



American Sunset

A Role Playing Game

Wolky Samboy-Hillyer, Zeb Howell, Jordan Voltz, and Edgar Elliott



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Special thanks to Professor Amy Fisher, our patron, editor, research advisor, and perpetual source of motivation for this entire project. American Sunset couldn't have happened without her, and she's helped us in too many ways to count. Amy took a risk believing in us, and we couldn't be more thankful for it.

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We'd also like to extend thanks to all our playtesters, who took time out of their busy schedules every Tuesday night to test the game with us, even when we weren't sure if it was fun yet.

IN 1890, following the eleventh U.S. Census, the United States government announced that the American frontier was closed. Three years later, historian Frederick Jackson Turner seized upon this report and declared that the end of an era had passed. The America that came after 1893 would be fundamentally different than the one that came before; the land was “settled,” lacking a wild and unpredictable edge.

The Western, the quintessential tale of the American frontier, is a romance told about the last days of the America that came before. Not quite real, a land where the people are larger than life, death is cheaper than a glass of whiskey, and the horizon is as endless as it is beautiful.

The reality, however, is sadly far less romantic.

The atrocities committed in the name of westward expansion are innumerable and horrific. The American Indian Wars led to the deaths of tens, if not hundreds of thousands and eroded the culture, religion, and way of life of Native American tribes, all in the name of bringing “civilization” to the frontier. The history of the American West is blood-stained and tragic.

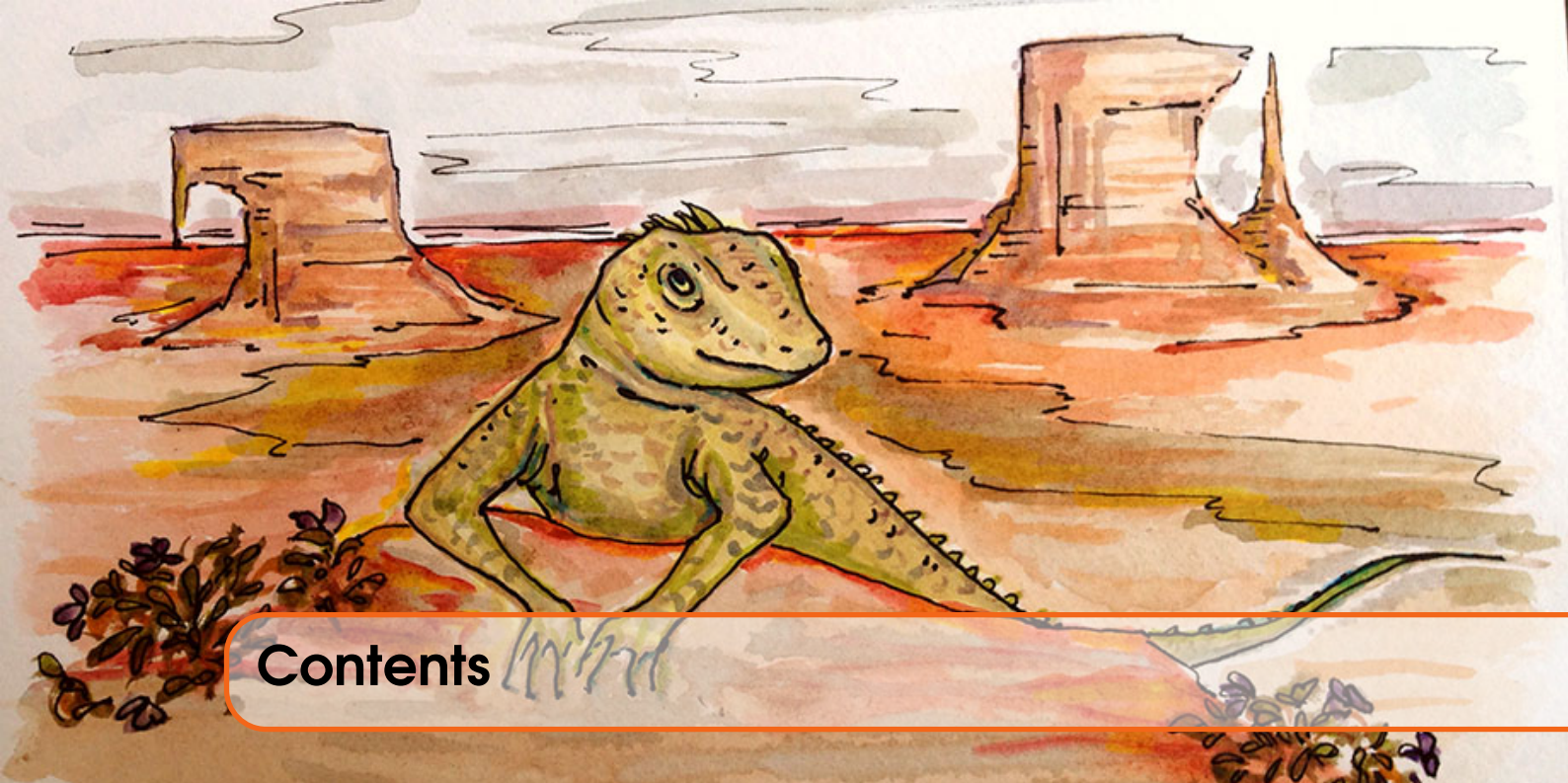
The book you’re reading is our endeavor to distill these complex histories of the West into a single, playable experience. No small amount of research went into creating this work, and even then, it was far from a simple task. What we’ve created isn’t perfect, but it is the culmination of our efforts at giving you the opportunity to experience all of the West - for better, and for worse. In keeping with this, while the places, names, and organizations that follow are fictional, they are all inspired by true-life people and events.

American Sunset is a game about adventures, train robberies, outlaws, saloon shootouts, horseback-riding, mountain-scaling, river-fording, and a thousand more things, but it is also a game about loss.

The loss of a way of life. The loss of a people. The loss of the America that came before, and the loss of the frontier on her border.

We hope that you have fun playing American Sunset, and we hope that you are able to experience the Western story you want to play, but as you do, we also hope that you keep these things in mind.

Thank you, and enjoy.



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0.1 A letter sent from the City of Silver Springs, May 12, 1872

To my dearest cousin Adrienne,

I am overjoyed to learn that you've made the choice to travel out West and live here with me in the city of Silver Springs. The clear, clean air of the West has breathed into me a new vigor, and I eagerly await the chance to share this beautiful country with another member of our family.

As you well know, I'm not inclined to work of the physical sort, on account of my injury from the War of the Rebellion, but here it seems opportunities are around every corner. Of late, I have taken up employment with the newspaper. The owner, Elias Reach, is a man ravenous for the next day's headlines.

You would hardly believe the drivel he asks me to report upon- The way he tells it, talk of monstrous beasts and secret societies is the only thing that sells a paper, unless we are lucky enough for some poor fools to be beset by a train robbery or, and I have heard him speak wistfully of this, a fire like the one of ten years past.

It would be dishonest of me to claim that this city is a safe place to live. Just this last Tuesday I nearly witnessed the killing of a man over the price of a drink. In the summer, the heat could be likened to living inside a coal stove, and in the winters the air itself seems to freeze solid. To the North there are vast forests yet unmapped, to the West there are mountains as full of silver as they are bandits, and to the South lies a desert populated by little more than stones, lizards, and the ghosts of foolish prospectors.

Still, my time here has given me a perspective of this land that I would have otherwise never seen. There is something special about the men and women who choose to brave the frontier here, as if they were painted with brighter colors than the gray, forgettable people back East. Their names roll off my tongue as easily as the names of our own family members now, though there are some I've scarcely met! The river that flows past our city is a magnificent thing, hidden in canyons and valleys, and I cannot give justice to the sunsets, which are awash in colors that by my reckoning even a master painter would be hard pressed to reproduce.

I, and the frontier as well, eagerly await your arrival.

With love and anticipation, your cousin Ambrose



1. What is this game?

ANY tabletop roleplaying game is an exercise in group storytelling. A Game Master and a group of players come together, and with some imagination, acting, strategizing, calculating, ignoring risks, making stuff up, overthinking things, takeout food, bad luck, good luck, scheduling, and yes, a little bit of math, everyone gets the chance to not just tell a story, but to be part of a story. In keeping with that, every role playing game has a type of story that they're best at helping you explore.

American Sunset, the game you're holding in your hands now, is a game about the West.

When we set out to make a Western role playing game, we knew we wanted it to feel like a Western. A world where death is cheap, and living is hard. Where the open frontier stretched on in every direction, and mysteries and adventure are always just over the horizon. Where maps aren't always complete, and where tales of impossible feats and stranger things are true as long as the stories get told.

American Sunset is quick, tense, and dangerous. Combat is decisive, and magic, while real, is distant and always a hair's breadth away from discovery. Player characters begin the game with well-established identities, capable of holding their own against the forces of the frontier. By the end of their journeys, those same characters have become more than the sum of their parts, emblazoned on the world as more myth than history, more tall tale than documented fact. Similarly, the environment of American Sunset is designed to give players and GMs a complex, fully-realized landscape to explore. The city of Silver Springs sits at the center of multiple factions eager to see their vision of the West realized, and at the crossroads of classic American vistas. The frontier itself is populated with a diaspora of peoples, some displaced, others well situated, but all making a living on the land, any way they can.

We hope that in playing American Sunset, you have fun, come to see the West from a new perspective, and most importantly, get the chance to be a part of a Western tale all your own.

1.1 Shorthand Rules

How to Perform a Contest

(For a detailed explanation see **Contests** pg. 52)

The only dice ever used are six sided dice, and the vast majority of contests use two per character. The total of a roll is the numbers rolled on two six-sided dice plus the rating of the relevant skill being used.

In an **Unopposed Contest**, characters roll against a Target Number.

In an **Opposed Contest**, two characters roll, and the higher total wins.

In all contests, the procedure is as follows:

1. Active character sets the stakes.
2. Defending character (if there is one) is allowed to raise the stakes.
3. Roll dice.
4. Calculate and compare totals.
5. Resolve the contest.

When rolling at **Advantage**, players roll four dice, and choose the top two values.

When rolling at **Disadvantage**, roll four dice, and choose the lower two values.

Traveling is a unique type of Unopposed Contest, and is determined by performing three different Contests: Awareness, Fitness or Riding, and Survival skill, each with their own target numbers and consequences for failure.

Reputation

(For a detailed explanation, see **Reputation Points** pg. 56) Players are allowed to spend their Reputation points to alter the course of the story. There are fundamentally two different ways they can do this:

1. Spend one Reputation point and gain advantage on their next roll, or
2. Spend more than one Reputation point in order to fundamentally change the course of events so they align with the Reputation of their character.

A player's Reputation is described by their Aspects. Players may only spend Reputation points when it is in a situation relevant to their Aspects. In order to gain Reputation points after they have been spent, a player must play up their Flaw in a way that either hinders them, or is an otherwise exceptional example of role playing.

Combat

(For a detailed explanation see **Combat** pg. 69)

Combat is a specific type of Opposed Contest. During combat, actions must take place over structured time.

Wounds and Strain

(For a detailed explanation, see **Wounds and Strain** pg. 76)

Injury Degree	Consequence
Light	No Penalty
Medium	All contests rolled at -1 for each medium injury
Severe	All contests rolled at disadvantage

Treating Injuries

Severity	[TN]	Example	When Treated	Time to Heal
Light	5	Just a scratch. Sprained joint or pulled muscle	Removed	Instant
Medium	10	Bruised or fractured bone. A profusely bleeding cut.	Bandaged	Days equal to ten minus Fitness rating
Severe	15	Badly broken or shattered bone. Bullet to the chest.	Bandaged	Days equal to fifteen minus Fitness rating

Initiative

(For a detailed explanation see **Turn Order and Initiative** pg. 71)

2d6 + Awareness rating. Order of play proceeds from the character with the highest total to the character with the lowest total.

Movement

(for a detailed explanation see **Movement** pg. 72)

1 Scene per movement action.

Fitness Contest TN 8 to have an additional action. TN 15 to have a second additional action.

If you move more than one scene in a turn you cannot initiate a contest as well.

Defending (For a detailed explanation see **Defending** pg. 53)

Counter-Attack - when you are being attacked you can attack back with your chosen Weapon or Rhetorical Strategy.

Evade - when you are attacked, you can roll 2d6 + Grit (Weapons) or Poise (Rhetorical Strategy) instead of Counter-Attacking to avoid the stakes.

Cover

(For a detailed explanation see **Cover** pg. 71)

Type of cover	Example	Effect
Soft Cover	Thin metal. A particularly robust window.	Decrease degree of wound severity once.
Hard Cover	Reinforced wood. Stone. Layered sandbags	Decrease degree of wound severity twice

If an attacking character rolls doubles (a matching pair on any dice rolled), ignore the effects of cover.

Mounted Combat

(For a detailed explanation, see **Mounted Combat** pg. 72)

- All Mounts have a shared Wounds and Strain track. Rhetorical Strategies cannot be used against mounts in combat.
- Once a Mount takes a severe Wound, they will suffer an additional light Wound whenever their rider takes a movement action.

- Mounts can move up to three scenes per turn as their first movement action. Mounts do not receive their own turn during combat.
- TN 10 Riding Contest to perform another movement action in a turn if riding.

Mount Attacks (Trampling)

Riders who have traveled more than two scenes in a turn before attacking may gain Advantage against their target, or they may choose to Trample. If Trampling, treat the rider's Mount as the weapon, and use its qualities for the attack.

If a character chooses to Trample, or their target is counterattacking with a weapon that has the Polearm quality, they do not gain Advantage.

Multiple Combat

(Detailed explanation Multiple Participants In Combat pg. 75) See the Section.

Death and Surrender

(Detailed explanation Death and Surrender pg. 78) See the Section.

Range Brackets

(Detailed explanation Range pg. 70)

- Short Range is within the same scene
- Medium Range is from one to three scenes away
- Long Range is from four to five scenes away
- Very Long is more than five scenes away

Performing a Contest at a range longer than your weapon allows for incurs a -2 penalty for each extra range bracket



Setting

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2. History, Factions, and Characters.

WELCOME to the world of American Sunset! This chapter tells the story of American Sunset's history, and lays down the important characters and organizations. They interact in subtle and overt ways, and create an interesting and dynamic social network for your characters to live and move in. The future actions of the characters in this chapter are not strictly set forth and they are as much tools to make this world interesting as the rules in Chapter 3.

2.1 City of Silver Springs

Silver Springs is the capitol city of the state Jefferson, and the largest city for more than a hundred miles in any direction. Many of the efforts to expand into the few remaining unmapped regions of the frontier are based here, as are a hundred and one industries trying to compete for business in the quickly growing city.

History

Before settlers arrived in Silver Springs, there were the Native Americans who would eventually compose the Civilized Five. They lived on the Jefferson Stripe, the massive river that runs through Jefferson territory, and upon whose banks, and upon whose banks the the southwestern edge of Silver Springs lies lies. Early settlers would tell stories of the rejuvenating power of the water and air, the golden glints in the river's ripples, the magic springs that gave worthy visions of the future, and the mysterious the mysterious raven migrations. Now these stories are scarce. As reality appeared to settle in, the stories disappeared and the hardships began to mount. As reality appeared to settle in, the

stories disappeared and the hardships began to mount. A series of terrible floods have afflicted Silver Springs, winters seem to get harsher as the secrets of the mountains are plundered, and drought and fires occasionally rip through downtown, burning nearly all the businesses to the ground.

Like most other Jefferson Territory towns, Silver Springs emerged in the early 1850s during the silver rush. It was a small town in a fortunate place, surrounded on all sides by gold and silver rich hills. While the mineral value and renowned hot springs of the region were major influences on settlement, tales of the mystical and far-fetched also attracted a unique circle of settlers. And it was its settlers – not the Jefferson

Stripe, the Plains that led up to it, or the mineral rich hills – that made it what it is today. Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about these individuals, whose reputation precedes them, is that they are still our neighbors.

The first of these visionaries to settle this land of peaks and prairies, amongst the disowned braves, the hopeful miners, and the plucky wildmen of the frontier was Elias Reach. If you were to say that Silver Springs exists because of Elias Reach, you might just be right. Reach was once a surveyor, imposing the law of cartography on Oregon and California, before he traveled to the relatively untamed Jefferson State and likewise set it to paper. There, Reach set up shop as the editor of the Silver Springs Weekly, and to this day still prints the news exactly as he sees it. The Silver Springs we see today is a reflection of the city he predicted would one day come about. More than just a charismatic printer, Reach's influence gave rise to both the vigilante committees and city marshals, as well as the town jail, a building that he owns. Even the administration of capital punishment has been known to happen on his authority, although he styles it as "the common will of the people." Reach is appreciative of diversity and freedom in his town, but threatening him or Silver Springs is a quick way to end up on the wrong side of his shotgun.

By the time Reach established his paper, the gold rush had begun to wane, and the magical time, short though it was, in which hope and a pick was enough to make a living, had ended. Silver and gold was still produced in abundance from the ranges and caves around the town, but only at the hands of dedicated miners. Farmers began to settle and tame the land and record the seasons.

Prospectors, who had done very well for themselves, began to influence the development of the town. Richard Crabb, a successful prospector-turned-owner of a real estate company out of Turage, managed to successfully buy out (and claim) some very choice land between the town of Silver Springs, the Highlands encampment, which was hardly a town at all, and Aproi, a rival town. Reach and Crabb began negotiations to combine these communities into one larger municipality, which would become

the capital of Jefferson State. A central issue: where would mainstreet be located, in Aproi or Silver Springs?

When the mayor of Silver Springs, Maximilian P. Woolcott (the man who is still mayor to this day) managed to convince the coach lines to run through Silver Springs rather than Aproi, tensions grew. The people in smaller camps, like the Highlands, were hardly unified enough to protest, but the peoples of Aproi and Silver Springs would not back down. With the new coach lines, the Aproi supporters became more disheartened. Additionally, Herb Wyatt was able to convince the founders of Summit Bank, successful prospector Dale Gibbs and mining outfitter Benjamin-Francis Palmer, that it would be safer for them to set up shop in the town with the Vigilante Committee in Silver Springs. The end of the struggle was near. When the now forgotten Aproi newspaper print shop mysteriously burned down and Reach graciously extended the Silver Springs Weekly coverage to Aproi, Silver Springs took on its current form, becoming the capital.

The town slowly attracted businesses and settlers, who were lured by the cheap property rates, the idea of the West, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Saloons and brewing companies were very lucrative and many other businesses from blacksmith shops to bakeries began to open up.

The last, but certainly not least, of the truly successful Silver Springs prospectors was Herbert Wyatt. After procuring silver and copper from mines only he knows the location of, Wyatt reinvented himself as a gentleman gambler. Wyatt invested early and heavily into the saloon and brewing business immediately before the Civil war and made a second fortune. He is a self-made man, but how he got his code of honor is anyone's guess. He's also interestingly a scholar and, in an attempt to create a scholarly community, sent letters to fellow academics tired of the ivory tower and armchair thinkers of the civilized world, inviting them to move West. With Reach's support and advertising, he successfully created a scholarly community, albeit a small one, in the town. Our current Gov. Campbell is still a member of Wyatt's Readers, as is the esteemed local lawyer and town elite Lawrence

Myers.

In the period just before the war, Silver Springs was characterized by slow growth and development, as the locals fought amongst each other and against nature, in the struggle to become a legitimate city in the West. After the war, however, it prospered. The establishment of Sprigg's JDSF (Jefferson-Deseret San Francisco) Railroad and the connection of Silver Springs to the American Continental rail line meant that cargo, goods, military transports, and ordinary people could come into and out of the region much more frequently and efficiently.

Since the population boom, more and more of the State has been charted for railroad development, and organized mining continues to excavate fortunes out of the mountains. The lifestyle of Native peoples continues to be challenged, and their presence in the city is minimal and aggressively contested.

Safety is not a given in the town of Silver Springs. Because mining is a key industry, the town of 20,001 residents (by census) is full of thugs and vagrants, holing up in the town waiting for their next big break. They spend their money on drinking, gambling and prostitutes, leaving what little they have left to go towards room and board. They are why saloons are successful in the West. Ever since the gold rush there have been thieves and murderers in a town whose people are so largely focussed on their own fortunes that no one really looks out for each other. Reach and others managed to finally get a jail, six police and a marshall, but even the monthly hangings only slow crime, not prevent it. With the influx of displaced soldiers after the war the situation has only gotten worse.

Silver Springs has experienced concentric rings of development. The center of town is now

the business district where the movers and shakers of Silver Springs work. The newspaper headquarters are also there, along with the banks, the town hall and any other lucrative or long standing business venture. Due to a fire that swept through the city center during the war, everything there is now built of brick. Just outside the ring of brick buildings there are the taverns, newer businesses, inns, and some houses. This is the most varied district. It includes many different kinds of shops, craftsmen workshops, squares to gather in, and taverns to drink at. It is noisy and constantly in motion nearly all times of the day. Farther out are the newest houses; these are usually little more than shacks with hard packed dirt floors, but they are large in number. The people living in them are often displaced veterans, uncared for migrants low on luck and money, people unliked or unwanted by the community, like Chinese or black people, and other unfortunate people perceived as being different. Alice Gage's brothels are scattered throughout the rings. She has more authority than anyone would like to admit, so she runs her business the way she pleases.

The tallest building in town is the clock tower next to the train station on the North side of town. It is just a little bit removed, but it can be seen from almost all places in the town. Trains run all hours of the day. Just next to the station is a military fort, although it is poorly manned.

It is a vibrant town, the hub of activity taking place in the Jefferson State. All the money comes into and out of Silver Springs, all the supplies and nearly all the people. The Major Characters of Silver Springs run the gamut from the politically inclined to lucky prospectors to folks looking to escape their destinies.

2.1.1 Silver Springs Politicians

As a hub for growing enterprise, many who hope to rise in the ranks of the US government have begun to descend on the city, searching for opportunity and fame.

Mayor Woolcott

Born into a notoriously political family, Woolcott is no stranger to controversy. Maximilian P. Woolcott's father was the governor of an eastern American state, which remained indecisive

during the civil war, and relations with the new union were frigid afterwards. While the state's population were decidedly against slavery, Woolcott's father feared the devastation caused by war. He placed his dreams of success in his son and

spirited him through his education. Woolcott was appointed Mayor of Silver Springs shortly after the death of his father; a tragedy which he never entirely recovered from. He became shrewd and serious, preferring isolation to company. His assistants describe his work ethic as impeccable, and his efforts made Silver Springs the hotspot of the Central West. He is getting on in years but remains a sprightly and fearsome swordsman. As a celebrity fencer, he is known throughout the states for his legendary composure and remarkable precision. Mayor Woolcott is ultimately concerned with consolidating his power over the fledgling state. This involves subsidizing infrastructure projects, something he and President Wolfe have personally discussed. The majority of this money comes from G.M.Holt, who is trying to grow his power into a state monopoly. Wolfe has personally tried to curb Holt's influence by providing personal financial support to Mayor Woolcott, but the mayor is only too keen to develop his land and accepts both Wolfe and Holt's contributions with generosity. He has been in office longer than anyone else in the state and is thus the locus of the state's developing power which, through Grant and Holt, he has begun to centralize on himself and his office. With his upcoming reelection, there is no telling how the office of Mayor may change.

