



DEAD LANDS

SADDLE SORE



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Saddle Sore

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INTRODUCTION

Travel. Whether one goes by rail, by river, by stage, or in one's very own saddle, the notion of travel is bound to arise if you intend to spend any time west of the Mississippi. The distances between settlements Out West are simply vast, and the ability to cross those distances safely is a rare talent possessed by few.

In all my travels of the Territories, in the service of one Rail Baron or another, I've found one commonality between every journey I've undertaken—danger. Be it nature's wrath, the evil that men do, or (of late) the weird and terrifying events that have fallen over North America like a shroud, be assured you'll find a little of it along your chosen trail. Tread carefully, amigos.

—from *The Disputed Territories Guidebook* (1880 ed.), by Phineas P. Gage

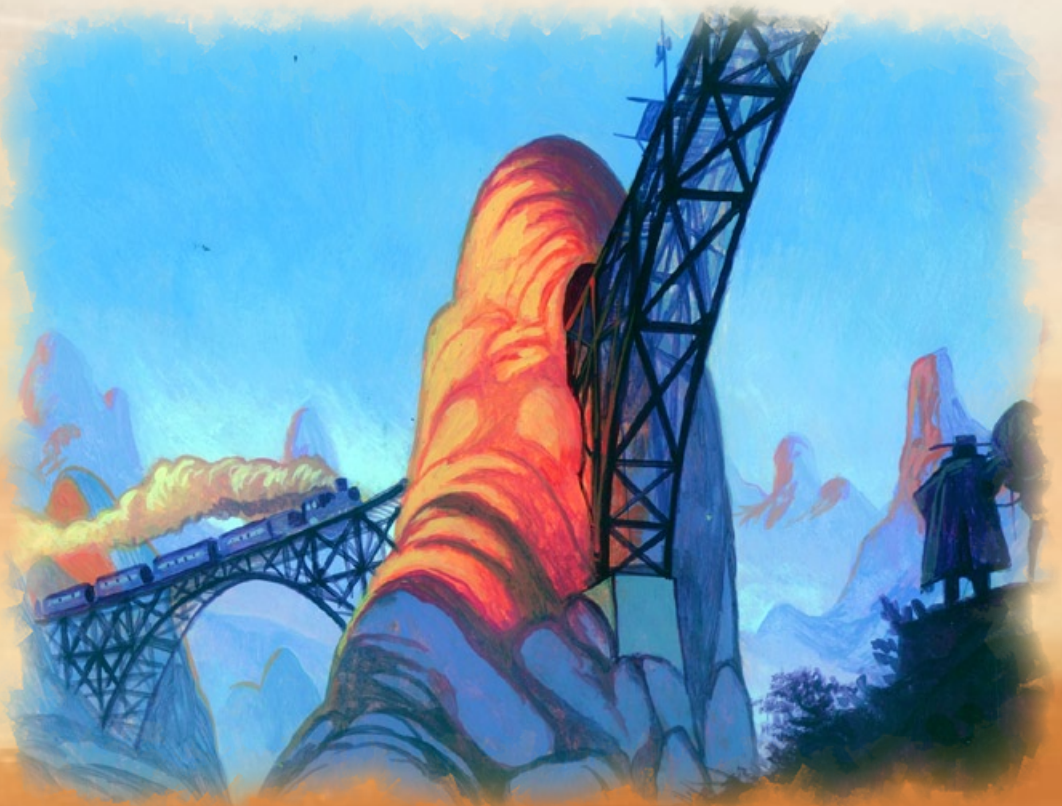
Welcome to *Saddle Sore*, Marshal, a collection of short adventures for *Deadlands Reloaded*. Unlike other adventures, these tales are designed to be inserted into your cowpokes' journeys as interludes and should last a single session. Think of them as detailed "random encounters."

None of them link together, so they can be played in any order and at any time. Default names for important places and people have been included for ease, but should be altered to fit the posse's actual location in your campaign. Don't fret—this won't affect the stories in any way, amigo.

The tales are written for characters of roughly Seasoned Rank, but with a few tweaks to the number of deadly foes they can be altered for weaker or stronger posses. Only you know the exact capabilities of your cowpokes, Marshal.

The Marshal should read each adventure before play begins. Knowing the basic flow and details in advance will greatly speed up play and make the game run smoother. You need a copy of *Savage Worlds*, as well as *Deadlands Reloaded*, to run this adventure. Figure Flats or miniatures are recommended, but not required.

If you intend to play in these adventures, you should **stop reading now**, hombre. Advance knowledge of the scenarios will only spoil your enjoyment of the game.



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THE SHOW MUST GO ON

At the end of a long day's ride, just as the sun sets, the posse spies a small collection of tents. This might be a prospectors' camp, a logging outpost, or even the start of a new town, depending on the terrain and territory through which the gunslingers are traveling.

The Empty Camp

Even from a distance, the cowpokes can tell there's nobody home. There are no fires or voices, and definitely no signs of movement other than tent flaps slapping in the evening breeze. Calling out elicits no response. Up close, the party quickly discovers why the inhabitants aren't being friendly—they're all dead.

There are six bodies in total. None show any obvious evidence of injuries, but they're stone dead. Each lies as stiff as a board, face contorted in an unholy blend of pain and fear.

Opening the corpses' shirts reveals strange blue-black marks on each of their chests. They aren't bruises, as any hombre with Healing can tell. Characters with experience of the frozen north reckon they're closest to frostbite. Strangely, none of the extremities (the first areas to suffer from extreme cold) show any signs of frost damage. Cowpokes making a Common Knowledge roll deduce the marks have the general appearance of fingertips pressed into flesh.

Aside from the corpses, there's only one useful piece of evidence. One of the inhabitants kept a diary. It's all pretty boring stuff, except for the last entry, dated yesterday, which reads,

Traveling show stopped by yesterday.

It isn't much of a clue, but it'll come in handy later on. Scouting the area around the camp requires a Tracking roll. There's poor lighting (the sun is setting), but there were more than five individuals, so the modifiers cancel out. Suc-

cess locates three sets of wagons tracks in rough single file heading in the same direction the cowpokes plan on going. On a raise, the scout reckons the imprints aren't more than a few days old.

Hicksville

At some time the following afternoon, the gunslingers come across the nearest settlement. It ain't much to write home about, but it's home for around 250 God-fearing folk. There's a saloon (with a few eager dancing girls), general store, small church, marshal's office, undertaker, blacksmith, a boarding house, and all the basics settlers need to feel comfortable. There are also a number of small outlying ranches that add to the population, but they can't be seen from the town.

Parked at the far end of the main street (it isn't a big place), near a corral, are three wagons. Each proudly displays the words, **Phineas Bartrum, Esq. Traveling Show of Curiosities** on the canvas coverings. Half a dozen cowpokes are mooching around the wagons, laying out bedrolls and starting a small campfire. Four are dressed like typical cowboys, but the other two are Indians.

Any townsfolk the posse passes greet them with a polite "Hello" or "Howdy, stranger." There's only one place in town to stay—Agnes' Boarding House—so that's where the cowpokes are directed if they are looking for somewhere to lay down their weary heads for the night.

The Marshal

Before the heroes enter any building, the local marshal approaches and raises a finger to touch the brim of his hat. Then he says,

Afternoon, strangers. Name's Marshal Clements. I don't want to know your business here—that's your lookout—but if you're here lookin' for trouble, you best

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keep on ridin'. We welcome strangers seekin' rest and vittles, but we kill outlaws and bandits and don't lose much sleep over it.

As if to emphasize his words, he gestures up the road, to a graveyard.

If the posse mentions the corpses they found yesterday, the marshal scratches his chin a while then shrugs his shoulders and says,

Can't say as I can help much. My jurisdiction ends at the town limits. But I'll send some boys out in the mornin' to bring 'em back. Least we can do is be neighborly and bury the dead properly—before the coyotes get to 'em.

Mentioning the traveling show's visit to the camp the same day as the deaths does raise an eyebrow from the marshal. He nods,

Well, thank ya for that insight. I'll go have a word with the showman. You boys done good. Go get a drink and leave this to me.

Sure enough, the marshal wanders over to the wagons. Should the heroes try to follow, they are politely told to vamoose, this being official business and all. Over at the

small camp, Clements speaks with a brown-suited man in a bowler hat. The conversation goes on for a few minutes, then the marshal nods and walks back across town to his office. Characters asking what happened are simply told,

My investigation is over.

Marshal Clements: Wild Card. Use the Veteran Gunman stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*.

The Traveling Show

The roadies at the traveling show aren't all that sociable. In response to any questions they merely grunt and gesture to the largest wagon. Inside is Phineas Bartum, the proprietor. He's from Back East, as clearly shown by his brown suit and bowler hat. He's also got one of them funny East Coast accents.

If disturbed by the posse, either by them rapping on the wagon for his attention or calling out, his head and shoulders poke out from the wagon flaps briefly.

We're not ready yet. Come back tomorrow for the show of a lifetime! Only a nickel each!

He then disappears back inside.



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With a little persistence (either through role-playing or a Persuasion roll), the party can lure him out to talk to them. If the marshal has spoken with him, Bartrum doesn't have a lot to say, claiming only that he and his boys were at the camp, but everything was fine when they left. Otherwise, he listens to any tale of dead tent-dwellers, then raises his hat and scratches his noggin.

Dead, you say? Well, I'll be. Sure, we were there the day before yesterday. Nice folk, very appreciative of the marvelous wonders of the Phineas Bartrum Esq. Traveling Show of Curiosities. They were very much alive and well when we left their camp.

Any cowpoke who knows basic math can deduce the caravan left the camp the day before yesterday. However, they seem to have only arrived here recently. Should they question Bartrum on this he's happy to give an answer. He gestures over to the corral where six horses are drinking from a trough. One has a noticeable limp.

One of the horses went lame so we rested up out in wilds. We managed to reach town this very morning.

Since he believes himself totally innocent, Bartrum doesn't appreciate being outright accused of murder.

Bartrum doesn't allow anyone to go poking around his wagons, not that there's much to see—all the exhibits are kept in wooden crates. Gunslingers who try to open them are asked to stop. If push comes to shove, Bartrum's boys start getting rough, pushing and shoving the heroes away from the wagons. Drawing guns isn't a good move. Although Bartrum's hirelings aren't stupid enough to draw iron over the contents of a few crates, Bartrum begins hollering for the marshal, who soon arrives.

Phineas Bartrum: Wild Card. Use the Townsfolk stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*, but add Persuasion d10 and the Charismatic Edge.

Bartrum's Boys (6): Use the Outlaw stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*, but drop the Hindrances.

Sneakin' Around

Now players can be a curious bunch, so there's a chance they'll go snooping around the wagons at night. Bartrum sleeps in the main wagon, while his boys nap outside around the campfire in their bedrolls. No guards are posted since the town is considered a safe place. However, the wagoners are generally light sleepers, so they count as inactive sentries.

