

# APOCALYPSE: VEGAS

## TIMELINE OF THE APOCALYPSE

### 2015

- *The Midwestern US suffers total soil toxification*
- *Leading to major food shortages throughout North and South America*
- *Which affects Africa due to US inability to send food shipments*
- *Off-grid communities begin to form throughout the western hemisphere*
- *US Soil Regulation efforts become militarized*

### 2016

- *US government starts Agricultural Internment School project (i.e., labor camps)*
- *The XL Pipeline bursts, oil spreads into the water table and rivers of the breadbasket*
- *Oil in the water begins to kill off the fish in major US rivers*
- *Clean water becomes scarce*
- *Toxic sludge spread by ocean currents begins to reach the Asian nations*
- *A failed "Ag Revolution" leads to hostilities which destroy most remaining arable land*
- *US Wheat Crop infested by pesticide-resistant microbes rendering the plant inedible*
- *The US government declares war on Canada and Mexico, in an attempt to take arable land*
- *Mass insanity spreads as cannibalism becomes commonplace*
- *Massive riots occur in all major US cities*
- *The Kruetzfeild-Jacobsonphagia Cult arises, declaring cannibalism is a religious right*
- *A counter-movement called "Cannonymous" organizes mass protest actions against the KJC*
- *"Greenification" efforts become murderous, eco-terrorists begin assassinating industrialists*

### 2017

- *An experiment using cordyceps as a foodsource goes awry, thousands of people are infected*
- *Toxic Rain begins to fall; it contains petrochemicals which burn the skin*
- *The general unavailability of medical aid causes mass suffering and death*
- *A series of foodsource reforms lead to experiments in cloning meat from human tissue*
- *A government distribution program rations out cloned meat to citizens*

### 2018

- *The US highway system is siezed by cannibal militias, who establish tollgates at state lines*
- *Urged by Canada and Mexico, the United Nations sends peacekeeping forces into the US*
- *Black market ranchers begin "farming" humans for food, breeding captives in patrolled compounds*

### 2019

- *Half of the US suffers a total power loss as the eastern powergrid collapses*
- *The atmosphere is filled with toxic chemicals; gasmasks become necessary to go outside*
- *Japanese fishermen are being attacked by carnivorous mutant horseshoe crabs*
- *Mass starvation throughout Europe as stockpiles decline and US imports cease*
- *British navy begins waylaying cargo vessels of other EU nations, leading to "WWIII" in Europe*
- *The cordyceps parasite mutates into a microbial form that spreads through the air*
- *Airborne infections put a crimp in the human farming industry as foodslaves begin to die off*
- *US telephone network is destroyed by Superstorm Kaleb*
- *Cannibal survivalists begin hoarding uninfected foodslaves in underground enclaves*
- *Society breaks down into a 3-class structure: Farmers, Slaves, and The Infected*
- *A Chinese doctor develops a cure for the cordyceps parasite*
- *A last-gasp libertarian militia movement is co-opted by newly-formed slave trade corporations*
- *The Great Dying begins*

# **GENEALOGY OF APOCALYPSE WORLD INHABITANTS**

## **Your Grandparents (you probably never met them) - circa 2020**

People who were of childbearing age when the Great Dying began - they lived through it directly; they saw their entire civilization, nearly everyone they'd ever known, wiped off the face of the Earth. They invented and mass-produced the medical gear used by Angels today; their desperate experiments and perverted ideas of technological progress led to developments like the Violation Glove and airborne biological weapons, in addition to Off-Grid Communities, Cryo Chambers and Survival Vaults. Some of them got into these vaults, and their descendants only now emerging. Others, well... They experienced the cannibal militias, the toxic rain, the great famine, the freak weather, the constant struggle to obtain clean water... and some of them survived.

## **Your Parents - circa 2045**

Their children, who came of childbearing age when the Great Dying had begun to level off. For Vault-Dwellers the daily routine of life remained pretty consistent, but for above-grounders it was a whole different thing. This generation still remembered much of the above from their childhoods and tales told by their parents, but by the time they reached adulthood the population had been reduced by 90 percent, and Survival of the Fittest was the rule. These people lived in very different world. For one thing, they lacked any direct experiences of the previous civilization; they had no personal memories of Life Before the Fall. Their new ideas of "civilization" were nascent, random, and frequently brutal. Some of them began to develop new technologies, new social systems, new ways of living, scrounging, bartering, cobbling together little experiments that were sometimes workable, setting up the first "hardholds", adapting to the harsh realities of life... and some of them survived.

## **You - 2065**

Their children, most of whom are coming to childbearing age now. That's you. You remember much of the above from your childhood, and things haven't changed that much. If anything, the major concepts of the game world have now become crystalized: The psychic maelstrom exists, hardholds exist, and the various character classes (and all their accoutrements) exist. To the newly-emerging Vault-Dwellers it will be a very confusing and dangerous place. But for you...

This is Apocalypse World.

## SESSION 1: WELCOME TO FABULOUS LAS VEGAS

### VAULT DWELLERS:

**Elrond "Pop" Vasilier** - a Russian ex-soldier and sleeper agent who entered the vault when the cannibal riots broke out in the midst of his mission, he is the only remaining member of the original vault dwellers and ostensibly the leader. He's a good shot and a rugged survivor but at age 72, he's not as spry as he used to be.

**Joel Rodrick** - a pudgy bearded 21-year-old manchild who was born in the vault and is secretly in love with Wren. His parents were both dead by the time he hit his teens. He was molested by Elrond at a young age, and has suppressed the memory. Both he and George call Elrond "Pop".

**George Elima** - a strapping, bearded young man, 25 years old and born in the vault, he has always been like a big brother to Joel. His dad died just a few years ago. He considers Wren weird, her fascination with dead things is twisted and macabre. He knows Elrond is softer than he seems, and wishes to look after the old man. In preparation for the outside world, he has sharpened a broken piece of the vault wall into a shank, which he carries as a weapon.

**Wren Lorraine** - a 27-year-old vault dweller, her parents were middle-aged when they entered the vault and died when she was young. She has taught herself taxidermy, skinning and stuffing the small animals that increasingly make their way through the crumbling walls and airducts of the vault. She thinks Elrond is a noble leader, and she can't stand being around Joel any longer. She also thinks George is weak-willed and needs her protection.

The cracks in the vault walls have been growing for some time, and last week one room was flooded in two inches of water following a heavy rain. The water smelled slightly like gasoline, and ruined several pallets of dried foods. The three younger inhabitants, realizing that all of them wanted to brave the outside world, and further realizing that they constituted a majority in the vault, threw the question to a democratic vote and of course, won.

In the vault they have a handy variety of supplies. They pack up a bunch of hunting gear and navigation/surveying equipment and prepare to head out.

### ABOVE-GROUNDERS:

**Dez (The Angel)** - She has her infirmary set up in the remains of McCarran Airport's Terminal 1, which she rarely leaves. She keeps a dropbox outside where people can leave notes to request medical attention, and barter her services for food and supplies.

**Zeke (The Faceless)** - His face hideously mangled by the blades of a cultist group that waylaid him on the road into Vegas and left him for dead, Zeke somehow found his way to Dez. She patched him up as well as possible under the circumstances and gave him a job working security. He has helped her heal many people, and has a strong bond with her. He also knows Madame Tulu, but that's a secret only they share; they have some past affiliation in the South.

**Dodge (The Driver)** - Another vault dweller, but from a different vault (one that had its hermetic seals damaged beyond repair several years ago, forcing its inhabitants out into the world), Dodge was named after a car and quickly took to them when he first saw a real one at the age of 17. Now he runs errands and supply runs to keep Dez' infirmary stocked with food and medical supplies. He drives Dip around on scavenging missions, and takes Zeke as backup on the more dangerous barter runs. Zeke has saved his ass on more than one occasion.

**Serendipity aka "Dip" (The Ruin Runner)** - A 13-year-old orphan from the streets of Las Vegas, Dip's parents died when she was just eight. She lived on her own as a packrat for several years, scavenging amid the ruins and developing a keen eye for detail. When she met Dodge he recognized her talents and convinced her to come to the McCarran Infirmary, which she now calls home base. Dip's resourceful eye and frequent excursions are the source of most of the random barter used by Dez to obtain her stock.

**Madame Tulu (The Brainer)** - A mysterious wanderer who only recently arrived in Vegas, Madame Tulu is originally from the deep South. She has no problems traveling alone, thanks to her violation glove and painwave projector, and her ability to create in-brain puppet strings. She has struck up a loose acquaintance with Squaids, and sneaks into his tent at night to watch him sleep on occasion. She has also been keeping a close eye on the airport infirmary for a couple weeks now, but hasn't approached anyone from there yet.

**Lord Squaids (The Hocus)** - A fucking wacknut with a drugged-out cult who travels with him around the southwest, Squaids has perfected a method of distilling a hallucinogenic neuroexciter from certain wild mushrooms. This drug is the source of the quasi-religious power he holds over his followers, who are dedicated and hard-working, but constantly filthy and on the verge of starving. It was Squaid's people who slashed up Zeke's face several years ago.

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## WELCOME TO FABULOUS LAS VEGAS



WE START with the vault dwellers unsealing the great door and stepping out to view the ruined city for the first time. They emerge from a rocky hill on the west side of town and look eastward, facing the Strip. The sun is in their eyes. They take in the sight of grand casino hotels, windows smashed, garish walls covered with faded, peeling paint and strewn with graffiti; the overgrown foliage growing up and onto the crumbling roads and collapsing freeways; the overturned cars and piles of rusted metal scattered around the landscape like some giant had tossed them aside. The sounds of birds and insects fill the early morning air. That's something Elrond doesn't remember ever hearing here, even in the days before the water stopped running.

