

# The Arbor Stories: A Baby was Crying

A **Dead Reign** adventure, by **Steven Dawes**

**Intro:** It had been four months since “The Wave”. At the time, we were still coming to terms with harsh realities... no military was coming to save us, no government agencies to help us, all of civilization is gone, and the dead reign. At that time, our community of Arbor was new and on wobbly legs, small in numbers and living within the log walls of *Camp Lied*, struggling and still unsure how to survive in this new world. This is our story of when a Road Reaper named Stan “The Stump” came with news of the outside world and to educate us about Zombies, particularly how to kill them. When our group had gone out to get some training in with Stan, we heard a baby crying...

Writers note: This adventure is a revision of the first Dead Reign adventure I ran back in 2009, shortly after the book was released. It was inspired by one of the adventure ideas (page 132), but with my own spin and extended ideas added to it. I kept the notes from the adventure and years later I came across them while working on other materials for Dead Reign. I thought it would make a great one-shot introduction to Dead Reign adventure if done right and wanted to run it as a gaming convention. This adventure is the end result.

Also note that while the contents of this adventure refer to various aspects of my home game (the Nebraska setting, “Camp Lied”, the community of “Arbor” and its residents calling themselves “The Arborists”) this adventure can work just about anywhere in North America and during any season, although end of summer/early fall works best. Lastly, Stan’s character sheet is available at the **Dead Reign Ranch** ([http://houseofbts.net/dead\\_reign\\_ranch.html](http://houseofbts.net/dead_reign_ranch.html)).

## It Began with a Radio Broadcast

**GM:** The day before our story begins, our newly built communication center overheard a radio broadcast from someone named Stan, claiming to be a “Road Reaper”. For the cost of a meal and a safe place to rest for the night, Stan offered to share all the news he had of the rest of the world, as well as provide us with some much-needed information on how to handle zombies.

This was the first time we’d heard of the *Road Reapers* (this was months before their rise to living legends and symbols of hope amongst the safe havens), and we weren’t sure if we could trust some random guy, even one offering free news and zombie killing expertise.

After a short conversation with him on a more private channel, we decided to take a chance and met him at a rendezvous point just off the Highway. After meeting and talking with him, he was friendly enough and seemed honest about his intentions, so we invited back home with us. Upon arrival, Stan had insisted that we take his guns at the gate as a way to establish trust between us. He was also impressed with our make-shift home and was satisfied with our log wall defenses (and even offered a few tips on how to improve them).

That evening, we all sat around the campfire, eating our meal while listening to what Stan had to say. We didn’t know how bad things really were out there until that night. He told us about the major cities being overrun by zombies, about the rising numbers of bandits and raiders, about the Death Cults that had been springing up, the retro-savages, and more. He even talked about the various theories of what started the Wave. None of it was good news and it was disheartening to listen to.

However, Stan also urged us not to give in to despair, and to have hope for a better tomorrow. He said that other safe havens like our existed and were surviving, he told us who the “Reapers” are, how they came about, and their continuing mission to slay zombies and teach others to do the same. Stan then promised to stick around a day or two to show us all how to better kill zombies and offer advice on how to survive in this new world.

At that time, our experience with the zombies had been limited, and lethal. We didn’t know how to fight them very well, and we’d lost half our community when several zombies shambled their way to Camp Lied in the dead of the night two weeks earlier. Luckily no more zombies came to our home after that. However, we were also losing a member of our community with nearly every attempt to scavenge nearby areas and small towns for supplies. We’d gotten to the point where we were reluctant to leave home, relying on what we had at home, which was depleting quickly. Stan “The Stump” couldn’t have arrived at a more critical time.

Stan went on to explain that zombies seem to know that humans will come to town to scavenge them, which is why most of them stay in the towns, simply hiding and “going dormant” until they sense us. The pack that came to our camp two weeks ago was likely a small group of living survivors who all perished at a campsite or other enclave and had wandered aimlessly till they spotted us. We didn’t know until that night why the zombies are so good at finding us in the dark. Not only do they seem to have some kind of night vision, but they can see the life energy of the living. According to Stan, we glow like human fireflies to them, in the daylight the glow is hard to see, but at night we stick out like sore thumbs. This is also why Stan wouldn’t take us out for training us until tomorrow afternoon.

