

INTRODUCTION

By Brent P. Newhall



CC-BY-ND Jeff Preston

THE APOCALYPSE INTRODUCED MAGIC

The sky collapsed. The sun vanished. The moon cracked. Waves plunged the cities into the sea. Airplanes fell from the sky.

And the wizards, warlocks, and witches of olden times returned. These may be related.

The wizards (which is what most people call those with magical ability) soon retreated into abandoned labs and created armies of strange beasts and beast-men. These creatures could not be controlled, and many of whom still survive in bands around the world.

WIZARDS ARE POWERFUL AND FEARED

Though quite a few low- to medium-powered wizards live scattered around the world, the public imagination views wizards as super-powerful, quasi-immortal beings who can mold reality to their will and rule their fiefdoms with absolute authority.

Wizard-ruled kingdoms are usually theocracies, basically large and organized cults devoted to the will of the wizard ruling them. Those involved are rarely happy about this, but those who disobey are quickly discovered and sacrificed to demons (or worse things).

TECHNO-PRIESTS CONTROL THE CITIES

Within the crumbled cities of yore, the Priesthood has arisen to preserve the technology of the past. In some places, they are merely the preservers of vast archives of knowledge. In others, they subdue and rule the others who live in their cities, demanding tribute and sacrifices.

The cities themselves are marginally safer than the wilderness, but hold unique dangers. Winged lizards nest on the roofs far above, while ratfolk

scurry through the sewers. Old parks are now farms struggling to coax even mutated vegetables from the tired earth.

SAVAGE NATURE ABHORS TECHNOLOGY

The deeper one presses into the wild forests and jungles of the world, the less technology functions. Vicious, powerful creatures live deep in the wild places. Rare is the non-wizard who can survive in the wilderness.

REGIONS ARE CONTROLLED BY WIZARDS OR WARLORDS

Open, habitable spaces--the farmlands of old--are usually split up into small nation-states, each ruled by a wizard or a warlord. Technology has regressed to a subsistence level of food production, scavenging, and trade. Remnants of the old world are used for shelter and raw materials.

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=134>

THE VALLEY

By Brent P. Newhall

The Valley's a hard place. Harder than most.

The Gray City hulks on the western horizon, of course; can't miss that. The aging towers house the Priesthood and their supposed civilization. They're safe enough amidst the crumbling asphalt and filtered sunlight, between the giant flying lizards roosting in the roofs above and the crawling scavengers of the sewers below. May the ratfolk never learn how to organize.

Outside, it's your choice between Tomas and Shedra. Tomas rules his kingdom with ruthless efficiency, more towns and armies sprouting up every month, it seems. Life in his

kingdom is tiring but hopeful: he's built a pocket of real living that keeps many dangers out.

Shedra the Witch pays little attention to her subjects. They pay a lot of attention to her, and to her cloaked priestesses. The latter roam the streets, occasionally commandeering people and their gear for strange rites. No reason is given. Whole families can disappear overnight.

This is the price paid for the magical barrier that keeps hostile creatures from entering Shedra's kingdom. This barrier must also warn Shedra when anyone enters, as strangers quickly learn to visit from her priestesses; who learn the

strangers' business...or kill them. Her kingdom isn't as prosperous as Tomas's, but it's a little easier. For a price.

Their kingdoms are surrounded by the Wilds, a savage forest filled with even more savage creatures. Hell, the plants themselves will kill you. And that itself is strange. Those few who've lived outside of the kingdoms or the city will tell you that the things living in that forest don't make sense, and don't live anywhere else. It's like they were made in there. By someone. Or something.

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=143>

SANCTUARY, SHEDRA'S DOMAIN

By Brent P. Newhall

They say it is Shedra's magic that keeps the beasts out of the rolling hills and valleys of Sanctuary, and brings the rains in spring. Sanctuary is, indeed, a strange place. It is more...vibrant than most, more full of life. Life in Sanctuary is peaceful, and her people have full bellies.

Of course, those full bellies come at a price: total obedience to the priestesses of Shedra. Her robed priestesses roam the streets on inscrutable errands. They occasionally commandeer people and supplies. No reason is given, but rarely is a reason asked. That is the price.

