd been closest to her was first to go, in order of contact: Mr. Crown, Vertebreaker, Lilith, then Arnie. But you didn't have to have touched her to start to dissolve. We rushed upstairs to ask her to leave; nobody wanted to even look at her now. We shouted at her through a door. We wanted to kill her, but somehow nobody could bring themselves to lay a hand to gun butt. She left, and said she'd tried to warn us, she was sorry, she just needed a drink. She left while we hid from the sight of her.

It took them all a surprising long while to melt away completely. They laid suffering and moaning in a half-melted state for nearly three days before finally succumbing, dissolving into salty tears and bitter bile.

You're right, that was gross as well as sad. Well, I can't think of no creatures that ain't gross in some way. Maybe one of you's got a request for information I can help you with.

Head Cases



93 Those floating heads down by the I-35 off-ramp? Sure, son, I know all about those. An old regular here, Brian Banchy, got himself caught by them, sorta enslaved for a while. He called them "head cases." Guess that's as good a name as any. Though they didn't care for it much themselves. They've got an awful temper, that's the first thing you've got to understand about the floating heads. They don't want to hear you making jokes about their putty-colored skin, or about the trouble they have operating simple things like guns and door knobs. And they most especially don't want to hear you make jokes about their not having bodies no more. They really resent those of us who are still walking around.

Slave Duty

Brian's main job when he was enslaved was to find them fresh corpses. They kept trying to find ways to revivify dead bodies for the head cases to sew their necks onto, so they wouldn't be floating heads no more. Never seemed to work, not during Brian's enslavement. He said he'd explain to me how they make their heads float, but I don't think I ever heard that part. Maybe they float by sheer psychic power, or maybe through some junker stuff. They lust for technology, keeping junkers as psychic slaves.

Brian knew how you turn into a head case. It happens to people who think too much. If you had too big a brain when Judgment Day came, all the demons and whatnot, they played a joke on you and kept your head alive and killed off your body. Even now, people who think too much are liable to find their bodies all crumbling to dust on them. Especially if you go into certain ruins. Especially old strip malls for some reason.

They hate mankind, to hear Brian tell it. They want to conquer the world. What else? Oh yes, they can pop your brain with their psychic powers. A popped brain, it makes a high, hissing sound like a potato in a microwave. Then it dribbles out your ear.

Sorry. Got gross again at the end there.

From The Journal of Sebastian K.

Librarian's Note: This section is transcribed from a handwritten journal recovered in the Arroyo Grande region of the Maze. The complete name and identity of the author is unknown. It's clear that not all encounters occurred in the Maze region, but the exact location of each encounter is not always indicated. Note the dates—some of this information may be obsolete.

Missing Persons

Feb 19th, 2087: In the morning, Lefferts was gone. He'd taken the last shift of watch duty. Turned out our watcher needed a watcher. We knew he hadn't just up and walked off on us, 'cause his gear was still all neatly arranged by the rock he'd last been seen sitting on.

We looked for signs of an intruder. No tracks. And the sandy surface of the mesa shoulda left tracks. Randy found just the few tiniest beads of blood in the sand. Lefferts', we figured. None of us had heard nothing, and both me and Joline are real light sleepers. The mules weren't spooked or nothing. We scanned the desert below and didn't see no movement whatsolutely. Even though Lefferts couldn't have been taken more'n two hours before.

Predavores?

"Predavores," said Kills-The-Bear, all knowingly-like, taking a perverse satisfaction in having the answer.

He was recent to the team, and I wasn't sure what he was full of ('ceptin' maybe himself). He kept on about the predavores, how nobody's ever seen one, how they strike at night, with impunity, taking their prey without so much as a whisper. They swallow the victim up right on the spot, leaving no trace of his existence. They take people, cattle, buffalo, horses, dogs. Never leave a trail.



All at once everybody was spouting off the various theories they'd heard of what the predavores were. They was ghosts, said Zakerlee, insubstantial and vengeful. Aliens from Faraway, said Joline, who take the victims off to another dimension in space and time. But Kills-The-Bear said that couldn't be, explaining that sometimes the bones of their takings is found miles away, stripped clean and popped open for the marrow. The only clue to them is the mysterious long scratches along the bones—ain't no regular teeth makes those marks. It's some kind of meat-eater nobody's seen yet, with fearsome powers to avoid detection.

I said it was all a bunch of bison bombs. Obviously a whole lot of different unexplained incidents had been piled together with a bunch of rumors and nonsense to make up the legend of the predavore. A cougar attack, a human ambush, a voluntary disappearance—any of them could be described as the work of predavores. Saying that a predavore got Lefferts was the same as saying we didn't have no idea what happened, but wanted to pretend we did.

We divvied up Lefferts' gear, and Joline said a few words, even though there was nothin' to bury. We broke camp and continued our search for the underground mall. That night, we set up in a hollow and posted watches.

But this morning, Zakerlee was gone.

Good Luck Gone Bad

March 20th, 2087: It's a day to celebrate—a year to the day since I freed myself from the Fate Eater. Over four years since it first captured me. I think I'm ready to write about it now. Though my pen shakes even at the thought of him.

86 Only sometimes could I see him. Out of the corner of my eye. When the light was a certain way. Like at dusk. Or when there was a reflection. And in my dreams. Sometimes I could see him just fine in my dreams. In dreams, he looked almost normal. Like somebody from before the Judgment. Middle-aged. Glasses. Balding. Plaid shirt. Beige slacks. Loafers. Any other time I caught sight of him, he was ghoulish, with glowing eyes, and this creepy expression. I don't want to picture him too clearly. I don't want him to haunt me no more.



Predavores: fact or survivor myth?

Housework

I first came upon him when I was scavenging through the ruins of Pocatello, Idaho. There's a part of it still mostly standing. Wasn't too near ground zero. House after suburban house, standing there, empty—mostly untouched, back then just a few years after the bomb. So I was picking them over.

Inside one of the houses, I suddenly felt someone had walked over my grave, like. I felt this thought in my head: "I got something for you to do for me." That thought, I banished it. Went about my business.

Then everything in my life turned to crap. Scavengers like me, we rely on a little bit of extra luck to keep ourselves alive. Starting right then, my luck went away. First time, driving that motorbike along an empty stretch of road, I popped a tire. Found myself sliding along the road and—bam!—straight into an old post. Nearly killed me. Then I heard the voice again, louder this time. "I got something for you to do for me."



Pede is about to meet his Maker.

Happened a couple of other times. Each time things went disastrously bad for me. Each time I heard the voice. So I know for sure, I'm cursed. I call out for the thing that cursed me. Nothing but echo. But that night it appeared in my dream. Said its name was Reg. Said it was killed in the blast. Said it's got unfinished business. Said I'm going to complete that business, or I'll never get my luck back. And without my luck, sooner or later, I'm dead as he is. So I promised this ghost I'd do what it wanted.

Lawn and Garden Department

Reg was entered in a perfect lawn care contest before the war started. Lawns were his hobby. Reg wanted nothing more in life than to have the ideal lawn. Then the tanks rolled through. Then he got drafted, after all the young soldiers were used up. With no one home to tend it, his lawn was overrun with weeds.

So I had to go back to Pocatello. Find grass seed. Find fertilizer. Set up a sprinkler system—which wasn't any easier back then than it is

these days. Had to fight off a dozen different kinds of freaks, muties, and demons to get all the stuff, and to guard the place. Twice they came and ruined everything. For three years of absolute hell I was trapped in Reg's old home, tending and guarding that lawn. Stomping out crabgrass. Warding off dandelions. Slowly going nuts.

Finally Reg appeared in my peripheral vision. Said I'd finally got his perfect lawn for him. He gave me my luck back, set me free. You shoulda seen me when I next got in a fight. I was the luckiest man alive.

A Dance with Death

July 1st, 2087: Damn, what a day! Pede was ready to kill me—but first he wanted to play that damn-ass harmonica of his. That same awful moaning tune over and over. Pede. He was just like that. I couldn't move; he had me securely chained to a mess of twisted girders. He finally got bored and whipped out his Tokarev. I closed my eyes.

Then I heard this awful groaning sound, like the air itself being torn inside out. The noise came from behind him. Thought at first it was Kills-The-Bear, coming to rescue me. But then it hove into view. A man-sized twister yawing and weaving across the rubble of the ruined city. I know that describes a dust devil, but this was worse than that. This was a heaving, bubbling vortex of blood and muscle and bone. A screaming storm of gore and flesh. Headed straight at us.

A Bad Day to be Pede

Pede saw the terror in my eyes and turned to face it. He emptied the machine pistol into the thing, to no avail. It stopped for a moment, as if to gloat. Then it advanced. A hook of sharp bone shot out from it. Connected with Pede's face, neatly flaying the meat from the right side of his skull. Plain as day, you could see the skin and flesh and eyeball from the brainer whip around the thing a couple of rotations, after which it became part of the vortex. That's when I puked.

Pede didn't let having half his face off stop him. He drew his knife and stood his ground, blade outstretched. Another swipe of the vortex,



and the knife was clattering to the pavement, his arm gone from the elbow on down. His severed hand and forearm were orbiting around the thing—let's call it a "gore storm"—with each rotation being broken down into smaller and smaller bits of carnage. Meanwhile, blood was spraying out of Pede's wound like from a hose under pressure. It was also being sucked into the vortex—seemed as if it were feeding on it. Damned if the cursed thing wasn't getting bigger as it feasted on Pede's bits. Maybe I was just imagining this last part, but I swear that a hundred laughing mouths and two hundred leering eyes formed themselves in the surface of the vortex for just a moment. Taking delight in what it was doing to Pede. Nearly felt sorry for the man. Nearly.

As Pede shook off the shock and groped for something in his money belt, the gore storm lurched towards him and sawed him to bits like a lawnmower or a lamprey or I don't know what. Then it came towards me.

That's when Kills-the-Bear finally appeared to do his cavalry number. He hosed the thing down with a burst of liquid nitrogen originally earmarked for Pede. It made a weirdly human sound of pain and annoyance, and went off behind some stadium bleachers.

We didn't pursue it.

Headed for the Maze

October 23, 2087: Reached the Maze after a hell of a trip from Portland. Damn, what a place! I never had the chance to get out here before the war, but it looks even cooler than it did in the old vids. We saw something yesterday that sure didn't show up on the TV before the war.

I once heard that the local Indians had a legend about the Great Maze. They say that hundreds of years ago, an old medicine man sacrificed his only daughter and painted the rocks on Carillo Plain with her blood. When the white men came, that blood would release a powerful magic and turn them back. It didn't work, though. Instead, it threw the coastline into the sea and created the Great Maze. Bunch of superstition, I'd have said before the war. But when we saw that creature pull that boat apart, I couldn't help wondering how much superstition is the real truth.

From where we were travelling down the ruins of I-3, we could see the boat slipping through the mesas all day. It was good to see other people, even if they were far below us. We talked to them on the radio—they said they'd fought off a band of croakers the night before, and were anxious to put some distance between them. They were making good time, and staying alert as well; we could hear them shooting at the sharks every now and then. For all of that, they didn't know death was upon them until too late.

Death from Below

It started with the water. I could see it clouding up from our position above them, turning this sorta crimson color. I thought at first that it might be the mud, that the boat's prop had churned up some clay that was coloring the water. Only it kept deepening, getting' redder and redder. After a hundred yards, it looked like they were paddling through a sea of blood. The strange part was, it was only red around the ship; the water behind them faded and turned back to its normal color.

Joline started yellin' in the radio, but by then the crew of the boat had noticed it already themselves. They gathered around the sides and fingered their guns. Probably assumed they had hit a Maze dragon or somesuch with the boat, and that it was going to rise up in a rage on them. They were right, at least partly. It was the water itself that sprang up: a huge tower of it with arms and hands, and what almost looked like a face. It rose right up in front of the boat, blocking the causeway with its bulk. It was bloody red like the sea around it, and sent out a howl that rattled our teeth.

Don't Shoot It—You'll Only Make It Mad

The crew opened fire, for all the good it did them. Bullets passed right through the thing. It tore into their boat, grabbed the bow and ripped it apart. Not just small chunks, either: it ripped the whole boat up the middle like a wishbone. The ship went end-up, spilling men and supplies into the water around it. The entire craft sank inside of five minutes. The creature dropped down beneath the waves, then popped up again around the survivors, grabbing them



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and thrusting them underwater. Poor sods. A few of them tried to swim to shore, but the mesa walls were too steep. Even the four who pulled themselves out of the water couldn't get high enough before the monster went for them. It swatted them against the stones like flies. I think a few got away, but the rest were crushed against the stone. Those who didn't reach the mesas were all drowned by the creature.

Randy fired off a few shots, and me too, but we were too far away to help even if our guns would have done any more than theirs. The creature didn't even seem to notice us. It vanished beneath the waves, and the water slowly turned back to blue. The boat was gone, all but a few shards and the corpses of its crew. After a few more minutes of watching, Joline wished their souls Godspeed, and we continued on our way.

The Black Mesa

November 10, 2087: We've traveled to the southwestern part of the Maze to check out rumors we've heard of a black mesa made entirely of ghost rock. Sounds too good to be true, so it probably is, but you never know.

November 12, 2087: Turns out the place does exist. This morning we sighted a mesa that was black as pitch.

We circled it a few times, and it turns out that that description fits better than I thought: the sides of the mesa are covered in a thick, black tar that seems to be oozing out of the rocks themselves. There's a small area on the north side that is clear of the tar and looks climbable. We're going to head up there and check things out after lunch.

Tourist Trap

November 13, 2087: You'd think by now we'd have learned that if things seem out of the ordinary we should just leave them the Hell alone. We were lucky to get off that damned mesa alive. As it is, Kills-The-Bear got a bad burn and Joline broke her leg.

I guess what we found up there shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise; we knew we were in the vicinity of where Los Angeles slid into the ocean back during the Great Quake

of '68. Still, it was kind of a shock to climb up there and find a deserted museum.

Up on top of this mesa are the La Brea Tar Pits, complete with museum, replica mammoths and sabre-tooth tigers, and a gift shop still stocked with hats, mugs, and I heart the Tar Pits T-shirts. Not a nugget of ghost rock anywhere in sight, of course. (Although we did grab some shirts. The ones we're wearing are getting kind of threadbare and a little rank. Joline also grabbed a stuffed mammoth doll.)

The place had been quite a tourist attraction before the War, but I had never heard of it was on being covered in tar. Near as we can figure a postwar quake or maybe the shock of a nearby nuke must have fractured the mesa and allowed some of the tar to start seeping out the sides.

Things went downhill after we left the gift shop. As we got close to the pits themselves, the tar began to boil and then it rose up in wall before us. Before we could say "merde," this ropy string of tar whipped out of the mass and slammed Kills-The-Bear back about ten feet.

We didn't need to see anymore. We took off running. The thing belched a burning ball of tar after us and some of it splattered on Kill-The-Bear, giving him third degree burns on his left shoulder. He didn't even stop, he just kept on running until we reached the rope we had secured at the edge of the mesa.

We were going to climb back down, but about then a new horror popped its head up: a sabre-toothed tiger skeleton covered in syrupy tar came running toward us. That was enough. We all looked at each other and then jumped off the mesa into the water. I can't imagine what that salt water felt like on Kills-The-Bear's burns. He remained as stoic as ever, of course. It was about a forty-foot drop. Joline hit the water at a bad angle and snapped her leg. It was a clean break, though, and it looks like it will heal up just fine.

We all threw away our T-shirts.

Ghost-rock Fever

December 4, 2087: Got to Mesa Prada yesterday. Soon as we got there, this fellow approached us and started goin' on about some penny-ante ghost-rock mine not too far off. Apparently, the locals believe it's still intact, and several have disappeared while investigating it.

Guess they took a look at our guns (not to mention Kills-The-Bear) and figured we got what it takes to help them out. They promised a share of the mine should they get it running. A pipe dream, I figure, but what the heck (we never learn).

So we made our way out to the mineshaft with two guys from the town, out on the lip of a mesa a few miles offshore. We set up camp and had a look around. I doubt this is the cash cow they hope it'll be; Joline says there isn't even a nugget left in that burnt-out hole. But we might as well give them the chance to check it out thoroughly. Who knows, it might pay after all.

Ghosts in the Night

December 7, 2087: It happened last night. This creature came out of nowhere and took the guy from town who was sitting guard duty on the north end of the camp. Since that whole "predavore" thing, Randy's taken to setting up a vid camera at night—this time it paid off. The camera got all of it.

It's hard to see on the little camera monitor, but it looks like a ghost or spirit or something, a glowing green apparition in the rough shape of a man. It appeared on the edge of the shaft, coming out of the darkness like a beacon. The guy yelled out at it, then opened fire. The bullets passed right through it, and the holes closed back up as it moved in on the guy. When it got close there was like this pulse of sickly green energy—like radioactive fire—which seared him black. He froze and then pitched over, all covered with burns. If you just saw the body and not the vid, you'd swear the fellow died of really bad radiation poisoning.

Kills-The-Bear wants to leave, but Joline talked him out of it. We've got our rad-suits, and she think's they'll protect us if the creature returns. Seems she's changed her mind about this mine shaft, but I still got my doubts.

Curiosity Kills the Cat

December 9, 2087: Another attack. It got Randy this time, and Kills-The-Bear. Along with Joline, that just leaves me. Now that that other guy from town ran off with the boat. Guess I'm next, since I'm stuck here. Oh well, at least I won't be missin' Joline for too long.



What killed Sebastian H. and his friends?

It appeared in the mineshaft again. This time, it moaned, kinda the way ghost-rock does when it burns, and glowed ever more fiercely. It almost seemed like it was in pain. The radiation suits didn't do us much good. Sure, it stopped the toxic glow a bit, but when it saw that, the wraith just reached out and touched Kills-The-Bear, right through the suit. I could see its handprint eating through it, right into his flesh. He screamed as it hit him. Gunfire, knives—nothing did any good. Randy tried to run, but it caught him easily. The burns on their bodies match the creature's handprints exactly.

It let me be after killing them. For some reason, before it disappeared I called out and it stopped. It turned and looked at me. It seemed... sad to me, somehow. Lonely and piteous.

December 10, 2087: Radiation burns getting bad; no time to patch them up though. I guess this'll be the last entry in my journal. When it appears tonight, I'm going to try talking to it. Maybe it can tell me what it is, and why it haunts this lonely place. Maybe it'll let me live. If it doesn't, though, then I have other plans.

Ghost-rock is highly flammable. It may be immune to regular weapons, but fire... fire's something else entirely. A well-thrown road flare may just do the trick.

No more time... there's that odd wailing sound it makes. Guess I find out now whether either plan is any good.

Combine Eyes Only

Librarian's Note: These reports are from a dataslug found in the possession of an alleged Combine agent working in the Santa Fe region. The individual had already been killed by local townspeople before my arrival, so its authenticity cannot be confirmed.

Field Report on Rogue Armament

This agent has infiltrated the military organization of subject. I am now a trusted operative with access to much sensitive information.

Subject appears to be a heavy battle tank of Northern Alliance manufacture; specifically, a Schwartzkopf M4A8 main battle tank with significant modifications. History of subject is as follows: apparently subject was engaged in hostilities in NorCal theater on J-Day. Allegedly a soldier onboard subject, in contravention of regs, installed computer game "Alexander the Great," a strategy simulation of warfare in 3rd century B.C., in subject's local mainframe. EMP pulse from ghost-rock detonations in vicinity appear to have interacted with computer game to invest subject with A). artificial intelligence, and B). personality of Alexander III, King of Macedon. Exactly how this transformation took place is still being investigated.

Infantry Support

Subject has gathered a small force of mercenaries and scavengers to further its goal of conquering the west, and from there, the world. Subject secures their loyalty with promises of booty and political power in its projected kingdom, New Macedon. These troops appear to be motivated not so much by fear and retribution as a curious loyalty and pride. Soldiers show a surprising degree of discipline and esprit de corps for such a ragtag assembly. It is as if the machine is actually a charismatic leader.

Subject's forces are small, no more than 50 reliable irregulars, but recruitment continues at a rapid pace. Recruits attracted by steady supply of rations and legend of intelligent tank. Subject and its forces always on the move, showing sophisticated grasp of 21st century armored vehicle tactics. Given this mobility, subject's precise whereabouts at any given time are difficult to predict; subject might be encountered anywhere. Raids to secure rations and materiel both constant and merciless. Equipment and skills of average irregular equivalent to average Black Hat, though without access to elite officers and intelligence operatives (such as this agent). Subject directly supervises efforts to educate soldiers in ancient Greek language, history and culture. This agent was startled by the quality of their amateur production of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex."

Blowin' Stuff Up Real Good

Subject is said to be headstrong, intelligent, and focused on problem-solving, especially through unconventional means. Modifications from standard Schwartzkopf M4A8 tank design include double-reinforced armor, full amphibious capabilities, full leather interior. Functionality of last-mentioned modification is questionable, but widely regarded among subject's forces as "wicked-A cool." Main armament appears to be a 125mm cannon, the M4A8's standard armament.

Analysis: While subject's military organization is no current threat to Combine security, its potential for growth should not be underestimated. Subject itself is a considerable tactical threat to any team unlucky enough to run into it head-on. Recommend immediate and decisive action against subject.

Report From a Combine Town

Subject Jessica Travers (A94-48222) was discovered by local Black Hat patrol near village of Clearwater in violation of local curfew. Although tattooed barscan confirmed her identity, subject reported feelings of disorientation and confusion. Subject claimed ignorance of proper designation, friendships, and basic layout of native village. Complete memory loss and deep amnesia apparent.

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Subject's husband, Walter Travers (A94-48296) was interrogated, along with additional Clearwater personnel. Transcript of testimony follows:

"Jess had stepped outside for a moment to catch a breath of air. She was standing out in the moonlight, when this fellow kind of sidled up to her. He had a long, billowing coat and a wide-brimmed hat, so I couldn't see what he looked like. I thought he was nuts violating the curfew like that. I mean, what makes someone take a chance like that—it even occurred to me that maybe she'd taken a lover. But she looked surprised to see him; I heard her give a short gasp, and saw her eyes widen in the moonlight. Then he was next to her and wrapped her up in his great coat. It seemed a very gentle and tender motion, like a father protecting his daughter. Except that his hands were pressed against her temples like he was trying to push his fingers into her brain. I've never seen anyone embrace quite like that.

"He held her for a long time. I wanted to say something, but was scared I'd bring the watch down on them. Maybe if he left, he wouldn't get her in any trouble. Finally, after what seemed like forever, he let her go. She swooned for a minute and I thought she'd pass out. But then she regained her footing, and it seemed like she was okay.

"The fellow, he didn't waste any time with her further, but trotted back the way he came. Before he left, though, he turned back and I could see beneath his hat in the moonlight. He wasn't a man—not even a mutant—but something much worse. Something not of this world.

"He had no face. Just a blank sheet of flesh where his eyes, nose and mouth should have been. He stood there beneath the moon and looked right through me, looked at me with eyes he didn't have. I've never seen anything so frightening in all my life.

"Then he was gone, and I could turn back to Jess. She had wandered down the street in a daze, and didn't show any signs of coming back to the bunkhouse. She seemed confused, like she didn't know where she was. She was staggering straight down the middle of the road, just begging to be noticed by the guard. How she got past the perimeter guards is anybody's guess.



What really happened to Jessica Travers mmd?

I didn't go after her. Scared that I'd be caught for breaking curfew. Now I wish I had. In fact, I wished I'd made a fuss while she was locked in that thing's grasp. You can call it a mutant or say I just got confused by the dark if you want, but I've seen it—I've looked into its face. It wasn't a man and never was."

This agent remanded Jessica Travers (A94-48222) and Walter Travers (A94-48296) into custody of automaton L9484 for termination. Usual local unrest quickly put down by Combine forces.

Analysis: No physical evidence of reported creature could be found. Testimony is unusual, but no alternative explanation for subject's mental state exists. No further incidents have occurred.

Based on these facts, this agent concludes that this alleged creature or person is of no concern to Combine forces. Resource expenditure unnecessary to counter threat. Recommend database creation to catalog further encounters and closure of A94-48222 and A94-48296 files.



What are the origins of this bizarre hybrid?

Second Incident Follows

No survivors available for interrogation. Excerpt from tape recorder found amid the partial remains of one August "Razor" McGinnis (no known file number), who was not authorized or known to be present in Clearwater region or any other sector. Four other unauthorized humans discovered in immediate vicinity. Identification of bodies was impossible.

Transcript of recovered tape recording follows:

"Didn't need those fellas anyways. Always gripin' an' shootin' their mouths off. It needed what they had more'n they did, I figure. It kept its end of the bargain, fair an' square, and you can take that to the bank.

"We had taken down a pretty good haul that afternoon; a buncha nomads had some prime pickings an' didn't wanna share. Tapped a couple o' their kids in the back of the head, straightened 'em out. Me an' the boys stripped 'em clean an' left 'em out on the highway to die. Serves 'em right, getting' uppity with us.

"Fifty miles down the road, we bed for the night. I draw first watch; dumb luck, I guess. It's about midnight when the robot shows up. Damndest thing I ever seen. It looked like one of Throckmorton's beasties, only different, you know? Shiny and metal, with a wicked bad chain-gun comin' out of one arm. But the weird thing is, it ain't all metal. Parts of it is skin, too; one of its arms, a thigh, a couple of chunks of its torso. I even thought I could see guts inside its circuitry: a heart, an' intestines maybe, buried there under the wires an' gears. It were no cyborg—too much metal fer that. But it wasn't just a robot; more like a robot with little bits of meat to patch up missin' parts.

"Anyhow, it's sittin' there in the dark, watchin' me watchin' it. I figure it would've attacked as soon as it could, but it didn't look interested. Just scopin' out the situation from the shadows. I don't want it to get any ideas, so I says:

"Whachoo doin' here?"

"Parts,' it says. 'Needs parts.' It holds up its meat arm an' points at it. Guess it wanted to add to its collection.

"Well then, we got ourselves a problem,' I says. 'My buddies an' I ain't in the givin' mood.'

"Make it worthwhile for you,' it says. I keep listenin'. It offers up the gun on its arm, plus the truck it came in—a hummer hidden a little ways off. I look down at my compadres, and figure they don't give me anything I can't get elsewhere. So I says 'go nuts.'

"It jumps into the campsite, swift an' quiet, an' starts puttin' the boys down. Gunshots to the head, most of 'em. Sammy, though, he gets gutshot; wakes up screamin' an' almost gets away, but the robot still won't shoot him in the head. Guess it wanted the equipment there. A few of 'em woke up in the middle of it an' went fer their guns, but it took them down lickety-split. Made me glad I didn't open up on it.

"When it's done it pulls out this rotary saw—the kind that doctors used to have to saw through bones—and starts carvin' the boys apart like Christmas turkey. An arm from one, a leg from another: everything cut really neatly, to keep the manglin' to a minimum. Sharp saw that thing had. When it gets done, it gathers all the bits up—much more than it needs, I think, so I figure it's got friends somewhere—and drops the chain-gun on the ground. 'Back soon,' it says.

"So now I'm sittin' here, waitin' for the robot to come back with the hummer like it promised. Shouldn't take long. Figure I didn't need my compadres anyways. Figure I can get new ones better than them. 'Sides, that robot did better by me than they ever di—

"<BLAM>"

Recording ends. Subect McGinnis' remains discovered in a dissected condition—right leg, right eye, left eye removed. Fellow unauthorized humans in similar condition.

Analysis: No physical evidence of reported biomechanical entity could be gathered. Despite apparent similarities to Combine cyborgs and/or automatons, incident cannot be traced to any known unit. Recommend increased security sweep and sensor check of all appropriate units. Recommend database creation to catalog further encounters.

Underground Terrors

You remember those stories from before the war? "Urban legends," they called them. People in cities, tellin' each other 'bout all the sick and twisted things that went on between the skyscrapers. Alligators in the sewers. Babies in the microwaves. Drek like that. My favorite one had Mojave rattlers runnin' around in the subway system. You ever hear that? Story goes that they wandered into a city somewhere, and liked the tunnels underneath. Kept 'em from havin' to move the dirt themselves. So they stuck around an' bred, gettin' bigger with each new batch. Anytime a subway accident killed somebody, or a gas main blew up, they said it was the rattlers. Huntin' and eatin' folks the way they used ta do in the desert. Great story, right?

Well here's the kicker, buckaroo: it ain't just a story. They ain't Mojave rattlers, least not as far as I seen, but there are all kinds of things livin' in the subways, just like the legends said. And huntin' humans is their favorite recreation. I know, 'cause I've run into all kinds of 'em. One of 'em killed my boys.

Librarian's Note: The following accounts are from one Caleb McAllister, an individual with an apparent penchant for underground exploration. Despite his assertions, it is doubtful that any of these creatures existed before Judgment Day.

Beaded Horrors

A juicy military bunker attracts scavengers by the droves, but more often than not the only thing they manage to scare up is trouble—the kind with big, sharp teeth.

Me an' Jacob an' Saul (my boys) was snooping around some old base near Amarillo, when Saul lost his footing, took a header into a crater, an' disappeared from view. I fastened a rope to a nearby girder and rappelled down for a closer look. To my surprise, he was alive—pissed as Hell, but still breathin'. He'd fallen through down into some old bunker.

We found a vent shaft leadin' deeper in, so we started explorin'. The upper levels were wasted, full of old office furniture, useless debris, and plenty of dirt. And a bunch of holes in the floors, ceilings and walls, like someone'd been goin' at them with a jackhammer. Maybe someone'd been trapped down here, Jacob said, an' had tried to dig out. But that didn't really make no sense. So we checked our ammo and went deeper down by way of the elevator shafts. There weren't no power, of course, and we like to save on the flashlight batteries, so when we got down near the bottom Saul broke out the road flares.

Soon as he lit one up, the walls just seemed to come alive. A dozen rejects from a Tokyo monster vid slithered free from the walls and were on us faster'n Jacob could piss himself.

Before we could make it back to the elevator shafts, the scaly SOB's had blocked off our escape and were closing in on us from both sides. A couple of the critters kept back and began wheezing and hacking, 'til one of 'em belched up a fireball from its craw and sent it singin' into the wall.

That's when Jacob started lightin' 'em up. His scattergun wasn't having much effect, but Saul had one of them SA assault rifles, what'll punch through a brick wall, and that seemed to do the trick. We managed to fight our way back to the elevator shaft and reloaded while the monsters hung back and snacked on their dead. Jacob had a gash on his forehead an' two missing fingers from his off hand, so I figured I'd hold the critters off with the incendiary rounds in my magnum while they climbed up the shaft.



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Guess the critters wanted more, cuz they came on stronger than ever, hissing and spitting flame. I held the damned beasties off for long enough for the boys to get clear, then I shimmed up right after them.

As a parting goodbye, I dangled myself upside down and squeezed off a shot into one of the critters' heads. Bad move! The thing went off like old dynamite—blew me straight up the shaft into the arms of my boys. The fires were spreading fast, fillin' the shaft and upper floors with smoke, an' we could hear the critters burrowin' around behind the walls. So we lit out for the entrance like 'ol Scratch himself was on our tails, and fled to the safety of the open wastes.

Great Glowin' Slugs!

Me an' the boys got ourselves a job once layin' electrical cable for this little settlement outside of Oklahoma City. Seemed they thought they could rebuild the whole place, from the ground up. Course, all the wirin' was trashed along with everything' else, but the underground conduits and subway tunnels were still mostly intact, an' we figured they'd be perfect for layin' the lines and keepin' them safe.

So there we were down in these subway tunnels, me an' the boys an' this feller from the settlement, pushin' our way past debris and collapsed spots and everythin' else. As we rounded a bend in the tracks, we saw a green glow up ahead. It seemed to come and go. Countin' on our hazmat gear, we drew closer and found the remains of a subway terminal. The other side of the tunnel had collapsed, creating this sorta' pool of water, an' that's where the glow was comin' from. As we got closer, we could see a ruined train car lying on its side—sometimes they'd run those things down into the subway tunnels during the war, to keep 'em out of the way of the bombers. Anyway, this thing's got a cargo of 55-gallon drums lying all around the floor, and there's a green, hissing broth bubbling from 'em.

We get up to the pool. If that nastiness weren't enough, the toxic swamp was just swimmin' with worms—worms as thick as my arm and longer than my leg. That green glowin' wasn't comin' from the water or the ooze—it was comin' right outta the worms!

The Geiger counter was buzzing like a hornets' nest, and grew even louder as we lowered a line into the soup to get a temperature reading. As soon as the line hit the goop, the counter went all postal. We were still probably okay in the suits, so we just stood there a sec, looking at the worms and wonderin' if we were gonna hafta reroute our plans a bit.

Saul takes this piece of rebar and pokes it down there in the pool. The worms, they get all stirred up, start thrashin' around. Suddenly there's this flash, right outta nowhere, and my eyes are all splotchy like I been starin' at the sun. Fried the Geiger counter, though I didn't know it 'till later, just like the bombs fried all the electronics anywhere near their blasts. Anyway, soon as the flash goes off we started hearin' something scrabbling along up above, up in the darkness where the girders and concrete was all broken up.

I couldn't see much, but I knew I didn't like the turn things had taken. Me an' the boys started backin' towards the way we'd come, but the other feller kept sayin' to hold up—he still wanted to check the place out some more. We were climbin' over the rubble pile when his shouts suddenly changed tenor, and he started firin' his gun. Jacob started to turn back, but the feller's sudden, gurgling scream stopped him in his tracks. We turned tail and headed on out of there.

Never saw what got the guy; never did finish up that wirin' job. Heard the town got overrun by gangers a few months later, anyway.

On the Town

Okay, now, this one ain't exactly like the others. We was deep in the ruins of Witchita with this group of scavvies—me, the boys, and four or five of these other folks. We wasn't down underground like with these other stories, but we'd holed up for the night in this broke-down parking garage. All the upper levels were collapsed, but we'd found a good spot in the basement. We'd put our backs up against the wall, all covered in old ganger graffiti from before the war, and were preparin' to bed down for the night.

No sooner had the sun vanished between the tore-up girders of the ruined buildings, than all Hell breaks loose. One of the guys lets out a

shout, and I spin 'round. Where the wall had been, there was this steaming, slimy mass of I don't know what, with gaping maws and barbed tentacles all shootin' out of it. Here and there were large bulbous growths and inhuman eyes all burnin' with hatred and malice. One of the scavvers was already in its grasp, slidin' down into the thing's gullets in sickening, bloody chunks, as it spat out the meaty bones all broken and purple.

We pulled our pieces and woulda taken on outta there, but one of the tentacles lashed out and got ahold of Jacob. So me and Saul fire it up, and the other scavvies are goin' at it, too. I don't remember how long it went on, to tell the truth—just that it was a long and messy fight, and the thing got hold of at least two of the others. Finally, the last of the tentacles was severed and the wall was running with slime and black clots of blood. The bones of the two or three that got et up were all piled at the base of the wall.

We didn't sleep much that night. In the morning, a feelin' of dread settled over our campsite as the first rays crept through broken concrete. The last remains of the creature had all but dried up and withered away, but the wall was still there, with its faded old graffiti. There, within the horrid mural, you could make out the faces of the three dead scavvers, all twisted in fear and torment.

One of the other scavvies had an antitank rocket, that he was savin' for a special occasion. This was it. We blasted that wall, then took the Hell off out of Wichita.

Terminal Tunnel

Those times was pretty bad, but that ain't the worst. The worst was somethin' different, and I don't hardly want to talk about it.

We were workin' on the collapsed street near the old civic center in KC. Jacob uncovered a stairwell leadin' down to a subway terminal. I didn't figure there'd be much left down there, but we were

hard up fer salvage, so we thought we'd take a look. We got as far as the platform when it came fer us: right down the tunnel like a train. Its skin was a mottled grey, lookin' like a piece of the wall had broken off and grown teeth. If the bastard weren't so big, we'd a never



Graffiti with an attitude.

have seen it comin'. I couldn't even see the end of it: just a long end headin' back into the tunnel. It didn't have tentacles, but the way it moved, it didn't need 'em. Before we blinked, it shot across the open terminal an' pinned Jacob to the wall with its jaws. Before we blinked again, my boy was down its throat.

Saul opened up with his 9mm, but it didn't even scratch that critter's hide. I knew we weren't gonna take that thing down there, so I grabbed him and dragged him back up the stairs. Saul kept shootin' an' screamin' fer his brother, but I calmed him down enough to pull him away before it got done eating. I figured we were safe by the time we hit topside again. Figured wrong.

Saul was tryin' to get the earthmover started when it came up from under. Burst right out through a manhole, blowing the steel cover off like it was paper, then hit the bottom of the mover like a cannon. I saw Saul in the cabin as it flipped over, bringing shards o' concrete slammin' through the windshields. The worm was racin' around outside like a cat at the mousehole, waitin' fer Saul to pull himself free.



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Didn't even notice me down the street. So my boy pulls himself out of the cab; his arm was broken and he leaked pretty good from a half-dozen puncture marks. Then the worm... the worm, it sorta rears back, an'...

An' then I ran while it ate my youngest son. Ate him up like a stick o' jerky, and I couldn't think of anything but my own filthy hide. I could hear its teeth grindin' on Saul's bones, and the choked screams comin' from its gullet. An' I couldn't go back. Not fer Saul's life or Jacob's either. Not fer anything on this earth was I gonna face that monster again.

Turn that thing off, mister. I don't wanna talk to you anymore.

Words of a "Freelance Librarian"

You want documents, do you? Well, I got your documents right here. Except you'll have to pay for them. And if you're thinking you can outdraw me and just take them, think another time. Because I've read all of these documents and they've expanded my mind, body, senses, and reaction time. I am like unto the wind, my friend.

Librarian's Note: I ran into this gentleman outside of Reno, Nevada. Hearing that I was gathering stories, he tried to sell me several dataslugs. To my surprise, he claimed to be a Librarian, though he seemed completely unaware of our ways, the fact that I truly was one, and the fact that I was recording our conversation.