GM: As you’re all sitting around the camp fire and talking with Stan, do any of you have any questions about the zombies to ask him?

Note: Stick to the zombie information on pages 17-38 for details to give the PC’s.

**After questions are answered:** That evening ended with Stan asking where the closest small town or location would be to not only confront zombies, but possibly find some supplies while we’re out. Someone mentioned **the Jenson Orchard**, a small family orchard and farm that’s only about 20-25 minutes’ drive time. The Jenson Orchard has a small shop where visitors were able to purchase various goods like jars of preserved fruits and vegetables, jams & jellies, fresh honey, various baking goods and more.

However, one of our scavenging groups went to the orchard and tried to enter the store a week or so back, but had to abandon the run after they stumbled into a pack of zombies, losing one of our members in the process. They’d not even made it past the store’s locked doors before the zombies assaulted them and no one’s tried to go back since. Stan said this sounds like the ideal place to visit. With that, we called it a night and turned in.

## **The Next Day**

The next morning started with Stan examining, adding onto and improving the front gate. Turns out, Stan was in construction before the Wave, and old habits died hard for him. We talked while working together and discovered Stan’s love of using hammers to bash in zombie heads, his old demo hammer in particular. After a light lunch, our scavenging crew had assembled and was ready to go.

Stan encouraged us to use as few vehicles as possible, as more vehicles meant a greater possibility of break down troubles and well as more noise, which attracts zombies and other potential dangers. He also encouraged the group to travel light and bring an empty backpack, duffel bag, messenger bag or rucksack of some kind to carry glass and similarly fragile items in.

GM note: Discuss with the group how they plan to get the orchard, and what items & weapons their bringing and make note of it. Encourage them to talk to Stan if they have questions or aren't sure what to bring.

**GM:** There are only a few abandoned vehicles along this particular country road, making it easy to drive around them, so after a short drive, your crew breaks to a stop at the corner of the Jenson Orchard, noted by the billboard sign posted in the corner and the familiar wooden horse fencing and gates that surrounds the orchard. While neither a person living or dead has been seen thus far, a nearby hive of honey bees buzz and work tirelessly away, thriving in the face of the apocalypse. Stan pulls his motorcycle next to the lead vehicle and tells the driver "When we get to the front gate, we'll park and walk from the there."

About a half mile further down the road is the gated front entrance. This entrance leads to a gravel road with apple trees running along the length of both sides of it. The tall, unkempt grass in the orchard details the lack of maintenance since the Wave. About a quarter of a mile up the gentle slope of the gravel road is the orchard store. Mostly obscured behind the orchard trees on both sides and behind the store are various buildings and structures, including equipment and tool sheds, storage facilities, a storm cellar, a barn, and a farmhouse with a large garage adjacent to it. Stan parks his bike and kills the engine (pause for player response).

Getting off his chopper, Stan pulls an empty backpack from one its saddlebags. Then he checks, loads and holsters his shotgun over his shoulder before taking his favored demo hammer in hand. Stan looks at you all and asks "are you all ready?" (Pause for player responses).

### **The Orchard Shop**

You can see the orchard shop from where you parked and can walk straight to it. The sound of gravel crunches underfoot as you all walk towards the shop; the orchard trees envelop you all the further you go in. Everyone seems half expecting zombie to come out from behind the trees, but not one zombie can be spotted. Getting a closer look, the Jenson family built the orchard shop with a common prefabricated vinyl wall shop kit. This means that it has a door in the right corner (and likely one on the back side) and a garage door further down the front side. You can estimate the building to be about 50 feet by 50 feet. This means there's plenty of space for goods to be stored inside, but also plenty of space for zombies to be hiding inside. Dried blood spatter is spotted on the walls and cement near the front door, a reminder of your previous attempt to scavenge the building. So far, fortune has smiled on you as no zombies still haven't been seen, everything is quiet. Surprised by the quiet, Stan remarks, "Huh... maybe they all moved on."

