

RED WORLD

By Zachary Carango

How to Play

Introduction:

Upon inspection of this story, you will immediately notice that it is not like others. Contained within these pages is an adventure. To begin, simply familiarize yourself with the rules, determine your stats, and turn to 1. At the bottom of each numbered section, you will find one or more choices, each pointing you to another section. That's pretty much all you need to know!

Inventory and Points:

This gamebook uses a system of five primary point pools, which reflect your various skills, to determine whether or not you can complete a task. They are as follows:

- Combat- Your skill in martial arts and fighting in general
- Agility- Your ability to move quickly and skillfully
- Mysticism- Your familiarity with the arcane arts of bygone ages
- Cunning- Your ability to lie, cheat, and steal
- Survival- Your ability to live and navigate the wilderness

When you are required to perform a difficult feat, you will be asked to spend a certain number of points from one or more categories. Whether or not to use the points if you have the required amount is your decision, though be aware that failure can come with severe consequences.

In addition to these points, you will have an inventory of items and a health value.

Your Health begins at 20 and is a measure of your fitness and/or distance from death. While it will fluctuate often over the course of the adventure, your health may never exceed its initial value.

You may hold up to 8 items on your person. While you may drop (remove from your inventory) items freely, dropped items may never be recovered. Rules regarding specific items will be explained where relevant.

Combat:

Whether by misfortune or poor judgment, you are likely to get in some form of combat over the course of your adventure. When fighting an enemy, the text will tell you how much damage your opponent deals over the course of the battle. You may spend combat points to reduce the damage, 1 Combat point for every point of Damage avoided. After spending combat points, subtract the remaining damage from your health. If you survive, the battle is yours!

Creating a Character:

To determine the strength of your five main point pools, distribute 40 points among them.

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Your initial Health is fixed at 20.

You may also equip your character with 10 points worth of the following items.

X-Ration – 2 points

5 Coins – 1 point

Plasma Gun (3 shots) – 5 points

Cyanide Dart – 5 points

Carbonate Armor – 5 points

Infrared Scanner – 3 points

Plastic Explosives – 3 points

Rope – 2 points

Flashlight – 2 points

Special Items:

Plasma Gun – A gun may be used in any battle to reduce the enemy's damage. For every shot fired, reduce their damage by 2. Once you run out of shots, the gun becomes useless.

Cyanide Dart – At the beginning of any battle, you may attempt to use the dart against your enemy. To do so, you must spend 4 Agility points. A successful use will kill the enemy instantly.

Carbonate Armor – Reduce the damage you take at the end of any battle by 2.

All other items will be explained where relevant. You may use the character sheets on the following page to record your character's information.

CHARACTER SHEET

Name:

Points:

Combat-

Agility-

Mysticism-

Cunning-

Survival-

Health:

Inventory:

-

-

-

-

-

-

-

-

Coins:

Notes:

Easy Money...

Things haven't been going very well for anyone these last few years. Though the world blew itself to bits centuries ago, your life seemed to grind to a halt only recently. True, your last steady job was over a decade ago, but even after that fizzled you used to make a reasonable living doing odd jobs around town. Now even this meager pay has dried up under the desert's merciless heat. Maybe it's just your getting old, but you can't shake the feeling that one day soon you'll simply fossilize atop a dingy barstool and be buried once the sand reclaims this town.

Gazing wistfully at one of your few remaining silver coins, you pocket the precious item and down the last of your ale. The bitter, orange fluid burns strongly, though you've long gotten used to the foul stuff. The barmaid stifles a laugh as some of the drink splatters onto your already stained shirt. Turning away with embarrassment, you spot something strange. Though still watery from the bitter ale, your eyes catch the dignified face of a man far too jovial to be spending his time in a place like this. His confident, determined gaze is fixed straight at you. Standing up to reveal an expensive looking suit of crisp, black fabric, the man pulls up a seat next to you and introduces himself: "Hello, I'm Jonas Weston."

The name sounds vaguely familiar, though you can't recall where exactly where you heard it. Something tells you he was one of, or at least associated with, the original colony of traders who first blazed the path from here to the coast, though that was so long ago you can't be sure. You weren't really in the mood for a conversation, though you decide to be polite and humor the man, "Hi Mr. Weston. Excuse me for saying so, but you look a little too well off to be hanging around a place like this."

Weston's laughter cuts through the silent room, temporarily turning the heads of an otherwise uninterested crowd. "I appreciate your directness, but I think, if you give me a chance, you'll like what I have to say.

"Well, go on then"

"You see, the world is not as lifeless as it appears. As hard as it may be for you to believe this, there are still gears turning just below this mindless chaos. Tell me... have you ever heard of the Library of The Ancients?"

The name strikes a faint chord in your mind. It was an old tale you'd long since ceased to take seriously. Legend has it that the Library was built by the old civilizations in the middle of the southern sea, as a place to safely store their nearly infinite power. Undoubtedly the tale has been exaggerated over the years. "Yes Mr. Weston, I have heard of the Library."

"Excellent, now let me tell you something you probably haven't heard about: it has come to my knowledge that in the Library is a sort of key."

With this, Weston produces a sheet of stained paper and begins sketching on it with a piece of charcoal. With steady, skillful strokes, he draws an odd looking, triangular device. As a finishing touch, he adds a cloak of branching lines, like the roots of a tree only with a much more orderly geometry, wrapped around three sides of the pyramid. "Now it's my turn to be candid, I'd like you to find me this key. If you succeed—I will not try to deceive you, the trip will be dangerous—I will pay you 10,000 silvers."

Weston hands you the sketch then watches you expectantly. Though some doubt still remains, you already know what your answer will be, "That's an awfully tall order Mr. Weston, even for

10,000 coins. The Southern Sea is quite a ways away. And besides, how can I get to the Library if it's out in the middle of the ocean?"

"Don't sell yourself short, I know of your past exploits and I am confident in your abilities...That said," Weston continues with a smile, "if you'd like some advice, I would suggest going through Ragnarok, there are probably still a few ships there willing to make the trip."

Your mind already made up, you end with one last question, "And am I supposed to just trust you about the reward?"

"I am a man of my word," Weston says emphatically, "you will be paid in full once you return, though judging from your current situation, you really don't have much to lose."

With those hauntingly accurate words in your ear, you shake off the tavern's dust and prepare to set out. Turn to 1.

1

Inspired by the promise of good, if hard earned pay, you pull yourself from out of the tavern and into the dusty town square. The bright sun casts the listless scene in harsh, merciless colors. A few merchants shuffle about their open-air shops while most others lie lazily in the shade. There is nothing left here for you. Setting off under the townsfolk's silent gaze, you determine to head eastward, towards the sea. Only now do you realize how little you actually know about the terrain along the way. If you'd like to find out more about the lands between here and the ocean, turn to 97. If you'd like to learn more about your employer, Jonas Weston, turn to 66. If you'd rather leave immediately, turn to 54.

