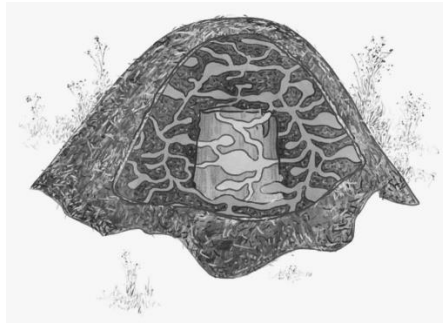


Section 6: Red Dawn



Soundtrack Atmosphere:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROqOai_sMFk&list=PLSUjeNeKJtQp1jhlkaj8fLHvwH6hmy8p7&index=10

Pre-War History:

Among the barren deserts near Yesso lay Douglas Air Force Base, constructed in the Mid-2060s. Beneath the air-force base, however, lay the New Mexico operation of Project Darwin. The aim was simple: to engineer so-called Mutant Undermining Lifeforms that would be deployed into Red China.

These creatures would be inseminated throughout the Chinese mainland and establish breeding colonies undetected. Then, driven by engineered aggression, voracious hunger, and a lack of natural predators, they would devastate China's ecosystem, devouring entire harvests worth of grains, exterminating indigenous species, and slaughtering villages to sate their hunger. By the time the Chinese command realized what was going on, it would be too late - the mutants would have a foothold and done their damage. The beauty of it was by the time the US rolled in for occupation, a genetic kill switch in the creatures would activate, making it safe for our boys.

The mutants would be created through a combination of selective breeding, radiation exposure, and gene splicing. There was some hushed talk among project scientists that they might be getting their hands on more advanced mutagens, though nothing ever came of this. The success of other operations of Project Darwin had suggested euro-social creatures were the best baseline for the project, and so the DAB wing of Project Darwin focused on ants. Bullet Ants, to be specific.



The team made the ants better, faster, stronger. They spent a lot of effort working to fully understand the patterns of ant colonies, their dynamics and their inner workings, and to find if they could be improved upon. As with many high-tech R&D projects, the entire affair was overseen by a ZAX unit, jokingly dubbed "Queen" by the science team. In addition to overseeing the genetic and chemical modifications made to the ant, it worked

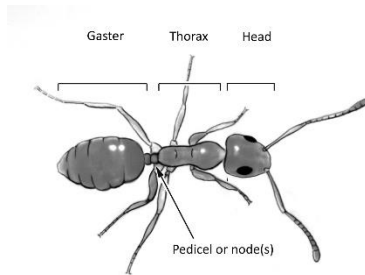
to understand the surprisingly complex and (to humans) inscrutable patterns that governed ant 'society.' As the ZAX delved deeper into the strange patterns and loops that allowed the ants to collectively undertake behaviors far in excess of any one individual's capability, it went a little queer, perhaps relating to the ants than to the research team.

The project was making tremendous progress. Plans were drafted to begin implanting colonies behind enemy lines to shore up the flagging Yangtze Campaign. Breeding pairs were shipped to air force based across the country, ready to be flown over the Pacific at a moment's notice. Before the Pentagon could rubber stamp it, however, disaster struck. A feral colony was discovered in several communities around central New Mexico, and wreaked havoc before the military could get things under control or clean things up.

It wasn't clear exactly how the ants had spread, but the brass deemed them big of a risk of spread to be shipping cross countries. The breeding pairs were terminated (though there were some questions if the job was as thorough as it should have been), and the main breeding colony was slated for destruction.

As soldiers went through the facility evacuating scientists, something went wrong and the ants managed to escape from their containment and act the humans. In the frenzy, the base security system seems to have gone haywire, robots and turrets turning on humans. Fearing a full-blown outbreak, the government decided the only option was to use a tactical nuclear device requisitioned from Los Alamos, claimed to merely be a weapons test to the public. The site was utterly destroyed. Troops scoured the facility for any evidence of survivors, and hoping to retrieve any useful data that may have survived. No trace of the ZAX nor its bomb-resistant black box were ever found. In the end, the government shifted a rejigged Project Darwin to Malpais Army Depot in the hopes of starting again.

Post-War History:



The Bullet Ants of Project Darwin survived. The radiation of the Great War only making them larger. These ants were larger than the normal variety found in the Wasteland, and had hardened exoskeletons that made killing them far more difficult. The best method was to aim for soft spots or cripple their legs before they could reach you. More dangerous to be sure, but still just Wasteland Giant

Ants.

