

Each Tribe had their own tale of why the green world had gone — endless warfare, avarice of the elite, sins of the commoner. But they all added up to dust in the end.

Rising and falling like a ship on a sandy sea, the nameless warrior rode his iron Beast across the desert. From time to time, broken concrete and sand-drowned buildings pierced the surface. Other times, barren dunes stretched to eternity. Two lines graded the sand behind his steed, tread-mark scars no sooner carved than blown across the windswept billows.

The sun escalated its fiery war upon the desert until the horizon itself trembled beneath the onslaught, presenting to the warrior's eye phantom pools of water, the mirror surfaces of which no sooner appeared than vanished. He loosed the straps on his hauberk, a vest of nuts and washers woven with electrical wire, and dabbed his brow with a tattered rag pulled from a hole in the instrument panel. A sip from his canteen met his lips, hotter than the last.

In the delirious dance of the horizon, a dark shape flitted and disappeared. He trained his gaze on the spot. Heat rising from the desert. Nothing more. He was about to cast off the sight as a Wavering, or mirage, when the dark shape flashed a second time.

Uncertain what would emerge from the simmering horizon, he shouldered his broadsword and pulled his lance from its mountings. A lone rider like himself, a Rogue Beast, or a pack of Marauders were equally likely — and equal, too, in the potential for danger.

Again the dark spot appeared, snaking over the dunes. Two more black shapes wobbled in the heat beside it like immense wings, and light flashed from the silhouette like an eye peering over the desert. The warrior's jaw went slack and his grip tightened around the lance until the color fled from his fist.

He grabbed the frame of his steed with his free hand and prepared to slam his full force onto the pedals, though whether to charge or run he wasn't sure. Then the shape changed once more, shrinking smaller and smaller until it vanished altogether. No sooner had it disappeared, than from the heat-obscured horizon five human figures melted into view.