Gov. Campbell

Gov. Campbell was Silver Springs' acclaimed doctor before running for Governor. Outwardly, Dr. Peter Sydney Campbell appears to be a very stern old man: tall and skinny with a carefully sculpted grey beard along his chin, a completely bald head, and spectacles above his hawk like nose. Even his eyebrows are somewhat threatening, jutting out in dangerously owl-like levels; however, any of his patients will tell you he has impeccable bedside manner and a warm smile. Being the only good doctor in Silver Springs, he is known to almost everyone in town, and when he ran as a "well-read, unbiased, and dependable man," there was very little opposition. His aspirations for Jefferson are high, and largely directed toward the public good. His first real act of authority as governor has been to build a hospital and install his old clinic staff as its head staff. St. Francis opened very recently and is one of the only large buildings located not in the center of town, but among the poorer outer circle. He still remains allied with the scholars and visionaries of Silver Springs, but his discussion of higher taxes is giving fire to Mayor Woolcott's campaign for governorship, and the contest between them is growing quite heated: those who want to develop Silver Springs into a better place for the people support Campbell versus those who want a more commerce-oriented future champion Woolcott.

2.1.2 Silver Springs Establishments

Business is booming in the city of Silver Springs, and these are the people and companies who are making sure it stays that way.

American Continental

The story of American Continental is really the story of Sylvester Van Wyke. Wyke was born in New York. His father, Ernest Van Wyke, was a shrewd businessman who owned a successful shipping yard. As Sylvester got older he saw the trains moving goods to and from the yard and realized that was the future. Years before the civil war he acquired a small railroad company and, thanks to the business acumen drilled into him by his father, his railroad became a booming success. At the height of his success, however, he was voted off the board when he

refused to sell to the then successful Atlantic Railways. Van Wyke's response was to begin again, acquiring another small railroad, building it up the way he had his previous one. Then, when a corruption scandal struck Atlantic Railways, severely crippling the company's image, he made his move. He bought Atlantic Railways and merged it with his own, naming the new combined railroad American Continental. At this point Van Wyke had developed a reputation for being an unstoppable businessman. When the war ended and the Transcontinental Railroad was to be built, there was no question of who

would be building it.

It was around this time that Van Wyke met Adrian Steele. Anyone who's been with the two of them would compare it to an unstoppable force meeting an immovable object, although they'd be hard-pressed to tell you who had the upper hand. Van Wyke uses the U.S. military to guard his trains and construction yards, Steele uses Van Wyke's trains to transport his troops and resources to the frontier to further his crusade against the natives. Despite their partnership they are constantly at each other's throats, neither of them could have gotten where they were without constantly exploiting the weaknesses of everyone they meet, a lesser man in either of their shoes wouldn't last a day.

G. M. Holt

Gabriel Marshall Holt is the proud owner of G M Holt Bank, the most aggressively expanding bank on the frontier. Holt came to Silver Springs from Philadelphia just after the war to manage his empire's Westward expansion more personally. Holt is shaped like egg, with a round face and round hands, and what little neck he has to his name is hidden in the tuxedos he perpetually wears. Complete with a top hat and mustache, this enterprising walrus of a man is a figure of notice in Silver Springs. Despite his outward image, he has a very shrewd mind and very quick fingers, kept dexterous by trimming his rose garden that is his pride and joy. No small rose garden either, as he has more of a "rose farm," and it takes up 3 acres of elevated beds on a property East of Silver Springs. The garden is his pride and joy and the delicate side it evokes in him is present in his love of opera and what he considers *High Arts*. Delicacy should not be confused here with sensitivity or empathy; he is very frugal and charity is not in his vocabulary.

His alliances with other investors are not friendships, and the train operators that bring his money into and out of Silver Springs seem to always be covered in cold sweat, yet their turnover rate is quite low. The military guards that come with the trains seem less afraid, but they still follow his directions to a tee. His motivations have always been financial but there are rumblings that his interests may be spreading to politics?

Mrs. Holt shares her husband's love of the "High Arts," although she appreciates roses slightly less. She is a tall skinny woman with silvery blonde hair and a very sharp green-eyed glare, who can always be found in the latest fashions of American aristocracy, not that there are very many to notice in Silver Springs. Now that all of their children are out of the house, managing other branches of the bank or married, she has found new ways to direct her time.

Leslie Harriet Holt considers herself a leader in the social reformation of Silver Springs, and while she stepped down from her position of head of the Vigilante committee some years back, her tea group is constantly discussing ways to bring culture to the somewhat disgusting denizens of the city. Getting on her bad side means getting on the wrong side of many of the rich women in town, which is not necessarily equivalent to the most influential women in town. Nonetheless they do have pull when it comes to the various popularity contests in town, and people on their bad side quickly find disparaging poems, songs, articles, and jokes at their expensive circulating through town with alarming speed. Any discussion of projects related to building opera houses, dancehalls, or music venues can be attributed to Mrs. Holt, although her only recent successful endeavor has been to create a horse-racing track. She can be found there at every race appropriately cheering on the G M Holt stallions.

This strange mixture of interests, talents and wealth has endowed the Holt family with the ability to financially and socially outcompete most newcomers in their enterprises, especially in banking. Opposing them is to incur both a financial struggle and a social one, as investors have been trained to shy away from their competitors so as to not look bad if sudden character assassinations occur. With this looming threat on the board it's not surprising that G.M.Holt is the banking monolith that it is.

Meyers and Son

Silver Springs has its fair share of crime. Business should be booming for local lawyer and prosecutor, Lawrence Meyers, but he's an elderly man looking to retire. Born and raised in Silver Springs, Meyers is the last in a long

line of solicitors working at Meyers and Son. Tall, but slightly stooping, Meyers' craggy face hides a sharp tongue and a curmudgeonly nature. Always handsomely dressed, someone is paying him more than his regular salary. Rumor has it that he works for Mr. Van Wyke. Meanwhile, his junior partner, Luis Dantes, is poised to take over the law firm. Dantes has worked diligently, not only to earn Meyers' respect, but also the mayor's. Dantes is ambitious, and Meyers knows it. Perhaps, that is why Meyers hasn't retired.

Silver Springs Weekly

The Silver Springs Weekly is a typical Western newspaper. It focuses on politics, local events, social and cultural news and, of course, advertisements. Founded by Elias Reach, it is run by Bob Franks: editor, journalist, and critic.

No one knows much about Mr. Franks except that he is a difficult and dangerous man. Short and slightly overweight, he doesn't cut an imposing figure, but everyone is afraid of him. No one in town knows whose side he is on. He is a middle-aged muckraker in both senses of the term: he is a man who investigates corruption and criminal activities, but he's also a scandal-monger. He lives in the shadows, smoking his pipe, always listening to the whispers on the wind.

Rumor has it that he is a major investor in American Continental (AC), but it may just be that: a rumor. The Silver Springs Weekly both praises and censures the actions of AC's owner, Sylvester Ernest Van Wyke. Mr. Van Wyke clearly avoids Mr. Franks, and so should you, unless you want to become front-page news.

Summit Bank

Summit Bank is a local bank run by Dale Gibbs and Benjamin-Francis Palmer. These two men, a wildly successful prospector and a local mining outfitter, respectively, had humble beginnings. Gibbs came to Palmer after several of his fellow miners had been tricked into selling their findings for pennies on the dollar. Palmer was sympathetic and began posting current gold prices outside his store. Soon Gibbs suggested he just exchange the currency himself. Together that's

just what they did, the trust of the local miners worked to their benefit, and they quickly became a serious bank.

Between Palmer's finances, and Gibbs' newly discovered intuition for playing the gold market, the two of them have laid their claim on the banking fortunes of Silver Springs and are now trying to outperform powerful East-coast bankers like Holt. What they lack in resources, however, they make up for in accessibility and hospitality. Residents of Silver Springs universally love Gibbs and Palmer, who they see as the "average man's" banker in contrast to Holt's financial monolith. Yet, even if Summit Bank is beloved by the people of Silver Springs, they have not escaped Holt's notice. People are expecting Holt to react quickly and decisively in eliminating Summit Bank, but strangely nothing has happened as of yet. Perhaps they are discussing a merger?

Alice Gage

The world's oldest profession was one of the first to follow prospectors and settlers into the West, and Alice Gage is one of the most successful madames in the history of the West. It's a fair bet that every prostitute in Silver Springs is an employee of Gage's, and you'd be hard pressed to find any in the state of Jefferson who has not worked for her at some time. A buxom and intense woman, interactions with Gage are frequently one sided, and those who meet her often mistake her for being much taller than she is.

Gage's personal history is a mix of mystery and tall tales, misdirection that she gladly encourages. Rumors that she was descended from European royalty, an exiled Enochite, or the child of the unholy union between an excommunicated Enochite preacher and a demon are all true, at least according to her. In reality, she was a Chicago prostitute with a good ear for business opportunities and the will to claw her way into a position of power.

As the head of the largest brothel in Silver Springs, and owner of all the rest, Gage is one of the most well-informed, and well-moneyed people in the city.

2.1.3 The Silver Springs Bounties

The message boards of Silver Springs are always plastered with dozens of fading posters looking for work, but these four cases have managed to avoid being removed for some time. Too much time, if you ask Sheriff Hammond.

The Witch of Vander's Gulch

The story of the Witch of Vander's Gulch is shrouded in mystery. Legend has it that Vander's Gulch was the place where the Great Spirit began creating the world, and filled the Gulch with her failed creations once the world was formed. It is said that, although the gulch was filled with monsters and abominations, it was the most peaceful place in the world because a young woman had pacified its inhabitants. No one knows where she came from or what she did, but she made the meek from the monstrous, and her power was renowned. One night, when a full moon stole the night sky and the Trickster Fox was laughing, the monsters took up tendencies befitting their grotesque visages and laid waste to the gulch. The Trickster Fox approached the bereft woman, who wept for her dead friends, and the fox cursed her to always look like those who she tried to save. She became a hideous crone, whose appearance curses her visitors to repeat her tragedy. They fall victim to their own kindness, only to be betrayed by those they helped. Even her name is unmentionable amongst settlers- especially Enochites, who must bless the air to dispel her inauspicious name. The Witch's curse manifests in seemingly harmless ways, and many attribute the existence of the curse to the bitterness of those who believe themselves cursed. It begins by refusing coins to beggars and ends with cynicism and paranoia; one day, those who need your help will leverage your empathy and take everything from you. It becomes an obsession for those who believe themselves cursed: that those that you help rob you of your altruism.

It is said that the Witch of Vander's Gulch still has the purest heart in the west, and has never intentionally cursed anyone. She has completely isolated herself within the gulch and refuses to take visitors. Yet, even in the gulch, the origin and wastebin of all creation, she cannot escape the doomed landscape. The irony is that she perpetuates the cruelty of the land, yet she is the kindest soul of all. Amongst the native tribes,

young men are sent into the gulch to confront a paradox of reality - that those who commit their lives to saving others are often consumed by them. She remains there to this day, and serves as a warning for those who wish to help others, cursing them for their benevolence. The curse remains to be verified, but it is certainly believed.

The Perpetrator of the Gartner Homestead Slaughter

The Gartner family were some of the first homesteaders in the area. Self-sufficient on their farm, their absence from town went unnoticed until the entire family was found dead by a group of travelers seeking shelter from a storm. Upon investigation, Marshall Hammond determined they were killed with a knife, but the weapon was never found on the grounds. In the wake of the discovery, a volunteer group was sent to alert other nearby settlers and they discovered that a similar fate had befallen the more secluded Smith homestead. The Smiths had been killed months earlier, but due to their isolation, their deaths had gone unnoticed, without anyone's knowledge. The common theory is that the murderers were natives, but the Marshall believes it was something much more sinister.

The Strange Case of the JDSF 4:10 from Omaha

The disappearance of the JDSF railway 4:10 from Omaha is infamous in Silver Springs as one of the greatest unsolved cases of all time. Scheduled to arrive in Silver Springs on a clear spring afternoon, the train, her cargo, and her passengers simply never arrived. Later arrivals reported seeing absolutely no signs of it along the tracks and none were ever found. The train manifest has been checked and rechecked, and nothing of unusual value was onboard, as most bank and government cargo is transported via American Continental. An investigation into the passenger list was made as thoroughly as could be afforded, but never turned up any results. The current working theory is that the train was stopped on

the bridge over the Jefferson Stripe and derailed over the side onto a raft, where it was then floated down the river. Countless issues with this theory have been voiced, but without an alternative theory, none have gained traction. The passengers are presumed dead since none of them have resurfaced in the months following the event.

Maria Ortega

Maria Ortega is the leader of the female bandit gang that has been conservatively taking a piece out of everything going into Silver Springs. Ortega is a short plump Hispanic woman with a warm smile and a taste for expensive revolvers. She began her career of thievery as the organizer of the wives of a bandit group called Los Diablos Argentes. They would chat, sing, watch the children and prepare fiestas for the men when they returned, until they didn't return after an attempted bank robbery gone wrong. Discovering

that their husbands had been killed or arrested, she organized the women into a raiding group that managed to successfully break the surviving gang members out of jail. Discovering a taste for excitement, and with the prospects of a new empowering lifestyle, the women took up their husbands' mantle, and through a combination of careful planning and caution, have been a lot more successful in their raiding enterprises. Maria's passion is dancing, and Los Diablos send out discreet invitations for fiestas they hold outdoors every full moon; anyone from Silver Springs can come and dance. Because the women themselves have never been identified, no arrests have been made, and Maria is almost seen as a hero amongst many in town. Her long term ambitions are to raise a happy family, and to encourage other women to take up arms and live life, but for now Maria is just enjoying a new chapter in her own life.

2.1.4 Residents of Note

These people are some of the more notable movers and shakers in the city of Silver Springs. Not necessarily politicians or business owners, they nonetheless are powerful and influential characters, well known in the city.

Herbert Wyatt

Herb Wyatt is a heavyset man with a thick mustache and a deep unpleasant laugh, which is usually heard following his own jokes. He made a lot of money in the early days of the silver rush and now spends his money at saloons and brothels. Most people in town expect him to go bankrupt soon, with no obvious source of income and his blatant public spending, but it isn't quite that simple.

He is deceptively well-educated and he doesn't spend his money as freely as people think; he merely doesn't bother hiding his vices. After amassing a small fortune prospecting in silver and copper, Wyatt decided to reinvent himself as a man of leisure. He received a medical degree from Tulane and a new identity from New Orleans. Upon returning to the area, he immediately invested in the saloon and brewing business instead of practicing medicine. He has a lot invested in the development of Silver Springs, and he will put money behind anything he thinks is worthwhile, especially scholarly projects such as

the Readers.

Matron Madrigal

Susan Madrigal is in charge of St. Francis Hospital. She was the head assistant in Dr. Campbell's office. With the most medical skill, short of the Dr. himself, she's a very capable and disciplined matron, and the hospital similarly seems to be successful and efficient. Ms. Madrigal cuts a very imposing figure. She is a stubborn, pale-skinned Scandinavian bear of a woman, and people have a tendency to behave politely whenever she's in the vicinity. She cares deeply for her patients and between the hospital and Church, she needs no other calling in life. Although she'll treat anyone, she does not hesitate to make it clear that she has strong opinions and is very distrustful of anyone who isn't a Protestant Christian.

Sheriff Paul Hammond

Once a bright eyed recruit in a respectable east coast police department, an departmental spat earned Hammond a transfer out West, to the no-

torious and understaffed. There, Hammond discovered that the Silver Springs “police department” consisted of a single jailhouse, privately funded by newspaper mogul Elias Reach, and a long list of previous sheriffs who’d fallen in the line of duty. Hammond’s adjustment to his new situation was short, but brutal. Now several years into his career, his premature grey hair and deeply lined, unshaven face are souvenirs of his time keeping order in a city that resists his efforts at every turn. Though very much disliked by the criminal element of Silver Springs, Hammond is still grudgingly respected by many for his steady tenacity and dedication to justice.

Recently, he has taken under his wing a rag-tag band of recruits, each motivated by either obligation or a genuine desire to do good in their city. Though they’re untrained, if even a sliver of Hammond’s experience rubs off on them, they might just survive long enough to earn their keep.

Reverend Josiah G. Brightridge

Josiah Brightridge was a slave for most of his early life. After emancipation, he devoted himself to his church. His face is only beginning to show his age and life of hardship. Reverend Brightridge’s sermons emphasize community and helping your fellow man. He came to Silver Springs only recently, invited by the local preacher Arne Caldwell when worries and questions about the Enochites began to affect the congregation. Upon his arrival he refused to be put up in Father Caldwell’s home, preferring to sleep in the church. A charismatic speaker, he is ordinarily quite personable and calm, but has an intense distrust of anything supernatural. For this reason he also dislikes the Enochites, believing that their leadership is dabbling in practices and powers they should not be involved with. His willingness to hear people talk about their strange experiences outside the city has strengthened the church’s following, but makes Father Caldwell uncomfortable. Brightridge’s strong feelings about the supernatural lead many to believe that his past is filled with struggles against those kind of forces, but he tells no such tales.

Leon von Kaiser

Leon von Kaiser can trace his family’s lineage back to the lands beyond the Americas, where

he claims that he was descended from kings. His father supposedly abdicated his throne during a period of revolutionary turmoil and fled to America. He bought and developed an estate at the foot of the mountains outside of Silver Springs and raised his only son there. While Kaiser’s kingly pedigree is doubted, his father’s name appears on the title for the estate, and that much is certain. His father was an intelligent and well-read astronomer, who bequeathed his library, observatory, and estate to his son Leon after his death. Leon von Kaiser sees himself as both the continuation of his family’s bloodline and promoter of his father’s culture. Of the vast library in his estate, he has read very little, although he claims to have read it all. He sees himself as the West’s intellectual because he is always ready to propose a new theory that explains everything. While he is largely dismissed by most serious American intellectuals as a radical monarchist, he has made friends in the local area who value his removed perspective on current events.

Consumed by his dreams for the past and his obsession for the stars, he has given shelter to other radical thinkers and authors such as the infamous Coyote Teeth, who is rumored to be residing at his estate. In recent years, he has barred outsiders entrance to his estate - especially state bureaucrats - and installed a private rail line on his property that runs directly to Silver Springs. He has stationed personal guards to ensure that unauthorized people do not make it to his estate, and Mayor Woolcott has confirmed his von Kaiser’s privacy. Given that his most recent theory on the development of prosperous societies praises the use of indentured labor, the government of Silver Springs is concerned that he may have reinstituted slavery within his realm. There may soon be a reckoning with Kaiser, but even the Mayor is concerned about the loss of his library - the only bastion of knowledge in the West.

Jiao-Long Ma

Jiao-Long Ma was a Chinese immigrant and laborer for American Continental, working on railway construction sites for long hours and little pay. His overseer, Marshal Stotts, was a cruel, unforgiving man. To prevent himself from losing hope, Jiao-Long became determined to kill

Stotts, planning to commit murder by crafting a gun from scraps of metal and stolen tools. For almost a year, he worked on his weapon in what little spare time he had, but when the gun was finished he realized that killing Stotts would simply lead to his own death. He hid his gun with the construction tools and abandoned his plan. No less than a week later, natives attacked the construction site. In the fray, Ma retrieved his weapon and killed three of them, saving his life as well as the life of Marshal Stotts.

In the aftermath of the attack, Stotts was in too much shock to think about why Ma might have been creating the gun in the first place; he only realized that Ma's genius was being wasted hammering railroad spikes. He offered Ma a business proposition, they would go into business crafting and selling guns, Stotts would handle the front end and Ma would do the manufacturing. Their partnership was short-lived, Stotts was killed in a duel and Ma's business lost its face. But his guns still show up around the West, each a work of art, no two alike. Every gun he's made has a reputation of its own, that can be followed through the west, through the hands of some of the most skilled and influential people in the West. New Jiao-Long Ma firearms don't show up often but when they do it's always in the hands of a larger-than-life character looking to

make waves, and no attempts to figure out where they came from before that person's possession ever bear fruit.

Gertrude H. McCormick

Mrs. McCormick is the local school teacher, the only school teacher, in Silver Springs. She's a tall, skinny, plain-looking woman who always wears a scowl, glasses, and her long brown hair in a braid almost all the way down her back. One of the only people in town to have been born on the frontier, in what was then the Turage Territory, she believes that there's a future for Silver Springs, and it lies in the children. There are few children in Silver Springs, and Mrs. McCormick is determined to make sure that they have good schooling and good Protestant values so they grow up to be contributing members of society. For these reasons she also sits at the head of the Silver Springs vigilante council, and she is the only woman to sit on the council at all. In her opinion, the drunks and criminals that move in and around town are the biggest threat to the children's future; they are dangerous and provide terrible role-models. She campaigns to rid the city of alcoholics, and as one of the best rifles in the state, she is very comfortable picking up arms and tracking down the various bandit groups that harass the citizens and shamefully inspire the children.

2.2 Government and Army

The election of President Manford Silas Wolfe and the ongoing campaign of General Steele matter to the folks in Silver Springs. These two men rose to prominence during the civil war as generals, and while Wolfe is trying to repair the country after the bloodshed of the civil war, Steele hasn't truly left it.

President Manford Silas Wolfe

Wolfe is a controversial figure. He rose to prominence as a general during the Civil War in which he was renowned for breaking the stalemate between the north and south through bloody and costly offensives. A general for the north, he directly led the campaign which decimated the southern army. His campaign for the presidency elicited fear amongst the defeated south, who cried in outrage that his election would entail further punishment for the southern states. So far, Wolfe has adopted a policy of forceful recon-

ciliation and reconstruction, opening up the west to migration and statehood, while rebuilding the south's devastated infrastructure.

He is relentless in forging a consensus - demanding personal duels from those who oppose him. His bloodstained reputation followed him into office, where many have adopted the phrase, "Man is a Wolfe to Man." There are even rumors that President Wolfe is actually a werewolf. Although he has publicly laughed at the suggestion, it has become a popular metaphor when discussing the man. After all, who could endure this

much carnage, yet still remain human enough to reconstruct a nation beset by the goriest civil war in history? The rise of Silver Springs has been largely attributed to Wolfe's success, as he has staked his power upon the loyalty of new, local leaders in the West. Mayor Woolcott has taken a particular liking to Wolfe, seeing him as a beneficiary and friend, although Wolfe is much cooler towards him.

General Adrian Steele

Steele was born to a family of farmers on the east coast and grew-up with a relative abundance of everything. He developed traits of both stoic beligerence and impetuosity that would define his later career. Steele enlisted at the outbreak of the Civil War and quickly rose through the ranks amongst the cavalry. He employed devastating counter-offensives and magnificent feints; his techniques were noted for their ruthlessness.

After the war, Steele found gainful employment in Wolfe's programs of Westward expansion and his reputation skyrocketed. His most discussed battle occurred at the foot of the mountains by Silver Springs, in which he encircled the Confederacy of the Hawk's Grand Chieftain, Tecumseh, and eradicated him alongside his co-

hort. Steele's name is poison to the Grand Chieftain's successor, the Starhawk Kenu, who has vowed to slay him. A number of skirmishes over Van Wyke's passenger trains have occurred between Steele and Tecumseh. Steele uses these trains as bait, drawing the Confederacy into a committed military engagement, and then overwhelms them in a counter-charge, but he has won no decisive victory so far. Steele is the number one enemy of the Confederacy of the Hawk, and Tecumseh has matched him battle for bloody battle. To ensure his position, Tecumseh needs unambiguous victories and that is precisely what Steele denies him.

Finally, Steele's promises serve as a rallying cry for restless war veterans, who re-enlist in multitudes. He offers them a break from their shattered lives, a temporary, new life laden with adventure and spoils. When the west is settled, Steele knows that his name will be ranked amongst the heroes who carried the sword and defeated the last bastion of resistance. Needless to say, for all Steele's fantasies, Sylvester Ernest Van Wike has not been too receptive about his passenger trains being used for the military's goals.