They see movement on the Strip. Wren grabs the binoculars and Elrond peers through his rifle's scope. There are a couple people down there, but they quickly disappear out of sight. The party continues scanning the ruins, looking for any more signs of life. It doesn't take them long to find one.

CUT TO DODGE driving his muscle coupe southbound on the I-15, he's just a little south of the airport when his eye catches a glint of something on a hill about a mile off. Swerving through the broken center dividers to avoid that overturned trailer rig that blocks four lanes, he slows down and squints westward. Sure enough, it's people. Looks like four of them. And they're all wearing matching brown jumpsuits. Dodge has never seen jumpsuits like that before, but the fact that they're all wearing matching clothes strikes him as freaky. He turns the car around and gets off the freeway, finding a spot behind a building where he can watch these strangers without being seen.

BACK TO THE VAULT DWELLERS. They see the car as it approaches, then turns around and gets off the freeway. They lose sight of it again. They decide to start walking toward the nearest casino hotel. Wren takes point, scouting a few hundred paces ahead.

CUT TO THE MCCARRAN INFIRMARY. Everybody's waking up. Zeke does his security rounds while Dez checks the dropbox. There's a note in there, someone's handwriting she doesn't recognize. The note says "We need you in northtown there's a virus? We can offer training. Talk to the captain." It's signed "Bobbert". Dez doesn't know any Captain, or anyone named Bobbert. She asks Zeke. Turns out Zeke *has* heard of a guy who called himself "The Captain". But that was years ago, and the guy was in Needles, California. He was a military hothead who ran some kind of guerilla training camp.

Dez is interrupted by the cries of a patient in one of the sickbeds. Jak, a teenager from one of the dozen or so relatively peaceable groups scattered around the city, has ripped his leg open on a piece of sheet metal while scavenging. His sutures are still healing. Problem is, he wants to leave. Now. Says his father needs him. Dez tries to convince him to remain in bed but fails: He pushes her to the floor and quickly limps out the door to the main room, tearing his sutures open again and bleeding all over the floor. Hearing the ruckus, Zeke is already headed this way. He grabs the boy casually, lifting him a foot off the ground, and tells him in no uncertain terms to GET BACK IN BED. Jak, terrified by this monstrosity of a man, goes completely limp and starts sobbing in fear. Zeke carries him back to the bed and gently lays him down, as Dez prepares to sew his leg up again.

CUT TO DIP, who has been rummaging around through the gift shop in the old airport terminal. She decides to make this place her room, because of its brightly painted walls and sparkly ceiling. She goes through the cabinets and drawers behind the cashier's counter. Spying something glimmery that appears to be a candy wrapper, she reaches far back into a deep drawer and - SNAP! - a mousetrap clamps shut on her fingers. But she gets the candy. It's a dry old chocolate bar, gone white with age. She sits cross-legged on the counter and happily eats it.

CUT TO MADAM TULU, who awakens beneath the freeway overpass that served as last night's home. She finds a comfortable spot to sit and performs her morning meditations, opening her brain to the psychic maelstrom. She sees sparks of light shooting across the dark land like magical ley lines. Everything is spinning. She seems to be floating, weightless. The most striking thing about the maelstrom is *the sound*, waves and waves of sound: voices, snippets of old radio and television broadcasts, automobile collisions, explosions, laughter, cries and screams, and meaningless snippets of random conversation swirl around in her head. The land below becomes recognizable: she is floating above the city of Las Vegas. She feels the dark, heavy energies of the people in the city: here's one group, there's

another one, there's another... They look like little black circles, and they all share a heavy darkness that fills them up. She then notices four more circles to the west. These circles are empty, and they're coming this way. Just before the vision fades she notices one last thing: up in the north part of town there's a large fuzzy area that glows with a dim, red light. Inside the light she sees a number of people who seem to be watching a movie. The red light has the feeling of bad news.

CUT TO SQUAIDS, who is waking up under the trees in a forested area once known as Heritage Park. He dons his tattered robes and heads toward the campsite, where his followers have already started a fire for the morning meal. His second in command, a mannish-looking woman named Cookie, beckons him over. She is concerned because the group's supplies are nearly depleted. "I can feed these people for one or two more days," she says, "but we're gonna have to find more food and water right away." Squaids considers his options.



CUT TO THE PARKING LOT OF THE SILVERTON HOTEL. The vault dwellers have been walking for about half an hour, and have seen no one. Wren is way out in front. She enters the parking lot and heads toward the big glass door when a shot rings out and strikes the asphalt just in front of her. "You better stay right there!" shouts an old female voice. Wren pauses for a moment, then rolls behind the nearest car for cover. She eyes the building through the car's windows. She figures the voice is coming from the upper floor, over or near the main doors. What she misses is the person

creeping up on her from the other side. There's a CLICK as a gun is cocked, just a few feet behind her. Wren spins around and throws a scalpel into the would-be assailant's chest before even noticing that he's a shirtless young man, no more than eighteen. His eyes go wide and he hits the ground. He's not getting up again. "JONNY! AAAIIIEEEEE" shouts the old woman's voice, and then she shouts some other things. Wren's not sure who she's shouting to, but it sounds like she's not alone in there.

As soon as the shot rings out, George starts running toward it, getting there a bit ahead of Elrond and Joel. He sees Wren crouching near a shirtless corpse, a gun on the ground beside it. He runs to join her as more shots whiz past.

Elrond and Joel reach the parking lot. Elrond tries shooting back at the shooter but fails to hit her, when a bullet strikes him in the shoulder and knocks him to the ground. George runs to the building to open the big glass door, but a second young man yanks the door shut from inside and points his gun at George's head through the glass. George quickly ducks back around the corner, avoiding the shot. It is now apparent that there are four opponents: three young men with handguns, and an old woman with a shotgun. There seems to be a family resemblance. Joel remembers the fallen gun. He grabs it, takes aim, and pulls the trigger ... only to hear the CLICK of an empty chamber. There's no ammo in this gun!

CUT TO DODGE, who has been watching this entire scene from the comfort of his car, a few hundred feet away. He has a clear view of everything, and he knows who lives in that hotel. It's a crazy bitch called Mutha Hubbard and her four sons; they're kidnappers and slave traders who most people around here know to steer clear of. And these four jumpsuited fools just walked straight into her parking lot like they had no clue at all. He starts his engine, gunning it up over the curb and straight into the lot, screeching to a halt right between the hotel and the jumpsuited female. He leans over and throws open the passenger door. "Get in!" he shouts. A bullet pings off the coupe, putting a deep dimple in the left front panel. Dodge whines, "Aw SHIT, now I'm gonna have to fix that..."

Wren is staying down, trying to decide whether or not to get into this guy's car. She's never even *seen* a car. Joel hurls the empty gun at the glass door, which smashes into shards. Elrond rolls to one side to get a good view, raises the muzzle and picks off son number two. George steps back around the corner and into the foyer, slashing viciously at the two remaining Hubbard sons with his improvised shank. The sharp edge of the makeshift weapon slices open the belly of one son, and the point plunges deep into the other one. Screaming in berserk rage, Mutha Hubbard gets off another shot, hitting no one. Dodge pulls out his magnum, sticks it out the driver's window and puts a hole in the old lady's head. Her body drops to the ground. "That's for the car" he says.

AFTER GRABBING ALL THE WEAPONS (and giving the shotgun to Dodge), the four vault dwellers rifle through the pockets and loot the bodies. The cold dead Hubbards yield 2 barter worth of shiny jewelry and ammunition. The slave trade is lucrative, it seems. Dodge approaches Elrond, who is still bleeding. "I know a place they can fix up your arm," he says. "Get in and I'll take you there."

They get in.

## SESSION 2: WHEN IT RAINS, IT BURNS

*Elrond has passed out due to his gunshot wound and Wren has become neurotically glued to his side. She will not leave him for an instant. The airport residents stick him in a sickbed and give her a chair. Zeke has gone out to patrol the airport perimeter.*

UPDATES & EXPOSITION, in which we learn a few interesting things:

**Joel** (Vault Dweller) - Seeing Elrond get shot really hit him hard. He kinda wants to go back to the vault.

**George** (Vault Dweller) - Having taken the lives of two men at the end of his makeshift sword, ripping their bodies open with a savage rage that he never knew he had inside, George feels strong, powerful, and newly assertive - perhaps a bit too much. In fact he's a little psychotic right now. He considers himself an unstoppable warrior, the fearless protector of the vault-dwellers.

**Dez** (Angel) - She got paid by Jak's dad, the agricultural projects organizer at Phoenix Farms, who also says he owes her a favor. And she almost forgot to send a shipment of reloaded narcostims up to O.G.King, the head guy over at Golden Gardens on the Strip. (As we shall see soon, she still hasn't remembered).

**Dodge** (Driver) - The vault he came out of is located on the map, but it is entirely caved in and exposed. When asked about the fates of others inside, we learn that Dodge has a mother out there somewhere who went AWOL years ago. We also learn that Dodge's knowledge of the various settlements on the Strip is very keen. And there's been a lot of "Cordies" (Cordyceps victims) on the east side lately. The more advanced victims develop finger-sized wormlike growths that protrude from the body in random places.

**Tulu** (Brainer) - It's gonna take more time and meditation to discover the true meaning of her maelstrom vision this morning.

