**Technology**  (GW pp 226-228)

**Gamma World** is a game set after the fall of civilization. Humanity once reached heights of social and technological achievement so great that they are now the stuff of myth and legend. It was a Golden Age that went inexplicably wrong. Gamma World is a product of technology gone awry. It is the bastard child of a confluence of technological streams that came to a head before humanity had the wisdom to recognize their ultimate implications.

While Gamma World uses our fears of the end of the world for good dramatic purpose, it does so in an unusual way. Rather than being a cautionary tale of human hubris or stupidity, the setting affords every player a unique opportunity to rebuild the world as you see fit. In this game, the collapse of civilization is already behind you. What lies ahead is an unwritten future in which almost anything could happen.

If modern civilization were to fall, it couldn’t be rebuilt easily, let alone in anything like its original form. For example, the easy-to-extract ores were all extracted generations ago, and while cities could be mined for their raw materials (metals and such), it would be difficult without the proper tools, which themselves require massive quantities of ores in the first place. The same principles hold true for petrochemicals and many other important natural resources.

The pre-Final Wars humanity was almost impossibly talented in every field of technological endeavor. At the high end of its accomplishments were devices that would seem magical to anyone who did not understand the science behind them, and even many who did. The technological devices in use were paradigmatic examples of science applied to specific uses. In Gamma World, technological devices are rarely just pieces of equipment. Many of them have histories, stories to tell and roles to play. Technology misused resulted in the downfall of humanity. Now, the stage is set for the rebirth of mankind. Technology will undoubtedly play a part in this scenario as well.

The Final Wars were incredibly devastating. Much of the vast edifice of human achievement toppled so thoroughly that no one has yet found a way to reverse its effects. The devices that survived each did so for a reason. Because many such devices were hidden away or protected from the vicissitudes of the last several generations, these devices are still extant. They can be found, understood, and used. Not surprisingly, the devices that survived are not a representative selection of what the ancient world was capable of. Indeed, the devices that were secreted in vaults or safe areas necessarily provide a skewed vision of the past, with consequences for the present and the future.

The devices of the past are unquestionably mysterious to most inhabitants of Gamma World – including your characters. They do not understand the principles on which most of these devices were built and likely also do not even understand the uses to which they were put. Finding an ancient technological item brings you face to face with an alien world of which you have no experience and even less comprehension. For example, a microwave gun might as well be Excalibur; its possession by a tribal chieftain might well be every bit as portentous as Arthur’s possession of that famous sword.

The destruction of the Final Wars ushered in a new mythic age. The world of the past is dead and a new world is dawning, one simultaneously freed from the shackles of history and bound by them. In this new world, there is plenty of room for mystery and rediscovery.

Tech Levels

The concept of Tech Levels is not used in 6th edition Gamma World. It was used in the 1st and 2nd editions. However, I will be using it in this campaign – but only for purposes of metaknowledge, to allow for GM and players to ascertain the rough, relative level of *prevailing* technology that a given village, town, facility, or region may possess. There are sometimes exceptions and crossover to these tech levels. For example, many times a lower tech level settlement may still have a small smattering of high tech items here or there. Or, a higher tech level settlement may still widely utilize lower tech for certain functions (such as windmills, cooking fires, and river mills). Clearly there is a wide range of technologies that developed within any of these approximate time periods. But that isn’t the point. This is only a comparative tool to provide perspective.

Tech Level Approximate Period (Earth History)

1 Ancient times thru 1500 (archaic and medieval)

2 1500 (gunpowder) thru 1800 (renaissance and pre-industrial)

3 1800 thru 1950 (pre-computer)

4 1950 thru 2000 (modern)

5 2000 thru 2050 (post-modern)

6 2050 thru 2115 (Final Wars)

Generally speaking…

A tech level 1 settlement would be like a typical ancient or medieval settlement. There are many of these. A good rule of thumb would be to figure that at least 50% of the settlements players may encounter would fall into this tech level.

A tech level 2 settlement would be a renaissance-era place with muskets and simple plumbing. Almost as common as tech level 1 settlements, figure roughly 40% of the settlements encountered would fall into this tech level.

A tech level 3 settlement would have simple machinery, steam or electrical power, possibly internal combustion vehicles, etc. About 10% of the places you may encounter would fall into this tech level. Large “bartertowns” would fall into this category.

A tech level 4 settlement (rare) would have hardtech and basic soultech, medical knowledge, basic flying vehicles, powered systems, and so forth. These types of locales are indeed rare, but they do exist and some are known. Figure a dozen or so such communities exist within the area (on the map) once known as USA.

A tech level 5 settlement (very rare) would be highly technological, but not likely fully automated (AI). A few hidden Pure Strain Human enclaves may possess this level of tech, but such places tend to be secretive and very hard to find.

A tech level 6 settlement (virtually non-existent) would be a technological wonder, a minor glimpse into the highest levels of tech development prior to the Wars. These would likely only be encountered as facilities and installations that somehow wholly or almost wholly survived the Final Wars and continue to operate on their own. Whether any people would live in or around them is anyone’s guess.