**GM:** You're all at the front door, who wants to try opening it?

After player response: Trying to turn the knob, it won't budge; the door is still locked.

This likely means that no one else has gotten inside to scavenge the shop yet, but it also means that someone will have to either bypass the lock somehow, kick the door in, or break it down, which will be loud. What do you all want to do?

GM note: Attempting to Pick/bypassing the lock will suffer a -5% penalty as it's a quality lock. Kicking the door in or breaking it down will require some effort and will create noise. Either way, once the shop is accessible...

**GM:** The door is now open, the shop is pitch black inside. The air wafting out from the doorway is stale and dusty, likely from a lack of use in recent months. It's a good sign.

Everyone, please make a Perception Roll.

To the highest roller: You were the first to hear it, shushing the others when you do. The crew listens with you, eventually hearing it as well. A sound is carrying down from the gentle hill to the right. Its distant, but its unmistakable. Stan tilts his head a bit, scrunching his face in concentration, and then says "That sounds like a baby crying." Pause for player response.

GM note: Characters of a good alignment, including Stan, won't ignore the sound of a baby crying in such a dangerous place. For those adamant on scavenging the shop however, they could stay behind while the others look into the crying, (this option would be especially appealing to a Scrounger), but splitting the party always has its dangers. As the GM, to keep the party going and adventure flowing, Stan could step in and say "we can check the shop later, that baby probably needs help right now!"

If anyone/everyone is going inside the shop to scavenge...

**Inside the Orchard Shop:** Beyond the sunlight spilling in from the doorway, its pitch-black and dusty inside, you'll need light sources before going in (if checked, turning on the light switch does nothing; there's no power).

Turning on light sources: Your light(s) shine upon a few rows of shelves and countertops. Some of the items on the walls and shelves are bits and pieces of seasonal décor and useless knickknacks for sale. A pair of swing glass door refrigerators are half stocked with what looks like plastic jugs and bottles of apple and cherry cider and other fruit drinks, but without proper refrigeration all this time, most of them have turned dark ugly colors and not likely drinkable (if opened and searched however, there's a dozen bottles of water inside one of the fridges).

However, continuing your search, you spot a couple of shelves as well as a few long tables stocked with a variety of goods! Pickles, pickled beets, jams, jellies, mustards, horseradish, salsas, salad dressings, syrups, bottles of BBQ sauce, various fruit butters, preserves, onion and hot pepper relish, applesauce, and jars of honey can all be seen, just waiting to be collected! Various dry goods like packaged homemade noodles, cake, muffin, cobbler, and crisp mixes, bags of baked toasted corn, cashews, sunflower seeds, peanuts and pork rinds that still look edible dot the shelves and hang from the walls! A veritable treasure trove of goods no doubt, but you can only collect and carry so much at a time.

Behind the store counter, a wall has been placed down the middle of the building, separating the storefront from whatever's on the other half. A single door is set in this wall for those who wish to head over and see what's in the other half of the building.

Note: The other half of the building is where the fruits & vegetables of the orchard are brought, cleaned, and processed into various canned & jarred goods. While the initial viewing reveals nothing more than long since rotted fruit and veggies that hadn't been processed, any Scrounger will recognize that the canning stations, crock pots, portable ovens and other food related equipment has value that will only increase over time.

GM note: The orchard shop could be a fun and interesting opportunity to see how the scroungers and scavengers in the group think and what items are important to them, so be sure to ask them what they plan to carry/haul back to their vehicles and point out weight and carrying limits. A clever player may ask about using boxes to carry goods, or finding a Dolly to carry more boxes, or even look for a forklift to transport more goods to their vehicle(s). If a character can operate a forklift and can find the key for it (or hotwire it) can use it, but forklifts are very noisy and WILL attract zombies. Also note that getting more than one trip of goods to the vehicle(s) is not likely (due to incoming zombies below), and is certainly not safe to do so.

