

Wherein a terrifying infestation threatens Coffin Nail, Arizona...and Ms. Applewood takes action!

THE STORY SO FAR

Just a few nights ago, Ms. Applewood – schoolmarm in Coffin Nail, Arizona and accomplished scientist – finally perfected a clockwork invention she'd been working at for years: the Icarus Wings. She'd received the inspiration in strange and haunting dreams, in which she heard cold whispers in whirring gearwheels.

But when she looked out the schoolhouse window she saw something that made her blood run cold. Looming tall over Coffin Nail's mining district stood a new geological formation that hadn't been there the day before – a mound. Worse, closer inspection revealed it to be more anthill than rock, although few cared to guess how *big* the ants might be...

In truth, the Hunting Grounds' nocturnal manitous that gave Ms. Applewood her eerie scientific insights also drew fearsome, unnatural predators from deep underground – a highly intelligent mated pair of rattlers. Turns out Mama Rattler was just about to birth the brood. Now the mound's interior swarms with rattler young 'uns, and every living person in Coffin Nail's in grave danger of ending up their next meal!

THE SETUP

Run this tale of creeping fear when the posse passes through Coffin Nail. The town is a flyspeck mining burg without amenities, but its saloon – the Gilded Cactus – is rumored to stock quality whiskey.

The first thing you notice when you ride into town is an 80-foot-tall, conical mound of sand, soil, and rocks looming over the town's mines. One thing's for sure: You've never seen a mining operation result in a mound of earth like this one!

Just then a prim-looking woman in a dress approaches you in the street. She says in an English accent, voice quavering slightly, "Good day, strangers. I am Ms. Applewood, schoolteacher in this town. And we...we have a problem with the children. My students, to be exact. Not to mention the miners. I need your help."

It's up to your cowpokes to decide whether they ignore Ms. Applewood's plea. It's clear from her demeanor she's not a damsel in need of rescue, but Coffin Nail seems to be in a fair sight of trouble.

● **Ms. Elenora Applewood:** See opposite page.

COFFIN NAIL, ARIZONA

Fear Level: 3

There ain't much to Coffin Nail, but its people are tough as leather. With all the mining families putting down roots to dig for copper and ghost rock, Ms. Applewood has a full classroom. The mound's sudden appearance has boosted the Fear level all around the area. If you're using this One Sheet with *Stone and a Hard Place*, the town's located just east of Tombstone.

- **Gilded Cactus:** Sadly, the rumors are false. Barman and owner Vance Kremkin sells watered-down liquor and hasn't seen any of the good stuff in years.
- **Miners' Union Hall:** The miners meet here to discuss policies. Land records are stored here too.
- **Swembrough Mining Supply:** This general store specializes in mining tools and supplies.
- **Schoolhouse:** Ms. Applewood teaches the town's children here, and has a workshop and apartment in the back. She has 17 students in all.



BAD FOR BUSINESS

Once the posse members agree to help, Ms. Applewood takes them to the Miners' Union Hall, where the locals are having an emergency meeting. After living with the eerie mound for two days, they're relieved to have any outside aid they can find. Union chief Orville Hopper explains the situation:

"I reckon we got some trouble with that mound, strangers. The first day, a few miners up and vanished. The next day Zeke Gephart went missin'. But he left behind an arm and a whole mess o' blood. Today, we got some children missin' up in the hills. But we need that mound checked out pronto. If there's any critters in there, we need you to exterminate 'em!"

Needless to say, the miners are also concerned with the mound's appearance cutting into profits. Orville offers to hire the cowpokes to handle the problem pronto, and he's willing to pay each hero \$1,000—inclusive of hazard pay—to see the job done.

- **Orville Hopper, Miners (12):** Use the Townsfolk profile in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

WE'VE GOT TWO PROBLEMS, AMIGO

The posse has to split up if they want to investigate the mound and search for the missing children at the same time. That's when Ms. Applewood exclaims,

"Pish posh, there's no need for you to delay in investigating the mound and its tunnels. I have just perfected a new invention...one that will allow me to soar upon winds in search of my students, the children. Never fear. I shall find them."

Ms. Applewood assures the heroes of all the aid she can proffer, just as soon as she returns. Until then, she asks them to reconnoiter the mound.

INFESTATION O' WORMS

The mound is infested all right—with worms. Except these varmints are of the Mojave rattler kind! The upsurge of earth into a mound was caused by the adults rattlers, which made the inside into a nest. Most of these young are fated to die off, but plenty more survive if they reach those tasty miners.

The 80-foot-tall mound is pocked with about a dozen tunnel entrances. Every one of them arrows straight for the center, where they all meet in a large cavern whose walls and ceilings are held in place by gluey secretions of rattler slime. In the pit at the center squirm hundreds of hungry rattler young 'uns.

The heroes should tread carefully. Any attack on the young stirs them into an attacking frenzy. Plus mama and papa—a mated pair of full-grown rattlers—join the fracas 1d6 rounds later.

- **Rattler Young 'Uns (5 per hero):** See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.

...BUT THEY DON'T CHECK OUT

The biggest problem the heroes have is the adult rattlers, who are far smarter than the average worm. A large enough explosion inside the mound kills all the young, but the trick is placing explosives. Mama and papa do all they can to stop that from happening.

If the heroes survive their first trip into the mound, Ms. Applewood returns later that day with the children, all safe and sound. Hearing the situation, Elenora suggests that she could build a clockwork "clicker"—a ground spike designed to draw the adults away from the mound—so the posse can plant dynamite charges. (She uses her Gadgeteer Edge to do so.) This plan succeeds, but mama and papa come back angrier than hornets...and bent on destroying Coffin Nail!

- **Rattler Papa:** See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*.
- **Rattler Mama:** See the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Mama's got Smarts d12, and the Vengeful (Major) Hindrance. She uses her demonic cunning to keep the young 'uns safe. And you read that right, Marshal—she's a Wild Card!

Ms. ELENORA APPLEWOOD

Elenora is an English mad scientist, although she prefers the term "clockworkist"—which is appropriate because the ghost steel she uses for her spring work has sent her a little cuckoo! She stayed in the West after her father's death to become a beloved schoolteacher in Coffin Nail, Arizona.

Elenora is tenacious and forthright but she tends to get her head in a muddle worrying about protecting the children. The West is no place for the young, as she likes to say. To good friends she's known as Nora; acquaintances may address her as "Miss Applewood."

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Science) d8, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Repair d10, Shooting d6, Taunt d6, Weird Science d12+1

Cha: 0; **Grit:** 5; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Curious, Dementia (Phobia, Major—Can't allow children to be harmed)

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Brave, Gadgeteer, Improved Level Headed, New Powers, Professional (Weird Science), Power Points, Strong Willed

Powers: Fly (Icarus wings), quickness (Acceleration armature) *stun* (Static charger); **Power Points:** 25

Gear: Gadgets, tool kit, steam wagon.

"Elenora Applewood" created by Tanya Beeson.