

THE MUTANT EPOCH™

TABLETOP ADVENTURE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

MULTI-PATH
ADVENTURE MODULE

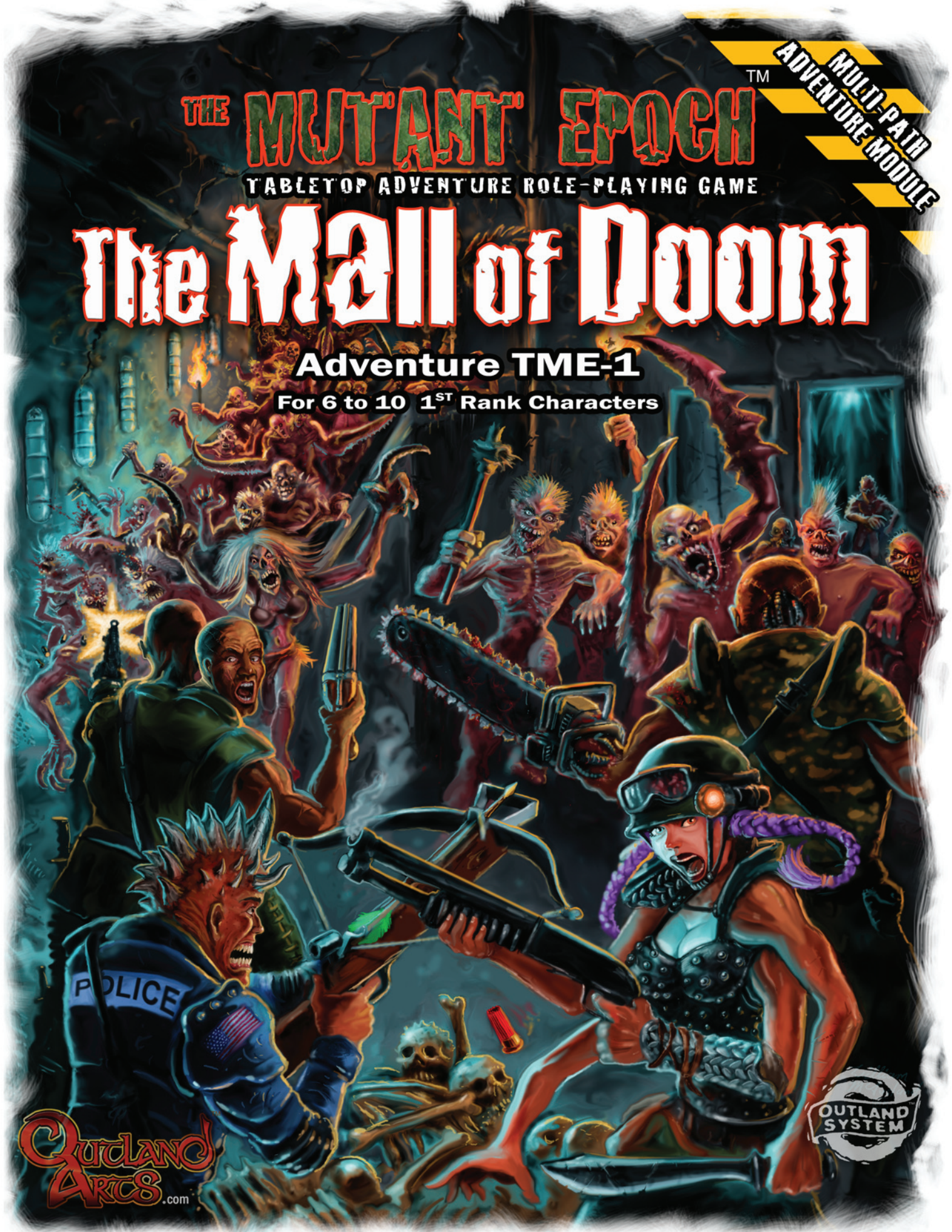
The Mall of Doom

Adventure TME-1

For 6 to 10 1ST Rank Characters

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Created by William McAusland

