RESTLESS

A CARD-BASED, FREEFORM HORROR RPG OF PURSUIT THROUGH THE RUINED WORLD

J. Walton

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This game was created by J. Walton based on a discussion with Marshall Miller and Jason Morningstar, as well as the games *Mystwood* by Gray Pawn and *The Sundered Land* by D. Vincent Baker. Its was sparked by the Golden Cobra game design contest and made during the 72-hour Trad Games Jam. It is indebted to the muses Emily Care Boss, Jackson Tegu, and John Harper.

The themes and content are inspired by the novels *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, *The Passage* and *The Twelve* by Justin Cronin, the *Resident Evil* series of films by Paul W.S. Anderson and starring Milla Jovovich, and the first few volumes of the comic series *The Walking Dead* by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore, and Charlie Adlard. There are surely others as well.

Love and thanks to Hannah Joseph for editing and feedback, as well as to all the early playtesters.

HOW TO PLAY

Read aloud & follow these instructions at the beginning of the game, repeating them if new players join.

Restless is a game for 3-8 players about a group of survivors being hunted through the abandoned ruins of the world by a monstrous, unyielding horde. The game is intentionally vague about what these monsters are like: they can be zombies, shadow creatures, robots, or whatever else you decide. Sometimes the nature of the Restless can even shift during play.

A single session of *Restless* can range from 1 hour to 4+ hours, depending on how long you decide to play. A session is composed of a number of different situations called "Verses," which are the cards with white text blocks on the front. To begin play, shuffle the Verse cards together, face down, and then draw one from the top of the deck.

The first instruction on every Verse card is to consult the yellow "Refrain" card, which is repeated between Verses. The Refrain card tells you how to choose and describe the survivors and also about the role of "non-survivor" players. The survivors and non-survivors will likely change between verses, and the Refrain is also when players can drop in and out of the game.

(Continued on the reverse side...)

(Continued from the reverse side...)

Each Verse will take roughly 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how quickly you play. At the end of each Verse, the players will be asked if you want to play another Verse. If not, some or all of you are welcome to stop.

Each of the Verse cards, along with the Refrain card, is meant to be read aloud one paragraph at a time. You can either have the same person read an entire card, or switch readers between paragraphs, but you should definitely switch readers between cards.

It is very important to stop at the end of each paragraph and follow the instructions in that paragraph before you proceed to the next part of the card. There are sometimes surprises and unexpected developments that are introduced in later paragraphs of a Verse card, and these can be spoiled or even cause minor problems if they are revealed beforehand. Additionally, it can be difficult to keep track of everything that a card asks you to do, so it's better to proceed one step at a time.

If you occasionally make a mistake and read more that one paragraph at a time, that's okay. Just back up, read the next paragraph you need to do again, and proceed from there. But try to remember to proceed slowly and deliberately, one paragraph at a time. (Note that the numbered choices on "The Citadel" Verse card are considered part of the preceeding paragraph.)

If you are ready to begin, draw your first Verse card.

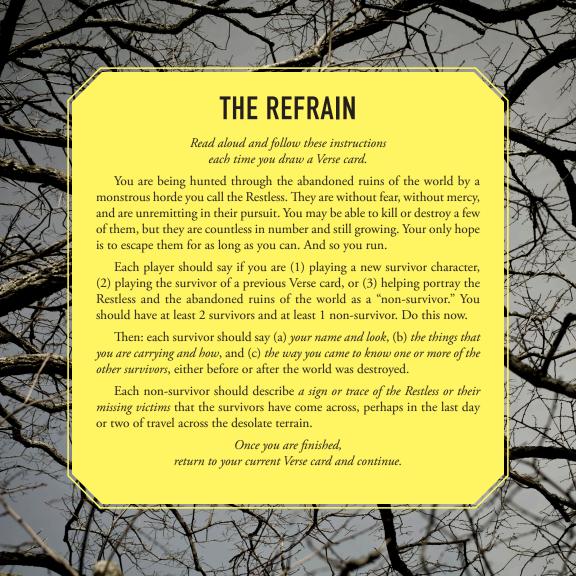
CREATING YOUR OWN VERSES

After playing *Restless* a few times, you may be inspired to create your own Verse cards to shuffle into the deck or even to create your own custom deck. Here are some things you may want to keep in mind:

- 1. Always start with the Refrain, or some other means of reminding the players what the game is about and assigning characters and roles.
- 2. The designer's job is primarily to ask interesting and loaded questions of the survivors & non-survivors, leaving the answers open-ended.
- 3. Be clear about the order of operations, using paragraph breaks and other techniques: who's supposed to say or do something and when?
- 4. Make sure that your Verses work for both the minimum number of players (2 survivors and 1 non-survivor) and the maximum (8 players with a mixture of roles).
- 5. Make sure that both the survivors and non-survivors always have interesting things to say and do.
- 6. Don't say or require specific things about the nature of the Restless, since that can vary between sessions and groups.
- Always end a Verse with the Restless eliminating one or more of the survivors, since this encourages the rotation of players through roles and makes every Verse dangerous and significant.

