

for EABA™v2

Interregnum™

sometimes the bad guys win...



 **BTRC**

greg porter

Interregnum™

v1.00 ©2021 greg porter

rules: greg porter

graphics: greg porter

cover art: marek okon

character art: josé melo

chapter art: boris u., russell shaw higgs
(creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en)

useful
comments: cathy demott

dedication: to cathy, always

EABA™ and **EABA^{v2}** are a trademarks of blacksburg tactical research center.
all rights reserved. protected by the universal copyright convention and lackeys
of our alien overlords.

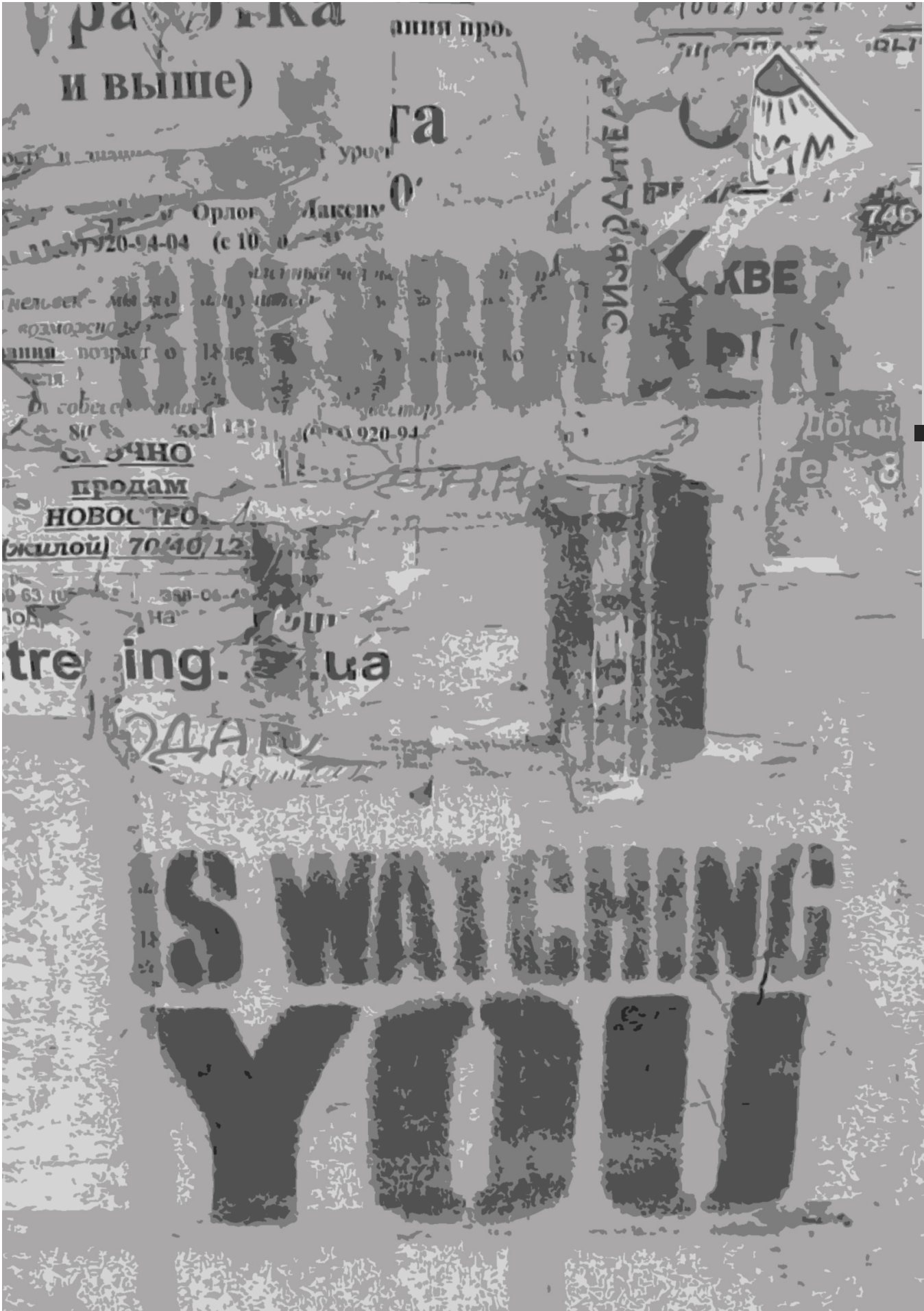
INTRO	1
Into the Deep End	1.2
What it's about	1.5
The future	1.6

