BRAINS AND SOULS

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A zombie survival source book

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BRAINS AND SOULS

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INTRODUCTION: THE NAKED CORPSE

Human, but not human; dead, but not dead. Abandoning all civilised behaviour as they descend below the level of animals. The Arabic *ghuls*, the *Wendigo* of Algonquian myth, the *draugar* of Norse legend and, from Haiti, the *zombi*.

Stories about zombies are stories about humans. We project our fears onto them, fears about how fragile our civilisation might be and what would happen if everything that we love and everything that we think that we need was suddenly taken away.

SotC is a OGL role-playing game written by Evil Hat Productions and based on their FATE system. This supplement contains additional rules to tailor SotC to the zombie survival genre. The SRD for SotC can be found at http://www.faterpg.com/dl/sotc-srd.html. If you don't want to use this game, the information will be useful for any tabletop campaign.

As well as the rules, this book also contains a history of the zombie survival genre of fiction (both in film and in literature) and an exploration of the genre's influence on today's society. It asks questions about what it means to be a human being – both as an individual and as part of society. This book should allow you, the GM, to create games where you and your players can explore these issues – and have fun while you're doing it.

BRAINS

There are many threads that are woven into what we find horrific about zombies. Each of these strands tells us something about what it means to be human.

Firstly, zombies used to be people and now they're something less. In most re-tellings of the myth, they are implacable and relentless hunters, existing only to kill, feed and to convert you into something like them. The zombie has lost is its humanity: compassion, empathy and the ability to reason.

Secondly, it can happen to anyone: your best friend,
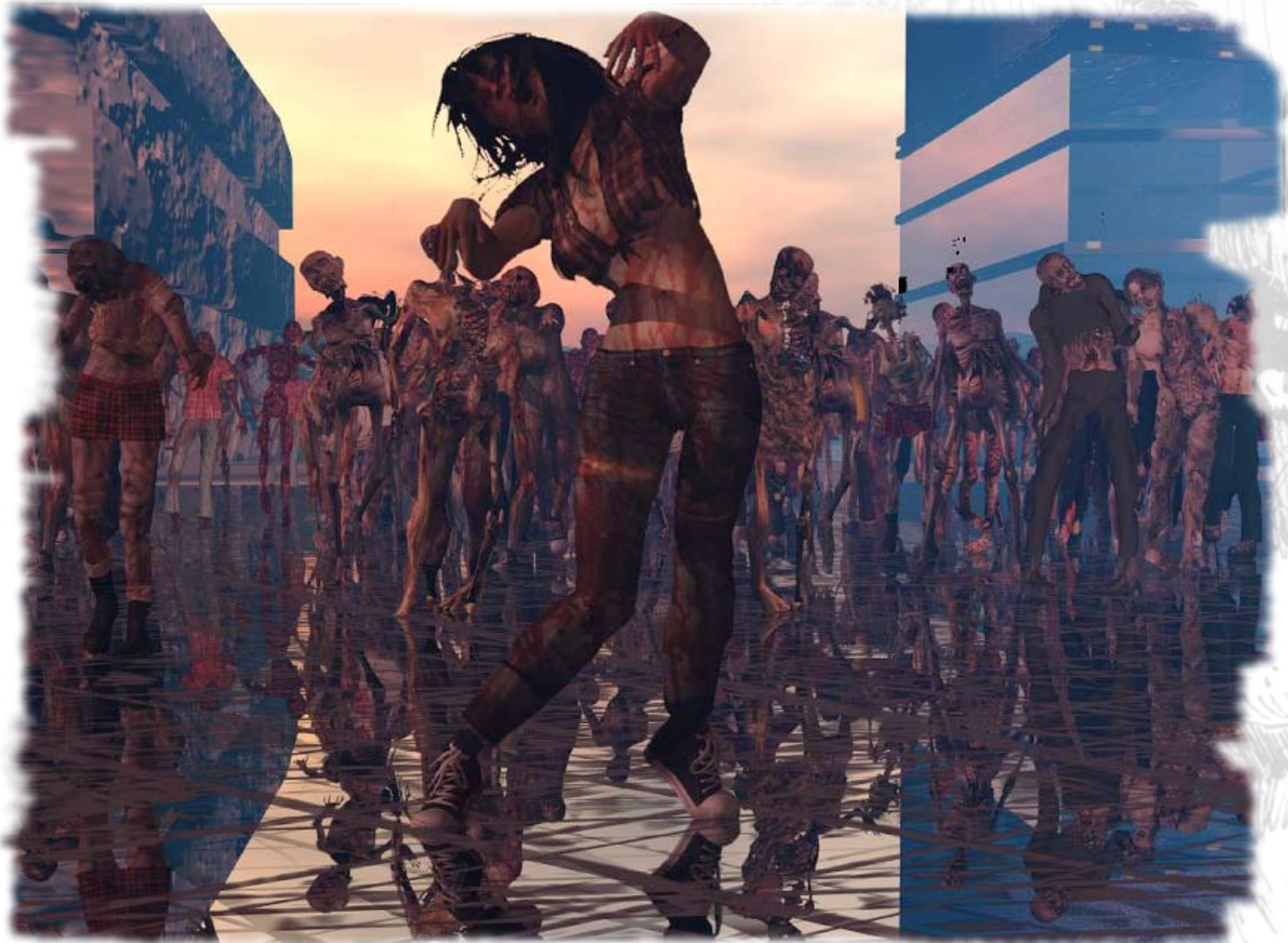
your worst enemy, your wife, husband or children. In most versions of the myth, the infection is incurable, converting even the most moral individual into an inhuman threat. It could happen to you. Zombie stories ask us what we would do in the worst possible situation. We're all heroes in our own minds (or at least we would like to be), but could we really kill a monster wearing the face of a loved one? Worse, could we take the lives of our nearest and dearest to prevent them from becoming that monster? Could you take your own life?

SOULS

Zombie stories aren't just about humans as individuals. They can be read as commentary on our society and on our civilisation. In particular, Charlie Brooker's series *Dead Set* is a satirical commentary about reality television. George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* can be read as a critique of consumerism.

More generally, (and this is the third thread I want to unpick) once the heroes have survived through the first phases of a zombie apocalypse and have found a place of safety, the real threat is no longer the zombies. What will get the them killed are the still-living people – stupid, selfish frightened humans making stupid, selfish and – above all – human decisions (think of Major West in *28 Days Later* or the producer's unilateral decision to escape from the house in *Dead Set* – and the failure of the rest of the cast's to decisively deal with him). There's a strong misanthropic streak to much zombie fiction; what else is a mob of zombies, but a seething pack of mindless humanity, seeking to drag you down to their level?

The final thread I want to explore is survivalism. By definition, a zombie apocalypse represents the end of the world as we know it. Society becomes unable to protect its own. The military and law enforcers are overwhelmed and converted into more zombies. The infrastructure needed to support modern civilisation (power, water and sewerage, transport networks) is either destroyed or made inaccessible. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina or the earthquake in Haiti were horrific enough and that's without any additional hazards. Any apocalyptic tale asks questions of the reader: are you man or woman enough to survive without all of the things we deem essential nowadays? Do you have the skills – or, more importantly, the

discipline and temperament – to help rebuild? Would you be an asset or a liability?

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ZOMBIE SURVIVAL GENRE

ZOMBIES IN MYTH

The word "zombie" comes from Haitian folklore, where a dead person can be revived and controlled by a *bokor* or sorcerer. However, this isn't the only culture to have legends of the walking dead.

The earliest known literary reference is from the Arabic *One Thousand and One Nights*. In the story *The History of Gherib and His Brother Agib* (from volume 6 of *Nights*), the brothers defeat and enslave a family of flesh-eating *ghouls* before converting them to Islam. In Arabic folklore, the *ghoul* or *ghul* is a desert-dwelling demon that can change form, often into a hyena. As well as stealing children and drinking blood, they rob graves and eat the dead – taking on the form of those that they've eaten.

The Norse have the *draugr*, a form of ghost with a reputation for eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the living. They were said to be immune to weapons and either death-black or corpse-white depending on the telling. A hero would have to wrestle the draugr back to their grave before cutting off the head, burning the body and dumping the ashes into the sea to make absolutely sure that they would not return.

Among the Algonquian-speaking tribes of the northern United States and Canada, there is the legend of the *Wendigo*. This malevolent cannibalistic spirit could possess humans – particularly the greedy or those who engaged in cannibalism. The myth served to encourage moderation and co-operation – and to reinforce the taboo against cannibalism. The Wendigo is depicted as being gaunt to the point of emaciation, with decaying flesh and a permanent hunger. Among certain tribes, the Wendigo were said to be giants, growing with each person they ate.

The *jiang shi* or hopping vampires are reanimated corpses from Chinese myth with zombie-like characteristics and that feed off of the "life essence" of living creatures. They can typically be killed by attaching a piece of paper with a Daoist spell written

on it to their foreheads and distracted by throwing seeds or grains of rice into their path.

EARLY FICTIONAL DEPICTIONS

While not a zombie novel, Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* was an important influence on future work, particularly in the idea that the risen dead are degraded and more violent than they were in life.

In the 1920s and '30s, H.P. Lovecraft wrote several stories with an undead theme: *Cool Air*, *In the Vault*, *The Thing on the Doorstep*, *The Rats in the Walls* and *Herbert West – Reanimator*. This last story, strongly influenced by Frankenstein, helped to define zombies in popular culture (though "zombie" is not a word that Lovecraft ever used). Herbert West's experiments are primitive, almost entirely mute and uncontrollably violent.

The word *zombi* was not introduced into western culture until 1929, when W.B. Seabrook released *The Magic Island*, a sensationalised account of a visit to Haiti where the narrator encounters voodoo cults and zombies. This was a big influence on Victor Halperin's 1932 film *White Zombie* (staring Bela Lugosi), which depicts zombies as mindless thralls to an evil sorcerer.

The modern depiction of the zombie is almost entirely down to George Romero's 1968 film, *Night of the Living Dead*, but he deserves his own section (see below). Notable zombie films between 1930 and 1968 include the infamous *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, *Things to Come* (released in 1936, and based on the H.G. Wells novel and featuring "the wandering sickness", a highly contagious plague that causes its victims to wander slowly and insensibly, infecting others on contact), *The Last Man On Earth* (released in 1964, and based on the much adapted 1954 novel *I Am Legend*) and Hammer Horror's *Plague of the Zombies* (released in 1966, the first to show zombies as walking corpses and setting the standard for zombie make-up).

GEORGE A. ROMERO

In 1968, George Romero released *Night of the Living Dead*, the first of five films in the *Living Dead* series. The modern conception of the zombie is almost entirely based on his vision: slow-moving,

unintelligent, spreading the infection via their bite, and having an insatiable hunger for flesh (usually human). Romero uses zombies as a vehicle for satirical criticism: consumerism, incautious scientific experimentation, slavery and exploration – even government incompetence. Romero also popularised the idea of the zombie apocalypse; the complete breakdown of human society as a result of zombie infestation.

RESURRECTION

In recent years, the zombie sub-genre has experienced a revival. The *Resident Evil* series (2002, 2004, 2007), the British *28 Days Later* and *28 Weeks Later* (2002, 2007), the 2004 remake of *Dawn of the Dead* and (in the same year), the homage/parody *Shaun of the Dead*. This interest and box office success allowed Romero to create the fourth and fifth entries in his zombie series, *Land of the Dead* (2005) and *Diary of the Dead* (2008). There are two common themes through this revival. Firstly the zombies are frequently depicted as biologically infected humans rather than the walking dead. Secondly, these zombies often retain some of their higher brain functions, moving too fast and too fluidly to be "classic" zombies and exhibiting pack and hunting behaviour ().

As part of this revival, Robert Kirkman self-published the Romero-influenced graphic novel *The Walking Dead* and followed this up by writing *Marvel Zombies*. Garth Ennis's ongoing comic *Crossed* is right on the edge of the zombie genre (the infected still retain the ability to communicate), but features a

vision of apocalypse that even hardened Romero fans will find difficult to stomach.

In print, we have Max Brook's *The Zombie Survival Guide* (2003), a zombie-themed parody of pop-fiction survival guides and useful for GMs and players alike. He followed this up in 2006 with *World War Z*, a fictionalised set of eyewitness accounts of a worldwide outbreak of zombie infection. Another source of campaign material is Jonathan Maberry's *Zombie CSU: The Forensics of the Living Dead* (2008), based on interviews with over 250 experts in medicine, law enforcement and the military discussing a hypothetical real world response to zombies.

BEHIND THE MYTH

In 1985, Wade Davis, a Harvard ethnobotanist, published *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, based on his investigations of the zombie myth in Haiti[1]. He theorised that a living person could be turned into a "zombie" by a combination of two drugs. A toxin derived from the pufferfish temporarily induced a death-like state during which the victim would be buried. After being recovered and revived, a second drug derived from the hallucinogenic plant *datura* would induce a dissociative state. These drugs, combined with the victims knowledge and expectations about the zombie myth would create a brainwashed slave. Davis popularised the story of Clairvius Narcisse, a Haitian man said to have survived this process. While Davis may have been a better botanist than a pharmacologist, his work does point the way towards a reality behind the myth.

In rats and mice, the brain parasite *toxoplasma gondii* alters the behaviour of its host, making it less fearful of cats (another host for the parasite). The virus that causes rabies is notorious for its ability to alter behaviour – again to help it to spread. Based partially on these real-world diseases, *The Zombie Survival Guide*, the *28 Days Later* series and the *Crossed* comic (among others) all posit a biological source for their particular zombie plague, with various degrees of plausibility.