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Introduction

About This Adventure

While this adventure is designed for 'multi-path' or solo play, it could easily be adapted for use by a standard gaming group with a game master and be playable many times over, with almost no chance of the same sequence of events, encounters, rewards or random disasters ever occurring again. While the starting scene, a few critical locations, several NPCs and the mission's end are more or less fixed, the steps in between are quite open ended and allow for a remarkable amount of choice which a role playing game player would normally only find when the session is refereed by a very well prepared and creative game master. Another great application for this book, and other Outland Arts multi-path adventures, is that it is an excellent training ground for new GMs, or players who wish to better familiarize themselves with the rules away from their regular gaming group sessions. Additionally, a GM might find the structure and open ended nature of a 'solo' adventure more exciting to present to his or her players than a traditionally published module, since he or she will be just as surprised as the players when the unexpected happens or what the hero's discover leading up to the adventure's conclusion. In multi-path style game play it might be especially enjoyable for the GM to have a few players characters of his or her own along for the quest, to either participate just like a regular PC or to keep the pace of the session moving along. Also, this adventure could serve as an example on how to construct home brewed adventures, and sections of it could be inserted directly into a free style or GM written game session.

Character Party Strength

The Mall of Doom involves plenty of ruin exploration and combat far below the village of Walsave, therefore, the characters will not be able to easily retreat and seek a medic for healing. For

this reason, it is recommended that the adventure team consist of at least 8 characters, most of them with combat skills, implants or mutations. Secondly, each player should control two characters, since the amount of combat involved in this mission will likely result in more than a few deaths; expect casualties in the range of 20-40% before the adventure is resolved.

'Read to Player' Text blurbs and GM advice on multi-path TME adventures

'Read to players' text in italics can be read as is, but a word of caution, reading to players is an art form, just as presenting prose at an author's book reading or giving a speech from prepared text. It is better to paraphrase the text, referring to it only if you must after previously reading the entry. If reading directly, look up at the players from time to time, use emphasis and if possible add to the description to make it your own.

Sometimes with a passage of *read to players text*, also seen as *read*: or *read on*: the game master will notice sections of normal text in parentheses, usually numbers or facts for the GM's eyes only that are tied to the proceeding text. Examples of this GM info might be numbers or types of creatures or people present in a description, distances, amount of ammo, game statistics for speeding up game play, and other highly useful information that the players either don't need to know or wouldn't know. Most often however, when the 'read to players' text ends, the abbreviation 'GM:' will appear and simply mean that the following text is meant strictly for the game master. Here is an example:

Read to players: You peer over the broken concrete barrier and see several armed men (d4+4 raiders with crossbows and hatchets) huddled about a bonfire a stones throw away (20+d12 meters). You happen to notice that among the men, sitting by the fire cross-legged as if in meditation is a woman with two heads, an assault rifle slung across her back (20+d10 rounds ammo in clip, treat as raider leader). Beyond this camp, standing up on a protrusion of twisted metal and only barley visible, is a sentry with binoculars looking away from you from within his protected vantage point (-20 DV, raider with sniper rifle containing d8+1 rounds). GM: Each viewing player character is allowed a type C perception based hazard check to also notice a sleeping mu-

tant guard dog laying 8m away under a shrub. The dog has two enormous heads with razor sharp teeth (+10 SV/ two attacks per round/ DMG 3d8+4 each).

Multi-path adventures are large volumes on account of the multitude of options available, making it a lot to digest and pre-read for a GM. While a read through is certainly wise, it is probably impossible to remember all the locations and possibilities found in the adventure. To remedy this, a game master might want to go through the entire text and pre-select random occurrences that may transpire for each entry and check mark those, familiarizing him or herself with fewer encounters or events and increasing the odds of recalling what happens here or there, perhaps even adding to the circumstances with his or her own notes.

An excellent way to speed up the game session is to use the time when players are discussing options or engaging in PC to PC dialogue to read ahead and temporarily memorize what is coming next, although this is often easier in a multi-path adventure if the next course of action has been decided by the players and the next entry known to the GM. Additionally, player hand outs are sometimes designed to be given out to the players when a particularly long passage of narrative 'box text' needs to be read. By each player receiving the handout in turn, it gives the gamers something to do while the game master describes a scene or reads NPC dialogue.

The Adventure Begins

Background for Game Master: An optimistic but hard pressed farming village called Walsave, near the great city of Overpass, has been trying to accomplish re-habitation of an excellent town site. Due to the disappearances of citizens and visitors alike, and getting no help from Northern Freehold Scouts, the village elders have travelled far to seek a team of adventurers who might help them.