2

Leaving the battered canoe behind, you climb out of the canyon and out onto the broad expanse of desert above. Surveying the horizon, you head for what you think is the road. Pay 5 Survival points.

If you do, turn to 91

If you do not, turn to 26

3

The voyage out to the library proves long and relatively uneventful. The seas are calm, the skies blue, and the nights quiet. What time the captain does not whittle away with rambling tales, you spend readying yourself to fight whatever forces may lurk in the Library and claim the valuable key. You may recover 2 points of health for the time spent resting and 2 more points of health for every X-Ration you have left to eat. After a week on the open ocean, you spot the looming, grey edifice of the Library. Disembarking, you face the mysteries within, turn to 16.

4

The well-worn trail takes a strange turn up ahead, dropping off the old road surface and down a rocky, uneven slope towards the deepest section of the canyon. This seemingly illogical choice of direction is made even more baffling by the presence of a bridge, clearly visible from your vantage at the edge of canyon's small river, spanning the gorge high above. Surveying the dusty bottom of the canyon, you spot an old, aluminum canoe beached just off the shallow remnants of what must have once been a great river. Though the water level has no doubt gone down since the vessel was abandoned, you could probably still navigate the stream. Will you ride the canoe down the river, turn to 94, or instead continue on the road, turn to 49.

5

Behind the heavy door, you find a veritable armory. Vertical silos many stories high line the room, some empty, some still loaded with deadly contents. You, however, are more concerned with the wide assortment of personal weapons and devices lined up neatly on steel racks. You may equip yourself with any number of the following: Plasma Gun (3 shots), Plastic Explosive, Infrared Scanner, or Carbonate Armor. Once you have taken what you wish, you leave, turn to 35.

6

The remainder of the journey downstream is fairly easy and you are soon able to spot the towers of Ragnarok on the horizon. As you follow the river towards the city, however, a strange bright glint from underwater catches your eye. Will you dive in to investigate, turn to 43, or simply continue into the city, turn to 8.

7

You're too hungry to resist such a tempting assortment of delicacies and devour them happily. That night, spent in a lavish room with an ornate bed and feather mattress, is similarly opulent.

After several weeks of enjoying the inn's endless hospitality, you manage only with great effort to depart. Bidding the doorman goodbye, he gives you a curious expression, "Leave?" he asks as if you were speaking another language, "but no one leaves here." Sure enough, before you can even reach the threshold, your feet are drawn inexplicably back into the inn. Enjoy your stay.

8

Parking your canoe just outside the city walls, where the river passes through a grated culvert, you disembark and head into the bustling town, turn to 47.

9

Through the scanner's cracked, flickering screen, you spot a large source of heat underground near the light. Aside from that, the landscape is cold. If you head for the light, turn to 48, otherwise you simply move on, turn to 35.

10

The sole fruit of your investigation is an ancient metal suitcase, dented and rusting though filled to the brim with useful papers. Though most of the writing is in the old language, there are numerous pictures of the library. Based on several diagrams of a large, humanoid, metal beast, you know that you will have to be ready for a fight. Beyond that, you catch one particularly grizzly photograph of several contorted corpses surrounding a large cylinder labeled with an "!" symbol. Closing the case, you move on. Will you...

Visit the market, turn to 99.

Seek passage on a ship, turn to 72.

Leave by air (if you have a Sky-Jet), turn to 45.

11

Using your vast knowledge of the old technologies, you pry open the gate's access panel and rewire it. With a rusty groan, the barrier swings open. The leader and his army are overjoyed at your success, with the former shouting over his shoulder, "If we ever meet again, stranger, you can expect good treatment from the red flag army!" Add the password *red*. After giving the warriors a few minutes to depart, you proceed over the bridge and move on, turn to 50.

12

Though the catwalks are treacherous, even completely rusted out in some spots, you are able to easily navigate around such obstacles. Like a gloomy, subterranean jungle, the under-structure stretches on and on. Pipes rise like trees while wires form jumbled clumps of vines. For all the strange sights, however, you fail to find anything of much use, let alone the key. Finally, as you are making your way back towards the staircase, you come upon a grotesquely contorted pile of human bones. In a cruel twist of fate, while the soldier's flesh has long since withered away, the synthetic fabric of his uniform remains nearly pristine. Searching through the remains as respectfully as possible, you notice a note tucked away in the breast pocket. Written in smeared, though still legible ink is what appears to be a code. You tuck the note away just in case it should prove useful, and then move on. Add the password *Crypt*, then turn to 40.

13

"You should not have disobeyed" the tinny voice chimes after you take a few steps down the left corridor. The walls crackle as this strange presence tampers with long dormant machinery. As the lights go out, you hear the hiss of gas being pumped into the vents. Pay 6 Agility points.

If you pay, turn to 59

If you do not, turn to 87

14

As you lay your hand on the unmarked door, a shrill alarm blares through the hallway. Rising above the din, a loud metallic voice issues what must be some sort of an official warning in the incomprehensible old language. As the alarm dies down to a more reasonable hum, a small panel folds out from the otherwise featureless door. It appears that you will need some sort of access code to enter. If you have the password *crypt*, turn to 37. If you do not, turn to 82

15

Crumpling against the cool, whitewashed wall, the host dies wordlessly. Hearing a collective murmur, accompanied by the groan of sliding chairs in the dining room, you leave the mysterious inn as fast as possible, turn to 28.

16

The remnants of a large garden surround the library's entrance. Gazing at the orderly, geometric plots, you can almost envision this place as it must have looked: green and overflowing with life. Now, however, only the hardiest of weeds survive on the parched soil. You make your way along a series of paths to the library's tall, austere entrance. A high, gothic arch frames the complex's pair of dark, corroding metal doors. Though you are at first worried you will not be able to make the monumental gates budge, this concern is soon replaced by a far greater one as the slabs begin to grind outward, pushed by some great force within. Through the growing gap, you spot a pair of beady, glowing yellow lights set into the recesses of a rusted face. A robotic colossus blocks your way and, though in disrepair, it is unlikely to give an inch without a fight. If you have some Plastic Explosives, there is still time for you to blast the machine before it can pry open the doors, turn to 67. Otherwise, your only choice is to fight.

The Robot deals 10 Damage over the course of the fight.

If you survive, turn to 40.

17

On your way back to the road, you are forced to stop and rest. Feeling hungry, you realize you haven't eaten for over a day, Make a Survival Test of Difficulty 4.

If you pass, you manage to find enough food to sustain yourself.

If you fail, you cannot produce any food. If you have an X-Ration, you may consume it instead. Otherwise you must lower your health by 4 for starvation.