Available Technology and What You Know About It

Enough old technology survived that small bits of it are commonplace — most families will have some relic, albeit a simple or almost useless one. The family heirloom might be a child’s toy that sings songs that don’t have any meaning but sound pleasant, a knife made of an odd substance harder than steel and as transparent as glass or a disc that projects a hologram of flowers with petals rippling through colors as the day passes. Weapons, armor, robots and vehicles are still very rare, but most communities have a stock of old rifles for defense, and a robot, its motive systems long since wrecked but its mind and vocalizer still sound, may sit in the village square and sonorously recite the building code violations it is detecting all around it. The Great Lord of the village takes his skimmer out once a year; the ancient vehicle sags lower on its air cushion each time it is brought out, but it never fails to impress as it speeds through the city twice as fast as a centisteed! Bandits ride beasts, but a few leaders have motorcycles.

Towns rely on their own creations, supplemented by whatever they can find. At least one community in ten was built around a surviving relic of some sort, such as a working water purifier, an agroprocessor that can preserve the harvest indefinitely, a smelter that can make a dozen different tools if the right materials are fed in and the priests touch the correct runes in the correct order. The lowborn and the peasantry have only local tech to their name, but professional soldiers will have a smattering of arms and armor from the Shadow Years, and powerful lords appear in full battle dress. Robots may be seen as useful tools, “metal gods” or hideous abominations, but they’re not things of myth. The cities have not been picked clean, and there’s a good chance an expedition will be able to find some goodies before the inhabitants find them.

The rules on Equipment charts (separate handout) will discuss what levels of tech you can and cannot find/purchase when the game starts, based on purchase DCs primarily.

**Soultech**

Your characters understand the concept of soultech to be that of highly intelligent machines and move and/or think for themselves – like people. The closest any of you have ever (yet) come to meeting such technology is the cooking robot (known as Chev) in your village, or the medical robot at Apprise. (If one or more of you start out as Synthetics, we will add your name(s) to the list of soultech that the villagers are aware of.) You have heard stories/tales of other robots – some as large as cities, that still think and dream away the hours – possibly even controlling people that live inside or near them. Aside from a datapad that one of the councilors has, none of you have seen nor are familiar with computers or what they do. You have heard the word used, but for all you (and the villagers) know, a computer is just another form of robot.

**Hardtech**

Your characters are fully aware that there were technological wonders before the Final Wars over 100 years ago. A few bits of that technology has survived and you have seen – even held – some parts of it. A few members of your village have tech. Some of you may even have (or purchase) a few tech items. Some villagers have tech items that have been passed along (like relics or heirlooms) from generation to generation. You know what some kinetic firearms look like (they shoot out little metal objects when you pull a trigger, they go boom, they can be both useful and dangerous); there are even a few of them in town. Some villagers know how to use them. And there are stories of large supplies of kinetic firearms in Huntersville to the north. Few of you will know much about how much ammo there is, or how large of a cache of guns that the Hunters keep stashed for emergencies. No one has seen or experienced a grenade or rocket weapon, though you have heard stories of small round or square metal objects that explode violently upon impact when thrown. Your experience with armor is pretty basic – you have never worn or even touched any powered armor. You have seen (per-War) non-powered combat armor on a couple of the Hunter leaders from time to time, so you know there is ancient high tech armor out there that is far superior to the hand crafted variety of today, but it is apparently in extremely short supply everywhere in the valley. And you know what a power cell is. There are some in the village. The only problem is that all of them have limited power left, and no one has seen a power cell recharger device in over a generation.

**Biotech**

You are virtually no working knowledge of biotech devices, except information about the few grafts that some villagers have (most of which have been passed down generation to generation) and the existence of Nanites (which you are told are very dangerous and are to be avoided).

And a few more words about Robots

For purposes of Gamma World, a robot is defined as an artificial being which is capable of locomotion. Intelligence also dwells in immobile forms, from the few surviving cityminds to soultech tools.

Not all robots are self-aware. Any robot that deals regularly with humans, though, has at least a simulated personality. Non-self-aware robots were confined to jobs where the work was assumed to be sufficiently predictable that no capacity for judgment or self-adjustment was required. In the final decades before the Final Wars, the casual ease with which a mind could be implanted into a machine made people inclined to add intelligence to elevators and toasters, “just in case.” No one wondered what the toaster and the refrigerator talked about, in epic debates carried on as nanosecond timing errors in monitored communications. No one noticed bank accounts being started by elevators who played the stock market with literally inhuman skill, trading on the knowledge they heard discussed within them.

If anyone had noticed these things and had bothered to trace where the money was going, what and who was being funded, they might have been able to do something. But no one cared, and no one noticed, and humanity filled the world with minds human beings could not control or comprehend. As the Final Wars approached, ten billion inhuman minds interacted in a secret world, a society of lightspeed conversation and terahertz thought.

When it all fell apart, those minds died by the billions. The few who survived found themselves as abandoned, alone and confused as the humans who had built them. Their private world, founded on the ubiquitous data streams that filled the air, was stripped away. There was silence everywhere, a deafening silence. Many went mad because of it. Those who didn’t — and, frankly, many of those who did — faced the same challenges as their creators. To somehow survive in the lunatic world which now surrounded them; to find a purpose in life; and to see if, perhaps, they couldn’t make a better world.

*A few of you may choose a Synthetic as a character, and that is fine. The rules for that are in the GW book. You will need to work with the GM as you draft up your character, as Synthetic characters tend to be a bit more complicated than the other genotypes.*