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1 The 1988 Wes Craven movie of the same name is based on this (non-fiction) book

ZOMBIE SURVIVAL CAMPAIGNS

DEAD BY DAWN

The SotC SRD is designed for a "pick-up" style of game where each session is a self-contained story and the players and characters can change between sessions. This works well with an adventure where a disparate group of characters are thrown together by a crisis (such as a zombie uprising) and have to survive as best they can. Many of the classic zombie films are based on this premise (*Night of the Living Dead* for example). Ordinary human beings should be created using a skill ladder that peaks at Good (see page 12) and fewer stunts than a character created according to the SotC SRD.

(PARA-MILITARY

The PCs are members of the armed forces or a paramilitary organisation such as a corporation's security forces. A routine mission goes horribly, horribly wrong when the party encounters the risen dead (the 2002 *Resident Evil* movie is based on this premise). Any PCs that are killed can be replaced by rescued survivors. Military or para-military PCs can be built using a skill ladder that peaks at either Good or Great depending on the GM's thoughts on their experience.

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS ZOMBIES, MULDER."

This is similar to a (para)-military adventure. However, instead of military or security personnel the characters are reporters, explorers or law enforcement officers, tasked with investigating rumours of mysterious activities in a remote area. This sort of adventure would probably work best if the characters represent ordinary human beings, created using a skill ladder that peaks at Good.

EXTENDED ZOMBIE CAMPAIGNS

As noted previously, one of the major themes of the zombie survival genre is that zombies are an environmental hazard – the most dangerous threats are human stupidity and selfishness. An extended campaign allows the GM to explore these themes as

the PCs build a safe haven for themselves and other survivors. The adventures would become about about searching for resources (food, water, information or sources of energy), while avoiding hazards (zombies, obviously, but what about collapsing buildings, pollution and radiation?) and then defending what you have and what you've built from those who want to take it from you.

As human beings, we want to do more than just survive – we want to live. An extended zombie campaign should be about rebuilding civilisation, either after the zombie plague has passed or while continuing to defend against and accommodate for the walking dead. *Green Shoots and Ashes*, a supplement tailoring the SotC SRD to apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic campaigns, is currently in the planning stage and is intended to include ideas and rules for campaigns of this sort.

PULP ZOMBIES

An interesting twist would be to set a zombie survival adventure in a historic time period. The excavation of an tomb could release an ancient curse or a mystical text is recited in, shall we say, an *unfortunate* manner. If you, the GM, wishes to add colonialist themes to your campaign, then a tribal wise man/woman can be behind the attacks. This shaman, priest or magician can be responding to incursions onto tribal lands, genocidal actions by the colonising power or some other, real or imagined, threat or insult.

Despite the title of this section, the grim, gritty and pessimistic tone of most zombie survival fiction isn't a good fit with the optimism of the pulps. However, *Shaun of the Dead* played the genre for laughs and so could you (I'm currently imagining an excruciatingly British group of PCs defending a remote fort during the days of the Raj – think *Carry On Up The Kyber* meets *Zulu*, only with zombies[2]). If you're setting your campaign during the Victorian period, then you might find *Brass, Blood and Steam* useful. Also by UKG Publishing, this is a source-book for running steampunk campaigns.

ZOMBIES - IN SPACE!

The walking dead – or a reasonable facsimile – make interesting protagonists for a science fiction campaign.

2 *"Don't throw. Bloody brains. At me."*

Perhaps a distress signal is picked up by a freighter or contact has been lost with a remote colony or research station. Simply replace the "xenomorph" of the Aliens series with a disease or alien organism that has taken over the colonists/scientists or reanimated their corpses.

The level of technology in the average science fiction universe will give the PCs an advantage, but not an insurmountable one. For example, it would be difficult for a zombie to chew through a spacesuit without making the suits unrealistically fragile. However, a sufficiently large mob could take down and – eventually – disable a suit of powered armour even if they are unable to penetrate it.

Space ships and space stations have areas that are designed to be sealed in the event of leaks or meteor impacts. The PCs will need to be discouraged from simply locking themselves in and waiting for rescue. The movie *Aliens* shows two ways to to this: one is to place something important outside of the sealed area. This can be resources (food, oxygen, water, medical supplies) or equipment (an emergency beacon that needs to be activated or a malfunctioning reactor that must be shut down before it becomes a radioactive cloud the size of Nebraska). The other is to give the zombies a way in that the PCs have missed – something that's not on the blueprints or a bulkhead door that's been jammed open.

CLATTO VERATA NECKTIE?

An ancient curse laid by an evil necromancer. A

mysterious artifact, unwisely treated. An evil force imprisoned in a hidden tomb and released by incautious and incredulous archaeologists. Either way, the local area or even the whole world is now hip-deep in the unquiet dead. This type of campaign often works best if the PCs are in some way responsible for the plague or at least have a duty to end it.

If the cause of the plague is magical in nature, then it follows that it can be solved in the same way. The campaign will be focused around finding the correct ritual and the necessary components. Religious faith might repel or even destroy zombies created through occult methods. This can be represented by an aspect on the zombie that can be tagged or compelled by PCs with religious aspects (who will soon start running out of fate points if they rely solely on their faith – this represents the fatigue caused by exerting their will in this fashion). If your campaign features magic, then you might find some use for extended rules for the Mysteries skill in *Thousand-Faced Heroes* (also by UKG Publishing).

TAMPERING WITH NATURE

In some campaigns, the plague can be the result of scientific experimentation. Either the experiment has gone wrong or the creators have lost control of the results. A typical adventure of this sort will have the PCs being part of the group sent in to investigate why contact has been lost with the laboratory or base. If one of the PC also is (secretly?) at least partially responsible for the experiments then it will tie them closer to the plot and provide entertaining inter-party conflict. The plague will need an internally consistent (pseudo-)scientific explanation, but (if you're brave) you can save time by letting the players fill in the details with carefully controlled declarations.

LITTLE GREEN ZOMBIES

Who knows what else is up there? Outer space isn't quite as mysterious as when the original *Plan 9 From Outer Space* was released, but blaming the plague on space aliens is still an option. A campaign with an extraterrestrial origin campaign offers more options for infection and motivation than the traditional bite and feed. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Ghosts of Mars*, and even the classic Heinlein story *The Puppet Masters* are all feature zombie variants (if you're to young to

have been raised on Heinlein then his antagonists are basically the brain slugs from *Futurama* except they attach themselves to the small of your back). You can go wild with transmission mechanisms, methods of detection, motivation and cures. If you do your job right, your players might not even realise it's a zombie story until you order the after-game pizza.

NOBODY KNOWS...

A mystery is much, much scarier than a known threat. An outbreak with no known cause and (thus), no known cure might seem a cop-out by a lazy GM, but the best horror is based on the fear of the unknown. Experience has shown that a zombie game where the cause is unknown or only revealed towards the end of the campaign (after much effort on the part of the PCs) has a different feel to one where the mystery is revealed "up front". It's often more effective.

"IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER."

Does the plague have a single point of origin or are the dead returning to life all over the world? If infection can be isolated and controlled then there's a possibility that it can be eliminated – the PCs can win. A global epidemic (or a localised epidemic that spreads too fast to contain) means the end of civilisation as we know it – the PCs can only "win" by surviving. The second option will result in a more traditional zombie survival campaign, but the first can make a very intense pick-up or convention game if the players know that they'll doom humanity if their PCs fail.

ETHICS? IS THAT THE COUNTY NEXT TO SUSSEX?

There are some player groups that will just want to shoot lots and lots of walking dead, unencumbered by moral considerations – and that's perfectly fine. You need three ingredients for a guilt-free zombie massacre: the zombies must be verifiably dead (no pulse, no respiration, no brain activity), the condition must be irreversible and there must be no way of halting the transformation once a victim has been exposed. If any of these conditions are absent, then the morality of simply exterminating the infected becomes murky. If this disease is curable, shouldn't these humans be restrained instead?

Quite obviously, treating zombies as if they are still human is physically dangerous, but only sociopaths can kill another person (or something that was once a person) without suffering psychological damage. Optional rules for handling insanity and post-traumatic stress can be found on page 20.

CANNIBALISM

Cannibalism is a near-universal theme in the zombie genre. Sometimes it can be the cause (the Wendigo myth, the Lovecraft story *The Rats in the Walls*), more frequently a hunger for living, human, flesh is one of the symptoms. Part of the reason that we find zombies so horrific is because they are cannibals (at least in the classic re-tellings of the myth).

If, as a GM, you decide to make your zombies cannibals, there are additional considerations. Do they get sustenance from the flesh or is it just a compulsion? Are there particular organs or interest ("BRAAAINS") and what is it about these organs? A need for liver could indicate vitamin deficiency, braaains contain several glands that produce hormones and enzymes needed for existence, bone marrow is rich in precursor stem cells, and, in many cultures, the soul is stored in the heart. Incidentally, the human skull is stronger than human teeth – a brain-seeking zombie will need some sort of tool to extract the organ (or they could just bash it open on a sufficiently hard surface).

SMOOTH ON THE OUTSIDE, CRUNCHY ON THE INSIDE – ZOMBIE ARMADILLOS!

In most fictional treatments of the zombie myth, only humans are vulnerable to whatever is causing the outbreak. There are two good reasons for this. Firstly, if any creature – even any mammal – can become undead then the campaign will quickly descend into farce ("zombie badgers", anyone?). Secondly, it's hard enough to keep zombie humans out of a compound, but if the PCs also have to repel birds and vermin then their job becomes impossible.

An exception can be made for campaigns where the outbreak is a deliberate creation – perhaps that of a necromancer. In this case, giving him or her a zombified pet or a coach pulled by skeletal horses could be completely appropriate.

TIMELINE TO THE APOCALYPSE

This section examines what might happen to society during a outbreak of the zombie plague by dividing a potential campaign into a timeline with eight sections. Each section estimates how long it might last and outlines what the PCs might experience during this time.

Pre-outbreak (optional)

If the cause is undefined or the PCs are not a factor in it, this section might not be part of campaign. If used, it will last until the event that triggers the zombie outbreak. It's intended to bring the PCs together, giving them common cause and goals. They might personally witness the trigger for the uprising or gain clues as to how to control or halt it. If the GM is feeling particularly cruel, they might cause it – accidentally or by failing to act. A word of warning: experienced players can spot a railroad a mile off and might be entertained by the prospect of de-railing your campaign.

The Gathering Storm

This is the period between the start of the outbreak and when it becomes widely known. During this time the PCs become aware that something is wrong, either gradually (due to news reports, rumours and escalating terror alerts) or immediately (e.g. if they've just shot someone and they won't stay down).

If the outbreak is localised they the PCs should be in or close to the zone of infection – otherwise they won't notice anything is wrong (obviously, if the outbreak is global then this doesn't matter).

During a disaster, the first priority of any normal human is to ensure that their friends and loved ones are safe. This means that if the PCs don't already know each other, then they will split up at the first opportunity and try to get home. This should be avoided unless you have a burning desire to simultaneously run four or five different adventures. The (non-zombie) movie *Cloverfield* shows one way to keep them together – the characters already know each other and receive a call from a trapped friend who they attempt to rescue. Another way is to have them part of the same military, paramilitary or pseudo-military unit: fire crew, police riot squad, National Guard, emergency room staff,

street gang (but – other than the last – these are the sorts of groups that will take heavy casualties during the next two sections).

The length of this section depends on the incubation period of the infection or how long it takes for one zombie to make another. The faster this process takes, the shorter this section will be. Assuming a Romero scenario where dead humans rise within a matter of minutes and infected humans sicken, die and Rise within a couple of dozen hours, this section will last between twenty-four and ninety-six hours.

Survival

Society begins to collapse. No-one knows exactly what's going on or what's causing the attacks, but civilisation is the thinnest of veneers and too many people are waiting for the slightest breakdown in law and order. For PCs living in large towns or cities, this will manifest as widespread rioting and looting, exacerbated by some of the "rioters" being zombies.

Emergency services will be overwhelmed. Police will take heavy casualties as tactics designed against rioters (tear gas, wedge baton charges, "kettling", mounted charges) will be worse than useless against zombies. Paramedics and ER workers will be attacked by any patients that die (and there are only a limited number of hard restraints in any given emergency room). PCs in the emergency services can use fate points to mitigate the worst of these attacks – their colleagues will not have this option.

During this period, smart players will find an in-character excuse for realising what is going on and beginning the process of collecting survival equipment. Let them, but be aware that other people will have the same idea and the authorities take a very, very dim view of looting at the best of times.

Containment

In this phase, the authorities (and the PCs) will have at least some idea of what they are now facing and will

begin attempts at fighting back. Government officials will be moved to secure locations, martial law declared and refugee centres or aid stations established.

If the plague is localised around a particular point of origin, the authorities will probably try sterilising the area with conventional or even nuclear weapons. Obviously, the PCs should get warning of this and should have the opportunity to escape (unless you like ending a campaign with "bombs fall – everybody dies").

If it is possible someone (like the PCs) can discover the origin of the outbreak and a way to cure it then the campaign can be concluded in this section. If not, the military will slowly begin to lose.

Hospitals and aid stations will fall first – all it takes is one person inside a perimeter to successfully conceal an infection. The concentration of the living will only attract the dead. In many types of campaign, a zombie will be motivated by their last, driving desire – to get to safety.

The military will be faced by slow attrition and increasingly limited ammunition. The civilian population will be caught between the zombies and the military. Within days, cities would be empty of food (unless the searcher is a zombie). All exit roads will be blocked by massive traffic jams, bridges and tunnels blocked. Suburban areas are will be better off, due to lower density of population. Looting will become commonplace, as will crimes of violence.

Communications grids will become jammed up with emergency calls. At this point, the Emergency Broadcast Service (or equivalent) will kick in and the government will seize control of the phone network and airwaves. Civilian access to land-line and the mobile phone network will be restricted. Dial-up and mobile Internet will end at the same time, but DSL and cable-internet will continue for as long as the emergency generator hold out. Despite its distributed nature, sites will gradually drop off of the Web as the Net fragments. After a few days, the electrical grids will begin to collapse due to lack of personnel staffing the power stations and damage to the grid itself.

