

Introduction

Northwest Kansas is a bare, flat land. Fallow fields stretch out mile upon mile, occasionally marked by an oasis of thick, twisting trees or sparse grass. Here, the sun heats up the highway like a griddle that stretches on forever.

This land is open, horizons broadening out like an endless sea even in the towns that cling to the ever-shifting dust, always dwarfed by the clouds that sail in monolithic fleets through the dark blue sky.

There is a tinge of the eternal in this land, like you could walk the roads for a lifetime and still find yourself lost in the flat Purgatory of the plains. This is a place where men and their works seem smaller somehow, where it seems like the hand of God could reach down at any moment and sweep away a town in a roar of winds and blare of trumpets.



This isn't a strong place. The towns are small and dirty, still suffering from not becoming railroad stops during the Wild West days. Most of the shops have been closed, their paint beginning to peel and their boarded-up windows

squinting forlornly out onto grey skies. Lonesome farms dot the landscape, sheltered by a few trees and occasionally connected by dirt roads.

Small windmills turn in the wind, almost an anachronism when one thinks of the towering windfarms not two hundred miles away. Everything about the land seems to be leaning forward, as if waiting for the seasons to change or the rest of the world to slow and let this place catch up. In the winter, the fields lie fallow, waiting to be turned and reborn in golden horizons.



Seasons change quickly around here, however, and a new age was ushered into these people's lives not with a party or prayer, but with a storm. Called the Freak Storm, the Storm of Judgement, and a thousand other names, this outpouring of nature's fury appeared out of nowhere, defying all weather predictions. That was not the only thing that was strange about this storm, though. On that fateful night, green lightning flashed through clouds that seemed set alight with white fire. Unearthly choruses accompanied the howling wind, rising in a swelling crescendo until, just before dawn, the storm vanished in a final, ground-shaking clap of thunder. Later on, when the storm had ascended to the place of legends, there were even tales of the dead rising from their graves.

Regardless of the whatever legends surrounded the storm, one fact was obvious to everyone when they emerged from their homes: they had entered a new world. Televisions, computers, and cell phones had simply stopped working. Cars gave a last sputter and died, the small, essential parts within them simply ceasing to turn. The constant roar of the highway had been cut off. Empty husks of automobiles littered the once-great thoroughfare, already

rusting away. Even the barbwire fences, boundaries that had been there for a hundred years, were disintegrated, leaving behind lines of wooden posts standing like dozing sentries.

The fences were not the only boundaries to be destroyed. It seemed as if the pounding rain of the Storm had somehow softened the laws of the universe. Mysterious Miracle-Workers wander the land, catalysts for strange power. As you get farther from towns you find time flowing slower and slower, till finally there's nothing but a red sun hanging eternally in a hard blue sky. Shadows are creeping to tear off another bite from the ragged edge of civilization.

Will you stand strong and united against all odds, or will you be swallowed in the ringing vespers of a world? It's up to you.

Chapter 1: Those Who Would Live

As you may have gathered, the world's gone to pot. Stuck in an agricultural land as flat and exposed as a pancake, stripped of government, technology, and even the assurance that the supernatural is the stuff of children's stories, you've got to learn how to survive and, above all, live. This game is all about answering these questions.

The first thing you need to do to play is create a character. Unlike in most games, the GM will not be creating the world you play in for you. It is up to the players to create an area and characters that they are interested in, and up to the GM to find the conflicts inherent in this world.



The first step to knowing who you are is knowing where you've been. Who were you before the Storm hit? Spend a few minutes talking to your fellow players about the kind of area your characters inhabit. Is it a town, adjoining farms, a trailer park? After you've figured that out, consider what you want

your character to be, and how he fits into the area. Were you a farmer, a businessman, a drifter?

Seth, Jayden, and Adam are playing their first session of Land of Ill Harvest. They discuss the kind of place they're playing in, deciding that the area they inhabit is a town that is going through hard times, its inhabitants wondering if they can go on. After that, they each spend a few minutes thinking and then jot down the following summaries onto a piece of scrap paper.

A small-time farmer, afraid that he might lose his land.

A grandson visiting his grandparents as he searches for a purpose in his life.

A minister of a small town, feeling fiercely protective of his flock, frustrated because he can do nothing about the economic crisis slowly pulling the town under.

Once you've figured out who your character was before the Storm, come up with a name for your character and record it on your character sheet.

Seth decides his small-time farmer is going to be named Sam Howell.

Jayden decides his visiting youth will be named Danie Nel.

Adam decides his spiritual shepherd will be named Pastor Inkfist.



Now you must find out who your character is. What effects did the Storm have on your character and on his surrounding environment? Did it present new opportunities or destroy an old life? At this point you've probably started to figure out that things aren't as they should be. You've probably started hearing rumors of dark things in the woods and strange, supernaturally-gifted people called Miracle-Workers beginning to filter in from out of the wilderness. You may have even encountered something yourself. You can determine the effects the Storm had on your character on your own, or you

can discuss it with your fellow players, helping each other find out what's going on.

Seth, Jayden, and Adam decide to figure out what is happening to their characters on their own.

Seth decides that the Storm presents a new opportunity for his character. Now that he no longer has to worry about money or taxes, he is free to keep his land with nothing but the his own strength.

Jayden decides that the Storm was a disaster for Daniel, who is now cut off from his parents, friends, and old haunts.

