



SUMMERLAND

A role-playing game of desolation and redemption
within the Sea of Leaves.

G R E G S A U N D E R S

SUMMERLAND

REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION



A ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF DESOLATION AND REDEMPTION WITHIN THE SEA OF LEAVES

DESIGNED BY **GREG SAUNDERS**

COVER AND PAGE BACKGROUNDS **PAUL BOURNE**

ART PAGES 14, 74 AND 102 **JEROME HUGUENIN**

OTHER IMAGES ROYALTY FREE COPYRIGHT DREAMSTIME.COM, MANIPULATED BY **GREG SAUNDERS**

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE **RALPH MAZZA**

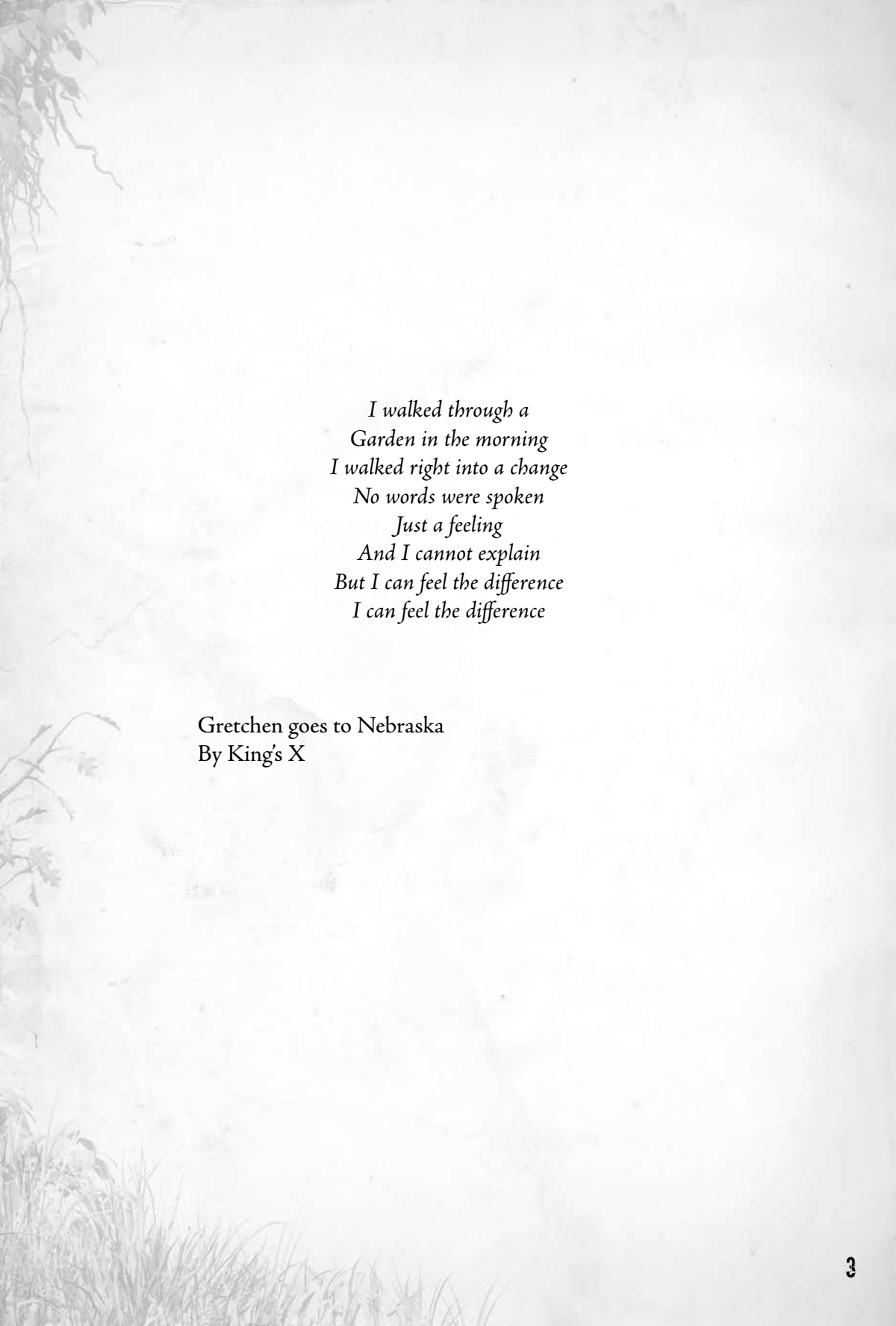
EDITING AND PROOFING **PHIL DAVIES AND GREG SAUNDERS**

FINAL PROOFING **MIRIAM WALLER**

PLAYTEST GROUP **PHIL DAVIES, ADAM KIBBLER, CRAIG WYNNE AND JOHN WILLIAMS**

WEBSITE WWW.FIRERUBY.CO.UK DESIGNED BY **OWEN WILLIAMS**

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*I walked through a
Garden in the morning
I walked right into a change
No words were spoken
Just a feeling
And I cannot explain
But I can feel the difference
I can feel the difference*

Gretchen goes to Nebraska
By King's X

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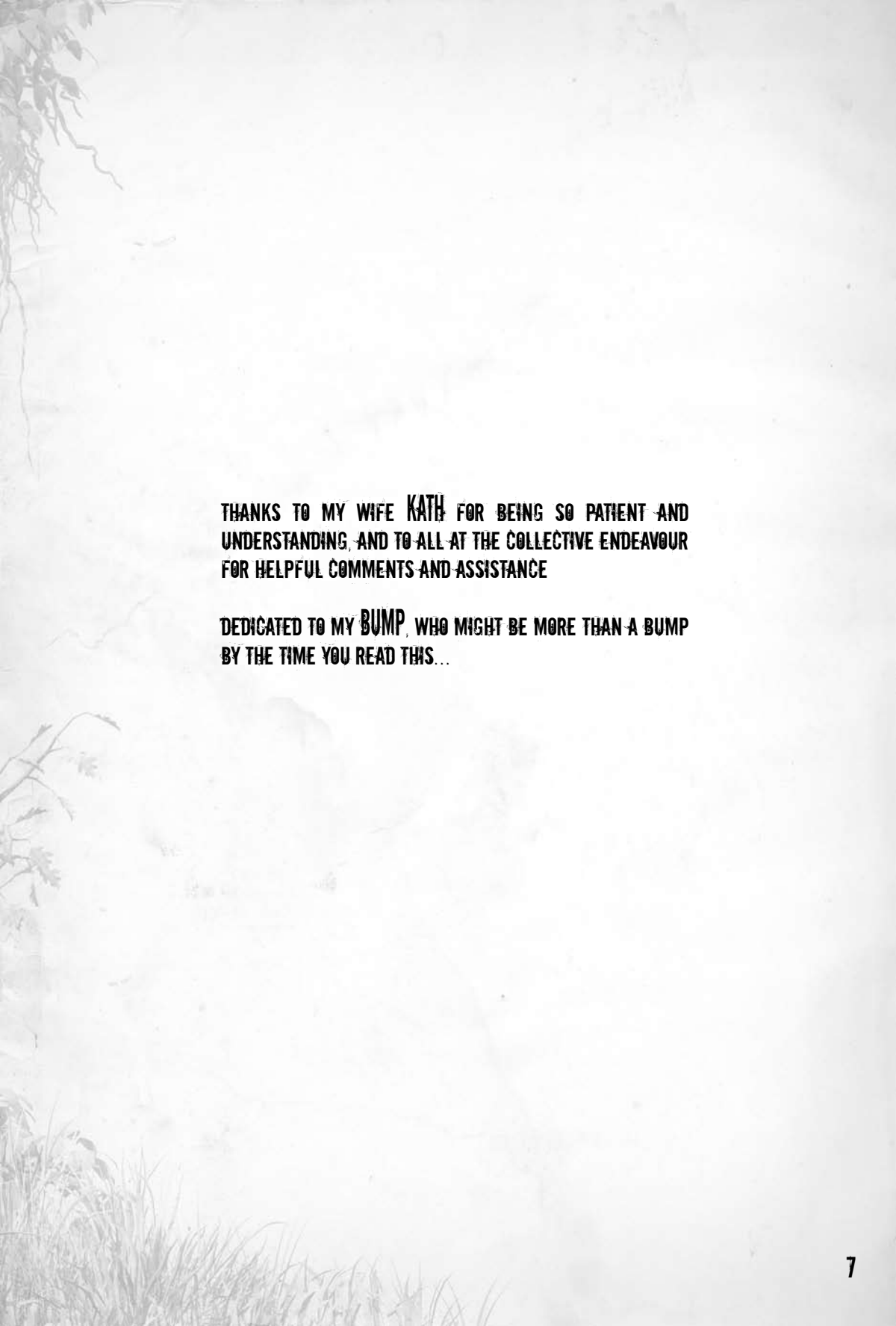
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THANKS TO MY WIFE **KATH** FOR BEING SO PATIENT AND
UNDERSTANDING, AND TO ALL AT THE COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR
FOR HELPFUL COMMENTS AND ASSISTANCE

DEDICATED TO MY **BUMP**, WHO MIGHT BE MORE THAN A BUMP
BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS...

THE EVENT

One night, for no apparent reason, a vast and ancient forest appeared across the land as if it had existed there for hundreds of years. Destructively superimposed on all that existed before it, the forest devastated the works of man. Nothing escaped the blanketing of the trees, not even the tarmac of the roads or the buildings of the city centres. Life as we know it ceased: structures collapsed; roads, rail lines and runways were choked; and anything that may have helped with a swift recovery was lost. For a short while a state of emergency was broadcast over all available media, but soon these reassuring words fell silent. As devastating as the Event was, much worse was to follow. It became apparent that this forest, soon to be named the Sea of Leaves, was not like any ordinary, mundane wood. Ancient, foreboding and somehow alive, it was a wild place, full of cunning, dangerous animals, and permeated by the Call, a siren-song, a lure that sucked the weak-minded, the desperate and the lonely into its depths. Within weeks over eighty per cent of people succumbed to the Call and entered the depths of the wood, never returning. Those that remained clung together however and wherever they could, slowly forming close-knit communities in locations that could be protected from the dangers of the wood. These survivors learnt that only through human connections could the Call be resisted, friendships and family binding each community together in the face of adversity. Within these settlements normal people could forget the lure of the forest, bolstered by the community around them. But they avoided the woods by day, and could not sleep under the trees for fear of the Call. Outside of these communities the landscape was warped, the remnants of humanity's work still recognisable but now broken and twisted into something new and frightening by the trees. Here the Call was powerful, especially in the deeper, wilder woods.

Only a small number of people found that they were able to travel into the Sea of Leaves in relative safety, journeying between settlements, entering the ruined suburbs and even venturing into the wilder places deep within the Sea of Leaves. These people were called drifters, individuals that were somehow resistant to the Call of the trees. Why is it that they alone could resist the Call? Because for many of them the



pressure of the Call was outweighed by something else, something in the past, a trauma, a hurt, something so devastating it had hardened them to the Call. They were damaged, unhappy, pained people, separated from the rest of humanity by the scars that they bore. Normal people shunned them as psychologically damaged, expelling them from the remaining communities, exiling them to drift from place to place beneath the trees. But in time this gift was recognised and drifters were exploited by communities to root out things from before the Event, escort others susceptible to the Call from place to place and provide a link between isolated patches of humanity dotted across the land. In exchange for these services the settlements offered temporary shelter from the dangers of the forest and a brief exposure to the warmth of a human community. But they would not accept drifters permanently; they were seen as too unstable, too damaged. It seemed that only through healing themselves of their past hurts could the drifters join the communities they served.

Summerland is a role-playing game set in an imaginary near future where our world has been changed beyond recognition. One player takes the part of the narrator; they are responsible for describing the scenes and antagonists in the game, the world after the coming of the Sea of Leaves and structuring the stories that the group cooperatively creates. The other players take the part of drifters, the special individuals who

play a key role in humanity's survival after the Event. These drifters make journeys into the Sea of Leaves in search of goods and information that might help the remaining human communities to continue. In return they are accepted back into human society for a short while, gaining respite from the forest before they are driven back into the woods. As drifters they face all sorts of dangers in the forest, from the Lost and wild – the shattered remnants of the majority of people who could not resist the Call – to unnatural beasts – cunning and intelligent animals with agendas of their own. Even other drifters pose a threat, often working for communities with conflicting agendas. But also they face dangers from within, from the past they hide that keeps them awake at night. Only those most hardened drifters may make their way into the forest proper, away from the support of communities, where the Call is strongest and the danger greater. What do drifters desire most? To be accepted, to be allowed to stay in a settlement with other humans permanently, to be part of something. But to do that they must heal themselves, and that can only be achieved through risking the dangers of the Sea of Leaves.

WHAT IS THIS GAME ABOUT?

Summerland is about survival, hope and redemption. The traumatic events that haunt drifters mean that what they desire most – acceptance – is denied them. They yearn to be welcomed into a community, but for this to happen they must risk everything beneath the canopy to redeem themselves and cure the wounds of their past. The question is, how much are they willing to risk to make this happen?

WHAT IS ROLE-PLAYING?

A role-playing game is a type of freeform, collaborative game where a group of players create a story together using a set of rules as a framework and take on the role of a set of characters in the story. Summerland is a narrative role-playing game, where creating and describing an interesting story is far more important than the rolling of dice. In these rules you won't find lots of modifiers for different conditions, or complex rules that attempt to model exactly how characters interact with their environment. There aren't any hard and fast rules on character movement for example. Instead we rely on the judgement of players and the narrator and common sense. The golden rule is let the story flow. The rules are there just to aid game play, not to hinder it.

A NOTE ON THE SETTING

Before the coming of the Sea of Leaves, the world of Summerland was identical to our own. Therefore, much of what people are capable of doing, what technology is (or at least was) available, and the general geography of the world is the same as our own. However, saying that, the appearance of the Sea of Leaves has obviously greatly affected the state of the things, so later in this book we will go into detail describing just how the arrival of the great forest has altered the world. The world of Summerland is a mixture of the real and the mysterious. It is this combination of the familiar and the terribly strange that will hopefully make your games of Summerland fascinating.

As a default the game assumes a European or North American setting and that the Sea of Leaves is based on a forest from those areas, with stands of mainly deciduous trees interspersed with coniferous areas, populated by a wide variety of the animals that are normally found in temperate woodland. All the descriptions of areas in this book portray an environment of that kind. However there is no reason why the game could not be placed in another part of the world and the landscape altered to match that region or, for that matter, set in a place overrun by a totally alien landscape, such as a game set in a steamy jungle covering northern England. The basic tenets of the setting remain the same in any case, and it's up to the players and narrator to decide where exactly they want to set their game.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO PLAY THE GAME?

There are a few things you will need to play Summerland. The first is a few friends – role-playing is a shared experience. Typically, between three and six of you is ideal. You'll also need some paper and pencils (you can use pens, but a lot of the information you'll be writing down will change during play so pencils are better). You will need a character sheet such as the one shown at the back of this book, although you can easily copy down the relevant information onto a blank piece of paper should you wish to. Also, you'll need some normal, everyday six sided dice. Ideally, you'll have a handful, say ten dice in total, but as a minimum you'll need four or five.



Summerland is a role-playing game with a narrative emphasis, so you won't need miniatures or strategic maps. Saying that, if you want to use them to enhance your experience of the game then feel free.

Finally, you'll need your imagination, so bring along some fuel for the brain – pizza and pop works well!

A FINAL COMMENT...

This is a game, and should be treated as such. Summerland deals with some mature themes such as mental illness, repentance and guilt, so always remember it's not real! If you and your fellow players start touching on ideas that you're not comfortable with, bring it up straight away and work it out between you. We're just giving you an environment for an exciting adventure, and you should always treat it that way, nothing more.

WELCOME TO THE SEA OF LEAVES - INTRODUCTION



...A ROAD STRETCHING AWAY INTO THE DISTANCE. TREES BURST THROUGH THE TARMAK, FORMING A THICK CANOPY OF LEAVES OVERHEAD. THE RUSTED REMAINS OF CARS ARE DOTTED OVER THE ROAD, THROWN ASIDE AS IF BY SOME GIGANTIC HAND. IN ONE DIRECTION THE ROAD LEADS BACK TO THE COMMUNITY, THE OTHER, TO THE NEIGHBORING TOWN. IT IS THE SAFEST WAY TO GET THERE. YOU WAIT, THE OTHERS WITH YOU EITHER BY YOUR SIDE OR HIDING IN THE TREES. DOWN THE ROAD ANOTHER PARTY OF MEN COME TOWARD YOU, HANDS TIGHTENING ON RIFLES. INSIDE YOU FEEL FEAR GNAWING. IF THIS SUMMIT MEETING DOES NOT GO WELL, IT COULD SPELL THE END OF THE STRUGGLE FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS. YOU CAN FEEL THE TENSION RISING, AND THE ANGER WITH IT, AS ALWAYS. WHO THE HELL ARE THESE GUYS, TO THREATEN YOU. JUST WHO THE HELL? SWALLOWING, YOU FORCE DOWN THE BILE, TRYING TO KEEP A LID ON THE RAGE...

GAME AND CHARACTER CREATION

Before you can begin a game of Summerland, there are several important aspects of play that you'll need to consider – the parts everyone will play, the theme and style of your game and the characters you'll use. Each is equally important to ensuring an enjoyable game for everyone involved. Plan to spend around one to two hours covering these aspects. Later after the session the narrator will build on this information to create interesting scenarios for you all to enjoy. In this chapter we'll look at the different aspects of setting up a game of Summerland, from describing the themes and setting of the game to creating player characters ready for play.

ROLES WITHIN THE GAME

Summerland, like many role-playing games, involves two distinct sets of people: a narrator who is the person responsible for describing the world, judging to some extent the actions of characters within that world and setting the challenges ahead; and the players who control the starring characters within the game and, with the help of the narrator, create the story. The game requires one person to be the narrator and at least one player, although three or more players are better. You will need to decide from the start which of your group is going to take on which role before you can proceed. Let's look at them in more detail.

NARRATOR – This person is in charge of detailing the world of Summerland. They present the other players with the facts of the setting. They construct the challenges that the player characters face within the game. They also adjudicate the actions of other characters and play the roles of those characters. In a sense they are the director and editor of the story being created. Narrating a game can be a challenge but also immensely rewarding. One prerequisite is a clear understanding of the mechanics of the game, as it's the narrator who has the job of making final rulings about any aspects of the game system.

PLAYERS – The players take on the roles of the starring characters in the story that they and the narrator create. They are literally the focus of the setting. Playing a character can be great fun, and there is certainly



less of a requirement to understand the game system than that which lies with the narrator. However, the challenge is to actually think about the character you are playing and to act out that character to the other members of your group. This isn't as easy as it seems, but it's the reason playing a character in a game can be such fun.

Have a chat among yourselves as to who wants to take on each role. Perhaps you'll alternate narrators between several people as the game continues, or perhaps one of you feels they are best suited to the role. Either way, you need to make the decision about who does what before you can proceed any further.

THEMES AND PLAYING STYLES

The next thing to consider is the themes and playing styles that will influence your game. The theme of redemption is key to Summerland and provides the main focus of play, but how this theme is presented in the game depends very much on the desires of the players. The setting of Summerland can accommodate many different themes, and it is not unknown for all to come up during play. However, usually one or two will be dominant in the stories you tell. The world of Summerland can be presented in several different ways, depending on which aspects of the setting come to the fore during play. Below are listed three examples of common themes and play styles that fit well with the background of Summerland.

COMMON THEMES

HORROR – Summerland is a post-apocalyptic game; civilisation has been destroyed and the heights of mankind's achievements have been brought low. What's more, terrors stalk the forests in the form of beasts, spirits and feral men. This theme focuses on the horror of the setting, concentrating on isolation, the desolation of the world, and the slow decay of humanity. There are plenty of horror films set in dark, ominous woods that feature this theme, as well as films that feature decayed humanity preying on those left. Games that feature a strong horror theme might feature trips to decayed storehouses overrun with feral humans, the defence of a human community from a horde of bestial attackers, or conflicts with dysfunctional drifters from other communities who wish to steal women and children from their homes. Horror as a theme can also be used to

concentrate less on the setting and more on the individuals within the setting; the degradation of the drifters themselves as they are perverted by the weight of the emotional scars they bear is an example of a powerful theme.

HOPE – In this theme, it is the hope for humanity that dominates. The world may have been changed and civilisation lost, but mankind survives and endures. This theme focuses on hope for the future, regeneration, renewal and the indomitable human spirit. Games featuring hope as a strong theme might also touch on redemption, as suffering drifters come to terms with their issues and are healed. Often in literature and films hope is juxtaposed with horror to create dramatic tension. Games that feature hope as a dominant theme might feature the rescue of a community from a band of wild animals, searching out equipment to build rudimentary medical facilities for a community, or forging ties with neighbouring communities and restoring links. On a personal level, this theme is always going to be a part of Summerland where the redemption and healing of drifter player characters is the main goal of play.

MAGIC – The world of Summerland can be viewed as a magical place, certainly the Event was other-worldly and many of the beasts of the forest are not like their mundane counterparts. The discovery of secrets dominates in this theme, as do encounters with other-worldly beings and places. Magic as a theme ties strongly to the themes of horror and hope as in many works of literature other worlds can be miraculous or perilous places. This theme focuses perhaps less on the individual and more on the setting, picking out intriguing components of the new world rather than concentrating on the beliefs and concerns of individuals. Games that involve a strong focus on magic might include investigations into the mysteries of the deep woods, encounters with magical creatures and the revelation of secrets regarding the sea of trees.

STYLES OF PLAY

ACTION/ADVENTURE – In this style of play, action and adventure dominate the game. Similar to an action film, the characters are involved heavily with combating threats such as other drifters, feral humans and the creatures of the forest. Guns and other weapons are prominent, as are places where they might be found. Little emphasis is placed on creating



three-dimensional characters; instead it's what those characters actually do that's important. Naturally it's conflict and confrontation that drives action games.

INVESTIGATIVE/DISCOVERY – This style of play focuses on solving mysteries, be they as simple as who's been seen spying on the community or as complex as the nature of the Sea of Leaves itself. Here we are less concerned with conflict and confrontation and more with mystery and discovery, so weaponry is likely to be far less prominent.

SURVIVALIST – In this style of play, we focus on the survival of the player characters and by extension all of humanity as the main thrust of the game. Scavenging equipment, rebuilding communities and defending against attack become the main events of the game. Here each player character is likely to be an all-rounder, capable of holding their own in many situations, but relying on the strength of the group to make it through the big stuff.

We've included only three examples of theme and style here, so feel free to expand on the list. Before play, the players and the narrator should discuss their ideas and decide which themes and styles they would like to have as the focus of their game. Review the options presented here (as well as any others that come up) and order them in terms of their importance in your game. It's likely that all sorts of themes and styles of play will come up in play, but usually one or the other will dominate. Doing this helps the narrator to create adventures that everyone will enjoy and assure that players are taking part in the kind of games they want to play.

Example of theme and style choices

James, Tom and Nancy are going to play a game with Rich as their narrator. Before proceeding with character creation, they review the themes and styles presented here. Looking at the list of themes Tom and Nancy like the sound of a game that features hope, suggesting that the game focuses on their efforts to rebuild the lives of the members of the shattered communities. James likes the idea of horror as a factor in the game, pointing out that the feral humans known as the Wild would make creepy adversaries, and Rich agrees that a game with a focus on horror would be fun to moderate. They therefore order

the themes for their game as hope – horror – magic, with hope being the primary focus of play.

Looking at the play styles, they decide that the order survivalist – action – investigation suits their game, as the idea of scavenging brings home the post-apocalypse feel they all like. Rich now has an idea of the kind of game they all want to play.

CREATING CHARACTERS

Now that everyone's roles and the theme and style of your game have been decided, the players need to create their alter egos in the game. Player characters (PCs, also just referred to as characters) are the figures through which players interact with the world of Summerland. The personalities of these characters are the roles players adopt during play, their focus within the game. It is the choices players make for their characters and how those characters interact that creates the story. Creating characters can be a shared experience, and building from each other's ideas can help to create a more interesting group of people. Remember to include the narrator in the design process, as they have an important part to play in creating the game everyone will play.

In Summerland characters are described by a series of words, phrases and numbers that put into context what they can do and how they can do it, all within the framework of the rules. Some of the terms used here won't be completely clear until you read the next section of this book that describes gameplay, but you'll find that most are fairly self-explanatory. It is suggested that you read the whole book before you make up a character, as some of the decisions you make here will strongly influence what your character can do in the game.

There is a character sheet at the end of this book. Take a look at it now to see how a character is laid out in Summerland.

DRIFTERS

As previously discussed, all the characters portrayed by players are drifters, the generic name given to anyone able to travel into the Sea of Leaves and sleep safely within the woods, being resistant the siren song of the Call, the strange lure that draws people away from family

and friends and into the depths of the forest. Drifters aren't immune to the Call, and through their actions can become exposed and succumb to it, becoming lost and eventually wild, but they are certainly far more impervious than others in the remaining human communities. In the case of player characters the reason for their resistance is that they have been hardened – physiologically damaged by some event in their past. This has made them highly resistant to the Call, but left them mentally scarred and unstable. This is the great irony of most drifters' lives; only through exposing and prodding at the pain that haunts them can they serve a purpose, but in doing so they alienate themselves from other people and forego a permanent home.

It's important to remember that drifter player characters are not great heroes or especially gifted individuals with incredible abilities or skills; they are just ordinary people who are more resistant to the lure of the Call due to some past trauma. They could be just like you or your friends or family, only they are bowed by the weight of their physiological issues. Before the Sea of Leaves covered the land they may have been computer programmers, housewives, real estate agents or teachers. They might be friendly, reserved, sporty or couch potatoes. They are more or less normal people thrust into a bizarre world. Since the Event they will have evolved significantly, but at their heart they are still just normal, if unhappy, people. Remember that when you are visualising your character for the first time. What were they, and what have they become?

The rules here are for the creation of drifter characters. Creating the other characters found in the game, the non-player characters (NPCs) controlled by the narrator, follows pretty much the same steps, but without some of the detail, especially regarding their past and their mental state.

STEPS IN CHARACTER CREATION

There are a series of simple steps that should be followed when generating a character in Summerland. They are fairly straightforward, and are outlined below.

IMAGINE YOUR CHARACTER – Picture them in your head. Who are they? What are they like? Who were their parents? Are they friendly or reserved,

jovial or sober? This mental image is your map to guide you in creating your alter ego in Summerland.

THINK OF A NAME – Give someone a name and automatically the image of them solidifies into a person.

DEFINE THEIR QUALITIES – Each character in Summerland is defined by four linked qualities, two of which are mental qualities, and two are physical qualities. These broadly describe the capabilities of the character, what they can and cannot do. The four qualities are mind, empathy, body and finesse. Each has a numerical value, but more on that later.

DEFINE THEIR TAGS – A character's tags describe how their abilities work and how others perceive them, giving an angle on how a character operates. We use descriptive words to describe a character's tags.