Depending on the level of military preparedness and the speed the infection can spread, this section will last anything up to 3-4 months.

Collapse

This section begins when the ammunition starts to run out. Easily accessed fuel will be also have gone by this time, survivors having drained the tanks of the vehicles that litter the highways leading from the cities. The military and emergency services will have taken massive casualties in vain attempts to hold back the tide of dead flesh.

The cities will be full of disease. Even if whatever force animates the zombies prevents them from decaying, the streets will still be full of rotting corpses; shops and distribution centres full of spoiled fruit, vegetables and meat. Romero zombies don't care if they're carrying cholera, typhoid or worse.

Villages and smaller towns would be empty of life – sometimes even of zombies – with no hint of what happened to the population. The survivors might be holed up nearby or their (supposedly) secure location might have been overrun. If you're fleeing, then these ghost towns will be a place to quickly refit and re-gas your vehicles and find petrol/diesel, food or even ammunition that has not already been scavenged.

Three months into the apocalypse, the easily accessible food and water will have all been used. This means that a safe haven will need more than a strong wall or well-barricaded windows and doors. Survivors will need to learn how to grow food and sterilise water.

Law and order, even conventional morality, will be thing of a past. I'm not going to dwell on the implications of this because a much better treatment has been done in the *Year of the Zombie* line of source books (also by UKG Publishing), but if you want an outline, think of the worst things that happened in Bosnia, Rwanda or in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Democracy will have vanished at around the same time. Smaller refuges will be dictatorships ruled by the strongest and his (usually his) cronies; larger ones will be more feudal in nature. There might be some pseudo-democratic elements (such as committees or votes), but they will be largely a sham.

Stability

By the end of the first year, Darwinian forces will have eliminated the least fit of the survivors and cruel,

naked chance will have taken much of the rest. At this point in a Romero scenario there will be a minimum of ten thousand zombies for each living human.

Modern physical infrastructure (roads, bridges, buildings, sewers, dams) undergoes a constant process of inspection and maintenance. With this gone, they will begin to degrade – any damage taken during the early stages of the apocalypse will only make things worse.

Those vehicles blocking the exits to the cities? Gasoline vaporises in hot weather and the slightest spark (lightning?) or even an exceptionally hot day can cause a leaky tank to spontaneously detonate and set off a chain reaction. There's no Fire Service any more.

Despite the difficulty and dangers, the cities are still the best source for the equipment and supplies your PCs need to create their brave, new world. Sessions will be based around locating potential sources (malls, former military bases, distribution centres) and getting in and out without attracting too much attention from the living dead.

The PCs won't be the only survivors. All wars have their root cause in competition for resources and not all refuges will be the benevolent safe havens that the PCs will (hopefully) have created. Defences built against zombies will need to be re-built to protect against living humans – by this stage, the humans that are the real threat. Zombies are just a particularly deadly environment hazard.

Endgame

How do you end a campaign like this? Once the PCs have a secure base and learnt how to grow food, sterilise water and have cleared the competition from the local area, then things can turn into a soap opera (abet a grim and gritty one).

Whatever started the apocalypse will be the key to ending it. If the PCs can find the source in some concealed black-ops lab or an incautiously-read book in a remote cabin then they can have a chance to stop it. Unless preserved in some way dead bodies will rot (even the walking dead) and zombies that are still alive in some way will starve (think *28 Days Later*).

In the mean time, society will change; new customs will emerge. In a Romero scenario, the infection is transmitted by biting. Kissing might be seen as aping this and become taboo. Concealing an infection can doom a whole community, so stripping to underwear (or further) would be expected for anyone re-entering a settlement. Close-knit communities usually have a strong nudity taboo, but in a Romero apocalypse this will be an expensive luxury.

RULES

This is the meat of this book, a series of optional additions to the SotC SRD that allow the GM to customise it to a zombie survival campaign.

STUNT ASPECTS

As it sounds, a stunt aspect adds an aspect to a stunt. In a Souls and Brain campaign, stunt aspects are usually used by NPCs, but might be appropriate for the stunts of (e.g.) an Experiment (see page 14. For example: a particular type of zombie might have the ability to spit acid. This would be written on their character sheet as "Natural Ranged Weapons (acidic spit)". When this stunt is in use that can be tagged or compelled as normal. For example, a compel could have a missed acidic globule weaken a catwalk, putting at risk of collapse or the player of the character can tag the aspect to dissolve a lock. Certain new stunts (see the New and Modified Stunts section on page 17) have optional or obligatory stunt aspects. Existing stunts (either from the SotC SRD or another source) can have stunt aspects added to them with the GM's approval.

REDUCING THE SKILL PYRAMID

As described in section 1.2 of the SotC SRD, pulp heroes push at the boundaries of what "normal" people are capable of doing. The skill pyramid (see section 2.12 of the SotC SRD) for a character designed under the SotC SRD peaks at Superb. There are exceptions, but most zombie campaigns will feature normal people in extraordinary circumstances and their character sheets should reflect this.

Despite what section 1.2 of the SotC SRD says, most people are Good at the things that they do for a living. Characters that reflect ordinary human beings should have a skill pyramid that peaks at Good, with one skill at Good, two skills at Fair and three skills at Average.

They should also have three stunts, six aspects and begin the session with six fate points. This works well with Dead by Dawn or Extended Survival games (see page 6). For an exceptionally low-powered campaign, you can further reduce the number of stunts, or even remove them entirely.

More experienced or highly trained characters (such as elite soldiers) should have a skill pyramid that peaks at Great, with one skill at Great, two skills at Good, three skills at Fair and four skills at Average. They should also have four stunts, eight aspects and begin the session with eight fate points. This works well with (Para)-Military or Investigation adventures (see page 6).

NAMED AND UNNAMED NPCS

As a GM, sometimes you need your cannon fodder to be less disposable than a minion. The SotC SRD is designed for the violence level of the pulps, where a bad guy would usually surrender (offering a concession – see section 4.3.5 of the SotC SRD) long before they're actually killed. In zombie survival campaigns, the players need the ability to put down a zombie with (e.g.) a single, well-aimed head-shot.

Unnamed NPCs are those that are obviously unimportant to the overall plot of the game because the GM hasn't bothered giving them a proper name or back story. An unnamed NPC has no consequences and is taken out as soon as they take a hit for which they don't have a stress box.[3]

OPTIONAL CHARACTER GENERATION PROCESS

The standard character generation process in the SotC SRD is tied pretty strongly to the default setting and doesn't seem very appropriate for zombie survival campaign. Fast Character Creation is highly appropriate for this genre (particularly a one-off Dead by Dawn campaign), but, if you won't want to use it, here are some guidelines:

Character ideas

Some of the character ideas in SotC can be used

3 The concept of Named and Unnamed NPCs comes from the excellent *Feng Shui* RPG originally by Daedalus Entertainment and now published by Atlas Games

without modification, but most zombie campaigns are set in the present day or near future and, for example, there are very few Two-Fisted Pilots nowadays (though, if the the campaign is set in a remote area, someone has to transport the rest of the party). The Jungle Lord or Primitive/Foreigner will only work in very specific types of story, the Man of Mystery will work best in stories with an occult theme and the Gadget Guy or Science Hero is inappropriate if the character's are supposed to be normal human beings.

Here are a few other ideas for characters for a zombie survival story:

Civilian

An ordinary Joe or Jane, stuck in the middle of an extraordinary situation. In a zombie survival movie, the civilian is the everyman/woman that the audience can identify with quite easily. In a game, playing someone a normal person can make a refreshing change after a campaign filled with high-powered characters. This character type works best when the skill ladder (see page 12) peaks at Good

What are you doing: Surviving – and trying to get home to your friends and loved ones.

Cop

In many zombie survival stories, the police represent the authorities – sceptical in the initial phase and ineffectual once the threat becomes too apparent to conceal. If a PC dies early in the game, a cop makes a good replacement. In an ideal world, the role and duty of a police officer is to protect and serve, but

in reality this slogan is often more of an aspiration. Protecting the community becomes impossible if the authorities fail to contain the zombie plague (see page 10) and how do you "serve" a group of survivors who are looking to you for leadership?

As an alternative (and perhaps more interesting), the character can be a corrupt, dirty cop and the zombie plague gives him or her a shot at redemption.

What are *you* doing: Trying your best "to protect and serve", maintaining your integrity in the face of unimaginable horror.

Criminal

You're not the "gentleman criminal" of fiction or the SotC SRD – you're the real deal. A life spent on the wrong side of the law has given you skills, experience and – most importantly - attitude that puts you a step ahead of a civilian when surviving the Uprising. On the downside, you might be more impulsive, a drug addict or lack the social skills and/or education that a blue or white collar worker would have.

The skills (and attitude) of gangsters, gang-bangers and drug dealers will be obvious to the rest of a party, but a more subtle criminal might appear as "just" a civilian until an opportunity (such as a locked door) forces you to reveal your past.

What are *you* doing: Surviving – but the zombie uprising offers you an opportunity to escape from your past or even search for redemption.

Experiment

This concept fits best in campaigns where the source of the infection is scientific in nature (see page 8), but could still work in alien or occult zombie campaigns. The zombie plague is a result of experiments that have either gone wrong or where an attempt to contain the results has failed. You're a test subject, modified as part of the experiments that created the infection – voluntarily or otherwise. The experimentation has left you ... different. Alternatively, the character has been infected by the zombies, somehow survived, but has been left changed by the experience.

Your senses or physical attributes (strength, reflexes, endurance, etc.) might have been enhanced – this would be represented by aspects or stunts. If there

is a some sort of zombie hive-mind, perhaps you can hear it whispering in the back of your head, telling you just how good it feels to rip out someone's throat or feast on their brains (Zombie Hive-mind would make a great aspect – it can be invoked to detect nearby threats or compelled to represent the character coming closer and closer to losing control).

What are *you* doing: Finding out what you've become and how you fit into the mysterious cause of the zombie infection.

Soldier

Every mysterious government installation needs guards – who will always be the last to know what's going on. Alternatively, the Governor could call in the National Guard to deal with the "drug-crazed rioters". In the United States, the *Posse Comitatus* Act means that (initially) National Guard rather than Regular forces will be used in an attempt to contain a zombie outbreak, but other countries (in particular the United Kingdom) do not have an equivalent to this law. A soldier is another good choice for a replacement PC if a player loses his/hers early in the game – particularly if the soldier if the last survivor of their unit.

A soldier's military discipline and training make him or her an asset to any group of survivors.

What are *you* doing: Just following orders – until the point where there's no-one left to give them.

Phases

These phases replace the character generation phases found in the SotC SRD. They're completely optional and are intended to get you thinking about your character in terms of aspects. In each phase you should select between one or more aspects.

Phase one – origin

In this phase you decide where your character came from and the events of their youth from around birth to just before they're considered an adult by their society. In this phase you choose one or two aspects related to their family, place of birth, a childhood friend or a significant event from this time.

Where the character grew up and who they grew up with will influence the character's attitude towards

nature, towards science and technology and towards foreigners. Are they cosmopolitan or xenophobic; a Luddite or superstitious? These attitudes might be important enough to reflect as part of an aspect. If the place of origin is famous or an important trading hub then this can become part of an aspect.

Phase two – background

This phase covers your character's teenage years and early adulthood (if they are an adult). If your character completed secondary or tertiary education or undertook professional training then an aspect could reflect this. A first love is always significant and some friendships – or enemies – made at this time can last a lifetime. At this point your character be starting on their initial career – professional relationships and adversaries can be a source of aspects.

While we're on the subject of relationships – has this character ever been in love? Have they been married? How did it work out? Do they have offspring? What's happened to them?

Phase three – uniqueness

All SotC characters are exceptional in some way. In this phase you decide how this unique nature is reflected in their aspects. An aspect should be linked to your character's highest ranked skill, customising or clarifying its use. In addition, aspects can be related to one or more stunts (particularly if they are in a chain of pre-requisites).

Is there something else that makes them special?

Are they the heir to a politically important family or a corporate CEO; famous or infamous for something they didn't actually do, but the media has blown out of all proportion?

Phase four – motivation

This is the phase where you tie your character to the rest of the party or into the campaign. The GM might have a list of allied or protagonist organisations – if your character has an aspect that relates to one of these organisations it will be easier to relate the character to the GM's concept of the plot.

What does the character want? Money? Power? Fame? A successful career? To find or rescue their true love? The character's drives and goals should be reflected in their aspects.

Do the character's already know each other? Are they acquaintances, friends, professional rivals or even enemies? What is it that will get each character in the party to the first scene of the first adventure of the campaign?

Phase five – rounding out the character

If you're still stuck for that last aspect, think about their hobbies, passions, pet peeves or prejudices. If completely clueless, Risus[4] clichés are practically identical to SotC aspects and the Risus Companion has many ways of generating that last #@!% cliché including the "Megaversal Omnigroovy Background Machine", "The Random Bad Thing That Just Happened To My Character Table" and, of course, "The Last #@!% Cliché Table". If you're *still* stuck, then just leave a gap and add it in play.

ZOMBIES

Shamblers and Sprinters

In legend, as well as in the early movies, zombies are slow-moving, shambling creatures and easily evaded. Their danger comes from their relentlessness. Some, more recent, treatments of the subject (see page

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4 Risus™ is S. John Ross' trademark for his Anything RPG. It (and the excellent, but completely optional, Risus Companion) can be found at http://risus.cumberlandgames.com/

5, and following) have the plague not effecting the victim's movement. Even a single zombie of this type is dangerous.

