

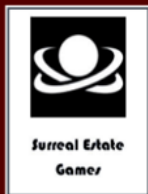
TALL TALES

WILD WEST B/X FANTASY ADVENTURE GAME



TUMBLEWEED TALES VOL 1

ROBERT GARITTA



Tumbleweed Tales

Volume 1

By Robert Garitta

A collection of three short Western adventures for your Old School Roleplaying Game, being particularly suited for and sponsored by Deputy Emeritus Mark Hunt's ~Tall Tales~, a thrilling game reflecting the exploits of knights of the genus bovine, desperados, purveyors of patent nostrums, soldiers of fortune, and diverse others!

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≡Tumbleweed Tales≡

Volume 1

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THE LAST STAGE OF GRIEF

The characters are having a smoke or passing a bottle around in front of the stage line office when the 10:30 stage pulls in, just an hour late!

The sheriff and three shotgun toting deputies also arrive to supervise transfer of the stage's lock box and the characters are told to move along. Near the stage office is a snake oil salesman's Wagin and the salesman is doing a decent job selling turpentine as a purgative or something similar.

The snake oil tradesman winds down his sho as the stage pulls into town. Several people watch, half-interested, but keeping back from the deputies. The passengers are quickly taken off and shooed clear by the Stage Agent: Alexander Busby, a thin, scowling, and annoyed young man.

One of the passengers is a lovely young lady named Regina. She will attempt to make conversation with the characters. She absentmindedly plays with a beautiful gold and diamond locket around her neck.

If none of the characters are biting Regina strikes up a conversation with Busby who is absolutely smitten. After talking with someone for a bit Regina goes into the stage office to freshen up

while waiting for the stage to change horses and prepare to depart. One of the passengers grumbles about the fifteen minute wait and how maybe they'll get that time way down in another hundred years.

The snake oils salesman is busy polishing bottles, inspecting his wagon and horse and seems to be getting ready to leave as well. He climbs inside to make final preparations. The deputies depart after giving the party suspicious looks.

The passengers are about to board the stage when Regina screams and begins hunting around. She lost her locket somewhere! The stage is delayed for Regina's overly dramatic screams and tears. She gives the Station Agent and the characters who talked pretty to her her address two towns down the line. She pointedly offers a 500 GP reward for the necklace.

Regina's hysterics can (and should draw a crowd). Roll on the table below to bother and bewilder the players. All the characters are 1 HD Normal Men and Women. Feel free to use any or all of them. Very little happens in a small Western Town and it is really a matter of making your own entertainment.

☞☞☞ Gapers and Gawkers ☞☞☞

1- Some Chinese day laborers chatting incomprehensibly unless a character speaks Cantonese (they joke about how all these folks are crazy and think talking loud and slow makes them comprehensible.)

2- An elderly gentleman's horse gets spooked by the yelling. Make a Quickness Save to grab the reins. Otherwise the man is thrown on a 3 in 6 chance and knocked unconscious.

3- A pickpocket is working the crowd. Each character is robbed on a 1-2 unless they make a Quickness Save.

4- Rowdies. They mock Regina's cries of woe. They will melt away if confronted (1-3) or begin a brawl (4-6).

5- Town Drunk. Harmless, 2 hit points. He wanders around asking questions. He may become abusive if not answered.

6- Reporter for the town weekly. He makes notes, asks questions and takes statements.

7- Soiled Doves. Several saloon girls with their hearts in the right place (and most of the rest of them arranged in a pleasing manner) swarm Regina trying to give her some of Jerome Kirby's Salubrious Serum (50 Proof) and otherwise console her.

8- Several urchins begin tearing about underfoot looking for the locket.

The stage pulls out after a few minutes of fruitless searching heading to Culvert City. Before that the group may have some altercations with the crowd

As the stage passes out of sight the snake oil salesman gives a small cry and scoops something out of the dirt. He heard nothing about the lost locket being busy behind his wagon.

If the characters do not act, Busby will, and tell the salesman the necklace belongs to a passenger and to give it up. He pointedly avoids mentioning the reward Regina offered. The salesman, Jerome Kirby, refuses to hand over the necklace claiming possession is 'nine tents to d' law!'

