

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #35:
Terror Weapons



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During the final wars, various factions came to rely on psychological tactics (terror) as their weaponry of choice, rather than conventional bombs, bullets, and energy beams. Many believed a terrified populace was an unproductive populace, demoralized and ripe for civil unrest: all useful conditions for the terror-users. Sometimes this strategy worked; other times it backfired so badly the groups were hunted down and destroyed with prejudice.

Small terror groups and unscrupulous governments had the dark limits of human imagination at their disposal. Among their arsenals were nanites, dirty bombs, and perhaps the most horrific — biological agents: weaponized diseases or genetically modified microorganisms. These bio-weapons were usually delivered using missiles or bombs, but they could be spread by fouling water supplies, secretly inserting infected personnel into an area, or contaminating everyday objects and currency. (The actual delivery method used is left up to the fertile and twisted imagination of the individual Mutant Lord.)

This article deals with the large number and variety of biological weapons left over from those cataclysmic wars. MLs should be wary of using this material, as most of the agents are deadly in the extreme and can easily destroy entire communities — not just your party. Because many of the weapons were designed to contaminate wide areas, infect populations wholesale, and cause the maximum chaos possible, they will likely affect mutant humans, plants, and animals.

Acidic Blood

This biological weapon converts blood into powerful acid, dissolving the target and likely killing or infecting anyone nearby. Although targets must save versus poison when initially exposed, nothing seems to happen — even to those



who failed and became infected. However, the next 24 hours are critical for these unfortunates, because their bodies go through drastic biochemical changes. If victims are examined by a doctor or medical robot/android during this time, the

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This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the "Basic" system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).



infection can be detected and cured with filter-dose.

Once the grace period ends, an untreated victim feels terribly itchy for 1d6 rounds. Then he starts to liquify. As his blood becomes increasingly acidic, the victim takes a cumulative 1d6 points of damage per round (i.e., first round, 1d6; second round, 2d6; etc.). Besides being strong enough to melt flesh, the acid will also damage any clothing or equipment carried. These lose one condition level per round until completely destroyed.

This terrifying process cannot be reversed. When the first victim falls to zero hit points he explodes, covering everything within a 20' radius with gouts of caustic blood. All creatures caught in the splash zone take 10d6 points of damage, but can save versus poison to reduce damage by half. These secondary victims (including mutant animals and plants) must also make a second save versus poison to avoid becoming infected themselves. In addition, their equipment needs to save or it begins to dissolve as above. The floor, walls, and ceiling of any enclosing area must save or have holes burned into them. If the ML is feeling feisty (sadistic), the dissolving process could also create a noxious gas within the area of effect, and/or sicken (nauseate) observers and secondary victims (see *Wisdom from the Wastelands* Issue #8 for details).

Bio Rot

Not actually a disease, this genetically modified fungus was weaponized into a covert food destroyer and potent killer. There are two strains, both typically delivered as missile or bomb payloads and released into the cloud layer above enemy territory. The dormant fungal spores mixed with rain water, fell to earth, and infected crop seeds. During this stage, the fungus was very difficult to detect, so contaminated plants could be grown, harvested, and transported to distribution centers with no one the wiser.

The first strain of Bio Rot activates when host plants die, so harvesting triggers the fungus' growth stage. If mixed with uninfected crops, the fungus spreads, contaminating everything. The tainted food is class 7 poison (save for half damage) and provides no nutritional value.

Although they show no sign of it, anyone exposed to the fungus becomes a carrier and can contaminate harvested

plants and food. Fungicide, low-intensity radiation (level 1), and mutations that snuff out life (e.g., *vampiric field*) are the only ways to ensure someone is not infected and spreading Bio Rot.

The second strain of Bio Rot remains dormant until it touches certain materials, such as plastics or aluminum, allowing it to pass through some safeguards undetected. Contaminated food appears safe, but 36-72 hours after being packaged in the triggering substance, the fungus starts growing and poisoning the food as above.

