

# A GRAVE PLACE

CONTENT FOR DYSTOPIA RISING LIVE



This book is intended to work in tandem with living documentation provided on the Dystopia Rising LARP Network website. This publication is designed as part of the living narrative of the Dystopia Rising Live player experience, via the Dystopia Rising LARP Network.

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## WHAT IS A DYSTOPIA RISING LIVE BOOK?

The world of **Dystopia Rising**, much like the survivors within the world, is very much alive. It is a living space where players participate in the live events, where the world shapes the characters, and the characters shape the world. The **Dystopia Rising LARP Network** has events that impact the shape of the game world. To keep a chronicle of that living narrative, we have introduced the **Dystopia Rising Live** book series.

These books are hosted and written by the people at Most Improbable. The founders of Most Improbable include the original creator of the **Dystopia Rising** universe as well as the only other person who has written as much content and material for **Dystopia Rising** across all of its forms.

We do ask that you do not print and sell these books, or host them on another website, or otherwise take the work that we have created. We want to make books and host them and provide them for your enjoyment. However, we do not want them taken and used to drive traffic to other websites as a form of marketing or sold for profit.

All of the artwork within this book is either contracted or licensed from artists for our use. We pay for it for this specific use, and we would appreciate it if you respected the artists we hire by not stealing, reproducing, or recreating the art without their permission.

Allow me to welcome you on a journey that melds the familiar with the innovative, the traditional with the contemporary. As a writer, game designer, and gamer who has spent years exploring the intersection of education, technology, and human curiosity, I am excited to introduce you to **Dystopia Rising Live**.

As living documents, the content grows and evolves over time. This book is not just a text; it is an evolving experience. It is designed with the flexibility and adaptability that modern readers need, living and growing with its readership.

In the past, our digital content for the **Dystopia Rising LARP Network** was limited to static documentation and print book-format publications. This prevented us from adapting, changing, and improving our content at the rates we wished to for supporting the games (and players) of the LARP. While we love books, and publications, we found that relying on the standardized format primarily used for tabletop role-playing games did not fit the needs of a live action role-playing network.

As we add new content and resources to the library of content under the **Dystopia Rising Live** banner, notations for cross-references between them. With this digital technology, we will integrate cross references and notations will be able to open additional books and go directly to the relevant page section. Mechanic focused documentation, like character creation or game mechanics, will be designed with the minimum needed resources in the document by leveraging optional “read more” links that will open the narrative focused publications.

This does mean that we will be abandoning some traditions of game content publication. We will no longer be producing print-copy versions of our books. Print copy publications restrict how often game materials can be updated. Once people purchases a print copy of a book, we cannot update that book without making their existing physical copy obsolete.

We also will not be selling the books. Instead, these will be published online for free.

Welcome back to the apocalypse.

Let's make something magical out of the debris.

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# FORWARD

This book covers the Infection, life and death, and the timeline of the “Fall of Humanity” in the world of Dystopia Rising. Since we explain so much of how the world works (explicitly and without vagaries), it’s important to remember that if you’re a player and want to keep a sense of mystery in your game, then you may not want to read this book.

We also understand that some players may play characters that derive a large portion of their purpose by diving into the secrets of the Mortis. If you have theories that don’t match up to what is written here, we understand that you may have a negative reaction. If the storytellers at your local games have created stories that weave their version of what they believed happened into play, you might find conflict points in regards to continuity. This is part of the reason why games in the LARP have been told to not write their own “universal lore” for aspects of the game world outside of their control – because eventually it might get written down.

There are a few ways to handle negative responses you might have regarding story conflict. The first is that you can read it, decide what your character believes or has heard is the truth, and have your character believe that “their truth is right.” This is a completely acceptable approach as long as you, as the player, understand that your character’s devotion to a different idea doesn’t make that alternative history true. The second approach you can take is to just not read any further. If you don’t read the details in this book, and others do, you might have a more organic transformation of narrative. Again, you will have to accept that your character’s “in-character knowledge” is not infallible and is not the same as your “out of character knowledge” as a player.

Another way is to just switch the direction of your viewpoints, beliefs, and understanding of the world as a whole without any need for explanation. Because we control our characters and what they think and feel and know, we can just choose to change their beliefs.

You may find content in this book that contradicts prior editions and releases. As much as we make an effort for constant continuity, on occasion we have to make a narrative break to improve and evolve a story for the next generation. The Mortis Amaranthine started as a plot arc run by Michael Pucci in year one of Dystopia Rising because a group of players had questions about death, and over two decades it has grown and expanded into a key portion of the narrative of the world. With that in mind and for the health of the larger narrative, we’re not keeping every story created regarding the Mortis as a universal truth.

With that aside, please understand that this is your last spoiler warning regarding the Infection, the Mortis, and other aspects related to death and regrowth in the Dystopia Rising universe.



## INTO THE DARK

*Sometimes people ask me why I wear a mask – why I hide my face. Many of us do. After all, if you don't know the face of the person who drags you to hell, then you can't come after them for revenge. It also means I don't get lauded for when I do my job right, but I don't mind. I prefer to be an anonymous figure in the dark rather than a villain in the light.*

*I still remember the first time I went into the Mortis. I was a young woman – about 20 or so. I was full of hope and good intentions. I thought that by delving into the Mortis, I could help others. I could save others. How naive I was. There are no heroes in our world – not really.*

*A few days before, my teacher told me that I was ready. I shadowed him when he interviewed the patient and prepared him for the inevitable plunge into death. His name was Rotter – a Yorker with green veins that showed up starkly beneath his skin. He was a nervous man, always looking over his shoulder and talking too fast for anyone's good. At the time, I wondered why my teacher thought he was a good candidate for surgery. Sure, Rotter wanted to live. But I wasn't sure how well his clearly fractured psyche would do when we went into the Mortis.*

*Little did I know that it was the whole point.*

*I remember how we stood in the Morgue deep beneath the city of Old York. It smelled of rust and mold, of damp and death. A few candles flickered next to the makeshift table made of a slab of metal that had been procured from who-knew-where. Shadows danced, glinting off the rabbit mask my teacher wore and transforming us all, temporarily, into monsters. I cast a sympathetic glance toward Rotter, who was biting one, dirty fingernail to the point of non-existence.*

*“Are you ready, Rotter?” My teacher asked. He had a way of making his voice resonant and soft at the same time – as if he were performing for an audience of one.*

*Rotter spat the fingernail that he had bitten off to one side. I noticed that his thumb was bleeding, blood turned black in the gloom. He offered my teacher a yellow-toothed and nervous smile, his voice trembling as he spoke, “Yeah.”*

*My teacher gestured toward the table and Rotter approached it hesitantly. He placed one, cut and dirty hand on it, stroking the surface before he hopped on top of it and slowly lay down. My teacher approached and handed him several, small pills.*

*He spoke quietly, “Swallow these. And then we'll begin.”*

*Rotter looked at the pills for a long moment before he swallowed them. It was only a minute before his eyes fluttered closed and he stopped breathing. I let out a deep breath that I didn't know I was holding.*

*“Is that it?” I asked. “Shall we begin the surgery?”*

*My teacher turned his rabbit mask toward me, studying me for a moment. Then, he held out his other hand, holding more pills, “Your turn.”*

*I stared at the pills in his hand, cold shock going through me, “What do you mean?”*

*He didn't respond, simply holding them out.*

*I swallowed. I knew what he wanted. I knew what was expected. I glanced once more toward Rotter, who was cold and dead on the table. I took the pills and without hesitation, swallowed them dry.*

*I sat down quickly, propping myself against the crumbling, stone wall. I felt my heart speed up and then slow. Blood rushed to my face and my vision tunneled.*

*And then there was nothing.*



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Mortis Amaranthine. Welcome to nowhere and nothing. Welcome to death. In the world of Dystopia Rising, this is just the beginning – a chance for you to experience rebirth after the end.

When the world fell and the zombies rose, the fungal Infection began to take over the rest of humanity. Eventually, these people evolved into various different Strains depending on which type of the fungal Infection contaminated their ancestors. This allowed them to come back even after they died – emerging from local Morgues as they clawed their way back to life.

However, death is not a pleasant experience – whether you come back from it or not. When a Strain dies, they enter what is known as the Mortis Amaranthine, a liminal space where they experience the death of the ego. As their bodies are slowly knit back together with the Infection, their minds try to cope with what is happening to them – often leaving them with horrific memories and nightmares.

In this book, you'll learn more about death, the Mortis Amaranthine, procedures done by Mortis practitioners, and the timeline of events that led to the post-apocalypse. Keep in mind that this is information that your character might not know, since it's steeped in mystery, rumor, and hearsay within the world of Dystopia Rising.

## IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

When it comes to understanding the Mortis, you need to understand the lingo that goes with it. Within the world of Dystopia Rising, those who delve into death have terminology they use to describe their work and aspects of the Mortis.

When people use these terms incorrectly, it can lead to confusion. To avoid this, we're setting a clear, unified foundation from the beginning. Whether you're portraying a Mortis Practitioner or are a storyteller, it's important that you're familiar with these terms to fully understand the concepts discussed in the later chapters.

### GRAVE DIVES

A Grave Dive is a catch-all term that describes a number of different procedures used within the liminal space of the Mortis Amaranthine. In particular, Grave Dives are used to complete Necrology procedures, though can also be used to complete mental procedures. This process requires a Morgue (entrance point) and a Necrology procedure (process and materials).

In particular, Grave Dives involve performing psionic feats or biological processes to trick the organic functions of the Mortis into identifying the participants as being "dead." Because these processes and procedures convince the Mortis that the individuals are an unliving extension of its biomass, it allows individuals to observe and engage the Mortis without completely losing their sense of self.

All Grave Dives have a very real threat of death or mental Fractures to them. Events within the Mortis, even when choosing to enter willingly instead of entering via the process of death and reconstruction, can cause the individual participating in the procedure to lose Infection, gain Fractures, or potentially contract diseases or other mutations.

### IMPRINT

Imprints are a common term that is used to describe the impressions that people and things leave behind in the Sunless Garden and, occasionally, the Mortis. These are not actual people or things, but are impressions and memories. Because these are memories and not actual people or things, they can be flawed and biased depending on how they are changed through the process of being in a liminal space.

While it's possible to tap in to learn information through imprints, there is no guarantee that the information is true. Various imprints, as an example, make up the memories of most Full Dead when they are created via the Mortis. Reclaiming all of these imprints to make a full person, though, is not something anyone can do. Once an individual enters the Mortis, it's rare for even one memory to become an imprint – let alone all of their memories.





## **INFECTION**

In the game setting of Dystopia Rising, “The Infection” was one of the central triggers that caused the catastrophic events that reshaped humanity and the world. The Infection caused the apocalypse, and with that, is almost universally present in the post-apocalypse game setting of Dystopia Rising. The Infection is the reason why wounds mend quicker than they did with humans, why scrap and resources seem to partially regrow over years if left unattended, and it is the foundation of how Lineages and Strains exist in the highly radioactive world.

The Infection is the shared biological network that allows Strains to be reconstructed after death. It is also a network of shattered memories in a liminal space (see Mortis), and is as much a building block of reality as carbon is.

Each time a character dies, and passes through the Mortis, there is mental and physical stress that the character goes through. This results in the character having mental Fractures, as well as limited health upon return. Each time a character dies (both player characters and non-player characters) one to two more zombies are introduced into the universe made of the broken process of attempting to rebuild a dead person. These zombies appear somewhere within the world, and don’t always appear immediately or locally.

## **MORGUE**

A Morgue is either a naturally occurring or engineered location on a site that contains excess Infection. It is an area where Strains are more likely to emerge after death, and allows for easier access to and from the Mortis. Morgues are also required as focus points for Necrology, Grave Dives, and character post-death scenes. For a Morgue to support any sort of Necrology engineering, it requires some degree of engineering work and upkeep.

Morgues are important. They are a way of ensuring that an individual who has died and is being reconstructed comes out of a relatively safe and predictable location. Without Morgues, there is a great deal that can go wrong (see “No Morgue Consequences”).

Morgues should be located in an area that is secluded, private, and has very clear markings of where players can and cannot travel without some use of Necrology. Morgues should have a private area for players to have their post-death scene without people walking in, and should have some sort of waiting area for players looking to use mechanics to potentially enter a post-death scene.

Setting an environment of a space “suspended between life and death” is important for your Morgue role-play space, and will help your players engage with post-death scenes more easily.

## **MORTIS**

The Mortis is short for the Mortis Amaranthine which is one of the most unique aspects of the Dystopia Rising game universe. In Dystopia Rising, the Mortis Amaranthine is a pivotal element that shapes the cycle of life and death. It functions as a vast network of information, deeply embedded in the game’s post-apocalyptic setting. When characters die, the Mortis Amaranthine plays a crucial role in their rebirth process. It absorbs the deceased’s body, including their bones, blood, and memories, assimilating these into its complex organic structures. This absorption contributes to a vast bank of information within the Mortis Amaranthine, akin to a repository of life experiences and identities.

The Mortis transcends the conventional understanding of a tangible entity or a physical place. It is less an observable thing and more of an experiential phenomenon that exists just outside the perception of people alive in the wasteland. It’s a process that involves the dissolution of the individual identity and a rebirth process suspended in an invisible mycelium network that carries not just biological forms, but the essence of the intangible concepts of memory, identity, and emotions. A person’s experience in the Mortis not only relies on their own self, but also taps into the networked consciousness of the Infection.

## **NECROLOGY**

Necrology includes the collective sciences that involve the Morgue, Grave Diving, and the Infection. Any procedures, blueprints, or mechanics that involve manipulating, engaging with, or entering the liminal space of the Mortis fall under the umbrella of Necrology. In particular, it includes hard sciences relating to the Infection such as engineering, chemistry, and biology as well as soft sciences such as Grave Diving, Infection manipulation, and others. There is also the argument that Aberrant-related procedures are not a hallmark of Necrology, but are instead innate abilities that have been developed over time.

## **NECROPOLIS**

A Necropolis isn't a town or a structure. Instead, it's a region of concentrated Infection. While Morgues can be built on smaller areas of concentrated Infection at what is known as a Morgue Site, a Necropolis can encompass miles rather than feet.

A Necropolis can be extremely dangerous for those that live near one or within one. Because of the concentration of Infection, Morgues can't be appropriately built within them. This is largely since Morgues have the same level of concentrated Infection as a Necropolis does, which means it's a bit like putting a drop of water into a glass of water; there is no real separation if you do so.

In practicality, this means that Strains that live in or near a Necropolis find themselves emerging from various areas within the Necropolis after they die – which can be an extremely dangerous prospect for the area (no one wants to come back from death underwater, or in the middle of a zombie horde, as examples). Not only that, but a Necropolis will attract larger and more powerful undead and may also cause strange phenomena to occur around it. The Green Way within the Lone Star region is one such example.

Most Strains avoid building anything on or near a Necropolis due to the fact that they can't build a Morgue. However, there are those who still do so since Necrology Stations are much easier to create in these areas, though they are often plagued by extremely dangerous conditions.

## **PSIONIC CRYSTALS**

Psionic crystals are concentrated, crystallized Infection that act as attractants to other Infectious agents, such as undead and Lineages when they die. They also all vibrate at the same frequency, causing a phenomenon that allows them to be used as components for various different projects, including building Morgues.

Because Psionic crystals are made up of concentrated Infection, they're useful as a way to connect to the Mortis. While they are used in many Necrology procedures because of this, they are also useful to Aberrants as a way to connect to their abilities. Psionic crystals can be found in areas where the Infection of the area has been damaged by radiation over many generations. These crystals form similar to a scab over a wound, forming over repeated long term destruction.

With that being said, Psionic crystals have their limitations. They cannot store memories, act independently, or cause phenomena to occur without being incorporated into something else. Instead, Psionic crystals are, effectively, crafting components used when dealing with the Mortis.



## SUNLESS GARDEN

The Sunless Garden is not technically part of the Dystopia Rising IP. With that in mind, you will only find the Sunless Garden at specific events that have licensed the Sunless Garden from the creator. If, as a game, you'd like to use the Sunless Garden, you must reach out to the IP license holder ahead of time.

The Sunless Garden is not connected to the Mortis or the Infection. Instead, if anything, the Sunless Garden is a lack of Infection. This phenomenon occurs in rare locations across the wasteland where nothing grows and even animals avoid the area.

Similar to experiencing the Mortis, a Strain has to enter a death-like state to fully experience the Sunless Garden. They enter death, and then push further into a liminal space. The longer a Strain stays within this space, the more Infection they lose. If they stay too long, they may never leave.

With the dangers that this entails, you may wonder why a person would bother entering this space in the first place. The Sunless Garden has a very unique property that makes it fully different from the Mortis. While the Mortis can provide biased information based on experience and memory, the Sunless Garden provides unassailable truths.