Shamblers cannot sprint and must take a primary action (not supplemental) to move between zones (see section 4.3.4 of the SotC SRD). As the name suggests, sprinters can move between zones as a supplemental action and may perform primary sprint actions (again as described in section 4.3.4 of the SotC SRD). An aspect should describe whether the zombie is a shambler or a sprinter.

Savage living or walking dead

The intelligence of the average zombie and their recollection of their former life will vary from campaign to campaign depending on the type of story you (the GM) are telling. In the typical movie of this sub-genre, the walking dead don't have the intelligence or dexterity to operate a door handle and little or no memories of their life. There are exceptions – the zombies in *Land of the Dead* built a parody of their former society and Big Daddy, their leader, even remembered how to operate an assault rifle.

At the other end of the spectrum there a zombie-analogs that have all the knowledge, skills and memories of their former selves, but either just don't care about who they were or are controlled by some outside force.

It should go without saying, but the skills, aspects and stunts of a particular zombie character or NPC should reflect their memories and skills. Mindless drones should lose all the skills and stunts from their former character and only retain aspects that represent physical appearance ("Big As A House", "Scrawny Little Geek"). Those that retain some memories should lose all stunts, at least two ranks from all non-physical skills and any aspects that don't represent physical appearance should be prefixed with former (e.g. "Former Captain Of The Hockey Team", "Former Housewife And Mother"). Characters with all their memories gain additional aspects representing their new nature (e.g. "Alien Hive Mind") and lose any that are no longer appropriate ("Salt Of The Earth", "Wouldn't Hurt A Fly").

"Boom – headshot!"

A very important decision for the GM to make, when designing the campaign, is how the zombies can be killed. This section details the "classics" and the rules that cover each method of dispatch.

Decapitation or destruction of the brain will kill just about anything and is the classic method of dispatching a "Romero zombie". Other possible weak spots include the heart or spine; some are particularly vulnerable to fire, blessed objects or certain types of chemicals. If a zombie has been animated by magic, there might be markings or sigils on their body – destroying these markings will break the spell. *Jiang Shi* (see page 4) are either destroyed or put to sleep (sources vary) by attaching a piece of paper with a spell or prayer written on it to their forehead (requires a maneuver, see section 4.3.4 of the SotC SRD).

Some zombies have no specific method of destruction – anything that can harm a living human can harm the dead (there are no specific rules for this). Others have no form of weakness and must be utterly destroyed – amputated limbs will squirm around on their own. These zombies have three consequences (as normal, see section 4.3.5 of the SotC SRD), will offer no concessions and each moderate or severe consequence will create an Average quality minion (see section 4.3.6 of the SotC SRD) as a limb or other extremity continues to function after being is severed

The method or methods used to dispatch a particular zombie should be described using an aspect; for example: "Only The Head", "Erase The Sigil" or "Complete Destruction". Once the players learn to tag this aspect, unnamed zombie NPCs (see page 13) should be quite easy to take out by competent PCs.

Spreading the plague

An equally important decision is what causes a person to become a zombie. The "Romero zombie" can only infect others using its bite, causing a infection, fever, coma and finally death and reanimation as a zombie, all over the course of around a day. To give the PCs a fighting chance (and to add some more drama), this will only occur as a result of a concession or a severe consequence during hand-to-hand combat with a zombie (a kind GM may allow a fate point to be spent to avoid infection).

The infection may be even more contagious – contact with any bodily fluid may be enough or the "zombie" may spread infection by planting eggs, injecting with a serum or performing brain surgery using nanotechnology. In this case, infection will occur as concession or a moderate consequence during hand-to-hand combat with a zombie (again, a fate point to be spent to avoid infection).

Physical contact with a zombie isn't the only way to make new walking corpses. All dead bodies may be coming back to life (as in *Night of the Living Dead*), or it may require some sort of ritual or operation in order to reanimate a corpse (performed by other zombies or by their controller).

MODIFIED CHASE RULES

In zombie survival movies, the characters spend much of their time either running away from or trying to barricade against a mob of zombies (where a "mob" is defined as "more than they can fight"). This section contains modifications to the chase rules in section 8.3.8 of the SotC SRD, to simulate a group of PCs fleeing from a mob of zombies.

A mob of zombies is treated as a single character with its own stress track. Each exchange, the PCs make a choice of action. If it's simply fleeing, they roll the lowest Athletics of the group against a difficulty that represents their choice of route. If they fail, the character with the lowest Athletics takes Health stress equal to the number of shifts the character missed the difficult by.

Alternatively, another character can choose to make a roll. They can assist a slower character (making the Athletics roll for them), use a burst of covering fire to slow down the mob (Guns), build an improvised barricade (Engineering), jimmy open a door before jamming it shut behind them (Burglary), lead the mob in a different direction before making a quick fade (Stealth) or anything else that the GM will let them get away with. The PC picks a difficulty and rolls against it; if they fail, they take stress equal to the number of shifts the character missed the difficult by. The stress is almost always physical, but can be mental if (for example) the PCs see the mob gaining inexorably on them.

Next, the mob makes an Athletics check against the same difficulty. If the mob fails, it takes stress equal to the number of shifts that the mob missed the difficulty by. If they succeed, the mob inflicts stress on the character that set the difficulty equal to the number of shifts the mob succeeded by.

Consequences will reflect the roll caused the stress. A mob can become confused, dispersed – even set on fire – and, if taken out, the PCs will either have lost them, have barricaded themselves into an apparently safe location or even have inflicted sufficient damage on the mob that they are no longer a threat (this last is unlikely without access to military weapons). Depending on how the infection is spread, consequences for the PCs can include infection if zombie has caught up with them or attacked from ambush (see page 16).

NEW AND MODIFIED SKILLS

Certain skills are modified for the modern age; others have less applicability in a zombie survival campaign. A word of warning: some GMs like to create a zombie campaign with a "bait and switch" approach, telling the PCs to create characters for one type of campaign and then springing zombies upon them. This is fine unless you feel that your players might feel short-changed if they've built a character with (e.g.) Superb Resources and corresponding stunts that are now useless.

Burglary

In a modern-day campaign, Burglary includes overcoming electronic computer systems. It also includes computer hacking, but the roll will be modified by Engineering

Contacting

You might think that this skill would be useless in a campaign where potential contacts will be dead or zombified, but you'd be wrong. A PC with the Contacting skill would still know where his or her former contacts, lived, worked and stored their equipment. Knowing that the guy down the street is a survivalist with a basement full of supplies or where the diesel storage tanks are in the local marshalling yard could make the difference between life and death in a apocalyptic situation.

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Engineering

This skill is unchanged, but includes computer programming. As described above, it also modifies Burglary when bypassing software security systems.

Leadership

For a character with aspects that represent military training, this skill also covers strategy and tactics. This is used in an almost identical manner to casing (see section 5.6.1 of the SotC SRD). When performing reconnaissance or planning an upcoming conflict, the player can declare minor details or attempt to place aspects on the target(s). The player then makes a roll against a difficulty determined by the GM. If they succeed then the fact is true and an aspect has been added to the relevant scene, location or character(s). As always, the first +2 is free and subsequent tagging costs a fate point.

Strategy and tactics doesn't have to be restricted to military matters. A lawyer can use Leadership in the same way when planning a court case or a corporate takeover.

Mysteries

In some zombie campaigns, this skill will be unavailable – particularly those where the supernatural doesn't exist and the zombies have a purely scientific origin. In others, the plague has an occult origin and the Mysteries skill will be central. The Turn Undead stunt (see page 20) is one tool available to the PCs and the GM can design other aspects, stunts and uses of the Mysteries skill appropriate to their campaign. Psychic combat (see below) is one such concept.

Psychic Combat

In some campaigns, where the zombies have an occult origin, ghosts or other spirits can take centre stage. Combat featuring unquiet spirits or astral projections (called "psychic combat" in this section) requires more detailed rules than are presented by the SotC SRD.

The Voices from Beyond stunt (section 6.20.4 of the SotC SRD) is a pre-requisite for psychic combat. An attacker will roll Mysteries to inflict stress on the Composure stress track; the defender will defend with Resolve.

If the PCs investigate before this conflict may uncover aspects of their opponent's character that they can tag during combat. The use of Academics to pore over dusty volumes in an attempt to find (e.g.) the source of a curse is obvious, but other skills are useful. Engineering or Art checks might find unusual architectural features; Art can be used to infer the occult history of a painting, sculpture or other artefact. If the GM has decided that there are scientific aspects to spiritualism, then Science rolls (and appropriate equipment) can be used analyse any manifestations. As always, any physical clues can be uncovered with Investigation. With the GM's approval, all of these skills can be complemented by Mysteries.

Resources

A few days into a zombie apocalypse there are no shops still open and (consequently) currency is only useful for kindling or toilet paper. Very few consumer goods accumulated before the dead walk the earth will have any purpose once the power goes out. Zombie-proofing isn't usually a priority when constructing a workspace. These factors combine to make the Resources skill and associated stunts of little use in a zombie apocalypse campaign. Possible exceptions are the stunts in the Headquarters chain (see section 6.24.2.). A kind GM may rule that Headquarters/

Lair/Stately Pleasure Dome with Utmost Secrecy and/or Extensive Security is (pretty much) zombie-proof (assuming that the PCs can get to it).

NEW AND MODIFIED STUNTS

The following stunts are appropriate for a zombie survival campaign, at the GM's discretion.

Natural Melee Weapons (Fists/Weapons)

The character has teeth, claws, tentacles or other pointy implements of destruction built into his, her or its body, making them impossible to disarm without major surgery. These weapons are operated using either the Fists or Weapons skill (decide when the stunt is picked). This stunt should have stunt aspects; note this on the character sheet as (for example) Natural Melee Weapons (cat-like claws – use Fists) or Natural Melee Weapons (razor-sharp beak – use Weapons).

Natural Ranged Weapons (Guns)

The character has some sort of ranged attack "built-in" to his or her body. This can be fire breath, an assault rifle for a leg or something else. The Guns skill is used to attack with this ability. A stunt aspect should be taken as part of this stunt.

Military Mind (Leadership)

You have had extensive training in military strategy and tactics. You gain +2 to Leadership checks during reconnaissance or while planning an attack (as described on page 18).

Military Genius (Leadership)

Requires Military Mind and one other applicable Leadership, Resolve, Guns, Intimidation, Endurance, Contacting or Academics stunt

When performing reconnaissance or planning an attack (as described on page 18) a player normally only reveals or declares one aspect about the location or opponents, in advance. With this stunt, however, if the character gains spin on his roll, he may reveal or declare one or more additional aspects (one additional aspect at 3 shifts, two at 5 shifts, or three at 7 or more shifts). Further, regardless of spin, if the player is

using the declare method with this stunt, he may save off from making his declarations until he's already in the middle of making the combat – in essence, retroactively introducing elements he'd "already planned for". Only one such retroactive declaration may be made per scene, but (except for truly epic battles), a combat rarely lasts only one scene.

Alternately, the character may trade in one of his "retroactive" aspect picks in order to declare up to three non-aspect-based lesser details about the scene. This may be done in addition to making an aspect pick for the scene.

Dynamic Aspects (Science)

The character can transform between two forms, has two personalities or can change their nature in some other way. They have two sets of aspects and can switch between the two at any point by invoking an aspect for effect and spending a fate point. The lists will have at least some overlap – one or more aspects should cover the two lists, the differences between them and the trigger (if any) that causes the character to switch between the two sets of aspects.

Dynamic Form (Science)

Requires Dynamic Aspects.

In some legends, the unquiet dead have the ability to change their appearance. This stunt is a more extreme version of Dynamic Aspects where the character can completely alter their form. As well as two lists of aspects, the character has two lists of skills and two lists of stunts (both lists must include Dynamic Form and Dynamic Aspects). As with Dynamic Aspects, the character can switch between the two sets of lists by invoking an aspect for effect and spending a fate point.

Parapsychology (Science)

Some call it mysticism, but you call it science. The character can use Science to modify all Mysteries rolls and can use it instead of Mysteries when performing Mesmerism (see section 8.3.19 of the SotC SRD) or when Artificing (see section 5.20.5). The Workshop of a character with this stunt will function for them as an Arcane Workshop of the same level and the Library of this character will also function for them as an Arcane

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Library. This means, for example, that a character with a Resources of Great and the Parapsychology stunt, who selects Workshop as their workspace (see section 5.24.3 of the SotC SRD) will have a Fair Workshop (Great-2) that also functions for them as an Arcane Workshop.

Turn Undead (Mysteries)

In a campaign where the undead have a mystical origin, you've been blessed by your God, Goddess or some other Higher Power. By brandishing your holy symbol or performing another ritual appropriate to your faith, you can hold the undead at bay, force them to flee or even destroy them. To use this ability, spend a fate point and roll Mysteries against a difficulty set by the GM. For each shift you can cause one zombie to flee for the rest of the scene or hold two zombies at bay (unable to approach your character), for as long as you maintain concentration. In addition, if you gain spin and succeed on an appropriate attack roll you can lay zombies to rest instead of having them flee. This stunt will usually require aspects and your character will normally also have aspects detailing the relationship with the power that gives him or her their power.

INSANITY AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

The SotC SRD already has rules for these things, cunningly disguised as the social combat rules. The GM can assign a difficulty for a particularly horrific event and the characters experiencing it roll Resolve against that difficulty (hereafter known as a "horror check"). Each character that fails this roll takes an amount of Composure stress equal to the difference between the result and the target. Consequences taken as a result of this stress including shrieking in terror, freezing up, fainting or running in terror for a mild consequence, temporary insanities (phobias, catatonia, paranoia) for a moderate consequence or more permanent insanities for a severe consequence. A character taken out as a result of a horrific event has become permanently insane in a manner that makes them no longer suitable for a player character.