Sanctuary is made up of about two dozen towns and villages, nearly all of them farming communities. This is amazing in itself; little of new earth's soil is capable of farming. Strange, twisted things come from this earth, but it's edible, and there's a lot of it.

The only non-farming town is Tower, a massive mining complex in the mountains and Shedra's home. This is a dark place. Though it employs hundreds of people, the only ones who ever leave are Shedra's priestesses. Here, Shedra performs powerful magic in the dark passages of the complex she carved from the living rock of the mountain. Moans and screams can sometimes be heard from inside.

The truth: Shedra is a necromancer. She spends most of her time creating undead, for the gray area between life and death fascinates her. She has released so much life energy that it has seeped into the lands around her, giving them the strangely powerful life her subjects crave.

Shedra will undoubtedly become a lich someday. Perhaps she already is, and uses a glamour of beauty to hide her true self.

CC-BY-ND Jaydot Sloane



STRONGHOLD, THE KINGDOM OF TOMAS

By Brent P. Newhall

THE EGGSHELL

Tomas's kingdom is entirely surrounded by a wall, which is no mean feat in this world. Near the roads, the wall is solid stone ten feet high; out in the wilderness, it's mostly pieces of scrap tied together and barely comes up to a man's chest.

This is the Eggshell, so named because it protects the precious life within it. Every road into Stronghold passes through large gates and guard houses set in the Eggshell. The guards stationed here can inspect anyone or anything, and often abuse their privileges.

Bif is a typical guard: broad-shouldered and narrow-minded. He'll sift through belongings and find ways to claim valuables as "suspicious."

WOM

The capital city of Stronghold, Wom is a town of bustling activity. It was a civilized town before the Blast, too, and the old stone buildings that form the center of Wom have been fortified into a castle, complete with a circular wall and a foul-smelling moat.

Wom also has an arena. One day a week, beasts are raced in the morning, and human teams play aggressive ball games in the afternoons.

Most crimes in Tomas's kingdoms are punished by forced gladiator combat. Once a month, all criminals are brought to the arena and fight to the death. The survivor returns next month. If a criminal lasts for more than a few months, he or she is put against increasingly large teams of enemies and eventually killed.

TOMAS'S ARMY

Make no mistake: Tomas's army is probably the best in the world. He forged a rabble of bandits into a hard military unit, conquered the towns that now make up Stronghold, and built his followers into an army.

The army is divided into three levels:

The Guard are the lowest level. All able-bodied men (12 to 30 years old) are forced to serve in the Guard for six-month terms every three years. Their training is minimal by Tomas's standards but world-class outside. Any member of the Guard has an iron will.

The Fists are chosen from the Guard to live out their lives in the Army (and rarely have a choice in the matter). They train daily and are feared throughout the land. For the past five years, they've been the center of the Project.

The Fists are actually Tomas's biggest problem, as they are the most restless. They need new enemies to fight.

The Blades are Tomas's personal bodyguards. Every Blade is hand-picked from the Fists as an example of some extreme: bravery, loyalty, might. They're an odd lot, but they're fanatically devoted to Tomas, and any one could easily defeat a dozen normal men.

THE PROJECT

Tomas is building. A lot. Fortifications and towers are going up all over Stronghold. Only Tomas and the Blades know what it's all for.

PLOT HOOKS

The PCs are sent by a wealthy metal trader who sent his youngest son to work in Stronghold for six months. That was two years ago.

The PCs find a dying man who claims that the buildings are being constructed in a magical pattern that, when completed, will summon a demon that will give Tomas tremendous power but will destroy the valley in the process.

The PCs find a dying man who claims to have been attacked by one of Tomas's Blades. He says that Tomas's actual goal is to build an unstoppable army.

The PCs are captured on a pretense and brought to the arena for the monthly gladiator fights.

TOMAS

Archetype: Stern general

Actors to imitate: Z from Men In Black, that guy who always plays Wyatt Earp

Behaviors: Stand straight, frown, bark orders, speak in straightforward English

Goals: Find out if the PCs are a threat or useful.

What he'll say: If Tomas doesn't see the PCs as threats, he'll hold nothing back.

He sees himself as the only sane organizational force in this part of the world. The wizards are insane and insanely dangerous, and nobody else is strong enough to protect a lot of natural humans. He has no problems with mutants themselves, but he's afraid that humanity will mutate further into complete monsters, and that civilization will never be able to recover.

