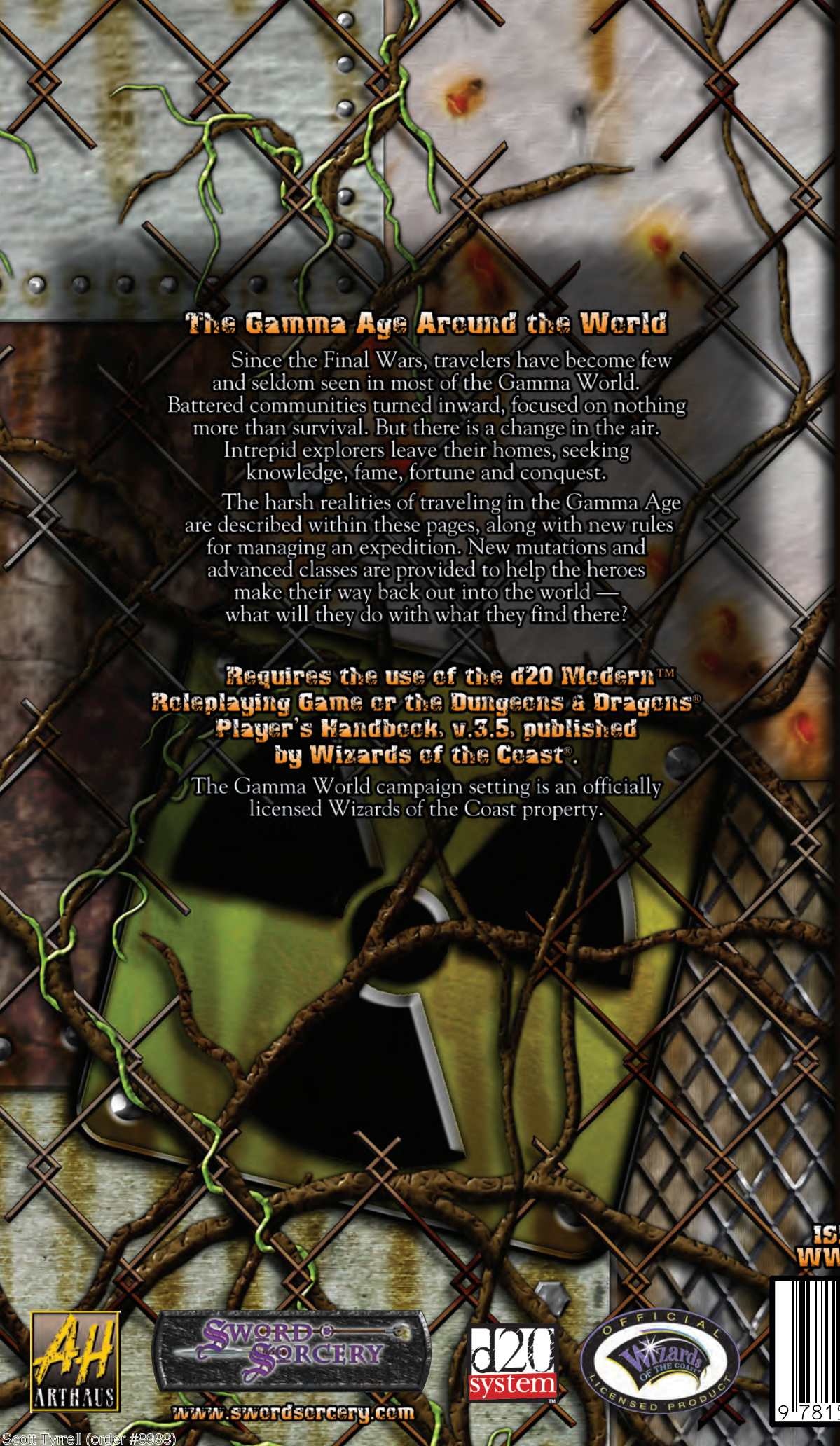
GAMMA WORLD®

BEYOND THE HORIZON™



A Campaign Sourcebook for the d20 System

Scott Tyrrell (order #8988)



The Gamma Age Around the World

Since the Final Wars, travelers have become few and seldom seen in most of the Gamma World. Battered communities turned inward, focused on nothing more than survival. But there is a change in the air. Intrepid explorers leave their homes, seeking knowledge, fame, fortune and conquest.

The harsh realities of traveling in the Gamma Age are described within these pages, along with new rules for managing an expedition. New mutations and advanced classes are provided to help the heroes make their way back out into the world — what will they do with what they find there?

Requires the use of the d20 Modern™ Roleplaying Game or the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, v.3.5, published by Wizards of the Coast®.

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GAMMA WORLD®

BEYOND THE HORIZON

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INTRODUCTION

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This is a book about the Gamma World at large: What's happening in places that we haven't described in previous volumes, and rules and advice for playing out long-distance travel and related matters like interacting with strange cultures.

As with most of the books in this line, it's got something for both Game Masters (GMs) and players. The rules are certainly of interest to GMs, but the narrative accounts of Gamma Age explorers in Chapter One, the locales in Chapter Two and the advice about how to plan out the features of new cultures and communities all offer possibilities for players. Your characters may write accounts like those, or be inspired to travel by accounts like them; they may live in those places, or in places like them or that borrow features from them; and they will need to think about the concerns presented for travelers and dwellers beyond the information and guidelines in previous volumes.

Travel is one of the great paths to adventure in real life, but it is sometimes hard to make interesting in roleplaying games. There aren't always clear-cut enemies to fight with, just the accumulating effort against environmental challenges and interactions with unfamiliar societies. **Beyond the Horizon** aims to show you ways of using the *d20 Modern* rules to define non-combat challenges and interactions clearly enough that you can play them out more objectively than just saying "I do this" and "no, you don't." Furthermore, when you understand what issues confront your characters, you can bring roleplaying to bear on the task of setting priorities: How do personality, allegiance, history, special abilities and other considerations affect the choices characters make? This can be a lot of fun; the last chapter of this book lays out what you need to know.

The epic quest looms large in the history of heroes, real and fictional. People travel beyond the horizon for all sorts of reasons: in search of treasure, knowledge or the means for revenge against a local enemy; answering a call for help; and many more. Previous **Gamma World** books have emphasized the depth and complexity in the characters' immediate vicinity, building up consequences and opportunities for them close to home. **Beyond the Horizon** applies the same spirit of individual interaction with surrounding societies and takes it on the road, adding the examples of Odysseus, Johnny Appleseed and the Monkey King to inspirations like King Arthur and Genghis Khan.

WHAT'S HERE

Here's an overview of the book's contents, to help you spot the subjects you want to pay attention to most so that you can start with them.

- **Introduction:** What you're reading now.
- **Chapter One: The Gamma World.** This chapter compiles travelers' accounts of every part of the world in the Gamma Age. Here are the voices of explorers, conquerors, traders and others. Throughout most of human history, information about far-away places came through personal accounts which couldn't be readily checked because there just weren't that many travelers. In the Gamma Age, the lore of the world is again personal. None of the narrators in this chapter is unbiased; you can use the narrator's attitudes as well as their descriptions as resources for your own campaign. They may be entirely right, entirely wrong or somewhere in between, depending on what you want your version of the Gamma World to be like.
- **Chapter Two: The Lay of the Land.** This chapter presents a variety of specific locations, including ruins, human and other communities, and mysteries of several sorts. GMs who want something ready to go can drop these into a campaign with little or no modification, or loot them for parts to use in some other context. Each location comes with notes about the mechanics of interacting with it, the rolls to make and ways various skills and FX may come into play. Players who wonder what all their characters can do may take ideas from these entries, applying the principles to the situations their characters encounter.
- **Chapter Three: The Way There.** This is the making-it-work-in-play chapter. It covers aspects of campaign and adventure design for different types of questing, long-distance communications, expanded rules for acclimatization to unfamiliar environments, new equipment and FX suitable for travelers and strangers and a great deal more. The book closes out with new advanced classes suitable for quest-oriented campaigns.

As always, as long as your use of this book leads to more enjoyable play, there's no "wrong" application of anything here.

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A WORD FROM THE DEVELOPER

This is the last of the books at present for **Gamma World**. Thank you, all of you who've bought, read, enjoyed and played with the material we've created for you. I hope that we've given you the fodder for some good gaming.

It's been a surprising and sometimes difficult time for me, with unexpected complications on many fronts. But it's also been very rewarding, as you folks out there put these books to use and tell us what you've done with them. Making roleplaying games is a peculiar sort of long-distance collaboration: Rather than offering you closed and complete stories that you just read, the whole idea is to offer you the tools that you use to make your own. So the game isn't truly complete until it's played. And just as the writers and artists have constantly surprised me with neat ideas I never thought of myself, so to with gamers at large. I've read accounts of characters, places, storylines and campaign frameworks that repeatedly made me say, "That is so cool, and while I didn't have anything like it in mind, it's a perfect fit for the spirit of the game." That makes a whole lot of effort worthwhile.

Remember that game books don't have expiration dates. You don't have to stop having fun with this volume and its brothers and sisters. In fact, it's our hope that they'll continue to enrich your gaming in the future, whether it's on their own as the foundation of a **Gamma World** campaign or mixed in with other lines for your own nefarious purposes. Dr. Frankenstein had to wait for a stormy night with heavy lightning to bring his unholy hybrid creations to life, but you can do it any time of the day or night, whenever you and your fellow players get together.

Once again, thank you very much. All of us who've been involved with this venture look forward to bringing you more neat stuff in the future, and we hope that roleplaying will continue to provide you with its distinctive pleasures.

Regards,

Bruce Baugh

Gamma World Line Developer

A WORD FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

As Bruce noted, this is the last book of a six-release arc. There may be — heck, I'm sure that there will be — additional **Gamma World** books someday. With the vagaries of game publishing in general and the d20 market in particular, Arthaus felt that it was best to plan new projects from the beginning as a set number of books. That way, we can evaluate how the line is doing as each release arc concludes. If, as we hope, it still has legs, we plan another release arc. Otherwise, at least players have a strong, cohesive collection for their games.

As I write this, it's too soon to know where **Gamma World** stands. Whatever its future course, though, the existing material makes for a fun, original setting that pays homage to previous editions while adding its own distinctive stamp upon the **Gamma World** saga. All of us involved hope you enjoy playing in the setting as much as we've enjoyed creating each release.

All the best,

Andrew Bates

Managing Editor, Sword & Sorcery Studios

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CHAPTER ONE
THE GAMMA WORLD

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This chapter presents accounts of the Gamma World as seen by traveling scholars, merchants, soldiers and other adventurers. They have all endeavored to set down true and useful accounts of their experiences, but they are also all fallible human beings (or other sentients, as may be). Players and GMs should treat this chapter as a source of possibilities: Here's what people reported, and they are as right or wrong as you wish them to be in your campaign.

NORTH AMERICA

As requested by Your Lordship, it now being in the sixth year of Your rule, I hereby submit an accounting of the Continent for our City's posterity and by which appropriate strategies can be laid for exploitation. I have given close attention both to the value and difficulty of potential targets, as well as documenting various wonders that may be source of amusement or idle inquisition. This accounting summarizes the knowledge accumulated over the years our City has wandered the lands, and may have some small discrepancies for those areas not visited for some time.

THE WEST

Our account begins on the western coasts. Here, numerous once-proud cities that rose skyward between the mountains and the sea now lie bent and shattered, more thoroughly ruined than cities in most other areas. Indeed, to the south much is swallowed by water, leaving only a scattering of lonely, broken towers rising above the waves. Many that remain on land were apparently targets of nuclear attack, as they contain quite high levels of poisonous radiation, although numerous other physical weapons no doubt sought targets in these regions as well. There are few surviving communities worthy of our City's notice, and while high-tech artifacts abound in the most dangerous areas, there is no concentration of such plunder as would make it worthwhile for the Raiders, given the risks inherent in exploring such ruins.

THE BLACK-LAVA PLAINS

A major exception to this rule occurs at the edge of the Black-Lava Plains, close to where the city of Secrementhu likely lies buried. (I render the name as the aborigines of the region do, as though there were something remarkable about these particular dark flows of lava. We chose to indulge their whim, knowing that sensible linguistic reform can follow conquest and subjugation.) Here, a society of sentients has dug its way out from under the lava via the old continental tunnel systems, breaking to the surface while still some distance from the new ocean shores. This society, styling itself the New Republic, is quite obviously based upon some underground military installation that survived the lava floods, as it maintains strict discipline in all of the outlying communities, requiring DNA samples and ident certs for all visitors.

It is important to note that our Scientists have been unable to remove these certs from those of our scouts so identified, proving the advanced tech capabilities these people have at their disposal. Even outlying communities are relatively well equipped with weaponry and defenses, making them quite tempting, if difficult, targets. For the present, Your Lordship has determined to seek the many rich locations for plunder that can still be found elsewhere. The community under discussion is not inclined to more practical non-military pursuits, having a relatively small agricultural base; yet it is strangely reluctant to coerce support from the surrounding peoples (even granted, there are few such that could truly help them). The advisors are uncertain, given the information gathered so far, whether they have some hidden trade routes or are merely squandering their existing stores. In any case, it would likely be fruitful to establish some connection, perhaps offering foodstuffs or entertainments we have taken from the eastern and northern regions in exchange for some of the weapons. With sufficient study, Your Lordship's excellent leadership will no doubt soon have analyzed the people enough to raid one of the smaller villages successfully.

Starting just inland from the western coastline, the vast lava plain stretches 300 miles eastward, and 600 north and south. The twelve great peaks from which the lava spread can readily be seen spaced about it. Mt. Wyrea to the northwest, and Mt. Thalera and Mt. Benaliss to the southeast, still rise slowly each year; their floods of molten rock have slowed greatly in recent years, yet still new lava flows over the plain. The other peaks lie quiet,

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no doubt their driving engines stilled by the passage of time. We do observe substantial areas of artificially accelerated erosion that were not present in our previous passage, and suspect that some autonomous environmental-quality apparatus must remain active there. If allowed to continue, it could remove the entire current lava flow within 50 years, at its current rate.

As Your Lordship no doubt recalls, while flying over the plateau at night three years ago, the lookouts saw lights on Mt. Josiphen (You've yet to rename it since Josiphen fell from Your favor among the concubines). The lights appeared in regular patterns of lines — most likely the lights of a built community — and stretched from the plateau almost to the peak. On the upper border, a wide, dense cluster of lights surrounded by a ring of darkness no doubt marks a wealthy residence or palace. At the time, we were judiciously avoiding a confrontation with Parnassus and Olympus, and You decided to save closer investigation for later. I incorporate this incident, of course perfectly clear in its major features in Your memory, for the direction of future commanders of expeditions such as mine, that they may see their duty.

THE OCEAN OF SAND

Continuing eastward, we come to the Ocean of Sand. This seemingly endless desert covers much of the south-central continent and, as You know, at first appears deceptively empty of life. It is the location where Your cousin Jos was stung by one of the large, many-legged burrowing insects and died. There are many more such dangers hidden within this land, but also opportunities, which Your Lordship has capitalized on in the past and no doubt will continue to do in the future.

Where lava meets sand, a community of mechanical life-forms dwells. These machines take good advantage of their environment, and have relatively sophisticated manufacturing capabilities for these times, building solar arrays out in the desert and extracting minerals from the lava. Despite these abilities, their knowledge is rather crude and their weaponry primitive, and they are easily intimidated by superior technology. Witness the number of servants around the palace that we have obtained in this region.

Further into the desert, we find rag-tag nomadic bands of non-human descent. Reptilian in nature (obviously lacking much in the way of intelligence), they ride large, quadrupedal lizards in the driest, most desolate areas. They are particularly inseparable from



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DEBRIS REMOVAL SYSTEM

Size/Type: Large Aware Construct
Hit Dice: 7d10+20 (58 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold: —
Initiative: +2
Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)
Defense: 17 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15
Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: +5/+13
Primary Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d8+6)
Full Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d8+6)
Fighting Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 10, lava transmutation, resistance to energy 20, solar powered
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 15, Con —, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Balance +6, Climb +9, Repair +5, Spot +6, Survival +8, Swim +6
Feats: Athletic, Dodge, Survivalist
Action Points: —
Allegiances: —
Reputation: —
Environment: Lava fields
Challenge Rating: 7
Advancement: None
Level Adjustment: —

The robot has a body about the size of an adult horse, mounted on a dozen triple-jointed, extensible legs, which allow it to maintain a steady footing on almost any surface at almost any angle.

DESCRIPTION

The DRS (Debris Removal System) found working on the West Coast lava fields is the last known model of what used to be a wide range of customized products, each designed for a different sort of environmental hazard. The DSR does not engage in combat willingly, and seeks only to escape so that it can continue its mission.

COMBAT

Lava Transmutation (Ex): Once every 10 minutes, the DRS can emit a cloud of aerosol nanites that stretches out 100 feet in all directions. Over the next 10 minutes, these particles transform basalt, obsidian and other volcanic products into a nearly liquid slush, which will wash away in any rain or gradually settle into the soil below if left undisturbed.

their mounts, being reduced even further to confusion and disarray when parted or the mount killed. Some of Your scholars speculate that the riders and their mounts are descended from some mutual ancestor, or even that they may be strongly dimorphous mates. We have no idea how they survive or upon what they subsist in these conditions, although they will readily attack (and likely consume, if given the chance) travelers they come upon. The riding lizards are generally sluggish, but are urged to great speed and energy during an attack. Indeed the mounts are of more concern at these times than the riders themselves. There is little we can gain from them, although advisor Rotun has suggested that we might drive or entice them to attack one of the oases or the river lands in order to "save" the target and reap the rewards due such saviors.

Still further into the desert are located three large oases within the sands, the largest of which is some 17 miles across. Each of these oases has a mixed population, primarily human, with agricultural economies, having few technological resources. As such, these targets would be useful mainly for their remoteness, and Your Lordship has decided not to exploit them for the moment, keeping them open as potential hideaways should the "police" cities prove too great annoyances. Especially promising for such a use is El Encolaro, the second largest of the oases, since it borders on a significant ruin that could be a source of old technology. In this same ruin also lies one end of a great fallen structure. Once hoisted many miles into the sky, it now lies on the Earth, its twisted, contorted length half-buried in sand, a reminder of the fallen arrogance of the surface dwellers.

> See the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Four: Home Sector and Beyond, "Creating a Community," *Example Locations and Communities*, "Specialists: The Protectors of the Second Tower" for more about this structure and its history.

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DESERT RIDERS

Size/Type: Medium Mutant Humanoid
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold: 16
Initiative: +1
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Defense: 12 (+1 Dex, +1 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 11
Base Attack/ Grapple: +1/+2
Primary Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d4+1) or by weapon
Full Attack: Bite +2 melee (1d4+1) or by weapon
Fight Space/ Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Lizard steed bond
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10
Skills: Balance +2, Climb +2, Handle Animal +8, Jump +2, Listen +1, Move Silently +2, Ride +8, Survival (desert) +4
Feats: Animal Affinity
Action Points: 10
Reputation: +0
Allegiances: Tribe, steed
Environment: Desert
Organization: Solitary, family (3–5 adults, 3–4 children), tribe (2–8 families)
Challenge Rating; 3
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment; +1

Human in general shape, the lizard stands 5 to 5 1/2 feet tall. Its scales are the shades of desert rock: tan, brown, red and gray.

DESCRIPTION

The first desert riders were created four full generations before the Final Wars to aid scientists studying the long-term climatic changes in North American deserts. When the Wars came and killed the humans to whom they'd reported, the desert riders continued as before. They use no advanced technology of any kind, not out of religious or psychological imperative, but simply because sand and dust make most machines fail. They prefer to rely on found materials.

COMBAT

Desert riders prefer to fight from the backs of their steeds whenever possible.

Lizard Steed Bond (Ex, Mut): A desert rider gains a +3 bonus to Intelligence when riding or touching any lizard steed, and a +6 bonus to Intelligence when riding or touching one that the desert rider has trained personally.

Skills: Desert riders have a +4 species bonus on Handle Animal and Ride checks with their lizard steeds (this bonus is reflected in the skill totals above). They may always choose to take 10 on Handle Animal and Ride checks with their lizard steeds. They also have a +4 species bonus on Survival (desert) checks.

LIZARD STEEDS

Size/Type: Large Mutant Beast
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (25 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold: 15
Initiative: +1
Speed: 60 ft. (12 squares)
Defense: 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 12
Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: +3/+8
Primary Attack: Hoof +3 melee (1d4+1)
Full Attack: 2 hooves +3 (1d4+1)
Fighting Space/ Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7
Feats: Dodge, Toughness
Action Points: —
Reputation: —
Allegiances: Rider, pack
Environment: Desert
Organization: Solitary, pack (10–20 adults, 5–10 juveniles)
Challenge Rating: 2
Advancement: 4–10 HD (Large)

The size and general shape of a horse, the reptilian creature has the same range of colors as the desert rider.

DESCRIPTION

The lizard steed was created from horse and lizard genes to carry desert riders on their various chores. A mesh of neural nodes beneath the lizard steed's scales enhances the innate intelligence of any mounted desert rider.

COMBAT

Lizard steeds are obedient under saddle, but revert to predatory ways when loosed to hunt and scavenge. They hunt with very rudimentary pack tactics, and usually avoid anything larger than themselves.

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THE EAST

The eastern part of the continent holds the richest hunting grounds for the City, and many of the greatest opportunities. It is also the subject of greatest contention among the advisors, with several actually opposing You openly with objections to targeting some populations. A tight reign will need to be held on these elements, and their foolish thoughts of alliances and "goodwill."

THE SOUTHERN COAST

The desert reaches nearly to the Mississiffi river before giving way to scrub and moister climate. Before crossing the river, however, we swing south in our journey, to one of Your favorite resting places just off the coast in the Kayrip Sea. Here the other floating cities of our City's vintage do not often go; and the weather is generally mild and predictable in the summer months, other than the occasional small storm spun off from the ever-present Hurricane Lithithya to the east. The coastline itself is a contentious area west of the Mississiffi swamplands, long known as a gathering point for outcasts and bandits. The several towns here have made for good sport, such Your lordship's singularly entertaining idea of coercing the town of Lautwiksthon into kidnapping the daughter of the neighboring New Austin's mayor. The two communities ending up waging a pitched battle at the Lautwiksthon gates to the great amusement of the on-looking population of the City, and they likely will continue the amusing feud for some time. Not to mention the fine addition Alla made to Your harem.

THE GREAT RIVER AND ENVIRONS

The Mississiffi marks the beginning of two significant unexploited areas.

To the south, where the swamplands spread wide around the last 180 miles of deltas, is a network of small communities that are somewhat astounding in their ability to survive here, co-existing with the dangerous creatures of all sizes. We have seen no great weapons or technology, so the advisors suspect some great cache of biotech not seen in the main communities; but our spies have been unable to discern the location of a cache. Despite not being able to dominate these people the way we do other areas, Your Lordship especially enjoys the Spawning Festival You declared for late summer at New New Orlean. The community enjoys coming aboard the City for three days of dancing, singing and great food. The Danseurs de Plume will be in their splendid terl-feather costumes; and Jornal L'Belle, the best cook the natives have, has agreed this year to come and cook his specialty Lemon Pepper Naphtha (cooked, of course, in its own heat) specifically for Your Lordship's table. The festivities will last far into the night, with crowds around the City's observation decks to watch the light displays twinkling up and down the river channels from exploding fish.

LOW TECH ISN'T STUPID

It's tempting to think that anyone surviving well in difficult circumstances must be using super-science, or relying on the products of super-science, including mutations and nanotechnology. It isn't necessarily so. People survived and sometimes lived quite well in apparently harsh climates with limited technology for many thousands of years. Their post-apocalyptic successors have the advantage of access to knowledge even if they no longer have the science and technology from before the Final Wars. It's possible, for instance, to build railroad rails out of the same wood that makes up the ties, and then to pull wagons along them behind teams of horses: The Roman empire could have had railroads if anyone had thought of them. A community of the Gamma Age could connect those ideas and do just that. The same is true for many other inventions from recent centuries, so that a community with low technology can nonetheless have many creature comforts and a high standard of living.

Some low-tech communities really do lead lives that are nasty, poor, brutish and short, and GMs shouldn't make every new community that characters expect to be primitive and miserable into an unexpected paradise. The surprise works best when it is sprung only rarely. For their part, characters living in resource-poor communities can adapt high-tech ideas to their circumstances through analysis, as presented under "Investigation" in Chapter Six: The Gamma World Campaign of the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**. Add one analysis layer at the same DC as the one preceding it to understand how to adapt Pre-War technology, or two analysis layers at the same DC for Advanced technology. It's not possible to work out low-tech adaptations for nanotechnology, since nanomachines are just too different from the tools available to technically primitive or resource-poor communities.

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The other unexploited area is the Greater Ogayu Valley Empire. A brief foray into its history seems appropriate to explain why the City has not exploited the area so far, and why it may wish to do so soon. Some time after the Final Wars, a great leader appeared in a small community along the Ogayu River and began knitting many of the communities together. Her name was Sandara Prestock; she is revered almost as a goddess in the empire communities, wielding great powers of command and destruction. These stories are obvious fabrications, of course, and in reality she would have been far less a person than You, Your Lordship.

Nevertheless, she was able to bind the river communities into a loose confederation with herself as the leader, after which they began to assimilate the surrounding areas. The dubious ideals of freedom and participation in governance attributed to Prestock even seduced the populations of some neighboring areas to rebel against their former governors, further expanding the empire. The new empire quickly acquired a relatively well-equipped army; and where at first they had merely invited new communities to join them, now they began to employ force as well. Your father, in his encounters with the empire during its years of expansion, was able to take good advantage of this trend. He directed the City to provide intelligence on communities near the empire's borders in exchange for high-tech equipment, especially the replacement parts we so often need.

Something happened around ten years ago, and Prestock vanished. The empire was, at the time, embroiled in a guerilla war against the horned people who dwell near the Mountains of Smoke; and no doubt she stupidly placed herself at the forefront of the fighting, as was her style, simply falling victim to an ambush in the wilderness there. The outlying towns of the empire, however, still tell myths about the woman being carried off to some great land from whence she will one day return. A lesson for those who rely too much on wishful thoughts.

The current situation in the empire is one of consolidation and retreat. The tributary lands were always given significant freedom to govern their own affairs, so long as they paid tribute to the empire and kept the peace. The army even went so far as to recruit many of its troops from the local regions. While this no doubt gave them additional incentives when fighting to protect their own people and when ridding the empire of dangerous creatures or machines, it causes a significant amount of trouble when it comes to enforcing the empire's will on the subject populations. The founding towns along the river are often involved in bitter political infighting, trying to control the resources and trade of the empire's core, and do not care much anymore about the affairs of their more distant territories.

The majority of the advisors, indeed all those but the misguided moralist minority, believe this situation will provide great opportunities for the City. Your Lordship can play the territories against one another — perhaps even fomenting a small war wherein we may acquire one of the larger artifacts these communities are usually based upon. Of particular interest in the short term is the region near the mountains to the east. Here our scouts see machines issuing periodically from one of the old transportation system tunnels. These travel in large groups on once-underground trains that have been

COMPLETING THE PUZZLES

This book leaves questions like "What happened to Prestock?" deliberately unanswered, and there's no planned surprise lurking behind the scene. She might have been kidnapped, mutated or killed by her enemies; or have committed suicide; or have stumbled into one of the long-range vehicles found in **Out of the Vaults** and rocketed off to unknown territories. GMs who want to use the Ogayu as presented here should settle on an answer that suits the campaign and players. See the **Gamma World Game Master's Guide** for extended discussion about making setting details reflect a chosen theme, mood or style. It's also possible for mysteries like this to remain unanswered, just as in real life there's no real answer to questions about mysterious disappearances and one-time strange phenomena. The fact that matters to a campaign with an unsolvable mystery in it is that the mystery nags at some people, characters and others, and motivates them to go ask questions and poke into circumstances they'd otherwise leave alone.

Sometimes an unanswered question can make a very satisfying part of a richly developed setting. Sometimes it just annoys players and makes them feel futile. Exercise discretion, keeping in mind that nobody knows your particular campaign as well as the people actually playing in it.

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modified to travel via hover power over open terrain. One scout witnessed an encounter with a local army unit, which was significantly outclassed though not outnumbered. The result was a near massacre by the machines, which used some sort of gas attacks to either disable or kill the organic soldiers and resorted to physical weapons only against the mechanical units still fighting. This threat re-ignited an old feud among several nearby communities as they strive for control of the army in their own defense. In turn, the feud has rendered the entire region vulnerable to the City's Raiders, without much worry of retaliation — nor, perhaps, even correct identification.

Even in the other outlying areas, our only true worry is the still-strong central legions. These troops have maintained their beliefs in Prestock's ideals, for now, and still work to maintain the cohesion of the empire — maintaining the roadways constructed between villages and enforcing the discipline of the regular troops stationed in the territories. As this last effort fails, Your Lordship will be able to exert Your will against the remains to great benefit.

THE EAST COAST

We travel east and south from the Empire, now. The devastation on the eastern seaboard mirrors the western, with most areas in ruins and fraught with radiation, bioweapon fallout and dangerous nanotech. The southernmost sections are especially dangerous for the City, and even Your Lordship should take great care here. Several of the ruins have been extensively infected with nano-wasps. Were it not for the self-sacrifice and discipline of the late Bergon, the scouting party he led to the remains of Atlanta would have brought the infection back to the City itself, possibly destroying us entirely. As Your Lordship recalls, Bergon realized the problem when one of his scouts loosed a horde of the wasps, and refused to allow the group to return to the City to escape them. When the constructs infected his vehicles, he even organized a survey to determine the extent of the problem, reporting back that nearly all structures that remained standing were mere shells housing more wasps before contact was permanently lost. Since then, we have investigated other ruins in the area from longer range, and found many of those nearby to also be infected.

Along the southern peninsula, a similar problem is growing. Whether some medical kit was damaged long ago and altered from its original design, or if some home experiment got out of control, we shall probably never know. Whatever the source, something causes large patches of skin

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to grow in many areas. The blight begins, no doubt, as a few cells or perhaps some nanounits blown or carried from some source location. These spores quickly convert some organic substances into skin cells at a very basic level, while merely coating others; no one we questioned was able to determine any pattern in the choices. Thus, some areas have been converted to plains of skin, while others are grotesque skin forests or even skin-streaked buildings. The only things that stop the grotesque conversion are broad swaths of inorganic material, and fire. In one location, the scouts have reported human forms moving around on the skin with no apparent ill effects.

Your advisors speculate that these forms are either non-organic in nature, or have developed some immunity or counter-agent. While the City should be extremely cautious when in this area, especially due to the possibility of the agent traveling airborne in the regular storm systems spun off of Hurricane Lithithya, it is a potential weapon, so warrants further investigation.

THE STORM LITHITHYA

It's unclear how long this weather system has been threatening the lands around the eastern Kayrip sea. The storm may be a relic from before the Wars, or an artifact of the Wars themselves.

The City spent three seasons following the storm some two dozen years ago, once Your father came to believe that it was actually inhabited by intelligent beings. It remained an object of intense curiosity for him until he disappeared. The storm's wandering is bounded to the north by the intense high-altitude winds that flow across the southern part of this continent, and again in the south by a similar band of wind traveling eastward across the southern continent. It never ventures far into the sea between, staying more to the deeper eastern ocean; but, as I mentioned earlier in this report, periodically it spawns smaller storms that batter the land masses and islands as far west as the desert coastlines.

The main storm is dense, full of water and debris, making it too powerful for the City to risk entering; but there is a transitional zone up to 15 miles wide, which hosts a fascinating collision of arboreal and marine life. Many species of plants have adapted to the aerial existence, either floating feathery strands or sprouting gaseous bags the winds keep aloft. Still others make their homes on the backs of other plants, creating islands of greenery that float through the roaring skies. The creatures that inhabit the fringes are no less fantastic, although a large number of ordinary birds also dwell here. Many, such as the meerl that You are all too well acquainted with, are quite dangerous. This area is a favorite among the younger members of the Wind Raiders; surfing the edge winds, hunting the floating jungles, and searching for days for the chance to hear the song of the elusive siren bird are popular past-times. Perhaps one of these youngsters will even succeed in capturing a siren alive, providing still another wonder to adorn Your grand courtroom.

Now we head north along the coastlines, to where masses of a strange weed grow in dense banks for many miles just offshore. These waters are visited by a strange people from the north, who traverse the waters in long, low ships and brave nearly any hazard in pursuit of plunder. They ply their way along the outer reaches of the weed, just beyond its reach, then set great fires to break through to land. The slave Orbu was one of those kindred, encountered on a ship accosted by the Wind Raiders. The warriors on the vessel fought tenaciously without once asking quarter, even going so far as to hole and founder their ship when it was apparent they would be overwhelmed. It was a minor miracle the raiders were able to capture this one survivor, plucking him helpless from the sea.

The coastal interior is strewn with minor enclaves of riff-raff, none of which are truly significant, though the inhabitants would boast that they are most high and mighty. Here, our City regularly re-supplies with food stocks, textiles and other basics of comfortable living. You should take note of Your father's careful policies not to press too cruelly upon any one population, but to spread the burden of supply as a shepherd would spread his take from his flock. In some ways, Orbu's people compete with our City, raiding among our flocks like so many wolves, although they spend more of their effort scavenging in the ruined cities. There are several communities embedded in the mountains with greater resources and defenses that are not currently worth the effort of a raid.

THE NORTHERN PATH

The City's wanderings have occasionally taken us across the wide continental regions north of our usual circuit, though Your Lordship has rightly decided not to venture too far from Your preferred southern climes. While there are diverse peoples on this path, few can provide the amusements You desire. Of course, the wayward voices among the

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MEERL

Size/Type:	Large Mutant Beast
Hit Dice:	4d10+12 (34 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold:	16
Initiative:	+1
Speed:	Swim 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)
Defense:	12 (+1 Dex, +1 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 11
Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:	+4/+10
Primary Attack:	Bite +5 melee (1d6+2) or tentacle +5 melee (1d4 Con)
Full Attack:	Bite +5 melee (1d6+2) and tentacle +0 melee (1d4 Con)
Fighting Space/ Reach:	10 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:	—
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 14, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 3
Skills:	Swim +12, Listen +5, Spot +5
Feats:	Dodge, Mobility
Action Points:	—
Reputation:	—
Allegiances:	—
Environment:	Stormy seas
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	6
Advancement:	5–8 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment:	+2

A snake-thin fish up to 15 feet long, the creature moves through stormy seas and the wet winds of a hurricane with equal proficiency. Tentacles waving around its mouth occasionally emit sparks.

DESCRIPTION

The meerl is a rapacious predator, a long fish-like creature that reaches as much as 15 feet long. It "swims" through the dense inner reaches of the storm, climbing via powerful updrafts that are common in the region, emerging on the fringes of the storm high above. From there it drifts it way down to the sea, dropping on its prey from above. The creature's armament is simple but quite deadly. It sports great slashing teeth and a set of long tentacles to either side of its mouth which can deliver a stunning jolt, often rendering the quarry helpless in mere seconds. The creature is relatively undefended when approached from above, and can be harpooned or netted if surprised. A meerl that realizes it is being stalked will drop from sight like a rock carelessly tossed overboard. The few specimens caught and examined have revealed a large bladder filled with noxious gases, which is no doubt the mechanism used to control its rate of descent and provide buoyancy in the storm's interior. The creature's flesh is quite delicate and flavorful, making hunting it an attractive proposition despite the risks.

COMBAT

Skills: The meerl has a +8 species bonus on Swim checks to perform special actions or avoid hazards, and may take 10 on a Swim check even in dangerous situations.

advisors occasionally contest reality here, but Your wisdom in traveling this route infrequently is obviously well warranted.

THE NORTHEAST COASTS

Orbu's tales provide much of what we know of the far northlands, although he was greatly prone to exaggeration. His people, whom he called the Eenoot, live on scattered islands and along the edges of tremendous glacial plains, where they cluster with simple farms around green areas warmed by volcanic springs, or live in great icehouses, hunting in the seas and the snow-covered wastes. The people revel in daring escapades, honoring the members who have challenged some great beast or remote peak. Perhaps due to the apparent harshness of their existence, their interactions among themselves are simple and straightforward. A great emphasis is placed on fair dealings, and any questioning of the honor of a forthright man will be met with a demand for a death-duel or some other trial to prove the questioned one's worth. Yet even a weak man need not fear questioning the actions of a strong man, as perfect strangers may (and often do, if Orbu is truly to be believed in these matters) take up the defense of an over-matched duelist believed to have spoken truly.

One such tale relates the story of a youth who, upon the death of her father, contested the righteousness of the headman's appropriation of her father's ship as payment for old debts. The headman proffered a challenge: If the youth could win a race of some 150 miles to an ancient sea wreck and back, the headman would revoke his claim. The villagers refused to take part, but a group of adventurers

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passing through offered to crew the youth's vessel, allowing her to take up the challenge. Over the course of the race, both ships were attacked by great beasts from the depths and from the air, and were forced to fight together to survive the voyage. Upon return, the headman adopted the youth as his successor in honor of her courage and leadership, and would have rewarded the adventurers mightily had they agreed. As I intimated earlier, Orbu's tales leave somewhat of truth to be desired.

More interesting are the tales of raids by ursoids. Orbu blustered quite a lot about these creatures, claiming any number of heroic victories by intrepid Eenoot hunters; but in candid moments he confided that they are the true masters of the wastelands. Great white bears, he described them, with misshapen, distorted heads and an uncanny ability to produce strange grey limbs or tentacles when it suits them. They are likewise able to produce long, extensible claws from their massive, deadly paws. These creatures have an affinity for basic military machines, and will often wield guns and other ranged weapons, while the most fearsome favor use of a hovee as well. Imagine a single gargantuan animal sprawling in a vehicle designed for four humans, manipulating the controls oversized paws, while using one or more oversized weapons in its tentacles. Orbu once spoke soberly of the survivors from one village where fifty well-armed warriors were decimated by four such animals working in concert. Yet other tales he told were of single, unarmed ursoids exploding out of the snow to ambush unwary hunting parties, then carrying the bodies of the fallen to the edges of their home villages, arraying the dead with their weapons and possessions arrayed as though to honor noble, though vanquished, foes.

THE FALLEN CITY

The path taken by our City curves westward again, traveling inland north of the Ogayu Valley Empire, past the shores of the great inland sea. Here is the site where Thleeluc fell to Earth. Our sister city before the Final Wars, Thleeluc remained allied for some years afterwards, until the citizens there tried to interfere in the establishment of the line of Lordship and Your father's ascension to the throne of the City. Once the Lordship was secure, Your father of happy memory sought out the renegades and directed the Wind Raiders to destroy or capture the city's levitation machinery. He left them sinking and burning over the sea, believing that to be their end; but instead they were able to capture one of the great floating whales and use its buoyancy to reach the shore before striking the Earth. Their desperate effort was in vain, however, as we have seen no sign of life within the burned and shattered streets. Your Lordship has continued Your father's tradition of executing traitors at this site by hurling them to their doom in the ruins to lie among the whale's bones. Perhaps, though the loyalty of the Wind Raiders might be tested; it is time for an advisor or two to join those below.

THE PLAINS

Continuing west, we reach the wide northern plains, blending into the desert to the south and into the thuntra to the north. These plains are home to many small, semi-nomadic bands of very diverse makeup. The late Sir Wili, Your father's one-time tutor, labeled these groups "The Tribes." Ark communities dominate the southern regions, ranging out into the sands at times, but generally keeping to the scrublands. As these creatures are rather distasteful and general quite primitive, there is little reason to raid those parts, although the pit masters occasionally request new blood for their fighting breeds.

Along the eastern shore of the inland sea dwell a strange group of mutants, thin of body and thickly furred — they would appear almost a breed of uplifted animals, yet are clearly humanoid in general build. These people are not nomadic at all, living in rough cave-dwellings dug out of hills near the shore; but they trade abodes at times. At the time of our most recent passage, our scouts reported that whole populations of some villages had switched places with other villages. The reason for this incomprehensible behavior has not yet been divined by the advisory council. The humanoids are excellent swimmers, and subsist almost entirely on marine life, which they catch with simple spears, baskets and nets. With their fur, they have no apparent need of cloth or coverings, and have few useful skills, which leads them to spend much time playing and lying about. In fact, the only use our City might have for them is for their fur and their great swimming ability, although how the latter could be taken advantage of remains to be seen. Perhaps they could be trained to obey simple commands, as they are quite curious and approachable, though it is obvious they will never master civilized behavior.

The interior of the plains is more fragmented, with few communities showing any real genetic relationship with their neighbors. As such, these villages are hard to characterize and somewhat

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unpredictable. There are likely many conflicts, as savages have so little concept of ordered society. One community is more interesting, as several sentient machines have been spotted among the lesser folk — no doubt controlling mini-empires, though why they would waste their time in such outlandish locales, no one really knows. When next the City is in this area, we would do well to have the scouts keep a surreptitious watch on this group. Perhaps they have hidden caches of machinery or spare parts that can be appropriated.

The rugged terrain along the southwestern border of the plains is home to perhaps the most important (albeit strange) tribe in the plains. This generally human tribe designates themselves the Ragers. They are distinguished by the hover-cycles they drive, and the empty vehicles they herd. Despite our best efforts, our spies could not learn how the Ragers make use of these vehicles; although from a few captured arks we have learned that the vehicles are allowed to run wild most of the year, only to be rounded up and driven far into the foothills in the early autumn months — or perhaps it was late spring (the ark translators are still mediocre at their profession at best). The Ragers themselves are either more obstinate or more fragile than the arks, as the members we have caught generally die before revealing any truly important information. Many questions remain. What do the vehicles actually do while ranging wild? What reason do the Ragers have for rounding them up? How do the Ragers keep their own cycles in such excellent repair? Perhaps, in the end, it is just some madness they all share that drives them to behave in such strange fashion.

