

THIS HERE'S TYRANNOSAURUS TEX

Some years ago a movie was made entitled *The Valley of Gwangi*, in which a group of cowboys stumble across a lost valley in the American Southwest populated by prehistoric dinosaurs and mammals. In the course of an impromptu rodeo, the cowboys encounter the uncrowned king of the valley: a great *Tyrannosaurus Rex* known as "Gwangi." The rest of the film is reminiscent of *King Kong*, with the capture of Gwangi, the attempt to exhibit him commercially, his escape and final destruction. Did the movie have to end this way? Maybe not.

The following scenario is freely adapted from the movie, and was designed to fit in with an ongoing *Boot Hill™* campaign if desired, or as a one-evening adventure unconnected with the regular goings-on. It should provide some lively entertainment for the players (and for the BH gamemaster as well; the look on the player's faces when he describes the figure towering over their characters will be something to treasure until the referee is old and grey.) Rather than creating a *Lost Valley* and the characteristics of the hordes of other beasts therein, an alternative method of getting "Gwangi" into play is given.

The Scenario

It is spring in El Dorado County. For two weeks thunderstorms have lashed at the countryside; flash floods and landslides are reported in the hills and mountains around Promise City. As the weather subsides ("the worst gully-washer in forty-odd years," say the old-timers) rumors of a great "devil-beast" are heard by traders doing business with some Indians in the mountains. The monster was supposedly released by the powers beyond during the height of the storm's fury, and now roams the hills at will. Some of the Indians believe that the beast, which they call *The Avenger*, was sent to destroy the white man and return the land to its original occupants. Other Indians, including most of the ones claiming to have seen the beast, regard the creature as evil and potentially hostile to all men.

These rumors are heard in the bars and taverns of Promise City, but are usually told with great derision and obvious amusement or contempt. Soldiers from Fort Griffin regard the rumors as a possible prelude to a general Indian uprising, believing the story to be the vision of a medicine man.

As time progresses, ranchers near the mountains discover the tracks of some unknown creature, unlike any tracks ever seen before. Many people regard them as a hoax, though the ranchers finding the tracks swear they aren't. Some reports of missing cattle are made known in the same area. Finally, a lone rider enters town, obviously panicked and having ridden hard for most of the day, and tells a tale of having met a huge reptilian beast in the mountains that attacked his party. He doesn't know what has happened to his friends, who rode off into a canyon to escape the creature.

When a posse is organized and goes into the area, the men discover the

bodies of two of the missing men, partially devoured, and their mounts. Giant, three-toed tracks cover the area and lead away from the site, but the trail is lost as it enters rockier ground. The bodies of the men and animals show the marks of teeth larger than anything known, and the members of the posse believe it is impossible for this to have been the work of Indians or any other humans. The town marshal posts a reward of \$50,000 for the killing or capture of the monstrous predator.

Referee's Information

The thunderstorms caused a landslide, opening a natural cavern in the mountains. Through an unusual combination of geological circumstances, a Tyrannosaurus was trapped in that cavern millions of years ago and preserved alive but in hibernation; the rain waters washed away the surrounding rock cover and awakened the slumbering giant. It is now roaming about the country in search of food, and relishes the new diet of horses, cows, and humans it finds in the rough terrain. It has no established lair, but wanders freely in a fifty-mile radius around the place it emerged from. It fears nothing. Unless cut short by act of man or God, it has a life expectancy of another 50 years.

Some basic information on the Tyrannosaurus Rex will be helpful in running the adventure. The creature, by the best paleontological figuring available today, weighed eight tons in life, stood twenty feet high and had an overall length of forty to fifty feet. It moved with a waddling gait, using its tail to counterbalance its head and chest as it moved. It was fairly fast-moving, despite the apparent clumsiness of its motion.

While Tyrannosaurs existed, some sixty million years ago and more, they were at the top of the ecological food chain and preyed on any and all creatures across the American West and Asia. Their jaws were four feet long and jammed with four- to six-inch-long teeth. Tyrannosaurs had thick hides and were probably dark in color (black, grey, or reddish). Their forelimbs were useless as weapons and served only to help them get up from the ground after resting.

One of the books listed in this article's bibliography (*The Day of the Dinosaur*) discusses some of the finer aspects of dinosaur hunting, supposing that such was possible to the modern sportsman, and tells about shooting Tyrannosaurs in particular. It ain't easy, pard. First of all, it is difficult to say what the best place is to shoot at. A Tyrannosaur has a very tiny brain (though with highly developed reflexes and senses), and head shots are not necessarily fatal. The heart is the best aiming point, but the de Camps note that the average Tyrannosaur heart weighed somewhere between fifty and one hundred pounds and a direct hit with an elephant rifle would probably only slow the creature, rather than kill it immediately. Shots put elsewhere are a waste of time, and are dangerous for the hunter besides (who, in such cases, quickly becomes the hunted).