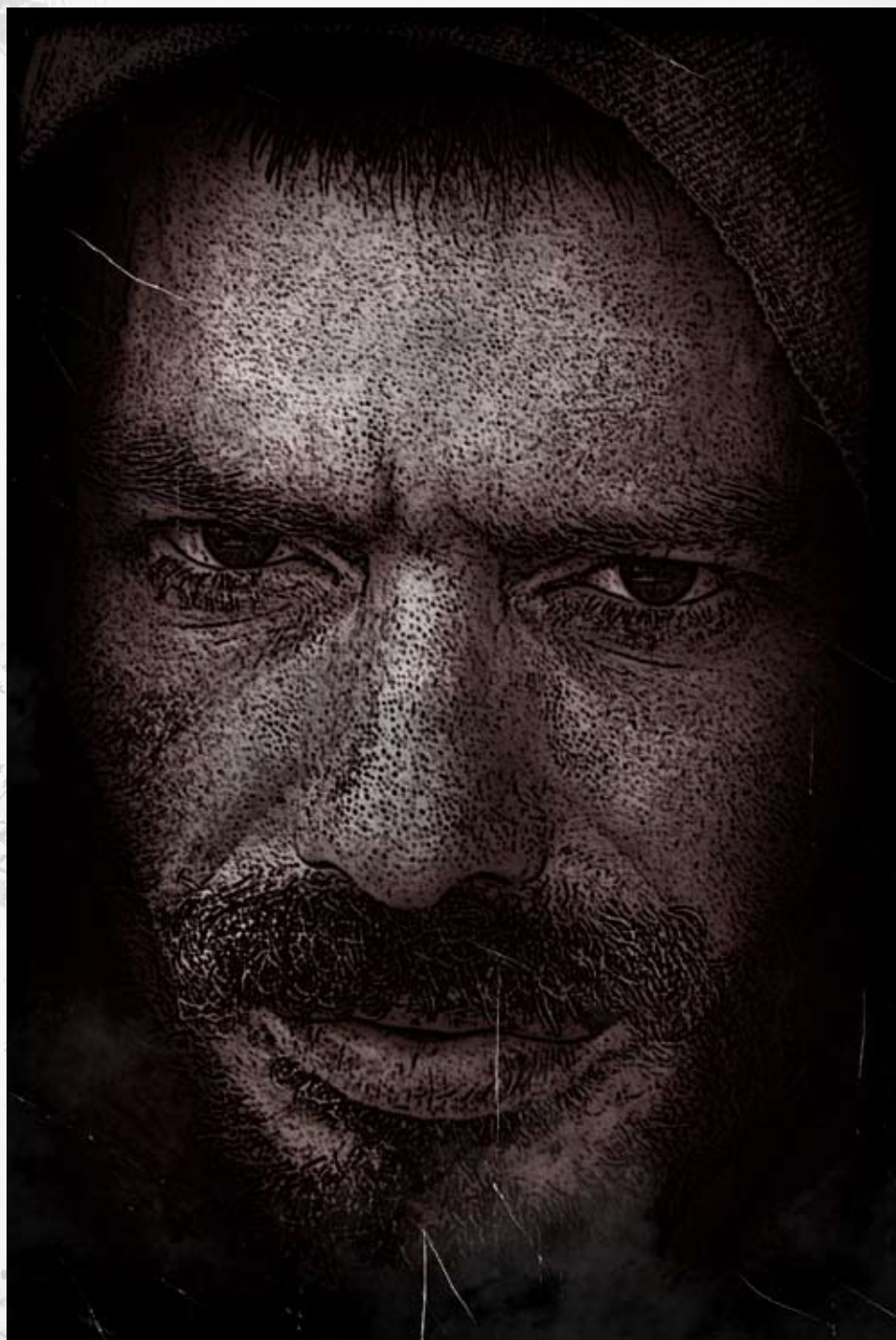
DEFINE THEIR PAST – Here we define the past event that hardened a drifter character to the Call of the Sea of Leaves. What was it that inured them to call? What event shields them from the lure of the Sea of Leaves? We define this with a short description.

DEFINE WHAT THEY OWN – Although most of us have a whole world of material possessions, most people in Summerland don't, either because those things are worthless or because you can find them simply lying around now that the world is covered by the Sea of Leaves. Here we describe only the most precious of items that help to define a person, as well as a few mechanically important devices they may own, such as tools that help them use their skills.

And we're done! It may seem a lot of work, but actually creating a character is pretty simple. OK, now we've considered the overall process, let's look at the steps in detail.

STEP 1 - CONCEPT, NAME AND PAST

First we need to come up with a concept for our character. Picture them in your mind. This is pretty key to the process of character creation so try to come up with a concept that interests you and represents the type of person you would want to play. To help you along, here are some



examples of important questions to ask about your character.

What do they look like?

How old are they?

What do they like?

Where are they from?

Why are they here?

From questions like these you can draw up a mental image of your character that can then act as a template through the rest of the character creation process.

The next thing to do is give your character a name. This will help to make your character more real – give something a name and it's automatically more solid. Any name that takes your fancy will do, a proper name, a nickname, anything.

Thinking about the image of your character, give them a past. Describe in a few words what they were before the Event. Think of all the things that define us as people – jobs, family, friends and roots. Think about your character and see what fits your image.

Character creation example

Continuing our example, James is now making his first character for Summerland. Thinking about the setting, he thinks a young kid, fresh out of college thrust into the world of a drifter would be a fun choice. So, picturing his character, he comes up with a football player, tall, slim, with an athletic build but cold, hard eyes. He's called Jimmy Dent, and he's from Littleham. He has family around the town of Lucksborough, where the game is to be set, and was visiting home mid-semester when everything changed.

STEP 2 - QUALITIES

A character's qualities describe just what they are capable of doing. There are four qualities that describe four different areas of expertise, each with an associated value. Qualities encompass the natural physical ability of the character as well as any skills or knowledge they may have picked up through their life. Each is described below, along with some examples of where it might be used. In every case, the larger the value associated with

a quality, the more adept the character is at doing things that involve that quality. There are two physical qualities called body and finesse, and two mental qualities called mind and empathy.

BODY – This quality describes the raw physical potential of the character's body as well as any physical skills they may have picked up. It is used in tasks that require pure physicality for their success.

High body value – a sportsman, a weightlifter or an endurance runner;
low body value – a weakling, a disabled person or an elderly person.

Examples of actions that might use body

Breaking down a door, lifting a heavy weight, climbing, running, punching someone, intimidating someone, and walking a long distance.

FINESSE – This quality describes the character's physical finesse, including such concepts as balance, nimbleness, dexterity and poise. It is used in tasks that require the careful and controlled application of the physical form for their success.

High finesse value – a fencer, a gymnast or a pianist; low finesse value – a clumsy oaf, a thug or small child.

Examples of actions that might use finesse

Picking a lock, using a rapier, balancing on a beam, tying an intricate knot, playing most sports, and aiming a rifle.

MIND – The mind quality describes not only pure intellect and the ability to think rationally and logically, but also gives an idea of retained knowledge. It is used in tasks that require planning, specialist knowledge or just a lot of thinking. Sometimes the narrator will rule that a character just won't know something if it's really specialised, unless they have an appropriate tag (more on this later). The mind quality relates more to general knowledge.

High mind value – a professor, an accountant or a military commander;
low mind value – an idiot, a school kid or an animal.

Examples of actions that might use mind

Arguing with someone, planning an engineering project, remembering your route through the woods, and fixing a computer operating system.

EMPATHY – This quality is used in any task that involves influencing how another person or creature thinks, feels or behaves. It is used in tasks that rely on a character's influence, leadership and standing.

High empathy value – your best friend, your mother or a social worker;
low empathy value – a cold hearted person, a murderer, or your ex.

Examples of actions that might use empathy

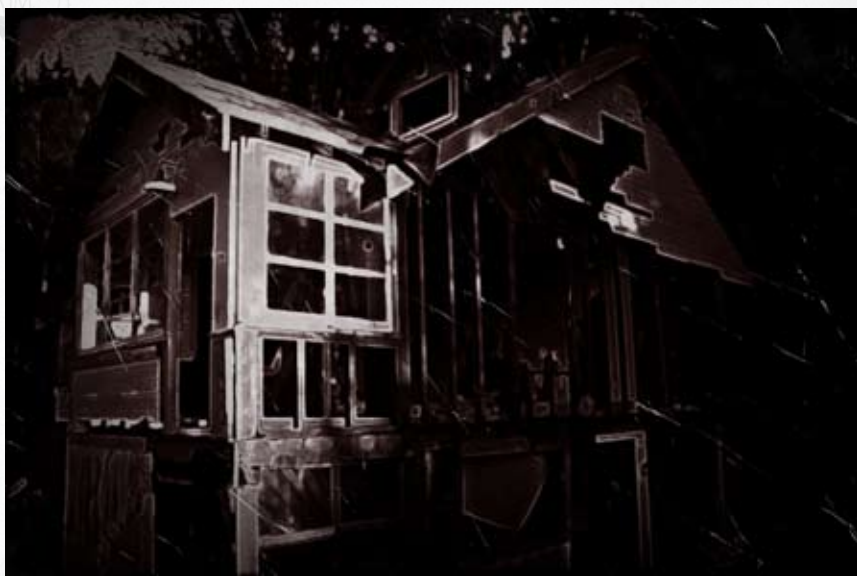
Persuading someone to help you, calming a restless horse, asserting your leadership over a group, issuing orders, and acting.

CHOOSING THE VALUE OF QUALITIES

When we create a character, we must assign values to each of the four qualities, picking values that best suit our image of our character. We have 20 points to split between each of the qualities, spending on a one to one basis. The maximum value we can have for a quality is 8 and the lowest value is 2. Below is a table to give you an idea of what a quality value means.

QUALITY VALUE	MEANING
1	CRIPPLED
2	VERY WEAK
3	NOTICEABLY DEFICIENT
4	BELOW AVERAGE
5	AVERAGE PERSON
6	GOOD SHAPE
7	EXCELLENT SHAPE
8	EXCEPTIONAL
9	PHENOMENAL

With 20 points to spend, the average value will be 5.



Character creation example part 2

So James is creating Jimmy Dent, a football player. James considers Jimmy and assigns his 20 points' worth of qualities.

Body 6 – Jimmy is in good shape, he still works out a little.

Finesse 7 – as a footballer, Jimmy knows how to use his body to the best advantage.

Mind 4 – not the sharpest, Jimmy relies on brawn rather than brains.

Empathy 3 – sad thing is, Jimmy's a bit selfish and not well liked.

Already we have a good image of Jimmy in our mind.

STEP 3 - TAGS

Tags are single words or short phrases that describe how a quality value relates to a character. For example, if a character has a high body score, does that mean he's big, strong, fat, or a lean, high endurance athlete? They also tell us about any training, skills or abilities the character has. Tags give us a way of picturing our character and separating them from others with similar quality values, and they are used in game play to help describe how a character achieves their goals. Tags also have values - more on this later.

For each quality, look at the value associated with it and consider the mental image you have of your character. For each quality we assign a single tag apart from the highest quality, where we assign two tags.

Tags can be: Descriptive, negative, related to the character's past or job, related to hobbies or sports skills, or representative of specialist skills. For the tag, write down a few words or a short phrase that describes how that quality value relates to your character, i.e. how they display that quality. The only rule is one of the tags assigned to the character must be negative. Let's look at the different kinds of tag in more detail.

DESCRIPTIVE TAGS

So, your character has a high body score. Is that because they are big, obese, extremely muscular, or whippet-thin with a toned runner's physique? This kind of tag can include negative tags (see below) if appropriate.

Example of descriptive tags

A character with a high body score might be tall, stocky, muscular or toned.

NEGATIVE TAGS

A negative tag doesn't mean a useless tag; it just means something that most people would say was a negative point. For example, a negative mind tag might be 'ignorant', meaning a bigoted, stuck-in-your-ways kind of attitude. Although negative tags might not seem that useful, they do have a use in conflicts as they act as a shield against interference from other characters. Furthermore, a negative tag can be useful for the narrator when they are describing how and why a character failed to do something. Generally, the lower a character's particular quality, the more likely they are to have negative tags associated with it.

Every character must have at least one negative tag related to one of their qualities.

Example of the use of a negative tag

For Greg's character Alex, he has the negative mind trait 'bigoted' listed. This certainly isn't going to help him appreciate other world views, but if the leader of a rival group of drifters was trying to persuade him to join them and Alex

doesn't want to do this, Greg can point out that Alex is bigoted and hates strangers as he considers them untrustworthy. The narrator would then allow Greg to use Alex's bigoted tag in the conflict.

Example of the use of a negative tag in describing consequences

Greg now wants Alex to befriend a guy who is holed up in a factory filled with a ton of food. Looking over his tags, the narrator states that if the conflict fails it's because Alex couldn't hide his bigoted nature.

LIFE AND JOB BASED TAGS

If your character was trained to do a certain specialist profession, you can tag it. Think about the job they had before the Event. What did they do for a living? Did that give them some useful, positive abilities that they might be able to utilise later on? Use that as a tag next to the most appropriate quality so you can bring it out in play. Past and job-based tags should be fairly broad in their application.

Examples of life and job based tags

A one-time doctor could have a 'medic' tag next to the mind quality, a old soldier could have an 'armed combat' tag next to the finesse quality, and a social worker might have the 'talk down' tag next to their empathy quality.

HOBBY OR SPORTS TAGS

Give your character a tag that tells us something about what they do or did in their spare time. This might come in useful, and also serves to flesh out the character and give them a little depth.

Examples of hobby or sports tags

A character might have 'endurance runner' next to the body quality, 'guitarist' next to the finesse quality, or 'philosopher' next to the mind quality.

SPECIALIST SKILL TAGS

This is just a catch-all for any specialist skills or abilities you think your character should have. This includes things that are not covered by a past profession, and might be new skills they've picked up since the arrival of the Sea of Leaves.

Examples of specialist skill tags

A character might have 'astronomy' next to the mind quality, 'making bows' next to the finesse quality or 'writing poetry' next to the empathy quality as specialist skills.

TAG VALUES

All tags start with a value equal to half of that of the quality to which they relate, rounded down. Make a note of the tag values next to each one.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH TAGS?

Tags help characters to achieve their goals by describing the knowledge and skills that they have at their disposal. Characters attempting actions for which they lack an appropriate tag suffer a penalty in their ability to perform that action – more on this later.

Character creation example part 3

We already know the qualities of Jimmy Dent, the college football player. Now James needs to assign tags to each quality.

Body 6 – muscular (descriptive) 3.

Finesse 7 – fast (descriptive) 3, great endurance (descriptive) 3 (two tags as this is Jimmy's highest quality).

Mind 4 – forgetful (negative) 2.

Empathy 3 – confident (descriptive) 1.

STEP 4 - THE PAST

Drifters can travel beneath the Sea of Leaves in relative safety because they have suffered a psychological trauma in the past that has hardened their minds to the Call. Only through bearing the scars of this trauma can they continue to serve their friends, their families and their community.

Here we define the past event that hardened a drifter character to the Call of the Sea of Leaves by creating a short description of the trauma. The event should be something horrific and damaging to the character, something that they cannot easily forget or get over. Give it some thought as the trauma in many ways defines the character.



Given the way the Sea of Leaves appeared and essentially destroyed civilisation, it shouldn't be too hard to think of a traumatic event, as everybody lost something to the trees. Once you have thought of an appropriate event, make a very short note of it, just a couple of words that sum up what happened. You'll see on the character sheet a number of lines listed under the title of trauma. Use the top line only for now, making as short a note of the event as possible. What you write can be cryptic, vague and ambiguous, a mere glimpse of the hurt that has affected the character so badly. The key is not to be too specific – you will get to describe and embellish the trauma in more detail during play, and the other lines under trauma on the character sheet are for that purpose. Keep it brief and to the point at first – a taster to the revelation of what damaged your character and turned them into a drifter.

Next, think about why your character became a drifter in the first place. Have they always been a drifter, or were they kicked out of a community for something they did? What happened to them? Make a note of this on the character sheet. This will help to colour how the character sees human settlements, and how those people view the character.

You then need to record the character's starting value on the trauma scale that describes how the event in their past affects the character's

relationship with other people. This value starts at 5 and goes down during play. The aim of the game is to reduce the value to 0, whereupon the character becomes acceptable into what remains of human society. The trauma value is recorded on the sliding scale on the character sheet.

Character creation example part 4

We know Jimmy is a cold-hearted guy who played football at college. So what's in his past that hardened him to the emotional pull of the Sea of Leaves? Thinking about this, James decides that when something bad happened to Jimmy's little sister he could have helped her but didn't. He makes a note of this as 'blames himself for his sister' on his character sheet. What did happen to his sister? No need to work that out now, it will come out in play. He then thinks about what happened to Jimmy, and decides that he was kicked out of the community he found himself in just after the Event for picking a fight with someone who made a joke about his family. James makes a quick note of this on the character sheet.

James makes a note of his starting trauma scale value of 5.

Characters also have a value that describes how emotionally controlled they are, recorded on the stress scale on the character sheet. As they expose and relive past traumas they risk become increasingly out of control until they eventually crack. At the start of the game, characters have a value on the stress scale of 5.

STEP 5 - POSSESSIONS

Summerland isn't the sort of game where we rigidly define what characters own, how much they can carry and the like. After all, there are plenty of useful things either lying around after the Event or available from abandoned shops, factories and warehouses. All characters start with a selection of outdoor clothes and equipment such as you might find in a camping store, like tents, a stove, a compass and some dried food, typically in a small backpack. What we need to do now is describe one or two key items that help to define the character. This could be useful stuff, like a doctor's medical bag, sentimental items like an old favourite pocket watch or emotional baggage like a picture of a lost child. Think about how your character is going to be presented to the world. Is there something that helps to define them?

Character creation example part 6

Viewing Jimmy's character sheet, James notes that he has two important possessions along with his outdoor stuff – an old photograph of his sister that he keeps in his breast pocket, and a football.

WE'RE DONE!

If you followed these steps through you should now be in possession of a character ready to play Summerland. You have thought about who they are, and what they can do, what trauma has made them capable of travelling the Sea of Leaves and why they left their last community. Once every player has made a character the game can begin. First, however, the narrator will need to understand how all those numbers defined in character creation are used in the game.

NARRATOR INVOLVEMENT IN PLAYER CHARACTER CREATION

One of the most exciting parts of any role-playing game for players is creating characters. These are the focal point of their experiences of the game, and it is through them that players get to act out their part in the shared story they and the narrator create. The narrator isn't responsible for creating player characters, but they do have an important part to play in the process – it is the narrator the players turn to for advice and adjudications when creating their character. Here is some advice for the narrator in helping players create characters that shine in the setting.

CREATING A PICTURE

The narrator should try their best to make sure the players really focus on their character first and foremost. Picturing them in the mind makes all the other choices easy, giving a smooth, hassle-free creation process. Some players will be better at this than others, so the narrator is encouraged to put a little work in here where needed, offering suggestions and options to reticent players.

CHOOSING APPROPRIATE TAGS

Assigning values to qualities is easy. Assigning tags is a little trickier. The purpose of tags is not only to mechanically give characters reasons for making tasks easier, but also to describe just how or why the character finds that task easier. Players need to give their characters tags that are

useful as well as being interesting and characterful. There's little point in having a descriptive but mechanically useless tag such as 'spiky hair', but very broad and bland tags such as 'big' aren't that much fun either. Encourage the players to think up useful tags for their characters that not only contribute to their abilities but also help to describe how the character behaves.

HAUNTED BY THE PAST

The idea of traumas is an important concept in Summerland – it is through resolving traumas that player characters heal themselves sufficiently to be accepted into a human community. Traumas act to focus players on the isolation inherent in Summerland, adding an edge that makes the post-apocalyptic world after the Event that much more real, and provide a goal in play. Importantly, traumas also have a mechanical effect – they help characters to achieve their goals by adding to their abilities. When this happens the character will be slowly healing themselves of their trauma, but also they will become more open to the influence of the Call. The narrator should try to help players pick traumas that are first and foremost interesting, and that can be called upon during play. If the player picks something really obscure as their trauma, the narrator is going to have to shoehorn in situations where that trauma can be used. Instead players should be encouraged to choose traumas that make sense in the setting and that will be useful in a reasonable number of occasions given the themes and style of the game, thereby making the trauma an active instead of a passive part of the player's experience.

DON'T GET TIED UP ASSIGNING EQUIPMENT

The narrator shouldn't place too much emphasis on equipment. Summerland isn't the sort of game where keeping track of what the characters own should be of any real importance, except for a few key things. Very personal items, weapons and ammunition are all worth noting down, but most other possessions can be kept track of in a very general way (for example 'camp gear' might mean tent, small stove and sleeping bag). Don't get drawn into the details – if the items you're describing aren't going to add to the drama of play, forget them. Depending on the type of game you are playing, most characters will have access to some kind of gun, typically a pistol or rifle, and some ammunition.



CREATING CHARACTERS IS FUN!

Make sure that for everyone involved the process of creating characters is interesting and fun. If people aren't enjoying the process, it's probably because they don't understand exactly what they have to do – it's the narrator's job to make sure this doesn't happen.

PLAYING THE GAME

In common with most role-playing games Summerland uses dice to resolve situations during play. This introduces a level of uncertainty into the game. Essentially, dice are rolled when characters attempt to impose themselves on the environment or on other characters. From uncertainty comes tension, and from tension comes drama – a requirement of any story. In this chapter we'll look at how to use dice to resolve actions and conflicts in Summerland, and how the numbers listed on the character sheet are used in play.

WHEN DO WE ROLL DICE?

Dice are used when characters attempt to shape the environment or interfere with the actions of other characters. For example, a character building a raft might require dice to be rolled as they try to travel downriver, or a character's attempt to persuade a drifter from another community to give them vital medical supplies might also mean a die roll.

When dice are rolled it represents a split in the direction of the story. One of those paths is that of success – what happens if the character gets things their way. The other path is that of failure – what happens if the character gets it wrong. If the paths resulting from success and failure are the same, don't roll the dice. This may seem a little counter-intuitive, but think of it this way. If a mechanic is attempting to fix a damaged car and has all the time in the world to do it, then unless there are mitigating circumstances they are going to get the job done. We could break the repair down into lots of separate dice rolls to see if they successfully repair all the individual components, but there is little point – if the mechanic fails to repair something the first time round, they can just repeat the process. Eventually, they'll successfully repair the car. In this kind of situation the success and failure of all those rolls would lead to the same overall result, so there is little point in rolling dice. Let common sense prevail here – we want dramatic tension in the game, not just endless meaningless dice rolling. However, if the result of a character's action affects the direction in which the story will progress, then that is when we want to roll the dice.



Examples of dice affecting the direction of a story

A player controlling a character that is attempting to drive off an onrushing wolf might describe how he hopes to wound the wolf and drive it away. If the character fails to drive off the wolf, the narrator describes how the wolf leaps up on the character and brings them down in a fury of snapping jaws. With success or failure, the direction the story is taking will change.

SCENES

In Summerland play is divided into scenes, just like in a novel or film. Each scene describes a different circumstance that the characters find themselves in. Scenes can be further divided into action scenes and linking scenes. Any scene that involves rolling dice to resolve actions and conflicts is called an action scene. A linking scene provides colour, no dice are rolled and the scene is used simply to connect actions scenes together. Action scenes are the heart of the game.

ACTIONS AND CONFLICTS

In action scenes a character is either attempting to shape their environment or is interfering with the behavior of another character. These activities are called either actions or conflicts respectively, and

are generally described in the same way. The person controlling the character describes their intent, i.e. what they want their character to do. The narrator then describes the consequence – what happens if the character fails to do what they want? These are the paths of success and failure described earlier.

TIMING

How much fictional time passes in a scene depends greatly on the nature of those circumstances. A fight might be over in a matter of minutes. A scene where a party is foraging for supplies in the Sea of Leaves might represent several hours (planning to be home before dark). A trek between settlements might take days or weeks. The narrator will determine how much passage of time is appropriate for any given scene, although the players should feel free to suggest that time slow down for parts they're particularly interested in, or speed up for parts they'd rather skip through quickly.

INTENT

The first step in resolving an action or conflict is for whoever controls the character to state what they are trying to do. What is the path of success? This is called the intent – what the character intends to happen if they succeed.

Generally, the intent of an action or conflict should be immediately obvious in the context of the scene. What is the character trying to achieve in the scene? The intent should reflect the very nature of the action or conflict taking place in the scene – it's not appropriate to give an intent that doesn't bear any resemblance to what's going on. The intent must also be a single goal and shouldn't include multiple objectives. At its most basic, the intent of an action should make sense in the context of the story being created.

How much a character can accomplish with a single roll and single statement of intent can be highly variable. It depends on how much an average person would be able to accomplish in the amount of time available in a scene. The narrator is always the final judge on how much can be accomplished and how long it will take to accomplish it. If he



feels that the scale of a player's intent is too long or the scope seeks to accomplish too much the task can always be broken down into smaller pieces.

An effective technique for the narrator is to ask the player "how are you doing that?" as many times as necessary. This will help to break a large or long project into several steps (or sub steps) each of which can be a task and roll by themselves. For example, an intent to "clear a section of the forest" might be broken down into separate rolls for "selling the villagers on the idea", "organizing them and leading them", "scouting the area for hostile animals", or possibly even an entire adventure trying to find enough tools and equipment to make it work. Or, if that part of the story is fast-forwarding through several months of time with a single scene, the narrator can also decide that "clearing a section of the forest" is a perfectly reasonable intent at that scale. The most important standards are: what makes sense within the fiction, and keeping all of the characters (those controlled by the narrator and players alike) operating at about the same scale within each scene. The narrator is always the final judge on what is or is not acceptable as a valid intent.

Sometimes, especially when multiple parties are acting at the same time, it's important to know how long actions and conflicts take. The narrator always adjudicates this, and common sense should prevail. Conflicts especially can represent protracted periods of activity rather than a single shot of a gun or heated debate – typically, in these situations a conflict could be thought of as lasting at least a minute. During this time, characters not involved in the conflict could perform several very short actions at the narrator's discretion.

In the case of conflicts between characters, intents for both participants can be very similar. In conflicts, consequences are also a little different – more on this later.

Example of a poor choice of intent

In a debate between Jason's character and a drifter, a poor choice of intent would be persuading the drifter give him his gun, help him to the nearest settlement and then to treat his injuries, as it has too many objectives for a single conflict.

In an argument over the leadership of a raiding party between two drifters, a poor choice of intent would be stealing the opponent's rucksack, as it's not really related to what's happening in the scene.

Example of a good choice of intent

In a debate between Jason's character and a drifter, a good choice of intent would be persuading the drifter to give up his gun.

In an argument over leadership of a raiding party between two drifters, a good choice of intent would be forcing the opponent to back down.

If a character succeeds in achieving their intent, they get to narrate just how they did it, adding a little to the story. This could be one of the players or the narrator, depending on who was rolling the dice.

INTENTS TO CAUSE DAMAGE

Any intent to cause harm, physical or mental, is handled by the distress mechanics outlined later in this section. In these cases the intent may be just to beat the opponent and cause damage, but often inflicting distress is either incidental to the actual intent, or just the means by which the intent is accomplished – in either case, the magnitude of that damage is not pre-set but is determined by the distress caused.

Example of using distress

Mark is having a shoot out with a drifter – the man stole his woman, and he's not happy. His intent is to kill the drifter. Only when the dice are rolled will the extent of the damage be known should he succeed.

CONSEQUENCE

The narrator then describes what happens if the test is failed. What is the path of failure? This is called the consequence – what will happen if the character fails?

The narrator also has the task of setting the consequences of failure for the player characters and for their own characters. These are set up front by the narrator before any dice are rolled. In many instances the

consequences of failure are pretty obvious, and this step can be rather quick, but this will not always be the case. This is part of the responsibility of the narrator in the game – describing fairly what the outcome of a situation might be. However, the players may contribute to the scene by suggesting to the narrator possible consequences for characters involved in actions and conflicts.

Example consequences

Rallying your comrades, consequence of failure – they remain dispirited and fearful; stalking a feral man, consequence of failure – he hears your approach.

If the character fails to achieve their intent it is the narrator that narrates what happens. Generally, players only narrate what happens to their characters when they achieve their intent.

ACTIONS, CONFLICTS AND THE SCORE

The player making the roll then generates a value using the numbers written on their character sheet, typically between around 3 and 15. This is called their score. They then determine the outcome in one of two ways, depending on what they are trying to achieve.

If they want to alter or use some aspect of the environment, for example break down a door or climb a wall, we call this an action. If they want to alter or affect the behavior of another character, for example arguing with them or subduing them, we call this a conflict. Resolving actions and conflicts always involves generating the score as the first step. Once the score has been determined dice are then rolled and the outcome narrated, with either the player or the narrator describing the outcome depending on the result.

GENERATING THE SCORE

Players and the narrator generate the score for their characters in the same way, by considering three things listed on the character sheet.

WHICH QUALITY IS MOST APPROPRIATE?

Consider which quality most reflects the character's intent? This should

be fairly obvious in most cases.

Example of picking a quality

Jennifer, Rochelle's character, is attempting to break open a locked door with the intent to escape from a ruined shopping mall and the men searching for her. In this case body makes sense as the most appropriate quality.

Sometimes it will be difficult to decide which of two qualities reflects the character's intent. If this is the case, pick the one you want to use (probably the one with the highest value) and describe just why that quality is most appropriate. Assuming your description makes sense, the narrator should allow it.

Example of choosing between qualities

Rebecca, Lea's character, has a mind quality of 4 and an empathy quality of 5. She's trying to persuade a child lost in a collapsed house that it is safe to crawl through a tight window. She could feasibly reason with the child logically, but that would mean using her weaker mind quality. Instead she describes how she comforts the child and assures her she's safe. The narrator agrees that this makes sense and lets Rebecca use her empathy quality.

WHICH QUALITY TAG MAKES THE MOST SENSE?

Consider any tags listed with the quality selected. Pick one that helps describe how the character is attempting to achieve their intent. If the character doesn't have a tag that would help, ignore the listed tags.

Example of picking a quality tag

Jennifer is using her body quality to attempt to break down the door. Looking at the tags listed by her body, she has 'bulky' and 'ugly' (body is her highest quality so she has two tags). In this situation ugly makes no sense, so Rochelle decides that Jennifer is using her bulk to try to force the door open. If Jennifer had the tag 'tall' instead of 'bulky', she wouldn't have a suitable tag for the task she's attempting.