The problem came when they formed a gigantic ant-hill over their original breeding ground, and began to deploy in vast swarms. Entire tribes were subsumed, and they began to stretch out Eastward into the Red Okie Wastes. Eventually, the tribes of eastern New Mexico and the Oklahoma Panhandle had enough. A confederation of three tribes: The Junkers, The Dune-Cutters, and The Six-Stringers. Under the leadership of a young man named Redhawk they banded together to track down and destroy this menace. The Wastelanders in eastern New Mexico called them many things, bughunters, antbusters, pest control, but most simply called them Red Okies. The name stuck.

Eventually, they reached the Anthill and a great battle occurred. A towering, two-story structure with man-sized holes. The place was surrounded with junk that the larger Soldier Ants had carried and placed around. They battled their way inside, reaching the very depths of the tunnels, and destroyed a large, fattened Ant-Queen that was pumping out eggs. They blocked off the "Deep Tunnels" by using explosives, and declared the threat dealt with.

The problem was that during their myriad adventures and battles, the land to the East had been ravaged by vast cyclones and storms. It would take many seasons for them to clear, and who knows what would be left in the aftermath. Instead of waiting to return, under the declaration of Redhawk, they settled at the Anthill. It was a highly defensible position with a trickle of clean water in the lower tunnels, and the West was ripe with opportunity. So, Red Dawn came to be.

The Red Okies



There are three tribes that comprise the Red Okies:

Dune-Cutters: Led by Redhawk himself, they are the only of the three tribes to carry firearms (of military standard) and are skilled marksmen. They dress in desert ponchos with hoods over their tribalized combat armor and often wear thick goggles - a legacy of persisting through the sandstorms of the Red Okie Wastes.

Junkers: Led by Junkmaster, who wears an Old-World diving helmet on his head. They are DIY masters by nature and are the prospectors of the Red Okies. They wear Metal Armor adorned in junk parts and decorated with Old World trash like brochures, magazine clippings or advertisements. They wield weapons such as Chainsaws and Rippers. Junkmaster himself carries a Thermic Lance.

Six-Stringers: Led by Big Buddy, who carries a unique weapon venerated by his tribe: The Six-Stringer itself. A sword concealed within an Old-World electric guitar. The Six-Stringers are the most poorly armed of the three tribes, wearing Heavy Leather Armor and carrying Fire Axes, though they compensate for this through their speed and fearlessness. They are the primary chem cooks for the Red Okies.

It has been five years since Red Dawn formed, and now a growing junktown surrounds the large Anthill, which has now been additionally fortified as a place of retreat in the case of an attack. Inside the Anthill are numerous living quarters, the water spring and the home of Redhawk. There are tunnels that lead deeper below protected by mechanical gates, where Red Okies go on "Bug Hunts" to clear out forming nests that occur occasionally and to harvest their large eggs for food.

The Junkers established a basic traffic light system that's wired through the mid-tunnels alerting to how many in a line of ants are coming, as a heavy swarm is enough to catch you like an insectoid riptide. Green is clear, Yellow is light, Red is "Get the fuck out of the way".

Recently Red Dawn has come to dominate the chem trade in Arizona and New Mexico, acquiring space rocks from a tribe to the far southeast at Roswell, the Six-Stringers produce what's known as "Stardust" a semi-psychedelic and highly addictive chem crushed with thin powder from the space rocks (meteorites). They have totally undercut the business of Scorpion's Bite, which has caused them to have a handful of scrapes. When visited by a Daughter of Hecate, they didn't buy what she was selling and strung her and her Sons up for dead.



There are four main places of interest at Red Dawn:

Tradersville: The market where the Red Okies deal with outsiders and prepare their own caravans, mostly ran by the Junkers who deal in their Old-World crap. Their primary trading partner used to be Underpass, but now they mostly deal with pissant tribes of New Mexico who gawk at Old World junk. As a result, trade is severely drying up.

The Red Zone: A makeshift arena where the Red Okies battle out their differences. There's Betters (Fights with betting stakes), Grudgers, (Violent, non-lethal) and Killers (Violent, Lethal). The Red Zone is ran by the Dune-Cutters.

The Watering Hole: A scumpit where booze, Chems, gambling games, and prostitution can be found. Currency doesn't exist here so everything is bartered through loot and goods. In the backrooms are the chemlabs to produce Stardust amongst other products. Ran by the Six-Stringers.