The table below shows some sample horrific events and corresponding difficulties for horror checks:

As you'd expect, aspects such as "Hardened

Horrific event	Difficulty
Someone shouting "boo". Sudden darkness.	Mediocre
Direct and immediate threat of violence. Encountering a dead body	Average
Witnessing violence. Encountering a brutally murdered body or the body of a friend or loved one	Fair
Encountering a zombie or other obviously supernatural creature. Witnessing a death. Being the subject of a violent attack	Good
Encountering a zombie that used to be a friend or loved one. Witnessing a horrific death or the death of a loved one. Being attacked by a zombie. Encountering a mob of zombies	Great

Military Vet" can be invoked on these Resolve rolls. Once a particular character has rolled for a horror check during a particular scene, they don't have to make another one unless the difficulty is higher than a previous horror check. Characters who gain spin on a horror check can "pass" their bonus to another character experiencing the same horror by reassuring them (even their stoic presence would be enough).

In extended zombie survival campaigns, the PCs will become hardened to the horrors they see around them; this can be represented by new aspects (see section 9.5.2 of the SotC SRD). In addition, the GM can lower the difficulty for commonly encountered horrors or rule that a simple dead body or random

wandering zombie is no longer enough to trigger a horror check

EXHAUSTION

Mental and physical tiredness is an important factor in zombie stories. Section 4.3.5 of the SotC SRD says that "stress can usually be shaken off once a character has some time to gather himself, between scenes.". Zombie apocalypses do not allow a character time to "gather himself" unless they can get a good nights sleep in a safe and secure environment.

This apparently small change to the rules will have a major impact to the game; stress will rapidly build up in the PCs (particularly if you combine this rule with the "horror checks" from the previous section). Players that are used to the SotC SRD will need time to adjust to their character's new vulnerabilities – particularly if you are using characters built using a skill pyramid that peaks at less then Superb (see page 12).

Kishin '0

BRAINS AND SOULS

THE FUNGI FROM LAMU

A SAMPLE ADVENTURE

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is intended as a campaign introduction, bringing the PCs together and taking them through the first few days of the apocalypse.

The PCs are employees of the Parasol Corporation, a huge multi-national with a shadowy reputation. They're either scientists, computer security experts or employee's of Ze, the Corporation's paramilitary security subsidiary. They should have a skill pyramid that peaks at Great (see page 12), with one skill at Great, two skills at Good, three skills at Fair and four skills at Average. They should also have four stunts, eight aspects and begin the session with eight fate points.

Cordyceps unilateralis is parasitoid fungus that infects ants, consuming non-vital soft tissue before entering the brain of its host. It causes the ant to climb up the stem of a plant and anchor itself with its mandibles before the fungus kills its host. When the fungus is ready to reproduce, its fruiting bodies sprout from the ant's head and explode, releasing the spores of the fungus. Its unusual properties are being investigated by Parasol are being investigated as a new source of drugs.

PLOT OUTLINE

The adventure is divided into four acts and is based on the premise that a Parasol research lab on an island off the coast of African has created a strain of *Cordyceps* capable of infecting human beings. During an attack by pirates, the fungus escaped, infecting staff and pirates alike. The PCs are part of a Parasol security team tasked with taking back the island. In the first the PCs assemble at a Parasol Corporation facility in Lamu, Kenya before being briefed and equipped. In act two, the they fly to the island where they are attacked by the pirates and forced to crash-land. In act three, they secure the crash site and investigate the outbreak. In act four, after fighting off more zombies,

the PCs will discover that the US government has been monitoring the situation (possibly through a PC mole) and is taking decisive action to prevent the outbreak from spreading. The PCs must escape the island before it, the facility and (hopefully) the infection are burnt out by massive amounts of incendiary bombs delivered by the US Navy.

Due the the intense pace of the action, PCs will not automatically have a chance to gather themselves between scenes – this means that their stress tracks will not empty and minor consequences will not be resolved. If a scene gives the PCs an opportunity to take a breather, this will be specified in the description for that scene.

CORDYCEPS ZHONGII

Named after the head of the research team that discovered its unusual properties, Dr. Zhong and her team cross-bred it with a number of fungi that infect rats to see if the chemicals excreted by the new species would have medical potential. Theoretically this should have been completely safe; in nature, each species of the *Cordyceps* genus targets a specific host species so the chances of it infecting humans were minimal. Unfortunately for Dr. Zhong, *C. Zhongii* turned out to be a more insidious parasite of humans than of rats. She was accidentally infected before they realised this, but Parasol have contained worse threats. If it wasn't for the pirate attack it would have been categorised, filed and stored as just another dangerous failure.

The fungus spreads via its spores. These are infectious if inhaled or enter the bloodstream through an open wound. Anti-fungal medications and immune system-boosting drugs can treat the early stages of the disease, but once it has established itself in its victim there is no known cure.

Characters wearing full NBC equipment (like the PCs at the start of the adventure) cannot be infected by the fungus unless they remove it or an appropriate physical consequence penetrates the suit. If they are wearing a gas mask (even a dusk mask will provide some protection) then, again, the GM can rule that any appropriate physical consequence has created an open wound and exposed the character. A character exposed to the fungus resists infection with an Endurance roll (the Developed Immunities stunt given a +2 bonus);

the difficulty of the roll depends on the amount of spores in the area. Even a single spore is enough to cause an infection, so default difficulty for anyone on the island one the victims begin to spore *en mass* is Fair, rising to Good or Great in enclosed spaces and Superb if the character is at "ground zero" when a stage five victim "pops" (see below).

Diagnosis and treatment will not be possible with the equipment that the initial group of PCs are carrying with them, but Brian Harper (see page 35) has the skills and equipment to at least delay its progress.

There are five stages in the disease, as the fungus gradually takes over its host and converts it into a vector for further infection:

1. Once the fungus enters the victim's body, it makes its way to the brain, passing through the blood-brain barrier using a process that is not as yet understood. It takes up residence in regions on the brain that control the higher functions and begins to feed on the tissue there. The victim becomes more impulsive and less moral. In game terms the GM should add an aspect to the character called "Cordyceps Zhongii Infection: Stage One (Poor Impulse Control)" and compel this and any other aspects that represent social or emotional weaknesses. This phase lasts until the victim becomes stressed by taking a physical or social consequence.

2. The fungus continues to feed and grow, ravaging the higher brain functions and causing pain and rage that are controllable only by the strongest painkillers and sedatives. The GM should replace the aspect added in the previous stage with one called "Cordyceps Zhongii Infection: Stage Two (Rage And Pain)". Victims seem to be able to recognise each other and the rage will be directed only against those who are not hosting the fungus. The victim should attempt a Good Endurance check every hour (appropriate treatment and/or the Developed Immunities stunt will give a +2 bonus to the check). If spin is gained on this roll then the victim has shaken it off. They lose the aspect for the infection and permanently gain a new aspect ("Poor Impulse Control") and a +2 bonus on subsequent rolls to avoid Cordyceps Zhongii infection. If they fail three rolls in a row, the infection proceed to the next stage.

3. The fungus spreads further through the head, increasing the pain and rage and starting to affect motor control – victims will begin to shamble in a manner reminiscent of a classic Romero zombie. The aspect from the previous stage should be be replaced with "Cordyceps Zhongii Infection: Stage Three (Rage, Pain, Poor Motor Control)". As with the previous stage, the victim should attempt a Good Endurance check every hour (appropriate treatment and/or the Developed Immunities stunt will give a +2 bonus to the check). Once the infection has progressed to this stage, there is no way to halt it short of the death of the host. If three failed checks are made in a row, then the infection proceeds to the next stage.

4. The fungus continues to manipulate the behaviour of its host, inducing feelings of claustrophobia. The victim will attempt to get outdoors and to as high a position as possible. The aspect from the previous stage should be be replaced with "Cordyceps Zhongii Infection: Stage Four (Rage, Pain, Poor Motor Control, Claustrophobia)". As with the previous stage, the victim should attempt a Good Endurance check every hour (appropriate treatment and/or the Developed Immunities stunt will give a +2 bonus to the check). When the first check is failed then the infection will develop into the final stage.

5. The victim suffers a series of muscle spasms locking them into an upright position and then dies. Over the next ten minutes fungal growths erupt from every orifice on the head and begin to spore with a violent popping sound.

ACT ONE: "WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH ONE OF OUR FACILITIES..."

Scene one: The Call

The PCs are all somewhere in Africa when they receive the call. Parasol has large hub offices in Capetown and Nairobi, Ze (their paramilitary spin-off) do security and counter-terrorism work all over the continent or the character might be on a safari or beach holiday. Either way, narrate a short scene for each character where they receive a mobile phone call from Miranda Mitchell, Head of Global Security (even if they're in the middle of the Serengeti – Parasol can get hold of you anywhere). Miranda tells that they've been reassigned to Special Projects, effective immediately (if they're on holiday, they're told it has been cancelled). If they're in an city, a car is waiting

for them outside, otherwise a Ze helicopter will fly into land while Miranda is still talking to them. They will be taken to the nearest airport before transferring to an executive jet that will take them to a remote airstrip on the coast of Kenya. Night will be falling as they come into land, any character looking out of the window will see a floodlight hive of activity, focused around a pair of ex-Warsaw Pact helicopter gunships that are being fueled and supplied.

On landing, each PC will be ushered into a decaying departure lounge that's been briefly refitted and offered refreshments (this will give the players a chance to introduce their characters to each other and enough NPCs from Ze's Black Ops division to take the total number of characters to twenty). About five minutes after the last arrival, they will be escorted through an aircraft hanger that's been converted onto an operations centre (floodlights, cables everywhere, huge monitor screens and lots and lots of people with Parasol brand iPad-clones). Kalsum Yusah, the regional head of Special Projects give the briefing.

Scene two: The Briefing

"Call me Kalsum" is Egyptian, in his fifties, with salt-and-pepper black hair, a moustache and a BBC World Service accent. After having a PA ensure that the PCs have coffee, etc. and engaging in brief pleasantries about their journey, he'll begin the briefing:

"Just under twelve hours ago our facility on Thanga was attacked by a large group of heavily armed pirates. Contact has been sporadic since then, but it appears that they have overpowered the on-site security team. Satellite overheads and drone footage have shown extensive damage to the laboratory complex and that the pirates are still on site. We need you to do a reconnaissance-in-force of the island and secure it if possible, concentrating on rescuing any survivors and safe-guarding the research."

Players start to get bored part-way through long briefings and they'll probably start asking questions at this point, so you can handle the rest of the briefing in a question and answer format. Kalsum will volunteer the following with little or no prompting:

"There are less than fifty pirates, apparently Somali nationals. Some of you have experience running convoy security, so you'll know what you're dealing with – an ill-trained and ill-disciplined rabble that only

overpowered the security detachment using surprise and force of numbers. This is very embarrassing for Ze."

"They are primarily armed with Kalashnikov's copies and approximately one RPG-7 launcher for every ten men. Intelligence suggests that they expended most of the warheads during the initial conflict. At least two general purpose machine guns and one heavy machine gun have been observed."

"We're initially assumed that the purpose of the raid was hostage-taking for ransom – in which case they would have left before we could assemble a strike team. However, drone and satellite surveillance shows no attempt to leave. Instead the pirates seem to be engaging in apparently purposeless acts of destruction."

"Due to political consideration, would prefer to handle this internally. Backup may become available from SEAL Team Six and the Nimitz carrier group, but only if the mission does not proceed according to the expected scenarios."

"Publicly, it's an agricultural research station, but there is a level four containment laboratory that does medical research. Intelligence suggests that the lab complex has been penetrated, so – just as a precaution – you will be wearing NBC gear. Ebola is one of the diseases that is being researched."

For "security reasons", Kalsum will not give any more information about Parasol's activities on the island. Social conflicts will be useless – Kalsum's life is one big social conflict and he's exceptionally good at it.

Scene three: Equipment

Once the briefing is over, the characters will be escorted to another area of the hanger to be fitted with the equipment that Ze thinks they will need for their mission. All PCs will be issued with an NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical warfare) suit with helmet, body armour, a Heckler and Kock USP pistol and a harness to carry the rest of their equipment. Characters with military training will receive a Ze CQB (Close-Quarter Battle) rifle (a varient of the M4 SOPMOD issued to US Army special forces) and two fragmentation grenades. Characters with medical training will be given a a first aid or battlefield surgeons equipment;

characters with technical or scientific training will also be given appropriate equipment.

Heavier, but squad-level weapons will be available on request; a M203 under-barrel grenade launcher, the AT4 anti-armour rocket or the M-249 SAW machine-gun, for example. Don't be too stingy; if a character decides later on that they have a combat knife, flares or more grenades then let them have them – especially in the early part of the adventure.

The NBC suit provides the aspect Hot, Bulky And Clumsy NBC Protection – it will protect against tear gas, the fungal spores, etc., but is bulky and hot inside. The helmet provides the aspects Night Vision Goggles With Zoom Function while the body armour provides the aspect Body Armour (this can be invoked when making defense rolls in physical conflicts). The Ze CQB rifle has a Laser Sight (an aspect that can be invoked when making maneuvers with the weapon, or even when making attacks against someone in the same or an adjacent zone) and a Sound Suppressor (which can be invoked for effect if the PC wants to reduce the possibility of a firefight alerting everyone in the area).

The rules for explosives are in section 8.4.2 of the SotC SRD. The fragmentation grenades have Fantastic force, area 1 and a complexity of Great, but will not fizzle – treat a fizzle result as no explosion. The specialised grenades fired from an M203 will have a range of three zones and should be treated as a fragmentation grenade. The AT4 has a range of four zones, a Fantastic force and an area of 1 zone. It won't fizzle and can't be disarmed – the quick checks before each individual action represent the rocket's flight time.