Kirby demands a finder's fee for the necklace. Twenty dollars will do for him. If the characters are stingy (or wary) Busby will step up, haggle badly, and then give Kirby 200 GP out of the office safe.

There are a few problems with this transaction.

If asked why Kirby doesn't go after the stage and find Regina himself for the full reward, he will cite time and other commitments. If pressured he will admit he was promised a free neck stretching after his serum removed the fur from a prize Corgi.

If characters ask to examine the locket they will notice that it is conspicuously clean for something that was just on a very dirty street. If they grab it away from Kirby (Quickness save at -3) they can check it further. If they check the diamonds, they do not cut glass. Similarly the gold of the locket is a cheap plating job and scratches off under a spur or knife point.

☞☞☞The Con☞☞☞

This is pretty simple. Regina is in cahoots with Jerome Kirby of course. She went to use the Necessary and stuck her 'valuable' locket in her purse. She feigned losing it. Jerome feigned finding it. The whole scheme hinged on the supposedly clueless Kirby not parting with the valuable locket without some compensation. If he gets 20 GP its about 19 GP profit on a very crummy locket. The address Regina gave and her name are both made up of course. Characters or Busby going to Culvert City will be directed to a rendering plant if they give that address.

Kirby will attempt to leave at this point. The salesman uses his gift of gab on Busby, handing him locket for free to prove his good intentions. He produces a small vial of Doctor Gladstone's Balm of Good Tidings and gulps it (he succeeds in this on a 4 in 6 chance as it is an oft practiced move.)

All present must make a save or fall down laughing as he whips his horse into a gallop.

If the characters say they are waiting for some trick, and make an observation Save, the vial palming is spotted. Kirby must roll for initiative and only imbibes the balm if he wins. Otherwise he runs for the wagon, producing a derringer and firing back at any pursuers.

If the characters were hanging around they might not have their horses handy (characters letting their mounts follow them around like dogs should be gently discouraged. (Have a horse snatch the hat off a lady or a deputy). In this case they may try to jump on the wagon, which requires a Dexterity check. Hanging on to the wagon and climbing aboard requires a Gumption save. A fail merely means the character must try again next turn.

Kirby has a pistol under his seat and will use it to deal with boarders though at -2 to hit. He might also need to make an Observation save to avoid a collision or crashing the wagon.

If the group captures Kirby (entirely possible) and takes him to the sheriff they find he is a known con man and wanted for breach of promise. There's a 100 GP reward for him which they can

collect in a few days. The sheriff telegraphs ahead of the stage to tell his counterpart in Culvert City to hold Regina for questioning after getting an description from the characters. He thanks them for the smart piece of work and may offer them job as deputies. They at least have his good will.

Jerome Kirby Desperado (Snake Oil Salesman is his occupation, not his class) 3 HD (8 hit points) AC 7; Atk Small Derringer (1d4 damage); Move 120'; Save 16; AL D; XP 50; Special: Doctor Gladstone's Balm of Good Tidings (1 dose), and Doctor Sampson's Liniment.

While Kirby is a Desperado he has gotten several potions from Regina to enhance his act. His main stock in trade is Kirby's Salubrious Solution -50 proof, the rest a combination of herbs and creek water.

That night Kirby imbibes his hidden bottle of Doctor Sampson's Liniment, twists the bars out of his cell window and makes his escape, perhaps swearing revenge.

'Regina' 4 HD (10 hit points) AC 7; Atk Small Derringer (1d4 damage); Move 120'; Save 16; AL D; XP 50; Special: Lady Godiva True Love Tonic Water (1 dose), and Doctor Sampson's Liniment (1 dose). Hatpin in her hair (1d3 damage).

RATTLESNAKE RHAPSODY

The group is riding ... somewhere when as dusk draws near they spot a lone roadhouse on the trail. Lanterns are being lit in the windows and smoke puffs from the chimney. As they are approached the proprietor, Lou, greets them accompanied by his young daughter, Cindy. Lou is gruff with the little girl pulling her away from some boards laid across the ground. If the players look they see the boards are over a sinkhole.

A nights lodging and meals are offered at reasonable rates. Lou's a fair cook and baker it seems. Stew is almost done and there are hot biscuits. A good deal for 2 GP.