WHICH OTHER TAG WILL CONTRIBUTE?

The player then chooses another tag associated with a second quality that might help their character achieve their intent. This could be any tag depending on the intent they are trying to achieve, but must be associated

with a different quality to that selected in step one. Again if a character doesn't have suitable tags then ignore this step.

Example of picking a secondary tag

Jennifer is using her body quality to attempt to break down the door using her bulk. Looking at the other tags she has, Rochelle picks the mind tag, 'thoughtful', describing how Jennifer is carefully studying the door for weaknesses before attempting to force it. The narrator thinks whether this is appropriate before agreeing.

ADVICE IN PICKING APPROPRIATE TAGS

Tags are useful for helping us to visualise how characters go about tasks. They are descriptive elements that add to the story. When selecting tags, try to ensure that they make at least some kind of sense in relation to the action being performed. This can be part of the fun of tags, trying to think of how a character might involve a tag in a particular task. However, if a character really doesn't have a useful tag that will contribute, then don't try and shoehorn something in just for the sake of the numbers.

HELP

Some things are a lot easier with a little help. In certain instances, another person can help a character achieve their intent by adding to their score, using one of their own tags (assuming it is appropriate). If one character elects to help another, look over their tags and choose one that is appropriate, adding that tag value to the main participant's score. If the character attempting to help does not have a suitable tag then they can't assist.

Example of help

Mark, a friend, finds Jennifer before her enemies and offers to help her to break through the door to escape. Looking at his tags, Mark selects 'strong' with a value of 2.

Helping another makes the assisting character vulnerable to the consequences of failure. This will of course depend on the action or conflict that is taking place, but often failure means both characters suffer the consequences. The narrator should make this clear to the players of both characters if a shared consequence is likely. This is the risk of



helping – you might succeed in helping a character achieve their intent, but you might also have to suffer the consequences of their failure.

Example of a shared consequence

Mark is helping Jennifer to force the door. The narrator has ruled that the consequence of failure is that the door won't give and the characters will reveal their location to their pursuers. In this case, the consequence is shared regardless of whether Mark assists Jennifer – they are standing together and anything that locates Jennifer through her actions is going to find Mark as well.

Some actions and conflicts won't benefit from help. The narrator must rule when help is appropriate and when it isn't. Also, the narrator and player should decide if it's appropriate for another character to lend a hand. The number of players that can help is limited to one. In bigger tasks that require several pairs of hands – if it is dramatically important to roll dice – split the task into several smaller sub-tasks.

CALCULATING THE SCORE

We end up with a quality, and possibly a tag, associated with that quality and a second tag associated with an unrelated quality. To obtain the score we simply add the value assigned to the quality being used and the values of the tag choices, including help. If a character doesn't have two suitable tags, then only the values of the tags they can use are added.

Score = quality value + up to two tag values + help

The purpose of using a quality and the two tags is to help a player to conceptualize how their character is attempting to achieve their intent. This can be important in making the roll of dice something that adds to the story rather than just being a mechanical action.

Example of generating a score

In the example above, Jennifer is using body with the tag 'bulky', and the mind tag 'thoughtful'. She has a body of 6, a bulky tag of 3, a thoughtful tag of 1 and Mark's tag 'strong' of 2, giving a final score of $6 + 3 + 1 + 2 = 12$.

Example of using the score to add to the story

Looking at her choices of quality and tags, Rochelle describes how Jennifer runs her hands over the door, feeling for weaknesses, thinking about which part of the door is most likely to give, forcing the fear of the men that hunt her from her mind. Guessing that the weak spot will be by the lock, she forces her weight against it, praying that the wood gives way...

So what do we do with the score? That depends on what the character is trying to achieve.

ACTIONS

When a character is attempting to influence their environment we call it an action. When resolving actions, the narrator considers how difficult it is for a character to achieve their intent. Difficulty is assessed as being at one of four levels – routine, difficult, very hard and near impossible. The difficulty must reflect the intent – the more unlikely the intent is to happen, the higher the difficulty. The narrator should consider the character and their abilities and try to assess how likely it is that they will achieve their intent.

Generally, most tasks at which characters have a reasonable chance of success are going to be routine or at most difficult. Very hard tasks are going to fail most of the time, whereas near impossible tasks are very likely to fail. The narrator should make sure that the difficulty level they select is a fair reflection of the task and the character. Any tools the character has should also be considered when assessing the difficulty level.

For an action, the difficulty reflects how likely it is that the participant will achieve their intent. Note that in an action the difficulty never drops lower than routine (except when traumas are invoked, see later), as this would reflect a simple task where rolling dice is no longer dramatically appropriate.

Example of setting a difficulty for an action

Jane's character Mary is trying to outrun some angry members of a community where she stole some food. The narrator considers the situation. Mary is described as a large girl, and she's carry a pretty big rucksack on her back. Loosing them is going to be extremely tricky. Considering this, the narrator

decides that the task is going to be very hard for her.

Bruce, a huge guy with a body of 7 and 'scrapper' as a body tag, is attempting to move a fallen beam lodged in place with rubble. Looking at the character sheet, the narrator states that given Bruce's size and brawn, this action would be of routine difficulty level.

HOW MANY DICE ARE ROLLED?

The difficulty is used to determine how many dice are rolled, as shown below.

Routine – two dice

Difficult – three dice

Very hard – four dice

Near impossible – five dice

RECONSIDERING INTENTS IN ACTIONS

The player involved in the action now has a choice – they can accept the difficulty assigned by the narrator, or they can reconsider their intent if they think the task is too hard or the consequences too harsh. Only when they have accepted the difficulty that the narrator assigned is their intent final. Often a player will reconsider their options several times before settling on their actions. This is fine!

Example of changing intent in an action

After the narrator told Jane how difficult it would be for her character Mary to outrun the men in the forest, she changes her intent for Mary. Now she's just going to try and hide in a nearby wrecked car. The narrator considers the new situation and decides that difficulty of hiding from her pursuers is now routine.

THE OUTCOME

Once the dice are rolled, the values on the dice are added together and the result compared to the character's final score.

The character achieves their intent if the dice result is lower than their final score.

So in every case, low results are best.

If the character achieves their intent, their player gets to describe the next sequence of events, relating how the character achieved their goal and tying in the quality and various tags used. If the character fails to achieve their intent, the narrator describes the consequences of the failure.

Example of an action

Back to Jennifer and the door. Her final score was:

Body of 6, a bulky tag of 3 and a thoughtful tag of 1, plus 2 from Mark's help, giving a final score of 12.

Will, the narrator, states that the door is reinforced which would normally make the task near impossible. Luckily, Jennifer is armed with a crowbar so the difficulty is reduced to very hard. Accordingly, 4 dice will be rolled and the consequence of failure will be that the door wouldn't budge and Jennifer will make a lot of noise trying to open it, alerting whatever stalks her as to her whereabouts.

Rochelle, Jennifer's player, agrees to this and rolls the dice getting 10. This means she has achieved her intent and gets to narrate what happens. Rochelle describes how Jennifer finds a weak spot after studying the door and works the crowbar against it with Mark's help, hearing a gratifying crack as the wood gives way. Lucky she rolled less than 12!

AUTOMATIC SUCCESS

When characters generate scores of thirteen or greater, it is not possible for them to fail a routine task where they are required to roll twelve or less on two dice. This is OK, as the score represents how adept the character is at performing the task. It is important, however, that the player or narrator controlling the character still rolls the dice, as in certain instances the actual values that are obtained on the dice can have a mechanical effect on play. This is discussed in detail later when we talk about traumas.

CONFLICTS

Sometimes characters are not attempting to influence their environment, they are in direct conflict with an opponent. Typically this might be a fight, a heated argument or an attempt to persuade another to take a different point of view. The method of determining who achieves their intent in these situations is very similar to that described above with a few slight changes, but the consequences are resolved differently. The final score for each character is determined in pretty much the usual manner; it's how we describe and resolve the contest that's different.

Only two participants may be involved in a conflict at any one time. Should other player characters get involved, all they can do is give help to the one of the main participants.

The narrator's characters don't use help. Instead their numbers are considered as part of assessing the difficulty level of them achieving their intent.

Conflicts may be resolved in a single die roll or may take multiple rolls, depending on the nature of the conflict, the pacing of the scene and the context of the story being told – as usual the narrator is always the final adjudicator of how a conflict is to be played out. The winner gains their intent. There is no set consequence of losing a conflict; instead the loser suffers the intent of the winner, and may also be damaged in the process using the distress mechanics.

CONCEDING CONFLICTS

Participants in conflicts may concede at any point before the dice are rolled. As soon as a character concedes, they automatically lose the conflict and their opponent achieves their intent. However, they do not suffer any physical or mental distress (more on this later). No one in a conflict may concede once the dice have been rolled; at that point it is too late to back out.

Example of conceding

Jim and Tom are arguing, and Tom's pushing Jim to resolve the argument as a conflict. Jim could agree and roll the dice but instead he concedes, giving Tom the victory and agreeing with his argument but preserving himself from



distress.

INTENT AND CONSEQUENCES IN CONFLICTS

In a conflict both participants state their intent. The intent can be anything actively opposed by the other participant, such as the desire to cause harm or to gain some other advantage beyond mere hurt. Importantly, in a conflict the two intents from the participants will be directly opposed and mutually exclusive – only one participant can achieve their intent. However, consequences are not described in the same way as actions because in a conflict the main price of failure for the loser is suffering the intent of the winner.

Examples of intents and consequences in conflicts

Billy is scuffling with a feral man. Billy's intent is to force off the Wild man with his baseball bat, while his opponent's intent is to knock Billy over and pin him down. For Billy, failure in the conflict means being pinned by his opponent. For the feral man, failure in the conflict means being clubbed back by Billy.

Damage, whether it be physical, emotional or in some other form, is represented by distress. The determination and effects of distress are covered later in this section.

DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF CONFLICTS

In a conflict between two opponents final scores are determined for both participants. As with actions, player characters can give help to each participant in a conflict.

NEGATIVE TAGS IN CONFLICTS

The tags selected by participants in a conflict may actively help them to achieve their own intent, as is the case with actions. However, it is possible for a character to select their own negative tags to act as a shield to prevent an opponent from achieving their intent. In this sense negative tags might represent a character's inability to accept a reasoned argument or to connect emotionally with another character.

Example of negative tag selection in a conflict

The leader of a group of drifters is attempting to persuade Dave to join their

group, something Dave is trying to avoid. The leader's intent is to persuade Dave to join whereas Dave's intent is to persuade the leader to leave him alone. Dave's negative empathy tag 'antisocial' works in his favour in this instance as Dave's player states how his character's negative attitude is putting the other guy off. Considering this, the narrator allows Dave to use the negative tag as one of his tag choices in the conflict.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS IN CONFLICTS

The player or narrator controlling each participating character then rolls a number of dice depending on how difficult it would be for their character to achieve their intent, just as with actions.

Routine – two dice

Difficult – three dice

Very hard – four dice

Near impossible – five dice

In a conflict, the narrator should look at the intent of each participant and consider which intent is most likely to be the outcome of the conflict. In most cases both participants face an equal difficulty, in which case they are assigning the same difficulty value – routine, so they both roll two dice. This is the default difficulty for a conflict.

If the conflict is not so evenly balanced, this may be reflected by altering the difficulty levels of the participants. The situation for each participant is considered separately. In play, the narrator should make quick mental lists of pros and cons, the advantages and disadvantages for each of the participants in the action or conflict. This includes the effects of narrative distress (this is outlined later on in this section) and any negative tags that the narrator deems may affect the situation – the narrator should consider these when setting a participant's difficulty level.

Example of setting a difficulty in a conflict

Jane's character Mary is in a conflict with another drifter, as both are trying to persuade a party of travellers that they know the right way to a nearby settlement. Neither is trained at navigation or has been to the place before, so normally both would experience the same difficulty in trying to achieve their intent, which would be routine. However, if Mary had a map with

the location marked on it (assuming she doesn't know their exact location which would make the whole argument moot), her opponent is going to find it much harder persuading the others that she's wrong and he's right. The narrator rules that for Mary that the difficulty remains at routine, but for her opponent the difficulty has increased to very hard (rolling four dice).

Fred and Steve are fighting over whether to kill a drifter who tried to rob them, a conflict with a routine difficulty level. Both will use their Finesse and attack the other's Body quality, using appropriate combat tags. However, Fred has some minor Finesse distress. It's harder to fight when you're tired, so the narrator decides that an extra level of difficulty is appropriate for Fred in the conflict, making it difficult (rolling three dice). However, he's got a knife while Steve is unarmed so that's a disadvantage to Steve. As a result, the narrator rules that Steve's difficulty level is also increased, so they're both facing a difficult conflict and rolling 3 dice. In this case the increased chance of a stalemate (because both fail) is logical given that the conflict describes an unarmed man fighting an exhausted opponent with a knife.

Mike is trying to persuade Jenny to follow him into a ruined building that he thinks contains some weapons. This begins as a Mind conflict with a routine difficulty level. However, Jenny is exhausted – Mike's been dragging her through the forest for hours. The narrator rules that persuading her to enter the building is more difficult as a result, giving Mike a difficulty level of difficult for the conflict. Mike's already lost one argument today – suffering minor Mind distress, which is going to make things even tougher. The narrator assigns a further difficulty level to Mike to represent this. Now Jenny is facing a routine conflict whereas Mike is facing a very hard one.

Bruce is fighting a feral human. His intent is to throttle it, while the feral human's intent is to tear out Bruce's throat. Bruce is a big guy with a body of 7 and a body tag 'scrapping'; the feral human is undernourished. The narrator rules that the likelihood of Bruce achieving his intent is routine, so his player rolls 2 dice. For the feral human the task is considerably more difficult, therefore 3 dice are rolled.

OVERWHELMING NUMBERS IN CONFLICTS

One common occurrence is when one of the sides in a conflict has overwhelming numbers compared to the other. In this situation the



difficulty for both participants will change, as the difficulty level should represent the likelihood of each side achieving their intent.

Example of overwhelming numbers in conflicts

Now Bruce is fighting a pack of feral humans. His intent is to beat them back, while they attempt to bring him down and tear out his throat. Although Bruce is a big guy with a body of 7 and a body tag 'scrapping' and is easily able to handle himself, the feral humans, though undernourished, severely outnumber him. The narrator rules that it is very hard for Bruce to achieve his intent, so his player rolls 4 dice. For the feral humans the task is considerably easier, so 2 dice are rolled.

RECONSIDERING INTENTS IN CONFLICTS

Just as in actions participants always have the option to reconsider their intents before the dice are rolled. Only when they have accepted the difficulty that the narrator assigned is their intent final. If a player reconsiders their intent, the narrator or other players involved in the conflict can reconsider theirs, back and forth several times before everyone is happy with the decisions.

Example of changing intent in a conflict

Mark's character is fighting a bear in hand-to-claw combat! His intent is to harm the bear; the intent of the bear is to harm him. Looking at the situation, the narrator says that without any weapons the difficulty will be near impossible for Mark's character. Deciding against this suicidal act, Mark changes his intent to running away from the beast. The narrator gives this intent a difficulty level of difficult, as the bear, although fast, has only just awoken from hibernation. Mark agrees to this, and they both agree to change the intent of the bear to chasing down Mark's character, which the narrator rules has a difficulty level of difficult for the sleepy bear.

OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT

To determine the outcome of the conflict, look at the difference between what was rolled on the dice and the value of their final score.

The character rolling less than their score by the largest margin wins the contest. If both players fail to roll under their score, then, if possible, neither achieves their intent and the contest is a stalemate; if a stalemate

is not a realistic result, then the dice are re-rolled. Players and the narrator should decide if a stalemate makes sense.

The winner of the conflict then gets to narrate their intent as normal, and the loser suffers the intent of the winner.

Example results of a conflict

Rob and Neil are punching it out, a routine (two dice are rolled) conflict using the body quality (they do this a lot). The intent of each character is to claim the food rations they are fighting over. If both roll and obtain failures, neither grabs the food decisively and they have reached a stalemate. If Rob achieves a success and the other a failure, he beats Neil to the food. If they both achieve success but Neil rolled under is score by a larger value than Rob, Neil wins the conflict and claims the food.

RE-INITIATING CONFLICTS

Generally, a single dice roll should be used to try to resolve conflicts, as often one participant achieving their intent or causing distress to their opponent ends the matter.

However, sometimes this isn't enough, and one participant or the other wants to push home the advantage. It is perfectly acceptable for either participant to try to initiate a second conflict immediately after the first with the same opponent, with the aim of achieving a more comprehensive victory.

Example of re-initiating a conflict

Mark is having a shoot out with a drifter. At the end of the conflict he's wounded the drifter who has suffered minor distress to the Body. However, Mark's Player wants to really finish him, so he starts another conflict with the drifter. In response to Mark's attack, the narrator expresses the drifter's intent to run away from Mark. Mark's player decides this is fair and changes his intent to try and catch the drifter, and a new conflict begins.

INTERRUPTING CONFLICTS

If an outside party interrupts a conflict before sufficient time has passed for it to be concluded, for example by shooting at one participant in an argument, the conflict is cancelled and all intents are ignored. Assume



that they didn't get a chance to finish what they started. A conflict can only be interrupted before dice are rolled, after the dice are on the table, the conflict is considered too close to resolution to stop.

Example changing intents and interrupting conflicts

Three player characters, Tony, Bette and Robert, are trying to convince a settlement's leader to help them find their missing friend in the Deeps, but the leader is reluctant to do so – he doesn't trust drifters, especially those he doesn't know well, and he's rightly scared of the Deeps. The leader's intent is to get the player characters to leave the settlement immediately. After the narrator tells Robert's player that it's going to be very hard to convince the leader to help them out, Robert's player changes his intent to persuading the leader to lend him ammunition, an easier task. The narrator says this will still be difficult (rolling three dice) conflict, and changes the leader's intent to getting the players to accept that the community has nothing to give them. Everyone agrees this makes sense.

However, before the dice are rolled, Tony's player says "forget this, I'm just shooting the jerk" which interrupts the negotiation. Bette's player reacts to this, saying "No way, I'm going to try and get control of the gun secretly so that no one notices the disturbance and the negotiations can continue". This

conflict – stealing the gun from Tony before he can step in – is the first in the narrative, and must be resolved first. The participants – Tony and Bette – declare their intents, Bette to get the gun, Tony to notice her trying, the narrator assigns the difficulty levels and the conflict is resolved. If Bette failed to get the gun off Tony, he'd now be in a position to interrupt the conflict with the leader, so that conflict – shooting the blabbermouth – is resolved next, and the initial attempt by Robert to persuade the leader to help them is abandoned.

DISTRESS

Sometimes the intent of a conflict is to cause some form of distress. This could be physical harm, but may also represent other forms of mental or emotional damage.

Examples of different types of distress

Physical harm, fatigue, mental weariness and drained emotions are all forms of distress.

In every case the effect of distress on a character is resolved in the same way: by assessing it against one of the four qualities.

Body – represents resistance to physical harm

Finesse – represents resistance to fatigue

Mind – represents resistance to persuasion and argument

Empathy – represents the body of the character's leadership and respect

Consider the intent of the victor of the conflict and how they achieved their intent – it should be obvious which quality is being distressed by the conflict.

Examples of causing distress

Ricky loses an argument to Jez over who should lead their party: Ricky suffers distress to his empathy quality. Ricky wins a fight to drive off an onrushing wolf: the wolf suffers distress to its body quality.

DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF DISTRESS

Comparing the results obtained by the participants determines the level of distress caused in a conflict.

If both participants obtained a success, compare the amounts by which they rolled under their scores. Subtract the value of the loser from that of the winner to obtain the level of distress.

If both participants obtained margins of failure, the contest was a stalemate (if possible) or the dice should be re-rolled.

If one participant rolled under their score but the other rolled over theirs, add the amounts by which this occurred to obtain the level of distress.

Example of a conflict and levels of distress

Tom and Jane are arguing about whether to press on into a military base or to regroup. Tom wants to press on whereas Jane wants to regroup. Tom's final score is 10 and Jane's final score is 12.

If, when rolling the dice, Tom gets 6 (rolling under his score by 4) and Jane gets 10 (rolling under her score by 2), Tom has won the conflict causing 2 points of distress (obtained by subtracting 2 from 4). However, if, when rolling the dice, Tom gets 13 (rolling over his score by 3) and Jane gets 15 (rolling over hers score by 2), both have failed so the conflict is a stalemate – they can't agree on what to do. If Tom rolls 13 (rolling over his score by 3) and Jane gets 8 (rolling under her score by 4), Jane wins the argument causing 7 points of distress (obtained by adding 3 and 4).

Once the level of distress has been determined compare it to the quality being attacked.

If the distress level is less than or equal to the quality, then the distress is cosmetic.

If the distress level is greater than but less than twice the quality, the loser suffers minor distress.

If the distress level is equal or greater than twice the loser's quality, the

loser suffers major distress.

Cosmetic distress causes no lasting problems. Minor distress is annoying and potentially painful but not overly threatening – the character can carry on but they may find actions and conflicts more difficult as a result of the distress. Major distress is nasty, and can have a major effect on activities the character can perform and in some cases may result in long-term damage.

Example of inflicting distress

Jim suffers an attack with a distress level of 4 to his body in a scuffle with Ted. The value of his body quality is 4, so he suffers cosmetic distress from losing the conflict. Jane loses an argument to Lila with a distress level of 6. The value of her empathy quality is 4, so she suffers minor empathy distress.

Distress to the four qualities is exclusive – distress in one quality does not affect distress in another quality.

Distress levels are independent, not additive – for example a character can suffer minor distress to the body quality several times.

THE EFFECTS OF DISTRESS

Distress is handled in a narrative fashion; the winner of the conflict describes the distress caused using the guidelines below. Both participants must agree that the effect of the distress is reasonable. Distress can affect actions and conflicts using the distressed quality until the distress is removed. Distress affects characters because the narrator factors narrative damage into the difficulty levels assigned for actions and conflicts involving the distressed character.

Example descriptions for qualities

Body quality:

Cosmetic distress – nasty cuts and scratches.

Minor distress – sprains, dislocations, minor breaks.

Major distress – incapacitated, possibly dying without medical help, may not perform actions or conflicts involving the body quality.



Finesse quality:

Cosmetic distress – out of breath.

Minor distress – very tired or bruised.

Major distress – exhausted and physically sick, may not perform actions or conflicts involving the finesse quality.

Mind quality:

Cosmetic distress – argued down.

Minor distress – very confused or mentally exhausted.

Major distress – utterly crushed and incapable of argument, may not perform actions or conflicts involving the mind quality.

Empathy quality:

Cosmetic distress – overly emotional.

Minor distress – very annoyed or deeply saddened.

Major distress – utterly proven false or open to complete ridicule, may not perform actions or conflicts involving the empathy quality.

Examples of narrative distress

Jeff suffers minor distress to his body quality is a scuffle with a community guard – the narrator (controlling the guard) describes how the guy whacks Jeff over the head with a shovel. Janice takes major distress to her empathy

quality in an argument over who leads their party, and ends up a laughing stock.

RECOVERY

Characters recover from distress in different ways depending on the quality under attack. The table below gives an example of how long it takes to recover from different forms of distress. After the listed time has passed, the character recovers to the next lower distress level. Summerland is a narrative game so these recovery levels are deliberately loose; don't get hung up on the details. Each case of distress heals individually - if a character has three minor levels of distress to his empathy quality, they each will recover independently. Note that distress to the Body takes a lot longer to recover from than any other kind of distress - this is intentional, bruises and sprains can take a lot longer to get over than hurt pride after all.

	RECOVER TO NEXT LOWEST DISTRESS LEVEL AFTER...			
QUALITY	BODY	FINESSE	MIND	EMPATHY
COSMETIC	INSTANTLY			
MINOR	THE START OF THE NEXT DAY	THE END OF THE SCENE		
MAJOR	THE START OF THE NEXT MONTH	THE START OF THE NEXT DAY		

TRAUMAS

The trauma scale gives an indication of how much a character suffers from the events in their past. The higher the value on the trauma scale, the more affected the character is by their psychological issues. Even those characters with extremely low values will eventually display the effects of their past experiences. All the positive values on the scale are described as 'exiled' - characters with these trauma values will not be accepted as permanent members of human communities. They are too unstable and too damaged, even if the effects take a while to be revealed. Eventually they will be forced to leave - communities don't like outsiders, especially those that bring their problems with them. However, the zero value is described as 'accepted', showing that characters with a trauma value of

zero are ready to join a community.

The goal of play is for player characters to be accepted into communities, to resolve their pasts and become normal people again. Healing past issues and reducing the value on the character's trauma scale from five down to zero achieves this aim, as once the scale reaches zero the character is ready to be accepted into a community. However, facing traumas in your past is a stressful thing that can crack even the most hardy of minds. Closely tied to the trauma scale is the stress scale. All positive values on the scale are described as 'controlled' – characters with these stress values are in control of themselves. The value of zero is described as 'cracked' – should the stress scale be reduced to zero the character has cracked and lost control of themselves, completely giving in to their emotions. In play characters are striving to reduce the value of their trauma scale while at the same time maintaining the value on their stress scale.

INVOKING TRAUMAS

During actions and conflicts, characters can invoke their traumas in an attempt to reduce their value on the trauma scale. This is done before the dice are rolled, with the player simply stating that they are bringing their trauma into the action or conflict. Traumas can only be invoked in actions or conflicts that are stressful, with the narrator adjudicating when this is the case.

To invoke the character's trauma their player must explain how the current scene is connected to the past event. This could be a flashback or memory of the original trauma, an emotional response, anything that relates what happened in the character's past to the current situation. Perhaps the current scene echoes that of the event that scarred them, or maybe they see in their situation a way of redeeming themselves. Either way, the trauma can be invoked if the narrator agrees that involving the character's past makes sense. The player then narrates what is happening to their character and makes a short note of it on their character sheet under the original trauma description, adding detail to the initial outline of their trauma. As play progresses these notes add further information to a character's trauma, revealing details and subtleties of their emotional hurt.



If appropriate, it is possible for characters to 're-use' details of their traumas that they have already listed on their character sheet, rather than creating new details. However, players are encouraged to think up new details for their characters where possible; doing this fleshes out their characters.

Example of invoking a trauma

Anthony is attempting to rescue his friend Martin from a burning building. He needs to run in and drag Martin's prone body to safety. Anthony's player Will decides to invoke his trauma, telling the narrator that this scene has triggered a flashback. Will describes how Anthony had the chance to save a friend in the past at great risk to himself but chose not to help, and this is the root of Anthony's trauma. The narrator agrees that Will can invoke the trauma and Will describes how the scene has triggered a memory of the cries of Anthony's old friend echoing through his head. Determined not to let that happen again, Anthony rushes into the building. Will notes down 'I could have saved him' on Anthony's character sheet under his trauma.

Importantly, as a result of involving their trauma in the action or conflict, the number of dice rolled is reduced by one. So: for a routine task, one dice is rolled instead of two; for a difficult task, two dice instead of three; a very hard task, three dice instead of four; and a near impossible task, four dice instead of five. Invoking traumas makes difficult actions and conflicts much easier to perform.

Invoking traumas leads to healing as, in doing so, the character is forcing themselves to engage with their past. Once the dice have been rolled, look at the values obtained. If at least one value of 1 is obtained on any dice, then a point is deducted from the character's trauma scale value. This represents the character gaining insight into the trauma that haunts them and working towards healing the hurt from their past.

However, invoking traumas and forcing a character to confront their past is a stressful business. Once the trauma scale has been adjusted, look at the highest value dice that was obtained among all the dice rolled. If the highest value is a 4, the character's stress scale is reduced by one point. If the value was a 5, reduce the character's stress scale by two points. If the value was a 6, reduce the character's stress scale by three points. This

represents the emotional harm caused to the character by confronting their past.

Example of the effect of dice values

Anthony is rushing into the building and dragging out Martin's prone body. Given the debris in his path, the narrator rules that safely dragging the body from the building is a very hard task that would normally require 4 dice to be rolled. However, since Will invoked Anthony's trauma, only 3 dice are rolled. The results on the dice are 1, 3 and 6. A result of 1 means that one point is deducted from Anthony's trauma scale, which moves down from 4 to 3. However, the highest value obtained on any of the dice was a 6, so three points are deducted from Anthony's stress scale, which takes it from 5 down to 2. Tony has healed a little of his trauma by confronting it, but at the same time he's driven himself close to breaking point.

CRACKING

Should a character's stress scale be reduced to 0, they have cracked, completely losing it.

The player controlling the character has the job of describing exactly how this breakdown is manifest, and should try to choose something appropriate to the character's situation. Importantly, it should be obvious to every other character involved in the scene that the character has cracked. The narrator has the final say in whether the behaviour of the character is suitable.