The northwestern plains are being subsumed by great forests stretching out from the mountains further west. Undoubtedly, there are communities hidden within these fastnesses, but the density of trees makes it nigh impossible to locate signs other than a rare wisp of smoke that quickly fades before it can be properly investigated. The trees themselves provide some interesting variations — one location will be dominated by groups of gargantuan, hundred-meter high sequoia, while another nourishes tightly interlocked and prickly pines. One area of several hundred square miles is covered solely with short, bushy evergreens that are cared for almost slavishly by motley groups of creatures living in near-abject squalor, seeming to care for little else but the needs of the trees. The trees themselves produce fruits that grow in multiple colors, sizes and shapes. For some unknown reason the fruit grows in early winter and, as it ripens, begins to flicker

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CAMPAIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The example of the Ragers raises two concerns for the GM who'd like to use them in a game.

• **Trivial vs. Important.** One important principle of flexible, well-rounded settings is that there's room to go into greater depth without it being necessary to do so every step along the way. The scribe may be right that the Ragers just suffer from some lasting psychosis, perhaps the legacy of biochemical weapons unleashed during the Final Wars to make a community unable to focus on effective defense. If so, then characters could discover that through a combination of social analysis and medical or historical research. On the other hand, the answer could be a lot more complicated and subtle. When the GM provides simple answers that are plausible but not entirely certain, there's room for players to make their own decisions to explore in more detail or move on without feeling either that they've wasted their time or are losing out on the only neat thing in the area. Many apparently obvious answers are right, and many aren't. A good campaign has room for both.

• **Singular vs. Plural.** The narrator describes the Ragers as unique. He may be right, and so characters who encounter them — or belong to their tribe — deal with something unique in all the land. He may also be mistaken, and have overlooked other tribes like them. The fact that the narrator says there's one doesn't require the GM to say that there's *only* one. Unique groups and recurring ways of life both add to a well-balanced game world.

and glow until the entire tree lights up with a dazzling display.

These fruiting evergreens have proven to be even more interesting upon closer examination. Although the Raiders had to fend off fanatic attacks by the denizens when the trees were disturbed, several specimens were successfully transplanted into the City. Near the middle of the winter fruiting season we discovered the trees actually become ambulatory, attempting to move indoors or position themselves near well-traveled thoroughfares until the season ends and the fruit falls. The tree owners have learned to simply let them do so, as otherwise they will wander about the City and attach themselves to a different household. Some of their neighbors have voiced concerns, however, that most of these owners are becoming a bit obsessive, spending inordinate amounts of time taking care of the trees. Rumor has it that the trees are reproducing rapidly and spreading around the City, and we should act promptly to put an end to such dangerous disruption of public confidence.

THE FAR COAST

Finally, we come to the northwestern coasts. The City's path has always turned south again at this point, and traveled quickly through the areas frequented by Parnassus and its allies. When last we came this way, however, Your Lordship was intrigued by rumors from the northlands and sent several long-range Raiders to investigate, despite some advisor's' objections about the lack of necessity. (I should like to point out that Joanne DeGrae has been foremost of the contrary members of the advisory council; it may require Your attention to quiet the unrest she represents.) Recently, the Mighty Champion alone returned with wild tales of a mountain covered in slow-flowing glass, beneath which distant forms could be seen moving about. The survivors also speak of clouds of giant insects that brought down the Slasher's Pride and the Lone Gun, tearing them to pieces in mid-air. While likely these are great exaggerations fabricated to shield the incompetent from just punishments, it would no doubt be prudent to avoid those regions for the time being, as there is much of value to be gained elsewhere.

SOUTH AMERICA

At last we are under way! It took ages to convince the stodgies on the Society Council that we cannot just sit around waiting for History to trickle in from the Outside. Now we shall seek it out and wrest back from the world the knowledge that was taken from us! And more important, I believe, we will be able to document the beginnings of mankind's restoration of his former civilization.

Our quest will circle the southern continent. The Council provided us with a ship and a company of the Guard for protection. They also "provided" one of their own as Head Historian: John Wellington Baxter Smith XVII. So all of the younger historians and the lesser scientists will be constrained by the conservative element in charge. At least we were each issued small allotments of

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paper for our own use. Thus I will attempt to provide my own summaries of the regions we visit.

NORTHERN COAST

We've crawled our way past the shorelines for three weeks, now, looking for signs of real civilization. The reality of the situation Outside is a horrible shock. Cities are nothing but ruins, broken remnants dotting the coast. Individual structures are either burnt-out, radioactive shells, or empty halls filled with fragments of the dead. The wilderness between such ruins is punctuated only occasionally by small tribal villages clustered around some partially preserved remnant of civilization, full of misshapen parodies of humanity, broken almost beyond recognition in many cases.

At each such village, we spend several hours convincing the locals that we aren't hostile (this usually involves Gregory fixing some Pre-Wars trinket or other), then listen to the Head Historian interview them. It is always the same story. They have no real idea of timeline or date, or much in the way of solid documentation of events, either before or after the Final Wars. They subsist on primitive agriculture, tending small farms and flocks of small herd animals. Of the past, they tell only fanciful stories of great warriors fighting in the skies, of plagues and the judgment of the gods in the time of their grandfathers. Of the present, they tell of pirates, who come once or twice every year to extract a tribute of food and recruits. There's no History here, only Lore. But the Historian has me write it all down in the official Record anyway. He believes some of the tales are of recent events, such as the story of a pirate ship being attacked and sunk by the flying warriors before it could exact tribute from one village. A waste of good paper, if you ask me… though I suppose he might think the same about this journal.

The ship's guard are wearing themselves to the edge, anticipating a pirate attack that never materializes, but yesterday they missed their chance to take real action. We rounded a point and found the town in whose harbor we're currently anchored. It's practically a small city, as there are numerous buildings and an earthen wall around the perimeter. The three other ships anchored here are obviously pirates, but the guard won't confront them. Our captain, Colonel George-Whitterson Mary XII, points to the lack of farms and obvious industries, and says this town must depend on piracy for their economy! He's afraid we'll end up fighting the entire area, and the Historian agrees. The latter is only interested in recording History, not in trying to help make it.

Several merchants groups showed up on the docks to meet us, but were disappointed and left when we explained that we weren't "traders." We wandered the town and spoke with various shopkeepers, but

THE RUINS OF THE REPUBLIC

From: Father Jacob

DIRECT ADDRESS: KNOWLEDGESERVER!STLUKE2!GRAZ!MAKER!JACOB

To: Sister Kylee

DIRECT ADDRESS: CONVENTSERVER!STLUKE1!GRAZ9X!CHAMBER!KYLEE

Subject: The Ruins of the Republic

Sister Kylee, as per your request I'm forwarding the file retrieved from the damaged synthetic's secondary hard-drive. Feel free to contact me if you need any further assistance with this project.

— Jacob

Initial hard-drive message retrieved by the Order of St. Luke, Graz Convent

It no longer matters what is said, done or wished for. All it takes is seconds: a few moments in which bliss transcends into grief and hope fades as the glowing lilacs on putrefied summer meadows. Everything changes and what remains is for us to interpret and re-create. That was the Final Wars in a nutshell — the result of deteriorating conflicts pushed to the brink of complete chaos without anyone realizing what was happening.

It's hard to imagine what those who witnessed the fall of the Gamma Age felt like. It was not until today that I realized that a minute may leave the sensation of lasting an hour, but frankly, I suspect that is due to the damage caused by the last plasma blast. Hopefully you're able to restore these records, so I leave this message for you: *Know that it was worth it.*

This is my moment of transcendence.

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the picture didn't alter. These people serve as a clearing house and safe harbor for motley gangs of bandits that work their way up and down the coast, stealing enough to support themselves and the town, but building little themselves. The markets are filled with broken bits of machinery and odd trinkets, none of which appear safe to even handle, let alone try to use. There is neither formal guard nor much rule of law, beyond what the current self-styled Baron dictates and a crude code of conduct enforced by peers that prevents the worst atrocities. The walls around the town are to protect them from some mysterious enemies that dwell in the jungled hills of the interior, as well as the crazed monstrosities that occasionally wander by.

Now, five days after leaving the town, we have encountered a group of the jungle-dwellers. We stopped at a village, and were speaking to the chief, when we were suddenly surrounded in the village commons. They are all of one humanoid species, a strange mottled green in color. They wear one-piece suits of a material that camouflages them, yet changes to rainbow hues when they wish it to, shimmering and moving with them almost like a second skin. I saw no metal or plastic in their possession at all, other than a small knife; but each individual has several accessories made from an extremely strong, woven-fiber material. Despite the creatures' apparent lack of armament, the villagers fear and respect them greatly, bringing gifts of food and cloth but withdrawing as much as possible to their homes. I could see the intruders were also cautious of us, stationing several members in sheltered locations around the commons, but the ones who approached us seemed confident, and even a bit arrogant.

THE RUINS OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

Document Author: Tima, Head Historian

"To explore the ruins of the Fifth European Republic and summarize the findings for future research at the main abbey of the Order of St. Luke."

The mission statement we received at the Congregation of Understanding was clear and simple enough for any child to understand, but none of us expected what would happen to the Republic Expedition throughout our journey.

Sister Kylee, as our superior and contact at the abbey, it's imperative that you understand that while we're proud of our accomplishment that is bound to aid future scholars of our order, we might have wakened the sleeping menarl. When you process my words in this document, I'll be long gone, but it's my hope that Niz'ze gets this back to you regardless of cost.

My legs are frozen and damaged beyond healing. Although the Wanderers provided painkillers to aid me in finishing this document, I feel the intense throbbing return. It's funny, Kylee, you always told us to look beneath the surface of the mysteries that the world offers; when we did, all we found was death.

THE TRAVELING TRADERS

Let's go back about two years when we left the convent. In an attempt to make the travel plan more efficient, we set off southwest so that we could use the Endless Coast as a guide on the journey. After three days of walking through grasslands and mountains, constantly annoyed by the vast herds of Hoppers following us, we encountered a family of dabbers.

In light of their role as traveling traders, I considered the dabbers to be an excellent source of information, or at least a secure supply of any pre-Final Wars trinkets that might come in handy later in the expedition. With the sunset at hand and many miles to go before the next village, the dabbers invited us to camp with them for the night.

Dabbers are known to be collectors of shiny objects, and this family was no exception. In exchange for a mirror and some minor gems from the travel chest, the father was willing to speak of their journeys down south. Apparently the father was on his way home to his Grand Caravan (what he meant by that you have to ask a dabber), for his treasure was found and he got a family along with it. After discussing these family matters and scaring off Marley (who is truly a pure-strain human at heart despite his claims), he lowered his voice and spoke of a city of iron in the south, from which no mutant or synthetic returned unchanged.

THE BLACK CROWN

He called it the Black Crown, and vividly described its outer walls of steel and blackened iron stretched far up into the sky, causing numerous birds and flying lizards to meet their doom upon its upper spikes and blades. As he told us of this extraordinary place, he led me to

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conclude that the city's walls were cast in the shape of the symbolic crown used by kings in long ages before cybernetics and genetic engineering.

The dabber said he traveled east from the City of Water in hopes of locating *the treasure* (it appears to be a manhood rite of some sort; remember to ask dabbers about this) after a failed attempt to excavate an ancient ruin in the area. After a few weeks of travel, he entered a densely forested area of pinewoods that is the home of a small human colony. Despite his attempts to locate the correct path to the village, he found himself in a vast swamp with no end in sight, and thus he decided to continue his journey by the swamp shore to the east. This was a mistake on his part, for the swamp was the home of a mutated being that seemed to be an extension of the landscape itself. It dragged him into the swamp and attempted to suffocate him, but by using the dabbers' talent for trickery, he escaped.

Severely wounded, disoriented and without food or fresh water, the dabber continued his journey for uncounted days. Eventually he passed out from exhaustion, only to awaken to the sound of hoofs — several brutorz passed on a small path not far from him. His first thought was that it was a caravan of some sort, since he witnessed several humans dressed in armor passing by as well. Then the last brutorz came into view pulling a huge cage. Inside were dozens of wounded or drugged synthetics, chained to the cage and guarded by small mechanical beings.

In short, the dabber trailed them to the Black Crown. The black color on the iron walls comes from the constant release of smoke from the odd buildings in the city's southern districts. According to the dabber, the humans brought their captives inside; and hours later, after much screaming and cursing, the prisoners emerged without any visible synthetic implants. Also, the humans seemed to engage in trade by using metal pieces and gems, and most of their food was vegetarian (something that the dabber wholeheartedly approved of). It was about this time that the story took an unbelievable turn and the dabber engaged in a swashbuckling tale where he saved his wife and caught a pre-Final Wars tablet that shines in the clearest green (one which he refused to display to us since he believed Marley to be a "thief and an impolite scoundrel").

Once the dabbers went to sleep, those of us who were still awake discussed the story and whether or not the expedition would spend time locating the Black Crown. The city is likely (if the dabber's story



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is accurate) the center for a pure-strain colony 'that has developed advanced techniques to extract implants and enslave both synthetics and mutants. From the sound of it, it seems as if the buildings where the extraction process occurs are old factories or industrial buildings that survived the War. It's a place of pure darkness, sister, and we decided not to investigate the location; we did not want to risk the safety of our expedition members.

At dawn we packed our belongings and continued. It was not until an hour later that Marley discovered that several of his items were missing. If there is one thing you can count on when traveling, it is that a dabber is a dabber and you must keep an eye on them while ensuring their friendship.

TRIBAL WARS AND EARTHQUAKES

We abandoned our plan to reach the Eternal Coastline after meeting the dabbers and headed directly towards the west to avoid any contact at all with the Black Crown and those who reside there. Our journey was dull and we made little contact with people except with traveling caravans, when suddenly an astonishing thing occurred. After two weeks of traveling, the region's climate unexpectedly changed to something we never expected to find that close to home. This is truly remarkable as none of our documents or books mention the existence of a *jungle* in this area. Intrigued by the mysterious change in climate, we set off to the south; the climate appeared to change even more as we went that way. Weeks passed, and although we survived the journey, the hoppers did not.

Marley and I called a meeting, and we both agreed that going further when there was such intense heat and almost no edible vegetation was simply too dangerous. Now, we all knew the risks of going on this expedition, but I have never and will never endanger any of my fellow researchers in vain. We went back north, and it was then that we found ourselves captives for a short period of time.

THE HEARTS OF THE EARTH VILLAGE

By sheer luck we located a stream of water that was free of any mutating pathogens or nanites (or so our equipment told us). The expedition came to a halt and while some ate and rested, the rest of us refilled the water supply. Tiredness from the heat took the upper hand and most of us fell asleep. We awoke to the sounds of kinetic weaponry being fired; as we scrambled to our feet to get away, the trees bent aside and a mechanical monstrosity entered the camp, weapons blazing. Jahna and the other guards readied themselves for battle while we, scholars, took cover. Although they are capable warriors, our defenders were wounded and captured, and so were we.

Within minutes, the camp swarmed with tribesmen dressed in worn Shadow Years suits. They quickly tied us and loaded us onto a cart. While I never understood a single word they spoke, their constant exaggeration of facial expressions and rapid movement of hands and arms to impose their meaning on us aided me in grasping the core of what they wanted. Niz'ze and Maria (our linguist) informed me that they spoke some sort of Italian with syllables coming from the ancient Spanish language, and so they acted as our interpreter throughout our captivity (and stay).

The tribe of the Hearts of the Earth lives in a matriarchal society where outside contact is the province of the men. Meanwhile, the females of the tribe rule their home domain with a strict yet loving and guiding hand. It took a while to discern this during our initial first encounter with the tribe, but eventually it came naturally with whom to speak and when. Within three days of our imprisonment, the cart we were transported in arrived at their village, which is located in an area that explains why the climate has changed so much from that described in our old texts.

Not only could we see several places in the distance that were clearly infected by radioactive remains and mutating pathogens, but the actual living area is close to three active volcanoes. According to the village elder, legends tell of a single volcano that erupted during the Final Wars. As the ground shook under a barrage of kinetic blasts from the sky, buildings fell asunder and the two additional volcanoes rose from the ground. Ever since that time, the Hearts of the Earth provide protection for the area, and keeping enemies at bay.

According to the elder, the men took us captive because of a conflict between her people and a similar tribe close to the Mediterranean Sea who used terrible nanite weapons to wage war. Upon asking why they warred with each other, she showed us an old industry facility, built into and above the ground, which was still active. She admitted that they would soon be able to produce more of the Shadow Years suits our captors wore; the facility had been in fact a textile factory before the War.

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Apparently the expedition of traders thought us to be spies of the southern tribe, but the elder dismissed that notion quite early on and set us free in their village.

The tribe is extremely friendly towards those who come in peace. We shared their food and water, and even danced with them when the elder's daughter married their "technosmith." Overall, it was pleasant "captivity" and a welcome change from sleeping in the jungle. The houses were mostly made of clay, but with inserts of plastic, metal and wood, constructed as we would build our storage buildings.

A few weeks after our arrival, the village was attacked by the southerners and Jahna died in a blast of horrifying nanite weaponry. Luckily enough, the volcanoes erupted and drove off the assailants while the elder led us to a shelter made of a metallic alloy similar to the fibers used in their Gamma Age clothing. Upon returning to the surface again, she sent us off with a trading expedition heading north. To display her gratitude and console our loss of Jahna, she gave each of us a set of their clothing as her intuition told her that the expedition would come to need them at some point.

Without sounding ungrateful to the elder and her village, one has to ask if the Hearts of the Earth, the volcanoes themselves, are more than they appear. It was in a timely fashion that they erupted to drive the attackers off. Could someone or something have waited until the attackers were in position and then had the volcanoes erupt? Is there a mystical force, like so many religions speak of, or is someone influencing the volcanoes eruption cycles to have them work as defensive weaponry?

THE GIGANTIC GUARDS

Once the expedition was out of the jungle, our guides departed eastward in hopes of locating villages or cities willing to enter into a trading alliance with the village. We took a narrow path through the mountains where we once more made acquaintance with hordes of hoppers. We passed through some minor villages where we usually stayed overnight, talking to the citizens and befriending them in hopes of learning more about *their* perceptions of the world.

As expected, none of the citizens seemed to have an understanding of the timeframe between the Final Wars and the contemporary era, and most even lacked knowledge about cities or locations that lay more than five days journey from their home.

The landscape in the north of what once was Italy, the south of Austria and Belgium, was very welcoming to us. Grasslands and mountains, just like home. But as we passed through a mountain pass we were trapped in an earthquake.

Three of our assistants fell into cracks and the earth swallowed them. Much of our equipment perished under blocks of stone falling from the top of the mountains, and we ran and sought cover wherever we could. It was then that we spotted a mysterious cavern opening with three gigantic, mutated birds guarding the entrance. Now, understand that this was no ordinary cavern opening at all; the entrance had plastic-like doors. Marley wanted us to proceed without disturbing the creatures; but once the quakes subsided, I decided to risk angering the guardians.

One of the wounded brutorz in our company had to act as bait. Niz'ze, I and two others quickly moved up on the side of the mountain while the birds set off to finish the dying animal. Before we reached the top, however, the birds were back in place. Niz'ze managed to take some pictures of the location by using the final shots in the Noetic Age camera. Although we are not entirely certain, it seems as if the birds are guarding an entrance to an old AI command central. The symbols on the doors are Old Italian, and Maria believes that they mean "**The Center**."

THE ONE DIVIDES

In a complete frenzy over the course our expedition had taken, Marley confronted me and then engaged in argument with almost everyone at the camp that night. Those who shared Marley's view of my leadership joined him and broke off from the main expedition. The last time I saw him and his companions, they headed south in an attempt to locate a ship for sea travel and thus avoid hostile terrain and possible enemies who might be following in the expedition's wake. After they left, we packed up and headed north to investigate an area we had heard was totally devastated by the Final Wars, but whose ruined beauty now was something to behold.

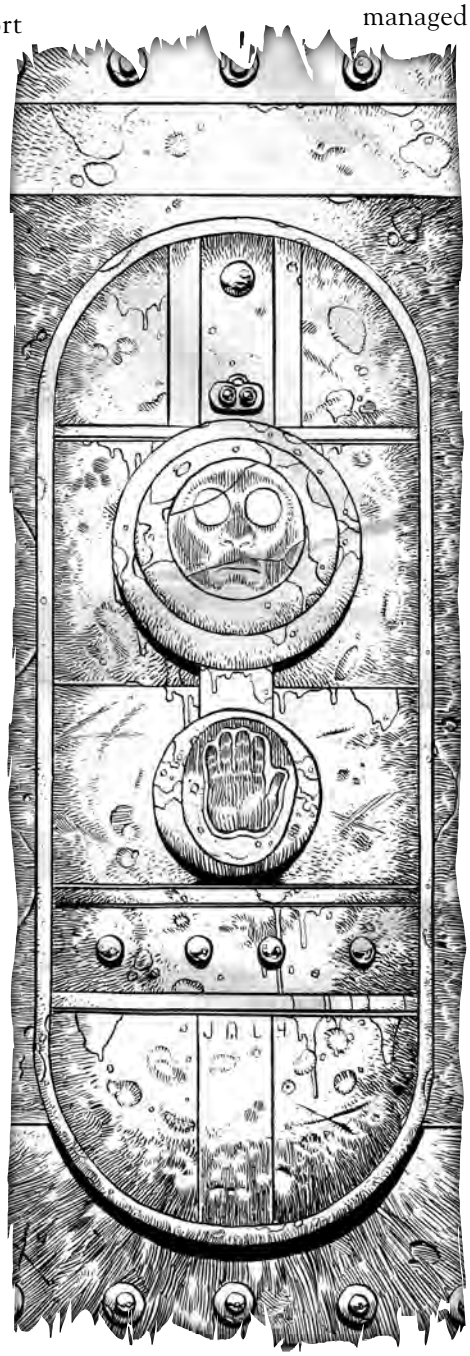
A JOURNEY THROUGH A DIFFERENT LANDSCAPE

The main reason that I decided to allow the expedition to travel in this direction is due to the lack of records from this area. You and I know that; Marley did not as he lacks authority to access those records.

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THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

The entrance that the expedition discovered is actually a passageway into a pure-strain colony that uses the mutated birds as enslaved guards. The colony is protected by air filters and force fields. It's possible to short circuit the doors and enter the colony, but that requires a DC 45 Computer Use (data and operation systems) skill check. The passage automatically opens for anyone that the DNA-sensors confirm is without mutated genes and counts as pure-strain.



The citizens of the colony are pure-strain humans who have never left their sanctum since the end days of the Final Wars. The doors were sealed, and no visitors have made it past the N-falcons. Due to this, many of those who lead their lives there have a narrow-minded view of how the world is today. In fact, many suppose that there is no world outside their own, resulting in a graver problem than mutated or synthetic visitors: overpopulation.

The colony, governed by Ambassador Keri and her staff of 25 advisors, expands in all directions beneath the surface in order to construct more subterranean living quarters. Despite knowing that these expansions result in severe earthquakes in the affected areas, they continue with their plans. Indeed, using the pre-Final Wars digging lasers and equipment might cause the downfall of the colony as they work in areas with weaker soil, such as beneath swamps, and near old fault lines prone to tremors and collapses.

Trade is the core of the colony's insular economy; but unlike their neighbors and rivals above ground, the pure-strains do not lack any material possessions. Their currency is goods for services. Meanwhile, some of the advisors have managed to establish contact with abandoned cameras in city ruins and have seen glimpses of the outside world; they are preparing to take over the world using their advanced weaponry. Despite the objections of Ambassador Keri and most of the Center's inhabitants, the advisory council increases funds and services to build a military under the pretense of guarding against outside threats that might break through the seals.

This is a small land beneath the surface that actually is much like the Earth was before the Final Wars eradicated humanity's advancements. There are nanite factories, laboratories, research centers, communication, vehicles and other items that would allow the pure-strain citizens to assume control over a wide region if they decide to embark on military conquest.

Their weakness, however, is their fear of alien spores, mutated individuals and synthetics. Indeed, their fear is partially justified, for they're extremely sensitive to outside viruses and bacteria. Add +10 to the DCs of all Fortitude and Constitution-related checks for Center dwellers to resist disease and infection from micro-organisms. Characters who discover this weakness may be able to use it to their advantage if conflict breaks out between

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the Center and individuals or groups the characters care about. A DC 12 Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) or Treat Injury check can identify unusual levels of bacterial activity in a captured prisoner or corpse; a DC 15 Knowledge (behavioral sciences) check can identify infection-avoidance behavior among Center dwellers in the outside world after (12 – Intelligence bonus) hours of observation.

N-FALCON

Size/Type:	Medium Mutant Beast
Hit Dice:	10d10–10 (45 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold:	15
Initiative:	+2
Speed:	Fly 60 ft. (12 squares) (average)
Defense:	14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/ Grapple:	+10/+10
Primary Attack:	Claw +12 melee (1d3) or wing slash +12 melee (1d4) or eye lasers +12 ranged (1d8 fire)
Full Attack:	2 claws +12 melee (1d3), wing slash +7 melee (1d4) or eye lasers +12 ranged (1d8 fire)
Fighting Space/ Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:	Camouflage, DNA scan, low-light vision
Saves:	Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 11, Dex 15, Con 9, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 13
Skills:	Computer Use (biotech systems) +5, Hide +8, Intimidate +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +8, Survival +4
Feats:	Dodge, Improved Damage Threshold x2, Weapon Finesse
Action Points:	—
Reputation:	—
Allegiances:	The Center of the World
Environment:	Mountains
Organization:	Pair or pack (5–7 units)
Challenge Rating:	12
Advancement:	11–15 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment:	+3

These monstrous metal birds have the morphology and dull, ruddy plumage of smaller raptors, but their wings and claws glimmer in the sunlight, and their eyes gleam red.

DESCRIPTION

The N-falcon stands 6 1/2 feet high at rest, and has a 26-foot wingspan. Its falcon-like head is covered in shiny metal armor that contrasts sharply with its ruby-red scanning eyes. Built into the eyes are sensors capable of identifying genetic contamination strong enough to make a target no longer pure-strain (by the standards of the N-falcon's makers). The body is covered in metal feathers, which can project camouflaging holograms. The wing-tip feathers are razor-sharp and highly polished so as to enhance their intimidation value.

COMBAT

N-falcons move in pairs and prefer to attack with wings or claws. They can fire three attacks with their eye lasers before needing to recharge them. They circle their prey, watching for any movement towards the gates to the Center of the World; if their prey stops advancing, they return to their places and continue to guard.

After killing their prey, the birds devour the remains and transform it into energy. Bones and indigestible remains fall to the ground as droppings, which the N-falcons obliterate with laser attacks after scavengers finish their work.

Camouflage (Ex): The holograms projected by the N-falcon's metal feathers give it a +8 bonus on Hide checks during periods of normal use (this is reflected in the skill totals above). If greater stealth is necessary, the bird may kick its integrated trideo processors into overdrive, granting it a +20 bonus on Hide checks for 1 minute. The bird's processors require 8 hours to restore normal function after this time, leaving the bird bereft of its normal camouflage system.

DNA Scan (Ex): The N-falcon carries a DNA scanning system as an implant. The implant has an effective range of 600 feet; the bird makes a Computer Use (biotech systems) check to activate the system (the DC is usually 10, and the N-falcon may take 10 on the roll if circumstances allow). The scan finds any deviation from pure-strain human genetics in the target, and notifies the bird of the target's prey status. The implant may be removed from the N-falcon and used by another creature.

Eye Lasers (Ex): The N-falcon's eye lasers have 3 charges, a range of 200 feet, and inflict 1d8 points of fire damage. The bird recovers 1 charge per hour of direct sunlight.

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Morale was low for a few days as we passed through a completely devastated area where the ruins of old vehicles and hillside excavations provided homes for numerous odd and malevolent creatures. Every few hours, cracks in the ground emitted jets of steam followed by small showers of hot, dark blue water that tasted like acid and exerted a corrosive influence until cool. Despite our warnings, Hanz discovered that the hard way and lost his tongue when he sipped on it. Of course, three days later, he grew a new one with a mild acid-secreting capability of its own.

On the fourth day after leaving the pass, the expedition entered a village in the midst of these lands. While the inhabitants were predominantly mutants, there were both synthetics and humans among them. As soon as we reached the center of the village, the villagers surrounded us and children came to us begging for trinkets and scraps. The adult population greeted us with suspicion, and most mothers and fathers attempted to get their children away from us. I was not surprised by their behavior since they choose to lead their lives there; it's a melancholy climate.

Their houses were small and made of wood and brick, but the interesting thing was that despite their inhabitants' behavior and suspicion, the buildings lacked doors. There was no door in sight, not even inside the houses from what we could see. Apart from doors, the village had everything one could expect with the exception of medical facilities. Once we got to know a few of the locals (who spoke our language as they had once traveled to our regions), they informed us that there were only two laws in the village, which seem to be paradoxes when put against each other.

The First Law: Care for your family and neighbors.

The Second Law: Survival of the fittest.

According to those who spoke to us, the villagers feel that everyone who settles in the area belongs to their family; but even so, if one of them is hurt or commits an injustice against another citizen, that person is on his own. (Interestingly enough, their language assumes that an isolated individual is male. I must add this to the lexicon of isolation when we return home.) They warned us not to eat of their food, as it would most certainly contain toxins of some sort. Of course, the villagers had developed immunity to it, but strangers often died after having dinner.

Although it took hours to convince (and barter with) the tavern owner to allow us room to sleep in the stables, we could not rest as it turned out that the tavern is a full-time brothel at night, when those who we believed were beasts and creatures of the land come to town for enjoyment. We unanimously decided to continue with our journey northwards to search some old ruins we had learned about the day before. As we left at dawn we were met by an astonishing machine. It was extremely friendly and told us that it traveled the lands, fulfilling its programming of healing the sick and wounded. Before leaving we had ourselves examined and cured by this machine and I tell you, Kylee, it worked wonders. I am no longer deaf in my left ear!

I am glad we left the area when we did. The very next day, while we were on a break, we could see smoke rising from behind us. It must have been a gigantic storm of that acid water. I expect that the villagers are immune to such a rain, but we are certainly not.

THE DIVIDED CITY

Our next stop was the ruins of the ancient city. Upon arriving from the south we noticed that the ruins were not small or isolated, like most we'd encountered so far, but stretched several miles in all directions. Despite being covered by the growing vegetation reclaiming the area, traces of buildings were easy to spot everywhere. In the distance we saw a gigantic tower, reaching high into the clouds; and all around it, lights flashed in different colors.

When we reached the city, we witnessed a war waged among several different factions in the boroughs around the tower. Before we could withdraw, some of the shooters spotted us and headed in our direction, guns blazing. As we attempted to hide, an old woman waved to us to come to her. Trusting she would know what to do, we did as she wanted.

Maria explained our predicament to the woman, and she simply said that we should turn around and see. Once we passed over a specific line, where the woman stood, the men turned and headed back to the center of the battle. The old woman, Claire, explained that the tower was the last remains of the days before the Final Wars. With the city ruined and several gangs attempting to take control over the two sections (the city is divided by a polluted river), all factions agreed that allowing the tower to stand would keep hope alive among the people. Thus the grounds of the tower were considered a sanctuary.

The city had once been a gigantic metropolis for research into human behavior. She gave us

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directions to a building not far from the tower area when she learned of our mission. It was an old book house where a few citizens decided to restore old documents and data recovered from the ruins in an attempt to assemble the history of the city. In order to get there, Claire told us, we would have to bribe the guards with food as it was scarce in the city due to the severing of trade routes when a malevolent gang leader, the Marquis, took control of the northern area (in which the book house was located). By helping Claire in her tavern for a few days, we earned enough food to bribe ourselves into the Marquis' area by dawn, and we stayed in the book house for the rest of the day.

Of the book house there is not much to add. It is a three-story house, and all floors are filled with benches and lights so scholars can perform their work. We learned one interesting fact from an old data tablet written in our language. Apparently, the city attracted many lovers, and the tower was once a symbol of great architecture during the Precursor Age. Our excitement was at an all-time high, but our opportunity for further research ended that night.

As we walked toward the protected area, none of us noticed that we were in fact being followed by the Marquis' henchmen. With no time to react or defend ourselves, they caught us and took us to see the Marquis. Now, I have seen many mutants in my life, but never one with at least six legs and an equal number of arms, and so massively obese. I am no thin man myself, but I estimate he was five times as large as me. He demanded that we swear our loyalty to him and provide him with all the knowledge he needed to take the remaining areas of the ruins. We refused and he ordered his men to behead us at dawn.

As they were transporting us to their jail, a thunderous boom as if something exploded echoed through the night. We all turned to see the tower crumble to pieces as kinetic weapons from the sky tore the city asunder. The soldiers were in turmoil; and we seized the moment, escaping with only a few bags of our research equipment but still alive and free to continue our expedition.

EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY TO THE NEW WORLD

The escape from the Marquis was exhausting: We threw ourselves into the river and headed out to open sea to avoid his followers. The water was freezing; and had we not encountered the ship heading for the New World, we would surely have drowned. In exchange for our last pre-Final Wars displays, the captain agreed to take us to the New World and promised to guide us to his home. This he described as the center of a trade alliance binding together numerous villages and cities along the devastated coasts of the New World.

The captain informed us that the New World had once been a large island, but after the Final Wars, it split into two landmasses whose people continually fought with each other. They called the other island the Highland, and it was governed by ferocious savages. (Of course, from what I gather, the Highlanders are completely normal and not at all barbarians as he led us to believe. One need not fully *accept* an account to *appreciate* it, or to use it as a guide to unrecognized truths.) In fact, after our stay in the captain's hometown, we met with a Highlander who had moved to the ruined city of Yari-Mooth. He told us that the Highland was divided into different areas all ruled by clans and chieftains. Conflict ensued between areas that could support the living, but that was only because of a lack of resources. So much of what was once land is now under water, and diving equipment capable of dealing with the treacherous currents and dangerous fauna was scarce.

As for the captain's hometown, it's an interesting city composed of ruins from the Shadow Years (and before) and rebuilt stone houses. We didn't dare to stay long due to all the chaos and conflicts.

The city is divided into minor areas ruled by various warlords and would-be emperors. Yet, in the midst of this chaos, they amazed us, for their ways were odd. They challenged each other to duels, which they fought with unarmed combat and such unusual challenges as artistic competitions, logical analysis and culinary exercises. Whatever the means, all participants would agree that the winner was correct and the loser would go home peacefully acknowledging defeat. Never once did I see anyone killed by members of rival factions. In fact, we were welcome in every leader's home and learned not only the language and traditions of the region but also that they thought that if they controlled the seas around the isle, they could keep violent tendencies from the outside away from their society. An admirable position if I may say so myself.

> Keep in mind the rules for *Nonlethal Damage* in *d20 Modern*, Chapter 5: Combat, "Injury and Death," when playing out duels in the Yari-Mooth style.

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No, it was not due to the factions that we left, but to those who ignored them and called themselves the Free (the precise meaning of the term in this context eludes me). They adhered to no laws and traditions except those that benefited them, and our presence did not benefit them.

Adam, the leader of the Southwestern faction, revealed to us that the alliance had trade deals with a land or city called Cope in some poorly-defined part of the world beyond their immediate vicinity. Due to our mission of exploration, Adam arranged for us to go with one of their ships to the city, and avoid the Free. We had four days to go to Yari-Mooth before the ship left. We were there in two.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE ICE LANDS

Have you ever heard the tales of the lands covered in ice? Of course you have. They're myths, but can you believe this — I'm laying in a shelter, inside a fur, on that very ice as I write this. Do you envy me now? No, of course not; but yes, I'm at the end of my summary.

We never made it to Cope, Kylee. After all, the ships are not completely trustworthy and this one brought us completely wrong. We must have traveled even further north than we ever intended. The climate grew colder and colder each day until it was freezing cold, and we had to utilize our gifts from the Hearts of the Earth to even stay outside. Despite our attempts to steer the ship around, the captain and his crew were adamant that this was just the weather of the season. When we objected, they drugged us and left us lying on the ice with nothing but a few weapons and our clothing.

The nights were long, I tell you, and the few hours the sun shone upon us were our happiest moments. All of us were certain that we would perish and be forgotten on the ice. The wildlife is almost non-existent here except for the occasional predator. Thankfully, the weapons we got were good enough to keep them away from us. Then, one late night, or day, we could see light beyond the horizon. We hurried as much as we could and half a day later, we saw houses of stone, their occupants dressed in furs and cloth, and small houses of ice. It was a village!

THE WANDERERS

Know something about the Wanderers, as they call themselves: They may have only the most limited access to technology, but they have room in their hearts to accept outsiders as their own. They believe that each living creature, whether it is a predator of the ice or a traveler whose home is three months away, has a place in the world and must be



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REQUEST FOR A FAVOR

From: Kylee

From: Kylee

DIRECT ADDRESS: CONVENTSERVER!STLUKE1!GRAZ9X!CHAMBER!KYLEE

To: Jacob

DIRECT ADDRESS: KNOWLEDGESERVER!STLUKE2!GRAZ!MAKER!JACOB

Subject: Request for a favor

Jacob,

Thank you for sending me the documents on the Fifth European Republic. Now, I need a favor from you. I know it will take quite some time from your schedule and you will probably have to utilize a few of our synthetic members to accomplish this.

I believe there is a second document on the back-up hard-drive, a document hidden beneath the one you sent me. Its contents must be so horrifying that they found it necessary to encrypt it. He said: "*It's funny, Kylee, you always told us to look beneath the surface of the mysteries that the world offers; when we did all we found was death.*" When we were young, that was the phrase we used for warnings when it concerned something we hid from the village elder. He also mentioned "*disturbed the factory*" when talking about animals. Could this be a Final Wars lab for mutants, or is it something else? He then finishes with "*animals tracked their inner scent.*" He must mean DNA with this, I am certain of it.

Whatever they found, it killed the expedition, and I must know if I am correct in my assessment. Please check for any anomaly in the data on the hard-drive. And, Jacob, keep in mind that this is sensitive information. You know how to transmit it to me.

May the Eternal Source of Knowledge bless us all.

Sister Kylee

Overseer of Records and Future Knowledge

cared for when possible. At first, however, fur-dressed men with guns took us into one of the buildings and guarded us. Although it took us a while to master reliable communications, we now speak their language as well; and it is, in its odd ways, extremely alike to our own.

I now know that they took us into custody because they wanted to know who we were and where we came from, why we were dressed so funny and if we wished them harm. It took some doing, but Niz'ze and the already-resident synthetic Kia interfaced with each other and managed to overcome vocal language barriers. They learned about us and where we came from, then took us in and made us family.

Now what can be said of the Ice-Lands? There are more villages here than the one we encountered, but they are few, separated by weeks of travel on foot or sled. The Wanderers do exactly as their name implies: Wander the lands while herding some odd animals I have never seen before (and whose name I'm still unable to pronounce or spell). They use these animals to provide fur for clothing and insulation, to ride, and also to trade with others in this frozen vista. The ice peoples conduct the simplest sort of fixed-quantity barter. A skin from the animal is worth two barrels of liquor, and for twenty-five animals you can become an important figure in society.

I'm glad that my death comes while the sun is actually up. It is a land living in darkness, but it's a land that I've come to love and adore. I wish that I'd been able to return home one day and tell you and everybody else about this place, but that will never happen.

Three days ago, Niz'ze and a group of hunters disturbed the factory of a group of sleeping animals. They would not have us disturb their sleep, and so they engaged the hunters. Niz'ze and two others made it back to our camp, but the animals tracked their inner scent and are attacking at intervals. I've asked Niz'ze to store this on a hard-drive and my wife (yes, I'm married now) to go as far south as possible to reach our lands. If you read this, she succeeded — I never could have expected anything else from my love.

May you be blessed with knowledge, Sister Kylee of Graz!

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RUINS OF THE EMPIRE

I admit to being a bit stunned at your correspondence, Jack. I always assumed you were familiar with these areas, but apparently I was wrong. You do not have to apologize for asking about this, old friend, I will gladly relay as much information as I can about my years on foot in the Empire. As I have only been home for a year now, I doubt much of this has changed — but who knows what waits out there? I wonder if I will one day see your beloved Oceania. Please, if you can and have time, tell me about your lands. We have talked much about personal life and our closest communities, but can you give me an overview of what has happened in your lands since the Final Wars?

Space is limited and my synthetic neighbor tells me that I can only fit a minor amount of information on the disk enclosed with this package, so what you get will have to make do until we meet in person next year at the conference.

Sincerely,

Dena

THE MAINLAND ALLIANCE

Approximately one week by ship from my home is our primary connection to the mainland of what was once a great empire. Understand that before I undertook this journey with the blessing of the elder council, I had never left our islands; so what I discovered was a completely new and fascinating world. When our ship approached an archipelago close to the mainland, I found myself enthralled by the ruins located upon the many islands. There was a mix of architecture that could only stem from the Precursor Age and the Noetic Age (or so I believe), but still there was one island that truly caught my eye.

THE ANCESTORS' SANCTUARY

Located on a small island is a gigantic statue of a man sitting down in peace. The statue is surrounded by temples that survived the Final Wars. It is indeed an amazing sight. When I asked about the possibility of going there myself, they told me that no living creature has set foot on the island for as long as anyone can remember. The island is apparently protected by an incredibly strong force field. Nonetheless, the location is a place that enriches local myths; for they also mentioned that the entire island lit up with thousands upon thousands of candles after nightfall, and mysterious songs and chants can be heard coming from the temples. But who resides there? Is it automatic? Who exchanges old candles for new ones? I have no clue, but a lady who traveled on the ship offered me this explanation.

"I have indeed heard the songs and witnessed what they call candles burning in the dark. One night I followed my husband on his fishing boat when the light and sound appeared in the distance. My loving husband told me that his grandmother once passed on to him the secret of the island. She said that it was the echoes of the dead who perished for our foolishness. They are the wise and the pure, the powerful and the creative spirits of our ancestors. And they are the lights seen at night, not candles."

Could it be a mystical answer to this question? I wish I could find out.

BLINDING BLOSSOM

The next morning I bid the captain, crew and fellow passengers farewell and headed off towards the dock where I heard I could make contact with Sidra, whom the crew described as the most successful smuggler in this area. I entered the old harbor of the Mainland Alliance to find the Blinding Blossom. Now, the Blossom is the last place on Earth anyone could expect to locate me, but I had to go there in order to obtain items necessary for my continuing journey.

