Going Home

A 24-hour RPG by Shevaun Frazier, using the words Mud and Gun. Mud represents where you are, the world you have suffered in. Gun represents the things you will have to do if you ever want to leave.

The theme of this game is obsession. An obsession that drives men to madness and despair, to acts of cruelty and barbarism, for the simplest of things: the chance to go home.

In the future, the world has been torn apart by warfare. The skies are eternally blackened with ash-laden clouds, the earth has been robbed of its fertility and the acidic rain pummels everything into muddy ruins. The war is long over, 10 years or so, and though the bitterness has not faded, it has been largely replaced by something else: despair. At first, people consoled themselves. Their wounds would heal, the skies would clear, and they would have to work oh so hard for it, but one day the world would be clean again, and children could play in fields and forests and breathe fresh air.

The children grew up, and most of them now don't remember anything but the rain and the mud. The adults grow older and see no sign of a return to the way things were. The aftermath of the war continues to produce non-viable or deformed offspring, and those who know something of evolution fear that humanity will never be the same.

The war had other effects too. Cities and technology were, on the whole, destroyed. A culture wholly reliant on electronic data storage realised too late how prone it was to the loss of all its information archives. Complicated technology is in the hands of only a few now, those self-proclaimed genii that were not at the epicentres of the destruction. Their numbers are few, as are the numbers of the people who survived at all. They guide what is left of communities, helping them to rebuild from the shards of the shattered world and telling tales of what once was.

What a world it was, too. Shining towers, gleaming in the sunlight; food and water brought to your home, clean and wholesome. Parks, pets, family and friends, *holidays* even. A culture build up over thousands of years and the freedom to travel the world and see what had been done in the name of humanity. History. Comfort. Light. Free time, sports, hobbies, books, movies, TV, music when you want it, the change of seasons...

So many things lost, so little hope of seeing them again. Now, all many are faced with is a lifetime of living in ignorance, of near-starvation, of the depredations of bandits, and of the god-damned mud, seeping it's way into everything.

So, if someone said you could have it all back, what would you do to get it? For most people, the answer is simple. ***Anything***.

Before the war, space travel was being explored as an option. The planet was, as it had always been destined to be, overcrowded. Technology helped but it was not an answer. So for a long time governments had been researching a way to begin shuttling the populous off of our dinky little planet. Many ships left, intent on building a self-sufficient biosphere, taking with them all the information and equipment they would need. No-one thought they would ever see them again, and went back about the business of everyday life. Which, as it happened, included an apocalypse.

These colonists have done their best, and have built a little utopia. They sent back reports of their progress, a few space agency enthusiasts kept listening and responding. As the war grew more despirate, though, these enthusiasts were seconded to other, military roles. The colonists listened impotently to the last few transmissions they received, knowing that, even if they did try to help they could not arrive of years. They watched as their planet was lit up with a destructive force never before witnessed by mankind, and knew that there was now nowhere to go back. None the less they continued to build, hoping that they could return to rescue survivors and bring them to their new world.

And so they did. Now that the colony is finished, they have build a great ship to hold as many people as they can safely transport and house, and they have travelled back. Finding that communication via normal methods is now impossible, they have resorted to the oldest principle of advertising: flyering. They sent shuttles across their home continent (after all, if you only have so much space, you have to look after your own) dropping leaflets telling people where they'll be. They will wait with their ship, at the centre of the continent, for as long as it takes, and when it is full, they'll fly back from whence they came.

They promise, of course, to return again in the future, but that might not be for many years. There are so few suitable planets or moons, after all.

You are a person who has suffered all that this horrible world has to offer, and can take it no more. The years of slogging through the mud-filled streets of ruined cities to scavenge something for trade, the trench foot, the darkness, watching your friends die of starvation or brutal murder at the hands of raiding parties, it's too much. You want to go home.

The race is on, but the way is long and there will be much competition. Grabbing what ever supplies you can, and of course your gun, you are heading off to get a place on that ship. The flyer you found is clutched in your hand like a religious artefact, a chance for salvation. You travel on foot, or if you are very, very lucky you can find some kind of vehicle.

You don't know what's out there, and you don't really care, because by all that was once good and right in this god-forsaken world, you *will* be on that ship when it leaves.

Introduction to the game

This is a game in which you play people who have survived the unthinkable only to find that life is a filthy, cruel parody of what it once was. You've been given a chance, one chance, to change that. In the place you were before the summons, you could have had any role. As an able-bodied individual, you would have been of great use physically in any community you were part of. You would have helped farm (Farm! What a joke) the various algae and fungi which are all that will grow in such a low-light world. You would have built defences and fought the raiders that plague you. You would have scavenged in the cities for anything of use. You would have been essential to your little community.

