DEAD LANDS

GRIM PRAIRIE TRAILS

SAVAGE WORLDS

John Rogers (Order #49932984)

Grim Prairie Trails

by John Goff

Credits & Acknowledgements

Additional Material: Shane Lacy Hensley

Editing: Matthew Cutter, Jodi Black

Deadlands Brand Manager: Matthew Cutter

Art Director: Aaron Acevedo

Layout and Graphic Design: Matthew Cutter, Aaron Acevedo, Joel Kinstle

Cover Art: Chris Bivins

Interior Art: Mike Burns, James Denton, Carly Sorge, Bryan Syme, Headfirst Studios, and the Doomtown Artists

Cartography: Alida Saxon

Savage Worlds by Shane Lacy Hensley

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18 June 1881

Mr. Abernathy,

As requested, in this package please find our report compiling Prof. Connolly's correspondence and photographs from his springtime travels. You will no doubt note several missing reports, which we attribute to the difficulties of cross-continental mail transport and the unreliability of the telegraph system.

We have no experience in dealing with private investigation firms, but yours comes highly recommended to us through the Denver lodge of our society, so we hold forth great hope for your success in locating Connolly. Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are pledged to help in any way possible.

The dispatch from Tucson marked Prof. Connolly's last contact with us. Although we are not schooled in the art of investigation, our board believes this may be a likely area in which to begin your search for him. You are the detective, however, so we bow to your experience and expertise in this endeavor.

As stated in our initial discussion, we must request a full accounting and receipts for all expenses incurred above and beyond your agreed-upon fee.

Sincerely,

Stephen Hutchens

Stephen Hutchens
Chairman
Explorer's Society, Charleston S.C. Lodge

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THE EXPLORER'S SOCIETY

Charleston, S.C. Lodge *Vigilantia, Scientia, Vindictas!*

Field Report #1

New Varney Flats, Kansas

21 March 1881

Let me begin by once again thanking the members of our lodge for sponsoring my expedition through the western regions of the continent. It is with a heavy heart that I make this journey alone, but I understand that finance is as active a stressor in our lives as any force of nature. I hope that my endeavors will reflect well upon not only the Charleston lodge, but the Explorer's Society as a whole!

I am currently two days behind the travel schedule I presented to the Society. While I find the delay in New Varney Flats frustrating, I know all too well from experience that an alteration in itinerary of a mere few days while traversing the continent is hardly cause for outrage. Only a year or two ago, I'd have counted myself lucky to have completed the journey without at least sighting an armed gang in the employ of another railroad, if not an outright assault on the train!

Asking around, I determined the problem arose not from a skirmish in the so-called "Great Rail Wars," which the papers in Charleston would have us believe are concluded. I can safely say—if the presence of well-armed guards onboard my train is any indication—the owner of the Black River Railroad Co. considers the matter far from settled. No, instead it seems there was a brief flare-up of partisan violence between supporters of the Union and those of the Confederacy somewhere westward along the track. For the passengers' safety, the railroad decided to halt its trains temporarily.

At first, I supposed I could be in worse surroundings. After all, the original Varney Flats is the source of a well-known legend back in the tearoom of the Society's Charleston lodge. The tale claims the settlement all but vanished in a single, blood-soaked night.

I hoped to follow up on the tale's origins, but found none of the current residents actually were present. No one could point me to an eyewitness to the supposed event, leaving me to wonder if the outlandish claims of blood-sucking revenants weren't simply exaggerations to hide the depredations of border raiders, or possibly even a bloody-minded war party sallying forth from the nearby Coyote Confederation.

I did happen across several posters advertising a passing carnival by the name of "Nightlinger's Traveling Exhibition of the Extraordinary," which claimed to have on display—among other things—the mummified cadaver of an Aztec king. Sadly, the flyers were left over from the previous week, leaving me unable to verify the accuracy of said claims with any immediacy.

On a side note, one of the residents told me that the owner of the carnival, Jebediah Nightlinger, had expressed an undue amount of interest in the stories revolving around the original Varney Flats. Nightlinger even closed the carnival for a day to visit the ghost

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town. No doubt the huckster was collecting further outlandish tales for future performances!

Hopefully, my next update will find me in the western metropolis of Dodge City.

Professor Kevin Connolly

Field Report #2

Dodge City, Kansas

26 March 1881

I lost patience with the delay in New Varney Flats after the second day and purchased passage aboard a stagecoach, hoping to leapfrog the delay and catch another westbound train in Dodge City. It seems ill-luck is fated to plague me on this journey, as less than three hours after departing the town, I saw the train pass us from the window of the bouncing and dusty coach. If there is a more uncomfortable manner to travel the rutted trails of the West, I've yet to experience it, and would add I hope I never do in the future!

Furthermore, the unnecessary detour took me directly through the town of Afton Valley, the very site of the conflict that stalled my journey. We stopped only briefly, just long enough to trade the coach's team of horses for fresh beasts, and, after glimpsing a few of the residents, I remained inside the passenger compartment. Certainly, the local citizens were a rough-looking lot. This is to be expected in the so-called "Disputed Territories." But mere surliness would have been unlikely to dissuade me from stretching my legs after the thrashing the past few hours in the stage had inflicted upon me.

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Rather, nearly everyone I observed in Afton Valley appeared to be suffering from some infectious malady, exhibiting hacking coughs, red, swollen eyes, or both. Fearing an outbreak of typhus, yellow fever, or possibly malaria, I opted to remain within the coach and kept my kerchief close to my face at all times.

A shame really, given that on the outskirts of the hamlet I witnessed a striking spread of whitish flowers with red-tipped petals. I've heard tell of these flowers, often found near battlefields Back East, but know them only by their vulgar name, "blood roses." I would have liked to have obtained a specimen or two for comparison purposes to see if the species is indeed the same as those east of the Mississippi, but discretion advised against any further exposure than necessary to the apparent epidemic.

After avoiding contact with the potentially infectious disease in Afton Valley, the rest of the journey to Dodge City was uneventful, if bumpy and hot. In Dodge, all I have to worry about are cowboys fresh off the trail with pockets full of cash and bellies overfull with liquor. Thankfully, the latter is not contagious, and sadly, neither is the former!

I have purchased a ticket on a Union Blue train departing tomorrow. If all goes well, I will send the scheduled update from Denver, prior to boarding the Denver-Pacific for the final leg to California.

Professor Connolly

Field Report #4

Salt Lake City, Deseret

31 March 1881

The ride over the Rockies passed without incident, and I had the pleasure of spending it in the company of one Elmer Vawter, formerly of the Union state of New Jersey. Mr. Vawter proved an endless repository of tall tales from the Northeast. I was taken, in particular, by the legend of the so-called "Jersey Devil."

If Mr. Vawter's stories are to be believed, the devil is a singular creature of chimeric nature, combining aspects of stag, bird, and possibly a wolf or

Field Report #3
29 March 1881

ARRIVED DENVER SAFELY STOP NEXT REPORT FROM SALT LAKE STOP SCHEDULE TIGHT STOP DID NOT VISIT DENVER LODGE STOP

PROF. CONNOLLY

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other predator. Further stretching credulity, he claims sightings of the animal date to the first half of the last century! According to the popular myth, the creature has made its home in a rather desolate area of the state known as the Pine Barrens, and was either born to or summoned from the depths of Hell itself by a woman known as "Mother Leeds."

I find most of the tale highly dubious, beginning with the supposed demonic origin and ending with the assertion that the beast has survived nearly 150 years. However, as we have found, most outlandish myths have some basis in fact. Witness the discovery of the *Troglodytus* gorilla by Dr. Savage only three decades ago. Until that time, most Western explorers laughed at the indigenous peoples' tales of brutish bush men. An expedition to the Pine Barrens might be warranted, if not by our own lodge, then perhaps by one native to the Union.

Salt Lake City, or the "City of Gloom" as it's often called by visitors, has proven an education in itself. Never have I seen so many examples of the New Science on ready display. In the farmlands of Dixie, it's certainly not uncommon to encounter a tinkerer selling his own version of clockwork demoler, but here complex mechanisms and devices are almost the norm! I should have liked to have more time to wander the streets cataloguing unique contraptions, but alas, my train was scheduled for only a brief layover in the city.

C.

Field Report #6

Shan Fan, California

3 April 1881

After a brief sojourn in Virginia City, I have reached the Denver-Pacific line's terminus at Shan Fan. I hope our esteemed members have had time to discuss what I discovered while in

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Nevada. I remain at a loss to explain via current scientific principles the existence of that phenomenon. Personally, I must confess I'd had my own doubts of the authenticity of "ghost rock fever," but now I can find no other likely explanation. Furthermore, having witnessed the anomaly the miners referred to as a "fever phantom" firsthand, I find logic fails me.

Simply put, what I saw appears to fly in the face of the very foundations of science as I understand them! However, I trust my previous—and far more detailed—missive contained more than enough data to formulate your own theories. I did succeed in obtaining the remains of a victim of the fever: a small lump of ghost rock. What implication this carries, I can only hypothesize. Due to the uncertainties of mail transport, I will keep the mineral in my possession for the remainder of this journey.

I did have opportunity to visit briefly with our sister lodge here. I must say, I was quite impressed by their facilities and their hospitality. After dispensing with the usual membership verification, Captain Pennington-Smythe allowed me unfettered access. I daresay the lodge rivals our own for comfort and appointment! I encourage any members who follow my explorations in this area to pay the Shan Fan lodge a visit.

C.

Field Report #7

Shannonsburg, California

5 April 1881

I intend to hire a boat to take me to a few of the Great Maze's mining camps. The Iron Dragon train on which I traveled from Shan Fan had decidedly fewer creature comforts than the Denver-Pacific. I should have expected such given that, by and large, the other passengers on the line are miners, boat crew, and other laboring types who likely have no desire to waste their salaries on a finer bench or dining car.

The more earthy accommodations have allowed me freer access to several immigrant workers recently arrived from the Orient. Mastery of the Mandarin tongue is not my foremost linguistic accomplishment, but I can, nonetheless, manage enough of basic dialogue to carry on simple conversation. I learned that most of these people arrived under contracts of indentured servitude, although I suspect many of us would consider them little more than voluntary slaves.

I was able to gather a few of their culture's myths through our discourse, but I fear the details may have surpassed my own skill with their native tongue. Giant humanoids—or ogres, if you will—seem to make up a large portion of their crytozoological tales. These beasts seem to share characteristics of biological and spiritual entities, and to my own coarse ear, their origin might better be classified as demonic rather than terrestrial.

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After my experiences in Nevada, I'm less inclined to dismiss these claims outright, but note that some seem less credible that others. I can accept the possibility of massive hominids, but I find others less likely founded in reality. In particular, the *t'ao t'ieh* (which I roughly translate as "gluttonous ogre") would appear to be an exaggeration at best. According to travelers with whom I spoke, the creature is possessed by a hunger so extreme it will consume itself if denied another source of nourishment!

Such behavior in an individual might be explained as a manifestation of lunacy, but to accept that an entire species is capable of self-cannibalization seems to fly in the face of Professor Darwin's accepted theory of natural selection. Furthermore, the damage such consumption would cause far outweighs any minor nutritional gains.

Logic aside, many of the Orientals with whom I spoke maintained not only that such creatures existed, but that certain of their countrymen were capable of controlling these oddities through arcane rituals, using them as particularly horrific henchmen. In fact, one insisted that the individual holding his contract of indenture employed exactly such a beast to compel obedience among his workers. Any worker who displeased the man was fed to the creature!

These encounters have renewed my enthusiasm for my journey. It is against exactly this sort of dangerous ignorance that we in the Society must forever toil. Only through scientific understanding of our world may we free our fellow man from the bonds of unenlightenment—and other men.

C.

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THE EXPLORER'S SOCIETY

Charleston, S.C. Lodge *Vigilantia, Scientia, Vindictas!*

Field Report #9

Lynchburg, California

14 April 1881

I strongly suspect my last report did not reach you, as I learned the Maze runner carrying the mail was sunk by one of the large water serpents known hereabouts as Maze dragons. Ironic, considering the report largely dealt with my observations of just such an animal while traveling outbound from Shannonsburg! The sights of the Great Maze continue to astound me, and utterly defeat any attempts at capturing them within the confines of the written word.

Never fear—I promise to provide a full verbal report of the experience upon my arrival back home.

I spent the past week in and around a rather wild mining town called Lynchburg. Were it not for the titanic mesa upon which it sits, surrounded by the crashing waves of the Pacific, one might be hard-pressed to differentiate it from boomtowns in the Rocky Mountains or Black Hills—excepting the decidedly Oriental influence, of course. Saloons and bawdy houses abound, packed with miners looking to purchase a moment's respite with hard-earned scrip.

Though the Maze itself is worthy of a lifetime's study, my sojourn here is limited to little more than a week. I have been fortunate enough to observe numerous oddities firsthand, not the least of which I found within the confines of Lynchburg itself.

One of my dinner companions, a somewhat boisterous boat captain, invited me to join him for an evening at the "fights." I found out upon my arrival that said bouts are not held according to the Marquess of Queensbury rule. Instead, combatants descend into a steep-sided pit in one of the local saloons where they bare-knuckle brawl until one is rendered unconscious. As I'm sure you've guessed,

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wagering provides a large part of the entertainment.

The evening's final match involved a pair of vicious mongrel dogs versus what I thought was a grossly obese man. Further observation revealed it was, in fact, a revenant of the sort discussed in Dr. Frederick Sutherland's 1877 treatise. However, this specimen appeared to have spent some time submerged in water after its initial demise, and the exposure had drastically affected its biology.

The creature's flesh had taken on a soggy, soap-like consistency and it emitted a foul odor reminiscent of rotted cheese. Its waterlogged nature no doubt contributed to its swollen appearance.

The abomination made rather quick work of the dogs, using only its hands and teeth. It seemed impervious to physical pain, and my companion informed me that such creatures, known among the miners as "bloats" for somewhat obvious reasons, are virtually immune to firearms and pikes. Apparently the piercing nature of the weapons is wholly ineffective, passing harmlessly through the paste-like flesh. (Based on the biology of the undead, I would imagine, though, that alcohol might react negatively with its altered state.)

As a side note, I seem to have crossed paths with Mr. Nightlinger once again. My companion made certain to highlight that human participants were no longer allowed to face a bloat in the pit, as that would be "uncivilized." Taken aback and fearing a horrific tale, I inquired whether anyone ever requested such a match, to which he responded, "Only once." Nightlinger himself had proposed a bout between his strongman and one of the creatures when his show passed through here about a year ago.

On that occasion, the proprietor agreed and all watched as Nightlinger's muscled man dispatched the monstrosity with alacrity. It took another four months before the fight promoters were able to secure a replacement bloat…

C.

Field Report #10

Perdition, California

25 April 1881

I have decided to remain here for a few days to survey local mesa towns, before continuing overland via the colorfully named "Ghost Trail." With the Wasatch rail line's terminus nearby, I believe this is an excellent location from which to mail my next bundle of correspondence. (I opted against visiting Lost Angels, as I have come to understand the good Reverend Grimme's faithful tend toward mercurial behavior.)

Rather than traversing the Maze overland, I booked passage on a small freighter. I'd heard numerous tales over the past days of the dangers posed by southern California's factions, from the self-styled "Emperor" Norton to the Rattlesnake Clan, and decided to take my chances with whirlpools and sea serpents instead. Besides, waterborne travel would allow me to

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visit more of the unique mesa towns, as well as a chance to document more of the Maze's indigenous marine life.

Most towns in the Maze proper are located atop towering pillars of rock and reachable only via the large elevators that soar from ramshackle, sea-level piers to the summits above. Maintenance on said contraptions is disturbingly intermittent, making an already disconcerting trip a gamble with one's life! As a result, I won't deny feeling a modicum of relief when, at our second port of call, we found the elevator apparently out of service.

Further investigation—primarily conducted by crewmen yelling to the top of the cliff face—determined that the town, or at least the operator's station, was abandoned. The captain of our vessel, a man of an ethical fiber seldom encountered among Maze traders, expressed his concern at this development. He told me he had visited the settlement only a week ago and noted at that time the residents seemed to be acting "queerly."

The captain sent a crewman to scale the cliff wall and lower the elevator. Interested to see what had evoked the otherwise stalwart man's unease, I chose to brave the device with the landing party. On reaching the settlement—which appeared to have been home to several dozen permanent residents—we found it completely deserted and devoid of any life: human, dog, cattle, or otherwise.

We set about exploring the buildings and made a worrisome discovery. Several of the buildings were filled with silken fibers, similar in some respects to a spider's webbing, but considerably thicker. Were I to hazard a guess based on the webs, I would estimate that any spider creating them would have to be at least the size of a large man.

Our disquiet grew as we began to find desiccated corpses secreted in the deepest corners of many of said structures, further fueling speculation that some enormous arachnid was loose in the area. Needless to say, the crew desired as quick a departure from the mesa as possible, lest we encounter the creature that spun the webs. Our captain insisted his men set fire to the ill-fated town before we returned to the boat.

During this interlude, I was able to pace the perimeter of the mesa quickly, it being only about a quarter-mile across. At the edge of the mesa farthest from the abandoned town, I discovered a long strand of the same webbing stretching to a nearby plateau. Whether this marked a route of ingress or egress I was unable to determine, as the captain recalled us to the boat shortly thereafter.

I have heard stories of unusually large tarantulas along the border with Mexico, but in my experience that species does not create webs, and certainly not to the extent I witnessed. I believe this may be the first evidence of a new species of arachnid. Although I was understandably uncomfortable at the time, in retrospect I am disappointed I was unable to make a visual study of the animal. Imagine the

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accolades our lodge would enjoy if we were able to produce incontrovertible evidence of a heretofore unknown species!

C.

Field Report #12

Yuma, Arizona

6 May 1881

I ended my stay in Perdition after only a few days. The town proved a bit raucous for my Southern sensibilities. I was able to find departing for Arizona a trader by the name of Clevinger, who graciously allowed me to travel with him at least as far as Yuma. Although Bayou Vermilion's line ends far closer at the once mobile but now stationary town of Railhead, I opted to avoid rail travel, at least for a while, in hopes of better sampling the local flora and fauna.

I anticipated observing such rumored creatures as the inscrutably named "desert thing," or perhaps even a Mojave rattler. After a couple of uneventful days with no sightings, I inquired about such with my traveling companion. Mr. Clevinger informed me that both animals were quite real. However, as both ambushed their prey from beneath the very ground, he stated we were unlikely to see either—at least until we were about to be consumed by one. With that knowledge, my longing for firsthand encounters was muted.

Even moreso after we encountered the West's version of wild pigs!

Traveling through an area that Mr. Clevinger referred to as the Colorado desert (presumably after the nearby river), the sound of a guttural grunting and squealing reached my ears. My companion grew quite nervous, peering anxiously into the surrounding arroyos and

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draws. I asked him the cause of his alarm, and he responded with a single word, "Javeranhas." I was unfamiliar with the appellation and inquired further.

His explanation was cut short as a horde of nearly 100 bristling peccaries erupted from a nearby culvert, rushing toward us. Clevinger fired off a volley of shots from his carbine and dropped a few of the lead pigs. The other animals fell upon their comrades in a feeding frenzy so fevered that I still shudder at the thought.

The trader made haste in leaving the area, saying that once the beasts had stripped the flesh from their fallen packmates, they would again be on the hunt. I would have liked an opportunity to perform a closer study on the anatomy of the carnivorous swine. From my limited observation, I believe the "javerahnas" possessed slightly exaggerated tusks, but that could be simply the artifact of my startled response upon my memory.

C.

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FIELD REPORTS OF PROF. CONNOLLY

Field Report #13

Tucson, Arizona

13 May 1881

I have little of interest in the way of zoological observations to provide in this report. My time in Tucson has been uneventful, with a single notable exception which I feel compelled to share, as it was certainly unsettling for me.

A few days ago, I attended a vaudevillian show at a local theater. I was most taken by a ventriloquist act that served as a lead-in to the main attraction, a somewhat clumsy rendition of Goethe's *Faust*. What struck me as so engrossing about the ventriloquist was the quality and workmanship of his mannequin. Seated near the front row, I could not help but note the degree of detail on the puppet, which appeared fashioned from high-quality porcelain if not actual china.

The young man himself was quite entertaining, being gifted not only with an impeccable sense of timing for his jokes, but also a surprising acting ability. His feigned surprise at his own dummy's actions was quite convincing and even more amusing for its seeming genuineness. Why, had I not known better, I'd have believed the dummy moved of its own volition!

After the show, I went backstage to congratulate the young performer and more closely examine his puppet. I found the door to his room slightly ajar, and upon receiving no response to my hails, peeked inside. There I found the poor soul murdered before his mirror, with numerous slashes about his neck.

As the closest thing to a witness, I was interviewed by the town marshal. The experience was quite beyond my ken, but it gave me opportunity to gather insight into the investigative procedures of law enforcement. I was able to learn that, although the murder was particularly brutal and seemingly evidence of a personal vendetta, the marshal believed that theft was the primary motivation. After all, the criminal had stolen the man's undoubtedly very valuable puppet.

I also discovered that the young ventriloquist arrived in Tucson in the company of none other than Nightlinger's Traveling Exhibition only a week ago! If you'll excuse my excitement at a mere sideshow's passing, the number of times I've crossed paths with this attraction have left me somewhat fixated on it. Given the opportunity, I would feel reticent in my duties if I failed to examine the proprietor's claims for his show.

Inquiries have led me to believe the carnival may visit nearby Tombstone presently. As soon as I can secure safe passage, or at least a traveling companion, I shall depart. My journeys thus far throughout the "weird" West have taught me the folly of braving this expanse alone.

C.

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Introduction

The world's become a dark place, where the boogeyman isn't just a story parents tell misbehaving children. And it's getting darker, with fresh-or not so fresh-horrors being spawned from the depths of Hell with frightening regularity. And just in case your cowpokes are getting jaded by gunning down walkin' dead or plugging the occasional jackalope, we've rounded up a small herd of these critters for use in tormenting your heroes anew.

In the following pages, you'll find a passel of new abominations to throw at your saddletramps just to keep their spurs a-spinning. You'll find a few more (or less) human foes as well, from a very extended family of inbred malcontents to a mad scientist who puts a whole new meaning to the term "mastermind!"

Each of these abominations also comes with a short Savage Tale that showcases the creature in question, just to make it as easy as we can for you to get to tormenting your poor sodbusters as quickly as possible!

Throughout *Grim Prairie Trails*, Wild Cards are marked with a marshal's badge, just like this one:

But before we get to the varmints and critters, let's tie up a few loose ends from Professor Connolly's tale…

THE EXPLORER'S SOCIETY

The Society is generally known as something of a "gentleman's club." The public believes it to be nothing more than a social organization for the wealthy and eccentric. Its primary function seems to be little more than a gathering place for those who hunt critters that most people don't even believe exist. And for the most part, the public is right.

The membership does hunt strange creatures, whether for trophies or, like Professor Connolly, merely to study them. Most of the members are rich and even a little on the kooky side. After all, they do chase after prey that most folks are convinced don't exist, at least outside of fairy tales—or the pages of the *Tombstone Epitaph*.

The Explorer's Society is an international organization, maintaining chapters in many of the larger cities around the world. Due to the many exotic and thus far undiscovered creatures appearing in the American West, there are a proportionately larger number of outposts springing up there than elsewhere. Members traditionally wear a signet ring bearing a crossed sword and torch to identify themselves to each other.

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The Professor's Fate

As you've probably guessed, Professor Connolly never reached Tombstone. Ironically, after chasing after all manner of Hell-spawned abominations during his brief sojourn in the Weird West, it wasn't some outlandish critter that did him in. You see, the professor had the bad luck to hire Redcap Morris (see page 95) as his guide while he was in Tucson. Once they were in the desert, Redcap decided he fancied the professor's hair more than he did the professor's company.

Professor Connolly's corpse lies baking in the Arizona sun about a little over a day's ride southwest of Tucson, near the base of the Huachuca Mountains. Minus his scalp, of course...

The Twilight Legion

The Explorer's Society is actually just the public face for a much older organization known as the Twilight Legion. Few outside the Legion even know of its existence. Over the years, it has had many names, both public and secret, like the Sons of Solomon, the Rippers, and the Msaka Dubwana. Its roots are so shrouded in mystery, even its own members don't know the Legion's complete history.

The Twilight Legion is one of the few organizations aware of the Reckoning. It battles the forces of the Reckoners, much like the Texas Rangers or the Agency, only without any regard for political borders. Like those two organizations, the Legion believes the common man is best served by remaining ignorant of the existence of monsters, although the Legion is nowhere near as ruthless in pursuing this end as those governmental organizations are.

Nonetheless, many in both the Agency and Rangers are aware of the Legion's goals and are, depending on the circumstances, willing to at least look the other way where its members are concerned. While Agents and Rangers are apt to recognize the Explorer's Society signet ring and grant its wearer some consideration, local lawmen aren't likely to do so. In other words, it's not a get-out-of-bank-robbing-free card!

Joining Up

Rank and file associates of the Explorer's Society gain admittance the old fashioned way: Their family buys it. These high-falutin' members rarely suspect the Society has any agenda other than simply stocking its trophy rooms.

Adventuring types may be inducted into the Society if they possess abilities or resources the Legion finds useful. Even so, these inductees are seldom aware of the existence of the Twilight Legion unless it suits the secretive group's goals. More often, the Legion simply works behind the scenes to ensure the right folks are in the right place at the right time.

Only when a member has proven both her usefulness to the Legion and her trustworthiness might the inner circle reveal its existence and goals. The Twilight Legion can serve as a powerful ally for characters in your campaign, Marshal, operating from the shadows to point the posse in the right direction. As the heroes become more experienced and capable, the group may come to entrust them with its secrets.

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Agatha Leeds

Agatha, or "Mother", Leeds's exact age is uncertain, but she's been alive since at least the 17th century. A distant cousin of the infamous Whateley family, she's a skilled black magician, more than a little on the crazy side, and a whole lot on the evil one.

Given that she was into black magic up to her elbows, Agatha wasn't exactly looking forward to a trip to the Great Hereafter. Long ago, she mastered enough of the dark arts to prolong her unnatural life indefinitely. But she never could completely defeat that pesky fellow Death, at least when it comes to a violent one—especially since having ties to the Whateleys means violent death is always on the menu.

Eventually, Agatha conjured up a dozen soulless bodies. Some folks say she stole the corpses, others that she magicked them up out of thin air, and a few that she "spawned" them through some unholy rites. However she obtained them, she spread her soul out over all of the vessels and turned them into carbon copies of herself in the process. In addition to giving her a ready-made coven of witches, she also ensured that as long as any of her "children" was alive, her soul would remain tied to this world.

Still not satisfied with that solution, she continued to summon otherworldly entities in an attempt to find a permanent home for her twisted spirit. When one of these abominations got loose to plague a wooded stretch of New Jersey, her cousins the Whateleys took offense. Not that she'd called up a devil from Hell, but that she'd been clumsy enough to let it get away. The Whateleys felt her recklessness might draw attention to

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their own nefarious activities and called a blood hunt on her and her spawn.

Agatha and her creations split up and have been lying low ever since, hiding not just across the Weird West, but the world itself. They're still seeking the secret to immortality through black magic of all forms, regardless of the cost…to *others*, when at all possible.

Agatha Leeds

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d12, Knowledge (Occult) d12, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Spellcasting d12+2

Charisma: +2; **Grit:** 5; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Enemy (Major, Whateleys), Overconfident

Edges: Arcane Background (Black Magic), Charismatic, Expert (Spellcasting), New Powers, Power Points, Rich, Soul Drain, Strong Willed, Wizard

Powers: *Beast friend, bolt, curse, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, fear, healing, obscure, puppet, smite, speak language, stun, telekinesis, zombie*. **Power Points:** 30

Gear: Ritual dagger (Str+d6+2). The dagger is bound to Leeds. In anyone else's hand, it does Str+d4 damage.

Special Abilities:

- **Ageless:** Agatha and her spawn can appear any age, from a young girl to an old crone, as fits their purposes. Changing their apparent age requires a day of magical rituals.
- **Brood Mother:** Agatha's soul is spread across all her remaining spawn, who are effectively exact duplicates of her. Only by destroying them all can Leeds be permanently killed. Creating a replacement spawn takes her at least a month.
- **Coup (Spirit Curse):** A deader gains the *curse* power, activated by Spirit and costing no Power Points—plus the Whateleys' eternal enmity.

Savage Tale: The Devil You Know

One of Agatha's vessels has set up shop in a small town called Caldwell. She's summoned another horror similar to the Jersey Devil, determined to study the creature more closely. She's maintained better control of this attempt, but the beast still breaks free from time to time to plague the countryside, and rumors are starting to spread about the Caldwell Devil.

Those rumors have finally reached the ears of the Whateleys, who didn't take long to put two and two together. They've dispatched several family members to make good on their old pledge. And guess who should ride into to town just as all Hell is about to break loose?

This Savage Tale is ostensibly set in the pine woods of east Texas, but can be transplanted easily to any forested area.

Caldwell

Fear Level: 3

Caldwell is a small town located off the beaten path in the pine forests of eastern Texas south of Nacogdoches—an overgrown region commonly called the Big Thicket. It grew up around Caldwell's General Store & Saloon (from which the town takes its name, and not vice versa), an old trading post that still stands in the center of a group of about half a dozen other poorly constructed shacks and cabins. Though lumber is a growing industry in the Big Thicket, Caldwell is far from any current operations and railroads. A few hardy folks scrape out

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a living raising cattle nearby, but most of Caldwell's business comes from trappers passing through, either selling their hides or resupplying.

The posse may be drawn to the town by rumors of a strange creature prowling the woods around the isolated settlement, preying on cattle—and occasionally, if the stories are to be believed, lone travelers. You can tack a modest bounty onto the stories if your saddletramps are more mercenary than curious. Alternately, the heroes may simply come across the town in the course of their travels.

The Devil, You Say!

As the only place in town to purchase either supplies or whiskey, Caldwell's always has a few customers visiting. The trading post has all the class one would expect from an establishment where you can buy watered-down liquor across the same counter where the owner barters for not-so-fresh otter pelts. It's not long after entering that the party begins to pick up snippets of conversation pertaining to the beast haunting the woods. One of the patrons tells the aging bartender,

> *"I'm tellin' you, ol' Jenkins lost two o' his Longhorns to it in the last week."*

Another says,

> *"Cows, Hell—I heard tell it snatched a circuit rider right off his horse about a month ago!"*

Should the heroes ask any of the saloon's customers about the creature, they find no shortage of folks with tales about "the Caldwell Devil." The locals generally agree it first appeared a few months ago. They describe a creature sharing the worst characteristics of a bat, a stag, and a crocodile. Supposedly it hunts after dark, gliding through the night sky seeking lone victims.

If any of the cowpokes makes a Streetwise roll, the bartender motions her over and says,

> *"If you folks are interested in the Devil, I'd suggest you visit with Floyd Jenkins. He runs a small herd out on the edge o' the pines, and the critter seems to have taken a likin' for his cows."*

A raise on the roll reveals a band of suspicious characters showed up recently, also asking about the Devil. They say they're members of a family by the name of "Whateley" from Back East and share an unpleasant family resemblance. Folks in Caldwell steer clear of them, saying only that something feels "off" about them.

The Whateley Inquisition

At some point in their investigations, the posse is approached by am unsettling group of men and women. They all share an odd resemblance to each other.

Their leader is tall, thin, and unnaturally pale. He asks in a Back East accent if the posse knows of a woman in the area by the name of Leeds, or possibly Curwen, claiming she is a distant family relation. Oddly, he's unable to provide any accurate description of her.

The encounter should convey a sense of menace, but no overt threat—like spotting a copperhead sunning itself in the middle of the trail. The Whateleys aren't looking for a fight and if the posse becomes agitated, they withdraw.

A Streetwise roll reveals a woman by the name of Curwen lived somewhere out in the Thicket many years ago, but no one has seen or heard from her in over a decade.

- **Whateley Cousins (4):** Use Cultist stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), Springfield rifles

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(Range 24/48/96, 2d10, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP 2, reload 2), and 20 rounds for each.

Shadrach Whateley: Use Huckster stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Add the Whateley Blood Edge and the Mean Hindrance.

Into the Thicket

The Big Thicket's name is apt. The woods are densely populated with pine trees and hardwoods, and brambles and other undergrowth clog the spaces between. Although the land is nearly uniformly level, meandering creeks and muddy sloughs pockmark the area. Worse, with no definitive geographical landmarks, getting lost in the thick brush is almost a certainty for outsiders.

Critters of all sorts prowl the Big Thicket. Black bears, wild boars, alligators, and even a rare cougar or two all hunt the wilderness. The area also hosts every type of poisonous snake found north of Mexico. A posse wandering willy-nilly through the woods is asking for trouble. If heroes decide to traipse off into the Thicket on their own, feel free to have them encounter one of the area's resident predators!

Jenkins' Farm

Fortunately, a well-heeled trail leads to the Jenkins' homestead. The farm sits on the edge of a rare piece of meadow stretching several acres into the forest. The property is fenced, mostly by wire strung between trees, and a small herd of cattle grazes near one edge of the clearing. The farmer's one-room cabin is the only structure on the property.

Floyd Jenkins is as wrinkled and tough as old boot leather, dressed in an old pair of overalls and a battered hat. He tells the group,

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"I've not actually seen a Devil, nor nothin' like it. But over the past week or so I've lost two o' my herd to it. Most recent a bull two nights ago—and he was a good 'un, too.

"I found the first cow's carcass without no trouble, all tore up. A big ol' trail o' dried blood in the pasture led off into the trees. Which says to me the other beeve didn't just wander off into the thicket all by its lonesome."

A Tracking roll turns up some strange hoofed prints in addition to those of the bull. If searchers already found the tracks at Agatha's cabin, these are remarkably similar. However, the prints are only in the area of the attack; there's no sign of them entering or leaving the meadow. A raise on the roll picks up a faint trail of dried blood leading out of the meadow—but no tracks.

Make a Notice roll for any hero who thinks to look up. With success, an eagle eye spots the torn and half-eaten carcass of the bull caught about 30 feet above the ground, in the branches of a pine tree not far from the pasture's edge.

- **Floyd Jenkins:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. He's armed with Matilda, his trusty shotgun (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1, Shots 1, +2 Shooting), and 4 extra shells.

Stakeout

The posse may decide Jenkins' herd is a good spot to set up a guard to catch the devil. If so, the farmer is more than happy to have armed guards protecting his cattle, especially if he's not paying for them.

The first night nothing of note occurs, but around midnight on the second, allow a Notice roll for any characters on watch. With a success, they hear a strange howl somewhere in the distance. This requires a Guts roll for everyone who hears it. Read the following:

Multiple, rapid gunshots ring out in the distance. Soon they dwindle to just a few. Then only a single gun fires intermittently. It too falls silent. It's impossible to tell from where the gunfire originated.

The rest of the night passes peacefully.

Regardless of whether the posse is at Jenkins' farm, back in Caldwell, or elsewhere in the vicinity, they hear the shots.

Through the Woods

No matter where the heroes are early the next morning, a bloodied and gravely wounded man stumbles up to them. It's one of the Whateley thugs.

As soon as he arrives, he falls over dead. His body bears horrific wounds, similar to those the posse may have found on the dead bull.

Other than his injuries, there is little else enlightening on the man. Even his holster is empty. However, his dragging walk—and large number of bleeding wounds—make following his backtrail fairly easy.

Tables Turned

A simple Tracking roll leads the posse to a small clearing in the woods a couple of miles away. There, the Whateleys had obviously once made camp, but the site now has more in common with a slaughterhouse than a woodland glade. Dead bodies and parts of bodies lie scattered across the ground and even in the surrounding trees. A Tracking roll uncovers several odd, hoofed tracks similar to those at Jenkins' farm.

After the party has had a moment to take in the carnage, one of the bodies stirs with a moan. Shadrach Whateley

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Adventure Link

If the posse searches Agatha's cabin, a Notice roll uncovers a damp and smeared letter. All that can be made out is "...Leadtown... summoning requires sacrifice." This is a reference to another of her spawn's attempt to summon a terrormental (see Sacrifical Lamb, page 119).

managed to survive the assault, but only barely.

Whateley has three wounds and temporarily has the Lame Hindrance from a broken and lacerated leg. He's more than willing to tell the heroes what happened, if they ask.

He starts by providing a short history of Agatha Leeds to the posse, glossing over his own family's role in any of her evils. Similarities between the Caldwell Devil rumors and those of Agatha's original abomination drew them to the area, hoping to find Agatha (or one of her spawn). Shadrach had discovered a general location for her cabin and the Whateleys were preparing to head out this morning. Unfortunately, the Devil found them first, and made short work of them last night.

The huckster is certain the devil is another of Agatha's conjurations. He assures the posse that killing the witch will also banish the monster. And unless they succeed, he points out, the Jersey Devil that has plagued the Pine Barrens for over a century will also keep on doing so. (He's lying on both counts.)

Mother's Den

Fear Level: 4

Shadrach provides the heroes with a crude map to the Curwen cabin. He is obviously too badly injured to make the trip and, even if he could, he would be more of a hindrance than a help. Also, Shadrach is enamored with the idea of letting someone else do his family's dirty work without further risk to his own hide!

Agatha Leeds' cabin lies in the depths of the Thicket. Even with the map, between fighting underbrush and navigating around creeks and swamps, traveling there takes an entire day.

The shack sits atop a small hummock in the middle of a shallow slough. It appears to be several decades old and time has worn heavily on it.

During daylight hours, Agatha spends most of her time in the surrounding swamps gathering herbs and other ingredients for spells and the like, leaving shortly after dawn and returning just before nightfall.

If the heroes approach during the day, they find the cabin empty. Roots, drying leaves, and animal carcasses hang from the low rafters and a rank smell of rot fills the cabin. With success on a Tracking roll, a hero discovers more of the strange hoofprints outside the cabin.

Cowpokes visiting the cabin after dark encounter Agatha—or rather one of her spawn. She appears as an attractive, if not pretty, middle-aged woman. At first, she plays innocent, claiming to be a victim of some twisted Whateley scheme. She does not allow anyone to enter her home, though, her excuse being she's not comfortable with strangers when her son is away.

Agatha's an accomplished liar and quick to pick up on folks' weaknesses,

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so feel free to tailor her story to fit the characters' prejudices or Hindrances.

Family Reunion

Should the adventurers fall for Agatha's tale, she sends them off to capture Shadrach—and uses that time to hightail it out of the area.

If it becomes clear that the party isn't buying Agatha's lies, her demeanor quickly becomes much less pleasant. She glances momentarily at the night sky, then says,

"Oh good. My son is home."

With that, the Caldwell Devil swoops down from above. Allow a Notice roll for each character, opposed by the devil's Stealth. Those who fail are surprised the first round of its appearance. Make a Guts roll (–2) for everyone except Agatha upon seeing it.

The devil stands upright, nearly seven feet tall. It has a head shaped like a horse, with a vaguely crocodilian and decidedly carnivorous mouth. Large, batlike wings sprout from its back and the beast's muscular hind legs bend backward, like a bird's, but end in hooves. A pair of clawed forearms protrudes from its chest and a long, serpentine tail whips back and forth behind it. With a bloodcurdling howl it rushes toward you!