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Getting into a wagon without stirring the guards requires a Stealth roll. With success, the posse climbs quietly into the back. Bartrum sleeps like the dead, so unless there's shouting or gunfire he doesn't wake up.

All the goods are kept in the boxes, which are locked. The cowpokes can smash the locks (Toughness 8), but this requires the hombre to use the lowest of Strength and Stealth each time if he wants to be a quiet vandal. Alternately, the locks can be picked with a Lockpicking roll (make one roll per wagon, rather than per box). A thief might sneak into Bartrum's wagon and find the keys. All this requires is a Notice and Stealth roll.

The general contents are described below, based on the wagon searched.

Bartrum's Wagon: The largest crate measures six feet by three feet and contains what appears to be a mummy dressed in ceremonial robes! A label claims it is an Aztec priest, found in the dark jungles of Mexico.

In fact, it's a naturally mummified corpse Bartrum found in the desert years ago dressed in Indian garb. Any Indian character instantly recognizes the clothing and headdresses. Other characters learn this with a Common Knowledge roll (with modifiers for how much they know about Indian culture).

The other crates contain similar oddities. There's a stuffed rabbit with antlers labeled as a jackalope, a snake with a head at each end, a two-headed coyote, and other curiosities of similar nature. These are all fakes, though good quality ones. Detecting the forgery for what it is requires a Notice roll (-2).

Wagon Two: This wagon holds the personal belongings, food stores, and general supplies for the traveling show.

Wagon Three: A collection of Civil War memorabilia, including flags, swords, spent shot, uniforms, diaries, letters, maps, and the like, are found in this wagon.

Death Comes to Hicksville

That night the killer strikes again. The murderer is actually a mourning mist. Bound to a material anchor carried unwittingly by Bartrum, the mourning mist is following the caravan. Rather than slaughter Bartrum and his boys, the mist uses them to carry it across the country so it can spread fear, pain, and death. After Bartrum and company leave a settlement, the mist moves in and does its work—giving its hosts an alibi so they aren't imprisoned.

Mourning Mist (1): See *Deadlands Reloaded*.

The mist didn't kill anything last night, thanks to the horse going lame and the troupe spending the night in the wilds, so it's in a foul mood. Rather than wait, it decides to take a calculated risk and seek out a victim.

The heroes are awakened by the sound of screaming from the boarding house (or a nearby house if they've decided to sleep under the stars). Cowpokes snooping in the wagons hear the screams as they walk back, instead.

Locating the exact source of the screams, the gunslingers barge in to see a faint mist drifting out through an open window. They don't catch a good enough glimpse to be able to identify the nature of the mist. It then sinks into the ground, returning to the patch of earth under Bartrum's wagon.

The screamers were two traveling snakeoil salesmen. One is dead (his torso has similar frostbite marks to the other victims), but the other, Clint Schwartz, is merely in a state of shock, having been Shaken by the fiend's Pain Touch. After recovering, he tells what he saw.

I awoke suddenly from a troubled dream. Leaning over me was this horrible figure, with burning eyes and a screaming face. It seemed like there was more than one face, but that can't be possible. Jed, my partner, woke then and screamed. Bad for Jed but good for me, because the thing headed straight for him. Then I remember the door opening and you folks driving it off. You saved my life!

Shortly after this, the marshal arrives with a posse of six armed townsfolk. Guns are pointed at the cowpokes while Clements interrogates Schwartz. Luckily for them,

GUNFIGHT!

The town is a lawful place, but it only got that way because the townsfolk, men and women alike, aren't afraid to take the battle to troublemakers. Starting a gunfight in town doesn't cause the locals to go running to their homes in terror. Quite the opposite, in fact—they run to their homes to grab their guns!

Townsfolk (30): See *Deadlands: Reloaded*. They are armed with a variety of guns.

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Schwartz's story, though rather far-fetched, is enough to deflect any accusations of murder. The town doctor is Doctor Hibbert Winthrop, who, after a brief examination, declares death by failure of the heart.

Marshal Clements, a man of rational mind, thinks for a few minutes before delivering his verdict.

Well, if the doc is right, and he usually is, I'd say this was an unfortunate early death from natural causes. Mr. Schwartz awoke from a nightmare. I reckon that nightmare was nothin' more than hearin' his partner havin' a heart seizure. In the darkness and confusion of being woken by a scream, he saw the victim rise from his bed and try to get help afore he died. Natural causes. Case closed. Best get Pickens the undertaker over here.

The marshal doesn't want to listen to any stories of strange mists (dismissing them as night fog or hallucinations) or previous deaths (totally unrelated in his eyes—Jed's injuries are obviously caused by him clutching at his chest and leaving bruises as his heart failed).

Nor will he place Bartrum under arrest, pointing out that the previous deaths the posse claimed occurred were not witnessed and how coincidental it is they arrive in town the afternoon before this unfortunate accident. He isn't

making accusations, but if pressed, especially by stories of supernatural activity, he waves his finger at the cowpokes and says,

There's folk here would say you could be trying to deflect your guilt onto an innocent man and cover your tracks. Best you shut up now afore I arrest you on suspicion of somethin'.

Likewise, he refuses to stop Bartrum hosting his curiosity show on the morrow. There's no evidence the showman is involved in anything suspicious.

As always, the mundane explanation is favored by the innocent folk of the Weird West. If the posse wants to solve this situation, they'll have to do so on their own.

The Show Goes Bad

All being well for now, the gunslingers settle down for the night after the earlier excitement. In the morning, Bartrum's boys set up a tent containing all the exhibits. The show opens at 10 o'clock, with a nickel charge per person (no exceptions).



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A large crowd quickly gathers to see the wonders and historical artifacts. They *ooh* and *ah* in all the right places as Bartrum's men wheel out his strange exhibits. All goes well until a young lad starts playing with one of the Civil War relics, an old pistol.

As he plays soldier, a strange mist begins to pour from the barrel. Most folk don't notice it until it's too late. Yep, the mourning mist, fearing its anchor is in danger, has risen to the occasion. Pandemonium ensues as it materializes and begins laying into the crowd.

The mist must use its Pain Touch on at least one party member during the scene, since this gives a clue as to how to destroy it. The visions it invokes are ones of Confederate soldiers being butchered by Union troops. The bloody massacre seems to be focused around a single officer armed with a pistol. Once defeated, the mist fades into nothingness, though it will keep returning day after day.

The pistol in question once belonged to a Confederate captain in charge of Sharpshooters assigned to the Great Rail Wars. He and his men were sold out by a treacherous scout for a fistful of dollars. Every last Confederate died on that battlefield, which by coincidence isn't far from the town.

Bartrum came across the scene of the massacre a few years ago (though coincidentally he has taken a circular route and is back near the site of the battle). He couldn't do much for the skeletons littering the area, but he did spy a few relics, including the pistol, he figured he could use. As the wagons moved off, the gun drew the mourning mist with it.

A Tale to Tell

After the fight, the cowpokes may have some questions for Bartrum—the marshal sure does. He tells his tale of how he found the pistol on a battlefield covered in Confederate dead a few years back. One of his boys mentions that the battlefield is no more than a day's hard ride from here, the wagon having gone Back East first before turning around and heading out West.

The characters can visit the battlefield and try to find a way to stop the mourning mist (assuming they don't already know from previous encounters). Or they can simply destroy the pistol (Toughness 12), perhaps figuring the fiend and it have some sort of mystic relationship.

The second option isn't much of an exciting ending, but it does the trick, and that's all that matters. The mourning mist doesn't return to Bartrum's side. Of course, it's still out

there, free to plague other travelers, and if not put in torpor by a *sanctify* spell, there's a good chance it'll be back in the future.

To the Battlefield

Sure enough, the massacre site can be reached in a single day, though it's tough on the horses. Any el cheapo mounts need to make a Vigor roll or they drop dead from exhaustion.

Despite the passage of years, there are still bones on the battlefield. Most have been taken by coyotes or blown away by the wind. Only one skeleton is intact—and it wears the rotten coat of a Confederate captain. His corpse is the hub of the site.

Gunslingers who have never crossed paths with a mourning mist may be unsure how to defeat it. If they're really stuck, ask for a Knowledge (Occult) roll and suggest the mourning mist is somehow tied to the site of the treacherous ambush. Should they begin to *sanctify* the site, the mourning mist is drawn back to the center, arriving the next night.

For the next week—the time it takes to complete the ritual—the posse has to put up with constant attacks as the fiend fights for its freedom.

Once the *sanctification* is complete, the mist is forever bound to the site. It isn't destroyed, but it is dormant. Giving the captain's corpse last rites and a Christian funeral doesn't destroy the thing permanently, either, though it's worth a small reward (Fate Chip or Experience Point) for smart thinking.

Should the party have neither miracle worker nor the *sanctify* power, they're going to find it mighty hard to end the mourning mist's reign of terror. Tracking down a blessed with the spell, and convincing him to come perform a length ceremony while being constantly attacked by an intangible creature from Hell, is an adventure waiting to be written, Marshal!



SNATCHED

Fear Level: 2 in town, 3 in mine and caverns

This adventure works best in terrain where there's some sort of mining taking place, whether for gold, coal, or ghost rock.

The trail the posse is following leads them past an old mining town. All the windows are boarded up tight and there's no sign of life except for an old timer sitting on a porch in his rocking chair, a double-barrel shotgun cradled in his arms. Lying beside him is a mangy dog, a glass jar full of clear liquid, and a box of shotgun shells. He looks up as the cowpokes approach, nods his head in recognition, then goes back to doing what he was doing—rocking gently back and forth.

WHY A RANDOM SYSTEM?

There are two reasons for creating a random system for exploring the tunnels and caverns.

First, it gives you, the Marshal, a handy system for designing your own subterranean areas in future adventures. Tweak a few of the encounters and this system can be used over and over again. Compare that to a finite map, which once used will be easily recognizable by any cowpoke with a hint of brains.

Second, it doesn't matter if a player has read the adventure or not. And it certainly cuts out any impropriety in terms of accidental glances at maps. Sure, some posses will have an easier ride than others, but the Weird West is an unpredictable place at the best of times.

The old timer, known simply as Mortimer, is friendly if addressed. Any questions about why he's in a deserted town, what he's doing, or even just asking his name get the same response.

Name's Mortimer by and by, and this here hound is Butch. Ain't nobody here but me, myself, and Butch. All up and gone. Yep, been a good month now since the last one left.

Reckon you can pick any place you want if you fancy beddin' down for the night. Ain't no one gonna complain, and that's for sure.

Yep, all gone away. Them what didn't vanish in the gold mine or from their beds plum got scared and vamoosed. I'm too old and stubborn to be driven out by some pesky critters. Yep, just spend my days and nights out here with Butch, shootin' at shadows and drinkin' ma hooch.