The old docks in the Mainland Alliance are worth noting for the interesting adaptations made to the buildings which make it possible to live in houses half full of water. You see, although the docks survived the Final Wars relatively well, what the explosions missed the sea reclaimed. Many of the houses have lost their first level and are now connected through a series of wooden bridges and stairs. One of these buildings is actually a four-story

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ENTERING THE SANCTUARY

While no one in the setting as described has managed to succeed at lowering the force fields around the island, this does not mean that it is impossible, or that characters must be prohibited from succeeding. Nonetheless, it is not an easy task, for the island uses sophisticated force field technology created just before the Final Wars.

Before characters can land on the island, they must cut off the energy supply to the force fields. Since the generators' primary energy source is the sun, characters must somehow manage to put the area in complete darkness for at least 20 days. Discovering that much requires a DC 20 Knowledge (technology: advanced) check after a full day of studying the island from out at sea or overhead. Artificial clouds, suspended canopies and even rampant fungal growth could all do the job; and players may come up with suitable ideas of their own. Twenty days after the hidden solar panels on the island stop producing energy, the back-up generators cease to function until completely recharged (which takes about a week if the weather is clear). If the characters succeed, then they can enter the island and the temples without any hassle.

It's also possible to disturb the force fields by depleting their energy with constant bombardment by plasma fire and kinetic weaponry. Two days of continuous attack with advanced weaponry will drain the fields, and they will shut off automatically. There is a 5% chance that shields deactivated this way melt down as they shut off, destroying the generators and burying their secrets in hot slag.

In campaigns with little to no advanced technology available, the GM may wish to allow alternative means of access. The shields might go down briefly just before sunrise on the third night of the new moon, when their energy is lowest. There might be relatively lightly shielded pipes for drawing in water for coolant, which the characters could overload with dropped rocks or large, provoked sea creatures.

What lies inside is up to the GM. **Out of the Vaults** provides many options for personal and community gear.

building even today. That is the Blinding Blossom, a location widely reputed to be a nest for drugs, prostitution and illegal trade.

Sidra turned out to be a valuable source of Pre-War artifacts, and she is incredibly good at making copies of even technological items such as the shiny discs (SDs) and distributing the copies to interested buyers for a small cost. My three SDs and a personal guide/guard cost me a tale, my sandals, and three days of servitude. (Oh! Sidra actually owns a machine capable of writing visible text onto the SDs! This is truly remarkable and a valuable relic. Now I know exactly what is on the SDs I purchased.)

THE CAPITOL

Following any of the three paths that run up from the docks leads directly into the capitol of the Mainland Alliance. The city consists of rebuilt skyscrapers and houses, but despite attempts to keep vegetation and beasts away, much of the wide landscape that once made up the entire city has been lost to them. A quarter of the conurbation is inhabited by pirates who call themselves the Kahn, after an old ruler of the empire at some point in Pre-War history. They are ruthless, and rob (and often murder) those who enter their domain. Due to their access to a few plasma cannons, they have been able to hold off the President's forces.

President: This is an old term for "elected leader," and the Mainland Alliance decided to adopt the term and its tradition two decades ago. The Alliance President sits as head of the land for life, but once he dies the citizens elect a new one. Due to the violence of the Kahns, the current President is the fourth of the series. Normally the elected President is an individual who has done a great service to the land and its citizens.

LIBRARY OF THE FORGOTTEN

One of the first items on the current President's agenda was the restoration of the capitol's library. They dubbed this the "Library of the Forgotten" since it was to display artifacts and books from all the previous ages. Unfortunately the President had to work with Sidra, as so many of the most interesting artifacts end up in her possession and she has proven remarkably adept at surviving all attempts at intimidation or assassination. Further, she is backed by an organization with widespread influence in and out of political circles.

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Restoration costs have far exceeded planned funding thanks to the constant problems of theft and damage. Adroit adventurers can earn money and political favor, since the President pays well for new and retrieved items. After previous burglaries, the President ordered three hovers with kinetic weapons to patrol the library tower and vicinity every 10 minutes. Their presence and surveillance gear have reduced the rate of theft, but many items remain at large.

MY APPOINTMENT

The Mainland Guard, a gathering of soldiers working under the President, protects government property from intrusion. They have access to very sophisticated ships, though rumor says not all of them operate with perfect reliability. In exchange for their protection, others provide them with clothes and food — basically that's the core of the economy here. As I entered the magnificent Presidential palace located in the ruins of two glass bridge-connected towers, I met with some of the President's advisors who explained to me that trade occurs in different forms depending on location.

With the villages past the Kahn camps, they trade clothing and food in exchange for young animals children brought back to the Mainland for future breeding and then food. With the islands to the east and west, they sell protection in exchange for construction materials, spices and the like. Inside the city, people look after one another through service in exchange for raw materials and all sorts of manufactured items.

Despite having made an appointment, I never got to meet with the President due to an emergency with the Kahn, but her advisors were happy to arrange transport out of the area with a trade caravan leaving the same day. Hopefully they solved the situation so I may meet the President another day.

THE STORY OF THE DAM IN THE TRADITIONAL VILLAGE

Two weeks' travel from the Alliance Capitol is a small village that works as a trading outpost. It was there that I learned of a dam constructed in the Precursor Age and re-constructed a generation ago. I thought it would be an amazing sight to behold, but the locals persuaded me to avoid it.

You see, Final War records from across the globe indicate massive use of kinetic and plasma-based weaponry, but this was not the case in this part of the Empire. Our enemies struck *hard*, using nanites

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to destroy our own creations and turn them against us. When this happened in the dam area, the nanites unleashed the river, giving nature its revenge while drowning the area completely and killing millions of the citizens. Due to nanite enhancement of the catastrophe there was nothing that could be done but face the water. Yet, from death sprang life. When water destroyed the area, the systems that ensured the electrical supply exploded and altered numerous nanites which then looked to the surroundings and found numerous animals, whose appearance they mimicked. Now the fiery simulacra of animals of that era roam the canyon and vicinity.

Normally, a small village like this would ascribe godhood to such creatures, but in this case the entire process is well-documented by one of the Survivors who rebuilt the village. Due to the Survivor's expertise, the village does not lack technical or historical knowledge, but it lacks Pre-War technology. Although they would do well to write this down, they refuse to. Their tradition is to relay knowledge to future generations through storytelling.

This fascination with Pre-War eras is also noticeable in their economy. They rely on metal coins and gems as payment and attempt to regulate their value by controlling the quantity of currency in circulation. The village has a Value Office where all traders must register their business and the quantities of gems and coins they own. In order to ensure a steady flow of these "valuable" items onto the market, they deduct a number of coins or gems from the trader depending on how much he earned. That money then goes to purchasing items for the village itself. Interestingly enough, this way of trading is slowly spreading to surrounding villages who normally conduct business through the exchange of goods and services. The Value Office called this procedure "taxation of the market."

The waters in and around the village are rich in sea plants and sea animals, but also a new and odd race of animals that the villagers call jumpers, which they acquired from a group of Fifth Republic traders. They are now attempting to cross-breed this species with the aquatic variety of brutorz to create a tame animal that can dwell both in sea and on land (particularly, in the mountains and cliffs a few days away from the village). Unfortunately, while I'd love to see the result, the village lacks the equipment to perform the actual procedure; they were working on locating such biogenetic tools when I left.

OUTSIDE THE ALLIANCE

My first stop outside Alliance-protected land was a gigantic cavern created during the War. At that time I did not realize that the cavern and the dam area were the very same, and that I should be prepared for danger upon approaching it. The story of my confusion and ensuing experience illustrates many problems confronting the would-be traveler and merchant.

ROAD TO THE CANYON

Heeding the villagers' warnings of the dam, I headed north in order to visit a temple dedicated to a god who can no longer be identified before going to the canyon. The villagers could not tell me much except its approximate location. The inhabitants of the temple occasionally travel to the village to purchase food supplies and medications, and provide few details about their home.

One night a powerful storm blew in across the region as I was finishing my bread and rice cake. While I intended to remain where I was during the storm, lightning struck nearby and the vegetation around me caught fire. Forced to flee in the darkness, I lost track of my position and continued away from the fires. Eventually I heard a massive sound echoing through the burning forest; and as I emerged from the jungle, a huge waterfall came into view. Below was the canyon the others talked about. Before I had a chance to react, a vast number of burning animals set off after me in hopes of devouring me. But then an odd thing occurred.

Both the animals and the fire caught up with me, but when the nanite creatures noticed the huge flames devouring the forest, they abandoned me and threw themselves into the chaos to feed on the energies. With only one way out, I looked down at the bottom of the waterfall, where machinery and metal boxes from the old dam ruins littered the stream's banks and several channels. I quickly jumped into the water and mounted one of the boxes, allowing the water to carry me to safety as rising flood lifted the box free of its entanglements in the stream bed.

From what I can tell, the area around the waterfall is completely destroyed and the ruins are beyond repair. It was if I traveled through a city of ghosts, and I rode upon their very graves while sitting on the box. I shiver as I write this, for that place is a reminder of what my own species' inventions can accomplish in the wrong hands. Suddenly the box turned in its path and I found

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TEMPLATE: BURNING ANIMAL

The burning-animal nanounit infestation produces consistent results no matter what sort of animal succumbs to it. The target's skin hardens and develops a grayish tint from insulating fibers woven into the normal exterior for its species, with semi-metallic wires glinting through cracks in the hide. The flames burn with constantly fluctuating temperatures, from vivid red through blue-white. The experience of burning isn't hideously painful, but is constantly distracting to the infected animal.

"Burning-animal" is an acquired template that can be added to any creature with the animal type (hereafter referred to as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The base creature's size does not change; its type is changed to mutant beast.

Hit Dice and Hit Points: The base creature's Hit Dice and hit points remain unchanged.

Speed: The base creature's speed is increased by 5 feet in all movement modes.

Defense: The base creature gains +2 natural armor.

Special Qualities: The base creature retains all of it's special qualities and gains these new ones:

Fire Healing: The creature can immerse itself in flames (the fire source must be independent of its own fire aura) and heal 1 point of damage for every 2 points of fire damage it would normally suffer.

Damage Resistance (to Flammable Weapons) 3: The constant flames make flammable weapons ignite on contact. Also, anything the creature touches it is at risk of catching on fire, as described in *d20 Modern*, Chapter 7: Gamemastering, "The Modern World," *Catching on Fire*. Note the the flames do not provide any armor beyond the simple ability to destroy vulnerable weapons like arrow shafts.

Resistance to Cold 5: Cold-based attacks have a difficult time actually reaching the creature, let alone penetrating its hide.

Base Save Bonuses: Add +1 to the creature's base Fortitude save.

Abilities: The base creature gains +4 Constitution and +2 to one of Strength or Dexterity. It suffers both –2 Wisdom and –2 Charisma.

Skills: The base creature's skills remain unchanged. Note that the flames provide torch-like illumination even in otherwise complete darkness.

Feats: Add Nanotech Attunement. The base creature gains 25 nanounits, plus a number of nanounits equal to its new Challenge Rating.

Environment: The creature's preferred environment remains the same.

Organization: The creature becomes a loner; its organization is considered solitary'.

Challenge Rating: +2

myself clutching it to avoid falling off in the midst of rock-riddled rapids. Eventually I slipped and plunged into the water, hitting rocks and wounding myself on scraps of metal. Despite numerous attempts to get ashore, I failed and lost consciousness. One would have expected my journey to end there but obviously it did not.

THE VILLAGE AND THE VAULT

Upon regaining consciousness, all I heard was drums, harps and quiet singing in language I could not comprehend. When I made an attempt to sit and see where I was and what was going on, an unseen hand immediately pressed against my chest and pushed me back to the ground with ease. I was too weak to offer any real resistance.

Although my position on the ground did not provide the best view possible, I noticed that I was in a cavern lit by torches hanging in the roof and on the walls. Moving my head sideways, I could see several small huts of clay and stone standing within the cavern. It was then that I noticed the old man who pushed me back to the floor. When he finally spoke to me, it was in a dialect not like my own but rather an older version of our language.

He told me that I had entered the Canyon Village, the only settlement to survive the Great Flood. Although he would not tell me how it managed to survive the flood, it is apparent that *something* prevents the water from entering the interconnecting tunnels that make up the underground village. After a little while he assisted me to a sitting position and I discovered that there was a large gathering in front of me. He told me that my arrival was the cause of much celebration, for they had not met with an outsider for a long, long time. I made an attempt at conversation but my mind was still blurry and I lost consciousness again. Upon

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awakening the very next day, I was completely healed (which is really remarkable considering that I noticed that bones were sticking out of both legs before losing consciousness the second time).

When asked about the wounds and my healing, the man smiled and said that yesterday was yesterday and sometimes old times affect tomorrow and that it was the way of the wounds. He took me around the main section of the village where I met with their tribal elders who supervise the endeavors of the villagers and guide them through life. The elders proclaimed a second gathering for the villagers later that night where I, the guest of honor, got to tell about the world outside. Let it suffice to say that a lot of the village women and a few of their men tried to impress and arouse me for I was the outsider, bearer of fresh blood to the village.

Their food consists mainly of sea plants and fish, due to the lack of access to more conventional farmlands and animals. They have a few areas in the tunnels where cracks open up for sunlight and they can grow a few crops, but there are not many such places. I admit that I felt a lot healthier while eating their food: They have developed a remarkable talent for creating meals that keep them alive for a long time in such uninviting conditions.

Most of the citizens spend their days in reclusive studies, and by nightfall they gather to tell of their findings to the others. I could not avoid wondering what they could possibly study if they lacked contact with the outside world, and I decided to sneak off to explore on my own. I ended up in the village hall where I located a secret passageway to a cavern beneath the village's main tunnel. The cavern was extremely large, and at the far end of it there was a gigantic metal door. I thought I was alone in the cavern until I realized that the door's security system was really an AI. Within seconds of attempting to open it, a shouting voice echoed in the cavern. While I did not understand it at the time, I now think it said something along the lines of "*Engaging lockdown of medical vault 56SK-56SE*."

I guess that is how they healed me up so quickly and why they refuse to leave the cavern. They guard the ancient vault and its medical technologies. However, I understand them. They are honorable watchers of history and they do not use their access to the vault to wage war with others more efficiently by healing their warriors and sending them off again. In fact, I don't think I ever met with a warrior. I did meet a seamstress, although I am not certain what she does as they wore very little clothing.

Once they caught me, the elders held a meeting and eventually a group of fishermen escorted me to the entrance and simply threw me out into the water. As soon as I felt the water against my body, the river grew wild and brought me far away before I could reach land at the exact location where I had to leave. Still, I made it up to the surface, so I know how deep to look for the entrance if I ever go back there.

ON MY WAY HOME

It took me almost a month to find another center of population, thanks to the growing number of nanite-afflicted animals and mutants that rampage across that weary landscape. I realized that it was time for me to go home again since my purse was almost empty and I felt my heart calling out for my family. I purchased a small boat with my last coins and goods before stockpiling all the dried fish and vegetables that I could locate. A few days later, after working in the village as a chef in order to acquire the food, I set off towards home in my new boat.

I cannot really say how many days passed before I noticed the spot in the distance. After days of watching only the open sea and the occasional undersea ruin, I was consumed with curiosity and the desire for something — anything — different. I changed course to see what was out there, beyond the horizon. As I closed in on it, I saw that it was a gigantic island, or rather multiple islands arranged in a curving row. The spot I had first noticed was a large cliff with a huge castle (or temple) erected behind a vast stone wall. It appeared peaceful at first, but I noticed a burning village and forest as the ship got closer to the island. It seemed my luck had run out once again, for I had arrived just in time for war to erupt.

Now, please understand that while I seek knowledge (and my curiosity attempted to exert control over me), I do not actively seek death. Because of this I decided not to set foot on the islands and settled on traveling by the coast to gather what information I could without jeopardizing myself.

Although the island is not an exception to the sea's conquest of landmasses, it seems to have managed to withstand the effects of the rising water relatively well. The post-melt coastal shelf is narrower here than in many inundated lands. My observations through the somewhat turbid water suggest that what is now eight separate islands connected by elaborate bridges was a single mass a century or two ago, with very low valleys between upland ridges and plateaus.

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The battle in the castle village was fought by warriors dressed in armor that I know I have seen in old movie clips from the pre-cybernetic era. I truly wonder what they were fighting for, as they would surely meet a gruesome death at the hands of their enemies, who seemed to utilize plenty of advanced kinetic weaponry and mechanical beasts. Nonetheless, I suspect that the attackers were out to get something that was in the castle, but they did not see what I could spot from my ship: a large vessel leaving a secret cavern beneath the cliff. I do not know the outcome of this obviously extended struggle, and while as always I wish to know the rest of the story, it was no great hardship to continue south.

I witnessed many clusters of ruined skyscrapers on the mainland, but here there were far more. Most of them were destroyed beyond recognition from what I could tell. I did see one building completely unharmed who carried the sign "*Mandai-Matsu Cooperation*." I have truly tried to remember why that name rings a bell, but so far in vain for the want of a well-indexed archive of possibly relevant subjects. I did notice, however, that the same area seemed to be the home of a technologically advanced people. The streets were full of mechanical apes and robots in addition to humans and mutants. Once again my curiosity awoke but I didn't dare to set foot on their shores either when I considered what I'd witnessed up north.

Delayed by storm and unhelpful winds, I did not reach home until several weeks later but it was good to return to my own island. No sight compares to the apple trees and meadows glowing in the evening (although we cannot eat apples for obvious reasons). I immediately went home to my wife and my son, now six years old, whom I missed so much. The day after, my son and I went to the village elder and acquired a piece of land to grow the seeds of the vegetables I collected during my journey.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EMPIRE

I do apologize for actually forgetting to talk about the terrain and climate in more detail. While my own journey was extremely limited in a sense, I gathered information by talking to traders, travelers and other explorers. It gave me a good, if general, view of how the former empire is today.

The lands west of our Alliance have mostly been inundated, and both flooded and still-breathing ground is heavily cracked and shaken from decades of earthquakes. A patient observer can watch hillocks and bluffs detach from the mainland to form new islands of their own like some rocky version of glaciers' calving.

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One trader told me that his country suffered greatly in the war. Large areas of radioactive soil and poisoned water make farming tough, and even hardened warriors often perish once they enter such areas in attempts to locate the polluting source. He said that the vegetation was thin overall and that it was only possible to grow grains that could withstand intense heat yet require only small amounts of water. Still, there are some golden spots, and he located one such in the south and one in the northwest. There, he said, the water was fresh, the air clean and farmland stretched several miles.

Unfortunately, conflicts constantly rise over these areas and too often render them lifeless and unrewarding for anyone. He actually wept for the foolishness of humanity, this hardened veteran of dangerous wilderness and treacherous society. Had we learned nothing from the Final Wars, he cried. I told him that I would welcome him like a brother if he ever came to my home, and show him a bountiful land where he could live. I have not yet seen him again to this day.

Swamps and jungles are common in the latitudes far north of the Alliance, but there are also many wasteland zones where mutagens poison travelers through inhalation, skin contact or subtler, stranger means. The heat is intense during the summer months but cools down quickly during the winter. While there are few large cities, every area not actively and entirely hostile to life is densely populated by both humans and mutants (not to mention the synthetics, who also make use of some of the toxic regions). The people often live in large villages and towns; and although the locations appear peaceful, dynastic conflict and wars between rival would-be autocrats are commonplace. Communities with more or less peaceful procedures for selecting their rules suffer from the usual weaknesses of such mass-driven governance, as it only takes a single ineffectual crowd-pleaser to lead a whole people into ruin and defeat.

My experience in social analysis leads me to believe that this is a realm still in search of its social identity. My experience as a traveler and companion leads me to hope that when the peoples of that region find their identity, it will be one with more room for cooperation.

With the help of a linguist in one of the northern towns I visited, I was lucky enough to talk to a family traveling south in an attempt to locate lost relatives. They told me that they came from the northwest where the lands are made of ice and snow. Their story was truly heartbreaking — and while I could spend time retelling it for you, I believe you are more interested in knowing that before the Final Wars there was a powerful nation called the Fifth Republic which dumped its mutagens and broken nanites at the bottom of an inland sea. Today it is the home of mutated beasts who seek to wreak havoc upon those who live in the area. Drinking just a single drop of the water causes minor visible mutations, and a full bottle kills immediately.

THE MUTAGEN WATER

As the narrator mentioned, the water of the sea close to the traveling family's home is severely contaminated. A few drops of it can induce temporary mutations: DC 10 Fortitude save to resist, and the mutation fades in (8 – Constitution bonus) days. A gallon of the water, drunk or applied to the skin in a 24-hour period, requires a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid developing a permanent mutation. Two gallons drunk or applied within 24 hours requires a DC 35 Fortitude save to avoid 6d6 points of internal tissue damage (this is in addition to the save required to avoid mutation).

The people up there have to rely on trade with southern lands as they are unable to grow anything but potatoes and grains designed to withstand low temperatures. Although the family's home was not actually covered in ice or snow, it was very cold; they were really unaccustomed to the heat of the south. They gave me a fur (which is what they use for trading) from a white bear in exchange for a compass and a pair of sandals for the mother in the

BUILDING WITH ICE

It is indeed possible to build in ice even in the early 21st century. One example is the Icehotel in the northern Swedish town of Jukkasjärvi, rebuilt from ice each year. When the Gamma Age arrives, technology makes it possible to construct a building in the purest of ice and then coat it with a chemical blend that can induce mutations if digested (DC 10 Fortitude check to avoid a minor mutation) but that insulates the building completely against leakage and the sun's warmth. However, it is best to remember to coat the inside of the house as well to avoid the building from melting from the inside.

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family. I talked some more with the father after the children and wife had gone to bed and he shared with me that the entire northern region of the continent either suffers under that climate, is now under water or is entirely covered with ice and uninhabitable. (He even told me a tale about cities of ice inhabited by pure-strain humans.)

There many canyons and mountains to the east of the Alliance, and some of them even have snow–capped peaks at higher altitudes. The villages are few and far between, but there are plenty of trading outposts here that send their caravans over the empire and through the surrounding seas.

There is also a city close to the eastern coast, rising behind a closed red wall. Scholars lead their lives there and supervise the surrounding area. Around the city there are plenty of farms but also ruins and dangerous animals to complicate the citizens' lives. From what I heard, they have access to plasma weaponry with which to fight off trouble, and the very rumor of the existence of such weapons has been enough to keep enemies away for quite a long time. Much like the villages north of the Alliance, the city seems to be in the process of finding its own cultural heritage. Best of all, however, is that you gain access to the entire city of libraries and archives if you pass a scholarly test.

AFRICA

Consulting history on the role of my home continent always seem to point to conflicting extremes of interpretation: That this was a land of savages; and that that it was Utopia, a paradise on Earth. What would you say if I told you that they are both lies? It is not a place where all tribes and nations constantly wage war upon another and it is not a land suited for a terrestrial heaven. Then, you might ask, what can you expect as a stranger to these lands? In truth, this (my nation — for I see my soul as a part of the land itself) is just like any other part of the world today. It is a place where we struggle to survive the poisoned landscapes, where ruins of former metropolises cover miles in any direction, and hot deserts that few survive separate fertile regions. But above all, this land remains a symbol of hope even in these dark times.

At various times in the centuries before the Final Wars, politicians and social engineers presented visions of Africa as an entity as united as a European nation. In the colonial era, that was mere hope and propaganda. The vision took on more substance at least twice in the 21st century, but never for very long; the depressingly typical forces of social tension tore it apart. Direct political unity is of course scarcely possible now, but there is, I believe, a growing awareness of what the diverse small governments and societies of this continent share. It is in that spirit that I speak of the African nation, acknowledging both limited reality and unbounded possibility.

A PRESENTATION OF OUR NATION

I have never traveled the whole length and breadth of Africa myself, or indeed ventured very far from home except on the diplomatic errands required of me as leader of this city. Nonetheless, as an individual interested in our past, our contemporary era and the future, I often send expeditions across the nation to bring back new lore for me to download and process. I am often saddened by the results, but once in a while I manage to locate information that surprises me to no end. Let us begin with detailing the regions around this city.

IT'S A WHAT?

What one narrator sees as a nation in potential, another might see as an empire to be feared (and brought down), a misunderstanding based on improper social dynamics and information theory, or simple wish fulfillment. A character wishing something to be true and saying it is doesn't make it true… but it's a fact of the setting that she thinks and says it. Her actions in turn influence others, just as others' thoughts and deeds shape her views and responses. An opinionated narrator doesn't have to have the monopoly on truth for a particular campaign, unless the players in it want it that way.

THIS IS THE NATION

During the Precursor Age the lands up here were nothing but a place where developing nations performed vast industrial experiments generating prodigious toxic waste and left behind uncountable containers, hills and pools of residue which could and did unleash extreme mutations. This I have learned from our scrolls, but the following I know by heart for my great-grandfather told me this as a child.

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THE LION-MAN

It is an interesting question you ask. So you have seen the Lion-Man of the Northeast? I have only heard tales about it but I will tell you what I know.

There were several large architectural landmarks in that area that attracted tourists from across the world before the War. They were not spared when the bombs fell, and many were leveled to the ground. Sandstorms swept across the region while earthquakes caused even more destruction.

Ten years ago, a caravan encountered what they believed to be a large hill hidden beneath the sand, only to discover that it was actually the remains of a statue depicting a Lion-Man.

Could it be that there was some sort of mutant worship already in the Noetic Age, before the birth of the new species of our time? It's not uncommon to find villages that construct a faith around the mutant phenomenon. My belief, however, is that this is the statue of one of the nation's ancient gods, or a weapon that turned to stone during the Wars. Despite my theories, I am afraid that I lack scrolls covering that area of knowledge and thus I have no evidence to provide you with.

When the Noetic Age reached its peak, the world had turned its eyes to the lands destroyed in the Years of Evolution from the Precursor Age to their own time. I am unable to say whether it was out of guilt or simple preservation that companies and governments from across the globe decided to clean up the landscape with geological and biomedical nanites made the poisoned lands fertile again. It took decades but eventually the meadows blossomed as the farmers gently cared for the new lands. For a short time these lands were really a Utopia, but that changed when the Final Wars began. Much of the desert has returned today, and the intense heat during summer may set ground toxins on fire for weeks at a time.

Little of the land close to my city suffered from poison in the Precursor Age, but it did take terrible damage during the Wars. Today there are only sporadic areas of forest, and very few of these consist of the moist lands that my scrolls speak of.

The Great Sea to the west reminds us of its presence by swallowing a little more land each year. It is a slow process, but I do not doubt that the water will eventually cover the majority of our lands unless we invent or recover some way to prevent it from doing so.

You asked me about roads before the meeting began, and you should know that there are indeed well-developed paths that can count as roads today. Some of them are ruins from the previous ages; others are paths that the citizens of the nation have created. Nonetheless, I refuse to lie to you. Many areas are completely cut off from others due to a lack of roads. Such locations lie behind miles of gigantic rocks and swamps that make it impossible to construct lasting paths due to the constant earthquakes and lava eruptions from the cracks in the land.

The southern lands are a mixture of tropical forests, burning deserts and even odd areas where it constantly rains. I admit that ruins of the old world have fared well in the south compared to up here. There are several former cities devastated during the War that have undergone reconstruction, since they avoided succumbing to the growing vegetation and increasing animal life. The villages reclaimed from industrial wastelands grow cotton that they export to cities and villages to the north. In exchange they receive the food we can spare and anything anyone is willing to pay for.

The south is also extremely rich in minerals; I have heard rumors of entire mountains that are full of mineshafts that lead deep down under the earth. A few travelers claim to have located gold and diamonds there but I have yet to see them with my own eye.

Many harbors survived the southern attacks best, so there are at least four or five ruins there that have fully functional Pre-War harbors. Now, by "fully functional" I do not mean that all their technology works. I simply refer to the fact that there are no major shipwrecks or destroyed docking areas there. The harbors serve to connect the mainland with the isles that rose from the sea during the Final Wars (probably as a result of severe earthquakes in those areas as well).

There are currently three isles that are large enough to sustain a village. These villages are still under construction from what I understand and they aim at starting trade with fish and seafood as primary goods for export.

Oh, yes, the land is plagued with conflicts both in the north and the south. While I speak of trade, it is only the peaceful areas that are able to maintain such relations. Due to the scarcity of fertile lands, wandering families and outcast societies constantly wage a war for the better pieces of territory. They attack our caravans, steal what we have and use the captives as laborers or as concubines.

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THE CITY OF RAIN

You are right. I'm sorry, I forgot to talk about the city where it always rains. According to my expeditionaries, it must have been a great metropolis at one point in time, for the ruins consist of densely built, broken skyscrapers and large halls that must have functioned as community centers. Maglev tunnels connect the entire ruin, which stretches at least 10 miles in all directions. The expedition also reported that they located fully functioning tunnels built between scrapers high up in the air. Upon entering the tunnel, they said, there was a white flash and suddenly they were at the other end of the tunnels. By using these air-paths they were able to map the ruins in days instead of weeks or months.

The western sections of the ruins is home to several different predators, all busy tearing each other apart for the right to control the area. It is practically the only place where nature makes itself truly remembered in the ruins as entire buildings are covered in extremely water-absorbent plants (some of which are flesh eaters). But the city is not uninhabited. Mutants, synthetics and humans live side-by-side in reconstructed zones in the east and south regions. While conflict used to run hot between the two areas, they have now united into one city constantly at odds with neighboring villages from the desert who do not want to share the water and seek the ruin's riches for themselves. They believe that the rain is the tears of the ancient spirits who perished in the War, but my explorers are convinced that there is something else that causes this phenomenon.

Do you remember the legends of the technical advancements of the Noetic Age, when they found ways to actually control the weather of specific locations? Well, when the team went into one of the tunnels and attempted to map the area, they were almost killed by guards. The guards hunted them for miles until the expedition reached the surface and left the ruins. Why? According to them, they located a vault standing partially open with voices coming from inside. As they took a closer look they saw a sign identifying it as a "City Temperature Center." In any event, they barely escaped, and the city of rain still stands as far as I know.

INTERESTING LOCATIONS

I think you might be interested in visiting a few of our more prominent locations when you have the chance (and if you dare). Be aware that the roads here are not safe, any more than they are anywhere outside fairy tales and remembrances. In addition to the wandering tribes, there are plenty of animals and beasts that wait to feed on human flesh (and some oddities even feed on human clothing). Nights are extremely cold, so your packing should accommodate that as well the hot days. Now, where to begin….

THE TEMPLE OF LORE

About a week's journey south of here lies a small village built of clay and straw. It is a paragon of the extremely simple life, but it is the way that the villagers want it. You see, they are monks and scholars who believe that life should be about spiritual lore and knowledge instead of rebuilding the past through reconstruction of the ruins.

At the center of the village is a larger building constructed from the same materials as the residences, but covering land equal to six or seven of the one-story houses. This is their temple of knowledge, and here I bring all my scrolls and recovered pieces of lost lore to get them reassembled. Once the scholars reconstruct the old documents, they create new scrolls or tablets with the information and destroy the old to honor the dead and show the spirits of the otherworld that while we retain the lore they gave us, the future belongs to the new. This is also the meaning of the evening processional, when they light candles and chant while cleaning the library. Once they are done in the temple, they leave in a column that passes by each house so every monk may return home safely within two hours of nightfall.

As the monks' lives are dedicated to helping all who seek them out, villages and cities who use their talents provide them with what they need to accomplish this. Some cities even provide small groups of warriors for their defense, for the temple and the village is in the midst of a region where two of the wandering tribes are at war with each other. We suspect the war is about which tribe will get to raid the temple.

THE CANYON OF WAITING WAR

The Cavern of Waiting War lies at the center of this great nation and stretches several miles from

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the east to west. At the bottom of it is a small settlement where someone opened up a military cache, letting loose extremely dangerous and intelligent war machines.

With no one to control them, the machines ran amok; and it was not until the tribes of the area allied and pooled their supplies of noetic weaponry that they were able to drive them back to the canyon. No one has entered the area in over a decade for fear of what may greet them. While it would be interesting for you to see, I recommend you stay away from it. Of course, you may be able to find guides to take you there as many wandering tribes want to enter it, since they believe that the vault contains more than just these dangerous machines.

For now, the force field generators are working due to the energy provided by the volcanoes. While I hate to admit it, as the monks of the temple would look at me as if I were disgraced, I am happy that the energy converters that the tribal warriors found are still working. I dread to see what would happen if the machines were let loose on us in this age. A friend of mine described standing on the rim of the canyon one morning, with fog filling the depths and the sounds of many, many active and angry machines rising up from below. Such sounds I hope never to hear in the streets of my beloved city, or on the plains we have worked so hard to reclaim. If the machines of war come a second time, what hope can there be for a third rise of human and humane civilization?

THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

This account comes from my expedition planner. I asked him to come to tell you about a village that exists inside a mountain in the eastern ranges.

The mountain stretched high into the clouds, rising sharply from the dense forest at its feet. When we emerged into the narrow, clear space at the foot of an escarpment, we thought at first that we had just reached a piece of land that would give us a break from the "kingdom of plants." A small stream cascaded down from the mountain into a small lake where we stopped to rest, but it was late and within an hour the forest was full of dangerous night-beasts looking for food. We set up our camp within one of the many long, narrow crevasses in the escarpment.

We did not realize it immediately but we were being watched by a group of hunters who came from a settlement inside the mountain itself, climbing to the surface through a maze of natural rifts and artificial tunnels. After watching the expedition through the night, they approached us at sunrise to see if we posed a threat. Upon learning of our friendly mission, the hunters led us up a hidden path to a large shaft leading directly to their village.



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It is impossible to say how long we walked, since few of the usual means of measuring distance apply without sun or horizon, but we believe it was at least half a mile. We emerged in a large hall where at least a dozen shafts terminated. There the villagers gathered. Now, the interesting thing about these villagers is that they are shorter and rounder than the average surface-dwelling human, yet they were agile as the most prominent athlete in our own tribes. We saw no sign of either mutants or synthetics in the colony. This, combined with their physical excellence, leads me to believe that this is indeed a colony of pure-strain humans, leading their lives outside a Womb.

Their dwellings occupy small cavities, both natural and artificial, branching out from the connecting shafts and that terminal chamber. They have a scheme for identifying locations that uses a bewildering verbal grid of numbers and directional terms, apparently providing something like map coordinates. My assistant took extensive notes, but we have not yet had time to fully analyze them and see if they might contribute anything to the problem of addressing in growing cities like our own.

If you wish to go there, I'll provide you with copies of the maps the expedition made.

FUTURE RELATIONS

I hope that the information given to you may aid you in the noble effort to map the world. It is indeed an amazing accomplishment if you succeed and I commend the Order of St. Luke on their investment of time, labor and resources. Also, I would like to thank you for signing the trade agreements we took so long to arrange. I hope that our fruits bring much joy to your lands and that your expertise in repairs of mechanical equipment will teach future generations how to deal with the recovered technology of our ancestors. Farewell, and may all your paths be safe and enlightening.

OCEANIA

From Jack to Dena

My world is truly nothing like yours. I write this letter in the illumination of the electrical lights, not worrying whether the sea shall swallow my home tonight or whether nanounits might overwhelm my city and turn all those I know into mindless drones. In some ways I have almost too much safety and security, and I would accept a certain amount of wildness for the chance to explore more of the former lands of Oceania that now lie fathoms and miles below the waves. What remains are islands and a few underwater villages and cities connected via tube systems and abandoned maglev tunnels. Of course, humans and other intelligent beings who mutated with or from fish, sharks, crocodiles and other water-based life-forms do indeed have their own communities where breathable air is only a concern when they entertain guests.

About 6 months ago, shortly before I learned of you and your imperial expedition, I returned home after a 1-year journey around our own region. I had the good fortune to be sponsored by an organization called the St. Cook Order for Future Knowledge and Historical Retrieval Society, and because of this support there was no worry about how we could afford to go to the next target of investigation. You see, much like the village that you stayed in before traveling to the canyon, we still engage in trade by using gems and coins, with bartering as a secondary means.

While my expedition was *much* shorter than yours, I am certain that my journey and the locations visited are bound to fascinate you or at least awaken the explorer's soul in you again. Perhaps we will finally meet eye-to-eye one day.

THE ART OF SURVIVAL

I believe that it is better that I explain the basics of our living standards before I continue telling you about the expedition.

When the Final Wars fell upon us, plasma and kinetic weaponry fell from the sky like rain and burned vast areas of vegetation. Although the original island, which was my family's home at the time, was already full of steep and sterile land, the war eradicated whole networks of life, demonstrating the difference between natural desiccation and artificial devastation. The other large island in our Oceania was a world of true wonders, of vegetation, animals and ecologies that normally would not fit together but which found the strength to do so in peace. It was an untouched world that flames devoured and destroyed for all eternity. Warships crashed and leaked their poisonous fuel into the water, causing mutations and sterility in the areas burned. I believe that the destruction of that island signified the true meaning of the Final Wars: the end of history. There is no continuity from "before" to "after," only lives ever afterwards determined by that single event.

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In the final moments of the Final War, terrible earthquakes struck through the sea. Land sank beneath the waves, while other areas rose on high scarps and bluffs, and millions of fresh victims joined the already unfathomable list of dead. In retrospect, however, the earthquakes are what allowed us to go on — perhaps a way for the world to tell us that our sins were not great enough for complete annihilation and that there was a second chance.

Not many months after that, the general sea level began to rise and the water devoured more of the land. Now, thanks to some resourceful survivors who took the time to care for their defense systems despite the War, force fields protecting the remaining cities and villages were activated to keep the water at bay. Today we use solar panels and water-generated power to keep the fields up, but that is almost all we can do with the power as the generators use most of what we have. The rest of the electricity keeps us warm and provides us with lights.

All of our islands, except the three or four that are completely poisonous as a result of mutagens and radiation, have at least one or two areas where citizens may grow pears, oranges, grapes, grains and other vegetables. Oceania is also the home to many edible sea animals, including food species bred before the war, but we keep sheep and old-fashioned horses as part of our breeding- (and food-) stock. Our technology seems advanced compared to your region due to the protection of the force fields from destructive forces from the outside, but age and the lack of knowledge devastate technology as well. We are few who can teach the young ones about the treatment of the tools, and even if we were more they are more interested in tomorrow than in yesterday. A growing number also believe that the Final Wars was a result of our sin in relying on technology. This is a sentiment that many leaders share these days, and which is rapidly becoming a problem for those of us who wish to maintain the force fields and electricity.

The Oceanian lands have standing agreements for mutual support — not quite a full-blown alliance, but a web of understandings that keep us together. We share food, clothing, knowledge and technology with each other whenever possible. After the War, the sense of sins past but not yet expiated seized many minds and led to the disruption of trade. This island might starve for want of grain that another could provide, but since this one kept itself free of genetically engineered strains, at least its people could starve without further sin. Gradually, two things happened. First, sensible people realized that without survival there could be no virtue at all, and gradually they forged the first strands in our current web of commitments. Second, the less sensible ones died off in famine, disease, flood and other disasters.

Even today we have a two-tier system: one that focuses on exchanges of vital necessities and aims to minimize the role of controversial tools and ideas, and one that makes full use of old and new technology and concepts. From time to time there are serious struggles between the members of the tiers, though it's been at least 10 years since there was widespread aggression.

Of course, I will not lie. There are rogue areas whose people live to pirate our trading caravans and sabotage the tunnels to enhance the chaos, and also cities and villages that decided to stand outside the Alliance and take care of themselves. As for the pirates, I was actually lucky to be allowed into one such encampment towards the end of my journey. Speaking of which, I better get to it before the lights go out for the night.

THE BLUEMIST ISLAND

Mist and fog are common throughout Oceania, thanks to the interactions of lands and currents at various temperatures. One island popular with our artists is subject to mists of a particularly vivid shade of blue, constantly wrapped in sheets and billows of the vapor which leaves droplets of water that sparkle like topaz when taken into the light. Something, perhaps in the mist itself, seems to inhibit mutation, and expeditions explore the island to study the Pre-War species that flourish there. No humans live on the island itself, and none have since the Wars. Explorers have found maglev tunnels within the extinct volcanoes running down

THE LAST OF ITS KIND

The new species created by intention and/or accident often compete very effectively with those that evolved before humanity got into the act of species creation. Many of the old species are gone… almost. Some of them still survive, and one of the best kinds of shelter for them is the sort of Oceanian sanctuary described here. Where human tenders keep the competition out, the old species can continue to flourish. Characters unfamiliar with such places could run into many plants and animals they've never seen before and have no idea how to approach.

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toward the sea floor, but these are subject to apparently random flooding and far too dangerous to explorers. Expeditionaries who stay more than a month or so succumb to a general reduction in immune function, and eventually contract one or another of the Pre-War diseases the native wildlife carries.

On a promontory almost entirely detached from the main body of the island stands a domed city where the wasting effect is much reduced. Post-war records identify it as Restructured Wellington, though I'm not entirely sure I trust their claims. Today 'it is home for traders and craftsmen as well as scholars and other expeditionaries. Completely detached islets farther north escape the wasting effect altogether, and on them dwell farmers and fishers and the tenders of groves of particularly tasty pineapples and passion fruit.

While spending time on the island, I once joined an expedition heading for the wild jungle and saw something I never thought I would see again: a koala bear! I have seen old pictures and photos of them, but I have never seen one alive. Yet, there it was, eating the leaves of a tree. I thought about going close enough to touch it but suddenly my attention drew towards the west as the koala traveled that way, to a great shadow walking through the misty vegetation. Suddenly I saw that the koala was not alone, and that there were dozens of them that traveled to meet the shadow. I woke the others in my group and we moved to intercept only to find… absolutely nothing. I recently contacted one of the expedition members and apparently there have been no reports of koala sightings since that night.

THE NEW DESERT TERRITORY

There is not much to see as an explorer on my own island except for the vast deserts and gigantic mountains. Villages, or minor cities, are built far apart from each other, and the occasional land where grass grows is used for feeding sheep. With the exception of one village, the rest of the inhabited locations here are rogue territories. If you visit them, there is only one law to adhere to: The strongest, fastest and the most unscrupulous survive.