Cannibalize

Save Modifier: +0

Infection Duration: 1 day

Affected Stats: INT -2, WIL -2

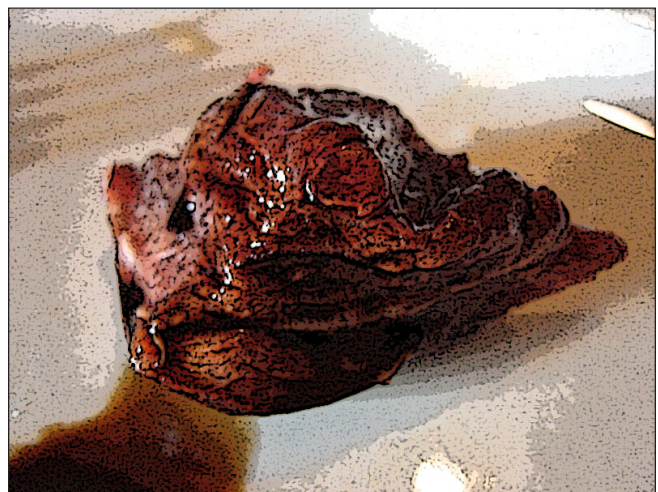
Damage per day: 1d8

During the final wars, a horror known as "zombie plague" ravaged cities across the planet. Its beta form was called Cannibalize. This terror weapon alters the biochemistry in a target's brain and digestive tract, creating a psychological craving for human flesh and making it impossible for the victim to eat anything else.

Cannibalize was initially delivered to an area in contaminated food and water, infecting primary victims. These people would then attack others, biting them and transmitting the disease through saliva. Anyone exposed, in any fashion, must save versus poison or become infected.

After the disease manifests, those infected are overwhelmed by a constant, insatiable craving to feed on others. Every time they meet another member of their species, victims must save against death or be forced to attack and eat their fellow creatures. And the 'meat' need not be 'fresh': the infected will also eat the dead. However, if the ML is generous, victims may get a bonus to their save when faced with attacking friends or family.

When an infected character successfully saves against the disease, it is beaten. But the victim must immediately save against poison or gain the *dietary requirement change: cannibal* mutation (new, see below). If characters have access to Ancient medical technology, any drug or nanite that treats diseases will cure a victim.



Although related to the zombie plague agent, Cannibalize does not reanimate victims killed while infected. For more details on the later disease, see the **Walking Dead** entry in the revised *Mutant Future* core rulebook.

Symptoms: Flu-like symptoms, headaches, craving for raw meat.

Dietary Requirement Change: Cannibal (D)

Physical

Frequency: Very Common

Recommended Type: All

The mutant develops a need for the flesh of her own species. At least once every 24 hours, she must consume 10 hit points worth (or one pound) of tissue. The mutant can still eat normal food, but every day she goes without her special diet she loses 1d3 points of Constitution.

If the mutant has a high CON, she can go longer between feedings: an additional day per daily healing modifier (see *WfiW* Issue #8 for details). For example, Myn has a 16 CON, which gives a +2 daily healing bonus, so she can go three days between cannibal meals.

Although her CON falls, the mutant does not lose any hit points. However, she will quickly lose the bonus to daily healing as her ability score drops, so the correspondingly increased period between meals will disappear too.

When the mutant's CON reaches zero, she must make a daily save versus death, with an accumulating -1 penalty to the save every day (i.e., day 1, no penalty; day 2, -1 to the save; day 3, -2 to the save; etc.). When she misses this saving throw, the mutant dies of starvation.

To stop or reverse the CON loss, the mutant must eat the required amount of flesh. The lost CON points return at 1d6 points per day, so long as she eats the food she needs.

As might be expected, most cultures do not take kindly to cannibals. When others discover the mutant's eating habits, she suffers a +6 to any reaction check.

