

BRAINS & HEARTS

You are members of Sojourner - a rag-tag caravan - in a world gone mad; ravaged by a global zombie apocalypse. The Corporation - following its own mysterious agenda - tinkered with Secrets Humanity Was Not Meant To Know and now we're cursed with dead ravenous hordes. Darcy, your leader has been incapacitated by an unknown illness, leaving you to fend for yourselves while Darcy recovers.

PLAYERS: CREATE CHARACTERS

- 1 Choose a style for your character: **Rugged, Sneaky, Stone-Cold, Clone, Survivor, Bad-ass, Honorable, Innovative, Friendly**
- 2 Choose a role for your character: **Scout, Soldier, Peacekeeper, Scavenger, Medic, Veterinarian, Maker, Child, Psychic, Counselor**
- 3 Choose your **avatar number**, from 2 to 5. A high number means you're better at **BRAINS** (technology, science, cold rationality, calm and precise actions). A low number means you're better at **HEARTS** (intuition, diplomacy, leadership, wild and passionate action).
- 4 Give your character a **cool zombie survival horror name**, like Imperator Fury or something.

You have: Worn, but durable clothing; crank-powered walkie-talkies; a canteen with water, rations for a week; a backpack with assorted camping gear; and a weapon of your choice (gun, baseball bat, katana, etc.).

Player goal: Get your character involved in awesome, impossible zombie survival horror adventures.

Character goal: Beyond keeping the group alive, choose one or create your own - **Team up with other survivors. Kill zombies. Take down The Corporation, Find clean clothing and get a shower. Learn more about the zombies (study them), Party like it's the end of the world. Discover a cure before you turn. Secure long-term shelter. Bring survivors to safety. Prove your value to the caravan. Keep Being Awesome** (ie: you have nothing to prove).

PLAYERS: CREATE THE CARAVAN

As a group, pick two exceptional vehicles for your caravan (all other vehicles are unremarkable - Volvos and Honda Civics and the like): **18-Wheeler** (think "mini big-box store" + CB radio), **Ambulance** (medical), **Delivery Van** (random stuff), **Dune Buggy** (quick and nimble), **Food Truck** (food & fridge), **Fuel Tanker** (gasoline), **Military Humvee** (durable & armed), **News Van** (cameras & satellite comms), **Party Bus** (creature comforts, music, lights, & booze), **Police Car**, (CB, captive "cell," light arms and armor) **RV** (bed, comforts, generator), **Mobile Science Lab** (science!), **Surveillance Van** (comms, sensors, hacking).

Also, pick one persistent problem: **Gas guzzlers** (always need gasoline), **Noisy** (attracts zombies and other beasts), **Stolen Corporate Vehicles** (they want them back), **Prone to Breakdowns** (at the worst possible time), **Grim Reputation** (Darcy did some bad stuff in the past).

ROLLING THE DICE

When you do something risky, roll **1d6** to to find out how it goes. **+1d** if you're **prepared**, **+1d** if you're an **expert** (GM's call).

Compare each die result to your avatar number:

↓ If you're using **BRAINS**, you want to roll **less than** your avatar number.

↑ If you're using **HEARTS**, you want to roll **greater than** your avatar number.

If none of your dice succeed, it goes wrong. The GM says how things get worse.

If one die succeeds, you barely manage it. The GM inflicts a complication, harm, or cost.

If two dice succeed, you do it well. Good job!

If three dice succeed, you get a critical success! The GM gives you an extra effect.

If you roll your avatar number exactly, it's **BRAIN HEARTS!**

You get special insight into what's going on. Ask the GM a question and they'll answer you honestly. Some good questions:

What are they really feeling? Who's behind this? How could I get them to...? What should I be ready for? What's the best way to...? What's really going on here?

(A **BRAIN HEARTS** result also counts toward your successes.)

HELPING: If you want to help someone else who's rolling, say how you try to help and make a roll. If you succeed, they get **+1d**.

GM: CREATE A ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE ADVENTURE

Roll or choose on the tables below:

(1) A THREAT...

- 1: *The CEO (of The Corporation)*
- 2: *Intelligent Zombies*
- 3: *Wasteland Raiders*
- 4: *A Local Gang Leader*
- 5: *Cyber Zombies*
- 6: *Psychic Parasite (One? Many? Your call.)*
- 7: *A Pro-Zombie Cult*
- 8: *A brilliant-but-ruthless A.I.*

(2) WANT(S) TO...

- 1: *Wipe out*
- 2: *Steal / Capture*
- 3: *Study / Dissect*
- 4: *Strengthen / Evolve*
- 5: *Create*
- 6: *Take Over / Incorporate*

(3) THE...

- 1: *Corrupt World Leader*
- 2: *Zombie Horde*
- 3: *Last Military Base*
- 4: *Remnants of the CDC*
- 5: *Mysterious Artifact*
- 6: *Omega Virus*
- 7: *Top secret facility*
- 8: *Heavily guarded shipment*
- 9: *Ancient Occult Ritual*

(4) WHICH WILL

- 1: *Utterly Annihilate Humanity*
- 2: *Give Them Complete Control of the Zombies*
- 3: *Unlock the Key to Immortality*
- 4: *Let Them Dominate the Psychic Network*
- 5: *Bridge the Realms of the Living and the Dead*
- 6: *Cure Zombieism*

GM: RUN THE GAME

Play to find out how the protagonists defeat the threat. Introduce the threat by showing evidence of its recent badness. Before a threat does something to the characters, signal what's about to happen, then ask them what they do. *"The cannibal cultists are loading the harpoon gun. What do you do?" "The CEO chortles and says, 'That's my offer, take it or leave it.' What do you do?"*

Call for a roll when the situation is uncertain. Refrain from pre-planning outcomes - let the chips fall where they may. Use failures to push the action forward. The situation always changes after a roll, for good or ill.

Ask questions and build on the answers. *"Have any of you encountered a psychic parasite before? Where? What happened?"*

BRAINS & HEARTS is a hack by Desirée and Jonathan Leistiko of the very clever LASERS & FEELINGS RPG by John Harper. Check it out at onesevendesign.com. You'll find more clever stuff by us at invisible-city.com.

INSPIRATIONS The Resident Evil movie franchise - especially the later ones, and particularly the one set in Las Vegas. The Resident Evil video game franchise (less than the movies, but still). The Underworld movie franchise (style less than content, but that's your call). Cabin in the Woods. The Evil Dead movie franchise (original, not reboot). Fallout New Vegas. Bioshock.

