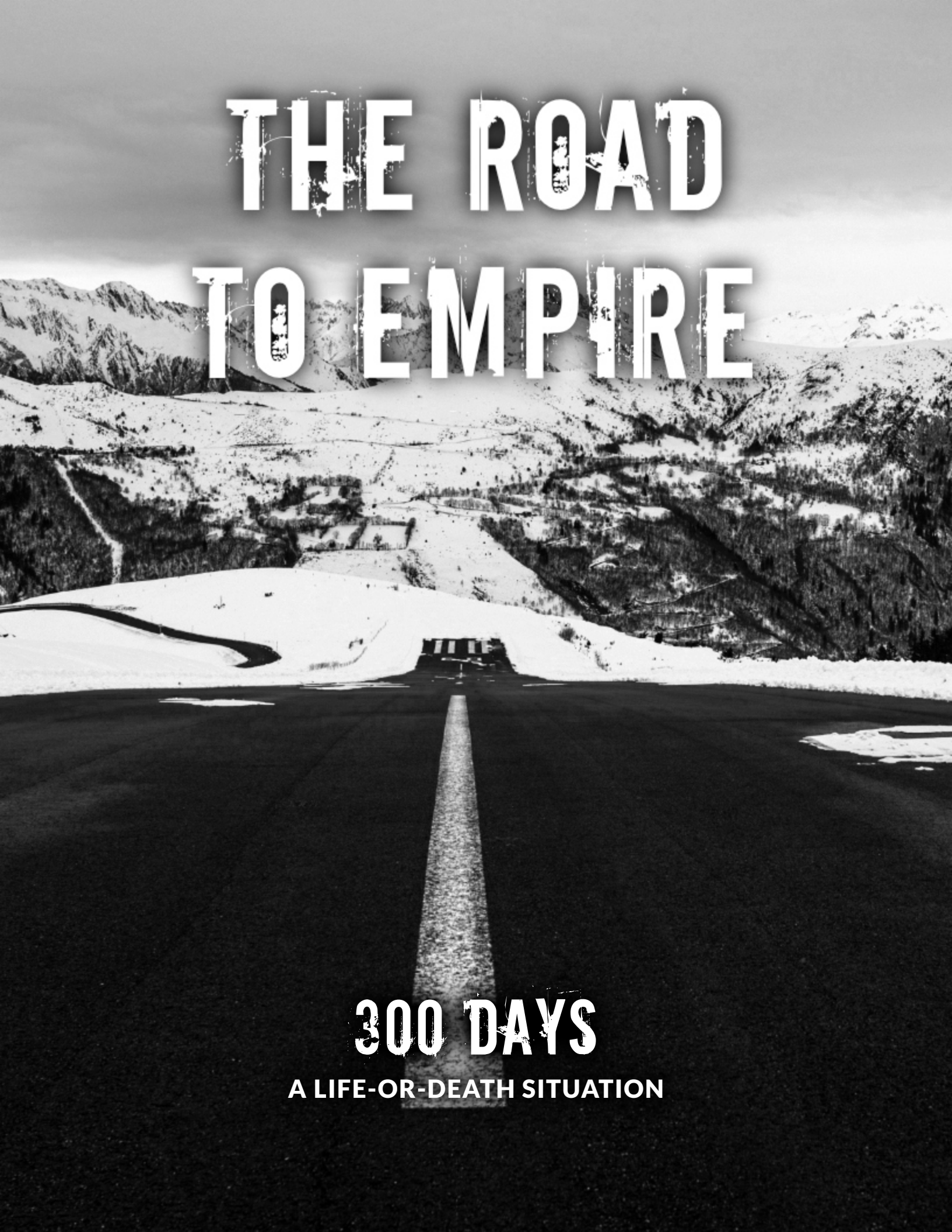




THE ROAD TO EMPIRE

300 DAYS

A LIFE-OR-DEATH SITUATION

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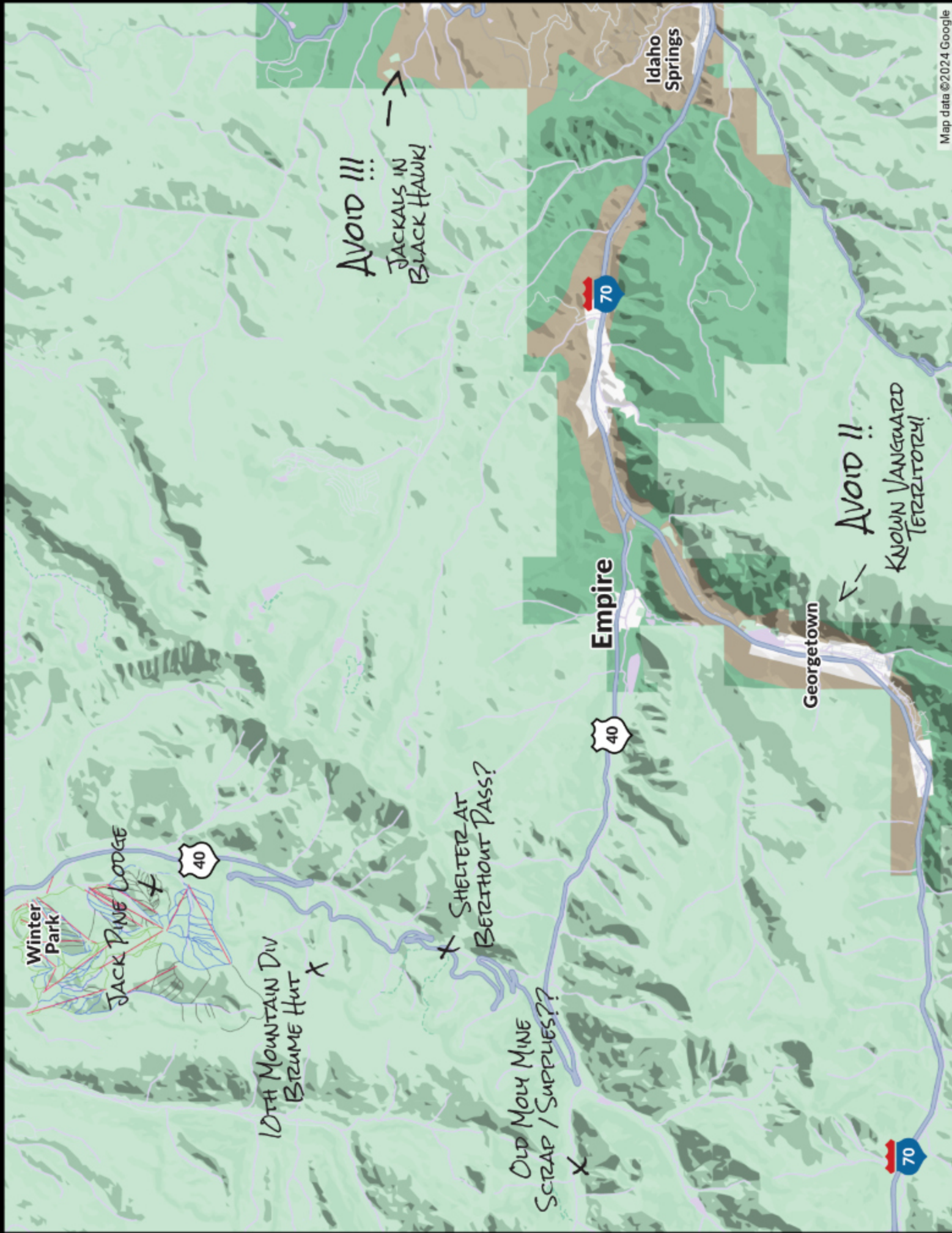
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300 Days is a post-apocalyptic survival and horror game. Intense situations are central to the narrative which explores themes of violence, death, psychological manipulation, abuse of power, torture, cannibalism, suicide, and other sensitive topics.

Reader discretion is advised.