He readily admits that he wants to invade Shedra's domain, defeat her armies, and kill the witch. He sees her as a threat.

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=257>

ENTRY GATE PAMPHLET

By T.W. Wombat

WELCOME TO GREYBAR CITY

We hope you enjoy your visit to our fair community.

Feel free to ask a keeper if you have any questions about reconstructing a vibrant, advanced, and safe society in these modern times.

ENJOY COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE

All aspects of daily life in Greybar City have been designed with your comfort in mind. Any injuries or diseases will be treated as soon as you arrive, and you'll be back on your feet in no time. Don't miss our nightly shows in the Central Aud, running the gamut from ancient-style live theatrical performance, to massive trideo shows, to stadium-style music concerts. Our chefs use the freshest ingredients to make you the best meals in the world today. Every guest room has a terminal to explore the vast wealth of information stored on our network, individual environmental controls, a private bath with hot water, and convenient waste reclamation receptacles. Use our communications grid to contact people across town without leaving the comfort of your room. Trideo conferencing is available, as is immersive private entertainment.

If you take the Oath and join our city, all of this can be yours every day. Your Personal Star Pass will be upgraded from Red to Yellow and

you'll accrue credits in our centralized system which can be cashed in for some great rewards, so leave the uncertain barter system at the gate. If you're interested in becoming a member of Greybar City, please ask any Keeper wearing a Blinking Blue Personal Star Pass.

PLEASE BE COURTEOUS AND FOLLOW OUR SIMPLE RULES.

Our rules are simple and meant to provide the maximum comfort for all citizens and visitors.

1. **Your Personal Star Pass Must Be Worn At All Times.** We cannot protect you if we don't know your location or status. Your Star is fitted with a communicator and personal life signs scanner. If you travel more than three paces from your Star, a team will be dispatched to determine if you're in danger and help you out of whatever situation you're in.
2. **Recycling Is Mandatory.** With a lack of raw materials, we strive to reuse and recycle everything. Please use the convenient waste reclamation receptacles scattered throughout the city, marked with a green triangle.
3. **Respect Boundaries.** Your Star will warn you if you stray into a restricted area. Greybar City runs on very large machines which could hurt you if you get too close. Restricted areas exist

to keep you safe.

4. **Obey All Keepers.** If anyone with a Blue or White Star asks you to do something, they are speaking with the authority of the entire city behind them. Please comply with the Keeper's request as quickly as possible for everyone's safety and comfort.

Failure to follow these rules will result in a warning from a Keeper followed by immediate expulsion from Greybar City. Further infractions will be met with increasingly escalated responses.

INTERESTED IN MOVING TO GREYBAR CITY?

We would love to be your new home. After taking the Oath of Citizenship and receiving your Yellow Star, you will be assigned a role in the city. New citizens are tested for aptitude and assigned to help the city in a manner appropriate to their skill set. Unskilled citizens will spend at least six months in Food Services while learning a new trade in the off hours.

We want you to be happy and healthy. We want you to be safe. We want you to unlock your full potential.

Enjoy your visit to Greybar City. We hope you come back soon.

(Produced by Greybar City Printing, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Syrinx Corporation.)

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=387>

VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM OF GREYBAR CITY

By T.W. Wombat

The following text was found encrypted with ROT13, hidden in a file tagged "Corrupt Image File". It has the latest date of the 317 files in the directory, each containing a similar block of hidden and encrypted text.

It's all coming to a head. I can feel it. It's only a matter of time before the Keepers switch from masters to slaves, and now it's closer than ever. I know the Free Data Movement take a look at any new file that comes online. I only hope they're bright enough to find and read this. I used some skills from the pre-disaster days when I was a total digit head so I could hide my journal, but I kept it simple. When the Keepers didn't haul me in for treason, I figured they missed these files. Corrupt data is pretty common and there's no sense scrutinizing every little thing, is there?

I'm an old man who wants to set the record straight about Greybar City before I shuffle off or they take me to Cybernetics to put my brain in one of the Pax bodies.