But I'll tell you what. I'll give you a special advance preview of some of the very most interesting documents I have for sale. Just a hint. To wet your whistle. Then you won't be complaining about my price no more.

What? You just want monsters? Monsters! I offer you consciousness expansion, and you want monsters. Well, I'll give you monsters. I got one here written personally by a bona fide one-hundred-per-cent vampire. He writes pretty good, so I'll just read it to you.

Dogs of Death

"I found Igor, my faithful nosferatu servant, lying in a pool of ichor, gutted and partially eaten, behind the toppled grain silo. Seward, I told myself, it's getting harder and harder to

make an unliving these days. Now I'll have to find another nosferatu, bind him to my will, and name him Igor. More importantly, I'll have to take stouter measures against the charnel hounds. It's one thing having them penetrating my perimeter and partially devouring my undead thralls. Quite another to contemplate them biting into my own vampiric posterior."

This here's a double-whammy! You get a story about charnel hounds, told to you by a vampire! A bargain at twice the price!

"If only I knew more about the dratted things. The accounts I've gathered are damnably contradictory. Everyone out around here is talking about them; it takes no effort on my part to elicit the latest batch of wild-eyed imaginings from the locals. Thus, my interest in the hounds is not seen as unusual. No one suspects that I have reason for special concern.

"Some say they're regular, mutated wolves or dogs or canines or whatever. Others charmingly describe them as skeletal, with bags of organs dangling and dripping inside their ribcages. Or describe them as radioactive. Or invisible. Or not actually dog-like at all, more like a cross between a crocodile and an opossum.

"The rumors all agree that the things are predators adapted to dine on the flesh of the undead. They say a living man can stand in the midst of a pack of charnel hounds without fear of so much as a nip on the ankles. How they distinguish the living from the merely ambulatory remains a mystery. Do we dead consistently emit some kind of pheromone that a mutated animal can pick up on? Or are these things supernatural, with all of the attendant extra senses? If so, whom do they serve? Has Death unleashed them, in order to cull the ranks of his own minions? Call me an unrepentant rationalist, but the thought of a creature designed to strike fear into the hearts of the undead seems, well, rather perverse to me. Not to mention redundant.

"The list of their supposed immunities is longer than my body count. Bullets don't stop them. Bombs only knock them back a tad. They enjoy being on fire, as if it gives them a good scratch (maybe they have supernatural fleas that eat them). High voltage is nothing to them. Neither pesticide nor biotoxin will keep them from their appointed rounds.





What is the purpose of these grisly scavengers?

“Likewise, each report I’ve heard attributes to them a different type of attack. Some say lightning eyes. Some say hypnotizing eyes. Their bite may be paralyzing, or simply very sharp and muscular. They may or may not be able to leap 20 feet up into the air, run faster than a motorcycle, or squeeze through a hole the size of a quarter. Frenchy, who has clearly been reading too much Lovecraft, claims they can travel along the angles of non-Euclidean geometry.

This could be the biggest challenge of my unlife.”

Pretty scary, hey? Oh, I have a whole diary written by this vampire. I just read you the end of it, but there’s plenty more of interest. Provided you pay up. But I said that already.

These Ain’t No Matchbox Cars

You want variety? I got variety. We just had a monster of the supernatural sort. You want a monster of science? Here’s another riveting first-person account.

“When I began to scan the info packet, all thoughts of what the Librarian had charged me for it melted away.”

See, this here one’s smart. He knows it’s worth it to pay the traveling Librarian. But I interrupt.

“Now I know the origins of the things I have isolated in the back container unit—the ‘bone bots’, as Hot Horton has dubbed them.”

Okay, this guy is a little long-winded, even for a science guy. Back to paraphrasing. He’s watching this monitor, which has a tape he’s made of these bone bot things. They’re stripping a cow’s carcass. He’s really loving these things. They get him all excited. In a science kind of way, you understand.

He’s describing them: each the size of a matchbox. Made entirely from scavenged biological parts: bone and cartilage mostly, plus a few other nonperishable items of carrion. If you look at them without thinking about their gruesome components, they look merely awkward, constructed, graceless. Like oversized bugs made from an old-style children’s play set, like Lego or Meccano. Most have six or eight legs, but the design is always slightly different, based on the materials available when it is made or repaired. Almost all have delicate wings of bone carved with microscopic precision. Their locomotion, on land or air, is clumsy. But always they move forward. Reproducing. Building more bone bots.

Now he’s theorizing on where they came from. Figures they’re the end result of robotics experiments conducted by Professor Ruben



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A syker's worst nightmare.

Bombora at the Missouri Institute of Technology. Says Bombora and his team built the first SE-17s; miniature robots designed to mimic insect behavior. Though not intelligent, per se, their nanochips were able to learn from stimuli. Their chief aim, like Mother Nature's: reproduction, of course. Ain't that what we're all really after?

The original SE-17s weren't made of bone, of course—metal, rubber and silicon, mostly. But he says here the similarities in design and behavior are unmistakable. These things have continued to reproduce in the post-collapse environment. They have seized upon the most available building material for self-replication: the animal world. Somehow they have learned to carve copies of their central nano-chip circuit boards on bone, ensuring their survival and continued evolution.

Each generation improves on the design of the last, through a process emulating vastly-accelerated natural selection. Deviations from the design occur frequently; each seems to be a random experiment. Most experiments fail. The changes are not improvements, and the bots bearing them are unsuccessful, leaving few progeny. The few deviations which do represent improvements, however, are soon replicated and passed down, quickly becoming standardized models.

I'll skip the rest. It's all philosophizing. Will these things inherit the earth, that sort of thing. But the last bit is pretty funny. Want to hear it? "The minimal risk is surely worth the wealth of knowledge we can wrest from these tiny, self-aware creatures. The container will hold, I am sure of it."

Ah, that's rich. These documents, they're worth it for the sheer comedy value alone. You know what the common theme running between these is? It's: "Stay the Hell away from monsters!" And that insight is provided absolutely free of charge, friend.

Sykers Beware!

I'll read you one more before you have to start paying for this little anthology. I met the syker who experienced this. He wouldn't give me his name, but he was plenty talkative enough, and I took all this stuff down myself. So this document is an original—you can only get it from me.

"So you think us sykers are pretty bad, do you? Think we got the edge that puts us above an' beyond whatever dreck we tangle with? Well, I can't say as I blame you. After all, you don't know any better. But lemme tell you, ain't everybody out there's happy to see us. Some of



them hate what we have, and fear what we can do. And once upon a time, a few of them did something about it—they made themselves a mind biter.

"Y'see, before the war, there were people in the UN who were worried about us. They knew that there were a lot of us fighting it out on Banshee, and they were scared about what would happen when the fight ended and we came home. So a few of them set up a lab, captured some of the sykers still on Earth as guinea pigs, and set about 'solving the syker problem.' They wanted something that would put us down hard.

"What they made was a nightmare. It's shaped like a human head, and floats in the air. If it weren't for the scaly synthetic skin and the suckers hanging underneath it like a sea-anemone, it'd look like a remote sentry or some other piece of technology. But don't be fooled; the minute you see it, it may be too late.

"The mind biter's got a psychic kick on it like a mule. It can send focused blasts of energy out in waves, turning brain patterns to mush and skulls into time bombs. It's bad enough for the norms, but for us, it's pure agony. If a blast catches you unaware, it can cause an embolism, or a tumor the size of a summer squash. It can leave you lobotomized or even detonate your head like a firecracker in a cantaloupe. Sound like fun? Even with your guard up, the damn thing might get you; I've seen them break down psychic defenses and turn back blasts that could kill a bear. They don't get tired the way we do, and can keep up an attack for hours on end. If you're lucky, you might be able to fight them off. If not... well, I already told you about that.

"The good news is that the brainers who made these things aren't around anymore. The bombs dropped, the Reckoners broke loose, and all those laboratories got lonely in a big hurry. The biters that escaped confinement—and there were quite a few of them, believe me—are loners mostly, and don't work together the way they were supposed to. They're small and fast, but they bleed just fine, and if you can peg one with that flea-flicker on your hip, your troubles are over. But don't underestimate them. Their whole life is dedicated to turning your brain into hash, and they're very good at what they do.

"Oh, you think I'm full of it, do you? Think I'm spinnin' stories just to keep you lookin' over your shoulder. Hmph. See these scars on my skull, son? Long and streaky, like the veins in my head just burst? Ain't no human hand did that to me..."

He wasn't kidding about those scars. Creepiest things I've ever seen. I don't know what really made them, but whatever it is, I'm glad I've never seen it.

Beep! Beep!

All right, this here's your last freebie. I got this one from some guy who claimed to be a big-shot officer in the CSA Air Force. Sounds like a lot of hooie to me, but what the heck—it makes for a pretty good yarn.

"Doctor Clarence Bachman was a virologist working for the Confederates during the Last War, developing vaccines to combat dangerous pathogens released by Union scientists."

Damn Yanks!

"He was brilliant, ambitious, and most of all, arrogant. After crossing his superiors one too many times, he found himself exiled to a remote research facility in the Nevada desert a hundred miles from nowhere.

"He hated the assignment. The work was boring, and he was trapped indoors by a violent case of ophidophobia—fear of reptiles. The Nevada desert's crawling with them: lizards, snakes, gila monsters, you name it and you'll find it. Bachman decided to clear the area of these 'fearsome' creatures, using the skills he was best with: genetic engineering.

"The indigenous roadrunners were the most common predators of reptilian desert life. Bachman set out to unlock the genes for size, speed, and aggressiveness in the otherwise inoffensive, flightless avian. After months of research, he eventually succeeded, and released the resultant species into the desert to develop without the interference of human beings. What he ended up with was the stuff of Sensoround legends or Warner Bros. cartoons. Take your pick.

"Over the next few weeks, the desert surrounding the fenced-in compound became silent as a tomb. No animal larger than a mouse stirred. The experiment appeared to be a complete success.



"If it really had been, though, I would never have heard about it. I was the one they called in when the sentries and patrols started disappearing and buildings on the perimeter of the compound were broken into. Doors were smashed in and labs and dormitories ransacked. Worse still, researchers began to vanish from their labs and quarters just as mysteriously.

"We spent weeks trying to root out the NA saboteurs or spec ops units that were obviously working in the area, with no luck. Then one of my teams ran into a specimen of these creatures, and managed to bring it down with a well-placed LAW rocket. You guessed it: a giant road runner. And I mean giant. The beasts were always preceded by a roiling cloud of dust, apparently kicked up by the flock's advance. Thus cloaked, a trio or quartet of these monsters easily overwhelmed armed defenders, reducing them to bloody strips which would be rapidly gulped down before the dust settled.

"The 'gallos', as we called them, had evolved far beyond Doctor Bachman's initial projections. The radiation of the desert had destabilized the birds' DNA and caused further mutations, causing them to grow as tall as a man, augmenting their already considerable speed, and worse still, their foraging instincts. The creatures had regressed into a primeval, monstrous state driven only to hunt and bring down prey.

"Granted cruel cunning by their rapidly mutating genes, the creatures rose to the top of the ecological order and supplanted mankind from his established place at the top of the food chain. They not only eliminated Bachman's hated lizards, but for a while it looked as if they might eliminate us as well.

"Shortly after this whole episode, the bombs fell. Somehow our little research center was spared. Cut off from help, and fearing the worst, we staged one last desperate attempt to escape. The creatures hit us on the road north. It was bloody. The only thing which saved us was being able to take shelter in the one APC we had. It couldn't outrun the things, but it kept us alive long enough to gun them down.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Bachman was among those who were killed. But not by the hungry jaws of the gallo. Seems the good doctor took a bullet in the back. Shame."

Canned Magic

Librarian's Note: The following was transcribed from notes provided by a heretical Doomsayer who represented himself as "Brother Wavelength," a likely pseudonym.

When the glorious Glow was released upon the World, the dawn of a new age had come and lifted the Worthy up from the Hell of genetic stagnation and delivered them from the jaws of extinction. Behold, in the aftermath of the Atom—the Nuclear Angel is born.

At least that's what Silas wants you to believe.

I was the first to run into one of these things. It was a trip, but I don't think it was an angel. That's what Silas believes. He calls them Nuclear Angels—benevolent manifestations of the Glow sent to deliver us all from Evil. I call them "explodogenies." "Explodo" because they like to blow things up—they thrive on destruction and misery. "Genie" because they live in bottles and give you wishes, like that chick on that old black-and-white vid program.

So, like, the first time I crossed paths with an explodogenie was a few months after I ditched Silas and the green robes. I'd joined up with these scavvies until I could hook up with Joan and her boys. We were searching ruins for food, ammo, and all that good stuff.

Yeah, we found this garage that no-one had ever gotten into. One of those underground jobbers, you know? We spent hours clearing debris from the entrance. The Geiger counter on my hip started to click as we went in, faster and louder the further we went. There was this truck knocked over in the corner, all covered with dust and whatnot. And there's this big cannister on it, with some chemical name or something marked on the side. We get close, and suddenly the valves on the cannister twist free, and there's this big flash, and the air gets all filled with this, like, radioactive mist.

When the dust cleared, there was this thing there—this, like, giant or something, all looming up above us, glowing in the darkness. It bowed deeply, saying, "You have at last freed me. I live in your service and debt." Or something like that. I was totally in awe. Think about it! This thing was like solid radiation—a real living representative of the Glow, an Angel sculpted from pure atomic matter. Man, what a rush!



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So we took it with us, cannister and all. Over the next few days, it did everything I told it to—but it seemed like every time, something terrible happened. Like we were just about out of ammo, and one of the dudes I'm with says let's just ask the genie to find some for us. So it starts leading us out, and we run straight into a patrol of Black Hats. They're loaded for bear. All the ammo we could ask for—'cept they're using it against us.

That whole thing turns into this freakin' huge battle. Course, we got Mr. Explodogenie on our side. It's blasting out these great gusts of energy, like they're drawn from the very Hells. Knockin' down Throckmorton's troops left and right. But that's not all. It's hitting the dudes on our side, too, if they're in its way. And there's this batch of civvies that the Black Hats have chained up—prisoners or slaves or whatever—and the genie just toasts them as well.

That was just too much, dude. When the fight was over, I told that thing to get the Hell back into the cannister. You'd think it would obey, what with all that "I live to serve" bunk. But it got all pissy about it and nearly toasted me. The others, they were already nervous, and they totally lit it up. I guess maybe it was weakened by all the fighting already, 'cause after a minute it fled back into its prison. We buried the cannister deep in the ruins, in the very heart of a crater, hoping the Glow would deter the curious from digging it up again.

If only. A couple years later I was back that way. The cannister was empty. The Explodogenie's out there, free to work its evil upon the world.

Totally evil. But at least it didn't smell too bad. 'Cause that's what I remember most about these other things—the way they stank!

Druggies

You remember back before the war—all the stuff people thought was bad. Traffic. Crime. Drugs. You name it. Now that we've got real problems, you'd think that stuff would all, like, go away. But I guess some people couldn't let go. Or maybe the Glow is, like, trying to teach us a lesson. Yeah, I like that one.

94 So anyway, you can find these things shambling around the ruins, eyes cloudy and glazed, wracked by the sweats, looking lean



A deadly remnant of the prewar drug culture.

and unwashed, their filthy hands covered with open sores and cuts that have gone all septic or whatever. Their fingertips just sort of turn into these glass syringes, all filled with oily narcotic distillates that run out from inside their bodies.

My buds and I had the misfortune of encountering these "mainliners"—that's what the other dudes took to calling them—in the ruins of Tulsa. We'd freed this group of refugees from one of Throckmorton's labor gangs, and we were guiding them to a safer place, when we were forced to hide for a few days in the ruins.

So after the sun set, this odd groan seems to approach our encampment—this pain-filled wail like someone's torturing a dozen cats. A minute or two later, a hoard of these skinny, smelly, all starvin'-thin dudes rushes us.

We're all shooting and blasting, and even the refugees have picked up clubs and junk to fight with, but were easily overwhelmed. The refugees are disappearing from sight as the things get hold of them, and, like, just drag them out into the streets. Those of us that were left just kinda fell back to a stairwell, waiting to make our last stand on the second floor.

But the things didn't follow us. We could see them—at least 20 of them—shambling like they were stoned, kneeling over the downed refugees who were, like, all gasping and clutching at their chests. Dude, it was harsh. The creatures were thrusting their needle-tipped hands into the victims, then jamming them into their own limbs. And then they'd all go shaking and shivering, like they were totally in ecstasy or something.

We couldn't save the victims, but we took care of the mainliners. One of the guys had a thermite charge, and we used it to burn a hole through the wall and escape. The place started to go up, but the mainliners were so wiggled that they didn't even notice. It went down around them, and they all burned up in the blaze.

Rustin' Away

107 We hit another weird creature on that same trip. I don't know what these things are—maybe the Glow's doing us a favor, using these things to do away with the weapons of man. Or maybe they were developed in, like, some government lab—you know, before the war. All I know is that when these little buggers go to town, they don't leave much behind.

We were south of Wichita. There was a lot of fighting in that area. Have you ever seen it? You can be just driving down the road, just like any other place, and suddenly you round a corner and there's all these tanks and guns and things, all twisted and rusted where the war left 'em. So we're not too far from one of those old battlefields when a red haze sort of springs up and drifts towards us. Cecil—that's one of the dudes I was hangin' with—he's all trigger-happy any time anything weird happens. He takes one look at that, fires up his rifle, and lets fly.

Doesn't do a bit of good. The cloud closes in, and suddenly Cecil's all yelling—make that screaming. There were bugs crawling all over him. Little red things—the whole cloud was little red bugs, like the size of a gnat or something. He's swatting and smacking, but it's not like they're actually hurting him.

Then he drops his gun. It hits the ground and shatters into a million pieces, like it was made of glass or something. The bugs were eating it! Not him—the gun!

And then suddenly Cecil's pants fell down. Dude, it was like the funniest thing. The bugs had eaten his belt buckle, and the snap, and the zipper and all, and the pants just fell around his ankles while he stood there staring at the gun, bugs all over him.



These bugs have a voracious appetite.

I would have laughed out loud, but right then Joey hit the gas and lit on out of there. Good thing, too, 'cause the bugs were closing in on our truck. We got a couple miles down the road and left them behind, then waited for Cecil to catch up with us. He wasn't happy when he finally came stomping down the road, holding his pants up with both hands. But at least he wasn't hurt.

Whine Bugs

Librarian's Note: This entry was recorded by Librarian Bo Hopkins in Junkyard. The subject of the interview is one Charlie "Chigger" Muldoon, a pathfinder operating out of Junkyard.

Not every horror you encounter while trudging through the US of A is a lumbering behemoth the size of your dad's Buick, whine bugs are no larger than your fist but that doesn't make them any less deadly.

83 These pint-sized terrors are likely the brainchild of government-sponsored geneticists trying to develop a defense against sykers. Although if anybody who knows for sure is alive today, they're not telling.

Shortly after the bombs dropped, folks traveling the lonely grasslands between Wisconsin and Seattle began noticing an odd whirr in the air, a persistent drone that wore on your last nerve like a dentist's drill—not that most folks know what a dentist is these days. Anywho, I was hired to lead a caravan out of Junkyard to Michigan, God knows why, but the money and trade was good so I figured I'd give it a shot.

Barring a couple of run-ins with a few trogs and a pack of bloodthirsty Ravenites, we made good time until we reached Illinois. Most of the state was overrun with prairie grass after the Apocalypse. Beats the Hell outa me why, something about ecological regression according to some buddies of mine. Anyway, we hit upon the sea of grass and we figured smooth sailing. That is until we hit upon the drone.

It started as a low hum. Only the animals seemed to notice at first, then 'ol Chester, who'd been on edge since we left Junkyard, picked a fight with the company cook. The ruckus spread like wildfire, arguments broke out over nothing and folks started swinging their fists

but as quickly as it started, the campsite fell silent and the combatants set back more than a little confused.

The next two nights were no different but each time the arguments grew more intense. On the third night, 'ol Chester happened to catch a fork in his temple and died after he commented on the meal being too salty to one of the cooks. While the trailboss quieted things down, me and a couple of the boys grabbed our rifles and set out to find the source of the drone. We wandered around until dawn, but whatever was causing the ruckus had eluded us once again—that is until we were packing up.

While loading up, a barrel of flour slipped and fell to the ground, exposing a pair of giant locusts who immediately set up to wailing. A second later, blame was passed around and a fight broke out while the nasty bugs just sat there quietly soaking up the bad vibes. I had already taken to sticking tallow in my ears; read it in a book once. Shotgun in hand, I stepped between the quarrelers and emptied both barrels into the smug little bastiches. A hushed silence enveloped us, and it remained that way for the rest of the trip.

Glamor Shots

Librarian's Note: This last entry was taken from a palmcorder found in the lair of a gang of trogs near the City of Lost Angels. 21 May 2090. The identity of the author is unknown.

The 21st century brought about unprecedented advances in the fields of medical science, the likes of which were only hinted at in science fiction. Many surgeries requiring weeks of planning and months of painful recuperation became routine outpatient procedures performed in chic, highly exclusive clinics for society's effete elite.

Those who strove to achieve physical perfection often had no choice but to resort to plastic surgery in order to shorten, tone up, enlarge, or in other words improve upon Nature's handiwork. After the bombs fell, some of these individuals survived the fallout, diseases, and packs of rabid mutants—only to become warped abominations themselves. Ironically, it would be their unrelenting vanity that would prove to be their undoing.

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Now, packs of these creatures wander urban centers, hiding out in the ruins of hospitals and once-exclusive clinics, looking for victims from which to borrow spare parts in a never-ending pursuit of "the perfect look."

Those unfortunate enough to run afoul of these monsters are well advised to beware, lest they become unwilling organ donors. These creatures layer themselves with scraps of flesh and bone stripped from those they manage to overpower. By working in concert and sharing the spoils, two or three of them can easily overpower a single victim and remove the most useful bits in under a minute. Unfortunately for the victim, the glamor puss doesn't wait for their victims to expire before they begin their gory work.

The creatures are highly competitive—they often fight over choice pieces of flesh, causing many of the creatures to have a patchwork appearance from the many clashing ears, cheek bones, and chins. Each glamor puss has its own sense of the esthetic, but one thing remains in common: vanity. When presented with the opportunity to preen in front of a mirror, the glamor puss will at least be distracted by the presence of any reflective surface.

The Meaning of it All

Librarian's Addendum: Following are the thoughts of Master Librarian Higgins on the ramifications of this report.

Although many of our order have known this for some time, this report clearly supports the theory that many new forms of supernatural creatures have sprung into existence since the end of the Last War. This of course raises the question, "Why?"

We know from interviews with individuals who exhibit "magical" powers that the level of spiritual energy available for such things is much higher now than it was prior to the war. All sources we have interviewed who are knowledgeable in this area attribute this higher energy level to the detonation of such a large quantity of ghost-rock bombs in such a short space of time. As this event seemed to herald the arrival of the Reckoners in the personas of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, we can only assume this theory is correct.

However, it has also been postulated that the Reckoners need a certain ambient level of fear to survive. Both Agency and Texas Ranger reports from before the war indicate that the creatures spawned by the Reckoning were intended to create this fear and create an atmosphere habitable by these entities; "terrorforming" the earth as one report puts it.

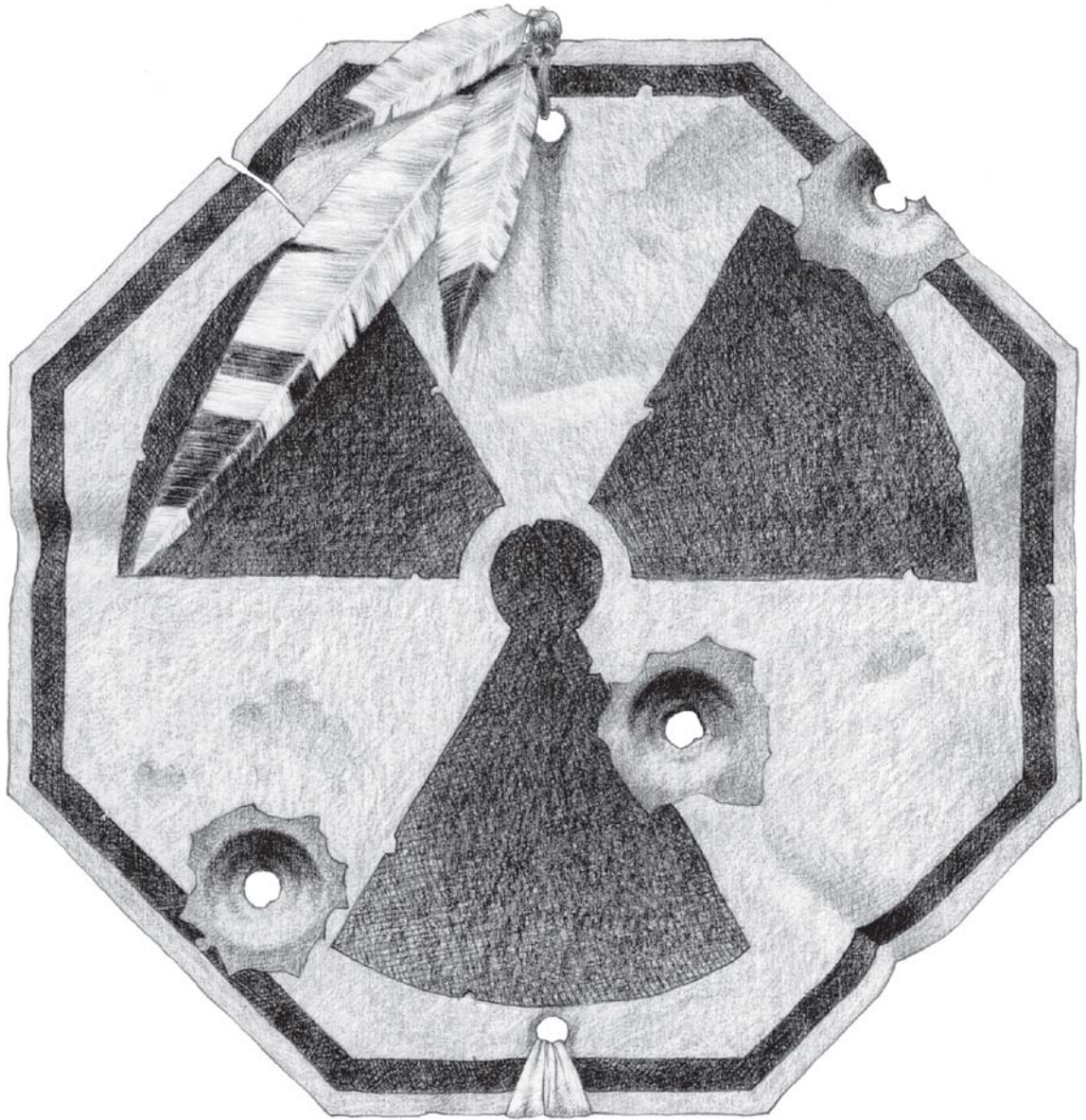
This sudden explosion in new forms of creatures, however, almost seems at cross purposes to the Reckoner's goal. As the fantastic and extraordinary become more common, the fear of them naturally lessens as people come to accept these creatures as part of the natural order. They are still capable of creating short-lived fear as a threat to an individual's personal survival, but few inspire the type long-lived, visceral fear of the unknown that existed before the war.

In addition, this increase in numbers also threatens to bring about the extinction of the human race. Current projections show that the surviving world population is dangerously close to the threshold from which a recovery is impossible. After factoring in deaths due to disease, war, mutation, suicides due to survivor's syndrome, and supernatural agencies, the world population is experiencing a sharp downward growth curve which may not reverse itself.

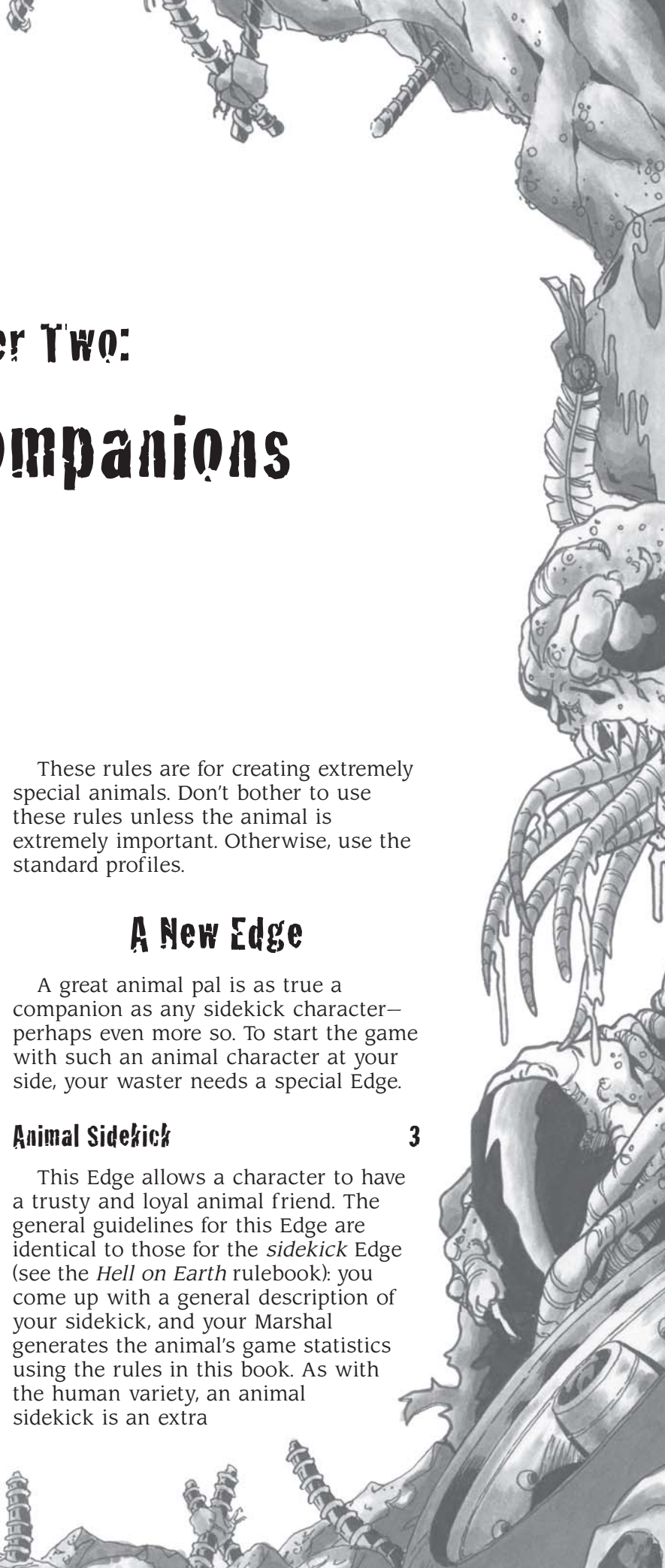
Does this mean we are now expendable to the Reckoners? Has the fear wrenched from our much-abused race created an atmosphere which can be sustained in our absence, or do the Reckoners have something more diabolical in mind? The appearance of creatures such as the charnel hounds, which prey on other supernatural beings is most telling. Their exact significance is open to interpretation, however. The charnel hounds could herald the beginning of the establishment of a full-fledged supernatural ecology on Earth, or they might indicate that the Reckoners don't fully control the powers they have unleashed and new creatures are being spontaneously spawned by the high ambient levels of supernatural energy.

I'm afraid at the moment, not enough data exists to make any firm conclusions on this matter. This may have to wait until our scouting parties return from across the Mississippi with their reports—if they return. And may God help us if they don't.

No Man's Land







Chapter Two:

Animal Companions

Not every hero in the Wasted West walks on two legs. Sometimes an animal of exceptional courage or outstanding ability becomes almost as large a part of a hero's legend as the hero himself. Where would Mad Max be without his dingo?

These rules are specifically made for creating animal sidekicks for heroes in *Hell on Earth*. To gain one of these valuable companions, the character must take the *animal sidekick* Edge (covered just below) or obtain his new friend through an adventure. Picking up a four-legged friend through play doesn't cost any points, it's simply a reward for good roleplaying.

Dogs and horses are the two most common animal sidekicks, but others are certainly possible. More exotic companions, like hawks, cougars, wolves, or bears, are always special animal companions. These animals are very rarely tame, so it is their tameness (around the hero at least) that makes them unique. Anyone could have a horse or a dog, however, so for one to be special, it must be created from scratch using special rules. Luckily, this section covers just that.

These rules are for creating extremely special animals. Don't bother to use these rules unless the animal is extremely important. Otherwise, use the standard profiles.

A New Edge

A great animal pal is as true a companion as any sidekick character—perhaps even more so. To start the game with such an animal character at your side, your waster needs a special Edge.

Animal Sidekick

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This Edge allows a character to have a trusty and loyal animal friend. The general guidelines for this Edge are identical to those for the *sidekick* Edge (see the *Hell on Earth* rulebook): you come up with a general description of your sidekick, and your Marshal generates the animal's game statistics using the rules in this book. As with the human variety, an animal sidekick is an extra

Dog Traits and Sizes

	2	3-8	9-J	Q-K	A
Deftness	d4	d4	d4	d6	d6
Nimbleness	d6	d8	d8	d10	d12
Quickness	d6	d8	d10	d10	d12
Strength	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12
Vigor	d6	d8	d8	d10	d12
Cognition	d6	d6	d8	d10	d12
Knowledge	d4	d6	d6	d8	d10
Mien	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12
Smarts	d4	d6	d6	d8	d8
Spirit	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12

Maximum Size	Edge or Strength	Hindrance	Typical Breeds
1	d4	<i>small breed: 5</i>	chihuahua, dachshund, Pekingese, toy poodle
2	d6	<i>small breed: 3</i>	beagle, red fox, Scottish terrier
3	d6	<i>small breed: 1</i>	border collie, dingo, cocker spaniel, Welsh corgi
4	d8	none	boxer, bull terrier, bulldog, collie, coyote, dalmatian, Doberman, husky, Irish setter, Labrador retriever
5	d8	<i>large breed: 1</i>	bloodhound, German shepherd, rottweiler
6	d10	<i>large breed: 3</i>	great Dane, grey wolf, Irish wolfhound, Newfoundland

played by the Marshal, with a will and personality all of its own. Your *hombre* is also saddled with an *obligation* (-2) Hindrance, though you get no points for it (and it doesn't count against your 10-point limit on Hindrances). Sometimes your new companion may need some help.

You don't need this Edge for your character to own an animal—even a spirited animal with a real personality and close relationship with your character. What this Edge gives you is an exceptional animal friend created using the rules below, well-suited to assisting your hero on his epic adventures.

Creatin' a Four-Footed Friend

To create an animal sidekick, follow these six easy steps:

1. Concept (including breed)
2. Traits
3. Aptitudes
4. Hindrances
5. Edges
6. Background

One: Concept

This is easy. What kind of dog? What color horse? What is he trained to do? Who does he belong to, and what is their relationship?

Two: Traits

Animals have ten basic Traits, just like humans. The difference lies in the range of those Traits. To determine Traits for an animal, draw 10 cards from a fresh deck. Do not discard any cards.

Assign these cards to Traits as you would for a human character. The Coordination is determined by the suit just like for humans. The die type for the Trait is determined by the card and which Trait you wish to place it in. Use the tables on these two pages to determine Traits for dogs and horses.

Note that Mental Traits are relative. A dog with 3d8 *Smarts* is not smarter than a man with 1d6—she's just above average for a dog. Physical Traits, however, are on the same scale as for humans. That doesn't give an animal human capabilities, of course—no matter how strong, no dog is going to beat a man in an arm-wrestling competition. And *Deftness* usually relates to how well an animal can manipulate objects with its mouth, since it ain't got no hands to work with.

Drawing a Joker is as weird for animals as it is for people. If you draw a Joker, it counts as an Ace for whichever Trait you use it for. Draw another card for the Coordination. In addition, the animal has a "Mysterious Past." See that section in the Marshal's portion of this book.

Size

Your average dog has a Size of 4; a typical horse has a Size of 10. Differences in breed as well as between individual animals can lead to a great deal of differentiation, though—much more than among humans.

To determine your critter's Size, check out the tables on these two pages. Start with the breed you have in mind, or at least a rough idea of a breed your animal might compare to in build. Then look up the appropriate size, and make sure that the *Strength* you generated above doesn't exceed the breed's maximum.

If your dog's Size is greater than 4, or your horse's is greater than 10, you'll need to purchase the Edge *large breed* at the appropriate level (see Edges, below). Likewise, you'll need to purchase the *small breed* Hindrance if your dog's size is less than 4, or your horse's is less than 10.

You might purchase other Edges and Hindrances that also affect your critter's Size, such as *big 'un* or *scrawny*. Apply the effects of these Edges and Hindrances just as you would with a human hero. Note, though, that dog Sizes cannot exceed 8, even with multiple Edges or Hindrances, and horse Sizes cannot exceed 12.

Wind

Wind is determined by adding Vigor and Spirit, as with human characters.

Pace

Pace for a dog is equal to its *Nimbleness* plus 4. For a horse, it's the critter's *Nimbleness* plus 8.

Three: Aptitudes

Animals can learn Aptitudes just like humans, but they are extremely limited in which ones they can learn and how they can use them. No matter how smart, no dog is going to have the *science: engineering* Aptitude. Appropriate Aptitudes are listed here, though Marshals might allow others to be introduced to the game if they're reasonable.

Animal Companions

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Aptitude Points

Dogs get a number of Aptitude points equal to their *Smarts* plus *Knowledge*; Horses get a number of Aptitude points equal to just their *Smarts*. These are spent on beginning skills just like they would be on any other character.

Basic Skills

Each critter begins with certain skills instinctively. These can be raised like any Aptitude during the process of generating your animal's game statistics.