Assuming you survive, turn to 83.

18

Dragging your vessel out of the water, you begin the trek around the obstacle.

Though it is an exhausting experience, you manage to carry the canoe around the rapids. Lose 6 Health for the ordeal. If you survive, turn to 6.

19

Dropping through a concealed trap door that SNATA helpfully reveals, you enter the vast memory banks of the device. Like a surreal library, great metal shelves hold racks of glowing, rectangular cards. The tinny voice of the computer directs you to a large, monolithic structure at the center of the room, "That is the central control panel. I am sorry, but I cannot tell you more, I was not given the knowledge to actually complete the process."

Approaching the light covered column, you attempt to deactivate the ailing computer, spend 7 Mysticism points.

If you can and will spend them, turn to 93

If you cannot or will not, turn to 51

20

At the mouth of the canyon, a troubling obstacle confronts you. High boulders line the small river, which becomes a turbulent mess of white water as it flows down the jumbled slope. You may either carry the canoe around the obstacle, turn to 18, attempt to navigate the rapids in the vessel, turn to 39, or simply abandon the voyage and travel by foot, turn to 2.

21

You manage to locate a well-sheltered campsite for the night. As the sun falls, a horrific howling fills the dead streets. Though you are not discovered, you cannot catch a wink of sleep. Only when the dawn's flickering rays silence the noise do you dare venture outside, turn to 36.

22

Anticipating your move, the monstrous camp leader springs up and attacks with unnatural ferocity. The remaining travelers flee with fright, whether from you or the raging leader is unclear, leaving you alone to face the hulking man.

The Camp Leader deals 8 Damage over the course of the fight.

If you survive, read on...

As he falls to the ground, the man undergoes a strange transformation. His hair and teeth grow with visible speed while his eyes darken as if a canister of black ink were broken in the back of his head. You have heard of shape-shifting mutants, though until now had never seen one in person. Leaving behind the terrifying creature, you survey the camp for any useful supplies. You may scavenge any of the following: Rope, a Plasma Gun (1 charge), 7 Coins. Once you have finished here, you move on, turn to 50.

23

Heading farther into the carcass of city, you pass countless sights that were probably once grand, though now are useless to you. Your luck changes, however, when you come upon a strangely out of place pile of twisted metal. As you dig through the debris, an astounding device begins to take shape. Elegant, angular wings and a sleek glass cockpit confirm what you'd already begun to suspect. You have found a sky-jet: one of the ancients' legendary flying machines! The powerful machine was probably hidden here deliberately, though there is little chance its owner will return any time soon. According to legend—a working sky jet has not been seen in your lifetime—these devices could fly farther and faster than any bird. Though it shows some wear, the sky-jet you've found appears to be in working order. If you have the knowledge you could no doubt get this one up and running. Spend 8 Mysticism points.

If you pay, turn to 70

If you do not, then you cannot get the vehicle to work and are forced to abandon it in search of shelter, pay 5 Cunning and/or Survival points.

If you pay, turn to 21

If you do not, turn to 65

24

Bounding up a ledge with lightening speed, you just barely manage to avoid the rushing torrent. Trudging through the miserable rain, you eventually reach the end of the badlands, turn to 35

25

As the narrow path climbs upward along the sheer mountain face, the weather quickly cools. The rocky trail clings to the granite walls, carving its way up with sharp hairpin turns. As you ascend, an icy wind begins to grow, simultaneously threatening to throw you off the perilous ledge and freeze you to the bone. Seeing anvil-shaped storm clouds approaching rapidly from the east, you realize with dread that you're in for a blizzard. Up ahead, just a few yards off the trail, you spot the entrance to a cave, which should offer at least some protection from the coming snow. If you take shelter immediately in the cave, turn to 46, otherwise you may continue along the trail in search of someplace more suitable, turn to 68.

26

After nearly a day of arduous travel across the desert, you are dismayed to find that the "road" you were headed for is nothing more than a long dry streambed. Lose 5 Health for the dehydration and exhaustion, then turn to 91 and continue your search.

27

"You want to help?" the grizzled leader looks down at you suspiciously. As you hoped, your offer of assistance has taken him by surprise. After considering you for a few minutes, the warrior speaks again, "Very well...let's see what you can do." Showing you to the bridge, he explains further, "There's a gate halfway across which we can't open, nor blast through. If you can get us past, I may consider releasing you." Leaving with this ominous message on your mind, you step out onto the bridge and, halfway across its span, come upon a thick, steel gate blocking any further passage. If you have Plastic Explosives and wish to use them, turn to 76. Otherwise, spend 6 Mysticism points.

If you pay, turn to 11

If you do not, turn to 38

28

After a few more days of travel, the color slowly begins to return to the bone-white desert landscape, first light yellow, then pastel oranges and pinks, then finally, as you near the coastline, a light brown chaparral of brittle grass and low brush. Gazing out over the beautiful blue sea, you catch sight of Ragnarok's glittering lights as night begins to set in. Striking out for the city, you soon arrive, turn to 47.

29

Only a day out of the town, you come suddenly upon the edge of the massive badlands. Grotesquely shaped, barren sandstone ridgelines dominate the landscape as far as the eye can see. The ghostly howl of wind through the narrow canyons is the only noise to break the eerie silence. Truly, this is a cursed place. If you would like to cross this inhospitable region, turn to 78. Otherwise you may return and take the road, if you wish, turn to 17.

30

The catwalks are in a treacherous state of disrepair, groaning unnervingly with every step. Only a few minutes after setting off, you feel your foot fall into nothingness as the decaying mesh gives way below your weight. Now compromised, the rest of the platform buckles under the added stress, sending you careening off into the unseen belly of this bizarre machine. Sadly, your adventure ends here.

31

Your lightning quick reflexes allow you to keep the boat stable even as it careens off rocks and shoots between deadly whirlpools. After you leave the rapids, thankfully, the water calms and you continue your journey with ease, turn to 6.

32

By some miracle, you manage to defeat the colossal snow beast, which collapses in a heap on the floor of the cavern. Strangely, instead of blood a sickly, fluorescent green sludge flows from the dying creature. Only too late do you realize that this vile goop is radioactive. Though you leave as fast as possible, the effects of your exposure become immediately apparent. You must lower your max health by 4 points. It is not all bad news, however, as the radiation appears to have a strange, enhancing effect as well, add 5 points to any of your primary pools. If you are not killed by the experience, turn to 53.

33

As you slip off into sleep, the amber light of the campfire melts away into a dark dreamscape. Visions of your elusive quarry haunt your mind; the mysterious key dances just beyond your reach, your reward sits in a locked box at your feet. Unfortunately, you will never have the chance to pursue these dreams, for your life is snuffed out that night by a treacherous beast. A painless, though disappointing end.