Let's talk about life in the big city. The Keepers run everything. They control the entertainment, the food, the medical establishment, access to the data cached from when there was an Internet that they've been bastardizing, and all high-tech development. The rest of us go on like sheep, serving our role as proletariat laborers. If one of us gets a great idea, we're asked to join the Keepers. But here's the thing: If you join them, that'll be the last original idea you have. I don't know what they do for the initiation ceremony or what they cut out of your brain when they attach that infernal metal box to the back of your head, but Keepers are convinced that all the answers already exist online if only they're

diligent enough to find them. Like Internet data came from the heavens to enlighten the world, but only the Keepers have the implanted interface to truly appreciate the scope of the data.

And yet they don't bother looking at subversive messages hiding in corrupt image files.

I dodged a bullet when they asked me to join. I came up with an idea, but I convinced them it wasn't me. They tapped a friend of mine, and when I saw him the next year he remembered me. He said he was happy, but he was completely different. He didn't even think the same way any more. He asked me to join, and I just couldn't like the way I think. So I resolved to keep my head down and do what was required in as unremarkable a way as I could manage. And that's when I discovered the Free Data Movement.

I worked in the Food Mines for years. The Keepers maintain two sub-levels of hydroponic gardens and livestock genetics labs under the city. The vat-grown flesh experiments turn my stomach, but that's the tasty meat that keeps the city fed and docile. I swore it off after I saw how it was made. There are more sub-levels under those two, and I saw a guy with a yellow star who looked like he owned the place coming out of an access stairway right behind one of the Pax one time. The Keepers don't have the manpower to develop and use the lower levels, which is why they're so keen on recruiting new citizens. They send Pax patrols down there to make sure nobody has moved in. I learned that the Free Data Movement can somehow control the Pax, so it makes an ideal base of operations for them. There are plenty of secret entrances and no other humans go down there.

The Pax are the Keepers' hole card, an army of perfected robot soldiers who obey without question or hesitation. People say the Pax are built from people, but that's just rumor. Every once in a while some of them seem to recognize something and act strangely, so maybe that's not far off. The Keepers read about Nuclear Deterrence, and they've been using that doctrine for the past 60 years to hold the wolves at bay outside the city walls. Combat robots don't feel pain. They're pinpoint accurate, and their pulse lasers recharge to full given time. But usually one well-placed shot from a click away tends to end fights before they begin. Once in a while a Wizard gets uppity and takes one out before he falls, but that's been rare. The Keepers trusted the Pax so much that they turned over all security responsibilities to the Pax. Now they can concentrate on finding the truth at the bottom of the pile of data in their heads.

The Free Data Movement hacked the Keepers' interface a while ago. They're listening in on everything the Keepers do. I'm not sure if they hacked the Pax or if they just worked out a deal somehow, but I've never seen a Pax attack a member of the Movement. According to the subversive propaganda that sometimes interrupts the entertainment shows, new data comes in at random intervals. It looks like there's some sort of intermittent connection to other sites in other cities. The Keepers think it's The Word Of God, so they're overjoyed when new data comes in. The Movement is more pragmatic. They learned about computers the same way I did – hacking and experimentation. I think they've got the right idea, but they have no

idea how to run a government. They're specialists, not leaders or even team players. So they're great for throwing monkey wrenches around, but I fear they'll take over and the whole city will come crumbling down.

Not that the Keepers are too far off from total meltdown either. It's a hard world now. The Pax keeps the raiders at bay, but the infrastructure itself is threatening to implode. Gathering genetic material from banished citizens is mostly for show now since they don't have a working genetic scanner any more. Recycling Is Mandatory, but that only gets us so far. We still need new things to fill the holes left by raids and theft and the passage of time. The Keepers have been ranging farther and farther afield, desperately searching for more technology they can salvage to keep their machines running. I hear they've left the valley a couple of times, but they keep absolutely clear of the forests. All their defensive and curative gadgets and they're afraid of goblins in the woods. Maybe their dogma makes them believe in the Tooth Fairy too.

Food production is always a tricky

thing. They've tried to move some of the fields outside, but the Pax couldn't stop the sheer number of raiders in an unfortified field. We lost a field's worth of seed corn that year and more than a few good people. We've got enough for now, and the synthesized spices can make feces taste gourmet, but who knows how long until one of the experiments takes out a whole field. Nobody thinks about the risks involved in what we're doing every day just to survive.