ADVENTURERS	2
Introduction	2.2
Special backgrounds	2.3
Tech Inheritance	2.3
Status	2.5
Cipher	2.6
Frozen Chosen	2.7
Attributes & Skills	2.10
Starting gear	2.10
Pre-gen adventurers	2.12

THE WORLD	3
Introduction	3.2
Daily life	3.2
Climate	3.3
Civil liberties	3.3
Transport	3.4
International issues	3.5
Computers	3.5
Big Brother	3.5
3D printing	3.7
Anarchy tech	3.8
Antiquing	3.9

CAMPAIGNING	4
Introduction	4.2
Campaign ground rules	4.2
Campaign types	4.4
People	4.6
The Masters	4.8
Zones	4.10
Complications	4.11
Starting a campaign	4.14
Experience awards	4.16
Campaign structure	4.16
Lambda cell (group)	4.19
Short adventures	4.21
1: Bugout prep	4.21
2: Leadership void	4.23
3: Supply run	4.26
4: The operation	4.31
Assassination	4.32
Upgrades	4.34
Propaganda	4.35
Losing your humanity	4.36
Campaign timeline	4.37
Losing adventurers	4.39
Campaign end	4.42
Media references	4.46

GEAR	5
Weapon notes	5.2
Armor notes	5.6
Masters tech	5.7
Anomaly gear	5.8
Regular gear	5.11
Gear list	5.13
Adventurer sheet	5.15
Adventurer log	5.18
Pre-gen extras	5.19
EABA OSL	5.23





*Those who only know **what** to think, fear
those who know **how** to think.*

INTO THE DEEP END



Chris clutched his StateSec sniper rifle too tightly as he sighted down the hallway. To him, the rifle smelled of warm plastic and scorched blood. He'd never been able to get all of its former owner out of the cracks in the composite, but the others said it was just his imagination. He was behind a pane of IR-block film covering a hole in the wall, masking his thermal signature but still allowing him to see. To his left and front, a wall and some sandbags, and past the wall to his left, the door at the end of the hall, with a small space heater warming up a tank of black market butane.

The StateSec drone came in from outside, over the smoking ruin of the crawler that had placed the demolition charge on the door and been blown up in turn by a hidden Resistance charge. Their propellers were shrouded now, to keep from tangling in the near-invisible fishing line strung from the ceiling. *Every tactic the Resistance used was eventually met with a countermeasure.* As it pushed by the curtain of dangling lines, the adhesive smeared on them stuck to the shrouds, pulling the lines free from the ceiling to be sucked into the ducted fans. The drone crashed and tumbled. Neither Chris nor the other Resistance members twitched. While immobilized, its sensors were probably still active, and the entire point was to *not* show your position.

The next drone buzzed through the doorway. *Fuck!* It was a streamlined triangle of alien tech. Supposedly fusion-powered, it barely fit through the doorway, and it was armored and heavily armed. From her position on the floor above, Rachel triggered the frag mines on either side of the hallway. The StateSec drone was shredded, as were both walls, but the Masters drone was only staggered. It tilted upward and fired a stream of hypersonic projectiles, unzipping the ceiling of the hallway. Over the roar, he heard Rachel scream, and distantly, the sound of splintering composite. His hardwired headphone crackled, "*Multiple entry teams, south, west and north second floor. Open fire, plan Beta.*" He pressed his transmit button and said "*Masters drone, south entrance.*" It would have been nice to know about *that* drone ahead of time, but Resistance knew better than to have visible spotters, and electronic sensors and radios were of dubious utility against high-tech countermeasures and homing weapons. The problem with being successful in the Resistance is that it drew the attention of the Masters. *Today was our lucky day to join the big leagues,* he thought. Careful info leaks, luring StateSec into a well-planned ambush, had turned into a grade A clusterfuck in mere seconds.