If the group is dead broke Lou adopts a severe look but at the urging of his daughter offers the group dinner and to let them bed down in the barn in exchange for chopping wood, drawing water, and a few similar chores in the morning ("Care for your own horses. There's limits to my charity.")

During dinner Lou's neighbor Bub, a prospector, comes by. He's a rough looking short man in need of a bath and shave. He seems to have little patience for Cindy. Bub shows up at dinner time.

Cindy is very interested in where the characters

are from and what adventures they've had.

If the characters are friendly and indulge her Lou's manner softens a little and he pours everyone a libation. If the group has any money to give him he places it in a strong box under the counter. The night is otherwise pleasant and the group gets a good night's sleep. Or not

☞☞☞ Spooky Doings on the Lone Prairie ☞☞☞

- 1- An owl hoots. Or is it an owlhoot?
- 2- A coyote howls.
- 3- The wind moans free.
- 4- The outhouse door bangs open in the wind. Mind the boards if you try to close it!
- 5- A cat starts after a mouse in the barn, running after it over at least one person's face.
- 6- A horse has severe gas.

Their sleep is broken at dawn by a high, plaintive scream from Cindy!

Running outside they will discover the boards are kicked away from the hole. Cindy's screams are coming from the hole. If they call to her she screams for help. The rest of her speech is an

incoherent babble broken by screams.

Lou is also up and quickly grabs a length of rope and a lantern if no one else has. He has a an old shoulder injury and can't climb a rope and begs one of the characters to descend and get his little girl.

The rope will safely hold about 200 lbs, -a grown man and Cindy. One character can descend or ascend safely at five feet per round. Two characters could descend but the ascent would be at 2 feet per round. A number of characters equal to the ones descending must hold the rope. Lou can also hold onto the rope despite his bad arm.

A lantern could be tied to the end of the rope. A character could also hold it in one hand while grasping the rope but all Quickness saves will be at -2.

The hole is twenty feet deep and covered in deep soft sand. Cindy is unhurt due to her soft landing.. Descent takes four turns. Ascent takes four turns for one character or 10 for two with Cindy. If two people make the trip there is a 5% chance per turn of ascent it will fray and break. Characters must make a Quickness save to land softly otherwise taking 1d6 damage. It takes one round to lash Cindy to the rope. Cool headed characters might

realize it will be quicker to let one character ascend with Cindy (if there are two then throw the rope down to the other character.)

It becomes apparent why Cindy was screaming. The hole is swarming with rattlesnakes. Characters will be attacked by 1d4-2 snakes each turn. Gunslingers have a chance to shine here, since they get one attack per level against the snakes. Characters can be considered to have initiative each turn since they are blasting away while the snakes have to ... rattle and then strike.

Any shot that hits a snake kills it at this range. Even so it is likely a character could be bitten at least once. Following the characters in the hole attacking, the snakes strike, then characters not holding the rope may take shots, though these are at -2 and any missed shots will hit a character on a 1 in 6 chance.

☞☞☞ Meanwhile ☞☞☞

Bub has finally snapped after too many days panning for gold without shade. While the rescue is going on (hopefully) Bub will enter the roadhouse and grab the lockbox. This takes five rounds. He then runs off towards his mule which is 600 feet away and waiting in a ravine.

Spotting Bub's theft occurs on a 2 in 6 chance or an Observation Save if a character watches the roadhouse. Chasing Bub may require several Riding Saves. Assuming he starts with a 600 foot lead it requires 5 such checks. Each cuts 120 feet of the distance.

The first time a shot hits Bub or even comes close (miss by two or less) he reins up and surrenders.

"Lock me up! String me up. I don't care! I saw that little girl fall into that hole and all I thought about was this filthy money. I deserve no mercy!!" Bub cries breaking down.

Lou is less than forgiving. "If I ever set eyes on you again you're dead. You're worse than those serpents in the shaft. They announce when they're going to strike. I'll be telling the Marshall about this. You best keep moving till you hit South America."

Miraculously, Cindy is unhurt besides some sprains (she has 3 hits left!). Lou can doctor any characters bitten with Professor Peter Worthington's Salve of Salvation.

Rattlesnake: HD 1; AC 3; Atk 1 bite (1hp + poison); Move 130'; Save 15; AL N; XP 60; Special: Lethal poison +1 initiative.