When you take a step and place your foot down on the ground, you can leave a print behind that shows the truth of your passing. It's not your actual foot, but it is a sign of what once was there. Similarly, the Sunless Garden houses "imprints" of what came before. This means that sages, scholars, and those insane enough to want information more than life may enter the Sunless Garden.

There are also those who believe that this region can be harnessed for other experimentation and other purposes. However, many believe that it isn't worth the risk.

From a game runner's perspective, the Sunless Garden is a very specific, black box experience that deals with the themes of emotion, violence, death, and tragedy. It's not an experience for everyone.

## ZOMBIES

Zombies are the undead husks of what were once Strains. Every time a Strain dies, their body is rebuilt, and a corpse (or several copies) rises with the Infection. These zombies are normally shuffling bodies – good for little else other than swarming.

However, when a zombie is "killed," the Infection doesn't stop its process. Instead, it tries to replicate and rebuild it again. As zombies are destroyed and rebuilt, they mutate and change, resulting in a wide variety of types of zombies that Strains have to deal with on a daily basis. These dead corpses become more monstrous over time, resulting in truly horrific beings.

Fortunately, zombies are not intelligent creatures. Because they are fueled by the Infection, they are simply walking bodies that seek to feed and overwhelm the area around them, similar to a fast-growing fungus. This means that zombies will always seek out living Strains to feed on.

Because zombies are, effectively, walking husks of Infection, they do resonate more strongly with those that have Aberrant skills. This means that zombies will seek out settlements with an excess of Aberrants within them.

Unfortunately, as long as Strains continue to die, there will continue to be zombies in the world. This means that while zombies are an ever-present threat, Strains need to adapt to them as part of post-apocalyptic life.

## WHAT IS THE MORTIS AMARANTHINE?

A long time ago, the fungal Infection claimed the world. It wound its way through the water supply, leaching into people, plants, and animals. Now, this is our new existence – where death is not the end.

The fungus that spread across our planet has the same drive that most life forms do: replicate, survive, and reproduce. It doesn't understand complex machinery. It doesn't understand the emotional toil of relationships. Instead, it aims to continue its existence.

As objects and life forms were infected, something unintended happened. A mycelium network formed, interlinking the world as a whole. This network became more complex over time, and as the Strains evolved, they tapped into it – experiencing things after death that felt almost as real as life. This network is encouraged to grow in places like Morgues, where there is less radiation, and where the fungal Infection can flourish. This, in turn, allows Strains to return to life in a specific location rather than in a potentially unsafe environment.

So what is the Mortis Amaranthine? It's both a liminal space that Strains experience, as well as a fungal network that spreads across the globe. When a Strain enters the Mortis Amaranthine, they're entering a liminal space where they leave their body behind and where their consciousness melds into this network. The Mortis is not a thinking entity. It is a fungal network that rebuilds Strains.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF DEATH

When a Strain dies, when their heart stops beating, when the breath leaves their lungs, their body rots at an extraordinary speed. In a matter of minutes, their flesh sloughs from their bones and then their bones sink into the ground. However, their consciousness lives on within the fungal network known as the Mortis Amaranthine. And that's where they experience ego death as their body is rebuilt.

This ego death is a fundamental disintegration of their self-identity, similar to a metaphysical unraveling, where the boundaries between self and the Mortis Amaranthine blur. The Strain's memories, experiences, and personal narrative also dissolve, merging into the collective repository of the Mortis Amaranthine. This phase represents a death not just of the physical body, but of the very essence of who they were – their hopes, fears, and dreams becoming indistinct and scattered within the vast network of the Mortis.

In this state of ego death, there is a profound loss of self. The familiar anchor points that define one's individuality – personal history, relationships, and even a name – fade away. This experience can be both terrifying and liberating as the individual confronts the impermanence and fluidity of their existence. The Mortis Amaranthine, with its vast and impersonal nature, strips away the layers of their identity, leaving a raw, undefined essence of being.

As the process of rebirth commences, the Strain regains perception, albeit in a fundamentally altered state. This reconstitution of self is disorienting, as fragments of their old identity clash and coalesce with new elements introduced by the Mortis Amaranthine. Aspects of self doubt, revelation, and pressing nihilistic memories flood to the surface. During this time, the Strain may experience flashes of unfamiliar memories or emotions, remnants of other recent lives and experiences absorbed by the Mortis. This phase is similar to assembling a puzzle without knowing the final picture, as pieces of their old self fuse with aspects they cannot recognize.

The character's re-emergence into the world is marked by confusion and a sense of alienation as they come out of a Morgue. They have to reconnect to not only who they are, but also how to interact with a world that may now feel strange and uninviting. Strains often grapple with existential questions about their identity and purpose as they come to terms with the changes in their journey through the Mortis Amaranthine. A Strain's mind is forever altered by the experience. After all, it's traumatic to have your body rebuilt after death – and the realization that your body is simply a copy is not something that most people are ready for.

# HISTORY OF MORTIS AMARANTHINE AND THE INFECTION

The Mortis Amaranthine didn't appear all at once. Instead, it developed over hundreds of years. The fungal Infection that caused the first zombies to materialize evolved and spread, twisting humanity into mutants that could withstand the harsh realities of the new world. The Mortis Amaranthine evolved with them, eventually transforming into what it is in the modern day of the post-apocalypse.

In order to understand the Mortis Amaranthine, we need to take a look at the timeline of the apocalypse. Please keep in mind that while this information is interesting, and helps develop a deeper and better understanding of the game world, knowing this information has very little impact or relevance for the modern survivor in the Dystopia Rising universe. This is the same way that individuals who are scholars may find these points interesting from a historic perspective, but they do not help provide food or munitions for the average survivor in the wasteland to survive.

Most of this history is steeped in rumor and hearsay. No one in the post-apocalypse believes that there were once towering cities where all it took to get water was to turn on a faucet – or that farms produced so much food that they were subsidized by the government. Instead, the people of the post-apocalypse largely believe these are fantasies. “Once upon a time there was a shining city, where there was food aplenty and everyone was safe.” There are even people that think “humans” are a myth – a species that was godlike in their excess and their technological prowess.

Instead, the people of the post-apocalypse are largely concerned with everyday problems, such as the ever-present threats of zombies and Raiders. When they find relics from the past, they only speculate about what once was.

## HOW THE MORTIS CAME TO LIFE

The Mortis Amaranthine originally wasn't part of the core world of Dystopia Rising. Instead, it was introduced during the first six months of play as a plot arc. The brainchild of Michael Pucci, the Mortis Amaranthine eventually became an integral part of the Dystopia Rising universe.

During the first year of the game, players wanted to know what happened to a person after death. The Mortis Amaranthine was originally a liminal space that characters experienced during death, serving as a transformative zone before their eventual rebirth. By design, the Mortis was a space where the concept of “losing a life” could instead become “gaining a unique experience in death.” This meant that players were less likely to experience negative bleed when their character lost a life, and also allowed a player a few moments to decompress after an intense scene.

As time went on, players wanted to know more about the Mortis Amaranthine and how it made the universe tick. Over many years, we released the narrative of the Mortis through gameplay and publications, explaining how the Infection and the Mortis connected to one another, and how it tied into the old world of humans dying off.

Part of this story was that of the “Infernal Pastry.” This was a narrative device where any small genre infraction could be explained away. If it was something you shouldn't find in the game world, then it could be explained as the Mortis attempting to recreate something from the forgotten age of the Fall. This allowed players to eat their modern packaged snack and learn that they should try to hide that sort of genre breaking item from view. Turning a pre-packaged “infernal pastry” into an unwrapped or re-wrapped cream-filled cake was now an option without having to break out the genre-police.

Since such a large portion of the secrets of the game universe were tied into the Mortis Amaranthine and the Infection, players wanted to experiment and dive into the Mortis to learn more about how the universe ticked. This meant that we introduced Graverobbers, Mortis related procedures, and the ability to regain Infection. The liminal space of the Mortis now was as much of a part of the narrative of Dystopia Rising as zombies and radiation were.



## IT'S YOUR FAVORITE

*Wait in line for your creme brulee latte. Be slightly annoyed that the line is so long, but get a vanilla bean scone at the front to make up for it. It's your favorite. Grab some fruit leather, while you're at it. It's organic. You're not quite sure what that means, but you've been told it's good for you. It's like "natural" and "wholesome." The woman behind the cash register smiles at you and then she glances at her phone. You're annoyed that she's paying more attention to her phone than you. You pay and grab your latte, then snap a picture of your latte and scone. You type out "Ready for the holidays!" with a smiley face on social media, and wait for the dopamine.*

*You get in your car, glancing at your phone to see how many likes your picture got. You don't consider the increasing electronic waste crisis in India, where children pick through the trash to make a living amidst toxic fumes. Instead, you think about how you still need to do some holiday shopping. Do it online – look at some pictures, click, credit card number, done. Easy. No need to think too hard about it.*


*You drive into work and hop out of your car. You don't think about the terrorist bombings in London that have injured over 700 people. You think about how your latte is too sweet to finish. You toss the rest in the garbage on the way into the office building as you munch your scone. It's made with real vanilla beans that were harvested by children in a third world country. It's organic. It's your favorite.*

*You take the stairs to be healthier as you break out your sugar-laden fruit leather, finishing it as you climb. You don't want to hear about how 230,000 people died after a tsunami swept over Thailand and Indonesia. Instead, you consider changing the picture on your phone screen to something more festive. Maybe a wintry landscape or some lights on a tree. You hear the faint sound of music from the lobby. It's your favorite.*

*When you reach the top of the stairs, your phone buzzes, you look down and notice it's the national emergency alert. You assume it's a test, but something catches your eye. It says to shelter in place.*

*You enter the office. Your colleagues are tapping away at their computers. Some are discussing the alert that just went out, but most assume it's something weather related. You assume the same – or perhaps it's protesters. There have been a few incidents lately in major cities, but not in yours.*

*You sit at your desk and regret throwing the rest of your latte away. You'll get another one at lunch. You look at your phone. Thirty-six likes. The dopamine hits.*



*When the second alert goes out, you largely ignore it. You need to get work done. Holiday music burbles from the office kitchen, and you're slightly annoyed. You put on your headphones.*

*That's when it starts. It's slow at first. No one notices at first. No one cares at first. The sirens, the curfews, the orders to shelter in place. It becomes the new normal. Normal. As if anything is normal. You get pizza delivered to your door along with your alcohol. Every day is a celebration when you can't go into work. Why bother getting out of your pajamas? Stay comfortable. Stay safe. The news tells you of how bad it is elsewhere, but it's not bad where you are. Those poor people. You post online about how your heart goes out to the victims in Chicago. You get 47 likes.*

*The dopamine hits.*

*The riots begin in your city. Delivery stops. X's appear on windows. Doors are boarded up. You post on social media, "I'm scared. I can't believe this is happening." You get 34 likes. People comment, "Our hearts go out to you."*

*The dopamine hits.*

*It's too late to get out. It's too late to do anything. You pull the curtains in front of your window to hide the sight of the woman throwing up in the street before she staggers, falls over. You shut the blinds against the corpses. You still get alerts to shelter in place. You follow them. You can't sleep. What else can you do? Where else could you go?*

*The internet goes out. Your neighbor says it's intentional – that the government is in on it. You shut the door when you notice his eyes are bloodshot.*

*You put on reruns of movies, keeping the volume low. You don't want to be bothered.*

*The power goes out. You are alone.*

*And then you hear the pounding at the door. You hear the groans.*

*It's the sound of the end.*

*The adrenaline hits, and it's almost like dopamine.*

*It's your favorite.*

## TIMELINE OF THE APOCALYPSE

- 1988 - The first actions to control and slow the predicted population growth of 1 billion people per year begin. First steps include economic control, increased focus on warfare, and calculating “needed loss.” This is the beginning of “The Rocksalt Conspiracy.”
- 1990 - There is a focus on population control and population reduction by world powers. The environmental impact of capitalism, throw away resources, and over population forces a situation that requires either less people on the planet or a comprehensive change to the economic and environmental policies that companies follow. The powers-that-be make the decision that it’s easier to have less people than to change “business as usual.”
- 1994 - Genetically modified fruits and vegetables are approved for public consumption. Privately owned companies start producing agricultural resources for the globe that include pesticide-resistant crops, plants that do not reproduce by seed harvesting, and crops more resistant to climate change.
- 1998 - Population of the planet reaches 6 billion. Severe weather continues as proof of climate change and due to the impact that human resource production has on the environment.
- 2000 - Actions to increase conflict, warfare, and other means of reducing and controlling human life and growth are in steady use behind the scenes.
- 2002 - GMO manipulated famine begins as a means to control the ballooning population. Crops that are not specifically genetically designed to resist a laboratory-created fungus begin to die worldwide. Thirty-three global breakout points are later identified.
- 2003 - The fungal infection used as the trigger for the calculated famine begins to mutate, transmitting to insects. The ruling powers lose control of the crop-destroying fungus. The end of 2003 resulted in the first cross-infection to mammals and reptiles. In retrospect, this is considered the start of the period of time known as “The Fall.”
- 2004 - Social media becomes a mainstay of people’s lives. This becomes a double-edged sword, since it acts both as a platform of open communication as well as a form of “social bleeder valve” that prevents many people from acting to make actual change. “Thoughts and prayers” and “reposting for visibility” start to replace activism and involvement for tangible change.
- 2005 - Starvation, violence, and war is now culturally normalized and unless directly impacted by conflict, most people become numb. Over 8 million people die each year due to starvation, 225,000 people die each year due to conflicts, and 1 million people die due to curable and preventable diseases each year. The 1.9% yearly increase in the population percent is reduced to 1.15% new growth.
- 2007 - Reports of corpses being animated and attacking the living occur, but are kept localized by total control of the news. Mass bombings, weapons of mass destruction, and privatized military groups are globally active as an attempt to prevent the spread and eradicate any proof of an outbreak occurring. Social media, now a powerful tool for population control, instantly blocks out regions where outbreaks of rising dead could occur. Narratives of warfare, terrorism, and internal conflict replace proof of the “dead rising.” Population growth is reduced to under 1% growth from the prior year for the first time since the 1800s. The apocalypse has moved from early stage to major local impact, but the majority of the world is unaware that the end of modern life had been snowballing for some time.



- 2010 - Sections of the globe are marked as “Dead Territory” due to the volume of the outbreak. Global travel is restricted to only those who regularly submit to swab tests. Entire cities go dark, but politicians and media focus on the fact that a cure can be found using unfettered modern science. Many corporations receive massive volumes of funding, have production and safety restrictions removed, and are allowed access to privatized military support when needed. Information relating to how privatized militaries purge infected regions begins to leak despite best efforts.
- 2010 - The fear of the end of days spreads like wildfire. As an attempt to avoid the Infection, wealthy individuals create strongholds. Some people go far enough to have their bodies cryogenically frozen as an attempt to return to life after the Infection threat is dealt with. Many people enact their “apocalypse” plan of either building family estates, escaping into the woods, going to military bases, or gathering around centers of faith.
- 2011 - The first “Carriers” are identified. These are individuals that carry the Infection but have not lost control of their own minds. The population sees these Carriers as threats, since when they are wounded, they release a spore cloud of infectious material in the area. Word is that these individuals sometimes heal even mortal wounds. Private military groups, masked and in bio suits, begin operating under the guise of the CDC. Distrust of companies, governments, and corporate controlled media is at an all time high.
- 2012 - Undercover journalists expose private details regarding the Rocksalt Conspiracy to the public, and these details can no longer be contained. These details show corruption in governments, plans for calculated losses via wartime, forced famine, and documentation of genetically designed diseases. Revolution, rebellion, and open conflict occur worldwide. The 3rd World War is not one of country against country but instead people against systems of control.
- 2012 - Multiple nuclear strikes occur as an attempt to destroy “nexus points” of where the Infection has spawned from. While causing massive damage to the environment, these strikes primarily cause the mutation of multiple radiation resistant forms of the Infection. Shortly after, Carriers describe some sort of “shared memory” that occurs in the moments between being mortally wounded and their bodies repairing themselves. It is believed this is the first growth of the Mortis Amaranthine.
- 2012 - 2015 - Entire territories are “Carrier havens” where the settlement is overseen by those hunted for carrying the Infection. The term “Carrier” becomes the derogatory shortened term for “Spore Carrier.” Much of the globe has become overwhelmed since the Infection and the “zombies” that carry it are deadly to non-carrier humans. Strongholds of human settlements begin to form with privatized militaries functioning as raiding parties that go out into the wastelands.
- 2016 - There are reports of the Infection “regrowing” a twisted form of pre-fallout structures in the thirty-three primary nuclear strike points. This is the first record of the Mortis Amaranthine rebuilding non-sentient structures and binding to raw materials. From these points, the Infection spreads further. The first Full Dead and Unborn rise from corpse biomass and immediately retreat from the conflict between humans and Carriers.
- 2017 - There are reports of humans becoming “Raiders.” This phenomenon occurs due to a combination of the chemicals produced to resist the Infection, the radiation, and the newly mutating forms of the Infection. Not only do these elements create sub-human “Raiders,” but they also spawn more deadly forms of Infection zombies.