Why you decided to leave on this quest is up to you. It is true that almost everyone who could decided to try for it. Most suppose that they will do their best and then return if they're unsuccessful. Some do not care about what, or who, they leave behind. Most have no idea what they face, and many are completely unprepared.

In this game, one person will represent the world to you. The people you meet, places you go and the repercussions of your actions will all be described to you by that one person. You can call them what you will, GM, DM, Storyteller, or G.O.D., but ultimately you owe them your respect and gratitude. They have been the one willing to take you on, and to wrestle you through the adventures which await you.

The various actions you take will be determined by your character's abilities. There will be rules to determine how well you do in the things you undertake. If you are not familiar with this concept, don't worry. This is one of the many responsibilities the GM has taken on. They will help you.

The rest of your group could be anyone. You decide why you are travelling together, whether it's a matter of convenience or of loyalty, whether you intend to turn the rest of the party over to the dogs if it means you can get on the ship or if you would give your own life to get someone else on. Unlike some games, no-one really gives a damn about making your characters together unless you want to. Trust has to be earned.

A final word. This whole game presumes you know a thing or 2 about roleplaying games. Possibly that outlook is overly cynical, since it is perfectly possible that someone would download an indie game before they'd ever tried one of the big mainstream games. Still, if you want to know more about the basic nature of gaming, I'd recommend either looking at some other games, talking to some other gamers, or browsing one of the many game-based forums in the world. Try rpg.net or The Forge (though this one's a little conceptual).

The World and the war

This game takes place on a continent ravaged by warfare. Before the war, cities, towns and villages were prevalent. Imagine modern day America with 50 to 100 years of technological advancement. Skyscrapers dominated cities, which were in themselves spilling out into the countryside. Even the lowliest farming community would have had a population 10 times that of today. Despite the lack of room, life was still pretty good. Most people (at least in this area) had a job and a place to stay. They could go out at night, sit in and read books, speak with people around the globe with no effort at all. They would even have hobbies sometimes, activities solely for the purpose of self-gratification.

The war itself was an unexpected thing for many. As always with people living in comfort, no-one realised how close to destruction they were until the warnings came. The cities were absolutey destroyed with only the ruins of the suburbs still standing to mark them. Further out, structures remained mostly intact but the people all died, consumed in fire. Even further into the countryside, some plant life even survived. But this was not just a one-off strike. This was a global cleansing, and the destruction was not limited to the cities. Many small communities were targeted as well, even particularly fertile fields. The land was scoured of any capacity for supporting the country upon it.

Worse, the electromagnetic effects, which destroyed virtually all the electronics, also drove some people into a mad frenzy. They saw and heard things they couldn't understand, attacked each other or fell into stupors and hysteria. After the blasts, which went on for 3 days, there was finally calm. The remaining survivors shook off their shame at their sometimes murderous actions and peered out, with new eyes, into a world covered in dust and darkness. The end of the world was ushered in with madness in many forms.

The particulates in the air blocked the sunlight and prevented even newly built radios from working. The human race was cut off into small enclaves, living at first on whatever canned or preserved food they had.

It was only a short time before the rain started. The intellectuals surmised that eventually rain would fall and clear the skies. Plants would grow again and they could start to rebuild. Bases on that, the rumbling thunder was welcomed by many, until they saw what was really happening. The rain was so laden with ash and debris it was falling as mud. It coated everything, smothering what little vegetation was left, gathering on roofs to eventually weigh down and crush many of the remaining structures. People caught unaware found themselves caught in horrendous mudslides, or trapped inside shelters completely buried in the muck.

The worst was yet to come. The sky didn't clear. Not this rainfall or the next. There was, it seemed, no hope of regaining the happy arable existence most yearned for. Before it was possible to find an alternative food source, many more died of starvation or sickness. The mud was caustic, acidic, and would leave you with horrible burns. Many more were lost to that, and many more shelters too. Eventually the acidity fell, so that, with protection people were able to venture out of their ruined shelters.

The mud has one property to be grateful for. It was relatively fertile, and it wasn't long

before a variety of low-light fungi started to spring up. With time it was possible to discern which ones were edible, and communities grew around this new principle of farming.