☞☞☞ Why Did It Have to be SNAKES?! ☞☞☞

A word about snakes and their lethal venom. In the rules as written you make a Toughness Save or die. To give characters a fighting chance a failed save causes one hit of damage per round. This damage is cumulative. If you get bitten twice you take two points of damage per turn etc. this can still add up quickly. If the characters use the Salve of Salvation (Lou has three doses) they will stop this ongoing damage and be immune to further damage for five turns. Taking the salve takes one round.

As for the snakes themselves, it is better to avoid being bitten at all. Players could improvise 'armor', wrapping blankets around their arms and legs that will improve their armor class by 2.

As an alternative to shooting it out with the serpents, characters can opt to carry a torch instead of a lantern. The snakes will recoil from the fire and if the characters move slowly sweeping the flame about they can avoid bites for a turn by making a Gumption save. This doesn't work if other characters are shooting at the snakes.

WICKED RIVER GAMES

The group is finally traveling first class -maybe on the steamboat Missouri Mogul. This hundred mile leg of the Missouri River runs 100 GP for first class and 40 GP for deck passengers.

First class passengers get a small cabin and access to the dining room, lounge and other entertainments (gambling!). Deck passenger have access to the deck. They carry their own food and hopefully some protection from the weather and their fellow passengers! Many of the passengers are settlers using the steamboat to save time on their journey. The first class passengers are relatively affluent with business to look after or very private business indeed.

The boat boasts a small theater and a piano in the lounge. The lounge often has a number of games of chance going on.

Noble Clay Desperado 4 HD (10 hit points) AC 3; Atk Small Derringer (1d4 damage); Move 120'; Save 16; AL N; XP 50; Special: Clay has a spring loaded holster strapped to his forearm. This will extend a derringer into his hand ready to fire allowing him a +2 to initiative when he uses it.

Noble Clay is always running a card game for his

fellow passengers. Witty and charming, Noble is a professional gambler busily fleecing the passengers. He's a regular on this leg of the journey.

Clay is actually a better cheat than a true gambler. Glass framed portraits are tilted to give him a view of cards. Several servers have a secret code of signals to inform him of the card his opponents hold. He uses his special ability to introduce winning cards to his hand, making sure the servers or other staff provide a distraction.

Noble Clay was 'hired' by the Captain Templeton Poole. Captain Poole provides protection for the cheat and passage. In exchange he takes half the winnings. Noble has begun to resent this arrangement and plans to jump ship when they get into town.

Captain Templeton Poole 2 HD (8 hit points) AC 5; Atk Pistol (1d6 damage); Move 120'; Save 18; AL D; XP 50;

Cape. Poole is a thug to put it politely. He is an expert pilot and knows every snag (submerged tree) in the river. Noble's plan to desert is already known him and he has made arrangements with a professional gambler at the next port. He's made sure this trip would be more lucrative than usual.

The Captain is courteous, though oily, to the first class passengers, though he doesn't mix with them. He's downright mean and bullying to the deck passengers. Characters may observe any of the following base acts.

☞☞☞ Base Acts by a Villain!! ☞☞☞

1- Crew abuse. A deckhand mopping the deck accidentally gets water on the captain's shoes. He receives a clout on the head knocking him senseless. The captain will continue beating the crew man if the characters don't interfere.

2- A female deck passenger with a sick infant asks the captain if there is a doctor onboard. She is coldly ignored.

3- The captain aims for a small rowboat with a couple of boys fishing, slamming it aside, laughing as they end up in the water.

4- The captain and several crew eject a first class passenger from the lounge after the man accuses Clay of cheating him.

5- Captain Poole spots a couple of hands taking a breather from work. Seizing a rope he whips it at them hollering for them to make themselves useful or be made into fish food.

6- The captain grabs a stray cat and throws it overboard.

Poole plans to catch the Mogul on a snag he knows well (he even tied a yellow ribbon to a lone oak tree root that rises above the water.) Just before sunset he will snag the boat on the tree and order full stop to avoid serious damage.

Characters on deck near the bow will notice the ribbon on a 2 in 6 chance. Characters watching the river have a better chance to spot it by making an Observation save.

Colliding with the snag is more gentle than you might expect. In fact the boat only lurches from the engines stopping, before the snag is hit.