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INTRODUCTION

The Road to Empire is an introductory situation for 300 Days. It takes place in Clear Creek Canyon, at the base of Berthoud Pass in Grand County, Colorado. The rugged landscape is dominated by steep mountains and dense, high-alpine forest.

This situation references some of the actual geography and landmarks of Colorado. And while Empire is a real town, the locations, people, and scenarios presented in this situation are fictional.

You don't need to have any specific knowledge about the geography of Colorado to enjoy this situation. However, referencing a real world map could provide you with some inspiration.

THE SITUATION

THE DAY BROTHERS

Caleb Day suffered a complete psychotic break when his wife, Angela, died. His break from reality reached its peak when he murdered his youngest brother, believing him to have stolen Angela from him.

Caleb's two remaining brothers, Mitch and Cody, fear for their lives. Caleb is unhinged, hyper-paranoid, and believes that every woman he encounters is his former wife. He kills the men accompanying the woman, accusing them of trying to steal his wife.

One week ago, Caleb arrived in Empire with his two remaining brothers, his son Danny, and two captive women; Alex and Victoria. They're squatting at the roadside motel at the west end of town.

THE THATCHER FAMILY

Three days ago, Katherine, Mark, and Ashley Thatcher took refuge in a recreational campground east of Empire.

Caleb and his brothers discovered the Thatchers at the campground. Mark managed to hide Ashley before they were seen. Caleb killed Mark and abducted Katherine. Ashley has been hiding at the campsite ever since.

VICTORIA'S ESCAPE

Yesterday, Victoria escaped from the motel. She is hiding somewhere in Empire.

Caleb instructed Mitch and Cody to track her down. He refuses to move on until she's found.

OVERVIEW

The PCs discover Mark's body at the campground, and find Ashley hiding in the restroom. Ashley describes the ordeal, and the characters find evidence that points to Empire.

While exploring Empire, the characters find Victoria, and learn that she escaped from the same men that abducted Katherine.

CLIMAX

The characters must decide how they will deal with the situation:

- Do they confront Caleb in an attempt to rescue Katherine, and reunite her with Ashley?
- Do they flee Empire, leaving the hostages behind? If so, what do they do with Ashley?

NOTABLE NPCs

Ashley: 13-years old, quiet, observant

Katherine: 40s, Ashley's mother, confident, outspoken

Victoria: 20s, thin frame, terrified, doesn't trust anyone

Caleb: 50s, delusional, unhinged, paranoid

Danny: 20s, Caleb's son, non-verbal, giant frame, shares his fathers delusion, wears a balaclava to hide the scars from a bear attack

Alex: 30s, widow of Caleb's younger brother, terrified, hates Caleb and his brothers

Mitch: 40s, large frame, strong fighter, terse demeanor, loyal to Caleb out of fear

Cody: 40s, younger than Mitch, feels hopeless to change his family's current situation, easily manipulated

See Stat Blocks on page 12.

SETTING THE SCENE

After fleeing a Jackal raid in Black Hawk, the characters traveled together for two days. They are the only survivors of the raid, and know little about each other beyond this shared ordeal.

They're traveling westward, following the southern bank of Clear Creek. Their goal is to find shelter and supplies in Empire, a small mountain village at the base of Berthoud Pass.

CROSSING CLEAR CREEK

Clear Creek flows west-to-east through the mining territories of the Rocky Mountains. The characters must cross Clear Creek in order to reach Empire.

The creek is approximately 35 feet wide and four feet deep. The rushing water could sweep a person off their feet.

There is no predetermined solution to this encounter. The players need to figure this out for themselves. Encourage them to explore any solution that seems plausible, and ask them to describe their actions. Have them roll whichever Skill makes the most sense, and play out the success or failure of those actions.

Never let the players get comfortable. Encounters are designed to pressure them, and failure should have consequences.

With this in mind, don't roll for trivial or futile actions. It's boring, slows the game down, and doesn't serve the narrative. Success should move the characters towards their goal. Failure should generate new complications, or increased tension.