With time, the rains have become less muddy, and this has caused a few issues. The mud has nothing to hold it in place, so in many places there are mudslides, valleys filled with mud and unable to drain properly. The mud is mostly too wet now to hold the weight of a human body, so people must slog through it. On the plus side, some higher, rockier areas are now clear of the mud, and a few communities have built up in these places.

The remains of the old world are still there to be found. Buried under the mud are treasures from a previous age, uncovered by the rain and waiting to be found. Sometimes a mudslide will uncover a whole town that had been lost. Sometimes the ground will give way unexpectedly as the corrosive rain finally eats through a last support for some long-forgotten basement area. These places are equally opportunities and dangers, both in that someone could easily be trapped or injured exploring them, and that those who have are envied by all.

No-one really knows what they will come across as they travel. The possibilities are many, and they will be the domain of the GM to create as they go. A small community of cripples and mutants who entice travellers with the promise of fresh food, only to perform some sort of atrocity; a forest of massive fungi growing in the remains of a city, populated by crazed mutants; even a similar group to your own, travelling in the same direction, could be a big issue. Do you help each other? Do you overtake them to increase the chance of a place onboard? Or do you kill them and take their goods, to increase your own chances of survival?

There are some basic truths though. One: even if you aren't desperate enough to murder, others are. Two: you don't have any time to waste.

Community Life

Each community is build around one basic fact, which is of course survival. To survive they must have food, shelter and defence from those who would take either. The food is provided, mostly, from the farming of fungi, mushroom-like organisms which can vary in shape and size, and can usually be eaten raw or cooked. A few communities also farm algae in pools of mineral-laden water, mostly for variety. For the same reason, less savoury practices are becoming more widespread, regarding the disposal of the dead. This is probably something its best not to mention. In a world without hope, ethics are a waste of time for many.

A small number of communities are trying to collect and save information as well. They believe that they must try to save some of the thousands of years of knowledge humanity has collected. It is for these communities that most people will go scavenging in the city ruins, for books or discs, memory cards which they hope one day to be able to read again.

The area around a community can dictate a lot about life there. Some places are on relatively flat ground and can farm easily nearby. Other places have chosen a defensive position which forces them to travel to their farmlands. A few places have found other resources, such as saltpetre caves from which to produce potassium nitrate for gunpowder. Now that this great migration has begun, many of them are growing rich, if that's the word, on trade goods from people desperate for more ammunition.

Bandits are the people who have failed to find or settle in a community, or just plain don't want to work for a living. They live near such places, and regularly raid them. Bandits can come from any origin, but many are soldiers who feel rejected by the people who blame them for their predicament.

Since the migration has taken the majority of able-bodied people away from them, most communities are populated only by the infirm and those physically unable to travel. This has left many of them forced to ask favours of passing travellers in return for help. The bandit problem has worsened now that old pacts no longer apply, and with so many more groups travelling past, the only real commodities are those which cannot be taken away. A few of the mining communities have realised that they could grow rich, if that's the word, on trade goods from people desperate for more ammunition. They have also realised that they are massively vulnerable.

Cities

People rarely live in the cities. It is true that the sickness that used to prevail there in mostly gone, but the cities are even more infertile than most places. Even fungi grow only sparsely, due to the absolute sterilisation of the ground. The centres of most cities are nothing more than collapsed heaps of rubble and dust, not even worth looking at except for as a testament to man's absolute stupidity. The suburbs are more useful, where in some places the heat may not have been enough to completely liquefy

everything. This is considered the best source of guns other than basic handguns. Gun stores used to abound in the suburbs, and every house had some kind of home defence, usually just a handgun. The gun stores also stocked more exotic firearms, such as shotguns and rifles. The stores, as well as the few police stations still standing have been mostly pillaged by now, but all sorts of unexpected things can be found in the remains of the cities.

Disease, sickness and infection

This is something people have had to come to terms with. The most common problem in the world, now, is Trench Foot. People who have to spend long periods of time in the wet mud and don't have an opportunity to dry their feet properly regularly, will be prone to this particularly nasty condition. It is not actually an infection, but rather an effect similar to Frostbite. It is caused by the coldness of having wet feet for a long time. It can be prevented by keeping your feet warm and dry – not very likely in the current scenarios. Boot stealing a good enough reason for some people to kill, since Trench Foot, untreated, can lead to loss of skin, flesh, toes and even the whole foot. No foot, no ship.

Other possibilities for sickness or infection from a muddy, swampy condition are many. Malaria might be considered, and open wounds can develop gangrene or other problems. Intestinal parasites could easily be a problem, in a world with so much standing water. Any cuts and grazes should be checked and treated as soon as possible to prevent infections, and any infections which do occur will need to be dealt with immediately.