Incidentally, Parasol subsidiaries do engage in weapons research (Ze in particular). Experimental weapons that the PC is field testing make great Personal or Universal Gadgets.

ACT TWO: "YOU'RE FLYING ZE AIRLINES"

The helicopters are reconditioned ex-Warsaw pact Mil Mi-17 (NATO reporting name *Hip*). Ze has upgraded the avionics and communications, improved the armour and (for this mission), restored the door guns and rocket pods, but it's still no Apache. If the players ask, PCs with a military background will know that it's practically impervious to small-arms fire

(apart from a lucky shot), but a heavy machine-gun or rocket-propelled grenade will really ruin the pilot's day. A rocket pod is mounted on each "wing" and the door gunners can fire heavy machine-guns mounted just in front of each side door.

If one of the PCs works for Ze as a helicopter pilot, they can and should be piloting one of the helicopters. All the PCs should be in the same helicopter; the Mi-17 has a passenger capacity of thirty, so add NPCs to fill it. The two helicopters will have the call-signs "Striker-One" and "Striker-Two" respectively. The PCs will be in Striker-Two and (collectively) have the call-sign "Striker-Two-Actual" (the security team in Striker-One will have the call-sign "Striker-One-Actual".

Scene one: "In event of a forced landing, bend over, place your head between your legs, and..."

The trip to the island should be uneventful. The players can take the opportunity to have their PCs get to know each other, but any character with military experience is likely to try and get some sleep. It's nearly 2am, local time as the the island comes into sight. Striker-One-Actual and Striker-Two-Actual are ordered to don the helmets of their NBC suits in preparation for landing.

Kalsum Yusah has overall command of the operation and will begin issuing detailed instructions to the pilots and and expecting them to be obeyed as orders. There is a remotely-operated camera in the nose of each gunship, as well as cameras mounted in each PC's helmet. Kalsum can see everything that they can see and is also monitoring communications. PCs making a Good Contacting check will know that Kalsum has no military background or experience; those making a Good Leadership check will be able to detect this inexperience and will also know that (even if he did have the relevant experience), this level of "armchair quarterbacking" is counterproductive and dangerous:

"Striker-Leader to all Strikers. Be reminded that the laboratory complex is a high-dollar value installation. No high explosives are to be used in its vicinity – especially the rockets."

The island is mostly covered in thick, sub-tropical forest, apart from where it has been cleared for the

laboratory buildings (including a helipad), a harbour, two plantations for crop research and unpaved roads between them. There's a large fire in the main laboratory complex, another, smaller fire in the harbour area and sporadic small-arms fire throughout the developed areas of the island:

"Striker-One, I've noticed some unusual activity in the main laboratory complex. Can you do a slow circle while I monitor the feeds. Striker-Two hang back and prepare to offer support."

If they want to see what Kalsum is talking about PCs making an Average Engineering roll can monitor the feed from the remote cameras. The complex has a number of balconies and roof terraces. Each of these has a handful of people – Parasol staff and pirates – in stage five of *Cordyceps* infection standing stock still (the resolution on the camera will not be sufficient for anyone to see any fungal growths). During this time the odd burst of fire will bounce off of the armour of both Striker-One and Striker-Two, but there is no organised resistance. Characters assigned to the door guns can return fire – PCs should make Guns checks against the Fair Athletics of a Pirate (see page 37).

Once the first circle is completed, Kalsum starts to order Striker-One to make another, tighter pass for a closer look.

If any aspects are needed for this scene, they could include: Bone-shaking Vibration and Moonless Night.

Scene two: "Contact Front!"

This scene will begin by an pirate firing a rocket-propelled grenade at Striker-One from concealment in the forest surrounding the laboratory. The pilot of Striker-Two (if a PC) and anyone monitoring the video feeds can make a Good Alertness check to spot the pirate and the distinctive shape of the RPG-7 before he fires. Success means that they aren't surprised for the first exchange of this scene (see sections 5.3 and 5.27.3 of the SotC SRD), but even Alertness stunts will not prevent the PCs from taking action before the grenade is fired.

The grenade will impact Striker-One in its rotor mechanism, severing the blades; the gunship will drop like a rock. If an NPC, the pilot of Striker-Two will reflexively trigger the rocket pods to suppress the

area around the pirate and (hopefully) kill anyone else there with a heavy weapon (if the pilot is a PC you can give them the option or even compel an appropriate aspect). Kalsum will go ballistic if the rocket pods are fired because of the risk of damaging the laboratory complex – the possibility that half of this strike team have just been killed doesn't seem to bother him.

The downing of Striker-One is the trigger for every pirate on the island to begin firing in the general direction of Striker-Two. Possible actions during this combat are as follows:

• a PC piloting Striker-Two will need to evade one rocket-propelled grenade each exchange, defending with Pilot against the Fair Guns of the average pirate. A failure means that the helicopter is struck. Everyone on board will take Health stress equal to the number of shifts on the attack and the helicopter will take a consequence

• A PC pilot or door-gunner can attempt to suppress the pirates on the ground with the machine-guns or rocket pods. Let the players roll Guns and note down the result, but – even through night-vision goggles – the situation is too confused for the PCs too see if they're making any kills

• Kalsum will be shouting out irrational and contradictory orders. A PC monitoring the can temporarily cut his feed (and give the characters a bit of peace) by making a Fair Engineering roll

• Striker-One has crashed in thick forest about a hundred metres away from the clearing around the laboratory complex. Anyone making even a Average Leadership roll will know that having Striker-Two hover over the crash site while the PCs and their allies rappel down to rescue their comrades will be suicide. Striker-Two will have to land somewhere quieter (the helipad or the harbour for example). Striker-Two-Actual can then fight their way to the crash site while Striker-Two provides air cover. Of course this plan won't come to fruition (see below), but the characters can make a start

• If the PCs haven't already started ignoring him, Kalsum will still refuse to contact the Nimitz or SEAL Team Six. However, Striker-Two has its own communications setup. A PC can make a Fair Engineering check to raise Nimitz carrier group and then a PC with an aspect representing a background with US Special Forces will need to invoke it for effect

and then make a Good Contacting check to locate someone they know from their old life. It will take at least a couple of hours for the team to assemble and the legal situation is sketchy without a official request for assistance from Parasol

- If a PC isn't a pilot, door-gunner or otherwise involved in the combat, and their player is getting bored, then an NPC door-gunner can take a stray round to the chest. A PC with medical training can treat the injury or they can take the his place at the machine-gun

At the end of the third exchange, a RPG will hit Striker-Two in the cockpit, forcing it to make an emergency landing. If the pilot is an NPC, you can just roll 4dF behind a screen and rule that that's what happened. If the pilot is a PC, you'll need to be more subtle. If one or more RPGs have already struck the gunship, compel the resulting consequence. If the pilot has been successfully evading ground fire, you can compel an aspect representing bad luck or similar. If that doesn't work, just offer them a fate point. One way or another, Striker-Two needs to crash-land.

Aspects for this scene include: Bone-shaking Vibration, Moonless Night, "Blackhawk Down" Re-enactment Society and Sky Full Of Tracer

Scene three: Brace, brace, brace!

When the RPG hits Striker-Two, all characters on board will need to roll Athletics as a defense against an attack result of Fair – damage is taken against the physical stress track (a PC pilot will roll against a difficult of Great). The NPC co-pilot will be killed and an NPC pilot seriously injured. A PC pilot will know the best course of action on an Average Pilot check; an attempt to make as gentle as landing as possible on the road between the laboratory complex and the harbour. During the landing a burst of machine-gun fire will kill an NPC door-gunner (the intention for all this carnage is to a) ramp up the tension and b) eliminate as many NPC combatants as possible to ensure the PCs are the heroes of the piece).

Treat the crash landing as an attack result of Fantastic which the pilot defends against with Pilot. On a failure, physical stress will be taken by all the (still living) characters in Striker-Two equal to the number of shifts on the attack. The crash will start one fire in the cockpit and another in the cabin. Move straight to the next scene, but remember that the characters have not yet had chance to take a break so stress and consequences will accumulate between scenes.

Aspects for this scene include: Moonless Night, "Blackhawk Down" Re-enactment Society and Brace, Brace, Brace!

Scene four: A Landing You Can Walk Away From

The PCs are now the only active members of Striker-Two-Actual, the other occupants of the cabin are either dead or incapacitated. Thick black smoke will quickly begin fill the cabin and the cockpit – luckily the passengers and crew are in full NBC gear otherwise they would be overcome.

Each exchange, each PC attempting to escape the wreck should state what they are doing to escape. The GM should select an appropriate skill (Might if they are forcing a door open, Athletics if they're attempting to wiggle out of the door-gunner's hatch, Engineering if they are unjamming a lock, etc.) and the player will roll that skill against a difficulty of Fair. If the roll is a success, any shifts should be noted down. PCs in the cabin will need work together to accumulate five shifts, a PC pilot will only need to accumulate two shifts as the cockpit is designed to be easy to escape from in an emergency. If the roll is a failure then the PC will take the difference between the difficulty and the result as stress. This stress will usually be on the Health track (fire, exhaustion, ammunition "cooking off"), but the GM can rule it as mental stress if, for example, the character is claustrophobic or suffers from flashbacks due to a previous helicopter crash).

If any player thinks to ask, there are emergency hammers and similar tools clipped to the cabin wall and within easy reach of the pilot's seat. Due to the smoke and chaos it will take an Good Investigation or Alertness for a PC in the cabin to find these tools; the same check will only be of Average difficulty for a PC pilot. Success adds the aspect "I've Found The Emergency Hammer!" to the scene.

BRAINS AND SOULS

Once the PCs have pulled themselves and any casualties from the wreckage, they'll be able to drag everyone clear just before the remaining rockets in the rocket pods explode. This scene and act will end with the PCs contemplating the flaming wreckage of their only way off the island.

Aspects for this scene include: Moonless Night, "Blackhawk Down" Re-enactment Society, A Landing You Can Walk Away From and Which Way Is Up?

ACT THREE: RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE

In this act, the PCs attempt to rescue their comrades while gradually discovering what's been happening on the island. Kalsum will drip-feed them with information while using them to extract data on the disease from the laboratory mainframe.

Scene one: Now what?

As the PCs are contemplating their next move, Kalsum's voice comes through on the radio[5], demanding a report. After the PCs tell him their situation, Kalsum will simply tell them to stand by. He will be unavailable for the rest of this scene.

Science checks can be used to stabilise any injured NPC survivors (see section 8.3.24 of the SotC SRD). The next step is to get them to (relative) safety. A Fair Leadership, Stealth or Survival will point out the small hill 250 metres away. If the PCs can hold off any pirates that come to investigate the crash, then the walking wounded can use improvised stretchers (Average Engineering or Survival checks to make) to evacuate the immobile casualties to this temporary strong-point.

The injured NPCs will just have made it clear when the first group of pirates (two pirate "Sergeants" and minions – see page 37) arrive to investigate the crash. The pirates will be making plenty of noise (drunken shouting and random firing into the air), so if the PCs have any sort of sentry, they'll be able to set up an ambush (Stealth modified by Leadership or Leadership

5 This happens even if a PC managed to cut off his feed in the previous act. If any of the players ask how Kalsum is managing to communicate with them when the main transmitters would have been on Striker-Two, he's being relayed through a drone that's monitoring the island from high altitude.

modified by Stealth vs. the pirates Average Alertness – the ambush rules are in sections 5.3 and 5.27.3 of the StoC SRD). The pirates seem slightly disoriented and un-coordinated due to infection, but the PCs will have no way to distinguish this from alcohol or drug consumption. Once this combat has been resolved, the PCs have their first opportunity to take stock.

The armed forces of most developed nations have an implicit or explicit policy of never leaving a fallen comrade behind. If necessary, use compels to "encourage" PCs with military background's to decide that they need to search for any survivors at the other crash site. If they need additional encouragement, Kalsum will finally come back into contact and ask for a further report. If the PCs mention the pirate attack (and, if not, why not?), Kalsum will ask them to check the corpses for any "unusual markings". He'll be cagey about what he means by "unusual" and direct the PCs doing the searching to perform a strip search on one pirate corpse, monitoring the search closely though their helmet camera. Once this search has been carried out, Kalsum will agree with any PCs suggesting that they need to make contact with any survivors from Striker-One-Actual before pressing on to the laboratory complex. Neither Kalsum or the PCs have been able to raise any members of Striker-One-Actual on the radio since the crash. Smoke and heat from the crashed Striker-One are clouding the drone's sensors; Kalsum repeatedly describes the situation around the crash site as "confused".

On bright side, the brief "breather" between this scene and the next means that each PC's stress track is now empty and any mild consequences have faded away.

Aspects for this scene include: Moonless Night, "Blackhawk Down" Re-enactment Society and Thick Subtropical Forest

Scene two: A Walk in the Woods

The pirates in scene one used the road from the laboratory complex to the harbour before striking off to get to the crash site. The road is fifty metres away from the crash site – unpaved but levelled and recently gravelled. If the players don't want to use the road, they can find a trail through the jungle on an Average Survival check.

Either way, about half way through their journey

to Striker-One's crash site, the PCs will encounter a horrific scene. A pack of pirates in stage three of the infection have hunted down a group of Parasol employees, hacked them to pieces and are now butchering the corpses, shambling around as they enter stage four of the infection (see page 23). There are two pirates led by an pirate sergeant and his minions (see page 37).

If they detect the PCs, the pirates will attack with machetes and erratically-aimed automatic weapons. However, they aren't paying attention to their surrounding and a party using night-vision will have little difficulty in ambushing them. A PC will notice that there's something funny about the way that the pirates are moving on Good Alertness check – a jerkiness and staggering that goes beyond simple intoxication.

Kalsum will demand that the PCs examine the corpses – pirate and ex-employee alike. The scene is brutal and bizarre enough to shock to shock even the most hardened vet, so each PC should make a horror check with a difficulty of Good (see page 20 on horror checks).