Perhaps answering a help wanted poster or being discovered at a bar in the communities of nearby Overpass or Pitford, or another free town that fits in with the GM's own campaign setting, the village's foremost leader, Benwad, a thin, middle aged mutant, pleads for help in uncovering whatever or whoever has been taking his

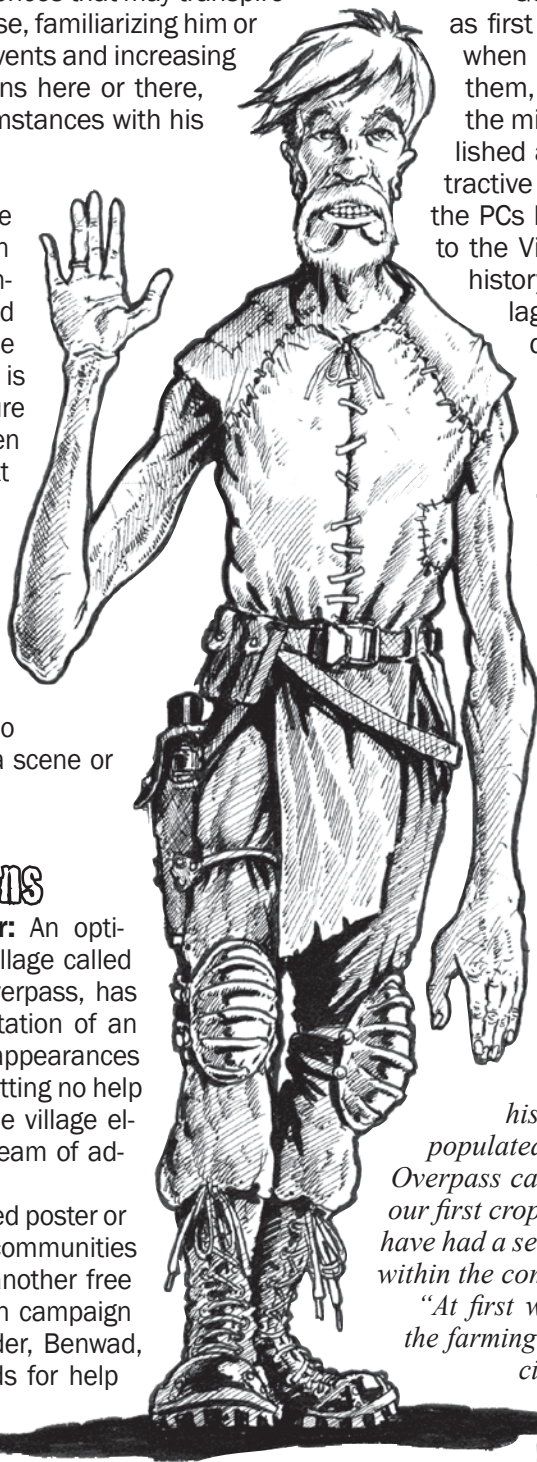
people. If something is not done soon, the terrified farmers will abandon their fledgling community and return to the abject poverty of life in Tentville, a slum of Overpass. They do not tell the characters that the village site was abandoned a decade before by Benwad's father after numerous disappearances and empty homes were found. The village, about twenty kilometers outside of bustling Overpass, sits among exceedingly productive crop lands and good water, as well as an abundance of building materials offered by the plentiful ancient ruins protruding from the rich soil.

Getting the players to accept this mission as first rank characters shouldn't be too hard when considering the offer Benwad makes them, still, the PCs shouldn't blindly accept the mission just because the GM holds a published adventure. The offer should be truly attractive and perhaps personal, such as if one of the PCs has relations who have recently moved to the Village of Walsave, unaware of the dark history of the site. Having relatives in the village might help coax the PCs to accept the quest, but multiple motivators should be added to appeal to those PCs who don't have blood ties to the place.

The Plea for Help: After establishing where the characters are, either after the team answers a poster or are discovered in a slop house, barroom, market or travelling in wagon caravan, they meet up with Benwad and his lesser elders. If at a bar, these strangers offer to buy a round of drinks in return for allowing themselves to be heard.