The control box to his left was nothing more than a residential light switch wired to an extension cord, and as he sighted on the drone he flicked it. A cobbled together bundle of pipes and rifle cartridges fired through the door and down the hallway at the drone. It hit nothing, but did what it was supposed to. The drone responded so fast Chris didn't even see it move. The doorway to his left was shredded, and as the thermal bloom from the butane blast flooded the hallway, Chris fired half a dozen shots. He had no idea if it was the first shot, last shot or something in between, but one of the ducted fans stuttered and stopped. With only two fans it should have crashed, but instead it started doing a crazy spin in mid-air and the turret spun the opposite direction at the same rate, ignoring the decoy gun and thermal bloom to aim right at him. *Doublefuck!* Chris dropped below the edge of his sandbags as a disturbingly accurate fusilade tore his wall to confetti. He stayed flatter than he thought was possible, and after several seconds the fire stopped and he heard the fans receding. Not daring to look up, he rolled to one side and slithered to the next room, not even noticing the graze that had torn off his helmet and left it spinning slowly on the floor behind him.

Plan Beta was to head for the basement and exfil through a jackhammered hole into the storm sewers. But standing policy was to leave no one behind, and Rachel was somewhere above. Chris headed for the east stairwell in the hope it was furthest from any of the StateSec entry teams, popping his partially empty magazine, pocketing it and replacing it with a full one on the way. He had just cleared the second story fire door when he heard the crash from the south wall, followed by a scream of agony. Turning the corner to the corridor shredded by the drone, he saw a three meter tall suit of alien armor, what the State-controlled media called a Praetorian. It was holding Rachel up by her shoulders. One of her legs was missing below the knee and she was trying to arm a grenade with one hand.

They both saw him, even though the armor was facing away from him. Alien sensors were *really* good. She yelled "Run!" as it torqued its hands in opposite directions, splintering her rib cage, and it started running towards him. Rachel's grenade fell unarmed from her dead hand, her last act of defiance never to be.

Chris recovered from his shock too slow to jump back, but luck caused the weakened corridor to collapse under the Praetorian's weight. Chris finally flailed backwards the way he had come just as several cannon shells pierced the floor where he had been standing. For all he knew they were probably still on their way up after piercing all four floors of the building. Rumor was that Praetorians went one-on-one with tanks during the Big Ugly and won.

He was halfway down the stairs when the lower door opened and StateSec goons came in. Spotting him, they opened fire. The din was deafening, but the cement stairs blocked the shots as he flattened against the wall and hightailed it back to the second floor. Before exiting the stairwell he tossed one of his two grenades down the stairwell to teach them some caution and buy him some time. *If StateSec was already at the stairwells, there was only way left to the basement.*

Chris sprinted to the central elevator shaft. The doors had been wedged open for just this eventuality. Slinging his rifle and trusting to the abrasion resistance of his gloves, he leapt out and grabbed the cable. From there it was a straight slide to the basement. *But the archaic steel cable had been greased.* With little friction he slid almost as fast as if he had leapt the same distance to the sidewalk. He felt and *heard* something snap in his left knee as he hit the top of the elevator car. Whether he had fractured the top of his tibia, bottom of his femur or both was a bit of trivia that would require his survival to find out the answer to.



The open top of the elevator was a two-plus meter drop away from its floor, but the sounds of automatic weapon fire from above made haste more important than comfort. Using his rifle as a chin-up bar across the opening, he *almost* got his good foot to the ground before his greasy grip slipped. He took *most* of the weight on his good leg, but not *all* of it. He scrabbled against the elevator walls but could not keep his balance and ended up on his ass with his vision going dim from the pain. Looking up, his rifle was mockingly still draped across the opening, as far away as the Moon for either self-defense or as a crutch.

He was a few meters down the hall, pulling himself upright on a protruding water pipe, when he heard the elevator cable thrum. He looked back. A second later there was a crash that shook the elevator car. His rifle, bent at a ninety degree angle, clattered to the floor. *The Praetorian*. The sound of tearing metal meant it was too big for the opening, but not for long. Chris hopped down the hallway, propped on the water pipes and hissing at every wobble of his useless leg, but had only managed several meters when the tearing sounds stopped and a loud thump announced the arrival of the Praetorian.