2.3 Native Americans

It is important to note that this section on Native Americans is entirely fictional. This is intentional, as it was the designer's intention to provide a representation of Native American life that encompassed the larger issues they faced, rather than the issues specific to natives of the area that is now the State of Colorado. There was no single religion which every native tribe adhered to. This fictional representation is heavily inspired by the Jicarilla Apache Texts, which are available online for free.

The indigenous people have a very harsh life, and there are no signs that it will improve. For the past four centuries, these people have contended with a population of foreigners encroaching upon their ancient territory. With guns, railroads, disease, and legislation, Native Americans were corralled or pushed westwards.

As the sun sets in the West, millions of Native Americans find themselves caught in the twilight. This is their story, kept neatly between these pages, though it is entirely fictional. It would not have been possible to accurately define Native American life within the confines of this book.

This book is a work of historical fantasy. Any pretense of historicity would only further the inaccuracies which surround representations of Native Americans in popular culture. The most recent Lone Ranger (2013) film is a good example. Even the translator is a kind of Conquistador, despite their best intentions to inform. If you are playing this game while speaking English on the American continent, you should

deeply consider why this is the case. That is the sole intent of this story.

This is a story - and it is certainly not a history - of the Native Americans from their first days until 1890 when the Frontier was officially declared closed.

2.3.1 The Beginning

In the beginning, there was only the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit made the world, drew forth the rivers, and populated the land with innumerable creatures. Amongst these creatures, the Fox was the smartest, and he fooled the other animals into making him their chieftain. He soon became bored, and beseeched the Great Spirit to entertain him. The Great Spirit, seeing that the Fox had mastered all of creation with his guile, created humanity. The Great Spirit gave the humans the gift of wisdom, so that they could spot the trickery of the Fox. Over time, this wisdom became paranoia, and the humans dreaded the approach of the Fox, the being who stalked the line between falsity and reality. The humans asked the Great Spirit to protect further against the machinations of the Fox.

The Great Spirit agreed and created three birds: the Raven, the Vulture, and the Magpie, who were designed to live in harmony with one another. So long as these birds lived, the Fox would not be able to fool all of the humans; their priests would always be able to discern the truth from the Fox's lies. If, however, the birds were to die, the humans would also die. If creation were to end, the birds would eat each other, and thus the birds became known as the Three Cannibal Birds. The priestly orders would keep the birds at peace with one another, resolving any conflicts before they resulted in death. The Three Cannibal Birds represented a covenant between the Great Spirit and humanity, so that the Fox's existential humor was kept at bay. But the Fox still played with the humans, leading them into minor follies and tricking them into personal tragedies. The Fox had been misunderstood by the humans - he was not malevolent, merely bored. He watched as the simple humans, who so prided themselves on deep insight, engaged in the most ludicrous acts of self-deception. They did not need the Fox to deceive themselves, because they already took so much pleasure in their innate duplicity.

The Fox loved the humans more than anything, but the humans feared the Fox. The Fox laughed at their fear, but the humans were right to fear the Fox who would unwittingly bring about their demise.

How the Pox Tricked the Fox

One day, while the Fox lay upon the eastern shores of the continent, boats began to appear on the horizon. The Fox, sensing the opportunity for mischief, informed the local tribe of their arrival. He dazzled them with stories of their foreign wonders and terrified them with descriptions of their weapons. The Fox tried to portray these foreigners as divine and powerful, but the tribe was wiser than the Fox was cunning. They knew that history was unfolding before them, and they waited for the foreigners to make the first gesture.

When the ships arrived, there was rejoicing and wonder on all sides, yet each people cultivated a suspicion of the other. The Fox saw that these two peoples were fated to be incompatible, regardless of their innocent intentions and conciliatory behavior. The Fox doubted that their altruism would last and the lingering gunships reminded the Fox that his people would die if the two went to war.

As night came, the tribes were struck with a devastating plague. Millions of tiny pustules covered their bodies, and the sound of vomiting blotted out the foreigner's songs of friendship.

"This is the beginning of the end!" The Fox cried and sang a funeral dirge as the coastal people fell in droves to the new disease. For a whole week, the Fox wandered the makeshift graveyards, completely bereft. He tried to escape the corpses piling around him, but wherever he walked, the disease followed.

He called the Raven to him, and told the Raven to warn his people about the foreigners and their disease. This, however, was the moment when the pox tricked the Fox. The Fox

had carried with him the disease, but was unaffected by it, so that he spread the pox as he walked. Now, the Raven had become infected. The Raven flew to warn the other tribes of the continent, and as he flew, he unknowingly spread the plague. Once the Raven warned all of the Chieftains about the foreigners, he collapsed.

The Vulture was the first to realize the tragedy of the Raven, who had finally succumbed to his illness. On the Raven's deathbed, the ground blackened beneath him, as pustules formed upon the land and the Raven heard the earth's breathing become labored. The earth sighed with quakes and became even more ill. The Vulture came to the side of the Raven, and repeated the promise made by the Great Spirit to the humans - that one bird consuming another would lead to the end of the world. The Vulture promised never to eat another living bird, so he urged the Raven to die. If the Raven died, the Vulture believed that he could eat the Raven and prevent the poisoning of the earth without

heralding the end times.

The Raven wept, and told the Vulture that he was cursed with immortality - it was impossible for him to die. In order to save the land, the Vulture must consume the Raven alive and thus break the covenant between the Great Spirit and the humans. In the interest of saving his people, the Vulture consumed the Raven.

The Magpie watched, and felt overwhelming sympathy for humanity's paranoia. They had been right about the Fox, and now the end times were among them. As the years passed, he watched with deathless vigilance as his people were slaughtered by disease, despair, and desolation. The Vulture watched the Magpie watching him, and felt a fraction of the melancholy which the Fox must have felt when humanity turned away from him. At first, the Magpie aimed to prevent the apocalypse, but over time, his disposition shifted. It is only recently that many people, following the apocrypha of Gizzard Tongue, believe that the Magpie has finally lost his mind.

2.3.2 Civilized Five

The Civilized Five are the remnants of the five tribes in the Silver Springs area who are currently being assimilated into American society. While they live almost exclusively on reservations, there are exceptional individuals who brave the dangers of leaving these reserved locations. Despite their status as "civilized," they are almost unanimously regarded as savages. They take this nickname with a dark sense of irony, as they are violently aware that their own civilization has been eradicated. To the American colonists, civility is equated with docility, and the name of their tribal federation is proof enough that the Trickster Fox has paid too much attention to them. The critics of the Civilized Five point to the poverty of their estates and blame the tribes for retaining their archaic lifestyle. The tribes also have their staunch defenders in American society; those who demand that the Civilized Five receive more comprehensive aid from the government in their time of great need.

Perhaps the most (in)famous member of the Civilized Five is Coyote Teeth, the brilliant satirist. Unsurprisingly, her books, written entirely in English, have been widely popular and showcase the deplorable living conditions faced by her people. However, her reputation is complex and soured with the kind of mischief one would expect from a devotee of the Trickster Fox. She is the public image of the Civilized Five, for better or for worse.

Background

Initially, when settlers tried to create a colony on the Jefferson Stripe, the riverbank near Silver Springs, they were evicted by the Five Tribes who lived there.

Years later, as the West opened up, a second wave of settlers aimed for the river of Silver Springs. They were cut off by the five tribes and forced to leave the territory. Seizing this

opportunity, the army gave Adrian Steele the order to crush the tribes. During the night, Steele surrounded them. When day came, the tribes attempted a breakout, but their charge was broken upon the bayonets of Steele's troops. To this day, the chronicles speak of Steele's brutality as he sacked the tribal camps. The five tribes fled to the river they had defended, and there they surrendered. Steele forced the tribal chieftains to

abdicate their sovereignty and divided the tribes into five different reservations throughout the area. A generation passed in silence and depression. Revolts were common, and so was suicide. The priests of the tribes have adapted their traditions for the present age, and they serve as the only conduit to the ancient traditions from which their peoples have so radically been severed.

Religion

To the Civilized Five, their religion explains the history of their people - their movement from a once-sovereign people to desolation and isolation. After the abdication of their chieftains at Steele's hands, the priests of the Civilized Five have become the sages of culture and tradition. They provide what moral support they can, but lately this has not been enough. Nihilism is rampant amongst the camps of the Civilized Five, and even the priests are uncertain whether their stories and rituals provide any relief to their broken people. They continue the sacred practices, but their reverence has become mild. Their people do not fear the Fox as they used to, as if they have already accepted their defeat.

In a dream, a priest named Gizzard Tongue watched as the Magpie circled the continent, trying to find any tribes who had successfully resisted the foreigners. When the Magpie arrived on the West Coast, he saw the warships being constructed in California's harbors. While the Fox despaired when he saw gunships made of wood, these new ships were made of steel. The Magpie flew into a rage when he saw that the foreigners had finally won- it was as if their ships sailed through the continent and emerged stronger upon the other shore. Now, these foreigners would be free to export their terror across the world. Something must be done about this, the Magpie thought. If the end of the world was brought about, at least it would halt the progress of these foreigners, the progress they viewed as a god, the progress of finally colonizing a continent, progress like Americanization, progress like ironclad gunships sailing to foreign shores. All this progress was white noise to the Magpie, whose own thoughts progressed rapidly towards a final, prophesied conclusion- the Great Spirit's promise to end everything.

The Magpie, the smallest and gentlest of the

Cannibal Birds, sought out the Vulture and tried to free the Raven that was in his stomach. The Vulture told the Magpie that it was no use, that the Americans were immune to the plague that they brought upon us. This did not satisfy the Magpie, whose only desire was the end of all creation. He attacked the Vulture, tore open his stomach, and ate both the Vulture and the Raven decaying in his stomach. This was the vision Gizzard Tongue had.

The story spread like wildfire throughout the camps of the Civilized Five and many Priests of the Vulture renounced their profession. A council of priests was held, and it was decided that the Trickster Fox should be revered above all, for now their people were truly humbled by the vicissitudes of fate. Salvation was impossible - they could only laugh at the tragedy of their people, foretold since the earliest of times, and they laughed at how they had failed to prevent such an obscure prophecy from becoming reality. If there is any role that religion plays in civilized society, it is the injunction to laugh at the insurmountable sorrows facing a people before their inevitable silencing. Whether this divine comedy is secretly couched in nihilism or in a defiant repudiation of it, the Trickster Fox stands alone before the Civilized Five: terrifying and hilarious.

Coyote Teeth

Coyote Teeth was raised on a reservation and learned to read and write at a young age. She left the reservation and made friends with Leon von Kaiser, whose library she passionately enjoyed and devoured. Von Kaiser subsequently became her patron, and she embarked upon a career as a ghostwriter, adopting the name "Coyote Teeth." She wrote bitter satire about the conditions her native tribe suffered on the reservations, employing a grim humor that was said, "to sound like the noise a coyote makes when laughing through its teeth." She rose to prominence amongst the educated Eastern classes, who read her magnum opus, "Man is a Wolfe to Man"- a satire on the current President Wolfe. In the novel, the protagonist Ulysses S. Grant is a thinly veiled reference to Manford Silas Wolfe. It follows his role through the recent civil war, detailing his atrocities and providing absurd justifications for them.

For example, there is a running joke throughout the text that Grant's (and therefore Wolfe's) violent tendencies are due to his secret nature as a werewolf - a notion which became extremely popular following Coyote Teeth's prank.

One day, when Wolfe was visiting Silver Springs on parade, Coyote Teeth, with the help of Leon Kaiser, captured over 2 dozen wolves and set them loose down the avenue. What seemed like a joke turned serious when the procession of wolves tore into the crowd. Wolfe personally killed 3 of the wolves with his bare hands before his guards shot the rest. At the end of the skirmish, over 20 people were injured, but Wolfe was jovial and the crowd delighted with the martial prowess of their warlord-president. Their cries of "Wolfe is a man of wolves!" echoed throughout the city for days. Mayor Woolcott quickly discovered Coyote Teeth and Kaiser's involvement in the matter, but he has been reluctant to pursue them for other reasons.

In the past year, Coyote Teeth has caused even more controversy, writing a series of tragic-comedies about the lives of natives on reservations. While incomparably witty, her novels de-

pict the grim realities of life on these reservations. Starvation is common, disease is rife, and culture is prohibited. This has divided a number of intellectuals on the emancipation of the natives, and the debate rages to this day. The Trickster Fox plays a key role in these tragic-comedies. Coyote Teeth's reverence for the Trickster Fox is absolute. She views herself as the Fox's emissary, and maintains close ties with the Civilized Five, who see her as their champion.

The recent von Kaiser controversy casts shadows over Coyote Teeth's whereabouts. It's more than likely that she's fled von Kaiser's domain, but many are concerned that something much more sinister has happened; that she realized too great a comedy, laughed too hard for too long, and was changed forever. These speculators are concerned that another tragedy has occurred- that Coyote Teeth, like von Kaiser, has realized something deeper and darker about the human condition, and she laughed at it. This is, of course, just speculation; speculation that is perhaps mixed with the desires of those who want her criminalized and her books banned.

2.3.3 Confederacy of the Hawk

The Confederacy of the Hawk is an aggregate tribal organization composed of numerous tribes fleeing the encroachment of the United States. Led by the Starhawk Kenu, the Confederacy is the largest alliance of Native American tribes to date. They operate under the protection of the mountains west of Silver Springs, the Argent Range, and have surprisingly peaceful relations with the local Enochites. The Confederacy of the Hawk are committed to the reclamation of all their lands, by force, however, their alliance is anything but permanent.

The natives have been deeply involved in the wars fought in the territory. They have served on both sides of nearly every conflict. This has divided them and they remain divided to this day. Just as the Confederacy of the Hawk has been divided from the Civilized Five, the chieftains remain divided over the status of the Cannibal Birds. While they reject Gizzard Tongue's dream (see Civilized Five, Religion), the priests of the Confederacy of the Hawk have not yet agreed upon the state of these birds. Kenu has proclaimed that this minutiae is irrelevant to the present state of the Confederacy, and has indefinitely suspended any discussion of the matter. For Kenu, all that matters is that the end times are upon his people. He sees these petty theological debates as meaningless and prone to divide the confederacy, which must remain united at all costs. While his subordinates disagree, they do so silently, afraid of incurring his wrath.

The Starhawk's largest concern is supplying his people with the necessities to survive. With the recent tribal migrations, the land is unable to provide for all of its inhabitants. As a result, the Confederacy of the Hawk has committed their resources to robbing the railroads of Silver Springs for survival.

These railroads are well guarded by General Adrian Steele's cavalry, which inflicts brutal losses upon the Confederacy. Things are looking grim for the Confederacy, and many tribal leaders are

resigned to their fate. The Starhawk speaks of one last great charge against the United States - to settle the issue of the Silver Springs once and for all.

Background

The Confederacy of the Hawk was born from a divergent prophecy in a nearby land (roughly the Lehigh territory). The most widely accepted form of the prophecy states that, when the covenant between the Great Spirit and the humans is broken, the Great Spirit will give the humans a fourth bird, the Hawk, to govern humanity in their final days. The Hawk's presence on earth will be taken up by the Starhawk, the individual whom the priests of the other three birds will unanimously nominate. The Starhawk will unite the scattered tribes underneath a single banner, so that their people will at least have solidarity in their final hours.

The Confederacy of the Hawk didn't begin as such. The tribes which compose the confederacy, led by the Grand Chieftain Tecumseh, migrated into the plains behind the Argent Range once they were beaten by the American military and routed. Their defeat was reported to the nearby tribes in the Deseret territory, who flocked to their leadership. The Grand Chieftain Tecumseh was unanimously chosen to lead this confederacy of Native American tribes.

While Tecumseh promised to correct his previous defeat, he did so in increasingly religious language. He spoke about the coming of the Hawk, the bird which was to arrive once the covenant was broken, and pointed to his people's current allegiance as a sign of the Hawk's arrival.

The priests of the Confederacy convened to discuss Tecumseh. The tribes from Tecumseh's land insisted that Tecumseh was the prophesied Starhawk, but the rest were skeptical. Because the proclamation of the Starhawk required a unanimous consensus amongst the priests, the meeting was adjourned in frustration.

The majority of the tribes were inflamed by Tecumseh's rhetoric and demanded a war of revenge against the United States. Tecumseh gave them their war, and led a mass offensive to reclaim Silver Springs. Their advance led them to the city's gates before they met any serious resistance. General Steele and his army met them,

deployed around the city limits while his cavalry rested on an overlooking hill.

Tecumseh's host paused. He split his forces to affect a spearhead which was designed to pierce through Steele's lines and envelop his infantry from behind. Tecumseh planned for Steele's cavalry to become too mired amongst their own troops to effectively charge, thus blunting Steele's proposed counter-attack with his cavalry. He would personally lead the charge as the spearpoint, and drive his people to victory.

Steele, however, had a trick up his sleeve. He was secretly accompanied by two brigades of his finest cavalry, garrisoned inside Silver Springs. Steele placed the town under martial law, and ordered his officers to alert him once Tecumseh began his charge.

Tecumseh's charge is one of the great tragedies of history. His spearhead pierced through Steele's lines, but were blunted by the counter-charge of Steele's cavalry. Tecumseh and Steele met at the gates of Silver Springs, where Tecumseh was struck down and his charge halted. To this day, the spot where Tecumseh fell is a landmark of Silver Springs, called Tecumseh's Gate, where a statue of Adrian Steele brandishing a broken spear was erected.

Once Steele's cavalry was engaged, the other cavalry on the hill joined the fray, and broke through the shaft of Tecumseh's spear. The spearhead, including Tecumseh's top lieutenants, was swiftly consumed and his army broke.

It was a total rout, and the Confederacy of the Hawk fled back to their camp behind the Argent Mountains. They had lost nearly half of their men.

Starhawk Kenu

When the warband returned to their encampment, the confederacy spent an entire week in grief. During this time, the chieftains of the various tribes met to discuss the future of the confederacy. Tecumseh had never specified his successor, and the chieftains were concerned that the confederacy would be disbanded and scattered to the winds. After much deliberation and disagreement, they nominated a youthful Priest of the

Magpie named Kenu as their new Grand Chieftain.

Kenu's grandfather was a chieftain for one of the Civilized Five's tribes who were forced to abdicate after their military defeat. (See Civilized Five, Background) Kenu bore this legacy proudly, claiming that he alone spoke for the entire Civilized Five. While the claim was seen as childish and arrogant by the council of chieftains, they saw in it a powerful logic. If they proclaimed Kenu to be the Starhawk, they could claim to exercise their authority over the Civilized Five, whom Kenu claimed to represent.

When the chieftains convened their next council, they invited Kenu and the remnants of the confederate priests to attend. The chieftains rose before them, and proclaimed that Kenu was the Starhawk. The priests were outraged, and unanimously threatened to abdicate their office.

Kenu, however, had been informed of his ascension beforehand, and used the time to prepare a speech. He explained his pedigree to the priests, detailing his claim of command over the Civilized Five. He proposed that, above all else, his entrapped people must be liberated and that, once liberated, they would join the confederacy to replace the losses from Tecumseh's charge. He claimed that Tecumseh was not the Starhawk because he had failed to consider that his brothers in chains, the Civilized Five, should also live under the sovereignty of the Confederacy of the Hawk. While their religious practices did not mention the Hawk, that was no fault of their own. Because they observed the same basic traditions, Kenu argued that they should be liberated as well, and brought into the fold.

The priests secretly knew of the nihilism which beset the Civilized Five, and knew that their leaderless people would be hesitant to exchange one master for another. While the priests

remained in disagreement over the proclamation of the Starhawk, the council of chieftains did not permit the priests to convene their own council to adjudicate on the matter of the Starhawk. It became immediately obvious to the priests- this was a coup.

The Starhawk was proclaimed, and any dissenting priests were exiled. An official ceremony was held shortly afterwards, in which the remaining priests unanimously affirmed Kenu as the Starhawk. There was no great spectacle for Kenu's coronation. The ravages of hunger and malnutrition were felt throughout the camp, as the land showed that it could not feed the confederacy indefinitely.

The Starhawk Kenu, only 16 years old and filled with that particular youthful arrogance towards death, personally organized a series of raids upon the trains which criss-crossed the frontier. Nearly every attempt to loot the trains was repulsed, once again, by Adrian Steele. Kenu and the chieftains were infuriated, and their anger towards the United States deepened as their people starved.

Kenu can no longer justify these small-scale raids, and his chieftains have suggested that he should make good on his grandfather's claim. Kenu knows that he will have difficulty bringing the Civilized Five into the confederacy and plans to use force. He has been meeting regularly with the council of chieftains and in the deepest secrecy. It is unknown what Kenu is planning, but his tribesmen believe that Kenu is preparing for the end. If Kenu is going to launch a final offensive against Silver Springs, he will undoubtedly need the support of the Civilized Five. The movement of his troops indicates that this liberation is his next goal, whether or not the Civilized Five like it.

2.4 The Church of Enoch

A religious organization unique to the American West, the Church of Enoch is both spiritual movement and economic doctrine. Their unorthodox beliefs lead to the persecution of Enochites in most settled lands, leading to their self-imposed exile to the frontier. Ever seeking to expand their influence, Enochites have established their own state of Deseret to the West of Jefferson state. While they nominally follow the requirements laid out for them by the Federal government, many fear the Church is seeking to establish a new Theocracy the wastes.

History

Founded by Hyrum Cutler in the first quarter of the 19th century, the Church of Enoch has faced persecution and mistrust since their original exodus away from the East coast. After settling and subsequently being forcibly ejected from several states, including New York, Indiana, and Illinois, the Church relocated to the US territory of Utah. There, they were able to live unmolested for several years.

Members of The Church of Enoch believe that North America is home to the original location of the garden of Eden, and that Native Americans are a lost tribe of Israel. Central to the beliefs of Enochites are the United Order. Adherents to the United Order would willingly cede surplus production to the church, which is distributed by a bishop or equivalent religious leader. Additionally, Enochites practice polygamy, where family patriarchs would take multiple wives. These traits together, along with their powerful economic presence and tendency to vote in blocs, made them a threatening force in the eyes of more traditional settlers. Violent conflict between Enochites and “gentile” settlers was not uncommon before their move to the Utah territory, nor was violence between schism groups that split from the mainstream church. In response, church doctrine developed a “kill-or-be-killed” approach to attacks on church members, and members were not unopposed to acts of terrorism or preemptive strikes against their perceived enemies. This attitude was only reinvigorated by the murder of Hyrum Cutler by vigilantes as the Church fled Illinois. In spite of this, however, most Enochites are reserved and devout, truly believe in the righteousness of the United Order, and freely welcome even the most unscrupulous of strangers, so long as they do not threaten violence against the Church.

Founding an entirely Enochite government under the leadership of Cutler’s appointed successor, Theron Marsh, the Enochites settled in the uninhabited salt flats of Utah territory. Desiring a form of representation in the United States government, as territory representatives are appointed rather than elected, Church leaders drafted a constitution for the state of Deseret, and submitted it to Congress. Eager to avoid

conflict, and desiring another abolitionist state in the strained years preceding the Civil War, then-President Zachary Tyler ratified the constitution in spite of resistance from other members of the government. Despite fears over what precedent might be set by allowing the church to form their own state, Deseret was founded. More recently, however, a disastrous incursion into the state of Deseret by the Federal government, misinterpreted by the Enochites as an attempt at a forcible retaking of the state, led to open conflict. In the months following, Enochite militias clashed with underprepared Army forces across Deseret. A truce was eventually negotiated, and though the Deseret government is now no longer entirely Enochite, Theron Marsh, who ordered the original attack on the Federal task force, was allowed to keep his position as the head of the Church.

