



STAY ALIVE



AN ALTERNATE HISTORY
GRAPHICAL NOVEL
PETE ANDERSON

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This is a work of fiction in the genre of what is commonly known as alternate history, where things that have occurred in the past in our timeline are not such here. The Soviet Union never fell, North Korea is almost as strong militarily as China, and many other countries that are at least quasi-allies in our time are uneasy truce-keepers at best. World War II ended with a nuclear holocaust for both the Nazis and an unrepentant Japan, and warhead proliferation began soon after. Into this uneasy stalemate came ever more radical world leaders with agendas that threatened the safety of every human on Earth. Then one day

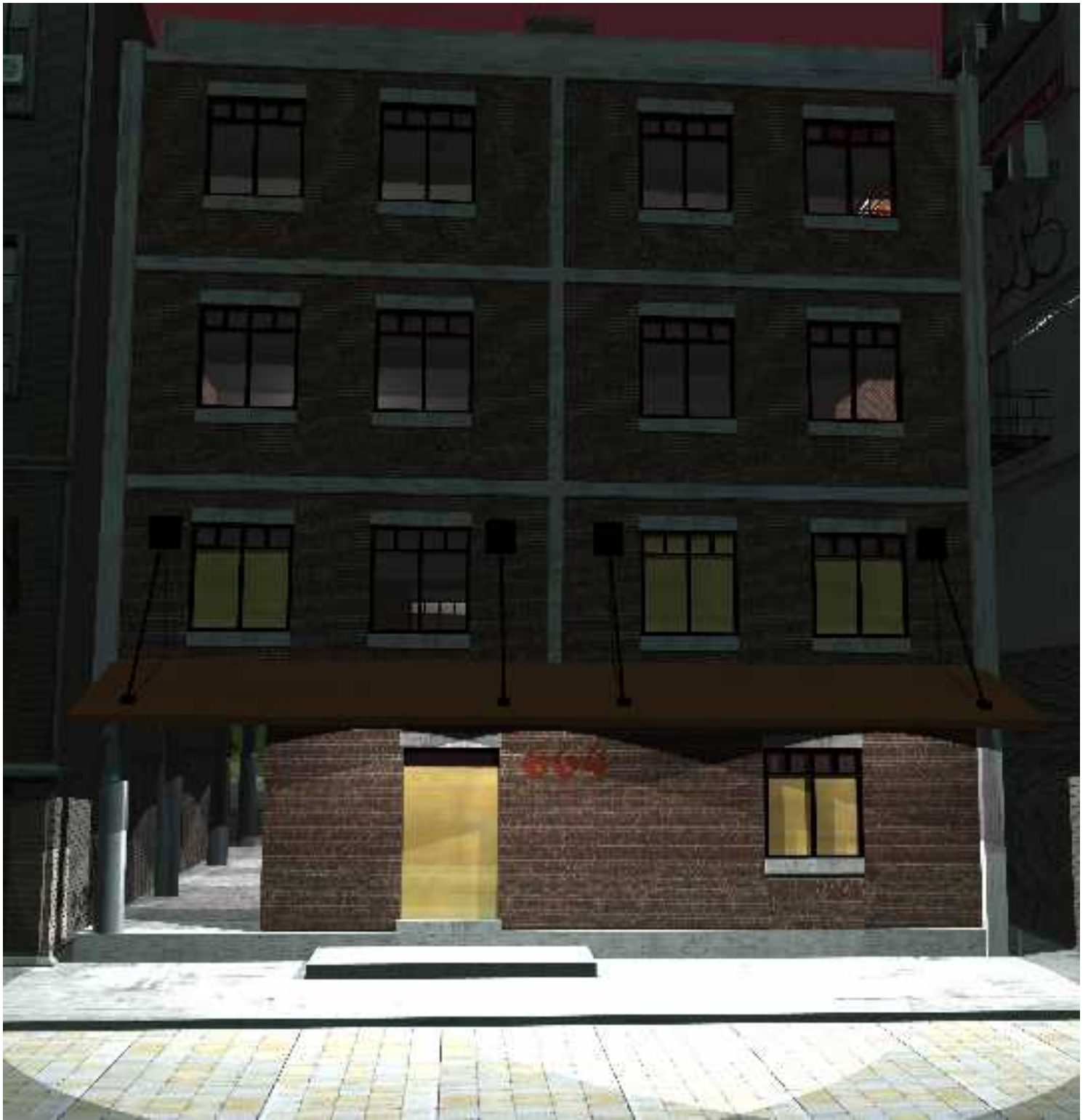
My name is Rikard Karl Wagner and this is my story.