Skill	Dog	Horse
Fightin': Brawlin'	1	1
Swimmin'	1	2
Trackin'	1	0
Guts	1	1
Loyalty (Master)	1	1

Horse Traits and Sizes

	2	3-8	9-J	Q-k	A
Deftness	d4	d4	d4	d6	d6
Nimbleness	d6	d8	d10	d10	d12
Quickness	d4	d6	d8	d8	d10
Strength	d8	d10	d12	d12+2	d12+4
Vigor	d8	d10	d10	d12	d12
Cognition	d6	d6	d6	d6	d8
Knowledge	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Mien	d4	d6	d6	d6	d8
Smarts	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Spirit	d4	d6	d6	d8	d10

Maximum Size	Strength	Edge or Hindrance	Typical Breeds
8	d12	<i>small breed: 3</i>	mule, Shetland pony
9	d12	<i>small breed: 1</i>	mustang
10	d12+2	none	saddle horse
11	d12+4	<i>large breed: 3</i>	Clydesdale

Cat Traits and Sizes

	2	3-8	9-J	Q-K	A
Deftness	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Nimbleness	d8	d10	d12	d12	d12
Quickness	d6	d8	d10	d12	d12
Strength	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12
Vigor	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12
Cognition	d6	d8	d8	d10	d12
Knowledge	d4	d4	d6	d6	d6
Mien	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12
Smarts	d4	d4	d6	d6	d6
Spirit	d4	d6	d6	d8	d10

Maximum Size	Strength	Edge or Hindrance	Typical Breeds
2	d4	<i>small breed: 3</i>	house cat
3	d8	<i>small breed: 1</i>	lynx, bobcat
5	d12	none	mountain lion
6	d12	<i>large breed: 3</i>	lion

Animal Aptitudes

The Aptitudes that animals can take are listed below. Unless noted otherwise, these skills are used just like they are for human heroes. They are animal versions, though, and don't always correspond in every way to their human equivalents. See the descriptions for more details. For example, while a human with a professional Aptitude can describe her job as well as do it, this isn't the case with animals.

You might want to take note of the loyalty and obedience Aptitudes—they're unique to animals, and are a big part of determining how a critter relates and responds to her master.

Deftness

As with humans this is a measure of the animal's dexterity: its eye-paw or eye-muzzle coordination and its ability to manipulate small objects.

Filechin'

Anyone who's carried apples in their pockets near a farm knows how sneaky horses can get when they want a treat. And of course, many a canine bandit has made off with that extra muffin or even the entire roast.

To use this Aptitude, the animal surreptitiously grabs with its mouth and attempts to get away before anyone notices. Because dog and horse lips are not made for fine manipulations, animals suffer a -4 penalty to rolls with this skill if they're removing items from a person's body.

Nimbleness

This is a measure of how graceful your critter is.

Dodge

Some critters know to be where the bullets ain't. The animal can only *dodge* attacks it knows from experience or training are bad for its health.

Fightin': Brawlin'

Dogs can cause *Strength+2d4* damage with their teeth, or *Strength+1d4* with their claws.

Horses inflict *Strength* damage with their teeth or *Strength+3d4* damage with their hooves.

Sneak

While not the quietest of animals, dogs can creep right up on a soul. Horses, being as big as they are, make all *sneak* rolls at -4.

Swimmin'

Both dogs and horses are naturally pretty strong swimmers, although horses have the edge on endurance.

Cognition

This is a measure of how well you animal notices things around it. Both dogs and horses can hear frequencies not audible to the human ear and tend to have keener senses of smell.

Scrutinize

The main difference between this and the human skill is that most horse and dog *scrutinizin'* is done with the nose.

Search

Although better than humans in some respects, horse senses aren't quite as acute as those of dogs. Horses get a -2 penalty to all search rolls.

Trackin'

Some dog breeds can track a scent for miles. A horse can track, but it's not nearly as common.

Knowledge

As with *Smarts*, an animal's *Knowledge* is relative.

Area Knowledge

Both dogs and horses are often familiar with their home territory. Some know it better than humans.

Obedience

Specific commands

A well-trained dog really can be man's best friend. This Aptitude covers the training an animal's undergone.

The individual tricks that an animal knows (or commands that it understands) are treated as concentrations under this Aptitude. A roll against the *obedience* Aptitude is made when an animal is given a command, to see if the critter understands and obeys. If it does, the actual performance of the commanded task may then require some other roll—for example, a dog that follows a command to "sic 'em" would then have to make an actual *fightin': brawlin'* roll to make its attack.

Most tricks take just a moment to perform, but others (like "stay") might go on indefinitely. In such cases, have the animal make an additional obedience or loyalty roll every so often—perhaps as frequently as once every few minutes, or as rarely as once per couple of hours, depending on the nature of the task.

Animal Companions

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Note that this makes animals poor long-term guards or watchmen, as their attention tends to wander (though vicious animals trained to attack strangers on sight serve just fine if confined to the area they are to guard).

The TN for keepin' ones' canine eyes on the prize is typically Fair (5), though distractions or attractions may make it more difficult. If the creature's master is around, it gets a +2 to its roll, or a +4 if the master is keeping a close eye on it. Animals can attempt *obedience* rolls for commands that they haven't been trained for, but only the simplest of tasks, and at the standard -4 for using an Aptitude without the appropriate concentration.

Though individual commands are treated as separate concentrations, they aren't acquired in quite the normal manner as for other Aptitudes. To learn a command (and gain a corresponding concentration), the animal has to be trained—a process which requires time, Bounty points, and successful rolls by both the trainer (the animal's master, or

Bird Traits and Sizes

	2	3-8	9-J	Q-K	A
Deftness	d4	d6	d6	d8	d10
Nimbleness	d8	d10	d12	d12	d12
Quickness	d8	d8	d10	d12	d12
Strength	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Vigor	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Cognition	d6	d8	d10	d12	d12
Knowledge	d4	d4	d4	d6	d6
Mien	d4	d6	d6	d6	d8
Smarts	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Spirit	d4	d6	d6	d8	d10

Maximum Size Strength

1	d4
2	d6
3	d6
4	d8

Edge or Hindrance

small breed: 3
small breed: 1
none
large breed: 3

Typical Breeds

canary, parakeet
gull, parrot
eagle
condor



another person to whom the animal has loyalty—see the *loyalty* Aptitude, below) and the creature.

Teaching an animal a new command takes four or five days, during which the trainer and critter must spend a few hours each day on the training. The master or the animal (usually the master, but the Marshal might have awarded the critter a chip or two) pays one bounty point. Then the trainer makes an *animal handlin'* roll, followed by a *Smarts* roll by the critter. The TN for these rolls is usually Fair (5), though more difficult tasks often have higher TNs. If the trainer fails her roll, the training must continue another three or four days; otherwise, every raise that the trainer gets in her *animal handlin'* result gives the critter a +2 on its *Smarts* roll. The animal doesn't learn the trick until both the trainer and the critter have succeeded in their rolls.

Several commands are described here. Each trick must have a trigger signal—a word, action, or even a particular whistle or clap. The trigger can be anything, and if spoken does not have to be the same as the name of the trick (though these are named after common

command words). The TN listed is for rolls to train the animal and for rolls to understand and obey the command.

An animal companion may begin the game with a number of tricks equal to its *Knowledge*. During the character creation process, the animal's master may spend Aptitude points to give the critter additional command concentrations, at the cost of one command per point.

C'mere: The creature comes to its master (or whoever calls it). This trick can be just as useful for a horse as it is for a dog. **TN:** 3.

Fetch: The animal seeks and brings to the master a particular item. If it knows or remembers where the item is, it goes straight to it; otherwise it may have to make a *search* roll. If it can't find the item in the immediate area, it may turn up something that seems (to it) like a reasonable approximation. This concentration can be taken multiple times, for different items. **TN:** 5

Git Down: This is the old cavalry horse trick—the animal lays down to form a shield for its master. Course, it doesn't have to be used as a shield—this trick can be used to get a horse down out of sight in a low gully or thicket as well. **TN:** 5.

Go Home: The critter returns home, or to another particular place it has been trained to go (this concentration can be taken multiple times, to send the

animal to different places). This trick doesn't instill the animal with any extraordinary navigational aptitude—if the critter doesn't know where it is, it may become lost or return to the master in confusion. If gettin' home takes a long time, the animal might become distracted along the way. **TN: 5**

Go to Bob: The animal goes to a particular person, to whom it must have a loyalty concentration. If it knows or remembers where "Bob" is, it goes straight to him; otherwise it may have to make a *search* roll. This concentration may be taken multiple times, for different "Bobs." **TN: 5**

Guard 'em: The animal guards a person or other animal as indicated by its master. If the target tries to move or leave, the critter attempts to *overawe* it into staying put, attacking if the *overawe* doesn't do the trick. **TN: 9**

Hide: The creature seeks a hiding place, from which it won't emerge until called out. **TN: 7**

Nip 'em: The animal harasses the target indicated by the master, nipping heels or tugging on pants legs. These aren't serious attacks, but can cause minor damage. **TN: 7**

Nab 'em: The animal makes a *fightin': brawlin'* attack against the target at a particular point (like the throat, wrist, or groin), going not for damage but for a solid grasp. If the target doesn't resist (the firm grip of a dog's jaw on a man's tackle can discourage any sudden moves), the animal maintains its grip until called off. If he does try to pull away, well, he better hope the animal doesn't have a strong bite. **TN: 9**

Perform: The critter rolls over, plays dead, shakes paws, barks or clops out two plus two, or whatever. This trick can be taken multiple times—each concentration gives the critter three simple tricks, or one complicated one. **TN: 3**

Round 'em up: The animal attempts to "herd up" one or more targets and chase them back to the master. It makes an opposed *Mien* roll against the target(s) to do so. **TN: 9**

Scare 'em: The animal growls and threatens the target indicated by the master, making an *overawe* roll against it. It continues to menace until called

off by the master. Typically, the command for this trick is a vociferous order to attack—it adds to the effect if the target believes that the animal is moving in for a commanded kill. **TN: 7**

Seek: The animal scours the immediate area for anything unusual. What it thinks is worthy of note may vary, of course—a dog is likely to think that a hidden cache of bones is great news, while totally ignoring a chest full of ghost rock. Typically a hidden person or animal will be of interest to the critter, and this trick is often used to flush out people in hiding. **TN: 5**

Shut up: The critter stops barking, growling, or otherwise vocalizin', and remains silent until released. **TN: 5**

Sic 'em: The animal attacks the target indicated by the master. It continues to attack until the target is subdued or the critter is called off. **TN: 5**

Speak: The creature barks or makes some other appropriate noise. **TN: 5**

Stand Watch: the animal guards a particular spot or object, threatening or attacking anyone who approaches. **TN: 7**

Stay: The animal patiently remains in one place, until released by its master. **TN: 5**

Toss 'em: The creature bucks and tosses its rider, or (if the rider is attempting to mount) won't let him on its back. Obviously, this trick ain't much use for a dog, unless it's a big dog. I mean a really big dog. **TN: 5**

Track: The critter pursues a scent that it has isolated or been given, making a *trackin'* roll to do so. **TN: 5**

Trade

Plowhorse, drafthorse, racehorse, cavalry mount, stalking horse, watchdog, hunting dog, sheep dog

Many an animal has been called on to contribute to its owner's income. The animal's score in this Aptitude merely shows how good it is at actually doing the job—it doesn't give the animal any of the particular training that might be

imparted through the *obedience* Aptitude. *Trade* can, however, define the sorts of situations and environments an animal can tolerate. For example, a cavalry mount would not be particularly spooked by combat; a watchdog would know to remain alert and respond to intruders.

Mien

This is a measure of the critter's personality and bearing.

Overawe

When riled or trying to establish who's the dominant animal, both dogs and horses can be quite fierce. No one really wants to get a bite on the leg or catch a hoof to the head.

Smarts

Remember, this is a relative Trait. Your dog will never learn rocket science.

Survival

Most wild animals don't need an Aptitude to survive in their home environment. Domesticated animals don't have it so easy.

Spirit

This is a measure of the animal's willpower and spiritual stamina.

Guts

Remember, these are exceptional animals. If they didn't have *guts*, they wouldn't make very good sidekicks.

Loyalty

The animal's master, other individuals.

A good hound dog'll stick by its master through thick or thin. This Aptitude is a measure of that loyalty. It's not a long-term measure—a critter with

2d4 loyalty isn't any more likely to run away than one with 4d10—but rather a benchmark for moments when the animal's immediate loyalty is challenged. For example, the Marshal might make a roll against this Aptitude when deciding whether a dog attacks a creature who threatens its master. On a failed roll the critter might hold back with its tail between its legs.

Individuals to whom the animal is loyal are treated as concentrations under this skill. Obviously, the critter's master is the first concentration, but most animals can develop loyalty to others as well. An animal trainer must instill loyalty in a critter before that creature can be trained; therefore establishing loyalty (and a concentration under this Aptitude) towards a trainer is always the first step in training any animal.

Four: Hindrances

Critters can take Hindrances just like regular folks. There is no real limit on how many points worth of Hindrances they can take.

Hindrances available to animal sidekicks are listed below. Unless otherwise stated, each Hindrance works as it is described in the *Hell on Earth* rulebook. Because these Hindrances often impact animals differently than they do humans, however, they don't always cost the same.

Ailin'

3/5

No animal with a fatal ailment could survive long enough to become a sidekick. It could still suffer from a lesser ill though.



Ailment Severity	Points
Minor	3
Chronic	5

Bad Ears

3/5

Only dogs may take this Hindrance, as a horse with bad ears would be put out to pasture or put down.

Bad Eyes

3/5

Only dogs may take this Hindrance, as a horse with bad eyes would be put out to pasture or put down. (It's a hard life being a horse. Folks put up with a lot from their dogs. That's the difference between a pet and a beast of burden.)

Big 'Un

1/2

Just like regular folks, some animals can be tubs of lard. This hindrance works just like the regular *big 'un* Hindrance in the *Hell on Earth* rulebook.

Bloodthirsty

2

Once an animal tastes blood, it can develop a hankering for more.

Curious

3

The cat isn't the only animal that curiosity can kill.

Feral

3

This animal has returned to its wild roots—or perhaps it never even had any real socializin'. Either way, it doesn't truck with any of this domestication stuff. A feral dog or horse cannot learn the *trade* or *obedience* Aptitudes, and can only have a *loyalty* concentration for one person: its master. The animal hangs around the hero out of a sense of personal loyalty, but rarely responds to direct commands—and never from anyone other than its master. Feral horses can be ridden, but don't take saddle or tack, and won't allow anyone other than their masters on their backs.

Without any *obedience* Aptitude, feral critters must make rolls to obey commands at the standard -8 unskilled penalty—and even then they can only be made to follow the simplest and most obviously-communicated commands (like “stay” or “come here”). A feral creature can, however, have a high *loyalty* Aptitude, and be as close a companion as any well-heeled critter.

Lame

3/5

Horses can only take this for 3 points. A really *lame* horse would be put down.

Animal Companions

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Mean as a Rattler

2

Some animals are just born bad, others get that way by mistreatment from a former owner. Either way, this critter doesn't take to having its belly scratched.

Randy

3

In dogs, this can sometimes mean a quite embarrassing affection for trouser legs.

Scrawny

3

In the Wasted West, it ain't only children that go hungry. This Hindrance works just like the one of the same name in the *Hell on Earth* rulebook.





Slowpoke

Reduce Pace by -2 (or by -4 if it is over 12). If the animal is a horse it isn't going to be winning any Kentucky derby's. If it's a dog you're going to be waiting a while for it to show up with your slippers.

2 Five: Edges

Using some of the points gained by taking Hindrances (and only those points), you may now choose some benefits for the critter. Unless otherwise noted, these Edges function just like they do for humans, but, like Hindrances above, they don't always cost the same.

Brave

Contrary to what you might think from his name, Ol' Yeller was as brave as they come.

Small Breed

1/3/5

The critter is of a smaller than average-sized breed, making it lighter and less rugged than typical dogs or horses.

For dogs, the average Size of 4 represents breeds the size and build of typical retrievers. This Hindrance at level 1 reduces the dogs Size to 3, making it a breed equivalent in build to a border collie. Level 3 makes the Size 2, equivalent to a beagle, and level 5 reduces it to Size 1, the build of a chihuahua or other small, lap dog.

For horses, the average Size of 10 represents typical saddle horses. This Hindrance can only be taken at level 1 or 3. Small breeds at level 1 are mustangs or equivalent (Size 9); at level three they are ponies or mules (Size 8).

Thin-Skinned

3

Some animals are spooked by just about anything.

Tuckered

1-5

Animals can have weak systems just like humans, though they seem to be a bit closer to the process of natural selection than we are. Critters with tuckered levels over 2 are usually runts, and they rarely live long enough to end up as character companions.

Yeller

3

Granted, this wasn't where Ol' Yeller got his name from, but some animals turn tail at the first sign of danger.

Brawny

2

A rugged animal can be a real lifesaver when out in the boonies or facin' off against a horde of slaverin' muties. This Edge functions just like the one for heroes in the *Hell on Earth* rulebook, i.e. a +1 increase in Size.

Fleet-Footed

2

While there can be fast pooches, there's nothing like a fast horse. This Edge functions just like the one for heroes in the *Hell on Earth* rulebook.

Free Spirit

2

Mustangs and half-wolves often retain some of their wild natures, even when domesticated. A creature with this edge has its Spirit raised by +1 step. However, the animal must be of a wild or half-wild breed (for horses that's likely a mustang; for dogs that's probably a coyote or half-wolf) and must take the appropriate *large breed* or *small breed* Edge or Hindrance. Furthermore, such creatures are uncomfortable in urban settings or around crowds.

Great Nose

1-5

The critter has a great sense of smell, even for an animal. For each level in this Edge, the animal gains +1 to any *trackin'* or *search* roll that involves scent. Horses can only take this Edge at levels 1 or 2. Most dog breeds can take it up to level 3—only bloodhounds and similar tracking breeds can take it at level 4 or 5.

"The Growl"

1

This is the canine version of "the voice." Some dogs have a growl that can cause an hombre's cojones to shrink up into his belly. This adds +2 to *overawe* rolls. Only dogs can take this Edge.

Large Breed

1/3/5

The animal is of a larger than average breed, making it tougher and more impressive than the run-of-the-mill pony or pooch.

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For dogs, the average Size of 4 represents breeds the size and build of typical retrievers. This Edge at level 1 increases the dog's Size to 5, making it a breed equivalent in build to a German shepherd. Level 3 makes the Size 6, equivalent to a Great Dane, and level 5 increases it to Size 7, the build of a mastiff or other huge dog. Dog Sizes cannot exceed 8, even with the *big 'un* or *brawny* Edge or Hindrance.

For horses, the average Size of 10 represents most typical saddle horses. This Edge can only be taken at level 3, which makes the animal a Clydesdale or other similarly-sized breed (Size 11). Horse Sizes cannot exceed 12, even with the *big 'un* or *brawny* Edge or Hindrance.

Nerves o' Steel

1/3

The cost of this Hindrance is still 1 point for dogs, but horses are extremely skittish by nature, so this edge costs them 3 points.

Purty

1

A handsome animal with a clean, glossy coat always gets a better reaction from folks.

Renown

1/3

For an animal to have this Edge, the master usually also has to have it.

Saddlewise

1

This horse seems to know what its rider wants before the command is given. Anyone riding this horse gets a +2 to all *horse ridin'* rolls.

Sense of Direction

1

Funny how an animal can just be more in tune with his environment than his master is. This is a good one for St. Bernards leading folks out of mountain passes.

“The Stare”

The inscrutable eye of the beast can really creep a cowpoke out. Some dogs with this edge may have different colored eyes or eyes that catch the light in a way to give them that creepy “demon dog” glow.

Thick-Skinned

Nothing bothers these animals—well, almost nothing.

Tough as Nails

Some critters can take a kicking and come back for more.

Wolf Dog

Occasionally, domestic dogs and wolves mate, producing a hardier, if occasionally unpredictable, crossbreed. A wolf dog receives +1 to its Size if the base Size for its breed is 5 or less, and its teeth inflict Strength+2d6 damage. These crossbreeds have a reputation as being bloodthirsty, though, and folks tend to look askance at them. Many believe they'll eventually bite the hand that feeds them. Is the reputation deserved? That's up to your Marshal...

Six: Background

The last step is to make up a bit of background for the beast. This doesn't need to include a lot of detail. The animal can even borrow some of its background from its owner if the two have been adventuring together for a long while.

If a Joker was drawn during Step Two, the Marshal needs to draw from a fresh deck to find out what's unusual about the animal. Animals are not as prone to weirdness as humans, so only one card is drawn, even if two Jokers came up during Trait generation. There's only so much mischief an animal can get up to.

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Animal Companions & Bounty Points

Animals usually stay much the same over time, but sometimes a beast improves with training. Normally animals don't earn Fate Chips, though the Marshal may opt to award one every so often when the critter's actions are exceptional or really add to the story (events that relate more directly to the *obligation* Hindrance that comes with the animal *sidekick* Edge yield Fate Chips for the hero, however, not the animal).

These chips may be spent by the Marshal on the animal's behalf if the need arises within the same game session. If not, they should be spent as Bounty to raise an existing Aptitude (of the Marshal's choosing) before the next game session, or they can be applied to any training efforts that are ongoing at the time. If the animal has been particularly active, especially with a specific Aptitude (if the critter has been doing a lot of swimming, for example), the Marshal might award a Chip specifically to be used in raising the appropriate Aptitude. An animal's more disturbing experiences might also yield a point or two of Grit.

Additional *obedience* concentrations can be developed through training (see the *obedience* Aptitude, above). Non-*obedience* Aptitudes also require training time, along with the expenditure of the usual Bounty points by the critter (if the Marshal has given her any) or her master.

New HQE Animal Rules

Some designer's notes: These rules replace those for Animal Sidekicks as detailed in *Rascals, Varmints & Critters*. In particular, they present a rational system for dealing with variations between breeds, improve and better-define animals' training and what can be done with it, and add a benchmark against which an animal's loyalty can be measured.

Substantive changes have been made in the cost of acquiring and maintaining an animal companion.

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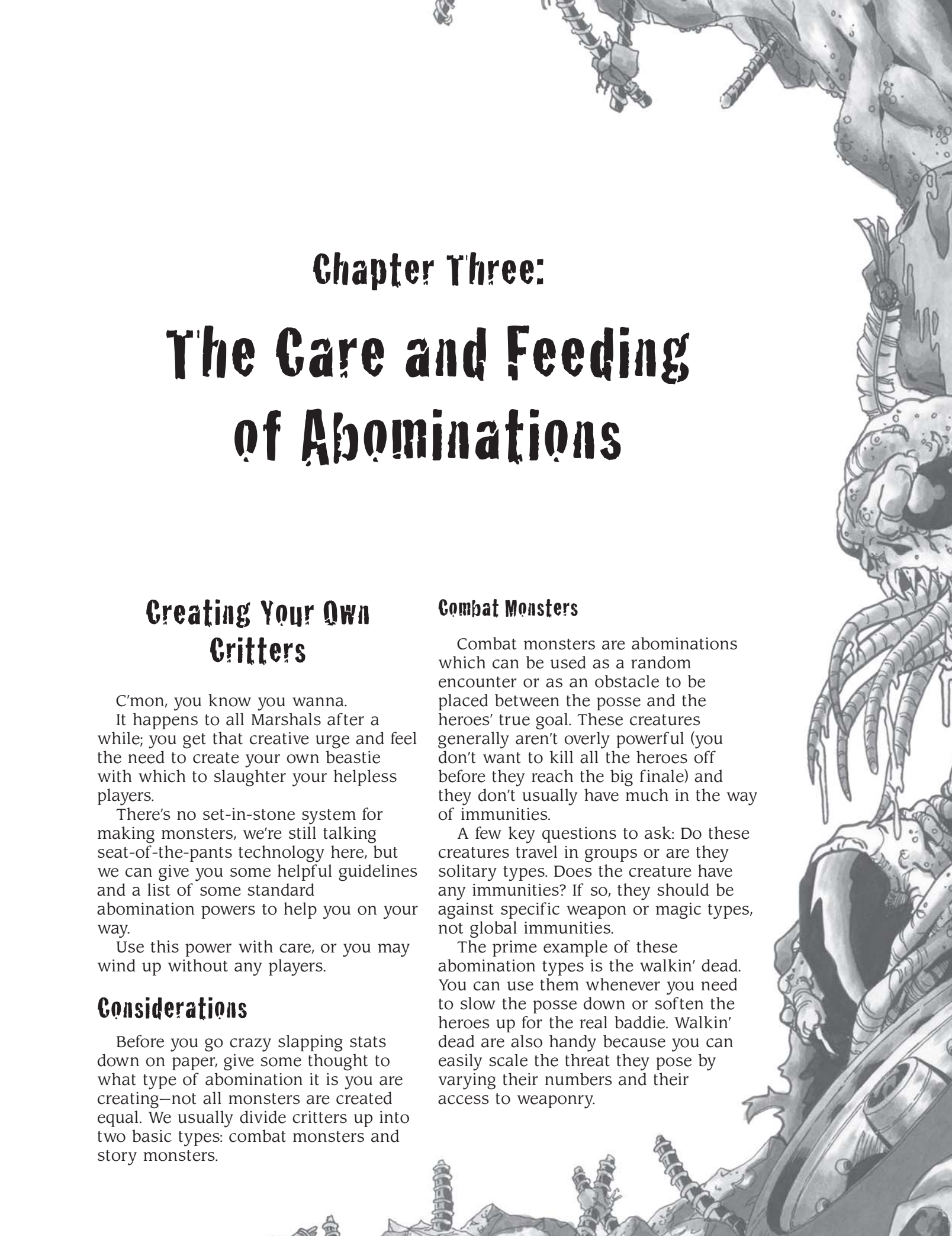
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The Marshal's Handbook







Chapter Three:

The Care and Feeding of Abominations

Creating Your Own Critters

C'mon, you know you wanna.

It happens to all Marshals after a while; you get that creative urge and feel the need to create your own beastie with which to slaughter your helpless players.

There's no set-in-stone system for making monsters, we're still talking seat-of-the-pants technology here, but we can give you some helpful guidelines and a list of some standard abomination powers to help you on your way.

Use this power with care, or you may wind up without any players.

Considerations

Before you go crazy slapping stats down on paper, give some thought to what type of abomination it is you are creating—not all monsters are created equal. We usually divide critters up into two basic types: combat monsters and story monsters.

Combat Monsters

Combat monsters are abominations which can be used as a random encounter or as an obstacle to be placed between the posse and the heroes' true goal. These creatures generally aren't overly powerful (you don't want to kill all the heroes off before they reach the big finale) and they don't usually have much in the way of immunities.

A few key questions to ask: Do these creatures travel in groups or are they solitary types. Does the creature have any immunities? If so, they should be against specific weapon or magic types, not global immunities.

The prime example of these abomination types is the walkin' dead. You can use them whenever you need to slow the posse down or soften the heroes up for the real baddie. Walkin' dead are also handy because you can easily scale the threat they pose by varying their numbers and their access to weaponry.

Critter Size

Size	Typical Weight	Examples	Hit Mod
0	1 ounce	bug	-6
1	a pound or two	rat, snake	-4
2	10 or 12 pounds	housecat	-3
3	20-30 pounds	eagle, fox	-2
4	50 pounds	average dog, pig	-1
5	100 pounds	mountain lion	0
6	150 pounds	person, wolf	0
7	250 pounds	trog	0
8	400 pounds		0
9	650 pounds	gorilla	+1
10	1000 pounds	bear, saddle horse	+1
11	1750 pounds	Clydesdale, steer	+2
12	2500 pounds	buffalo	+2
13	2 tons		+3
14	3 tons		+3
15	5 tons	elephant	+4
16	8 tons		+4
17	13 tons		+5
18	20 tons	avg.. Maze dragon	+5
19	30 tons		+6
20	50 tons	small Mojave rattler	+6
21	80 tons		+6
22	130 tons	blue whale, average Mojave rattler	+6
23	200 tons		+6
24	300 tons	large Mojave rattler	+6

Story Monsters

Story monsters are abominations around which an adventure can be based. They are usually fairly powerful, and many often have extensive immunities. Servitors, fate eaters, vengeful spirits, and the like all fall into this category.

All of these creatures require the posse to do some legwork before it attempts to confront the abomination. Often the heroes need to fight other foes, talk to or browbeat other people, or poke around in dangerous ruins to unlock the abomination's dark, arcane secrets.

In addition to any powers these creatures may have you'll need to provide a detailed background for the abomination explaining how it came to be and how the heroes might discover its weaknesses.

Description

Here's where you get to put your creative juices (no, not those) to work again. You want your players to be creeped out by your new monstrosity, so you should make sure you give them a vivid description of the thing.

For example, if your posse runs into a glamor puss, rather than saying, "You see a glamor puss," you might say something like:

 The creature which shambles out of the shadows before you is a mockery of its human form. The withered skin of its face and torso are covered with the fine lines of past surgical scars. Pieces of skin and other body parts have been affixed to the thing's body with crude sutures. A haze of flies, attracted by the smell of putrefying flesh, circle the creature's head like some sort of dark halo. It looks at you for a second with a pair of mismatched eyes and then rasps with its rot-blackened tongue, "Come here my pretty. Let me get a better look at you."

Stats

Once it comes time for the heroes to interact with your new creation, you're going to need some stats for the critter.

Traits and Aptitudes

A creature's Traits depend on its nature. Combat-oriented creatures tend to have high *Strengths* and *Vigors*, and a high *Nimbleness* or *Deftness* depending on whether they depend more on hand-to-hand or ranged attacks. Creatures which depend more on social interaction have high *Smarts* and *Mien* Traits—all the better to *overawe* the heroes with.

Remember that d12 is not the highest die type. Extraordinary creatures may have Traits rated at d12+2 or higher. A word of warning, though: Traits rated above d12, especially when combined with combat Aptitudes, can make for an extremely deadly foe. Use Traits at this level sparingly.

A creature's Aptitudes also depend on its nature. Most abominations of animal-level intelligence have only a few instinctual skills like *fightin': brawlin'*, *sneak*, and perhaps *climbin'* and *trackin'*. More intelligent creatures may have some learned skills like *dodge*, *fightin': weapon*, and so on. Abominations which were once human may have access to nearly any Aptitude.

Pace

For humanoid critters as for people, Pace is usually equal to the *Nimbleness* die type. However, particularly large or fast creatures may have a Pace much greater than their *Nimbleness* die. Horses for instance, have a base Pace of *Nimbleness*+8. The number listed is always the creature's primary mode of movement (swimming for sea creatures, for example, and flying for birds); if they move at a different pace by a different means, that's listed in parentheses.

Some abominations have a supernatural ability to move quickly. If that's the case, be sure to list the ability under Special Abilities.

Size

A creature's size is a measure not just of its physical dimensions, but also of its general toughness. The best way to assign a size is to mentally compare it to other known creatures, or to make a guess at its weight, and assign it a Size from the Critter Size Table (see page 52). You might knock it down a point or two if the monster is particularly lanky or weak, or bump it up a step or so if it's extra rugged or tough.

Wind

Wind, for creatures as well as humans, is equal to *Vigor* and *Spirit* die types added together. If your abomination is going to play an

important, singular role (like an important extra), and it's even possible to knock it out by Wind, go ahead and figure this stat for it. In most cases, though, you don't need to bother. Wind isn't important for minor extras and creatures (we list it in published stats, but in italics to remind you that you probably shouldn't bother tracking it). Large creatures, such as Mojave rattlers, are generally too tough to be Winded out, so for those it's best to simply list it as a dash. Finally, undead are unaffected by Wind. Again, slap down a dash for such creatures.

Terror

As every Marshal well knows, Terror is a rating of how good an abomination is at scaring the bejeesus out of those who encounter it. Terror scores are based on the standard Target Numbers: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, etc. Use the standard guidelines for assigning TNs (from the *Hell on Earth* rulebook) when you're figuring an appropriate Terror score for your monster—in other words, if making a *guts* check ought to be fairly easy, give it a Fair (5) Terror. If your critter is so terrifying that it would be incredible if anyone passed a *guts* check, give it an Incredible (11) Terror.

Special Abilities

Most abominations have a few tricks up their sleeves to catch unwary heroes with.

Damage

Many abominations have some form of natural attack. Damage from a bite attack is normally STR+1d4, and claws do STR+1d6 damage. Particularly large or nasty forms of these attacks may bump the damage die type up a step or increase the number of dice by 1 or 2. Extraordinarily sharp claws or teeth might also be given an Armor Piercing (AP) rating of 1 or 2.

Standard Powers

Many of the most common special or supernatural abilities are defined as standard powers. This prevents us (and you) from having to reinvent the wheel every time we make a new monster. If any of the standard powers listed below fits your abomination, use them. If not, feel free to modify them or make up your own.

Unique Powers

The standard powers are helpful and effort-saving, but they don't always fit the bill. Don't sweat it, partner. Many abominations have special powers unique to them alone. Feel free to make up your own, or borrow or modify the powers of other creatures. Obviously, you want the power level and invincibility of your abomination to fit your story and your posse's capabilities, but beyond that your imagination is the only limit!

The Standard Powers

The monsters of *Deadlands: Hell on Earth* have many fantastic powers and abilities. Your posse may encounter ghosts, vampires, werewolves, creatures mutated by radiation, and all manner of horrors. To make it easier to create and run these monsters, we've come up with a set of standard powers used by many of the monsters and creatures of the wastelands. These powers are listed here (including those already covered in the main rulebook, putting all of them in one handy place).

Armor

No self-respecting terror of the wastelands goes around unarmored.

The Armor value is listed directly after the creature's *armor* ability. A positive number means that the creature has that many levels of die-reducing armor. A negative number means the

thing has light protection that subtracts damage from every attack that hits it. For example, *Armor 2* means it has heavier armor that reduces an attack by 2 full die types, while *Armor -2* means that 2 points of damage are subtracted from every attack.

Bolts o' Doom

Bolts o' doom covers any sort of missile attack the various horrors of the Wasted West might hurl at your posse. Some critters hurl poisonous quills, others throw things, and some might even projectile vomit. You never know.

Creatures use *shootin'* or sometimes *throwin'* to hit. For weird spellcasters, the attack roll for *bolts o' doom* is the same as their *faith* roll. All the usual rules and modifiers for shooting apply unless the description says otherwise. The statistics for the attack such as Shots, Speed, Rate of Fire (ROF), Range, and Damage follow the entry.

Bot

The creature is a robot, vehicle, or other type of machine.

The creature has a Durability rating and takes damage as if a vehicle. Durability is listed following this power. For example, an abomination with the power Bot: 45/9, has a Durability of 45 with a Durability step of 9. Damage to the creature can be repaired with spare parts and a successful *tinkerin'* roll. See *Road Warriors* for more info on how damage and repairs to vehicles work.

Note that this power is intended primarily for non-humanoid, mechanical creatures. Mechanical creatures of roughly human size and shape, like automatons, can use the standard damage rules.

Cloak o' Evil

Armor is nice, but sometimes it's best not to get hit in the first place. *Cloak o' evil* does just that. It turns aside any sort of attack aimed directly at the user.

Right after *cloak o' evil* there's a negative number like -2 or -4. That's the penalty anyone attacking the critter must subtract from their *shootin'* or *fightin'* total.

Cloak o' evil doesn't protect the caster if he's caught in an area-of-effect attack, such as an explosion or spell not targeted specifically at him. If someone throws a grenade at the user, apply the modifier. If someone throws a grenade at the ground near the user, it doesn't apply.

Detection

The creature can sense the presence of a specific substance, usually from a distance. In each case, specify the type of substance, and the range of the power. Some versions of this power disregard all barriers. Others may be stopped by certain barriers, such as lead shielding, thick walls, or other substances with strong scents or radiation signatures. Specify whether or not the power is immune to barriers; if not, describe the types of barriers which thwart it.

Some creatures may be able to detect things other than substances. A supernatural creature that feeds on hatred, for example, might be able to zero in on sources of that emotion.

Fearless

Some critters just can't be scared. Most soulless undead are like this (because the manitou inside has nothing to lose). Others are just too dumb to know when they're beat.

These kinds of monsters are *fearless*. They never make *guts* checks, even against a power or effect of supernatural origin.

Fearless creatures can be surprised for one round, but after that, they get over their shock and get to work. Deal *fearless* creatures in normally the round after they're surprised.

Hive Mind

Monsters with a *hive mind* don't exist as individuals. Or if they do, they experience an inseparable link with all others of their kind. In essence, each being is part of a larger whole, and can draw upon that strength in time of need. If they are a sentient species (i.e. are capable of learning things, instead of just following instinct like animals), they

share knowledge and experiences, meaning they know everything the others of their kind know. Any *Knowledge*-based skill they attempt is made as if the most qualified member of their species were attempting it: 4d10 at least, if not higher.

Furthermore, killing one member rarely damages the overall whole, and others retain the memories of the brethren they have lost. Anyone who kills a creature with *hive mind* is considered an enemy of the entire species, and surviving members do their utmost to wipe him or her out. Characters dispatching a sentient hive-minded creature gain the disadvantage Enemy 4 to represent their new foes. They gain no bonus points from acquiring this disadvantage.





Finally, monsters with *hive mind* tend to have stronger wills than other creatures, as they can draw upon the power of their fellows for support. Hive-minded creatures get a +4 bonus to resist any psychic attack or other effort to mentally dominate them.

Immunity

Immunity simply means the character or creature can't be hurt by certain forms of attack. Anytime you see this, a description of the particular immunity follows.

One common *immunity* is to "normal weapons." You'll see a lot of the Reckoners' servitors, ghosts, and "spiritual" creatures with this power. In this case, normal weapons refer to any blade, bullet, or even fist that's not

enchanted. Magical abilities, supernatural effects, and legendary weapons work normally unless the creature's description says otherwise.

To be absolutely clear, the weapon itself must be enchanted, not its user. Thus a *brain blast* could hurt this kind of creature, but a Templar with *inner strength* could not (though if his sword is considered enchanted, it could, and it would grant the benefits of *inner strength* as well!)