Read to players: *Joining you are a group of 3 men and 2 women, all of them middle aged and dressed like farmers. They are lead by a tall, fifty or sixty year old, skinny mutant with lavender skin, elongated arms, and rust red hair. The man introduces himself as Benwad the Executive, who does all the talking for his group and explains his people's plight: "We represent a newly populated, charming little farm village outside of Overpass called Walsave. While we are now getting our first crops off the rich fields outside the walls, we have had a series of disappearances of townsfolk from within the community.*

"At first we thought people were just abandoning the farming life and moving back to the slums of the city, which is understandable as many of us never worked the land before. After several travelers to the village,



watchmen on the walls, and others in the streets vanished, we knew we had trouble and doubled the militia patrols, which seemed to work for awhile. A week ago, however, the kidnappings started again. We found an entire family missing from their home and the place broken up, but no bodies or blood discovered. After that, we decided to seek outside assistance.

"The Freehold Scouts have been no help, claiming they are short on manpower and telling us we should abandon settlement of the site, that remote villages outside of Overpass were impossible to protect due to repeated invasions by Aberratia, The Purists, or any number of humanoid war parties. We are aware of those risks and will strengthen our defenses, grow in numbers, and deal with those obvious threats, but these abductions... they've terrified everybody and some people are threatening to leave the village, and worse, others are abandoning our existing faith to join a silly cult that has established itself in the community.

"Walsave is in danger of being abandoned so we have pooled our money and our great treasures of the old ones, as payment to those who could help us. We need mercenary adventurers... no... heroes... to find out the cause of the abductions, put a stop to it, and maybe return our lost people. We are simple farmers with not much money to offer warriors like you, but if you will come to our new village in the next few days and help us we are prepared to give you each one hundred silver coins and a few wondrous treasures handed down to us for many generations which you can keep, and one device on loan, a rocket launcher and at least 2 rockets, until the job is done."

GM: Benwad now lists the wondrous treasures waiting for the PCs if they come to Walsave to help his people. Roll d3+2 times on the following table, MOD-1A, re-rolling results with an asterisk beside the roll number.

Important: This is just an offer, and any pay or gifts will only be delivered if the PCs come to Walsave, accept and are actively setting out to accomplish the mission. The rocket launcher comes with 2 regular battle rockets and is only handed over to the PCs at the onset of the search from Walsave and only if they promise to return it and only use the rockets if it is a matter of life or death for the village, since the weapon is the main defensive tool of the community and they believe their survival depends upon it.

If PCs are skeptical or unimpressed with the offer (after rolling on table MOD-1A), Benwad will sense it and being desperate, sweeten the pot to try and swing the group; roll once on table MOD-1B.

Important note: In your GM's adventure log notes, record exactly what the terms of the total offer are; if the PCs survive this adventure, it will make delivery of the promised pay and gifts much easier to recollect.



Table MOD-1A: Promised Wondrous Treasures, roll 3d6, d3+2 times

- 3*. Suit of urban camo colored combat armor with helmet
- 4*. Razor sword
5. Suit of tactical armor with helmet
6. Ballistic shield
7. Pump shotgun with 2d6+1 shot shells
8. Fragmentation grenade
9. Headset flashlight, fully charged
10. Shotgun pistol and pouch containing 2d6 shot shells
11. Gas mask
12. Two anti toxin Injectors
- 13*. Night vision headgear, fully charged
14. Flashlight, pocket, fully charged
15. Assault rifle with 10+d12 rounds of ammo in magazine
16. Suit of riot armor with helmet
- 17*. Advanced fragmentation grenade
- 18*. Assault shotgun with 10+d6 shotgun shells in magazine

* re-roll if this result occurs again.

Table MOD-1B: Additional Offer by Benwad, roll once using 2d6:

2. Roll twice on this table, re-rolling this or any duplicated results.
3. A submachine gun with one full magazine and another spare magazine with d6 rounds remaining
4. The arranged marriage to Benwad's cousin, Moneek, to the best looking male character regardless of PC type. The

girl is an orphan and lives with Benwad's family as a servant. She is 18 years old, treated as a slave woman for stats, generated randomly with a 56% chance she is a mutant with d3 minor mutations. A random personality table can be found in the member's area of the www.mutantepoch.com site.

