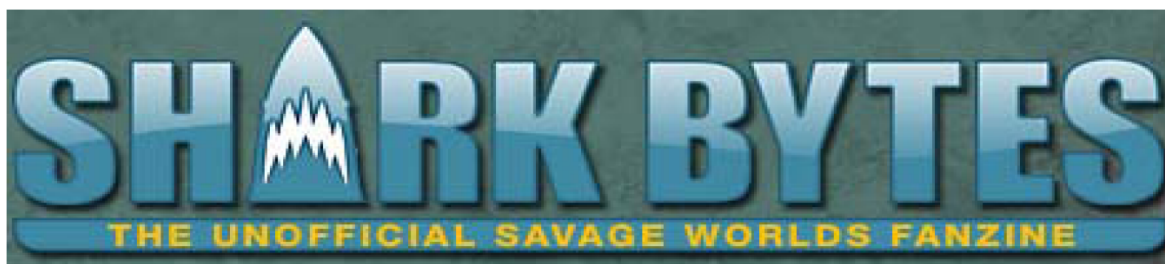


SHARK BYTES

Deadlands Issue





Volume 3, Issue #2

January, 2008

Deadlands: Reloaded Issue

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Headin' Out West

Every time I start writing one of these editorials, I'm challenged to think up something new to say about *Shark Bytes*.

"Talk about how delayed this issue is," demands the muse. (No Greek goddess, this muse...she's more like a manitou.) I talked about how late the last issue was. "Get people up to speed on the changes in staff." I think we covered that last time too. The muse rejoins, "Tell 'em how good this issue's going to be." Think of something *else* (I say to the muse), and quit making such a mess in there!

Lately, a lot more of my time has been spent demanding ideas from the muse. Last month I was fortunate enough to join Pinnacle's *Deadlands* team as a freelance writer and editor. If I could give you the lowdown on the amazing stuff being developed right now, you'd probably be as excited as I am. But I'm not about to do that, so you'll just have to take my word for it. We're talking several hundred kilotons of pure cool.

But now I'm feeling the effects of the Obsession Hindrance. It isn't enough for me to do research and write...I'm headin' out west, partner! I've started running a bi-weekly *Deadlands* campaign for my friends. I've begun amassing a collection of classic *Deadlands* rarities (latest acquisition: a limited leatherbound copy of *Deadlands Classic*). I've even started snapping up, and painting, *Deadlands* miniatures.

Remember I said my muse is more like a manitou? Well, she's hungry, too. She demands careful thought and extensive brainstorming before she gives me the ideas. So what better way to use the time I'm not writing about *Deadlands*...than by painting *Deadlands* miniatures and thinking up ideas for *Deadlands*?

The manitou loves it...but my wife remains less than amused.

Given my current fixation on all things *Deadlands* (if you're counting, yes, I'm about to say "*Deadlands*" ten times in one editorial), this issue can be seen as a natural extension of that. On the other hand, I share my obsession with legions of Savages, all of whom just can't get enough of the Weird West. This issue is dedicated to all you folks who are just as obsessed as me.

M. A. Cutter
January 4, 2008

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Around the World

Locations are always helpful to give you an idea or two, especially when they come with maps, personalities and rumors.

Ice Wall: End of Darkness

by Emiricol

"What is the Ice Wall, you ask? Why, boy, that's the very thing that makes it possible for us to survive up here, away from the Shamblers. It is the Perma border, where the temperature almost never rises above freezing for long enough to thaw out a hunk of meat the size of a dead body. It is the last and best place of refuge for the remaining few threads of Humanity, except a couple of Enclaves in the border regions—what used to be the rest of Canada, and Scandinavia.

What does the Ice Wall protect? Well, here in the West it covers most of what used to be Alaska, the northern edge of Canada, and fortunately, most of the Nunavut territory of old Canada. Nunavut is home of the Inuits, and without them sharing their knowledge with us over here in the Restored United State of Alaska, we'd be polar bear chow. But damn if it doesn't also cover in the East some of what was once North Korea and much of eastern Russia! They're always raiding each other, those Kimmies and Commies, and us too if they can get away with it. Damn them, I hope they get the Shamblers! I lost a good buddy in the '57 Incursion, about the time you were born I think it was. Bastards ate their victims, no better than Shamblers. Never surrender to a hungry Kimmy. Oh, and there's some Verdenen on a huge island just east of Nunavut. Funny thing, they called it Greenland back when there was a world, but it was always mostly ice. Funny ha ha.

You don't know anything but snow and ice, yet soon you will be old enough for The Choosing, when God or your friendly local priest, depending on how you look at it, selects among those who have come of age for the honor and glory of service in a Border Team, fighting off hordes of Shamblers and worse, all to bring back from the Borderlands meat, gas and if God is willing, medical supplies and a Playboy. All the things humanity needs to survive in our new ever-frozen homes. You're a Merican, boy. You'll do us proud, by God."

Overview

Welcome to Ice Wall: End of Darkness.

The world ended almost two decades ago, overwhelmed in an apocalyptic frenzy of blood and gore. In November of 2056 Russian domestic "eco-terrorists" blew up what they believed was a secret laboratory for medical experimentation on animals. They were part right—there was medical experimentation going on. What they didn't know was the nature of that experimentation. They unleashed Pandora's Box when the formula vaporized, and was inhaled by the terrorists and the staff within. A new plague that quickly came to be called The Shamblers, which might have been inspired by the Devil himself, spread from the facility outside St. Petersburg across Europe, The

Middle East, Africa, and by plane to every major city in the world. The Shamblers virus quickly spread by air to just about every place on the planet.

Everywhere the the new plague went, the effect was immediate and obvious. Someone infected by being clawed or bitten seriously enough to be badly wounded died within a day or two of exposure. Others, having been exposed to the virus by air somewhere along the way, died of natural causes or violence. Either way, within moments they arose, a shambling corpse bent on eating the living. The next few months was one long Dawn of the Dead scene. Military units deserted en masse, civilians killed one another for any and all reasons and added more Shamblers. Military bases went into lockdown, some overrun first by desperate civilians, or then by the Shamblers that arose when the defenders hosed down the crowds with machine gun fire.

When it was all over, the only human survivors anyone knew about were those who were in the frozen areas of the north, or mountainous regions. Most of these died the next summer when things thawed out—including the frozen, preserved corpses of those who died in the apocalypse. Some though lived in permafrost areas, or areas that could be defended long enough to reach the next freeze, and these survived. But without modern society to import all the things they need, survival is tenuous at best.

These new societies survive largely because of the efforts of the Border Teams, which are groups of able-bodied men and women who venture out to gather food and salvage. For most cultures, service on a Border team is a rite of passage of sorts, and is expected of every fit and able-bodied citizen. There's no room for slackers in the zero-margin survival of what settlements remain.

Characters

Characters in Ice Wall are archetypal. The society of the day demands specialization to a certain extent, although most everyone knows how to use a spear and a dagger. PCs should play up the archetype they select! Warrior, Scout, Technologist and Artisan are some examples.

Characters in Ice Wall don't have a Race (they're all Human), but do have a Culture. These are Kimmie (N. Korean), Commie (Eastern Russian), Innit (Inuits), Claver (Enclaves) or, most commonly, Mericans (Alaskans). Because in most cases all PCs will come from the same location, there are no stat modifiers for different Cultures. However, everyone has the Outsider Hinderance unless dealing with a person from the same Culture.

Kimmie: Language (Russian), based on Baekdu Mountain and its crater lake, frozen for 8 months out of the year.

Commie: Language (Korean), based in Irkutsk

Innit: Language (Inuit), based in Frobisher Bay, i.e. Iqaluit

Claver: Language (French, English, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish (Greenland), or Russian depending on native area)

Merican: Language (English), based in Barrow

Gear & Money

Any gear appropriate to a modern setting is available. Money is not used, except as a form of Credit from the merchants of a particular Culture. Credits from other Cultures are worthless. One gets Credits by taking salvage or manufactured goods to a merchant, who gives back Credits in the amount of 1/2 the value of the goods (3/4 with a relevant skill Raise). Gasoline, however, is always traded at a 1:1 rate.

Because all goods use the same scale, don't bother changing the values of goods. "Cost" is a relative concept anyway. But do remember that barter is the common means of exchange.

When Bartering, NPCs will always want to receive a 25% higher relative value than they are giving (10% higher if you get a relevant skill Raise). However, anything they need urgently has a relative value of twice the book value. If food is \$5/meal and a person wants to feed his family for the week it takes him to get to safety, he might pay \$10/meal. However, goods he will have no immediate or near future need of have a relative value of \$0. You can't trade bullets to a guy who has plenty of bullets, or snow shoes to a guy who never leaves his Enclave.

Edges & Hindrances

PCs can take GM-approved Edges and Hindrances from any *Savage Worlds* supplement. However, no Arcane Backgrounds or Weird Edges are allowed. Edges from *Necropolis* and *Tour of Darkness* are particularly relevant.

Veteran Warrior

Requirements: Seasoned, Shooting d8+

Most of the people who go out of the fortified settlements are adept at making their shots count against the usually quite hardy undead they often face. When using a Ranged Weapon, the Veteran Warrior may do extra damage to Undead with Called Shots as usual.

Geography

Among the best preserved of the new-era societies is the Restored United State of Alaska, or (R)USA. Though Barrow is the population headquarters, now with some 5,000 full-time resident survivors, the oil fields of nearby Prudhoe Bay are occupied by a couple hundred Border Team members and civilian technicians make the journey from Barrow and extract as much oil as they can transport back to Barrow prior to the next thaw. Additionally, there are many roads from Prudhoe Bay to areas south, and when frozen, Prudhoe Bay becomes the bustling center of Border Team forays to the towns to the south. Over the years, most of the Shamblers from the fall of mankind have been destroyed. Of course, it is important to remember many wander the wilds still, and the cities are not entirely cleared especially within buildings they are often trapped in. Unfortunately, much of the salvage Border Teams seek is located inside these buildings.

The (R)USA is the default starting location because of its relative abundance of not only oil from Prudhoe Bay and natural gas locally, but the abundance of caribou, bears and whales to eat—and the locals who know how to catch them. Also there are many settlements to the south to

explore, the proximity of the Ocean (useful if the PCs ever travel to the Commies or the Kimmies), and because of the abundance of maps available on the Internet.

Additional survivors exist around the northern hemisphere in Norway, Greenland, Russia and a mountain in North Korea.

Campaigns

I have thought of three main campaign types (and a fourth as an alternate setting idea). The first is a mostly local, "ensure the survival and growth of civilization" campaign, in which various animal and weather and geographical challenges are the norm, and the Shamblers are an intermittent menace. The second is a "travel around and build alliances while thwarting the Kimmies and Commies" campaign, with lots of travel (and the challenges that entails), possibly with the PCs having to fix some local problem before getting their cooperation. And then blasting "the bad guys" in a final apocalyptic battle. The third idea is a campaign to locate a vaccine to the Shamblers and introduce it into the populace somehow. It would entail travelling far, unravelling mysteries, lots of undead mayhem, and avoiding Kimmies and Commies and their agents.

Other Ideas

The Shamblers are just the mindless foot soldiers of something...darker. Something more evil. An intelligent hierarchy of undead masters (vampires work well for this) who control mobs of Shamblers and harvest food and reinforcements from farms of humans in warmer areas. Perhaps they don't really want the vaccine to be found? And just maybe those dirty rats from (that other culture over there) are in cahoots with the masters...

In this case it is entirely reasonable to have a campaign where PCs infiltrate an enemy encampment and destroy it from within, or create an underground railroad to rescue a few humans.



The Stuff of Legend

The Stuff of Legend showcases Legendary (or at least more experienced) characters available as NPCs, with some detail about tactics and their impact on the world.

You're in that tavern or spaceport, waiting for the next big adventure to come along and you need an NPC to spark a little side adventure. Here are two that fit the bill and get at the spirit of what we'll be looking for in this column. Even though they aren't Legendary, they're not Novices either.

A Pair of Wild Cards

by Robert A. Green

Carin Altair (WC)

Veteran Space Pirate Freebooter

Race: Human; **Sex:** Female; **Profession:** Space Pirate/Mercenary

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Piloting d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor (Major), Greedy (Minor)

Edges: Alertness, Attractive, Dead Shot, Dodge

Gear: Reflective vest (+10 Armor, covers torso, only works against lasers), molecular knife (Str+d8, AP 2, cannot be thrown), laser pistol (15/30/60, 1-3d6, RoF 1, semi-auto), 2 laser batteries (provides full load of shots for laser pistol), lockpicks

Description: Medium build, red hair, green eyes. Scar across right cheek. Carin will do just about anything if the price is right, though she has some scruples. Not many, but a few.

Nefek the Enchanter (WC)

Seasoned Evil Mage

Race: Human; **Sex:** Male; **Profession:** Enchanter/Wizard

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d10

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Arrogant (Major), Mean (Minor)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Arcane Resistance, New Power (x2), Power Points, Wizard

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), staff (Str+d4, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 handed)

Powers: *Barrier* (wall of stone), *blast* (fireball), *bolt* (lightning bolt), *dispel* (dispel magic), *teleport* (phases out).

Power Points: 15

Description: A scrawny, bearded man with white hair. He wears the usual wizard's robes, inscribed with arcane symbols, and carries a gnarled oaken staff. He usually keeps a dagger with him as a back-up weapon.

Baubles and Trinkets

Baubles and Trinkets concerns itself with game aids of one kind or another. This issue we present a game aid that was previously presented as a standalone download. Here we provide a description of it to encourage use. The original download (sheets of each counter) can still be found in the Downloads section at the *Shark Bytes* site.



Ammo Depot

by Lord Skudley

"Move over Smith & Robards! There's new competition in town and its name is Lord Skudley's Ammo Depot. You need bullets! They're here. You need arrows, they got 'em. Gasoline, yup. Shootin' aids, by the dozen! We even got a bit of that nu-cleer power as well as some stuff that you'd think hasn't even been invented yet! Yep, every kind of ordinance you could want can be found at Lord Skudley's Ammo Depot. Check out the catalog and then hop on over to the store to pick up what you need!"

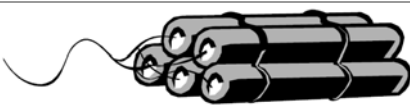
—Billy Inar's enthusiastic review from the *Tombstone Epitaph*

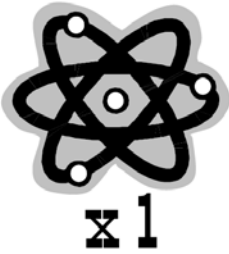
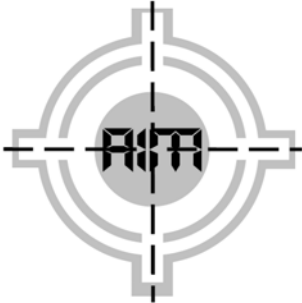


Lord Skudley would like to thank **Jack Ace & Noshrok Grimskull** of the *Savage Forums* for their input and suggestions.

