XERO SUM STUDIO

PRESENTS

DISTEMPER

EMPTY

A TTRPG JUMPSTART

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ARTIST **HERNÁN GONZÁLEZ**

NENAD CVITICANIN COLORS

EMPTY IS A STANDALONE STORY SET IN THE #DISTEMPERVERSE THAT COMES WITH ADDITIONAL CONTENT INTENDED TO BE USED AS A JUMPSTART THAT GUIDES NEW PLAYERS THROUGH THE CONCEPTS AND MECHANICS BEHIND THE DISTEMPER TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME.
EMPTY IS AVAILABLE AS A PDF AND ALSO AS A HARD COPY FROM WWW.THEDISTEMPERVERSE.COM,
AS WELL AS THE FULL DISTEMPER RULES AND ADDITIONAL GAME RESOURCES & CONTENT. VERSION 0.9.7 FIRST PRINTING 2022

TO HELP TELL THE STORY, VISIT WWW.DISTEMPERVERSE.COM   THE DISTEMPERVERSE CREATED BY TONY BUSHELL

My dad used to say "we don't see the world as IT IS, but as WE ARE" but as I look out of the window I don't know what that means we ARE now, except FUCKED.

I think it's fair to say this is worse than ANY of us expected.

This area was never exactly what you'd consider DENSELY POPULATED but we haven't seen anything in almost an hour.

And, by anything, I mean there have been ZERO signs of life.

It's like the whole fucking world is EMPTY.

I would say I wish I had stayed back at the farm, but that would be a lie.

None of us have left in almost 3 months and everyone has been itching to leave but no one wanted to be the first one to suggest it.

And now that I'm out, all I can think is it's NOT FAIR.

But, fuck that noise.

NOT FAIR that we survived and so many others didn't?

NOT FAIR that none of us really got to say goodbye to anyone that we loved?
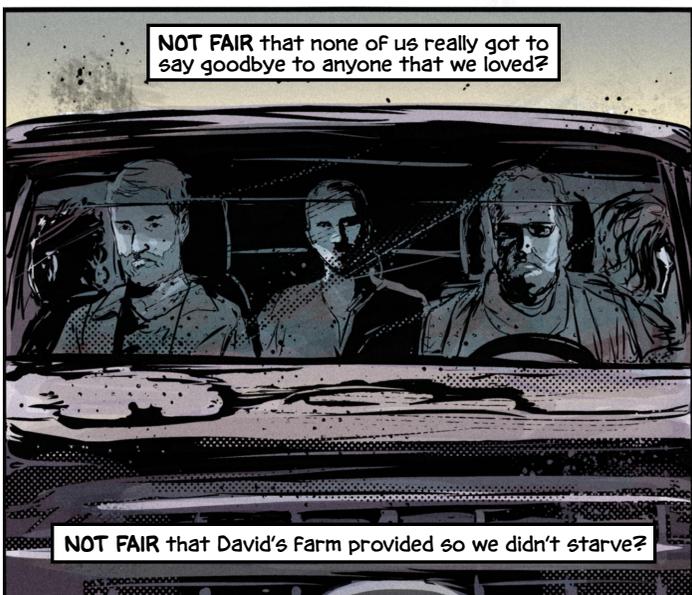
NOT FAIR that David's farm provided so we didn't starve?

What's NOT FAIR is that a vegetable-based diet has given me the best skin of my life and there is no one to appreciate it.

Delaware. 357 days since the first recorded death.

IF YOU PLAN ON TAKING PART IN EMPTY AS A PLAYER, STOP READING HERE

I thought getting away from the farm would be good for me.

A breath of fresh air.

But the stench from the farm came with me.

We decided to stop along the way to see if we could find anything worth scavenging.

We gave up after one house.

SPOILER WARNING: Looting dead people's homes isn't as fun as it sounds.

You have to ignore the putrefied bodies and skeletons in beds while rummaging around in the remains of people's lives looking for the essentials.

Y'know, batteries and bullets, stale cigarettes and unexpired tins of food, toilet paper and chocolate.

Stuff that won't ever be made again.

The essentials.

Other times you just find photos and birthday cards and other, inexplicable and pointless items which had probably meant the world to someone once.

I am hating this.

David gave us a speech about how everything was useful and should be grabbed, but really, we're just taking dead people's shit.

But, fuck them.

It's not like THEY need any of it anymore.

I would say that I hate how I've started processing information since the world ended, but I'm starting to wonder if I wasn't always like this.
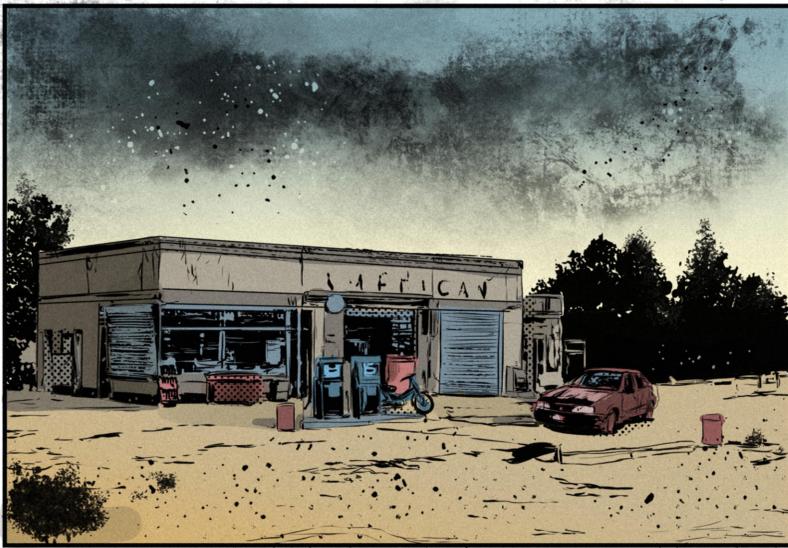
- WAIT -

- WAIT -

Too Late.

Not great.

We had just assumed it was empty, like everywhere else.

And, for a second, it WAS empty, right up until it was flooded with tension and violence until there was no room left to breathe.

THE FUCK ARE YOU?

THE FUCK ARE YOU?

OK, LET'S ALL STAY CAL -

HEY, FUCK YOU.

HEY, FUCK YOU.
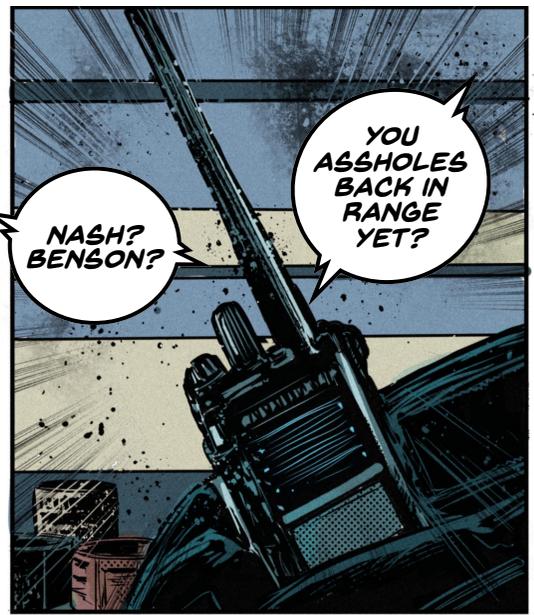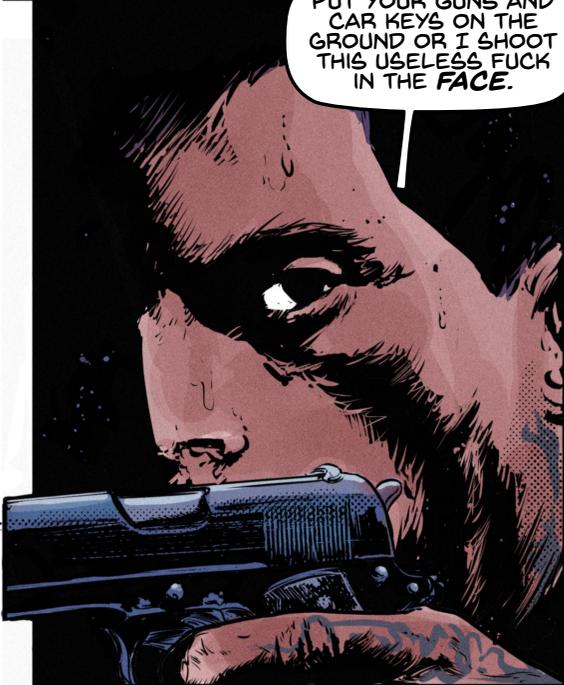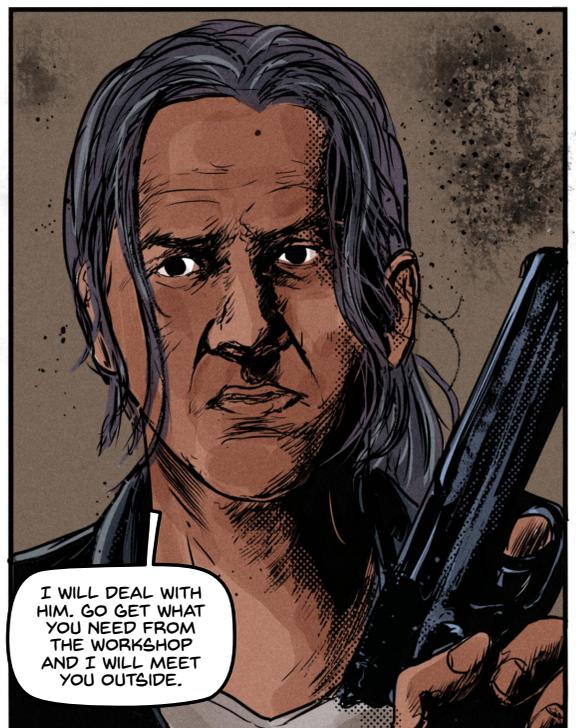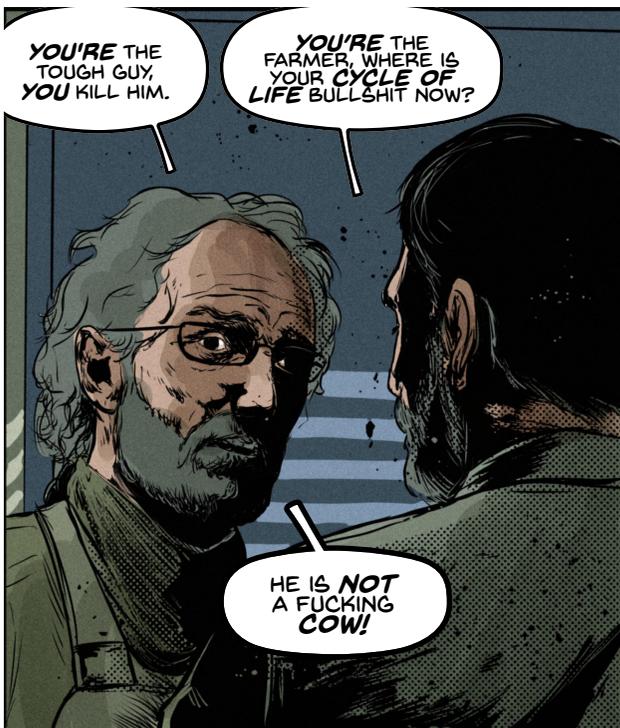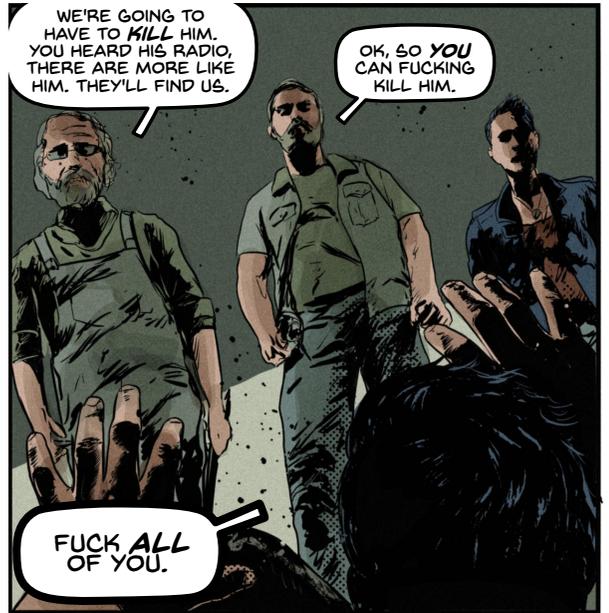
Got to hand it to Gus.

He's good with knots.
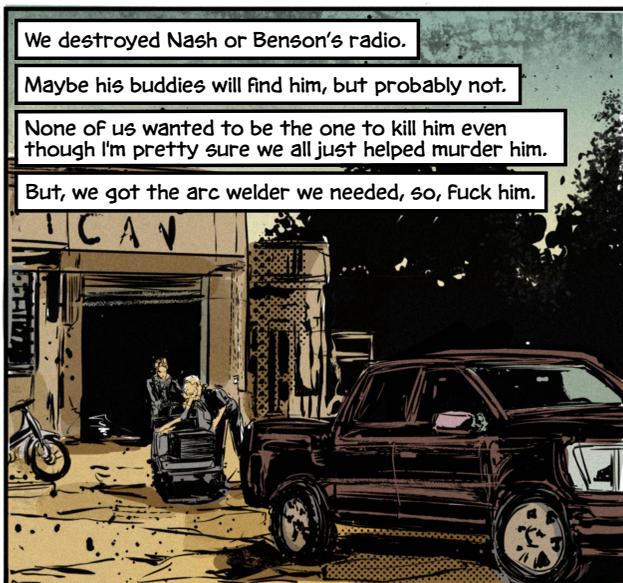
We destroyed Nash or Benson's radio.

Maybe his buddies will find him, but probably not.

None of us wanted to be the one to kill him even though I'm pretty sure we all just helped murder him.

But, we got the arc welder we needed, so, fuck him.
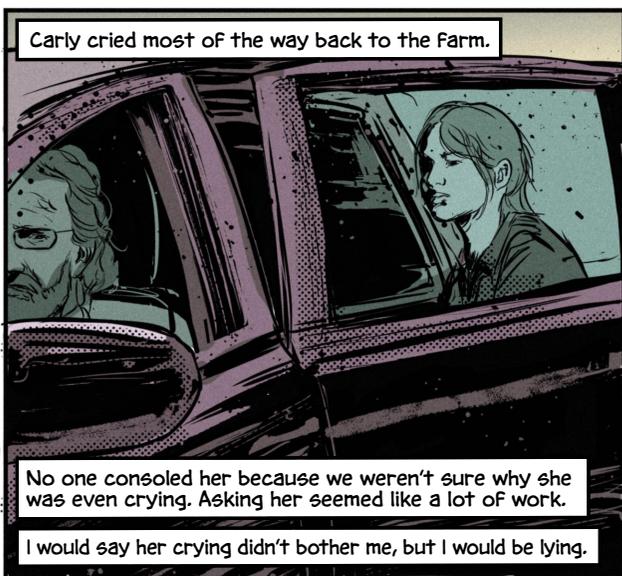
Carly cried most of the way back to the farm.

No one consoled her because we weren't sure why she was even crying. Asking her seemed like a lot of work.

I would say her crying didn't bother me, but I would be lying.

This was the first time we had seen another living being in months.

You would think we would want to talk about what just happened but no one said a fucking WORD.
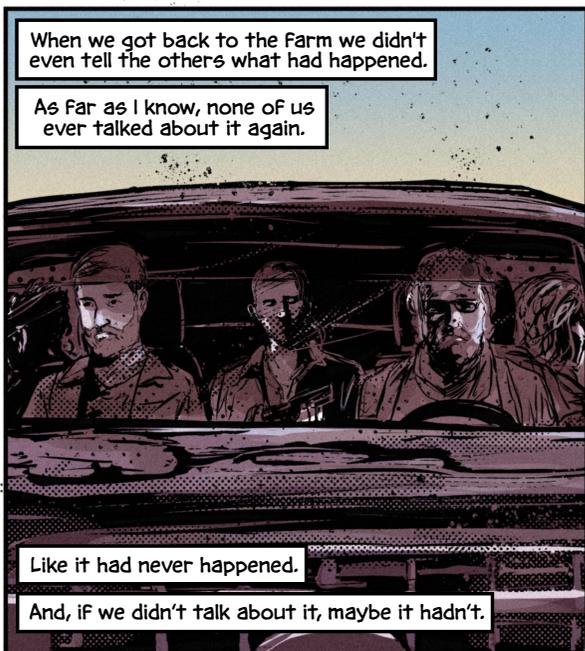
When we got back to the farm we didn't even tell the others what had happened.

As far as I know, none of us ever talked about it again.