Mortimer is a touch mad. He was always a chamber short of a full load, but a month on his own with the constant threat of death—and alcohol of dubious quality—has pretty much driven him over the edge. He wouldn't budge from his chair even if the good Lord asked him.

If asked about the gold mine or the “pesky critters,” Mortimer replies as follows.

Reckon it all began about a two-month back. Folk in the gold mines breached a wall into an old cavern system. Nuthin' much special about that, happens all the time.

Then miners started vanishing. One minute they was diggin' for gold, next minute they was gone like they never existed. Folk got a mite rattled, but things got worse. Yep, folk started going missing from their beds at night. Well, after a few weeks the townfolk, those as was left, had a meeting and decided to cut their losses and pack up.

He then levels his shotgun and fires it at a nearby bush.

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Damn critters might be hiding anywhere. They're right sneaky! Here, have a slug of this. It'll make your curl proper fine.

The old man reaches down and grabs the jar of liquid, which he thrusts toward the nearest hero.

Mortimer's hooch is lethal. Swallowing a mouthful requires a Vigor roll. A cup full gives a -2 penalty. Success causes the victim to become Fatigued as his extremities (yep, all of them) go numb and his head feels like a Mojave rattler is hosting a party. Failure means that the poor sod is Exhausted. On a critical failure, the poor victim goes blind for the next 1d4 hours in addition to being Fatigued.

Mortimer provides directions to the mine (it's only a mile or so away), but no amount of Intimidation or Persuasion can make him accompany the posse. The old coot has his shotgun loaded and he'll use it if the gunslingers turn nasty. Treat him as Townsfolk, with the addition of a double-barrel shotgun. Butch only attacks if Mortimer orders him to, or the old guy is attacked.

Mortimer: Use the Townsfolk stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*. Mortimer is armed with a double-barrel shotgun (10/20/40; 1-3d6; RoF 1-2; Shots 2; Shooting +2).

Butch: Use the Dog stats in *Savage Worlds*.

There are basic supplies in the town, scattered among the houses and stores. No guns or ammunition can be found, but things like shovels, rope, and lanterns are plentiful. Enough canned food remains for maybe a week, but there's a plentiful supply of hooch.

The hooch, as well as causing nervous disorders, is highly flammable, igniting on a roll of 2+ on a d6 if fire is involved. Each jar that catches fire explodes in a Medium Burst Template for 2d6 damage. The jars can also be used as thrown incendiary weapons (Range 3/6/12), though obviously a burning wick is required.

The Old Mine

As Mortimer said, the gold miners broke through into an ancient natural cavern system. What they didn't know was that the caverns were home to a nest of tunnel critters. At first there were only three of the critters left, their numbers having been reduced over time by cannibalism. Once the miners broke through, the critters were able to grab hosts in which to lay their parasitic eggs. They even had the gumption to go into town and snatch folks from their beds. Now there are a total of 15 critters, all in the young stage (Mortimer killed five who came snooping around town).

SPECIAL CASES

A little fudging may be required when laying out the tunnels, as certain conditions can arise that prevent any more tunnels being placed. That's just no fun for anybody. Use these rules of thumb instead:

- If the card is a club (one tunnel—the entrance from the previous square) but would create a total dead end in the entire cavern system, then call it a diamond, heart, or spade (Marshal's choice).
- Tunnels that lead outside, such as being in any square on the edge of the grid and drawing a spade (four exits), should be ignored. In this case, there can only be three tunnels.
- Likewise, as shown in the diagram, if the party got to the square to the right of the 3D square (marked 6D) but a heart was drawn, there could only be two tunnels—the one going off to the right to an empty square and the other back to the AD square. The 3D square is already explored and all exits marked so it can't have a new tunnel, and going straight up would lead back outside.

Worse, these particular beasts live in an area of ghost rock deposits. Ghost rock powder has become infused into their armor, giving them a strange ability—they burst into intense flame when they die. This has stopped them turning on each other, since both victim and killer get fried.

The gold mine is still productive and even the ghost rock deposits could be exploited. Once the critters are gone, the posse can set up their own mining business. Details of how much work is involved, the amount of deposits left, and annual income the mine earns the cowpokes are left to the Marshal to decide. Setting up a mine attracts outlaws and other ne'er-do-wells, and Hellstromme or some other mad inventor will quickly learn of the ghost rock and stake a claim on the site as well. Life should sure be interesting from then on!

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The Layout

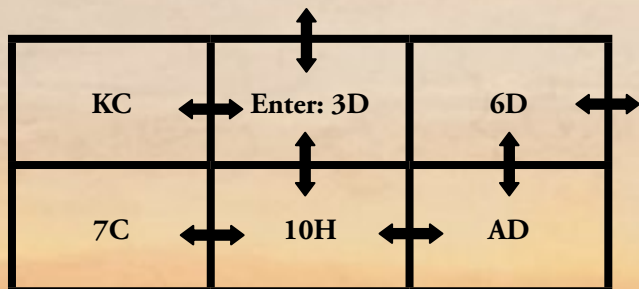
Exploring the tunnels requires the use of the action deck rather than a map. The mine is fairly small, but since the natural caverns stretch for miles across myriad passageways and multiple levels, making a map is all but impossible (and it's not as if any of the cowpokes are going to start measuring distances to make an accurate map).

Draw a large five-by-five grid on a piece of paper. Each square represents a portion of the cavern system. Some areas may be winding tunnels, while others represent vast caverns. They don't all necessarily cover the same amount of geographic space, so the grid is just an abstract representation, not an accurate scale map.

When the posse enters an area, draw a single card. Use short form notes to keep a track of the card value and suit for each square (so 3C for Three of Clubs, or KH for King of Hearts). The cavern layout never changes, so keeping a record is important.

When a card is drawn, the Marshal has to do three things. First, he records the value in the appropriate square. Second, he reads the card *value* on the chart below to determine the general subterranean features and encounter. Run the encounter immediately. Third, after any encounter has been handled, he needs to connect the square to its neighbors. This uses the card's suit.

Here's an example of what a portion of the cavern "map" might look like. The party enters on the 3D, giving them an immediate choice of direction: KC or 10H.



Connecting Tunnels: On a club, there is a single tunnel going from the square to one of its neighbors. In explored areas, this might already exist, as it's obviously the tunnel the posse used to enter the square. A diamond means there are two exits, a heart three exists, and a spade means there are exits joining the square to all its neighbors.

Jokers can be whatever suit the Marshal wants. He can keep the party going in a certain direction, for instance, by picking a diamond, or open up the exploration by picking

a spade and having the square connect to every other surrounding one. Mark these tunnels as lines crossing between the appropriate squares.

The entrance tunnel never counts toward the number of available exits.

Where to Begin: The posse begins at any of the three central grid squares along the edge of the larger square (their choice). This represents the way into the cavern system after passing the short distance through the mine.

Moving Between Squares: The explorers can only journey between regions linked by lines. Obviously, they can only draw cards for squares they enter. For this reason, there must always be one tunnel which leads to an unexplored area. In short, the caverns always cover the entire 25 squares.

Moving through each square takes about 30 minutes of game time. If an encounter requires a Notice roll while searching the region, this increases to an hour. Should the party decide to split up and explore separately, they are always at least 30 minutes apart (even if in adjoining squares). For this reason, it's wise to stick together.

Return Journeys: Should the party vacate the caverns, such as to go back to town and rest up, they must journey back through the previously determined areas again, each region taking 30 minutes. However, the encounters don't reoccur. Once an area has been dealt with, nothing of interest happens there (unless the Marshal wants something to happen, of course).

It's a Bug Hunt!

In order to secure victory, the party just has to wipe out 15 critters before they get exterminated. The party obviously doesn't know how many critters they face, but after a few hours without any encounters they should hopefully get the message and declare the job done.

Once 15 are slain, ignore any reference to them in the encounters. Should they map the entire complex without actually killing 15, then their job is done also. The others have already fled the area and won't return.

Even if the hombres have lamps, the caverns are still a spooky place to explore. There are dozens of small side tunnels, vertical shafts dug from other levels by the critters over the years, vast caverns that stretch beyond the limit of their light sources, and, of course, the eerie echoes that seem to originate from all around. Play this exploration for atmosphere—not as a straightforward "dungeon bash." Dim the lights if you want.

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Encounters

The Marshal should invent flavor text regarding tunnels or crossing expansive caverns. The cards simply deal with interesting encounters, whether natural, like a cave-in, or with critters. Should combat occur, pick up the deck, shuffle it quickly, and deal cards as normal. Afterward, just use the top card for the next encounter.

When critters attack, they start 3d6" away from the posse, having come out of the shadows, dropped from ceilings, or leaped from side tunnels. Roll once for all the critters, not individually. Gunslingers who don't have a lantern or who are distracted might not notice the critters approaching. Have the beasts make Stealth rolls as if the cowpokes were inactive sentries. Cowpokes keeping an eye out for their compadres, whether they can see into the dark or not, count as active guards.

Tunnels in which fights occur are 2" across and considered to be infinite in length (for the purposes of the combat only), whereas caverns measure 2d20 x2" in diameter.

Deuce: Cave-In (Tunnels or Cavern)

On a red card, the area is comprised of tunnels. A black card means it's a cavern.

Every character in the square must make an Agility roll (-2). Success indicates the character manages to leap out the way and avoids taking damage. A failure means the character is struck by falling rocks for 2d10 damage. A critical failure means the cowpoke suffers 3d10 damage and is buried alive.

Buried characters may extricate themselves. This requires a Strength roll (-6) and each roll takes one hour. Non-trapped heroes may, of course, dig their friend free with a Strength roll (-2). This may be a Cooperative roll. Again, each roll requires an hour of hard work.

On a black deuce, 1d4 tunnel critters take this opportunity to attack the posse as well.

Three or Four: Blockage (Tunnels or Cavern)

On a red card, the area is comprised of tunnels. A black card means it's a network of large caverns.

One of the tunnels leading from the area, picked at random, is blocked by debris. If there is only one tunnel (the one the cowpokes entered by), it means a cave-in occurs behind the posse, blocking their escape. In either case, clearing the rubble takes 1d4+1 hours.

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On a red card, 1d4 tunnel critters attack the posse while they are clearing the debris. Since their hands are full, this likely means the cowpokes are unarmed for the first round. Critters in an area from which there is only one exit were hidden in deep cracks or entered through narrow tunnels in the ceiling (too narrow for the posse to use).

Five or Six: Maze (Tunnels)

The gunslingers enter a maze of tunnels spread over various levels. To navigate the region they must make a Tracking roll (-2). Only one roll is allowed, but it can be a Cooperative effort. With success, they locate the exits (as determined normally). On a failure, they waste 30 minutes but may try again. A critical failure means they must spend an hour futilely wandering before making another roll.