Chris turned, leaning against the wall, his last grenade in hand. Unlike Rachel, he had both hands available and primed it. There was no chance it would do more than scratch the paint of the Praetorian, but it was more than enough to ensure he was not taken alive.

The Praetorian paused. Faceless, the thoughts of the alien inside were unfathomable. The arm-mounted weapon retracted, and the arm lowered.

Chris held up the grenade and shouted "*If you wanted to kill me, I would be dead now. The choice is mine!*", thinking to himself that bravado is easy when it is the only option you have left.

Faster than human reflexes, the Praetorian raised its *other* arm and fired. Chris never knew what hit him, only that the precisely aimed snap shot shattered his hand and sent the grenade tumbling down the hall behind him. He had forgotten that the Masters also used *technically* non-lethal weapons. By the time the gasp of pain had left his lips, the Praetorian was behind him, simultaneously shielding him from the fragments and holding him upright as it had Rachel. The Praetorian spoke, its voice an eerie synthesis of Chris's own words and inflection.

"If..I..wanted..you..dead..now..you..would..be ..dead..now..The..choice..is..mine.."

As it clamped both his wrists in its grip and dragged him screaming up the stairs, Chris retained consciousness just long enough to note that the alien conditioned its statement about wanting him dead with the word "now".



WHAT IT'S ABOUT

With that tiny bit of cheery fiction as an intro to the setting, you get an anchor attached to a chain around your ankle, and then a swift kick into the role-playing equivalent of the Marianas Trench.



Interregnum is a setting you have never played before, in a way that you have probably never played one before*. Most rpg settings and adventure fiction with any depth will have an overall plot, one or more major items that play a recurring role as antagonists, with the background threat of something big looming on the horizon that brave, plucky and lucky adventurers will have to face and defeat or something really bad will happen.

You are not those adventurers.

Those adventurers failed and the bad thing happened and is still happening. The Death Star did not get blown up and the Empire is rounding up the Rebels. You are one of Custer's lieutenants and asking yourself "why didn't we bring those Gatling Guns?" Sauron got the One Ring, Gandalf is roasting on an Orc spit somewhere and the Elves have sailed off with a "sucks to be you!". Cthulhu is back and he brought his Old (One) Friends with him. The army of the Night King rolled over Winterfell and is headed south. You are a Jew in the Warsaw Ghetto and you are down to your last three bullets and a Molotov cocktail.

That is, **Interregnum** is a campaign where the bad guys *won* and are now mopping up the last bits of resistance before taking absolute control and making the world a really awful place for everyone who is not them. *You are that last bit of resistance.* As a player you have to go into the campaign with eyes wide open to the fact that you cannot and will not prevail, playing adventurers whose only way of measuring victory is putting up enough of a fight that they will not be forgotten.

The Resistance knows they will lose. There is a saying from the apocryphal and quickly-being-edited past that "*you do not go to war with the army you want, you go to war with the army you have.*" Whoever it was who said that, it was clearly someone who was covering his ass because he got himself into a war *without* the army he wanted. The Masters started the war *with* the army they wanted, and the Resistance has the army that was left after the Masters' devastating first strike.

Death. That is the word the Resistance uses, what they say to each other before parting. It is what a mother says to her ten-year old daughter before giving her a sack of grenades for the school field trip to the State House. It is what she says to her lover as they get behind the wheel of a truck that is going on a one-way trip. It is what he says to her with tears in his eyes and his thumb on the button as they are surrounded at a roadblock kilometers from their destination.

Death. It means "*Death always wins, but we fight to our last breath anyway.*" The Resistance knows they will lose, but they fight *anyway*. They fight because that is what humans do. *Some of them, anyway.* They fight so that they will be remembered. They fight so that cautious parents will whisper of their deeds to their children when no one can overhear it and hope that those children will not turn them in to State Security as traitors for having done so. They fight so that people will remember, and someday, somewhere, somehow, find the tools and the inspiration to achieve what the Resistance could not...

Victory.

*However, see Jason Morningstar's **Gray Ranks** for playing several child characters in the Warsaw Uprising, where the gameplay has no chance of altering the final outcome.