The year is 2017 and the world lies in ruins. North Korea stole bioterror weapons from a poorly defended Soviet research facility and mixed them before firing them at the United States with intercontinental range ballistic missiles they had developed mostly in secret.. For the population that isnt dead already, the bioweapons have rendered most a living nightmare, a bizarre zombie-like existence where they neither eat nor sleep often, and biologic functions are reduced to almost nothing, giving an appearance of sleep-walking and cold, grey-waxy skin. A few of us are resistant to the effect and we still don't know why. The most terrifying thing is the effect it has had on plants. They have simply stopped growing, neither dying nor living but caught in a cellular statis, a floral netherworld. Most of the coastal cities are gone, hit by megaton warheads in a massive surprise strike by the Soviet Union, precipitated by their belief that the bioattack left us vulnerable. They were wrong. Boston, Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, the Carolinas, Portland, Los Angeles, San Diego and many others are just glowing nuclear wastelands. The Soviet Union has ceased to exist entirely -

- rendered down to glowing nuclear glass and ash by the unimaginable power of the bulk of the US's ballistic missile submarines and remaining ICBMs answering with a full-scale thermonuclear holocaust. China has taken Japan and most of its neighboring countries. The Middle East is also devastated, Israel taking advantage of world chaos to protect itself by destroying its historic enemies with a nuclear arsenal much larger and more powerful than ever believed by the West. Canada has invaded New York State as far as Albany, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Minnesota. The Mexican flag flies over Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and parts of California and Louisiana. Great Britain alone remains almost unscathed but is too small and powerless to do much more than defend her own coasts. This time her long-time ally lies alone, abandoned by the world dealing with its own dead and the threat of universal extinction by starvation and toxic radioactive fallout. I have created a small enclave for myself, a place where I can regroup and attempt to assist those few of us who are still "normal" work feverishly against the clock to reverse the effects on our vegetation and the sad human victims I have dubbed "the Others".







664 Main Street East, Hades Kansas. An unassuming nineteenth century brick and concrete building that hides many secrets behind its weathered masonry walls