If the first Tracking roll is even, they encounter a single critter, which leaps out from ambush adjacent to the last hero in the walking order. Check for Surprise as normal. If it's odd, they meet 1d4 critters, all of which try to mug the last character. Subsequent rolls have no effect with regard to critters.

Seven: Skeleton (Chamber)

Lying in the chamber is a skeleton. Close examination reveals its chest has burst outward, as if something nasty erupted from within the now-missing flesh. Have the gunslingers make a Guts roll, Marshal, to avoid Fear/Nausea.

This is one of the former miners. He was ambushed, paralyzed, and impregnated by one of the critters. When the eggs hatched, the poor sap suffered a horrible death. The skeleton has a Colt Army .44 revolver in its belt and



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12 rounds of .44 pistol ammunition in the pockets of its jacket. Beside it is a lantern. The light needs fuel before it can be used, though.

On a black card, 1d4 tunnel critters attack the posse while they are investigating the remains.

Eight: Unsafe Floor (Tunnels or Cavern)

On a red card, the area is comprised of tunnels. A black card means it's a network of large caverns.

The ground beneath this area is riddled with tunnels and other caverns. In some places, the ground is a thin crust, just waiting for some unsuspecting traveler to step on it and cause a collapse. Allow the lead character a Notice roll (-2) to detect the hidden crack. Failure means a tragic fall. The depth of the crack is 1d10 x10". Victims can climb back out 10" with a successful Climbing roll, as long as there's no fighting going on.

On a black card, 1d4 tunnel critters take the opportunity to attack the posse as well. Cruel Marshals might have the poor gunslinger in the hole attacked, with critters swarming from side tunnels in the bottom of the pit.

Should a posse member fall through, one of the available exits can be reached through the lower level. Otherwise, it's a blind chamber at the bottom of that long drop.

Nine, Ten, or Jack: Suspiciously Quiet (Tunnels or Cavern)

On a red card, the area is comprised of tunnels. A black card means it's a network of large caverns.

No, really Marshal, there's nothing happening here—absolutely no critters or natural hazards to harass the beleaguered heroes. The area can be considered somewhere safe to rest up or make camp for a spell, or perhaps make a last stand against advancing critters.

Queen, King, or Ace: Nest (Cavern)

The cowpokes have stumbled across a cavern containing a nest of critters. Hiding in the shadows and lurking in crevasses are 1d6+2 tunnel critters, who immediately swarm in to impregnate their prey.

Joker: Burnt Critters (Cavern)

One of the only miners to find this area was attacked by critters. He set several of them ablaze when he stomped one under his boot, killing them and himself in a horrible fire. Fortunately the blaze didn't spread far—it's just the miner's scorched corpse and a few smoldering critter husks—but it makes the area mighty spooky to explore.

The region is swathed in smoke (Dark lighting) and strange screams and wailings echo eerily throughout. Any character making a Guts roll in here who rolls a 1, regardless of his Wild Die, suffers a bad case of the jitters and is spooked as if by Terror.

Critters numbering 1d4 lurk in the area and attack the posse.

Ghost-Rock-Tainted Tunnel Critter, Young

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d4, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armored Inferno:** Armor +2. The hard shell of these critters has become infused with ghost rock dust. When they die they burst into super-hot flame for a brief moment, causing 2d6 damage to everything in a Medium Burst Template centered on the corpse. Victims also have a chance of catching fire. Critter husks smolder for 1d4 days before going out.
- **Bite:** Str.
- **Egg Insertion:** On the round after a victim is paralyzed (see below), the critter injects the poor soul with eggs (another bite attack) which hatch within 1d4 hours. If the victim is alive when the eggs hatch, his death is as gruesome as you're guessing. A surgeon can remove the eggs before they hatch with a Healing roll (-2), 15 minutes, and a minor operation.
- **Paralytic Poison:** Any hero who suffers a wound from the critter's bite must make a Vigor roll (-2) or be paralyzed for 1d4 hours.
- **Size -1:** Critters are about the size of a dog.



SADDLE SORE

JOURNEY O' THE NIGHTINGALE

This weird tale can start with a bit of action or in an eerie way. However it starts, this adventure is slightly different in that it has no true plot—it's just a strange journey. Let the cowpokes look for solutions to the mysteries and invent their own conclusions as to what is occurring.

Use the **Action** opening if you need to motivate your group to board the train. If they're already traveling somewhere, use the **Eerie** opening to set the tone.

Action

While traversing the Weird West the cowpokes are set upon by a horde of Indians far greater in number than the posse. The Indians might be defending their land or maybe it's just a case of mistaken identity. Either way, they don't want to talk about things. Make it clear there are a *lot* of Indians. If you don't fancy using Indians, substitute a gang of mean outlaws, Mexican banditos on a cross-border raid, or even a Mojave rattler.

Before everything goes totally bad for the posse, they hear a train whistle from over a nearby hill. The train appears to be slowing and the driver is frantically waving to the characters to board the train. Jumping on board should seem the only safe way out of the situation.

Once aboard, the conductor locates the posse and asks them if they want seats. He waives any fee, calling it a "friendly gesture to folks in need." He then welcomes them aboard the *Nightingale*.

Eerie

The posse is waiting for a scheduled train. No matter where they are, it is important they are the only passengers boarding at the station. A lonely wind blows at the creaking signpost on the platform, and the heroes imagine they can almost hear voices whispering in its gusts. Suddenly their reveries are broken by the train pulling into the station.

As the gunslingers board, they are greeted by the tall and saturnine conductor, who welcomes each of them with a handshake and grim smile.

Welcome aboard the Nightingale, sirs. Your tickets if you please.

He then shows the travelers to their carriage and informs them the buffet car opens in an hour.

Something Weird Is Happening

During the journey several strange events occur. These can be run in any order the Marshal wishes.

Card Game

A few of the passengers start up a friendly game of poker to pass the time. Use the Gambling rules as normal, but the maximum stake anyone bets is \$10. There are four NPC players with Gambling d6, plus as many heroes as want to join in.

Feel free to create brief backstories for the NPCs, including details like their jobs and where they're going. It's best to have a few notes prepared in case the cowpokes start up conversation.

Should a character win, have him make a Notice roll. With success, he realizes all the hands he won with were dead man's hands (that's aces and eights of black suits, amigo). If an NPC wins, the character who lost the most money makes the roll to figure out his few winning hands were dead man's hands.

Disturbed Sleep

If it's an overnight journey, the posse is allowed to use the sleeper carriage. During the night a gunslinger (pick one at random) suffers a nightmare, in which he feels like he is

CHAP. THREE: JOURNEY O' THE NIGHTINGALE

falling into a bottomless pit. He awakens with a start to see the door to his compartment closing. Whether he rushes outside or waits a while, there's no one in the corridor.

Wet Woman

Along a corridor, one of the posse (and only one, no matter how many are in the corridor) spies a woman wearing a soaking wet dress. She smiles at the character and then enters a nearby compartment. Should the hero investigate, he discovers a middle-aged man sitting alone reading his newspaper. He denies having seen any woman enter the compartment.

Have the posse make Notice rolls (-4). With success, the highest roller (and only one character) catches the date on the paper—it is a year old. Should he raise this matter with his compadres, he's in for a shock—the newspaper date has changed to the date the gunslingers boarded the train. The man, when questioned, says he purchased it at the stop before the characters boarded but hasn't had a chance to read it yet.

Don't Eat the Meat

The train has a buffet car, which is open to all passengers. The food isn't exactly *haute cuisine*, but it's hot and plentiful. During the meal, the cowpoke with the lowest Spirit (pick one at random if there's a tie) notices a strange taste in his mouth. If he spits out his food, he discovers it is rotten. Looking down, he realizes all the food on his plate has spoiled, and is seething with maggots. He must make a Guts check versus Fear/Nausea. No one else detects anything unusual with his food, or their own.

All Aboard...?

Except for the posse, no one else boards or disembarks from the train, no matter how many stops it makes. If there are only a few stops along the route, this probably goes unnoticed. On a journey of longer than two days, allow the gunslingers a Notice roll to work it out. The conductor, if questioned, passes it off with a cheery smile and says,

Well, we can't force folks to use the train, sir.

Last Stop

Whatever else happens on the trip, the heroes reach their stop after dark. Maybe the train had to slow for cattle on the track or took on water at some remote

station. In any case, they are the only passengers who get off at this stop. The *Nightingale* pulls away into the darkness, steadily chugging toward the end of the line.

The station is deserted, but after a few minutes the stationmaster comes huffing and puffing from his house, a lantern lighting his way. He has a puzzled look on his face.

Where did you folks come from? Ain't no trains due until tomorrow mornin'!

Claims the cowpokes just arrived by train are dismissed with a wave of the station master's hand. His voice displays his suspicion.

Did this mysterious train have a name or number?

When told the name *Nightingale*, he laughs out loud.

*You havin' some kind of joke, mister? Shoot, I guess I don't much care where you came from, but it sure wasn't from the *Nightingale*. That train crashed a year ago this very night. A bridge collapsed just up the track from here, killin' everyone on board.*

Looking back, the posse sees no sign of any train!

End of the Line

Should they make the 10-mile trip up the tracks they come to an intact, recently built bridge. At the bottom of the gorge, strewn across the banks of a fast-flowing river, is the rusting wreckage of a train. The engine's nameplate can still be seen. On it is a single word—*Nightingale*.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Fear Level: 3

After a day on the trail the cowpokes come across what appears to be a small wagon train of four vehicles parked in a semi-circle on the side of the trail. The remains of a campfire can be seen beside the wagons, but there's no sign of any horses or people. On investigation, the hombres discover several strange things.

- Lying near the wagons, hidden from view until the posse are right on top of the site, are six human skeletons. The corpses are shrunk and withered, as if they've been lying in the sun for weeks.

- Checking the corpses reveals a rolled-up newspaper. It is dated four days ago and was printed in a town called Watkins Field.

- Aside from the usual gear travelers might need, such as bedrolls, shovels, rope, and so on, all the wagons contain in the way of cargo are shredded cloth sacks. Faint traces of white powder lie here and there. Tasting it reveals it is ordinary flour. There is no sign of any fresh provisions, though there are some tinned goods. If opened, the tins prove to be empty!

- Inside one of the wagons is a manifest. The caravan was transporting flour from a railyard about 50 miles back along the trail (away from the direction the heroes are heading) to a small town about a half-day's ride ahead of them. One name is listed on the delivery manifest—Dwight Mullins.

- There is a lot of torn-up ground around an old tree stump. A successful Tracking roll reveals that four horses were hitched to the tree, but judging by the trampled ground they broke loose and fled at high speed.

Starving Folk

The first town along the trail is Drywater Creek, a typical Western town, population 75. The cowpokes can't help but notice the townsfolk look thin and weary. As they amble through town, folk come up to them—men, women, and children—begging for food. Handing out vittles is a good charitable act, but it quickly attracts more and more hungry people, all clawing at the cowpokes' saddlebags and horses. Stopping the food handouts threatens to cause a riot.