And that's my big problem with the Keepers and the Syrinx Corporation they represent. Everybody listens sympathetically, and everybody wants a better place to call home. Some people have great ideas, but once the Keepers give you the implant you start navel-gazing and sifting through data looking for the secret of life. Data acts like a narcotic, and when it's in your head all the time nothing else matters quite as much. The Keepers get a non-stop information buffet to keep them complacent. The Keepers in turn provide a constant stream of bread and circuses for the masses, and the people stuff their mouths too full to question their self-appointed leaders. So who's at the top reaping the fruits

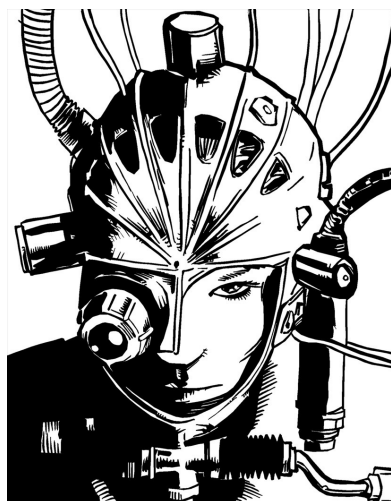
of this docile society?

If the Keepers and the Free Data Movement ever decided to listen to each other, Greybar City would actually become the beacon of hope in a dark world that the brochures want you to believe. We'd be able to use the Keepers' archived data as a starting point for innovation instead of an ending point of religious intolerance. We could reinvent the world and get humanity connected again. We could all pull together toward a better life for our children and their children. But I doubt that will ever happen. The Movement wants a say, and the Keepers only hear the data from before the cataclysm echoing in their heads. The Movement keeps grabbing for attention through thievery and vandalism, while the Keepers fight back the chaos without ever analyzing what the city really needs. Both sides butt heads because they always have. And that stupidity will get us all killed one day.

So welcome to Greybar City. It's crappy, but it's a far sight better than your alternatives.

Good luck out there.

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=387>



Greybar City is a tough place. The Keepers cater to those few souls who think they can re-capture life before the cataclysm. Some still believe that there are pockets of pre-collapse civilization, living in the height of luxury.

All their materials trumpet this, and they spend a fair amount of time manufacturing their utopian facade.

Life's a bit more rough inside. Everyone does what the Keepers tell them to do, mostly because the Pax freak out every last citizen of Greybar. There are plenty of stories about robot insurgent armies and berserk androids killing entire cities. There hasn't been a problem yet, but.....

– Brent

CC-BY-ND Jeff Preston

THE FORESTS

By Chris Jackson

The face of the world has irrevocably changed, three generations after the end. The landscape is divided neatly between vast swathes of desolate waste and gigantic, ancient forests. Arable land that has not become completely overgrown is an incredible rarity in the world, and all of that has long since been claimed by the warlords or the sorcerer-kings. Many of the remaining cities have been built within the crumbling remains of those left from before the end, crowding along the coasts of rivers, lakes, and oceans. These are almost invariably held under sway by the ineffable whims of the Priesthood. Wherever one can gain a fleeting sense of security, one also must have to sacrifice liberty.

Magic seems to have not only returned to humankind. The forests are, perhaps, the most dangerous place in the world. Technology begins to inexplicably break down and malfunction, the further one strays from civilization, but there is nowhere worse than deep within the forests, where technology just doesn't work at all. Even more primitive implements such as compasses can often lead one astray; the magic imbuing the place seems to disrupt natural as well as artificial magnetic fields. This may also contribute to some of the more subjective experiences, deep in the woods; spending too much time in the wilds can lead to dizziness, confusion, exhaustion, and anxiety. These effects seem to be particularly bad to those with natural magical talent of their own; not only does magic frequently misfire or go astray, but but it is more exhausting for the caster to carry through. Worse, it seems that many flora and fauna within the forests and jungles seem naturally attracted to magic, zeroing in on the errant caster, often ignoring their companions completely.