The Boot Hill characteristics of an adult Tyrannosaur given below are arbitrary, of course, but are based on all available information. The statistics may be modified as desired, but in any event, it is recommended that it be very hard for a character to kill a dinosaur of any kind with only one shot. The stopping power of weapons in the 1800's was not as great as the weapons the de Camps spoke

of in their discussion, and besides, a prolonged gunbattle will generate more excitement in the game.

An interesting side note: Paleontologists (fossil-hunters) and other scientists were unaware of the existence of Tyrannosaurs until the late 1800's and early 1900's, when several skeletons were discovered in Montana. Any scientists in the time of Boot Hill, might, however, be aware of the fossils of related species, such as Megalodon and Antrodemus (which were discovered earlier than Tyrannosaurus),

Tyrannosaurus Rex in Boot Hill:

Strength: 250

Speed: 27" tactical scale; 4 hexes/turn strategic scale. (Tactical scale turns are 10 seconds long; strategic turns are an hour long.)

Attacks: One every turn (10 seconds) for 2-11 wounds (1d10+1) per bite. Roll for the effects and location of each wound separately.

To hit: 85% base chance; modifiers for target condition (obscured, moving, etc.) apply, as well as modifiers for the wounded condition of the Tyrannosaurus.

Range of Attack: From where it stands, a Tyrannosaurus has a "reach" of three hexes, tactical scale (about 18'), when it leans down to bite at someone. The Tyrannosaurus will attack last in order in each turn that it attacks.

Morale: 100%. Absolutely fearless.

Additional notes: A Tyrannosaurus cannot be stunned unless dynamite is used (see Dynamite Rule below). All minor characters must make an immediate morale check at -60% upon first confronting this monster, fleeing immediately if they fail. Characters firing weapons or shooting bows at a Tyrannosaurus have a +15% to hit due to its large size.

Hit Location Chart for Tyrannosaurus

| | | Light | Serious | Mortal |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| Dice | Location | Wound | Wound | Wound |
| 01-20 | Tail | 01-80 | 81-00 | -- -- |
| 21-50 | Rear Leg** | 01-60 | 61-00 | -- -- |
| 51-55 | Forearm** | 01-70 | 71-00 | -- -- |
| 56-75 | Abdomen | 01-50 | 51-99 | 00 |
| 76-85 | Chest | 01-40 | 41-95 | 96-00 |
| 86-00 | Head & Neck | 01-40 | 41-98 | 99-00 |

** 01-50 = Left, 51-00 = Right.

A result of Light Wound means a deduction of 3 points from the Tyrannosaurus's strength; a result of Serious Wound deducts 7 points. If a Mortal Wound is received, the Tyrannosaurus will continue to fight for 1-10 turns before collapsing and dying. During that time it will move at half normal speed and have a base chance of 45% to hit a target, making one attack every two turns until death.

If the Tyrannosaurus's strength is reduced to zero or less from non-mortal

wounds, it becomes unconscious and has a 30% chance of dying 1-10 hours later. Thereafter, if it survives, it regains one strength point per day, to a maximum of its original strength. If captured alive, it must be fed its own weight (8 tons) in raw meat every month to keep it healthy. It will also be active and extremely dangerous, and any keepers will have their hands full!

Using the above chart, there is a 1% chance of inflicting a mortal wound on the Tyrannosaurus with any single shot. Referees should adjust hit location to take into account attacks made from ground level, since these beasts had hips 10' off the ground and knees 6' high. An Indian warrior with a tomahawk would score a hit on a location between 01-50 on the above chart (a leg or tail) unless the dinosaur bends down to bite him; if that happens, hits may be registered elsewhere on the body or head.

The Dynamite Rule

For every two sticks of dynamite used against a Tyrannosaurus in one attack, there is a cumulative 50% chance of stunning it for one turn (10 seconds), a 25% chance of inflicting a wound or wounds (d10: 1-2 = one wound, 3-5 = two wounds, 6-8 = three wounds, 9-0 = four wounds), and a cumulative 10% chance of killing it outright. This percentage is reduced by 20% (for stunning, wounding, and killing) for each 2" (12') that the monster is distant from the explosion. For example, 20 sticks of dynamite exploded 4" (24') from a Tyrannosaurus has a 460% chance of stunning it ($500-40=460$), a 210% chance of wounding it ($250-40=210$) and a 60% chance of killing it ($100-40=60$). Treat any amount of dynamite greater than 40 sticks as 40 sticks.

Good luck, and hoping you have a fast horse!

Bibliography

de Camp, L. Sprague, and Catherine Crook de Camp, *The Day of the Dinosaur*, Curtis Books, N.Y., 1968, paperback.
Desmond, Adrian J., *The Hot-Blooded Dinosaurs*, Warner Books, N.Y., 1977, paperback.
