

CONTAMINANTS!

by Ian Howard

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When the world suffered a thousand small deaths, your ancestors fled to safety. For many long years you hid, sheltered, withered. Now your clan, heirs to an empty fortune, must reclaim what remains of the contaminated earth outside your protective boundaries.

PREPARE!

Begin in your bunker, fort, shelter, or hideaway. If you are alone against the world, you must fill each role yourself. If your numbers are legion, elect one of you to each position:

- Science Officer, responsible for identifying threats
- Quartermaster, responsible for carrying perishable goods
- Safety Officer, responsible for ensuring compliance with safety protocols
- Advance Scout, responsible for directing the group's path

Next all survivors must don protective gear: masks are de rigeur, and should be carried or worn at all times. Be alert to any warnings from the Science and/or Safety Officer regarding proper masking procedures.

You may optionally wear:

- Gloves (with or without fingers covered) or mittens
- Boots, galoshes, or any other closed-toe shoe
- Helmets, visors, hats, eyeglasses, tinted eyeglasses, or goggles
- Long sleeves, thick pants, and/or woolen socks that itch your feet
- Any other safety apparatus deemed necessary by your elected officers

You may optionally gather:

- A knapsack
- Small jars or other containers
- One or more bandanas or clean rags
- An ancient map
- One or more empty notebooks
- Assorted measuring devices including a timepiece
- A supply of clean water and whatever rations come quickly to hand

Don't believe the lies. It's not safe out there. Keep your gear on if you want to come back.

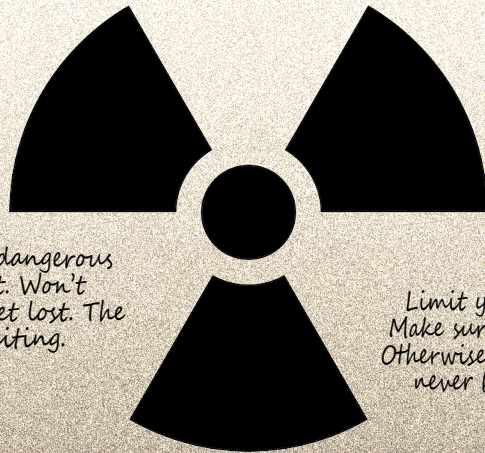


INVESTIGATE!

When you are assembled and prepared, depart. You may experience some disorientation; this is normal and is certain to pass. Provided you may do safely, explore your immediate area and then begin investigating further outward. Communicate with your fellows to ensure that all safety procedures are being followed precisely. Safety is your watchword!

For maximum diligence, comply with the following:

- Stay only in verified safe areas and maintain group cohesion
- Avoid open field and the vertigo it produces
- Speak only to those you know
- Avoid other humans (all survivors are inherently unpredictable)
- Measure the angle of the unfamiliar sun and assess what risk it poses
- Make detailed observations on the amount and type of vegetation you encounter
- Collect samples of dirt, rainwater, and other environmental accoutrements
- Be alert to any danger from wild beasts or objects weakened by cataclysm
- Avoid electronic devices that may disrupt or distract from your exploration



The longer you stay, the more dangerous it is. They won't tell you that. Won't tell you about the ones that get lost. The real truth is still out there, waiting.

Limit your exposure. Check your levels. Make sure you've got time to get back to safety. Otherwise you'll go rogue. And then you'll never be safe again.

ACCLIMATE!

With the blessing of your Safety Officer, you may remove your safety gear in stages to conduct experiential analysis. This involves no small amount of risk, and it is advised only insofar as it furthers our noble goal of reclaiming the earth. You may:

- Climb a structure or tree to gain a better vantage
- Listen for the ruckus of animals in the distance
- Lie down in the muck, rolling around in it to savor the squelch
- Befriend an unfamiliar human by exchanging treats or hastily whispered words
- Drink rainwater or falling snow as hungrily as you dare
- Press your palms into sharp gravel
- Whistle listlessly or to a half-remembered tune to hear its echoes
- Run until your lungs burn and your legs shake with exhaustion
- Watch from afar as creatures perform the mindless tasks needed for survival
- Scream into the sky (defiantly or with unfettered yearning)
- Wrap your arms around the trunk of a tree, as though to hear its heartbeat
- Chase one another in the carefree manner of yesteryear's children
- Scratch your name in the dirt as a record of your existence
- Gather fallen flowers for decorative purposes
- Call to each other in the language of the beasts
- Forage for sustenance, provided you have studied sufficiently to do so safely
- Wade in shallow water until your woolen socks are soaked clean through
- Enjoy the feeling of warm sunlight and clean air along your body
- Spin until you fall victim to gravity

RETURN!

We are aware that there is a chance that some explorers may find the allure of the ruined world too engrossing, despite its many flaws. They have forgotten what it means to be a survivor. Their recklessness betrays the future of humanity. Be watchful for those who:

- Ask too many questions
- Linger unadvisedly
- Enjoy too much
- Express unsanctioned emotion
- Secret away trinkets in their pockets
- Question or ignore the orders of their officers
- Do not participate in sanctioned activities
- Act as animals do, without diligent self-control
- Remove their safety gear without proper authorization
- Investigate the history of the cataclysm or any of its direct consequences

Those of you who remain steadfast in your duties may tolerate this behavior provided it does not pose an immediate threat, but it is likely that such specimens shall not willingly return to their shelter after the exploration. This is an unavoidable loss and we condemn anyone who makes such a selfish decision against the glorious remnants of humanity.

When you have no more rations or water, or the day grows dark, or you begin to tire, then you must return to shelter. Those who wish to stay in the world may have it, in all its disgusting wretchedness. Those who return must do so along unfamiliar paths. You have done well. Rest now for the coming of the grand resurgence. Rest.



If you have survived this long, you know the truth. Those who stay are no better than animals. They are lost to the feral world.

Forget them in your hearts.