THE CAMPSITE

After crossing Clear Creek, the characters discover a recreational campground. Faint ribbons of smoke rise from one of the camp fires.

Murder Scene. Mark's dead body lies face down in the dirt. Rolling the body over reveals a large bloodstain in the center of his chest. Further inspection reveals three gunshot wounds. Mark's body is absent of anything useful other than his shirt, pants, and boots.

Hidden Survivor. The character with the highest Observation score notices a scuffling sound coming from the campground vault toilet.

Upon inspecting the restroom, the characters discover Ashley cowering in the corner and

brandishing a knife. She remains silent as tears roll down her face. She lashes out at any anyone that tries to get near her.

If the characters gain her trust, Ashley conveys the following:

- She's been hiding in the bathroom for the past three days.
- Her father hid her in the bathroom when the "strangers" came.
- She heard fighting, then gunshots, then her mother screamed.
- One of the strangers mentioned a motel.
- They drove away, but not in a car. She's not sure what it was.
- She's been too frightened to leave the restroom. She's afraid of what she'll see.

Tire tracks. A successful Observation roll reveals tire tracks leading northwest towards HWY 40. A critical success on this roll reveals that a four-wheel ATV made the tire tracks.

EXPLORING EMPIRE

Empire is a small mountain village, nestled at the base of Berthoud Pass. There are few buildings of significance, and fewer houses. Most of the structures are decrepit and on the brink of collapse.

As the characters make their way through town, they find six buildings of note:

- Berthoud Petrol CO-OP
- Three single-family homes
- Maggie's Diner
- Empire Post Office

The characters shouldn't feel comfortable in Empire. Katherine is in imminent danger, and Ashley is eager to find her mother.

If the characters attempt to rest before they find Victoria, interrupt their rest with the noise of Mitch and Cody driving the ATV to the petrol station to refuel. Cody is left alone at the ATV, while Mitch goes inside the office.



FINDING VICTORIA

Victoria is hiding in the first residence the characters explore.

Upon discovery, Victoria is terrified and hostile. If the characters gain Victoria's trust, she reveals the following:

- She was abducted by Caleb, who murdered her husband.
- Caleb is deranged and believes she is his wife.
- Caleb, his two brothers, and the women he abducted are at the motel at the end of town.
- The night before her escape, Caleb abducted a new woman.

Victoria refuses to leave with the characters, for fear of being discovered. After the players leave, she hides in a different location in town.

Victoria is armed with a small handgun that she found in one of the residences. If the characters attempt to persuade her to leave with them, she threatens the characters with the gun.

If the players demonstrate any hostility, or make any attempt to take her out of the building by force, she turns the weapon on herself and takes her own life. The gunshot alerts Mitch and Cody who immediately investigate the noise.

MITCH AND CODY

Mitch and Cody are searching Empire for Victoria. They are exasperated and defensive. They're motivated by fear of disappointing Caleb. They don't want trouble. They aren't looking for a fight. But they're not going to let anyone get in their way.

As the GM, it's your decision how and when to introduce this encounter. Maybe they sneak into the house and ambush the characters while they speak with Victoria. Or perhaps it's as simple as bumping into the characters on the street. It needn't be complicated. Just remember; Mitch and Cody are motivated by their fear of Caleb to find Victoria.

When the characters encounter Mitch and Cody, Ashley recognizes Mitch as her mother's kidnapper. She conveys this information when she can do so privately.

If the characters don't dispatch of the two brothers, Mitch finds Victoria and drags her away, kicking and screaming. If not confronted, the brothers make their way back to the motel, bind Victoria's feet and hands with duct tape, and lock

her inside guest room 3 at the motel. After which, they take watch in the parking lot at the motel.

BERTHOUD PETROL CO-OP

Two massive, above-ground fuel tanks dominate the scene. The white paint shows signs of rust. One of the fuel tanks is empty. The other is half full. The fuel pumps are bypassed, and replaced with simple ball valves.

Inside the office is a ransacked counter. The drawers are pulled open and scraps of paper are strewn everywhere.