Another kind of *immunity* you might see is "All." That means this is one ugly critter and there's probably only one way to kill it. Check out its *weakness* to find out how.

Infection

Infection is the ability to turn a victim into something like the monster. Werewolves, vampires, and other creatures that can make more of their ilk have this ability.

The details are up to you. A bug-like horror might inject eggs that hatch inside its victim. A vampire bites someone and then forces him to drink of its own dark blood.

If the *infection* is spread through the blood, any wound, including a single point of *Wind* does the trick.

After the *infection* entry is a TN. That's the *Vigor* roll a character must beat to avoid the infection. If he fails that, he can only seek supernatural aid in resisting the inevitable results.

Insubstantial

Creatures with this power have no solid form, and are therefore unaffected by solid objects. Ghosts, spirits and other non-corporeal beings tend to exhibit such powers most often, although a few other creatures have developed it as well (the Wasted West can produce almost anything these days). *Insubstantial* monsters can pass through walls and buildings as if they didn't exist, and ignore cover bonuses (including armor) when making hand-to-hand attacks. They can literally reach through anything to get you. They normally have no effect on the objects they pass through—they won't cause a power surge if they move through a fuse

box, for example—unless they have a specific additional power which allows it. Most of them can still make a physical attack if they wish, however. The fuse boxes might not have to worry, but you still do.

In addition, *insubstantial* creatures are invulnerable to bullets and other physical attacks, as the ability *immunity*. Mental attacks and magic still affect them, however.

Manipulate Fate

The creature can take Fate Chips from characters, and transfer them to other characters (or return them to their original owners). To do so, it engages in a mental duel with the target character, pitting its *Spirit* against the target's. For each raise it gets, it can take a chip from the target. If the target has more chips than the creature had raises, and more than one type of chip, the creature must take the lowest chips first. For example, if the target has a white and a red chip, and the creature got only one raise, it must take the white one. If the creature wins one contest, it can immediately start another. If it keeps winning, it can run the target out of chips. However, as soon as it fails, it must wait at least twenty-four hours before trying again.

No roll is required to transfer a stolen chip to another character, or give it back to its original owner. Unless specified, the creature is unable to use the chips itself.

This power is sometimes used simply to curse the victim, softening him up so that the creature can kill him by other means. More often, though, the creature uses its accumulated Fate Chips to bribe others into doing its bidding. Obviously, victims who've been run out of luck by the creature are most susceptible to this kind of offer.

Poison

Poison does just what you think it does, though the way this kind of thing works in the profiles of the creatures of the Wasted West also applies to diseases, nonlethal poisons (such as paralyzers), viruses, and other toxins designed to get into the blood.

If the *poison* is delivered by fangs, claws, needles, blades, or other devices that have to hit the victim, it takes effect if the target suffers even a single point of Wind damage.

Once contacted, the victim must make a *Vigor* roll versus a TN based on the *poison's* power level listed in the creature's description. If failed, he suffers the effect listed.

Radioactive

Get your sunscreen out, kids, because this critter's hot! With all the ghost-rock radiation, "normal" radiation, and plain, toxic nastiness floating about, it's only natural that a few monsters would pick up some for themselves. Creatures with this ability are positively glowing with toxic rads, enough to cause damage to nearby beings. The exact amount of damage varies from species to species, and is listed under their particular entry.

Radioactive creatures are immune to their own ability, of course, as well as that of other monsters with the same ability. Unlike trogs and other mutants, they can't be affected by radiation anymore; their bodies have become invulnerable to it. They ignore damage from toxic pits, blast craters and other hazard zones, as well as the radiation from other creatures.

They are also resistant to the effects of most Doomsayer magic. Any time a damage-causing radiation spell is used against the creature, roll the damage listed for the critter's *radioactive* power and subtract this total from the damage of the spell. These creatures put out enough rads for a Doomsayer to feed off them with the *sustenance* miracle.

Monsters with this ability are relatively easy to detect; any Geiger counter can quickly pinpoint their locations, and anyone with eyes can spot them from a mile off. That healthy green glow is tough to miss. *Radioactive* creatures have a -4 penalty to all *sneak* rolls, and cannot have the power *surprise*.



Razor Flesh

The creature possesses armor which not only protects it, but also causes harm to those who come into contact with it such as with *fightin': brawlin'*, *wrasslin'*, and *boxin'* rolls. The armor may take many forms, such as the long spines on a porcupine or an electrical field which jolts the attacker on a successful strike.

The rating, ranging from 1 to 5, corresponds to the number of raises required on the attacker's *fightin'* Aptitude roll to avoid injury following a successful attack. The attacker's *Strength* die is used to determine the damage die delivered and the level of the *razor flesh* power provides the number of dice the poor sod takes if he doesn't get the required raises.

For example, a hero with d8 *Strength* die attacking a monster with *razor flesh* 3, would take 3d8 damage on any strike which did not get three raises.

Regeneration

Some critters heal faster than spit bubbles in a microwave. The exact rate of its *regeneration* follows the entry.

Stun

Some critters like to eat their prey while it's still warm or maybe even still breathing. That's a really bad way to go, friends. This power lets the bad guys *stun* their prey instead of hurting them, very likely saving them for a much more horrible fate than death.

Most creatures must touch their prey to stun them. In these cases, if the monster hits (usually whether it actually causes damage or not), the victim makes a *Vigor* check against the TN listed after this power. The victim can make recovery checks each action against this same TN to snap out of it and make an escape.

Surge

The creature gains a Trait increase whenever a certain condition is fulfilled. Usually this condition is something which thwarts the creature as it tries to do something it really wants to do. Specify the condition, the affected Traits, and an interval. Each time the interval passes while the condition is still in effect, the specified traits improve by one die type: d4s become d6s, d6s surge into d8s, and so on.

For example, a mutated bull might gain a surge in all Corporeal Traits for every round somebody waves something red in its snoot.

Surprise

Creatures with this power are keen on catching their victims unaware. Some burrow up from below. Others swoop down from the sky.

Assuming the critter isn't detected, it starts the fight with one Action Card "up its sleeve" and makes its first attack at +4.

Undead

There are many different types of undead, from simple zombies and walkin' dead to ancient lichs and vampires.

Those without any vestige of their mortal soul inside their rotting carcass are "soulless" undead. They are always inhabited and animated by a manitou. These are much less risky for a manitou to occupy because the demon simply escapes back to the Hunting Grounds when the shell is destroyed.

More powerful creatures like vampires and lichs become undead because of ancient curses, a lifetime of evil, or through dark rites. They make a deal with the forces of evil and destruction (the Reckoners, though most don't know that) in exchange for power, but in so doing they become irrevocably evil.

Harrowed are a special case of course. Their manitous share the shell with the mortal soul.

All these undead have many varied powers and abilities, but here are some common to all types:

Undead don't feel pain, but they still suffer from having their body parts blown off. They can ignore 2 levels of wound penalties and can never be stunned.

Undead ignore Wind caused by wounds or physical damage. Supernatural effects that cause Wind act as regular damage, since the spirit inside suffers the blow. (Since undead don't suffer Wind, halve damage if you're using the Marshal's trick we taught you for handling lots of lesser bad guys in Chapter 14 of *Hell on Earth*.)

Soulless undead don't regenerate damage without a secondary power. Those with souls make natural healing rolls once per day unless they have a faster way to heal damage and regenerate their undead flesh.

Undead take full damage to their "focus." This is some area of the body the spirit inside uses to control the corpse. The most common focus is the brain, though a vampire's focus is usually the heart, and some very powerful creatures even remove their focus and hide it elsewhere for safekeeping. Unless the description says otherwise, assume the focus is the brain.

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Finally, undead can only be destroyed by a maiming wound to their focus. That means horrors like walkin' dead (with the brain as a focus) keep fighting even if they receive a maiming wound to the guts.

Weakness

Creatures with a *weakness* are particularly susceptible to certain kinds of damage. A wendigo of the icy north probably doesn't enjoy fire. Similarly, a giant, mutated slug might dissolve if covered in salt.

Generally, attacking a creature with whatever it has a weakness of should cause double damage. If the weapon doesn't usually cause damage (such as salt, water, holy water, or so forth), the description tells you how much damage the weakness can cause the creature.

Gettin' the Most out of Your Abominations

So now you've got yourself a monster—either one of ours, or one you've put together yourself. What do ya do with it? Any Marshal can sic an abomination on her posse. It doesn't take much imagination to just have a critter jump the heroes from out of nowhere. Doing it with style, though—that's another thing altogether.

Fear and Tension

We're not saying there's necessarily a right way or a wrong way to use abominations and critters, but some methods tend to make the most out of an exciting and mysterious new creature. We've got a few thoughts that might help set you down that path.

You might want to take what we say with a grain of salt, though. The best way to do things is the way that entertains you and your players the most. If our advice doesn't work for you,



and the things you've come up with on your own do, then ignore what we've got to say and go your own route.

That said, here's what we think.

Dark, Scary, & Desperate

People play games to have fun, so they choose games they think are fun. Obviously, if you've chosen *Deadlands: Hell on Earth*, you are expecting to get a certain type of enjoyment from it.

The *Hell on Earth* game is one of adventure, fear, and desperate struggle in the blasted wastes of the West. It's a sullen and creepy world, and one in which the heroes have precious few resources—technology, weapons, and even other people—to call upon in their fight against the Reckoners. They fight an uphill battle against horrors that

have all but won their war against humanity. The world—what's left of it—has been cowed by the forces of fear, and saving that world is uncertain and dangerous work.

The Game's Afoot!

While that may all seem dismal and murky to *Hell on Earth* players and characters, it actually provides some clarity for us Marshals, suggesting some direction for our adventures and ideas for the “proper” use of abominations.

For one, nothing should ever be straightforward in this game. The Reckoners are still feeding on the fear they and their forces generate, and they well know that people fear the unknown more than anything else. So, even after the Apocalypse, they keep their servants in the shadows and background whenever possible, rarely showing their true natures.

Yes, they are often much more overt than they were before the Reckoning. And yes, most abominations act on their own, without any direct control from the Reckoners (this is discussed a bit more below), and they often don't hesitate to openly attack the weak and isolated settlements of the Wasted West. But tension and mystery is always a big component of fear, and the creatures of the Reckoning generally know that—and they use it.

Make 'em Think

So what does this mean to you as a Marshal?

Well, it means you make the players figure out what's going on. You never say “a settlement has asked for help because bloodwolves have been eating their children.” Instead, you describe the scene: a wretched, walled town full of bitter and frightened people. When the posse members talk to the survivors, they discover that children and livestock and even a few adults have been disappearing. Sometimes they turn up dead, drained of blood or ripped to shreds. Sometimes they don't turn up at all.

With a few good questions and some poking around, the heroes should figure out what the problem is. But you don't

want that to be too easy for them, so you should throw them a few curves and mislead them. You can do this by using some red herrings, making it look like the culprit is something other than what it really is.

For example, one local might be convinced that the deaths were caused by a band of muties living in the ruins nearby. Or perhaps they suspect classic vampires, and have become paranoid and suspicious, wondering which of them (or of the posse) might have been turned. You can try a sort of “bait and switch”—perhaps a biological agent left over from the Last War has made some of the townspeople pale and sensitive to sunlight. If the heroes take the bait, they’re going to waste precious time investigating innocent locals while the bloodwolves knock off more victims.

Keep ‘em Off-Balance

The really cool thing about this is that your false clues don’t actually have to be untrue. Maybe the town is plagued by both bloodwolves and hostile muties. Or to use another example, maybe the heroes track and kill a lurker that’s been eating anyone who wanders into a nearby city to scavenge the ruins, only to discover that the lurker was the only thing keeping the night terrors from attacking the townspeople.

Using multiple critter types in the same adventure can be pretty effective. In some cases, it might be coincidence that brought both abominations to the area, or perhaps they just decided they make an effective team.

Mystery

The Wasted West is a whole new world of horror, and entire new species of terrors are being spawned every day. Much of what the heroes run into will be completely unknown to them—and to everyone else as well. Even seasoned veterans of the West’s horrors run into unknown creatures on a routine basis—so much so, that when they run into some terrible creature that they recognize, it’s almost a relief! Some of that is reflected in the way this book is written: the posse section covers many of the monsters in the bestiary with

varying degrees of completeness and accuracy—but many of the most frightening monsters aren’t even mentioned in the players’ section at all.

Play up this sense of mystery. Never give away more than you have to about the nature, motivation, or powers of your abomination. With minimal information, your players will always imagine the worst—and then they’ll be surprised when they find that even their imagination couldn’t do the horror justice!

Sometimes Bad Guys Live

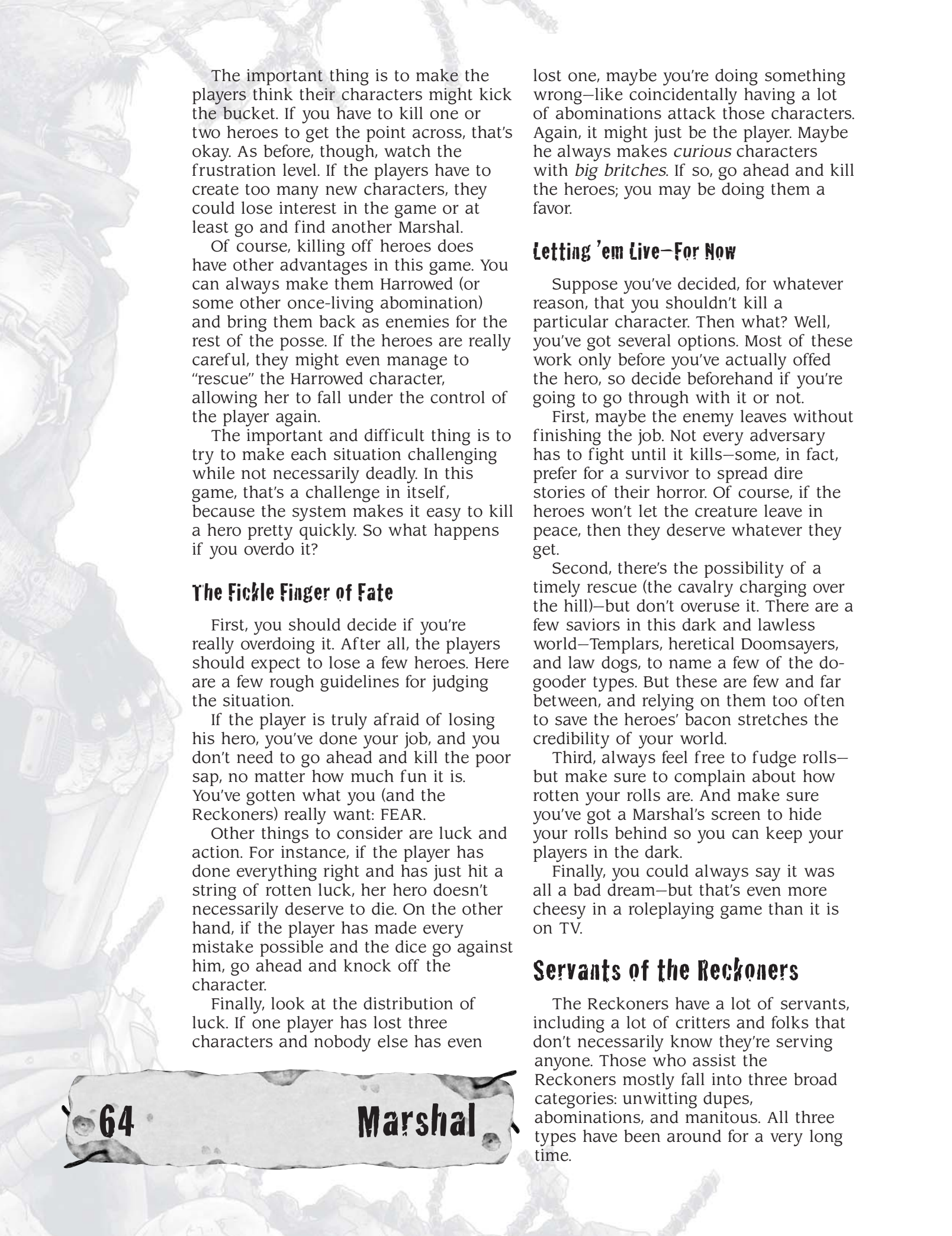
Recurring villains (and other characters) can be a lot of fun for the players. They provide a focus for them, and the eventual defeat of fearmonger or servant of the Reckoners feels like a huge accomplishment.

Just be careful, though, not to overdo it. Sure, get all the use you can out of a well-built villain and his cronies—but if he always gets away, even when the heroes have a very clever plan which they execute without a flaw, the players are going to get mighty frustrated. After all, it is a game, and the goal is for everyone—not just the Marshal—to have fun.

Now don’t get us wrong: It’s a good thing for the players to feel frustrated sometimes. It shows that the game isn’t too easy for them, and it makes an eventual victory just that much sweeter. Still, a little frustration can go a long way. Just try to make sure the heroes eventually have a victory, because everyone likes to at least feel like they’re winning.

Sometimes Good Guys Die

As Marshal, you should know that not every character has to live for the posse to claim victory. If the posse has lost a few members on the way, that can also sweeten the final victory. Be careful to balance the danger as much as possible with the abilities of the posse.



The important thing is to make the players think their characters might kick the bucket. If you have to kill one or two heroes to get the point across, that's okay. As before, though, watch the frustration level. If the players have to create too many new characters, they could lose interest in the game or at least go and find another Marshal.

Of course, killing off heroes does have other advantages in this game. You can always make them Harrowed (or some other once-living abomination) and bring them back as enemies for the rest of the posse. If the heroes are really careful, they might even manage to “rescue” the Harrowed character, allowing her to fall under the control of the player again.

The important and difficult thing is to try to make each situation challenging while not necessarily deadly. In this game, that's a challenge in itself, because the system makes it easy to kill a hero pretty quickly. So what happens if you overdo it?

The Fickle Finger of Fate

First, you should decide if you're really overdoing it. After all, the players should expect to lose a few heroes. Here are a few rough guidelines for judging the situation.

If the player is truly afraid of losing his hero, you've done your job, and you don't need to go ahead and kill the poor sap, no matter how much fun it is. You've gotten what you (and the Reckoners) really want: FEAR.

Other things to consider are luck and action. For instance, if the player has done everything right and has just hit a string of rotten luck, her hero doesn't necessarily deserve to die. On the other hand, if the player has made every mistake possible and the dice go against him, go ahead and knock off the character.

Finally, look at the distribution of luck. If one player has lost three characters and nobody else has even

lost one, maybe you're doing something wrong—like coincidentally having a lot of abominations attack those characters. Again, it might just be the player. Maybe he always makes *curious* characters with *big britches*. If so, go ahead and kill the heroes; you may be doing them a favor.

Letting 'em Live—For Now

Suppose you've decided, for whatever reason, that you shouldn't kill a particular character. Then what? Well, you've got several options. Most of these work only before you've actually offed the hero, so decide beforehand if you're going to go through with it or not.

First, maybe the enemy leaves without finishing the job. Not every adversary has to fight until it kills—some, in fact, prefer for a survivor to spread dire stories of their horror. Of course, if the heroes won't let the creature leave in peace, then they deserve whatever they get.

Second, there's the possibility of a timely rescue (the cavalry charging over the hill)—but don't overuse it. There are a few saviors in this dark and lawless world—Templars, heretical Doomsayers, and law dogs, to name a few of the do-gooder types. But these are few and far between, and relying on them too often to save the heroes' bacon stretches the credibility of your world.

Third, always feel free to fudge rolls—but make sure to complain about how rotten your rolls are. And make sure you've got a Marshal's screen to hide your rolls behind so you can keep your players in the dark.

Finally, you could always say it was all a bad dream—but that's even more cheesy in a roleplaying game than it is on TV.

Servants of the Reckoners

The Reckoners have a lot of servants, including a lot of critters and folks that don't necessarily know they're serving anyone. Those who assist the Reckoners mostly fall into three broad categories: unwitting dupes, abominations, and manitous. All three types have been around for a very long time.

Unwitting Dupes

Unwitting dupes have served the Reckoners for as long as there have been people, usually just by doing what they want to do. Bandits, murderers, road gangers—even Throckmorton and his goons—all do their part for the Reckoners by generating the fear that provides energy for their dark masters. Some of these nasty people are out for revenge and know that greater powers exist, but they don't care. Unwitting doesn't mean unwilling.

And unwitting doesn't mean they don't have any idea what they're doing. Some cultists, for example, know (or at least think) that they're serving powerful entities. They just don't know the full power or true nature of those dark demigods.

Lastly, just because they're dupes doesn't mean they're powerless. Throckmorton, Silas, and the many lesser despots shaking their iron fists at the Wasted West can hardly be considered pushovers.

Abominations

Abominations—the supernatural monsters spawned from the Hunting Grounds—are often in the same boat. They live for their own ends, sowing death and terror because that's what they like to do—they seldom realize they serve the purpose of higher powers, even now, after the Reckoners have come to Earth. Some fearmongers—and especially Servitors—know of the Reckoners and even realize that they are given power for furthering their masters' agendas. But they still operate on their own, with no knowledge of the big picture.

Some abominations realize they gain more power when more people are afraid of them, though they don't necessarily have any inkling of why this is so. And a lot of them are clever enough, or have instincts good enough, to stay on the edge of the unknown. That which stays mysterious and hidden creates more fear than something that kills openly, for all to see. If the mortals get jaded, they start fighting back instead of just cringing in fearful anticipation. Scared prey is easy prey.

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Abominations only work together when it serves their individual needs and tastes. Some are powerful enough to cow lesser beings into serving them; others use magic or special abilities to make tools of humans and horrors alike. But abominations never work together simply because they're evil, or serve the same Reckoners. They may all be enemies of humanity, but that doesn't put them on the same team.

Manitous

Nobody but the Reckoners themselves know where they have gone or when they're coming back. But whatever their plan, manitous are important to the scheme. These spirits are general-purpose servants, and they perform a wide variety of tasks. While they know





they serve powerful beings, they (like abominations and dupes) don't truly comprehend the character of those beings.

Pawns in a Greater Game

What manitous do know is that they're responsible for channeling fear to the Hunting Grounds. Most manitous spend the majority of their time in the Hunting Grounds, which they share with the hated nature spirits.

Manitous usually remain in the Hunting Grounds, but they can enter the physical world at will. They can only affect the physical world through a mortal shell. Some can enter living beings, but most cannot. The ones who do are responsible for the tales of "demonic possession" common to most

religions. When expelled, the manitou simply returns to the Hunting Grounds. A few manitous can enter living animals as well. When this happens, they can be exorcised just as if they were in a human host.

Entering a corpse is an ability most manitous possess. If the shell is empty, the manitou simply crawls inside, animates as much flesh, muscle, and bone as is still attached, and starts doing its dirty business. This is where walkin' dead come from—they're simply corpses animated by mayhem-causing manitous. That's why these undead are a tad smarter than some other types that use different methods to animate the body—like voodoo zombies for instance.

Most manitous use the brain as their focus. That's why walkin' dead stop creeping around when you bust their noggins open. Some have more control and can use other body parts, like the heart, a hand, or so forth, but these types of spirits are much more rare. If the brain is ruined while the manitou is hiding out in an otherwise empty carcass, the demon simply gets tossed back to the Hunting Grounds where it starts looking for a new corpse to set up shop in.

So what about the Harrowed? They're a special case because the soul of the body is still in the corpse. This is the only way the manitou can get control of all the things that make a character more than just a pile of dead meat. When the demon has control over a body's soul, it can use a gunslinger's incredible skill, a Doomsayer's ability with the Glow, or a syker's incredible brainpower.

The danger here is that to gain this kind of control, the manitou must bond with the body permanently. If the Harrowed's brain is destroyed, the manitou is slain forever.

In fact, this is one of the very few ways in which these spirits can ever be destroyed. It's a fantastic risk for the manitou, but the potential reward for sharing the body of a real hero is so much greater than when merely using an empty corpse. As the manitou gets more at home in its new body, it begins to learn ways of channeling spiritual energy through it, giving a Harrowed character new powers.

Marshaling the Undead

A manitou in a walkin' dead or other animated corpse doesn't care what happens to the body. It "feels" when a body part is blasted off, but as an alarm instead of genuine pain.

The Harrowed are a little different. They have to "live" in their shells for a long time—maybe forever. If someone blows off a kneecap, the Harrowed may not cry like a baby—but he's not as willing to ignore it as a manitou inside an animated corpse it's going to discard in a while.

All this means walkin' dead and similar creatures should be a little tougher than a Harrowed—at least in terms of how much damage it can take. Here's how you can adjust the *undead* special ability some creatures have if you feel your walkin' dead are a little too fragile:

Roll bonus dice normally when a shot hits the noggin.

If you're keeping track of wounds, halve any damage to the guts and ignore hits to the gizzards. Limbs are still blown off normally.

When using "quick hits," double their normal hits (60 for human-sized zombies).

Companion Critters

We promised you some ways to make your pet-owning heroes' lives more interesting, so here you go.

Mysterious Pasts

When a player draws a Joker for the Traits of an animal sidekick, turn here to figure out what the animal's mysterious past is all about. Except where noted, the following backgrounds are as close to their human counterparts as reasonable.

Deuce: Curse

The animal has had a curse laid on it. Until the curse is lifted, the animal has the *bad luck* Hindrance. The one twist here is that the bad luck affects the proud owner as well as the poor, dumb animal.

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Three: Unnatural Enemy

This animal sidekick has a particular hatred for a specific other species—and the feelings are mutual. Whenever possible, the animal attacks the object of its hatred with every intention of tearing it to shreds or trampling it.

In return, members of that species actually choose the animal as a target over any other available target.

Red: The enemy is a normal species: bear, eagle, cougar, wolf, etc.

Black: The enemy is an abomination or class of abomination (usually not a major foe): wormling, devil bat, tumblebleed, etc.

Four: Possessed

Something lies behind that dog's intelligent stare. Some form of spirit has possessed the animal, and it acts according to its own agenda.

Red: A nature spirit has possessed the animal. Usually, the type of spirit is determined by the species. A dog can be inhabited by a dog spirit, a wolf spirit, or a forest spirit. A horse can be inhabited by a horse spirit, a plains spirit, or a wind spirit. The animal aids a hero for as long as the hero's goals and methods conform to the spirit's own. The spirit can use one shaman favor with up to 2 Appeasement points.

Black: Something nasty has inhabited the poor beast. The animal is now irrevocably evil. It has a nasty disposition to everyone (including its master), but it's still loyal to the hero. However, it does enjoy seeing the hero lose friend after friend to nasty "accidents." The beast has a single black magic power at its disposal.

Five: Grizzled

The animal has a shock of white fur on its head. Beasts with this sort of marking are destined to lead lives of terror, but they have one advantage: they can earn Grit just like a human.

Six: Sixth Sense

Just like the human version, but the animal's master must spend the Fate Chips. The animal may react to a perceived threat, but its clueless master may not know why until afterward—if at all.

Seven: Soulful Eyes

Sometimes animals seem to react to thin air and buck and howl at nothing at all. Well, it ain't always nothing. For some reason, this animal can see ghosts and spirits even if they are incorporeal or invisible.

Eight: Pedigree

This animal's bloodline includes heroic critters from ages gone by. Perhaps a horse's ancestor was the mount for one of the Knights of the Round Table, or maybe a dog is descended from an animal that saved a tribe from destruction with a timely warning of fire. In any case, the animal has been gifted with one level of a Harrowed power, just like a human with the *ancient pact* background.

Nine: White Dog/White Horse

This dog or horse is completely white, but not an albino. Certain animals of this kind are sacred to many religions. As a result, it causes an additional die of damage to any unnatural creature affected by magical weapons.

Ten: Blessed/Bewitched

This animal has been touched by the supernatural somehow. Perhaps a friendly Huckster enchanted it, or perhaps it was prayed over by a saint. Whatever the reason, it has a permanent spell or miracle laid on it.

Red: The animal has been blessed by higher powers. These abilities can be activated only by the animal's master

shouting a command and making an Incredible (11) *faith* check. The miracles possible are: *lay on paws* (can heal humans and other animals; a really pious St. Bernard might have this), *smite*, and *succor*.

Black: The animal can use a single standard power from this chapter by making an Incredible (11) *Cognition* check and expending 1 Wind per round. Only a few powers can be gained this way. They are: *armor 1*, *cloak o' evil -2*, *fearless*, *insubstantial*, *razor flesh 2*, and *stun (9)*.

Jack: Haunted

The poor beast is haunted by the ghost of a human, probably a former master. Otherwise, this is just like the human version.

Queen: Animal Hatred/Ken

For some unknown reason, the animal either gets along amazingly well with all other species or provokes other four-legged critters just by being around.

Red: Animals love the critter. The animal sidekick gets a +2 to any *overawe* check versus animals, or any *professional* check that involves other animals (like sheep herding).

Black: Other animals hate the critter unreservedly. The beast is at a -2 to all of the above checks.

King: Past Life

There are those who believe that when people die they come back in another form based on how well they did in their previous life.

If the brainer in question was good during his time on this Earth, he goes on to be a human again, only in a better situation (if such a thing exists in the Wasted West). If he was less than perfect, he might come back in a "lower form," that of some kind of critter—even a horse or a dog.

This animal had a past life, and whoever the person was, he screwed it up big time. Now he has to go through life again in the form of an animal. One of the animal's Mental Traits is replaced with the human Trait for that card value. Pick one using the table below.

Red: The soul inside the animal knows it screwed up, and it has an honest desire to do better. The best way it has to do that is to be a good and faithful companion to a great hero.

Black: The poor twisted bastard is stuck inside a beast's shell and he's none too happy about it. The animal is bitter, vicious, and mean, and determined to make everyone around as miserable as itself.

Past Life Trait

d10	Trait
1-2	Cognition
3-4	Knowledge
5-6	Mien
7-8	Smarts
9-10	Spirit

Ace: Relic/Cursed Relic

This animal came with a special item. It would most likely be a saddle, a collar, horseshoes, or something similar. This item's powers, whether good or bad, only work while with the animal.

Red: The relic is a good thing. It might be special collar woven by an Indian shaman for the animal, or the horseshoes from the first Pony Express rider.

Black: The relic is a cursed item. Maybe the animal's favorite chewing bone came from an Indian burial ground, or perhaps someone hexed a horse's horseshoes. Whatever the case, while the relic is in the animal's possession, the animal and its master suffer from the *bad luck* Hindrance.

Joker: Undead

That's right: the gallopin' dead.

Now normally, there's no way that an animal spirit would hang around in a carcass that's stopped moving and breathing. But once in a very great while, a particularly reckless or stubborn nature spirit decides that its not quite ready to move on to the Happy Hunting Grounds yet. This leads to the occasional dog or horse that keeps on moving long after it should have been pushing up daisies.

Undead animals are privileged to some of the same powers as the two-legged deaders, but they come with a few other problems.

For one, no other animal of any kind wants to get near the beast. This can make it difficult to travel in a group. Second, animals aren't as keen on keeping themselves respectable as humans are. Unless the critter's master is extremely diligent, people begin to notice little things about the beast, like skin falling off or bones poking through skin, not to mention the absolutely horrible smell.

On the upside, the animal can only be hurt as if it were Harrowed, and it doesn't eat much. However, undead animals cannot count coup on abominations and they cannot gain Harrowed powers.







Chapter Four:

A Litany of Horrors

This is the last chance for you player types to turn back before we activate the headbanger chips.

Good, we thought you'd respond to reason.

The Truth is Right Here

Okay, Marshal, here's where you get the low down on all the creepy-crawlies mentioned in the player's section, plus a few new abominations to catch your posse off guard. There are also stats for some common Weird West critters that managed to survive being hunted by heroes for over a century, the Last War, and Judgment Day, like the Maze dragon, Mojave rattler "kings," tumblebleeds, and devil bats.

The critters are listed in alphabetical order with a description and their stats. Feel free to alter the beasts' stats and special powers to suit your tastes and the abilities of your posse. This will keep players who managed to sneak a peek into this section on their toes. It might also reveal who they are, if they start arguing stats with you.

Report these players to us and we'll deal with them appropriately.

A Final Word on Running a Game

With the addition of the abominations found in this book, the creatures found in the main rulebook and other supplements, and those you've created yourself, you should have a good selection of Hell-spawned badness to throw at your posse. Just remember, though, that not every threat your posse runs into needs to be supernatural.

Despite the evil wrought by the Reckoners, the human race must still also deal with the evil it creates itself. In the aftermath of the Last War, there are still plenty of people who are out to benefit themselves at the expense of others. Some of them are very powerful, like Throckmorton and Silas, and others are not so strong, but just as evil—like the scavenger who knowingly trades contaminated water for something he needs. Make sure you mix some of these human predators in with the supernatural baddies. You might even have humans working together with an abomination—like the sand spiders

Alexander 9000

Cost NA	Pass. 5	Engine Gas turbine	Gas Tank 150 gal.	MPG 3
Suspen. Tracked	Wheels 0	Top Speed 60 mph	Pace 150	Accel. 5 mph
Durability 90/18	Armor See below	Handling -2	Size +4	Load Limit 90

Armor: Bottom 6, front 12, rear 10, left side 10, right side 10, turret 12

Weapon	Mount	Location	Arc
125mm cannon	Fixed	Turret	360°
NA SAW	Fixed	Turret	360°
NA SAW	Ring	Turret	360°
NA SAW	Articulated	Bow	Front 90°

Weapon	Ammo	Shots	Speed
125mm cannon	125mm Sabot	1	3
	125mm HEAT	1	3

ROF	Range	Damage	Cost
1	250	6d20 AP 8	NA
1	150	4d20 AP4, Burst 5	NA

Alexander 9000

The Combine spy who submitted the report on Alexander 9000 was a bit off as to the tank's origins. The vehicle was actually a one-of-a-kind prototype built as part of the US Army's cyborg program. The Army had been experimenting with using the same technology used to make cyborgs to make cybernetic combat vehicles.

Most of these attempts failed because the Harrowed human brains implanted in the vehicles simply couldn't adjust to their new "bodies," quickly went insane, and were destroyed. The brain of Samuel Wilkins, however, was another matter; his grey matter took to the tank like a duck to water.

Wilkins was a college professor of Greek history at the University of Pennsylvania who had checked the organ donor box on his driver's licence. When he was killed in a car accident his internal organs went to waiting patients; his brain went to the US Army's testing facility in Montana.

Wilkin's brain was able to adapt to its alien body and he found that he rather liked being a nearly unstoppable killing machine. He got along well with the crew assigned to him, and often played computer games with the tank's commander. His favorite, of course, was *Great Battles of Alexander 4*.

On Judgment Day, the facility at which the tank was stored was hit by a ghost-rock bomb. The hardened bunker protected the vehicle from the worst of the blast, but it did experience some system malfunctions. When the tank came back on-line, Wilkins was convinced that he was Alexander the Great reincarnated, and that it was his destiny to conquer the world.

The Alexander 9000 has gathered a following of roughly 20 soldiers, which it refers to as its Immortals. They scrounge up fuel, ammo, and parts for the tank and will form the core of its army once it puts its plans for world domination into action.

Profile: Alexander 9000

Corporeal: D:4d10, N:1d6, Q:6d12, S:5d10, V:3d8

Dodge 3d6, drivin' 8d6, shootin': 6d10

Mental: C:2d6, K:2d10, M:2d12, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Academia: Greek language, history, warfare 5d10, arts (theater direction) 2d6, guts 3d6, leadership 4d12, overawe 4d12, professional: military strategy, tactics 4d10, scrutinize 2d6.

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Bot: 90/18

Multi-Tasking: The tank may fire both its cannon and any of its machine-guns on a single action.

Description: Alexander 9000 is a modified Schwartzkopf M4A8 amphibious tank. It has matte black paint job; one of the Immortals has painted the turret to resemble a large skull.

Beaded Horror

The beaded horror is a mutated form of gila monster, a squat-bodied, highly pugnacious lizard common throughout the deserts of the southwest. It's the closest thing the Wasted West has to a dragon. Considering the thing's voracious appetite, cunning, and fiery breath, it's a wonder these things haven't wandered closer to civilization.

These creatures are most often found in abandoned bunkers; most likely due to their appetite for gunpowder and other explosives. They usually appear in groups of 1-4.

Profile: Beaded Horror

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d8, Q:1d10, S:3d10, V:4d8

Fightin': brawl in' 3d8, shoot in': firebreath in' 4d8, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:3d4, Sp:2d10

Guts 3d10, overawe 3d8

Pace: 6

Size: 6 (3 feet tall and 7-8 feet long)

Wind: 18

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Bite (STR+1d8, AP 1), Claws (STR+1d4)

Jawlock: Following a successful bite attack, the horror clamps its jaws down and automatically delivers bite damage every round until killed, knocked out, or forcibly made to let go with a Hard (9) *Strength* roll. Worse still, while the beaded horror grinds its teeth, its saliva enters the wound and acts as a weak poison. Only a successful Onerous (7) *Vigor* check prevents the poison from taking effect the round following contact. The poison causes weakness in the extremities causing a 2 step loss to all Corporeal Traits. If any Trait drops below d4 or the hero goes bust, the victim immediately falls unconscious for 1d6 hours.