- 2017 - 2105 - An irradiated dark ages begins. Much of the world's knowledge is lost in the destruction of digital records and the warfare between the Carriers, Humans, and Infection zombies. Different forms or "Strains" of Carriers begin to develop based on the different forms of the mutated Infection they are carrying. This rapid evolution is directly related to the variants of the Infection and the environmental stimuli and threats.
- 2106 - 2109 - The last Humans, resisting the Infection via pockets of technology and regular injections of medical bio-blockers, also become Carriers. These are eventually known as Digitalians.
- 2110 - 2250 - The wastelands as we know it become more stabilized under a near total global Infection. Strains and Lineages become more formalized with identifiable biological traits. Radiation levels are still incredibly high in some areas. Total global population of Strains is under 300 million people globally. Zombies and Raider populations continue to grow. Each time a Carrier dies, an additional zombie spawns from pieces of the individual that died. "Green Veining" becomes a term for people that have died so many times that they may not return.
- 2331+ - Lineages and Strains become standardized with fewer and fewer "Remnants" occurring. Biological traits become standardized across most Strains, with only slight variants occurring in isolated evolutionary territories. During the Fall, different regions were driven to different stages of technological advancements. While some communities existed in post-apocalyptic versions of the Bronze Age or Iron Age, others were closer to a late Renaissance or Early Industrial Revolution. However, in all cases high-end technology was lost, including computers, microchips, and circuit boards. While technology pieces could be found reconstructed in areas of high historic technological inference, they were effectively useless corpses, unable to be reactivated. As radiation caused decay, the Infection continuously rebuilt itself. This caused a conflict between the two and resulted in a "blue shift." Settlements, cities, and empires began to grow while other communities pulled inwards to avoid threats of the outside world.

## A NOTE ON THE APOCALYPSE TIMELINE

In Dystopia Rising, we've created a fictional world that diverges from real history, filled with radiation, zombies, and superhuman fungi-filled survivors. Because the Dystopia Rising world is a work of fiction, and the characters that are in the world exist well after the real world modern day, it is completely acceptable to introduce genre appropriate media and references that would have happened outside of the general timetable of the game worlds fall of humanity. If we can suspend disbelief to embrace a reality overrun by the undead and mutated marvels, then bending time to include a song from 2023 in a game world where most modern media would have died pre-2005 isn't a big deal as long as it fits the vibe of our dystopian game world. Just introduce the content in a way that is still appropriate for the game world and via a technology that is appropriate for the wastelands.

## ROCKSALT CONSPIRACY AND THE INFECTION

The “Radioactive Mistake” is one of the core moments of the history of the Mortis Amaranthine and the Infection as a whole. In order to preserve the millions of remaining human lives and stem the tide of the Infection, the fractured powers-that-be opted to use the nuclear option. A combination of high altitude explosions as well as impact-based explosions sparked around the globe. While various individuals intended that these detonations take out “Carrier targets” and areas of massive zombie threats, these explosions caused a secondary chain of events that resulted in accelerating the demise of humanity.

As radiation permeated entire sections of the globe, it didn’t completely wipe out the Infection. Instead, the radiation triggered a development similar to the radiotrophic fungi in the historic Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. The Infection mutated, changed, and treated the impact zone as an “open wound” to be mended and repaired. Everything mechanical and material within the impact zones that carried the Infection began to regrow. Metals, plastics, and even lifeforms began to knit back together. While the Infection could not recreate complex electronics, it could recreate the devices that were related to them. So while TV’s could be regrown, functioning TV’s could not. The simpler and more mechanical the device, the more likely it could operate. These Infection-laden reconstructions defined the new nature of the future of the wasteland and created a series of mycorrhizal networks that would eventually become the Mortis Amaranthine.



## **THE FALL OF HUMANITY**

While horrific things happened during the rise of the Infection, humanity did not simply vanish in a short period of time. Instead, its downfall unfolded across generations, a testament to the species' resilience, adaptability, and resourcefulness in the face of unimaginable odds.

While nuclear fallout was lethal, it was not uniformly fatal across vast expanses of land. There were zones of intense radiation where survival was nearly impossible, but also areas that were less affected and served as refuges for survivors. Those who escaped the initial onslaught had access to the remains of human civilization – canned food, bottled water, tools, and more – which enabled them to eke out an existence even in a ravaged world.

The undead threat, though terrifying, had their limitations. Their decomposing bodies were subject to the laws of biology and would eventually break down, especially in extreme weather conditions. Humans, driven by their primal instinct for survival, quickly adapted, forming communities for mutual protection and developing strategies and weapons to fend off the undead. It took time before the “zombies” of the Fall became the hardened mutations that they are in the wasteland now.

However, the real challenge came from the combination of the two threats. The nuclear fallout affected not just humans but also the environment, leading to a scarcity of resources such as clean water and arable land. Communities had to become self-sufficient, adapting old techniques and developing new ones for food production and water purification. Over time, knowledge and technology degraded, and communities became isolated, each developing its own ways of coping with the new world order. Even in the modern wasteland, civilization is scarce, and most land is made up of irradiated dead zones, or is filled with zombies. In fact, most territories are more dangerous for Strains to live in than not.

The constant threat of zombies also impacted the psychological health of the survivors, affecting their ability to reproduce and maintain a stable population. There was a constant battle between the need to venture out for resources and the risk of encountering zombies, not to mention the ever-present danger of nuclear contamination.

In the end, the story of humanity's demise was a slow and painful decline marked by pockets of resistance and small communities struggling to preserve the essence of humanity in a world gone awry. The last remnants of the species were testament to the indomitable will to survive, even in the face of the most harrowing and overwhelming odds. The last strongholds of humanity were pumped full of chemicals to allow them to resist turning into Infection Carriers or Raiders. These last pockets of humanity eventually succumbed, and became the foundation of the Digitalian settlements.

## **THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD**

After the Fall of humanity, there was a dark period of time. Technology was scarce, and many people didn't have the resources or knowledge to be able to maintain stable settlements. Many groups died, falling to the rising hordes of undead, or Raider populations.

During this time, Strains isolated themselves in smaller communities, eking out a living amidst the wasteland. The wastelands themselves were (and still are) highly dangerous. Those that ventured into them almost never returned.

Fortunately, these post-apocalyptic dark ages eventually wound to an end as Strains began to grow and stabilize. Farms became larger and, slowly but surely, they began to rebuild civilization. It's only now, in the modern day of the post-apocalypse that larger settlements are becoming more prevalent.

The Reconstruction Period eventually ended. Now, the world has moved forward as Strains develop a new form of terrifying technology: Necrology.



## THE NOTEWORTHY AND THE GRAVE

Within the world, there are those who have plumbed the secrets of the Mortis Amaranthine – notable figures who, perhaps, know a little too much. These are individuals that are not only feared, but are respected across the wasteland due to their knowledge and their insight into death.

However, delving into the Mortis doesn't come without a price. Experiencing death over and over again causes many individuals to lose their way – becoming less attached to reality itself. Many Mortis practitioners eventually become too dangerous to allow to live – or commit atrocities in the name of pushing the limits of discovery.

Those who manage to hold onto their sense of self are rare, but are notable. However, they do tend to have their own, individual “quirks” and most of them are described as “dour” and “morbid.”

Keep in mind that individuals mentioned in this section can be referenced, but can't be impacted or used at your local games. These are characters that are instead earmarked for future Most Improbable publications.

## DR. E. LIVEST

*“You can call me an engineer of sorts. My story? Well, it’s riveting. People might say that I screw around too much, but I think I nail it. Sorry. Sorry. I know. I can’t help it. What was I saying? Oh yes. Engineering. Happy to show you, as long as you don’t mind the sense of existential dread and lingering horror.”*

*– Dr. E. Livest, Necrologist*

Livest is well-known through the wasteland as both an asshole and someone who delves into the Mortis on a fairly regular basis. Using Helscape suits and other appropriate equipment, Livest relies on science and technology to see them through the day.

Livest wasn’t always obsessed with the Mortis. As a young person, they were more interested in how the world worked. They liked to learn how plants grew and why fog formed. They wanted to understand that combination of nature and science that made the planet spin. As a Lascarian in Old York, Livest was encouraged to keep their head down – mind their own business and keep to the dark and the old tunnels. But Livest couldn’t help themselves. They wanted to learn.

As they grew older, Livest soon discovered that there was one mystery that no one had the answer to: the Mortis Amaranthine. To Livest, this was the biggest mystery of all – something they could spend years learning about. From the first time they spoke to a Graverobber, they were hooked. This was what they were looking for.

Livest became near-obsessive with learning about the Mortis. They wanted to not just explore the Mortis Amaranthine, but also the Sunless Garden and what lay Beyond. Unfortunately for them, they didn’t quite understand the repercussions of their actions. They didn’t realize that Beyond was not a place any sane person would want to interact with.

In pursuit of their obsession, Livest began to explore how to create things within the Mortis itself. They had a background in building things, so they reasoned that if the Mortis was sort of a real space (sometimes), then it would be possible to create items in there even if it was impossible to bring items in. It was the sort of circular logic that Livest thrived on.

Soon, they began experimenting with Necrology, building biological transmitters to relay information, items made of flesh and sinew that acted as useful tools within the Mortis, and more – much more.

These days, Livest continues their research. However, their puns attest to the fact that they use humor as a coping mechanism. It’s not uncommon for them to burst out laughing when asked a serious question – as if they were remembering something awful and want to block it out.



## FORMER SENATOR ETHAN HEROD

*“When you’re younger, you have a burning desire to learn more – to find out more. You want to plumb the secrets of the world. You want to know what makes things – people – tick. But as you age, you learn that sometimes you don’t want to know everything. Knowledge is not always a gift. It can be a terrible curse.”*  
– Former Senator Ethan Herod, Graverobber

Ethan Herod grew up in the DeeCee territory. Nothing is known about his childhood since like most Full Dead, he sprang fully formed into the world. What is known is that as a young man (or, at least, a younger man), Herod had an insatiable curiosity – a need to learn all he could about the world and its history.

Fortunately in DeeCee, he could do just that. He plumbed the depths of the old city, discovering artifacts and truths that were, perhaps, best left forgotten. He pieced together what he knew from the fractured memories that lived within him, and eventually learned some hard truths about humanity and the apocalypse.

With an unassuming face, brown hair speckled with gray, and dark circles beneath his eyes, Ethan looks a bit more like a harried, undead professor than someone who is one of the most knowledgeable people in the post-apocalypse. He doesn’t look dangerous – simply tired and worn. However, Ethan has information that many people would (and have) killed for.

With the knowledge he found, however, Ethan wanted to better the world. He helped support the Trade Union, an organization that he hoped would help connect the various settlements dotted across the wastes. In his mind at the time, he saw a wasteland brought together by roads – a way to share ideas and trade and religion. Sure, there would still be dangerous portions, but at least it would merely be dangerous rather than deadly.

That dream, however, came to an end rather abruptly. With the advent of the Iron Works war, Herod found himself embroiled in politics. Not only that, but settlements turned away from the Trade Union. Who were they to dictate if they should get roads? Why bother with a train line when walking worked just fine?

Herod and the Trade Union gave up. Instead, Ethan turned inward with his knowledge, letting others come to him to seek information. He performed Graverobber procedures, using his knowledge of medicine to patch people back together – to heal what was broken. Those who visit today tell of their experiences – how the tired, worn man takes them into the Mortis to show them what life was like – or could be like again.

Then again, perhaps Ethan Herod’s dream is just a fantasy.



# LENORE

*“Monster. Weirdo. Freak.  
We’ve heard it all. The fact is that we have a connection you don’t.  
We have a purpose. We’re the next stage.  
And you need to understand that we’re not the freaks.  
We’re your future.”  
– Lenore, Gravenaut*

Lenore is one of the most notable and terrifying psions in the wastes. With dark hair and eyes, she is striking. She stands tall in any room, seeming to dare anyone to try and fuck with her. Most Pure Bloods would rely on their family name. Lenore, in contrast, has renounced hers, instead choosing to let her own reputation stand for her.

As a child near the Overgrowth, Lenore Jindal’s abilities manifested early. She told her mother one day that she heard the voice of her sister in her mind. Her “sister,” however, had died almost 3 years ago. Her mother quickly told her not to tell anyone else if she heard any other voices, and Lenore never told her mother of the other voices she heard – the ones that whispered secrets in her ears.

As Lenore grew older, she realized that her family would ignore her abilities entirely if they had her way. She began cultivating them in secret, delving into the Mortis while claiming that she was studying “medicine” to keep her parents happy.

Slowly, but surely, she began to grow her power. Soon, it became too noticeable for her family to continue to ignore. How do you ignore a psion who delves into the Mortis – who plumbs its depths and discovers what was lost? How do you ignore someone who communes with the voices that whisper secrets to her?

There are several different accounts of what happened next. In one account, her family asked her to leave, but since she was their daughter they allowed her to depart on good terms. In another version, her family planned to eliminate her as a disgrace, but at that point Lenore had accumulated enough blackmail and family secrets that she had primed to release on the advent of her death that they decided to pay her off instead.

Whatever the case, Lenore renounced her family name and instead decided to go her own way. Always followed by three “disciples,” who are intent on learning her craft, Lenore travels the southern reaches of the post-apocalyptic wastes. She can often be found near the reaches of the Sunken Saints or even near the Paradise Isles. She offers her services to those who need it – extracting information from the dead and performing seeming “miracles” as she delves into the Mortis.

The one thing she always teaches, though, is not to go too deep. “Either you control the mind or you become the mind,” she claims. What that means and if that’s true or not is largely up to speculation.





# MEMO

*“To know oneself is one thing. To know others  
– their wants, their fears, their hopes.  
To know what makes them do what they do – that’s power.  
It’s the sort of understanding that must be used wisely  
– especially within the Mortis.”  
– Memo, Corpse Whisperer*

No one is quite sure what Memo looks like. She keeps her face covered with a metal deer mask, her features obscured by tarnished horns adorned with twine and beads. Her hair is covered in a loose cowl, and her form obscured by tattered robes. However, one thing is certain; she is a study of not just the Mortis, but also the mind.

Memo claims she began life in the Midwest, growing up learning all she could about assisting others in their time of need. However, in a world where you experience death and then come back again, sticking to the realm of the living can only do so much. Memo soon began to investigate the mental processes that occur within the Mortis – the trauma that people experience when they die.

She became a study of people – an observer constantly watching the world around her. She realized that if you understand a person – truly understand them – then you can influence what they do merely by using your words. Not only that, but a person within the Mortis is even more vulnerable, with their psyche open to influence. She understood that within that space, you can completely alter a person.

However, Memo still had the desire to do good. She instead used her newfound understanding to help those that needed it. While she has the ability to remove memories and past experiences, she normally does not unless the individual asks her to and even then only under extreme circumstances. She much prefers a person to talk through their past and reconcile themselves to it so they can learn from it and move forward.

These days, Memo travels across the wasteland. There are rumors that say she tests various individuals in the hopes of finding new apprentices. However, who these potential apprentices are and what these tests may be is anyone’s guess.



## DEAD END: LOCATIONS OF DEATH

There are places within the wastes that are hubs of death – places where the dead rise time and time again and where the land itself is deadly. These are locations that are known among Mortis Practitioners, but are almost never visited. They are areas that are inimical to life itself.

Keep in mind that the following locations are not areas you can use in your games. They are canon locations that are meant as reference rather than for active play. Not only are these areas hard to present during a live game, but they are also extremely deadly; trying to have a game that takes place in such a dangerous zone would result in a lot of dead characters very quickly.

With that in mind, these locales are simply areas that Mortis Practitioners can reference and use as examples, but are not locations that players can visit or that you can mimic for your own games unless special dispensation is given for a national game. These locations instead are reserved for future publications by Most Improbable.

### THE FLESH FLOOR

**Location: Off of the east coast of the wastes near what is modern-day Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and New York.**

Off the eastern seaboard, something lurks within the murky waters. The restless dead fall into the ocean and rot, eventually sinking to the sea floor. There, their flesh knits together, forming a gelatinous mass several hundred miles wide and long. Limbs reach upwards from the depths, and fleshy strings break off to grasp at passing ships. Known as the “Flesh Floor,” this mass makes sailing dangerous even for the most prepared.

The Flesh Floor is a hive of Infection, and Mortis Practitioners have spent years analyzing what sustains this mass of undead flesh beneath the waves. While there are many theories, most agree that the Flesh Floor, by practical definition, is a singular zombie – even if it is made up of many of them. In fact, pieces of the Flesh Floor that break off are classified as Mass Graves.