Before that occurs, a single gunshot rings through the air, followed by a strong voice calling,

Leave these good folk alone! They ain't got food enough to fill all our bellies and we're still civilized, ain't we?

The voice belongs to Marshal Walter Daly, who promptly approaches the posse and apologizes for the townsfolk's behavior. He's as gaunt as the others.

I'm Marshal Daly, the law in this town. Say...you haven't seen a group of wagons heading this way, have you? We're expecting a food shipment.

Daly hangs his head when he hears the fate of the wagons.

Dang it! That's the fourth wagon train this month we lost. I don't know whether it's outlaws or Indians, but every time we send out a wagon train for supplies it fails to return. Folk are so weak now we can't even spare men to guard the wagons properly.

Daly has no belief in the supernatural. As far as he's concerned, men stopped the wagons coming through and coyotes ate the drivers.

CHAPTER FOUR: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Dwight Mullins

Inquiries about the name Dwight Mullins lead to the general store. Mullins is the storeowner and, as such, is responsible for ensuring food arrives in town. There's absolutely no food left in his store of any kind. Mullins adds to the marshal's story.

First wagons failed to return over a month ago. We found them empty about 20 miles back along the trail. No sign of the drivers, though. Then the next wagons failed, and the next, and the next. Well, panic soon set in as supplies dwindled. We finished eating all the horses, dogs, and cats a week ago. Folk have gone mad from hunger. I've seen them eating candles, wood chip-pings, and even boiling leather to make it soft enough to chew—anything to end these terrible cravings.

Asked about why they haven't gone to their neighbors for help, Mullins says,

We telegraphed all our neighbors, but they've met with similar fates. Shoot, even the local exporter's depot is running low on supplies. If this keeps up the entire region is going to be littered with corpses real soon now. Real soon.

A Job Offer

If the cowpokes don't suggest it, Mullins brings up the subject of the gunslingers helping out.

Look here—I don't suppose you folks would help us out? You're fit and strong, and look like you can handle yourselves in a fight. How about you go back to the wagons, hitch them up to your horses, and head to the supply warehouse for more provisions? We ain't rich folks, but we can rustle up a suitable reward. Should only take you a few days and you'd be saving a lot of lives.

Mullins supplies a bundle of cash to purchase the supplies (a whopping \$300 if the characters count it). Cowpokes of less-than-honest nature might feel like taking the cash and running. No one in town bothers to raise a posse to hunt them down—they're just too weak.

A few weeks later, news spreads across the Weird West that the entire region around Drywater Creek has been saved thanks to one Jebediah Winchester, who managed to secure food supplies. The newspapers fail to mention he made a vast fortune. There was a great loss of life first, though, due to famine. There's likely to be a few angry ghosts haunting the region for a good while, should the heroes travel back that way.

Assuming the gunslingers agree, they can head back along the trail to the wagons. Each wagon requires only a single horse to haul it. The journey to the large town takes two days, three if there is an el cheapo nag among the horses.

Exporter's Depot

The exporter's depot is in the town of Watkins Field, which straddles a rail line. Typically the depot would act as a clearing house for local grain headed Back East. The current situation being what it is, most folks are hoping for some food coming the other way, so far without luck.

The largest building in town is the depot. Outside are a dozen heavily armed cowpokes with a mean disposition and a tendency to shoot first and ask questions later. Inquiries about buying food lead the posse round to a small office, where the owner, Jebediah Winchester, is busy with paperwork.

Jebediah listens to the gunslingers' requests for food. He then asks to see the color of their money. When shown the amount he exclaims,

Three hundred bucks? Much as I'd like to say that'll feed a lot of folks, I'm afraid it won't. Folk all around here are ordering extra supplies. I only get a finite number of deliveries, you know, and it's costing me money. The depot is nearly empty and I have to ration things. Heck, even we're suffering bad now. Best you'll get is maybe enough food to feed 50 folks for a day. Take it or leave it.

Once a deal is reached, Winchester calls for one of his men to take the wagon into the depot. The posse aren't allowed in under any circumstances, and the guards are willing—some might even say eager—to use force to back up their boss. A short while later the wagon is returned, complete with its food shipment.

Should the gunslingers try to sneak or blast their way into the depot, see **Deception Revealed** below.

Jebediah's Story

Jebediah Winchester is the villain of the story. His business is successful, but not successful enough for his liking. During a drunken rant to no one in particular, Jebediah remarked how widespread crop failure and famine in the local towns could benefit his business. After all, he stands to make more money selling food than exporting it, and folk have to eat. Something heard him, though it wasn't any earthly power.

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The attacks on food shipments began shortly afterward and have grown in intensity. Jebediah doesn't know who is to blame, but he isn't about to ask questions, either. Not while the price of food is skyrocketing.

It's important to note that Jebediah isn't actively in league with evil powers. He hasn't sold his soul or summoned anything, nor does he have any control over the attacks or knowledge of the Reckoners, but his greed is the direct cause of the problems plaguing the region. His corruption was self-induced and is effectively self-fulfilling, for as long as he craves wealth, the attacks are destined to continue.

Jebediah Winchester: Despite being the villain of the piece, Jebediah isn't some ultra-powerful hexslinger or dark disciple, nor is he a Wild Card—he's just a greedy merchant, a self-made puppet of the dark powers. Use the Townsfolk stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*, but add the Greedy (Major) Hindrance. He carries a derringer (5/10/20; 2d6; RoF 1; Shots 2; AP 1) and six bullets.

Insatiable Hunger

On the first night back, just after the posse stops for sleep and vittles, mysterious attackers appear—literally. Emaciated, near-skeletal figures attack the posse out of nowhere. Check for surprise, Marshal!

The shriveled figures—starvation spirits—use their emaciating aura and deadly bite on the gunslingers.

The posse's horses get spooked on the first round and try to bolt. If they're attached to the wagons, then the wagons go trundling off into the night. Otherwise, the horses make a Strength roll (–4) each round to pull their reins free and gallop into the wilds. Finding them is (possibly) another adventure.

Remember, the ultimate aim of this encounter is to provoke fear and reveal part of the cause of the famine, not kill the cowpokes outright.

Starvation Spirit (1 per hero)

Starvation spirits are an amalgamation of souls who died of starvation bound into a corpse-like phantom. They appear as emaciated figures, with pale skin and hollow, burning eyes that speak of an insatiable, terrible hunger.

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

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

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d8. A starvation spirit has an enormous, gaping mouth filled with jagged teeth.
- **Emaciating Aura:** The spirit is surrounded by a terrible aura which literally drains the life from the living. This fills a Medium Burst Template centered on the spirit. Any living creature which enters or begins its turn in the template must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. This Fatigue is removed as per the rules for hunger (see *Savage Worlds*). Victims who die of this attack rise as a single starvation spirit in 1d4 days.
- **Ethereal:** The creature is immaterial and cannot be harmed by normal weapons. Magic and magical items affect them normally.
- **Fear (–2):** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Guts roll (–2).



CHAPTER FOUR: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- **Insatiable Hunger:** A starvation spirit which locates a source of food, such as a field of crops, herd of cattle, and so on, can devastate the resource. Each day, the spirit makes a Vigor roll. Each success and raise means it devours one-tenth of the resource.
- **Invisible:** Starvation spirits are invisible, but can become visible at will (usually to cause Fear). Attacks against an invisible target—assuming someone even knows the spirit is present—are made at -6.
- **Weakness (Exorcism):** Exorcism releases a phantom from its torment. Most ghosts can also be permanently laid to rest if a hero manages to rectify whatever has caused it to remain in our world. In this case, revealing Winchester's profiteering and putting an end to it does the trick.
- **Weakness (Food):** If a starvation spirit is offered food, it must make a Spirit roll or immediately begin devouring it, ignoring all other events around it. A spirit can devour 20 pounds of food (a sack of flour) as an action.

Deception Revealed

Even a cowpoke with the brains of a cactus should be able to deduce something ain't right around here.

Although Jebediah hasn't done much to rouse their suspicions, investigating him further is a logical option—after all, he essentially has control over who eats and who doesn't. And the man is getting rich due to the famine.

Should the posse return to Drywater Creek first, the townsfolk pay them \$400 reward (collectively, not each) and are eternally grateful. Whenever they pass through town they receive free room and board for up to a week each month (gratitude only goes so far, after all).

The Warehouse

Day or night, the depot is guarded by a dozen mean gunslingers. They have strict orders to let no one in unauthorized, and that means hearing the orders straight from the boss' mouth. "The boss said it was okay for me to enter," or similar ruses, do not cut the mustard with these gun dogs.

The warehouse has no windows, but there are two entrances. The first entrance is the large double doors through which the wagons enter. Eight men guard the front

of the building. Heavy chains and stout padlocks (Toughness 12, Lockpicking -4) seal the doors. Only Jebediah has a key.

Around the back is a smaller door. Two gunslingers patrol here. Like the main entrance, this one is also protected by chains and locks (stats as above).

The remaining two guards walk patrol around the building, following the same route over and over. It takes them two minutes (that's 20 combat rounds) to complete a circuit at their usual, leisurely pace.

At night, two lanterns hang over the front door and a single lantern hangs over the back door. These provide good illumination in a 4" radius. These sources cast Dim light (-1) at up to twice the listed radius. Anything up to three times the listed radius is in Darkness (-2). Anything beyond that cannot be seen. Of course, the figures within the lanterns' glow can be seen at much greater distances.

The interior of the warehouse measures 20" by 10". Place a half dozen 1" square markers to represent the meager quantity of barrels and crates. Moving over these obstacles counts as difficult ground.

Guards (12): Use the Outlaw stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*. Each man carries a Winchester '73 (24/48/96; 2d8; RoF 1; Shots 15; AP 2, min. Str d6) and a double-action Colt Peacemaker (12/24/48; 2d6+1; RoF 1; Shots 6; AP 1). They have enough ammo for three full reloads of each weapon.

Gaining Access

How the posse gains entrance is up to them. Going in with guns blazing is certainly an option, but the town marshal and his posse are in Winchester's pocket and arrive 2d6+4 rounds after any shooting begins. The marshal is paid well, but he isn't part of the conspiracy—he just thinks Winchester is paying him to act as extra muscle in case a food riot breaks out.

Marshal Stern Bloom: Use the Veteran Gunman stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*.

Posse (10): Use the Outlaw stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*.

More sneaky groups may elect to disable the pair of guards at the back door and then ambush the patrol, perhaps passing themselves off as the guards as they walk the circuit with hats pulled low and staying to the shadows.

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Another option is to locate Winchester and force him to let them in. Asking around town and making a successful Streetwise roll locates his residence.

The Contents

The warehouse is essentially empty (and dark—the cowpokes need a light source). There are a few sacks of corn, some barrels of smoked meat, and a few crates of tinned goods, but not enough to feed a town for more than a single day. It seems Winchester was telling the truth.