Like it had never happened.

And, if we didn't talk about it, maybe it hadn't.
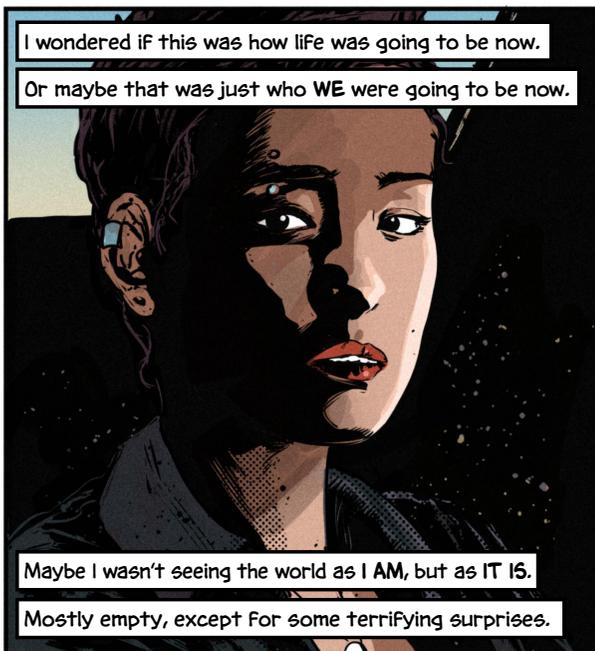
I wondered if this was how life was going to be now.

Or maybe that was just who WE were going to be now.

Maybe I wasn't seeing the world as I AM, but as IT IS.

Mostly empty, except for some terrifying surprises.

DISTEMPER

If at any point during this comic-book - or perhaps when you have been watching a movie or TV show or while reading a book - you found yourself questioning a characters' behavior or choices and thought: "I wouldn't have done that, I would have done something different, something better, something smarter than that" - then **Distemper** is your opportunity to put that theory to the test.

In addition to being a comic book series, **Distemper** is also a **Tabletop Role-Playing Game** (**TTRPG**) wherein a group of 3-6 players collectively tell the story of a group of survivors in the aftermath of a virus that has obliterated most of humanity.

Alone, save for each other and a handful of dice, they are at the center of an unfolding narrative and together they will create an interactive, improvised, and collaborative storyline.

The world they find themselves in is hard and fractured with each new day bringing risks, threats, opportunities and terrors, and the group of players must figure out how their characters are going to survive, and hopefully even thrive.

Unlike many traditional games, there are no winners or losers in **Distemper** as it unfolds cooperatively between the players and the referee, or **Game Moderator**. Together, the group collaboratively defines the challenges and outcomes in order to tell a story that is exciting, enjoyable, fulfilling, memorable, and unique to that group.

The encounter within this booklet can serve as an introduction for a GM and group to the world of **Distemper**, but it is additionally intended to serve as a play-test document that guides a group through some of the major game mechanics to help test for errors or broken systems.

If you took part in a session, we would love to hear any feedback, comments or suggestions you may have.

HOW TO PLAY DISTEMPER

Distemper is a **Table-Top Role-Playing Game** (**TTRPG**) which, at its core, is like a complex and rewarding game of make-believe where a group of friends work together to tell a story.

One person will take on the role of **Game Moderator** and act as a referee and storyteller, helping guide the characters (voiced by the other **players**) through a series of events and interactions to tell a story that they collectively help shape.

Each **player** contributes to the narrative by explaining what their character is seeing, thinking, saying, or doing, and together the group create a shared narrative where their characters are at the center of the action.

When the outcomes of certain actions or activities - like firing a gun or climbing a wall - will have an effect on the story, players will make a **dice check**. This involves rolling two 6-side dice (written as **2d6**), adding or subtracting modifiers for their natural abilities, skills they have learned along the way, and any additional variables of that situation. Although there are gradations of success, if they get a **9 or higher**, they were successful in whatever they were attempting. More details can be found on page 22.

MAKING A DICE CHECK

All attribute, skill, or combat checks require **a total score of 9 or above** to be successful. They take the format:

2d6 + Attribute Modifier (AMod)
Add their Reason, Acumen Physicality, Influence or Dexterity AMod, for a range of -2 to +4

+ Skill (SMod)
Add relevant SMods from Skills for a Range of -3 to +3

+ Conditional Modifier (CMod)
For any external influences or Unexpected factors, ranging from -5 to +5, at the GM's discretion

GETTING STARTED

With the exception of a handful of 6-sided dice, this **Jumpstart** provides everything a group needs to get started playing. From understanding how to read a character sheet, to resolving actions and challenges with dice checks (as well as how to interpret the various results), from how to interact with the **Non-Player Characters** (**NPCs**) bough to life by the **Games Moderator**, through to taking part in a brutal and unforgiving combat system, this guide walks teaches a group what they need to know to survive the encounter laid out within.

To get started, one player must take on the role of the **Game Moderator**, or **GM**, who will act as the referee or director or chief storyteller and who will run the game for the rest of the group. The GM is responsible for guiding the other players through the encounter laid out in this comic and helping them get to grips with the basics of the game.

Although this guide is structured to be accessible and useful to someone who has just picked it up and allow them to run a session with little to no preparation, it is nonetheless recommended that the GM reads through the entire guide at least once to familiarize themselves with both the story as well as the basic concepts of the game.

The other players in the group will each take on the role of a survivor, picking from one of the **Pregenerated Characters** on pages 16-17. Each comes with a character card that details who they are and what they can do, and each player should have their character card available to them to reference while playing.

These cards, along with some additional background information to help acclimatize them to this new world, are available as part of the **Survivor's Handbook** from **www.distemperverse.com/empty.**

Also available online is a **By the Numbers** version of the story that shows how key moments during the encounter play out in game terms, to provide working examples of gameplay that help with digestion of the rules.

So, grab some friends, a handful of dice, some scraps of paper, decide which character will be your voice as you tell some collaborative stories in a dark, dangerous world where every move may be your last.

NOTE: Many of the rules and concepts in this booklet are expanded on and covered in greater depth in the **Distemper Core Rulebook,** which is available for download, along with a variety of other game resources and additional stories, at **www.distemperverse.com**.

STOP READING HERE IF YOU PLAN ON TAKING PART IN EMPTY AS A PLAYER

GUIDANCE & EXPOSITION

Boxes like this will contain information and suggestions that are designed to aid a GM in running this encounter.

Each box provides context for a different part of the encounter, including any flavor or detail that the GM will need to relay the situation to the group. These sections and generally bite-sized, to ensure the game keeps moving.

These boxes may also contain information designed to be shared with the group to help set the tone or to give the players a sense of what's happening in the world around them.

Depending on the context, it is up to the GM if they hint, paraphrase, or read the contents of these boxes directly to the players.

RULES & SIDEBARS

To help make critical rules easy to find and refer back to, they will be called out in boxes like this, sometimes as a sidebar to the explanatory text.

These rules will often be accompanied by working examples that provide greater detail that both help clarify a rule and help the players and the GM digest the information.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & VTT ASSETS

Although this book contains everything a group needs to play **Empty** (with the exception of dice), there are additional resources available for download that can help facilitate gameplay. These include a **Survivor's Handbook** for each of the characters that contains enough information to get a player acclimatized to this setting and ready to go, unmarked copies of the map that can be shared with the group, and an **Initiative Tracker**.

Additional, whilst TTRPGs may have originally been designed to be played in person at a table with physical dice and pens and paper, the rise and prevalence of **Virtual Table-Tops** (**VTTs**) have opened up a much wider world of interaction and gaming possibilities for groups of players.

Distemper works perfectly well in *The Theater of The Mind*, but various maps and character tokens have been created to support playing **Empty** online via a Virtual Tabletop.

All additional resources are available at **distemperverse.com/empty**

USING THIS GUIDE

Built around a specific encounter, **Empty** is designed to get a group playing **Distemper** as quickly as possible by distilling the rules required to play down to the bare minimum and teaching them on the fly as they become relevant to the story.

This **Jumpstart** should take 2-3 hours to complete and by the end of the encounter players should have a grasp of how the basic mechanics of the game work and also have a good sense of the world they will be playing in.

Although it's recommend that the GM reads through and digests this entire document (including the comic book) at least once to become familiar with how the encounter unfolds and the details they will need to bring it to life, this book is organized to aid with the digestion of information and streamline what a GM needs to know to help a group start playing quickly and simply.

EMPTY (PAGE 1): Intended to provide context, flavor and inspiration for the GM, this short story shows one possibly way that this encounter can unfold. To help new GMs, this encounter is scripted and while it plays out in a similar manner to the comic, there are enough differences that the story should just be seen as a guideline and GMs are encouraged to take the pieces they like while ignoring anything they don't wish to use.

ENCOUNTER OVERVIEW (PAGE 10): An overview of the story in game terms to help orient a GM on both how the story relates to game mechanics and rules, how the encounter is likely to unfold, as well as what is expected of a GM.

THE WORLD AROUND YOU (PAGE 12): An overview for both the players and the GM that describes what has happened to the world they once knew and in which their characters' must now survive. This information is in the **Survivor's Handbook** (available for download from **distemperverse.com/empty**) but the only information that is necessary for a player to read to get started is in the **Here's What You Know For Sure** section on page 13. Before starting, the GM should show, read, or paraphrase the contents of that section to the players in order to orient them in this new reality.

CHARACTER CARD OVERVIEW (PAGE 14): An explanation of the various aspects that go to make up a character, such as their abilities, skills & personality, as well as an understanding of how these individual elements affect gameplay.

PREGENS (PAGES 16-17): There are 5 different pregenerated characters (Pregens) that players can pick from, each complete with the statistics, equipment, and background information needed to play them immediately. Players should take a moment to read over each Pregens' backgrounds & characteristics and choose the one that they feel they can either relate to the best or would have the most fun playing.

HOW TO RUN EMPTY (PAGES 18): Although there are many ways that a GM could run Empty, the building blocks of how the encounter is structured are provided here. This section walks a GM through **Distemper's** various mechanics and rules, giving examples of gameplay and suggestions for players uncertain for what to do next. The location where the encounter takes place and the **Non-Player Character** (**NPC**) that the players will meet are both described in enough detail to allow a GM to guide the group through the basic game mechanics, showing them how and when to make **Dice Checks**, how to interpret these results to see if they were successful at a task, how to make social checks such **First Impressions**, **Gut Checks**, and **Negotiations**, as well as how to engage in **Combat**.

If a GM is uncertain how a rule might relate to the story, they should reference the **By The Numbers** version of **Empty** available online, as it clearly outlines how the events portrayed in the comic align with the rules of the game.

WHAT NEXT? (PAGE 37): Some suggestions for players & GMs as to where to go next, including suggestions on story hooks and where a group can find additional resources.

REFERENCE GUIDE? (PAGE 38-39): A summary of the various rules, collected in one place for ease of reference.

CALL-OUT BOXES: For ease of use, important details will be called out in a variety of boxes to make the contents as obvious and easy to find as possible. These boxes are discussed on the page opposite.

ENCOUNTER OVERVIEW

Empty is explicitly designed to introduce a group to the world and core mechanics of **Distemper** and is a scripted encounter that runs in a fairly linear manner. However, depending on the approach and goals of the group, it can still have a number of outcomes.

The characters are made up from a small group who have been living together on David Battersby's farm for the last few months, trying to outlast the pandemic. One of the tractors on the farm has recently broken and David knows a garage where he believes there is the arc welder he needs to attempt repairs.

This is the first time anyone has ventured off the farm in months and the drive has been a sobering experience. They had stopped along the way to see if they could find anything worth scavenging in a house and were starkly reminded of the horrors recently inflicted upon the world and kept on moving.

When the group arrives at the garage, they realize that there is someone already inside. This non-player character (NPC) is **Nash**, and is voiced and played by the GM.

Nash is obviously a potential threat, and how the encounter unfolds will be largely dependent on how the group chooses to interact with him and how the GM chooses to voice him in response to the players.

Although Nash could be seen as an ally, possibly helping the group find the parts that they require, it just as likely that he will be an antagonist, aggressively laying claim to the contents of the garage or forcefully attempting to join the group.

Empty can be played peacefully, with an emphasis on social skills and negotiation, or it can devolve into bloody and uncertain carnage. What will ultimately happen during this encounter - like with everything the players do in **Distemper** - will be decided by the choices they make.

WHAT IF THE PLAYERS HAVE READ THE COMIC?

Whilst it is ideal that players come into **Empty** with no idea of what is about to unfold, if a player (or even the whole group) has read the story then it is up to the GM to change things around just enough to keep the encounter fresh for the group.

To help keep things fresh and interesting for players familiar with the comic book story, the contents of this guide and how things play out are varied slightly different. For example, the NPC who is in the gas station, **Nash**, is much less confrontational in this encounter than in the comic. He would ideally like to join the group and discover where their base of operations is. Rather than get into an instant confrontation, he will attempt to bargain with the players. This may or may not be successful, depending on how the players approach the situation.

As the GM you may decide to make Nash more sympathetic or a less threatening figure. Perhaps Nash is a much older man, or perhaps Nash is a young adult who appears to be desperate not be abandoned. Perhaps Nash is a pregnant woman who needs help. With just a few minor changes, Nash can go from an obvious threat to a choice that presents the group with an ethical dilemma. Rules are provided for **Negotiations** and perhaps the group comes to an arrangement of some sort with Nash, instead of devolving into combat.

With just some subtle shifts in narrative, a GM can ensure the encounter remains fresh for the players, no matter whether they have read the story or not.
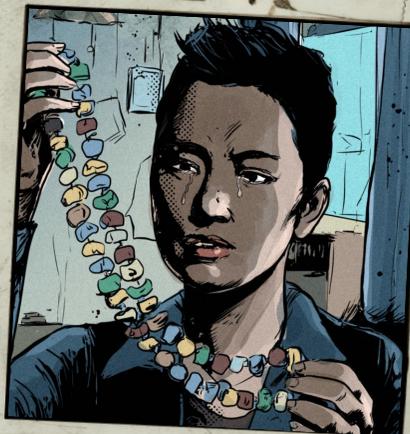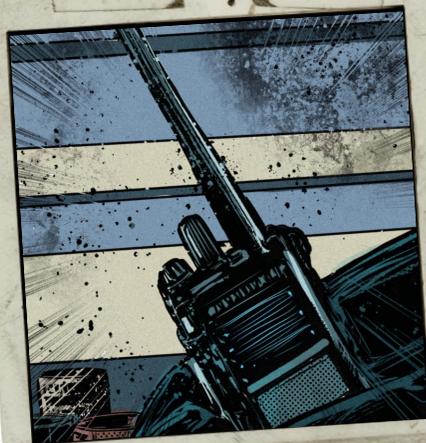
SANDBOXES & RAILROADS

Distemper is a sandbox TTRPG in which the players are encouraged to explore the world through their characters, and this requires the GM to be flexible and adaptable.

Although future content for **Distemper** will provide more of a framework for a GM to build within rather than rails to move a train along, **Empty** is intentionally and deliberately different.

As it is designed to teach players the game, there is a very light storyline that is purposely hard to deviate from. This is done in order to make sure players are introduced to all elements of the game.

The storyline in this encounter loosely mirrors the **Empty** story on pages 1-6 as one possible way this story can play out, but more experienced GMs should feel free to deviate from the story at any point, or even just take various elements of the encounter to use in their own stories.
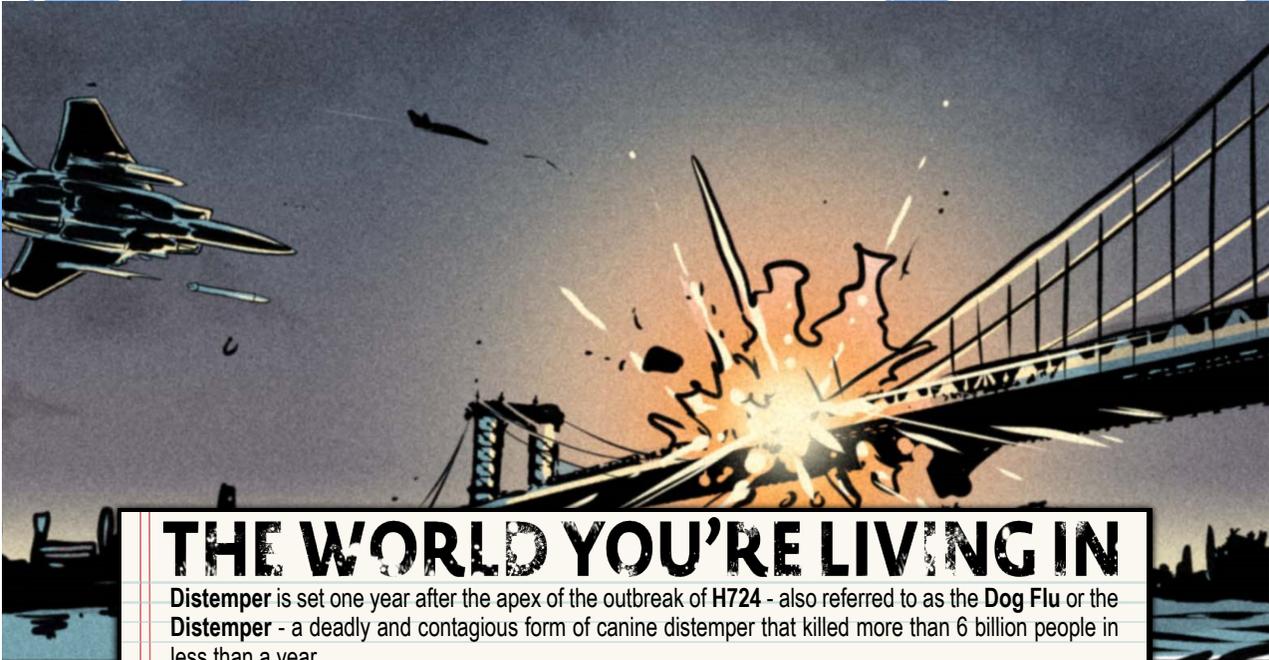
THE WORLD YOU'RE LIVING IN

Distemper is set one year after the apex of the outbreak of **H724** - also referred to as the **Dog Flu** or the **Distemper** - a deadly and contagious form of canine distemper that killed more than 6 billion people in less than a year.