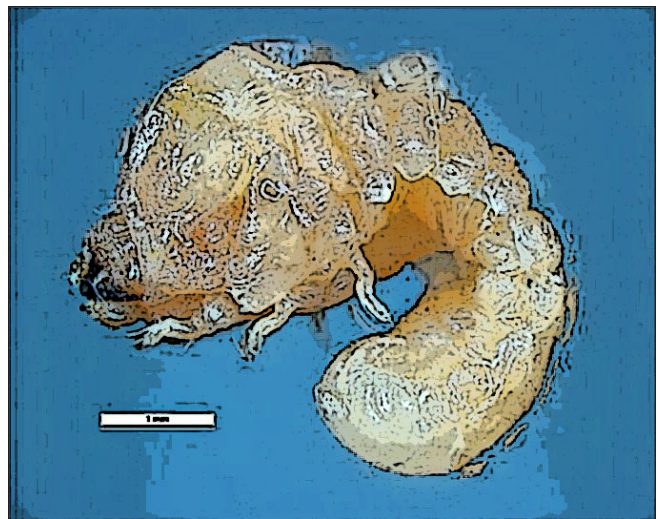
Gargantuan Toothy Worm

Unlike most other terror weapons presented here, the Gargantuan Toothy Worm (GTW) is both disease and monster. The Ancients developed the worm from bacteria, bio-engineering a creature easily spread and innocuous, but capable of ripping open a victim from the inside.

GTWs start life as dust-like eggs, which can remain dormant for centuries unless exposed to the combination of heat, water, and digestive enzymes found in the human (or animal) gut. Their small size allowed a variety of dispersal methods, but the most common was by hand, typically in public eating areas — to ensure the eggs were ingested.

After eating the eggs, potential hosts must save versus poison. Success means the eggs were destroyed; failure means 1d12 of them hatch and begin absorbing the host's partially-digested food. Six hours later, the growing worms start on the stomach lining and the victim develops abdominal cramps. The pain is mild for 1d6 rounds, inflicting a -1 to hit penalty and a one-point AC penalty.

Then the worms begin eating their way out of the host's



body. Some travel up the esophagus and exit the mouth, while others head south through the abdomen and come out the anus. It takes 2d4 rounds for a worm to complete the exodus, and every round each one inflicts 1d6 points of damage. While inside, worms can only be damaged by area-effect weapons or mutations (e.g., *vampiric field*). Of course this harms the host, but sometimes these injuries are mild compared to those the worms inflict.

Once free, worms look for a hiding place where they can safely digest their meals. GTWs mature rapidly and survive only a week, but are dangerous throughout life. They constantly produce eggs, using their bite to plant them in targets. Any creature bitten must save versus poison or be injected with a mass of eggs, 1d12 of which survive the trip to the stomach.

Dead worms quickly decay into piles of grey powder containing fertile eggs. A stiff wind can disperse the spores; if eaten, the horror begins again. The eggs can only be destroyed with fire, acid, or area-effect mutations and weapons.

Gargantuan Toothy Worm

No. Enc.:	1d12
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	90' (30')
Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	1d3
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d6 plus special (see below)
Save:	L1
Morale:	9
Hoard Class:	None

These nasty creatures resemble slick-bodied, albino leeches, their large, circular mouths lined with inward-pointing, shark-like teeth. Young worms are about 6" long, but mature worms can be three feet from mouth to tail. Despite not having limbs, GTWs can move quickly by simply wriggling. They also seem to lack eyes and other visible sensory organs, using a radar-like sense instead.

When a worm dies, its body decomposes into a mildly toxic (class 2 poison), rancid puddle of slime within 1d6 turns. In another 1d6 turns, the slime dries into a grey powder (full of eggs) that can be easily spread by the wind or gathered for reuse as a terror weapon.

Mutations: *Gigantism, toxic weapon (special).*

Age	Hit Points	AC	Move	Bite Damage
1-6 hours	1d3	2	90' (30')	1
7 hours to 1 day	1d6	3	90' (30')	1d3
1-4 days	2d4	4	120' (40')	1d6
5-7 days	2d6	5	150' (50')	2d4

Last Generation

Save Modifier: -2

Infection Duration: 1 day

Affected Stats: CON -2

Damage per day: 1d6

This subtle disease destroys the targets' ability to reproduce. When first infected, victims feel like they have caught a cold, which resolves in a reasonable amount of time. But just as the illness seems cured, victims must save versus poison. Those who fail are left sterile.

Before the final wars, this disease was a pretty ineffectual terror weapon, because most Ancient nations had technology (nanites, surgery, etc.) able to reverse the damage. But in the post-apocalyptic world, Last Generation can devastate whole regions where the inhabitants lack this medical knowledge.

MLs should note that this weapon only effects humans, not animals or plants.