Interestingly, the Flesh Floor is affected by seasonal pulls in the region. On the Wailing Shores, in particular, it lies close to the local settlements. Each year in the autumn, it moves close enough that Mass Graves and zombies become an everyday occurrence. However, it moves back out again toward winter.

Trying to “destroy” the Flesh Floor is impossible because of how large it is and how many die within the seas. Instead, most have learned to deal with the cyclical occurrence of the Flesh Floor, and the many zombies that come with it. Some Mortis Practitioners claim that the Flesh Floor is actually a good thing. There are other things that lurk in the depths of the ocean, and the Flesh Floor acts as a natural barrier between the wider sea and settlements on land.



## **THE FOREST OF THE UNMAKER**

**Location: Within the midwest of the wastes, in what is now known as the Overgrowth.**

Trees made of fungal flesh twist and turn, creating thickets of growth where one can lose themselves forever. Dark liquid slicks the forest floor, creating a spongy and wet surface to travel upon. The Forest of the Unmaker is a horror even by the standards of the post-apocalyptic wastes. Made up of Infection and fungal growths, the forest consumes all who dare to enter.

Underneath the deep purple and red branches of the forest, fungal growths pulsate with their own kind of life. Every so often, screams and groans erupt just out of sight. The Forest of the Unmaker spontaneously gives life to undead and zombies before absorbing them again. These zombies, part of the forest itself, seek out any flesh that the forest may consume.

Because the Forest of the Unmaker is a hive of Infection, there are those who are brave – or reckless – enough to enter in order to learn more about the Mortis. Many explorers and Mortis Practitioners have been lost in this way, entering the forest for their own experiments only to be absorbed by the forest. However, some brave few have managed to exit once again. They claim that the Forest of the Unmaker allows an individual to enter the Mortis more easily, and some even say that if its power could be harnessed, it could allow Necrologists to make great strides in their research and studies.

## **THE GREEN WAY**

**Location: The Green Way is located in the western portion of the Lone Star region, surrounded by miles of scrub brush and wilderness.**

Within the western wastes of the Lone Star region, there is an area known as the Green Way. Miles before you actually get to the town, it's clear that something is off in the area. The vegetation changes from scorched brown to a sickly green with bright lichen climbing over rocks and rubble. The animals in the area, including deer and rabbits, have half-rotted flesh. Their ribs stand out starkly from gaping holes and their heads turn toward you to reveal empty sockets rather than eyes.

As you walk further into the Green Way, you'll eventually see a series of dilapidated buildings, overgrowth with green fungus. Doors creak and swing from their hinges, and a deathly quiet fills the space – silent, except for the shuffling of footsteps.

Zombies fill the space, each of them going about tasks as they would in life. One takes a bucket with a hole in the bottom to a nearby stream, fruitlessly “filling” it before shuffling back toward the town. Another stands in the corner of a room, staring at the wall as if there was something there. Yet another sits at a rotting table, making the motion of picking something up and putting it down again. Classified as a Necropolis, the Green Way is an example of an unsettling phenomenon in the wastes best avoided.

Most disturbing within the Green Way, though, is what is referred to as “the dance hall.” The old wooden building has mostly decayed, but within are countless bodies. They shuffle in a slow circle around the dance hall – less dancing and more walking forever. A groove has formed within the floor, an indication for how long they've been walking.

There are those who sometimes venture into the Green Way, either by accident or intentionally for research and study. However, going anywhere near the town is death. While the zombies and animals there ignore people at first, there is always a trigger point – whether it's right as someone enters the town, or hours afterwards. The zombies, as one, whip their heads toward the intruder and begin a guttural howl. As one, they sprint towards living flesh from every direction – from the dance hall, from the dilapidated stores, from the nearby river. They swarm the people there and kill them. Very few have survived this encounter – and those who have refuse to go to The Green Way again. Those who do not survive become just another member of the dance hall.

## THE CRYSTAL HOLE

**Location:** Just past the desert of the Vegasian wastes, right before the coastline near what was once the west coast.

Within the arid and brutally hot landscape between Vegasia and the coast, you'll find only death. Even Diesel Jocks refuse to travel the area in the summer, since their engines overheat. Any who dare tread this region know all of the secrets of the area – and even then, it is perilous.

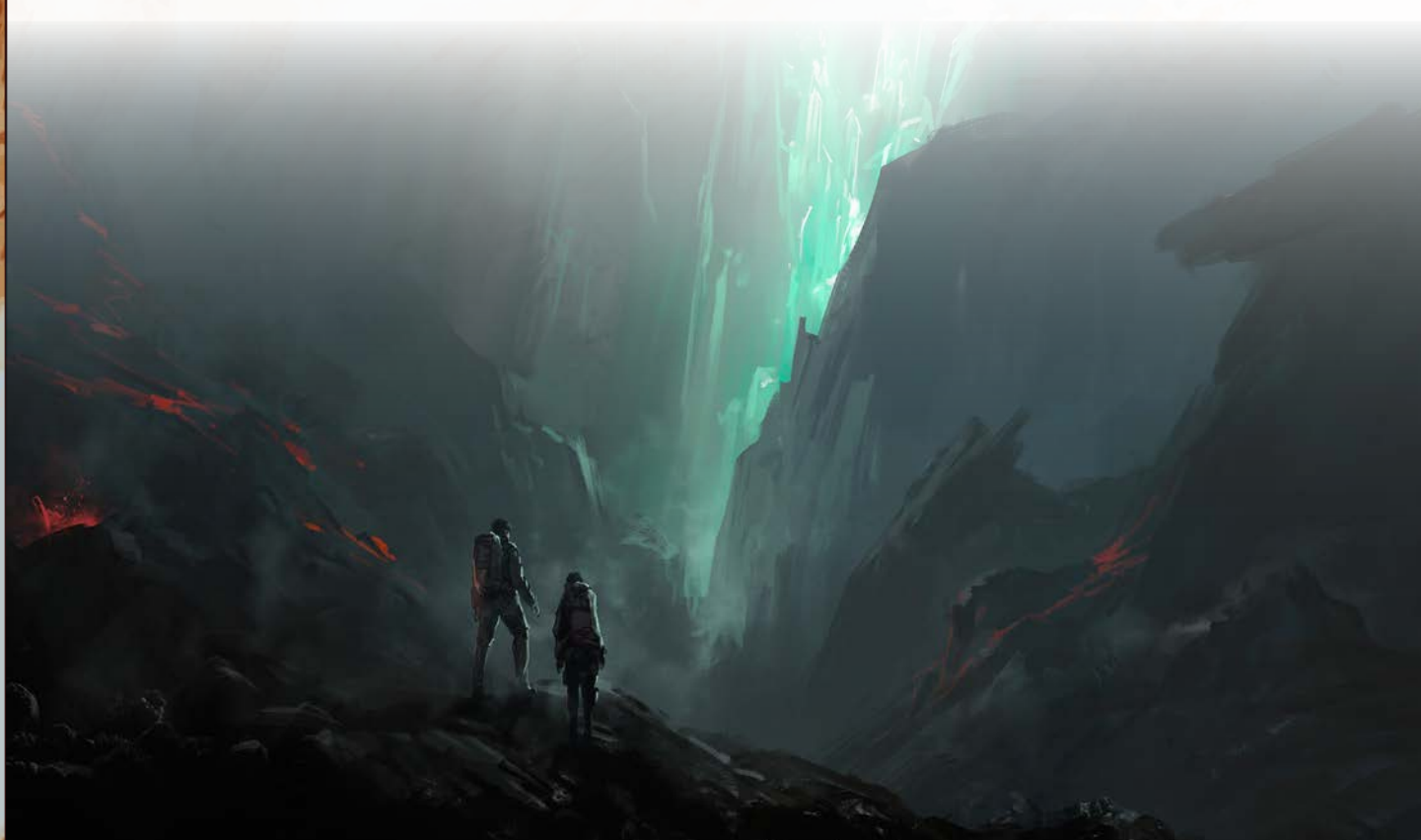
However, within this deadly landscape there is a cave – a hole in the ground once filled with water. The water has since seeped away, but within it has left behind crystals – rock formations in a greenish hue. If you descend into this cavern, there is an ever-present weight around you as if a sound is being emitted just out of your hearing range.

The Crystal Hole is known for housing thousands and, perhaps, millions of Psionic crystals. Those who descend into the Crystal Hole claim that it is easier to enter the Mortis – as if there is no true line between life and death. Aberrants that venture within often leave with visions and sights that would drive anyone mad.

The strange atmosphere of the place, coupled with the fact that it can only be reached by traversing one of the most hostile places in the wastes, means that the Crystal Hole doesn't receive many visitors. Those that do venture within often become lost between the tight, winding passages that delve deeper and deeper into the ground. Those that do emerge again are often plagued by nightmares.

However, there is a rumor that if you descend into the Crystal Hole, you can tap into imprints and memories from not just a few days past, but also a few decades past. It's not enough to learn about the Fall or the beginnings of things, but it is enough to find out information from those that have died in the region over the past ten years. Unfortunately, it's also said that those who claim this information cause a ripple effect – resulting in undead pouring out into the region for the next month or more.

Needless to say, this particular attribute isn't very useful – unless you happen to be embroiled in the local politics of Vegasia. If you are, though, the Crystal Hole represents a very, very dangerous source of information. It's not surprising that most tend to seek their information from other sources.



## BEYOND THE DARKNESS

*The first thing you notice is the silence – the sheer emptiness. You never realize how much sound there is when you're alive: your heartbeat, the whoosh of air through your lungs, your blood pumping through your veins. It all just stops. And then there's just...nothing.*

*And then after that silence, you notice the other person – the other force in that liminal space. It's something that is not you, though "you" has only become the vaguest concept. Because now, you are also nothing.*

*Except that there is also something else there – in that nothingness. At least, there is when you go through with someone else. It's a sense that there is "otherness" there. And then, it all comes into focus.*

*I stood there in a dark room. A fire crackled in one corner, a makeshift pipe catching the smoke and filtering it outward through one of the cracked, concrete walls. The windows were mostly boarded, thin glimmers showing only darkness outside as the sound of wind shrieked past.*

*Rotter stood by the boarded window, bloody fingers pushing through the cracks to try and reach the wind outside. He murmured to himself, "Not again. No, not again." His voice echoed in the gloom, a chant that repeated over and over again.*

*I knew what this was. It was his moment of death – the point when he lost not just his life, but everything.*

*"Not again. Not again. Not again, not again, not again."*

*His voice continued to chant and I looked away from him for a moment. It was just a moment, but it was everything in that time and in that place. Instead of a dark room, I saw a city block, light slanting through the ragged rooftops and casting a dim glow on the rubble below. A figure from far down the block began walking toward me – toward us.*

*"Notagainnotagainnotagain."*

*This wasn't Rotter's experience. This wasn't his final moment – or rather, this wasn't just his final moment. This was also mine.*

*I stepped backwards away from the figure walking towards us. I remembered how my heart pounded in that moment, even though it was still now. I remembered how that figure eventually reached me and how everything changed. I forced myself to remember what it felt like to breathe, what it felt like to still my mind and focus. I forced myself to turn away from that city block, and look back towards Rotter.*

*"Not again."*

*His breath steamed in the air, snow blowing through the slats and swirling into the dark room. He was panicking – never a good thing for what we were attempting to do. I reached out and put my hand on his metaphysical shoulder. He whipped around, eyes wild, and focused on me.*

*I smiled in the dark and spoke, "Don't worry. You'll make it through this. Now, focus on what matters."*

*I saw his face still, still scared, but more controlled. He nodded shakily.*

*That was my final test. That day I learned that you have to focus on the patient – not yourself. If you focus on yourself, then both patient and doctor may die.*

*I passed, but sometimes I wish I hadn't.*

## TITLES OF THE DEAD

Those who delve into the Mortis Amaranthine do so in various different ways. Some use psionics, while others use more scientific means. Some specialize as a medical practitioner, while others act as an engineer while using Necrology.

As knowledge of the Mortis Amaranthine has grown, so too have the titles that go along with it. At most, people accumulate two titles over their lifetime – or tend to combine titles to best suit what they’ve specialized in. However, no one can claim all titles for themselves. After all, it takes years to learn just one area of the Mortis Amaranthine – and that knowledge comes with a price. Those who descend into death lose a piece of themselves each time. Their moral compass can become warped and skewed, eventually leaving them as hollow husks of the people they once were.

### NECROLOGIST

While “Necrology” is the catch-all term for Mortis procedures, Necrologists have become known as the de facto engineers of the Mortis Amaranthine. These are individuals who know of construction techniques using biological materials, creating transmitters, morgues, and even experimental undead. In order to complete their work, a Necrologist normally needs to delve into the Mortis itself, using a Necrology station, and also needs to harvest flesh and Infection. This often means that Necrologists suffer from the same fate as others who delve into the grave a little too often. They are stoic and have a strange sense of humor.

**Roleplay Hints:** Necrologists know the basics of construction and engineering within the Mortis, but aren’t as versed in the wellness and physical being of an individual person. They are not squeamish, since they normally have to deal with decaying organic matter and body parts to complete their work.

**Skills Necrologists Have:** Necrologists normally possess Artisan skills, as well as Medical skills. They often become Mortis Practitioners to be able to complete various procedures within the Mortis, or become Ruin Engineers.

### GRAVENAUT

There are those who delve into death, and then there are those who push its limits and go beyond. Gravenauts are those who plumb the depths of the Mortis Amaranthine, exploring its depths and trying to understand what secrets it may hold. These are individuals who take exploration to a new level, learning all they can about the last, great frontier. They equip themselves appropriately, relying on gear that’s crafted by Necrologists to be able to go further and deeper. Gravenauts are normally highly educated, but often develop high-energy quirks over time. After all, you have to be at least a little twisted to delve into death time and time again.

**Roleplay Hints:** Gravenauts explore the Mortis, often retrieving information from beyond death. They look for inconsistencies in the Mortis and are adept at leading others through death. They are adventurous and make choices that sometimes look impulsive to outsiders. However, Gravenauts normally take calculated risks in order to survive through the trials of death.

**Skills Gravenauts Have:** Gravenauts normally have Lores related to the Mortis, and many of them tend to pick up being a Jones along the way. Many Gravenauts also are able to use Necrokinetics to enter the Mortis, though some rely on being Mortis Practitioners or use other procedures to accomplish the task.

## CORPSE WHISPERER

There is information to be had within the Mortis – secrets that others possess. Corpse Whisperers are people who have mastered their knowledge of the psyche of humanity. They know what to say to a person to either empower them, or break them. However, most Corpse Whisperers focus on mending rather than destroying. In particular, they specialize in retrieving information from memories, and also altering the minds of those within the Mortis.

**Roleplay Hints:** Corpse Whisperers are studies of people, and normally thrive in social situations. They can de-escalate (or escalate) a situation simply by using their words. While empathetic, they are even-keeled and aren't very excitable. They also understand that while they can extract information from individuals in the Mortis, they don't always have to go into the grave in order to do so – and so make judicious decisions when it comes to entering death.

**Skills Corpse Whisperers Have:** Many Corpse Whisperers have Master Biokinesis as well as levels in Education. Many of them also wind up becoming HelDivers or Mortis Practitioners over time.

