

# THE EPITAPH

New Fiction:  
Devil's Night

A Chilling Adventure:  
Guess Who's Coming to  
Donner

Regular Features:  
According to Hoyle  
For Fistfull of Dollars  
The Big Picture  
The Medicine Bag  
Varmints

# DEAD LANDS

3







# THE DEADLANDS EPITAPH

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

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# Deadlands Dispatch

## — The Big Picture —

Good to see you again—or for the first time if you've not had the opportunity to take a gander at an Epitaph before this one!

Since this issue is the one hitting the shelves closest to our favorite holiday—Halloween, if you couldn't guess—we've devoted as much of it as possible to the darker side of Deadlands.

Like there's much in the way of a light side to it anyway...

In these pages, you'll find *Guess Who's Comin' to Donner*—but it's just for Marshals. That's because it's an adventure that's suitable for *either* the Weird *or* Wasted West with a little modification. Just from the title alone, you can probably take a guess at the general idea behind that one!

In this issue's *Medicine Bag*, we've included a passel of new voodoo spells that we couldn't fit into *Hexarcana*. For you Marshals, *Varmints!* has a few new creatures to keep your heroes on their toes—or at least a scarf around their necks.

A new semi-regular feature, *For a Fistful of Dollars*, gives players and Marshals alike a look at how folks make a living in Deadlands. The first installment of this feature, in

keeping with the season, details the finer points of undertaking and gravedigging in the Weird West. On top of all that, we've got *According to Hoyle* covering the *Lost Colony* CCG, HOE fiction from John Hopley, a new comic, and a couple of other surprises!

First, we need to pay credit where credit is due. We listed Jay Kyle as the sole author of last issue's adventure, *Biodome 2*. He's asked we acknowledge the contribution of Matt Steflik in the concept and design. Done!

## WEIRD WEST ROUNDUP

Things are getting stirred up west of the Mississippi worse than a nest full of pit wasps and somebody's going to get stung *real* soon!

If you've been following along so far, you already know that California is on the verge of a big referendum, deciding for either the Union or Confederacy—or maybe just calling it quits with both and striking out on its own! One way or the other two of the three factions are going to lose, and you can bet neither is likely to roll over and give up on the ghost-rock rich region without a fight.



## TROUBLE DOWN SOUTH

As if folks in the Golden State—or at least what's left of it—didn't have enough on their minds, everyone's favorite one-legged general, Santa Anna, is getting a little pushy along the Mexican border.

Reports of large troop movements south of Arizona and California reached this office over the past few weeks. Apparently, the infighting in the area convinced Santa Anna the time was right to make his move.

His first target seems to be the only community of any size in the area, the Free City of Lost Angels.

Folks in Yuma, Arizona, claim that the Mexican Army has so plagued the Ghost Trail that it's nearly impossible for a caravan of any size to reach Lost Angels now. Granted, Reverend Grimme's self-proclaimed "free city" isn't exactly a favorite vacation spot, but as the saying goes, "The enemy of an enemy is a friend." Although many in the region may find the idea of allying with the Reverend's fanatics unpleasant, it may prove to be unavoidable for now.

Rumors of a closed-door alliance between Lost Angels and the Confederacy are already circulating in Yuma, where the meeting supposedly took place.

## REINFORCEMENTS?

What few troops are in the area are currently involved in trying to maintain order in the wake of California's "referendum fever." And, depending on how the vote goes, those units may find themselves defending "foreign soil!"

It's unlikely the Confederacy will be able to move substantial troops into the area quickly enough to thwart Santa Anna's initial advance if he does make a move.

As yet, no railroad has reached the area, with Bayou Vermillion, stalled west of Tombstone, coming the closest. With typically poor timing, Bayou Vermillion recently issued a statement that unless the Confederate government is willing to grant a loan, it cannot guarantee that its trains will continue running—even in emergency.

While this statement is certainly in keeping with our earlier reports of financially dire circumstances in the New Orleans-based company, whispers suggest a more sinister motive. Although these are completely unsubstantiated, some sources suggest that Baron LaCroix may have made arrangements with Santa Anna himself!

If so, the railroad's sudden inability to guarantee further operation takes on a new light...

## ILL WIND FROM THE NORTH

The Union may take pleasure in the Confederacy's current dilemma, but it has problems of its own.

Chafing at British possession of Detroit, Union General Maniha spent the winter quietly pulling units from stations along the Canadian border. Over the months, he clandestinely pieced together a force of three divisions of infantry and several artillery batteries to support it.

Carefully timing his attack to fall between the first thaw and spring rains, Maniha assaulted the British positions. Unfortunately, his intelligence was out-dated and drastically underestimated the enemy strength in the city. Apparently, over the winter months, the British had reinforced as well.

After three days of hard fighting, Maniha's battered forces were forced to retire, leaving the British in control of the city. The Union not only failed to retake Detroit, but the attack has depleted its forces along the rest of the Canadian border!

Word has filtered down from whiskey traders that the British government has breathed new life into the Canadian transcontinental railroad. The track-laying operations have begun in earnest through western Ontario.

To date, the numerous lakes and rivers and thick forests of that area have seriously hampered travel to the western half of Canada. However, with the backing of the most powerful nation on earth, it's unlikely the situation will persist much longer. It seems likely the Union faces the possibility of a two-front war in the near future as well.

## HIGH TALES OF HELL ON EARTH

### LOCUSTS ATTACK

An enormous swarm of locusts descended upon the small survivor settlement of Batesville, Kansas. The insects destroyed crops in the field, devoured most of the town's stored food, and generally made a nuisance of themselves. Only the timely arrival of a Convoy truck laden with food allowed the town to avoid starvation.

The inhabitants of the town believe this modern day plague was the work of Thorax, an insect shaman who had passed through the town only a week before. No one knows why the shaman would inflict such a punishment on their town, because although they weren't overly receptive to his message of insect supremacy, the man was not mistreated while in town.

The angry survivors are offering a reward of 500 bullets and as much corn liquor as a hero can drink to anyone who can find Thorax and return him to the town for trial. Judge Harrison of Batesville prefers that the man be brought in alive, but no questions will be asked if he turns up dead.

### MYSTERIOUS MURDERS

The survivor town of Grenada in Northern California also has its share of woes. There is a killer in the town and he has already struck three times.

Grenada is an unusual town for NorCal in that more than 80% of its inhabitants are former British soldiers. They were part of the big Canadian offensive that pushed down I-5 in the spring of '81. Their position was overrun by a Northern Alliance counterattack in August of that year, but this resourceful band evaded capture behind enemy lines until Judgment Day occurred and all organized fighting stopped. Once things had

calmed down some, the soldiers came out of hiding in the mountains and were welcomed as protectors by the small group of people living in Grenada.

The killings in this small town have baffled those trying to solve them. There doesn't appear to be any connection between the three victims, but the one thing in common between all of the murders is that each of the victims felt as if they were being watched for days before the killings took place. All of the victims also reported that things had been moved around within their houses. Nothing was stolen; things were simply rearranged as if the killer wanted his victim to know that he had been there. The third victim was murdered in her home despite the fact that two armed guards were posted outside.

The inhabitants of Grenada welcome any outside assistance with solving these murders. However, the town's leader, Major Niles Blakeley, stated, "We want all to know that there is no evidence to suggest that these murders were committed by Jack the Ripper. He has not returned from the dead and his disembodied spirit has not possessed a member of this community. Frankly, I must say I'm offended that whenever a murder occurs with an Englishman in the vicinity, you Yanks automatically assume that Jack the Ripper is involved. You Americans have produced many more serial killers than have ever been encountered in the British Isles and I think it presumptuous that..."

For an idea of what may be behind these gruesome murders, check out the upcoming *Waste Warriors* supplement.

### PURITY OF ESSENCE

They say bad news comes in threes, so here's one last town that's had a run of bad luck.

The town of Clarksville, Missouri was a nice place to live—at least as far as bleak, blasted, post-Holocaust survivor towns go. The pride and joy of Clarksville was its brand-new (thirteen years ago) water treatment facility. This facility was capable of



sucking in water from the Ol' Muddy and remove 99.99% of all the toxins and bacteria in the water. It also had a fluoridation capacity.

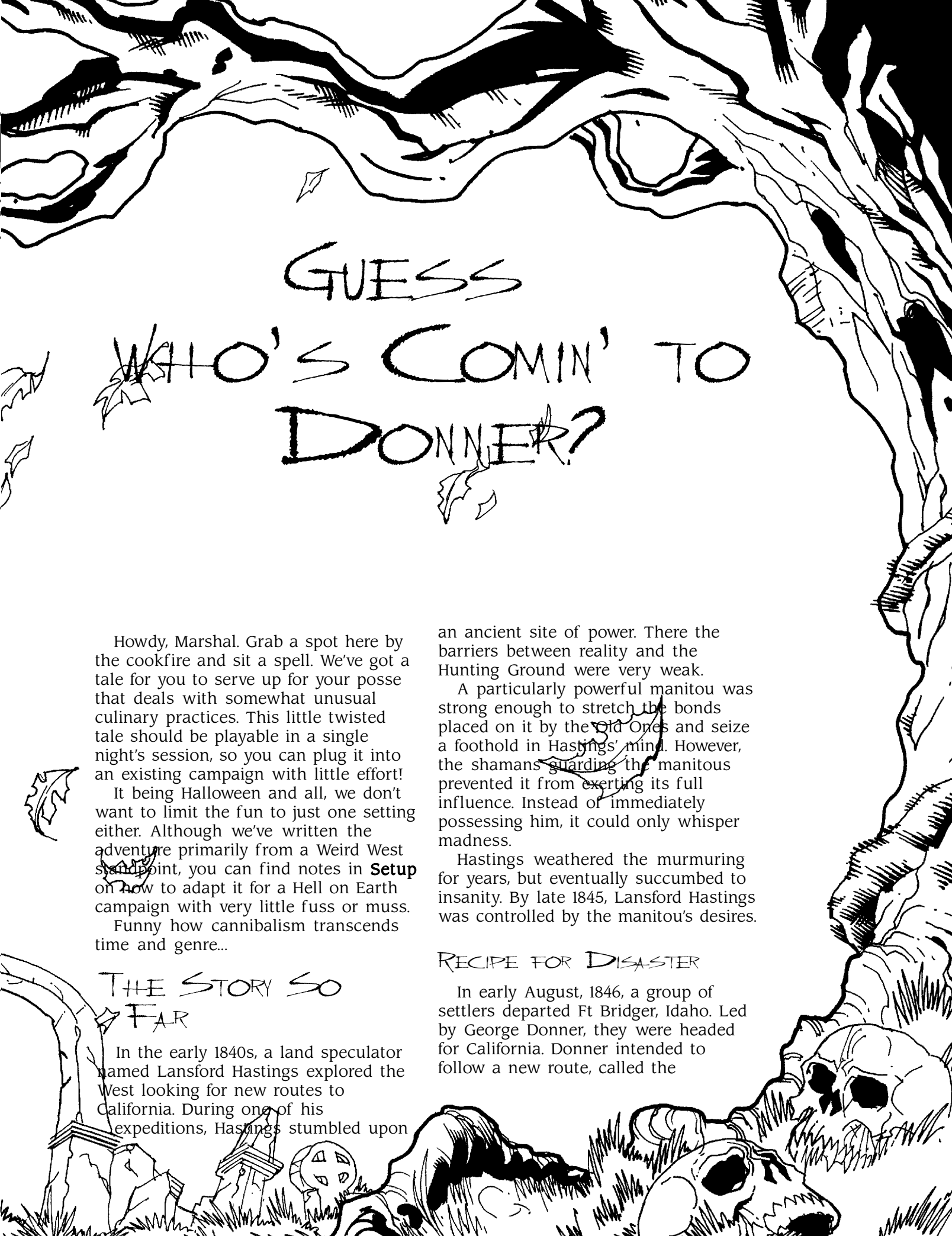
The survivors in Clarksville kept the place running after Judgment Day. Before the Last War, drinking water straight from the Mississippi was a bad idea; these days it's downright suicidal when you consider all of the stuff that has leached into the water from industrial sites and been thrown in by toxic shamans. To make matters worse, undead from across the river have been using it as their own private swimming pool recently.

Therein lies Clarksville's problem. Some undead swim better than others, and many have been swept downstream by the current only to be sucked into the intake pipes of the town's facility. The townspeople have been unable to clear the latest clog because a small horde of undead has gathered around the pipes. Over-sized catfish have also been spotted in the area. The inhabitants of Clarksville are looking for experienced divers to clear this clog—compensation rates are negotiable.









# GUESS WHO'S COMIN' TO DONNER?

Howdy, Marshal. Grab a spot here by the cookfire and sit a spell. We've got a tale for you to serve up for your posse that deals with somewhat unusual culinary practices. This little twisted tale should be playable in a single night's session, so you can plug it into an existing campaign with little effort!

It being Halloween and all, we don't want to limit the fun to just one setting either. Although we've written the adventure primarily from a Weird West standpoint, you can find notes in **Setup** on how to adapt it for a Hell on Earth campaign with very little fuss or muss.

Funny how cannibalism transcends time and genre...

## THE STORY SO FAR

In the early 1840s, a land speculator named Lansford Hastings explored the West looking for new routes to California. During one of his expeditions, Hastings stumbled upon

an ancient site of power. There the barriers between reality and the Hunting Ground were very weak.

A particularly powerful manitou was strong enough to stretch the bonds placed on it by the Old Ones and seize a foothold in Hastings' mind. However, the shamans guarding the manitous prevented it from exerting its full influence. Instead of immediately possessing him, it could only whisper madness.

Hastings weathered the murmuring for years, but eventually succumbed to insanity. By late 1845, Lansford Hastings was controlled by the manitou's desires.

## RECIPE FOR DISASTER

In early August, 1846, a group of settlers departed Ft Bridger, Idaho. Led by George Donner, they were headed for California. Donner intended to follow a new route, called the

"Hastings Cutoff" he'd learned of in a book, titled *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California*. This shortcut, the book claimed, would shorten the trip by nearly four months. The book was written by none other than Lansford Hastings.

Donner contacted Hastings and set up a meet at Fort Bridger so Hastings could guide them through the shortcut. When the party arrived, it discovered Hastings had gone ahead. The man promised to leave markers along the way, and link up with them prior to entering the Sierra Nevadas.

Hastings had no such intentions. The Donner party was unknowingly following a monster to its den.

## TENDERIZERS

The route became steadily more difficult and dangerous. Hastings' directions were deliberately inaccurate and Indian attacks plagued the settlers as they crossed Utah. Finally, in October, far behind schedule, they reached the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas.

The Donner party began its final push on October 23. By all rights, there should have been plenty of time to clear the high mountains before the snows began to fall. Unfortunately, Hastings had been shadowing the party throughout its journey and the manitou had drawn strength from the suffering and fears of the settlers. The manitou finally flexed its true power.

Winter came to the Sierras almost a month early.

On October 29, the Donner party was trapped near the top of the region known as Truckee Pass. There they made camp near a small lake in cabins built by earlier pioneers.

## THE CUPBOARD WAS BARE...

The party's food, already decimated by the disastrous trip, soon dwindled to nothing. The first death from starvation occurred on December 15. By January,

even the strongest pioneer was near death. Hastings prowled the woods nearby to savor the terror and despair.

Then the final horror was released—the spirit of a Wendigo.

The settlers, most already half mad with hunger, were easy prey for the beast. By the time the final rescue party reached the camp in April, 1847, it was a charnel house. The rescuers later spoke of kettles filled with skulls and corpses stripped of flesh. Of the 87 members of the Donner party, 39 had died in the Truckee Pass.

The manitou, through Hastings, had reveled in the fear and horror for almost four months. It raised the Fear Level in Truckee Pass to near that of a Deadland. Lansford Hastings' mind snapped then as well. Although the Manitou would wait nearly another 20 years for Raven and the Last Sons to completely free it, its bond with Hastings was now breakable only by death.

## THE SECOND COURSE

Thirty years or so later, Truckee Pass is commonly called "Donner" Pass. Residents of nearby towns tell tales of ghosts and other creatures haunting the high pass. Few people venture into the area near the old Donner campsite.

And so it would have continued, if not for the Great Rail Wars.

The Denver-Pacific railroad is a minor player in the transcontinental race, but it stands the best chance of reaching the California coast first. One last obstacle stands in its way - the Sierra Nevada range. The company's surveyors have determined the best route over the mountains lies through Donner Pass.

In an effort to ensure rapid completion of its railway, the company has kept a crew working into early winter. Just over a week ago, the company's clearing crew reached the edge of Donner Lake.

## HASTINGS RETURNS

Over the years, Hastings has degenerated into a unique and terrible abomination similar in many ways to a Wendigo, but in many ways far more

powerful. The thing has felt a strong attachment to the area and this winter, it returned to the old camp to relive the horror it caused.

It lairs in one of the cabins a short distance from the lake. The abomination sensed the arrival of the rail crew. Freed and much more powerful, it swiftly descended on the workmen. In less than a day the men were corrupted into a pack of ghouls, feeding on themselves.

Donner Lake and much of the surrounding area are fully under the sway of the monster. Every living being within 5 miles of Hastings's lair is consumed with a terrible hunger for human flesh. Anyone or thing entering the area soon suffers the same hideous craving as well.

Oddly enough, the Pass holds the only method for defeating the abomination as well. It has fed on pain and terror so long that the Hastings thing is virtually invulnerable—with one exception. Just as the stories claim, the spirits of the Donner party victims do haunt the area around the pass, seeking revenge for their torment. They alone have the power to destroy it.

Hastings is aware of this and has built a simple, but effective, defense against the ghosts. Outside his cabin is a tree from which hang numerous bottles. It uses these bottles to trap the vengeful spirits of the victims and hold them.

## THE SETUP

The local Denver-Pacific supervisors know only that they have lost contact with the 25 men it has working in the Donner Pass region. The last report the foreman made over a week ago indicated that the crew had reached Donner Lake. The foreman was supposed to send an update every three days; he's now two reports behind. The company believes that outlaws, another rail gang, or just plain bad weather has trapped the men in the high mountains.

It has no inkling as to the true fate of its employees.

The railroad's branch office in the boomtown of Virginia City, NV, has hired the posse as a relief party. The group is to lead a small mule train

GUESS WHO...

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carrying supplies into the Sierras. They will be paid \$75 a person upon completion and return to Virginia City.

## GUESS WHO... IN HELL ON EARTH

*Guess Who's Comin' to Donner* is very easy to translate over to *Hell on Earth*. Instead of a rail crew, the posse is searching for a lost group of Convoy outriders. They're not taking supplies, but rather just trying to track them down. The last place the group made contact was at a small trading post near Lake Tahoe (note that Virginia City is *not* a good starting place in *Hell on Earth!*). The group was following a series of backwoods dirt roads to avoid the wreck-clogged main road.

A few other tweaks are necessary of course, such as changing the tents in the work camp to ruined vehicles, but the story works equally well in either setting!

## CHAPTER ONE: APPETIZERS

Unless you want to detail the trip from Virginia City, the posse begins at a trader's cabin in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Although the adventure starts on October 30<sup>th</sup>, any late Fall or early Winter date works fine as well,

## JOHNSON'S TRADING POST

It is late evening when the heroes arrive and a light snow is beginning to fall. The Denver-Pacific arranged to have the relief supplies awaiting the posse at this cabin. Joshua Johnson, a one-time mountain man, owns the cabin. His main source of business lately is the railroad and its work crew and he is anxious to see work resume.

There is a fair-sized porch at the front with a few benches and Johnson is waiting here when the heroes arrive. Wolf and bearskins are displayed on the wall. Johnson also has what appears to be a wind chime made of bottles hanging on the porch.

Johnson has prepared four mules to carry the supplies up the mountain trail. The goods consist almost entirely of foodstuffs such as bread, salted meat, and the like. Although the mules can be loaded in less than an hour, Johnson suggests the posse stay at his cabin because night will fall soon. He points out it's not good practice to head up the trail in the dark—a misstep might break a leg, and the temperature's dropping fast as well.

### THE BOTTLE TREE

If any posse member asks him about the bottles, Johnson says, *"I use 'em to keep the spirits outta my cabin. The bottles trap any ghost what comes too close. 'And,"* he adds with a knowing look, *"ya can here 'em moanin' sometimes if you listen."*

Should anyone ask him about the ghosts, Johnson only says, *"I'll tell ya later."* Skeptical heroes notice that the "ghosts" only seem to moan when the wind is blowing.

### INSIDE THE CABIN

The cabin is large, having a main room where Johnson conducts business and two smaller rooms in the back. It's heated by a large potbelly stove, and lit by two oil lamps. There is a musty smell emanating from a pile of furs in one corner of the front room.

In the front room, Johnson keeps his sale goods. He has a small selection of common items such as blankets, clothing, and basic tools. He also has a few firearms for sale (standard pistols and rifles) along with ammunition. He doesn't have any exotic items, such as dynamite or gizmos of any sort (save

the ubiquitous Clockwork De-Moler). If the heroes feel they need any extra equipment (like winter coats!), he's more than happy to sell to them.

Of the two rear rooms, one is a kitchen and the other a bedroom. There is nothing of interest in either room, save a an Indian headdress hanging in the bedroom. Should a hero ask about it, Johnson says only that it is a Crow war bonnet.

### GHOST STORIES

As night falls, Johnson prepares a rough stew for the posse along with some black coffee. After dinner, he tells them the story of the Donners.

Johnson knows nothing about Hastings' true nature, and only mentions him in passing. Mostly, he focuses on the "ghosts" that haunt the pass and forest near the summit. If the posse hasn't mentioned it before, he explains the purpose of his "wind chimes". Any posse member can verify this with a Fair (5) *occult* roll. This is a vital piece of information, but don't club the posse over the head with it.

### HEADING OUT

When morning arrives, Johnson fixes a quick breakfast of bacon and biscuits. He tells the heroes the work camp lies about 15-20 miles to the west. Although the trail climbs steeply into the mountains, the crews have cleared the way and they should reach the missing workers by mid-to-late afternoon if they keep a good pace, even with the light snow from the night before.

Afterward, he sees the posse to the trailhead and wishes them luck.

### ON THE TRAIL

#### FEAR LEVEL: 2

Leaving Johnson's cabin, the trail winds through the forest less than a mile and joins the railroad's cleared right-of-way. The trail parallels the right-of-way to the work camp.

Last night's snowfall shrouds the evergreens and most wildlife has sought shelter from the sudden winter cold. The fresh precipitation hides any evidence of other travelers on the trail,

and the forest begins to feel very lonely. If you feel like giving the cowpokes a tougher time of it, Marshal, feel free to use the rules on cold weather on page 26 of the *Marshal's Handbook*. The air temperature is 30°F during the day and drops to 20°F at night.

The higher the posse goes, the deeper the snow becomes. Any hero making a Fair (5) *trackin'* or *survival: mountain* roll realizes snow has been falling on the mountains for days.

As the snow gets deeper, the heroes find themselves traveling slower. By mid-afternoon it becomes obvious that they may not reach the work camp until near nightfall. Worse yet, the sky is rapidly clouding over again.

### WOLFING DOWN DINNER

Near mid-afternoon, the trail begins to follow a small stream that feeds Donner lake. By this time, the snow is almost 2' deep.

At this point, the heroes are within 2 miles of the work camp, but there are no recent signs of the crew. As the posse follows the trail along the edge of the water, any character making a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll hears a far off howl. The echoes in the pass make it impossible to determine the direction.

A few minutes later, have the posse make *Cognition* rolls again. Any cowpoke who makes an Onerous (7) TN catches a glimpse of shadowy forms circling the party behind the tree line. Before the sharp-eyed hero can do anything but shout a warning, the posse is attacked by a pack of ravaging wolves. If none of the party notices the animals prior to the attack, roll surprise normally.

There are 2 animals for each member of the posse and they divide themselves up as evenly as possible. The wolves fight until three quarters of their number are killed or have at least Serious wound levels, at which point they retreat howling and yelping into the forest.

After the battle, any character with *animal wranglin'*, *medicine: veterinary*, *survival: mountains or forest*, or who was **Born under a Blood Red Moon** knows that these wolves were well-fed. She also knows that ordinarily wolves



do not attack humans unless they are starving. This does not require a roll of any sort.

### PROFILE: WOLVES

**Corporeal:** D:1d4, N:3d10, Q:2d8, S:2d8, V:3d10

**Fightin':** brawlin' 4d10, sneak 2d10

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

Overawe 2d6, search 3d4, trackin' 5d4

**Pace:** 20

**Size:** 6

**Wind:** 18

### Special Abilities:

**Damage:** Bite (STR+1d6), Claw (STR)

**Description:** These are large, obviously *well fed* gray wolves. The light has a nasty habit of catching in their eyes and turning them into devilish red orbs.

### HUNGER PANGS

About one hour after the wolf attack and by best guess an hour from the work camp, each hero must make a Fair (5) *Spirit* test. Those who succeed begin to feel a little hungry. Those who fail suffer the effects of a day's starvation—loss of 1d4 Wind.

The heroes find that no matter how much food they consume, they are unable to sate the terrible craving for food. Unfortunately, this starvation is a result of the emanations from the abomination in the pass. The only way to abate the hunger is to consume human flesh. Of course, the posse probably doesn't realize this right away.

Continue the *Spirit* tests every hour of game time. Once a character has failed he doesn't have to make any subsequent tests, however, he does lose 1d4 Wind every day until either the abomination is destroyed or he resorts to cannibalism. Exactly what happens to him at that point is up to you Marshal, but it should be unpleasant; after all, wendigos and ghouls start off with a single bite...

## NOW THAT'S NOT RIGHT!

Shortly after their stomachs begin growling, the heroes get an undeniable clue that something's very wrong in Donner Pass.

The trail enters a small clearing. At the far side, the posse can see a pair of rabbits hunched up, presumably nibbling at an exposed patch of grass. As they get closer, the rabbits apparently take no notice of the group, but instead seem focused on what now looks like a small clump of berries.

This is a good time to mention the fact that some fresh meat sounds quite appetizing, especially since everyone in the posse seems to have worked up a lumberjack-sized hunger. Taking a shot at the critters is easy and as long as a cowpoke makes Fair (5) *shootin'* roll he can drop one with a single shot from a firearm or bow.

The other rabbit doesn't bolt at the sound. Instead, it turns and begins nuzzling the fallen animal. Although this may seem like an oddly human display of grief, it's actually *eating* the dead rabbit and the "berries" are in fact a dead chipmunk's entrails on the snow!

This unnatural behavior is rather unsettling and any hero who catches a glimpse of it must make a Foolproof (3) *guts* roll. If the character is sufficiently "city-fied," Marshal, you can give her a bonus on plain wilderness ignorance if you want! "What do you mean rabbits *don't* eat meat?"

If approached too closely, the remaining rabbit attacks, but while you should feel free to play up the incident for as much amusement value as you want, Marshal, it is just a bunny and a single good hit puts it down.

## BOUNTY

**Each hero that puts a wolf down or out of action:** 1 White Chip.

**Making the *Spirit* roll to resist the hunger the first time:** 1 White Chip.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE MAIN COURSE

The posse arrives at the work camp just prior to nightfall. Although snow is now beginning to fall, a full moon illuminates the cloud cover, providing fair visibility in the clearing.

However, the forest surrounding the camp is dark and ominously silent. The crunch of the snow under the posse's boots seems unnaturally loud. Though they are outside in an open space, the clearing feels oddly claustrophobic.

## THE WORK CAMP

(FEAR LEVEL: 3)

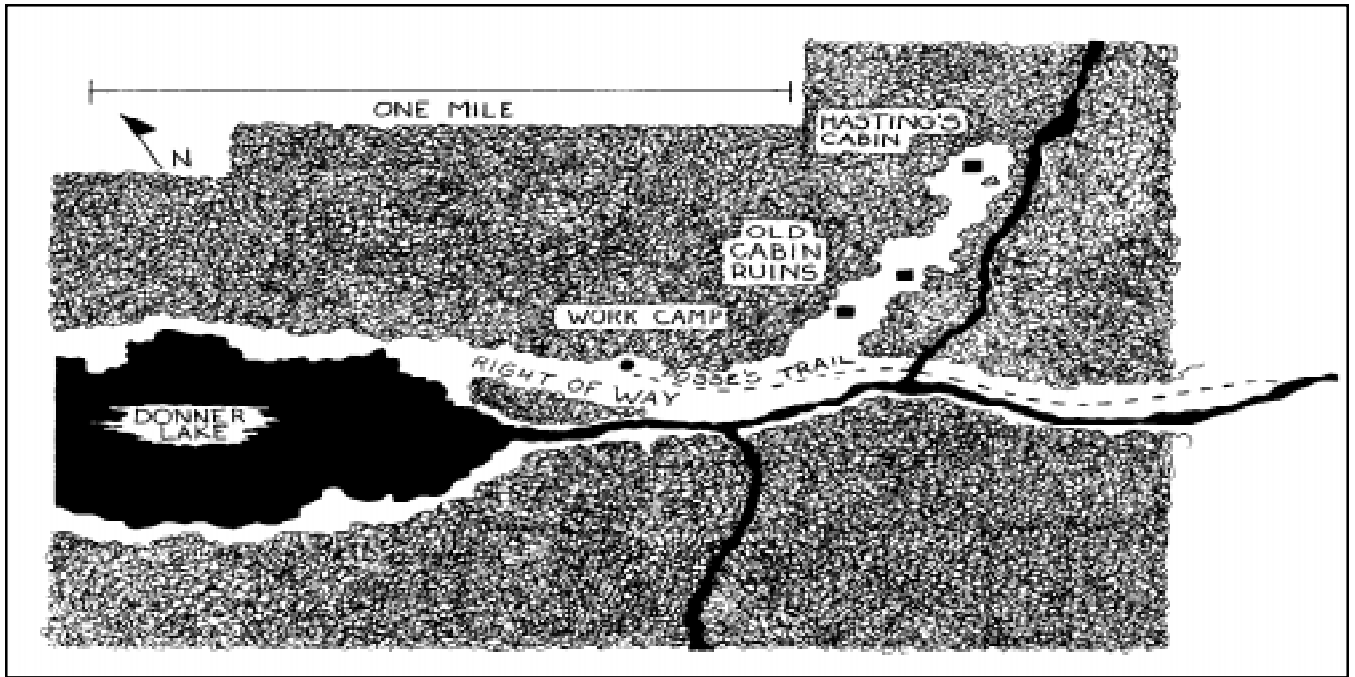
The camp itself is a shambles. The tents have been torn down or ripped apart. The animals have been butchered and eaten. Tools and personal gear lie scattered around the camp. Smoldering ashes lie amid the ruins of a wagon.

A cowpoke making a Fair (5) *trackin'* can tell that the wagon was used for a bonfire last night. Human tracks lead into and out of the surrounding woods from all directions. Some of these tracks are only a few hours old. Any hero attempting to follow the tracks finds that they wander aimlessly through the woods for some distance and eventually end up back in the clearing.

If the heroes search the area more carefully, they find a few scattered piles of smaller bones. A posse member can identify the bones as human on a Fair (5) *medicine* check. If the hero makes a Onerous (7) TN on the roll, she can tell the bones have been gnawed by some animal, although not what type.

A Fair (5) *search* turns up a few days supply of salted meat in a ruined tent.

Should the posse continue to search the ruins, a Hard (9) *search* uncovers a scrap of paper in a nearby tent. The paper is torn and badly scorched, but appears to be from a journal. All that can be made out on the paper is "...*hunger grows each day. How long until...relief*" and a date, October 28th—three days ago.



## ELIAS ARRIVES

After the posse has had time to search the site, have each cowpoke make a Hard (9) *Cognition* roll. Those who fail are startled by an emaciated man staggering into the camp. He mutters incoherently for a moment and then notices the characters.

His name is Elias Kingsley and he is quite mad.

Elias was affected by the abomination's influence, but his mind snapped completely from its horror. Elias has cannibalistic tendencies, but only toward himself. To make his plight even worse, Elias has a very low tolerance for pain. As a result, he spends a lot of time gazing wistfully at one of his legs or arms and drooling. Occasionally, he may lick his fingers or nibble at his palms, but he lacks the will to ever "take a bite". Of course, Elias never explains this to the posse—he doesn't even understand his own situation. His actions should eventually give them an idea, however.

## THE "OTHERS"

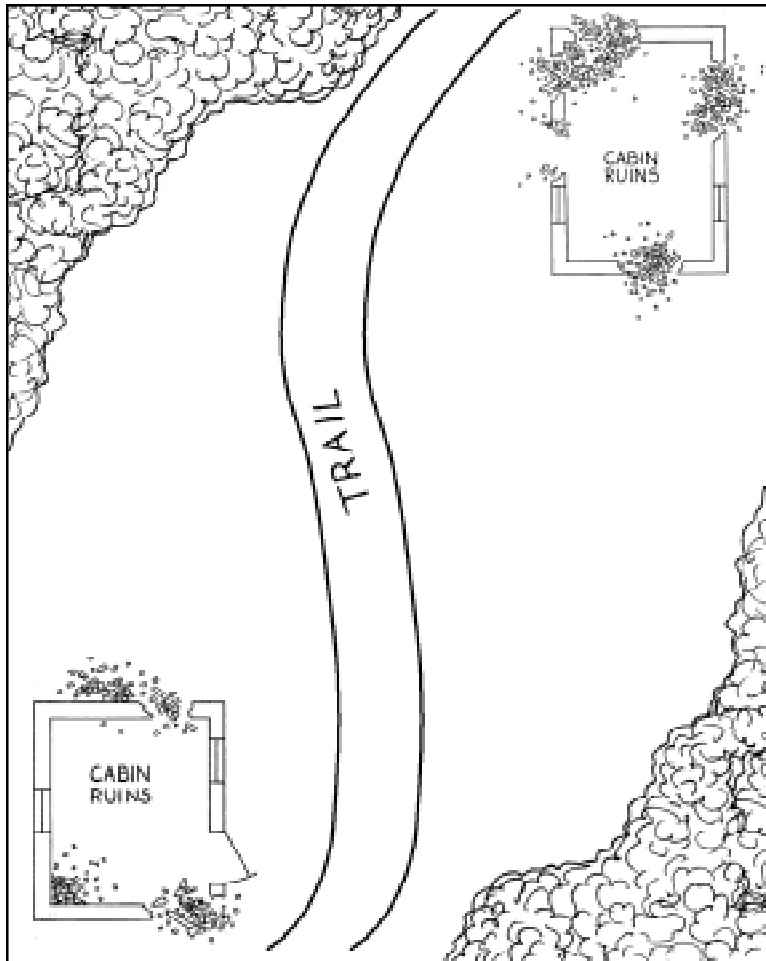
What Elias can tell the posse is that the "Others" are in the woods. He is referring to his fellow crew members, but he no longer thinks of them as such. He has avoided them by being clever, he claims.

If the heroes ask about the other work men, Elias says, "*T'weren't our fault, y'know. T'was the Thing from the cabin what did it. The Others is just hungry.*" Elias won't elaborate on who the "Others" are. He only repeats, "*Not you and not me, the Others are coming...and they're hungry.*"

If the posse mentions the Donner party, Elias mutters, "*Them spooks tain't the Others. Oh they don't like 'em, don't like 'em one bit.*" After this, he begins softly giggling and ignores the heroes, scrabbling off to the woods when they aren't watching. It's possible the posse may subdue or tie up Elias; if so, that's fine. He wails and cries, certain the group is going to fricassee him, and tries to get away at the first opportunity. He's weak and fragile-minded, though, so the heroes won't have a hard time keeping him secure.

This is a good time to remind the heroes of their own gnawing hunger pangs. Any hero examining his craving who makes an Onerous (7) *Smarts* roll realizes what he desires is human flesh. This unsettling insight forces an Onerous (7) *guts* check.

A cowpoke making this realization is of course free to pass it on to the other posse members—who then have to make the same *guts* check. As we noted earlier, pursuing this urge should be a very *bad* thing for the hero.



## ATTACK!

About a half a mile from the camp, the posse comes across the ruins of a few cabins built by the Donner Party.

Now there are little more than a few logs outlining the former walls. The cabins were hurriedly built and had hide roofs. They have not weathered the years well. Booted footprints crisscross the area, but there are no signs of recent habitation. Any search proves fruitless, as there is nothing here to find.

After the characters have a few moments to search the cabin, a few of the former workmen creep from the woods and attempt to ambush the posse. They have been shadowing the party since its departure from the campsite. Hunger finally forces them to attack.

The workers are now human in name only. Given over totally to madness, they are feral, wholly consumed with their desire for food.

They seek to surprise the posse, but failing that fall back on a good, old-fashioned bum rush. There is one cannibal plus one more for each posse member. Fortunately for the heroes, only two have working firearms, the rest are armed with crude clubs or spears.

## DINNER BELLS?

Shortly after they have a chance to learn all useful information Elias knows, have each hero make an Onerous (7) *Cognition* roll. Apply all modifiers for hearing. Repeat the roll every couple of minutes until someone makes it.

Whoever succeeds hears a faint tinkling from the woods to the west. If any hero gets a raise on the roll, she hears a soft, deep whistling as well from the same direction. The posse is hearing the bottles hanging in front of a Hastings' lair, a dilapidated cabin about a mile northeast of the camp.

A quick check of the camp perimeter finds a number of footprints. They lead to an old path through the woods that heads in that direction.

## PROFILE: CANNIBALS

**Corporeal:** D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:2d8, V:2d10

Fightin': club 2d6, shootin': shotgun 2d6, sneak 2d6

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

Guts 2d6

**Pace:** 6

**Size:** 6

**Wind:** 16 (*Hits: 30*)

**Gear:** Shotgun (2d6+4d6) and 15 shells, or club (STR+1d6).

**Description:** Their clothing is in tatters and they lack any facial expressions, save vacant stares and slack jaws that occasionally dribble saliva. Most have terrible cases of frostbite to which they seem totally oblivious. One or two appears to have bites missing from a few places on their faces or arms...



## HASTINGS'S LAIR

(FEAR LEVEL: 4)

The snowfall has continued to increase since the posse's arrival at the work camp and is now quite heavy. About one mile past the first cabins, the posse arrives at the manitou's lair. At present, Hastings is out on his evening hunt.

Although the moon still provides some diffuse light, the decaying one-room cabin is cloaked in the shadow of the trees. The cabin was built years before even the Donner party arrived in the area. In fact, it served as shelter for the Kesebergs, a family trapped with the Donners. Time has taken its toll on the small building. The porch has long since fallen, and the roof is holed in several places.

### THE BOTTLE TREE

In front of the cabin is a tree adorned with a number of bottles hanging from strings. This is the source of the tinkling the posse heard at the work camp.

Anyone who looks at the bottles and makes a Fair (5) *Cognition* roll knows that the bottles are recent additions to the tree. Occasionally, a faint whistling sound can be heard. Any hero making a Foolproof (3) *Cognition* check realizes there is no wind blowing when this occurs.

If they didn't hear Johnson's tale, anyone making a Fair (5) *academia: occult* roll knows that bottles are often hung from trees or porches in such a manner to capture spirits or ghosts. The Hastings abomination has placed them here to trap the angry ghosts of the Donner victims.

### INSIDE THE CABIN

The interior is best described as a frozen abattoir. Anyone entering the cabin must make a Hard (9) *guts* check.

Pieces of workmen are strewn throughout the cabin, tossed about as if in a beastly frenzy. Portions of the roof and the remnants of primitive furniture litter the floor. If the posse has a light of some sort they find a word scrawled on the northern wall, clawed deeply

GUESS WHO...

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into the wooden cabin wall in large, crude strokes, that reads only "HUNGER".

### DIGGING FOR CLUES

Strong-stomached cowpokes can make *search* rolls to dig through the mess. Each roll requires 10 minutes game time and uncovers an item according to the nosy hero's result as shown below.

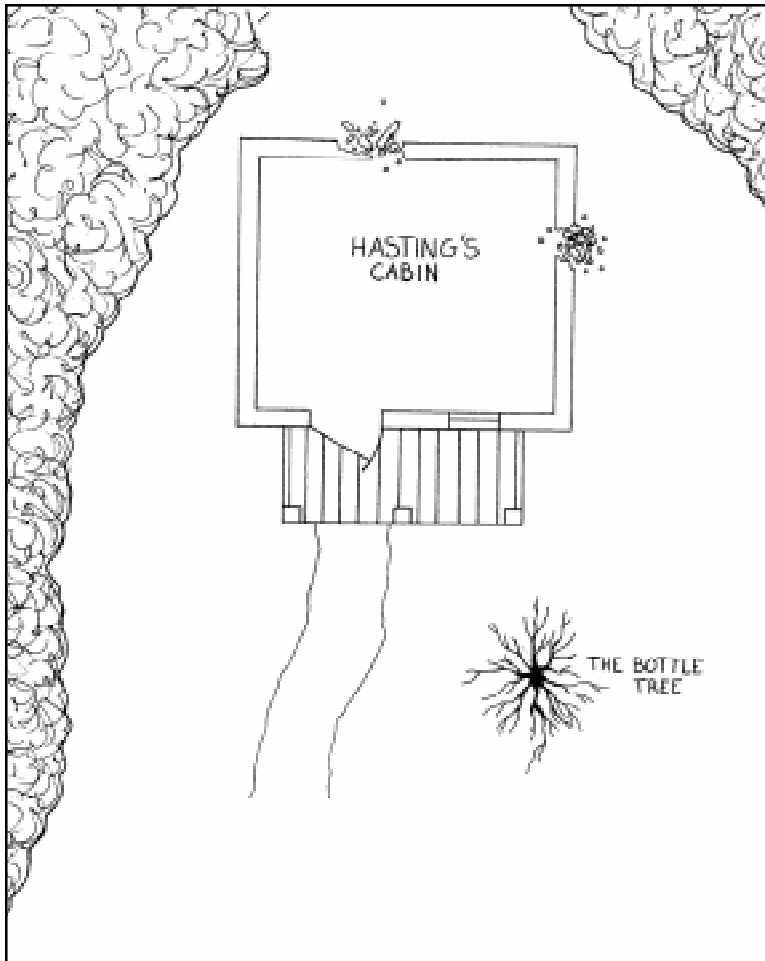
If an item has already been found move to the next lower item on the chart—if none exists, or has already been found, ignore the result.

**Fair (5):** A badly worn copy of the book *An Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California*, 1846, by Lansford Hastings. The book is lying among a pile of wood that was once a crude shelf, badly worn. The inside cover identifies the book as "Property of George A. Donner." A careful examination (no search necessary) reveals a bookmark in a section describing the Hastings' Cutoff. Written in Donner's handwriting in the margin is the single word "Trap".

**Onerous (7):** An old yellowed skull. A character making a Fair (5) *medicine* roll determines its owner has been dead for decades (30 to be exact—this is the skull of George Donner which Hastings has kept as a trophy.)

**Hard (9):** An odd loose board in the southwestern corner of the room. In a small compartment underneath the board are the remains of the journal of Lewis Keseberg. Keseberg was the last victim of the Donner party to be rescued. The journal is almost entirely molded and decayed, but the last page is readable. Dated April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1847, it is largely the completely indecipherable scribbling of a madman. One passage clearly states:

*"Met a pale man in the woods today. He luffed at me and said we were his. I asked who he was, to which he replied 'I once was as you and named Lansford. Now I*



*am far more.' I knew him then,  
and would have kilt him, save  
hunger had sapped my strength."*

Allow the party 30 minutes to search the cabin (three *search* rolls per hero). After this, Hastings arrives at home, such as it is.

## HERE'S LANSTFORD!

Hastings, sensing the arrival of the posse in the area, has returned early from his nightly hunt. The monster was not totally unsuccessful before returning, for slung over its shoulder is the body of Kingsley.

If the posse brought Kingsley along, hes found another poor sap for the larder gibbering in the woods not long after the party left the camp site.

The abomination is furious at the destruction of its cattle (the cannibals). It settles for no less than the death of every member of the posse.

## DON'T PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD!

Hastings uses the black magic power *zombie* to raise 1 workman for every two posse members as frozen dead and one body part for each member of the posse for its attack (increase this number if you need a bigger challenge, Marshal). Hastings does this before emerging from the shadowy forest, lumbering out of the dark tree line as the dead rise.

Any hero unlucky enough to witness this must make a *guts* check against a Hard (9) TN. (Don't forget the Fear Level!) Any hero still in the cabin sees the dismembered pieces began to writhe and move toward the posse. Needless to say, this requires a Hard (9) *guts* test as well.

## BREAKING BOTTLES

Hastings is well aware of the danger the Donner ghosts pose for him. He immediately focuses on any hero who damages the bottle tree. There are seven bottles on the tree.

It takes seven successful Fair (5) *shootin'* rolls with a rifle or pistol, or 4 with a shotgun to break all the bottles. A cowpoke trying to break them by hand can break one an action, as long as he's within reach of the tree. Thrown weapons follow the same rules as rifles or pistols.

Once all the bottles are broken, the ghosts are released. A pale green haze swirls from the shards of glass. Within the fog are the hollow-eyed and emaciated faces of the Donner dead.

Hastings stares in horror as tendrils lash out toward him. Within moments he is totally enveloped within the haze. The specters begin to devour both Hastings body and the manitou inhabiting it. Any posse member watching this must make an Incredible (11) *guts* check.

Once Hastings has been destroyed, any zombies he raised or animated parts fall lifeless to the ground.

## LANSFORD HASTINGS

Hastings now resembles a bloated, 8' tall human. The manitou's essence has so filled his physical form that it is swollen almost to bursting. His skin is bluish white and cracked from the cold that constantly surrounds him.

Dark blue lines outline Langsford's frozen veins. His teeth are uniformly pointed and even, his lips are split in numerous places. His eyes are coal black save for tiny red sparks at the center.

When he speaks it is in the manitou's voice, deep and rumbling, trailing off into the tinkling of breaking icicles.

### PROFILE: LANSFORD HASTINGS

**Corporeal:** D:2d6, N:2d8, Q:3d8, S:2d12,  
V:3d12

Dodge 2d8, fightin': brawlin' 4d8, sneak  
6d8, throwin': bolts o' doom 3d6

**Mental:** C:3d8, K:2d8, M:3d12, S:1d10,  
Sp:2d10

Faith: black magic 4d8, guts 4d10,  
overawe 4d12

**Pace:** 8

**Size:** 8

**Wind:** 22 (see below)

**Terror:** 11

**Special Abilities:**

**Armor 3**

**Black Magic:** *Bolts o' doom 2*  
(appear as torrents of snow  
emanating from Hastings arm.  
Swirling in the snow can be seen  
transparent skull-like shapes),  
*zombie 3* (see *Zombie Parts* for  
details).

**Damage:** Claws (STR + 1d6), or bite  
(STR)

**Immunity:** While his *dark protection*  
makes him very tough, a straight-  
shooting posse can drop him—for a  
little while. Only the ghosts of the  
Donner party trapped in the bottle  
tree can permanently put him  
down. Otherwise, he quickly melts  
into the snow, only to rise again  
the next night.

**Night Vision:** Langsford can see  
normally in all but total darkness.

**Unnatural Hardiness:** Although  
"alive," Hastings ignores stun, the

GUESS WHO...

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first two levels of wound modifiers  
and Wind loss, as if he were  
undead.

**Zombie Parts:** His power is limited to  
the corpses of either cannibals or  
their victims. Hastings also  
possesses the unique ability to  
animate portions of corpses killed  
by cannibals. He can affect twice  
as many of these as normal,  
complete zombies (i.e. 2d6). These  
portions all have the same  
statistics, although the flavor  
(sorry) of each varies—after all,  
parts is parts.

**Description:** See above.

### PROFILE: FROZEN DEAD

**Corporeal:** D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:3d10,  
V:2d10

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 2d6, fightin':  
brawlin' 3d6, shootin': pistol, rifle,  
shotgun 2d6, sneak 3d6

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

Overawe 5d6

**Pace:** 6

**Size:** 6

**Wind:** 14

**Terror:** 9

**Special Abilities:**

**Armor:** -4 (Light). Their frozen flesh  
is hard and resilient.

**Damage:** Bite (STR) or icy claw  
(STR+1d6). The zombie can use one  
or the other, not both.

**Fearless**

**Gear:** Although sometimes armed,  
these frozen dead are armed with  
only their claws and teeth

**Immunity—Fire:** Frozen dead take  
only half damage from fire and  
fire-based attacks due to their  
iced-up bodies.

**Undead:** Focus: Head.

**Description:** These escapees from the  
grave are blue-skinned from their  
frozen flesh and are missing bite-size  
hunks of flesh in several places. The  
cold has frozen their faces into a  
rictus of death.



## ANIMATED PARTS

**Corporeal:** D:1d4, N:1d6, Q:1d4, Q:1d6,  
V:2d8

**Fightin':** brawl in' 2d6

**Mental:** C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4,  
Sp:1d4

**Pace:** 4

**Size:** 2-3

**Wind:** 12

**Terror:** 9

### Special Abilities:

**Damage:** Flail/Bite/Kick (STR)  
**Fearless**

**Immunity:** Animated parts are immune to stun, the first two levels of wound modifiers, and Wind loss, just as if they were normal undead.

**Description:** Per the name...

## AFTER DINNER MINTS

After defeating Hastings, posse members suffering from his influence recover, provided they have not already given in. The heroes still have to eat to recover any Wind lost to starvation, but any sort of food now sates their hunger.

The party can locate another five workmen with a day or two of searching the area around the lake. The men are unnerved and take a good deal of coaxing to come out from hiding. Further searching turns up only the half-eaten remains of the less fortunate members of the crew.

The trip back to Johnson's trading post is long and arduous thanks to the heavy snowfall, but otherwise uneventful. From there, it's a relatively easy journey to Virginia City; the snow didn't reach too far down the slopes of the mountain.

The railroad is disturbed by the events in the pass, but is nonetheless grateful that the heroes were successful. They offer a \$100 bonus to each member—provided the posse swears to secrecy.

Although no one quite believes any wild claims of cannibal snowmen or ghostly whiskey bottles, it's obvious that *something* went terribly wrong with the work party in Donner Pass. It would certainly complicate matters for the Denver-Pacific if it were to have to explain why its workers were eating each other!

The railroad has suffered a brief setback in its plans. However, as a number of the main competitors are interested in the progress of the Denver-Pacific, it is doubtful that the westward drive will be long delayed.

## BOUNTY

**Saving Elias:** 1 white chip.

**Figuring out the bottle tree was**

**Hastings' weakness:** 1 red chip to the hero who does.

**Rounding up survivors:** 1 red chip.

**Defeating Hastings:** 1 blue chip. Also, each surviving member has earned a point of Grit. A Legend Chip goes into the pot for ending a decades long menace.

# BAD MOONS RISIN'

1878

Since *Deadlands* is a horror game, it's likely at some time during a campaign a Marshal—or a careful player—is going to want to know when the next full moon is going to fall. Even if you're not worried about lycanthropes or evil cults in your campaign, it often helps to know what sort of light is around for night time excursions.

With that in mind—and because full moons and Halloween just seem to go hand-in-hand—here's a quick set of charts listing full and new moons for both *Wasted* and *Weird West* campaigns.

Full Moon	New Moon
—	January 3 (Thur)
January 19 (Sat)	February 2 (Sat)
February 17 (Sun)	March 4 (Mon)
March 18 (Mon)	April 2 (Tues)
April 17 (Wed)	May 2 (Thur)
May 16 (Thur)	June 1 (Sat)
June 14 (Fri)	June 30 (Sun)
July 14 (Sun)	July 29 (Mon)
August 13 (Tues)	August 28 (Wed)
September 11 (Wed)	September 26 (Thur)
October 11 (Fri)	October 25 (Fri)
November 10 (Sun)	November 24 (Sun)
December 9 (Mon)	December 23 (Mon)

1876

2094

Full Moon	New Moon
January 11 (Tues)	January 26 (Wed)
February 9 (Wed)	February 25 (Fri)
March 10 (Fri)	March 25 (Sat)
April 8 (Sat)	April 24 (Mon)
May 8 (Mon)	May 23 (Tues)
June 7 (Wed)	June 21 (Wed)
July 6 (Thur)	July 21 (Fri)
August 5 (Sat)	August 29 (Sat)
September 3 (Sun)	September 17 (Sun)
October 3 (Tues)	October 17 (Tues)
November 1 (Wed)	November 16 (Thur)
December 1 (Fri)	December 15 (Fri)
December 30 (Sat)	—

Full Moon	New Moon
January 1 (Fri)	January 16 (Sat)
January 31 (Sun)	February 15 (Mon)
March 2 (Tues)	March 16 (Tues)
April 1 (Thur)	April 15 (Thur)
April 30 (Fri)	May 14 (Fri)
May 30 (Sun)	June 13 (Sun)
June 28 (Mon)	July 12 (Mon)
July 27 (Tues)	August 11 (Wed)
August 26 (Thur)	September 9 (Thur)
September 24 (Fri)	October 9 (Sat)
October 23 (Sat)	November 8 (Mon)
November 22 (Mon)	December 7 (Tues)
December 21 (Tues)	—

1877

2095

Full Moon	New Moon
—	January 14 (Sun)
January 29 (Mon)	February 13 (Tues)
February 27 (Tues)	March 15 (Thur)
March 29 (Thur)	April 13 (Fri)
April 27 (Fri)	May 13 (Sun)
May 27 (Sun)	June 11 (Mon)
June 25 (Mon)	July 10 (Tues)
July 25 (Wed)	August 9 (Thur)
August 23 (Thur)	September 7 (Fri)
September 22 (Sat)	October 6 (Sat)
October 22 (Mon)	November 5 (Mon)
November 20 (Tues)	December 4 (Tues)
December 20 (Thur)	—

Full Moon	New Moon
—	January 6 (Thurs)
January 20 (Thur)	February 4 (Fri)
February 19 (Sat)	March 6 (Sun)
March 21 (Mon)	April 4 (Mon)
April 19 (Tues)	May 4 (Wed)
May 19 (Thur)	June 2 (Thur)
June 17 (Fri)	July 1 (Fri)
July 17 (Sun)	July 31 (Sun)
August 15 (Mon)	August 29 (Mon)
September 14 (Wed)	September 28 (Wed)
October 13 (Thur)	October 28 (Fri)
November 11 (Fri)	November 27 (Sun)
December 11 (Sun)	December 26 (Mon)

# VARMINTS! BLOODSUCKERS

Being sort of old-fashioned ourselves, it only makes sense that we pay our respects to an old-fashioned monster in a Halloween edition. We've picked an abomination near to our heart—or throats, as the case may be—the vampire.

Remember the thrill your players got when they first confronted a strange abomination with little idea of how to defeat it?

Unfortunately, once a critter becomes too familiar it loses some of its punch when it's time for the *guts* checks. One way to get that “magic” back is to present the heroes with what seems to be a cut-and-dried adventure that takes a rapid turn for the worse when all of the tried and true methods have fallen flat.

Here are a few unusual vampires pulled from folklore to put a few surprises back into a campaign!

## NACHTZEHRER

A creature of German folklore, *nachtzehrer* means “night waster” in its native language. Other terms for the grisly abomination are *nachttoter* (“night killer”) and *bluatsuager* (“blood sucker”).

Although it's a form of vampiric undead, many of its habits resemble those most associated with ghouls. *Nachtzehrers* seem to prefer to feast on the blood of the recently dead. They lack the characteristic fangs associated with common vampires, and have to chew at a body to open up the sluices, if you'll forgive the imagery.

That's probably why they choose to feast on the dead; most normal folks aren't going to sit still long enough for the thing to gnaw through to a vein!

A *nachtzehrer's* hunger for blood, and to a lesser extent, flesh is nearly overwhelming. It begins by chewing at its own extremities and clothing when first risen from the dead. This leaves the monster's hands and other limbs looking torn and ragged when it finally does emerge from the grave to feed.

The monster isn't above attacking the living for blood, but kills its prey *before* feasting. A victim of a nachtzeherer may appear at first to have been killed by a wild animal attack, and only closer examination reveals the abnormal absence of blood.

A person killed by a nachtzeherer rises again as one of the abominations herself after three days, unless she's removed from her funeral clothing before burial. This practice is likely to meet a *lot* of resistance in the Old West, by the way!

Fortunately, its condition is not passed on to the bodies of the already dead on which it prefers to feeds.

There are a couple of signs unique to a nachtzeherer's activity that a sharp-eyed cowpoke might pick up on. The monster prefers to drink from the dead and a hero frequenting the local Boot Hill after dark might hear the sucking sounds under the ground.

Also, the abomination is a bit of a glutton and tends to drink more than it needs. As a result, opening a nachtzeherer's coffin reveals the corpse soaking in a pool of excess blood that has been purged from its body.

Vampire hunters may be in for a nasty surprise when confronting an nachtzeherer—religious items (crosses, holy water, etc.) have no effect on it! *Consecrate armament* works normally.

## PROFILE: NACHTZEHERER

**Corporeal:** D:2d6, N:2d8, S:2d10, Q:3d8, V:3d12

Climbin' 1d8, fightin': brawlin' 4d8, sneak 5d8

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

Area knowledge: local area 3d6, guts 4d6

**Pace:** 8

**Size:** 6

**Wind:** 18

**Terror:** 11

### Special Abilities:

**Burrowing:** The nachtzeherer can dig through all but solid rock equal to its normal Pace. A region plagued by a nachtzeherer may be riddled with barely man-sized tunnels which a cowpoke could wriggle through—just barely.



**Damage:** Bite (STR) and Claws (STR+1d6)

**Infection:** Anyone slain by a nachtzeherer's attack rises again in 3 nights as one of the creatures.

**Nocturnal:** The nachtzeherer is only active at night. Sunlight causes it no harm, but it is dormant (comatose) during daylight hours.

**Undead:** Focus—Heart. To permanently destroy the creature, it must be staked through the heart with a rosewood stake and its mouth filled with garlic, otherwise it eventually rises again.

**Vulnerability:** Garlic, roses. The nachtzeherer is repelled by these plants. To approach them, it must make a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll; if failed, it remains 10' from either.

**Vulnerability:** Black dogs. For some reason, the monster is terrified by black dogs. It must make a Hard (9) *guts* check when confronted with one.

**Description:** The monster resembles a walkin' dead or ghoul more than a vampire. The two exceptions are its gnawed-upon hands and limbs and a blood-stained mouth. The nachtzeherer doesn't cast a reflection in a mirror or other such surface.

## SHTRIGA

The shtriga is found in Central European folktales (especially Albanian), and is sometimes confused with the *strigoi* which is a Romanian vampire. However, although the shtriga does have a thirst for blood, it differs from other "vampires" in one major point: it's not undead. Other names include striga, strigon, and vyeshtitza.

This bloodsucker is actually a form of witch who's developed a taste for human blood and uses her powers to hunt her prey. Her living status makes her a particularly dangerous foe as most of the usual defenses against a vampire (garlic, crosses, sunlight, etc.) are completely useless against her.

The shtriga conceals herself in a community and, since she can travel freely in daylight, can be very difficult to detect. Furthermore, she has the ability to transform into an animal form to hide her nocturnal comings and goings. Top all that off with respectable black magic powers, and you've got a foe to challenge any posse.

Particularly since the shtriga is more than smart enough to disguise her feedings as the work of a more mundane vampre!

The witch is, like many of her undead cousins, particularly voracious in her feedings. Often she kills her victim in a single attack, instead of returning to feed over the course of time. As she lacks fangs, she's forced to use a knife, dagger, or other cutting instrument to draw the blood, though.

Her gluttony often leads her to consume more blood than she can assimilate, however, and a sure-fire way to tell a shtriga is haunting a community is a tell-tale pool of regurgitated blood near the site of the attack.

A hero who recognizes the shtriga's activities can fashion an amulet using this vomited blood as an ingredient (yuck!) with an Incredible (II) *academia: occult* roll. such an amulet provides +4 to all rolls made to resist the witches black magic.

#### PROFILE: SH-TRIGA

**Corporeal:** D:3d8, N:3d6, S:3d8, Q:4d8, V:4d10

Climbin' 4d6, dodge 3d6, fightin': brawlin', knife 5d6, lockpickin' 2d8, sneak 6d6

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

Academia: occult 4d8, faith: black magic 4d10, guts 2d10, overawe 3d10, persuasion 4d10, scrutinize 3d10

**Pace:** 6

**Size:** 6

**Wind:** 20

**Terror:** 7 (when exposed)

#### Special Abilities:

**Black Magic:** *Animal mastery* 3, *cloak o' evil* 4, *curse* 2, *ghostly servant* 1, *scrye* 2, *stun* 2, *transformation* (normal animals only) 3

**Immunity:** Although she can be injured or even temporarily incapacitated by normal weapons and magic, the only way to kill a shtriga is to drive a wooden stake into her stomach.

**Regeneration:** If not staked as above, she heals one wound level per hit location each hour—including Maimed locations.

**Unnatural toughness:** Although she's still living, due to her unholy practices, the shtriga is treated as **Undead** for the purposes of damage, stun and Wind loss.

**Vulnerability:** Cross made from pig bones. For some reason, only this type of cross has any effect on a shtriga. When faced with one, she must make an Incredible (II) *guts* roll or be forced to remain 10' away from the device.

**Description:** A normal, older woman of Central European descent. After a feeding, her skin takes on a bright red blush, her belly is distended, her lips bloodstained, her eyes crimson, and she appears much younger.

#### UPIR

The upir is another type of vampire from Central European legend, with reports dating back to the 16th century. This abomination *is* undead, unlike the shtrigoi, and one of the most powerful forms of bloodsuckers a posse is likely to run into, short of a nosferatu, Ancient One, or Dracula himself!

Upirs aren't given to traveling, and usually haunt the locale near their place of death or interment. An upir usually begins as a restless spirit or ghost, similar to a poltergeist, except that it attempts to smother folks or even domesticated animals. After a short period of plaguing the area, the spirit returns to its dead body and animates it as an undead vampire.

In corporeal form, the upir usually kills its victims by strangulation. This may lead initial vampire hunters astray,



as the cause of death is suffocation or a broken neck. The abomination draws blood from the victim after the fact by biting the victim's tongue—an area often overlooked by 19th century doctors in a post-mortem!

However, the upir has another weapon in its arsenal should old-fashioned choking fail. The monster can kill a person unlucky enough to simply meet its gaze!

The upir, while nocturnal, suffers no damage from exposure to sunlight and holy items have no special effect on the monster. Additionally, the creature has *two* hearts and is immune to the staking experienced vampire hunters may rely upon to eliminate undead bloodsuckers.

### PROFILE: UPIR

**Corporeal:** D:3d6, N:2d8, S:4d12+6, Q:4d10, V:3d12

Climbin' 2d8, dodge 3d8, fightin' brawlin', wrasslin' 5d8, sneak 3d8

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

Area knowledge: local region 4d6, overawe 3d6

**Pace:** 8

**Size:** 6

**Wind:** 22

**Terror:** 9

#### Special Abilities:

**Damage:** Claw (STR)

#### Fearless

**Gaze:** The upir can spend a Blue Fate Chip and an action to meet an opponent's gaze with its own stare. The victim must make an opposed roll of *Spirit* against the upir. If she loses, she suffers a *Heart Attack* as described on the **Scart Table** in the *Marshal's Handbook*.

**Nocturnal:** The nachtzehrer is only active at night. Sunlight causes it no harm, but it is dormant (comatose) during daylight hours unless aroused. Then, it is -4 on all Trait and Aptitude rolls.

**Strangle:** The upir's incredible strength allows it to crush its victims' throats or break their necks. With a raise on a *fightin'* attack, the upir grabs its foe's neck and begins to strangle. Roll an opposed test of its *Strength* versus



the victim's *Vigor*. The victim suffers the difference in Wind, should she lose. If the victim goes bust, her neck is broken, killing her instantly. A successful opposed test of *Strength* (and an action) breaks the upir's grip.

**Undead:** Focus—Head. Only an iron spike driven through the upir's skull permanently destroys it. Completely burning the body has the same effect.

**Vulnerability:** Poppy seeds. If confronted with a line or trail of poppy seeds, the upir must make an Onerous (7) *Spirit* roll to cross it. Otherwise, it must either go around or turn back.

**Description:** The upir looks much like it did in life. However, its eyes never blink and two distinct curls appear in its hair. After feedings, its skin takes on a reddish cast, but is otherwise slightly paler than in life. The upir *does* cast a reflection when confronted with a mirror.

# THE MEDICINE BAG: MORE VOOODOO GRIS-GRIS

Digging into the Medicine Bag for this issue we find some Voodoo spells that didn't make it into *Hexarcana*. These were written for the revised *arcane background: voodoo* found in that book, but they work just as well with the original rules found in the *River o' Blood* campaign set. To use the older rules, just change any reference to *conjurin'* to "this spell" and you'll have no problem!

In addition to the spell's description, there are five entries: Trait, TN, Speed, Duration, and Range. The explanations for these are pretty self-explanatory, but you can also find more detailed discussions in either *Hexarcana* or *River o' Blood*, should you have any questions.

Finally, if the spell has specific components, we've mentioned them in the description. Some have generic ingredients and these are explained in the description as well if appropriate.

## BLOOD MONEY

**Trait:** Spirit

**TN:** 11

**Speed:** 4 hours

**Duration:** 1 week/*faith: voodoo level*

**Range:** Touch

Nobody in his right mind steals from a conjure doctor, if he knows anything about voodoo. There are some frighteningly potent curses that a voodooist can call down on a cowpoke—especially when the caster is perturbed. *Blood money* is one of those.

This spell is cast on a valuable item belonging to a voodooist. If the object is taken from the caster without his blessing, the person making off with the item is in for a string of extraordinarily bad luck until she rids herself of it.

The curse follows the stolen item for its duration, so if the thief gives it to someone else, that person now suffers the effects of *blood money*.

As long as the cursed item is in a person's possession, the thief (or poor sap the thief passed the goods off on!) has a greater chance of going bust on any Trait or Aptitude roll. By the way,

“possession” in this case isn’t limited to actually being on the victim’s person. As long as she “owns” the cursed item, she suffers the gris-gris, no matter where she’s stashed it!

The person in possession of the cursed goods needs one less “1” on any Trait or Aptitude roll in order to go bust. The victim must roll at least a single 1 to go bust.

For example, if she was rolling five dice, she’d go bust if two of her dice came up 1s; on three dice, she’d only need a single 1. But no matter how few dice she actually rolled—even if only one die—she’d still need to actually roll a 1 to go bust

The voodooist must have the item in his possession when he casts the spell and must actually own it. No cursing someone else’s belongings this way! Also, someone must actually intend to steal the item for the curse to kick in. If he simply plants (or gets someone else to plant) the item on another cowpoke, *blood money* doesn’t work.

Although it’s usually cast on a single object, the spell can protect a group of similar items, provided they’re kept in a single location—like, for instance, a sack of money. In that case, the curse affects whoever has the largest amount of the cursed goods.

This spell requires ingredients and powders worth a total of \$5. Alternately, the voodooist can find the components with a Fair (5) *scroungin’* roll.

The voodooist can have no more items (or groups of items) protected by *blood money* than his *conjurin’* level at any one time. Each item (or group) requires a separate casting as well.

## DREAD CHARM

**Trait:** Mien

**TN:** 7

**Speed:** 1 hour

**Duration:** 1 day/*faith*: Voodoo level

**Range:** 1 yard/*conjurin’* level

This conjure bag lets the voodooist tap into the darker side of the Hunting Grounds, providing a target with just a brief glimpse of some of the horrors that hide there. Few folks can walk away from such an experience unscathed!

## THE MEDICINE BAG 27

Once prepared, the *dread charm* lets a voodooist force another cowpoke to make a *guts* check, just as if the poor sap had been confronted with an abomination with a Terror score. This takes an action and the victim must be in range. Also, the target must make eye contact with the voodooist for the *charm* to take effect.

If those conditions are met, the cowpoke must make a *guts* roll against an Onerous (7) TN. For every success the voodooist got on her roll to cast the spell, that TN is raised by one level. If the victim fails the roll, the Marshal should roll results on the Scart Table, just as if he’d failed a Terror check against a TN of the same value.

All normal modifiers to *guts* checks apply to this roll: *brave*, Fear Levels, etc.

## WHAT'S IN THAT THING?

So, you might be wondering exactly what it is your voodooist character is *scroungin’* when he puts together a conjure bag. Here’s a short list of some of the things in a bag:

Alfalfa	Ashes (various)
Bones (animal)	Blood (animal)
Catfish Spines	Catnip
Cayenne Pepper	Coffin Nails
Dandelion	Dust (from a footprint)
Ginseng	Graveyard Dirt
Holly	Knotted Cord
Licorice Powder	Lodestone Powder
Mandrake	Mistletoe
Myrrh	Needles
Peppermint	Poppy Flowers
Rose Hips	St. John’s wort
Salt	Spider (dead)
Thread (various colors)	Thyme
Wax (usually a ball)	Wild Grape Root
Paper with a victim’s name written on it	
Splinters from a tree stuck by lightning	

Once used, the *charm* loses its potency. Otherwise, it lasts for the listed duration.

A voodooist can prepare as many *dread charms* as she has *conjurin'* levels, but only she can make use of them. Abominations are unaffected by the conjure bags created by this spell; after all, they've probably seen much worse!

### GRAN SILIGBO'S BLESSING

**Trait:** Knowledge

**TN:** 7

**Speed:** 1 hour

**Duration:** 1 day/*faith*: voodoo level

**Range:** Self

The loa Gran Siligbo is often called on by practitioners of voodoo to prevent physical harm of any sort. This spell creates a conjure bag that provides the voodooist with temporary protection against injury.

For each success and raise the voodooist gets on her *conjurin'* roll, *Gran Siligbo's blessing* prevents a single

wound level of damage or 5 Wind. The charm is a one-shot deal, so no matter how many raises she received, the voodooist can only use the conjure bag to protect against a single source of damage.

However, she chooses when she wants to apply the *Gran Siligbo's blessing*; she doesn't have to use it against the first attack she suffers. She can wait until after both hit location and damage have been rolled to decide to use the conjure bag.

The conjure bag takes \$10 dollars worth of components, or she can locate them for free with a Fair (5) *scroungin'* roll.

A voodooist can only have a single *Gran Siligbo's blessing* at any time. Only the voodooist who made the conjure bag can gain the benefits of its effect.

### PETRO CONJURE

**Trait:** Smarts

**TN:** 7

**Speed:** 1

**Duration:** Special

**Range:** Self

Most of the time, voodooists prefer to work with *rada* loas. Only a few spells practiced by good folk call on the *petro* loas; they're far too malicious to consort with on a regular basis! Still, the *petro* loas are known to pack the greatest whallop when it comes to working voodoo, so from time to time, a conjure doctor or mambo may invoke their power to add a little extra punch to another spell.

*Petro conjure* is cast immediately before the hero attempts another voodoo spell. It refocuses the second spell to use *petro* instead of *rada* loas. This gives the spell a bit more power—but at a price!

As long as the second spell is successful, treat the result as if the caster had received an additional raise on his *conjurin'* roll. Note that *petro conjure* gives no bonuses to the actual roll to succeed; it only adds a raise to the final total. This bonus counts for resisted spells as well as those that require the caster to beat a simple TN.

On the other hand, if the caster fails the roll to cast the second spell (or fails to overcome the target in a resisted



roll), it's treated as if he'd gone bust on his *conjurin'* roll. There is no halfway with a *petro conjure*-boosted spell!

This is one of the fastest voodoo rituals to cast, and requires no ingredients or conjure bags either. Apparently, the *petro loa* are quite happy to get involved with the physical world.

## TANGLED SKEIN

**Trait:** Knowledge

**TN:** Special

**Speed:** 4 hours

**Duration:** Permanent

**Range:** 5 miles/*conjurin'* level

Voodoo is a more subtle form of magic than a huckster's hexes or a black magician's spells. In spite of this subtlety—or perhaps because of it—voodooists can accomplish things no other arcane practitioner could hope to do.

*Tangle skein* calls on the loa to cause a bureaucracy to succumb to complete incompetency with regards to a single item. Granted, that's not really that great a feat in most bureaucracies, but this spell allows the voodooist to target a specific document to be lost.

The TN for the spell is based on how many channels the item or document must pass through—or how many people have to sign it, log it, review it, or simply carry it down the hall. The table at the end of this description gives the exact TNs for the *conjurin'* roll. At least two people must come in contact with it for *tangled skein* to work.

If the caster succeeds, at some point in the process the item is lost, completely and utterly. No record of where it disappeared can be found; for all intents, it ceases to exist.

To cast the spell, the voodooist must know the name of the person who first handled the document in the organization, whether it be the agent who scribed a field report, the clerk who copied the legal documents, or even the deputy who logged evidence.

The item or document must be within range at the time of casting. After that, it can travel outside of the range without negating the spell. Once cast, the curse sticks with the document; it does *not* expire!

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*Tangled skein* requires several pieces of yarn, the name of the first person to contact the document (as noted above), and an additional \$20 worth of components to cast. Miserly voodooists can find these last ingredients on an Onerous (7) *scroungin'* roll instead.

This spell, while seemingly rather innocuous, has tremendous applications in the Wierd West. It can cause an organization to lose court documents, deeds, bills of sale, contracts, Texas Ranger reports, warrants, and more!

For purposes of "changing hands," *tangled skein* counts not only individuals within the organization, but any outside agencies that come in contact with the item as well. For example, a telegraph operator who sends a reporter's story over the wire to the home office does count for purposes of the spell!

When using the table below, here are a few rules of thumb. In general, assume that only small, local organizations (town marshal, county patper etc.) have two contacts involved in a process. Medium-sized companies, such as Bayou Vermillion, the Tombstone Epitaph, and circuit courts have three to four.

Federal courts and most large companies, like Hellstromme Industries, have five to six. Only truly enormous or complex organizations, such as Sweetrock Mining Company, the Agency, Congress, and so forth, are likely to have seven or more.

if the object is likely to be archived or maintained for a long time, the Marshal also may lower the TN.

## TANGLED SKEIN

Contacts	TN
2	13
3 to 4	11
5 to 6	9
7 or more	7

# FOR A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS...: UNDERTAKERS & GRAVEDIGGERS

*For a Fistful of Dollars* is another of our semi-regular features, like *Varmints!* or *The Medicine Bag*. We've dedicated it to detailing the more mundane occupations and endeavors heroes may engage in to eke out a living—jobs that are interesting, but unlikely to ever get detailed in a full-sized sourcebook.

In future installments, you can expect to get information on journalists, cowboys, and other Weird West occupations. But we won't be limiting it to just historical positions; you can also expect to get background on pre-Last War jobs that give a character either a little more background or maybe even an edge or two.

While we promised all you aspiring yellow journalists that we'd be covering muckrakers last issue, we instead chose an undertaking that we feel is appropriate to the season—the caretakers of the dead.

## IT'S A LIVING...

If there's one thing that can be said about graveyards, it's that folks are just dying to get in! All jokes aside, though, the role of the undertaker has seldom been considered a glamorous or even desirable one for many folks. That's not too surprising when you consider much of their interaction is with the dead!

Still, in the Weird West, this can make for an interesting character to play. An undertaker is likely to be rather jaded to dead bodies and, given the odd circumstances of the last decade and a half, is also likely to have a good idea that *something's* not quite right in the world.

Better yet, professional experience may have provided him with a few expedient ways of dealing with recalcitrant dead. While recent events may be unsettling to the average townsfolk, undertakers are possibly the only group to actually see a benefit in the unusual recent occurrences. If nothing else, at least now they can enjoy repeat customers!

Before we get into the meat of this article, let's take a moment and talk about gravediggers, the "right-hand man" of the undertaker, so to speak. Assuming the undertaker doesn't dig the grave himself, he usually hires a local handyman (or drunk) or two to do the job.

Usually, gravedigging isn't a full-time occupation. Depending on the locality, the frequency of work, and the competition, an average gravedigger can earn between 50¢ and \$3 for a single gravesite. Unless the turnover rate in the area is fairly high, most folks involved in this line of work have other jobs.

## THE LIFE OF A CORPSE

The Civil War marks a turning point in many aspects of American culture. The handling of the dead is one of the most profoundly affected.

Battlefields covered with literally thousands of dead bodies have forced both sides to develop new methods for dealing with the dead. The art of the embalmer gained its first toehold in American society preparing fallen soldiers for the return home.

## PRESERVATION METHODS

The modern technique of draining the blood from a body and replacing it with a preservative fluid existed for nearly a century prior to the Civil War.

In 1775, an anatomist in England embalmed a woman's body in this fashion, as the marriage contract had stipulated her husband would have control of her fortune only "as long as she remained above ground."

The process was so successful, the husband had to place public notices in newspapers of when his "wife" was available for public viewing!

Prior to modern embalming techniques, bodies were preserved in one of two ways. Both practices continue in the West for various reasons.

For short periods, the undertaker (or family) purchases ice blocks or simply rents a space for the body in the local icehouse. While the remains can be preserved this way for a lengthy period, usually the cost of iceblocks is too high to do so for too long. Plus, few icehouse owners are thrilled about having a dead body in their place of business!

Along a similar vein, in extremely cold weather, the body can be stored in an outbuilding, like a shed or barn, where the temperature prevents it from decomposing. In northern regions, like the high plains states or Canada, this is often a necessity as the ground becomes frozen solid, preventing anyone from digging a grave before the spring thaw.

The other method of preservation takes more time, but also provided a longer "shelf life." In short, the undertaker removes the body's internal organs, fills the cavity with sawdust or similar stuffing, sews it up, and places it in a solution of water, salt, alum, and other chemicals. In effect, the undertaker pickles the remains.

This process requires nearly a month of soaking in the solution. Afterwards, the body is placed on a board to dry and the undertaker makes small incisions to drain the fluid from within. The liquid often turns the skin red or gray in patches and leaves the remains with a distinctive twangy odor as well.

Although this procedure does preserve the corpse, it leaves it none too lifelike. More than one traveling carnival has obtained such remains and uses them as displays in the freak show tents!

## MODERN EMBALMING

The Union was the first North American country to begin using modern embalming techniques. Although many like to attribute the practice to former President Lincoln's concern for Union soldiers the real credit belongs to Dr. Thomas Holmes.

Using a combination of hand- and foot-powered pumps combined with good old-fashioned gravity, Dr. Holmes drained the blood from his subjects through arterial incisions and replaced it with a preservative chemical solution. Once so treated, the body is protected against decomposition for longer than anyone had reason to keep it above ground!

Now, unlike President Lincoln, it's arguable that Dr. Holmes had concern for nothing but his bank account when he rushed to the front to preserve the remains of Union soldiers for their return home. If nothing else, the fact that he charged the bereaved families a hefty \$100 for the service should be a strong hint. Over 4,000 embalmings later, Dr. Holmes returned to his native New York a very wealthy man indeed!

Regardless of the motive, Dr. Holmes opened many American eyes to the potential of embalming.

## PRESERVATION IN THE WEST

Regardless of the utility of the modern embalming process, it is, as of 1878, not in widespread use—particularly in the West. It may take another decade to become commonplace in both the Union and Confederacy, and many European countries are likely to take even longer to accept it.

In the Weird West, the average undertaker makes due with ice or “pickling” the remains to preserve them. Keep in mind that the rather unsettling nature of a “pickled” corpse makes it an unusual practice, used only in extreme or important circumstances.

## BURIALS

Until the mid-19th century, most graveyards in America were simple affairs, usually attached to the local church. Often this placed them near the focal point of a community. In rural areas, cemeteries are often found alone alongside a trail or road, without a nearby church.

However, as towns and cities began to grow both in size and population, it became obvious that burial grounds shouldn't remain inside the community's limits. Not only was there a concern for the space, but flooding or other ground disturbances tended to turn up long-lost relatives.

While New Orleans' above-ground tombs are one method of handling this problem, most cities have opted to set aside ground outside their limits for burial plots. For you tinhorns, in the West, these areas are called “Boot Hills.”

No one can quite agree about the reason for “Boot” in the name of Western graveyards, but most are placed on ground higher than the local flood waters reach (for reasons noted above), and that's likely where the “Hill” portion of the name originates.

## GRAVES

Contrary to popular belief, most graves—at least those in the West—don't quite reach six feet in depth. More commonly, the remains are only three to four feet below the surface, and sometimes even less! While part of the reason for shallow graves may be the relative security from flooding allows them to sit closer to the surface, no doubt simple laziness plays a role as well.

Back East, the average grave in a cemetery is deeper, usually closer to the standard six feet. On large battlefields along the border the graves tend to be shallower—and mass burials aren't unheard of!

Of course, in the Weird West, shallow graves just make getting up easier on those folks who don't have the common decency to stay down.

It's common practice to pile rocks on gravesites in desert or high plains regions where winds or scavenging animals like coyotes might unearth the remains. In forested areas, folks more commonly cover the grave with the smoothest dirt from the whole, building it into a small mound.

In established Boot Hills, gravediggers are less likely to pile rocks on a grave, regardless of the region. It's just plain unsightly to have a graveyard cluttered with rock piles!



There are even accepted practices for the position of the corpse in a grave.

In the southwestern states and territories of the Confederacy, honest folk are buried with their heads to the west and feet to the east. That way, when Judgment Day comes, they'll rise to face the Resurrection. Outlaws, on the other hand, are buried in the opposite direction—so they can get a headstart on the Devil!

## MARKERS

In Great Plains towns, tombstones are actually fairly rare. Not that people don't care as much for their departed loved ones, but both quarried stone and stone cutters are in short supply. Larger towns, like Dodge and Cheyenne, have such services—after all, you get enough folks together and you can sell anything. In general, most towns make due with cheap, carved wooden markers.

Now, communities nearer the Rockies or in the Maze are a different story. There, suitable rock usually can be found locally, and often a resident can carve an adequate, if not necessarily artistically rendered, marker.

## COFFINS AND CASKETS

Until the early part of the century, only the richest folks used coffins. In fact, in Europe, church officials actively campaigned against caskets as they prevented normal decay and caused graveyards (then around churches, if you recall) to fill up. Still, by the early 1800s, coffins were in wide use at least in America.

Everyone's familiar with the standard, pine-box shape of a simple coffin. Roughly rectangular, with a slight widening at the shoulders, it is the most common form the interment box took in the West. However, it was far from the only one.

Coffin designs were patented in tapered, tear-drop, cruciform, and a half-dozen other shapes, while pottery, glass, cement, rubber, and even papier-maché were used as construction materials. It all depended on exactly how much the family wanted to—or could—spend on the last resting place.

Perhaps one of the most interesting developments, at least in the field of mortuary science, to come out of the War, is the interment sack, or, to use a more vulgar term, a "body bag."

First recorded at Gettysburg, they are actually rubberized sacks used by the soldiers as sleeping bags in rainy weather. An enterprising soldier discovered that, with the drawstring at one end pulled tight, the bags served to keep the body protected and the odor of death at bay—somewhat.

Although an attempt is being made to market the bags to civilians, the sacks haven't quite caught on with the public as yet.

One last note: The word "casket" is considered somewhat unrefined by undertakers. "Coffin" is the preferred term.

## THE COST OF DYIN'

### Services

Burial permit	\$1.50
Burial plot (sometimes free)	\$0-\$5+
Coffin, pine box	\$4-\$7
Coffin, fancy wood	\$8-\$40
Coffin, metal	\$35+
Death certificate	.50¢
Embalming	\$10+
Funeral services	\$1.50+
Hearse rental	\$8-\$10+
Ice (for preserving)	\$10
Washing/dressing body	\$5

### Undertaker/Gravedigger Expenses

Cosmetic cream	.25¢
Embalming gear	\$12+
Hearse, simple (open buggy)	\$40+
Hearse, fancy (closed, decorated)	\$1000+
Pick	\$2
Shovel	\$1.50
Suit, simple black	\$7.50
Tophat, black silk	\$3.50

## FUNERALS

Although the face of the American funeral is changing in the wake of the Civil War, the ceremonies remain simple affairs, at least on the far side of the Mississippi. Most often, formal rites are conducted only at the gravesite, and then merely a Bible reading and short eulogy by a local preacher, priest, or minister.

Usually the remains are kept in the home of family, or failing that, the undertaker's shop (if one exists), overnight. Often, relatives or friends stay awake near the body for the entire night prior to burial. Although this is a traditional form of paying respects, no doubt in the Weird West it has a more practical application as well.

Nothing like having Aunt Gertrude up and frightening the children before her memorial ceremony!

Due to the scarcity of embalming, it's unusual for a body to be held for viewing or memorial services for more than a couple of days—particularly in the heat of summer! In the few instances where one is, ice is liberally applied in the coffin to delay decomposition. The water from the melted ice tends to damage rugs and carpeting, though, providing yet another reason for *not* holding long memorial viewings!

## UNDERTAKING AS A PROFESSION

Although nearly all communities have *someone* who cares for the deceased, only larger ones typically can support a full-time undertaker. Often the duties are filled by the town preacher or priest, with local handymen providing the services of gravediggers and coffin makers.

Of course, in such smaller towns, little or no facilities were available for preserving the remains, or providing more than the most basic services.

In some communities, the undertaker combines the jobs of other professionals. While a medical occupation such as doctor or dentist may seem the most logical choice for an undertaker, often he is a livery owner, woodworker, or furniture maker. Since he builds the coffins, it made the most financial sense for him to sell them as well. In the case of the livery owner, she's the person who most often has to cart the remains to Boot Hill.

Only the largest towns in a state or territory are likely to produce enough business to support a full-time undertaker. Boomtowns—cattle or mining—tend to have a larger percentage of undertakers in the populace than other communities.

It's safe to assume that many moderate-sized towns look favorably on gaining the services of a full-time undertaker, particularly given recent events. Some even actively pursue the recruitment of these professionals!

Why? Well, one of the official duties often assigned to an undertaker is the filing of death certificates; some even perform autopsies. Given the rising incidence of "premature burials" since the mid-1860s, most folks might prefer a professional look over their remains and those of their dead loved ones prior to getting planted in the local cemetery!

## THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PREVENTION OF PREMATURE BURIAL

While we're on the topic, let's take just a moment to discuss premature burial. It is, unfortunately, a rather common occurrence prior to the widespread use of embalming, and a common fear among folks.

Not that embalmers necessarily look that much closer, mind you, but having one's blood drained and replaced with a preservative liquid tends to make certain you're dead!

Anyway, the truth is that a disturbingly high number of live folks end up in a grave ahead of their time. Even a medical practitioner sometimes failed to correctly diagnose death in a

patient! Given the tools and conditions of the time, that isn't too surprising, but still of little comfort to someone who wakes up with a coffin lid 2 inches from the tip of her nose.

To help ease the public's concerns (or perhaps to take advantage of them!), a number of inventors have developed "safe coffins." These include air tubes, speaking tubes, bells, or other devices for summoning aid, and similar contraptions. Less imaginative folks simply stick a crowbar and shovel in with the body in case it "wakes up."

No record exists of even one successful use of such measures, but then again, there have been reports of supposed dead folks walking about!

In 1875, thanks to a few well-publicized cases, public concern over premature burial reached such a level that the Association for the Prevention of Premature Burial was formed in England. Branches of the organization quickly spread to America.

The Association preaches trained medical certification of death. It also seeks the closings of crowded city church cemeteries, endorses ethical behavior among undertakers and other death-related professions, and promotes the use of cremation.

## CREMATION

Interestingly enough, the Cremation Society—which stands for pretty much what you'd guess—was formed just a year earlier in 1874, by Sir Henry Thompson. Sir Henry built a working model and demonstrated it in 1873 in Vienna.

Due to church opposition and overall public opinion, it took Sir Henry another five years to actually raise enough money to build a full-sized crematory in Working, England. In America, the practice caught on more quickly, however.

The first commercial crematory was constructed in Washington, Pennsylvania, by Dr. Julius LeMoyne. Thanks to the ongoing Civil War, the practice has begun to take hold in the Union, particularly in the Northeast. Continued outrage from vocal Protestant ministers has delayed the Confederacy's acceptance of cremation.

## GAME APPLICATIONS

Rather than pitch out new archetypes, we're just going to point you toward some useful Aptitudes, Edges, and the like, for building a hero that's got a close, professional association with the dead.

### GRAVEDIGGERS

First, since he makes his living with his hands, a gravedigger is likely to have decent Corporeal Traits, particularly *Strength* and *Vigor*. No Aptitude is directly tied to the job, although *tinkerin'* might depict the character's handyman nature.

The Edges *brave* and *tough as nails* can show the effects of hard work in a rather unsettling environment. On the other hand, making a living in a graveyard is liable to make the fellow *superstitious*, and he may have picked up an odd *habit* or *loco (phobia)* out at Boot Hill on some lonely night.

### UNDERTAKERS

There are no necessary Traits for an undertaker, but it's likely that the hero's Mental ones will exceed the Corporeal ones. *Spirit*, *Mien*, and *Vigor* are probably the most necessary.

An undertaker should have *trade: undertaking* at a minimum, and maybe a little *medicine: general*, particularly if she produces death certificates or performs autopsies. *Trade: woodworking* is handy if the hero also makes her own coffins. The *teamster* Aptitude is necessary for handling a horse-drawn hearse, and it's just possible exposure to the oddities of the dead of the past 15 years may have given the character a little *academia: occult*.

Edges and Hindrances are as for a gravedigger, with the addition of *strong stomach* (from *The Agency* sourcebook).





# Devil's Night

by: John Hopler

Roth stepped down from the cab of the semi and turned back to give his companion, the Templar Samantha Stark, a hand down.

"I'm capable of walking on my own," said Sam as she batted his hand away. "I've even been known to talk and chew gum at the same time." The petite Templar dropped to the ground and then reached back up into the truck for the pair's gear. With a loud grunt and a strong tug, she pulled both of their packs from the cab.

Momentarily off balance, Sam staggered backwards, and then, regaining her poise, she held Roth's gear out to him.

The gunslinger accepted it with a bow while trying not to grin. "I'm sorry Your Graciousness, I was only attempting to help."

Sam shot Roth a quick glare. "Thanks for the ride, Bug," she said to the truck driver. "If all goes well, we'll be waiting for you right here when you swing back this way in a week. Good luck!"

The Templar slammed the cab door shut and stepped back. Amidst the sound of grinding gears and a blast of oily black smoke from its stacks, the

armored truck lurched forward and then slowly picked up speed. Sam waved to the machinegun crew perched atop the rig's trailer behind the welded gun shield. They waved back and the truck receded down the highway to a string of whistles and good-natured catcalls.

"Fans of yours?" asked Roth. Sam didn't reply, she simply punched the gunslinger in the shoulder and busied herself with her gear.

Roth shrugged into his pack, adjusted the straps, and then reached beneath his black trenchcoat to make sure that the shoulder holsters carrying his twin Tokarevs hadn't become tangled with them. He picked up his Northern Alliance assault rifle and slung it, muzzle down, over his right shoulder.

Damn, he thought, it feels good to be wearing some fresh clothes. While the pair traveled east with the Convoy truck, they had been able to trade with the crew for some new duds. Roth picked up a pair of fatigue pants with

suspenders, a handful of black T-shirts, an H&K Shooting Team sweatshirt, and luxury of luxuries, some new, never-before-worn underwear. Sam bartered for some new blue jeans and a few sweatshirts to keep her warm in the cool, late-October temperatures. Roth also suspected that she had bargained for some of the men's underwear, as the only female undergarments on the truck had come from a lingerie store and fell well within the "butt floss" category.

As he waited for Sam to finish adjusting her gear, Roth reached into his coat pocket for his most prized trade of the trip: a small bundle of fresh, honest-to-God cigars. He clipped the end from one with the razor-sharp folding knife he carried on his belt and fired it up with his trusty Zippo. He took a long drag and released a large cloud of smoke in a satisfied sigh. Damn, it had been a long time.

A fit of overly dramatic coughing erupted behind him as the light autumn breeze carried the smoke in Sam's direction. "You know," she said in that God-you're-being-such-a-child tone of voice that implied his IQ was one point above idiot, and which she seemed to reserve just for him, "those things cause cancer."

"Really?" replied Roth in mock surprise. "Given the fact that the Four Horsemen are walking the Earth, the dead won't stay buried, and there are five biker gangs and at least one cyborg that want me dead—that I know of—I'd say if I live long enough to get cancer..."

"Whatever," interrupted the exasperated Templar. "Just stay downwind of me. Now let's go find those River Watchers."

\* \* \*

It only took the pair about an hour to find the location marked on the map they had been given: A small,

dilapidated house on a slight rise above the west bank of the Mississippi River. The yard was overrun with weeds and knee-high grass and a battered Buick with flat tires slowly rusted into scrap in the carport. The only signs of habitation were the matted grass near the front door and a cleared strip that had been hacked through the weeds to completely encircle the house. As Roth and Sam moved closer they could see that this area was filled with an intricate pattern created with painted rocks. A crudely-constructed wooden ramp provided access over the rocks to a path worn in the grass.

Roth unslung his rifle and crouched behind a small tree. To his right, he saw Sam do the same with her Mac-10. "Hello in the house," yelled the gunslinger. When there was no response, Roth hollered again—no answer.

Just as the gunslinger began to creep forward, the front door opened and the muzzle of a rifle appeared. Roth could just make out a form in the darkness beyond the doorway. "Who goes there?" yelled a voice from within the house.

"My name's Roth, and that's Sam over there," responded the shootist. "We're looking for Bill and Mike Ryan of the River Watch."

The rifle barrel wavered slightly and then resumed its aim in Roth's direction. "Come on across the ramp, but keep your weapons lowered," said the voice.

Sam and Roth moved slowly across the ramp, keeping their weapons pointed groundward as instructed. "Okay, now drop your guns and step back from them," said the voice. Once the pair had done so, two men, both in their early twenties, stepped from the house. One carried a high-powered hunting rifle, the other covered the pair with a pump-action shotgun. Both of the men were of average height and had close-cut blonde hair. It was obvious from their similar facial features that they were brothers.

"I'm Mike," said the one with the rifle. "That's Bill. Whaddaya want with us?" The man addressed Roth, but his eyes never left Sam.

"Well," said Roth, "we've been hearing stories back west about

increased undead activity along the river."

"That little lady over there with the pig-sticker," Roth paused as Sam let out an indignant grunt, "is a Templar. The Grand High Water Buffalo back in Boise thought she should come take a look for herself, and I tagged along to make sure she didn't get into any trouble."

"Roth, I..." began Sam.

"Let's see the tabard," interrupted Bill.

Sam removed her pack and slowly fished her tabard out from the bottom. The two men relaxed and lowered their weapons once they saw it.

"Sorry," said Mike, his face coloring slightly, "but you can't be too careful these days."

Roth retrieved his rifle and clapped the man on the shoulder. "That's okay. I'd have been disappointed with anything less."

"Come on in and we'll talk," said Bill. He motioned for Sam to precede him into the house. Both of the men's eyes never left the Templar as she mounted the front steps.

*Can't say I blame them, thought Roth, she does look good all cleaned up.* From everything he had heard the life of a River Watcher was a dangerous, lonely, and thankless job. As he passed the pair and entered the house, the gunslinger whispered to them, "Don't get any ideas, she's pretty good with that sword." Both of the brothers blushed deeply and looked away. Roth grinned.

Mike and Bill directed them to a living room at the back of the house. Most of the east wall was filled with a large bay window that gave an unobstructed view of the river. A telescope, aimed to the east, sat before the window. Roth could see a dock at the base of the hill beneath the house with a small launch tied to it. A large bookshelf covered most of the west wall. It contained some books, but most of the shelves were covered with stacks of game boxes. There was a large table in the center of the room. Two well-worn recliners flanked the table. A large map dotted with stacks of small cardboard chits covered its surface.

Mike noticed the direction of the gunslinger's gaze. "What we do in the River Watch is just that—we watch. There's too many of them and too few of us to try and fight them directly. More than one Watcher has lost it under the constant strain, so we try to keep our minds occupied when we're not hunting or fetching water. The games help pass the time."

"What's that pattern around the house?" asked Sam.

Bill pointed to a book on the shelf: *A Guide to Native American Rituals*. "We got it out of that book. It's some sort of ward against malevolent spirits. It seems to work. Just a few days ago, about thirty deaders showed up outside. They just sort of wandered around for a while and then left. A few of them tried to cross the circle but were stopped, uh, dead, just like they had hit a wall."

Sam ran her hand down the line of books; almost all of them dealt with the supernatural or occult. "Quite a collection you've got here."

"Yeah," said Bill, "We figured in this line of work, we should get up to speed on the subject. We traded for some and scavenged the rest from a bookstore on the outskirts of St. Louis." He paused for a moment, and then pulled a small pouch from beneath his shirt. It hung from a leather thong. "We also made these talismans. If you die, they're supposed to prevent you from coming back as one of those things."

Bill glanced at his brother. "We weren't sure if we could bring ourselves to pull the trigger on each other—if it ever comes to that."

"Sounds like a reasonable precaution," said Sam. "I hope you never have to find out if they work," she added with a smile. Bill's face split with a grin so wide Roth was afraid his jaw might come unhinged.

"So, what can you tell us about what the living challenged have been up to?" interjected Roth.

Mike motioned his guests to the two recliners, while he and his brother grabbed some chairs from the adjoining kitchen. He spread a local map of the river on the table and quickly outlined the activity they had observed in the past few months. Most of the sightings had been to the north of their house, but a few groups of undead had been seen to the south and they had even attacked a small survivor settlement about 10 miles away in that direction. The majority of the activity was at night. The groups of walking dead usually emerged from the river at dusk, traveled inland, attacking anything in their path, and then returned to the river by dawn. A few groups, however, had not returned to the water. Some roving Watchers had tracked these groups west until they left the state. The brothers had also seen a lot of activity on the eastern bank through their telescope, but they were unable to determine exactly what the deaders were up to.

"What do you think?" Bill asked Sam.

"I'm not sure," replied the Templar. "It could simply be a new tactic to increase the fear in the region, but if it is, it seems like they're wasting an awful lot of time in uninhabited areas."

"Look at the dates," said Roth. "The attack on that southern settlement was one of the earliest sightings. Since that time the appearances have moved steadily north. Most of the groups that didn't return to the river all came out in roughly the same area—an uninhabited area. I'd say we're looking at a reconnaissance in force."

"A reconnaissance for what?" asked Mike.

"That's what we're here to find out. I think we should take a look around tonight and see what our smelly friends are up to."

"I don't think that's a good idea," said Bill, casting a sidelong glance at his brother.

"Why not?"

"Well," answered Mike, "our calendar's a bit out of date, so I can't be certain, but I think tonight or tomorrow night is Devil's Night."

"Devil's Night?"

"Yeah, you know, the night before Halloween."

"Oh," sighed Roth, "we called it Mischief Night where I grew up. You afraid we might get egged or TPed while we're out there?"

"All I know is that strange things happen around here this time of year," said Mike earnestly. "I think it just might be better to wait a few nights."

"We're on kind of a tight schedule," remarked Sam. "We've only got a week before our ride back to the west passes through here again."

"In other words," rumbled Roth, "we don't have time to sit around with our thumbs up our rears. There's obviously something going on around here, and it may take some time to get to the bottom of it."

"Look," the gunslinger continued in a more conciliatory tone, "I've seen enough that I'm not going to blow your fears off as mere superstition, but from what you've told me, it doesn't sound as if what's going on here is directly tied to a particular holiday. If you're really that concerned, you two can stay here and Sam and I will go. If we buy it, I give you permission to write on our tombstones what stupid brainers we were to ignore your warning."

"No, no," shouted both the brothers in unison, slipping looks toward Sam. "At least one of us will go with you," said Bill. "We just thought you should know..." He trailed off, seemingly at a loss for words.

"You should know how weird it can get around here," finished his brother for him. "There's all sorts of stories about ghosts and witches in this area."

"Ever seen them yourself?"

"Well, no," Mike said slowly. "We always stayed in on Devil's Night because of the stories."

"Case closed, then," responded Roth. "We go out tonight."

The four of them sat in uncomfortable silence for a few moments.

"So, how'd you boys come to be in the River Watch? You couldn't have



been more than nine or ten when the bombs fell."

Mike told them the story. He was ten and Bill was seven when the world blew up. Their father had been killed in NorCal in '79 fighting with the US Army. They lived with their widowed mother in a small town not too far north of the house they were in now. Things had been hard after the bombs fell, but the community worked together and survived. Then, one night, about four years after Judgment Day, a horde of walking dead boiled up out of the river and rampaged through town. The last time they had seen their mother, she was holding off a zombie with a shotgun. She told Mike to take his younger brother, run, and not look back. He and Bill fled into the darkness until, exhausted, they hid in an old barn. As far as they knew, they were the only survivors.

A River Watcher named Jack Henderson found them there the next morning. He took the boys under his wing, trained them in survival, and eventually recruited them into the ranks of his group. For the past four years, the two brothers had watched the river from this house, passing their observations on to the Watch's Rangers—roving Watchers who traveled from watch post to watch post to patrol the areas in between them. Unless something happened to delay him, they were expecting a Ranger visit some time within the next day or two.

Once Mike finished his story, the four discussed preparations for the night's outing. It was decided that Mike would accompany Sam and Roth. Bill would remain behind in case the Ranger arrived and also so that if they didn't return, he could pass the news on to the Convoy drivers and they could take word back to Boise.

"Well, if we're going to be poking around in the dark, I think I'd like to get some sleep beforehand," said Roth. "You have anywhere I can bed down for a while?"

Mike led Sam and Roth to a spare room on the second floor. "You can sack out in here. I'll get you up around dinnertime. Hope you like rabbit, it's all we've got."

## Devil's Night

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Once the pair was alone, Roth looked at Sam quizzically. "What do you think?"

"They seem like nice boys," replied the Templar. The mature air with which she called them "boys" made Roth grin—Sam couldn't be more than two or three years older than they were. "What do *you* think?"

"I think I'll take first watch and you should grab a couple hours of sleep."

"You don't trust them?"

"I don't trust anyone. That's how I've lived long enough to become a cynical old bastard. Hell, I even keep one eye on you while you're sleeping."

"That sounds more like a dirty old man. They seem harmless enough. Wake me up in a while so I can spell you."

\* \* \*

Roth awoke in a darkened room to the smell of fried rabbit. His stomach rumbled and he sat up. Sam sat cross-legged in the shadows across from him, her sword on her knees and a whetstone in her hand. She gave him her best "I told you so" look and offered him her hand. He batted it away. "I'm capable of walking on my own," he mimicked.

"Sorry, Methuselah, you looked like you needed some help. Shall we?"

The pair descended to the kitchen where Mike and Bill had set out places for four. A small oil lamp and a few candles lighted the room. The wind had picked up outside, causing the brown, dead leaves to rustle in the trees and the windows to occasionally rattle in their casements. A gusty draft made the candle flames flicker and the shadows dance.

"All we need now is some candy and a Jack o' lantern," joked Sam. The two brothers laughed, but it sounded forced; the somber looks on their faces betrayed their nervousness. They parceled out the fried rabbit parts in

silence and barely picked at the food on their plates. Sam and Roth, who hadn't eaten since early that morning, devoured the meat quickly and picked the bones clean.

"This wind is good," said Roth as he ate. "All the blowing leaves will cover the sound of our movements. Walkin' dead aren't too stealthy. We should be able to hear them a long while before they can hear us."

Once dinner was finished, the four moved into the living room. Sam, Roth, and Mike began to gear up. The wind promised to make it a chilly night, so after donning his bulletproof vest, Roth slipped into his new sweatshirt. Over that went his twin shoulder holsters. He took each Tokarev out of its holster and checked to make sure a round was chambered and that the batteries in the laser sights still had some life left. After the pistols were tucked back beneath his arms, he shrugged into his trenchcoat and picked up his rifle—he was ready to go. The gunslinger looked around and saw that the others were also.

"Let's move out, people," he growled.

Bill spoke up as the trio moved toward the door. "Uh, Sam," he gulped, "I made this for you while you were sleeping." He held out a small pouch similar to the ones he and his brother wore. He looked sheepishly toward Roth. "I would have made you one too, but I only had enough ingredients for one."

"That's okay, kid, I don't plan on buying any real estate tonight." The gunslinger gave Bill a slow wink that caused him to blush.

Sam took the proffered talisman and tied it around her neck. "That's very sweet," she proclaimed. "Thank you, Bill." The Templar bent forward and kissed the startled man full on the lips. His fair skin turned a dark shade of crimson.

"Can we please get this show on the road?" muttered Roth.

Sam and Roth stepped out into the front yard. The gusting wind gave them an immediate chill. They stopped for a moment as Mike paused at the doorway to exchange a few last words with his brother.

"You're an evil woman," whispered Roth to the Templar.

"Why, suh," said Sam, batting her eyelashes and speaking in a slow Southern drawl, "Whatevah do you mean?" Reverting back to her normal voice she asked, "Jealous?"

Roth merely grunted.

Mike joined them and the trio started off to the north. The group moved slowly along the riverbank, looking for any signs of walking dead having recently exited the water. An hour of patrolling brought them to a small copse of trees where Roth called a halt to take a short rest and get out of the chilling wind for a few minutes.

"I hope Bill has a fire going when we get back," said Sam.

Mike opened his mouth to reply and then his eyes went wide. Instead of speaking, he threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired a shot toward the river. He fumbled with the bolt in his haste to chamber another round.

Roth turned to look in the direction of Mike's shot—two undead had broken the surface and were coming ashore. He pulled his pistols, took aim, and put a bullet in each of their heads. They flopped back into the river and began floating downstream.

"Take it easy, buddy," Roth said to Mike, who was still fumbling with his rifle bolt. "I got 'em. We should move though, since..."

"Uh, Roth," interrupted Sam.

"What?"

The Templar pointed toward the river.

Roth turned to look. The surface of the river had begun to boil like a giant stewpot. One by one the heads, and then torsos, of more walking dead began to appear. The gunslinger counted at least thirty and there looked to be more beneath the water. One of the dark forms raised its arm and a bullet clipped through the trees near the trio.

"Point taken. Let's move."

The three of them started inland, moving in a low crouch to avoid the

random shots coming from the river.

"Let's head for that bluff. We can observe them from there," said Roth. The group angled northwest toward a low, scrub-covered bluff that looked to provide a good vantage point from which to survey the river. The three made it to the top and flopped down behind some bushes.

From the top of the hill, they watched as nearly fifty walking dead emerged from the water and assembled on the bank. The group seemed to mill around aimlessly at first, but then, without warning, the entire mass turned and started toward the bluff.

"Damn," muttered Roth, "Let's relocate."

The three of them started to move down the back of the bluff. Mike began muttering to himself in a bad Scottish brogue, "I told ya. I warned ya. But did you listen? Noooo. Look at the b..." A bullet crashed through the bushes at the top of bluff and punched the Watcher in the back with a meaty thwack. He dropped lifelessly to the ground.

Roth grabbed Mike's collar and dragged him behind a tree. Once behind cover, the gunslinger drew his knife and cut away the shirt around the wound. A warm jet of red blood pulsed from the hole. *Damn*, thought Roth, *it hit an artery*. He quickly stripped off his trenchcoat, pulled the belt free, wadded it into a ball, and pressed it against the wound as hard as he could.

Sam dropped to her knees beside him. "I need to heal him," she said, placing her hands on the man's back.

"There's no time," growled Roth. "We need to get him someplace that I can hold these things off while you do your thing. Tie that belt around him to hold this in place."

"No, Roth," Sam screamed, "Not again! I'm not going to let you sacrifice him like you did Teller!" The gaze she leveled at the gunslinger was filled with pain and hatred.

Roth grabbed the Templar by the upper arm hard enough to make her wince. "If we don't move him, we are *all* going to die. I know you don't give a rat's ass about me, but if you die, so does Mike. Now tie that damn belt!"

Sam's stare never left Roth's face, but she tied the belt off tightly, creating a crude pressure bandage.

"All right," said Roth, "I'll carry him. You run interference."

The gunslinger hefted the wounded Watcher onto his shoulder and began to run. Behind him, he heard the sound of Sam's sword leaving its sheath. He didn't look back; his attention was focused entirely on making his way through the scattered trees in the dim light without falling and dropping his fragile load.

More sounds of battle reached his ears: Sam's grunts of exertion, the feral snarl of the living dead, the sound of metal on metal, and a few gunshots. This was followed by a few seconds of complete silence, and, for a moment,



Roth felt a pang of fear. Then he heard the crunching of dead leaves behind him. He stopped to look back.

Sam appeared through the trees. She was bleeding from a shallow cut above her left eye, but otherwise looked okay. "Keep going!" she yelled. "We've got a little breathing room now."

The pair crashed through the edge of the tree line and stopped. Before them were the ruins of a small town. A light burned in the window of a house near the edge of the settlement. Without a word, the two started moving in that direction.

As they neared the house, Sam yelled, "Look, the pattern. Don't break the circle!" Roth looked in the direction she was pointing and saw a band of colored rocks like that at the Watchers' cabin. Without breaking stride, he leaped over the arcane pattern, stumbled briefly under his heavy load, and panted his way to the back door of the house.

Although seconds were precious, the gunslinger knocked loudly on the door. The last thing he wanted to do was crash through the door into a frightened local with a shotgun. There was no answer, so he pounded harder. A few seconds later, an attractive blonde woman in her mid-twenties opened the door. Roth pushed past her and followed the hallway to a living room lighted by a large oil lamp. He gently placed Mike on a threadbare couch.

Sam shoved the gunslinger out of the way and knelt down next to the wounded Watcher. She placed her hands on Mike's chest, closed her eyes, and began to mutter in Latin. Her hands glowed with a mystic light that slowly spread across the man's body.

Roth turned to the woman, who had followed them into the room. "Sorry to bust in like this, ma'am, but as you can see, we've got a wounded man here." The woman didn't respond, her eyes were riveted to Sam and Mike. Roth

continued, "There were some, uh, creatures chasing us. Do you mind if I look around and make sure we can defend this place?" The woman still didn't speak, she just fluttered her hand in the gunslinger's direction in a dismissive wave.

Roth took that as a "yes," and began his search of the house. In addition to the living room, the house had a kitchen, a dining room, and a small laundry room. A quick glance out of a window showed that their "friends" had arrived—at least a score of walking dead were shuffling around the house at the edge of the arcane circle.

The shootist headed upstairs. There he found a bathroom and two bedrooms. Only the master bedroom appeared to be in use. The unused room looked to have belonged to children. A child-sized bunkbed filled one corner; the shelves were lined with toys and games and model aircraft hung from the ceiling.

There was also an unpleasant odor on this floor. Roth searched for a source, but came up empty. Eventually admitting defeat, he headed back downstairs.

As he began to descend the stairs into the living room he could hear Sam and the woman talking—the Templar must have finished her healing ritual. "Yes," the woman was saying, "those sweet boys who live down by the river drew that circle around my house. I thought it was silly superstition at first, at least until the first of those awful monsters showed up here. I have to say, I was terrified..."

Roth froze, the hairs on the back of his neck standing at attention.

*We didn't know if we could pull the trigger on each other if it came to that.*

The gunslinger turned and went back down the hall to the master bedroom. He searched more carefully this time, and he found what he was looking for. The first item was a framed picture. It showed a man in a US Army uniform posing with the woman downstairs. Two young, tow-headed boys stood in front of the couple.

The second object of his search he found in the closet: A trapdoor into the attic. Roth pulled a chair into the closet, climbed up, and pushed the

door open. His nose was assaulted by a gut-roiling stench. He flipped his Zippo open and lighted it. The light from the dim flame showed the gunslinger more than he needed. The white gleam of human bones shone from the corners of the small attic. In the center of the floor was a naked man. He had been disemboweled and the flesh of his thighs and upper arms was disfigured by bite marks—human-sized bite marks.

*Damn, the gunslinger thought, that circle was not meant to keep the zombies out.*

Roth flipped the lighter closed and drew his pistols. He moved quickly, but quietly, down the hallway and paused at the top of the stairs. The woman was still speaking, "...you say Billy made you that necklace? He must be really taken with you. He was always the shy one."

Roth quietly eased himself down the stairs. Sam was facing the staircase and caught his eye. Her eyes were wide and she nodded in the direction of the woman, who was kneeling beside Mike's sleeping form and stroking his hair.

"Mrs. Ryan?" Roth asked quietly.

The gunslinger was unprepared for the violence of the woman's reaction. She whirled upon him, large claws sprouting from her hands. Her attractive appearance faded and was replaced by that of a withered corpse missing bite-sized pieces of flesh. One of her claws slashed the back of Roth's left hand, causing him to drop his weapon. He fired the pistol in his right hand, but the shot went wild.

Sam quickdrew her sword and aimed a chop at the woman's head. The Harrowed mother spun in a blur, deflecting the blow into the top of the coffee table, where it smashed the lamp. A burning pool of oil splashed across the table and flowed onto the floor.

Roth stepped back and fired a quick double-tap into the woman's chest. The impact of the bullets caused her to stumble back into the flaming oil, igniting her jeans. She ignored the fire and launched herself at the gunslinger with a scream. He got off one shot before she barreled into him and

knocked him to the floor. He felt her teeth sink into his neck.

Roth grabbed a handful of her hair with his left hand and tried to pull her head back, but it was like trying to control a bull with a dog leash. He struggled to force the pistol in his right hand beneath her chin, but she kept his arm pinned to the floor in a vise-like grip.

The gunslinger saw a silvery blur of motion out of the corner of his eye and felt the woman's body go limp. Her head tumbled to the ground and Roth's face was showered with thick, foul-smelling goo.

"Thanks," he grinned, wiping off the viscous liquid. "That was a nice shot."

"No problem," said Sam. "I figured if I cut too deep it was no big loss."

The fire had spread across the across the carpet and was beginning to lick its way up the curtains at the window. Roth retrieved his pistol and stood up.

"Let's grab Mike and get out of here."

The pair supported the wounded Watcher between them and hobbled outside. Walking dead still prowled along the edges of the warding circle. They snarled and pressed themselves against the invisible barrier when they saw their prey in plain sight, but they were unable to pass.

Sam and Roth moved to what seemed a safe distance from the burning house and collapsed to the ground.

The strong wind fueled the fire and soon the entire structure was ablaze. The wind-whipped flames caused bits of fiery debris to spiral upwards. Some landed in the town and started new fires. Within minutes, most of the northern skyline was alight.

"Devil's Night," muttered Roth.

Sam and Roth, with the unconscious Mike between them, huddled close together for warmth and waited for the coming dawn.

## ACCORDING TO HOYLE

This issue's installment of *According to Hoyle* just arrived via a sporadic burst of communication through the Tunnel from Banshee. Zeke Sparkes, the brand manager for our *Lost Colony: Showdown* CCG has prepared an FAQ for us.

But first, let's address the inevitable gremlins..

## ERRATA

**Kreech's Skull** is a rare card, not scripted as the icon indicates.

**Kryll** is a scripted card, not a rare card as the icon indicates.

**Assault Rifle** as printed is missing a +1A, the new version corrects this:

**Assault Rifle:** Gear; Uncommon  
Cost: 5; Attack: +1; Damage: 2;  
Toughness: -; Bonus: 2; Gear. Firearm.  
Automatic.

*"Now THIS is a weapon! Puts down all but the most stubborn xenos!"* -Norton

**Die** is now worded so that the skinny can only get the bonus from a combat hit:

**Die:** Skinny Power; Rare Cost: 0;  
Bonus: 6; Skinny Power. Free Action:  
Turn after a successful hit to give this  
Skinny +3D for this round of combat.

*"Did you see that?"* -Norton

**Chanouk**, like all anouks, should only be able to use anouk gear.

**Chanouk:** Drifter Troop; Uncommon  
Cost: 5; Attack: 3; Damage: 2;  
Toughness: 5; Bonus: 3; Troop (B). Land  
Transport 1 (Anouks only). May only  
use Anouk Gear. May not enter Space.  
*"Why shouldn't you pet 'em? Ask Lefty."* -Ross

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

For ease of reference, we've broken the questions down into a number of categories: card types, chips, and general.

### HEROES:

**Q:** *Jolly Ho* says he gives Evasion to a friendly Space Transport in the same combat as him. When do I declare this? It doesn't state Free Action, so do I declare it as I assign said Transport's Crew to the combat, or after everyone has assigned their forces to the combat (or do I get to choose)?

**A:** You would declare it after all of the forces were committed to combat but before Battle Actions start being played.

**Q:** *Tech Sgt. Hendricks* gets Gear for one CC less than listed. Does this lower the cost of Gear he starts with, or only Gear he gets after the start of the game? It says 'Gear attached to' rather than 'Gear being attached to.'

**A:** Yes it lowers the costs of Gear he starts with. It only works on Gear being attached to him however. So if you put a *Laser Scope* on his *Officer's Pistol* you have to pay full price because it is attaching to the *Officer's Pistol* and not to *Tech Sgt. Hendricks*.

**Q:** I notice that there are very few faction-specific Units. Most can be used by anyone. Is this the norm for the game, or is it just a matter of the set being on the small side?

**A:** We kept the faction-specific cards low because you can't play them at all if you are another faction. Even if it were a large set, having a bunch of faction-specific cards would still make it hard to play with just a few starters or boosters. Don't worry though, there will be plenty more faction-specific Units in the following expansions.



# EPITAPH

## LOCATIONS

**Q: If I play a Location in an Area, can I later discard it to play a different Location?**

**A:** You're stuck with it until it leaves play somehow.

## GEAR

**Q: If I use *Company Colors* to boost the Toughness of my Units, and they take damage above their normal Toughness, but below the boosted Toughness, do they die immediately after the combat ends? Also, does the bonus only last during the combat, or does it last to the end of the Turn?**

**A:** They don't die after combat ends because damage is removed when combat is over. It only lasts for one combat.

**Q: I assume I can only use *Havoc Missile* during a battle, and only target opposing Units. As *Havoc Missile* is a Free Action, strictly speaking it isn't limiting itself to combats or to targets in the same area.**

**A:** Yes, it can only be used in combat. It says: "Free Action: Discard for an additional A3/D3 attack against a Vehicle, or A3/D1 attack on any other Troop." because it says it's an "additional" attack you have to play it when your units are making their attacks. So not only do you have to use it in combat but you can't use it unless it is actually your turn to attack.

**Q: What happens when the combat is over because of a *Smoke Grenade*? Are the attackers forced back to the exact Areas they came from? Are they forced to Retreat? Do they head to any adjacent Area in whatever groupings that player decides (i.e., not the same groups they were in before the attack)? I assume the Defenders stay where they are.**

**A:** Yes. Defenders stay and the Attackers have to Retreat back to where they came from.

**Q: Can troops carry any number of Gear?**

**A:** They can have as much Gear as they want but they can never have a duplicate Gear. So you can have the *Officer's Pistol*, *First Aid Kit*, *Assault Vest*, *Laser Scope*, *Commando SMG*, etc. You can never have two Officer's Pistols on the same unit, though.

**Q: What Gear can and can't be attached to Troops/Vehicles? I was playing yesterday and my opponent kept attaching *Assault Rifles* and *Smoke Grenades* to his *Converted Freighters*, which seemed rather strange to me, but I couldn't see a rule against it. We ended up playing that "personal Gear" could only go on Troops, while cards like the *Compo Armor* could only go on Vehicles. Is this a correct interpretation?**

**A:** Normally Gear can only be attached to Troops (this excludes Vehicles since they are not Troops). Cards such as *Compo Armor* and *Reserve Tanks* will say "Vehicles Only." which means they can be played on Vehicles but not on Troops.

**Q: "Troops and Vehicles may swap Gear as an Action, but this Turns the receiving card." Do Troops and Vehicles swapping Gear need to be in the same Area? Can you swap multiple pieces of Gear in one Action, or just one piece at a time?**

**A:** You can swap any number of Gear cards from one unit to another as a single Action. The Units must be in the same Area, the unit that receives the Gear must Turn to do so and must be a legal target for any of the Gear being swapped to him. In other words you can't transfer an *Officer's Pistol* from a *Hired Gun* to an *Anouk Warrior* (the *Anouk Warrior* may only use Anouk only gear).

**Q: "Gear is placed directly on any appropriate Troop or Vehicle (whether Turned or Unturned)." Does this mean that Turned cards can receive gear if it comes from your hand?**

**A:** Yes, you can place Gear cards from your hand to a Troop or Vehicle even if it is Turned.

## COMBAT

**Q:** When an enemy moves into one of your Locations that doesn't have any Units but has the *Point Defenses*, is a battle automatically started between the two or is the Location fragged?

**A:** Yes, the battle is started up until you can get rid of the *Point Defense*. Since it has combat stats your Units still have opposition even though there aren't any enemy troops or vehicles in the area.

**Q:** With a successful *Smoke Grenade Pull*, where do the Units go—after all, there can't be more than 4 in any one Area? Do the attackers leave or the defenders?

**A:** The battle ends and since there are still defenders alive the attacker is forced to retreat.

**Q:** Dave Ross had his *Colt Peacemaker* and a *Commando SMG*. He was facing off against *Skaak* and some other Units. Dave decides to use his *SMG* and kills *Skaak*. Having used the *SMG* does Dave still get the +1 Occult from the *Peacemaker* in order to try and Vape *Skaak* automatically?

**A:** No. *Skaak* is getting Fraggged/Vaped as a result of the attack so you would not get the bonus of the *Colt Peacemaker* unless Dave had used it instead of the *Commando SMG*. A Troop can only use or gain the benefits of one Firearm card at a time. Since he chose to gain the benefit of the *SMG*, he cannot also use the *Colt Peacemaker* in the same combat—even just the Occult bonus it provides.

As a side note, having Occult does not mean *Skaak* would be Vaped automatically. It means he is Fraggged automatically and you get to make an Occult Pull to see if you Vape him. If you don't have Occult, *Skaak* would not have to check for being Vaped at all because he is a Skinny and not a Hero.

## ACTIONS

**Q:** If *Blood Brothers* is played in a battle with only one Hero on each side, what happens. Does the combat stall until one side decides to retreat?

**A:** If you are left with two *Blood Brothers* in a combat, it is over and the Attacker must Retreat (just like with *Smoke Grenade*).

**Q:** Can *Bloodthirsty* be used after a Troop Vapes a Hero, or only if they Fragg them? It says Fragg, but I wanted to make sure.

**A:** In order to Vape a Hero you have to Fragg them first so you can use *Bloodthirsty* even if the Hero you hit becomes Vaped.

**Q:** I assume *Wasted Youth* will give Occult to a Troop that does not have it already?

**A:** Yup it sure does.

**Q:** Does *Sneak Attack* override *The Kid's* ability to always attack first?

**A:** Nope, *The Kid* always goes first.

**Q:** Can I take Free Actions truly at any time (for instance, *Havoc Missile*)? Can I fire one off as soon as I attack an Area, or do I have to wait until (A) it's my turn to act or (B) I have just taken an action?

**A:** You have to use them according to their game text. (See the question about *Havoc Missile* in the **Gear** section, earlier). Most of them are pretty clear, such as *Parting Shot* and *Bloodthirsty* which are triggered only when someone is Fraggged.

## ADVENTURES:

**Q:** *Redbeard* is a Unique Adventure. Does that mean that you can't try for that Adventure again after you successfully complete it? Can you try for it a second time if you fail the first time?

**A:** Yup, if someone has beaten *Redbeard* no one else can go after him. If you (or another player) fail in the first attempt you can always try again though.





## EPITAPH

### CHIPS

**Q: Can you discard a Chip as a person is taking enough damage to Frag them to reduce the damage enough to save them? Or can you only use Chips as a normal Action in/outside of combat?**

**A:** They are Free Actions so you can use them as a Unit is taking enough damage to Frag it and save it (just like the First Aid Kit).

### GENERAL

**Q: I noticed a dearth of Search-capable people in the cards I've gotten. I assume that at least one Hero in each faction has Search, but at 3-5 people, that's not many. Will there be a lot of Search-capable cards coming out, or is it going to remain relatively rare?**

**A:** Yes, there is at least one card for each faction that has Search. You can also use the Binocs to give people Search. It isn't going to be a common skill but there will be plenty more cards with Search in the upcoming expansions.

**Q: The Rangers, Reapers, and UN all start in different Regions. I'm pretty sure that The Lab will start in Near Space, making that one faction per Region. Are there going to be new factions after The Lab's expansion is released?**

**A:** Yup, the Lab will be Near Space but it will not be the last faction in the game.

**Q: When a card states "any" like the UN HQ which says "place that many total hits on any enemy Troops in this Location," is it all the enemy Troops get that many hits (like if you Pull a 6, they all get 6 points of damage) or does the UN player get to pick where the hits go? The same goes with the *Life Mystic Power*. Does that many hits come off of all of the Troops or just the chosen one(s)?**

**A:** "Any" means you get to choose which ones are taking the damage. "That many total hits" means you only get that many to distribute as you see fit. If you pull a 6 you

can split that total of 6 hits up on any of the Units in the Area. If it says "all" Troops take that damage then each Unit would take 6 hits and you wouldn't have to split it up.

**Q: When a card states that it is a Troop and a Transport (like Chanouk), can they go on other transports?**

**A:** No, if a unit has the Transport ability it can't be Transported by another card. The exception to this is the Gear Vehicles which are covered in the rules.

**Q: If you Search for an Artifact and don't find it, it goes back into your hand. Does this mean I can basically declare a Search from Norton every action until he succeeds? Or does a failed Search for an Artifact Turn you, like a failed Adventure?**

**A:** Searching for an Artifact will turn you whether or not you actually find it. So *Captain Norton* would only be able to Search once per turn. The card does return to your hand however so someone else with the Search skill would be able to attempt to find it in a later action that turn.

**Q: Do you Turn after all Search Pulls, all Skill Pulls, or only after Adventure/Artifact Searches (whether successful or failed)?**

**A:** You only turn after Adventure/Artifact attempts, not every time you use a Skill.

If you've still got a question or two, be sure to check out our website where you can find a blow-by-blow account of a game played between Zeke and our webmaster, Chris Libey. In the future, you'll see further updates, game variants, and news about both the CCG and the upcoming RPG!

You can also find links to a *Lost Colony* forum where you can talk to other *Showdown* players and instructions for signing up for the *Lost Colony* e-mail listserve.

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