Nowhere and no one was safe from the Dog flu and those who hadn't been stricken down by the virus, and who weren't killed in the food riots that followed as society collapsed, and who hadn't starved in the ensuing famines or gotten themselves murdered over scraps of food in their hands, are now faced with figuring out their ongoing survival.

The fear of the virus is still very real and strong enough to get people with a runny nose killed without warning, but more immediate threats and priorities - like food, shelter, and safety - have taken precedence.

Some elements of society are attempting to knit themselves back together whilst others are pulling at the frayed edges. Many cities - those that aren't still burning, at least - have devolved into anarchic and chaotic hellholes, whilst others strive to shine as sanctuaries and beacons of hope - even if no one is really sure who they can trust any more.

The Rule of Law has been replaced with the Rule of the Gun and for each instance of people working together to fulfill the basic needs of food and protection, someone, somewhere, is plotting to take it away from them. If you have something of value, you need to be prepared to fight to keep it and if someone else has something that you want, then you may have some interesting choices to make.

Everything anyone knew has changed and people are having to do ugly things to survive. As players, you will constantly be faced with ethical choices that test your morality and have long-term impacts on gameplay.

After all, when starvation is a very real prospect, people quickly reevaluate priorities.

WHAT YOU KNOW FOR SURE

In the year since the first recorded death from the **Dog Flu**, the world has changed dramatically. There are no central authorities left, no governments, no military, no supply-chain, and no media.

What the characters know is very limited and, in the absence of real information, much has either been deduced or assumed, however here are some inarguable facts:

- The **Dog Flu** came out of nowhere. The first recorded death was in Chile on March 7th and from there it was like an unstoppable snowball of death.
- Every country on earth found themselves being suddenly and brutally eviscerated.
- It was initially transmitted to us by *Man's Best Friend* but mutated and developed multiple transmission mechanisms.
- The death rate continued to escalate exponentially as the virus continued to mutate.
- By the end of the summer when the media stopped broadcasting, the grim outlook was that up to 80% of humanity would likely be killed from the **Distemper**.
- As summer turned to fall, enough people had died that society essentially collapsed under the onslaught of this invisible enemy and ceased to function.
- With no new information about the state of the world or the virus, paranoia and fear run rampant, and word of mouth is unreliable.
- All forms of canines - wolves, coyotes, jackals, foxes, and dogs – still carry the virus and are considered deadly.
- Securing food & water, shelter and other essential supplies is now of paramount importance to anyone left alive.
- How they go about doing that will depend on their level of desperation.
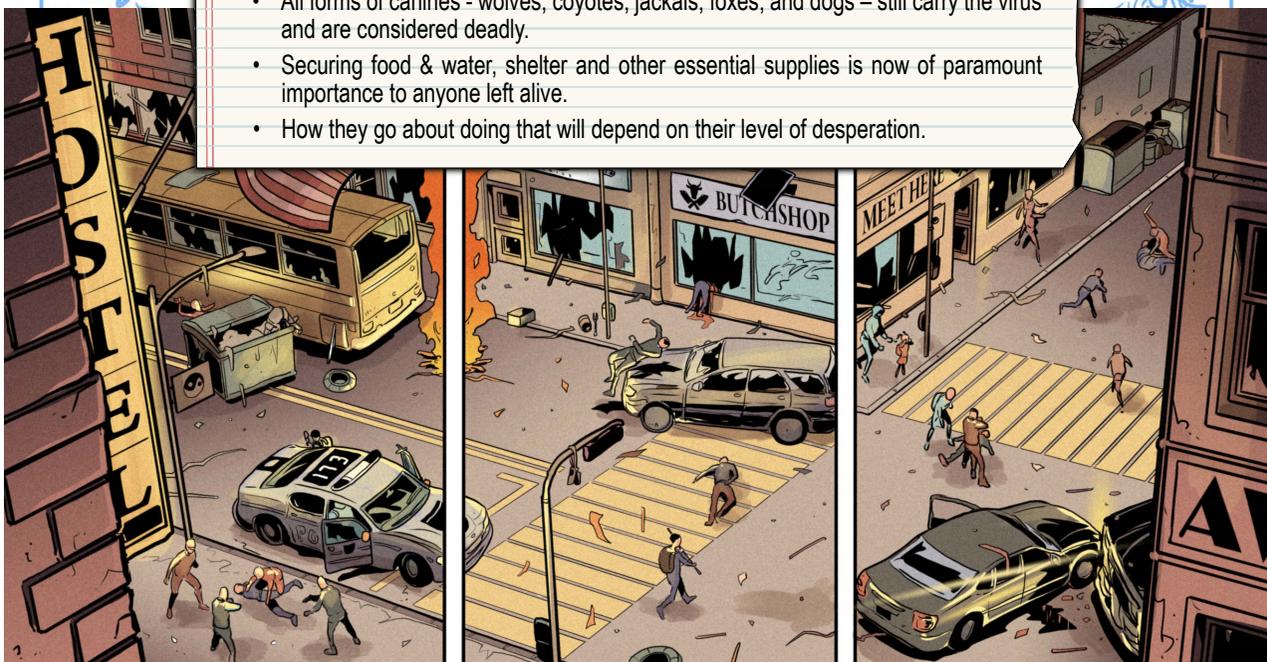
CHARACTER CARD OVERVIEW

Characters in **Distemper** are the protagonists of the stories told between the group. They are a player's eyes, hands, and voice, and it is through this avatar that they can interact with the world around them.

On the following pages are a series of **Pregenerated Characters** (also referred to as **Pregens**) that are ready to be played immediately. For players unfamiliar with the game, the numbers and stats might be overwhelming, so they should look over each characters' background and pick one to play based on what they see in the **Who They Are & How To Play Them** sections of the character card.

The various attributes, statistics and skills that define how competent or capable a character is at certain tasks or activities will be explained during the course of **Empty**, but there is a brief overview is below to help orient a GM or player.

These character cards are a truncated version of the full character sheet designed to make playing this Jumpstart easier for a group. To see the full character sheet or to download additional copies of the character cards, visit **www.distemperverse.com/empty**

MARVIN CALHOUN

AGE: 38
WEIGHT: 172 LBS
HEIGHT: 5'10"
PROFESSION: HANDYMAN

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS:
FISTS 1D3+1+3 (100%)
LIGHT PISTOL [5] 3+1D6

MARV IS:
Sarcastic, Bold, Sly

MARV'S COMPLICATION IS HIS ADDICTION AND HIS MOTIVATION IS HEDONISM

NOTES:

A combination of drink and his temper is why Marv spent so many years in and out of correctional facilities growing up. Working for David doing odd-jobs around the Farm in the year or so leading up to the pandemic helped Marv get sober. When the dog flu hit, Marv was one of the first to move to the farm with David and his wife and is both protective and antagonistic of David.

MARV

RAPID RANGE

REASON	1
ACUMEN	2
PHYSICALITY	1
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	1

SKILLS

BARTER (A)	2	PERCEPTION (A)	1
DECEPTION (I)	1	SCAVENGING (A)	1
DEMOLITIONS* (P)	1	STREETWISE (A)	1
DRIVING (D)		TINKERER (D)	1
GAMBLING (A)		UNARMED COMBAT (P)	2
GENERAL (R)	1		
LOCK-PICKING* (R)	2	VEHICLES* (D)	1

SECONDARY

WOUND POINTS	12
RESILIENCE POINTS	7
DM MELEE	1
DM RANGED	1
INITIATIVE MODIFIER	+4
ENCUMBRANCE	7
MORALITY	3
PANIC THRESHOLD	3
BREAKING POINT	6

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❶ WHO THEY ARE & HOW TO PLAY THEM

This section provides basic details about who each character is. Although this information has little impact on game play, it helps bring a character to life.

Additionally, there is a brief background section that describes who they were before the Dog Flu and how they came to be here. This provides more context for the players when taking on the role of their character.

Each character has various characteristics that define who they are and why they act like they do to help a player voice these characters.

There are a few keywords that summarize their personality, as well as a **Complication** and **Motivation** that will drive their actions. **Complications** and **Motivations** are explained fully in the **Core Rule Book** (available at **distemperverse.com/core**) but for the purposes of this encounter, these elements should be taken at face value – someone with the **Motivation** of **Find Safety** will always put the idea of **Finding Safety** above all else, for example.

❸ RAPID RANGE

A characters' inherent abilities are defined by five attributes - **Reason, Acumen, Physicality, Influence & Dexterity**. These are collectively referred to as the **RAPID Range**.

These attributes range from 0 to 4 and this number is the **Attribute Modifier**, or **AMod**, which is applied to any dice checks using that attribute.

REASON:
Reason reflects how smart, how quick, and how well educated a character is, in addition to how well they process and retain data. Characters with a high *Reason* tend to be good at skills that require a high degree of mental agility and cognitive ability.

ACUMEN:
Midway between perception & cunning, *Acumen* affects a PC's ability to read a situation or person and defines how well they can turn things to their advantage. Characters with a high *Acumen* are very in tune with their surroundings and tend to rely heavily on their instincts.

PHYSICALITY:
Not simply a measure of brute strength, *Physicality* also defines how tough or how athletic a character is, and can also be a representation of how much discipline or self-control they can exert over themselves. Characters with a high *Physicality* are often capable of not only amazing feats of strength, but also will-power.

INFLUENCE:
Influence is a measure of a character's presence, charm, charisma, or sheer physical beauty, in addition to how well they are able to use that to their advantage. Characters with a high *Influence* are often able to convince, manipulate, or otherwise bend others to their will.

DEXTERITY:
Dexterity is a mix of innate agility, hand-eye coordination, reflexes. Characters with a high *Dexterity* are not only quick on their feet, but are also able to react deftly to rapidly evolving situations. Characters with a high *Dexterity* are adept at activities that require nimbleness, fancy footwork, or quick fingers.

❹ SKILLS

All characters picked up a variety of knowledge and abilities prior to the game starting. These Skills are listed here, along with a number that reflects their degree of training.

These **Skill Modifiers** (or **SMods**) range from -3 to +3 and apply to all dice checks using that Skill.

A full list of skills is provided below and while a character without training can attempt to use any skill, if the skill is marked with an * (such as *Surgery**) then it indicates that this requires specific training or it incurs a -3 SMod.

Each skill is tied to a **RAPID Range Attribute**, this is referenced in parentheses after the skill name. On the character card it is written as "**Dodge (D)**" and in the list below as "**Dodge (DEX)**".

SKILL LIST

Animal Handling (INF)
*Armorsmith** (DEX)
Athletics (PHY)
Barter (ACU)
Charm (INF)
Deception (INF)
*Demolitions** (PHY)
Dodge (DEX)
Driving (DEX)
Entertainment (INF)
Farming (RSN)
First Aid (RSN)
Gambling (ACU)
Genera Knowledge (RSN)
Hunting (PHY)
Inspiration (INF)
Intimidation (PHY)
Local (RSN)
*Lock-Picking** (ACU)
Melee Combat (PHY)
Navigation (ACU)
Perception (ACU)
*Pharmacology** (RSN)
*Psychology** (INF)
Ranged Combat (DEX)
Research (RSN)
Scavenging (ACU)
Sleight of Hand (DEX)
Stealth (PHY)
Streetwise (ACU)
*Surgery** (RSN)
Survival (ACU)
*Tactics** (RSN)
Tinkerer (DEX)
Unarmed Combat (PHY)
*Vehicle Repair** (DEX)
*Weaponsmith** (DEX)

❺ SECONDARY STATS

Each character has a series of statistics that are derived from their **RAPID Range Attributes**. Each of these **Secondary Stats** impact gameplay in some ways and although they are explained below, not all of them are explored in this guide.

Those that are, are introduced and explained as they become relevant to the story.

WOUND POINTS:
A measure of how much physical punishment someone can endure before they become **Mortally Wounded** and are then **Killed**.

RESILIENCE POINTS:
How much stress, strain, and concussive damage someone can endure before becoming **Panicked**, or **Incapacitated**.

DEFENSIVE MODIFIER MELEE:
How well the character dodges, parries or otherwise reacts to an incoming **Melee** attack. Also reduces damage suffered from Melee attacks.

DEFENSIVE MODIFIER RANGED:
How well the character dodges, feints, or otherwise reacts to an incoming **Ranged** attack. Also reduces damage suffered from Ranged attacks.

INITIATIVE:
Initiative determines the order in which each participant acts during combat.

ENCUMBRANCE:
A measurement of how much a character can carry before becoming fatigued.

MORALITY:
A reflection of a character's internal moral compass and how far they may have strayed from their own values.

BREAKING POINT:
The threshold at which someone becomes overwhelmed by pressure or stress and snap, usually doing something they later regret.

❷ EQUIPMENT

Although not all of the included **Pregens** start **Empty** with anything other than the clothes on their back, anything they do have with them is listed here in the **Equipment & Weapons** section along with any specific details for that item.

Some items require charges to be used (a pistol needs bullets to be fired and a flashlight needs batteries) and any charges for an item are listed next to the name in parentheses. Nash has **Light Pistol [2]**, for example.

This also where the damage a character does with a their bare fists is listed.

DAVID BATTERSBY

AGE: 62
WEIGHT: 193 LBS
HEIGHT: 5'9"
PROFESSION: FARMER

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS:
FISTS 1D3+1 (100%)
SHOTGUN [6] 3+1D6
TRUCK

DAVID IS:
Sullen, Pessimistic, Shrewd

DAVID'S COMPLICATION IS HIS LOSS AND HIS MOTIVATION IS STAY ALIVE

NOTES:

David is a third-generation farmer and, along and his wife jenny, has spent decades working their farm, close to the Maryland and Delaware border. When the pandemic hit, David and jenny couldn't save their own children (who were scattered around the us) but they invited those near and dear to them to farm to try and ride out the storm. They have been there ever since.

DAVID

RAPID RANGE

REASON	2
ACUMEN	2
PHYSICALITY	1
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	0

SKILLS

ANIMAL HANDLING (I)	1	RANGED COMBAT (D)	1
BARTER (I)	1	SCAVENGING (A)	1
FARMING (R)	3	STEALTH (P)	1
FIRST AID (R)	1	SURVIVAL (A)	2
HUNTING (A)	3	VEHICLES* (D)	1

SECONDARY

WOUND POINTS	11
RESILIENCE POINTS	7
DM MELEE	1
DM RANGED	0
INITIATIVE MODIFIER	+2
ENCUMBRANCE	7
MORALITY	3
PANIC THRESHOLD	3
BREAKING POINT	7

CARLY MCINTYRE

AGE: 29
WEIGHT: 138 LBS
HEIGHT: 5'6"
PROFESSION: TRAIL GUIDE

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS:
FISTS 1D3+2 (100%)

CARLY IS:
Sarcastic, confident, Strong

CARLY'S COMPLICATION IS HER FAMILY OBLIGATION (DAVID, HER UNCLE) AND HER MOTIVATION IS TO FIND SAFETY

NOTES:

Carly was born in Delaware but after her parents divorce she was raised in Montana by her father, and has spent the last few years as a trail guide in various parts of the US. She returned to Delaware when her mother got sick early on in the pandemic and found herself stranded. She moved to her aunt and uncles farm where she has been for the better part of a year.