Currently, though tensions run high between the Church and the Federal government, there is an uneasy peace. However, schismatic churches, led by newly declared prophets who see the fight with the United States as a holy war, have sprung up out of the chaos. Though the official stance of the Church of Enoch is that these groups are heretical, intervention is rare. Though Enochites are finding themselves more and more disqualified from holding occupations outside of their home State, missionaries are a common sight on the streets of Silver Springs, as Jefferson borders the state of Deseret to the East.

Rumors abound that Theron Marsh, the highest authority in the Church, has been receiving instructions from some other power. Not helping this is the fact that he has been known to retreat for long periods of time into a shrine behind his study, ornamented with only a strangely carved stone laid carefully in a velvet-lined case, before emerging with new declarations and decrees. While certain Enochite sects believe that great people in the Church will be reincarnated, inquiries as to whether Hyrum Cutler’s spirit may still be bound to this earthly realm are not taken well by Enochite leaders, and may even inspire violence from less tactful adherents to the faith.

Theron Marsh

Theron Marsh is a firebrand leader and a man with the needs of his people in his heart. Biblical in his nature and his appearance, Marsh's long, greyed beard and simple dress do little to hide the fire behind his piercing, deep blue eyes.

Before his time as Church president, and even before he earned a place in the Church leadership, Marsh spent time in Federal prison, arrested on charges of destroying the homes and property of dozens of people who had actively harassed and denied service to Enochites living in the outskirts of a major city. Throughout the court proceedings, Marsh insisted his innocence, claiming it was "the hand of God" that brought on the fire he was accused of starting. Though there was not enough evidence to convict him of arson, a number of other offenses, the least of which included his admitted polygamy, were enough to put him behind bars for five years.

On his release, Marsh discovered that during his imprisonment, Church leaders had been championing him as a martyr for Federal oppression of Enochites. Embracing his new role as an icon among his people, Marsh began a tooth-and-nail ascent through the bishopry. Though his rhetoric of retaliation against the people who sought to harm the Church was a drastic turn from earlier doctrine, it found supporters on all levels of the Church hierarchy.

When Hyrum Cutler, the church's first prophet, was killed in the chaos of the Enochite's exile from Illinois, Marsh took up the reins of leadership with little resistance by Church elders. It was Marsh who led the Church to the salt flats west of Jefferson, and Marsh who spearheaded the campaign to give statehood to the sun-bleached territory there.

Marsh's first Proclamation, a message he claimed was interpreted directly from the word of God, came at the end of the chaotic and violent Deseret War. A short but bloody conflict between Enochite militias and the US Army, Marsh called for a truce he declared was God's will for his people.

What Enochite elders are less willing to share is that this announcement came after Marsh locked himself in his study, refusing all food and water for three days. Upon exiting, he disclosed

in confidence to a handful of elders that it was not God advising him, but the late Hyrum Cutler. A fist sized rock, perpetually warm and inscribed with arcane glyphs, which Marsh cannot explain how he came to possess, serves as Cutler's new earthly form, which he claims to be able to telepathically communicate with.

Marsh's later Declarations, including ending the practice of Enochite polygamy, have led to major changes in church doctrine, inspiring dissent from some of his followers. Insisting that these changes are the word of God, Marsh and the rest of the Church leaders have not been kind to these seditionists.

John Caleb Sprigg

John Caleb Sprigg was the son of prominent Enochite Pastor Jeremiah Sprigg and raised in his father's shadow. Father Sprigg, as the leader of his United Order, was constantly keeping track of budgets, inventories and the full economic production of his community. John, often invited to observe his father's work, spent his younger years being molded to follow in the Elder Sprigg's footsteps. On a mission to the East Coast in his later years, however, he found his true love, a young woman by the name of Julietta, and his true calling: the railroad. Inspired by the miles and miles of rail and the massive, steam-powered engine cars, he saw visions of an Enochite train bringing the entire Church together to and from a single community. Upon finding that the rest of his hometown had little enthusiasm for his high-minded dreams, at the urging of his wife he founded his own rail company, the Deseret railway, with funds provided by his sympathetic father and an unexpected windfall from his in-laws. At first only a local rail company, with tracks that barely found their way out of the state of Deseret, they soon expanded beyond the horizons of the single state.

Now the Jefferson Deseret San Francisco Railway, Sprigg's rail empire is the second largest in the West, preceded only by the monolithic American Continental. Long gone are Sprigg's visions of a church united by train, as the JDSF rail snakes its way across the west coast, joining cities that have only meager Enochite presences with the devout communities of Deseret. While Sprigg continues running his

business at the behest of his wife, his true passion is using the incredible potential of the railroad to bring prosperity to his people.

Julietta Clements Sprigg

The daughter of a New York financier, Julietta Clements was raised in a well-to-do home and worked as a desk clerk for a news agency when she met John, an Enochite missionary. John was a true believer in his faith and sought to find new followers willing to make the pilgrimage back to his home state of Deseret. In Julietta's case, it worked better than expected. After a series of coincidental encounters, one stymied mugging, a street-vendor lunch date, and a longer-than-expected train ride, the two of them fell in love in the way only storybooks can tell it. Wasting no time, they were married less than three months after their first fateful meeting. In her, John saw God's love for mankind. In him, Julietta saw a passion unbound by station or circumstance.

Upon arriving in the desert country that the Church of Enoch called home, however, she was distressed to find that John's tales of a land of prosperity, equality, and faith were not quite true. John's family lived in a small community sepa-

rated from the Enochite capital by both distance and culture, and as she was not a member of the church, her and John's marriage was deemed unacceptable. For some time, the two of them lived as social pariahs, present in the community, but unwelcomed by it. Undaunted, Julietta put her clerical skills to work under John's father, one of the few who welcomed the young woman to their town.

Though it took years to even admit it to herself, she couldn't stand it. Certain it was her best path to salvation, she took drastic action. Calling in a favor from home, and convincing the elder Mr. Sprigg to provide financial support, she and John founded the Deseret railway. Although Julietta still claims that her love for her husband is as endless as it was on the day of that first train ride, circumstances have changed, and she along with them. The JDSF railway is the second largest in the West, and is rapidly closing that gap. John's passion has faded as his vision of an Enochite community united by rail has given way to the reality of running an empire, but Julietta's has only surged. Though John is nominally the head of the company, it is Julietta who is the fire fueling the JDSF railway's rise to power.



3. Landscapes and Locations

LANDSCAPES are an iconic and important feature of the American West and its portrayals. The United States features varied landscapes, and Westerns, like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, show off the beauty of the West from orchards to rocky plateaus and mountain vistas. The landscapes presented here are the ones featured around the hub city of Silver Springs, but doubtless there are many others, such as salt flats or oak savannas. Each of these landscapes have different benefits and challenges associated with them.

3.1 Landscapes

The Great Plains

East of Silver Springs, the Great Plains stretch out to the edges of the horizon. It is an expanse of green (or golden) grass sometimes stubbly, grazed down to the earth by cattle, with occasional small copses of trees. Populating the open seas of grass are farmers, ranchers, nomadic Indians, bandits and outlaws, abandoned forts and more, all accessible so long as you're willing to cross the hundreds of miles of grassland to get there. A land of cattle drives, the last of the buffalo, and occasionally train tracks, out here roads and company are luxuries, and cloudspotting is the national pastime. Towns and villages spring up at most crossroads, and while the work might be hard, the living is simple. On the prairie, time seems to slip away as every day looks a lot like the last. On the days that it doesn't, the weather may include sun, snow, rain, tornados, or all-

out drought. An almanac of the Great Plains is cheap to acquire, but literacy is rare. God becomes a close friend out here, or at least someone who's good at listening when the urge to talk arises. What few topographical anomalies that exist can be seen for days before arrival, and serve as important landmarks. The absence of roads is rarely a problem; so long as you can keep traveling in the same direction you'll get somewhere eventually. Water and food aren't uncommon so long as you're comfortable hunting game, boiling water, and carrying everything else with you. Tobacco and coffee are worth their weight in gold on the plains, discussions of patience are moot, and orchards are the best mirages and the sweetest destinations.

Great Plains Travel Difficulty
Survival 8

Riding 5**Fitness** 7**Awareness** 8**The Argent Range**

The Argent Range is a tall mountain range that extends down from Wyoming. Its peaks are always snowy, but it is known as being a relatively friendly range to navigate. There are a variety of passes that cross over it and a couple of nice valleys for a traveler's respite. A couple of trains go through it as well, and it really feels like well-trafficked mountain range. The most dangerous thing on the mountains is not the weather, but the wolves that hunt in its alpine forests. They don't tend to attack people, but with the pressure of hunters coming west they have started to take whatever they can get. The same can be said to be true of mountain lions. The Argent Mountains are the political divider between the states of Jefferson and Deseret. Before the mining rush, they had many names, but the term argent picked up amongst settlers due to the massive amount of silver being pulled out of the ground in the area. Other than mining, and the occasional fur trapper, most people in and around the mountains are traveling across them. In all seasons, the mountains are prone to storms and quick temperature changes, but they are especially treacherous in winter, when the snow flies. The Indians hold certain peaks of the mountain to be sacred, and they feature prominently in their stories. They do not take well to the railroad companies modifying the landscape.

Argent Range Travel Difficulty**Survival** 15**Riding** 9**Fitness** 7 (+4 without suitable equipment)**Awareness** 16**Chacahuela Desert**

The Chacahuela Desert, or the Chuckwalla to most settlers, is a large desert that borders the Great Plains to the North and the Argent Mountains in the West. Because of a rain shadow cast by the Argents, the Chuckwalla rarely sees moisture of any kind. Named for the large lizards that populate the rocky scrublands, Chuckwalla lizards are eaten by the natives and considered

a delicacy. To non-locals, their incredibly rich yellow meat is filling and not unpalatable. The Chuckwalla is a place of rocks, sand and cacti, but do not think it isn't a diverse place. From high places you can see that it is a sprawling and varied landscape composed of rocky hills, sandy and dusty plains, dry streambeds in ravines and petrified logs demarcating where ancient forests used to stand. Throughout the landscape are sun bleached bones, and occasionally the unpredictable winds turn over rocks to reveal small oceanic fossils. A few strong plants cling to the shade, near streambed habitats, and they do produce flowers and berries from time to time. It may not be an especially hospitable place, but it is beautiful if you can withstand the heat and thirst. But do take care: what little rain that falls causes severe flash floods every one to three years, wreaking devastation on the unprepared. It is said that the rains leave in their wake a momentary Edenic landscape of wildflowers, butterflies, frogs, and pleasant aromas. The Chuckwalla is a place where someone might go to seek out Indians, for better or for worse, to witness something seemingly divine at the right time of year, or to find meaning in the wastes. The desert, after all, is a simple place with few secrets.

Chacahuela Desert Travel Difficulty**Survival** 14**Riding** 8**Fitness** 12**Awareness** 15**The Plateau Classical**

The Plateau Classical, named by French explorer Guy LeBlanc, more or less means the rock plateau, which to a certain extent is what this plateau actually is. Located in the Chacahuela Desert, this monolithic yellow-brown stone structure suddenly rises up from the ground, casting shade all around it, on nearly every side. Water erosion from heavy rains has worn channels around its edges, and silt from the top of the plateau seems to kick up into the air and into the eyes, noses, and mouths of unprepared travelers. The base of the rock is surprisingly green, and at the bottom of every waterfall ravine, there are some plants or at least moss that has gathered there. The base of this plateau is filled with

camping grounds used commonly by nomadic Indians, as walking around the base is the most comfortable way of crossing the middle of the desert. There are a few paths to the top of the plateau if you know where to look and riding atop it is the fastest and most direct way across the middle of the desert, if the lack of shelter doesn't get to you before you make it. The wind is as fierce as the sun and it's dangerous to cross in nearly all seasons. The top of the plateau has no shelter, anyone on the plateau can see the length of it, and that means crossing it in anything less than twelve hours is not recommended by anyone because it burns during the day and freezes at night.

The Plateau Classical Travel Difficulty

Survival 12

Riding 12 (+4 if towing wagon or coach)

Fitness 16 (+4 without suitable equipment)

Awareness 10

Jefferson Stripe River Canyon

The Jefferson Stripe is a massive river that runs out of the Argent Range and continues southeast until it joins the Jefferson-Turage River. Over the course of its vast length, the river goes through stretches of waterfall, pooling, whitewater, calm, wide and shallow, and deep and narrow sections. Those that know it well can always tell how close they are to its origin as the water gets greener closer to the mountains and browner closer to the Mississippi. Silver Springs was originally built on its banks, and the river still borders the whole of the southwestern part of town. That city stretch is dominated by slow moving pools and a somewhat foul smell. The river divides runs through the the Great Plains to the East for most of its journey until it joins the Jefferson-Turage river on the Jefferson Turage border. A couple miles past the city, the Stripe flows through the famously deep Jefferson Stripe Canyon until that canyon gradually shortens and fades away as it crosses the flat stretches of the Midwest States. The canyon at its height is easily over a hundred feet deep, and it reaches this depth just East of the city at the magnificent Jefferson Falls. Due to it's proximity to the city and the rail lines it's become a happy hiding spot for a variety of bandit groups, who have explored nearly all of

the game trails that navigate the Canyon's rocky walls. The cave complexes within the walls of the Canyon provide good impromptu hideouts, and the variety of nooks, crannies, spaces between boulders and other secret spots provide great places to hide anything from gold to stolen goods. There are very few places to cross the Canyon, most of them small rickety bridges, except for the JDSF train bridge that splits off from the main line a couple miles east of town and the bridge at Carolina's Crossing. Carolina runs an inn right next to the only sturdy well engineered bridge, about two coaches wide and 500 yards across.

Jefferson Stripe River Canyon Travel Difficulty

Survival 6

Riding 6 (+4 if towing wagon/ coach)

Fitness 6 (+4 without suitable equipment)

Awareness 18

Centerstone Hills

The Centerstone Hills aren't named for their geographic placement, but for their spiritual importance to local tribes. A unique landscape found in the deepest parts of the Great Plains, the Centerstone Hills can be seen from miles away as dark features rising up over the horizon. Forested with hardy pine and spruce trees, and interspaced with both lush meadows and monolithic granite formations, it's no wonder that the Centerstone Hills were sacred to virtually every Native group that came across them. The Centerstone Hills are one of the few places in the shrinking frontier that is entirely ceded to the Five Nations, owing to the difficulty of farming its rocky, vegetation-blanketed hills. Until recently the Centerstone Hills were promised to exclusively the Five Nations in the Five Nations Treaty by the federal government. The Centerstone Reservation is to some a haven to avoid conflict with the settlers, and to adapt to a new way of life, while to others it is a symbol of the complacency of the Nations and a sign of a defeat. More recently, however, rumors of gold in the hills have piqued the interest of settlers, and there are rumors and rumblings that the cries of the prospectors to shrink or close the reservation are gaining traction. Gold seekers are already moving into the

area and tensions are rising faster than they ever have. The disrespect of the sacred places and the feeling of betrayal some Nations' Indians feel at this turn of events has brought back the anger that the Nations strove to avoid in accepting the Treaty.

Centerstone Hills Travel Difficulty

Survival 12

Riding 8

Fitness 8

Awareness 16

Ghost Mountains

The Ghost Mountains are a small, isolated range of mountains located significantly East of Silver Springs. While the mountains themselves are unmapped and scarcely populated, the foothills at their base are home to a community of prospectors, hermits, and more permanent townsfolk. The mountains rise up in a very odd way out of the Centerstone Hills. They rise just high enough to have snowy peaks, and the odd formation seems to almost be made up of rocks spiraling around each other. Because of their odd structure, there are numerous paths up, around and through the mountains, although the last thousand feet on the highest peaks seem to have no easy access and require climbing gear to scale. Most of the people nearby make a living working as guides and outfitters, or try their luck at prospecting for gold or silver, while a few seek out those who've become lost in the moun-

tains for pay- whether they want to be found or not. The Ghost Mountain community doesn't ostracize Indians to the extent that most settlers do, and it's for this reason that many travelers avoid the supposedly cursed range, though for many that's just a way of putting a label on the nameless fear that seems to lurk there. The Ghost Mountains have a strange mythos associated with them. Tales of lost mines spilling over with gold and silver, fortune-telling mystics, and hidden entrances leading to the homes of impossibly beautiful, impossibly wise people living under the rocky cliffs abound. The Ghost Mountains are one of the most Westerly places not fully mapped, and even the most seasoned veteran guides regularly find new canyons, rock formations and petroglyphs. It is a strange place, home to plants and animals that can't be found anywhere else, where landmarks seem to move from expedition to expedition. The townspeople actively dislike and try to avoid surveyors from the area, as if somehow they'd lose something if it were to be mapped and catalogued. A place of strangeness to be sure, where desperate cowboys can vanish, never to be seen again, and lucky treasure hunters might strike it rich!

Ghost Mountains Travel Difficulty

Survival 12

Riding 18 (+4 if towing wagon/ coach)

Fitness 14 (+4 without suitable equipment)

Awareness 14

3.2 Settlements

The settlements of the American West are an important part of the landscape as well. While they don't occupy as much space, they have lots of character. Presented in this section (briefly) are Silver Springs, which is the central city of the Jefferson Territory, as well as examples of other settlements across the expanse of the West. There are many different kinds of possible settlements, many of which do not conform to the examples we've given here, and you should feel free to imagine other kinds of settlements, or combine the types of settlements we've presented below.

Silver Springs

Silver Springs is the capital city of Jefferson. It has the biggest train station, the largest number of people of all kinds, meeting and mingling, and the most challenges concerning growth and law. Silver Springs is host to most of the big names in the state, possibly even the West, and everyone

who is anyone has been there. It's where the most goods are shipped to and from, and ultimately any experience that can be found in the West is or will be there.

Silver Springs Travel Difficulty

Survival 6

Riding 5

Fitness 4**Awareness** 10 (+3 if without a map)**A Smaller Settlement**

To the people of Silver Springs the rest of the frontier seems empty, but in reality the West is dotted with smaller settlements. It's places like these where your reputation matters the most. People out here will be exposed to stories told by travelers, but without the cynicism bred by urban life, they will take them a lot more seriously and literally. The smallest example of a settlement you might find would be a single-family homestead. Larger settlements might have things like a general store, an inn, stables, or a clinic. Most places have a workshop of some kind and many have a practicing craftsman like a blacksmith.

Languages Spoken: Various (English, Native, Spanish, French, etc.)

Smaller Settlement Travel Difficulty**Survival** 6**Riding** 4**Fitness** 4**Awareness** 7 (+2 if without a map)**A Hopeful Settlement**

People in settlements like this are often people displaced by the war, and they are frequently more trusting of people who fought on the same side they did. Some small settlements are also of a group of people who immigrated from a specific country, like Poland or Denmark. These people probably remember and practice the customs of their place of origin, speak their native language, perhaps better than english, and generally vary wildly between being hospitable and wary. By and large American settlers tend to distrust Natives and Enochites but are not necessarily in a position to refuse business. Generally these settlements host a mix of different people, some willing to help a traveler in need, others who distrust outsiders.

Languages Spoken: Various Immigrant Languages (English, Spanish, French, Polish, Danish, German, etc.)

Hopeful Settlement Travel Difficulty**Survival** 4**Riding** 4**Fitness** 4**Awareness** (+2 if without a map)**A Mexican Village**

The Mexican American communities are more plentiful in the southern reaches of Jefferson, and while this far north there aren't remnants of Mexican towns, most Mexican immigrants are still more comfortable living together than amongst the xenophobic townspeople of Silver Springs. Mexican Villages are some of the most unconditionally welcoming places in all of Jefferson, although any slight against the community often moves to quick ostracization. They are usually friendly towards Indians provided that those Indians are friendly towards them, and so Indian heritage may have made its way into the families in these towns. These communities are usually agrarian and catholic, and they generously share what they have with travelers in a good or bad season. They are usually willing to barter for gold, supplies, tools, and alcohol. Most villages feature a range of craftspeople and possibly an inn or a saloon. As mentioned above, however, they are incredibly insular and theft is noticed very quickly. These communities feel warm and content, with nightly singing and dancing when the weather is nice.

Languages Spoken: Spanish (Mexican Dialect), Native, Various Immigrant Languages.

Mexican Village Travel Difficulty**Survival** 5**Riding** 5**Fitness** 5**Awareness** 6 (+4 if without a map)**A Ghost Town**

Ghost towns were places at one point or another; often mining, logging, or trapping camps set up by wild entrepreneurs with a few permanent buildings such as log houses or common rooms. When the reason for setting up this community disappeared, or danger lurked, people left. Now many ghost towns still have a running inn, and buildings in various states of disrepair, especially if they are close enough to a crossroads to be useful. Occasionally people looking to hide out might take up rooms there, bandits might use them as a hideout, or somebody hoping to find gold in the hills after everyone else had given up

hope. Regardless of who is there, Ghost Towns are only home to the desperate and should evoke a wary attitude in passers by.

Languages Spoken: Various Immigrant Languages

Ghost Town Travel Difficulty

Survival 12

Riding 6

Fitness 6

Awareness 1 (+2 if without a map)

An Enochite Compound

Enochite compounds are abandoned US Army forts, homesteads, and even some small villages that have been transformed into armed holdouts against the Federal Government. These compounds are usually full of welcoming people interested in converting others to their faith and lifestyle. Some of them are havens for Enochites hoping to continue controversial practices, such as polygamy, which many reject, while others are forward thinking and trying to adapt to the new state of affairs where the Church is concerned. Those who are more religious are willing to host and feed travelers overnight out of their goodwill, while other compounds driven by their conditions might be less willing to share what little they have with non-believers. The mainstream Church of Enoch has reached an uneasy truce with the Federal government after disastrous conflicts in the years before the Civil War, although many felt that Church President Theron Marsh's decision to cease violence against the Federal government was a mistake. If you are in any way associated with the federal government and plan on going in and amongst the Enochites it may be best to keep your affiliations hidden.

Languages Spoken: English

Enochite Compound Travel Difficulty

Survival 6

Riding 4

Fitness 4

Awareness 8 (+2 if without a map)

A Civilized Five Reservation

The Civilized Five live in poverty and squalor with little hospitality to offer travelers. Their reservations are enclosed with barbed-wire fences, and are little more than a dozen barracks. These reservations are cramped, and disease spreads quickly within their boundaries. Death is common and new corpses are found every week. The reasons are plenty: suicide, alcoholism, and sickness, to name a few. Reservations are usually guarded by a small contingent of the U.S. Army, with each contingent numbering about fifty men. These troops are stationed to prevent revolts, but they frequently agitate and abuse their captives.

Languages Spoken: Native, English

Reservation Travel Difficulty

Survival 14

Riding 6

Fitness 6

Awareness 10

A Tribal Encampment

When the Confederacy of the Hawk migrated to the lands east of Argent Mountain, they put a massive strain on the natural produce. Within a year, the land was barren, and new crops were slow to grow. Because of this, Kenu leads raids against the railways in Jefferson State, of which almost all have failed. Because victory is scarce, these camps prize whatever spoils of war can be found. They dangle scalps from their horse's braids and ride into battle bedecked in their loot: guns, uniforms, and other American militaria are highly prized. Their warring, nomadic existence means that these camps are temporary, and are little more than a place of respite until the next campaign.

Languages Spoken: Native only

Tribal Encampment Travel Difficulty

Survival 14

Riding 8

Fitness 8

Awareness 12



4. Conflict Themes

A MERICAN Sunset is driven by three main sources of conflict, sin and corruption, chaos and disorder, and evil and emptiness. These three sources of conflict are made manifest in the people and places in the West. That's not to say every conflict is simply one of these, many conflicts can be much larger and more complex. Furthermore the people of the West pushing the conflicts forward might themselves be unaware of where their motivations lie. That's not to say that each and every conflict is the result of some large scale abandonment of morals, but simple greed, rebellion or just a bad person can cause many of the simple conflicts that are found in our setting. Bandits may be driven by need or greed, but even those who become bandits out of desperation have probably suffered at the hands of sinful, chaotic, or evil circumstances.