Lord Skudley's Ammo Depot Catalog

Amounts shown in brackets

Pistol Bullets [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Rifle Bullets [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Assault Rifle [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Machine Gun {Burst Grouping} [3, 4, 9, 16, 25]	
Shot Gun Shells [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Cap & Ball or Sling Ammo [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Shotgun Slugs [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Special Ammo, Missiles & Rockets [write in amount]	
Grenades [1, 5, 10, 20]	
One Stick of Dynamite	
Five Sticks of Dynamite	
Bombs/Nitro [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Gas/Flame Thrower Fuel [1, 5, 10, 20]	

Power Cells or Units/Power Points [1, 5, 10, 20]	
Flechettes Crossbow Bolts [1, 5, 10, 20]	
One Arrow	
Five Arrows	
Ten Arrows	
Aim Marker [color to match as needed]	
Target Marker [color to match as needed]	
Target Acquired Marker	

I Love an Adventure

...and who doesn't? Here we showcase short adventures to drop into an existing campaign, or to provide an evening's entertainment.

By the Book

A *Deadlands: Reloaded* Adventure

by Theron Seckington

The Setup

The characters are members of a posse that has recently captured the Fancy Dan Gang, a pair of dangerous outlaws. They are now in a town where they could turn them in for a cool \$500 reward. It should be a simple matter of finding the county sheriff and handing over the gang.

It is late afternoon by the time the posse finds the sheriff's office, but it is, quite oddly, boarded up and strongly barricaded. Anyone who presses an ear up to the doors may make a Notice roll at -2. If they succeed, what they find is nothing auditory but instead an awful stench that wafts out of the building. The rest of the town is going about its business, but they steal nervous glances at the office every now and then.

As the posse debates what to do, a small balding man wearing a deputy's badge rides up and introduces himself as Eric Brock, the deputy in these parts. He informs them that the sheriff's office is closed right now and if they have any business with the department the posse should come to the temporary office at the Old Bear Hotel, about a block away.

The Situation

When the posse arrives at the hotel, Brock and another deputy take the bandits away and lock them in a storeroom. After a moment, Brock comes back and invites the posse down to the hotel bar and orders a small beer for everyone. He then explains, picking his words carefully, that the sheriff seems to have shut himself up in the office for two days. The county would love to have these two criminals locked up for good, but there are several laws in the way that were designed to prevent corruption in the sheriff's office, and the current situation makes it difficult.

First, the posse would need the official county seal, which the sheriff keeps with him. Second, the sheriff's signature is required. Third, the office needs a signed confession from the Fancy Dan Gang, although with a wink Brock informs the posse that they'll get that done if nothing else. Finally, all of this has to happen within 12 hours or the bandits will be released.

Brock says that the sheriff himself also has the only set of keys to the office, but he tacitly authorizes the posse to break into the place. Before they go, Brock says the town has a no-weapon law and thoroughly disarms the posse

before he allows them to go seek out the sheriff. Clever posse members might hide a small gun or knife on their person, which Brock will find with a Notice roll. Brock has a Notice of d6 (no Wild Die).

The Siege

The barricades on the office are very thorough. Brock will follow the posse, but refuses to go inside or to help apprehend the sheriff. He tells anyone who asks that the office has been the target of numerous lynch mobs and riots, so they had barricades constructed that are secured with iron bars. Breaking through the thick doors isn't easy; they have a Toughness of 12. Some players might try the boarded up windows, which have a Toughness of only 10. With a successful Notice check, the characters notice a small porch on the second story. The barricades are lightest on this floor, and the door and windows only have Toughness 9. Getting to the second story, or through a window, will require a successful Climbing roll.

If the posse is having lots of trouble getting in, Brock will give them a sledgehammer to assist them. Treat as a Maul from the SW Core Rulebook.

Unfortunately, all the doors are trapped (even the one upstairs). If someone thinks they may be trapped, allow a Notice roll at -2. A system of pulleys will tug on the triggers of a shotgun, placed about waist height; anyone who bashes in a door will be blasted for 3d6 damage. If the posse figures this out, or suspects some kind of trap, they are allowed an Agility roll to dodge the blast. Angry PCs may inform Brock that this clearly indicates their life is in danger, but Brock will tell them that defending one's home with lethal force is allowed in the town and the trap is protected under the law.

The building's interior has a Fear Level of 3. Upon entering, an incredible stench washes over the posse; they must make Guts checks or suffer a -1 to all actions while in the office. The inside is lit by rows upon rows of candles; between the smoke and the candles the inside counts as Dim lighting.

If they go in through the front...

Immediately to the right of the front door is a reception desk; its window is closed and boarded up. Shouting and banging on this window is of little use.

To the left is a small corridor that ends in a right turn, leading to the cells and sheriff's desk. Posse members who pause to listen can make a Notice roll. With a success, they catch snippets of a man muttering to himself and occasionally chuckling. Anyone who succeeds with a raise distinctly hears a man say, "Everything turned out all right in the end, eh, Joshua?" and a small pause before the man mutters again.

If they break in the back door...

Go right to the events described in **The Holding Area**.

If they break in upstairs...

Deal with **The Stairs** and then go to **The Holding Area**.

The Holding Area

Entering the holding area requires another Guts check. The sheriff is seated at the far end of his desk, covered with his own filth, talking to a decapitated head sitting on the desk. The head has a ragged hole between its eyes and is certainly not answering back. A gate is drawn between the holding area and the hallway; the gate has a Toughness of 14 and a simple lock on it (no penalty to a Lockpicking roll).

If addressed, the sheriff will laugh and say he's sharing a private moment with his brother before he has to go away and begs their pardon, but he'll have to see them later. The sheriff will fail to acknowledge that his brother is clearly dead, and in fact the mention of this will cause him to become uncomfortable and doubt the posse's sanity. He refuses to allow the county seal to leave his person and will grow more aggravated the longer the posse stays there. If the posse wears out its welcome, the sheriff will suddenly panic and shoot at them through the gate while he retreats upstairs with the severed head.

The county seal is locked in the Sheriff's desk drawer. This will require a Lockpicking roll at -2 to open. Sheriff Marlin has the desk key on his person.

The Report

If the posse decides to go report any of this to Brock, he'll tell them that the Sheriff's brother died a week ago in an accident. Pressing Brock for further information requires a Persuasion roll. If they succeed, Brock will tell them that three days ago the Sheriff heard that some madman had attacked a local woman who lives near the cemetery and went to investigate. The sheriff returned, depressed and sullen. Apparently, the madman was Joshua Marlin, the sheriff's brother, and the sheriff was forced to deal with him. The posse is of course free to interview her but doing so nets no additional information and wastes valuable time.

Going after the Sheriff

Eventually, the posse will probably decide it's time to put a mad dog down. Brock will give them their guns back and allow them to assault the sheriff if they testify that he is mentally unfit for duty. This will require a Persuasion roll at -4, but any evidence they might be able to present will help to mitigate this penalty. Any character with relevant authority (such as an Agent or a doctor) gains a special +2 bonus. Brock would prefer they disarm the sheriff and bring him back alive, and will give them all clubs to help apprehend him.

The sheriff, if he was not disturbed, is still on the ground floor. If the posse moves to unlock the gate or break it down, he scoops up his brother's head in one arm and fires on the posse with the other, screaming about how nobody's going to make him kill his brother again. The sheriff shoots to wound, not to kill, and often aims for arms and legs. His first priority is whoever is working at the lock or trying to break down the gate. Before the posse gets through, he'll shout, "Come on, Joshua!" and attempt to dash upstairs, taking two steps at a time. If the stairs are intact see **The Sheriff Upstairs**. If not, see **The Sheriff**

Downstairs. If the players attempt the stairs, see **The Stairs**.

The Stairs

If the posse attempts the stairs, going either up or down, they will find that the sheriff sawed most of the steps in half. Characters who are not Small have a 50% chance of falling and taking 2d6 damage, destroying the stairs as they tumble through them. Obese or Brawny characters always destroy the stairs. Clever posses who hope to catch the sheriff off guard by coming through the upstairs window must also beware this trap, although if they're moving cautiously they may make a Notice roll at -2 to discover the trap first. Once the stairs are gone, characters may use an action to make a Climbing roll and clamber to the top.



The Sheriff Upstairs

The sheriff will set down his brother's head and take cover at the top of the stairs, using the narrow staircase to his advantage to pop out of cover and fire on the posse. If it looks like they're going to make it up the stairs after all, or if he takes a Wound, Frank will dash off and hide under his bed. What happens next is up to the posse, but he might be tracked by the stench or a blood trail. Frank is on Hold and may even get the Drop on anyone who disrupts his hiding. If Frank thinks he can take a character out silently using his truncheon he'll do it. Ultimately, Frank will try to make a run for it, either out the window or by leaping down the stairs. If he takes more than two Wounds and has no way out, Frank will start sobbing and insisting that it wasn't his brother's fault while he fights, inflicting an additional -1 penalty to his actions.

The Sheriff Downstairs

The sheriff will set down his brother's head and take partial cover behind the stairs, taking advantage of the room's darkness to make it effectively Dark when trying to target Frank. From this position he can fire on the posse freely. If he takes more than two Wounds and has no way out, Frank will start sobbing and insisting that it wasn't his brother's fault while he tries to make a run for it, past the characters.

The Aftermath

If the posse gets the seal and delivers Frank dead or alive to Eddie Brock in time, they collect the reward on the Fancy Dan Gang and can ride off into the sunset. Brock offers the posse a chance to stay on as deputies for a week to make sure the town stays orderly in the aftermath of Marlin's madness. He offers \$25 each for their services. Otherwise, he wishes them well and begins to clean up the sheriff's office.

Frank Marlin (WC)

The Mad Sheriff

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (County law) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Delusional (His brother Joshua is alive), Small

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Nerves of Steel, Quick, Quick Draw, Speed Load

Gear: LeMat grapeshot pistol (12/24/48; 2d6; RoF 1; Shots 6; AP 1), 2 spare cylinders, Smith & Robards bulletproof vest, club, scattergun (6/12/24; 1-3d6; RoF 1-2; Shots 2; +2 Shooting rolls, SBT), 20 buckshot shells.

Abilities: Fearless, Hardy, Home Turf (Ignores lighting penalties in the office), Territorial (+2 to Strength rolls)

Note: Many of Marlin's Attributes are the result of his madness, not physical ability.

A Licensee Dispatch

from the folks at

12 to Midnight

Howdy Savages!

12 to Midnight has been hard at work behind the scenes this year, and all that work is starting to come to light. If you haven't been keeping up on the Pinnacle forums or our own, here is what you've missed:

- **Bites of Midnight** – In October we released the first in a new series of free one-sheets from 12 to Midnight. Visit our [freebies](#) page to grab a copy of *Bites of Midnight: Josephina's*.
- **Midnight Cellar** – October also marked the grand opening of our very own [online store](#). If you haven't checked it out, we'd appreciate it if you'd take a few minutes to browse around and tell us what you think. We'd also appreciate any feedback on what else you'd like to see in the store.
- **Ed's Midnight Tales** – This new collection of adventure outlines written by Ed Wettermann is scheduled for a November release.
- **Wild Things** – We released our first classic fantasy adventure for d20 System back last February. Unfortunately, the Savaged edition turned out too deadly so we held back on release until we could get it just right. You'll have this title in your hands very soon.
- **Neal's Midnight Tales** – Like Ed's and Jerry's before, this is a top-notch collection of adventure outlines that originated in our run with the *Modern Dispatch* e-zine. This set comes courtesy of our newest partner, Neal Hyde. Look for it by the end of the year.
- **ETU Designer's Notebook** – Every Monday we've been posting a new essay on the work going on behind the scenes for our first plot point campaign book, *ETU: Degrees of Horror*.

Other than layout and editing of the above titles, we've set aside all other work to focus on ETU. We expect to wrap up writing by the end of Spring 2008, when we'll resume work on *12 Hours to Midnight*, *The Prodigal*, and *House on Dale Island*. Hopefully you're looking forward to ETU as much as we're enjoying writing it. In the meantime, stay Savage!



New Recruits

Someone just pop in for game night, but you want to get going right away? Need a quick and dirty, colorful character to add some flavor to your setting? *New Recruits* has got what you're looking for!

The Hensworth Gang

by M. A. Cutter

Randall Hensworth

A gunslinger and bounty hunter, Hensworth has weird horrors in his past and a head full of nightmares. Some say he was once a farmer, but gave it up after he lost his wife to a swarm of tunnel critters. Randall's made a vow to serve the Union and its railroad above all else.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Dreams, Illiterate, Vow (to aid Union Blue)

Edges: Ambidextrous, Quick Draw, Two-Fisted

Gear: 2 Colt Peacemakers .45 (12/24/48; 2d6+1; RoF 1; Shots 6; AP 1), knife (d6+d4), gun belt, 30 rounds, Stetson hat, horse, saddle, bedroll, canteen, rollin' tobacco.

Oliver P. Knapp

Oliver's a detective with a hero complex. He's got knowledge of weird horrors, and the cojones to wipe 'em out.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d4, Guts d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Law) d4, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 8 (Run d10); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Cautious, Heroic, Stubborn

Edges: Alertness, Brawny, Fleet-Footed

Gear: Winchester lever-action (12/24/48; 1-3d6; RoF 1; Shots 4; +2 Shooting), knife (d6+d4), 30 rounds, gun belt, duster, Derby.

Harriet Sweet

She's a painted lady with a heart o' gold. Harriet plays cards like a demon, has an iron will, a talent for larceny, and is cute as a button. With all those talents, she thinks she can do just about anything. She might be right!

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Lockpicking d4, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Anemic, Greedy (Minor), Overconfident

Edges: Attractive, Card Sharp, Strong-Willed

Gear: Derringer .41 (5/10/20; 2d6; RoF 1; Shots 2; AP 1), knife (d4+d4), dress, makeup, lockpicks, disguise kit.

Jack "Cookie" Pennebacker

Once Jack Pennebacker was your everyday prospector with a lust for gold, headed to Pike's Peak to find his fortune. What he found was the many horrors o' the weird west. He lost his family and everything he loved...and he was never the same after that.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Cooking) d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Spellcasting (Black Magic) d8, Stealth d4, Taunt d4

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Grim Servant o' Death, Mean

Edges: Arcane Background (Black Magic), New Power, Power Points

Powers: Armor, bolt, boost/lower trait, fear.

Power Points: 15

Gear: Double barrel shotgun (12/24/48; 1-3d6; RoF 1-2; Shots 2; +2 Shooting), pickaxe (d4+d4), knife (d4+d4), tin pan, overalls, flop hat, corncob pipe.

Dr. Milton Blackwell

An inventor who practices the ancient Chinese arts of fireworks and high explosives, Dr. Blackwell travels the west putting on brilliant light shows for modest fees. His lovely assistant, Xiu Li, is always on hand to mend a wound or protect the doctor if he requires it.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Knowledge (High Explosives) d6, Notice d8, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6, Weird Science d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 5 (Run d4); **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Loyal, Obese, Yellow

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), McGyver, Power Points

Powers: Burst (The Blackwell Flamecaster).

