Character Stories

Compassion - The Villain

Suffering - The Deserter

Rage - The Beast

Empathy - The Watcher

Curiosity - The Wanderer

Hatred - The Protector

Despair - The Hunter

Complacency - The Ghost

Regret - The Father

### The Protector

I used to have a family like you. I remember them well, my wife, Mary, and my daughter, Anna. We lived in a safe place, one of the last safe places in the world. We had fields of crops, running water, and miles of woodland. We did our best to get along, some of us had been born there, others were wanderers we took in from the wastes. There were those of us, myself included, who felt that letting outsiders in was dangerous. There were terrible stories that made their way to us. Stories of barbarism, murder, men killing each other over water. We worried that our haven would be found. With every parched raider passing, every bleached wastelander that stumbled by, my fear grew. Sometimes I would lay awake nights on end, starting at every crack, rustle, and hoot. You could see division growing among us, some wouldnt look at me- they knew my mind, and in the eyes of the others I could see my own thoughts reflected back at me. One day a mad man found his way to us, at first he seemed like another sorry soul, but as soon as night fell he took one of our women. He was silent, we only found her body in the morning. The moment her blank stare found mine I knew what had to be done. I scoured the village for him, the man beast who took us for fools, and when I found him I crushed his bones beneath my feet. As the echoes of his screams died out I realised what had been done. We were split, forever divided. My friends drove the other outsiders into the forest, never to be seen again. Many of us fought one another, others fled. I searched for my family, to protect them, to say sorry. But I knew they had left, whether because of me or to escape the insanity I provoked I will never know. Since then I have been searching for them. I know it is futile. Too many years have passed, years that have turned that safe haven into sand and shelter to ruins. Still I am driven on, by my love and by my hate. I know I will find them, in this life, or in the next.

### The Ghost

Things werent always this way. I recall I time before the winds were dry and laden with ash, a time when we would welcome the sight of another, rather then recoil at the fear of danger. Sometimes its hard to say if it was all a dream, a misrememberance of my childhood. I prefer to think we are in a dream now, because even then we would one day wake up, even if now we have to live in this nightmare. I dont know if I had a family, I must have done, though they are long dead by now I assume. Wandering is all I know, going from place to place, there is so much that has been left undone in this world. I find newspapers, books, diaries, strange devices that sputter with light and sound but go dark before long, never to wake. Happily I find myself without sadness in these dying days. I have no remorse or incomplete doings, none to to weep for, and nothing to rejoice. My only lament is my lack of feeling, though Im sure you envy my stagnant mind. What little memories I have are no more real to me than scribblings in a book. There are those who call my a ghost, because that is who I am, a ghost in this purgatory, drifting lifelessly through an equally lifeless plane. I will follow you though, though like a leaf on a breeze I do not know why. I assure you I do not fear death, for I cannot truly call my existence life.

### The Beast

Eternally I rage on, through red dust and dark fire. Enemies I have none, yet mercilessly I cut down those before me. You however, you I will spare. There is a dark shadow I see on your soul, a side you cannot see, that blinds you in your most passionate moments. A beast that howls and screams, taunting you to let it free. It is in all of us, a monster lurking beneath your civil self. Only I have controlled it. You see it is not a demon that takes over us, it is not some foreign horror that overpowers, or a contagion that clouds your thoughts. The beast is a reflection of you, it is the inversion of your conscious mind. It does the bidding of your true emotions, if youll let it. There is no greater power in this world than the unchained beast. The weight that burdens others in these pallid years is a pedestal that raises me up above others. Come! Revel in your freedom, shirk the shackles of civilisation and sate your need for blood. Do not care for the other, do not pity them for they would do the same to you. You will free them of their duties on this earth. Perhaps they will go to the halls of their heroes, or perhaps only blackness awaits. It is not for us to know, but we will find out. Go, allow the wolf within you to burst forth, break the weak, conquer the strong, and if you should fall you shall know that it was in glorious rage that your fire was snuffed, do not allow it instead to whimper and fail in the darkening of the night.

### The Villain

Atop the highest pinnacle of an ancient rig a man sat upon his throne. He made sure he was above all others, able to see for miles and miles around. Many worked for him, some dug at the ground beneath their feet, others were there for his pleasure. Every month, in an attempt to show his humanity, he would gather his people, and select one to bestow a great gift upon. He would take them out of the settlement in his great vehicle, far beyond the horizon, to a place no-one saw or knew about. The people of the settlement lived for this great gift, they would praise his name in the hopes that one day they too would be able to go to the paradise. One day a mother and her child came before the warlord. With croaking voices they begged him to leave. And so he laid his great hand upon them, and spoke the words they most desired to hear. The others watched on longingly, some wept, whilst others cursed in frustration. The mother and her child descended with him. Deep through the the great machine they went, down to the salty floor below. He beckoned for them to enter the vehicle, and begin their journey to salvation. It was far, to go beyond the bounds that confined them. The self-proclaimed king spoke not a word, and gave them not a glance. He allowed them supplies to sate their moaning bellies and quench their dry throats. Days passed, the warlord driving without sleep, before they finally stopped. Before them was a great plain. Their breath was stolen from them as they gazed upon miles and miles of grassland. So flat it was that it would drive the mind to madness if one were to gaze at it long enough. The mother started to weep, for she knew that despite the rivers that ran through the land, despite the green fields that beckoned to her, she knew it was as hostile to life as any desert. She knew that this would be the end. She turned to the driver, imploring him to return them home. But he refused, in his mind this was a paradise, how could anyone refuse this great green place. You cannot go back he said. For if they were to return the magic would be shattered for his people. They would be crushed by the reality of the world. Suddenly the woman spun round, digging her fingers deep into his forearms, running them down his flesh in long red streaks. He screamed out in pain and pushed her to the ground. Blood spilling onto the blinding white floor, immediately absorbed by the grateful earth. He ran back to his car, started the engine, and drove away as he tried to tend to his wounds. Glancing up, he saw her in the mirror, still on the floor, a mask of anger worn upon her face. As they grew smaller he knew his reign had ended. He could not give hope to his people, not now that the veil had been lifted from his eyes. And so exiled himself into the desert. His compassion towards his people blinded him to the reality of his actions. To this day he carries those scars, a reminder that we are all equal in the dust.