Examples of reactions to cracking

A character losing their cool while attempting to chase away a fox dogging his party might become angry; a character attempting to escape a pack of feral humans might suffer from fear; a character attempting to repair a broken car might feel frustration; and a character caught in a fight with a feral human might suffer shock.

Players are encouraged to act out their character's behaviour, and should try to portray an emotional response that demonstrates realistically how their character would behave when under a certain kind of stress. This is a chance for the player and their character to shine in the narrative of the story.

Example of a character cracking

Jeremy is trying to fix a torch he found so he can find his way out of a collapsing building. Invoking his trauma (trapped in the dark) and rolling his dice, he loses enough points on the stress scale to crack. Paul, his player, describes how Jeremy shouts in frustration and dashes the torch to pieces on the floor.

Importantly, characters that have cracked may not invoke their traumas in actions or conflicts until they have a value on the stress track greater than zero.

The stress reaction lasts for the remainder of the current scene. At the beginning of the next scene, the character can behave normally. However, if during subsequent scenes the character obtains a result of 6 on any dice rolled in any action or conflict (remember they cannot invoke their traumas), they will suffer the stress reaction once again for the duration of that scene.

RECOVERING FROM STRESS

Stress points are recovered in full if the character spends a couple of days as a welcome member of a community. This is the only way to recover points on the stress track.

Example of recovering cool

A character with a value of 3 on the stress scale returns to a known community and is accepted within. After a few days the character's stress track value returns to 5.

TRAUMAS AND THE CALL

To be fully accepted as a permanent member of a human community, a drifter player character must reduce their trauma point total to zero. They do this by invoking their trauma to add to their score during actions and conflicts. However, the siren song of the Call tempts all who enter the Sea of Leaves, especially at night when they sleep. Healing a character's trauma makes them able to join human communities but has the unfortunate side effect of making them more open to the lure.



CALL LEVELS

Every location has a call level. Examples of locations for relative call levels are given below.

Level 0 – safe within a trusted community.

Level 1 – an average area of trees in the Sea of Leaves.

Level 3 – an area of dense woodland far from home or other communities

Level 5 – the Deeps.

Example of setting a call level

An action scene in which the player characters track a group of drifters into an area of thick, impenetrable forest has a call level of 3. When they find themselves straying into the Deeps in a new action scene, the Call level rises to 5.

When a character tries to sleep in a location, the narrator compares the Call level to their value on the trauma scale.

THE EFFECTS OF THE CALL

If a character sleeps in a place with a call level lower than their current value on the trauma scale, the character is fine and may behave normally.

If the Call level is greater than (but less than double) their value on the trauma scale, the character becomes very aware of the Call and begins to notice it much more as they drift off to sleep. When they awake they are confused and groggy, and all actions and conflicts within locations with call levels greater than their trauma scale values are one difficulty level harder than normal, representing their inability to concentrate properly.

If they spend a night in an area with a call level twice or more than the current value on the trauma scale, the character will find that they cannot resist the Call. They will awake sometime during the night as if in a trance, and immediately try to make their way deeper into the Sea of Leaves. If restrained or stopped from doing so, they will attempt to escape and make their way to the Deeps at the earliest opportunity. If they are returned to a place of lower call level before this happens, they are safe; if they make it into the woods before they can be helped, they

are lost. This is what happens to normal people who attempt to spend the night within the Sea of Leaves.

As the Call level changes between locations it is possible for some characters to sleep normally in some areas but to awake confused in others, such as in the Deeps where the Call is strongest. Travelling the Sea of Leaves is very dangerous for these characters.

Example of the effect of the Call

Sarah has a value on the trauma scale of 2 after invoking her trauma several times. She enters an area of the Deeps, which the narrator rules has a call value of 5. If Sarah sleeps in this area of the forest she's going to succumb to the Call.

THAT'S IT

Everything that characters try to do in the game can be resolved using this basic system presented here, and once you get the hang of the mechanics, the game is very straightforward. The trauma and stress scales are integral to the game and should take a prominent role in play – remember that resolving traumas and healing them is the goal of Summerland.



...A SUBWAY STATION, DARK EXCEPT FOR STRAY SHAFTS OF LIGHT FROM OUR TORCHES. ROOTS HANG DOWN FROM WHAT REMAINS OF THE CEILING, TWISTING DOWN TOWARD THE GROUND AS IF GROPING FOR A HANDHOLD IN THE DARKNESS. YOU CAN SEE DIRT AND RUBBLE SCATTERED OVER A FLOOR OF BROKEN TILES AND LITTER. YOUR TORCH PICKS OUT A WOMAN'S HANDBAG, ROTTING. AN ALMOST OVERPOWERING SMELL OF EARTH, RICH AND LOAMY, FILLS THE STAGNANT AIR. SCANNING ACROSS THE STATION TO THE TRACKS YOU SPOT TWO PINPOINTS OF LIGHT REFLECTING BACK AT YOU - A WOLF. IT APPROACHES, PADDING SOFTLY ACROSS THE BROKEN TILES OF THE FLOOR, LIPS CURLED BACK FROM TEETH IN A FROZEN GRIN...

SETTING INFORMATION

The Event that brought the Sea of Leaves altered the world completely. Overnight, the entirety of human civilisation ended, and now only small numbers of true humans remain. In this chapter we'll discuss some aspects of the Summerland setting, focusing on how the world has changed from what we know today. The information presented here reflects what most drifters know, so players can read this information if they want to.

THE SEA OF LEAVES

The Sea of Leaves is the name people have given to the vast forest that now covers the land. As far as anyone knows, the forest covers everything, from countryside, farmland and roads, to villages, town and cities. Some drifters say they've glimpsed mountains that are not covered by the trees and still show bare rock, but no one knows if that's true. The green canopy covers the world, and if you get up high enough in the right places, you can see that the sea of green stretches from horizon to horizon. The sea is composed of all types of trees, but mostly those native to the landscape. The ever-present drone of the Call permeates all of the forest, an almost sing-song distraction that hovers in the back of the mind, growing and fading in intensity throughout the woods.

STRUCTURE OF THE FOREST

The Sea of Leaves has a layered or tiered structure. The upper most of the layers is the canopy, composed of tall mature trees that are impossibly old compared to the time of the Event. Below the canopy is the sub-canopy, composed of smaller mature trees and saplings that are waiting to fill openings in the canopy above. Below this level is a shrub layer, composed of low growing woody plants and other thick shrubs native to the region. Finally, the lowest growing (and most diverse) layer is the ground cover or herbaceous layer – the undergrowth. In many areas, especially the Deeps, the undergrowth is extremely choked and tangled, restricting access to any large animals or people.

The Sea of Leaves has many characteristics of a pre-Event wood.

Dominated by deciduous trees including oak, elm, aspen, beech, maple and birch, the Sea of Leaves also includes a number of varieties of coniferous trees such as pines, firs and spruces in lesser numbers. Unlike pre-Event trees however, all these trees are somewhat twisted and contorted, giving them a vaguely unnatural appearance.

Shrubs dominate under the canopy, choking the ground in many areas. Woody vines are also found beneath the canopy, plants well adapted to survive and thrive, twisting and clawing up at the trees above them. All across the Sea of Leaves plants are unusual compared to those from before the Event – even in the lighter areas of woodland they seem somehow more verdant and ripe with life. Pockets of deep woods are dotted about the region in a seemingly random way, with the woodland becoming fecund and unnaturally convoluted in the regions. Dense undergrowth restricts movement into and out of these areas.

Underneath the canopy the light is dim, especially in the deeper woods. The air is cool and shady, and all about the forest a rich loam is beginning to cover the ground, hiding the remnants of whatever existed before the trees. In the cities and other larger areas significantly altered by mankind, the trees are reasonably well separated and the ground can be quite clear in places, allowing easier movement between the trunks. Here the Call is weaker, less insistent, more of an annoyance than anything else. This is where the communities have grown: the safer, more recognisable places. In the deeper areas of forest the undergrowth can become quite impenetrable, and the lure of the Call can be hard to resist. Even the most grounded drifter fears to enter the wilder, darker areas of the Sea of Leaves, known as the Deeps.

THE CALL

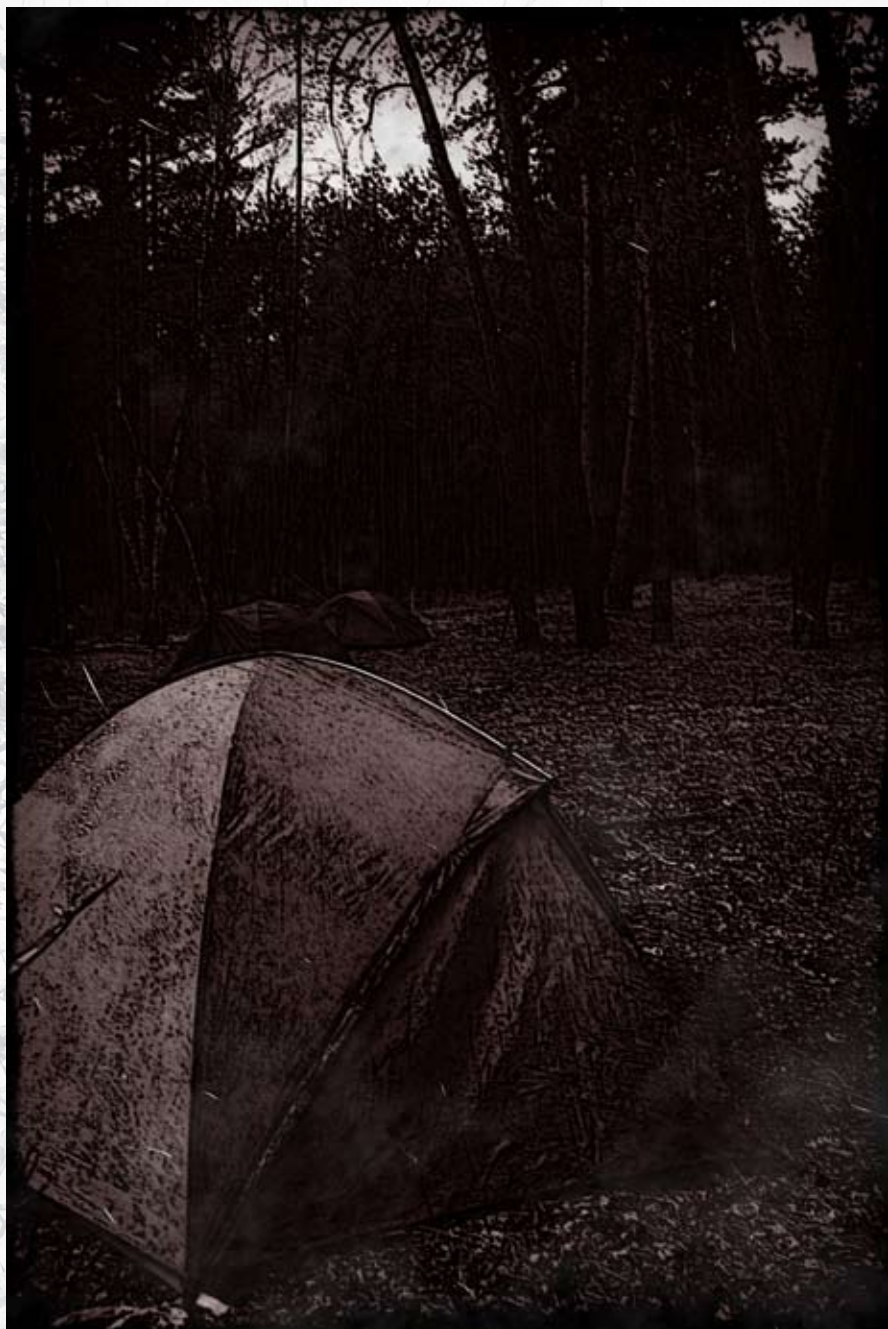
The mysterious feeling or presence of the Call permeates the Sea of Leaves. From a niggling drone in the communities to the insistent lure of the deeper forest, the Call tugs at the mind, snagging and drawing on the human consciousness. Some people experience the Call as a sing-song of notes, some as flashes of imagery that glitter behind the mind's eye. Always the message of the Call is the same: come deeper. Forget your friends, your family; come into the forest. Behind it all is the promise – come beneath the trees because there's something waiting for you,

something wonderful.

Most people can resist the Call by day if it is weak and they are not alone. With friends and family around you, it's easy to push the urging from your mind, to concentrate on what it is that makes you human. The ties that bind people together in the remaining communities allow them to ignore the voice of the forest for the most part. But in the deeper woods, away from community, away from contact, the Call can be deadly. The Call is especially insistent during sleep, worming into the unconscious mind with dreams of the deeper forest. Few can resist the Call when they slumber. In the first few weeks after the Event, countless numbers of people turned their back on the world and simply walked into the wood, answering the Call. Drifters occasionally come across some of those that strayed into the woods when the Event took place, their dried and cracked bones resting where they fell against a wall or a tree, but most leave no trace. People still succumb, becoming lost and eventually changing into the feral creatures known as the Wild, but most are too wary to even enter the forest proper let alone sleep beneath the canopy. Sometimes the drifters escort ordinary people from community to community through the Sea of Leaves, but an overnight stay can be deadly for the unprotected, and it is not uncommon for the drifters to resort to binding their wards overnight to keep them from temptation. When these rare travellers are delivered to their destination they are free of the dangers of the Call.

Those that are able to resist the Call are universally known as drifters. Invariably these people are able to truly resist the Call because they are hardened against its lure. Experiences in their lives allow them to resist the temptation, to ignore the voices in their dreams. Dreams of bad things drown out the Call; their trauma is a barrier to the insidious lure of the woods. They are able to avoid the Call, but at a price to their peace of mind. To drifters, the Call is but one voice among a chorus within their heads.

The power of the Call seems to wax and wane throughout the forest. In some places the Call may be particularly strong or noticeably weak for no discernible reason. The true nature of the Call is not known, but rumours spread. Some say the Call is a creature's lure, that some being



inhabiting the deep woods is drawing victims in so that it can feed. Others say it is the woods themselves, the ancient, gnarled trees speaking to one another, or maybe the trees have brought with them a memory of wherever they came from. Another story is that the Call is purely a figment of the human mind, a need to return to the primordial state just as the Sea of Leaves is a primordial state of the earth. No one knows the answers, except perhaps those that follow the Call, and they can't answer for themselves.

THE SEASONS

The appearance of the Sea of Leaves has also affected the climate. The seasons seem more intense, as if the colours, smells and sights of the changing landscape have been magnified or intensified. Some say this is the Call, working its subtle magic. Others say that the cycle of the earth is no longer the same. Either way, the seasons cannot be ignored.

Spring is vibrant with growth. Leaves seem to pop from their swollen buds, and the fresh greens of the trees hum with a vibrancy that can take the breath away. Fat insects buzz everywhere, and the creatures of the woods can be heard in thickets and undergrowth. In some places such as the Deeps an oppressive, almost unhealthy exuberance fills the air, as if too much growth and expansion were crammed into one place. In other areas the air seems much more open, almost pleasant. In the cities brambles and other undergrowth thicken, tightening their grip over stone and mortar, steel and tarmac, tearing down the works of man with silent but deadly efficiency. Nights are dark beneath the trees, the glowing bodies of insects drowning out the feeble light of stars breaking through the canopy. The temperatures drop quickly overnight. Many of the Lost are discovered dead after the cold of the night.

Summers are hot, with days of sticky, heavy humidity alternating with periods of parched and dusty air, despite the cover of the trees. Fires break out occasionally, but never seem to spread far through the Sea of Leaves, as if the trees cow the flame's potency. This is when the Wild and other creatures of the Deeps are at their most dangerous, and all who travel into the forest must be vigilant. The Call seems to be stronger in the summer, as if the warmer weather stirs something in the hearts of men. Despite the warmer weather many communities keep their young

under close scrutiny during the summer months.

Autumn marks the changing of the leaves, when the sea turns from green to browns and reds, leaves dropping from the trees to coat the ground in decay. Many of the plants and trees of the forest bear their fruit during autumn, and the creatures of the forest feast on the loaded boughs. Drifters say this is a strange time to travel beneath the canopy, the change between the heat of summer and the cold of winter permeating the forest with an uncertain air. Many of the dangers of the woods, such as the Wild and the unnatural beasts, seem restless during the autumn as if they fear the coming winter months. The Call is different in the autumn: the season of change altering the voice of the woods.

Winter is a harsh time for all. Snow falls silent and thick, coating bough and ground alike in a frosting of white. Food becomes scarce, driving unnatural and mundane animals alike towards the remaining human communities. In the winter the forest is an eerie place, silent except for the occasional flurry of falling snow. The air is thick and muted, deadening sound and motion. The snow hides many of the relics of man beneath its white mantle, making it easy to forget that the cities and towns even existed. It is very difficult to navigate during winter – those that stray from well-known paths and roads often find themselves lost in the depths of unfamiliar woodland. Life is harsh for all in the winter, and drifters restrict their travelling to only the most important trips, leaving less essential travel to the spring and summer. The Call is harsher too, seemingly more insistent and demanding. Even drifters feel its presence in the winter months.

THE DEEPS

Some the trees of the forest are not like those from before the Event. These trees are bigger, seemingly older; an air of age, slow life and ripe decay permeates the areas of the woods where they are found. These are the Deeps, the heart of the wood. Drifters who regularly travel beneath the canopy say that in these regions the Sea of Leaves seems somehow more alive than a forest from before the Event, as if some spirit permeates the sap of the trees and the tangles of undergrowth. Dotted about the Sea of Leaves, the Deeps are thick with shadows and twisted with growth and decay. It is here where the forest is at its most forceful



and strange. The trees are huge and old, gnarled and twisted into odd and often bizarre forms. The undergrowth is thick and entwined, barring access to anything but the smallest animals. Everything is bigger, deeper, darker and more vibrant in the Deeps, as if these areas of woods were taken straight from some child's fantasy. The Call is also stronger here, more resonant, as if the forest were reverberating with the silent cries of some unknown beast. The animals are different in the Deeps, more cunning, stealthier and somehow more alive than the rest of the Sea of Leaves. These are the unnatural beasts of which the drifters speak. The Deeps are the heart of the forest and the centre of the Event that brought on the new state of the world.

CITIES AND TOWNS

It is in the cities that the changes wrought by the appearance of the forest are most apparent and most devastating. Just like the rest of the landscape the trees burst through the concrete, tarmac and steel of the cities, ripping structures and twisting forms, blocking roads and demolishing buildings. The trees claimed even the lightless areas inside structures. The tree trunks cover everything, a profusion of brown and green obscuring the ground

below, the twisting undergrowth bursting through the tough ground as if it did not exist. Now only the taller tower blocks and skyscrapers break free of the plant growth, and vines are claiming even these structures and twisting plants as the years pass.

Devastation and ruin is everywhere. Many buildings, especially older ones, were destroyed by the appearance of the trees, their supporting walls buckled by the trunks. The overnight appearance of the Sea of Leaves means that many of the trappings of everyday life were left where they fell, the scattered remains of human civilisation dotting the cityscape. Since the Event, the trees and undergrowth have covered much of these remnants, leaving only dull impressions of what is hidden by briar and loam. A heavy air of abandonment hangs in the air, reeking with the memories of what these places once were. Only in the small communities that dot the cityscapes does life exist in any semblance of the past.

NAVIGATION AND MOVEMENT

Even the mundane forests from before the Event were difficult to navigate. Trees obscure vision and hide landmarks, and one forest glade looks very much like another. In the Sea of Leaves the situation is much worse. With few breaks in the forest to allow a clear view, and most landmarks obscured by trees and decay, it is very easy to become lost within a few hundred metres of familiar places. The Deeps are another problem – in these pockets of deeper, wilder wood travel can be extremely difficult. Within the remains of cities and towns, where landmarks can include fairly large buildings that can be spotted from beneath the canopy, the situation is easier; but here the presence of shattered buildings and all manner of detritus can severely slow progress.

The Sea of Leaves ruined road and rail lines, the trees bursting through the tarmac of roads and buckling the railways, with vehicles either pinned in place by tree trunks or trapped by encircling boughs. But these ruined structures still serve their purpose – they are the main thoroughfares the drifters use between settlements. With the unmapped forest difficult to navigate, the roads and rail tracks provide paths that, although not easy to travel, are clear marked on pre-Event maps. The same is true of the underground rail lines. In the underground stations the Sea of

Leaves is evident; vast roots tunnel down from the surface in search of sustenance, shattering ceilings and destabilising structures, making many underground locations extremely hazardous. But the underground lines are still the easiest method of moving between locations, being largely intact and well mapped. Unfortunately, others have found that the underground makes for a perfect home, and many feral humans can be found congregating in the depths.

SURVIVOR SETTLEMENTS

Survivors of the Event exist as small groups of typically fifty to a few hundred individuals. These communities have coalesced from those who have managed to resist the Call. The companionship they share and the links between them act to lessen the effect on the human mind. As a result, human survivor settlements tend to be very closely knit, with strong loyalties and ties between members. Given that most people will stray no further into the woods than they have to, and never do so overnight, it is unsurprising that emotional ties in these communities are much stronger than those found before the Event.

Settlements are normally located in easily defensible positions, most often in the ruins of cities or towns. Large buildings that have survived the coming of the trees are ideal; so many communities are housed in large warehouses, civic buildings or tower blocks. These structures are often chosen because their height ensures that the uppermost floors are generally free of plant growth making them easy to adapt to community occupation, whilst providing relief from the all-encompassing forest below. Of course the dangers of collapse are a constant concern. Defence of these locations is key to their survival, as there are plenty of beings in the sea of trees that would wish them harm, such as raiding drifters, packs of wild animals and the feral humans looking for an easy meal. Barricades serve to keep out the unwanted, backed up by deterrents such as pits and wire fences. A close watch is kept on the surrounding forest, searching out signs of danger from the woods.

The relative isolation of the communities and the immediate dangers faced from the Sea of Leaves has had a damaging effect on the inhabitants. Communities are introspective and insular, wary of outsiders and quick to violently defend what they see as their own. Some are completely



xenophobic, driving off strangers with guns and snarls of hate. Bizarre customs and beliefs revolving around the forests and the place of humanity within the woods are widespread, and many communities endorse all manner of ritual acts to ensure the survival of their members. Control and leadership in these settlements is as varied as the communities themselves, from groups of 'elders' or respected members, micro-democracies, dictatorships, and tyrannies where might is right, to communes and animalists that worship the beasts of the wood. Travelling from one community to another, drifters witness a wild array of customs and beliefs established since the appearance of the Sea of Leaves.

Travel between communities is possible but difficult, as normal people cannot risk being in the forest after nightfall unless escorted by drifters. Considering the dangers, most communities only allow certain members to travel, typically those whose skills may aid neighbouring settlements. Only on rare occasions do face-to-face meetings between leaders occur.

Considering the small size of human communities and the dangers of the forest, it is not surprising that all sorts of resources from weapons and medicines to simple necessities such as foodstuffs are scarce. Many communities manage to obtain their own foods by farming livestock captured from the forest or harvesting crops within close proximity to their settlements, then abandoning their efforts overnight and retreating

BENEATH THE CANOPY - SETTING



to the safety of the community hub. Many scavenge supplies from nearby pre-Event caches, such as tinned foods from ruined supermarkets or field supplies from an army base. But as time goes on these easily accessible resources are running low and communities must look further afield for supplies, relying on drifters to bring home vital goods. Rivalries between close settlements are fierce. With only limited resources available and a tight-knit, partisan membership, most communities view people from other settlements as competition. In many cases uneasy truces exist between settlements that share disputed resources, but sometimes cooperation takes place. However, it is not unknown for hostility, and even open violence, to be the first reaction. Drifter bands often find themselves the tools of this aggression.

Weapons and medicines are always in very short supply, and drifters often spend a considerable amount of time in the woods seeking them out. This is one of the most common causes of conflict between drifter bands, and has led to open warfare between communities in the past. As supplies dwindle, the situation is likely to get worse.

DRIFTER BANDS

Unfortunately, as useful as they are drifters are not accepted into the remaining human communities. They are considered strange and unwelcome, a consequence of the pasts that haunt them and of their unique ability to travel the Sea of Leaves. If they had a choice most survivor communities would refuse contact with drifters, considering them dangerous and unhinged. Sadly for the communities, they need them. Without drifter bands, ordinary people have no way to travel in relative safety between communities, or to scavenge supplies more than half a day's travel from home. The drifters also provide the only real link between the isolated settlements, spreading news and reminding people that there is an outside world. All they ask in return is food, shelter and to be accepted into a community, if only for a short while. Community leaders grudgingly accept these terms, welcoming drifters into their homes while they are needed. But it is a sad fact that when their tasks are complete drifters invariably find themselves forced out of their new homes by the indifference, hostility and even violence of their hosts. Only those that have resolved the effects of the past are truly accepted into the human communities.



The vast majority of drifter bands don't work on behalf of any particular community. Instead they travel the Sea of Leaves, intent only on their own survival, moving from place to place and performing tasks for the communities they encounter in return for a little comfort before being moved on when the community loses tolerance. Drifters are mercenaries, lending a hand where it is needed in return for the goods, services and comforts that make life worth living. Some are little more than thieves and bandits, robbing communities and other drifters alike to get what they want.

DANGERS OF THE FOREST

Beneath the Sea of Leaves a wide variety of dangers exist, from the mundane to the extraordinary. In their travels drifters may encounter fellow drifters from other settlements, the Lost and the Wild, animals both natural and unnatural, as well as people from nearby communities. Some even say that ghosts or spirits of some kind haunt the deeper woods.

RIVAL DRIFTERS

Surprisingly, one of the most dangerous groups of beings that may be encountered among the trees is other groups of drifters. These encounters

can be very dangerous for two main reasons: drifters are competing to claim dwindling resources, and drifters are all usually to some extent psychologically damaged. Both these factors contribute to the friction that exists between rival groups of drifters.

The competition to claim resources for a community can be extremely fierce. With most settlements on the brink of extinction, people are willing to do whatever it takes to get what they need to ensure their survival, and are often happy to turn a blind eye to the manner in which drifters get what they need. For their part, most drifters are utterly selfish in their aims and will happily mislead or threaten their rivals. Some will even take the situation one stage further, and will attack or even kill those they think might deny them their goal, as within the forest and away from the eyes of others there is no judgement or blame. This ruthless need makes groups of drifters exceedingly dangerous. Couple to that the fact that drifters are generally maladjusted and mentally damaged individuals – the very fact that allows them to be drifters in the first place – and you have a clear reason for drifters to fear their peers.

Drifters tend to act in small groups. It is a sad fact that, with the coming of the Sea of Leaves and the effects of the Call on individuals, there is no lack of people who are psychologically damaged enough to become drifters. Each band forms a close-knit group, often calling themselves a humorous or descriptive name. New members are usually picked up in communities; the maladjusted, damaged and unfit attaching themselves to the travelling drifter bands to escape the judgement of their peers. They generally have some kind of leader who calls the shots, be that an individual elected by the group, someone selected by unconscious consent or just the biggest bully with the largest gun among them. These individuals act as a mouthpiece for the group when negotiating with the communities and make decisions concerning the future of the band.

Drifters are generally well armed and dressed for wilderness travel with items looted from army depots and outdoor stores, and travel quickly and silently to avoid detection. At least some members are true woodsmen, capable of leading the band through the Sea of Leaves and avoiding the dangers that exist. These members are key – without them, the drifter band would fall to the countless predators that stalk the forests.

Despite the danger, there is some contact between different groups of drifters. They carry news and goods between communities, escort rare travellers from place to place and spread word of changes under the canopy. They sometimes team up to help combat powerful threats and to help gather important resources. Still, meetings between drifters are taut, tense affairs, and the combination of the dangers of the woods and the unstable nature of these people means that tragic incidents do occur.

THE LOST AND THE WILD

The Call has a strange effect on the human mind. It sings of a different world, a life away from others, free beneath the trees. It calls out to the base nature of all people, drawing them away from their homes back to their ancestral past and the beast that lies within. Those who answer the Call and abandon their family and friends fall into two categories – the Lost and the Wild. Both are to be found in the Sea of Leaves, and both present dangers and difficulties to drifters.

THE LOST

The Lost are a tragic group. Composed of individuals who have been drawn into the woods by the Call, they have forgotten what it is to be part of a community. Abandoning friends and family, they are quite literally lost among the trees and within themselves. For these people the Call is like a blanket, a warm, muffling shroud that blurs thought and deadens memory. They may remember a little of who they were and where they come from, but the Call has affected their minds leaving them forgetful and vague. Some drifters have likened the Lost to dementia sufferers, their lives comprised of a lulling wash of vagueness followed by small moments of lucidity and remembrance. The Lost represent a moral rather than physical danger to drifters, as they are nothing more than helpless, lonely and detached people, often in real need. Helping them is generally useless as most that have spent time in the forest are too far gone to recover, but leaving them to their fate is difficult.