Power Points: 25

Gear: Two horses, Conestoga wagon, barrel of gunpowder, tool kit, matches.

Xiu Li

The daughter of Chinese immigrants, Xiu Li's parents and siblings were swept away by a twister as they worked the railroad. Xiu Li would have died, wandering in the wastes, if she had not been found by Dr. Blackwell. Now she protects him. It's the least she can do—she believes she owes him her life.

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

Skills: Boost/lower Trait d6, Fighting d8, Guts d4, Healing d6, Notice d6, Smite d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d4

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Curious, Loyal, Pacifist (Minor)

Edges: Arcane Background (Chi Mastery), Martial Arts, Superior Kung Fu (Eagle Claw)

Powers: Boost/lower trait, smite.

Power Points: 20

Gear: Fists (d6+d4, AP 1), simple clothing, peasant hat, medical supplies (bandages, alcohol, needle & thread).

What We Talk About When We Talk About Games

In this column, we discuss the game of *Savage Worlds* itself, by introducing new concepts, and more detailed or alternative explanations and uses for rules.

High Quality Characters

A Savage Roleplaying Tool

by Lucias (Mr. Pleasington) Meyer

Creating a deep, multi-faceted character is the goal of just about any gamer. While *Savage Worlds* provides the tools to make a well-rounded character, the broad strokes the system is painted in (which is arguably one of its best features) sometimes leaves a little to be desired on the character sheet. Qualities are a new addition to the ruleset that help to bring the important details of the character into the spotlight without unbalancing the system.

1. What Are Qualities?

Qualities are descriptors that tell the world what is important *about* your character and important *to* your character. They can be just about anything you can imagine, from relationships and beliefs to quotes, reputations, and simple statements describing your character.

Sample Qualities: *Strong Like A Bear*, *Sworn Enemy of Duke Welston*, *Well-Traveled*, *"I'm getting too old for this \$#!%,*" *Protector of the Golden Flame*, *"Inconceivable!"*

2. What Do Qualities Do?

Qualities tell the world what's important about your character. It also tells the GM exactly what you'd like to see show up in the game. If you have a Quality of *Protect my daughter, Maddie*, then you're telling the GM that you want your daughter to be a feature in the game. Similarly, if you tie any organizations into your Qualities you better believe that they're going to show up in the game...for good or for ill.

Qualities also provide the player a bonus to rolls which are tied into that Quality. This is called **tapping** the Quality. A character with the Quality of *"I Never Miss"* may tap that quality for a bonus on his Shooting roll. Someone with the Quality of *Fearsome Presence* can tap that to get a bonus to Intimidation rolls, or any social rolls where such a description could affect things

Lastly, Qualities provide a way to get bennies. The GM can provoke a Quality in order to challenge that player to perform certain actions, or limit choices that fall under the description of that Quality. This is done in order to introduce complications to the story that come directly from what the character holds dear. Characters are rewarded with bennies for making their own lives a little tougher and a lot more interesting.

Why should you include Qualities into your game? The main reason is that it allows a chance for players to put character definition in the spotlight. Sure, Edges and Hindrances give a lot of variability, but with Qualities a

player is limited only by his imagination. How many times have you played a game where someone has put in their background that they're well-traveled (or something like it) but has no Edge or anything else that reflects it on his character sheet? In the standard rules (and with most roleplaying games) it's just a background detail, or something he might ask the GM to give him a bonus for once in a while. With Qualities, the player can put that part of his character in the forefront. He's *Well-Traveled* and can get bonuses on all sorts of rolls that relate to his travels, if he's willing to spend a benny.

Qualities allow the background and roleplaying aspects of characters to have a more concrete impact on the game, without breaking the balance of Edges and Hindrances.



3. Tapping a Quality

In order to tap a Quality, first the player and the GM must agree that the Quality in question applies to the situation. There may be some negotiation involved in this. If it would occur in combat, it is probably best to have this worked out ahead of time. Next, the player spends a benny to tap the Quality. The player then rolls an additional d6 with his regular dice and adds it to the roll. This die may ace as normal.

Example One: *Barrett has a Quality called No One Touches Silvanna. Silvanna is another PC who is a mage that has had a long-standing relationship with Barrett. When the orc berserker wounds Silvanna, Barrett spends a benny and taps his Quality to gain an addition d6 to attack the orc. He then chooses to spend another benny and tap the same Quality for an addition d6 on the damage roll. Seriously, no one should mess with Silvanna.*

Example Two: Joe is playing Lars, the pilot of a transport in Steve's sci-fi game. Joe's character has the Quality I Am a Leaf on the Wind, which Joe has defined as a state of mind that allows his character to ignore distraction and keep level-headed in even the worst piloting situations. Sure enough, the ship gets caught between two enemy fleets and must maneuver through sheer hell to get to safety. Battered and beaten, the ship must evade one last exploding vessel to get to safety. With flak, explosions, and carnage all around him, Lars spends a benny to tap I Am a Leaf on the Wind and get an additional d6 to make that Piloting roll.

An additional die is a pretty large bonus; for those that don't want Qualities to have that much power, you can tone them down by having them supply a flat +2 bonus to the roll. You can even knock that down to a +1 if you're feeling stingy.

A Quality may be tapped either before or after the roll is made. A Quality may only be tapped once for each roll, but if multiple Qualities are applicable then you can spend additional bennies to tap additional Qualities.

[Editor's Note: For those using fate chips in Deadlands: Reloaded, this approach could be neatly summed up as allowing a white chip to be used as a blue chip when tapping a quality.]

4. Provoking a Quality

Provoking is not meant to punish players, but to showcase their Qualities and put them in interesting situations. It also adds a mechanical aspect to certain Hindrances that are usually solely in the purview of roleplaying (and often forgotten about, in my experience).

For instance, how many times have you seen a GM introduce a situation which was mysterious that no player would send his character to investigate because it was too dangerous? Even a character with the Curious Hindrance might not delve into the mystery because his player knows that it's trouble.

With Qualities, the GM can provoke a player with Curious to go investigate. When provoking, the GM offers a benny to the character with the Quality in question. The player may then choose to take the benny and give in to his Quality or spend a benny to ignore his Quality. Provoking Qualities gives the players the fuel to later tap Qualities.

Example One: Cole Treller has just discovered the abandoned lab of the evil genius, Dr. Strobe. As he and his companions explore the place he comes across a strange panel that seems completely alien. Cole has the Curious Hindrance and thus has linked that to the Quality "What's that?" The GM provokes "What's that?" by offering Cole a benny to begin fiddling around with the alien device. Not looking to press his luck, Cole begrudgingly spends a benny to ignore his Quality.

Example Two: Lucky Lou is a character with the Quality High Roller, Baby. He's been tapping that Quality all session in order to win big on the tables down at the strip. He's also been using it on Persuasion rolls to get into back room games and have the casinos roll out the red carpet.

He's earned a fat pile of cash but he's just gotten word that the contact he and his crew were sent here to find has agreed to a meeting in twenty minutes. The contact is known to be skittish and he knows he has to be there to back up his crew. As he makes his way through to his car, Fat Carl and the boys from last night's game approach him and let him know that they want a chance to earn back their money. The GM offers Lou a benny as he provokes High Roller, Baby. The player knows that if he accepts the benny he's not going to make the meeting, but he's low on bennies from tapping the Quality so much. Lou accepts the benny and prepares to make a few more Gambling rolls while his friends walk into danger across town.

5. Other Uses of Qualities

There are other ways that Qualities provide bennies to the players. If the GM uses a relationship or organization from a player's Qualities, he's obliged to give that player a benny for introducing something so inspiring to the game. Also, for those times when the GM needs to use a character with a certain Knowledge skills as a mouthpiece for critical game info (which we all know happens), that player should be awarded a benny.

Also, at the GM's discretion, a player may spend a benny to edit the details of the story.

Example: Josh is playing Rhupert, a mage and member of the Magus Academy. As this affiliation is important, he even has the Quality Ascendant in the Magus Academy. Rhupert just took a long voyage and has arrived in a foreign port. His travels have uncovered a conspiracy and he needs to contact the Magus Academy as soon as possible. He asks the GM if the academy has a presence in the city. The GM tells him no, as the local religion believes all mages to be evil. Josh offers to spend a benny to have the academy have some sort of presence in the city. The GM considers it and agrees that there is a small underground group of academy mages in the city working both to stay alive and undermine the church. Of course, finding such outlaws will be an adventure in itself...

Having the players take an active role in world creation isn't everyone's cup of tea, but it usually ends up creating far more interesting adventures if the GM knows how to spin it.

6. Creating Qualities

Qualities are really only limited by the player's imagination. Anything that can be thought of as important to a character can be turned into a Quality. The key to creating good Qualities, though, lies in honing them into a double-edged sword. Since you generate bennies by having Qualities provoked, it's in the player's best interest to make sure that each Quality is designed that it can be provoked easily. That's not to say you can't create a Quality that would be difficult to provoke, but while those types of Qualities provide bonuses, they're not going to net you any bennies.

Example: Cale has the Quality Bookworm, which he taps frequently when doing research. His player has described the Quality as being born from all the hours Cale has spent isolated in the library. As Cale hasn't had great social exposure, the GM takes great pleasure in provoking Cale

into awkward social situations where his bookwormish ways tend to make a poor impression.

Another key to Qualities is giving them an interesting name. You could have the Quality of *Strong* (which is one of those Qualities that isn't terribly provokable), but it's much more interesting to give it a bit of flair. Perhaps your Russian woodsman is *Strong Like a Bear* or your brawny dwarven miner has *Strength Born of Granite*. Your ex-cultist researcher could have a Quality of *Ex-Cultist*, but isn't *Hunted by the Crimson Hand* more interesting?

It is up to the player to define those situations in which his Qualities can be tapped and provoked. The GM has final approval though, as some Qualities may be far too broad or uselessly narrow.

A character may create up to 5 Qualities. While he may never have more than this, Qualities can change during play as long as the GM agrees. There are two methods for picking Qualities.

Pick and Choose. The easiest of the methods. Pick 5 Qualities that are important to your character and go play. Simple and quick.

The Lifepath Method. This is the more interesting of the methods. Divide the character's Qualities over the course of his lifetime. His first Quality might be from his childhood and reflect his place of origin or upbringing. The second Quality could cover his pre-adventuring career. The third Quality relates to the character's first adventure. The fourth and fifth Qualities should be tied to the adventures of other characters. This instantly creates a back story to the party and gets around the whole "Your characters all know each other" issue that many games begin with. Think of your third Quality as a novel, movie, or comic starring your character. Your fourth and fifth Qualities are from guest-starring in the other player's novels or movies.

You can also adapt the lifepath to focus on a major event. In *Deadlands*, the paths may look like this:

Quality 1 – Childhood and Upbringing
Quality 2 – The Civil War
Quality 3 – After the Reckoning
Quality 4 – Starring Role
Quality 5 – Guest Starring Role

7. Linking Hindrances and Edges

There is really only one hard and fast rule when creating Qualities. Any Hindrance your character takes that doesn't have a direct mechanical effect (e.g., Vow, Curious, Overconfident) must be linked to a Quality. This gives the 'free' Hindrances some mechanical beef so they actually have an in-game effect. You can still name your Quality as you like, but the description must be tied into the Hindrance in some way.

Example: Seth is playing a space pilot named San Holo. He's taken the *Overconfident Hindrance* and must somehow tie it into the Quality. He decides to create a Quality called "Never tell me the odds!" which he'll tap to get bonuses in situations where he's completely outnumbered, or in executing plans that have minimal

chances of success. The GM can provoke that Quality in situations where San's overconfidence can cause complications. Any GM that can't think of situations like that to put the character into isn't worth his salt!

It can be useful to tie Edges into Qualities too, though it doesn't have to be done. Trademark Weapon just screams for a Quality that applies to the weapon.

Example: Aragorn has the *Trademark Weapon Edge* that applies to his sword, Narsil. He also takes a Quality called Narsil, the Blade Reforged. Aragorn can tap that Quality to gain bonuses to *Fighting* and *damage rolls*, and also any *Persuasion* or *Intimidation* rolls regarding those who know what Narsil is.

8. Famous Examples

Let's take a look at some famous characters and see what Qualities they may have had.

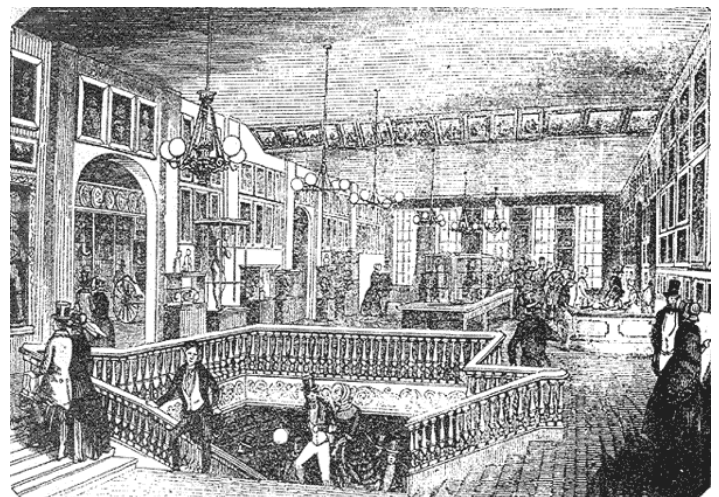
Inigo Montoya. *Spaniard, Lousy Drunk, "You killed my father...prepare to die!", Master Fencer, "Fezzik is my only friend."*

Spider-Man (focusing on just the first movie). *Science Nerd, "Thanks, Aunt May," With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility, Unrequited Love (Mary-Jane), The Worst Luck.*

Harry Potter. *A Mother's Love, The Boy Who Lived, Quidditch Prodigy, Friends Until the End (Ron and Hermione), Gryffindor!*

Author's Note

Qualities were heavily inspired by *Spirit of the Century* and the FATE 3.0 system by Evil Hat Productions. *Spirit of the Century* is an excellent game in its own right and can be considered a spiritual sibling of *Savage Worlds*. I highly recommend the game to anyone, as it is one of the best and most well-designed games to come out in the last few years.



Cryptozoological Society

Monsters and new races to terrify your players!

Two Powerful Creatures of the Night

by jtc

Darkling (WC)

Darklings stand about five and a half feet tall, and look like undead elves wearing close-fitting black leather. Shadows seem to swirl about them at all times, and they are never fully visible, or fully in the world of life, unless exposed to direct light.

They were originally created by the high Servitors of the dark god Hei An-yi from the reanimated corpses of Hei Rong-yi Ninjas. The exact process and ritual involved are not known in the present day, and Darklings have become rare as they are destroyed over the years.