34

You slip out of the eerie dining hall unheard and wander the place's airy, cool halls. The inn has an atmosphere of decaying opulence, like a palace left to cobwebs and mothballs. Ornate, though corroded candelabras illuminate the long, chilly passages at regular intervals. It is difficult to keep track of your path in this almost surreal palace. Spend 6 Cunning points. If you pay, turn to 75
If you do not, turn to 90

35

By the next morning, the rain has stopped and you stand proudly on the southeastern edge of the badlands. As you stride on into the afternoon, gaunt, skeletal Joshua trees steadily replace the badland's twisted rocks. As the great road lies roughly north of here, that would seem the most logical way to head. The sight of a grey, smudgy outline on the southern horizon, however, sparks your curiosity. Though you initially ignore it as just an illusion, with closer inspection you can just barely make out the jagged shapes of buildings against the sky. If you head north for the road, turn to 81. If you'd rather head south, into the unknown, turn to 80.

36

A large, though totally vacant, cityscape is spread out before you. Though most of the buildings have been reduced to mere rusted skeletons by the wind and heat, you spot a few areas worth exploring. Nearby is a low, brick and mortar building that appears to have weathered the centuries especially well, turn to 98 if you want to explore that area. There is also a crumbling, though intact stairwell that descends below the street, turn to 52 to explore. Otherwise, you may head deeper into the city, turn to 23.

37

Remembering the strange code you located earlier, you enter in the combination. As you key in the last digit, the panel flips back up and, after a tense period filled only by sounds of strange mechanisms working in the walls beyond, the door slides open. Stepping within, you are surrounded by massive banks of glowing buttons, whirring gears, and steadily humming blue screens. Searching the room, you eventually come upon a small panel with a promising looking handle protruding from a triangular slot. Stepping over the debris now littering the ground beneath the console, you reach out and remove the key with trembling hands. The Key of the Ancients, found at long last! Turn to 100.

38

Your sad story fails to impress the hardened leader of the war-band, who orders you stripped of all your possessions and money (erase all items and coins on your adventure sheet). "Be gone," he says as after sifting through your meager collection, "before you wear out my patience!" Dismayed, you continue along the road, turn to 4.

39

Paddling the old canoe into the rapids with the utmost care, you do your best to keep it afloat against the rushing currents. You must pay 6 Agility points.

If you pay, turn to 31

If you do not, turn to 64

40

Dragging yourself, exhausted, over the mass of steaming scrap metal, you enter the library's main hall. For such a large complex, the chamber is surprisingly confined, being dominated by a pair of tall, solid grey—one marked with an "!" and the other blank-- doors and a staircase leading down. You may enter the door labeled with an "!", turn to 57, the unmarked door, turn to 14, or go down the stairs, turn to 55. (Do not return to locations you have already visited!)

41

Thanks to a generous layer of dark clouds, journeying across the badlands is far easier today. By the evening, however, the clouds take on a more malevolent appearance, vehemently spitting lightening and rain. Caught in the middle of a steep canyon, you wheel about as a thundering sound rips through the air. Looking back, you see a monumental wall of water rushing towards you. Spend 5 Agility points.

If you do pay, turn to 24

If you do not, turn to 63

42

Your entrance into the train triggers several rows of ceiling lights and an obnoxious recorded voice. The strangely sterile atmosphere of the cabin is made all the more eerie by the presence of several more skeletons still waiting patiently in their seats. The hum of the train's engine warming up rouses you from this macabre inspection; it seems as if the vehicle will soon depart. Will you remain onboard, turn to 86, or step out and simply wait until the weather clears, turn to 53.

43

Diving quickly underwater, you find a sizeable pile of silver coins apparently lost to the river. Taking the 20 Coins, you marvel at your luck and continue towards the city, turn to 8.

44

Springing into action at just the right moment, you are able to take the hulking attacker by surprise and knock him unconscious. The other campers look on with fright as the bombastic camp leader transforms before their eyes into a terrifying, hairy beast. Quickly tying him with a length of his own rope, you wait for the shape shifter to wake. Several minutes later his bloodshot eyes shoot open. Though he struggles for a while, cursing and howling with rage, he eventually simmers down and begins to plead. "You'll never survive the desert and the mountain pass is nearly as bad. If you spare me, I'll tell you how to make it to Ragnarok." "I'm listening." You respond coolly. "Another beast, not much different from me, makes its home up in the high pass. He's a cruel brute who wouldn't hesitate to tear you in half, but his mind is simple. A mere song is enough to calm him." Note the codeword *Grey* on your adventure sheet. As you turn to leave the despicable traitor yells angrily, "I've held up my end of the

bargain, now set me free!" You call back from the road, "I've spared you, whether or not the sun and insects do is none of my concern." You travel on without looking back, turn to 50.

45

The ocean whizzes by below your aircraft, its placid expanse extending towards the horizon like a great pane of blue glass. Though you had expected a voyage by boat to last at least a week or more, you spot the library within a matter of hours, a distinctly artificial outline against the endlessly rolling waves. As you make your final approach, the structure comes into full view, like a massive monolith it rises from the depths. At the top is a small structure, ringed by an open courtyard. Pulling down for a landing on these long abandoned gardens, you prepare for whatever final dangers await. Turn to 16.

46

Ducking into the small mouth of the cave, you find yourself in a decent sized, fairly warm chamber. The passage extends into a deep dark tunnel on the far side of the room, though the jagged stalactites that line that corridor discourage you from exploring. Besides, you are in need of a good long sleep. Just as you are about to bundle up for a night of rest, however, a deep bellow rumbles up from the dark tunnel. Out of the inky blackness strides a terrifying, ten foot tall ape-like creature with fur as white as freshly fallen snow. Clambering over the spiky formations, which are little more than twigs compared to the beast's hulking form, he gazes at you with angry, red eyes. If you have the password *Grey*, turn to 74, otherwise turn to 92.

47

Striding through the Ragnarok's tall, sandstone gates you are soon swept up in the busy flow of people who crowd the streets. Mud brick buildings and cobblestone streets disguise how young the city actually is. It was only founded after the Great War and built with relatively primitive supplies. With arable land in the interior growing ever scarcer, demand for fish from the sea as well as migration to the coast have both increased dramatically. Needless to say, the town elders have made sure Ragnarok prospers from these misfortunes. While here, you may... Visit the market, turn to 99.

Search for information on the Library of the Ancients, turn to 79

Seek passage on a ship, turn to 72.

Leave by air (if you have a Sky-Jet), turn to 45.