Most of the Lost encountered in the woods are relatively new, having left their homes only a few weeks or months before. Initially they may recall much of themselves and their past and be capable of making some kind of home for themselves under the trees, but as time passes their memories



fade and blur, becoming more and more like snatches of dreams. As they diminish, the Lost become less like adults and more like children, alone and scared. This is when they are at their most vulnerable, for the predators of the woods view the Lost as an easy meal. Only those who make it through this dangerous phase make the transition to become the feral humans known as the Wild.

Drifters often encounter the Lost in the Sea of Leaves, especially around the ruins of civilisation. Some drifters try to return them to their communities in the hope that the reaffirmation of their humanity can save them. Sometimes they're right. However, many of the Lost are too far removed from what they once were to be redeemed. Returning them to their homes may reunite them with those they left behind, but they often seem dull and lifeless compared to what they once were, and unless they are guarded night and day the Call of the forest will always lure them back into the woods.

Example Lost:

A little girl who cannot speak but only follow; a talkative boy who forgets everything he has been told after a few minutes; a man who talks to people who aren't there; a woman who seeks her long dead children; an old man who acts as if the trees don't exist; and an elderly woman who talks and behaves

like a ten year old.

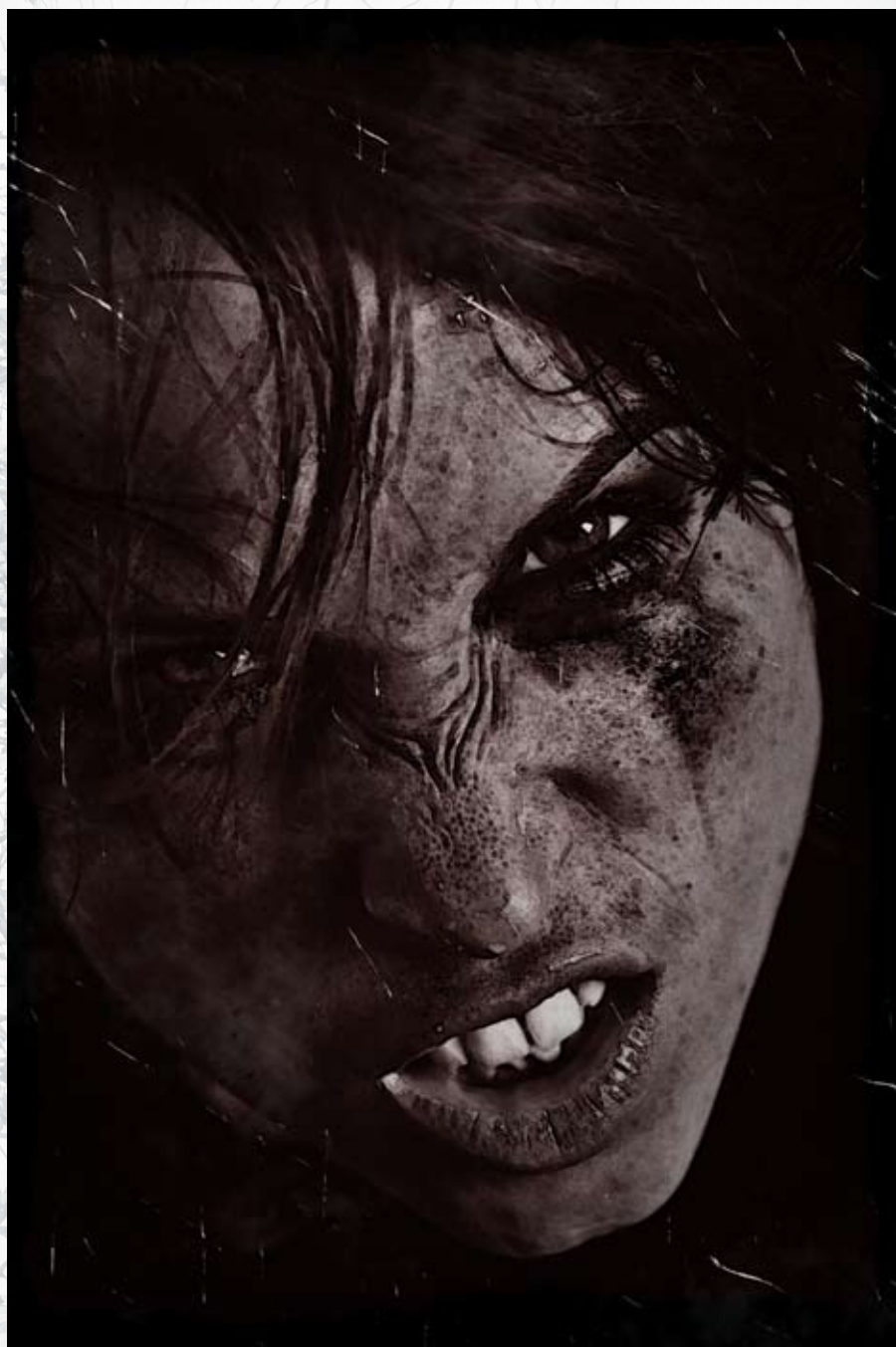
THE WILD

Some of the Lost make it through the dangerous time of transition and become something else. Forgetting their humanity and losing themselves utterly, they become the Wild – feral humans, more beast than man. Unlike the Lost the Wild represent a real physical danger within the woods. The Wild, as their name suggests, are unfettered from true intelligence. They live in the moment; to them the future does not exist.

The Wild are like animals trapped in human form – although they walk upright, for the majority of them that is as far as the likeness to humanity goes. The Wild hunt and scavenge food and live off the land, seeking shelter where they find it, travelling throughout the Sea of Leaves. They are more or less universally carnivorous, seeking meat over other forms of food, be it a fresh kill or a scavenged carcass. Some act alone, living like solitary predators, while others work in packs like wolves. They can use primitive weapons and tools, typically clubs or rocks with which to batter opponents, and some mimic the actions of people as if they remember a little of what it is to be human. There are even some of the Wild that retain a little of their humanity – they wear clothes and may even talk. Some think that the Wild are not animals, just people driven to extremes by the stresses of living beneath the Sea of Leaves. However, most agree that despite appearances, beneath the surface the Wild are beasts and can no longer be considered truly human.

Whereas mundane animals such as wolves and other pack predators can be shy of humans and wary of contact, the Wild seem to delight in hunting people. It is as if their lost lives direct them unconsciously against their one-time peers. Some drifters believe it is the Call that drives them while others maintain that deep inside, the original spirit remains and is angered by what has become of it, seeking revenge on those that let it be lured by the Call. Either way, the Wild are dangerous opponents that most drifters seek to avoid at all costs.

Interestingly, those Wild that do seek out the companionship of a pack can be quite communal in an animalistic way, with a strict hierarchy within the group and a definite leader, usually the strongest or smartest



individual. Some groups show greater signs of intelligence, and some have been known to pass themselves off as one of the Lost, a useful trick for luring others. While most drifters would agree it is true that the Wild are not all alike, all agree that the Wild are a dangerous foe that must be dealt with if encountered. Unlike the Lost, there is no pity for the Wild.

The Wild are found throughout the Sea of Leaves, although they do seem to congregate in greater numbers around the remains of human civilisation. Presumably this is due to the higher concentration of people – the Lost and drifters – found in these places: prey for the hunting packs.

Example Wild:

A savage man in a torn t-shirt and jeans who rushes to attack any animal he sees; a pack of feral humans dressed as shop assistants and office workers that behave like dogs; a young girl in a torn but pretty dress who acts deaf and dumb but relishes the taste of blood; a beautiful girl dressed in stylish clothes stained with the blood of animals she's eaten; a pack of feral teenagers who hunt silently and strategically; a young man in a torn business suit that growls and attacks anyone who approaches him; and an old woman who barks like a dog and walks on all fours.

MUNDANE ANIMALS

Much of the forest is home to an abundance of mundane animals. These creatures are the same as those that existed before the arrival of the Sea of Leaves, only in greater numbers. Virtually extinct creatures such as bears and wolves are also now common. It is as if the arrival of the sea of trees brought with it a rich complement of wild animals. These creatures are as dangerous now as they were before the Event, though luckily most are wary of man and tend to give drifters a wide berth.

Example mundane animals

Many well-known animals once native to the region live in the Sea of Leaves. Examples are beavers, bears, snakes, mice, foxes, deer, rats, wolves and large birds of prey like hawks. These animals are very similar to those found before the Event and are adapted to suit seasonal life within the forests, for example the bears of the Sea of Leaves store up fat and hibernate during the cold winters just like their pre-Event counterparts.

Packs of wolves roam within the forest. Many are 'normal' wolves, typically shy of groups of humans, although they will chase down lone or injured individuals. They are often based in ruined residential areas hidden within the forest, although they do move about their land territory. They have been known to clash with the Wild, but although the degenerate humans match them in ferocity the speed and natural weapons of the wolves usually prove superior. Bears are also a danger to those that travel alone and startle them, or those that cook their food injudiciously beneath the canopy.

UNNATURAL ANIMALS

Along with the mundane creatures of the forest, unnatural beasts may also be found. Mostly identical in form to their mundane counterparts, the creatures differ in their size and their intelligence.

The intelligence of these unnatural creatures cannot be underestimated, but it is well hidden. These animals do not dress or talk, and to most observers they seem very similar in mental scope to their mundane counterparts. They watch and learn, picking up skills by observation. They listen to the talk of humans, almost as if they understand. And most revealing of all, they plan. They have learnt somehow to look beyond the moment, to plan for the future as well as living in the present. This is the hallmark of their intelligence and the ability that makes them so potentially dangerous. It seems that while the Call degrades the minds of humanity, it raises that of these animals.

These unnatural animals are not necessarily vicious or aggressive; in fact they may be benign and even helpful. What makes them dangerous is that they are unpredictable. Whatever thoughts they have are hidden and indecipherable. They are not like people; they may show the signs of thought but whatever they think it is alien to the human mind. Humanity has never encountered an alien intellect – no one suspected that the first they would encounter would be on their own doorstep.

What little is known of these creatures is that they seem to originate in the Deeps, the areas of dense forest where the Call is strong and the landscape more twisted and alien. They seem interested in people, and have been known to follow groups of drifters. They watch and learn for



their own unknown reasons, and there are even stories of these animals helping drifters or drawing them away from danger. Still, there are plenty of other stories of these beasts attacking men or leading packs of the Wild down into communities. Why they do these things is not known – the unnatural beasts of the Sea of Leaves are as alien as they are familiar.

Example unnatural animals

The fox who mimics human actions; the bear that wears a ragged cloak tied about its neck; the solitary wolf who growls in an almost human tongue; the crow that spells words with broken twigs; the deer that hunts lone humans; the rats that steal items of worth but leave food behind; and the wolf that walks on two feet.

THE REMNANTS OF HUMANITY

Under the canopy of the forest, normal people are only met within a short distance of their home community. The Call is so dangerous to the unshielded human during sleep that no sane person would risk spending a night beneath the boughs, so the limit of human exploration is half a day's travel from home. However, considering the dangers that lurk in the forest, few people risk travelling this far out unless they have a clear purpose.

Most humans encountered in the woods are scavenging parties, those involved in farming animals or very limited amounts of crops, or gatherers collecting the fruits of the wood. They tend to travel in large groups as protection from feral humans and animals, and are often armed, moving as quietly as possible through the trees so as not to rouse the other denizens of the wood. Some of these groups have been mistaken for the Wild by drifters and then attacked – the truth only becoming apparent after the event.

SPIRITS AND GHOSTS

Some of the drifters that have travelled into the Deeps speak of ghosts in the woods, spirits of some kind that inhabit the darker places among the twisting roots and trunks of old trees. Rumours are vague and the exact nature of these beings, or even if they truly exist, is still not known. Still, stories of ghosts that can possess a man and drive him mad do seem to occur with regularity among the communities of man. The dangers these beings represent and their form and purpose is unknown, so most drifters treat them as just another good reason to avoid the deeper, darker parts of the forest.

Example spirits and ghosts

The Sea of Leaves is home to many strange and unusual sights, and rumours abound of what might be found in the forest. Some of these are listed below. Note just a sketch is provided so that the narrator may adapt the details of each to their own version of Summerland.

Shadows and stains

Some drifters have been telling stories of strange happenings on the edges of the Deeps. Apparently, several unrelated individuals have reported seeing shadows that move across the forest floor; they seem to have no obvious source but flit from trunk to trunk away from the deeper woods. These shadows seem to emanate from the forest depths, spreading towards the observer with unnerving speed. Some dismiss this as imaginings, the forests are tense places for travellers after all – especially the Deeps – but some think that there is some truth to these stories. There have even been tales of the shadows brushing over individuals and sticking to them: a viscous, half-invisible stain that slowly sinks beneath the skin. No one seems to know what the long-term effect of this

exposure is, but everyone agrees it cannot be good.

The ragged man

There are stories of a man who lives in the forest alone: a wild, unkempt individual dressed in tatters and rags. In itself that isn't unusual; there are plenty of Wild in the depths of the wood. What makes this individual unusual is that although he has the yellowed eyes and tattered nails of the Wild, he does not attack travellers or act like an animal. Instead he talks to them, giving advice about the dangers of the area and what to avoid in the woods. He asks for nothing in return except a story, usually asking for one relating to the communities in the area. He doesn't seem to want facts or information; instead he seems to need to hear stories of people, especially children.

The sly fox

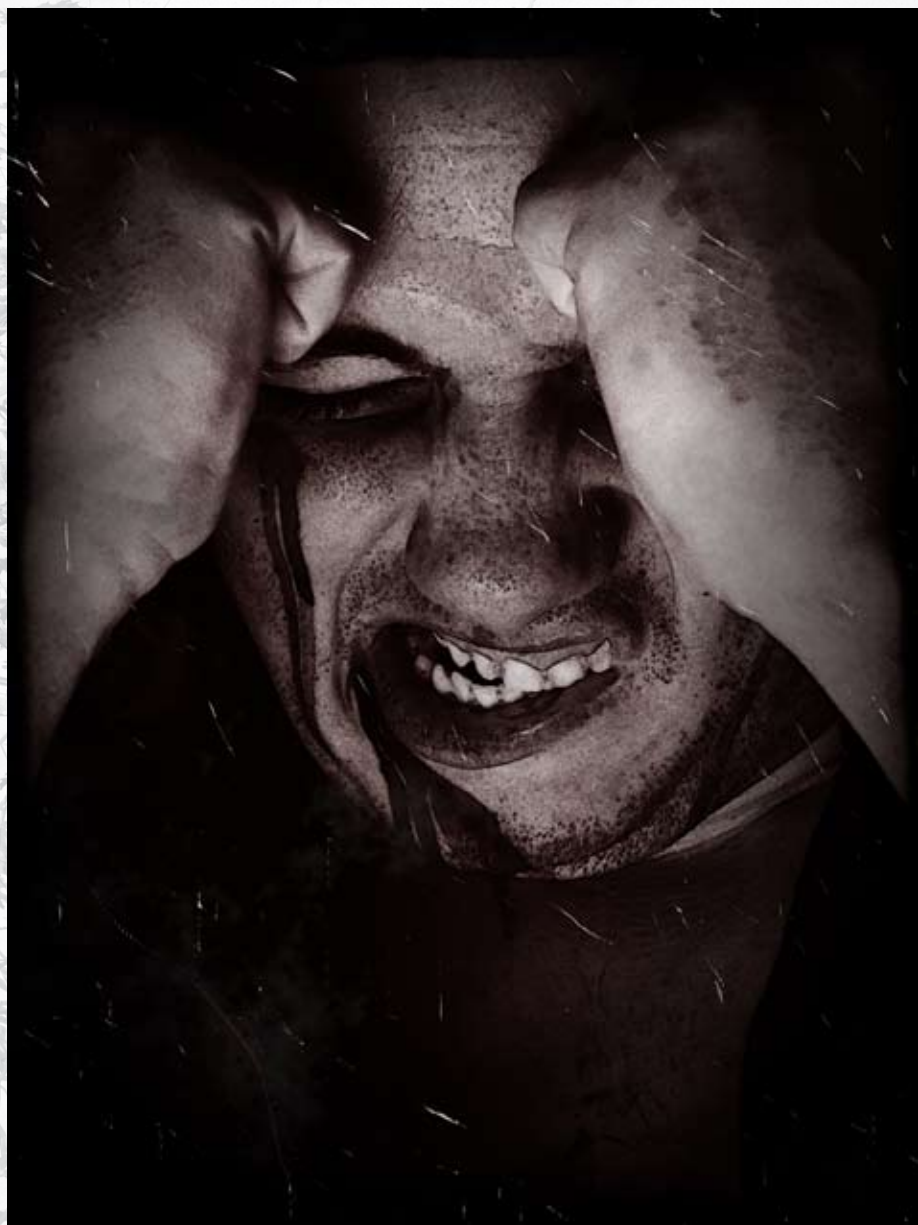
There is a fox in the woods, an unnatural beast that seeks the company of men. Most seasoned travellers to the area have come across the beast at one time or another. It is easy to placate – it seems to want gifts of some kind, preferably working mechanical devices such as watches, tools or guns, and if allowed to approach it will try to take one such item that it then carries off into the woods. It usually returns a day or so later and leaves the individual it stole from a gift in return. This is typically a similar gadget, but it's never the same item. No one knows why the fox does this. If it is prevented from taking anything, it takes revenge by leading danger towards those who thwarted it.

Whisper Trees

In some glades of the forest the trees whisper. Swaying to some invisible breeze, they seem to mutter to each other, their words half-heard and at the edge of comprehension. Some drifters say that the Whisper Trees reveal secrets of the changed world to those that sit beneath their boughs and dream. Others say it's the voice of the trees that generates the Call - the Whisper Trees just speak louder.

Bone wards

Many of the Drifters that travel the forest have begun creating bone wards. These are made from bones, animal and human, that have been found in the wood. The ward is created by carving into the surface of the bone, marking the material with words, images and scratchings that mean something to the bearer. These bones are then tied to clothing and worn in plain view. Those



that make them claim the wards form a barrier against the Call, adding a further level of protection for the owner. Whether they have any real effect beyond their macabre appearance is not known.

The golden stag

In the forest around the town a stag with a golden pelt has been sighted, leaping through the trees as if driven in terror. Witnesses say that the stag runs as if fleeing for its life, but nothing seems to be following it, although the forest does quieten as if waiting for something. Opinions differ as to whether the stag brings good luck or bad.

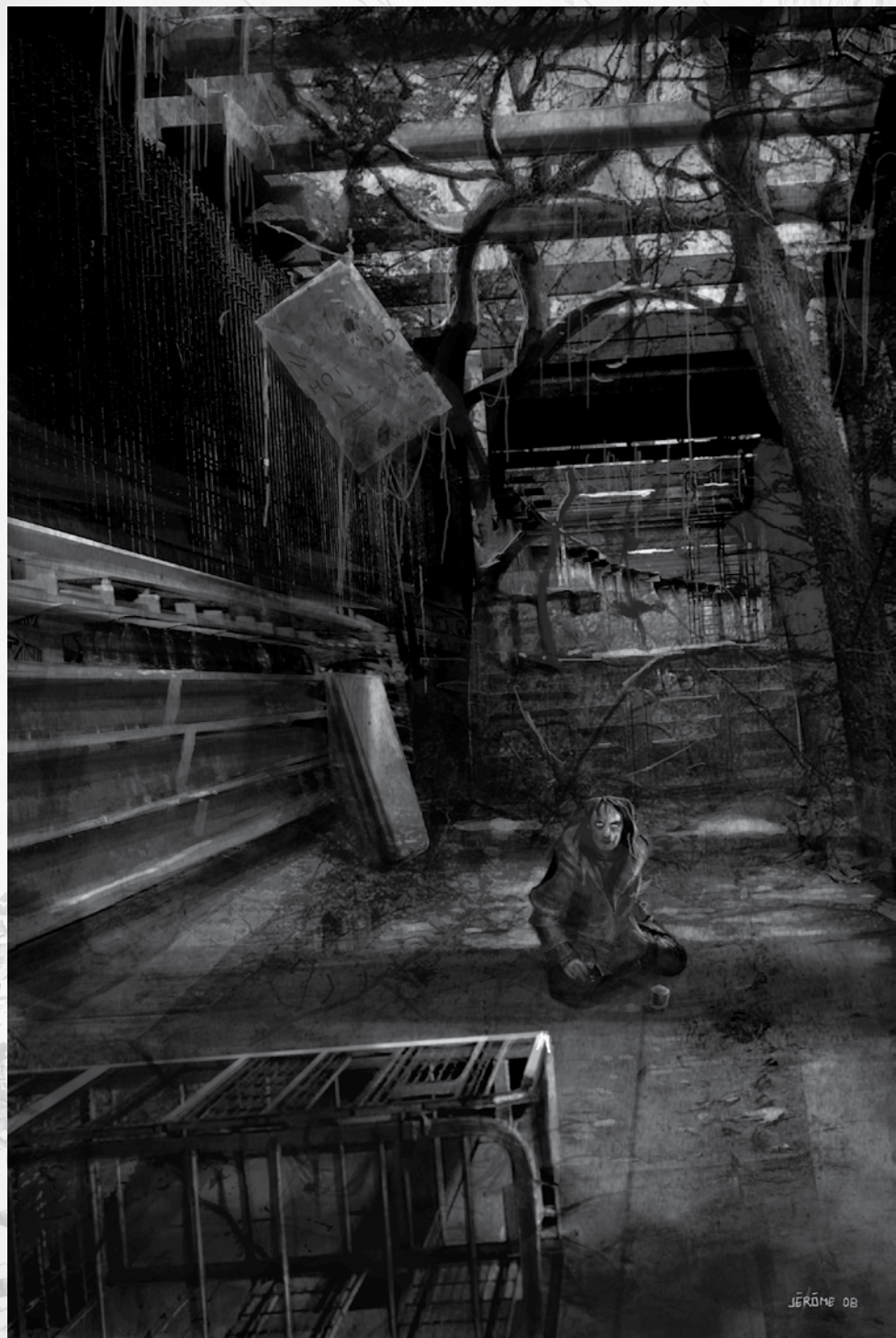
Wood children

Someone has been leaving sculptures in the woods, usually near the site where a child has died. They all take the same form - a simple human figure made from broken sticks knotted together with strips of bark. Some say that in the proximity of these wood children you can hear the crying of a real child, especially at night. Many smash the things as soon as they find them. Who or what makes the sculptures is not known.

The silent congregation

Sometimes the forest quiets for no apparent reason. The calls of nature cease and the trees seem to stop moving, becoming still and silent. Then the birds appear – rooks, cousins of the crow, a huge flock that floods down to the trees from the sky and covers the branches of the trees in a sea of black feathers. They watch in silence for a few moments and then they act. There are tales of them attacking people, of them leaving gifts or of revealing secrets in their flight; but in every case they remain silent. When they have finished their task the silent congregation take to the air and depart, allowing the sounds of the forest to return.





JÉRÔME 08

...A SUPERMARKET. HUGE TREE TRUNKS THRUST UP FROM THE GROUND, SHATTERING THE FLOOR AND TEARING DOWN THE SUSPENDED CEILING AND THE STRUCTURE BEYOND, ALLOWING SUNLIGHT TO PENETRATE. THE AISLE ARE CHOKED WITH DIRT AND TOPPLED GOODS, BROKEN GLASS BOTTLE HALF BURIED IN THE LOAMY DIRT ON THE FLOOR, THEIR INSIDES LONG SINCE PICKED CLEANED OF ANY FOOD. YOU TREAD CAREFULLY OVER THE SHATTERED GLASS, THE WRECKED FREEZER DOORS REVEALING WHERE THE SMELL OF MEAT ONCE ATTRACTED VISITORS TO PLUNDER. THERE, AHEAD IS THE TINNED GOODS AISLE, YOUR GOAL. ROUNDING THE CORNER YOU CONFRONT A MAN SITTING ON THE FLOOR, CLASPING A TIN IN HIS HANDS. HIS CLOTHES ARE DIRTY, RAGGED AND TORN. HE IS SO FILTHY THAT SOIL SEEMS TO HAVE PENETRATED HIS SKIN - HIS FINGERS ARE CRACKED AND BLACK AS HE MIMICS OPENING THE CAN HE HOLDS WITH A BROKEN STICK. HE TURNS TO LOOK AT YOU WITH YELLOWED, FERAL EYES AS YOU BACK AWAY, TURN AND RUN BACK TO THE OTHERS. THE NOISE OF SCATTERED TINS TELLS YOU HE'S FOLLOWING...

NARRATOR'S ADVICE

As with many role-playing games, the narrator has a difficult job in Summerland. They are responsible for setting up the game, creating the backbone of the story that the players will be involved in, and adjudicating all of the decisions that take place during play. This chapter gives advice to the narrator about how to perform these duties effectively and how to make Summerland an interesting and fun game for everyone involved. Remember, the narrator gets to have fun too! Also, there are a large number of characters, places and associated adventure hooks that the narrator can introduce into their games. Only the narrator needs to read this chapter, and it's advised that players don't read beyond here.

DISCUSS THE GAME FIRST

It's a good idea to discuss with the players the type of game you all want before going any further. As discussed at the start of this book, touching on themes, play styles, and what players are expecting from the game as part of the first session of play is a really useful way of making sure everybody knows what they want to do. There's nothing more disappointing for a player than creating a character focussed on survivalist and investigative play only to discover that everyone else, narrator included, is playing a game of horror-based action, or for the narrator to create a horror scenario that none of the players want to play. The narrator should try to ensure that during these discussions everyone has equal say in the type of game they want to play.

THE MYSTERY OF SUMMERLAND

One thing you won't find in this section is a description of just what occurred on the night the Event took place. There is no explanation of the Sea of Leaves, the Call or of the Deeps, or why they appeared on the earth so suddenly. This is deliberate. It is up to the narrator and to some extent the players to decide these things – what may be the truth of the setting for one game will not be the case for another. Mystery is part of what makes Summerland an interesting and dynamic game; if you remove the mystery then you take away part of the setting. You may choose to explore the mystery of Summerland in your games, or you might ignore this aspect of the game and simply deal with the results of

the Event. As always the choice remains with the narrator and players to decide on the type of game they wish to play.

WHAT DO PLAYER CHARACTERS DO?

The aim of player characters is to be accepted into communities. This can only happen if their trauma points are zero – that is they have confronted their past sufficiently within the Sea of Leaves to resolve the issue that haunts them. This is the goal of player – to heal their characters.

How is this achieved? Player characters heal their traumas by using them, invoking them in actions and conflicts within the forest. However, acting within the forest involves facing stress, which can affect characters strongly and cannot be recovered except the by rest in a friendly human community, for a couple of days at least. The communities offer rest and security to drifters but only in return for some form of help, typically a dangerous activity in the Sea of Leaves that normal people cannot be expected to perform. This is cycle – the player characters need the communities and the communities need the player characters. Player characters can accept the demands of a community and enter the Sea of Leaves on their behalf, expecting stress as a result but giving them the opportunity to resolve their trauma, or they can move on to the next community and see what they require. This is the reason that drifters flit from community to community: never welcome for long, but always hoping that this place might be the one that finally accepts them.

WHAT DOES THE NARRATOR DO?

The narrator has three really important jobs in Summerland. Firstly, they are responsible for adjudicating the rules and describing them to the players, so they need to have a firm understanding of the mechanics of the game. Secondly, they are responsible for creating the stories that the players take part in, and populating them with interesting locations and characters. Finally, they create, describe and control the scenes that make up each scenario. These are tough jobs, so let's look at them in more detail.

WHAT IS A SCENARIO?

At its simplest, a scenario is a story arc or plot line that describes a series of events that will take place within the setting of the game. The player characters then take part in this plot and interact with the various elements of the story. The difference between a scenario and the script of a film or play is that nothing is set in stone – the players get to decide how their characters act during the story. The narrator assesses and reacts to the players' actions and describes the events that unfurl as a result; the players react to each new revelation and in doing so direct the path of the story. It is this that makes role-playing games so interesting – those playing get to create a story collaboratively that involves all the characters, themes and ideas they find most interesting in the setting. Unfortunately, this places a great responsibility on the narrator. They must create the basis of the story – the scenario – and then they must react to the actions of the players and alter the flow of the story accordingly to create a smooth game. Luckily, the focus of the game for players is very clear – resolving their character's trauma and getting them accepted into a community. This makes the creation of scenarios an easier proposition for the narrator.