**Dip** (Ruin Runner) - She's met some of the Eastside Raiders, a local motorcycle gang who Dodge knows by their newer name, "The Reapers". They're not such bad people, at least if you're a kid. She also found a strange object in the mud out by Dez' dropbox: it's a 1-inch diameter gold-colored button that says "Cannonymous". She doesn't know what that means, but she pockets it.

**Squids** (Hocus) - Having traveled long distances and always hungry, it turns out that the Squaidists have often eaten human flesh. In fact they have been known to capture Cordies who they "harvest" for their tainted blood (a key ingredient in his own custom myco-drug). If the infection is not too far along, the cultists will eat the organs of these damned souls because, well, you gotta get your protein. Squids has heard that there's a slave corp called "Anthropos Industries" from northern Cali that's been pushing down into the Los Angeles area lately, setting up branch offices and foodslaving facilities throughout southern California. This is pissing off the hardholders who live down in SoCal (who are mostly descendants of today's LA gangbangers), although you gotta admit, it has caused a huge boom in the local slave trade.

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## WHEN IT RAINS, IT BURNS



WE START WITH SQUAIDS, who sends a group out to do some beginning-of-session foraging. The sky is covered with grey clouds and the air is getting humid. After a couple hours the foraging group comes back with three Cordies, two of whom are far along and will be used for extraction. The third will be killed and eaten. Starvation has been set back for another day.

CUT TO THE AIRPORT/INFIRMARY RECEIVING ZONE. Dez is examining the pinched finger of young Dip when Dodge pulls up into the passenger receiving zone outside Terminal 1. Dodge gets out and the vault-dwellers emerge from the vehicle, carrying the unconscious Elrond. Dez and Dip go out to meet these strangers who wear matching brown jumpsuits. It seems the old man is the only one needing medical attention. The girl is just hysterical. They lay Elrond out on the trunk of the car, and Dez begins cleaning the wound. Dodge gives her a short version of the

Silverton Hotel story, opining that there will be repercussions now that the Hubbards have been taken out of the local slave trade. Dez continues digging for the bullet. George attempts to read the situation, which gives him a levelup. In keeping with his new psychotic angle, his player chooses to take "Merciless" from the "Battlebabe" playbook ("When you inflict harm, inflict +1 harm").

It's about this time Joel suddenly realizes that he forgot to close the vault door when they left. He kinda wants to go back to the vault anyway, but he doesn't want to let these new people know about the huge stockpile of food and water they have stored there. He also wants to keep George from finding out that he messed up so badly, so he pulls Dodge aside, trying to come up with a fake reason to bum a quick ride back to the vault. But George, with his newfound aggressiveness and patronizing attitude, comes over to barge in on their conversation. Joel clams up. Dodge and George continue talking. A sudden cold wind comes downward and spreads throughout the parking area.

While the others are diverted, Dez slips the wristwatch off the old man's arm and puts it in her pocket. This is barter, she thinks, just in case they don't have anything to pay with. (Note: This watch is one of Elrond's personal "special items", and it has a piano-wire garrot hidden inside it.)

CUT TO MADAME TULU, who has entered the airport perimeter and moved to an observation position not far from where the others are standing. Crouched behind a rusted car, she watches closely and tries to identify these brown-suits. She opens her brain to the psychic maelstrom. The vision she receives is short and dim, but she senses there is another force, like her, somewhere here in town. This force is, like her, searching the maelstrom on a daily basis, and looking for something. Then the vision ends. Tulu decides to get closer. She takes a chance at running for cover behind an empty bus nearer to the terminal doors, but drops her Violation Glove en route. Offered the hard choice of leaving the glove laying there in full view, or going back to try and retrieve it, she opts for the latter and is spotted by Dez, who happens to look up at that moment.

BACK TO THE RECEIVING ZONE. Dez says nothing of what she sees, but watches as Tulu moves back behind the bus. She glances down at the wounded old man, and then has a sudden desire for psychic guidance herself. She closes her eyes and opens her brain to the psychic maelstrom. The vision she receives is like nerves and arteries branching onward and onward, unraveling in pathways that indicate people, places, events and their meanings, but it's all too

abstract for Dez to understand. Suddenly she hears a disembodied voice speaking very clearly, close to her. It asks "Do you like boys or girls?" And Dez feels compelled to answer. "I... like... girls" she says, quietly but out loud. The vision is over. Dez shakes her head and wonders what the hell *that* was.

Dip, the only person who has been paying attention to the sky, suddenly feels a drop of rain on her nose. Waiting for a couple seconds before wiping it off, she gauges the burning sensation it causes and finds it's quite extreme. The rain varies in intensity; sometimes it's mostly water, sometimes there's a lot more petro in it. This is going to be a bad one. But of course that's good news for the gasoline distillers down at the Pyramid. She goes to Dez to tell her, but before she can get a word in, the sky opens up and a torrent of toxic water begins falling. "Holy fuck, my paint job!" shouts Dodge, and hurries to move his car under the second-level footbridge nearby.

Dez goes over to the others. "We're gonna have to get this man inside" she says, gesturing back toward Elrond, "We can't stay in this rain for long." Everyone hurries into the lobby, wincing and twitching at the irritation seeping into their skin.

CUT TO SQUAIDS. While the cult members are hacking up their Cordie victims, it begins to rain. It's a strong one. Like many people, the Squaidists use a system of filtration and separation to extract a low-grade liquid fuel from the rain. Squaids makes sure the rain collecting tarps and separation funnels are all set up properly, then scouts for some cover for his group. Next door are the ruins of the Natural History Museum. The building yields some interesting dinosaur bones, but the roof has collapsed all the way to the floor, and the interior affords little protection. Across the street is the Children's Museum, which still has most of its roof intact. The cult moves its operation to the west side of Las Vegas Boulevard.

CUT TO THE INFIRMARY INTERIOR. Dez continues speaking once everyone gets inside. This is her place, she's in charge here. "Now there's also the matter of payment" she says. George and Joel look at each other. Joel tells her that they have no place to stay here in town, and asks if she could accommodate them. Dez thinks it over. She wishes Zeke was here. She has no security right now and she doesn't know shit about these vault people. However, she does think their blood might yield some interesting results if tested. "I can let you stay here for a limited time" she says, "but first I have to make sure you're not a threat to us or any of my patients. Are you carrying any infectious diseases? Lie to me and you'll be kicked out." The vault-dwellers tell her that they have no diseases. "You'll have to submit to a blood test, of course" she adds. Joel agrees without argument but George, apparently feeling put-off by this woman's third-degree, tells her "You can take it from my penis."

Dez stares at George for a moment and asks no one in particular, "Did he really just say what I thought he said?" Everyone else looks at George too. "Hell yeah I said it" replies George, staring right back at her.

Dez sees red. She points to the door they just came through. "Get the fuck out of my infirmary, you sexist piece of crap." Joel tries to intervene, but George shrugs him off and walks toward the door. "I don't need to take your shit," he says, and heads outside into the rain. Joel stands there, totally unsure what to do.

CUT TO MADAME TULU, who has opened up the bus doors and climbed inside to seek cover from the rain. She rifles through the glove box and back seats (finding nothing; the infirmary crew stripped all these vehicles long ago). She watches through the windows as the group inside has a conversation. It looks like an argument. The big guy has been kicked out. He walks out into the rain and stands there looking around. She reads the situation, gaining a levelup. Her player chooses In-Brain Puppet Strings.

Out of the corner of her eye, Tulu notices movement on the access road to the parking area in front of the infirmary. It's a pack of six sweet-looking motorcycles, their riders wrapped up tightly in multiple layers against the rain, heading north. She likes those bikes, and decides on a whim that she's gonna get one for herself. She pulls out her painwave projector and fires it.

CUT TO THE RECEIVING ZONE. The radiating waves of psychic pain explode outward from the epicenter of the bus, reaching the bikers, George, and the nearby Dodge, who throws himself down on the front seat of the car, holding his ears.

George's head suddenly hurts something fierce and his ears are ringing, but he ignores it. The rain is burning his skin, but he's ignoring that too. He's totally fixated on the pack of motorcycles he sees going down in a pileup on the road. Only one bike manages to stay upright. Its rider stops several dozen yards past the accident, looking around for the attackers, but the rain does not permit stopping for long. The rider revs his engine and takes off northbound, one fist raised in the air. George can't hear him, in fact no one can hear him except Tulu, but he's shouting "REAPERS!"

Attracted by the mayhem on the road, George grabs a nearby piece of corrugated sheet metal and holds it over his head as he begins running out to the scene of the crash. His path takes him right past Tulu's bus. Tulu, of course, sees him go by. "Those bikes are MINE" she thinks, and bounds out of the bus to catch George before he can cover the distance.



CUT TO SQUAIDS. Sitting in the ball-pit at the children's museum, surrounded by his followers who are happily munching on human organs, Squaids performs a ritual, opening his brain to the psychic maelstrom. His experience is one of myco-fibrous tendrils surrounding the world, infecting everything they touch. But his vision is distorted somehow, disturbed. It's as if he keeps trying to lay the vision out flat like a sheet of paper, but it keeps fighting him, over and over, curling up into a ball, all the corners meeting in this same point in the middle. he focuses on the point in the middle, where he sees a pair of silver eyes. Female eyes. They see him, too. He doesn't know if he literally hears it but the words in his head are "You and I want the same thing. Come to me." The vision ends. Squaids is certain the silver eyes are telling him to go to the Silverton Hotel.