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First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: your group has run out of one or more critical resources: gasoline, cigarettes, food, water, baby formula, bullets, toilet paper, batteries, tampons, prescription drugs, medical supplies, or something else. Go around and have each player, say something simple and basic that you no longer have.

Just over the ridge, in the fading hours of twilight, you see an abandoned gas station and mini-mart. The non-survivor players describe what it looks like and list a few signs that it has been previously disturbed.

The survivors decide how you want to approach this: are you all going to check it out together? Will some of you stay behind? Do this quickly.

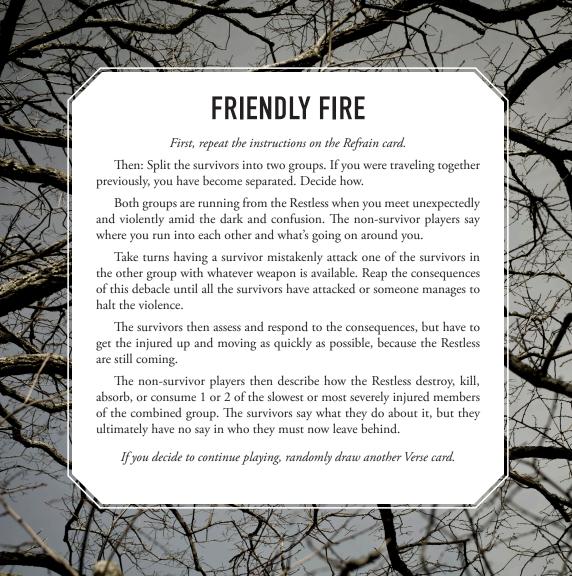
Play out your reconnaissance of the station. The non-survivor players decide which of the things you need are there and reveal the unexpected: a tire iron, flashlight, keg of kerosene, headless corpse, etc.

Then, if you left survivors outside, they spot the Restless coming. Do they shout and risk drawing attention? Do they quietly flee? Play this out.

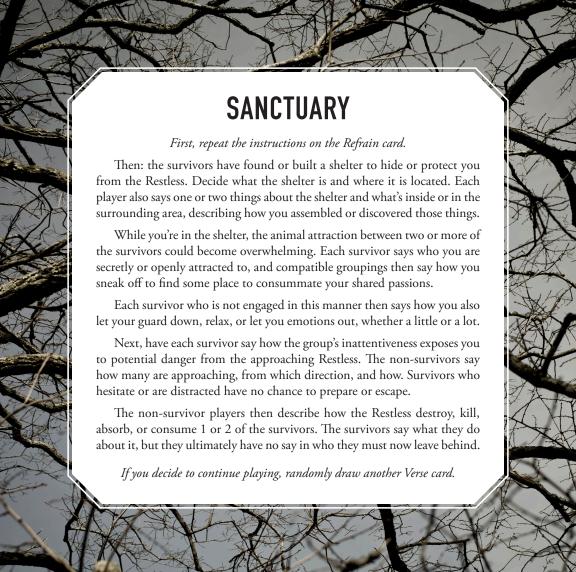
The non-survivor players then describe how the Restless destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 or 2 of the survivors. The survivors say what they do about it, but they ultimately have no say in who they must now leave behind.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.