Time to deal out the Action Deck, Marshal. The abomination wades into combat with the largest group of heroes, using either its bite/claw attack or tail lash, depending on the circumstances.

Agatha uses *fear* and *stun* when it's possible to catch multiple heroes in the effect, and casts *smite* on her dagger should any sodbuster close with her. Otherwise, she acts to support the devil with *deflection* or *healing* if possible.

Both fight to the death. The devil has little choice in the matter and Agatha doesn't really have anything at risk besides the body of one of her spawn. Minutes after their deaths, both rapidly decay and crumble into a moist ash, leaving little trace of their existence.

Should the heroes bother to check, Shadrach is gone when they return to the remains of the Whateley camp.

Agatha Leeds' Spawn: Use the Agatha Leeds stats on page 18.

The Caldwell Devil

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d12, Vigor d12+4

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Tracking d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 14 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Unnaturally tough hide.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Fear –2:** Seeing the devil provokes a Guts roll at –2.
- **Flight:** 24".
- **Improved Frenzy:** The abomination can make two Fighting attacks in a single round at no penalty.
- **Hardy:** The monster does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Howl:** As a standard action, the devil can let out an unholy, yet strangely human-like howl. Make a Guts roll for everyone within earshot.
- **Night Vision:** The devil suffers no penalties for lighting.
- **Size +2:** The devil is roughly the size of a horse.
- **Tail Lash:** The abomination can sweep all opponents adjacent to it with its tail. This is a standard Fighting attack and damage is equal to the devil's Strength –2.

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Bloat

Not everyone dies on solid ground. Whether as a result of the war, a shipwreck, or accident, a fair number of unfortunates end up in watery graves where they lie without the solace of a tombstone or other marker for a memorial. Manitous aren't the particular sort though, so even those who pass on the high seas are fair game for undead shenanigans.

Once a cadaver has been underwater for a month or more, its flesh begins to be replaced by a substance scientists and doctors call *adipocere*. Less book-learned sorts call it "corpse wax" or "grave wax," which you have to admit are a lot more colorful terms. When a manitou latches onto one of these waterlogged corpses, the end result is a bit different from your run-of-the-mill walkin' dead. Being submerged in water for long periods of time does all sorts of unpleasant things to a body.

Grave wax is lighter and bulkier than the fat it replaces, lending a grotesque and bloated appearance to the body, hence the common name of this type of walkin' dead. It also slows down the decomposition process and turns the corpse a putrid grayish-white. Undead of this sort have an odor distinctly different from old-fashioned zombies, more similar to that of old cheese with a hint of rancid sweetness.

Bloats, by the nature of their transformed flesh, are particularly resistant to puncture wounds, including those caused by bullets. Arrows, bullets, and the like find little resistance in the abominations' wax bodies and pass harmlessly through them. However, alcohol acts like an acid on the creatures, dissolving them wherever it comes into contact.

These undead are usually found in the Maze, the bayous of the South, and large rivers, but can exist anywhere a body may have been submerged in water for a long period of time. Although they frequently come ashore (or clamber onto boats) to attack the living, they return to their watery graves sooner or later.

Bloat

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Swim d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fear –1:** Their distorted features make bloats more frightening than other walkin' dead.
- **Fearless:** Bloats are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Puncture Resistant:** Bloats take half damage from most firearms and

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piercing weapons. Shotguns and cutting or slashing weapons do full damage to these abominations.

- **Reek:** Grave wax has a much stronger stench than normally associated with the dead, granting +2 to Notice rolls to detect the monsters.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage (except to the head).
- **Weakness (Alcohol):** Splashing alcohol of any sort on a bloat inflicts 2d6 damage.

Savage Tale: Mine Your Own Business

Virgil Ward used to run a profitable little silver mine called the Lonesome Heart Strike, nestled in the Rocky Mountains. In fact, the Lonesome Heart was so successful Constance, a small boomtown, sprang up around it.

As time went on, prospectors and placer miners drifted into the area, but Ward's mine was the main source of revenue and employment for most of the town's laborers. The mine was so profitable, even after one of the shafts broke through into an underwater river Ward could afford to install pumps to keep the tunnels relatively dry.

All that changed around a year ago, when a freak explosion collapsed the entrance to the mine and trapped most of the workers inside. Ward tried several times to organize rescue operations, but with the most experienced miners caught inside the collapse, each attempt failed miserably.

The mine has sat dormant ever since. Recently, representatives of the Sweetrock Mining Company arrived in town with their own crew and laid claim to the strike. Needless to say, Ward is unhappy about this development. Things are just coming to a boil as the posse rides into town.

Big Men in Town

Constance has seen hard times since the collapse of the Lonesome Heart Strike. Not only did a fair number of its citizens die in the cave-in, but its primary source of income perished too. Enough prospectors remain in the area to keep a general store and one saloon open, but most of the other buildings in town are deserted. It's pretty obvious as

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the heroes enter Constance that the place is about two steps and a hop from becoming a ghost town.

Legal Maneuvers

On arrival, a commotion at the far end of town catches the posse's attention.

A crowd is gathered near the foot of one of the mountains that surround the dying town. And from the look and sound of things, a fight is on the verge of breaking out!

Drawing closer to the hubbub, the adventurers see three men armed with shotguns standing in front of a boarded-up mine opening. These are Virgil Ward and his two sons. Opposite them is a man in a fancy suit holding a piece of paper. He is Oliver Sinclair, duly appointed representative of the Sweetrock Mining Company. Behind the tinhorn are a passel of rough-looking customers carrying rifles and pistols. A crowd stands off to one side, nervously watching the proceedings.

Ward shouts angrily,

"You got no right to take the Lonesome Heart! This here's robbery!"

Sinclair responds,

"Now, Mr. Ward, you no longer have any legal claim to the mine. Sweetrock bought your note and I've been sent to take possession of our legal property. Step aside or suffer the consequences!"

If a hero chooses to intervene at this point, allow her to make a Persuasion roll opposed by Sinclair's Persuasion. Alternately, if the posse prefers the less subtle route, they can attempt Intimidation versus Sinclair's Guts. Failure on either roll leads to a lot of dangerous posturing on the part of the Sweetrock thugs, but before lead starts flying, the town's sole law enforcement officer, Marshal Blake, arrives to settle things down (at least temporarily).

Should any of your cowpokes have Knowledge (Law), Sinclair allows him to examine the documents. Included are a set of foreclosure documents on Virgil's loan for lack of payment, and a deed of trust transferring the mine to Sweetrock. A Knowledge (Law) roll reveals everything is in order and Sinclair's claim seems legitimate.

- **Virgil Ward & Sons (3):** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with double barrel shotguns (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1–2, Shots 2, +2 Shooting).
- **Oliver Sinclair:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. He wears spectacles and carries a briefcase full of legal documents.
- **Sweetrock Gunmen (4, plus one per hero):** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Peacemakers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), Winchester '76 rifles (Range 24/48/96, 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2), and 20 rounds of spare ammunition for each.
- **Marshal Blake:** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with a Colt Army revolver (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).

Something's Fishy

Regardless of the outcome of the standoff with Sinclair and his lackeys, Virgil approaches the party at the scene or later in the lone saloon left open in Constance. If the characters intervened on the Wards' behalf, he thanks them for their help. In any case, he approaches them with a possible job offer.

Ward begins with a quick history of the cave-in at the mine and their hard times since, and then he makes his pitch.

"I got a look at them documents that Back-East lawyer was flauntin'. Those

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Sweetrock bigwigs bought our loan up all legal-like. But one thing's never sat right with me. We weren't supposed to be blastin' the day the mine caved in, and even if we was, none of our crew would have been riggin' charges near the entrance.

"I always had a suspicion someone sabotaged us. Now that these carpet-baggin' bankers show up with all sorts of paper, I'm a-bettin' I know who."

Virgil tells the heroes his foreman, Clarence Nelson, just happened to be outside the mine when the explosion occurred. Nelson usually oversaw the work directly, but Virgil found him near the entrance shortly after the collapse. Although they used to be friendly, since the cave-in Nelson has largely avoided him.

Events since then led Ward to believe Nelson had a hand in the disaster. In spite of the town's dire economic straits, Nelson never seems to be short on funds. Furthermore, Sweetrock hired the man to oversee the mine's reopening.

Virgil asks the posse to get any information they can out of Nelson. He believes if he can prove the mining conglomerate was responsible for the accident, he can pressure them to turn over the deed. He offers the characters $100 a head for evidence of Sweetrock's involvement.

Talking to Nelson

Virgil's former foreman isn't difficult to find. His house, unlike most in Constance, is well-maintained and even sports a fresh coat of paint. He greets any visitors on his porch, dressed in work clothing—very nicely tailored work clothing.

Nelson becomes gruff if he figures out the heroes are there on Virgil's behalf. He has little to say about Sweetrock or the Lonesome Heart Strike, barely admitting he is the current overseer for the operation. Should talk turn to the cave-in, his gruffness turns to outright offense and he tersely asks the posse to leave his property. Whether they do or not, Nelson goes back inside, slamming his front door behind him.

The foreman refuses to speak to the characters any further (at least until the events of **All Hell Breaks Loose**, below). Should the adventurers approach him or his house again, they find a pair of Sweetrock gunmen barring their way.

- **Clarence Nelson:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.
- **Sweetrock Gunmen (2):** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Peacemakers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), Winchester '76 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2), and 20 rounds of spare ammunition for each.

Word on the Street

The posse may poke about Constance for dirt on Nelson or Sweetrock. A successful Streetwise roll reveals Virgil isn't the only resident who thinks Nelson had a hand in the collapse. A number of townsfolk turned down employment with the Sweetrock outfit because they believe Nelson either knew about the collapse beforehand, or worse, actually caused it himself. But no one has any hard evidence of his guilt.

Make a Common Knowledge roll for any investigator with a background in mining, the Rich or Filthy Rich Edges, or who might otherwise know about Sweetrock. A success tells her that Sweetrock is based in Pittsburgh. The company took a big hit when its largest operation, the Gomorra mine conglomerate, went under a few years

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ago. It has a reputation for aggressiveness and strongarm tactics.

Sinclair's goons aren't completely blind to the posse's activities. Once they talk to Nelson, the Sweetrock gunmen keep tabs on the heroes. If it becomes obvious they're stirring up trouble, the characters might get a visit from a pair of hired guns. The thugs don't push things to an outright gunfight, but they aren't subtle in encouraging the group to mind its own business.

- **Sweetrock Gunmen (2):** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Peacemakers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).

Openin' the Floodgates o' Hell

Sweetrock isn't sitting still while the party goes about investigating Nelson's possible crimes. Armed with a stack of official-sounding documents and a slick tongue, Sinclair convinces the town marshal to give him and his men access to the Lonesome Heart a day or so after the confrontation with Virgil.

Meanwhile, Nelson rounds up a skeleton crew of miners from the down-and-out prospectors still drifting around Constance. Within less than a day of receiving the go-ahead, the miners start excavating the entrance.

Since there's no concern for anyone still alive inside, the Sweetrock crew is fairly liberal in their use of explosives. As a result, they make relatively quick progress busting through the original collapse. A contingent of Sinclair's hired guns stay near the work site at all times.

That night at the saloon, a cowpoke who strikes up a conversation with one of Nelson's crew can make a Streetwise or Persuasion roll. With a success, he learns that there is water seeping through the rockfall in the mine. With a raise, he discovers some of the men quit the job after claiming they heard movement from the other side of the collapse.

All Hell Breaks Loose

On the second day of operations, Nelson's workers break through the collapsed portion of the Lonesome Heart. Unfortunately, they discover that the water levels in the mine have risen considerably. Worse, the victims of the Lonesome Heart collapse have been waiting patiently for a chance to escape and Sweetrock just provided it!

When the mine caved in, it also destroyed the pumps that kept it from flooding. In fact, many of the trapped miners drowned in the cold, rising waters. Eventually, all the dead were covered by the dark flood.

After months lying submerged, the dead rise again as bloats and swarm out of the newly opened Lonesome Heart. Unless the posse is keeping an eye on the mine directly, the first hint they get that something is amiss is the sound of shouts and gunfire coming from the entrance. A few miners stumble out in a rush, looking fearfully over their shoulders while the hired guns peer inside in confusion.

Moments later, a stinking gang of former miners—now bloats—spills out, attacking everyone near the entrance. The Sweetrock gunmen find their firearms nearly useless against the abominations. Most of the thugs are quickly overcome by the undead, and the survivors flee in terror.

A shallow stream of water pours out of the Lonesome Heart as the water inside levels out. The impromptu river makes wading on the town's one street count as difficult terrain. Nelson, wading through the waters in a panic, screams to the posse for help!

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If the posse has a hard time of things, Virgil, his sons, and the town marshal can pitch in to help save Constance.

Nelson is useless in the fight, choosing instead to save himself if he can.

Bloats (4, plus 2 per hero): See page 24.

- **Clarence Nelson:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. He has the Greedy (Major) and Yellow Hindrances, and is armed with a Derringer (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 2, AP 1).
- **Marshal Blake:** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with a Colt Army revolver (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).
- **Virgil Ward and Sons (3):** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with double barrel shotguns (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1–2, Shots 2, +2 Shooting).

Confessions

When the heroes have managed to stem the tide of undead, Nelson, still in a panic, confesses to planting explosives that caused the cave-in. He admits Sinclair paid him off to ruin the mine and promised him a job as the new foreman.

Blake takes both men into custody. Virgil pays the posse $100 each and thanks them, although he also admits he's not likely to find many folks willing to work in a mine with as cursed a history as the Lonesome Heart!

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Clockwork Demoler

We're not talking about the misguided invention designed to remove beauty marks, warts, or other blemishes from a lady's skin here. Most folks remember how that particularly horrific disaster turned out. Nor should it be confused with the ill-advised artifact of dentistry with a somewhat similar name: the "clockwork de-molar."

Instead, we're referring to the palm-sized mechanical pest exterminator targeted at small subterranean mammals. Certainly the device is intriguing in and of itself. Utilizing a set of finely manufactured gears, springs, and a hardened rock grinder, the demoler patrols a property beneath the surface of the ground, intercepting any gophers, moles, rats or the like it encounters. The device even incorporates either seismic sensors or even a type of echolocation—depending on the model—to guide it to its prey autonomous of its owner's control.

There are countless variations on this contraption available to the discerning agriculturalist, primarily because it seems one out of every five inventors has come up with his own version. This has resulted in an astounding number of legal battles, corporate espionage, and even outright violence that some outside observers refer to as the "Patent Wars." (Granted, those who do probably lead rather sedate lives given that they have made a pastime of monitoring patent disputes.)

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Not surprisingly, modified versions of the demoler have been seen in use by Wasatch troops, although Hellstromme Industries denies any weaponized model of the device exists. Survivors report that the miniature mechanisms are used as infiltrators to disrupt rear areas, and skirmishers to break up advancing formations. The demolers' ability to close with an enemy from underground provides unmistakable advantages on the battlefield, and grinders capable of crushing small stones aren't likely to have too much trouble with flesh or even bone!

Clockwork Demoler

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** These machines are protected by a hard steel shell.
- **Burrowing:** 12". The demoler is not capable of burrowing through solid stone.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from Shaken. No additional damage from called shots. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Fearless:** Clockwork demolers are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Grinder:** Str+d4, AP 2. What works on dirt and rock works surprisingly well on flesh, too!
- **Leap:** These miniature machines can burst from the ground with surprising force, bounding up to six feet in the air. If a demoler burrows at least 6" before attacking, it adds +2 to its damage roll that round.
- **Size –2:** Clockwork demolers are roughly the size of a man's hand.
- **Weakness (Loud Noises):** When subjected to continuous loud noises, a demoler suffers –2 on all Fighting and Notice rolls.

Savage Tale: Playing Dirty

As they enter the outskirts of Spring Valley, a small farming community, the adventurers encounter a mob of outraged citizens apparently about to lynch an eccentrically dressed traveling salesman.

The characters hear cries of "Infernal machines!" and "Devil's playthings!" rise from the crowd. The intended victim, spotting the posse, calls out to them to help him.

Very quickly, the salesman—whose name is Reginald Farnsworth, if the placard on the side of his wagon is to be trusted—explains that he's being falsely accused of manslaughter. He says,

> *"These good folk are quite mistaken about my culpability in recent matters of an unfortunate nature. Could I prevail upon you to intervene on my behalf?"*

Lynch Break

If the heroes do step in on his behalf, they learn from the members of the angry crowd exactly what Farnsworth is accused of. It seems he has been selling his own version of the ubiquitous "clockwork demoler."

But recently, two of his customers were found dead on their farms. More accurately, *pieces* of his former customers were found, alongside obvious signs that whatever caused their demise had attacked from beneath the ground.

For the crowd, all of this adds up to the unavoidable conclusion that Farnsworth's devices have gone murderously haywire. And rather than wait for legal justice, they've decided to

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take the law—and a noose—into their own hands.

Fortunately, whether or not the posse decides to rescue Farnsworth, the town marshal arrives before the things get completely out of hand. With a little talk—and several gestures with a double-barreled shotgun—Marshal Dan scatters the crowd. However, he takes the traveling salesman into custody pending trial in a week, when the circuit judge arrives.

As the marshal prepares to take him to jail, Farnsworth appeals once again to the heroes for help. The salesman offers the characters $150 to find evidence of his innocence—double that if he's found innocent. Before they can further question him the lawman hustles the inventor off to the hoosegow, telling the cowpokes any more discussion can be held there.

- **Marshal Dan:** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with a Colt Peacemaker (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).
- **Reginald Farnsworth:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Add Persuasion d8 and the Snakeoil Salesman Edge.
- **Townsfolk (10):** See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

Powerful Enemies

Farnsworth incorporated a unique design in his version of the clockwork demoler. He recently filed a patent application on his creation. It's a minor technical point to all but mad scientists specializing in clockwork devices, but Hellstromme Industries spies were quick to pick up on it and see potential applications for other inventions.

A few "troubleshooters" were dispatched to acquire a working model of the device. Simultaneously, they were tasked with discrediting the man and his creation so that Farnsworth might be convinced to sell his "failed" patent to Hellstromme for a pittance.

Hellstromme's agents are using a device originally created to decoy rattlers in the salt flats west of the City o' Gloom. The contraption employs a spring-powered weight on a shaft to repeatedly thump against the ground, drawing the attention of the abominations to its location. They've correctly reasoned that their gizmo will cause Farnsworth's demolers to malfunction wildly.

What they didn't factor into their plan was the presence of a pack of actual baby rattlers that had strayed into the area…

Legwork

Assuming your hombres accept Farnsworth's offer, there are several avenues the investigation might take.

Marshal's Office

The posse is likely to start by speaking with Farnsworth himself. Marshal Dan's office is a small, single-room building holding little more than the marshal's desk. A small barred enclosure is nestled at the back, where the heroes' prospective employer is currently incarcerated.

The marshal can provide the names of the dead farmers: Nick Bilson and Andy Thomas. Marshal Dan explains he hasn't looked into the deaths himself because both occurred well outside the town limits—the limit of his jurisdiction. His plan is to turn it over to the county circuit judge when he comes to Spring Valley in a week to let him sort it out. As an afterthought, he adds that the circuit judge has a reputation for hanging first and asking questions later, at which Farnsworth visibly pales.

The salesman answers to the best of his ability any and all questions the

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heroes may have. The demolers are of his own design. Although they're similar in function to other inventions on the market, he is emphatic that his design is unique and even currently patent-pending. Spring Valley was his first stop on a journey he hoped would eventually result in the creation of another Smith & Robards or Hellstromme Industries.

He admits malfunctions are the nature of creations of the "New Science" and that it's not impossible that his machines could injure someone in…certain circumstances. On the other hand, he doesn't believe there's any way the devices caused the amount of damage of which they're accused. The demolers simply aren't large enough to rip a man limb from limb.

Farnsworth has only been in town for a few days and made just three sales; one demoler each to the dead men, and just this morning, three more to another farmer named Milton Hurley—his only multi-item sale. Marshal Dan provides the party with directions to Hurley's place if they ask.

If the characters are feeling extraordinarily mercenary, they can try to squeeze more money out of Farnsworth. With success on an opposed Persuasion or Intimidation roll, he increases the amount by $50 each. That's all the money he has; most of his capital was invested in the demolers. With a raise on the roll, he agrees to provide the initial payment upfront.

The Wagon

Picking over Farnsworth's wagon provides little in the way of clues for the posse. Besides the usual tinkerer's assortment of tools and spare parts, the only other contents are several boxes, each sectioned off into smaller compartments. Each compartment holds a single clockwork demoler.

The gizmos are all currently inactive and only Farnsworth knows the proper sequence to turn them on. If you'd like, you can allow a character with the Arcane Background (Weird Science) Edge to attempt to get one to function with a Repair roll. Even if the mad scientist is successful, since there has been no initial programming the tiny machine immediately leaps into the dirt and burrows away for parts unknown.

Make a Notice roll for any posse member who examines the boxes. With a success, the sharp-eyed saddletramp notes that there are six empty compartments. If they've spoken to Farnsworth, the heroes should know that he's only sold five. Following up with the inventor on this reveals that he has no idea where the missing demoler may be.

Unbeknownst to the beleaguered Farnsworth, cunning representatives of Hellstromme Industries have taken advantage of his incarceration to grab a working sample of his creation.

Talking to the Locals

Spring Valley is a rather modest settlement with a general store and a small saloon/hotel serving as its only major gathering points. It doesn't take any particular people skills for an investigator to learn that most of the townsfolk are convinced Farnsworth is responsible for the deaths of Bilson and Thomas. However, it is also apparent that no one has any hard evidence of his guilt.

Should the heroes visit the saloon, they spot a pair of men at the short bar dressed differently than the other patrons. Their clothing looks a little nicer and their boots a bit less worn than those of the rest of Spring Valley's citizens. More notably, both are armed with Gatling pistols.

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For any hero with expertise in either firearms or gizmos who asks about the Gatling pistols, make a Common Knowledge roll. Success identifies the guns as being a model manufactured by Hellstromme Industries.

Allow each of your cowpokes a Smarts roll. All who succeed recall seeing the men near the back of the mob at Farnsworth's wagon. If approached, the two say they're "passing through" and refuse to answer any other questions. If the posse becomes too pushy, the men retire to a room they've rented upstairs.

A successful Streetwise roll unearths that the men arrived in town a few days ago. A raise reveals that a couple of folks recall seeing them ride out of town twice since they arrived, but no one in Spring Valley knows much more about them.

Scenes of the Crime

Visiting either or both of the Bilson and Thomas farms turns up the same pieces of evidence. While the remains of the dead men already have been (mostly) collected, dark crimson stains cover large areas of the ground, making it abundantly clear the farmers both died hard—and very messy—deaths.

The main house and outbuildings at each farm are locked and look to have been undisturbed. Inside, there is no evidence of robbery or violence.

A Tracking roll turns up a few interesting bits of information. There are numerous footprints in the area, likely belonging to the folks who cleaned up the mess. Numerous small, partially collapsed burrows, roughly the size of what one would expect a clockwork

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demoler to make, dot the farm. However, there are also a few spots of disturbed dirt that appear considerably larger—say, roughly the size of a dog. These larger areas are all close to bloodstained patches of dirt.

A raise on the Tracking roll finds a strange circular depression about the width of a man's hand behind one of outbuildings. In the center of the depression is small hole about half a foot in depth. (This is where the Hellstromme agents placed their "thumper.")

The Hurley Place

The last surviving customer of Farnsworth's demolers is Milton Hurley, a homesteader who lives a few miles outside of Spring Valley. When the heroes arrive, he's in the process of clearing some trees from the edge of his farm.

Hurley tells the posse he purchased a trio of demolers to deal with a rather large company of moles that have been tearing up his crops. He only released them an hour or so ago. So far, he hasn't seen any sign that there's anything wrong.

Almost as if on cue, the heroes hear a rhythmic thumping noise and feel the ground begin to quake weakly. Within moments, the demolers—disoriented by the seismic vibrations—spring to the surface, leaping in and out of the dirt like trout from a stream.

Deal Action Cards at this point. However, each round there is only a 1 in 4 chance that a demoler attacks a hero (or Hurley). The tiny automatons are simply malfunctioning—not actively trying to target the humans.

One round after the demolers go haywire, have each of your hombres to make a Notice roll. Those who succeed spot the two men from the saloon attempting to slink off from behind Farley's barn. If the posse confronts the men, they attack.

- **Milton Hurley:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. He is armed with an axe (Str+d6).
- **Clockwork Demolers (3):** See page 31.
- **Hellstromme Agents (2):** Use Rail Warrior stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Gatling pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 2, Shots 12, AP 1) and bulletproof vests (Armor +2).

The Real Threat

Five rounds after the Hellstromme men activate the thumper, the actual creatures responsible for the deaths arrive: a group of rattler young 'uns! A few initially emerge near the thumper, but all are quickly drawn to live prey—in other words, people! (If your posse is particularly tough, you can substitute a full-grown rattler in this battle. Just make sure to change the relevant clues at the other farms if you do.)

The rattlers fight to the death, but Hellstromme's agents surrender once one or more is Incapacitated. The demolers continue to malfunction until the thumper is turned off—or simply removed from the ground.

Once the heroes present their findings to Marshal Dan, he releases Farnsworth—who gladly pays the promised bonus!—and jails the Hellstromme agents.

- **Rattler Young 'Uns (1, plus 1 per hero):** See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

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Death Cloud

Death clouds are sometimes created when victims die horrifically by one of the most abominable weapons to emerge from the laboratories in Fort 51 and Roswell: chlorine gas. Fortunately, with the cessation of organized hostilities, these abominations are rare even Back East. Still, occasionally a mad scientist's latest experiment goes awry or a Rail Baron gets his hands on a stock of war surplus chemicals, and one of these horrors seeps out into the Weird West.

A death cloud's gaseous nature makes it nearly invulnerable to most attacks. Strong winds are devastating to the monster if it is caught in the open, so these abominations usually seek out low ground, valleys, caves, or buildings. However, its vaporous composition makes its own attack hideously effective, and doubly hard for a victim to escape.

In a neutral state, a death cloud resembles a sphere of yellowish-green mist about six feet in diameter. Other than its unusual color, a cowpoke who makes a Notice roll catches a glimpse of another hint something's amiss: a set of menacing eyes an unnatural, putrid shade of green faintly visible high in the cloud.

As the creature is a product of science gone awry rather than myth or legend, any occult-based research on a death cloud is doomed to fail. However, a scientist (mad or otherwise) can deduce a weakness of a death cloud with each success and raise on a Knowledge (Science) roll. A character with the more specific Knowledge (Chemistry) gets a +2 on this roll.

Death Cloud

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** These abominations can maneuver through any non-solid surface. Only an airtight seal can stop one.
- **Fearless:** Death clouds are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Fear:** Any character who recognizes a death cloud for what it is must make a Guts roll.
- **Flight:** A death cloud has a Flying Pace of 10″ and a Climb of 10″.
- **Invulnerability:** Their gaseous nature makes death clouds immune to all normal damage. Even non-area effect magical attacks (*bolt*, etc.) only do half damage.
- **Poisoned Air:** A death cloud attacks by moving on top of its victims. At full expansion, it covers an area the size of a Medium Burst Template. Every hero inside must make a Vigor

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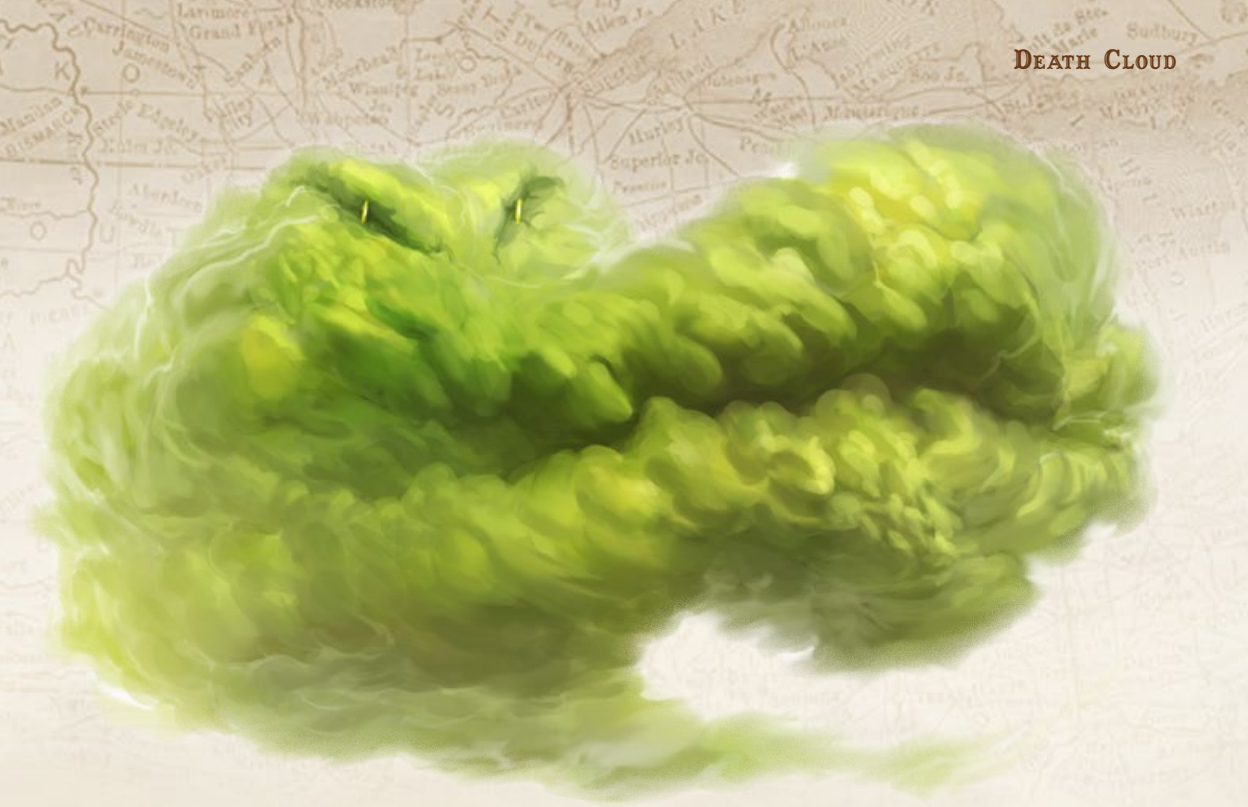

roll (–2) each round she is inside the cloud. Failure means she suffers a Fatigue level; this can result in death. Fatigue levels are recovered at a rate of one per minute spent breathing fresh air. An airtight gas mask completely negates the cloud's attack.

- **Weakness (Sunlight):** A death cloud exposed to direct sunlight takes 2d6 damage per round.
- **Weakness (Electricity):** Electricity-based attacks and powers with electrical trappings do double normal damage to a death cloud.
- **Weakness (Iron):** Weapons made of pure iron (not steel) do normal damage to the abomination.
- **Weakness (Weather):** Strong winds, whether natural or created by powers such as *windstorm*, cause 3d6 damage per round the death cloud is exposed to them.

Savage Tale: Bad Air

Not everyone was happy when the North and the South stopped shooting at each other on an official basis. Silas Corbitt, an aspiring inventor of new and unpleasant ways to kill folks, was pretty high up on the list of the disgruntled. While peace breaking out was certainly inconvenient, Corbitt's determination was equal to the task of finding ways to continue his research. Not legal ways, mind you, but ways all the same.

The mad scientist decided the ideal area for him to recruit "assistants" would be one populated by transients and poor folk no one would miss—in other words, nearly any city or boomtown west of the Mississippi. Not long ago, he began tinkering with poison gases. The gas proved deadly enough, making short

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work of several test subjects, but the experiments themselves were horrific enough to spawn a death cloud.

Not surprisingly, safety procedures weren't high priorities for Corbitt and the abomination broke free, making quick work of its insane creator. The gaseous monstrosity has now begun ranging farther and farther from Corbitt's lab, leaving a swath of dead bodies in its wake.

This adventure can be set in nearly any boomtown or city in the Weird West.

The Locked Room

Not long after entering a local saloon, the heroes hear a pounding from upstairs, followed by a shouted,

"Open the door!"

The commotion continues for a minute or two before a saloon girl comes downstairs to speak to the bartender. The conversation occurs within earshot of the posse. Apparently, another patron of the establishment has locked himself in his room for over a day and he hasn't responded to knocks or requests in some time.

The bartender's face visibly pales in fear and he hurries upstairs. He also pounds briefly on the door, demanding to be let in. When there is no response, he tries to unlock the door but cannot, because the lock is jammed. After throwing his shoulder ineffectually against the door, he asks any party members present for help. (If no heroes followed him, he comes downstairs to look for them.)

An Expired Tenant

Forcing the door requires a raise on a Strength roll, but there's enough room for up to two characters, if they want to make a Cooperative roll.

Inside, the tenant lies on the floor beside the bed. With the exception of a couple of chairs and an endtable or two, the room is otherwise empty. An odor of citrus and pepper lingers in the air.

Any cowpoke looking closely at the occupant must make Guts roll versus nausea.

The man's face is contorted in a rictus of fear and pain, his body curled into a back-breaking arc. Tears are crusted around his eyes. His fingers are clenched into clawlike hooks, as if he were trying to fend off an attacker. However, there is no evidence of a fight and the room is otherwise undisturbed.

Checking the lock, an investigator finds the obstruction to be another key inserted into it from the inside. There is a window, but it is also locked from the inside. Make a Notice roll for any hero who looks closely at the window. On a success, she observes the latch is rusted shut. Should any of the characters check the floor, a raise on a Tracking roll finds a patch of boards with similarly corroded nails in a path reaching from the window to the corpse.

A character who examines the victim may make a Knowledge (Medicine) roll. With a success, he finds burns inside the man's mouth and nose. With a raise, he recognizes that these most likely were caused by an acid of some sort, but there is nothing that could have caused them inside the room. Likewise, any acid that caustic would have also probably prevented the victim from locking the door from the inside.

Sniffing Around

After taking a gander at the body, the bartender gasps,

"No, not in my place!"

When a character asks him what he means, he says,

"Folks have been talking about something haunting the streets around

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here. Every now and then, a body turns up in an alley like this, but I never figured it would get into my place. Ain't nowhere safe!"

A growing crowd of gawkers in the hall makes the barkeep reluctant to talk more about the deaths. However, there's no shortage of gossip among the other customers in the saloon. Guesses run from a madman to a ghost to a "nose ferret." There's even at least one or two patrons who suspect it's all a plot by Northern (or Southern) sympathizers.

A Streetwise roll turns up a little more information from one of the saloon-goers:

"I reckon it all started 'bout a year ago. Drunks and drifters gone missing 'round here, mostly. Nobody paid it much mind at first. Well, at least until Doc Corbitt vanished. But he was the last fella to disappear, so most folks conjured he'd just moved on.

"Last few months, though, people started findin' bodies like that one in there—all hunched up, but no marks on 'em. Me, I reckon it's been the same thing all along. It's just gettin' braver, that's all."

If the posse follows up on Corbitt, the saloon-goer says the doctor set up shop a little over a year ago. He had an office in his house near one of the poor sections of town. No relatives ever showed up to claim it and it's sat empty ever since.

Something Rotten

Dr. Corbitt's house sits on the outskirts of the seedier side of town. A large dead tree stands near the building and a few patches of brittle, brown grass dot the yard. Most of the windows are broken and the locks on both the front and back doors have been forced.

The doctor's house is largely empty, stripped of anything of value over the last year. A few battered pieces of furniture remain, mainly those too large for scavengers to cart off easily. A diligent hero who digs through the remaining debris may find a rusty medical implement or other device, but little else of interest.

A barrel of flour, now maggot-ridden, still sits in the kitchen. Make a Notice roll for any investigator who examines the base of the barrel, at +2 if she's read Corbitt's journal (see below). With a success, she discovers a trap door that leads to the cellar.

Experiments in Terror

On the second floor, Corbitt's bedroom is identified by the presence of a moldy mattress on a broken-down frame. If the characters search the room, make Notice rolls for them. Anyone who succeeds finds a water-soaked journal that has fallen between the mattress and frame.

Although many of the journal's pages are stuck together and unreadable, the first legible passage makes it clear the doctor wasn't quite living up to his Hippocratic oath:

I've found a location suitable for my experiments. A high number of transients makes it unlikely that any test subjects will be missed.

Expanding the cellar provides not only ample space for a lab, but I should have room to inter any "leftovers"—safe from prying eyes. Hiding the entrance under the flour barrel was a stroke of genius, if I do say so myself.

The next readable passage gives the posse a little more information on the nature of Corbitt's studies:

The chlorine mixture functions better than I'd anticipated, although it is highly reactive with pure iron. Few survive more than a minute's exposure. I'm on the edge of a very profitable breakthrough!

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The final legible section in Corbitt's journal is the very last entry:

> *The gas continues to react in an unexpected manner. It appears often to move in direct conflict with prevailing air patterns, but this may be an effect of lack of sleep on my part. I even imagined eyes in the cloud, after all!*
>
> *I have one last test subject downstairs, so I'll have to postpone my rest one more night, I suppose.*

Don't Look in the Basement!

Corbitt substantially expanded the root cellar, extending it until it occupied nearly the entire area beneath the house. The lab occupies the whole thing, making the cellar and open space approximately 50 feet square, punctuated every 10 feet or so by support pillars for the house above.

Although there are numerous oil lamps positioned about the walls and on the pillars, none are lit when the heroes enter. As a result, exploring the laboratory is more an exercise in providing enough illumination than anything else.

Tables line the walls, covered with all manner of alchemical implements such as beakers, burners, and vials. Make a Notice roll for any character who gives the tables more than a passing glance. With a success, the cowpoke spots an odd device on one of the tables that resembles a strange, rubber mask. Any veteran of the later years of the Civil War—or a character with a background in science—can make a Common Knowledge roll to identify the device as a gas mask.

The central feature in the lab, though, sits appropriately enough in the center of the cellar: two large glass chambers, each over six feet tall and three feet wide. One of them is broken, and a desiccated corpse lies in the debris, halfway inside the chamber. A pepper-and-citrus odor

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permeates the cellar, similar but much stronger than the one the heroes may have caught wind of back at the saloon.

A second corpse in a white lab coat lies on the floor near the glass chambers. Its hands clutch at its neck, but otherwise it's been dead too long to determine any cause. The body is remarkably untouched by scavengers; a Notice roll spots dozens of carcasses of rats and other such creatures scattered around the cellar.

Make a Notice or Tracking roll if a hero explores the southern end of the chamber. Success identifies a sizeable area of ground that appears to have been disturbed, albeit possibly a year or more in the past. Digging down more than a foot in this part of the cellar turns up several buried bodies of Corbitt's original test subjects, almost 20 in all. If the posse found his hidden journal, no roll is necessary to find the mass grave.

More important, near the grave rests a large, iron pick axe that has not been corroded by the death cloud. While somewhat unwieldy, the unique composition of the pick's head allows it to hurt the death cloud.