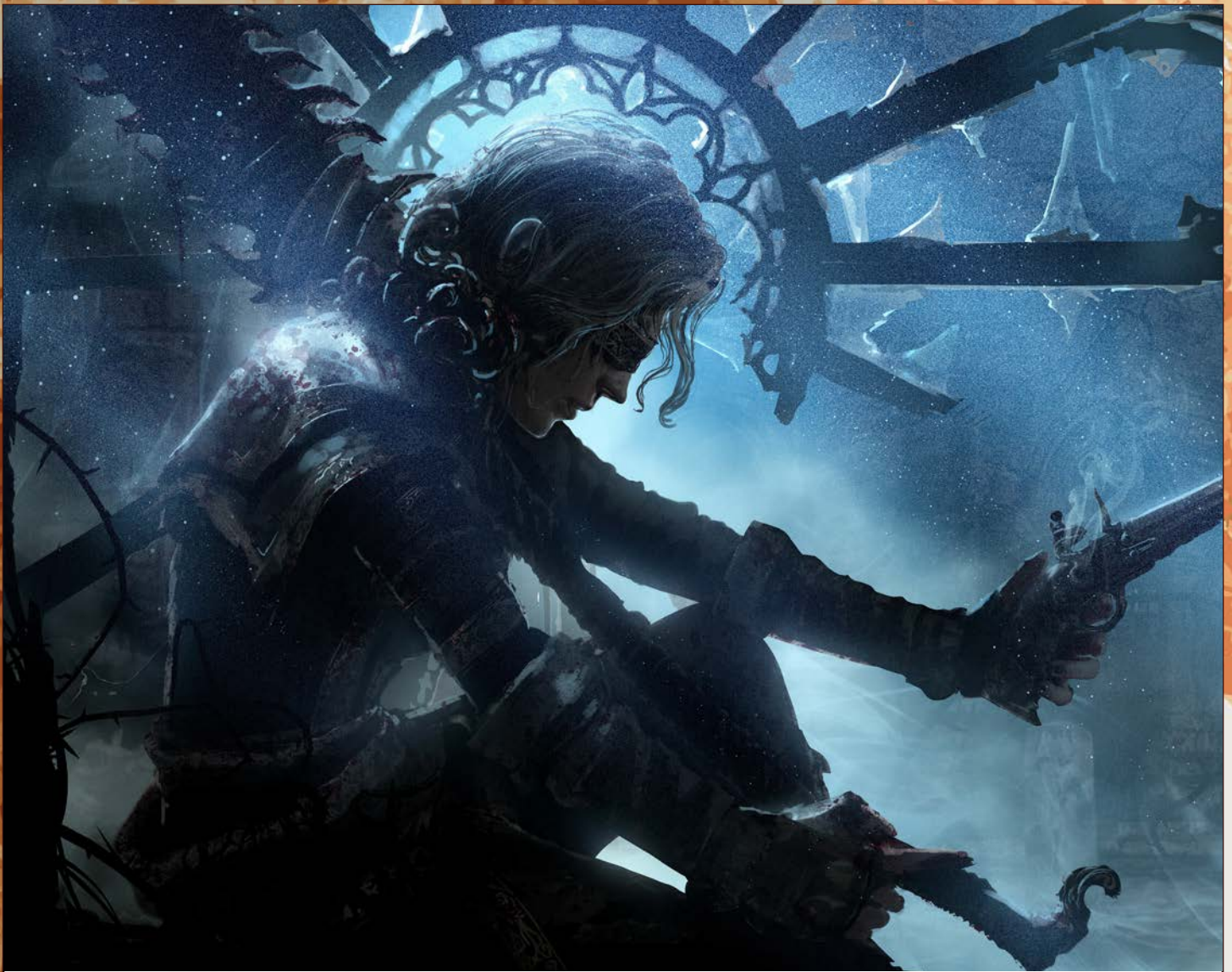
## GRAVEROBBER

There are ways to push back death – ways to make people come back time and time again. Graverobbers specialize in doing medical procedures within the Mortis, but are most known for helping others regain their Infection. However, that's not all Graverobbers can do. They can bend the Infection to give people abilities they might normally have – or create monstrosities that are better off dead. Graverobbers deal with the living bodies of Lineages, and are normally seen as the true medical practitioners of the Mortis. In order to complete their procedures, they have to enter the liminal space of death, which often leads them to becoming stoic as they slowly lose themselves over the years.

**Roleplay Hints:** Graverobbers are often stoic and have a skewed sense of morality, having gone time and time again into the Mortis. They do not flinch at blood or bodily fluids, and do not seem to care when it comes to dealing with dead bodies. They often have a few people they keep around themselves that help direct them in “what is moral.”

**Skills Graverobbers Have:** Graverobbers are highly skilled in Medical procedures, and are Mortis Practitioners. Graverobbers are almost never Aberrant, since that can affect their success within the Mortis.





### **MORTIS ENTHUSIAST (AKA: SHORT LIVED)**

There are those who are knowledgeable about death, and then there are Mortis Enthusiasts. These are individuals who delve into the grave without studying it first. While Graverobbers, Necrologists and others spend years learning about the Mortis Amaranthine and what can happen when you enter a liminal space, Mortis Enthusiasts dive right in – literally. They often use Aberrant skills or drugs to enter the Mortis, and take high-stakes risks. Some are able to become Mortis Practitioners – but it’s largely through sheer luck or just a cursory study of the subject rather than spending years learning. These are often individuals that utter the phrase, “Let’s see what happens when we eat it,” or “Let’s see what happens when we poke it.”

**Roleplay Hints:** Mortis Enthusiasts are impulsive and tend to have a strange fascination – bordering on obsession – with the Mortis Amaranthine and death. They normally know only the basics about the Mortis, and like to “experiment” with things on a fairly regular basis. This experimentation can lead to large-scale consequences in a settlement.

**Skills Mortis Enthusiasts Have:** Mortis Enthusiasts often have Aberrant skills, or are skilled at finances and trade, which allow them to gather the resources they need to delve into the Mortis. Others are criminals, looking for a way to profit from being able to enter death.





## **DEAD ORGANIZATIONS**

Within the world of Dystopia Rising, there are various organizations that revolve around delving into the Mortis – or limiting the destruction that Infection mutations can cause. These are groups that have plumbed the depths of death and have come back changed but determined to continue their work.

These groups can be found scattered throughout the wasteland at various settlements as local representatives of a much larger society. However, these representative groups act independently, with their own local goals, drives, and governing bodies. When a representative of a certain group visits another settlement, they normally introduce themselves to the local group there before diving into the Mortis; it's only polite to do so.

Everyone who joins these groups can be described as a little strange. After all, you have to have a very particular personality to delve into the Mortis time and time again.

### **HOW TO USE THESE GROUPS**

Each of these groups focuses on a particular aspect of the Mortis that players may find interesting. However, that doesn't mean you need to introduce all of these groups into your game. Instead, we recommend that you choose one or two groups for your local game that thematically fits your setting.

Once you decide on which groups to introduce, make sure to fit them into your local setting as local branches. These groups can appear throughout the network, which means that in order to avoid story conflict, it's best to create local subsects of these groups. This means they have their own local leadership, local goals, and local politics that they have to deal with. This allows you, as a game runner, to have agency over your game and what happens with these groups.

With that being said, it's absolutely possible for players to form their own branches of these groups, as well. Players that do so should let their game runners know ahead of time so that they can calibrate plot and story, and potentially introduce local NPCs to help guide players. When forming a player group, you should have at least four individuals interested in being part of it – though the exact number depends on your local game; it may be more or less depending on your game's player population.

Each of the groups listed below have a suggested hierarchy as well as a scope of study and research. We also list general goals that you can modify to fit local goals at your local branch.

Keep in mind that you cannot introduce one of these groups and have what they do dictate the story for all other branches of that group. This is largely since other branches of these groups will be operating at other games. There are also positions in some of these groups that are reserved for future publications and events overseen by Most Improbable.

## THE OCCULUM

*“Our eyes are open to the world. We gather knowledge to build a new state of understanding within the world. After all, death is not the end of learning. It’s only the beginning.”*

The Occulum is a secretive group made up largely of Psions and Mortis Practitioners. With an ever-watchful eye as their symbol, they aim to learn all they can from the Mortis and record it for future generations. After all, knowledge is power.

The Occulum delves deep into the Mortis to recover lost knowledge, uncovering secrets and aiming to extract the memories of Full Dead, in particular. Individuals within this organization will go to extremes for knowledge, often conducting procedures that others may shudder to even consider.

This organization collects their knowledge and compiles it into journals for their members. It’s said that access to an Occulum’s “library” is worth its weight in Texas Tea.

### CODE

The Occulum holds to a code that all of its members follow. While less strict than other organizations, the Occulum still expects its members to hold to it.

- **KNOWLEDGE IS POWER:** Information is universally seen as power, and all members of The Occulum must seek knowledge to grow their influence.
- **DAMN THE COST:** While other organization may think some knowledge is too dangerous, The Occulum views the opposite. Knowledge should always be sought out, no matter the cost.
- **PURSUE YOUR SPECIALIZATION:** Generalists do not excel where specialists will defined new horizons of knowledge.

### ORGANIZATION

The Occulum has several levels of organization, and each level is achieved after an individual has proven themselves and has been accepted by their peers.

- **PUPIL**  
Pupils are valued members of the Occulum, and have just begun their journey within the organization. They are sponsored by a Master, and must complete a course of study and thesis to prove themselves and move up to being a Master.
- **MASTER**  
Masters make up most of the membership of the Occulum. They’ve chosen a specialized course of study, and are dedicated to that course until they’ve truly mastered it. Masters may take up to three Pupils at a time to sponsor and train in the ways of the Occulum.
- **WATCHER**  
A Watcher is one of the upper ranks of the Occulum on a local level. Traditionally, there are only three Watchers in a settlement (though larger settlements may have up to five). These individuals have proven themselves time and time again, and have mastered not just one specialization, but have done multiple. These are individuals that have often trained many Pupils in their time as Masters. A Watcher normally has up to three Masters that report to them for larger courses of study that require multiple specializations.

- **THE EYE**

The Eye is the highest level an individual can achieve on a local level. The Eye is awarded to an individual who is not only a master of the Mortis and the knowledge within, but is also someone who can teach others and bring them together. The Eye is normally elected by a council of Watchers, and may be asked to leave the position if they do not fulfill their duties. The Eye normally has three Watchers that report to them, and is responsible for holding meetings for the organization, as well as overseeing the thesis arguments of new Pupils.

- **THE ALL-SEEING**

This is a position reserved for national events hosted or sponsored by Most Improbable. The All-Seeing is the highest position within The Occulum, and is held by an individual who has several settlements that report to them. The All-Seeing is a regional position, and it's estimated that there are 5 total within the wastes. While these 5 largely focus on gathering and organizing vast repositories of knowledge, they do meet to share and exchange ideas, often accompanied by the Eyes from their regions.

## **RITUALS AND INDUCTION**

Within the Occulum there are several rituals that are done based on gathering and compiling knowledge from the Mortis. This includes initiation, as well as rites done on a monthly basis.

- **INITIATION**

As part of Initiation, a Pupil must first choose a course of study and find enough information from the Mortis to put together a defensible thesis. This normally takes several months of Grave Dives and research. They must then defend their thesis in front of their Master, as well as the Watchers and Eye of their settlement. If they can defend their thesis, then they are officially welcomed as a Master and are expected to pursue their course of study.

- **THE GREAT DEBATE**

While there are meetings monthly (or every other month), hosted by the Eye, The Great Debate is a special get together that is hosted once per year. Normally done in late spring, The Great Debate involves Masters and Watchers each presenting their latest findings, and engaging in heated debate with their peers to defend it. The Great Debate normally involves loud voices and drinks. Pupils are invited to watch The Great Debate though cannot participate until they become Masters.

- **THE RITE OF KNOWING**

The Rite of Knowing is something all individuals go through as soon as they receive their Mastership. While members delve into the Mortis to rise from Pupil to Master, they don't go for the express purpose of understanding themselves. As soon as someone rises to Master, they are taken into the Mortis by those who witnessed their thesis and must confront the flaws and the brilliance of their own selves. It's both an enlightening and, sometimes, embarrassing experience to go through, but all members of The Occulum agree that it's an important aspect of their own knowledge.

- **THE PASSING OF THE KEY**

The Passing of the Key is a solemn rite that all Watchers undergo. After attaining the title of Watcher, the Eye presents the individual with a "key" to where they keep all local, recorded knowledge. This may take the form of an actual key, or may simply be information to a hidden location. Whatever the case, the new Watcher becomes responsible for the safekeeping of this knowledge.

## THE FEORMERE SOCIETY

*“Our survival hinges on what we can salvage, repurpose, and reclaim from the shadows of the past. In the Mortis, we find the seeds of our future.”*

The Feormere Society is a group of Necrologists, bio-hackers, and scavengers who view the Mortis not merely as a force of nature to be feared but as a vital resource ripe for exploration. Their emblem, a cracked skull entwined with roots and vines holding it together, symbolizes their belief in the cyclical nature of life and death and the potential for growth from decay.

Driven by the conviction that the secrets to humanity’s resurgence and harmony with the new world lie within the Mortis, the Feormere Society dedicates itself to uncovering and harnessing these secrets. They are renowned for their deep knowledge of Necrology, using it to extract valuable biological components and to innovate in the realms of agriculture, medicine, and energy.

### CODE

The Feormere Society, with its deep-rooted beliefs in the sanctity and potential of the Mortis, adheres to a set of core sacred codes that guide their actions, research, and interactions with both the Mortis and the wider post-apocalyptic world.

- **RESPECT FOR THE MORTIS:** Members must hold the Mortis in the highest regard, recognizing it as a source of life, knowledge, and rebirth rather than merely a tool for exploitation. This respect extends to all endeavors within the Mortis, ensuring that their actions do not desecrate or unduly disturb its essence.
- **STEWARDSHIP OF KNOWLEDGE:** The acquisition and sharing of knowledge within the society are paramount. Members are expected to contribute to the collective understanding of the Mortis, Necrology, and bio-alchemy. However, this knowledge must be guarded against misuse, ensuring it does not fall into hands that would use it for harm or against the natural order.
- **UNITY IN PURPOSE:** The society values the collective over the individual, believing that unity in purpose and action is essential for their survival and the fulfillment of their goals. Members must work together, supporting one another in their endeavors and respecting the hierarchy and structure of the society.
- **INTEGRITY IN CONDUCT:** Members are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, both within the society and in dealings with outsiders. This includes honesty in their research, fairness in their exchanges, and the avoidance of practices that would bring dishonor to the society or harm to the communities they interact with.
- **GUARDIANSHIP OF THE FUTURE:** The Feormere Society sees itself as a guardian of the future, using the powers and materials derived from the Mortis to build a better world. Members must always consider the long-term consequences of their actions, ensuring that their work contributes to the regeneration of society and the environment, rather than its further destruction.

### ORGANIZATION

The structure of The Feormere Society reflects their dedication to the study and application of Necrology.

- **INITIATE**  
Newcomers to the society, Initiates are introduced to the basics of Necrology and the ethical harvesting of resources from the Mortis. Ethical harvesting is a large discussion point of the society, ensuring all members understand that actions should always be taken that result in the least negative impact to the Mortis bio-system and suffering to people. They are mentored by Adepts, learning the foundational principles of their craft.

- **ADEPT**

Having demonstrated a proficiency in Necrology, Adepts focus on specific applications, such as creating bio-enhancements, medicines, or energy sources from Mortis-derived materials. They mentor Initiates and contribute to the society's body of knowledge.

- **LEAD NECROLOGIST**

Experts in Necrology, Lead Necrologists heads research and exploration efforts into the Mortis. They oversee projects and missions, applying their deep knowledge to solve complex challenges facing the society and humanity at large.

- **SAFEGUARD OVERSEER**

Safeguard Overseers are responsible for the protection and advancement of their local community's interests. They are seasoned members who have contributed significantly to the society's goals, overseeing the ethical application of Necrology to ensure balance and sustainability. Each Safeguard Overseer leads a group of Necrologists and Adepts, guiding the strategic direction of their endeavors. This is the highest rank a game can have for either player or NPC characters.

- **ABYSS HARBINGER**

The pinnacle of achievement within The Feormere Society, The Abyss Harbinger is a visionary leader who orchestrates the society's efforts across multiple territories. There are only a few Harbingers, each overseeing a vast area of influence. They coordinate major exploratory and harvesting operations, ensuring that the knowledge and innovations derived from the Mortis are disseminated and applied wisely. This position is only available at Cross-Network Games and to be used for canon content production or as a reference tool within cross-network play kits.

## **RITUALS AND INDUCTION**

The Feormere Society embraces a series of rites that underscore their commitment to the cycle of life and death.

- **INDUCTION**

A new member's induction involves a "harvesting" task, where they must ethically gather a specific biological component from the Mortis and utilize it in a project that benefits the community. Overseen by an Adept, this task demonstrates the new member's understanding of Necrology and their dedication to the society's principles. Upon completion, the Initiate is carried by local Adepts and the Lead-Necrologists within a coffin into the morgue as part of their initiation ritual.

- **THE GATHERING OF ROOTS**

This is an annual event where members of The Feormere Society from various settlements come together to exchange knowledge, present their necrological innovations, and engage in a collective project that benefits the wider community. This event celebrates the society's ethos of growth, innovation, and the respectful harnessing of the Mortis.

- **THE MENDING**

In the face of a crisis where the Mortis has been severely tainted by radiation or mutation, the Feormere Society enacts The Mending. This requires the collective effort of the society's most skilled Necrologists and bio-chemists. Participants gather at the affected site, forming a perimeter around the contamination impact site. The process can last for hours or days, depending on the severity of the contamination, and involves the scientific application of repair procedures to remove the source of agitation and the offering of their own life force and Infection to restore balance. The Mending is considered a last resort, reflecting the society's deep respect for the Mortis and their commitment to safeguarding its sanctity against all forms of corruption.

