



EXCLUSION // ZONE

Kickstarter One-Shot

The Rot In The Wilds

By F. M . Donovan

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Rot In the Wilds

An Exclusion//Zone One-Shot

01 // INTRODUCTION



The dead outnumber the living, and they don't like being counted.

The Zone isn't one place. It's many. Splintered pockets of collapse. Ghost cities. Places eaten hollow by war, science, or worse. We call them *Clusters*—each one stitched together by old infrastructure, glitching comms towers, and bleeding-edge decay.

You're heading into the **Holy Name Cemetery Subcluster**, just off what used to be Jersey City. Once a quiet sprawl of headstones and mausoleums, it's now a necrotic bloom of bad air and stranger things. For the last three weeks, aerial scans have picked up anomalous heat signatures—movements that don't align with wind, wildlife, or seismic data. Something is down there.

THE STITCHER COVEN

Local homesteaders used to whisper about the **Stitcher Coven**, a cult obsessed with death—not the ritual or peace of it, but its *raw anatomy*. They're said to worship entropy, claim that ruin is the final evolution of matter, and see the Zone's rot as divine. Those locals have disappeared.

Worse still, they're reported to **control rogue SWARM nanomachines**—microscopic builders long since corrupted by broken command chains. These microscopic robots ride air currents or nest in patches of **Scabbing**—a brittle, wet lattice of fungal growth and blood-colored algae, crawling with machine logic. To the Stitchers, this red-and-brown smear is sacred.

Your job? **Enter the Cluster. Investigate the disturbance.**

2.1 // TRAIT GENERATION

In this Quickstart, roll 1d6 for each of the four Traits:
Wit, Intelligence, Compulsion, Muscle

That number becomes your score.

These are static for this version, but in the full game, you'll build your Operator using a

detailed Trait Drift Assessment and Personal Narrative system that reflects *how the Zone has already changed you.*

2.2 // SIGNATURE TRAITS & SKILLS (NOT IN THIS QUICKSTART)

Signature Traits—unique abilities tied to your Role—are excluded here for simplicity, but they appear in full rules and are critical for role-specific rolls, special reactions, and narrative triggers.

This Quickstart also omits the Skill System, which provides layered proficiency and unlocks additional risk/reward opportunities based on training, gear familiarity, and hard-earned instinct.

2.3 // HEALTH AND DAMAGE

Operators are not bulletproof.

Your HP = Muscle + 6

- Most standard weapons or dangers deal 1d6 damage.
- Armor (if worn) may reduce damage by 1 or grant Advantage on DT checks to resist injury.

Damage reduces HP directly. When you hit 0 HP, you don't die right away...

2.8 // DEATH

"It's not just the dying. It's what it leaves behind.

The silence. The signal loss. The empty channel."

When an Operator hits **0 HP**, they enter the **Dying state** — a fragile countdown stretched across **three turns**. This isn't instant death; it's the last flicker before the signal goes dark.

At the **start of each turn**, before any other character (player or NPC) takes an action, the Dying Operator must immediately make a **Dying-State Check**.

Every failed check accelerates the collapse.

There is still time.

Barely.

DYING STATUS:

Turn	Action	Outcome
1	No action	Death Check #1 is queued
2	Death Check #1	DT 10
3	Death Check #2	DT 12
4	Death Check #3	DT 14 → If failed, Operator dies

DEATH CHECK FORMULA:

Roll 1d10 + Compulsion vs DT
Each failed check increases the DT by +2.

- If stabilized before the third check, the Operator gains Bleeding instead of dying.
- If the Operator takes *any damage* during this period—from *any source*—they

die instantly.

2.9 // STABILIZATION & PATCHING

Stabilizing a Dying Operator halts the countdown, but doesn't remove the threat.

In this Quickstart, stabilization is a simplified form of the full Patch Skill system:

- Roll 1d10 + Intelligence vs DT 10
- On a success, the Operator stabilizes. They don't regain HP and instead gain Bleeding (a persistent condition).
- Failure has no effect unless the Operator is already on their final check.