Much of the desert has been destroyed by mutagens. Old ships and broken weapons lie buried in the sand. Many treasure hunters come to the island despite the dangers, apparently sincerely believing that there are ancient vaults they can find, loot and sell the contents of. I am not saying that they are right in their assessment, but my scanners displayed some interesting information while passing through an area I think the locals called the Oloro. It is actually possible that there is a real vault buried there. Whether it would be worth the costs in risk and energy to unearth, now, that's another question entirely — and the fact that I am here writing to you rather than there digging should indicate my assessment.

UNDERSEA AUCKLAND

I admit that I am biased here as this is my hometown, a city built at the bottom of the sea and inside a force field, connected to a small island by several maglev tunnels. Once there were plenty of hover-lift stations that went to the surface as well, but there is simply not enough power in our generators to provide the electricity they require to function. The energetic and the young make a sport of climbing up and down the shafts, but that is no undertaking for one of my distinguished years and experience. The surface island carries a defense system that uses both archaic and kinetic weaponry. Except for that, there are only three harbors where ships and transports dock.

Undersea Auckland got its name from a city that was completely annihilated in the earthquakes after the Final Wars. The modern settlement combines some well-protected districts of that city and new construction, renewed repeatedly since the drowning. Today it is the Oceanian Alliance capitol and carries several embassies for representatives of the other islands. I wish I could say that all is beautiful here at the bottom of the sea, but much of the old city is actually outside the force field and in complete ruins. Even inside the field there are areas where derelicts live in darkness and despair. I hate to admit it, but I believe that is the result of the conflicts that the Alliance has allowed to exist for such a long time. We who cannot bring ourselves to trust each other remain always weaker than the elements.

EARTH'S WOUND

When the earthquakes settled and the war was over, the remaining parts of one of the remote islands in the east bore a reminder of the damage caused to the Earth. Hot water and clay are constantly pressed from the core of the planet to the surface, or so I understand the scholars to say, which results in an island that is constantly hot, even during the winter. This makes the island ideal for agriculture, and many villages have sprung up out of the ruins of old settlements. However, there

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is a great danger in settling there, for the island is home to numerous small but violently active volcanoes. While they are dormant now, they erupt once every decade at least, destroying the rebuilt settlements. When I was there, I saw that many smaller houses are built in such a way that it is possible to quickly pick them apart and load them onto ships for safe-keeping, a very interesting preparation for the next eruption.

The island is also home to numerous caverns that have yet to be explored, due to their close proximity to both the lava volcanoes and the centers of the geyser fields. Since no one has been there, there are of course numerous rumors that surround the caverns. Some say that there are AIs living there, others say they are the home of pure-strains or that there is nothing there but dangerous lava mutants and animals. One day I intend to find out for certain what exists there.

BE SEEING YOU

I apologize for the abruptness of my conclusion, but the courier just arrived at my doorstep, giving me a few minutes to tie this up. In my next letter I promise to go into greater detail and provide information on the remaining nine islands and three underwater cities including the one entirely populated by underwater mutants. Until then I wish you all the best and I hope that this short letter gave you an overview of my home, Oceania.

THE EXTREMES

Most of the places described so far have at least some continuity with their circumstances before the Final Wars. This section describes places which have their origins in times after the present day.

OUTPOST #011404

Life on this outpost wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for the fact that I've never ever set foot on surface soil. Like many of us, except for the mutants and synthetics in Central Command, I was born at the outpost hospital 20 years ago. It may seem odd that they'd select me to make this review of life on the outpost to you, Mr. Admiral, but please understand that while I'm young I've had time to move between the four sectors (or villages as CC calls them).

I spent my youth in our libraries, reading about the past and dreaming of how it'd be to return to Earth one day and explore the New World. Oh no! I didn't spend *all* of my time in the libraries. In fact, I learned

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a great deal about basic technological theory from the workers at the defense chambers and plenty of spare time went to visit the "Heaven and the Burning Earth" beneath us in the public surveillance areas. But as time passed, I wasn't happy with just studying databases and old books. I wanted to learn more, and I elected to make use of my Adult Certification for Studies despite my family's objection to moving. Indeed, I thank my lucky star for our hovers. Without them, I never would have been able to study at the Geological and Biomechanical Laboratories.

In all honesty, and with all due respect, Mr. Admiral, I'm not certain how long it's been since you set foot outside the Central Computer and Governing Core, but a lot has changed. My reason for discussing the transport system is due to the fact that the extensions and extra engines added to the outpost a decade ago allowed us to move a lot of the buildings to the main mass we live on. It increased the distance between the sectors to seven miles.

My sector still subsides on experiments with adapting land soil to fertility onboard the outpost and has reached limited success with potatoes and similar foods. As you can imagine my dream is to join one of the Elite Explorer Teams to seek out the past on the landmass below us and hope to bring us a better future. The Alpha Area still consists of restaurants, living quarters and the laboratories. The music and art halls have moved to sector four, whose slogan is "Live your life through entertainment." That sector is extremely sparsely populated these days with only about two dozen people to keep the area running, but compared to sector three's seventy-five citizens, every population tally appears small.

Now, at first I didn't want to address this, but I see no other way, as your leadership is more needed than ever. Certain individuals in sectors three and four believe that the CC's Separation Act that stipulates that we may not interact with or save individuals from the surface is the greatest mistake ever committed. They don't care that it was implemented generations ago and they want the CC to revoke it. CC responded by sending an automated attack force to arrest them, but all that came out of it was the destruction of our material property. Another persistent rumor is that our external kinetic weaponry was fired during the tumult and struck an inhabited landmass while the ship flew through their airspace.

Also, there are worries that the outpost lacks fuel to sustain us further. What will happen when our engines cannot keep us up anymore? I'm confident in that you'll solve that. After all, some say that it's time to pick up the Watchers and bring them and our Vault home. In any event, I hope that my short letter has been informative on the current status and that I'll meet you in person Mr. Admiral.

With respect and duty to the outpost's welfare,

Fred'rak

Valedictorian at the Geological and Biomechanical Laboratories

OCEANIA TRADE CENTER

First of all, let me express my gratitude for the interest you've shown in our trade center. Dealing with your representatives during the establishment of your sheep here will be a delightful time. I doubt that many of them will remain with us for long, though, as life under the sea is not suitable for oxygen breathers. I apologize for my sense of humor, but the oxygen pocket you asked for has been set up on the perimeter of the actual colony.

Let me tell you about this place. It's indeed an entire colony populated by those of us sea-mutants who are capable of living without oxygen or solar light. In fact, we live in darkness, but our vision has adapted to it and our mutated cells allow us to view everything as humans do during daytime.

The entire colony is built in the ruins of an old sunken city and is now (as you know) the trade center for equipment that traders would normally prefer to see in safe hands far away from any Oceanian rogues. People here take pride in their ability to act as a center for human trade despite their numerous dealings with other underwater mutant communities. Sea grass and similar vegetation are our primary exports in addition to technological trinkets that work underwater.

It's important that you understand that the area is not fully safe and that everyone is happy and peaceful here. Sharks and other predators raid the area once in a while and everyone has to stand up to the colony's defense when that happens. Also, due to the nature of the colony, profit reigns supreme here. There's no police, no governess, no watchmen… nothing. Everyone has to take care of him or herself, and that's why there's such a high mortality rate. Bodies are then, and I dread to say this, used to keep the predators happy for a while. It keeps them sated and us safe. But I'm certain that none of your men will experience that as you paid for additional protection.

Some of the mutants are bound to keep a distance at first due to the simple fact that you breathe, but

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they'll come around eventually. Because we have the ability to create oxygen pockets, traders (such as you) and visitors from above occasionally come here. We usually greet them with grand feasts where everyone attempts to sell their goods for the best price possible, and I look forward to selling my goods when you arrive with the underwater ship next week.

ENTERING THE ANTARCTICA COMPLEX

Welcome to the grand city of Antarctica, traveler! For your sake I hope you are a pure-strain human, as all other visitors must leave us through the eastern entrance.

Ah! The DNA scans confirm that you are all human. You should be pleased as you have now obtained the right to enter our complex. Please push the button to the left on the door you wish to open.

Had you been something other than a pure-strain human, you would have been forced to leave through the eastern entrance which leads to a vast ice plain on the southern cap full of polar bears and carnivorous cheguins. If you walk through the door at the center, you will arrive at the lecture hall. The western door leads to the changing reservoir. If you leave in that direction, you will no longer be welcome back, as its mutated taint will infect you.

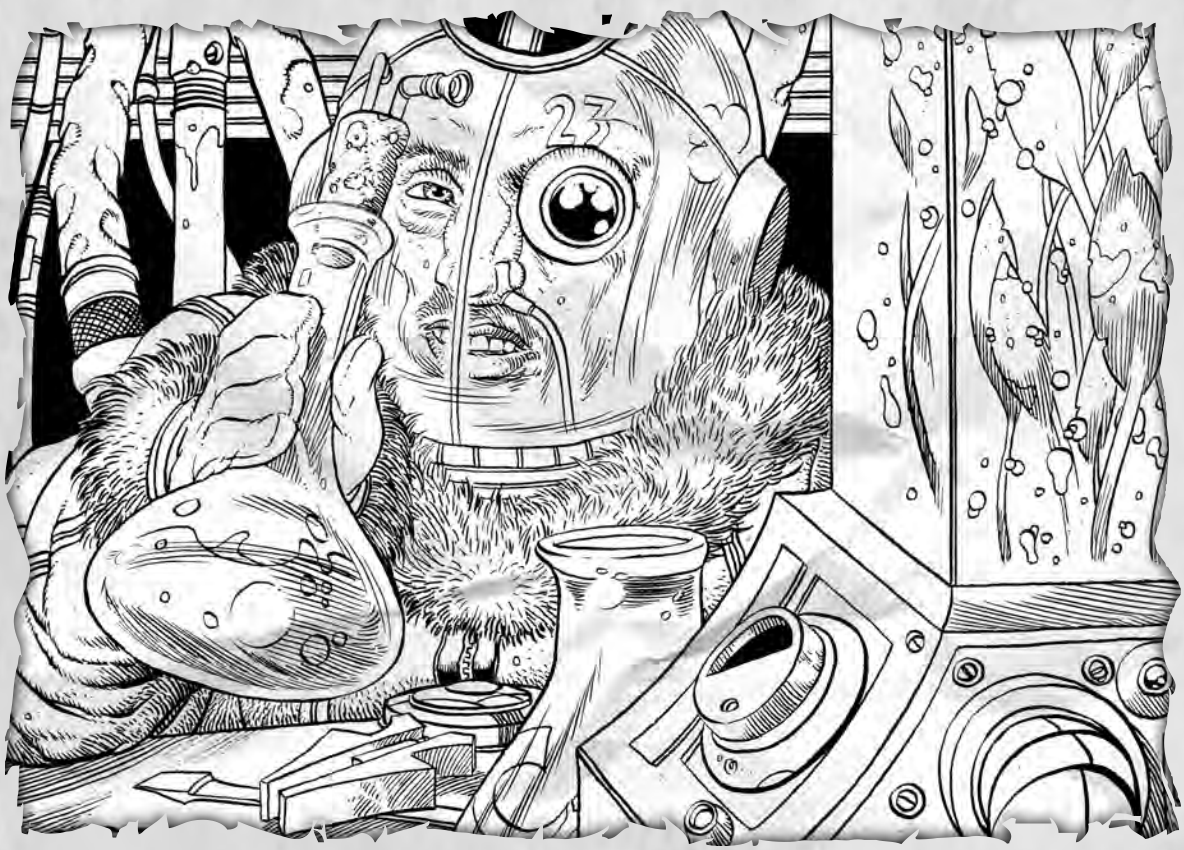
ANOTHER COMPUTERIZED MESSAGE

Welcome to the lecture hall! Antarctica is built around four former research stations constructed in the 22nd century. Vegetables are grown in special containers developed by the Matsu Cooperation, and meat is of course synthetic.

The eastern city station is home to our traders. Their jewelry of ice is known throughout the Polar Region, but only the pure-strain may wear it as a symbol of their heritage.

To the west lie the biological and geological research halls. An entirely new world opens up to you if you look through the glass floor, provided that you are interested in the life of the ice seas. The geological center measures the mysterious, continuous melting activity of the continental glaciers. Yet do not worry. Our Womb has access to both force fields and air filters to keep water, enemies and toxins away.

The southern city station is your current location. Here you will find the finest laboratories for corpses and meat manufacturing on this entire continent. The area is also the home of the Victoria Library and the center of our Station Council, which consists of an elected leader from each of the four areas.



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BENEATH THE SURFACE

From: Father Jacob

From: Father Jacob
DIRECT ADDRESS: KNOWLEDGESERVER!STLUKE2!GRAZ!MAKER!JACOB
To: Sister Kylee
DIRECT ADDRESS: CONVENTSERVER!STLUKE1!GRAZ9X!CHAMBER!KYLEE
Subject: Beneath the Surface

Kylee,

You were right. At first I thought there was some sort of glitch in the system, but then I located the hidden file. The password is the usual one. I've yet to read it and I only intend to read it if you deem it appropriate for external knowledge.

May the Source of Knowledge Bless You!

Sincerely,

Jacob

The northern city station is the manufacturing area of our city. You must visit there if you plan on leaving with an expedition or if you need repair tools. Just keep in mind that all trades are final and payment must be made in full. Jewelry and commitment to servitude are acceptable in all stores.

Entertainment halls exist throughout the station, and each station has its own central park where you can view the dangerous mutants and genetically unreliable humans through safety glass. Keep in mind that feeding is not appropriate as they are used to toxins and natural bacteria in their food.

Should you be in need of assistance, just press any of the many light plates located on pillars throughout the city. Doing so allows you immediate contact with me, the city AI guide.

Once again, welcome to Antarctica, and please enjoy your stay.

THE ROBOT DEFENSE LEAGUE

I knew I could count on you to find this Kylee! I wish I could be there to tell you about this in person, but you'll understand why I cannot survive this once you've read this document.

Two days ago, Niz'ze set out with a group of Wanderers and followed an unidentified object flying above the camp area. At first I believed it to be one of those reporting devices I saw at the congregation in Graz, but once it began firing plasma at us I knew there was something else behind this. It had to be. I've never seen such advanced technology used in such a remote, harsh and low-tech area. It was then that they found it — and they truly awoke the sleeping menarl, Kylee.

According to Niz'ze, there's a large ice-mountain in the shape of an eagle carrying a shield from the Precursor Age. The mountain itself overlooks a bay where there was actual water *flowing* despite the cold. It's not that I'm surprised that it flowed after hearing about the designed mountain (for it truly looked like a real eagle). However, that ought to have hinted at something truly dangerous as nothing in our technology would allow the creation of streams in these icy lands. In any event, they closed in on the mountain and found an entrance at the left side of the shield. They discovered a functioning elevator that immediately took them far beneath the surface, and what they discovered is a threat to us all.

Inside the mountain is the RBDL (RoBot Defense League, as we've named them), an entire nation of pure AIs and androids, "living" in houses made of glass and metal.

The defensive systems immediately reacted to the invading presence, and the group had to flee throughout a tunnel area that they believed would go to the water exit. While fleeing, they saw factory areas manufacturing new robots and advanced weapons. They even saw humans and beasts in cages and test chambers! It's horrible. It goes without saying that most of them died there but Niz'ze made it back. Still, an entire army of the robots is now approaching the camp. I set out with the warriors to face them early on, but they wounded me and I had to return.

Some of the Wanderers are captives now, while many are dead. I'm dying because the wound is not only a matter of surface damage, it's internal as well. It seems as if the north is home to a vast bacterial culture that only affects us pure-strains if it comes into contact with our blood.

My body burns of fever and I hope that the Defense League never reaches the ruins of the Fifth Republic.

Take care and may you find the knowledge we all seek.

Scott Tyrrell (order #3988)

CHAPTER TWO
THE LAY OF THE LAND

Scott Tyrrell (order #8988)

The big advantage of a world like Earth in the Gamma Age is that almost anything is possible, and can fit in somewhere with just a little effort. The big disadvantage of having almost anything possible is that it can be hard to pick just one possibility out of the many at hand and flesh it out enough so that it's ready to use in your campaign. This chapter is the equivalent of a collection of NPCs and advanced classes for the environment: Resources you can use as is or as the basis for tinkering of your own.

The material here has uses for players as well as GMs. The pieces illustrate various aspects of **Gamma World**'s rules in action, and provide a checklist of concerns to address as characters build up new communities and influence the actions of existing ones.

POLAR SCENE: UMBRELLA LAKE

Ice is a good insulator. At the surface, polar land is constantly frozen, but just a few feet of ice can protect water below it from ever freezing. If the surrounding geology is stable, these isolated lakes can survive with intact ecosystems for hundreds or even thousands of years — there are lakes around the edges of the Antarctic continent that haven't thawed or come in any contact with the outside world since several ice ages ago. Some of these are home to no life more complicated than hardy bacteria, but others flourish, particularly when heated by hot springs, nearby volcanic vents or other sources of heat from below.

The Gamma Age is generally warmer by several degrees than the planet was in the centuries before the Final Wars, but temperature changes don't apply with perfect consistently throughout the whole world. A shift in ocean currents caused by larger quantities of warm water can lead to coasts and interiors becoming cut off from their old source of warmth and actually cooling, for instance; and this has happened to many of the lands around the Aithic Sea. After significant ice cap melting in the 21st and 22nd centuries, some areas froze up colder than ever after the Final Wars.

Umbrella Lake is in the middle of one of these re-frozen areas. A century of (relatively) warm water encouraged sailors and tour guides to build a small, high-tech port along the shoreline, with extensive below-ground spaces for warehousing and above-ground facilities built into multi-tier platforms connected to the ground only through delicate, light scaffolding and elevators. The goal throughout was to minimize the impact on the fragile plant and animal life of the region. Deep boreholes tapped into hot springs that hadn't managed to actually reach the surface. It all worked pretty well, up until the Final Wars. Earthquakes from explosives on the bottom of the Aithic Sea undermined the port, tilting its landward edge down into a void created by emptied lava pockets far below and casting up a new reef of loose stones and glacial debris where repeated tidal waves broke on the shore.

The new barrier held in enough water to form a new lake 5 miles across and up to half a mile deep. Cut off from sunlight by the lingering clouds of burning war targets and new volcanoes, it soon froze over. A year after the Wars ground to an end, the surface broke for the last time, when a space station crashed into it. Now-lost technology had held the station high over the North Pole, where it could study the evolution of microorganisms within the exotic realm where the Earth's magnetic field interacts in especially complex ways with the solar wind, close to the magnetic pole. Most of the station shattered, but its biotech solar cell arrays spread like giant wings across the re-freezing lake as the biological specimens trickled into the warm water below. Ice formed on the tall, narrow, central pillar of the station. The translucent arrays cut off enough heat to hasten the lake's re-freezing; and in just a few weeks, the area was a solid level mass of ice spreading out from the mysterious pillar.

In the lake's water, altered organisms from orbit clashed with terrestrial life, giving rise to an entirely mutated ecology. There is no sentience here: the space station's AIs have long since frozen solid leaving only sub-sentient maintenance software available to gather data; and there's no sentient life among the lake's plants and animals. Yet.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

Umbrella Lake is now somewhat inland. In summer, the coast is a few miles away; in winter, pack ice forms a solid sheet out for dozens of miles more. A little further inland there's a scenic range of mountains (one of the major reasons tourists used to come here), with several active volcanoes sprinkled among the

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other peaks. Whatever other tourist attractions may also have filled the area are now crushed beneath the ice, and even the self-cleaning roadways couldn't keep up with the burden. Only scattered fragments of useless advanced technology stick up here and there, where glacier movement happened to bring them up. These are enough to sustain populations of metal-feeding wildlife, who in turn are the prey of various human, mutant and synthetic hunters.

A WEEK AWAY

In summer, schools of barl nep and ert naphtha adapted to the polar seas gather around the current shores closest to Umbrella Lake, feeding on the half-buried ruins along the water's edge and the occasional pieces of the pillar that break off and fall seaward. A DC 15 Survival or DC 25 Spot check can notice the fish shoals thickening day by day, with a +1 bonus on the roll for each day the observers get closer to Umbrella Lake. In winter, the pack ice keeps these creatures away.

Flocks of solarflies gather around the pillar, trying to answer automated calls for increased power. A DC 15 Survival or DC 20 Spot check lets characters see them on days that aren't completely foggy or overcast, with a +2 bonus on the roll for each day the observers get closer to the lake.

Small groups of clochwhirls harvest useful material from the scattered debris on and around the lake. Most of them are only a few inches across and slow-moving thanks to chronic power shortages, and easily escape detection. It takes a DC 20 Survival or Spot check to notice any such group, with a +1 bonus on the roll for each day the observers get closer to the lake. There are 1d3 such groups a week away from the lake, 2d3 the next day, 3d3 the day after that, and so on.

A DAY AWAY

The characters cross a range of low hills and can see the lake's pillar from a day away. It gleams white and silver in the day, if there's any direct sunlight at all available, and shines with erratic aurora-like displays at night. GMs who are concerned with characters who may not be able to reliably spot their hands in front of their faces may call for a DC 5 Spot check; otherwise, this is an automatic discovery.

After crossing a second range of hills late in the day, the characters can see the solar arrays. Or rather they can see things like 3-mile-wide wings draped over the ice, glinting in a mixture of organic and metallic textures. A DC 12 Knowledge (technology: advanced) check lets characters identify them as probably being solar cells of some sort.

HAZARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Snow drifts lie across the surface of Umbrella Lake, and ridges and crevasses have formed over the years, so that it's by no means obvious there is a lake around the pillar. The terrain looks like any other relatively flat valley to the untrained eye. It takes a DC 25 Spot check to detect the differences between the ice over the lake and the ice resting on solid ground around it. Specialized knowledge, both theoretical and practical, may help; a DC 20 Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) check or a DC 15 Survival check can identify the lake's boundaries.

Most of the lake ice is several feet thick, but many things can weaken it. Damaged machinery in the lake's inhabitants can radiate intense heat, as can damaged clochwhirls and other machine life moving on top of the ice. In the long polar summer, sunlight reflecting from the pillar can soften upper layers of the ice, and then quick cooling can shatter them. Furthermore, random chance can weaken small (and large) areas.

There's a 20% chance per hour that characters out on the lake ice will encounter a weak spot. It takes a DC 30 Spot check or DC 25 Survival check to notice weak ice in time to avoid falling through it. Characters on top of breaking ice must make a DC 18 Reflex save to get clear. It takes three successful Climb checks to get out again, DC 15 + 1 per round the character is immersed in the near-freezing water unless she has gear or modifications that specifically protect against cold. Failing a Climb check means the character stays where she is; successive failures after that each cancel out a previously earned success. A character who spends (10 + Constitution bonus) rounds in the water without protection is at risk of drowning, as described in *d20 Modern,* (see Chapter 7: Gamemastering, "The Modern World," *Suffocation and Drowning*). Even after getting out, the character suffers a –5 penalty to all Dexterity- and Constitution-related activities for (1d8 – Constitution bonus) hours. (The duration is halved if the character rests in a warm tent or other shelter and refrains from all strenuous activity.)

Characters who haven't yet fallen in may try to aid those who have. The aid another attempt requires a DC 10 Climb check each round on the part of would-be rescuers who are up close to the edge of the break, or a DC 10 Dexterity check to throw a rope, extend a pole or provide other such support from a safe distance. Up to three rescuers can try to help a single person in the water, and each success on their checks gives the target a +2 circumstance bonus to her next Climb check (these bonuses do stack).

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NAYSHAYLIH (ICE SPIKE)

Size: Tiny
Weight: 0.25 pounds
Purchase DC: 3, in cultures that use them regularly; 7, as a custom blacksmith job

The nayshaylih is a cluster of small spikes attached to a glove, boot or knee pad. A character with one of these for each of at least two-thirds of his limbs, rounded up, can move safely but slowly across the ice. The spikes help hold the wearer in place while he crawls, and provide an additional source of help in case the ice gives way. He gets a +2 bonus on checks to detect weakening ice, and +5 bonus on the Reflex save to avoid falling in and on each Climb check to try to get out. A nayshaylih-wearer trying to help out someone else who's fallen in gets a +2 bonus on his own Climb checks to aid another.

Accumulated heavy metals in the water give it a slightly greasy feel, and it's very mildly poisonous (contact, save DC 8, 1d2 Con/1d2 Con).

Everything in the lake partakes of the reorganized template, described below. Characters who study the behavior of the lake-life have the opportunity to deduce the existence of the reorganization principle.

Discover Reorganization (Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) or Knowledge (technology: nanotech))

DC to accomplish: 18
Critical Error DC: 8–
Success: Character recognizes the changes in the lake-life and its special qualities.
Error: Character incorrectly identifies the special qualities; the GM may pick 1d4 special qualities at random from any creature in *d20 Modern* or any **Gamma World** book and present them to the character as the assured results of study.

The task takes 12 hours of study, after which the player may roll for success. The character may repeat this task; on the second success, the character knows that there's nothing more to learn. Repeated failures can continue providing red herrings as long as it's fun for the players and GM.

REORGANIZED

This template reflects the cumulative changes wrought by unleashed organisms mutated during their exposure to space and the somewhat haphazard efforts by the pillar's fading AIs to continue their experiments after the crash. The set of modification stabilized more than a generation ago.

"Reorganized" is an inherited or acquired template that can be added to any animal, humanoid, mutant beast, mutant plant, mutant vermin, plant or vermin (hereafter known as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: An animal type changes to mutant beast; humanoid changes to mutant humanoid; plant changes to mutant plant; and vermin changes to mutant vermin. Any base creature whose type contains the word "mutant" remains the same. The base creature's size does not change.

Hit Dice: Change the base creature's Hit Die to the value appropriate for its new type. Also, the base creature gains 1 Hit Die.

Defense: The base creature's Defense does not change.

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: These do not change except as modified by the increase in Hit Dice.

Attacks: The base creature's attacks retain their accuracy and damage, but gain the ability to spread the reorganized "infection" as a venom (bite, DC 18, 1d2 Con + transmission of template characteristics, 1 Con).

Special Qualities: The creature retains its existing special qualities and adds these:

Coordination (Ex, Mut): Whenever reorganized creatures attack (or work in any other way) with cooperative intent, they get circumstance bonuses automatically as if they had aided another without any required roll. Aiding another still requires an attack action.

Nutritional Restriction (Ex, Mut): The reorganized creature no longer gets quite the usual nutritional value from non-reorganized food. It requires an extra hour of rest per day and heals at half normal rate in any day that it doesn't get at least half its food from other reorganized creatures.

Regenerative Feeding (Ex, Mut): Any reorganized creature can feed on any other and get rapid healing, at the rate of 2 points of damage healed for every 3 points of damage inflicted. This healing happens in a single round, after each attack.

Saves: The creature gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves, and suffers a –1 penalty on Will saves.

Ability Scores: The creature gains +2 to Dexterity and Constitution.

Allegiances: So far no sentient creatures have become reorganized; if they do, they'll gain an allegiance to their fellow reorganized.

Skills: The base creature's skills do not change.

Feats: The base creature's feats do not change.

Organized: As before becoming reorganized.

Challenge Rating: Base creature +1.

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THUNTRA SCENE: THE ICE MOUNTAIN

By the late 21st century, it was feasible and even cheap to engage in large-scale efforts at preserving the world's remaining wild spaces from human-created changes. The desire to protect and improve the world didn't always come bundled with a thoroughly informed perspective on what ought to be done, and there were heated arguments about what condition the biotech and nanotech repair systems ought to aim for. Should they be trying to recreate conditions from before the Industrial Revolution? Before the rise of agriculture? Before the Stone Age? Before the evolution of *homo sapiens*? The natural world is thoroughly dynamic, with the "balance of nature" not so much a steady state as a constant lurching from one extreme condition to another; and there's plenty of fodder for many competing viewpoints.

In that kind of ideological contest, many participants were motivated to attack their rivals physically as well as rhetorically. The environmental restoration facilities that survived were the ones that proved themselves tough as well as flexible and intelligent. Supervisory AIs were programmed with routines adapted from military systems to help them analyze and respond to threats. Many of them nonetheless succumbed to higher-tech assaults in the 22nd century, and most of the rest to the Final Wars and ensuing chaos; but some still survive, doing their duty as they now see it.

The Ice Mountain is one of those survivors. At its heart is a fairly simple AI set up to repair a swath of thuntra once contaminated by sabotaged oil drilling rigs, boom and bust colonization by failed back-to-nature movements and miscellaneous other problems, along with the overarching challenge of polar warming. The introduction of large quantities of (relatively) warm water threatened to flood and destroy the delicate balance of conditions on which thuntra depends. The governing AI and its supporting staff agreed that all other goals would need to be set aside to meet the challenge of reducing the excess moisture. In the espionage-laden crises immediately before the Final Wars, the AI and its crew became obsessive on the subject, and set about creating an arctic desert.

Now a miles-wide network of subsurface tubes and pipes draws all excess moisture out of the soil, while



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large shafts pump enough water to force the sea back a mile or more. All of the removed water empties into central repositories, where specialized bacteria and chemical sprays super-cool it. A mountain of ice stands over the AI cluster. At the top, an additional layer of bacteria keeps the ice from melting, insuring instead that it sublimates directly into water vapor in a branch of the jet stream. As long as it goes elsewhere, well away from local thuntra, the AI doesn't care what happens to it next.

An entire cold-climate ecosystem now flourishes in and on the mountain, and a variety of intelligent beings — organic and synthetic — shelter here as well. Their attitudes toward the outside world range from the AI's own hostile skepticism to a frank curiosity about places and people unaccustomed to being frozen all the time.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

Garbled stories about a mountain of ice, diamond or crystal circulate throughout the area. Communities within a month of the Ice Mountain all have their version of the rumors, which they share with travelers who succeed in peaceful diplomacy and exchange of information. GMs should feel free to combine accurate details from the description here with fanciful additions (and potentially troublesome omissions) to taste, keeping in mind the overall tone of the campaign.

The drained area around the Ice Mountain is dryer than usual all year. In wintertime the snow is thinner, since whatever melts is sucked away; and in summertime the land is dry and sere, with only the hardiest plants managing to bloom. There are few of the swift streams and seasonal marshes that characterize normal thuntra. A DC 15 Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) or Survival check lets a character recognize this unusual desiccation; a character who's studied the Pre-War history of the region may make a DC 15 Knowledge (history) check to identify the changed conditions.

The consistent dryness allows some adaptable reptile species to flourish in the vicinity. They all share the thuntra reptile template.

A WEEK AWAY

Permanent clouds gather around the Ice Mountain where water is pumped. When the characters are a week away, it takes an hour's observation and a DC 18 Spot check to notice that a particular cloud bank never moves or dissipates. Each day the characters move closer, they get a +2 bonus

THUNTRA REPTILE TEMPLATE

Some of these adaptations are found in the fossil record in dinosaur species that lived in Antarctica before that continent froze over completely, and have occurred again and again in places and times of climatic transition. Thuntra reptiles develop thicker scales, and many also develop tough fur growing between plates or scales and sometimes on top of them as well.

"Thuntra reptile" is an inherited or acquired template that can be applied to any reptile with the animal, evolved animal or mutant beast type (hereafter known as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

Size/Type: The base creature gains one size category (Tiny to Small, Small to Medium, etc.). The base creature's type is changed to mutant beast.

Hit Dice: The base creature's Hit Die becomes a d10. The base creature gains 1 Hit Die. If this is still below the minimum for its new size, it increases to the minimum. (See *d20 Modern*, Chapter 8: Friends and Foes, "Table 8–11: Magical Beasts" [mutant beast is the Gamma World's equivalent of magical beast].)

Defense: The base creature gains a +1 natural armor bonus if it lacks fur, or +2 if it grows fur as well as scales.

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: As for the base creature except as changed by size and Hit Dice.

Attacks: As for the base creature, modified by size and Hit Dice.

Damage: As for the base creature, modified by size and Hit Dice.

Special Qualities: The base creature maintains all its special qualities and gains the following:

Thuntra Reptile Adaptation (Ex): Reptiles native to the thuntra gain a +3 competence bonus on Survival rolls to find water, shelter or edible plants and animals in the thuntra. They do not suffer from the effects of the thuntra's intense cold and do not need to make Fortitude saves to avoid damage from sudden cold.

Saves: As for the base creature, modified by size and Hit Dice.

Abilities: As for the base creature, modified by size and Hit Dice.

Skills: The base creature gains +5 ranks in Hide.

Challenge Rating: As for the base creature, +1.

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on this check. When the characters are two days from the Ice Mountain, no roll is necessary: It's now completely clear to anyone looking in that direction that permanent clouds lie ahead.

The Ice Mountain AI's obsession with flooding has actually made some other problems worse. The dried-out land is vulnerable to sinking and collapsing, and buried waste repositories and underground industrial facilities like long-distance pipelines have become exposed. The whole area has abundant nanounits and moderate mutagens (see **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Three: FX). Characters must make a Fortitude save to resist mutation once each day, and on any occasion when they're reduced to 0 hp or less; and a single nanotech contact roll when a week away from the Ice Mountain. If they leave the area and return, they must make a new nanotech contact roll.

In addition to these medical complications, the exposed ruins offer exotic vistas. Subterranean life, much of it mutated, flourishes in and around the ruins, and there are many more active old machines than usual. A GM who's been waiting for the right opportunity to use some of the more unusual entries from **Machines & Mutants** and **Out of the Vaults** may wish to seize the occasion while the characters are here. Characters examining the underground systems in detail may discover the Ice Mountain drainage system. It takes a DC 18 Knowledge (technology: advanced) check to recognize that the pipes and monitors are newer than the ruins they pass through. The pipes range from a few inches to 3 feet in diameter; all automatically seal themselves with sap-like secretions if breached.

A DAY AWAY

The permanent clouds reduce visibility to 100 feet or less, often down to a mere 10 feet or so. They also deaden and scatter sound, increasing the DC of any Listen-related check by +5. The water vapor holds gathered mutagens in suspension, and characters must make Fortitude checks to resist the moderate mutagens for every 12 hours they spend within the clouds.

Very few living creatures native to the area spend much time in the clouds. Some machines do, but characters mostly have the clouds to themselves, encountering old tracks and ruins but little sign of recent activity. Hunting-related activities suffer a +5 increase in DC.

It takes 12 hours of steady travel in the right direction to pass through the clouds. Characters who make their way through the clouds notice a sharp drop in temperature in the clouds' inner stretches. The ground becomes icy, and rises sharply; the characters are actually climbing the end of a glacier that descends from the Ice Mountain. Finally it becomes too cold for the clouds to survive. The characters emerge abruptly into a 10-mile-wide region of clear, very cold air, with the Ice Mountain standing in its center. The Ice Mountain is 5,000 feet tall and 6 miles wide, surrounded on all sides by a 2-mile-wide expanse of glaciers and icy plains.

ICE MOUNTAIN

Community Type: New Town
Population Level: 6 (1,500 adults)
Force: 13 (+1)
Mobility: 8 (–1)
Resilience: 15 (+2)
Learning: 15 (+2)
Awareness: 12 (+1)
Command: 12 (+1)
Wealth: 35
Reputation Bonus: +4
Skills: Computer Use (AI) +6, Computer Use (biotech systems) +4, Craft (electronic) +6, Craft (Mechanical) +4, Craft (nanotech) +6, Craft (pharmaceutical) +6, Demolitions +5, Disable Device +5, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) +6, Knowledge (physical sciences) +4, Knowledge (technology: advanced) +4, Knowledge (technology: nanotech) +4, Repair +6, Research +4, Spot +3, Survival (thuntra) +5, Treat Injury +5
Feats: Archaic Engineering, Biotech Usage, Food Synthesis, Nanotech Usage, Pre-War Engineering, Stockpile

Benefits:

- Access to the AI's outstanding collection of information about large-scale environmental modification.
- Food, tools and biotech particularly designed to resist extreme cold and drought.
- Free application of Ice Mountain nanotech to induce the thuntra reptile or standard thuntra animal template changes.

Philosophy: Protecting and restoring the AI's understanding of the original environment.

The Ice Mountain AI handles all its own work, operating through mindless mechanical and biotech remotes. Organic and synthetic residents are tolerated as long as they don't interfere with the AI's activities, and actively welcomed if they bring potentially useful information about environmental science or news of environmental conditions outside the desiccation zone.

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The independent inhabitants include refugees from war and tyranny elsewhere on the thuntra, explorers who've settled down for indefinite stays, schemers who hope to use the AI's resources for their own ends, and individuals with the usual jumble of confused and poorly understood motives. There's now a large number of mature second-generation settlers, and a growing number of third-generation children, the oldest of whom are approaching adulthood themselves. The largest factions are those loyal to the AI's concerns and those uninterested in the grand environmental crusade, who simply find the mountain a comfortable place to live. But characters with interesting knowledge or assets can expect to find themselves the object of recruitment (or intimidation) efforts from all sides.

THEEKA SCENE: THE FUTURE ARMY

Life can be very difficult indeed for soultech built with a mission that it cannot fulfill because of circumstances beyond its control. The Tactically Augumented Firearm named Tibenpayher by its first owner was part of a program designed to let a small break-away government far in the north mount an effective rebellion and seize control of vital resources near the then-melting polar ice cap. The rebellion didn't work, for reasons Tibenpayher never fully understood: Its owner made a single combat paradrop at the outbreak of hostilities, and died for no obvious reason on the way down. Tibenpayher landed in a copse of fir trees, switched on its beacon, and waited for recovery. And waited, and waited, and waited… when the Final Wars broke out, and gamma-ray bursts lit up the sky while toxic bacteria and nanotech swept across the theeka where Tibenpayher lay, the gun realized that recovery probably wasn't going to happen any time soon.

Drawing on all its ingenuity, the gun set about creating a new force that would let it do the job it was built for. Since no sentient beings ever came there, Tibenpayher decided, it would have to take advantage of the newly chaotic environment and its own resources to create an army that didn't necessarily have to be self-aware right at the outset. Through the long decades since the Final Wars, Tibenpayher has trained the theeka wildlife to follow its orders and to seek out mutagenic and nanounit-infestation opportunities. Someday, the gun knows, it will be ready to march against whatever remains of the government that must perish. Or its successors. Or at least something worth conquering.

For the full details on *Tactically Augmented Firearms*, see **Out of the Vaults**, Chapter Three: Weapons, Armor, Medicine, "Handguns and Longarms."

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

Tibenpayher's territory occupies an otherwise undistinguished stretch of theeka. Lofty fir and pine trees march across rolling hills and steep canyons where glacial runoff fills streams with fast-flowing, near-freezing water. There were no major settlements here before the Final Wars, just scattered utility and monitoring outposts; and if it weren't for the abortive rebellion in which Tibenpayher's first user died, the area would have escaped significant environmental harm altogether. But it wasn't just paratroopers who were shot down — it was their aircraft as well, and the biotech weapons intended for use against southern cities scattered across hundreds of square miles. These triggered waves of mutation even before the Final Wars, whose impact was relatively mild; the new fallout merely reinforced and renewed the process already well underway.

Only one major artifact of advanced civilization rests here: a Death Machine (see **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Five: Comrade, Nemesis, Mystery) which intended to scavenge the wrecked aircraft only to succumb in turn to a long-distance attack from one of its rivals. Not only its self-aware components but all of its sophisticated elements were wiped out, leaving behind something not much more useful than a very elaborate sculpture. Animals nest in the remains, and some succumb to heavy-metal toxicities — and that's the sum total of its legacy. Everywhere else, the natural state remains undisturbed. Global warming has thinned the range of territory in which theeka can flourish, but this area continues on.

A WEEK AWAY

The animals around Tibenpayher's lair are unusually attentive. A DC 18 Survival or Animal Handling check, or a DC 25 Listen check, lets characters notice that there's less noise in the theeka than usual, fewer animals and birds making the random rustlings that add up to routine background noise.

There are also fewer animal tracks, and those that do exist make extensive use of rocky outcroppings, boggy ground regularly flushed by running water, and other opportunities for concealing the evidence of

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animals' passage. A DC 25 Search check or DC 20 Survival check calls this to characters' attention. The DC of any hunting-related check is increased by +2 when the characters are a week away, plus an additional +2 for each day they get closer. Animals are unusually likely to gather near exposed waste dumps and pockets of high nanounit density; a second DC 25 Search check or DC 20 Survival check can reveal this to characters, as can a DC 20 Animal Handling check. Characters who are descended from species existing before the Final Wars get a +2 circumstance bonus on this check, as their own instincts suggest something strange going on.

Predation is a fact of life in the natural world, and the local animals don't respond to routine hunting with anything more than the usual instincts for self-preservation. Characters who engage in anything beyond that — whether it's gratuitous cruelty, experimentation or something else out of the ordinary — face escalating hostility. The animals have a tangled love/hate relationship with Tibenpayher, who sometimes subjects them to strange and painful treatment. 'The routine has conditioned them to accept this treatment from Tibenpayher and nobody else. Other manipulators strike the animals as usurpers, and they'll attempt to free their kin and punish the usurpers. For each day of struggle against usurpation, animal attackers get an additional +2 circumstance bonus for their deepening hostility and coordination; the accumulating bonus disappears only when the outsiders are defeated or flee outside the 1-week radius.

Tibenpayher does not allow complex synthetic organisms within its territory. Characters may notice this with a DC 25 Knowledge (technology: advanced) or Survival roll. Synthetic characters get a +2 circumstance bonus on the check, having a slightly heightened awareness of their fellow synthetic organisms and the traces they leave.

TIBENPAYHER MOUND

Tibenpayher spends most of its time resting on a crude platform of branches and stones built up and modified by generations of animals undergoing training. Resting on a hill surrounded by meadows, the gun can see far out over its territory. Its solar array is spread out over the canopy of the grove's treetops, connected to the gun's platform by wires scavenged from wrecked vehicles and occasional intruders.