- **Pick Axe:** Str+d6, requires two hands, –1 to Parry and Fighting.

Foul Air

Close examination of the glass chambers reveals each was designed to be airtight, with rubber-sealed doors allowing access to the interiors. The doors have latches only on the outside, rendering them impossible to escape once inside. A piece of hosing runs from the top of each chamber to a metal canister that stands upright between them. Although there is a valve at the top of the canister, it appears to have corroded in place and is immovable.

After the posse has had a little time to explore the lab and gather a few clues, allow a Notice roll for each adventurer. Those who succeed catch sight of a strange, yellowish gas beginning to pour into the broken glass chamber from the hosing at the top. Those who fail are surprised the first round of combat as the death cloud attacks the nearest cowpoke!

If the heroes damage the canister or hosing all by their lonesome, the death cloud emerges and attacks.

The death cloud tries to position itself to trap as many victims within its body as possible. If the posse wises up and spreads out, it instead fixes its attacks on those who succumb to its initial onslaught, trying to kill one victim before moving on to the next. Should one hero prove particularly effective against the abomination, either through magic, mad science, or plain old iron weaponry, it focuses on her instead.

An intrepid soul donning the gas mask finds it's not quite a perfect fit. However, it grants the wearer a +2 on any Vigor roll to resist the abomination's Poisoned Air attack, canceling out the –2 normally associated with it.

The death cloud fights until it is destroyed.

- **Death Cloud:** See page 36.

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Doomsower

Sometimes, peculiar flowers resembling white roses stained red near the tips are found growing on the sites of battles, both great and small. Colloquially known as "blood roses", folklore claims that the flower sprouts near the battlefields to mourn the dead. The truth is far darker...

Blood roses only grow in ground upon which a large amount of blood has been spilled in anger. To further spread their species, they've a particularly disturbing reproductive method: In effect, the blood rose sows the seeds of War.

Each patch of blood rose, a six-foot-square area (1" square on a battlemat), is treated as having a Toughness 5, and only cutting weapons or fire affect it. But the plant's defense mechanisms are what make it truly daunting.

Anyone coming in direct contact with the plant must make an Agility roll or be pricked by some of its poisoned thorns. A cowpoke who gets stuck suffers a Fatigue level. This effect cannot move a victim past Fatigued, though, and is recovered after one hour in any case. However, the poison makes a fellow more susceptible to the blood rose's *actual* attack.

Once per hour, a 1"-square patch of blood roses can emit a spore burst, either in a Medium Burst or Cone Template. Anyone caught within it must make a Vigor roll—at –2 if already Fatigued—or be afflicted with "blood fever."

And that's where things *really* start to go downhill.

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Blood Fever

Folks infected by blood rose spores are identifiable by a persistent cough and red, rheumy eyes. They must make a Vigor roll each day until they either make three such rolls in a row—at which point they're cured—or fail three rolls. Each failure moves them closer to becoming a doomsower—a walking seedpod for the blood roses.

After the first failed roll, the victim gains the Mean Hindrance as the poor sap moves closer to transforming into a tool of bloodshed. The second failed Vigor roll bestows the Bloodthirsty Hindrance. On the third failure, the afflicted sodbuster becomes a doomsower. Before the transformation is complete, the *healing* or *greater healing* power can cure the infection, but once the hombre becomes a doomsower, there's no coming back.

Doomsowers appear and, for most purposes, act like normal humans. Their overriding goal, though, is to spill blood in violent conflict and be slain themselves. You see, upon their own death, their chests burst in an explosion of blood rose spores, seeding the ground—and any cowpoke unfortunate enough to get caught in the area!

Doomsower

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** Doomsowers are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Frenzy:** A doomsower can make two attacks per round with a –2 penalty to each attack.
- **Spore Burst:** When Incapacitated, the torso of a doomsower bursts outward, covering an area around it equal to a Medium Burst Template with blood rose spores. Everyone within it must make an immediate Vigor roll or be afflicted with blood fever. Anyone viewing the event must also make a Guts roll (–1).

SAVAGE TALE: SEEDS OF DISTRUST

Amity, Missouri, is home to veterans from both sides of the War who've tried to pound their swords into plowshares, and get back to just living their lives. Sadly, although the two governments might have reached an uneasy peace, blood still boils hot in many folks. Several months ago, a band of Northern-sympathizing border raiders clashed with a group of Confederate-supporting nightriders on the outskirts of Amity.

The townsfolk stayed out of the fight, but an unlucky few got caught in the crossfire. If that wasn't enough to put an edge on the town's nerves, the bloodshed spawned several patches of blood roses which have begun to bloom. A former Confederate officer, Jeb Braxton—whose wife and child were killed by the border raiders—has contracted blood fever. He's not yet a doomsower himself, but he has begun to raise his own army to purge the town of "damn Yankees."

And wouldn't you just know it—the posse arrives just in time to participate in the festivities!

Signs of the Times

As the posse nears the small town of Amity, read the following:

You begin to observe evidence that some fairly heavy fighting occurred in the

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area. Burned buildings, shot-up fences and trees, and even a broken-down, spiked cannon dot the countryside. The beautiful white and red blood roses that bloom nearby only serve to highlight the stark scars of battle.

Most of the damage appears to have occurred several months ago, but as you come into sight of the town proper, you pass the smoldering ruins of a small farm. From the wisps of smoke still rising, it's likely the fire has only been out for a couple of days.

Not far from the burned house, a sign proclaims, "Welcome to Amity, the friendliest town in the West!"

Should they investigate the farm, the heroes find numerous bullet holes in the few walls still standing.

Town Meeting

Amity is home to perhaps a few hundred citizens. Contrary to the battle-torn areas the posse passed through, the buildings are well-maintained and brightly painted. Had the heroes not just seen clear indications that violence recently visited the region, the town would certainly appear to be as peaceful and friendly as its welcome sign claims.

As the party arrives, a fair portion of the town is converging on the town's only saloon, the Watering Hole.

Following the small crowd through the saloon doors, you discover the topic that draws the townsfolk is none other than the burned farm you passed earlier. The local marshal stands on the bar trying to calm the crowd, but a number are calling for him to take action against someone called Braxton. A nearly equal amount of folks are defending the accused man, claiming the victims—the Thornton brothers—were Northern sympathizers.

Success on a Notice roll tells a hero that a large number of folks seem to be suffering mild colds or allergies.

Coughing frequently disrupts an impassioned speaker, and there are more pairs of red, watery eyes than you'd find in a Shan Fan opium den. The loudest proponents on either side of the debate all appear to be suffering the effects of the illness.

The argument continues for a few moments before the marshal manages to disperse the crowd without any mobs forming or blood being shed.

What's All the Hubbub?

Any of the townsfolk or the town marshal can bring the posse up to speed on recent events. Early yesterday morning, a band of local Confederate supporters set fire to the Thornton brothers' farm on the edge of town. Although there were no witnesses, most think it's a pretty sure bet that Jeb Braxton and his supporters were behind the raid.

Braxton, a former Confederate officer, settled in town years ago with his wife and child after mustering out. He, like many of the other citizens of Amity who are veterans of one side or the other, put aside his past to live peacefully. Then last year, two large bands of opposing border raiders clashed on the outskirts of Amity, with the first confrontation taking place on Braxton's farm.

The former soldier was in town at the time purchasing seed; only Braxton's wife and child were at home when the fighting started. Neither survived. Braxton sank into a depression.

Recently, he's focused his anger on the North and anyone with ties to it. Surprisingly, he's drawn a fair number of formerly amiable folks to him and the band is becoming more aggressive nearly every day.

The Thorntons were former Yankee soldiers and, unlike most of the town, outspoken in their support for the

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Union. There's little doubt that Braxton and his gang were behind the attack, but the marshal has no hard evidence—and worse, he and his two deputies are badly outnumbered by the vigilantes. To add to his troubles, violent outbreaks of all sorts are becoming more and more common. It's as though old grudges have come to a sudden boil after years of peace.

If the posse offers to help, the marshal gladly accepts. For those demanding a wage, he says he can pay each member $50 if he needs the heroes to back his play. He adds though, that while he welcomes any extra guns, he'd prefer to see this matter handled peacefully. Should the heroes find a way to defuse Braxton's gang without bloodshed, he'd be mighty grateful—and double the reward.

Axing the Questions

Whenever you're ready, Marshal, regardless of where the heroes are in the town, read the following to your group:

> *Out of nowhere, a man comes rushing toward you, brandishing an axe. It's clear he's not there to help you stock up on firewood. He shouts, "You Rebel scum! I'll kill every last one o' yas!"*

As is often the case in social situations disrupted by axe-wielding maniacs, nearby townsfolk suddenly remember pressing engagements elsewhere and disappear into surrounding shops, bushes, or closets. In short order, the characters are left standing alone as a man armed with a long-handled chopping implement charges at them.

The axe wielder is a doomsower and he's there to kill and be killed. Regardless of any argument or evidence to the contrary—even a bluebelly uniform won't dissuade him—the madman closes with the heroes, with his axe cocked overhead! The only way to stop the man is to put him down.

Since any other townsfolk hightailed it on his arrival, only the posse is at risk from the resulting spore burst.

- **Doomsower (1):** See page 43. Armed with an axe (Str+d6).

The Root of the Problem

After the encounter with the doomsower, the investigators might start putting together the strange illness afflicting many of the townsfolk with the sudden surge in aggressive behavior around Amity. If they ask around, they quickly discover that most of the folks with the sniffles are pretty surly—about just about everything! However, a little perserverance reveals that most of the troubles around Amity did start about the same time as people started having "allergies."

A hero who further investigates the topic of "allergies" can make a Streetwise roll. If successful, she learns some suspect it's the blood roses that are responsible. The flowers are fairly recent, having sprung up only this year. Most in town hold to the belief that the plants sprang up in mourning over the bloodshed from the raid last year.

If the posse delves into the blood roses, they find that the flowers are indeed only blooming on sites of the battles between the raiders. Unfortunately, most of those battles took place in and around local farms. And, to confirm any suspicions they may have at this point, the citizens whose farms have sprouted blood roses are almost to a man among those with "allergies"—and short tempers.

Pulling Weeds

Obliterating the blood roses themselves isn't particularly challenging. They're hardy flowers, to be sure, but that's hardy compared to your garden-variety daisies and sunflowers. A determined

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posse makes short work of the plants, but that's not the real challenge.

Some of the property owners, particularly those already under the effects of blood fever, are likely to give the heroes an awful lot of trouble about destroying the flowers. Hopefully, the characters are focused on reaching a peaceful solution, though. If not, blood fever helps escalate any conflict rapidly to fists or even guns, and most of the town is populated by veteran soldiers who know how to use those guns.

- **Angry Farmer:** Use Soldier stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

Down on the Farm

It's possible that the heroes may visit Braxton's farm while looking into the blood roses. If so, they discover the man's farm is so overrun by the flowers that a casual observer might believe he was raising them on purpose.

Braxton himself has a pretty hardy constitution. He's shaken off blood fever at least three times, but the flowers keep re-infecting him when he does.

While under the effects of the fever, he outright refuses to allow the posse to remove the plants—at swordpoint if necessary. He believes the plants are some sort of living memorial to his wife and child.

Jeb Braxton: Use Soldier (Officer) stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Add Vigor d10 and Toughness 7.

Braxton's Marauders

The posse may ignore the blood roses or simply decide to deal with the vigilantes first. On the other hand, even if your hombres are successful in dealing with the blood roses, Braxton and his band are brewing up a whole mess of trouble.

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Dowsing the Powder Keg

A clever band of saddletramps might infiltrate Braxton's band. The fever keeps them from thinking too clearly, so a simple Persuasion roll is enough to convince them the heroes sympathize with their goals. If so, the raiders subject heroes to long-winded rhetoric on the evils of the Union and all who support it.

All the members of Braxton's gang are afflicted with blood fever. The characters can thin the ranks using *healing* to cure the fever. Better yet, doing so on Braxton himself takes a lot of the wind out of the group.

Unfortunately, it's too late for the poor souls who've been turned completely into doomsowers. They deliberately fight to the death if the heroes attempt to restrain or capture them.

As soon as it's obvious that the big attack isn't going to go forward, the doomsowers go for the next best target—our intrepid heroes, of course!

- **Doomsowers (1 per hero):** See page 43. Armed with Winchester '73s (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2) and bayonets (Str+d4, when fitted to rifle, Str+d6, Reach 1, Parry +1, requires two hands).

Braxton's Raid

Braxton is planning an all-out attack on Amity within a few days. Egged on by the effects of blood fever, he's adopted the philosophy of "If you ain't with me, you're agin me!" Worse, Braxton has gotten his hands on a working cannon left behind by the border raiders last year. Unless the posse stops him, he and his men turn the town of Amity into a battleground—and further sow the seeds of the blood roses!

If the posse fails to head off the attack, the vigilantes approach the western side of Amity just before dawn. You can allow a Notice roll for posse members to detect the group as it prepares its attack. Braxton leads most of the men into town. While the doomsowers break ranks and close for melee to maximize their spore bursts on dying, most of the raiders hang back, preferring to rely on their firearms.

They set up their cannon on the edge of town, centered in the street. The cannon is manned by four men and fires either shrapnel or cannister, depending on the available targets. You can find the rules for cannons in *Savage Worlds*.

The marshal and his deputy arrive after three rounds, and the townsfolk begin arriving at a rate of one per round thereafter. Allow the players to control these reinforcements as Extras.

- **Jeb Braxton:** Use Soldier (Officer) stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.
- **Vigilantes (20):** Use Soldier stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.
- **Doomsowers (1 per hero):** See page 43. Armed with Winchester '73s (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2) and bayonets (Str+d4, when fitted to rifle, Str+d6, Reach 1, Parry +1, requires two hands).
- **Marshal and Deputies (3):** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.
- **Townsfolk (10):** Use Soldier stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

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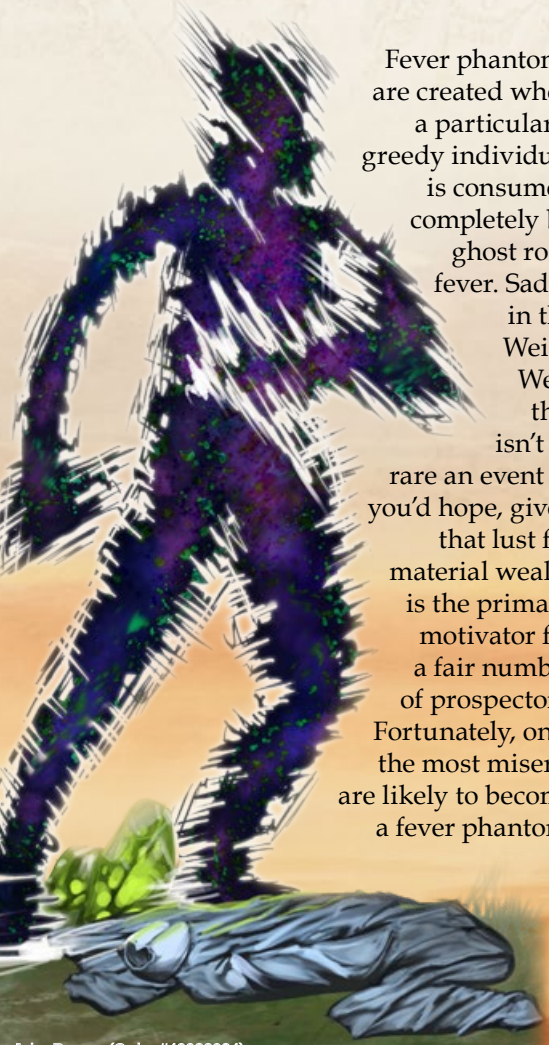
Fever Phantom

Most prospectors and mad scientists have had a brush or two with ghost rock fever, but a few find the condition fatal. Usually in these cases, the fever boils the brainpan of the poor soul suffering it. Rarely, a victim spontaneously bursts into flame, and burns down to ash, a few gold fillings, and a lump of ghost rock. Once in a blue moon, though, a terminal case of the illness spawns a fever phantom.



Fever phantoms are created when a particularly greedy individual is consumed completely by ghost rock fever. Sadly, in the Weird West this isn't as rare an event as you'd hope, given that lust for material wealth is the primary motivator for a fair number of prospectors. Fortunately, only the most miserly are likely to become a fever phantom.

Otherwise, Deadwood, the Great Maze, and most of the Southwest would now be populated solely by these abominations. Fever phantoms are a physical manifestation of the former victim's overwhelming greed.

Fever phantoms appear to be vaguely human-shaped, coal-black shadows at first glance. Anyone brave—or foolish—enough to study them closer realizes that the phantoms aren't shadows, but actual empty voids in reality itself, rather like a hole in the world leading to somewhere else.

Although they are intangible to most substances, they interact normally with precious metals and ghost rock and are driven to hoard the valuable minerals. The phantoms are drawn by their pervading greed to these materials, often haunting mines and the like. Their avarice is also the source of their only weakness: Ironically, the same items they lust after so fiercely are capable of destroying them. Any weapon made of a precious metal or ghost rock can damage a fever phantom normally.

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The most terrifying aspect of a phantom's attack is that often it pulls its victim into the void with it. In these cases, the victim rises within moments as a phantom himself!

Fever Phantom

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Stealth d12+4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Ethereal:** Fever phantoms are immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks or their weakness.
- **Fear:** Make a Guts roll whenever an hombre spots a fever phantom.
- **Ghostly Touch:** Attacks from fever phantoms ignore all non-magical armor. Armor that includes ghost rock or ghost rock shavings, such as a standard bulletproof vest, also protects against their attacks normally.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a fever phantom has a 50% chance to be pulled into the same void that spawned the original, arising as another phantom under the Marshal's control in 1d6 rounds.
- **Reach +1:** A fever phantom can stretch its shadowy appendages to unnatural lengths.
- **Shadow:** In lighting conditions of dim or darker, a fever phantom has a 50% chance to be *invisible*, as per the power.
- **Weakness (Fundaments):** Fever phantoms take normal damage from weapons (or bullets) made of ghost rock, gold, silver, or other precious metals.

Savage Tale: Ghost of a Chance

Deborah Morton, a young lady from Back East, contacts the heroes for help locating her uncle, a prospector named Chance Farley. Chance was obsessed with striking it rich mining in the Maze, and Deborah had spent most of what little money she had bankrolling his effort. The last she heard, he claimed to have hit a substantial strike, which he'd named the "Last Chance Mine."

Deborah has not heard from her favorite uncle Chance for several months, and now she's worried that catastrophe has befallen him. She only knows that Chance sent his telegrams and letters from a small port town named Fortuity, located on the inner edge of the central Maze. Deborah offers the posse $100 to convey a letter to her uncle or learn his whereabouts.

Unfortunately, Chance succumbed to ghost rock fever some time ago, becoming a fever phantom. Due to the remoteness of the strike, his shade remained undiscovered until recently, when a band of Maze pirates stopped at his camp. Initially picking the outlaws off one at a time, eventually the fever phantom infected enough victims to be able to overwhelm the majority, leaving only a few to escape…

Fortuity

Fear Level: 2

Fortuity is a small harbor town positioned on the edge of the Great Maze. It's still on the mainland, so the posse doesn't need any special transportation to reach it. There's even a tiny station in town for the Iron Dragon railroad.

Unfortunately, that's where the easy part of the heroes' search ends. Asking

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around town, the characters learn that although lots of folks remembered Chance Farley, no one knows where his strike was. Farley was apparently pretty paranoid about his mine, going so far as to not even file the claim in the local town office for fear someone would jump it. Instead, he traveled all the way to Sacramento and filed the paperwork at the county land office.

Furthermore, the man has a reputation for being miserly. He haggled over the price of everything from salt to ghost rock, always trying to squeeze an extra penny or two out of the deal. All this in spite of the fact that he seemed to be pulling in a fair amount from his strike.

An investigator who succeeds at a Streetwise roll learns from one of the townsfolk that Farley owned a Maze runner that he purchased in Shan Fan. The citizen also says,

> *"Come to think of it, I'm pretty sure I saw his boat chug into the harbor earlier today. Haven't seen the old skinflint himself, though."*

With a raise on the roll, the hero also finds out the name of the craft: *Deborah's Folly.*

Pirates of the Maze

Even without learning the name, a moderately clever posse should be able to figure out which runner is Farley's as he named it after his niece. If not—and you're feeling generous—you can have a dockhand point it out to them.

Deborah's Folly sits at the end of the farthest dock in the small inlet. As the adventurers near the moored craft, they can see the Maze runner is virtually crawling with unsavory types, all armed to the teeth. And, of course, none look likely to respond positively to polite requests to return Farley's boat…

When the heroes reach the boat, a man on board takes one look at the posse and tells them,

> *"Shove off, pigeons!"*

Any questions about Farley or the Maze runner are met with a barrage of derisive comments, usually involving particularly inventive anatomical descriptions. Should one of the cowpokes rise to the bait, the insults quickly change to snarls and weapon handling.

The posse can attempt to sway the Maze pirates to a more cooperative mood, either by winning an Intimidation Test of Wills with a raise, or making a Persuasion roll while offering a bribe of at least $200. Each raise on the Persuasion roll lowers the necessary bribe amount by $50.

Or your hombres can just beat the truth out of the pirates. If attacked—or suitably enraged through taunts and catcalls—the waterborne bandits eagerly draw their cutlasses or skin their smokewagons and commence to fighting. *Deborah's Folly* is armed with a single Gatling gun (see sidebar on opposite page) on a swivel mount in the bow, and one of the crew jumps on it at the beginning of combat.

The pirates fight until more than half of their number are Incapacitated. At that time, the rest surrender and offer up the information contained in **Fessin' Up**, below. The pirates are all minor wanted criminals, each with a $25 bounty on his head for any number of petty crimes. An adventurer with an appropriate background (bounty hunter, law dog, Maze resident, etc.) can make a Common Knowledge roll to realize this.

- **Maze Pirates (2 per hero):** Use Maze Pirate stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

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Fessin' Up

Once the heroes convince the pirates to talk—whether by verbal abuse, a soft word and a fistful of dollars, or pistol-whipping the lot—one of the crew, a wag named Dawkins, spills the beans. If your posse was particularly heavy-handed and left all the scurvy band Incapacitated, assume Dawkins is only "walking wounded" and capable of carrying on a coherent parley with the group. The pirate explains,

"We used to be part of Fenton the Fancy's crew. Ol' Fenton got that nickname for his extravagant wardrobe, and a fixation on all things silver.

"Anyhow, we had a run-in with a pair of Union warships yesterday. We lost. No surprise, given the captain's habit of spending his money on clothes rather than his ship. We managed to lose our pursuers in the twisting canyons of the Maze, but we were taking on water badly. We limped into a hidden cove at the base of a mesa.

"The cove turned out to be a small mining site, complete with a dock. We found the Deborah's Folly *moored there, but the mine looked to be abandoned. With the ship sinking, Fenton set me and a few other men to transferring our gear to the Maze runner. Capt. Fenton took the rest of the hands with him to look for loot and set camp for the night.*

"Night had set in before we finished stripping the scow. By that time, Fenton and the crew had a bonfire going. In the light of the fire, I saw what looked like a group of men all dressed in black approaching from the dark. They attacked. The landing party tried to fight back, but it seemed like their weapons had no effect on their attackers—except for one that Fenton shot. That one just... melted away into the night.

Deborah's Folly

The *Folly* is a Maze runner, specifically designed for use in the Great Maze. It has independently geared, side paddlewheels. These can rotate in opposite directions, allowing it to pivot in place.

It has an open rear deck with bench seats and a partially enclosed driver's cockpit. There's also a small cargo hold belowdecks.

Acc/Top Speed: 10/30, Toughness: 10 (2), Crew: 3+5, Cost: $15,000, Notes: Travels 30 miles per pound of ghost rock. Armed with a Gatling gun (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 3, Shots 40, AP 2) on a swivel mount in the boat's bow.

"Me and the others got spooked. Someone, I don't know who, said the attackers must be ghosts. So when those black-garbed figures took notice of us, we cast off in the Maze runner and lit out as fast as we could."

No Chance at All

Dawkins can give the heroes directions to the Last Chance Mine's whereabouts—provided they agree to let him go. Since the mine is located in the channels of the Maze, the posse needs a watercraft to reach it. They can either hire a local boat and crew for $20 a day or use the *Deborah's Folly* if they're capable of piloting it. Dawkins, though reluctant to return, can be convinced to pilot the *Folly* with a successful Intimidation or Persuasion roll, if either is backed by a threat to turn the pirate over to local law enforcement.

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The trip to the mine takes the better part of a day. If the adventurers hired a captain or recruited Dawkins, either recommends leaving as soon after sunrise as possible. The waters of the Maze are dangerous enough without trying to navigate them in the dark!

Regardless of when your group decides to set out, Marshal, fate and the twisting canyons connive to delay their arrival until shortly before dark. Maybe Dawson's recall of the route is a little off and leads to a few dead ends. Or perhaps the tide traps the heroes' craft behind a sandbar. If you're feeling a bit more bloodthirsty, the posse can always run afoul of another band of pirates or even one of the many abominations that haunt the Maze.

Regardless, by the time the characters arrive at the Last Chance Mine, the sun is slipping behind the mesas, slowly shrouding the strike in shadow. However they reached Farley's claim, it's pretty clear they're spending the night.

The Last Chance Mine

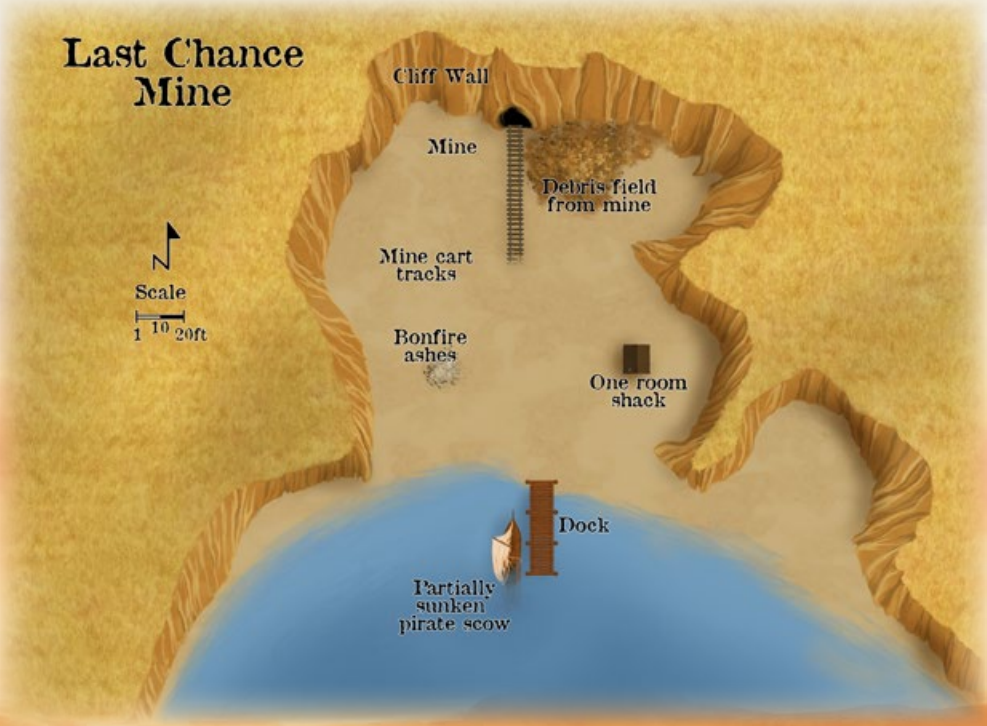
Fear Level: 3

The Last Chance is situated in a little cove at the base of a mesa. Steep cliff walls surround a small box canyon only a little over 100 feet wide at any given point. A rickety dock thrusts out into the water and the partially sunken remains of Fenton's scow sit to one side of it.

A single-room shack sits nearby, with the mine entrance on the back wall of the cleft. The remains of a large bonfire sit on the opposite side of the tiny gulch from the cabin. There is no sign of any life as the heroes arrive.

Searching specific areas turns up the clues noted below.

Bonfire: A Tracking roll reveals the ashes to be about two days old. Around



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the fire, the investigators find more than a few pirate bodies, all raked with horrible claw wounds. Inexplicably, they also find several sets of clothing laid out on the sand near the ashes. A Notice roll spots that all the bodies and clothing have pistols and/or cutlasses nearby. A raise on the roll reveals to the cowpokes that there are no other items of value on the bodies. Some of the corpses even appear to have had teeth removed!

Mine: A track leads into the darkened mine. There is only a single tunnel, never more than 10 feet wide. During the daylight hours, the phantoms hide inside. If the heroes delve too deeply inside, go to **Shadows in the Dark**, below.

Pirate Scow: The scow is mostly underwater at this point. There is nothing of interest left on board. What Dawkins and his band didn't off-load has either been lost to the tide or stolen by the phantoms.

Shack: This sparsely furnished hovel served as Chance's living quarters. A single set of clothing lies on the floor. Unlike other outfits the heroes may have found, there are significant burn marks on this one, left when Chance succumbed to ghost rock fever. Also in the shack is a small pile of various precious metals and ghost rock pieces (total value $250)—including several gold and silver teeth and Fenton's silver-plated Colt Navy revolver, complete with five silver bullets remaining unfired. The six-shooter is worth $50 on its own.

Shadows in the Dark

When darkness falls—or the posse travels more than 75 feet into the mine—the phantoms take notice. Initially, the abominations rely on their near-invisibility to, *ahem*, "shadow" the heroes. Play up the suspense by having the cowpokes make Notice rolls to catch sight of dark figures darting just at the edge of their vision.

When possible, the phantoms try to prey on stragglers or smaller groups. But be careful not to overwhelm the characters. Until the party figures out how to defeat them, the phantoms are quite formidable. If need be, don't be afraid to toss an Extra—like Dawkins or one of the boat crew—to the ghostly predators.

Magic works normally on the phantoms and should any of your hombres be toting silver bullets already (hey, it is *Deadlands*!), that's great. Otherwise, Fenton's pistol still has the five silver rounds in its cylinder. In a pinch, the heroes can use chunks of ghost rock, either by throwing them or simply bashing with them. In either case, the rocks do Str damage if they hit.

Give the group a chance to see that most normal attacks have little effect on the phantoms. Hopefully, one of the posse remembers Dawkins' account of Fenton putting one of the haunts down. If not, you can have the abominations try to reclaim their hoard to reinforce that, while insubstantial, the phantoms do interact with precious metals and ghost rock.

- **Fever Phantoms (1, plus 1 per 2 heroes):** See page 49.

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Gluttonous Ogre

Ogres loom large in many myths over on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. The Chinese in particular have numerous versions of these monsters to haunt their nightmares, with the hulking creatures often serving as minions to demons and sorcerers. Kang's followers were even thoughtful enough to bring a few of the more common variety of ogre with them when they came to the Maze.

But even Iron Dragon's most ambitious wizards are usually wise enough to steer clear of gluttonous ogres, or *t'ao t'ieh* as they're called in their native tongue. Like their more traditional cousins, gluttonous ogres are huge, hulking humanoids whose features mix those of wolves, bulls, and tigers. Add to that a gaping mouth, a pair of horns, and protuberant eyes that ogle everything like a starving dog does a fresh steak and you've got a rough idea of what one of these critters looks like.

T'ao t'ieh have a reputation for rapacious appetites; hence their more common name. These carnivorous giants eat constantly, devouring any living thing that comes within their reach. If left without a steady source of food, a gluttonous ogre's hunger will drive it to feast on its own flesh. Legends speak of t'ao t'ieh that have eaten their entire bodies, reduced to nothing more than a head that gorges itself while its meal drops uselessly to the ground beneath it. Whether or not this is true or even possible, most t'ao t'ieh have lost a piece or two of their own bodies when the larder was running low.

A gluttonous ogre has a frighteningly fast metabolism which digests food as fast as the creature can consume it. While this is obviously the source of the creature's ravenous hunger, it also has a horrifying side effect for anyone unfortunate to have to face one of these fiends. The t'ao t'ieh can almost instantaneously heal itself of wounds by gulping down a suitable amount of meat.

Strangely, while its own flesh can sustain its life and never cause it an actual wound, a gluttonous ogre never heals the cosmetic damage caused by self-cannibalism.

Needless to say, only the most powerful—or foolhardy—of Chinese sorcerers attempt to summon and control these monsters. Unlike the more common Chinese ogres, t'ao t'ieh don't employ weapons, relying instead on their terrible jaws in combat. As often as not, the ogres greedily gobble the pieces they bite off.

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Gluttonous Ogre (T'ao T'ieh)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Coup (Glutton):** A Harrowed gains the ability to Bite for Str+d4 damage. But the deader also has to eat *two* pounds of meat for every natural healing roll they make.
- **Devour:** Each wound a gluttonous ogre causes a victim with its bite regenerates a wound on its own body (if it has any).
- **Fear (–2):** Gluttonous ogres are terrifying creatures, causing Guts checks (–2) in all who see them.
- **Improved Frenzy:** These abominations may make two Fighting attacks a round at no penalty.
- **Size +3:** T'ao t'ieh range from 8 to 12 feet tall and are heavily muscled. Their bellies are usually distended from overeating.

SAVAGE TALE: GANG WAR

Zhao Chen was a small-time hood working his way up through the Shan Fan Triad thanks to a slight edge over his rivals. Unknown to any but his closest henchmen, Zhao dabbled in sorcery. Unfortunately, his ego far outstripped his ability. He used his dark magics to summon a gluttonous ogre to serve him as an unholy combination of enforcer and body-disposal service.

You've probably noticed we're talking about Zhao in the past

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tense. That's because the monster broke free a few days ago and made short work of Zhao and his henchmen, turning their hideout into a pretty good imitation of a Stinktown slaughterhouse. The creature has since begun to range farther afield as it tries to keep its belly from rumbling.

And, although it's near the largest concentration of fresh meat in the Maze, the ogre isn't particular about where it gets its meals from…

Shan Fan Showdown

While traveling through the Skids, the characters see a band of thugs tearing up a merchant's shop. Read the following:

The merchant stands to one side, yelling in dismay, but the vandals ignore his protests. A young boy runs out of the store and begins tugging at one of the men, who promptly picks the child up and throws him into the street. Another thug emerges, pulling a woman by the hair and making comments that—while in Chinese—are clearly lewd and threatening.

This should be enough to provoke your heroes into intervening. If not, the boy or the shopkeeper begs passing hombres to help. The men, Triad "rascals," gladly turn on any interlopers that get between them and their intended victims. They fight until half their number is Incapacitated, at which time they attempt to flee, vowing revenge as they do.

Should the posse not step in, the thugs continue vandalizing the shop and roughing up the shopkeeper and his family. Eventually, they tire of their sport, but promise to return. As they leave, they sneer at any cowardly assemblage of sodbusters who stood by and watched their assault.

- **Thugs (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Martial Artist stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

Turf War

After the rascals depart, the merchant approaches the party. He introduces himself as Wing Ho-Tin. If the heroes stepped in to help out, he thanks them profusely for their assistance. If not, he does not judge them; after all, they are outsiders and not expected to intervene in local affairs.

Should they ask him about his attackers, Wing is surprisingly forthcoming for a Shan Fan resident.

"They work for Fei Ya-Hung, an enforcer for Thin Noodles Ma. They were looking for Zhao Chen. This is his territory. Zhao is very powerful—people say he even commands demons to his bidding! He would stop Fei, but no one has seen him for a week."

Wing says Fei's men have become increasingly aggressive in their questioning of the locals. If Zhao is not found, he's worried someone is going to be injured or even killed soon. He adds that the marshal, Long-Haired Tony, turns a blind eye because it looks like a turf war between members of the Shan Fan Triad.

Wing doesn't expect the posse to go toe-to-toe with one of the Big Bosses of the Triad. As far as Wing and his neighbors are concerned, they pay protection money to Zhao and this is his problem. However, he's willing to offer the heroes $250 on behalf of the local merchants if they'll find Zhao.

Thin Noodles, Big Plans

What Wing doesn't know is Thin Noodles Ma has heard rumors of Zhao's sorcery. As a rule, Big Ears Tam, leader of the Shan Fan Triad, frowns on his members being involved with the dark arts, and when Tam frowns, Shan Fan undertakers grin. However, Ma has been getting schooled in sorcery on the sly by Kang himself and decided to pick

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up a little extra-credit by taking it out of Zhao's hide.

If Thin Noodles Ma has already been sent to take a dirt nap in your campaign, Marshal, that's fine. He's enough of a scoundrel to be a prime piece of manitou real estate, so it's safe to assume he's been Harrowed. If you don't want to go that route, Fei Ya-Hung might be looking to steal Zhao's secrets for himself.

Canvassing the Neighborhood

The cowpokes quickly find finding Zhao isn't as simple as asking directions at the local saloon. The neighborhood residents are more than a little suspicious of outsiders poking into their business even on a good day. Add in Fei's thugs and it takes a snakeoil salesman to even get most to answer a door!

Communication is also a problem unless someone in the posse speaks a dialect of Chinese. Any Streetwise roll to locate Zhao is automatically at –2 due to the circumstances, even if the heroes speak Chinese. If no one speaks a Chinese dialect but they manage to scrounge up an interpreter, the roll is at –4. (Wing can help them find one if the heroes think to ask him.) If the sodbusters try to get by with hand gestures and speaking loudly, give them a –6 penalty instead!

A success on the Streetwise roll points the group toward a warehouse on the edge of Stinktown that was rumored to be Zhao's base.

Belly o' the Beast

The warehouse holding Zhao's headquarters is a dark and apparently lifeless two-story building on the edge of Stinktown. A pair of large sliding doors provides access to the main floor. They are closed, but anyone checking finds them unlocked. Numerous windows ring the building, but they've been boarded from the inside. A smaller door on the southwest corner of the building leads to the former office, but it's locked and requires a Lockpicking roll to open.

Inside, the investigators find the warehouse still contains many crates and barrels. Stacked up to 10 feet high in places, they turn the large room into a veritable maze. A suspended walkway hugs walls of the storeroom about 12 feet above the floor.

Any cowpoke entering the room must make a Guts roll against nausea. Read the following:

> *The building resembles a charnel house more than a warehouse—and a badly kept one at that. The stink of rotten blood fills the room so thickly it's almost tangible. Piles of viscera and body parts lie haphazardly around the main floor.*

Examining the floor allows a hero to make a Tracking roll. On a success, she finds a number of large, clawed humanoid footprints. The tracks wander through the piles of gore, and there are several sets leading in and out of the warehouse's main doors.

At the center of the main floor is a cleared area surrounded by strange symbols (actually Chinese pictographs). With a Knowledge (Occult) roll, a hero who can read Chinese recognizes the symbols as bindings for some sort of demon. With a raise, she realizes the bindings are disastrously flawed.

Within the area bounded by the symbols is a broken length of chain attached to an eyebolt in the floor.