CUT TO THE ROAD EAST OF AIRPORT. Two of the bikers are still alive, struggling to get up. When they see George running toward them, they draw their handguns and take aim. George keeps coming. One of the bikers squeezes off a shot, hitting George in the leg, but he keeps coming. The second takes aim just as Tulu catches up with George from behind. Her small hand - cased in its Violation Glove - reaches up and grabs him by the shoulder. "Plant that sheet in front of you like a shield" she orders via in-brain puppet strings, and he does so. The bullet PINGs off the corrugated metal sheet, leaving a deep dimple. George lifts the sheet again and continues closing the distance. He is now almost upon them, with Tulu still trailing behind.

CUT TO THE TERMINAL INTERIOR, where everyone suddenly hears gunshots. Dez rushes over to bolt and chain the terminal doors, looking out the window for Dodge. She sees him. He's okay.

CUT TO DODGE, who has recovered his senses and gotten quietly out of his car. He watches the fight on the road, reads the situation, and draws his magnum. He also levels up, his player choosing +1 Hard. "This is the second time I've watched one of these idiots run directly \*toward\* the most dangerous thing" he says to himself. Remaining under the covered walkway he gets as close as he can get without exposing himself to the rain, and casually draws a bead on the fight scene.

BACK TO THE ROAD. The bikers fire again, striking both Tulu and George. Both take damage but manage to remain standing. Tulu pinches George's shoulder once more with the glove. "Now swing that sheet and decapitate that man!" she orders. He attempts to comply, but the wind whips the sheet out of his control like a mad kite and it dives downward, digging forcefully into his lower leg just where the bullet hit him. This is finally too much pain for George to bear. He winces and crashes to his knees. He's bleeding really badly now, and his skin is starting to peel in some places. He's gonna need medical attention very soon.

Both riders take aim at Tulu, but not before she decides to let loose with another blast from her painwave projector. The radiating pain takes out one man immediately, his eyeballs bulging out of their sockets, blood dripping from his ears. The other one screams in pain but raises his gun once more. Just as he's about to fire, a bullet hole appears in his chest and he drops to the ground. Dodge has taken him out.

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*We leave the players wondering what will happen when that escaping Reaper gets back home and tells his gangleaders that his squad was taken out while riding past the infirmary.*

## SESSION 3: SNAP, CRACKLE, POP

*Wren's hysterical sobbing has gotten on Dez' nerves, and she's been given a sedative to keep her quiet. Zeke is still out patrolling the airport perimeter, and has hunkered down inside an old 727 to escape the rain.*

### UPDATES & EXPOSITION:



**Elrond**, aka "Pop" (Vault Dweller) - We learn that Elrond had some experience with foodslavers in the days before the fall. Back in 2019 he was rounded up in a general sweep and held for a time at Nellis Air Force Base, where a temporary Cordyceps Containment Facility had been erected under a public-private partnership between the US Air Force and Pioneer Proteins Incorporated. He managed to escape, but not without killing some people and making some enemies. We also learn that over the years in the vault Elrond performed brainwashing experiments and attempted to plant post-hypnotic suggestions in both Joel and George, some of which may have worked, but with unpredictable effects on the boys' psychological development.

**Joel** (Vault Dweller) - He was secretly taught strategy and anticapitalist ideology by Elrond during the hypnosis sessions. And he's changed his mind about Wren. He is no longer interested in her, since she seems to become hysterical under pressure. He's growing increasingly concerned about the vault door, and still hasn't told anyone he forgot to close it.

**George** (Vault Dweller) - George wants to die. Laying in the dirt, partly covered by a large piece of corrugated metal, skin peeling from the rain, George has a series of visions in which scenes from his short and mostly uneventful life go by. He sees himself as a young boy playing with a stuffed giraffe (his most sentimental possession is the foot of this plush toy, which he carries to this day). He sees himself doing poorly with the logic and math that Joel did so well at, but excelling in his martial arts training and sparring with Elrond. He remembers his father, who was a military man, and his father's final words to him: "To give up and die early is the greatest dishonor." At this moment, that's exactly what George is considering doing.

**Dez** (Angel) - It's been fifty years, as far as she knows, since anyone was able to get a sample of pure human blood, untainted by Cordyceps or high levels of petrochemicals. Dez realizes that the vault-dwellers would be very useful as a control group, and their blood might be useful in helping to develop anti-toxins or vaccines. She wants those blood samples. She's worried about upsetting the Reapers, but mostly because they have a good machinist who sometimes fixes stuff she needs.

**Dodge** (Driver) - He's also worrying about the inevitable visit from the Reapers. He has no doubt that escaping squadleader will tell his gang bosses where the attack took place, and they'll be back here as soon as the rain lets up to do a little investigating. The rain in Vegas rarely lasts longer than 30 minutes. And from what he knows of the Reapers, detente is not one of their stronger suits.

**Dip** (Ruin Runner) - Checking out that "Cannonymous" button she found near Dez' dropbox this morning, Dip realizes two things. First, it's not old. It seems to be newly made. And second, it wasn't covered by any mud or anything when she picked it up. That means it must have been dropped just last night, or this morning.

**Tulu** (Brainer) - Turns out she and Squuids have been "communing" in the psychic maelstrom for the last week, touching each other's unconscious minds, and they have been growing steadily more aware of each other - even to the point of knowing some of each other's secrets. We learn a little more about Tulu's mysterious past (as does Squuids). While Dodge's shot takes out her would-be attacker, she recalls a time long ago when someone else saved her in a similar way. It was back in the South, and it's why she had to leave her hometown. She and her parents had been captured and targeted for eradication by a religious cult who felt their god-appointed duty was to "cleanse the world" of all Brainers. After her parents were tortured and killed before her eyes, the young Tulu was saved by a gigantic slave who set her free and told her "I'll meet you in Vegas one day." That slave's name? Zeke.

**Squuids** (Hocus) - Between mushroom-enhanced maelstrom visions in which he cavorts with mysterious disincarnate females, Squuids learns that two of his followers - Sorrow and Rabbit - are beginning to show second-level symptoms of Cordyceps infection. This means they will soon lose their cognitive abilities, and will have to be "harvested" for food and mycotoxin. To make matters worse, the latest foraging run turns up nothing edible in the entire Childrens' Museum complex. The only good news is: the rain is letting up.

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## SNAP, CRACKLE, POP

WE START WITH SQUAIDS, who is preparing to take his group down to the Silverton Hotel, where he is sure the silver eyes from his maelstrom visions are telling him to go. The cultists begin packing up the camp while Squaids takes another look into the maelstrom. What he sees is a confusing array of information and he loses consciousness, passing out in the ball pit. When he awakens he is being slapped by Cookie, who has been trying to wake him for several minutes. "Lord Squaids, it's Sorrow and Rabbit... They've gone walking."

*"Gone walking" means the Cordyceps has taken over their motor control impulses, and they'll be chaotically wandering around the neighborhood now, trying to eat things. Sometimes it takes some work to find walkers, because their patterns of travel make no sense: they'll turn on a whim and go into buildings, up stairs, wander out into the trees, fall down elevator shafts, and all sorts of other random things.*

Squaids tells her to get them back. The cult is starving, they need all the food they can get. This saddens Cookie, who helped birth Sorrow, and doesn't want to eat her. She requires some convincing. Squaids promises to perform a ritual to set Sorrow's soul at rest, and sends Cookie to assemble a search party. Six cultists go off to find the walkers.

CUT TO THE ROAD EAST OF AIRPORT. Tulu whirls around to see who fired the shot that just saved her. She's looking down the barrel of Dodge's magnum as he slowly approaches. Dodge attempts to read Tulu, but she's unreadable. She stands her ground, finger hovering over the button of her painwave projector. He's coming this way. "That head pain thing - what the fuck was that?" he demands. She doesn't answer. "Well... Don't do it again!" he shouts. He realizes that he's out of ammunition, but keeps the gun raised as a bluff. They eye each other warily, and Dodge cautiously moves closer.



CUT TO INFIRMARY INTERIOR. Dez and her assistants Shig and Mox place the sedated Wren in the bed across from Elrond's. Dez senses movement from the other bed as Elrond comes to. She also levels up and chooses to take a +1 Hot from the Hardholder playbook. With the reflexive speed of his martial training Elrond bounds out of the bed and seizes a narcostab from the counter, turning upon Dez, whom he sees as a would-be captor, an assailant, an enemy. Dez doesn't turn around, but she does reach into a pocket for her taser. She says "It feels a lot better with that bullet out of your arm, doesn't it?"

Joel and Dip, who have been standing in the hallway just outside, notice what's happening and quickly enter the room. Joel realizes that Elrond must be having some sort of flashback. He runs in and interposes himself between Elrond and Dez, simultaneously attempting to calm the old man down verbally. It doesn't work. At this moment the unconscious Wren begins screaming horrifically, at the top of her lungs. Everyone is startled. Elrond tries to lunge around Joel but loses his footing and falls, breaking his nose as his face hits the hard tile floor. The narcostab goes skittering under Wren's bed. Nobody notices this but Dip, who takes advantage of the adults' distraction to slide down there and grab it. She slips the dropped narcostab into her pocket and comes out from under the bed.

Dez quickly whips out a chillstab and jabs Wren with it. The screaming stops instantly.

BACK TO THE ROAD. Tulu and Dodge are now only a few feet apart. "Are you friend or foe?" Tulu asks. Dodge glances at the dead bikers on the road, at the twitching body of George on the ground, and back at the diminutive spiky-haired woman. "I'm a friend" he says, and lowers his weapon. They keep a close eye on each other from either side of the fallen George, who has managed to push the metal sheet off with his good leg.

Neither of them knows this, but if George had the strength to do it, he would commit suicide right now. He's sure that Dez won't help him after the earlier debacle, he knows he's bleeding his last, and he would rather kill himself than die at an enemy's hand. But all he can manage to do is twitch.