Medical treatment

Good luck with that. All medical treatment is hard to pull off without the appropriate skills and equipment. Anything but first aid is going to be almost impossible. Oddly though, the theory goes that Penicillin comes from mould, and there's no reason why you can't get that. Interesting.

<u>Character Creation</u>

This is the process by which you create the reference sheet which will remind you what your character is good at. The personality of the character is harder to write down, and much harder to quantify, but the abilities you chose should help you to recall his strengths.

Before you do anything else, try to ascertain the answers to a few quick questions.

What's your name?
What do you look like?
What sort of place were you living?
What was your role there?
Why did you leave?
What did you do before the end of the war?
How well have you coped with your life since then?
Do you have family?
How are you feeling?

The last question is a starter to get you thinking about how the character feels at the start of the game. This is likely to change, but since at the start of the game you'll be in a neutral situation, this may give you some idea as to what the character feels when he's under no pressure.

You have 4 abilities: Body, Psyche, Finesse and Mind. Body dictates your physical size and strength and how much damage you can take. Psyche is a measure of your mental and emotional fortitude, how well you deal with pressure and trauma. Finesse represents your ability to do things that require precision. Shooting, cooking, throwing a rope over a hook, that sort of thing. Mind applies to knowledge, common sense and cunning. These basic attributes will be the basic scores you roll dice against to achieve things when there's a chance of failure.

 Each of your abilities begin at 2. You have 32 points to spend to create your character's basic profile. You can spend the points between these stats, up to 15 in each one (to a maximum of 17). You get 5 skills for free as well. 2 skills should represent who you were before the end of the war. 3 skills come from who you have become. You can also sacrifice points to gain skills on a 2 for 1 basis. If you like, you could chose the full set of skills you would have had before the war, then take a look to see which skills you would have lost. Electronics would be pretty useless since no such devices will function. Alternatively, if you were a soldier, most of that life would carry over well.

You choose the one word description for the skill, and the GM will determine whether it's too broad a category. In general, imagine if you could do a detailed course on it. Firearms are not all the same and handle fairly differently. Similarly, geology and geography are related, but you'd be hard pressed to study them both at once.

Example:
Shevy wants to build a Professor who was forced into the role of patriarch in his little community. He has tried to use his knowledge for their good, but no matter what he did he always ended up with a gun in his hand. She decides that the Professor was just sick of his life. Depression had crept in and he was virtually suicidal. He will now

do anything to get to the ship, since he has nothing more to lose. This is the basic concept of the character.

Shevy would like to allocate his points as such:
Body: OOO|OOO
Psych: OOO|OOO|OOO
Finesse: OOO|OOO|OOO|OO
Mind: OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OO

Shevy can then choose skills. These should reflect who the man was as well as who he is:
Rifles
Geography
Leadership
Mechanics
Diplomacy

If she wanted to give him another skilled area, such as Anthropology (study of the physical, social and cultural development of human being, probably more useful than you'd think) she'd have to drop points from somewhere. Also, she wants him to use pistols as well as rifles. So then his abilities would be:

Body: OOO|OOO|
Psych: OOO|OOO|OO
Finesse: OOO|OOO|OOO|O
Mind: OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO

Skills:
Pistols
Rifles
Geography
Anthropology
Leadership
Mechanics
Diplomacy

You may notice the Professor only has a Body of 6. This means that he's a small target for the purposes of targeting. It also means that he's likely to go down quickly if he gets hit in a fight.

When doing something that isn't combat, roll the dice and see where they fall. If you roll equal or lower than your linked ability, you do it. Skills let you roll and drop an additional die. This is called a Good die.

Example:

Professor Francis Lingham is trying to settle a dispute between 2 rival communities. They are willing to listen to him because he is well known, but need convincing. He rolls against his Intelligence, which is 12. He needs to get 12 or less to convince them. The Professor studied anthropology though, and knows something about cultural interaction. The game runner tells him to roll another die as well. The Prof rolls 1,3,5 and 6. He then drops the 6 for a total of 9. The arguing elders are convinced, and negotiate a peace.

On the other hand, you could be put upon to do something you've never done before, ever. In that case, the game runner may ask you to roll another die, but drop the lowest. This is a Bad die.