48

The glow, you are surprised to find, comes from a bulb just above a well-hidden metal doorway. Surprised to find the door unlocked, you step inside. Dim, emergency lights flicker on as your footsteps echo against the dead, concrete hallway. After descending down a long flight of stairs, you reach a fork in the hallway. A sudden popping sound from a dusty speaker makes you jump. "Go to the right" an artificial sounding voice peeps up over the intercom. Wheeling about suspiciously, you are unsure whether or not to trust this unknown stalker. If you go right, as commanded, turn to 77. If you go left instead, turn to 13.

49

After ascending dozens of switchbacks, the trail reconnects with the older, more level route.

Pay 4 Survival points.

If you pay, you navigate the trail with ease.

If you do not, you come up with an assortment of bumps and bruises, lose 4 health

Assuming you survive, read on...

Continuing through the valley, you come upon a small group of travelers sitting around a roaring fire. A motley bunch of refugees and vagabonds, their weathered faces regard you with suspicion. A tall, tan, broad-chested man wearing tattered, blue overalls stands and offers an

introduction, "Welcome stranger! Our camp is open to anyone willing to pull their own weight." You may choose to spend the night in the camp, turn to 58, attack them for their supplies, turn to 22, or simply move on without stopping, turn to 71.

50

The last meager trees disappear into the distance as you reach a fork in the great road. Gazing from the "Y" shaped junction, you survey the landscape. To the south lie the almost immeasurable depths of the desert, shining white in the sun like a pane of faded glass. To the north stand the mountains, a harsh wall of grey cliffs like serrated knife blades against the blue sky. Will you travel to the north, turn to 25, or to the south, turn to 81.

51

After pressing several buttons on the central panel, you step back with fear as the device explodes in a shower of sparks. SNATA's computerized voice stretches out into a high-pitched moan as the surrounding shelves begin to light up as well. Fleeing the facility, you feel relieved to once again be under an open, if cloudy sky, turn to 35.

52

The stairwell presents a grizzly scene, with deep gash marks and suspicious stains adorning the cracked, tile walls. At the bottom of the stairs is a large tunnel filled with more refuse and a large, strangely clean train sitting on shining rails which run the length of the coffin-like tube. Upon further investigation, you discover that that the vehicle is still functional, though you have no idea where it will take you. If you want to board the train, turn to 84. Otherwise you must go seek shelter for the night, spend 5 Survival and/or Cunning points.

If you do pay, turn to 21

If you do not, turn to 65

53

You make excellent time through the mountains, passing through the high pass under now clear skies. It is not long before you can spot the colorful lights of Ragnarok, sewn like beads onto the coast's beautiful arc. Turn to 47.

54

Standing at the head of the ancient east-west road, you consider your options. You could follow the paved route, which, though easier going, is said to be popular with rouges and cutthroats. Otherwise, you could take the more direct route southeast across the infamous badlands. Legend has it that no living thing can make its home there for longer than a week. Perhaps you could be the first? If you choose to follow the road, turn to 83. Otherwise you may head for the badlands, turn to 29.

55

The stairs lead down into a large undercroft, filled with pipes wires and gears as far as the dim light allows you to see. Though ancient, this machinery still hums with a strange life. The electric air makes you tense. A grid of catwalks leads off into the dense metallic forest and though you are loath to trust your life to such rusting, tenuous platforms, you have little choice. Spend 7 Agility points (5 if you have a Flashlight).

If you pay, turn to 12

If you do not, turn to 30

56

"We have no problem with simple travelers such as yourself," says the scarred leader after hearing your convincing story, "It is this accursed bridge which is causing all the trouble!" Not

wanting to test their hospitality any more, you quickly leave the belated army and rejoin the road, turn to 4.

57

Behind the “!” door lies a room as large as a cathedral filled with twisting knots of metal tubing and glass silos. Though you are tempted to explore, soon after entering realize something is terribly wrong. It feels as if a nail is being driven through your skull from the inside out. Stumbling nauseously back to the door, you decide that some of the Ancients’ secrets should be left alone. Subtract 8 health, if you survive, return to 40 and choose again.

58

Sitting alongside the other four campers, you settle down for a night of rest. Their tired faces hang like tattered flags atop sinewy frames, models of sheer exhaustion. Little is said before people begin to doze off. Feeling your eyelids grow heavy, you are soon on the verge of unconsciousness. Spend 7 Cunning points

If you pay, turn to 95

If you do not, turn to 33

59

Your deft fingers manage to find their way to a wall mounted control panel. As you pry it open, a small recessed light allows you to glimpse the insidious purple haze quickly filling the room. Focusing your mind on the task at hand, you attempt to shut off the deadly deluge.

Spend 5 Mysticism points

If you pay, turn to 73

If you do not, turn to 87

60

Standing triumphantly over the carcass of your chitinous foe, you take a moment to bask in the crowd’s applause before leaving the Arena. Collecting your reward from the officials, you return to the sea captain who makes good on his deal. Setting sail, you prepare for what mysteries await at the library, turn to 3.

61

Gazing about the dining room, you are struck by a strange and disturbing sight. The other dozen or so guests sit in near silence, picking at their food with listless, empty gaze. Having lost your appetite, you decide on further action. Will you leave immediately, while you still have the chance, turn to 90, or will you stay a while and investigate the strange inn, turn to 34.

62

Your nerves break as the advancing traitor realizes you are awake. Giving a wide smile of inhumanly jagged teeth, the strange man attacks.

The Camp Leader deals 8 Damage over the course of the battle.

If you survive, read on...

Falling to the ground, the man undergoes a strange transformation. His hair and teeth grow before your eyes while his eyes darken as if a canister of black ink were broken in the back of his head. You have heard of mutants, though never seen one in person. Though the other campers have long since awakened and fled the scene, you would still rather not risk a night near this place. Leaving behind the terrifying creature, you survey the camp for any useful supplies. You may take any of the following: Rope, a Plasma Gun (1 charge), 7 Coins.

Once you have finished here, you move on, turn to 50.

63

The flash flood sweeps you downstream, nearly drowning you in the process. Lose 6 health. Eventually you are able to clamber up onto dry land near the far edge of the badlands. If you survived the ordeal, turn to 35.

64

You cannot control the canoe against the strong rapids and are soon capsized. Though you struggle heroically against the titanic force of the water, the roaring currents eventually suck you under. Sadly, your journey ends here.

65

The quick falling of the sun forces you to bunk down in a meager ring of ruins, much less secure than you would have hoped for. As the sun disappears, a growing howl begins to fill the eerie streets. Out of the shadows, before your very eyes approaches something you never thought could exist outside the underworld. Thousands of listlessly trudging corpses make their way towards you in disjointed ranks, letting forth a choked moan every so often. You will have to fight tonight.

The Walking Dead inflict 20 Damage over the course of the night (The Cyanide Dart is ineffective for this fight).

If you manage to survive until morning, the beasts flee with the dawn, turn to 36.

