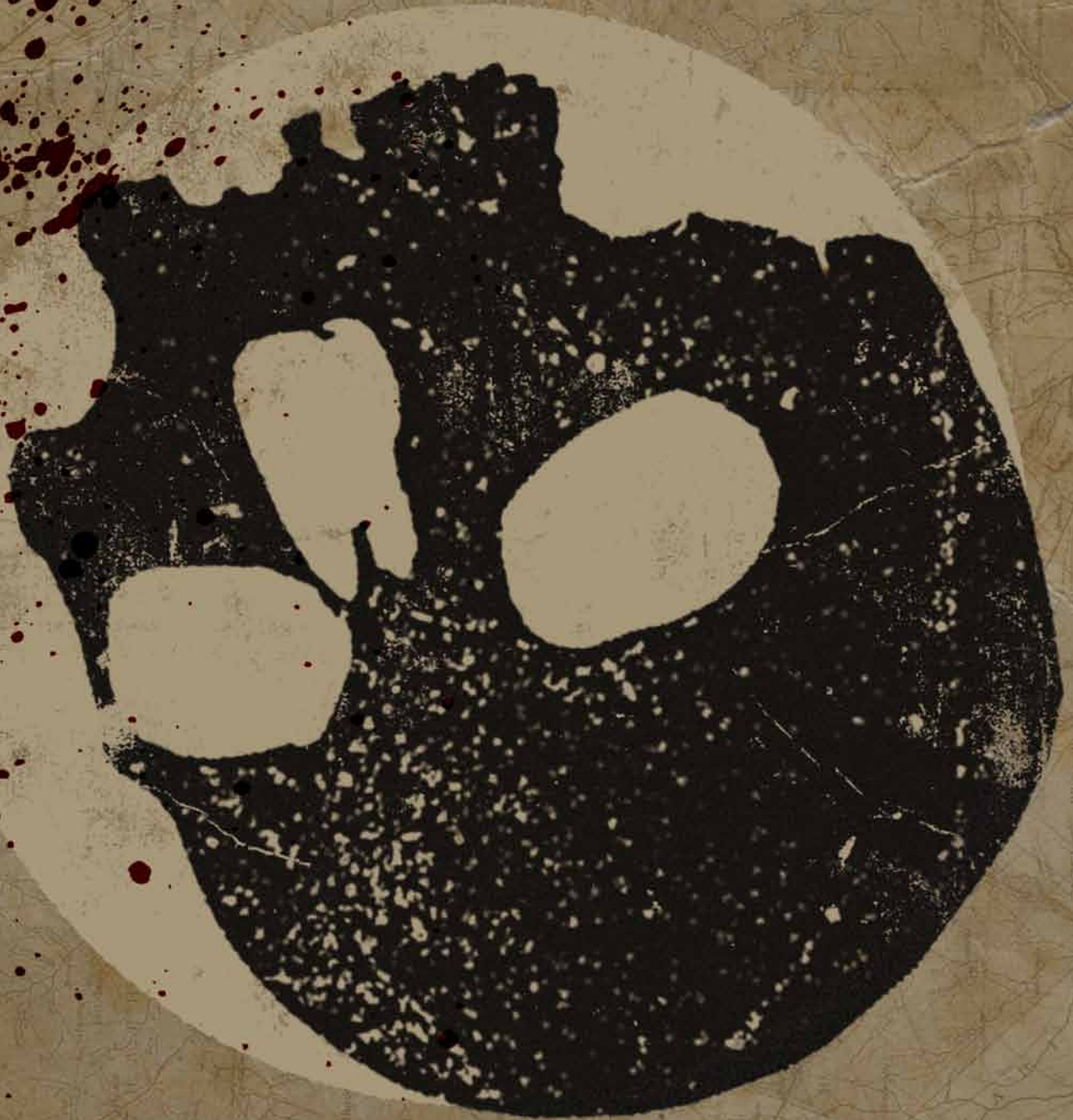


CAROLINA DEATH CRAWL



BULLY PULPIT GAMES

CAROLINA DEATH CRAWL

**A PARTIAL RECITAL OF THE CONDUCT OF THESE FIENDS AND HYENAS—
A MEDITATION ON THE VICISSITUDES OF WAR
& THE PENALTIES OF TREASON**

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Carolina Death Crawl

First Edition, April 2013

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*"When you play, play hard."
— Theodore Roosevelt*

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WHAT IS THIS?

Carolina Death Crawl is a fun and competitive Southern Gothic swamp crawl roleplaying card game designed to help you tell a story of desperation, depravity, and destruction. Set in North Carolina during the American Civil War, the game has a grounding in real history but stands ready to go wherever you and your friends wish to take it.