SCENARIO FORMS

Once the themes have been established with reference to the ideas of the players at the start of play and a suitable inspiration has been considered, the narrator can begin to create a scenario that features some of the concepts outlined above. Scenario construction is key to playing Summerland and is worth considering in more detail.

SCRIPTED VERSUS FREE-FORM SCENARIOS

Some narrators like to script their scenarios, going into details regarding the scenes that take place and writing out the major events, locations and characters involved. Purchased adventures fall into this category. This can be very useful, as going into detail gives the narrator a sense of comfort that they've covered every eventuality. However, there are a few things to be aware of with this approach. Writing detailed scenarios is extremely time consuming and players will more than likely deviate from well-constructed plot lines, which often means that no matter how much time the narrator has spent crafting their scenario, the story might end up somewhere completely. Also, it can be difficult not to rail road players



when using scripted scenarios, restricting their choices and giving the game a forced feel.

The alternative is the free-form approach, which you might also call winging it! Here the narrator starts with a rough idea of the plot and the direction of the story and perhaps some of the characters and locations involved, but then makes up the rest on the fly as the game progresses. This technique has the advantage of allowing the narrator to react to the ideas and plans of the players, but does put a lot of emphasis on the skills and ideas of the narrator. It can also cause problems if it becomes apparent that the narrator is acting off the cuff, as players can lose focus on the game world and the story if they think the narrator is 'making it up'.

Ideally, a combination of these approaches to scenario construction is best, combining the detail and forethought of a planned scenario with the flexibility and reactive nature of a free-form game. Narrators should consider these two approaches before play to see which better fits their style.

REWARDS

Should a player character ever reduce their trauma points to zero, they are ready to be accepted within a community. This is a great time for their player, as they have achieved the goal of Summerland – redemption of their character. The character can then make their way to a community and be safe in the knowledge that they are now in a position to be permanently accepted within.

The reward for achieving this goal is narration of their character's redemption. At this point, assuming the current scenario is near its end, the player controlling the healed character takes over from the narrator and can describe their character's triumphant acceptance into a community. They can do this any way they choose, ending the story for that character. The narrator should be very lenient in giving the player free rein to set the scene of their redemption any way they wish – after all, they earned it.

INSPIRATIONS FOR SCENARIOS

One of the most challenging aspects of creating a scenario is inspiration. All scenarios are based on a central idea or premise from which the story unfolds. Getting inspiration can be tricky, but luckily there are hundreds of fictional and non-fictional books, films and TV shows the narrator can draw on. Summerland is based on the collision of two worlds – our world of human civilisation, cars, phones and the Internet, with the primal world of the forests and wild animals where nature is an active force. Neither of these environments is unusual or difficult to visualise; it is the combination of the two that creates the tension in play.

INTEGRAL THEMES IN SUMMERLAND

At the start of this book we discussed some of the themes that players and the narrator might choose as the emphasis of their game, such as horror, hope or magic. The way in which the narrator can use these themes to create adventures is discussed below. By involving these themes in scenarios for Summerland, the narrator will help to create a consistent mood for the game.

HORROR

Horror is perhaps the most obvious theme of Summerland. The world has been taken over by some strange alien force – the Sea of Leaves. This has led to the collapse of the civilised world. The forest draws normal people into its depths and changes them, making them forget who and what they are, becoming the Lost that are preyed on by the beasts of the woods. Those that survive have a worse fate awaiting them; they become the Wild, beasts trapped in human form, little more than savage animals with only the smallest vestige of humanity remaining. These creatures then begin to prey upon the Lost and those humans who remain. Horror is everywhere beneath the canopy of leaves, from the desolation of the world to the savagery of the creatures that inhabit the forest.

The following concepts can all be used to instil a sense horror in a scenario.



DEATH IN THE WOODS

Of course the most immediate and perhaps most powerful horror element of Summerland is the reality of death in the woods. From the Wild to the unnatural beasts of the forest, death lurks everywhere beneath the trees.

Examples that highlight death as a common occurrence

An attack from a pack of wolves led by an unnatural leader, a group of Lost gunned down as Wild by nervous members of an isolated community, and the destruction of a settlement by raiding drifters all illustrate the proximity of death in Summerland.

DEGENERACY

Many of the creatures of the forest can be considered to be degenerate forms of humanity. The Lost act like dementia sufferers, the Wild are little more than savage beasts. Even those humans that survive in the communities have been damaged by what has happened to them. The idea that mankind is collapsing and regressing is powerful, generating a sense of hopeless inevitability that can grind down even the toughest and most resourceful people.

Examples of locations and beings that highlight degeneracy

A Wild man dressed in the remains of a suit who is found feasting on the carcass of a deer, a Lost child who shies away from human contact, or a community where captured Wild are burned alive all highlight the theme of degeneracy.

DESOLATION

The world that we know has been decimated and little remains intact: buildings are destroyed, communications links broken and civilisation ended. This theme is integral to Summerland and should come up time and time again throughout a scenario. Again this is a common theme of post-apocalypse settings.

Examples of locations highlighting desolation

A ruined church, a burnt and gutted hospital, a choked and crumbling playground, a deserted and ruined shopping mall, a collapsed suburban housing estate.

LOSS AND ABANDONMENT

Like the Marie Celeste, much of the world has been abandoned in mid-flow, as the majority of people left their homes to answer the Call. Now there aren't that many people left, and those that remain survive in close-knit, insular groups. Abandonment adds to the feeling of transition, the ending of one world – our own – and the beginning of something else where humanity does not seem to have a part. Even simple things can invoke a feeling of loss and abandonment.

Examples of locations and objects highlighting loss and abandonment

Clothing scattered and decomposing outside a shop, a partially burnt photograph album found in a gutted house, faded advertising hoardings for shampoo and beauty products, a smashed television in the middle of a clearing, shattered glass bottles spilling over a factory floor.

The following films illustrate how these ideas can be used to create compelling horror stories in Summerland.

DELIVERANCE (FILM, DIR. JOHN BOORMAN, 1972)

A classic film centring on a group of friends exploring an area of virgin forest, the story soon develops into something far darker, with degenerate hillbillies, rape and murder, followed by a fevered pursuit through the woods. Deliverance encapsulates beautifully the feel of the horrific aspects of Summerland, providing inspiration for any narrator concentrating on this theme. A must see.

STRAW DOGS (FILM, DIR. SAM PEKINPAH, 1971)

Centring on the actions of a couple trapped in their house by degenerate locals and pushed to snapping point, Straw Dogs was a controversial release at the time, featuring some graphic violence. However, it's a good film that encapsulates in miniature the ideas of isolation, hopelessness and degeneracy that affect the remaining human communities of Summerland.

28 DAYS LATER (FILM, DIR. DANNY BOYLE, 2002)

A deserted London, murderous degenerate humans and a desperate tale of survival including an encounter with normal people (soldiers in this case) that turn out to be just as bad as the degenerates, 28 days later is a modern post-apocalyptic horror that paints an interesting picture of what it would be like to survive an event of catastrophic proportions.

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT (FILM, DIR. DANIEL MYRICK AND EDUARDO SÁNCHEZ, 1999)

Either loved or loathed depending on what you find scary, the Blair Witch Project is nevertheless an interesting example of how a mundane forest can become a pretty terrifying place purely through inference and suggestion. Even if horror isn't for you, the film is still worth seeing if only for a pretty good example of how to build tension through successive scenes.

SCENARIO IDEAS FEATURING HORROR

The following short summaries give example scenario ideas that feature horror, and can be used to inspire the narrator in creating their own scenarios.

THE WILD IS RISING

Another group of drifters arrive at a settlement where the player characters are hoping to stay. They seem disturbed and uneasy. They stay for a couple of hours then leave. Three days later, a pack of Wild attack the community, breaching the barricades and savaging all they find. During the confusion of the attack, strangers are seen driving on the Wild.

What's going on: The Wild are being driven by the drifters, a motley group of raiders led by Em Taylor, who was a hardened criminal before the Event. They arrive before the attack to scope out the settlement for supplies before returning to the forest to lead the Wild into an attack. During the attack they plan to steal the medical supplies stored by the community. Can the player characters stop them from destroying the community, earning themselves the gratitude of those they've saved?

Sample scenes: strangers arrive at the settlement, the strangers depart, attack of the Wild driven by the drifters, escape into the woods, the hunt, confrontation with Em, back at the settlement.

THE BUNKER

Passing through a settlement, the player characters hear of a place nearby where weapons are to be found – a bunker, where the army stored equipment before the Event. The community leaders offer the characters a few nights' respite from the forest if they scope out the bunker and share anything useful they find. They offer to lend the characters a guide to lead them as long and can get back before nightfall. The bunker entrance is only a few miles from the community, near an area of Deeps. Their guide is Leroy Nash, a young hunter.

What's going on: There is indeed a bunker near the community, and it does contain weapons, but also something else. A group of the Lost has found their way into the bunker, and is trying to survive through the vagueness and dissolution. They have found the guns and they're scared. Some of those that have penetrated deep into the bunker have truly forgotten who they are and have become Wild. What's more, one of the Lost is Benny Nash, Leroy's father.

Sample scenes: talk of the bunker, the journey, entrance to the bunker,

lost inside the bunker, the weapons cache, wild in the dark, back to the settlement.

FROM THE DEEPS

The player characters come across a community, Little Beech, gripped with fear. Something has been threatening the members of the settlement, killing those that stray too far into the woods even in broad daylight. Only three people have survived an attack – two have died later of their wounds, one has been rendered dumb by the experience. Within the community, Jess Walker has rallied support around her. She claims the terror is nothing but an animal and that with the help of the community she can get drifters to kill the beast that haunts them, offering them a safe bed in return. Others in the community led by Duncan Webber argue against this, claiming that the beast is a warning from God against the trees and that the community must rise up against the forest that surrounds them. In Little Beech, the community is dangerously divided and on the point of conflict.

What's going on: The beast is a bear, an unnatural animal filled with hunger. It has been terrorising the community of Little Beech for two weeks. It comes from the nearby Deeps where Duncan Webber, a drifter



who came to the community a year ago, had set fire to the forest. He did this out of hatred for the trees that stole his daughter from him, a trauma that haunts him. Now he's attempting to use the community to fuel his loathing of the forest, right into the path of a pack of feral humans. Can the player characters stop him from putting all of Little Beech in danger and earn themselves a few days acceptance?

Sample scenes: entering Little Beech, meeting the factions, the terror attacks, Duncan leads the assault on the forest, the feral humans attack.

HOPE

Hope is a powerful emotion that can relieve even the darkest night. Certainly in Summerland there is plenty of room for hope, depending on how you view the situation. Despite the coming of the Sea of Leaves and the desolation wrought on humanity and civilisation, life endures. Small communities are examples of what people can do when faced with insurmountable difficulties and how they can pull together to create something good in the face of disaster. Most of the world is gone and humanity is nothing but a shadow of what it once was, but with the existence of the communities, there is always hope for a better future.

The following concepts can all be used to create a sense hope in Summerland.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Despite the horrors of the Sea of Leaves, community endures. Civilisation may have been lost, but those people that remain have managed to build some kind of existence for themselves in the ruins. Through their closeness and will to survive they have managed to create small pockets of relative normality in the forest, and they live in hope that, despite what the future may hold, humanity endures. Drifter characters will interact strongly with the various human communities, and may draw strength from their endurance.

Examples of community spirit

A community that rescues injured drifters and tends to them, a group of humans that seek to defend a neighbouring settlement from the Wild, and

a settlement that rallies around a recovered Lost child to bring her back to herself are all examples of community spirit.

COMMUNICATION AND TRADE

The establishment of communication and trade between the communities of humanity in the Sea of Leaves helps to create a sense of togetherness and unity that can dispel the isolation that has befallen mankind. Drifters are key to establishing these links, as they can travel much farther through the forest than normal people, and it is through them that mankind can re-establish itself and recover from the devastation of the trees. This is an integral component of many scenarios in Summerland, where player characters act as go-betweens for different communities in the woods.

Examples of communication and trade

A group of drifters carries a cache of vital medicines from one community to another in exchange for weapons; drifters are asked to carry the news of dangerous drifter raiders from one community to the next to help combat the threat.

LOVE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

Despite all the dangers of the changed world, love persists. In communities knitted by common fears, closeness leads to companionship and then to love. Despite all that has happened since the Event, love remains as an enduring human emotion. This concept is unlikely to directly influence the players as drifters are not welcome for extended stays in most communities, but witnessing and helping to nurture the love between those that do survive can help to make drifters feel part of humanity.

Examples of love beneath the Sea of Leaves

Drifters escort a girl through the Sea of Leaves after hearing that her lover from before the Event survives in a nearby community, and a Lost man is recovered from the forest and brought back to himself through the love of his wife.

CHILDREN

Mankind is but a shadow of its former self, but life goes on. Within communities isolated by the Sea of Leaves, children are born – innocents who have not known the world before the Event. They are the future of

mankind and the hope of the people, and through them the world shall be reclaimed. Again, drifters are unlikely to have children of their own, but few people, even the most hardened, can isolate themselves from the healing effect of the innocence of children.

Examples of the hope brought by children

A Lost child is recovered from a group of wolves that have carried it into the woods, and drifters on a journey through the forest rescue a pregnant woman after her community is destroyed by fire.

The following novels illustrate how these ideas can be used to create compelling stories of hope in Summerland.

THE POSTMAN (NOVEL, DAVID BRIN, 1985)

Rather better than the film version of the same name, the Postman tells a tale of hope in a devastated North America. In the novel, a bogus postman – a man claiming to be on official business for the restored government – acts as a focus for a struggling community fighting against a savage aggressor. The Postman heavily features the concept of communication and the need for people to believe that they are not alone – a concept that can be easily translated to Summerland.

DAMNATION ALLEY (NOVEL, ROGER ZELAZNY, 1969)

A convicted killer is offered a full pardon if he'll transport a vaccine through the 'damnation alley' that links LA and Boston in a post-apocalyptic North America. Dealing with themes of hope, redemption and recovery in the face of devastation, this is a must read novel for Summerland games that deal with hope.

Scenario ideas featuring hope

The following short summaries show example scenario ideas that feature hope, and can be used by the narrator as inspiration in creating their own scenarios.

THE LOST CHILD

The player characters, while travelling through an area of forest, come across a sobbing child. Clearly either Lost or Wild, the small boy is inconsolable. Assuming the party can calm the child, they discover that

he comes from a nearby settlement. Apparently his mother told him to go. If asked he can direct the player characters to the settlement where they can reunite him with his family.

What's going on: The settlement, Cold Fields, has come under the sway of a charismatic man named George Smith. George is a lone drifter, an unhinged traveller who believes that the forest confides secrets to him. In reality George was dangerously schizophrenic before the Event. He's convinced the people of the community that they have to sacrifice to the forest the children of those who answer the Call to stop others succumbing. After the disappearance of her husband, Jenny Speake chose to hide her child Harry near the outskirts of the forest rather than allow Smith to take him. Unfortunately, Harry escaped the shed where he was left and is now wandering the forests. Can the players stop Smith from leading the community into ruin, and reunite Harry with his mother?

Sample scenes: meeting Harry, introduction to Cold Fields, meeting George and the townsfolk, confronting George, reuniting Harry with his mother.

CONFRONTATION

The player characters come across two groups of men facing off across the remains of a road. The sight of the players sparks a conflict in which one man is killed and the players are forced to retreat along with the killers. They find out that the people they are with are from Dogsville, a small settlement run by Tom Buttle, a militant newcomer who has been telling his new friends of the fuel hoarded by the other community, Sim's Field. Buttle is eager to lead the rest of the community to claim what he says they are being denied.

What's going on: There is no fuel. Buttle is actually a troublemaker eager to settle a score with Terrence Hitchcock, one of the leaders of Sim's Field who kicked him out for trying to rape one of the community's women. The player characters must decide who is in the right, and if they are to help Sim's Field, they need to win the trust of those who see them as Buttle's pawns.



Sample scenes: the fight, fleeing the scene, around Dogsville, confrontation with Buttle, Sim's Field, final confrontation.

THE ARMY

Rumours are spreading of an army base to the west of a community the characters are visiting. Apparently, a drifter passing through said that the base appeared empty, but that animal noises were coming from the interior. Afraid of entering the base alone, the drifter carried on. Now the settlement wants some drifters to scope out the base in the hope of raiding it for equipment in return for a place in the community, at least for a while. They offer to send one of their own that remembers the area from before the Event, as long as they can share the equipment. The journey will take three days, so the drifters will need to restrain the guide, Freddy Gurtz, during the night.

What's going on: The base does exist but it isn't deserted. A group of army survivors, all drifters, are holed up inside. They've been hoarding the supplies of the base and modifying a vehicle to allow them to travel through the lighter parts of the woods. What they need now is fuel – fuel that the nearest community use to power their decrepit generator. At the moment the army team is under the command of Captain Smith, who intends to travel to the community to 'requisition' the fuel. However,

some of the men, led by Corporal Findes, plan to finish off the Captain and steal the vehicle, thinking that raiding is the best way to exist in the altered world. Findes plans to use the visit to the settlement to make his move. Can the players stop Findes from killing the Captain and destroying the community?

Sample scenes: talk of the base, travelling to the base with Gurtz, scoping the base, meeting the captain, amongst the men, the return journey, Findes makes his move, final conflict.

MAGIC

Since the Event, the world is a very different place, a magical place. The Event itself is miraculous, with trees appearing overnight as if summoned from another world. Within the woods the otherworldly nature of the landscape is evident from the Call permeating the minds of those who stray too far under the boughs to the strange animals that watch the actions of men with unnatural interest. Even spirits are said to exist deep within the woods, far from humanity.

CLASHING WORLDS

At its most basic, Summerland is about the clash of the modern world with some form of primal existence. It is this concept that makes Summerland the game it is. Narrators are encouraged to include the clash of these two worlds – the familiar with the strange – throughout the game. Most post-apocalyptic films and stories focus on this theme to some extent.

Examples of locations and objects invoking the clashing worlds theme
A pack of feral dogs investigating a ruined supermarket, a tree bursting through the floor of a swimming pool, a car pinned on its side by a tree trunk, a pair of glasses discarded and broken in the dirt, coins scattered on the floor from a broken automated payment machine, or a partially gnawed shop dummy lying on the forest floor.

THE MOODS OF THE WOOD

Forests can be varied places depending on the season, the weather and the time of day. The narrator is encouraged to try to use as many aspects

of the forest in their scenarios as possible. It's also a good idea to print off suitable images from the Internet or your camera that show these different moods, helping to set the scene for the players.

Examples of different forest moods

A wood dappled by sunbeams and filled with the soothing call of birds; or a dark, oppressive forest, quiet except for the sound of leaves and twigs crunched underfoot.

UNNATURAL NATURE

Many of the beasts found within the wood do not act like their counterparts before the Event. They seem more intelligent, more knowing, and their actions more alien. Introducing these beings into a game of Summerland acts as a focus to all that is unnatural in the new and changed world.

Examples of unnatural animals

A fox that watches a group of drifters, mimicking the way their mouths move when they talk; a pack of wolves creep into a camp at night and steal guns; or a bear that carries a Lost child on its back like a riding beast.

The following films, novel and comics illustrate how these ideas can be used to create an air of the magical in games of Summerland.

A COMPANY OF WOLVES (FILM, DIR. NEIL JORDAN, 1984)

Ostensibly about werewolves, but really a story about a girl's transition to womanhood, *A Company of Wolves* is an excellent example of a modern take of a fairy story. Ignoring the rather graphic transformations of the werewolves, the scenes set in the sinister, overgrown forests are perfect inspiration for the Sea of Leaves and especially the Deeps, and some of the creatures and environments are certainly otherworldly.

PRINCESS MONONOKE (DIR. HAYAO MIYAZAKI, 1997)

Featuring man's conflict with the strange and powerful forces of nature, this Japanese anime film is a surprisingly bloody and violent classic. The unnatural beasts of the woods and the mystical nature of the forest itself are key ingredients of a magical version of Summerland, making this film inspirational for versions of Summerland that focus on the magical aspects of the setting.

LITTLE, BIG (NOVEL, JOHN CROWLEY, 1981)

An award-winning novel about the relationships between a large family clan and faery, *Little, Big* is an exceptional book. Difficult to digest at times and huge in theme and scope, the book is an excellent example of what a faery story can be in the right hands. Inspirational particularly for narrators and players that would like to emphasise the magic nature of Summerland, it's a recommended read for all.

SWAMP THING (COMIC, CREATED BY LEN WEIN AND BERNI WRIGHTSON, 1972 ONWARDS INTERMITTENTLY)

A creature of the swamp, Swamp Thing battles many enemies to protect his habitat and his friends. The Swamp Thing comics have been written by a number of authors, but it is British comic author Alan Moore's run on the series that are of particular interest in reference to Summerland, featuring the Parliament of Trees that represent the elemental force of all living things known as The Green. Swamp Thing is a comic and features many superheroes from the D.C. stable, but its treatment of the swamp as a living entity is of interest in this case.

Scenario ideas featuring magic

The following short summaries show example scenario ideas that feature magic, and can be used by the narrator as inspiration in creating their own scenarios.

THE WOLF PACK

While camping out in the woods, the player characters are raided in the middle of the night by a pack of wolves. The animals creep in during the night and rifle through the belongings of the characters, stealing food, blankets and other clothing. They leave without a sound. Anyone awake to see them depart sees a hunched figure with the wolves, running along in the middle of the pack. The wolves disappear into the woods in the direction of a retail estate.

What's going on: Paul Little, a seven-year-old boy, has become lost. Wandering the woods alone, it was only a matter of time until he fell prey to one of the beasts of the Sea of Leaves. It was then that Paul met the wolves. They led him to a safe place – the retail park – and keep him safe



there, raiding nearby communities and humans to keep the child safe. Why they are doing this is not known. Unfortunately, a group of drifters has been hired by a local community to hunt down and kill the wolves. Will the player characters help in return for a place in the community?

Sample scenes: the midnight raid, hunting the wolves, the retail park, Paul and the wolves, the hunting drifters.

GHOSTS OF THE FOREST

As they travel through the forest the players come across a strange sight – a group of five young children, walking arm in arm through the forest. If the players interrupt the children they start as if waking from a dream, and immediately begin crying. They seem lost and confused and don't know where they are or where they have come from. While the players are dealing with this they are surrounded by a group of armed and angry men. The children have left the community of Six Bells and walked into the forest; the men are community members desperately searching for their kids. It appears that in Six Bells something keeps drawing the children into the woods, something beyond the Call. So far, four have gone missing in two weeks. The only information that is known is that the children have been seen making for the nearby Deep. If the player characters press the children they discover that 'the smiling face' told them to go there.

What's going on: The smiling face is some kind of spirit or ghost from the wood. It resides in the nearby Deep and seems to desire the company of children to appease it. It hasn't harmed the children it has taken yet, but it hasn't got what it wants from them either, and it may only be time before it grows angry with them. Will the player characters venture into the Deep to free the children and discover what the smiling face wants, so that it will stop luring children away from home?

Sample scenes: the children, the men of Six Bells, the community disappearances, travel to the Deep, confronting the smiling face, fleeing with the children.

CREATING NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Part of the job of the narrator is to create and play the part of the various non-player characters that are encountered in the game. These range from mundane animals, Lost and Wild humans, to drifters and all the other people that make up the world of Summerland. We can divide these characters into two types depending on their relevance to the story being told.

INCIDENTAL NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Incidental characters are just that – incidental to the main story. They act to support the player characters and may oppose them, but they are incidental to the real focus of the game. Animals, mundane or otherwise, will be incidental characters, as well as feral humans and some of the Lost.

Incidental characters are defined in the same way as player characters using qualities. Each incidental character has values assigned to the same four qualities of body, finesse, mind and empathy. The scale assigned to humans in the character creation section of this book can be used to select appropriate values.

QUALITY VALUE	MEANING
1	CRIPPLED
2	DANGEROUSLY WEAK
3	NOTICEABLY DEFICIENT
4	BELOW AVERAGE
5	AVERAGE PERSON
6	GOOD SHAPE
7	EXCELLENT SHAPE
8	EXCEPTIONAL
9	PHENOMENAL

Animals can also be assessed against this scale by considering their strengths and weaknesses in comparison to humans.

Incidental characters have tags but, instead of selecting a different tag for each quality as with a player character, they have only a single selected tag that can then be used with any quality. This tag is typically a description

of the creature or person – just enough to remind the narrator of what they are like and what they can do. Then anything the narrator thinks that the incidental character should be able to do will use that tag, regardless of the quality that is being employed; whereas anything that is against their nature or abilities will be resolved without the use of tags. Incidental characters always have a value of 4 for their tag.

Example of a tag description for an incidental non-player character

A wolf has a 'wolf' tag at 4, a thug has a 'thug' tag at 4, and a doctor has a 'doctor' tag at 4.

Finally, assign the incidental character any extra equipment or natural abilities it may have, so that the narrator can take these into account when assigning difficulties.

Example incidental non-player characters

Here are some example incidental non-player characters for the narrator to use in their scenarios.

Mundane wolf

A simple mundane wolf – dangerous by itself, deadly in a pack

Body 4

Finesse 6

Mind 2

Empathy 3

Tag: wolf (4)

Tools: claws and fangs

Mundane fox

A simple mundane fox, sly and shy.

Body 2

Finesse 6

Mind 2

Empathy 2

Tag: sly fox (4)

Tools: claws and fangs

Feral human

Wild and unrestrained, an example of what a person can become when the Call grips them.

Body 4

Finesse 5

Mind 4

Empathy 1

Tag: feral human (4)

Tools: club

Average human

One of the remaining people that make up the human population in the Sea of Leaves.

Body 5

Finesse 5

Mind 5

Empathy 5

Tag: average guy (4)

Tools: knife

Lost human

An unfortunate, drawn into the forest.

Body 3

Finesse 3

Mind 3

Empathy 3

Tag: one of the Lost (4)

Tools: a stick for defence when lucidity comes

COMPREHENSIVE NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Characters that have a more important part to play in the story are called comprehensive non-player characters. These individuals have an important part to play in the evolution of the game. Comprehensive characters are created in just the same way as player characters, using the rules outlined at the start of this book. You can assign more or less points to their qualities if you feel it's appropriate. Important humans will be comprehensive characters, as will most drifters.

When creating comprehensive characters, remember that the trauma and stress rules outlined for player characters are only used for drifters. Normal people don't use these rules as outlined at the start of the book.

Example comprehensive characters

Some example comprehensive characters are given later in this book.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

The narrator has the task of taking the scenario, the scenes, the location of the action and the participants, then tying it all together to make a story with the aid of the players. This might seem like a huge task, but once you get the hang of it, it's not too daunting. The main advice for a novice narrator is to let the story flow. Don't inhibit the players' creativity just because their desires don't fit with the original plan of the scenario. Instead, try to react to their actions and adapt the scenes as required.

Finally, remember that playing Summerland is supposed to be fun for the narrator and the players. As long as you keep that in mind, you should be OK.



FALLEN LEAVES - SNAPSHOTS OF THE SUMMERLAND

This section describes a generic set of drifters, communities and adventure hooks that may be inserted into a game of Summerland, or may be used by a narrator as a springboard for their own creations. The entries are described in a way that allows the narrator to adapt them to the style of play of their game and to slot them into existing campaigns with little fuss. Many of the drifters and locations are inter-linked, allowing the narrator to use one item to connect to others; this helps to create a living, breathing web of people and places. Where such links exist the names of people and places have been placed in bold italics, indicating items with their own entry. Lastly, a number of adventure hooks have been built around this framework providing inspiration for the narrator to create interesting and diverse scenarios.

Finally, take a look at the end of this book. In the appendix is a quick and easy system for randomly generating a community for Summerland: a handy tool for narrators lacking inspiration!