A successful Notice roll shows recent signs of wagon tracks in the sandy floor (the posse's wagon). It also reveals an area of disturbed sand farther away. Boot prints (from the loaders) seem to enter and leave the patch of sand, but there are no prints actually in the area. Should the gunslingers look up, they see a hoist mechanism hanging from the roof.

Tapping the floor produces a faint, hollow sound. Sweeping away the sand reveals a large wooden trap door. Beneath are a wide hole and a ladder bolted to the wall. Shining a lantern into the void illuminates a large subterranean storage area crammed full of boxes, barrels, and crates.

Anyone going down automatically spots the various markings labeling the goods as sacks of flour and grains, barrels of smoked meat, and crates of tinned food, fresh bread, and vegetables. With a successful Common Knowledge roll, the gunslingers estimate there is enough food to end the famine instantly!

Famine Strikes

Despite not being able to control events, Winchester is protected by whatever dark power answered his rhetorical call, as is the warehouse. As soon as the first posse member climbs back up the ladder, starvation spirits materialize out of thin air. They don't much fancy Winchester's plan being thwarted, so they plan to remove all the witnesses. Cowpokes down in the cellar when the fun begins can climb to the top of the ladder as their regular movement for the round.

One starvation spirit per party member materializes from thin air 12" from the trap door.

Check for Surprise and make Guts rolls. Winchester, if present, has never seen the cause of the famine, so he isn't immune to the effects of Fear (neither are his guards, should they enter the fight later).

Starvation Spirits (1 per hero): See page XXX.

Once shooting begins, the guards outside are automatically alerted. One rushes off to find Winchester and get the key, while the others wait outside for his return (it takes 20 rounds). Of course, if the posse has left a door unlocked the outlaws can easily join the fray. Otherwise they wait outside and cover the exits—blasting away from behind Medium Cover at anyone who shows their head. The spirits' emaciating auras affect them just as much as the heroes.

If Winchester is present and the posse is clearly winning the battle, whatever opponents are left turn on him—although he can't reveal any secrets about their nature, he has failed them. It might be he is caught up in an attack and dies earlier in the battle. The critters don't try to prevent this—Winchester is a liability now and someone else can always be found to take his place.

Should Winchester be in his house and the spirits lose the fight, a starvation spirit materializes beside his bed and devours him. By the time the posse arrives to arrest him he's just a dried-up corpse.

The Conclusion

The battle also attracts the marshal and his posse. They arrive after the spirits have been finished off and immediately order everyone to drop their guns. They'll fire if provoked. Winchester's guards, figuring (wrongly) the marshal is on their side, do as he demands. The marshal then demands to know what is going on.

Although the cowpokes are guilty of breaking and entering, and possibly murder if any guards have been shot, they have revealed a vile conspiracy. No charges are leveled at the posse, assuming they agree to keep the matter quiet and spread the story that folks Back East sent extra food shipments to help relieve the famine.

The attacks on food wagons cease immediately, the local newspapers blaming Winchester's men for the murders of the drivers and theft of the goods (Agents and Rangers might suggest this to the marshal as part of their duties to cover up supernatural activity). Winchester's men are all arrested, duly tried, and hanged as murderers and accomplices.

If they haven't returned to Drywater Creek yet, Mullins and the townsfolk honor their promise of a reward when they do. They scrape together \$400 for the posse (collectively, not each) and offer free room and board in the future—up to one week out of each month. Gratitude *still* only goes so far.

CHAPTER FIVE: DEAD MAN WALKIN'

DEAD MAN WALKIN'

Fear Level: 3 when the posse arrives, 4 after the murder

To run this tale effectively, it needs to be placed in an area where the locals grow corn (so avoid placing it in the desert if you can).

The small town of Fairchild lies along whatever route the posse is taking. It's a small farming settlement, the locals devoting their working time to tending the cornfields that surround the place. About a mile from town, before any buildings can be spotted, the cowpokes spy a gallows. Hanging from it is a corpse with a wooden board around its neck proclaiming the word, **MURDERER**. The body is showing early signs of decomposition. With a successful Healing roll, a cowpoke reckons it's maybe a week old. The corpse is clothed, but it's missing its boots.

A few hundred yards up the road is a small wooden sign bearing the town's name. Beneath the name is the population count. It started at 156, but successive numbers have been added and then scratched out. It now reads 149. All the subtractions look fresh. A Notice roll places the age of the markings at no more than a week old—about the same time the gallows was occupied.

Fairchild has few facilities. There's a small church, a small saloon (no dancing girls), a general store, a marshal's office (he's part-time), and a smithy, but that's it. If the locals need anything else they have to head to the nearest big town. Assume this is several days travel unless the Marshal has placed Fairchild near a larger settlement.

Initial Inquiries

Approaching the town requires walking up a rough trail with swaying corn on either side. Two scarecrows can be seen watching over the ripening crops, but there's no sign of anyone working in the fields. A few locals are in the street

when the posse enters town, but they lower their heads and walk in the opposite direction. A Notice roll reveals they are scared of something.

Curiosity should hopefully get the gunslingers talking about the body and thinning population very soon after reaching town. Aside from grabbing folk off the street and questioning them, the most likely places to engage in conversation are the church (with Preach Samuel Dicks) and saloon (occupied by 2d6 patrons hunched over drinks and the saloonkeeper, Henry McTavish). Regardless of which locale they visit, they receive the same information.

Asking about the body provokes the following explanation.

That body is some no good outlaw who began plaguing this town a month or so back. He'd ride into town and take our women and goods like they were his own. We're simple folk, mister, not gunslingers, so we tolerated it as long as we could. Well, he went too far one day and murdered someone. Marshal finally had no choice but to bring him to justice. He was found guilty and strung up as a warning to others a week back.

Questions about the town's dropping population receive a more ominous reply.

Ever since that outlaw was strung up there's been a murder each night. Grisly murders. Horrible, just horrible! We've stopped going out after dark now. Marshal reckons he has compadres who are taking a slow revenge. Call me crazy, but I think it's something more evil than outlaws. Something unnatural.

No one is willing to elaborate much more, being wary and frightened. Mentioning the corpse's lack of boots raises an eyebrow from whoever the cowpokes are talking with. As far as the citizen recalls, the outlaw died with his boots on.

SADDLE SORE

Marshal Pickens

A few minutes after the cowpokes finish talking to the locals, the marshal (Byron Pickens) makes an appearance. A successful Notice roll reveals that although he wears a holster he doesn't wear it like someone who really knows what he's doing with guns. This isn't surprising, as Pickens is just a farmer who acts as marshal when needed. He's about as comfortable with a gun as a follower of the Old Ways.

He introduces himself and inquires about the characters' business in town. Pickens then asks whether any of them have any real experience in hunting down outlaws. Assuming a positive response, he offers them a short-term job tracking down whoever (he never says "whatever") is preying on the town and bringing them to justice. He can't offer much, just \$5 a day each and free room and board with some of the townsfolk while they're in town.

The Church

Should the posse visit the church before the first encounter, have each hero make a Notice roll. With success, they spot piles of fresh dirt around some of the graves, as if someone—or something—has been digging at the graves. A brief investigation reveals all the graves were dug in the last week, as evidenced by the dates on the wooden crosses.

This is a red herring—the digging was caused by wolves (or other scavengers local to the area) and has nothing to do with the adventure. Still, the gunslingers might be figuring walkin' dead are involved—don't stop them thinking this way, Marshal.

Another Red Herring

The corpse of the hanged outlaw might be another suspect. Sure he's dead, but this is the Weird West, amigo. Burning, mangling, burying, blessing, or otherwise messing with the corpse has absolutely no effect on events in the scenario. The outlaw's body is just a piece of meat.

A Scream in the Night

Whether on patrol or catching some shut-eye, the heroes hear a scream during the night. A Notice roll pinpoints the origin of the cry. On arrival, the cowpokes spot a man lying near an outhouse, his throat freshly cut. He's dead, but only just. A gunslinger making a successful Tracking roll spots two sets of boot prints—one obviously belonging to the deceased and another set, which heads off into the nearby corn fields.

Unfortunately, it's dark (–2 penalty) so following the tracks accurately requires a source of light. The corn hasn't been trampled, so there's no obvious trail to follow, either. Another successful Tracking roll leads the party to a scarecrow. Here the prints end as the ground has become much harder. However, the trail appears to end *at* the scarecrow (another red herring).

Should they rush to the church (perhaps still betting on walkin' dead), they find a lot of loose soil. A wolf was digging up one of the graves when the scream scared it away. There's no indication anything came out of the grave (the coffin is intact if they dig down). Heroes who think the hanged outlaw might be responsible are in for a disappointment—he's still hanging in the wind, bootless, and there's no sign of any recent activity beyond the prints left by the posse earlier.

Setting a Trap

Another murder has the townsfolk well and truly scared, so much so that they refuse to leave their houses except for the direst emergencies. This won't stop the murderer, though. Outside of scouting the land for miles around, which reveals nothing of interest except for some wolf prints and wastes an entire day, there is little the posse can do except set a trap. Traps need bait—in this case a human being.

None of the townsfolk are willing to sacrifice themselves, so it's down to the cowpokes. The killer isn't stupid and if he spots an armed man, alone or otherwise, he isn't going to risk attacking. Should the heroes fail to realize this, allow them a Common Knowledge roll to work it out. Carrying a concealed weapon should be fine, of course.

Marshal Pickens might be invited to join the posse in their nighttime vigil. He'll refuse, claiming he's no use in a real fight and he's paying the cowpokes to do the dirty work. Once night falls he locks himself in his office.

Nothing untoward occurs during the next day, since all the murders take place at night. The following night, the murderer stalks the empty streets again.

Sneakin' Around

Draw up a quick plan of the town. Assume there are around 20 buildings in the center, which is where most of the attacks have occurred. Let the posse mark down where the bait is standing or walking and where the others are hiding.

CHAPTER FIVE: DEAD MAN WALKIN'

Unless the posse is well-concealed (on roofs, inside buildings peeking out through windows, or otherwise out of general sight), the murderer won't take the bait. However, if he can't detect any obvious lurkers and spies a lone individual, he sneaks in for the attack. He uses Stealth to get as close as possible before making his move. If he gains Surprise on his victim, he also gets the Drop.

Should the murderer pass a lurker's line of sight, allow them a Notice roll opposed by his Stealth (d10 plus Wild Die). It's dark, so the killer gets a +2 bonus to his roll. Success allows the gunslinger to spot a figure moving through the shadows. It's up to the cowpoke who spied him to decide how to react. Unless he's hiding with his amigos, he can't communicate with his comrades short of shouting, nor can they act on the information he's been told. A raise on the Notice roll over the killer's Stealth allows the hombre to catch a glimpse of the man's face—it's Marshal Pickens!