### **Following the sound of a crying baby**

If/when the characters head up the cement pathway on the small hill to investigate (and all characters with a good alignment should have), they'll see equipment and tool sheds, several storage facilities, a storm cellar, an old barn, and a 3-story farmhouse (all the windows on the first floor are broken and the doors are either wide open or broken down) with a recently built 3 car garage adjacent to it. All the doors of the 3-car garage are open, and empty of vehicles. Strangely, there are still no zombies to be seen, only the sound of the crying baby stands out.

The characters will have to pinpoint where the crying is coming from (Perception rolls or good old-fashioned searching).

GM note: Its coming from the barn, the front of which faces the group and both the front door and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor hay loft doors are wide open, making it easy enough to pinpoint.

### **The Old Barn**

**GM:** At one time, the barn may have looked impressive. It's a massive structure, and painted red with white trim. However, the decades of time and weather have been hard on the walls and most of the paint has flaked off. It's now been repainted in ages so now it's mostly drab grey in color. The front barn door is wide open, as well as the hay loft window above it.

If no one else brings it up, Stan eventually says "that crying is gonna attracts zombies any minute now. We need to find that baby, fast!"

GM note: A sense of urgency should be instilled at this point. Stan will point out if needed that the baby and whoever might be with it HAS to be moved to safety immediately (and may need our help doing so) as zombies WILL be attracted to the sound.

### **When a character investigates the barn:**

**GM:** Peering inside the front door of the barn, the first thing that comes to mind is all the clutter. The barn was been used for storing random things for some time. An engine block sits in pieces on a pallet, a dirty tool kit lies open next to it. Both plastic and wooden bins, boxes and crates are strewn and stacked about. Seeds, potting and gardening materials cover and surrounds a set of tables and chairs. Cannisters of various fluids and chemicals are stocked along shelves or lays on the floor in various places. Amongst all this clutter, there are also several bales of hay lying about, a few of them have busted open and now resembles piles of hay.

Looking over and around all the clutter, towards the back of the barn, you can see movement. You'll need to move in closer to get a better idea of what's moving. Luckily you can use all the clutter to prowl behind and likely not be seen.

GM note: As long as the character attempts to Prowl or at least move quietly, they will succeed as the zombies in the barn are currently distracted.

**GM:** Moving in for a closer look peer around a wooden crate to see a pair of what look like long since turned zombies. They are both in such bad shape and color that they might have been among the first wave of people to get sick, die and become the undead! The two are kneeling over something on the floor... no, not something... someone!

Note: Could require a low Horror Factor roll here.

To your realization and horror, both zombies are pulling and ripping the guts from the fresh, bloody corpse of a man who was in his 20's. He was so still that you didn't see it right away, but a slight movement to the right of these zombies gets your attention. It's a third zombie, standing virtually still as he gazes up at the hayloft. The shock of the scene subsiding and your senses returning, you now realize that the hayloft is where the sounds of the crying baby are coming from. This zombie's head slowly swivels around, as if he's trying to deduce some kind of puzzle. Then, he takes a few steps to his right, reaching out and grabbing onto a fastened ladder that leads up to the hayloft. He slowly begins climbing it, heading towards the crying baby!

### **Zombie Combat in the Barn**

The setup: The two zombies kneeled over the fresh corpse are Flesh-Eaters, gorging themselves on a fresh kill. The one climbing the ladder is a Thinker Zombie, and its ladder climbing should move the characters into quick action. The Flesh-eaters are distracted, but will stand up and come after the characters either as soon as they sense them or are attacked/ambushed by them. The zombies are likely at a disadvantage by being outnumbered and can and will trip and fall over all the clutter in the barn, the characters can and should take advantage of this.

The Thinker on the other hand will need to be pulled off the ladder, not a hard feat as its attention is focused on the crying baby. However, if the characters take too long to get to the Thinker, someone will have to climb up after him, slow down his decent somehow, or be a good enough shot to shoot him in his brainpan. Writer's anecdote: When I ran this adventure, a character got a highlighted moment by shooting the Thinker in the back of the head of with his bolt action hunting rifle while it was climbing the ladder, so I rewarded his action by causing the Thinker to fall off the ladder in surprise. The baby was now out of immediate danger and the Thinker lost two actions getting back to its feet before resorting to combat with the characters.