The game is designed for four players and a session will typically last three hours, depending on your style of play.

The game is competitive—only one character will survive to see the end, with the players of those who fall providing additional adversity. It isn't fair and it isn't balanced, so enjoy yourself and play to find out what happens.

Throughout these rules you'll see **bolded directions** that tell you who is supposed to do what at each stage of the game. There's no game master but there is a host—probably you, right?

PREPARATION

HOST: Prepare for your game

If this is your first time playing, read the rules and get familiar with the cards.

HOST: Invite some kickass friends to play the game

Try to play with four players, ideally three plus you, because the game is geared for that number.

If you want to play with more or less than four, see “Playing with More or Less than Four” section (page 11) for details.

HOST: Arrange your space

Arrange a comfortable place to play with a table and some chairs. Arrange the chairs by descending order of comfort, and make sure one is pretty nice. You don’t need pencils or paper or dice.

Organize the game’s cards on the table, like so:

- ★ Put the Color cards in three individual stacks, in numeric order, face down, #1 on top.
- ★ Shuffle each of the three suits of Action cards and sort them into individual piles.
- ★ Spread out the Character cards so all twelve are visible. Put the given name cards to the left and the surname cards on the right, non-bloody side face up.
- ★ Have a copy of the Glossary at hand in case anyone at the table isn’t sure about the terms used in this text or on the cards.

HOST: Explain the premise of the game

The important points:

- ★ *Carolina Death Crawl* is a competitive storytelling game set in 1863 during the American Civil War.
- ★ Most of the game takes place after our characters have been abandoned deep behind enemy lines.
- ★ We’re going to craft a nightmarish story to learn who lives and who dies.
- ★ You don’t need to know any history to play!

TONE

EVERYONE: Agree on a tone for your game

The best tones are spooky Southern Gothic or over-the-top action-adventure. Gritty realism can also be fun if everyone is up for a grounded, low-key evening. Don’t introduce moaning haints into a session you agreed would be realistic, don’t hijack explosive-laden trains in your Southern Gothic

game, and don’t argue about the rate of fire of muzzle-loading rifles in your action-adventure game.

If you’re looking for inspiration, try reading the work of authors such as Ambrose Bierce, Charles Frazier, Cormac McCarthy, William Faulkner, Stephen Wright, Shelby Foote, or Thomas Keneally.

Carolina Death Crawl is rooted in real history, but if you find yourselves arguing about historical anything, you are doing it wrong. There is just enough atmosphere provided by the cards to point you in the right direction, and beyond that whatever you come up with is explicitly permitted. If some Civil War history nerd starts pontificating, tell him to stow the trivia and play the game.

MAKING CHARACTERS

HOST: Explain who the characters are

Here are the important points:

- ★ Your character is a soldier in the First North Carolina Cavalry. He is a Union loyalist and native of the Confederate state of North Carolina.
- ★ This is an awkward combination, given the bloody war being fought in your home state.
- ★ Men in your unit are a little rough around the edges. Nobody asks too many questions if you are willing to kill somebody you probably bobbed for apples with at the Pitt County Fair.

EVERYONE: Choose your Character cards

Select a given name card for the player on your left and a surname card for the player on your right. Do not choose either for yourself!

Once you have both halves of your character, read them and consider the questions they raise—what sort of criminal is he? How does being a greenhorn mark him? Answer these during the game, but ponder them a little now.

SEAT ORDER

EVERYONE: Reseat yourselves by rank

Rearrange yourselves around the play area in order of character rank from highest to lowest, proceeding clockwise. Make sure that the player of the highest ranking character gets the most comfortable spot at the head of the table.