Sin and Corruption in the Hearts of Men. The push into the frontier made room for new figures of influence to arise be they political, economic, or spiritual. The desire for power and influence is present in many figures that shaped the west, and in the course of your character's journey you will surely find yourselves opposed to them. G.M. Holt is a man of wealth and power, who is distributing his bribes amongst the pockets of others like himself, to gain political, social or further economic influence. His money buys politicians and businessmen and women, bringing his interests to bear over the interests of the community. But Silver Springs is a town founded on the idea of mineral prosperity, and greed is all but inseparable from the town's history. Holt is by no means unique by his avarice, nor is anyone else by their sin of choice. As a player, bear in mind that even the most noble of causes may be playing into the hands of the vilest of Silver Springs denizens.

Players playing games in settings heavily influenced by sin and corruption may find themselves surrounded by religious NPCs, a strong Enochite or christian presence, biblical references and symbolism, and even some strange biblical magic. Corruption in the game might be of an ethical nature, like political corruption, or of a moral nature like corruption of someone's character, causing a change in their behavior. In the latter case it could be anything from a large dose of cynicism, to something more sinister.

Chaos and Disorder in the confusion of expansion. In the west, multitudes of different parties with different interests were thrown together, and out of that chaos arises an inherent conflict. Anyone can be sucked into this maelstrom at any time, and to unravel the twisted threads is not a simple task. Between Steele, who cannot leave the civil war behind and Tecumseh riding to this death, the bandits that can attack anywhere at anytime, and the lack of strong law in town, anything can happen at any time and the consequences can be incredibly unpredictable. The Civilized Five claim it to be the Trickster at work, taking advantage of the ignorance of the settlers, while the successful people of Silver Springs describe it as opportunity, opportunity to be the first of something, the best at something or to control the most of something. The lack of an appropriate system of checks and balances in the West makes even simple tasks seem to have repercussions far outside what a rational mind might expect.

Players playing games in settings heavily influenced by chaos and disorder may find themselves surrounded by NPCs strongly related to the law, like sheriffs, vigilantes, and bandits, as well as strong ambitious leaders trying to take control of the situation. Furthermore, a lot of native american mythology has to do with the Trickster, and players may find characters using superstitious explanations to account for odd, unpredictable events, including angry spirits, skinwalkers, or the Trickster himself. Often people profiteering from the disorder and disruption may be working behind the scenes to further entangle the players. These profiteers could be actual people, like politicians and business people, or they could be entities just wanting to watch the world burn.

Evil and Emptiness in the vast reaches of the frontier So much of the west is unknown; towns are few and far between. In those gaps where civilization is stretched thin there is space for all nature of unsavory characters with no more motivation than their own twisted entertainment. People tell stories of cultists and heathens who lost their civilized minds in the frontier and live alone in the woods as animals, preying on travelers. Others of course form communities in the empty places and practice unsavory religious rituals and lifestyles, or so it is said. True or not there is something very similar about the vast nothingness that Silver Springs buffers against. Where once there were nomadic peoples and herds of bison roaming everywhere, now the chances of meeting these people or seeing majestic creatures is far lower. The unprepared often go missing, perhaps eaten by wolves, choking on poisonous berries, dying of thirst and starving. Still others are asked to confront something evil about themselves as they do anything in their power to survive. Such experiences are life changing and those who go out and come back from the emptiness, especially when they return alone, are often kept at a distance from society, by their choice or that of the community.

Players playing games in settings heavily influenced by a sense of emptiness and evil may find themselves mistrusted by many NPCs and more frequently encounter people who have slipped through the cracks, such as small unsavory cults, the sociopathic or the criminally insane. In investigating the empty places they may come across revelations that are hard to bear, such as the humanity of Natives and the inhumanity of the American Army. In investigating the interactions between the people of the emptiness and the people still in touch with humanity they may also come across genuine mysteries with terrifying endings, such as cannibals, people who enjoy killing, or others things from beyond the rational mind...



5. Magic

MAGIC in American Sunset is a far cry from the wizardly powers of other settings. Subtle, pervasive, and motivated more by the whims of the world than the players, you should expect to find it wherever stories are told. Belief guides most otherworldly forces on the frontier, giving rise to trickster gods as readily as fallen angels, and to more terrestrial powers in the hands of players. While you shouldn't believe everything you're told, know that there's a little bit of truth in every story. In keeping with this, the magic of the West is split into two categories, Reputation and Mystery.

5.1 Reputation

Reputation is the magic of the known and the magic most readily available to players. A representation of what you're believed to be by the people in American Sunset, your reputation is magic unto itself. In a land where stories travel faster than storytellers, the tales told of your accomplishments and their reality are divided by a thin line. While the magic of Reputation lies in the hands of the players, it is a subtle and specific kind of power. A player's past accomplishments give them the ability to influence the odds in their favor, shaping their reality into one that conforms to their reputation. Under the right circumstances, a player can make the impossible possible, because otherwise there'd be no stories to tell. These impossible feats are closely tied to their performer; Expect onlookers to be impressed, even awestruck, but never surprised. If the Fastest Gun in the West kills seven men in the blink of an eye, then he's done the impossible, to be certain- but when it comes to shooting, nothing's impossible for the Fastest Gun in the West. Why else would he carry the name?

Take note of the stories told about your antagonists as you encounter them. The more often you hear them repeated, the more likely they're indicative of their abilities.

5.2 Mystery

In contrast to Reputation, which is the magic of things that are known, Mystery is the magic of everything that is unknown. As colonization of the West proceeds, more settlers will find themselves

pushing against forces they cannot understand. Mystery cannot be mapped by cartographers, or catalogued by the instruments of modern science, but they can still be understood through the oral traditions of those who live alongside it. If you hear rumors that a local mountain is haunted, and these stories are supported by locals, or by tales told by the natives who live in the area, think twice before moving forward.

Strange creatures and stranger forces are at play in the unmapped lands. Chupacabras still stalk through the desert flats to the South. The hoots and gibbering of hirsute wildmen of impossible stature still echo through the forests to the North. On the plains to the East, at the right time of year, on the right kind of night, the glowing bones of ancient creatures come alive, swimming through waves in a sea of grass. Still more dangerous things walk like men between the scattered villages and homesteads on the frontier, ancient and cunning and hungry.

And you might be one of the last to see these things firsthand. In the world of American Sunset, the frontier is just years away from closing. Mystery, while still a power in the wilds, is disappearing as quickly as the wilds themselves. Once mapped, the mystery in the land vanishes, leaving behind little more than landscapes where once ancient spirits hid beneath the hills. Those who've lived their lives in comfort behind the walls of cities and towns do not, and perhaps even cannot, understand what lies beyond the edges of the map. Do not expect your tales of haunted caves and impossible animals to be taken seriously within the city limits.



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6. Basic Rules

The judge smiled. Men are born for games. Nothing else. Every child knows that play is nobler than work. He knows too that the worth or merit of a game is not inherent in the game itself but rather in the value of that which is put at hazard. Games of chance require a wager to have meaning at all.

— Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West*

EVERY game has rules, and American Sunset is no different. Part II is devoted to the rules of play. The rules here encompass (nearly) every situation you will encounter while playing. We recommend that both the Game Master (GM) and players be familiar with this section before playing. We have also included here optional rules, to allow for slight changes to certain mechanics so you may customize the game you want to play.

Keep in mind that for all the details of the system in this chapter, the GM has the final say on all rulings.

6.1 Skills

Skills represent how your character is capable of interacting with the world. Though a character's background and Reputation define who they are, their skills represent what they can do. All player characters (and most non-player characters) have an index of skills rated from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest) that measure their talents at various tasks. The full list of skills is as follows:

Awareness
Deception
Education
Empathy
Fighting
Fitness
Grit

Handiness
Medical
Perform
Poise
Intimidate
Riding
Rope Skills

Shooting
Sleight of Hand

Stealth
Survival

6.1.1 Skill Descriptions

All skills will have their time to shine at some point during gameplay, but it may not always be immediately obvious what each skill is best suited for what task. For this reason, a full description of each skill is listed here.

Awareness

Awareness is your sensitivity to the environment around you, and dictates how effective your senses and intuition are. The higher your awareness is, the more likely you are to quickly foresee changes in the social or physical environment, and the more likely you will be able to react to them. Awareness governs your ability to notice things as well as your Initiative. (See Turn Actions, pg. 71)

Deception

Deception is your skill at lying. Characters with a high Deception rating are skilled at lying through their teeth, telling impromptu fables, and otherwise tricking people with their words.

Education

Education is how well you can read and write, how much you know about academic subjects, and your skill at logical debate. A character with an Education rating of 0 is illiterate. A high Education skill allows you to read more complex texts and reference them from memory. Additionally, Education determines your skill bonus for Logical Rhetorical Strategies. (See Rhetorical Strategies, pg. 72)

Empathy

Empathy is your ability to understand other people, especially their emotions, and a higher rating in this skill allows you to motivate others more effectively. Your Empathy can be used for social and narrative purposes, and to treat Strain. Empathy determines your skill bonus for Empathetic Rhetorical Strategies. (See Rhetorical Strategies, pg. 72)

Fighting

Fighting represents your abilities in hand to hand combat, be it brawling with your fists, using weapons like knives and sabers, or other improvised weapons like chairs, tools, or other found

objects. Your Fighting rating determines your skill bonus using melee weapons. (See Weapons, pg. 81)

Fitness

Fitness represents your physical prowess. How far you can run, how fast you can run, how much you can lift, etc. A high Fitness rating allows you to effectively perform improvised actions, such as breaking down doors or hopping onto a moving train. Successful Fitness contests allow additional movement actions in combat. (See Movement, pg. 72)

Grit

Grit is your ability to endure pain and cope with injuries you receive. The more Grit you have, the more Wounds you can take before becoming incapacitated. Grit can also be used to Evade a weapon attack, instead of Counter-Attacking. (See Initiating a Contest, pg. 53)

Handiness

Handiness is your ability to perform trade crafts and to make, fix, and operate objects with mechanical complexity, such as locks or engines. Handiness is used for narrative purposes to repair complicated machines, jerry-rig small mechanisms, or operate a powered vehicle such as a train or steamboat.

Intimidate

Intimidate is your ability to successfully threaten other people. A character with a high Intimidate rating is good at frightening others and coercing them to surrender. Your Intimidate skill may also be called upon for narrative purposes. Intimidate determines your skill bonus for Hostile Rhetorical Strategies. (See Rhetorical Strategies, pg. 72)

Medical

Medical is your knowledge of medical practice, etiquette and first aid. This skill is used to treat Wounds people receive on the battlefield. Using the Medical skill often requires tools, and a lack of access to these tools, such as bandages, disinfectant, or surgery equipment may hamper the use of this skill. (See Treating Wounds, pg. 77)

Perform

Perform is your ability to create artistic illusions, play musical instruments or sing, and to maintain a disguise. For

Poise

Poise is your ability to maintain your composure through the strain you may receive. The more Poise you have, the more Strain boxes are available to you. (See Wounds and Strain, pg. 76) Poise can also be used to try and avoid taking Strain in response to an enemy's social attack on you, instead of attacking back.

Riding

Riding represents your ability to ride a horse and to do things while mounted. A Riding Contest is one of the contests that is taken during any Travel Contest made on horseback. (See Travel Contests, pg. 55) A character can also use a horse to Trample an unmounted opponent. Rules regarding horses in combat can be found in Mounted Combat, see pg. 72.

Rope Skill

Rope Skill represents your ability to use rope, be it to tie knots well or quickly, do rope tricks, or lasso somebody. Rope skill determines your skill bonus while using a Lasso, in combat or otherwise. (See Weapons, pg. 81)

Shooting

Shooting represents your ability to shoot a gun or a bow. Shooting determines your skill bonus when using most ranged weapons. (See Weapons, pg. 81)

Sleight of Hand

Your Sleight of Hand rating dictates your skill cheating in games of chance, committing theft, and other acts of skullduggery and dexterity. This includes your skill bonus with thrown weapons. (See Weapons, pg. 81)

Stealth

Stealth is your ability to move around without making others aware of your presence. When hiding, your Stealth skill is tested against the other's Awareness to determine if they notice you. Characters that don't notice you cannot Counter-Attack in the first round of combat. (See Ambush Round, pg. 71)

Survival

Survival is your ability to feed yourself, identify flora and fauna, track both people and animals, and find shelter in the wild. You will be called upon to use Survival when tracking anything or making any kind of Travel Contest. (See Travel Contests, pg. 55)

6.1.2 Skill Ratings

Skill Ratings represent a character's ability to perform a specific set of tasks on a scale from zero to ten. For a rough understanding of what a specific skill rating means as it relates to a talent, consider this table:

- 0:** Entirely Untrained. May have an understanding of what this skill pertains to, but has no practical experience with it.
- 1:** Barely Trained. Has attempted the skill several times, enough to understand the basics.
- 2:** Inadequately Trained
- 3:** Adequately Trained, Competent
- 4:** Above Average, Proficient
- 5:** Professional Quality. For practical skills, you could reasonably expect to make a career out of your talents at this level.
- 6:** High Quality Professional, Above Average Professional, Noted Amongst Professionals
- 7:** Expert, Exemplar of Your Profession, A Cult Phenomenon

- 8: Master, A Popular Phenomenon, History is Waiting for You to Prove Yourself
9: Aspiring Legend, One of the Best.
10: Legendary, Your Name is a Quality Unto Itself. The Stradivarius, Newton, or Alexander the Great of your craft.

6.2 Contests

Contests are dramatic devices used to resolve conflicts between two or more characters or between a character and their environment. Contests are dramatic and decisive, designed to produce a clear winner and loser (with the occasional draw). All contests begin by determining what is at stake, and all contests end by deferring the stakes to the winner. This system, in which there is always something being wagered, is the primary innovation of American Sunset. There will be dozens of contests in a single session, so be sure that you understand contests before proceeding any farther in the book.

6.2.1 Contest Types

There are 3 different types of Contests: Opposed, Unopposed, and Extended.

Opposed Contests

Contests in which two or more characters compete against each other to fulfill their own goals. When an Opposed Contest is initiated, the acting character is called the attacker and the inactive character is called the defender. The attacker and defender set the stakes and each roll 2d6. Both attacker and defender add their skill bonus to their roll, respectively, to determine their total score. The character with the higher total is the winner of the contest, and the character with the lower total is the loser.

Depending upon the situation, there may be multiple attackers and/or defenders (see Multiple Participants in Combat, pg. 75).

Examples of Opposed Contests include combat, sneaking by another character unnoticed, or any other contest in which one character actively resists another.

Unopposed Contests

Contests in which an active character employs a skill against something that doesn't actively resist. In these tests, the GM assigns a Target Number which the player's total must exceed in order to succeed in the contest. Examples include scaling a mountain, shooting a tin can off a fence, or breaking down a door.

Extended Contests

Contests in which multiple smaller contests, opposed or otherwise, are resolved for a larger set of stakes. These contests are usually time sensitive, and will typically follow structured time (resolving actions in terms of rounds and seconds) instead of narrative time (resolving actions in terms of whoever speaks first, etc.)

Extended Contests are not initiated like normal contests. In an Extended Contest, multiple contests are made in fulfillment of a larger goal. These larger goals are called Conditions, and dictate the winners and losers of Extended Contests. At the beginning of an Extended Contest, the stakes are determined in addition to the conditions in which they are applied. Note that only Extended Contests have Conditions.

Multiple Contests will likely take place over the course of an Extended Contest, as characters vie to fulfill the prescribed Conditions for their own benefit. The stakes are resolved only when the Conditions have been met.

Example: After a quick exchange of unpleasantries, Jessica's Gang fights The Wild Thirteen for control of Timmy's Tavern. The opponents set the stakes: the last gang remaining in the tavern wins. The Stakes are determined: the victor gains control of the bar and if the loser is The Wild Thirteen, then they may never return to Silver Springs. Both parties proceed into combat aware of the stakes and what they need to do in order to secure them.

Extended Contests are designed to streamline the stakes system, allowing GMs to set larger stakes in which multiple, less significant contests are required. Additionally, Traveling is a specific type of Extended Contest with its own set of rules.

6.2.2 Initiating a Contest

Whenever a Contest is initiated, there is a five step process involved in resolving it:

1. **Determine the Stakes**
2. **Raise the Stakes**
3. **Make Rolls**
4. **Calculate Totals**
5. **Resolve the Stakes**

The details of each step are explained here.

1. **Determine the Stakes.** Before any dice are rolled, the GM and the players determine the stakes. The active character (i.e. the player whose turn it is) sets the stakes, and the GM must confirm that the stakes are appropriate for the situation. Examples of stakes include:
 - **Injuries (Wounds and Strain):** Contests which occur during combat involve one side trying to harm the other, be it their pride (Strain) or their flesh (Wounds). Characters setting an injury as the stakes also pick the degree of injury they wish to inflict, choosing light, medium, or severe. The winner of the contest will inflict injury of the specified type upon the loser (see Combat, pg. Combat).
 - **Physical Objects:** Money, Booze, Territory.
 - **Narrative Advantage:** The favor of a crowd, intimidation of an opponent, demonstration of skill to a mentor.
2. **Raise the Stakes.** If the defending character is a Reputable Character (i.e. they have a Reputation Rating), they may choose to take a penalty (-2 to their combat roll) to raise the stakes. Examples of raised stakes include:
 - **Increase the degree of an injury** being dealt by one (From Light to Medium or from Medium to Severe)
 - **Add a Narrative Stake.** Establish something the defending character has to gain by winning this combat. *Example: "If I shoot this bandit he'll drop the detonator for the dynamite."*
3. **Defending.** In Combat, it is important to define the defender's reaction to the attacker. Defenders may either Counter-Attack, in which they attempt to instead inflict the Injury stake upon the attacker and resolve any other stakes in their favor, or they may Evade the attack in an attempt to nullify the stakes altogether. In a Counter-Attack, the defending character selects the weapon or Rhetorical Strategy they will use for the Counter-Attack (exactly like the attacker) to oppose the attacker. When a Defender Evades, they roll their Grit (vs. Weapons) or Poise (vs. Rhetorical Strategies) to oppose the attacker. (See Combat pg. 69)
4. **Make Rolls.** Any characters participating in the contest roll an appropriate amount of dice: 2d6 normally, or 4d6 if that player is at Advantage or Disadvantage. When rolling with two dice, both die are totaled to determine the result. Once the result of the roll is determined, proceed onto Step 4.

- Characters rolling with Advantage roll four dice instead of two, and total the two highest die for the result of their roll.
 - Characters rolling with Disadvantage roll four dice instead of two, totaling the two lowest die for the result of their roll.
 - Characters with both Advantage and Disadvantage or with multiple instances of Advantage or Disadvantage use whichever they have more instances of, with no additional benefits for any instance beyond the first. If they have the same amount, they will roll as if they have neither. *Example: A character who has three instances of Advantage and one instance of Disadvantage rolls as if they only had one instance of Advantage. A character with two instances of Advantage and two instances of Disadvantage rolls as if they had neither Advantage or Disadvantage.*
 - It is also worth noting that the resolution system in steps 3 and 4 is designed to be modular. It is entirely possible to use a different method of choosing a winner and loser than rolling dice and adding skill ratings. If you would like to resolve the outcome of an in-game Texas Hold'em match by playing a round of Texas Hold'em, feel free! If you are using an alternate resolution system, however, you should specify this during Step 1.
5. **Calculate Totals.** Once all characters have completed Step 3, they each add their designated Skill Rating and any other modifiers to the number they rolled. This value is compared to the Target Number (Unopposed) or their opponent's result (Opposed).
- $\text{Total} = 2d6 + \text{Skill Rating} + \text{Other Modifiers (Qualities, Injuries, Landscapes etc.)}$
 - In an Unopposed Contest, the character wins the contests if they exceed the Target Number. In an Opposed Contest, the character with the higher result is the winner and the character with the lower result loses. In the event of a draw in an Opposed Contest, any injuries at stake will be dealt to both characters and the remaining stakes are contested with exceptions to be determined by the GM.
6. **Resolve the Stakes**
- Any injuries are dealt and the effects of any other stakes are resolved before future contests are initiated.

6.2.3 Draws

In the event of a contest where both attacker and defender have the same total, a draw occurs. Whenever this happens, both players suffer the stakes that were set out for the contest. In the case of combat, any injuries at stake are dealt to both players. How exactly this occurs is up to the GM; it may be as simple as both bullets finding their mark, or environmental hazards causing other, unexpected effects. Outside of combat, consequences of a draw are less explicit. The core idea behind every draw, however, should be that both characters get what they want, and both characters get what they don't want. You should expect that all draws have some kind of broader narrative consequences as well; after all, a tie is a fateful event, and fateful events don't happen every day.

6.2.4 Target Numbers

During Opposed contests, determining the outcome is as easy as comparing the dice rolls of two characters. In Unopposed contests, however, it is up to the GM to determine the difficulty of the task at hand. All contests range in difficulty from approximately 4 to 22, though exceptionally simple or near-impossible tasks may be lower or higher, respectively. Below is a table showing some examples of target numbers for Awareness and Handiness contests.

Example Target Numbers

Target Number	Awareness Example	Handiness Example
4 - Very Easy	Realizing that the building you are in is on fire.	Repairing a horseshoe with suitable equipment
6 - Easy	Finding a soured apple in shallow barrel of fresh apples. Noticing someone who is obviously trailing you.	Tailoring a garment. Brewing low quality moonshine.
8 - Routine	Noticing that your drinking buddy has not touched their drink. Keep watch for the night.	Making a rope from scratch. Forging an iron pot.
10 - Challenging	Spotting a moving figure on the horizon. Realize when someone is Blathering at you. Eavesdrop on a conversation.	Repairing a simplistic firearm with the Unreliable quality. Sewing a simple garment. Repairing a broken sword or other melee weapon.
12 - Difficult	Noticing that the bartender has a shotgun concealed behind the bar. Eavesdrop on a conversation through a wooden door. Analyze a simple crime scene.	Crafting a sturdy bow. Crafting a simple bear trap. Crafting a simple melee weapon.
14 - Hard	Distinguish a familiar individual at a Medium range. Overhear someone whispering.	Building a simple firearm. Repairing a complex firearm with the Unreliable quality.
16 - Very Hard	Realize that someone is secretly aluding to something. Notice a secret trap or trapdoor. Analyze a complex crime scene.	Crafting a simple lock. Crafting a simple firearm. Crafting a saddle.
18 - Arduous	Read someone's lips. Distinguish a familiar individual at Long Range.	Crafting an ornate melee weapon. Crafting a complex experimental firearm with the Unreliable quality.
20 - Near Impossible	Find a well-hidden secret trap or trapdoor.	Crafting a complex lock.
22 - Legendary	Pursue a dead end and catch the culprit regardless.	Crafting an item with Legendary craftsmanship.
24 - Impossible	Discern that someone is a killer by looking into their eyes.	Crafting a complex or experimental firearm without the Unreliable quality

6.2.5 Travel Contests

Traveling is a unique type of Unopposed Contest, performed whenever players must travel long distances across the vast reaches of the frontier. Three different contests determine the success of a traveller: an Awareness Contest, either a Fitness or Riding Contest, depending on whether the character is riding a mount or not, and a Survival contest. Each contest is performed separately, with their own target numbers and consequences for failure. Different landscapes will have different degrees of difficulty for each skill, and may be easier or more difficult depending on whether or not they are mounted. For examples of travel difficulties, see **Landscapes** pg. 37.