A small brochure rack is next to the counter. Rummaging through the rack reveals the brochure for the Great Divide Motel (*see page 12*).

A looted vending machine is empty, save for a small bag of "Wally's Organic Pitted Dates". Inspecting the packaging reveals that Wally prides himself on not using preservatives. The dates expired five years ago. If a character eats the dates, they must succeed on a Stamina roll versus food poisoning (botulinum), d6 virulence.

Behind the counter is a door marked "Employees Only", that hangs ajar on a broken hinge. Behind the door is a small service garage. The industrial odors of stale machine grease, petroleum distillates, and solvents is heavy in the air.

The garage is ransacked, and absent of anything useful. Large rusted bolts secure a broken bench grinder to a workbench. Several 55-gallon drums rest against the far wall. An unknown liquid puddles at the base of one of the drums. A successful Wits-based Skill roll identifies the liquid as benzene.

If the players linger in the service shop, they must succeed on a Stamina roll versus benzene exposure. Players that fail their Stamina roll must take the Exhausted condition.

RESIDENCE A

This white house, with black shaker shutters, has an enormous ash tree growing in the front yard.

A triggered shotgun trap adorns the front door. A dead body lies face down, across the threshold; the apparent victim of the shotgun blast.

A conspicuous, handwritten note rests on an antique console table in the foyer. The note reads: "*Turn back now, and live.*"

Trapped Stairs. The coat closet under the stairs contains three large pikes carved from fence posts. The carpeted stairs leading to the 2nd floor

are rigged to collapse into the coat closet. Successful Observation recognizes that someone cut and restitched the carpet seams.

If a character steps on the rigged stairs, a successful Mobility roll avoids falling onto the pikes. A character who falls on the pikes suffers 1d6 damage, and a critical injury equivalent to result 25 on the **Critical Injuries** table (see page 17 in the *Basic Rulebook*).

Refrigerated Claymore. In the kitchen, a note scrawled on the refrigerator door reads: “Congrats. You survived!”

The refrigerator contains a Claymore mine. Opening the door triggers the mine. The character who opens the door recognizes the infamous words “*Front Towards Enemy*” before the explosion (8d6 BP).

RESIDENCE B

This gray stucco building looks like it was neglected by the owner, even before the war.

The home’s interior indicates that the owner was a chronic hoarder. Piles of rotten trash, stacks of newspapers, and cardboard boxes crowd the rooms and hallways.

A thick stench of filth and death lingers in the air. More than 20 cats, both dead and alive, are inside the house.

A putrefied body slumps on the living room couch. The cause of death is impossible to determine. Cats are eating the body.

RESIDENCE C

Vandals spray painted the word “*TRAITOR*” on the garage door using red paint.

The front door to the house doesn’t close, and the jamb is split.

The house shows signs of a fight. Successful Observation notices bullet holes in the walls and spent cartridges on the floor.

Photos of an elderly couple hang on the wall. Pieces of memorabilia throughout the house suggest that the homeowner was a retired U.S. Navy veteran.

An open door in the kitchen leads to the back yard. A large blood splatter stains the wooden fence.

The gate leading to the alley is open. A trash dumpster in the alley contains the dead body of an elderly man.

MAGGIE’S DINER

The ceiling inside the entry is partially collapsed. A broken florescent light panel hangs by its frayed wiring.

A successful Observation roll hears a noise coming from the far side of the dining room. Investigating the noise reveals a **mountain lion** eating a rat. If the characters fail the Observation roll, the mountain lion ambushes the characters.

Combined with a successful Persuasion roll, the characters can attempt to frighten the mountain lion by yelling, throwing objects, firing shots, etc.

If the characters run or approach it; or if the characters fail their Persuasion roll, the mountain lion attacks.

The dining room is covered in dust and grime. The vinyl booths are sun-faded and cracked. Searching the dining tables reveals a handful of sugar packets.

The kitchen door hangs ajar, revealing broken appliances. The walk-in cooler door is open. Expired food remains on the shelves. The dry storage shelves are ransacked. Only a roll of aluminum foil and a partial tub of salt remains.