Author's note: This **EABA** setting is called **Interregnum** because it is between the present, flawed as it is, and an equally flawed victory somewhere in the future, a victory whose setting will be **2384**. An interregnum is a suspension of normality or government, and what is going to happen is *certainly* going to be that. It is low-graphics with a black motif, appropriate to the subject matter, but I have to give a shout-out to Polish artist Marek Okon, whose *Apocalypse Please* is the unspeakably grim and absolutely appropriate cover for **Interregnum**. The chapter art is various bits of global graffiti about political or more overt resistance to real or perceived illegitimate government control, and seemed appropriate.

I did most of the writing for this several years ago, but despite my tropism towards dystopian settings, **Interregnum** was so grim I had to set it aside and work on other things. But the slow motion disaster of the past few years brought me back to it in 2020, and I finished up the last few difficult percent of getting it ready for publication and tightening it up.

It is definitely not your normal role-playing fare, but at the same time, knowing the ending of the story ahead of time frees both you and your adventurers to do things you would not do in any other setting. **Interregnum** is of course designed for **EABA**, but you can play it with any system that handles modern weapons, making it a diversion for your group between other campaigns, an alternate future that may or may not happen.

Speaking of which...

The Future

Interregnum as a setting is a quasi-sequel to the **EABA** supplement **CORPS**. **CORPS** is set in the real world of the present, but with a few conspiracies and multi-dimensional quirks, and one of these conspiracies is that aliens are among us and manipulating humanity. In **Interregnum** the good guys (i.e. adventurers) were *not* able to stop this plot from reaching its tipping point several generations from now, and the aliens have revealed themselves and are taking over.

How it happens is this.

Prologue. From their arrival on Earth over a century ago, the Masters have been subverting humanity. They are supreme manipulators, and that extends to the realms of the scientific. Introducing humans to genetically altered high-yield crops, crops that quickly became a necessity to feed Earth's ever-expanding population. And some of these crops, after certain industrial processing procedures, began to subtly alter the genetic code of those who consumed them, each generation born afterwards being shifted towards a form the Masters desired.

Humans looked the same as before. They were just a *little* dumber, a *little* less curious, a *little* more docile, a *little* more willing to accept authoritarian pronouncements without question. By the time the Masters were ready to strike, human innovation had slowed to a trickle. Technology was designed for users rather than creators, and irrational belief and rumor held more sway in the popular mind than fact and reason. These tendencies had already started to show in the nations most prone to consume the tainted foodstuffs as early as the start of the 21st century, but had spread to virtually the entire world by the time of the takeover. Everything you read about the future history of politics and technology should take into account the gradual and unnoticed dumbing down of the world's population.



If you think this is unreasonable, consider this: Do you think that people in the medieval world were genetically dumber than modern people? Or did they just have fewer opportunities to expand their minds with education and information? You probably think the latter is true, but...how would you tell? There is no way to tell by looking at a preserved brain what IQ that person had. Our modern breakthroughs and technological miracles might be because we are smarter, but we have nothing to measure ourselves against...except ourselves. Similarly, if we gradually dumb down, how will we separate this from 'educational policy', or 'mature technologies' or 'bottlenecks inherent to the underlying physics'? We already fudge the results of our 'standardized tests', people are not graded absolutely but are 'graded on a curve', and so on. We will be willfully blind to the notion that we are changing (or being changed), and will instead blame the poor results on someone or something else.

Then, a few months ago (from the viewpoint of the Resistance), the Masters decided they were ready and revealed themselves to Earth as a whole. And not in a 'we come in peace' fashion.

First, the nuclear strike. Enhanced radiation warheads (minimal blast, maximum radiation pulse) destroyed the computers and people at any spot on the globe where humanity had fission or fusion warheads, along with any governments the Masters deemed problematic to their future control efforts (the politicians who will fill the vacuum were conveniently out of town at the time). The Masters do not rely on things as primitive as our fission, but the refined isotopes in human bombs represent a huge investment in energy and the material *can* be repurposed. So no point in blowing it up when you can just kill all the people and go in later and scoop up the valuable stuff. Military bases, nuclear subs and other irreplaceable assets will also be destroyed. Environmental damage this might cause is of no concern to the Masters.