Example:

The Professor then finds that one of the tribespeople is going into labour. As an educated man they ask him to help, and in order to keep their trust he tries. The Professor has never studied medicine, especially obstetrics, so essentially he's making it up as he goes along. He rolls 4 dice against his Intellect. He rolls 3, 4, 2 and 5. dropping the 2 gives him a total of 12. He just makes the roll, and while it may be a bit rough, the baby is delivered. He's made a friend for life. Unfortunately, the Professor plans to leave tomorrow, and the peace he's negotiated may go with him. C'est la vie.

The bad die can also be applied to represent many situations which are not in the player's best interests. A character is forced to shoot an assault rifle having only used light pistols before. They are very unlikely to hit, and thus the GM may assign a bad die. The target could be beyond the normal range of the gun – another bad die. The player has a scope on the gun – normally this would add a Good die, but in this case, you'd be dropping a bad die.

Good and bad dice counteract each other, so in the end you roll the net number of dice allowed.

Example:

On the way back to his hut to collect his things, the Professor is accosted by a group of people who heard he was leaving. They're angry and want to stop him. The Prof tries to calm them down. He decides to use his knowledge of cultural development again to convince them they'll be okay without him. He gets a good die from his skill Anthropology. The people are desperate though, and the GM says there'll be a bad die because of their state of mind. It's also raining, cold and windy, and some of them are

still injured from recent run-ins with bandits. They're in no mood for intellectual reasoning, so the GM applies another bad die. The Prof makes his roll – he loses his good die to the first penalty and gains a bad die, so it's 4 dice, drop the lowest. He'd better be damn lucky to escape a fist fight.

Combat

The main form of combat is with guns. Fists are rarely fatal, knives are not easy to use and leave you open to repercussions. Either one of those is more likely to make you an enemy than rid you of one. Everyone you meet, anyone who isn't unable to travel, is going your way, and any of them would like you to fail to make sure they get their place.

Unfortunately for you, the world before the war was riddled with guns. People kept them in their houses on the most tenuous of arguments and whole stores were set up to sell them. After the war there was a scramble to recover as much of this ordnance as possible, and given the sheer numbers of guns, compared to the tiny percentage of the population which survived, guns are pretty prevalent.

Combat is broken down into 5 basic stages:

1. Turn order
2. Actions
3. Damage
4. Falling down
5. Repeat until you don't want or need to fight any more.

Firstly, you work out who's going first. This is a straight Mind roll, and one of the few times you'll need to do subtraction. Simply put, both of you roll, and you then compare how much you succeeded or failed by. Who ever succeeded by the most goes first. Draws are resolved simultaneously. Another proviso – the actions are declared in reverse order. The slowest person telegraphs his actions, allowing others to respond by changing their course of action.

Hitting is a simple roll of Finesse. The size and range of the target will apply to your dice roll in the form of good or bad dice. A large target (a body of 13 or more) will add a good die to your shot. A small target (body of 6 or less) will add a bad die. Also, shooting beyond the guns range will add a bad die. Shooting too far beyond the gun's range will give you an automatic failure. You can't go sniping with a shotgun. Shooting within the gun's range will give you a good die for increased accuracy.

Range is measured about as simply as you get. Close range is a one to one situation. You're looking your target in the eye, and he's looking back at you. Medium range is best described as a group v. group fight. Across a road, down a corridor, where you're looking at the whole person instead of the gleam in their eye. Long range is any-

thing farther than that. Maybe you're trying to take someone down from the other side of a valley with your rifle. Perhaps it's an ambush and you need to take out the driver of a vehicle so you can stop the damn thing. Use your judgement, or if not, use you GM's.

Once you've hit (hopefully), you can roll damage. This is a simple number of dice, totalled and subtracted from your target's total Body Ability. Once all your Body is gone, you die. If you're lucky, someone will morn you. Armour just subtracts from the number of boxes you tick off. Any Bleeding should be noted at this point; the damage from this is applied the next turn. You should also resolve any immediate factors like Death or Severing (see below).

Then comes the odd part. It is a well-documented fact that guns don't make you fall over. The amount of energy transferred from that tiny little bit of metal just isn't sufficient to force you over, but people fall down anyway. This is because of the psychological impact of being shot. As most gun fights are simply a number of people trying to disable each other, it is very important to know whether someone is going to continue to shoot back. If you are hit and you know it, you need to know if you have the sense to know that you can still fight or whether you'll fall to the ground and wait for your own death. A Psych roll should be made, with a failure indicating you're out of the fight unless something happens to snap you out of it. You get an additional good die to prevent falling down if it was not obvious that someone was shooting you.