Note: Depending on the number of characters and their experience level, the GM can increase the number of zombies accordingly, and can do so in sudden, sneaky ways. For example:

-After the first round of combat, ask the character's opposing the Flesh-Eaters to make a Perception roll. For those that roll 14 or higher: *In the midst of fighting, you are still somehow perceptive enough to see the fresh corpse on the floor twitch, then open his eyes. He starts moving, trying to get to his feet. In about two actions he'll be able to join the other zombies in trying to kill you all!* If no one made a successful Perception roll, this zombie could ambush or attack/grab an unsuspecting character from behind, requiring a Horror Factor roll and someone's help dealing with it.

-A zombie surprises a character who failed their Perception roll: *In the midst of fighting, you feel something grab your right ankle, squeezing it with a vice-like grip! Looking down, you see a zombie, one that was hiding under a pile of hay, has reached out and grabbed onto you!*

*You will not be able to run, or even step away until freed from its incredibly strong grasp!*

This will likely be a Crawler Zombie who's lost its legs and possibly one of its arms. Regardless, it has grabbed a character with its good arm, and they will likely need help dealing with it.

You could option to have this Crawler grab Stan's leg instead, causing him to call out for help, or it could take him out of the main combat for a while, focusing the action on the main characters.

**Using Stan as a player character aid:** For the first-time players, Stan is keeping a watchful eye on them and calls out advice and tactics throughout the fighting. As the players get the hang of fighting the zombies, Stan should become more of background NPC, aiding and assisting them as needed.

**While the fighting's going on:** The baby is still crying up in the hay loft and has already alerted several zombies in the area, who are already converging on the barn. Most of them are Slouchers, but there could be others, like a Fast Attack Zombie, who comes racing into the barn, tackling and wrestling with the first character it sees. Or if using this adventure scenario with more experienced zombie killers, adding a Juggernaut Zombie into the mix of those converging would up the danger and challenge, either during this combat scene or amongst those converging towards the barn.

**Once combat is over:** For story purposes, it's worth revealing the fate of the man the Flesh-Eaters were feasting on (and possibly rose up as a zombie) by reading the following: *Looking at the area where the recently deceased corpse lays (or had laid if a zombie) a half-collapsed set of wooden stairs lies in pieces here, along with a crowbar and a claw hammer. Taking it in, you understand that this man gave his life while attempting to protect the baby, and possibly others, by destroying the only set of stairs that led up to the hayloft. He was likely still dismantling it when the Flesh-Eaters ambushed him, grabbing onto and pulling him down from the remaining staircase.*

**If the man rose as a zombie:** *Then, ambushed and pulled to the ground, he was an easy kill for the three zombies.*

**If the man didn't rise:** *He likely died upon impact with the hard cement below. This sudden death spared him from being killed by the zombies and rising as one of them.*

## **The Hayloft**

With the stairs destroyed, the ladder is now the only way to get up there. Climbing up, they'll discover the baby, and his unconscious mother.

**GM:** *Climbing up to the hayloft, you see what looks like a makeshift camp site. A lantern, a portable stove, and other camping items have been set up around the loft. Near the window of the loft, a pair of sleeping bags have been unzipped, opened up and laid over a bed of hay like blankets. Under the blanket lays a young woman, breathing softly, her eyes closed. Clutched in her arms and swaddled in a plaid blanket is her crying baby. The baby is a newborn, it must be less than an hour old!*

Any medical related skills would be extremely helpful here to help the players determine that the mother is unconscious, having passed out from exhaustion and loss of blood. The severity of the situation should become apparent. The players are going to have to carry both the unconscious mother and her baby out of the barn before the converging zombies overwhelm them.