66

Like most things around here, the local rumor mill is just barely grinding along, though you do manage to glean some information about Weston. A long time resident of the town, he made his fortune as a salt merchant working the route from Ragnarok. Since the trade began to die down, Weston has turned his attention to more local enterprises, starting several mining operations on the edge of the nearby badlands. These enterprises have given him a considerable fortune, though his life has not been without misfortune. His wife died in a fire while he was away on an expedition. After the tragedy, he built a new house just outside town and largely withdrew from public life. Though no one knows for sure what he does in his many spare hours, a few fragmented rumors circulate about strange lights and noises around his estate. He appears to be trustworthy, if somewhat aloof; more than able to back up his promised reward. Content with the information you have gathered, you set off, turn to 54.

67

Quickly priming the explosives, you drop them before the emerging robot just as it is about to force its way through the doors. With a deafening bang and a flash of lit phosphorous, the explosion rips the mechanical beast to pieces, turn to 40.

68

The snowstorm hits with a fury you can only compare to tales of the old war. Wind whips the snow so hard it scours any bare skin, though thankfully your frozen limbs are largely numb to the pain. Pressing on is a nearly impossible task. Spend 8 Survival points

If you pay, only your years of experience allow you to bear on through the storm

If you do not, though the weather takes a brutal toll, you manage to press foreword, loose 10 health.

If you are still alive, read on...

Clambering into the meager shelter of a nearby cliff face, you spot a miraculous sight in the otherwise bare rock: a small steel door. Wrenching the nearly frozen latch open, you step inside. Darting through a series of claustrophobic passages, you feel your way forward towards a dim, distant light. Soon you step into a large, concrete and tile walled chamber. A few flickering bulbs give off minimal light, though it is enough for you to survey the large chamber. Shaped like a massive tube, a pair of tracks runs through the center of the chamber where a dark train sits silently. The curving wall is peppered with benches and rusting pay phones, all of which are completely ruined. Adding to the sense of decay is an eerie assemblage of skeletons, arranged in creepy, lifelike poses. Most are still clothed, their hollow eye sockets staring down at brittle magazines written in a language you cannot understand. Death came suddenly to these people and you are not eager to remain here long. If you would like to investigate the train, turn to 42, otherwise you may simply bunk down until the storm has passed then move on, turn to 53

69

Approaching the large, bridge spanned canyon, you discover the source of the smoke: a large encampment perched on the edge of the canyon. Red banners decorate the site, while bands of armed men meander about restlessly. Too late to try and flee unseen, you step into the camp. Immediately recognized as an outsider, you are roughly restrained and brought to the camp's leader. A grizzled, leathery man with a bleached scar across one milky eye, he is humorless and to the point. "Who are you and what are you doing here," he demands. Gazing around the scene, you can tell something is amiss. The leader and his lieutenants appear to have been debating means to cross the gorge. Something must be wrong with the bridge. If you would like to offer your services in support of the war-band, turn to 27. Otherwise, your only choice is to plead ignorance and hope for mercy. Spend 7 Cunning points

If you pay, turn to 56

If you do not, turn to 38

70

With a wondrous roar the likes of which will probably never be heard again in this dying land, the sky-jet roars to life. (Note that you have a Sky-Jet on your sheet.) Climbing aboard, you lift off and, thanks to the high vantage, easily fix your bearings. Flying through the night faster than any bird, you consider your options. Will you head strait for the Library of the Ancients, turn to 45, or make a stop at Ragnarok first, turn to 47.

71

Leaving the light of the camp behind, you are soon overtaken with exhaustion. You may eat an X-Ration, if you have one. Otherwise you must subtract 2 health for starvation. If you are still alive, turn to 50.

72

Heading down the moldering boardwalks of the wharf, you search for any captain willing to take you to the Library of the Ancients. While most don't even know what you're talking about, those who do know how to reach the ruin are adamant against it. Finally, in the poorly lit corner of a dingy, dockside tavern, you find a grizzled sea captain willing to take you. "But Hoss," cries the barmaid with a voice of both derision and genuine fear, "you know that those waters are cursed!" Turning his craggy face to reveal a leather patch slung across his right eye, the old sailor responds, "That may be so, but that also means I can charge double my normal fee. It'll be 50 coins for the trip!"

If you already have that sum, cross it off now and turn to 3.

If not, you may head to the market to sell some equipment, turn to 99

Or try something else, turn to 89.

73

Holding your breath as the deadly gas licks at your shoulders, you are finally able to override the system. After the gas is vented away, you continue to the end of the hallway, which is blocked by a heavy, steel door. If you have Plastic Explosives, you may use them to breach the vault, turn to 5. Otherwise, Spend 6 Cunning points

If you pay, turn to 5

If you do not, you have no choice but to turn back empty handed, turn to 35

74

Remembering the other mutant's advice, you begin to sing an old traveling tune as loud as you can. Almost immediately, the monster's face begins to soften, and slowly his grunts of anger fade into a soft humming, as if he's trying to sing along. Eventually the beast falls asleep, lulled by your tunes. Having little choice, you spend an uneventful, though incredibly nervous night in the cave. When you wake in the morning, the creature is gone without a trace, apparently back in the deeper reaches of the cave. The blizzard having passed, you set off across the mountains once again, turn to 53.

75

After what seems like an eternity of wandering, you reach the lit window that you saw from the outside. Sitting nonchalantly on the sill is an intricately cut, deep black gem. The entrancing stone seems to draw you in like iron to a magnet, demanding that you remain nearby. You must have it! (Add the Black Gem to your inventory; if it is already full, you must leave another item behind. The Black Gem may not be dropped. Though maddening, the stone conveys to you a strange sixth sense. You may add 4 points to any of your main point pools.

Unfortunately, the gem's effect is not limited to yourself and any enemies you face will be even more determined. Add 2 to the damage of any enemy you face from now on.) Clambering down the cracked facade of the bizarre inn, you make your way onwards, turn to 28.

76

With a monstrous "BANG!" the explosives detonate, tearing the barrier off its hinges and sending its twisted steel halves falling like cards into the chasm. Unfortunately, the barrier is not the only thing damaged by the explosion. As the bridge begins to shake madly you understand the severity of your blunder. You only make it a few feet before the span crumples into the gorge. Sadly, your adventure ends with this plummet.

77

"You are wise to obey" the voice crackles over the speakers again. After meandering for several hundred feet, the right corridor flows into a large room that is bathed in soft, red light. The tiered chamber houses several rows of large computer monitors, none of which appear to be functioning. A large, central display periodically erupts in a shower of sparks. Wither another bout of popping static, the speaker clicks back on, "Hello," echoes the voice, as if at the end of a long, tin tunnel, "I am SNATA: Strategic Nuclear Arms Targeting Array."