To fully stop Bleeding, further medical treatment is needed. A second successful Patch roll or access to specialized equipment may be required.

In the full rules, skills like Patch are tied to background, training, and gear—letting Operators improvise medicine from whatever scrap the Zone hasn't already claimed.

03 // Threats and Encounters

"Rotgears don't shamble because they're clumsy. They're listening to something else."

d10	Encounter
1	Scabbing Bloom: A fresh patch of red-brown fungal scabbing pulses along a mausoleum wall. Any contact requires a DT 7 Wit save or triggers a hallucinatory vision from the SWARM memory bleed. Gain +1 Compulsion for 1 hour.
2	Cult Graffiti: Strange hex-coded spirals and reversed scripture have been daubed onto tombstones with black alginate. Investigating and succeeding an Intelligence DT 6 reveals a nearby safehouse entrance.
3	Stitcher Acolyte (Lone): A young cultist in a ragged brown cloak is harvesting tissue from a dead raccoon. They flee unless confronted directly. If captured, they speak in glitched nursery rhymes.
4	Swarm Drift: Nanite fog settles over the path. Roll a d4 — on a 1, someone inhales active agents. DT 8 Muscle or start bleeding from the gums. Gain a permanent black vein somewhere.
5	Shutter Drone: A cracked surveillance drone hovers silently. If ignored, it trails the team. If attacked, it flashes a retinal burn (DT 7 Wit) and calls reinforcements (see 10).
6	Empty Coffins: An open mausoleum has its coffins torn apart from the inside. Strands of Scabbing connect each casket like veins. Compulsion DT 6 or lose composure momentarily.

7	Echoes of Prayer: Whispering voices echo from empty graves. Sounds like chanting, but reversed. Intelligence DT 7 reveals a repeating phrase: " <i>The flesh will follow the signal.</i> "
8	Scrap Proxy Husk: A rusted and gutted humanoid automaton lies slumped against a statue of Mary. A hidden cavity holds a Stitcher idol made of wire, teeth, and meat.
9	Scavenger Team: Another group of Operators (3) stumbles into the area. One has a shivering cough. They're friendly, but terrified. They're trying to find their missing pilot—last seen chasing a signal.
10	Stitcher Conductor: A high-level cultist wearing a chitin-and-wire mask conducts an invisible symphony. With each gesture, nearby Scabbing twitches. If combat begins, they summon a swarmburst (DT 9 Muscle or suffer corrosive damage).

//ROTEAR

Class: Gamma - Artifical

Origin: Stitcher Reanimation Protocol (Confirmed)

Designation Tags: *Biomech, Undead, Glitch*

HP: 7

Traits:

- **WIT** 0
- **INT** 0
- **CMP** 3

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- **MUS 0**

Skills:

- **Bash** (Melee attacks, 2d6 total)
 - **Resist** (Takes half damage from fire/impact)
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Abilities

- **Shock Protocols:** Whenever a Rotgear is struck, the attacker takes **1 Shock damage**. This bypasses armor.
 - **Chainlink Arms:** Once per turn, may **Pull** an Operator from 1 Zone (about 20 feet) away into melee range. Treated as a forced movement.
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Behavior

- Patrols assigned territory for intruders.
- Becomes erratic or *berserks* when cornered, dealing an additional +1d6 if its HP drops below 4.

Combat Advice: Operators should **avoid direct engagement**. Observe, record, and escape. Letting a Rotgear touch you means feeding it.

// STITCHER COVEN CULTIST

"You thought they were praying. They were **assembling**."

HP: 9

Traits:

- **WIT** 4
- **INT** 3
- **CMP** 2
- **MUS** 3

Skills:

- **Command SWARM** (3d6 Ranged SWARM blast)
 - **Stitch** (Ritual reanimation, 1 corpse required)
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WEAPONS

- **SWARM Staff (Ranged) – 3d6 damage**
 - Weapon channels airborne nanites into a focused projectile
 - Cooldown: 1 turn after use
 - **Staff (Melee) – 1d6 blunt trauma**
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BEHAVIOR

- Operates in **twos or threes**.
- Primary objective: **harvest bodies** to create new Rotgears.
- Will break off combat to retrieve a fallen Operator.