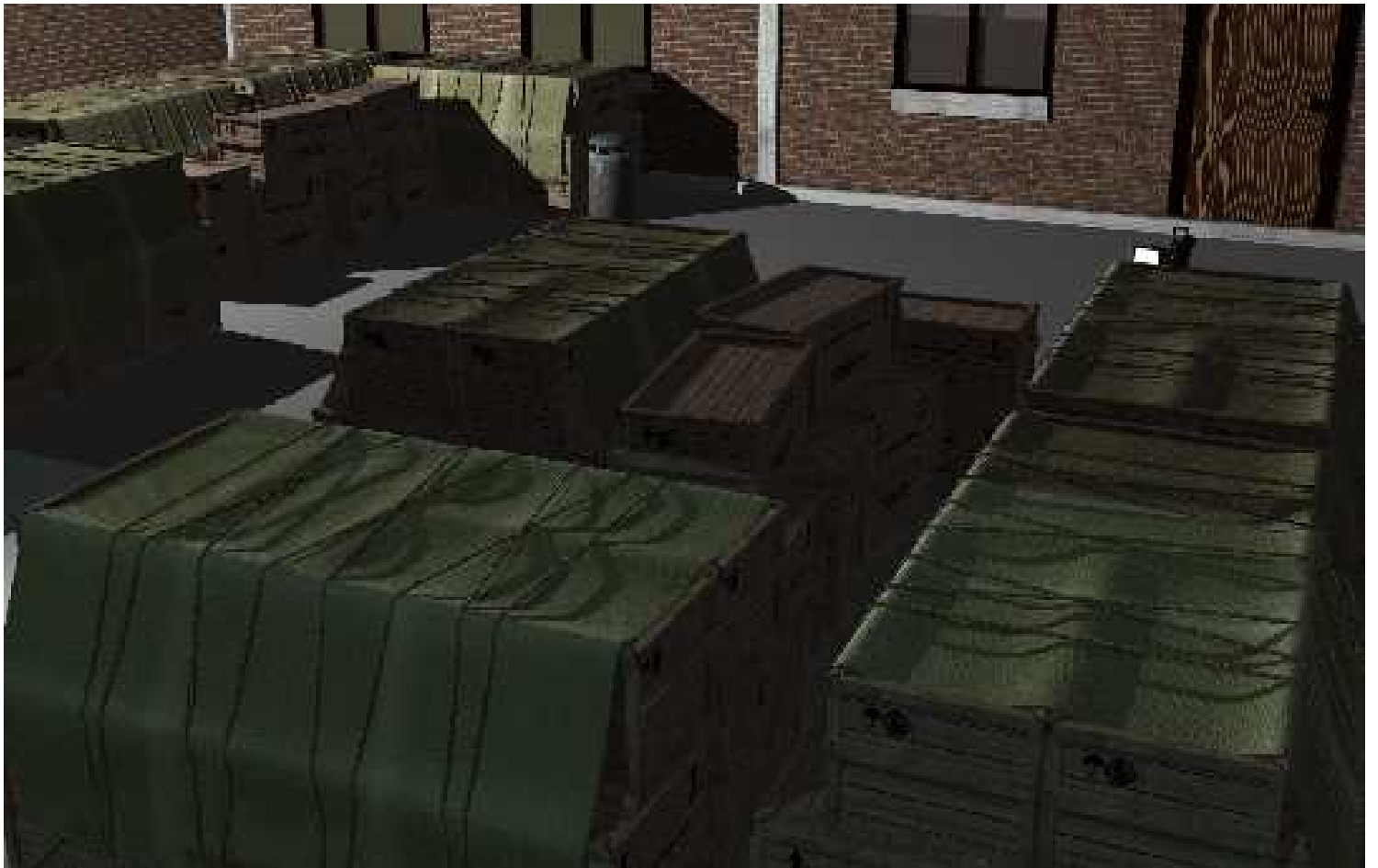
John: so whats our condition?

Karl: well, so for all real purposes, the Internet has ceased to exist. ARPAnet was built in the early 1960s to support the Department of Defense and our strategic missile forces, and parts of it still exist on POTS copper lines that are working sporadically, but all the fibre backbones are down