LANDSCAPES AND TRAVEL RULES TO BE EXPANDED

6.3 Reputation Points

Traits, Feats, and Flaws make up a character's Reputation Aspects, but without Reputation Points, they are little more than personal details. By spending Reputation Points in game, characters can influence the outcomes of contests. The more points that are spent, the greater the influence, and the grander the effect the player has on the world. It is suggested that characters begin a campaign with a Reputation Rating of 3 and with 1 Reputation Point available to spend, but the GM can modify this if they wish. (See Reputation in Creating a Character, pg. 59)

6.3.1 Spending Reputation Points

To spend a Reputation Point, a character must invoke one of their Aspects in a positive manner. A character can invoke an Aspect whenever that Aspect would benefit them in their course of action. (For more details, see Reputation, pg. 65).

This is not a strictly defined system, and the use of reputation should always be negotiated between the GM and the players. Players should invoke a Reputation Aspect at narratively dramatic moments, in which their character performs a heroic or otherwise significant act related to their Aspect. Keep in mind that when players have access to reputation they can choose to initiate contests they otherwise couldn't risk, knowing that they have their reputation to back them up.

Only one Reputation Point may be spent invoking an Occupation or Background Trait. Any number of Reputation Points may be spent invoking Feats.

Spending Reputation Points

Points Spent	Effects
1	Gain Advantage on a single contest. <i>Banjo Tom gains Advantage when playing his banjo.</i>
2	Gain Advantage on a single contest, regardless of how many instances of Disadvantage that character has. Automatically succeed at an Unopposed Contest with a Target Number that character is capable of reaching. <i>Banjo Tom automatically succeeds at playing a complicated song [TN 12].</i>
3	Automatically succeed at an Unopposed Contest with a Target Number up to 5 beyond what that character is capable of reaching. <i>Banjo Tom automatically succeeds at coherently playing a song in a rowdy tavern [TN 17].</i>
4	Gain Advantage for all contests in an Extended Contest. <i>Banjo Tom gains advantage when playing his banjo in an Extended Contest against his nemesis, Ukulele Dave.</i>
5	Automatically succeed at any Unopposed Contest <i>Banjo Tom plays his banjo while standing atop the tallest mountain. The village below the mountain can hear him perfectly, and are moved to tears by his soulful art.</i>

6.3.2 Gaining Reputation Points

To gain Reputation Points, a character must invoke one of their Aspects in a negative manner. A character can invoke an Aspect to gain Reputation Points whenever that Aspect could disadvantage the character. Invoking an Aspect to gain Reputation Points should alter the story in some way, and

deviate the story from its natural direction. It is generally not considered in good form to have party members gaining Reputation Points by narratively hindering each other, and GMs should shy away from this. However, this dynamic could be useful in situations where inter-party conflict is present, and there are disastrous consequences if party cohesion is not maintained. GMs should consider giving multiple Reputation Points for especially tragic or disadvantageous invocations of an Aspect.

6.3.3 Reputation Tips

When negotiating Reputation Points with your GM, it is important to remember a few things:

- They want you to use your traits. Your GM wants your character to live up to their reputation, so help them do so. Avoid choosing traits that are too narrow in their scope. Good traits are both descriptive and contribute to the GM's storytelling.
- Be active. Your GM is busy with other things, and may not be aware of your traits. Moreover, be aware of your other party members' traits. While only the GM can compel a Flaw, anybody can make a suggestion, especially you.
- Be descriptive and unique. Your Reputation is not a matter to be taken lightly. It is the sum total of all the actions that people know you by, and your name should impress everyone. Your GM will be more likely to reward well-narrated invocations, especially when it could earn you another trait.



7. Creating a Character

PLAYER Characters in American Sunset are unique among their peers, distinguished by their ability and willingness to build and wield a reputation. The average person in the world of American Sunset isn't seeking reputation and will often avoid garnering it if possible. Your character, however, shouldn't be like that. That's not to say you can't make your character a shopkeeper or have some other mundane job, but you should ensure that they have greater ambitions than simply running the shop. There are five primary steps to generating a character:

1. Creating a character concept
2. Choosing a Background (pg. 60)
3. Choosing an Archetype (pg. 64)
4. Building Reputation (pg. 65)
5. Choosing your starting gear (pg. 67).

All characters start as an idea, but it is their Background, Archetype, and Reputation that give that character a mechanical presence in the world of American Sunset. Descriptions of each of these steps can be found below.

7.1 Character Concept

Before you create your character, it's important to come up with a concept of who you want your character is and what your character does. All characters start as an idea. Where did your character come from? What do they do for a living? How did they find themselves in the American frontier, and what do they hope to find there? Why are they a "somebody" out here in the West, rather than just another average resident of the frontier?

- Take time to develop a concept.
- Consider your character's appearance and ethnicity. Who are their parents? How do they dress?
- Consider your character's ambitions. What do they want to accomplish, who do they want to become?
- Consider your character's skills and unique abilities. How do these things reflect who they are?

7.2 Choosing a Character Background

The next stage of character creation is to choose a background. Backgrounds are divided into broad and distinct archetypes, and it is your job to define your character's background in detail. Your character's background will determine the initial skill ratings that you can allocate to your character's skills, and will give your character an additional bonus or penalty. These skill ratings are broken up into two categories: Archetype Skills and General Skills. Your archetype skills are determined by the archetype that you select during the next step, so keep that in mind! General skills can be allocated to any skills. It is recommended that you also select your Archetype before allocating skills.

No One Knows

No one knows, but you certainly do. Are you running from something? Is that something following? If so, how closely? Nobody knows where you came from, but here you are. Do you plan on telling them the truth? For someone without a history, even legends and lies are a kind of truth. Your character's background should be very detailed. It should include the most important reason: why nobody else knows. Or perhaps there are those who do know, but they are so remote and distant that they are inconsequential. Ensure that your GM knows your background prior to the beginning of the game.

Skills

- When you allocate your Archetype skills, allocate one skill at rating 6, two skills at rating 4, and three skills at rating 3.
- When allocating general skills allocate three skills at rating 2, and seven skills at rating 1.

Background Abilities

- Contests to find characters with this background roll at disadvantage.
- At the beginning of each session, characters with this background may roll a d6. If they roll 1, 2 or 3 then the player may choose a different background trait. If they roll a 4, 5 or 6, then the GM chooses a new background trait for them.

Example: Doctor Wieland's accent is a rarity in the West, and information on him is even rarer. Dressed in a tattered priest's garb, Wieland acts little like a man of god, and spends his days wandering between scattered settlements. Unbeknownst to most, "Doctor" Wieland is actually Gustav Wieland, the son of a missionary who immigrated to the continent many

years ago. There are only two notes on Gustav in the government record: a mention of his and his father's efforts to convert a native tribe on the eastern shore, and his father's certificate of death — suicide. Fleeing their failure, Wieland wanders the desert and fears that the curse laid upon him by the tribe's shaman- to never know God and to spend his days in exile- may have already come true.

I Served My Time

Your character has lived a long time, too long even. Whatever you did in your years past, it has shaped you dramatically. The skills you've developed over the years have been honed to a fine point? but you have never known the diversity which life offers to the dilettante. You are a professional at what you do, first and foremost. Examples of characters with this background would include career soldiers, retirees, and criminals.

Skills

- When you allocate your Archetype skills, allocate three skills at rating 5 and three skills at Rating 3.
- When allocating general skills, allocate three skills at rating 2 and four skills at rating 1.

Background Ability

- As a tradeoff for having more skills available to them, characters with this background begin with a permanent Light Strain box marked.

Example: Luke "Lucky Luke" Baxter's an old, scarred man with windswept pepper-grey hair and a lifetime of experience. Lucky is man who's been around. A delinquent until his mid twenties, he was in and out of jail for most of his

early life. He tried his hand at mining, lumber, and trapping before enlisting in the Army, fighting Indians across the growing frontier. Later serving in the Union Army during the Civil War, Luke has seen more combat than most men alive. Having walked away from so many injuries and disastrous battles, his nickname is as well-earned as any of his wartime accolades. During the war, his shrapnel-scarred countenance became widely known amongst Union soldiers, who considered him a good-luck charm. Go into battle alongside Lucky Luke and you're sure to survive, even if the battle isn't won.

Lucky married his trade, and it's been so long that he's had trouble reintegrating into society and regular working life. Despite his relative youth and his issues with social life after the war, he's been respected and honored by many for his service. Recent attempts to settle down haven't gone down well, and Lucky has yet to find the right girl or the right place. To pay for his travels, he does odd jobs from patching roofs to hunting criminals. At the end of the day, when he's exhausted and can feel his growing age, he still finds himself hoping that he'll stumble upon a life of comfort, and find the girl of his dreams waiting there for him.

On a Mission

Who you are is indistinguishable from what you want to do. You set out into the world in pursuit of someone or something, and that pursuit is what drives you even when others would falter and fail. Perhaps you feel the need to spread your ideology to the world. Perhaps you're out to kill the man who killed someone you loved. Perhaps you're out to resolve some inner conflict within yourself. You live your life in a frenetic haze of passion, constantly judging people and events through the lens of this mission, be it holy or otherwise. If you're a religious character, consider which religion your character might follow. Unless they're a charlatan, their religion should have a profound impact on their mindset.

Skills

- When you allocate your Archetype skills, allocate one skill at rating 5, two skills at Rating 4, and three skills at rating 3.
- When allocating your general skills, allocate four skills at rating 2 and five skills at

rating 1.

Background Ability

- The first time in a session that a Character with this Background invokes their Background Trait, they do not have to spend a Reputation Point to invoke it.

Example: Adam Migisi is a Native American of the Confederacy of the Hawk who is on a mission to claim the Confederacy of the Hawk for his own. He is afraid that the Starhawk Kenu will lead the Confederacy into an unremarkable death. He is afraid that his people will slowly fade away and will only be known as the savages that robbed a handful of trains, instead of the proud people who lost a great war against General Steele, but nonetheless killed the man who caused them so much suffering. Migisi served as a Union soldier in the Civil War, taking the name Adam on his papers.

Migisi knows war now, better than even the warlords. If anyone is to lead the Confederacy of the Hawk into their final war, it should be him. Every action Migisi takes, he takes to either attack General Steele, or to test himself in order to prove that he is more worthy to be the Starhawk than Kenu. He brings in the Sheriff's bounties constantly, testing himself against larger and larger groups of men. Whenever he works with others, he immediately takes a leadership role, ordering then and treating them like soldiers. If he is asked to perform a task that is beneath him, he will delegate it immediately. His reputation is beginning to spread, and his only concern is that his name will reach the ears of General Steele or the Starhawk Kenu before he is ready.

A Life of Privilege

You grew up in a rich and powerful household. While you may not have been exorbitantly wealthy, scarcity was rarely, if ever, an issue. Perhaps you were a member of the prosperous state bureaucracy, or the child of a tycoon lord. Yet, for some reason, you are out west - in the empty desert. Your reputation and your security are behind you now. These are the badlands, and they don't care about you unless you do something for them. It's an economy where your life is the nexus - made fragile for the first time.

Skills

- When you allocate your Archetype skills, allocate one skill at rating 5, two skills at rating 4, and three skills at rating 3.
- When you allocate your general skills, allocate three skills at rating 2 and eight skills at rating 1.

Background Ability

- Instead of beginning the game with \$2d6, you begin the game with \$2d6+70.

Example: Dulcinea Rivera lived a pampered life as the daughter of Mexican aristocrat Guillermo Rivera until Dulcinea mother was assassinated and they fled Mexico. After discovering her father's plans to have her marry into a wealthy family in Texas, she ran away from home, bringing with her as much money as she could carry. Dulcinea is not accustomed to being told she can't have things exactly the way she wants them, but she's well-educated, strong willed and proving herself to be resourceful on the frontier.

Now on the run from bounty hunters hired by her father to bring her home, Dulcinea is constantly on the move. She's dedicated to proving that even without her father and his money she can become someone of note, and she strives to make something grand of herself. Perpetually one step ahead of her father's lackeys, she's developing a network of contacts to build up her own legacy.

Outcast

Whether it was exile or your choice, you never fit in where you were raised. Instead, you took to the West — a land perfect for those who were misfits amongst their families. Nomadic life isn't new for you, and it's possible you derive some kind of stability from it. Even if you aren't a loner by nature, circumstances have made it your lot in life. The trick is to always be arriving and departing; sentimental relationships will only keep you from moving forward.

There are a thousand and one reasons why you might have been cast out of your home, be they ethnicity, ideology, or even bad luck. In the wake of the Civil War, despite . While pride and enlightenment ideals are championed, equality doesn't happen overnight, and thousands of people like you have fallen through the cracks.

Skills

- When you allocate your Archetype skills, allocate one skill at rating 5, two skills at rating 4, and three skills at rating 3.
- When you allocate your general skills, allocate four skills at rating 2 and six skills at rating 1.

Background Ability

- Characters with this Background gain a bonus to Travel Contests equal to their Reputation rating.

Example: Adi Morrison was until recently a well meaning and well behaved Enochite with only the best interests of her family and faith at heart. She lived in a compound that, against the wishes of the head church, still practiced polygamy. Fearing retribution from the Federal Government as well as a higher power, the church elders deemed it necessary to send a Destroying Angel to dismantle the troublesome community.

Near-mythical in their capabilities and often dismissed as little more than anti-Enochite rhetoric, Destroying Angels rarely leave witnesses to their deeds. Adi escaped the burning of her home only by a stroke of luck, fleeing across the desert knowing her husband, sister-wives, and children were already dead.

Traveling to other Enochite settlements she found that they had all been forewarned of survivors from her group of "heathens". Tainted by the rumor that she was responsible for the massacre at her home, Adi was refused entrance to compound after compound as, to her dismay, the story travelled much faster than she could. Eventually finding herself in Silver Springs, she finds little love amongst her former peers, but has earned respect among many who harbor hatred towards the Enochites. Scraping by as a seamstress, she spends her days searching for a way to prove that her story is the truth, though she doubts she'll ever return to the Church anytime soon.

A Life of Struggle

You've had a difficult life so far, and it's only going to get worse. Your days have been spent in grueling labor, bordering on starvation, or burdened by intense and pronounced stressors. You've likely seen the worst that humanity has

to offer, and offered it yourself in turn. A life of suffering perpetuates suffering, often without intending to do so. Now you're out in the west, and your life of struggle has prepared you well. Going without water for a day is nothing new to you. Killing someone for food maybe isn't too farfetched. While you're inured against commonplace atrocities, the grotesque frontier beckons. Will you participate in the depravity, or work to abolish the suffering you know best?

Skills

- When you allocate your Archetype skills, allocate one skill at rating 5, two skills at rating 4, and three skills at rating 3.
- When you allocate your general skills, allocate six skills at rating 2 and two skills at rating 1.

Background Ability

- You begin with \$d6 instead of \$2d6

Example: Philip Zande is an ex-slave from Georgia who has been jumping trains and boats since he escaped just before the Civil War, trying to make his way West. Word in his home was that there was a land of opportunity out West, far from white slave owners, where people took your real measure as a man. The youngest and healthiest of his family, he was chosen as the one to escape. Skipping meals for the next three days, his parents and siblings bundled their rations and gave them to a shocked Phillip, telling him to run, run and never stop until Jefferson.

Now five years older than he was then, Phillip has survived by stealing money and food, and learned to defend himself in fights from other vagrants living the same life as him. Philip has spent his whole life only looking as far ahead as tomorrow, and that's prepared him much more than most. Now that he's made it to Jefferson, Phillip is learning to adapt to city life, and worked a number of labor jobs before being offered a position as a bodyguard for Summit Bank. Now stably employed for the first time in his life, his only goal now is to find some way to free his family and bring them to his new home in Silver Springs.

Baptism by Fire

Your life was ordinary until, one day, something big happened — something that changed your

life forever. It was at that moment when, upon reflection, you knew that you couldn't return to your ordinary life. Perhaps you were a bureaucrat who learned too much about a banker's schemes, or a train conductor whose vessel was sacked by marauding natives. Regardless of how it happened, you found yourself out west. You're unprepared for what's going to happen next, but you know that you can't go back.

Skills

- When you allocate your Archetype skills, allocate one skill at rating 5, two skills at rating 4, and three skills at rating 3.
- When you allocate your general skills, allocate four skills at rating 2 and four skills at rating 1.

Background Ability

- Characters with this Background get a +1 when using rhetorical strategies against un reputable characters.

Example: Amanda Cobart was a passenger on a train traveling from Chicago to San Francisco when it slowed to a grinding halt just hours outside of Silver Springs. Some suspected engine trouble, but it didn't take long for the whispers to reach to her compartment: train robbers. Always in the wrong place at the wrong time, the man sitting across the aisle from her was carrying two thousand shares in JDSF Railway in his suitcase — exactly what the bandits were after. When the first robber made his way to her compartment, she took her opportunity to act. A two-shot derringer, tucked in her purse by a concerned family member, suddenly became more than just the small insurance against muggings it was intended to be. In two shots, the bandit was dead. Though she'd never fired a gun before, the slain bandit's revolver fit into Amanda's hands better than she could explain. As the other robbers rushed into her compartment, she killed each of them in turn, singlehandedly destroying one of the most notorious gangs in the area. Hailed as a hero, Amanda stepped off the train in Silver Springs a different woman than she was just hours ago, but her troubles were only just beginning.

7.3 Choosing an Archetype

Your character's Archetype determines their Archetype skills, and provides guidance towards choosing a Career Trait. There are six Archetypes to choose from: **Killer, Ranger, Educated Folk, Working Folk, Tradespeople, and Scum**. Every Player Character in American Sunset is defined as one of these categories.

Included with each Background are two sets of skill ratings, one for Archetype skills and one for general skills. At character creation, you choose what skills your character will have by allocating the skill ratings listed in your Background to your character. To do this, use the values listed under your chosen Background.

Example: Alice wants to make a Ranger with a background of I Served My Time. Because of the Archetype skills that I Served My Time provides, she gives her character a rating of 5 in Grit, Riding, and Fitness, and then she gives her character a rating of 3 in Handiness, Shooting, and Stealth. Next she chooses general skill ratings, giving her character a rating of 2 in Awareness, Fighting, and Sleight of Hand, and a rating of 1 in Education, Medical, Poise, and Intimidate.

Archetype skills must be chosen from among the skills in your chosen archetype, but your general skill ratings can be put into any skill you choose (including any unallocated Archetype skills). See Skills (pg. 49) for the full list of skills and more a detailed description of their uses. The Archetypes are as follows:

Killers

Killers, by trade or necessity, make their living by removing other people from the earth - or sometimes by merely threatening to kill them. Whether it be lawful and justified, in cold blood, or anywhere in between, Killers have the skills to live up to their name. Examples of Killer characters include bandits, soldiers, hired mercenaries, bounty hunters, or lawmen.

Fitness

Grit

Handiness

Rope Skill

Riding

Stealth

Shooting

Survival

Archetype Skills

Awareness

Fighting

Fitness

Grit

Intimidate

Medical

Riding

Shooting

Survival

Educated Folk

As an educated individual, you learned your skills from a school or university. Unlike other Archetypes, all educated folk can read as a benefit of their upbringing, and their technical abilities are often rare and highly valued on the frontier. Examples of Educated characters include bankers, judges, scholars, military officers, priests or doctors.

Archetype Skills

Awareness

Deception

Education

Empathy

Handiness

Medical

Perform

Poise

Shooting

Rangers

Rangers, don't just survive in the wilds, they thrive. Men and women who make their living on the land, Rangers are skilled at living for weeks, months, or indefinitely without support from the greater forces of civilization. Examples of Rangers include characters who are hunters, trappers, cowboys, trackers, or prospectors.

Archetype Skills

Awareness

Working Folk

Working folk are the backbone of continued civilization on the frontier. No part of their life is easy, and not all chose it voluntarily. Strong-backed and stalwart, their jobs require stamina and long hours, often in unsafe conditions. Working Folk is a good choice for players who want to play as ranchers, loggers, laborers, farmers or miners.

Archetype Skills

Awareness
Fitness
Fighting
Grit
Handiness
Intimidate
Rope Skill
Riding
Survival

Tradespeople

Tradespeople are working folk who've learned a craft, whether it was self taught or by an apprenticeship. While not formally educated, many of their talents cannot be learned without long hours of practice, a teacher, or both. Tradespeople includes careers such as railroad engineers, craftspeople, shopkeepers, coach operators, and other townsfolk.

Archetype Skills

Awareness
Deception
Empathy
Fitness
Handiness
Poise
Perform
Riding
Shooting

Scum

Scum are the strange, the criminal, and the outcasts of the west. Scum are shunned by even the lowest classes of society, but still find a place in the lawless reaches of the West. Players should consider the Scum Archetype are those who want to play as drifters, prostitutes, con-men, gamblers, and mystics.

Archetype Skills

Awareness
Deception
Education
Empathy
Fighting
Intimidate
Poise
Sleight of Hand
Stealth

7.4 Reputation

Your reputation influences many aspects of American Sunset. It's what makes your character stand out, and gives them an identity beyond their stats and skills. As your character develops a grander reputation, the more powerful a force they'll become.

All characters begin with a Reputation Rating of 3 and one Reputation Point, but the GM may change this as they see fit.

7.4.1 Defining Aspects: Traits, Feats, and Flaws

The fundamental building blocks of the Reputation system are your character's Aspects. There are three types of Aspect, Traits, Feats, and Flaws, which represent individual facets of your Reputation and the stories people tell about your character. All characters start with one Feat, one Flaw, and a Background and a Career Trait.

If you cannot think of a quality Trait, Feat, or Flaw during Character Creation, feel free to define them during play. If you do not have all of your Aspects completed prior to play, and your character responds to an event in a cool or dramatic way, make it a Feat! Just keep in mind though, that you cannot invoke an Aspect which does not exist. Be sure to inform your GM about any changes you make to your character sheet in this way.

Background Trait

The first trait you will define is your Background Trait. Your Background Trait describes what brought you from being nobody in the West to being somebody of repute. It should elaborate on the Background you chose, solidifying it into a story. Mechanically, you are limited to spending only a single reputation when you invoke your background trait. (See Using Reputation Points, pg. 56)

Example: Jessica James is a Gunslinger whose Background is No One Knows. She would write “No One Knows” in the Background Trait section. Jessica James comes from Missouri, and is unknown in Jefferson. Since her identification papers along with most of her other personal belongings were burned when a train caught on fire, nobody knows who she is, and she has used this to her advantage by spreading her reputation as a mysterious bounty hunter.

Career Trait

The second trait you should define is your Career Trait. It doesn't ask who your character is, but rather what they do for a living. While this may seem mundane, Reputation is about how people perceive your character and so includes details like your Career. Note that your character's Archetype is separate from your Career. While a character's Archetype determines their starting skill ratings, your Career Trait is what your character does on a day to day basis. Mechanically, the Career Trait will not allow you to spend more than a single point of Reputation to perform tasks you would be expected to perform in your chosen way of life, so keep that in mind while choosing which aspects of your character are best represented here (See Using Reputation Points, pg. 56).

Examples of Career Traits

Career Trait: Farmhand

Description: My character has worked on a farm from when he was very young, moving and using farm equipment, and tending to animals.

Career Trait: Nurse

Description: My character is a nurse at the local hospital, where she tends to the sick and wounded.

Feats

Feats are predominantly positive attributes of your character that describe what they've done and what they're known for. Feats are made up of two parts: The feat itself and, its story. A good Feat is a specific one. Why is this something that makes your character stand out? What caused people to know this about your character? What does this feat say about your character's personality? Your feat should be more than “my character is known for being really strong!” or “my character is known for being very compassionate.” Plenty of people in the world are strong or compassionate. Why is your character that way?