Heaped in the dish pit are grease-caked pots and pans that show signs of rust. A dull kitchen knife rests on the prep counter.

The mop sink is in the back corner of the kitchen. On a shelf above the sink is an unopened container of lye-based drain cleaner.

POST OFFICE

Post office boxes line the walls in the entry hallway. Junk mail is scattered on the floor. The boxes are pried open and pilfered.

The supply shelves are sparse. Only a few cardboard boxes and padded mailers remain. A single roll of packing tape hides under a fallen advertisement for commemorative stamps.

Rolls of stamps and individual packing slips are scattered behind the counter. A locked door leads to the sorting room behind the post office boxes.

Inside the sorting room are piles of abandoned packages. Searching the packages reveals:

- A ceramic coffee mug with the words “*I don’t do Mondays. My coffee does!*” printed on it,
- A massive dildo shaped like an octopus tentacle,

- A six-foot dog leash embroidered with the name “Burton”,
- A book filled with pressed flowers,
- A collection of family photos,
- Six rolls of undeveloped film

Shoved in the corner of the room is a large canvas tote on casters. The tote is filled with unsorted mail. Successful Observation while searching through the tote reveals a snubnose revolver, loaded with two rounds.

GREAT DIVIDE MOTEL

COURTYARD PARKING

The parking lot is crumbling. Weeds grow from the cracks in the pavement. Two large stone planters flank the lobby entrance.

An old four-wheel ATV is parked in front of the lobby.

If Mitch and Cody are alive, Cody is standing watch in the parking lot. Mitch is sleeping in guest room 1. Otherwise, the courtyard is empty.

If the characters draw attention to themselves, Cody alerts Mitch, without hesitation. The two brothers take covering positions behind the large planters and attack. The noise from outside alerts Danny and Caleb. Danny exits from room 7 to engage the characters.

LOBBY

Behind the front desk are stacks of old registry records, and a master key ring holding nine keys. These keys open the lobby door, the guest rooms, and the storage room. Individual room keys, on plastic keychains hang on the back wall. Successful Observation discovers a book of matches with the motel logo.

STORAGE

The door to the storage room is locked. The characters can use the key from the master key ring, pick the lock using a plausible tool and Mobility, or bash the door down using Force. Bashing the door down alerts Danny and Caleb.

This room stinks of death, and the air feels damp. Draped over the side of a filthy mop sink are two blood-soaked towels.

Stuffed behind the water heater is the body of a dead man. Duct tape binds his hands and feet.

Inspection reveals a single gunshot to the head. Searching the man’s pockets discovers three pieces of butterscotch candy and a tattered business card that reads:

Axel “Wrench” Malone

Winter Park Scrap & Salvage

Vault 12, Winter Park, CO

GUEST ROOMS

The air in the guest rooms is thick with the scent of stale linens and black mold. Each room contains a single queen-sized bed, a night stand with a Gideon’s Bible in the top drawer, and a small chair. In the bathroom, the sinks and showers showcase rusty water stains. The water in the toilet evaporated long ago, leaving rings of mineral stains. There are no towels or soap, and there is no running water.

Room 1. If Mitch was killed earlier, this room is empty.

Otherwise, Mitch is asleep on the bed, and is surprised by the characters. He is defiant and uncooperative. He fears his brother more than the characters.

With successful Persuasion, Mitch reveals the following:

- His oldest brother, Caleb, has lost his mind.
- Caleb murdered his youngest brother, Jacob.
- Caleb abducts every woman he encounters, believing them to be his wife.
- He hates Caleb for killing his brother, but is terrified by his capacity for violence.
- Victoria is in room 2. The key to the room is in the top drawer of the night stand.
- Caleb is in room 7, with his murdered brother’s widow, and a woman that Caleb abducted a few nights ago.

Outside of this information, Mitch refuses to help the characters in any way.

If given the opportunity, Mitch attempts to grab the hidden pistol from under his pillow, and attack the characters. If he fires a shot, the noise alerts Caleb and Danny. And Danny leaves room 7 to investigate.

