

DEGENESIS



HARM'S WAY



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IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO BE LIED TO,
DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS
IF THERE WERE NO QUESTIONS,
THERE WOULD BE
NO LIES

[B. TRAVEN]

LIAM FOLEY

COMPROMISED

67 hours since Stringer's last transmission. Too long. Far too long. Xerox paced back and forth in his small, hewed out living space, nestled deep in the tunnels of Tech-Central. On every fifth circuit he stopped, adjusted the dial on the radio linking him to his fellow operative and the Cluster, waited a moment, and continued. Checking all of the alternate frequencies, even the ones they had discarded weeks ago for fear they had been compromised. Nothing but dead air.

The Shutter was no stranger to tense situations, but this was the worst yet. Deep behind enemy lines, infiltrating the most powerful Scrapper organization in history, supposedly operated by the legendary Dwarven King, Bosch, himself, with the goal of doing nothing but finding hard evidence for that link. If only the mission had turned out as easy as the briefing – get in, make friends with the dirt-diggers, get one of them to blab. It had been months, and they still had nothing. Xerox's thoughts were interrupted by the blinking red light of the override channel of his radio, only used by the Cluster in the most urgent situations. He tuned in to the channel. "... EMERGENCY BROADCAST-..... OPERATION ABORT..... -NGER BE-

LIEVED CAPTU-...." The signal was patchy, was it being jammed? No matter, the point was clear, he had to get out of there. He had set up his extraction plan weeks ago, all he needed to do was make it to the border of Tech-Central, near the Pollner district of the Tent City. There, he'd disappear underground into the Exit Level.

Suddenly, a pounding knock rang out from the fortified scrap door. The Shutter's head snapped towards the sound. "Jasper? You in there, buddy? It's Altyn, from the scrap market, haven't seen you in a few days..." Xerox's eyes flicked to the security monitor, the thermal camera revealing the tunnel outside. Four figures stood in the dark behind Altyn, skin burning yellow and holding cold blue steel pipes. Not friends. Backup plan. He pulled an E-Cube from the rack on the wall and worked quickly, jamming a wedge into its circuits, bridging the gap between its solid-state crystal elements. It began to spark and smoke instantly, and he tossed it into the tangled web of wires and electronics that was his workstation here. Grabbing only the bare essentials, he pulled aside a scrap sheet and began to climb his backup tunnel, reaching the surface through a hatch hidden behind a pile of debris.

On the surface, after brushing the dirt from his clothes, he began to hurry through the throng of Scrappers towards the edge of the district, patching together something of a disguise on the way. A low-brimmed hat swiped from a passerby's backpack, a ragged cloth hanging out to dry turned into a cloak, grease palmed from a workbench and smeared on his face to obscure the seam of the patch covering his barcode, and he was all but impossible to distinguish from any of the muckrakers. Closing in on his destination, he turned onto the last street before the Exit, and was immediately confronted by a trio of burly Scrappers. He scanned them with quick glances, recognising them all as confirmed Cartel thugs. One of them stepped forward, holding his hand out to stop the disguised Chronicler in his tracks. "Hold it pal, this way is closed."

Xerox cleared his throat, trying to remain calm, even if his heart was pounding so hard he was sure the brute would hear it. "C'mon, I gotta get through, my, uh, mother lives on this street and she's sick, you can't tell me you're gonna stop me from helping her!"

"Look, there's nothing I can do, I have t'follow orders. We'll open it up in an hour, come back then."

The Shutter sighed. "...Alright then." He surged forward, burying his pinky finger in the muscled Scrapper's gut. His overcharged Streamer Glove sparked to life, delivering a brutal shock to the thug who slowly toppled over. Before the other two had a chance to react, Xerox was off, sprinting down the street. The others shouted after him, but they reacted too slowly; he was already well out of their grasp. Only a few more seconds until he reached the Exit, only a few more steps!

He heard the gunshot before he felt it, as the world tumbled down around him. Everything went numb for a few moments, the bustle of Tech-Central fading into a senseless mumble. He looked down. His leg hung limp, knee shattered by the bullet, everything red. A sigh rattled through his lungs as he attempted to drag himself a little bit closer to salvation, but his arms failed him. Out of time, out of luck. One last thought filled his mind; "Damn dirt diggers..."

Steps from behind. A figure approached, gun in hand, and crouched down next to the crippled Chronicler. Xerox looked up into Altyn's face. "Sorry, buddy." Then the pain arrived, and his consciousness left.

harm's Way

Justitian. The Moloch. The focal point of European civilization, and the strongest foothold humanity has managed to regain in this harsh world. The bustling metropolis spreads its borders wider and wider, its main corpus already tens of kilometers in diameter, and surrounds itself with a protective ring of farms that is itself another hundred kilometers across. It is impossible not to feel the influence of the city, and millions call it home.

On the surface, the distribution of power is clear. The Judges are the rulers of this land, riding out on their horses to beat back savages and criminals alike, hammering the law into the people to ensure their safety. By their side stand the Spitalians and Chroniclers, each providing their own services to the populace. Then, there's everyone else, struggling to make it by, eking out a life by whatever means they can muster. "At least we're safe!" they say, while they cower in fear of the Judgement hammer, waiting in line for a hygienic checkup, under the omnipresent gaze of the Cluster's all-seeing eye.

Scrape away the delicate, gilded layer coating the city, however, and a far different story reveals itself. While the Judges may claim to have Justitian under control, and the Chroniclers might screech their assertions of having the entire city modeled in their predictive algorithms, the Carrion Birds and the Cartel have the metropolis in the palms of their hands. The colossal crime syndicates have extended their influence into every vice and sin Downtown has to offer, dividing it up between them. An immeasurable volume of Drafts flows through their coffers every year, and as the city grows, so too do their profits. The Apocalyptic Flock caters to the pleasures of the flesh, with renowned brothels and bars peppering their district of Eastside, while the Scrapper gang specialises in dangerous, brutal pit fights – officially outlawed, and yet one of the most highly anticipated events in all of Justitian.

With both the Carrion Birds and the Cartel attempting to attract the same clientele, competition between the two is inevitable. However, with the Judges looming overhead ready to punish each of them at the first sign of a slip-up, the pair has settled into an uneasy symbiosis, each one using the other to clean up after their crimes. An Apocalyptic murdered a Spitalian? Get the body down to Tech-Central and it'll be dealt with. A Protector has been getting nosy about the pit fights? Set some Battle Crows on his wife, he'll learn when to turn a blind eye. Neither side of this arrangement ever learns the full story of whatever problem is being dealt with, but both end up satisfied in the end.

Even within each organization there are hierarchies of information – every member only knows exactly what they need to know, and not a single iota more, to ensure that every failure is contained to only a few individuals. At the lowest level of these syndicates languish the lackeys who simply do whatever they're told, without asking why. For most of them, being asked to dabble in unsavory acts in exchange for a months pay at their day job is well worth the secrecy.



BREAKDOWN

HARM'S WAY is a one-shot scenario which takes a small team of adventurers from the outskirts of Justitian all the way through the Rubble to the neighboring town of Harm acting as a hired delivery squad for the Carrion Birds Flock, transporting an unsavory package on the criminal organization's behalf. It is intended to function as a short, sharp introduction for a group of new Players, allowing them to come to understand the power dynamics of the city through a simple narrative that includes a series of hooks that easily lead to further

adventures. However, the story can also be extracted and used by Game Masters as a brief interlude for a series of more experienced characters, which can be tied into an ongoing campaign.