Feats aren't just a single word that describes your character. Instead, they tell a story about how your character became who they are. Not only does this give you the opportunity to craft a more detailed backstory for your character, it will also help you determine when to invoke your reputation (See Using Reputation Points, pg. 56).

Defining Feats during Play

When a character has an empty Feat slot and the character performs a remarkable action, the player may define one of their empty Feat slots immediately. Describe the action as actively as possible in the “Feat” entry, and be sure to tell a convincing story too.

Examples of well-written Feats

Feat: Strong during fits of grief

Story: When my character's best friend was shot, he carried him on his back for fifteen miles into town to see a doctor.

Feat: Can treat any combat wound, no matter how gruesome

Story: My character treated soldiers during the war when she was a combat medic, and knows her way around a bullet wound.

Examples of poorly-written Feats (Don't write traits like this!)

Feat: Really strong

Story: My character lifted lots of weights

Feat: Good doctor

Story: My character is good at healing

Flaws

Flaws, like traits, are made of two parts. The flaw itself, and the weakness that governs the flaw. Unlike traits and feats, flaws are predominantly negative aspects of a character that prevent them from accomplishing their goals.

You should ask yourself similar questions about your character's flaw as you ask about their traits. What about your character's flaw is unique? Under what circumstances might your flaw impede you? Why does your character have this flaw? What does this flaw say about your character's personality? You should try to come up with flaws that tell a story, provide insight into the character, and most importantly, indicate when you can invoke the flaw for Reputation Points.

Examples of well-written Flaws

Flaw: Acts on impulse in social situations.

Weakness: My character didn't learn many social graces growing up on a farm, and often speaks his mind when he shouldn't.

Flaw: Has to drink after firing a gun or rifle.

Weakness: My character became an alcoholic while trying to forget the death and horror she saw in the war.

Examples of poorly-written Flaws (Don't write Flaws like this!)

Flaw: Impulsive

Weakness: My character insults people because he feels like it.

Flaw: Alcoholic

Weakness: My character drinks too much.

7.5 Starting Gear and Miscellany

Each character starts with a "kit" filled with normal quality items and some personal effects. These can be written in the "Gear" section of your character sheet.

7.5.1 Your Kit

Characters begin the game with a “kit” that represents what the characters bring with them to the table, and is usually based on who your character is and the tools of their trade. This kit represents the items you need to perform your Skills. You should consider each one of your Archetype skills and decide what you need to effectively perform each of those Skills to determine what’s in your kit. **Your kit does not give you bonuses when using those skills**, but losing elements of your kit, or letting them be damaged or broken can result in penalties.

Everyone begins the game with a gun and a horse. In addition, Working Folk begin with a melee weapon that reflects the type of work they have done (See Gear, pg. 81). Your starting kit must be verified by the GM prior to starting the first session.

Example: Doctor Wieland begins the game with a Derringer, a Quarter Horse named Wanderer, and a Doctor’s Kit. His Doctor’s Kit contains everything that he needs to treat injuries on the fly.

7.5.2 Your Rhetorical Strategies

Characters begin the game with one Rhetorical Strategy from each of the three categories: Logicity, Empathy, and Hostility (See Rhetorical Strategies, pg. 72). If a character has a rating of 3 or higher in any of the skills associated with rhetorical strategy categories (Education, Empathy, or Intimidate), they may choose an additional Rhetorical Strategy in the appropriate category. Rhetorical Strategies are used for Combat, and inflict Strain upon a character.

7.5.3 Other Character Details

Personal Effects

These are small items that do not affect your skills, but help you create a more detailed description of your character, such as a pipe, locket, or unique articles of clothing.

Example: Doctor Wieland begins the game with a set of doctor’s clothes, photo of his father, a copy of his father’s death certificate, and warm scarf.

Language and Literacy

Characters are only literate if they have a rating of at least one in the education skill.

Optional Rule

Poise Based Languages: Characters begin the game able to speak a number of languages equal to half their Poise Rating (minimum of 1 language) and are literate in a number of languages equal to half their Education Rating (both are rounded up).

Starting Wealth

Characters begin the game with \$2d6 unless they have the “A Life of Privilege” (\$2d6+70) or a “A Life of Struggle” (\$d6) Background.



8. Combat

COMBAT in American Sunset is designed to be fast, dramatic, and decisive. Whenever combat takes place, the stakes are life and death - and the system is designed to exemplify this. Combat is distinguished in two ways: social combat and physical combat. Social combat takes the form of organized debates, heated interpersonal arguments, and tense negotiations, which may turn lethal. Physical combat takes place through exchanges of bullets, fists, and the occasional blades, arrows or improvised weapons. Both can coexist in the same combat, providing a multi-layered and dramatic combat experience.

8.1 Structured Time

All Combat takes place in **Structured Time** - a system of organizing actions into a series of turns and rounds. Whenever there is a situation where it is important to know the specific order of character interactions, the GM may institute Structured Time. During Structured Time, the order of players' actions are determined and play proceeds in the given order, in which each player takes a turn (see below for details on what comprises a turn). Once every character has taken a turn, the current round is over and a new round begins.

In American Sunset, there is both Physical and Social Combat. Because the game uses the same system to handle both, players are encouraged to behave dynamically. Characters use Rhetorical Strategies to inflict Strain and Weapons to inflict Wounds. Allowing for a variety of responses to a single challenge. Whenever the term "Combat" is used, it is synonymous with structured time. Structurally speaking, there is no "Physical" or "Social" Combat. All combat is resolved using the same system on the same Initiative count.

8.1.1 Scenes

In any combat or other structured time scenario, the environment is broken up into scenes. Scenes are designed to allow players to quickly and easily understand their position during combat, even in complicated or chaotic situations. Each scene is relatively small, easily described in a few words or a couple of short sentences, and relatively uniform in terrain and obstacles. Players are able to

freely move inside a single scene, but moving from one scene to another involves suffering a -2 penalty to their attack. (See Movement, pg. 72)

Examples of scenes: “In the corner, by the piano”; “In the middle of the street”; “Along the edge of the ridge”; “In the master bedroom”; “On the balcony”; “Next to the large group of cacti”; “In the shadow of the hill”; “Inside the caboose”; etc.

8.1.2 Range

All weapons in the game have a range associated with them that determines their effectiveness over varying distances. These ranges do not have hard rules associated with them. Instead, we've listed here three possible descriptions for each range bracket: the number of scenes composing the range bracket; an intuitive, narrative context; and a distance in units of measurement. All three are equally viable, and may be more or less suited to different situations. Use whichever is best for you! GMs are encouraged to be flexible and creative with this system.

8.1.3 Range Brackets

Short Within the same scene. The distance at which you can comfortably have a conversation while speaking normally. Zero to fifteen feet.

Medium One to three scenes away. The distance across a large room or a bar, or a distance that would take several seconds to cross at a sprint. Fifteen to forty feet.

Long Four to five scenes away. The farthest distance you could yell and be understood. Forty to eighty feet.

Very Long More than five scenes away. Too far to make out the recognizable details of a person. Eighty to one hundred and fifty feet.

Extreme At extreme distances, individuals are barely discernible. Circumstances where this range bracket may be needed will be very rare. Examples of extreme range include the distance from the peak of a mountain to the base, or the first sighting of riders in the distance on the open plains. Realistically, you should not be initiating combat at this range with anything less than a cannon.

Characters who make a ranged attack at a range bracket farther than their weapon's listed range suffer -2 to their roll for each range bracket beyond the listed range.

Example: Jessica wants to shoot a fleeing bandit with her revolver. The bandit is at Long range from Jessica (5 scenes away) and her revolver has a listed range bracket of Medium. When shooting at the bandit, she suffers a -2 to her roll.

Characters may not attack more than 1 range bracket beyond the range bracket listed for their weapon. A character may not Counter-Attack a target that is beyond the range bracket listed for their weapon - they may only Evade. It is simply too distant for the character to accurately return fire.

8.1.4 Initiating Combat

When Structured Time is announced, determine which characters are aware and unaware. While sometimes this may be obvious from a narrative standpoint, you may also wish to have defending characters perform an Awareness contest to see if they really are unaware. If there is an unaware character, treat the first round of combat as an Ambush Round.

Ambush Round

Whenever a character would attack an unaware character, the first round of Structured Time is the Ambush Round, in which unaware characters cannot act. When determining Initiative for the Ambush Round, do not roll Initiative for unaware characters. Unaware characters are unable to act or react during this round and they may not Counter-Attack. Once the Ambush round is over, roll Initiative for unaware characters. In the next round, unaware characters become aware and act normally in subsequent rounds.

Turn Order and Initiative

The order of play is dictated by an Initiative Contest, in which each character rolls 2d6 and adds their Awareness Rating to the total. The order of play proceeds from the character with the highest total to the character with the lowest total.

8.1.5 Turn Actions

During a character's turn, they may do one of each:

- Initiate a Contest (See Initiating a Contest, pg. 52)
- Move to an adjacent scene (-2 to any Shooting contests made)
 - If a character moves to an adjacent scene during their turn, they suffer a -2 penalty to any Shooting contest they make until the start of their next turn.
 - A character may choose not to initiate a Contest during their turn in order to make a Fitness contest with a Target Number of 8. If they are successful, they may move an additional scene during their turn. If a character succeeds at the previous test, they make another Fitness Contest with a Target Number of 15 and if they succeed again, they may move another scene. (See Movement, pg. 72)
 - For Movement and Mounted Combat, see Mounted Combat, pg. 72.
- Speak a sentence

A character may also pass, and do nothing during their turn. Characters will usually pass if they are attempting to make an attack with other characters against a single target.

Using Weapons

Characters use Weapons to deal Wounds to other characters. All weapons have an associated skill. When making an attack, roll 2d6 and add the associated skill rating. If a character is attempting to Evade (See Opposed Contests, pg. 52) an attack with a Weapon, they add their Grit to the die result instead.

8.1.6 Cover

If a character is attacked with a ranged attack while standing behind cover, the severity of any Wounds the defending character receives is reduced by the type of cover that they are behind.

Type of Cover	Example	Effect
Soft Cover	Wood. Thin Metal. A particularly robust window.	Decrease degree of wound severity once.
Hard Cover	Reinforced wood. Stone. Layered sandbags.	Decrease degree of wound severity twice.

Ignoring Cover

When attacking with a Weapon, attacking characters who roll a doubles on any dice they roll for the attack (including dice rolled with Advantage and Disadvantage) ignore the defender's cover when resolving their attacks.

8.2 Mounted Combat

Horses are an iconic component of any Western tale, and American Sunset is no different. While horses count as characters like any other animal or entity, they are unique in that other characters, player or otherwise, can make use of them during combat. In keeping with this, horses and other mounts have qualities much like weapons and rhetorical strategies, and some can even have a reputation associated with them.

Health

All Mounts have a shared Wounds and Strain track (an "Injury Track." See Antagonists, pg. 93 for more info about injury tracks) that is used whenever they take either physical or mental injuries. Whenever a Mount would take a Strain or Wound of any degree, they take an injury of that degree. Rhetorical Strategies cannot be used against mounts in combat.

Additionally, once a Mount takes a severe Wound, they will suffer an additional light Wound whenever their rider takes a movement action. As with all other characters, once a mount has filled each of their possible wounds, they are dead.

Movement

Unladen Mounts, by default, can move up to three scenes per turn as their first movement action. The rider may take another movement action, provided that they succeed at a TN 10 Riding Contest and have not initiated a contest this turn. Note this may not be true of some mounts such as donkeys or ponies! Additionally, Mounts do not receive their own turn during combat, as they are taking commands from their rider.

If a mount is killed while being ridden, the rider is thrown and takes a wound. The severity of their wound is determined by how many scenes the rider traveled through in their previous turn.

Distance	Wound Degree
0 - 1	Light
2	Medium
3	Severe

Mounted Attacks

Characters riding a mount have several options in combat, some of which rely on the mount and rider traveling a number of scenes before they make an attack. Riders who have traveled more than two scenes in a turn before attacking may gain Advantage against their target, or they may choose to Trample their target instead of using a weapon. When doing so, they treat their Mount itself as a weapon, and use its qualities for the attack.

If a character chooses to Trample, or their target is counterattacking with a weapon that has the Polearm quality, they do not gain Advantage.

8.3 Rhetorical Strategies

Social Combat is a series of negotiations, movements, and arguments intended to achieve a single purpose. This could be swaying a crowd to your cause, convincing someone to help you, or navigating the often byzantine and corrupt legal system. Social Combats are initiated by characters who want to affect a change in someone's behavior. The arenas are court rooms, assembly halls, and bars.

8.3.1 Using Rhetorical Strategies

Rhetorical Strategies are used to demoralize, distract, and disarm your enemies, as well as revitalize your allies. During combat, a character may choose to use a Rhetorical Strategy instead of attacking with a weapon, forgoing their chance to inflict a Wound in order to inflict a point of Strain. In order to Evade a Rhetorical Strategy, a character uses their Poise skill instead of the Grit.

Each Rhetorical Strategy falls under one of three categories, Logical, Empathetic, and Hostile. Each of the three strategy categories are associated with a skill; Education for Logical Strategies, Empathy for Empathetic Strategies, and Intimidate for Hostile Strategies. When using a Rhetorical Strategy, add the appropriate skill rating to the dice result in order to determine the total.

Note that Strategies do not have range brackets, because they can only be used inside the same scene (or within earshot, as defined by the GM).

8.3.2 Logical Strategies (Education)

For all Logical strategies, if Doubles are rolled, one targeted opponent (even if you are targeting multiple) may not initiate a contest during their next turn.

Strategy	Qualities	Other Effects
Blather*	Underhanded Unreliable (5)	Whenever a character loses to someone using this rhetorical strategy, the loser cannot initiate a contest during their next turn
Blunt	Shocking (1) Reliable (5)	
Concise	Underhanded Accurate (1) Compact	
Demand	Shocking (2) Inaccurate (1)	

8.3.3 Empathetic Strategies (Empathy)

For all Empathic strategies, if Doubles are rolled, you may erase a Medium Strain on a character within your scene.

Strategy	Qualities	Other Effects
Butter Up*	Unreliable (5)	A number of opponents equal to your Poise Rating suffer Disadvantage when using Rhetorical Strategies against you until the end of your next turn.
Sincere	Accurate (1) Underhanded	
Innuendo*	Accurate (1)	Can select any number of characters in a scene to discretely receive a short verbal cue.
Inspire*	Inaccurate (1)	All of your allies within your scene can erase their Light Strain.

8.3.4 Hostile Strategies (Intimidate)

For all Hostile strategies, if Doubles are rolled and the strategy does not have Shocking (X), it gains Shocking (1) in addition to its other qualities. If the strategy already has Shocking (X), it now has Shocking (X+1)

Strategy	Qualities	Other Effects
Indifferent	Reliable (4) Accurate (1)	
Mock	Underhanded Shocking (1)	
Threaten	Inaccurate (1) Shocking (1) Reliable (5)	
Denounce	Shocking (2) Unreliable (5)	

*Rhetorical Strategies marked with an asterisk do not have an injury stake and do not deal Strain when they win a contest, even if they are Counter-Attacking.

8.3.5 Optional Rule: Identity Politics and Social Combat

If the GM wishes, they may highlight the racism, classism, or prejudices of a social situation by detailing privileged identities and marginalized identities particular to it. When using rhetorical strategies, characters whose identities align with a privileged identity may invoke their privilege as if it were a trait, and characters whose identities align with a marginalized identity may invoke their marginalization as if it were a flaw. Narrative explanations of how these elements are invoked is necessary.

Whenever this optional rule is used, the GM should be clear with their players about the identity politics encountered in each social situation. This can be used to reflect more than the standard prejudices of white, patriarchal American society, such as the intense suspicion of foreigners harbored by Native tribes. The West is populated by small, disconnected communities with their own fears and prejudices and this guideline is designed to represent that.

8.4 Movement

During a character's turn, they may make a Movement action. A movement action is taken when a character wants to move to an adjacent scene as a part of their turn. Characters on horseback may make three movement actions in their turn.

If a character succeeds at a Fitness contest with a TN of 8, they may move an additional scene during their turn. If a character succeeds at the previous test, they make another Fitness Contest with a TN of 15 and if they succeed on this test, they may move another scene. If a character moves more than one scene in a turn, they may not Initiate a Contest. Likewise, if a character initiates a contest, they may not move more than one scene during their turn.

If a character moves between scenes and makes an attack in the same turn, that attack suffers a -2 penalty unless the Weapon or Rhetorical Strategy has the Compact quality.

Optional Rule: More Realistic Horse Movement

A horse may not move from scene A to scene B, and then move from scene B to scene A during the same turn.

8.5 Multiple Participants in Combat

You may often find yourself in a situation where there are more than two characters in combat. The following rules describe exactly how to play out these scenarios.

8.5.1 A Single Character Attacking Multiple Targets

1. The active character chooses how many targets they will be initiating a contest against.
2. Stakes proceed as normal. The defending group must choose as a group to raise the stakes and will each take the appropriate penalty to all of their rolls for doing so.
3. Characters roll dice and calculate their total. In addition, the attacking character subtracts 1 from their roll for each character they are attacking beyond the first.
4. The attacking character's total is compared to each individual defending character's total. Each defending character with a lower total suffers an appropriate injury and any other stakes. Then, the attacking character suffers an appropriate injury each defending character with a total higher than theirs.

Example: Jessica James is shooting at 4 bandits who are making trouble in her town. Since she has little patience for bandits, she wants to set the stakes at a severe wound. The bandits choose not to raise the stakes, and all parties proceed to roll and add their skill bonuses. Jessica has a high Shooting skill, so her total is a respectable 14, despite the -4 to her roll. Three of the bandits are somewhat less skilled, and their totals are 8, 10, and 6. However, the lead bandit is somewhat more skilled, and his total is a 15. The three bandits who rolled low each take a severe wound from Jessica, but the lead bandit deals a severe wound to her and takes no damage.

8.5.2 Multiple Characters Attacking A Single Target

The characters intending to attack together (the "attacking group") must wait through Initiative until the last character's turn in the Initiative order (See Structured Time: Combat, pg 69). The attacking group then chooses to initiate a contest, as a group, against a single target.

1. Stakes proceed as normal. The attacking group must agree on the stakes being set, and the defending player may raise them as normal.
2. Players roll dice, and the defending player receives a -1 for each attacking character beyond the first.
3. The defending character's total is compared to each attacking character's total individually. Each attacking player with a lower total suffers an appropriate injury stake and any other

stakes..

4. Each attacking character with a higher total than the defending character takes the appropriate injury stake and any other stakes.
5. In the case where one side, either the attacking group or the target, has won all the individual resolutions, that side counts as the winner for all other relevant stakes. In other cases, the GM must determine an appropriate division based on the circumstances.

Example multiple combat: Some bandits have heard about Banjo Tom's formidable skills in combat and want to team up to get an edge. They all roll Initiative and while the lead bandit rolls higher than Banjo Tom, the other two roll worse. The lead bandit has to wait for his allies to be ready since he wants to make a group attack so Banjo Tom gets to attack first. When the other bandit's turn in initiative comes up they choose to make a group attack against Banjo Tom. They set the stakes at medium and Banjo Tom chooses not to raise them. The bandits roll dice and Banjo Tom rolls dice at -2 since there are three attackers. Banjo Tom rolls an 8, the lead bandit and one of his cohorts both roll 9's but the third bandit rolls a 5. Banjo Tom takes two medium wounds and the bandit who rolled low takes one as well. The bandit leader and his other friend take no damage.

This system does not allow for multiple attackers against multiple defenders because that's what normal combat already represents. A given combat scenario is broken up into individual 1v1, 1vX, and Xv1 combats.

Dual-Wielding

If a character is firing a pair of the same pistols, resolve the attack as if only one pistol is firing. That pistol gains the following qualities:

- Inaccurate (1)
- Brutal(1)

If a weapon with the Accurate quality gains the Inaccurate quality, the number (X) listed beside the Accurate quality is reduced by 1. If the weapon already has the Inaccurate or Brutal quality, the listed number (X) is increased by 1.

For more information on weapon qualities, see page Qualities.

8.6 Wounds and Strain

The world of American Sunset is a perilous one, fraught with dangers and risks. Be it through combat, accidents, or even overwhelming terror, injury is inevitable. Characters have two different ways of tracking their health: Wounds, which measure physical injuries, and Strain, which measures mental injury.

Both Wounds and Strain are broken into three categories, Light, Medium, and Severe, measuring how badly the character has been injured. Character sheets have boxes arranged in order of severity and are marked whenever a character suffers an injury.

Characters with a higher Grit can withstand more Wounds before they are incapacitated, and similarly, characters with a higher Poise can withstand more Strain before they are incapacitated.

Grit Rating	Max Wounds
0	3 Light 2 Medium 1 Severe
1-3	4 Light 2 Medium 1 Severe
4-7	4 Light 3 Medium 1 Severe
8-10	4 Light 3 Medium 2 Severe

Poise Rating	Max Strain
0	3 Light 2 Medium 1 Severe
1-3	4 Light 2 Medium 1 Severe
4-7	4 Light 3 Medium 1 Severe
8-10	4 Light 3 Medium 2 Severe

Characters who suffer injuries take penalties to future contests depending on the severity of the injury.

Injury degree	Consequence
Light	No Penalty
Medium	All contests are rolled at -1 for each injury of this type
Severe	All contests are rolled at Disadvantage

To offset these consequences, characters must treat their injuries. This is accomplished in one of two ways, treating Wounds, and treating Strain.

8.6.1 Treating Wounds

To treat Wounds, a character must perform a Medical Contest. The Target Number for the medical test is determined by the kind of Wound a character is attempting to treat.

After treatment, Light Wounds are removed entirely. However, Medium and Severe Wounds are not. Instead they are Bandaged, represented by the smaller box next to Medium and Severe wound boxes on character sheets. Wounds that have been Bandaged are not gone, but no longer inflict any lasting effects on the character who has suffered them. After a number of days based on the severity of the wound minus your character's Fitness rating, the wound is healed.

In Structured Time, treating a Wound takes a number of rounds equal to the Target Number of the Wound minus the treating character's Medical Skill (minimum 1 round). During this time, they may not move or perform any other contests, though they can still speak as normal.

If you are treating your own Medium or Severe wounds, add 2 to the difficulty.

Severity	TN	Example	On Treatment	Time to Heal
Light	5	Just a scratch. Sprained joint or pulled muscle.	Removed	Instant
Medium	10	Bruised or fractured bone. A profusely bleeding cut.	Bandaged	10 minus Fitness days
Severe	15	Badly broken or shattered bone. Bullet to the chest.	Bandaged	15 minus Fitness days

8.6.2 Treating Strain

To treat Strain, a character must perform an Empathy Contest. The Target Number for the Empathy Contest is dictated the degree of Strain that the character is attempting to treat. Before making the Empathy Contest, the character must announce the level of Strain they are trying to treat.

In Structured Time, treating Strain takes a successful Empathy Contest for each point of Strain that the character is trying to remove. Light and Medium Strain are gone after treatment. Severe Strain is not gone after treatment, but it stops providing Disadvantage to rolls once it is treated. Severe Strain doesn't go away immediately after treatment although the injured player will stop taking Disadvantage once it has been treated. After treatment it will still take time for the Severe Strain to be completely gone. After 5 days you may make another Empathy contest to remove the wound entirely.

Severity	TN	Example	On Treatment	Time to Heal
Light	5	Bruised ego. Temporary social awkwardness.	Removed	Instant
Medium	10	Shocked or afraid to the point of taking pause.	Bandaged	Instant
Severe	15	Shellshock. A moderately debilitating panic attack.	Bandaged	15 days. (Or 5 days, if treated)

8.6.3 Resolving Injuries: Death and Surrender

As gameplay progresses, a character will probably suffer an injury when they have already taken their maximum injuries of that severity. In this case, they instead take an injury one degree more severe than the injury they would otherwise take.