- **THE BINDING OF SHEARS**

When a member becomes a threat to society or violates the group's sacred codes, the Feormere Society conducts the Binding of Shears. This ritual involves the errant member being brought before a Safeguard Overseer, where their transgressions are laid bare. Should they be found guilty, a ceremony is performed to sever their connection to the Mortis. This symbolic and literal disconnection serves as both punishment as the individual is brought to their last Infection, and released into the world. The ritual concludes with the individual being exiled, their name stricken from the society's records, and a warning sigil branded upon them as a mark of their betrayal.



## THE TABULARASA SOCIETY

*“In the embrace of the Mortis, we find liberation from the self.  
Through unity and the void, we shall redefine existence.”*

The Tabularasa Society is a clandestine society of psychonauts, Aberrant psions, and philosophers who delve into the depths of the Mortis with the aim of transcending individual consciousness. Their emblem, a spiral descending into darkness, represents their journey towards the loss of ego and the discovery of a collective consciousness within the Mortis. They believe that through this unity of mind and soul in death, they can influence the very fabric of reality, guiding the evolution of the Mortis and, by extension, the world itself.

It should be noted that this group is written primarily as a narrative tool for local storytelling as well as an antagonistic sect. However, if local branches wish, they can make this group available to players up to a certain level of membership.

### CODE

The Tabularasa Society is guided by a set of principles that reflect their extreme commitment to their cause.

- **TRANSCENDENCE OF THE SELF:** Members must strive to dissolve their individual ego, seeking unity with the collective consciousness cultivated within the society via the state of death and rebirth in the Mortis. Personal desires and identities are to be subsumed into the group’s singular purpose.
- **EMBRACE OF THE ABERRANT:** The society values the Aberrant psionic abilities as keys to unlocking deeper understanding and control over the Mortis. Members are encouraged to explore and expand these abilities, even at the risk of their own sanity. There is no higher calling than to find a means to transcend the limitations of the ego and self via Aberrant skills.
- **NIHILISTIC VISION:** The Tabularasa Society holds a nihilistic view of the current state of the world, believing that only through the complete overhaul of reality, as influenced by the Mortis, can true meaning and purpose be found. This plan does include creating a new world via manipulation of the Mortis via planned Imprint manipulation. Each death is an infinitely small change to the direction and design of the Mortis.
- **SACRIFICE FOR UNITY:** Sacrifice, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, is considered noble and necessary for the advancement of the society’s goals. Members may be called upon to sacrifice themselves for the collective’s endeavors.

### ORGANIZATION

The structure of The Tabularasa Society reflects their focus on deep exploration of the Mortis and the cultivation of Aberrant psionic abilities.

- **SEEKER**  
New initiates to the society, Seekers are introduced to the basic tenets of the Tabularasa Society’s philosophy and begin the process of ego dissolution. They are mentored by Transcendents, learning to navigate the psychological and existential challenges of their path. These initiations are terrifying, ego shattering, and involve a combination of brainwashing and destruction of the ego.
- **TRANSCENDENT**  
Having demonstrated a significant detachment from their individual ego, Transcendents mentor Seekers and facilitate their exploration of the Mortis. They are responsible for introducing more advanced practices and overseeing the initial stages of Aberrant ability development.

- **VOIDWALKER**

Masters of Aberrant psionics and deeply immersed in the collective consciousness, Voidwalkers lead the society's most sacred and dangerous activities. They are pivotal in the efforts to influence the Mortis and reality itself. These members plan and decide who, and how, individuals should die to have the biggest impact on the Mortis. This is the highest rank a player character can achieve.

- **ABYSSAL HERALD**

The leaders of local chapters, Abyssal Heralds, have started to transcend their individual selves, becoming avatars of the society's collective will. They oversee all operations within their domain, guiding their members towards the society's ultimate vision. This is the highest rank that a branch can represent as a NPC for their branch.

- **ECLIPSE ORACLE**

The highest echelon of The Tabularasa Society, Eclipse Oracles are those who have achieved the greatest depth of unity with the collective consciousness and wield unparalleled influence over the Mortis. They coordinate the society's activities across all chapters, ensuring that their nihilistic vision is pursued with unwavering focus and unity. Eclipse Oracles control individual sects the same way dangerous cult leaders would control serving cells. At a word, life and death happens at the direction of the Eclipse Oracle.

## **RITUALS AND INDUCTION**

The rituals of the Tabularasa Society embrace the loss of Infection, the shattering of the self, and are often unkind and self-destructive rituals.

- **THE DISSOLUTION**

This is the initiation ritual for new members, where they undergo a series of trials designed to strip away layers of their ego, rebuild them through brainwashing, and culminating in a psionic ceremony that binds them to the collective consciousness of the society.

- **THE GATHERING OF SHADOWS**

A periodic event where members from various chapters come together to share insights, strengthen their collective bond, and perform mass rituals aimed at influencing the Mortis and the fabric of reality. This event normally involves individual or group sacrifice of Infection to the Mortis, with the intent of sculpting the direction of how the Mortis will influence the growth of the world moving forward.

- **THE RITE OF THE VOID**

In times of significant opportunity to advance their cause arises, the Tabularasa Society performs this powerful and dangerous ritual. It involves a collective sacrifice of ego, and sometimes physical form, to enact a significant change within the Mortis or to harness its power for a specific purpose.

- **THE SEVERANCE**

Should a member become a threat to the society's unity or goals, or irreversibly reclaim their sense of self, The Severance is performed. This ritual releases psychological blocks that were placed in a member during their initiation, forcing the individual to face the mind shattering experiences of death and ego loss. This act expels them from the sect, often leaving them as a gibbering husk, devoid of purpose or identity, as a warning to others of the cost of betrayal.





## DEOS MORTIS

*“Some are more worthy of living than others – that’s the hard truth no one wants to talk about. If you could allow these people to live forever while sacrificing the unworthy, wouldn’t you choose to do so?”*

*Please note that the Deos Mortis is designed as an antagonist group. While individual games may choose to allow their players to join this faction at their discretion, it’s designed to be antagonistic. We recommend instead using this group as a faction of antagonists at your local game. If you do decide to allow players to join, make sure they understand that this is an antagonistic group that may result in CvC with others.*

The Deos Mortis is a group made up of Graverobbers and Necrologists whose sole aim is to find a way to live forever. With the advent of the Infection, this is (in theory) possible. After all, Full Dead exist in the world – creatures who retain their cognitive functions but will never age. It should be possible to use the Infection to extend a person’s life into eternity.

However, eternity doesn’t come without a cost. The Deos Mortis have worked to uncover the old writings from infamous Iron Works scientists to recreate their experiments to harvest Infection. Their view is that there is a price of immortality – a heavy price. However, that price is worth it. By allowing artists, scientists and those who are “worthy” to live forever, they can create a new age of peace and prosperity. If a few atrocities need to be committed to attain that goal, then that’s fine by them.

### CODE

There is a code that individuals of the Deos Mortis all adhere to. This is a common set of rules that they follow in order to maintain cohesion within the organization

- **DO NOT MOURN THE UNWORTHY:** Do not mourn the ones who are not worthy of eternal life. They are simply steps towards a greater purpose for all.
- **STRIVE FOR ETERNITY:** In the future, we will be able to attain eternal life. This eternity will herald a new age of prosperity, peace, and control within our world.
- **SACRIFICE FOR NEW LIFE:** If you need to sacrifice for the sake of learning more, then do so. We cannot allow anyone to stand in the way of our research.
- **INFECTION IS LIFE:** It’s important to recognize that the Infection is the key to eternal life. Full Dead and Unborn may hold more information to attaining our goals.

### ORGANIZATION

The structure of The Feormere Society reflects their dedication to the study and application of Necrology.

- **RESEARCHER**

The first stage of the Deos Mortis is the Researcher. This is an individual who normally works beneath a Lead Scientist, and collects information to better understand how best to attain immortality. Researchers aren’t privy to all of the rituals and information in the society, and are often used as low-level assistants rather than treated as respected members of the group.

- **LEAD SCIENTIST**

In order to become a Lead Scientist, a Researcher must prove themselves and dedicate themselves to the cause. Normally, Lead Scientists have three to five Researchers that work beneath them, gathering data for a larger project that a Lead Scientist is working on. Lead Scientists are the backbone of the Deos Mortis, conducting various experiments with the Mortis that further the cause. A Lead Scientist is the highest level that a player can achieve, if a game decides to introduce this as a joinable, local group.

- **DEO**

The Deo is the highest level that a local NPC can portray. This individual works with Lead Scientists to enact larger-scale plans for a local area. This includes creating large-scale projects that many individuals need to work on – such as testing an injection on an entire settlement to see its effects, or setting up a harvesting operation for Infection. The Deo is in charge of all local area Lead Scientists and their Researchers.

- **THE LIVING ETERNAL**

This is a position reserved for cross-network events hosted or supported by Most Improbable. The Living Eternal is the architect of the Deos Mortis – an individual who sees the larger scale picture of pursuing eternal life. It's rumored that this position has been held by a Full Dead for as long as this organization has been in existence, and this individual is intent on creating a new world full of promise and structure. The atrocities done in the name of the Living Eternal are many – and this person is often viewed as a villain, albeit one with purpose, drive, and their own goals.

## **RITUALS AND INDUCTION**

The Deos Mortis have several rituals for members of their society, each of which is focused on their larger goal of obtaining immortality. While most of them are centered on research, however, there are aspects of the society that delve into ritualistic practice.

- **THE “TROLLEY INDUCTION”**

Nicknamed “The Trolley Induction” by Lead Scientists who are in the know, induction into the Deos Mortis is not an easy thing. Those that show promise are led into a room where two individuals are being experimented upon. The potential Researcher is then given a choice: save both of them by sacrificing themselves, or choose which one to inject with a potentially deadly experimental serum. Those that interview the patients and decide which the best candidate is normally accepted into the organization by showing the depths of their scientific mind – as long as they continue to record the results. Those that are emotional or try sacrificing themselves are summarily rejected from the group and sometimes become experiments themselves.

- **MEETING OF THE MINDS**

While research happens year round, once a year the Deo calls for a Meeting of the Minds for members of the Deos Mortis. This is where Lead Scientists and Researchers gather to present their latest findings, and also potential therapies to allow for eternal life. The Deo judges which findings are worth investing in, and which are best discarded or incorporated into more promising research.

- **THE FORCE OF ETERNITY**

The Force of Eternity is less of a scientific get together and more of a ritualistic practice. Those who are part of the upper echelons of the Deos Mortis will come together and perform a ritualistic sacrifice of one of the “unworthy.” This is often an individual that is dying due to scientific experimentation. After the ritualistic sacrifice, each of the members of the Deos Mortis will dip their hand in a cup of the victim's blood as a way to signify that they are willing to do what it takes to obtain immortality.

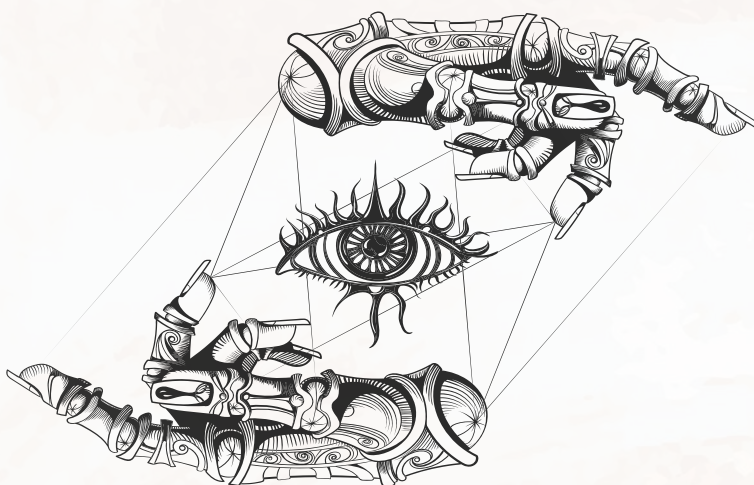
## THE DEAD MARKET

*“You’d be surprised how squeamish some Mortis Practitioners are. They don’t like harvesting their own shit – they want someone else to do it for them and put it in a nice, clean, sanitized package for them to use. We’re the ones that do the harvesting and the packaging. We’re the ones that get our hands dirty. They don’t ask questions because they don’t want answers – and that suits us just fine.”*

There is a whisper among the settlements of the wastes of a society that works in the shadows. It procures items and specialty components for Mortis Practitioners without any sort of troublesome morality. Only those who know where to meet and who to speak to can get access to these items. And those who join are put through a series of rigorous tests to ensure that they never reveal the market’s secrets.

The Dead Market is one of the circles within the Black Market. Those who are privy to its membership and inner workings usually know enough not to speak of them. However, most Mortis Practitioners know of a group that can get items that are almost impossible to procure otherwise – though they don’t necessarily know its name or anything else other than their particular contact.

***More information about The Dead Market and its inner workings can be found in the Black Market book, Illicit Business.***



## THE WATCH OF THE BONE CHAPEL

*“It is the responsibility of all members to ensure that those that would lead the masses act with the interests of the greater society in mind. It is the responsibility of all members to remind wayward leaders of the humility of mortality.”*

Being able to control the path between life and death is something that someone should wield responsibly. There is a certain expectation for those that delve into the grave. Unfortunately, some don’t meet that expectation. That’s exactly where the Bone Chapel comes in.

There are many rumors about this organization. However, it’s clear that they’re very effective at what they do – whatever it is. To most, the Bone Chapel looks like a group of Graverobbers who “fix” an issue in an area before leaving without a word.

***More information about the Watch of the Bone Chapel and its inner workings can be found in the Murder Inc book, A Killer’s Mind.***



# NECROLOGY

Years ago, people realized that they could harness the Infection and the Mortis to accomplish unspeakable tasks. These individuals, first known as Graverobbers, were at first feared and then respected among the settlements of the wastes. As time went on, though, these individuals refined the technology that they were working with. Soon, various disciplines began to develop. Over time, the term “Necrology” began to be used – a catch-all phrase that described the discipline of Grave Sciences and the various individuals involved with it. While at first Necrology was viewed as simply building something within the Mortis, it has since expanded to encompass other disciplines of the Mortis.

## WHAT IS NECROLOGY?

Necrology consists of the various Grave Sciences that allow individuals to delve to the Mortis and perform various procedures there. There is quite a bit of debate as to whether Aberrant abilities should be considered as part of Necrology, and most professionals in the field have determined that they should not be. This is largely due to the fact that while they can cause similar (or almost exact) effects, they are less a part of the spectrum of sciences and more part of a class of innate (or semi-innate) abilities that some possess.

Necrology allows individuals to create monstrous advancements – building fungal transmitters for communication through death itself, restoring Infection, or even drugs to enhance physical performance — but it is still limited by biological processes and by how quickly organic matter breaks down. As an example, you will never be able to create a “computer” made of biological material, but you could create a mycelium network to make a telegraph system.

In all, there are three disciplines of Necrology that have developed over time. These disciplines each involve their own procedures, and many individuals normally choose to specialize in one discipline rather than all three. While there is some crossover between them, each is distinct enough that it’s normally beneficial to concentrate on one of the three.

## MECHANICAL NECROLOGY

The most well-known discipline is mechanical Necrology; this includes building items within the liminal space of the Mortis at a Necrology station. These items are normally made of biological matter, and include things such as fungal network communication systems, Morgues, and large-scale building projects.

As with most things made of biological matter, though, these projects eventually fall apart over time. While they last, though, they act as huge assets to local settlements – as long as everyone gets over the fact that they’re crafted from semi-dead flesh and the Infection. Necrologists are the main practitioners of Mechanical Necrology, and are adept at creating large-scale structures within the Mortis.

## MEDICINAL NECROLOGY

Within the liminal space of the Mortis, it’s easier to create brews and tinctures that affect the body in extraordinary ways. Medicinal Necrology is the art of using Necrology resources and items to create drugs and medicines that affect Strains in startling ways.

Those that study Medicinal Necrology are normally masters of culinary arts, and know the ins and outs of using various herbs to concoct medicinal tinctures and injections. More specifically, they’ve studied how a Strain’s body can be affected by various naturally (and unnaturally) occurring compounds. Many Gravenauts and Corpse Whisperers study Medicinal Necrology as a way to aid their expeditions into the Mortis either for information or for exploration.

## PROCEDURAL NECROLOGY

While Mechanical Necrology is the most well-known discipline of Necrology in general, Procedural Necrology has a long and storied history in Grave Sciences. These are a series of procedures normally performed on Strains themselves that have varied effects.

Those who practice Procedural Necrology normally have a near-perfect understanding of how bodies work, no matter their Strain. Learning Procedural Necrology normally requires dissecting bodies to better understand what makes them tick. Graverobbers are the main practitioners of Procedural Necrology, though this discipline often attracts other individuals depending on the results of the procedure.