Adam decides that for Inkfist, the Storm is a double-edged sword. He no longer has to watch his town slip under, but he now feels he must protect it from darker forces than a dip in the economy.



To bring your character into focus, you must now discover where your character is going. How does he deal with the cards fate has dealt to him? What does he do about things he doesn't like? How does he protect the things he loves?

Seth decides Sam is going to do anything necessary to keep his farm and bring in the harvest, whether it costs him in tears, sweat, or even blood.

Jayden decides Daniel's goal is to stay alive, but only so he can make it home. He'll seize any opportunity to get back to his familiar city, if only he can tell his parents he's sorry for the pain he's caused them.

Adam decides Pastor Inkfist's goal is to protect his congregation. Whether it means whispering soothing words or raining down the judgment of God, he'll be sure they stay safe against any and all threats.

To finish your character, you must record everything you've discovered so far. Write it as if it were a story, the life story of your character.



Once you've done this, you're ready to move on to the mechanical side your character: his Methods and Motivations.

Looking over your character sheet, you've probably got a pretty good idea of how your character does things and what he's good at. These are his Methods. **Methods** are what tools a character uses to accomplish his goals. They can be skills, physical characteristics, or even items that are intrinsic to your character. From the description you wrote of your character, extract at least one or two Methods and record them on your character sheet.

Looking over his story, Seth decides that Sam, being a farmer, is probably pretty good at farming. He adds "Farming" to his Methods. He also decides the continuous work on the farm has made him strong and tough. He adds "Strappin' Farm Boy" to his Methods.

Jayden's having a hard time figuring out what his character's good at. He thinks about how in his story his character is sorry for hurting his parents. He decides his character is good at pushing people's buttons and getting under their skin. He adds "Poisoned Barbs" to his Methods and leaves it at that.

Adam envisions his character as an older man with few defining physical strengths but many people-oriented abilities. He adds "The Double-Edged Word of God" and "Inspiration" to his Methods to reflect his ability to use the Bible as a balm and a whip and his talent for moving people to action.

While how you do things is important, it's even more important why you do things. What drives you to keep on living in a world you don't understand

any more? What keeps you toiling even when you want to fall down right there and sleep? These are your **Motivations**. Look over your character sheet and decide the reasons your character acts the way he does.

Seth looks over his character sheet and finds Sam's first Motivation easily: his want to keep his farm. He adds "Hold On To My Place" to his Motivations. He imagines his character as a fairly gentle person. He records "Stay Out of Trouble, If Possible" as his second Motivation. Moving on, he thinks that Sam probably wants to expand his farm and use it as a base for a better life. Seth, however, doesn't yet have a very clear idea of what that future is, so he settles for "Bring In the Harvest" and decides that he'll find out Sam's future soon enough.

Jayden immediately writes "Get Back Home" on Daniel's character sheet as his first Motivation. Also, he decides that Sam was bullied a bit back home, so he'll "Step Up for the Weak."

Adam has an easy time figuring out his Motivations. He immediately jots down "Protect My Flock" and "Crush the Darkness" as his Motivations. Pastor Inkfist may be old, but he's full of fire.

Now that you've figured out how and why you're character does things, it's time to assign values to your Traits. Each player gets **15 points** to distribute between his Methods and Motivations. Mark how many points your putting in a Trait beside it on your character sheet.

Sam Howell's Traits look like this:

Methods

Farming 2. Strappin' Farm Boy 2.

Motivations

Hold On To My Place 5. Stay Out of Trouble, If Possible 2.

Bring In the Harvest 4.

Daniel Nel's Traits look like this:

Methods

Poisoned Barbs 5.

Motivations

Get Back Home 7. Step Up For the Weak 3.

Pastor Inkfist's Traits look like this:

Methods

The Double-Edged Word of God 4. Inspiration 3.

Motivations

Protect My Flock 5. Crush the Darkness 3.

All right! You're almost finished with your character. There's just one more step to take: assigning values to your character's Attributes. There are three Attributes: Cool, Breath, and Blood. Each one represents your ability to weather a different kind of conflict and your ability to outlast your opponent.

The first Attribute is **Cool**. Cool represents your ability to stay calm in a stressful situation. You may use Cool to keep your face looking open and truthful even when you're lying through your teeth to a bandit lord. You may use it keep from breaking down under the pressure of battle. Cool's important for characters who are good at remaining steady in the face of pressure or danger.

Breath represents your ability to keep going strong in non-lethal physical conflicts, whether you're fleeing from an angry sheriff or trying to punch that thug unconscious without being battered yourself. Breath's important for those guys that can keep on running mile after mile, or who just don't seem to go down no matter how little they sleep or they get punched.

Blood represents your ability to hold on to life. Put simply, if you lose your Blood, you die. You'll be wanting a lot of Blood when a cannibal comes rushing at you with a rusty bonesaw or an angry farmer decides to hit you with a scattergun and ask questions later.

To finish up your character, divide **10 points** between each of your Attributes. Your character sheet's got a track for each. Count a number of squares down the appropriate track equal to the Attribute score, then cross off any remaining boxes.

Seth divides his points as follows

Cool: 2. Breath: 4. Blood: 4.

Jayden divides his points as follows:

Cool: 4. Breath: 3. Blood: 3.

Adam divides his points as follows:

Cool: 5. Breath: 2. Blood: 3.



Now your character is completed, free to explore the world and himself. And there is a world to explore, a world of brutal horror and quiet miracles. What will you discover?