CARLY

RAPID RANGE

REASON	0
ACUMEN	2
PHYSICALITY	2
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	1

SKILLS

ATHLETICS (D)	1	PERCEPTION (A)	1
FIRST AID (R)	1	RANGED COMBAT (D)	1
HUNTING (P)	3	SCAVENGING (A)	1
MELEE COMBAT (P)	1	STEALTH (P)	1
NAVIGATION (A)	2	SURVIVAL (A)	3

SECONDARY

WOUND POINTS	13
RESILIENCE POINTS	8
DM MELEE	2
DM RANGED	1
INITIATIVE MODIFIER	+4
ENCUMBRANCE	8
MORALITY	3
PANIC THRESHOLD	4
BREAKING POINT	5

MORGAN LIEU

AGE: 31
WEIGHT: 119 LBS
HEIGHT: 5'3"
PROFESSION: VET TECHNICIAN

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS:
FISTS 1D3 (100%)

MORGAN IS:
Angry, suspicious, insular

MORGAN'S COMPLICATION IS LOSS, MOTIVATION IS TO STAY ALIVE

NOTES:

MORGAN

Raised in Philadelphia, Morgan grew up loving animals more than people and grew up to become a vet technician. Moving to Delaware to work at a practice that specialized in farm animals, Morgan met and befriended David and his wife. Just before everywhere went into lock-down, David invited Morgan to move to the farm the few other survivors he was corralling.

RAPID RANGE

REASON	2
ACUMEN	2
PHYSICALITY	0
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	1

SKILLS

ANIMAL HANDLING (I)	2	PHARMACOLOGY* (R)	1
ATHLETICS (P)	1	SCAVENGING (A)	1
CHARM (I)	1	SLEIGHT OF HAND (D)	1
DECEPTION (I)	1	STEALTH (P)	1
FIRST AID (R)	2	SURGERY* (R)	1
NAVIGATION (A)	1	SURVIVAL (A)	1
PERCEPTION (A)	1		

SECONDARY

WOUND POINTS	11
RESILIENCE POINTS	6
DM MELEE	0
DM RANGED	1
INITIATIVE MODIFIER	+4
ENCUMBRANCE	6
MORALITY	3
PANIC THRESHOLD	3
BREAKING POINT	7

GUS GONZÁLEZ

AGE: 42
WEIGHT: 172 LBS
HEIGHT: 5'11"
PROFESSION: GARDNER

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS:
FISTS 1D3+2+1 (100%)

GUS IS:
Observant, Peaceful, Intelligent

GUS' COMPLICATION IS LOSS AND HIS MOTIVATION IS TO FIND SAFETY

NOTES:

GUS

Gustavo grew up in Argentina but moved to the US when he was 15 to live with his father after his mother died. Struggling with English, he continually cut school until the point where he was kicked out and His father put him to work as a gardener on his own crew.

Having done much work for David over the years, Gus ended up there with the others when the pandemic hit.

RAPID RANGE

REASON	1
ACUMEN	1
PHYSICALITY	2
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	1

SKILLS

ANIMAL HANDLING (I)	1	RANGED COMBAT (D)	1
ATHLETICS (P)	1	SLEIGHT OF HAND (D)	1
DODGE (D)	1	STEALTH (D)	1
FARMING (R)	2	STREETWISE (A)	1
HUNTING (P)	1	SURVIVAL (A)	3
PERCEPTION (A)	2	UNARMED COMBAT (P)	1

SECONDARY

WOUND POINTS	13
RESILIENCE POINTS	8
DM MELEE	3
DM RANGED	2
INITIATIVE MODIFIER	+4
ENCUMBRANCE	8
MORALITY	3
PANIC THRESHOLD	4
BREAKING POINT	5
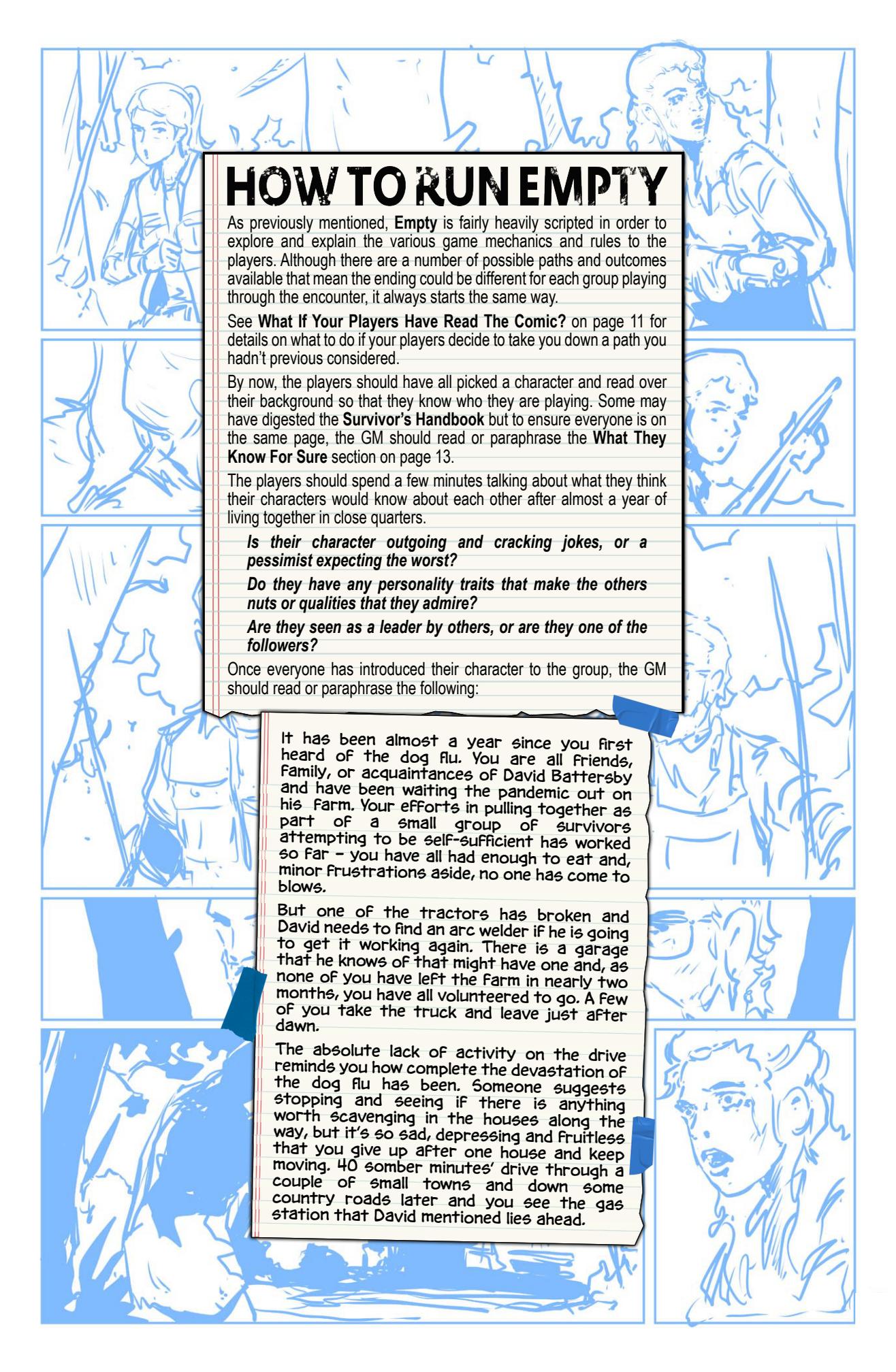
HOW TO RUN EMPTY

As previously mentioned, **Empty** is fairly heavily scripted in order to explore and explain the various game mechanics and rules to the players. Although there are a number of possible paths and outcomes available that mean the ending could be different for each group playing through the encounter, it always starts the same way.

See **What If Your Players Have Read The Comic?** on page 11 for details on what to do if your players decide to take you down a path you hadn't previous considered.

By now, the players should have all picked a character and read over their background so that they know who they are playing. Some may have digested the **Survivor's Handbook** but to ensure everyone is on the same page, the GM should read or paraphrase the **What They Know For Sure** section on page 13.

The players should spend a few minutes talking about what they think their characters would know about each other after almost a year of living together in close quarters.

Is their character outgoing and cracking jokes, or a pessimist expecting the worst?

*Do they have any personality traits that make the others nuts or qualities that they admire?*

Are they seen as a leader by others, or are they one of the followers?

Once everyone has introduced their character to the group, the GM should read or paraphrase the following:

It has been almost a year since you first heard of the dog flu. You are all friends, family, or acquaintances of David Battersby and have been waiting the pandemic out on his farm. Your efforts in pulling together as part of a small group of survivors attempting to be self-sufficient has worked so far – you have all had enough to eat and, minor frustrations aside, no one has come to blows.

But one of the tractors has broken and David needs to find an arc welder if he is going to get it working again. There is a garage that he knows of that might have one and, as none of you have left the farm in nearly two months, you have all volunteered to go. A few of you take the truck and leave just after dawn.

The absolute lack of activity on the drive reminds you how complete the devastation of the dog flu has been. Someone suggests stopping and seeing if there is anything worth scavenging in the houses along the way, but it's so sad, depressing and fruitless that you give up after one house and keep moving. 40 somber minutes' drive through a couple of small towns and down some country roads later and you see the gas station that David mentioned lies ahead.
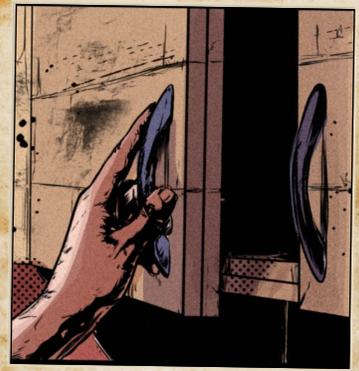
FILLING IN THE GAPS

Much of **Distemper's** gameplay is essentially telling collaborative stories and one of the primary tools the GM has to keep the narrative moving is to have the players **Fill in the Gaps** about what they are seeing or doing. This helps ensure the GM can keep the scene being played out straight in the group's heads and allows them to help provide flavor and context.

The GM should ask each player to tell the group at least one detail about what they are seeing on the drive to **Fill in the Gaps** around the GMs description.

Do they see abandoned cars?

Are buildings and houses intact or have they been damaged?

Are any of them burned out shells?

Do things look like they have been looted or is everything eerily normal and quiet?

Are there piles of dried sludge encased bones where the bodies of the dead were left?

The power is still on in this area, are there lights on in any of the buildings?

Do they see any stores they might want to stop at and see if there is anything valuable to scavenge on the way back to the farm?

Having the players tell each other what they see and how their character reacts to it is the heart of the game and the GM should ensure all players throw in at least one detail.

Once the group has **Filled In The Gaps**, the GM should tell them that they are approaching the gas station that it is time for them to make their first dice check.

DICE CHECKS

As the group approaches the gas station, the GM should show them the map on page 25 (additional copies are available for download at **www.distemperverse.com/empty**).

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *As you start to get closer to the gas station you see it's exactly like David described it - a small garage with a couple of pumps out front, a mini-mart inside, and a workshop attached.*

The GM should tell the players that it is time to make a **Perception check** to see what they notice as they approach the gas station.

To prepare for the check, each player should look in the Skills section on their character card see if **Perception** is listed, and if it is, what Skill level they have.

This **Skill Modifier** (or **SMod**) is a number between 0 and 4 and is added to their dice total during the upcoming attempt. If they do not have **Perception** listed, it means they don't have any levels in that **Skill** and their **SMod** is 0.

SKILLS

ANIMAL HANDLING (I)	1	RANGED COMBAT (D)	1
ATHLETICS (P)	1	SLEIGHT OF HAND (D)	1
DODGE (D)	1	STEALTH (D)	1
FARMING (R)	2	STREETWISE (A)	1
HUNTING (P)	1	SURVIVAL (A)	3
PERCEPTION (A)	2	UNARMED COMBAT (P)	1

RAPID RANGE

REASON	1
ACUMEN	1
PHYSICALITY	2
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	1

All skills are tied to one of the five attributes each character has - **Reason, Acumen, Physicality, Influence** and **Dexterity** - collectively referred to as the **RAPID Range**.

The attribute a Skill is tied to is noted in parentheses next to the name of the skill and in this case, **Perception** is tied to a character's **Acumen**.

Each player should look in the RAPID Range section on their character card to see what their Acumen attribute is. This will also be a number between 0 and 3 and this **Attribute Modifier** (or **AMod**) is added to their dice total.

MAKING A DICE CHECK

To see if a character was successful at any given task that affects the narrative, they must make a **Dice Check,** which means the player must roll two six-sided dice (written as 2d6), add or subtract modifiers for attributes, skills & conditions, and get **a total score of 9 or above**.

All dice checks take the format:

2d6 + **Attribute Modifier** (**AMod**)

Add their Reason, Acumen, Physicality, Influence or Dexterity AMod, for a range of -2 to +3

+ Skill Modifier (SMod)

Add any SMods from skills that may be relevant to the attempt for a range of -3 to +3

+ Conditional Modifier (CMod)

For any external influences or unexpected factors, ranging from -5 to +5, at the GM's discretion.

INTERPRETING DICE CHECKS

OUTCOMES

0–3	DIRE FAILURE
4–8	FAILURE
9–13	SUCCESS
14+	WILD SUCCESS
1+1	MOMENT OF LOW INSIGHT
6+6	MOMENT OF HIGH INSIGHT

Once everyone is aware of their attributes and skills, each player should roll two six-sided dice, written as **2d6**, and add their **AMod** and **SMod** to the score. There is no **Conditional Modifier**, or **CMod**, on this check.

Each player should then check their total against the **Outcomes** chart to the left to see which of the possible 6 results they got.

Anyone with **A TOTAL OF 3 OR BELOW** got a **DIRE FAILURE** and were asleep until the truck stopped. Read or paraphrase the following to them:

You wake up with a start. You hadn't realized you were even dozing till your head hit the window of the truck as you stopped. You squint, trying to take in the situation and realize the rest of the group is looking at a gas station. You must be here.

Anyone that got **A TOTAL OF 8 OR BELOW FAILED** to notice anything of note. Read or paraphrase the following to them:

As you draw closer, you see nothing of note. This looks like pretty much every back-road gas station you have ever seen in your life.

Anyone that gets **A TOTAL OF 9 OR ABOVE** was **SUCCESSFUL**. Read or paraphrase the following to them:

Everything looks quiet. The building seems to be intact with no broken windows. You see a cheap car parked outside what you believe is the workshop and an expensive looking motorbike parked at one of the pumps. Nothing is moving.

Anyone with **A TOTAL OF 14** or above got a **WILD SUCCESS**, which brings an additional positive benefit in addition to them being successful at the task. As well as the paragraph for getting a **Success**, read or paraphrase the following to them:

As you get closer, you realize that there is gas line going into the tank of the bike. You can't tell if the pumps are working or not, but it strikes you as unusual that someone would have walked away from a bike while leaving it connected to the gas pump like that.

If any players rolled **TWO ONES** or **TWO SIXES**, they got a **MOMENT OF INSIGHT**. This means that their action was automatically a **DIRE FAILURE** on a **DOUBLE ONE**, or a **WILD SUCCESS** on a **DOUBLE SIX**. Read them the **DIRE FAILURE** or **WILD SUCCESS** descriptions from above.

Additionally, on a **MOMENT OF INSIGHT** the character receives an **INSIGHT DICE**, which they should note on their sheet. If there are enough dice, they should place one in front of them for later use (see **MOMENTS OF INSIGHT AND INSIGHT DICE** on page 22).

CONDITIONAL MODIFIERS

Whether it's circumstantial, environmental or karmic influences at play, **Conditional Modifiers** are intended to reflect external factors that can positively or negatively affect the outcome of a dice check, such as rain making it harder to scale a wall, or a using a compass while trying to read a map.

Each dice check can be affected by a **Conditional Modifier** (or **CMod**) that ranges from -5 to +5. These are applied at the discretion of the GM or at the request of a player who can **Fill In The Gaps** as to what is happening and added to the total score, along with **AMods** and **SMods**.

Any dice roll could have multiple **CMods** for a variety of reasons. These are cumulative and are all added to the total score.

MOMENTS OF INSIGHT & INSIGHT DICE

A roll of **double one** or **double six** (a 2 or 12) is considered to be a **Moment of Insight** wherein the task went so flawlessly well or so disastrously awry that the character learned an important lesson about what not to do or gained a deep understanding of how and why they were successful.

As a result of this roll, they receive an **Insight Dice** that can be used to affect the outcome of future dice checks.

By their very nature, **Moment of Insights** always have a narrative impact and regardless of any **Ability**, **Skill** or **Conditional Modifiers** being applied to the roll, a **double one** is always a **Dire Failure** and a **double six** is always a **Wild Success**.