## **Possible O.C.C. related events in the barn:**

While some of the characters are up in the hayloft, the others could be doing other things. For example:

**Scrounger:** While there are many bins and crates to be searched through if desired, there's a large wooden crate sitting in a corner of the barn. It looks unopened. Who knows what could be inside it? The crate is nailed shut and will need a crowbar or a similar tool and some time to open it. Will you take the time and opportunity to open it? Note: It could be machine parts, farm equipment or something else entirely, but it should be something of value to a Scrounger, adding a new dilemma

of trying to get it out of the barn and back to their vehicle(s) as opposed to helping the mother and child. This may cause friction with the others and problems with the converging zombies.

**Hound Master:** (The name of the dog) *ears perk up as it looks out the open front door of the barn. He/she growls and begins barking at something, their hackles standing at attention!*

Looking outside: *Several zombies are shambling their way up the hill and through the tall grass, converging towards the barn, no doubt attracted by the crying baby, and the scent of blood (and possibly gunfire from combat moments earlier)!*

1D4+1 Slouchers are on their way, 2D6 more will arrive in another five minutes, and 2D6+10 more five minutes after that. Hound Masters and others with rifles or a good range weapon could get a highlighted moment of firing at the zombies closing in on the barn and taking it down early which gives more time for the others to get mother and baby down from the hayloft. Or they could light a torch, or a road flare or other fire source in an effort to keep a few or all of the first incoming wave of zombies at bay, but that's only a temporary solution and would require the group to exit from a different door or window in the barn (meaning a zombie could ambush them).

## **Escape the Orchard!**

From here the adventure becomes more about quick actions and thinking. Picking up and carrying both the mother and the baby is a smart idea, only the baby won't stop crying (and someone will have to be responsible for carrying and protecting him) and rescuing them both includes figuring out a way to get them down safely from the hayloft to ground level.

GM note: All the components of creating a makeshift elevator/platform are in the barn if the players are unsure of what to do (Stan will deduce this if needed).

From there, the characters will need to make their way back down the hill towards the orchard shop and through a quarter mile of the orchard itself, which is full of trees and tall grass, creating obstacles, possible tripping hazards, and opportunities for nearby zombies to be obscured/hidden from view and ready to pounce on and/or grab them, all to get back to their vehicle(s) and flee.

The zombies will chase after them, even if they somehow lose sight of the characters, they can still follow all the noise they make and the smell of blood from both the baby and his mother (and any injured characters). 1D4 other zombies will pop out of hiding along the way every 2D4 minutes wherever the PC's go. Stopping for more than a minute or two means the character will see the number of zombies triple.

Orchard Shop note: If any of the characters stayed in the shop to scavenge while other went to the barn, there's no zombies in either half of the shop, but any loud noises made will attract a few of the ones heading towards the sound of crying. This means fighting it out with them or fleeing through a back door (where a zombie will be pounding its fists on the door while trying to get in) or get around the entering zombies somehow to exit the front door.

Any violent actions or falling on the floor could result in shattering some or all of the glass jars full of goods they may be carrying. If this character(s) either heads to the barn or back to their vehicle(s), they'll meet up with their friends eventually, but will have to confront zombies on their own in the meantime. If they head to another building or direction than the barn, who knows what could happen. Getting separated, lost, injured (or worse) happens a lot more than you'd think during chaotic situations like this. If the separated parties have walkie-talkies, they could communicate and rendezvous.



## **When the PC's have successfully fled the scene in their vehicles**

**GM:** *Through the rear-view mirrors or looking behind you, you all watch the zombies get farther away until obscured by the dust your vehicles kick up. While driving back to base, the baby finally gets quiet, falling asleep in (player character's) arms. Once safely back home at Camp Lied, Everyone, including Stan, checks in on the baby and his mother, who's still unconscious. Looking at you all he says "Well, it's not exactly the training I'd hope to give you, but we save two lives today, and that's something to be proud of. Maybe tomorrow we can try again."*