Special Deadlands: Reloaded background: Darklings look like Harrowed with no discernible wound. Appearing only at night, these creatures swirl darkness around them, making dark western nights seem even darker. For those in the know, Darklings don't seem to be inhabited by manitou, seeming older somehow. Luckily there only seem to be a few of these terrible apparitions.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+4

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidate d10+2, Notice d10, Stealth d12

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10

Hindrances: None

Edges: Danger Sense, Fleet-Footed, Improved Nerves of Steel, Quick

Gear: None

Special Abilities:

- **Claws** (d12+d6+2).
- **Fearless:** The undead know no fear.
- **Fear:** Darklings are terrifying creatures animated only by their creator's desire to kill. Anyone who sees one must make a Guts check.
- **Infravision:** Darklings are granted the ability to see the heat patterns of living creatures.
- **Invulnerable:** As they exist partly in the world of the dead, Darklings cannot be harmed by mortal foes.
- **Undead:** Darklings are the reanimated corpses of dead ninjas.
- **Weakness:** Darklings suffer 3d6 damage each round they are exposed to natural sunlight.
- **Weakness:** When exposed to direct light other than sunlight, Darklings become susceptible to normal damage.

Virbest (WC)

This creature's exact origins are not known. Its name, Virbest, literally means "man-beast." This refers to the fact that it is recognizably human (or at least humanoid) in appearance, although its claws, teeth, and enormous muscle mass, not to mention its instincts, are beast-like.

Some scholars speculate as to whether it is a species which branched off from humans or elves at some point in the past. However, the fact that many of its abilities are somewhat magical would seem to point to a more unnatural origin.

Virbest are extremely long-lived and fierce hunters. They will feast on anything living, and typically dwell in the frozen forests of the north, where only their small numbers and exceedingly long reproductive cycle (upwards of 500 years) keep them from being a serious danger to civilization.

Special Deadlands: Reloaded background: Indian legends spoke of a horrifying creature called the Virbest (best English translation) which haunted ancient woods, carrying off whole buffalo and any person who tried to get in its way. Thankfully, the Virbest had not been seen for many years. That is, until the Reckoning. It seems that the Virbest has been reborn or reawakened. Recent sightings of a beast matching the description of the Virbest have put an additional level of fear into neighboring communities. The Virbest is fierce, territorial, and almost always hunts alone.

Attributes: Agility d12+4, Smarts d4, Spirit d12, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d12+4, Notice d12, Survival d12, Tracking d12, Stealth d12, Guts d12

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 11 (1)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Danger Sense, First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Improved Frenzy, Improved Nerves of Steel, Quick, Woodsman

Gear: None

Special Abilities:

- **Teeth and Claws** (d12+d6+4).
- **Leathery Hide:** Tough, leathery skin gives the Virbest +1 Armor.
- **Hardy**
- **Low Light Vision:** Keen eyes make the Virbest a deadly hunter.
- **Fast Regeneration:** So long as it has fed recently, the Virbest heals quickly, regenerating one wound per round.
- **Size +1:** A Virbest is a full head taller than the average human, and twice as broad.
- **Deadlands: Palpable Fear:** The Fear level of any community within the territory of a Virbest is increased by 1.



Let Me Tell You a Story

Game reports, short fiction, a fictionalized account of an adventure from the character's perspective...all of these are the domain of *Let Me Tell You a Story*.

THE RANCH

by The Thompson Gang

Several Years Ago...

"Dakota, it looks like I'm gonna need my gun."

Dakota's hands moved unthinkingly, snapping a piece of draped braid at her side, revealing the hooks beneath. Opening that, she could easily reach the pistol holstered underneath her petticoats.

She couldn't think, couldn't breathe...just being there made it all so much worse. He was out there. They hadn't even had a month since Stone's warning. There hadn't been any time at all...

And now it was almost over.

"You don't have to go out there," she said, desperate for anything that would stop this from happening to him. "He can't..."

"You know I have to," Vaughn said, holstering the pistol. He pulled her close. "He's facin' me head-on. Seems like he has a sense of honor. He'll play fair."

"No he won't," Dakota said. "And you don't have to..." she looked toward Gregory St. Clair. "Father? Please? Isn't there anything?"

"I can keep him from this place," St. Clair said. "But the street is not sanctified."

"See?" she said to Vaughn. "You don't have to..."

"Dakota," Vaughn interrupted. No sense in dragging it out any longer than he had to.

"Then I'm going too," Dakota said, reaching for the duster and rifle on the church pew. She slipped her Gatling pistol into a pocket.

"You are gonna protect that baby," Vaughn said firmly. "That's more important."

"You comin' out Holcraft, or are ya yellow?" Stone's harsh voice echoed through the chapel.

Vaughn pulled Dakota into his arms again. "Dakota, I..." he hesitated.

"If this is a matter of pride, son," St. Clair said gently, "then perhaps..."

"This isn't for me," Vaughn said. "And it's not for pride. What are all those people out there, all the ones watching us, looking for someone to help them, gonna think if I don't

face him? They—all of them—they need to know someone's going to stand up for them, even if they...if I die doing it."

Dakota blinked back rapidly-rising tears. Vaughn couldn't back down, she couldn't let him go alone...and she wouldn't let him see her cry. The steel in her rose with an almost audible snap.

"I won't leave you," she said. "But Father, isn't there anything..." her voice trailed off.

"I won't accept help from anyone but you and God," Vaughn told her.

"That's who I'm asking."

St. Clair raised his crucifix and began to chant softly in Latin. A soft golden glow surrounded Vaughn.

"Dakota, I..." Vaughn started.

"I love you," she interrupted, her eyes dry. "Come back to me."

"I will always love you," he said, with a lingering kiss. Then he turned and walked out of the chapel doors without looking back.

Dakota followed three steps behind, stopping on the church steps. She raised the Winchester. If Vaughn



wanted a fair fight, he'd get one. Any tricks, and hell would break loose.

Stone pointed at a witch in a tight leather vest, a lethal looking whip on her hip. "Esperanza—you stay out of this until I'm done."

The crowd of Agents, witches, hucksters, and churchgoers parted as if by magic, leaving the street clear. Stone and Vaughn matched each other step for step, stopping twenty paces apart. They turned to face one another.

Time hung suspended for what seemed like hours. Dakota, watching through the sights on her rifle, saw Vaughn stiffen. He'd seen behind Stone's mask. But he didn't run.

Vaughn drew first, and in a fraction of a second, it was over. Two shots crashed through the silence simultaneously. Vaughn crumpled and fell—Stone dropped in slow motion, blood, brains, and bone exploding out the back of his head.

Dakota's scream died in her throat, but her vision swam before her eyes and she couldn't breathe. She had to decide—go for Vaughn, or take the shot. Try to keep Stone down.

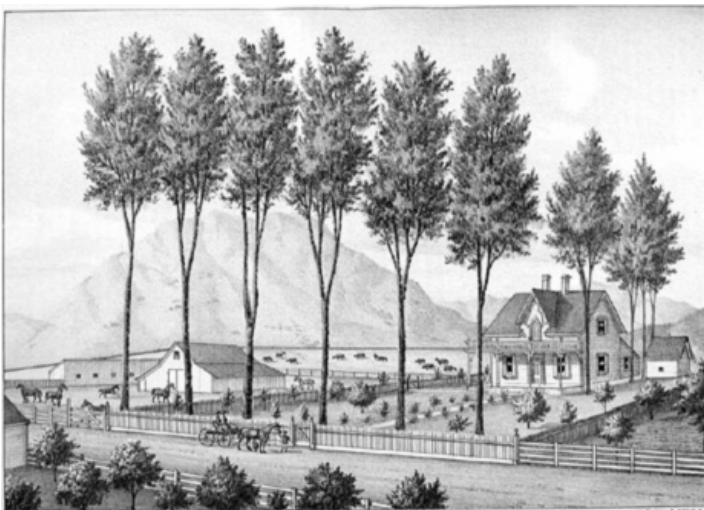
There wasn't any decision at all. She dropped the rifle and sprinted into the street. Wrapping her arms around Vaughn's chest, she dragged him away and up the steps, a bright red trail of blood following her and spilling down the front of her dress.

Hell broke loose. Guns fired, hexes flew—explosions rocked two buildings across the street. Dakota pulled until she had him inside the vestibule, screaming for the priest.

Out in the street, Stone sat up. His wounds were completely healed.

St. Clair knelt beside Vaughn's prone form. He kissed his crucifix and began to pray, then stopped. "Miracles will not work in this case, my dear," he said. "We must be quick if we are to save him." He ripped a piece of his white vestments. "Hold this right here, and keep the pressure steady," he said calmly.

"And pray."



(Semi-)Public knowledge about The Ranch

Located in a remote valley in the Colorado Rockies is a small horse ranch that is more than it seems. To all appearances, the ranch is the end of one of the great heroic romances of the West.

Dakota Dewitt was a young Pinkerton who was assigned to Western Operations in 1876. She distinguished herself and caught the attention of the management and the Union government. She was one of the original recruits to the Special Services Agency in 1877. Due to her beauty and charisma, Dakota was chosen to be the "face" of the Agency and was featured in a series of popular dime novels that rivaled the adventures of Nevada Smith in popularity. In the spring of 1877, Dakota was assigned to the 13th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas along with another Agent, Vaughn Holcraft. Soon a romance developed between the two Agents. Instead of disciplining them for fraternization, the Agency promoted their romance in Dakota's dime novels, seeing their relationship as putting an even more human face on the Agency that was believed to be advantageous. This led to their appearance at the Philadelphia Exposition and numerous appearances in the East, culminating in their announced engagement and wedding in Vaughn's home of Vevay Indiana, located on the Ohio River.

The Dewitt-Holcraft wedding became the social event of the year. As such, a rogue group of Confederate troops under command of a fugitive mad scientist attacked the wedding! Thanks to the presence of a number of Union soldiers, famed U.S. Marshal Jake Cahill and a number of Agents, as well as the famous couple, the attack was foiled and the ceremony completed. Following a short honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. Holcraft were assigned to Denver and continued their adventures until their success finally caught up with them. In the summer of 1878, ironically enough at the wedding of one of Dakota's dear friends, the infamous gunman known only as Stone arrived and called out Vaughn. Facing each other in the Denver street, Stone gunned down Vaughn Holcraft just before a group of the Wichita Witches launched their own attack, probably hoping to settle a grudge with Dakota. When the smoke cleared, Dakota Dewitt Holcraft was a widow. Her many fans mourned her loss and she received condolences from the Presidents of the Union and the Confederacy as well as Gen. William King, the commander of the Texas Rangers, and her legions of admirers.

Vaughn's murder occurred just days before the Agency began its withdrawal from Colorado under the terms of the recent cease-fire between the Union and Confederacy. Not only having to deal with the loss of her husband but also discovering that she was with child, Dakota decided to leave the Agency and retire. Taking the proceeds of her dime novels, she purchased land in a valley near Colorado Springs and established a small horse ranch to provide her with income to supplement her pension and savings. Aided by her old friend, now-retired U.S. Marshal Jake Cahill, Dakota spends her days raising her twin son and daughter and has left the adventurous life behind. The ranch's

remote location, combined with fear of Agency reprisal and the legendary reputations of Dakota and Cahill, keep things safe and quiet.



Today ...

"My Lord! It's Gremlin Ginny!" Tom Parker ran up the porch steps to hug his former classmate enthusiastically, slapping her on the back. "How'd ya end up here?"

Genevieve Broder smiled in return. "Tom! Walker! Kate! It's so nice you see you all!" Suddenly self-conscious about her maimed hand, Genevieve concealed it in her skirt. "I didn't want to go home after...after everything, and Doc Turner knew Missus Holcraft when she was at Salem so he wrote her and asked if she needed any help. So here I am!"

Her story wasn't entirely true. Genevieve had lost three fingers on her shooting hand when a Gatling pistol had blown up on the Academy shooting range. She'd been lucky to survive, and she'd thought her career as an Agent was over before it had begun. Never one to leave anything half done, Genevieve had finished her classwork from a bed in the infirmary. She had been hoping to angle for a clerical position at the Castle—anything, really, to keep her in the Agency. Keep her in the game.

She'd learned what was hiding in the dark, and now she couldn't go back to Iowa and be a schoolmarm. She couldn't close her eyes.

But getting a job offer from the Western Bureau? From Dakota Holcraft herself? Genevieve could hardly believe it.

It wasn't field work. It couldn't ever be field work—she couldn't hold a gun. But what Director Holcraft had offered Genevieve was the chance to be her eyes and ears among the dozens of new recruits that would be spending time at the Ranch. Genevieve would get additional training in disguise, espionage, and security, and she'd help protect one of the most sensitive sites in the entire West.

So what if she had to help with the housework and the children? Genevieve had grown up on a farm—hard work was nothing new to her.

"Beautiful, ain't it?" said Kate Samuels, a willowy blonde looking toward the mountains.

"Yeah, it's something," Genevieve agreed. "We don't have anything like this back home."

"Big rocks. Wow," cracked Walker Price, the undisputed king clown at the academy. "Look, Ginny—how long have you been here?"

"Two weeks."

"Then you can give us the inside scoop—what's really going on around here? I can't believe they hauled us all the way out here to shovel horse crap."

"Then get ready to be surprised," Genevieve said. "But I can't really say. Agent Miller will be along, and he'll explain."

"C'mon girl!" Tom shouted. "We're your friends! Give us a hint—give us something!"

"Tell us about her," Kate said.

"Her?" Genevieve asked, her eyes wide and innocent.

"Her!" Walker said, waving his gangly arms. "The dime novel queen! Killer of killers! Dakota DeWitt!"

"Missus Holcraft. She'll correct you right quick if you call her DeWitt. And I don't know any secrets—I haven't seen her much," Genevieve lied.

"She kill anyone yet?" Walker asked with a grin.

"What? No! Don't be stupid. That's all talk. Besides—her husband's gone and she's got two babies to raise. You expect her to be jumpin' around like you idiots?"

"So that was all real?" Kate asked. "The showdown in front of the church and all?"

Genevieve shrugged. "She hasn't exactly told me her life story. Anyway—see for yourself. I'm sure she'll be around sometimes."

"Eh, it's all talk," Walker said. He made an exaggerated show of flexing his muscles. "I can take her."

Dakota stood on the veranda near her bedroom, watching the recruits. She shook her head. The recruits were as green as grass, and the first thing they needed to learn was to find out who was listening before they started talking. They'd been so loud she'd heard them from the nursery.

They would learn soon enough—she could see Ed walking in from the barns with Jason Mahoney. Jason had been a Cleaner. Then a Mojave rattler had bitten his right leg clean off. He'd still gotten the explosives down its gullet, but the damage had been done. Now he worked at the Ranch.

"Agents!!" Ed shouted. "Form up!"

The recruits arranged themselves reasonably quickly. Nothing to complain about yet.

"Welcome to the Ranch," Ed said. "I'm Agent Ed Miller. And you're wondering what you're doing here."

He started to pace in front of them, sizing up each recruit in turn. "Your training at the academy, while very thorough, cannot and did not prepare you for duty in the Western Bureau. Life is different out here.