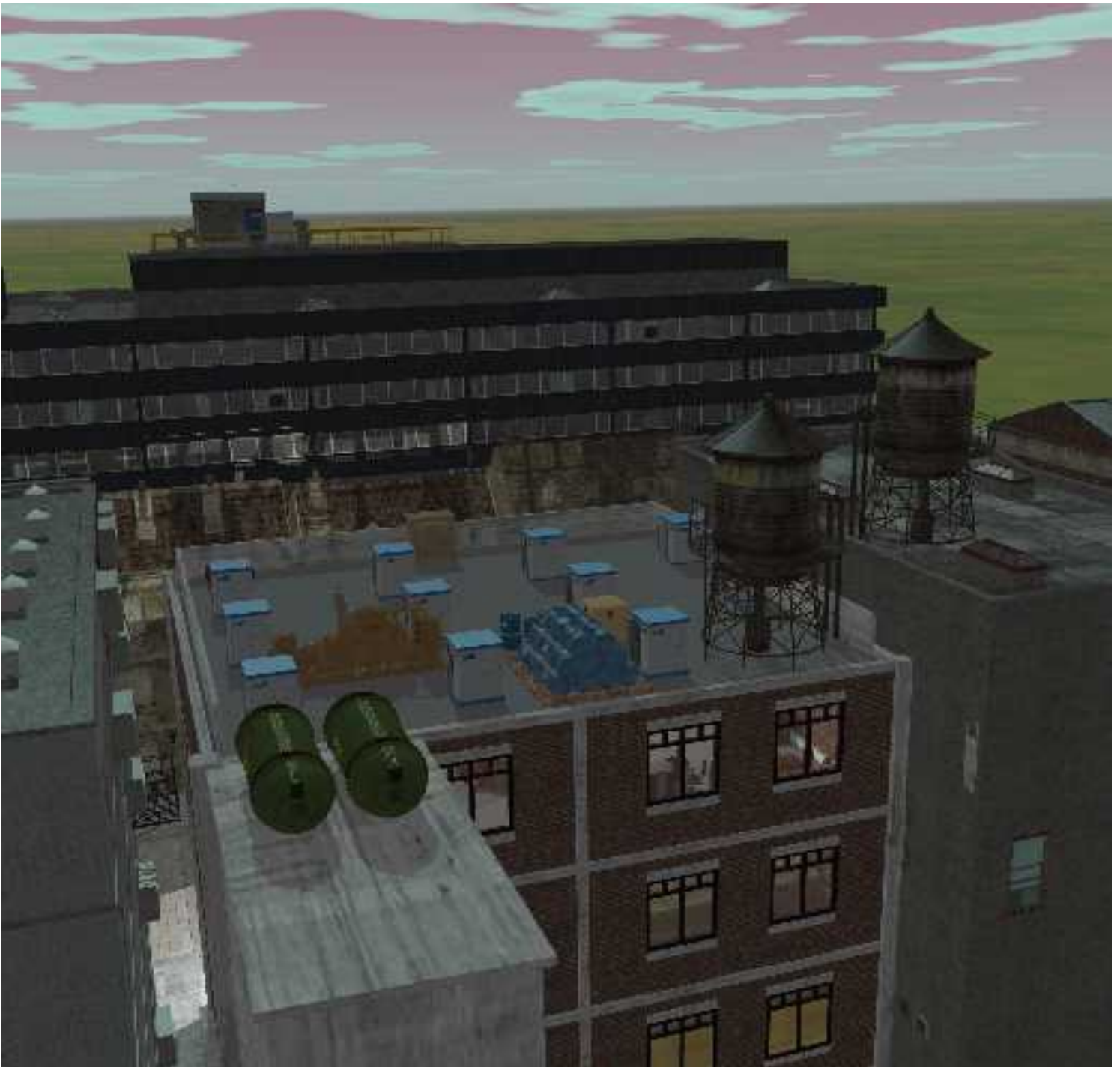
Karl: - because the Russkies detonated 5 high-altitude 7 megaton EMP warheads and fried over eighty five percent of the electronics in the United States, including most of our comm systems. Johns Hopkins Baltimore is still on-line at their Harbour facility but their comms are spotty and their power is all hydro these days, so if the lack of rain continues its going to be a major issue.