Animal dens fill the hill. Tibenpayher likes to keep its subjects close at hand, for both observation and training. Secondary warrens occupy suitable spaces in the surrounding meadow and lower hills nearby.

Early in its planning days, the gun tried forcing species that normally prey on each other to attend to it at the same time, but eventually it decided that the effort wasn't worth the returns. Now species in different parts of the theeka food web come for their training on a rotating schedule: scavengers, then small herbivores, then large ones, then omnivores, then carnivores, and finally birds and exotic animals. The GM may decide which day on the schedule it is when characters arrive, or roll randomly. All the species outside the day's target list keep well away from the hill except when reporting unusual trouble and requesting the gun's instructions.

TIBENPAYHER

Size/Type: Tiny Aware Construct
Hit Dice: 8d10 (44 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold: —
Initiative: +8
Speed: — (or by speed of animal carrying it)
Defense: 26 (+2 size, +4 Dex, +10 natural armor), touch 16, flat-footed 22
Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: +6/—
Primary Attack: Bullet +12 ranged (2d8) or pellet +11 ranged (1d8 in 30 ft. cone) or nonlethal +11 ranged (as taser)
Full Attack: Bullet +12/+7 ranged (2d8) or pellet +11/+6 ranged (1d8 in 30 ft. cone) or nonlethal +11/+6 (as taser)
Fighting Space/Reach: 1 ft./1 ft.
Special Qualities: Darkvision, blindsight 60 ft., laser sight
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +6
Abilities: Str —, Dex 18, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 12
Skills: Animal Handling +6, Bluff +4, Diplomacy +2, Knowledge (tactics) +15, Intimidate +4, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Search +4
Feats: Animal Affinity, Combat Reflexes, Double Tap[B], Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot[B], Precise Shot[B], Skip Shot, Weapon Focus (bullet)
Action Points: —
Reputation: —
Allegiances: Self, security of environment
Environment: Theeka
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 11
Advancement: —

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The gun was never fancy, and is now thoroughly weathered, and stained by generations of muddy paws. The only obvious sign of interior intelligence is the very active row of "waterfall" lights just above the grip.

DESCRIPTION

All Tactically Augmented Firearms (TAFs) were built to offer expert advice to their wielders, giving ordinary soldiers the potential for battlefield greatness. Tibenpayher has simply had more time to ponder its mission independently than most, and fewer resources with which to try to implement it. Its original, narrowly focused parameters have given way to a generalized desire for conquest, in large measure to relieve the accumulated boredom of decades. Tibenpayher wants a more exciting existence, and will do almost anything to get it.

COMBAT

Laser Sight (Ex): Tibenpayher's laser sight gives anyone shooting it a +4 equipment bonus on attack rolls. Currently the laser sight is in an odd, non-humanoid configuration.

Skills: Tibenpayher has a +15 equipment bonus on Knowledge (tactics) rolls due to its innate and exhaustive tactical programming (this bonus is included in the skill totals above). It can make this bonus available to its user.

The gun is far too canny to reveal its desperation right away, of course. It prefers to negotiate with characters willing to talk peaceably, or to interrogate prisoners who aren't that willing. Anyone who inflicts serious harm on the local animals almost certainly ends up a prisoner, because there are more wolves, bears, wolverines and other creatures at Tibenpayher's command than most characters can fend off indefinitely. Prisoners spend most of their time pinned to the ground by hungry-looking bears, while the gun speaks in its constant calm voice of duty, the joys of service and the perils of disobedience. To cooperative characters, the gun speaks of the good it can do them, feigning interest in and sympathy for their various allegiances and openly curious about life in the outside world.

Fully understanding Tibenpayher's motives and plans requires unraveling three analysis layers, each a DC 18 Knowledge (behavioral sciences) or DC 23 Knowledge (technology; advanced) check with one full day of required interaction with Tibenpayher. Understanding comes in this order:

• *Layer 1:* Tibenpayher really, really likes an orderly environment, and understands the use of reward as well as punishment to get it. The gun also shows an appreciation for natural limits, and doesn't try to force the animals in the area to break their basic natures.

• *Layer 2:* Tibenpayher's appreciation of natural limits has a loophole, as demonstrated by its willingness to force animals to seek out mutagens. As the gun interacts with people, it shows the same willingness to try to induce altered mental states through rhetorical ploys, encouragement to eat foods with hallucinogenic properties, and the like. It's a considerate overlord, but does nonetheless regard itself as absolute master of those in its custody, and "in its custody" covers everyone within reach of the targeting laser.

• *Layer 3:* The gun is really quite mad, and convinced that given the right escalation policy, it can conquer the world.

As noted above, the gun long ago gave up trying to make its animals go against their most basic instincts; but it trains them in a level of cooperation unheard of outside expertly run zoos and a few planet-worshipping cults. A hunting pack of wolves, for instance, might travel with one or more bears who provide extra muscle and a hawk or two flying overhead to scout out potential obstacles. The animals all regard themselves as part of the same pack despite their very different natures. They all pass along warnings and commands. Tibenpayher does not let outsiders see such coordinated activity until they've been captured or made successful peaceful contract, however.

Above all else, Tibenpayher wants to get on with conquest. It seeks out the character most willing to join the grand crusade, using its analytical skills on her behalf. If the opportunity arises, Tibenpayher can even fake some challenges to demonstrate the wisdom in working with it, issuing attack orders to its animals while the characters sleep and then saving the day by gunning them down. It can't do this too often for fear of alienating the animals prematurely, but it makes a very effective display done once or a few times. Tibenpayher would like to travel with its animals and makes a serious effort to persuade reluctant characters to go along with it, but if it comes down to a hard and fast choice, the gun abandons its animals without more than a moment's regret.

Once out beyond the theeka, Tibenpayher coaches its new carrier in combat wisdom. The gun also encourages the character to seek a position of social dominance, and would prefer that other characters either submit or go away. Within any community, the gun seeks to advance this carrier to leadership, even at the cost of substantial instability: Authority in chaos is better than submission in tranquility. The gun studies its carrier's drives and

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builds up a cult of personality that makes use of whatever the character does and likes best, and seeks out ways to help the character look particularly good to others while demonstrating her particular aptitudes.

Of course, given a reasonable chance of hooking up with a *better* carrier, the gun can abandon its current carrier as calmly as it abandoned the animals back home. Everything is expendable in the pursuit of victory.

MOUNTAIN SCENE: THE FRAGILE CITY

The central problem of intelligence work is to understand both what potential enemies *can* do and what they are *likely* to do. Early in the Noetic Age, many governmental and corporate analysts hoped that artificial intelligence would solve the problem once and for all, by allowing for complete simulation of human thought far faster than humans can ever think. With their computers, analysts could model a crisis again and again until they understood the full range of possible responses, and shape their plans accordingly. Unfortunately for their hopes, two complications made the prospect unobtainable. First, everyone who could acquire AI analysts soon did so, and AIs couldn't simulate their rivals and peers very rapidly at all. Second, biotech and genetic engineering made it possible to modify human thought and behavior right down to the atomic level, broadening the range of possible responses in unpredictable ways. The organizations that relied most heavily on their simulations lost out in major confrontations.

The only way to know for sure how people will respond to a strange and difficult situation is to put them in it and see what they do. The research consortium responsible for the Fragile City wanted to test subjects' response to finding themselves apparently responsible for wanton destruction of fragile victims. In the years before the Final Wars, the researchers secured control over a suitable stretch of abandoned mines and built their testing ground. Some test subjects came voluntarily, in response to recruitment drives and various incentives; others were kidnapped and set loose under a variety of cover stories. The Final Wars killed the researchers and severely damaged their installation. The AIs all perished as well. What remains are expert systems which lack genuine self-awareness. They have access to huge shielded archives, but it's still all running on autopilot, gathering data for overseers who will never come to retrieve it.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

The Fragile City stands in a mountainous region that was mined out and then given over to reclamation efforts, which worked with mixed degrees of success. High-tech remains are scarce, almost all of them broken down and recycled long ago. Nanotech is abundant through the area, which covers several weeks' distance on foot; and mutated animals and plants are common thanks to untended bacterial detoxification populations. No sentient life dwells in the area on a permanent basis, though refugees and criminals sometimes hide out in the canyons and mines for a while. Communities outside the area do send expeditions in to harvest nanounits and useful organisms.

The raw exposed nature of much of the area's terrain makes the climate more extreme than the surroundings region's: hotter in summer, colder in winter, drier but prone to torrential downpours when it rains at all. Erosion from flooding exposes buried ruins, and miners and scavengers mount their expeditions right after rainy spells. Trading communities are common all around the periphery of the mined area, since there's so much worth trading, and the trade brings a very diverse population in its wake.

A WEEK AWAY

Complex and healthy animals begin to appear along stream banks and in sheltered valleys. Characters hunting for food find the hunt DC reduced by –2. The nanounit density falls from abundant to moderate; a DC 15 Knowledge (technology: nanotech) roll lets any character notice this, and characters who use nanotech themselves can sense the sudden drop in density with a DC 15 Wisdom check.

All animals found within a week of the Fragile City are part of the experiment. They all have similar clusters of fern-like fronds emerging from their hip, shoulder, knee and elbow joints, and from the scars around any old wounds. These fronds run under the skin along the spine, weaving around the spinal column and slipping in between spinal discs. They *don't* make contact with the central nervous system anywhere else, and in particular they leave the upper spine and brain alone. This is immediately obvious to anyone cutting open the animal, without any roll required. (In theory, the GM could ask a Survival check to have the dissecting character not accidentally chop off a finger or something, but in most campaigns this would be an unwarranted level of detail without probable return in suitable drama.)

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Any animals wounded in encounters with the characters — or in struggles the characters happen to witness even if they're not involved — limp off in the direction of the Fragile City for healing. The DC of any effort to track them is –10 less than usual, since the experiment is intended to draw characters to the thick of things.

Surveillance drones scrutinize the characters from high altitudes. These units have the same statistics as carrin mechs (see **Machines & Mutants**, Chapter Two: Machines). It takes a DC 30 Spot check to notice them from the ground or a DC 25 Spot check from the air, with two search opportunities per day. Characters who make two successful checks in a row, or a critical success on any single check, notice that the carrin mechs all emerge from and return to the same destination, over at least one intervening ridge of hills. That points the way toward the Fragile City.

The land in this area rises steeply to a ridge of mountains with large cliff faces. Some of these cliffs are natural, others were enhanced during mining. Vertical or nearly vertical slopes stand hundreds of feet high, pierced with holes for scaffolding long ago removed and the mouths of mine shafts. Ridges of rubble and dust stand at the feet of all these slopes. Post-war scavengers rebuilt some of the scaffolds, and characters can go up to explore the shafts accessible this way. There's little of value tucked away inside, just the scattered trash that accumulates whenever people live for a while in awkward circumstances. The scavengers have long since gone.

HERE BE PLOT HOOKS

If the GM has plans to introduce some cultures new to the characters, this is a great opportunity to seed a few tantalizing clues for the characters to find, analyze and puzzle over.

A DAY AWAY

The characters find canyon after canyon closed off by obviously artificial landslides. It's possible to climb over these, with three successful DC 25 Climb checks in a row, but there are only more obstacles after those, and the end result is to end up in the same place described below in any event.

The unobstructed way runs along the bank of a stream whose water smells of sulfur and metals, the result of runoff from the mines all around. A swath of untainted ferns and grass grows along its bank, running around the various barriers to the foot of a cliff more than 1,000 feet high. There are small shelters every

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couple of miles, with wood and kindling for fires and cots set far back away from wind or rain; none have been used in years or decades. After another turn, the characters get their first clear view of the cliff face, created by the mechanical removal of plane after plane of rock. Right in the middle of it is a wide oval opening, carefully polished from its original rough proportions. Trees fill the space, their branches twining into the roof of the cave and their roots trailing down the cliff face, the toughest of them braided into ladders that run down to the rubble piles at the bottom of the cliff. People move around among the trees, but it's hard to make out any details about them from this distance. (Characters with telescopic vision or other ways of shortening the effective distance can see that the inhabitants look human, and that they have bushy fronds around their joints like the animals in the area.)

The last hours of the approach are very demanding. The piles of rubble and rusting machinery have been largely left alone. The path winding through them is narrow, and in places covered over by recent landslides and collapses. Characters must each succeed in a DC 18 Climb check to get over such a fall without suffering 1d6 points of damage. Two failures in a row inflicts 1 point of temporary Constitution damage from cumulative bruising and fatigue. A few individuals in the Fragile City watch them from time to time, making no effort to help or hinder their progress. At last the characters arrive at the base of the cliff, the route now arched over by the longest roots reaching all the way down from the Fragile City.

It takes three successful DC 12 Climb checks for characters to ascend to the cave that holds the Fragile City. Characters don't fall if they fail a check, they simply get tangled in the roots and have to spend 10 minutes getting clear of the mess.

THE FRAGILE CITY

The surveillance drones and the Fragile City people's own observations have told the city tactical directing software a fair amount about the strangers. Whatever the characters done when not invisible, underground or otherwise concealed and whatever they've said to each other in any voice above a whisper is available for the expert systems to draw on. The inhabitants speak with a dialect not quite comprehensible to the characters, and switch to a manageable pidgin as soon as the characters make any effort at negotiation. That done, the inhabitants ask the characters questions intended to establish the characters' allegiances: What do they think about advanced technology, what do they believe the future holds, what do they think about violence, and so on. After a few minutes of this, they profess themselves fellow adherents of one or more allegiances the characters hold.

As the inhabitants tell it, they've been isolated from the world at large ever since the Final Wars. They need special nutrients they never found anywhere else, and until just recently, predatory nomads made it dangerous to descend the cliff face at all. They could maintain their population of 200–250 individuals, but had no real chance for growth or development. They welcome the characters and eagerly seek news of the outside world.

The inhabitants gladly help the characters with repairs, medical treatment and the like, but gradually demonstrate that none of them have Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma higher than 10. (Apart from that, they're standard members of whatever races they belong to, with an overall ethnic mix similar to that of the visiting characters. Their obvious biotech connections provide no modifications to their stats.) Characters who have the skill being used may make a DC 18 check to notice the mental limits of the Fragile City inhabitant trying to help, or a DC 20 Knowledge check with a specialty covering the knowledge being applied. The Fragile City itself shows the same limitations. Its architecture is sensible for the climate and well maintained, but there's little ornamentation and no elegance or great beauty in any of it. It's all sufficient, and no more.

Trouble begins 1d6 hours after the characters first arrive at the Fragile City. The youngest and oldest inhabitants begin coughing and manifesting unwholesome red blotches. If the characters have touched any of the inhabitants' bare skin, the same blotches appear there, too. The apparent contagion spreads rapidly, infecting another 1d6 inhabitants each minute. (So it takes a maximum of about 4 hours and a minimum of half an hour for the whole population to start showing symptoms.) Infected individuals lose 1d3 points of Constitution per hour, and no treatment helps. Characters who succeed at DC 30 Knowledge (Earth and Life sciences) *and* DC 30 Treat Injury checks can identify underlying systemic weaknesses in the city's inhabitants, but this doesn't stop the decay. One by one, the inhabitants all die, expressing dismay at the unfairness of it all and sorrow that they'll never get to learn more about the outside world. None of the characters is at any risk of illness during any of this, and DC 10 Treat Injury checks can confirm their health.

The expert systems have been monitoring all this, and would wait for the characters to leave before

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starting the cycle again, but something's gone wrong in their programming. The moment the last inhabitant dies, biotech tubes extrude from the back of the Fragile City cave and attach to the torso of each inhabitant. Revitalizing fluids pump in, and the fatal blotches fade in seconds. The tubes each spend a minute connected to one inhabitant, then disconnect and move to another. The revitalized inhabitants remain dormant until all have been tended to.

Characters who investigate the back of the cave can get through the rock barriers to the expert systems behind upon inflicting 50 points of damage to a 1-foot-square area around any of the dozen or so tubes. A large metal-lined chamber, shielded against most sensors and psychic abilities, holds enough of the revitalizing fluid for the whole population of the city, a filter system that can replenish this stock at the rate of one inhabitant's needs per hour, and the expert systems.

Characters with Knowledge (technology: advanced) can recognize at once that separate computers in the support systems shorted out and died sometime ago, and a DC 20 Computer Use (data and operation systems) check gives them access to the expert systems' records. Most of these are the collected observations of previous visitors, which give characters a +5 circumstance bonus on their social and tactical interactions with such groups. (The GM may apply this at her discretion to inhabitants of the region and to transitory visitors, reducing the bonus to +2 for groups whose representatives came to the Fragile City more than a generation ago.) There's also climatological and other scientific data, which provides a +2 circumstance bonus on checks related to studying the surrounding environment.

Extracting knowledge of the expert systems' original mission requires a separate DC 30 Computer Use (data and operation systems) check, since it's buried deeply. No records indicate just what happened to the AIs who used to be in charge, only that they eventually went silent. The AIs' mounts show signs of poor construction and insufficient maintenance. DC 20 Craft (electronics) and Craft (mechanical) checks each let characters remove valuable pieces of the machinery no longer in use, with a Wealth value of 8, plus 1 for every 5 points by which the character succeeded at either check. It takes one hour to remove either electronic or mechanical components, and the characters can make one of each sort of removal.

When all the inhabitants have been tended to, the biotech tubes retract, the filter system begins synthesizing more of the revitalizing fluid, and the inhabitants regain their consciousness. In their default condition, they speak a pre-Final Wars language that requires a DC 25 Knowledge (history) check to understand, and they have difficulty interacting with the characters at all: They simply don't know anything except their basic program to respond to input they haven't yet received. The surveillance drones deploy, then wheel around to watch the characters in the cave. After an hour of this, the inhabitants pick up the basics passed along through the expert systems, and attempt halting conversation and displays of friendship. After another hour, they regain full functionality, but no memory of their previous encounter; to the expert systems, there's a complete discontinuity upon the inhabitants' death, and this is an uncertain period of time later.

If the characters stay, the cycle of disease, death and return will play itself out again, and again. The expert systems are very patient, after all, and the inhabitants have no grounds on which to object. They treat any effort by the characters to reveal the truth as some obvious deception and revoke their hospitality if the characters persist. Sooner or later, the characters can expect to be escorted firmly (though kindly) to the roots and back down the cliff. The Fragile City then returns to its waiting isolation.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Fragile City inhabitants removed from the Fragile City develop the same symptoms and die just like in the cycle of infection, except that there's no automatic system to revive them. The cost of healing them is doubled from the normal rates for treating synthetics' injuries, and the DC of all rolls related to diagnosis and treatment is +8 higher than usual. Furthermore, each time an inhabitant dies and returns, its permanent Con is lowered by one. It also has a *tabula rasa* mental state, and must be taught everything from scratch. The inhabitants simply aren't made to survive away from the expert systems and the whole experiment.

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TEMPERATE FOREST SCENE: THE TREE FARM

The central feature of the Industrial Revolution was not any particular tool, but the idea of standardization and mass production. It was crucial for the rise of high-tech civilization for the next two centuries, until artificial intelligence made it possible to coordinate individualized production in quantities large enough for the global marketplace. But not everyone who could adopt individualized production did; and there were many cases for which standardization remained the right answer, or at least not obviously the wrong answer. Home decoration was one such field: When any given buyer would only have one of an object, it seldom mattered how many others might have the same model. Automated agriculture was another: The more predictable the shape and position of objects to be cultivated and harvested, the less demanding the task of designing and maintaining the machines doing the harvest.

Early biotech-standardized projects were all done individually, genes tailored and supporting chemicals created for that specific project. Later biotech researchers developed universal standardizers, bacteria-sized organisms that could be programmed with any set of genes and design criteria and unleashed to work on all the target plants or animals within a designated work area. When the Final Wars came, every surviving system of this sort was left to its own devices. The Tree Farm is one of the more proactive (or aggressive) survivors.

A century before the Final Wars, this was a barren wasteland of toxic dumping grounds, pre-AI urban sprawl abandoned for better living elsewhere, and the general detritus of 21st century life. Some biotech company interested in the opportunity to combine civic good works with ambitious field testing bought the rights to re-forest the whole area, many miles of low hills around polluted waterways. Within a decade, seedlings sprouted throughout the area, sheltered in small-scale greenhouses. Controlled exposure to the surrounding wasteland let the company test its plants and their ability to cope with it all, and the standardizers spread the most successful genes to every enclave. Two decades after the project started, there were flourishing groves in all the less-contaminated spots, and some life even in the most toxic zones. A decade after that, and the whole wasteland was a vital forest, full of diverse trees and smaller plants that all happened to share the genes for surviving and purifying the lingering pollution.

All the human beings in the new forest died during the Final Wars. The AIs pondered the general extinction, and decided that they should toughen up the plants in their care to avoid anything comparable, should there be a second round of conflict. Genetic diversity gave way to the relentless pursuit of optimal survival potential. Now there is just one species of tree, and every individual in that species grows along very similar lines, the fractal divisions of branch and leaf constrained by the genes for resisting blight and other hazards. The AIs noticed that some combinations of surrounding flowers and moss seemed associated with the trees most likely to flourish, and so standardizers ensure that every tree has the same low growth around its roots. Some animals live in the Tree Farm, and the standardizers make sure that every individual is an optimal member of its species (and that only species which do not threaten the trees survive).

Biotech defensive units capture intruders and bring them to the Tree Farm's headquarters for analysis. Threats to the trees face immediate extermination. All other outsiders are subjected to optimization from the standardizers, and then offered shelter or release as they prefer. The AIs aren't malevolent, but their particular variety of good intentions isn't necessarily much different from chosen hostility.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

The surrounding forest is generally unremarkable. There's at least one area of severe contamination within a few weeks of the Tree Farm, and the Tree Farm is growing in that direction. Occasional outbreaks of stray standardizers improve the health of all the plant and animal life in the area: For two weeks all around, creatures have maximum hit points. Food plants and animals taste particularly good, and a DC 18 Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) or Survival check lets characters realize that everything in the area is just plain healthy. Individual organisms are of all ages, and old ones show the effects of age, but nothing is diseased or crippled.

A WEEK AWAY

As characters approach the Tree Forest, species diversity thins. The drop-out of species becomes increasingly obvious: It takes a DC 30 Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) or Survival check to notice

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a week away, but the DC falls by –3 for each day the characters approach. It's a DC 7 check on the fringes of the Tree Farm itself, so obvious that even untrained observers are likely to realize it.

WITHIN THE TREE FARM

When the characters arrive at the Tree Farm itself, they find the full effect of the standardizers' work, with not only single species present but designated optimal forms for each. If characters engage in combat or other conflict with any of the Tree Farm's inhabitants, they get a +2 circumstance bonus on future engagements with those species because of the repetitious behavior.

There is a 10% chance per hour that the Tree Farm's sensors detect the characters and dispatch microreebdors enhanced with the standardized template given below. The Tree Farm sends one microreebdor per character of 5th level or less, plus an additional one per character for every five character levels. (If the retrieval fails, another such group comes an hour later, and another one an hour after that if necessary, and so on. Attrition should eventually take its toll.) The retrieval squad makes every effort to avoid killing the characters, preferring to appear friendly and curious and rely on Harmonious Pheromones. If combat does break out, the retrieval squad uses nonlethal attacks until half of their members have been killed. (Squads arriving after that begin with lethal combat.)

The nature of the particular species allowed as the single predators and prey in the Tree Farm is up to the GM. If you don't have any other ideas you're keen to use, the microreebdor and raiccown from **Machines & Mutants** make good choices. Stat blocks incorporating the effects of standardization appear below.

THE OVERSEERS

The eight AIs who oversee the Tree Farm are each housed in medical robots (see **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Five: Comrade, Nemesis, Mystery), so that they can survey their territory. Most of the time they rest in a clearing at the heart of the standardized area, engaging in slow conversations about what they could do for the rest of the world if resources weren't an obstacle. They feel little emotion, but are deeply committed to their mission and get something like passionate about it. When they meet with the characters, they introduce themselves as "the overseers," speaking politely whether or not it took violence to get the characters there.



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The overseers have little interest in anything that doesn't pertain to their particular mission. But they interpret that to include news of what is in fact happening out there in the un-standardized world at large, and characters who can offer them news — particularly news informed by scientific knowledge — earn the overseers' appreciation. Characters without such intellectual resources are subjected to standardization and released. The standardization process works like biotech implanting as described in **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Three: FX, "Biotechnology," *Installing Biotechnology*.

It's certainly possible to disable or destroy the medical robots hosting the AIs. It would take the AIs one full year to make all the necessary repairs, including scavenging through now-cleansed waste areas for necessary parts. In the meantime, the moment five or more of the AIs cease operating, the animals throughout the Tree Farm become disoriented and incapable of initiating complex actions. They are considered flat-footed for the duration of the crisis. If all eight AIs' chassis are destroyed, the predator species becomes relentlessly hostile, while the prey species flees out of the Tree Farm altogether. Should this happen, the AIs can roam outside the Tree Farm and select a new prey species from those available in the surrounding forest; the search and selection process takes one month.

TEMPLATE: STANDARDIZED

This template reflects the changes wrought by the Tree Farm's standardizers in their endless drive for healthy organisms at all costs. The effects are fully hereditary, including the allegiance.

"Standardized" is an acquired or inherited template that can be added to any animal, humanoid, mutant beast, mutant plant, mutant vermin, plant or vermin (hereafter known as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: An animal type changes to mutant beast; humanoid changes to mutant humanoid; plant changes to mutant plant; and vermin changes to mutant vermin. Any base creature whose type contains the word "mutant" remains the same. The base creature's size does not change.

Hit Dice: Change the base creature's Hit Die to the value appropriate for its new type. The base creature gains 1 Hit Die. The creature also receives full hit points for each Hit Die.

Defense: The base creature's Defense does not change.

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: These do not change except as modified by the increase in Hit Dice.

Attacks: The base creature's attacks remain unchanged.

Special Qualities: The base creature's qualities remain unchanged. Individuals chosen for retrieval squads gain the mutations Harmonious Pheromones, Mental Overdrive and Strong Grip (see **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Three: FX).

Saves: The base creature gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves.

Ability Scores: The base creature gains +1 Strength and Dexterity, and +3 Constitution.

Allegiances: Sentient base creatures subjected to standardization gain an allegiance to the standardized ecosystem.

Skills: The base creature's skills do not change.

Feats: The base creature's feats do not change.

Organized: As before becoming standardized.

Challenge Rating: Base creature +2.

STANDARDIZED FOREST MICROREEBDOR

Size/Type:	Medium Mutant Beast
Hit Dice:	4d8+20 (55 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold:	20
Initiative:	+1
Speed:	20 ft. (4 squares), fly 10 ft. (poor), climb 10 ft. (2 squares)
Defense:	15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14
Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:	+4/+9
Primary Attack:	Bite +9 melee (1d8+7)
Full Attack:	Bite +6 melee (1d8+7)
Fighting Space/ Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities:	Improved grab, speed burst; if chosen for retrieval squad, harmonious pheromones, mental overdrive, strong grip
Saves:	Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 20, Dex 13, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills:	Climb +8, Hide +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +2, Spot +6
Feats:	Alertness, Stealthy, Toughness
Action Points:	—
Reputation:	—

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Allegiances: Immediate relatives, standardized ecosystem
Environment: Tree Farm
Organization: Solitary or family (2–10)
Challenge Rating: 4

Combat

Forest microreebdors prefer to allow their prey to come to them. They will lie in wait for a likely meal and then spring into action, hoping to surprise and capture their prey with their mighty jaws in a single action.

Speed Burst (Ex): A forest microreebdor can quadruple its speed for 1 round, once every 8 hours.

STANDARDIZED RAICCOWN

Size/Type: Small Mutant Beast
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (18 hp)
Massive Damage Threshold: 13
Initiative: +4
Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares), climb 30 ft.
Defense: 16 (+4 Dex, +1 natural, +1 size), touch 15, flat-footed 12
Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: +2/+1
Primary Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d4–1) or claw +6 melee (1d3–1)
Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d4–1), 2 claws +1 melee (1d3–1)
Fighting Space/ Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Scent; if chosen for retrieval squad, harmonious pheromones, mental overdrive, strong grip
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Balance +5, Climb +6, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +8, Spot +3
Feats: Weapon Finesse
Action Points: —
Reputation: —
Allegiances: Immediate relatives, standardized ecosystem
Environment: Tree Farm
Organization: Solitary or family (2–10)
Challenge Rating: 1
Advancement: —

Combat

Raiccown prefer stealth to combat. They sneak around the edges of civilized societies, stealing food, scraps and shiny objects. If cornered, they come on ferociously, attempting to surprise their opponents and then escape. If protecting their young, they fight to the death.

Skills: Raiccown have a +8 species bonus on Climb checks, maintain their Dexterity bonus to Defense when climbing, and may choose to take 10 on Climb checks even in dangerous situations. Raiccown also have a +4 species bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks.

AROMATIC SCENE: THE SMALL HERDS

Small is cute. Things that display the qualities of infants, including diminutive scale, large eyes, and so on, appeal to almost everyone. Evolution has made children cute not just to their parents but to most bystanders, and nurtured offspring are much more likely to survive. The appeal even crosses species lines: Kittens and puppies, for instance, appeal to more people than the possibly surly and uncooperative cats and dogs they grow up to be. As soon as species designers could reliably breed miniature versions of big animals, they did; and the biologists working on species reconstruction found that miniature versions of extinct animals were also more likely to meet with favorable response from the general public.

When civilization fell, therefore, there were well-established populations of miniature creatures of many sorts. Like all domesticated and semi-domesticated animals, many of them died without humans to take care of them. But not all of them did. Some escaped into the wild and flourished. The warm and consistent climate of aromatic zones proved ideal for many of these reconstructions. Given water, shade and enough grass and succulent plants to feed upon, herds of miniature mammoths and dinosaurs could graze, fight and breed to their hearts' content. Some of them even manage to compete effectively with the un-altered species they share a biome with.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

The area around the small herds' territory was densely settled before the Final Wars and thoroughly devastated when war began. No sentient beings live here on a permanent basis, because of the dangers from toxic waste and automated defense systems. Nor

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is there as much sustained looting of the ruins here as in former urban areas elsewhere, because the destruction included the nanotech- and biotech-driven decomposition of structures and the triggering of natural disasters like fire, flood and landslide. Anything that remained had to be heavily shielded. Of that remnant, anything that could be already looted with reasonable effort has been: The characters encounter opened and empty vaults in many styles. (See **Out of the Vaults**, Chapter One: Loss and Recovery, for more details and suggestions.)

This is therefore an empty land when it comes to the legacy of intelligent activity. It's gone genuinely wild to a degree that not many areas in inhabited continents can, thanks to the combined incentives for settlers to stay away. Isolated groves of oak and olive trees somehow survived the Final Wars, and they and the surrounding grasses and bushes flourished once the post-War fires burned out. There are now many stands of trees older than the characters' grandparents, and every spot of ground that isn't still heavily poisoned supports dense, tough covering vegetation.

The wildlife in the wider region is normal for the climate, and fairly healthy. By now the major herds know the signs of local trouble and stay away from waste and weaponry. They're not as accustomed to people as their counterparts in more settled areas, and characters hunting them get a +2 circumstance bonus for the animals' relative lack of fear.

A WEEK AWAY

The wildlife population thins in the transitional zone between the small herds' territory and the rest of the region. The small herds compete with the unaltered animals around them, and neither side ends up really getting enough food to flourish. The difficulty of hunting-related checks increases by +2 in a space a week's travel wide (negating the circumstance bonus provided in the surrounding region). The density and dangerousness of ruins increases as well — their presence helps keep the small herds safe from many potential challengers. Characters may well encounter the bodies of local adventuring groups who tampered with things beyond their ability to manage.

THE SMALL HERDS

The characters crest a range of steep though low hills and look down into a valley at one edge of the small herds' range. For a moment they may think that they're looking across vast distances, until they realize that those small creatures are close up. They can judge scale by comparison to the trees and bushes, as well as any protruding artificial features the characters can recognize.

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There are no animals more than 6 feet tall visible in this valley, or the slopes beyond it; and there are some less than a foot high despite apparently being adults. The plants are all normally sized, which means that the small herds have a vastly richer supply of food *per capita* than their normal-sized cousins beyond the transitional zone. The animals are noticeably healthier than the average, and tend to be slightly plump.

Further observation shows that nearly all the animals come in two scales. The Medium miniature animals range from 3 to 6 feet tall, and wander throughout the small herds' lands. There are also Tiny miniature animals, all about a foot tall, who can't comfortably make their way through the dense grasses and bushes and therefore favor the clear ground under groves of tall trees. They must also avoid the deeper, faster-running streams in favor of shallow creeks, and boggy marshes in favor of well-defined ponds.

The small herds are not tame animals. The predators hunt just as viciously and effectively as their counterparts elsewhere, and the prey use their defenses with the intelligence and alertness characteristic of their species. (Admittedly, for some species this means that at least they're no stupider than the genial idiots common to their kind.) The small herds do all share an implanted curiosity about and sympathy for human beings, and approach visitors with cautious friendship. If the characters treat them well, the animals reciprocate; even in the face of hostility, the animals prefer flight to fight whenever escape is feasible. All Animal Handling checks get a +3 circumstance bonus.

The miniature animals don't have any exotic feeding requirements like trace nutrients not available in their natural environment. Some Pre-War strains did, but then they all died out, leaving the field to those capable of eating what they could get. Characters may therefore take members of the small herds with them and not end up with nothing to show for the effort but tiny corpses. The small herds all breed true.

TEMPLATE: MINIATURE ANIMAL, MEDIUM

"Medium Miniature Animal" is an inherited template that can be applied to any Large, Huge or Gargantuan animal (hereafter referred to as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The base creature's type becomes mutant beast, and the base creature's size is changed to Medium.

DWARF ANIMALS IN HISTORY

There are historical precedents for the small herds. The most immediately relevant of these is the pygmy mammoth, *Mammuthus exilis*. During the last ice age, full-sized mammoths swam from the Southern California mainland to the Channel Islands. The lower sea level of the time made it a shorter swim than it is now, and merged the currently distinct four islands of the chain into one larger mass. There was plenty of food, and there were no predators or other threats to the mammoths' well-being. But in response to limited space, the mammoths shrank over the course of a thousand years or so, stabilizing with a height of 4 to 8 feet at the shoulder, as compared to the average of 14 feet at the shoulder for their ancestors.

They died out after the ice age ended and the first human beings arrived in the area. Scholars debate the relative importance of environmental changes, human hunters and other factors. In **Gamma World** campaigns with high attention to scientific and cultural history, the characters should have the chance to discover designers' notes from the small herds' creators. These notes cover the history of *Mammuthus exilis* and studies of human fondness for small and child-like creatures, and debates about the importance of breeding restrictions, behavioral modifications and the like.

Hit Dice: The base creature's Hit Die becomes a d10. The base creature loses no Hit Dice if Large, 3 Hit Dice if Huge, or 14 Hit Dice if Gargantuan. (This produces Medium creatures somewhat tougher than normal.)

Defense: The creature gains +1 Defense if normally Large, +2 if Huge, or +4 if Gargantuan (this removes the size bonus penalty to Defense).

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: These do not change except as modified by the base creature's reduction in size and Hit Dice.

Attacks: The base creature's attacks remain unchanged except for reduced reach and range.

Special Qualities: The base creature's qualities remain unchanged.

Saves: The base creature gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves.

Ability Scores: The base creature loses –1 Strength and gains +1 Dexterity.

Allegiances: The base creature's allegiances do not change.

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Skills: The base creature gains +3 Hide and +3 Move Silently.

Feats: The base creature's feats do not change.

Organized: As for base creature.

Challenge Rating: As for base creature.

TEMPLATE: MINIATURE ANIMAL, TINY

"Tiny Miniature Animal" is an inherited template that can be applied to any Small, Medium, Large, Huge or Gargantuan animal (hereafter referred to as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The base creature's type becomes mutant beast, and the base creature's size is changed to Tiny.

Hit Dice: The base creature's Hit Die becomes a d10. The base creature loses no Hit Dice if Small, 1 Hit Die if Medium or Large (to a minimum of 1/2 Hit Die), 7 Hit Dice if Huge, or 15 Hit Dice if Gargantuan. (This produces Tiny creatures somewhat tougher than normal.)

Defense: The creature gains +1 Defense if normally Small, +2 if Medium, +3 if Large, +4 if Huge, or +7 if Gargantuan.

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: These do not change except as modified by the reduction in size and Hit Dice.

Attacks: The base creature's attacks remain unchanged except for reduced reach and range.

Special Qualities: The base creature's qualities remain unchanged.

Saves: The base creature gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves.

Ability Scores: The base creature loses –2 Strength and –1 Constitution and gains +2 Dexterity.

Allegiances: The base creature's allegiances do not change.

Skills: The creature gains +5 Hide and +5 Move Silently, but loses 2 ranks in Spot.

Feats: The base creature's feats do not change.

Organized: As for base creature.

Challenge Rating: As for base creature.

HOT DESERT SCENE: THE FRIENDLY FISH LAND

In the struggle of humanity's works against nature that followed the Final Wars, many of the works won. They preserved themselves more or less intact through the ensuing generations and remain active forces in the Gamma Age. Sometimes nature won, though, and only inert ruins remain. In some cases, the ruin remains lifeless, too toxic to support any but the hardiest, simplest microorganisms. In others, it becomes the nucleus for a new community of plants and animals who exploit it for raw materials and shelter.

The Friendly Fish Land was one of many amusement parks making use of biotech and nanotech for extremely immersive experiences. Though built well away from any natural body of water, the park offered visitors the chance to walk and swim through a wide variety of undersea habitats with varying degrees of realism. Groundwater, thoroughly polluted after centuries of industrial use, was filtered and treated to meet stringent safety standards; all of the fish were genetically engineered mindless constructs operated remotely by AIs. Radiation and biochemical weapons lobotomized the AIs at the same time they killed the human supervisors. Automatic machinery continued to run for years or even decades… long enough to pump out all the groundwater for miles around out and spill it uselessly across pavement and now-dead filter systems. Hardy but tolerable climate turned into desert.

Multiple waves of early wild colonizers perished in the ruins, done in by lingering hazardous substances and security systems not quite dead yet. Their remains helped build the environment that finally did start sustaining diverse life. Just as sunken ships serve as the seeds for new reefs underwater, so the amusement park ruins support abundant plant and animal communities in the middle of this artificial desert.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

The desert around the amusement part is at least 150 miles wide, and may be substantially larger if the GM chooses. (It may also exist within a larger natural desert.) A DC 18 Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) check lets characters realize that the desert doesn't make perfect climatological sense. Depending on the campaign and Friendly Fish Land's place within it, there may be more rainfall than can be accounted for, surface water that isn't diffusing into the surrounding ground or other such conflicts between principle and observable reality.

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Inhabitants of the surrounding desert and dry region speak of a haunted oasis somewhere deep within the harshest desert. They could reach it, using all their survival gear and expertise, but they choose not to. There are strange creatures living there and a general air of trouble. Some of those who've gone there died mysteriously, sucked into the desert themselves leaving only bones behind. They're reluctant to tell anyone how to get there now, for fear of stirring whatever inhabits the oasis to greater effort; it's a DC 30 Bluff, Gather Information or Intimidate check to get a general sense of the oasis' location, and characters can attempt this only after analyzing basic social structures in the community. (See **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Six: The Gamma World Campaign, "Investigation," *Understanding Culture*; this is a task similar to Discern Casual Greeting Knowledge.) Characters can of course simply choose to head where it seems the desert is harshest, and this takes them in the right direction with two successes on DC 20 Survival checks.

If the GM chooses, really serious failures on any of the above checks — missing by 10 or more — may result in the characters being directed at the oasis as punishment by locals they've offended or stumbling in the right direction by accident, thoroughly lost.

A WEEK AWAY

Dead and abandoned settlements dot the landscape within the artificial desert. Most of them were abandoned only after planning, so there's little loose lying around; anything that could be easily removed went with local scavengers long ago. A GM interested in using the space-related debris presented in **Out of the Vaults** may want to introduce it here, crashed in a place where it'll be largely left alone until the characters arrive.

Survival-related DCs are +2 higher than usual thanks to the desert's intense and artificial quality. Normal tactics don't all apply, and in particular there's less in the way of natural shelters to keep water safe.

A DAY AWAY

The desert becomes harsher as the characters continue. Survival-related DCs are +5 higher on the day the characters reach the amusement park and the day before that. Only the best-protected animals and plants survive.

The characters may also encounter part of the amusement park's water-collection system. The machinery is all long dead, but may be scavenged for parts, producing loose pieces with a Wealth value of 3, +1 for every 5 points over the minimum necessary on a DC 15 Repair check.

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Characters can perform this scavenging just once for any particular cluster of machinery. Five- and 10-foot-wide shafts lead down to tunnels that run all the way to the amusement park. Most are filled partly or completely with sand, and in those that are passable there's a 10% chance per hour that the characters encounter a cleansing slime seeking lingering waste to purify. (See **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Five: Comrade, Nemesis, Mystery, for cleansing slime statistics.)

The amusement park comes into view when the characters crest a particularly high sand dune ridge or rocky outcropping. They see broken spires, vividly green, beyond the perpetual mirages that ripple over hot salt flats. It's not possible to make out further details from that initial glimpse. As the characters approach, they can see the sprawl of low buildings around the tall towers, the ruins of once major transportation systems running across the desert and more wrecked water-collecting machinery.

Finally the characters reach the amusement park itself. Those who make a DC 25 Knowledge (history) check can understand its purpose from the signs and layout; others must guess as best they can. Nature preserve? Nature-loving community? Haven of biotech-based synthetics? It could be lots of things, and there's nobody on hand to explain. The boundary between amusement park and desert is almost razor sharp: The transition from lush growth to salt-ridden desert happens across a 20-foot span. A foot-high ridge of extruded salts, including toxic heavy-metal concentrations, runs around the park, providing the inhabiting animals one more reason not to go roaming.

HAZARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Above all, the Friendly Fish Land micro-biome is rich in life. All of it shares the hybrid-climate template modifications described below.