## CREATING DEATH IN PLAY

When the Mortis Amaranthine first came into being, many game runners learned how to run death scenes via word-of-mouth and with firsthand experience. As the Dystopia Rising LARP has grown, however, learning how to run a Mortis scene has become more difficult. That's why we've created this guide to help both game runners and players understand what a Mortis scene is and how to run one.

In the following pages, we'll go over a bit more about the theory behind the Mortis Amaranthine, as well as how to run death scenes and grave procedures. Keep in mind that this is a useful tool for not just game runners, but also players who are portraying Mortis practitioners that want to delve further into the grave. It also allows all games to be consistent across the network, which is important when it comes to travel between chapters.

## THE THEORY OF DEATH

When we talk about the Mortis Amaranthine, it's essential to understand how it completely redefines the concept of "losing a life" in the Dystopia Rising universe. This transformative experience instead turns a perceived loss into a gain, enriching the gaming narrative in the process.

In most gaming scenarios, the loss of a life or character death is seen as a setback, often accompanied by frustration and disappointment. Many times death is seen as a moment of defeat, a pause that interrupts the gaming flow, which can lead to a disheartened player.

However, the Mortis Amaranthine changes this. Instead of a straightforward loss, character death becomes a creepy, fun, and transformative experience for the player. It's not the end but a new beginning, opening doors to fresh perspectives and insights that the player might not have considered before.

When a character dies, their player gets to decompress, take a breather, and shake off the adrenaline. It's a space designed for players to recalibrate and get their heads back in the game, all while the staff keeps an eye on their well-being.

When a character succumbs to death in Dystopia Rising, it's not a moment of loss but an opportunity for the player to engage in a process of reflection and recalibration.



## **MORTIS AMARANTHINE AS A CHARACTER STEERING TOOL**

With the Mortis Amaranthine, character death can be a narrative pivot, marking not a conclusion but a fresh start, unveiling new avenues of perspective and insight previously unexplored or unnoticed by the player.

When people enter the Mortis via death, they do not return to play the same way. Minor changes to personality, memories, and even some biological changes to the character can be explained by using the process of death and rebirth via the Mortis. As a narrative tool, this allows staff and players the ability to fundamentally change a character to keep things enjoyable for the player.

When a character is played for a longer period of time during a chronicle play LARP, the personification of the character may become stale over time. Staying “true to the character” becomes a concept that can trap a player into feeling bound to actions and forms of play they may no longer find enjoyable. With the Mortis Amaranthine, these aspects of the character can be adjusted by the player with the narrative explanation of “people change in the Mortis Amaranthine, and often don’t come back the same way.”

## **MORTIS AMARANTHINE AS A META CONCEPT**

The Mortis Amaranthine functions as a meta concept that makes Dystopia Rising different from other post-apocalypse properties. While there have been a number of other game and story worlds with apocalypses, fungus, infections, and mutations of different zombies, the concept of the Mortis Amaranthine still remains as a unique genre driving aspect of the Dystopia Rising world.

At its core, the Mortis Amaranthine facilitates a unique exploration of death and rebirth, serving as a narrative device that allows characters to experience multiple lives, akin to respawning in video games. This approach creates a space where characters transition through death, providing a controlled environment for game runners to manage and guide players through the intense experiences their characters undergo. The design of this death and rebirth system allows for the process to be universally standardized despite the game world having multiple religions and philosophies regarding what life and death means. Death and rebirth is now no longer an aspect of debate regarding higher beings and abstract religious concepts, but instead grounded as an accepted biological aspect of the game world. This allows game runners to create a liminal space for player roleplay that is engaging regardless of how religious a character, or their player, may be.

This liminal space, represented by the Mortis Amaranthine, is not just a pause or break in the character’s journey; it’s a transformative phase where characters are reborn, carrying with them the echoes of their past decisions and the profound experience of transformation through the cycle of death and rebirth. It turns the typically negative experience of character death into an opportunity for narrative enrichment and character development, offering players a chance to explore their character’s psyche and evolution in deeper, more meaningful ways.

Furthermore, the Mortis Amaranthine is intricately connected to the network of Infection within the game’s lore, serving as a conduit for the characters’ experiences of death and transformation. This connection is not superficial; it is deeply embedded in the game mechanics and the overarching narrative, influencing how characters perceive and navigate their post-apocalyptic environment. The Mortis Amaranthine, therefore, is not a passive element; it actively shapes and directs the stories unfolding within the Dystopia Rising universe, making it a pivotal tool for storytelling and gameplay.

The Mortis Amaranthine becomes a tool to offer a decompression at the end of a potentially impactful scene. It provides a narrative point that allows players to steer their characters in role-play directions that the player wishes to explore (but requires a drastic change to implement), as well as giving a narrative explanation for any mechanical changes a player may wish to make on their character sheet.



# RUNNING DEATH

The world of Dystopia Rising is a dangerous place. Zombies, Raiders, and people threaten others in the post-apocalyptic wastes. It's not surprising that death is a relatively common occurrence. That's why it's important to learn how to run death scenes as a game runner – or even as a player who wants to delve more into the graver aspects of the Dystopia Rising universe.

## WHAT IS A POST-DEATH SCENE?

A post-death scene is a personalized moment for a newly dead character. It's the experience that they go through within the Mortis as their body knits back together. On a more practical level, it's a psychological, black box scene that a game runner facilitates for a player to help move their character's story forward.

On an out-of-character level, death is a good thing in Dystopia Rising. It helps drive character growth and change, and gives a player the opportunity to alter their character's personality and drives (if they so wish). When greeting a player after a character's death, we always recommend you congratulate the player and be positive. Not only does this help with negative bleed that a player may be experiencing, but it also puts them in a good mindset for their death scene.

Once a player is ready, you'll want to ask them a bit more about their character. Learn more about how they died, what mindset their character had when they died, and also ask them if they'd like to steer their character in a particular direction. This gives you, as the game runner, some direction in how they want their scene to go. In all, we recommend asking the following questions:

- How did your character die, and what were they thinking of at the moment of their death?
- Was there anyone important to your character who was there during the time of their death?
- What sort of Fracture are you thinking of role-playing? If you don't have one in mind, let's discuss a few examples so you can customize it. Alternatively, you can let the Mortis scene dictate your character's Fracture and how you role-play it.
- What is your character's back story? Do they have any current drives and goals?
- How much does your character know about the Mortis Amaranthine?
- Do you want to use this opportunity to steer your character in any particular direction going forward?
- Do you want anything in particular to occur during this scene, or do you want it to be a surprise?
- Are there any topics you'd like to avoid completely during this scene?

Another thing we recommend is asking the player what their character knows about the Mortis and a bit more about their character's past and any connections they may have. This allows you to customize the scene for the character in a way that drives their story forward. By checking what topics a player wants to avoid, you can also make sure that you avoid story points that the player may not find enjoyable. Overall, death scenes normally fall into one of three categories:

- **Build It Up:** A scene that builds up a character, who they are, and leaves them with a positive feeling. Usually, this results in a character having a new goal or drive.
- **Break It Down:** A scene that breaks down a character so that they can either rebuild themselves, or have others help them rebuild.
- **Fight It Out:** A scene that is combative with the character fighting with "themselves" within the Mortis. The fight can wind up with a peaceful or non-peaceful outcome depending on the character's mental state.

There are, of course, other ways a scene can go, but these three are the main ones that we see most often, and can help encourage character development.



## THE CENTER OF ATTENTION

While each character has an individual post death scene, there are skills in the game that allow other characters to either observe or interact with a recently dead character's scene. When that happens, remember that the focus should still be on the dead character and their player. After all, they're the one that just had an intense scene, and should be the center of attention.

With that in mind, always speak to the players going into the scene ahead of time, and remind them that the focus should be on the dead character rather than themselves. By outlining this ahead of time, you can avoid interruptions within the scene itself. With that being said, there are ways to remind players within the scene who the focus should be on with in-character methods so as not to break the scene.

Example: The recently deceased character is portrayed by someone who is quieter. While they agreed to have others in their scene and you as a game runner told the other players who the scene was about, the other players are talking over the quieter player. As a game runner, you decide to throw in a unique mechanic during the scene to allow the quieter player to speak. After an aggravated back-and-forth with the louder players, you declare Choking Blow on each of the louder players for one minute. This allows the quieter player to speak and not be interrupted, and reminds the louder players who the scene is about.

We also recommend being transparent with the players ahead of time about this sort of mechanic and let them know that if you feel as if it's time to give the spotlight to the deceased character, you'll declare a choking blow during the scene. After all, we're all playing a game and want to be sure that each person is having a good time. By mentioning it ahead of time, players can be more mentally prepared and are more likely to have a good time.

## SOME WAYS TO DO IT

There are a lot of ways to run a death scene, and each death scene is as unique as the player and the game runner involved in them. However, there are a few tools that you can use to make a death scene more immersive and more fun for all those involved. Below, we've outlined some general guidelines and some examples of what you can do when running a death scene for a character. Some of these same techniques can be used for any Mortis scenes that you create.

Most important to remember, though, is the fact that Mortis scenes are never funny or silly. This is death – the last door. Scenes within the Mortis should always be either dramatic, serious, terrifying, or story changing.

## SET THE STAGE

One of the most important things you can do for Mortis and death scenes is to have a dedicated space for it. We recommend an indoor or underground space where you can easily black out the windows and lights with fabric or black sheeting to create a dark or dimly lit location. After all, death is still a terrifying experience. Once you do that, decorate it with flickering lanterns or battery-powered candles, or even use wavy, green, blue, or red lighting to set the stage.

After that, consider what smell you want players to encounter when stepping into death. Do you want them to smell grave dirt? Corpse? Saltwater? Get some scent sprays and line the interior of a box or other container with a closable lid. Open it about 10 minutes before a scene begins so that the smell permeates the interior space.

Then, consider what objects you want players to encounter, if any. Do you want skeletons and bones? Do you want your Mortis space to be a slaughter house with bodies hanging from meat hooks from the ceiling? Do you want it to be a single chair with a figure in it facing a darkened corner? Consider how you want to present your flavor of the Mortis, and then include items that are thematically appropriate.

You may also want to think of sounds. Hidden speakers with a background soundtrack can immerse your players in the space even more thoroughly than they would be otherwise. Just remember to start the sound right before players enter so they can't hear it beforehand.

Finally, consider how players both enter and leave the Mortis space. Do they need to crawl? Are they blindfolded and led in by someone to disorient them slightly? Entry and exit can help set the stage for your scene.

Always remember, however, that death is unsettling. With that in mind, always aim to create spaces that incorporate fears that people naturally have. Look into haunted house techniques rather than trying to decorate the room in a way that's inviting.



## TWISTS ON THE CLASSIC

Now that we've gone over how to prep for a death scene, we're going to dive into actually how to run one. You only need one Guide to run a death scene (though you can absolutely add in more than one individual to add in extra depth and interactions in a scene). How you run each scene largely depends on the Guide and the player. While a death scene is, on an in-character level, a character having a psychological experience (and thus, there is a lot of wiggle room for creativity), you should never introduce elements that are genre-breaking or outside the bounds of the game world. As an example, you shouldn't introduce information about what happened during the Fall or before the Fall. Similarly, you shouldn't introduce the Mortis as an actual personification that characters can interact with. Instead, aim to play with the character's fears, hopes, and drives, and incorporate them into the scene.

### SCENE EXAMPLE:

*The character you're running a scene for is named Lucky, and the player that portrays him is named George. After interviewing George, you find out that Lucky died after being eaten by a swarm of zombies. Lucky's friends tried to save him, but they couldn't get past the horde. George explains that Lucky came from a farming family on the outskirts of the settlement, but he left them in order to pursue his dream of being a guard and fighter. He still worries about his family, and especially his little sister, Juniper. George mentions that he'd like the Mortis scene to determine Lucky's Fracture, but he'll say what it is as soon as the scene concludes. He also mentions that he'd like you to incorporate his backstory a bit.*

*You leave George for a moment, and check in on your Mortis area. It's dimly lit, and you have two bluetooth speakers hidden in the corner connected to your phone. You load a clip of the sound of zombies, and leave it on pause for a moment. Then, you slip on a skull mask and go back to meet George and drop into character, narrating how he died before you lead him to the Mortis space.*

*Within the Mortis space itself, you run a scene where you portray various aspects of Lucky's personality. One is the farmer, hopeful and eager to leave the farm. The other is Lucky as he might imagine himself in the future – jaded, violent, and having lost his family.*

*George portrays Lucky as he is now. You, as the scene runner, switch between the two other personalities as the scene progresses. As it does, you begin running the zombie groans on low volume while hiding the phone in your pocket so that George doesn't see it and so that it doesn't break the scene. As the scene continues, the volume rises and you begin to roleplay more as a zombie over time and less like "Lucky" during the scene. At the end, you shout, "Go! Run! Get out of here!" and point toward the door. Lucky runs out of the Mortis scene, you take off the mask and proceed to Logistics. Later, George returns and tells you he has decided to roleplay the Fracture of being terrified of turning into a zombie – and a general fear of zombies, as well.*

*Note that this scene focused on the player and his character, as well as his continued development. It took notes from how the character died, as well as his backstory that he wanted to include. It also allowed the player to respond as his character, and make decisions of what he'd like to do in the scene.*

*With that being said, you have quite a bit of creative freedom when it comes to running a Mortis scene for a player's character. However, always stick to genre, keep the focus on the character, and give the player the ability to further the story of their character.*

## DYING FOR THE LAST TIME

When a character dies for the final time and loses their last Infection, it's important to make sure the player has an opportunity to not just have an amazing last scene, but also wrap up their character's story arc in some way. We also encourage players to begin developing a secondary character once their primary character has reached one or two Infection so that they have another character to portray in the instance that their primary character dies for a final time.

However, in the instance that the player doesn't have a secondary character to jump into, as a game runner you can always offer to help them create their new character (and offer NPC costuming to use if they don't have any of their own at the moment), give them a single, social NPC to portray during the rest of the weekend, or allow them to join in on being various characters as a standard NPC. Make sure to check in with the player to see which option they prefer.

When dealing with a player whose character has lost their last Infection, follow the same steps as you would for any post-death scene. However, also check in with the player to see if there are any additional wrap-ups that they'd like to see happen. You want to aim to give the player an amazing wrap-up scene that is meaningful to them and helps end their character's story. Some things you can offer include:

- Offering the player to allow their character's friends to enter the Mortis scene, as well (introduce a NPC Mortis Practitioner that seeks these individuals out ahead of time).
- Offer to allow the player to have their final Mortis scene at their home game if they happen to be at an away game at the time.
- Offer to allow the player to write notes to be found on their character's corpse, addressed to loved ones (or a last "will and testament")
- Offer to have a NPC go out and tell everyone that the character has died for the last time – either as a witness to the death or as a Mortis Practitioner that has sensed it in some way. This is a great option if the death wasn't actually witnessed by anyone.

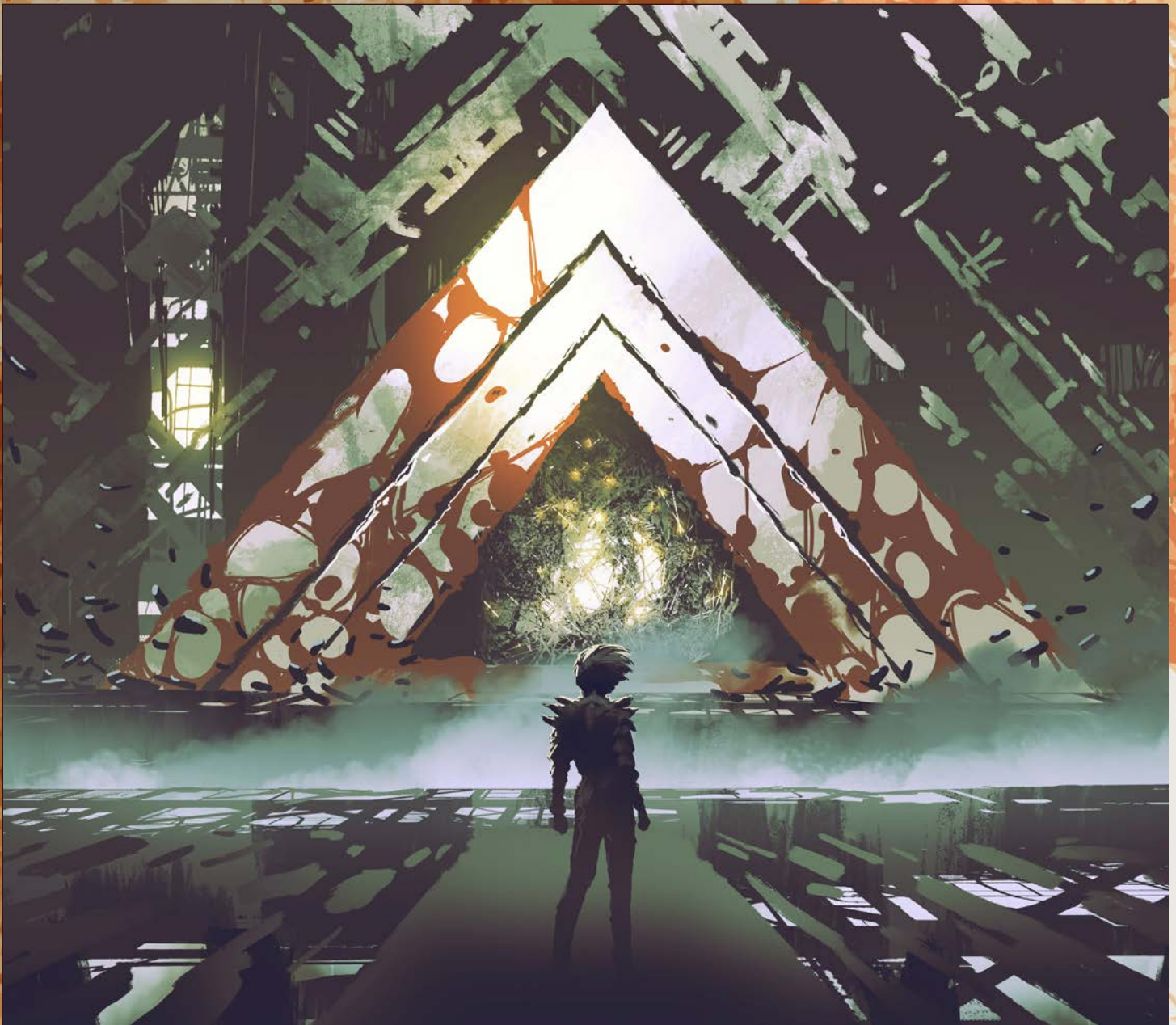
The player doesn't have to do any of these things. However, the above offerings are just a few ideas that could help wrap up a character's story.