Dodge looks at the twitching, wounded man in the brown jumpsuit, now frayed and dissolving in places. He takes a quick count: "Two down, one hysterical, Mutha Hubbard dead by my magnum, and the Reapers are on their way". He can't believe this is what his day has turned into. "Why the hell did I stop to get involved with these people?" he thinks to himself. "I swear, next time, I'm just doing what Dez says, running to the Golden Gardens, doing my job, no side trips, no free rides..."

He lifts one of George's arms carefully. "Help me get this guy inside?" he asks. Tulu nods. She grabs George's other arm and they begin dragging his bulky form across the parking lot, toward the infirmary doors. Along the way she opens her brain for a moment. Her hunch is confirmed. George is one of the four empty circles she saw in her vision

this morning. The other three are inside this infirmary. One more thing: She knows there aren't any more bullets in Dodge's gun.

CUT TO LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD. Squaids and his group have been moving for a couple hours, they're now just south of Tropicana Avenue. As they get closer to the Silverton Hotel they notice a scav party up ahead, catty-corner from their current position. Six people, each with a black equilateral triangle marked onto their shirts or tattooed on their biceps. The scavengers are breaking into two groups of three to search both levels of a small apartment complex. Their tactical efficiency implies they have a good deal of experience with this type of thing. Squaids, always hungry and eager to capitalize on someone else's find, decides to take these guys.

The cultists move quietly around the back of a neighboring gas station, and then up into position around the corner of the nearest apartment. They brandish their kitchen knives, waiting for the scavenger inside to come out. When he does, he is caught completely off guard. "Hey, look what I found" is what he almost finishes saying - before Squaids and the cultists slice him from throat to crotch. His entrails pour out onto the ground as his body collapses. Squaids takes his handgun.

Alerted by the first scav's gurgling, two more scavengers hurry out of the adjoining apartments, guns drawn. They see the cultists standing over the body of their fallen comrade, now slashed to ribbons. There is a brief exchange of gunfire between neighboring apartments as both groups duck in and out of their respective doors. One of the cultists - Snake - is killed by a shot to the head. Squaids is also hit, but he manages to corner one of the scavengers before their leader makes it down the stairs with the other two. Squaids holds a long carving knife, he's surrounded by followers, and they've got this guy backed up against the wall. "Tell him to hold his fire. I want half of this building." he says quietly. The guy shudders and complies: "Durk - don't shoot!" he shouts. "They only want half!"

Durk, a massive man with a shaved head and scars all over his face, looks at Squaids with scorn. "Do you realize who you're fucking with?" he asks. There is a large solid black triangle tattooed on his chest. "I can have a squad of backup here in one hot minute. This is Pyramid turf you're standing on." Squaids stares right back at him, gesturing with the knife toward the bloody mess on the ground beside him. "Right now we outnumber you three to one" he says.

Durk considers his options. He looks at his fallen comrade, then at the body of the fallen cultist. "That's one for one" he says. He looks up at the building and then back at Squaids. "Alright, fifty-fifty. This building ONLY. And then you move on, clear the fuck out of our turf."

"You agree to retain a truce as we withdraw?" Squaids says. Durk spits in his palm and they shake hands.

The two groups of uneasy accomplices continue their search of the building together. No weapons are drawn. The loot is divided fifty-fifty. The cultists' take is half of a first aid kit, a little food, and a box of CDs. The scavenger unit wraps up their fallen comrade and carries the body north toward the Black Pyramid. The cultists leave the apartment building only after slicing up Snake's body and heaving the meat into a carrier. No sense wasting it.

CUT TO INFIRMARY INTERIOR. Elrond gets back on his feet. He stands there, blood pouring down his face. At about this time Dodge and Tulu can be heard banging on the infirmary doors. Dip glances out and reports to Dez: they're carrying the big guy. Dez is furious. "YOU can stay" she says to Joel. "But HE" - pointing in the direction of George - "cannot. And HE" - pointing at Elrond - "has to leave my infirmary. NOW."

Elrond suddenly lunges himself at Dez one more time, screaming something in Russian. Joel runs to restrain him while Shig tries to grab his arm. Dip casually whips out the narcostab she retrieved earlier and shoves it into his chest. Elrond goes down again.

While Shig and Mox strap Elrond into the bed, Dez goes to the front doors and opens them for Dodge. He is accompanied by Tulu, and together they drag George in and lay him down on the floor. There's blood and mud EVERYWHERE. Dez is looking at Tulu, who's also bleeding but not critically wounded. George is making gurgling noises. Joel kneels at his side. "What a mess George made of everything" he thinks. "He's out of his fucking mind and he's going to get us all killed."

Dez is resolute. "He can't stay here and I'm not treating him" she says.

George looks up at Joel with his one unswollen eye, trying to speak. He gathers his strength and fumbles weakly at the hewn shank weapon at his side. Joel kneels closer. "Kill me..." George says.

Joel takes the weapon from George's trembling hands. He raises it. Nobody says anything. "You were like a brother to me" Joel says, as the wicked blade slices across his vaultmate's throat.

As the camera draws back on the bloody scene, the sound of motorcycle engines can be heard approaching.

## SESSION 4: THE GANGS ALL HERE

*A NEW CHARACTER will be introduced this session: Silas the Gunlugger, a wandering mercenary and friend of Dodge's who recently got back in town.*

### UPDATES & EXPOSITION:

**George** (Vault Dweller) – As George is passing into the great beyond, he sees a vision of the Las Vegas Valley as a watercolor painting, swirling and bulging. The colors are all clashing against each other. Things are about to get very bad here. He feels his consciousness pulled apart, and his last thought is of his vault-brother Joel. He looks straight into Joel's eyes as his soul departs.

**Joel** (Vault Dweller) - Joel feels a strange sensation in his head as George's body goes limp. He finds the paw from a stuffed giraffe in George's pocket and takes it as a memento.

**Dez** (Angel) – She still hasn't prepared that shipment of medicine for O.G.King. That's important. Golden Gardens is the source of the clean linens used by the infirmary, as well as Dodge's ammunition. She needs to handle this situation and get to work.

**Dodge** (Driver) - Out of the corner of his eye he sees the motorcycle gang approaching the pileup on the road. It's hard to tell exactly how many there are, but he does recognize one of them: a fellow named "Grit" who he's dealt with in the past. He was a pretty easygoing guy, it seemed.

**Dip** (Ruin Runner) – All this talk of Reapers has got Dip thinking, trying to remember anything useful about their group and culture. All she can remember is that they have a deep hatred for cannibals.

**Tulu** (Brainer) - As George expires on the floor, she feels a tiny little void appear in her subconscious sense of the maelstrom. She don't even have to open her brain to know that there are now only three empty circles in Las Vegas. She also sees the approaching motorcycles, and notices that two of them pull off from the pack and circle around north of the airport.

**Zeke** (Faceless) - Having fallen asleep in the body of a 727 to escape the rain, Zeke wakes up and begins moving back toward the terminal building. He's thinking about the group of Cordies (Cordyceps victims) he saw yesterday, getting rounded up by some gang. It definitely seems there's more Cordies on the east side lately.

**Squads** (Hocus) - He climbs up a roof-access ladder to take a look northward. He sees a lot of activity at the Black Pyramid. Given the vehicles and equipment he sees on the exterior he figures maybe 100 people live in there. He also notices movement and noises in the trees of the Mandalay Jungle, which has overgrown the casino environ and spread all the way into the crumbled walls of the Four Seasons. There's some kind of animal life in there. He continues leading the group southward toward the Silverton Hotel.

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## THE GANGS ALL HERE

WE START WITH SQUADS, who sees the Silverton just a block ahead. He sends the cultists into some nearby buildings to look for food or barterables. They come back empty-handed; seems as though this block has been scavenged recently.

Cookie and the other scouts catch up with the group and report that they looked everywhere, but couldn't find Sorrow or Rabbit. That's two followers gone walking for good. While Cookie is talking, Squads watches a jeep pull out of the Pyramid lot and turn southward. Not safe here. Better stay off the main streets. The cult cuts down a side street and enters the Silverton parking lot from the back.

In the parking lot they find a bare-chested young man dead of a knife wound, and the bodies of the Hubbards piled up in the foyer. He knows of these Hubbards. Slave Traders. He orders the group to begin searching the building.

CUT TO THE INFIRMARY. At the sound of motorcycle engines approaching, everyone looks anxiously at each other, wondering what to do.

Coming in via the back hallway, Zeke sees the group standing around a dead body on the ground. He scans the situation quickly and realizes there is no danger here - the danger is outside. He grabs his gun and joins Dez near the door. "About time you showed up!" she says. "I fall asleep for one hour and you got a dead guy and an angry motorcycle gang?" he retorts.





Tulu is glancing at Zeke. The mask is strange, but the body language seems right. She's not sure, but she's starting to think she's found him.

Joel starts to go back and check on the other vault-dwellers, when Elrond snaps free of the old leather restraints and bounds out of the room, nearly knocking young Joel down as he barrels toward the foyer. Joel gasps "Elrond!" but the old man takes no notice, turning to push his way past Dez and Zeke, who stand between him and the open doors. Dez doesn't want him to escape. She whispers "I want his blood" and Zeke quickly lashes out, strong-arming Elrond and knocking the wind out of him. Elrond goes down again.

Suddenly a series of gunshots is heard from outside. "YO, DEZ!" shouts the biker named Grit. "COME ON

OUT HERE, WE GOT SOME BUSINESS TO DISCUSS!" Dez squares her shoulders and prepares to go outside.