If a watcher fires a shot and misses, or makes his presence known without engaging Pickens in melee combat, the marshal runs off into the night. Once he's more than 24" from any building assume he's out in the cornfields and can't be detected. After he's engaged in combat, Pickens' unholy bloodlust takes hold and he fights to the bitter end. Note that if Pickens is detected and flees, he can't be found in town the next day, but he will return under cover of darkness to kill again.

Possessed Pickens

Pickens in his normal state is a Townsfolk armed with a single-action Colt Dragoon pistol. The possessed Pickens doesn't try to use his pistol, favoring a bowie knife instead. Pickens keeps the knife under his bed, though only his possessed form knows of its existence.

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

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

Charisma: -6; **Grit:** 5; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7;

Toughness: 9

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean

Edges: Hard to Kill, Improved Arcane Resistance, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep, Improved Tough as Nails, Level Headed, Martial Arts, No Mercy, Quick, Quick Draw, Trademark Weapon (Bowie Knife)

Gear: Bowie knife (Str+d4+1, AP 1).

Cursed Boots

Any character within 3" of Pickens can make a Notice roll (-2) as a free action each round. With success, they detect Pickens' boots don't fit properly, being too large for his feet. This is a fairly major clue that all is perhaps not as it seems. Pickens isn't wearing the boots when met earlier (hence why no one noticed sooner)—he only dons them at night.

So what's going on? Marshal Pickens, like the rest of the locals, isn't rich. Heck, none of them make a decent living, though it's an honest life they lead. After the outlaw was hanged, Pickens snuck out of town and stole the brigand's rather fine boots. Unfortunately, this has allowed the spirit of the outlaw to possess the marshal. By day he's a fumbling no-hoper, but by night he is a lethal killing machine.



SADDLE SORE

Note that just removing the boots has no effect on Pickens' mental state. Only at dawn (when the spirit is compelled to relinquish control), or burning the boots before this time, frees the marshal from the possession.

Pickens' death ends the killing spree, but doesn't remove the true cause of the problem. The townsfolk aren't happy with the outcome (indeed, they're downright shocked to their core), but at least the killer has met some sort of justice. If the posse put two and two together and capture Pickens alive, he remains in a murderous rage until dawn.

Pickens later confirms under questioning that he stole the boots from the outlaw's corpse to replace his worn out ones. However, for some reason he can't fathom, he never wore them after trying them on, at least not that he can remember. He has no memory of how they got on his feet.

Destroying the boots (burning works well) condemns the outlaw's dark spirit to whatever eternal fate awaits it. Failure to destroy the boots doesn't end the murders—the outlaw's spirit is still in Pickens and he'll keep on killing night after night if he gets the chance.

The Murderer's Boots

In the event a character decides to wear the cursed boots, he must make an immediate Spirit roll opposed by that of the outlaw's Spirit (d10 and Wild Die) each time he dons them (or every 24 hours if he never takes them off).

With failure, he is possessed by the outlaw's vile spirit. Each night thereafter, the victim dons the boots. When he does, he gains the Edges and Hindrances from Pickens' stat block (retaining his own as well) and adds 1 die to his Spirit, Strength, and Vigor (max d12+2). He also attempts to commit one murder each night, which is bad news for his compadres if they're alone. To remove the curse, the boots must be destroyed or given to someone else to wear.

The spirit takes full possession of its host only between dusk and dawn. Assuming its activities have not been discovered, after it commits a murder the spirit compels the host to clean himself up, remove any evidence linking him to the crime, and then go back to bed and forget everything that happened.

The boots can only possess one person at a time. Until the wearer fails his Spirit roll, the previous victim remains possessed, though without the boots to grant him the extra powers he doesn't enter a murderous state.



CHAPTER SIX: AN ORNERY TOWN

AN ORNERY TOWN

Fear Level: 3

For wandering cowpokes, the small town of Denton is little more than a stopover point on the trail—somewhere to eat vittles and sleep in a comfortable bed, and then forget about when the posse moves on.

On entering the saloon, the heroes catch wind that something isn't quite right—everyone gives them an irritable glance. Any provocation (which can range from just being polite and saying hello too loudly, or some sarcastic comment about “friendly folk”) starts a fist fight—and something *will* trigger a brawl. Unless a posse member draws a weapon, the locals stick to using fists, feet, heads, bottles, and chairs.

The townsfolk have stats that make the fight fun but not deadly—they're irritable, not psychotic. Novice characters might face off against common townsfolk, Seasoned characters might tussle with citizens using outlaw traits, while groups of Veteran or higher status might trade blows with a few hombres equivalent to veteran soldiers for a challenge, and the rest outlaws.

Ornery Brawlers (2 per hero): Use the Townsfolk, Outlaw, or Veteran Soldier stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*.

Not every ornery sodbuster turns on the posse—once the fight starts it's every man for himself (don't think the ladies are any politer, either). If the players want, you can hand out a few Ally Sheets and let them help run the rest of the fight. Mayhem should be the goal of this encounter, not a bloodbath.

The fight ends just after the characters have defeated all their opponents, as soon as a hero gets a good beating (when someone takes their third wound), or if someone dies. It doesn't finish with a whimper, but with a bang. In this case, it's the report of the marshal's pistol as he marches in through the doors.

The marshal orders everyone to calm down, threatening a few patrons with his pistol to ensure they comply. He then asks who started the trouble. To a man, the townsfolk point at the posse. The marshal then asks (not commands) the posse to follow him. Should they resist or complain he says,

Right now, you aren't in trouble. In fact, you might be able to help us. But if you continue to stand there with your mouth flappin' like a saloon girl's dress, I'm gonna fill you full o' lead myself.

The Townsfolk's Plight

The marshal walks across the street to his office, slams open the door, and sits in his chair, reaching for a bottle of whisky as he does so. He takes a large gulp then hands the bottle to the posse.

Sit down, drink up, and shut your mouths while I talk. Folk 'round here are a mite irritable right now. Dang, most of us haven't slept properly in a goodly number of weeks thanks to that infernal droning all night. Tempers are burning low—we've already buried a dozen folk after shootings and stabbings. Heck, we even had a fight at Old Man Parker's funeral last week. Here's the deal. Either you help us out and find the source of the noise, or you leave town immediately for your own safety.

Discussing rewards isn't a good idea, the marshal being nearly as irritable as his neighbors. He offers a flat \$100 if asked. Pushing him for more results in a shooting match unless he can be calmed with a Persuasion roll. Just a single roll is allowed, though it can be made Cooperatively. Even then, his final offer is a hundred bucks.

Marshal Babcock: Use the Veteran Gunman stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*.

SADDLE SORE



No Sleep Make Mongo Irritable

Should the posse stay in town and decide to catch some shut-eye, they find getting to sleep all but impossible. Denton is being plagued by a humbug (see below).

Finding the Source

Locating the humbug first requires it to start droning. Fortunately, that doesn't take too long. Day and night, the damn critter begins its mating call at random intervals, preventing anyone from sleeping. Tracking down the source of the sound requires a Notice roll at -2 (bad luck for cowpokes with Hard of Hearing). With success, they head out of town.

After a mile or so, the trackers enter a range of hills. The sound appears to be coming from a cave (which has the nasty effect of amplifying the sound). At the back of a short tunnel is a small metal cage, in which sits the humbug. Now, as any folks know, humbugs aren't renowned for locking themselves in cages, so someone obviously put it there.

That someone has minions and they watch over the cave. As the party gets nearer the cave, the hired guns move out of hiding and approach, intent on keeping the nosy

hombres from ever revealing what they've discovered. They arrive on the scene the round after the posse. Unless they've posted a sentry, the posse has to check for surprise.

Hired Guns (6): Use the Gunman stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*. Three carry double-action Colt Lightning pistols (12/24/48; 2d6; RoF 1; Shots 6; AP 1), two are armed with Winchester '76 rifles (24/48/96; 2d8; RoF 1; Shots 15; AP 2), and one has a Colt revolving shotgun (12/24/48; 1-3d6; RoF 1; Shots 5; +2 Shooting rolls, min. Str d6). Each has his ears plugged with wax.

Humbug (1): See *Deadlands Reloaded*.

Defeating all the gunslingers and killing the humbug ends the adventure, but it doesn't end Denton's problems. Things revert to normal for a week, but then another humbug is placed in the cave to torment the locals. Getting to the real villain requires questioning one of the hired guns. With a successful Intimidation roll opposed by the thug's Spirit, the cowpoke convinces the goon to spill his guts.

We were hired by a rancher by the name of Clint Cooper. He lives over near Red Rock, about ten miles from here. We don't know what he's up to, mister. We just get paid to keep an eye on the cave, honest!

CHAPTER SIX: AN ORNERY TOWN

Clint Cooper

Cooper's ranch can be reached without any difficulty. He only changes guards every week or so, and isn't expecting to hear back from them for another three days, so he likely won't receive any warning the posse is on its way. Cooper is outside with three of his hands when the gunslingers arrive.

Trying to bluff a private meeting automatically works if the posse claims to be looking for work. Otherwise, a successful Persuasion roll is required, opposed by Cooper's Smarts (d8) to fool him. If the attempt fails, the rancher insists any business be discussed out in the open. His hired hands remain present, hands resting lightly on their pistol butts.

Clint Cooper: Wild Card. Use the Guardian Angel stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*.

Hired Guns (3): Use the Gunman stats in *Deadlands Reloaded*. Two carry double-action Colt Lightning pistols (12/24/48; 2d6; RoF 1; Shots 6; AP 1), and one is armed with a Winchester '76 rifle (24/48/96; 2d8; RoF 1; Shots 15; AP 2).

Conversations held outside result in Cooper simply mocking the posse and warning them to get off his land before they're shot for being rustlers. Cooper knows that any gossip from interrogated hired hands isn't enough to bring him up on legal charges. He also has enough money to thwart such attempts.

Inside, when the gunslingers turn the tables on him and reveal their true reason for visiting, Cooper is more willing to bargain. He begins by offering them \$500 collectively to walk away and forget about Denton. He'll go up to \$750 maximum, but only when he feels the situation is desperate.

Should this bribe fail, he offers the party a small share (5%) in his gold mine. The mine isn't actually up and running yet, but it will be once the townsfolk of Denton are dead or vamoose. Yep, he's found gold in the local hills and he has no wish to share with the settlers.

His final offer isn't one the heroes probably want—he reluctantly agrees to face the music and tells the posse they can go and fetch the marshal. The cowpokes should be expecting some sort of trap, because this is what's coming! On the journey back to town, Cooper and his three ranch hands attack.

There are many ways this adventure could actually end. The posse might take the bribe and leave town, they might leave before learning anything of use and sneak back later

to find evidence (there are papers in a safe revealing the discovery of the gold), or they might take the money and then return (being low-down, sneaky sorts). Unless the cowpokes are of the less-than-honest variety, there's likely to be a deadly confrontation at some point.