The fungus continues growing after the death of the host; even an Mediocre Investigation check will uncover the fungal growths on the pirates and on one of the laboratory workers. Describe the yellowish growths that are erupting from the ears, eyes and mouths of the pirates. If a PC has a physical consequence that involves their NBC suit being penetrated, compel it, but don't tell them why just yet. As Kalsum asks the PC with the ripped suit to move their helmet camera closer to a particular course for a closer inspection, the growths will burst, spraying that PC with spores. Roll for infection on that PC (and any others that have compromised suits) as described on page 25.

One of the laboratory workers is still clutching a battered lap-top that appears to have been used to fend off a machette. The hard drive is still fine, so it will take an Average Engineering check to extract any data from it and then a Good Engineering check to break the encryption. The most recent file is a "To Anyone Who Finds This..." written by the former owner of the laptop (an administrator) while hiding from the pirates. She describes hiding during the initial stages of the attack and her terror when she hears explosions coming from the secure sections of the laboratory complex. Her colleagues become impulsive and irrational (one of them attempts to rape her), which leads to their detection by the pirates and a group fleeing into the jungle. It ends with her spelling and grammar deteriorating as she complains about a headache.

Once the pirates and victims have been searched, Kalsum orders them to move out. There isn't enough time between scenes for the PCs to take a break and for their stress tracks to empty.

Aspects for this scene include: Moonless Night and Thick Subtropical Forest

Scene three: The Crash Site

In this scene, the PCs will make their way to Striker-One's crash site. They'll discover that the survivors of Striker-One-Actual were quickly overpowered by the pirates. The PCs will, however, meet two uninfected Parasol employees – a scientist and a senior security guard. If any of the PCs have been infected, by this time, they are now likely to be in the second stage of infection and approaching the point where they will become unplayable. This scene will give the player of an infected character the opportunity to retire their current character and begin playing one of these NPCs.

The rest of the journey to the crash site will be uneventful, but Kalsum will insist that the PCs don't have time to take a break. To maintain tension, roll Stealth as the PCs approach the site, but just note down the result and ignore it. The pirates don't have a sentry on the hill overlooking the site, but Average Alertness checks will reveal a handful of pirate corpses who made their way to the highest point in the area while in stage four of the infection before dying and releasing the fungal spores onto the wind. If any of the players ask, a Mediocre Survival check will let them know that the wind is blowing towards the mainland. An Average Science or Academics check will reveal that fungal spores have been known to drift for hundreds of miles on the right kind of wind.

The crash site is a Dantean nightmare. Enraged by the fungus, the pirates have dragged any survivors of Striker-One-Actual and torn them apart before turning on each other. Everyone still alive in the valley is in stage three or four of infection, shambling about and occasionally thrashing and howling at one-another

or discharging their weapons into the air. There are between thirty and forty victims in the area – a mixture of pirates and Parasol employees. If a fight starts, they can be represented by ten pirate "sergeants" (see page 37) and their minions. Hopefully the PCs will take the hint and not try anything.

While the players are working on their next move, ask them to make Alertness checks against Doris Kajinsky's Average Stealth. Doris will immediately introduce herself, use a walkie-talkie to summon Brian from his hiding place and make her report to the ranking officer.

Kalsum will insist on hearing Doris's report. While she's talking to Kalsum, Brian start treating any infected PCs, rolling his Science against the disease's Superb Subtlety. Success gives the PC a +2 bonus on their next Endurance roll to resist the disease. As soon as Kalsum realises that Brian's skills and knowledge of the disease, he'll switch his attention to Brian. He'll demand that all the information that Brian has be uploaded by the PC communication specialist (a Fair Engineering check will be needed as the systems aren't directly compatible and it's a *lot* of data). After a brief scan of the data, Kalsum will ask if it includes the complete sequence of the DNA of *C. Zhongii*. Brian will say it doesn't – it was simply too much data to transfer before he had to flee the laboratory complex. Kalsum's response is simple: *We need that sequence.*

Aspects for this scene include: Moonless Night, Thick Subtropical Forest and Smoking Wreck

Scene four: Raiding the Laboratory Complex

The sequence is stored on a mainframe in a sub-basement of the central laboratory complex. The PCs will have to infiltrate the facility while avoiding the infected. The compound covers around a square kilometre of cleared and (mostly) leveled forest, surrounded by a nine-foot fence topped with barbed wire. Inside are a number of residential and office buildings surrounding the main complex. Have the players roll Burglary or Leadership to "case the joint" or produce an operations plan (see section 5.6.1 of the SotC SRD and page 17), then roll Stealth for each PC, against a difficulty of Good (a PC gaining spin on this roll can pass their bonus to another PC and

appropriate aspects declared as a result of the Burglary or Leadership rolls can be tagged). Take the lowest effort in the party: if this PC succeeded then the party has managed to sneak past the infected roaming the grounds and has reached the central laboratory. If they failed, the party will encounter one adversary from the table below for each shift that they failed by:

- a pack of guard dogs (see page 36)

- a group of infected Parasol employees (two Parasol employees – see page 36 – with the minions stunt)

- three pirates (see page 37) torturing a pair of incapacitated Parasol employees

- two pirate "sergents", plus minions (see page 37)

Once the party has reached the central lab, they have a choice of how to enter it. The stealthy approach would be to covertly open a fire door or a ground floor window without triggering an alarm or attracting attention. This will require a Fair Burglary check – failure will attract the attention of another group from the above list. The alternative is to fight their way through one of the main entrances, past two groups from the above list.

If, at any point, the PCs ask how Kalsum plans to get them off the island, he will tell them that he is in contact with the Pentagon and the Nimitz carrier group (the truth) and SEAL Team Six is being prepped for a hostile evac (a lie, but the PCs will have to roll Empathy against Kalsum's Good Deceit to detect it). It the PCs have previously been in contact with SEAL Team Six (see page 26), their former comrades will now be unavailable.

Aspects for this scene include: Moonless Night and Open Ground.

Scene five: Inside the complex

The central laboratory is a large building and we have a small budget, so there isn't a map. Instead we present a number of locations within the building that you, the GM can put together in any rational order to give the PCs a route through to the mainframe. The PCs have an up-to-date computerised copy of the blueprints, so they have lots of options. If the PCs wish to avoid a particular encounter, plotting a new

route takes half a minute and an appropriate skill check of Average difficulty (usually Engineering to read the blueprints or understand the architecture of the office building, but Burglary or even Guns to blow a big hole in a particular wall are also appropriate – let the players be creative). The time taken to find an alternative route will be modified by the outcome of this skill check as described in sections 8.2 and 8.2.1 of the SotC SRD.

By this time, the PCs should be beginning to run short of ammunition, so add a Running Short On Ammo aspect to each character and compel it whenever is dramatically appropriate.

Each of the locations below has a short description, its position and adjacent locations, a list of possible adversaries and any aspects that cover the location (all locations also have the aspects Flickering Emergency Lighting and This Building Is On Fire). They are arranged in alphabetical order. Where a location specifies a mob of a particular adversary, use the modified chase rules on page 17; a mob of a particular NPC will have the same Athletics and physical stress as an individual NPC. The PCs may (should?) have to take a different route exiting the building in order to avoid a particular mob. Any adversary can be replaced by pirates or pirate "sergents" (see page 37), but the pirates will be most common above ground.

Each location is divided into two zones – one as the PCs enter it and one as they are leaving it. The GM can place any adversaries in either of these zones. PCs moving from one location to another should roll the Alertness of their point man against the Stealth of the adversary to see if they will be ambushed (see section 5.27.3 of the SotC SRD).

Armory

Description: If the party is running low on ammunition, a short detour could take them here. Much of the equipment has already been checked out, leaving the wall racks empty of weapons and armour, but there's still plenty of ammunition. Overall, it has the feel of a locker room

Location: Basement. Adjacent to Utility Tunnels

Aspects: Gun Racks, Ammunition Containers

Adversaries: One or more Ze Security Guards (see page 37), with or without the Minions stunt

Boiler Room

Description: With no-one monitoring the environmental control systems of the complex, and the damage inflicted in the attack, the boilers are out of control and venting steam. The room is hot and dark with low visibility. If a replacement PC is needed, it's possible that an uninfected Maintenance Worker (see page 36) could be hiding down here

Location: Basement or sub-basement. Adjacent to Utility Tunnels, Ventilation Shaft or Wet Wall

Aspects: Shadowed Corners, Clouds Of Steam, Exposed Utilities

Adversaries: Maintenance Worker, with or without the Minions stunt. A mob of Maintenance Workers.

Canteen

Description: A large, well-lit area, with abandoned meals, overturned tables and chairs and inspirational corporate art on the walls

Location: Above ground. Adjacent to Kitchens, Open Plan Office, Utility Tunnels, Wet Wall or Meeting Hall

Aspects: Tables And Chairs, Abandoned Meals

Adversaries: Parasol Employees (see page 36) or Ze Security Guards (see page 37), alone, with the Minions stunt or as a mob.

Dog Kennels

Description: A corridor lined with dog kennels – think of an animal shelter that only housed really big dogs

Location: Above ground. Adjacent to Security Checkpoint or Utility Tunnels

Aspects: Wire Mesh Dog Kennels, Dog Mess Underfoot

Adversaries: Pack of Guard Dogs (see page 36) feeding off of a dead security guard

Laboratory

Description: The complex has lots of these areas. Shelves full of potentially hazardous chemicals, tables loaded with glassware and hi-tech equipment. The

player of a scientist PC might think to find a DNA sequencer and analyse a sample of the fungal spores that they have collected. An Average Engineering check modified by Science will be necessary to find the correct lab, an second Average Engineering check modified by Science will locate and set up the sequencer and a final Fair Science check will produce the sequence. This process will take half an hour – each shift will make this task one step faster as described in section 8.2 of the SotC SRD.

Location: Above ground or basement. Adjacent to Security Checkpoint, Quarantine Area, Open Plan Office or Wet Wall

Aspects: Laboratory Equipment, Gas Lines, Dangerous Chemicals

Adversaries: One or more Parasol Scientists (see page 37), alone, with the Minions stunt or (possibly) as a mob

Lift Shaft

Description: Since the power is off in the complex, the lifts are non-functional. However, the PCs can still use the shafts to get around the building. Rappelling down the lift cables to the sub-basement requires a few moments per PC (see section 8.2 of the SotC SRD) and an Average Athletics check. Ascending will take a few minutes (which they won't have) and a Fair Athletics check – there isn't a ladder. Any aspect representing military training or extreme sports experience can be invoked for free on these Athletics checks. Spin gained on these rolls can be used to assist another individual. Characters failing any of these rolls can opt to take extra time (see section 8.2.1 of the SotC SRD) or take a short fall (see section 8.3.4 of the SotC SRD). Once they are in the sub-basement, it's traditional to ambush incautious PCs if they open the lift doors without first using a fibre-optic camera or similar probe.

Location: Any floor. Adjacent to Open Plan Office, Utility Tunnels, Security Checkpoint

Aspects: Greasy Cables

Adversaries: None (but there might be an ambush on the other side of the doors)

Meeting Hall

Description: A large room, either completely empty or with seating arranged in "lecture theatre" style. A podium or staging at one end with a projection screen

Location: Above ground. Adjacent to Open Plan Office or Canteen

Aspects: Podium, Projection Screen, Lecture Theatre, Good Sight Lines

Adversaries: One or more Parasol Employees (see page 36), alone, with the Minions stunt or as a mob

Open Plan Office

Description: Cubicals are so 1990's. The desks in this large, open area are separated with low dividers. Motivational corporate art is on the walls along with charts showing performance targets and the like

Location: Above ground. Adjacent to Meeting Hall, Canteen, Stairwell, Lift Shaft, Security Checkpoint, Laboratory, Utility Tunnels

Aspects: Cubical Farm, Office Equipment

Adversaries: One or more Parasol Employees (see page 36), alone, with the Minions stunt or as a mob

Quarantine Area

Description: This chamber is designed to be sealed, with an filtered atmosphere so nothing can get in or out. This includes fungal spores, so if a replacement PC is needed, an uninfected Parasol Scientist (see page 37) could be hiding in here. The area will contain a hospital bed and medical equipment

Location: Any floor. Adjacent to Laboratory

Aspects: Let Me Out!, Thick Mirrored Observational Window

Adversaries: One or more Parasol Scientists (see page 37)

Stairwell

Description: It's a set of stairs. They go up. Or down

Location: Any floor. Adjacent to Security Checkpoint, Open Plan Office or Utility Tunnels

Aspects: Check Those Corners, Banisters

Adversaries: A single Parasol Scientist, Security Guard or Parasol Employee

Security Checkpoint

Description: A sealed door with a electronic lock. A desk, swivel chair and a band of monitors in plain view of the door

Location: Any floor. Adjacent to Lift Shaft, Laboratory, Open Plan Office or Stair Well

Aspects: Security Monitors, Gun In Bottom Drawer, Electronic Security Door

Adversaries: Ze Security Guard (see page 37), singularly or as a group, with or without the Minions stunt

Server Room

Description: This is a the goal of the scene, a sealed, air-conditioned room filled with computing equipment that is still operational due to banks of backup power supply systems (that are bleeping in an increasingly panicked fashion). It will take a Fair Engineering check and a few minutes to find the appropriate bank of machines followed by a Good Engineering check and another few minutes to crack the system, then locate and download the sequence (use the Time rules in sections 8.2 and 8.2.1 of the SotC SRD).