"You're not going to be going to an office every day. Might be months before you see another Agent. You can call for backup, and we'll do what we can, but ultimately, we are sending you into the field to investigate and deal with

Event-related phenomena. You cannot let the public know about these phenomena. You must do whatever is required. You better be ready to handle it.

"So we're going to help you," Ed continued. "Here you're going to learn the lingo. You're going to develop cover identities. You're going to learn to blend in. You're going to get the shine off your shoes." He stopped pacing and looked at Tom's feet. "Buy some boots, son—those won't last a day in the barns.

"Missus Holcraft is kind enough to let you stay on her place. You will work for the privilege. First week's duty roster is up in the bunkhouse—see Agent Mahoney if you have any questions."

Ed started pacing again. "Every person on this Ranch has information you need. Experience you can learn from. Some of those lessons will be formalized, but many will not be. Keep your eyes and your ears open. Learn from your surroundings. Learn about the people. This is your first investigation."

He smiled. "I'll even give you a hint. Ask Sarah-Beth about the War some time. She's got some great stories." He stopped. "Rest of the afternoon is yours to get settled in. Dinner's at the main house at six. If you've got any questions about arrangements or need something, see Genevieve or myself. Good luck to you."

Ed and Mahoney turned and headed toward the barns, leaving the recruits to retrieve luggage and mill about on the lawn.

"There's plenty of stall space in the West barn for your horses," Genevieve called from the porch. "Bunkhouse is the next building over from that. Room assignments are on the doors."

Walker loped over to her. "You gonna give us a tour, Gin? We've got stuff to check out, ya know."

She smiled. "I'll have to help Sarah-Beth with dinner, but I've got some time."

"So what's for dinner?" Tom was always hungry.

"Roast beef. Don't worry Tom—you won't starve."

"Wanna bet?" he teased. "Look Gin—if this is a field test, then you've got to help..." he looked up. "Whoa!" Tom said with a low whistle. "Is that her?"

Genevieve followed his gaze to the slim woman dressed in black. "That's her. She's been watching."

"How long?" Walker asked. "I mean, do you think she heard us talking about..."

"Not if you're lucky."

"He's not," Dakota called. "Drop those bags. I think it's time for some combat training."

A Licensee Dispatch

from the folks at

Talisman Studios

Greetings, Savage Fantasy Fans!

It has been a long, long two-plus years, fraught with "Real Life Woes" and a killer case of Writer's Block.

I am, however, very proud (and relieved) to say that the long-awaited **Shaintar: Immortal Legends** book will be out before the end of this year! *[Editor's Note: It's already out! Thanks to them being quick and us being slow!]*

The book includes the original material released as the **Shaintar Player's Guide**, as well as the following:

- Details on the region known as the Wildlands.
- A full description of the heroic organization, Grayson's Grey Rangers.
- A complete Plot Point Campaign, the "Raven's Quest."
- Dozens of additional adventures.
- An Encounters section featuring dozens of monsters and bad guys.
- Appendices detailing such features as Extended Casting, additional Edges, recommended Edges from other sources, and a complete Random Magic Item system.
- The M.A.C.S. (Modular Adventure Creation System), a new approach to scenario creation that will empower GMs to create unique, personalized adventures unique to their gaming groups.

Shaintar: Immortal Legends will be your complete Epic High Fantasy book, and it's only the beginning of a series of material that will serve Savage fantasy needs for years to come.

As well, please check out the Talisman Studios site (www.talisman-studios.com) for TONS of **FREE** Shaintar material, including Worldbook information, One Sheet Adventures, and fully illustrated Character Packs.



Marshal's Section: The Real Story

Hey, there pardner! Don't be reading the next couple of pages if you're going to playing in The Ranch!



In the beginning...

"I realize that Agent DeWitt can be a...trial," said Andrew Lane carefully. "But her record speaks for itself." He stood, moving to the marble-topped fireplace in his office, then crouched, poking at the dying fire with a poker.

"Of course it does!" sputtered Detwiller. "She's a rabid dog! Barely more than a beast! A bloodthirsty, ravening animal!"

"With one of the highest paranormal kill ratios in the Western Bureau, and a history of taking on and successfully completing missions that for most people would be suicide," Lane finished. He dusted off his hands and put the poker away, walking to the window and standing with his back to Detwiller. Twilight was falling, and the pre-Christmas traffic that had filled the Denver street below was fading away with the sunlight. A light snow had started to fall, frosting the holiday scene in sparkling white.

"And among her kills would be at least one of her superior officers?"

"That was a special case," Lane said. "The details are...not something it is necessary for you to know."

Detwiller massaged his throbbing jaw, shifting uncomfortably in the horsehair chair. He could hardly believe his ears. The head of the Western Bureau was actually defending this deranged animal.

"But if you look at my notes," he said, almost pleadingly. "The multiple and repeated violations of Agency rules—the gaps in reports and required paperwork—so little regard for regulations she openly flaunts them."

"I am well aware of Agent DeWitt's difficulties with authority," Lane said. "But many of our most talented Agents are mercurial."

"The open hostility for other Agents?"

"DeWitt has had some problems in the past—some of them were our fault. It's understandable that she's hesitant to form relationships now."

"The dime novels?" Detwiller said, indignantly. "It's hardly suitable for a secret Agent to have her exploits plastered from here to New York City."

"The novels are more a curse than a blessing to Agent DeWitt," Lane said. "But they don't do much harm—sometimes, even some good."

"Besides," Lane finished, turning to face Detwiller. "If the Agency as a policy thought the novels so offensive, would we print them out of the Philadelphia office?"

"But have you read these things?" Detwiller was building a full head of steam now. "She drinks human blood in one of them! Blood! Is that the image you want the public to have of an Agent?"

"Ah, yes, the vampire cult one," Lane smiled. "An even more complete work of fiction than most, as you should well know. We planted that story ourselves to help cover reports of nosferatu activity in western Kansas."

"Her own family has disowned her," Detwiller said, smugly.

"Agent DeWitt's personal life is none of your concern," Lane said. "Didn't your wife decide to remain in Baltimore rather than move out here with you?"

"Eliza had her reasons," Detwiller said in a small voice. "Buh-buh-but..." he was stuttering, anger and pain mixed with indignation flooding his voice. "She attacked me!"

"I heard you told her you were going to bust her down a rank and make her wear skirts in the office." Lane turned to face the window again, bending his long fingers to form a steeple and hiding a smile behind them.

Detwiller was silent for a long moment. He knew he had lost. Lane was just as crazy as the other mavericks out here.

"You have a right to your opinion, of course, Chief Lane," Detwiller said, carefully now, his voice cold and haughty. "But Agent DeWitt is a menace, and my reports to Chicago will have to reflect that. She is, or soon will be, more dangerous than the things she professes to hunt."

Lane turned, piercing Detwiller with an intense look. He looked almost savage, Detwiller thought, suddenly frightened. There was something...wrong...

"Dakota is a warrior," Lane said. "She'll die with her teeth buried in someone's throat. But before she does, many dark things—terrible things—will die at her hands."

"She is a weapon—one we can direct. One we must keep a hand on. You don't forge a sword and then leave it lying on the ground for your enemies to pick up, Agent Detwiller."

Lane was silent, considering the man before him. Bureaucrats. He must speak to Allan about some of the people he was sending out here. Clerks and accountants had their place, but Andrew Lane had had his fill of them in a past life.

"I've been thinking," Lane said. "It's the holidays, and you so far from your wife, your children. Why don't you take a few weeks off? Go back to Baltimore, see your family."

"Well, then, yes...it would be nice to see the children," Detwiller said as he made a hasty exit. "Thank you sir. Have a merry Christmas." He wasn't an idiot—he knew what Lane was doing. He'd be transferred back East within a week.

He'd crossed swords with the infamous Andrew Lane, questioned his judgment, tried to make him see the error of his ways—and now he'd never set foot in the West again.

Good riddance then. Let Lane keep his rabid dog Dakota DeWitt. When it all came crashing down, they'd see that he, Curtis W. Detwiller, had been right.

Lane stood looking out at the snow-covered street until the last bit of sunlight had faded. The fire was dying, and a chill was stealing across the room along with the lengthening shadows.

He wished the chill still bothered him.

Dakota...damn that girl, he thought. She had almost limitless potential—smart, skilled, ruthless—and a dedication to the job that awed him with its intensity.

But he looked at her, and he saw a child. A lost little girl, abandoned and confused.

She had been so young...she'd embraced the Agency's crusade with the fierce loyalty only the young could have. And in return she'd been sent on suicide missions, alienated, rejected, literally dumped in the middle of the night. Told to tackle things alone that whole troops of Agents would fear.

Did she have anyone at all? Lane wondered.

He wanted to reach out to her, but it had been years since he'd been a father, and time and circumstances had stripped the required emotions from him. He was, he thought ruefully, almost as alone as she was.

But never completely alone, was he? Lane clenched his hand into a fist, and slammed it into the plaster wall, cracking it.

Then he straightened. Anger and self-pity wasn't going to help Dakota, or him.

He'd told Detwiller the truth—Dakota was a weapon. But she was one that could just as easily be pointed at the Agency's heart if it wasn't careful.

Lane had noticed some things over the past few months. Troubling things. Dakota's almost breaking Detwiller's jaw had just been the latest symptom.

Dakota was growing more distant, troublesome. Her loneliness was so deep it was almost a physical presence, a dark cloud following her. It was a darkness that threatened to consume her.

Most people only saw what they wanted to see. She was tough, she was dangerous. Most of the personnel in the Western Bureau either hated or feared Dakota—sometimes both. They didn't see the cracks. If one of the forces opposing them figured it out, tried to use it, use Dakota to their advantage...

Lane didn't want to think about it.

She needed a reintroduction to the world that had forsaken her. A chance to wash the blood from her hands. Maybe with another Agent, someone who could understand the depth of the abyss she walked the edge of every day.

He'd save her.

He had to.



**Office of the Director
United States Special Services Agency**

Top Secret

GM 28-51 Addendum

Issued 2 January, 1879

Following the Gomorra Incident and the recent events in Denver, Bureau Chief Andrew Lane has tendered his resignation as Western Bureau Chief and is on indefinite leave of absence. As such his Security Clearance is hereby reduced to Class III Troubleshooter. See below for Troubleshooter classifications.

Accordingly, the Western Bureau is being reorganized as follows:

- Codename: "The Ghost" now refers to the council of Assistant Directors of the Western Bureau

- Main Office -- Comprising: The Nevada Basin Land Office in Denver, the SRF relocated to the Colorado Springs Cheyenne Mountain Secure Facility, and the Holcraft's Horse Ranch located near Colorado Springs, Codename: The Ranch

- A.D. Vaughn Holcraft, Denver Region

- A.D. Dakota DeWitt-Holcraft, Special Threat Teams

- A.D. Dr. Maximilian Reynolds, Supernatural Research Facility
Sacramento Region

- A.D. Samuel Quincy Hellman

- Seattle Region

- A.D. Hattie Lawton

- Deadwood

- A.D. Richard Speakman

- Gomorra

- A.D. Cort Williams

- Salt Lake City

- A.D. Nevada Smith

- "The Ghost" shall hold meetings in person once per quarter rotating between each A.D.'s choice of venue to discuss progress of investigations and determine the overall policies of the Bureau for the coming quarter. All decisions are to be made by simple majority vote. In the event of a deadlocked vote, the issue may be referred to the Office of the Director for final adjudication. Each A.D. is also responsible for filing monthly summary progress reports with every other A.D. and full progress reports with the Main Office and the Office of the Director. (Note: What happened in Seattle will NEVER happen again! - A.P.)

- The Cheyenne Wyoming Ward is the "official" relocation point of the Denver facilities. As such, any operations tasked with "keeping up appearances" should originate and end in the Cheyenne Ward.

- All Agency Personnel should reacquaint themselves with GM 28-51: USSSA Organization and Activities as well as GP 28-51A: Field Operations

- Troubleshooters are classified as follows:

- Class I: Non-Agency personnel with no previous Event-related phenomena experience.

- Clearance: N/A

- Post Op: As civilian unless senior Agent on-sight promotes to Class II

- Class II: Non-Agency personnel with previous Event-related phenomena experience.

- Clearance: Need to Know

- Class III: As Class II but with proven record of reliable service. Clearance: Secret

"You sure about this?" Dakota asked. "It's not the bullet in your brain talking?"

Vaughn was sitting up in bed on a pile of pillows, his head wrapped in white bandages. He was pale, but his hold on Dakota's hand was strong.

In the chaos after the battle, Dakota had been impressed by the Agents remaining in Denver. With Cahill and Annabel's help, they had helped lock down the mess, hauled Esperanza into custody, got help to the wounded, and miraculously found the one Agency doctor who hadn't already left Denver to treat Vaughn, who had been spirited away in a closed carriage to a safehouse.

Dr. Talley, a veteran researcher who had spent the vast majority of his career in the Tank, seemed a mite surprised at having a patient that was still breathing, but he'd done a fine job. Cahill and a half a dozen Agents were guarding the house. They had a moment's respite.

"I'm sure," Vaughn said. "Not what I'd want to do, but it's the best chance we'll have."

"Are you so tired of being you?" Dakota asked.

"I'm tired of people I care about being targets," Vaughn said. "And we need breathing room to do what we've got to do. If it takes me dyin' to get that, then that's what will happen."

"You're lucky I look good in black," Dakota said fondly. She gave him a soft kiss. "I'm with you. Always."

She rose and headed for the door, holding on to Vaughn's hand as long as she could, then trailing her fingertips down his body, reluctant to lose contact.

Samuel Flynn was waiting outside the door, Gatling at the ready. "Agent Flynn?" Dakota said, and he snapped to attention.

She checked her watch. "Start sending the telegrams. According to the official record, Vaughn Holcraft died at seven minutes after midnight."

As we said, The Ranch is more than it seems. First of all, Vaughn Holcraft is not dead! Thanks to some timely intervention combined with his own extraordinary resilience, Vaughn managed to recover from the near-mortal wound Stone dealt him. Following that close call and combined with the need to reorganize the Western Bureau due to the cease-fire conditions and Andrew Lane's stepping down as Western Bureau Director, it was decided to use Vaughn's "death" and Dakota's "retirement" to reorganize things. Officially and publicly, the Agency has relocated the Western Bureau to Cheyenne, Wyoming. That's just a front. The Ranch is the real center of operations and a training center for new Agents sent out West. The new Agents spend a period working as hands to develop an initial cover identity, and to allow Vaughn and Dakota to size them up and determine where their skills and personality can be best put to use. Those who can't handle the hard work or who fail the subtle tests put to them, get sent back East. Those with the grit to handle the Weird West get moved into specialized training as

Investigators under Vaughn or as Special Threat Team "Cleaners" under Dakota.

Vaughn always operates under a different disguise and name for each class of recruits. To maintain the belief that "The Ghost" is still an individual who is in charge of the Western Bureau for *The Tombstone Epitaph* and Confederate spies, Dr. Reynolds has devised a uniform for The Ghost to appear in the field, which Vaughn and a handful of select Agents, chosen for their skill and similar build, use for special field operations. This has served to increase the *Epitaph's* speculations on the supernatural nature of The Ghost and to irritate spies as they no longer know even the name of the Western Bureau's Director.