As these **Moments of Insight** are tied to specific dice rolls, **a roll of double one** is referred to a **Moment of Low Insight** and **a roll of double six** is referred to as a **Moment of High Insight**.

Insight Dice allow players to affect dice rolls or other elements of gameplay in their favor. Each player starts the game with 2 **Insight Dice** and receives an additional **Insight Dice** each time they roll a **double one** or a **double six** and have a **Moment of Insight**.

Common uses for **Insight Dice** are:

- Adding an additional dice to the pool prior to making a check, for a **3d6** dice pool
- Used as a +3 **Conditional Modifier** (**CMod**)
- Re-rolling one or both of the original dice
- 'Bending reality' to allowing a player to find an unexpected clue or suddenly have a missing piece of required equipment (such as a rope to scale a wall)
- If a character would otherwise **Die**, they may surrender all of their Insight Dice in exchange for recovering 1 Wound Point and 1 Resilience Point for each dice surrendered. Players cannot choose how many dice to use in this method, this costs all of their **Insight Dice**

There is no limit to how many **Insight Dice** a player can have, and they carry across from session to session. Once used, **Insight Dice** are immediately surrendered back to the GM.

Although **Insight Dice** can be used by a player to perform an act that helps another player, they are non-transferable and cannot be given directly to another character.
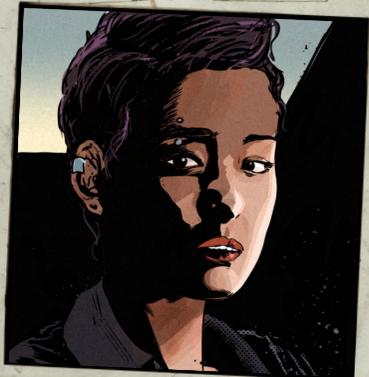
SNEAKING AROUND

If players announce their characters are sneaking up to the station (or even if they are simply approaching with some degree of caution) then it is time to make another dice check – this time, a **Stealth check**.

Like with their **Perception check**, have the players look at their character cards to see if they have levels in **Stealth**. If they do, they will see that they skill has a **(D)** next to it, indicating it is tied to the **Dexterity Attribute**. Players should make a note of both their **Stealth SMod** and **Dexterity AMod** (which could well both be 0) and add those Modifiers to the total of their **2d6** roll.

If they get a total score of **9 OR HIGHER**, they were **SUCCESSFUL** and made no unnecessary noise as they approached and anyone inside would not have heard them coming.

If their total is **8 OR LOWER**, they **FAILED** and accidentally kicked an empty bottle or banged into a trashcan, something that would potentially alert anyone inside (see **Did He Hear Them?** on page 26).

If their total is **3 OR LOWER**, it was a **DIRE FAILURE**, and not only did they bump into something, but they also fell, knocked something over, reflexively yelled out, or in some other way made enough noise that would undoubtedly have get the attention of anyone within earshot. Have the player **Fill in the Gaps** as to what their character did.

If their total is **14 OR HIGHER**, it was a **WILD SUCCESS** and, assuming the character is intending to use the main entrance to enter the store, the bell attached to the door catches and doesn't ring or otherwise announce their presence.

If any player got a **DOUBLE ONE** or **DOUBLE SIX**, it is a **MOMENT OF INSIGHT** and in addition to being either a **DIRE FAILURE** or a **WILD SUCCESS**, they additionally get an **Insight Dice** that they should note on their character sheet (see **MOMENTS OF INSIGHT & INSIGHT DICE** on page 22).

SKILLS

ANIMAL HANDLING (I)	1	RANGED COMBAT (D)	1
ATHLETICS (P)	1	SLEIGHT OF HAND (D)	1
DODGE (D)	1	STEALTH (D)	1
FARMING (R)	2	STREETWISE (A)	1
HUNTING (P)	1	SURVIVAL (A)	3
PERCEPTION (A)	2	UNARMED COMBAT (P)	1

RAPID RANGE

REASON	1
ACUMEN	1
PHYSICALITY	2
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	1

THE GAS STATION

WHAT THE GM KNOWS: The gas station had been owned by the same couple, Errol and Martina Stansfield, for almost 15 years before the Dog Flu hit. In addition to fuel sales and the general store, Errol had bought a tow-truck and built a well-equipped workshop where he could perform a variety of repairs. The two had lived a happy life for many years, dying at home in excruciating pain within days of each other.

Due to the relatively low population in the area and the somewhat secluded nature of the gas station, it has remained untouched since Errol was last there. Although not particularly well stocked at the best of times, the general store is still largely intact, even if most of the contents are expired or rotten.

Inside the gas station is **Nash**, a man in his early 30's who is no relation to Errol and Martina and who is just passing through. He is part of a gang who have kept moving, scavenging and raiding along the way and he arrived at the gas station late the night before. Nash spent the night asleep on the couch in the break room and has been sorting through items in the general store and workshop to take with him while he waits for the rest of his gang to get back within radio range.

When the players turn up, he is sitting on a couch in the break room eating some instant noodles he found in the general store. He is alone and the bike out front is his. He is armed, but recently used more ammunition than he intended while unsuccessfully rabbit hunting and he only has two bullets left. He has been actively searching for more ammo but has so far found nothing that matches the caliber of his pistol.

If the characters approach in a vehicle, Nash will hear them pulling up and will watch as they approach the station to decide on how to react. If it is obvious that they are coming in, he will move towards the workshop fire-escape so that he has an exit and circle back around to his bike.

If the group approach by foot, particularly if they are being stealthy or cautious, Nash will only become aware of them if the bell above the main door rings as they enter the store.
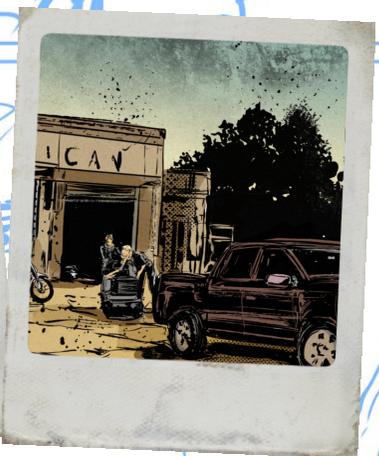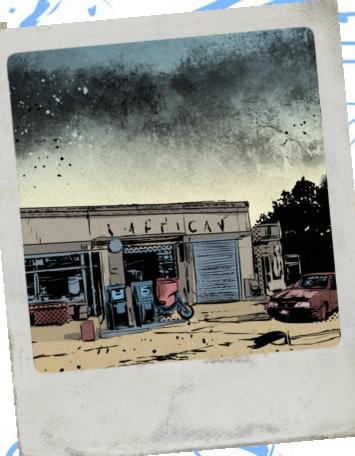
THE GAS STATION

1 **GAS STATION ENTRANCE:** This is where the group of characters initially pull up when they arrive at the gas station. They can park the truck where they wish.

2 **ABANDONED CAR:** At some point, this car had gotten left behind. It's unlocked and the keys are still inside but the battery is dead and there is nothing of value.

3 **NASH'S BIKE:** Nash's bike is connected to one of the pumps, as he had been filling it before setting off again. Any player examining the bike will realize that, unlike the car, this is still very much in use. There are saddlebags on the bike that are mostly filled with survival equipment, such as his tent and sleeping bag.

4 **MAIN ENTRANCE:** The door is unlatched and unlocked and the characters can enter the station. There is a bell above the door that will ring as they open it.

5 **STAFF AREA:** This is where Nash spent the night, sleeping on the couch. When the players arrive, he is sitting in here eating one of the cups of instant noodles that he has found on the shelves.

6 **FIRE ESCAPE:** Characters can open this from the inside or the outside and although it isn't alarmed, it is a heavy door and will make a lot of noise.

7 **WORKSHOP:** In addition to the tow-truck, the workshop has a lot of potentially useful tools, not least of which is the arc welder that the group is looking for. The tow-truck is in good condition and will start on the first attempt.

8 **FIRE ESCAPE:** Characters can open this from the inside or the outside and although it isn't alarmed, it is a heavy door and will make a lot of noise.
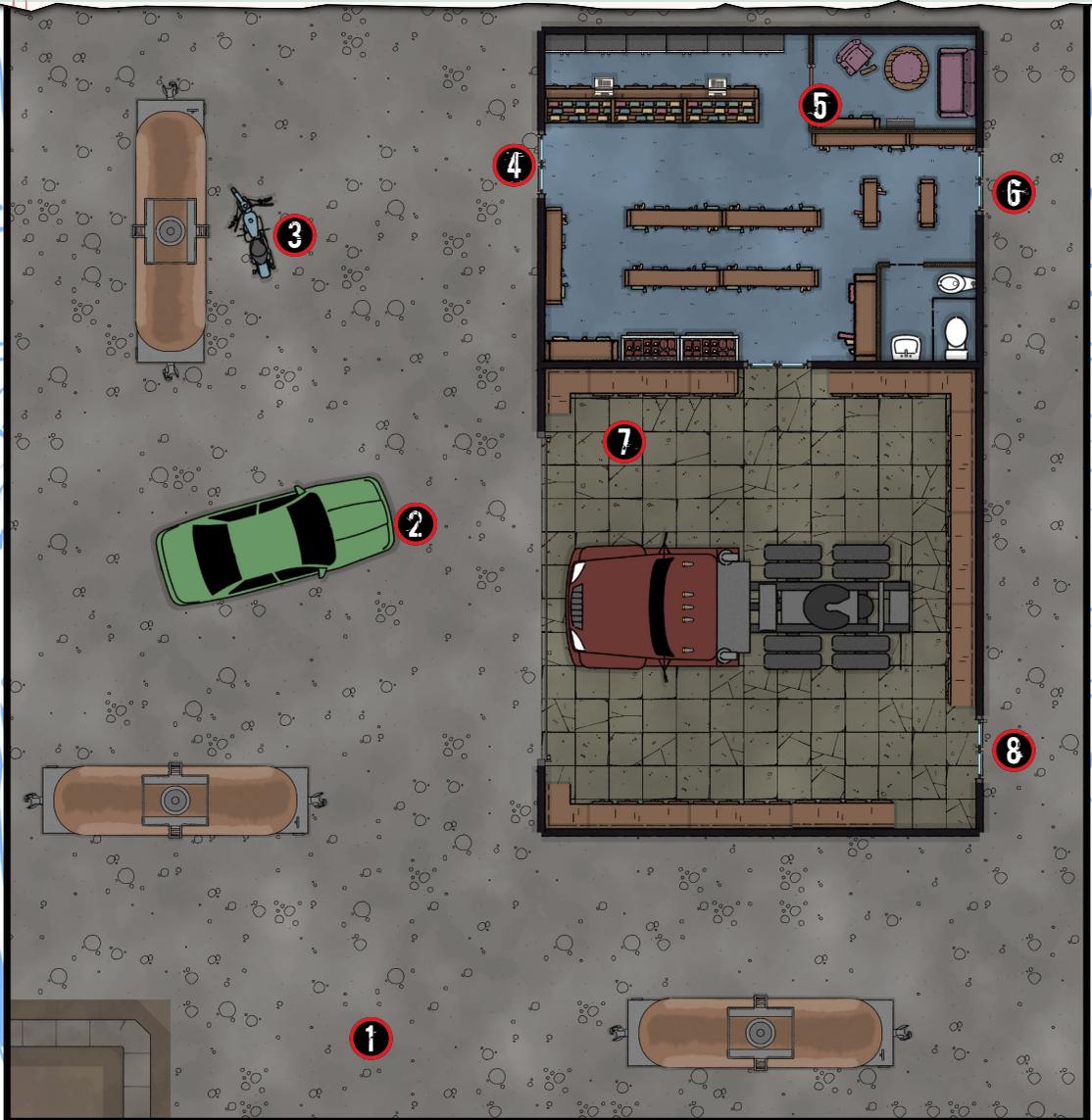
ENTERING THE STATION

There are three ways into the gas station - the front door, the rear fire-exit, or through the workshop. These are all marked on the map on page 25.

Depending on how cautious the characters were on their approach then Nash will either still be in the break room or he will be moving towards the workshop. He had searched the building before sleeping there the night before and knows that there are multiple exits that will put him out close enough to make a run to his bike if he feels threatened and needs to escape.

THE FRONT DOOR: Unless a player got a **Wild Success** on a **Stealth Check** when approaching the gas station, there is a bell above the door that will ring as soon as they open it. The bell is loud enough to alert **Nash** to someone entering the station.

THE FIRE-ESCAPE: If the players choose to go around the back, there is a fire exit that is locked. Any character with the *Lock-Picking** skill can try to pry the door open quietly. Although a character without *Lock-Picking** can still attempt it, they will get a **-3 SMod** due to their lack of familiarity with the skill. It would also be possible for a character to break it open by simply making a **Physicality check** to kick it in.

There is another bell on the fire exit and opening it in any way will alert Nash to their presence if he wasn't already aware. If he hears this going on, then he is more likely to try and go out the front exit, the closet route to get him back to his bike.

THE WORKSHOP: There are two ways into the workshop, through the rolling door at the front or the fire-exit at the back. Both are currently locked and opening either door would take a **Physicality check** with a **-2 CMod**, causing a huge amount of noise to get them open from the outside.

The fire-door at the back of the workshop opens inside out and Nash can use that to leave with a minimum of noise if the players are coming in the front. He will circle around to the pumps at the front of the garage to get back to his bike.

DID NASH HEAR THEM?

If the group are trying to be stealthy but fail, Nash should make a **Perception check** to see if he heard them approach. If they check **Nash's Character Card**, the GM will see he has **Perception 1** which is tied to his Acumen, which is also a 1. This means that Nash's Perception check to see if he hears them approach is **2d6+AMod+SMod**, or **2d6+1+1**.

If the characters **Failed** in their Stealth checks, give him a +1 **Conditional Modifier** (**CMod**) and if they got a **Dire Failure** or a **Moment of Low Insight**, give him a **+2 CMod** (See **Conditional Modifiers** on page 21).

On a **Success**, Nash hears the group as they approach the garage, and on a **Wild Success**, he hears them approaching with enough time to get to the workshop.

ENCOUNTERING NASH

Whether or not Nash is caught flatfooted will depend on how the characters encounter him once inside the gas station. He stumbled on the garage last night as the sun was going down and decided to sleep on the couch in the break-room. He had had spent the last hour or so sorting through all the supplies in the mini market, dropping anything rotten or bad into piles on the ground by the shelves and stacking everything he planned on taking on the counter next to his backpack.

Nash's backpack also has a radio which is on, but currently silent. He had started to fill up his bike with gas before going back inside to get something to eat, planning on heading out to meet the rest of his group after his meal.

If the group drove up in the truck, were cavalier on how they approach the station, or opened either of the fire escapes on the back of the building to get in, Nash will become aware of their presence. If he has enough time, he will get into the workshop and try and sneak out through the fire-escape so as not to become trapped. He will then make his way to his bike to reseal his gas-tank before announcing himself to the group.

If he didn't hear them until they open the door, Nash will have been in the break room as he was not expecting anyone to join him. He will barely make it to the door of the break-room as the characters start to enter the building and, having no way around them, he would rather encounter the group on his terms than be caught while trying to hide.

Read or paraphrase the following to the group:

As you open the door, a little bell rings above your head to announce your arrival. It rings very hollow and loud in the complete silence that permeates the building.

The place looks empty and as you start to wonder what supplies you might be able to find in the general store when you notice a large pile of items next to a backpack on the counter by the cash register. It looks like someone had the same idea as you but, for whatever reason, didn't take the supplies with them.

The GM should ask the players what they want to do. If they are uncertain, the GM can make some suggestions:

- Have the characters all make a **Perception check** to see if they see or hear anything else that catches their attention
- Have them make a **Scavenge check** on the items piled up on the counter to see if there is anything of value
- Have them call out and see if anyone answers
- See if they can get into the workshop and look for the arc welder

Unless the group is acting in a particularly hostile or belligerent manner, **Nash** will wait for a few beats and then step out of the break-room with his hands up in the air in as non-threatening a manner as he can. He is clearly wearing a holster with a revolver in it.

He is smiling and says to the group, "I haven't seen anyone in more than two weeks and now we are all here at the same time. What are the odds of that? I'm willing to share the pile of stuff on the counter, but the bag is mine."

As this is the first time that they have encountered each other, the group should make a **First Impressions** check and also determined what their character's **Gut Instinct** is about Nash.

KNOWING NASH

Nash's character card can be found below. This is intended for the GM only and should not be shared with the group.

WHAT THE CHARACTERS SEE: Nash is stocky and fit, with a wide, charming smile and an easy laugh. He is articulate and obviously intelligent and anyone paying close attention to him will notice that his eyes rarely stop darting around as he takes in all aspects of any situation. In his early 30's, Nash looks to be in good shape and years of riding a bike has given him excellent reflexes. He has short hair and tattoos are visible all over his arms. He is wearing a holster that holds a Colt Python revolver (a Light Pistol that does 3+2d3 damage and has 2 rounds).