*Getting the mother and baby to the make-shift infirmary, its agreed by everyone that the baby is healthy and the mother will be alright. Later that evening the mother, Christine, eventually wakes up. Asking about both the baby and her boyfriend, the boy's father, she mourns at the news of his loss, but is grateful to the group for saving her and her son. She names her son "Jacob", after his father.*

## **The Ending**

**GM:** *That is where this particular story ends. Stan would indeed stay for a few extra days, training us to become better zombie killers, and would even stop by occasionally for a visit and to check in on us, including me and my son Jacob as we both became part of the community of Arbor. I survived and would go through many other trials and challenges with the Arborists in the months to come, but those stories are for another time.*

**GM note:** There is an NPC/Character Sheet available for Christine in the Dead Reign Ranch for any GM's and players those who want to use it. Presenting her as a new available player character to your group, or even bringing her along as an NPC in future adventures can be a good way to show history, progress and growth of the group's community/safe haven, etc. As stated in the Ranch, she's not available for this particular adventure, but should be allowed for any future adventures I add to the ranch.

## **Additional Adventure Ideas**

-Stan was designed to be an advisor and mentor type of NPC for this adventure as it's designed with first time players in mind. However, Stan can be removed from the adventure altogether for those gm's or groups who don't need him there and it won't adversely affect the story. Simply skip to the part where the group decides to make a scavenging run to a nearby orchard store. Most of his commentary is at the end of a paragraph, so the GM can say something similar to the group, have their own NPC's say his commentary, or ignore them altogether.

-For those GM's who want to be particularly devious to their players, the crying baby could in reality be an Impersonator Zombie (see *Dark Places*, page 25), but I don't recommend this option for first time players.

-For those using this adventure for a campaign game and want to add new angles, there could be a Mock Zombie hiding in the darkness of the back half of the orchard shop if a character(s) checks it out. "OH, thank goodness... you're alive, I mean... you're not zombies! I've been hiding back here for I don't know how long! You all look hungry! Would you like some preserved peaches? Or apples? I canned them all myself. If we get some wood for that stove over there, I make the best apple cobbler you'll ever taste. Hmm? Why are you looking at me like that? I'm not a zombie! I'm Claire Jenson, this is my family's orchard." She's not lying, about being Claire Jenson anyway, and she is a good cook. But in the end, she's a Mock Zombie and will have to be treated as such.

-In the same vein as expanding this adventure for a campaign game, the trip to the orchard can be extended, such as having to move cars out of the road, scavenge the few houses, garages and sheds found along this stretch of highway, spot a homeless dog or even a horse running loose in a field that could be tamed (again), or drive right into trouble like bandits, cultists, a pack of zombies, etc.

-If desired, the time of year could be set to peak apple season, giving the player characters an opportunity to pick apples. Professional cooks and food preservers could gain experience prepping and canning it all. In fact, the orchard store has caramel apple supplies, making an opportunity for a rare treat for the characters to enjoy and/or trade with other communities & safe havens. Sweets and small comforts and luxuries will become more and more valuable as time goes on.

-If played as part of an ongoing campaign, the characters might have family and friends that died at or near the orchard. The group could come across them as zombies, maybe finding some consolation in slaying them. "He would have wanted me to kill him, he'd never want to live as a zombie".

-The characters could return or make multiple trips to the orchard, scavenging the various buildings (see *Encounters and Resources* and *Resources Common to Most Homes and Houses* in the *Civilization Gone* sourcebook) but this means they might have to deal with bandits, raiders, cultists, and other problems beyond the zombies. If a group or community moves in before the players return, how would they deal with this? And are they friends, or foes? If they're foes, the players now have dangerous people living only 20-25 minutes away, which can be too close for comfort.

-The orchard & farmlands are still viable and there's plenty of fertilizer, gardening and farming tools and equipment, a functioning tractor and other useful materials and amenities are available. With some elbow grease and effort, the orchard and farm can become a valid safe haven location for the players.

Written with pride for the **Dead Reign Ranch**, located near the **House of BTS**  
[houseofbts.net/dead\\_reign\\_ranch.html](http://houseofbts.net/dead_reign_ranch.html)