When you shoot someone, you can either choose to aim for a body part or just go for basic centre of mass shots. If you don't specify, it's basically 50/50 whether you hit the Chest or Abdomen. A chance headshot is so unlikely as to be negligible. Certain body parts will inflict bad dice on your roll, but they also have their own factors to take into account. For instance, if you hit someone in the leg, you'll probably disable the leg. If you hit someone in the head, there's a pretty good chance they'll die.

Dodging is possible, of course, and a well-timed dodge instead of any other action should award your opponent a bad die, 2 if you're diving into cover. Going prone has the samke effect as dodging without cover.

Part	Penalty	Factors
Head	2 bad dice	Psych, Death 3
Neck	2 Bad dice	Death 3, Bleeding 3
Chest	1 bad die	Death 6
Abdomen	1 bad die	Bleeding 1
Arm	2 bad dice	Disabled 4

Part	Penalty	Factors
Leg	1 bad die	Disabled 6

Similarly, guns have factors, some of which will be the same as the factors body parts have. Basically, these factors are as follows:

Handgun: No special factors

Rifle: Bleeding 1

Shotgun: Bleeding 3, Psych, Severing

The factors listed above have the following effects:

- Bleeding – the amount of additional damage taken each round from bleeding. The number indicates how much bleeding damage is applied. The total bleeding currently being suffered from all sources is applied every turn, so if you shoot someone with a shotgun in the neck they'll be bleeding 5 damage a turn. If you haven't blown their head off, of course.

- Death – A shot to this location brings with it a chance of immediate death. Cops and soldiers are trained to know this, since that is the best way to ensure the complete incapacitation of a target. The number is simply how high you need to roll on a die to have hit something vital, like the brain or heart. If you do that much damage or higher, the GM can rule an automatic death. Otherwise, If you roll that number or higher on a die, that's it for you. GMs should note, however, that unless the nervous system is hit (brain or spinal cord), the target might still be able to perform one more action before keeling. It's been proven that even without a blood supply the brain can function for a further 10-15 seconds. In a case where it seems more feasible that the heart or it's major vessels have been hit, the victim can make a psych test to take one more action before expiring.

- Disabled – a shot to this location has a chance of rendering it useless. A shot to an arm is quite likely to hit the bone or a nerve bundle, whilst a shot to the leg has much more spare tissue to absorb a bullet impact. Like Death, just try to roll this much or higher.

- Psych: It is a well-documented fact that guns don't make you fall over. The amount of energy transferred from that tiny little bit of metal just isn't sufficient to force you over. But people fall down anyway. This is because of the psychological impact of being shot. A weapon or area with the psych factor adds a bad die to your Psych test not to fall down when shot.

- Severing: Solely the province of shotguns and large knives, Severing occurs when an appendage is so massively disrupted that it falls off, or as good as. This can only be applied to shots to the arms or neck. Damage of 6 or more leave the appendage effectively removed, for ever. Bleeding from that appendage is increased by 2, and an extra bad die is added to psych roll. Of course, if this happens with the neck, there is no psych roll. You've removed his head.

The GM may make up more factors as they see fit, and amend those factors for exceptional situations such as different ammunition, unusual physiology.

2 Examples of gun-based combat:

The Prof is facing 2 other travellers. They've decided they want his gun and ammo, and he has failed to talk them down intelligently. The Prof and the travellers roll off to see who'll get the drop on whom. The Prof has a Mind ability of 12, and rolls a total of 8 on his dice. The other 2 both have a Mind of 9, and roll 7 and 5. The Prof succeeds by 4, the goons succeed by 2 and 4 respectively. The Professor sees one of them go for his gun, and decides that instead if trying to intimidate them with his piece, he'll to spend his action firing his shotgun at that bandit. Unfortunately at the same time he pulls the trigger, the other bandit sees sense and tries to stop his friend from firing. Too late.

The Prof is virtually face to face with these guys. He's at short range with a shotgun, a short range weapon, so he gets no bonus from that. The goon isn't trying to dodge or anything, so no penalties for than. He is, however, well built and quite large. The Prof is getting a good die from the fact the guy is large. Unfortunately the shotgun is not his weapon of choice; he has no skill with it, so gets no die from that.He rolls against his finesse of 11 and gets 3,4,4,6. He drops the 6 to get a total of exactly 11. Good shooting. A shotgun has a damage of 3D6, so he rolls for that first. He gets 10. Ouch.