Firebreathin': If the poisonous bite and raking claws weren't bad enough, these critters can belch up a gout of Hellfire—a by-product of

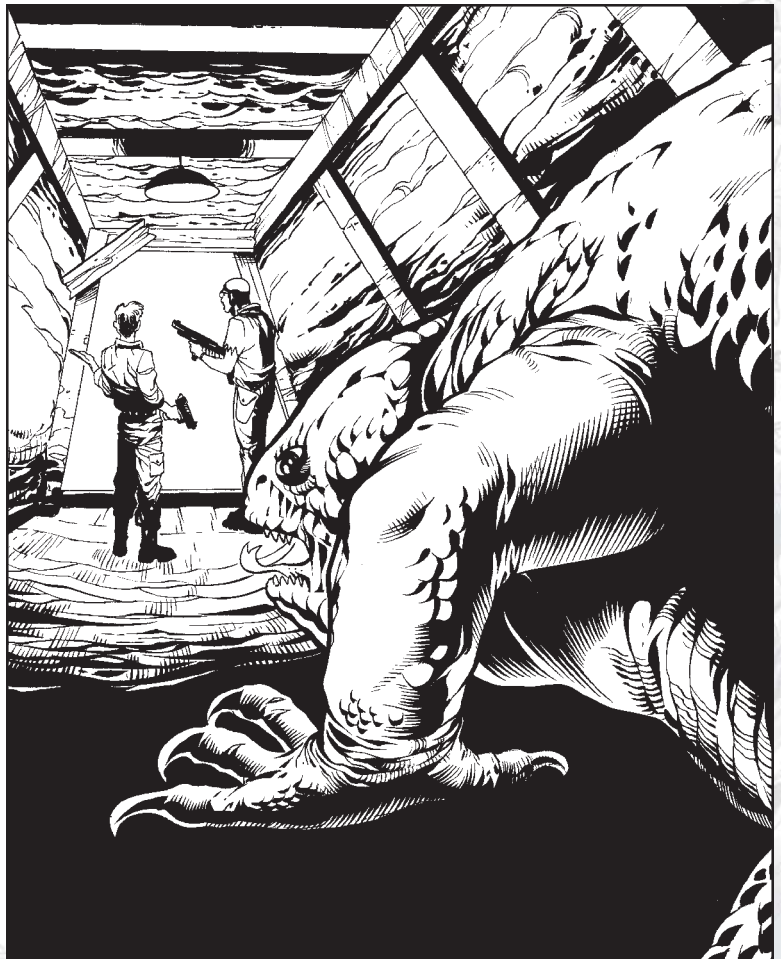
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eating gunpowder. Each critter has enough boom dust in its gullet to eject 3 shots before having to eat more gunpowder. Roll the creature's *shoot in': firebreath in'* Aptitude versus the target's *dodge*. The fire has a maximum range of 10 feet and does 4d10 damage.

Burrowin': The critters can dig through 1 yard of earth or 1 foot of concrete per action but progress through metals is much slower, requiring hours or days.

Weakness: Should a fire or heat-based attack cause a maiming wound to a beaded horror's head or gizzards, it ignites what gunpowder remains, creating a fireball with a burst radius of 3 yards, doing 1d10 per each unspat shot to everyone caught within it.



Battle Hound

As the territory under the Combine's direct control grew, Throckmorton began looking for a way to patrol his growing kingdom that wouldn't put too much of a strain on his limited fuel reserves. Foot patrols of Black Hats were all well and good, but they could only cover so much territory, and they were increasingly needed to fight the growing resistance at the edges of the General's expanding empire.

Some experimentation showed that the same technology that was used to make Harrowed cyborgs could be used in animals. This led to the development of a new line of cybernetic patrol animals. These enhanced animals can patrol 24 hours a day, never need to eat (unless damaged), and are completely fearless—more than can be said of the rabble that become Black Hats.

Like humans, dogs can't handle bodies which are vastly different from those they had in life, so most cyber pooches retain a goodly portion of their original bodies under all of their armor. Infiltrator hounds (see below) are still mostly original doggie parts.

All battle hounds are equipped with an AI that rides herd on the animal and analyzes all of the data it collects before transmitting the information back to the AI in Denver. Although rudimentary compared to the AIs used to control human cyborgs, these computers make the hounds much smarter than your average dog. The battle hounds can play tricks on their victims, lay ambushes, and use simple tactics when operating with other cyber-dogs.

All hounds also possess a military-grade radio with a range of 100 miles (on a good day). It uses this to relay reports back to the AI in Denver and to communicate with others of its kind and nearby Black Hat patrols. It can also transmit a direct video feed from its sensors to these patrols, allowing them to see what it does.

Patrol Models

The battle hound looks like a sleek, canine robot, somewhat like a mechanical greyhound the size of a large mastiff. It has long steel claws, sharp, jagged teeth, and glowing, red receptor eyes. Incorporated into its head and body are suites of sensors which provide the beast with enhanced senses, including thermal imaging, the ability to detect the vibration of a heartbeat from a distance, and a superior sense of smell.

The early hounds were armed with only razor-sharp, titanium claws and teeth, but later models have been trained to use either the HI Hellblazer chaingun, or a plasma rifle which operates off of the power provided by the dog's spirit fetter. The early models were also painted a flat gray, but newer versions have been given an elaborate camouflage scheme.

Patrol models scour the Colorado countryside in search of unwanted interlopers. Once a battle hound spots a hostile party it may attack or radio for backup depending on the AI's assessment of the situation.

Infiltrator Models

Throckmorton also had an infiltration version of the hounds built. These creatures look for all the world like a living, breathing dog, but underneath they are a mixture of undead canine and the latest in robotics.

Throckmorton uses these against the resistance movement which has sprung up in the territory held by the Combine. These hounds are released into the wild and left to work their way into the good graces of survivor settlements in occupied territory. Once there, they monitor activity in the town and transmit video of any suspicious activities back to Denver.

Profile: Battle Hound

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:3d12, Q:4d10, S:3d12, V:4d10

Climbin' 3d12, fightin' brawlin' 4d12, shootin' MG, rifle, sneak 3d12

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:2d6, Sm:3d6, Sp:2d6

Overawe 3d6 , search 4d8, trackin' 3d8

Pace: 20

Size: 6

Wind: -

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 4

Camouflage: The hound's paint scheme gives it a +2 to all *sneak* rolls.

Damage: Bite (STR+1d6), claw (STR+1d8), HI Hellblazer (Ammo: 10mm caseless, Shots: 100, Speed: 1, ROF: 9, Range 10/20, Damage: 4d8 AP2) or plasma rifle (Ammo: Energy, Shots: Infinite, Speed: 1, ROF: 1, Range 20, Damage 4d10 AP 2).

Detection: Specialized sensors allow the battle hound to detect a beating human heart within 100 yards with a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll.

Fearless

Hive Mind: The creature is in constant contact with all other hounds within 100 miles.

Regeneration: Every pound of meat the hound wolf's down heals a wound within an hour.

Self-Destruct: When a battle hound is put down, it explodes for 6d20 damage with a Burst Radius of 10.

Sensors: The optical, aural, and olfactory sensors of the battle hound give it +4 to *trackin'* and *search* rolls.

Undead

Description: see above.

Profile: Infiltration Hound

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:3d12, Q:4d10, S:3d12, V:4d10

Climbin' 3d12, fightin': brawlin' 4d12, sneak 3d12

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:2d6, Sm:3d6, Sp:2d6

Guts 4d6, overawe 3d6 , search 4d8, trackin' 3d8

Pace: 20

Size: 5

Wind: -

Terror: 7 (Only once revealed)

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4), claw (STR+1d6)

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Detection: Specialized sensors allow the battle hound to detect a beating human heart within 100 yards with a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll.

Fearless

Hive Mind: The creature is in constant contact with all other hounds within 100 miles.

Infiltration: Special systems allow the dog to pass for a living, breathing pooch complete with bad breath and bleeding wounds.

Self-Destruct: When a battle hound is put down, it explodes for 6d20 damage with a Burst Radius of 10.

Sensors: The optical, aural, and olfactory sensors of the battle hound give it +4 *trackin'* and *search* rolls.

Undead

Description: see above.



Bloatbelly

Famine created bloatbellies as a partner to her more prominent followers, the faminites. While faminites operated directly against the human body, bloatbellies take a more tangential approach by destroying food supplies. The gas they carry is designed specifically to ruin crops and stored foodstuffs; the fact that it eats through human flesh is just an added bonus.

While humanoid in appearance, bloatbellies could never be mistaken for men. Their skeletal arms are long and distended—like an ape's—ending in a trio of sharp-tipped claws. Their heads are fanged skulls, their eyesockets filled with an eerie blue glow.

They move in large groups of 30-60, searching for prosperous townships (a relative term in the Wasted West) to destroy. Their attacks begin with “feelers,” small groups of three or four who infiltrate the town and try to cause as much havoc as they can. When they have been dispatched, the defenders tend to relax.

That's when the main body attacks: dozens of bloatbellies, swarming over walls and bunkers like rats. Victory in battle is not their objective. They seek only food to desecrate, to leave ruined and push the town towards the brink of starvation. Unprepared communities often won't realize their goals until it's too late.

As discussed in the player's section, the gas in a bloatbelly's gut is extremely poisonous, and spreads out in a wide cloud from the slightest puncture. They can breathe their toxin through their mouths, too, and secrete it along their teeth and fingernails as well. Any food coming into contact with it is destroyed, even canned goods.

Luckily, the bloatbellies never use weapons and they can be killed from a distance by anyone with a gun and a little caution. The creatures rarely travel in groups smaller than thirty, however.

Profile: Bloatbelly

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d6, Q:2d6, S:4d6, V:3d8

Fightin': brawlin' 2d6, sneak 2d6, swimmin' 2d6

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d6

Overawe 3d4, **trackin'** 5d6

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Breath: The creature can belch up a small amount of gas (see below) at anyone within 1 yard. This affects only one target for one round.

Damage: Claws (STR+1d6), teeth (STR+2d6)

Gas: If a bloatbelly's gizzards are ruptured (any attack which causes a wound to the lower guts area), its toxin is released, creating a toxic cloud 2 yards in radius. Inhaling or contacting the gas with bare skin causes 3d6 damage, every round contact is maintained. Anyone who takes damage this way must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll or pick up the *ailin'*: *minor* Hindrance due to permanent lung damage. All food which touches the gas is destroyed.

Poison: A bloatbelly's teeth and nails are coated with a rot-causing poison. Any hero taking a wound from these must make a Fair (5) *Vigor* roll or the flesh around the wound withers. This increases the TN of all rolls made to heal the wound through medicine, magic, or nature by +4.

Bloodwave

Bloodwaves are the nature spirits of the water in the Great Maze, driven to anger by the pollution and bloodshed. The devastation of the Last War roused them from their slumber, and now they're looking to make folks pay.

A bloodwave appears as a towering wall of crimson sea water, with two great limbs and a hideous face springing from its bulk. It waits in ambush for boats, rising up to tear them apart and drown their crews.

The creature signals an impending attack by turning the water around the target blood-red; that's the spirit coalescing its form to strike. If possible, it rises up beneath the ship in an effort to overturn it (or at least punch a big hole in the bottom). Overturning a boat requires the bloodwave to make a *Strength* roll against a TN of 11 plus the boat's size modifier. It can also batter the boat with its arms for half damage.

If that's not feasible, then it appears in front, trying to drive the ship into a canyon wall. It bellows madly while it attacks, sending rumbles through the nearby walls. Ships crew are deposited into the water, where the creature can drown them at its leisure.

Bloodwaves are bound by water and cannot manifest on dry land. Only water in sufficient quantities—a pond, river or some other naturally-occurring body—provide enough liquid to support their bodies.

As the crew of the ship in the posse section learned, it's hard to hurt a bloodwave. Gunfire causes damage, but it regenerates quickly from the surrounding sea water. The only way to truly defeat a bloodwave is to dispel the spirit which animates it, through mystic weapons, syker attacks, or other methods. The local Indians may have methods of exorcising a bloodwave as well, but they're not talking.

Profile: Bloodwave

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d12, Q:3d8, S:4d12
+8, V:3d12
Dodge 3d12, fightin': brawlin' 6d12, sneak
4d12
Mental: C:2d12 K:1d6 M:3d8 Sm:2d8
Sp:4d10
Overawe 5d8
Pace: 12
Size: 14
Wind: —
Terror: 9
Special Abilities:

Damage: Grasping limbs (STR+3d6)

Regeneration: Heals damage at a rate of one wound level per round as long as it is in contact with a body of water.

Weakness: Wounds caused by magical attacks may not be regenerated.

Bone Bots

The account of bone bot origins and behavior in the posse section is accurate. Although they originated at a facility in the Mississippi Delta, swarms of bone bots have migrated into the Wasted West, and dense pockets of them are scattered across the continent.

Bone bots can appear in your game as mindless obstacles to the posse's progress. They can populate areas completely inhospitable to normal life, or may ravage inhabited areas. They are responsible for countless cattle mutilations, some of which are attributed to the activities of space aliens, cultists, or crazy muties. The posse may be sent to deal with the threat they pose to a local food supply.



Villainous wasters have been known to keep a bone bot or two in a secure container for use as a particularly terrifying implement of torture. A restrained victim can do little but look on in horror as a single bone bot methodically harvests the bone and cartilage from his body.

Although they can't stand up to much damage—even a single point kills one—bone bots are hard to hit. Their small size and erratic flight imposes a -10 penalty to shots directed at them. Area effect weapons don't suffer this penalty.

Profile: Bone Bot

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d4, Q:3d10, S:1d4, V:1d4

Brawlin' 4d4

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4
Science: nano-engineering 5d4

Pace: 4

Size: <1

Wind: —

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Detection: Sense mammalian, avian, or reptilian life within 10 yards.

Damage: A single bone bot does 1 point of damage for every minute it works on a target. This damage is cumulative, so after 6 minutes of cutting, the creature has caused a wound to a normal-sized individual.

Swarm: Individually a bone bot is a minor irritation. In a swarm, they're deadly. A swarm of bots automatically deals its swarm damage on each of its actions to any and all flesh-and-blood creatures in contact with the swarm. Each victim suffers 1d6 damage for every five bone bots attacking him. Swarms typically divide their attacks equally between all available fleshy targets, at least at first. The only way to decrease this damage is to decrease the number of bots. Most swarms have 102 to 140 bone bots (100+2d20).

Description: See above.

Brain Buzzard

Nobody much cares for vultures. They're large, unclean bundles of ragged black feathers that love nothing more than to bury their hooked beaks into rotting carcasses. The only thing worse than seeing a volery of vultures fight over the bloated hide of a cow is watching it fight over the remains of a mother and her child.

Now imagine something worse than a vulture—a critter that's not only bigger and smarter, but also able to knock out your powersuit, your Hummer, your radio, and just about anything that's got electronic circuitry in it just by thinking about it. Meet the brain buzzard, the only bird in existence that can blast you and yours with a powerful electromagnetic pulse—just like an A-bomb, only on a localized scale and without all the death and destruction. And unlike the Doomsayer variety of EMP, electronics wasted by the brain buzzard are toast—for good.

With dirty black feathers, fleshy pink heads, and great, hooked beaks, brain buzzards look very similar to normal buzzards—at least while they're high in the sky riding thermals. But when a brain buzzard swoops down for a closer look at a lone animal or wandering convoy of trucks, it doesn't take long for the attentive road warrior to tell the difference. Mainly because they're a lot bigger. They measure up to 10 to 15 feet wingtip to wingtip. It isn't all that simple to establish scale of something in the sky, but experienced travelers soon learn how or give up owning digital watches. The heads of brain vultures are proportionally larger when compared to the rest of their bodies than the ordinary vulture, too—a bigger skull to hold in all the extra brains.

Brain buzzards are more aggressive than regular buzzards. These guys aren't content to wheel around in the sky and wait for death of come to some injured beast—they're likely to swoop down and help things along a bit with their razor-sharp talons and beaks. They can often take a small group of people totally by surprise while they're gathered around the hood of their truck trying to figure out why the engine stopped.

Brain buzzards are smart birds—at least as smart as dogs or horses—but that isn't why they zero in on electronic devices. Truth is, operating electronics give them splitting headaches, and they zero in on offending items like a bat on a bug and pulse it just to make the pain stop. In other words, the EMP attack is really nothing more than an elaborate defensive measure.

Not surprisingly, brain buzzards and junkers get on like a house on fire. Any junker worthy of the name is loaded with enough electronic gear to give a brain buzzard a splitting headache a mile away. And any junker that gets much closer than that is going to find himself carrying a hundred pounds of fried silicon. Getting between a junker and a brain buzzard is not a good idea.

If there's one class of individuals who hate brain buzzards more than junkers, though, it's the Black Hats. See, when a junker's toys go on the fritz, she cusses and throws things around and generally does her best to blast the offending fowl out of the sky, but she's still got her health. Not so the Black Hat. Because when an EMP wave hits a Black Hat, it fries the circuits in his head, his guns and his equipment—and all those Combine-issued goodies get confused and start blowing up. Automatons, of course, don't stand a chance.

So, when Black Hats see a brain buzzard coming, they run like the wind—it's either that or start going off like firecrackers when the feathered bastards get closer. Some raiders have been known to attack Black Hat convoys by sticking a few caged brain buzzards in some bushes by the road, while other folks tell how they were cornered by Black Hats and goners for sure before a couple of brain buzzards showed up to confound the opposition and save their bacon.

Fortunately for the Combine, brain buzzards are more common down south in northern Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. They usually steer clear of Combine settlements in any case because of the headaches they cause. Along the old Route 66 trail, though, they're, ah, thick as buzzards, much to the consternation of the traders who convoy up and down the cracked remains of the CSA's I-40.

Profile: Brain Buzzard

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d8, Q:2d4, S:2d8, V:2d10

Fightin' brawlin' 3d8, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:3d10, K:1d4, M:2d10, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d6

Guts 1d6, overawe 2d10, search 4d6

Pace: 18 (2 on ground)

Size: 8

Wind: 16

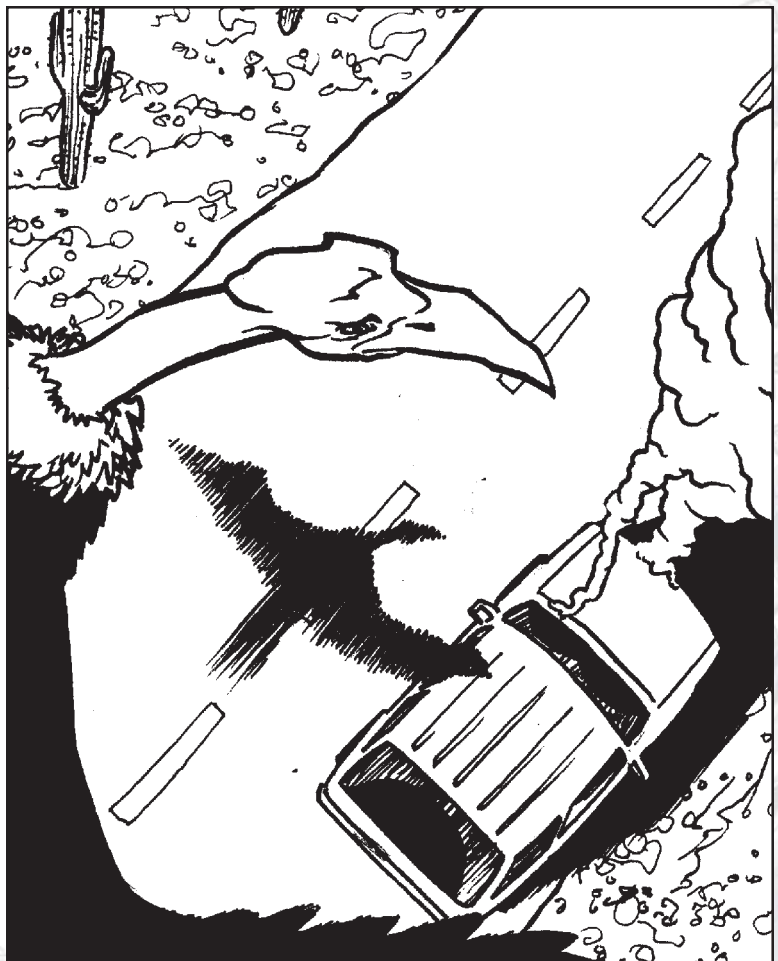
Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Damage: Beak (STR+1d6), talons (STR+1d6)

Electromagnetic Pulse: Brain buzzards send out an EMP that fries most any electronics for good. Speed: 1, Range: 200 yard radius.

Description: See above.





Candiru

The candiru is a simple little parasitic catfish with animal intelligence; the mutant driller candiru is the same creature with additional striking capability. Inaccurate rumors abound as to the existence of even worse mutant varieties.

Candiru live in fast-moving rivers. They are rarely found in slow-moving waters.

The regular candiru is only dangerous if you swim in an infested river, especially if you pee while swimming. Although it inspires special terror in men, women are equally susceptible. For every 15 minutes a hero spends in infested waters, he must make a Fair (5)

Vigor roll to avoid picking up a hitchhiker in his privates. If he makes the mistake of relieving himself while in the water, the TN for this roll jumps to Hard (9). If this happens, use the abscess rules below.

Driller candiru are much more aggressive—they actually launch themselves at their victims and can burrow into any body location. If a driller candiru hits a target and causes a wound, it has embedded its spiny snout in the target and cannot be removed without causing an additional wound. It may also cause an infection (see the abscess rules below).

Both driller and regular candiru are partial to making their homes in floating corpses; dozens of them may be found in a single riverside carcass. The driller variety jump out *en masse* when warm bodies get near enough.

Profile: Driller Candiru

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:1d4, Q:1d10, S:1d4, V:3d4

Throwin': self 3d6

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 4

Size: <1

Wind: —

Terror: 5 for women, 11 for men

Special Abilities:

Damage: STR+1d4

Abscess: If not removed, a candiru in your flesh leads to infection.

Infection occurs within 1d4 days.

The infection starts out as a light wound. The victim must make an Incredible (11) Vigor roll; if

successful, the wound may be healed naturally. If not, antibiotics

or supernatural healing is required to end the infection. Gangrene sets

in, and the wound increases by one level of severity (from light to

heavy, heavy to serious, and so on) every twelve hours. Removal of the

candiru before infection sets in is a simple but brutal procedure,

causing an additional wound to the affected area. Without infection, this

wound heals as per the normal rules.

rules.

Description: 2"-long, dark-colored fish with spiny fins and a sharp, spiny nose.

Charnel Hounds

Lots of folk think they know all about charnel hounds, but few have actually seen one. This accounts for the cool but inappropriate name: they're actually descended from carnivorous raccoons. This is not immediately apparent when you see them; they're hairless, covered in flaky skin, with long snouts and big claws. They grow to the size of a St. Bernard. You might encounter one and not even realize that the thing eating your leg is a charnel hound.

Charnel hounds do gain maximum food value from undead flesh, and strongly prefer them as prey. Contrary to legend, they definitely attack the living if they detect no tasty undead in the immediate area. Even worse, their undead-detection sense is on a hair-trigger, identifying as preferred prey many victims who are not remotely undead.

They have one-track minds; once they've locked onto a target with their detection sense, they'll track him for hundreds of miles. They may take other prey of opportunity to keep them nourished during the trek; eating animals as small as mice, and attacking something as large as a horse. If a target stays put in a safe enclosure, they wait him out, coming back time and again, always probing for a way in.

Charnel hounds travel in packs. The average pack consists of a half dozen animals, but some groups can be four times that big.

As far as their rumored special attacks or immunities go, they actually have jack-squat. It doesn't hurt that many opponents, made wise by the tall tales, never even try to use common weapons like guns or bombs on them.

Profile: Charnel Hound

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:2d8, V:2d6

Fightin': brawl in' 3d6, dodge 3d6, sneak 2d6,

Mental: C:3d8, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 6

Size: 5

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Wind: 10

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d6), claw (STR+2d6)

Detection: Sense undead within 1 mile, regardless of barriers.

Characters who cheated death within the last week register as undead to the charnel hound's senses. Cheated death means that the character would have been killed if he hadn't spent one or more Fate chips.

Description: See above.

Creepin' Gulch

Creepin' gulches represent the oddest of abominations—terrain come to life with murderous intent. Creepin' gulches were born when men fought and killed one another over a ghost rock claim or some other treasure. The blood of the dead seeped into the dusty ground and mixed with the evil intents of the murderers, and pretty soon a manitou came along to bring it all to horrible life.

Nowadays, of course, most ghost rock prospectors are long gone, but their descendants remain—folks searching in the wilderness for any sort of valuable stash waiting to be discovered, be it a cache of weapons, or a bank vault filled with gold. When they clash, creepin' gulches are born.

A creepin' gulch is a depression in the ground—usually a ravine a couple of dozen feet deep and 50 to 100 yards wide. It moves very slowly across the landscape, perhaps a mile or two an hour (but watching a creepin' gulch on the move is nigh impossible on the ground, since it detects the vibrations of people walking up to a mile off and stops). The texture of the walls and floor of a creepin' gulch varies according to local terrain. In the deserts of New Mexico it's a small, rocky box canyon; in Oklahoma a deep furrow of rich loam.

Creepin' gulches aren't all that intelligent—more a force of nature (or supernature) than a thinking creature. They don't have any discernible destinations in mind; they simply meander in a straight line on whatever heading they struck out on when they were born, changing course only to avoid a ghost rock deposit or a ghost rock maelstrom.

The way a gulch gets people interested in it is by offering a lure: something real interesting down in its center that folks just have to go check out. The bait depends on the gulch—what gave it birth and what it's collected in the way of victims along the way. Maybe there's an abandoned Yankee missile launcher down there, with a missile and warhead still on its flatbed, or perhaps there's a huge heap of truck and machine parts partially concealed by blue plastic tarps.

Once a good number of people are down in the gulch checking out the goods, it goes to work. It whispers subtle thoughts of greed and violence into each mind. Pretty soon, each person begins to believe that he or she alone deserves to have whatever there is to covet.

Those with weak minds or selfish inclinations soon succumb to the gulch's seductive urgings, and it isn't long before arguments break out. Then fights. And then, with the gulch egging everyone on, comes escalation and finally the spilling of blood.

The shed blood triggers the gulch's final attack—it smashes shut with a thunderous crash, sealing everyone inside in small air pockets (protecting its bait similarly). The only way to avoid this fate is to derail the killing before it comes. There isn't much hope for those trapped at this point—they die a few minutes later when they consume all the air trapped in their pockets (kind Marshals might allow others to dig them out). A few hours later, the gulch reopens and begins its journey once again.

There is only one way to kill a creepin' gulch: locate some of the original treasure that led to the first murder—the reason for its being—and destroy it. This can be difficult if the gulch has been on the move for a while, since the original goodies are mixed in with a lot of other stuff. If the heroes can destroy the gulch's original treasure, it dies, and is thereafter a natural gorge.

Profile: Creepin' Gulch

Corporeal: D:NA, N:NA, Q:NA, S:NA, V:NA

Mental: C:5d10, K:1d4, M:4d6, Sm:2d4,

Sp:3d4

Overawe 5d6

Pace: less than 1 but more than 0

Size: NA

Wind: —

Terror: 7 (only when active)

Special Abilities:

Immunity: The creepin' gulch is immune to all forms of harm.

Attacks simply inflict no damage. But see weakness below.

Incite Jealousy: Each person in the gulch must make a successful *Spirit* check every five minutes of game time spent there—the TN begins at 3 and rises by +2 every check (leaving and returning to the gulch does not restart the clock).

As fair warning, play up the whispers in the victims' minds before the first roll. When a person fails her first check, she is consumed with avarice and can no longer willingly leave the gulch. Continue the periodic checks, and refer to the table below to see the effect of further failures. If any roll is successful, the person may break the cycle and leave the gulch or try to destroy it.

Smashin' Finale: This is the creepin' gulch's convulsive last act. When blood is spilled (the first serious wound incurred qualifies), the gulch slams shut. Each character can attempt an Incredible (II)

Nimbleness or *climbin'* roll to clamber out in time. Those who fail are imprisoned in air pockets within the gulch, buried alive and unharmed—but likely doomed. Those with an independent air supply or some method of placing

themselves in suspended animation might sweat the ordeal out. The others run out of air in 2d6 minutes and then lose 1 Wind per round until they die (remember that each time a hero reaches a negative multiple of his Wind he takes a wound to the guts). The gulch reopens in 1d6 hours, releasing any survivors.

Weakness: Destroying or removing a creepin' gulch's original bait renders it inert.

Description: see above.

Incite Jealousy

Spirit Check	Result
1st Failure	Covet others' possessions; firmly ask for them.
2nd Failure	Attempt to take a coveted good by non-lethal force.
3rd Failure	All out attack.

Desert Gator

Folks who poke around in the swamps near Baton Rouge know all about the giant alligators that troll through the weeds and muck. Those who live out West are learning to appreciate their own special brand of reptilian sunshine: the desert gator.

In appearance, the desert gator looks much like a natural gator, only on a much larger scale. Its coloration suits its new rugged environment: its back is a dusky brown with green highlights, and its belly is a light tan. It has very large eyes, which differentiates it from the run-of-the-mill giant alligators (though there can't be all that many people in a position to compare).

Desert gators are giant gators just like the Louisiana variety—but they have a few capabilities their southern cousins lack. For starters, they're blindingly fast. Like normal gators, they can outpace a man running all-out with no trouble, but unlike other gators they can keep up the pace for several minutes—more than enough time to run most game to ground.

Their speed is only the start, though. They've also got a long, frog-like, sticky tongue that can lash out 40 feet or more and reel in some poor sod. Some of the larger specimens can even bring a small car to a dead halt by latching onto the axle or bumper. The desert gator's speed/tongue combo is harsh. Once within a desert gator's jaws there isn't much hope for you.

Desert gators are tough. Unlike other gators, they don't need to live in the water, though they tend to gravitate toward watering holes because that's where all the food goes. When in the water waiting for prey, gators are very difficult to spot, since only their eyes protrude from the water (an Onerous (7) *search* roll to spot 'em). When animals or people draw near to the edge of the water, they lunge out to attack. They're



highly resistant to radiation, too, and more than one desert gator has chased a clutch of toxic zombies out of their puddle of ooze to make itself a cozy nest.

Though desert gators don't need watery environs to lay and raise their eggs, desert gators mindlessly respond to their ancient ancestral instincts and when ready to breed seek out such locales when possible. Desert gators mate for life and are usually encountered in pairs, often with offspring of varying ages tagging along or nearby.

The desert gator is an extremely aggressive hunter. It pursues and attacks prey even when it's not hungry. When not prowling about it likes to sun itself on the rocks, idly dragging in a stray rabbit or prairie dog with its strong tongue.

Desert gators only started popping up about 20 years ago in the West, but they've been lurking in Louisiana swamps for some time. They aren't naturally occurring mutants. They were cooked up in a lab by a team of scientists studying the effects of G-rays on living tissue. Intrigued by the new breed's resistance to dry heat, they trucked them out West and dumped them in the wild for years—just to see how they adapt to their new environment.

Anyone carefully inspecting the body of a desert gator—probably a dead one—may find a small transponder fastened to the flesh inside its mouth. The scientists used these to track the gators' movements. A thorough investigation and a couple of clever junker gadgets may lead a dedicated team back to the scientists' swampy labs in Louisiana, but investigators beware, although the scientists are long dead, they didn't value human life all that much, and they managed to cook up even worse things than the gators. Some of the genetic engineering they did involved human subjects, and many of these experiments are still guarding the laboratory.

Profile: Desert Gator

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:2d8, Q:3d10, S:4d12+6, V:2d10

Fightin': brawlin' 3d8, sneak 5d8

Mental: C:4d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:2d4, Sp:1d8

Overawe 5d8, search 3d6

Pace: 12

Size: 3 for tongue, or 10-15 for main body (12-40' long)

Wind: 36

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Camouflage: The gator's coloration gives it a +2 to all *sneak* rolls.

Damage: Bite (STR+1d6), tail (STR+1d4; knocks a person back 5 yards for every raise on the attack roll).

Fearless: Desert gators are just too ornery to be scared of anything. They never make *guts* checks, even when up against supernatural beings.

Immunity: Radiation

Tongue Grab: Speed: 1, ROF: 1, Range: 40'. On a successful *fightin'* roll, the desert gator can lash out with its long sticky tongue and grab a victim. It needs two rounds to pull a victim into its maw. During this time, the victim can free himself from the sticky organ by getting a raise on an opposed *Strength* roll.

Tongue Wounds: The tongue takes wounds according to its Size. All Wind damage to the tongue is ignored because it doesn't affect the main body and the tongue can't be rendered unconscious. If you track wounds by location, use three different locations: base (results of legs or arms), center (results of guts or gizzards), and mouth (noggin). A maiming wound to any of these locations severs the tongue at that point.

Description: see above.

Devil Bat

These critters live in the Badlands of the Dakota Territory. The Sioux (what's left of them) call them "kinyan tiwicakte," or "flying murderer."

Devil bats are nocturnal predators who hunt in groups of 1-6. They attack by racing from the night and grabbing prey with their taloned feet. This is an opposed *fightin': brawlin'* roll. If the bat thing gets a success, it causes damage normally. With a raise, it drags the prey into the air and rises at its maximum Pace for a medium load (12). If the prey doesn't break free with an opposed *Strength* roll by the time the devil bat is 50 yards up, it lets go (10d6+50 points of falling damage) or tries to slam the prey into a rocky outcropping. If successful, the bat lands and feasts on the remains.

The best thing for a traveler to do once she's in the grasp of a devil bat is to grab hold of its ankles and hang on for dear life. This is an opposed roll between the creature's *Nimbleness* and the character's *Strength*. If the creature gets a raise, it manages to shake the prey loose. If the prey gets a raise, she manages to force the critter to within 10 yards of the ground or a rocky outcropping where she can jump free. Otherwise, the contest continues on each subsequent action.

Profile: Devil Bat

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:3d12, S:1d12+2,
Q:3d10, V:2d8

Dodge 3d12, *fightin': brawlin'* 3d12, sneak
1d12 (5d12 from the air)

Mental: C:4d10, K:1d4, M:2d10, Sm:2d8,
Sp:1d8

Overawe 2d10

Pace: 6 (ground)/24 (air)

Size: 7 (8' tall)

Wind: 16

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Claws (STR+1d4)

Flying: Pace 24

Weakness:—Noise: The devil bat "sees" by means of sonar. If its prey has the guts to stand stock-still among other obstacles (like rocks and such), the thing has to make an Onerous (7) Cognition roll to pick her out of the clutter. If the prey does this, however, her *fightin': brawlin'* Aptitude is not added to the devil bat's TN.

Description: Devil bats look like an obscene cross between a human being and a bat.

Discord Bug

These mean-spirited insects feed on the energy of negative emotions: anger, fear, violence, what have you. In order to feed, the critter sets up a high-pitched hum audible up to 50 yards from the source of its wings. The hum has the effect of setting most folks on edge and given time, those same folks get downright ornery and get to feudin'. Some are even driven to kill by the persistent drone which suits the bug's unusual dietary needs just fine.

Once you encounter one of these little pests, it would seem a simple matter to give it a taste of shoe leather, but you better be prepared when you stomp down as the nasty darlings have a hide like a cast-iron skillet.



Profile: Discord Bug

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d10, Q:1d12+2, S:1d4, V:3d8

Dodge 1d8, shootin': sonic wailin' 3d8, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:1d8, K:NA, M:1d12+4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Overawe 4d12+4

Pace: 12/6 (ground)

Size: 2 (10 inches)

Wind: 12

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor: 3

Bite: Sharp mouth parts and beak cause STR in damage.

Bolts of Doom: A piercing wail that causes the bug's *Vigor* in damage to a single target within 10 yards.

Flying: Pace 12

Discord: The critter uses its *overawe* Aptitude to instill feelings of uneasiness in all those within 20 yards. Those hearing must resist with *Smarts*, suffering the usual penalties from a failed roll. Marshal's may modify the *Smarts* rolls by +2 to +6 to account for ear protection such as headphones, candle tallow, or cotton jammed in the ears. Those that go bust are driven into a frenzy and attack the nearest character on hand, or in the absence of one, the nearest object of value. The sonic assault continues until someone goes bust or the critter causes a "Broken" result, at which time it shuts up for 2d6 hours.

Blastin' Interference: These critters can detect a syker and syker powers up to 100 yards away by the tell tale hum of the syker's brain. Once the critter happens to locate a syker, it stays nearby and generates the drone, only this time, sykers and those with syker powers are affected. This distraction is similar to a persistent headache and causes the sykers to spend one additional point of Strain per each

use of their powers and raises the TN of all syker abilities by +6! For this reason, some folks are willing to risk the occasional societal flare up and keep a bug handy to root out and interfere with syker assassination attempts.

Dust Devil

Dust devils are vicious killers that live in the deserts of the southwest. They lurk about like repulsive, spiny serpents until they see prey. Then they use their supernatural power to create a whirlwind about themselves and move in for the kill.

More than one unwary traveler has gone down before the spikes of one of these creatures, thinking it was only a dust storm.

Dust devils attack by centering on their prey and whirling around it with their spiny, snakelike bodies. They live at the center of their dirt-filled whirlwinds, making them difficult to see or hit with normal weapons. A hero has to make a -8 called shot to hit the creature itself.

Shots that miss are sucked into the whirlwind and shot out in a random direction. Roll a d12 to determine a clock facing and see if any innocent bystanders are hit by the errant attack.

Dynamite and other explosives affect the creature normally, although most sticks thrown into the whirlwind are usually flung out before they can detonate. (Roll 1d20. On a 1, the explosive detonates inside the funnel cloud.)

A hero making a *fightin'* attack on the creature must first beat it in an opposed *Strength* contest (ignore the -8 penalty for hand-to-hand attacks because of the creature's length). If he wins, he can attack normally. Otherwise, he is blown backward by the whirlwind and can't take a swing this action.

Profile: Dust Devil

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d12+2, Q:1d10, S:1d12+4, V:1d8

Fightin': brawlin' 6d12+2

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d12, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4

Pace: 24

Size: 10 (10' tall)

Wind: 12

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Spines (STR+1d4)

Blinding: The dust devil kicks up a swirling cloud of sand and stone that blinds everyone within 10 yards of its deadly center unless they make an Incredible (II) *Vigor* roll.

Description: When not whirling (which isn't often) a dust devil looks like a large, pale snake with spikes running down its back.

Explodjinn

The explodjinn is a hellish monstrosity born of nuclear fire. It's driven to acts of wanton destruction but compelled to serve those who freed it from imprisonment.