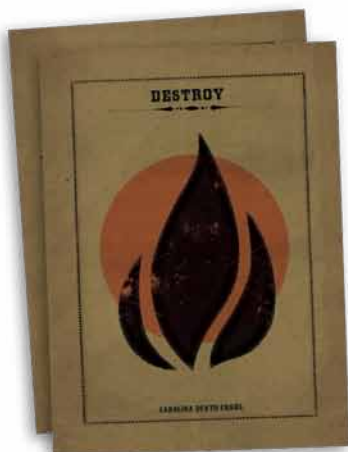
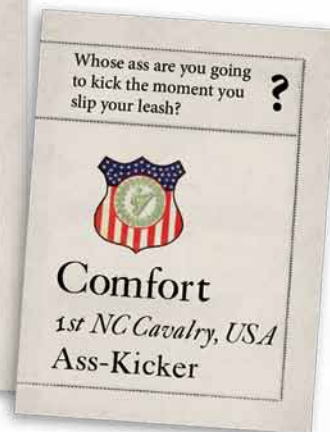
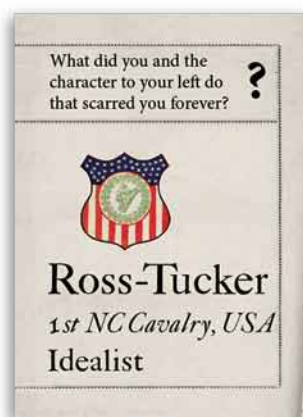
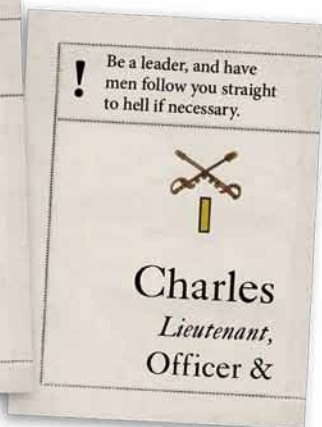
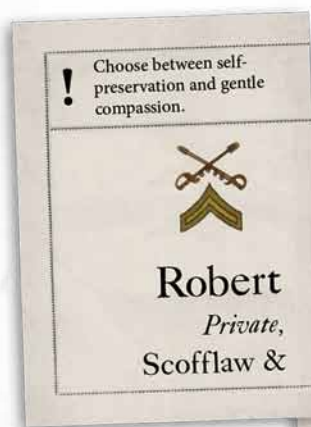
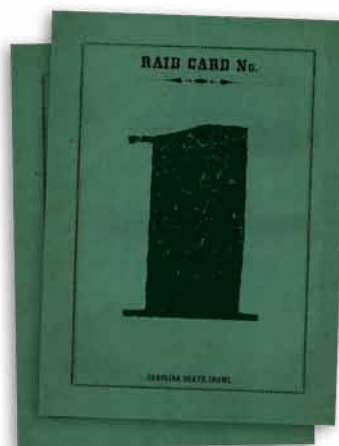
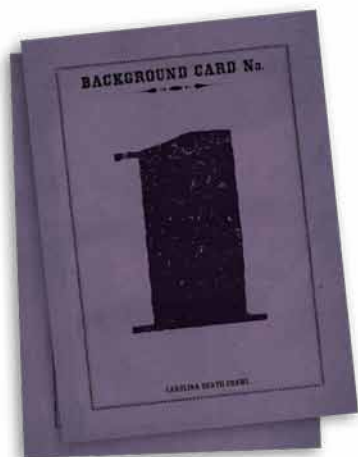
Ranks, from highest to lowest, are: Lieutenant, Sergeant, Corporal, Private (there may be two; whoever has served longer has precedence so decide who that is), and Bugler.

DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP. 

CARD SETUP

Carolina Death Crawl is a card-based game, and understanding the various types of card will make the rest of the rules much clearer. The deck has 60 individual Color, Action, and Character cards in it.

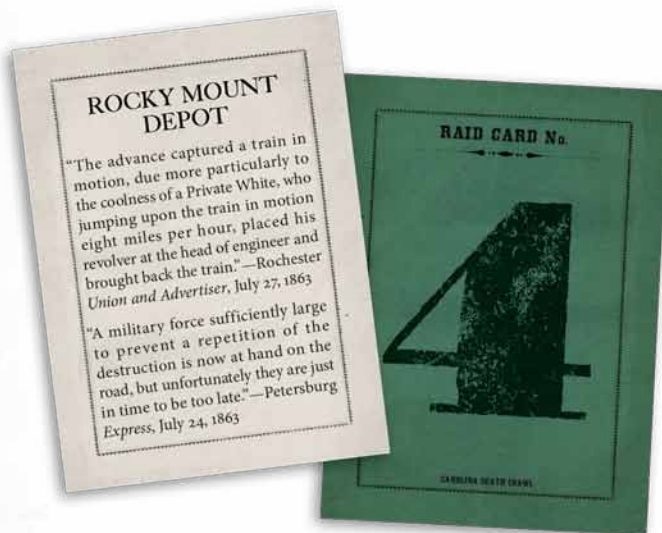
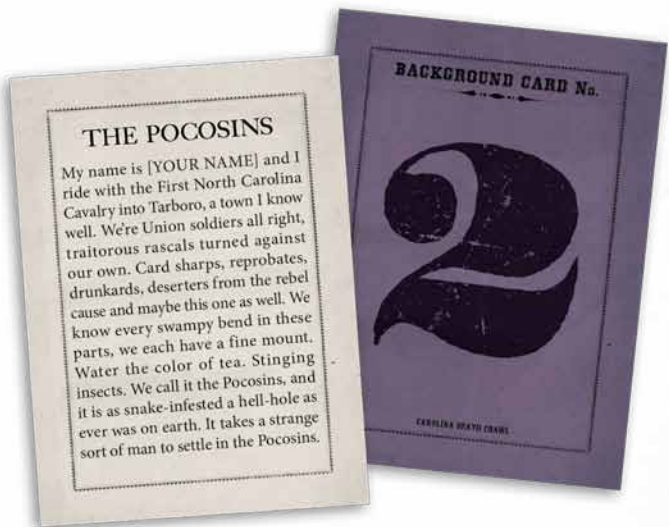
Sort the cards and arrange them on the table as shown. Normally all of the Character cards would be visible, so that players can read and assign them easily—space prohibits that here.