Then, the subversion. Over the past century or so they have made 'alliances' with various wealthy and influential families on Earth. Never revealing their true intent, these people and their children and children's children were nonetheless primed and groomed to be surrogates for the Masters' intent, ruthless in serving the Masters' interests yet totally subservient to the Masters. That these families might be aghast at what the Masters have in store does not mean they will not do their bidding. *Better to be the slave with the golden chains rather than the slave working in the mines.* These families were the faces the failed generation of adventurers were fighting, never knowing that the ones they *thought* were the masterminds were merely the highest placed human puppets, the Servants.

After the nuclear strike by the Masters, these traitors and lackeys quickly rise to prominence as 'voices of reason' among the decapitated ranks of national leaders, and will be the first to spout the Masters' propaganda about '*what really happened*' (more on that later). And far too many will actually believe it, both because they are primed to do so by generations of mental deficits, and because there will be intact media organizations ready to step in and be the propaganda arm of the Masters. But still, the Masters will remain mostly hidden, their human proxies spinning a long-fabricated and superficially verifiable story about nuclear terrorism, evil communists or whatever fits the narrative of the late 21st century.

Then, the second strike. Unorganized militias, rebels, local military units and the like quickly grouped to form a resistance to the attacks by the Masters. *Not everyone believed the propaganda. Not everyone was gullible. Not everyone was willing to let someone else take care of the problem. Not everyone gave their loyalty to the new leaders of government.* They were not armies, but neither were they helpless. They had guns and tanks and fighter jets. They had generals and command structures and loyal troops. Globally, they numbered in the millions.



And they were wiped out almost to the last person. Multi-ton iron needles with precision guidance modules streaked down from orbit by the *thousands*. These kiloton yield conventional explosions hit any concentration of force, from remote airfields to wilderness training camps to national or territorial guard outposts. Anything that looked organized enough to be under intelligent command and bigger than a platoon got hammered flat.

At the same time, the final determination of "how much critical infrastructure does this planet need?" had been made, and sufficient and efficient orbital bombardment meant these technologies would never be possible again. All your integrated circuits rely on special epoxies that are only made in three spots on the globe? Those three plants are *gone*. Civilian spaceports? *Gone*. The handful of universities still capable doing advanced research? *Gone*. All your advanced hypersonic fighters are built at this one factory? *Gone*. Your nuclear processing plants? *Gone*. Everything you might need to build devices or weapons that might remotely inconvenience the Masters? *Gone*. All that you have left of these things is all that *is* left of them, and when they are gone there will not be any more of them.

Ever.

Last, the takeover. The Masters have very specific plans for Earth, and these plans require a populace of sufficient intelligence that can be compelled, coerced or cajoled into working for them, and a certain minimal level of technology and infrastructure. Efficiency or safety in these industries is not a concern, only the ability to generate the required output. They already have most of the population characteristics they need, and they have the reduction of Earth's technology base well in hand. All that is left is to deal with the tiny fraction of the population that will not cooperate, and to use the power of the State to edit and rewrite history so that future generations of humans will know only what the Masters want them to know of what has transpired. The Masters *will* succeed at this, it is just a matter of time.

You are the Resistance. You intend to make this process take as long as possible. *In the dark thoughts you do not share with the others in your Resistance cell, you think you have a year, two years at most.*

What are the Masters?

The Masters are a plague of interstellar locusts, a civilization that exists near planets only long enough to resupply themselves for the journey to the next star. They have faster than light travel, but their FTL is mass-limited. Scout ships (the UFOs of popular belief) are FTL, while their cityships are slower than light and take decades or centuries to travel between stars. And since planets are merely sources of materials and things to torture, making the planet a non-sustainable biosphere by the time they are done with it is a bonus.

The Masters invading Earth are only one of a cluster of their kind that is slowly passing through this part of the Milky Way, stripping resources from lesser civilizations, not because this is most efficient way to refuel and resupply an interstellar fleet (it is not), but because they *enjoy* doing it this way.



The Masters are genetically sadistic, highly intelligent, technologically advanced far beyond humanity, methodical without being predictable, and have a *very* long experience at doing what they do. Earth and humanity might be the hundredth or thousandth time they have done this, no more and no less difficult than all the other times. The end result was not in doubt, only the timetable and degree of success. This success was aided by the fact that the Masters' advance scouts had been here for over a century, secretly providing advice and technological breakthroughs to select governments, breakthroughs humans came to be dependent on as part of their infrastructure, breakthroughs the Masters could overcome, deactivate or subvert virtually at will.