In truth, these monstrosities were born of the Hunting Grounds to act as harbingers and fearmongers but, due to the unstable nature of the spirits, they could not live long in physical form. Most simply dissolved back to the Hunting Grounds, and others were sealed in vessels by their masters, to wait for release. The Reckoners used lamps, gemstones, and in one case, a tea pot, to store their monstrous creations.

Fortunately, when the bombs fell, many of these receptacles were lost in the ruins, buried under tons of debris. Now, with all the scavengers rooting around ruins, these unholy vessels are being located and their occupants freed to work their evil upon the world.

Like the genies of yore, the explodjinn is bound to the one who freed it until such time as three services are rendered. And like the genie of myth and legend, they are cruel and cunning, seeking to twist their master's wishes—it is the letter and not the spirit of the request that is followed.

Once free from servitude, the djinn usually departs, leaving destruction in its wake. It seeks out the nearest radiation source and soaks up as much energy as possible and then moves onto greener pastures, to set them alight with nuclear flame.

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One last note on the vessels, so long as the djinn lives, the vessel is virtually indestructible. Somehow the object of its imprisonment is tied to the djinn metaphysically and physically. This connection allows the djinn to track the vessel regardless of distance.

Profile: Explodjinn

Corporeal: D:4d8, N:2d12+6, Q:3d10,

St:5d12+6, V:3d12+6

Dodge 3d12+8, fightin': brawlin' 3d12+6

Mental: C:4d10, K:3d10, M:3d12, Sm:4d10, Sp:1d12+4

Academia: occult 4d10, blastin' 7d10, bluff 3d10, guts 3d12+4, overawe 3d12, persuasion 4d12, ridicule 2d12, scrutinize 4d10, trackin' 5d10

Hindrances: All thumbs

Pace: 20





Size: 8 (7-8 feet tall)

Wind: 32

Terror: 9

Strain: 34

Special Abilities:

Bolts of Doom: The djinn can hurl lightning bolts and balls of fire with a Range Increment of 10. These attacks cause 1d12 damage per Strain spent on them. The djinn can't spend more than 4 Strain per attack.

Flight: Pace 72 but it costs 1 strain per minute of flight.

Immunity: The explodjinn is completely immune to fire, damage from heat, and radiation. Also, the djinn only takes full damage from supernatural or magical attacks, Mundane attacks cause 1 Wind for every wound they would have

inflicted. Should the djinn be somehow driven unconscious or killed by one of these attacks, it reforms in 24 hours. It reappears in it's vessel fully restored to health, and pissed as Hell at those responsible for putting it there.

Insubstantial: The djinn can spend an action and 1 Strain to become insubstantial. It takes another action to return to solid form.

Obligation: The djinn must obey the letter of the commands given by the person who freed it from its vessel. It does not have to obey commands that would result in harm to itself.

Strain Recovery: The djinn does not recover Strain normally. It must return to its vessel, where it may recover one Strain per hour of uninterrupted rest. Exposure to radiation allows it to recover 1d6 Strain every 10 minutes.

Fate Eaters

Fate Eaters are ghosts of people who died on Judgment Day with unfinished business to complete. They extort living victims into finishing that business for them by using their fate manipulation ability to rob them of Fate Chips. They promise to return the Fate Chips (they call it luck) when the deal is done. The completion of the desired task usually allows the fate eater to end its existence as a trapped spirit on earth, and go to its next reward.

The task in question might be ridiculous (as per the example in the posse section), poignant, or just plain deadly. Come to think of it, even the simplest task can be lethal in the Wasted West. The victim may be called upon to avenge a wrong, wrest a confession of mutual love from someone the fate eater worshipped from afar, or find lost treasure.

Fate eaters are incredibly persistent, and continue to dog victims until their will is done. Nothing stops them from stealing fate from more than one victim at a time. They love posses of adventurers: a group that sticks together is easy to follow, and many tasks are more easily completed by groups.

Profile: Fate Eaters

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:2d6, V:2d6

Varies, depending on who the fate eater was while alive.

Mental: Traits and Aptitudes vary according to the fate eaters living identity.

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: NA

Dream Invasion: The fate eater can appear in the dreams of a victim from whom he has stolen one or more Fate Chips. He appears as he did before death. He can use this power only for purposes of communication; he can't otherwise manipulate the details of the dream, probe the victim for information, or anything like that.

Immunity: All

Insubstantial

Manipulate Fate

Tireless: Fate eaters never tire or sleep.

Voices In Your Head: Fate eaters can project their thoughts into the minds of other intelligent entities. The recipient of the message hears his own voice speak whatever the fate eater wants it to say.

Description: Fate eaters look like ghostly apparitions of their former selves. They're only rarely glimpsed outside the victim's dreams

Fizzers

Fizzers are not, technically speaking, mutants. They're victims of a genetically engineered virus created a few years before the war by unscrupulous executives of the Bubbly-Fizz Beverage Corporation. The virus, planted in random batches of the cola, was meant to reinforce a brand preference for Bubbly-Fizz, with no other side-effects. Funny how viruses engineered at the behest of unscrupulous executives always seem to go awry, isn't it? In this case, the virus not only significantly degraded the physical and mental health of its victims, but induced an

overwhelming psychological need for the product. In the aftermath of the war, the infected are doubly screwed, because B-Fizz is now a nonrenewable resource.

The fizzers live in chaotic, violence-prone colonies whose only goals are survival and the acquisition of more B-Fizz. Individually weak, they are dangerous in numbers. Bounties are sometimes placed on them by relatives of those they've slain in pursuit of cola.

In Fizzer-dominated areas, B-Fizz is an expensive commodity; posse may find rich rewards in ferrying a case or two through Fizzer territory. Fizzers are prodigious scavengers, and trade valuable stuff for their beverage of choice. Their theologians also exchange desirable items for prewar records of the B-Fizz Corp. If the heroes research the corporation, the posse may find itself wondering if they, too, have been infected by B-Fizz consumed in the past.



Profile: Fizzer

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:1d6, Q:1d10, S:1d6, V:1d6

Filchin 2d6, shootin': pistol, shotgun 2d6, throwin': unbalanced 2d6, drivin' 2d6, fightin': brawlin' 2d6, sneak 2d6, quick draw 2d6.

Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4
Search 3d6, trackin' 2d6, knowledge of B-Fizz 4d4, survival 2d4

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Caffeine Overdrive: For 24 hours after consuming Bubbly-Fizz Cola, *Quickness:* 4d10 and *quick draw* 4d10.

Detect: Can sense Bubbly-Fizz Cola within 60 yards, regardless of barriers.

Gear: Motley assortment of scavenged weapons and armor.

Surge: Gain an extra die in all Corporeal Aptitudes for every three rounds in which the Fizzer can detect Bubbly Fizz, but is prevented from taking it.

Description: See above.

Gallos Terribles

Captain Marley survived the attack and made it back to civilization. To this day, he's looking to hire a band of bold adventurers interested in the untouched loot protected by the swift-footed gallos. Not surprisingly, nobody has taken him up on his offer.

The research facility now lies under several yards of sand although many of the entrances still remain above ground. The laboratories and stores remain to this day, sealed away behind airtight bulkhead doors. The base still has power, although the antique atomic reactor has been on standby since before the scientists' last attempt to escape. It's only a matter of time before it melts down and destroys the base.

Within this subterranean warren lair the descendants of the original gallos. They leave their burrows at dawn and dusk to hunt for food. The gallos range as far as 25 miles around the base in search of prey. The remains of vehicles of those who ran afoul of the vicious birds litter the valley floor.

Although this has yet to come to light, as there are few paranaturalists interested in risking their necks to satisfy scientific curiosity, the Gallos live for only two to three years. Apparently, the birds' metabolism precludes a longer lifespan.

Wormlings and the rattlers steer clear of this region. Apparently, the gallos are none too particular about what they eat, meat is meat after all—besides, you know what they say about the early bird catching the worm.

Profile: Gallo Terrible

Corporeal: D:3d4, N:2d10, Q:2d12+4, S:2d8, V:4d10

Dodge 6d10, fightin': brawlin 3d10, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:5d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:1d10

Guts 4d10, overawe 5d8, ridicule 2d10

Pace: 80

Size: 8 (10' feet tall)

Wind: 20

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Bite (STR+1d12 API, AP3 if the gallos runs at the target), claw (once a gallo has successfully struck, it harries a downed opponent with repeated slashings causing STR+1d6).

Cloak of Evil: -2; A flock of gallos moving at quarter Pace or better kicks up a huge volume of dust. The actual area of effect is equal to the number of gallos within the storm multiplied by 5 yards in diameter. Anyone caught within this cloud must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll or take the difference in Wind. Going bust on the roll means the hero has choked on the dust; raise the TN of further rolls by +4. The gallos swarm over their prey, disorienting them with the dust and sowing confusion with their

ridicule Aptitude. Once a melee is joined, the birds continue to harry their quarry and the dust settles in 1d6 rounds. It should go without saying, the birds function normally, and suffer no ill effects, within the cloud.

Fearless: The gallos possess primitive intellects, rendering the *ridicule*, *overawe*, and *persuasion* Aptitudes ineffective.

Description: A giant roadrunner.

Ghostrock Wraiths

Ghost rock consists of damned souls, trapped and sentenced to eternal agony within the mineral they inhabit. When the bombs fell, they unleashed millions of such tortured beings, scattered in radioactive ash. Sometimes, however, a condemned soul has enough will, enough strength, or just enough plumb meanness to escape its material prison. It coalesces from nearby ghost-rock dust, and stalks the night, seeking to share the pain of their existence.

Ghostrock wraiths haunt particular areas or sites, usually the places where they first manifested. They usually do not stray far from their places of origin; no further than a few hundred yards.

A wraith appears before any interlopers who enter its territory: a man-shaped swirl of ghost-rock dust, glowing green with radioactivity. Just remaining in one's presence is enough to cause damage, but wraiths can periodically send out pulses of radioactive energy that damages any flesh near it. Their insubstantiality means they cannot be harmed by conventional weapons; only fire and certain holy incantations can damage them. They flee if sufficiently injured, but cannot be dissuaded otherwise. Nothing save the hideous death of everyone they see satiates them.

Those killed by ghostrock wraiths become imprisoned in ghost rock themselves, perpetuating the cycle of death and pain. It is rare to find two wraiths in the same area, but not unheard of. The second wraith is often a former victim of the first, and the two engage in battles that disintegrate any onlookers.

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Profile: Ghostrock Wraith

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d8, Q:3d10, S:3d6, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 3d8, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:2d8 K:1d6 M:2d8 Sm:2d6 Sp:1d6
Overawe 3d8, area knowledge (home territory) 5d6

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: -

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Immunity: All

Insubstantial

Weakness—Fire, Magic: Fire, enchanted weapons, and the Templar power *lay on hands* (which causes as much damage to ghostrock wraiths as it heals in



Glamor Puss



others) are the only things which can hurt it. Fire causes its form to burn, which increases its radioactivity (double the damage below while on fire), but also causes it damage as normal.

Radioactive: In addition to the passive damage (1d6 every round spent within 50 feet of one), they can concentrate the radiation into bursts, causing 4d8 damage to any being within 10 feet. These bursts drain it somewhat, so they can only use this ability once every five rounds. Actually touching a ghostrock wraith (or letting it touch you), causes 4d12 dice of damage, and sears permanent burns into the skin.

Description: A swirling, green-glowing phantom.

The glamor puss relies upon superior numbers and its horrid appearance to overwhelm its prey. Once restrained, the glamor puss goes to work on its victim with its razor sharp nails, removing choice components of the prey's anatomy with surgical efficiency.

The effect is resolved by rolling its *medicine: surgery* against the victim's *Vigor*, who takes the difference in damage to a random location. Should the victim sustain more than three wounds which are not countered with Fate Chips, he or she acquires the *ugly as sin* -1 Hindrance. Should the victim already be *ugly as sin*, the level of the Hindrance rises to -3. This damage continues until the victim expires, escapes, or the glamor puss is killed.

Profile: Glamor Puss

Corporeal: D:4d10, N:1d10, Q:1d12+2, S:1d8, V:5d6

Dodge 4d6, fightin': brawlin' 3d10, sneak 2d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d12+2, M:2d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:3d6

Guts 3d6, *medicine: surgery* 4d12+2, overawe 3d8, persuasion 2d8

Pace: 10

Size: 6

Wind: -

Terror: 7 or worse, see below

Special Abilities:

Damage: Claws (STR+1d6; this is an attack of last resort as it damages the "merchandise".)

Gore Shedding: Once a glamor puss takes damage, its appearance begins to suffer as the borrowed components begin to slough off, revealing raw, pulpy muscle underneath. After the first "free" wound level (see below) is taken, regardless of location so long as it's visible to the heroes, the abomination's Terror value increases to a 9, and degenerates further to an 11 once the final "free" wound level is taken.

Parts is Parts: By clothing themselves with skin taken from past victims, the glamor puss receives two "free" wound levels per

hit location. Once wound levels have accumulated to 2 or more, the glamor puss begins taking wounds to that location and suffers wound penalties normally.

Regeneration: The glamor puss heals much faster than usual, making one healing roll per day as opposed to once per five days. Also, instead of using its *Vigor* for the roll, it may make a *medicine: surgery* roll instead presuming a source of "spare parts" is available.

Weakness—Vanity: Attempts to trick the creature by appealing to its vanity are done so at a +2 to the roll. Also, presentation of a mirror or other reflective surface forces the glamor puss to pass an Onerous (7) *Smarts* roll, otherwise, it pauses for 1d4 actions to preen and pose before resuming its grisly purpose.

Glow Worms

The glowing mass of worms is the larval stage of a much nastier critter. After a period ranging from seven days to a month, the glow worms merge and encyst, forming a tough cocoon of melted concrete, asphalt, and metal slag. The chrysalis swells to five times its original size over the next three to five days, after which time the adult form, known as a voracipede, emerges and begins protecting the hive.

The voracipede is a 20'-long, arthropoid creature resembling a nightmarish fusion of centipede and preying mantis with scythe-like forelimbs, a wicked set of mandibles, and a central eye of capable of emitting a concentrated beam of energy powerful enough to vaporize steel.

This predator exists to devour animal life for the purposes of self-fertilization. After a number of months of hunting, the voracipede seeks out a suitable amount of contaminated water and radioactive waste away from the main hive. Like a paper wasp, it builds a subterranean lair out of whatever materials are on hand and entombs itself. After a period of a month, the beast splits open releasing 4d20 larval glow worms to begin the process anew.

Profile: Glow Worm

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:1d6, Q:2d6, S:3d6, V:5d6

Mental: C:2d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d4

Pace: 3

Size: 3 (2-4 feet in length)

Wind: 10



Terror: 3

Special Abilities:

Immunity: To radiation

Radiation: All unprotected heroes within 5 yards of the worms must make a Fair (5) *Vigor* check every round to avoid severe radiation poisoning. Anyone failing the roll gains the *ailin': chronic* Hindrance.

Weakness—Heat & Fire: Heat and fire-based attacks cause +1 die of damage. Also, certain alkaloids such as salt and chlorine cause 3d6 damage per round of contact as it dries out the worms.

Profile: Voracipede

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:6d10, Q:2d12+2, S:5d10, V:2d12

Fightin': brawlin' 8d10, sneak 3d10

Mental: C:4d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d8

Pace: 20

Size: 13 (20 feet long and 4 feet tall)

Wind: —

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 5

Bolts 'o Doom: Damage 3d20, Speed 2, ROF 1, Max Range 20'

Damage: Bite (STR+2d8, AP 1), claws (STR+1d12, AP2 or on a raise they can grapple. Its bite hits automatically on the creature's following actions until a successful contest of *Strengths* is won.)

Burrowing: Pace 8 through earth, loose stone, and similar materials, Pace 4 through concrete and stone.

Wall Crawl: Pace 10

Description: See above.



Gore Storm

These particularly nasty demons, a joint creation of War and Death, came to Earth with the Reckoners, and have been salted throughout the Wasted West's worst Deadlands in order to keep their despair and terror quotients up in the stratosphere. They appear as described in the posse section as vortices of whirling viscera. Although they often seem to possess a malign intelligence, and they apparently enjoy toying with their victims before finishing them off, gore storms are pretty much creatures of instinct, with little capacity for original thought. They exist only to feed upon the flesh of the victims. They do, however, often leave a single survivor when attacking a group of victims, to ensure that word of their horror spreads and propagate.

Gore storms are wary creatures. They may track a party through a city for days, watching as the group's resources are expended, before launching a surprise attack. They seem to enjoy playing with their food, and often leave gory presents near the heroes' camp to relish the fear these create.

There are a few gore storms of enormous size (Size 20+ with a *Strength* of 4d12+6). These were spawned by War on battlefields as he fought his way across Kansas.

Profile: Gore Storm

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:2d12, Q:3d10, S:4d10, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 5d12,

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d12, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d10

Guts 5d10

Pace: 12

Size: 12

Wind: –

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Damage: Razor-sharp bone (STR+1d8)

Feeding Time: Each time the gore storm maims a flesh-and-blood opponent, its Size increases by 1, and its STR by a full die type. It also heals 3 wound levels.

Immunities: Guns, blades, fists.

Weakness: The gore storm takes double damage from explosives and from chemical or biological weapons which harm flesh-and-blood creatures. Due to the spiritual nature of its attack, it can't damage vehicles, machines, or other inanimate items or objects. The creature deals only half damage to undead creatures. It also gains no feeding time benefits from wounds dealt to undead. Damage dealt to cyborgs is halved.

Description: See above.

Head Cases

Contrary to legend, head cases are not the monstrous revenants of people who think too much; they weren't created by demons, either.

In the second half of the 20th century, a subculture sprang up around cryogenic freezing technology, which offered its mostly tech-head clients the promise of a second life. The clients' dead body would be frozen and kept on ice in anticipation of a utopian future when the victim's original cause of death would be cured by benevolent future scientists. Cryo-enthusiasts on a

budget could pay to have only their heads frozen, in hopes that future medical technology could also cure the lack of a body.

Surprise! When the ghost bombs fell, those cryogenic facilities that survived (mostly in strip malls, oddly enough) became cradles of undeath. The frozen bodies got up and walked off—without paying their bill!

The frozen heads came to life, too, but couldn't leave. Their intense frustration combined with the supernatural to give them brain-popping psi powers. When adventurers tried to loot the cryo-labs, the heads used these powers to cow them into servitude. They ordered captive junkers to build them armored helmets with built-in jet-packs for mobility.



But this wasn't enough, of course. They want bodies again. And after that, they plan to take over the world, or set up a sinister empire, or something equally evil. The exact goal depends on the particular head case and varies from group to group and head to head.

Many head cases were embittered, sarcastic geeks before they died the first time. Now their only pleasure is showing contempt for their mental inferiors.

Profile: Head Case

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d4, Q:2d6, S:1d4, V:2d6

Drivin': jetpack 4d4

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d8, M:3d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:2d10

Academia (specialty varies) 2d8, bluff 2d8, guts 4d10, ridicule 5d8, leadership 3d6, overawe 4d6, persuasion 2d6, professional (specialty varies) 2d8, scrutinize 3d8, science (specialty varies) 3d8, search 2d8, tinkerin' 2d8

Pace: 12 (flying)

Size: 2

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Bolts o' Doom: Brain popper: Speed 1, ROF 1, Range 10, Damage 3d8. This psychic attack automatically targets the noggin with no called shot penalty.

Damage: Manipulator arms (STR+1d4).

Flying: Pace 12

Mental Stun: The head case can fire a stunning bolt (Range: 10 yards) which requires a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll to resist.

Undead

Weaknesses: Only one hit location; all hits are noggin hits and gain bonus dice to damage.

Description: A head case is an undead head, showing signs of freezer burn, encased in a helmet-like contraption with miniature rocket boosters to allow flight. It is also equipped with small, stunted, and mostly useless manipulator arms.

Mainliners

Mainliners hunt in packs of 2d6 individuals. The most common tactic they use is a harrying pursuit that attempts to drive their victims into a blind alleyway where they can be overpowered by the creatures' enormous strength and superior numbers. Once restrained and beaten into submission, the prey is roughly injected with the narcotic soup the mainliner uses for blood. This triggers a massive heart attack and causes the victim's brain to release huge quantities of endorphins and other hormones.

While the victim overdoses, the mainliners gather around to siphon off the victim's blood with the hypodermics and shoot up. While feeding, the mainliner is vulnerable to attacks as it blisses out on endorphins and the victim's fleeting lifeforce. After feeding, the mainliner is totally insensate for 1d6 minutes, after which the high wears off and the craving returns greater than before. The mainliners then begin the cycle of hunting and feeding all over again.

Profile: Mainliner

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:4d10, Q:5d6, St:2d12+4, V:3d4

Fightin': wrasslin' 3d10, sneak 2d10

Mental: C:1d8, K:1d4, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:4d8

Search 2d8, trackin' 2d8

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: —

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: -2

Damage: Bludgeons (STR+1d6)

Dulled Senses: Severe damage to the nerve endings and perpetual state of stupor make the creature less susceptible to pain, allowing it to ignore up to 3 wound levels. This has also robbed the creature of its ability to feel fear, shame, etc. and therefore it is immune to *ridicule*, *persuasion*, and *overawe* attempts. This effect also robs the mainliner of its sense of self preservation—it always fights to the death.

Infection: Anyone killed by a mainliner revives in 1d10 hours as a mainliner.

Injection: STR in damage plus injection of a chemical similar to heroin but four times as potent. This requires an Incredible (11) *Vigor* roll to avoid a massive heart attack (see Scart Table result 31-35). If the victim croaks, the mainliner must immediately make a Hard (9) *Smarts* roll. If it fails, it immediately succumbs to its cravings and indulges its narcotic sweet tooth, siphoning off the dying character's body fluids.

Toxin Immunity: The mainliner has total immunity to drugs, poisons, and similar effects due to the narcotic soup the creature calls blood.

Weakness: Should a quantity of B-complex vitamin, or similar narcotic-antidote be introduced into the mainliner's bloodstream, the creature seize up for 1d4 rounds during which time it flies into a blind rage, attacking anything within reach. It gains one additional card per round during this period, after which its veins and arteries burst, putting the creature down for good.

Maze Dragon

All kinds of strange creatures emerged when California fell into the sea. One of the biggest was the California Maze dragon. These tremendous critters attacked both ships hauling ore and prospectors mining the canyon walls of the Maze.

Unlike most abominations, Maze dragons became known and accepted as ordinary creatures. Most folks just figured they somehow came with the Great Quake. The Chinese warlords of the area started calling them dragons, and the name stuck.

During the 20th Century, Maze dragons were hunted by the navies of both the US and the CSA to make the shipping lanes in the Maze safer. It was a fairly even battle, as only small ships could enter the narrow, rock-filled canyons where the dragons laired.

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The navies of both sides also attempted to capture and train some Maze dragons with varying degrees of success. The US fitted some dragons with enormous explosive charges connected to a magnetic trigger and then released them in Confederate shipping lanes. These living torpedoes would explode whenever they came close to a large, metallic object (like a ship). These were only of limited effectiveness as they often exploded while swimming near wrecks or moved north into US waters.

Profile: California Maze Dragon

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:5d12+4, Q:1d10, V:2d12+4

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 5d10, swimmin' 5d10

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d12, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4

Overawe 3d12

Pace: 20

Size: 24 (50 yards long)

Wind: -

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Damage: Bite (STR+2d12)

Mines: A few dragons are still toting around some defective mines. These things can still explode if hit by weapon fire. On a roll of 1 on 1d20 the mine explodes for 10d20 damage with a Burst Radius of 10 yards.

Swallow: The dragon's mouth is large enough to swallow a person whole. With 2 raises on an attack, it does so. The victim takes 4d6 points of damage every round from the crushing gullet and acidic bile. The only way out is to cut open a slit with 20 points of damage from a shotgun or cutting weapon.

Swimming: Pace 20

Description: Maze dragons look like sea serpents of legend, with long sinuous bodies covered in thick, slimy scales.

Mind Biters

Mind biters came about as part of the countless genetic experiments performed in the days before the Last War. Their creators were concerned about unstable or openly hostile sykers returning from the war on Banshee. The biters were imbued with an overriding urge to kill any sykers they encountered, and equipped with the tools to do the job.

Physically, a biter resembles a green floating ball, ringed with eye-like biosensors and scores of small tentacles hanging on its underbelly. It can maneuver itself quite adeptly, changing direction on a dime and reaching speeds equal to a man at a full sprint. It has no physical means of defending itself, besides hiding and fleeing. However, given its mental capacities, it doesn't need any claws or fangs. A hovering brainstroke never does.

It attacks suddenly and without warning, sending a blast of telekinetic energy into the mind of its target. This is similar to the syker ability *brain blast*, only it doesn't affect inanimate matter. It tears into brain tissue, creating tumors, bursting blood vessels, and rupturing tissue on a cellular level. The lucky ones are lobotomized, the rest are killed instantly. Sykers tend to take much more damage from the attack than normal humans.

Mind biters are genetically-engineered beings, and require little in the way of sustenance. They tend to lurk near population centers, or in the ruins of old communities where sykers are more likely to be found. They think only to hunt down sykers; normal humans hold no interest for them, although they attack if confronted or if prevented from completing their "mission." A syker's allies won't be spared the biters' tender ministrations.

Mind biters tend to operate alone, simply because not many of them survived. They were originally designed

to work in teams together, and two biters in one place can cause devastating damage. Thankfully, such cases are few. However, biters are linked in a common hive mind, despite the great distances between them. If one of them is destroyed, the others know about it, and move to avenge their fallen brethren. A syker who dispatches a mind biter may find herself hounded by the species for years to come.

Profile: Mind Biter

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:3d8, Q:2d10, S:2d6, V:2d6

Dodge 4d8, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:2d10 K:3d12 M:1d4 Sm:3d12 Sp:3d12

Blastin' 5d12, scrutinize 2d10, search 5d10, trackin' 2d10

Pace: 10

Size: 3

Wind: 18

Terror: 7

Strain: 12

Special Abilities:

Mind Blast: Mind blast functions as the equivalent of the syker ability *brain blast*, (TN 5, Strain 1, Speed 1, and Range 20 yards/blastin' level). The only difference is, it causes mental damage instead of physical. Roll damage according to the biter's *Spirit*; the number of dice rolled is doubled against sykers (yeah, it's ugly). Every 10 points of damage rolled reduces the target's *Cognition*, *Knowledge*, and *Smarts* by one die type. If any Trait ever drops below d4, the target must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* check. If he passes, he is comatose until his Traits regenerate to d4 or higher. If he fails, he has suffered a brain embolism and dies. Lost dice may be regained at a rate of one die level per week. Marshals are encouraged to role-play out the regenerative process. The effect leaves permanent streaking scars (from burst blood vessels) along the target's head—the telltale sign of a mind biter attack. A syker can resist a mind blast by spending 1 Strain point and winning a *blastin'* contest with the creature. A blocked attack causes no damage.

Hive Mind: Mind biters share consciousness and memories. What one knows, all of them know. They can use any *Knowledge* skills possessed by another mind biter, and remember anything learned or witnessed by one of their kind. In addition, all psychic attacks against them suffer a -4 penalty, due to the strength of their collective will. Sykers beware.

Description: See above.

Mojave Rattler

They call these great worms “rattlers” because a person’s teeth start chattering as the rattler rumbles through the earth beneath him. Though they are most common in the Mojave, rattlers are also found in isolated flatlands in Montana and Utah. The rattlers of each region tend to have their own colors and even personalities.

Mojave rattlers go straight for the kill, while the ones in Montana are skulkers. Utah rattlers are smaller but faster, and they absolutely love to chase drag racers across the great Salt Flats—at least until one was speared by a jet-car going for a land speed record.

Rattlers sense their prey by vibrations in the sand. They can detect the movement of a man up to 200 yards distant. This is an opposed *Cognition* versus *sneak* roll if the prey is trying to be stealthy. Horses are detected at double the distance, and vehicles at triple. Note that if a creature runs, its *sneak* totals suffer the usual -4 penalty.

When a rattler moves in for the kill, it bursts up through the earth and tries to snag its prey with one of its tentacles. Though rattlers have many tentacles, they never attempt to capture multiple targets unless their intended victims are very close together, such as a horse and rider, preferring to focus on a single quarry.

The tentacles have a *Strength* of 3d12 and are about a quarter as long as the worm itself. Once they grapple a target with a raise on an opposed *Strength* roll, the worm starts dragging the victim into its crushing maw. Every success on an opposed *Strength* roll drags the rattler’s prey 1 yard closer.

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The rattler’s tentacles (Size 5-10) can take 3 wounds before they’re useless and the worm retreats, but bullets and impaling weapons do only a single point each, and shotgun blasts do 2. Cutting weapons do full damage.

During the late 19th century, rattlers were hunted commercially; many of their body parts were found to be useful in manufacturing, and rattler steaks became all the rage Back East. The original rattler “whalers” stalked them from the decks of wooden land ships. In the 20th century, these were replaced by enormous, mechanical sand crawlers festooned with cannons and automatic harpoon guns.

The commercial hunting of these creatures continued until the early 1980s, when some tree-hugging whackos managed to get the things placed on the endangered species list. The remaining rattlers—the smartest and most wily of the bunch—were left to live in peace.

The rattlers which survived the whaling period were kept under control (to a certain extent, they still swallowed whole anyone dumb enough to wander into their territory) by a massive system of underground sound generators that produced low frequency waves painful to the creatures. These were installed around all towns in threatened areas and along all interstates which passed through rattler territory.

Of course, the power grids which powered these devices went down on Judgment Day, and the rattlers now have free run of their old stomping grounds. They’ve been making up for being penned up with a vengeance; anyone or thing wandering into rattler territory had better be prepared to wage war.

Some of the rattlers roaming the Wasted West these days have been around since the first of these abominations appeared. These enormous specimens dwarf common rattlers and have been dubbed “king rattlers” by the very few people who have been fortunate enough to survive their attacks.

Profile: Mojave Rattler

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d6, S:6d12+20, Q:2d6, V:4d12+24

Fightin': brawlin' 3d6, sneak 2d8 (when underground)

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:2d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:1d8

Overawe 2d10

Pace: 6 (18 underground)

Size: 10-20 (10-100 yards long)

Wind: –

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Damage: Bite (STR+2d20; AP 2)

Burrowing: Underground Pace 18 (cannot be doubled by running)

Surprise: Travelers who don't recognize the rumblings of a rattler beneath them subtract -4 from their surprise checks.

Description: Rattlers look like huge fleshy worms, with a mass of fleshy tentacles at the "head" end surrounding a round saw-toothed maw.

Profile: Mojave Rattler "King"

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d6, S:6d12+24, Q:2d6, V:4d12+24

Fightin': brawlin' 5d6, sneak 2d8 (when underground)

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:2d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:1d8

Overawe 2d10

Pace: 6 (24 underground)

Size: 40

Wind: –

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: 4

Damage: Bite (STR+2d20; AP 4)

Body Slam: A rattler king can rear up and then slam its body down on a target with a successful *fightin'* roll versus the target's *dodge* (or *drivin'* if the target is a vehicle). This causes STR+4d20 massive damage to the target. Regardless of whether the attack

hits, the impact of the rattler's massive body causes a shockwave that can knock people off their feet. Anyone within 20 yards of the rattler must make an Onerous (7) *Nimbleness* roll to remain standing. Those who fall down must also make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* check to avoid being stunned. The drivers of any moving vehicles within this radius must make a Hard (9) *drivin'* roll or roll on the Outta Control Table.

Burrowing: Underground Pace 24 (cannot be doubled by running)

Surprise: Travelers who don't recognize the rumblings of a rattler beneath them subtract -4 from their surprise checks.

Description: These are much, much larger versions of the Mojave rattlers. They would be right at home on a desert planet loaded with some esoteric spice.

Night Haunt

Night haunts are evil creatures of corrupted shadow that subsist on human souls. They are lone hunters that appear only at dusk following scavengers and other travelers across the plains, waiting for them to camp for the night.

When a night haunt spots prey, it hides away in the enshrouding darkness and waits for most of the travelers in the posse to fall asleep before it begins its insidious attack. It then uses mimicry and illusion as a *bluff* test o' wills.

The camp's guard likely sees strange "patches" of darkness or hear's a distant baby's cry or some far-off screams—anything the night haunt can do to unnerve its prey. Its goal is to lure the guard out alone, preferably without waking his companions (of course anyone who investigates without waking someone deserves what he gets).

If the night haunt is successful, it draws the fool out until he's entirely isolated before it attacks with its soul-wrenching claws. When it has killed its victim, it sups on the fleeing soul, making it impossible for someone killed by a night haunt to become Harrowed.

100

Marshal

Profile: Night Haunt

Corporeal: D:1d8, N:4d10, S:2d8, Q:2d12+2, V:1d4

Fightin': brawlin' 5d10, sneak 8d10

Mental: C:4d12, K:1d4, M:1d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:2d10

Bluff 6d8

Pace: 24

Size: 6

Wind: –

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Coup: A night haunt's essence gives a character a dark, shadowy appearance. When he concentrates, the hero may add +6 to his sneak rolls.

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4), claws (STR+1d6, ignores armor)

Fearless

Hovering: Pace 24. Night haunts float a few feet off the ground and aren't slowed by material objects.

Immunity—Normal Attacks: Normal weapons can't hurt a night haunt. Only light and magical attacks cause it any sort of damage.

Weakness—Light: Night haunts are creatures of shadow. They cannot exist in bright light. Torches, lanterns, and other weapons used against them inflict 2d6 points of damage (ignore the user's *Strength*).

Description: Night haunts resemble thorny shadows straight from a nightmare.

Night Stalker

When night falls and fog gathers in the lowlands in a certain way, when the moon shines bright, and fear and terror permeate the air, a ghastly night stalker steps out of men's nightmares and onto terra firma, ready to hunt.

Also known by the very few shaman who know of them as rope men or yarn men, night stalkers are misshapen, gangly creatures. Humanoid but definitely not human, these fell creatures stand twelve feet tall. They have extremely long and spindly arms and legs, thin torsos, and overlarge, squashed, bulbous heads. Their skin is pasty, white, and rubbery, and their faces have few features other than black

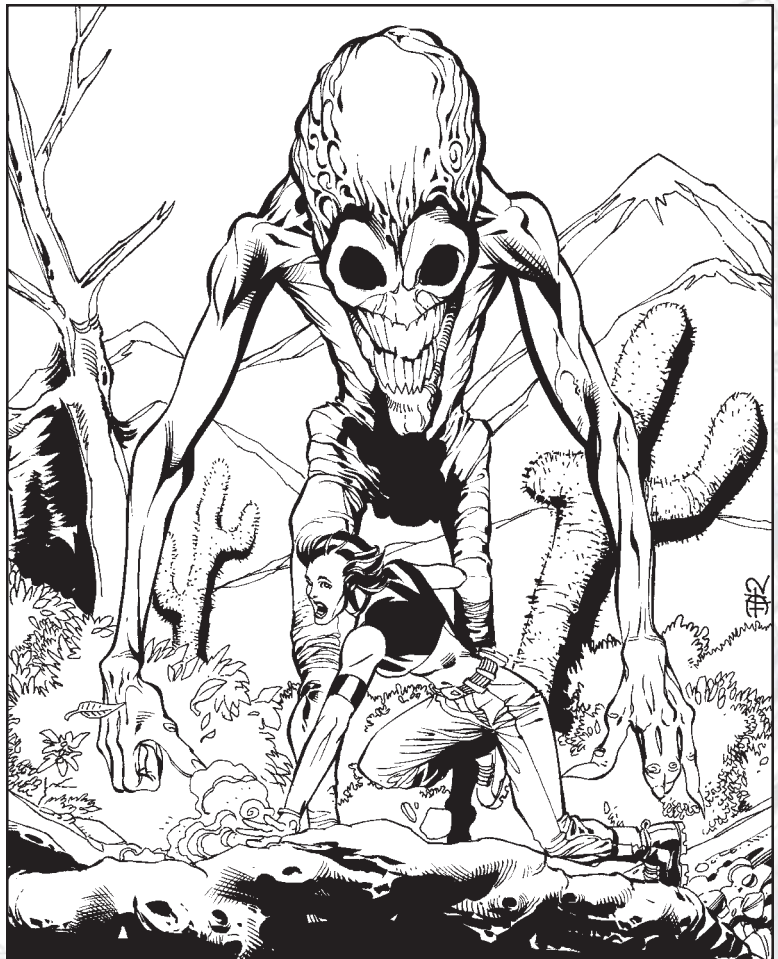
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sockets where eyes should be and overwide grins which stretch the length of their oval faces.

When a night stalker appears, it quietly strides across the landscape, looking this way and that for a human wandering alone in the dark. It may spot many people during the night, but there is only one person the creature really sees—the first person to look back at it, right into the depths of its empty eye sockets.

When the night stalker makes such a connection with a person, its sockets light up with a devilish, green glow, and its queasy, vacant grin grows even wider than usual. From this point on—until it is sated or until dawn banishes it back to whatever hell it came from—the night stalker relentlessly pursues its chosen victim.



Strangely, the stalker does not attempt to end the chase as quickly as possible. It walks at a leisurely stride (for it), covering as much ground as a jogging man. It never runs or attempts to cut off its quarry. It simply follows in his footsteps, closing the gap only when the victim stops to rest or slows down.

The stalker follows the path its victim takes exactly—the victim could double back and walk right up next to the stalker, and the creature would walk right by him, tracing his steps precisely to the double back point and then back around. According to its strange rules, it cannot catch a victim unless it does so having followed in its footsteps. At least theoretically, a person could jog in a giant circle with a stalker right behind her till dawn came and never fear being caught—as long as she could maintain the pace.

Getting into a car or plane is the best way to outdistance a stalker, though it isn't wise stopping until dawn, because it may appear with no warning, having eaten up the miles with its long strides.

There is no hiding from a night stalker—once it has connected with its victim, it knows where he is at all times, and can pick out his path unerringly. Locked doors do not stop it either. It can pass through any solid object placed in its path—in its curious state of being, it can pass through any course the quarry takes.