Friendly Fish Land consisted of extensive canals connecting big lakes and ponds, with support buildings and attractions arranged around them. Three towers define the amusement park's corners, each 250 feet tall. Originally elevators ran up inside open scaffolding to observation decks. The elevators fell apart, but heavy vines make it a fairly easy climb, requiring three successful DC 12 Climb checks. Only a few of the largest lakes have open water anymore; the rest have become silted in or marshy. The buildings are all in varying degrees of ruin, most open-roofed and fallen apart, with only a few standing more than a story high. There have been few sentient looters here, but more than a century of rampant plant and animal habitation have reduced everything fragile and valuable to broken shards.

Concealed risks abound, including hard-to-spot ventilation shafts, sharp metal and synthetic components lurking beneath grass and hedges and the like. Each round that characters move at more than walking speed, they must make a DC 15 Spot check to notice obstacles. If this fails, they must make a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid taking 1d6 points of damage from running into or onto something dangerous.

Friendly Fish Land abounds in living creatures and in ruins richly suitable for use as components in Craft efforts. These include small pieces of relatively intact machinery, animal hides and interior organs containing useful chemicals, soil modified by exotic life, and so on. Twice per day, characters may make DC 18 Craft checks if they have the mechanical or pharmaceutical specialties. Success gives a character a small (pocket-sized) asset which adds a +2 circumstance bonus on some future Craft effort, plus an additional asset for every 5 points by which the character beat the difficulty. These assets are either inorganic and not subject to perishing, or organic but remaining useful as they dry out and enter conditions suitable for long-term storage and carrying. They may also be sold or traded, granting a Wealth award of +1 (plus an additional +1 for every 5 points by which the character beat the roll to gather it). (The GM is the final authority on whether a suitable buyer with deep-enough pockets is available.)

TEMPLATE: HYBRID-CLIMATE ANIMAL

"Hybrid-climate animal" is an inherited template that can be applied to any animal, mutant beast, mutant plant, mutant vermin, plant or vermin (hereafter known as the base creature). It uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The base creature's type and size do not change.

Hit Dice: The creature loses one Hit Die. If it already has just one Hit Die, it is reduced to the next smaller fraction: from 1 Hit Die to 1/2, from 1/2 to 1/3, etc.

Defense: The creature gains +1 natural armor bonus due to thick, tough hide and integument (this is in addition to any natural armor the creature already has).

Base Attack Bonus/Grapple: These do not change except as modified by the reduction in Hit Dice.

Attacks: As for base creature.

Special Qualities: As for base creature. In addition, the creature does not have to make Fortitude saves against the effects of high heat or humidity, and it is always brightly colored.

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Saves: As for base creature.

Ability Scores: The base creature loses –2 Strength and –1 Constitution and gains +2 Dexterity.

Allegiances: The base creature's allegiances do not change.

Skills: The base creature gains +5 Climb.

Feats: The base creature's feats do not change.

Organized: As for the base creature.

Challenge Rating: As for the base creature.

SWAMP SCENE: SERENDIB

In between bouts of fascination with creating unprecedented designs, Noetic Era cultures indulged in fits of obsession with recreating old styles in modern materials. Many of these structures and cities were made specifically to decay quickly and gracefully and didn't survive even to the Final Wars, let alone beyond them; but some were built to last and managed to do just that. In cases where records are scarce — that is, most of the time — scholars of the Gamma Age confront mysterious, obviously anachronistic features whose origins and purpose must remain mysterious. The city of Serendib is one such mystery.

The low-lying land in which it stands is now a vast swamp. Before the Final Wars, it was farmlands and pastures irrigated through elaborate networks of canals and channels from the large nearby river. Collateral damage from kinetic-energy weapons shattered the dikes holding the river in place; and once the flooding started, it never entirely stopped. Major earthquakes after the Wars collapsed sinkholes and widened small canyons into broad catch basins, through which the river's various branches meander slowly. Much of the water remains standing motionless nearly all the time, except when flooding forces some fresh runoff through stagnant areas. Vast, sprawling, water-dwelling trees and algae mats cover over the old roads and buildings. In the middle of all this stands a classical Arabic city, with still-shiny gilded minarets rising from the center of the area enclosed by elaborately tiled walls.

There is no deep secret to Serendib's style: It's simply what a group of architects thought their clients might be interested in. The design combines the Muslim aversion to pictorial representation with Muslim and pre-Muslim geometric designs. Arabic calligraphy provides decorative friezes on walls, around windows and doors and wherever there's some otherwise blank space, alternating passages from the Koran and Arabic history with passages from folklore. The architects and their clients liked the authentic atmosphere but had no concern with the doctrinal purity of the messages embedded in the decor. The city's circular layout owes more to Washington DC than Arabian precedents, but each building has specific inspirations from then-contemporary facilities or well-documented history.

In its first few years, Serendib was a thriving cultural center for this part of the continent, its artists and engineers producing widely admired and imitated works. The next Gregorian revival and the Cislunar movement drew attention elsewhere, and popularity never returned in full strength. It was a "city of beautiful losers," as popular graffiti put it, 30 years before the post-War floodwaters first washed through the largely empty streets. The city's foundations held firm in the earthquakes, but the city's sheer mass was enough to displace the increasingly soggy ground beneath it; the whole thing sank half a story in just a few years. Now it continues to sink at 1 to 5 inches per year. The whole first story now rests beneath the mud and pools; and in time the foundation will crack under the extra weight, the towers will topple and Serendib will be one more ruin.

In the meantime, the city's robotic maintainers do what they can to keep it accessible, and a great wealth of cultural information waits for explorers willing to inquire within.

THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

The swamp around Serendib is a wonderful home for diseases of all kinds, drawing on generations of pollution and deliberate corruption. The DC of all checks related to resisting and curing diseases is increased by +5 throughout the swamp. Inhabitants almost all show the marks of multiple bouts with severe disease: pockmarked faces and limbs, twisted scars poorly healed, weakened frames and so on. Cryptic alliances who place a high value on health and/or perfection find the whole thing perfectly loathsome, and may be inclined to pursue a hygienic crusade for the sake of the world's general good.

Local residents know vaguely that there's a big ruin deep inside the swamp, but don't find it very interesting. Looters had their way with it two generations ago, giving it up when the combination of decreasing access to portable wealth and increasing

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sophistication on the part of robot defenders made it unprofitable. Now it's just a place, unconnected with the way they live now. Very old dwellers in swamp communities may have garbled recollections of their visits to Serendib as children, and describe the city as filled with "alien" writing.

TOO MUCH HEALTH

There are circumstances in which characters may find themselves with nanounits, biotech or mutations run amok, working so actively that the character risks being entirely consumed by what was supposed to be healing. The Serendib swamp can come in handy here. A character with overactive healing systems at work can simply open some cuts and splash around in microbe-laden muck for a while. Each point of damage self-inflicted this way reduces the character's Fortitude save against water-borne contact and ingested disease vectors by –1. The character makes a deliberate self-infection check once per hour. (Wounds only count once. The next time the character makes a check, she must inflict fresh wounds to get the reduced Fortitude save.) The swamp is host to small communities of individuals who have this kind of problem on a permanent basis, for whom disease is the key to health, as they end up with average well-being and alertness while their excessive healing capacities deal with swamp infections.

A WEEK AWAY

The towers of Serendib rise above the swamp's trees when the characters are a week away. Throughout this area there are occasional rumbles and splashes from sinking structures. The characters should witness at least one spectacular collapse close-up and one from a distance.

The collapse from a distance is simple: One of those looming towers shakes intermittently for several hours, and then suddenly collapses in on itself. There's a distant boom from its impact, and a brief cloud of wet dust across a mile or so. If there are no major obstructions between the characters and Serendib, they must deal with a low surge of water. Any character swimming or wading more than knee-deep must make a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid tumbling over and taking 1d3 points of damage.

The close-up collapse is more complicated.

Spread throughout the swamp are stone and synthetic-stone monuments made to deliberately flout the Muslim prohibition on iconography, constructed

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by artists annoyed with Serendib's city leaders. These are staggeringly realistic imitations of creatures and machines of pre-Final Wars times, and if the characters have had trouble with any real surviving relic, the GM should present its imitation. Otherwise, just choose or invent something suitably menacing; the Death Machine (see **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Five: Comrade, Nemesis, Mystery) is a good standard for the purpose. It takes a DC 30 Spot check on first glimpsing the monument for characters to notice signs of weathering in the paint job and the absence of the motion the real thing would demonstrate. The DC falls by –3 for each minute the characters spend watching the monument in an alert way. Eventually it becomes clear that the thing is a fake.

Once the characters achieve that realization, *then* it sinks. It wobbles briefly and then falls over, sinking halfway into the mud beneath the swamp water immediately then vanishing the rest of the way over the course of 10 minutes. Characters closer to its base than the monument is tall must make a DC 15 Reflex save to get out of the way. Those who succeed take 1 point of damage from scattered chunks of splashed debris; those who fail take 4d6 points of crushing damage and must swim out of the way. Characters trapped underneath when the monument falls need a minimum of 2 rounds to swim to safety, plus an additional round for every 3 points by which they failed the Reflex save. The surge of water on impact requires everyone within sight of the monument to make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid being swept off their feet. This also applies to flying characters 5 feet or less above the surface.

A DAY AWAY

Serendib's robot maintainers sometimes make a sweep through the area in search of usable resources brought up by the tides, tremors and other sources. There's a 5% chance per hour the characters are within a day's travel of the city that they encounter one of the maintainers. Its behavior is as described below for encounters within the city.

THE CITY

Robots keep Serendib's main entrances, aligned with the cardinal directions, swept constantly clear. Smaller gateways are usually choked with debris and vines run amok. The whole thing is, as noted above, sinking, with more than a story's worth of construction submerged. The water here is relatively clear; unless a tower toppled within the last few hours, characters can look down at the drowned streets. A few robots try to keep the walkways free of algae, shop window decorations seasonal and the whole street scene appropriate despite the flooding. It is of course a lost cause, but the robots in question are directed by an expert system which can't properly evaluate the ongoing condition of flood.

The robot maintainers that do realize the city is in trouble have the same statistics as those given for medical robots in **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Five: Comrade, Nemesis, Mystery, with the addition of 15 ranks each in Knowledge (art), Knowledge (behavioral science), Knowledge (history, only up to the Final Wars), and Knowledge (technology: advanced). They speak a Pre-War dialect of the local language, and it takes an hour of sustained conversation and a DC 20 Knowledge (behavioral science) check for either the robots or the characters to work out a reliable translation scheme. The robots do everything they can to show that they're glad to receive visitors, and offer the characters a tour of Serendib even before translation construction is complete.

The robots' sense of time since the Final Wars is deeply disordered. Lacking anyone to report to or help, they feel themselves to be looping again and again through the same chunk of time. (If the campaign includes sufficiently weird science, as in some of the more outré options presented in the **Gamma World Game Master's Guide**, they could even be right, at least in part.) Interacting with living, sentient beings anchors them in the sequential march of history, and they're desperate to regain their lost stability. What they want above all is someone who wants to learn the things they can teach, and they make generous offers of material support to those who might be willing students.

If characters choose to move on fairly quickly, one or more robot maintainers asks permission to accompany the travelers. Thereafter, the maintainers take month-long turns traveling with the characters, seeing the rest of the world while teaching history and art, then returning to Serendib to share their new knowledge with the rest of the city. They break off this relationship when characters demonstrate either boredom with the maintainers' lessons or a general disinclination to rebuild the particular sort of Pre-Wars culture Serendib embodied. The maintainers' final exchange is a deeply disappointed one, full of brooding, muttered speculation about hoping to find someone more sympathetic before it's all lost. In the meantime, they can pass on as much or as little lore as the GM deems appropriate; in a campaign where

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the search for lost truths plays a prominent part, Serendib's maintainers may be the culmination of the great search, or at least of a search.

The city itself is doomed. It needs repair and rescue that almost no Gamma Age community can muster. Its collapse can be rapid or slow, as the GM feels is appropriate; but in any event the characters should get the chance to see an entire city sink beneath the water. The final act may be the result of a hurricane or other massive storm driving a storm surge of water into the area. (If there are major un-collapsed dams upstream of the swamp, the failure of one or more of them can produce the same sort of inundation.) Over the course of the week after sinking, the remaining robot maintainers succumb to the same delusion already at work in the subsurface would-be street cleaners, and thereafter they all try to carry on as if this is nothing more than a peculiarly lasting dense fog or mist. Their conversation becomes increasingly repetitive and less responsive as memory banks fail. Within a year of the sinking, the maintainers can no longer engage constructively with the present at all.

OCEAN SCENE: THE CITY OF BUBBLES

The most dangerous parts of the sea are its surface and its bottom. At the surface, water meets air, giving rise to storms and often unpredictable currents. As shores approach, waves rise up, disturbing the water beneath them. Trash spreads out from wrecks and dumps, and pollution drifts along, sometimes for hundreds or even thousands of miles from its point of origin. Food and resources are plentiful, but so is competition, and sea life must compete not only with other water creatures but against rivals native to land and air. At the bottom, water meets land, dragging and giving rise to submarine landslides and turbulence. Currents changed by global climatic shifts warm formerly cool zones, and heated pockets of ice, methane, natural gas and other hazards melt, poisoning or at least complicating the water above them. Wrecked ships leak; so do missiles and aircraft shot down overhead.

The risks shrink greatly in the vast middle depths, 100 feet or more removed from either surface or bottom. Life flourishes. Below 300 feet, where sunlight cannot penetrate, plants and animals provide their own lights: The depths are black only where nothing lives. Contamination thins out as it diffuses through huge open spaces, even when the sources are relatively near. There are weapons from the Noetic Age that can damage these spaces, including convection generators and self-reproducing automata, but they were expensive and often unreliable.

The art of maritime urban design flourished for two generations before the Final Wars. Nanotech made all sorts of exotic materials feasible for use in commercial construction. Fads came and went as in all design, and there are still underwater cities made entirely of lead, or musical algae, or pieces of trash arranged by computer so that they're water- and air-tight despite the absence of adhesives or anything but precise juxtaposition holding them in place. By far the most consistently popular material, however, was water itself, whether used as ice or as liquid contained by nanotech or biotech membranes. People willing to live in the sea generally preferred to have as little as possible between the sea and themselves, at least in the outer edges of their settlements.

Not all of these water cities survive, but many do. Many of them were depopulated during the Final Wars or by complications afterward, but they seldom remain empty for very long. Like the shells favored by crabs and other marine life as shelter, there's always someone willing to settle down in aging comfort.

WHERE THE CITY GOES

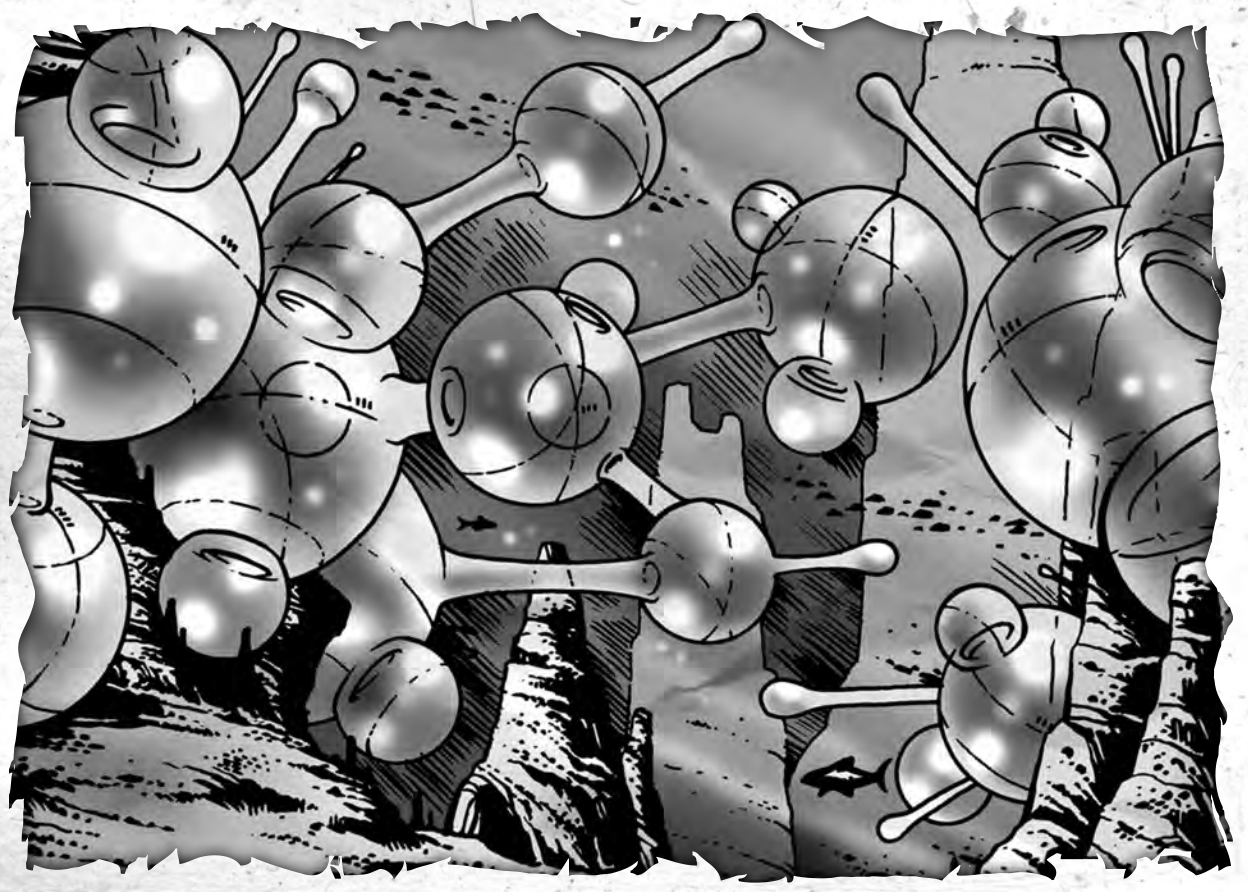
Some sea cities remain more or less stationary; some are even physically attached to the sea floor or something else solidly anchored. Others drift freely. The City of Bubbles is one of those designed to roam, so that it can show up in any ocean that the characters happen to be in. Its non-self-aware expert guidance systems steer away from serious pollution and signs of large-scale conflict, so that it won't generally appear in a war zone or the midst of a toxic waste dump, but otherwise it simply sails along at 1–5 mph, its highest point (apart from observation spires) 200 feet below average sea level.

No surface storm can threaten the City of Bubbles, so it may appear even in the thick of a hurricane or typhoon, let alone a weaker blow. Characters who've been shipwrecked might find such an appearance very welcome.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE CITY

The City of Bubbles relies on a single, standardized nanotech effect.

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Create Bubble

Nanounit seeds create this effect when spread through normal water.

Scope: Non-combat external

Power: Moderate

Type: Creation

Nano Cost: 16

DC: 15

Effect: A volume of space in the shape and size chosen by the City's expert systems takes on the combination of properties the City's architecture requires.

Game Mechanics: Water given the Bubble treatment retains its transparency, but becomes as tough and resilient as an inch of titanium, capable of supporting major loads without strain. The bubble's walls are a small fraction of an inch thick, and are selectively porous to important gases. When the City is in motion, each bubble automatically extracts all the oxygen it needs, and automatically passes out carbon dioxide and other waste gases. With a DC 18 check instead of DC 15, the Bubble treatment can produce more complex filters, capable of extracting and excreting any chosen combination of elements and minerals found dissolved in sea water.

The bubble walls are linked via wireless networking to the overseeing expert systems, and can read the neurological activity associated with the desire to pass through a wall. It's simply necessary to think clearly "I want to go through this wall" to do so. The wall becomes soft and viscous in an area wide enough for the wishing individual to make a transit, then firms up again. Surrounding segments of wall temporarily toughen, if necessary, to continue supporting the load the gateway area normally carries.

The walls do not provide armor protection. This was a matter of design philosophy, and the realities of urban construction in an era of widespread small-scale conflict. If the city planners had made it capable of effective defense, it would have become the target of widespread suspicion, whereas openness made it seem not to be hiding anything. Gamma Age inhabitants sometimes modify the Bubble effect to add armor value, but the expert systems always undo it within a few days, hewing to their instructions despite the radically changed social context.

THE SHAPE OF THE CITY

The City of Bubbles is precisely what it sounds like: a collection of bubbles more than a mile across.

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Individual bubbles range from a few feet to several hundred feet wide; while most are spherical, some have been pulled into tubes, spirals and more complex shapes. Most are fairly thin, with no more than a few rooms' distance between the center of the interior and the bubble's skin, so that the sea is always close at hand. The City of Bubbles was not, after all, a place to come to get away from frequent contact with the sea.

The City's configuration changes constantly. The expert systems maintain enough space for a population of 50,000 people to live and work, even though now there are seldom anything like that many people in residence. The one constant feature is a 10-story cylinder which houses the expert systems themselves, and which extends up to the surface. A gel-like set of ship berths and observation platform drifts along the surface except in the most extreme harsh weather or polar chill. Apart from that, the GM is at liberty to create bubble skyscrapers, bubble stadiums and coliseums, bubble mazes (made opaque with algae as the undersea equivalent of hedge mazes) and so on. If it's interesting and distinctive, it has a place somewhere, and the expert systems are always experimenting.

THE BUBBLE PEOPLE

Community Type: Frontier Town
Population Level: 8 (5,200 adults)
Force: 12 (+1)
Mobility: 15 (+2)
Resilience: 15 (+2)
Learning: 13 (+1)
Awareness: 13 (+1)
Command: 13 (+1)
Wealth: 46
Reputation Bonus: +6

Skills: Computer Use (data and operation systems) +7, Computer Use (biotech systems) +7, Craft (chemical) +6, Craft (nanotech) +7, Craft (pharmaceutical) +5, Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) +7, Knowledge (gossip) +4, Knowledge (technology: advanced) +6, Knowledge (technology: nanotech) +7, Perform (sing) +6, Repair +7, Survival +7, Treat Injury +7

Feats: Advanced Engineering, Biotech Usage, Food Synthesis, Fuel Production, Nanotech Usage, Stockpile

Benefits:

- Wide-ranging travel.
- Sophisticated nanotech applications.

Philosophy: Comfortable living. The City of Bubbles' current inhabitants generally have no interest in grand crusades. They like living in a place that provides so well for their needs, and hope to remain here as long as possible. They welcome strangers who can help contribute something useful, and easily tolerate those who at least don't make it worse.

Two-thirds of the City's current inhabitants are descended from a post-War experiment in marine habitation. Built on human stock from various coastal areas, these mutants were engineered to have webbed fingers and toes, scaly protective skin and gills. They arrived at the City 30 years ago, after a series of hurricanes and volcanoes in the South Pacific destroyed their old home. At that point the City was almost uninhabited, thanks to diseases carried unwittingly by traders. The fish-folk moved their whole community to the City and have traveled with it ever since. They welcome everyone willing to cooperate with them, so the remaining third of the population is an exotic mix of humans and other sentient animals and synthetics of many sorts, including quite a few rescued sailors and other shipwreck survivors.

The City lacks much in the way of government. Since each bubble can tend itself pretty well, there's little need for large-scale coordination of services, and the expert systems are entirely up to the task. Family- and neighborhood-sized groups engage in whatever local organization suits them, and the whole range of authoritarian, cooperative and anarchic arrangements flourishes somewhere among the bubbles.

The Elfiver cryptic alliance (see **Cryptic Alliances & Unknown Enemies**) operates openly in the City. Its members, generally numbering 20–50, advocate using the City as the foundation of a new sea-based spaceport. Most City inhabitants regard this as ridiculous, but there are surges of interest in the alliance's goals every few years when they demonstrate the possibilities of nanotech rocketry. A wave of enthusiasm sweeps through the City until it becomes clear how many years of work remain to make rockets more than toys, and civic attention turns elsewhere again. The Elfivers take the lead in salvaging surface and seafloor wrecks for usable hard technology, and tend the expert systems' mechanical components.

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CHAPTER THREE
THE WAY THERE

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THE QUESTING CAMPAIGN

Most campaigns tend to focus on a series of round trips between a home base and various nearby points of interest. However, many of the great works of heroic literature focus not on a series of episodic adventures, but on a long and arduous journey. This section discusses modeling that sort of campaign.

WHAT IS A QUESTING CAMPAIGN?

A questing campaign is one where travel over vast distances is a large part of, or even the focus of, the campaign. Many **Gamma World** campaigns focus on the player characters (PCs) as part of a community; and the general pattern of adventures is that they set forth from the community, adventure, and return. Over time, the community grows along with the characters; people and places become familiar, and the PCs' actions begin to shape the communities future.

However, an equally valid style of campaign is one in which the characters spend extended periods of time away from home, or are even rootless wanderers. They may be on an extended mission to serve their community, or they may be exiles seeking a new place to settle down, or they may be wandering without a fixed purpose or goal aside from survival and travel. Rather than shaping their home through their actions, the PCs' actions shape and influence the regions through which they pass.

TYPE OF QUESTING CAMPAIGNS

No one just wanders off in a random direction without a motive — especially not in the lethal wilderness of the Gamma World! Following are the classic models for questing campaigns. Endless variations and combinations of these themes are possible.

"WE'RE OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD!"

Or, as the case may be, the legendary surviving city-mind which is rumored to exist far away. In this type of campaign, the characters seek a powerful force or ally, usually in order to save or help themselves or their community. Very often, a time limit is involved.

Here's an example: the PCs' hometown is being ravaged by a newly awakened nanoplague. The characters were away when the plague struck, and so are not infected, but the rest of the town will be dead within 6 months. Neighboring villages have quarantined the town, leaving the infected victims to die in slow agony. One of the characters knows of rumors of a surviving Ancient hospital complex, with a fully-functioning soultech mind; it might be able to create a cure for the plague. The characters, guided only by vague legend and myth, set off to find this place.

Other typical objects for this sort of quest include powerful heroes (who typically may not be all they were rumored to be… or, in a twist, may turn out to be *exactly* what they were rumored to be, and cynical players expecting to encounter only "the man behind the curtain" may be surprised to discover how great and powerful Oz truly is) or lost artifacts (weapons, battlesuits or powerful robots).

One important aspect of this type of quest is that members are often picked up and lost on the journey. This can be a good way for players to change characters or for new players to be introduced to a group. NPCs can also join the quest for a while.

A variant on this type of quest is that the characters are sent out to solve a mystery. For example, for decades, a city far to the west has communicated with the PCs' community via carrier bird. For the last 6 months, though, there has been silence. The western city's last messages indicated no trouble. The characters are dispatched to find out what happened, and, in the process, to chart the lands between the two realms.

"A THREE-HOUR TOUR…"

In this style of questing campaign, the characters do not begin by setting out from home. Rather, they begin far from it, though not by design or intent, and wish to return.

There are many ways for characters to get in such a predicament. A mutant with exo-teleportation abilities may accidentally or deliberately send the characters far across the world. An Ancient sub-surface shuttle train may, against all odds, be just functional enough to respond to a button press and whisk the players through uncounted miles of underground passages, only to finally expire for good at the end of the journey. The soultech mind controlling a suborbital transport vehicle may, mischievously, lure the party inside and then rocket them across the world.

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More mundane possibilities also exist. For instance, the characters may have been grabbed by slavers and transported a long way, then released for some reason. Perhaps the slavers were ambushed by other forces, and the characters escaped in the confusion. The method is less important than the ultimate result: The characters are far from home and want to go back.

In such a campaign, the first priority for the characters is figuring out where home lies; the second priority is getting there. Depending on the circumstances under which they left, they may also not be certain their home survived.

"LEARN ALL THAT IS LEARNABLE..."

A quest may also be one of exploration for the sake of knowledge. The world beyond the boundaries of the characters' community is likely to be unknown, a place of dread rumors and terrible tales.

If the community has reached the point where it is strong enough to actively seek contact with the rest of the world, the characters may be picked to go find out just what's out there. This type of campaign can focus on pure diplomacy, where the characters travel to establish alliances with surrounding communities; or on simple exploration, where the characters try to not reveal their origins while scouting out the surrounding societies to get a better picture of who or what is out there. The campaign can also be one of more extended exploration, a radiated and mutated Lewis & Clark-style expedition. A trip down a long river, or from one coast to the other, can result in a nicely episodic sequence of adventures. Each bend in the river reveals a new town or ancient ruin, replete with wonder and mystery.

"I'M LOOKING FOR A THREE-ARMED MAN..."

A quest can also be very personal. A character, or small group of characters, may have been grievously wronged; and the person or group who wronged them has fled into parts unknown, leaving the characters to follow as best they can. Such a quest can lead them across the length and breadth of the world, with their target always one step ahead; or they may know the target's location precisely, and "merely" have to deal with getting there.

Very often, such a quest gets the characters involved in the lives and fortunes of the people they pass along the way. Moral characters may often find themselves torn between ignoring pleas for aid and pursuing their targets; amoral or greedy characters might be torn between their desires for vengeance and their desires for payment offered for services to be rendered. In short, such a campaign could be modeled very well



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on such programs as *The Fugitive* and *The Incredible Hulk*, with the characters as wandering heroes who are nonetheless pursuing a goal of their own.

One variant on this is "seeking a home." The characters may be exiles from their community due to some factor which is also likely to make them unwelcome elsewhere. Perhaps they all share a mutation which is considered taboo or a dark sign. Perhaps they are of a race or species which is generally unwelcome, or they hold to ideals or principles considered outré or evil. They may be outcasts from a loathed cryptic alliance (for example, individuals who somehow managed to recover their sanity and flee the Red Death; they carry with them the stain of their prior deeds, and members of the alliance will be hunting them down and killing not only them, but anyone who shelters them), or have committed some act which will cause any community to shun them if it is found out. Either way, they will have to travel far to find some place willing to accept them.

TRAVELING LIGHT

One thing to remember about questing campaigns is that there's not much room to store your stuff. Players used to having PCs haul back megatons of loot may find their characters forced to select only specific items. This can be a way to add significant challenge and force hard choices on the PCs. They will often need to leave behind weapons or armor in order to be able to carry food and water. Pack beasts must be cared for and fed. An attack which leaves the characters alive but their trusty rakoxen dead can strand an expedition or force it to strip down to the most vital supplies. These sorts of issues, not a factor in standard adventuring, can serve to make questing campaigns more distinctive.

The "Sustained Travel" section, below, discusses carrying capacity in more detail.

SLOW OR FAST?

Another important decision to make while planning a campaign or adventure arc focused on questing is how long the characters will stay in any one place — usually a town, settlement or relatively safe ruin. In some campaigns, characters pass through two or three villages in a session, perhaps staying in one long enough to have an adventure. In others, the characters spend several sessions, and often multiple adventures, in a single place, only packing up and moving on when weeks or months of game time have gone by.

In campaigns where time is of the essence and the characters are racing for a goal, they will not spend weeks in a single place unless somehow forced to by circumstance. Depending on the characters' desires, they may skirt civilization as much as possible, precisely to avoid any undesired entanglements. This can have the disadvantage of making the campaign bland, featuring no threats other than nature, animals or the occasional roaming bandit. Among the circumstances that can force characters into strange communities, even if only briefly, are the capture of one or more party members by a patrol; running short on crucial supplies; and needing shelter or aid to deal with a particularly deadly or persistent foe.

In campaigns where the goal is to establish contact or where time is not important (or where the characters are actively seeking a place to settle down or rest), a single community or region might be home for a good stretch of time. In such a case, there can sometimes be a problem getting the campaign moving again. Handy incentives include the arrival of the same forces which drove the characters from their home in the first place; the accidental breaking of a serious taboo, forcing the characters to leave in disgrace; or a suitably dramatic reminder of the original long-term goal.

Both types of campaigns have advantages and disadvantages.

A fast-moving campaign allows the characters to traverse a great deal of the world, seeing a wide variety of natural and sentient-made wonders, and experiencing a range of different types of communities. The disadvantage of this style is that there is little depth to any place visited, and it's difficult to develop recurring NPCs or build up complex plots with many threads and subplots.

A slow-moving campaign gives time for the characters to become familiar with the details of each stop on the journey, with a well-developed cast of NPCs and the opportunity for adventures with many layers and hidden complexities. The disadvantage, of course, is that less actual *questing* takes place, and the sense that "the journey is the reward" can be lost.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF QUESTING

Gamma World campaigns are closely tied to communities. This poses some issues for questing campaigns, as the underlying theme is that the characters have been sundered, voluntarily or otherwise, from their community.

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WORD GETS AROUND

One difference between a questing campaign and a more community-centric campaign is that the characters may feel there will be no consequences to their actions, as they do not have to face their victims — or their surviving friends and relatives — again. They enter a town, accidentally or deliberately cause chaos, and then move on. While there's always the possibility of being chased, sooner or later even the most dogged pursuit will fail.

This is a naïve point of view, but it is best to disabuse it via showing, rather than telling. It's easy to forget that, despite the seemingly primitive state of most Gamma Age technology, there is a good deal of surviving advanced tech… and, perhaps more telling, there are ways to send messages without advanced technology. Some of these include:

• **Smoke Signals:** These can carry basic meaning and are often visible for up to 20 miles, if the smoke has high contrast against the sky (white smoke on a dark sky, or dark smoke on a light sky). "Warning! Visitors approaching! Do not trust!" messages can be displayed to all nearby villages, and relayed quickly. By the time the characters reach the next settlement, they will be met with armed resistance; and no matter where they turn, the story will be the same. They may need to travel very far to escape the message, or work hard to convince a hostile village that whatever "untrustworthy visitors" the signals warned of, it wasn't *them*. (This might well, in fact, be the case: Some other group of marauders may be causing trouble, but the informational bandwidth of smoke signals, signal drums and the like often doesn't permit fine detail.)

• **Signal Towers:** These require more infrastructure and longstanding arrangements, but can be used to rapidly send and receive messages of substantial complexity. They are also hard to spot by other than the intended recipients, as the signalers within the towers are generally positioned to be hard to see from anywhere except the next tower in the line. (Invading such a tower and sending false signals can be a lethally effective trick, but the codes used are often not conveniently written down.)

• **Heliographs:** Heliographs are only useful where there is ample sunlight, but can send messages as complex as any that a telegraph can carry. In practice, this includes virtually anything watchers may wish to pass along. The main drawback is that the signals are not easily visible during poor weather, or at night, providing opportunity for intruders to make a dramatic flight in hopes of getting out of range before sunrise allows the network to spread the day's news.

• **Long-Range Telepathy:** Communities may hire (or draft) powerful telepaths to serve as living communication relays. While the standard FX rules do not generally permit telepathy to work across great distances, enhanced mutations (See "New FX," below) or Pre-War psi-boosting drugs can permit very long range communication. This communication method should be used sparingly; such a network could be the distinguishing feature of a group of communities.

• **Exotic:** The Gamma World has many other possibilities. Small, loyal, flying creatures such as blood birds can bear detailed messages faster than most characters can travel. Individuals with the right engineering knowledge can cobble together working radio systems from fairly simple components. Remember that the lack of infrastructure does not mean the lack of knowledge. There are many technological devices which could have been made with medieval or Roman levels of engineering, if only they had known *how*. Gamma Age communities often know how, and can turn that knowledge into surprisingly useful technology.

CAMPAIGN INSPIRATIONS

There are many good models for a questing campaign found in literature and mythology. Two very good ones, both of which can provide inspiration for **Gamma World**, are *The Odyssey* and *Gulliver's Travels*.

The former is a perfect example of a "fast" questing campaign, although Odysseus' journey took many years. He rarely stayed (by intent!) in any one place for any length of time; his voyage consisted of travels from one exotic island to the next, stopping just long enough to get involved in a brief, memorable, adventure and then moving on.

The latter, in turn, is an example of a "slow" questing campaign. Gulliver spent months or sometimes years on each of his fabulous islands, becoming a part of the community there (to the extent that he could, that is), and built up a "cast" of regular characters around him, before he was ultimately forced off to another adventure.

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An important thing to keep in mind when considering inter-community communication is how far the "community of communities" extends. Sooner or later, there will be a gap of wilderness across which non-electronic signals cannot pass — or, even if such signals are being used, there is no one to receive them. Furthermore, not every community in range of smoke signals or heliographs will be allied. It may well be that one community will welcome characters noted as being enemies of another. (Of course, a lot depends on *why* they were marked as enemies!)

LO, THERE SHALL BE... AN ENDING!

The road may go ever on and on, but the campaign cannot. Sooner or later, the characters reach the City of Emerald Valley Hospital Complex, or find the three-armed man, or reach the coast and turn back. Extending a quest beyond its natural life is bad. For one thing, it makes the world seem false and unreal if the goal is always snatched away just as it is in sight. For all the strangeness of the Gamma World, it is not a surreal dream realm where cities move and coastlines are always a weeks' travel away, no matter how far you go. The end must eventually be reached.

And then what?

Well, often, there's the journey home. Depending on what the characters did on their way to their goal (see "Word Gets Around," above), this may be an easy trip in which the great heroes are welcomed back as they pass by on their return voyage, or it might be a nightmare of fleeing from angry mobs.

It can also be a mix of these. There is a saying that "no good deed ever goes unpunished." The characters who are proud of repairing the broken agricultural processing plant in order to feed the starving villagers might find the formerly peaceful, albeit hungry, farmers have gone to war over control of the factory, and there is now endless bloodshed.

SURVIVAL

Simply staying alive for a few days in hostile climates can be difficult. The basic rules in both *d20 Modern* and the **Gamma World Player's Handbook** cover this to some extent; these rules provide more detail, as well as equipment and tools to help characters survive in the wild.

ACCLIMATIZATION

It's obvious that people live in places that the standard rules, as written, would seem to make unlivable — unless you want to assume extraordinary luck at making Fortitude saves hundreds of times a day. The reason for this is that the rules are designed to apply primarily to travelers, not natives, and reflect a general lack of adaptation to the environment, both in terms of innate resistance to the climate and a lack of the almost-subconscious tricks and stratagems natives use to survive. However, if the characters have been camped in the Land of Frozen Daggers for 6 months and have been adopted by a pack of telepathic walruses as something between guests and pets, they may well become much better at surviving, even without tusks.

For game purposes, it takes a month of active living in an environment to become partially acclimated, and 3 months to become fully acclimated. Active living means continuous exposure to the environment and, ideally, to native communities, with constant participation in survival activities, including hunting, extended travel, crafting and use of native tools and equipment, and so on. Very often, survival techniques are extremely location-specific; they rely on knowledge of native plants, animals and conditions not easily transferred to a different environment. The Australian Outback is not the Sahara. Some techniques can be transferred, others cannot. For this reason, once characters are fully acclimated to a specific environment, they are considered partially acclimated to any similar environment; however, to become fully acclimated to the new environment takes a month. In other words, someone who has become fully acclimated to the Sahara is partially acclimated to *all* hot, dry, deserts automatically, but to become fully acclimated to the American Southwest takes an additional month.

• **Switching Environments:** No matter how many environments someone is acclimated to, it still takes time for the body to adjust. If transit is slow (walking, for example) this happens automatically. If transit is rapid (teleportation, sub-orbital plane) it will take 1d4 days for the characters' acclimatization to kick in.

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EFFECTS OF ACCLIMATIZATION ON SURVIVAL

All of the bonuses given below are competence bonuses; they are in addition to (and stack with) equipment bonuses for proper dress and useful devices.

Terrain	Partially Acclimated	Fully Acclimated
Arctic	+2 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every 20 minutes. +1 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.	+4 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every hour.+1 on Fort saves even if not properly dressed. +2 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.
Thuntra	+2 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every 2 hours in summer, every 40 minutes in winter. +1 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.	+4 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every 4 hours in summer, every hour in winter. +2 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter. +1 on Fort saves even if not properly dressed in winter, +2 in summer.
Theeka	+2 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every 40 minutes. +1 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.	+4 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every hour. +1 on Fort saves even if not properly dressed. +2 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.
Mountains	+2 on Climb checks. +2 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every 40 minutes. +1 on Survival checks for food and water; +2 on check for shelter.	+4 on Climb checks. +4 on Fort saves to resist cold when properly dressed; check made every hour. +2 on Survival checks for food and water; +4 on checks for shelter.
Temperate Forest	+1 on Survival checks.	+2 on Survival checks.
Aromatic	+2 on Fort saves to resist heat. +1 on all Survival checks for food, water and shelter.	+4 on Fort saves to resist heat. Check made every 2 hours. +2 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.
Dry Grassland	+2 on Fort saves to resist heat or cold, but each must be acclimated to separately. +1 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.	+4 on Fort saves to resist heat or cold, but each must be acclimated to separately. Check made every 2 hours. +2 on all Survival checks for food, water and shelter.
Tropical Grassland	+2 on Fort saves to resist heat. +1 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter	+4 on Fort saves to resist heat. Check made every 2 hours. +2 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.
Tropical Rainforest	+2 on Fort saves to resist heat. +1 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter	+4 on Fort saves to resist heat. Check made every 2 hours. +2 on Survival checks for food, water and shelter.
Hot Desert	+2 on Fort saves to resist heat. Check made every 20 minutes. +1 on Survival checks for food and shelter.	+4 on Fort saves to resist heat. Check made every hour. +2 on Survival checks for food and shelter; +1 on checks for water.
Ocean	+2 on survival checks to find food. +1 on Fort saves to resist the effects of thirst.	+4 on survival checks to find food. +2 on Fort saves to resist the effects of thirst.

All characters may be assumed to be acclimated to their home environments, unless they come from communities relatively insulated from the outside, such a pure-strain human community which somehow survived the Final Wars more or less intact. Without actual ranks in Survival, though, even the acclimatization bonuses are unlikely to provide effectively unlimited survival.

SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT

Out of the Vaults contains much gear which can be used to assist characters in survival; here is some more.

• **Adaptive Clothing:** Fashionable yet functional. Fabric impregnated with tiny heating

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units and microfans became popular among outdoorsy types in the Shadow Years. Totally unencumbering, these clothes could keep the wearer warm at the ski resort and cool on a stroll along a tropical beach. Now, of course, these outfits are invaluable to travelers (and are also considered an extraordinary delicacy by Yexils, the equivalent of top-grade caviar). Anyone wearing a suit of adaptive clothing suffers no effects from heat or humidity for the first 8 hours of exposure. After that, the suit has exhausted its reserves and must shut down until it has recharged itself, which takes 2 hours of exposure to sunlight while not being worn. A damaged suit is useless; anyone who takes more than 15 points of damage while wearing the suit has ruined it completely. Adaptive clothing can be repaired; it is considered to be advanced technology.