Example: Adi has already taken 4 light wounds, and is dealt another because she trips over a loose rock. Because she does not have a fifth space to fill, she instead takes a medium Wound. If a character is dealt a Strain and all of their Strain have already been allocated, they have no choice but to surrender and cease to be an active participant in combat. For narrative purposes, they will reluctantly accede to their opponent's demands.

If a character is dealt a Wound and all of their wounds have already been allocated, they are dead.

In the case of non-Reputable characters, this is the end of the line for them. However, Reputable characters are made of tougher stuff - If they're treated soon, they may have a chance to survive. This isn't a situation to take lightly, however! Characters who've taken their maximum number of wounds have experienced a seriously traumatic event. Outside of extraordinary circumstances, you should strongly consider retiring the character. If the character is not retired, the GM may decide to give that character an additional flaw to reflect the trauma.

8.7 Qualities

Weapons, Rhetorical Strategies, and even some other game objects such as horses are imbued with **Qualities**. Qualities distinguish different types of combat devices, add either add additional effects or make a device more difficult to use.

For the purposes of Qualities, a Counter-Attacker is also an attacker, unless otherwise stated. If, for whatever reason, a weapon or rhetorical strategy would gain a quality that it already has, increase the X value of the quality by 1. If a weapon or rhetorical strategy does not have an X value to increase, there are no changes to the weapon's qualities.

Accurate(X)

Add X to the your total when making an attack with this weapon or rhetorical strategy.

Inaccurate (X)

Subtract X from your total when making an attack with this weapon or rhetorical strategy.

Brutal (X)

Whenever a character attacking with this weapon or rhetorical strategy inflicts injury, they deal an additional number of Light Wounds equal to X.

Non-Lethal (X)

You may not deal severe Wounds or Strain with this weapon or rhetorical strategy unless your relevant skill rating is equal to or higher than X.

Concealable

If a character with this weapon is searched, the character being searched receives a +2 to their attempts to conceal this weapon.

Polearm

A weapon with this quality can used to deprive a mounted attacker (who has taken two or more movement actions) of their Advantage. Mounted attackers may not make an attack with a Mount weapon against a character wielding a weapon with this quality.

Compact/ Mobile

Do not take a -2 penalty when attacking with this weapon if the character has taken a single movement action since the beginning of their last turn. If the character has taken more than one movement action, they still cannot make an attack.

Quick Draw

As long as this weapon is within reach, the character never counts as unaware for the purposes of an Ambush Round. If an unaware character has a weapon with this quality at hand, they count as aware for the Ambush Round, provided that they respond to any contests this turn with a Counter-Attack by using a weapon with the Quick Draw quality.

Spray

When attacking with this weapon or rhetorical strategy, instead of nominating a single target, nominate every character within a single scene. Resolve attacks against all characters within this scene, friend and foe, using the Attacking Multiple Targets rules on p. 75.

Reliable (X)

When attacking with this weapon or rhetorical strategy, if the character's dice roll lower than (X), they automatically count the result as (X).

Unwieldy

An attacking character using a weapon with this quality takes a -2 penalty when attacking a target within the same scene as the attacker.

Unreliable (X)

When making an attack with a weapon or rhetorical strategy with this quality, if the attacker rolls underneath (X) on their dice roll, they automatically lose the contest. Whenever a character loses a contest in the manner described above, the weapon is considered broken until an appropriate Handiness contest is passed.

Shocking (X)

Whenever a character attacking with this weapon or rhetorical strategy inflicts injury, they deal an additional number of Light Strain equal to X.

Underhanded

The first time that you make an attack with an Underhanded weapon or rhetorical strategy in combat, your opponent must succeed at a Perception contest with a TN of 10 or be considered unaware for the purposes of the attack (i.e. they may not Counter-Attack in the Opposed Contest and must Evade).

Slow

A character may not Counter-Attack with this weapon or rhetorical strategy.



9. Gear

THIS section details all manner of items and equipment a well-prepared character might be carrying. That means the mechanical details for weapons, which are a major subset of gear, as well as the mechanics and prices for buying everything from food to clothing to weapons. Though we provide suggestions, prices for items are ultimately at the GM's discretion.

Starting Gear is classified as one of three types of item:

Kit Items , which are required to perform a task.

Personal Effects and items that are part of your character's history or backstory.

Weapons , which are any item used in combat.

9.1 Weapons

Pistols: (Shooting)

Standard Revolver

Range (M)

Compact
Quick Draw

Derringer

Range (S)

Compact
Concealable
Underhanded

Apache Knuckleduster

Range (S)

Compact
Concealable
Underhanded
Close Combat Attachment

Texas Behemoth

Range (M)

Brutal (2)
Unreliable (4)
Cannot be dual-wielded.

Rifles: (Shooting)

Line Infantry Rifle
Range (L)
Reliable (6) Unwieldy

Line Infantry Rifle with Bayonet
Range (L)
Reliable (6) Unwieldy Polearm

Cavalry Carbine
Range(M)
Compact Reliable (5)

Shotgun
Range(M)
Brutal (1) Reliable (4)

Sawed-Off Shotgun
Range (S)
Brutal (3) Inaccurate (2)

Bows: (Shooting)

Short Bow
Range(S)
Compact Slow Accurate (1)

Compact Bow

Range (M)
Compact Slow Reliable (6)

Heavy Weapons: (Shooting)

Heavy Weapons require an active crew of at least 3 to operate. If a Heavy Weapon has a full crew, they may move the weapon one scene per turn. If a Heavy Weapon moves during its turn, it may not fire. Heavy Weapons may also be towed (See Mounted Combat pg. 72)

Canon
Range Very Long
Brutal (5) Inaccurate (3) Slow Shocking (2)

Gatling Gun
Range (M)
Brutal (2) Spray Unreliable (5) Unwieldy Shocking (3)

Melee: (Fighting)

Attacks with melee weapons can only target characters within the same scene as the attacker. Characters attacking with a melee weapon do not suffer the -2 penalty for moving and Initiating a Contest in the same turn. (I.e. they all have Range: S and the Compact quality in addition to their other qualities.) Mount Weapons are also Melee weapons.

Line Infantry Smallsword
Accurate (1) Reliable (4)

Cavalry Saber

Brutal (1)
Reliable (5)

Large Wrench

Reliable (4)

Spike Maul

Brutal (1)

Hatchet

Brutal (1)
Reliable (4)

Axe

Brutal (2)
Inaccurate (1)
Slow

Pickaxe

Brutal (2)
Unreliable (5)
Slow

Fists

Non-Lethal (5)
Quick Draw

Brass Knuckles

Concealable
Underhanded

Spear or Pike

Polearm
Accurate (1)

Stiletto

Compact
Concealable
Underhanded
Quick Draw

Bowie Knife

Concealable
Accurate (1)

Mounts (Riding)

Mounts can be used as weapons for trampling by following the rules of Melee Weapons but with certain additional effects: (See Mounted Combat, pg. 72)

Quarter Horse

Shocking (1)
Brutal (2)
Reliable (4)

Appaloosa

Shocking (3)
Brutal (1)
Accurate (1)

Mustang

Unreliable (5)
Accurate (4)

Donkey

Unreliable (5)

Donkeys may only move one scene per turn, rather than the usual three.

Miscellaneous

Some weapons do not fall under a specific category, or may use an otherwise non-combat skill during combat. A few examples of those weapons are listed here.

Lasso**Skill: Rope Skills****Range (S)**

Whenever this weapon deals damage, the target is knocked to the ground. If the target is riding a horse, they are thrown from their horse. After a character attacks with this weapon, they must succeed on an Opposed Fitness contest against the target to reclaim the Lasso.

Rope with Horseshoe**Skill: Rope Skills****Range (S)**

Brutal (1)
Inaccurate (1)
Compact
Concealable

Throwing Knife**Skill: Sleight of Hand****Range (S)**

Compact
Quick Draw
Concealable
Underhanded
Inaccurate (1)

9.2 Optional Gear Rules**Multiple Currencies**

The American Sunset system allows for multiple different items to be treated as units of currency, with prices of conversion listed below, if you want to use these you'll need to track them. This rule is optional because it requires more information that players and game masters need to track, but it can lead to more depth in the economy when different characters players encounter are more willing to accept different currencies.

Alternate Currencies

Silver	\$1.30 per oz
Gold	\$20 per oz
Bullets	\$0.05 each
Booze	\$1 per bottle
Day's Food	\$0.05
Day's Rent	\$0.05

9.3 Prices of Everyday Items**Weapons and Ammo**

Item	Price
Revolver	\$20
Muzzle-loading rifle	\$8
Shotgun	\$60
Repeating Rifle	\$50
Customized revolver set	\$100
Cartridges, one box	\$0.50

Home and Farm

Item	Price
Homestead filing fee	\$14
House, 1200 sq ft	\$700
House, 350 sq ft	\$300
Shanty, 80 sq ft	\$25
Stable and well	\$150
Plow and cultivator	\$325
Chairs, each	\$1.25
Bed and end table	\$15
Cookstove	\$25
Lantern	\$1.00
Kerosene, 1 gallon	\$0.15

Food Items

Item	Price
Wheat, 1 bushel	\$1.00
Flour, 1 barrel	\$3.00
Corn, 1 bushel	\$0.40
Molasses, 1 gallon	\$0.15
Pork, 1 barrel	\$8.00
Lard, 1 pound	\$0.06
Butter, 1 pound	\$0.15
Sugar, 1 pound	\$0.07
Cheese, 1 pound	\$1.00
Rice, 1 pound	\$0.05
Oranges, dozen	\$0.50
Dried figs, 1 pound	\$0.20
Dried apples, 1 pound	\$0.10
Dried apricots, 1 pound	\$0.15
Fresh peaches, dozen	\$0.40
Fresh apples, dozen	\$0.30
Flour, 1 pound	\$0.04
Coffee beans, 1 pound	\$0.12

Livestock Items

Item	Price
Average work horse	\$150
Good saddle horse	\$200
Saddle	\$30
Well-made saddle	\$60
Harness	\$50
Yoke of two oxen	\$150
Heifer	\$19
Cow	\$26
Bull	\$90
Three year old steer	\$62
Two year old steer	\$22
Yearlings	\$12
Calves	\$2.50
Buggy	\$75
Wagon	\$75

Dry Goods

Item	Price
Rough cotton fabric, 1 yard	\$0.10
Patterned cotton fabric, 1 yard	\$0.15
Blue denim, 1 yard	\$0.15
Cashmere wool, 1 yard	\$0.30
Blanket	\$3.00
Undershirt	\$0.50
Cotton shirt	\$0.80
White cotton pants	\$0.80
Colored cotton pants	\$0.50
Socks, 6 pairs	\$1.00
Hoop skirt and bustle	\$1.00
Gold locket	\$1.50
Gold earrings	\$4.50
Gold ring	\$2.00
Silver plated watch	\$6.00
Silk parasol	\$1.00



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10. Appendix I

10.1 Character Sheet

[illegible]

Character Description

Literate? ☐
Languages known: _____

Gear and Personal Effects

\$ _____

Name: _____	Mount	Qualities: _____	Injuries
Description: _____			Severe: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
_____			Medium: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
_____			Light: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
_____			Mounts with a severe Injury take a light Injury for every movement action they make

Reputation Aspects

Maximum Reputation	Feat: _____	Flaw: _____	Career Trait: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
	Story: _____	Weakness: _____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
Current Reputation	_____	_____	Background Trait: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____

Additional Traits

Feat: _____	Feat: _____	Feat: _____	Flaw: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____
Story: _____	Story: _____	Feat: _____	Weakness: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____



11. Appendix II: Characters and Antagonists

This section is all about creating characters for players to interact with in the world of American Sunset, both mechanically and conceptually.

11.1 Antagonists

Antagonists in American Sunset are different from player characters. Some are weaker, either because they can take less wounds, have less skills, or lack a vital capability like Reputation. Others are roughly equivalent to player characters of varying levels, sometimes even with the ability to use Reputation traits. Others still are stronger than player characters, they might have unachievable levels of skill or special weapons and rhetorical strategies unavailable to players. Some may be able to safely sustain additional wounds, or wield abilities completely alien to players, born of mystery rather than reputation.

Injury Track

Minor characters and minions have a combined Injury track rather than distinct Wound and Strain tracks. Whenever a character with an Injury track suffers either a Wound or Strain, an injury of the same severity is allocated to their Injury track.

Human Antagonists

There are 3 different types of human antagonists in American Sunset: Minions, Elites, and Reputable Antagonists.

- **Minions** are the goons and lackeys employed by the setting's powerful characters. Minions are usually unskilled, cheaply paid, and expendable. They only have one Injury track, with 3 Light Injury and 2 Medium Injury boxes.
- **Elites** are the specialists, the professionals. They are hired more infrequently than minions, and are much more reliable. An Elite character is equivalent to a starting character in their effectiveness. A good Antagonist will ensure that an Elite accompanies every group of minions to keep them in line. Elites only have one Injury Track, with 3 Light Injury boxes, 2 Medium Injury boxes, and 1 Severe Injury box.

- **Reputable Antagonists** are the movers and shakers of American Sunset. They pull the strings, pay the bills, and run the show. Reputable Antagonists are antagonists which have Reputation Aspects, Reputation Points, and a Reputation Rating. Reputable Antagonists may Initiate 2 Contests per turn, and calculate their Wound and Strain tracks like player characters (although the GM is free to fudge this as they wish).

11.1.1 Minions

Bandit

Skills Shooting 3, Fighting 3, Fitness 3, Poise 2, Grit 2, Fitness 2, Riding 2, Survival 1, Awareness 1, Intimidate 1, Rope Skills 1.

Bandits are sometimes ex-soldiers and outcasts, and othertimes just plain mean. They usually ride together and don't attack tough looking people.

Ghoul

Skills Fighting 4, Awareness 4, Fitness 3, Intimidate 3, Grit 2.

These folks are barely human and eke out their existence on the fringes of society. Many of them are deranged and prefer to eat their meat raw. Watch out for them, unless you want to become their next meal.

Laborer

Skills Handiness 3, Grit 3, Fitness 3, Intimidate 2, Fighting 2, Perform 2, Shooting 1, Medical 1.

These folks do the hard jobs on the frontier and most are uneducated. They don't want trouble, but come to the aid of friends and family.

Bureaucrat

Skills Education 3, Deception 3, Poise 3, Intimidate 2, Empathy 2, Awareness 2, Medical 1

These folks work at banks, or in federal offices, and try to avoid physical combat if they can. They range from bored employees to committed representatives.

Nurse

Skills Medical 3, Poise 3, Education 2.

Nurses are doctor's assistants, but are likely stuck at hospitals and clinics during the graveyard shift when no one else is on call. They see the goriest face of the West, and work for little pay.

Cultist

Skills Deception 4, Awareness 3, Empathy 3, Intimidate 2, Fighting 2, Shooting 2, Medical 1.

There are weird people out West— people with weird beliefs.

Merchant

Skills Handiness 3, Empathy 3, Awareness 3, Intimidate 2, Perform 2, Deception 2, Education 1, Sleight of Hand 1, Poise 1.

Merchants are all about sell, sell, sell. They try to avoid confrontation, but will defend themselves and their trade.

Pilgrim

Skills Poise 3, Empathy 3, Awareness 3, Medical 2, Survival 2, Fitness 2, Rope Skills 1, Handiness 1, Riding 1.

Pilgrims are resolutely seeking to be closer to their God, traveling long distances for spiritual rewards. They are confident in their Lord to guide them and protect them.

Tradesman/Tradeswoman

Skills Handiness 3, Empathy 3, Rope Skills 3, Poise 2, Grit 2, Medical 2.

These people are dedicated to their craft, whatever it may be. Usually the products of apprenticeships or family businesses, tradespeople can be found in every settlement on the frontier, crafting and trading their wares.

Skulker

Skills Stealth 3, Sleight of Hand 3, Awareness 3, Fighting 2, Shooting 2, Rope Skills 2, Poise 1, Grit 1, Fitness 1.

These people are muggers, ruffians, thieves, and other individuals that live off of the work of others. Unlike bandits who attack travelers in force, skulkers lurk around cities trying to keep their identities secret. They are often willing to accept money to do unsavory things.

Tribesman/Tribeswoman

Skills Handiness 3, Awareness 3, Medical 3, Fitness 2, Rope Skills 2, Riding 2, Survival 2 Empathy 1, Poise 1, Grit 1

The Native American tribespeople are a hardy lot. They have endured the colonization of their home by uncaring and unending settlers, and it seems that their suffering will not abate anytime soon. Above all, they are self-sufficient and mobile, preferring to migrate rather than settle.

Settler

Skills Grit 3, Handiness 3, Fitness 3, Awareness 2, Poise 2, Empathy 2, Medical 2, Shooting 1, Riding 1, Rope Skills 1.

Settlers are hard working people that have taken a risk moving out west, or grew up here. They can be found on farms and ranches, starting or growing families. They are quick to defend what's theirs, and loyal to their friends and family to a fault.

Vigilante

Skills Shooting 3, Fighting 3, Grit 3, Intimidate 3, Awareness 3, Poise 2, Fitness 2, Rope Skills 2.

Vigilantes work outside of the law to enforce justice, and see themselves as good individuals who step in where the law cannot. Many of them have some kind of hatred for lawbreakers, and competently defend themselves in times of stress. They are usually unwilling to attack good citizens.

U.S. Army Ensign

Skills Shooting 4, Fighting 3, Awareness 3, Fitness 3, Poise 2, Grit 2, Rope Skills 1, Medical 1.

Like any soldier, ensigns are competent shooters and many of them have something to prove. They represent the U.S. government and its ideals, and will come to the aid of good people if they can. They usually have orders to attack Natives and have a distrust of Enochites.

Bandero

Skills Grit 5, Shooting 4, Intimidate 4, Riding 3, Awareness 3, Rope Skill 3, Empath 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Survival 2, Stealth 2, Handiness 1, Perform 1.

Banderos are expert Mexican soldiers who have served their time and moved on. With Mexico crumbling while America expands, many Banderos have become hired guns, and sell their services to the highest bidder.

11.1.2 Elites**Line Infantry Officer**

Skills Shooting 5, Empathy 4, Poise 4, Fitness 3, Grit 3, Awareness 3, Survival 2, Riding 2, Intimidate 2, Education 2, Medical 1, Deception 1, Rope Skill 1, Handiness 1.

Army officers are experienced individuals who served during the Civil War. They have witnessed countless atrocities, led their men in suicidal charges, and lived to tell the tale.

Bounty Hunter

Skills Shooting 5, Survival 4, Stealth 4, Poise 3, Intimidate 3, Awareness 3, Riding 2, Medical 2, Rope Skill 2, Empathy 2, Handiness 1, Perform 1, Deception 1, Grit 1.

Bounty Hunters have a job, and they are loathe to let anyone get in their way. Bounty Hunters can be found in shady saloons, looking for their next mark. Many Bounty Hunters are ex-soldiers, and learned their arts from the military. Motivated only by pay, they're nonetheless the closest some settlements get to a force of law.

Assassin

Skills Shooting 5, Stealth 4, Fighting 4, Sleight of Hand 3, Awareness 3, Riding 3, Rope Skill 2, Education 2, Medical 2, Survival 2, Fitness 1, Deception 1, Poise 1, Grit 1.

Assassins are professional killers, trained to execute their targets without being noticed. They are highly valued individuals whose skill set often finds a employment in the West. Some have a moral code, but many are only bound to their contract and the pay they receive.

Cavalry Officer

Skills Riding 5, Fighting 5, Poise 4, Empathy 4, Fitness 3, Grit 3, Awareness 3, Survival 2, Intimidate 2, Education 1, Medical 1, Deception 1, Rope Skill 1, Handiness 1.

Cavalry Officers are seen as glorious, heroic individuals by most Americans. Their imposing, mounted stature cuts a strong figure, and they are known for their ruthlessness. The prestige of General Adrian Steele has trickled down to these lowly officers, but so has his brutality and his cunning. By virtue of their stature, Cavalry Officers consider themselves privileged above all others, and few would dispute this.

Distinguished Warrior

Skills Riding 5, Fighting 5, Shooting 4, Awareness 4, Stealth 3, Fitness 3, Grit 3, Empathy 2, Intimidate 2, Perform 2, Poise 1, Rope Skill 1, Education 1.

The Confederacy of the Hawk's lifestyle lends itself to the creation of hardened veterans. Their elite warriors compose the bodyguard of the Starhawks' retinue, and they are fiercely loyal to him. They ride quickly, and frequently accompany raiding bands.

Doctor

Skills Medical 5, Poise 4, Education 4, Awareness 3, Handiness 3, Empath 3, Grit 2, Intimidate 2, Shooting 2, Fitness 2, Deception 2.

Doctors are the lucky, educated few who have their own practice. They likely employ a number of nurses and see to the needs of an entire town. Doctors are scarce on the frontier, but they are well-loved by their patients.

Cult Leader

Skills Empathy 5, Education 4, Deception 4, Poise 3, Medical 3, Grit 3, Stealth 2, Riding 2, Rope Skill 2, Survival 2, Handiness 1, Perform 1, Awareness 1.

The West is a strange place, with even stranger people. Cult Leaders are charismatic, educated individuals who know how to manage their flock. The distinction between Cult Leaders and priests can be semantic if you don't look too closely, but looking too close at some people's beliefs can be a danger in its own right.

Politician

Skills Poise 5, Deception 5, Empathy 5, Intimidate 3, Education 3, Awareness 3, Riding 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 2, Handiness 1.

Politicians are good at their job—almost too good. For a politician, their career is a lifestyle. Every public appearance is a show, and every secret is a weapon against the shameful. They are manipulative, shrewd, and conniving by nature, but a few might a sense of decency and honor if you dig deep enough.

Priest (Christian)

Skills Empathy 6, Poise 4, Education 4, Awareness 3, Intimidate 3, Grit 3, Deception 2, Medical 2, Handiness 2, Perform 2, Fighting 1.

For a Christian, the priesthood is an ancient tradition, stretching back to the Levant. Priests are highly trusted by their laity, like the flock trusts the shepherd. This trust is usually well placed, but the West is a godforsaken place, and it can corrupt even the purest souls.

Priest (Enochite)

Skills Poise 6, Intimidate 4, Deception 4, Medical 3, Education 3, Grit 3, Awareness 2, Riding 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Shooting 2, Stealth 2, Perform 1.

Enochite Priests, much like Christian priests, are leaders to their people, spiritual and otherwise. Outside of their communities, they are met with suspicion and their words often go unheeded, but inside their tight-knit settlements, they are as family.

Priest (Native)

Skills Awareness 6, Empathy 4, Medical 4, Intimidate 3, Poise 3, Grit 3, Education 2, Perform 2, Survival 2, Stealth 2, Riding 1, Sleight of Hand 1, Shooting 1.

Native priests local to Jefferson come from one of three orders: Priests of the Raven, Magpie, and Vulture. While the orders have always kept the peace between each other, the end times are upon their people, and mistrust is taking hold. It is all some priests can do but walk with dignity alongside their tribe into their final days.

Sheriff

Skills Intimidate 5, Shooting 5, Awareness 5, Poise 3, Rope Skill 3, Grit 3, Riding 2, Medical 2, Education 2, Fighting 2, Stealth 1, Handiness 1, Deception 1, Perform 1.

Sheriffs are the underpaid, overworked lawmen in the West. They will often hire vigilante committees to aid in exercising justice, though any sheriff worth his salt knows that sometimes the only person can trust is yourself.



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