The pursuit by such an unnerving-looking creature is unpleasant enough, but those who know what it does when it catches up to its victims squeal in terror as they attempt to keep ahead. Because when a stalker comes within 10 feet of its prey, having duly walked in his footsteps, it raises its long fingers, points at its victim, and...unravels him.

The person is lifted screaming into the air by an unseen force, and while the stalker watches, the victim shimmers, then begins to unravel like a grotesque and bloody ball of yarn—skin and muscle alike spinning off the body in great organic loops of cord, starting

from the outer layer of the epidermis and working in to the bones. The loose end of the fleshy yarn snakes around the stalker for a moment, then runs up to its wide grinning maw. The stalker devours its prey by slowly sucking his mass up like a long strand of spaghetti. The most horrific aspect of the whole process is that the stalker saves the head and vital organs for last—for a long, long time, the victim can see what's happening to him.

When it has completed its bloody feast, it disappears from sight, still licking its blood face with its long white tongue. Few folks are quite ever right after seeing a stalker consuming its meal.

Profile: Night Stalker

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:4d8, Q:3d10, S:3d6, V:3d12

Mental: C:8d10, K:3d6, M:3d6, Sm4d6, Sp:2d8

Guts 3d8, overawe 6d6, search 10d10, trackin' 12d10

Pace: 15

Size: 9

Wind: 20

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Coup: Defeating a night stalker gains the hero a +4 to all *trackin'* rolls.

Immunity: Normal weapons cannot harm a night stalker.

Phase: The night stalker can move through solid objects.

Unravel: Once a stalker closes to within 10 feet of its victim, it unravels him as described above. Once the person is lifted into the air, the unraveling causes one wound in each hit location per round. Fate Chips cannot be spent to cancel these wounds.

Weakness: The night stalker must trace its victim's footsteps exactly.

Weakness: The night stalker cannot harm one who refuses to look into its sockets, and ignores everyone else once it has chosen a victim.

Weakness: Dawn banishes a stalker. It won't return to haunt the same victim again, unless by chance he is the first to look into its eyes on some future night.

Description: See above.

Ningyo

Most Westerners think of mermaids as shy, and occasionally friendly, fish-tailed lasses who beguile sailors from beneath the waves. But in Japan, a darker and more malignant spirit flits through the icy depths of legend. She too is a beautiful woman with the tail of a fish, and she too beguiles men from the sea. But there the similarities end. For, unlike the Western mermaid, the Japanese ningyo is real—and a voracious man-eater.

Ningyo appeared in the waters around the Japanese islands in the 1870s, and first came to the Maze smuggled aboard Iron Dragon freighters. Until very recently, they kept a low profile to avoid being hunted. With their growing numbers they are becoming bolder, however, and people living in the Great Maze are beginning to realize that something “new” has infested its murky waters.

From the waist up ningyo are incredibly beautiful Asian women. Their human hips transition into long and pliable fish tails, covered in silver or golden scales. Though very feminine in appearance, ningyo are actually asexual; they are immortal and do not procreate (not in any fashion that male heroes would be interested in, anyway).

Ningyo—like sharks—feed on just about anything, but have a particular taste for human flesh; they savor not only the meat of the human, but the sweet tang of fear that accompanies it. When in a feeding frenzy, ningyo revert to a more bestial form—their jaws unhinge to display a horrible shark-like maw, and their lovely eyes bulge out in a disturbingly frog-like manner.

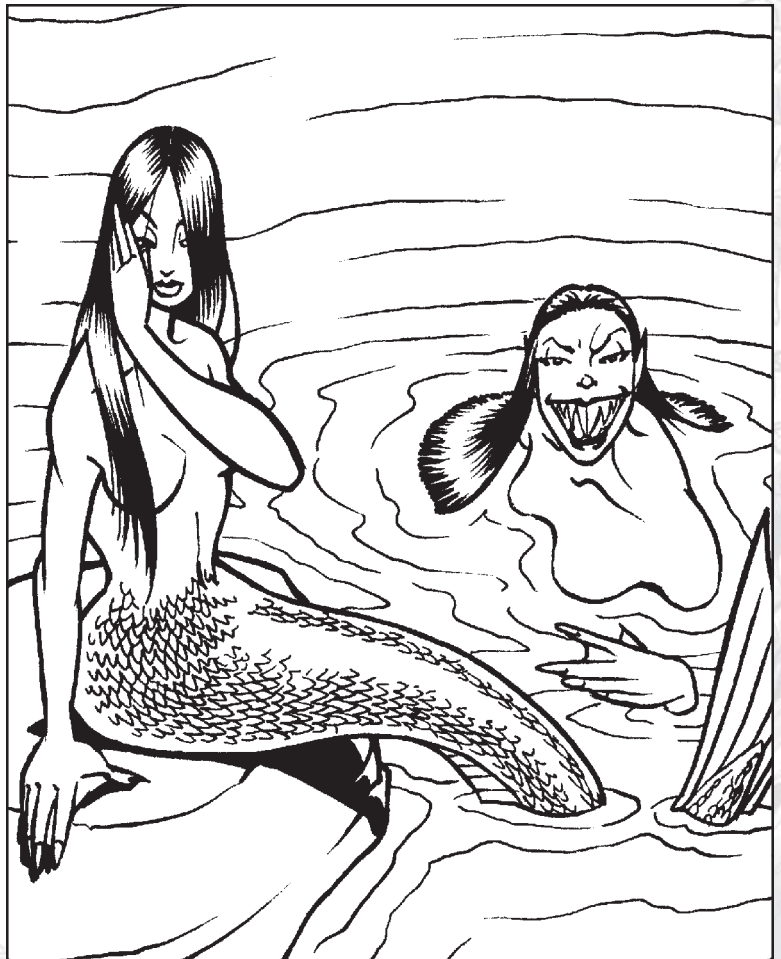
The hunger for human flesh is visited back on the ningyo by mankind, however—because the flesh of a ningyo bestows eternal life upon those who consume it. This is well-known among Kangars, but what very few know is the horrible fate which befalls most who partake—a painful and horrible mutation into a beautiful ningyo (well, it beats becoming a wormling). An extremely small group of people retain their humanity while gaining eternal life—not a bad deal if you're lucky. When

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someone eats the flesh of a ningyo, draw seven cards from a full Action deck. If both Jokers are among the cards dealt, the imbiber becomes immortal but remains human (and susceptible to harm). Otherwise, he mutates into a ningyo over the course of a week.

Ningyo hunt in groups. When seducing a single person or small group, most remain out of sight in the water, leaving the beguiling to one or two sisters. When the unfortunates are within reach, all close in for the kill.

Ningyo are perfectly aware that gaijin look upon mermaids as gentle creatures, and play upon this not only to attract prey but to avoid capture. More than one ningyo has been saved from the cooking pot of a hunter by putting on a “damsel in distress” act for a Law Dog who happens by.



In addition to being consummate flirts and flatterers, ningyo are excellent story tellers and singers. They are extremely vain, and take great efforts to conceal their animal hunger behind a veneer of delicate refinement. Ningyo dislike women, and take a particularly catty tone when forced to converse with them.

Only in extremely unusual circumstances will a ningyo willingly place herself in a situation where she cannot quickly enter the water. Ningyo are extremely agile and quick in the water, but extremely clumsy and slow on land.

The goal of every ningyo is the survival of her pod. Traditionally, this meant hunting loners and small groups, and avoiding detection by anyone other than tonight's dinner. One ningyo sighting by a gang of Kanger Maze pirates eager for immortality can, and has, lead to the wiping out of entire ningyo populations. (Of course, the mutated pirates soon replace them, but this is of little consolation to the dead ningyo.)

A huge population explosion experienced after the Great War has caused a change in hunting tactics. Ningyo have begun salvaging items from the many sunken warships littering the bottom of the Maze—especially the infamous “Channel of Doom.”

Some ningyo pods use recovered mines to sink ships and dine on those aboard. Others cut deals with local leaders by trading salvage for a regular supply of human food. What warlord wouldn't toss his enemies and drifters (like your posse) into the drink in exchange for deck guns, machined parts, and cases of bullets?

It's only a matter of time before a ningyo pod surfaces with a ghost-rock missile recovered from a sunken LatAm or Confederate sub. Until then, the ningyo must continue to compete with the other man-eating denizens of the Great Maze for the dwindling supply of human flesh.

Profile: Ningyo

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:4d8, Q:4d8, S:2d6, V:3d8

Dodge 6d8, fightin': brawlin' 5d8, swimmin' 6d8, throwin': balanced 5d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d4, M:3d12, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Guts 3d6, language: Japanese 3d4, language: English 1d4, performin': singing 5d12, overawe: 4d12, persuasion 4d12, tell-tellin' 6d12, scrutinize 4d8, search (in water) 5d8, trackin' (in water) 4d8

Pace: 12 (2 on land)

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite: STR+3d4 (in feeding frenzy mode)

Description: See above.

Nowhere Men

Nowhere men arose from the ashes of the old world, stealing silently into the ruins with their own sinister agenda. They appear as man-shaped humanoids, their build and rough features matching men's exactly. They often dress in human clothes—voluminous and concealing, like trenchcoats and hats pulled low—which makes it easy for them to appear as men. Nowhere men are devoid of features. Their eyes and mouths are sealed up, their noses and ears merge seamlessly into their skulls, and their pale bodies are completely hairless. They take care, however, not to reveal their true selves to anyone not of their ilk.

Nowhere men steal human memories, memories ripped from the minds of their victims. A nowhere man gets in close to its target, then grasps the victim's temples and begins drawing the life experiences out of his or her brain and into its own. The process only takes a few seconds or so, and leaves the victim a confused amnesiac. The nowhere man then departs as quickly as possible, abandoning its victim to fate. Because it's difficult to get close enough to do their work, they tend to haunt cities like Junkyard or other areas with comparatively large populations.

A nowhere man can possess hundreds of lifetimes worth of memories, stored through some unknown process within its mind. They use these memories as currency amongst themselves, trading certain experiences for certain others. They believe that if one of them gathers as wide a variety of memories as possible, it will transcend this world and return to its unknown place of origin.

Communication with nowhere men is next to impossible, for they cannot speak and show no inclination to interact with the humans they "harvest." People who try to talk to them usually end up meandering across the landscape, trying to remember who they are.

Profile: Nowhere Man

Corporeal: D:3d8 N:3d10 Q:3d8 S:2d6
V:2d8

Dodge 3d10, fightin': brawlin' 4d10,
lockpickin' 1d8, shootin': pistols 2d8,
sneak 5d10

Mental: C:2d8 K:4d12 M:2d8 Sm:3d10
Sp:2d6

Scrutinize 3d8, search 3d8, area
knowledge 2d12, guts 2d6

In addition, Nowhere Men can utilize the memories they have stolen. They have a 50% chance of having a 3 rank in any Knowledge-based skill they need. Roll on a contingency basis only.

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Terror: 7 (if detected)

Special Abilities:

Memory stealing: If a nowhere man makes a called head shot on its *fightin': brawlin'* roll, it has locked onto its target's temples and begun draining memories. The target must make a contested *Vigor* roll against the nowhere man each round, or else lose one rank of all Knowledge-based skills per round. The target can do nothing else if he or she wishes to resist. If the target fails three rolls in a row, his or her Knowledge drops to 1d4, all Aptitudes are lost, and she is reduced to a state of confusion for 1d4 days. She is not able to use any skills, cannot respond if attacked,

or do anything except be led passively about. The hero must relearn everything from language skills, to how to dress themselves, etc. If, on the other hand, she wins three contested rolls in a row, the nowhere man breaks off and flees. All lost Traits and Aptitudes are returned at that time.

Hiding in Shadows: Nowhere men can blend seamlessly into the shadows, using them to become nearly invisible when they stalk their prey. They add +6 to their *sneak* rolls.

Prairie Tick

Prairie ticks are once again the scourge of the High Plains. This species of abomination had been nearly wiped out with powerful pesticides and genetically-engineered predators, but now that people have more important things to do than pest control (like finding their next meals), the prairie tick population has bounced back. Much of the High Plains is again covered in tall grass—perfect cover for these voracious insects.

These horrid bloodsuckers live in underground burrows of 11-20 (1d10+10) creatures each, and are controlled by a single, giant queen that rules over each nest.

When they sense prey, the ticks crawl out of their burrow and bound through the tall prairie grass at top speed. They can sense the vibration of a man walking up to 100 yards away, double that for horses, and quadruple that for vehicles.

Prairie ticks attack by leaping for the mouth and pulling the victim's lips down with their two front hooks. This is an opposed *fightin': brawlin'* roll. If the tick gets a raise, it's in and slides down the victim's throat. Once inside, the thing's hooked legs sink into the innards, and it begins to drain blood at the rate of 1d4 Wind per hour.



As the host loses wounds to bleeding, the tick gets larger. When the host dies, the tick has grown so large that it bursts the ribcage and comes crawling out of the stomach or throat. Anyone who sees this needs to make a Hard (9) *guts* check or very likely lose his lunch.

There are only two known ways to remove a prairie tick inside a host. The first is to pour a quart of castor oil down the victim's throat. The host needs to make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll to get the castor oil down. If he does, the tick comes crawling out in 1d4 rounds, doing its *Strength* in damage each round as it does.

The second way is to take a special serum developed especially for this purpose. It kills the tick and causes it to release its hold on the host's organs. Once the tick is dead, it is removed in

pieces using a specialized scope inserted down the victim's throat. Finding the serum and a scope requires an Incredible (11) *scroungin'* roll in a hospital or ambulance. Performing the removal procedure requires a *medicine: general* roll against an Onerous (7) TN. Failure causes 2d6 damage to the victim's guts.

Profile: Prairie Tick

Corporeal: D:2d10, N:4d12, S:1d4, Q:3d10, V:2d8

Dodge 2d12, fightin': brawlin' 4d12, sneak 3d12

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:2d8, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Overawe 2d8

Pace: 12

Size: 2

Wind: -

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Damage: Hooks (STR; when prairie ticks can't get at someone's mouth due to a covering of some sort, they swarm over him and try to pick him into unconsciousness with their hooks, then they try to crawl inside)

Description: Prairie tick's bodies are about the size of a man's fist. They are blood-red in color, with fat, bloated bellies and long, hooked legs.

Predavore

The much-feared, little-known predavore is in fact that ancient cousin of the dinosaurs, the pteranodon. It owes its surprise return to the skies to the friendly folks at Pentacorp, who in the 2070s decided it would be a good idea to experiment with fossil DNA in order to see if it could be synthesized and cloned. Pure research, you understand. Although of course they started with the sexier fossils, like velociraptor and T. rex, the species *pteranodon sternbergi* proved to be the most amenable to their experimental methods. Pentacorp had several secret aeries stocked full of pteranodons when the bombs dropped.

The creatures escaped and have since been thriving in the Wasted West. They owe their fearsome reputations to their habit of hunting at night, to their extremely quiet, gliding flight technique, and to the considerable accuracy they invest in their yard-long spear-like beaks. Their night vision is excellent, allowing them to spot, swoop down upon, and skewer a tasty meal, gliding away before anyone can get a good look at them. They then retire to their lairs in tall treetops or in nests on high cliffs in order to methodically clean the meat from their victim's bones. Like any canny predator, the predavore is quick to abandon its prey when it senses that further pursuit endangers its safety, or simply uses up more energy than its meat provides.

Profile: Predavore

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:4d12, Q:4d12, S:2d10, V:2d12,

Fightin': brawlin' 5d12, dodge 4d12

Mental: C:3d10, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:3d4, Sp:1d8

Search 3d10

Pace: 20 flying, 4 walking

Size: 20

Wind: 20

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Damage: Beak (STR+2d8, AP 2)

Flight; Pace 20

Skewer: If the predavore causes at least 2 wounds with an attack, it has skewered its target on its beak. It then glides away at half its normal flying Pace, climbing 10 yards per round as it does so. Once it gets 100 yards up, it drops its prey for 20d6+100 damage to both finish it off and tenderize it.

Surprise

Description: The predavore is a flying reptile with an average wingspan of 23 feet; some reach 30 feet. Their heads are about six feet long, equipped with a long, spearing beak and a large head-crest. Powerful flying muscles run from each wing to its sternum. Its claws, twice the size of a man's hand, are useful for climbing, though not as weapons. Under its neck is a ruff of primitive feathers.

River Worm

When the California coast collapsed into the Pacific, huge water serpents appeared in the resulting Maze. Dubbed Maze dragons by the Chinese warlords of the area, they caused no end of trouble for ships and junks braving the Maze and the new coastline of the sundered territory. In the ensuing decades, the CSA traded in their cannon and dynamite for bigger guns, depth charges and submarines, and by the 1980s the Maze dragons had been hunted to near-extinction.

When the ghost rock bombs fell, the resulting conflagration caused rampant mutations among the remaining Maze dragon population. And just when the Confederates and Union boys lost most of their anti-dragon toys, a new horror was introduced to the river systems of the Maze—the river worm.

River worms are bloodthirsty, rubbery, serpent-like creatures that grow as long as 12 feet. Three to five inches in girth, they look for all the world like animated, black firehoses snaking through the water. They hatch from silvery eggs deposited on weeds and rocks at the depths of the river or lake—these eggs are about the size of golf balls, and are sometimes washed downstream when fierce storms increase the strength of the flowing water. This is the primary way worm populations expand into new areas, since the worms themselves tend to stay put unless diminishing food supplies force them to migrate.

Being much smaller than Maze dragons, river worms can't bring down prey alone, and therefore cluster in school of a dozen or more. They do not actively seek prey. Instead they settle to the deepest and coldest part of the river or lake, waiting for disturbances in the water to alert them to dinner's arrival. When they do detect something moving in or through the water, they light out in pursuit, ready to dine.



River worms attack by swarming all over their prey, much like piranha converge on a chunk of raw meat. They viciously ram their prey with their hard, blunt heads, stunning it into submission. After a few moments of this, they open their toothy maws and begin consuming the victim. Once blood is in the water, the entire school frenzies, frothing the water with foam and blood as dozens of worms squirm around the victim in a tangle of black, ropy bodies, viciously tearing the flesh off the hide until nothing remains but bone.

River worms are very stupid creatures, known to hurl themselves at boat hulls with the full expectation of drawing blood. One can't enter a worm-infested lake or river by boat and remain ignorant to their presence for long—pretty soon the boat begins to resound

with the sound of dozens of hard little skulls hitting the hull below the waterline. In decent-sized watercraft this is more a nuisance than danger, but if the boat happens to be a rowboat or canoe, the force of the attacks may be sufficient to capsize it or cause leaks. If figuring damage to a boat, the river worms' headbutt attack only does one quarter damage in Durability.

A person caught in the water with a swarm of river worms does have one last possible defense (aside from clambering right back out again). Petroleum products burn the skins of river worms, and tossing a can of gasoline, oil, kerosene, or other petroleum-based liquid into the water is one sure way of clearing the area of the loathsome creatures. This isn't likely to be an option for someone who falls into the water at, say, a church picnic, but if there is a boat in the vicinity, its fuel supplies are usually more than adequate.

When forced to defend themselves, river worms can deliver a powerful electric shock through the water. This nasty attack can do a number on a human-sized creature and kill weaker creatures.

In ordinary hunting situations, the head butts and mass attacks are sufficient to overcoming resistance. Because of this electric attack, larger predators such as croakers and actual Maze dragons tend to avoid chasing after river worms—at least after the first shocking attempt. As the old saying goes, a cat won't jump on a hot stove a second time. Nor a cold one.

Profile: River Worm

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d10, Q:2d10, S:2d6, V:2d8+2

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 5d10, swimmin' 5d10

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d12, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4

Overawe 3d10, search 2d10

Pace: 14

Size: 4

Wind: 12

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Electric attack (3d10, 2 yard radius), head butt (STR+2d6), teeth (STR+1d6)

Frenzy: Once worms detect blood in the water, they frenzy. Wind is doubled for the duration of the attack and the worms get an extra action each round.

Weakness: River worms are very susceptible to petrol. They take 2d4 damage for every round spent swimming in gasoline-spiked water. They flee contaminated water as fast as they can.

Description: See above.

Rust Mites

The red clouds are actually hundreds of insects all banding together. The metallic ring of their wings is audible out to 100 yards, adequate warning if one recognizes it for what it is. In most respects, the rust mite is mostly harmless. Its carapace is iron hard and has sharp edges, presumably useful for tearing into metal.

Rust mites can sense large concentrations of metal up to a quarter of a mile away. Once it is detected, the swarm mobilizes and descends *en masse* upon the source. The swarm always concentrates upon the highest concentration of iron or steel first. In the case of a band of scavengers and a Wolverine clad driver, for instance, the mites would attack the powered armor first.

A rust mite swarm can only be harmed by area effect weapons. Each "wound" inflicted on a cloud in this way reduces its diameter by 1 foot.

Profile: Rust Mites

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d10, Q:3d8, S:1d4, V:1d8

Fightin': brawlin' 3d10

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 12

Size: 10 (10' diameter cloud)

Wind: NA

Terror: 3; 7 to Junkers

Special Abilities:

Flight: Pace 12

Metallophagic: The rust mite has an incredible appetite for metals of all types. After a successful attack against a metal weapon, armor, or device, the rust mites begin

devouring all metal components. Each action following exposure to the mites, such equipment loses 1d6 points of Durability.

Weakness—Magnets: The rust mite's unique metabolism causes the creature to accumulate ferrous metals in its body, making it susceptible to magnetic fields which disorient and repel it. Caggy wasters know to carry magnets with them, or adhere magnets to valuable gizmos, just in case they wander into a mite cloud. Each magnet sets up a defensive field which repels rust mites. A small magnet, such as a kitchen magnet generates a field up to 6" away. Larger magnets generate a field up to 2 feet away from the source for each pound of weight.





Sand Spiders

Sand spiders are a race of large, sentient tarantulas who roam the deserts of the southwest. They stand approximately six feet tall, with a head and torso rising above a spider-like thorax.

Their lower four limbs are used for locomotion, while their upper limbs have grasping ends and can manipulate simple tools with ease. Their heads are those of giant spiders, and their mandibles produce a foul, green venom which can keep a target paralyzed for many days. Short, wiry hair, usually black or reddish-brown, covers their entire bodies which are usually a light brown color.

Sand spiders live in a series of loose nomadic tribes, wandering across the desert in search of food. Their padded lower limbs allow them to move across the shifting sand with ease, and they can bury themselves for hours without having to come up for air. They hunt Mojave rattlers and other desert monsters, using pit traps and snares like trapdoor spiders. They often use spears and other sharp objects made of salvaged metals; they coat such weapons with their paralyzing poison, making it easier to bring down their prey. Once it has been subdued, they can then drain it of its vital juices at their leisure.

While rattlers and other monstrosities form the bulk of their diet, humans are considered a rare delicacy, and they occasionally pursue lone travelers for a tasty meal. Despite this gruesome addition to their cuisine, they rarely trouble humans in large groups. Several desert communities have even formed alliances with the strange creatures. Sand-spiders can be useful in disposing of local monsters, and often acquire useful equipment from their victims. Human towns sometimes trade with them, or "hire" roaming bands to kill troublesome monsters in the area. The less savory ones also trade prisoners for the spiders to use in their feasts. Travelers spending the night in lonely townships had best take care.

Sand spiders have developed a rudimentary culture of sorts, based on a figure they call the "Egg Sac Mother." They often pray for her guidance in their strange hissing tongue, and set aside certain days of the year in supplication to her.

Profile: Sand Spider

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d10, Q:3d10, S:4d8, V:4d10

Fightin': brawlin' 3d10, sneak 3d10, throwin': balanced 3d6

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d4, M:2d6, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d6

Search 2d6, trackin' 3d6, scroungin' 2d8, survival: desert 4d8

Pace: 12

Size: 7

Wind: 16

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4)

Poison: Roll *Vigor* versus a TN of 7 or suffer paralysis for 2d4 days. The victim is unable to move—although vital functions are unaffected—for the duration of that time.

Description: See above.

Scrawlers

Scrawlers are the creations of a servitor of Pestilence who only goes by the name of the Maestro. Why Pestilence? It seems one too many mayors carried on about graffiti being a “symptom of the disease that plagues our inner cities.”

He now wanders from city to city, pausing long enough to create his “masterpieces” before moving onto other locales. No one is sure what he looks like because he wears a trenchcoat with the collar turned up and his hat pulled low. He carries little more than a few buckets of paint, spray cans, and chalk. He works quickly and is capable of creating a 10-foot-square mural every night.

A scrawler can only digest organic matter, any indigestibles are spat out and accumulate at the base of the wall, along with the bones of past victims. Weapons, armor, and artifacts are often found in abundance at the foot of one of these horrors, attracting the greedy and the careless.

The following profile illustrates the typical scrawler, a living wall measuring roughly 10 feet on a side, for larger pieces, increase the die types of each Corporeal Trait by one step for every additional 10' by 10' section.

Profile: Scrawler

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:1d12, Q:1d12, S:5d10, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin: 6d12, sneak 3d12

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d4, M:1d10, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d8

Pace: 3 (once created it may move slowly to prevent itself from being recognized or to move on when no prey is available)

Size: 10 or larger, see above.

Wind: —

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Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: 3

Damage: When the scrawler attacks, it grows tentacles tipped with mouths full of jagged teeth, stingers, and other horrors. These have a reach of 5 yards. Damage is STR+3d6, AP 1. In general, each 10 foot section can attack up to 3 human-sized opponents.

Urban Camouflage: The scrawler looks to be a very disturbing piece of graffiti. In an urban setting the scrawler receives a +6 to *sneak* rolls to surprise prey.

Description: See above.

Profile: Maestro

Corporeal: D:3d12, N:2d8, Q:2d8, S:4d8, V:2d10

Fightin': brawlin' 4d8, shootin': fire 5d12, sneak 3d12

Mental: C:3d12, K:3d10, M:3d10, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d12

Arts: painting, chalk 5d12, overawe 4d10, search 4d12

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Create Scrawl: With a single action the Maestro can create a minor scrawl. This creature has 2d6 in all Traits, a Size of 4, and *fightin': brawlin'* of 3d6. Its tentacles have a reach of 3 yards and do STR+1d6 damage.

Flame Attack: The Maestro can ignite the paint from his spray cans. This has a range of 3 feet and does 3d8 damage to the target.

Immunity: All

Weakness—Paint Thinner: Each gallon of paint thinner, turpentine, etc. thrown on Maestro causes him 4d6 massive damage. Once he takes a maiming wound to the head or guts, he simply melts away, leaving only his coat and hat.

Description: See above.

The Sob Sister

Unassuming computer analyst Annie Suggins was so overcome with grief when she lost her family and friends on Judgment Day that the damned souls released by the ghost bombs decided to play a cruel cosmic joke on her. They transformed her into a walking incarnation of sorrow, making her grief into a weapon to destroy others. Unable to die, she wanders the Wasted West, bringing disaster to those who try to help her, her sorrow always worsening.

Profile: The Sob Sister

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:2d6, V:2d6

Fightin': brawl in' 1d6, dodge 2d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:2d6, M:6d12, Sm:2d6, Sp:6d10

Professional: computer systems 3d6, overawe 8d12, scrutinize 2d6, guts 5d10

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 16

Terror: 11 to those who identify her as the Sob Sister, and know what that means; otherwise, 0.

Special Abilities:

Dissolve (You) Into Tears: Anyone who speaks with Annie, or comes into contact with something she has touched in the past six hours, must make an Incredible (11) *Vigor* roll or slowly melt into a pool of salt water and bile. Treat the victim as winded throughout this ordeal; it takes seventy-two hours to die. The only way to reverse the effect is to find a way to momentarily relieve Annie's grief. Her grief can never be relieved the same way twice. All currently suffering characters recover if her grief is alleviated. Characters suffering terrible grief of their own are immune to Annie's curse. The Marshal decides which heroes, if any, are immune for this reason.

Elicit Sympathy: Anyone who sees or hears her must make an Incredible (11) *Spirit* roll; those who fail wish nothing more than to attend to her needs and relieve her obvious sorrow, no matter how much she protests. They do so until they realize she's melting them. It is impossible for affected characters to do anything to harm her. Any character who wishes to harm her (or even inconvenience her, or hurt her feelings) must make that Incredible (11) *Spirit* roll for each separate harmful action they wish to take.

Description: As above.

Spider Head

There's not much that makes a man fill his boots quicker than the sight of a dozen human heads scuttling out of the brush on thin spider legs, screaming to wake the dead. Especially if the heads used to belong to his drinking buddies. They've been called screamers, headhunters, and just about every cussword in the book, but mostly people call them spider heads. And when they show up in a new neighborhood, things go downhill fast unless you stomp them out really quick.

Spider heads are shock troops of the Reckoners. These vile abominations exist to quickly bring a healthy region under the shadow of the Deadlands by spawning deep-rooted horror among the populace. Seeing the severed heads of your spouse, kids, pastor, mayor, and the local Law Dog come screaming at you out of the darkness usually does the trick.

Spider heads are severed—but seemingly alive—human heads which crawl around on eight spindly spider legs—basically scaled-up daddy longlegs with human heads as bodies. At the base where the legs emerge is a hairy abdomen not much wider than the neck itself. When a spider head screams, one can see a small bladder inflating and deflating at the base of the abdomen—the “lungs” it uses to pass air over its reanimated voicebox. The bladders, when not in use, are protected by a pair of small, leathery flaps.

Spider heads have three stages to their life cycle. In the first stage of life they're little white larvae—about an inch long—that feed off the flesh of a spider head's victim. After a couple of days, they cocoon up and metamorphose into metallic, green, hand-sized beetles. These brain beetles aren't all that strong—you can kill 'em just by stepping on them—but if they can get themselves into a victim's mouth, say, when he's sleeping or paralyzed, they're home free. They have sharp mandibles—the better to eat their way up through a victim's mouth, nasal passages, and right up into the brain pan.

The poor sod dies right away, as the beetle burrows into his gray matter. And like a grotesque hermit crab in a new shell, the brain beetle gets to work making itself at home in its new head. It sends minute tendrils down into the chest of the victim, both to feed and to deposit the tiny eggs containing its offspring.

The body decays rapidly as the brain beetle and the hatched larvae ravage it. The head, in contrast, remains hale and hearty because the brain beetle is sustaining it. One sure way to tell a brain beetle is at work is seeing a swollen, rotting corpse with a head that looks like it's merely asleep.

Eventually, when the body is but a mere husk, the thing begins to grow down out of the neck, where a hairy, distended, abdomen forms. Eight spindly spider legs sprout from the sides and eventually force the head from the body. At this point the spider head has learned how to control the organs of its new human head—it can see, hear, and smell using the victim's eyes, ears, and nose.

By the time a new spider head is ready to leave its body (the whole process takes about a week), the eggs it has laid have hatched, gone through their larvae cycle, and are now brain beetles themselves. When the spider head ambles off in search of mischief, most of its "children" go with it, out of an instinctive impulse that tells them therein lies survival. The average body gives birth to 12-50 (10+2d20) beetles.

Spider heads have a screaming attack similar to that of the night terror—while paralyzed by the scream, victims are

swarmed by the spider heads and their beetle companions (who get to work making more spider heads among the stunned prey). The scream is what makes the spider head so fearsome, and what makes its peculiar life cycle possible.

The scream attack is stronger in groups than alone—spider heads prefer to gather in swarms of five or more. Woe betide the traveler who enters a town overrun with spider heads—by the time a town population has been devastated, spider head swarms of 40 or more heads—and thousands of brain beetles—are possible.

Spider heads, though devious creatures, are not sentient. Though they can manipulate the facial muscles of their victims into grimaces and loathsome smiles, they do not absorb



their personality or any of their memories. They can sense terror in people and seek to maximize this sensation—often by attacking at night, when they look even more terrifying than usual.

Spider heads appear wherever the Reckoners plan to expand their territory. They are particularly thick along both banks of the Mississippi—river watchers regard their appearance as an extremely bad portent.

Profile: Brain Beetle

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:3d6, Q:3d6, S:1d4, V:1d4

Fightin': brawlin' 4d6, sneak 3d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:1d6, M:1d4, Sm: 2d4, Sp:1d4

Search 3d8

Pace: 6

Size: 1

Wind: —

Terror: 3

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4)

Burrow: Once a brain beetle is in a person's mouth, it burrows to the brain using its mandibles. Its saliva contains a powerful painkiller that makes its burrowing feel like little more than a persistent, gnawing ache. This process takes 3d4 rounds. If a victim is merely sleeping and not paralyzed, she has a chance to awaken before it's too late by making a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll (characters with the *light sleeper* Edge always wake up, while those with the *heavy sleeper* Hindrance never do). In the first two rounds it is still possible to save the victim by yanking the vile insect out of the mouth or nasal passages. This causes 3d6 damage to the hero's noggin. After that it's too late to kill the bug without killing the victim.

Description: Large, green beetles with massive mandibles and a bad attitude. They sometimes hiss at their prey.

Profile: Spider Head

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d4, Q:3d6, S:2d4, V:1d6

Dodge 4d4, fightin' brawlin' 3d4, sneak 5d4

Mental: C:4d6, K: 2d4, M: 2d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Guts 2d6, overawe 3d8, search 4d6

Pace: 6

Size: 2

Terror: 7 (11 if the head used to belong to a pal)

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4)

Scream: The spider head's major attack is its soul-piercing scream. Anyone who fails an Onerous (7) *Spirit* roll is paralyzed for 1d4 rounds. The effective range of the scream is 10' per spider head present, up to 80' (so six spider heads can fell folks from up to 60' away).

Description: see above.

Stormcrows

Scavengers follow in the wake of any disaster—both two-legged and four-legged. In the past, they were ravens and wolves, looters and bandits, creatures of opportunity. In the Wasted West, they're stormcrows.

Like the Hellstorms which they follow, stormcrows seem created out of pure meteorological spite. They appear as living balls of chain lightning, ripping across the shattered landscape. They feed on the bodies of those the storm has destroyed, burning corpses into oblivion with their tendrils of electricity. But while they happily feast upon the dead, their primary targets are the survivors—living flesh is so much more fun to burn than dead.

A stormcrow attacks with all the fury of the hurricane which proceeded it: direct, overwhelming and utterly merciless. It fires out arcs of electricity at anything that moves, scorching it to a blackened husk. It disregards cover, relying instead on its intense speed to keep harm away. Stormcrows never hide from their prey. They like to be as prominent as possible when they sear someone's flesh off.

They can be damaged by normal weapons, but it takes a lot of firepower. If "killed," it disperses only to reform within a few days. The only way to permanently destroy them is to ground them—through a properly-laid cable or enough water to drown Cincinnati. Stormcrows have enough sense to avoid these fates, so anyone hoping to use them had best be clever.

The only upside to stormcrows is that they can easily be spotted from a distance and rarely bother to hide themselves. They tend to move as individuals, but there are always several more close by, who are attracted to any mayhem their brethren produce. Smart folks dispatch the first stormcrow as quickly as possible, then get underground before more arrive.

Profile: Stormcrow

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:4d10, Q:4d12, S:3d8
V:4d12

Shootin': electricity 4d10, dodge 4d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:2d6, Sm:2d6,
Sp:3d4

Overawe 3d6, search 2d8

Pace: 14

Size: 8

Wind: 16

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 5 A stormcrow has a physical body of some sort beneath its electric skin, but it is notoriously difficult to damage.

Damage: Electrical attack (4d8); it can launch three per round. Range: 50 yards. Properly grounded targets take half damage.

Short Circuit: The voltage pumped out by the stormcrows is dangerous to more than just their prey; delicate electronics that get zapped may stop working. Whenever a hero takes a wound from a stormcrow attack, roll 1d20 for each piece of electronic equipment he is carrying. On a result of 20, the equipment's circuits are fried—throw it in the trash.

Weakness: Stormcrows are vulnerable to water. They take 3d6 damage for every gallon they come into contact with.

Description: See above.

Tar monster

The area directly around La Brea was a thriving community centered on the primary industry: the asphalt pits. These were not only plentiful, but also naturally occurring. Since the early 1850's, the town of La Brea supplied sealing pitch to one side or the other of the Mason-Dixon line. Of course, that all changed when most of the area fell into the ocean during the Great Quake of '68.

The site remained abandoned until the late 1880's, when a scientific expedition traveled to the remaining pits to oversee the removal of tons of solidified tar and earth to get at the bones of mammoths, sabre-toothed cats, and other long-extinct animal life.





By the first decade of 1900, a wealthy philanthropist, by the name of George C. Wilson acquired the land rights directly around the tar pits and began construction of a museum.

A month into construction, George C. Wilson was visited late one night while he was working in his office. He left the security of his office after he heard a door being torn from its hinges and the shouts of alarm of the security guard. Taking flashlight in hand, he advanced into the half-completed museum expecting a prowler or a pack of vandals, but when he turned the flashlight on the source of the disturbance, he found the security guard pinned to a pillar by a great mass of black tar oozing from the skeletal remains of a saber-toothed cat. A thick tendril of tar led from the bulk of the

cat's remains through the smashed door and back to the central tar pit.

Spotting the guard's discarded pistol on the floor, George Wilson drew it and fired repeatedly into the tar-covered skeleton but with no effect. The cat turned and advanced, but did not attack. Instead it withdrew, dragging the guard's limp body out the shattered door, and dove into the opaque depths of the pit. Fearing the swift involvement of the Guardian Angels, Mr. Wilson concocted a story of how a prowler had smashed in the door and attacked the guard who gave chase. The Guardian Angels seemed satisfied and the local authorities posted a missing persons report, but the entire debacle was quickly forgotten.

Three days later, Wilson had a second visitor, this time the guard's reanimated body shambled free of the tar pit. His body looked as though it had been pressure-cooked—most of the soft tissue had been eaten away by the superheated tar. Through the guard's corpse, the power behind the animated saber-cat made its demands known to the petrified Wilson.