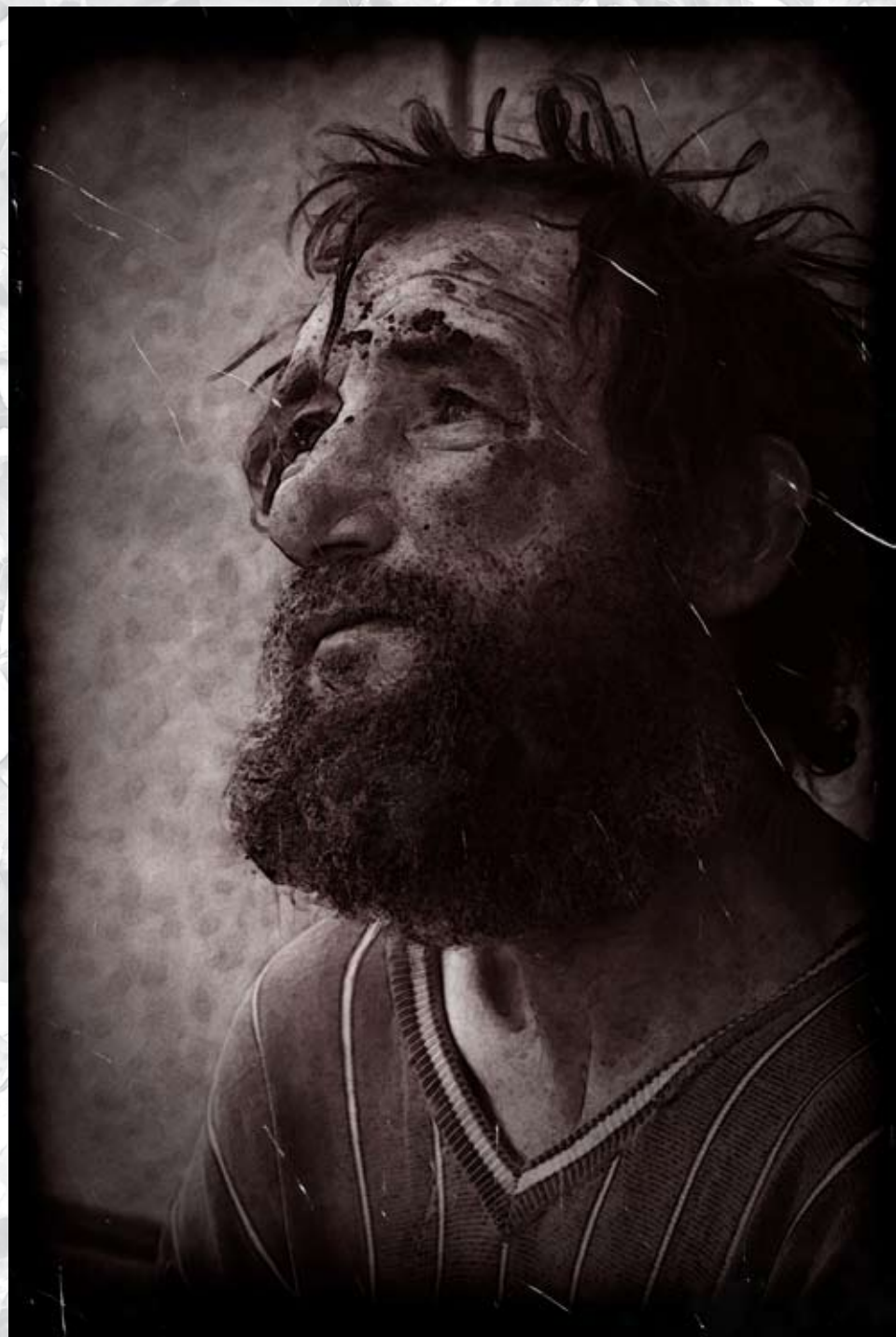
DRIFTERS

There follows a selection of drifters that might be encountered in the Sea of Leaves or in a community. Some might become allies, others enemies, depending on the story being told and the behaviour of the player characters towards them. Many are interlinked, so the narrator may use one character to draw others from this selection into the game.

ROBERT SWIFT - BULLY AND THIEF

Description: a short thin man with brown eyes, dirty black hair and a thick beard who appears to be in his early fifties. He is dressed in ragged, dirty clothing and carries a hunting rifle.

'Come come lad, where are ya from? Got nowhere to go? Come with me. I'll sort you out.'



Body: 3

Tag(s): emaciated (1)

Finesse: 7

Tag(s): surprisingly agile (3), good shot (3)

Mind: 6

Tag(s): appraising mind (3)

Empathy: 2

Tag(s): devious (1)

To all appearances Swift is a grubby, wizened old man with a benevolent streak a mile wide. Taken to long, rambling monologues and irreverent and unintelligible mutterings, Swift is considered as to be borderline insane by most he comes into contact with. Wandering from area to area, he is known to all as 'Uncle Swift' as he has a real fondness for children. Swift drags a posse of children with him, begging food for his wards as he goes. Six children of ages up to sixteen can be found with Uncle Swift, 'refugees from the wood' as he calls them. In reality he took these children when the Event occurred. Swift is considered a kindly eccentric by all – ignored for the most part – just another sad case of a good man driven over the edge by the Event.

However, under Swift's kind exterior lurks a truly twisted and malevolent individual. In reality Swift isn't a kindly and benevolent man trying to help children survive the Event, instead he keeps the children as his own gang. Working with his two 'associates', Harry Wit and Sally Allen (drifters who never leave the wood when Swift enters a community), Swift has taken the children he picked up and perverted them, twisting and corrupting their fragile minds. Working on the fears and hopes of these unfortunates with a little physical persuasion courtesy of Wit, Swift turns the children into slaves whose only hope of salvation lies in obeying their 'uncle'. He then uses them to rob and steal from communities he visits, and to dig about in dangerous ruins for equipment and goods.

Swift has two rules about his gang – never to get involved with other

drifters, and never to let his secret out. The children themselves are efficient at what they do and are fiercely loyal to Swift, and so far no one in any of the communities he has visited has ever had reason to doubt the old man.

The only person Swift allows to see the children on a regular basis is the healer **Jessica Longburn**, who helps to keep the kids in relatively good health. Swift tolerates her presence from time to time – breaking one of his rules – for the sake of keeping the children at ‘operating efficiency’, but if he thought she perceived the reality of his situation he would have no qualms about having her killed. For the children, however, Jessica represents a dream-like figure of purity and even love, an angel in the darkness of Swift’s reign. She is perhaps the only person who could test Swift’s control over his children.

JESSICA LONGBURN - MEDIC AND LONER

Description: a tall, slender woman with green eyes and blonde hair, in her thirties, dressed in rugged outdoor clothing. She has a small knife and a backpack of camping gear and medical supplies.

‘Look, you are ill. I can see it and you can feel it. Take this to sterilise the wound and then bind it with this. No, I don’t want anything in return. Please, just take it. Please?’

Body: 4

Tag(s): beanstalk (2)

Finesse: 6

Tag(s): quick fingers (3), graceful (3)

Mind: 6

Tag(s): doctor (3)

Empathy: 4

Tag(s): understanding (2)

Jessica is an example of the sort of individual who was not born to cope with the harsh realities of life after the Event. Tall, slender and beautiful,



she is bowed by the tragedy she is forced to witness every day: the decay of humanity around her. So she does what she can to help those who suffer, using her skills to create simple remedies for those she comes across in the communities as she travels from place to place, picking up what supplies she can from those communities willing to trade them and then moving on to those places that lack the supplies or skills to heal their sick. She has even been known to treat drifters she encounters in the woods, bringing wounded individuals back from the brink with an intensity and passion that is truly inspiring. Surprisingly, Jessica has never been seriously harmed in the forests, despite the fact that she generally travels alone. This is because the close-knit communities she visits regularly recognise her contribution to their lives – her efforts to make existence after the Event just that bit more bearable – and do everything they can to make sure she's safe, including hiring drifters to watch out for her. Any outsiders, Wild or animals that threaten harm to Jessica would find themselves in a lot of trouble. Jessica is oblivious to this silent recognition, and goes about her business without even noticing the drifters who shadow her moves and eliminate danger before it can materialise.

Jessica is a drifter herself as a result of the death of her child. During the Event a tree smashed through her house and collapsed the roof, and her infant daughter's cot was crushed beneath a fallen wall. Despite her medical training, she could not save her girl. Her child died that day, and so did a part of Jessica.

Jessica sometimes runs into *Robert Swift* and administers treatments where required to his adopted family. For their part, his charges adore Jessica, and she is perhaps the only person they have any feelings for, apart from the fear and adoration they harbour for Swift and his cronies. For her part, Jessica recognises that something is not right about Swift's children, but she hides her suspicions, in case Swift denies her further access to them. If Swift knew she suspected something he would have her killed, not realising the trouble he would bring down on his head by doing so, as Swift does not understand the depth of feelings that Jessica's actions create in others.

PAUL ABBOTT - TRADER WITH A DARK SECRET

Description: a tall, imposing man with steel-grey hair and brown eyes, in his sixties, dressed in a hunting outfit. He carries a long knife and a hand-made bow.

'Hmmm. There is simply nothing of interest you have to trade. I'll be leaving now.'

Body: 6

Tag(s): imposing (3), solid (3)

Finesse: 4

Tag(s): archer (2)

Mind: 5

Tag(s): hard dealer (2)

Empathy: 3

Tag(s): callous (1)

Paul Abbott has been a trader all his life, and the fierce competition has made him the man he is. With a reputation for making the kind of harsh business decisions that even other drifters find cold, Abbott is a powerful force within the local area, if you have something worth trading that is. Many of the communities speculate that Abbott was some kind of city trader before the Event. The gift that separates Abbott from other drifters is a mental detachment that some less generous individuals would consider an illness. To Abbott, people aren't people; people are things, goods, and commodities to be bought, sold, and discarded when not needed. He'd buy and sell anything for his own profit. That he has some kind of stockpile of goods in the forest no one is in doubt, but so far he has been careful enough to keep its location secret, despite the attention of those he deals with. His one rule is that he makes no deals outside of communities – if you want to talk to Abbott, you have to persuade the residents of the settlement where he's staying to let you in. This keeps Abbott separated from undesirables like **Brendan Cains**. He travels alone, staying in communities as often as he can. He dislikes **Swift** in the extreme, having met him regularly in various communities. He



suspects Swift's secret, but considers it none of his concern to interfere.

Abbott has a secret, something that has rendered him immune to the Call. He has an addiction; only his is not drugs. He revels in the pain, fear and death of living things. This perversion was brought on by the Event, when he lost his wife to a wolf. Torturing and killing the beast gave Abbott a release from the pain and loss, something he now can't live without. He has been feeding his need in the forests, injuring animals with his bow, and then taking his time to silence them. So far, this has gone unnoticed. The trouble is Abbott is finding the release he feels isn't coming as often as he would like. Therefore, he has begun contemplating other 'sources' of amusement – the Wild are too dangerous, which leaves the Lost, who are surely no more than animals?

BRENDAN CAINS - THIEF AND KILLER

Description: a skeletally-thin man in his late forties, with black hair and piercing blue eyes, dressed in a shabby overcoat. He carries a shotgun and a long hunting knife.

'Hey mate, what you got there?'

Body: 3

Tag(s): wiry (1)

Finesse: 6

Tag(s): fast (3), good shot (3)

Mind: 5

Tag(s): calculating (2)

Empathy: 1

Tag(s): no feelings (1)

To all intents and purposes the skeletally-thin Brendan Cains is an example of the depths to which men can sink. Striding through the forest with his gang, Cain threatens and cajoles smaller communities with his thin, whispering voice, intimidating those he can to get what he wants. He steals as well, using what he gets to trade with those communities too large or well organised to threaten but unscrupulous enough to deal with him. With his piercing gaze and drawn, haggard features Cains comes across as a brutally uncompromising man, leaving few to imagine that anything resembling human feelings occupy his thoughts. Never alone, his thugs always accompany him, noted as much for their lack of intelligence as anything else. To many of the settlements he visits Cains is the epitome of drifter scum, a deranged man feeding on the desperation of others.

Cains was born to be a drifter long before the Event took place. A serial drug addict, petty criminal and career vagrant, Cains was set up perfectly to survive in the Sea of Leaves. Unfortunately for him, drugs are hard to come by in the forest, and the shock of his withdrawal has left his mind ragged and bare. A bitter, uncompromising and sick man, Cains is not someone to cross. Recently he and his gang have started following *Jessica Longburn* through the woods. It's clear she has medication, and Cains is beginning to think that she might have drugs he can use, but so far her invisible bodyguards have kept him at bay, at least for now.



JOHN WHITE - EX-ARMY MESSENGER

Description: a short, muscular man in his mid-sixties, with brown hair and eyes, dressed in tailored combat fatigues. Armed with a hunting rifle and a selection of blades.

'Which one of you gentlemen is Smith? I have a message for you.'

Body: 6

Tag(s): hard muscled (3)

Finesse: 4

Tag(s): brawler (2)

Mind: 3

Tag(s): good memory (1)

Empathy: 7

Tag(s): outwardly warm (3), emotionally crippled (3)

John White keeps fit, talks well and affects an air of happy optimism. Accustomed to the menacing and brutal character of your average



drifter, the communities he frequents like dealing with someone of White's apparent good nature. However, beneath the air of gentility White is just another of the typical mercenary drifters that keeps the Sea of Leaves connected. In fact it is this total lack of differentiation that has forced White to adopt his outward persona, as if his eccentric nature gives people something to separate him from the other violent characters of the forest. Always smiling, White found himself a drifter after the Event killed his family – simple as that. Behind the smile he's a devastated man.

White deals in information, and has a reputation for discretion. He travels from community to community, spreading the news and delivering personal messages, all in exchange for food and some lodgings. He guards this 'business' jealously, warning others off 'his patch'. Luckily, he's well liked and – more importantly – trusted, as far as people are willing to trust drifters. He does travel with others though, eager not to be alone in the woods if he can help it. An ex-soldier from the barracks outside of town, White suffers from serious mental issues after serving overseas, and is prone to bouts of paranoia and depression, a personal affliction that he has managed to keep to himself for the most part.

BORIS WICKSTOW - FLAWED GENIUS

Description: a bearded individual in his early forties, with grey eyes and short but wild brown hair, wearing glasses and dressed in ragged and dirty clothing.

'Hmmm. Wait, I see, I see it! This structure's sound, yes, I could make something here...'

Body: 4

Tag(s): slender (2)

Finesse: 6

Tag(s): quick-fingered (3)

Mind: 8

Tag(s): visionary (4), analytical (4)



Empathy: 2

Tag(s): unable to connect (1)

Looking almost like a member of the Lost, Wickstow's dishevelled appearance hides his brilliance. Travelling about the forest, he helps to re-build structures – in fact many of the more open communities like the *Treetops* and *KwiCo* have used his expertise. However Wickstow's real talent does not lie in building or repairing things (there are many others more highly skilled), but in a natural ability to see things in a different way to everyone else. Not many people would be able to take the smashed wreckage of a building and envisage what it could become. Wickstow is an ideas man, a unique thinker and also a passionate believer in himself; in short – a genius. Wickstow lives for 'his work'.

Unfortunately, as it is for many who see things differently to the rest of mankind, Wickstow has difficulty communicating with others. Bumbling and stuttering through conversations and glowing with embarrassment, Wickstow struggles to communicate his ideas, in fact he sometimes barely recognises people as fellow human beings. It seems he suffers from some mental condition that alienates him from the world and ultimately stops him integrating into what's left of human society. Luckily, the illness seems to protect him from the Call as well.

Currently Wickstow is being 'minded' by *Brendan Cains*, who sees him as a possible source of bartering power. Wickstow seems not to recognise his predicament and is as focussed on his own thoughts as ever, which has so far probably saved his life.

ALICE LADBROKE - FINDER OF THINGS

Description: a short, athletic woman in her twenties with blue eyes and short black hair, dressed in rugged, baggy outdoor clothing and armed with a hunting rifle.

'What are you after? Yeah, I might be able to find that.'

Body: 4

Tag(s): durable (2)

Finesse: 6

Tag(s): fit (3), contortionist (3)

Mind: 4

Tag(s): inquisitive (2)

Empathy: 6

Tag(s): self-confident (3)

It's no surprise that Ladbroke makes an impression – she's intelligent, beautiful and self-confident. A pretty woman with short black hair and an athletic build, she has a natural ability to make others feel at ease, and her men find her attention flattering. She flits about the area locating things from before the Event for communities willing to trade. She certainly has a knack of finding stuff, seemingly able to sniff it out despite the ruin brought on by the forest.

Underneath all the layers of smiles and flattery though Ladbroke is brittle, strained and angry. Abused physically as a child, she can't help but seek acceptance, craving attention from those around her. But as a



result she feels disconnected from people, as if separated by a barrier she can't surmount. To herself she seems to spend all her time telling people only what they want to hear, being the person that they want to see, but unable to truly communicate her feelings. As a result she's terribly, terribly lonely. Although she would never admit it, she hates herself. If the situation continues for much longer, it may drive her to breaking point.

If Ladbroke ever found out that she is the fantasy object of Peter Carter, the leader of the *KwiCo* community, she would have only contempt for another man drawn in by the lie that she feels is her life. She knows nothing of Carter's desires though. She does however share something with him – a need to escape from the chains of her life. While Carter turns to the forest for his release, Ladbroke seeks danger. She goes about the forest seeking the Wild, considering these beings fascinating, drawn in by their alien and unforgiving nature. So far she's escaped injury, but it's only a matter of time before she gets into real trouble.

Ladbroke knew *Julius Armitage* before the Event, and has recently reconnected with him. She finds the juxtaposition of the squalor of Armitage's life with the single-minded focus for what he sees as his life's calling both fascinating and irresistible, and he enjoys her company, so the pair are often seen together.

JULIUS ARMITAGE - PASSIONATE ARTIST

Description: a short flabby man in his early forties, with a shaved head, a beard and soft brown eyes, dressed in a shoddy tracksuit. Armed with assorted scraps of paper.

'So beautiful! Do you see it? Do you? The way that Lost man is standing? The hopelessness? So beautiful.'

Body: 5

Tag(s): flabby (2)

Finesse: 6

Tag(s): painter's skill (3)



Mind: 7

Tag(s): artists' eye (3), keen observer (3)

Empathy: 2

Tag(s): hidden nature (1)

An artist, Julius Armitage has spent his time since the Event making images of the forest. Travelling from community to community, Armitage has seen much that the Sea of Leaves has to offer. With an awkward gait and a portly, unhealthy body, Armitage is a familiar figure to many in the local communities. His broad face, constantly lined with concentration, darting eyes hidden behind his glasses, and carefully sculpted beard make him instantly recognisable. When he speaks it is in a surprisingly tight, high pitched and nasal voice which many find uncomfortable. Clutched under one arm is a scrappy pile of paper and jutting from his jacket pocket are broken sticks of charcoal (home-made from wood) – tools of his trade.

Armitage walks about the wood until he sees something that catches his interest. This could be a broken tower jutting from the ruins of a building, a sodden Lost person huddled in a tree, or even the Wild. Seemingly, nothing is insignificant or distasteful enough to escape Armitage's eye. Once he has found something he considers worthy of note, he unfolds a piece of dirty paper, selects a charcoal stub and begins to sketch. This can and has happened anywhere; he has even been known to stop in the middle of the Deeps to make a drawing, much to the annoyance of any companions. Once Armitage has sketched the image, he rises, puts the charcoal away, stashes the drawing under his arm and sets off once more. After a full day he returns to his cramped accommodation – a semi-collapsed trailer – and makes copies of the scenes, using his precious paints rescued from some craft shop. His room is stuffed full of images of the forest, with paintings and sketches littering the floor and piled up on rickety bookshelves.

Armitage has no idea why he does this. It's just a need, a burning passion that he must sate. Without his drawing tools he gets cranky and agitated, and sometimes even violent. Few doubt that he's 'not quite right'.

Armitage is the companion of *Alice Ladbroke*. She finds his lack of interest in her reassuring, and his total disregard for his personal safety echoes her deeper sentiments, so the two are often seen together. Armitage has made images of *Robert Swift's* children, whom he seems to find interesting, seeking them out when he can, much to Swift's annoyance. If Swift spots Armitage hanging around again, things could get nasty.

REBECCA HASTE - WORN-OUT FIGHTER

Description: a tall, rangy woman in her early thirties with dark eyes and hair and a wry smile, dressed in outdoor clothing and armed with a pistol.

'What are you looking at? Afraid of something? No? You should be.'

Body: 6

Tag(s): surprisingly strong (3)

Finesse: 7

Tag(s): good shot (3), fit (3)

Mind: 4

Tag(s): methodical (2)

Empathy: 2

Tag(s): inwardly bitter (1)

Rebecca Haste is a fighter. All her life she has fought, striking out against those who sought to harm her in the care home she grew up in, those who would use her for their own ends and those who discriminated against her as a female soldier. She fought and she won, but now she is tired of fighting. Despite her ready smile her dark eyes are unflinching and uncompromising. For the last ten years she has served in the military, including several tours of duty overseas. She moved quickly through the ranks, her courage and audacity becoming almost legendary at the local barracks.

Even before the Event she had grown tired of fighting, suffering post-



combat stress severely enough to require counselling. At the same time she bitterly came to see that it is not fighting that she wanted anymore, not the thrill of combat and the rush of victory, but the pleasure of having a family – her family – around her. She yearns for a child and the warrior within her rebuked her for it. These feelings have made her bitter and intractable, turning her inward and away from contact with others. Haste projects a feeling of isolation that few would dare breach. As a member of the local barracks she helped in the construction of *Treetops*, but since other families joined the community she felt she had to leave.

Before the Event her repeated requests to leave the military were met with refusal, as her superiors could not think of a role that such a talented individual could fill outside of the armed forces. Now, she wanders the forest with no particular purpose, travelling from place to place, visiting communities when she feels the need. She finds the solitude comforting, away from the press of others in the communities. She often shadows *Jessica Longburn*, and is perhaps her most common protector. Haste find the other woman fascinating, and if anyone can breach the walls she has built around herself, it's Longburn.

COMMUNITIES

The following communities may be used by the narrator in their existing games or adapted as they wish. Each community comes with a description of the location and resources, the people that live there and the attitude of its members to outsiders. Finally, a detailed adventure hook is provided for the narrator to use. Links to the drifters described earlier are also present for the narrator to use as they see fit.

WHITE HOSPITAL

Home to a small community hiding a big secret, White Hospital is in the centre of town. Within its grounds is a working farm hidden from outside view by barriers and defended by entrenched guards. Very wary of outsiders, the community is slowly being compromised by those who don't share the views of the majority and threaten to tear the community apart.

MEMBERS: AROUND 50

Quite a few people make their homes in the remains of the hospital buildings; they help to secure the site and working on the farm. There are several families inside the perimeter, and children are more common here than in many other communities.

LOCATION: RUINED BUILDING COMPLEX

The imposing central buildings of the Fairview Medical Centre make up the settlement, with most people being housed in the three main administration buildings that remain largely intact after the Event. The community is named White Hospital on account of the distinctive colour of the panels that clad the structures, which are very prominent amongst the greens and browns of the woods. Ripped out hospital equipment, bed frames and chairs have been used alongside wrecked vehicles to construct the barriers that secure the site from the forest and outsiders.

RESOURCES: LARGE SCALE FARMING

One of the reasons the hospital made such an attractive location for a settlement was the farm that was located onsite. Originally a small



working farm maintained as therapy for children in the terminal ward of the hospital, the farm now provides food for most of the community members, with crops, animals and dairy goods produced on the site supplementing food gathered from the woods. The community members keep the farm hidden behind dilapidated vehicles and other detritus, so that it is only obvious when approached very closely.

ATTITUDE: CAUTIOUS

The community of White Hospital is very aware of the dangers outsiders bring. They also know they are in no position to defend themselves from an organised attack – so they guard their farm closely, hiding in foxholes outside the settlement and chasing off those they can. They will only trade with outsiders they have dealt with for some time or who have proved themselves trustworthy (such as *John White*) but even then they are very cautious and security conscious and everyone is treated with suspicion.

LEADERSHIP: ANARCHY

White Hospital doesn't really have an organised chain of command; instead it operates in a form of chaotic anarchy. This only works because the members know that there are just two jobs that need to be performed – working on the farm, and guarding the farm. All the members of White Hospital realise this. Everything else is left to just sort itself out.

BIZARRE PRACTICES INVOLVE: OUTSIDERS

Some of the members of the hospital, led by the pragmatic Jean Hirst, have taken a different view from the majority of members. They see outsiders such as drifters as the only way of understanding the world around them. So they have taken to holding meetings with any outsiders chased off by the community, ambushing them deep in the forest away from the settlement and demanding information and news of the forest. But even though they always attend such meetings masked, and do not claim to be from the hospital, people are beginning to put two and two together and the hospital is getting a reputation among drifters as a place with a secret - perhaps a secret worth knowing.

NOTED INDIVIDUALS

Toby Jensen has been a farmer all his life. An extended stay at the hospital involving cancer treatment led him to become involved in the farm on-

site, and many of the innovations and changes that have transformed the farm from a therapy centre in to working farm have been due to him. Taciturn, methodical and patient, Toby is the unofficial controller of the farm – he knows far more about running it than the rag-tag collection of city folk and ex-hospital workers that follow his instructions. Without him, they're lost. The trouble is Toby has just started to feel the gnawing pain in his stomach that he remembers from before the Event – the cancer's back, and this time it's going to kill him.

Rebecca Morello was a doctor before the Event, and she's carried her medical training with her into the changed world. She treats all the members of the community in exchange for avoiding working on the barricades or the farm, and actually has quite a comfortable existence at White Hospital. She's a caring person, who has turned her bird-like attention to Toby Jensen. She treated him before the Event and suspects that the cancer is back, but she knows there's nothing she can do for him. Still, she can't help but care.

Adventure hook – Secret treasure

A drifter, Jessica Longburn, has had dealings with Jean Hirst, mainly exchanging medical supplies for information regarding the surrounding communities. However, unfortunately for her she accidentally overheard talk of White Hospital and the farm. Now she's heading for a nearby community, and Hirst is worried that she'll sell the information about the hospital. In a panic, Hirst has set some of the drifters she regularly deals with after Longburn, to stop her – permanently – before she spills the community's secret. Maybe the player characters discover Longburn in the woods, or maybe they come across the mercenary band of drifters on Hirst's mission. Either way, the secret of White Hospital is unlikely to remain a secret for long.

KWICO SUPERMARKET

KwiCo was once a large cash and carry located in the retail park on the outskirts of town. After the Event, a few disparate groups of straggling survivors made it to the site in search of food and supplies. Realising that the building – a large warehouse – was still almost intact unlike much of the rest of the area, they quickly banded together and set up a base of operations. Trawling through the shops in the retail park, they



collected together a modest stockpile of food and other goods that is now the basis of their community. At around twenty members, KwiCo is a reasonably large settlement, and they are fairly enlightened in their view of outsiders.

MEMBERS: AROUND 20

There are four families in the KwiCo settlement, along with several lone men and women and a number of dogs kept on as guard dogs. Six children live in the community.

LOCATION: RUINED BUILDING

The community is based in the KwiCo warehouse on the outskirts of town; a large, freestanding structure with stable walls and an intact roof. Rubble barriers and barbed wire fences surround the building, with an area of cleared land allowing approaching visitors to be seen as they draw close. Within the building a large open space has been cleared and temporary structures built from materials scavenged from the business park. Power comes from a generator fed by a large fuel tank, but this is rarely used as fuel is scarce. Instead firewood is burned in open fire pits.

RESOURCES: SMALL STOCKPILE

Goods, foodstuffs and other useful items were stockpiled from the surrounding buildings when the community was established. These are stored in a large cellar space beneath the building, accessed by a stairwell in the office in the far corner of the warehouse.

ATTITUDE: CIVIL

KwiCo realises that it cannot survive without some help from outside, but has also heard of the violence of drifters and other robbers within the Sea of Leaves. Outsiders are treated civilly and fairly, and will be accorded some respite from the forest under careful watch if they can provide any assistance to the settlement.

LEADERSHIP: MERITOCRACY

The leadership of KwiCo is based on merit. One member, Peter Carter, has the kind of uninspired organisational skills that cannot be underestimated; he has become the de facto overseer of the settlement, assisted by those whose skills he recognises. The arrangement is entirely voluntary however, and should someone want to stand up to Carter, no

one would stop him or her. Given his flair for arranging the smooth running of the community, it is unlikely that anyone would do so.

BIZARRE PRACTICES INVOLVE: ANIMALS

Some members of KwiCo are fearful of animals. Recently, a pack of wolves has taken up residence in the vicinity. Their howls and barks can be heard around the settlement, especially by night, and many within the warehouse think that they are watching, waiting to attack. Some of the more superstitious and impressionable members of the community have begun fashioning totems – stuffed effigies of animals made from old clothes and grass that they hang from the trees around the settlement in recognition of the wolves. Some have even begun to leave food at the base of the trees as a kind of homage to the animals they fear. So far Carter has ignored this, but most in the community assume this won't continue, as he is unlikely to let good food be wasted for long.

NOTED INDIVIDUALS

Peter Carter is the leader of KwiCo, while the nervous James Keller and Justine McMillan, a jolly mother of two, are his deputies. Of those that seek to placate the wolves Lillian Brown is the leader – a pale, thin woman in her early twenties. Always fretting and worrying, she has persuaded others that the beasts of the forest will come for them soon unless they do something; what, exactly, remains unclear. Other members of the community see her as a 'bad sort', and they want her ejected from the community.