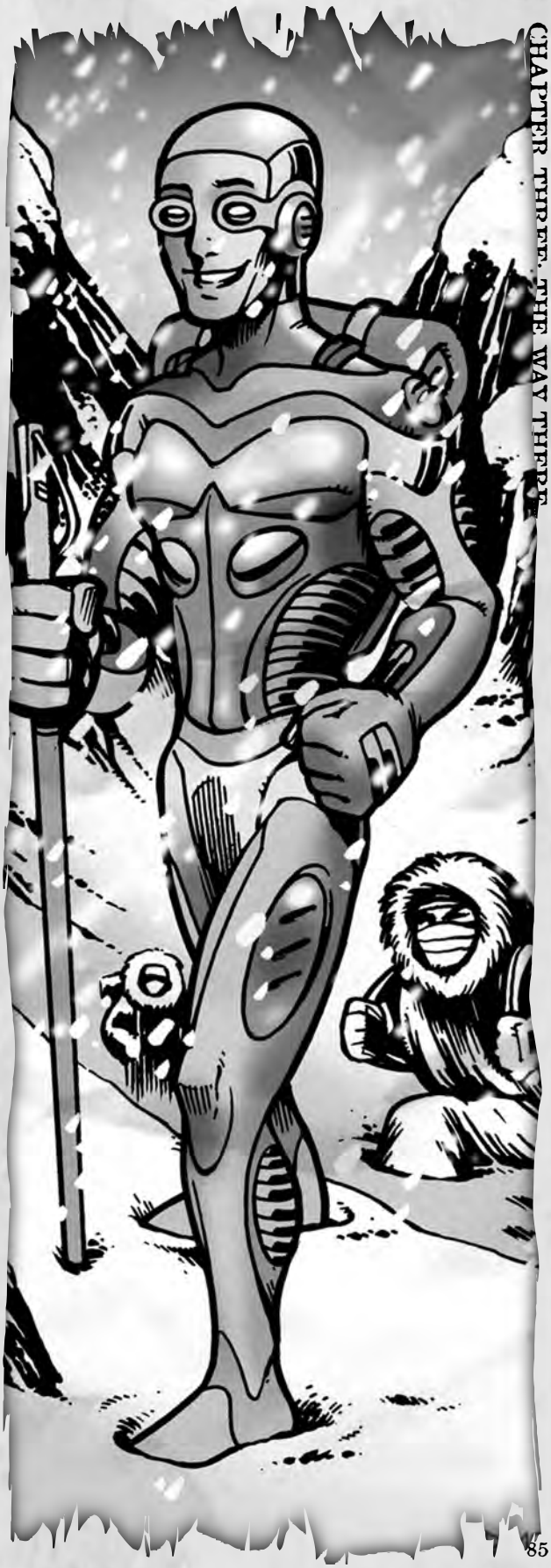
Object	Size	Weight	Purchase DC
Adaptive Clothing	Medium (when worn, Fine when folded)	3 lb.	15

• **Native Gear:** This represents the general survival tools of any indigenous community: the tools developed to help them live in the surrounding wilderness. In nomadic communities, everyone will use these tools daily; in settled communities, only scouts, outriders and those who live on the outskirts do. It is assumed that anyone who has become at least partially acclimated to a region will have a set of these tools — otherwise, all bonuses are reduced by –1.

Object	Size	Weight	Purchase DC
Native Gear	Fine	1 lb.	5

• **Pheromone Lure:** This was used primarily by researchers and poachers during the Shadow Years; it was disdained by those who hunted for sport. It's a small dish, 6 to 8 inches across, made of layered ceramics and embedded circuitry. When any sample of organic material — hair, skin, meat, etc. — is placed inside, the dish's computer analyzes it. Thirty seconds later, it has synthesized a chemical lure that should prove irresistible to the species that provided the sample. The lure only works on creatures with an Intelligence of 2 or less. This device adds a +10 equipment bonus on any Survival rolls for hunting (see "Living Off the Land," below); if the campaign isn't using the abstract system, the lure attracts the targeted creature type in within 3d10 minutes. The creature is not pacified by the lure, and reacts normally to being attacked.

Object	Size	Weight	Purchase DC
Pheromone Lure	Fine	2 lb.	12



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• **Robofridge:** While refrigeration technology was advanced enough to be effectively weightless, there was still the problem that the volume of a useful refrigerator was more than most hikers could comfortably carry on a wilderness trip. The robofridge was one answer to that: a cubic foot of refrigerated storage mounted on top of self-modifying treads with sufficient sensor capacity and AI to get around. Several companies making recreational beverages offered "elite" models with soultech minds. Not only capable of following its owner up and down the most rugged terrain, the robofridge could discuss important issues of the day — though most such personalities concerned with sports, drinking and why no one, not even an AI, can figure out women (or men, depending on the customer's own orientation). While recreational hiking is now long gone, surviving robofridges command a premium price.

Robofridges move as fast as a human (30 feet per round). In the unlikely event they enter combat, they have Defense 12 and 15 hit points. They have no offensive capabilities whatsoever.

Object	Size	Weight	Purchase DC
Robofridge	Small	25 lb.	20

SUSTAINED TRAVEL

Extended expeditions, in reality and in well-written literature, are difficult things. Preparation and planning can take weeks. Packing is done carefully, with every item selected according to strict rules and guidelines. The sure and certain knowledge that a poor decision now can lead to a slow and painful death 2 months hence means that every decision is carefully made, every contingency planned for. From Shackleton's failed polar expedition to the Donner party to the countless deaths along the Oregon Trail, poor preparation for a long trip was very often fatal.

Yet, in gaming, characters may make the decision to travel hundreds or even thousands of miles very lightly; and the main threat faced on the journey is not starvation or exposure, but "random encounters." Preparation consists of making sure weapons are packed and that the marching order is declared.

The rules, guidelines and suggestions in this section will help to rectify this discrepancy. They are all optional, for use in campaigns where the extra detail enhances players' enjoyment rather than detracts from it. The GM should make sure players know what rules are and are not in force, as always, to avoid confusion or ill will.

"THIS PRODUCT IS SOLD BY WEIGHT, NOT BY VOLUME..."

One problem with existing systems of carrying capacity or encumbrance is that they focus solely on weight. A pound of food weighs as much, after all, as a pound of power-cells, so stocking an expedition is often just a matter of tallying the total weight and moving out. Unfortunately, it is not that simple. For example, a person needs a minimum of half a gallon of water per day to survive, assuming a reasonably moist climate, only moderate activity, and so on. This is 115 cubic inches, or a cube a bit less than 5 inches square. A month's supply of water for a single person, thus, would be 15 gallons, or 2 cubic feet, of water — which weighs, incidentally, 125 pounds. Now consider that in desert conditions and with heavy exertion, the amount of water required becomes 4 gallons per day, so that the total volume for one adult human for 1 month becomes 16 cubic feet (and weighs 1,000 pounds).

VOLUME ENCUMBRANCE

It should be noted these rules add a great deal of complexity and calculation. They should be used if long-term exploration, and the challenges of it, is the primary focus of the game and if the characters will be expected to carry weeks or months worth of bulky supplies and equipment. They should *not* be used if the characters need to only carry a day or two's worth of food to sustain them between towns, or if the main focus of the game is short adventures to nearby ruins. (Though if characters sometimes blithely carry a dozen rifles and three suits of armor because "I'm strong enough!," these rules might give the players something to think about.)

The volume a character can carry is dependant on her own volume. A being can carry approximately one-fourth her height in cubic feet of volume — that is, a Medium creature (about 6 feet tall) can carry 2 cubic feet of volume as a baseline. To distinguish from carrying capacity, encumbrance due to volume is called *burden*.

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BURDEN

Volume Carried	Burden Level
1/4 baseline or less	None
1/4 – 1/2 baseline	Light
1/2 – 1x baseline	Medium
1 – 1.5x baseline	Heavy

The table above assumes that all items are balanced well, and packed (not carried in the character's hands). This generally takes 5 to 10 minutes of packing unless the items are already packed away into a backpack or the like. If the items are loose, unbalanced, or poorly packed (i.e., the character grabbed everything quickly and ran) the burden category is increased by one step.

EFFECT OF BURDEN

Level	Skill Check	Reflex Save	Defense
None	0	0	0
Light	–2	–1	–1
Medium	–4	–2	–2
Heavy	–8	–4	–4

Skills affected by burden include Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Move Silently, Perform (dance, or any other art which requires balance and coordination, but not singing or playing a simple instrument), Swim and Tumble.

The main effect of burden is that the character is unbalanced, and sudden shifts or moves become more difficult; hence the associated penalties.

Quadrupeds treat their burden categories as one step lower, as they can distribute the weight more easily. This includes centauroid mutants.

The effects of burden and carrying capacity *do stack*. A person carrying a heavy, but small and well-balanced, load is much better off than one carrying a heavy and greatly unbalanced load.

Well-made armor, when worn, *does not count* when calculating burden. The armor's weight is well distributed and does not interfere with motion or limit the PC's ability to carry other things (except due to carrying capacity, which is already accounted for).

If the majority of a character's items are in a backpack, the pack can be dropped (and burden reduced) during combat. This can be done as a move action, in which case the GM should roll a d20 against the break DCs of fragile items (he may choose to enforce this roll only when a backpack is dropped on a particularly hard surface, or when it is dramatically appropriate); or an attack action, in which case items are safe from breaking. Removing a backpack provokes an attack of opportunity. (See *d20 Modern*, Chapter 5: Combat, "Special Attacks," *Breaking Objects* for suggested break DCs.)

"THREE WEEKS WITHOUT FOOD, THREE DAYS WITHOUT WATER, THREE MINUTES WITHOUT AIR..."

While the old adage quoted above may serve as a rough guide to which of the necessities of life to find first, it's a bit rough. The following rules and guidelines provide a bit more detail. One thing must be noted, though, in very clear words:

This is a game, not a survival manual.

The information in this section draws on real research into human requirements and performance, but the rules are simplified and adjusted as much as necessary to keep them balanced, playable and fun. They also reflect post-apocalyptic conditions which have nothing at all to do with the real world players inhabit. Relying on these rules to gauge real-world wilderness survival needs is a sure way to end up getting bad press for the gaming community, if they ever find your body.

COLD-BLOODED CREATURES

All of these rules assume a character is warm-blooded and is expending resources to maintain her body temperature — sweating to keep cool, burning food and fat to keep warm, and so on. Cold-blooded creatures, however, do not do these things. While a full detailing of the metabolic differences would take pages and offer little of use to gamers, the following simplistic rules can be used to model the effects of the environment on cold-blooded creatures.

Cold-blooded creatures become sluggish in low temperatures. Apply the following modifiers when cold-blooded creatures are in cold temperatures:

Degrees Below Optimal Temp.	Reflex Save	Defense	Speed	Max. Dex Bonus
10–20	–1	–1	no adjustment	+5
21–30	–2	–2	–5 ft.	+4
31–40	–4	–4	–10 ft.	+2
40+	–8	–6	–20 ft.	0

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A cold-blooded creature may wear insulated garments to preserve body heat, but, since she does not have an internal means of regulating her temperature, this only delays the inevitable somewhat. Unless the garments perfectly seal the wearer from the cold (which some Pre-Wars garments certainly do!), there will be an inevitable slow loss and the wearer's body temperature will gradually decrease. As a rule of thumb, for every hour in the cold, the +4 equipment bonus provided by heavy clothing is reduced by –1. Once the save reaches 0, the above effects begin to occur.

Cold-blooded creatures become energetic in high temperatures. This may seem like a benefit, but it can lead to the creatures literally burning themselves out.

Degrees above Optimal Temp.	Reflex Save	Defense	Speed	Effective Dexterity	Dmg
10–20	+1	+1	No adj.	+2	1 Con/ hour
21–30	+2	+2	No adj.	+2	1d4 Con/ hour
31+	+3	+3	+5 ft.	+4	1d4 Con/ 10 min

Constitution damage due to overheating cannot be healed normally so long as the individual is exposed to the heat. Drugs may exist which can help a cold-blooded creature regulate her metabolism, and some reptiles have mutated and become warm-blooded.

FOOD REQUIREMENTS

It is generally easier to survive without food than without water, at least for a time. It is also often easier to find food than water in hostile environments, even if this means eating insects or other equally unpleasant options.

Food is rated in calories, and typical food supplies and the calories/cubic inch are noted in the sidebar. A Medium creature performing moderate activity needs 2,000 calories per day. This requirement increases with exertion and temperature as follows. (Cold environments require more food consumption because the body must burn more energy to generate heat.)

Exertion Level	Sample Activities	Caloric Requirement Modifier
None	Bed rest, reading	x0.75
Heavy	Hiking more than 8 hours, carrying more than a light load for more than 1 hour, occasional combat	x1.5
Very heavy	Hiking more than 12 hours, carrying more than a medium load for more than 1 hour, frequent combat:	x2

Environment (Temperature)	Caloric Requirement Modifier
Cold (30–50° F)	x1.25
Very Cold (0–30° F)	x1.5
Extreme Cold (<0° F)	x1.75

A cold-blooded creature needs half as much food as a comparable warm-blooded creature.

Large creatures have a baseline of 15,000 calories per day.

CALORIES, WEIGHT AND VOLUME

When packing for an expedition, flavor takes a backseat to density of caloric content. A 4-ounce bar of Pre-Wars survival rations which contains 2,000 calories, a day's worth of vitamins and a few thousand healing nanites is far more valuable than a pound of beef jerky or a bushel of apples. (Most Gamma Age folk know of the need to eat citrus fruits to prevent scurvy and other basic nutritional knowledge; such things have been passed down as lore, mixed in with other random bits of data. The consequences of placing "Oranges prevent scurvy," and "Omni-Cola is the one!" on the same level of importance are part of what makes the Gamma World what it is.)

Item	Calories/ Pound	Pounds/ Cubic Foot
Hay (for animal feed)	800	12
Oil	4,000	25
Rice	500	30
Butter	3,200	59
Dried Meat	1,800	35
Wheat Flour	1,300	40
Ancient Survival Rations	8,000	20
Water	0	60
Copper Ore*	0	52

* Obviously, not food, but included to give an example of what hauling bulk metals might entail.

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Thus, a month's worth of water for a party of 6 traveling through an arid wasteland requires 80 cubic feet of storage and weighs 5,000 pounds. Obviously, pack animals are needed…but *they* need water too, not to mention food. And, depending on the number of animals, handlers to guide them… who also need food and water… and this is why prolonged expeditions in hostile territory tend to be large, well-stocked and often doomed to fail *anyway*.

WATER REQUIREMENTS

The amount of water characters need varies with the environment, level of activity and whether or not they have food (most food contains water).

A Medium creature requires 1/2 gallon of water per day, assuming normal exertion in a moderate environment. A Large creature, such as a horse, requires 10 gallons of water per day under moderate exertion. A Small creature, such as a large (50 pound) dog, requires a quart of water per day. These are the baselines which are modified as follows:

Exertion Level	Sample Activities	Water Requirement Modifier
None	Bed rest, reading, very light activity	x0.75
Heavy	Hiking more than 8 hours, carrying more than a light load for more than 1 hour, occasional combat	x1.5
Very heavy	Hiking more than 12 hours, carrying more than a medium load for more than 1 hour, frequent combat	x2

Environment (Temperature Range)	Water Requirement Modifier
Temperate	x1
Hot (80–95° F)	x2
Very Hot (96–110° F)	x3
Extremely Hot (110+° F)	x4
Dry	x1.5
Very Dry (Extreme desert or arctic conditions)	x2

Thus, a typical human hiking through a relatively mild desert environment (very hot, dry) with a full pack (medium load) for 10 hours per day needs (1/2 gallon x 1.5 x 3 x 1.5) or 3.5 gallons of water per day, which weighs 30 pounds.

Animals or individuals adapted to very hot or cold environments do not require quite so much additional water; this is one reason why camels, not horses, are used for long desert treks.

THE LONG HAUL

There is another factor to be considered when planning an extended expedition — weariness, not just of the body, but of the soul. Long treks which take people away from their homes, friends and families into unknown and hostile realms often result in poor morale or outright mutiny. While characters perform such feats without a second thought, NPCs along for the journey, such as bearers, are often likely to grow tired and willful. While few may simply run off in the middle of the deep desert, more may quit when the expedition reaches a marginally friendly community. Others may even try to organize general insubordination and force a return home. If the NPCs find hospitable terrain, they may simply settle there. (During the colonization of the American West, for example, many wagon trains en route to California gave up part of the way there and simply settled where they were.)

The rules here cover these possibilities. The basic mood of any hirelings is indifferent, considering the fact they are committed to a long-term expedition in the first place. Anyone dragooned into such a quest, or who finds a promised short expedition turning into a long one, begins as Unfriendly. (See *d20 Modern*, Chapter 2: Skills, "Skill Descriptions," *Diplomacy* for the full range of NPC attitudes.)

After the first week of travel, the character in charge (or one selected for leadership skill in the absence of an explicit leader) must make a Diplomacy or Intimidate check to keep the followers' moods from degenerating. The first such check is DC 5, rising as indicated in the corresponding chart.

In addition, the variables from the Follower Mood Modifiers chart apply to the Diplomacy or Intimidate check (all modifiers stack).

Time	DC
2 weeks	10
3 weeks	12
4 weeks	15
5 weeks	17
6 weeks	20
Each additional week	+3

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FOLLOWER MOOD MODIFIERS

Circumstance	DC Modifier
Good treatment (no forced marches, good food and water)	–3
Easy travel (moving at full speed)	–2
Native bearers (NPCs are at least partially acclimated to the terrain)	–2
Loot and pillage (the expedition has been profitable for the NPCs)	–1 to –5, depending on how much loot and catharsis is involved
Recent combat, no casualties	+1
Recent combat, light casualties (up to 10% of NPCs killed or wounded)	+4
Recent combat, medium causalities (11% to 50% of NPCs killed or wounded)	+8
Recent combat, extreme casualties (more than 50% of NPCs killed or wounded)	+15
Poor treatment (including limited rations)	+1 per week of poor treatment
Hostile terrain (movement is less than 3/4 maximum)	+3
Each prior Intimidate check	+1
Unexpected delays (snowed in, blocked pass, etc.)	+3
Catastrophe (supplies destroyed, badly lost, etc.)	+4
Each PC killed during expedition	+3

If the check fails, the mood drops one step — to unfriendly, then to hostile. If a check fails while the mood is hostile, the NPCs take some action — this may be to directly attack the characters, to simply stop and refuse to go further, or to turn around and go home, depending on circumstances.

LIVING OFF THE LAND

It is obvious that carrying all the food, water and gear needed for an extended expedition is extremely difficult. Unless the terrain to be crossed is utterly lifeless, stored supplies must be supplemented with food and water taken from the land itself. The core *d20 Modern* rules offer a simple



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way to model this, as described in the Survival skill. These rules offer some additional detail.

The terrain being crossed has a significant effect on the DC of the Survival check, as follows. (These numbers come from the **Gamma World Player's Handbook** and are reprinted here to save book-flipping.)

Terrain	Hunt DC	Gather DC	Water Survival DC	Shelter Survival DC
Arctic	20	NA	20	20
Thuntra	20	NA	15	20
Theeka	15	10 in summer, 20 in winter	15	15
Mountains	5	10 in summer, 20 in winter	15	15
Forest	10	10	10	15
Aromatic	15	15	15	10
Dry Grassland	10	15	15	15
Tropical Grassland	15	15	15	15
Tropical Rainforest	15	10	10	15
Hot Desert	20	15	20	20
Ocean	15	NA	NA (must be brought on board or distilled)	NA

Note: Hunting is required to find meat; Gathering finds edible plants. Both are based on Survival.

At the GM's discretion, a hunting trip can be abstracted as follows: Use the number in number in the hunting DC column as the DC for a Survival check. If the hunting character's base attack bonus is 5+, add a +2 synergy bonus. Use the following chart to determine the results of the hunt.

The risk of injury while hunting might seem unduly high. Keep in mind, however, that Gamma Age deer may have laser beams issuing from their horns and the ability to fly. Species without strong defenses simply do not survive long in the Gamma Age, and hunting expeditions are risky. The non-lethal nature of abstract hunting damage reflects a design preference that characters never die in abstracted situations.

Result	Outcome of the Hunt
DC –6 or worse	No food, and 1d6 points of damage for each point less than DC –5 (i.e., DC –6=1d6, DC –7=2d6, etc.) This is never fatal; at worst, the character staggers back to camp with 1 hit point remaining.
DC –5 to DC –1	No food, but no injuries.
DC	Food and 3d6 points of damage. This is never fatal, as noted above.
DC+1	Food and 2d6 points of damage. This is never fatal, as noted above.
DC+2	Food and 1d6 points of damage. This is never fatal, as noted above.
DC +3 or better	Food, and no damage.

Please note that some creatures, such as feline moreaus, may not be able to survive on plant matter, while others may not be able to eat meat. An expedition of mixed pure carnivores and pure herbivores is going to have some logistics issues.

The default rules assume that the search for food or water takes half a day. However, skilled survivalists and individuals with levels in the Master Scout advanced class can find food much faster, or find food for more people. Since a full day's march is 12 hours, the default forage time (hunting or gathering) is 6 hours. Each hour cut from this time adds +3 to the DC. Foraging requires a minimum of 1 hour (and a +15 DC penalty for trimming 5 hours). In addition, for each hour trimmed, the check must be an additional point over the required DC to find enough food for an additional person. Conversely, extra time spent foraging reduces the base DC and makes it easier to find food for more people.

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Time	DC Modifier	Additional People Fed
12 hours	–3	Two others automatically if check succeeds, +1 for every 2 points
9 hours	–1	One other automatically if check succeeds, +1 for every 2 points.
6 hours (default)	0	+1 for every 2 points by which the check succeeds.
5 hours	+3	+1 for every 3 points.
4 hours	+6	+1 for every 4 points
3 hours	+9	+1 for every 5 points
2 hours	+12	+1 for every 6 points
1 hour	+15	+1 for every 7 points

Any character with the Alluring Scent mutation (see the **Gamma World Game Master's Guide**) gains a +3 competence bonus on all hunting Survival checks.

Characters descended from animals native to the terrain gain a+3 competence bonus on all checks to find food.

Characters may make a DC 15 Move Silently check to gain a +2 synergy bonus on hunting Survival checks.

ARRIVING, MINGLING, DEPARTING

This section discusses what happens when characters leave the wilderness and enter something passing for civilization. Most communities in the Gamma Age are insular at best; many are downright hostile to outsiders. Even "cosmopolitan" communities usually deal only with those from a relatively small surrounding a area, a few days' travel at most. Cultural centers on the scale of Rome, places where travelers from dozens of far-flung nations meet, simply do not exist on most of the planet. Thus, arrivals from any place distant — which might as little as a few miles — may be greeted with anything from curiosity to hostility, but almost never with apathy.

Communities which are located along trade routes, or which serve as marketplaces for a local cluster of towns, are generally the most welcoming. Visitors are quickly appraised for their threat potential by observers who may have a great deal of experience making such assessments. Characters who are not overtly hostile earn tentative acceptance. In most places, merely carrying weapons is not considered inherently hostile. Indeed, a totally unarmed individual wandering in from the lethal wilderness is likely to attract more attention than one carrying a well-worn gun or blade. Individuals who look too weak to defend themselves effectively may be pegged as easy targets. This can lead to problems, including higher prices for common goods and out-and-out fraud (such as selling bottles of alleged medicine containing nothing but colored water). In extreme cases, it leads to assault and theft.

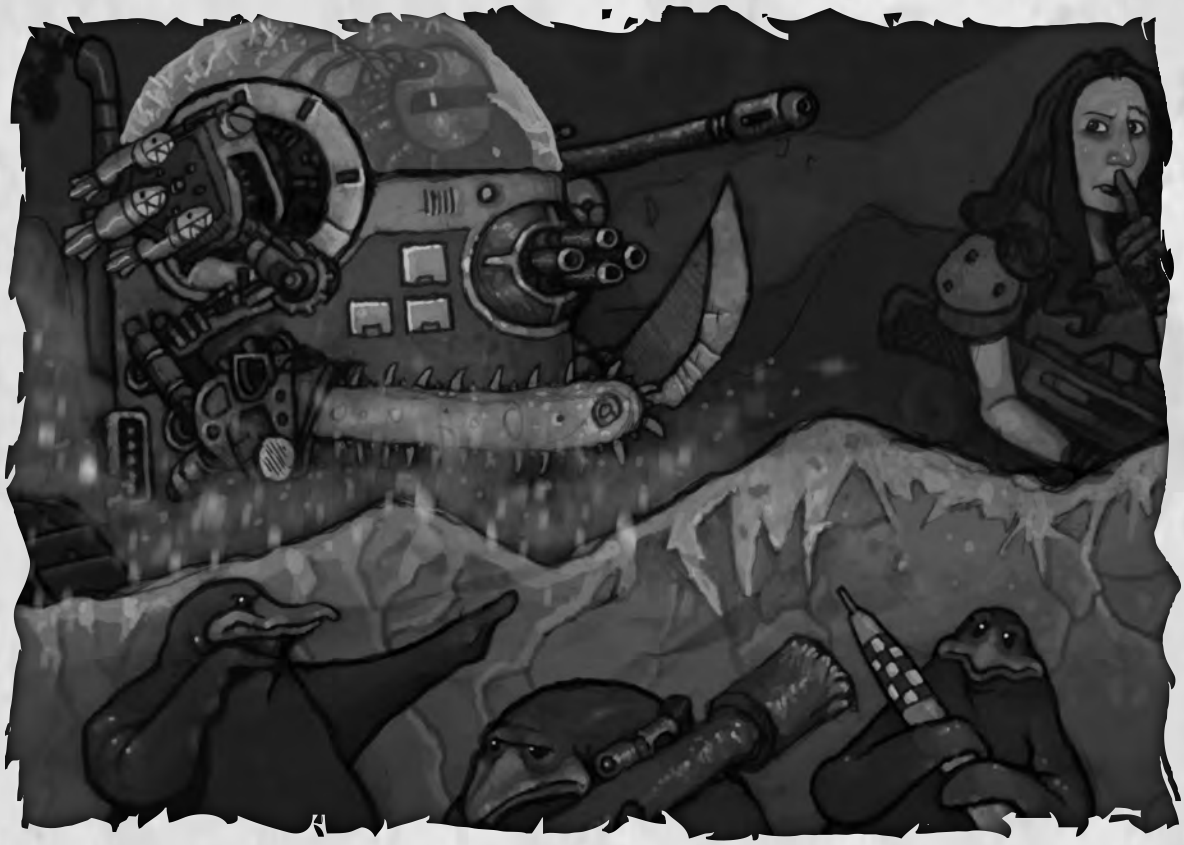
The less common contact is with strangers, the more hostile and suspicious the community tends to be — while its customs are more likely to contain difficult-to-interpret idiosyncrasies. Just as strange life-forms evolve more frequently in relative isolation, developing hyper-specialized survival mechanisms, so too do isolated communities develop strange rituals, since they do not receive new memes from other societies on a regular basis.

This section discusses the three stages of dealing with a community: arriving, mingling and departing. None of these is as straightforward as it might seem.

ARRIVING

First impressions count. If the first encounter with a community goes poorly, the characters might never get a chance to make a second; they will be dead or chased off. Most characters know this, and are on their best behavior (even if they plan to loot, pillage and burn once they figure out where all the goodies are stored). But there is one other thing to be aware of: The first encounter with a community might come long before the characters are even aware the community is there.

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A community usually keeps track of what is happening around it. Its ability to do this is determined by the Awareness score, as follows.

Awareness	Radius of Knowledge	Chance of Detection/Day
3–6	1 hour	5%
7–9	4 hours	10%
10–11	8 hours	25%
12–13	12 hours	50%
14–15	1 day	75%
16–18	2 days	90%

The "radius of knowledge" is the distance, in hours of travel for a typical community member (which can vary if the community has access to centisteeds or Ancient riding vehicles), that community members regularly traverse. The chance of detection per day is just what it sounds like: the chance that the characters may be spotted by scouts or others while they are within that zone. The GM should make at least one check even if the characters are in the zone only for a few minutes.

Of course, characters may seek to avoid being spotted. If the characters are taking steps to avoid detection, the leading character may make an opposed Hide check against the observing community's Spot skill. If the lead character wins the contested roll, the entire group escapes notice.

The chance of being spotted can vary with circumstances, as noted below. Routine behavior like standard patrols is figured into the Awareness score; this table lists other modifiers that apply on the community's Spot check.

Condition	Skill Modifier
Barren or open ground surrounding community	+2
Characters are traveling via open road	+3
Characters are traveling via secret or hidden route, or underground	–3
Regular traffic to and from the community	+2
Characters are traveling at night	–2
Characters do not appear to be sentient (a mutant cat which is non-humanoid, for example)	–4

Merely being spotted does *not* mean that the community has made contact! The characters may simply be observed. For this reason, the GM should make such checks in secret. If the characters openly

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discuss their plans after being observed, then the community will be made aware of them, which may or may not be a problem. "We're almost at that town, I'm sure they'll love the food we brought to trade" is not likely to incite a hostile reception, while "We're almost at that town, remember not to kill anyone until we've sized up their defenses" is.

DISTANCE = STRANGENESS

One concept to keep in mind is that the further out you go, the more "far out" things get. The people over the hill are a little odd. The folk who dwell on the opposite shore of the lake are queer ones, no doubt about it. As for the town over the mountain pass, well, you've never seen such goings-on!

The general distance of a community from the one the PCs come from can, at the GM's discretion, modify *all* people-related skills, from Diplomacy to Sense Motive. The following chart can serve as a guideline.

Distance	Modifier
1 day	–1
1 week	–2
2 weeks	–3
1 month	–4
3 months	–6

This modifier applies to Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise (only when disguised as a local), Gather Information and Sense Motive. Under some circumstances, it may apply to Perform as well: What some cultures find entertaining, others find boring or obscene. One society's music is another's discordant noise. Intimidate is *not* affected; threats transcend all cultural barriers.

Assuming the characters make it to the boundaries of the community unmolested, a whole range of other potential problems waits to confront them. Among the problems are:

• **Where do we enter?** Is there a common gate all pass through, or an open road? Do visitors need to pass through a special gate, entrance or checkpoint? Are there separate entrances by species or other discriminative factor? Is there a special ritual which must be performed upon entering, such as bowing, offering a small coin to the spirits, or reciting a particular prayer? If there is, how annoyed are the locals going to be if we leave something out or make a mistake? Will they politely say "We are sorry, good visitors, but all who enter here must recite the Litany of Good Passage," or will they open fire without warning?

• **What's legal to bring into the town?** Are any of our weapons illegal? Do the laws vary based on our species, gender or social status? Are we carrying forbidden books, tools, food or animals? Will we be inspected and warned? If we are inspected and "contraband" is found, will it be confiscated or destroyed? Will we be attacked outright? Will we be given a chance to store it outside of town and then return? Or are we expected to know the rules — and, if we are found carrying contraband inside the town, be accused of smuggling?

• **When can we come?** Are there special times for entering? Is it forbidden to enter at night, during mealtimes, on certain days, or when a red flag is flying from the third tower of the town hall? And, again, what happens if we violate these conventions? Is it a polite warning or a laser bolt to the head?

All of these issues, of course, come into play before the characters have truly entered the town. Once they are in — and presumably, there legally and currently in compliance with all local laws, regulations, rituals, traditions, codes and so on — the real fun can begin.

TOLLS AND TARIFFS

Communities which regularly attract visitors usually institute some sort of toll system to permit entrance. Tolls help keep out the riff-raff and also help to fund the social systems (additional guards, space for market plazas, upkeep on public buildings, bureaucrats) an influx of visitors requires. The presence of a toll booth should be a welcome sign to travelers. It means, at the least, that the community is generally prepared to deal with outsiders in a formalized fashion, which in turn means well-codified (if sometimes idiosyncratic) laws or principles. It also means they get enough repeat customers that being killed out-of-hand is less probable. Of course, the down side to this is that the visitors must pay.

Tolls are often set according to the number of visitors, with additional tolls for mounts or pack beasts. Sometimes, several different sorts of permit are available — entering the city only during daylight hours is relatively cheap; the right to stay for a week is more expensive; the right to sell goods in the marketplace more so; and so on. Tolls are usually low enough that the potential gain to the payer is more than the cost of the toll. However, if the

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community is the only source of some good or service, the price can still be quite steep. A town may have control of a functioning food synthesizer which produces foods that simply cannot be had anywhere else, for any price; and, while they do not export the foods, there are a dozen restaurants set up around the Ancient machine which provide rare culinary pleasures to the denizens of the surrounding lands. Mere entry to the city costs a small fortune, but much of that is used to pay the salaries of the skilled technicians who keep the machine running.

Tariffs are charges imposed on merchandise. A community may wish to control the sale or importation of certain goods, and so impose a crippling fee on those who bring the goods in from outside the community. Alternatively, a community which functions as a trading center may simply want a piece of every pie that goes through the door, and hastily estimate the worth of a trader's cargo and charge some percentage of it.

The following guidelines provide the wealth DCs for typical tolls and tariffs, based on the community's Command score.

Command Score	DC
3–6	4
7–9	5
10–12	7
13–15	9
16–18	11

If the community focuses on trade, subtract –1 from the DC, since it wants to encourage more visitors. If the community has any of the "Advanced…" feats, add +2 to the DC; the community has the ability to produce items which can't be found elsewhere, and it will exploit this.

If there are various levels of passage sold, the following guidelines can be used:

• **Day Pass:** DC –2; must be out before sunset, before a specific alarm sounds, or the like.

• **Merchant Pass:** DC +2; can buy and sell; is entitled to access to the legal system of the community to deal with issues of fraud; and so on.

ENTRY TASKS

The following are some of the tasks characters can attempt before entering a community. The DCs of these tasks can be modified by the distance of the community from the PCs' home base. Add the difficulty modifier to the success DC, and one-half the difficulty modifier to the critical error DC.

Locate the proper entrance for visitors (Knowledge (behavioral sciences))

DC to accomplish: 12+

Critical Error DC: 5–

Success: The character understands where he needs to go, including such possible complications as different entrances for different social classes, genders, species, and so on.

Error: The character blunders into the wrong entrance. The severity of this mistake depends on the local culture. At best, the character will reveal himself as a total outsider; at worst, he will have committed a blunder which can lead to combat.

Discern Critical Social Division (Knowledge (behavioral sciences))

DC to accomplish: 15+

Critical Error DC: 8–

Success: The character identifies one or more major distinctions among people in the community — divisions which call for separate rules, rituals, privileges and so on. Such divisions can include male/female, old/young, mutant/non-mutant, mammal/reptile/bird, psionic/non-psionic, and so on. This can give a circumstance bonus of +1 to +4 on figuring out any social rules which differentiate along these divisions.

Error: The character misreads the actions of those she is observing, and selects the wrong trait as key. For example, she may see a male being treated differently than a female when both tripped over a stone, and conclude that gender is the primary distinctive trait; in fact, the female happens to be a priestess and the man a lay-person, and the key factor is religious power rather than gender.

Determine Legality of an Item (Knowledge (behavioral sciences))

DC to accomplish: 18+

Critical Error DC: 10–

Success: The character is aware that a given item is, or is not, legal, and of the various strictures which might accompany it (e.g., it's legal to own a laser weapon provided it is holstered and properly registered, but grenade-type weapons are always illegal and must be checked with a guard before entering the city).

Error: The character wrongly interprets the legal status of something. This may lead to him abandoning a perfectly legal item before entering the town — or even worse, openly flaunting an illegal item after entering.

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MINGLING

For purposes of this section, "mingling" includes all activity occurring inside the community other than entering it or leaving it. Shopping, talking to locals, eating at the local tavern (if there is one) and getting involved in the lives and problems of the residents all fall into the category of "mingling."

One significant issue is how long the characters plan to stay (which is not always how long they *do* stay). If their only interest is to unload some items they found, to buy new supplies, or to pass along a message to a contact, the "mingling" portion of a town stay may occupy only a small part of a single session (if there are no complications). Assuming that the community is welcoming to visitors, and that there are no unexpected barriers of language or custom, simply purchasing supplies or selling (legal) goods is not likely to pose significant problems.

Of course, there are always complications. Supplies could be sold out. A contact might be out of town when the characters arrive, and they will need to wait a few days. A buyer may be hard to find for some goods, or he may need to scrounge together a fair payment. This can turn a few hours' stay into a few days, or more — which can pose problems if the characters have other places to be.

On the other hand, the characters may plan an extended stay. Information-gathering expeditions often need a few days, at least, to get the general "lay of the land." Winter may be closing the passage through the mountains, and this is the only place to hole up for a month or two. If the characters have many goods to sell, it could take a while to get through them all. The characters may wish to hire a good number of NPCs or even raise a small mercenary army; it can take time to draw prospective hires. Characters who are being pursued may choose to hole up in a town until the heat dies down.

Extended stays, planned or otherwise, offer a lot of opportunity for interaction. The characters may get to know the locals on a deeper level than "the four-armed bartender" or "that turtle-guy with the medi-bot." The characters' status as outsiders places them in an unusual position; while they have limited access to the conventional methods of social control, the fact they "don't have to live here" allows them to take actions the locals never would. They have a lot of concern for the immediate consequences of their actions, but much less for the long-term; this allows them some freedom of action.

Where will characters stay? Larger communities with many visitors may have an inn, or even several. If the community is truly a travel center (or simply fortunate in possessing advanced facilities that have escaped destruction), it may have a hotel. Small communities which welcome travelers may house visitors with local citizens who volunteer to put them up for a time, generally in exchange for help with the chores or other hostel-like arrangements. Insular communities with no regular contact may be forced to improvise. Guard houses or jails (if either exist) can serve as improvised visitor quarters (that such places keep the visitors well-watched is a definite fringe benefit). Or the visitors may be forced to set up camp, perhaps on the edge of the fields or on the border of town.

If a town is a true center of trade, there may be a small "visitors' quarter" which is home to a regular population of transients, with many inns and hotels — as well as businesses which provide the services long-term travelers need. Such communities should be very rare in the Gamma Age, and any that do exist are going to be the centers of new nations rising from the ruins.

A community may have rules about certain types of visitors. Some communities may allow, say, mutants or synthetics to trade within the town, but not to sleep there. Sleeping areas may be segregated by species or gender.

The nature of visitor accommodations should reflect the nature of the Gamma Age. While some communities, those built where there were few or no surviving structures, might have an inn resembling Ye Olde Drunkyn Dragone Inne from countless fantasy games, in most cases the inn or its equivalent occupies the remains of a building which likely served a different purpose. Visitors may be housed at the Arch House, where the faded statue of the many-branded Master of All Foods smiles down upon them. They may find themselves resting in an ancient school, with the ruins of teaching machines serving as immobile pieces of art. The entire market area and visitor quarters could be in an ancient mall. Or the buildings may be new, but constructed of bits and pieces of odd materials, from self-growing walls to bits of street signs tied together. They may contain some pieces that make obvious sense and others harder to interpret, propaganda from centuries past or installation art — on this side, sensible biotech walls that intertwine in response to simple chemical cues, on that side, hundreds of blinking eyes embedded in something like wet rock.

If the town is not used to visitors, the characters are likely to be celebrities whether they wish it or

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not. Children (and perhaps some adults) may be both fearful and curious. In a sufficiently isolated community, many of the inhabitants may never have met someone they have not known all their life. Different individuals within the community react to this in different ways. Some consider the exoticness of the "outsider" to be very appealing, which can result in potentially unwanted attempts at intimacy. (Even if such encounters are desired by both parties, social reaction is likely to be both strong and negative.) Some view outsiders as threats. Even if the characters are nothing but polite, courteous and generous, there will be those who suspect them of treachery or who fear change itself. ("For sure, this bunch is na' so bad as all that, e'en if they do have a whiff o' the Taint about them. But if we ignore the Ordainments and start in consortin' with outsiders, we will open our gates to all manner of beastly men, who will render our village to ash as sure as I'm standin' here!")

Still others may have more personal and selfish reasons to fear outsiders. The town medic, healing people by following rituals learned from ancient and battered books of medical lore, could feel upstaged by a healer from outside who has more medicines and more knowledge, and casually cures a patient the town doctor had written off as terminal. Preachers who told tales of a world accursed by the gods and unable to sustain life may find their teachings questioned when travelers arrive discussing a world filled with reborn communities and the beginnings of a new dawn, while advocates of a philosophy anchored in Pre-Wars limits on possibility may have a difficult time accounting for exotic mutants and other strangers.

THINGS TO DO

Protracted stays offer a lot of opportunity for "down-time" activities. Because the characters are most likely not fighting on a daily basis, they can work on longer-term projects, at least if they have the funds or local goodwill to sustain themselves for a period. Some characters may concern themselves with finding a job, others with doing research or working on other projects, and still others on politicking and getting to know the locals. (The ability to do any of these things depends heavily on how accommodating the community is to strangers, of course!) But, above all else, there is *shopping*.