The real secret of The Ranch is the large cave complex located underneath it, the Cheyenne Mountain Secure Facility, which houses the Western Bureau's Supernatural Research Facility along with the offices, records and equipment for the Bureau's operations. These caves have been secured and sealed off from the deepest tunnels, as well as being concealed from outside detection, above or below ground.

New Edge

Ghost Agent

Professional Edge

Requirements: Agent Grade 3+, Guts d8+, Stealth d10+

You are one of the elite Agents chosen to play the role of The Ghost. You've been given one of the special uniforms designed by Dr. Reynolds. The uniform consists of a double-breasted tunic, hat, boots and trousers styled like a Union Cavalry Officer's but in black, combined

with the classic Agency Duster and a full head mask. The mask is actually a Ghost Steel helmet fitted with top secret lenses that gather ambient light. This allows the wearer to ignore 1 point of darkness penalty, and causes the eyes of the mask to glow eerily, granting +1 to Intimidation rolls. The helmet is paired with Ghost Steel torso plating, granting Armor +3 to the head and torso. The reinforcement of the rest of the uniform, combined with the Duster gives the wearer +1 Armor to the rest of the body. Additionally, you gain +1 Grade for purposes of requisitioning equipment and assistance.

A Ghost Agent's job is to engage high-risk threats and neutralize them. At the same time he provides the enemy with false information by playing into the *Epitaph* and Dime Novel depictions of The Ghost as a mysterious, supernatural figure. Taking this Edge requires GM approval and the above Requirements are only a suggested minimum. By putting on the uniform, a Ghost Agent is willingly making himself a target. All of the Agency's enemies, from the Reckoners to the Confederacy, would love to capture the infamous Ghost...and his fate would not be pleasant.



Characters

Dakota (nee Dewitt) Holcraft (WC)

Agent

Despite being born in New England, this flame-haired beauty has become a legend in the Weird West for her skill as a fighter. An expert with her Winchester rifle, Buntline Special, Agency Gatling pistol, Bowie knife or bare-handed, Dakota is stronger than she looks and incredibly fast and agile. Dakota regularly surprises the new trainees by repeatedly flooring the biggest of them on their first day of training, even while pregnant! Dakota does have a vain streak, dressing almost exclusively in custom-tailored clothes and maintaining her figure by keeping herself in fighting condition. The only blemish to her beauty is the streak of white in her hair, a mark of a terrifying past experience that she never talks about. Due to past experiences, Dakota only lets her children and Vaughn see past her tough exterior. She is reluctant to give her trust and responds with murderous rage to betrayal. No one crosses Dakota twice. In her relatively short career as an Agent she faced more horror than most do in a lifetime. She survived. Her goal now is to make sure her children are able to do the same.

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

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Law) d4, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d4, Riding d6, Shooting d12, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Swimming d6, Taunt d4, Throwing d6, Tracking d8

Charisma: +4; **Grit:** 5; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Heroic, Vengeful, Vow (Agency), Vow (Devotion to Vaughn)

Edges: Agent (Grade 6), Common Bond, Connections, First Strike, Marksman, Quick Draw, Reputation, Steady Hands, Very Attractive, Veteran o' the Weird West

Gear: Bowie Knife (d6+d4+1; AP 1), Buntline Special* (12/24/48; 2d6+1; AP 1), Gatling pistol (12/24/48; 2d6; AP 1, RoF 2), Winchester '76* (24/48/96; 2d8; AP 2), Agency duster (Armor 1), riding horse, bit and bridle, saddle, bedroll, reloads for each weapon (5).

* Each is customized for a +1 to Shooting

Vaughn Holcraft (WC)

Agent

When the war started, fourteen-year-old Vaughn Holcraft answered the call and joined the Union Army. He heard the stories following Gettysburg but didn't really believe them. After surviving the brutal Battle of Cold Harbor, Vaughn was a believer. That experience led to a deep-seated fear turned hatred for all undead, and to his recruitment by the Pinkertons.

Vaughn was the classic Pinkerton detective, operating with anonymity under multiple covers, so much so that he started to lose himself. His reports became increasingly dispassionate as his successes increased. Director Andrew Lane noticed this about the same time he saw another of his favorites, Dakota DeWitt, becoming so isolated and afraid to trust that she was on the verge of a breakdown. In a desperate effort to save them both, he assigned them to be liaisons to the 13th Cavalry out of Fort Leavenworth. The move paid off as the two found solace and eventually love with one other.

Vaughn is incredibly tough, with a capacity to endure and overcome pain and injury that is the envy of even the famed Texas Rangers. It was this toughness, along with the timely intervention of one of the Blessed, that allowed Vaughn to survive his encounter with Stone. He felt the cold of Death radiate from Stone's bullet, felt his heart stop and his soul begin to leave his body and his beloved wife and unborn children when the angel gave him the choice to live again. Vaughn took the offer and decided to not waste it. He let the world believe he is dead so that he and Dakota can train the next generation of Agents, and raise their children. The last test for Ranch trainees is to pierce Vaughn's current disguise. One day, when his work with the Agency is done and he is sure his children can fend for themselves, he and Dakota will undertake one last mission. They intend to call Stone out, on their terms this time, and on that day there will be a reckoning.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Law) d6, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d10, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +0; **Grit:** 8; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11

Hindrances: Ugly (Heavy Scarring), Vengeful, Vow (Destroy Undead), Vow (Devotion to Dakota)

Edges: Agent (Grade 6), Ambidextrous, Charismatic, Dead Shot, Duelist, Ghost Agent, Hard to Kill, Improved Tough as Nails, Improved Trademark Weapon, Nerves of Steel, Quick Draw, Reputation, Right Hand of the Devil, Two Fisted, Veteran o' the Weird West

Gear: Vaughn's Piece (12/24/48; 3d6+1; AP 1)**, Colt Peacemaker* x2 (12/24/48; 2d6+1; AP 1), Gatling pistol (12/24/48; 2d6; AP 1; RoF 2), Knife (d6+d4), Agency duster (Armor 1), riding horse, bit and bridle, saddle, bedroll, reloads for each weapon (10).

*Each is customized for a +1 to Shooting

**Trademark Weapon and focus of Right Hand of the Devil



Jake Cahill (WC)

Harrowed

"I met Dakota when she was a green Pinkerton on her first trip to Denver. I was asked to assist her dealing with a rogue scientist from Fort 51. Yep, the same one who attacked Dakota's weddin'. That pretty little girl turned out to be a real hell-cat! I taught her how to track and hunt and how to apply those skills to men. In a short time, she was like a daughter to me. Even after the Night Train...after I died and came back with Junior in tow...Dakota's kept me human. She even had me give her away at her weddin'. Now she's got a pair o' young 'uns and it's like I'm a genuine Grandpappy! Of course, the best reason for me stayin' around is that I can trust that if Junior gets outta hand, I can trust Dakota or Vaughn to put me down the right way. Until then, Lord help anyone stupid enough to try and harm this family."

The first test put to the new Agency trainees at The Ranch is how long it takes them to realize that "Old Jake" is Harrowed. When he died, Jake Cahill already had nearly thirty years service as a U.S. Deputy Marshal and was known for his tenacity, toughness and his fondness for whiskey. As such, the heavy scarring from nosferatu claws and burns he sports, along with his eye patch and constant smell of whisky, are not an immediate giveaway.

"Junior" is Jake's name for his manitou, a smart and cunning demon who keeps his evil subtle. It knows that while Dakota might hesitate to kill her friend Cahill, Vaughn has no such compunctions. Vaughn has made it clear that Cahill is still on "The List" of things that need killing but he's near the bottom. Cahill respects Vaughn and so keeps away from him, unless Junior starts acting up. At those times, Cahill tries to keep in sight of Vaughn as much as is

reasonably possible. This usually settles Junior down for a while.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Indian Sign Language) d4, Knowledge (Law) d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Streetwise d4, Survival d6, Taunt d6, Tracking d6

Charisma: -2; **Grit:** 4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Hindrances: Heroic, One Eye, Ugly (Death Scars), Vow (Protect Dakota and her children)

Edges: Brawny, Level Headed, Strong Willed, Woodsman

Gear: Bowie knife (d12+d4+1; AP 1), Colt Peacemaker* (12/24/48; 2d6+1; AP 1), Colt revolving shotgun* (12/24/48; 1-3d6), Winchester '76* (24/48/96; 2d8; AP 2), riding horse, bit and bridle, saddle, bedroll, reloads for each weapon (5).

**Each is customized for a +1 to Shooting*

Dominion: +3

Harrowed Powers: Coup (Werewolf), Hellfire, Implacable, Supernatural Strength

About The Thompson Gang

The Ranch was written by "The Dead Ranger," John W. Thompson, based on *Deadlands* campaigns run by Nick Ream and John W. Thompson. Dakota Dewitt created by Christine M. Thompson, Vaughn Holcraft created by Amy Joan Holzeard, Jake Cahill created by John W. Thompson and inspired by the work of John Wayne. The Ranch Fiction (italicized portion) by Christine M. Thompson.



THE ARCANÉ TOME

In this column, we'll discuss new powers, new Arcane Backgrounds, and new uses for powers.

Superpowers in *Deadlands: Reloaded*

by Geoffrey Nelson

Sometimes you want to play a character (or create an NPC) with a weird schtick that doesn't fit neatly into the official *Deadlands Reloaded* Arcane Backgrounds.

Arcane Background (Super Powers) neatly handles these quirks, gifts, and knacks. A steam-driven cyborg, an Indian shapeshifter, and a Ghost Dancer are all possible with Arcane Background (Super Powers).

Leaves No Track (WC)

Osage Shape-Shifter

Leaves No Track is a slightly built man, with a sunken chest and washboard ribs. Despite his physique, his is a brave warrior and has been favored by the spirits with the ability to shapeshift. Leaves No Track lives by the Old Ways Oath.

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

Skills: Climb d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d4, Shapeshifting d8, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Old Ways Oath (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Favored; works like AB: Super Powers; Trappings: committing sins affects the power just as it does a Shaman), Fleet Footed

Power Points: 20

Gear: War pony, shield, bow (12/24/48; 2d6), 10 arrows, knife (d4+d4), tomahawk (d4+d4).

Won't Bend (WC)

Sioux Ghost Dancer

Tall and proud, Won't Bend is a force to be reckoned with in battle. His Ghost Shirt, a blue-dyed elaborate buckskin tunic, grants him extra protection against his foes. Won't Bend neither shows nor expects mercy.

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

Skills: Armor d8, Climb d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Riding d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty (major), Old Ways Oath (major), Stubborn (minor)

Edges: Arcane Background (Favored) (works like AB: Super Powers; Trappings: committing sins affects the power just as it does a Shaman; Won't Bend must be wearing a Ghost Shirt to activate this power), Block

Power Points: 20

Gear: War Pony, Bow (12/24/48; 2d6), 10 arrows, bladed war club (d6+d6; AP 2; Parry -1; requires 2 hands), knife (d6+d4), Ghost Shirt

Note: For both Leaves No Track and Won't Bend, the Old Ways Oath is only for flavor; it isn't required to take the Arcane Background (Favored) edge.



Eustace McCall (WC)

Steam-driven roustabout

Eustace works for a traveling circus as a laborer, bouncer and freak. He is a hulking, bald brute with a sloping forehead, a long handlebar mustache, and two limbs made of brass and steel. Eustace's left arm and right leg have been replaced with steam-powered prosthetics. He is intensely loyal to the circus owner, a Hungarian crone who calls herself Madame Corvi.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Boost Trait d8, Climb d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Riding d4, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Minor, wears glasses when not performing), Loyal (Minor, Madame Corvi)

Edges: Arcane Background (Steam-Driven; works like AB: Super Powers; Trappings: *Boost trait* works only on Strength, Agility, and linked skills).

Power Points: 20

Gear: Glasses, pocketknife, maintenance kit for prosthetics, sledgehammer (d10+d8; -1 to parry; -4 to hit for improvised weapon).

Ideas

Other possibilities for the Arcane Background (Super Powers) are a lightning-fast gunman, an Indian who calls upon various animal spirits to boost his prowess, a faith healer, or a ghost-hunter who sees what others cannot. This Arcane Background is great for quick NPCs with a single supernatural schtick.

Around the World pt.2

We've got so much good stuff this issue, we needed to repeat a column! Here is a setting from Lord Skudley that can be used as an adventure seed or when you need a quick map. If we nudge him, Lord Skudley might even provide an adventure specifically designed for this setting. High resolution images of the maps can be found in the downloads section of the *Shark Bytes* site.

Rusty Glenn

by Lord Skudley

The Town's History

Northern Idaho, early 1800's: Fort Grayson

During the Western Migration the U.S. Government stationed troops at strategic intervals to ensure the safety of her people. Over the years many forts became towns and just as many were abandoned. Fort Grayson in northern Idaho was abandoned in the hunting grounds of the Lapwaii (pronounced *lap-way*; a tribe of the Nimi'ipuu, pronounced *nee-mee-poo*); all that remains is a palisade

wall, a watch tower, and a partially collapsed bunkhouse.

March 22, 1867 (10 years ago): Rusty's Glenn

Wendell "Rusty" Hardwick, a former "Mountain Man" turned guide leads a band of pioneers looking to start a new life west along the Oregon Trail. Searching for better hunting, Rusty leads them into the Northern Idaho Territories. They come across the Glenn at Fort Grayson and fall in love with the region. Choosing to settle here, Rusty helps the pioneers to build their new home. Using the remaining wall and bunkhouse the settlers build their Town Hall and persuade Rusty to stay as their honorary Mayor, naming the settlement "Rusty's Glenn."

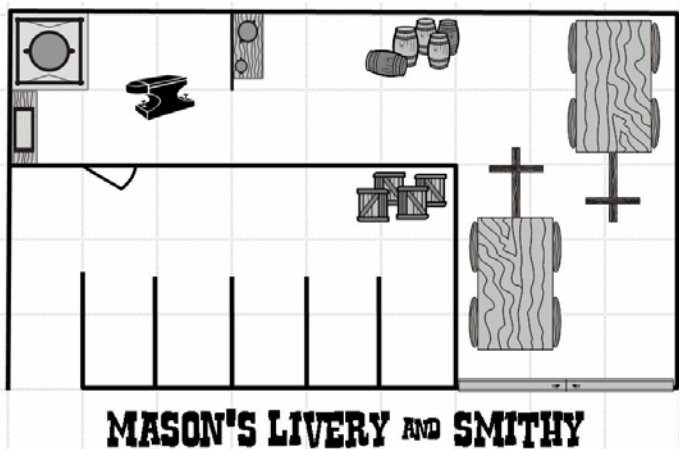
A Lapwaii Hunting Party discovers the Whiteman invaders and quickly returns to their village. Standing before Chief Chapowits (Many Coyotes), they tell him of the imminent danger they perceive in allowing these outsiders to live within their territory.

