

# Introduction

## Life Before the Bomb

By the mid 21st century, the world as we knew it started to become a much more dangerous place to live. Years of dependence upon fossil fuels finally pushed the world's supply to the breaking point. As would be expected, the United States were among the hardest hit. In turn, they placed economic and military restrictions on Mexico, ensuring the nation a supply of oil, albeit at Mexico's expense.

Not too long after, the world entered a period of Resource Wars. Small nations went broke attempting to secure what they could of the dwindling natural resources, and Europe became fully dependent on the Middle East for oil. Seeing their opportunity, Middle Eastern countries raised the prices of oil to absurd levels, invoking the military wrath of the European Commonwealth. The battles over these precious few reserves would continue for almost a decade, up until the very day they dried up.

At around the same time, mounting pressures around the world forced many countries to withdraw from an already ailing United Nations. The Middle East saw limited use of nuclear weapons, and the "New Plague" killed people around the world in droves. The U.S., in response to the Euro-Middle-Eastern conflict and New Plague, closed its borders and imposed a national quarantine. In order to insure the survival of the American way of life in the future, the government began to organize and fund Project Safehouse. This project, funded by junk bonds, was designed to build underground shelters called Vaults, the first of which was built in 2054.

To further protect its precious supply of oil, the U.S. established the Anchorage Front Line in Alaska in 2059, increasing tensions with Canada due to their reservations on letting U.S. troops into the country to guard the pipeline. Despite the resource shortage, the

world saw the advent of the first artificial intelligence, and the first primitive attempts at powered armor.

By 2060, virtually all traffic in the world came to a halt, as the remaining oil supply was deemed too valuable to waste on conventional automobiles. This spurred the market for fusion-powered cars and in turn created interest in new ways of creating fusion power and applying it to tasks normally associated with oil. By 2066, China's resources went dry as well, forcing it to become much more aggressive with the U.S. over trading oil. The U.S. decided not to export oil, and within the year, China invaded Alaska. With the advent of crude fusion cells and power armor, the U.S. developed the upper hand in the conflict. Even with these two technological trump cards, the U.S. was still strapped for resources and began to draw upon Canadian resources, eventually leading to the annexation of Canada by 2076. Unable to match the might of American power armor, China began to aggressively use biological agents against U.S. forces. In turn, the U.S. began research to counter this threat: the Pan-Immunity Virion Project (PVP). The efforts of this project created the Forced Evolutionary Virus (FEV), a virus that seemed to increase the strength and intelligence of its animal test subjects. By mid 2076, American power armor units penetrated deep inside China, stretching Chinese military forces and resources to the breaking point in an attempt to repel the invaders. The Alaskan front was also reoccupied. Power armor also saw action on the home front, pacifying starving American rioters around the nation.

In 2077, the world was at a stand still. America expected a nuclear or biological attack from China. The president went into hiding with trusted advisors. Then the bombs dropped, and the world was instantly changed.

## Life After the Bomb

Few people made it into a Vault on that cool October day in 2077. Air raid sirens blew, but few people believed that their deaths

would be imminent. Just mere feet below the streets of major metropolitan areas, these people were unaware of the extensive damage to the outside world. Entire populations were wiped out, leaving only the ashes of the once great civilization of Man. In seconds, the world became a much different place.

A combination of lethal doses of radiation and F.E.V., which had somehow escaped its confines at a non-descript military base, created entire new species overnight. Those locked away in the Vaults lived for entire generations underneath the earth.

As far as anyone in the wastes knows, some Vaults opened up as early as 20 or so years after the Great War. Some opened much later, and even more sit silently under ground, housing an entire population of people waiting to return the surface and reclaim the land of their ancestors.

Those who survived in Vaults or other pre-war shelters that opened found the world a harsh new place. What once was a land of spiraling cities and arid land is now almost entirely sun-scorched desert. Survivors banded together, created towns, started trading routes, and generally began the long process of rebuilding civilization. Along the way these people encountered a vast variety of new species and old human habits. Survival was not only a struggle against the elements; it was a battle against mutated beasts and murderous raiders.

For now, much of the fate of the rest of the world is unknown. All most people are concerned with is staying alive...

## The World In Review

### **Vaults: Your Tax Dollars at Work**

Building massive underground shelters to house portions of the American population during a nuclear exchange was the ultimate goal of Project Safehouse. Started in 2054 and ending in 2069, Project Safehouse

supervised the construction of some 122 separate Vaults across the country. They were initially envisioned to hold 1000 people comfortably until the surface once again became inhabitable. Powered by both geothermal and nuclear power, the Vaults were equipped with just about every amenity known to man to make the stay that much more comfortable. Vaults also housed a wealth of hydro-agricultural farms, water purification systems and construction equipment (including a GECK) to facilitate man's return to the surface.