Tulu is freaking out. She's the one who caused all this trouble, and she doesn't want to be handed over to the Reapers. She looks to Dodge and Dip. "You gotta hide me!" she says. They decide to help. Dip leads Dodge and Tulu to her giftshop-bedroom in the south wing. Meanwhile Dez and Zeke head out the main doors and Joel follows cautiously behind them, pausing to grab George's hewn shank blade.

CUT TO DIP'S GIFT SHOP where a concealed panel behind the counter hides her secret stash spot. Before opening the panel, she looks at Tulu. "Can I trust you?" she asks. Tulu looks at the girl, trying to determine how to answer. She decides to use a direct-brain whisper projection. "You can trust me" she says, both mentally and verbally. Dip seems to agree, and relaxes. She opens the secret panel and they all crawl into the hidey hole. She seals it shut behind her and strikes up a lightstick, revealing the contents of the room. Lots of small shimmery objects come into view. "Wow..." whispers Dodge. There's a pile of barter in here no one knew about - not even Dez. "Touch anything and you can leave" says Dip.

Grit

CUT TO THE AIRPORT PARKING LOT. There are 10 bikers here, split into two groups of 5. One group has stopped on the main road and is beginning to clean up the wreckage from earlier. They're maybe 150 feet away. The other group is right here, forming a semicircle outside the infirmary doors. Grit confronts Dez. He gestures toward the pileup on the road. "So what's the story here? You got some answers for me?"

Dez looks him straight in the eye: "No, I don't. You need to answer your own questions."

Grit doesn't like being challenged in front of his squad, least of all by this tiny little woman. He gets off the bike and points his gun at her head. "You got any answers NOW?" Everybody draws their weapons.

Dez stays cool. "Look, I have no idea what happened to your friends, but if you want to receive medical attention next time you have an emergency, you better put that weapon down."

Grit slowly bends his arm at the elbow, pointing the gun into the air. "Well then we'll do it another way. All you gotta do is take us inside, so we can have a little look around."

"Are you wounded? Do you need medical attention?"

"No, but we need to make sure you're not hiding anybody in there. You realize, I got five men dead out here, and I'm not going back to Megadeth empty-handed." He needs to come back with a dead body or a live one. He just doesn't know whose.

All weapons are still drawn. It's a stand-off. No one makes a move. Finally Joel steps up. He's carrying George's shank weapon. "Look," he says, "THIS is what killed your guys. And I just killed the guy who did it."

The squadleader spins to face Joel and shoves the gun barrel into the boy's forehead. "Who is THIS fuck?" he asks Dez. Joel emboldens himself and responds: "I told you. I'm the guy who just killed your enemy."

Grit is starting to feel like he's being messed with, and he doesn't like it. He's chosen his hostage. He laughs as he turns away from Joel, then snaps his fingers and jerks his thumb back toward the kid. The other four bikers rush Joel, grabbing him by the arms and hair.

BACK TO THE HIDEY HOLE. Dodge is interrogating Tulu about her weird abilities. He noticed the way her eyes glazed over when Dip asked about trusting her, and although he's never met a Brainer personally, he has heard of them. He's starting to put two and two together. She covers the gaps in her own story by asking questions about him, Dez, and the airport. "This is our hospital" he tells her. "Dez is the doctor, and me and Zeke just do whatever needs done." Tulu's eyes narrow. "Did you say 'Zeke'?" she asks. "Yeah the big guy out there? With the mask? Wait... Do you know him?"

Tulu nods, remembering. That's the name. Zeke is the man who saved her from the Blessed Lamb cult all those years ago; the slave who told her he'd see her in Vegas one day. "I've been looking for him... for a long long time..." she says. She's finally found him. She stares at Dodge in the dimness, her eyes wide, head slowly nodding.

Dip breaks the awkward silence: "Hey, anybody hungry? I got some candy bars."

BACK TO THE SILVERTON HOTEL. Squaids and his group are completing their search of the filthy building. Nothing to eat, but so far they've dug up some books, a bottle of 19 mystery pills (homebrew pharmaceuticals), and the ledger in which all the Hubbards' business deals were recorded. Looks like the Hubbards sold slaves to the Eastside Raiders some time in the past. There's only one entry left unbalanced, and it's the last line in the book: a shipment of 18 slaves due to someone called "BrightEyes". Regular customer. 12 barter on delivery. Lucrative business.

Squaids opens his brain to the psychic maelstrom, and the knowledge crashes instantaneously into his mind. BrightEyes. The Shining Silver Eyes. The Voice That Said "We Seek The Same Thing." These are all one and the same. He knows that her power - for she is definitely female - is immense. Her voice in the maelstrom, more clear than any other he's heard. And he knows she can be found on the east side of town, north of the airport they call "the infirmary". Then the vision is over, suddenly as it began.

Some of the cultists come downstairs to report. They've found six people chained to the walls in a small room, where they've been kept for days without food. The stench is foetid. The unfortunate slaves can barely speak. They're covered in their own urine and feces, and surrounded by the decaying bodies of other victims. Squaids orders the cultists to undo their shackles, as he wonders what price they'd bring on the market. If he can get the same rate the Hubbards got, that would be 4 easy barter. Gotta clean them up first, though, he thinks. Maybe get some food into them. The infirmary.

BACK TO THE PARKING LOT. Zeke has had enough. First they point a gun at Dez, then they point their guns at him, and now they're gonna take this kid? Zeke decides - OH YEAAAAH - to make these fuckers stop what they're doing. The massive faceless hurls himself toward the bikers who are now dragging Joel off to the side, smashing into them like a giant human bowling ball. Bikers go tumbling everywhere. Grit begins cussing out his men, kicking them and losing his cool. Dez steps forward and again tells him he better leave the infirmary post-haste.

Joel, who has miraculously kept his feet, steps to one side and turns to face Grit. "Call them off!" he says. "I'm telling you the truth -" but that's all he gets out as a bullet hits him in the back. There's a sniper on the roof. Joel winces in pain and falls to his knees. The bikers on the road take cover and draw their weapons.

Dez decides to try a different tactic. Hurredly doffing her labcoat, she tugs at the fabric of her tight shirt to accentuate her figure, which is seriously, unbelievably, hot. "Ok now, don't you think we can all sit down and talk about this?"

Grit literally stops speaking mid-sentence as his eyes take in Dez' beautiful form. Very few people have seen her without that bulky lab coat. He looks lasciviously down her body and back up again. He is about to say something when a second shot rings out; the sniper's bullet hits Dez in the shoulder. She falls to the ground.

Zeke leaps at Grit, seizing the man from behind and pinning both his arms to his sides. He lifts the helpless squadleader off the ground and shouts loudly: "IF ONE MORE SHOT IS FIRED, I BREAK HIS NECK!" [With this awesome move, he levels up. You'll find out what he chose soon enough.]

Zeke holds Grit tight; the biker cannot escape. There is a tense moment as everyone freezes, eyeballs quickly darting around. Grit, terrified, calls out: "Hold your fire! Please! You guys! Don't let them kill me!" and a wet stain begins spreading down the front of his pants. From out in the parking lot, somebody laughs and points. Then another. Suddenly a third shot rings out - and Grit's body goes limp in Zeke's arms. A neat hole leaks blood down the side of his biker head.

Zeke looks up at the gang, doing quick tactical calculations. But he's not ready for what happens next. Grit's second in command, a bushy guy with a black bandana, steps up with his weapon down. He says "You'll have no trouble from



Mental

us. Grit always was a pussy." Zeke sets the body down, staring at the man quizzically. "My name's Mental" he says. Then he turns to the rest of the gang and waves them all in. "Come on boys, the time has come!"

The road crew comes in, bringing their bikes and those of the fallen. They holster their weapons and keep their hands visible, almost like this whole thing was planned. Introductions are made all around. Some of these guys address Zeke as "Sir". He's still a little incredulous. Mental says "I know you think we ride all tight & shit, well, that used to be true, but we've been talking about breaking off to form our own gang for a while now. I don't know exactly what you've got going on here, but I know that nobody fucks with Airport. So, the way I figure it, you've got what it takes to stand up to Megadeth. And we want to stand with you."

BACK TO THE HIDEY HOLE. It sounds like the gunfire has ceased. Tulu opens her brain and reads the vicinity. Her vision assures her that there's no threat here, but just as it's ending she suddenly feels her worst fear - as someone or something grabs her from behind, placing one hand over her mouth, seizing her and pulling her into the darkness. Then it's over. She takes a few breaths to calm herself. "It's okay" she says.

Dip opens up the panel and the three of them go back to the terminal lobby.

AIRPORT INTERIOR. The threat abated, Dez and Joel have moved back inside, and Dez is tending their wounds. Everyone else follows them, and they all find places to sit or stand in a big loose circle.

Mental breaks out a baggie of homegrown roadweed and starts passing out handrolled numbers as he begins explaining a bit of Reaper history. "See... Megadeth has been blowing chunks for over a YEAR, man. First that fat fucker gets us kicked out of LA - lots of us still have family back there, homez - but if we show our colors out there we'll be hunted down by Anthropol Industries. All because Megadeth had the brillo idea to steal back some slaves we sold em. And failed, massively. Lost nine men that day. Corporate Hits out on all our heads. That's why we came to Vegas and merged up with the Eastside Raiders. We had no choice, you know? But as if that wasn't bad enough, now he's losing turf to the Gardens - we're losing riders every month. That's why me and the squad started talking about splitting off soon as we got the chance. We all agreed on this - except for Grit." He looks out at Grit's body, still laying in the parking lot. "Problem solved" he says.