Very few animals still dwell within the

forests, and those that do are monstrous. The plants themselves, it seems, have become the chief predators, preying both upon each other, and anything else that wanders too far in whether for folly or for food. Many have changed into things unrecognizable from what they may once have been, developing bulbous, tuberos, vining, sticking, and piercing structures to assist in their predations. Nearly every predatory plant can exhibit short bursts of incredible growth, draining storage organs and shrivelling pseudobulbs in order to achieve these wild grasps. Roots, stems, and even flowers are often covered in minute hairs, which sense something brushing against them, or even walking over the ground above, and stimulate the plant to strike. These hairs can also serve another purpose as well; many are packed full of potent crystallized toxins, causing skin that brushes against them to burn, scab, or even necrotize. Many pollens serve a double-duty as soporific agents, lulling the breathers into a narcotic sleep. Spines and mucilaginous glands along the leaves and stems further serve to deliver the plants' predatory payloads to their unsuspecting victims. Once bound by rapidly-growing vines, disabled by poison or injury, or simply exhausted from fighting back cruel nature, the plants slowly grow over their victims. Adventitious roots pour out of any part of the plant and dive into the flesh, drawing out nutrients as they exude enzymes that breaks down the tissue. Even calcium is drawn out from the bones, eventually, leaving nothing as evidence after only a couple weeks.

People venturing into the forests, whether for adventure or for forage, often do not return. Rescue parties are a rare sight; usually once someone has been attacked, there is very little chance of survival.

Nevertheless, the sight of a scarred, scabbed individual is not an uncommon one within the settlements nearest to the forests. Some are even permanently disfigured from their experiences in the wild. It is sheer folly to venture within the woods alone, so oftentimes a member of an adventuring group will take a misstep and be attacked by feral foliage, and for the rest of their lives bear the marks of the encounter. Yet the incredible bounty promised within the forests continues to draw the brave and the desperate; despite all of the deadliness, there is also an abundance of edible fruits, roots, and fungus. Many nomadic groups travel from forest to forest, foraging and scavenging within for items of subsistence and trade, as well as for the components of valuable medicines which they can produce. It is unreasonable, therefore, to make any sort of attempt to destroy the forests wholesale, despite the threat they present, because it is counterbalanced by their incredible fecundity of natural resources.

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=365>



CC-BY-ND Jaydot Sloane

THE WOLVES OF THANATOS

By Chris Dundon

When predators rise in the food chain and eventually hit the top, it is seldom that they remain in that place unchallenged. Given enough time, other predators will realize their potential and evolve into a threat to the complacent. The wizards of the World Reborn quickly asserted themselves as the dominant species across the devastated lands, but in many places across the lands there was no room for shared power; wizard fell upon wizard in desperate struggles to be the strongest among them. It is often when these wizards hunt alone that they fall victim to another predator, one that hunts them specifically.

Little is publically known about the Wolves of Thanatos, other than they seem to specifically target wizards throughout the wastelands. The few facts people have scraped together range from amazing to horrifying. Wizards have suddenly vanished in the night, even from their own lairs. The vast majority is never seen again, and looters who descend on the riches of the missing wizards say that, despite clear signs of a struggle having occurred, their libraries and artifacts are frequently intact. Their numbers aren't known, nor has a base of operation been identified. The greatest question, though, is how they're able to take down such immensely powerful beings where many have failed.

On only a few recorded occasions has a wizard returned from going missing, and in every case they're found crucified to the gates of a city, butchered like a swine and with

a look of unending terror on their faces. The reports from autopsies that are performed on the remains become locked away by the Techno-Priests and those who ask questions are either rebuked or jailed. Information among the common folk is little more than scary stories and rumors.

Those in the inner circles of the Techno-Priests, though, know much more about the Wolves than they're letting on. The bulk of what is known has been chronicled by a Jocelyn Albrecht, a young Techno-Priest in training at the Grey City in The Valley. Thanks to her efforts, we now know that the Wolves of Thanatos are a band of wizard hunters who prey specifically on wizards. She also learned that they seem to have no political aspirations outside their own internal dealings, and their entire society is centered on the hunt itself. But, most significantly, she was the first to discover one of the secret hunting techniques of the Wolves: the ability to dampen magic.

The actual method they use to produce the mysterious liquid is guarded even fiercer than the knowledge of its existence, but the effects are now known through observation. The effects when introduced environmentally are profound: low concentrations of the liquid in the area and soil causes magic in the area to become significantly dampened. Successfully cast spells are weaker, and some fizzle before they can even manifest. Stronger concentrations intensified the

effects. Robbed of their potent offensive and defensive abilities, wizards fall as if they were mere lambs.