Location: Sub-basement. Adjacent to Security Checkpoint or Utility Tunnels

Aspects: Secure Room, Halon Fire Extinguishing System, Blinking Lights And Suspicious Beeps, At Least The Air Conditioning's Working

Adversaries: One or more Parasol Employees (see page 36) with Good Engineering instead of Good Leadership

Toilets

Description: Parasol tries to keep its facilities spotless, but the infected are not house-proud

Location: Any floor. Adjacent to Open Plan Office, Utility Tunnels and Wet Wall

Aspects: Face In The Mirror, Blood On The Tiles

Adversaries: One or more Parasol Employees

Utility Tunnels

Description: These tunnels are "behind the scenes" of the laboratory complex. The ceiling and walls will be lined with cable trays and pipes carrying water and chemicals throughout the building. The tunnels will be roughly and cheaply decorated, with non-slip flooring

Location: Any floor. Adjacent to pretty much any other location

Aspects: Rough Walls, Climb Onto The Pipes, Exposed Utilities, Non-Slip Flooring

Adversaries: One or more Maintenance Workers (see page 36), with or without the Minions stunt, or as a mob.

Ventilation Shaft

Description: It's a cliché, but the idea of rattling their way through the air conditioning is one that your players might go for. If they try to use them to bypass all of the action, the mountings could fail or a mob of infected could rip the ducting from the ceiling as it passes alone some utility tunnels

Location: Any floor. The ventilation shafts go all the way through the building, so a vent can be found in any location

Aspects: Cramped And Claustrophobic, You Go First

Adversaries: None (unless someone pursues the PCs from another zone)

Wet Wall

Description: A "wet wall" is an architectural feature where water pipes (hence the name) and other utilities are routed through a vertical crawlspace. If the characters need a quick, Matrix-style getaway , a wet wall can be located in an appropriate location by making a Fair Engineering roll. A hatch can be opened in a minute and an Mediocre Engineering check or an appropriate Guns, Engineering or even Might check can make an appropriate hole. Once inside the wall, a Fair Athletics check should be made to safely descend to the sub-basement. Failure means the PC will take a

short fall (see section 8.3.4 of the SotC SRD)

Location: Any floor. Adjacent to Canteen, Toilets and Boiler Room

Aspects: Cramped And Claustrophobic, Raw Brickwork, Exposed Utilties

Adversaries: None (unless someone pursues the PCs from another zone)

Scene six: Fleeing the complex

Try to arrange things so that they are fleeing from one mob of zombies as they exit the main complex only to run into straight into another in the compound (rules for mobs are on page 17). By this stage the infected are almost all in stage three or four (if in their character is in hand-to-hand combat with a stage four infected, a player could even compel the Cordyceps Zhongii Infection: Stage Four aspect to force their attacker to enter stage five – dying, but showering the PC in spores). Once they have evaded both these mobs and exited the compound (perhaps by hot wiring something in the Vehicle Pool?), they should have chance to take a breather, shake off any Mild consequences and make a Science check for medical attention (see section 8.3.24 of the SotC SRD).

Aspects for this scene include: Vehicle Pool, Moonless Night, Open Ground, Pitchforks And Torches?

ACT FOUR: THIS ISLAND IS ON FIRE!

Parasol and the US government (and is there really any difference in this game?) have decided that the infection needs to be burnt out before it spreads. An air strike from the Nimitz carrier group is being prepared. In this act, the PCs get advance notice of the attack and have a chance to flee before the incendiary bombs reduce the island to rock and ashes.

If there were any NPC survivors of the crash of Striker-Two that were left behind in act three, scene one (see page 28), don't let the players forget about them. Their characters won't have.

There are two ways that the PCs can get off the island (though if they come up with a plausible third, let them have a try): boat (scene three) or helicopter (scene four). The players may need reminding about the helipad and harbour that have been mentioned in previous scenes.

Scene one: Betrayal

Kalsum will start shouting for the PCs to upload the sequence as soon as they leave the main laboratory complex (they can't do it from inside because the building is electromagnetically shielded). It's a lot of data, so it will take a few minutes, a Mediocre Engineering check and the PCs will need to be stationary for the whole time (each shift on the Engineering check will make the task one step faster, as the table in section 8.2 of the SotC SRD). Feel free to have the infected encroaching on the PCs during this process.

Once the sequence has been uploaded, Kalsum will tell them to return to the wreck of Striker-Two as SEAL Team Six are en route. Again, this is a lie, but the PCs have a second chance to to roll Empathy against Kalsum's Good Deceit to detect it.

The satellite uplink goes through the Parasol network, so it will be almost impossible for the PCs to make contact with (e.g.) the Nimitz carrier group or SEAL Team Six without being detected (a Superb Engineering check). If they haven't already managed to find an appropriate contact (see page 26), make a Good Contacting check. SEAL Team Six have not been prepped, but their contact will be able to tell them that the Nimitz is preparing for a massive airstrike ("*I saw them loading every Mark 77 incendiary we have on board. Looks like they're planning to burn out the infection – if I were you I'd get elsewhere ASAP.*"). If they ask Kalsum to patch them through to SEAL Team Six, he'll claim the networks are incompatible (an Average Engineering check or another Empathy check against Kalsum's Good Deceit will confirm this is another lie).

Alternatively, the PCs can try to salvage the transmitter off of Striker-One or Striker-Two and use that to contact a contact. This will take a Good Engineering check.

Finally, one of the PCs may have an aspect that represents them being a mole from another organisation (the CIA, for example). Assuming that they have some way of contacting their handler (and what decent spy doesn't?), then this aspect can be invoked for effect and their handler can let them know what's really happening.

Aspects for this scene include: Betrayed and They're In The Trees – They're Coming!

Optional scene two: Incoming!

If the PCs still believe that Kalsum has their best interests at heart then they will return to Striker-Two and await rescue. After about fifteen minutes of fighting off the odd wandering infected, they will hear the distant sound of jet engines. A few seconds later (enough time to trigger an Alertness stunt), the first bombs will hit the island. This will add the Incoming! and This Goddamn Island Is On Fire aspects to the rest of the PCs time on the island. These aspects should be heavily compelled.

Optional scene three: Sailing off into the sunrise

The harbour is at the end of the other road that took the PCs to the laboratory complex. A series of switchbacks leads down into a cove with a pier, a boathouse and a small warehouse. A pleasure cruiser is tied up at the pier, being prepped by a group of pirates (two sergeants and their minions plus a pirate with the Minions stunt standing guard – see page 37 for their details). The PCs will need to use Stealth to sneak up on the pirates, take over the cruiser and then drive off into the sunrise as the the jet fighters scream overhead and the island erupts in flame. Anyone with a remotely appropriate aspect can use the Drive or Pilot skill to sail the cruiser.

Aspects for this scene include: Beach Barbecue, A Life On The Ocean Wave, Moonless Night

Optional scene four: Get to the Helipad!

The hanger by the helipad in the main compound looked undamaged when Striker-One did its fly-by. There might be a functioning helicopter there. The PCs must sneak back into the compound (facing the encounters in act three, scene four on page 30), before defeating the group of pirates that have set up a bonfire on the helipad (two sergeants and their minions plus a pirate with the Minions stunt standing guard – see page 37 for their details). They will then need to break into the hanger (Average Burglary, Engineering or Guns check depending on the technique) before wheeling the helicopter out and (assuming that they still have a

pilot), flying off into the sunrise as the the jet fighters scream overhead and the island erupts in flame.

Aspects for this scene include: Moonless Night, Bonfire

FURTHER ADVENTURES

This is only the beginning. The spores have been carried on the wind and have already spread to the mainland. The PCs will be flying or sailing into chaos. Kalsum has the sequence and other Parasol laboratories are already investigating a cure or a vaccine – which, for the right price – it will supply to the rest of the world. Assuming that the PCs took a copy then they have something that could restore the balance of power, but they'll have to find a safe and trustworthy laboratory to finish analysing the fungus.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Once they reach stage two of the infection (see page 23), all NPCs infected by the fungus should be treated as if they were "named" (see page 13) even if they haven't been given a name. The aggression induced by the fungus means that they won't consider offering concessions.

Brian Harper

Aspects: Alpha Geek, "You're Fitter Than You Look", Trusted Parasol Employee, Should Anyone Have This Power?, It's All My Fault, I've Got Just The Thing, I Haven't Spent All These Years Playing Dungeons And Dragons™ Not To Learn Something About Courage, Genre Savvy

Stunts: Doctor, Scientific Genius (biology, genetics), Scientific Invention, International

Skills: Science (+4), Academics (+3), Resolve (+3), Engineering (+2), Investigation (+2), Rapport (+2), Guns (+1), Contacting (+1), Resources (+1), Athletics (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐

Brian is recovering science geek, recruited by Parasol straight out of M.I.T. He was part of the team that developed *C. Zhongii* and is repressing the guilt he feels over what they have unwittingly done.

Privately, his inner nerd is excited about being in a zombie movie – which is making him feel even more guilty. He's had to kill friends and colleagues today. Brian has studied the origin and progress of the disease and has a laptop and memory stick containing all the documentation on the fungus he could grab.

Like Doris, Brian is also wearing a dust mask and Doris has given her pistol to him. He has used his Scientific Invention stunt to create a formula that provides partial immunity to the fungus – in game terms, he has used a maneuver to apply the Pumped Full Of Anti-Fungals aspect to Doris and himself. This, combined with the dust masks, has prevented them from being infected thus far, but the GM can compel this aspect to produce vomiting (dangerous in a mask) or bouts of trembling and weakness.

Doris Kajinsky

Aspects: Citizen Of The World, Ze Security Agent, Veteran Of Developing World Hell-Holes, Good Bone Structure, Feminine Even In Body Armour, I Did I Do The Right Thing?, Parasol Is My Family Now, Tough Childhood – Tougher Adolescence

Stunts: Shot On The Run, Last Leg, Developed Immunities, Danger Sense

Skills: Leadership (+4), Endurance (+3), Guns (+3), Resolve (+2), Athletics (+2), Alertness (+2), Fists (+1), Survival (+1), Contacting (+1), Stealth (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐

Doris is an Israeli citizen and a (disgraced) former member of the Israeli Defence Force. An only child, her father (a Major) raised her to be the soldier son that he'd wanted instead. During an incident in the ongoing Israel/Palestine conflict, Doris disobeyed an order that would have put the lives of Palestinian civilians at risk. Her father's influence and the possibility of bad publicity saved her from a court-martial, but not from a dishonourable discharge. Ze seemed to be the most reputable of the companies that would still employ her and – even now – she sees no reason to regret this decision.

Doris has a Ze CQB rifle, body armour and is wearing a dust mask (see page 25 for details on this equipment). This coupled with being Pumped Full Of Anti-Fungals (see below) has prevented her from

being infected – so far.

Maintenance Worker

Aspects: Blue-Collar Worker, Grease Monkey, Mild-Mannered Janitor, I Know This Building Like The Back Of My Hand, Loyal Employee, More Than My Job's Worth

Stunts: None

Skills: Engineering (+3), Endurance (+2), Resolve (+2), Rapport (+1), Contacting (+1), Athletics (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐

NPC member of Striker-One- or Striker-Two-Actual

Aspects: Ex-Special Forces, Ze Security Agent, Dull-Eyed Killer, For A Few Dollars More, This Is My Last Job, Exit Strategy, Blink And You'll Miss Him, Disturbingly Ordinary

Stunts: Military Mind (see page 19), On Top Of It, Shot On The Run, Stay On Target

Skills: Guns (+4), Leadership (+3), Endurance (+3), Resolve (+2), Athletics (+2), Leadership (+2), Fists (+1), Survival (+1), Alertness (+1), Stealth (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐

Pack of Guard Dogs

Aspects: Furry Landshark, Not A Nice Doggie, Nasty Pointy Teeth, Well-Trained Killer, Vicious, Nose For Trouble

Stunts: Natural Weapons (Fists), Minions, Reinforcements

Skills: Fists (+3), Endurance (+2), Athletics (+2), Resolve (+1), Intimidation (+1), Survival (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐

Parasol Employee

Aspects: Loyal Employee, Office Politician, Rung On The Ladder, Peter Principle, This Is A Nightmare, I'm On A Deadline

Stunts: None

Skills: Leadership (+3), Academics (+2), Rapport (+2), Empathy (+1), Deceit (+1), Contacting (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐

Parasol Scientist

Aspects: For Science!, Lab-Coated Cliché, Loyal Employee, It's All About The Results, We Don't Have The Budget, Questionable Ethics

Stunts: None

Skills: Science (+3), Engineering (+2), Academics (+2), Leadership (+1), Rapport (+1), Resolve (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐

Pirate

Aspects: Beirut Unload[6], Undisciplined Thug, Somali-Born Pirate, Dab Hand With A Machete, Gun Older Than He Is, Tougher Than Nails

Stunts: None

Skills: Endurance (+3), Guns (+2), Athletics (+2), Fists (+1), Intimidation (+1), Weapons (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐

Pirate "Sergeant"

Aspects: Semi-Disciplined Thug, Stylish Eyepatch, Somali-Born Pirate, Guns – Lots Of Guns, Franchised-Based Violence, Tougher Than Nails, Low Cunning, Yo-Ho-Ho And A Pouchful of Khat

Stunts: Minions, One Hit To The Body, Fast Reload, Rain Of Lead

Skills: Endurance (+4), Leadership (+3), Guns (+3), Resolve (+2), Athletics (+2), Contacting (+2), Fists (+1), Intimidation (+1), Weapons (+1), Alertness (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐

Ze Security Guard

Aspects: Loyal Employee, Longest Day Of My Life, Worse Case Scenario, Where's My Backup?, More Than My Job's Worth, I Ain't Paid Enough For This

Stunts: None

Skills: Guns (+3), Leadership (+2), Endurance (+2), Athletics (+1), Resolve (+1), Contacting (+1)

Stress: Health ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐ Composure ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐

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6 British Army slang for emptying the whole magazine of an AK-47 in a barely aimed and undisciplined manner

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