The last thing you should do before entering a scene is discuss what sort of zombie the character will come out as. When a character dies for the last time, they always come out as some kind of zombie (unless game mechanics say otherwise – such as in the case with Bad Brain disease). Always discuss options with the player about which zombie thematically works for the player's character.

As an example, if the player portrayed a character that was sneaky, then you might suggest they come out as a stealthy zombie of some kind. If the character was tough and larger than life, then you may suggest they come out as some variety of tough or giant zombie. With that being said, it's more important to let the player choose what zombie they feel their character should come out as (within limits and within what is available for costuming).

Once you run the final Mortis scene for the character, ask the player if they're ready to go out as a zombie. Once they are ready, allow them to "spawn" where they'd like – whether it's straight out of the Morgue, or somewhere else on site.

While it's not always possible due to NPC availability, it can also be a good idea to costume a few NPCs as zombies to go out with the newly deceased character. That way, it's more of an interesting and dramatic fight for not just the player whose character just died, but also fellow players in the field at the time.



## GRAVE DIVES

There are those who die and fall into the Mortis, and then there are those who dive into it intentionally. Whether it's with Aberrant abilities or via a Mortis Practitioner procedure, diving into the grave is a harrowing and dangerous experience for anyone who chooses to do so.

With a post-death Mortis scene, a body is willingly accepted into the Mortis to be rebuilt. With a Grave Dive, an individual is forcing their way in instead. With that in mind, a post-death scene and a Grave Dive should be run differently.

In all, there are three main reasons to do a Grave Dive. The first is to reclaim Infection, the second is to find out information, and the third is to assassinate someone within the Mortis. Each of these instances require a game runner to run a scene for more than one player. However, each of these scenes have very different feels to them. Overall, though, each of these scenes should be serious, creepy or scary, and should always have an element of danger.

Diving into the Mortis is always a risk. Whenever anyone chooses to enter the Mortis, they are always putting their life on the line, and game runners should enforce this via plot introduced in the scene.

## DIVING TO RECLAIM INFECTION

When an individual dives to reclaim Infection with a procedure or skill, they are delving into the Mortis in order to replace what they've lost. When a Strain dies, they lose a bit more of themselves each time as the Mortis attempts to put them back together. Every time they die, there is less of their humanity left – until they eventually turn into a zombie.

When running a scene for an individual to reclaim Infection, you don't just want to do the dice roll mechanics referenced in the Player's Guide and on certain blueprints. Instead, you also want to run a scene for the players involved.

As a scene runner, you first want to learn more about the players involved in the dive. This includes their backgrounds, drives, and any other information you can get. Our recommendation is that you ask players to give you a month's advance notice that they're going to be doing a dive for Infection. That way, you can prepare a scene for them that will be both memorable and in-depth. You can do this by putting a form on your website, and requesting all players fill it out at least one game before they intend to do the Infection dive. We've included some questions you may want to ask the players about their characters ahead of time below.

- What was your character's most memorable death? Give details.
- Why does your character want to dive for Infection, knowing all of the risks involved?
- Are there any points in your character's backstory that are important?
- Who are the most important people to your character currently? Why?
- What does your character hope to do in the future? What are their long-term plans?
- What does your character know about the Mortis (if anything)?
- Who is your character diving with into the Mortis with? What do they know about them?
- What are three secrets your character has? Be detailed.

Once you have information about the characters involved in the Grave Dive, you can weave a scene for them using the information. You'll want to choose common themes between characters, as well as items that make them different. In addition, you'll likely want to aim for a social or puzzle scene rather than combat. This is largely because Mortis areas are normally dimly lit, and the Mortis is more of a mental space than a physical one.

Below, we've included a few examples you can use as inspiration for an Infection Reclamation scene. Keep in mind that each scene will be different depending on the players involved and depending on the space that you have to work with.

## UNFOLDING SECRETS

Set up a series of containers and wooden drawers (easily gotten by going to a thrift store to purchase old jewelry boxes with drawers) scattered through your Mortis space. Each drawer has a different piece of paper that either has information about one of the people within the Mortis scene, or a directive that a person must do within a Mortis scene (eg. Insult one of the people in the Mortis with you at this moment). An individual may choose to ignore a directive by spending 1 Resolve. If they receive information about another person, they must match it to that person after speaking it aloud. Once all of the pieces are matched to the correct people, the dice roll may occur. There is also a timer counting down with how long they have to match the correct pieces of information to the correct people. The Mortis Practitioner does not have to perform any of the directives, but does have secrets scattered amidst the others (as long as they are not also trying to regain an Infection).

## **THE MAZE**

Set up a string maze with as many differently colored strings as there are people going into the Mortis. Each person must pick a strand of differently colored string and follow it. Along the way, there are pieces of paper they must take that tell them to do certain actions to the first person their string crosses. There are other pieces of paper that block those actions. Each individual takes a turn and untangles their string until they reach a tied piece of paper, or a “cross string” with someone else. Once untangled, the strings attach to a main piece at the middle where the players have to each do one action and say what their future goals/dreams are before the dice roll is done.

## **TAKE WHAT'S YOURS**

Focus on the character's future goals and drives by stating at the beginning of the scene that they can only speak the truth. Then, have them pick from a bowl one by one. The bowl has a series of pieces of paper with questions that the character must answer truthfully. They can only choose to lie by spending a Resolve. If they run out of Resolve, they must leave the scene and receive a Fracture, but do not lose an Infection. If they stay in the scene and all questions are answered, then they may roll the die for an Infection gain.

## **DIVING FOR INFECTION ASSASSINATIONS**

There is another way to do a Grave Dive that's more nefarious. When someone dies, others may dive after them to try to take another Infection from them by using a procedure with stated mechanics. This results in two Infection lost rather than just one.

With that being said, this can only be performed on NPCs. However, it's important to make this attempt matter. NPCs with countless Infection makes players feel as if they have no real impact on the world. With that in mind, always remember to keep to the same cap of Infection on NPCs as PCs have, and only do an Infection Reclamation “on screen” for them rather than off-screen.

With that being said, Infection Assassinations are far more dangerous than Reclaiming Infection. These are harrowing experiences that leave not only the assassinated individual scarred (or dead forever), but can also scar those who are the would-be assassins. These scenes should always be horrifying, violent, and bloody.

Since these scenes can be spontaneous, it's a good idea to create a template (or a few templates) that works for your game. It's also important to remember that you want to add some more depth to this scene rather than just make it a “hit the NPC with a stick over and over” type of scene. With that in mind, we've included a couple of ideas below for you to get started with your own Infection Assassination scene. Keep in mind that we always recommend including scents, sounds, and other aspects in addition to the actual mechanical aspects below.

## **THE POISONED CUP**

Lay out several glasses. Each glass is filled with either water or clear vinegar. The person being assassinated has to pick two glasses each round instead of one. Every round, everyone drinks or must leave the scene. Every time someone drinks vinegar, they have to roll the dice to see if they either lose a Resolve, leave the scene, or stay in the scene with nothing happening. The target does not have the option to leave the scene and instead only has the option to lose a Resolve, lose an Infection, or stay in the scene with nothing happening. If an individual loses all of their Resolve, they lose an Infection. Keep in mind that Aberrants roll at disadvantage.



## **THE PERFECT STRIKE**

If you have a group that wants a more physical encounter, then this option may be a good solution. Have the group play a game of the ninja hand slap game. Have the NPC begin in the center of the circle of would-be assassins and go first, then have each player go in order, one after the other. The NPC gets two turns in a row instead of one, just to make things interesting. During everyone's turn, they may take up to one step. Every time a player's hand is slapped, their character either loses 1 Resolve or is ejected from the scene (you may choose to do a coin flip for this, or pre-determine it as the game runner at the beginning which mechanic you use). When a character loses all of their Resolve, they lose an Infection and are ejected from the scene until someone is free to run their Mortis scene. The NPC can have their hand slapped 4 or 6 times (2 times per each hand or 3 times per each hand) before they lose the extra Infection.

## **DIVING FOR INFORMATION**

There are times when characters may dive into the Mortis to learn more information about a NPC or another character. If someone dives to find out more information about a character or a situation, keep in mind that they can only find out information after someone has very recently passed through the Mortis (has to have done so during the current event) and who knows that information.

However, retrieving information from the Mortis isn't that simple. Your own experiences and others' may become tangled in the information gathering – especially when many have recently passed through the Mortis. Diving for information should always include a puzzle of some kind that players need to solve before getting the information they need. With that in mind, we've included a couple examples below of things you can have prepared if characters decide to dive for information.

### **MATCH IT UP**

Write a series of pieces of information on long, narrow strips of paper. Then, cut each piece of information straight down the middle so there are two pieces of symbols. Roll up each strip of paper and place them within your Mortis space within the various props you normally have set up there. The character that dives for information then needs to find the pieces of paper and match them up to each other to read out the pieces of information. They cannot take the pieces of paper with them when they leave the scene, but may write them down if they have a journal or other item they've brought with them. Every 3 minutes, they lose a Resolve. The character may stay in for as long as they like as long as they have Resolve, but once they reach 0 Resolve, they gain a Fracture and are ejected from the scene. Make sure to give the player a flashlight or other small light source if your Mortis space is dimly lit. The player may also choose to leave the scene at any time.

### **PUZZLE IT OUT**

Create a simple letter shift cipher and write out several pieces of information on paper. Then, fold up these pieces of paper and place them throughout your Mortis space. A character diving for information can then be given one blank piece of paper and a pen that they can take into and out of the Mortis space. They have 4 minutes to collect as much information as they can – whether that's deciphering the code and quickly writing down the information, or copying the cipher and decoding it later. Every 4 minutes, the character loses a Resolve. The character may stay in for as long as they like as long as they have Resolve, but once they reach 0 Resolve, they gain a Fracture and are ejected from the scene. Make sure to give the player a flashlight or other small light source if your Mortis space is dimly lit. The player may also choose to leave the scene at any time.

# NO MORGUE CONSEQUENCES

Sometimes, a settlement may not have a Morgue. This may be because the town is built on a Necropolis, or because something terrible occurred to the Morgue. Whatever the reason, there are consequences when there is no Morgue in an area to attract the newly deceased. We've listed some of the things that occur when there is no Morgue, as well as what may cause a Morgue to collapse in the first place.

## WHY MORGUES FAIL

Sometimes, a Morgue doesn't last – or can't be built in the first place. After all, while these structures are sturdy, they still can fail under the right circumstances. When a Morgue does fail, it normally does so spectacularly. Zombies flood the nearby area momentarily before it completely collapses.

When a Morgue is at risk of failing, you should make sure that players have the opportunity to save it in some way (allow them to shore it up at half the cost of what it took to build it), or give enough warning that it's not a surprise. This is especially important since Morgues are very costly to build, and the consequences of not having one can be deadly.

Below, we've given a list of some reasons why a Morgue may fail. This is not an all-encompassing list since your local plot and mechanics may cause a Morgue to fail in some other way, but it does show you some thematic reasons why a Morgue may collapse.

- Too Many Aberrant Grave Dives - If characters continuously do Grave Dives using Aberrant-related skills, then a Morgue is at risk of collapse. This means doing between 5 and 10 per event, though games may choose to make that number higher depending on their local plot
- Too Many Infection Reclamation Procedures - If characters run too many Infection Reclamation Procedures in a row, the Morgue may be at risk of collapsing. This means doing 2 per event for a number of events in a row, though games may alter this number depending on if they want this procedure to be rarer or more common.
- Aberrants Dying - If characters with Aberrant skills continuously die, one after another, then a Morgue is at risk of collapse. This may be anywhere between 15 to 20 characters in a row dying who have Aberrant skills.
- Morgue Experimentation - While some experimentation is encouraged, too much may cause a Morgue to collapse. Make sure to warn your players ahead of time.
- Being in a Necropolis - If a town or settlement is built on a Necropolis, it is not possible to have a Morgue in the first place.



## DEATH WAITS

When there is no Morgue, there can be serious consequences. This is largely due to the fact that there is no set place for Strains to gravitate toward after they die. Instead, they may pop up in the area at random – or other things may arise with them.

Keep in mind that consequences we've listed below are thematic suggestions, and you can create your own based on your game's flavor and location. We also recommend that players are made well aware of the consequences of having no Morgue. With that being said, we do recommend you follow the following mechanic when a Strain dies.

If your settlement has no Morgue, then roll a 6-sided die when a Strain dies. The following happens to the character after you run their post-death scene:

1. The character comes into the world either underground or underwater (you can simulate this with a person-sized crate or box that you place somewhere on your site that the player can choose to wait within as long as they are comfortable with it). Other characters have 10 minutes to find them before they drown or suffocate and pass through the Mortis again.
2. The character comes into a world in a random location on your site. At the same time, send out a zombie horde as a roaming threat that they may encounter (or not).
3. The character becomes trapped within the Mortis space (send out a Mortis Practitioner to say as much). Their friends must enter the Mortis to retrieve them.
4. The character enters the world and for the next hour calls "All Zombies Attracted to Me" every 10 minutes.
5. The character comes into the world, half-stuck within the ground at a random location. It takes 10 minutes for them to free themselves, or a friend may dig them free in 2 minutes. Random threats may encounter them during this time.
6. The character emerges in a safe location on your site. However, for the next 30 minutes, Aberrant-related zombie threats plague the settlement.

## BUILDING A MORGUE

After a Morgue fails and players deal with the consequences of it, they'll often want to build a new one. There is a set amount of items needed to build a Morgue, but you can enhance this experience as a game runner with a planned module. Since it often takes months for players to get enough resources to build a Morgue, you can ask them to give you advance warning via a form on your website so that you can plan a scene for them.

Thematically, building a Morgue is dangerous in and of itself. Since it requires psionic crystals and other components that can attract the undead. With that in mind, we recommend finding out how many players will be involved in this process, and create several elements to occupy the various individuals involved in crafting the Morgue.

As an example, you can have waves of undead coming in to disrupt the builders that can occupy the fighters, a toyetic puzzle that the builders need to complete, and even a medical portion that requires your doctors to carefully hack apart body parts to fuel the builders.

How you structure this is completely up to you as a game runner, but building a Morgue is always somewhat dangerous, complicated, and requires a team effort.



## AFTER WORD

This book was many years in the making – not because of how long it took to write this particular splat book, but because of all of the lore and history that preceded it in play. For over 15 years, the Mortis Amaranthine has intrigued and terrified players who have played Dystopia Rising. Now, we’ve finally written it all down.

This book by no means encompasses all of the stories, plots, and intrigues that have been run during this time. However, it does give some concrete answers about the world and the original intentions behind the Mortis.

We hope that you can use this information to craft your own stories at your own local games. We hope that you use your imagination and run with it – tell amazing narratives and weave them into your local games.

Most importantly, this book wouldn’t exist without all of the players that have joined us over the years – so thank you. It’s because of you that we can continue crafting the Dystopia Rising world and putting it out there for you to play with.







**MOSTIMPROBABLE**