The ogre made its lair in a cleared space in the northeast corner of the warehouse. If the heroes head in that direction, Fei Ya-Hung and his henchmen enter immediately. Otherwise, the Triad rascals appear after the posse has had time to take in the carnage and the ominous implications of the mystical wards.

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Party Crashers

The sorcerer is accompanied by a large number of his thugs, all of whom carry hatchets. Close by his side is a dour, shirtless man whose chest and face are heavily scarred. Clearly, Fei came gunning for a fight.

Upon seeing the posse, the sorcerer says,

> *"I did not think to see you interlopers so soon. My luck is indeed great today, for now I may kill two birds with but a single stone! I will learn Zhao's secrets while exacting my revenge!"*

With that, he orders his men to attack. The thugs gang up on heroes when possible, while Fei's bodyguard stays close to him. Fei first casts *deflection* on himself, then *quickness* on his bodyguard.

- **Thugs (3, plus 2 per hero):** Use Martial Artist stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. These henchman are all armed with axes (Str+d6).
- **Bodyguard:** Use Martial Artist (Superior) stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Yan is not a Wild Card—unless you want to make this a really tough fight, Marshal!

Fei Ya-Hung

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d6, Spellcasting d10, Taunt d6

Charisma: 0; **Grit:** 3; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Greedy (Major), Mean, Overconfident

Edges: Arcane Background (Black Magic), Command, Power Points, Fervor

Powers: *Bolt*, *deflection*, *entangle*, *quickness*. **Power Points:** 15

Gear: Knife (Str+d4).

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Feed Me!

After three rounds of combat, the gluttonous ogre charges out of the northeast corner of the warehouse. It is also roused by anyone unlucky enough to enter its lair. The ogre is over 10 feet tall and quite powerful, plowing straight through the walls of crates as often as it goes around them.

The abomination's body is missing large chunks of flesh as Zhao's supply of food did not keep up with its hunger. The creature took to eating bits of itself before it broke loose a few days ago. A large chunk is missing from its abdomen and, often as not, anything—or anyone—it eats falls out shortly thereafter, which explains the chunks of flesh the posse found around the warehouse. The heaps of gore are all that remains of Zhao and his rascals.

The ogre has been able to feed only a little from nearby slaughterhouses, so it isn't about to pass up home delivery of fresh meat. The monster makes no distinction between the Triad enforcers and the posse. If a victim proves too capable of defending itself, it moves to another, trying to kill as many as it can, as quickly as it can.

The ogre fights until slain, wholly driven by its hellish appetite. Fortunately, Fei and his men aren't quite as fanatical. After more than two-thirds of his men fall, Fei seeks to beat a retreat. If Fei and his bodyguard are Incapacitated, the remaining rascals flee.

Gluttonous Ogre: See page 55.

Wrap the Rest to Go

When the t'ao t'ieh and the sorcerer are defeated, the posse is free to explore the rest of the warehouse. The office holds dozens of ledgers, all in Chinese. These detail payments to Zhao from local merchants, and his payments up the Triad chain. Zhao was meticulous in his record-keeping, and surprisingly honest in his dealings with his bosses.

There is also a locked strongbox in the desk, requiring a Lockpicking roll (–2) to open. In it is only $50 dollars—Zhao had already made his weekly payment before his death. Had he triumphed over the posse, Fei would have been disappointed: Zhao never actually possessed any arcane texts. He was working from the memory of one he'd read years ago.

Any caballero with a strong enough stomach can go poking through the half-digested remains scattered around the warehouse and find a few odds and ends—cufflinks, a watch, a pair of gold teeth, etc.—which can fetch another $50 in a pawnshop… once they're cleaned up a little. The crates themselves are either empty or packed with largely worthless goods, like canvas tarps, substandard building supplies, etc.

Shortly after they leave Zhao's warehouse, the heroes are met by Long-Haired Tony. The marshal says,

> *"Big Ears Tam, a local businessman and owner of the warehouse, thanks you for your efforts."*

Allow the players a Common Knowledge roll with the appropriate modifiers to recognize that Tam is the head of the Shan Fan Triad.

Tony adds,

> *"Tam would consider it a personal favor to him if you were to turn over any documents you may have recovered from his warehouse. Got any?"*

If the heroes give the marshal any ledgers they may have taken, Big Ears Tam takes that into consideration in future dealings. On the other hand, if they don't, let's just say he takes that into consideration as well…

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Hodag

According to legends, the hodag is formed by the spirits of mistreated oxen and other similar beasts. While this monster is perhaps best known among the lumberjacks of the northern Midwest forests, it's encountered anywhere one might find oxen, Longhorns, or even buffalo and bison. Descriptions of it vary somewhat, but most agree it has a pair of horns, clawed feet, fangs, and a disposition not much better than that of a wet wolverine.

Those of us in the know—and that now includes you, Marshal—realize it isn't really old Bessie's ghost inhabiting a hodag, but rather a good, old-fashioned manitou. Now, as a rule manitou don't usually cotton to reanimating normal critters. Hodags represent one of the rare exceptions to this, mainly because the manitou takes a few liberties with the body it brings back.

True to the legends, a hodag retains its horns. Its hide cures into a hard, scaly armor. Rigor mortis pulls the flesh from the creature's teeth, making them look larger and almost fanglike. The animal's spine protrudes through its toughened skin, giving it a spiked appearance. Finally, the bones in its tail grow into sharp barbs, turning its former flyswatter into an implement of bloodletting.

Hodags are quadropedal by nature and often choose to begin an attack by charging. However, they are capable of rising onto their hind legs for extended periods. This might lead a more classically educated cowpoke to mistake them for another creature of legend—the Minotaur. And just like that mythical monster, hodags usually have a hankerin' for human flesh.

Hodag

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Tracking d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor (+1):** The monster's hide is tough and leathery.
- **Bite/Hooves/Horns/Tail:** Str+d6.
- **Coup (Bull Strength):** The deader's Strength die type increases one level. So does his stench. Notice rolls to detect the deader's decaying odor receive a +4 bonus, or +2 if alcohol is used to mask the scent.
- **Fear (–1):** Anyone encountering a hodag must make a Guts roll (–1).
- **Fearless:** Hodags are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Gore:** Hodags can charge to gore their opponents with their horns. If they can move at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- **Improved Sweep:** When using its horns or spiked tail, the hodag can attack all adjacent targets with a single Fighting attack. Resolve each

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damage roll separately. The hodag cannot use Improved Sweep during the same round in which it uses its Gore ability.

- **Miasma:** Anyone within 25 feet of a hodag must make a Vigor roll (–2) or receive a –2 penalty to all Trait rolls as a result of the overpowering stench of decay that surrounds the abomination.
- **Size +2:** Hodags are large creatures, weighing nearly half a ton. When standing on their hind legs, these creatures are over eight feet tall.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; Called shots deal no additional damage; Immune to disease and poison.

Savage Tale: The Minotaur

This Savage Tale begins at night as the heroes are camped or traveling through plains or similar terrain. Alternatively, the posse may even be employed as cowboys for the Clanton family and riding night watch on the herd.

Stampede!

A low rumbling gives mere moments of warning before a wall of frightened cattle rolls out of the dark right at the posse! Allow each hero a Notice roll to avoid being surprised. Those who succeed have one round to find cover or mount up. Those who fail are caught by surprise—and likely in a bad way!

Any saddletramp unlucky enough to be caught on foot in front of the stampeding beeves must make an Agility roll (–2). On a failure, the poor sod is kicked and butted by a few of the cattle as they rush past and suffers 2d6+2 damage. If a character rolls a 1 on her Agility die, regardless of her Wild Die's result, she's knocked down and trampled, taking 4d6+4 damage.

A hero lucky enough to be mounted before the herd overtakes him can substitute

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a Riding roll (–2) instead. If he fails his Riding roll, though, both he and his mount take 2d6+2 damage. As before, rolling a 1 on the Riding die, regardless of the Wild Die, means he and his horse are knocked down and take 4d6+4 from the trampling!

It requires two successful Agility or Riding rolls in a row—or a raise on one—for a pedestrian to make it to relative safety.

Rustlers in the Night

About 10 minutes after the stampede roars through, a wounded rider gallops up to the heroes. The man is in his late thirties and has obviously been shot in the right shoulder. He's barely able to stay on his horse, but draped across the saddle in front of him is another, younger man. He says,

"Name's Jim Clanton. Me and my boys were bringing the herd in for the night when a whole slew of rustlers jumped us. They shot me and Mark here—he's my oldest—then cut the herd and stampeded the rest. My other boy, Davy…he took off after 'em. He's barely 13, but with Mark shot up, I couldn't stop him."

Jim's wounded, but Mark's in dire straits. Unless he gets medical aid soon, he's not likely to make it. Jim's taking him to a nearby town about another hour away where there is a doctor. The attack took place a little over an hour ago, so short of *greater healing*, there's no quick fix for the men's wounds.

"Listen, you folks don't know me from Adam, but if you could find it in your hearts to go after them rattlesnakes and bring my boy back, I'd appreciate it. I ain't got nothin' to offer 'cept my gratitude and maybe a couple slices of beefsteak when—if—I get my cattle back."

If the heroes agree, Clanton gives them rough directions back to where the attack took place.

"I figure the bushwhackers came out o' Buffalo Drop Canyon to the south. There's only one way in, but once you're in, them badlands get to be like a maze. Still, they cut nearly 50 head, so it shouldn't be too hard to track them even there. Also, my boy's mare threw a shoe earlier today—that might help you track him."

The Legend o' Buffalo Drop

Should any of the characters ask about the name of the canyon, Jim explains:

"They say back before the white man came, Injuns used to drive buffalo off cliffs into the canyon in mass hunts. Later, buffalo hunters from the railroads would chase large groups of the animals in there and shoot them from up on the canyon walls.

"So many of them critters died in there over the years, there are places where the bones lay thick as gravel on the canyon floor. Folks hereabouts claim the canyon's haunted by ghosts of them dead buffalo, and most steer clear. Probably makes it a good hideout for a bunch of no-good rustlers."

Or it would be if it weren't home to a hodag that has taken offense at the outlaws encroaching on its territory…

Into the Labyrinth

Should the posse agree to Jim's request, it's easy for them to find their way to the site of the original ambush. Even in the dark, it's not too tough to follow the trail of a stampeding herd of cattle, and they have Jim's directions to help.

About 45 minutes after meeting the rancher, the party arrives at the scene of the rustlers' attack. Any cowpoke making a Tracking roll (+2) determines

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that over a dozen men were involved in the attack and that they came up from the south like Jim guessed. Afterwards, they headed back the same way with nearly 50 beeves. A raise on the roll finds the tracks of a horse missing one shoe, also headed south.

Rear Guard

The trail leads to the entrance to a steep-walled, sandstone valley. The mouth of the canyon is narrow, only about 25 feet across, and the walls rise over 50 feet above the canyon floor. A small stream flows out of the ravine, a shadow of the river that must have once flowed through it.

The rustlers sent a few of their number back to dissuade anyone on their trail from continuing the pursuit. Luckily, Davy slipped through before the rustlers thought to watch their back trail, but by the time the posse arrives, the rustlers are in place and waiting. The outlaws are hidden in cover near the entrance to the canyon, and open fire on the heroes with their rifles once the posse closes to within 24".

If more than three-quarters of the outlaws are Incapacitated, the rest try to flee, but won't surrender under any circumstances. Rustling is a hanging offense by itself, and adding attempted murder isn't likely to sway a jury to leniency. The outlaws have their mounts hobbled about 100 yards behind them in the canyon, and make for them if things go badly.

- **Rustlers (1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. The rustlers are armed with Winchester '73 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2) and 20 spare rounds.

Buffalo Drop Canyon

Fear Level: 4

Inside, Buffalo Drop opens up into a twisted collection of channels, side canyons, and dead-ends, a sort of poor man's Badlands. Fortunately, the rustlers and their purloined herd left a fairly obvious trail. A simple Tracking roll every 10 minutes keeps the posse on the right trail. A raise on the roll also finds the tracks of Davy's horse in the mix, apparently following a short distance behind the outlaws. With a failure, the heroes have to spend another 10 minutes backtracking and searching for signs before the group can attempt another Tracking roll.

About 10 minutes into the canyon, the heroes come across what at first appears to be a stretch of white sand covering the floor near the base of one of the taller cliff walls. Closer examination reveals that chunks of bone, horn, and a few buffalo skulls are mixed in with the "sand." The white substance is actually the powdered remains of hundreds—possibly even thousands—of buffalo that have died here over the centuries.

Culling the Herd

Not long after they leave the bone field, gunshots ring out ahead of the party. Allow the characters a Notice roll, including modifiers for hearing. Those who succeed hear what sounds like a large animal moving at a gallop somewhere ahead but can't pinpoint a location due to the echoes. With a raise on the roll, a sharp-eared sodbuster detects that something about the sound isn't quite right: There don't seem to be enough hoofbeats for a steer or horse.

A few minutes later, the posse comes across the bodies of a pair of recently slain outlaws and their horses. The men have apparently been gored and trampled by cattle. A successful

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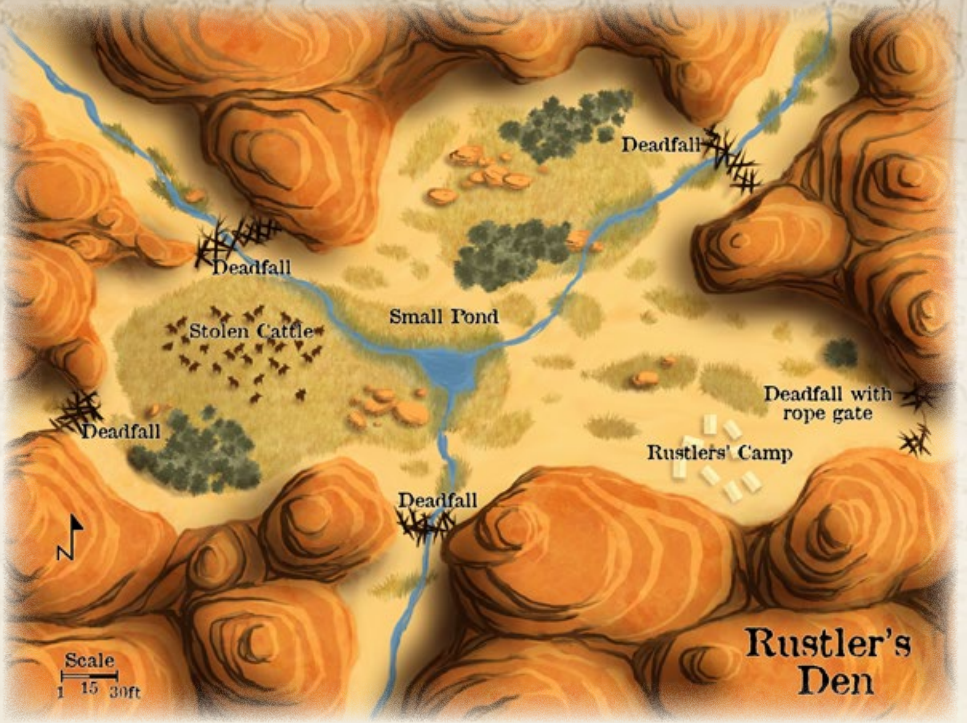

Knowledge (Medicine) or Healing roll reveals several slashes on their bodies more consistent with a saber or bullwhip than the horns of a steer.

Any cowpoke making a Tracking roll learns little. The area is literally covered in the tracks of both horses and cattle as the rustlers passed through here not that long ago.

Horns of a Dilemma

After making three successful Tracking rolls in a row, the posse manages to find its way through Buffalo Drop Canyon to the rustler's hideout. If the posse has managed to identify the tracks of Davy's horse, they discover it breaks off from the herd and heads into a side canyon a short distance before the trail leads to the outlaws' camp.

It's up to the posse whether they follow Davy or go straight for the rustlers.

Rustler's Den

The cattle thieves have corralled the herd in a wide spot where several side canyons meet. The rustlers are more than a bit on edge. The fact locals avoided Buffalo Drop Canyon made it seem like a perfect hideout—until the hodag started picking off rustlers a little while ago. No one's seen it (and lived), but most are sure there's something in the canyon with them. They're now jumping at any sound that echoes through the maze.

If the heroes try to sneak into the camp or around it, treat the bandits as active guards. If the posse attempts to parlay with them, the outlaws state their case with bullets. Like the outlaws at the entrance, none of the rustlers have any intention of surrendering.

Only a rope corral holds the cattle in a small box canyon nearby. Should gunfire break out, the herd likely stampedes—especially if anyone cuts the rope!

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- **Rustlers (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), 25 spare rounds.
- **Gang Leader:** Use Gunman stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with a Winchester '76 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2), a Colt Peacemaker (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), and 20 spare rounds for each.

Corralled!

Following Davy's horse leads the party to a small cul-de-sac. His mare is standing near the base of small sandstone spire, but Davy is nowhere to be seen. A Winchester rifle lies on the ground not far from the mare. The horse itself is covered in a sheen of sweat and its mouth is frothing. Even a tinhorn can see the animal is nervous and on the verge of bolting.

A young voice echoes down from the top of the spire,

"Shoot it!"

Just then, a sound like caged thunder erupts from the shadows on the far side of the arroyo. Allow the heroes a Notice roll. Those who fail are surprised as the hodag rushes out of the darkness, charging at the nearest posse member. Of course, those who succeed have to make Guts checks—don't forget the Fear Level of 4 in the canyon!

After its initial charge, the hodag tries to stay as close to the largest clump of characters as it can, relying on its stench to help even the odds. When possible, it employs its barbed tail or horns to attack multiple victims at once. The monster fights to the death, trying to take as many of the heroes with it as it can.

Hodag: See page 60.

Adventure Link

If you want to tie this adventure to the Savage Tale At the End of His Rope (on page 79), you can let your cowpokes find a Rolling S brand at the rustler's camp.

After all, if a ruthless cattle baron like Slade isn't above murder, he's certainly not above stealing a few cows!

Round-Up

After the abomination is defeated, Davy climbs down. He tells the party he was trying to get the drop on the rustlers by sneaking around a side canyon when the monster trapped him. If they've not yet encountered the main rustler camp, Davy insists they go after the outlaws and recover his family's herd.

Of course, if the heroes haven't already taken care of the rustlers, the bandits have heard the sounds of the battle with the hodag and might have a welcoming committee waiting for them…

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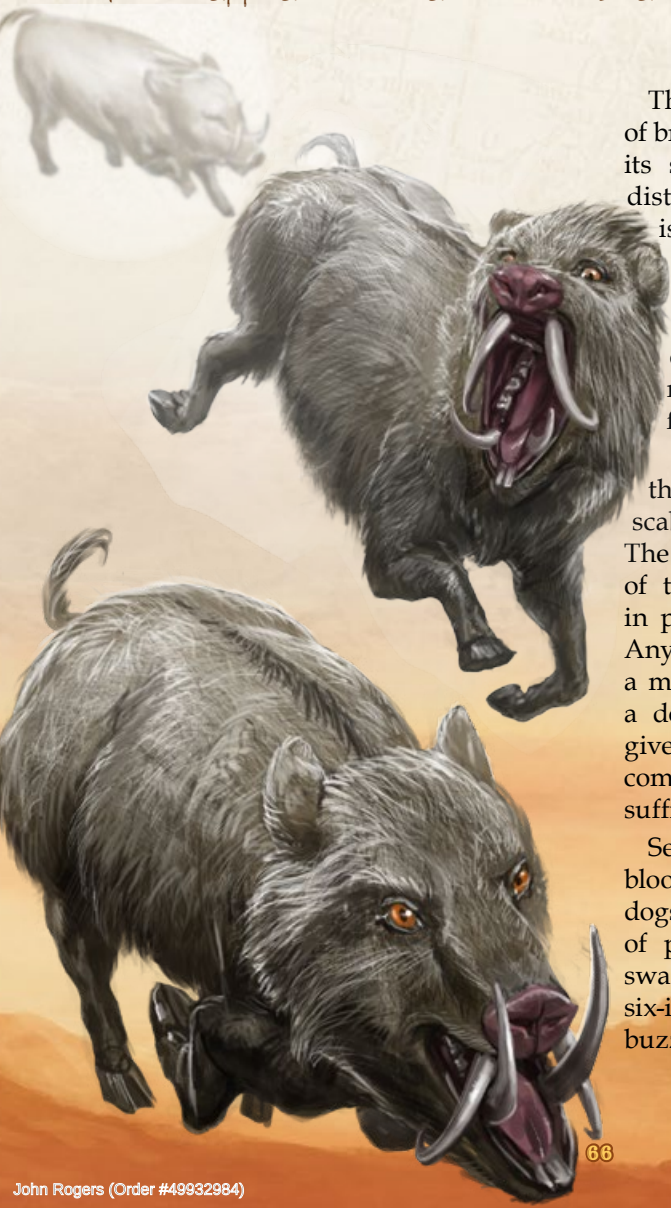
Javeranha

At first glance, a javeranha is a deceptively unimpressive critter. It appears in many ways similar to its less dangerous cousin, the javelina. At about three to four feet long and between 50 and 60 lbs., it's about as big as a mid-sized dog. It does sport a nasty pair of tusks, and it looks capable of inflicting a nasty cut or two, but doesn't appear to be a serious threat to a grown cowpoke.



The animal's fur is coarse and a mix of brown, black, and gray, except around its snout which is usually stained a distinctive deep red. The "red mask" is one of the first warning signs an hombre gets that he's not facing the more common javelina. The red staining comes from the blood of the creature's prey. Unlike their more docile cousins, javeranhas are ferocious carnivores.

Two things make javeranhas one of the most feared creatures prowling the scablands and deserts of the southwest. The first is you never encounter just one of the little buggers. Javeranhas hunt in packs often numbering 30 or more. Anyone with a six-shooter is more than a match for one—or possibly even half a dozen—of these desert pig-rats, but given that the larger packs are far more common, a six-shooter probably won't suffice!

Second, javeranhas are driven by a bloodlust second only to sharks, rabid dogs, and lawyers. Once they catch wind of prey, the little critters go berserk, swarming like angry bees—sporting six-inch tusks. By the way, these furry buzzsaws consider anything that walks,

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crawls, or slithers "prey," and they're always hungry.

Driven by instinct, javeranhas always try to gang up on their victims. In combat, they ignore other attackers to gain numerical superiority over a lone victim. A pack of a few dozen javeranhas poses a dire threat to anything short of a Mojave rattler. When possible, they focus their attacks on wounded targets, not due to any tactical advantage, but simply because the smell of fresh blood drives them mad.

Like other peccaries, javeranhas emit a strong, pig-like odor. Folks familiar with the voracious creatures have learned to recognize the smell and make for shelter—or at least a tree—when they catch wind of it.

Javeranha

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Alertness:** The animal has an acute sense of smell and hearing, granting +2 to Notice rolls.
- **Fleet-Footed:** A javeranha rolls a d10 when running.
- **Frenzy:** Javeranhas make two attacks each round at a –2 penalty.
- **Size –1:** An average specimen is about the size of a dog.
- **Tusks:** Str+d4.

Savage Tale: Open Ground

This Savage Tale begins with the posse on a stagecoach traveling through an uninhabited stretch of desert, preferably in the Southwest, either riding shotgun or simply as passengers. Before departing, they learn a number of coaches have failed to complete the next stage of the route. The vehicles are found empty. Even the horses are gone.

Rumor has it that a gang of particularly bloodthirsty outlaws has set up along the stretch of trail ahead. In reality, a crazed old coot named Rufus has become convinced he can communicate with javeranhas. He ambushes folks passing through the region and feeds his victims to the vicious little critters.

Ironically, an outlaw gang has moved into the vicinity as well, drawn by the remoteness of the locale. Unfortunately for them, they're about to meet up with the top predators in the area…

Stick 'Em Up!

Around midday, the coach is trundling through a hot and dusty stretch of desert when a single, booming gunshot rings out. One of the horses on the team squeals and falls dead, shot through the neck. The rest of the team, now tangled in the harness, skids to a halt.

The driver draws his pistol, warning his passengers to do the same. With a successful Notice roll, a hero hears a distant snort or grunt. This is Rufus calling nearby javeranhas. He also shot the horse, trapping the coach and its passengers.

Moments later, a group of men rides up and orders everyone off the coach, at gunpoint. If no one resists, they strip everything of value from them and the vehicle, including weapons, before riding off. If the heroes resist, the gunmen fight back until at least half their number are Incapacitated or Shaken, at which point they flee. The stage driver fights back only if the characters do.

- **Outlaws (1, plus 1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's*

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Handbook. The bandits are armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), 25 spare rounds, and a horse.

- **Stagecoach Driver:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*, but give him Shooting d6. He is armed with a Colt Lightning (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1) and 10 spare rounds.

Varmint Swarm

Shortly after the banditos depart—whether with the posse's valuables or just a few bullets in their backsides—the first javeranhas reach the scene. Read the following just before you deal Action Cards, Marshal:

> *You hear a flurry of grunts and pig-like squeals coming from a nearby arroyo.*
>
> *Abruptly, a herd of four-legged creatures, each the size of your average pooch, bursts out of the dry wash about 20 yards away. They rush at you in a wave of fur and clashing tusks, snorting and squealing like a frenzied swarm.*

Luckily, the monsters focus on the easiest prey the first few rounds, so at first the characters only have to outrun any nearby corpses. Heroes who scamper onto the coach are safe from the hungry piglets—they're ferocious, but high-jumping isn't among their skills! Any sodbuster still on the ground after a round or two draws the porcine predators' attention, though.

The beasts concentrate around any food source on the ground—including corpses and the remaining horses. Should any of your heroes have a favored mount, Marshal, feel free to let the horse escape into the wilderness for the duration of the adventure.

Only when the passengers put down a quarter of their number do the javeranhas retreat into the desert. Otherwise, they scrounge around the area for nearly a half-hour before trotting off, leaving no trace of their victims, not even bones.

- **Javeranhas (50):** See page 67.

Rock Hoppin'

The posse finds itself in the middle of nowhere and likely without any mode of transportation except the heel-toe express. Given the horde of javeranhas somewhere out in the desert, walking 10 miles to the next station might not be particularly appealing. However, it's at least another two days before the next scheduled coach will pass, and the vehicle has precious little water.

If the posse tries to wait it out on the coach, remind them the temperature is well above 90 degrees and there is no water in sight. Every four hours, any characters still in the blistering heat face Vigor rolls (–1) to avoid gaining a level of Fatigue, per *Savage Worlds*.

Worse, the javeranhas return about every hour, called by Rufus. Each time, the now-familiar distant snorts and grunts are audible beforehand. Success on a Notice roll discerns that these calls have a human origin, not animal. Rufus's feedings have amassed a huge number of the beasts. Their numbers replenish each time they return, while the heroes' ammunition doesn't.

Should that not be enough to encourage the group to get a move on, make a Common Knowledge or Knowledge (Science) roll for each character to realize it's very probable the animals, like most desert creatures, are even more active after dark, when it's cooler.

The characters might already have an idea that climbing isn't exactly the strong suit of the little carnivores. Any hero that takes a gander at the surrounding countryside can make a Survival roll (or roll Smarts at –2) to figure out there are numerous terrain features that could

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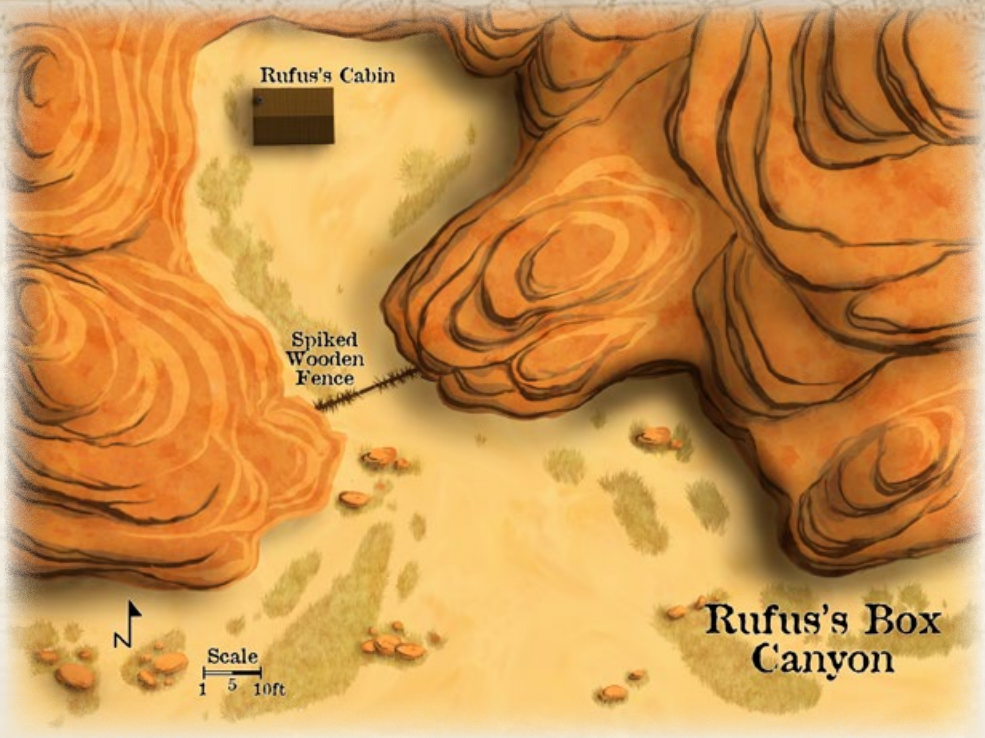

provide safe haven from a javeranha attack—trees, boulders, and the like—spaced every few hundred yards or so. By moving from one to the other, the group might be able to keep ahead of the beasts until they reach safety.

The driver remains with his coach, whatever the posse decides.

Help Me into the Tree!

If the heroes try to hoof it, let them get a mile or two from the coach before harassing them with attacks from the diminutive marauders. There are many nests of the creatures along this stretch of the trail and each time the heroes pass in noseshot of one, a small pack of javeranha burst out to attack, rushing from under outcroppings, thickets of brush, or dry creek beds.

The javeranhas are within 1d4 x 10″ of the group when they emerge from a nest. Each time the animals attack, the nearest terrain suitable for refuge is 1d6 x 10″ away. The little monsters attack until the posse manages to reach safety or Incapacitate at least half their number.

- **Javeranhas (4d10):** See page 67.

Get Off o' My Land

If you feel your caballeros are having too easy a time warding off the cannibalistic cob-rollers, here's a rotten apple to chuck in their feed trough. As the group races the javeranhas to its next safe harbor, pistol shots ring out, kicking up dust near the heroes' feet.

The bandits that accosted the stage earlier have also run afoul of the bloodthirsty peccaries. The survivors have taken shelter atop the same spot the posse was eyeing and have no intention of sharing!

The outlaws, trapped between the heroes and the javeranhas, have no intention of surrendering. They force the

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Adventure Link

If the posse searches Rufus' cabin, a Notice roll discovers a worn copy of a family Bible. Inside, it lists its owner as Rufus Squatpump. The family tree is so convoluted that at times it doubles back on itself. This is a reference to the Squatpump gang (see page 101).

posse to fight a running battle with both them and the ravening desert piglets.

- **Outlaws (1 per 2 heroes):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*, armed as before. The bandits no longer have their mounts.
- **Javeranhas (20):** See page 67.

Any Creepy Cabin in a Storm

After a few footraces with the javeranhas, allow the heroes to make Notice rolls. Those who succeed spot a faint smoke trail rising from a short distance ahead of their current sanctuary. If they decide to make for the smoke, it's up to you to decide how many more run-ins with the half-pint hogs you want to stage before they reach the source.

When they get there, read the following:

The smoke rises from a small box canyon not far from the trail. The canyon's entrance is blocked by a stout wood fence adorned with sharpened wooden spikes. A single, man-sized gate stands closed and barred in the middle of the fence.

Behind the barrier is a ramshackle cabin that looks like it was built out of whatever wood was closest at hand at the time of construction.

The characters can attempt to scale the fence with a Climbing roll or an Agility roll (at –2). Any saddletramp that fails takes 1d6 damage from the spikes, but can try again if he's a glutton for punishment.

On the other hand, calling out to the cabin brings the owner to the structure's porch in a matter of moments.

Old Man Rufus

The owner of the shack is every bit as coarse-looking as his residence. His age appears to be somewhere between his mid–60s and three days dead. His white beard is patchy, although close examination reveals the bare patches are actually just tobacco stains. He's missing several teeth and many of those remaining don't look to be of any use besides causing a toothache.

The old man rushes to the fence in a limping run to open the gate, ushering them inside hurriedly. He quickly introduces himself as "Ol' Rufus" and says,

"If you folks didn't notice, there's some right nasty pigs hereabouts!"

Rufus asks the heroes how they came to be in his neck of the woods. After their tale, he explains the wild pigs have always been a problem, but they've gotten worse recently due to a large and particularly aggressive pig he calls "Lucifer." He says he's been hunting

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Lucifer for over a year now, but the beast is unnaturally cunning.

He invites the party to bed down in his canyon for the night. He has little to offer but some smoked meat and rotgut whisky he makes himself, but adds that the fence does keep the javeranhas at bay.

Mostly, Rufus is spinning a story to lower the heroes' guard, but Lucifer does exist. Rufus actually sees him as a rival for control of the javeranhas. In return, Lucifer hates the old man with a passion for pretty much the same reasons. Rufus would like nothing better than to be rid of the boar, but he's afraid to take direct action against the beast for fear of raising the ire of the other peccaries.

Feeding Frenzy

If the posse takes Rufus up on his offer, he lets them camp inside his canyon that night, but not inside his cabin. Some time after midnight, preferably after the posse beds down, Rufus slips out and unlatches the gate. If he's observed, he claims he's either visiting the outhouse or just checking the fence before bed.

If he's successful in opening the gate, when he gets back to the cabin's porch, he calls the javeranhas with his trademark grunt, then steps inside and bars the door. The animals begin flooding into the canyon within two rounds. During that time, Rufus uses his Springfield rifle to pick off any sod who tries to secure the gate.

The hogs, led by Lucifer, go wild in a feeding frenzy once they enter the canyon. Rufus laughs and capers inside his cabin—however, he did not shutter the windows prior to hiding inside, so the posse can easily break in. He takes potshots at anyone trying to enter the shack.

The posse can easily turn the tables on the crazed coot, as Lucifer has an unholy hatred of Rufus. If the party opens the door or otherwise exposes Rufus to the javeranhas, the critters immediately focus on him. The last the posse sees of the madman is as he runs off screaming into the night, pursued by a mass of blood-maddened javeranhas.

- **Javeranhas (50):** See page 67.

Lucifer

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Alertness:** The animal has an acute sense of smell and hearing.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Lucifer rolls a d10 when running.
- **Frenzy:** This large javeranha makes two attacks each round at a –2 penalty.
- **Tusks:** Str+d4.

Ol' Rufus

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d6

Charisma: –2/–4; **Grit:** +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Delusional (Believes he can speak to javeranhas), Ugly

Edges: Alertness, Combat Reflexes

Gear: Springfield .58 rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d10, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP 2, reload 2), Bowie knife (Str+d4+1), 10 spare rounds.

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Jebediah Nightlinger

Contrary to what some may suspect, carnival owner Jebediah Nightlinger has few nefarious motivations. He is first and foremost a showman, looking to ride his carnival's unique exhibits to fame. Season that ambition with an unhealthy dose of curiosity and a mild salting of greed and you find most of the motivation for his interest in the supernatural.

The enigmatic air he projects is almost entirely an act, although Nightlinger has seen more of the occult than all but the most experienced Agency operatives or Texas Rangers. However, unlike the more dedicated monster hunters in the world, Nightlinger is far less interested in unraveling the secrets behind the Reckoning than he is on spinning the tale that draws the largest crowd to his tent. He goes out of his way to track down creatures and artifacts of unusual natures, but he seldom spends much time researching them—beyond how much said purchase will lighten his wallet, that is.

He dresses the part of the mysterious stranger even when he's not hosting a show. Nightlinger favors long coats and top hats, all in dark fabric. He is always impeccably groomed, with a neatly trimmed moustache and beard. A skilled sleight-of-hand artist, he also relies on simple parlor tricks and the like to enhance his carefully crafted persona.

In conversation, he further fosters the impression that he is privy to secrets "man was not meant to know" by frequent cryptic references and veiled hints. In truth, he knows only a little more than even a casual student of the occult, but he is such a talented tale-spinner—and practiced liar—that it is almost impossible to pin the man down on any statement. He is careful to avoid making claims that an observer can dispute with fact. On the rare occasion this does happen, Nightlinger simply implies that he has knowledge of factors that the challenger has either overlooked or ignored, often with as simple a retort as, "Ah, that would be the case *normally*, wouldn't it?"

The Carnival's in Town

Nightlinger's Traveling Exhibition of the Extraordinary can fulfill a variety of roles in your campaign. Nightlinger's displays can serve as springboards for further investigations on the part of the posse. On occasion, the ringleader funds small expeditions if he believes the potential reward tempting enough. The carnival also draws a smorgasbord of unusual customers, from scholars

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to cultists, and from Agents to fortune tellers—and everyone in between.

Depending on how you present him, your hombres may begin to view Nightlinger as an amusing sideshow entertainer, a client, a long-term patron, or even something of an adversary, albeit one who complicates their lives more than threatens them.

Jebediah Nightlinger

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (History) d8, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10

Charisma: +2; **Grit:** 4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Curious, Greedy (minor), Overconfident

Edges: Charismatic, Great Luck, Hard to Kill, Rich, Snakeoil Salesman, True Grit

Gear: Deck of cards, fine clothing, silver-headed cane, Rupertus pepperbox (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 8).

A Night at the Fair

Nightlinger's Traveling Exhibition of the Extraordinary is never the same show twice. Certainly there are attractions that appear more than once and a few that are rather frequent repeat billings, but it's rare to see the same lineup of performers and exhibits from one town to the next. This potentially makes each visit to Nightlinger's a new experience for your posse, allowing you to reuse the carnival as a distraction, a hook for new adventures, or even a semi-nomadic base of operations if your heroes are so inclined.

One of the main reasons the Exhibition so frequently changes its attractions lies with Nightlinger himself. He has a very short attention span and is drawn from one strange story to the next, like a bee searching flowers for nectar. All too often his newest exhibit turns out to be a bust, a fraud, or worse, it breaks loose and runs amok on the midway. However, he's nothing if not resilient and quickly moves on to the next big thing.

That's good news for would-be adventurers, of course. Jebediah Nightlinger is more than willing to buy those bizarre oddities that clutter up many a hero's saddlebags—the dried carcass of a chupacabara, a jackalope's foot, or a vampire's fang. And if the trophy case is a little empty, on more than one occasion Nightlinger has dispatched a crew to hunt down some bizarre legend he heard of three towns back.

Here's a brief sample of some of the exhibits and performers your hombres

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Relic: Wild Bill's Deck

Anytime a huckster uses this deck as camouflage for a damage-causing hex, the deck grants +2 to the Spellcasting roll. But if one of the five blood-spattered cards is drawn while "dealing with the devil," it's an automatic Backfire (see the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*), whether the cards are used in the final hand or not.