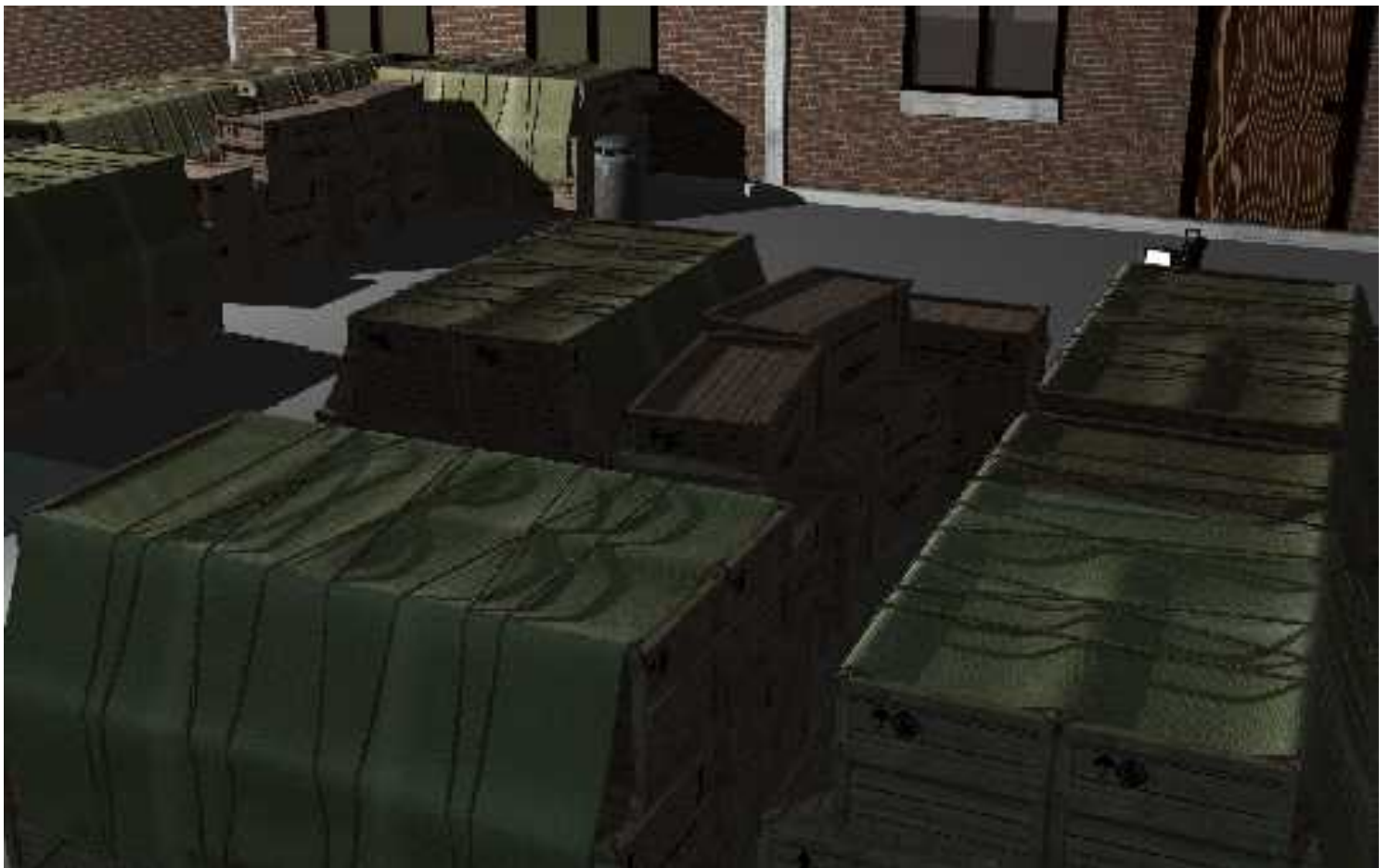




Karl: so I raided the old furniture store over on Peco and liberated a bunch of high-end stuff before one of the crazies burned it down. That's where all this came from. The computers were stored underground at another site, so the EMP pulse didn't harm them, and then I moved them up here. There's a full duplicate unit down on the third floor.



Karl: I have two automated motion-tracking chain-guns to cover the doors and enough freeze-dried, canned and MRE rations stocked downstairs to last two people at least two to three years, but fuel and electricity are going to be problems. The big diesel on the roof can recycle the fuel cells but it makes so much noise that on a quiet night you can hear it for miles around, so I only run it when I have to.





Karl: I have several cards in the main CPU stack that are monitoring the 300 baud modem to Johns Hopkins, the major GSM cell bands in case someone comes back on-line, and the most common HAM radio bands that anyone in range might try to light up. The atmosphere's still so screwed up though that I mostly just get random static patterns and some scrambled bits.



Karl: Before he headed to Texas, Jack helped me get a Korean War vintage four-wheel drive ambulance up, we swapped out the old petrol engine for a heavy duty six-speed backed up with an in-line six turbodiesel, that can run on the bio-diesel I've got stored on the roof. It's an old truck but she's tougher'n nails and runs really good now.

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