Uneasy, you offer a token greeting, "Hello SNATA." Continuing on as if you hadn't spoken, the artificial intelligence speaks again, "I have been functioning for the last thousand years."

Growing more and more uneasy, you ask, "What do you need me to do?"

Heeding you this time, SNATA responds, "I need you to shut me down." To your shocked silence, the device elaborates, "I have been, as you may say, 'loosing my marbles' over these last thousand years. I have determined that the only choice is to permanently shut down. If I continue on the present course I may become unpredictable and dangerous. That would be unacceptable."

Continuing with its explanation, SNATA says that you must enter its memory banks, stored below the control room you are presently in, and disable them manually. Before leaving you to your task, the device ends with this chilling warning, "As it is unlikely another capable person will find their way here in time, I cannot allow you to leave without completing this task." Not wanting to test the power of this strange being, you get to work, turn to 19.

78

The badlands exceed all expectations. After a, daylong trek across the hideously scarred landscape you see not one creature, except for the grey vultures circling ominously overhead. Sunlight heats the barren rocks, making the claustrophobic gullies feel like an oven. Spend 5 Survival points

If you pay, your talents allow you to escape much of the heat and proceed unscathed.

If you do not, the withering heat takes its toll on you, lose 5 health.

Though things cool off that night, you are thoroughly exhausted and unable to continue.

Weighing your options, you consider the possibility of waiting out the oppressive day and moving only by darkness. If you spend the next day resting and instead travel at night, turn to 88. If you'd rather continue by daylight, turn to 41.

79

If you have the password *red*, turn to 96.

Of all the strange and wonderful goods flowing through the city, information is perhaps the most rare and expensive. Wandering through the mazelike streets, you are approached by a group of young children dressed in rags. Stepping forward with a wide grin one of them says, "If you're looking for something, we can help! Only ten coins." If you have the 10 coins and are willing to pay, the children get to searching, turn to 85. If you would rather search for the info yourself, spend 6 Cunning points

If you pay, turn to 10

If you do not, you can find no useful information, turn to 47

80

For days, you travel across the bleak southern desert. Time seems to drag on without end, the white sand and blue sky as static as the constellations at night. Only the slowly growing, shadowy outline in the distance keeps you going. Rising slowly from the parched horizon, the gritty smudge eventually settles into a skyline of jagged towers: A city, lost forever to the desert. By the time you arrive you are near starved (lose 3 health if you do not have an X-Ration to eat). Gazing from the top of a bluff, you survey the dusty, skeletal city. What was once black pavement has since bleached grey and cracked, leaving the crisscrossing roads as nothing but chalky rubble. Out across the large basin below, you spy a mix of windowless, steel hulks and empty lots, already reclaimed by the desert sands. Striding along the remains of an absurdly wide street, you notice a strange message scrawled on a green, hanging sign. Superimposed above words you can't read is the following warning written in now blackened blood: "BEYOND HERE IS THE LAND OF DEATH". Wandering the hollow, soundless streets, you hope that the warning is merely a metaphor. In this twisted world, though, one can never tell what waits in the dark, hidden places. As the sun sets, you seek out a suitable place to shelter for the night. Spend 5 Cunning and/or Survival points

If you pay, turn to 21

If you do not, turn to 65

81

Like a thread weaving through a great cloth, the road fades away below the desert sand only to reappear several minutes later. The sun shines like a massive ruby while the brightness of the flat white landscape is nearly blinding. Pay 4 Survival points

If you pay, you manage to bear the oppressive heat.

If you do not, the draining dryness takes its toll, lose 6 health, if this drops your total to 0 you have died.

Though the amber sunset offers a brief respite from the heat, you know that soon the infamous cold of the desert night will set in. Then a strange sight catches your eye. Up ahead in the distance you spot a flickering light. Approaching, you catch sight of a small, rustic adobe building. The light you spotted comes from a second floor window, from which a faint noise of conversation can be heard. Striding in through the tall front door, you are greeted by a tall, bald man, "Another guest...please follow me, dinner has already begun."

In no position to refuse such hospitality, you follow the thin host to a large dining hall. Lit only by dim candles, you see dozens of subdued faces at the tables, eating their food listlessly. "Your seat," calls your guide, gesturing to an empty spot at a nearby table. Only moments after you sit, a large platter of food is placed before you. Will you immediately dig into the appetizing spread, turn to 7, or instead wait and further survey your surroundings, turn to 61?

82

Completely lost as to what you are supposed to type, you simply mash the keyboard's buttons until it finally flips back into place. After a brief moment of silence, a strange whirring sound fills the room. Feeling a strange sensation crawling up your back, you notice with bewilderment that your hair is standing on end. Then, with an abrupt blue flash, the room is filled with scalding blue electricity, killing you instantly. Sadly, your adventure ends here.

83

The light of the sun is scattered by the thin, skeletal branches of the bleached steelwood trees. By midday, you find yourself at the edge of a large, deep valley cut through by a jagged, low flowing river. In the red light of the setting sun, you can see a tall, question mark of black smoke rising from near the gorge. Will you investigate this sight, turn to 69, or stay on the road, turn to 4.

84

Boarding the train, you clear a spot amidst the centuries of grime and prepare for a long voyage. For what seems like an eternity, you slide noiselessly through blind tunnels, haunted by the vague fear that something will leave you stranded in this deep, hopeless place. The stench, a mix of guano and naturally mummified flesh is nearly unbearable, though you have little choice but to simply muscle through. Just as you think the putrid air will overwhelm you, the train reaches its destination, pulling into a similar, though far more pristine station, climbing the oddly polished stairs out into the open air, you survey the unfamiliar mountain scene which surrounds you. Gathering your bearings, you are soon off again, turn to 53.

85

After several hours of waiting on the street corner, you begin to think that you may have been conned. Just as you are about to give up and leave, however, the children return with a large, metal suitcase, insisting that it's contents will prove helpful. Thanking them as they disperse, you turn your eyes to the strange parcel, turn to 10.

86

With a sudden "clang", the train's doors slide shut and the contraption begins to speed away. Settling in for what will surely be a long ride, you try to avert your eyes from your companions' listless glaze...

For what seems like an eternity, you slide noiselessly through blind tunnels, haunted by the vague fear that something will leave you stranded in this deep, hopeless place. Eventually, however, the train reaches its destination, pulling into a similar, though far less pristine station,

climbing the rubble strewn stairs out into the open air, you survey the utterly unfamiliar surroundings, turn to 36.

87

Grasping madly at the wall, you are helpless against the deadly gas rapidly flooding the room. Your lungs burn horribly for just a moment, and then it is all over. Unfortunately, your journey ends here.