Soon, the deck's owner starts dreaming about the fateful day Wild Bill played his last hand. Because of how Hickok was killed, the huckster gains the Dementia (Paranoia) Hindrance for as long as she's in possession of the deck.

might encounter during a visit to Nightlinger's carnival:

The Medicine Wagon

The one permanent attraction at Nightlinger's Exhibition is a garishly painted, wood-walled tinker's wagon he calls the Medicine Wagon. Inside, he displays all manner of outlandish items, each of which he alleges to be unique and exotic in origin. Nightlinger hosts visitors to the wagon personally and spins elaborate tales around each of the exhibits.

The snakeoil salesman regularly rotates the displays and isn't above relabeling a previous piece as something entirely different. Below are several examples—and whether the items are simply not-so-clever fakes or something more sinister is entirely up to you, Marshal!

Aztec mummy: This dried-up husk may be a bit of creative taxidermy or it may be an extremely parched nosferatu that needs just a touch of blood to wake up. There's also the chance it's the remains of a victim of some bizarre abomination. If so, a piece of modern clothing is likely to tip off observant viewers. This becomes especially awkward when one of the posse recognizes the clothing…

Dried blood rose: The dried flower under glass is exactly what the plaque claims, a blood rose (see **Doomsower** on page 43). Unfortunately, Nightlinger is only familiar with the benign folklore behind the flower and has no idea of the danger it poses if the plant is still capable of spreading its spores!

Empty display case: A small empty case occupies one of the shelves. If asked about it, Nightlinger briefly explains that it once held a very intricate and lifelike doll. Unfortunately, he adds, another customer must have found it irresistible and spirited it away. Or maybe it's missing because it was actually a minikin (see page 84).

Soul stone: Nightlinger claims this lump of blackened ash is the last remains of a miner who succumbed to ghost rock fever. Most likely, it's just a big piece of charcoal.

Wild Bill's deck: This exhibit consists of a deck of cards fanned out inside a glass-topped case. Drops of dried blood are visible on the Eight of Clubs, Eight of Spades, the Ace of Clubs, Ace of Spades, and the Jack of Diamonds. A tiny brass placard on the case claims these are the very cards Wild Bill Hickok was using when he was killed in Deadwood.

These may be nothing more than a deck of cards Nightlinger doctored up with some red paint. If you decide they *are* Wild Bill's cards, Marshal, see the sidebar above!

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Leopold, the Strongman

Leopold is a regular attraction at Nightlinger's carnival. True to stereotype, he's a hulking bald man with a handlebar moustache, who favors tight-fitting clothing that highlights his physique. He serves as both entertainer and literal muscle for Nightlinger, whether used to erect temporary tents or to knock the heads of overly rowdy customers.

His act begins with a compilation of fairly standard feats of strength. Nightlinger takes care to enhance them with some simple stage effects, such as trick weights that are held to the stage by hidden latches, making them impossible for a bystander to lift—but easily hefted by Leopold.

All of the theatrics are designed with one goal in mind: to make Leopold appear inhumanly strong. When the crowd is suitably impressed by Leopold's physical prowess, the strong man offers to take on all comers in bare-knuckle brawling (Nonlethal damage), with side bets encouraged. Given his strength and skill, he is a formidable opponent, and more often than not, he ends a night's performance undefeated.

However, Leopold and Nightlinger occasionally let the betting pool get lopsided in favor of the strong man, then throw the final match, but not before they've bet on the challenger—through a proxy, of course. It turns out gamblers get a mite touchy when they think they've been snookered by the house.

Leopold, the Strongman

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d8

Charisma: –1; **Grit:** 1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9

Hindrances: Habit (Minor, Braggart), Overconfident

Edges: Block, Brawny

Gear: Sledgehammer (Str+d8, AP 2 vs. rigid armor, Parry –1, 2 hands).

The Mirror Maze

A less frequent attraction at Nightlinger's carnival is the Mirror Maze. Its interior is constructed with glass and mirrored glass set in wooden frames, while the outside is draped in colorful canvas tarps. It takes several wagons to transport it from stop to stop, so the Maze doesn't usually make too many appearances in backwater towns.

Although it is a relatively small and simple labyrinth, the seemingly endless reflections confound perceptions and give the impression it is five or six times its actual size. The mirrors are placed at angles to enhance the disorientation felt by folks wandering through its corridors. Oil lamps are strategically placed to enhance the illusion of size. Nightlinger often uses dry ice (he's one of the very first to do so for this purpose), to provide a misty cover to the flooring, further confounding perceptions.

In and of itself, the Mirror Maze is little more than an amusing way to pass a few minutes. Given ample time, all but the densest of customers can eventually stumble from the entrance to the exit. Characters inside the web of mirrors move at half their Pace. At each intersection, a hero not taking precautions, such as keeping a hand on a wall, must make a Notice roll to even realize there is an intersection! If the clueless sap fails the check, roll randomly to determine which passage the befuddled wanderer chooses.

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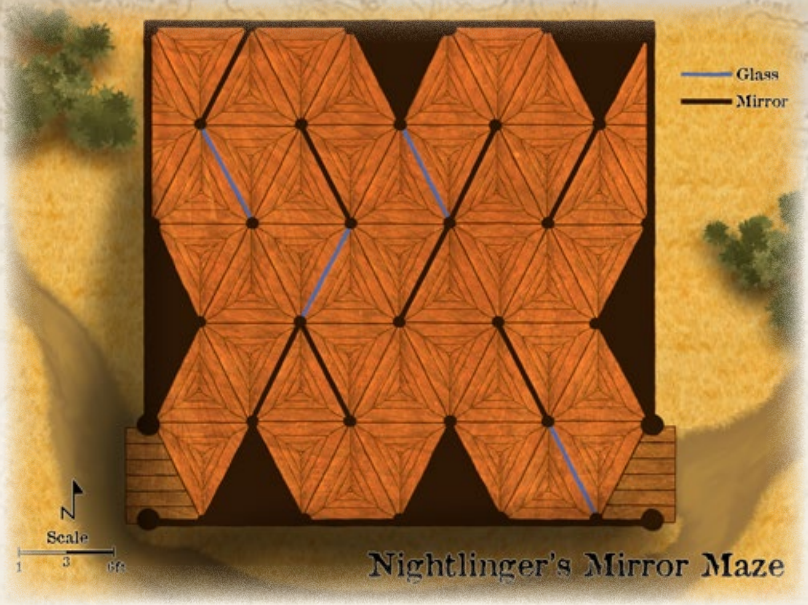

Bullets and Mirrors

The minor inconvenience becomes a life-threatening complication should your cowpokes find themselves in an actual fight in the Maze. Due to the angles, reflections can travel down corridors and around corners or turn a single gunman into a gang. Add in the few panes of non-mirrored glass positioned throughout the Maze and gunslingers are going to find a shootout an even more deadly game of cat and reflected mouse!

If a fight breaks out in the Maze, make a Notice roll for each character each round. On a failure, a hero incorrectly identifies a reflection as a threat. With a success, they aren't confused by reflections, but they don't pick out a real target either. On a raise, they manage to sort out the false images and spot a live (or dead, or even *undead*) target.

Savage Tale: The Lady and the Panther

This attraction is housed in a relatively new tent placed near the Medicine Wagon. The outside of the tent is adorned by colorful paintings of a black jungle cat, crouched on the branch of a tree. Underneath the illustrations are various encouragements to "See the Black Death!" or "Cringe before the Cat Woman!" For reasons which will soon become clear, this is not a recurring exhibit in Nightlinger's carnival!

Admission costs $1, making it one of the most expensive of any of Nightlinger's displays. The barker at the door promises—in flowery hyperbole—that customers get to see an example of the great predators that prowl the jungles in southern Mexico, "a creature both woman and panther."

Apparently, few are interested in seeing the creature. Should any of the heroes gain entry, they find they are the

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only visitors present. A large, circular cage sits in the center of the tent. Inside, a young woman sits cowering. Upon seeing the characters, she begs them in broken English to help her. She manages to convey that she was captured and sold into slavery and that Nightlinger tries to force her to pretend to be some strange creature for his customers.

Should the posse believe her story, they find the lock on the cage relatively easy to open. A simple Lockpicking roll springs it, and the door swings open.

If the posse instead confronts Nightlinger, he insists that she is a shapechanger capable of becoming a giant black cat. However, the young woman seems genuinely afraid of the carnival owner, and despite his commands, never once turns into a feline monster. She becomes ever more frightened as his tone turns angry, and eventually collapses in tears. Regardless, the carnival owner refuses demands to release her, short of an actual threat on his life.

If the heroes believe Nightlinger's claims and leave her caged, they may find themselves wondering if they left an innocent victim behind…

Terror on the Midway

If the posse succeeds in freeing the woman, they discover Nightlinger was being honest, albeit possibly for the first time since they've met him! As soon as she's free of the tent, the woman reverts to her ravenous natural form—a large black panther with hideously prehensile forepaws—and goes on a rampage through the carnival. She attacks other attendees, slaughtering as many as possible. (Marshal, this is a really good time to use the Mirror Maze as well.)

The only way to stop the creature is to put it down. Although her weakness is a rather rare item on the American frontier, Nightlinger also has a sacrificial Aztec dagger (Str+d4), four obsidian-tipped arrows, and a *macuahuitl*, a wooden blade imbedded with obsidian pieces (Str+d6). He purchased these items from the same source as the werejaguar and they're on display in the Medicine Wagon. At some point in the battle, particularly if the posse is having a hard time and doesn't suggest it themselves, Nightlinger suggests using the Aztec weapons.

- **Carnival attendees:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Include as many as you'd like. None are armed—the better to serve as helpless victims!

Werejaguar

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Swimming d10, Stealth d12+2, Tracking d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Coup (Catlike Grace):** The deader's Agility die type increases by one level.
- **Fear:** Any character seeing a werejaguar in its monstrous form must make a Guts roll.
- **Invulnerability:** Werejaguars are only Shaken by most attacks. Only their Weakness can wound them.
- **Low Light Vision:** Werejaguars ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Weakness (Obsidian):** Werejaguars suffer normal damage from obsidian weapons.

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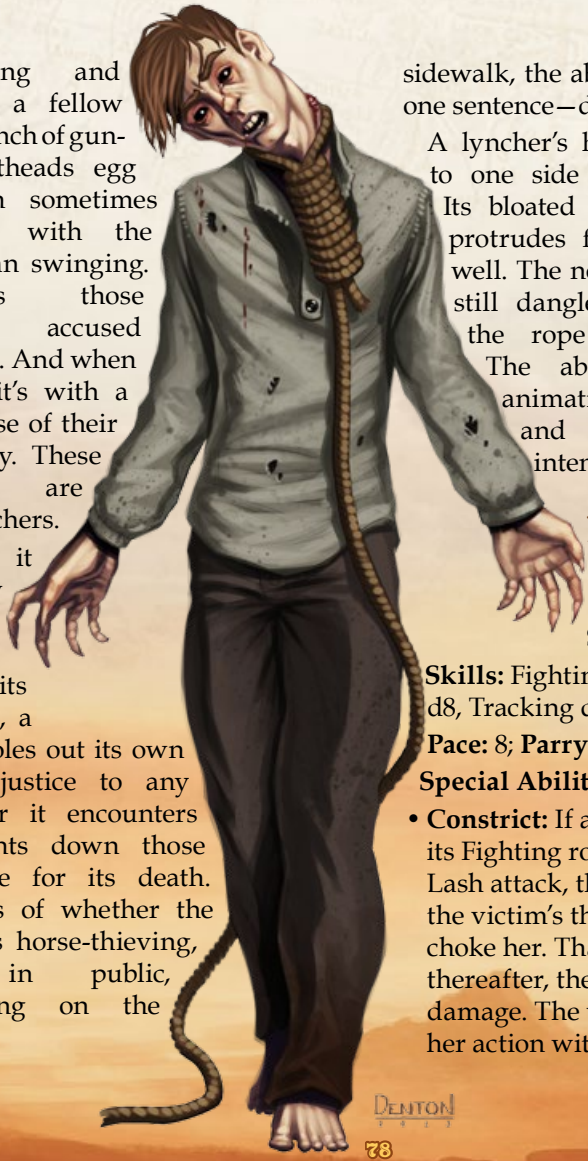
Lyncher

Mob justice is sometimes a part of life in the West. Not every cluster of buildings at a crossroads or watering hole is lucky enough to have a presiding judge, or even a marshal. Not surprisingly, some independent-minded (or just impatient) folks feel justified taking the law into their own hands.



Convicting and executing a fellow while a bunch of gun-toting hotheads egg things on sometimes ends up with the wrong man swinging. Sometimes those wrongly accused come back. And when they do, it's with a serious case of their own angry. These revenants are called lynchers.

While it ultimately seeks revenge on its murderers, a lyncher doles out its own perverse justice to any lawbreaker it encounters as it hunts down those responsible for its death. Regardless of whether the crime was horse-thieving, drunk in public, or spitting on the sidewalk, the abomination invokes only one sentence—death.

A lyncher's head hangs unnaturally to one side from its broken neck. Its bloated and blue tongue often protrudes from a slack mouth as well. The noose used in its hanging still dangles from its neck, with the rope dragging behind it. The abomination attacks by animating the rope, lashing and possibly strangling its intended victims.

Lyncher

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Tracking d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Constrict:** If a lyncher gets a raise on its Fighting roll to hit with its Rope Lash attack, the rope wraps around the victim's throat and begins to choke her. That round and each round thereafter, the rope causes Str+d6 damage. The victim can break free on her action with a raise on an opposed

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Strength roll. Severing the rope also frees the victim.

- **Fear (–1):** Anyone spotting a lyncher must make a Guts roll (–1).
- **Fearless:** Lynchers are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Invulnerability:** A lyncher can only be be destroyed by its Weakness. It can be Shaken by other attacks, but never wounded.
- **Rope Lash:** Str+d4, Reach 4. The lyncher's rope strikes like a whip. Due to its supernatural nature, it can continue to lash at targets even while constricting another victim.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from Shaken. No additional damage from called shots. Immune to poison and disease.
- **Weakness (Justice):** If those who performed the lynching are brought to justice before the lyncher kills them, the thing is destroyed. After the lyncher kills all its murderers, the only way to permanently defeat it is by destroying its noose.
- **Weakness (Noose):** Severing the noose around the abomination's neck puts it down for good. This requires a called shot (–6). Treat the rope as an inanimate object with Toughness 8 and can only be severed by cutting or piercing attacks. Cutting the rope at any place but the neck has no adverse affect on a lyncher.

Savage Tale: At the End of His Rope

Ogden Slade is a cattle baron—pretty much *the* cattle baron in Dawson County. He's accustomed to getting what he wants. So when Stephen Cutler started a homestead along one of his herding trails, Slade took umbrage. Cutler held a legal deed to the land, but Slade wanted it, so he figured he had a right to it. And once he caught sight of Cutler's wife, Emily, Slade coveted more than just his neighbor's land.

Pulling an old trick out of the corrupt cattleman's bag, Slade framed Cutler for rustling his cows. The nearby settlement of Weeping Creek was too small to have a marshal, and the county sheriff was more than a day's ride away, so there was no one to stand in the way when Slade's gunnysackers strung Cutler up in a tree outside his small farm. The cattleman abducted Emily Cutler and is holding her at an old shack several miles from town.

What Slade didn't figure on was Cutler coming back…

Hangin' Around Town

Weeping Creek is a modest settlement at best, with a total of three buildings comprising its entirety: an unnamed saloon, a livery, and a small dry goods store. As the posse enters the town, a rider barrels past them and dismounts at the saloon. He rushes into the building, and the heroes hear him blurt out,

> *"Another of the Rolling S crew's been killed!"*

Following the man into the saloon, they discover as much of a commotion as Weeping Creek's few folks are capable of mustering. A quick question by any of the characters as to what's going on leads Sebastian Meyers, the barkeep, to explain:

> *"We've had a flurry of hangings round these parts lately. It all started about a month ago when Ogden Slade and his boys strung up Stephen Cutler for rustling. Not many folks around here figured he was the thievin' type, but his*

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wife ran off that same night, so maybe he was.

"Anyway, since then there's been more folks found hung than you can count on your fingers. Strange thing is, no one ever finds the rope that their last necktie is tied with…"

Untangling the Truth

Should the heroes look into the story behind Cutler's lynching, there are a few avenues they can pursue, even in a town as small as Weeping Creek.

Ears to the Ground

The easiest place for would-be investigators to begin is simply asking around town. It's largely a farming community with the Rolling S being the only cattle ranch in the area. However, four of the seven hangings—including Cutler's—have involved cowboys from the ranch. The other two were a known horse thief and the town drunk.

Some of the small farmers in the area are convinced that Cutler was innocent of rustling. The majority believe that Slade simply wanted Cutler's land and framed him to get him out of the picture. With her husband brutally killed, likely in front of her, Emily Cutler understandably then lit out for parts elsewhere.

A Streetwise roll uncovers an interesting complication to that theory. One of the townsfolk comments that Slade seemed to have taken a fancy to Cutler's wife back when the couple first moved into the area. He made an inappropriate advance when she came into town to fetch supplies and Emily Cutler soundly rebuked him. The rancher was quite embarrassed by the incident and told her, "You and your sodbuster husband will come to regret that, you hussy!"

Cutler's Farm

The now-abandoned farm is a relatively modest affair, with a small, two-room house and a barn a short distance away.

Make Notice rolls for heroes who poke around the property. With a success, near the small barn they find the branding iron Cutler was accused of using to change Slade's brands. However, a Smarts roll lets a cowpoke realize there's no sign of a fire pit or other nearby source with which to heat the iron. Also, it's unlikely Cutler could have crafted the iron on his farm; there's no forge, anvil, or other smithing tools to be found.

Finally, a single grave stands not far from the tree, with a simple wooden marker bearing Cutler's name. The grave itself has clearly been disturbed, with a two-foot-wide circle of churned dirt near its center. A Tracking roll tells the posse that the dirt seems to have been pushed up from below rather than dug up!

Livery

There's only one place in Weeping Creek to get any specialized smithing done—like, say, a custom branding iron—and that's the small livery stable not far from the saloon. Tom Calhoun serves as the blacksmith not just for Weeping Creek, but also a fair number of folks living in the wilderness nearby. The next nearest smith is the better part of two days away in the county seat.

If asked, Calhoun remembers shoeing a horse for Cutler about two months ago, but never crafted him anything resembling a branding iron. The last iron he forged was one for the Rolling S Ranch. Ogden Slade told him he was thinking of changing his brand to make it more unique. Calhoun remembers the design quite well—it was pretty much the opposite of Slade's current brand.

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If shown the branding iron found on Cutler's farm, Calhoun immediately identifies it as the one he crafted for Slade.

Rolling S Ranch

Not surprisingly, the posse receives little help if they visit the Rolling S. The cowboys are all quite nervous about newcomers given the recent spate of deaths and don't allow the heroes near the main house. If the group asks about Ogden Slade, they're told simply that he's "away" from the ranch.

A truly aggressive bunch of hombres may well start a fight with the ranch's hired help. If so, the cowboys fight until half their number are Incapacitated and then either flee or surrender. However, engaging in a gunfight fails to gather any new information and succeeds in getting the posse in hot water with the county sheriff!

- **Cowboys (2 per hero):** See page 136.

Hideout on the Range

If the posse decides to try to round up Slade—and rescue Emily Cutler in the process—they've got to first find the cattle baron. The location of the shed isn't exactly secret, so if the heroes ask about Slade's holdings or even possible hideouts, allow them a Streetwise roll. On a success, someone in town remembers Slade's cowboys built a shack out on the range for warming up when riding herd in the winter.

That information is enough to get the party into the general area, but it takes a successful Tracking roll to find the shack itself. Failing that, a raise on a Notice roll lets a cowpoke spot a plume of smoke that leads them to Slade's location.

Not Without a Fight!

The posse quickly discovers finding Slade and taking him captive are two different things. The rancher has no intention of surrendering to any band of do-gooders intent on turning him over to the sheriff, nor does he intend to release the widow Cutler. He remains oddly convinced that killing her husband and kidnapping her will eventually win her heart—if for no other reason than that's what he wants, and Slade *always* gets what he wants.

To back his play, he's got a small gang of his most loyal hands with him. The gunmen know there's been a batch of killings around Weeping Creek and no small number were Rolling S cowboys, so they're already on edge. If the posse rides in looking for trouble, Slade's men are more than happy to trade lead with them.

A successful Persuasion roll allows the heroes a chance to meet with Slade face-to-face, but no amount of fast talking convinces the cattleman to surrender himself. However, during the parley, any hombre who makes a Notice roll catches a glimpse of Emily Cutler in the shack's tiny back room. A raise on that roll tells the sharp-eyed character that her hands are bound and she's been gagged.

If negotiations break down or the posse just loses patience, Slade and his men slap leather and commence shooting. The Rolling S crew is fiercely loyal and fights to the last man or until their boss surrenders. Slade, on the other hand, has grown fond of living and gives up if he suffers two wounds or when the last of his gunmen are Incapacitated.

- **Rolling S Cowboys (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Cowboy stats on page 136. Armed with a Colt Army revolver (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), Winchester '73 rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, ROF 1, Shots 15, AP 2), and 40 spare rounds (.44–40).

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Ogden Slade

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: –2; **Grit:** 1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Overconfident, Mean, Stubborn

Edges: Command, Rich, Strong Willed

Gear: Colt Army (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), Bowie knife (Str+d4+1, AP 1), and 40 spare rounds (.44–40).

Confronting the Lyncher

It's also possible the posse decides to simply battle the lyncher themselves. The straightforward option certainly requires less leg- or brain-work on the heroes' part.

The lyncher prowls the town and surrounding countryside each night after sundown, looking for a likely victim. Given its broad interpretation of the law, virtually anyone is a suitable target, although if any of the posse members are wanted, feel free to have the abomination come after them! The heroes may choose to try to bait the creature or simply patrol the surrounding area. Either idea is eventually going to bring them into contact with the lyncher and it's entirely up to you as to how long it takes before they encounter it.

Although they're unlikely to know the abomination's specific weakness when they first encounter it, it's not unlikely that a clever group of cowpokes can make the link between the creature's noose and its unnatural existence. You might want to go easy on them in the first encounter if they don't seem to be catching on, Marshal. Consider having the lyncher retreat from the initial conflict—maybe facing a determined group for the first time, or simply the approach of dawn, gives it pause. A posse that tries bullheadedly to put the undead vigilante down by simply shooting more bullets may end up in Boot Hill themselves!

- **Lyncher:** See page 78.

Aftermath

If the posse succeeds in capturing Slade, they can bring the matter to the county sheriff. The altered branding iron goes a long way toward calling into question the accusations against Cutler, and if they managed to free Emily Cutler, it becomes an open-and-shut case. Even without those, there are plenty of folks in the Weeping Creek area who will testify that Slade was responsible for the farmer's hanging. Once the rancher is turned over to the sheriff, the lyncher is put to rest.

Emily is eternally grateful to the party for rescuing her. Although the cattleman never progressed past kidnapping in his crimes against her, he did kill her husband and abduct her. Although she has no money or belongings to offer, the characters can always find a warm meal and a roof over their heads when they pass through Weeping Creek.

Should they have opted to instead simply put the lyncher back in the ground themselves, the heroes have solved the supernatural problem in Weeping Creek. However, Slade remains free and returns to his ranch after it's obvious things are back to normal. Worse, he may still hold Emily Cutler captive!

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Minikin

The first minikins were the creation of an obscure New Orleans toymaker fascinated by clockwork mechanisms. His goal was to create finely crafted dolls capable of complex, independent actions. You can probably already guess how this story ends.

The toymaker was successful... and disappeared under mysterious circumstances shortly thereafter.

At cursory glance, minikins appear like normal porcelain dolls, although somewhat heavier than one might expect. They stand between eight inches and one foot in height and weigh about 3 to 5 lbs. The dolls come in all manners of designs and styles, from infants to debutantes in fancy dress to Confederate soldiers.

In reality, minikins are miniature killing machines. Whether this results from a flaw in their original design, the influence of gremlins, or even direct intervention by manitous is unclear. The end result is that they appear to exist solely to torment and kill.

Although they appear to be skillfully molded figurines or perhaps ventriloquist dummies, once the demonic contraptions are revealed, there is no mistaking the evil intent they hold. Their formerly lifelike eyes turn coal black, their mouths open to reveal teeth of razors or broken glass, and their tiny hands hold weapons cannibalized from knives, knitting needles, and the like. The constructs move hideously fast for their size and are fiendishly clever about laying ambushes and setting booby traps for their prey.

Once they come into the possession of a new owner, minikins wait quietly in their

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new homes until opportunity presents itself. The monstrous marionettes then move against their hapless masters, preferring cat-and-mouse hunts that allow them to savor their victims' terror. Against quarry that appears capable of putting up a fight, minikins may resort to more roundabout methods, such as poisoning food or water, or setting fatal traps.

Their most terrifying ability is using household items to create other pint-sized engines of murder. Minikins are capable of transforming other dolls, stuffed animals, and the like into lesser copies of themselves with nothing more than common components found around a house—and of course, knives, razors, and needles.

Minikin

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Improvised Weapons:** Str+d4.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from called shots. Does not suffer wound modifiers. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Conversion:** Minikins can convert normal dolls into animated killing machines like themselves. This process takes 1d4 hours. The resulting creation becomes a minikin, identical in all ways except that it is only an Extra and does not gain this ability.
- **Fear:** Once one of these contraptions is revealed as "alive," any character viewing it must make a Guts check.
- **Fearless:** Minikins are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Minikins roll a d8 when running instead of a d6.
- **Size –2:** Minikins are the size of a small cat.
- **Small:** Attacks against a minikin receive a –2 penalty due to its small size.

Savage Tale: Play Time

After traveling through the wilderness for a few days, the posse rides into the small town of Parker late in the afternoon. Parker looks to be home to perhaps a few dozen citizens, but it quickly becomes apparent the town is devoid of life. No one is on the streets and there is an almost eerie silence over the small settlement, disrupted only by an occasional door or shutter banging in the wind.

Deadly Delivery

One of the oldest residents of Parker, the widow Margaret Ratliff, devoted her twilight years to amassing the finest collection of dolls and figurines in the state. A few weeks ago, she caught sight of a unique creation in a passing carnival sideshow and convinced the owner to sell it to her. Unknown to the widow, the doll was a minikin...and she had just brought Hell to Parker.

Within mere days of her purchase, the abomination had slain Margaret Ratliff. The evil contraption quickly set to converting the widow's collection into a horde of horrors. The devices then crept out into the small town, killing when the chance arose and gathering supplies to create even more of their kind.

Although the initial deaths were assumed to be accidents or suicides, many of the townsfolk became convinced that deviltry was afoot and pulled up

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stakes. The few that remained soon fell prey to the minikin and its converts.

Now Parker sits empty, a ghost town, but not uninhabited…

Parker

Fear Level: 4

Parker is a small frontier town, formerly home to less than a hundred souls. It has been empty of life for a little more than a week, so at first glance, it's not obviously abandoned. Perhaps an unlatched door slams back and forth against its frame somewhere in town or a torn curtain blows out through an open window, but little else initially provides a clue to the town's emptiness—beyond the utter lack of people, of course.

What is almost immediately obvious is the palpable air of dread that has settled over Parker. The minikins succeeded in generating a fair amount of terror and the effects still linger. The shadows seem a little longer, movement flickers at the corners of the heroes' eyes, and floorboards creak mysteriously while the posse explores the empty town. From time to time, the characters may even hear a faint pitter-patter, like the footsteps of a child, running somewhere just out of sight.

I See You…

Shortly after the cowpokes arrive in town, allow them a Notice roll with any applicable modifiers for hearing. The hero who rolls highest hears a rapidly repeated, tinny, clanging sound coming from somewhere in town. The sound is not unlike that of spurs clicking, only very rapidly and rhythmically.

This is the original minikin, a toy monkey, clapping tiny cymbals to announce the posse's location to the rest of the brood. (Feel free to repeat this encounter anytime you think it might intensify the players' tension.)

Taking a Gander

Allow your hombres to poke around town for a while. By and large, there's little of interest to find. Most of the buildings are vacant, stripped of their furnishings by their owners before they fled. A few, however, stand locked in time at the moment the minikins struck: rotting food on plates in a dining room, sheets thrown back from a bed, candles burned down to their bases.

The last living resident, the town marshal, did a fair job keeping the bodies picked up—well, except for his own (see below), but a few did slip past. As they explore, the heroes may stumble across a victim in bed with a slashed throat or one at the bottom of a staircase, lying with a broken neck.

Although only the most sharp-eyed cowpoke is likely to spot them right away, there are a couple of things the heroes may begin to notice if they explore more than a few houses. After they've visited several homes or businesses in the town, you can allow the characters a Notice roll (–2) to realize there's been a doll in every location they've visited thus far. The dolls were all different—for example, one was even a monkey—but as soon as the party makes note of this, they see no more of the toys. Even the ones they saw earlier have vanished!

The other point of interest is the absence of any complex mechanical devices or sharp objects (knives, razors, and so forth). However, the posse is unlikely to take note of this unless they are actively searching for such items while they wander the town.

Marshal's Office

At some point, the heroes are likely to visit the marshal's office. Inside, the

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posse finds the lawman's blood-soaked body in a locked cell, his back to the wall. The keys to the cells hang from his belt. An empty six-shooter dangles from his dead fingers and bullet holes pock mark the walls and floor in front of him, both inside and outside the cell.

He's been stabbed dozens of times. A Healing or Knowledge (Medicine) roll tells a sawbones that none of the wounds are particularly deep, and the man appears to have bled to death from the sheer volume of cuts.

In a shack behind the marshal's office, the heroes discover the remains of other victims stacked like cordwood after the undertaker left and the death toll surpassed the marshal's ability to keep up with it. Any investigator who stumbles across that horror must make a Guts roll against nausea, as the corpses have been sweltering in the heat for nearly two weeks!

Dollhouse

Atop a small hill overlooking the town is the former home of Margaret Ratliff. It's hard to detect at first, being somewhat hidden by trees, but once the heroes have been in town for a while, allow them Notice rolls any time they're outside to catch sight of the building poking up from behind the vegetation.

The Ratliff house is an ornately styled farmhouse with distinct Gothic overtones. Its sweeping gables, pinnacled roof, and peaked windows shaded by lace curtains attest to the wealth of the owner. Although it is well-maintained and obviously lived in—at least until recently—the house feels menacing, as if it watches the characters approach with a sense of malice. The lacy curtains effectively block any attempt to sneak a peek inside the mansion.

Fortunately, the front door to the house is unlocked...

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Wandering the Halls

Inside the house, there is a musty smell, almost like mothballs. However, a Notice or Tracking roll tells the party it appears to have been abandoned for no longer than the rest of the town. There is not enough dust accumulated to search for tracks or signs of other visitors.

The house is as finely appointed as its exterior would lead an observer to expect. Exceptionally well-crafted furniture fills every room and decorative rugs cover the floors. The owner appears to have spared no expense on the mansion's fixtures, so its apparent abandonment seems even more inexplicable.

The only thing that feels out of the ordinary is the presence of an unusual amount of dolls. Every room contains at least a few exquisitely manufactured porcelain dolls. Some of the rooms even contain cabinets dedicated to displaying the toys. Any character with an appropriate background can make a Common Knowledge roll to recognize the dolls are likely worth a considerable amount of money.

The heroes get the distinct impression the tiny figures are watching them as they travel through the house. Whenever a cowpoke looks away from the dolls, some seem to be staring directly at him when he looks back. No matter how patient or tricky your hombres are, though, they can never catch the eyes actually moving.

Rest in Pieces

In an upstairs bedroom, the investigators find the body of Margaret Ratliff. She is laid out on the bed in a peaceful repose, her hands crossed over her stomach as if prepared for burial. She is obviously dead, and her joints are locked in place, as though rigor mortis has set in. Actually, this is due to another, more terrifying reason, but the posse won't know that just yet!

If the heroes search the room, they find an unfinished letter on a desk opposite the bed. It reads as follows:

Dear Cousin Bess,

I hope this letter finds you and the Ratliffs of Kansas in good health. I have found what may be the perfect addition to my collection in the strangest of places. A passing carnival was displaying it amongst their sundry curiosities. Oh, Bess—never had I seen its like!

But the carnival owner, an unsavory gentleman named Nightlinger, would not sell it to me at any price. I must confess, I had such a strong desire for the item that I secreted it in my clothing and stole it. And try as I might, I cannot feel any guilt for my crime. I found its cymbals most delightful, so much so that

Once they've read the letter—or should the heroes become too interested in examining the widow's corpse at this point—allow them to make Notice rolls. With a success, they hear the faint clanging sound again—this time from within the house!

Adventure Link

After the heroes read the Widow Ratliff's unfinished letter, they may be intrigued by the carnival owner, Nightlinger, whose "curiosities" seem to be responsible for the demise of most of Parker's residents. If the heroes go looking for the traveling carnival, see Jebediah Nightlinger (page 72).

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Ambush!

As the heroes move back through the upstairs, make a Notice roll for each. Those who succeed feel something is amiss, although they're not sure exactly what. When the hombres reach the top of the stairs, allow the first person descending to make another Notice roll (–4). If she succeeds, she catches sight of a nearly invisible wire stretched across the first step. If she fails, the tripwire sends her tumbling down the staircase. She may make an Agility roll (–2) to roll with the fall; if she fails, she suffers 2d6 damage from the battering.

Once the trap is sprung or spotted, the minikins pour out of hiding to attack. Not surprisingly, the appearance of a mob of demon dolls requires a Guts check from any posse members who see them!

The dolls attack by leaping off shelves and scuttling from underneath furniture to slice at legs. When possible, they try to use their speed to make hit-and-run attacks, darting in to slash at a character, then fleeing to cover. If one of the heroes falls down the staircase, several rush her while she's still on the ground, using the Gang Up bonus to their best advantage.

The monkey minikin eggs the battle on by chattering and clanging its cymbals from atop a nearby display cabinet. If attacked, it tries to flee into the master bedroom.

- **Cymbal-Clashing Monkey (1):** Use Minikin stats on page 84.
- **Converted Dolls (4, plus 2 per hero):** Use Minikin stats on page 84. These are only Extras, though.

Widow's Walk

Should a hero follow the monkey minikin into the master bedroom, he finds the widow's "corpse" standing bolt upright in the middle of the room. (This is the perfect time for a Guts check, Marshal.) If the heroes don't enter the room or manage to destroy the monkey before it can reach the bedroom, the Widow moves into the hallway to attack.

Over time, the monkey has managed to turn the Widow into a life-sized minikin, hollowing her out and replacing her insides with gears and wires. She moves in a jerky fashion, far more like a puppet than a living being (or even a walkin' dead).

The monkey minikin tries to use the Widow's entrance as cover for its escape, fighting only if cornered.

The Widow

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4. Her teeth have been replaced with broken razor blades.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken. No additional damage from called shots. Does not suffer wound modifiers. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Fear –2:** Once the true nature of the Widow creature is evident, any character viewing her must make a Guts roll (–2).
- **Fearless:** The Widow minikin is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

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Raven Mocker

Originally a creature of Cherokee myth, a raven mocker is a hellish combination of vampire and banshee. Contrary to what some believe, this nightmare-spawned monster has no connection to a certain infamous Indian shaman, and they're sometimes referred to as "mockers" to avoid confusion. These creatures are drawn to the sick, aged, or dying, from whom they drain the last of their victims' dying essence. For each day, week, or year they steal from some poor soul, their own existence is lengthened by the same amount.

Although the abomination is most often invisible and intangible, when revealed a raven mocker is a horrifying sight. They appear as aged Indians with unnaturally pale, withered skin and dead white eyes. Their hands are gnarled into talons and their knees bend the wrong way, giving them an unmistakably birdlike appearance.

Mockers are active only after sundown, soaring through the night sky as they seek new prey. Their approach is often heralded by a terrifying shriek said to chill the heart of the bravest of warriors. One of these creatures can only be killed by an arrow through its head. Even that is easier said than done, as would-be slayers must first force the raven mocker into material form, most often by exposing it to tobacco smoke.

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Raven Mocker

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d6. Mockers only use their claws in physical form.
- **Ethereal:** Raven mockers are normally ethereal, able to pass through any non-solid surface. While ethereal, they are also invisible, causing all attacks against them to suffer a –6 penalty. A mocker can switch between ethereal and physical forms as a standard action.
- **Fear (–2):** Any cowpoke unfortunate enough to see a non-invisible mocker must make a Guts roll (–2).
- **Flight:** Pace 12". Raven mockers have a Climb of 6".
- **Invulnerability:** A mocker can only be killed by its Weakness. They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never wounded.
- **Life Drain:** Ethereal mockers can drain the life of helpless or Incapacitated victims by rolling their Spirit against their target's. If it wins, the victim suffers a Fatigue level for each success and raise the mocker scores. These Fatigue levels are only recovered if the mocker is slain.
- **Mocker's Cry:** As a standard action, the creature can shriek with a horrifying voice, causing all who hear it to make a Guts roll.
- **Weakness (Arrow Through the Head):** A mocker hit with a called shot to the head (–4) by an arrow must make a Vigor roll versus a Target Number equal to the total damage. If successful, it takes damage normally; if it fails, it disintegrates into dust.
- **Weakness (Tobacco Smoke):** Exposure to tobacco smoke removes a mocker's etherealness, turning it solid and visible as long as the smoke is in contact with it, and for 1d6 rounds following.

Savage Tale: Bad Medicine

A band of Ravenites recently moved against an Old Ways shaman, Wolf Runs on Three Legs, forcing him out of his tribe. Left without traditional remedies, members of the tribe have begun to seek medical treatment from a nearby doctor. Elias Prescott, a well-meaning physician from Back East, has set up a small hospital where he provides medical services to members of a local Indian tribe. Although he knows much about modern medicine, he is woefully uneducated about the horrors of the Weird West. He does not believe in the supernatural, and his disbelief costs some of his patients their lives.

A raven mocker, sensing the easy prey at Prescott's clinic, has begun feeding on the sick and infirm there. It found the doctor is completely incapable of even acknowledging its existence, let alone defeating it. To further complicate the doctor's dilemma, the Ravenites are now blaming him for the deaths of the tribe members!

Luckily for him, the posse's about to cross his trail…

Encircle the Wagon!

This adventure can take place virtually anywhere in the Weird West, with the exception of the Sioux Nations or Coyote Confederation. As the posse travels along a trail, they hear the sound of gunfire ahead. Riding to investigate, they discover a single wagon surrounded

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by a number of braves, all of whom are carrying—and using—rifles.

Every so often, a hand pokes over the side of the wagon and fires a six-shooter blindly at the attackers. Although none of the Indians have been so much as grazed, the wild shots temporarily keep them from rushing the wagon. But it's only a matter of time before the wagon's defender gets a leaden introduction to the Grim Reaper.

If the heroes intervene, the braves—actually Ravenites—gladly turn the business ends of their rifles on the party. Not surprisingly, they're not particularly receptive to talking out their problems; attempts to parley are answered with a hail of bullets. The Ravenites even attack characters who are content to stand by and watch the massacre. They're just plain unsociable folk.