The Anthill: The large, termite-mound-like two-story anthill that serves as the town center. Acts as the home of Redhawk and a place of retreat in the case of massive attack, as they've received a few times from Scorpion's Bite or wandering packs of Deathclaws.

Important Characters of Red Dawn:



Redhawk: A tall, lanky man with bright red hair. He can be found inside his quarters in the Anthill reciting his (terrible) poetry to a Legion Explorer who feigns interest. He has a certain upbeat charisma about him and is typically pleasant to talk to when he isn't trying to sell you on his wordsmithing. He is incredibly concerned about the state of the Tribes, and thinks they are splitting apart. The Red Zone is full of more grudge-matches than ever, and each of the tribes are restless. To add to that, their water source is drying up with no sign of stopping. The Legion Explorer he is speaking with, Caeso, has proposed to him a plan of action: conquer the Scorpion's Bite and bring a mass of slaves and wealth to Caesar, and join his Legion to bring even greater unity. To Redhawk, the unifying of the tribes was the grandest moment of his life so far, so the idea holds great appeal. A warrior-poet like himself seeking unity amongst the tribes? He'd like to speak with him.

Caeso: The most accomplished Legion Explorer by a large margin, he was one of the scouts who served directly under Caesar when he was still a Blackfoot. Being sent to the "Far East" of New Mexico, he ordered his fellow explorers to remain in western New Mexico as he followed the leads on these "Red Okies", apparently a confederation of warrior tribes. Knowing that Caesar's reach does not yet extend this far, he sees the opportunity to bring the tribes to Caesar.

Junkmaster: A short, broad shouldered man with a shaved head and wearing an Old-World diving helmet on his head. His metal armor covered in Nuka-Cola memorabilia (He's an addict). He is ill-tempered and short of fuse, frustrated because of the lack of prospecting left in the barren deserts of New Mexico and the lessening of trade - he and his people are restless, and seek rustier pastures. He takes his anger out on repeat Grudgers in the Red Zone, where has become quite adept.

Big Buddy: Average height with shoulder length blond hair, often wearing sunglasses to help him deal with come downs or hide his extremely bloodshot eyes. He gets high on his own supply of Stardust and often Med-X. He's content with the current business of Red Dawn - but that in itself has attracted ire from the restless Junkers and Dune-Cutters.

Quests in Red Dawn:



The Dawn of the Red Okies:

Redhawk believes the only way forward to keep the Red Okies together is to listen to Caeso and bring them all West, to Arizona. It's where their best chem business lies, it has more prospecting opportunity for the Junkers and there's plenty of opportunity for nomadic warfare for the Dune Cutters. But the latchkey to this move is beating out the Scorpion's Bite and enslaving them as tribute to Caesar. He could try an all-out assault, but they would lose a lot of men and if the Scorpion's Bite

employ the Glyphers (of which he believes they're likely to) - then it's a problem. This applies doubly so if the party are attempting to convince him to defeat Hecate and the Brotherhood Exiles at Nexus.

To even the odds, Redhawk will suggest trying to turn the Glyphers. He knows their situation is peaceful but ultimately still tense - from what they know anyway. They know the Glyphers have been secretly buying Stardust from Red Okie traders, and that's enough to leverage. The tradeoff is that they'll leave the Glyphers alone to have the ruins of ABQ all to themselves.

Ants In Their Pants: Another concern of Redhawk is the growing presence of monstrous Bullet Ants beneath the Anthill. The Bughunters have been telling stories of bigger Ants in bigger numbers. Not only would a new swarm stop their war efforts and their exodus in their tracks, it would break the reason for the tribe's unity in the first place. Redhawk unfortunately thinks there might be a new queen down below, but this must be kept a low-key operation, otherwise it risks breaking morale if their coming together was a fraud. He will pay the party along with three of his most trusted and best men (one from each tribe) to accompany the party. As the party delves deeper into the tunnels, they will meet numerous swarms, including a particularly stressful situation in which the "traffic lights" at the main tunnel junction all turn red at once:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oHWu6GhAro>)

Delving deep, they will find the previously blocked off tunnels have been burrowed open, leading to the original ZAX Bunker where the simplistic "Queen" Computer can be destroyed (defended by two Sentry Bots). It's data regarding Project Darwin can be downloaded to holotape.