The Chief approaches the Settlers, voicing his concern, "You have built your homes in the hunting grounds of the Lapwaii Peoples. We are concerned that the Whiteman will encroach upon our way of life."

Rusty assures Chief Chapowits that the citizens of Rusty Glenn will make every attempt to live harmoniously with Lapwaii Peoples. Agreeing on a Treaty, Rusty and Chief



Chapowits state that the people of Rusty Glenn will stay in the northern portion of the hunting grounds, taking up no more than 5,000 acres (approximately 8 square miles), and the Lapwail will hunt in the southern areas no closer than 2 miles to Rusty Glenn.

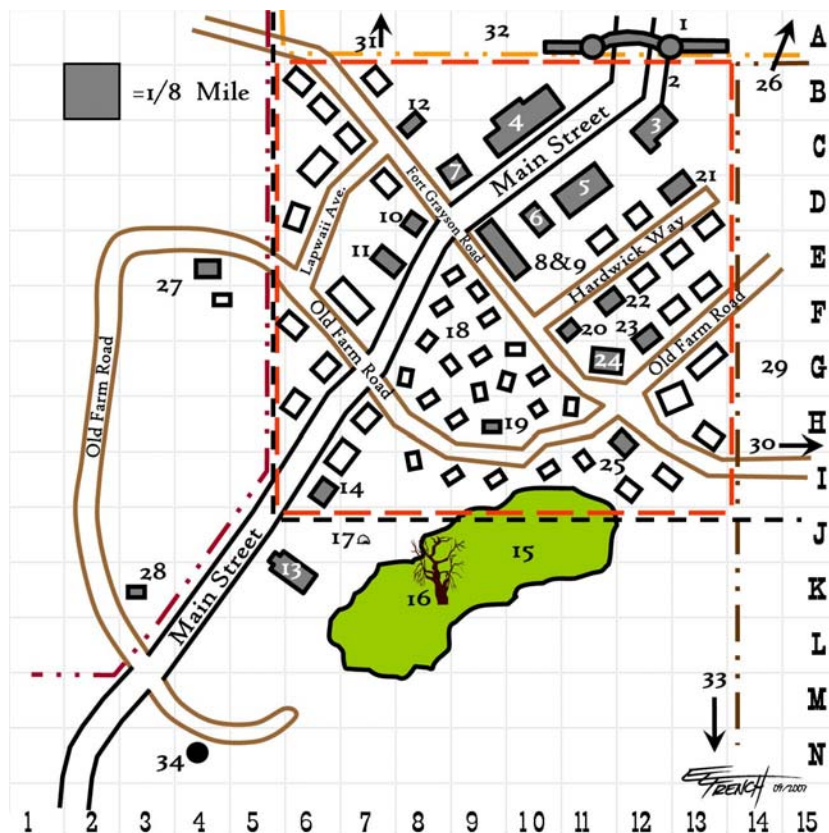


MASON'S LIVERY AND SMITHY

Today

As the years go by, Rusty Glenn expands beyond their original boundaries. Chief Chapowits chooses to allow the people of Rusty Glenn to live in peace; they are good neighbors and always willing to trade with the Lapwail.

The Town features a palisade wall, now rebuilt and freshly painted, with its gate wide open; a welcome sight to weary travelers. Passing by the watch tower they read "Welcome to Rusty Glenn formally Fort Grayson" painted across the arch overhead. GMs should fill in the numbers of various Points of Interest on the map as they go along, customizing the town for personal use.



Rumors

Use these as springboards, along with the Points of Interest, to come up with ideas for adventures in Rusty Glenn.

- Georgie Balderama, Jr. disappeared while playing hide-'n-seek in the Grove after dark.
- The notorious Strathmore gang buried the spoils of an army transport wagon robbery somewhere near here about 15 years ago.
- The new school was built on sacred Indian ground. Mysterious lights are seen near it every dark or moonless night.
- An Indian dreamcatcher was found at the scene where a silo under construction burned down in the night.
- Many families have suddenly decided to leave Rusty Glenn in the last few weeks.
- A big man named Juan has recently shown up, causing trouble at Fay's Place.
- A giant badger lives (or lived) near Badger Rock.

Rusty Glenn: Points of Interest

- 1) Fort Grayson Wall & Tower
- 2) Block & Tackle System
- 3) City Hall/Jail
- 4) Fay's Place (Local saloon)
- 5) Mason's Livery & Smithy (Willy Truitt, prop.)
- 6) Jefferson's Mercantile
- 7) Cleveland's Hardware
- 8) Dr. Ashwood's Office & Funeral Parlor
- 9) Amos' Barbershop (Amos Ludwig, proprietor)
- 10) Assayer's Office (Ardin Marsh, proprietor)
- 11) Norwood's Bank & Post Office
- 12) Sanders' Bakery
- 13) School House
- 14) Ms Scott's Home (the School Marm)
- 15) The Grove
- 16) The Hallow Tree
- 17) Badger Rock
- 18) Tent city
- 19) Truitt's Place
- 20) Horace & Rollie's Place
- 21) Rusty's Home
- 22) Balderman Home
- 23) Beardsley Home
- 24) Clark Home
- 25) Kline Home
- 26) Thompson's Farm
- 27) Jenkins' Farm
- 28) Jenkins' Barn
- 29) Grimes' Farm
- 30) Mabry's Farm
- 31) Shepherd's Farm
- 32) Roberts' Farm
- 33) Abandoned shack
- 34) Burnt silo

Campaign for my real friends

...and real pain for my players! Fully developed campaigns will go here, and we've got a doozy this month with new Edges, gear, characters, and a whole Plot Point for your enjoyment!

Sticks, Stones, & Rail Wars

A serial *Deadlands: Reloaded* Plot Point

by Jon Ginsberg

Welcome to a rousing tale of greed, power, and more weirdness than you can shake a stick at. What you got in your hands, Marshal, is the core story of a *Deadlands Reloaded* campaign. Just like those fancy Plot Points the hombres at Pinnacle write up, this is just the core pieces of the story, not every little step your posse will take along the way. Unlike their work though, we don't have no fancy Savage Tales or Adventure Generators to go with it. That's why they make the big bucks. But between the stuff in here and the myriad (see, us cowpokes can use the fancy words too) *Deadlands* material out there already, you should be fine, Marshal. Didn't get to be where you are now by being slow.

Oh, and if any o' you player types are lookin' around here, **DON'T**. You'll get to learn everything in here in due time. And not a moment sooner!

Introduction

Well, guess it's time to give you the rundown on what's brewin' in the Weird West that has things headed downhill. More downhill than usual, even. It all started back before the Great Spirit Wars, among the Indian tribes out West. Seems there was a shaman by the name o' Hanaptala who dealt with manitous, unleashing them on anyone he could. No one's sure anymore what his ultimate goal was—hell, he may not have even had one—but one thing is clear: he was as twisted as they come.

Unlike most evil shamans, this Hanaptala feller didn't just call on manitous to do his work, or force 'em into it like a huckster. This guy let the buggers run wild, stirring up as much fear as they could and even helpin' them out. Then they'd thank him for the free lunch by doing a few nasty things for the guy. Needless to say, a few people took exception to this, and one of the Old Ones gathered a band of warriors and other shamans together to take Hanaptala down. It took time, lives, and many favors from the nature spirits, but in the end he was beaten. The Old One didn't want to take any chances, and destroyed all of Hanaptala's spirit tools, and what he couldn't completely destroy, he hid. That's where the sticks and stones in the title of this campaign come in.

One of the things the Old One couldn't destroy was the crazed shaman's medicine staff. He was able to break it in half, and break the carved stone headpiece off, but it had

become a powerful relic after Hanaptala's death. So the Old One sent his most trusted warriors out to hide the three pieces as best they could, and there they stayed for hundreds of years. Until now (betcha didn't see that comin').

After that whole big mess in Gomorra with Knicknevin, some manitous have decided to follow suit and try and find a way to cut the apron strings from those big baddies, the Reckoners. Most have been dealt with by those evil bastards (turned to ghost rock for the most part) but one demon by the name of Brackneller was crafty enough to keep its plan hidden. And unlike Knicknevin, Brackneller wants to move up in the world, up to the very top.



See, Brackneller's not much more than an average run of the mill manitou, spreading fear, bringing some back for the Reckoners to feed on, and so on. But one day 'ol Brack came across the legend of Hanaptala. Being a curious and crafty demon, it slowly pieced together more and more of the legend, until it had figured out what made this staff of Hanaptala's so darned special. See, should the staff be reassembled, it has the power to spread fear by its very existence. In the hands of someone with some black magic, it'll do much more than that. It can take that fear, and send it off directly to the Hunting Grounds. And if that black magician works for Brackneller, well...I think you see where this is going. It'll quickly give Brackneller all the fear it needs to challenge one of the Reckoners and take its place. Oh and one more thing—since this thing literally sucks the fear right out of you, it usually leaves its victims insane, if not dead.

Brackneller knows it can't get the staff put together all by itself. It doesn't like the idea of being bound to a corpse, but it *loves* making people do the work for it. With the Great Rail Wars bringing all sorts of folk into the West, it's had no trouble finding people to get things done. His best men (and woman) are a dupe with a small army, a power hungry witch, and an insane corpse. And without your posse to do something about it, chances are these hombres will succeed. Them's the breaks, Marshal, so get those cowpokes of yours off their keisters, and kick 'em into action. There's *heroes'* work to be done.

Major Characters

This is where you'll find all the details on the important folk in this story, other than the most important ones, your posse. That means stats and background info, but it don't mean there ain't updated stuff later on in this thing. Some secrets we want to keep from you too, Marshal, 'til the very end.

First we'll be talking about the villains, and then the heroes. Yeah, we felt a bit forgiving when writing this, and decided to give your posse a little help. Don't know what we were thinking.

Brackneller

Well, not much more to say on this guy that ain't been said already. He's out to make a name for himself and replace one of the Reckoners, and if he gets his slimy demon hands on that staff, chances are he'll do it. No stats for this one. Not yet.

Iida Zenko (WC)

This is the dupe we talked about earlier. See, Iida (pronounced *Ee-da*) Zenko's a samurai, straight from Japan. He was some kind of lord or something over there, but when they changed rulers and the Emperor took over, he got sold out by those he trusted, and made ronin. That's pretty much just one notch above a common criminal. Like many other ronin, he's made his way to the West, and joined up with Kang's Iron Dragon rail company. Since he's good at what he does, he's moved up fast in the Iron Dragon organization, and now has a sizable force at his command.

Lately, he's been having strange dreams of his ancestors, giving him cryptic messages concerning the hills around Deadwood. He believes that there is something there that will help him to regain the honor he lost and take back his rightful place. And hopefully you figured out those dreams are purely the work of Brackneller. One of the pieces of the staff is hidden near Deadwood, and with Iron Dragon being the only company to have any lines near there, the manitou figured Iida could get the staff for him. The guy may be handy with a katana, and a good leader, but he can be a bit shortsighted when it comes trying to get his honor back.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Notice d6, Riding d6, Stealth d4, Taunt d10

Charisma: +0; **Grit:** 4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Bad Dreams, Code of Honor (Bushido), Death Wish (Regain his honor)

Edges: Ambidextrous, Arcane Resistance, Combat Reflexes, Command, Dodge, Improved Sweep, Inspire, No Mercy (Fighting), Two-Fisted

Gear: Katana (d8+d6+2; AP 2), wakizashi (d8+d6; AP 2), Demon Armor (+2 Armor; see below)

Demon Armor: Demons have long been hallmark of armor for the Iida family, and Iida Zenko's armor is no exception. But through his association with Brackneller, his armor has

become more potent. It now grants the wearer the Arcane Resistance Edge, stacking with any they already have naturally. However, it makes the owner particularly susceptible to the influence of manitous, especially when they sleep. Anyone who wears this armor enough gains the Bad Dreams hindrance.

Virginia Leeds-Howell (WC)



You'll never meet a more ruthless woman than Miss Virginia. She's one of the last remaining descendants of the Leeds family, after the Whateleys wiped out most of them following the birth of the Jersey Devil (more about this in *The Black Circle*). And Miss Virginia has always wanted to find a way to get vengeance on those that done her wrong. She's a skilled huckster, and a damn fine looker, and has used both to her advantage. Early on in life she crossed paths with Mina

Devlin, and while she didn't join her coven of witches, the two agreed aid each other from time to time. More recently, she's married a man by the name of Thaddeus Howell, a high ranking member of the Union Blue rail company. Unfortunately for him, she plans on doing him in soon so she can take over.

Unlike Brackneller's other cronies, *she* found a piece of the staff herself, and saw her chance for more power to destroy the Whateleys. She's been using her own skills, her husband's resources, and a couple witches sent by her old friend Mina Devlin to help the manitou find the pieces of the staff.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d10, Hexslinging d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d8

Charisma: +6; **Grit:** 7; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Bloodthirsty (but very few know it), Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Connections (Union Blue, Black River), Improved Dodge, Improved High Roller, New Power x3, Power Points x2, Strong Willed, True Grit, Very Attractive, Whateley Blood (exotic)

Powers: Armor, boost/lower trait, bolt, fear, puppet, teleport. **Power Points:** 20

Gear: Fancy clothes, Ritual Blade of the Leeds (d4+2d4; see notes below)

Ritual Blade of the Leeds: This fancy old knife's been in the Leeds family for...well, since there's been a Leeds family. It's been used in more vile and dark rituals than you can shake a stick at, and it's long been tainted by these evil acts. When used by anyone, wounds dealt by the blade can only be healed naturally—magic has no effect. In

the hands of a huckster, it grants the user the Whateley Blood Edge, assuming the cutting they do is done by this blade. In the hands of someone with Whateley Blood, it doubles the amount of Power Points they get from using that Edge. So taking a level of Fatigue gets the huckster 4 Power Points, and taking a Wound gets them 2d6+2 Power Points. Now obviously this power comes at a price, and so after a while, anyone using the blade has to make a Spirit roll at -2 in order to *not* use their Whateley Blood Edge to get the Power Points for their hexes.



Holden Kramwell (WC)

This boy's loony as they come, and dead to boot. Kramwell was a Union cavalry rider stationed out west when the Reckoning began. He had to deal with all manner of bad mojo and it quickly drove the poor boy bonkers. Soon enough, he went AWOL and started hunting down abominations, hucksters, anything "not right," as he put it. As you can guess, this little crusade of his didn't last long, and soon one of those things that goes bump in the night bumped Holden real good. About a week after being buried in a Boot Hill somewhere, he woke up again Harrowed. The man was so loony, it started to rub off on his manitou, and soon enough they were roaming the Weird West stirring up a ruckus everywhere they went, killing humans and abominations alike.