The braves fight until more than half their number are Incapacitated. At that point, they head for the hills—or other suitable terrain feature for wherever the encounter takes place, Marshal.

- **Dr. Elias Prescott:** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Add Healing d10, Knowledge (Medicine) d8, and the Doubting Thomas Hindrance. Armed with a Colt Army revolver (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).
- **Ravenite Braves (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Indian Brave stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Substitute Mean for the Old Ways Oath. Armed with Winchester '73 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2), tomahawks (Str+d6), and horses.

Doctor Prescott, I Presume?

When the posse drives the Ravenites off, the poor sod hunkered down in the bed of the wagon pokes his head up. A well-dressed, middle-aged man takes a look at the heroes and clambers out of the wagon, introducing himself as Dr. Elias Prescott. He profusely thanks the characters for their assistance.

The doctor goes on to explain,

"I was returning with some basic medical supplies to the small hospital I've recently set up. I've been providing treatment to the members of a local Indian tribe, you see, and was returning from a trip to replenish my stocks in town. Those Indians that attacked me were part of a group that is violently opposed to any contact with white men.

"I must ask, would you kindly accompany me to my hospital? I fear the braves may return if they believe me to be unprotected.

"I can't offer you much in the way of recompense, but I can make certain you get a hot meal, a cot, and a tent for the night, for your kind and generous efforts."

Medical Emergency

Prescott's hospital is a few hours' travel farther along the trail. En route, he explains that he did his studying Back East and served briefly as a battlefield surgeon before heading West. Upon arriving, he was moved by the lack of advanced medical treatment most Indian tribes received and how many relied on quaint—and often dangerous—"superstitions" to treat everything from broken bones to infectious diseases. His tone makes it clear that he places no stock in the supernatural whatsoever.

Reaching the hospital, the heroes find it's little more than a collection of tents at the moment. Construction has begun on a more permanent log structure nearby, but at present, the doctor does his work under a canvas roof. There are a number of Indians at the site, mainly patients,

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although a few seem to be serving as assistants and laborers.

The doctor shows the posse to an unoccupied tent where they can bed down. Along the way, Prescott shares a concern with them:

> *"To be honest, I feel I'm a bit over my head here. There seems to be a strange malady afflicting these people that I've yet to identify. They come to me with seemingly minor complaints, yet expire overnight. It's almost enough to make me believe the savages who attacked me earlier may have a point…"*

If questioned further, Prescott explains it doesn't seem to make a difference whether the patient has a serious illness, a common cold, or even a broken bone. They seem in reasonable health the night before, but when he makes his morning rounds, he finds a corpse. Worse, it's beginning to become an almost daily occurrence.

Should the heroes express any interest in his plight, the doctor welcomes their help—especially if any of the group has medical or scientific experience. He introduces them to Sunrise Dove, a young Indian woman who works for Prescott as both interpreter and nurse.

- **Sunrise Dove:** Use Indian Brave stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Add Knowledge (English) d8 and Healing d8.

Impromtu Autopsies

Prescott offers to allow any of the adventurers with an appropriate background to examine the bodies of the recently deceased. There are two being held in a nearby tent in preparation for burial. One is an elderly man with no signs of injury and the other is a young woman with her arm splinted. A successful Healing or Knowledge (Medicine) roll determines there is no discernable cause of death.

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Triage

After viewing the bodies, the doctor returns to his rounds and asks Sunrise Dove to show them around the hospital. Dove is very fluent and fairly familiar with most common medical practices from her time helping Prescott. If questioned about the strange deaths, she becomes somewhat hesitant. With further prompting she reveals,

> *"I suspect the spirits are at work here—evil spirits. You see, a gang of Ravenites chased away my tribe's old shaman, Wolf Runs on Three Legs. After that, my people had no one to care for their needs. Neither their bodies nor their spirits. I fear it's a manitou that now plagues my tribe."*

Should they express interest in talking to the shaman, Dove tells the heroes he retreated to a cave in the nearby hills. She also provides accurate directions for how to reach it.

Death in the Night

A proactive posse may decide to set watch on the patients over night. Because the mocker is both ethereal and invisible, it's virtually impossible to detect. You might allow an hombre who scores a raise on his Notice roll to get a sense something is amiss—maybe a candle flickers or there's a sudden chill in the air—but short of some extraordinary ability, it's highly unlikely the heroes actually catch sight of the creature.

Regardless, any group of cowpokes that stays the night at Prescott's hospital awakes the next day to find another patient has passed away. The victim had only presented a fever the night before. As in previous cases, examining the body does not reveal any obvious cause of death.

Wolf at Bay

Following Dove's directions, the posse travels through the wilderness for almost half a day before arriving at the base of a sandstone bluff. A crude set of handholds is carved into the wall, leading up 60 feet to a dark opening in the side of the cliff. However, before the heroes get a chance to consider tackling the climb, they discover they are not alone…

Hunting Party

Not content to let Wolf Runs on Three Legs pass into self-imposed exile, the Ravenites followed him to the base of the cliff. Even though the shaman is an old man, his position in the cave has allowed him to keep the Ravenites at bay—for now. Unfortunately, his food and water supply is dwindling and the Indians know it's just a matter of time until he must either face them or starve.

The posse's arrival throws a hitch in their plans, though. As soon as the heroes arrive at the base of the bluff, the Ravenites attack. The braves fight until more than half their number are Incapacitated and then attempt to retreat.

- **Ravenite Braves (2 per hero):** Use Indian Brave stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Substitute Mean for Old Ways Oath. Armed with Winchester '73 rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2), tomahawks (Str+d6), and horses.

Wolf's Call

Once the party has dispatched the Ravenites, they hear a voice call from above,

> *"The spirits told me you would come. Climb up, so we may talk."*

Clambering up is a daunting task, even with the carved handholds. A cowpoke attempting the wall must make

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two Climbing rolls to reach the top. Once there, the hero finds herself in a small cave whose ceiling has been blackened by decades of smoke from a firepit near the center.

Wolf sits propped against a rock near the firepit. The shaman appears to be in poor health. He motions for any characters to take a seat, and says,

"My time is short. I am not the young man I was once. Although I escaped the traitors, the fight took a great toll on me, else I would go to my tribe's defense this one last time.

"You must be my spear in this. A great evil plagues them, a spirit my people call a mocker. It feeds on death to make itself stronger and the white medicine man is helpless—for he will not see it."

He hands one of the heroes a bundle wrapped in cloth. Inside is a carved pipe and a packet of tobacco.

"The smoke from tobacco makes the spirit show its form. Without it, you can neither see nor touch it. Once you have forced it into our world, you can fight it. However, only an arrow into its head will banish the creature."

Wolf can provide a simple bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1) if no one in the party has one, and six arrows to go along with it. Also, he tells them that any tobacco smoke works to reveal a mocker's presence.

Mocking Death

The trip back to the hospital is uneventful—at least once any heroes that climbed up the cliff make it back down. By the time they reach Prescott's camp, night is beginning to fall. The doctor scoffs at the posse if they try to talk to him about what the shaman had to say, but he doesn't prevent them from sitting up with the patients if they ask.

Should the investigators set watch on the hospital, allow a Notice roll for any on guard from time to time. Those who succeed take note of a patient tossing and turning, breathing hard, or twitching. Most of these are just the effect of either a sedative given by the doctor or normal dreams. A quick puff of tobacco smoke reveals nothing.

Once you're ready to spring it on them, Marshal, the mocker makes its move. The abomination is fairly confident and doesn't see the heroes as a threat until they blow tobacco smoke on it. As soon as the smoke wafts across it, the creature is exposed—and the characters must make a Guts roll (–2)!

Fortunately for the group, the abomination is nearly as surprised as they are and takes no action the first round of combat. After that, all bets are off and the creature attacks with a terrible ferocity. It fights until Incapacitated.

After the mocker is defeated, the mysterious deaths at the hospital come to an abrupt end. How the doctor responds to the mocker is entirely up to you, Marshal…but it involves one heck of a Guts check for the dear Dr. Prescott!

- **Raven Mocker (1):** See page 90.

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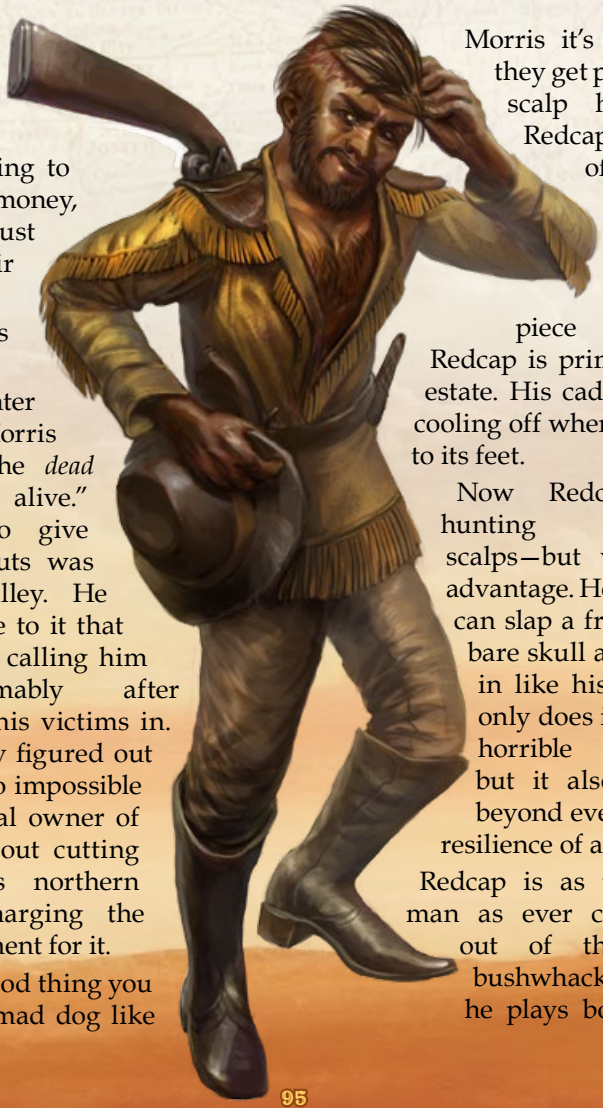
Redcap Morris

Back around the middle of the century, the Apache and Comanche were raising Hell down in Mexico. Their raiding parties proved too much for the Mexican government to handle, so a few of the border states down that way began offering bounties for Indian scalps. With Santa Anna's designs on the Maze tying up most of the Mexican Army, the practice is gaining popularity once again.



Employment of that sort only attracts two kinds of scum: those willing to do anything for money, and those who just like getting their hands bloody.

Luke Morris was both.

A bounty hunter by trade, Morris specialized in the *dead* part of "dead or alive." Getting paid to give extra-close haircuts was right up his alley. He took such a shine to it that folks just started calling him "Redcap"—presumably after the state he left his victims in. Worse, he quickly figured out that it was next to impossible to tell the original owner of a scalp and set out cutting a swath across northern Mexico—then charging the Mexican government for it.

If there's one good thing you can say about a mad dog like Morris it's that eventually they get put down. A rival scalp hunter relieved Redcap of a recent haul of scalps, his life, and then his own hair. But this being the Weird West, a piece of scum like Redcap is prime manitou real estate. His cadaver was barely cooling off when it lurched back to its feet.

Now Redcap's back to hunting bounties—and scalps—but with an added advantage. He's discovered he can slap a fresh scalp on his bare skull and have it settle in like his own hair. Not only does it hide his rather horrible death wound, but it also sustains him beyond even the unnatural resilience of a Harrowed.

Redcap is as unscrupulous a man as ever clawed his way out of the ground. A bushwhacking rattlesnake, he plays both sides of the

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law according to which pays the most at the time. Nonetheless, he's canny enough to keep his face off the wanted posters—usually by making sure no victims survive!

Redcap Morris

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Gambling d4, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Survival d4, Stealth d10, Throwing d6, Tracking d8

Charisma: –5; **Grit:** 4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Habit (Scalping victims), Ugly

Edges: Block, Implacable, Nerves of Steel, No Mercy, Spook, Stitchin', True Grit

Gear: Sharp's Big 50 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d10, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP 2), Colt Peacemaker (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1, double action), Bowie knife (Str+d4+1, AP 1), 20 rounds for each firearm, assorted scalps.

Special Abilities:

- **Disguise:** As long as he's wearing another scalp, it takes a Notice roll opposed by Redcap's Stealth to recognize him.
- **Hair Pieces:** As long as Redcap is wearing a scalp he has personally cut from a victim, he can be Incapacitated but not actually killed. In order to permanently put him down, the scalp must be removed. Only then can he be killed by a Called Shot to his head like other Harrowed.
- **Harrowed:** +1 Grit. Needs only 1d6 hours of sleep per night. Only a head shot can kill; "death" only puts Redcap down for 1d6 days.

Savage Tale: A-Bounty Hunting We Will Go

Apache raiders have taken a toll on Bayou Vermilion's operations in Arizona and New Mexico. Never one to let something as petty as inhuman torture sway them from profit, the railroad reintroduced the practice of paying bounties for Indian scalps. The reward money is more than good enough to whet Redcap's appetite—and knife—so he's been prowling the Southwestern deserts for a few months now.

True to form, Redcap has also been lining his pockets from both sides when the opportunity presents itself. Currently, he's riding with a gang of outlaws and Comancheros—folks who also turn a profit trading firearms and the like with hostile Indians—plaguing the very region he's supposed to be working to protect. Of course, Redcap sees spreading murder and pillage as a simple matter of ensuring job security.

Just so long as no one figures out *he's* the one doing the murdering and pillaging…

Last Stop on the Left

The posse comes across a small stagecoach waystation about three miles from the middle of nowhere. The outpost consists of a one-room cabin, a small corral, and a storage shack. The stage route is seldom used and the stop would look deserted except a faint plume of smoke wafts out of a stovepipe on the roof. Otherwise, there is no other sign of life as they arrive.

The door to the cabin bangs in the wind as the heroes ride or walk up. Any character entering the building immediately discovers that the

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waystation isn't exactly deserted. Inside are three dead men, all scalped. The men died from gunshot or arrow wounds, but the amount of blood from the head wounds indicates that at least a couple of them were still alive when their murderers scalped them.

With a successful Tracking, Healing, or Knowledge (Medicine) roll, an adventurer can tell the bodies have only been dead for less than an hour—some of the blood hasn't dried yet. The bandits, led by Angus Pike, formerly of the Laughing Men Gang, caught sight of the posse and lit out before they could be caught, literally red-handed.

The waystation has been stripped of any and everything of value, right down to a couple of teeth taken out of one victim's mouth—no doubt with gold fillings. A pair of cots has been overturned, the drawers pulled from the single desk in the cabin, and the dead men's pockets turned inside out.

The only other things of interest are the wanted posters hanging on the wall outside, mostly naming members of a local outlaw gang led by Pike, as well as one touting Bayou Vermilion's bounty on Apache scalps. The bounty on Pike is $500, while the railroad is offering only $20 for each gruesome trophy presented.

Any cowpoke who makes a Tracking roll while examining the trail leading in can tell it's been days since the last coach came through. However, a large band of horses rode in recently at a fairly brisk pace. With a raise, the sharp-eyed tracker estimates over a dozen riders were involved in the attack.

A Pale, Filthy Rider…

While the gang was pillaging the waystation, Redcap caught a glimpse of the wanted posters. It just so happens that the value on the scum he was riding with recently went up to exactly the amount necessary to convince him to turn on them. However, he knows Pike's gang is too much for him to handle on his own. Telling his soon-to-be former partners in crime he was going to lead the posse into an ambush, Redcap circled back to the station.

After the heroes have time to look over the clues, Redcap rides up to the waystation. Read the following:

A stranger trots up on horseback, his Sharps resting across the saddle in front of him. His clothing is filthy and stained with various unidentified substances—at least some of them are blood—and a long mane of matted, black hair hangs out from beneath a weathered plainsman hat. A small collection of scalps hangs from his saddle horn, at least a few of which seem relatively fresh.

The stranger hails you with a raised hand and a gruff, "Howdy."

It's pretty likely the characters are going to look at Redcap with more than a little suspicion. He's an unsavory character at best, and riding up to the scene of a recent multiple murder carrying fresh scalps isn't a strong testimony to one's virtue. It doesn't help that Redcap was riding with the Comancheros when they attacked, but he has no intention of admitting it.

If challenged, the bounty hunter feigns innocence. Redcap explains he is a bounty hunter, and when the job requires, a scalp hunter. He denies having a hand in the murders and says the scalps are from a group of Apaches he crossed paths with earlier in the day.

Redcap's a skilled liar and is telling the truth in the strictest sense, so attempts to detect lying don't reveal any deception. (He did not kill anyone at the waystation; he was momentarily distracted by the wanted posters, so by the time he entered the building the men were already dead.

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The fresh scalps are indeed from a group of Apaches—a handful of women he ambushed while they were washing their clothes in a stream.)

...and Unlikely Ally

He takes a look around the waystation briefly before proclaiming,

> *"I know who did this—a rattlesnake by the name of Angus Pike."*

If none of the adventurers has already done so, Redcap pulls the wanted poster with Pike's name on it from the wall.

Redcap has either decided to enlist the posse in rounding up the gang, or sell them out to the bandits like he told Pike. He's not decided yet. The bounty hunter then says,

> *"I've been trailin' that murderin' skunk for weeks now. Looks like I'm just a few hours behind him, and I got a good idea where he's headin'. Any o' you man enough to ride with me to bring that bastard to justice?"*

He doesn't immediately offer any split of the reward. All told, Pike and his gang are worth $1,000—dead or alive, just the way Redcap likes it. If the heroes haggle, he puts up a brief argument, but agrees to a fifty-fifty split between him and the rest of the characters. Besides, he plans to thin the party's numbers a bit.

Bad Water

Pike and his men are familiar with the local area; they know most of the hazards and terrain quite well. Pike has instructed Redcap to lead the group to a watering hole guarded by a particularly foul-tempered local: a desert thing. Just in case the abomination isn't enough to handle the heroes, Pike's left a few of his gang to pick off the survivors.

Redcap follows the raiders' trail through the desert, pausing occasionally to check the signs. Any cowpoke making a Tracking roll can tell the bounty hunter

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is indeed sticking to the gang's tracks. While he is tracking them, Redcap has an edge in that he knows exactly where the bandits are heading.

After a few hours, the trail leads near a small spring. Redcap suggests the posse water their horses and refill their canteens. He, on the other hand, stays slightly behind, claiming he's noticed one of the gang's horses has an odd gait—possibly indicating it's going lame. Actually, he's just making sure he doesn't wander too close to where the desert thing is known to prowl.

The subterranean monstrosity attacks any hero who heads to the waterhole. Don't forget the abomination can attack up to eight characters at a time with its tentacles! Two rounds after the creature reveals itself, Pike's outlaws—hiding behind rocks and shrubs surrounding the waterhole—open fire.

Redcap uses this encounter to assess the posse's competence. He shoots to kill against the desert thing, but deliberately misses any shots he takes against the bandits. After all, should any of the thugs escape, he doesn't want them carrying word back to Pike about his betrayal. The gunmen fight until more than half their number are Incapacitated, at which time the survivors cut bait and run.

After the battle, Redcap takes a moment to hack the scalps from any bandits that get sent to Boot Hill. If confronted, he says he plans to sell them to the railroad. He points out that it's pretty hard to tell where a scalp came from as long it's got dark hair on it…

- **Desert Thing:** See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.
- **Bandits (1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Peacemakers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), and 20 spare rounds.

Deadman's Eye

After the run-in with Pike's gunmen at the watering hole, Redcap decides to lead the posse to the gang's hideout. If the heroes acquitted themselves well, he figures they're his best chance at claiming the reward on Pike and the rest of the gang. On the other hand, if they performed like a bunch of greenhorns on a snipe hunt, the bounty hunter figures he can score some points with the outlaws by handing the lot over on a silver platter.

Redcap tells the characters that Pike is likely holed up in a canyon not far from their current location. The area is known as Deadman's Eye because the only way into it is through a narrow crack carved by a stream. Behind the crack the canyon widens considerably, but the crack itself is only a little over 10 feet wide, which makes it very easy to defend—and popular with folks on the wrong side of the law.

Into the Eye o' the Dead

The bounty hunter leads the party to a short distance from the Eye itself. He cautions them that it is very likely that Pike has set at least one lookout at the crack. Beyond that, Redcap makes no suggestions, but answers any questions the heroes may have about the layout. He's been there several times himself, so he's quite familiar with it, but he claims it's been years since he was last in the hideout.

The lookout is positioned on the outside of the crack. If he spots anyone approaching, his immediately calls out an alarm, then takes cover and opens fire. A cowpoke can creep up on him using Stealth, but the guard is treated as active and the rocks and scrub provide only light cover. If the guard at the entrance catches sight of the posse, the

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outlaws are ready when the characters come through the Eye. Treat them as being On Hold the first round.

The canyon walls are about 40 feet tall and can be scaled with a Climbing roll (–2). Once atop the cliffs, the cowpokes can bypass the chokepoint of the Eye and get the advantage of higher ground on the bandits. However, if attacked, the outlaws seek cover under a large overhang on the south side of the hideout that completely conceals them from anyone on the cliffs.

Shootout

Pike and his gang have a fairly defensible spot, but they're also cornered. There is no way out except over the dead bodies of the characters, so the gang fights to the death. Likewise, the outlaws don't waste any effort trying to take prisoners themselves.

As before, Redcap makes sure his shots go wide, at least at the beginning. Only when the heroes have established the upper hand does he start picking off his former compatriots. Initially, the gang figures the bounty hunter is still playing the part and doesn't fire on him. Only once he shows his hand does he become a target for the bandits.

Of course, if things start going badly for the characters, Redcap doesn't hesitate to jump ship and side with Pike.

When the smoke clears, Redcap tallies up the bounties and takes scalps unless the heroes stop him. To claim their share, they have to accompany Redcap to the nearest town—and although he happily promises to wire the money, only a fool would trust him!

If he turned on them and the posse still managed to survive, it's likely Redcap is down, although maybe only temporarily. If that's the case, he comes back carrying a bit of a grudge—and given his ever-changing hairstyle, the party may not recognize him the next time until it's too late!

Angus Pike: Use Gunman (Veteran) stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. He is armed with a Colt Peacemaker (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), a Winchester '73 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2), and 25 spare rounds for each.

- **Comancheros (1 per hero):** Use Rail Warrior stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*, replacing Enemy with Wanted. Armed with Springfield rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d10, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP 2, Reload 2), knives (Str+d4), and 20 spare rounds.
- **Bandits (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Peacemakers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), and 20 spare rounds.

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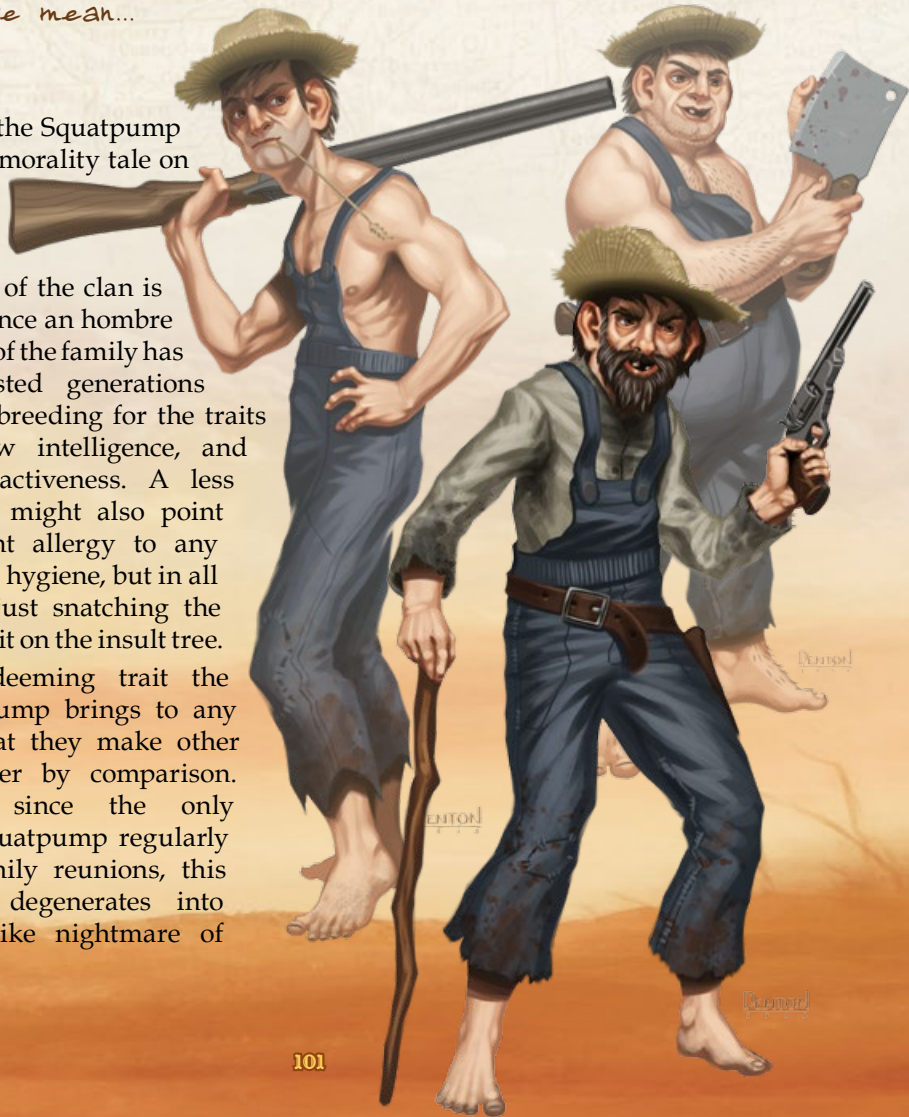
The Squatpump Gang

The squatpump gang is composed entirely of brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, and uncles from the squatpump family. And before we go any further, we should point out that in many cases, one member of the family fills several of those roles simultaneously. The squatpump family tree, while quite large, is more of a family ground-crawling ivy, if you know what we mean...



By and large, the Squatpump gang is a living morality tale on the hazards of inbreeding. One look at most of the members of the clan is enough to convince an hombre that this branch of the family has diligently invested generations into selectively breeding for the traits of laziness, low intelligence, and physical unattractiveness. A less polite cowpoke might also point out an apparent allergy to any kind of personal hygiene, but in all honesty, that's just snatching the low-hanging fruit on the insult tree.

The sole redeeming trait the average Squatpump brings to any gathering is that they make other folks look better by comparison. Unfortunately, since the only gatherings a Squatpump regularly attends are family reunions, this effect usually degenerates into an Ouroboros-like nightmare of dimwitted ugly.

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Given their, *ahem*, strong familial ties and lack of ambition with regard to honest work, it's really little surprise that many members of the Squatpump clan have been drawn toward pursuits that often wind up with one's picture on a wanted poster. Robbing, stealing, and killing seem to come as naturally to these folks as courting a cousin. That's not to say they're particularly good at any of those pursuits, but when you've got a pool of recruits as large as the Squatpumps do, you can afford a bit of trial and error.

This makes the Squatpumps an excellent recurring enemy for your posse, Marshal. They're not particularly skilled, but what they lack in raw talent, they make up for in sheer numbers and a preternatural ability to hold a murderous grudge. Kill one Squatpump, and the next time you'll probably find yourself facing half a dozen.

The profile below is for the run-of-the-mill Squatpump gang member. Most groups of more than five or 10 are led by one of the more capable family members who has lived through numerous hold-ups, shootouts, and trips to the outhouse. As you'd expect, these naturally selected survivors are almost always Wild Cards.

Squatpump Cousin

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d4

Charisma: –2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Clueless, Ugly, Vengeful (Major),

Edges: –

Gear: Squatpumps carry any sort of weapons they can lay hand to.

Savage Tale: Down on the Farm

This Savage Tale is a showcase for the Squatpump Gang, as unappetizing a thought as that might be. You can run the two encounters in this adventure back to back or spread them out over the course of several other adventures to help make the Squatpumps a recurring burr in the posse's saddle.

Breaking the Bank

As the posse is riding into a town, they hear gunfire coming from the vicinity of the local bank. If they hurry toward the sound, they see the following:

A group of ragtag gunmen mills about the front of the bank, firing guns into the air, hooting and hollering, and generally raising Hell. The door to the bank stands open, and cracks of gunfire issue from within the building as well. While you watch, a few customers run out, ducking at the sight of the reckless bandits out front.

Should your cowpokes pause, a passerby exclaims,

"The Squatpumps are robbing the bank!"

The loud-mouthed citizen then looks expectantly at the posse, obviously expecting the group to intervene.

If the heroes try to stop the Squatpumps, the outlaws gleefully engage in a firefight. On the other hand, should the characters choose to stand aside and not get involved, the robbers emerge carrying several bulging sacks. As the gang attempts to ride out of town, however, one of the Squatpumps loses control of his horse and careens into the middle of the posse. His cousins mistakenly perceive this as somehow

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the heroes' fault and a gunfight ensues as above.

The gang fights until more than half their number are Incapacitated, at which time they flee like scalded dogs in all directions.

This is not intended to be a challenging fight for your saddletramps, Marshal. In fact, if your hombres leave the gunfight unscathed, so much the better!

- **Squatpump Cousins (2 per hero):** See page 102. Armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).

Now You've Done It!

Shortly after the posse sends the Squatpumps packing, the town marshal arrives on the scene. Far from offering the heroes the heartfelt thanks they're expecting, he instead bears a warning. With a disappointed sigh, he exclaims,

"Aww… now ya gone and done it!

"The Squatpumps ride in here every few months or so and 'rob' the bank. It's so regular, the manager keeps a few sacks of newspaper clippin's he gives 'em just to hustle them out the door before anyone gets hurt. They ain't the sharpest tools in the shed, so by the time they figure out they've been hornswaggled, most of 'em done forgot what they came into town for.

"But you gone and riled 'em up. Now we'll have a whole herd of them yahoos' cousins ridin' into town from here 'til the end o' time lookin' to settle up with you lot."

The marshal explains the town discovered the hard way that, while the gang wasn't particularly good at the outlaw profession, there always seemed to be more family members ready to avenge any perceived slight. Now, he adds, the posse's likely made an enemy—or more accurately, a *lot* of enemies!

"The Squatpumps live on a pig farm about a day's ride north of here. Personally, I just ignore 'em, but I reckon you folks will keep litterin' up my streets with empty shell casings and dead Squatpumps if you don't put a stop to this here feud."

He won't send any help with the characters, stating it's outside his jurisdiction. Actually, he doesn't want to attract any more attention from the family. However, he encourages the heroes to ride out—sweetening the pot by telling them about a $500 bounty on Bucephalus Squatpump, the clan patriarch, and a general $25-per-head bounty on the rest of the gang—dead or alive, of course!

Rootin' Out the Gang

The marshal's directions lead the heroes to the Squatpump farm. All the buildings appear to have been constructed with whatever castoff materials the residents could find that weren't nailed down—or could be pried loose. A large barn and adjacent pig pen are the only things that even vaguely link it to agriculture or animal husbandry.

Other than a flock of sparsely feathered chickens and a few overly large hogs near the barn, only a thin plume of smoke rising from the dilapidated shed behind the main house provides any sign of life.

In this case, looks are very deceiving. There are plenty of Squatpumps holed up here. As soon as they are aware of the posse's presence, they dig in deeper than ticks on a hound…and look to draw as much blood as possible.

Barn

Inside the barn a few Squatpumps are lounging about. If the heroes enter the barn, most grab farming implements and attack, while one opens the gate to the pig pen and calls the hogs from there

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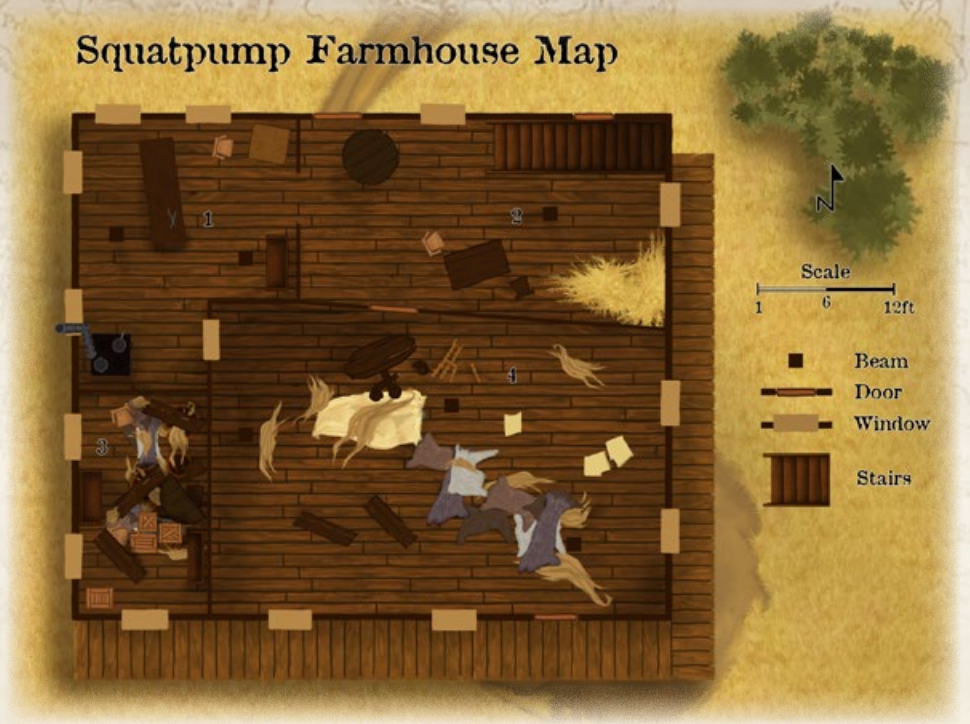

with a loud "Sou-eee!" This brings the beasts running (see **Pig Pen**, below, for details).

If a ruckus breaks out elsewhere, they grab shotguns and fire on the characters from the cover of the barn after flushing the hogs out onto the grounds.

- **Squatpumps (1 per hero):** See page 102. Armed with farming implements (Str+d6) or double-barrel shotguns (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1–2, Shots 2, +2 Shooting) and 10 extra shells.
- **Aggressive Hogs (3):** Use Wild Boar stats on page 138.

Outhouse

The outhouse is empty when the posse arrives, but any hombre foolish enough to enter this rickety shack must make a Guts roll. We're not going to go into detail, but let's just say the horrors in the Squatpump facilities are so revolting that any hero who fails her Guts roll doesn't suffer nausea, but instead rolls on the Fear Effects Table!

Pig Pen

The Squatpumps raise hogs...badly. They've crossbred their already oversized pigs with wild boars and even a javeranha (see page 67) they got from a distant uncle in the Southwest. The family uses the animals for everything from breakfast meats to garbage disposal to getting rid of the occasional corpse. Unsurprisingly, the critters eat everything they can run down.

Although there are a large number of piglets in the pen, luckily for the heroes there are only three adult hogs at this time.

- **Aggressive Hogs (3):** Use Wild Boar stats on page 138.

Shed

The plume of smoke the cowpokes saw coming from this shed originates from a

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fire under the one legitimate enterprise outside of pig-farming the Squatpumps pursue—brewing rotgut whiskey. There are two cousins in here working the next batch through the still.

The Squatumps lob impromptu firebombs at any pistolero that gets close enough, made out of Mason jars filled with whiskey. They effectively have an unlimited supply of the firebombs. For those who wisely stay out of range, they fall back on their rifles.

Unfortunately for them, the still is unstable and fills the shed with volatile fumes. Any gunfire into the shed that misses the outlaws has a 1 in 6 chance of causing the still to explode for 5d6 damage in a Large Burst Template!

- **Squatpump Cousins (2):** See page 102. Armed with Springfield rifles (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d10, RoF 1, Shots 1, AP 2, Reload 2), 20 extra rounds, and firebombs (Range 2/4/8, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, SBT, may ignite victim).

The Farmhouse

The Squatpumps built the farmhouse without any sense of architecture or common sense. As a result, there are rooms with no doors or doors that simply can't be opened, windows between interior rooms, and a stairway that ends at the ceiling (it's a one story building). The interior is cluttered with everything from broken furniture to wagon wheels to farm implements to animal skins (or just dead animals).

Just walking through a room is an exercise in both balance and courage—and that's without a whole passel of inbred outlaws trying to kill you! In several places, the ceiling is supported by hastily erected beams, most of which are not nailed down. Any character coming in contact with one must immediately roll Agility or bring the ceiling down on his head, suffering 2d6 damage!

The Squatpumps are very familiar with their home's layout, and always have at least Light Cover against ranged attacks while inside.

Dining Room: The Squatpumps keep a few tables here for when they feel high-falutin' enough to eat sitting down. To make sure they aren't putting on airs, they also use this room to kennel a pair of foul-tempered mongrel dogs. And they aren't house-trained. The hounds attack any non-Squatpump that enters the room.

- **Dogs (2):** Use Dog/Wolf stats in *Savage Worlds*.

Kitchen: This room is where Etta May Squatpump prepares the gang's meals.

She's limited by the ingredients the family provides—usually whatever animal is slow enough to catch or stupid enough to get lured into arms' reach. (This usually boils down to watching for buzzards and stealing a carcass.) Only a pathological liar would refer to the resulting concoctions as "food."

She's just as feisty as the rest of her clan, though, and attacks any interlopers with a rusty and dangerously stained cleaver with which she is quite proficient.

The staircase in the corner leads up to the ceiling as the Squatpumps forgot to put on the second floor. The stovepipe stops about a foot short of the ceiling, causing the room to fill with smoke anytime Etta May prepares dinner. During mealtimes, all Shooting and Throwing rolls suffer a –1 penalty and any non-Squatpumps must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue due to smoke inhalation (See **Fire** in *Savage Worlds*).

- **Etta May Squatpump:** Use Squatpump Cousin stats on page 102, but increase

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Fighting to d10. Armed with a cleaver (Str+d4).

Storage Room: The only way into this room is through a broken outside window. The room is filled with all manner of junk and debris. Hidden amidst the trash is a spring-loaded bear trap.

Make a Notice roll (–4) for any character digging or walking through the junk to spot the trap. On a failure it's triggered, and the victim suffers 2d6 damage and is held by the trap until she makes a Strength roll (–2). If the damage causes one or more wounds to a leg, she suffers an additional Pace –1 until they are healed.

Living Room: This is the family room and sleeping quarters for Squatpumps who aren't passed out or lollygagging elsewhere on the farm. Several straw mattresses and piles of filthy and odd-smelling sheets lie about. The immense, bearded, and repulsive Bucephalus—father of the majority of the local Squatpumps (as well as cousin, uncle, and possibly brother to few)—is usually found here. There are also a few Squatpumps itching for a fight…and from body lice.

- **Squatpump Cousins (2, plus 1 per hero):** See page 102. Armed with single barrel shotguns (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1, Shots 1, +2 Shooting).

