

The **Black Circle:**
Unholy Alliance



JOHN GOFF



THE BLACK CIRCLE: UNHOLY ALLIANCE

BY: JOHN "CABAL IN MY POCKET" GOTTF



The Black Circle

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Deadlands created by Shane Lacy Hensley.

Dedicated to: Everyone who has stayed with us since the beginning. Especially those who voted with their dinero during the "January Surprise."]

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SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

The book you hold in your hands contains information on the Black Circle, in case you couldn't guess from its title. Fair enough, you're probably thinking, but what is the Black Circle?

We don't want to give away too much here—that would spoil half the fun. And, of course, the answer to that question's going to vary according to who's asking. For players, we've got one answer and for Marshals we've got the real one...we mean, *another* one.

But that doesn't really answer your question, does it?

Okay, try this one: the Black Circle may or may *not* be a conspiracy involving just about every secret society and blackhearted villain in the Weird West. Or maybe it just includes a few of them.

Only your Marshal knows for sure...

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Obviously this book is going to have the greatest appeal to Marshals. And, we're pretty sure there's enough plot hooks, ideas, and secrets in here to make any Marshal's mouth water!

But where does that leave the players? After all, a book on a secret organization that tells the players everything that's going on really kind of defeats the purpose of itself if you think about it.

Well, don't lose hope! One of the Epitaph's intrepid reporters has already started digging into the Circle and who's involved. His notes and journal entries follow. Unfortunately, the poor sod met an untimely end before he could piece it all together. However, a sharp posse might just be able to find a valuable clue or at least a starting point in his work!

On top of that, you'll also find a new *arcane background* in these pages. It's called *blood magic*, and it's perfect for those folks out there who think hucksters are too tame! Would-be sorcerers beware, though—blood magic carries a few dangers all its own.

SHAMELESS PLUGS

As long as you've got the *Weird West Player's Guide* and *Marshal's Handbook*, you don't need anything else to get full enjoyment from *The Black Circle*. However, if you're interested on expanding on this source material, here a couple of recommendations for more source material:

River o' Blood: This boxed set covers the lower Mississippi River, including Memphis and New Orleans.

Doomtown or Bust! All the info on the town of Gomorra prior to Knicknevin's rampage., made popular by the *Doomtown* CCG can be found here.

Back East: The South: What's happening east of the Mississippi in the Confederacy.

Back East: The North: As above, but this time from the Union's perspective.

Dead Presidents: This adventure throws the posse into the hotseat opposite one of the most powerful men in the Weird West.

USING THIS BOOK

Like many of our books, *The Black Circle* is divided into three parts: a **Posse Section**, **No Man's Land**, and the **Marshal's Handbook**. If you're a player, you should check with your Marshal to see if your character gets hold of this special edition of the *Epitaph*.

Posse Section: The first chapter of the book contains the notes and transcriptions of Daniel Clark, late of the *Tombstone Epitaph*. It's presented as a special publication of that newspaper.

No Man's Land deals with playing a few character types who probably aren't strict adherents to the "law of the West"—rail gang enforcers, blood magicians, and even Whateley relatives.

Marshal's Handbook: This is where the fun truly beings. Here you'll find the complete rundown on a few powerful opponents for your heroes, including profiles of some of the Weird West's most powerful villains! There are also a few new black magic spells, and, of course, what happens to blood magicians when a spell goes wrong.



**The Black Circle!
A Tombstone
Epitaph Special**

R. PAPPAS '86

Epitaph Special Edition: Conspiracy of Lies

1877 Edition

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Editor's Introduction

Those of you familiar with our publication know that it's unusual for me to take up space in a piece with an introduction. Ordinarily, I'm content to let our reporters speak for themselves. If I didn't think them capable of doing so, I wouldn't have hired them in the first place. Unfortunately, in this case, the reporter's piece doesn't tell the whole story. Neither can he further expound on his article.

You see, the journalist—Daniel Clark, a good friend of mine for many years—disappeared shortly after sending me his last set of notes. As you'll read in the following pages, Daniel believed he was beginning to uncover the roots of a conspiracy that reached across nation and at least one continent.

After reviewing his notes and comments, I fear that not only was he correct in his belief, but that in the end, his investigation may have brought himself to the attention of the members of this conspiracy. Since I have not heard from him in over three months, I am now concerned that he has met with foul play.

If that is indeed the case, I do not intend to allow that good man to have suffered such a fate in vain. In the hopes that his research and efforts may aid someone in continuing his work to its righteous conclusion—the exposure of the individuals and organizations responsible—I have decided to present his dispatches to you, the good readers of the *Epitaph*.

The presentation of this special edition may seem somewhat uncultured and rough to our regular readership. That's because I've chosen to present Daniel's notes and remarks exactly as I received them. Without his input, I fear that any editing or "cleaning-up" on my part may alter or even completely destroy a potential lead. My Editor-in-Chief, John Clum, agrees.

With that in mind, I ask that any of you in our audience who have further contributions regarding Daniel's research to please forward it on to the offices of the *Epitaph*. Mr. Clum will then forward the material on to me so that I can continue to compile information on the subject. With a little luck, we may one day decipher this cryptic conspiracy. Then we'll let our good friends the Rangers take over.

Throughout the text, I have taken some liberty in adding notes where either the situation has changed since Daniel's report or more detailed information has already been uncovered. I've also included photographs provided from either our archives or other *Epitaph* journalists in the field to further illuminate the text.

About the Author

Daniel Clark has written a number of short pieces for the *Epitaph*. His largest work for the paper was the *Guide to the Mighty Mississippi*, published early last year.

He attended the University of Louisiana and later served in the Confederate Army, leaving service in early 1863 after suffering a wound at the Battle of Chickamauga. Following his tour in the Army, Daniel returned to the riverboats of the Mississippi, occasionally scribing an article or two for local papers or the *Epitaph*.

At last report, Daniel was in the vicinity of Gomorra, CA. He has since vanished.



Last known photo of Daniel Clark, taken in Memphis, TN.

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Daniel's Journals

January 12, 1876

Dear Lacy,

I'm sure you've been paying attention to the reports coming from New Orleans over the faltering financial solvency of the Bayou Vermillion Railroad. "Baron" LaCroix has gone so far as to claim that unless his company receives governmental support, he may not even be able to guarantee eminent domain support for the Confederate government should conditions along the border or in California worsen.

My gut tells me this is merely a ploy to poke at Richmond's obvious favoritism for Lee's Dixie Rails. However, as often as you've told me a reporter has to trust his instincts, LaCroix may be telling the truth. If so, we could be witnessing the downfall of a rail baron and the collapse of one of the most influential private organizations in the Southwest.

Either way, I think there's a story here. I need a break from the river for a while—my leg's acting up and some time walking it out on dry land might be just the thing. Unless I hear otherwise, I'm going to follow up on this.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel C. Clark

New Orleans, Louisiana

January 23, 1877

My initial inquiries do seem to indicate that Bayou Vermillion is indeed running low on funds. Like many of the major railroads, it has been funded largely by its sole owner, in this case "Baron" Simone LaCroix. I've not had any luck determining where the Baron got his starting capital—the best I've been able to do so far is learn that he arrived from Haiti with a sizeable amount of cash in 1862.

Rumor has it, not surprisingly, that the nonstop conflict with his competitors, primarily Dixie Rails and Black River has put a substantial dent in his operating capital. On top of that, Bayou Vermillion has been the most aggressive (or lucky) builder, extending its rail line the farthest west of any of the major railroads thus far. Together, those two factors may have drained LaCroix's coffers.

Only the fact that most of the ghost rock filtering into the Confederacy from the Maze is carried east on Bayou Vermillion has kept the Baron's trains running this long. With the trouble reported with the Apaches west of Tombstone and Mexican incursions on the Ghost Trail cutting ghost rock shipments, LaCroix's claims are beginning to ring true.

I can't say I'll be disappointed if that's the case. If I had to pick a rail baron to go down first, I'd be hard pressed to find a better candidate than LaCroix!

January 27, 1877

Following up on a tip from one of my sources here in the city that LaCroix's right-hand man, Damien Brionne, was seen in the company of an unknown gentlemen at the St. Louis Hotel, I paid that fine establishment a visit. A few—actually *quite* a few!—dollars later, I managed to convince the desk clerk to share a little information with me.

Apparently the gentleman's last name was Curwen (no first name was entered in the register) and his room was billed to Brionne. Now, anyone who's familiar with how things work here in New Orleans knows anything in Brionne's name is really in LaCroix's! Beyond the fact that he had a "Yankee accent," the clerk was unable to provide any further information.

I put two of my most reliable researchers on the docks and train stations to track down any arrival information on the man. (I know most

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reporters call them "snitches," but I prefer to give them the benefit of respectability—and doubt.) I don't have a lot of hope—most Union citizens can only be tracked as far as St. Louis—but we might get lucky.

Given the fine accommodations and the fact that Brionne himself attended to the man, I doubt he was a simple visitor. I suspect the man is a Northern investor who LaCroix is courting to bolster his railroad's bank accounts. If that's the case, Bayou Vermillion may well be acting contrary to the interests of the Confederacy in an attempt to remain solvent!

January 29, 1877

One of my sources discovered Curwen arrived on a boat, the *Mary Eleanor*, about a week ago. Although his informant couldn't say for sure where Curwen—whose first name may be either Theodore or Thomas—boarded, he thought it was Memphis rather than St. Louis.

Interesting that, though I suppose he may have opted to take a Union Blue train to Dodge and then switch to Black River to avoid passing the lines in St. Louis. Can't really say that I blame the man either, if that's what he did.

However, of greater interest to me was a note slipped under my door sometime during the night. It contained only three words: "*Follow the money.*" Cryptic...and sadly uninformative.

I'm completely uncertain as to who my mysterious informer is, however, it's obvious that not only is he (or she) aware of my investigation, he seems to indicate there is indeed more to the affair than I initially suspected.

I pondered the note for some time this morning and I've come to the conclusion that it may refer to the ghost rock shipments along Bayou Vermillion's line.

Whether or not that is actually the case, I believe a trip West might be in order at this point.

Even if my interpretation is wrong, if Bayou Vermillion is indeed faltering, a ride along the line may reveal more evidence of that than is obvious here in New Orleans. LaCroix keeps a pretty tight hand on things around here—one look at the Bayou Vermillion rail yard tells one that—and it's doubtful he'd allow appearances to suffer in "his" city until the railroad was down to its last penny!

Nacodoches, Texas

February 3, 1877

I'm taking a roundabout way in my trip out for a couple of reasons.

To be honest, the anonymous note has me a little skittish. Obviously, someone knows I'm digging in Bayou Vermillion's dirty laundry and believes there's something there for me to find. Given the Baron's reputation for dealing harshly with folks he believes to be enemies, a few days' detour isn't such a sacrifice.

Second, I believe I've got the best chance to find indications of the railroad's faltering resources off the beaten track. The Nacodoches spur is one of the less-traveled offshoots of the mainline, yet reasonably easy to reach. A short ride up the Mississippi and a carriage over to Alexandria put me on the Bayou Vermillion line. The spur turns south in Nacodoches, eventually linking up with the main rail line east of Houston.

Besides, I must confess I'd read O'Malley's tales of the Nacodoches "zombies" and wanted to look into them myself!

Local Color

Word has it that about two years ago, half (or all, depending on the tale-teller) of the residents of the Nacodoches cemetery got up and started strolling the streets again. Some inventive yarn-spinners with a taste for ghost stories even go so far as to claim the dead began attacking the living! The story ends, as does any Texas tall tale, with the redoubtable residents of the Lone Star State overcoming their foes and having a good time doing it! The whiskey and home-brewed corn mash flowed freely during the Nacodoches "zombie" fiesta. And that was *after* things became wild!

It's such a popular legend that the locals tell me Nacodoches holds a yearly festival commemorating the event. The main attraction involves a shooting match where the contestants take potshots at pumpkins carved to resemble ghastly visages.

No doubt such festivities help draw visitors to the town, but I hardly find a public celebration to be hard proof of a ghost story!

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I spent a day in Nacodoches and found little further supporting information. The best I could come up with was the town gravedigger who showed me several cemetery plots that were somewhat sunken. Although such occurrences are actually commonplace as the dirt of the grave settles to a tighter pack, this fellow insisted the disturbance was caused when the plots' former inhabitants dug themselves out.

I didn't see the point in arguing with the gentlemen, as the event supposedly took place a good two years ago, making it difficult to prove or disprove the logic of his claim. From the man's unsteady stance and slurred speech, I suspect any "spirits" he encountered may have originated inside a bottle. To be completely truthful, I was appalled at the number of residents who seemed to have a weakness for excessive use of such libations! Certainly, the public drunkenness was nowhere near what I'm accustomed to from New Orleans or even Natchez, and I was somewhat surprised by it. I had always believed folks out West to be too busy with the day-to-day concern of living on the frontier to so indulge their weaknesses.

Tombstone, Arizona Territory

February 8, 1877

Over the past five days or so of travel, I've noted that Bayou Vermillion's facilities west of, oh, maybe San Antonio are ..lacking in refinement. I'm not certain if this indicates a shortage of funding, though, or simply the railroad's inattentiveness to the less-populated regions.

Regardless of any financial difficulties—real or contrived—I've seen more than a few of the railroad's "enforcers" during the trip. Private army is a better description if you ask me. Even the most out-of-the-way stations had at least a couple of armed guards, and most of the trestles appeared to have a few hired guns stationed nearby as well.

Our train carried its own complement of at least a dozen of the mercenaries, easily identifiable as most wear red arm-bands. Presumably, this makes it easier for the gunmen to identify allies in a shootout.

Surprisingly, this bit of trivia led to a moment of confusion when I first arrived in Tombstone. It seems a local gang, calling themselves "the



A few Cowboys at their most civilized, here in Tombstone. Note the sashes Daniel referred to prominently displayed.

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Cowboys" also sports a bit of red fabric as a badge of recognition. The first establishment I visited, a saloon called Ike's Place, was teeming with individuals festooned in red sashes.

I was sure I'd stumbled into a Bayou Vermillion watering hole until a helpful local lady in attendance at the saloon explained the difference. Sashes—Cowboys, arm-bands—enforcers.

Now, I imagined aloud this might lead to some confusion should the two groups ever find themselves facing each other. My helpful informant, however, explained that, to her knowledge the two had never butted heads.

This bit of information is made all the more interesting later in the day. I've found that the Cowboys are a bit to the shady side of the law. With Bayou Vermillion the biggest game in town—and the only railroad of consequence, it doesn't seem likely that the Cowboys could resist the temptation presented by the company. Yet, all reports indicate they have.

Perhaps the similarity in identifying clothing hasn't been a problem because the two groups are in collusion. I certainly wouldn't put it past LaCroix to employ or at least ally with such a group!

February 9, 1877

I spent most of yesterday afternoon and today feeling out the town. I also had the chance to visit with Lacy in the *Epitaph* offices. As always, he was entertaining and free with what information he had regarding my research.

From Lacy, I found that Bayou Vermillion's main railhead is less than 40 miles from Tombstone, although no passenger trains roll out there. I might be able to secure passage on a local trader's wagon, but traveling alone through the wilderness to the west is far too dangerous, he indicated.

The railroad's advance has been stalled in no small part due to increased activity by the local Apache Indians. The Confederate forces in nearby Fort Huachuca have trouble enough policing the area around Tombstone. Besides, it's common knowledge that most government forces are more favorable to Lee's railroad. As a result, most of the railroad's resources are currently involved in quelling the Apaches—largely to no avail.

Around town, I've discovered that ghost rock shipments are indeed down. Santa Anna's army has stepped up its incursions along the Ghost Trail, forcing traders to slow down their trips to the Maze. This decrease in shipments can only have hurt Bayou Vermillion's financial position.

Badly enough to force the Baron to seek a Union investor? Perhaps so, I'd like to take a look at the railhead itself before I leave, but I think the answer lies in the identity of the mysterious visitor to the St. Louis Hotel.

[Editor's Note: Since Daniel's report, the Mexican Army has become so aggressive that Lost Angels is nearly in a state of siege. As Daniel expected, LaCroix has balked at transporting any sizeable amounts of Confederate troops, claiming shortage of funds. Given Reverend Grimme's near-fanatical opposition to the railroads, it's probable LaCroix hopes to see the city fall to a Mexican force!]

Perhaps the government in Richmond would also look favorably on such a convenient solution to the "Free City of Lost Angels.]

Railhead

February 10, 1877

I managed to secure a ride out to the end of Bayou Vermillion's tracks yesterday on a freight stage headed for Tucson. Until the railroad completes the spur up to the city, traditional horse-drawn wagons and coaches remain the only link to the city.

Luckily, I saw no signs of the dreaded Apache either in route to or from the site.

The railhead itself is a sight to be seen! An enormous locomotive, with what looked like five steam engines, attached to a half-mile long train sat near the end of the tracks. From appearances, the train was actually a rolling town of sorts!

Obviously, Bayou Vermillion spent a fair amount of its operating capital on the train—which my fellow passengers referred to as "Railhead." I suppose I can see the usefulness in such a conveyance. This way, the company can support lengthy operations in the open desert that comprise most of the terrain Bayou Vermillion must cross. It also likely allows the

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company to recoup some of the wages it pays out through profit garnered in the company store and even—if the stories I heard on the stage are to be believed—saloons built aboard the cars!

Still, I have to think that such an expenditure might have been a bit extravagant for Bayou Vermillion's bank account. The money that funded that train could have been better used in a variety of other ways, I'd imagine!

I was unable to make a thorough examination of the site, however, as the red-banded enforcers made certain no "civilians" got to close to the train or the work area. What little I saw seemed to indicate there were at least a few workers nearby, but for the duration of my observation, I can't recall seeing any of them doing any hard labor.

Come to think of it, all I remember seeing them do was stand for nearly an hour in the blistering heat! Perhaps the Baron is unable to purchase suitable supplies to continue track laying at the moment, but still wants the workers to "earn" their wages in some way.

Able-bodied workers being at a premium right now, I doubt he wants to release them so that a competing rail baron can snatch them up!

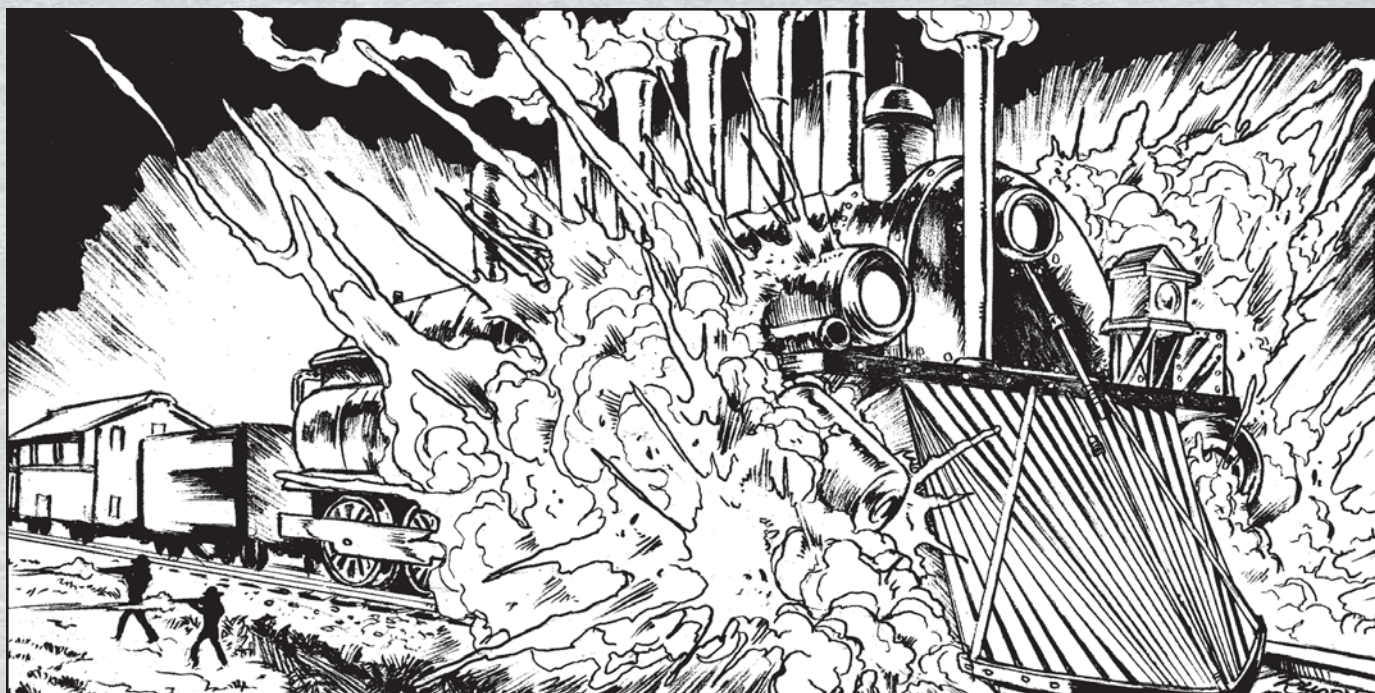
As I'm fairly certain I've learned all I can at this end of the tracks, I've purchased my return ticket. I'll start my return trip east tomorrow, although I expect nothing of import to record until I return to New Orleans.

Now that I've had some time to think on the note that set me on this trip, I believe I should probably leave a copy of my notes here with Lacy. If I am indeed about to discover evidence that LaCroix is courting Union money, I wouldn't be surprised if my work were to be confiscated by the New Orleans police. He bought out most of the ranking members of the organization long ago!

[Editor's Note: Less than two months ago, Railhead was attacked and destroyed in a nighttime raid that was described by the few witnesses I was able to interview as "military." According to their accounts, the attackers had both artillery and cavalry support. Furthermore, a few bodies were discovered wearing Mexican uniforms the next morning.

Rumor has it the bodies appeared to have been dead for more than a few days.

There may be more to Santa Anna's "Army of the Dead" than the Rangers would like us to believe!]



The only photo of the destruction of Railhead—reportedly by the Mexican Army. How will this loss affect Bayou Vermillion's shaky finances?

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New Orleans, Louisiana

February 18, 1877

I had been back less than a day when I began to believe I'd seriously underestimated the danger in which this investigation has placed me—and, I'm afraid, my sources here in the city.

My first act after arriving in town was to look up the individuals who had been continuing to follow up on leads for me here. After asking about the Quarter for Ned Warren, one of my best "pair of eyes" here in New Orleans, I was dismayed to learn the poor man was found floating in the river not one week after I left.

At first I didn't suspect a connection, but when I discovered the other two informants with whom I'd worked on the Curwen lead had also disappeared or been found dead, I decided their deaths were not a coincidence.

Whatever I've stumbled onto here, it is of tremendous importance! Although a voice inside me says I should forget the story and flee the city, the greater part of me does not want these men's lives to have been taken in vain. I must see this through to the end.

My first thought, of course, was that the Knights of the Golden Circle had a hand in the affair. This sort of brutal tactic is right in line with their practices. Of course, while everyone knows the Knights exist, no one will talk about them. (See the Alabama section of our special Edition *Back East: the South*).

However, as far as I know, the Knights' influence doesn't reach as far as the Union. On the other hand, I suppose the man Curwen *could* be an agent in their employ and not actually representing a Yankee firm. This line of thought may bear further research.

Late in the evening, when I finally returned to my hotel room (I had not even dropped my baggage here upon my arrival), I found an envelope awaiting me at the desk. The clerk told me it had been left on February 5th by an unnamed gentlemen. He also informed me that over the past weeks more than a few visitors he wouldn't flatter with the term "gentlemen" had stopped to inquire of my whereabouts.

I suspect at least one of these individuals also paid a visit to Ned and my other informants as well.

Thanking him for the message, I paid for a week's lodging and had my clothing taken to my room. I then departed through an alley door, where I opened the envelope and read the short note within under a gaslight.

In the same handwriting as the first message from my mysterious informer, it said only:

Leeds & Co., Providence

Memphis, Tennessee

February 21, 1878

The note seemed to reinforce my original suspicions about a Union investor in Bayou Vermillion. That same night, I made my decision. I would pursue the lead—as it was the only one I had—even though it meant crossing the border.

I resolved to make the crossing in the same fashion I suspected Curwen had, by traveling via Black River to Dodge and then on Union Blue back to the northeast. I also decided that my movements were of interest to someone in New Orleans, likely LaCroix's thugs, and that as soon as they realized I was back in the city, that my hours were numbered.

A trip to the Union might be in my best interests. Hopefully, it will take me out of the reach of Bayou Vermillion's enforcers, and possibly even provide me with the proof to prompt the government to move against LaCroix!

With those thoughts in the forefront of my mind, I bought passage on a freighter heading upriver that same night.

The journey to Memphis was uneventful, and for the past day I have spent some time here resting from my hurried departure and purchasing new clothing and other essentials. I also took the time to scribe the account of the past few days as I've had no chance since arriving in New Orleans to do so.

I did lose the notes I'd made while traveling back from Tombstone when I left my baggage in New Orleans. While I made no new discoveries during that time, I fear that if my belongings are obtained by my hunters, the scribbled musings in my journal may clue them into exactly how much I know. It's also possible the notes may place my unknown and, presumably inside, source in danger as well.

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February 22, 1878

My short stay here in Memphis has been uneventful, as I hoped it would be. Mina Devlin's Black River Railroad may be nearly as maligned as Bayou Vermillion elsewhere, but here, her name is nearly golden. Only the most brazen assassins in LaCroix's hire (again, assuming he is the threat) would dare try their hand in the home city of another rail baron!

I never thought the sight of Mrs. Devlin's hired guns and the lovely, but deadly, Memphis Belles would actually ease my nervousness! Then again, I'm reminded of the old saying about "the enemy of my enemy."

Perhaps it's this sense of relief talking, or maybe Black River *has* changed its colors over the past year. Whatever the case, Memphis does seem to have prospered somewhat since I last sojourned here. The Memphis Health Committee has enjoyed great success, improving sanitary conditions in the city markedly.

And, although I've yet to discover the anonymous benefactor who supported Newcomb Pharmaceuticals, it simply can't be denied that the company has done tremendous work in aiding physicians across the Confederacy. Thanks to its medicines, several burgeoning epidemics have been thwarted before reaching a critical stage. I'm reminded that sometimes something that looks fair may well indeed *be* fair.

Even the so-called haunting of the Memphis Trestle has ended (again, see *Back East: the South*). While I never believed it was De Soto's ghost, as local wags claimed, there was no denying that something happened near the railroad bridge.

I am grateful for the rest and peace I've enjoyed over the past day. It's almost enough to make me suspect my fears in New Orleans were the result of fatigue and an overactive imagination.

Almost.

February 23, 1878

A most disturbing thing occurred as I checked out this morning. A chill gust of morning air rifled the pages on the guest register at the hotel desk and a name caught my eye—*T. Curwen*.

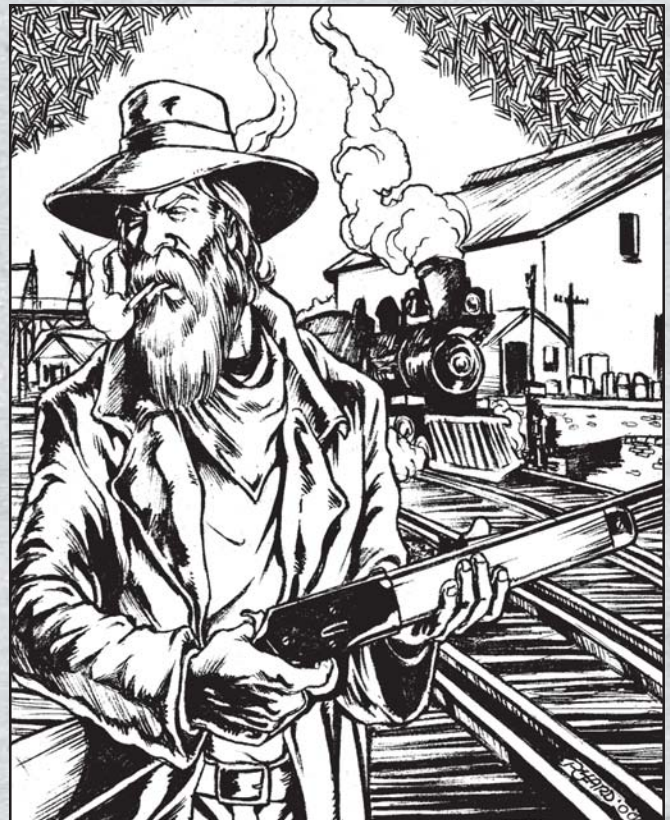
Obviously, the man had to stay somewhere while in Memphis, and by the oddest coincidence, I chose the same establishment. However, what truly piqued my interest was

the fact that Curwen remained in Memphis for more than a week, according the register!

As there are several riverboats departing for New Orleans as well as numerous trains, I must conclude Curwen remained here to conduct other business. What, I don't know, but suddenly, I am beginning to wonder if my earlier sense of security might have been terribly misplaced.

A few discrete inquiries revealed nothing of the mysterious Mr. Curwen or his activities while in Memphis. Whether this is simply a case of fading memories or something more. Sinister, I can't say. Unfortunately, my train for Dodge City departs in a short time, so I shall have to return at a later date to continue my investigation of this matter.

I'm going to begin sending regular packets of my notes to Tombstone for safekeeping by Lacy. At least that way, should I be forced to divest myself of my belongings again in the future, I won't lose the entirety of my work. At worst, someone will have a clue as to where to begin looking for me.



The Little Rock junction of Black River and the K.C. & L.R.

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Little Rock, Arkansas

February 25, 1878

Since I sent my packet off, little of note has happened to keep my paranoia running full steam. I've noticed a familiar face or two amidst the passengers over the past two days, and I'm fairly sure at least one or two of them actually *are* hired guns on the Black River payroll. However, given the state of conflict between the major rail barons, that's really nothing out of the ordinary.

I wouldn't be surprised to find that some of the "heeled" men and women I've noted are regulars on this particular route, assigned to the train to protect it against mundane bandits as well as Mrs. Devlin's competitors.

During a brief lay-over in Little Rock, I took a walk over to the nearby Kansas City & Little Rock railyard. It is the major north-south rail artery in the central Confederacy and its owner, Richard Barney, has succeeded in negotiating peaceful deals with all three Southern rail barons. The KC & LR shares right-of-ways with each of the barons and has contracted terms for freight transfers between the lines.

Thayer Shipping holds on the lower Mississippi, and it's a fairly accepted rumor that Thayer and Bayou Vermillion deal with each other on at least a "most favored" status. Given that, the KC & LR arrangement probably most benefits Black River and Dixie Rails, but even LaCroix gains some benefit from the northern terminus of Barney's rails.

After all, where else would LaCroix get his Union contraband if not through Kansas City and St. Louis?

I have to compliment Barney on the lengths he has gone to facilitate freight transfers. It's a little-known fact that Black River trains travel on an older, out-dated rail gauge. That means that a Black River freight car can't just transfer to the KC & LR line and vice-versa. Freight has to be physically unloaded from the Black River car and repacked on the KC & LR train.

So, in Little Rock, the KC & LR constructed large warehouse-like structures to provide protection from the elements. Rail spurs from both railroads lead into the covered areas. Once inside, the train crews then load or unload their cargo from a center loading platform.

While I wasn't actually allowed into the facilities, a local KC & LR spokesman was kind enough to explain the process to me when I mentioned the Epitaph. Fame has some rewards, it would seem!

Dodge City, Kansas

February 28, 1878

The train arrived here in Dodge just before nightfall. The weather here is a bit different than I'm used to in New Orleans, I must confess. There is little to block a frigid, seemingly constant wind and the ground is frozen solid, turning the towns dirt "streets" into rough and rugged affairs, deeply rutted by wagon tracks and horseprints that are likely to remain until the next thaw.

There's a tension in the air here, as Dodge is in many ways a "no man's land." Political rowdies from both North and South agitate openly, but I think the real powder keg lies in the short stretch of ground between the Union Blue and Black River rail lines that run virtually side-by-side through the middle of the town.

Currently, a fragile cease-fire has been imposed by the Dodge City town leaders. The first railroad to break the peace within the town limits will find itself blocked from its right-of-way. The local law enforcement allows employees of either railroad to keep their weapons while on railroad property, but require them to relinquish them leaving the rail line or right-of way when within town limits.

Since the two lines are close enough for their hired muscle to throw rocks at each other, I suspect it's only a matter of time before Dodge gets a taste of the Rail Wars!

March 1, 1878

My train Back East doesn't arrive until tomorrow so I thought I'd do a little wandering about the famous Dodge City today.

At first it seemed peaceable enough. Even in the late winter or early spring (I can never keep track of when those begin—it's still cold enough here for my old Southern bones to call it winter though) there's a constant bustle of activity in the town. While in summer it would most likely be cowboys driving cattle up from Texas to sell here in the Disputed Territories, at present the

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buffalo hunters, both legal and illegal, are the majority of transients in the area. Although the average buffalo hunter is a tad...aromatic for my tastes, the profession does apparently draw all kinds. Just this morning I saw a group of women prepping for a hunting trip north, into the Sioux Nations, I'd wager!

Before the War, one would never have seen a party of the fairer sex undertaking such a venture, but now it raises eyebrows only among the most naive travelers. Yet, in spite of the growing frequency of such encounters and my own Southern upbringing, I can't bring myself to call such entrepreneurs "ladies." Anyone brave—and mercenary—enough to risk the wrath of the Sioux for hides would likely be a fish out of water in any refined social setting.

Still, Lacy, there may be quite the "human interest" story in these female pioneers who've stepped up to fill the void created by the war in traditionally masculine jobs. If you've not considered such a piece, I'd recommend it, although I doubt my own bias and background make me suited to converse with such...self-assured women!

As usual, I've digressed and strayed from the original point of today's journal entry. The real item of concern occurred this afternoon when I

wandered out to Dodge's infamous "Boot Hill" cemetery. There, I noticed some odd etchings on a few of the tombstones. Had I not been a long-time resident of New Orleans the significance of those etchings would have been lost on me—as no doubt they are on the general populace of Dodge City.

The markings were unmistakably those normally encountered in association with the voodoo cults. I believe the correct term for them is *vé-vé* or a similar word. At any rate, they are used to invoke the powers of the spirits, or *loa*, as practitioners of voodoo refer to them. I need not point out Baron LaCroix's close ties to many of the voodoo cults in New Orleans.

To find them scrawled on grave markers so far from the bayous of southern Louisiana is disconcerting to say the least. And, as I've never been a great believer in coincidences, I suspect they are somehow related either with the nearby presence of either (or both) Union Blue and Black River, or worse, my own!

Regardless, I assume they are related in some fashion to the darker side of voodoo magic, especially placed as they were in the graveyard.

LaCroix's influence must be far more widespread than I'd first believed. I'm sending this packet today and "lying low" for a few days.



Too close for comfort! Black River and Union Blue rail lines run within spitting—and shooting!—distance of each other in Dodge.

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Chicago, Illinois

March 7, 1878

Just a quick note to let you know I've crossed the border and reached Chicago.

The trip was not without incident, though, as I'm fairly certain I recognized at least one or two faces from my journey to Dodge City. Thinking back, I'm beginning to believe I might have seen those same fellows on the riverboat trip up from New Orleans, but I can't be sure.

I fear I am beginning to jump at shadows and see threats when none exist. Then again, the more suspicious—dare I say frightened—part of me clamors that I'm not jumping high enough nor looking hard enough.

Either way, I'm beginning to doubt my own judgment at this point. I'm no longer certain of what is real and what I'm imagining.

March 9, 1878

I've delayed a short time both in departing for the East and sending my packet. The reason for my delay was to acquire the services of a "traveling companion" as it were. I spent a day or so in the city looking to hire a private detective. Since Allan Pinkerton's success, quite a few of firms and individuals willing to hire out such services have opened investigative and protective businesses—and Chicago, as home to the famed Pinkerton National Detective Agency, has its own fair share.

Given that, it didn't take long for me to locate an individual prepared to assist me in my own investigation, as well as serve as a bodyguard, if you will. His name is Thomas Hallaway and, if his claim is to be believed actually worked with the Pinkertons up until a few years ago. According to Mr. Hallaway, when the government ended the Pinkertons' contract, he was left unemployed.

(Between you and me, Lacy, I suspect there may be more to his story than he's admitting. Mr. Hallaway has a penchant for the bottle, it would seem, and I'd wager that more than a change in clientele was to blame. After all, if some of your other reporters are to be believed in their reporting on the Union's secretive "Agency," more than a few ex-Pinkerton operatives have found a home there. That Mr. Hallaway hasn't is telling of itself.

Still, any port in a storm as the saying goes, and provided his drinking is kept under reasonable restraint, I think the advantages of a second pair of eyes, in addition to any real "detecting" skills will offset it. At least in the short term I intend to keep him in my—or rather the Epitaph's—employ.)

By the way, I'll be forwarding you copies of his fees and expenses for payment!

Providence, Rhode Island

March 17, 1878

We've been here in Providence for a few days. The remnants of Puritanical ideology are giving Mr. Hallaway some consternation; the poor man has had great difficulty in satisfying his taste for alcohol. Not that he can't get it, mind you—just that his flask is never as full as he'd like!

I must admit his frustration at this predicament has provided me perhaps more amusement than is polite. It has also had the much-appreciated effect of clearing the man's mind. It certainly seems that he has at least some of the experience in investigative work that he claims.

My initial clue, the cryptic "*Leeds & Co.*" name eventually led us to a long abandoned warehouse in a very old section of town. At that point, I most likely would have found myself at a dead-end in my search, or at best delayed for an indeterminate period.

Mr. Hallaway, however, has proven his worth. After only a day or so of canvassing public records, newspaper "morgues," and similar sources, he turned up a potential lead. According to his research, Leeds & Co. was a holding and import company founded in the early 1700s that conducted business up until about 30 years ago. At that time, a local bank, the Providence Merchants', took over handling the company's affairs through an unnamed agent. As to exactly what those "affairs" are, I'm still uncertain.

Furthermore, he located the name of one of the founders of the company—Abigail Leeds—as well as the last known location of her home. The locale is in Vermont and a fair journey, and on top of that we're going to be looking for her great grandchildren or even further removed relatives. It's been nearly 150 years since she started the company, so it's highly improbable

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that we'll get to interview Mrs. Abigail Leeds herself!

If the trail here in Providence turns cold, we may have no other choice, but until then, I'd rather not wander off into the Vermont mountains on such unlikely odds.

Our current course of inquiry is to pursue further the Providence Merchants' Bank angle. Mr. Halloway wisely pointed out that the bank's representatives aren't going to be open in their disclosure of their client's activity, particularly when it apparently involves the support of a prominent industry in a hostile nation!

With that in mind, we're going to pursue more creative methods of attaining the information we seek. Mr. Halloway is possessed of a mind both keener and more cunning than his proclivity for liquor originally led me to believe, but I'm sending this entry off to you today.

Should we be caught in our extra-legal endeavors, I may be spending more time here in Providence than I'd expected—inside a jail cell. I don't know if your connections extend this far East and North, but I might find it necessary to test them here in the near future, Lacy.

(Editor's Note: The Epitaph does not endorse or condone illegal activities on the part of its field reporters in pursuit of a story! Unless it turns up something really good!)

March 19, 1878

Fortunately, Mr. Halloway is even more slippery an underworld tactician than I'd thought two days ago. Either that, or breaking into a financial establishment after hours is far easier than bankers would have the public believe. Of course, as Mr. Halloway pointed out, we didn't actually breach the vault, but only entered the offices.

We began our search of the offices, but I confess I had barely enough time to scan the portraits of the bank managers before Mr. Halloway informed me he'd located the ledgers we needed. The books were stored in a desk in the office of one Theodore Curwen! So far, the ends of this tangled skein are tying up nicely.

I've spent the last day pouring over the records. As far as I can tell, Leeds & Co. continues to generate income in spite of the dilapidated and abandoned state of its former offices. Its primary source of revenue appears

to now be ghost rock mines, the majority of which are centered in Cain County, California, a region to the north of Sacramento. I found the names of some of the mines, all located near a town named, no doubt in the spirit of black humor so common in the West, Gomorra.

Didn't the *Epitaph* publish a piece on Gomorra last year? I do wish I had access to the archives. My memory just isn't quite the fine-tuned tool it used to be...

(Editor's Note: Another of our field correspondents, Reggie Cornell, did a rather lengthy piece for us on the town of Gomorra last year. This Maze boomtown has apparently been the focus both governments attentions, Union and Confederate, for some time—as well as a few other powerful, although less public, groups as well, ranging from corporate concerns to intertribal alliances.

I dispatched Reggie back to Gomorra earlier this year, but the Union government has a tight lock on information leaving the town at the moment.)

March 20, 1878

Mr. Halloway and I have considered our options. We are both of the opinion that a direct confrontation with Mr. Curwen of the Providence Merchant's Bank will produce no positive results. Worse yet, if he is in league with LaCroix or Mina Devlin, he may send word of our queries and whereabouts to his allies.

Instead, we plan to continue our investigation on the periphery, attacking the soft, white underbelly of the beast, if you will.

I am going to travel to Vermont after all, to a quaint locale by the name of "Whispering Hollow" to attempt to locate the Leeds family, while Mr. Halloway, who is infinitely more at home in this urban environment than I, plans to continue mining Providence for further leads.

After we've exhausted our sources here in New England, we plan to continue to follow the advice of my unknown informant and "*Follow the money.*"

You'll get my next packet when I return from Vermont.

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Whispering Hollow, Vermont

March 30, 1878

It's taken me some time to track down the town of Whispering Hollow. Or perhaps I should say *former* town. It cost me a good amount to hire a coach to roam these overgrown roads, many little more than wide game trails.

Whispering Hollow appears to have been abandoned nearly a quarter of a century ago. One expects these things out West, I suppose, but not in the East. More disconcerting is the fact that the village appears to have remained virtually untouched by thieves, vandals, or the other human flotsam that is often drawn to such "ghost" towns. I suppose its location here in the Green Mountains might have much to do with that. The ancient and forested valleys do much to hide the existence of the town.

Matthew Collins, my coachman, is an old Union veteran who lost his left arm at Antietam. He spent most of his life hunting in this part of



The abandoned Whateley estate in 1877. (Epitaph archive)

the wilderness. He not only knows his way around the area, but also a good deal of local folklore and legends. He's a veritable cornucopia of ghost stories and goblin tales.

As Lacy knows, I'm quite the skeptic—which often makes me a minority on the *Epitaph* staff—but something about the old man's gravelly voice and the ominous atmosphere of the almost primeval forest makes the stories seem all too believable.

March 31, 1878

Matthew was unable to recall ever hearing reference to any Leeds' family living in this part of the mountains. Last night, he told me the townsfolk of Whispering Hollow simply "vanished" back in the late 1840s. The disappearances coincided fairly closely with the departure of a family of "witches"—the Whateleys. The inhabitants chased the family out of the area after untold decades and possibly even centuries of evil practices.

Rumors attribute the town's demise to a variety of black curses and beasts set loose by the vanquished family. A few claim the townsfolk were actually the slaves and servants of the Whateleys, but these are generally scoffed at by the more respected tale-tellers. Regardless, for that reason, locals avoid the area.

Matthew drove me by the entrance to the old Whateley estate. It was my intent to take a brief tour of the grounds, but my coachman would have nothing to do with it. After only a moment at the gate, I concurred with his opinion. I could not escape the feeling that *something* remained behind and was waiting, like a spider in its web, for me to enter the estate.

The Whateley name troubled me all day, and then I remembered their mention in the *Epitaph* piece on Gomorra. I can't recall what the reporter said regarding the family, other than a feeling that the former inhabitants of the town of Whispering Hollow weren't alone in their distaste for the brood.

The coincidences are beginning to trouble me. It seems too serendipitous that the last known location for the Leeds family corresponds to the former home of the Whateleys—who now live in the same area from which Leeds & Co. draws its revenue.

I'm more certain than ever that we must travel to Gomorra to complete our investigation. I find

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it amusing that we must enter the Maze to discover the end of this trail.

April 2, 1878

Curse my aging mind! I just recalled something I saw while in the Providence Merchant's Bank that might have saved me the whole of this trip!

One of the paintings of bank officers on the wall in the institution was of Isaiah Whateley! The answer was there all along and I missed it. I telegraphed Mr. Halloway from Boston this afternoon to tell him to prepare for our departure.

Providence, Rhode Island

April 3, 1878

When I arrived at the hotel, I found Mr. Halloway not in residence. I also discovered my telegram from yesterday waiting at the front desk. Along with it was a short letter dated a week prior, the text of which I've included below:

"Daniel,

I've left for Boston. I recently uncovered some information that leads me to believe that one of the bank's officers, one Isaiah Whateley, may be an influential member of the Freemasons in that city. I'm sure you've heard rumors of the Freemasons' involvement in the highest affairs of government and business, so there may be something to that connection.

Furthermore, we might have saved you a trip to Vermont had I been a little more thorough in my checking into the Leeds family though public records. It seems in the early 1700s, apparently shortly after the founding of the business, Abigail Leeds moved to somewhere in southeastern New Jersey.

I have no idea how long I'll be in Boston. Following that, if I uncover nothing solid, I'm probably going to take a short side trip to New Jersey to follow up on the Abigail Leeds angle. Leave word at the desk if you cannot await my return.

Theodore Halloway"

Mr. Halloway's letter distresses me on a number of points.

First, it implies that there may be even more organizations involved in this conspiracy than I had imagined. If the Freemasons are indeed tied up with Bayou Vermillion—and possibly Black River—the connections are multinational, given the Freemasons' known ties to the British Crown.

This could be the tip of a larger scheme on the part of the English to provide support for the Southern war effort. However, by supporting rivals of Dixie Rails, the unspoken favorite of the Confederate government, they may be attempting to undermine Richmond in any number of ways!

Second, I am not comfortable trusting my communications on a matter of such import to a hotel desk clerk. Bribery or coercion could place us in terrible danger! Perhaps a weakness for liquor wasn't the only reason Mr. Halloway is no longer with the Pinkertons, if he frequently practiced such lapses of judgment!

I've decided to head on to Gomorra on my own, leaving Mr. Halloway to follow up on both the Freemason and Leeds' connection himself. I left only the following—and hopefully cryptic—message for Halloway:

"Gone west to follow the money to its source."

I trust he'll understand that, and if not, then at least neither will any pursuers.

Salt Lake City, Deseret

April 19, 1878

So far, my trip has been uneventful. I opted to travel West on the Wasatch Railroad, as honestly, it's one of the few major lines that I've yet to uncover anything that might link it to this web of lies and manipulators. Even Union Blue is suspect to me, given the rumors (though hopefully unfounded) of an alliance between it and Black River—and even more scandalous of possible indiscretions between Joshua Chamberlain and Mina Devlin.

I discounted those as vicious lies last year, but now I begin to believe anything is possible...

However, for all the *Epitaph* has accused Dr. Hellstromme of, his is one of the few names I have yet to find linked to other members of this conspiracy.

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Having seen Salt Lake City itself, the so-called "City of Gloom," I am desirous of departing as quickly as possible. The atmosphere is rank with smoke and sulfur, and being a "Gentile," the accommodations available to me are, shall we say, less than first class.

Nonetheless, I've made it this far, Lacy. From here I will travel via the Denver-Pacific, also as yet unsullied by any taint of conspiracy, to Virginia City and then overland to the town of Gomorra.

I will not, however, make the same mistake I fear I made in Memphis. I no longer assume any one or any group uninvolved in this affair—save the *Epitaph* itself—is innocent. Innocence in this matter must be proven, not assumed. Else this may prove my last assignment for our esteemed journal.

Gomorra, California

April 28, 1878

The trip here took longer than I expected. While the Denver-Pacific conveyed me quickly enough to Virginia City, the Truckee Pass (now becoming known as "Donner Pass" due to the Donner party tragedy some thirty years ago) was hit by a heavy snowfall just prior to my arrival. I was stuck at the base of the mountain for almost 5 days waiting for the weather to clear.

After arriving in Sacramento, I was able to travel the remaining distance via the various local railroads, finishing the trip on the Pacific Maze railroad. The Gomorra station was my first indication that all was not well in the boomtown, which is the end of the rail line and appears to be the end of civilization of well. Only the rough waters of the Maze lie beyond the Western edge of the town.

The wreckage of a train lay off to one side of the tracks. Not only had the inhabitants not removed the train, apparently they have begun to use the dining car as a restaurant! The rest of the town showed the sort of damage one would expect in a town where a major battle a few months in the past. As I'd not heard of any major actions being taken in this area, I allowed myself to be momentarily distracted from my original quest and inquired as to the origins of the devastation.

At first, I was greeted with suspicious quiet or vacant stares, but finally, visiting one of the surprisingly few saloons in the boomtown, I was regaled with tales of an epic battle which—if the somewhat less-than-sober gentleman was to be believed—involved not only a demon from the pits of Hell, but also a cult of madmen and women who embodied the Seven Deadly Sins on Earth, the Whateley family (!), Texas Rangers, U.S. Marshals, a mix-and-match band of Indians, Oriental Pirates, a band of enraged professors, outlaws, and the local sheriff's office as well.

Needless to say, I took this explanation with a grain of salt. Later, I was approached by a well-dressed but stern-faced individual who identified himself only as Mr. Williams. He said he was in town assisting the U.S. Marshals in restoring order. I pressed my inquiry regarding the state of the town and he explained the actual cause *did* involve a group of religious fanatics whose unGodly practices had touched off the moral sensibilities of the town. A lynch mob roused itself and things got out of hand.

Most of the truly wild portions of the earlier tale were due to the fact that local criminals had been brewing their own whiskey, and rather poorly. A large supply of the liquor was accidentally poisoned and distributed to the town's drinking establishments. While the tainted whiskey was seldom fatal to its drinkers, it did cause terrible hallucinations.

Intrigued, I followed up on the involvement of the Whateley clan. Mr. Williams answered that the family had been somewhat aloof and standoffish from the townsfolk for years, and a weak bloodline caused many of their members to suffer from mental infirmity. Combined with the unfortunate location of their home near where the cult practiced its rites, the Whateleys were subject to much the treatment that the cult members suffered. Many in the family had been killed in the rioting, and those who remained were keeping a low profile.

Williams further suggested I steer a wide path around the Whateleys, as the aforementioned mental instability made their reactions to strangers unpredictable at best.

Before he departed, I learned from him that Reggie Cornell, the local *Epitaph* reporter, had departed for the nearby town of Soddum, founded by missionaries from Lost Angels.

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I'll have to continue my investigation alone, then, or at least until Reggie returns. I'd certainly enjoy access to his knowledge of what really happened here, as Mr. Williams' story struck me as too pat—just the sort of explanation a Texas Ranger might provide.

May 1, 1878

My last two days here have been busy—and disturbing. I feel I'm getting close to finally finding the last link in the chain.

First, I've found that the Whateleys were not nearly as devastated by the "riots" as Mr. Williams indicated. Many survived, and although their mansion on the southeast edge of town—disturbingly close to the Elephant Hill graveyard—was razed, many escaped and have settled in a small valley to the east of Gomorra. This in spite of the downright hatred most of the town seems to have for the family!

A couple of members of the family seem to scoff at this openly, according to the few folks willing to answer any questions about them. Tzipporah, a beautiful raven-haired woman said to rival Mina herself, and Nicodemus, Jebediah's nephew, are the most often encountered about town, although I've yet to catch sight of either. The clan matron, Wilhelmina, was slain, or so the rumors go, but her nephew Jebediah has taken up leadership of the brood.

The Whateley family is far larger than most people suspect, as there has been a fairly steady stream of cousins and other relatives arriving since the end of the year. Additionally, word has it that at least a couple of Whateleys have taken up residence in a town up the Gomorra Valley by the name of Ghost Creek—where it's said some of Bayou Vermillion's enforcers have been spotted as well!

Piecing together the ownerships of the claims listed in Leeds & Co.'s asset ledgers is turning up little so far. The claims office here in town was destroyed during the rioting, so I'm having to sift through deeds and land grants at the courthouse—a time-consuming process to say the least!

May 4, 1878

Finally, a stroke of luck! I tracked down the ownership of the Spirit of Kentucky Shaft—one of those listed in the Leeds ledger—in the clerk's records. As I suspected, the deed was



All that remains of the Gomorra Whateley estate today.

filed by Jebediah Whateley. I plan to keep digging until I can tie at least one or two others—the Knot Mine, Henry's Hole, and the Hitched Buggy Strike.

May 5, 1878

I placed Henry's Hole as a Whateley-owned property, but I also think I got my first glimpse of Nicodemus Whateley today.

A man dressed in a bowler hat and a tinhorn's suit was standing across the street from the courthouse when I emerged this evening. I wouldn't have noticed him but for two things: his constant shuffling of a deck of cards and his unnerving stare. Although we were nearly 50 feet apart, I'd swear he was gazing right into my eyes! I hurried back to Red Hill Hotel where I'm staying and haven't left my room, even passing up the wonderful dinner this establishment serves. My appetite seems to have left me.

I hope Reggie returns soon, as I've given up on Mr. Halloway arriving from Back East. He's likely been distracted by a saloon in Dodge.

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May 6, 1878

I think my imagination has finally had enough, either that or the town's water supply has been tainted by the same poison that ruined the whiskey.

I had the most disconcerting dream last night. My recollection of the details faded with the dawn, but I am unable to shake the sense of foreboding it left me with. All I can recall is the sense of a dark, hooded figure watching me as I slept last night, slowly scraping a skeletal finger across the glass of my window as a child laughed with cruel mirth somewhere in the dark. It still chills me...

I plan to finish my research today and quickly check out the rumors of Bayou Vermillion gunmen in nearby Ghost Creek. I'm sending this packet out this morning and will deliver the last in person. See you soon!

(Editor's Note: As he indicated, this was the last packet of journal entries to reach me. It arrived at the end of May. However, Daniel never came to Tombstone himself.

Instead, on June 9, I received the following short letter. I've reprinted its contents in its entirety so that our readership can draw its own conclusions. I caution those faint of heart as the text is not only graphic in description, but also frightening in its implications!)

Lacy,

They have noticed me. It was foolish pride to lead me to believe that I would be able to dig so deeply into something of this scale and not draw the attention of those involved.

My last dispatch—the one from Ghost Creek—should however provide you with the information you need to expose the conspiracy. I still am not sure what the parties involved gain from their plot, but in light of recent events, I am certain it must be stopped.

The afternoon following the dispatch of my last packet I returned to my hotel room to find a package on my bed. The pungent odor should have warned me something was amiss, especially given the circumstances. Nonetheless I opened

it. Would that I hadn't, though I doubt that would change anything now!

Inside, wrapped in wax paper like a fishmonger's catch, was the head of poor Mr. Halloway. The devils had gouged his eyes and in his mouth was stuffed a scrap of paper with the following inscribed in a flowery hand:

"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out..." Matthew 5: 29

So it is written, Clark; so shall it be done.

I fear my dream of the hooded figure was not a dream. A scythe is a powerful instrument, more than capable of severing a head. Just as, I fear, a bony finger can pluck out an eye.

Daniel Clark

End Note

After receiving this letter, I contacted Reggie Cornell in Gomorra and asked him to try to locate Daniel. Although Daniel was never found, a headless corpse was found near the town cemetery. A scar on the body corresponded to one Daniel suffered during his time in the War. I have little doubt as to his final fate.

I never received Daniel's final packet, the one he mentions as being sent from Ghost Creek. Whatever he discovered there, I don't know, but it's obvious that those behind this black circle of lies and murder that he uncovered feared it enough to take his life and those of others.

Where does this plot end? Who is stained by its influence? I don't know. Daniel found evidence that indicates it could involve even a foreign government, working to influence affairs on the North American continent. The details of those ties died with Mr. Theodore Halloway, unfortunately, just as the knowledge as to the final link died with Daniel.

Daniel was not only a co-worker, but also a close friend. I suspect the one thing these conspirators fear is exposure. I assure them, and our readers, that the *Epitaph* will continue Daniel's investigation.

The truth will come out.

Lacy O'Malley

NO MAN'S LAND





RICH
POLLAN



CHAPTER TWO: BLOOD SIMPLE

You've just gotten the briefest of glimpses at the pale and unpleasant underbelly of the Weird West. Maybe there's a hunger in your gut to throw your hero up against something a little tougher than the garden-variety abomination or cultist. If so, then you've come to the right place! Be warned, though—when your hero buys into this poker game, he's playing for the highest stakes and there's no folding!

As you've probably figured out, the Whateley clan isn't real popular once folks get to know them. However, there are a few branches of the family that better hide their unusual heritage. And they're often the most dangerous of the bunch!

If playing a character who's a dark shade of gray is your shot of whiskey, you've come to the right place! As always, check with your Marshal before using—or even reading—the rules presented here.

NEW APTITUDE

BLOOD MAGIC

Associated Trait: Knowledge

This Aptitude allows a hero to cast blood magic spells. The quick-and-dirty explanation is that blood magic is an arcane practice studied by folks (un)lucky enough to have Whateley blood in their veins, but not despicable enough to sell their souls completely to Hell.

Be warned—blood magic trickles down a dark and stony path. Those who care to follow the path, so to speak, are very likely to get a little on their boots. Maybe even a little blood on their hands. In fact, it's as close to the line as a cowpoke can get in the Weird West and still call herself a hero. And that's using the term loosely.

NEW EDGES

APT PUPIL 2

Not all sorcerers are created equal. Some are much quicker studies at the arcane arts, others are just more ambitious.

Most blood magicians start the game with 1 spell for each level they have in the *blood magic* Aptitude. With this Edge, your character can learn additional starting spells for 2 points each. You can purchase a maximum of three additional spells beyond your normal starting allotment.

This Edge is useful only to heroes with *arcane background: blood magic*.

ARCANE BACKGROUND: BLOOD MAGIC 3

Your character can work a special form of magic known as blood magic. To purchase this Edge, your hero must also have the Edge *Whateley blood*.

We'll give you the full details on blood magic a little later in this chapter.

BELONGIN'S: ARCANES TOMES 1-3

This isn't really a new Edge, but rather another way to use an old one. Your blood magician can purchase arcane tomes to represent a book or small collection of books she uses to help her research additional spells.

These books not only make it easier for her to learn new blood magic spells, they also shorten the time she has to spend researching them.

A single point in this Edge usually represents one arcane text, while 2 points may be either a more complete work or a couple of lesser ones. The maximum amount your blood magician can spend on this particular Edge is 3 points, which means either she's got a *really* potent grimoire or several minor ones.

The information in these books is written in Welsh and of no use to all but another sorcerer. However, a non-blood magician who's foolish enough to translate the text is in for a disturbing read. He must make a Foolproof (3) *guts* check, with a minus to the roll equal to the value of the Edge!

WHATELEY BLOOD 3

Your hero is a Whateley or one of the clan's cousins. She might be the illegitimate offspring of one of the family's more amorous members, a distant relative who's kept herself on the straight and narrow, or maybe even an actual member of the family who's trying to mend her ways.

Whatever the connection, she gains the advantages and disadvantages of the family's rather unusual breeding habits. Her inherited ties to the Hunting Grounds give her some special abilities where magic and the darker forces of the world—both this one and the next!—are concerned.

The rather shallow gene pool her family's been swimming in have likely saddled her with one or more undesirable traits as well. She may have an extra finger or three, a hunchback, scaly skin, or worse! Your Marshal is going to give you all the grisly details on exactly how the Whateley taint has manifested in your hero.

All folks with this Edge have green eyes, by the way.

WHATELEY BLOOD

Thanks to the, uh, relations your character's ancestors had with certain unsavory denizens of the Hunting Grounds, your character has a few inborn abilities. Your hero has unnatural resilience, the minions of Darkness are less likely to gobble him up for breakfast, and he can even tap directly into the Hunting Grounds at times!

All in all, not a bad deal for a fellow trying to survive in the Weird West. Or so it might seem.

There are four different powers available to anyone with Whateley blood in his veins, as detailed at the end of this section. To call forth the inherited power, all your hero has to do is spend

a Fate Chip and let his birthright do the rest. The color of Fate Chip you spend determines which aspect of your hero's dark forbearers he draws on. Your character can only spend one chip per action.

PAYING THE PIPER

Nobody's born bad. Well, okay, some folks probably are, but your hero is one of those who has a choice in the matter. In spite of his ancestry, he's not a mindless servant of Evil.

However, each time he makes use of his other-worldly powers, he strengthens the dark side's hold over his spirit. If he's not careful, he may find he's willingly chosen to become a minion of Hell just like the rest of his family!

Whenever you spend a chip to activate one of the Whateley powers, write down its "value" (whites are worth 1 point, reds are 2, blues are 3, and Legend Chips are 4). These are "Corruption Points."

The more Corruption your hero accumulates, the more he becomes aligned with his unholy bloodline.

How far down that road can your character go and still turn back? That's a tough call. Let's just say when your hero's Corruption Point total equals his *Spirit* die type, he's flirting with disaster.



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REDUCING CORRUPTION

Reducing Corruption Points is very simple, and very expensive. You can reduce your character's Corruption by one point by *spending* a Legend Chip for that purpose.

Just put it back in the pot (at any time) and tell your Marshal you're reducing your hero's Corruption.

Easy, right? Right.

BLOOD POWERS

White Chip: Your character gains +4 to a single Vigor or *Spirit* roll. The chip can be spent *after* the total has been determined.

Red Chip: Your character calls on the ancient pacts your family made with darkness. Any abomination or

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supernaturally evil foe must win a contest of *Spirit* to attack your hero. Otherwise, it ignores him. This power lasts for a number of rounds equal to your hero's *Spirit* die type.

Blue Chip: By tapping into the Hunting Grounds, your character causes a magical backfire of some sort. A huckster rolls on the **Backlash Table**, gizmos roll for a malfunction, and so on. If the spell or device has no "backfire" mechanic, the magic fails to affect your hero. This particular effect does not protect against miracles or divine interventions.

Legend Chip: The blood in your hero's veins draws manitous like honey draws flies. If your character dies and there's enough left of him, toss a Legend Chip into the pot to automatically return as a Harrowed.

BLOOD MAGIC

Every single cowpoke running around with Whateley blood in her veins has the potential to cast blood magic spells. The knowledge to do so isn't inborn, though. She has to know the secret incantations to make the link to the Hunting Grounds and shape the power into a usable form.

That's where the *Edge arcane background: blood magician* comes in. By pouring over ancient texts and tomes or studying under a helpful relative, you hero has learned how to harness the full potential of her diabolical parentage. She can tap directly into the Hunting Grounds and cast blood magic spells.

A blood magician's spells, while powerful, are dangerous not only to her physical well-being, but also to her very soul. She walks a thin line between white and black magic. A misstep can land her on the road down the dark path to Hell. Just because your character practices blood magic doesn't mean she's doomed, though; it's how she chooses to use it that usually matters..

BECOMING A BLOOD MAGICIAN

Not just any sodbuster can up and decide to learn blood magic. In fact, blood magicians are born *and* made! Your character must have the innate ability, but she's also got to learn how to use it.

To make a blood magician hero, your character must first have the *Whateley blood Edge*—with all the good and bad that comes with it. On top of that, she must take at least one level in each of the following Aptitudes: *academia*, *occult*, *blood magic*, and *language: Welsh*. The *blood magic* Aptitude is very important to a blood magician as we explained earlier in this chapter.

Also, you may want to consider the Edges *apt pupil* and *belongin's (arcane tome)*, both described previously in this chapter as well. However, while either of those will give your hero a leg up in her efforts, neither is absolutely necessary to make a blood magician character.



BURN THE WITCH!

Just like hucksters, blood magicians are likely to be labeled as witches if anyone spots them working their magic.

While a blood magician's spell doesn't make playing cards appear in her hands, she does have to utter a few words of power in Welsh (the Whateleys' native tongue) to invoke her magic. If she's spotted whispering arcane phrases just before some unnatural event takes place, odds are that a lynch mob will form soon!

Remember that there are blood magicians who cast spells in public and there are old blood magicians. There are no old blood magicians who cast spells in public.

STRAIN

The Whateley blood forms the link with the Hunting Grounds, but that doesn't make it easy on the blood magician. Channelling that power and crafting it into a usable spell is kind of like holding a lightning rod during a thunderstorm to light a light bulb. The more energy the caster uses, the harder it is on her system.

We call the effects of this "Strain." Each spell "strains" your hero's body for a while. When it can't take anymore, she's reached her breaking point.

Your hero's maximum Strain is equal to her *Vigor* die type. When she's used all of that, she can't tap the Hunting Grounds until she's recovered at least a little. She can't spend more than her maximum Strain on a spell; if casting it would take her beyond her breaking point, the spell automatically fails.

REDUCING STRAIN

A blood magician reduces her Strain by resting. Each hour she spends completely resting—*no* exertion of any kind—reduces her Strain by 1. Total rest means she isn't actively doing anything, she's relaxed, and she doesn't have to pay too much attention to what's going on around her.

Can she recover Strain while riding a stagecoach or train? Yes. Riding a horse or driving a steam wagon? No, because she has to pay constant attention or

risk falling off the horse or losing control of the steam wagon.

There is another, faster way for a blood magician to recover Strain. You can find all the bloody details under the spell *Faustian deal*.

WIND

The other cost to cast blood magic spells is a small amount of—*you guessed it*—blood. Over the centuries, this practice has been perfected to the point the caster doesn't have to actually spill her blood to enact the magic. The ancient sorcerers found a way to draw it right out of her body without any unsightly cuts or wounds!

Thoughtful guys, huh?

The amount needed for any particular is pretty small. She can usually recover fairly quickly from the expenditure. However, if the caster goes slinging spells too fast and furious over a short period of time, she may find herself a little light-headed or even fainting!

In game terms, for every point of Strain she spends casting a spell, she has to spend a point of Wind as well. The same rule applies if the spell requires Strain to maintain its effects. Basically, any time she has to spend Strain on a spell, she has to spend an equal amount of Wind as well.

The reverse *isn't* true, by the way. Some spells require only Wind to maintain. In that case, she doesn't have to spend an equal amount of Strain, just the Wind.

Your hero recovers Wind lost this way in the normal fashion (see the *Weird West Player's Guide* for details).

Unlike Strain, your blood magician can spend more Wind than she currently has. She simply drops to negative Wind, making it possible to drive your character into unconsciousness by casting too many spells!

CASTING SPELLS

To invoke a spell, your character must roll her *blood magic* Aptitude against the TN of the spell she wants to invoke. She also has to speak a few words of power. These are seldom more than a sentence, but if she's gagged or otherwise unable to speak, she can't cast the spell.

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If your character makes the roll, she pays the appropriate Strain and Wind and the spell goes off. Failure means she mispoke a word or missed a beat in her timing and the spell fizzles out. In that case, she doesn't lose any Strain. The blood magician *always* loses the required Wind whether or not the spell is successful.

Occasionally, a blood magician really blows it and says the wrong word of power or even slips some supernatural insult into her incantation. Anytime a caster goes bust on her *blood magic* roll, she loses control of the spell and suffers a supernatural backfire called "reflux."

The Marshal has all the details on exactly what that means for your character.

HARROWED AND BLOOD MAGIC

A Harrowed blood magician has a slightly tougher time of it than a living one does. Dead blood just doesn't seem to please whatever elder powers grant this dark ability. At least for those who fight against the Reckoning. Whateleys who give in to the "dark side" don't seem to have any trouble with being dead.

An undead blood magician "hero" loses Wind equal to the Strain cost when casting or attempting to cast a blood magic spell. However, as the blood in a Harrowed's veins isn't quite as pure as it once was, she takes an additional point of Wind each time she tries to invoke a spell, successful or not.

This does not apply to black-magic using Whateleys, Marshal.

CHOOSING SPELLS

A blood magician begins play with one spell for every level she has in the *blood magic* Aptitude. She can purchase additional spells with the *apt pupil* Edge. After creation, new spells aren't quite as easy to come by, however.

LEARNING NEW SPELLS

There are two ways a hero can learn a new blood magic spell. Either way costs your hero 5 Bounty Points after she's completed the other requirements for learning the spell.

Research: The first way is to piece together the incantation from references in arcane tomes and libraries. This takes a Hard (9) *academia: occult* roll, 1d6 days, and access to the a decent library or at least a fair-sized occult book collection.

Now, if your hero was savvy enough to purchase an arcane tome as a *belongin'*, she's going to have an easier time of it. These books actually have the spells written in them, although not as clearly as your blood magician might have liked. Should she have one of these books, she can add the book's point value (1 to 3) to her *academia: occult* roll to learn the spell.

She can also subtract the same value from the roll to determine how many days it takes to find and master the spell, down to a minimum of one day regardless of the value of the tome.

Mentoring: The other way your character can pick up a new spell is to locate a teacher. If your hero is lucky enough to meet another blood magician, he can teach her a new spell in just 1d8 hours. No *academia: occult* roll is necessary.

Don't count on this method though. Whateley blood magicians—particularly those who aren't likely to try to kill your hero outright—are far more rare than even hucksters or voodooists!

SPELLS

Every spell has five entries besides the spell's description that tell you how to use it in the course of a game.

TN is the Target Number the blood magician needs to make to cast the spell. If her *blood magic* roll meets or exceeds this number, the spell works.

Strain is the amount of Strain the blood magician accumulates when she successfully casts the spell. It's also the amount of Wind she loses when she attempts to cast the spell. Remember, she loses that Wind whether or not the spell is successful.

Speed tells you how long it takes for you character to cast the spell. If Speed is a just a number, that's how many actions it takes to invoke the spell. Some spells require a bit more time to cast and these casting times are listed as minutes or maybe even hours.

Duration is how long the spell lasts once successfully cast. "Concentration" means the hero must concentrate on maintaining the spell and can take only simple actions like moving or speaking. Other spells require Wind to maintain; they're listed as "X Wind/round." Those spells last as long as the blood magician pays the Wind to keep the spell in effect. A few use a combination of both. If that's the case, your hero can either concentrate or pay the listed Wind to keep the spell in effect.

Range is the distance at which the spell takes effect. This is the maximum distance from the blood magician to the target, or center of effect in the case of area of effect spells.

BALK

TN: Opposed

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration and 1 Wind/round

Range: 10 feet

Often one of the first spells a blood magician chooses to learn, *balk*—while not flashy or powerful—can be a life-saver!

All members of the Whateley bloodline have the ability to call on their supernatural ancestry to provide limited protection against abominations and supernatural entities. Through decades of study, blood magicians have discovered a way to hold those creatures at bay that doesn't cause Corruption.

When your blood magician casts this spell, she must choose a supernaturally evil opponent within range. No roll is necessary to invoke the spell initially.

As long as your hero maintains this spell, the target opponent must roll its *Spirit* against her *blood magic*. If it loses, it cannot touch her or otherwise cause her *direct* harm. It can cause a ceiling to fall on her, but it can't cast a spell, use any special abilities, or weapons against her until it wins the contest.

This protection only applies to the blood magician and is forfeit if she takes any hostile action—direct or indirect—against the target. Evil isn't stupid. Aiding another hero who *is* taking hostile action against the creature is considered hostile as well!

Balk takes a good deal of effort to maintain. Your hero must continually mutter archaic Welsh phrases of power to keep the spell effective and can only take simple actions while doing so.

BLOOD CURSE

TN: Opposed

Strain: 3

Speed: 2

Duration: 1 week/*blood magic* level

Range: 5 yards/*blood magic* level

Blood curse is a spiteful spell, one that shows the less hospitable side of a blood magician's repertory. Not that the other side is really all that friendly, but we think you know what we mean.

Your hero must choose an opponent as the target for *blood curse*. He then rolls his *blood magic* Aptitude against his *Vigor*. If he wins, the spell takes effect; otherwise, it simply fails.

Any attempt to heal a wound on the victim, whether by magical means, a doctor's skill, or even simple rest and recuperation, suffers a -2 modifier. For every raise your blood magician received over his target's *Vigor* roll, the poor sap gets an additional -2 to those penalties.

For example, if the blood magician beats the opponent's roll with two raises, all healing rolls on the target suffer a -6 penalty!

A normal sawbones is unlikely to have any explanation for the wound's refusal to heal, as are any magically-empowered healers, unless they've been exposed to the spell before.

This penalty lasts for the duration of the spell, so the affected cowpoke had better walk very softly until it expires!

CAUTERIZE

TN: Special

Strain: 2

Speed: 1

Duration: Permanent

Range: Touch

Blood magic isn't particularly well-suited to benevolent applications. The source of the blood magician's link to the Hunting Grounds tends to bias his spells toward the more unpleasant variety. Still, a determined and creative spellcaster can fit blood magic's square peg into the round hole of healing.

This spell burns the flesh of a wound, quickly knitting it together and closing it. In effect, it's pretty much like applying a magical hot iron to the wound. Unpleasant and painful, yes—but fast and crudely effective.

Cauterize treats only a single wounded hit location at a time. The TN for the spell is based on the wound level in the chosen location and listed below.

Each success and raise on the casting roll improves the hit location by one wound level. However, due to the rather brutal method the spell uses to "heal," it can't improve a hit location to better than a Light wound level. No matter how well your blood magician rolls when casting *cauterize*, the spell always leaves at least a nasty burn—a Light wound level—on the location.

If the spell completely heals the original wound, the burn is considered a *new* wound, though. That means that any effects of the original wound (poison, disease, etc.) are burned out by *cauterize*, and the cowpoke is left with a shiny new burn instead.

Furthermore, *cauterize* isn't the most soothing method of healing a wound. The "patient" suffers 1d6 Wind when the spell is successfully cast. On the other hand, *cauterize* does stop any further Wind loss from the wounded location due to blood loss.

After *cauterize* has been used on an injured location, a wound can't be healed by further treatment, either a

doctor's care or magical healing—even further castings of *cauterize*. Only natural healing rolls can mend the wound further.

Note that *cauterize* does not reattach severed limbs nor can it bring a dead cowpoke back to life. It can treat Maimed locations, but its usefulness is thus somewhat limited; it reduces wound modifiers from severely injured limbs, but the cowpoke is permanently lame or one-armed.

Cauterize is equally effective in curing living and Harrowed folks. Healing a Maimed guts wound on a Harrowed *does* return the undead cowpoke to life. Or at least what passes for it in his case.



Wound Level	TN
Light	5
Heavy	7
Serious	9
Critical	11
Maimed	13

CRIMSON FIRE

TN: 5

Strain: Special

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 15 yards/*blood magic* level

This spell sends a thin bolt of red energy from the blood magician to his target. The crackling bolt sears the flesh of any sod unlucky enough to get hit by it.

When your blood magician casts the spell, he decides how powerful he wants to make the *crimson fire*. Each point of Strain he commits to the spell causes 1d8 damage. He can spend no more Strain on a single casting than he has levels in *blood magic*.


For example, a character with 5 levels in *blood magic* could create a bolt of *crimson fire* that does 5d8 damage to its target if it hits.

The roll to cast the spell is also used to determine if the *crimson fire* strikes the target. The base TN is Fair (5). The roll is modified just as if the blood magician were shooting at his target (see the *Weird West Player's Guide* for modifiers). However, there are no range modifiers to the bolt provided the target is within the maximum range.

It is possible to successfully cast the spell, but miss the target, by the way. In that case, the Strain *is* spent, so pick your hero's shots carefully!

Check any missed bolts of *crimson fire* to see if they strike innocent bystanders as normal.

Magical and innate armor (thick hide, bony plates, etc.) does affect *crimson fire*, but artificial armor like bullet proof vests or leather clothing doesn't.

 Ichabod Curwen, a tinhorn blood magician, finds himself in a graveyard facing a walkin' dead intent on a late night snack. Ichabod hurls *crimson fire* at the zombie. His *blood magic* level is 4, so he goes all out and casts a 4d8 bolt of energy, which costs him 4 Strain and 4 Wind. The zombie is standing in the shadows near a crypt, which means Ichabod has a -6 to hit the abomination thanks to lighting. He rolls a 9 on his *blood magic*, which means the *crimson fire* is cast, costing him Wind and Strain, but the bolt missed his target. He'd better find another solution fast!

DEATH'S SHROUD

TN: 5

Strain: 2

Speed: 1

Duration: 1 round/*blood magic* level

Range: Self

Sane folks try to avoid getting a ticket to Boot Hill. Every now and then that ticket turns out to be round trip, but for most, it's one-way! That said, there are a few advantages to being dead.

The spell temporarily shuts down certain body functions normally vital to avoiding a visit with the undertaker. For the duration of *death's shroud*, the caster doesn't breathe, bleed, or even

feel pain. The blood magician doesn't suffer Wind loss from bleeding. She can lose Wind caused by mental stress or magical attacks, however.

The caster doesn't need to breathe while shrouded, so she can ignore dangerous gases, fumes, and suffocation. Finally, she can ignore 2 levels of wound modifiers per hit location.

At the end of *death's shroud*, she immediately loses those benefits. She has to breathe, she suffers the full penalty for any wound modifiers she may have, and she once again becomes subject to Wind loss. If she suffered any Serious or higher wounds, they begin bleeding, causing Wind as normal.

The caster can take no actions while shrouded, though she is aware of her surroundings and can end the spell as an instant action with but a thought.

Harrowed blood magicians gain no benefit from this spell whatsoever.

DECOMPOSE

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

Near and dear to the hearts of the darker forces in the universe you'll find chaos, decay, and rot. That's probably why this particular spell is so easy for a blood magician to cast!

The spell causes an inanimate object to age prematurely and swiftly. Each success and raise on the caster's *blood magic* roll to invoke *decompose* ages the target object by a decade. Exactly how that affects it depends on a number of factors, such as size, composition, and complexity.

Leather items begin to breakdown after only 20 years of age, wooden ones 40 years, and metal 60 years. Small items halve those amounts and really large ones double it.

The caster can affect an item weighing up to 10 lbs. for every level he has in *blood magic*. For objects with multiple parts, like a watch, pistol, or even a steam wagon, the spell only affects a single part at a time. However, if the caster is smart about which part he picks to effect, he may not need to worry about the rest!

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Decompose is effective against the undead, causing unliving flesh to decay and split under the blood magician's touch. The blood magician must make a successful *fightin': brawlin'* attack immediately after casting the spell to strike his target. If he's successful, *decompose* causes 1d10 damage for each success and raise to the hit location he strikes. Due to the nature of the magic, hits to the noggins or gizzards do *not* receive bonus damage dice. It has no effect on living creatures.

EXPULSION

TN: Opposed

Strain: 3

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 5 yards/level

Expel releases a burst of magical energy that causes a manitou to flee the body of a walkin' dead, skeleton, or other relatively simple undead.

The blood magician must make an opposed roll of her *blood magic* Aptitude versus the target abomination's *Spirit*. If she wins, the spirit animating the undead abandons it, in effect "killing" the creature instantly. If she loses, there is no effect on the target at all.

This spell generally only works on the weakest of manitous—those that create walkin' dead and similar forms of undead. Against more powerful forms of undead, like Harrowed, vampires, ghosts, and so forth, it's much less effective.

When cast at one of those creatures, the surge of supernatural energy can't force the spirit to abandon the host. It can, however, momentarily stun the target if the sorcerer wins the opposed roll. For every success and raise the caster receives in the contest, the target loses one action, up to the total number of remaining Action Cards it had in the round. No matter how well the blood magician rolls, the target cannot lose more actions than it had remaining in that round.

This spell has no effect on other types of abominations. (Mojave rattlers, werewolves, etc.) whatsoever. If there's any question as to whether the spell affects a target or not, your Marshal has the final say.

FAUSTIAN DEAL

TN: 7

Strain: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: Instant

Range: Self

We said blood magicians were able to cast their spells without actually having to spill their blood. *Faustian deal* is the exception. This spell uses the power of the caster's blood to call on a boon from the more unpleasant members of the Hunting Grounds.

To cast *Faustian deal*, the blood magician inflicts a wound on himself. Part of the spell is knowing where and how hard to cut or stick himself, so he won't accidentally slicing something *really* important!



Choose a hit location on your hero and inflict one wound level to it.

Your hero loses Wind from the wound as normal (1d6). He doesn't have to worry about a stun check, but he does suffer the normal wound modifier, assuming it's his highest wound level. Magic or other abilities (like being Harrowed) that protect him from wound penalties provide their normal effects against the modifier. The wound and the Wind loss are not preventable. Both are part of the spell's requirements.

In return for intentionally spilling his own blood, the sorcerer instantly recovers a small amount of Strain. The amount he gets back is equal to the Wind he lost as a result of the wound.

There are a few final catches to this spell—it is called *Faustian deal* for a reason.

First, the wound can't be healed by "good" magical means. The forces of Good want little to do with blood sacrifices of this sort. Only the miracles of the blessed and a shaman's favors fall into this category. Hexes like *helpin' hand*, voodoo and blood magic spells such as *conjure doctor* or *cauterize* work fine.

Next, the blood magician must cause the wound himself, with the casting of this spell as the reason for it. No one else can inflict the wound, nor can he cast it conveniently when he's accidentally injured himself, been successfully attacked, or any other reason.

Finally, the caster must have the means to cause the wound at hand. This usually means some sort of knife or other hand-held instrument. Bare hands or normal fingernails aren't sufficient, and weapons like firearms or, say, flamethrowers aren't really precise enough.

It's your Marshal's call whether or not an item is suited to the task; if your character doesn't have one, he can't cast the spell. It's probably a good idea for your hero to keep a pocket knife handy if he plans on making a *Faustian deal*.

This spell has no effect when cast by a Harrowed blood magician. Since normal wounds don't cause a Harrowed to lose Wind, he can't gain any Strain from a *Faustian deal*.

HANGMAN'S NOOSE

TN: 9

Strain: 2

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration or 1 Wind/
round

Range: 5 yards/*blood magic* level

One of the nastier spells in the tomes of blood magic, *hangman's noose* turns the caster into a one-person lynch mob! It creates an invisible rope that tightens just like a noose around the neck of her chosen victim.

If she successfully casts the spell, the victim feels his throat constrict painfully as the magic begins choking him. He must immediately make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll. If he fails, he loses the difference in Wind; if he's lucky enough to succeed, he loses no Wind, but still can't draw a breath—or even speak!

This ordeal continues at the beginning of each following round for as long as the blood magician maintains the *hangman's noose*.

Now, unlike a real hemp necktie, the spell doesn't lift the victim off the ground. There is an tell-tale depression around the neck, just as if the unlucky sod had a rope there, but the source of the depression can't be pulled or levered away from his throat. In fact, it can't even be felt; fingers, knives, and the like pass through it as if it weren't there!

Only a hex, miracle, or other power able to dispel magic in some fashion can destroy the supernatural garrote.

The victim can move about, fight, shoot, or just about anything else (as long as he remains conscious), but at a -2 to any Trait or Aptitude rolls—choking to death *is* distracting. The target can't speak or yell. This makes the spell handy for silencing another blood magician!

HEARTSEEKER

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: 1 minute/*blood magic* level

Range: Touch

Before blood magicians perfected a means to cast their spells without actually spilling their own lifeblood, a sharp knife was a vital piece of

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equipment. As a result, they became quite familiar with the weapon's use not just in slicing their own bodies, but those of their foes as well. *Heartseeker* is an old spell designed to magically enhance the effectiveness of the blood magician's once-favored weapon.

This invocation instills a murderous bloodthirst into a knife, making it a razor-sharp weapon. The weapon is drawn to the most vulnerable points of an opponent's body, finding chinks in any armor or other protection.

For each success and raise the caster gets on his *blood magic* roll, the blade gains one level of armor-piercing. Also, after a successful attack, the spell allows the knife's wielder to modify the hit location roll by 2 in either direction for each success and raise on the casting roll.

Finally, any time the enspelled blade causes a wound, the supernaturally sharp edge causes an additional point of Wind for each success and raise on the *blood magic* roll to cast *heartseeker*.

Your sorcerer can cast this spell only on a knife of some sort. Bowie knives, dinner knives and even scalpels are fair game, but other hand-held weapons like tomahawks or sabers aren't. Once the spell is cast, the knife can be used by anyone.

Heartseeker does not make the knife's damage magical, however. It does not cause Wind loss to undead or other beings normally immune to it, nor can it wound creatures not subject to normal damage.

LIFE EBB

TN: 5

Strain: 2

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/*blood magic* level

Few blood magic spells are as unsettling to witness as *life ebb*. This particular bit of nastiness draws the victim's life blood right out through her eyes, nose, mouth and even skin!



Life ebb causes 1d6 Wind to the target for every success and raise the blood magician gets on his roll to invoke the spell. Anyone watching this bloody display—including the target—has to make a Fair (5) *guts* check as well. The blood magician himself is immune to this *guts* check, by the way. There are some advantages to practicing dark magics...

The blood is drawn from the body equally across all exposed surfaces. That's right—only *exposed* skin, eyes, and the like are affected, so if the target is completely covered, the spell can't harm her. If so much as a tiny patch of skin is exposed, however, it gouts blood!

Because the blood pours from all exposed surfaces, *life ebb* looks much worse than it actually is. Still, all that

blood loss does add up. For every multiple of her Size, the victim suffers a wound level to the guts. In an average person, that means for every 6 Wind, she takes a wound in the guts; a horse, on the other hand, has to lose 10 Wind to *life ebb* before it takes a wound.

Creatures without Wind are immune to *life ebb*, as are all forms of the undead, including Harrowed.

LIGHTNIN' ROD

TN: Opposed

Strain: 1

Speed: 1 (Vamoose)

Duration: Instant

Range: 10 yards/*blood magic* level

Blood magicians understand how energy flows from the Hunting Grounds. It's in their blood, after all! This gives them some ability to manipulate that energy when another spellslinger goes throwing it around.

Lightin' rod lets the caster draw any ranged hex, spell, or even miracle to himself instead of the original target.

To do this, he must make a vamoose (i.e., spend his highest Action Card—that's his sleeve card if he's got one) and make a *blood magic* Aptitude roll. His TN for the roll is the original caster's result on her *faith*, *hexslingin'*, or other Aptitude to invoke the spell, hex, or whatever. If he's successful and within range of the original spell, it now targets him instead.

It can only be used on a successfully cast magical effect produced by a character with the Edge *arcane background*. The spell (or favor, miracle, etc.) must have a range other than "Self" or "Touch" and must affect a target other than the original caster.

Lightnin' rod has no effect on black magic, Harrowed powers, blessed gifts (not miracles), knacks, gizmos, or innate magical abilities.

Once the blood magician casts *lightnin' rod*, he takes the full brunt of the targeted spell, for good or bad. If the spell required some additional roll to strike the target, that roll automatically succeeds; the hero can't even dodge it! He must make any Trait or Aptitude rolls, take any damage, and/or suffer other negative effects.

Why would any sane cowpoke cast *lightnin' rod*? For one thing, not all magical effects are harmful. Maybe he wants to intercept a *corporeal tweak*, or other helpful spell.

Even if it is a dangerous effect, the sorcerer may have a defense that gives him a better chance to survive the attack than the original target.

MARK OF DEATH

TN: 9

Strain: 5

Speed: 2

Duration: 1 round/*blood magic* level

Range: Self

The most powerful of the blood magician's spells, *mark* calls upon the very essence of the Reckoning to cast a pall over an area. These spells are fearsome in their effects, but no one—including the caster herself—escapes the taint of a *mark*.

The area of effect has a radius equal to 5 yards times the *blood magic* level, centered on the caster. The *mark of Death* prevents anyone (or thing) within the area of effect from spending Fate Chips to prevent wounds for the duration. Since this includes the blood magician herself, it's not a spell to be cast lightly!

Fate Chips may be spent for other purposes, such as invoking powers or increasing skill rolls.

The area does *not* move once the *mark* has been invoked, but leaving the area does not remove the spell's curse once a target is affected. Only dispelling the *mark* through some magical means (the hex *disrupt*, the miracle *dispel*, or similar powers) can stop the *mark's* effects prior to the end of its duration.

Casting the *mark of Death* saddles the blood magician with a Corruption Point.

MARK OF FAMINE

TN: 7

Strain: 5

Speed: 2

Duration: 1 minute/*blood magic* level

Range: Self

The second of the *mark* spells, the *mark of Famine* destroys foodstuffs and saps the energy of all beings within its area of effect.

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Like the *mark of Death*, this spell has an area of effect with a radius of 5 yards for every level the caster has in his *blood magic* Aptitude. The *mark's* effects are centered on the caster, so he'd better expect to go on a crash diet when he invokes this spell!

Each creature within the area—living or otherwise—(or entering it for the first time), loses 1d6 Wind for each success and raise the blood magician got on his roll to cast the spell.

All food and drink in the area is spoiled, rotting and turning to useless dust or sludge. This effect of the *mark* is permanent.

Finally, the *mark of Famine* temporarily emaciates every creature within the area (or entering it for the first time), making them scrawny shadows of their former selves. This reduces each victim's Size by 1 for the duration of the *mark*.

The blood magician is subject to *all* the negative effects of the *mark of Famine*.

At the end of the spell's duration, all creatures return to normal Size immediately, although lost Wind takes the regular time to regain.

As with all the *marks*, invoking this spell gives the caster a Corruption Point.

MARK OF PESTILENCE

TN: 9

Strain: 5

Speed: 2

Duration: Instant

Range: Self

Disease is responsible for more deaths in war than any weapon. Few combatants make use of it as a tactic, not only because it is a vile practice, but also because it's seldom fast enough to affect the course of a given battle. The *mark of Pestilence* changes that. While it remains repulsive, in a blood magician's hands, the onset of disease can be accelerated to frightening speeds.

The *mark of Pestilence*, once cast, spreads a supernatural infection over a circular area centered on the caster, with a radius of 5 yards for every level she has in *blood magic*. The *mark* causes any wounds in the area to become instantly infected and pustulant.

Every living creature in the area suffers an additional wound level in any hit location that has a wound at the time of casting. A victim with multiple wounded areas suffers an additional level in *each* wounded hit location! The infection cannot increase a wounded location's level above Critical, however.

No Wind is lost due to these extra wounds nor is a stun check necessary. The additional wounds are caused by the worsening of the existing injury due to infection, not actual damage.

Creatures without any wounds are completely unaffected by this spell. Undead, incorporeal, and non-living creatures (automatons, etc.) are immune to the *mark of Pestilence*. Obviously, this includes those hunks of rotting flesh we call the Harrowed as well.

Casting the *mark of Pestilence* is a tad on the evil side. Doing so gives the blood magician a Corruption Point.

MARK OF WAR

TN: 7

Strain: 3

Speed: 2

Duration: 1 round/*blood magic* level

Range: Self

The darker forces of the Hunting Grounds enjoy a good fight as much as anyone—and probably more so! Pain and suffering are almost inevitable results of a battle, both of which are as sweet as honey to the malevolent entities with whom a blood magician often traffics.

Similar to the other *mark* spells, the *mark of War* affects a circular area centered on the caster with a radius of 5 yards times his *blood magic* Aptitude level. As with the rest of these spells, all the effects of the *mark of War* apply to the caster.

Any bow, *fightin'*, *shootin'*, or *throwin'* Aptitude rolls to hit a target within the area receive a +2 modifier for each success and raise the caster got on his *blood magic* roll to invoke the *mark of War*. This bonus also applies to magical attacks that require an Aptitude roll of some kind to hit the target, like *soul blast* or *crimson fire*.

All damage caused within the area does an additional +1 per die for every success on the casting roll as well.

The area of effect does not move with the caster, so after invoking the *mark*, he's free to hightail it out of there!

Calling on the forces of darkness in such a blatant fashion—even for the best reasons—leaves a taint on the character's soul. It makes the Reckoners feel all fuzzy inside but gives the blood magician a Corruption Point.

MESMERIZE

TN: 7

Strain: 1

Speed: 2

Duration: Concentration

Range: 1 yard/*blood magic* level

Some folks believe snakes hypnotize their prey by staring them in the eye. That might not be true, but by invoking *mesmerize*, a blood magician can hypnotize her foes with a stare!

To cast this spell, your blood magician must meet her opponent's gaze. This can be tough in a combat situation, and your Marshal has the final call on whether or not her attempt succeeds. Once she's done so and made her *blood magic* roll to invoke the spell, her victim enters an almost trance-like state.

As long as your blood magician concentrates on maintaining the spell, her target can take no action unless he wins a contest of his *Spirit* versus her *blood magic* Aptitude. He can attempt this contest on each of his Action Cards.

Any attack against the victim automatically ends the spell, whether or not it hits him.

Once your hero breaks her concentration, he's free to act normally. However, he has no memory of the time he spent under the effects of *mesmerize*, beyond a pair of searing red eyes.

MOUTHPIECE O' HELL

TN: Opposed

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Instant

Range: 1 yard/*blood magic* level

It's been said there were secrets no man was meant to know. Well, that may or may not be true, but *mouthpiece o' Hell* shows there were at least a few words no cowpoke was meant to hear!

Roll an opposed test of your hero's *blood magic* versus her target's *guts*. If she beats her victim, the poor sap finds the inhuman noise more than he can bear. Your Marshal rolls 1d6 for every success and raise your blood magician got on the contest and reads the total on the Scart Table, applying the result to the terrified sodbuster.

NECROLOGY

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 2




Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

A blood magician skilled with the *neurology* spell can pull a surprising amount of information from a dead body. While he may not be able to read the knowledge it contains like he would a book, he can certainly browse it like the front page of a newspaper.




The body targeted by the spell can be dead no longer than 1 year for each level the caster has in his *blood magic* Aptitude. He must also have the majority of the body—more than half—on hand to invoke the magic.

For each success the caster receives on his casting roll, he gains one piece of information from the following list:

-  Full name of the body, including any aliases or nicknames
-  Where the body died
-  How long the body has been dead, to the nearest hour for corpses dead less than a week or day for older ones

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-  What killed the body (the death wound, not the person or thing responsible);
-  The name of the body's closest living family member
-  The spell can be cast successfully on a given corpse only once. Multiple castings gain no further information. *Necrology* has no effect when cast on an undead creature!

POX

TN: Opposed

Strain: 3

Speed: 1

Duration: 1 day/*blood magic* level

Range: Touch

In spite of any good advice to the contrary, most folks *do* judge a book by its cover. This spell takes full advantage of that fact. *Pox* gives the blood magician the ability to inflict a foul-looking but not particularly dangerous disease on her target.

To cast this spell, the blood magician must make an opposed roll of her *blood magic* Aptitude versus her opponent's *Vigor*. If she wins, she curses the cowpoke with a horrible case of oozing sores all over his skin. The disease causes no serious impairment to the victim, other than to make him look like Typhoid Mary's ugly cousin.

His appearance causes folks to roll a *guts* check against a Fair (5) TN. Those who fail don't suffer any results from the Scart Table, but go out of their way to avoid the victim. Bartenders and hotel clerks are liable to refuse him service.

On top of all that, for each success and raise the blood magician beats his *Vigor* roll by, the plague victim suffers a -2 to all friendly *Mien*-based rolls. That's assuming he can get close enough to anyone to talk to them in the first place! All in all, his social life is miserable for the duration of the spell.

Usually, there is no lasting effect to the *pox*. Once the spell ends, the disease clears up within hours. However, if the unlucky victim went bust on his *Vigor* roll in the opposed contest, the disease takes permanently! It's time to visit one of the blessed, a convalescent ward, or Boot Hill, amigo.

SANGUINARY WARD

TN: 7
Strain: 2
Speed: 1
Duration: 1 Wind/round
Range: Self

This spell creates an aura of magical protection around the blood magician, helping protect him from harm. The spell's effect is invisible, although your hero's skin does become noticeably more pale. As the spell draws the necessary essence from the small blood vessels near the surface of the caster's skin.

If the *blood magic* roll is successful, the caster gains one level of magical armor against all damaging attacks. For each raise she gets on the roll, he gains an additional level. In other words, with a success and two raises on his *blood magic* check, he receives AV 3 from his *sanguinary ward*.

SCUTTLE

TN: 5
Strain: 2
Speed: 1
Duration: 1 minute/*blood magic* level
Range: Self

Few things move as fast as roaches darting for a dark corner when the oil lamp's turned up. With all the horrid things prowling the Weird West, a blood magician could do worse than learn that particular trick for clearing out fast!

For every success and raise she gets on her *blood magic* roll, your hero's Pace is increased by 2—as long as she skitters along on her hands and feet! *Scuttle* lets your blood magician move at this increased Pace over a vertical surface or even upside down—not unlike a roach.

She can even squeeze into spaces under or between surfaces normally too narrow for a human to enter. The space can be as small as 5" high, but it must be wide enough to allow her shoulders to pass through. As long as she can enter the space, she can move at her full Pace (as enhanced by the spell) even while compressed. Her movements while under the effects of *scuttle* are quick and jerky, like that of an insect.

Watching a cowpoke skitter along a wall or under a dresser like an overgrown waterbug is pretty disgusting. Folks seeing this sort of activity must make a Fair (5) *guts* check.



SHADOW WEAVE

TN: 5

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration or 1 Wind/
round

Range: Touch

This spell draws shadows to the target like iron filings to a lodestone. Darkness pools on her clothing and clings to her like Mississippi mud, making her hard to see clearly.

Being wreathed in shadows has advantages other than just looking unusual. For every success and raise the blood magician gets on her roll to cast the spell, the target gets +2 on all *sneak* rolls to avoid being seen.

Likewise, any ranged attacks against her receive a -2 penalty for each success and raise the caster received on the *blood magic* roll.

SHALLOW GRAVE

TN: 11

Strain: 3

Speed: 2

Duration: Permanent

Range: 1 yard/*blood magic* level

As if things in the Weird West weren't bad enough, blood magicians have figured out a way to make them even worse! *Shallow grave* calls a minor manitou to inhabit a nearby corpse, in effect creating a walkin' dead nominally under the caster's control.

There must be at least one dead (and not already *undead*!) body within range for your blood magician to cast this spell. If more than one is in range, the summoned manitou randomly chooses which it reanimates. Once cast, the corpse becomes a walkin' dead, rising at the end of the round in which the spell is cast.

If your Marshal is using *Rascals, Varmints, & Critters II*, he's welcome to make the newly-created undead one of the walkin' dead varieties listed in that book, like a frozen dead or bloat, provided the conditions are right!

The walkin' dead immediately attacks the nearest living human, but it avoids its creator. Other than that small concession, your hero has no special control over the abomination.

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The TN for *shallow grave* is reduced by an amount equal to the local Fear Level.

The Reckoners love having more minions on the planet, even if they're not in direct control of every walkin' dead shambling about the landscape. For that reason, casting this spell gives your blood magician a Corruption Point.

SPIRIT WALK

TN: 9

Strain: 5

Speed: 2

Duration: 2 Wind/round

Range: 5 yards/*blood magic* level

Maybe your blood magician isn't far enough down the path to the dark side to want to risk casting *shallow grave*, but still sees some value in having an undead foot soldier on her side in a fight. If that's the case, *spirit walk* may be the spell for her—but be warned, it has dangers all its own!

This spell lets the caster's spirit leave her own body and briefly reanimate a nearby human corpse. She can't target a non-human body or one that's already been claimed by the undead.

While animating the body, your blood magician can ignore two levels of wound modifiers and suffers no Wind loss due to wounds. Her Mental Traits and Aptitudes remain the same. She also retains her own Corporeal Aptitude levels, but she uses the Corporeal Traits of the body's former owner. Best of all, any physical wounds inflicted on the animated body stay with the corpse when she returns to her own body!

Your blood magician does still lose Wind from mental stress, like failed *guts* checks, and this Wind is subtracted from her own Wind. The cost of maintaining the *spirit walk* is also subtracted from her own total.

Since blood magic spells rely on her own supernatural ancestry to form the link to the Hunting Grounds, she can't cast further spells of that sort while animating another body.

While her spirit is animating the corpse, her own body lies in a comatose state. The body is completely defenseless during this time. Your hero is well-advised to make sure her body's in a relatively safe place while she's "out"!

The greatest danger comes from the chance that some malicious manitou may notice your hero's unoccupied body while she's *spirit walking*.

If your blood magician draws a black Joker from the Action Deck during combat while animating a corpse with this spell, a manitou is playing house in her original body. When it's time to return home, your Marshal draws a card to determine the claim-jumping manitou's *Spirit*. Your blood magician must defeat the critter in a contest of *Spirit* or find herself bodiless!

Whether or not there's any way for your blood magician to oust the spiritual squatter is up to your Marshal. You know what they say, after all—finders keepers, losers weepers...

Harrowed blood magicians are advised to stay well away from this spell. Leaving the body gives the manitou control of it until the Harrowed's spirit returns. Then she's got to make a Dominion check. If she wins, she regains control and nothing more; if the manitou wins, she still gets back into her body, but the demon gains Dominion points as normal from the contest!

SOUL SIGHT

TN: 5
Strain: 1
Speed: 1
Duration: 1 Wind/round
Range: Self

By tapping into the supernatural energies of the Hunting Grounds just right, a blood magician can sense the presence of spirits of any type. That includes beings with corporeal bodies as well as those without.

The blood magician sees the spiritual essence of other folks, critters, or even abominations as faintly glowing outlines surrounding their physical bodies. She can see the essence of incorporeal beings with *soul sight* as well, even though such entities seldom have physical bodies..

The glow also helps her spot bushwhackers and even magically hidden or invisible foes. In those cases, your blood magician gets +2 to any *Cognition* or *search* roll to spot the sneaky varmints!

Thanks to the magic of the spell, its effects function regardless of light (or lack thereof). While your character can't truly see in the dark, she can still see the glimmer of the souls. For every success and raise she gets on her *blood magic* roll to cast *soul sight*, she can ignore 2 points of negative modifiers on any roll to target or spot any being with a spirit in shadowy, twilight, or even pitch darkness. She might stumble over a log or chair in the dark, though.

Be careful, though. There are a few things prowling the Weird West that have no souls, and so are invisible to the effects of this spell! Also, for some reason, exposed ghost rock nuggets produce a sickly green radiance when viewed with *soul sight*.

STEAL LIFE

TN: 5
Strain: 1
Speed: 1 (Vamoose)
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch

Blood magic puts a mental and physical drain on the caster's body. Many practitioners of the craft tend to overlook the physical toll the spells take on them until it's too late. If your blood magician isn't carefully, he may find himself fainting from temporary exhaustion long before his mind tires.

There's a small amount of energy left in a body even after death, but it quickly dissipates, fading to nothing within seconds after the soul's departure. However, if your hero moves quickly—and knows *steal life*—he can snatch a little of those spiritual crumbs to replenish his own body's exhausted reserves.

This spell must be cast as a vamoose action when another cowpoke (or critter) takes a dirt nap near your blood magician. The target has to be actually dead, not merely Winded out or stunned, for *steal life* to work. Folks are mighty close-fisted with their life force otherwise!

For every success and raise your blood magician gets on his *blood magic* roll to cast this spell, he immediately recovers 1d6 Wind. He can't regain more Wind than his total, however.

Steal life is only effective on living targets. If cast on an undead one, your blood magician actually loses 1d6 Wind!

WINDOW TO THE SOUL

TN: 7

Strain: 1

Speed: 1

Duration: Concentration or 1 round/
blood magic level

Range: 5 yards

Some folks believe a person's eyes are the windows to her soul. Should someone be able to decipher the shimmering images beneath those glistening orbs, they might just be able to read the fine print on her very spirit.

As you might guess, this spell gives a blood magician the ability to discern important truths about a person simply by gazing deep into her eyes and reading the fleeting images dancing within.

The caster must make eye contact with his target to be successful. Exactly how difficult that is to accomplish depends on the situation. Normal conversation works fine, as does anything more intimate. Two gunslingers eying each other at High Noon works as long as they're within range. When used in this way, or in any tense situation, the caster knows when an opponent is about to act and can make an opposed *Quickness* roll to act before that opponent.

It's nearly impossible for the target to lie to your hero while *window to the soul* is in effect. With a simple success on his *blood magic* roll, he gains +5 on any *scrutinize* attempts versus his target, and each raise gives him an additional +2 to such rolls.

Furthermore, your blood magician gleans certain secrets about his target from merely casting the spell. A single success tells him if the target has an *arcane background* or is Harrowed (or other form of undead), while a raise gives him a clue to the type of magic (if any) the target uses.

Both effects of the *window to the soul* are resolved on a single roll. In other words, your sorcerer doesn't have to roll twice to get the *scrutinize* bonus and figure out if his target is also a "special" cowpoke of some sort.

However, the second ability of this spell can only be attempted a single time on any given target. Finally, if he fails in an attempt to invoke this spell on a given target, that sodbuster is forever immune to any more attempts on his part to use the spell on her.



CONSPIRACY THEORIST

TRAITS & ABILITIES

- Deftness 1d8**
Lockpickin' 3
Shootin': pistol 2
- Nimbleness 2d6**
Climbin' 1
Sneak 3
- Quickness 3d6**
- Strength 1d6**
- Vigor 2d6**
- Cognition 4d10**
Scrutinize 4
Search 3
- Knowledge 2d10**
Academia: occult 2
Academia: history 4
Area knowledge 2
Language: English 2
Professional: Law 2
Professional: Politics 2
- Mien 2d6**
Tale-Tellin' 3
- Smarts 2d12**
Bluff 2
Streetwise 3
- Spirit 3d8**
Guts 2
- Wind 14**
- Pace 6**
- Edges**
Keen 3
Luck o' the Irish 5
- Hindrances**
Curious -3
Enemy -2: *One of his theories is right...* (Marshal's choice!)
Loco -2: Paranoid
Tinhorn -2
- Gear:** Rupertus Pepperbox, 50 rounds, 10 issues of the *Tombstone Epitaph*, pad and paper, several notepads filled with notes, carpet bag, \$220.

PERSONALITY

Believe me, you don't want to go to the authorities on this problem of yours. You do know, of course, that the entire Union government has been subverted by the Masonic agenda, don't you?

I have incontrovertible proof that President Grant's predecessor was a practicing Mason. You can't be so naive as to believe he'd have lobbied as hard as he did to get Grant on the ticket if he weren't in the conspiracy as well!

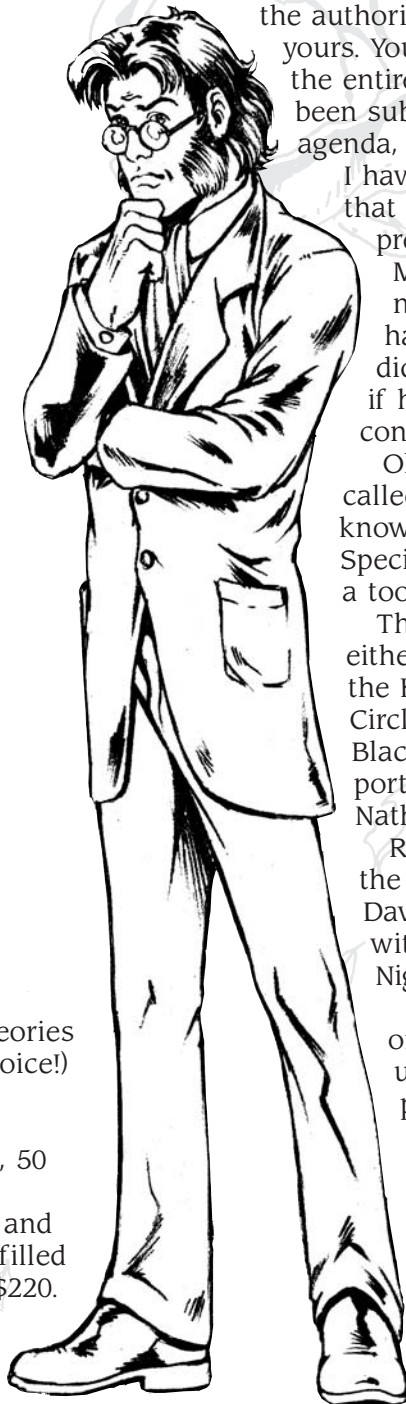
Oh, you can be sure the so-called "Agency"—otherwise known as the United States Special Services Agency—is just a tool for a European cabal.

The Confederacy's no better either. It's common knowledge the Knights of the Golden Circle control everything from Black River Railroad to the port of Mobile to General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Rumor has it that they're the reason First Lady Varina Davis won't leave Davis Bend without her guard of Nightwatchers!

There's something going on here, that's for sure. But, until we're sure who's really pulling the strings, we'd best keep it to ourselves.

Quote: "There's only two people I trust right now: me and you. And I'm not so sure about you."



EX-RAIL GANG ENFORCER

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 2d12

Shootin': pistol, rifle, shotgun 4

Nimbleness 3d8

Climbin' 1
Fightin': brawlin' 3
Horse ridin' 2
Sneak 2

Quickness 2d10

Quick draw 2

Strength 1d8

Vigor 4d10

Cognition 4d6

Artillery 2
Search 1

Knowledge 1d6

Area knowledge 2
Demolitions 2
Language: English 2

Mien 3d6

Overawe 4

Smarts 2d6

Streetwise 2
Survival: any two 2

Spirit 2d6

Guts 3

Wind 16

Pace 8

Edges

Friends in high places 1:
former railroad
comrades-in-arms

Level-headed 5

Nerves o' steel 1

"The stare" 1

Veteran of the Weird

West 0

Hindrances

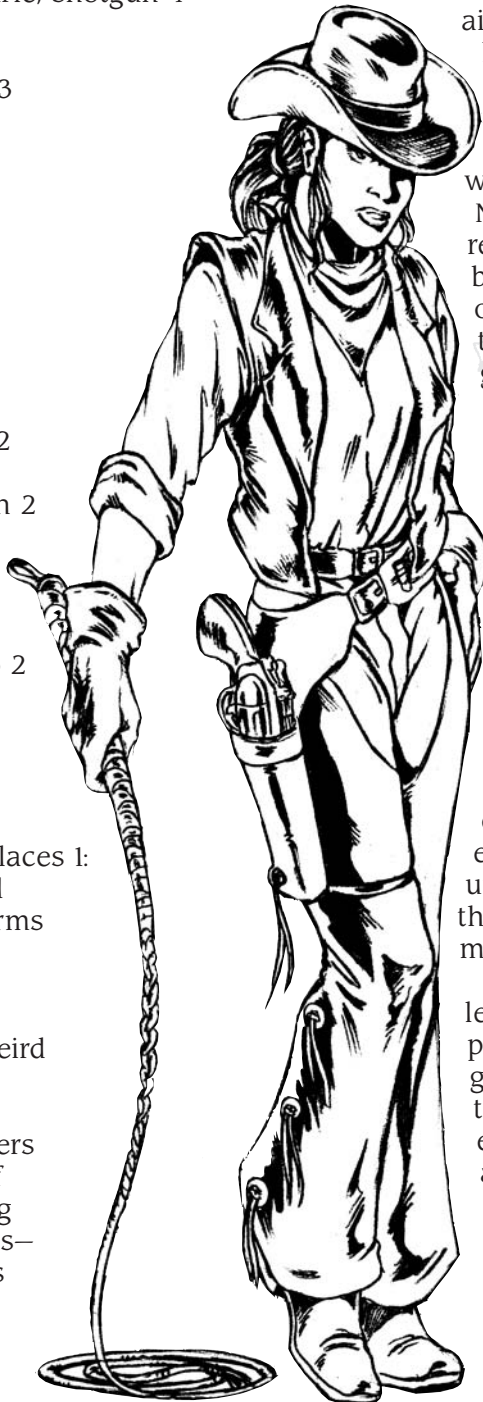
Enemy -3: Enforcers
make *plenty* of
enemies among
other rail gangs—
and sometimes
their own!

Greedy -2

Outlaw -2

Wanted -3: It's in
your hero's best interest to stay *this*
side of the border.

Gear: Colt Army revolver, Winchester
'73, horse and tack, quick-draw
holster, 50 rounds for each firearm,
\$25.



PERSONALITY

Okay, so I did some stuff on the other side of the border I ain't too proud of. But I never killed a man that didn't

deserve it, and the rest of it was just part of the job. And I don't do that kind of work anymore.

Now, I ain't sayin' I found religion or anything like that, but after a while you figure out there's wrong and then there's *really* wrong. I've still got a few friends back in my old outfit, but pretty much I'm shed of them now.

Believe me, there's worse things out there than a gal who's dug into the till once or twice at some fancy cow-town bank. I know, 'cause I've seen them with my own two eyes.

I don't want to see them again unless it's at the other end of my rifle sights either. And things that show up in my sights don't stay there long—if you get my meaning.

You'll do much worse than lettin' me handle your problem. 'Course, we've still got that matter of payment to discuss. I've got my expenses to consider, after all.

Quote: "I've seen worse. Much worse."

WHA TELEY BLOOD MAGICIAN

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 2d6

Throwin': balanced 2d6

Nimbleness 2d6

Climbin' 1d6

Fightin': knife 3d6

Sneak 3d6

Quickness 4d6

Strength 1d6

Vigor 3d8

Cognition 2d10

Art 2d10

Search 1d10

Knowledge 2d12

Academia: occult 3d12

Area knowledge 2d12

Blood magic 4d12

Language: English 2d12

Language: Welsh 2d12

Medicine: general 2d12

Mien 1d8

Overawe 2d8

Smarts 4d10

Bluff 3d10

Ridicule 2d10

Spirit 3d6

Guts 4d6

Wind 14

Pace 6

Edges

Arcane Background: Blood Magic 5

Belongin's: 2: Arcane tome

Nerves o' Steel 1

Whateley Blood

3

Hindrances

Ailin' -1

Enemy -2:

The family's very disappointed in you...

Night Terrors

-5

Tinhorn -2

Special Abilities:

Blood Magic 4: Spells: *Cauterize, crimson fire, necrology, and scuttle.*

Gear: Large knife, nice suit of clothes, carpet bag, \$225.

PERSONALITY

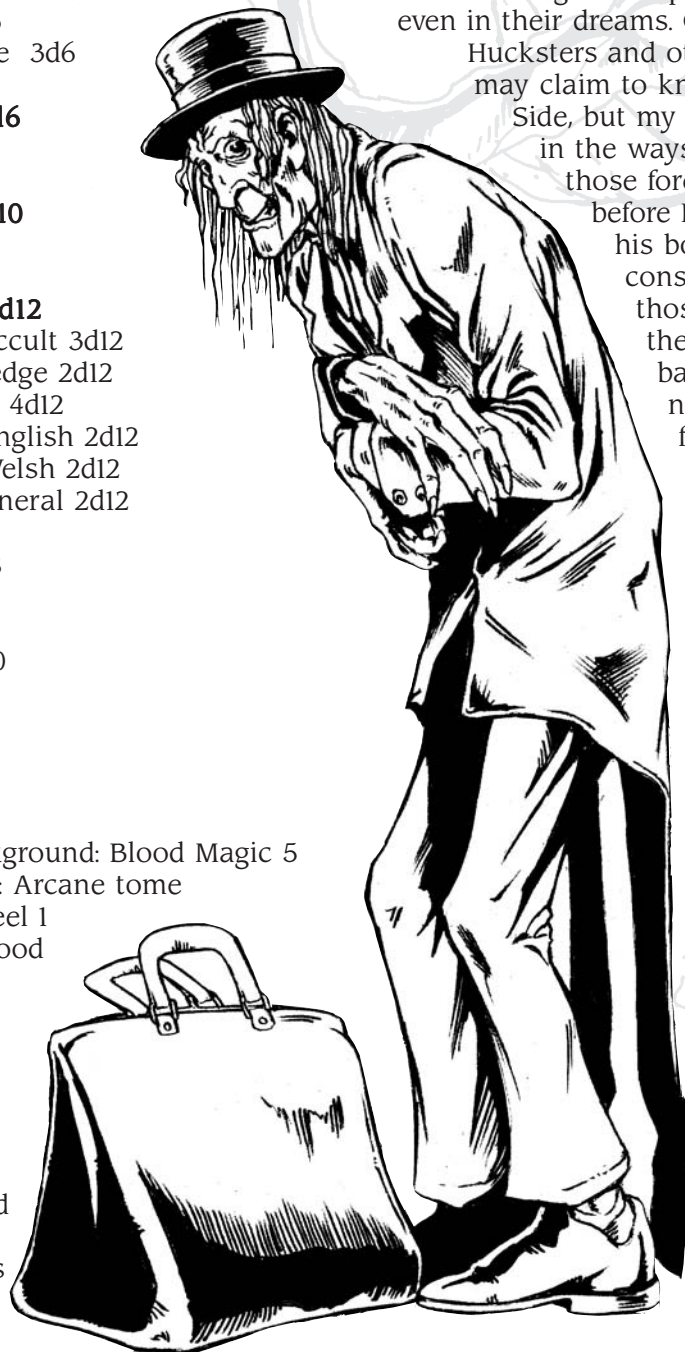
Oh, I doubt there's anything you could tell me that would really surprise me. I've seen things most people never do, even in their dreams. Or nightmares.

Hucksters and other charlatans may claim to know the Other Side, but my family was wise in the ways of manipulating those forces a millenia before Hoyle even began his book. You can consult with one of those upstarts, but in the end, you'll come back to me, so why not do it right the first time?

Not all of us are boogeymen; let's just say I'm sort of the "white" sheep in the family. Of course, for us that means something a little different than it does in other families.

For instance, you're still alive...

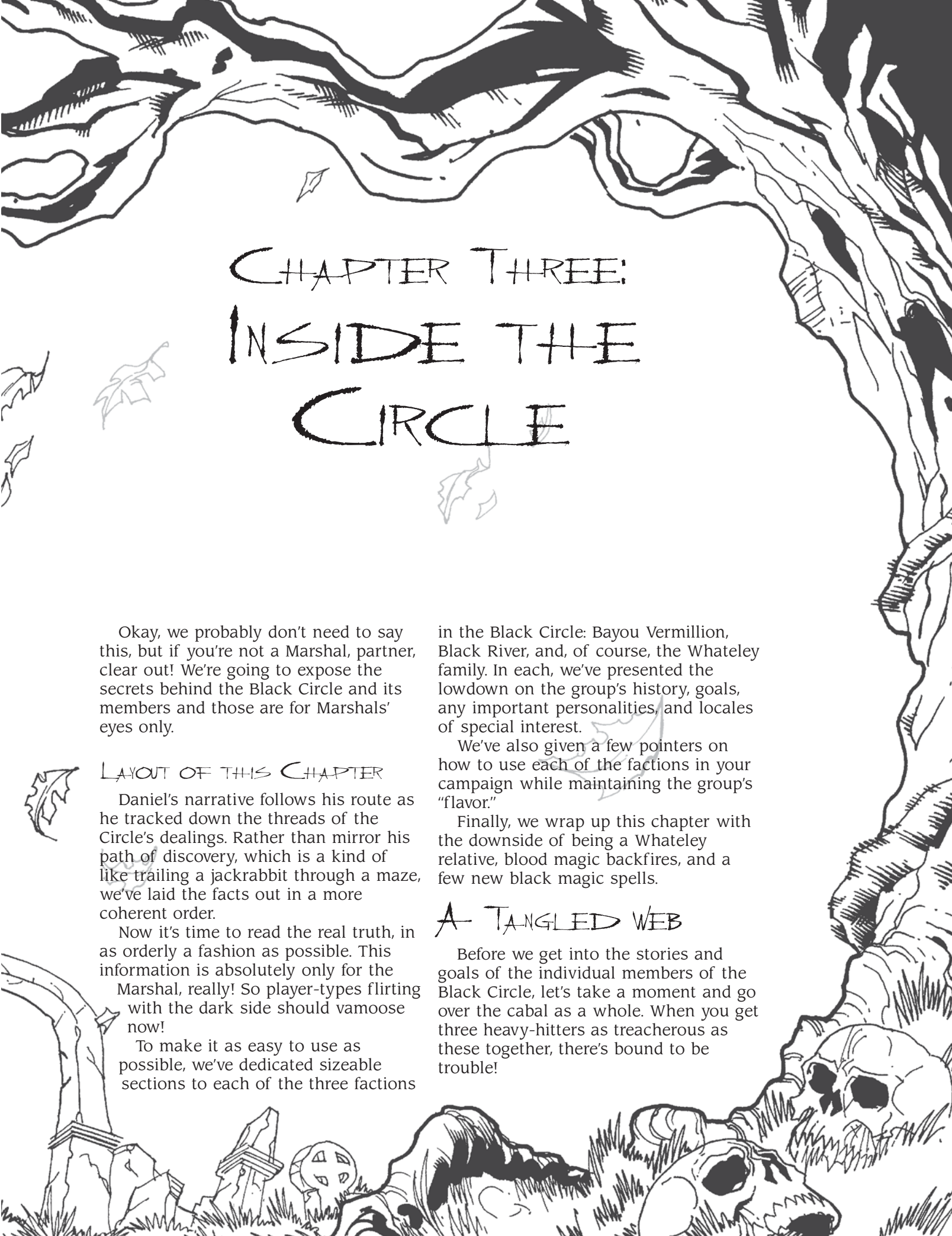
Quote: "That reminds me of Cousin Samuel around the eyes...at least I think those are eyes."



THE MARSHAL'S HANDBOOK







CHAPTER THREE: INSIDE THE CIRCLE

Okay, we probably don't need to say this, but if you're not a Marshal, partner, clear out! We're going to expose the secrets behind the Black Circle and its members and those are for Marshals' eyes only.

LAYOUT OF THIS CHAPTER

Daniel's narrative follows his route as he tracked down the threads of the Circle's dealings. Rather than mirror his path of discovery, which is a kind of like trailing a jackrabbit through a maze, we've laid the facts out in a more coherent order.

Now it's time to read the real truth, in as orderly a fashion as possible. This information is absolutely only for the Marshal, really! So player-types flirting with the dark side should vamoose now!

To make it as easy to use as possible, we've dedicated sizeable sections to each of the three factions

in the Black Circle: Bayou Vermillion, Black River, and, of course, the Whateley family. In each, we've presented the lowdown on the group's history, goals, any important personalities, and locales of special interest.

We've also given a few pointers on how to use each of the factions in your campaign while maintaining the group's "flavor."

Finally, we wrap up this chapter with the downside of being a Whateley relative, blood magic backfires, and a few new black magic spells.

A TANGLED WEB

Before we get into the stories and goals of the individual members of the Black Circle, let's take a moment and go over the cabal as a whole. When you get three heavy-hitters as treacherous as these together, there's bound to be trouble!

So exactly what does the Black Circle have planned? What nefarious plot brings these three factions together?

The truth is far more sinister than even Daniel believes. The unholy trio is in actually a quartet. The fourth player, as yet unknown to anyone in the Weird West, is the Cackler.

THE CACKLER

Things aren't so merry in merry Old England. If the West's bugaboo is Stone, England's is the Cackler. This ancient creature, a lich, might even be worse. The Cackler has been around since before the Reckoning, and was a major force of evil even then. The return of the manitous and the subsequent rise in supernatural energy nearly doubled his power. Then, just to make sure he was on the list of bad guys you don't want to mess with, he talked directly to the Reckoners and got an extra helping of villainy.

The Black Circle knows of the Cackler and his insane eldritch power, and they've found a way to draw him to the American West.

You see, the Cackler is searching for something, and the Black Circle knows what it is.

Eons ago, the Cackler's mother was the supreme sorceress in all the world. For reasons that will be revealed later, she betrayed her remaining family and slew them before being blasted from this world herself.

The Cackler escaped, though mortally wounded. In his darkest hour, he used his mother's dark magic to turn his dying body into a vessel of evil, a lich. The Cackler was not truly qualified for this complex ritual, but the dark powers recognized the potential of his bloodline and granted him the boon anyway. The next several hundred years were spent repaying their fearsome debt.

Now the Cackler is second only to his departed mother in raw power and naked vileness.

THE CACKLER'S QUEST

The Cackler is now free of the long debt he paid for his lichdom. The last obscenity whispered to him by his dark masters was that his mother might be reborn. The Cackler laughed for the first time since his death, a rasping giggle that would later earn him his name and disguise his true name.

The lich has spent the last few decades looking for a particular descendant foretold by the Cackler's masters. His mother's spirit lies dormant in their bloodline, and may be culled once every century from a raven-haired girl on her 13th birthday.

MINA GETS INVOLVED

In October of '77, Mina Devlin faced a grim future as the Battle of the Cauldron began in the Great Rail Wars. The Confederate government, tired of her attacks on their state-sponsored railroad, Dixie Rails, threatened to shut her down. (See *Tales o' Terror* for all the gory details.)

At the last minute, however, more devious heads prevailed and Mina was given an option. Help out the CSA or have her company shut down. She chose the former.

Mina's terms were two-fold. First, she was required to help Dixie Rails in the Cauldron. This task she performed with only modest results.

Second, and more importantly, Mina was tasked to travel to England and use her feminine wiles—not to mention a little black magic—to “encourage” Parliament to attack the United States. This they did in the attack on Detroit later that year.

MINA MEETS THE CACKLER

Mina used a little of her “vacation” to research arcana for her own use. While exploring an ancient witch's crypt in southern England, she came face-to-rotted-face with the Cackler.

In pleading for her life—and remember this is Mina Devlin we're talking about—she revealed everything about her past and the plans for her nefarious future. The Cackler was intrigued and asked if her powers could locate his missing descendant for him.

Mina didn't really know if such a task lay within her abilities, but it was try or die. She gathered a few crows, which the Cackler slew for her, and then read their gory entrails.

To her surprise, portents were revealed. The descendant resided not in England where the Cackler has been searching, but in America. Her bloodline had fled to the "New World" in the mid-1800s.

The Cackler realized Mina's lust for power was only a shade less black than his mother's, and proposed an alliance. If she would find and capture the child before her 13th birthday, his mother would grant her all the powers of Hell.

Mina agreed without hesitation.

The Cackler, still keeping his true identity a secret even from Mina, said that he would join her in a year's time to complete the ritual.

Mina fled home and began a desperate search for the Cackler's descendant. The first few months proved fruitless, so a desperate Mina turned to her sometimes ally, Baron Simone LaCroix. The Baron agreed to help, and through his voodoo rituals, learned the child's first name—Rachel.

The search continued for some time but the elusive "Rachel" remained an elusive

Mina, in terror of the day the Cackler would visit her, next turned to the incestuous Whateleys. Wilhelmina herself, before the debacle at Gomorra, told Mina far more than she could have hoped for, for she knew the identity of the Cackler. In fact, they were related.

Mina sat back in stunned silence at the revelation. After a bit, she asked Wilhelmina if she could find Rachel. The Whateley matriarch used her most powerful scrying abilities and was granted a vision of a most curious thing—a former lawman named Caden West.

West had been well-known in the Disputed Lands a few years back. He had even killed or jailed several of Mina's own Wichita Witches. Then he mysteriously disappeared. Everyone assumed Mina's girls had killed him, but if they had, they hadn't told Mina. Wilhelmina's vision proved that he was still alive, and had some connection to the Cackler.

THE HUNT BEGINS

The Cackler would come in less than three months. Mina began to panic and asked for more help from Bayou Vermillion and Wilhelmina's Whateley clan. They demanded more favors for their help, and within the month, the unholy trio were firmly in bed together. Literally, in some cases.

At this time in the Weird West, agents of the three are scouring the land searching for Caden West or a raven-haired girl named Rachel. They haven't found either yet, but it's only a matter of time.

And in less than a month, the Cackler comes.

MUTUAL AID

The search for West and the Cackler's descendant is the Black Circle's top priority. Day-to-day, however, the trio's arrangements are more mundane if no less sinister.

The gist of the agreement—which is completely verbal—is as follows.

Bayou Vermillion provides the Whateley family gunmen and walkin' dead to support their activities in the Gomorra and Ghost Creek regions. In return, the Whateley family paid \$250,000 up front, and monthly stipends of \$5,000 to LaCroix.

Black River also provides support for the Whateley family in its endeavors. Rather than simple foot soldiers, Mina Devlin has agreed to train members of the Dupont family in her special form of black magic. Until such a time as that training is complete, Mina's own witches fulfill that function in Ghost Creek.

Also, Black River plants and spies serve as the Circle's eyes and ears not only in the area in and around Caine County, but throughout the West.

Black River receives no money for their services, but Wilhelmina has given Mina access to her collection of dark arcana.

All conflicts between Black River and Bayou Vermillion—except as needed to hide the Circle's existence from outsiders—are to cease. In armed encounters with other rail barons, forces from either side are to aid the other in as subtle a manner as possible. Everyone involved thinks it's best if the Agency and Rangers aren't aware of their coalition.

Should one or the other reach the Maze first, a linkage will immediately be formed between the railroads' main lines. Black River will then claim the Union's contract and Bayou Vermillion the Confederacy's.

At least that's how it's *supposed* to work. As you'll see as you read up on the individual factions, each has its own agenda and plans for the others.

SHHH! IT'S A SECRET!

The three groups together are far stronger than any one of their opponents. Of course, should their foes join against them, they'd be worse off than before. Both the Agency and the Texas Rangers might come in with hundreds of guns blazing if they suspect the alliance.

The Circle's top priority is keeping that from happening. That means keeping the existence of the Circle, and especially their connection to the Cackler, a very tight secret.

Daniel Clark was very close to tying the three factions together, though he had no clue about the Cackler. His work does pose a threat to the Circle's existence, but there are a couple of factors that keep the *Epitaph's* exposé from sounding the group's death knell.

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ...

While posse members are likely to regard the work as gospel (and that's fine—it helps set a dark and oppressive atmosphere for a campaign involving the Circle), the average person doesn't

take it the least bit seriously. Or really even care. The *Epitaph* is considered little more than a collection of tall tales, and the actions of these three players don't affect the average Joe's life (at least he doesn't think it does). The public readily accepts that most of the rail barons are ruthless competitors not afraid to use ruthless tactics against their foes. However, Daniel's assertions of dark, supernatural forces at play fall on deaf ears. On top of that, linking the two railroads with a family that has consorted with demons for centuries is the nail in the coffin.

THE AUTHORITIES

The Agency and the Rangers did take notice of the piece, however, and aren't quite as quick to dismiss it as the general public. After all, they know the *Epitaph* is occasionally right about its stories.

The Agency is interested in following up on some of the leads, but many of them point to places in the Confederacy. That means any operatives down there are in double jeopardy. If the Circle doesn't find them, the Confederates might. Besides, the organization's leaders don't see the big picture yet; they're concerned with what is a threat to the Union. Let the Rebels get their own fat out of the fire!

The Rangers are in a better position to mix it up with the Circle, but they're also in a touchier situation. Both Black River and Bayou Vermillion are in contention with Dixie Rails—a railroad that has on several occasions made use of the Rangers' services. Several members of the Confederate Congress, notably from Tennessee and Louisiana, have taken issue with the apparent favoritism shown by a government agency in the realm of market competition!

The Rangers' authority grates on a number of strong states-rights advocates in the Confederacy. One of the primary motivations for secession was interference by the government in what many believed were state issues. Davis' assignment of blanket authority is a sticking point with these folks even today.

As a result, the Rangers find themselves walking on eggshells when dealing with either of the two railroads; until they've got hard and fast evidence, they're *not* going to risk a political brouhaha over it.

Finally, both organizations find infiltrating either railroad to any depth nearly impossible. Operatives assigned to the task routinely disappear—or worse yet, go turncoat. The Circle has a frightening array of methods to sway loyalties: bribery, coercion, blackmail, and magical means are all fair game. Gathering info on the companies is therefore much easier said than done.

And what applies to the railroads goes double for the Whateley family!

COVERING THE BACK TRAIL

Don't forget, the *Epitaph* is a public paper. The Circle had a pretty good idea how much Daniel had discovered by the time it caught up with him in the Maze. What it didn't know about what he'd uncovered, the *Epitaph* is kind enough to tell it for the paltry 10¢ cover price on the paper!

Nothing the posse may learn from Daniel's exposé is going to be a surprise to the leaders of the Circle. They may be Evil with a capital "E" but they aren't stupid. Any damaging leads Daniel found are now buried. Six-feet under. In fact, a posse that tries to follow the late reporter's footsteps finds they now lead directly into one trap after another!

USING THE BLACK CIRCLE

We've given you some information on the Cackler and the facts as they stand at the time of Daniel's investigation. Feel free to alter the situation to best fit your own campaign's style, direction, and tone, Marshal. Don't feel like you need to pull any punches either. If your cowpokes go after the Circle, they're playing in the big leagues!

What you should not do is bring the Cackler into your game yet. He's coming, and you'll know it when he does. We're not ready to say exactly when, but his presence will change the Weird West forever.

If the posse gets entangled in the Circle's affair, keep the connections

mysterious and sinister. We've tried to lay the groundwork for this paranoia with Daniel's journals. A few secrets do leak out in there, but we also seeded it as liberally as possible with false leads and red herrings.

Be absolutely sure to let them investigate the Circle itself for a good long while before even mentioning the Cackler. Jump to the lich too soon and you cheat the group out of peeling back the layers of the conspiracy one at a time. Plus, we've got big plans for him later on, and you won't want more than a few hints before he truly enters the picture.

When the Black Circle first realizes a posse of dedicated do-gooders is on their trail, they don't summon up a mess of devil bats and walkin' dead to deal with them. That would be far too blatant. They'll start with some hooded hired guns, men who have no idea who they're working for. Only after mundane means have failed will the conspirators flex their eldritch muscles.





Now let's move on to some more detailed information on each group, its background, goals, and motivations.

BAYOU VERMILLION

Henri Marchand was an aging French Creole aristocrat who turned his sugar cane fortune into a small railroad linking New Orleans to Biloxi and western Louisiana. Marchand still had plenty of money left over after completing the small rail line, which he named Bayou Vermillion. He took little interest in the Confederate government's announced award for the winner of the race to the Maze.

But someone else did.

Baron LaCroix's dark masters—the Reckoners, though he believes them to

be Loa—sent him visions via his twisted versions of voodoo rituals. The Baron was to gain control of Marchand's railroad through hook and crook and begin a drive to the Maze.

LaCroix's agent approached Marchand with an offer so low it was insulting. The fiery-tempered owner responded with a few choice words that probably burned LaCroix's ears second-hand! However, within less than a week, Marchand reconsidered the offer.

It's amazing what a few curses applied judiciously to a victim's loved ones can do for one's negotiating position. Less than a month later, Marchand and his entire family disappeared. The Baron is not a man who takes kindly to being balked at his goals—even if only temporarily!

THE RECKONERS' PLAN

Simply put, the Reckoners intend for LaCroix to play spoiler in the Great Rail Wars. His railroad occupies one of the easiest routes, avoiding the worst of the Rocky Mountains and driving nearly straight across to Lost Angels. That city has a special place in the Reckoners' hearts (or at least what passes for them!) and they've stacked the deck to make sure Reverend Grimme's plans have a little time to mature before the railroads arrive.

LaCroix's job is to tie up as many of the other railroads' resources as possible. Bayou Vermillion's undead troops are far more replaceable than those of the other rail barons, so he's the perfect foil for the job! Every time Bayou Vermillion mixes it up with another railroad, the Reckoners win.

It may seem that the Reckoners then don't want LaCroix to win. To be honest, they don't really care who does. All they're doing is delaying it as long as possible so Grimme can cement his position firmly in Lost Angels before "civilization" arrives.

WHAT LACROIX KNOWS

Surprisingly very little. In the grand scheme, LaCroix is just another pawn of the Reckoners. As such, he has no more knowledge of their real plans. He may suspect some of them, but he believes

his railroad's success is vital to his masters' goal. Whatever that is.

LaCroix doesn't even know who the Reckoners are. All he knows is that his Loa became much more powerful in 1863—and that it's in his best interests to jump when they say to and *hope* he's jumping high enough!

LaCroix is also unaware of Reverend Grimme's place in the grand scheme. He believes the leader of Lost Angels to be nothing more than the charismatic—and largely insane—leader of a splinter cult. Grimme is just another obstacle to overcome in his rush to the coast.

Grimme, on the other hand, knows LaCroix is little more than a powerful errand boy for the Reckoners. He's received no instructions to the contrary, so his fanatical followers attack LaCroix's rail crews with the same ferocity as those of the other rail barons. In fact, since Bayou Vermillion is by far the closest to Lost Angels, the railroad probably takes more of a beating than its competitors!

All of this suits the Reckoners just fine. They could care less about the fate of a few gunmen, zombies, and cannibal cultists. After all, two of those three feel fear just like a Kansas farmer does.

THE DRIVE WEST

LaCroix's closest, and fiercest, competitor from the onset has been Fitzhugh Lee's Dixie Rails. Bayou Vermillion enforcers, both living and dead, harassed the Dixie Rails crews across Texas and into New Mexico. Lee, furious, struck back just as hard.

This continual battering has worn hard on both railroads. While LaCroix's troops are somewhat recyclable, the damage done to his tracks and rail crews wasn't. Luckily, the initial fighting died down to sporadic raids.

THE S.F. & E.P.

When LaCroix's crews neared El Paso, the Baron invited Nathan Ennis, the owner of the relatively small but strategically placed Santa Fe and El Paso Railroad to a meeting.

As the words "fair" and "ethical" are nowhere in LaCroix's strategy book, he drugged Ennis' drink. As soon as the

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man succumbed, LaCroix and a few members of his red sect began a series of rituals to turn Ennis into a puppet of the Baron's will.

To complete the spell, LaCroix took Ennis' pocket watch. At the end of the ritual, the man was sent back to his offices, announcing the link-up between Bayou Vermillion and the S.F. & E.P.

Now, LaCroix could care less about the business end of linking to Ennis' railroad. However, the small line cuts directly across the path of Dixie Rails' advance. Unless the S.F. & E.P. grants a right-of-way to Dixie Rails, Lee is going to have to divert his line hundreds of miles to the north—a detour that will very likely cost him the race!

And you can guess how likely it is that Ennis—fully under the Baron's magical thumb—is going to grant that right-of-way!

STALLED IN THE DESERT

LaCroix's stunt with the S.F. & E.P. came just in time. His crews are stalled just west of Tombstone, locked in a hit-and-run war with Geronimo and the Chiracahua Apaches.

The Apaches have been raiding Ghost Trail caravans for years, and the Bayou Vermillion survey crews were just more targets to them. However, soon the raids picked up in intensity. Something about dragging corpses back from the dead to use as foot soldiers really gets the Apaches riled!

So far, LaCroix's undead minions have had little luck in tracking down the Chiracahuas. The walkin' dead are formidable in a fight, but Geronimo is careful to strike when and where the situation favors his people, fading away before the railroad's enforcers can muster to counter-attack.

On top of that, Union troops from Fort 51 in Nevada often raid into Arizona. When they can't find any Confederate troops to tussle with, they make do with Bayou Vermillion crews.



As if that wasn't enough, Grimme's Avenging Angels have begun attacking the railhead with suicidal fervor. A favorite tactic is for one of the "chosen" to strap a case of dynamite to his chest and charge the work crews. With that much powder, he only has to get so close!

With the tide currently turned against him, LaCroix has slowed his push. Instead of trying to force his way through three foes, he's moved the railhead just west of Tombstone. There, he's set several bokkor to building up a large force of walkin' dead with which to spearhead his push West.

Just in time, it would seem, as things are about to take a turn from bad to worse for the railroad!

SANTA ANNA

Santa Anna contacted Baron LaCroix back in the early part of 1877. The Mexican general believes his "assistant," the lich Xitlan, is actually nothing more than a simple shaman or other minor sorcerer who learned his power from LaCroix. The general doesn't know much of his own country's history!

Seeking to remove an unnecessary link, Santa Anna sought out LaCroix's assistance directly. He hoped to learn the secret of creating walking' dead himself. The Baron, to date, has refused to share his secrets with Santa Anna, but the two forged a secret alliance, nonetheless.

THE AGREEMENT

In exchange for the exclusive use of Bayou Vermillion rail lines and trains when he stages his invasion, Santa Anna agreed not to damage the railroad's property when he crosses the border. The Mexican army also agreed to pay handsomely for those services when used.

LaCroix insisted these negotiations be conducted in secret. After all, it wouldn't do have folks know he was helping a foreign power plan its war efforts! As a show of good faith, the Baron even cooked up a few special walkin' dead just for Santa Anna's zombie army.

In the past couple of months, the general sent word to LaCroix that he was on the verge of making his move. Civil unrest in California has both the CSA and Union troops in the region occupied. With Dixie Rails stalled in New Mexico and Bayou Vermillion in his pocket, reinforcements aren't likely to arrive from Back East soon.

VERMILLION IN THE RED

In preparation for his stalling tactics, LaCroix has been playing up his railroad's financial woes. He claims a temporary interruption in service may be necessary unless Richmond floats his company a grant or loan.

In all honesty, he doesn't have to work too hard to pass it off. The Rail Wars have taken a toll on his coffers. He

dragged a good deal of wealth out of Haiti when he ran over 10 years ago, but high-living minions of Evil tend to go hard on bank accounts. Bayou Vermillion isn't in dire financial straits yet, but it has seen better days.

Mainly, LaCroix is laying the groundwork for denying Confederate reinforcements access to his line when Santa Anna crosses the border.

He wouldn't mind getting President Davis and the Confederate Congress to cough up a little cash, but that's more on principle than need. Dixie Rails' virtual subsidization by the CSA has long grated on the Baron.

If not, it won't break him. With the Whateley's recent investments, his railroad's books still balance out.

XITLAN AND THE SECRET EMPIRE

You can get the full story on Xitlan in the *Marshal's Handbook* and *South o' the Border*. In short, he's far from a simple hedge magician. Xitlan is a unique undead abomination who's been around since the time of the Aztec empire.

He's also fairly well connected outside of Mexico—although not with the sort of folks that make for pleasant dinner guests! Raven himself has met with Xitlan and apprised the undying priest of his plans. They are united in their hatred of the men who stole their lands.

Over the years, he's built a large following of descendents of the Aztecs. People loyal to his goal of ousting the Spaniards and rebuilding the Aztec empire have infiltrated virtually every level of Mexican society. This network calls itself the "Secret Empire."

The Aztec sorcerer believes Santa Anna is integral to his plans to seize the Mexican throne. He's unhappy about the increasing ties between the general and LaCroix. He knows full well that Santa Anna is looking for a way to cut him out of the picture.

Given that, it's only logical that Xitlan has come to see LaCroix as a threat to his own schemes. He has turned the might of the Secret Empire against Bayou Vermillion, murdering railroad employees, attacking trains, and destroying tracks and property.

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LaCroix has begun to take notice of these raids and suspects his ally may be planning to backstab him!

If you're interested in pursuing the Xitlan angle further, we recommend you pick up the sourcebook *South o' the Border*. It has the full details on him and his Secret Empire.

WITCH IN THE OINTMENT

Mina Devlin is aware of the trouble brewing on the southern border. Some dedicated digging into the situation has revealed the potential powder keg about to explode between LaCroix and Santa Anna.

Mina isn't the most patriotic soul and could care less about a Mexican invasion. Business is business, after all! However, she's always happy to undermine a competitor—even one she's supposed to be allied with! She sent some of her troops down into Arizona on a very special and *very* secret mission recently.

Her enforcers were instructed to attack and destroy Bayou Vermillion's enormous rolling town named Railhead. The attack took place under the cover of darkness, and the Black River troops were careful to leave plenty of evidence pointing the finger at Santa Anna.

If it works out as she's planned, LaCroix is going to have his hands full in the next few months! For details, see the section on **Railhead** later in this chapter.

LA CROIX'S AGENDA

Pure and simple, LaCroix's goals remain those set by his dark masters, the Reckoners—be the first railroad to reach the coast. Of course, these orders don't come to him directly; he receives them as omens, portents, and other signs. Regardless, the meaning is quite clear to the Baron: If he loses the race, he *will* live just long enough to regret it and then face an eternity of torment! That gives LaCroix a lot of incentive to



win, even though he could care less about the Rail Wars if left to his own devices. Perhaps even more ironic is that the Reckoners themselves don't want him to win. In fact, they've already got a plan for who they want to win. They just LaCroix to drag the process out as long as he can, cause havoc, and instill fear along his blood-soaked rail-lines. Still, they *are* going to see him suffer for losing. The Reckoners definitely don't play fair!

The Whateleys' investment and monthly stipend provides him with enough money to hire and equip hundreds more enforcers. When they die, he'll keep using them—but without having to worry about paychecks!

LACROIX AND BLACK RIVER

Furthermore, LaCroix hopes to use the Circle to undercut Black River in some fashion. Perhaps foolishly, he does not feel as threatened by Mina's railroad, believing her to be tied up with Union Blue and blocked by the Denver-Pacific.

He sees Black River as the weakest of his competitors and is making a fatal flaw in underestimating Mina's abilities. LaCroix plans little more than to keep an eye on Black River's progress. Although he has a few small irons in the fire for Black River, largely he thinks the alliance has nullified Mina and her company as a threat.

Wrongly figuring his undead troops can eventually overwhelm her enforcers, he has no plan for countering her in the long run.

BAYOU VERMILLION IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Of the three factions in the Black Circle, Bayou Vermillion is the largest and single most powerful. LaCroix's railroad masses one of the largest private armies of any of the rail barons. Not only does he hire gunmen and ex-soldiers like his competitors, his undead troops swell his forces.

Unlike the other barons, each battle actually allows him to *increase* his army's size!

Bayou Vermillion dominates much of central Texas and the Confederate Southwest, simply by virtue of the fact it has the longest continuous rail line. If a businessman wants to connect with companies Back East, odds are he's got to use LaCroix's line.

This gives the Baron enormous political and economic clout in the region. With big money comes political influence as well. Most local government organizations are at least somewhat tainted by Bayou Vermillion's influence and more than a couple of Congressmen have an entry or two in the railroad's pay books!

Furthermore, his railroad's enforcers often outnumber the Confederate government's troops in many regions. Combined, this makes Bayou Vermillion a serious force to be reckoned with—

and that doesn't even factor in his bokkor and zombies!

Any posse that decides to take on the Baron and Bayou Vermillion should quickly figure out they're dealing with a juggernaut. The only thing that holds the railroad to anything even close to the law is its need to hide its darker dealings from the eyes of the Texas Rangers.

Frontal assaults against Bayou Vermillion are doomed to fail. Sure, the posse might win one or two small battles, but in the long run, they are going to be overwhelmed by enforcers, cursed by bokkor black magicians, or simply locked up by corrupt officials.

Drop hints to this fact should your heroes try to take the direct route. Opposing Bayou Vermillion requires stealth and smarts more than fists and firepower!

BARON LACROIX

Baron LaCroix was one half of a pair of twins born to a Haitian mambo—or Voodoo queen—named Collete Devaux. She claimed his father was Baron la Croix, a Lord of the Dead and relative of Voodoo loa Baron Samedi. To honor him (so she claimed), she gave her children his surname.

Truth be known, it was actually a play on her part to gain stature for herself and her otherwise illegitimate children. Twins are thought to possess special arcane powers by voodooists, and a pair born of a Lord of the Dead would be specially favored indeed! Deceit and ambition run in the Baron's blood, it would seem.

A BOY NAMED SIMONE...

At birth, Baron LaCroix's name was Simon and his sister Simone. As the twins grew older, Simone became as gentle as Simon was cruel. Naturally, folks preferred Simone's company to that of Simon, and it didn't take long for the seed of jealousy to take hold in the brother's heart.

For years, his hatred and ambition ran a neck-and-neck race for control of his soul. Then, on the twin's 18th birthday, Colette announced she planned to pass her powers on to her daughter. Simon,

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finally driven to near madness from his rage, took matters into his own hand.

That night, Simon killed his mother and twin sister, conducting evil rites to steal their power. The next day, he presented himself to the congregation, claiming to be the vessel of his sister's soul. Playing on superstition, he even took his sister's name—Simone—to add credence to his assertion.

LEARNING FROM THE WORST

LaCroix did gain power from his rituals on the night of the murders, but not as he'd have liked. While many of the congregation feared him, he knew one day they would likely challenge him.

He began to study under a bokkor known as Papa Natanga, one-time ally of the first dictator of Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture. Under the old sorcerer, LaCroix built his skills and gained contacts in the Haitian zobop, a society of evil voodooists.

For almost a decade, LaCroix extended his power in Haiti, and although others held leadership publicly, he ruled the island for all intents and purposes. It was during this time he assumed the title "Baron," claiming his fictitious father's title. Finally, in 1861, the Haitian people revolted, forcing LaCroix and his closest allies to flee the island.

He managed to secure a fair amount of the fortune he'd plundered from Haiti before he left, to ensure he wouldn't have to start from the bottom wherever he settled.

"Wherever" turned out to be New Orleans, barely a year before the Union seized control of the city.

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

LaCroix endured the Union's occupation until Union General Butler imposed a ban on public religious gatherings. The Haitian used those to garner support among the populace and

identify both potential allies and dangerous foes.

Even with what power he had garnered and the skills he'd learned from Papa Natanga, it's unlikely he had a chance against the Union army. On July 3rd, 1863, the day Raven released the manitous in the Hunting Grounds, LaCroix's previously restrained allies granted him their full power, giving him a sign to strike.

He quickly gathered his most powerful bokkor and released a terrible sending on the Union garrison in New Orleans. The soldiers never had a chance. The magic turned their very hearts and stomachs into spiders, snakes, and worse!

The magic had a consequence LaCroix had not foreseen. It slew all of the bokkor involved save LaCroix. The strain took him years to recover from, and during that time he gained his reputation as a recluse.

The Baron learned from the experience. Such power comes with a terrible cost. It took nearly another ten years for him to rebuild the ranks of his bokkor and he's unwilling to squander them in similar displays.

Instead, he relies on more traditional methods to enforce his will. If by traditional you mean zombies and voodoo curses, that is.

CURRENT FOES

At present, LaCroix believes there are two people who pose the greatest threat to him. One is more than a thousand miles away, but the other lives virtually in his own back yard.

The first is the undead sorcerer Xitlan who creates and controls Santa Anna's legions of undead. LaCroix doesn't know anything about Xitlan other than he's infringing on what the Baron considers his "turf"—the cemetery. He's sure the black magician means him no good, and as we'll tell you later in this chapter, he's right!

The second is Marie Laveau, the Voodoo queen of New Orleans. She is very popular with the people in the city and wields no small amount of power in day-to-day affairs there. However, she's not nearly the threat LaCroix believes her to be.

His concern comes from his seeming inability to affect her with magical sendings. What LaCroix doesn't know is that the public Marie is actually the daughter of the original. The pair pulled a skillful (and completely non-magical) identity switch years ago, and the daughter assumed her mother's position and name—with no one outside a close inner circle the wiser. As LaCroix's magic is dependent on knowing the victim's true name, this has caused him considerable trouble. In fact, his curses are working, but on the wrong Marie. The mother is now quite dead and buried in a New Orleans cemetery. Unaware, he continues to cast his misdirected spells at a corpse! As a result, he's convinced the New Orleans mambo is far more powerful than she truly is. In reality, the only threat she poses to him is in his own paranoia.

ENCOUNTERING LACROIX

The Baron is no fool. He's been around long enough to gain a respectable number of enemies and bury most of them—even if only temporarily! LaCroix is well aware he has plenty of folks looking to take him down and he has no intention of giving them the chance.

He knows better than to travel anywhere alone and keeps a sizeable group of gunmen and a red sect bokkor or two (described later in this section) around at all times. In less populated areas, he has a large group of veteran walkin' dead nearby as well. His public appearances are rare and carefully guarded.

Don't think of LaCroix as some two-bit conjure doctor or gunman. He's a powerful minion of the Reckoning, but he's also a canny businessman who's not looking to sully his hands with a simple bunch of gun-happy cowpokes.

That's why he has henchman! Should you let your posse run the Baron to ground, they have a fight on

their hands they're unlikely to forget. The Baron has tremendous arcane powers and goes for the kill. Nothing's worse than having an enemy with a scar to remind him why he hates you!

Still, the Baron does not fight to the death, or at least *his* own death. He escapes at the first chance he gets, or barring that, he surrenders. He's got the power, money, and influence to make some pretty attractive offers!

You shouldn't go killing off major players like the Baron just yet. That's why we haven't give you his statistics. Should the unthinkable happen, however, you've got a couple of options. He may come back Harrowed, or another member of his organization (Brionne or Papa Natanga) may step up into his former position.

NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans is home to the Bayou Vermillion headquarters and central rail yards. It's also where LaCroix himself spends most of his time, so if your posse ever gets crazy enough to try to beard the lion in his den, they're going to end up in the Crescent City.

For space reasons, we're only going to address the places and folks in town directly related to LaCroix and Bayou Vermillion. If you want a more detailed run-down on the city, check out our *River o' Blood* campaign set.

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BARON LACROIX'S MANOR

FEAR LEVEL 5

The Baron has chosen to live in the swamps to the south of the city to allow him to practice his dark arts without concerns of being observed.

The surrounding swamp is overrun with alligators and worse critters, forcing interlopers to approach by boat. LaCroix has eyes throughout the swamp watching the approaches to his manor. Walkin' dead are particularly useful in this task, able to remain completely underwater for hours on end. Of course, he loses one or two to the occasional alligator, but the Baron can always make more.

The walls are 10' high and broken glass is embedded in the mortar along the top. The glass and wall aren't to keep people out as much as they are to keep them in once they're there!

At night, LaCroix releases feral walkin' dead onto the grounds of his estate—they prowl the island from dusk until dawn looking for tasty morsels.

LaCroix never invites anyone to his estate that he plans to release. Instead,



he lets them onto the grounds and lets the crazed zombies outside finish them.

Should a posse be foolish enough to attempt to enter his manor, they're in for a bad time. LaCroix is careful about using his undead minions where he can be caught, but his estate is remote enough to give him a free hand. The soon-to-be *late* heroes soon have large numbers of walkin' dead, tonton macouts, and other horrors on their hands!

BAYOU VERMILLION RAIL YARDS

Baron LaCroix and his henchmen are careful to keep any "unusual" employees away from the main rail yard. Texas Rangers, muckrakers, and the like all come nosing around the yard far too often to risk even a hint of misbehavior on the railroad's part. Any posse investigating the train depots and workshops finds nothing at all out of the ordinary here.

If they're too persistent, they do find Bayou Vermillion has no shortage of normal thugs in its employe, however! The railroad keeps enough gunmen about the area to repel all but a determined military assault—and, since the yard has a number of Gatling guns and even a concealed cannon or two, it might even be able to do that! They do call it the "Rail Wars," after all.

THAYER SHIPPING

Thayer Shipping is owned by Solomon Thayer—actually the alias of Edmond Hoyle's one-time apprentice and nemesis Ernt Biren (elaborated on in much greater detail in *Hucksters & Hexes* and *River o' Blood*).

It was almost inevitable that two men of such power and evil in a single city would eventually be drawn together. Neither knows the full story behind the other's background, but each sees the other as a tool.

Biren knows of LaCroix's undead workers and LaCroix is aware of some

of Biren's unpleasant pastimes as well. However, LaCroix is completely unaware of Biren's true identity (or even his real name) and Biren believes LaCroix to be merely an upstart voodooist.

Their alliance benefits them financially, giving them trade access to most of the central and western Confederacy, either by train or steamship. In addition, Biren exempts towns on the Bayou Vermillion rail line from his supernaturally induced plagues and LaCroix has sent some of his undead minions to the Maze to recover a few faminites for Biren's study.

There is no honor among thieves—or black magicians either, it would seem. Biren is concocting a plague that affects the undead, while LaCroix has his agents working to obtain a lock of Biren's hair for use in a horrible curse. Just in case, of course.

Hoyle's former apprentice is uninvolved in the Black Circle and is, in fact, completely unaware of it. LaCroix feels it's best to not keep all his eggs in one basket!

DAMIEN BRIONNE

Damien Brionne is LaCroix's personal assistant, legal council, and public relations man all rolled into one. He's handled the day-to-day operations of the railroad for years and is a familiar face in financial and commerce meetings in New Orleans.

He's also the most obvious point of contact point for outsiders. Brionne is in charge of handling the troubleshooting of minor affairs dealing with either Bayou Vermillion or the Baron himself. As he's wise enough to distance both the railroad and its owner from any "unpleasant associations," Brionne prefers to use third parties to do his dirty work as much as possible.

Educated at Oxford University, Brionne is also from Haiti and well acquainted with Voodoo, both good and bad. He's aware he works for a truly evil man, but this fact is of no concern to him. Although not a particularly bad person, Brionne is first and foremost a loyal professional, dedicated to protecting the interests of his boss and company.

PROFILE: DAMIEN BRIONNE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:1d8, Q:3d6, S:3d6, V:2d8

Climbin' 1d8, dodge 2d8, fightin': brawlin' 2d8, shootin': pistol 2d6, sneak 1d8, swimmin' 1d8

Mental: C:2d10, K:3d10, M:4d8, Sm:2d12, Sp:3d6

Academia: history 2d10, academia: occult 2d10, area knowledge: New Orleans 2d10, bluff 5d12, guts 3d6, language: English 4d10, language: French 2d10, language: French Creole 2d10, language: Latin 2d10, overawe 4d8, persuasion 6d8, professional: law 5d10, scrutinize 4d10, search 1d10, streetwise 5d12

Edges: Dinero 3, friends in high places 5 (LaCroix and Bayou Vermillion, keen 3, "the voice" 1: soothing)

Hindrances: Enemy -2: various competitors, loyal -3: LaCroix and Bayou Vermillion, obligation -3: LaCroix and Bayou Vermillion

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 1

Gear: Fine suit of clothes, satchel of (non-incriminating) documents, derringer

Description: A well-dressed, light-skinned black man with a Caribbean accent. Brionne keeps his hair close-cut and is always clean-shaven.

PAPA NATANGA

Papa was LaCroix teacher back in Haiti and remained behind when LaCroix fled. His reputation on the island kept him safe from the reprisals directed at LaCroix's other allies.

He moved to New Orleans a few years ago, intending to capitalize on his student's good fortune. Fortunately for the old bokkor, it meant he wasn't involved in the disastrous rituals on July 3, 1863.

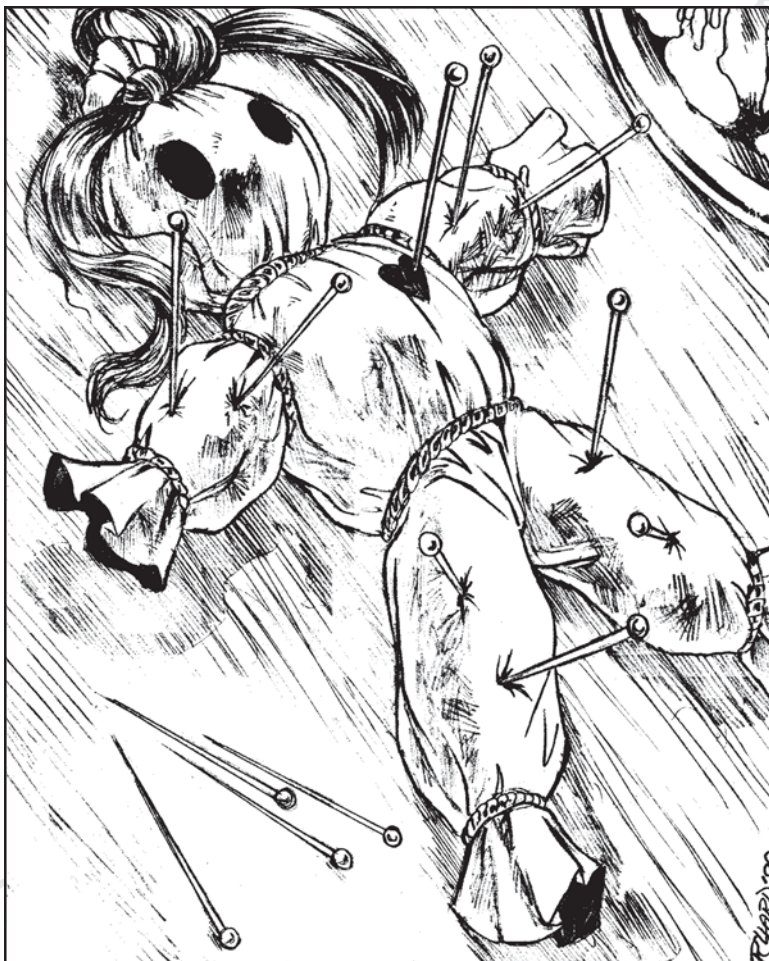
Once he arrived, he found LaCroix quite different than he recalled. LaCroix's power had grown enormously since the Reckoning. Papa still had the advantage of experience, but LaCroix's might now far outstripped his own. Rather than test his luck against LaCroix, Papa decided instead to throw in with him.

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This hasn't curbed the old man's tongue. He chuckles at LaCroix's claim to the title of Baron and refers to his magic as "dabbling," apparently for no other reason than it infuriates the younger man. Papa knows LaCroix's origins and how he came by the title of "Baron." The old man hasn't told anyone what he knows, but the threat that he might keeps LaCroix civil.

For now, LaCroix puts up with this abuse for a couple of reasons. First, Papa is an extremely skilled houngan who LaCroix believes can still teach him many things. Second, the old guy is damned handy to have around. More than once his skill with voodoo dolls has eliminated a bothersome foe.

As long as Papa remains useful, LaCroix is likely to put up with him.



However, should the day come the Baron no longer believes him worth the bother, no foolish sentimentality will protect the old man.

Papa Natanga stays at LaCroix's mansion while in New Orleans. The Baron often sends the bokkor to assist his enforcers in the field, however, when a little extra punch is needed.

PROFILE: PAPA NATANGA

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d6, Q:2d8, S:2d4, V:4d8

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, shootin': rifle 4d6, sneak 2d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:3d10, M:4d6, Sm:2d12, Sp:4d8

Academia: occult 8d10, area knowledge: Haiti 5d10, area knowledge: New Orleans 2d10, faith: black magic 5d8, guts 4d8, ridicule 4d12, scroungin' 4d12, scrutinize 3d8, search 3d8, streetwise 5d12, survival: island, swamp 2d12

Edges: Friends in high places (LaCroix and Bayou Vermillion officials)

Hindrances: Geezer -2

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: Curse 2, forewarnin' 3, puppet 3, stun 2, zombie 1. All of Papa's spells use voodoo effects as trappings.

Voodoo doll: Papa Natanga is an expert with these devilish toys. If he gains a piece of the victim's hair, skin, or nails, he can cast a spell similar to the voodoo spell *voodoo doll*. Papa can use the doll to inflict up to 10 wound levels to the victim regardless of range. He can cause one level per action, with no limit to the number of wounds per hit location. He must win a contest of his *faith: black magic* versus the victim's *Vigor* to cause each wound level. Papa can only have one such doll at a time.

Gear: Springfield .58 rifle

Description: Papa looks like a tired old black man well past his prime. He favors a ragged and worn top hat, and clothing barely fit for the trash bin.

Only the assortment of gris-gris, conjure bags, and amulets dangling from his neck are likely to warn a cowpoke of Papa's skills.

THE RED SECT

LaCroix has rebuilt the ranks of his bokkor since the disastrous night of July 3rd, 1863. A few of the conjure doctors are originally from Haiti, but the majority are recruits from New Orleans and the nearby bayous. Although only a small number of his newest crowd of bokkor have the experience of his first group, most make up for it with enthusiasm.

Zobop bokkor are often tasked to large groups of Bayou Vermillion enforcers to provide magical assistance. The railroad also keeps one or two near important locations along the line, like Tombstone, in case extra firepower is needed. A good number are always present in New Orleans.

The red sect is usually called on by LaCroix to sort out and clean up any inconvenient mess—or people.

For simple tasks, the sorcerers work alone, creating what support they need from the local Boot Hill. On more vital missions, usually two or three are sent, perhaps even augmented by abominations. If it's bad enough to warrant more than one bokkor, LaCroix's general feeling is better one too many than one too few.

Contrary to rumors, the red sect does not practice cannibalism—but that's about the only vile act they don't involve themselves in! However, LaCroix encourages the rumors as they help maintain his reign of terror in the area.

PROFILE: BOKKOR

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d6, Q:4d6, S:3d6, V:2d8

Climbin' 1d6, fightin': knife 3d6, shootin': shotgun 2d6, sneak 4d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:3d8, M:2d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:3d8

Academia: occult 3d8, area knowledge: New Orleans 2d8, faith black magic 4d8, guts 3d8, language: English 1d8, language: French Creole 2d8, search 2d6, streetwise 3d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magic, friends in high places 4: LaCroix
Hindrances: Superstitious -2, vengeful -3

Pace: 6
Size: 6
Wind: 16

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: Members of the red sect know a few spells at level 2 or 3. More powerful members of the group are likely to know more and at higher levels. Common spells (and their trappings) include: *animal mastery* (snakes), *curse* (voodoo doll), *cloak o' evil*, *puppet* (voodoo doll), *stun* (evil eye), and *zombie*.

Gear: Clothing varies by bokkor, but most carry a dagger (knife), a number of Voodoo items (voodoo doll, conjure bags, animal bones, etc.). A few keep a shotgun or scattergun.

Description: Zobop bokkor look like normal folks, although some may have obvious conjure bags or amulets around their necks.

BAYOU VERMILLION ABOMINATIONS

LaCroix, thanks to his connections with the Reckoners, has several unique abominations in his service.

NOSFERATU

Only a bald, albino weasel could love one of these monsters—and then only if it was nearly blind.

Driven solely by their bloodlust, these abominations seldom think beyond their next meal. Although possessed of an animal cunning at times, the most common tactic for the monsters is an overwhelming ambush. Any time spent planning beyond that cuts into valuable feeding time. Nosferatu can speak in a lisping, sibilant voice, but most use their mouths only for biting.

Originally found only in a few isolated areas of the Southwest, the Baron released trainloads of these monsters onto the network of his competitors' railroads in the Disputed Territories.

Although efforts by the Texas Rangers and Agency have been fairly successful

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in eliminating the resultant nests, smaller packs still exist scattered throughout both countries. LaCroix keeps a few penned under his mansion as a special welcoming party for truly persistent visitors.

PROFILE: NOSFERATU

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d10, Q:4d12, S:3d12+2, V:2d10

Climbin' 4d10, dodge 2d10, fightin' brawlin' 4d10, sneak 5d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d4

Overawe 4d8

Pace: 10

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Claws (STR+1d4), bite (STR; once a nosferatu successfully bites a victim, it holds on and does STR damage every round to the same location. The only way to break free is to win an opposed test of *Strength*. The nosferatu must use its hands to hold its victim and can't claw them).

Immunity: Physical damage.

Nosferatu don't suffer wounds from weapons or even damage-causing spells and hexes. They are not immune to stun—unlike most undead.

Infection: Any person slain by a nosferatu's bite rises as a nosferatu in 1d6 hours.

Undead: Focus—Head/Neck. The only way to permanently put down a nosferatu is to decapitate it or expose it to sunlight.

Weakness-Sunlight: Nosferatu take 3d6 damage per round from the light of the sun. This is massive damage.

Weakness-Wooden Stakes: A wooden stake through the heart totally paralyzes a nosferatu until the stake is removed.



Description: Nosferatu are bald and emaciated humanoids. Their eyes are solid black, with only a tiny spark of red visible in the center. Coarse, brown claws tip their fingers and toes, while chisel-like incisors protrude from their mouths.

SKINWALKERS

Baron LaCroix has somehow made an alliance with a number of these abominations. They serve as his primary infiltrators and spies, giving him an intelligence network that makes the Agency look like peeping toms!

Skinwalkers are seldom seen in their natural form. They prefer to wear the skins of humans and hide among mankind. A mutable skeleton allows them to freely mimic any human from

the size of a twelve-year-old child to the largest of adults. Their malleable musculature expands or contracts as necessary to facilitate these changes.

Since few people intentionally remove their own outer flesh, skinwalkers usually have to take it from unwilling victims. They can accomplish the flawless skinning of a victim in less than five minutes. Their claws are naturally suited for this task, and they use their coarse tongues to draw off the blood from their victims as they remove the skin.

Being particularly malicious creatures, they often keep their victims alive for as long as possible during this process.

The creature's tongue has a cartilage tube that it inserts through the base of the skull and uses to suck out the brain of the subject. Through some unknown means, skinwalkers are able to glean some of the subject's memories by this process. Although not a complete brain drain, it does give the monster enough information to pass a cursory interview. Needless to say, this experience is always fatal for the victim.

A skinwalker can wear a skin for about a month before decay begins to make it unusable. The hide can be used indefinitely if the creature regularly maintains it with vinegar or formaldehyde.

They can also store skins for up to three months in solutions of either substance. This practice gives the skin an odor, noticeable by anyone near the creature on an Onerous (7) *Cognition* roll.

Also, anyone closely examining a skinwalker from behind may notice a faint line or "seam" up the back on a Hard (9) *Cognition* roll.

PROFILE: SKINWALKER

Corporeal: D:3d12, N:3d10, S:1d10, Q:3d8, V:2d8

Fightin' brawlin' 4d10, skinnin' 6d12, sneak 6d10

Mental: C:d8, K:2d8, M:1d8, Sm:3d12, Sp:3d6

Bluff 5d8, disguise 6d8, persuasion 3d8

Pace: 10

Size: 6

Wind: NA

Terror: 9 (Without "skin")

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4), Claws (STR+2d6)

Disguise: A skinwalker in "disguise" gives all *scrutinize* tests to detect it a -2.

Immunity: As long as a skinwalker wears another's skin, it is impervious to physical harm. Once a total of 30 points of damage has been dealt to it, however, it sloughs off the destroyed skin. This is disgusting sight in itself, and witnesses must make an Incredible (11) *guts* check. Once its true form is exposed, normal weapons can harm it.

Gear: Whatever is suitable for disguise; when skinless, none.

Description: A skinwalker's natural appearance is very similar to a skinless human body. Retractable claws extend from the index and middle fingers of each hand. Its tongue is rough and rippled.

TONTON MACOUT

The very name of these abominations gives Haitian children nightmares. Tonton macout are the bogeymen of Haiti, frightening ogre-like creatures that serve powerful bokkor and sorcerers.

At first glance, they appear as nothing more than extremely large, bald, black men. They stand about six feet tall and weigh in at close to 300 pounds.

A closer examination reveals a few distinguishing characteristics. Their black eyes are abnormally small for their oversize heads. Their hides are tough, leathery, and completely hairless. Finally, they lack finger or toenails.

These creatures are completely insensitive to pain. This makes them particularly cruel when dealing with victims—and very useful as enforcers of LaCroix's will!

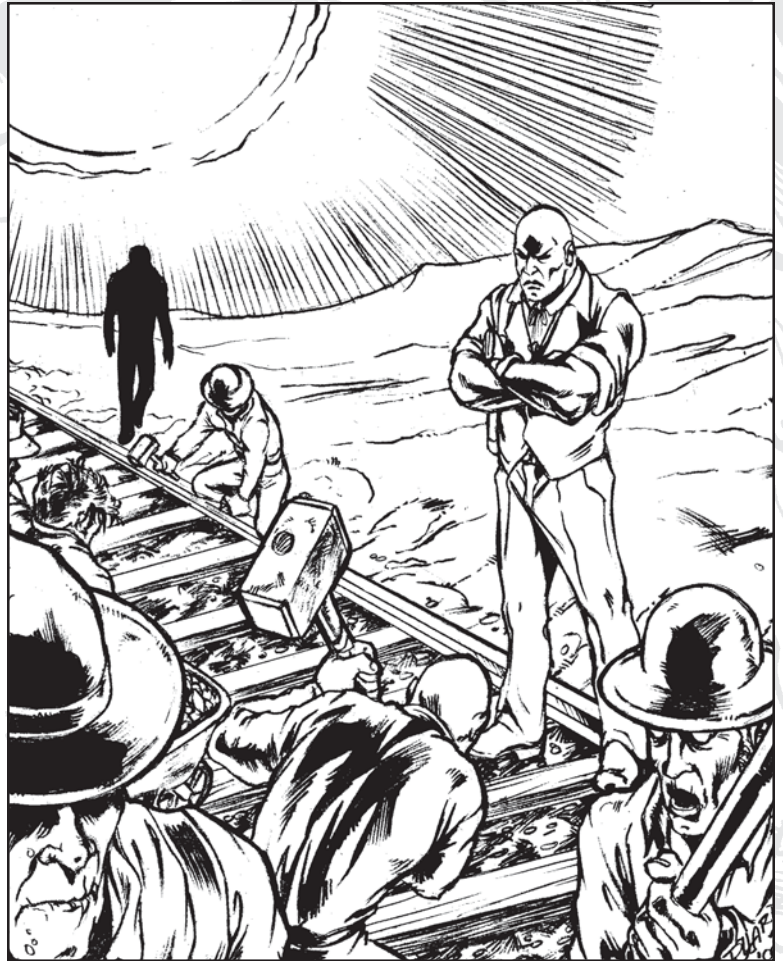
PROFILE: TONTON MACOUT

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:3d8, S:3d12+2, Q:2d8, V:4d12

Fightin': brawl in', machete 5d8, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:1d4, K:2d4, M:2d10, Sm:2d4, Sp:1d6

Size: 6



Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Armor 1

Invulnerability: Although they are not undead, they are immune to normal Wind loss and stun. They never suffer wound modifiers.

Fearless

Magic Resistant: Tonton macout are very resistant to magic. All hexes or spells cast against them suffer a -5 to the roll. Favors and miracles do not receive a modifier.

Throttle: If a tonton macout gets a raise on a *fightin': brawl in'* roll in combat, it has grabbed its victim by the throat. On each of its actions, it rolls a contest of *Strength* vs. its victim's *Vigor*. If it wins the contest, the poor sap caught by its meaty hands takes the difference in Wind.

Weapons: Tonton macouts are usually armed with machetes (STR+2d6).

Description: See above.

ZOMBIE

Zombies are often mistaken for walkin' dead, and understandably so. Lots of folks (even us!) even call walkin' dead zombies from time to time. Both were once living humans, and both wear the stench of decay and the grave. However, although they are a form of undead, zombies differ greatly from the more familiar walkin' dead.

First, they are not free-willed like Harrowed, and they are not inhabited by manitous. Instead, zombies are created by bokkors, evil Voodoo sorcerers and are totally under the control of their creator.

These voodoo-created undead are slower and stronger than Harrowed dead. Also, their mouths are frequently sewn shut—something no self-respecting undead would allow.

Effectively automatons, zombies are very resistant to physical damage. Unlike Harrowed, wounds to the head do not impair the zombie in any way. Short of total destruction of the guts area, zombies cannot be slain by physical attacks. Maimed limbs slow a zombie down until its creator can repair it.

A zombie can also be destroyed only by filling its mouth with salt and wiring it shut, or by turning to face the sea. Of course, there must be a sea within sight for the second version to work!

PROFILE: ZOMBIE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d6, S:4d12+4, Q:1d6, V:4d12+2

Fightin' brawlin' 4d6

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: NA

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Fist (STR)

Fearless

Immunity: Zombies are immune to most physical damage. Although

maiming a limb disables it, nothing short of complete destruction of the guts stops them. It's your call, Marshal, on what constitutes this.

Undead

Weakness: Anyone brave enough to put salt in a zombie's mouth destroys the tenuous hold its creator has over it. The zombie makes a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll. If it's successful, it seeks out its creator to exact vengeance. If it fails, it simply falls to the ground, its soul freed. Turning the zombie to face the sea also kills the zombie and releases the tortured spirit.

Description: Zombies resemble walkin' dead. Their eyes are a dull white and they move with less speed than their brain-eating counterparts. Occasionally, their mouths may be sewn shut

THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

This particular lead, like many of Daniel's, is purely a red herring intended to misdirect the posse and keep them jumping at shadows.

Sure, the Knights have their hands into a lot of things in the Confederacy, but they're not nearly as all-knowing as folks would believe. The Knights have their own agendas that only occasionally cross paths with the Black Circle. Unfortunately, space prevents us from going into the group in more depth here. See *Back East: The South* if you're interested in more information on the Knights of the Golden Circle.

NACODOCHES

The whole story on Nacodoches is in the *Marshal's Handbook*, but pretty much everything Daniel heard is true—and then some. The dead did rise, thanks to an inopportune train wreck that spilled thousands of gallons of LaCroix's reanimation fluid a few miles from the Nacodoches cemetery.

Daniel's comment on the number of folks under the influence of alcohol in the town isn't quite on the mark, though. The "inebriation" he noted is actually the effects of long-term

poisoning. LaCroix's reanimation liquid seeped into the water in the area and is slowly pickling the brains of the townsfolk.

The fluid is thoroughly diluted at this point, and takes a long time to build up enough to damage a cowpoke's system. It's unlikely a player character will spend enough time in Nacodoches to be affected by the fluid.

Every year spent in the town requires an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll. Failure reduces each of the victim's Mental Traits by 1 die type. Once a Trait reaches d4, the level reduces instead. When the poor sap reaches 0d4 in any Trait this way, he keels over dead—rising as a walkin' dead in 1d6 nights!

Since it's only been a little over 2 years since the first incident, only a couple of folks have died due to the poisoning. However, a number are experiencing reduced faculties, leading folks to believe they've taken to hitting the bottle heavily!

Assuming she doesn't return as a regular walkin' dead, anyone who drinks enough "corpse water" to require at least one *Vigor* check draws one additional card when checking to see if she returns Harrowed.

TOMBSTONE

Tombstone is where the axe meets the grindstone, at least as far as Bayou Vermillion is concerned. The town is pretty much the largest bastion of civilization near the end of the line's track-laying operation. As such, LaCroix has invested a fair amount of resources in making sure his railroad's interests there are protected.

We're only going to address Bayou Vermillion's presence in the town. For more details, check out the *Marshal's Handbook*.

Although the majority of his forces in the area are concentrated around the railhead to the west, at least a dozen or so Bayou Vermillion enforcers are in town at any given time. Additionally, Maurice Croker, one of the more accomplished members of the zobop, is assigned to look out for the railroad's interests in town.

Maurice keeps his allegiance to the Baron a secret; not even the railroad's

Cowboy allies in town know he's on the Bayou Vermillion payroll. He keeps a room in the Grand Hotel, both because it's one of the nicer establishments and to keep an eye on Doc Holliday.

Maurice poses as a professional gambler, moving from gambling house to gambling house each evening. While he's no card sharp, his stipend from the railroad gives the illusion that he's winning *somewhere* in town.

Finally, LaCroix has given Croker a skinwalker to assist in his duties. Usually, the abomination wears the skin of the now-deceased telegraph operator, letting Croker monitor nearly every communication from outside town. On rare occasions, it waylays a new arrival in town to gather more information.



PROFILE: MAURICE CROKER

Corporeal: D:1d8 N:3d6, Q:4d6, S:1d6, V:2d8
Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, fightin': brawlin' 2d6, horse ridin' 2d6, shootin': pistol 3d8, sleight o' hand 2d8, sneak 4d6
Mental: C:4d12, K:2d8, M:2d6, Sm:3d10, Sp:4d8
Academia: occult 3d8, area knowledge: Tombstone 2d8, bluff 3d10, faith: black magic 5d8, gamblin' 2d10, guts 4d8, performin': actin' 3d6, scrutinize 4d12, search 4d12, streetwise 3d10
Edges: Arcane background 3: black magic, dinero 2, friends in high places 4 (Bayou Vermillion)

Hindrances: Obligation -4 (Bayou Vermillion), superstitious -2

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *Stun 1, transformation 3* (snake fangs: poison bite as rattler), and *zombie 1*

Gear: Black suit and tie, black slouch hat, gold pocket watch, deck of cards, derringer, Colt Peacemaker.

Description: Maurice is a light-skinned black man with just a hint of a New Orleans accent to his speech. He carries himself more like a riverboat gambler than a bokkor.

BAYOU VERMILLION GUNMEN

Use the **Typical Bandit** profile from the *Marshal's Handbook* for the run-of-the-mill rail gang enforcer. For tougher hired guns, feel free to use the

Gunslinger archetype from the *Player's Guide* or the **Ex-Bayou Vermillion Enforcer** from this book.

THE TEXAS RANGERS

Hank "One Eye" Ketchum himself is based in Tombstone. He knows Bayou Vermillion's up to no good and has a pretty good idea about most of LaCroix's more blatant excesses like walkin' dead and Voodoo curses.

Unfortunately, direct intervention in the actions of a major public figure like LaCroix carry serious repercussions. For now, they turn a blind eye to LaCroix's business dealings as long as he keeps his supernatural practices from plain sight. When things get out of hand, such as in the Dime Novel *Night Train*, the Rangers step in and deal with the minions without hesitation. There is never any direct link to LaCroix from such outbreaks, however. Even if there were, the Rangers would be hard-pressed to bring him to court when they publicly deny things that go "bump-in-the-night" even exist.

Someday, perhaps after the Rail Wars are decided, both Ketchum and his superiors fully expect to have LaCroix meet with a very unfortunate accident.

THE EPITAPH

With the offices for the biggest mouth in the West located right next to the Bayou Vermillion railhead, it might seem odd that no more dirt gets out on LaCroix that does. The Baron has kept the Epitaph in line through threats of legal action and a couple of safeguards.

Croker's skinwalker watches any telegraphed correspondence, intercepting or altering any that are too damning. Bayou Vermillion troubleshooters are then dispatched to deal with the source of the information. (Daniel's packets got through because he sent them through overland mail, by the way.)

The railroad has also profited from the efforts of the Agency and Rangers to discredit its reports. The Epitaph is often willing to stretch the truth itself to make a story "sing." Few folks believe the paper's more outlandish claims.

THE COWBOY CONNECTION

In addition to his own forces in Tombstone, LaCroix has a group of allies in the Cowboy gang. Although it's entirely coincidence that their red sashes are almost a perfect match for the red armbands worn by Bayou Vermillion enforcers, it's a convenient one. For now, at least, the Cowboys are firmly in LaCroix's pocket.

Like the rest of Tombstone, the Cowboys are covered in some detail in the *Marshal's Handbook*, including the gang's leaders and its history. Since you've probably got that book if you're reading this section, we're not going to waste too much valuable space rehashing what you already know.

BORDER CROSSERS

The ranks of the gang have been bolstered in the past year or so, not only thanks to the influx of money having a rail baron for a patron brings, but also by some *vaqueros* from south of the border. These soft-spoken Mexicans are actually advance scouts for Santa Anna. The general traded support for the Cowboys for the information they send back to him about the terrain, populace, and any CSA troop movements.

The Cowboys are completely unaware of their Mexican members' true identities, just as they are clueless about the darker side of Bayou Vermillion and its owner. Not everyone in Tombstone is quite so blind to the obvious, however. Among those folks, the general assumption is that the gang is knowingly dealing with Santa Anna!

For the average Cowboy gun hand, just use the **Typical Bandit** profile from the *Marshal's Handbook*. Use the **Typical Soldier** profile for the Mexican scouts.

THE DOCTOR IS IN!

Doc Holliday has been a thorn in the side of the Cowboys, and by association, Baron LaCroix. Normally, a gambler dying from tuberculosis wouldn't pose that much of a problem for either the gang or the railroad. Unfortunately, Doc Holliday is far from normal.

Doc's skill with a gun and his hexes makes him more than a match for any three Cowboys. He's also smart enough to never let himself be cornered when the odds are against him. More often than not, Doc just publicly humiliates gang members and leaves them stuttering and the butt of jokes for days.

This is costing the gang a good deal of prestige in town, and, as a result, some influence as well. LaCroix has

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little use for laughing stocks, so they have to solve the Doc problem. Quick.

LaCroix realizes that straight gunplay isn't likely to provide a solution to the dilemma. Or at least not one he's happy with! With that in mind, he's trying a two-pronged approach.

AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT YOUR HEALTH...

Doc's main advantage is that he knows he's going to die soon. Wasting away from tuberculosis does odd things to a man's perspective. A quick death from a bullet doesn't seem so bad anymore weighed against the inevitable alternative. As a result, Doc can't be intimidated in the usual way.

LaCroix believes he may be able to win Doc over with honey where vinegar has failed. He can't give the gambler a cure for his illness, but he can offer Doc another option—life after death. Not in the religious sense, of course, but in the crawling out of the grave sort of way that the Baron has mastered. It's a poor substitute for a cure, but maybe—just maybe—Doc might figure it beats the alternative.

Right now his agents are slowly making in-roads with the gambler. Once they've gained his confidence, they plan to broach the subject.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS...

The Baron isn't foolish enough to pin his hopes for resolving the issue on one long shot plan. If Doc won't listen to (un)reason, LaCroix has a back up in place, courtesy of the Whateleys.

Reuben Whateley may not share the talent for black sorcery many of his cousins exhibit, but he's no less deadly. Instead of spells, Reuben slings lead with lethal proficiency. Even untrained in the black arts, his unearthly heritage makes him a deadly opponent—particularly for those who rely on hexes!

Like many of his family, Reuben bears the taint of his bloodline in a physical

aberration. In his case, it's an extra finger on each hand. He's quite dexterous in spite of—or perhaps because of—the bonus digits.

The six-fingered gun hand has joined up with the Cowboys recently. He's under orders to stay out of Doc's way unless the Baron's other plan falls through. If it does, the consumptive gambler is in for a nasty surprise!

PROFILE: REUBEN WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d12, N:2d8, Q:5d12, S:4d6, V:4d10

Climbin' 1d8, fightin': brawlin', knife 4d8, horse ridin' 3d8, quick draw 5d12, shootin': pistol, rifle 6d12, speed load 2d12, sneak 2d8

Mental: C:3d8, K:3d6, M:2d6, Sm:4d6, Sp:4d6

Academia: occult 2d6, bluff 3d6, faith: black magic 2d6, guts 4d6, overawe 4d6, search 2d8

Edges: Dinero 2, friends in high places (Bayou Vermillion) 3, renown 1: gunfighters, "the stare" 1, "the voice" 1: threatening, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty -2, loyal -3: Whateleys, mean as a rattler -2

Special Abilities: Reuben's extra fingers give him a couple of perks. First, he cheats at cards and gains a +4 to *slight o' hand* rolls. Second, his extra digits are quite magical. He can fan like a demon, allowing him to ignore the usual penalties for fanning.

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 16

Gear: Colt Army, fast-draw holster, derringer, boot knife, Winchester '73.

Description: Reuben is an unpleasant sort with a scowl constantly painted on his unattractive face. He favors dark clothing to match his dark brown hair and eyes. He flaunts his over-stocked hands, daring a cowpoke to comment.

THE ARIZONA RAILHEAD

As we indicated earlier, LaCroix's got big problems at his western railhead. Constant raiding by the Apaches and occasional armed strikes by the other rail barons has put a drain on his resources there, not to mention his manpower. At least the living part of it, anyway.

RAILHEAD

Once Bayou Vermillion hit the deserts of the Southwest, towns became fewer and farther between. To provide his workers and enforcers with a constant base of operations, LaCroix actually had a mobile town built on a train!

Named simply Railhead, the rolling town sat atop a half-mile long string of flat cars. It had all the amenities of any good company town, including a casino, hotel, store, and even a barbershop. The engine stood two stories tall and sported five smokestacks.

All in all, it was a wonder of modern science and represented a tremendous investment on the part of Bayou Vermillion. Financing Railhead put a serious dent in LaCroix's personal wealth. However, it filled its purpose admirably, providing a moving piece of civilization in the Arizona desert. That is, until Black River raiders blew it up!

BACKSTABBED!

Mina Devlin sent a handpicked group of her best troops across the Southwestern desert to stir up trouble between LaCroix and his Mexican allies. Not only did they have to put a hurting on Railhead, but also they had to sell the lie that it was actually Mexican soldiers who did the deed!

A combination of witchcraft and demolitions expertise pulled off the raid beyond her wildest expectations. Apparently, the engine pulling Railhead was as explosive as it was big! A few judiciously placed dynamite bundles turned the locomotive into a huge bomb.

The resulting explosion destroyed the front half of the train, ripped up almost a quarter mile of track, and killed a couple of dozen workers. Operations at

the western end of the line are completely stalled as Bayou Vermillion staggers from the damage.

The Black River force struck under cover of darkness. They used fireworks and mock-ups of cannon on a distant hill to make the dynamite explosions appear to be artillery fire. Finally, a couple of bands of enforcers wearing Mexican uniforms charged into the confused mass of workers following the detonation, with guns blazing.

The raiders even left a few corpses behind with Mexican equipment. Their attention to detail was commendable. Some of the corpses were a few weeks old, pointing to Santa Anna's "Army of the Dead."

AFTERMATH

The ruse worked perfectly. LaCroix believes Santa Anna, or at least a high-ranking officer in his command, has decided to break their deal. The Baron would have double-crossed Santa Anna himself if it had been in his best interests, so he wasn't hard to convince.

Still, LaCroix is determined to make the Mexican Army pay for its attack. He's continuing his contact with Santa Anna, letting the general believe he accepts the man's claims of innocence. However, when Santa Anna moves north into western Arizona and southern California, the Baron plans to strike the Mexican flank hard with his own forces.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Interestingly, since LaCroix has blocked any Confederate forces from using his line to reinforce the area, only one other group poses any opposition to the Mexican Army in the region. In a very short while, Bayou Vermillion and the City of Lost Angels may find themselves sharing a common foe!

The predominantly Catholic Mexican government has no intention of allowing Reverend Grimme to keep his little kingdom in the Maze. Once again, LaCroix unknowingly serves the Reckoners' goals by reinforcing Grimme's position!

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RIVER O' DOOM

Black River Railroad, the smallest of the remaining competitors in the Rail Wars, is also the oldest. In 1860, Miles Devlin, the line's original owner, founded the company in the hopes of capitalizing on congressional legislation mandating the building of a transcontinental railroad.

Mere months before the onset of the Civil War, there was heated debate about whether a northern or southern route was best, and politics muddied the waters. Devlin figured a central line accessible to both might have the best chance of garnering support. Unfortunately, with the outbreak of hostilities, his hopes were dashed.

Devlin's railroad suffered further setbacks when Union General Sherman destroyed mile upon mile of tracks during his march to Atlanta. The damage nearly destroyed Black River. For years afterward, the railroad was nothing more than a minor regional line.

THE TENNESSEE CENTRAL

In 1867, the owners of another Confederate railroad, the Tennessee Central, approached Devlin with an offer to buy his line. Miles hadn't given up his dreams of becoming a railroad magnate yet, and found the offer insulting. He explained this to one of the representatives with his fists, beating the man within an inch of his life!

Taken aback by the response, the railroad's owners figured Devlin was simply pushing for a better price. When a second offer got them a second bruised negotiator, they could only guess that Miles Devlin had lost his weak and sweaty grip on reality.

The snubbed buyers figured if Miles Devlin wouldn't agree to their terms, maybe his soon-to-be young widow, Mina, would. They hired an assassin by the name of Kent Belfore to eliminate Devlin. On the night of June 18, 1867 in

Memphis, the gunmen fulfilled his contract. Miles Devlin and his railroad were supposed to vanish overnight.

Tennessee Central, as part of the deal with Belfore, spared no expense in hiring the best defense—and witnesses—money could buy! Belfore's fee and legal costs came to far less than the original offer on Black River.

Though Devlin was shot in the back, the shooting was ruled "self-defense" and Belfore was acquitted in a hasty trial less than two weeks later.

MEET THE NEW BOSS

Miles Devlin's widow, Mina, proved to be no wilting flower. In fact, she was far more ambitious and business-minded than her husband. And a Hell of a lot more evil to boot!

She wasted no time in turning Black River into a highly profitable and growing concern. Mina was also quick to settle up her husband's debts—at least those owed to his murderers and their accomplices.

In short order, the primary stockholders in the Tennessee Central, the false witnesses in Belfore's trial, the defense attorneys, and even many of those groups' family members began to meet untimely ends. Mina was careful to leave no trail leading back to her doorstep and made sure the deaths looked like accidents. Nonetheless, at the time, most folks in and around Memphis just assumed she was most likely responsible.

Kent Belfore wasn't so lucky. Snatched early in the purge, Kent is a prisoner under Mina's Hunt-Phelan estate even now, where he is used as a target for the curses and other spells of Mina's apprentices. The only restriction that she has placed on her students is that under no circumstances is Belfore to be allowed to die.

Mina plans for Belfore to amuse her with his suffering long into old age.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

When Jeff Davis announced the offer of a 10-year government contract to the first railroad to reach the Maze, Mina dived into the race headfirst. Black River, while successful in the central

Confederacy, was nowhere near satisfying her craving for power. Davis' plan offered the chance to seize real authority and influence.

Better yet, Mina realized her husband had been a man ahead of his time. Black River's geographical position made it uniquely able to compete for both the Confederate *and* Union offers of exclusive contracts with only a short rail link across the Disputed Territories.

Of all her competitors, no other was so conveniently placed. Neither Union Blue, nor Dixie Rails has a snowball's chance in Hell of gaining the other country's contract thanks to their strong governmental ties. Bayou Vermillion, Wasatch, and Iron Dragon, the other "neutral" railroads, are all too far removed from the border to compete in both countries.

BLACK RIVER GOES TO WAR!

At first, Mina stepped into the Rail Wars with both fists swinging. While she lacked the financial resources or government influence of the other rail barons to field large private armies, she did have a few wild cards to play.

Mina had long practiced the darker side of witchcraft and passed her knowledge onto promising enforcers in her rail gangs—exclusively female ones, of course. Their magical prowess was often enough to win battles early on in the conflict.

Using innovative applications of dynamite and demolitions experts, Black River enforcers were able to compensate for their lack of skilled artillerymen at the beginning of the conflict. Thanks to the relative cost-effectiveness of their techniques (which required only a bow, some arrows, and a lot of dynamite), they even turned a potential weakness to their advantage!

Black River built a small war chest through bank robberies staged by Mina's enforcers in the Southwest. Violet Esperanza, a hot-tempered beauty from south of the border, and Charles "Chuckles" Ryan, infamous leader of the Laughing men, were her two most successful "finance officers."

Unfortunately for Black River, Ryan soon became disgusted with the favoritism Mina showed female enforcers

and broke from the railroad to pursue independent endeavors of larceny and assault in the Grand Canyon area (see the *Canyon 'Doom*).

Mina used the funds gained through Violet and Ryan's extra-legal withdrawals solely to fund her own armed gangs. She saved on land purchases by using blackmail, coercion, seduction, and even murder to gain reduced prices.

OUTGUNNED, BUT NOT OUTFOXED

Still, for all of Mina's careful maneuvering and clever strategies, Black River was just outmatched in a slugfest with the other rail barons. Her troops were dropping faster than she could afford to replace them. Day-in and day-out fighting with Union Blue as the two railroads crossed Kansas nearly neck-and-neck threatened to bleed her dwindling finances drier than a hog in a nosferatu pen!

Realizing her present course spelled eventual failure for her goals, Mina changed her tack.

First, she looked for supernatural allies through her mastery of the dark arts. Control of simpler creatures like wolves and even Badlands devil bats was a breeze, but those alone couldn't win battles for her. Then, she discovered the name and weakness of one of the more powerful abominations roaming the Weird West—Hiram Jackson, ringleader of the five hangin' judges that haunted the Chisholm Trail.

Using her sorceries, Mina compelled Jackson to create a few lesser hangin' judges to serve her. Needless to say, one of these terrors is a powerful ally on the battlefield.

Even the hangin' judges would have been too little and too late to save Black River by themselves. But by that time, Mina had her eye on an even more powerful ally.

STEP INTO MY PARLOR

Black River and Union Blue reached Dodge City within days of each other—and not a moment too soon for Mina's bank account! The Dodge City council, understandably concerned about rival

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armed gangs, decreed that if a railroad broke the peace in Dodge, its right-of-way in the city would be revoked.

Not surprisingly, Mina had no complaints with that restriction. Only a last minute and particularly successful bank robbery saved Black River from financial ruin before reaching the outskirts of Dodge. She had no desire to keep duking it out with Joshua Chamberlain's Union-backed railroad gangs.

Using the enforced cease-fire, Mina arranged a private meeting with Chamberlain. She arrived dressed to kill, hoping to seduce the man and gain his support through her charms. While her visit stirred up all sorts of unseemly rumors, Chamberlain resisted her advances.



Her trip wasn't a total waste, however. The Union Blue owner ended up agreeing to an extended truce between their railroads. When Black River gunslingers backed Union Blue forces during the battle of the Crater, Chamberlain entered a tentative alliance with her.

The alliance proved to be short-lived as Chamberlain never really trusted Mina's intentions. He'd seen too much of her double-dealing since the beginning of the race. Still, the brief respite gave Black River enough time to catch its breath and rebuild some of its losses.

BY HOOK AND CROOK

Since the collapse of the Union Blue deal, Mina has reevaluated her approach once more. Currently, her railroad, along with Union Blue and Hellstromme's Wasatch, has been stymied by the Denver-Pacific. All convenient passes through the central Rockies have been seized by Smith & Robard's private railroad.

Given the current deadlock, there are only two courses open to Black River if it wants to stay a contender—and it does. Either Mina can try to hamper the other competitors not blocked by Denver-Pacific, or she can seek alternative routes.

Mina's decided to take the strategy that she used early in the race a step further. She's dispatched agents and small gangs to the west to rob banks, and begin gathering ownership of smaller, local railroads throughout the Great Basin. These operatives are working through various aliases and false companies to disguise Black River's involvement.

Her field agents are instructed to use the same tactics that proved successful earlier. The enforcers are blackmailing, bribing, coercing, and using black magic to seize the properties. In more than one instance, Black River agents have married influential men and then killed them to inherit their holdings!

KEEPING IT QUIET

They've been enormously successful so far, not only in garnering the desired rail lines, but also in covering their tracks. None of her competitors to date suspects Mina's true plans. Best of all—at least for Black River—the current acquisition strategy puts almost no drain at all on her accounts, leaving them free to finance “spoiler” attacks on the other railroads!

There's only one clue linking the whole operation to Black River, and it's a fairly obscure one at that. If you'll remember, we mentioned Black River is the oldest of the railroads in the race. The newer railroads are using a track gauge that's now standard for their respective governments.

Black River, on the other hand, uses an older, almost out-dated gauge. All the local rail companies subverted by Mina's agents are quietly converting their tracks to that older gauge.

BLACK RIVER'S AGENDA

The driving force behind everything the Black River Railroad does is Mina Devlin's lust for power. Money, political influence, even her own physical beauty are all just means to that end.

Likewise, winning the race to the Maze interests her only because the contracts she gains further increase her personal power. Certainly, the monetary rewards would be nice, but more importantly, she'd control the ghost rock supply for two nations!

In fact, Black River itself is merely a tool in Mina's all-consuming megalomania. Once its usefulness has ended, she will cast it aside like so much rubbish!

The past six years have been tough on Black River. It's taken that long for Mina and her henchmen to discover the frontal assault is their weakest method of attack. However, they did learn it eventually—and learn it well.

Now, Black River enforcers seek to avoid direct conflict as much as possible. They've realized that even the strongest foe can't defeat them if they refuse to face him. Instead, they seek out weaknesses and force battle on their

own terms. More often than not, Black River's "terms" are to incite another player to fight for it.

BLACK RIVER AS A FOE

A posse trying to pin Black River down has a hard time finding any signs of wrongdoing. Mina's henchmen are involved in some of the dirtiest dealings in the Weird West, but they're careful to keep their crimes hidden.

If the enforcers are careful to hide their own crimes, they're doubly cautious about linking Black River to their actions. Using aliases and fake company names are only the front cows in their stampede of dirty tricks. Slander and blackmail are near the front of the herd as well. Regardless of the exact method used, misdirection is what most of the tactics boil down to.

When possible, they work through third parties. Maybe that sheriff stepped on the toes of a local outlaw gang, or rubbed saloon owners the wrong way by being too strict on the town's blue laws. Mina's prodding of the Santa Anna-LaCroix feud is a prime example of this tactic.

A group of heroes taking on Black River is going to face the same sort of treatment. Usually, Mina's troops throw allies at any troublemakers first. Gangs of outlaws and abominations are often the railroad's first line of defense.

Then, after battling through those, the heroes can expect to be framed, slandered, and just plain falsely accused of exactly the crimes they are seeking to solve!

Foes of Black River have to fight through a crowd of misguided folks who are often honestly trying to do the right thing. Of course, a good number of them are dirty public officials on the take, but knowing the good ones from the bad is sometimes nearly impossible where Mina Devlin's involved.

Opposing Black River should be like peeling an onion—layer after layer has to be removed before finally reaching the center. Investigation and digging through tenuous links from one clue to the next are good central themes for a Black River-oriented campaign.

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MINA DEVLIN

Black River's owner was born in the mountains of western North Carolina in May 1842. Her parents were poor farming folks, barely scratching out a living from their crops.

Early on, Mina decided she had no intention of being a simple farmer's wife. Not that she had anything against hard work, but rather she wanted to see more returns for her efforts. She wanted the nice dresses she saw in the general store when her father took her on the day-long ride into the nearest town.

Unfortunately, there weren't a lot of opportunities for social climbing in the southern Appalachians, not even for a girl as beautiful as Mina.

BUBBLE, BUBBLE

Mina's prospects for the future changed the day she met a woman named Sapphira in the mountain woods. Sapphira was an old-fashioned, black-magic-practicing witch. She recognized the ambition and potential in Mina immediately.

Sapphira offered to teach the young Mina the secrets of her black magic and hexes, but warned her there was a cost. Realizing that Sapphira's magic offered her all the things she'd otherwise never be likely to achieve, Mina agreed and damned the cost—without even learning what it was!

The young Mina proved a most apt student, and after only a few years, she approached her teacher in power, if not skill.

THERE WILL COME A RECKONING...

On July 3rd, 1863, Mina's ability to work dark magics surged. Sapphira's increased as well, but she lacked the natural affinity for the black arts that Mina possessed. The student had surpassed her master.

Sapphira was by no means a benevolent teacher and had a fair deal of pride herself. Once it was obvious that Mina was now more powerful than Sapphira could ever be, she decided to knock the girl down a notch or two.

The older witch told Mina what the price she would pay for her power was. She would keep her striking beauty for many years yet, but the day would come when she'd fall out of the ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down! All witches of their ilk were doomed to become horrifying hags in their later years, Sapphira told her.

Sapphira revealed she'd cast a spell on Mina the day they met each other. Although Mina saw her as an attractive older woman, in reality, she was a terrifying crone. To prove her point, she lifted the spell.

The young girl was horrified at the monstrosity Sapphira became. The old witch was everything folk tales claimed and more—right down to the wart on her nose! Sapphira drove the last nail in the coffin by telling Mina even the most powerful spells could veil her ugliness from only a single person at time.

The old woman cackled with delight at Mina's frustrated sobs of anger, mistaking them for anguish. As she taunted Mina, Sapphira failed to notice the young woman was building a powerful hex beneath her rage.

A moment too late, Sapphira realized her peril. She raised a defense, but only succeeded in prolonging her torment under Mina's attack. Mina tortured Sapphira for nearly three weeks before finally ending her suffering with a silver dagger through the heart!

A MARRIAGE MADE IN HELL

The day after Mina killed Sapphira (who died still laughing at her), Mina packed her meager belongings and headed to Knoxville, Tennessee. There, with help from her witchcraft and natural stunning looks, she soon had

carved herself a place in the upper crust of society.

She met Miles Devlin in 1864. Miles was as dashing as Mina was beautiful and just as ambitious. Within months, the two were married. At least as much as their black hearts were capable, the two actually loved each other. After all, they were two of a kind!

Over the next three years, Mina bore Miles three children—all daughters. The girls' names, from oldest to youngest are Caroline, Lydia, and Angelina. Needless to say, the girls were raised in a very "achievement-oriented" environment!

All three girls, though still quite young, are well on the way to mastering witchcraft themselves. They're every bit as driven and heartless as their mother, too!

MINA TAKES CHARGE

When Miles was murdered in 1867, it didn't break Mina's heart so much as harden the only soft spot left. After wreaking her vengeance on her husband's murderers, Mina devoted herself entirely to amassing personal power. She serves no one but herself.

Men, she discovered, were particularly susceptible to manipulation by a woman as lovely as herself—and in many cases, any woman at all! She's since capitalized on that, preferring to use women enforcers to men. Mina's particular brand of black magic works only for the "fairer" sex, giving yet another bias to her hiring practices.

In fact, since the death of Miles, she's come to see men as nothing but occasionally-useful pawns.

ENCOUNTERING MINA

Mina is another of the truly powerful personalities in the Weird West. However, even her worst enemies are unlikely to pose a threat to her life. For all the changes in the world, most folks still treat women a little differently than they do men. And you can bet Mina uses that to her utmost advantage!

She's usually in the company of an influential gentleman when encountered in public, and, at least on the surface, she relies on him for protection. You can bet that a couple of Memphis Belles

(detailed in a moment) are nearby, disguised as anything from socialites to saloon girls.

If a group of heroes happens on her away from the public eye, she's just as polite and well-spoken as if she had an audience of potential suitors hanging on her words. She's also got all sorts of firepower and unnatural allies lurking just out of sight.

Mina doesn't give an opponent a reason to resort to violence. At all times, she seems to be the perfect host or companion, even when plotting a guest's painful demise! She doesn't worry about carefully dancing about the truth. She's perfectly willing to tell an outright lie, but far too clever to be caught in a falsehood.

A heavy-handed posse is likely to find Mina a quandary. No matter what the heroes may know or suspect of her deeds, she never lets her "southern belle in distress" act drop for a minute. Unless she's ready to strike, that is. And Heaven help the cowpokes in the line of fire when that happens!

Her preferred tactic is to sweet-talk her way out of a direct conflict and then have her foes eliminated later, whether by assassin's bullets, black magic, or some Hell-spawned abomination.

We don't recommend letting your posse eliminate Mina as she has a few more roles to play in the tale of the Weird West. Should it happen, however, don't forget she's got three daughters waiting in the wings to fight over who gets to be the new Wicked Witch of the West! And of course their first trick will be to plot their mother's revenge.

BLACK RIVER AND THE OCCULT

Perhaps even more than Bayou Vermillion, much of Black River's strength lies in the arcane. Baron LaCroix's undead minions may far outnumber the witches and enthralled abominations of Mina's railroad, but pound for pound, more of Black River's might rests on the use of black magic.

It's important to keep in mind that unlike LaCroix, Mina's motivations are purely her own ambitions. She is servant



to no one—not even the Reckoners. While her deeds often further their goals, she does so entirely of her own free will.

Mina and a few of her more experienced witches are aware of the dark origins of their spells. But her lust for power is so great that she's willing to risk consorting with supernatural evil and endangering her mortal soul. She figures that even the vilest abominations and spirits can be manipulated if she just has the right lever.

ARCANE EXPERIMENTS

Mina knows that those who play with fire do eventually get burned. Some day she realizes her dark rituals and bargains will come back to haunt her. With that in mind, she's put some of her most accomplished students to the task of finding a less risky path to the powers of the Hunting Ground.

So far, they've had little success, but they believe the secret may lie in either the rituals of voodoo or perhaps the magics some of the less-degenerate members of the Whateley family practice. Her alliance with Bayou Vermillion and the Whateleys serves nicely in this endeavor, by giving her witches a chance to study practitioners of both methods more closely.

ABOMINABLE PAWNS

As we mentioned earlier, Black River witches are especially fond of using powerful abominations against their foes. You already know about Hiram Alexander's hangin' judges. They're undoubtedly Black River's most powerful supernatural allies, but they're by no means the witches' only such pawns.

Devil bats from the Dakota Territory are another popular creature Mina's girls enspell. Just getting close enough to those monsters to cast the *pact* spell is a task in itself, as it usually requires the witches to enter the Sioux Nations. While they're there, they occasionally raid the Cult of the Worm in the Black Hills for Mojave rattler eggs—a fact that has not endeared Black River witches to Ursula's fanatics!

Werewolves have begun to show up in Mina's service, but these are seldom coerced into working with the witches. Instead, Mina has found a willing source for lycanthropic enforcers, the Dupont family—cousins of the Whateleys! We'll tell you more about the Duponts in a little bit.

Most supernatural critters are fair game for "recruitment" by the witches. As a general rule, though, Black River spell casters avoid getting too involved with the undead. Mina and her witches see the living dead as distasteful and unsightly—a fact that causes them to view Bayou Vermillion with some disdain. However, they're quite careful to keep their opinions hidden from their New Orleans ally!

WITCHCRAFT

As we mentioned, Mina has spared no effort in seeking ways to enhance her own brand of black magic. Many of the spells and abilities she teaches her witches are centuries-old techniques she learned from Sapphira. Those methods were developed to work in a time when connections to the malign regions of the Hunting Grounds were impaired by the Old Ones' presence.

Now, thanks to Raven, drawing power from there is much easier. The witches' practices, under these more favorable circumstances, greatly boost their arcane abilities.

THEY KNOW A SECRET!

At the end of this chapter, we've included several new black magic spells. Some are available only to Black River. Many of those spells are secret formula passed down through the witches of Appalachia. One or two were recent developments by Mina or one of her more talented apprentices. The best example of this is *ball o' doom*.

Other spells commonly known by Black River witches are: *animal mastery*, *beguile*, *bolts o' doom*, *cloak o' evil*, *curse*, *dark protection*, *flight*, *ghostly servant*, *illusion*, *pact*, *scrye*, *sendin'*, and *stun*. Mina seldom teaches her students other black magic spells, even if she knows them herself.

THE MORE THE SCARIER!

Black River witchcraft is designed to work better when cast by a group. If more than one witch is nearby, they can share spells and increase each other's power. This sharing and magnification of energy doesn't take any effort on the witches' parts whatsoever; it's entirely innate!

A witch gains access to any spell known by another witch within 10 yards of her at Level 1. Additionally, for every three witches within 10 yards, all her black magic spell levels are increased by 1, including any spells she may gain from other witches.

The maximum level for any spell is 5, regardless of the number of witches nearby—which means 13 is the optimum

number of witches for spell-casting purposes!

Black River witches refer to such groups as *covens* regardless of how many members are involved. Fortunately, few covens have more than five or six members.

MEMPHIS

Memphis, Tennessee is to Black River as New Orleans is to Bayou Vermillion. The city is not only the headquarters for the railroad, but also Mina Devlin's place of residence and her seat of power. However, her influence in "her" city is far more subtle than that exerted by Baron LaCroix.

Mina has expended considerable effort to make certain her railroad is considered an asset to Memphis. By and large, she and her railroad are liked by the town's citizens.

Black River is a good source of income for Memphis, and that means Mina's opinion holds a fair amount of influence. She's careful not to squander that good will, and has aligned herself with the city's leaders on nearly all matters. Mina has even loaned some of her enforcers to the Memphis marshal's office on occasion.

Most people in Memphis are pretty much of the opinion that what's said about Mina Devlin and Black River is pure slander spread by her competitors. Over the years, even the mysterious deaths of her husband, jury members, and Tennessee Central stockholders have come to be viewed as "justice" by many folks in town.

In short, Mina Devlin's reputation in Memphis is, if not golden, at least copper. Any strangers wandering in and seeking to imply she or her railroad are anything but upstanding members of the community gets odd looks—or worse if they're not careful! More than one of Mina's enemies has ended up with a long term in a Tennessee prison thanks to the Memphis courts. And those are the lucky ones.

THE MEMPHIS BELLES

Unlike the Witches, Belles are also required to be schooled in social skills as well as gunplay. The Belles serve as



Mina Devlin's personal bodyguard while she's in the city, so they have to be able to behave themselves in polite company. It's no coincidence the members of this group are also among the prettiest ladies in town, either.

The Memphis Belles shy away from the Wichita Witches trademark bullwhip—that just wouldn't be proper, after all. Nor do they have any skill in the dark arts that many veteran Witches practice. Nonetheless, the Belles are a formidable group that is sure to give any opponent a rough time.

PROFILE: MEMPHIS BELLE

Corporeal: D:1d12, N:2d8, Q:2d10, S:2d6, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin', 3d8, quick draw: pistol 4d12, shootin': pistol, rifle, shotgun 4d12

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Area knowledge (Memphis): 3d6, guts 4d6, overawe 4d8, persuasion 4d8, streetwise 3d6

Edges: Friends in high places, purty, the voice (soothing)

Hindrances: Enemy (other rail gangs), obligation (Black River),

Gear: Silver plated, ivory handled Peacemaker (DA), fast-draw holster, Winchester '76.

Description: Mina handpicks her Belles from the ranks for their beauty and poise. Every one of them is a head-turning siren.

NEWCOMB PHARMACEUTICALS

Ronald Newcomb's secret financier is none other than Mina Devlin. After nearly facing economic ruin thanks to the Rail Wars, Mina decided to diversify her investments.

On top of merely expanding her holdings, Ronald Newcomb's company is conducting extensive alchemical research for Mina as well, seeking "scientific" means of working magic to supplement or replace her witchcraft.

Newcomb's is enjoying a fair amount of success thanks to Mina's influence throughout the Confederacy, but she's recently put a new twist in her plans for the company. You see, Mina has discovered at least part of Solomon Thayer's darker side.

Although she doesn't know he's Hoyle's old apprentice, she's learned Thayer has a soft spot for diseases. Seeing an opportunity for both parties to gain from an association, Mina approached Thayer with an offer. She can spread the man's newer diseases through Newcomb Pharmaceutical products throughout the Confederacy by polluting the drugs with the pathogens. One month it's cholera in the morphine and the next month it's typhoid in the sulfa drugs.

In return, Thayer helps Newcomb chemists develop the treatment for the diseases in advance. That way, she's got the cure all ready to sell when each

outbreak hits full swing, giving her medical supply company an enormous advantage over its competitors!

Mina is pretty sure LaCroix is involved with Thayer as well, thanks to the close relationship Bayou Vermillion and Thayer Shipping enjoy. While she isn't terribly impressed with LaCroix, she doesn't believe him a complete fool. She is unaware of how closely they're tied or how much either knows of the other's shadier activities.

While she'd love to wheedle the information out of one or the other of the men, she knows that showing too much interest might tip her own hand. She sees no reason why either Thayer or LaCroix should know about her dealings with the other. Regardless, she has no intention of revealing the Black Circle to Thayer.

THE HUNT-PHELAN HOUSE

The famous house is also the training ground for Mina's most promising student witches. Hidden in a number of secret rooms underneath the house is a veritable school of the black arts where her apprentices learn the finer points of witchcraft.

This is also where many of Mina's most hated enemies—like Kent Belfore—end up if they're *really* unlucky. Kent himself is still miserably alive under the house, tormented daily by Mina's underlings!

Any cowpoke foolhardy enough to intrude on Mina's domain is in for a heap of hurting. Her enforcers are ready to fend off a determined attack by a rival rail baron; a posse of heroes is unlikely to be more than a practice match for them!

THE GROUNDS

Unless she's expecting trouble, Mina has only 10 armed guards patrolling the grounds or nearby. Use the **Gunslinger** archetype from the *Weird West Player's Guide* to represent these hired guns.

Anyone apprehended by these guards (who isn't killed outright!) is turned over to the Memphis marshal's office and given an extremely *unfair* trial. The folks

of Memphis have no desire to see their rail baroness get injured by a rival!

During nights when Mina is elsewhere (i.e., about 362 nights a year), a pair of enormous pet wolves also roam the area between the outer wall and house. The wolves are well-trained and highly intelligent, able to discern intruders from guards by smell *and* sight. Needless to say, they attack immediately!

PROFILE: MINA'S WOLVES

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d10, Q:2d8, S:2d10, V:3d10

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:3d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d8

Guts 4d8, overawe 3d8, scrutinize 2d8, search 3d8, trackin' 5d8

Pace: 20

Size: 8

Wind: 18

Terror: 3

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d6), claws (STR)

Description: Huge, almost totally black wolves standing 4' at the shoulder and weighing in at well over 300 lbs!

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Inside, there are always at least five Memphis Belles, and two to three times that number during any public social gatherings. The young women present themselves as young Southern debutantes learning social graces from Mina, distant cousins, or house servants. Also, at least two witches-in-training are about the house, usually masquerading as servants.

Mina's daughters usually remain at the Hunt-Phelan House when their mother travels. With them is a young friend from the North, Melissa Dupont.

PROFILE: WITCH-APPRENTICES

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d6, Q:2d8, S:2d6, V:3d8

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, fightin': knife 2d6, sneak 1d6, throwin': unbalanced 3d8

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d8, M:1d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:2d10

INSIDE THE CIRCLE 85

Academia: occult 4d8, area knowledge: Memphis 2d8, faith: black magic 4d10, guts 2d10, search 1d6

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, friends in high places 3: Black River

Hindrances: Obligation -4: Black River, mean as a rattler -2

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 18

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: *Bolt o' doom 2, cloak o' evil 2, and ghostly servant 2.*

Witchcraft: The students can join their powers with other witches as described under the section on **Black River and the Occult.**

Gear: Nice dress and dagger—usually hidden in clothing or hair (STR+1d4).

Description: Their individual appearance varies, but all are attractive, if somewhat stern-looking, young women

CAROLINE DEVLIN

Although all of Mina's daughters are versed in the black arts, only her oldest is likely to pose any real threat. The two youngest girls flee at any sign of danger.

Caroline, on the other hand, is already beginning to show the fire and fight that has made her mother such a fearsome opponent. She shows no quarter to any opponent, and has already killed another student witch in a duel. Of course Mina was delighted!

The girl won't hesitate to kill again if the need arises. And, in her opinion, anyone who breaks into the Hunt-Phelan House *needs* killing!

PROFILE: CAROLINE DEVLIN

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:1d8, Q:3d6, S:2d4, V:3d6

Climbin' 1d8, dodge 2d8, fightin': knife 2d8, shootin': pistol, shotgun 3d8, sneak 2d8, throwin': unbalanced 2d8

Mental: C:2d10, K:3d8, M:2d12, Sm:2d10, Sp:4d8

Academia: occult 4d8, area knowledge: Memphis 2d8, faith: black magic 4d8, guts 2d8, performin': dancin' 3d12, persuasion' 4d12, scrutinize 2d10, search 1d10

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, dinero 2, friends in high places 5: Mina Devlin, purty 1

Hindrances: Kid 2: 15 years old, high-falutin' -2, mean as a rattler -2, vengeful -3

Pace: 8

Size: 5

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *animal mastery* 2, *ball o' doom* 1, *beguile* 1, *bolts o' doom* 2, *cloak o' evil* 2, *flight* 1, *scrye* 3.

Immunity: Mina has schooled Caroline in the deepest secrets of Appalachian witchcraft. As with her mother, only a silver weapon can permanently kill Caroline. Otherwise, she comes back as a Harrowed automatically.

Shapechange: Caroline can shapechange just like her mother, but only into a black cat with a tuft of white hair on its chest. The effect takes only a single action to use and lasts for up to one hour. Should silver come into contact with her during this time, the magic is automatically dispelled.

Vulnerability: If killed by a silver weapon, Caroline is permanently dead. Otherwise, she returns as Harrowed—no matter what her death wounds were like. Only a Maiming head wound caused by a silver weapon can put her down for good her once she becomes Harrowed.

Witchcraft: Caroline can join her powers with other witches as described under the section on **Black River and the Occult.**

Gear: The finest clothing and whatever else she needs or just desires.

Description: Caroline has much of her mother's good looks. The family

resemblance is startling, and only a shock of white hair in her bangs prevents her from looking exactly like Mina at 15 years of age.

MELISSA DUPONT

Melissa is the younger sister of Abigail Dupont, of the Ghost Creek Duponts. She's 20 years old and currently studying witchcraft under Mina. She also serves as the governess for the Devlin daughters.

Her black magic training is part of the agreement between Mina and the Whateley family. Melissa, as are most of her bloodline, is a natural at the dark arts, and like many of the Dupont family, she's also a werewolf! That's one hell of a combination for a young lady. One that makes her an absolute scream for the young men who try to court her.

Not only is she obligated by her family's agreements with Mina to help ward off any attacks on Black River or the household, but she's also become quite fond of the Devlin girls. Sort of like a mother snake, if you will.

While she wouldn't throw away her life to save them, she's more than a little overconfident and might very well get herself in over her head before she realizes it!

Melissa's presence has provided Black River with more than monetary support from the Whateleys. Thanks to Melissa, Mina now has a few werewolves in the ranks of her railroad's enforcers.

PROFILE: MELISSA DUPONT

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:3d8, S:2d6, V:3d6

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, shootin': shotgun 2d6, sneak 3d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d8, M:2d10, Sm:3d6, Sp:2d8

Academia: occult 3d8, area knowledge: Boston 2d8, faith: black magic 3d8, gut 3d8, performin': dancin' 2d10, persuasion 2d10, search 2d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, dinero 3, friends in high places 2 (Mina Devlin), Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Big britches -3, bloodthirsty -2, loyal -3: Devlin children, Whateley family

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *animal mastery* 3, *cloak o' evil* 2, *ghostly servant* 1

Lycanthrope: Werewolf. Changing shape takes Melissa 2 actions. Once transformed, Melissa matches the **Werewolf** profile from the *Marshal's Handbook*. Melissa can still cast spells while in werewolf form.

Witchcraft: Melissa can combine with other witches as described under the section on **Black River and the Occult**.

Gear: Nice dress. Melissa is seldom armed when around the Hunt-Phelan House, but if an alarm is raised, she may carry a shotgun.

Description: Melissa is a young blonde woman. While not in a class with Mina or her daughters' arcane skills, she doesn't exhibit any obvious Whateley taints, either.

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Mina is well aware of Barney's soft spot for her and is more than happy to take full advantage of it. Of course, should his favoritism be discovered, she'll throw him to the wolves faster than she can snap her fingers!

She uses the man to keep tabs on the movements of the other railroads and from time to time slip a raiding train onto their lines.

The Little Rock junction is where Black River slips trains onto the K.C. & L.R. track. Because Black River uses a different gauge than the other railroads, extensive modifications must be made to shift to the other tracks. The large K.C. & L.R. repair facility is where the trains are reworked to allow the transfer.

The different gauges also give Mina deniability when one of her trains is caught on another line. She claims the

THE MEMPHIS TRESTLE

The only ghosts around the Memphis Trestle are those left by the Black River gunmen who raided boats passing under the bridge. The entire De Soto's ghost story is a cover to hide the crimes.

Mina had the attacks stopped months ago, after Daniel's piece in the *Epitaph* raised interest in the events (see *River o' Blood* if you want the full story). She has claimed it was an act of goodwill to Solomon Thayer, whose boats were at risk from the raids. It wasn't, in case you wondered!

LITTLE ROCK

Richard Barney, owner of the K.C. & L.R. Railroad, has agreements with all three Confederate railroads, but he favors Black River above the others. He's not got any secret agenda regarding an alliance with a rail baron. He's just got his eye on Mina Devlin herself.

Barney has kept this little side deal to himself and only a few of his most trusted advisors. Barney's got a pretty good idea what LaCroix would do to him if he found out about the double-cross!



train was scrapped and has been re-worked by Union raiders to seed dissension throughout the Confederacy.

DODGE

Dodge City is the last major city on the Black River main line. The city itself is detailed in the *Marshal's Guide*, so we're only going to touch on details pertinent to Black River and the Circle that you can't find there, Marshal.

One of the few concessions made to the rail barons in Dodge was that the council allows their "rolling guards" (a nice name for enforcers) to retain their firearms within town limits—as long as they remain on a train. Step one foot off, however, and any guns have to be turned over immediately to a deputy marshal. And, you can be sure there's always at least one law dog about when a train rolls into town!

Black River gunmen are under very strict rules about breaking the gun law. Doing so risks the railroad losing its right-of-way through the town. Mina will have the head of any of her employee—literally—that causes that to happen!

ESPIONAGE

Mina's operatives have invested a good deal of effort into establishing an extensive spy network in Dodge. There are Black River moles in the Varieties and Lady Gay Dance Halls, as well as the Occident and Lone Star Saloons.

The spies keep an eye on anything that seems important, even if not directly related to the Rail Wars. As far as they're concerned, there is little knowledge that doesn't have value. For example, information on the movements of the Sioux or partisans from either country may prove valuable when planning a raid against other rail barons.

The web of informants stretches even to Wyatt Earp's new "wife," Mattie Blaylock. Shortly after the couple arrived in Dodge, Black River spies

discovered the woman had a weakness for alcohol and laudanum. Railroad operatives soon exploited her addiction, blackmailing her with threats of spoiling Wyatt's reputation. In return for silence, she passes them everything from duty rosters to duplicate keys to the city lockups!

BUFFALO GALS

The buffalo hunting women Daniel mentions weren't hunting buffalos. They were a group of Wichita Witches setting out for the Sioux Nations and Deadwood to scare up a few more devil bats and maybe even a young Mojave rattler or two. A trip like that takes a fair amount of supplies, so the Black River enforcers usually leave town disguised as hunters.

On the way back, they often delay just long enough to gather up a wagonload of skins. Since that's far less than most expeditions return with, old hands in Dodge tend to laugh about "women doin' a man's work"—but only when the Witches aren't around!

THE GHOUL KING

Mina had some of her operatives in Dodge do a little digging (if you'll pardon the pun) on Dodge's disappearing-body situation (detailed in the *Marshal's Handbook*). When the spies tracked the problem to Boot Hill, she logically assumed the problem to be more in the realm of her Black Circle ally, Baron LaCroix.

Happy to get his fingers deep into another rail baron's backyard, LaCroix sent one of his "specialists" up to Dodge. In order to fit in with Mina's own enforcers better, LaCroix chose Gabrielle de Valois to represent his interests.

It didn't take long for the zobop sorceress to learn it wasn't the undead, but ghouls behind the disappearances. However, when you're talking about something smelly and disgusting walking around in a graveyard, Bayou Vermillion isn't too picky!

In no time flat, de Valois had struck a bargain with the ghouls. The creatures have agreed to focus any above-ground "foraging" on Union Blue properties, provided Black River keeps them supplied with plenty of corpses.

If Kansas has one thing in abundance at present, it's dead bodies! Black River crews have no trouble snatching unclaimed bodies from battles and raids near their main line and throwing them into freight cars.

Mina's even gone so far as to pass these operations off as "humanitarian service" to the war-torn populace!

GABRIELLE DE VALOIS

Gabrielle is one of the few female zobops. For cultural reasons, not too many women are drawn to the darker side of Voodoo. LaCroix keeps an eye out for any who are though, because they make excellent spies in legitimate congregations as no one suspects them of belonging to the red sect!

Gabrielle is a highly skilled bokkor, and one of his most clever enforcers. He's used her as an assassin on several occasions. Her cautious and plotting nature makes her the perfect liaison between Black River and Bayou Vermillion. She's a match for all but Mina's most scheming agents.

She's made sure to keep herself as the intermediary with the ghouls in Dodge. If the Black Circle should disband, she has instructions to turn the ghouls against Black River!

Currently, she keeps a job as a seamstress in a small house on the north side of Dodge. She is careful to keep her Voodoo affiliations hidden and unless her life is in danger, she will not create any zombies.

PROFILE: GABRIELLE DE VALOIS

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d6, Q:3d6, S:2d4, V:3d8

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, fightin': knife 4d6, filchin' 3d8, shootin': pistol 3d8, sleight o' hand 3d8, sneak 4d6

Mental: C:3d10, K:2d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d10, Sp:1d8

Academia: occult 4d6, bluff 4d10, faith: black magic 4d8, guts 4d8, performin': actin' 2d8, persuasion 2d8, scrutinize 4d10, search 3d10, trade: tailor 3d6

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, friends in high places 4:

Baron LaCroix, keen 2, purty 1, "the voice" 1: soothing

Hindrances: Cautious -2, obligation -4: Bayou Vermillion, superstitious -2

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 16

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *curse* 3, *forewarnin'* 1, *sendin'* 2, *stun* 1, *zombie* 2. All of Gabrielle's spells use voodoo trappings.

Gear: Normal clothing, a knife (STR+1d4) hidden in her clothing, a derringer, 5 rounds of ammunition.

Description: Gabrielle is a slender, good-looking black woman. She keeps her hair wrapped in a bandana.

THE WICHITA WITCHES

The Wichita Witches are the cream of Black River's considerable crop of female shootists. The best among them not only know which way to point the business end of a gun, but also have some knowledge of the black arts.

Mina uses the Witches as her troubleshooters (often in the literal sense). When the railroad needed money, she sent them out to rob banks. When the Confederacy offered Mina money to stop the supplies headed for Fort 51, she sent the Witches to raid DP and Union Blue trains in Utah and Nevada.

The Wichita Witches number about two dozen girls in four gangs. Mina dispatches groups of Witches wherever they are needed to protect her railroad's interests. The leader of a local group of Witches often commands all of the Black River troops in a given area.

Not all of the Witches have magical abilities, but most veterans do.

Becoming a member of the Wichita Witches is not easy. First, you have to be a woman. Second, you have to have worked for Black River for a year or more. At the rate Black River has gone through troops, this isn't as easy as it

may sound. Lastly, you have to beat out all the other competitors who want to join the gang.

The gang holds “auditions” on a periodic basis. There’s no set schedule, it’s just whenever the gang needs some fresh blood—usually after an extended campaign. The festivities usually presided over by Violet Esperanza or Mina herself. Each prospective Witch competes in a series of contests to test her skills. Normally only the top ten percent or less of the competitors are accepted into the gang.

VIOLET ESPERANZA

Violet is Mina Devlin’s right-hand woman and the leader of the Wichita Witches. She has earned a reputation as a merciless killer who rarely takes prisoners. When she and her Witches rampaged through the south on their fund-raising tour, they left only two witnesses to their crimes—and they only survived because Violet overlooked them.

Born in Mexico, she and her family fled north when she was sixteen and Santa Anna and his Army o’ Death swept across their farm. Unfortunately, they jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire. In southern Arizona, Violet and her family ran into a group of violent thugs who made their living raiding settlers traveling the Ghost Trail. Her mother and father died before her eyes and she killed her first man while defending her virtue from the marauders.

Violet and her younger brother escaped and headed east into Texas. She found a job as a barmaid in El Paso and worked there for almost two years. One night a gunfight between two drunken gunmen broke out in the saloon. Violet’s brother was killed in the crossfire. Once the shooting stopped, Violet grabbed a gun off the loser’s body and calmly put three bullets into the back of the man who had shot him

Violet left El Paso with a price on her head. She traveled east again and ended up in San Antonio. She found work in a stockyard there—that’s where she learned to use the bullwhip that has become her trademark.

Her good fortune didn’t last. A few months after arriving in San Antonio, Violet was recognized by some cowpokes she had served in El Paso. The desperate woman killed two of them as she fled town.

Violet headed north because she heard that Black River was looking for shootists and was willing to hire women—the Great Rail Wars were just beginning to heat up at this time. Mina instantly saw that this tough seniorita had potential and took her under wing.

Violet took to Mina’s dark training like a fish to water and never looked back.

PROFILE: VIOLET ESPERANZA

Corporeal: D:1d8, N:3d8, Q:3d12, S:2d6, V:4d8

Climbin’ 1d8, dodge 4d8, fightin’: brawlin’, whip 6d8, horse ridin’ 4d8, quick draw 4d12, shootin’: pistol, rifle 6d8, sneak 2d8, throwin’: unbalanced 4d8

Mental: C:3d10, K:2d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d10, Sp:3d10

Academia: occult 3d6, area knowledge: Disputed Territories 3d6, area knowledge: Confederate Southwest 3d6, faith: black magic 4d10, guts 5d10, overawe 3d10, search 3d10, scrutinize 2d10, streetwise 4d10, survival: desert, plains 3d6, trackin’ 2d10

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, belongin’s 4: Violet’s whip, friends in high places 4: Mina Devlin, level-headed 5

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty -2, loyal -3: Mina and the Wichita Witches, outlaw -4, wanted -4

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 18

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *Ball o’ doom* 3, *bolts o’ doom* 3, *cloak o’ evil* 4.

Grit: 3.

Witchcraft: Violet can join with other witches as described under the section on **Black River and the Occult** to increase her power.

Gear: Colt Army revolver, Violet's whip (STR+2d8), 50 rounds of ammunition, fast horse (Pace 24).

Description: A dark-skinned Latino woman, Violet loves dressing scandalously. She often wears black leather pants and vest and not much else.

VIOLET'S WHIP

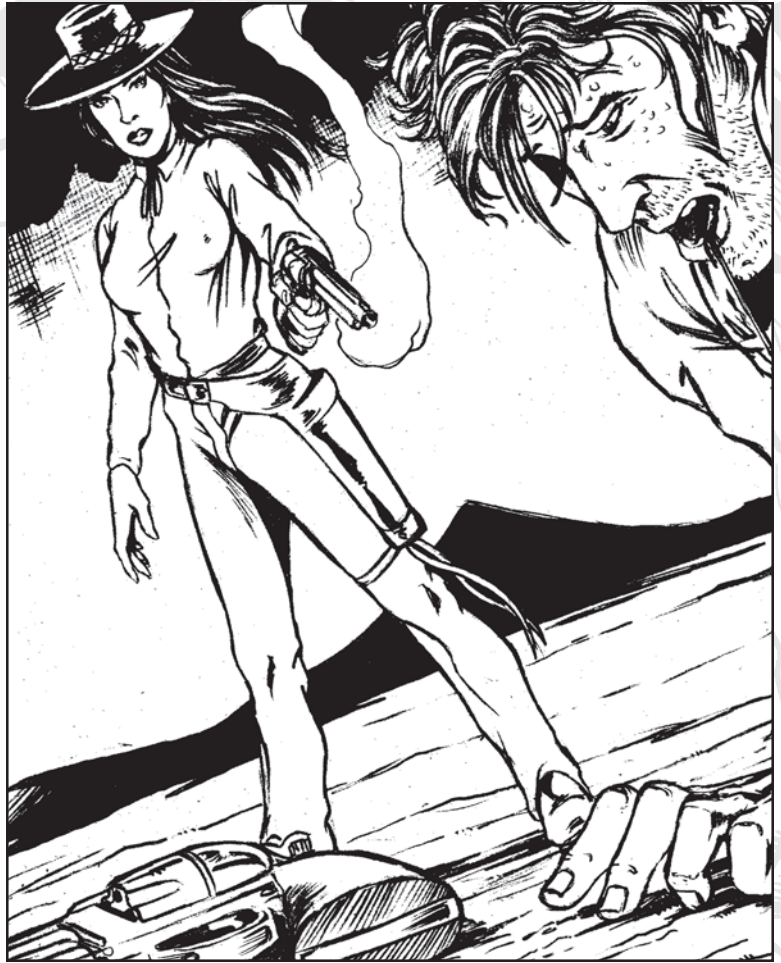
Violet has become a legend in her own time. Many a brave man has been known to run like a dog when they learned she was gunning for them. Like Wyatt Earp and other personalities, the Weird West has imbued some of the objects associated with her with legendary qualities of their own.

One of these items is Violet's trademark bullwhip. Violet has used it to deal out slow, agonizing deaths to those who have displeased her and the whip has developed a taste for blood that must be sated.

Powers: The whip causes STR+2d8 damage on a successful hit. The wielder can choose to make that brawling or lethal damage after rolling the total. Anytime its user kills an opponent with the whip, the relic draws a portion of the victim's life force into itself, conferring the energy to its owner.

The wielder can increase any one of her Traits by a die type each time she puts an opponent in Boot Hill with the whip. She can choose a different Trait each time or continue to increase the same one. This increase lasts for 10 minutes. At the end of that time, the owner's Traits return to their normal levels.

Taint: The whip infuses its owner with a furious bloodlust. Anytime she is attacked or insulted, she must make a Fair (5) *Spirit* roll. If she fails the roll, she immediately charges the provoking character and attacks him with the whip. Once the victim is down, she may attempt the roll again to break out of the rage. If she fails the second roll, she moves to the next foe. The owner is compelled to attack her friends only if she goes bust on the *Spirit* roll.



PROFILE: WICHITA WITCH

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d6, Q:3d8, S:2d6, V:2d8

Climbin' 1d6, fightin' brawlin' 3d6, horse ridin' 3d6, quick draw 2d8, shootin' rifle, pistol, shotgun 3d8, sneak 2d6

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:3d6

Area knowledge: Disputed Territories 2d6, guts 3d8, overawe 2d6, search 1d6, survival: plains 2d6, trackin' 1d6

Edges: Friends in high places 3: Black River

Hindrances: Obligation: Black River -3, outlaw -3, wanted -3

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Gear: Witches carry assorted firearms, but most have a pistol and a rifle or shotgun. All have horses and standard trail gear as well.

Description: Tough, no-nonsense female gunslingers who'd just as soon shoot a man as look at him.

PROFILE: VETERAN WICHITA WITCH

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d6, Q:3d8, S:2d6, V:2d8

Climbin' 1d6, fightin': brawl in' 3d6, horse ridin' 4d6, quick draw 3d8, shootin': rifle, pistol, shotgun 4d8, sneak 3d6

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:3d8

Academia: occult 3d6, area knowledge: Disputed Territories 3d6, area knowledge: Confederate Southwest 2d6, faith: black magic 3d8, guts 4d8, overawe 3d6, search 2d6, streetwise 3d8, survival: desert, plains 3d6, trackin' 3d6

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, friends in high places 3 (Black River)

Hindrances: Obligation -3: Black River, outlaw -3, wanted -3

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: Varies. Select a spell or two from the section on **Black River and the Occult** at level 1-3. Common spells include *ball o' doom*, *bolts o' doom*, and *flight*.

Grit: 1

Witchcraft: Wichita Witches can combine their powers with other witches as described under the section on **Black River and the Occult**.

Gear: As Wichita Witches.

Description: As Wichita Witches.

THE ROOT OF EVIL

Daniel—or rather Reggie—was correct in the majority of his information. The one flaw is that when researching the family, he took too narrow a focus. Thus, he missed the width and depth of the evil inherent in the Whateleys.

Reggie traces the family's origins back only to Robert Whateley, a mere five hundred years ago. In Whateley terms, that's only half a dozen generations or so. The family's true roots go much further back in Welsh history, reaching back to about the middle of the last millennium.

You see, Marshal, the founder of the Whateley clan was none other than the Cackler's mother! The Cackler was only one of her children. Others were never accounted for in histories of the period. Some things are just better left unsaid, and the offspring that ended up founding the Whateley clan in the Cambrian Mountains of Wales fall solidly under that heading.

Over the centuries, her descendants lurked in the mountains in central Wales, preying on anyone unlucky enough to run afoul of them. During that time, they practiced dark arts and consorted with unholy beings from the Hunting Grounds. Then, near the end of the millennium, an entity calling itself Knicknevin appeared to the clan.

The manitou charged the Whateleys with preparing the way for it to enter the physical world. Knicknevin was extremely powerful so the insane clan jumped at the chance.

THICKER THAN WATER

The Whateley family was the primary motivating force behind the formation of the Black Circle. To understand why the family pursued an alliance with two rail barons of questionable reputations, let's take a look at the history of the clan.

KNICKNEVIN'S PLAN

Knowing full well it would never be more than a lackey to the Reckoners in the Hunting Grounds, Knicknevin believed if it could escape to Earth, it could set up its own kingdom. It had no idea the Reckoners were themselves planning to create a "Hell on Earth" and manifest there as well.

The only problem for Knicknevin was actually getting to Earth. The manitou's natural form couldn't manifest directly into the physical world, and it didn't want to fight for Dominion with a human soul over a piece of rotting flesh.

It had to create a *new* way to get to the physical world.

With thousands of years to plan, it was only a matter of time until it did. The first step in its entry to Earth's dimension was the creation of a Deadland. Knicknevin needed to recruit its own servants on Earth to do its dirty work there for it. The Whateleys were the perfect choice. They were evil and already consorted with demons freely.

THE LONG VIEW

Knicknevin is a patient being, and so laid the course for the Whateleys to follow for the next 700 years or so. The arrival of Wilhelmina's branch of the family in Gomorra in 1875 marked the culmination of the first part of the demonic entity's plan.

The family spent the next two years slowly preparing the town to serve as Knicknevin's doorway to Earth. Their efforts are the driving force behind the events in Gomorra, as detailed in the *Doomtown* collectible card game and summed up in the *Doomtown or Bust!* sourcebook.

THE FINAL BATTLE—NOT!

Through Wilhelmina's maneuverings, the fanatical and insane cultists calling themselves the Flock got their hands on the Whateley Family Bible. While the Agency and Rangers were distracted with the Whateleys themselves, the cultists opened a gateway to the Hunting Grounds. Knicknevin came roaring through like a tidal wave.

By the time the white hats in Gomorra realized where the real threat lay, all Hell had literally broken loose. Knicknevin rampaged across the town like some gargantuan wolverine. Riots broke out all over town as the manitou's insanity spread among the people quicker than a summer prairie fire in Kansas. Dozens upon dozens of innocent (or at least as innocent as folks in Gomorra get!) died in the bedlam.

Only the combined forces of the mysterious Austin Stoker and the Ghost—animated by one of Knicknevin's rivals—were able to bring the manifested spirit down. The defeated manitou's body

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dissolved into green goo and drained away. The forces of good had won the day. Or so they thought.

In reality, they had only completed the second step in Knicknevin's plan! The manitou knew full well it could not survive for long as a towering obscenity of slaving horror. As much fun as that might be at first, eventually it would simply draw too much attention to itself.

The demon's entire purpose was to get its essence—the greenish goo—physically to Earth where it could await the readiness of its chosen vessel.

A CHILD SHALL LEAD

That chosen vessel is the other purpose the Whateley clan serves. The family's inbred and twisted bloodline has been planned to prepare a physical body capable of holding the full power of Knicknevin's essence.

Shortly before the Flock opened the gateway, the Whateleys performed a sequence of terrible rituals involving the blood sacrifice of kidnapped children. Those foul rites enabled Knicknevin to manifest long enough to sire a child with Dolores Whateley—Nicodemus' wife (and sister!).

Lucifer, the product of that union, was born only weeks before Knicknevin broke through the barrier between the Hunting Grounds and Earth. Now, the manitou's essence oozes underneath the boomtown, awaiting the boy's maturity. At that time, it will rise up, devour Lucifer's spirit completely, and walk among men!

THE FAMILY TREE

As you've probably guessed, the Whateley family tree doesn't grow in a straight line. While the clan proper is the bloodline chosen to carry out the majority of Knicknevin's plan, there are a few offshoots from the main body.

The Duponts, Leeds, Curwens, and McCrackens are related to some degree

or another to the Whateleys. According to the plans laid out by Knicknevin centuries ago, the Whateleys founded these families. Where the Whateley name is blackened by history, these families have more or less remained removed from their black ancestors' reputations.

They manage the more respectable aspects of the Whateley business, often serving as fronts for clan money, property, and endeavors. As a result, the Whateley family enjoys far more power, wealth, and influence than a cursory investigation (like Reggie's) is likely to reveal.

By using loyal members of these related bloodlines as intermediaries, the Whateleys are able to infiltrate opponents' organizations, make contacts with folks who'd cringe at the thought of dealing with a Whateley, and generally manipulate society from behind the scenes.

The Duponts have proven the most useful to the Whateleys, being both relatively normal in appearance and mostly sane. Over the years, the Duponts have contracted a form of lycanthropy and many members of the family are both werewolves *and* black magicians! The Curwens have also proven to be largely stable.

Unfortunately, not all the branches were so lucky. The McCrackens seldom produce any offspring capable of working the dark arts and are often horribly malformed as well. The Leeds branch is all but extinct at this point—see **New Jersey** for details—but many family enterprises remain in their name to further confound investigators.

THE WHATELEY AGENDA

Well, Marshal, the Whateley agenda is no big secret by now. The family's motivation is almost entirely to further the will and goals of Knicknevin. There are a few members of the clan who

aren't completely supportive of the manitou, mostly among the offshoot bloodlines, but one or two full-blooded Whateleys have their doubts as you'll see in a moment as well.

Nonetheless, the Whateley faction is far more focused in its purpose than either Bayou Vermillion or Black River.

USING THE WHATELEYS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

A good analogy for using this family of unrepentants is mold in an old house. Somehow, the stuff finds its way into the worst places—in tiny cracks and dark corners, behind curtains, under tabletops, and so on. Just looking at it makes you feel somehow soiled and actually touching it is every bit as bad as you'd thought it would be.

Any encounter with members of the family should leave the heroes feeling dirty—even if they defeat them. The Whateleys are pretty much the low-water mark of humanity, both physically and morally. They've willingly sold their souls to a powerful dark master for no end promise but to be the top of the worm heap in a Hell on Earth!

Unlike their new allies the rail barons, whose deeds may be reprehensible, but at least are understandable from a human's perspective, the Whateleys are a riddle of corruption. Until the aims of their master are exposed, most of their actions make no sense to the outside observer. They appear to practice acts of evil and depravity for no purpose other than pure enjoyment.

The deeper into the Whateley family the posse digs, the more unsettling it becomes.

BACK EAST

We're going to start our study of the Whateleys with the tinhorns Back East and work our way toward Gomorra.

WHISPERING HOLLOW VERMONT

There's a reason Daniel felt uneasy in Whispering Hollow, and it's not just the area's Fear Level 4! When the Whateleys headed west, they left behind a few of the less viable members of the family. And if the *Whateleys* thought the

relatives they left behind were bad, you can imagine exactly how twisted these monsters must be!

The cast-off family members have continued to inbreed, worsening their degeneration. The average life expectancy for one of these pathetic abominations is barely 10 years, but that seems to be plenty of time to wreak havoc and mischief on the neighbors.

The things—we hesitate to call them humans—haunt the woods around the old Whateley manor in the valley and have dug extensive tunnels beneath the estate as well.

They shun the light of day as it hurts their often-sensitive eyes, but at night the misshapen horrors prowl the valley, hunting with the ferocity of a rabid wolf pack. The brood now numbers nearly 50, so anyone stumbling into the valley after dark is in *big* trouble!

Occasionally, Isaiah makes a trip up from Boston to check on the old estate and his relatives. The man has a soft spot for his less fortunate kin and occasionally brings them a snack or two—in the form of a luckless soul he kidnapped along the way!

PROFILE: CAST-OFFS

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:1d6, Q:2d6, S:1d8, V:2d8

Climbin' 2d6, fightin': brawlin' 2d6, sneak 4d6

Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d8

Academia: occult 2d4, area knowledge: Devil's Valley 4d4, search 2d6, trackin' 2d6

Pace: 6

Size: 5

Wind: 16

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite or Claw (STR)

Night Vision: Cast-offs suffer no penalties for lighting in all but complete darkness. Their weak eyes cause them to suffer a -2 modifier to all physical activities they attempt in bright light.

Whateley Blood: Each of these abominations can use the effects of the Edge *Whateley blood*. The appropriate Fate Chip still must be spent to activate a power.

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Description: These disgusting creatures only bear passing resemblance to humans. Although their individual appearances vary greatly, all are horribly deformed and shrunken. Some are missing limbs or have extra vestigial ones and most are completely hairless.

PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Not all the Whateleys who came to America settled in Vermont. Some of the family settled in the tiny colony of Rhode Island—specifically the city of Providence.

Unlike the Vermont branch, the Whateleys in Providence kept their darker dealings carefully hidden from their neighbors. They stridently denied



relationship to the infamous Green Mountain Whateleys.

All of this was part of the master plan, of course. The branch in Providence was to help manage the family's assets and keep a hand in affairs Back East. To that end, they have been very successful.

The Providence Whateleys quickly dispose of any obviously deformed children. Their task isn't to produce an heir and the family as a whole isn't what you'd call "nurturing" so the members don't even think twice about such atrocities.

ISAIAH WHATELEY

The patriarch of the Providence Whateleys is 102 year-old Isaiah. He and his wife Jezebel are fond of children—especially when served with a fine Hollandaise sauce! Isaiah's weight is largely due to this horrific indulgence.

However, the couple has decades of hiding their crimes and occasionally take trips to Whispering Hollow to "let their hair down," so to speak.

Isaiah has insinuated himself into the Boston Freemasons, not because he sees them as a threat or even a potential ally, but merely to throw a red herring in the path of anyone investigating his family's shadier dealings. His Whateley blood makes resisting the petty loyalty rituals of the Masons child's play.

Isaiah has used his black magic to the family's advantage in the business world, with fortuitous "tips" from the spell *forewarnin'*. The Whateleys have significant shares in a few New England banks, textile mills, and manufacturing firms. They also have several holdings in the West Indies, where they draw profit from the illegal slave trade.

In the last ten years or so, he's turned more and more of the family's investment business over to his younger cousin, Theodore Curwen.

PROFILE: ISAIAH WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:2d4, Q:2d6, S:2d8, V:3d10

Climbin' 1d4, sneak 1d4, throwin': unbalanced 4d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d10, M:1d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:1d10

Academia: occult 3d10, area knowledge: Boston 2d10, area knowledge: Providence 2d10, faith: black magic 5d10, guts 4d10, overawe 3d10, professional: accountant 4d10, professional: law 2d10, scrutinize 5d8, search 1d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, dinero 5, friends in high places 3: Boston Freemasons, friends in high places 3: New England businessmen, "the stare" 1, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Big 'un -2, loco -5: cannibal

Pace: 6

Size: 8

Wind: 18

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *Bolts o' doom* 2, *curse* 3, *forewarnin'* 3, *scrye* 2, *sendin'* 4.

Gear: A fine suit and pipe.

Description: Although white-haired from age, Isaiah appears no older than his early 60s. What appear to be liver spots on his hands and arms are actually birthmarks that splotch his entire body, save his face.

THEODORE CURWEN

Daniel's inside source was Theodore Curwen, the man with his hands on nearly all of the Whateley brood's financial endeavors. Don't get the wrong idea, though—he wasn't trying to do the right thing. Theodore's motivation was purely selfish.

Theodore has little faith the family's generations-old plan will come to fruition. He largely suspects most of the truly outlandish claims his Whateley cousins make are just the result of their inbred and muddled brains.

The fact that his relatives can invoke powerful and corrupt magic is indisputable; Theodore knows a good deal himself, in fact. However, he scoffs at the idea that the family is truly going

to produce some physical manifestation of a demonic being. Theodore believes the whole issue is farcical, although he's careful to keep such thoughts private!

Since Isaiah Whateley has given him more and more control over the family's finances, Theodore has worked to gather as much as he can into his own pocket. The Whateleys' holdings are vast and diverse and he's a clever manipulator. As most of the family is involved in twisted and deplorable plots and rituals most of the time, he's able to move considerable funds undetected.

For example, when making the family's payments to the rail barons, he records the deductions in Union currency, but pays the stipends in Confederate. Since the Union dollar is stronger than the Confederate, he's able to pocket a small amount each month from the exchange.

Choosing to remain his own master, he has studied the art of blood magic extensively. While not as powerful as his cousins' black magic, it doesn't require him to make any agreements he might later wish to renege upon. After all, to a miser like Theodore, even something as insubstantial as a soul has tangible value! Still, sorcery has its uses. More than one noisy employee who got too close to detecting his deceit has met his end through blood magic.

Theodore put Daniel on the track of the Black Circle to put the family in the spotlight. He plans to ruin the family either financially, or by exposing them publicly as perverted abominations and traitors to the Union. Of course, Theodore isn't ready to tip his hand yet; his lust for wealth is far from sated. Given his greed, it may never be!

PROFILE: THEODORE CURWEN

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:3d6, S:2d6, V:2d8

Climbin' 1d6, filchin' 2d6, lockpickin' 2d6, sneak 3d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d10, M:3d6, Sm:3d10, Sp:2d8

Academia: occult 3d10, area knowledge: Providence 2d10, blood magic 6d10, bluff 4d10, guts 2d8, language: English 2d10, language: Welsh 2d10, persuasion 2d6, professional: accountant 6d10, professional: law 2d10, scrutinize 3d8,

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search 1d8, streetwise 2d10, trade: forgery 3d10

Edges: Arcane background 3: blood magician, dinero 4, friends in high places: various New England bankers 3, friends in high places 4: Whateleys, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Cautious -3, greedy -2, miser -3, mean as a rattler -2

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Blood Magic: *Blood magic* 6: Spells:

Crimson fire, Faustian deal,

hangman's noose, life ebb,

sanguinary ward, sever the link, and torment.

Strain: 6

Gear: Conservative clothing, pocketknife.

Description: Theodore is in his early 50s, and wears thick, graying muttonchops and a moustache. He looks every bit the part of an old New England banker.

NEW JERSEY

The reason Daniel was able to find out so little about the "Leeds" in Leeds & Co. is that there are very few members of the Leeds family left. The Whateleys kept the name on certain company names and legal documents to further confound the trail of their black deeds.

Those descendants that are left spend much of their time hiding from other members of the Whateley bloodline. The reason lies with a woman known as Agatha "Mother" Leeds.

Originally Mother Leeds and her children immigrated to the Whispering Hollow area near the rest of the Whateleys. At the very end of the 17th century, she and her offspring moved south to a heavily forested portion of New Jersey called the Pine Barrens.

The reason Mother Leeds left Whispering Hollow is she had decided she would be the one to bear



Knicknevin's vessel. This flew in the face of the millennium-old plan the Whateleys had been following and didn't match with Knicknevin's timeline either. However, she decided she was going to be the one to fulfill the clan's ambition.

Anyone familiar with ancient evil prophesies knows this sort of thing is a recipe for disaster! Mother Leeds—like many of the bloodline—wasn't right in the head by a long shot though, and overlooked this important safety concern.

For all her other faults, Mother Leeds was a powerful black magician—and more than willing to try again if at first she didn't succeed. She arrived in what later came to be known as Leeds Point with four children. By 1735, she had twelve rugrats but no unholy scion. She got it right on the thirteenth attempt—

and by "right" we mean of course terribly, terribly wrong.

Now You've Done It!

Her child was a frightful mishmash of animal, human, and things not of this world. It was born fully sentient and completely and utterly evil. The thing wasn't the vessel for Knicknevin she'd hoped, but it was a vessel for *something* from the other side!

The mere sight of the beast drove the midwife attending Mother Leeds stark raving mad. It would have likely done the same to Leeds, but she'd already been chasing bats in her attic for years.

The Whateleys in Vermont got word of Mother Leeds' offspring in 1742. To say the brood was displeased is an understatement. They embarked on a decade-long effort to expunge the entire Leeds line and were largely successful. By the end of their blood hunt, only a handful of Leeds had managed to avoid their wrath.

Among that handful was Mother Leeds' thirteenth child. Over the years, the revolting abomination haunted the woods in and around Leeds Point, occasionally devouring children or lonely travelers in the Pine Barrens.

Whatever else you might say about Mother Leeds, the woman built her kids to last—or at least the last one anyway. The Jersey Devil, as folks now call it, is still prowling the woods after almost 150 years!

PROFILE: THE LEEDS DEVIL

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, Q:4d10, S:2d12, V:3d12+4

Dodge 3d8, fightin': brawlin 8d8, sneak 7d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:3d6, Sp:4d12

Guts 5d12, search 3d8, trackin' 3d8

Pace: 10

Size: 9 (9' tall)

Wind: NA

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Armor: Light -4.

Damage: Bite (STR), fore claws (STR+1d6, AP 1), hind claws (STR+2d6, AP 1), tail slap (STR). The

Devil can attack up to three targets at once. The Devil must be flying to use its hind claws.

Dark Vision: The Devil suffers *no* penalties for lighting modifiers, even in total darkness.

Howl: The Devil's human-like scream can be heard for up 1 mile. Any cowpoke hearing the scream must make an Onerous (7) *guts* roll.

Stealthy: When flying at night or in dense woods (like the Pine Barrens), the Devil is nearly invisible. In these circumstances, it gets +5 to all *sneak* rolls.

Supernatural Speed: The monster gets one extra Action card each round in addition to any it receives due to its *Quickness* roll.

Unholy Toughness: The monster's unnatural parentage makes it very resilient. It suffers no Wind loss, can't be stunned, and ignores two levels of wound modifiers.

Whateley Blood: The Devil can use the effects of the Edge *Whateley blood*. The appropriate Fate Chip must be spent to activate a power.

Description: The Devil has a horse-like head, with bat-like wings, a serpentine body with two short legs and two shorter forelegs. In spite of the oddly shaped head, the thing has something of a human cast to its features. Anyone familiar with the Whateleys can see a disturbing similarity.

GOMORRA

On the surface, the Whateleys have had a tough go of it in Gomorra over the past year or so.

The Texas Rangers gunned down Ezekiel Whateley and Moses Whateley-Braun during a failed assault on the Whateley manor. Degenerate Whateley members Enoch, Malrog, and Francis were all slain during the violence following Knicknevin's arrival, as was the distantly related McCracken brothers. Mordecai Whateley burned to death in the destruction of the Whateley estate.

Wilhelmina herself fell in battle against Joseph Eyes-Like-Rain, leader of the Sioux Union, a collective of Indians from tribes all across the Weird West determined to oppose the Whateleys.

Saul Whateley, the idiot-savant Wilhelmina kept chained in the mansion's attic, did manage to escape the destruction of the mansion. He retreated into abandoned mining tunnels under Gomorra. Unfortunately, he stumbled onto a CSA plot to use the walkin' dead against Union forces in the Gomorra valley. He was discovered and subsequently hunted down and killed for his knowledge.

THE PRESENT

The Gomorra Whateley clan is nowhere near as battered as folks might think. They've welcomed the Agency's cover-up story of poisoned whiskey with open arms. If the government says nothing happened, they can't hold the Whateleys responsible for any wrong doing, can they?

The fact that there are no *surviving* witnesses to the family's actions outside of a few highly placed members of the town leadership—all conveniently sworn to secrecy by the Agency—helps their case immensely!

The current state of affairs in Gomorra is very similar to what it was before Knicknevin arrived. Nobody likes the family much and every now and then someone from the town disappears. The Whateleys are pretty much off the hook legally as long as they walk lightly.

PREPARING FOR THE END TIMES

The family is slowly beginning to build its forces in Gomorra to make sure when the time comes in a couple of years, they'll be able to fulfill their destiny. Nearly every month sees another member of the family arrive at the clan's new abode out in the Gomorra Valley.

Until they're able to stand on their own, the brood hopes their rail baron allies can provide them the manpower to stand off their foes.

Still, if their plans are exposed too soon, determined opposition may yet thwart them. You see, trouble is brewing in the clan. Not every Whateley is interested in seeing Knicknevin's plan come to fruition.



THE REBELS

Contrary to what folks in Gomorra believe, the Whateleys aren't a united front anymore. A small faction, led by the family's most visible member, Nicodemus, is having second thoughts about their unholy alliance with Hell.

Nicodemus and a couple of other family members have reconsidered their blind loyalty after getting a look at Knicknevin and the other side of the Hunting Grounds. They'd always assumed they'd be, if not the rulers exactly, then at least the crown princes of some earthly kingdom after Knicknevin's arrival.

Their experiences with the manitou's rampage as well as the few glimpses they managed to steal into the Hunting

Grounds while preparing the way for the monster have convinced them otherwise. They believe they would actually be worse off should their Hellish masters achieve their goals.

As yet, they've not opposed the rest of the family directly. The time will no doubt arrive when they've got to play their hand or fold, though.

Make no mistake. The "rebels" are not reformed souls. Rather, they've decided to hold what diabolical power they have now as opposed to trading it for whatever Hell decides to grant after the Apocalypse. Better to rule on Earth, they believe, than to serve in a Hell on Earth.

NICODEMUS WHATELEY

Nic remains the most visible of the Whateleys, although his sister, Tzipporah runs a close second. When the rest of the family went to ground during the troubled times following Knicknevin's rampage, Nicodemus alone continued to deal with the townsfolk. He's been the most vocal defender of his family's "honor," claiming they're merely government scapegoats and the victim of rumors spread by jealous competitors.

Nicodemus delights in the obvious discomfort townsfolk display when he speaks with them. While friendly and polite in his dealings, there is something deeply unsettling about Nic, and few can spend much time around him without noticing it. Perhaps it's the fact that his clothes sometimes move in unnatural ripples, as if his body were not quite human and straining to escape the cloth confines. What's in there is anyone's guess, though few care to even ponder the possibilities. Besides Nic's general creepiness, prodding too far into any of the Whateley's affairs is like digging into the bottom of an outhouse. You'll probably find something you really didn't want.

Nicodemus leads the small group of Whateley dissidents in Gomorra. Having witnessed Knicknevin's rampage firsthand, he realizes for all his vaunted power he'd be little more than a lickspittle for his otherworldly master should the manitou gain full strength.

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MARSHAL

PROFILE: NICODEMUS WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d8, Q:3d10, S:2d6,
V:2d6

Climbin' 1d8, dodge 2d8, filchin' 2d8,
quick-draw 3d10, sleight o' hand 4d8,
sneak 3d8

Mental: C:2d12, K:2d10, M:4d12, Sm:4d10,
Sp:2d8

Academia: occult 5d10, bluff 3d12,
disguise 2d10, guts 5d8, language:
English 2d10, language: Latin 2d10,
overawe 4d12, performin': card tricks
5d12, ridicule 4d10, scrutinize 3d12,
search 2d12

Edges: Arcane background 3: huckster,
big ears 1, dinero 3, fleet-footed 2, gift
o' gab 1, nerves o' steel 1, renown 2:
notoriety, "the stare" 1, Whateley blood
3

Hindrances: Big britches -3, big mouth
-3, mean as a rattler -2

Pace: 10

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Grit: 5

Huckster: Hexslingin' 7. Hexes: *Bash, beast master, black lightnin', brimstone, corporeal twist, disrupt, earshot, looking glass, mind twist, nightmare realm, phantasm, poltergeist, power struggle, shadow walk, soul blast, soul burst, and Texas twister.*

Gear: A well-pressed suit, a bowler derby, ruby-tinted glasses, a walking cane and his own special deck of playing cards (see below).

Description: Nic is a bit of a dandy, always neatly dressed. He wears his red hair long, and is never without his red-tinted glasses perched on his nose. The "things" rippling around inside his clothes are simply minor manitous, see **Nicodemus' Deck**.

NICODEMUS' DECK

The 52-card deck carried by Nicodemus has been imbued with a small part of all the otherworldly forces it has helped summon. During Knicknevin's short manifestation in Gomorra, Nicodemus released the full powers on a few very unlucky inhabitants of the boomtown.

Powers: A huckster using the deck draws one additional free card when casting hexes. Also, if a face card appears, the huckster has the option of aborting whatever hex he was attempting and instead releasing a single demon to attack any one opponent within the huckster's sight. This is what wiggles in Nic's clothes.

The demon can take the form of a serpentine man, a werewolf, or any other shape the Marshal wishes, springing from the image on the card face to come to horrifying life. Use the stats for Gremlins in the *Marshal's Handbook* for them. They lack the **Jinx** power and instead have a claw attack causing 1d12+2d6 damage. They also have **Terror** 9. The demon attacks until destroyed or until it kills its target.

Taint: The evil spirits clustering around this deck are always waiting to see its user slip up. Any backlash taken while using this deck is rolled at +4 on the Backlash Table *and* the huckster must immediately fend off an attack from one of the deck's demons, described above. Nicodemus is immune to this taint, as are any blood relatives.

DOLORES WHATELEY

Both Nicodemus' wife *and* his sister, Dolores is the mother of Lucifer. Thanks to the rather shallow Whateley gene pool, Dolores was never truly stable, but what she's done and seen have driven her quite mad.

Although she has the mind of a child, she has a mastery of dark magic matched by few in the family. That's why she was chosen as Lucifer's mother instead of being left in Deseret.

Her nightly cavorting in the Elephant Hill graveyard has been curtailed by the arrival of Confederate General Patterson, who appears to have designs of his own for the cemetery's residents. However, she found plenty of "playmates" in the aftermath of Knicknevin's rampage and the riots that swept Gomorra.

Dolores doesn't grasp enough of reality to understand the trouble brewing inside the family. Nicodemus' hold over her is strong enough to guarantee her support for his side, however, unless it brings her into conflict with her son.

**PROFILE: DOLORES
WHA-TELEY**

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d6, Q:3d6, S:1d6,
V:2d6

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 3d6, sneak 3d6,
throwin': unbalanced 1d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d12, M:2d10, Sm:1d6,
Sp:2d6

Academia: occult 5d12, guts 5d6, faith:
black magic 5d6, performin': dance
4d10, persuasion 2d10, search 2d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: black
magic, purty 1, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Loco -5: obsessed with the
dead

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 12

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: Dark protection
4, pact 3, puppet 3, zombie 3

Grit: 4

Gear: A torn white dress, a tattered rag
doll, and a sewing needle and thread.

Description: Were Dolores in
possession of her faculties, she'd
likely be regarded as one of the most
beautiful women in Gomorra. As it is,
her black hair is long and tangled,
and the undeniable light of madness
dances in her eyes.

GABRIEL WHA-TELEY

Gabriel, born to the Deseret clan, was
always a bit of an odd bird. Well-versed
in ornithology, Gabriel researched any
legend dealing with the reputed
supernatural significance behind birds.
He even studied black magic with the
express purpose of fashioning Harrowed
crow familiars.

Gabriel eventually entered a pact with
a lesser manitou that promised him
dominion over birds if Gabriel served as
the manitou's host. He poisoned himself
with cyanide and arose a few days later,
surprisingly in control of his manitou
and with dominion over birds.

Unfortunately, Gabriel fled from his
family when they discovered he had

allied himself with a rival of their own
patron manitou. Gabriel spent the next
few years wandering the Maze before
stumbling into Gomorra—and
Nicodemus. Nic recognized the potential
of Gabriel's talents immediately.

Gabriel controls a murder of thirty or
so crows. They hover around Gomorra,
though most folks figure they came to
feast on the aftermath of the
Knicknevin fight. Continued bloodshed,
spurred on by outlaws, Union and
Confederate troops, Maze Rats, and the
like have kept the body count in
Gomorra high. As a result, nobody's
gotten paid enough attention to these
carrion eaters to notice they're in
various states of decomposition.

The quiet and shy Gabriel plays spy
for Nicodemus by watching and
listening through his crow minions.
Additionally, Gabriel keeps one crow on
his shoulders at all times. When people
aren't looking, he lets the bird take a
quick bite from his face, accounting for
his pockmarked features. Some people
catch this out of the corner of their eye,
but quickly dismiss it as impossible.

PROFILE: GABRIEL WHA-TELEY

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:3d6, Q:4d10, S:2d6,
V:2d8

Climbin' 2d6, dodge 3d6, fightin': knife
3d6, filchin' 3d6, sneak 4d6

Mental: C:4d10, K:3d12, M:3d6, Sm:2d10,
Sp:3d6

Academia: occult 3d12, animal wranglin':
crows 4d6, faith: black magic 4d6,
language: Latin 2d12, medicine:
veterinary 2d12, overawe 2d6, science:
ornithology 4d12, scrutinize 2d10,
search 3d10, streetwise 2d10, survival:
Great Maze 2d10, trackin' 1d10

Edges: Arcane background 3: black
magician, keen 3, "the stare" 1,
Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Habit -3: carries crow on
shoulder at all times, loyal -3:
Nicodemus

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Animal mastery 1,
forewarnin' 1, puppet (only affects
birds) 5, scrye 2, zombie (only
affects crows) 4. All of Gabriel's

black magic spells use birds as trappings—crow spies for *scrye* and *forewarnin'* and so on.

Grit: 2

Harrowed: Dominion: Harrowed 4, Manitou 2. Powers: Infest 3, silent as death 3, spider 1.

Gear: Tattered clothing, pouch of stale breadcrumbs, Bowie knife.

Description: Gabriel is a walking scarecrow in appearance, with lanky limbs and the same perpetual sewn-on grin. There's little decay in his features save for his pockmarked face.

GABRIEL'S MURDER

Gabriel's crows are called his murder. He kills and reanimates healthy-looking crows, and feeds the rest to his pets.

They are of one mind—his. He completely controls the undead avians, and little goes on in Gomorra that he doesn't know about. He can also command them to attack as a unit or alone. Gomorra has yet to witness Gabriel summoning his entire murder to protect him.

Otherwise, members of Gabriel's murder are very much like normal walkin' dead, only they fly and perch. They do have an appetite for soft flesh, and normally attack the face and eyes.

PROFILE: GABRIEL'S CROWS

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:4d8, Q:2d10, S:1d4, V:1d6

Fightin': brawlin 1d8, filchin' 2d4, sneak 5d8

Mental: C:1d10, K:1d6, M:1d6, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Overawe 1d6, search 3d10, trackin' 2d10

Pace: 8

Size: 2

Wind: 10

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Damage: Claw (STR) and peck (STR).

Swarm: Every group of 10 crows can instead do 2d8 damage to a victim (treat as massive damage).

Description: Only a *very* close look can tell these crows are more than run-of-the-mill blackbirds.

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THE LOYALISTS

Most of the Gomorra branch of the family has remained loyal to their original purpose—although only one truly understands what that means!

JEBEDIAH WHATELEY

On the surface, Jebediah Whateley, grandson of Wilhelmina and uncle to Nicodemus and Dolores, has assumed his grandmother's position as leader of the Gomorra branch. In truth, he's only the mouthpiece for Wilhelmina, who, unknown to all but a few of her closest family members hasn't had the good graces to stay dead—more on her in a moment, though.

Jebediah has always been a strong supporter of tradition. In the Whateley family, that means blind obedience to Hell. He is the strongest proponent of the faction that retains loyalty to Knicknevin. Although far from the strongest magician in the family, he remains a force to be reckoned with in any fight.

Whereas Nicodemus has tried to put a more respectable—albeit completely false—face on the family's reputation, Jebediah has been defending the family through purely legal means. It's largely thanks to his efforts and litigious maneuverings that the law in Gomorra has been unable to pin the family with any of the blame for recent occurrences. Of course, the fact that the Agency is actively covering up the fact that there were *any* "recent occurrences" helps!

PROFILE: JEBEDIAH WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:1d6, V:3d6

Climbin' 1d6, horse ridin' 1d6, sleight o' hand 2d8, sneak 1d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:4d10, M:2d10, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d8

Academia: occult 4d10, bluff 1d10, guts 2d8, language: Latin 2d10, leadership



TZIPPORAH WHATELEY

Tzipporah, like her cousin Nicodemus, never really “went to ground” during the period immediately after Knicknevin’s initial rampage. She’s a canny girl, and made certain that no one who saw her involved in any shenanigans lived to bear witness to it. The fact that she’s gorgeous helped sway the men folk to her side as well!

Tzipporah, like her cousin Dolores, bears the taint of her family’s centuries of inbreeding on the inside. She’s very fond of the attention of the opposite sex, but she’s more fond of hurting things—in any way she can. Where her charms fail to ensnare prey, her pistol and black magic are likely to succeed.

Since Knicknevin’s rampage, Tzipporah has been something of a lady-about-town. She’s had an on-again-off-again romance with a grifter in Gomorra known only as Mr. Bones. However, with the arrival of her cousin and one-time lover—these are Whateleys we’re talking about, folks—Jack is sure to complicate things!

A longtime favorite of her grandmother, Tzipporah not only knows Wilhelmina is alive, she occasionally visits with her beloved grandmother. Her presence in Gomorra is as much to gather information as it is for pleasure. And she’s good at both.

PROFILE: TZIPPORAH WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d10, N:2d8, Q:3d8, S:2d6, V:3d6

Climbin’ 1d6, dodge 4d8, fightin’: brawlin’, knife 2d8, filchin’ 2d10, quick-draw 2d8, shootin’: pistol 4d10, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d8, M:3d12, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d8

Academia: occult 4d8, bluff 3d6, faith: black magic 4d8, gamblin’ 2d6, overawe 3d12, persuasion 6d12, search 2d6, streetwise 4d6

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magic, purty 1, “the voice” 1: soothing, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Loyal -3: Wilhelmina, mean as a rattler -2, randy -3

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 14

2d10, overawe 2d10, persuasion 4d10, professional: law 3d10, search 1d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: huckster, dinero 3, the stare 1, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Obligation -3: attend to the family business

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Huckster: Hexslingin’ 3. Hexes: *bodyguard, nightmare realm, phantom fingers, shadow walk, soul blast.*

Gear: A well-pressed, if somewhat outdated, suit and deck of cards.

Description: Jebediah looks as though he could have stepped right out of the Salem witch trials, with a gray beard (no mustache), and silvery hair.

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: *Beguile* 4, *bolts o' doom* 3 (trappings: pistol; requires *shootin'* instead of *throwin'* to hit target), *cloak o' evil* 3 (trappings: dress flutters and flows around her), *stun* 1 (trappings: kiss, non-combat only).

Gear: Low-cut black dress and silver-plated, pearl-handled Peacemaker.

Description: Tzipporah is a raven-haired beauty with creamy white skin. She favors black dresses, particularly those that display her figure.

LUCIFER WHATELEY

Lucifer is the result of an unholy union between Dolores Whateley and Knicknevin. The child was conceived and born prior to the manitou's physical manifestation in the world thanks to the Whateleys twisted black arts and is actually Knicknevin's true final destination in this world—not the huge ravening thing that originally appeared!

The manitou plans to seize control of the boy's physical body when the child reaches maturity. This will destroy his own spirit, a fact known only to Wilhelmina at present.

Thanks to his demonic heritage, Lucifer is growing far faster than a normal child, aging nearly a decade every year. The Whateleys keep him in the local orphanage under an assumed name, Lucius Waverly. Lucifer has begun terrorizing the local children—when the adults aren't looking of course! His favorite ploy is to let his true features slip, revealing his demonic red eyes and jagged teeth.

Lucifer manifests the greatest magical potential of any of the Whateleys, for obvious reasons. He possess formidable powers on his own, and is capable of drawing on the strength of his human (or at least somewhat human) relatives to enhance his own. Nicodemus is already more than a little concerned at the child's abilities.

Dolores, his mother, wavers between barely recognizing the child and doting on him. In her rare moments of lucidity, she's absolutely terrified of the boy, but her maternal instincts compel her to protect him. If she realizes Knicknevin's plan for Lucifer, she will fight tooth and nail to save him—likely to no avail!

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PROFILE: LUCIFER WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d8, Q:2d8, S:2d8, V:2d8

Climbin' 2d8, fightin': brawlin' 3d8, sneak 4d8, throwin': unbalanced 2d8

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d8, M:2d8, Sm:2d8, Sp:2d8

Academia: occult 3d8, faith: black magic 4d8, guts 4d8, language: Latin 2d8, performin': actin' 4d8, persuasion 2d8, overawe 3d8, ridicule 3d8, scrutinize 2d8, search 2d8

Edges: Arcane background: 3 black magician, Whateley blood 3

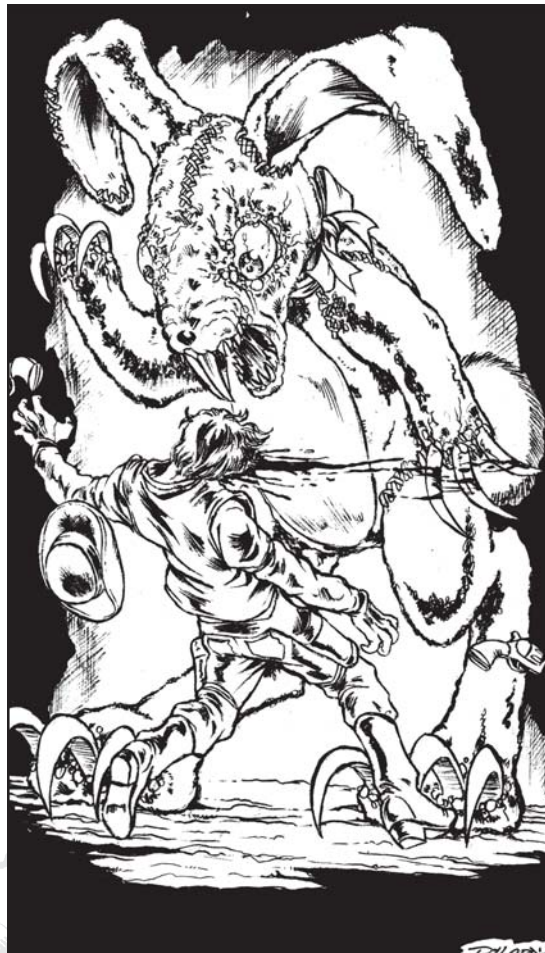
Hindrances: Kid -2, mean as a rattler-3

Pace: 8

Size: 5

Wind: 16

Special Abilities:



Black Magic: *Animal mastery* 2, *cloak o' evil* 1, *ghostly servant* 2, *illusion* 3, *sendin'* 3, *spook* 3.

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4)

Growth spurts: Each year, Lucifer ages approximately 10 years physically and mentally. He gains 2 die types and 2 levels in each Trait when he ages this way. He only continues aging for two more such spurts (assuming he lives that long)—or 6d12+4 in each Trait!

Unnatural Vigor: All damage done to Lucifer is halved before figuring wounds. Only a Maiming wound to the head can permanently kill him. Additionally, he makes a natural healing roll once per hour.

Whateley Focus: For each other Whateley black magician (maximum 5) within 100 yards, Lucifer gains access to one of the following spells. The spell level is also equal to the number of black magicians in range. Spells: *bolts o' doom*, *dark protection*, *puppet*, *stun*, and *transformation*.

Gear: His "stuffed rabbit" Clovis, pocketknife.

Description: Lucifer's disguised appearance is that of an angelic, blonde-haired boy of about 10 years old. When his *illusion* spell is removed, his red eyes and jagged teeth emerge to show his true self.

CLOVIS, THE DEVIL BUNNY

While it looks like an innocent stuffed animal, Clovis is actually a horrific little abomination. When all is well, the thing appears to be nothing more than a child's toy, but Clovis is capable of becoming quite the unholy terror if need be. Of course, no one over the age of 10 or so who's seen its true nature has lived to tell the tale.

The monster exists solely to guard Lucifer and won't hesitate to sacrifice itself—or anyone else for that matter—to keep the boy alive.

It has one other peculiar quirk as well. The devil bunny absolutely loves ham. Several missing pigs have vanished down its furry throat.

PROFILE: CLOVIS (MONSTER FORM)

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:3d10 (2d8), Q:3d12 (3d8), S:2d6 (3d12+2), V:2d12

Climbin' 2d10 (2d8), fightin': brawlin' 4d10 (4d8), sneak 5d10 (5d8)

Mental: C:3d10, K:2d6, M:1d6 (1d10), Sm:1d6, Sp:1d6

Overawe 3d6 (3d10), search 2d10

Pace: 10 (8)

Size: 2 (7)

Wind: NA

Terror: 5 (11)

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4); in giant form, Bite (STR+1d4), claw (STR+1d6)

Devil Bunny: Clovis has two animated forms: a small stuffed rabbit and a monstrous, bipedal, rabbit-like abomination. Use the statistics in parentheses to represent the giant form. Changing between shapes takes an action.

Fearless

Stuffed: Clovis has no vital organs, just a lot of stuffing. Hits to the noggin or gizzards receive no extra dice for damage. Clovis is likewise immune to stun and Wind loss.

Description: In normal form, he's a cute, if somewhat dirty and ragged, stuffed bunny. When animated, his eyes take on a red glow and his buckteeth become rat like fangs. In his larger form, Clovis becomes a gigantic, pudgy rabbit-thing with long claws and fangs.

THE UNKNOWN HOODED FIGURE

The Figure (referred to by the Whateleys simply as "It") is a powerful abomination that conducts the more gruesome tasks the Gomorra branch needs performed. It kidnapped town children for sacrifice before Knicknevin was freed and disposes of those who poke their noses in the wrong place.

During the last days before Knicknevin's rampage, the town's schoolmarm, Meredith Singleton,

temporarily contained it when she trapped the creature in one form with a device known as the Electromagnetic Calcifier. It was able to free itself with the aid of a few family members and has since returned to the Whateley's service.

Currently, the figure inhabits the body of Zeke Beauchamp, a burly Texas Ranger killed in a failed attack on the Whateley manor shortly before Knicknevin was freed. Zeke was Nic's choice, as he knows the man was the partner of Bobo Leveau—a potent huckster who wears a Ranger's badge.

Bobo has long had his sights on Nicodemus and the redheaded Whateley plans to use Zeke's body as a nasty revelation for the Ranger when the time is right.

It moves in secret, sticking to the shadows and never showing itself by light of day. Even now, no one suspects its connection to the Whateleys, and few even know it exists.

PROFILE: THE UNKNOWN HOODED FIGURE

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:3d12, Q:4d8, S:5d10, V:3d8

Climbin' 4d12, dodge 4d12, fightin' brawlin', staff 7d12, sneak 5d12

Mental: C:4d8, K:2d6, M:3d10, Sm:2d10, Sp:2d8

Overawe 7d10, search 5d8, trackin' 5d8

Pace: 12

Size: 6

Wind: NA

Terror: 11

Special Abilities:

Coup: Any Harrowed who manages to permanently put down the Hooded Figure receives a +5 to all *sneak* rolls.

Damage: Claws (STR), scythe (STR+1d12).

Fearless

Immunity: To bullets and other non-magical projectiles.

Possession: The Hooded Figure cannot be permanently destroyed by normal means. If its body is rendered unusable, it can possess a new one—the nearest one in most cases. The new incarnation has the same statistics as the original. Only



an *exorcism* or a powerful relic can truly slay the thing.

Undead

Vulnerability: To light and fire. The rays of the sun cause the Hooded Figure 3d6 damage per contact and burning weapons do normal damage to the creature. Keep in mind that even if the Figure is slain by sunlight or fire, it still comes back as noted above.

Description: The Figure's face is constantly hidden by the tattered hood it wears. It moves in secret, sticking to the shadows and never showing itself in the light of day. The Figure resembles nothing so much as an artist's rendition of Death—complete with razor-sharp scythe.

NEBUCHADNEZZER

One of the "things" folks whisper about running around at the new Whateley house, Nebuchadnezzar isn't so much a who as a what.



Given the degree of degeneration seen in some members of the Whateley line, one might be tempted to assume it was just a particularly badly deformed family member. Actually, Nebuchadnezzar is a supernatural minion created by Wilhelmina. She altered his original form and gave him an extended life through a series of vile and bloody rituals.

The creature now serves the family more as an errand boy than anything else, but it's still quite formidable when riled—as a few drifters who've wandered onto the Whateley property have discovered!

On occasion, the creature runs off on its own to create a little havoc through murder and mayhem. The remaining Agents in town consider killing the thing a top priority.

PROFILE: NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Corporeal: D:2d10, N:2d10, Q:3d8, S:4d8, V:2d10

Climbin' 4d10, dodge 3d10, fightin': brawlin' 5d10, shootin': pistol 1d10, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:2d12, K:1d4, M:1d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d6

Guts 3d6, trade: carpentry 2d4, search 4d12, trackin' 2d12

Pace: 14

Size: 5

Wind: NA

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Bite (STR+1d4), claws (STR+1d6)

Receptive: Any hex, spell, or other magical power with a Range of "Self" can be cast on Nebuchadnezzar as if it had a range of "Touch" instead.

Gear: A badly mis-sized and tattered brown suit, a Colt Navy pistol, gunbelt and 20 rounds of ammunition.

Description: Nebuchadnezzar is scarecrow-thin, with spindly arms ending in long, four-fingered hand. Its legs are likewise of unnatural length and it skitters about on the balls of its distorted feet. Its skin has a putrid green hue and clings tightly to its bones. The things ears are bat-like and its mouth is filled with sharp, almost needle-like teeth.

WILHELMINA WHATELEY

The other "thing" haunting the land around the Whateley farm is none other than Wilhelmina herself.

She purposefully set in motion the events to release Knicknevin into the world—even though she knew that it would mean the death of Lucifer and likely the rest of the Gomorra Whateleys. This betrayal earned her a special curse on her death, one similar to that of a chupakabara (detailed in *Rascals, Varmints, & Critters*). Thanks to her heritage and mastery of black magic, she's both far more and less than a simple abomination though.

Wilhelmina learned nothing from her afterlife curse, though. She continues to manipulate the family. Her eventual goal remains the same: serve Knicknevin.

Only Tzipporah, Dolores, and Jebediah know she's still alive (sort of). Tzipporah knows because Wilhelmina is particularly fond of her. Jebediah serves as her mouthpiece in the family, and appears to have assumed leadership.

Wilhelmina revealed herself to Dolores to further influence Lucifer's development. The elder Whateley's black sorcery was responsible for Dolores and she has no intent to see that hard work go to waste. Even if Dolores spills the beans, Gramma knows the rest of the family usually ignore the mad girl's insane ramblings.

Dolores' curse drives her to feed on living beings. She prefers the flesh and blood of humans—specifically men—but animals help curb the hunger when necessary. Wilhelmina prefers soft, squishy bits like the eyes and lips, as well as the blood of her victims.

Luckily for Wilhelmina, there's never a shortage of folks in Gomorra who "won't be missed" to keep her fed. Still, Jebediah makes sure to keep a few goats on the farm just in case...

PROFILE: WILHELMINA WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d10, Q:3d12, S:2d8, V:3d10

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 6d10, throwin': unbalanced 4d6

Mental: C:3d10, K:5d12, M:2d6, Sm:5d12, Sp:1d12

Academia: occult 6d12, faith: black magic 7d12, guts 5d12, language: Latin 4d12, overawe 5d6, ridicule 3d12, search 3d10

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, "the voice" 1: grating, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Loyal -3 (Knicknevin)

Pace: 10

Size: 5

Wind: NA

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: any black magic spell she wishes at Level 3.

Coup: A Harrowed who counts coup on Wilhelmina gains the ability to move without leaving a trail at the cost of 1 Wind per minute.

Damage: Bite (STR+2d6), claws (STR+1d6)

Immunity: Damage. Wilhelmina takes damage normally, but, due to the curse, only another Whateley can

permanently kill her. Otherwise, she simply rises again the next night. (There is *no* ill effect to a Whateley who refuses to kill her, unlike a normal chupakabara.)

Night Vision: Wilhelmina can see as well in the dark as most folks can in daylight.

Unseen Movement: By expending 1 Wind each turn, she can move without leaving a trail. While moving this way, she looks like a fast-moving blur and all attacks against her suffer a -4 modifier.

Undead

Weakness: Bright light. Wilhelmina suffers a -4 to all Trait and Aptitude rolls when in daylight or similar light.

Weakness: Blood hunger. When exposed to spilled blood, she must make an Onerous (7) *Spirit* roll or spend her next action lapping at it.

Description: Wilhelmina has been trapped in the form of a small, gray-skinned, almost monkey-like abomination. She has a large head, long arms, and relatively short legs. Each of her hands and feet has three digits, ending in vicious claws. Some of her features remain on the face of the creature, however, and, with a good look, anyone exposed to her in life can easily recognize her in this form as well.

THE WILD CARDS

A couple of the Gomorra clan aren't totally committed in the power struggle—largely because they've got demons of their own to wrangle with! If outright inter-family war breaks out, they *would* take one side or the other, but for now both are distracted by other concerns.

BASIL WHATELEY

Basil suffered terribly in the destruction of the Whateley mansion. His ability to actually breathe life (or unlife)

into paintings of abominations backlashed against him when his latest creation, a thing from his nightmares, broke free from the canvas during the fire that swept the mansion.

It badly mauled Basil, then pulled him back into the canvas—actually a portal to a particularly nasty spot in the Hunting Grounds—while it tortured him mercilessly. Time can pass (or at least seem to pass) very differently in the Hunting Grounds, and Basil was subjected to hideous abuse for what seemed for him to be years.

Mere minutes passed in the physical world and fire soon destroyed the painting, freeing Basil from his prison. Unfortunately, adding insult to injury, the once pudgy and decadent artist received severe burns in the blaze. Later, his broken and near-dead body was dragged from the ruins and spirited away to the rest of the family.

During the destruction of the mansion, Basil's soul-catching portraits of several of Gomorra's missing persons also burned. Due to their placement, the trapped victims were released into a collapsed and flaming tomb. None escaped with their lives. Folks brave enough to pick through the ruins of the mansion after the fire found more than a dozen burned and unidentifiable corpses, raising still unanswered questions around town.

Dr. Jenkins, an acquaintance of the family's Dupont cousins in nearby Ghost Creek, initially tended to Basil's wounds. Using his patchwork skills, the doctor conducted several skin grafts and replaced one of Basil's eyes.

Basil, through a third party, purchased one of the abandoned buildings in Gomorra and opened an art gallery there. He keeps his ownership of the gallery secret, and uses it to display his own paintings. Although his skill is undeniable, his paintings are disturbing to view. Anyone visiting the gallery suffers severe nightmares the next time they sleep.

PROFILE: BASIL WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d6, Q:3d6, S:2d4, V:1d4

Climbin' 1d6, sneak 2d6

Mental: C:3d12, K:4d8, M:1d6, Sm:4d6, Sp:3d6

Arts: painting 6d12, academia: occult 5d8, faith: black magic 5d8, scrutinize 5d12, search 1d12

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, dinero 3, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Double ugly as sin -2, night terrors -5, slowpoke -2, tinhorn -2

Pace: 4

Size: 6

Wind: 10

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: Cloak o' evil 3, minion 5, pact 5, spook 4

Night Vision: The eye Dr. Jenkin used to replace Basil's left one is actually that from some nocturnal abomination. As a result, Basil can see in even complete darkness as if it were daylight.

Soul Catching: If Basil paints a picture of someone realistically enough—Incredible (11) *arts* roll—he can draw her soul into it. To do so, Basil must also win an opposed roll of his *Spirit* vs. his victim's. Should he succeed, the target is actually drawn into the painting and trapped until it is destroyed. The painting opens into a pocket of the worst of the Hunting Grounds and is unpleasant in the extreme. The victim must make an Incredible (11) *guts* check when (or if) he's finally freed.

Gear: Painting supplies and a variety of unpleasant substances (crushed bones, blood, roots, etc.) to mix with the paints.

Description: Basil is a pudgy man with large patches of skin replaced by obviously mismatched flesh. His once well-kept hair is now scorched away in several places and his eyes are mismatched; one Whateley green and the other a black pupil surrounded by a tiny white ring.

JACK WHATELEY

If not for his lack of arcane ability, Jack would probably be vying with Nicodemus as the family's "favorite son." Born to Isaiah and Jezebel Back East, Jack is intelligent, well spoken, and lacks any debilitating defects.

Well able to fit into normal society, Jack even attended medical school, although a relatively small and distant one in the Carolinas. The Whateley name discouraged any reputable northern schools from accepting the young man, in spite of his family's money.

He proved quite the prodigy at surgery—not too surprising given his family's penchant for working with knives and blood. Upon graduation, Jack's mentor, Dr. Cuttinghwaite, presented him and another student with a small black valise and a shiny, new scalpel.

Jack, who'd discovered he actually somewhat enjoyed the respectability that came with his new profession (and being around folks who didn't know about the Whateley reputation), traveled to England to practice his trade. While there, his money and bearing made him quite popular in the upper crust of society. The Whateley name has long passed into obscurity across the water.

His schoolmate, Clayton Mansfield, shortly thereafter enlisted in the Confederate army—with disastrous results. On the night of July 3, 1863, while serving as a surgeon at Gettysburg, his scalpel revealed its malevolent curse and transformed the man into the Butcher. Jack's unusual lineage has to date, protected him from the scalpel's curse, but it's only a matter of time before the relic gains control.

A few months ago, the Gomorra family sent word for Jack to come West to tend to Basil. While Dr. Jenkin has kept the man alive, some of the family believe the good doctor from Ghost Creek may soon be tempted to "tinker" with their cousin's anatomy.

Since his arrival, Jack has cut a dashing figure around Gomorra. Polite, well dressed, and well-behaved, he's less feared than other members of the family, although the Whateley name still taints any interactions with the townsfolk.

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Jack has always been somewhat removed from the supernatural politics of the family, thanks to his studies. He's aware of them and even readily accepts the occult, but he has little direct involvement himself.

If push came to shove, he'd most likely ally with the loyalists at the moment. Of late, he's become infatuated with his cousin Tzipporah and so far she's returned his interest. However, Tzipporah doesn't remain with any man long, and the inevitable rejection may be all that's necessary to break Jack's resistance to the scalpel's urgings!

PROFILE: JACK WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, Q:2d6, S:3d6, V:2d6

Climbin' 1d8, fightin': brawlin', knife 2d8, shootin': pistol 2d6, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:3d6, K:3d10, M:2d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:3d8

Academia: occult 3d10, faith: black magic 1d8, guts 4d8, language: English 4d10, language: Latin 2d10, medicine: general, surgery 5d10, persuasion 3d8, search 1d6, streetwise 2d10

Edges: Dinero 3, don't get him riled 3, fleet-footed 2, "the voice" 1: soothing, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Tinhorn -2

Pace: 12

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Grit: 2

Gear: Fine suit of clothes and top hat, doctor's bag and instruments, walking stick, derringer.

Description: In his mid-30s, Jack is one of the most normal looking of the Whateleys. Dressed in the finest clothing—usually black—with his neatly trimmed beard, most folks don't realize he's a relative of the Gomorra clan until he identifies himself.

JACK'S SCALPEL

Just like his classmate's weapon, Jack's scalpel is a horribly cursed relic. If grasped after dark, it transforms its wielder into a cunning murderer. However, Jack has had much better luck fending off the taint of the blade—largely thanks to his Whateley blood.

Unlike the Butcher's scalpel, Jack's is not capable of creating walking heads (see *Independence Day* for the exact details on the Butcher's blade). Instead, the user can raise the local Fear Level by a series of murders, each more horrific than the last. The blade can raise the Fear Level once per week in such a fashion.

Powers: When in control, the scalpel transforms its wielder into a pale-skinned, wiry travesty of his former self. Shadows seem to pull around the user, making him difficult to focus on.

The user can climb even the sheerest surfaces at Pace 6. He gains 3 levels in *sneak*, *dodge*, and *fightin': knife* and adds two steps to each of his Corporeal Trait dice types. Also, he can only be harmed by bladed weapons.

He also gains the ability to move instantly from one shadow to another, provided each is large enough to hide him and are within 50 feet of one another. This takes a single action and costs him 1 Wind.

Taint: Every time the user holds the blade's bare handle after dark, he must make an opposed *Spirit* roll against the scalpel's 4d10 *Spirit*. If he loses, he gains all the powers of the scalpel and falls under the scalpel's control. If he wins, nothing happens, nor does he gain the powers of the relic. If picked up by a Harrowed, it struggles with whichever entity has Dominion at the time: either the human mind or the manitou.

Each time the wielder loses the struggle with the scalpel, he's at -1 for future attempts to fend off the scalpel's control, up to a maximum penalty of -6.

The relic is dormant in daytime, but even then if picked up by its bare

handle, the wielder can't voluntarily put it down without getting two or more successes on an opposed *Spirit* roll.

Taking the relic away from the wielder causes the effects to fade within a single round, but this might prove tough. Called shots to the scalpel are at -9 due to its small size! Severing the hand holding it works just fine too...

SALT LAKE

We're only going to mention the Salt Lake Whateleys and the Overlook Hotel in passing. For the most part, they have little to do with the rest of the brood's endeavors. Wilhelmina left them behind in Salt Lake because she considers their mental instability more a liability than they'd be worth.

Samuel Whateley owns the hotel and his sister (or is it wife?), Edwina lends a hand. Two Whateley children, Wilhelm and Marguerite, also make their home at the Overlook, although no one knows if they're Samuel's offspring or children left by another member of the clan. "Grandpa"—Wilhelmina's old and quite insane husband—also stays at the hotel.

The Overlook Whateleys are more demented than dangerous. A visit to their establishment is not unlike an overnight stay in a sanitarium! See the *City o' Gloom* for more information on the creepy Overlook Hotel and its demented inhabitants.

GHOST CREEK

Ghost Creek, a small town a little more than a day's ride up the Gomorra Valley is home to another nest of the Whateley clan. Settled by the Dupont family, Ghost Creek is a bolthole for the Whateleys should things in Gomorra become too hot for them there. The Dupont spread is far enough from Gomorra to be safe from all but the most determined foes, yet close enough to be a useful escape route in an emergency.

Recent discovery of ghost rock in the area—and particularly on free range claimed by the Morgan Cattle Company—has stirred the pot there as well. Sweetrock and the Collegium are

both invested in the area, and the usual swarm of outlaws has moved into the up-and-coming area.

To counter the growing buildup in and around Ghost Creek, the Whateleys have been funneling in support from their Black Circle co-conspirators. Baron LaCroix has sent some of his more anonymous gun hands to bolster the Duponts, and Mina has detailed a few witches to the area, either as servants to the family or strategically placed as bartenders and saloon gals in Ghost Creek saloons.

Use the **Gunslinger** archetype from the *Weird West Player's Guide* for LaCroix's hired hands, substituting *sneak* 2 for the *renown* Edge. Use the Witch Apprentice profile from this chapter for the Black River representatives.

As time passes, the Ghost Creek Whateleys and their Dupont cousins will further reinforce their position with more hired guns, walkin' dead, devil bats, wolves, and a variety of other critters summoned by Black River witchcraft.

THE DUPONTS

Abigail Dupont and her family arrived in the Ghost Creek area around two years ago. It's no coincidence that they reached the town shortly after Wilhelmina and her family settled in Gomorra. The Duponts' presence in Ghost Creek was part of the brood's plan to prepare the way for Knicknevin.

Abigail and Elizabeth are the eldest female Duponts in Ghost Creek; in the Dupont family, women usually make the important decisions. Melissa, Abigail's younger sister, is currently away in Memphis studying witchcraft.

ABIGAIL DUPONT

Prior to the arrival of Hezekiah, Abigail was the head of the Ghost Creek household. Like a good Whateley lackey, she is completely subservient to members of the "true blood"—in other words, cousins with the Whateley surname.

Abigail is a longtime acquaintance of Mina Devlin and one of the motivators for bringing Black River into the Circle. She not has not only mastered

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witchcraft, but has also learned how to brew up potions and philters of arcane potency.

PROFILE: ABIGAIL DUPONT

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:3d6, S:1d6, V:2d8

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, shootin': pistol 2d6, sneak 2d6, throwin': unbalanced 3d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:2d10, M:2d8, Sm:1d10, Sp:4d8

Academia: occult 5d10, area knowledge: Ghost Creek 2d10, faith: black magic 3d8, guts 3d8, language: English 2d10, language: Latin 2d10, science: alchemy 5d10, search 2d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, dinero 3, Whateley blood 3



Hindrances: Loyal -3: Whateleys, vengeful -3

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 14

Special Abilities:

Alchemy: Abigail can concoct potions that duplicate the effects of her black magic spells if consumed. For example, she can make a *bolt o' doom* potion that causes the drinker to suffer 4d8 damage to the guts. If other witches assist with the brewing, any bonus she gains as a result (see **Witchcraft**, below) is added to the potion's effect. A potion takes 1d6 hours to concoct.

Black magic: Spells: *Beguile* 2, *bolt o' doom* 2, *curse* 4, and *scrye* 2.

Grit: 2

Witchcraft: Abigail can combine with other witches as described under the section on **Black River and the Occult**.

Gear: Two *bolt o' doom* potions and one *curse* potion disguised as perfume bottles, purse, cloth facemask.

Description: Abigail appears to be a young woman in her early 30s, with slightly longer than shoulder-length blonde hair.

ELIZABETH DUPONT

Abigail's cousin, Elizabeth is perhaps the most in touch with the bestial side of the family's lycanthropy. She has a way with wolves of all sorts, and spends much of her time in wolf form herself, prowling the wilderness around the valley, spying on potential threats.

PROFILE: ELIZABETH DUPONT

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, Q:4d8, S:2d6, V:3d10

Climbin' 2d8, dodge 3d8, fightin': brawlin' 4d8, horse ridin' 2d8, sneak 3d8

Mental: C:2d6, K:3d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:1d8

Academia: occult 2d6, animal wranglin' 5d6, area knowledge: Ghost Creek 2d6, faith: black magic 2d8, guts 3d8, language: English 2d6, language: search 3d6, trackin' 4d6

Edges: Dinero 3, fleet-footed 2, keen 3, purty 1, Whateley Blood 3

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty -2, loyal-3: Whateleys, mean as a rattler -2, vengeful -3

Pace: 10

Size: 6

Wind: 18

Special Abilities:

Alpha female: Elizabeth has innate and near total control over normal wolves. Treat this as the black magic spell *animal mastery* at level 3, even though she isn't a true black magician. She has +4 on her *faith* roll to cast the spell and since it's a unnatural ability instead of a spell, she doesn't suffer the effects of a misfire if she goes bust.

Lycanthrope: Werewolf. Changing shape takes Elizabeth 1 action. Once transformed, she matches the **Werewolf** profile from the *Marshal's Handbook*, but retains her own Mental Traits.

Wolf Form: Elizabeth can change into a red-tinted wolf in addition to the two-legged werewolf form. In this shape, she has the profile of a normal wolf, but increase her Corporeal Traits by one die type. She keeps her own Mental Traits and takes half damage from non-silver weapons.

Gear: Rather plain clothing and little else in the way of equipment (she just ends up losing it when she shapechanges).

Description: Elizabeth is an attractive redhead in her early 20s. Her Whateley blood manifests in both her personality and minor physical traits. Primarily, her ring fingers are longer than her middle fingers and her palms are normally hairy (she shaves them regularly).

WILLARD CROGAN

Willard Crogan used to be an unscrupulous trail guide and trapper. Years ago, he fell in with the Duponts and hasn't looked back since. Whether

it's Abigail's potions or Elizabeth's "wild side" isn't clear, but he's completely loyal to the Dupont women.

Willard provides a rather surprising service to the family: he hunts monsters. At least those that aren't already on the family payroll. It wouldn't do for any "freelance" abominations to go drawing too much attention to Ghost Creek!

Over the years, he's become quite proficient at his trade. He's also picked up a bit of knowledge on all matters occult from associating with the Duponts. As a result, he can usually pick any spell-casting types out of a posse quickly and focus his deadly attentions on them.

PROFILE: WILLARD CROGAN

Corporeal: D:2d10, N:1d8 Q:4d10, S:3d8, V:4d6

Climbin' 3d8, fightin': brawlin', knife 5d8, horse ridin' 3d8, shootin': rifle 6d10, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:2d12, K:2d6, M:2d6, Sm:3d6, Sp:3d6

Academia: occult 5d6, animal wranglin': dogs 5d6, area knowledge: Ghost Creek 4d6, guts 5d6, language: English 2d6, overawe 3d6, search 4d12, tracking 4d12, trade: huntin' 4d6, trade: trappin' 3d6

Edges: Big ears 1, brave 2, dinero 4, keen 3, tough as nails 3

Hindrances: Bad eyes -3, blood thirsty -2: Duponts, stubborn -2, yearnin' -3: hunt dangerous game

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 18

Special abilities:

Grit: 3

Gear: Bullard Express rifle with telescopic sight (doubles range increment) and 50 rounds, dog whistle, spectacles.

Description: Crogan is a middle-aged man with dark hair and is slightly balding. He has tiny eyes and his small spectacles emphasize this.

THE WHATELEYS

With all the hubbub in Ghost Creek, Jedebiah, acting on Wilhelmina's orders, dispatched Hezekiah and Cassandra to take charge of the clan's holdings there.

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Initially, only the two and their manservant, Harold Bransby, were sent, but as more family members arrive in Gomorra, Jedebiah plans to direct a few of them to support the pair.

HEZEKIAH WHATELEY

Hezekiah is of a like mind with Nicodemus. The two were childhood playmates—and trust us, you *really* don't want to know what sorts of games Whateley children play! Like Nicodemus, Hezekiah would rather be his own master than kowtow to Knicknevin's whims.

Jedebiah suspected some collusion between the two and thought separating them might weaken any possible opposition they could pose. Instead, Nicodemus now plans to flee to Ghost Creek should things go badly for him!

PROFILE: HEZEKIAH WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, Q:3d8, S:3d6, V:3d8

Climbin' 1d8, fightin': brawlin' 2d8, shootin': pistol 2d6, sneak 1d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d8, M:2d10, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d10

Academia: occult 3d8, area knowledge: Ghost Creek 2d8, guts 4d10, language: English 2d8, overawe 3d10, persuasion 4d10, scrutinize 2d8, search 1d8

Edges: Arcane background 3: huckster, dinero 4, old hand 3, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Big britches -3, high-falutin -2

Pace: 8

Size: 6

Wind: 18

Special Abilities:

Hexes: Hexslingin' 5: *Bedazzle, corporeal twist, nightmare realm, phantasm, phantom fingers, sandman, soul blast, and spirit coils.*

Gear: Colt Army revolver, holster, spare cartridge belt, fancy clothes, pocket watch, and 100 rounds of ammunition.

Description: Hezekiah is a tall man in his mid-30s with black hair and a pencil-thin moustache. He favors a long duster over the nice suits he always wears. His ancestry is evidenced only by his coal-black fingernails.

CASSANDRA WHATELEY

Cassandra is Hezekiah's older sister, but, unlike many Whateley siblings, the two are *not* married. When she was younger, Cassandra was captured by a Comanche war party. She spent many years as a captive and was tortured horribly for the first year. She still bears the scars from that experience and her health never fully recovered.

Nonetheless, she survived and made peace with a tribal shaman. Over time, the tribe came to accept her, and the shaman even began to instruct her in the rituals of his people. Given her innate advantages, she quickly surpassed her teacher and unleashed her dark magics against the tribe.

She left the village a smoking ruin and only a few braves who were out hunting escaped alive. Now, all the Comanche know of the "white witch" and would happily send her to the next world!

Although her younger brother is nominally in charge, Cassandra handles much of the family business in Ghost Creek. She remains loyal to Knicknevin and Jebediah hopes her influence will return Hezekiah to the fold.

PROFILE: CASSANDRA WHATELEY

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:1d6, V:2d6

Climbin' 1d6, shootin': pistol 3d6, sneak 1d6, throwin': unbalanced 4d6

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d8, M:2d10, Sm:1d12, Sp:4d10

Academia: occult 4d8, area knowledge: Ghost Creek 2d8, faith: black magic 4d10, guts 4d10, language: English 2d8,

language: Indian sign 2d8, scrutinize 3d6, search 2d6, survival: plains 2d6

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, dinero 4, kemosabe 1, thick-skinned 3, Whateley blood 3

Hindrances: Ailin' -1: minor, enemy -2: Comanche, mean as a rattler -2, tuckered -2

Pace: 6

Size: 5

Wind: 12

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *animal mastery* 3, *bolts o' doom* 3, *cloak o' evil* 2, *curse* 2, *forewarnin'* 2, *illusion* 3, *sendin'* 4, and *stormcall* 3.

Dimensional Walk: Thanks to her time with the Indians, Cassandra has learned how to use the Hunting Grounds to travel short distances in the physical world. Similar to the hex *shadow walk*, she can step into a shadow and emerge up to 100 yards away.

Gear: Cassandra wears long-sleeved and high-necked dresses at all times to hide her scars. Underneath her dress, she keeps several talismans marked with Indian symbols.

Description: Cassandra is a small, frail-looking blonde woman who appears to be in her late 30s. She is actually much older, but her unnatural ancestry and dark magics hide the fact.

HAROLD BRANSBY

Harold is Hezekiah's full-time butler and part-time assassin. He's an unpleasant but reliable man who handles a tea service and shiv with equal proficiency. Well, maybe he's a *little* better with a shiv...

When a problem needs a discreet solution, Harold is the one Hezekiah turns to.

PROFILE: HAROLD BRANSBY

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d12, Q:4d10, S:2d10, V:3d8

Climbin' 3d8, dodge 3d12, fightin': brawlin', knife 6d12, lockpickin' 4d6, sneak 4d12, throwin': balanced 3d6

Mental: C:1d8, K:2d6, M:1d6, Sm:4d6, Sp:2d6

Academia: occult 2d6, language: English 2d6, professional: butler 5d6, ridicule 4d6, scrutinize 2d8, search 4d8

Edges: Don't get him riled 3, fleet-footed 2, sand 2, tough as nails 3

Hindrances: Loyal -3: Hezekiah Whateley, scrawny -5, ugly as sin -1

Pace: 14

Size: 5

Wind: 20

Special Abilities:

Fearless: Bransby's fear mechanism is turned off. He never needs to make *guts* rolls and is immune to Terror or *overawe* attempts.

Gear: Butler's clothing and a *big* knife (STR+1d6).

Description: Bransby is an unappealing little man. His features are too sharp, making his face look leering even when he's at rest. His tiny frame lets him wriggle into the most unlikely places—under beds, into cabinets, behind stairs, etc.

DOCTOR BROWN-JENKIN

Doctor Brown-Jenkin is a bit of a quandary for the Whateleys. The man is deranged enough to ignore even their most extreme excesses and a skilled physician, but he's also dangerously unstable.

It's certainly handy to have a sawbones around to extract bullets and sew knife wounds with no questions asked, but Brown-Jenkin is likely to stitch a third eye or fish gills onto a patient as well!

The doctor is a patchwork scientist (see *City of Lost Angels* or *Rascals, Varmints, & Critters II*). He mixes the parts of dead creatures like a tossed salad. The largest concentration of patchwork scientists is near Lost Angels, but even those folks don't want anything to do with Brown-Jenkin! That doesn't say a lot for the doctor's grave-side manner.

He has a regular office in Ghost Creek, but the Duponts allow him to conduct his more unusual experiments on their estate. Until Jack Whateley arrived in Gomorra, Doctor Brown-Jenkin tended to Basil, but his unusual methods made even the Whateleys nervous!

PROFILE: DOCTOR BROWN-JENKIN

Corporeal: D:2d10, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:1d6, V:3d10

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, fightin': knife 2d6, sneak 4d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:3d12, M:3d6, Sm:3d10, Sp:1d8

Academia: occult 3d12, area knowledge:

Ghost Creek 2d12, area knowledge:

Gomorra 1d12, guts 4d8, language:

English 4d12, language: German 2d12,

language: Latin 2d12, mad science

4d12, medicine: general, surgery 6d12,

science: biology 5d12, science:

chemistry 3d12, search 3d8, scroungin'

3d10, streetwise 2d10, trade: undertaker

2d12

Edges: Arcane background 3: mad scientist, friends in high places 2: Whateleys

Hindrances: Curious -3, impulsive -3, loco -3: uses corpses like jigsaw puzzles, stubborn -2

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 18

Special Abilities:

Grit: 3

Patchwork Science: The doctor can piece together dead bodies into walkin' dead. If you've got either *Lost Angels* or *Rascals, Varmints, & Critters II*, he can make patchwork creations as detailed. Otherwise, treat his creations as walkin' dead.

Gear: Doctor's bag, bone saw, lab apron (usually bloody).

Description: Dr. Brown-Jenkin is a man in his late 50s. He has a wild mop of white hair on the top of his head; he keeps the side shaved (he claims it's more "sanitary" that way). He has a scruff of a white goatee as well. His piercing blue eyes and gleeful grin while cutting on a patient reveal his madness.



ACE IN THE HOLE

Mina Devlin has her eye on Ghost Creek as well, unbeknownst to her Whateley allies. The community promises to be a new boomtown and an excellent location for exploitation. While it may be a little far north of her railroad's route to make it suitable for her right-of-way, she's still very interested in securing a chunk of the ghost rock market. To that end, she sent one of her most experienced enforcers to infiltrate Nathaniel Morgan's operation.

Lillian "Diamond Lil" Marcone, unlike many of Mina's recruits, was already familiar with some of the black arts when she joined the railroad. Born on a farm in Kansas, Diamond Lil is

motivated by much the same desires that drive Mina, although not to the same degree. As a result, the two women are well suited for each other.

The Black River witch caught Nathaniel's eye as planned and in no time flat became Lillian Morgan. She's kept her affiliation with Black River and her arcane abilities secret from everyone in town—even the Duponts are unaware of her true identity.

Right on target with Mina's plans, Diamond Lil—or Mrs. Morgan, as she insists on being called now—stands to inherit Nathaniel's spread in the not-so-unlikely event something happens to him. Until then, she's happy to enjoy the high life at the Morgan Cattle Company's expense!

PROFILE: DIAMOND LIL

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:4d6, Q:2d8, S:2d6, V:3d6

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, fightin': brawlin' 2d6, shootin': pistol 3d6, throwin': unbalanced 4d6

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d8, M:3d8, Sm:2d10, Sp:4d10

Academia: occult 4d8, area knowledge: Ghost Creek 3d8, disguise 2d8, faith: black magic 4d10, guts 5d10, language: English 2d8, performin': actin' 3d8, persuasion 4d8, scrutinize 3d6, search 2d6, streetwise 2d10

Edges: Arcane background 3: black magician, dinero 3, friends in high places 3 (Morgan Cattle Company), friends in high places 4 (Black River), purty 1, "the voice" 1: soothing

Hindrance: Greedy -2, intolerance -2: other women, obligation -3: Black River

Pace: 6

Size: 6

Wind: 16

Special Abilities:

Black Magic: Spells: *Animal mastery* 3, *ball o' doom* 3, *beguile* 3, *flight* 2, and *stun* 1.

Familiar: Lil's ever-present black cat is actually her familiar. The cat has the same die types in its Mental Traits as Lil and can understand (and even read!) English. While the animal is within 10 yards, she can communicate with it telepathically; outside that range, she's limited to a sense of its current emotions. Finally while it's within 10 yards, she gains a +1 on her *faith: black magic* rolls.

Grit: 2

Witchcraft: As with other Black River witches, Lil can combine her powers with others of her kind. See the section on **Black River and the Occult** for details.

Gear: Expensive and very fancy dress, costly jewelry of all sorts. Lil also has a Buntline Special revolver she keeps in a case in her bedroom.

Description: Lil flaunts her husband's wealth shamelessly, always dressed in the latest fashions and bedecked with extravagant jewelry. Her blonde hair is always carefully styled and she favors heavy perfumes as well.

RELICS

Here are a few special relics related in some way to the Black Circle. The items themselves may provide useful plot hooks but they can also serve as a method to draw your posse into conflict with the Circle, Marshal.

LUCIFER'S CANE

This 3' long piece of sculpted bone was carved from the only part of Knicknevin that didn't dissolve into slime upon his "death," a knucklebone from the manitou's smallest finger. Even this tiny portion of the monster possesses great power, and the Gomorra Whateley family quickly crafted it into a potent arcane item.

Lucifer Whateley carries the cane with him nearly all the time. In his hands, it appears as a plain stick, or perhaps a child-sized bat. In anyone else's possession, it reverts to its true form, a long, straight piece of bone covered with carvings of skulls.

Powers: The cane has the ability to drain life energy from the dying. When within 10 feet of another person who's just kept her appointment with Death, the owner can suck some of her spiritual energy into himself, using it to strengthen his own physical body.

For every die type the target has in her *Spirit* Trait, the owner can immediately heal one wound level on his own body or recover 5 Wind. Alternately, he can choose to raise one of his Corporeal Traits by a number of die types equal to the victim's *Spirit* die. This lasts for 1d6 hours.

Activating either ability takes a single action. However, it usually requires the owner make a vamoose (using a cheat card) as they must be used at the instant the victim dies. This may be done out of combat with no card.

Taint: Each time either ability of the cane is used, the owner picks up a Corruption Point. You can find out what the effects of Corruption Points are in the section on **Whateley Blood** in this chapter. A cowpoke can remove a Corruption Point by spending a Legend Chip for that purpose.

Corruption Points gained this way *are* cumulative with others from a different source, such as from using an effect of the Edge *Whateley blood*.

PEMBROKE'S ANALYSIS OF HOYLE

Lassiter Pembroke was one of the first folks to glean the secrets of Hoyle's text. He became one of the most skilled hexslingers of the early 18th century—and don't forget, that's back when hucksters had it *really* tough!

This book appears to be nothing more than a simple strategy guide to the games described in Hoyle's work. However, in a fashion similar to the text it refers to, *Pembroke's Analysis* is encoded with secret information.

Unlike Hoyle, Pembroke didn't include the hexes themselves in his book. Instead, his work provides more of a

training and tactics dissertation to a huckster.

Powers: Any huckster who owns a copy of *Pembroke's Analysis* and spends at least two hours each week studying the book gains the powers of the text. If she fails to study the book each week, or loses possession of it, she cannot take advantage of its power.

First, the huckster gains the Edge *old hand*. When she successfully casts a hex, this Edge allows her to draw her cards one at a time and stop whenever she chooses, up to the maximum number of cards allowed by her *hexslingin'* roll. That should give you enough to work with, Marshal, but if you want the full description of this Edge, see *Hucksters & Hexes*.

Also, whenever the owner casts a hex, she *may* draw an additional card above and beyond those indicated by her *hexslingin'* roll, if she chooses.

Taint: Lassiter's techniques leave something to be desired when it comes to protecting oneself from backlash. Anytime the owner draws a black Joker, roll twice on the Backlash Table and take your pick of the results, Marshal!

SAPPHIRA'S DAGGER

This ornate but tarnished silver dagger is the very one Mina Devlin used to kill her mentor, Sapphira. It's slightly smaller than a Bowie knife, but double-edged. When wielded as a weapon, it does STR+1d6 and has +1 DB.

Powers: A small part of Sapphira's soul seeped into the dagger when Mina killed her. Her essence protects the wielder against black magic, but only against spells cast by witches. Anytime a witch targets the dagger's owner with a spell, her TN is Incredible (11) instead of the usual Foolproof (3).

Furthermore, the dagger is a silver weapon and if used to administer the deathblow against a witch, she does not rise as a Harrowed. When wielded against a Black River witch in combat,

the dagger gives its owner a +2 bonus on all *fightin': brawlin'* rolls.

Taint: Sapphira's spirit has had years to wallow in hatred and spite and has become quite mad over time. The dagger's owner picks up the Hindrances *bloodthirsty* and *intolerance: attractive women*.

UNHOLY SYMBOL

These Whateley family heirlooms are real nasty pieces of work. When you've got over 1000 years to practice, it only makes sense you get something right once in a while—even if it's creating artifacts of pure evil!

They don't even look like what most folks imagine as "symbols." Basically, a Whateley unholy symbol is a severed human hand with overly long fingers, usually tied to a leather thong for carrying and decorative purposes. The hand is preserved somehow, but not mummified, as it remains disgustingly soft and pliable to the touch.

There are several of these repulsive necklaces floating about the Weird West, hinting that the family is making them and putting them into circulation.

Powers: The owner of this grotesque piece of jewelry gains +2 on all *faith: black magic* rolls, or on her casting rolls if using blood magic.

Taint: Even the wielder is prevented from using her Fate Chips to cancel wounds! Not surprisingly, these are seldom found in the possession of the Whateleys themselves.

WHATELEY FAMILY BIBLE

This book contains several chapters not found in a standard book of scripture and some interesting revisions of the existing ones. All illustrations and illuminated text is overwritten with occult symbols or just plain obscenities. The "family" in question is quite mad, after all.

Worse than these insane scribblings, however, are the horrific rites and rituals bound or written within, all designed to work powerful black magic spells.

The first page, like most family bibles, is a tangled diagram of the Whateley family tree, and reveals all of the offshoot bloodlines to the clan. Anyone

who gains even a cursory glance instantly realizes the Whateleys are frequent practitioners of inbreeding.

Since the arcane portions of the book are in Welsh, reading it requires a cowpoke to make a Fair (5) *language: English* roll to avoid misinterpreting key passages.

The book was last seen in the hands of a member of the Sioux Union, an alliance of Indians in the Gomorra Valley who've taken a special dislike to the Whateleys. Where it was taken or what happened to it afterwards is unknown.

Powers: In the hands of a black magician, the book reveals hideous incantations and grotesque rituals. Those who know black magic, or are willing to give themselves to the Reckoners for such power, can learn any black magic spell up to level 5. The trappings for these spells are very dark in nature, often requiring a blood sacrifice of some kind. This should not be possible for posse members unless you're running a very different type of *Deadlands* campaign, Marshal.

The book isn't a complete waste, however. Other types of magicians—in other words, posse members—who get their hands on it can glean a ritual for opening a portal directly to the Hunting Grounds. The process is long and involved, Marshal, and the exact details are up to you if you choose to allow the heroes to make use of it. Doing so should essentially be an adventure in itself, and should lead the heroes into the Hunting Grounds and on to one of the other *Deadlands* settings, such as *Hell on Earth*, *Lost Colony*, or even a setting of your own creation. The spell truly opens the portal to other worlds.

Taint: On top of the fact that the Whateleys *really* want to get this piece of literature back, it carries a few surprises of its own. Any hero reading the book must make a Hard (9) *guts* check, whether or not he succeeds on the *language: English* roll. Sometimes, the gist of the matter is enough!

Also, anyone not of the Whateley blood who has possession of the book suffers the *night terrors* Hindrance. The nightmares last forever unless a priest removes the curse. A victim who already has *night terrors* is not affected.

INSIDE THE CIRCLE 121

NEW BLACK MAGIC

A book about the Black Circle wouldn't be complete without new black magic spells! These follow the same rules for black magic found in the *Marshal's Handbook*. These are powerful spells designed to be useful to you in quickly resolving villainous attacks. They are not balanced and don't even pretend to be fair. We highly recommend you don't *ever* let black magic be used by posse members.

In the same bloody vein, please note that the chapter on Whateley blood magic was written for players, and is far more balanced than cheatin' black magic. You, however, should use black magic for the Whateleys and other sorcerers as it's far faster and easier.

BALL O' DOOM

Speed: 2

Duration: Instant

Trappings: Ball of glowing energy

Ball o' doom is available only to Black River witches. When this spell is cast, the witch hurls a palm-sized globe of sickly green light at her target. Just like *bolts o' doom*, this spell requires the witch to make a *throwin': unbalanced* roll to hit her target. Any misses should be checked for deviation as described in the *Weird West Player's Guide*.

When it strikes its target, the ground, or any other object, it instantly swells to cover a circular area 5 yards in diameter and then dissipate. Every creature within its effect suffers massive damage.

BALL O' DOOM

Level	Damage	Range	Increment
1	2d6		3
2	2d8		5
3	3d10		10
4	3d12		15
5	3d20		20

BEGUILE

Speed: 1

Duration: 1 hour/*faith* level

Trappings: A kiss, a potion, burning incense.

This spell makes the caster irresistibly charming to a member of the opposite sex. For each level he has in *beguile*, he gets a +2 to all *persuasion* rolls against the target, but the effects of the spell go beyond a mere bonus to his Aptitude roll.

If the caster wins an opposed roll of his *persuasion* against her *Spirit* (not *scrutinize*), she agrees to nearly any reasonable request. With a raise, she is amenable to any suggestion that doesn't directly violate her personal ethics or morals. Should the cultist get two raises on his victim, she can be cajoled into illegal or dangerous acts.

Regardless of the caster's result, he can't convince his target to do blatantly self-destructive acts like jump off a cliff or play Russian roulette with all six cylinders loaded.



Marshal, you may want to allow posse members an extra shot or two at resisting the worst effects of this spell. Nobody likes to lose control of her character!

FLIGHT

Speed: 2

Duration: 5 rounds/*faith* level

Trappings: A broomstick, billowing clothing or hair, glowing eyes, strong winds.

Few cultists outside of Mina Devlin's witches have mastered this spell yet, but you can bet it's popular among those groups favoring truly vulgar displays of power!

Much as the name suggests, this spell grants the cultist the ability to fly. We're not talking about flapping his wings like a bird or lying horizontal in the air and cruising around—this is black magic after all! Usually, the cultist remains in an upright and very menacing position as he drifts (or hurtles depending on his skill!) through the air. Seeing a human under the effects of this spell is very disconcerting!

The cultist's level determines how fast he can travel while floating above the ground.



Level	Pace
1	0 (Levitation only)
2	5
3	10
4	20
5	30

JUDAS

Speed: 1

Duration: Special

Trappings: A dripping candle, a pinch of dust, a veil

This spell allows cultists to alter their appearance right down to their clothing. Cultists primarily use *Judas* to hide their own identities while committing crimes or unholy acts in public. The effect is illusory, however, and does not affect Traits or Aptitudes.

The spell slips an illusionary “glove” over the cultist, adding, at best, six inches or so in either height or girth. With *Judas*, the cultist alters gender, voice, eye color, hair length and most any other physical characteristic. Likewise, clothing runs the gamut from miner’s work clothes to jaunty evening gowns. The cultist can never look smaller or thinner, or gain Edges like “the stare” or “the voice,” however.

The caster can look Harrowed, though he cannot impersonate a non-human Abomination. His general appearance must remain human.

Manufactured illusions designed to impersonate another person require a photograph, a well-rendered drawing, or a visual cue to work from. Obviously, studying the subject allows the cultist to prepare a better-looking illusion, while those crafted from photographs and drawings don’t appear exactly right.

If the cultist is trying to deceive a hero using *Judas*, the character can penetrate the disguise by making a *scrutinize* roll against a TN determined by the cultist’s familiarity with the subject, as shown below.

Knowledge of Subject	TN
Based on quick study	9
Based on detailed study	7
Based on photograph	5
Based on drawing	3

Of course, the Marshal can assign bonuses or penalties according to a hero’s familiarity with the impersonated individual.

If the disguise isn’t based on a real person, but simply a fictitious one created by the cultist to mask his own identity, the TN for the *scrutinize* roll is Incredible (11).



Level	Duration
1	1 round
2	1 minute
3	1 hour
4	1 day
5	1 week

MINION

Speed: 1 hour

Duration: 1 day/*faith* level

Trappings: Pentagram, candles, animal remains.

Unfortunately, there’s not always a handy corpse to animate or a convenient abomination to make a *pact* with when a cultist really needs it. In those inopportune situations, this spell makes sure the poor, downtrodden lickspittles of Evil still have a fighting chance against a posse of white-hatted heroes,

Minion creates a physical entity to serve the cultist in her nefarious schemes. Its Mental Traits are the same as those of the black magician who creates it, but its Corporeal Traits and physical form vary according to the caster’s skill with the spell.

The creature’s size can be up to twice the cultist’s level in *minion*. For example, a black magician with this spell at level 2 can create an abomination with a Size up to 4, while a cultist with *minion* 4 can generate a horror up to Size 8! Likewise, the monster gains light armor equal to the caster’s level in *minion* (-1 to -5).

The monster has the following Aptitudes at Level 1, plus the cultist’s level in the spell: *dodge*, *fightin’ brawlin’*, *sneak*, and *search*. In combat, it attacks with claws (STR+1d6) and bite (STR). Its Corporeal Traits and Terror score are shown on the table. The abomination’s Trait Level is equal to its creator’s spell level.



A cultist with *minion* 3 can summon a creature with Corporeal Traits of 3d10, *dodge*, *fightin’ brawlin’*, *sneak*, and *search* 3, and Size up to 6. The monster has light armor -3, two attacks each action for (STR+1d6) and (STR) and a Terror score of 7. Finally, it has the same Mental Traits as the caster.

MINION

Level	Corporeal	Traits	Terror
1		d6	3
2		d8	5
3		d10	7
4		d12	9
5		d12+4	11

WHATELEY BLOOD

As you've probably guessed, Marshal, over a thousand years of inbreeding and consorting with dark creatures from the netherworld isn't all fun and games!

There are a couple of drawbacks to the Whateley family lifestyle—actually, a whole wagonload of drawbacks when you get down to it—but here are the two most likely to come into play in the course of your campaign, **Defects** and **Corruption**.

TAINTS

With the family's penchant for, ahem, "selective" breeding, it's inevitable that certain undesirable traits become common. The Whateleys and their cousins are, by and large, pond scum on the gene pool. Actually, when you're talking about this family, gene "puddle" is probably closer to the truth.

Whenever a player creates a character with the Edge *Whateley blood*, have her draw a card to determine just how much of the Whateley taint her hero exhibits. Tell the player the result on the table below.

By their very nature, none of these traits are kept secret from the player.

DUCE: ALBINO

The character has no body pigment at all—white hair, pale skin, pink eyes, the works. Besides making the cowpoke really stand out in a crowd, this condition makes life in the West a bit tougher.

Her unnatural heritage makes her a bit more resistant to the harmful effects of the sun than folks who are naturally albino. However, the sun's rays are extremely painful to her eyes, and she suffers a -2 penalty on all Trait and Aptitude rolls while in sunlight.

Also, Whateley albinism is unsettling to view, making the character resemble a bloodless cadaver than simply a paler-than-normal saddle tramp. The cowpoke gets -2 on all friendly *persuasion* rolls. It goes without saying that most folks just plain don't forget him once they've seen him!

THREE: HINDERED

There are two different outcomes for this result, depending on the color of card drawn.

Black: One of the character's feet isn't quite normal. It may even resemble a hoof or claw! Regardless, it slows her down considerably. Treat this as the 3-point version of the *lame* Hindrance.

Red: The hero has a mass of muscle on her back that most folks don't. This does make her stronger than normal, but forces her into an unnatural hunched posture. Raise her *Strength* Trait by two die types, but lower her *Nimbleness* by the same amount. Her *Nimbleness* can't be reduced below d4 and her *Strength* can't be raised above d12+2 in this fashion.

FOUR: UNNATURAL BLOOD

Some of the character's supernatural parentage has manifested in the constitution of his blood. The exact effect depends on the color of the card drawn.

Black: The hero's blood is unnaturally thin. He loses twice the normal Wind from continued bleeding caused by a Serious, Critical, or Maimed wound (i.e., 2, 4, or 6 Wind per round). This does not apply to Wind loss from other sources, including that caused by the initial wounding.

On the other hand, being a free-bleeder gives him an edge in casting blood magic spells. Lower the TN for his blood magic spells by 2.

Red: The character's blood is thick and molasses-like. He suffers only half

the normal Wind caused by wounds. He loses no Wind from untreated Serious wounds, only 1 Wind per round from Critical, and 2 Wind per round from Maimed locations. Other sources of Wind loss affect him normally.

This miser has a harder time casting blood magic, however, as he has to put extra effort into coaxing his body to cooperate, Raise the TN by 2 for any of his blood magic spells.

FIVE: EXTRA DIGITS

This cowpoke has an extra finger or three on her hands. (She can have extra toes if she likes as well, but they neither help nor harm her.) The color of the card drawn determines if this is a good or bad thing.

Black: The fingers are vestigial and only get in the character's way. Lower her *Deftness* by one die type.

Red: Not only do the bonus digits work, but she's figured out how to use them to her advantage. Raise her *Deftness* by a die type!

SIX: DISTIGURED

The Whateley taint is blatantly evident on this character. Maybe his eyes are grossly lopsided or he has scaly skin or he has three (and only three!) teeth protruding from his mouth, even when closed. Whatever the case, he's not a pretty sight.

He has to subtract -4 from friendly *persuasion* rolls whenever his looks might play into the situation. And with looks like these, that's most of the time! When making an *overawe* or hostile *persuasion* roll, he gets a +2 bonus, though.

If the poor sod already has *ugly as sin*, the effects aren't cumulative—call it a freebie. It's hard for a fellow to get much more unappealing than this result makes him!

SEVEN: DERANGED

This hero is the "tainted on the inside" kind. Instead of some terrible physical disfigurement, she's just saddled with a mind that's as unsavory as an outhouse in July. Of course, her problem isn't as readily obvious as a

hunchback or a set of horns on her head, but in the long run, it may be worse.

She must choose at least 5 points worth of Hindrances from the following list: *bloodthirsty, habit, hankerin', intolerance, loco, mean as a rattler, outlaw, randy, vengeful, or yeller*. These are in addition to any others she's taken in character creation. She gets no character points for choosing these, though she's welcome to take more than the minimum!

EIGHT: BIRTHMARK

The character has some sort of obvious birthmark. This could be a skull-shaped mole, a patch of discolored skin that resembles "666," red eyes, or some other mark that, if viewed clearly, is obviously of supernatural origin. Religious types who see or know of the mark believe it marks the person as evil.

Its location is determined by the color of card the player drew.

Black: The birthmark is obvious, either on the face, neck or hands. It can be covered, but doing so for extended periods of time is likely to make folks start talking. When exposed, the hero suffers -2 on all friendly *persuasion* rolls.

Red: The cowpoke got lucky. Whatever his birthmark is, it's someplace normally out of sight, on his chest, leg, or even kiester. Still, once someone's gotten a gander at it, she's probably not going to forget it.

NINE: UNTOUCHED

For a Whateley, the word "untouched" has a slightly different meaning. Whatever mark her parentage left on her, it's relatively inconspicuous. Perhaps she has an extra (or missing) toe, no belly button, no body hair, or can bend her knees backwards. No matter what the taint she bears is, she can keep it hidden from view with relatively little effort.

TEN: DULL NERVES

This Whateley offspring got shorted in the nerves department. No, we don't mean he's a yellow-belly—his sense of touch isn't as good as normal folks.

He can ignore 2 levels of wound penalties to Trait and Aptitude rolls. This resistance to pain is cumulative with the Edge *thick-skinned*, but not a Harrowed's ability to ignore pain.

On the downside, he's a bit fumble-fingered as a result. Reduce his *Deftness* Trait by a die type.

JACK: BRITISH

The term "throwback" certainly applies to this hero. Increase her *Strength* and *Vigor* Traits. This can raise either above d12, by the way.

Also increase her *Size* by 1. This effect is cumulative with either *brawny* or *big'un*, but cannot raise her *Size* above 8 in either case.

QUEEN: UNHINGED

This cowpoke is just a tad out of touch with the world around him. Maybe he's distracted by things no one else can see, listening to voices only he hears, or just plain dull-witted.

Reduce his *Cognition* Trait by one die type. He also gets the Hindrance *clueless*.

On the other hand, his lack of focus on the outside world has given him a stronger grip on his own self. Increase his *Spirit* Trait by one die type.

KING: CONJOINED

The hero was born with a smaller twin still attached to her body. The twin is not only alive, but also fully aware! It's joined to her on the torso and fairly small in size, so she can keep it hidden from view most of the time by wearing bulky clothing.

Needless to say, folks in the Weird West tend to be a bit close-minded about these sorts of things. If the twin

is exposed to view, she suffers -4 on all friendly *persuasion* rolls towards all who are aware of it.

There is a potential upside to this, however. The character can purchase the twin as a *sidekick*, similar to the Edge. However, in this case, the twin only costs 2 character points—but it can only be purchased at character creation.

Have the player draw cards and create the character as normal, but he's limited to d6s in *Strength*, *Nimbleness*, and *Vigor*, and d4s in *Mien*.

Certain obvious limitations apply, of course. Many Aptitudes, Edges and Hindrances are unavailable to the twin, and common sense serves as an excellent guide. The twin *must* have the *Whateley blood* Edge. It's also possible for it to have a different *arcane background* than the host character.

The twin is *Size* 2 for damage purposes. Use $1d12+8$ to determine hit location. If the hero is struck in the guts from the front, roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, the twin is hit instead.

If the twin is killed, the host character must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll or die as well. If the hero dies, the twin simply dies as well.

Should the player choose to not go this route, Marshal, the twin becomes a character under your control. Exactly what its disposition and personality are depends on your whim in that case!

ACE: GENETIC CESSPOOL

This poor sap got more than his fair share of bad genes. Have him draw twice more and take both results. It is possible to get this result multiple times and it *is* cumulative!

JOKER: CORRUPTED

The character's connection to his unnatural ancestors is quite strong.

Black: The hero has a dark side that constantly struggles with him for control. He has Dominion points just like a Harrowed and must roll a contest at the beginning of each session just like one of those Boot Hill rejects. Determine the *Spirit* die type of his dark half just like for a Harrowed's manitou (see the *Marshal's Handbook*).

He gains no bonuses from his alter ego.

Red: The cowpoke's essence is particularly pleasing to manitous. He gets a +2 bonus to any *blood magic*, *conjurin'*, *hexslingin'*, or *mad science* rolls he makes. Any time he suffers backlash or similar effect, roll twice and give him the lesser of the two effects.

CORRUPTION

Let's talk a bit about allowing Whateley characters into your campaign.

At first, it might seem a little strange to let a relative of some of the Weird West's most corrupt villains join your posse of heroes. There's no argument there, but remember that heroes are made, not born. Such a character might actually be far more heroic than some of the other members of your group. After all, she's overcome the taint of her own bloodline to go out and fight evil.

Should a player want to play a true Whateley, the kind that snatches spiders out of the windowsill for a quick snack, we recommend you just say no. These demented creeps aren't heroes and wouldn't likely participate in any epic quests to fight evil. Only Whateleys who are trying to escape their heritage are appropriate as player characters.

Of course, it's your world, and you can do whatever you want. If you do, however, remember that Whateley player characters use the blood magic rules we gave you in this book. You can use those rules for non-player character Whateleys too if you want, but you should feel just as free to give them black magic. It's easier, faster, and far more powerful. If a Whateley player complains that he can't do something one of his family can, remind him that's why he's a player character and the other is merely a minion of the Reckoners.

A Whateley who ever becomes too corrupt becomes a non-player character in the service of the Weird West's dark masters.

CORRUPTION RULES

Each time a hero with *Whateley blood* invokes one of the Fate Chip powers, she gains a Corruption Point, as we

discussed in the **Posse Section**. Once she accumulates as many Corruption Points as her *Spirit* die type, she's on the threshold of slipping into the clutches of the dark side.

For every Corruption Point above her *Spirit* die type, she gains a Hindrance from the following list: *bloodthirsty*, *grim servant o' death*, *loco* (-2 value or more), *mean as a rattler*, *night terrors*, *ugly as sin* and *vengeful*. If the character already has some of these Hindrances, too bad.

Once she has picked up all the listed Hindrances, her heritage overwhelms her and she becomes a willing servant of the Reckoners. Take the character sheet and explain that she's become a non-player member of the Whateleys. This is the end of this character's career as a hero.

And the origin of a powerful new villain in your world..

BLOOD MAGIC REFLUX

When a blood magician goes bust on his *blood magic* roll, he suffers *reflux*. In other words, he released too much power for his own good and got burned.

As a sorcerer gains experience, not only is he less likely to suffer a surge, but he is better able to deal with its effects as well. Roll 1d20, add the hero's *blood magic* level to the result, and consult the table on the next page to see what happens. Regardless of the outcome, going bust on a *blood magic* roll always gives the sorcerer a Corruption Point as the fouled energies course through him.

As we just told you above, too much corruption taints the sorcerer's soul. In extreme cases, the taint can cause the caster to *lose* his soul and become a mindless pawn of the Reckoners.

If you're using these rules for non-player character Whateleys, use the Reflux table as well. If you are using the black magic rules, use the Backlash table found in the *Marshal's Handbook*.

REFLUX TABLE

Result	Effect
2 or less	This disastrous failure reduces the luckless sod to a puddle of green goo! It's instant death time with no chance for returning Harrowed.
3-5	The energies surge through the caster's body. He takes 4d10 damage to the guts and the spell fails.
6-9	The wild surge of power causes the spell to fail. The energy escapes in a flash of light, causing 2d6 massive damage to all within 10' of him.
10-12	The spell fails and the jolt of energy fries a portion of the caster's brain. He loses 3d6 Wind and a level in <i>blood magic</i> .
13-15	The spell affects the caster instead of its target, if possible. if that's not possible, the spell fails.
16-19	The spell affects both the caster and the target as if cast twice, if possible. Otherwise, it simply fails.
20-22	The sorcerer got lucky. The spell fails—that's it!
23-25	The sorcerer manages to keep some control, but suffers from direct contact with energies of the Hunting Grounds. He takes 3d8 to the guts, but the spell succeeds.
26+	Fortune and skill combine to turn potential disaster into success! Treat this as if the spell was cast with a raise instead of a bust.



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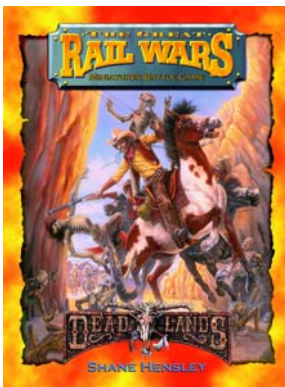
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