5. The house of the first missing family in Walsave, with legal papers recognized by the Northern Freehold and signed by officials in Overpass. If sold after the adventure, the PCs could fetch 400+2d1000sp for it, but won't know the amount until selling it which takes 3d8 weeks.

6. An assault rifle with two magazines, one full (30 rnds) the other with only d6 remaining.

7. Another 100 silvers coins each to make a new total of 200sp each

8. A piece of land 500m by 500m among the crop patches outside of Walsave, worth about 300+2d100sp to other farmers of the village. The land currently has mutant broccoli and corn planted on it and doing well.

9. A team of two draft horses and a fully enclosed wagon, big enough to house 8 people on long journeys.

10. An authentic Christian Bible, New Testament, pocket edition, in fair condition, printed in 2137, worth about 500+d1000sp in Overpass.

11. An assault shotgun with 14+2d6 shot shells in drum magazine, plus a spare empty drum magazine.

12. A flame unit, one full fuel canister and another with d20 rounds remaining.

Follow up: If the PCs accept the terms, go to entry 1, page 8; however, if the characters still aren't coaxed to undertake the mission, Benwad says (**roll d6**):

1,2. *"Do you think we are rich people? We have nothing else! What can we give you that have not already offered?"* **GM:** The PCs can ask for something, but the GM will have to decide if it is in the village's possession or moral ability to hand over. The maximum extra funding he can come up with is a total of 500 sp more. If the PCs still hold out, Benwad can make one more roll on table MOD-1B, above, and this is still not enough, he and his companions get up and walk away to try and find another, more gutsy and heroic team to take the job.

3,4. *"Okay, this is my final offer." Says Benwad, looking like he is about to pass a gallstone. "Another 100 silver coins each and the team will also be given a pump shot gun, which has been in my family since the ancient wars, along with ten shot shells. How does that sound?"*

5,6. *"I was assured that such an offer would be more than generous enough to recruit a newly formed band of untested diggers. This isn't war I am sending you on, just an investigation. Are you so lofty as to sneer at a fair offer?"* **GM:** After a moment he exhales and comes back with one final offer. **Read:** *"Okay, this is it though, the limit, and it will put many families and children into debt to money lenders for a decade. We can offer your team 400 silvers in total as a bonus upon successfully resolving this crisis, and an extra 100 silvers for each villager you can find and return alive. Yes, I know it is a lot of money, but we trust you, and need you. The survival of Walsave rests with you. What do you say?"*

If the PCs still decline, Benwad and the group of elders get up and walk away, heads down in despair. Unless the PCs go after them or find the elders around town someplace, show up at Walsave after reconsidering, or the GM can think of some hook or motivation that appeals to the players themselves, then the adventure is over. Some extra coaxing tools available to the GM are included below, however, if the PCs are part of an existing campaign or their backgrounds do not logically fit any of the following motivators, then some other option, or adventure might be more appropriate. GM note: Optionally **roll d6** if solo playing this adventure.

1. One or two of the PCs have relatives in Walsave, and it is these relatives who directed Benwad to seek out the PC team.

2. Benwad's group is desperate, and have kidnapped the team's parents and any wives or children and hold them hostage someplace in a slum of Overpass. They will only release them once the PCs successfully accomplish the mission. This hook is a real stretch; however as after completing the missions and seeing their families free, the PCs will likely seek vengeance on Benwad and all of Walsave, and could pose more of a threat to the village than the scenario's villains.

3. Northern Freehold Scouts have spoken to Benwad about the disappearances and the PCs and a few hours after the characters reject Walsave's plea, the Northern Freehold (NF) sends along a gorgeous female corporal and four heavily armed scouts. The officer asks to join the PCs at their table or in their room and explains that her faction cannot intercede since they have officially proclaimed that they do not support the resettlement of the village, that their hands are tied officially, but if the PCs would take the mission, the NF is prepared to document the noble act for future standing, plus, will give the team d3+1 advanced fragmentations grenades, a fully loaded assault shotgun with barrel flashlight, a pair of fully charged communicators, and an additional 30 NF minted gold coins each after completing the mission and an advance of 5 gold coins on the spot to show good faith. Furthermore, the NF will forgive any outstanding charges, debts or fines against the PCs within the faction's territory.

4. One of the characters had family in Walsave over a decade ago disappeared along with everybody else. Perhaps an aunt and uncle and all his or her cousins, perhaps grandparents or even parents.