WHAT THE GM KNOWS ABOUT NASH: How he is played is ultimately up to the GM and may also depend on how the group initially interacts with him but despite being overtly friendly and charming, Nash is a very dangerous man who has spent much of his life as part of a biker gang, and an equally long amount of time in jail for various crimes. Although he doesn't initially appear to be a threat, he won't hesitate to become aggressive or violent if he believes the situation requires it.

NASH'S INTENT: Nash is part of a small group of men who have spent the last few months traveling the US. They find somewhere with enough supplies to last them a few days and then move on again. Nash went on ahead of his group but is waiting for them to catch up and will attempt to join the group with the intent of alerting his buddies. If they are unwilling to let him join, he is likely to attempt to surreptitiously follow the PCs back to their base.

Nash's group needs to keep themselves supplied with food, supplies, and gasoline. Upon seeing the characters, Nash will immediately know that they have at least one of those things and becomes determined to find out more.

If and how he does so is up to the players as he is willing to work with them – to an extent – to get what he wants, but he is equally prepared to take what he needs by force.

NASH

AGE: 24
WEIGHT: 162 LBS
HEIGHT: 5'9"
PROFESSION: BIKER

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS:
FISTS 1D3+1+2 (100%)
LIGHT PISTOL [2] 3+1D6
HUNTING KNIFE 2+2D3
MOTORBIKE
BASIC SURVIVAL KIT + 2 RATIONS

NASH IS:
Charming, Furtive, Smart like a Fox

GUS' COMPLICATION IS LOSS AND HIS MOTIVATION IS TO FIND SAFETY

NOTES:

Nash has been in and out of jail since he was a teenager and he drifted into the same bike gang his old man belonged to as soon as he was old enough to drive.

When the pandemic hit, Nash watched his biker buddies die one and one and has kept moving ever since. The spoiling of gas worries him as he doesn't plan on stopping any time soon.

NASH

RAPID RANGE

REASON	0
ACUMEN	1
PHYSICALITY	1
INFLUENCE	0
DEXTERITY	2

SKILLS

CHARM (I)	1	PERCEPTION (A)	1
DECEPTION (I)	1	RANGED COMBAT (D)	1
DODGE (D)	1	SCAVENGING (A)	1
DRIVING (D)	2	STREETWISE (A)	1
LOCK-PICKING* (R)	1	UNARMED COMBAT (P)	1
NAVIGATION (A)	2	VEHICLES* (D)	2

SECONDARY

WOUND POINTS	13
RESILIENCE POINTS	7
DM MELEE	2
DM RANGED	3
INITIATIVE MODIFIER	+4
ENCUMBRANCE	7
MORALITY	3
PANIC THRESHOLD	3
BREAKING POINT	5

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Whenever characters encounter NPCs for the first time they will create a conscious or subconscious impression which can determine the course of their relationship. This is determined by the outcome of a **First Impressions check**.

Although **First Impressions checks** can be done per individual character, when a group is encountering an NPC for the first time – such as when the players meet Nash - they should make a **Group Check** (see **Group Checks** on page 30) as the NPC will be weighing up the collective threat.

MAKING A FIRST IMPRESSIONS CHECK: If characters first interact with Nash one on one, they should make an **Influence** check, or use an appropriate skill – **Charm**, **Deception**, **Inspiration**, or **Intimidation** – and **Fill in the Gaps** as to the specifics of their attempt.

> *What are they saying or doing? Are they welcoming or hesitant? Are they curious about Nash or do they feel instantly threatened and guarded?*

If multiple characters encounter him at the same time, they should make a **First Impressions Group check**.

Given that Nash is naturally suspicious and had not expected to meet anyone, he gets a -3 CMod to any **First Impressions** checks.

If the player gets **A TOTAL OF 9 OR ABOVE,** they are **SUCCESSFUL**, and Nash has no reaction to them. They get a 0 CMod to future interactions with Nash.

If they get **A TOTAL OF 8 OR BELOW**, they **FAILED** to make a good **First Impression** on Nash and he is wary of them. They get a -1 CMod to all future social interactions with him.

If they get **A TOTAL OF 3 OR BELOW**, no matter how they have **Filled In The Gaps** this **DIRE FAILURE** makes Nash believe they are hostile there is a -5 CMod to all interactions. Depending on the group's next move and demeanor, this may even initiate combat (see **Combat** on page 33)

If they get **A TOTAL OF 14 OR ABOVE**, they got a **WILD SUCCESS** and have overcome his suspicious nature and made a favorable **First Impression**. They get a +1 CMod to all future social interactions with Nash.

If they get a **MOMENT OF INSIGHT** (**DOUBLE ONES** or **DOUBLE SIXES**), it counts as either a **DIRE FAILURE** or a **WILD SUCCESS**, and the character gets an **Insight Dice** (see **Moments of Insight** & **Insight Dice** on page 22).

The **Conditional Modifier** should be written in the Notes section on the character card as it will influence future social interactions with that NPC, such as **Negotiations** (see **Negotiations** on page 32) and **Charm** checks.

GUT INSTINCTS

Similar to a **First Impressions** check, characters can also make **Gut Instinct** checks to see what they pick up about the NPC.

Making a **Gut Instinct** check requires the character to use **Perception**, *Psychology**, **Streetwise**, or their **Acumen** to get a read on the NPC. If they are successful, the GM should give the player some insight as to what their take is.

> *Do they get a sense that this NPC be trusted? Does the NPC feel shifty? Are they acting like they have something to hide, or do they appear to have a truly open and inviting nature?*

If the NPC is lying to the player, the GM might give a **Successful** player a sense of that, whereas if they fail, it is likely that their character takes the NPC at their word. Perhaps they would even become an advocate of the NPC, upon a **Dire Failure**.

Players making a **Gut Instinct** check when meeting Nash get a -2 CMod due to the fact that he is armed, and they had not expected to meet anyone.

Anyone getting **A TOTAL OF 9 OR ABOVE** gets a sense that while Nash may seem likable, his is potentially dangerous and doesn't feel like someone the group wants around long-term

Anyone getting **A TOTAL OF 8 OR BELOW**, their character gets no solid read on him as they are too distracted by his weapon and presence

If a player gets a **DIRE FAILURE** (**A TOTAL SCORE OF 3 OR BELOW**), Nash reminds their character of someone they knew before, a friend, relative, or perhaps an actor or a singer but he reminds them of someone, and they are disposed towards trusting him

On **A TOTAL OF 14** or above they get a **WILD SUCCESS**, and that character will instantly know that for someone to survive on their own, they have been lucky, resourceful, or violent – likely all three. Something about Nash raises their hackles and they know that letting him join them is a dangerous move.

Players would do well to remember that no matter the result of a check, appearances will often be deceiving and they should act on what their character knows, rather than what they feel.

GROUP CHECKS

If a group of players are attempting to undertake a task where multiple characters can contribute, instead of all of them making individual checks, they may elect to pool their abilities to make a **Group Check**.

Group Checks can lead to some potentially large rolls with a significantly higher likelihood of success, reflecting the combined effort of many people and GMs should ensure the check makes logical sense.

To make a **Group Check**, the player with the highest relevant individual Attribute or Skill makes the dice check and adds a **+1 Conditional Modifier** for each member of the group participating. They also take any of the participating group members' Attribute and Skill Modifiers into account.

All characters must use the same **Attribute** and **Skill** for a **Group Check** to be possible.

In this instance, the character with the highest **Influence Attribute** should make a **First Impression** check, adding a +1 **CMod** for each other person talking to Nash. In addition to the **CMod**, if the character is using **Charm**, **Deception**, **Inspiration**, or **Intimidation** as part of their attempt, they may add any SMods if other characters also have levels in the same skill.

Whilst **Insight Dice** (see page 22) cannot be used with **Group Checks**, if the player making the check gets a **Moment of Insight**, each player taking part in the **Group check** also receives an **Insight Dice**.

OPPOSED CHECKS

There are times when characters might need to make an **Opposing Check** to quantify their response to the situation - such as two characters having an arm-wrestling contest, for example.

Unlike most dice checks in **Distemper**, **Opposed Checks** are resolved on the total scores involved, rather than on the gradation of **Outcomes** usually associated with a check.

Both parties start with an **Initiative check** to see who makes the first move (see **Initiative** on page 33). The initiative winner declares their action, **Fills In The Gaps** as to what they are doing and makes a check using the relevant attribute or skill.

The other party then makes an **Opposed Check** using an appropriate attribute or skill, with whichever side getting the highest total score winning.

Moments of Insight still apply, and a character who gets a **Moment of Low Insight** (a double one) will automatically lose (unless their opponent also gets a **Moment of Low Insight**) and similarly, a character getting a **Moment of High Insight** (a double six) will automatically win, unless their opponent gets the same dice roll. If this happens, both sides go back to Initiative rolls and start again.

For example, a player character and NPC are engaged in an arm-wrestling contest. The player character has the initiative and both characters make a Physicality check.

The player gets a total score of 12 while the NPC gets 8, so the character is easily able to beat his opponent.

There may also be times when different skills or attributes are used - such as Influence on one side and Acumen on the other and the GM always has final say on which skills are to be used in the checks.

NATTERING WITH NASH

Unless the characters are overtly hostile, Nash will smile and appear to be friendly and non-threatening while, in reality, he is really trying to get a handle on who the characters are to ascertain if the situation can somehow be made to work to his advantage.

Having spent the last 3 months riding around the US with his own group, Nash has seen enough of what is and isn't left to know that he and his group have no interest in stopping or slowing down any time soon. He also has no real interest in abandoning his current group for the player characters, even if he might play it that way.

However, he recognizes immediately that a group of this size who look as relatively healthy as the characters do must have access to a food supply and a clean source of running water, and Nash intends to find out where it is.

Although he stops short of being obnoxious, Nash will ask lots of questions and make general small talk.

THINGS NASH MIGHT SAY:

- He will freely tell the group that he is mobile

- He says he grew up in Florida but is now just driving around - at least until the usable gas runs out

- He will ask the group if they are mobile, like him, or if they are from the area

- He will ask why the group is at the gas station, and if they are looking for anything in particular

- He will ask where they are staying - close by or not so much?

- He will point to his pile of supplies on the counter and offer to share what he's got if the group will let him throw in his lot with them

He will start out friendly enough but if the characters appear to be uncooperative or secretive, or if he feels like the group have no intention in including him, he will become slightly more belligerent.

- He will insist that the players think they're better than him

- He's seen what's out there and he believes mankind owes it to each other to help out

- He will tell them it's their duty to help him, a fellow survivor

If Nash still feels like he isn't getting anywhere with the group, that they aren't taking him seriously then will become visibly agitated, having trouble keeping up the easy-going appearance.

If the players either tell Nash they are here to look for an arc welder or if he sees them try to take something from the workshop, in his desperation he will tell them that everything inside this building is his and if they want anything, they need his permission.

If the characters ask him what he wants then he will try and **Negotiate** with them (see

KILLER NEGOTIATIONS

Nash tells them that if they want the arc welder (or anything from the workshop or gas station) then he wants to come with them back to their base. He will attempt to **Negotiate** with the group, saying that he has skills which may prove valuable to them, including repairing any farming equipment or whatever is broken.

Negotiations are broken into **Gambits** & R**ebuttals**.

Nash's **Gambit** is that he has skills and knowledge that may be useful to the group and aid in their long-term survival, and that he wants to throw in his lot with them.

He will make a Charm attempt on the group to win them over. Charm is tied to the Influence attribute and although Nash has Charm 1 and a corresponding +1 SMod, he has Influence 0, and therefore gets no AMod. The GM decides that the situation is tense and weird enough that his attempt feels clearly desperate, which is reflected by a -2 CMod.

His final roll is 2d6+1+0-2, or just 2d6-1.

- **IF NASH SUCCEEDS,** the GM should tell the group that his idea probably has some merit – another set of hands is always useful, and who knows, maybe he does have some skills that might be useful? Assuming the players even entertain this negotiation, they will get a -1 CMod if they decide to offer a **Rebuttal**.

- IF **NASH FAILS IN HIS GAMBIT CHECK**, tell the group that he starts to feel more threatening in his demeanor and that they feel disinclined to take him with them. If they were to offer a **Rebuttal**, they would get a +1 CMod.

- Although numerically impossible in this check, **IF NASH WERE TO GET A WILD SUCCESS** he would make a very compelling case to the group, telling them that he knows where there are other supply caches available (chiefly private clinics and military installations), but he just lacks the manpower to get them on his own. His argument is so convincing that a **Rebuttal** would get a -3 CMod.

- **IF NASH GETS A DIRE FAILURE**, as he is taking, the walkie-talkie in his backpack bursts into life and the players hear someone say, "Nash? Benson? You assholes back in range yet?" and there is no opportunity for a **Rebuttal**, as Nash will panic and resort to combat (see **Combat** on page 33).

- NPCs don't get **Insight Dice** but still get a **DIRE FAILURE** on a **DOUBLE ONE** and a **WILD SUCCESS** on a **DOUBLE SIX**.

The group may decide to reject his **Negotiation** attempt outright, in which case he will resort to combat.

If they decide to continue the **Negotiation** with a **Rebuttal**, they should be clear on what they are asking Nash for and then one character should make a **Charm**, **Barter** or **Deception** check, adding any CMod from their reaction to his **Gambit**. The **Rebuttal** can also be attempted as a **Group Check** (see page 30).

The GM will need to make a decision for Nash as to how their **Rebuttal** lands with him, but anything short of them agreeing to take him back to the farm is unacceptable to him.

As a moment of tension builds between Nash and the players, the radio in his backpack comes to life and the group hears a male voice saying: "Nash? Benson? You assholes in range yet?"

As Nash has expressly told the players he is on his own, this will blow his cover. Unless he feels he has really won the group over and has a chance to quick talk his way out of this by making a Charm check, he will panic and pull his gun.

Tell the group that the air quality noticeably changes as it's sucked out of the room, and they are moving into combat.

COMBAT

Combat is divided into **Combat Rounds** that last 6-10 seconds, each of which consists of 3 phases – **Initiative**, **Actions**, **Resolution**.

1. INITIATIVE. This determines the order in which each participant takes their turn, going from highest to lowest score.

Each player should check the **Secondary Stats** block on their character sheet. They will see an **Initiative** score that is made up of the **Dexterity** & **Acumen AMods** + **Perception SMods**. This is their **Initiative Modifier** that gets added to the 2d6 Initiative check. Nash's Initiative Modifier is +5.

Once each character has rolled, the character with the highest Initiative score goes first and each character acts in order down to the character with the lowest Initiative score. In the event of a draw, player characters always beat NPCs, and if two (or more) characters get the same number, those actions take place simultaneously.

Initiative Checks are made at the beginning of each round to reflect the chaotic nature of combat. In the second and subsequent rounds, any character who was neither attacked nor attacked anyone else gets a +1 to that Initiative roll.

Have each player roll **2d6 + Initiative Modifier** (the sum of their **Acumen AMod + Dexterity AMod + Perception SMod**) while the GM rolls 2d6 + 1 + 2 + 1 (or 2d6+4) for Nash.

The GM should make a note of the order in which each character takes their actions. There is an **Initiative Tracker** on page 39 to manage this.

2. ACTIONS: Each combatant gets two Actions per round. They may choose to take the same action twice or choose two entirely separate actions.

These actions are detailed in **Combat Actions** on page 34.

3. RESOLUTION: Certain actions, weapons, or effects, such as Repositioning or grenades, are resolved after all characters have taken their actions before the round is complete.

After all actions and attacks are completed in the **Resolution phase**, combat cycles to a new round and a fresh **Initiative check**.

REMEMBER: Any character who was neither attacked nor attacked anyone else gets a +1 to that next Initiative roll.

SECONDARY STATS

WOUND POINTS 13

RESILIENCE POINTS 8

DM MELEE 3

~~DM RANGED 2~~

INITIATIVE MODIFIER +4

~~ENCUMBRANCE 8~~

MORALITY 3

BREAKING POINT 5

ATTACK ROLLS

Attack rolls, like all other checks, requires a score of 9 or higher with two six-sided dice to be **Successful**.

Attack rolls take the format:

2d6 + Attribute Modifier (**AMod**)

Physicality AMod for Melee and Unarmed Combat, **Dexterity AMod** for Ranged Combat, for a range of -2 to +3

+ Skill Modifier (SMod)

Add **SMods** for **Melee Combat, Ranged Combat, Unarmed Combat**, or *Demolitions**

+ Conditional Modifier (CMod) as determined by the GM

+ Modifiers for the **specific weapon**

- Target's **Ranged** or **Melee Defensive Modifier**

INITIATIVE

Initiative is decided at the beginning of each combat round and sets the order in which participants in combat act, from highest to lowest.