Adventure book – Solace of the trees

Peter Carter is the sort of quiet, unimposing man who simply fades into the background. Utterly forgetful in both feature and nature, his small round head is almost entirely hairless and his eyes are small and wet, giving him a shrunken, withdrawn appearance. His voice is soft and level, betraying very little emotion. An efficient organiser and conscientious worker, Carter has assumed responsibility for the KwiCo community, something that no one seems to want to deny him. Most of his colleagues assume that Carter has only one passion: maintaining an orderly and efficient maintenance schedule. In fact Carter has two passions...passions which he buries deep.

The first is for Alice Ladbroke, a drifter that first came to the settlement six months ago. Since then she has been back to the community only sporadically, so his interactions with her have been rare and unremarkable. However, ever

since he saw her Carter has been consumed by desire for Alice and the depth of his feelings have seriously affected his judgement, leading him to ignore the animal effigies and the stolen food. Seemingly unable to make her notice him, Carter has despaired of his responsibility – his work, something that once filled him with comfort – and he dreams of becoming the sort of man who could win the heart of Ladbroke. To that end, he has begun living his fantasies, or at least trying to. Over the last three months Carter has been sneaking out of the community and walking the woods by night, seeking to understand Alice and her ways. This clandestine activity has become his second passion. It's this that has drawn the wolves to the community. Their leader, an unnatural animal, is curious as to why this man leaves the safety of his people to walk alone at night. Unfortunately, curiosity fades with growing hunger, and it won't be long before the wolves attack the community in numbers.

THE PIPER FAMILY'S WAREHOUSE

A seemingly altruistic extended family housed in an old warehouse on the north road out of town, the Pipers hide a secret that threatens them all. Outwardly friendly and welcoming, the Pipers don't realise that for them the danger comes not from the trees but from within.

MEMBERS: 13

An extended family, the Pipers represent three generations, with the grandfather at the head. The family have so far resisted the Call due to the strong sense of family loyalty that binds them together, or at least did until recent times.

LOCATION: RUINED BUILDING

The Pipers live in the ruins of their family business from before the Event – a mechanic's warehouse that dealt with cars and farm machinery - situated on one of the main roads into town.

RESOURCES: SMALL-SCALE FARMING

The Pipers keep animals: chickens, two pigs and a cow that they keep in pens in the nearby woods by day and their warehouse by night. The animals provide meat, eggs and milk, all of which the Pipers supplement with fruit grown in an ancient orchard that borders their property, and deer hunted in the forest.



ATTITUDE: FRIENDLY

The Pipers are friendly folk who meet and deal with any who come by and show respect, a very rare attitude beneath the Sea of Leaves. They can do this only through the good will of some of the more permanent drifters in the region, who know the Pipers are always willing to take a person in need into their community. These drifters have an unwritten law – you don't hurt the Pipers or steal from them, and you don't let anyone else do so. The Pipers are aware of this goodwill and see it as a sign that there's good in anyone.

LEADERSHIP: THEOCRACY

The head of the family is Pastor John, the grandfather. Originally a car mechanic of some skill, John has turned to God since the Event. Seeing the world effectively destroyed but his own family saved, he believes that a divine hand is at work. Taking down the old Bible kept in the house adjoining the warehouse, John became a preacher. Unfortunately he doesn't understand the Bible too well, and tends to confuse stories and teachings in his soft, bumbling way. Still, despite his confusion the rest of the family have been content to follow his ways, welcoming strangers into their midst to teach what John considers the Good Word.

BIZARRE PRACTICES INVOLVE: MEN/BOYS

There's something sick in the Piper family. Paul, the youngest boy, sexually attacked one of his nieces recently. He was stopped before anything serious happened, but Pastor John is scared. Very few women visit the community, and those that do are drifters. The way the Pastor sees things, the only girls that the boys in his family get to see are those who belong to the family and it's only a matter of time before something happens. To stop this he castrated Paul with the help of his two sons, leaving the boy damaged and unresponsive, and his mother, John's daughter, mentally unbalanced. No one outside of the community knows this secret. The Pastor now wants to castrate the other single men in the community, something he sees as the only way they can continue under the watchful eyes of God, but so far he's been unable to talk his sons into helping.

NOTED INDIVIDUALS

Paul Piper is a damaged boy of twelve. Sullen, unresponsive and angry, he's rarely seen by visitors, hiding in the woods around the warehouse

when others arrive. He hates John for what he did, and hates his mother for letting it happen and his father for helping. He spends his time climbing trees and plotting his revenge on his family. Recently he has become fascinated with the fuel containers that his grandfather hoards at the back of the warehouse. He dreams of setting the building on fire and watching those within burn, and is getting close to realising his ambition. *Jessica Longburn* is a regular at the Pipers' place and she's noticed that Paul isn't around much anymore, but she doesn't know why.

Annie Piper is the youngest member of the community. A carefree, happy child, she has become withdrawn after what happened with Paul. She doesn't know what he was trying to do – she's too small to understand – but she knows something bad happened and that she's not allowed to play with Paul anymore. Still, she spies on him, fascinated by the forbidden, and she has a pretty good idea where he hides and what he's up to most of the time.

Adventure book – Revenge of fire

The player characters spot a pillar of smoke high above the forest canopy. The Piper place is burning. The Pastor and his family, all except Paul and his mother, are wandering aimlessly as their home burns. The flames are going to draw all the drifters in the area to the scene, many of whom owe the Pipers in one way or another, and outsiders such as the player characters are going to come under a lot of suspicion. Can they determine who started the fire, and if they find out the reasons for the blaze, what will they do?

TREETOPS

A community built among the trees in a unique series of tree houses, the place known as Treetops is the creation of Ruben Smith, an ex-soldier who leads through coercion. Claiming resources from the old army barracks and National Guard store, the community feels sufficiently secure to open its doors to strangers, making Treetops one of the most welcoming settlements in the immediate area.

MEMBERS: AROUND 50

A large settlement, the community contains a sizable proportion of ex-army men and women. Nevertheless, Treetops has several families



within its membership, and these have brought a fair number of children into the world. Fairly safe from the creatures of the Sea of Leaves in their tree houses, the population is growing at a slow but steady rate, despite the Call which seems stronger here than in many settlements.

LOCATION: POST-EVENT STRUCTURE

The unique tree-house environment of the settlement is the idea of Ruben Smith, a soldier who has risen to become the leader of the community. Built slowly over time by the ex-army members who make up a large proportion of the community, the settlement has a sprawling, hap-hazard appearance that is deceptive. It is actually much more secure than it first appears.

RESOURCES: LARGE STOCKPILE

The army members of Treetops constructed the settlement after the Event destroyed the army barracks facility originally sited there. They placed Treetops directly over the old barracks site. This was due to the survival of the barracks' silo: a storage facility where sufficient food was kept to feed the original barracks members for several years. Although the structure of the base was destroyed in the Event, the silo was not breached and the food is intact, forming the majority of the food supply for Treetops. Positioning their new home over the silo allows the members to guard their stockpile closely while avoiding the perils of the forest.

ATTITUDE: FRIENDLY

The people of Treetops feel secure in their settlement, away from the ground and isolated from the dangers of the Wild. Also, a large number of soldiers make up their membership, many of whom still maintain their weapons from before the Event. As a result, Treetops has a relatively welcoming attitude to drifters compared to a number of communities, and will accept new members from those that prove themselves to be suitable. Still, caution is the watchword and armed guards are dotted all around the community.

LEADERSHIP: COMMUNIST

Perhaps surprisingly, considering that most of the membership of Treetops is ex-military, the community has a very un-hierarchical governance. All members are treated equally, with all having some share

in the decision-making processes of the settlement. One-time officers are treated the same as those they once commanded, a set up that seems to work very well. Only Captain Marcus Wright, the highest-ranking officer pre-Event, struggles to let go of the command he once had.

BIZARRE PRACTICES INVOLVE: CRIMINALS

One thing the members of Treetops won't allow is thievery. Anyone, member or not, that is caught stealing from the community's supplies is hung after only the briefest of 'trials'. The hanging trees are located on the periphery of the community – the carcasses serve to draw dangerous animals and the Wild from the forest, which are then shot by hidden gunmen and added to the food supply. The smell of rotting meat hangs over the settlement, a grim reminder that the membership is composed almost entirely of those prepared to go to war.

NOTED INDIVIDUALS

Ruben Smith was a model soldier. Efficient, ruthless, and unswervingly loyal to his community, he had served two tours of duty prior to the Event, including winning commendations for participation in an ultimately unsuccessful assault on a Taliban stronghold in Afghanistan. Hard, calculating and uncompromising, Smith is nevertheless a shrewd man who works hard to secure the future of his settlement and family. Finding, as a child, that he had a natural talent for fighting, Smith began his career as a soldier on leaving school. When the Event took place Smith was one of the first to react. He designed and supervised the creation of Treetops, so much so that many of his one-time superior officers defer to him when it comes to matters concerning the community. However, Smith has no desire to lead, and his continual refusal to do so has led to the development of the communal structure of the settlement, as no other members wish to step above him in the order of command.

The most senior pre-Event officer at Treetops is Captain Markus Wright, a veteran of several campaigns who walks with a limp as a result of the last. He carries a lot of authority with the rest of the soldiers, but is forced to defer to Smith in most matters due to the respect the other members show the man. Wright is desperate to show that the old command structures work and that he is the natural leader of Treetops.

Adventure hook – Unwelcome guests

Recently, Wright has begun to think that the life of his community is precarious. Although the military contingent of the community are well-armed, they aren't that numerous, and as rumours of their stockpile spread he fears that it is only a matter of time before the community is the target of a raid. With this in mind, Wright recommended to his fellows that they employ the services a band of local drifters he had befriended to bolster their position, allowing the drifters stay in the community in return (something opposed by Smith). However, Wright took a stand and Smith eventually agreed, so the outsiders were let in. Since then their numbers have been steadily growing. Recently, some of these outsiders have started causing trouble in the community: picking fights, arguing, and – some believe – stealing, although this hasn't been proven. However, their numbers and attitude make facing up to them difficult. Wright is getting nervous that he has seriously underestimated the drifters, something that could, he feels, lead to a lot of bloodshed. He needs someone to help him drive the drifters out somehow but doesn't want to lose any more face in front of the community (and especially Smith), and is considering any options he can. As for the drifters, they do have plans. They have been slowly moving into the vicinity of the community, and ingratiating themselves into Treetops. They plan to eventually raid the settlement, stealing as much of the stockpile as they can carry. Wright needs a way out before this happens – can the player characters help?

THE ISLAND

Set in a lake is an island separated from the shore by a hundred metres of water, with a rope marking a passage for boats between island and shore. A community of misfits, outcasts and criminals make their home here, a repulsive and dangerous group made up of the desperate, the deranged and the irreversibly damaged. Ruled with an iron fist by Alice Glass, the Island is best avoided by those who wish to avoid the Islanders' most repugnant habit.

MEMBERS: 26

Mostly men, the Island has no families as such and no children.



LOCATION: POST-EVENT CAMP

The Island is located across a narrow strip of water close to the shores of the lake. Separated from the shore by a hundred metres of water, the Island is well protected from the Sea of Leaves. On the Island temporary structures have been erected between the trees using materials scavenged from the forest, giving the place a haphazard, tumbledown appearance. They have two small boats at the camp – one a canoe and one a fishing dingy – which they use to travel to and from the shore, tugging on the fixed rope tied to trees on either end to guide them.

RESOURCES: SCAVENGING/HUNTING

The community survives on what it can find in the forest, killing larger animals and digging up pre-Event supplies from ruined buildings. Unfortunately, the members aren't as adept at hunting as they might appear and food is always in chronic shortage, leading to clashes between Islanders and nearby communities. Sickeningly, the leader, Alice Glass, has found another way to feed her followers: cannibalism.

ATTITUDE: HOSTILE

The Islanders don't like outsiders, which they all treat in the same way: chase them off if they are strong, kill them if they are weak. Only those lucky (or unlucky) enough to resemble the Islanders would be accepted

into the community.

LEADERSHIP: DICTATORSHIP

Alice Glass rules the Island. A hard, brutal woman, she has little patience for dissention and is quick to punish those who disobey her. Luckily for her, her favoured method of meting out punishment is well liked by her followers, and her position seems stable.

BIZARRE PRACTICES INVOLVE: THE DEAD

The Islanders are cannibals. Anyone found in the forest, from the Lost and Wild to other community members and drifters is assessed for their strength and if considered easy pickings, is killed and eaten by the Islanders. They have no qualms about this practice, considering all non-Islanders fair game. They dump the remains into the lake, and bones of human and animal alike have washed up on the banks around the settlement.

NOTED INDIVIDUALS

Alice Glass is a woman at the end of her tether. In and out of prison before the Event, she became the ruler of the Island initially through physical intimidation. Although small and wiry, she has an intense, dangerous air that scares even bigger men. Unfortunately, she has no leadership ability beyond her physical presence, and frets and worries over even the smallest decision. Once a typical post-Event camp, the Island has spiralled into depravity due to Glass's inability to direct and support her people. Cannibalism is the last straw, a desperate need for food pushing Glass into suggesting that they consume the remains of Wild killed near the camp. Since then her followers have adopted the practice with glee, leading Glass to adopt the killing and consuming of humans as her best chance of maintaining control.

The only voice that is raised against the cannibals is Tom Merchant's, a wizened old man who lived on the streets prior to the Event. He refuses to eat 'dead man's flesh' and continually berates Glass and the others for their foul acts, and so far has escaped punishment as he's far too skinny to be worth eating and more than a little crazy, plus he's the only one among them with any true scavenging skills.

Adventure hook – The lost children

Recently, Glass and her followers caught three children they found wandering in the forest. The children had escaped their home in a nearby community to explore the forest, but became lost in the endless glades. Taking the prisoners back to the Island, Glass has so far resisted the desires of the most depraved members of her gang and has not killed the youths – a step too far even for her. However, this reticence is undermining her position on the island, and some are beginning to show signs of standing up to her. It is only a matter of time before she buckles and kills the children to appease her subjects. At the same time, the community to which the children belong has found where the youths were captured and tracked the Islanders back to their base, but it lacks the firepower and experience to mount a rescue attempt. Now they seek others willing to lead them in a rescue so that the Islanders can be brought to justice.

THE SLAUGHTER HOUSE

Home to a tight-knit brotherhood of men fixated on death who call their home the Slaughterhouse, an old hunting lodge in the woods is the centre of a xenophobic community located in the hills that shuns outsiders and does not hesitate to kill.



MEMBERS: 9

The Slaughterhouse is home to a group of hunters who call themselves 'The Brotherhood'. Finding themselves trapped in a hunting lodge when the Event took place, these men found strength in their comrades and built a community around the ruined building. All are male and over twenty, and they are unrelated. Although they are small in number, they resist the Call through the bonds of shared trials both before and after the Event.

LOCATION: RUINED BUILDING

The hunting lodge where the party was staying during the Event survived mostly intact. Inside are large stores of ammunition and weapons, mainly gathered from the surrounding area by the community members. The building has an imposing, unwelcoming attitude, with all ground floor windows boarded against unwelcome guests. The smell of death hangs over the building.

RESOURCES: HUNTING/GATHERING

The members of the Slaughterhouse survive by hunting and killing any animals they can find in the forest. Deer, foxes and even bears are examples of what can be found behind their doors. The smell of slaughter hangs heavy in the air, and most animals avoid it, meaning the hunters are increasingly having to range as far as they dare for food.

ATTITUDE: XENOPHOBIC

The men of the Slaughterhouse do not appreciate outsiders. They will not hesitate to chase away those that approach the building, and have even killed two drifters who would not leave them alone. This xenophobia comes in part from the bond that holds the men together – they are a brotherhood, united in opposition to the changed world that has robbed them of their homes and families. As part of that world, drifters and other travellers are to be opposed and resisted at all costs. Most of the men don't even consider the drifters they killed to be human.

LEADERSHIP: DEMOCRACY

The Brotherhood of the Slaughterhouse operates as a democracy. Everybody gets a vote on decisions they make, and everyone's say is valued. Part of this sharing comes from the belief that the community must stay together to survive the hostility of the post-Event world – if people are undervalued they will leave, and if that happens The Brotherhood believe they will all die.

BIZARRE PRACTICES INVOLVE: ANIMALS

Animals are the rulers of the changed world. The Brotherhood believes that it is through them that the Event manifested itself, and it is only through them that the world can be saved. To this end the men do not hesitate to kill all animals they come across, no matter how small, and use those they cannot eat as bait to draw in more creatures. Some have become even more extreme in their hatred for the animal world, advocating the mass slaughter of creatures throughout the wood through forest fires and poisoning. So far these fantasies have come to nothing, but this cannot last.

NOTED INDIVIDUALS

Robert Heston was a stockbroker before the Event, on a hunting trip as a team-building exercise. Now he finds himself a member of The Brotherhood of the Slaughterhouse, trapped in a cycle of death that he finds hard to deal with. Only his fear of a lonely death in the forest keeps him from leaving – that and his feelings for Fred.

Fred Taylor is one of the most devout of The Brotherhood, dedicated to the death of any living thing he finds, driven by anger over his inability to save his family and guilt over his relationship with Heston. Taylor advocates the burning of the forest, and is actively seeking stores of fuel with which to begin the conflagration.

Adventure books – The burning

Fred Taylor has found his prize. Whilst surveying a nearby community, Taylor discovered a cache of fuel in a wrecked tanker truck within the settlement's perimeter. This is just what he needs to burn the forest. He has been talking the others in The Brotherhood into helping him steal the fuel, even if it means killing the people – after all, they aren't even real people,

are they? The player characters might be in the target community, or they may be in the surrounding forest when the attack occurs. Will they help the community beat off The Brotherhood? Or will they use the attack as a chance to help themselves?

OTHER INTERESTING LOCALES

The following collection of interesting locations that might be found within the Sea of Leaves can be used by the narrator in their games, or adapted as desired.

A POLICE STATION

Much of this building was ruined, but the armoury survived intact as it was constructed of toughened materials, although it is now buried under rubble. If anyone managed to make their way through the detritus to the entrance and somehow open the door, they'd find all the weaponry of the local police force – shotguns, pistols and ammo, with plenty of body armour and other police issue items.

Adventure hook – gunrunners

Alice Ladbroke has been trying to sell guns and ammunition, and word has got around that she's come across a cache of some sort. Unfortunately, the news has reached many ears, including some rather unsavoury types such as the drifter **Brendan Cains**. The player characters are asked by a community to follow Ladbroke and see if they can locate her supply. But they aren't the only people on her trail.

A SCHOOL

A school devastated during the Event, becomes the centre of operations for a pack of Wild that terrorise the town. Comprising around fifty individuals, the Wild scavenge all they can find in the Sea of Leaves around and about their lair, hunting both in small packs and individually before returning to the school. The place stinks of their presence and is avoided by all.

Adventure hook – finding Kelly

While they are in a community, Jim and Laura Pasaro approach the player characters. Their daughter Kelly wandered into the woods several months

ago, answering the Call. At first they thought the girl was dead, but now a community member has reliably informed them that the girl is actually now Wild – she attacked him in the forest not far from the settlement. To them this is a nightmare – their child has become something less than human and has been robbed of the dignity of death. They want the player characters to find their daughter and ‘bring her peace’. In return, they can offer the characters their only possession of worth – an ex-army field medical kit they found in the woods, unused and fully supplied. As proof of her death they ask the player characters to describe to them the tattoo they find on the small of the girl’s back. The girl is alive and is Wild – she runs with a pack that is based at the school. Can the player characters find her and do what is asked? Is there another way of finding out about the tattoo, and if they lie to Jim and Laura, can they live with themselves?

THE SEWERS

Below the streets of the town, extensive sewers connect the houses to the main treatment plant. Since the Event, many of these now-redundant sewers have become blocked with plant growth or accumulated waste, or have collapsed as the trees appeared above. However, many of the lines remain in a navigable state and provide a quick, if unpleasant, method of moving from one part of town to another, providing you know where you are going.

Adventure hook – Tunnel rats

Unfortunately, others have realised the potential of the sewers as well. A pack of Wild have found their way into the sewers and use them as a place to dwell and as a means of moving from area to area. They are fairly noticeable, as they smell terrible. Mostly these feral humans feed on rats and other vermin of the sewers, but occasionally they leave en masse to hunt, especially if they sense humans in the proximity. A local community seeking to destroy the pack and make the sewers safe hires the player characters, but how will they remove the threat?



APPENDIX - CREATING COMMUNITIES

In the post-Event world of Summerland, communities are key. As homes to the last remnants of humanity, survivor settlements provide a tenuous link to a pre-Event existence. They hold the last vestiges of hope and companionship left in the world. As such they are the focus of the activities of drifter player characters, for it is through interacting with communities that they resolve their personal trauma, and of course acceptance into a community is the ultimate goal of player characters.

In Summerland the various human communities that are encountered by drifter characters are an important aspect of the game. It is through these communities that the player characters will get most of their human interaction as, within the woods and far from these places, the only humans found will be Lost, Wild or drifter bands. The narrator has the task of creating these communities and breathing life into them. Here we give some general advice on how to create interesting and believable communities, and a random generator that can be used to create a settlement with a few dice rolls. The purpose of the generator is not to stifle narrator creativity, but to act as a springboard when creating new and interesting environments for player characters' to explore. During the process the narrator should feel free to change or ignore anything that does not feel right – the process is meant to aid the narrator, not hinder them.

The most important consideration when creating human communities is that as a whole they are isolated and their occupants are scared. The outside world, which to these communities means the Sea of Leaves, is a dangerous and often deadly place. It is an alien world where humanity is unwelcome. The only people that come from the forest are the drifters, and they are an unstable and unpredictable lot. Other communities exist but often they are too far away to be contacted directly, and even if they could be there is no guarantee that they would not be hostile. To most communities there is only one thing of importance: its members. Everything else is not to be trusted.

THE PROCESS

The six core features to consider when developing a community for a game of Summerland are size, location, resources, attitude, leadership and bizarre practices. Of course these are just guidelines to creating a settlement – the rest of the details are up to the narrator. The features described are just springboards for the narrator's creative process. To create a community, the narrator either needs to generate a set of values rated between one and six in a random way, for example with six-sided dice, or to simply pick interesting results from the tables below. The values or choices are then used as starting points to describe six key features of a community that can be used to create a fully-fledged settlement. In each of the following sections one of the key facets of a community is discussed.

SIZE

Roughly how many people live in the community? A small community might consist of only a few tens of people, whereas the largest post-Event settlement might consist of several hundred people. The size of the community will reflect on many of the other choices that are made regarding the settlement. When considering the size of the community, the narrator should remember that the position of the settlement in the environment will reflect the number of members: important communities with resources and facilities will tend to be large, whereas tiny hamlets with close-knit members could be very small.

ROLL	SIZE
1	A FEW TENS
2	LESS THAN FIFTY
3	UP TO FIFTY
4	AROUND ONE HUNDRED
5	A COUPLE OF HUNDRED
6	SEVERAL HUNDRED

Example size of a settlement

A settlement based around a tight-knit church group might only have a few tens of members, whereas a community that dominates the prison in the centre of a town might have as many as three hundred members.

LOCATION

Settlements are always located in a defensible position; anywhere with limited access routes and easily defensible perimeters would be suitable. When creating a settlement the narrator should try to consider places in the real world that would meet these criteria and should try and keep settlement locations as varied as possible. Of course, the location of a settlement may also reflect the number of people that live there.

ROLL	LOCATION
1	A RUINED BUILDING
2	A POST-EVENT STRUCTURE
3	A POST-EVENT CAMP
4	AN UNDERGROUND COMPLEX
5	A COMPLEX OF BUILDINGS
6	AN ISOLATED NATURAL AREA

Example locations for settlements

A shopping mall, a warehouse, a ship, an underground station, the top floor of an office block, an aircraft hanger, an army barracks, a fire station, a school, a bunker, an old fort or an island.

RESOURCES

How do the members of the community gather what they need to survive? Are they hunters, sending parties out into the forests to kill and gather what they can? Are they farmers, desperately working on whatever plots of land they managed to rescue from the forest. Or perhaps they have found a stockpile, a pre-Event source of food and goods that they rely on to this day. Determining the resources of the community tells the narrator a lot about the immediate needs of the community.

ROLL	RESOURCES
1	HUNTING/SCAVENGING
2	SMALL SCALE FARMING
3	SMALL STOCKPILE
4	LARGE SCALE FARMING
5	LARGE STOCKPILE
6	LARGE STOCKPILE

Example resources for settlements

Trapping animals beside a nearby river, farming tiny plots of land on the roofs of community buildings, raiding supplies in an abandoned army dump, gathering fruit from giant trees in an ancient orchard or hacking back the forest to grow crops.

ATTITUDE

How do the inhabitants of the settlement view those from outside? All communities are very insular and wary compared to pre-Event settlements, but on a relative scale, just how do they react to strangers? Also, how are these views expressed? Do the community members actively pursue interaction with outsiders, or do they shy away from contact? The narrator should consider both the attitude and the behaviour of the community members towards drifters and members of other communities. The narrator should remember that these views are relative – no one really likes drifters.

ROLL	ATTITUDE
1	HOSTILE
2	FEARFUL
3	XENOPHOBIC
4	CAUTIOUS
5	CIVIL
6	FRIENDLY

Example views of outsiders

Attitude – welcoming, frosty, scared, angry or critical. Behaviour – shoot at strangers, welcome them under guard, trade with them at the threshold, welcome them in with open arms, hide from them or barter with them for news.

LEADERSHIP

Every settlement has some kind of leadership which determines the path that the community takes and speaks on behalf of the people. Isolation has a strong effect here, where lack of interaction with other communities leads to the development of strange and often stagnated leadership structures that make no sense to outsiders. The narrator should again exercise their imagination dreaming up the hierarchy of a community, using some of the bizarre leaderships that have flourished in the real world as an example. Of course things might not be as they first seem within the community, and lines can become blurred between the leaders and those led...

ROLL	LEADERSHIP
1	DICTATORSHIP
2	ANARCHY
3	THEOCRACY
4	MERITOCRACY
5	DEMOCRACY
6	COMMUNIST

Example leadership types

A democracy where every member gets to vote, a dictatorship run by a leader with sole access to vital goods or skills, a tyranny ruled by a thug and his cronies, a semi-religious sect worshipping the woods, a gang ruled by fear and violence, a ruling council voted on by community members and a hereditary leadership with one ruling family.

BIZARRE PRACTICES

Isolation leads to evolution. Many communities have evolved what would be considered (to the pre-Event world) as very strange ideals, philosophies and bizarre practices regarding the Sea of Leaves, the creatures that dwell within and the place of humanity in this new world. The narrator should feel free to use their imagination to come up with suitably odd and unusual behaviour to add a touch of individualism to a community.

ROLL	BIZARRE PRACTICES INVOLVE...
1	WOMEN/GIRLS
2	MEN/BOYS
3	THE DEAD
4	CRIMINALS
5	OUTSIDERS
6	ANIMALS

Example bizarre practices

Women are drugged during the full moon to stop them answering the Call, children are kept in a locked area day and night to keep them safe, the dead are left propped against trees at the perimeter of the settlement to appease forest spirits, strangers are bound inside the settlement, crimes are punished by exile into the woods, no animal may be killed for fear of evil spirits, people over the age of sixty are cast out into the woods, the lost are hunted for food, and feral humans are left in peace as wild spirits.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once these key parameters have been determined, the narrator should have in their mind the seeds of an interesting and individual community for use in Summerland. The next part of the process is fleshing out the bones, adding details and noted individuals to make the community come to life.

PLAYER:

NAME:

QUALITIES AND TAGS

BODY ()

.....
.....

FINESSE ()

.....
.....

MIND ()

.....
.....

EMPATHY ()

.....
.....

DESCRIPTION.....

WHAT WERE YOU?.....

WHY DID YOU LEAVE?.....

POSSESSIONS.....

TRAUMA.....


.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

STRESS SCALE

CRACKED	CONTROLLED
0	1 2 3 4 5

TRAUMA SCALE

ACCEPTED	EXILED
0	1 2 3 4 5



THE TIME IS NOW. THE WORLD HAS CHANGED.

The Event brought the Sea of Leaves into our world, an immense forest that choked cities and drowned civilisation overnight. From the trees came the Call, a lure to the weak that decimated the population. In the aftermath only pockets of humanity remain, resisting the woods' siren song. In the endless forests lurk the Lost – whose wills were drowned by the Call – and the Wild, who have forgotten they were ever human.

You are one of a select few who can resist the Call. A Drifter, hardened to the lure of the woods by the scars of the past, you cannot let go. Your torment shields you, but drives your isolation. More than anything you crave welcome in a community, but can never be truly accepted without leaving behind your past. To do that, you must confront and defeat the demons that haunt you.

What will you risk for redemption?

Some paper, pens, friends and a handful of six-sided dice are required to play Summerland.