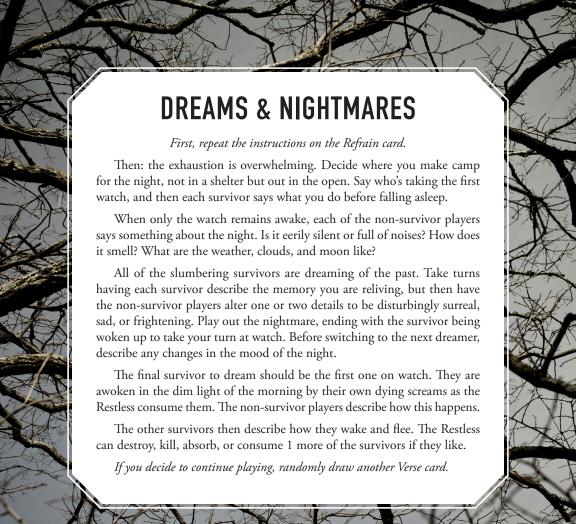




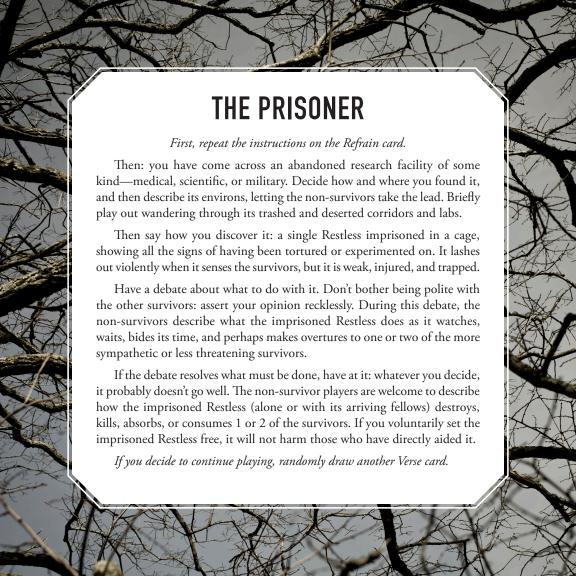




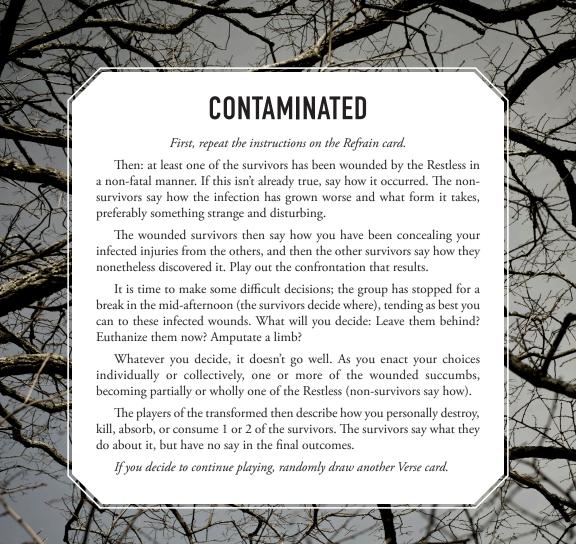




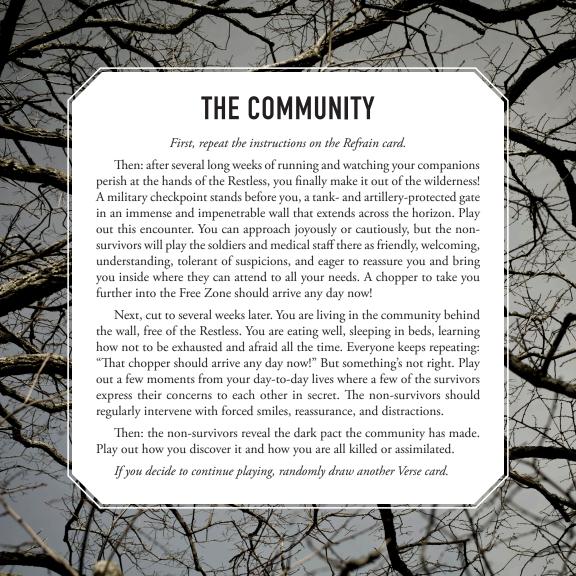
















First, repeat the instructions on the Refrain card.

Then: fate or misfortune has brought the survivors to the citadel of the Restless. The non-survivors say where this is and what it looks like, using some or all of these words as cues: within, frozen, corrupt, trapped, growing, forgotten, electric, human.

Next, the survivors choose one of these options:

- 1. you are imprisoned here and must escape (describe your cages);
- 2. you are desperately assaulting the citadel (describe your plan, but only choose this option if this is at least the third Verse card of the game).

Start heading in or heading out. Play out a few parts of this journey, with the non-survivors choosing from this list and describing (no repeats):

- A. a chamber where the Restless are born, made, or spawned;
- B. a long, dim hallway between banks of humming spheres;
- C. a viewing chamber from which you gaze upon the world's desolation.

In each of these places, the non-survivors can choose to have the Restless destroy, kill, absorb, or consume 1 of the survivors. If you survive all three, you escape or arrive at the heart of the citadel. End on this cliffhanger.

If you decide to continue playing, randomly draw another Verse card.