Tulu approaches Zeke. The masked man towers over her small form. "Zeke?" she asks. "Do you remember me?" Her voice is southern, lilting, somewhat familiar. He looks at her face. She was just a girl then, but... Yes, he remembers. This girl had been kidnapped by the Blessed Lambs - the same cult that brainwashed most of his own family and treated him as a slave - and he'd risked his own life to set her free. He saw what they'd done to her parents, what they planned to do to her... There would be no brains in her skull when they were done. He did what he had to do, and he was forced to go on the run himself. Long time ago. "But how... Why did you come here?" Tulu looks surprised at the question. "You said 'I'll see you in Vegas'" she says. "Well... Here I am!"



Mental trades Dez about an ounce of roadweed for some chillstabs. Meanwhile, the sniper and his spotter pull their bikes around the front of the building and enter the terminal. The sniper - a tall thin ginger with a mean machine - is introduced as "Red Jesus". The other guy - Dodge is startled to hear his voice - is a guy named Silas, a gunlugger Dodge has worked with on several occasions. It's time for a reunion. "Holy shit Silas - you're running with a bike gang now?" Dodge and Silas fist-bump each other. "Nah, I'm still a free agent. But Jesus asked me to come along and play spotter. We go way back. He said something interesting was gonna happen... it did."

Red Jesus nods in agreement, but says nothing and doesn't remove his shades. If anyone's waiting for him to apologize for shooting them, they'll be waiting a long time.

About twenty minutes later, Squaids and his cult approach the infirmary from the north. Seeing nothing out front but a bunch of motorcycles, they come down the drop-off road and enter the terminal doors. The airport group looks up at this new bunch of stragglers. They're led by a tall hooded figure, who carries a roadsign covered in mushroom-like glyphs. "We have some need of your services" he says. "Who is in charge here?"

Dez rises and raises her hand. "That would be me" she says. Squaids goes over to negotiate with her, while Dez checks out his group. They look filthy. Some of them appear stoned. More than a few exhibit the discolored underarms of first- and second-stage Cordyceps infection. There are six seriously emaciated ones among them, almost carried by those around them. "You have anything to pay with?" she asks. Squaids offers her the first aid kit and some CDs. He'd like to stay here for a little while, so he's considering offering her the gun as well.

Meanwhile, Tulu is staring at Squaids. He notices this, and looks back at her. As their eyes meet, it suddenly occurs to both of them that they've met before - even exchanged secrets with each other - in the whorls of the psychic maelstrom. They keep glancing at each other even as the negotiations continue, each growing increasingly aware that the other one knows it too.

Zeke is having a realization of his own: Some of these cultists look familiar. These are the fuckers who jumped him on the road north of Vegas last year, then ran off after taking a beating they weren't ready for, leaving his face a disgusting mass of slashed flesh and gushing blood. "NO" he says. Dez and Squaids look up. "I beg your pardon?" says Squaids. Zeke strides up and puts his face right in front of Squaids' own. He removes his mask, saying "You did THIS to me." Squaids remains stoic. Tulu looks at Zeke's horribly maimed face and gasps. Zeke replaces the mask. "You're not getting ANY kind of service here."

Squaids looks at Dez, who says nothing, and then back at Zeke. "I assure you that whatever happened to you had nothing to do with me personally. However if some of my followers have mistreated you, then I understand your anger. I'll tell you what;" he says, lowering his voice: "You point out the ones you say attacked you, and you can have them."

Zeke is understandably opposed to slavery: "I don't own people," he says, "so what the hell would I want with them?"

"You could sell them for fair market value, you could kill them, frankly I don't care what you do with them." says Squaids. "Their fate would be yours to decide."

That's some cold shit right there. Zeke doesn't know what to say. He's actually considering this. Dez and Squaids are both looking at him, waiting for his answer. Tulu glides up between Dez and Zeke and whispers a single word: "Cannibals".

This sets Dez off again. "You're a fucking cannibal cult!? You better get out of here now, you hear me? I'm not going to let your kind endanger anyone in this infirmary." At the mention of the word "cannibal" Joel looks up, startled. "What the hell kind of world is this?" he thinks. His shoulder is throbbing. "Why did I ever leave the vault?" Zeke's gang also looks up, hands inching toward their weapons.

Squaids is in a tough spot. If he gets these Hubbard-slaves fixed up a little bit, he can make some serious barter. He needs a place for his group in the infirmary for maybe a week, he figures. He also wants to stay near this mysterious Tulu person. He decides to lie. "You think we're a cannibal cult? No no, we are a mycophagious order; we partake of the sacred mushroom." He's not sure they're buying it. He lays it on thicker. "Certainly you understand that times are hard, and while some - only a few mind you - may have on one occasion fallen lapse in their morals and partaken of human flesh, I assure you that it is in no way a tenet of my order."

This bullshit actually seems to be working. Zeke narrows his eyes and makes a counter-offer. "You kick out those who eat human flesh - right out to the street, right the fuck now - AND you give me the attackers. Then you can stay for a week. ONE week." He glances at Dez, who stays mum. She's letting him drive this one.

Squaids agrees.

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*As the session closes, we catch a brief shot of Elrond. He's squatting in an abandoned van somewhere beyond the airport perimeter, muttering to himself, and reading his compass. The word he keeps muttering is "Joel..."*



## SESSION 5: A MEETING OF MINDS

*Joel is in the infirmary room with Wren, who remains under sedation. Silas is sleeping off a round of hard drinking in an upstairs office in Terminal 1.*

### UPDATES & EXPOSITION:

**Squads** (Hocus) – In keeping with his promise to Zeke, Squads selects six members of his cult to send away. He separates them from the others. “Your loyalty is especially strong,” he tells them, “and I have a special mission for you: a spiritual journey”. He explains that they are to go out and scout for signs of BrightEyes, locate her and make a pilgrimage to her location. He tells them that he will contact them when the time comes, and that they are to stay away from Airport. The six cultists nod in agreement, honored to be sent on a special mission. They gather their things and leave, heading north.

Meanwhile, the Hubbard slaves have regained their strength enough to start talking. It turns out that they’re refugees from Los Angeles, on the run from slavers who work for Anthropos Industries. The corporation has expanded their Southern California operations all the way into what once was Orange County, and these refugees have knowledge of the terrain between here and LA. Squads reconsiders his plan. He decides he won’t sell these people after all. Instead, he begins trying to convert them. His initial efforts are not successful, but he remains hopeful at the prospect of new followers.

**Dez** (Angel) - As soon as things calmed down a bit, she sent Dodge and Zeke up to Golden Gardens, where they made the dropoff. OG King wasn’t pissed, they were only an hour late and he seemed preoccupied. The pair got back safe a couple hours later, bearing a trunk full of fresh linens and ammo. All good. Later that day Vision and Jak came by from Phoenix Farms and dropped off a load of vegetables as barter for this month’s medical services. For the extra trouble of tending to his son, Vision also slipped in a pound of bacon. Dez hid that package from the others, keeping it cold in a secret minifridge upstairs.

Though the day turned out okay, Dez can’t shake a sense of depression gripping her. She’s starting to realize just how many people depend on her, and how easy it would be for something – like a gang war, for instance - to destroy all the progress she’s made. Hell, it almost happened this afternoon, and that was just a tiny firefight. She knows Shig and Mox try their best, but Shig plans to leave Vegas and become a farmer one day, and Mox is too ditzy to run Airport. Neither is capable of stepping up any more than they already have. This is a problem. She needs to find another Angel.

**Dip** (Ruin Runner) – Dip isn’t so sure how she feels about all these newcomers - the vault people, the bikers, the cultists, and the mysterious Madame Tulu - but she holds her tongue and watches carefully. She’s the only person here who hasn’t been wounded yet, and she wants to keep it that way.

**Tulu** (Brainer) – Tulu spent a couple days resting, not really doing much except for some quiet conversation and keeping an eye on Squads, whom she hasn’t yet figured out. She’s decided that she likes it here at Airport and she wants to stay – this place seems more like a “family” than anything she’s known for years - but she isn’t sure whether the others will accept her. She decides to talk to Zeke about it.

**Dodge** (Driver) - After pounding back some hard grain alcohol with Silas, Dodge drove Zeke up to Golden Gardens to make the trade. As he waited in the car he was eyed suspiciously by a nearby group of G.G. thugs the whole time, but he also managed to overhear their conversation: they were talking about preparations for the monthly open market called “First Friday” – the day after tomorrow. Looking around casually, he noted a platform-mounted machinegun on either side of the tower overlooking the market area, as well as a potential escape route from the marketplace: a haphazardly-secured parking area beneath the north tower, leading out onto Desert Inn. Then Zeke returned with the goods, and they hightailed it back to Airport.

**Zeke** (Faceless) – With the help of his new gang “The Triggerheads”, Zeke learns what he can about the Reapers’ hold. They’ve taken over the UNLV campus, and they’re all over it. Everybody has their own room or building. There are about 100 members and maybe 30 slaves. The Reapers treat their slaves well; they consider themselves sort of an extended family. They hate cannibals and kill them without hesitation. There are defenses and booby traps all over the campus, which are moved frequently due to paranoia and indecision. Megadeth’s prize possession is an operational Browning M2HB tripod-mounted machine gun. Some of the top names in the Reaper camp are: Megadeth (The Leader), Head (Mechanic), Beer (Security) and Tequila (Gang Girl).

Mental then drops a bomb on Zeke: He wants to go back to UNLV and get Tequila. Says he can’t leave her there. And he says if Zeke lets him go get her, she’ll bring all her girlfriends with her. Zeke refuses. “The only time I’ll be heading up into that campus is the time I’m ready to take Megadeth OUT,” he says. “Not before then.”