Bucephalus Squatpump

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8

Charisma: –4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Hindrances: Mean, Ugly, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Brawny, Improved Nerves of Steel

Gear: Scattergun (Range 6/12/24, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1–2, Shots 2, +2 Shooting), hatchet (Str+d6), 10 extra shells.

Aftermath

If the posse eradicates the local Squatpumps, they can claim the rewards on Bucephalus and his kin. However, this was just one small branch of the family and there are plenty more out there…

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Swarm Man

Swarm men are one of the less pleasant creations of the Reckoning. Colonies of voracious, beetle-like critters with a disturbing amount of smarts and an unnatural ability for camouflage, these swarms are capable of forming into a human shape and altering their appearance so as to look human. Their hive-mind intelligence enables them to function as a single organism instead of a mass of squirming creepy-crawlies.

Although a swarm man's camouflage isn't nearly fine-tuned enough to impersonate a particular individual, the bugs are capable as appearing more than human enough to pass close inspection.

These strange swarms roam the land like plagues of locusts without quite as discerning a palate. These critters don't limit themselves to just crops either. They are more than happy to devour anything they can get their mandibles on—cows, horses, cowboys, anything organic in nature that they can pull apart and consume.

When attacked, the swarm maintains its façade of humanity until it takes enough damage to cause a single wound. At that point it collapses into a swarm of chittering—and very angry—insects.

Swarm Man

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Shooting d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** A swarm man in swarm form inflicts hundreds of bites on anyone caught inside it (Medium Burst Template). It hits automatically each round and causes 2d6 damage. This damage is applied to the least armored location on a victim.
- **Fear –2:** Make a Guts roll (–2) for any hombre who witnesses one of these critters change to swarm form.
- **Human Shield:** A swarm man cannot be wounded while in human form. Instead, if it takes enough damage to cause one or more wounds, it immediately disintegrates into its swarm form.
- **Mimicry:** A swarm man is capable of mimicking a general human appearance, although it cannot copy specific individuals. At a casual glance, only a Notice roll (–4) spots anything amiss with a swarm man when camouflaged. However, a cowpoke who's specifically looking for a mass of arthropods disguising themselves as a sodbuster (for whatever reason) can roll Notice with no modifiers. Shifting to swarm form is a free action, but reforming into a human shape takes a full round.
- **Split:** A swarm man can split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst

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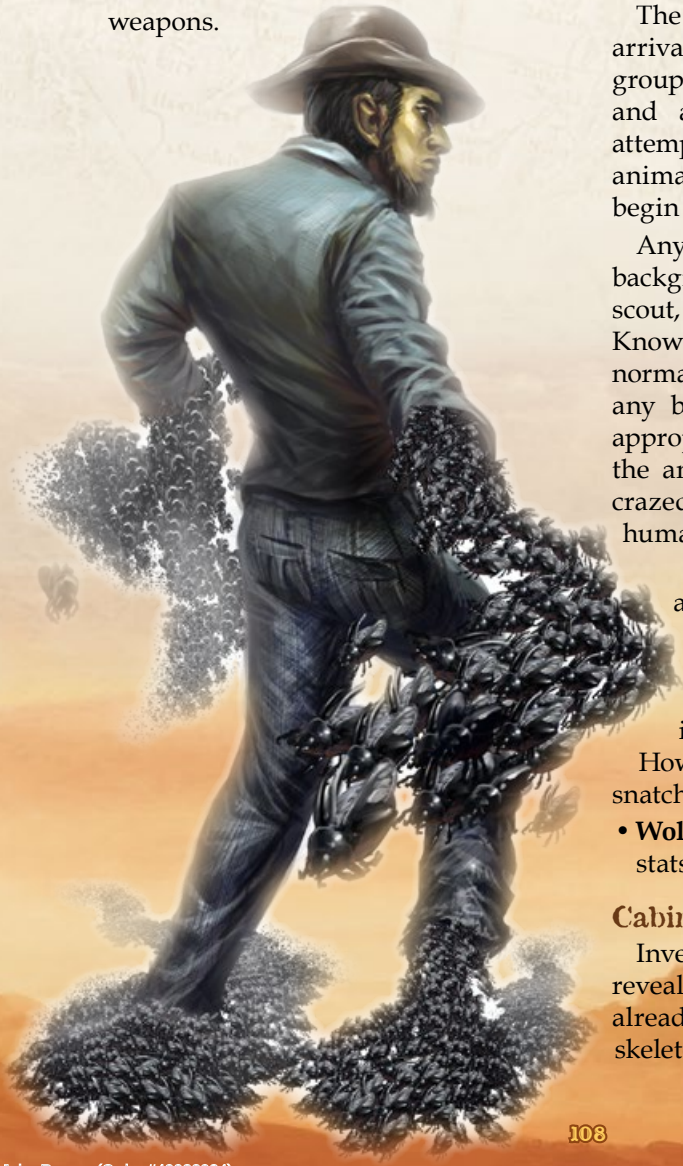
Templates) to deal with multiple foes if necessary. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is reduced by 2 (to 5).

- **Swarm:** Parry +2. In swarm form, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally and the abomination's attacks can be foiled—at least temporarily—by jumping in water. A cowpoke can make a Fighting attack by stomping each round. If successful, the stomp inflicts his Strength in damage. While in swarm form, the swarm man cannot use weapons.



Savage Tale: Hunger Pangs

Around midday, the posse is traveling along a trail through a relatively uninhabited stretch of wilderness when it comes across a small log cabin. The door to the cabin stands ajar and a fair-sized pack of wolves prowls around outside. As the heroes watch, one darts into the open door and emerges moments later carrying something in its mouth. A Notice roll identifies the object as a bone.

The wolves soon note the party's arrival and turn their attention to the group. The animals quickly spread out and advance toward the characters, attempting to circle them as they do. The animals growl menacingly and visibly begin to drool as they move in.

Any hero with the appropriate background (trapper, hunter, wilderness scout, etc.) can make a Common Knowledge roll to realize this is not normal behavior for wolves. Likewise, any book-learnin' types can make an appropriate Knowledge roll to figure out the animals are starving or otherwise crazed to attack a group of healthy humans.

The wolves are nearly starving and mad with hunger. They fight until more than two-thirds of their number are Incapacitated, at which point they try to flee into the surrounding wasteland. However, a few make a last attempt to snatch a bone as they depart.

- **Wolves (2 per hero):** Use Dog/Wolf stats in *Savage Worlds*.

Cabin in the Woods

Investigating the one-room cabin reveals what the heroes have probably already guessed: A pair of human skeletons—or at least the parts the

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wolves didn't steal—lie inside. Most of the bones remain inside clothing that indicates one was a man and the other a woman.

Anyone examining the skeletons can make a Notice roll. With a success, she realizes the bones are completely bare of any soft tissue; meat, bone, cartilage—it's all gone. The clothes are covered in dried bloodstains, but there is no obvious cause of death. The clothes are largely intact and no evidence of any wounds remains.

A double barrel shotgun and a Springfield rifle lie on the floor not far from the skeletons, and both have spent shells inside. An hombre looking for bullet holes may make a Notice roll. If successful, the hero spots a bullet hole (rifle) about four feet up the wall near the door and marks from a shotgun blast in the floor near the skeletons. There is no blood at either spot.

A search of the cabin takes very little time. It appears to have been a simple homestead, with the single room serving as kitchen, dining room, and bedroom. Other than the two firearms, there is little of value outside typical frontier household goods. If a character specifically looks for foodstuffs though, she finds a few containers for dry foods (beans, corn, flour, etc.). The lids are off all the bins, and other than a few crumbs, they are completely empty.

Checking outside for tracks allows a hero to make a Tracking roll. With a success, she finds the expected wolf tracks, but also signs that a wagon passed through within the last day, heading the same direction as the party. On a raise, she also spots a pair of booted footprints, most likely a man's, leaving the cabin and joining the wagon. If the posse thinks to ask, there are no boots to be found in the cabin—including on the skeleton!

Behind the Scenes

A small, uh... *group* of swarm men recently moved into this area. The abominations have managed to gobble up most of the prey animals, which has led to the wolves' starving state. They recently fell upon the homesteaders, devouring both hapless souls and all the food they had on hand.

Shortly after the monsters slew the couple, a wagon carrying another family passed through the area. One of the swarm men, disguised as a human, managed to secure a ride with the unwitting pioneers. The remainder tailed the family from the forest.

Dining Take-Out

Continuing on along the trail, the posse comes upon a covered wagon just before nightfall. It is stopped in the middle of the trail and surrounded by a war party of angry braves. The Indians are well-armed and tearing goods off the wagon. There is no immediate sign of the occupants and even the draft animals are gone.

After a moment, two things happen. First, the war party notes the heroes' arrival. The Indians turn menacingly toward the group, obviously ready to fight. Second, allow each character to make a Notice roll. The one who rolls the highest spots what appears to be the remains of at least one settler lying beside the front of the wagon.

The Indians are aware of the swarm men in the area. They're actually trying to find and destroy the abominations and arrived on the scene after the things had already attacked. The war party isn't looking for a fight with the posse. They don't attack unless one of the heroes makes an overtly hostile act—but they are tense and more than a little paranoid.

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Even drawing a weapon is enough to touch off the powder keg.

If the posse attacks—or provokes the braves into battle—the Indians fight until more than half their number are Incapacitated. At that point, the survivors attempt to retreat into the surrounding country. Under no circumstances do they surrender.

The war party has no interest in parley with the group. They're not overflowing with trust to begin with, and are also pretty keenly aware how bad the current situation looks from the outside. The best even the most silver-tongued talker can accomplish here is to convince the braves to retreat from the wagon without a fight.

- **Indian Braves (1, plus 2 per hero):** Use Indian Brave stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

Scene of the Crime

After either defeating the braves or convincing them to depart, the posse is free to examine the wagon. There are two skeletons lying on the ground nearby, still clothed and stripped of all soft tissue just like those at the cabin. One appears to be a man and the other a woman. Although there is a Winchester '73 rifle near the man's remains, it does not appear to have been fired.

More disturbingly, the heroes quickly discover the draft animals were not run off or stolen. The mostly-eaten corpses of four mules lie at the front of the wagon, still attached to their harnesses. Unlike the human victims, there are still some scattered pieces of meat and tendon on their bones.

A scholarly minded cowpoke can examine all the remains for clues by making an appropriate Knowledge roll

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or a Tracking roll at –4. With a success, he can discern no teeth marks or signs of weapons or tools on the bones. Whatever took the meat from the bones did so very skillfully, without so much as nicking the bone underneath!

From the looks of it, the war party had already torn through the interior of the wagon pretty thoroughly by the time the posse arrived. At first glance, there is only a disorganized pile of largely unexciting homesteading goods: clothing, basic tools, kitchenware, etc. However, moments after the first character pokes her head into the wagon, one of the larger piles begins to move—seemingly of its own accord!

A young woman, apparently in her late teens, scrabbles out from under the piles of upended belongings and looks nervously at her rescuers.

Sole Survivor

It soon becomes obvious the girl is mute and able to communicate only through a crude pantomime. The "girl" is actually the swarm man in disguise. This is what the Indians were tearing through the wagon trying to find, but it had dispersed into swarm form and filtered through the settler's belongings to hide. It now sees a chance at getting a little more food on the hoof—or boot.

Through hand signals and mime, the abomination attempts to convince the posse that it was part of the settlers' family. Furthermore, it claims the Indians were actually the ones who killed and ate everything at the wagon and that she escaped by hiding in the wagon. The swarm man even feigns thanks to the heroes for rescuing it from the attack and conveys that it would like to travel with them to the next settlement.

Although it can't speak, the monstrosity is fairly clever and experienced at deceiving its intended prey for at least a short time. The war party chased the other members of its group away during the attack and it wants to stay close to the party until they can return to help it. If the heroes seem reluctant, it is not above playing up its "helpless waif" role to pluck at the heart strings of any sentimental saps in the posse.

The abomination is careful to keep its true nature as protected as possible. It has clothed itself in a full-length and long-sleeved dress taken from the pioneers' belongings and also wears a bonnet and scarf. It takes care to keep any of the posse members from examining it too closely and stays largely at arm's length at least until nightfall, when darkness can help conceal it better.

- **Swarm Man:** See page 107.

A Plague Descends

The next town (or trading post, settlement, or whatever) is less than a day's travel from where the posse encounters the wagon and swarm man. If at all possible, the swarm man manipulates the heroes to take it along with them. At least until the rest of its companions catch up…

If the characters agree to take the "young woman" with them, it largely keeps to itself as much as possible—perhaps pretending to be traumatized by the recent events. Given that it claims to have watched a band of cannibalistic Indians attack its family, this probably isn't too hard of a sell.

On the other hand, if your posse's composed of a bunch of uncaring hombres with hearts of coal, the abomination instead settles for tailing them as they travel, waiting for a convenient time to ambush the group. Since it can revert into an insect swarm, remaining hidden isn't really a problem in this case.

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Night Falls

The posse has to spend one night on the trail before they reach the relative comforts of civilization. After they settle in and bed down for the evening, the swarm men make their move. The abominations that have been stalking the heroes move stealthily up on the camp, crawling across the ground in their swarm form. Allow any cowpokes on guard to make a Notice roll at –2, opposed by the swarm men's Stealth, to detect only a faint chittering sound as the creatures close in on them. Any modifiers for hearing apply here as normal.

Once they're within 12" of the heroes, the abominations assume human form, appearing as if from thin air in the night. They take the shapes of Indians and settlers alike. Their mimicry allows them to even appear clothed appropriately—normally, that level of detail is beyond the abominations, but a combination of darkness and the fact they don't have to pass close inspection allows them a little leeway here.

Roll for surprise normally if the heroes did not detect the creatures' approach. If a disguised swarm man is traveling with the party, it attacks too after a round of combat has passed. Otherwise, simply add it in with the bushwhackers numbers from the start.

The abominations fight to the death. If the fight goes badly for the posse, you can have some of the braves from the war party arrive to help the heroes, should you be feeling a little soft-hearted yourself, Marshal!

- **Swarm Men (1, plus 1 per hero):** See page 107. This number includes the "survivor" from the wagon attack.

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Terrormental

Mother Nature is plenty dangerous. Anyone who's experienced an earthquake, prairie fire, flash flood, or tornado is well aware of that fact. Now, imagine a thunderstorm or tidal wave with a personal desire to see you dead. That's a pretty good idea of what a terrormental is like.

Although similar to elementals of myth and legend, these creatures are born and bred of the Reckoning. As such, they want nothing more than to spread death, destruction, and above all else, *terror*.

Each type of terrormental represents one of the four elements: air, earth, fire, or water. As you'd expect, each has its own method of attack. Fire burns with hellish flame, air draws the very breath from your lungs, and earth just smashes things real good.

Just as they have their own powers, each has a unique weakness. Even magical attacks don't hurt a terrormental just by virtue of being magic. Only those tied to its Weakness can cause any lasting harm. A jet of water, magically conjured or not, can hurt a fire terrormental. But your huckster's old standby *soul blast* won't do more than tickle the terrormental a little.

These abominations are *tough*. If you plan on using them, Marshal, realize they're not fancy walkin' dead or some other critter your posse can put down by slinging enough lead in the right direction. Battling a terorrmental is more often a mental exercise than a knock-down, drag-out fight.

Fortunately, the things don't just spontaneously appear. A terrormental requires a human host to be molded into a living vessel of elemental horror. An ancient, blood-soaked ritual allows a petitioner to transform herself into a terrormental. One little hitch to the event is that the host is more accurately a sacrifice—the "vessel" is consumed in the act. As you'd expect, most cult leaders keep this little tidbit to themselves. Using an even lesser-known spell, some truly powerful practitioners of black magic can control the summoned creatures.

Air Terrormental

This horror alternates between a dust devil and a vaguely man-shaped figure, rendered visible by dust caught up in its turbulence and lightning rippling along its outlines.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6

Pace: –; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Coup (Light as a Feather):** The Harrowed gains an additional die type in Agility. But she also suffers a –1 penalty on all rolls to resist air-based effects and attacks.

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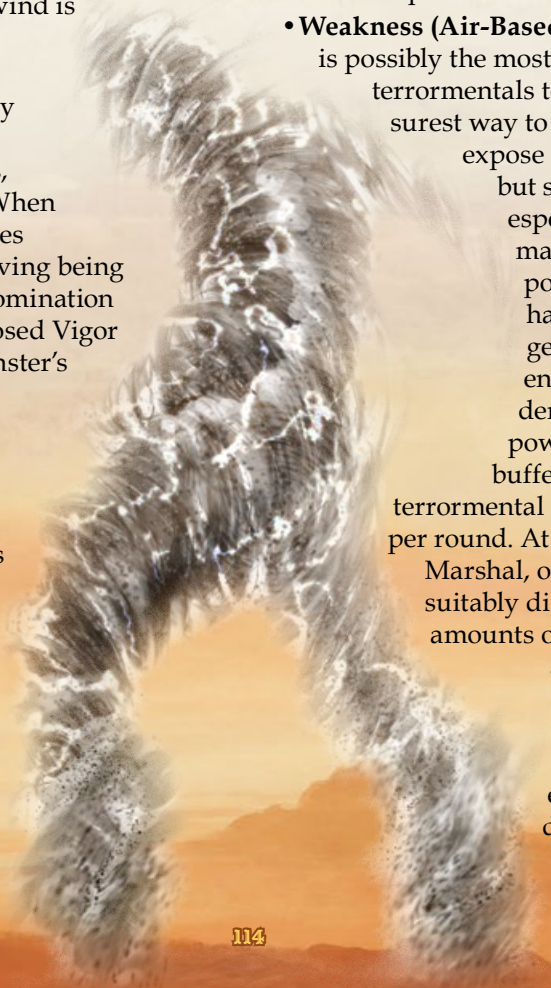
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots. Immune to Fear and Intimidation. Does not suffer wound modifiers. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Ethereal:** These abominations can maneuver through any non-solid surface. They seep through cracks, bubble through liquid, and rush through porous materials.
- **Fear (–2):** Encountering a terrormental provokes a Guts roll at –2.
- **Flight:** Air terrormentals have a Flying Pace of 24", with a climb rate of 6". They may not "run."
- **Invulnerability:** A terrormental can only be harmed by its Weakness. It can be Shaken by other attacks but never wounded.
- **Size +3:** The whirlwind is nearly 10 feet tall.
- **Suffocate:** An air terrormental kills by drawing the air out of its victims' lungs, suffocating them. When the terrormental uses this ability, every living being within 8" of the abomination must make an opposed Vigor roll against the monster's Spirit. Victims that fail suffer a Fatigue level. Anyone Incapacitated in this manner dies in a number of rounds equal to half his Vigor die. Once he is out of the area of effect, he recovers one Fatigue level every five minutes. Activating and maintaining this ability is a standard action.
- **Wind Blast:** Air terrormentals can send directed blasts of air at foes using the Cone Template and a Shooting roll, for 2d6 nonlethal damage. Make an opposed Agility roll for victims to avoid the blast.
- **Whirlwind:** As long as it does not move, the terrormental may make an opposed Strength check to pick up a victim as a standard action. If it wins, the target is pulled into the swirling maelstrom of its body. While trapped, the target is –2 to attack, damage, and Strength rolls to free himself. The terrormental cannot move as long as it wants to keep a victim trapped, but it can take other non-movement actions on subsequent rounds.
- **Weakness (Air-Based Attacks):** Air is possibly the most difficult of the terrormentals to defeat. The surest way to destroy one is to expose it to a vacuum, but short of an especially eccentric mad scientist, a posse is likely hard-pressed to generate an airless environment on demand. The power *windstorm* buffets the terrormental for 2d6 damage per round. At your discretion, Marshal, other attacks that suitably displace large amounts of air at once may also affect it, such as powers with air-based Trappings or even a large dynamite blast.



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Earth Terrormental

This beast is a lumbering, bipedal form made of graveyard dirt and broken tombstones.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Rocky hide.
- **Bash:** Str+d6.
- **Burrow:** Pace 10″. Earth terrormentals can meld into and out of the ground.
- **Coup (Tombstone Skin):** The deader gains an additional die type in Vigor. But he also suffers a –1 penalty on all rolls to resist earth-based effects and attacks.
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots. Immune to Fear and Intimidation. Does not suffer wound modifiers. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Fear (–2):** Encountering a terrormental provokes a Guts roll at –2.
- **Invulnerability:** A terrormental can only be harmed by its Weakness. It can be Shaken by other attacks but never wounded.
- **Size +3:** A walking mound of rock and dirt about 10 feet tall.
- **Weakness (Earthbound):** An earth terrormental is Invulnerable as long as it is in contact with natural earth. If the posse can lure it onto a bridge, a boat, or even a man-made floor, it becomes vulnerable to normal attacks. An inventive posse might even find a way to suspend one using powers or just finessing a few lassos. Also, any hero that engages one with a Fighting attack while she's under the effects of the *burrow* power can deal normal damage to it.

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Fire Terrormental

This abomination is a walking wildfire stoked with the fires of Hell.

Attributes: Agility d12+1, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Coup (Fiery Mien):** The deader gains an additional die type in Spirit. But she also suffers a –1 penalty on all rolls to resist fire-based effects and attacks.
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots. Immune to Fear and Intimidation. Does not suffer wound modifiers. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Fear (–2):** A terrormental provokes a Guts roll at –2.
- **Fiery Touch:** Str+d6, with a chance of catching fire (See **Fire** in *Savage Worlds*).
- **Flame Strike:** Fire terrormentals can project a searing blast of flames using the Cone Template. Heroes within the cone must beat the spirit's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage—plus the chance of catching fire.
- **Invulnerability:** A terrormental can only be harmed by its Weakness. It can be Shaken by other attacks but never wounded.
- **Size +3:** A 10-foot-tall inferno.
- **Wall Walker:** A fire terrormental can move up any flammable vertical surface at its normal Pace.
- **Weakness (Vacuum):** A fire terrormental is immediately destroyed if somehow sealed within a vacuum.
- **Weakness (Water):** Fire terrormentals take normal damage from water-based magical attacks. Additionally, dousing it with a gallon of water causes 1d6 damage, +2 per each additional gallon.

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Water Terrormental

Composed of murky salt water, this abomination most often appears as a cresting wave or waterspout.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Swimming d12+2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 12".
- **Coup (Cold Fish):** The Harrowed gains two additional die types in Swimming. But she also suffers a –1 penalty on all rolls to resist water-based effects and attacks.
- **Dehydrate:** As a standard action, a water terrormental can attempt to draw the water out of a victim's body. The terrormental makes an opposed Spirit roll against a target up to 8" away. Each success and raise inflicts a Fatigue level on the victim. Anyone who survives such an attack can recover a Fatigue level per hour by consuming at least a quart of water each hour.
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots. Immune to Fear and Intimidation. Does not suffer wound modifiers. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Fear (–2):** Anyone who encounters a terrormental must make a Guts roll at –2.
- **Invulnerability:** A terrormental can only be harmed by its Weakness. It can be Shaken by other attacks but never wounded.
- **Seep:** Water terrormentals can squeeze through a gap or crack of any size, no matter how small.

- **Size +3:** Like their brethren, water terrormentals crest at nearly 10 feet.
- **Waterspout:** A water terrormental can project a torrent of water using the Cone Template. Victims within the area may make an Agility roll opposed by the spirit's Shooting to avoid the blast or suffer 2d8 nonlethal damage. This also quenches any normal fires in the area.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Fire-based magical attacks damage them. Additionally,

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non-magical fire can also boil away the abomination, doing normal damage (see **Fire** in *Savage Worlds*).

Greater Terrormental

If the basic, run o' the mill terrormental isn't enough of a challenge for your hombres, Marshal, a few truly dedicated cultists have found a way to bind all four into one great, big steaming hunk of horror.

Resembling a huge mass of molten anthropomorphic mud whose each step is accompanied by a peal of thunder, a greater terrormental uses the special attacks of each of its components. It is well within its ability, for example, to pound the stuffing out of some poor, dehydrated, suffocating hombre with its enormous flaming fists.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Swimming d12+2

Pace: —; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 12".
- **Bash:** Str+d6, plus a chance to catch fire (see **Fire** in *Savage Worlds*).
- **Coup (Magic Proof):** A deader gains the Arcane Resistance Edge (or the Improved version, if she already has it). But the Edge doesn't provide protection from air-, earth-, fire- *or* water-based effects, and the deader also suffers a –1 penalty on rolls to resist these attacks and effects.
- **Dehydrate:** As a standard action, a greater terrormental can attempt to draw the water out of a victim's body. The terrormental makes an opposed Spirit roll against a target up to 8" away. Each success and raise inflicts a Fatigue level on the victim. Anyone who survives such an attack can recover a Fatigue level per hour by consuming at least a quart of water each hour.
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots. Immune to Fear and Intimidation. Does not suffer wound modifiers. Immune to disease and poison.

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- **Fear (–4):** Anyone unfortunate enough to encounter a greater terrormental must make a Guts roll at –4.
- **Flame Strike:** Greater terrormentals can project a searing blast of flames using the Cone Template. Heroes within the cone must beat the spirit's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage—plus the chance of catching fire (see **Fire** in *Savage Worlds*).
- **Invulnerability:** A greater terrormental can only be harmed by its Weakness. It can be Shaken by other attacks but never wounded.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to attack rolls when attacking a greater terrormental due to its large size.
- **Seep:** Greater terrormentals can take on the consistency of wet mud and squeeze through any non-watertight barrier.
- **Size +6:** One of these abominations tops out at nearly 20 feet tall.
- **Suffocate:** A greater terrormental may kill by drawing the air out of its victims' lungs, suffocating them. When the terrormental is using this ability, every (living) being within 8" of the abomination must make an opposed roll of his Vigor against the monster's Spirit. If the victim fails, he suffers a Fatigue level. If Incapacitated, the unlucky sod dies in a number of rounds equal to half his Vigor die. Once he is out of the area of effect, he recovers one Fatigue level every five minutes. Activating and maintaining this ability is a standard action.
- **Weakness (Magic):** A greater terrormental can only be wounded by magical attacks and effects.

Savage Tale: Sacrificial Lamb

In her search for an eternal vessel, Agatha Leeds (see page 17) discovered the secret of summoning a terrormental. Deciding that an incarnation of elemental force might well do the trick, she's raised herself a cult of fanatical—and, more important—utterly expendable followers. Needing a little time to prepare the ritual, she's led them to a small ghost town on a now-abandoned rail spur.

Not wanting to attract any unnecessary attention from meddling passers-by before she undertakes her latest attempt at immortality, Leeds instructed her followers to play the roles of simple townsfolk. She also hired a few men of, shall we say, *questionable* character to handle any particularly troublesome busybodies who might happen along. Like your posse, for instance, Marshal…

Leadtown

Fear Level: 3

The citizens of Leadtown once believed they were laying the foundations of the next Dodge City. Then the railroad abandoned the spur that ran through the town and its prospects dried up as quickly as a sponge in Death Valley. Slowly even the most diehard hopefuls left for parts unknown, leaving only empty buildings and ghosts of dreams.

Leadtown can be placed virtually anywhere in the Weird West, but the more remote, the better. And what leads the posse to Leadtown isn't really important either. In fact, one of the best ways is to simply have them stumble onto it while passing through a largely uninhabited wilderness area.

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Leadtown might best be described not as a ghost town, but a *zombie town*, briefly brought back from the grave for an unholy task. When it's over, Leadtown will once again be consigned to death. The cult has done just enough work to make the town function as temporary housing. They're not expecting more than a cursory examination before their work is done. So imagine their surprise when the posse rides in!

All the buildings are badly worn. Dry rot has set in on several, and most have only a few flakes of paint left on their sides. Virtually every building has broken panes of glass and it's rare to find one that's not missing more than a handful of shingles. The dry goods store is bare of everything, including shelves, and the vault in the town's tiny bank stand open and long empty. The only thing remaining in the offices of the *Leadtown Gazette* are a few crumpled pages of misprinted papers, all indicating nearly two years have passed since its last operation.

An observant group of heroes is probably going to have a few questions for the inhabitants after they get a look at the skeletal remains of the town. Most of the cultists don't outright shun the posse, but they are mighty stingy with their words. However, the group gets an edited version that's pretty close to the truth: The railroad pulled up stakes and most businesses dried up. The cultists claim they're the last of the residents and/or farmers who were too stubborn to leave.

Church

There's no longer even a sign identifying what type of church used to serve Leadtown, but the cross atop this building's steeple makes it pretty clear what the basic function was. Before the night of the cult's ritual, there's not much remarkable here: A handful of overturned pews and a pulpit are the only furnishings. Success on a Notice roll while walking through the small graveyard out back means a saddletramp observes that the most recent grave is over two years old.

Once the cult starts its ritual, the church becomes the center of activity in Leadtown (see **Hot Time in the Old Town**, on page 122).

Larson's Boarding House

The boarding house is one of the few buildings Leeds's followers have spent any time renovating. Although a few have taken up residence in houses near the town, most of the group has settled into Larson's.

Don't get us wrong, the outside of the building is still in pretty sorry shape with more bare wood than painted, but any broken windows are repaired, or at least boarded over. The roof has been repaired as well—by pulling shingles from other structures in most cases. Inside, there's a even a smattering of furniture, including a few simple chairs and mattresses.

The cultists do their best to keep any visitors out of Larson's. When possible, they simply lock the door; otherwise, they rely on fast talking to prevent entry. They don't escalate the situation with any pushy folks, though. If a cowpoke wants to bull her way in, they let her.

Leadtown Saloon

The creatively named Leadtown Saloon is the one building in town that the posse has no trouble entering. Fortunately for the cult, the former owner left town with a carpet bag and little else, so all the furnishings are still in place. The upright piano is missing a few strings and is badly out of tune, but—other than a bit of dust in the

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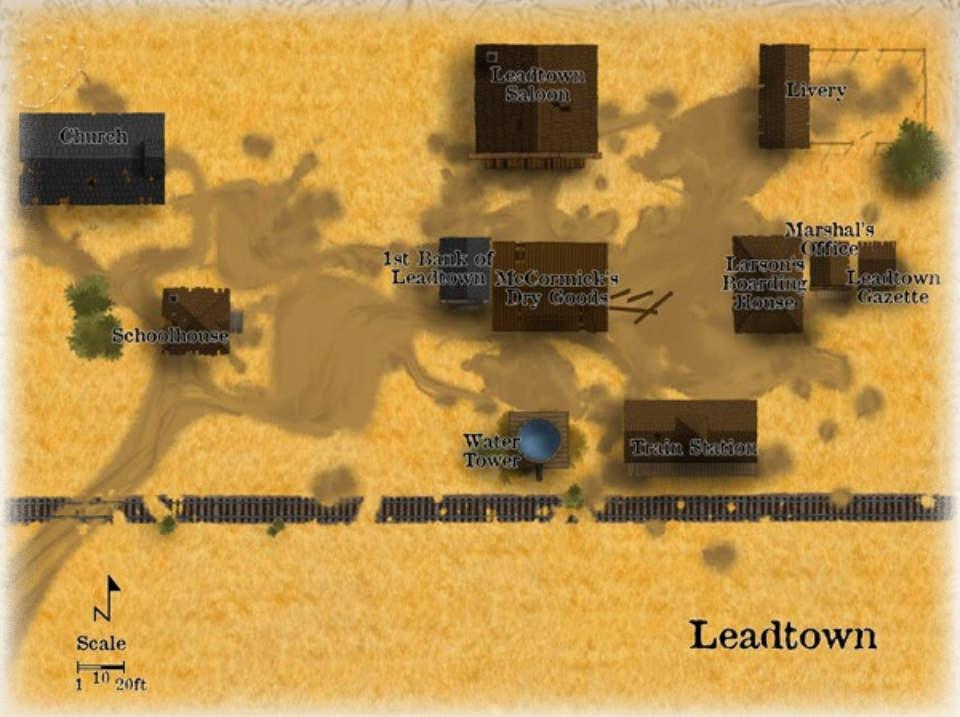

corners and a broken window or two—the saloon appears fairly run-of-the-mill.

There are even a few beds in the rooms upstairs that the "bartender" (another cultist) rents out for whatever sum he can finagle out of the adventurers. He's not got much experience at running a hotel, but he has the advantage of a monopoly. There's nowhere else in town the posse can shack up for the night!

There is a shortage of drinks, at least of the alcoholic kind. The cult isn't exactly a band of teetotalers, but whiskey wasn't high on the packing list. The hired guns are toting a few bottles of their own, which the cultists gather up if the heroes act overly suspicious over the lack of spirits.

Marshal's Office

The marshal's office is open. Leeds's hired guns have taken to using it as their own, displaying a fine sense of irony. A couple of the desperados even sport badges they found in a desk drawer. Of course, any gunslinger worth his salt is sure to take notice Leadtown has a fairly high ratio of law enforcement officers before long.

- **"Deputies" (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).

Train Station

The small train station, once the center of Leadtown's hopes, is as empty as most of the other buildings in town. The prairie has begun to reclaim the abandoned tracks; grass grows thick between the rails. A board near the barren ticket office lists the last scheduled train as departing over two years ago.

Outside the station is a watering tower. Although rusted and rickety from age and lack of maintenance, the holding tank is still intact, although it's filled

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with several hundred gallons of stagnant rainwater now. While the heroes aren't likely to take much note of this fact now, it won't be too long before they're going to pay it a lot of attention!

Bait and Switch

Late the first night the posse is in Leadtown, they're awakened by shouts and pounding at their doors. One of the "deputies" rouses them, saying there's been a raid by outlaws or Indians—take your pick—and the town's schoolteacher has been kidnapped. He's been sent by the marshal to raise a posse to rescue the woman.

If the heroes bite, he and another of his gang lead them on a wild and winding ride to an abandoned ranch a few miles outside of town. There, the rest of the hired guns emerge from hiding with guns drawn. They tell the characters they aren't looking for a fight, but they're under orders to not let the group return to town until after sunrise. None of the bandits knows why or what the cult has planned, though.

If your hombres go for their guns, the outlaws fight back. Unless the posse comes up with a clever plan to distract the black hats, treat the desperados as if they all are On Hold at the beginning of combat.

- **"Deputies" (2, plus 1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), and 12 extra rounds.

Minding the Store

If any or all the adventurers decline to join the fake posse, the hired guns take steps to corral the layabouts in the saloon. They wait until the would-be rescuers ride out of town, then attempt to hold any characters still in town in the saloon. Leeds gives orders that if there are any false moves by the hostages, the outlaws are to shoot first and not bother to ask questions. She doesn't want to risk any disruptions to her ritual!

In this case, the outlaws split their numbers to make sure they have at least as many gunhands in each locale as there are party members.

Hot Time in the Old Town

Whether they're waylaid out of town or in the saloon, by the time the heroes finish with the hired guns and make their way onto Leadtown's only street Leeds and her followers have their ritual well underway. Read the following:

> *The only light shining in town is a hellish red glow seeping out through the windows of the old church. An ominous chanting emanates from the same edifice, making it clear as creek water that whatever's rotten in Leadtown, the stink is coming from the church.*

Leeds has been at this whole evil cult thing for a fair piece, so she's learned that hired thugs often fail to stop the white hats from busting in at inconvenient times. To add a little more time for her and her followers to complete their spell, she's raised a couple of corpses from the nearby Boot Hill to give warning of any Nosy Nellies riding in at the last minute.

The deaders are positioned outside the church, although discovering their less-than-living status won't be clear until your cowpokes get close enough to see the dead white of their eyes…

- **Walkin' Dead (1 per hero):** See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. The zombies aren't carrying any weapons other than their claws.

Uninvited Guests

Once the heroes make it past the undead welcoming party, they burst

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into the church to see all the townsfolk inside. The cultists all wear stereotypical black robes and chant in some strange language. Laid out on a crude wooden altar at the front of the church is one of the women from town. She is bound hand and foot and appears to be struggling against a man holding a ritual dagger.

Actually, the woman is one of Agatha Leeds' spawn (see page 18). Although she looks like a younger version of her matron, she's every bit as evil and ambitious. She's trying to rush the sacrifice along before the heroes have time to stop it. The man, a skilled black magician himself, is her assistant, but the posse's untimely arrival has him confused and distracted. He drops the ritual dagger, pulls a pistol and immediately turns his attention to the interlopers—along with the rest of the cultists!

Agatha herself does not actively engage the posse—she has other plans (see below).

Agatha Leeds: See page 18.

Cult Leader: Use Cult Leader stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with a Colt Army revolver (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1).

- **Cultists (2 per hero):** Use Cultist stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with daggers (Str+d4).

Not So Fast!

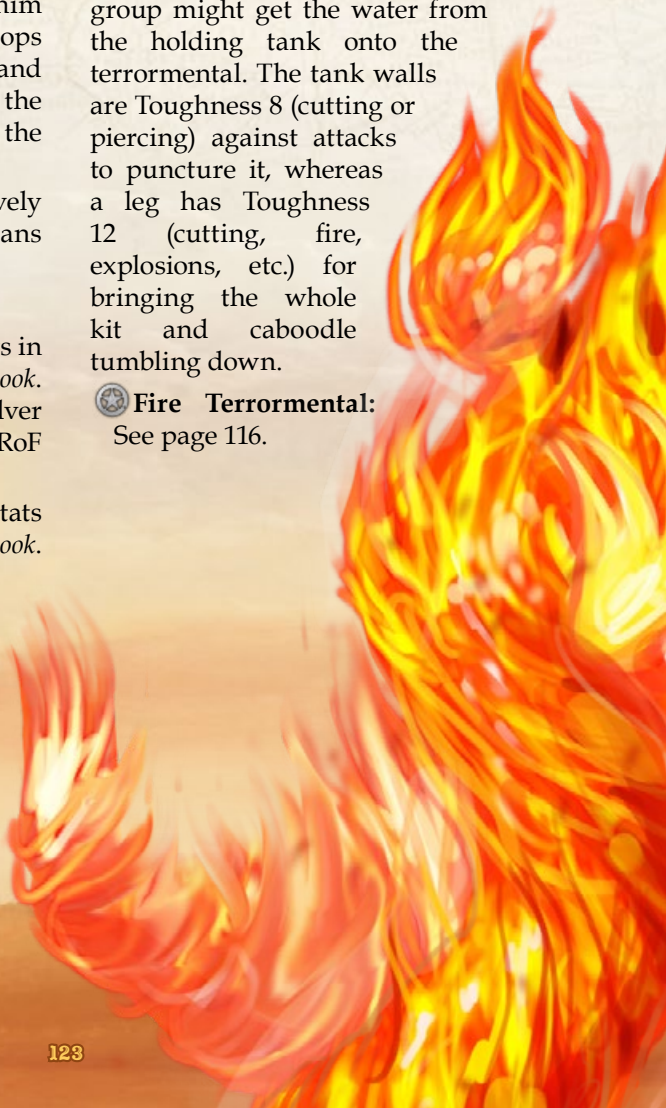
The cultists all fight to the death. Agatha, however, has other plans. The round before the heroes can "rescue" her, she snatches up the dagger her assistant dropped and plunges it into her heart!