A Happy Ending

Once Cooper is dealt with, and the threat of more hum-bugs ended, the folk of Denton slowly recover and return to normality—those that survived the ordeal, anyway. The marshal pays up as agreed.

As for the matter of the gold, the townsfolk, if told the full story, grant the posse 10% of the first year's income as a bonus. The best they can be bartered to (with a successful Persuasion roll) is 10% of the first two years. Unless you've good cause to limit the amount of funds, assume this gives the party (not each member) the equivalent of the Rich Edge (10% of one year's profits) or Very Rich Edge (10% of two years' profits) for the duration of their deal.

Keeping the gold a secret and trying to open a mine on the quiet is fraught with difficulties. They may be simple folk, but the citizens of Denton won't miss prospecting or mining activity in the nearby hills. They'll want their fair share, seeing as how the hills are inside the town's legal limits.



SADDLE SORE

ONE-SHOT HAPPENINGS

Presented here are a few random encounters the Marshal can throw at his posse. They aren't described in any detail, nor are there any right or wrong solutions. They're just strange events to give the cowpokes something to think about while they mosey along, or to act as hooks for the Marshal's own adventures.

Pick one at random or draw a card from the deck if you fancy using one of these encounters. On a Joker, draw two more cards and run the encounters simultaneously or within a short while of each other. Such a day is going to be very weird for the gunslingers!

Don't use these oddities on every trip. They're best used to break up a long journey, not interfere with an existing tale or divert the party away from a planned adventure.

Deuce: Sack Full o' Dollars

Lying on the trail is a leather satchel, with silver dollars spilled all around. The satchel has no markings to identify its owner. Likewise, the dollars are of no real significance. The value of the coins can be whatever the Marshal desires, though 2d10 x\$10 is a decent amount.

Did the satchel fall from a wagon or stagecoach? Are the coins the illegal booty of an outlaw who subsequently tracks the posse down to reclaim his silver? Could the loot be cursed? What if it is bait in a trap? Or could the find be simple good fortune, yet give the party reason to invent all manner of dire fates awaiting them if they steal the haul?

Three: Draw!

Late one night, a lone gunslinger on sentry spies a shadowy figure at the edge of his vision. The figure suddenly shouts the word "Draw!" Deal initiative cards and run a single round of combat. The sentry isn't surprised, as he already saw the figure (and a wise sentry always keeps his gun handy).

At the end of the first round of combat, the shooter vanishes. Searching the area in daylight uncovers a shallow grave containing a skeleton. A bullet wound through the back of its skull seems the likely cause of death. Tucked into its belt is a single-action Colt Peacemaker engraved with an inlaid pearl dove on the grip.

Who was the unknown gunman? Who shot and buried him? Was his ghost trying to alert the cowpoke to the existence of the grave for a reason? Could the pistol be a relic, or is it cursed? What action will the killer take if he sees a hero carrying the pistol?

Four: Throwing Shoes

One of the cowpokes' horses throws a shoe, forcing the posse to head to the nearest town to find a blacksmith. A few days later, the same thing occurs to the same nag. This goes on for a month. Without a shoe, the horse moves at half Pace (half the running die as well) and Riding rolls suffer a -2 penalty as the mount moves unpredictably to avoid injuring its bare hoof.

Is it simply faulty workmanship? Can a horse be cursed or possessed? Does the shoe throwing occur at the same time of day (say, sunset or midday)? What happens if the gunslinger buys a new mount? Can a good horse suddenly turn into an el cheapo nag?

Instead of throwing a shoe, the horse could suffer similar problems with its saddle straps. Pace isn't affected, but there's a chance the rider could be dismounted as the saddle suddenly comes lose. A roll of 1 on the Riding die, regardless of Wild Die, means the saddle slips, causing the rider to fall. Or maybe it is a saddle burr infestation (see *Deadlands Reloaded*).

CHAPTER SEVEN: ONE-SHOT HAPPENINGS

Five: Dang Thieves!

A posse member begins to lose small items. Perhaps a few coins or bullets go missing, or he finds his rations have been depleted mysteriously. A little paranoia is a healthy thing, especially in the Weird West, where *they* really are out to get you.

Is another posse member (or NPC) to blame? Perhaps some unseen ghost is at work, trying to get the gunslinger's attention. Or maybe the cowpoke is simply losing his marbles due to the heat?

Six: Is This an Omen?

A dove flies out of some nearby scrub or trees, flies toward a randomly chosen hero, and suddenly drops out of the air like a stone, landing at the cowpoke's feet. It's dead, with no sign of injury. If there's an NPC present, he mumbles a comment about bad luck coming soon.

The dove died a natural death, and the gunslinger's presence was pure coincidence. Of course, he doesn't know this. If a few bad die rolls occur (naturally) in the next few sessions, he may actually start believing a streak of bad luck has struck and try to seek a cure for a non-existent ailment.

Seven: This Tastes Like Crud

Ah, vittles! After a long day riding the trail the cowpokes settle down to a hot meal. For one hero, though, the meal isn't as good as he hoped—all his food tastes of ash. If others taste his food it seems perfectly fine.

As usual, there's no fixed explanation for this—it's just a weird occurrence. Of course, the cowpoke might not see things that way. Is this an omen of his becoming Harrowed soon? Maybe he's just ailin', or the dust from the trail has left a foul taste in his mouth.

Eight: One Week to Live

Outside a small town lies a graveyard, through which the posse must pass to reach the settlement. As they mosey through, one of them (chosen at random) spots a grave marker bearing his exact name above an open grave. Far worse is the date inscribed for his death—exactly a week from today! The townsfolk don't know anything about the grave, claiming it wasn't there yesterday when they laid an old timer to rest.



SADDLE SORE



Is this really a warning of impending doom? Has the posse made an enemy who is planning to ensure the grave is filled on time or just wants to frighten the gunslinger? Could there be a rational, if bizarre, explanation behind the appearance of the marker?

Nine: Doppelganger

On entering a saloon one of the cowpokes is met by a saloon girl (Doris) who immediately swoons over him. The locals always refer to the hero as Mister then his surname (so, Mister Jones) and are very polite. Better still, he receives free drinks at the bar and seemingly has a room prepared for him.

The locals pass off any questions like, “Who do you think I am?” and, “What do I do for a living?” as jokes and never give a straight answer to such inquiries. Differences in mannerisms and clothing likewise go unnoticed, with comments like, “All part of your job,” being typical when possible discrepancies are raised.

There are several critters in the Weird West that can impersonate folk, though usually they have to kill the person first. Could this be something new? Then there are those bizarre coincidences where two folk share near-identical appearances and names through a quirk of fate. Which one is this? Even if the doppelganger is human, is he feared or respected? What does he do for a living? What

trouble might the gunslinger enter into if his “twin” finds out he’s been taking advantage of his name (and his girl) while in town?

Ten: Weird Dreams

A cowpoke suffers from a bout of strange dreams. The dreams are more symbolic than an actual story he can follow, featuring an eagle with golden claws, towering cliffs, dark shafts containing twinkling gold flecks, and a large hammer. The next settlement the posse reaches is Eagle Bluff! Sure enough, they have a gold mine, though it closed down years ago after miners began reporting strange happenings.

Has some entity guided the character to the town, and for what purpose? What lurks in the abandoned mine? What does the hammer symbolize? Is the hero simply reading too much into his troubled dreams?

A Marshal who has an adventure planned can alter the symbolism of the dream to match the details of his story, thus creating a stronger link to the campaign—and giving the gunslinger more to think about as his dream slowly becomes reality.

Jack: ...Cassie?

A barking dog catches the attention of the cowpokes. It’s an average-looking mutt. The hound keeps barking, running in a certain direction, and then coming back. It doesn’t take a genius to realize it wants the posse to follow.

Assuming they mosey after the mutt, it leads them to a deep hole in the ground. Echoing up from the bottom (60 feet) is a child’s voice. The kid (Tommy) claims the hole opened up beneath his feet and he fell in. He’s broken his leg and can’t get out.

Is this simply a case of a loyal hound saving its master? What if Tommy actually fell into the hole years ago and was never found? All the posse finds is a skeleton with a broken leg, despite having talked to the kid. Or maybe Tommy is

CHAPTER SEVEN: ONE-SHOT HAPPENINGS

alive and well, but on being rescued says his dog died last year. What if Tommy's bones have been gnawed on or there is a tunnel branching off into the gloom?

There's a ranch a few miles away. This is Tommy's home. Whether the posse bring back the youth alive and well or just his bones for burial, his parents are grateful to the cowpokes.

Queen: Spooked

One of the posse's horses suddenly rears up and gallops off. The poor rider must make a Riding roll to remain seated. Should he succeed, he has to make a Riding roll each round opposed by the mount's Spirit. With success, he brings the horse under control. On a failure, the mount keeps moving at a run.

Maybe a rattlesnake or coyote simply startled the horse, or it trod on something sharp. Then again, perhaps it sensed something far more malevolent. Has the nag unwittingly saved its rider from an ambush? Alternately, an unseen entity has used *puppet* (or a similar mind control ability) to lure the rider into a trap.

King: Unseen Stalker

The Weird West is a vast place, with hundreds of miles of emptiness filling the horizon in all directions. So why does one of the cowpokes get the feeling someone—or something—is lurking close behind him, just over his shoulder? When he looks behind, there's nobody there, just a strange feeling of being stalked.

After a week or so, the feelings become more intense—not enough to cause a distraction in combat, but at other times the gunslinger can almost feel hot breath on his neck. When he shaves next, he catches a glimpse of someone right behind him in the mirror (or other reflective surface). Maybe it's an old enemy, one confirmed as eating dirt, or a complete stranger. Again there's nobody present.

When the cowpoke goes back to shaving, his mirror suddenly cracks. The cracks, to the cowpoke at least, form the word "Die!" The glass then falls away from the mirror, destroying the evidence before anyone else gets a chance to confirm its existence. The strange feel-

ings cease and do not return. Gunslingers using a pool as a mirror are startled when it suddenly begins to ripple, as if a stone had fallen in. The ripples distort briefly to form the word.

Ace: Tick, Tick

Ideally, this event should occur a few days before the Marshal has a combat encounter planned.

While some folk can tell the time using the position of the sun, most prefer to use a watch. Whenever a randomly chosen cowpoke checks his watch it shows a minute to noon, regardless of the actual time. It's still ticking, but the hands never move.

A Repair roll and an hour are required to give it a good cleaning and check the mechanism. Strangely, everything seems to be in working order. The hero can wind on the hands normally, but it's always just before noon next time he pulls the watch out to check. This continues until after the next fight (or better, the next duel), after which it begins to run as normal.

Did the watch prophesize the impending fight? Was it just a piece of grit lodged in the mechanism that caused it to malfunction? Could a gremlin have made its home in the device?