Symptoms: *Flu-like symptoms.*

Liquid Bane

Save Modifier: +0

Infection Duration: 1 day

Affected Stats: DEX -2, STR -1

Damage per day: 1d4

This bio-weapon changes a victim's skin so it is damaged by water. The virus was usually dispersed using aerosols or other airborne methods for maximum exposure, and those in the target zone must immediately save versus poison.

All who fail break out in an itchy full-body rash that lasts 1d6 days. They must also make a second save versus poison. If successful, the rash heals completely, with no ill effects; if not, the victim suffers a permanent skin change. For these unfortunates, water becomes deadly: whenever they touch the liquid (and substances containing water), their skin begins to slough off.

Any external contact the victim has with water, no matter the amount, causes harm. The exact damage is left up to the ML, because it depends on the victim's exposure. For example, a victim just touching water (fresh or salt) might suffer 2d6 points of damage per round until the source is removed. However, victims tossed in a pond could take 10d6 points of damage per round. An evil ML might even decide the victim's own sweat or the ambient humidity in a jungle setting could cause damage.

Victims can still drink, but must be very careful not to let any water touch their outer skin. And, because they cannot use water to bathe, they have to make alternate cleaning arrangements. Those unable (or unwilling) to do so could become outcasts, as the powerful accumulation of body odor would make them unwelcome.

Symptoms: *Flu-like symptoms, overall rash and irritation (see WftW Issue #8 for details).*

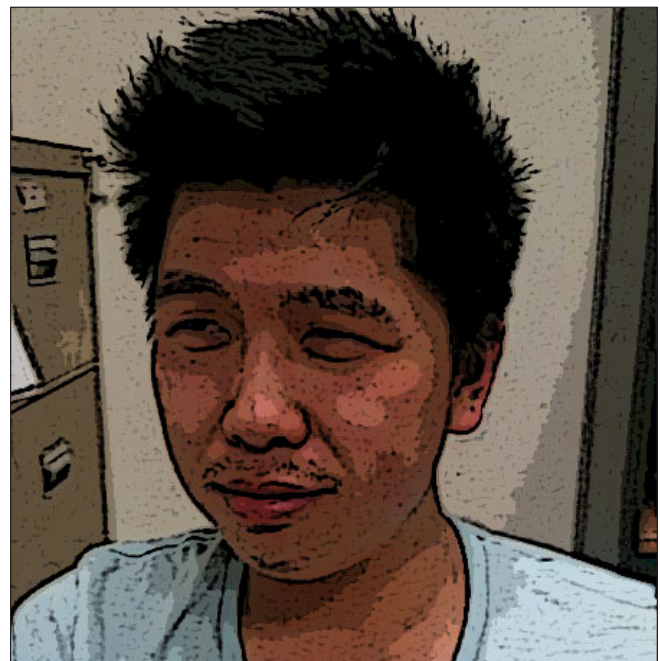
Sleepless

Scholars researching this terror agent maintain two camps regarding its origin. Some believe Sleepless was specifically designed and engineered, a weapon similar to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (better known as "mad cow disease"). Others think the plague was accidental, the result of too much tampering with the world's crops, a mutation that first appeared in genetically-modified corn. Perhaps this argument is purely academic; for however the disease was born, it claimed many, many lives in a long, torturous process.

Sleepless is caused by a prion, a protein particle, attacking the specific brain regions responsible for sleep. When first exposed to the contagion, a target must save versus poison. If he fails, symptoms appear after an **incubation stage** of 1d6+6 months.

When the victim enters **stage two**, he begins to have trouble falling asleep. Over the next 2d4+4 weeks, he sleeps less each night — until not at all. Every two weeks in this stage, he suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to hit; for every three weeks, all saves incur a cumulative -1 penalty. Every week, the infected character also becomes increasingly distracted, suffering a cumulative -3% penalty to figure out or repair artifacts.

Then the Sleepless effect becomes permanent and the victim enters **Stage three**, which lasts for 3d4+6 months. Now the victim's penalties stabilize at -4 to all attack rolls and saves. His penalty to figure out and repair artifacts



equalizes at -30% (even if higher during the weeks of lost sleep).