Eldritch, reddish flame erupts from the wound, winding over her body like a riled-up nest of burning rattlers. Within moments, her flesh is consumed by fire and she transforms into living hellfire—a fire terrormental. Unfortunately for her, the demonic elemental completely overwhelms her spirit. On the other hand, it shares the same goals as she did, at least in the short term: Destroy the posse!

The heroes should quickly figure out their weapons—magical and mundane—are of little use against the abomination. Barring an unusually well-prepared band of saddletramps, the posse's best chance lies in the old water tower.

The tower holds over 500 gallons, and there are all sorts of ways a creative group might get the water from the holding tank onto the terrormental. The tank walls are Toughness 8 (cutting or piercing) against attacks to puncture it, whereas a leg has Toughness 12 (cutting, fire, explosions, etc.) for bringing the whole kit and caboodle tumbling down.

Fire Terrormental: See page 116.



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Weaver

The Lakota Sioux tell stories about Iktomi, a trickster and spider-like god who sometimes controls others with strings. It's unknown whether the Reckoners' servants drew on legends of Iktomi when they spawned the weavers. However, given the similarities, and the fact that the manitous seldom let a disturbing idea go to waste, it seems likely.

Weavers are large, web-building spiders nearly the size of horses. The creatures have decidedly arachnid features, with multi-faceted eyes, eight spindly legs, and a bulbous abdomen. Their chitinous carapaces vary in color from black to mottled gray, and most have a distinctive mark on their abdomens—such as a skull-shaped white splotch, or the red hourglass of a black widow.

The abomination can insert a piece of nearly invisible webbing into the base of a victim's skull, rendering them a puppet to the weaver's will. The webbing is surprisingly resilient and can stretch for nearly half a mile or more.

Through the link, the weaver completely controls every action of the puppet. Although the monster cannot read minds through the string, its command is so strong that it can compel the victim to speak and act in an otherwise normal fashion, rendering its control nearly impossible to detect.

Spotting the thin filament requires a Notice roll (–6), but the web is easily detected by touch by rubbing the back of a victim's head. Although it resists attempts to break it by hand, any sharp item or cutting weapon can sever the line easily, instantly freeing the victim from the creature's thrall. Clever heroes might use the web to lead them to the weaver's lair—provided they keep track of it. Dropping it on the ground is an almost guaranteed way to lose it!

Although few weavers manage to ensnare more than a dozen or so this way before they're discovered, there is apparently no limit to the number of puppets a weaver can control at any time. It's not unusual for a weaver to have complex plans for its puppets, but some just use them to stock their larders…

Weaver

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Coup (Spider):** A deader gains the Wall Walker ability (see *Savage Worlds*). Unfortunately, his hands and feet are always tacky with a thin layer of adhesive goop.

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- **Fear (–2):** Confronting one of these horrors necessitates a Guts roll (–2).
- **Poison (–4):** The bite of a weaver causes instant paralysis to anyone who fails a Vigor roll. The paralysis lasts 2d6 minutes, during which time the abomination usually makes the victim a puppet.
- **Puppet:** A weaver can control any human's actions by attaching her to one of its strings. The process requires the victim to be helpless, whether in a web cocoon or paralyzed by the monster's poison. It takes a full round to attach the string, during which the monster can take no other action. While attached, the weaver has full control over the victim's actions, although Wild Cards can attempt to resist each round by winning an opposed Spirit roll. The string can be severed easily with any cutting weapon, but spotting one takes a Notice roll (–6). Controlling puppets is a free action for the weaver.
- **Size +2:** Weavers are eight feet long, with legs the same length.
- **Wall Walker:** A weaver can scuttle across vertical and even inverted surfaces at its normal pace.
- **Webbing:** Range 3/6/12. With a Shooting roll, a weaver casts a Small Burst Template-sized blob of webbing. Misses deviate by 1d6". If the weaver wins an opposed roll of its Shooting result versus the target's Agility, the victim is entangled and suffers a –2 penalty to Pace and all skills linked to Agility and Strength. With a raise, the victim is completely restrained, unable to move or use any skills linked to Agility or Strength. Each round, a webbed cowpoke may try to

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break free by making a Strength roll, at –4 if the weaver won with a raise.

Savage Tale: The Web It Weaves

The posse arrives in the small village of La Viuda (Fear Level 3). The town is a one-street affair, with likely less than 100 total citizens. La Viuda is a mix of older adobe and new wooden buildings, with a large two-story hacienda on the north side of town the most noteworthy structure.

Unknown to the posse, a weaver has taken up residence in the town and subjugated the residents to its will. The townsfolk view any travelers passing through as meals for their eight-limbed master.

Blood o' the Devil

The Sangre del Diablo is the only place in town to get a drink—or food or a bed, for that matter. The wooden structure is the only other two-story building in town besides the hacienda, and although it's seen better days it's far from dilapidated. There's no mistaking the intent of the sign on the front of the building: It depicts a red-horned devil holding a bottle of whiskey. A few horses are tied to a hitching post outside, and all look dusty and hard-ridden.

Read the following when your heroes go inside:

The saloon occupies much of the building's lower floor, although most of the tables are empty. In fact, a fine layer of dust coats the surface of many, a clear indication that La Viuda not only doesn't attract a great deal of visitors, but also that the locals aren't heavy drinkers.

Besides the bartender, the only other people in the saloon when you enter are a small band of rough-looking customers sitting as far from the entrance as possible. None of them have their back to the door. They stare at you for a few uncomfortable moments.

For his part, the bartender polishing glasses barely acknowledges you.

The barkeep's not a talkative sort, limiting his interaction with the characters to "yep," "nope," a grunt of barely feigned interest, or pouring shots of whiskey for them. The men at the table, however, hardly take their eyes off the posse from the time they pass the doorway.

Allow any hombre who returns the band's attention to make a Common Knowledge roll, at +2 if the character is a bounty hunter or lawman of some sort (including Texas Rangers). With a success, the sharp-eyed hero recognizes the men as El Tejon's Gang, a group of minor outlaws wanted in the area for everything from robbery to murder to bad hygiene. The leader of the gang is a particularly unsavory bandit who goes by the name El Tejon—the Badger—thanks to a distinctive white patch in his hair.

El Tejon himself carries a $250 bounty and the rest of his gang combines for another $200—all payable dead or alive. Should your pistoleros choose to confront the outlaws, the men are more than happy to skin their six-shooters and start blasting. On the other hand, if the posse either fails to recognize the bandits or chooses discretion, the gang becomes increasingly intoxicated and provocative, eventually progressing to outright insulting the saddletramps.

If the characters prove to have too thick of skins to make the first move, eventually El Tejon and his men start a fight, claiming some imagined insult. The bandits are ridiculously overconfident, egged on by a combination of a few

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recent successful robberies and alcohol—they fight to the death.

- **Bandits (1, plus 1 per hero):** Use Outlaw stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), 25 rounds, $5.

El Tejon

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: –2; **Grit:** 1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Mean, Overconfident, Wanted (Major)

Edges: Ambidextrous, Two-Fisted

Gear: Colt Frontiers x2 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1), 25 rounds for each, Bowie knife (Str+d4+1, AP 1), $25.

Clean-Up Crew

Shortly after the lead stops flying, a couple of men enter the Sangre. The bartender tells them to cart off the outlaws, explaining there is no local law in town. A county sheriff is responsible for any major crimes in the area, but mostly the town just handles affairs itself since very little happens in La Viuda—present shootout excluded.

If the heroes mention holding onto the bodies for a possible reward, the bartender tells the men to move the bodies to the nearby livery until the posse takes them away, provided the characters don't plan on leaving them there more than a day. Corpses and hot temperatures don't make good roommates!

At this point, the bartender pours a free round of drinks and introduces himself:

> *"Name's Emmet Perry, the barman around these parts. I knew it was only a matter o' time before them outlaws began making trouble. Without your intervenion, El Tejon and his gang might well have run roughshod over La Viuda. By way of thanks, why don't I set you up with a couple o' rooms for the night, free of charge?"*

Ulterior Motives

Perry, like everyone else in town, is a puppet of the weaver. The "free drinks" are intended to ensure any would-be victims sleep a little more deeply once they bed down. After a round or two, more townsfolk begin to filter into the Sangre, all more than happy to buy a round for the "heroes of La Viuda."

At the same time, other puppets carry the bodies of El Tejon and his men into the large hacienda to feed to the weaver. Should any of the posse decide to check on their bounties, they find the livery empty. Perry, if asked, gives them the run-around, sending them back and forth to the livery and nearly everywhere else (except the weaver's lair) in La Viuda looking for the outlaws' bodies.

If the posse takes Perry up on his offer of rooms, the weaver waits a few hours after the heroes head up to catch some shut-eye. Any cowpoke who tipped the bottle a little too heavily who's trying to stand guard or stay awake must make a Vigor roll (–2) to avoid drifting off due to the effects of the extra alcohol. Once the weaver believes they've had enough time to drift off to sleep, the abomination sends its puppets to capture or kill the sleeping sodbusters.

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Late Night Visit

When the townsfolk enter their rooms, heroes can attempt to wake up by making a Notice roll, at –2 if they imbibed overmuch. Those who fail are treated as surprised and lose their actions on the first round of combat.

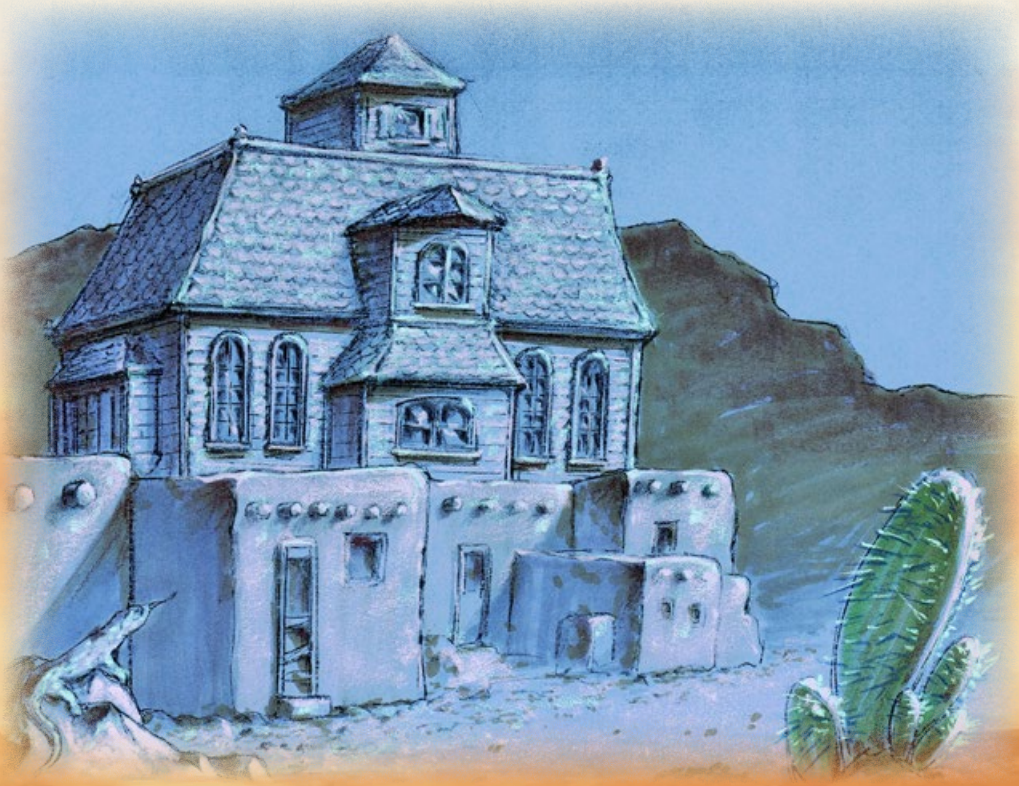
The townsfolk try to take the posse captive, tying them up while they're still out. This requires three uninterrupted rounds to accomplish. If they succeed, the caballeros don't awaken until they're webbed and in the weaver's lair (see below). However, if the group puts up a fight, the weaver is more than willing to have its minions kill the posse. After all, it can drain the blood from a corpse just as easily as a living victim. It's just not as much fun…

The puppets fight to the death: They have no choice. If a character somehow severs the filament on any of the townsfolk, that poor sod immediately stops fighting and surrenders.

- **Townsfolk (2, plus 2 per hero):** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Half are armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1) and the other half with double barrel shotguns (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1–3d6, RoF 1–2, Shots 2, +2 Shooting).

Step Into My Parlor

When the posse defeats the weaver's minions, if they freed any of the townsfolk from its control, the former victims volunteer everything they learned during their time as puppets. They direct the party to their erstwhile master's lair in the hacienda.



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Allow a Notice roll (–2) for any cowpoke who checks the bodies of the fallen townsfolk to discover the nearly invisible webbing attached to it. Although it takes a roundabout route through town and even a building or two, the filament eventually leads back to the weaver in the hacienda.

The hacienda is two stories tall and primarily built from adobe. Its previous owners were the weaver's first meals in La Viuda and the monster has laired here since then. The house was richly adorned and the recent lack of maintenance is just beginning to show with the odd broken window or unclapped shutter.

The abomination filled most of the house with sticky webbing. The webs are quite flammable and fire might seem like a quick solution, but the webbing is quickly consumed by a blaze and does little lasting damage to the hacienda. Worse, cocoons holding other travelers, both alive and dead, are suspended throughout the hacienda in the webs. Even a quick fire causes terrible injuries to those who've so far survived the monster's horrors—and might even raise the Fear level to 4!

Confronting the Weaver

The weaver made its nest in an upstairs bedroom farthest from the front door. Through its puppets, it's kept track of the heroes' movement through town and is ready when they arrive. The monster recently spawned young and has no intention of retreating.

Treat the weaver as On Hold when the posse enters. It begins combat by spitting a web at the largest concentration of hombres. A horde of tiny young weavers swarms out of the webbing and attacks at the same time. The adult abomination alternates its attacks between webbing and its bite, attempting to Incapacitate as many characters as possible.

One round after combat begins, more townsfolk arrive to aid the spider. As before, the puppets have no will of their own, so they fight to the death unless the party takes action to free them by destroying the filaments. Townsfolk released from the monster's control immediately flee in terror.

Setting fire to the webs causes an immediate 2d6 damage to everyone (and everything) in the room. Flammable objects have a chance to catch fire as detailed in *Savage Worlds*. More important, the fire destroys the filaments controlling the creature's puppets, releasing them all immediately.

When the weaver is slain, the remaining populace of La Viuda is freed from the abomination's control. All have complete memories of the weaver and its control, and most are badly shaken as a result. Unless the heroes tell a tale of victory to keep the Fear Level steady, it almost assuredly rises to 4.

Unfortunately, La Viuda has little in the way of reward to offer the heroes beyond its residents' thanks—which may be somewhat cool if the posse was overly bloodthirsty when dealing with the weaver's puppets!

Weaver: See page 124.

- **Young Weaver Swarm:** Use Swarm stats in *Savage Worlds*.
- **Townsfolk (2, plus 2 per hero):** Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Half are armed with Colt Army revolvers (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 6, AP 1) and the other half with double barrel shotguns (Range 12/24/48, 1–Damage 3d6, RoF 1–2, Shots 2, +2 Shooting).

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Wilton's Head

Diogenes Wilton came from a wealthy Back East family, one that's filled to the beaker's brim with extraordinarily talented scientists and inventors. Unfortunately, for the vast majority of those, "scientist" only describes them halfway. The other half is "mad." By and large, the Wiltons are a mass of well-educated lemmings rushing toward the brink of the cliffs of insanity.

Backed by copious amounts of family wealth, Diogenes Wilton pursued studies in every aspect of scientific endeavor in some of the finest institutions in the world. He proved a prodigy in nearly every sense of the word. Unfortunately, his intellect was outstripped by his ego.

Time and again, Wilton attempted ill-advised experiments only to have them go awry, and these failures often resulted in horrific injuries to himself. His skill in invention and his knowledge of both biology and engineering allowed him to compensate for a good while by fabricating an array of ghost-rock fueled prosthetics. But in time, Wilton found himself reduced to a little more than a head in a jar, remotely operating a variety of steam-powered surrogate limbs.

Not surprisingly, Wilton's studies wandered into patchwork science in an effort to recreate a suitable body. Further experimentation resulted in his invention of an implanted receiver that allows him to control a reanimated body as if it were his own. Initially, he used the creatures as simple lab drones, but as time progressed, he began sending them to perform "field work"—which is seldom legal, graverobbing laws being what they are.

Wilton's signal works at any distance, as it actually travels through the Hunting Grounds. Although he can only actively control a single such puppet at a time, Wilton retains his mental

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abilities and skills, as well as access to his arcane powers.

Wilton makes a good recurring villain. As long as his head remains alive, he can return to plague heroes again and again. He seldom conducts experiments near his actual location. His wealth provides access to considerable mundane resources, allowing him to work behind the scenes as well as through his patchwork puppets.

Diogenes Wilton

Attributes: Agility –, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength –, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Science) d12, Notice d10, Repair d10, Shooting d6, Weird Science d12

Charisma: –2; **Grit:** 3; **Pace:** –; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Delusional (Major, too numerous to count!), Ugly (Severed head)

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Eureka!, Filthy Rich, Gadgeteer, Mr. Fix It

Powers: *Bolt* (lightning gun), *greater healing* (potions and surgery), *stun* (static discharge), *zombie* (spinal activator). He can—and does—employ gizmos and the like through his surrogates.

Power Points: 25

Special Abilities:

- **Coup (Mad Insight):** The Harrowed gains an additional die type in Smarts, along with the Minor version of the Delusional Hindrance.
- **Jar Head:** Wilton is only a head in a jar. As such, he cannot move or interact with the outside world except through one of his creations (see below).
- **Puppet Master:** Wilton can control one patchwork creation from virtually any distance. The abomination must have one of Wilton's transmitters attached to its skull (or whatever passes for one). Wilton can see, hear, and access all the monstrosity's other senses while doing so. Although he can have any number of puppets prepared, Wilton can only actively control one such creation at a time.

Savage Tale: Gathering Specimens

Diogenes Wilton has wanted to get his hands on one of Hellstromme's automatons for some time. Although he's unaware of the secret of the devices, he believes that a working model might well make the perfect home for his orphaned brain.

Word reached the scientist about a bloody clash between Wasatch forces and those of Union Blue (or Empire Rails, depending when your campaign is set, Marshal) just a few days ago. Rumor has it that an automaton seized up on the battlefield and didn't self-destruct as the contraptions are normally prone to do. Wilton dispatched one of his surrogates to the town nearest the scene of the fight—which just happens to be the one the posse currently occupies.

Now all he needs is a few hired hands to help with the heavy lifting.

New in Town

The heroes are in a small railroad town called Danville (Fear Level 2) when they're approached by Diogenes Wilton in the guise of one of his patchwork puppets. He's well-dressed, if perhaps overly so for the West. He favors high-necked collars and long sleeves to hide the scars of his patchwork surgeries, but

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since he comes off as a tinhorn scholar, it doesn't seem out of place.

If the heroes have never encountered the mad scientist before, he uses his real name. Otherwise he provides an alias, as his physical appearance is certain to be different from any previous encounters the cowpokes have had with him.

After introducing himself, Wilton cuts quickly to a business proposition:

> *"As your band seems to be somewhat out of place here, I am assuming you are not part of the local riffraff. I am in need of a group capable of handling itself in the face of possible adversities, and I am willing to reimburse you well for your services.*
>
> *"Recently, there was an armed conflict nearby involving hirelings of the Wasatch and Union Blue railroads. Rumor has it that an item of technological interest was abandoned by Wasatch employees. I am interested in obtaining that item before it is recovered by other parties. It is possible there may be some…resistance to my efforts. I would engage your services toward that end."*

Wilton offers $100 per person up front, with an additional $10 a day salary. If he is successful in getting his hands on the device in question, he promises an additional $50 per person. A successful Persuasion roll results in him upping those amounts by 10 percent for each success and raise.

The scientist is hesitant to discuss what it is he hopes to find, citing a need for secrecy while near "prying ears." He willingly agrees to tell the heroes once they're out of town.

Diogenes Wilton: Use Patchwork Man stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Add Wilton's skills and powers. He also carries a repair kit. A successful Notice roll (–6) spots the transmitter attached to his head.

Body Snatching

Either shortly before or immediately after the heroes are approached by Wilton, they hear that Danville recently has been plagued by a rash of grave robbings. Whispers of ghouls and walkin' dead circulate in the saloons, but no one is talking too loud about the subject as of yet. Digging up the dead and making off with their remains isn't exactly considered polite conversation in most circles. By and large, the townsfolk are dealing with it by the tried-and-true tactic of ignoring the whole mess.

Regardless, their suspicions are a bit off the mark: The actual corpse is none other than Wilton. He had to piece a puppet together hastily for the journey, but was able to prepare fully only a head for a long-term surrogate. The rest he assembled upon reaching Danville. It was in this newly recycled body that Wilton approached the heroes with his job offer.

Wilton disposed of his former puppet and the leftovers from his other "acquisitions" in a mass grave some distance from town, to be certain no one would find the evidence until long after he'd departed.

Even if the posse takes notice of the body-snatching incidents, they're unlikely to connect it to Wilton's new surrogate. A Streetwise roll reveals that a stranger appeared in town shortly before the graves were violated and that he has since disappeared, seemingly without a trace. No one knows much about the fellow except that he came in on a westbound train.

Should any of the characters check on Wilton's possible involvement, another Streetwise roll tells her that Wilton definitely arrived in town after the robberies. A raise on the roll discloses that no one recalls his actual arrival,

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though. All folks recall is that he was not present at the time of the vandalism.

Into the Breach

Wilton's ready to head out immediately. He has a wagon ready to transport his "acquisition," and only needs to hitch up the team of mules, but he is easily persuaded to wait until the next morning. However, the battlefield lies the better part of a day outside of Danville, and even the impatient scientist is willing to admit the wisdom in delaying to avoid traveling at night. He also concedes to waiting a day if the heroes have any preparations to make before departing—or merely *claim* to have them, to look further into the recent grave desecrations!

At first, the trip out of Danville proves uneventful. The scientist allows unmounted posse members to ride in the wagon with the caveat that they may have to walk on the way back if the automaton is indeed still intact. Anyone who accepts his offer to ride in the wagon quickly learns the man is not an experienced teamster. He seems to have a knack for hitting every rut and ditch and hole along the way.

It's not long before Wilton's subpar driving skills begin to take their toll on the wagon. Several times he manages to get the vehicle stuck, requiring a fair amount of time and sweat from the heroes to get it rolling again. Only after he comes within a hair's breadth of breaking an axle—and putting an abrupt end to his mission to acquire the automaton—does he allow another character to take the reins.

By now, the expedition's timetable has been so delayed that the heroes do not arrive at the battlefield until nightfall. Wilton suggests the group set camp a short distance from the actual scene of the battle. Battlefields in the Weird West aren't safe places, even long after the fighting's finished. The wreckage from the battle, possible unexploded munitions, and the like make attempting to pick through the remains in the dark a hazardous occupation, to say the least.

If they ignore his suggestion, the intrepid nightstalkers are unable to locate the automaton in the dark.

The Tin Man

The next day, the heroes can more easily survey the scene of the rail gangs' clash. The fight was spread out over an area nearly two miles square, composed of rolling hills intercut with gullies and draws. Picking through it takes some time. However, shortly before midday the adventurers hit paydirt. Read the following:

> *The automaton stands at the bottom of a dry wash. When you reach the scene, the mechanical man is motionless. A pair of vultures rest on its shoulders, taking wing as you approach. A pile of bullet-riddled corpses lies not far away, testament to the fact the unholy device functioned at least long enough to kill off a passel of Union Blue enforcers.*

It's Raining Men!

Wilton is delighted, but before he has a chance to examine the automaton, the scientist is interrupted by a rapidly approaching, loud roar. Soaring down into the gully are a number of well-armed men wearing rocket packs. The newcomers—a Wasatch X-squad—land in a circle around the posse.

The Wasatch enforcers are tasked with securing the automaton until a steam wagon can arrive the next day to transport it back to Denver. Failing that, they have orders to blow up the war machine using its own failsafe device or good, old-fashioned dynamite.

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They're dead set against letting one of Hellstromme's most prized toys fall into anyone's hands but theirs—and make that point clear immediately by opening fire with their Gatling pistols upon landing!

The rail warriors also use their dynamite bundles as impromptu grenades (see the *Deadlands Player's Guide* for rules on using dynamite as a weapon) if the heroes clump together. The automaton is very unstable. Any damage causes it to self-destruct on a roll of 1 on a d6 (Damage 3d6, LBT). This includes stray rounds (see Innocent Bystanders in *Savage Worlds*) and explosions!

The trip to the battlefield exhausted the ghost rock supply for the X-Squad's rocket packs. With no resupply until the arrival of the steam wagon, they're left without any effective retreat. The X-squadders fight to the death.

- **X-Squad (2 per hero):** Use Rail Warrior (Wasatch) stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Add Piloting d8 and Throwing d6. Each is armed with a rocket pack, Gatling pistol (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 2, Shots 12, AP 1), a bundle of two sticks of dynamite (Range 4/8/16, Damage 3d6, SBT), and 50 spare rounds of .45 ammo.

Party of One

Two rounds after the X-squad arrives, the "pile of bodies" shudders and reveals itself to actually be a 'glom! Deal it an Action Card at the beginning of the third round.

Since they are probably fairly distracted by the formerly flying men shooting at them with automatic pistols, allow each hero a Notice roll to spot the 'glom before its first action. Don't forget Guts rolls (–2) for everyone who gets a look at it.

On its turn, the 'glom opens fire on the nearest combatants, targeting a different opponent with each of its weapons. It

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has a rifle for each of its component bodies and doesn't discern between X-squadders or posse members. Once the abomination starts firing, no Notice rolls are necessary to realize there's a new threat on the field.

The Wasatch enforcers alternate their attacks between the monster and the heroes, depending on which poses the greatest threat to them personally at the time.

As soon as he sees the 'glom, Wilton exclaims,

> *"Absolutely fascinating! I never imagined such a creature existed!"*

He pauses for the next round to study the monster. After taking a moment to assess the situation, the scientist rushes at the 'glom. His action is so unexpected, neither the remaining X-squad members nor the 'glom take any action to stop him.

Upon reaching the abomination, Wilton literally dives into the monster's arms. The creature's next round is spent absorbing Wilton's body into it. It shivers for a moment after adding the scientist's body to its own, then stands stock still. Suddenly, all of its heads laugh as one. In a single voice, the creature says,

> *"This is amazing! Such power—the implications are astounding. I wonder how many others I can add to the mass…"*

Wilton then begins his *new* "experiment"—attempting to kill and then absorb as many new corpses as possible. He makes no distinction between his former employees and Wasatch enforcers.

Initially, the abomination is composed of two corpses, plus an additional corpse for each posse member. Once Wilton is absorbed, increase its size and stats appropriately, and Wilton's noggin becomes the primary head. In addition to the 'glom's normal multiple attacks, Wilton can also use his gizmos, but only one in any given round.

'Glom: See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. It's composed of three corpses, plus an additional corpse per posse member. Each component corpse is armed with a Winchester '73 rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 15, AP 2).

Aftermath

Should the heroes defeat the X-squad and the 'glom, they can try to salvage the automaton themselves—assuming it survived the fight. Loading the volatile gizmo onto the wagon is a hazardous task and triggers two d6 rolls to see if it detonates, as above. The trip back to Danville is no easier, as the constant jostling and bouncing amounts to one roll every hour of travel. That's eight in total!

If they're lucky enough to make it back to town with the automaton, they can certainly try to sell it to one of the rail barons or even back to Wasatch. That is likely to be an adventure (or three!) in itself, and how much the enterprising heroes can garner for their find is up to you, Marshal. Regardless, the device doesn't survive any attempts to reverse engineer it, exploding as soon as its casing is cracked.

Examining Wilton's puppet after the 'glom is defeated, the sodbusters find transmitters attached to its skull, as well as patchwork scars telling them something rotten was afoot from the start. Where that leads is entirely in your hands as well!

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Humans

Whether range-riding cowboys, amoral gamblers, or devoted and stubborn lawmen, the Weird West is full of all kinds of folks who are just that-folks.

The profiles below give you a few more entries to round out those found in the Deadlands Marshal's Guide.

Cowboy

Weird or not, the American West's most vibrant symbol is the cowboy. These saddletramps ride the range or the cattle trail. Most settlements west of the Mississippi have their fair share of cowboys, and any cowtown is full of them blowing off steam.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d4, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Lassos) d8, Notice d6, Riding d10, Shooting d6, Survival d4, Taunt d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Poverty, Quirk

Edges: Steady Hands

Gear: Cowboys are armed with a variety of rifles and/or pistols, horse, chaps, saddle. A lariat (Parry –1, Reach +2, Can be used to perform an Agility Trick using the wielder's Fighting skill. Success means the opponent suffers –2 Parry until his next action. With a raise the opponent falls prone, suffers –2 Parry, and is Shaken) is a standard piece of equipment as well.

Gambler

This isn't your average card player at a dusty saloon table. This is the professional card shark who makes a good living fleecing others of their hard-earned grubstakes. These high rollers are usually found on riverboats or in fancy casinos in rowdy—but rich—boomtowns.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Habit (Minor)

Edges: Card Sharp, Charisma, Strong Willed

Gear: Derringer (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Shots 2, AP 1), deck of cards, dice.

Lawman

Not every riot gets a Ranger. In fact, most get handled by the town marshal or deputies. This represents the run-of-the-mill lawman whose duties range

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from corralling drunken cowboys all the way to leading the occasional posse.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

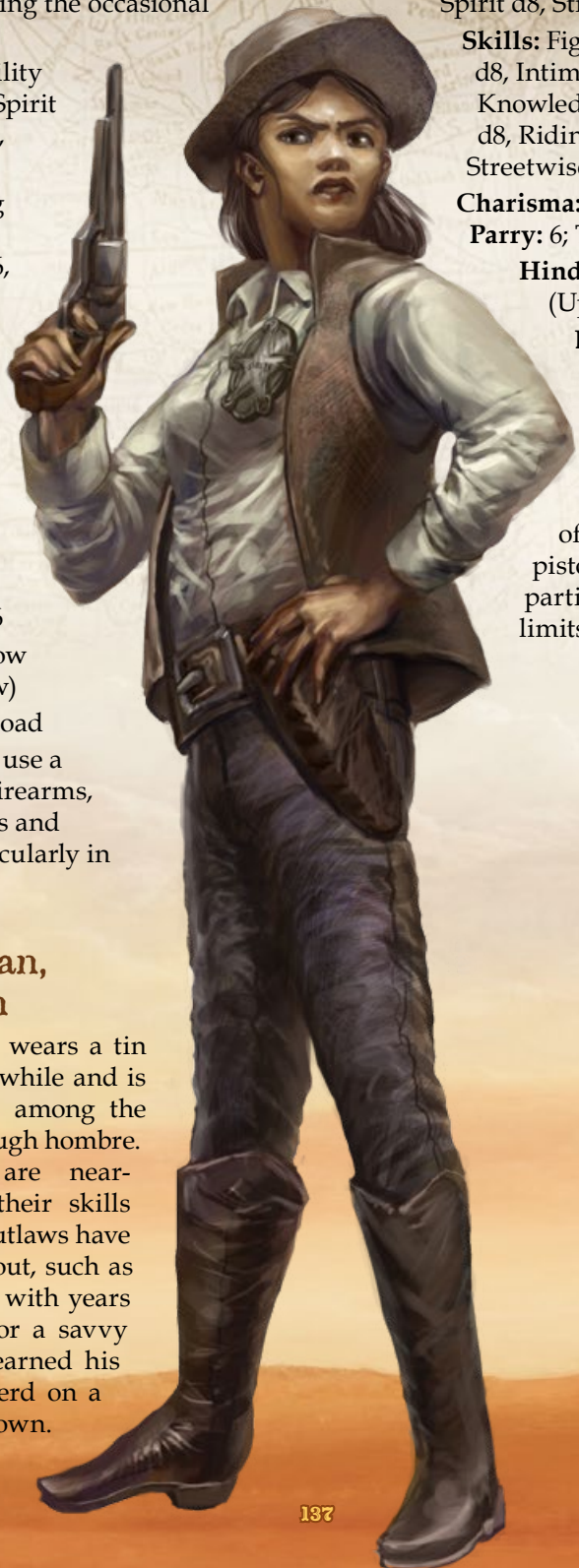
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Law) d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Streetwise d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Vow (Uphold the law)

Edges: Speed Load

Gear: Lawmen use a wide range of firearms, but favor pistols and shotguns, particularly in town limits.



Lawman, Veteran

Anyone who wears a tin star for a long while and is still numbered among the living is one tough hombre. These folks are near-legendary in their skills and the stuff outlaws have nightmares about, such as a U.S. Marshal with years of experience or a savvy marshal who earned his spurs riding herd on a raucous boomtown.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Law) d6, Notice d8, Riding d6, Shooting d10, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: 0; **Grit:** 3; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Loyal, Vow (Uphold the law)

Edges: Dodge, Marksman, Quick Draw, Speed Load, True Grit

Gear: Lawmen use a wide range of firearms, but favor pistols and shotguns, particularly in town limits.

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Critters

From volatile bears to famished boars, from lowing longhorns to cougars on the prowl, the Weird West is home to a bizarre variety of fauna. That's a fancy word for "critters", greenhorn!

These varmints give you a few more threats to sic on your posse, beyond those provided in the Deadlands Marshal's Guide.

Bear, Medium

Black bears are far more commonly encountered than grizzlies, and range from coast to coast and from Texas to Montana. Although they're not as fearsome as their larger cousins, an angry black bear is more than a match for an unprepared sodbuster.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Bear Hug:** A bear doesn't actually "hug" its victims, instead it attempts to use its weight to pin an opponent, exposing it to the bear's teeth and claws. A bear that hits an opponent with a raise has pinned its foe. The victim may only attempt to escape the "hug" on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Size +1:** Black bears average around 300 pounds, but larger specimens may reach upwards of 500 pounds or more.

Boar, Wild

A large, ill-tempered, feral hog. Not originally native to North America, these animals are the descendants of domestic pigs that were released or escaped into the wild.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Berserk:** When a hog is Shaken it goes berserk, gaining +2 to all Fighting and Strength rolls and Toughness, but reducing its Parry by 2.
- **Hardy:** A second Shaken does not cause a wound to a wild boar.
- **Tusks:** Str+d4.

Longhorn

Although we're calling it specifically a "Longhorn," this can also represent the average cow or steer in any herd of cattle. Though it's less aggressive than a bull, it may be dangerous if angered—or in a large, stampeding herd.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d10

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Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Survival d4

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Gore:** Cattle use the charge maneuver to gore their opponents with their horns. If they can move at least 6″ before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
- **Horns:** Str+d6
- **Size +2:** Longhorns are large creatures, weighing well over half a ton.

Mountain Lion

Also called a cougar or puma. The largest big cat in the Weird West, a mountain lion is usually a tawny color, although jet black versions have been reported.

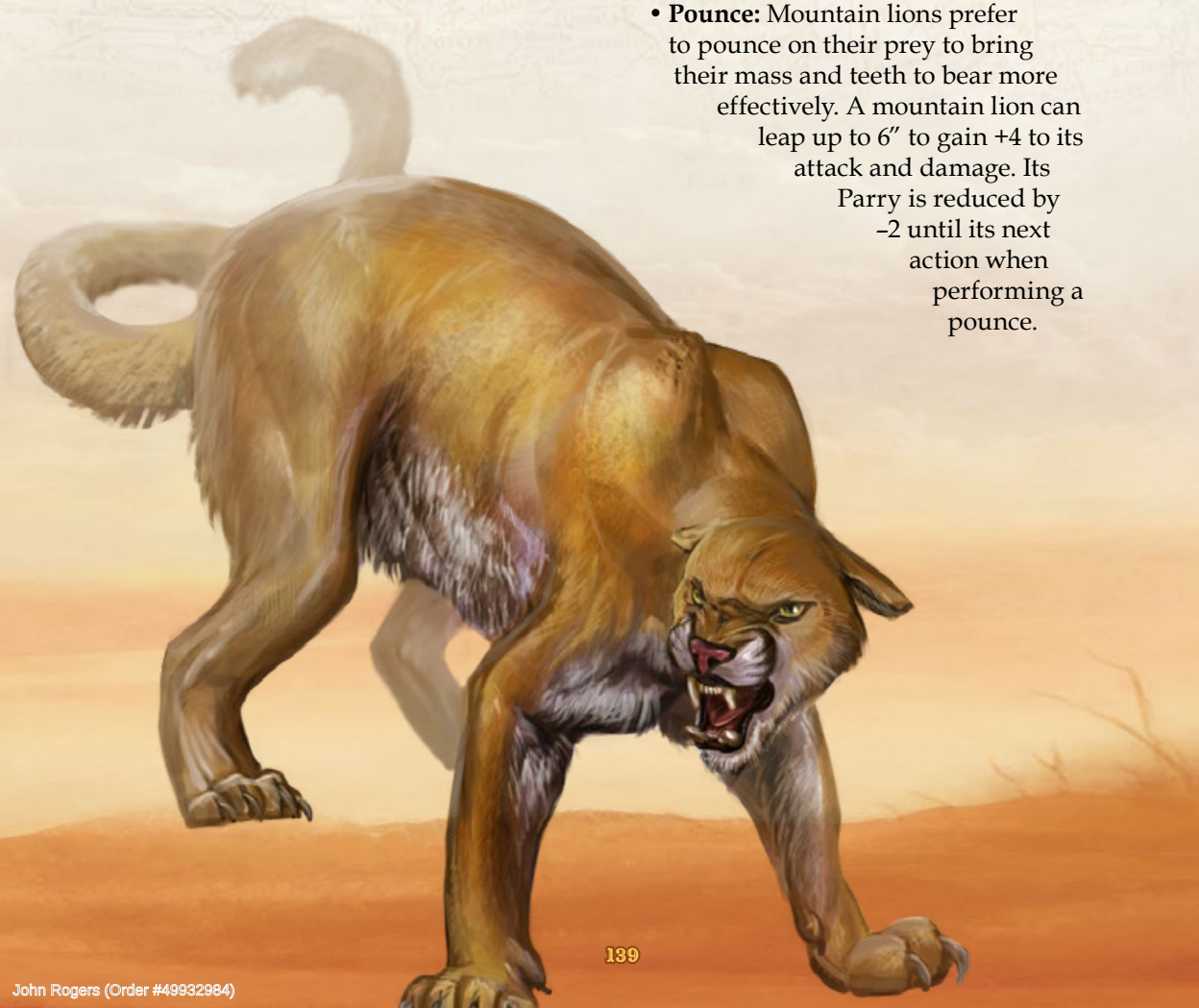
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Tracking d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Improved Frenzy:** A cougar may make two attacks each round with no penalty.
- **Low Light Vision:** Halve the penalties for Dim and Dark lighting conditions.
- **Pounce:** Mountain lions prefer to pounce on their prey to bring their mass and teeth to bear more effectively. A mountain lion can leap up to 6″ to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by –2 until its next action when performing a pounce.



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