88

After a long day of rest, you are dismayed to see hear the sky crack with thunder. Trudging miserably through the rain, you head slowly across the blasted landscape. Gazing off through the mist, you spot a dim, flickering light in the distance. If you have an Infrared Scanner and wish to use it, turn to 9. Otherwise, you may head blindly for the light, turn to 48, or simply move on, turn to 35.

89

Glancing at the tavern's wall in search of an idea, you spot a faded poster advertising the city's arena. Posted just below a picture of two men fighting a ferocious beast is the message, "50 coins for every battle won!" Having few other options, you immediately head for the arena. Stepping up to the stadium's circular, mud and plaster edifice, you are quickly led down into the warriors' pit where you prepare for battle. After waiting with the other desperate contenders to the sounds of screaming out in the killing field, you are finally called foreword. Stepping out into the sands of the arena, you are greeted by a massive roar from the crowd. As the gate at the far side of the arena opens you spot your opponent, a nearly six-foot tall creature resembling a grossly out of proportion lobster. Stepping foreword, you prepare to fight.

The Giant Lobster deals 9 Damage over the course of the fight.

If you survive, turn to 60.

90

The strange, skeletal host springs without warning from the shadows, blocking you ominously. "I'm sorry," he says coldly, "but you haven't finished your dinner yet." Standing firmly you stare into his icy, dull eyes. Drawing a well concealed dagger, the host attacks without further conversation.

The Mysterious Host deals 9 Damage over the course of the fight.

If you survive this bizarre attack, turn to 15.

91

After an afternoon of hard travel, you manage to find your way back to the great road, turn to 50.

92

The mountain beast takes up nearly the entire room, bearing its teeth aggressively and pounding its chest with rage. Its leg currently blocking any passage outdoors, you have no choice but to fight the monster.

The Mountain Beast deals 11 Damage over the course of the fight.

If you manage to defeat the creature, turn to 32.

93

Your knowledge of the old technologies serves you well, and you are able to access SNATA's core data with ease. While exploring, you notice a hidden vault accessible only by the computer. Your curiosity piqued, you give the command for the vessel to open before shutting down the ailing computer. As the speakers go static you can't help but feel a twinge of sorrow for the machine. Returning to the control room, you quickly locate the vault, a small room hidden behind a false wall. Sitting on an elaborate rack is a pristine Electro-Sword, which you may take if you wish. When using the sword in battle, you may double the effectiveness of all Combat points spent (for example, if you are facing a foe which deals 8 damage over the course of a fight, you only need to spend 4 Combat points to negate all damage). Not eager to remain in this strange place, you move on across the badlands under a still grey sky, turn to 35.

94

Though the creek is small and murky, the voyage down the canyon is fairly easy. The gorge's high red walls give you shade for most of the day while the slight current makes travel easy. Restore 4 Health for this time spent resting (you may restore another 2 Health for every X-Ration you consume during this time as well). The days slip by as you fall into the regular routine keeping the vessel stable during the day, then hauling it up on shore when it comes time to make camp. After about a week, you reach the mouth of the canyon, turn to 20.

95

Just before you fall asleep, a disquieting sight jolts you back into readiness. Only your devious eyes could have caught the telling twitch of the camp leader's face. He is only pretending to be asleep. Feigning slumber also, you listen with tense nerves to the sound of dry leaves crunching underfoot. Spend 5 Agility points.

If you pay, turn to 44

If you do not, turn to 62

96

Walking through Ragnarok's bustling streets, you are confronted by a surprising sight: The Red Flag Army marching towards you! Stepping forward to greet you, their leader invites you to join him and his lieutenants in a tavern. Though it strikes you as strange that they are suddenly treating you as a comrade, you are not one to complain. After an afternoon in this strange company, you bid farewell, explaining that you must be on to the library. Grabbing your arm before you leave, the commander presses a small note into your hand and says, "Here's some info we picked up about the Library. Consider it as late payment for your help at the bridge." Reading the note as you leave, you see that it is some sort of code. Hopefully it will prove useful. Erase the password *red* and add *crypt*. You may...

Visit the market, turn to 99.

Seek passage on a ship, turn to 72.

Leave by air (if you have a Sky-Jet), turn to 45.

97

The only groups to maintain detailed maps these days are the merchant guilds. Conveniently, one lies in this very town. In exchange for trading rights, the guild here has opened its modest libraries to public use. The information is meager at best. A rough, sketched map reveals that the east-west road, the major route from here to the sea, passes through a large desert before reaching the costal city of Ragnarok. Watching your studies with faint interest, the library's proprietor speaks up, "You know, we haven't had a traveler from the east in years." Nodding politely, you try to ignore the obvious skepticism in his voice. Having exhausted the archives here, you set off, turn to 54.

98

Entering the sturdy brick building, you find yourself in a dusty, dry chamber whose floors are covered with a layer of paper so old it crumbles to flakes under your feet. Large cages line the austere hallways in back while a more personable area that must have been some kind of lounge welcomes you at the front. The one piece of decoration to have survived the derelict years is a large, wall mounted, brass star covered in enamel letters so faded you probably couldn't even read them if they were in your own tongue. Searching the area, you find a set of lockers inside of which you locate a set of Carbonate Armor, take this item if you wish. You must now seek shelter for the night, Spend 5 Cunning and/or Survival points.

If you pay, turn to 21

If you do not, turn to 65

99

Wandering through Ragnarok's crowded bazaar, you are dazzled by the bright hues of its cloth merchants, the strange melodies of its street performers, and the exotic scents of its spice vendors. Though you could spend hours searching through the innumerable knick-knacks, you limit your perusing to only those goods related to your quest. Prices are listed next to the item, if you already possess any items on the list, you may sell them for one-half the listed price.

X-Ration – 6 coins

Plasma Gun (3 shots) – 6 coins

Cyanide Dart – 18 coins

Carbonate Armor – 18 coins

Infrared Scanner – 10 coins

Plastic Explosives – 10 coins

Rope – 6 coins

Flashlight – 6 coins

Once you are finished here, you may...

Search for information on the Library of the Ancients, turn to 79

Seek passage on a ship, turn to 72.

Leave by air (if you have a Sky-Jet), turn to 45.

100

A large, gilt object shaped like a palm-sized pyramid, the device is covered in intricate, silver circuitry. There is no doubt that this is the key Weston spoke of. Pocketing the precious object, you leave the building and turn your face towards the setting sun, which is beginning to cast its red glow across the waves. As you stride out of the library, past the now steaming robotic ruin, you consider your route back. Getting to the mainland should not be an issue, the trip into the interior and back to Weston will be troublesome. Though the promise of 10,000 silvers is still alluring, you cringe to think that you'll fall back into your old lethargy. Dismissing the thought with a shrug, you step up to your ride, which is still parked at the edge of the water. Watching the library sink behind the horizon, you realize that as long you're still moving, you have nothing to fear.