Now the victim needs to check whether he's going to drop from that shot. The Prof didn't choose a specific place to shoot, so the GM flips a coin (or rolls a die; whatever) to determine chest or abdomen. He gets abdomen. Noting that the poor guy is going to be bleeding 4 damage each turn after this one (3 from the shotgun, one from the body part itself), he then rolls the poor guy's Psych, with one bad die from the shotgun's intimidating nature (and the general painfulness and impact of the shot). He gets 3,2,5 and 3. He drops the 2 to get 11. This guy was no Navy Seal, and has a Psych ability of only 9. He collapses.

His friend, who was turning to speak to him, sees the whole thing. The gut shot, the river of blood and his companion now curled up wailing in the mud. Obviously, his action to talk his friend down is wasted. The Professor better hope he can pull off as good a shot next round, 'cause this guy is snarling mad.

Poor Prof, he might not have had to kill that poor man, but now that he's on the ground screaming, there's no way he can avoid trying to take down his enraged companion. That's life. You get used to it.

Example 2:

The surviving goon, Charlie, from the previous fight cut his losses and ran. The Prof tried to take him down with a parting shot, but once he moved away, the shotgun's general inaccuracy ensured that he only hit mud. Charlie wants revenge, and he certainly doesn't think the Prof deserves to get on that ship. He 'finds' a rifle in a small community, and sets up an ambush for the unsuspecting Professor.

He waits behind a ruined shack near the start of a ridge. The Prof will almost definitely go that way since the valleys on either side are up to his waist in mud. When poor Charlie sees the Professor approaching, he raises his gun for a shot. The rifle has a range of long, so he won't get a penalty for accuracy at this point. However, Charlie wants to be sure to hit, so he waits until the Professor is a little closer – medium range. He gets a good die for that. The Professor has a body of 8, so he counts as a normal target. Charlie is still angry, and decides to go for a head shot. He's not bad with a gun, after all. He's practised with rifles, and has the skill. Overall, it's plus one good die for the skill, another for the medium range, and 2 bad dice for the headshot. Charlie rolls straight 3 dice. With his finesse of 14, he manages a roll of 6, 6 and 5. Bad luck Charlie!

The Professor hears the gunshot and the buzz of the bullet past his ear. He turns to dash for cover as Charlie takes a second shot. The Professor is actively dodging now, so Charlie gets an extra bad die penalty. He rolls again. 6, 4, 2 and 2. He drops one of he 2's for a total of 12. A hit! And a rifle has a damage of 2d6, so the Professor seems destined for the next world. He rolls his 2 dice – the GM says he only needs to do 3 damage to kill the Prof outright. And the dice land as – Snake eyes! The only possible roll which might not kill him. The Prof's player breathes a sign of relief, and nervously picks up his die. Praying for an ear, his scalp, even his jawbone, he rolls. A 2 - The Prof survives. He still has to make a falling down check though, with one bad die for the head shot. This time he is not so lucky. The Professor cowers in the mud cradling his mutilated ear, while Charlie starts to sprint over to finish the job.

Melee combat

Knife or fistfights are similar, but the factors Death and Disabled from the body parts do not apply, as they are specific aspects. The Falling Down step is also removed; unless you can seriously injure or incapacitate someone, they can keep fighting you to the end. That's why people prefer guns. The Psych factor for the head applies only to bludgeoning attacks. Also, bleeding from body parts is reduced by 1 for knife fights, so that the only real bleeding would come from the weapon itself. Fists do not cause bleeding.

Guns

Type	Damage	Range	Factors
Handgun	1d6	Medium	None
Shotgun	3d6	Short	Bleeding 3, Psych, Severing
Rifle	2d6	Long	Bleeding 1
Assault Rifle	2d6	Short (medium with single shots)	Psych. Bleeding 1

Many more possible guns and ammo combinations are possible, but beyond the scope of this list. Such things are so remarkably rare in this world, it will be GM discretion as to whether they're used and what effect they have.

Knives

Type	Damage	Factors
Small	1d3 (halve your roll, round up)	none
Medium	1d6	Bleeding 1
Large (like a machete)	2d6	Bleeding 2, Psyche, Disable, Severing

Why Knives are less good than Guns

The Professor succeeds a Psych check to get his act together before Charlie gets close enough to put a bullet in his brain from his handgun. He pulls a wicked looking dagger from his boot and swings at Charlie. He succeeds at a finesse roll and slashes Charlie wickedly across the chest. Charlie takes 4 points of damage, then shoots the Professor squarely in the skull.