Most intriguing was when the Wolves seemed to begin experimenting in the Assassin's arts. In one situation observed by a spy planted in a wizard's home, the wizard was drinking from a cup of tea when he suddenly choked and fell to the floor, shaking before going unconscious. The wizard recovered several minutes later... and his connection to the ley lines had been completely severed. He could no longer summon a light, let alone summon a creature or a lightning bolt. The spy recovered some of the tea, which tested positive for the dampening poison. We don't know if the effect was permanent, though; the Wolves raided the lair hours later and the spy barely escaped with his life.

Combining the effects of their dampening poisons and brutal combat techniques with tactics that border on terrorism, the Wolves of Thanatos ride a thin line between being praised as saviors of the populace from the wizards and deeply feared for their horrific and extreme methods. Many wonder what will happen if all of a region's wizards are slain, driven into hiding or move on to less hostile lands. Will the Wolves move on, or will they remain and look for new prey? Without knowing who they are or what their true purpose is, speculation runs rampant.

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=244>

THE RACES

By Brian Liberge

3 Generations After The End (3GATE) is designed to be a primarily human-centric setting. That's great in a lot of ways. Humans are the dominant race in most RPG settings, and are certainly the stars of most modern media. It's easy for us to relate on a common level with them, as well as imagining them competing in a fantastic world.

However, many systems also support the idea of multiple player races and *3GATE* is easily expanded to include those.

After humans, the Beastmen are the most prominent race. Created by the early wizards after the great apocalypse, the beastmen are powerful men and women infused with bestiality of nature. Some are still under the control of wizards but many still escaped to the wilderness, forming their own tribes. Many races are naturally suited for beastmen as they already represent creatures who are part man, part animal. Minotaurs, lizardfolk, shifters, and thri-keens are all excellent choices. If you want to get creative, take a good look at the mechanics for the race and re-skin for different animals as needed. Gnolls are an excellent template race when playing *D&D 4E*. They get bonuses for hunting in groups, and their feats allow them to become excellent trackers or gain a natural claw weapon. These traits could be used to represent any number of animals in the world.

Beastmen are also naturally suited to working in a mixed party. Some are already allied with the wizards, while others have a natural reason to oppose them, so humans from either area could find reasons to work with them. They're less

naturally suited to the cities of the techno-priests, but in fantasy your characters are already exceptional. They could be converts, prisoners working toward release, or maybe they were an experiment left behind and freed by the priests.

Depending on the level of artifact technology you want to play with, the techno-priests offer another great race idea, that of the robot, cyborg, or android. The warforged of *D&D*, the gearforged of *Midgard*, and the giant robot of *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* are all great mechanics to use for these races. You could be a new creation, an experiment of the techno-priests and the ultimate representation of man's worship of technology. Perhaps you were found and only recently reactivated. Many high tech labs would be outside of the city and in secret locations, leaving you to ally with the first willing humanoid you can find. You may even have been around since the apocalypse, remembering the old world. Talk to your GM about this option first. Many things from the past may need to be a secret to allow proper exploration and discovery. Maybe your character was a simple worker drone before, and never learned of life outside a three block radius, or it could be that years of poor maintenance have ruined your memory, giving you glimpses of the past in short, confusing bursts, making you a modern oracle.

Finally there are the deepest areas of the wild, where technology ceases to function, and the beastmen roam with unforgiving savagery. Few dare to tread here, and even fewer return to speak its tales. Since magic returned with the apocalypse, the

secrets held here could be the source of the most fantastic racial options. Perhaps technology doesn't function here because of magic's rich veins. Fey lines could emanate from these zones, and perhaps their hearts are portals to other planes. One might stumble into cities of humanity's mythic past: the mines of dwarves and gnomes, tree-top elven villages, or roaming tribes of goblins and giants. Like humans, members of these races may feel compelled to brave the unknown and explore the wastes outside their hidden sanctuaries. What happens when they leave, though? Does their magic change? Do they themselves become warped by the apocalypse? What grand creations might come into being if dwarven master craftsmen were to work with the techno-priests?

Whatever you decide, use it to build the lore of your world, and have a grand adventure.

<http://blogs.gamerassembly.net/?p=270>



CC-BY-ND Jeff Preston