During this period, victims exposed to stressful situations must save versus death or fall into a trancelike catatonic state. (Combat is the most likely stressor, but MLs can determine what other factors trigger the effect.) Although this is not sleep, the victim dreams, even with his eyes open. He is completely helpless, unable to react to any stimulus — even pain — for 3d6 rounds. When he revives, he can act normally.

The **final stage** is marked by a physical pain no drug can alleviate. If the optional rules on wounds are used (see *WfiW* Issue #11 for details), the victim is considered moderately wounded. Once entering this phase, the victim must make a weekly save versus death or die. His body can no longer compensate for the lack of sleep, and it begins to shut down — finally ending the victim's suffering.

There is no cure for this condition, but MLs can decide certain mutations (such as *regeneration*) render the mutant immune to the prion. They can also design artifacts or mutations able to destroy the agent and repair the damage it does to the victim's sleep centers.

MLs should note several things about this weapon. No drug can induce a victim to sleep: those centers in his brain were destroyed. Second, any creature that needs sleep is vulnerable to the prion. Lastly, this entry was deliberately designed so as not to overburden the ML or players with mechanics. However, anyone who has experienced severe sleep deprivation knows there are other, significant disabilities that come up. If the ML wants to make this more detailed for roleplaying opportunities, other symptoms might include paranoia, hallucinations, increased aggression, and/or a variety of ability reductions.

Starver

This bio-weapon rewrites a target's genetic code until the gastrointestinal tract cannot absorb nutrients from food. Although usually an airborne pathogen, Starver can also be delivered in contaminated food or water.

Like several of the other biological agents presented here, Starver is slow-acting and insidious: food is still broken down into waste material and victims feel well-fed. They can function for a number of days equal to 1/3 their Constitution score (rounded down) before experiencing starvation effects and realizing something is horribly wrong. However, once crossing this threshold, an infected character must save versus death every day or lose 1d3 points of CON. Even if she succeeds, the character suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to her daily save (which does not reset when she finally fails). Once her CON reaches zero, she dies.

During this time, the victim also starts suffering fatigue effects, if your game uses the optional rules from *WfiW* Issue #8. For every 1/3 of their Constitution score lost, victims gain one level of fatigue. As an example, Myn has a CON of 15, but contracts Starver and starts wasting away. While she drops from 15 to 10, Myn is always lightly fatigued. Between 9 and 5, she is moderately fatigued. If her CON falls below this she will be heavily fatigued.

Hit points are not lost with the Constitution drain, but



victims do lose any bonuses they normally had. Their natural healing rate is also reduced (if you use the optional rule described in *WfiW* Issue #8).

Starver's effects can be reversed using advanced medical technology (ML's decision how) or an appropriate mutation. Unless the ML rules otherwise, the weapon is tailored to affect humans, so animals, plants, insects, etc. are immune to it.

Vampire Flesh

Save Modifier: +0

Infection Duration: 1 day

Affected Stats: DEX -2, STR -1

Damage per day: 1d4

An unexpected offshoot of the research into Liquid Bane, Vampire Flesh shares a similar progression and symptom set. But, while victims of the parent weapon cannot tolerate water, the skin of those infected with Vampire Flesh burns when exposed to ultraviolet radiation.

When they first encounter the agent, targets must save versus poison. Those who fail break out in a full-body rash that lasts for 1d6 days. They must also make a second save versus poison. If successful, the rash heals completely with no ill effects; if not, the victim suffers a permanent skin change. For these victims, any contact with UV radiation (including sunlight) will be painful, and possibly deadly. The exact damage is left up to the ML, as this depends on the amount of exposure. For a minor dose, the damage could be 1d6 points per round. If the victim's entire body is vulnerable, the damage could reach 3d6 points per round.

Unfortunately, even if the victim is completely covered by normal clothing, without a single inch of flesh exposed, the UV rays penetrate and inflict damage. Sunscreen, latex, leather, or plastic garments all offer no protection. The victim's only choice is to stay inside during the day or wear specific kinds of armor, usually EMAs. Mutants with the *control light waves* mutation are immune to the effects, so long as they use the mutation.

Symptoms: Flu-like, overall rash, and irritation (see *WfiW* Issue #8 for details).

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