Or

The Professor succeeds a Psych check to get his act together before Charlie gets close enough to put a bullet in his brain from his handgun. He pulls a small pistol from his boot and fires at Charlie. He succeeds at his finesse roll and blows a chunk out of Charlie's shoulder – 4 damage. Charlie rolls and fails the Falling Down check, and goes over. He'll probably recover quickly since it wasn't a huge gun, but before that the Prof will get a shot off. So long Charlie.

Hope that makes some sense to you. Feel free to carry a knife if you want, but it will most likely be a tool or a last resort.
Healing is a simple matter. Without treatment, you can heal one point of Body a day. This will also carry a possibility of infection. Roll against your Body ability. Or more likely, the GM will do this for you. Creative application of potential infections and their crazy effects on you are the domain of the person who wants to make the plots. Expect madness, hallucinations and a painful nasty death.

With treatment, you still need to roll for infection, but you get a good die, and you can regain 2 Body. And just for in case it happens, proper medicines can prevent infection entirely. Antiseptics, disinfectants and antibiotics, a clean room and a doctor who washes his hands. Like I said before, good luck.

<u>GM stuff – mostly advice, so players can read this too</u>

This game shouldn't just be about killing people and taking their stuff. Everyone around you has been suffering the effects of the aftermath, and everyone is in the same boat. The characters would have been part of a group before they set out, and could well be feeling more like companions than ever before, bound in a purpose. Their simple ambition, to go home, should stand out in stark contrast to the realities of the things they have to do to achieve it.

The gunshot wound rules are not there to allow players to revel in the destruction they cause, but rather for the GM to show them the dangers they themselves face. It should be clear when wounds are described to the players when they have ended a life and how. A successful Death roll on a chest wound would result in a massive gushing of blood from the chest. A look of panic in the victims eyes when they fail their psych check, or desperate rage followed by one final act of defiance. Guns are scary things in the real world, but maybe a lot of people don't know why that is. Carrying a gun gives you a sense of power but facing one makes you feel helpless, just because your life can be turned off with the push of a button.

The setting itself is deliberately vague. This is simply because of the psychological nature of the game itself. The aim is to make people question whether they deserve the reward they're after once they get there. The ship is a wonderful dream, something so desired that the characters would want to steal, cheat, and kill to get ahead. Whether you want to encourage that, or make it into some kind of morality play is up to you. The constants of harshness that the characters want to escape, and reminders of what they are trying to achieve, what's on the line, are the key factors to this game.

At no point has it been said that the bombs which destroyed the world were nuclear in nature. Again, this has been deliberate. Some of the effects could be attributed to nukes, such as the EM pulse, but others are more vague. The firestorm which engulfed cities, the madness which struck at people while the bombs were fall, and the continuing lack of radio transmissions could all be indicative of different technologies. Since no-one really knows now what happened, this allows you to use potential effects outwith the normal scope of nuclear bombs. Mutations could occur, true, or effects could be more insidious. Use your imagination.

This game is by its very nature limited. One day they will get there and they will either be taken up to paradise or find nothing awaiting them but an angry crowd of similarly forsaken souls. This would be the big climax, and it should be up to you what happens then. As time goes by and they draw closer to their goal, the characters will meet more and more other travellers, increasing the chances of conflict immensely. Right up until the moment the ship is in sight, anything goes with these other non-player characters. They are as desperate as the players to get where they're going. Keep up the pace, the tension and the threat level until the very last moment.

Ultimately, the game and the players are yours, and you will best know how to handle them both in any given situation. Good luck.

Character Sheet

Name: Age:
Background:

	Small	Medium	Large
Body:	OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OO
Psych:	OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OO
Finesse:	OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OO
Mind:	OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OOO|OO

Skills:

Guns:

Type	Damage	Range	Factors

Other equipment:

Final Thanks

There are 3 main people I'd like to mention.

Liam O'Connor, my fiancé and FLGS owner, who encourages me with every crack-addled scheme I come up with, and who knows far too much about guns. He has also been inflicting his theories on game design on me for months now. I guess it rubbed off.

Malcolm Craig, actual pro game designer, who has done me the honour of showing me his work in progress and of writing so many games in such I short time I just knew I could do it too.

Gregor Hutton, who is a man of such remarkable enthusiasm and spontaneous creativity that it just seems like fun to following his footsteps.

I have not been a reader of The Forge or a discusser of concepts. I have been a GM though, and a player, and I hope that this setting will provide a seed of adventure for those who read it. I know there are many, many flaws, but I hope to learn from them all with your help.

One final thank you, to the FBI. Their discussion of gun wound theory was invaluable.

http://www.firearmstactical.com/pdf/fbi-hwfe.pdf