Characters who weren't attacked and didn't attack in the previous round get a +1 Initiative CMod on their next roll

An **Initiative check** is:

2d6 + Dexterity AMod

+ Acumen AMod

+ Perception SMod
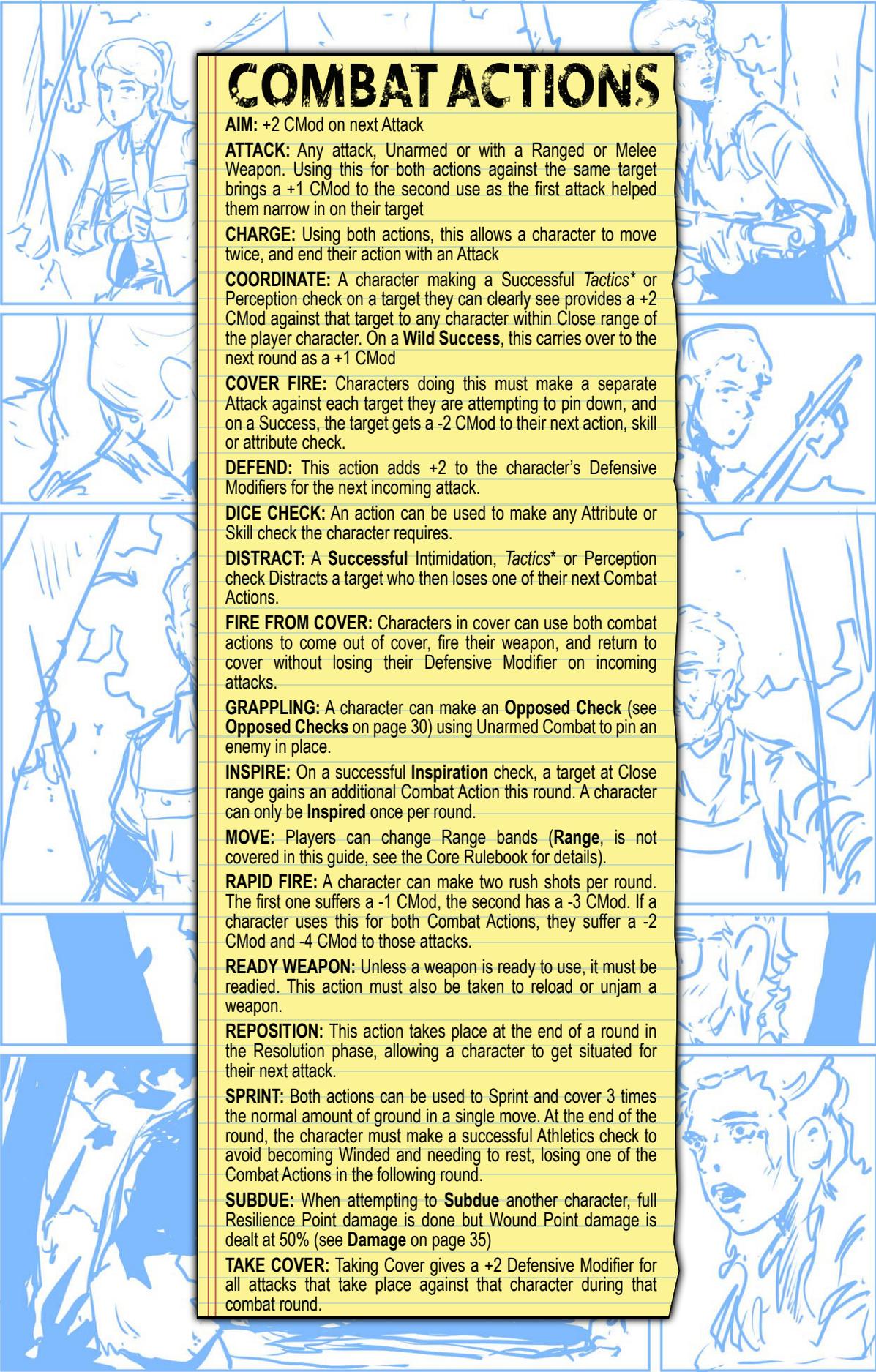
COMBAT ACTIONS

AIM: +2 CMod on next Attack

ATTACK: Any attack, Unarmed or with a Ranged or Melee Weapon. Using this for both actions against the same target brings a +1 CMod to the second use as the first attack helped them narrow in on their target

CHARGE: Using both actions, this allows a character to move twice, and end their action with an Attack

COORDINATE: A character making a Successful *Tactics** or Perception check on a target they can clearly see provides a +2 CMod against that target to any character within Close range of the player character. On a **Wild Success**, this carries over to the next round as a +1 CMod

COVER FIRE: Characters doing this must make a separate Attack against each target they are attempting to pin down, and on a Success, the target gets a -2 CMod to their next action, skill or attribute check

DEFEND: This action adds +2 to the character's Defensive Modifiers for the next incoming attack.

DICE CHECK: An action can be used to make any Attribute or Skill check the character requires.

DISTRACT: A **Successful** Intimidation, *Tactics** or Perception check Distracts a target who then loses one of their next Combat Actions.

FIRE FROM COVER: Characters in cover can use both combat actions to come out of cover, fire their weapon, and return to cover without losing their Defensive Modifier on incoming attacks.

GRAPPLING: A character can make an **Opposed Check** (see **Opposed Checks** on page 30) using Unarmed Combat to pin an enemy in place.

INSPIRE: On a successful **Inspiration** check, a target at Close range gains an additional Combat Action this round. A character can only be **Inspired** once per round.

MOVE: Players can change Range bands (**Range**, is not covered in this guide, see the Core Rulebook for details).

RAPID FIRE: A character can make two rush shots per round. The first one suffers a -1 CMod, the second has a -3 CMod. If a character uses this for both Combat Actions, they suffer a -2 CMod and -4 CMod to those attacks.

READY WEAPON: Unless a weapon is ready to use, it must be readied. This action must also be taken to reload or unjam a weapon.

REPOSITION: This action takes place at the end of a round in the Resolution phase, allowing a character to get situated for their next attack.

SPRINT: Both actions can be used to Sprint and cover 3 times the normal amount of ground in a single move. At the end of the round, the character must make a successful Athletics check to avoid becoming Winded and needing to rest, losing one of the Combat Actions in the following round.

SUBDUE: When attempting to **Subdue** another character, full Resilience Point damage is done but Wound Point damage is dealt at 50% (see **Damage** on page 35)

TAKE COVER: Taking Cover gives a +2 Defensive Modifier for all attacks that take place against that character during that combat round.

DAMAGE, INCAPACITATION & DEATH

Each character has two **Secondary Stats** - **Resilience Points** & **Wound Points** - that determine how much damage they are able to endure before becoming **Incapacitated** or **Dying**.

Wound Points reflects a character's ability to absorb and sustain the type of physical damage caused by fists, knives, or bullets. If a character is reduced to **0 Wound Points**, they become **Mortally Wounded**. If this happens, the character must be **Stabilized** by a successful **Reason**, **First Aid**, or *Surgery** check otherwise they have **4 rounds + Physicality Modifiers** until they **Die**.

Resilience Point damage reflects a character's emotional and mental endurance, their ability to sustain concussive blows, as well as their ability to handle the heightened stress of combat situations and various other aspects of life in this broken new world. If a character is reduced to **0 Resilience points,** then they become **Incapacitated for 1d6 rounds – their Physicality Modifier**, with a minimum of 1 Round. When they regain consciousness, they receive **1 RP**, and gain an additional **1 RP** per round that they are not in combat, up to a maximum of half their RP value.

SECONDARY STATS

WOUND POINTS	13
RESILIENCE POINTS	8
DM MELEE	3
DM RANGED	2
INITIATIVE MODIFIER	+4
ENCUMBRANCE	8
MORALITY	3
BREAKING POINT	5

EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS:

FISTS 1D3+1+2 (100%)
LIGHT PISTOL [2] 3+1D6
HUNTING KNIFE 2+2D3

When weapons hit, they inflict both **Wound Point** and **Resilience Point** damage, although the amount of damage done will depend on the type of weapon being used. Most weapons cause **Resilience Point** damage at 50% of the **Wound Point** damage that is inflicted, rounded down (therefore, a gunshot wound causing 4 WP damage also causes 2 Resilience Point damage).

Some weapons have **(100%)** noted after their damage output, this means that this weapon does the same amount of **Resilience Point** damage as they do **Wound Point** damage. Therefore it a club doing 4 WP damage would also do 4 RP damage.

All characters do a certain amount of damage when fighting with their bare fists. This is based upon their **Physicality AMod** & **Unarmed Combat SMod** and deals 100% **Wound** and **Resilience Point** damage.

PANICKING

If a character is reduced to half their original **Resilience Point** total (rounded down) then they must make a **Successful** Reason, Inspiration or *Psychology** check to stay in control, otherwise they have **Panicked**.

To determine how their character reacts, the player must roll **2d6** and check against the table below:

PANIC EFFECTS

Roll	Effect
2	**Catatonic:** Character falls to the ground and is unable to move for 1d3 rounds
3	**Severe Anxiety:** Character is unable to take any Combat Actions for 1d3 rounds
4	**Rattled:** Unable to focus properly, -2 on next Initiative Roll
5	**Outburst:** Character starts to verbally attack or blame someone close by
6	**Intimidated:** Character receives a -3 CMod on attacks for the next 1d3 rounds
7	**Twitchy:** Unable to control their spasms, -2 CMod on all attacks for 1d3 rounds
8	**Loose Grip:** They drop whatever are holding and must use an action to pick it up
9	**Frozen in Place:** Character loses both of their actions for the next round
10	**Scream:** Character spends the next round screaming, oblivious to everything
11	**Escape:** The character disengages and attempts to get out of range of combat
12	**Berserk:** The character attempts to attack the closest NPC or PC

HIS COLD, DEAD HANDS

If things escalate to the point of combat (even if he initiated it), Nash will quickly realize that he is outnumbered and has messed up - particularly as he only has two bullets left in his gun. He believes that his only option is to be aggressively decisive and attempt to intimidate the players into surrendering.

Nash will use his first action to **Ready his Weapon**, a Light Pistol.

Depending on where he falls in the initiative order, how many characters there are in the group, how close they are to him, and if they appear to be armed, Nash will use his second action and attempt to **Grapple** the closest or seemingly weakest player character, hoping to use them as a hostage and bargaining chip.

A **Grapple** attempt is an **Opposed Check** (see **Opposed Checks** on page 30) using **Unarmed Combat** (or **Physicality**). The character being **Grappled** must make a successful **Unarmed Combat**, **Dodge**, **Physicality**, or **Dexterity** check to evade Nash's grasp.

As Nash has Physicality 1 and Unarmed Combat 2, he gets a total of +3 to any **Grapple** attempt.

If successful, he will threaten to kill the character he as Grappled unless the group agrees to show him where they are staying. He is fully prepared to go through with his threat but if it appears like he isn't going to get his way, he will continue to use his hostage as a shield while he opens fire on any other character who he considers threatening.

While Nash is absolutely prepared to kill everyone present, not only does he lack the ammunition, but he is more intent on finding out where their base or supplies are located.

If Nash uses both of his bullets, he will attempt to cudgel targets with the butt of his pistol. This will count as an **Unarmed Attack** and do +1 WP and +1 RP damage in addition to the 1d3+1+2 damage listed under "fists" on Nash's character card.

Nash will not relent unless he is **Incapacitated** or **Killed** by the characters and unless the group surrenders or agree to work with him, the encounter will most likely end with his death or unconsciousness.

In that outcome, they are free to take his belongings – his gun, his backpack, the 3 days of rations he scavenged from the general store, and his motorbike. They can also get the arc welder David needs from the workshop and return to the farm.
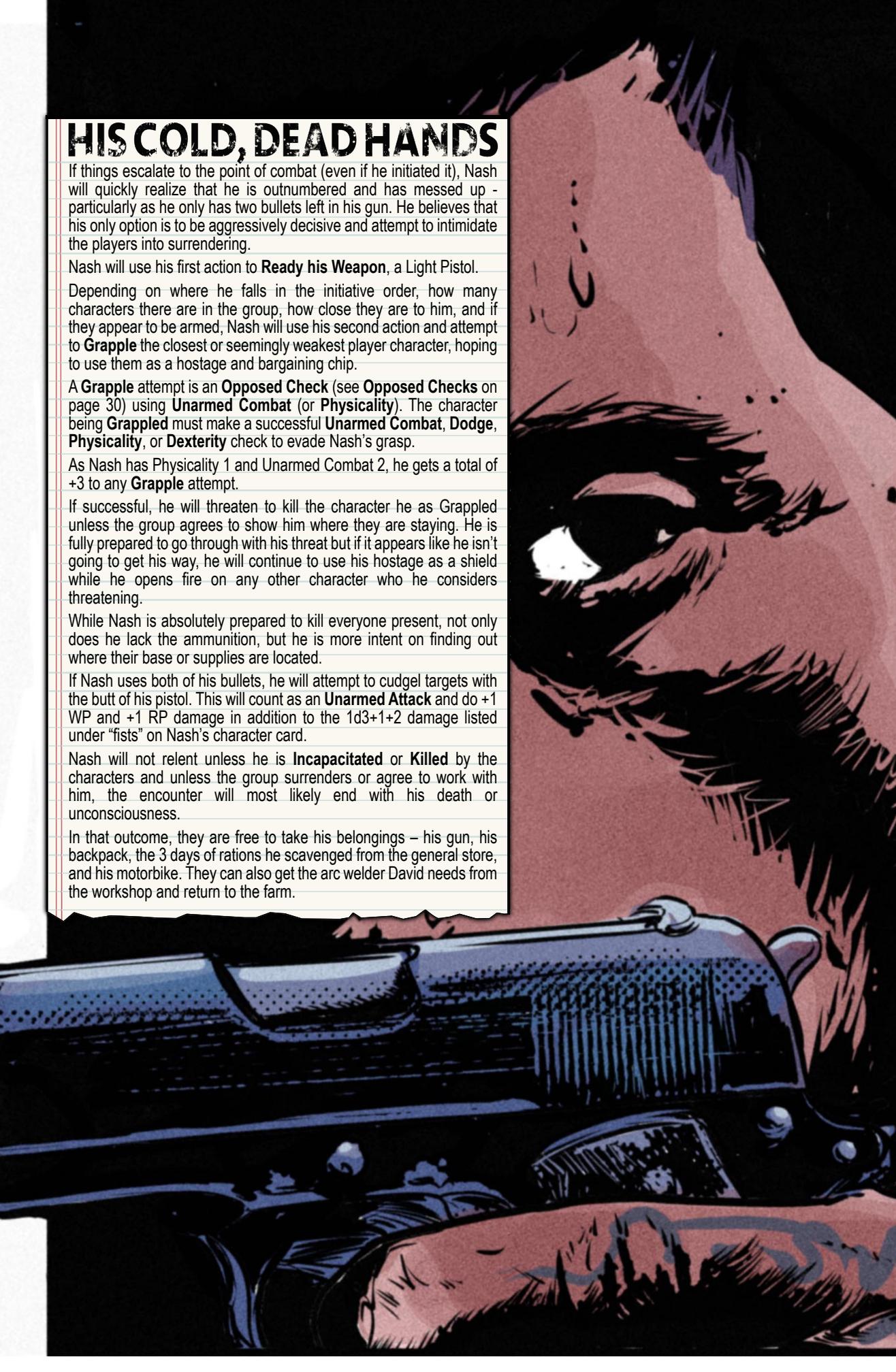
WHAT NEXT?

As mentioned in the introduction, **Empty** is a scaled-back and heavily scripted encounter designed to give players a brief taste of the **Distemper** universe, as well as an overview of the mechanics of the game.

For some players, this session will have been enough for them. Perhaps TTRPGs are not their cup of tea, perhaps the setting or the source material are too grim and not epic, fantastic, or heroic enough – and the end of this encounter might mean the end of the groups' foray into **Distemper**.

For groups who enjoy structured content in a similar vein to **Empty**, the next step may be the **Chased** arc of the **Distemper** comic book series.

This 3-issue mini-series revisits some of the same characters from **Empty** and picks up their story several months later. This series includes the full ruleset split over three issues.

For groups who wish to tell their own stories with their own characters within the **DistemperVerse,** the core rulebook is available is available for download from **distemperverse.com/Core**.

In addition to delving into the concepts touched on in this guide in much greater depth, this 200-page core rulebook provides everything a group needs to know to create their own characters, run their own campaigns, and tell their own stories.