Cultists avoid unnecessary conflict unless they detect vulnerability or signs of data worth claiming.

// COMPLICATIONS

Once players succeed at gathering sufficient data or reaching the mission midpoint, roll **1d4** on the Interface to determine what happens next.

Roll	Complication
1 - AMBUSH	1d3 Rotgears encircle the party. They're silent until one strikes.
2 - MYSTERIOUS WOUND	One Operator suddenly gains Bleeding —no clear source. SWARM residue suggests tampering.
3 - SIREN'S CALL	One Operator is Pulled by a Rotgear and drawn into a solo engagement. No time to plan.
4 - WAKE THE DEAD	The Stitcher Coven arrives. If a corpse exists, they reanimate it immediately into a fresh Rotgear.

Roll complications **once per session** or **when players overextend**, trigger noise, or fail a stealth roll.

04 // POINTS OF INTEREST

The Holy Name Cemetery Subcluster isn't a map so much as a scatter of dead ground and bad air. The Stitchers move through it like they own it. Maybe they do. Use these locations as anchors, or as the only safe-ish spots between worse ones.

1 — Gatehouse Checkpoint

What's left of the entry arch is half-buried under vines, half-crowned with broken antenna arrays still twitching for a signal. The bricks bleed rust in the rain. Nanite haze makes your teeth taste like copper. Something in the guardhouse keeps sending faint, half-formed distress bursts. Could be a trap.

2 — Scabbing Mound

Looks like a termite hill someone spray-painted with blood and left to fester. Every step crunches wet under your boots. The air above shimmers with rogue SWARM motes—too small to see until they're already in you. Disturb it, and the Rotgears will know exactly where you are.

3 — Mausoleum Row

Stone coffins turned into Stitcher workbenches. Doors wrenched off, dust washed away by algae-red symbols curling across the walls. Inside one, the floor gives way to a narrow shaft—old drainage tunnels converted into a prep space for rituals. Smells like formaldehyde and hot metal.

4 — Collapsed Catacombs

A sinkhole yawns where the ground used to be solid. Below: old brick, standing water, and a noise like someone breathing through a broken radio. SWARM nests cling to the ceiling like wet wasp hives, dripping into the flood. The water's only ankle-deep. For now.

5 — Central Monument

An angel statue, corroded into something faceless, arms stretched in a welcome you don't want. Stitcher banners hang from scaffolding, the fabric patterns shifting subtly when you

look at them too long. If the Coven is working a ritual, it's here—and they won't let you walk away.

4.0 // RESOLUTION

When you attempt an action that requires effort, roll **1d10 + the relevant Trait** against a Difficulty Threshold (DT).

- Use **Intelligence** for mental tasks like investigating, decoding, or analyzing.
- Use **Wit** for perception, awareness, and quick thinking.
- Use **Muscle** for physical tasks like moving, lifting, or fighting.
- Use **Compulsion** for resisting mental pressure, fear, or controlling impulses.

Example:

To investigate strange cult graffiti, roll **1d10 + Intelligence** vs DT 6.

To force open a stuck door, roll **1d10 + Muscle** vs DT 8.

4.1 // COMBAT OVERVIEW

Combat in the Zone is high-stakes and deadly. Every round, Operators have limited options and must think fast.

Each round, an Operator may take:

- **1 Move:** Change position or enter/exit Zones.
- **1 Action:** Attack, investigate, use gear, or interact.
- **1 Quick Action:** Minor tasks like drawing a weapon, stabilizing a teammate, or switching ammo.

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- **1 Reaction (optional):** Triggered by specific events like dodging or countering.

Initiative is determined by **Wit + 1d10**, setting the order of turns.

Combat encounters may involve terrain effects, accumulating stress, ammo management, and consequences for risky behavior.

Damage Types: Ballistic, Burn, Shock, Bleed, Data, and Stress—all have distinct effects and require different tactics.

Cover and Movement can save your life—sometimes running is the smartest choice.