Four characters are presented as pre-made options for Players who want to jump straight into the adventure, with existing ties to Justitian's population, and goals and motivations of their own, however other characters can easily be integrated – the Carrion Birds will recruit the operatives for this mission from any corner of Justitian's

society, with the intent of ensuring as few connections as possible can be drawn back to the Flock in the event of a failure.

After the end of their journey, the group may decide to continue on together, choosing to work their way into the Carrion Birds by carrying out more tasks for them, or, if they realise the true nature of the package they're carrying, they might decide to take a different route and begin uncovering the mystery of its origin, leading them into the murky swamps of Justitian's underground.

DIRTY WORK

In all of Justitian, there are few groups that hate each other more than the Chroniclers and the Cartel. The tension in the air is obvious to anyone when the representatives of the pair meet. The Cartel's Appraisers crowd around valuable artifacts before the Chronicler Agents can make an offer, and even after one is made the Scrapppers laugh it off for being insultingly low. The Cluster constantly tries to erect its megaphone poles in Tech-Central and establish Alcoves closer and closer to the tangled mass of tunnels and streets, and time and again they are knocked down, vandalised, or burned. Despite the uneasy atmosphere, a full-on conflict would be impossible from either side – Bosch, the Cartel's leader, can't be eliminated without causing the entire city's economy to collapse overnight due to his immense wealth, and not even the Cartel has the manpower to wage war on the Chroniclers, who would simply fall back on the Judges and Spitalians for aid. As such, the two sides of the divide restrain themselves to more subtle operations; Scrapppers hack into Chronicler communications, cut power to Alcoves, and undercut artifact sales, while the Cluster sends covert operatives to sneak into the gang, lobbies the Judges to impose curfews and regulations, and places embargos on leading figures.

This tense back-and-forth has gone on for years, steadily escalating as the Chroniclers begin to realise the true danger of the Cartel, one they've allowed to fester

right under their noses for far too long. However, the latest exchange has ended disastrously for the Tech Cult, as two of their Shutters tasked with infiltrating the Cartel were detected and captured despite the Cluster exercising its highest level of discretion. Neither of the operatives survived the encounter, with the first taking up permanent residence embedded in the concrete wall of the basement of a bar in Downtown. The second was hunted down just days after his partner and tortured to the brink of death to extract what little additional information he could provide, before being put out of his misery. From there, the Cartel handed the corpse off to Hector, the Carrion Birds' Woodpecker and public face, and washed their hands of the situation.

Meanwhile in Eastside, on the other side of the city, Hector was already making arrangements for disposal of the fresh body. A few well placed and discreet words to the right people and it was settled – the expansive pig farms of Harm, a nearby town and one of Justitian's primary food suppliers, would ensure that no one found the corpse by feeding it to the thousands of animals clogging up the pens. Simple, clean, and it would leave no evidence, just what was needed. The rest he left up to one of his subordinates, a Carrion Bird named Wicker, who secured the donkey and cart for transporting the body to Harm, and began the process of recruiting a suitable delivery team...

The Characters



UNSAVORY CONNECTIONS

Throughout his year of trials, Vesper has managed to develop his own web of friendships and connections amidst the dingy backstreets of Justitian, and has become adept at striking up conversations and relations. He adds +1D to all rolls related to friendly social interaction.



AUTHORITY

Justitian belongs to the Judges. Anyone wearing the floppy hat, sunglasses, and long coat is given the respect they're due – or else. Etta adds +1D to rolls made while exerting her authority in or around Justitian when she is wearing her Judicial outfit.

VESPER

It's been a full year since Vesper was finally allowed to join the hallowed Flock, the most powerful criminal organisation in all of Europe, with a heritage stretching back centuries; the Carrion Birds. One full year of mockery and degradation, languishing with the most humiliating tasks and punishments. "Go clean up after the Magpies!", "I lost my good knife down the latrine, go dig it out for me!", "One of our food stores went bad, everything in there has rotted, go gather up all of the mess and dump it in a Defiler Street!"

It wore away at his spirit, pushing him down and down into a pit of shame, even as his supposed brothers and sisters laughed at every sign of weakness. If not for the knowledge that waiting on the other side of these trials was full acceptance into the ranks of the Carrion Birds, his will would have shattered and he'd have been tossed aside without a second thought. There are thousands of potential Finches, just like him, and if he couldn't hack it, another would. This was all just a test, and he refused to fail. No longer would he let himself be kicked around by all of Justitian.

Now, after enduring a year of torture, the time has come for Vesper to finally prove himself. One last task to show his peers that he can be trusted without another Apocalyptic watching over him, that he is capable of succeeding on his own, and that he deserves to be allowed to rise from the bottom of the pile. He won't let anything get between him and his goal.

ETTA

Everything was going fine. She had been sent about as far away from the front lines as it was possible to get, Born, practically paradise compared to the stories of the nightmare at Siege she'd heard from her comrades in the barracks. She'd even managed to strike up a deal with the local Apocalyptics, a Flock called the Blood Birds, to turn a blind eye to their smuggling operation on her shifts, in exchange for a comfortable supply of Unity to help whittle the months away. No one really paid much attention to her trips away from the main village to get high, and the townsfolk of this sleepy lumberyard weren't causing trouble. Then it all went to hell.

First, her cozy spot crumbled when she was recalled to Justitian. No more cushy deal, no more Burn supply – no more Burn in the entire damn city. By the time she arrived at the gates of the sprawling Moloch, she was already feeling withdrawal. Luckily, after spending a few weeks trying to keep clean, she discovered a small operation a little under a day's ride outside of the city, a bunch of Apocalyptics operating from a Provider farm. It was far enough out that the Spitalians weren't too intrusive, but close enough to make it there and back on her off days. Things are looking up, right?

Wrong. Just a few weeks after finding her new supply, a dossier was delivered right to her bunk. Inside: a threat from the Carrion Birds to report her addiction and trips to the Office of Hygienics, and a note demanding she help one of their members with a job. The Judges might turn a blind eye to one of their own indulging in vice, but the doctors would never let it go. No choice but to comply.

MIKA STUKOV

In Justitian, if you aren't a Cultist you're no one. You're just one of the countless blank faces swarming the streets, destined to be nothing more than a speck of dust in the annals of history. Mika wasn't going to let herself end up like that, enduring a dull, uneventful life as some no-name Stukov only to die of old age having never really lived. In that case, the only option was to rise above the rest and join one of the monolithic Cults holding power over the city, and the only question was: which one?

The Judges? Not a chance, she'd been the brunt of their oppressive tendencies long enough to know that it didn't suit her. The Chroniclers? They'd never take anyone old enough to actually want to join, too little time to implant their indoctrination. The Spitalians were just as bad, and far too clean – she wasn't a fan of the bald-headed look anyway. That left one option, and it was an appealing one. Mika had fallen in love with the concept of the Carrion Birds from speaking to the members drifting through the bars of Downtown, listening to them amp each other up with outlandish tales of sticking it to the floppy hats, watching them strut around the streets in defiance of the rules, hearing whispered rumors of their misdeeds and vices in back alleys. It was perfect. Only one problem left: how would she get in?

She started asking, kicking up a fuss, trying to find the right person to talk to. Eventually, she was given her chance. Join an existing member on their mission, don't screw up, make it back in one piece. Simple enough, in theory. Still, she wasn't going to leave it up to chance. She'd call for help.

KIEFER STUKOV

Compared to the vast ocean of people flooding Justitian, the Spitalians are smaller than a droplet. There aren't enough doctors in all of Europe to even hope to administer treatment to every one of the city's inhabitants, and even after restricting their services to only citizens, they're still overworked. As such, they have no choice but to recruit from the very people they treat – the Clanners of the city. These assistants are only trusted with the most menial tasks; applying bandages, checking already treated wounds, or cleaning up after their betters. It's not particularly fulfilling, and the pay is barely enough to live on, but that doesn't matter for Kiefer, because if he proves himself, there's a chance to join the Cult in full. Officially, he missed the recruitment age, but this is his chance.

His sister, Mika, agrees with him on the fact that the Cults are the only way out of the swamp of mediocrity they are trapped in, but their aims couldn't be more different. In Kiefer's eyes, she is simply diving deeper into the muck, partaking in all of the depravity and sin the city has to offer. In contrast, he looks to rise above, to cleanse himself of the degeneracy infesting Downtown, and enter the ranks of those who look out and see the world stretching out before them rather than having their view obscured by a dingy street corner.

However, despite their differences, she is still his sister. He can't forget the ties of family so easily, and so when she asks for help in entering the Carrion Birds, what choice does he have but to grant her request – one last favor, before their paths diverge completely.



TOGETHER AS ONE

In Justitian, the situation couldn't be clearer. There are those who live down below, the common folk, then there are those in Uptown, lording over the rest. Us versus Them. Mika adds +iD to all rolls related to social interactions with denizens of Downtown or the Rubble.



EXPERIENCE THROUGH OSMOSIS

While he is yet to receive any formal training, he has been watching the other Spitalians intensely, picking up what they do and how they talk. He adds +iD to social interactions with the doctors, and +iD to any INT+Medicine rolls he has to make.

ONE DAY TO REMEMBER

JOB OPENING

The characters were hired by a Woodpecker working for the Carrion Birds called Wicker, whether separately or as a group. He was the one who provided them with the cart used to transport the body, along with the donkey used to pull it – “Just bring ‘im back in one piece, awright?” In addition, he provided them with three passwords – Hawk, Sparrow, and Nightingale – one of which would be the correct answer to a corresponding question from their contact in Harm. He refused to give away anything about the body’s origin, simply informing the inquisitive member of the group that they don’t want to know, and that he didn’t even know himself. That sort of knowledge was another step up the chain.

The characters were promised a modest reward, a couple hundred Drafts per head, but the real prize is the influence that comes from helping out the Carrion Birds; their members can be found across all of the Protectorate and beyond, and they have immense power in Justitian. Getting on their good side is never a bad thing.

SCENE 1: JUSTITIAN’S GATE

The year is 2597. The midday Borcan sun shines down on the assembled queue. It’s summer in Justitian, and the heat is relentless. Chatter fills the air from those waiting in line, idle conversations helping to pass the long wait by as they creep forward, closer to the massive construction ahead of them: the Great Northern Wall, rising high above them all. Compared to the overall mass, the gate they’ll soon – hopefully – pass through is but a speck, slowly approaching.

The characters have been here for half an hour already, steadily shuffling towards the security station at the end of the line. The donkey pulling their cart clicks its hooves impatiently, but it has been trained well enough to handle a bit of boredom. They’re on their way out of the city, towards the neighboring town of Harm, on a mission from the largest Apocalyptic Flock in Justitian – the largest in the world. The Carrion Birds themselves have tasked the characters with delivering a package to a contact in Harm, currently wrapped in cloth and hidden beneath a tarp in the cart they have been provided with; a human corpse. They haven’t been told whose, and they haven’t been told why it is being transported to Harm, but they do know one thing: sometimes it’s best to not ask too many questions.

Another step closer to the front of the line, and they can begin to see what waits for them up ahead. The gate splits into two streams, an inlet and an outlet. They can easily see the intense security on the other side of the immense wall, a full squad of Judges and Famulancers ensuring that no undesirable goods or people make it into the city, with the guards being particularly intrusive in their hunt for any Sepsis infestation. However, the contingent watching the outgoing flow is far less intimidating, a bored looking Protector on horseback looks over the line as it stretches back into the streets of the Stukov Quarter, while a single Spitalian casts a glance over any goods before waving them through. Another step.

THE EXIT

The characters approach, their cart’s wheels rattling on the uneven cobblestone of the street. As they come closer, the Spitalian looks up from her clipboard, eyes tracing over the assembled group and their goods. At this distance, anyone familiar with the rank structure of the Cult of Doctors can examine her equipment and quickly realise with a successful INT+Legends(2) roll that this is only an Orderly, with barely any real authority. “Destination?” she asks, in a bored tone. After the answer is given, she scribbles a note on the paper, and looks at the characters’ cart. “Alright, and cargo?” Any suitable excuse will placate her, all she’s interested in is checking off marks on her clipboard and keeping the line moving. “Last one, did you pack your cargo yourself or did anyone else do it for you?” Another simple answer, and they’re on their way, passing through into the vast expanse of the Rubble. Step one, complete.

SCENE 2: TRAVELING ALONG THE FUNNEL ROAD

A moment of darkness as they walk through the colossal wall, thousands of tons of concrete and steel bearing down on them, before they emerge into the world beyond. They have emerged into the Neighborhood of the Providers, the rust-red plain of West Borca replaced by endless parcels of cultivated land, regularly interrupted by small farming villages, looking to an outsider like the picturesque ideal of a rural community. Ahead of the characters, the northern Funnel Road meanders through the district, fenced on both sides and well maintained. This is one of the main arteries that links the outlying towns and settlements of the Rubble with Justitian, the heart of the Protectorate. Hundreds of groups travel these paths every day, and today is no exception – to their left, the characters can see the line for entry stretching a hundred meters or more away from the gate.

Their journey along the path is mostly uneventful, as the Funnel Roads are regularly patrolled by Spitalians and Judges for signs of wrongdoing or danger – these are the safest trails in the Protectorate. The paved surface allows the characters to keep up a good pace, and a quick estimate puts Harm at about 8 hours away. Occasionally, Provider families or other journeymen pass them by, and exchange pleasantries with their fellow travelers.

However, their trip will not be without its surprises. Every hour, the Game Master rolls a D6, and interprets the result as follows. If the die lands on an event that has already occurred, roll again until a new encounter is chosen.

- ◇ On a result of 1, an inconsequential event occurs – a Provider family passes and says hello, the weather changes, a crow flies overhead
- ◇ On a 2, they meet a Juryman walking along the road.
- ◇ On a 3, they come across a chestnut roastery open for business, where they can stock up on some supplies
- ◇ On a 4, a Spitalian Famulancer patrol passes, and performs a cursory inspection.
- ◇ On a 5, their journey is interrupted by a brawling bundle of Providers blocking the flow of traffic
- ◇ On a 6, a Judge passes by who recognises one of the characters, striking up a conversation.

SUBURBIA

The characters may start their journey in the Neighborhood of the Providers, but this idyllic district is nothing but an introduction to the Rubble proper. The route they take cuts straight through the Neighborhood, a far more populated and dense region with its farms and barns closer together, its roads heavily trafficked and patrolled, and its scenery vibrant and alive. After their first hour of walking they will begin to notice the transition, as the Borcan dust begins to take over. The continuous fencing becomes patchwork, then disappears entirely. Out here, only small points of interest break up the empty plain: sparse outcrops of plant life fighting back the dust, farms where the owners have excavated their way down to the fertile soil beneath the surface, and small Provider settlements standing together against the encroaching wasteland. Welcome to the Rubble.

Encounters on the Road

2: A JURYMAN APPROACHES

The Juryman can be recognised by his swagger from a mile away, the easy confidence of someone who knows the might of the Judiciary will back him up if he's ever in trouble. He strolls up to the characters and pompously demands to know their destination and the nature of their cargo. He's not particularly interested in the content of their responses, though – instead, he takes on an even more smug tone as he pulls a scrap of parchment from his coat, flashing it in front of the characters. “New proclamation came in today, Codex update 2597.07 verse 2 gives Jurymen the right to apply a toll on the Funnel Roads to support the war effort. If you folks wanna keep going, I'll be taking 50 Drafts.” The characters have a choice: pay up, or find a way out of it. Should they be allowed to inspect the passage in question, or have heard of it themselves with an INT+Legends (4) roll, they'll be able to quickly discern that the clause only applies to those traveling with carts carrying 200kg or more, a fact which, when pointed out, makes the entire argument crumble. The Juryman isn't particularly mentally fortified, and a strong argument, logical reasoning, or just intimidation will make him back down with an appropriate roll at Difficulty (2).

3: THE SPARROW

The smell of roasted chestnuts fills the air as the characters approach a shabby building at the side of the road, a tiny, open cafe with a bar and a series of stools underneath a corrugated metal roof, along with a small watering pool and some fresh hay for animals nearby. The only decoration visible is a sign hung from a post above the shack, displaying a crude but charming drawing of a sparrow in flight.

At present only one patron is seated at the counter, who introduces himself as Tomasso. He's a Provider traveling into Justitian where he plans to sell his goods at one of the markets, a combination of food harvested from his farm and small works of carpentry – “the snooty lot in Uptown like to seem ‘cultured’ by picking up some ‘rustic’ carvings, the bastards!” he jokes, grinning. The Provider is eager to talk about his day and his life, giving off a cheerful demeanor as he talks about his wife, Tessa, being the real fighter of his family, especially since they plan to start making kids soon enough. The characters can take this opportunity to buy some roasted chestnuts as provisions for the road ahead, just 5 Drafts will buy them enough to stave off hunger for the next few hours. Before they head out on their travels again, Tomasso lets them know that he saw a Chronicler drone flying over his farm this morning, “Probably means they got one of them Observers out and about doing their surveys, keep an eye out, eh?”

4: A SPITALIAN FAMULANCER PATROL APPEARS

They can be spotted from far off, a pair of black figures marching side by side, their dark spears rising up high into the sky. The characters can see them talk briefly to each other as they approach, until they get within speaking distance. One of them flags the traveling party down, announcing his presence with a short, sharp “Halt, you've been selected for testing.” He chooses two of the characters for a routine Sepsis inspection, presenting a small bottle for them to spit into, which will discolor if they are at more than a quarter of their spore infestation maximum. In that case, he will mark their hands with a splash of yellow paint, alerting them to other Spitalians as infested, unless they can convince him otherwise with CHA+Negotiation(3) or another appropriate roll – perhaps the solution has gone off, or they've been recently kissing one of those Magpies down by the Harbor!

OPENING HOURS

The characters will encounter the Sparrow regardless of whether it is rolled or not. However, the roll will determine whether the small roastery is open for business – should the option not be landed on before their first travel period ends, they will simply pass by it shortly before their cart breaks down, seeing the shack with its windows boarded up for the day, and with no one home. Merely a curiosity.

5: THE PROVIDERS

Up ahead, the characters spot a clump of farmers gathered together, creating a small traffic jam as carts and passersby are forced to a halt. Peering through the gathered crowd, they can see that two groups of Providers have descended into an all out brawl, fists and kicks flying back and forth between a handful of burly farmers. They have no time to waste this early into their journey if they plan to make their scheduled delivery, so they have two options: circumnavigate the Funnel Road to avoid the delay and the inevitable Judge intervention that will occur as soon as the altercation is spotted, or wade into the fray and break up the two warring parties.

Looking around, they can see a rough side trail breaking away from the road, which they can follow with an INS+Orienteering (2) roll – the path has lain largely unused in favor of the paved Funnel Road for some time, and the Borcan dust has begun to reclaim it. In parts, the path disappears completely for tens of meters, leaving the characters to guess at the correct course. Eventually it leads them back to the main road, where they can once again be confident of their direction.

If, instead, they decide to try and break up the brawl, they have to assert themselves as the bigger threat with either a show of force or intimidation. A roll of BOD+Force (3) can be used to physically drag the largest fighter away, the shock helping calm the group down, or PSY+Domination (3) to browbeat the farmers into cooling off. Once the characters have managed to deal with the Providers, all that's left is to keep on moving down the road.

6+: A MOUNTED PROTECTOR ARRIVES

The sound of hooves clattering on cobbles breaks the characters from their conversations as a horse approaches. It's obvious that the rider is a Judge, the hat and coat give anyone away. As he gets closer, he exclaims "Hey, I thought it was you! How are you doing?" The travelers share an uneasy look, as one or more of them realise that they know the rider, or have at least interacted with him before. He pulls up next to them, hops down from his mount, and strikes up a conversation. They'll have to divert or get rid of him quick, before he starts asking too many questions.

A FRIENDLY FACE?

The Judge who approaches the party is undefined, and the encounter will play out differently depending on the relationship he has to the characters. It is up to the Game Master to define him with relation to the particular personalities and backstories present in the party, but he isn't out to ruin their day – he might poke and prod a little at their story, but some fast talking and quick wits are all it will take to let him move on; nothing more intense than one or two Difficulty (3) rolls. Even if he senses foul play, it's not worth his time to try and apprehend a gaggle of people wandering along a Funnel Road when there are far more dangerous threats potentially in the area.

Using the premade characters provided, the Judge might be a distant cousin of the Stukov siblings, who found his own way out of Downtown by taking up the hammer. Alternatively, he could be Etta's former instructor before she was sent to Born, who begins to ask after her health and how she has come to be back in Justitian, or someone that Vesper has seen hanging around a bar in Eastside.

As another option, the Game Master might choose one of the Players and allow them to define their character's relationship with the Judge, with a little prompting it will create a recurring NPC that can be used in later adventures, with a strong link to the party.

HIGH TENSION

With fists already flying, the characters wading into the fray have the potential to lead the situation even further down the path of violence. Should their attempts to calm the Providers fail, they will simply be pulled into the fight themselves – by choice, or otherwise, as one of the brawling farmers aims a punch or kick or at them. The battle will continue only until one of the Providers loses half of their Ego Points, or a lethal weapon is drawn. Should one of the fighters be killed, the characters will have two bodies to dispose of, but their contact in Harm has only been paid for one; he's sure to demand additional payment for a second, equal to the amount they would have received as a reward.







STRANDED

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Neither of the options available to the characters are particularly pleasing, but they have little in the way of choice otherwise. However, the characters should be allowed to discuss their strategy, and if they can present an alternative plan they can play it out. Set a short timer on their discussion to keep the tension high; if it runs out, a Judge on horseback patrolling the Funnel Road will pass, spot the group in distress, and trot over to help, at which point he will surely recognise the stench of a decomposing corpse and demand to inspect their goods. At least they can see him coming from far away, giving them ample warning to avoid such a fate.

A CLOSER LOOK

Should the characters take a moment to examine the corpse more closely, an INT+Medicine(3) or INS+Perception(4) roll will allow them to uncover the cause of death. The body is that of a man covered in the marks of violent torture – bruises, cuts, scrapes, and burns all over his flesh – but the fatal injury can be tracked down to a knife wound under the left arm, slicing right into his heart.

SCENE 3: POTHOLES

Four hours have passed since the characters left the gates of Justitian behind; they're about halfway to their destination. It's around mid- to late-afternoon, the bright Borcan sun slowly sinking toward the horizon. They, and their cart, have been traveling in the dry summer heat for almost half of the day, and the inevitable has begun to occur. The corpse, wrapped up in its cloth and tarp, has begun to stink, and it's growing to the point where it has become too much to ignore. Pulling back the top layer, the characters can even see that the formerly pristine fabric covering the body directly has started to discolor. The rotting stench overpowers every breath, and even other travelers have started taking note, turning up their noses and looking away as they pass. None of them speak up or ask questions, whether through politeness or fear of the cause, but the mood radiating from everyone that passes is clear. Not so friendly anymore.

However, shortly after passing the halfway point, the situation goes from bad to worse. As the characters lead the donkey across a particularly rough patch of the road, filled with potholes and divots, one of the cart's wooden wheels breaks with a resounding crack. The animal, startled at the loud sound, immediately begins to panic, dragging the stranded vehicle along the ground as it tries to buck from its harness and escape – an INS+Taming (3) roll is required to calm it down before it breaks the link connecting it to the cart and gallops away. Regardless of the donkey's attitude, the characters are now left with a problem: no more cart.

With the group still at least four hours away from their destination, they need a solution. Two quickly present themselves: digging into the tarp covering the corpse, they find a meat cleaver strapped to the body, with a note attached to the handle reading "For emergencies." The implication is obvious: cut it up into manageable pieces and carry on without the cart. Alternatively, a quick look around reveals that the spot they have broken down in is close to a small farming building, likely owned by one of the Providers living in the area. A large barn beside the building seems to be empty, perhaps the home's occupants are in Justitian for the day? If the characters have managed to keep the donkey attached to the cart and under control, they might be able to drag the broken vehicle over there and replace or repair the wheel. They have little time to choose, though; the day is ticking away, and it's only a matter of time before someone comes by, sees them in trouble, and starts trying to help – potentially getting nosy and discovering the nature of their cargo.

SCENE 4A: BLOODLETTING

If the characters are going to make it to Harm in time for their delivery slot, and before the sun sets completely and the Borcan night closes in, they can't waste time messing about with trying to fix a busted cart. The note attached to the cleaver is right, this is an emergency, and they need to make use of any tools available. A small thicket of brush nearby provides some cover from the road to disguise their actions, and dragging the cart over to it is a simple process even if the whole operation is uncomfortably loud. Waiting until the Funnel Road seems clear, they strip back the tarp, pull out the cleaver, and get to work. Examining the body, they immediately notice an oddity – his scalp has been peeled away, leaving behind nothing but a bloody, bare patch of flesh where a forehead would be. An INT+Legends or PSY+Cunning roll of Difficulty (4), with the Secrets Background added as additional dice, allows a character to piece together the situation: the flayed area is exactly where a Chronicler's barcode or an Anabaptist's tattoo would go. A problem to deal with later.

Chopping up the body is a messy but simple process, at least so it seems at first. Every slice makes blood spray out, and it's impossible to escape some splatter. In addition, carving into a human body is mentally draining – the character holding the cleaver has to succeed in a Mental Defense against a Difficulty of (2) or pay (4) Ego Points to complete the process.

Once the body has been reduced to manageable chunks and stored in various backpacks and sacks, it's on to the next problem: cleaning off the blood. Ahead, further along the Funnel Road, a Spitalian fungicide tank rises from the dusty soil. Normally, its payload is used by the Providers to ensure their parcels of land are purged of Sepsis, but the potent solution within will work just as well to bleach the viscera from the characters' clothing. First, though, they'll need to gain access to the station. Normally they require a special token sold by the doctors in Justitian before they'll dispense their payload, using a sophisticated locking mechanism designed by the Chroniclers. Difficult to overcome, but not impossible. They'll have to either override the security system, with a Combination of AGI+Dexterity (4) and INT+Engineering (4), or they'll have to wait for a Provider to come along, use his token, and let them have some of the solution. The potent chemicals bubble and froth, burning their hands slightly, but it's easy enough to get most of the blood out; enough that a cursory investigation wouldn't spot it, at least. With their problems resolved, it's time to hurry on to Harm.

CLEANUP CREW

It's only a short wait before the characters spot a suitable target to haggle some solution from. They see a Provider waddling up to the dispenser, struggling to maneuver the large, empty bucket he is carrying. Accosting him, they can bargain for some of the cleansing fluid, but they have to be careful; they're all covered in blood, and he's immediately suspicious. With a CHA+Conduct or PSY+Deception (3) roll, they can concoct a suitable excuse and make an offer on some of the liquid. He'll sell them enough to clean their clothes, but for no less than 50 Drafts; he can't just give away too much, or the Spitalians will take away his parcel and give it to some other Provider who can properly apply the fungicides.



FASTTALK

With the Provider woman suspicious of the contents of their cart, the characters will need to think quickly – only a good excuse will calm the woman down. Many options are possible, and the Players should be prompted based on their character's backstory and speciality. With a confident enough tone and solid enough justification, she'll accept most answers; a shipment of meat from Harm was found to be spore infested, they're taking the animal's body back to have it inspected and track down the source, or perhaps it's simply a bundle of plants that react poorly to heat, giving off noxious vapors that just happen to smell like a rotting human corpse. A Difficulty (3) roll of an appropriate Skill is needed, with potential dice bonuses depending on the completeness of their explanation. If the characters have met Tomasso and draw the link to this being his wife, they can reduce the Difficulty to (2) by mentioning him.

SCENE 4B: BREAKING AND ENTERING

At a glance, the nearby Provider farm appears to be deserted for now. There are obvious signs of a cart normally taking up space inside of the barn, however the tracks leading out towards the Funnel Road make it clear that it was taken somewhere else recently – perhaps into Justitian, so the owner can sell his goods. The characters can drag their own cart over to it with a little effort, the broken wheel cutting a trench into the dust behind them.

Getting their cart inside and getting to work, they can quickly estimate that it will take about an hour to fashion a patchwork repair for the wheel. There are plenty of resources in the barn, and the tools are enough to get it moving again – a better equipped station would lead to a more complete repair, but it will at least last them until they reach Harm. No roll is required to fix the cart, simply an investment of time. In addition, they can find a few resources to help them on their journey: a set of large farming hats and a token for a water dispenser in the Rubble. As they work, though, they are interrupted by a loud clatter from the entrance of the barn. A woman has arrived, holding a length of steel pipe like a bat and with fury on her face. "Right, then, what's all this? Who the fuck are you lot?!"

The Provider woman is Tessa, the wife of the owner of the farm, who is out for the day. She demands to know what they're doing here, and is relentless in her questioning – to her, a group of hoologans has broken into her property and started stealing her tools. Could these be the "roaches" she's heard so much about? Or what about those weird pale people who broke into the house a mile up the road a month back! She steadily works herself up into a paranoid frenzy, unless the characters can calm her down. A CHA+Expression or CHA+Negotiation (2) roll is needed to explain that they are simply travelers, not any sort of savages, but then she becomes suspicious of the overbearing smell of death. Perhaps the characters aren't here to steal, but what are they transporting? Once the Provider is placated, the characters can continue on their way, hoping the cart holds up.



SCENE 5: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

After their interruption, the characters again set out towards Harm. The sun steadily drifts towards the horizon behind them, their shadows lengthening ahead. By now they are in the outer reaches of the Rubble, far from the overpowering influence of Justitian, but its presence cannot be ignored even here. If they turn and look over their shoulders, they can still see a haze of smog kicked up from the city.

Out here, the density of farmland and villages drops even further. Completely gone are the sprawling, idyllic communities of the Neighborhood of the Providers, replaced with small settlements of Provider homes crammed together to stave off the wilderness, their barns marked with large symbols declaring their loyalty to the Provider union, the Cooperative. There are far fewer patrols passing by, and even the flow of travelers passing by has slowed, but their trip is far from uneventful.

Once again, the Game Master rolls a D6 for every hour that passes on their journey, and interprets the result, rerolling if the event has already occurred.

- ◇ On a result of 1 or 2, another idle distraction passes by – a dust devil spinning through the landscape, or a squad of Judges galloping past
- ◇ On a 3, the characters pass a small water trading station manned by a single Ascetic, where they can refill their supplies
- ◇ On a 4, a Knacker dragging a Provider's corpse behind him shambles by the group
- ◇ On a 5, a Scrapper hauling a sled full of scrap wanders past and offers to sell some of his finds.
- ◇ On a 6, they encounter a Chronicler Observer and his guard, conducting a demographic survey.

Encounters at Dusk

3: PASSING A WATER STATION

Hours of trudging through the summer heat will leave even the most experienced survivalist parched, desperate for a drink. As such, when they see a small shack by the side of the road bearing the Anabaptist cross and with an icon declaring “Water”, it seems like a vision from the heavens above. Entering the hut, they are greeted by an old Ascetic named Akar, who is happy to sell them all a refill for their flasks in exchange for either 5 Drafts each, or a water token. However, as they interact with him, they are quickly dragged into an extended spiritual discussion. “Do you think that humans are deserving of forgiveness? If they have fallen prey to the Demiurge, is it right that they be allowed to prove themselves worthy, or has the rot already irreparably infected their Pneuma?”

He continues on like this for the duration of their time in his hut, spewing Neognostic dogma, his sermon hammering one core message into the character’s minds – if one commits sin, they do not necessarily deserve to be forgiven. Ever. An uncomfortable thought, considering the task they are currently involved in carrying out. Any characters who use PSY+Faith instead of PSY+Willpower must succeed a Mental Defense (2), or suffer a loss of (2) Ego Points as the potential ramifications of their actions in the eyes of their chosen framework of belief set in.

4: A KNACKER RETURNING TO THE CITY

As they travel through the vast expanse of the Rubble, they come across a curious sight. Anyone familiar with the dynamics of Justitian will instantly recognise the figure hauling a strange mass in a sled behind him as a Defiler by the Judicial tattoos coating his face. As he approaches the characters, his black robes will resolve themselves, and his occupation and current business can be extrapolated – a Knacker, dragging a body back to the city. He doesn’t hide the fact that he’s carrying a corpse, but why should he: transporting bodies to the Knacker’s Office for disposal is his job. This is Tiberius, a Defiler who combs the outer reaches of Justitian’s area of influence for dead Providers, bringing them back to the city where they can be inspected and properly recycled. It’s hardly glamorous work, but it keeps him fed and gives him somewhere to sleep, a luxury for outcasts like him.

It looks like he will simply pass the characters by, but as he approaches them he sniffs the air, turning to them with an annoyed frown. “The hell are you doing? If you’re pulling a body around, the Knacker’s Office is back thattaway!” He easily sees through their flimsy excuses and explanations, being able to recognise the scent of a corpse no matter how obscured or covered up it is, “Eh, cut the shit, y’ain’t gonna get by me that easy, I’d know that smell anywhere, been around it fer years!”. Tiberius has no interest in stopping them, or causing trouble, he just berates them for stealing his work and cutting into his lifestyle – “Goddamn city bastards taking my honest-to-god business...” – before continuing to shamble on, leaving the characters nothing more than a feeling of bemusement.

5: A SCRAPPER HAULING HIS FIND

The sound of his approach cuts through the rattling of their cart or the shuffling of their steps. A metallic scraping on stones, the clink of steel on steel, and a cheery whistling rising above the noise. The figure materializes from the haze that hangs above the road, and the characters get a good look at the oncoming man. He can immediately be categorized as a Scrapper; no other group of people would cloak themselves in so much wreckage and dirt. A stalk of wheat pokes from the corner of his mouth, which he chews on pensively. A wide grin splits his face as he sees the party

ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT

Tiberius belongs to a caste of Defilers who eschew the typical methods of their profession: digging through the Defiler Streets and back alleys of Justitian to trawl up corpses and drag them back to the Knacker’s Office. Instead, they set their sights on the Rubble, collecting deceased Providers and rotten animal carcasses from the outlying settlements – there’s far less competition out here, and they’re far less likely to get their skull bashed in by a rival Knacker desperate for a score.

drawing near, and he calls out a greeting, flagging them down. The characters have been dealing with the smell of death surrounding them, but as the clanking muck-raker approaches an even more intense aura of grease, sweat, and grime takes over.

The Scrapper introduces himself as Bolt, and eagerly lets the characters know that he's on his way back from a months-long stretch out in the northern Wastelands, digging up treasures and scrap aplenty. He gestures to his carrying rig and sled, taking pride from how full and weighed down they both are; "My stuff!" He turns back to the assembled group, looking them over, assessing whether they're likely to have enough Drafts to be able to afford any of it. "You know, if any of you's wanted, I'd be willing to sell some of it. Makes the trip back to the city easier on m' back, eh! Whaddya say?"

When his sales are complete, Bolt packs up his gear and begins his walk back to the city. He tells the characters that he'll be staying in Tech-Central for a few weeks, and that they ought to come find him at the Sarcophagus – always a good day to make new friends!

6+: THE CHRONICLER

The sound is quiet at first, a distant buzzing overhead, but the characters quickly spot the source: a dark blot on the sky, a mechanical drone flitting back and forth over the road, a single camera hanging beneath its insectile body providing oversight for some as-yet unseen observer. An INT+Legends or INT+Engineering (2) roll allows a character to intuit the source – a nearby Chronicler, searching for something. Peering ahead, they can see a pair of distant silhouettes crouched on the side of the road. They might be able to divert around them, heading offroad for a while, but to make it across the rough ground at the same pace they must all succeed a BOD+Stamina (2) roll or pay (3) Ego Points. If they don't divert, they'll have to face the potential inspection.

The Chronicler makes for a distinctive figure, hunched over and with a pair of amber lenses glinting beneath a dark hood. In the setting sun, the glittering discs stitched into its cloak cast spotlights across the ground as it moves, prowling back and forth along the Funnel Road like it's waiting for prey. As the characters approach, its hood snaps towards them, and it hurriedly shuffles in their direction. Its Vocoder activates with a distorted screech, before it introduces itself. "Designation: Mosfet, Observer. Accompanied by City Judge, Krupp. Current objective: Conduct demographic survey on Harm Funnel Road. Directive: Report names, occupations, and belongings!" The second figure, Krupp, stands from a boulder resting at the side of the road and lazily walks over, wearing the regalia of a Judge. Looks like the tech-toad has backup.

A rigorous physical examination ensues from the Chronicler, examining eye colors, dominant handedness, requesting information on the Cults the characters call their own and their roles within them, and countless other seemingly disconnected requests. If an answer is refused, the masked figure lets out an irritated, metallic screech and moves on – too many dodged questions, though, and it will turn to the Judge, rattling "Non-compliance noted, Judicial enforcement requested." Krupp will put in little effort, clearly not enthusiastic about his task, and flash a Judicial insignia before dryly informing the characters that they should comply.

Eventually, the inspection comes to the stage where the Observer demands to know the cargo they're carrying. By now, they have been held up for at least ten minutes, and the Judge is clearly getting impatient listening to the metallic rattling of the Vocoder. The characters can weasel their way out of the inspection by appealing to the guard's sense of boredom, or finding another way to divert the Chronicler's attention, and succeeding on an appropriate Difficulty (2) roll.

TRAVELING TREASURE

Bolt has quite a collection of technical wreckage and scrap in his possession, some of it pieced together and upgraded through his own ingenuity. If a character spots something of interest that's worth buying, and can properly prove to the Scrapper that they know what they're talking about with an INT+Engineering or AGI+Crafting (3) roll, they can buy up to 3 kilograms of Tech IV scrap for 60 Drafts per kilogram – a slight bargain compared to the Chroniclers in their Alcoves. With 2 Triggers on the roll, a character can pick out a kilogram of Tech V scrap hidden away behind less valuable gear. Bolt grins and makes an offer: 150 Drafts and it's theirs.

FINALE

CLIMAX

The Judge staring them down represents the final and greatest challenge facing the characters, and the encounter with him should be treated as the climax of the adventure. However, combat should be the last option in their minds – the Judges are the overlords of the Protectorate, and they are merciless when it comes to those who defy them. If they were to harm a Protector, or worse, kill him, the entire Judiciary would be bearing down on their heads. Should the Players attempt to fight Hawker, they should be made aware of the consequences of their actions. He'll fire a flare first, which will attract cavalry support from all over the quadrant...

SCENE 6: FINAL APPROACH

The first thing the characters notice is the smell, wafting from ahead of them like a solid wall. Pigshit. The stench overpowers everything, even the rotted corpse resting in the cart beside them, and it almost feels like they have to fight through it to even take a step closer. Soon after they can make out the town of Harm at the edge of the landscape, an industrial expanse of low ceilinged pigsties awaiting their arrival interrupted by tall methane tanks and blackened chimneys jutting up into the dark sky. They steadily make their way closer, soon only a few dozen meters from the outskirts of the town itself, the road before them passing through the charred iron gate where they were told to meet the Carrion Birds' contact, but they're suddenly interrupted by the clatter of galloping hooves behind them. Turning around, they see a Judge mounted on horseback bearing down on them. He passes by, and pulls his horse up ahead of them, looking the group over. He nods to himself, before hopping to the ground and walking towards the characters. They can't help but notice the heavy hammer by his side. A distinctive insignia gleams on his lapel, and an INT+Legends (3) roll will reveal the identity of the approaching Protector: Hawker, the leader of one of the mounted cavalry squadrons deployed to patrol and secure the Rubble. He's one of the most powerful figures out here, and can call a dozen Judges for backup with little more than a snap of his fingers.

"You folks been traveling from Justitian?" he asks, coming to a halt a few meters ahead of the group. "Providers gave me a warning of some suspicious travelers on their way to Harm that match your description, said you smelled an awful lot like something had gone and died." He sniffs, dramatically, making a show of it. "Unfortunately, I ain't smelling much but the pigs, so I'm going to have to ask you to let me inspect your possessions." One last obstacle stands in the way of their goal, just a short distance away but impossible to reach. Hawker is unmoving and stoic; a few measly excuses and pleas aren't going to be enough to get him to let them pass. They'll need to come up with something good.

There are only a few minutes left before sundown, when they were supposed to meet their contact at Harm's gate, a Harmid named Elrich. Looking over the Judge's shoulder, the characters can see a figure leaning against the structure – it might be him, but from this distance they can't tell. If they are able to get his attention, he might be able to bail them out. If they instead choose to attempt to engage in an argument with the Judge, they'll have to pull out all of their wits and tricks. The confrontation plays out as an extended Conflict, with every point and counterpoint represented by a roll. The Judge uses his INS+Perception and PSY+Cunning alternatively to see through the characters' arguments, both of which he has an Action Number of (7) for, while they can use any appropriate Skill with which they can construct a solid argument for not allowing him to inspect their cargo. The argument continues with both sides ac-

THE ONLY GOOD HUMAN BEING IS A DEAD ONE

[ANIMAL FARM]

cruing Successes until the difference in totals grows to (10), or 10 rolls have been made, at which point the contact notices the altercation and hurries over to bail them out.

If the characters are able to win the argument, by convincing the Judge that he has the wrong group, baffling him with obscure medicinal obfuscation, appealing to his morality by claiming to be transporting the body of one of their relatives back to their hometown, or any other method, the Judge simply rides off, grumbling slightly. If he wins the argument, or is allowed to inspect the body, his suspicions skyrocket, and he demands to take the group back to Justitian for further questioning. Tensions run high, until the Harmid arrives. He greets the Protector like an old friend, taking him aside to speak in hushed tones at the side of the road. With a keen eye, a sheaf of Drafts can be spotted changing hands, before the Judge returns to speak to the characters. “Your... friend, there, has clarified the situation. Sorry to take up your time, folks, have a good day. And stay out of trouble.” With that, he climbs on his horse and rides back towards Justitian.

SCENE 7: THE HANDOVER

After the Judge has been dealt with, the only thing left to do is complete the handover. The contact introduces himself, shaking the characters’ hands. Before he completes the deal, though, he first has to verify that these are the ones he’s been expecting. Back in Justitian, Wicker provided them with three passwords, informing them that Elrich would ask a corresponding question with one of the terms as the answer. The Harmid asks: “Along the road, where can I stop to eat?” They know the answer is one of the three presented, but it’s up to them to figure it out. Should they struggle for a solution, an INT+Legends or INS+Perception (3) roll will allow them to remember passing a small food stall with a sign hanging over it bearing a certain icon.

Giving Elrich the correct answer, he breaks into a grin, all tension dissipated. He had been told to expect them, and is impressed that they weren’t significantly delayed – most of the time, shipments of what he calls “Feedstock” are at least a few hours late. He presents a cheery personality as he takes the reins of the donkey, or collects the various backpacks and cloth wrappings containing the chopped up corpse. Should the characters ask what will be done with it, he’ll present a wry smirk and say “The pigs will handle it, of course!” As a parting gift, he gives the characters a note bearing his signature – to be handed to Wicker to receive their reward. He lets them know of an inn in Harm they can use to spend the night, and bids them farewell. With that, the characters have managed to complete their first task for the Carrion Birds, making it through the obstacles in their path. In the morning they’ll make the walk back to the city in triumph, with far fewer difficulties facing them.

REWARDS

Once they’re back in Justitian and have had their meeting to receive their payment from Wicker, the characters will all find their wallets 250 Drafts heavier. In addition, they’ll gain a single extra point in their Network Background up to a maximum value of (3), as their new in-road with the Carrion Birds opens doors in the city’s underworld. Each character gains 8 XP for completing their task successfully, and the group adds (5) Scars to their group’s Scar pool, if they are following an Alignment.

EPILOGUE

The characters don't know it yet, but they have inadvertently stumbled into a dangerous conspiracy. They have just participated in the cover-up of a Chronicler spy being hunted down and executed by the Cartel, and should retribution come, their ignorance will not be accepted as an excuse before a Shutter drives an electrified knife into their guts. Three paths stretch out before them, each of them inevitably leading deeper into the tangled web of secrets stretched through the streets of Justitian.

IN THE COMPANY OF CROWS

The Carrion Birds may be the largest confluence of migratory birds in the world, but not even they can survive without allies beyond their own ranks. Whenever they need some work done that would be impossible without outside aid, they call upon their army of potential helpers, held to the Flock through blackmail or mutual benefit. With their first task for the organization complete, and with them having proved themselves as reliable, the characters will join this privileged group, and Wicker will be sure to ask them to carry out more tasks in future.

UNWANTED INTERLOPERS

If they peeled back the cloth covering the corpse's face and saw the strange, flayed patch on its forehead, the characters will have uncovered the first inkling of the true nature of what they just transported. The missing scalp points to either a Chronicler or Anabaptist, but the lack of a nose ring suggests the mysterious Tech-Cult. They must be careful as they begin their investigations, however, as all three of the organizations involved – Cartel, Chroniclers, and Carrion Birds alike – are sure to not appreciate upstarts digging around their business.

APATHY IS DEATH

The third option is the simplest – the characters could just shrug their shoulders, take the rewards offered by Wicker, and leave, never paying the situation any more mind. If only things were so simple. The disappearances of their spies, Stringer and Xerox, have set the Cluster on edge, and Shutters have been activated to track down the source of any information breach that could have led to the operation's failure. One of these agents, Relink, has learned of the suspicious group that Hawker deemed irrelevant in his official report. He isn't as confident in the Judge's conclusions. Soon enough, he will come for the characters, when they least expect it, and he will have questions. He won't leave without answers.

JURYMEN

In the desperate times brought on by the re-emergence of the Clans beyond the Protectorate, the Judiciary is unable to properly staff itself and maintain order in Justitian. As such, the Judges have been forced to reach out and accept help from other sources. Those who are well respected in their community, or who know which palms to grease with some Drafts, can be made into Jurymen capable of administering punishments for minor crimes and tasked with maintaining order in the areas of the city the Judges cannot. Many find themselves in the Rubble, dealing with the Providers, or doling out justice in their own former neighbourhoods. Although they are not permitted to carry a Judgement hammer, they are allowed to carry other weapons.

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D/14 Ego Points

ATTACK: Short Sword, Melee 7D, Distance 1m, Damage 6, Smooth Running (3T)

Surplus Flintlock Pistol, Projectiles 5D, Distance 5/20m, Damage 8, Muzzle Loader

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Block), Melee 7D; Ranged Combat active, Mobility 5D; Mental 4D

SPECIAL: CHA+Leadership 6D, CHA+Expression 5D, INT+Legends 4D, PSY+Domination 7D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Leather coat, Armor 1

CONDITION: 12 (Trauma: 6)

TACTICS: Delegated Authority

While the Jurymen are not Judges, only having the right to issue punishments for small offenses such as petty theft or light vandalism, they certainly act like them. They strut about in outfits reminiscent of the long coat and hat, while staying just short of full Reenactment – even a Juryman is not allowed to impersonate a Judge, and wouldn't escape the death sentence if he were caught doing so. The people out in the Rubble barely know the difference, though, and any Juryman disguising his appearance in such a fashion adds +1D to all PSY+Domination rolls. However, if a real Judge appears he'll be forced to drop the act in a hurry, or face the consequences.

PROVIDERS

The sun beats down on the Provider's back, but the air is cold. The ground beneath his feet is hard, his shovel thudding into the earth and barely penetrating an inch. He has to get this layer of topsoil out of the way before the day is done, or he won't be able to plant his crops in the healthy dirt beneath. He's already running behind after those fucking Spitalians held him up at the fungicide dispenser. His mind drifts back to the last harvest, where most of his crop was ruined by a roving band of lunatics with sharpened bone knives. His hands grip tight around his shovel. The Juryman didn't even try to help, just ran away. This can't go on forever. Soon, it'll be time to slam the shovel into a different target. He raises his tool, slams it down. Crunch.

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D/12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Fists, Brawl 6D, Distance 1m, Dazed (3), Smooth Running(2T)

Farming Tools, Melee 4D, Distance 2m, Damage 6, Blunt Sling, Projectiles 4D, Distance 5/15m, Damage 5, Blunt

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active, Mobility 5D; Mental 7D

SPECIAL: AGI+Crafting 6D, INT+Legends 6D, INT+Science 4D, INS+Survival 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Leather farming gear, Armor 1

CONDITION: 12 (Trauma: 6)

TACTICS: Safety in numbers

The Providers are generally peaceful, lobbing nothing more than curses and dirty looks at anyone who crosses them. They'd much rather just get back to their work – there's only so much sunlight in the day, and they need to make the most of every second. When a mob of the farmers assembles, though, the mood shifts drastically. When they are together, they feel that they can take on anyone, and for the most part they're right. Their simple tools might be ineffective, but when a dozen of them all rain down on the same target even a Hellvetic would stumble and fall. When a Provider enters a fight alongside others of his kind, he gains an extra pool of Ego Points equal to the number of his comrades, which are lost at the end of combat.



Completed character sheets for the premade characters presented with this adventure, along with a primer for the KatharSys rules system, can be found at DEGENESIS.COM or by following the QR code. In addition, the website contains a plethora of additional content, multimedia, and tools to be used at the gaming table.

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