Additional background and world-building information is also included that can help flesh out this new environment for groups such as a history of the virus and the collapse of society, as well as a breakdown of the other types of survivors the characters are likely to meet, such as survivalists, nomads, bandits, religious zealots, nascent warlords, government remnants, to say nothing of the ever-present threat of cannibalism.

Rules for *Community & Territory* are also included, allowing players who want to work on a grander scale than just day-to-day survival can recruit NPCs to their cause and build their own tribes, armies, or even religions.

To find out more and to sign up for development alerts, visit **distemperverse.com/chased**

distemperverse.com   Chased Landing Page   xerosumgames.com

BOOM

RULES REFERENCE

DICE CHECKS

All attribute or skill checks require **a total score of 9 or above** to be successful and take the format:

2d6 + Attribute Modifier (AMod)

Add their Reason, Acumen, Physicality, Influence or Dexterity AMod, for a range of -2 to +4

+ Skill (SMod)

Add relevant SMods from Skills for a range of -3 to +3

+ Conditional Modifier (CMod)

For any external influences or unexpected factors, ranging from -5 to +5, at the GM's discretion

OUTCOMES

0-3	Dire Failure
4-8	Failure
9-13	Success
14+	Wild Success
1+1	Moment of Low Insight
6+6	Moment of High Insight

MODIFIERS

Each **Dice Check** can have up to three possible Modifiers that are added to the final total.

Attribute Modifiers (AMods): All characters have 5 attributes (**Reason**, **Acumen**, **Physicality**, **Influence**, & **Dexterity**) ranging from 0 to 4. This number is the **Attribute Modifier**, or **AMod**, that is added to any check that uses that Attribute.

Skill Modifiers (SMods): Each character has a variety of skills, with a **Skill Modifier**, or **SMod**, ranging from 0 to +4, that is added to any check using that skill.

Note: Some skills require some degree of specialized training and attempting to use one without the training incurs a -3 **SMod**. These skills are marked with a *****.

Conditional Modifiers (CMods): Any dice roll can have a **Conditional Modifier**, or **CMod**, ranging from -5 to +5 which is added at the GM's discretion to reflect external factors that can influence the dice check.

FILLING IN THE GAPS

Having the players **Fill in the Gaps** about what they are seeing or doing can help the GM ensure that the whole group are contributing to the narrative.

The GM may call upon players to provide details about what they are seeing or doing that flesh out the scene or actions for the rest of the group.

MOMENTS OF INSIGHT

A roll of double one or double six (a 2 or 12) is either a **Moment of Low** or **High Insight** wherein the task went so flawlessly well or so disastrously awry that the character learned an important lesson about what not to do or gained a deep understand of how and why they were successful.

Regardless of any AMod, SMod or CMods being applied to the roll, a double one is always treated as a **Dire Failure** and a double six is always treated as a **Wild Success**.

As a result of this roll, they receive an **Insight Dice** that can be used to affect the outcome of future dice checks.

INSIGHT DICE

Insight Dice allow players to affect dice rolls or other elements of gameplay in their favor. Each player starts the game with **2 Insight Dice** and receives an additional **Insight Dice** each time they roll a **double one** or a **double six** and have a **Moment of Insight**.

Common uses for **Insight Dice** are:

- Adding an additional dice to the pool prior to making a check, for a **3d6 dice pool**
- A **+3 Conditional Modifier**
- Re-rolling one or both of the original dice
- 'Bending reality' to allowing a player to find an unexpected clue or suddenly have a missing piece of required equipment
- Instead of **Dying**, a character can surrender all of their **Insight Dice** in exchange for recovering 1 Wound Point and 1 Resilience Point for each dice surrendered. Players cannot choose how many dice to use in this method, this costs all of their **Insight Dice**

There is no limit to how many **Insight Dice** a player can have and once used, **Insight Dice** are surrendered back to the GM.

Although **Insight Dice** can be used by a player to perform an act that helps another player, they are non-transferable and cannot be given directly to another character.

GROUP CHECKS

A group of players may elect to make a **Group Check** and pool their abilities so long as they are using the **same Attribute or Skill.**

The player with the highest individual Attribute or Skill makes a dice check, factoring in AMods and SMods from the group members, and adding a +1 CMod for each person contributing.

OPPOSED CHECKS

If two characters are working against one another (during a chase, for example), an **Opposed Check** is used.

This starts with both characters making an initiative check to see who goes first.

The initiative winner then makes a dice check using the relevant attribute or skill and the other player makes a responding check.

However, unlike most dice checks in **Distemper**, an **Opposed Check** relies purely on one side beating the final score of the other.

Moments of Insight still apply, and a character who gets a **Moment of Low Insight** (a double one) will automatically lose (unless their opponent also gets a **Moment of Low Insight**) and anyone getting a **Moment of High Insight** will automatically win, unless their opponent gets the same dice roll, in which case both sides go back to **Initiative** rolls.

SKILL LIST

Animal Handling (INF)
Armorsmith* (DEX)
Athletics (PHY)
Barter (ACU)
Charm (INF)
Deception (INF)
Demolitions* (PHY)
Dodge (DEX)
Driving (DEX)
Entertainment (INF)
Farming (RSN)
First Aid (RSN)
Gambling (ACU)
General Knowledge (RSN)
Hunting (PHY)
Inspiration (INF)
Intimidation (PHY)
Local (RSN)
Lock-Picking* (ACU)
Melee Combat (PHY)
Navigation (ACU)
Perception (ACU)
Pharmacology* (RSN)
Psychology* (INF)
Ranged Combat (DEX)
Research (RSN)
Scavenging (ACU)
Sleight of Hand (DEX)
Stealth (PHY)
Streetwise (ACU)
Surgery* (RSN)
Survival (ACU)
Tactics* (RSN)
Tinkerer (DEX)
Unarmed Combat (PHY)
Vehicle Repair* (DEX)
Weaponsmith* (DEX)

COMBAT ROUNDS

Combat Rounds last 6-10 seconds, and consist of 3 phases: Initiative, Actions, Resolution.

1. Initiative: At the beginning of each round, all participants make an Initiative check (**2d6+Init Mod**) to determine the order in which they act, going from the highest to the lowest score, which draws taking place simultaneously. Anyone who was neither attacked nor attacked someone else gets a +1 to their next Initiative roll.

2. Actions: Each combatant gets two Combat Actions per round and may take the same action twice or choose two different actions.

3. Resolution: Certain actions, weapons, or effects will be resolved in this phase after all characters have taken their actions and before the round is complete.

At the end of the **Resolution** phase, combat cycles to a new round and a fresh Initiative check.

COMBAT ATTACKS

Attack rolls, like all other checks, requires a score of 9 or above to be successful.

Attack rolls take the format:

2d6 + AMod
Physicality for Melee & Unarmed, Dexterity for Ranged
+ SMod
Melee Combat, Ranged Combat, Unarmed Combat, or *Demolitions**
+ CMod
as determined by the GM
+ any Modifier for the specific weapon
- Target's Ranged or Melee Defensive Modifier

PANIC

If a character is reduced to half their original **Resilience Point** total then they must make a Successful, *Inspiration,* *Psychology** or **Reason** check to retain their self control or they have **Panicked.**

Players should 2d6 and check against the table below for the effect:

Roll Effect

2	**Catatonic:** Unable to move for 1d3 rounds
3	**Severe Anxiety:** Lose **Combat Actions** for 1d3 rounds
4	**Rattled:** -2 on next Initiative Roll
5	**Outburst:** Lashes out at someone close by
6	**Intimidated:** -3 CMod to attacks for 1d3 rounds
7	**Twitchy:** -2 CMod on all attacks for 1d3 rounds
8	**Loose Grip:** Whatever they are holding, they drop
9	**Frozen in Place:** Loses all actions for the next round
10	**Scream:** Spends the next round screaming
11	**Escape:** Disengages from combat
12	**Berserk:** Attacks the closest person

INITIATIVE TRACKER

Initiative is decided at the beginning of each combat round and sets the order in which participants in combat act, from highest to lowest.

An **INITIATIVE CHECK** is:
2d6 + Dexterity AMod
+ Acumen AMod
+ Perception SMod

NAME	MOD	SCORE	ORDER
Marv	+4	_____	_____
David	+2	_____	_____
Carly	+4	_____	_____
Morgan	+4	_____	_____
Gus	+4	_____	_____
Nash	+5	_____	_____

A form-fillable PDF version of this **Initiative Tracker** is available from **www.distemperverse.com/empty**

COMBAT ACTIONS

AIM: +2 CMod on the next attack against one target

ATTACK: Make a Combat Roll

CHARGE: Uses both actions but lets a character make 2 moves and end in an attack

COORDINATE: On a successful Perception or *Tactics** check, this character can provide allies at Close range with a +2 CMod against a specific target

COVER FIRE: A Success inflicts a -2 CMod on their next action.

DEFEND: +2 to Defensive Modifiers

DICE CHECK: Make an Attribute or Skill check

DISTRACT: A Successful Intimidation, *Tactics** or Perception check causes the target to lose their next action

FIRE FROM COVER: Uses both actions to come out of cover, fire, and return to cover

GRAPPLING: An Opposed check to pin a target in place

INSPIRE: A Successful Inspiration check gives a target at close range an additional Combat Action

MOVE: Change Range bands

RAPID FIRE: Can make two shots per action, but the first incurs a -1 CMod and the second a -3 CMod. If used for both actions, it incurs -2 and -4 CMods

READY WEAPON: Prepares a weapon for use or unjams a misfiring weapon.

REPOSITION: Can move during the Resolution phase

SPRINT: Can cover 3 times the usual amount of ground. Requires an Athletics check or they lose one of the Combat Actions in the next round

SUBDUE: Can attack and cause 50% of the usual Wound Point damage but 100% of Resilience Point damage

TAKE COVER: +2 Defensive Modifier against all incoming attacks during that round. on next attack

GUT INSTINCTS

Characters can also see what their Gut Instinct about an NPC is by making a Perception, *Psychology**, Streetwise, or Acumen check.

If they are successful, the GM should give the player some insight as to what their take is. If they fail, the GM may mislead them.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Characters meeting NPCs for the first time should see how they are being perceived by the NPC by making either an Influence, Charm, Deception, Inspiration, or Intimidation check and **Fill in the Gaps** as to the specifics of what they are doing.

If multiple characters encounter him at the same time, they should make a **Group First Impression check**.

NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations are broken into **Gambits** & **Rebuttals**.

A character or NPC states their offer or request by making an Influence, Barter, Charm, Deception, Entertainment, Inspiration, or Intimidation check, and **Filling In the Gaps**.

If the other side agrees to the request or demand, the **Negotiation** is over.

On a **Dire Failure**, the **Negotiation** immediately falls apart.

On a **Failure**, the other side gets a +1 CMod on their **Rebuttal**.

On a **Success**, there is a -1 CMod to any **Rebuttal**.

On a **Wild Success** there is a -3 CMod to any **Rebuttal**.

Once the other side has heard the opening **Gambit** out, they can offer their **Rebuttal** by making an Acumen, Barter, Perception or Streetwise check.

On a **Dire Failure** or **Failure**, there is no common ground but there is potential to have created an enormous amount of bad feeling.

On a **Success** or **Wild Success**, their counter is met favorably and a deal or agreement can be reached.

NPCs can attempt to **Negotiate** with characters and although the players always have agency over what they will accept or agree to, they will need to **Fill In The Gaps** about what they are thinking or saying if they decide not to hold to the terms of the **Negotiation**.
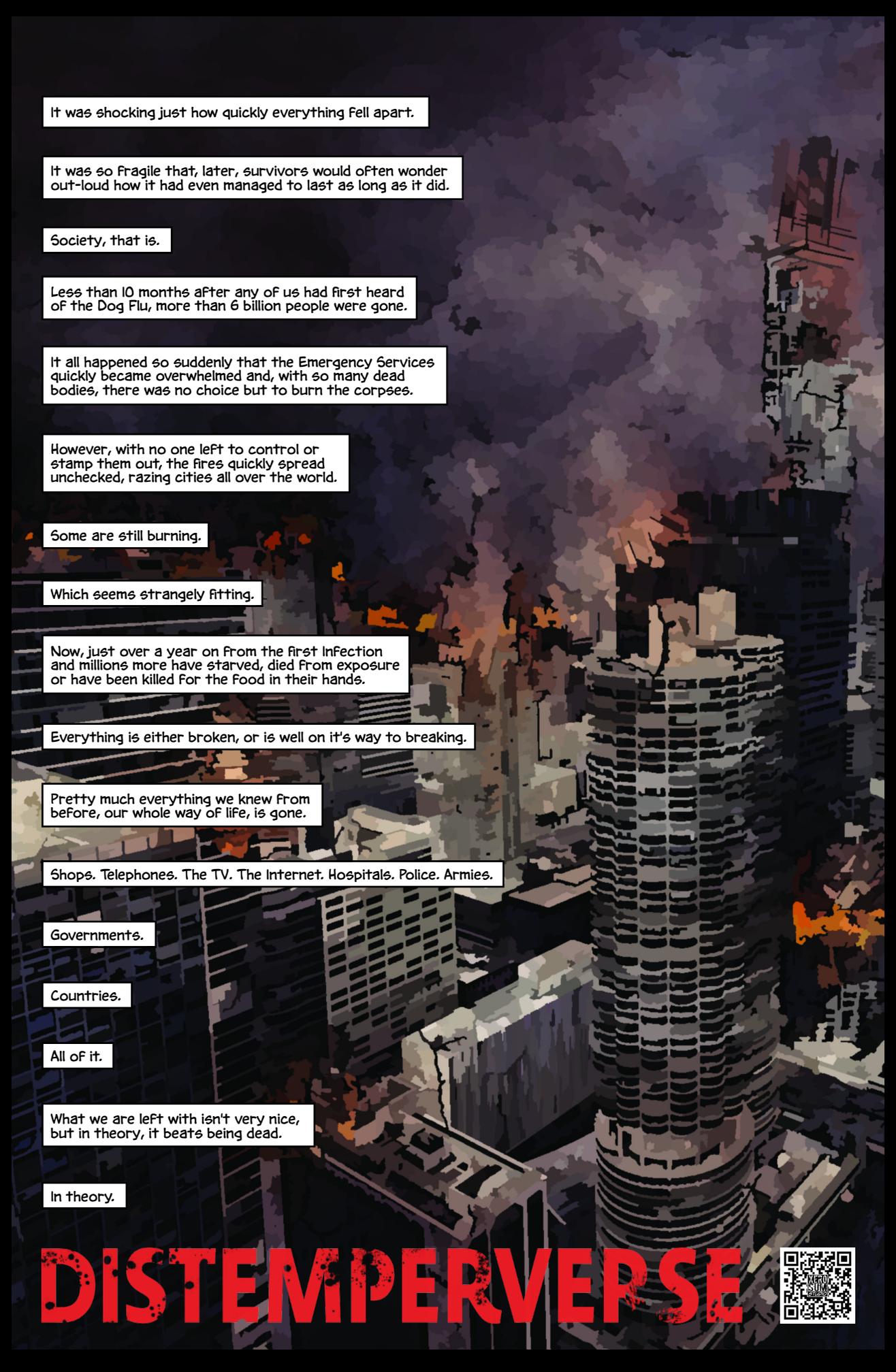
It was shocking just how quickly everything fell apart.

It was so fragile that, later, survivors would often wonder out-loud how it had even managed to last as long as it did.

Society, that is.

Less than 10 months after any of us had first heard of the Dog Flu, more than 6 billion people were gone.

It all happened so suddenly that the Emergency Services quickly became overwhelmed and, with so many dead bodies, there was no choice but to burn the corpses.

However, with no one left to control or stamp them out, the fires quickly spread unchecked, razing cities all over the world.

Some are still burning.

Which seems strangely fitting.

Now, just over a year on from the first infection and millions more have starved, died from exposure or have been killed for the food in their hands.

Everything is either broken, or is well on it's way to breaking.

Pretty much everything we knew from before, our whole way of life, is gone.

Shops. Telephones. The TV. The Internet. Hospitals. Police. Armies.

Governments.

Countries.

All of it.

What we are left with isn't very nice, but in theory, it beats being dead.

In theory.

DISTEMPERVERSE

NEXT STEP:

CHASED

-QUICKSTART

Dis·tem·per / ˌdisˈtempər/
noun: distemper
1. a viral disease of some animals, especially dogs, causing fever, coughing, and catarrh.
2. political disorder.
trans. verb: distempered; distempering; distempers
1. to throw out of order
2. derange, unsettle

EMPTY IS A STANDALONE STORY SET IN THE #DISTEMPERVERSE THAT COMES WITH ADDITIONAL CONTENT INTENDED TO BE USED AS A JUMPSTART THAT GUIDES NEW PLAYERS THROUGH THE CONCEPTS AND MECHANICS BEHIND THE DISTEMPER TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME