

HIGHWAY 447

This is another in my series of adventure hooks for the Morrow Project role-playing game. It's pegged to my on-going **Morrow Project Travel Guide**, so make sure you check that out too. Some of the encounter groups below are only found in my Guide and my supplements, so it would benefit you to read those first. This is based VERY loosely on the first half of the book Wreath of Fire (2000). No offense is intended to the author James Axler (or his unnamed ghost writer...) and the undead-vampire-ghouls employed by the legal team of Gold Eagle Books Incorporated.

This hook is set in the Northwest [Nevada](#)/Northeast [California](#) border region. It's meant to be played after Prime Base is recovered per the *Prime Base* (R-08) module. Some time after that, Team members are doing recon work south of Prime Base when they encounter a Gypsy Trucker poking through the ruins of the small town of Gerlach. This town is in Washoe County, about 55 miles south of Prime Base at the intersection of Highway 447 and Highway 34.

The Gypsy Truckers are from the Bear Republic region of Northern California (see the [California entry](#) in the Travel Guide for more info on the BR). They are led by a man named Chapman, who is in the area looking for bits of salvage and loot, but has found this area pretty well bare. He has found a few useful things in other areas further south and is anticipating a nice payout when he returns to the BR. Chapman has had some trouble with Raiders and bandits lately, and would gladly accept an offer of an escort back to [California](#). Since this is presumably the first the Team has heard of the Bear Republic, it would behoove them to offer to go along with Chapman so they can make contact with the BR leadership, or at least start to assess the situation in northern [California](#).

CHAPMAN'S GYPSY TRUCKERS

Chapman's band of Gypsy Traders consists of just four men. They have just one vehicle, a large restored cargo truck. In the truck are stored several weapons, an M-14 rifle, a Mini-Uzi submachinegun, a chopped-down shotgun with a pistol-butt, and a .38-caliber pistol. These are separate from those that are carried by the men.

They are led by a man named Chapman. He has long gray hair which is windblown and tangled, sticking up in spikes and a bushy mustache makes a horseshoe around his mouth. He has a huge purple birthmark on his face that is impossible to miss. He wears hand-stitched road leathers, jacket and pants, the brown rough-out material showing matted stains and accumulated road dust. A bandana and a pair of goggles hangs around his neck and he smokes a lot of home-grown cigarettes. He's armed with a nickel-plated pistol. Chapman is coldly efficient, and will do anything to complete his run, even if it means killing someone. He has a lot of native cunning and is reputed to be a bad man to cross.

His second is a man named Frank, a short man with a shaved head and a fresh human bite mark on his cheek. Frank is a hothead and will be the most likely to get into a fight with one of the Team members over any perceived threat to his position as Chapman's second. He favors a machete as a weapon.

Macon is his driver, a little wiry rat of a man with a shadow of a beard covering sunken, sallow cheeks. His age is indeterminate because of his ugliness, but he's probably between 20 and 40. He wears leathers.

Wylie is the mechanic, a bearded giant in a fatigue shirt with the sleeves ripped off.

THE TRIP BACK WEST

So they head back west. Chapman is aware (as is everyone in the region) of the Slaver Enclave down in Lake Tahoe (see the [Coast Road](#) supplement for more info) and wants to keep a wide berth. His route back into [California](#) will take them north and then west across the Cascades. The exact route will be Highway 447 northwest across the border (where it turns into Highway 81) and go on to Cedarville, [California](#). At Cedarville, they will turn west on Highway 299, which is a fairly busy Trade Route through the region. They will follow 229 over the Cedar Pass and through the big

settlement of Alturas, and then all the way into the major Bear Republic town of Redding in the Sacramento River valley. Depending on the time of year this takes place, it will either be warm and sunny, or blistering cold and snowy.

There will be three main encounters along the way.

- 1) Nell's Gang.
- 2) The Sand Fish.
- 3) The Roadhouse.

NELL'S GANG

The caravan is ambushed by a small-time gang in the Granite Mountain range, somewhere in the High Deserts between Gerlach and the [California](#) border. This narrow part of the canyon is called "Deadman's Waltz" by the locals.

The "gang" has just two members now, a man and a woman, having had some attrition lately. They call their ambush a "tollgate" and insist that anyone traveling this road has to pay a toll to pass through.

They have one vehicle, which is tucked off in a dead end in a nearby canyon. It's in good enough shape, though rough, as Nell always puts store in a decent-running truck. It has a long bed and an increased suspension, sitting high enough on the four-wheel-drive chassis that you have to use a step-up rung to get in the cab. It has saddle tanks (which are bone dry) and only about two-inches of gas left in the main tank, and they are desperate to get some more fuel. In the bed are shovels and picks and not much else.

The woman is named Nell. She's in her mid-twenties, with white-blond hair pulled back in a flowing mane. She has a good figure, tall and lean, small breasts, narrow waist and generous hips. She's well-tanned and well-toned from her lifestyle and she wears a midriff shirt and leather pants to show it off. Nell is armed with a Mini-14 Ranch Rifle, with two spare magazines and a .357 Magnum pistol. She always carries a canteen with fresh water in it. She's known to Chapman, and they perhaps were more than friends at one point, but there's only animosity between them now.

The man is named Joad. He's a little taller than Nell and twice as broad. Scars from burns mar his ugly face, leaving his skin dead and white, and old suppurating sores the size of dimes stand out on his cheeks and forehead. Joad is armed with a bolt-action Winchester .308 hunting rifle with telescopic sights and a .44 Magnum pistol.

The ambush is poorly-laid, as Nell and Joad just stand in the road to stop the vehicles. They will not hesitate to start shooting if things aren't going their way, as they are confident in their abilities.

THE SAND FISH

Somewhere along Highway 447 the caravan has to stop for some reason (maybe mechanical breakdown). One or more of the Team wanders off the road into the deserts to do some recon. Not far off the track, in a low gully at the base of a sloping rise, they are attacked by a fearful monster.

Up from under a thin layer of alkaline crust will explode upward in a shower of grit and dusty yellow fog a mutant monster. A scaled creature nine to ten-feet long shoves itself up through the sandy soil. Tentacles sprout from the ugly wedge-shaped head that is at least five-feet wide. Eyes occupy space on either side of the huge curving mouth, but they are milky white with blindness. The scales are a mottled bluish brown, some of them black with disease or age.

This is an "Ourboros Obscura", a giant worm of the deserts, so named in folklore, and "Sand Fish" to the locals around here. It's a radiation-mutated predatory creature, adapted to life underground.

The beast can move through sand and earth like it's water, and attacks targets by sensing their movements through the soil and coming at them from below. It will attempt to grab anyone close enough and pull them down under the sand, where they will choke to death before being devoured. The worm's hide is very tough and it's very difficult to kill, especially once it's underground.

THE ROADHOUSE

The caravan makes it to Cedarville, [California](#), and to a local Roadhouse that caters to travelers and traders.

About four miles from the Roadhouse, the first thing you will see along the top of a hill are six dead men hanging from steel crosses made from discarded support struts from buildings. They are up ten feet, so that they can be seen from a distance as a warning to anyone entering the area. All the bodies are mutilated, both before death and after by vultures and crows. One has a sign hanging around his neck that reads "Fukkin Radurs Kild Ded By Peabody". Chapmen will say that Peabody has a burning hatred for Raiders, especially ones working so close to his business. He pays good money for any Raider brought dead or alive to him.

The actual town of Cedarville is mostly ruined, filled with abandoned buildings and broken-down structures. A few dozen houses are still occupied, many rebuilt from the ruins of the rest. Heavily rutted roads meander through the back areas, but the ribbon of the Highway 229 Trade Route is kept clean and clear.

The Roadhouse is a new construction, built out of the best materials available from the ruined town, situated along the banks of Cedar Creek, right on 229, just west of the old town ruins. When built, care was taken to clear out everything for a hundred yards around it, to provide for free-fire zones. It's two-storied, with hammered tin sheets for the sloped roof and sides, the back half butting up against the creek bank. The store and saloon are downstairs, while the second level is for sleeping rooms and storage. A wide veranda circles the entire building, and windows along the sides also serve as gun ports. A huge black metal door has "Peabody's" inscribed upon it. It's as much a fort as a business establishment.

Inside, it's lit by lanterns hanging from the ceiling and cigarettes. Buckets of sand are arrayed around to act as fire extinguishers. Pecan paneling covers the walls and the tables and chairs have been salvaged and repaired with care. A bar occupies the center of the floor in an eight-foot square. Stools line the bar, but most patrons sit at the tables. On a small stage, a young woman dressed in pink underwear dances to the tunes of an old blind guitar player. Other entertainment is offered by a rare pool table, set up to the right of the bar.

Most of the time, the clientele are rough-hewn and sunburned men and most everyone has a weapon of some sort, either on their person or lying nearby. These are wary, semi-dangerous people and it's not advised to start a fight in here.

Their main business is serving the needs of Traders along Highway 229, along with the locals. It's a general store as well as a saloon and brothel. They serve rot-gut whiskey that you have to filter yourself to get all the water out of, and a thick heady beer dipped out of an oaken cask behind the bar. They also rent rooms upstairs with warm baths in large galvanized containers and real mattresses to well-paying customers. They have a purification system of sorts with the water out of the Cedar Creek out back.

The bartender is a short, thin, bald man with glasses named Shorty. He has a chopped-off shotgun under the bar and a short temper.

Peabody himself is a hard, opportunistic businessman who rarely deals with travelers unless they have something of value. He runs a fair business and does not cheat the customers (much). His pet peeve is Raiders, who are bad for business, and he's very tough on anyone he suspects might be one.

Sitting out behind the Roadhouse, in a covered tin shed is an old pontoon airplane. Peabody claims it was flying as recently as last year, but its condition and the lack of witnesses make that hard to believe. It's an old Cessna 180 floatplane, painted olive green, with color missing in patches where it had been repaired. There are empty mounts for what looks like machineguns bolted under each wing.

WHAT'S NEXT

What happens next is up to you. If you want the Team to make it to the Bear Republic, then a whole new world of adventuring is open to you in [California](#). There's virtually nothing canon in the MP books about the state, but I have a

lot of [information on that state](#) in my Travel Guide, which may or may not be helpful to you.