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## THE GANGS ALL HERE

### INFIRMARY DOWNSTAIRS.

With all these new people coming and going, Dez feels it's time everyone got on the same page. She calls a round table meeting and lays down some ground rules. "There will be no weapons inside Terminal 1, except for my own security staff" she says. The Triggerheads are dismayed at this. They don't like the idea of being disarmed, and start to shout their resistance. Zeke uses his Pack Alpha status to shut them up. They go outside to work on their bikes. After some discussion, Zeke and Dez decide that the gang will move their base of operations across the street to Terminal 3, and will help patrol the perimeter on a regular basis. They can do what they want on the other side of the road and while out on patrol, but they'll need to check their weapons before entering Terminal 1. Squaids and his remaining cultists, meanwhile, will be allowed to set up camp in the Cinnabon shop upstairs.

Dodge isn't so sure about having one of those "Brainers" around. Tulu seems nice enough, but as everybody knows, Brainers can read people's minds. It's creepy, to say the least. He's even heard tales of Brainers making people do things against their will, using some kind of psychic mind control. This makes him uncomfortable, but he says nothing. Instead, he tells the group about First Friday, and what he overheard at Golden Gardens. The thugs said something about "a lot of fresh trash coming in from Cali", which probably means slaves. Which means slave traders.

Dez realizes that with the Hubbards taken out, the power vacuum that has been left will attract even more slavers, and at a moment when Anthropos is already making aggressive moves toward expanding their powerbase in the southwest. If Anthropos slavers get a foothold in Vegas, that will be the beginning of the end. She begins to formulate a plan, and tells the group that she will no longer provide any services for anyone who buys or sells slaves. Furthermore, she plans to contact King, Vision, and all nearby hardholds and settlements, to try and get local solidarity on this important decision. It doesn't sound like an easy task. But there is no disagreement.

Recognizing that he needs to earn his keep if he plans on staying for any length of time, Squaids volunteers his cultists to assist in securing the Airport perimeter. They'll be paired up with Triggerheads, riding in the available sidecars. Zeke and Squaids begin planning the patrol schedule together. The meeting is adjourned.

### CUT TO ZEKE'S ROOM.

After the meeting, Zeke and Tulu find some time to talk privately. He asks why she came all this way to find him, and her response is childishly simple: "You said 'I'll see you in Vegas' – so, here I am!" she says. "Can I stay here with you and your... family?" He remembers this girl; she was young and impressionable when she lost her own family, to the same people who claimed his. He doesn't know what to say. It's not his Airport, after all. He tries opening his brain to the Psychic Maelstrom, but all he gets is a mass of swirling colors and cacophonous sounds, until a whispering voice speaks in his mind: "What are you most ashamed of?" He is stunned but reflexively answers without any hesitation: "My face," he whispers.

The vision is over. Tulu is looking at him expectantly. "Yes, of course you can stay here" he tells her, "but you'll have to clear it with Dez." He doesn't have the heart to tell her that the "Vegas" thing was just a figure of speech.

Suddenly Zeke hears the sound of several motorcycle engines revving up and taking off. He heads outside to find Mental. But Mental is gone. Red Jesus jerks his thumb northward. "Mental, Poptart, Oz, Foster and Cali," he says. "Gone after the girls." Zeke ponders this. "That stupid bastard," he mutters. Red Jesus pats his rifle. "You want I should go take him out?" he asks. It's clear that he'd love to take Mental's place as second in command. "No, let it go," Zeke says. "It will be a lesson for them." He sends Red and some of the guys out to circle the perimeter, just to keep them busy.

### CUT TO DEZ'S ROOM.

Secure in Zeke's support but unsure of her status with everyone else, Tulu decides to approach Dez directly. She finds the Angel sitting on the floor in her room, brooding over the suddenly-chaotic state of things in her infirmary. Everything seems to be spinning out of control. Dez reveals very little of her concerns but Tulu can tell she's stressed, and tries to put her at ease with an in-brain whisper of "Relax". Unfortunately her attempt backfires and Dez reels over, holding her head in pain. She's almost in tears now. Tulu doesn't let on. She calmly strokes Dez's head, massaging her temples and whispering soothingly. Eventually Dez relaxes, although her head is still dully throbbing. "I wanted to ask you if I could stay here," Tulu begins, "I like it here."

Dez straightens up and looks at her, squinting. She feels an affinity for Tulu, perhaps even a little attraction, but the infirmary is not a charity mission. She needs everyone to make some sort of contribution if things are going to keep running. "Listen, we can't just house everyone," she says, slowly removing her coat to display her breathtaking figure. This seems to have the desired effect on the Brainer, who glances at her body coquettishly, and then averts her gaze again. Dez continues: "Everybody here has to have a job, unless they're a patient. So. What would your job be?"

Tulu thinks about this for a moment. There are certain valuable services a Brainer could easily provide, for the right sort of client – like spying, scrying, and manipulating the brains of their enemies - but she doesn't think Dez is that sort of client. She decides to take a less cerebral approach. She slides in closer, pressing herself against Dez as she begins caressing the Angel's shoulders. "I know how hard it is for you," she says, her hands sliding down the Angel's body and embracing her from behind, "and how tense you get, with all your problems and worries..." She puts her lips to Dez' ear and whispers softly, "I can help you relax..."

Dez is not accustomed to such close contact with others, and a shiver runs through her entire body as she falls back into Tulu's arms. She closes her eyes as they begin kissing. Fade to black.

CUT TO INFIRMARY DOWNSTAIRS.

From the road north of the Airport, a single shot is heard. Dodge and Zeke run out to take a look. Several blocks away, they notice a small party of armed strangers taking position behind the rusted hunks of cars on either side of the street. The strangers look like wanderers, their clothes and hair covered with the powdery dust of the Mojave Desert, and they seem to be involved in a stand-off with another group in a nearby alley. Dodge says "Get in the car."

CUT TO ROAD NORTH OF AIRPORT.

Gassing it across the tarmac and out the main gate, Dodge comes closer to the scene of the action. One of the strangers, a tall man with a hunting rifle, pops his head up from behind a car door while keeping most of his body shielded. He shouts "You've already taken one of ours, we're not letting you take another!" Zeke and Dodge look at each other questioningly. The man continues: "We're just passing through. Let us pass and there will be no trouble!" Dodge slows the car and creeps closer, staying in the center of the road. The stranger points the rifle directly at Dodge, saying "I mean it - you stay the fuck back!"

From their current vantage point, Dodge and Zeke can see the opposing force in the alleyway to the north, it's none other than Red Jesus and his men. The Triggerheads are crouching behind cover and trying to line up a good shot. It looks like Slick has been hit; he's grimacing as he ties a makeshift tourniquet around his arm. Zeke addresses the



wanderers: "You must have us confused with someone else," he shouts, "You're in Airport territory. This is an infirmary." Dodge suggests that these may be more refugees from LA. They do look tired and hungry. Zeke calls for the Triggerheads to holster their weapons and fall in. They comply.

The wanderers come out of their hiding spots and the two groups hold a tense détente in the middle of the street. Introductions are made all around. There are five wanderers, three men and two women. They had another woman with them, but she was captured this morning by a group of

armed men on motorcycles who attacked from out of nowhere. The tall man with the rifle is ostensibly the leader, and he introduces himself as Tum. They're on the run from a slaver band who raided their enclave in Orange County, capturing or killing thirty of their friends. "We're the only ones who made it out alive," says Tum. They look like hell. Dodge and Zeke invite the group to come back with them to the infirmary. They agree. Tum turns to Slick and shrugs calmly. "Sorry I shot you, man. It's been a bad day." All the Triggerheads except Slick head off to finish their rounds.

CUT TO AIRPORT INTERIOR.

Zeke and Dodge return to the airport with Slick, Tum and the other wanderers. Shig and Mox help them get comfortable and apply first aid to their wounds, which are fairly minor. As dinner time approaches, Shig heads off to start cooking while Dodge and Zeke talk with the wanderers about what's going on in California. Squaids begins preparing a batch of mycotoxin tea.

The sounds of motorcycle engines are heard again, further off this time. Zeke expects to see Mental come walking in any moment, but that doesn't happen. The sounds continue to be heard for several minutes, and it's difficult to tell which direction they're coming from. Eventually they fade off into the distance. "Reaper scouts," Dodge warns. "We're being reconned."

Dez and Tulu wander back downstairs. Zeke looks at Dez, who seems much more relaxed than she was when he last saw her. "You look like you're glowing," he says. Dez, flustered, straightens her labcoat and opens her mouth, but says nothing. She goes to check on Mox's work.

When Red Jesus and the patrol team get back, they have a strange tale to tell. While turning onto Paradise Road a few minutes ago, they noticed a group of maybe ten Cordies, a little north of their position. It's becoming more and more common to see Cordies on the east side these days, but these specimens were unusual. Unlike typical Stage III Cordyceps victims, who wander around in an aimless and solitary fashion, tumbling out of windows and falling down elevator shafts, these Cordies were all walking in a single file line, their footsteps in perfect sync.

On hearing this, Tulu quickly opens her brain to the psychic maelstrom. The awareness strikes her instantly and without doubt. Her eyes grow wide as she hears her mouth form the words: "Something is calling all the cordies to a single spot."

Squads looks up from his jerry-rigged filtration system. He remembers the whispered words that came to him in a vision the other morning: "You and I want the same thing. Come to me."

BrightEyes.

# # #

*With all the distractions and commotion going on, it will be several hours before anybody realizes that Joel is gone.*