COLOR CARDS

There are three sets Color cards — Background, Raid, and Escape. Each set has four cards that contain short speeches you will give in character.

Background cards are just that. They provide additional context for the events to come from the perspective of the characters and are used in the Prologue.



Raid cards provide additional detail on each of the four locations that Potter's Raid passes through. They are used in the Prologue.

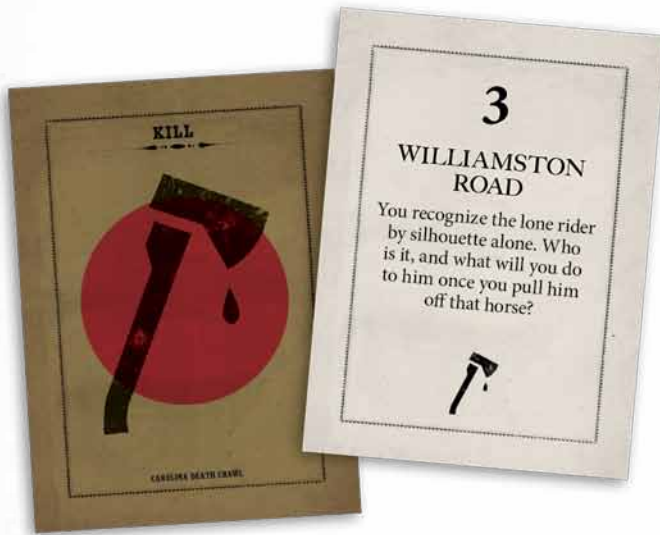


Escape cards set the stage for each act, detailing new circumstances the characters find themselves in.

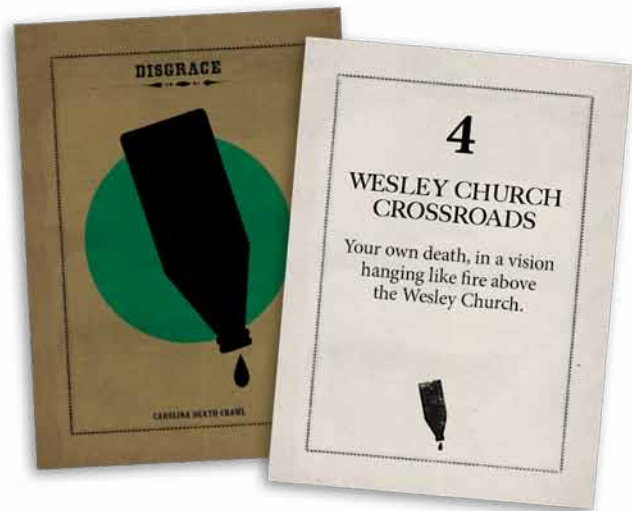
ACTION CARDS

Action cards are divided into three “suits” of twelve. The suits correspond to specific behaviors on the part of your characters, each of which are somewhat grim. You will draw Action cards during the Prologue and again during each act, and incorporating their contents into play may well save your character’s life.