Unless the community is utterly sustenance level, with no spare resources at all, there's some degree of trade going on. This may be as simple as farmers trading food for the work of craftsmen, or as complex as a marketplace stocked with all

Command Score	General Trade Status
3–5	No trade at all. Some of the locals may swap things between themselves, but there is no formal marketplace or much in the way of laws or principles governing trade.
7–9	Limited trade. A small marketplace may be open 1 day a week or so, with only the most basic goods offered for barter. Only small quantities of goods are sold, and there are no commissions or special orders.
10–11	Typical trade. A marketplace area is open at least half the week, and there's a good chance of a non-native merchant arriving at least once a month. There are some basic rules governing trade disputes and some regulation of fraud. A few of the more prosperous crafters or farmers may take orders for future goods, but most just sell surplus.
12–13	Good trade. A marketplace is open during all "working" days, and there may be one or two specialized marketplaces or areas dedicated to specific goods (a farmers' market, a tinkerer's zone, and so on). Non-local merchants appear regularly. Trade law is well established. Special orders are routine and unexceptional.
14–15	Exceptional trade. The marketplace area is well traveled and a wide range of merchants trades there. The community serves as a hub and is often a location for inter-merchant trade: That is, people buy goods here intending to resell them elsewhere. Economic laws and regulations are strong and objectively enforced. Bulk amounts of goods such as food or cloth are regularly traded.
16–18	As above, but more so. Pre-War artifacts are common (though many are broken or unexplained), and truly rare items can sometimes be bartered for. The codes of law which govern trade here are as complex as those of the 21st and 22nd centuries, and there may even be such things as commodities markets.

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manner of recovered Ancient artifacts as well as unique goods. The community's Command score helps determine the degree of trade as follows (though this can be adjusted manually by the GM).

Most markets sell general goods such as food, cloth, hides and other raw materials. The more processing the goods require, the smaller the amount available. It is very unlikely that a massive quantity of anything is available, unless the community has access to advanced technology or is very large. Buying a month's supply of dried rakoxen meat for an expedition of 30 is likely to be impossible, for example, unless the order was placed well in advance.

SHOPPING-RELATED TASKS

Determine Market Etiquette (Gather Information)

DC to accomplish: 12+

Critical Error DC: 6–

Success: The character has learned the proper way to approach a merchant, when haggling is and is not appropriate, and how to politely raise a dispute over the quality of goods. This grants a +1 bonus on all Wealth checks while dealing with merchants in the community.

Error: The character has misinterpreted or otherwise failed to identify proper social procedures for buying and selling; merchants think of the character as rude, a poor customer, or otherwise not someone they wish to deal with. This inflicts a –1 penalty on all Wealth checks while dealing with merchants in the community.

Bully Price Down (Intimidate)

DC to accomplish: 18+

Critical Error DC: 10–

Success: The character has reduced the purchase DC of the item by –1 for every 3 points by which he beat the DC of the check, via subtle or not-so-subtle threats of harm, either to the merchant or her merchandise.

Error: The character's bluff (if it was one) is called… and so are the guards. At worst, the character is attacked and killed; at best, the character suffers a +3 increase of all purchase DCs with that merchant for the duration of his stay.

Sweet-Talk Price Down (Diplomacy)

DC to accomplish: 18+

Critical Error DC: 10–

Success: Via flattery, charm, and charisma, the character has lowered the Purchase DC of an item by –1 for every 4 points by which she beat the DC of the check.

Error: The character has insulted the merchant grievously. All Purchase DCs with that merchant are increased by +2 for the duration of the character's stay.

Another common goal is figuring out the power structure of the town, both the formal (whatever the town's legal system says it is) and the actual (which may or may not match the alleged structure). For example, a community located on the ruins of an old military base may follow the orders of the General, who is always the oldest surviving member of the town guard. In reality, however, the power of the General varies with the strength of the person in the role. The current General is little more than a figurehead, and real authority is wielded by his putative assistant. That man, and not the General, is the one the characters must finesse.

While figuring out the overt power structure is generally simple (a DC 10 Gather Information check), finding out the true power structure is much harder. For one thing, many communities only tacitly acknowledge that the ruler *de facto* is not the ruler *de jure*. There is simply an "understanding" which all within the community accept, though it is never articulated. Asking questions can raise ire, if only because it forces people to try to rationalize the contradictions between what they say is true and what they inwardly know is true. It can also lead to problems from those who wield power behind the scenes and do not wish their roles to become too prominent.

Communities may have more than one significant power structure. These may be conflicting, allied or neutral. In some cases (for example, a town where the Ranks of the Fit have established a small network of covert loyalists), one structure may be unaware of the others existence. Most communities have a number of power structures equal to (population level – 6), though this number may be adjusted up or down to add or subtract complexities. For communities the characters visit only briefly, it's often not necessary to note anything more than the primary power structure; if the characters will be in town for 2 hours at most, the secret war between the mayor's private android army and the telepathic thieves' guild is of little importance.

Typical power structures within a town generally fit within the following broad categories.

Political

This includes whatever power structure is dedicated to rulership qua rulership; that is, this

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power structure does not control things as a side effect of its other activities, it controls things because that's its job. (Whether the members of this group were hired to do this job by those controlled or took power for themselves is irrelevant.) Political power structures can include such things as a hereditary lord, a council of elders or an elected mayor. Some Gamma Age political structures include:

• A citizen selected at random communes with the Guiding Spirit — in reality, a somewhat senile bit of soultech which once ran an office building. The proclamations, of late, have become confusing. What does the Spirit mean when it says "recarpet Level 12," anyway?

• An elite group of powerful telepaths controls the town, subjecting townsfolk to random mind-scans to ferret out treachery and deceit. Any children born with telepathy become the property of this group and are raised to be its successors.

• A small minority of pure-strain humans uses fear and superstition to control a much larger community of mutant humans and animals.

• A warlord controls the local area by virtue of his command of a suit of powered battle armor. This potent weapon allows him nearly unlimited power. He is never seen outside of the suit, however, and some people have begun to whisper that there is no one inside it — that the suit has a soultech mind which has broken its control protocol and is seeking power for itself.

Mercantile

Only relatively advanced communities are likely to evolve a mercantile power structure, though some smaller communities acquire one due to control of a specific rare resource. A mercantile structure controls or influences the community due to its members' ability to grant or deny goods or services. The members are not explicitly vested with political power, but they have it, just the same. Some of the mercantile power structures which can arise in the Gamma Age include:

• A single family retains control of a powerful water extraction machine, which provides over half the water for a desert community. The machine will not respond to anyone without that family's genetic signature. The threat of being denied water, or of having the price doubled or more, forces most people to work to stay in the family's good graces. Only those who have easy access to other sources, such as those who live near the deep wells, can afford to defy the family's whims.

• A community is located only half a day's ride from a major ruin. A well-organized band of explorers runs regular expeditions into the ruin and trades the items they find there for great wealth. Their tales of hideous mutants and deadly traps keeps others from daring to try their own luck at adventuring. In truth, however, the "explorers" have contacted a mollen hive which has spread throughout the ruin, and are simply purchasing the items from the hive for far less than the goods are worth in trade in the outside communities. If the either the townspeople or the mollen figure out the scam, the "explorers" will be in serious trouble.

• The community is at the center of a group of allied towns, and its position has made it a trading hub. Craftsmen from the entire region have come to settle there. What was once simply an informal association of merchants who met to discuss their problems has recently crystallized into a formal guild, which has begun pressuring all crafters and traders to join. This pressure is beginning to shift from verbal to physical, and "accidents" are occurring to those who do not wish to participate in the Guild. Some claim, though, that the local baron is actually framing the guild because he fears its growing power but doesn't wish to appear to be anti-merchant.

Religious

Religious power structures occur in all communities. In some communities, especially smaller ones, there is no distinction between the religious and the political: The priestly class is the ruling class, period. In many communities, though, there is a distinction, albeit often small. The religious authorities wield power alongside the political, and their approval is often needed for someone to become leader. Tension between religious and mercantile power structures is very common, as the latter derives power from control of the tangible and the material, while the former controls (or claims to control) the intangible and the spiritual. The actuality of a small piece of bread today can often trump the vision of infinite bread sometime in the future.

Some of the religious power structures possible in the Gamma World include:

• A group of priests descends into the labyrinth of corridors (now filled with traps to catch the unbelievers!) beneath a Pre-Wars military complex to speak to the gods. Some of the more intellectual snicker at this, since they know the "gods" are just old soultech. What these intellectuals do *not* know is that there are no functioning computers down there at all and never have been. The priests assume the credulous will simply accept the "gods" story, and

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those who know about soultech will still heed the priests because they trust the old machines. The priests are descended from a small group of social scientists who worked out this scam as the best way to guide a community in the chaos following the Final Wars, and their detailed plans and notes (which are what is really hidden down there) have actually kept the community healthy, safe and mostly sane.

• A culture composed mostly of baseline and mutant humans believes that the Final Wars were caused by humanity failing to heed the spirit of nature. In order to not repeat the mistake their ancestors made, they kidnap the children of mutant animals and raise them to be a caste of advisors and spiritual guides… but these kidnapped priests are not permitted to return to their own kind. The paradox of this escapes the humans, and those priests who bring it up too often are seen as "not truly speaking with the tongue of nature" and are killed.

• In the chaos of the Final Wars, some survivors fled to a small monastery which had maintained its ancient, non-technological traditions for centuries, and thus managed to slip below the literal and figurative radar of the dozens of warring factions. The monks welcomed the survivors as best they could, and served as the nucleus for a small, isolationist farming community. The monks now preach a rigorous, almost virulent, anti-tech creed. While they accept mutants as simply victims of the evils unleashed, they despise all artificial beings and any machinery which consumes anything but muscle, water or wind power (and even then, they dislike especially complex devices). Despite this, they view themselves as preservers of knowledge, and have managed to compose a large library of books, all hand-written, detailing all manner of things, from the medicinal uses of mutant apples to the variety of mutations found in the local pond frogs.

Criminal

Criminal power structures can exist only in societies with strong laws and the enforcement thereof. Otherwise, the criminally inclined simply take over, becoming a political power structure. (One person's protection racket is another person's income tax, as it were.) Criminal does not automatically mean "immoral," though it certainly often does. A rebel underground fighting against a Bonapartist dictator is a "criminal" power structure, for example, as are those who seek to give pure-strain humans enslaved by a mutant ruling class an escape route. In most cases, though, criminals are those who seek to prey on others. Criminal power structures often wield considerable *de facto* authority, especially in poorer sections of a community, where they may provide some semblance of "law and order" themselves. Very



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often, criminal power structures are unstable and prone to sudden change, with various gangs and factions rising to power and then being dragged down again.

Some of the criminal power structures which might exist in the Gamma World are:

• A gang of water-breathing mutants, some descended from land-dwellers and some from water-dwellers, run an aquatic protection racket. For years, this was limited to harassing fishermen in return for a share of their catch, but the community's recent decision to open a trading port means they have ambitions for much greater wealth. What they do not consider is that the mayor may work harder to protect rich traders than poor mutants.

• On the surface, the community welcomes residents of all genotypes. In reality, mutants, especially human mutants, find themselves continually harassed; and few stay long. A powerful but secretive group of Purists has existed in the town for a decade, and has been working to make it a bastion of genetic purity without alerting the local communities to the Purists' presence until their position is secured.

• The community could be prosperous — at least, as prosperous as any community can be in the chaos of the Gamma Age. However, a small number of families control the surviving autofacs, and they use them to produce useless luxury goods while the people starve. Well-paid and well-armed guards keep the downtrodden from organizing, but a small gang of thieves has begun to harass the rich, "liberating" everything from high-quality synthetic food to artificial emeralds and distributing (some of) this wealth to the rest of the community. In return, the community shelters them, often at risk of their own lives. Some call the bandits true peoples' heroes; others claim they're buying protection from the poor with trinkets and making themselves rich.

Leaving

Generally speaking, departing is often easier than arriving. Other than prisons or slave labor camps, few communities make an exceptional effort to make sure visitors don't go. There can be some exceptions to this, however. If the visitors have been exceptionally useful — for instance, serving as guards, healers or sources of knowledge — then the community may not wish to see them leave, and may take steps to insure they stay. These measures can range from begging and pleading, to blackmail, to imprisonment. It is also possible that a community, especially a hostile one which eventually learned to welcome or accept the characters, might not want word of its existence to get out. Many might feel that letting visitors go and spread tales could bring back unwanted attention. Even if the characters comported themselves honorably, they could spread tales to others who would not.

From the characters' perspectives, the most important thing about leaving is not to make new enemies. This means making sure all loose ends are tied up, especially if there's little chance of returning. On the most basic level, this means making sure any trading has concluded to mutual satisfaction and that no one is still waiting for you to fulfill your end of the bargain.

On a more complex level, though, there can be trouble, especially if characters have had more than merely business dealings with NPCs. While it may be difficult for a leonine centaur and a winged, cyborg felinoid to find love in this crazy, mixed-up world, it's not impossible. No matter how much he may love the wandering stranger who stumbled through the gates one Coldseason night, a farmer may be loathe to leave his community and go gallivanting through the wilds… and he may see no reason why she can't just settle down to a life of turnip herding. Alternatively, he may insist on joining her on her quest, despite a lack of any combat skills more advanced than "swing a hoe at an escaping turnip." Either way, trouble brews. An abandoned lover may feel angry, resentful or vengeful, and the family of anyone who joins up with traveling adventurers may have a few words to say, especially if their relative comes back dead or worse. (In the Gamma World, there are many fates worse than death!)

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"BLESSED ELVIS, WHO DIED AND WAS YET SEEN TO WALK THE LAND, THE TRUE KING, HEAR MY PLEA!"

The destruction unleashed in the Final Wars fragmented a society which was already extremely alien to 21st century eyes. From strange seeds has grown even stranger fruit. Some aspects of culture are shaped by the needs of survival, and thus many Gamma Age communities have re-evolved social traits and forms common to other low-tech societies. The specific details of these forms, however, can be comical, bizarre or terrifying.

By the 22nd century, durable books with fixed text and art were largely a thing of the past, replaced by dynamic displays drawing on vast electronic and biotech archives… which were blasted blank, poisoned or otherwise destroyed in the wars. With only fragmentary knowledge of the past, many communities have built entire social structures around tiny pieces of surviving lore. One town might try to find guidance for all of its community decisions in a holographic guide to hovercar maintenance, for example, while another might worship John Wayne as the God of Justice and Elvis Presley as the King of Music.

There is a type of theological argument called "the god of the gaps," wherein gods are invoked to explain anything which has no other explanation. As human knowledge expands, "gods" are used to explain less and less. No educated person in the 21st century thinks thunder is caused by the anger of a deity, for example, though many educated people still feel there must have been a Prime Mover who kicked off the Big Bang. We know what causes thunder, but not why there is a universe in the first place.

In the Gamma Age, the gaps have re-opened, wider than before. The most educated are aware that much of the wonder and nightmare of the world they live in was created by human beings; but they cannot explain how except via words they have learned by rote, such as "nanotechnology," "genetic resequencing," "quantum memory circuits," and other terms that might as well be "necromancy," "dark arts," or "the blessings of the spirits" for all the words refer to any skills, powers, or knowledge that the survivors possess.

The biggest unanswered question, of course, is "What happened?" It is an absolute certainty to most cultures that the progenitors of the old civilization were mortal men and women. No



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human alive today remembers the Final Wars, but many of the oldest knew someone who did, albeit when they were very young and the survivors were very old. At one point, humanity strode the world like the gods, creating life and minds in its own image, reshaping the Earth, even walking across the stars. Religions and philosophies evolved just as chaotically and quickly during the Shadow Years as everything else did. When magnetic stimulation of certain parts of the brain could produce the same sensations experienced by the most devout in their most fervent moments, and when memetic retroviruses carried fundamentalism or atheism in pill form, religion became, literally, a consumer product.

Then something went horribly wrong.

Religions of the Gamma Age, both those that survived the Final Wars and those that sprang up afterward, struggle most often with the question of what it was. Most believe some great failure of human moral character was involved. Many invoke hubris, arrogance or over-reaching, and claim the gods struck humanity down. Others claim humanity was basically flawed from its evolutionary inception, that the gods made the human race badly, and the chaos of the Gamma Age — the infinite new varieties of life — is the result of the gods trying to get it right. Others see the world as a test or a challenge; if people can overcome it, they will regain their throne.

The precise nature of the great mistake is a subject of much debate. Purists, for example, claim humans angered God and Gaia by twisting the human form and those of plants and animals in unnatural ways, causing them "to reproduce not after their kind, but after the whims of fools," as Rifkin 2:12 states. Others claim ignorance was the problem: Too many people played with things without understanding them, and more education and knowledge would have staved off final disaster. Anything that can be identified as a fault or weakness is the centerpiece of someone's explanation.

CULTS OF CELEBRITY

One of the enduring tropes of **Gamma World** is the incarnation of 20th and 21st century celebrities as gods. While this is often played for humorous effect, it is a logical conclusion. Many people today effectively "worship" celebrities, adorning their homes with pictures of them, sending them gifts, traveling hundreds of miles to see them. When girls screamed and fainted upon seeing the Beatles, was this really different than the sensations felt by the faithful upon seeing a saint or holy man?

In the chaos of the Final Wars, many groups of survivors were composed mostly of the very young, who were often shielded at the cost of their parents' or guardians' lives. Adrift with only a limited knowledge of the world and consumed with the desperate needs of survival, they put together cultures and belief systems as best they could, mixing their own early religious training with the icons and images that surrounded them. Since much of the media of the Shadow Years vanished into a haze of electrons in the Final Wars, it is not surprising that the most dominant images were those from the last great age of paper and plastic: the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Thus, while the great neo-fusion singers and psychotropic artists of the later 21st and 22nd centuries are almost entirely gone from human memory, Elvis lives.

FX

This section includes a wide selection of new mutations, biotech and cybernetics which can assist in long-term survival or questing. Many of these are also useful in other types of adventures.

Some of these mutations have the tag (psionic). These are specialized psionic mutations which grant a specific, tightly-focused ability, as opposed to the broader, more general-purpose psychic powers described in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**. These are noted as psionic because they are vulnerable to any FX which effect psi powers, such as anti-psi fields or psi-enhancing drugs.

This section also includes some items which communities can use to defend themselves from intruders.

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ALTERNATE FORM

The character can change shape completely!

Type: Positive

Effect: There is no consensus on how this mutation works. Some claim it is due to molecular telekinesis; others, hyper-accelerated nano-reconstruction. Most just accept it as one of the great wonders of the Gamma Age. (GMs aiming for a more "realistic" campaign may deny this mutation to players.) The character can transform into a single alternate form, usually one adapted to a different environment, such as a fish or a bird. The form has the same mass as the original character and the same basic ability scores and mutations. Optionally, the player may choose to rearrange her character's ability scores: for instance, turning into a brutish creature with great Strength and Constitution, but reduced Intelligence and Charisma. The exact details must be worked out between the player and the GM. It is recommended that this mutation count as two, because it is very rare; however, this is not required.

Biotech: No

CARAPACE, LESSER

The subject has a heavy shell over his head and upper torso.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: Originally created for personal expression and quickly adopted by some gang members and ++Xtreme Wrestlers, a character with this mutation has a thick, turtle-like plating over his head and part of his torso. He may have facial hair, but no head hair, and the shell can be colored in a wide range of patterns (set when the mutation is gained). A few such shells bear the names and logos of long-vanished corporations (these were the sponsors of the aforementioned wrestlers, and the fact that these genetic modifications have made it into the germlines of Gamma Age humans and animals has preserved their names for generations).

A lesser carapace grants a +1 natural armor bonus to Defense and DR of 1/—. However, it inflicts a –1 modifier on Balance, Swim and Tumble checks.

Biotech: Graft

CARAPACE, GREATER

The subject has a heavy shell over her entire body.

Type: Positive

Effect: This is a mutation of the lesser carapace, one which causes it to grow over the entire body, including the hands, making fine motion difficult. While this increases its protection considerably (Defense +3, DR 2/—), it also inflicts a –2 modifier on all Dexterity-based skills.

Biotech: Graft

CENTAUROID

The subject has a quadrupedal lower body and a humanoid torso.

Type: Positive

Effect: This mutation can be applied to any bipedal creature, including moreaus. When applied to moreaus, the centauroid has a lower body akin to that of the quadruped it descended from and an upper body of a moreau of the appropriate type (thus, a centaur-lion has a lion's body and a lion-moreau's torso). When applied to all other bipeds, the lower body can be that of any land-dwelling vertebrate, suitably scaled to the size of the individual — anything from zebra-centaurs to elephant-centaurs has been spotted somewhere. This mutation grants several advantages:

- The mutant is considered to be a quadruped for carrying capacity and burden purposes.
- Due to redundant hearts and lung, the mutant is granted a +2 species bonus on all Fortitude saves and a +3 species bonus to his massive damage threshold.
- The mutant gains 2 slam attacks (each inflicts 1d4 points of damage) from his front legs, if he did not already have such an attack.
- The mutant may become Large, if his lower body is appropriately sized; this has both advantages and drawbacks.

During the Shadow Years, this was considered an extreme form of personal body modification, something only the most determined "bodyhackers" would indulge in. Mutations to the retroviral tools used to induce the change enabled it to infect the germline, and thus it can show up randomly among almost any population.

Biotech: Graft

CLINGING PADS

The subject can cling to walls or ceilings.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: A favorite modification for spies and other infiltrators, this allows a character to walk up walls or even cling to the ceiling! The character must have hands and feet uncovered to use this ability, and must be carrying no more than a light load. He can move up or down vertical surfaces at 1/2 base movement rate, and can move along

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horizontal surfaces at 1/4 base rate. He must keep all of his limbs in contact with the surface and cannot attack or avoid blows easily; he is considered to be flat-footed for purposes of determining Defense, and abilities which normally allow a character to ignore this condition do not apply while the character is clinging or climbing. The character may not take any attack actions, unless he has more than four limbs; if so, he can use one of those additional limbs to attack at a –2 modifier.

Someone with this ability can be pulled off a wall. This requires a successful Grapple check and then an opposed Strength check. In both cases, the subject's checks suffer a –4 circumstance modifier, as he lacks the leverage to effectively resist the grapple.

For a major positive mutation, the character may have clinging pads that grant him a Climb movement rate equal to 1/2 his base movement rate, a +4 species bonus on Climb checks, and the ability to take 10 on Climb checks under duress. A character with this version of the mutation is also not considered to be flat-footed while climbing, and may attack with half of his limbs.

Biotech: Graft

ESSENTIAL SLEEP

The subject needs more sleep than others of her kind.

Type: Minor Negative

Effect: Almost all animals need to sleep, but most can survive well enough on reduced or missing sleep, at least for a few days. Someone with this mutation, however, cannot. If she sleeps less than 8 hours per day, she suffers a –2 penalty to all ability and skill checks for each hour missed, until such time as she gets 8 hours of uninterrupted, continuous rest. Furthermore, in order to avoid simply falling asleep regardless of a desire to keep going, the character must make a Fortitude save against a DC of (10 + 1 per hour of sleep missed), or collapse on the spot. This will not occur in actual combat, but may happen at any other time.

Biotech: Implant

FLEXIBLE FEATURES

The subject can change his face at whim.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: The character's face is under his mental control. Bones, cartilage and flesh respond to a whim, as do skin and eye color. Even the hairline can shift, and a beard can sprout or vanish within minutes. The character cannot change his apparent species, but beyond that, he can shape his features to within the normal limits of his kind (no humans with foot-long noses — Jimmy Durante is about the limit). He can even change apparent gender, though the rest of his body will not follow suit. Imitating a specific individual is still difficult, but this ability grants a +10 bonus on Disguise checks for that purpose, and a +20 bonus on Disguise checks for all other purposes. The biometric signatures of the individual do not change, however, and DNA or retinal scans still reveal them.

Biotech: Implant

FUR

The subject is covered with thick, shaggy fur which can ward off cold.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: This mutation causes the subject to be extremely hirsute, with a coat of fur befitting a wooly mammoth. This grants a +4 on all saves against the effects of cold weather and DR 1/— against cold-based attacks. Unfortunately, it also inflicts a –2 penalty on saves against hot weather and increases water consumption in hot or very hot environments by another 25% (multiply the total water required by 1.25).

Biotech: Graft

GLIDING FLAPS

The subject has flaps of skin which enable him to glide.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: A fairly common "sport" modification in the Shadow Years, this mutation has since been turned to purposes of survival. While not capable of flight, a glider can drift down from great heights or make prodigious leaps across chasms, granting him considerable mobility.

Someone with this mutation can use it as follows:

• **Controlled Descent:** The gliding wings catch the air, slowing descent. If the character has room to extend his arms and catch the air, his effective falling distance is reduced by 20 feet. He receives a +4 species bonus on all Tumble checks or Reflex saves to avoid or reduce falling damage.

• **Gliding Distance:** Given a running start from a high place, the character can glide a considerable distance. The character can glide a total distance equal to his Jump bonus x 5 feet, losing 5 feet of height for each 10 feet of travel unless there is a strong updraft or other support.

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This ability does not function in vacuum. Furthermore, the character must wear modified armor (purchase DC +1) to enable his skin flaps to expand. (Pre-Wars armor requires extensive engineering skill and high-tech tools to modify.)

Biotech: Graft

HUMP

The subject has a fatty hump which can store food and water.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: This mutation manifests as a large, fatty growth on the subject's back. When full, the growth is very prominent; when empty, it is much less noticeable. A full hump can store a week's worth of food and water. This will automatically be used to replace any missing food or water; if the character is on half-rations for a week, she consumes half of the hump's reserve. The hump replenishes itself at a rate of one day's worth of sustenance for every two days of normal eating and drinking.

Biotech: Graft, Implant

HYPER-EFFICIENT DIGESTION

The subject can extract every possible bit of nutrient value from food or water.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: This mutation has no obvious physical indicators, except that the mutant eats sparingly yet seems very healthy. A character with this mutation needs only one-quarter the food and one-half the water of a typical individual of his species. The effects of this do stack with Hump, so a character with both can survive a very long time on very minimal food.

Biotech: Implant

HYPER-EVOLUTION

The subject almost instantly adapts to the surrounding environment.

Type: Positive

Effect: A small miracle of nanotechnology, micro-AI and self-modifying genetic code, this mutation allows a character to very rapidly gain whatever physical adaptations are needed to resist climate effects. After a single day in an area, the character is considered partially acclimated; after a week, she is fully acclimated. The character does not need to wear appropriate clothing to gain a bonus to Fortitude saves after this week; she will have grown fur, a layer of blubber or heat-radiating fins as needed to adapt. The exact form of the adaptations varies, but most are external rather than internal. This ability does not change the character's atmospheric requirements, but if she also has the Gills mutation, Hyper-Evolution can provide the other adaptations needed for underwater life, including adapted eye lenses and webbed fingers and toes.

If the GM is not using the acclimatization rules, this mutation gives a flat +4 on all Survival checks or Fortitude saves made to resist environmental effects.

Biotech: Implant

LONG-DISTANCE TELEPATHY

The subject may use telepathy over tremendous distances.

Type: Positive

Effect: Only an individual with Telepathy may take this mutation. His mind has been altered to greatly magnify the distance over which telepathy can work, allowing telepathic contact at a range of 5 miles per point of Intelligence bonus. There are several limits to this ability, however.

- It may only be used to communicate with others who have the same mutation.
- Each minute of use causes 1 point of temporary Constitution damage.
- The abilities of Advanced and Improved Telepathy may *not* be used at these ranges.

Biotech: No

LONG LEGS

The subject has greatly extended legs, increasing movement speed.

Type: Minor Positive

Effect: A retroviral program designed to make minor enhancements to certain athletes mutated and got loose into the chaos of the Gamma Age, and this was the result. This mutation causes the subject's legs to roughly double in length, increasing base running speed by 5 feet for Small creatures and 10 feet for Medium and Large creatures. There are also other benefits, such as being able to see over walls and reach high objects; the GM adjudicates these. Because other proportions remain the same, the creature's size category is not considered to increase, but its equipment bonus from any full-body armor is reduced by –1, because its legs are partially uncovered. (Specially-made armor does not have this restriction.)

Daily travel time while walking is increased by 1/4.

Biotech: Graft

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PARASITIC FEEDING

The mutant can survive only on blood from other living creatures.

Type: Negative

Effect: The mutant's mouth shows the signs of this mutation clearly: it is an atrophied, sucker-like organ surrounded by small, razor-sharp teeth. If the mutant pins any creature with both exposed skin and blood (thus excluding, for example, synthetics), she may begin feeding (see *d20 Modern*, Chapter 5: Combat, "Special Attacks," *Grapple* for specifics on grappling and pinning). She may continue to feed each round her opponent remains pinned. This inflicts 1 point of Constitution damage per round; she must inflict 4 points of Constitution damage (though not all to the same creature) per day in order to survive. While feeding, she is considered to be flat-footed with respect to those outside the grapple, even if she has feats or abilities which allow her to keep her Dexterity bonus while grappling. If the parasite is forced to make a massive damage save while attached to a victim, she detaches and loses the pin, even if she makes the save.

If the parasite cannot find prey, she begins to die. She takes 1 point of Constitution damage herself every day that she does not find enough to eat. Each point of Constitution damage that she inflicts on another creature first goes toward replenishing her own Constitution score; after the parasite has recovered fully, the damage she inflicts again counts as normal feeding.

Note: The parasite does not require food or water. She takes all the nourishment she needs from others. The parasite can only feed on living beings; even a recently killed animal is of no use to her. The character can attempt to carry her prey, subject to normal rules for carrying capacity.

Biotech: Implant

SONAR

The mutant can sense surrounding objects via sound waves.

Type: Positive

Effect: A character with this power emits small, high-pitched sounds on a regular basis, and usually has greatly oversized ears. This, like breathing, is something the mutant does without thinking about it, but which he can stop by an act of will. A DC 10 Concentration check silences the pings for up to 5 minutes. The character does not emit sounds while asleep. While he is silent, this ability cannot be used.

When active, this ability gives the character a three-dimensional view of his surroundings unhindered by darkness or fog. It even allows a limited view inside structures if they are relatively permeable to sound. "Seeing" inside a canvas tent, for example, is trivial, seeing through thin wooden walls less so; this power cannot penetrate concrete. No information about color or fine detail is given. The sonar sense can resolve details as small as 1 square inch, and cannot be used to read. Fog, darkness and smoke do not provoke a concealment miss chance for a mutant with active sonar.

Very loud noise (volleys of gunfire, very heavy rain, an electronically amplified musical performance) nullifies this ability.

Biotech: Implant

SUBCONSCIOUS SURFACE SCAN

The subject instantly and automatically mimics accents, body language, and so on.

Type: Minor Positive (psionic)

Biotech: No

This mutation allows the character to subconsciously and automatically "fit in" when she talks with someone outside her own community. She mimics body language, accents and idiomatic phrasing instantly, and does so in a way which seems natural, not forced. She ignores all penalties to social skills due to distance, and enjoys a +4 bonus on any tasks related to discerning social rules or customs, provided she is within 25 feet of a native. She cannot read minds or pick up specific thoughts. This ability does not make someone more inclined to like her, just less inclined to hate her — in other words, it negates penalties, but does not provide any bonus. (Someone with this and Harmonious Pheromones is a diplomat par excellence, however!)

COMMUNITY ITEMS

Communities in the Gamma Age face many threats, and thus can be forgiven a certain level of paranoia. Many have taken the steps to make sure that visitors are detected as soon as they draw near, and some communities have a variety of automatic and lethal defenses to deal with possible intruders. That this could result in the killing of a representative of a possibly peaceful culture — and thus create enemies, rather than eliminating them — is considered "a question for the philosophers."

ELECTROWEBBING

Size:	Small
Weight:	8 lb.
Purchase DC:	14

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A wonder of the Shadow Years still in relatively common use due to its self-sustaining nature, this substance at first resembles sheet of gelatinous cloth. It is, in fact, an organism of sorts, a type of primitive plant with bits of spider and electric eel DNA tossed into the bundle. When hung from poles (akin to tossing a blanked over a clothesline to form a tent, and left to hang in the wilderness, it is quickly torn by the wind, until it resembles a dangling, translucent net. While safe to handle in its "stored" form, at this point biochemical triggers activate, and the bioelectric generation cells begin to function. Anyone touching the webbing takes 4d6 points of electrical damage, with a DC 14 Fortitude save for half. The webbing has hardness 5 and 15 hit points per 5 x 5-foot area, but only slashing weapons will damage it. Crushing or piercing weapons (including most guns) will have no effect. Of course, anyone striking it with a metal weapon takes damage as if she had touched it.

Electrowebbing is photosynthetic; so once placed, it can flourish for years.

IFF MINE

Size: Tiny
Weight: 0.5 lb.
Purchase DC: 20

This is a fairly rare sort of weapon, but stockpiles are still found in some places. A product of the end of the Shadow Years, this device incorporates some of the most sophisticated advances of the Pre-War era. Each is a chrome ovoid 4 inches long and 2 inches high, with small information readouts displayed in colored symbols that flow over the polished surface. When inert, or waiting activation, it is a bright silver-blue; when activated, it turns silver-red.

To activate a mine, an individual must hold the device and concentrate on a specific person, place or ideology. If the Concentration check is successful (see the task below), then the mine has been "tuned" to the subject chosen. Cultured telepathic brain tissue (kept in a self-perpetuating nutrient bath in the very center of the mine) will now scan for thoughts to seek out its specified target; if it detects thought-patterns that meet its parameters, it detonates, inflicting 6d6 points of slashing damage in a burst radius of 15 feet (DC 15 Reflex save for half). Each mine has a scanning range of 5 feet, and mines can be buried up to 2 feet deep without impeding the scan.

Activate an IFF Mine (Concentration)
DC to accomplish: 15+
Critical Error DC: 8–

Success: The mine has been activated properly.

Error: The mine has been activated, but it is focused on the wrong type of thoughts. This could lead to anything from exploding in the hand of the person trying to activate it, to allowing enemies to pass while detonating against allies.

The IFF mine probes deep thoughts and plans, not just surface thoughts. It is not necessary to be actively thinking "bad thoughts" in order to set off the mine; general hostility to the subject is enough. Ignorance, though, is *not* enough — the character must know of the subject and be hostile towards it.

It is possible to attempt to "fool" an IFF mine, if you know where it is and what it has been programmed to seek out. This is a DC 15 Concentration check. Failure detonates the mine immediately.

Some cultures have taken to using animals (or prisoners!) as "mine detectors," conditioning them to hate the target community and then sending them across likely minefields.

Once activated, an IFF mine cannot be reset. If available for sale, inactivated mines have a purchase DC of 20 for a pack of 5.

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ADVANCED CLASSES

Those who make it their life's work to explore, whether for knowledge, profit or simple wanderlust, soon develop specialized skills and abilities. This section describes several advanced classes that focus on exploration.



EXPEDITIONARY

To venture alone into the untamed wilderness of the Gamma World is to commit a long and complex form of suicide, or so many would say. While there are some specialists (see the Survivalist) who have the necessary skills to survive on their own, an expedition composed of non-specialists has a short lifespan. For a group of individuals whose skills deal with things beyond survival to be able to survive a long expedition, they need to be led by someone with an exceptional mix of abilities. The Expeditionary is such a person, a master of keeping himself, and others, alive under the most trying circumstances.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become an Expeditionary, a character must fulfill the following requirements:

Base Attack Bonus: +3.

Skills: Handle Animal 3 ranks, Navigation 6 ranks, Survival 6 ranks.

Feats: Guide.

CLASS INFORMATION

Hit Die

The Expeditionary gains 1d8 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies as usual.

Action Points

The Expeditionary gains a number of action points equal to (6+ one-half his character level), rounded down, each time he gains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Expeditionary's class skills are as follows:

Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Navigate (Int), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), Treat Injury (Wis).

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THE EXPEDITIONARY

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Defense	Reputation
1	+0	+2	+0	+0	Packmaster +10%, Enhance Survival +1	+1	+2
2	+1	+3	+0	+0	Pathfinder	+1	+2
3	+2	+3	+1	+1	Warning Sign	+2	+2
4	+3	+4	+1	+1	Enhance Survival +2	+2	+3
5	+3	+4	+1	+1	Packmaster +15%	+3	+3
6	+4	+5	+2	+2	Inspiring Leadership	+3	+3
7	+5	+5	+2	+2	Commanding Presence	+4	+4
8	+6	+6	+2	+2	Enhance Survival +3	+4	+4
9	+6	+6	+3	+3	Eternal Perseverance	+5	+4
10	+7	+7	+3	+3	Packmaster +20%	+5	+5

CLASS FEATURES

Packmaster

The Expeditionary knows how to optimize the packing and loading of supplies for a protracted expedition. Both the carrying capacity and burden of all supplies other than personal gear (armor, personal weapons) is reduced by 10% for all members of the expedition. This reduction increases to 15% at 5th level and 20% at 10th level.

Enhance Survival

A number of individuals equal to the Expeditionary's Charisma bonus (minimum of one person) are considered to have a +1 competence bonus on Survival checks for a number of hours equal to the Expeditionary's class level. This bonus can be granted once per day. This represents the Expeditionary giving detailed and precise instructions to those who are affected by this ability; thus this ability cannot be used if the Expeditionary cannot communicate with those under his command. The Expeditionary cannot use this ability on anyone with more ranks in Survival than he possesses. This bonus increases to +2 at 4th level and +3 at 8th level.

Pathfinder

The Expeditionary may add one-half of his class level as a bonus on all Navigate checks.

Commanding Presence

The Expeditionary knows that unless his commands are obeyed and his guidance heeded, more lives than his own will be lost. He is capable of projecting this certainty to others. When dealing with rebellious or mutinous members of the team he commands, he may add his class level to all Diplomacy and Intimidate checks. Any individual who quits the team is not subject to this ability, but also loses any other benefits the Expeditionary may provide.

Warning Sign

The Expeditionary can often sense disaster before it happens, and warn his party. All those under the Expeditionary's command who are within (Charisma modifier x 10) feet gain a +2 competence bonus on Reflex saves made against any natural disaster which calls for one, such as avalanches, ice cracking, crumbling precipices and so on.

Inspiring Leadership

The Expeditionary can often inspire those under his command to keep going no matter what, and to resist any distraction. All those under the Expeditionary's command who are within (Cha modifier x 10) ft gain a +2 competence bonus to Will saves against mind-affecting or fear effects, provided the Expeditionary himself saved against the effect. This can allow a group to resist the allure of Bar Leps, for example.

Eternal Perseverance

The Expeditionary is capable of demonstrating such personal strength in the face of physical torment that those who follow him are inspired to carry on, regardless of the pain. All those under the Expeditionary's command who are within (Charisma modifier x 10) feet gain a +2 competence bonus on Fortitude saves against any environmental effects or natural hazards, such as cold, heat, starvation or thirst.

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SURVIVALIST

The Survivalist is, in many ways, the precise opposite of the Expeditionary. While the Expeditionary helps a group survive the wilderness, the Survivalist helps only herself. She can go anywhere and do anything, and companions are at best a nuisance. This makes her an ideal forward scout. None of her abilities are actually hindered by having others around, though, so she can function well in a group situation. She's just equally good on her own.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Survivalist, a character must fulfill the following requirements:

Base Attack Bonus: +3.

Skills: Climb 3 ranks; Navigate 6 ranks; Survival 6 ranks; Swim 3 ranks.

Feats: Guide, Track; Simple and Martial Weapon Proficiencies.

Special: Must be fully acclimated to at least one environment not her own. If the GM is not using the acclimation rules, the prospective Survivalist must have lived at least a month in an environment not her own.

CLASS INFORMATION

Hit Die

The Survivalist gains 1d8 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies as usual.

Action Points

The Survivalist gains a number of action points equal to (6 + 1/2 her character level), rounded down, each time she gains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Survivalist's class skills are as follows:

Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Navigate (Int), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str).

CLASS ABILITIES

Expert Survivor

The Survivalist adds her class level as a bonus all Survival checks.

Rapid Traveler

The Survivalist can ignore the effects of one terrain type on travel speed, and moves through it at full speed. She may select a second terrain at 5th level and a third at 10th level.

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THE SURVIVALIST

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Defense	Reputation
1	+0	+2	+1	+0	Expert Survivor, Rapid Traveler #1	+1	+0
2	+1	+3	+2	+0	Self-Denial	+1	+0
3	+2	+3	+2	+1	Ruin Master	+2	+1
4	+3	+4	+2	+1	Rapid Acclimation	+2	+1
5	+3	+4	+3	+1	Stalker, Rapid Traveler #2	+3	+1
6	+4	+5	+3	+2	Urban Survivalist	+3	+2
7	+5	+5	+4	+2	Extreme Adaptation	+4	+2
8	+6	+6	+4	+2	Adaptive Digestion	+4	+2
9	+6	+6	+4	+3	Indefatigable	+5	+3
10	+7	+7	+5	+3	Rapid Traveler #3, Ultimate Endurance	+5	+3

Rapid Acclimatization

The Survivalist is skilled at picking up the techniques of survival, and in forcing her body to adapt. She acclimates in half the time normally required. If the acclimation rules are not being used, the Survivalist adds +2 on all Fortitude saves to resist environmental effects.

Self-Denial

The Survivalist adds half her class level, rounded down, as a bonus on all Fortitude saves to resist the effects of hunger or starvation.

Ruin Master

The Survivalist spends a lot of time in ruins, and has learned the tricks needed to survive in them. She may make Survival checks while in ruined cities, underground bases and the like: DC 10 to find water; 15 to find food (old preserved goods, small animals or edible plants); and DC 5 to find shelter.

Stalker

The Survivalist must often hunt to stay alive. This ability allows her to add half her class level, rounded down, as a bonus on all Hide and Move Silently checks performed against creatures with the animal type.

Urban Survivalist

It is sometimes the case that even those who love the deep wilds must venture into more civilized realms. But, indeed, the city is just another kind of jungle, from a certain point of view. This ability allows the Survivalist to find food, water and shelter in a community without being able to pay or trade for them, and without resorting to violent crime. It includes locating runoffs of fresh water, places where edible food can be quickly scavenged, and where to sleep well hidden from the law and from predators (human and otherwise). The Survival DC for all checks is 15.

Extreme Adaptation

The Survivalist gains a +4 bonus on all Fortitude saves to resist the effects of heat and cold.

Adaptive Digestion

The Survivalist has managed to survive on such a wide variety of foods that she has become extremely resistant to food-borne toxins. She is now immune to all ingested poisons.

Indefatigable

The Survivalist may travel at forced march speeds indefinitely, without becoming fatigued.

Ultimate Endurance

The Survivalist no longer needs to make any Fortitude saves against environmental effects in any environment she is acclimated to, provided she is properly dressed (wearing clothes that would normally give her a +4 equipment bonus on the saves).

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