It is worth repeating that the Masters are *genetically* sadistic. They *like* being cruel and devious. The degree to which they can quash hope and make their inferiors suffer is how they determine status. They are not merely raised that way, they are *born* that way. And they use their considerable intelligence and technology to enable and amplify these traits. They are *not* cartoonish villains who let their desire to gloat give the heroes an opportunity to escape or defeat them.

A simple example of their thoroughness is that their cityships are maintained by a slave species that has been bred to an even greater degree of pliability than humans. But just to be sure, every several generations the Masters completely wipe out any member of that species old enough to talk.

The surviving infant population is raised by robots and taught a brand new, completely artificial language. This slave species has no history for there is no one to remember it, it has no accumulated writings because no one can read anything that might be scratched on a wall somewhere, no oral traditions, nothing that could eventually build up into resentment and rebellion. There is only Masters and Slaves, and that is how it always has been for as long as anyone can remember. Like an ideal of George Orwell's 'Newspeak' from *1984*, their Master-created language makes it almost impossible to even express a *concept* of disobedience or rebellion.

As we said, the Masters are sadistic, intelligent and have been doing this for thousands of years. They are irredeemably awful sentiences, and 99.99% of them will stay in orbit where the Resistance has little or no chance of even inconveniencing them. Only a few win the *privilege* of serving on the surface where they can indulge their sadistic whims on humans in their native environment. The rest bid for the chance to play psychotic mindgames with captives who are brought up to the cityships. You know, give them hope, then crush it. Let them form emotional attachments and then cruelly sever them. Make deals with them and then betray them to their fellows as having made deals with the enemy. Force a mother to choose which of her children lives and which gets slow roasted (and then slow roast the other one). And of course torture as an art form, making humans fight each other to the death, competitive vivisections and other entertainments.

Next up: You





*The house always wins, rust never sleeps,
and Coyote is always hungry.*

ADVENTURERS

Interregnum is *not* a forgiving world. Everyone starts off with **six** adventurers, two each for three different Resistance groups (or if the gamemaster wishes, three each for two Resistance groups). You are not playing more than one adventurer in a Resistance group at a time, the extras are replacements for the inevitable capture or other fatal bit of bad luck. Because odds are that some or more likely, *all* of them are going to die by the end of the campaign.

A campaign will normally be played where every time a particular adventure or subplot resolves, you switch to a different Resistance group. This means that any player who lost an adventurer has some downtime for that group, so that their backup adventurer can be recruited or otherwise made part of the survivors.



You do not have to make all six adventurers at once, but you *should* make at least two. *Any* adventurer who has not entered play yet can be revised. Because you are making so many, and because the focus of the setting is so compressed, adventurer creation is simple and fast. Much more so than the normal point-based system. You do not get a large number of choices. The things you have to do are:

- Your motivation
- Your gender
- Your approximate age
- You must choose one professional skill
- You may have one Forte on an Attribute if you also have one Weakness on a different Attribute
- You may have one Background package
- You get three items from the Normal starting gear list and one from the Elite list

These choices may affect the quality of your skills and attributes.

Motivation: Taking up arms against your government is a *big* deal. So, why are you doing it? Think about it for a while.

Gender: Whatever you want it to be, with whatever sexual orientation you want. The adventurer creation adjustment is that women will have -1 to Strength and +1 to Health. Plus any game flavor and the nature of your interactions with other Resistance members and population in general.

Approximate age: You can be Younger, Adult or Older. Younger gives you +1 to a non-Fate Attribute of your choice, -2 to your Skill points and limits your maximum possible skill roll to 3d+2. Adult has no effect on Attributes and limits your maximum possible skill roll to 4d+2. Older gives you -1 to *two* non-Fate Attributes of your choice, +2 to your skill points and limits your maximum possible skill roll to 5d+2. By 'limits your maximum possible skill roll' we mean that you cannot buy a skill bonus where the attribute+skill gives a total roll of more than that limit.