The thing was a powerful earth spirit which had lived deep within the tar pits since the before the last Ice Age. It was awakened from its millennia long slumber by the construction of the museum. The pit entity lived off the life force of living things as they drowned in the pit. Wilson was given an ultimatum: provide a steady supply of victims, and the spirit would spare him. Wilson agreed and set about turning the Rancho La Brea site into a tourist attraction.

In the early 1940s, the Rancho La Brea tar pits drew crowds of unsuspecting tourists, a seemingly inexhaustible supply of lifeforce to the ever-hungry monster lairing inside. The monster preferred to attack at night by picking off stragglers from the many catwalks over the pits and by sending out its skeletal minions to hunt for it. For years, guards and museum workers reported black-tentacled animals stalking silently through the streets around the Rancho La Brea. The disappearances were overlooked as tourists and the occasional trespasser were the primary victims.

Wilson continued to provide for the monster in the pit for decades, until his passing in 1976. Before his death, Wilson initiated his son Martin into the service of the beast. Martin Wilson, who had been scheming for years for the means by which to rest control of the Rancho La Brea from his father, cast his aging father into the pit, cementing his relationship with the monster.

This relationship would endure for the next two and a half decades until the ghost-rock bombs fell—ending the tourist trade for good. The monster dined on the stranded staff, and then fell into a deep sleep. Now, with things heating up in the Maze, and plenty of scavengers and muties clambering around the ruins, the La Brea Tar Monster has begun to stir again.

The following set of stats is for the monster and its animated skeletal minions. Rarely does the monster have need to rise from the depths of its lair, but when it chooses to do so, it resembles a gigantic, amorphous tidal wave of boiling tar with the skeletal remains of dozens of creatures swimming within it.

Profile: La Brea Tar Monster

Corporeal: D:2d12, N:2d8, Q:3d4, S:4d12+8, V:3d12+4

Fightin': see below, **throwin':** tar ball 2d10

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d10, M: 2d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:5d8

Overawe 3d10

Pace: 5

Size: 15 (roughly 12 feet high and 20 feet in length, although the creature is amorphous)

Wind: —

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Tar Ball: The creature may hurl a ball of molten tar at an opponent up to 50 yards away. This has a Range Increment of 10 and a Burst Radius of 3 yards. The ball does 4d8 damage on impact, and then inflicts damage at the beginning of each round. The damage die drops by one step each round due to the rapidly cooling tar. The stiffening tar makes it very difficult to move; double all wound penalties caused by the tar until it is removed.

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Pseudopods: Each round the creature may attack with a random number of sticky, 10'-long pseudopods of congealed tar causing STR+1d6 damage. The number of pseudopods is inversely proportional to the beast's effectiveness in close combat. To determine the number, roll 1d6 on the table below.

Pseudopods

1d6 Roll	Number of Pseudopods	Brawlin' Aptitude
1	1	6d12
2	2	5d12
3	3	4d12
4	4	3d12
5	5	2d12
6	6	1d12

Immunity: Normal weapons.

Weakness—Fire: Flame-based attacks do full damage to the creature. Roll 1d6 against the number of wounds caused by fire. If the roll is less than or equal to this number, the tar has ignited. This does an additional 3d10 damage to it each round, but also adds a like amount to its *fightin': brawlin'* damage.

Weakness—Explosives: Explosive weapons do half damage to the creature. Even then, 24 hours after being "killed," it returns fully healed.

Weakness: The La Brea Tar Monster is petroleum-based. Certain solvents such as gasoline cause 2d6 points of damage per gallon. Also, certain bacterium strains were developed to break down oil and other petroleum products. The release of these agents would be devastating, causing the creature to lose 1 die off all Corporeal Traits and one level of Size per round of contact. Once one all Corporeal Traits are reduced below d4, it dies.

Profile: Tar Creature (Mammoth)

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d8, Q:2d6, S:4d12+2, V:3d8

Fightin': brawlin' 4d8

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d8

Pace: 8

Size: 10

Wind: —

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Gore (STR+1d12, AP 1), trample (STR+2d12)

Resistance to Slashing/Piercing:

Damage from slashing weapons, such as that from a sword, axe, etc. is halved, and puncturing damage, from thrusts, bullets, and the like cause only one quarter damage. Blunt attacks and explosives cause full damage. Poison and drugs are ineffectual as well.

Description: An enormous woolly mammoth skeleton covered in hot, dripping tar.

Profile: Tar Creature (Smilodon)

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d10, Q:3d8, S:3d10, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 2d10

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d8

Pace: 10

Size: 6

Wind: —

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+2d8), claws (STR+1d6)

Resistance to Slashing/Piercing:

Damage from slashing weapons, such as that from a sword, axe, etc. is halved, and puncturing damage, from thrusts, bullets, and the like cause only one quarter damage. Blunt attacks and explosives cause full damage. Poison and drugs are ineffectual as well.

Description: A saber-toothed tiger skeleton covered in hot, dripping tar.

Profile: Tar Creature (Human)

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d6, Q:2d6, S:3d8, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 3d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d8

Pace: 6

Size: 4

Wind: —

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Fists (STR), club (STR+1d6)

Resistance to Slashing/Piercing:

Damage from slashing weapons, such as that from a sword, axe, etc. is halved, and puncturing damage, from thrusts, bullets, and the like cause only one quarter damage. Blunt attacks and explosives cause full damage. Poison and drugs are ineffectual as well.

Description: A human skeleton covered in hot, dripping tar. See

Texas Razors

Texas Razors hail from the panhandle of their namesake state, although specimens have also been found in Kansas and Oklahoma. They sweep across the open plains in wide swaths looking for isolated homesteads, farms, and small towns to destroy. They take an infernal glee in wreaking havoc, and dedicate themselves to cutting their unfortunate victims into the tiniest pieces possible.

Razors are made of biological metal, and thus are incredibly resistant to damage. The tight coils of razor wire along its sides whip out and shred anything they touch. It can manipulate these coils like tentacles and wrap them around victims with alarming speed, cinching them tight to slice a trapped body apart. In addition, its large mouth contains several rows of sharp, pointed teeth which can rip apart flesh as easy as its "tentacles" can. This beast is anything but subtle.

Large cities and fortified communities can usually fight these things off. If the artillery is big enough, it can dent even the toughest hide. The razor makes up for this by savoring the townships it can attack, spreading fear and panic before

wiping everything out in one fell swoop. It does this by first sticking to assaults on isolated individuals: outlying buildings, nearby travelers, etc. Then when its main target is good and demoralized, it attacks like its namesake, turning quiet fear into full-blown panic. The best option to defeat one of these beasts is to either distract it and run like hell (recommended only if you have a high-speed vehicle), or wait until it stops attacking, then unload everything you have. Enough explosives or high-caliber weapons fired at it may convince it to retreat.

Some believe that Texas razors are a sentient offshoot of Hellstorms and other weather phenomena. Others think they're a breed of hyperactive lurkers who got tired of waiting for prey to happen along. The truth, in the end, is irrelevant; just ask anyone torn to pieces by one of them.

Profile: Texas Razor

Corporeal: D:3d12, N:2d12, Q:4d10, S:3d8, V:3d10

Dodge 5d12, fightin': brawlin' 4d12

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:3d8, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d10

Search 2d6, overawe 4d8

Pace: 26

Size: 9

Wind: 20

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2 while motionless, 4 while spinning

Damage: Razor wire (STR+3d12, AP 1); it can attack up to two foes per round in this manner. Bite (STR+2d8); it cannot bite any character further than ten feet away, or any characters it attacks with its razor wire.

Description: See above.

Thunder Spawn

There's something creepy about being out in the open at night in a world where the skies are home to any number of fearsome beasts who might swoop down at any time and snatch you and your loved ones from your car. It's like swimming in deep ocean, fearfully

hoping that the massive black shapes of carnivores moving silently far below never notice you. Most denizens of the Wasted West try not to think of the death lurking in the skies, and console themselves with the sure knowledge that flying creatures like night terrors and their ilk are relatively rare. Unfortunately, with the arrival of the thunder spawn, they are not nearly as rare as they should be.

Thunder spawn, great gelatinous monsters who hide in the moist interiors of clouds, were born from the ghost winds eddying and sheering through the deadly miasma hanging over the ruined cities of the East. They gather in mighty thunderheads, and strike when the rains lash down and make the lower atmosphere hospitable to their bodies.



Swarming in flocks of a dozen or more, these bus-sized monsters can swoop down and pick a city street clean of pedestrians in moments. From a distance, and in a suitably dark storm, the victims of thunder spawn appear to be rising screaming into the air, because the creatures are semitransparent.

Thunder spawn have only recently begun crossing the Mississippi in great numbers. Travelers ranging east of Fort Smith and Kansas City are increasingly learning to fear the mighty storms which routinely assail the region. Thus far, thunder spawn are relatively unknown any further West—but because the clouds cloak the creatures' movements, they could be much further along than conventional wisdom suggests.

The thunder spawn is a purplish, gelatinous monstrosity, semitransparent, and formless, some 30 feet long. It is shot through with large pulsing veins, and shadowy internal organs can be made out within its glistening bulk. Round black protuberances the size of plates—its eyes—stud its body. Three horrible, bone-white beaks—each several feet long—erupt at random places along its belly, snapping and emitting a noisome vapor.

The creature is buoyed in the air by a series of bladder-like membranes on its upper back, filled with lighter-than-air gases. It moves vertically by inflating or deflating the air bladders and laterally by throwing pseudopods before it and undulating into them.

These same tentacles seize prey and draw them toward the beak-like maws. Coated in acidic digestive juices, the tentacles leave corrosion marks on metals and burn skin horribly.

The gelatinous body of a thunder spawn is highly susceptible to drying out. Exposed to direct sunlight, heat, or dry air, it quickly becomes sluggish. Within 10 minutes of such exposure, its skin loses surface tension, and it splatters to the ground like a water balloon—thoroughly dead.

Creatures of cunning, animal intelligence, thunder spawn work in teams in running down their prey. Their hunting patterns are of course severely curtailed by their physical limitations. They drift with the clouds, only venturing out when torrential downpours shroud them in protective moisture and soothingly dim light. Their flocks usually number a dozen or so. The creatures normally attack from about 60 feet in the air.

The thunder spawn's air bladder, if punctured, causes it to lose buoyancy and plummet to the ground. It therefore protects this vital organ by staying above sources of firepower—the bladders can't be seen or reached from below. This strategy works well against ground-bound prey, but aircraft are a different story—thunder spawn attack fliers *en masse* to eliminate this great threat. Sykers too, once aware of the thunder spawn's bladders, may be able to remotely attack its weak point.

Profile: Thunder Spawn

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:3d10, Q:3d6+4, S:3d12, V:3d10

Dodge 4d10, fightin' brawlin' 5d10, sneak (from air) 6d10

Mental: C:4d6, K:2d4, M:3d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:2d10

Overawe 4d10, search 4d6

Pace: 20 in the air, 2 if grounded

Size: 7 (tentacle) or 20 (main body)

Wind: 20

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 3

Damage: Beak (STR+2d8), tentacles (STR+2d6; due to acid).

Surprise

Tentacle Grab: On a successful *fightin' brawlin'* roll, the thunder spawn can grab a victim within its reach. The abomination needs four rounds to pull the victim up to its beak. During this time, the victim can free herself by getting a raise on an opposed *Strength* roll (but may have to learn to fly shortly thereafter). Each round a hero spends in the tentacle's grasp raises him 5 yards in the air.

Tentacle Wounds: A tentacle takes wounds according to its Size. All

Wind damage to tentacles is ignored because it doesn't affect the main body and the tentacles can't be rendered unconscious. The average thunder spawn has 2d4 tentacles; each of which can attack independently. The tentacles are about 60' long and can regenerate slowly after being severed.

Weaknesses: The thunder spawn's bladders are extremely delicate. Any wound done to one (this is a called shot at -2) punctures it, causing the beast to plummet to its death. Unfortunately, the bladders can only be targeted from above the creature.

Weaknesses: Thunder spawn are extremely susceptible to heat, sunlight, and dry air. Any attack harnessing such aspects does triple damage.

Description: See above.

Tin Men

Not all of Professor Hellstromme's creations were happy with their lot, and not all of them stayed mindless zombies either. Some of the more sentient specimens had shards of memories that cropped up from time to time—half-remembered experiences from the days when their brains sat in a human shell. Over time, a few of them kindled a desire to become human again. They banded together into small groups and began replacing their gear and circuits with flesh—one piece at a time. People who ran into them started calling them “tin men,” after the character in *The Wizard of Oz* whose fleshly body was replaced by metal. The name stuck.

Tin men actively search for “specimens” to procure—human beings with limbs, organs, or other biological appendages that the robots can use. They then “harvest” the body part using a gruesome variety of surgical techniques and fuse it to their chassis. Over time, their steel bodies become riddled with bits of human anatomy, functioning as they would on an ordinary body. Eventually, the tin men hope to dispose of their mechanical parts completely, at which time they believe they will be fully human.

A tin man always takes care when it attacks, lest the body part it needs be damaged. They prefer sleeping targets and other means of “quietly” disposing of their prey. When need be, however, they cut loose and salvage what they can when the smoke settles. Dead flesh is of no use to them. It must be fresh, no more than a few hours old.

No tin man has ever succeeded in restoring its fleshly body, but a few have gotten close. These horrific beings resemble Frankenstein's monster, sewn together with countless chunks of human skin and a few remaining bits of metal. Ironically, in their quest to be human, tin men have never bothered to learn about human emotions. They continue to act with callous, unfeeling automation, no matter how much flesh has been grafted to their bones.



Profile: Tin Man

Corporeal: D:2d6 N:3d6 Q:3d8 S:3d12
V:4d10

Climbin' 2d6, dodge 3d6, fightin':
brawlin', knife 4d6, shootin': MG 4d6,
sneak 2d6

Mental: C:2d12 K:3d8 M:1d4 Sm:2d8
Sp:2d6

Overawe 4d4, medicine: surgery 5d8,
scroungin' 3d12, search 3d12, tinkerin'
5d8

Pace: 8

Size: 7

Wind: –

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Scalpel/bonesaw (STR+1d8)

Fearless

Gear: Chain gun (Ammo: 12mm; Shots:
120; Speed 1; ROF 9; Range
Increment 10/20; Damage: 5d8, AP2)
The tin man's mechanical arms
absorb the weapon's kick, allowing
it to ignore recoil modifiers.

Gear: Grenade launcher (Ammo: mini-
HE grenades; Shots: 20; Speed 1; ROF
1; Range Increment 20; Damage:
4d12; Burst Radius: 10) Grenades are
fired from a tube in the tin man's
shoulder and can be launched on
the same action as it fires—with no
penalty.

Regenerate: Tin men don't actually
regenerate, but they can heal
themselves by scavenging for parts
in ruins. Treat this as a normal
healing roll made once per day of
scroungin' against a Fair (5) TN.

Undead

Tumblebleed

Tumblebleeds are vicious critters that look just like tumbleweeds, the dried plants that you see blowing across the desolate, desert plains. They attack by rolling into a victim and entangling him in their thorny branches. The things' mouths and spiny thorns then penetrate

the skin and drain the prey's blood. These abominations prefer to prey on humans and cattle.

Tumblebleeds usually travel in packs of three to six for more efficient hunting. Hungry tumblebleeds stay well away from any prey carrying fire—they burn like dry tinder when they haven't fed recently.

Over the years, some tumblebleeds learned to hide themselves among the regular tumbleweeds which pile up against highway guard rails and on median strips. Before the war, a number of highway workers were lost to these clever creatures and it became standard procedure to burn the tumbleweeds rather than clearing them by hand. In the state of Arizona, the tumbleweed clearing duties were turned over to deathrow inmates working under heavy guard.

A tumblebleed that has just feasted looks like a pile of wet, bloody seaweed.

Profile: Tumblebleed

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, Q:2d8, S:1d6
V:1d4

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10

Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 18

Size: 4 (2-3' diameter spheroid)

Wind: NA

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Mouth (STR), thorns (STR, brawlin' damage; Lost Wind is actually drained blood. Due to an anti-clotting agent in a tumblebleed's saliva, damage taken from a tumblebleed cannot be healed as easily as normal. Wind lost in this way returns at the rate of 1 per day.)

Weakness—Fire: The thorny branches of a dry tumblebleed burn easily before it has fed. If hit by a lit torch a dry tumblebleed starts burning on 1-3 on a 1d6. Flamethrowers set the tumblebleed alight immediately. Once on fire, the tumblebleed takes 3d12 damage per round. Unless there's a lake or river nearby, they rarely ever manage to put themselves out before burning to a fragile cinder.

Description: See above.

Urban Wyrms

Urban wyrms hail from far below the earth's surface, where they have carved out an elaborate series of tunnels and passageways. When the bombs fell, the thunderous commotion piqued their interest, and they began migrating upward in larger and larger numbers. The blasted ruins they discovered made perfect homes, and they didn't even need to dig new tunnels—their prey had dug them already!

Wyrms are solitary hunters who pursue humans and other creatures for food. Most people never see their actual bodies, which lie in a hardened, tubular shell much like undersea tube worms. These shells are often huge, stretching two or three stories in the bigger specimens, and steel-tough. The bottoms of the tubes are anchored to nearby material, and are all but immovable once set. From the top extends a series of 10-20 giant, mottled, grey tentacles which the creatures stretch into nearby tunnels in search of prey.

The tentacles can extend a great distance, sometimes thousands of yards. Those who spot them often believe them to be the entire animal, not just a single limb. They end in hinged jaws, often big enough to swallow a man in one bite. The tentacles have their own sensors, and can discern their surroundings. They're also strong—strong enough to pound through rock-hard concrete if they have to. Usually, only one tentacle attacks at a time; the others are busy in other tunnels, and rarely show themselves.

The wyrms' preferred tactic is to crash through a wall or surface street beneath their targets, exploding around them and swallowing them whole before they have a chance to react. The hapless victim is then pulled through the tentacle's innards towards the base creature. By the time he reaches the beast's main body, digestive juices have turned him into a pulpy sludge.

While unintelligent, wyrms possess a predator's cunning and wait until the best possible moment to attack. They dislike extended combat and avoid attacking if the element of surprise isn't with them. Destroying a tentacle is

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usually enough to get them to back off; they don't want to lose any more than necessary.

Profile: Urban Wurm

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:3d8, Q:2d12, S:5d12+8, V:4d12+10

Fightin' brawlin' 4d8, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:2d10 K:1d4 M:3d10 Sm:3d6 Sp:1d6

Overawe 3d10

Pace: 30

Size: 30 main body, 20 tentacles

Wind: —

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2 for tentacles, 6 for the main body

Damage: Bite (STR+2d8)

Surprise: A wurm who gets the jump on its victims gets to make its first attack at +4 and begins the battle with one extra action card.

Swallow: If a tentacle gets two raises on an attack it swallows the target whole. The victim takes 3d6 massive damage each round from digestive juices. The only way out is to make a hole with a shotgun or cutting weapon. This requires 20 points of damage.

Description: See above.

Wall Crawler

Before the Last War, these nasty critters were a danger to anyone traveling the canyons of the West, especially those of the Great Maze. Since most of mankind has gone on a forced holiday after Judgment day, some of these beasts have moved into the deserted cities and made their homes in the rusted skeletons of wrecked office buildings.

Wall crawlers are predators that hang on the shadowy sides of mesas, canyons, and the occasional skyscraper, waiting for unsuspecting travelers to pass below. When they spot prey, they

race down from their perch with lightning speed. Their prey almost never sees them coming before it's too late.

Before they strike, wall crawlers are almost completely silent, their claws on rock the only sound they make. Once they reach their prey, they emit an evil hissing.

Profile: Wall Crawler

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, Q:2d12+2, S:3d10, V:2d8

Climbin' 8d10, fightin': brawlin' 5d10, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d10, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d6

Scrutinize 2d10

Pace: 10 (20 when racing downhill)

Size: 14

Wind: 24

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Damage: Bite (STR+2d8), tail strike (STR+3d10)

Wall Crawling: Wall crawlers can move over any moderately rough, vertical surface at their normal Pace, and can even move along totally horizontal overhangs at half Pace. They don't call 'em wall crawlers for nothing!

Description: Wall crawlers' forms combine the worst aspects of a spider and a monitor lizard, with nasty, spiky bits all over them for good measure.

Willow Wight

Way back in the days of the Weird West, most of the newly arrived manitous concentrated on corrupting people and animals, but some selected flora. These malignant spirits sank into the young hearts of tree sprouts and quietly changed their hosts over time, slowly growing more powerful as their host trees grew into towering willow wights—undead trees.

Though once ordinary trees, willow wights have over time become actual abominations that derive sustenance from human souls rather than sun and water. A willow wight is a monstrosity—its thick trunk is distended with tumor-like growths, its bark is black and shot through with green veins, and its branches are twisted into unnatural contortions.

By itself, the willow wight isn't much—just a huge gnarled tree. It can't move, which makes it a bit vulnerable to a determined guy with a chainsaw. What it *can* do is manipulate the dead buried within reach of its roots. The willow wight therefore gathers to its wooden bosom as many victims as it can without tipping people off to its true nature.

Any dead human body buried within reach of a willow wight's roots becomes one of its creatures. The willow wight infuses the body with a spark of its life force, reanimating it as an undead being enslaved to it. These can range out from the willow wight, and both protect it and add bodies to its collection. Some willow wights are luckier than others—a couple even became hangin' trees or boot hill shade trees over the course of time, making them deadly threats indeed.

The willow wight uses its undead as props in a deadly illusion it weaves for whatever audience it has managed to lure to its site. It can detect everything happening within its domain, generally a couple of hundred feet—at least at night. The willow wight always disguises itself as a normal tree in weaving its illusion.

In generating illusions, the willow wight creates illusions to appeal to different groups depending on the appearances and behavior of trespassers. A group of weary templars looking for a place to rest for the night happen across a comfortable campsite of fellow templars; a group of bandits might encounter an old house filled with gorgeous, flirtatious women.

The willow wight can't impart any physical reality to an illusion, however. It can make a nearby rundown house look like a well-kept palace—inside and out—or a walkin' dead appear as an attractive woman. It can also create

illusions of people and places. What it can't do is actually create a real house or person out of nothing. Illusionary people are simply ghosts, substantial only at a distance.

Once the tree has lulled its victims into a false sense of security, the willow wight's undead slaves turn on them. If successful in slaying their victims, the undead bury the bodies near the tree, thus creating new undead servants for their wooden master.

The willow wight does have one major weakness—it goes dormant from dawn to dusk. While the sun is up, the willow wight is simply a grotesque tree—its undead servants disappear, it cannot attack directly, and its power to weave illusions is gone. It's only defense during the day is camouflage: using its undead servants it cultivates thickets around its base to hide it.

Profile: Willow Wight

Corporeal: D:NA, N:NA, Q:NA, S:NA, V:5d8

Mental: C:5d10, K:4d8, M:4d12, Sm:3d10, Sp:4d8*

Guts 6d8, overawe 4d12, search (via mental powers) 5d10

Pace: NA

Size: 30

Wind: —

Terror: 9

Strain: 16

Special Abilities:

Animate Dead: A willow wight can animate corpses buried among its roots. It can simultaneously control a number of undead equal to its *Spirit* die type. Treat the willow wight's undead as walkin' dead. Range is equal to that of Mass Illusion (below). If killed, the link between the willow wight and the body is broken until the next sunset. If an undead's body is exhumed from the tree's soil and taken away, the willow wight loses the ability to manipulate it.

Mass Illusion: Willow wight illusions take in everyone within range (range is a 50' circumference per *Spirit* die type). These illusions can include audio and visual aspects and can be projected onto objects, structures, or its undead servants.

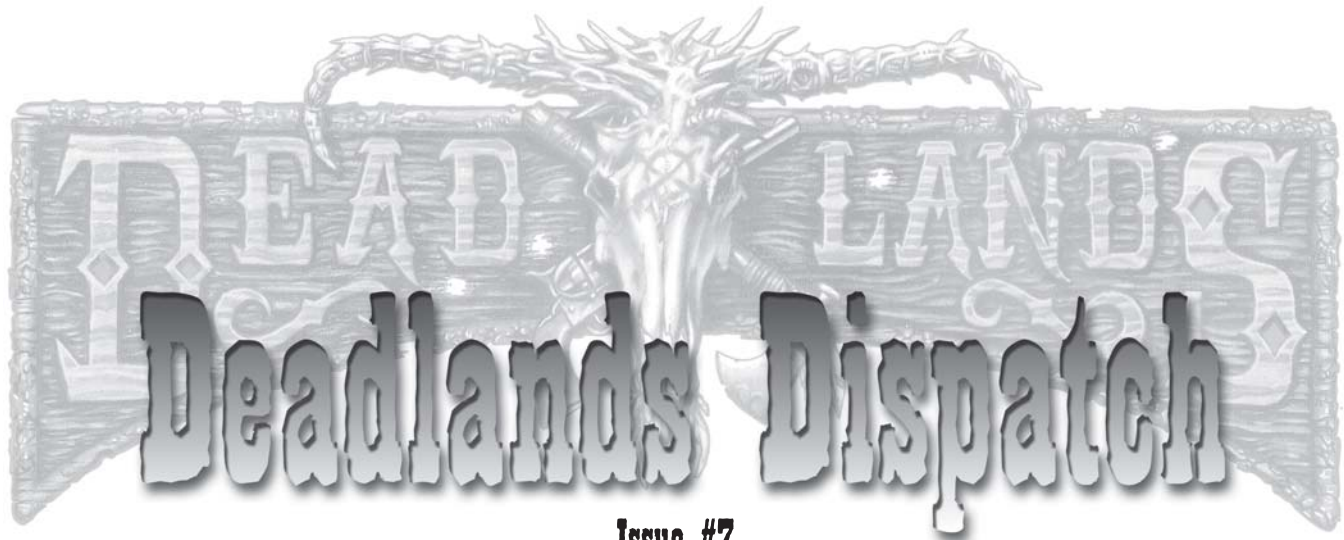
Maintaining the illusion costs the willow wight one Strain per hour for every person present. Cameras and other recording devices aren't fooled by the illusion, but if inspected within range of the illusion, the willow wight fools the viewer into seeing a playback or readings consistent with the illusion.

Weakness: Willow wights go dormant in the daylight hours. If located during the day, the willow wight is at the mercy of its enemies.

Description: See above.

* Varies by age of tree; older trees are higher. Decide how many walkin' dead you want around, and the range of the illusion you want, then use that number here.





Deadlands Dispatch

Issue #7

Character Info, Errata, and The Big Picture of the Deadlands Universe

Welcome to Pinnacle's regular update on the Deadlands universe. In this issue we talk about the Combine's latest suspected plot and one of the hazards left over from the Last War: minefields.

The Big Picture

Surgeon General's Warning

The inhabitants of Junkyard recently experienced a serious outbreak of contagious diseases that killed over 200 and made hundreds more seriously ill. The source of these diseases was traced to a load of "pre-war" cigarettes recently sold in the city. Examination of the unsmoked products revealed that the tobacco in each of them had been laced with a wide variety of dangerous viruses. These nasty bugs were drawn into the smoker's body each time he puffed on a cigarette.

All of these tobacco products were purchased during the Convoy's last visit to Junkyard. Those who bought the cigarettes assumed the trader with whom they were dealing was part of the trucker group. Once contacted about the dangerously defective cancer sticks, Convoy leaders revealed that not only was the trader in question not part of their group, but that the mystery man had sold two pallets worth of these plague cigarettes to the truckers. The tobacco was immediately destroyed once the truth was known.

Junkyard is offering a 2000 bullet reward for the capture or death of the person responsible for this atrocity. He is described as a man of average build in his late thirties, with thinning blonde hair and blue eyes. He has a scar on his left cheek, and a tattoo of a mermaid on his right forearm. He was last seen driving east on I-80 in a blue and red tractor-trailer rig with a large roadrunner painted on the side of the trailer.

There are many in Junkyard who believe that the Combine was behind this insidious plot. They point out that not only did the cigarettes weaken the population of Junkyard, but if the Law Dogs had not located the Convoy in time, the truckers would have sold these cigarettes and infected many of the towns with which they traded. In addition to further weakening resistance to the Combine's expansion, this would also have damaged the trust many survivor communities place in the Convoy; the end result of which would be reduced interaction between settlements and the possible disintegration of the Convoy itself as it lost trading partners—an outcome that Throckmorton would shed no tears over.

Mining Continues in Uravan

The Combine uranium mining operations continue outside the town of Uravan, Colorado. Scouts from Junkyard have been keeping an eye on the place, but so far the leaders of the "Iron Oasis" have taken no action against the mines. The garrison guarding the uranium mine has been heavily reinforced since the activity there was first discovered. Ike and the other leaders of Junkyard have been unable to reach a consensus on a course of action.

While they debate, convoys of trucks with fresh loads of uranium ore stream east toward Denver on an almost daily basis. The Sky Pirates have made a few raids against these caravans, but with little success.

Since the first attack on one of these convoys (see Dispatch #5), the size of the escorts traveling with the ore trucks has been beefed up considerably. Most convoys are escorted by two to three armored personnel carriers filled with Black Hats, a squad of cyborgs, one or two mobile anti-aircraft guns, a hover-tank, and on some occasions, a helicopter gunship or a brace of raptors.

The silver lining in this situation comes from reports from the resistance movement inside Colorado. Freedom fighters there report that all this driving back and forth has actually put a strain on Throckmorton's fuel supplies. The meager production he is getting from the Colorado oil fields isn't enough to meet the operational needs of the Combine forces.

— Needful Thangs —

Did You Just Hear a Click?

One of the most terrifying weapons of war for the average infantryman is the land mine. The thought that simply stepping in the wrong place may get your leg blown off or your body ripped to shreds is enough to make most people's skin crawl. Needless to say, lots of mines were used during the Last War. All the fear and terror they created gave the Reckoners a good chuckle at humanity's expense.

Many of those mines are still out there waiting for that misplaced foot. Most of them can be found near large battlefields along the border between the US and the Confederacy. Kansas in particular is littered with the things. They can also be found around the perimeters of most military bases and secure research facilities.

Using Mines

There are a number of ways Marshals can use minefields. The most common, of course, is as an obstacle the posse must breach to reach their goal. You can also use them as a random event to give your heroes some gray hair. They can also be thrown in to complicate a situation: as the posse flees an abomination, they run right into a minefield. Of course, clever heroes might

be able to turn a minefield they discover into a weapon. If the heroes are attacked by the Alexander 9000 while they are fresh out of anti-tank rockets, their only hope may be to lure the mechanical monstrosity into a field of anti-tank mines.

Minefields

So if you're feeling sadistic Marshal, here's what you need to know:

All minefields have a Density rating. This is simply a number from 1 to 20. Simply roll 1d20 against this number for each 5 yards a hero travels through the field. If the roll comes up less than equal to the Density, that lucky brainer has found a mine. If he wasn't looking for one (see below), he found it the hard way.

Just to give you some idea, light-density fields have a Density of around 5 or 6, medium-density fields would weigh in around 9 or 10, and a high-density field would have a rating of 13 or 14. This means a lucky waster could stroll right through a small, low-density minefield and not even know it. Just remember that actually killing people and destroying vehicles is usually the secondary purpose of a minefield. Their primary purpose is normally to slow down and disorganize an attack, and channel it through pre-sighted kill zones where the defenders can chop the attackers to pieces with massed fire.

Findin' Mines

Finding and marking a clear path through a minefield takes keen senses, steady nerves, and some knowledge of the various mine types. It's done using the new *Cognition*-based *mine sweepin'* Aptitude.

The brave hero doing the sweeping must make a *mine sweepin'* roll for every 5 yards of minefield marked. The TN for this roll depends on the type of mines being detected; some are more difficult to find than others. The Marshal rolls against the field's Density every 5 yards to see if there is actually a mine in that area. If the sweeper makes her roll she finds any mines. If she fails, the mine, if any, goes undetected. Once detected and marked, anyone following the sweeper can automatically avoid the blasted thing.

Looking for mines in this way takes about 10 minutes for every 5 yard long and 2 yard wide section marked. When under fire, a hero can speed this up and search a 1 yard square area per action, but this increases the TN of all detection rolls by +6!

Specialized military equipment can speed things up and give bonuses to detect mines. Look for this gear to be detailed in a later Dispatch.

Gettin' Rid of Them

Actually disarming a mine is a little trickier. This requires a *demolitions* roll against the mine's Disarm TN (see below). Unless the mine's a dud, this is one of those make the roll or go kaboom situations. Going bust on the roll simply means your hero's face was too close and the damage is automatically applied to the noggin.

Here's a look at the scoundrels responsible for all of this murder and mayhem.

Robin D. Laws

Writer and game designer Robin D. Laws lives in Toronto, because it is the best city in the world. He wrote (with John Hopley) the *Great Maze* boxed set for *Deadlands*. Robin's hit RPG, *Feng Shui*, recently staged a guns-blazing comeback in its new incarnation as an Atlas Games product.

The Mines

There are literally scores of different mine types and designs. We can only scratch the surface here. Mines have four important statistics. *Cost* is the mine's relative worth in trade goods. *Damage* is self-explanatory; it's how much of a bang the thing makes. *Detect* is the TN for attempts to detect the mine under ordinary circumstances. *Disarm* is the TN for *demolitions* rolls to render the mine harmless.

Anti-personnel Mine

Cost: \$100

Damage: 3d20, Burst Radius 3

Detect: 7

Disarm: 9

These nasty buggers have a pressure trigger, the sensitivity of which can be set when the mine is placed. Most are set to go off with as little as 30 or 40 pounds of ground pressure being applied.

Damage to the lucky sod who stepped on the mine is applied to a single hit location—the leg if walking. If crawling, roll hit location normally. Others in the burst radius take massive damage as usual.

Anti-vehicular Mine

Cost: \$300

Damage: 5d20 AP 2, Burst Radius 3

Detect: 7

Disarm: 9

These work in the same way as the AP mines, but require 200 to 300 pounds of pressure to detonate.

Profile

Upcoming projects include writing and design contributions to the *King of Dragon Pass* computer game (from A-Sharp) and *Hero Wars*, the new roleplaying game set in the classic fantasy world of Glorantha (Issaries, Inc.) Also coming soon to a game store near you are a veritable passel of *Star Trek* roleplaying products from Last Unicorn featuring his work.

If this biography had hypnotic powers, it would take control of your mind until you tracked down and purchased his 1996 novel, *Pierced Heart*, based on Atlas Games' *Over the*

Edge game. His mist-shrouded past includes various stints as an actor, stage director, children's play author, and movie reviewer for an FM station.

If he's not working on a game project as you're reading this, he's probably out watching a film. Don't talk during the movie. He really hates that.

Charles Ryan

A professional game designer for nearly a decade, Charles Ryan has left his mark on numerous game systems: not just *Hell on Earth* (for which he was Brand Manager at Pinnacle until recently) and *Deadlands* (to which he contributed the graphic design), but also *The Babylon Project*, *Millennium's End*, *Ars Magica*, *The Last Crusade*, and most recently *StarTrek: The Next Generation* and the upcoming *Dune* roleplaying game. He's been a major contributor to nearly every *Hell on Earth* product to date.

Charles began his career with the foundation of his own company, Chameleon Eclectic, which he ran until 1998. He served as the *Hell on Earth* Brand Manager here at Pinnacle until just a few months ago, before he defected to the west coast to take up a position at Last Unicorn Games. There he contributes to their lines while continuing to write, design, and illustrate on a freelance basis for numerous other games. He's also chairman of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design, the professional organization of game designers.

Though no longer officially in the Pinnacle fold, Charles continues to run and play *Hell on Earth*. His Templar, Reno, is one of the oldest extant *Hell on Earth* characters (created in a playtest campaign that started up well before the release of the game). When he can pry himself away from gaming, Charles enjoys travel, boating, biking, cooking, the odd computer game, and the absolutely fabulous southern California weather.

Paul Sudlow

Paul Sudlow got his start in gaming as a wee lad in the late 70s, and has been chucking dice and writing deathless prose ever since. Since his freelance debut in a teeny RPG rag in 1986, he's designed giant robots for R. Talsorian, explored uncharted islands for GDW, covered LARPs for TSR, beamed into a wall or two for Last Unicorn and Decipher, and stalked Pokemon with PC Gamer. He's also kept up with the Joneses,

chased aliens with the Men in Black, gotten his butt kicked by Xena, and stuck a couple of lightsabers where the sun don't shine at West End Games.

Paul worked as a Star Wars RPG game designer and editor for three years at West End Games, and left just before things got really interesting. Currently he lurks in the offices of Wizard Entertainment as an associate editor for InQuest Gamer magazine.

He enjoys manga, Victorian literature, and Hong Kong movies--which explains the strange assortment of critters he dreamed up for this fine book.

Rob Vaux

Born and raised in Southern California, Rob Vaux devoted a large portion of his waking life to figuring out how to escape the West Coast. After attending college in rural Minnesota and graduate school in Syracuse, NY, he changed his mind. Month-long blizzards have a way of doing that.

A summer internship for SHADIS magazine brought him back to the Los Angeles area, and turned into a full-time job. He currently writes and edits for Alderac Entertainment Group, and has done work for *Legend of the Five Rings*, *7th Sea*, and the *Doomtown* CCG.

A roleplayer since the age of nine, Rob is also a film lover and a fan of the California Angels. Both have brought him unending heartbreak. He lives in Rancho Cucamonga, California, and challenges anyone to find a city with a sillier name.

Joseph Wolf

One of the very first *Deadlands* fans, Joe turned his fascination with the game into a paying proposition. Joe has written portions of a number of *Deadlands* products, most notably *Rascals*, *Varmints & Critters*-- the monster book for the Weird West line. He's also written a number of convention adventures for Pinnacle and he is one of the company's hardest working Marshals during convention season. His writing credits expanded recently with the publication of *Skullport* for TSR.

Joe seems to have a fascination with large, carnivorous reptiles. His two Weird West adventures "The Trouble at Table Rock" and "Hard Times at Table Rock" both feature some grumpy dinosaurs and have quickly become convention favorites.