Characters must make a Quickness save if standing on deck or be thrown down taking 1d3 damage.

Over the next few minutes the boat lurches as the Captain 'tries' to free it and crew with shotguns move onto the deck. Finally the Captain grabs a megaphone and hollers, "All you passengers! Grab your baggage and come deck at the gangplank."

A crewman explains the Captain needs to lighten the boat to get off the snag. He will then let them back on.

Crewman 1 HD (5 hit points) AC 5; Atk Shotgun (1d10 damage); Move 120'; Save 18; AL D; XP 50;

The crewmen force the deck passengers to form up at the gangplank. This includes the characters if they thought to ride cheaply. Any obviously armed passengers will be disarmed. A pair of crewmen hustle Noble Clay to the gangway carrying a large valise.

The gangway is lowered into two feet of water and the deck passengers will be forced to disembark unless the characters fight the crew. There will be one crew for each character and an officer with a lever action rifle and 2HD.

Getting to the shore (if fighting fails or is decided against) requires a Quickness roll to avoid taking a spill and getting completely submerged. Some of the passengers may need help. Clay for his part seems to be concerned with his bas and holds it over his head the whole way, stumbling and almost going under and ruining his fancy duds (-1 AC till he changes clothes).

The characters and a 5d6 passengers are left ashore to watch as the Mogul pulls free of the snag and then paddles off down the river followed by curses and a few rocks!

Abandoned on the shore as the sun sets, and possibly unarmed it is time to examine options. The next town is a good thirty miles away. Since

the passengers include women and children (about 2/3's) the best policy would be for a small party to make the trip and come back with wagons and help. The deplorable state of the passengers' defense is explored.

This is when Noble steals the show. Opening his precious bag he produces four six guns and a sawed off. He has 100 pistol rounds and 12 shells for the shotgun.

Clay admits to his part in gambling and fleecing the passengers (though he does not admit to cheating outright) and explains he knew something was going to happen from snatches of conversation and hid the guns in his bag just in case.

He is a Desperado though and keeps the shotgun for himself in case the passengers are still sore losers. The characters get first pick of the guns since Clay thinks they are men of action and he hasn't cheated any of them. He also volunteers for the rescue party again because he doesn't want to be left with the passengers.

Before the group can set off a large party of horsemen approach. It is Caleb Hawser , a known outlaw and gunslinger and his gang. Caleb made a deal with Captain Poole, Poole marooning the

passengers at an agreed on spot for Caleb to rob them without any law to interfere.

Not that Caleb planned to give Poole his share (one quarter). Poole for his part expected this kind of double cross. This was why the crew instructed the first class passengers to leave their bags in their cabins. He'll go through the bags and remove any jewelry after stopping a few miles downriver.

Caleb Hawser Legendary Gunman HD 6 (24 hit points); AC 0; Atk 2 pistols (1d8); Move 120'; Save 13; AL N; XP 750; Special: +2 to hit in in a showdown. +6 initiative.

His gang is less impressive. There is one less outlaw than there are player characters.

Outlaw: HD 1 (3 hit points); AC 5; Atk 1 weapon (1d8); Move 120'; Save 17; AL D; XP 15; Special: The outlaws don't check Morale while Caleb is directing them.

The characters have a slim chance. Caleb is arrogant and assumes the Captain did a better job of disarming them than is the case. Again, Poole was a lousy partner. If the characters decide to make a stand they get surprise on a 4 in 6 chance. Failing that they do have initiative on the first turn.

Caleb will be caught with his pants down and he is AC 4 for the first turn. Clay will unload both barrels the first turn and then dive behind a dead tree. The passengers will grab some dirt at the first shots and be no help.

Assuming the characters win the fight (and they just might) they have four horses and can make it to the next town in a few hours. There is a 2500 GP reward for Hawser and 500 GP for each outlaw dead or alive.

If the characters need more help one or two of the male passengers may have hidden a pistol in their luggage and pitch in as Normal Men with 3 hit points.

Enterprising characters may try to get after Captain Poole. However, the Mogul is at least as far as the horses can walk and the old scoundrel has stopped at a relatively wide and deep point in the river. Trying to grab the Missouri Mogul will require a long swim. It is also away from the nearest town. Justice for Captain Poole will have to wait for another day.

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