However, the re-population of the surface was in reality not the ultimate goal of the Vaults. The pre-war government, who hid themselves away in a secure location days before the bombs dropped, envisioned the vaults as a way to study how pre-selected segments of the population re-colonized when they were isolated. Unbeknownst to all but one inhabitant of each Vault, the Over Seer, each one of the 122 Vaults was a social experiment.

In general, most Vault Dwellers have spent all their lives living in the Vault. As such, they know little to nothing about the outside world. Even those people living in opened Vaults may not know anything about the outside world except for what they learn from people wandering through. While they may be naïve about the outside world, they are also knowledgeable in state-of-the-art technology, having used it all their lives while the rest of the world went without it. With such a privileged and isolated upbringing, it is a common attitude among Vault Dwellers that they are better than most of humanity.

### **Outsiders**

The term "outsiders" covers a large array of people who live in the wastes. Some are descended from people who came from Vaults that opened long ago, and have become accustomed to the new world, while others are descended from people who survived in other shelters or in areas that were not hit hard.

Overall, these are the majority of people that make up the population in the wastes, and

cover a wide variety of occupations from raiders to farmers. Most have little to no knowledge of advanced technology, as they have found little of it while eking out an existence among the ruins of pre-war America.

Most outsiders are more than familiar with leading hard lives, and working tirelessly just to eat. Having to spend so much energy just to survive, outsiders are naturally untrustworthy of people they do not know.

Outsiders organize themselves in various ways. The most basic organizations are tribes. These usually consist of people who have, for some reason, reverted back to a more primitive society. They do not have access to technology, and usually believe in magic or spirits of some sort.

The rest will usually band together and attempt to resettle in pre-war cities. These people will set aside land for farming, and construct houses in order to build a community. Some of the most successful human cities have been known to have thousands of people living in them.

## Ghouls

While some people who didn't make it to a Vault in time were incinerated by nuclear fire, others suffered a different fate. Exposed to a combination of FEV and radiation, a number of people became ghouls. While still technically alive, they look like the walking dead. Thanks to the FEV, they have unnaturally long lives, though they have been rendered sterile and can no longer reproduce. Their exposure to radiation also makes them fairly resistant to radiation, meaning ghouls can live in areas with radiation levels high enough to keep normal humans away. Ghouls tend to live in these areas not only because they can, but also because such environments tend to be healthier for them.

Though they are still human, most "normal" humans either refuse to allow them entrance into their towns, or treat them as second-class citizens. Such discrimination tends to make

ghouls very distrusting of "normies" and leads them to live in ghoul-only communities. Despite their prejudices against normal humans, ghouls are practically font-heads of knowledge about all sorts of pre-war information. Having time and knowledge at their disposal, ghouls have been known to be a driving force behind some technological advances throughout the wastes.

## Super Mutants

Super mutants are products of radiation and FEV, but not in the same way ghouls are. Legend holds that super mutants originated on the west coast of the United States, and are the result of extensive research with the FEV virus to create super soldiers. Under the direction of a being referred to only as "the Master," normal human beings were dipped in a specialized vat of FEV. The result was a being of increased size and muscle mass, but often possessing less intelligence than they had before they were dipped. They also shared the extended life span and sterility that was inflicted upon the ghouls.

The Master's ultimate goal was to create an army of these mutants to overtake human civilization and replace it with his own. A nameless wanderer shattered the Master's plans, however. The mutant army shattered and fled. Nowadays, mutants can be found almost anywhere. They are not usually accepted in human or ghoul cities though, and often lead short and violent lives out in the wastes.

While mutants cannot breed, it is certainly possible that someone could once again come across a sample of FEV and rebuild a mutant army, or at least increase their numbers. Most super mutants alive today are remnants of the Master's army. Most still cling to the belief that they are a superior race of people destined to overthrow the human race. Most will treat normal humans and ghouls with disdain. Most all mutants also have at least basic weapons and tactics training. Combined with their enhanced size and strength, this makes them almost unstoppable engines of destruction.

## Deathclaws

Deathclaws are an enigma in the wastes. Some claim them to be angry spirits summoned by Native Americans before the end of the world, or demons that walk the earth. Those who have studied them describe them as coming from a certain type of lizard that was alive before the war, and whose DNA was altered by FEV, causing it to gain intelligence, size, and to ability to breed much faster than normal.

Deathclaws tend to tower over even super mutants and are known to be even more dangerous. They are very protective of their young, very territorial, and they tend to hunt in packs. Many travelers have either first-hand or recollected stories about the ferocity and cunning of the Deathclaw as it hunts. The mystery of the deathclaw remains mainly because very few people have survived an encounter with one. Those who escape tell tales of glowing hypnotic eyes, horrible claws, and bulletproof hides. There are a few people, though, who tell tales of talking Deathclaws. Few people put stock in these stories though, as they are so rare.