Room 2. If Mitch never finds Victoria, this room is empty.

Otherwise, Victoria is lying on the bed. Duct tape binds her hands and feet. She’s sedated, and her

speech is incoherent. The only thing she says that the characters understand is “room seven”.

Room 3. The furniture in this room is tossed. The chair is broken. The mattress lies against the far wall and has several large stains on it.

Smearred on the wall above the headboard are the words “*This is as good as it gets.*” Successful Observation reveals the smeared words are a combination of dried blood and feces.

Searching the night stand drawers reveals a hypodermic needle, and scrap of foil caked with a scorched substance.

Room 4. This room reeks of stale smoke. Ash and cigarette butts overflow a small plastic ashtray. An empty box of 9mm shells is in the top draw of the night stand.

The mattress has several small burn holes in the sheets.

In the bathroom, a chrome flip-top lighter rests on the counter by the sink. The word “**KILLER**” is engraved on the front. The flint and spark wheel are missing.

Room 5. A ripped duffel bag rests on the bed. Inside the duffel are two expired Colorado license plates and a shaggy blonde wig.

In the bathroom, a pair of scissors rests next to the sink, filled with cut brown hair.

Room 6. This room is completely empty. The bed, chair, and nightstand are all missing. There is no shower curtain in the bathroom. Even the mirror from the bathroom vanity is gone.

ROOM 7

Caleb and Danny have Alex and Katherine held hostage in this room.

Surprise! If the characters have not made themselves known, Caleb is standing with his back to the door, screaming at the women, accusing them of helping Victoria escape. Both women show signs of physical abuse.

Danny is sitting in the chair, with a shotgun in his lap.

Caleb and Danny are surprised by the characters when they enter the room.

Caleb reacts with hostility, accusing the characters of being kidnappers, trying to take his wife from him. He is irrational and unwilling to negotiate. He would rather kill himself, and the two women, before yielding to the characters.

If the characters insist on attempting further negotiations, Katherine attacks Caleb; roll initiative.

If Caleb is cornered into a hopeless position, he will take his own life. Danny fights to the death.

Botched Ambush. If the characters have drawn attention to themselves, Caleb is standing behind Alex, with a knife to her throat.

If Danny is still alive, he stands to the side of the door with his arm wrapped around Katherine’s neck. He puts a shotgun in the face of whomever enters the room first.

Caleb tells the characters they’ve come to the wrong place, and need to leave. He refuses to negotiate with kidnappers, and states he will kill everyone in the room if they don’t walk away.

If the characters insist on attempting to negotiate, Caleb follows through on his word and cuts Alex’s throat; roll initiative.

If Caleb is cornered into a hopeless position, he will take his own life. Danny fights to the death.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion to this situation depends on who is left alive. Here are some possible outcomes:

If Katherine and Ashley both survive, they thank the characters and return to the campsite to bury Mark. The characters never see them again.

If Katherine is killed, either Victoria or Alex could offer to take care of Ashley. They take the ATV and Danny’s shotgun. They kill every man they encounter along their journey.

If Caleb manages to kill all the abducted women, Ashley loads their bodies onto the back of the ATV, drives to a secluded location and buries them all with her father.

If there were any character deaths, don’t gloss over it. Character deaths are common in this game. Take an opportunity to roleplay the loss. It helps prevent the players from feeling like their characters are disposable.

CONTINUATION

The regional map included with this situation is annotated with additional locations the characters can explore. Feel free to populate these areas with whatever encounters sound fun to you. Some ideas include:

- A large pack of gray wolves inhabit a den in the molybdenum mine, west of Empire. They are territorial and aggressive hunters, with no fear of people.
- The winding section of HWY 40, leading to the summit of Berthoud Pass is treacherous. Rockslides make sections dangerous to navigate. And the absence of DOT maintenance reveal signs of instability.
- A small squad of cannibalistic Vanguard soldiers occupy the Visitor Shelter at the summit of Berthoud Pass. There are three hostages in the men's restroom. One hostage is missing an arm at the elbow.
- The 10th Mountain Division Hut is an isolated cabin at 12,000' elevation. Explosive traps line the three-mile trail leading up to it. Three farmers, growing medicinal and edible plants, inhabit the hut. They have a trade arrangement with someone, but will not say who.
- Three dead bodies lie near the fireplace inside the Jack Pine Lodge at Winter Park ski resort. They died by asphyxiation, due to an improperly vented chimney flue. They're carrying \$6,000 in Canadian currency, and a letter written in Russian.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Without exception, your players will make unexpected choices that this book can't possibly anticipate. This book isn't designed to have all the answers. It's a basic framework on which to hang your narrative. You will need to improvise to suit the story that develops during your game. Let it happen.

Enjoy the chaos, and don't forget that choices must have consequences to be meaningful.

STAT BLOCKS

Alex, Ashley, Cody, Katherine, and Victoria use the **Survivor** stat block. Ashley is armed with a knife. Cody has a hunting rifle. Victoria carries a pistol. Alex and Katherine are unarmed.

SURVIVOR

STR 3, AGI 3, WIT 3, EMP 3
Health 6

SKILLS: Melee 1, Marksmanship 1, Survival 2, Mobility 2

GEAR: See details above

MITCH

STR 4, AGI 3, WIT 3, EMP 2
Health 7

SKILLS: Melee 3, Force 1, Mobility 1, Stamina 1

GEAR: Pistol

CALEB

STR 3, AGI 3, WIT 3, EMP 4
Health 6

SKILLS: Melee 2, Persuasion 3, Marksmanship 2, Observation 1

TALENT: Bullshit Artist

GEAR: Knife

DANNY

STR 4, AGI 3, WIT 2, EMP 2
Health 8

SKILLS: Melee 3, Force 2, Stamina 2, Mobility 1

TALENT: Hard Hitter

GEAR: Shotgun

MOUNTAIN LION

STR 4, AGI 4
Health 5

SKILLS: Melee 2, Mobility 2, Stamina 2

ATTACKS: Paw: Melee; +1 point of damage
Bite: Melee; +1 point of damage

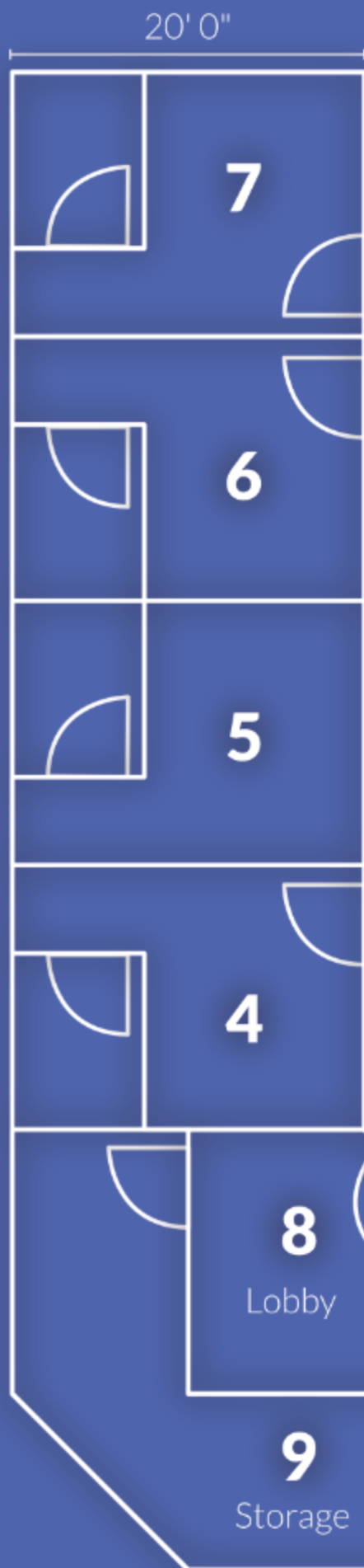


Great Divide Motel

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