Brackneller knew it would probably need a good old fashioned gunslinger on its side eventually, and while Kramwell's loony, his manitou's damn crafty. So Brackneller quickly enlisted the aid of this dead'un.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d12, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Riding d8, Shooting d12, Stealth d10, Taunt d6

Charisma: -4; **Grit:** 6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Hindrances: Arrogant (his manitou is, at least), Delusion (Major, pretty much anything you want), Mean, Ugly

Edges: Dodge, Hip Shooting, Implacable, Improved Dodge, Improved Hip Shooting, Marksman, Nerves of Steel, Quick Draw, Spook, Strong Willed, Supernatural Attribute (Vigor)

Gear: Random traveling goods, Kramwell's Colt Dragoon .44 (12/24/48; 2d6+1; AP 1; SA; see below).

Kramwell's Iron: Our dearly departed villain is still carrying the same Colt Dragoon he had when he was with

the cavalry. After all his years of slaying abominations, both living and dead, its become a relic. Anyone wielding it can ignore ALL called shot penalties when aiming for the weak point on an abomination. Now, this doesn't work on called shots to other spots on an abomination, and it doesn't help the cowpoke figure out where the spot is, 'cept through trial and error. Unfortunately, the gun's taken on a bit of Kramwell's...*unique* personality, so to speak, and it rubs off on the bearer as well. Slowly but surely the cowpoke carrying this piece goes nuts, first gaining a minor Delusion that eventually becomes major, then eventually Paranoia (as per the Mad Science Dementia), and finally Schizophrenia.

Agent Susan Forrest (WC)

A recent, but decorated member of the Agency, Susan Forrest is one of many members of that shadowy organization keeping an eye on Black River. She's unearthed evidence of a link between certain members of that rail company and the Iron Dragon company, and is determined to find out what's going on. She crosses paths with the posse in the mining camp of Deadwood.

Forrest is pretty unique as far as Agents go. She's a woman, never wore a Pinkerton badge, and was actually enlisted by the Agency while she was serving as a town marshal. A Scarecrow had been animated outside her town and began killing off the farmers, one by one. She assisted an Agent who had arrived and helped destroy the abomination. She performed so well, especially in keeping the townsfolk from knowing what was happening, that the Agent enlisted her. The stats below are accurate when the posse first meets her. Assuming she survives that little encounter, she'll advance some as she crosses paths with your posse later in the campaign.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Law) d6, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

Charisma: 0; **Grit:** 1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious, Vow (Destroy or contain the supernatural), Doubting Thomas (Still new to the horrors of the Reckoning)

Edges: Agent (Rank 1), Dodge, Level Headed

Gear: Gatling Pistol (12/24/48; 2d6; RoF 2; 12 Shots; AP 1), disguise kit, Agent's badge.

Randall Hicks (WC)

Hicks is the epitome of the Texas Ranger. He's smart, good with a gun, and laughs in the face of abominations. He tends to follow the laughing with a good wad of spit and a shot from his Peacemaker. All in all, he should probably be Back East training new recruits. But one thing's been keeping him out in the field, and at the rank of 2nd Lieutenant, for years now—Holden Kramwell.

You see, Hicks and Kramwell crossed paths back in '74, just as the Harrowed was taking a bite (literally) out of some folk in a small cattle town in Kansas. The two ended up slugging it out, but neither could quite put the other down for good, and Kramwell fled to fight another day.

Hicks tracked the crazy bastard, following a trail of bushwhackings, shot up towns, and bloody leavings for months. The two fought a few times over this period, always ending in a draw, though they definitely left their marks on each other. In the end, though, Kramwell's trail led Hicks back home; right to his own doorstep and the mangled and partially devoured bodies of his wife and eight-year-old daughter.

Well after that, Hicks decided while he still cared about his duties as a Ranger, they'd always be secondary to him hunting down that sick bastard Kramwell and making sure he'd be the one to put a bullet in the walking corpse's brainpan. He's willing to do *anything* to put that one down. While the higher-ups in the Rangers know he's a loose cannon, they also know he's one of the best Rangers they've got out in the Weird West.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d8, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Tracking d8

Charisma: -2; **Grit:** 4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bad Dreams (From all he's seen of Kramwell's atrocities), Death Wish (Kill Holden Kramwell), Overconfident, Vow (Destroy or contain the supernatural)

Edges: True Grit, Ambidextrous, Improved Rifle Spin, Texas Ranger, Scout, Wilderness Man

Gear: Winchester '73 (24/48/96, 2d8, RoF 1, 7 shots, AP 2), bowie knife (d4+d6+1), standard traveling goods, lariat.

New Edges

Rifleman

Requirements: Seasoned, Strength d8+, Shooting d8+

Your hero is one o' those manly types that can not only shoot a rifle one handed, but do that fancy spin to reload it. That's not to say doin' it's easy.

You may fire any longarm (a weapon requiring two hands) one-handed. You suffer a -2 penalty to Shooting rolls, and the range increments for the weapon are halved, but it sure does look spectacular. In addition, if the weapon is lever-action, he can reload with a fancy one-handed rifle spin. This Edge has no effect on the restriction on weapons usable in close combat.



Master Rifleman

Requirements: Heroic, Rifleman

Your hero no longer suffers the -2 penalty for firing a longarm one-handed, though range increments are still halved.

New Infernal Device

Steam Velocipede

Cost: \$800 (+\$100 for sidecar)

This steam powered bicycle is amazingly fast and perfect for those who don't want to worry about feeding and caring for a horse. It can only carry the driver, plus one passenger with an optional sidecar. For an additional \$50, a mount for a gatling gun can be added to the sidecar (gun not included).

Acc/Top Speed: 10/20; **Toughness:** 8; **Crew:** 1 (+1 passenger with sidecar)

Malfunction: The ghost rock boiler explodes, doing 2d10 damage to everyone in a Medium Burst Template (including the velocipede and passengers).



Plot Points

Episode One: Robbin' the Rails

Since this campaign deals so much with the Rail Wars, it all starts (where else?) but a train—a Wasatch train to be precise, traveling west to Denver. It shouldn't be too difficult to get all your posse's members on a train headed to Denver. It's a small train, only one or two passenger cars, and two freight cars. Feel free to add a couple more cars, if need be, to spread your posse out.

It's late morning, and the train is traveling only a few miles south of the Sioux Nations border. Everything's been going fine, the train is only a little behind schedule. That's when all hell breaks loose. Several passengers on each car get up, and toss off their hats and dusters, revealing themselves as Asian. There are 2 per hero on each car, with an additional 2 more on the last passenger car. One hombre on each car pulls out a katana, and demands the passengers turn over their valuables, and his buddies start gathering up the loot. The two additional bandits on the last car head out the back door, toward the freight cars.

Now it's your posse's turn. Give them a chance to act however they want. They're heroes, to one degree or another, so they should handle this pretty well.

Enemies: 2 Martial Artists per hero; 1 Iron Dragon Elite per car.

About 3 or 4 rounds into the fight (or sooner, if your heroes finish these hombres quick), the passenger cars are shaken by a sudden intense vibration. Anyone making a Notice roll looks out the window and sees the freight cars disconnect from the train, shrinking rapidly in the distance. If none of the heroes do so, the engineer pulls the emergency brake, sending everyone for a nice tumble.



Any surviving bandits make a break for it, leaping out of the car and heading back in the direction of the released freight car. If the posse attempts to follow, they'll need Agility rolls at -4 or get a Fatigue level from bumps and bruises. Assuming they stay on the train, continue with the section below. Otherwise, move on to the Freight Car Fight.

A Job

Once the train comes to a full stop, the conductor comes through all the cars, telling everyone to get off the train. Once everyone is off, allow the cowpokes to mingle, and introduce themselves, as well as ask questions of the other passengers. Eventually, they all hear the sounds of a heated argument between the train's conductor and a well-dressed man.

Conductor: "Whatcha mean yer takin the guards!? I unnerstan' thatcha need to get what was on those freight cars back, but if you take the guards, we'll be easy prey if those bandits come back. Not to mention we're within spittin' distance of the Sioux!"

Man in Suit: "Well, what do you suggest then? It is obvious your guards are not the most competent of

gunhands, having been unable to stop the attack of a handful of practically unarmed bandits, but I will take what I can get. This piece of equipment was procured by Dr. Darius Hellstromme himself! I do not need to remind you how the good doctor takes failure."

Conductor: "They didn't stop 'em cuz they didn't know they was there! The damned Orientals snuck on the train, actin' jes like passengers, proolly stole tickets. Regardless, we need the guards HERE! Not on some wild goose chase after some newfangled gizmo!"

At this point allow the heroes to intervene. If none make a move to do so, continue the argument, making it quite obvious that whatever this man wants recovered is rather valuable, and most likely worth a reward.

Once the posse has entered the conversation, the well-dressed man responds instantly, introducing himself as Roger Stanton, an officer for Wasatch, and directs them to follow him. He walks over to the rear of the last passenger car and presses a button. A flat mechanical device on rail wheels rolls out from underneath the car, and Stanton springs onto it, pulling levers, turning dials, and the like. In a moment, it expands and unfolds, until it resembles a stripped-down steam wagon. Stanton then says the following:

This is Hellstromme Personal Railrider. At least, that is the name I submitted to the approval committee. It is powered by a ghost rock boiler and operates on the same principles as the steam wagons Dr. Hellstromme has been building in Salt Lake City for years. It is intended to allow for fast and efficient inspection of rail lanes, in places where the terrain is too rough for steam wagons. With this, you should be able to reach the freight cars in minutes.

One of the freight cars carried extra baggage and supplies of the passengers, the other contained a special device needed by Wasatch to continue in our drive for the Maze. It is that one we are most interested in. If it is still there, the Railrider should be capable of pulling that single car back to us. If you are successful I will reward each of you with reimbursement for this trip, as well as an additional reward of \$50 each. If the bandits are already gone, do what you can to find their trail, and bring back the other cars. What do you say?

The Railrider requires only a successful Driving roll to use, as the controls are exceedingly simple. Failure causes the vehicle to come to a very sudden stop; all passengers roll Agility or suffer a level of Fatigue from bumps and bruises.

When the posse arrives on the scene, they see the two rail cars that were detached from the train. The one right in front of them is open, and completely empty. They can clearly see a couple of very deep wagon ruts headed north, away from the scene.

Freight Car Fight

After a couple minutes of looking around, and especially if the heroes start trying to follow the trail, have everyone make Notice rolls. The bandits aren't dumb—they left some friends behind to make sure they weren't followed for long.

Enemies: 1 Gunman per hero, plus 1 Martial Artist per 2 heroes

Anyone getting a raise on a Notice roll also sees that all of the gunmen are actually *gunwomen*. Once more than half of them are put down, a bright light flashes in the sky to the north, and any remaining bandits quickly vamoose to the south. Any that escape the posse get to some hidden velocipedes and zoom off, following the ruts. In moments they're gone.

The heroes can nurse their wounds now, and have a better look around. They find one freight car undisturbed, and all of the passengers' possessions—the posse's included—still inside. Whatever was in the other car is long gone, taken by the bandits. If any of the heroes goes to check out where the velocipedes were, they find a mostly empty pack. Inside is a note reading as follows:

Western Dispatch Telegram

Agents on board STOP
Meet 3 miles from hills STOP
Foil pursuit STOP
Retreat after flare STOP

Arai

There really isn't anything else for the posse to do here at this point. Make it clear that the bandits are long gone. Once the heroes return the freight cars to the rest of the train, Stanton approaches them, asking them how everything went. He's obviously upset that the equipment is gone, but understands that it was through no fault of the heroes. He says they will be paid half what was promised (can't be paying them for lack of results) and they will need to meet with the Denver representative of Wasatch to be paid. The conductor calls for everyone to board the train, and after a few days of travel, the posse reaches Denver.

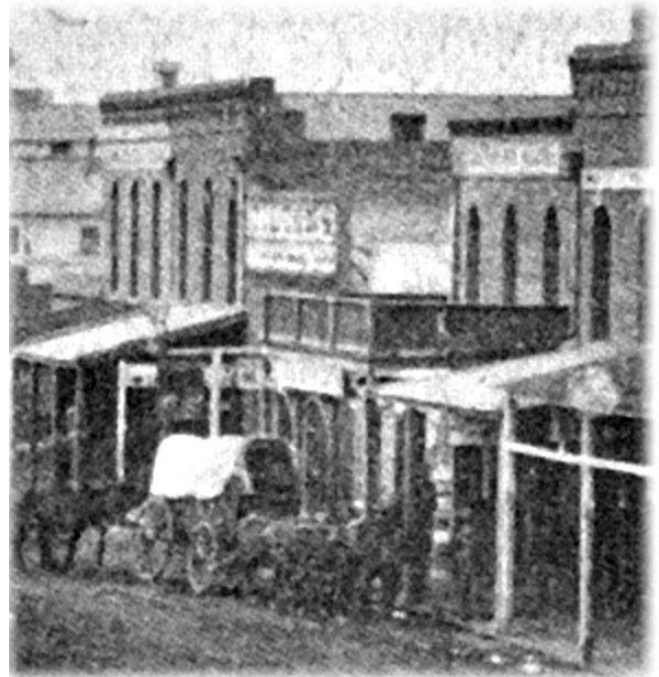
Denver and More Work

It's mid-afternoon when the train gets to Denver. A Streetwise roll, or just asking the train's conductor or Stanton, gets them the location of the Wasatch office in Denver. They don't need to head there right off the bat; they have an hour or so to check out the sights in the burg. This is a great time to add hooks to any side stories you have planned, Marshal.

The Wasatch office in Denver is a small affair, little more than a secretary's office and a private office for the local representative, Byron Lancaster. The secretary was told to expect the posse's arrival, and shows them in to Lancaster's office. The office is well-appointed, but small.

Lancaster is sitting at his desk looking over some papers when the posse comes in. He is an older man, somewhat big around the midsection, and balding, though he keeps the color of his hair and whiskers. He wears a thick mustache that grows into his sideburns, and a new suit of fashionable cut. As the posse enters, he looks up from his work and greets them, saying he's heard all about the incident from Mr. Stanton. Read the following to the players.

Byron rises from his desk and says, "As you probably suspect, this incident is a serious detriment to our company's operations. The shipment was kept a closely-guarded secret, so I don't think I can trust our usual regulators to address this. Your actions have shown you to be willing and able, and I'd like to hire you as troubleshooters for this affair. I want you to get our equipment back, by any means necessary. Obviously, you will do all you can to keep Wasatch's name out of this affair whenever possible. It would not do well for this news to be made public."



He's willing to pay the heroes practically anything, especially since he never actually plans on having them collect. He was paid by Virginia Leeds-Howell for information regarding the shipment, and to send the unwitting posse after it once it's been stolen. He figures Virginia's men will kill them, or they'll get the equipment back. He's nothing more than a dupe at this point, and thinks Virginia is just a power hungry rival of Wasatch.

Once an agreement is made, Lancaster suggests the heroes set out immediately. They'll need basic traveling gear and horses for certain, and a wagon wouldn't hurt. They'll be hoofin' it a plenty in this little tale.

Be sure to catch the next installment of *Sticks, Stones, & Rail Wars*, coming soon to Shark Bytes!