5. Benwad himself is the Uncle of a random 'born' PC; synthetic humans and android, or mutant animal characters are not eligible for this honor.

6. Motivation 6: The elders return with an addition to the offer. **Read:** *"We haven't made this offer to other teams," states Benwad. "We can offer you everything else, plus 20 gold coins each, and a rare weapon; an 8 gauge shotgun. There is almost nothing that can stand up to the blast of this ultimate close-in devastator. We have found numerous shell casings during our salvage operations around the town site, replaced the firing caps, reloaded the shell casings with steel ball bearings and can give you 10 shells and later reload your empties after you've dealt with what or whoever has been taking our kin. What do you say to that?"* **GM:** Also **See Appendix 2**, page 117 for info on this and another new relic. An 8 gauge shotgun has the range and rate of a regular pump shotgun but weighs twice as much and the kick will knock a person back a meter if they aren't of sufficient mass (at least 70kg). The gun has an SV of +30 and does 20+2d20 damage. Furthermore, the spray from this 'personal artillery' will afflict up to three man sized targets if in a close formation such as 3m cluster, including adversaries standing in a line in a narrow passage. Up to six small creatures, especially winged beasts, rodents and bugs, are all potentially struck from one shot of this area affect weapon.

The Villagers have used this gun to defend their front gate from all manner of predator and raider and will sorely miss the firepower after the adventure, but will gradually reload any collected empty shell casings before the PCs leave the village. If the PCs give the gun back to the villagers after the mission, the characters will be given full citizenship and considered brothers and sisters, always welcomed and honored in song.

If the PCs accept the mission, go to entry 1, part two, next page.



Part One

Arriving at Walsave

Entry 1, Accepting the mission and going to Walsave:

Unless the GM has something special in mind, or a parallel adventure or ongoing campaign element in play, the journey to Walsave is uneventful.

Read to players: *Arriving at Walsave just before sunset, the characters are put up in the stables and given a quick tour by Benwad. There are over fifty robust houses, barns, shops and storage facilities located here, as well as a large, octagonal, three story structure near the south east wall referred to as the Kwonite Temple of the True Prophet. All the structures are made of scrap metal, plastic and stacked inoperative vehicles, timber, straw and ancient concrete ruin protrusions.*

The community of about a hundred and fifty souls is contained within a shoddy looking network of wooden palisades, sections of rebar-bristling walls, rubble piles, aircraft wings and more heaped automobiles of old, bolted and lashed together 4 or 5 cars high. The double doors of town are of wood and scrap metal.

Benwad remarks: "Much of the ancient material you see here was dug up from the earth under our feet by people who built on this same site many years ago. They abandoned it suddenly during the wars, or just weren't farmers at heart and perhaps moved back to the city, I guess. They just left all these excellent materials stacked up for us. The concrete columns and walls are the tops of old buildings that are buried in the

deep silt and junk beneath the land, as is of course the case throughout the region after the sea came in and drank this part of the world.

"And there you see just one of the four houses people have disappeared from. A family with small children lived there until four days ago". You see a large wood and scrap structure across the muddy street, having a thatched roof and chimney without any smoke coming from it. Benwad points up the street to a large, lopsided building. "Come, let's get your settled into the stables then see about a hot meal. We can start the investigation at first light. We'll post four crossbow men outside the stable so you can rest up for the mission ahead. You'll get your promised ancient devices and the loaned rocket launcher at dawn."

GM: (Stables: location 3 on Walsave Map MOD-2) The team is given food and clean water and a large open area in a hay loft to sleep. During the night, they are wakened by the banging of pots and pans in alarm, as well as screaming and hollering on the far side of the village.

If they enter the street, they see about fifty or so villagers in an uproar, arming themselves with crossbows, spears and pitch forks and taking to the walls. When asked what the commotion is all about, the commoners admit they don't know what the alarm was called for, but they each have emergency positions to get to and await further instructions.

Finally, Benwad finds the PCs **read on:** *Benwad finds you outside and points across the roof tops to where many lanterns and torches are waving about along the wall. "Ah, sorry to wake you up", the elder explains, trying to suppress a yawn. "Some predator tried to get over the palisade but so far the nameless black thing has been driven off by a few bolts in its ass. See you in the morning."*

GM go to entry 2.