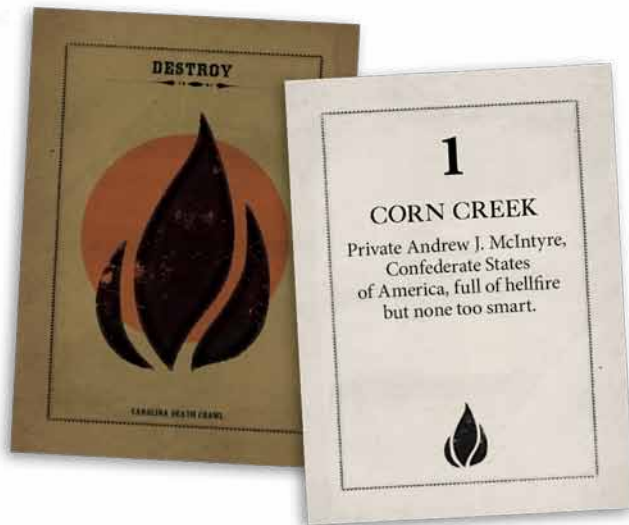
Kill cards introduce death into the game. When a Kill card is chosen, someone or something must die.



Disgrace cards introduce depravity into the game. When a Disgrace card is chosen, someone must shame themselves, their uniform, or both.



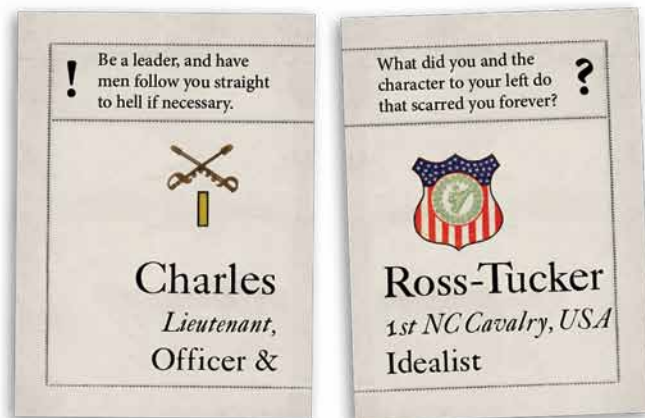
Destroy cards introduce destruction into the game. When a Destroy card is chosen, something must be burned, broken, or washed away.



CHARACTER CARDS

Each character is a composite of information provided by two cards. The first card has a given name, rank, and a defining characteristic. The second card has a surname, unit, and a noteworthy quirk. These, when mated, form the outline of an interesting person for you to fill in.

Each half of your character—each Character card—has a prompt (see below) on it with an accompanying point value. When you introduce a character prompt, turn that card over to the bloody side and reveal the number of points.



PROMPTS

Action and Character cards have text on them — questions, bits of color, or situations that may arise. These are called prompts and each has a point value. You will incorporate them into scenes during the game and gain points for prompts you've used.

It is important to recognize that a card's prompt is not directly related to the suit in most cases. For example, one Kill card's prompt concerns an abandoned baby — this does not imply that somebody needs to kill the baby! This prompt

is actually thematically related to disgrace — ensuring that a bloodthirsty character is confronted with challenging, non-violent conflicts amid his gore-soaked path to New Bern. Similarly the sad-sack choosing disgrace after disgrace is going to have bloody, nasty prompts in the mix, because the world is cruel.

Each prompt can only be used once, and they are often challenging situations you will want to build toward. See Act One for more information on how prompts are used.



THE STRUCTURE OF PLAY

A game of *Carolina Death Crawl* consists of a prologue, three acts, and a brief epilogue. Each act is a step closer to New Bern and safety after everything goes to hell. Only one character is going to survive, and the rest will die memorably. It isn't fair and it isn't balanced, so enjoy yourself and play to find out what happens.

THE PROLOGUE

EVERYONE: Read the Background cards

Starting with the player of the highest-ranking soldier, take turns and read all four Background cards aloud in numeric order.

HIGHEST-RANKING SOLDIER'S

PLAYER: Read the first Raid card

Read the first Raid card aloud, then choose an Action card, place it in your hand, and share a *vignette*.

Your vignette should describe your character doing something that relates to the chosen Action card's suit and be set in the location of the first Raid card, Greenville. Don't bother reading the prompts on the cards yet; those are for later.

Vignettes can be short roleplaying scenes if you wish but their purpose is to show the characters transgressing. Keep them to the point. "The Sergeant orders a businessman to give him his watch, the businessman refuses, and the Sergeant shoots him dead" is a perfectly good little Kill card scene.

Rotate and repeat until every player has shared a vignette. After everyone has gone, each player will have one Action card in their hand.

SECOND-HIGHEST-RANKING SOLDIER'S

PLAYER: Read the second Raid card

Read the second Raid card aloud, then choose an Action card and share a vignette. You should describe your character doing something that relates to the chosen Action card and is inspired by the second Raid card, Tarboro. Rotate and repeat until every player has shared a vignette. After ruining Tarboro, each player will now have two Action cards.

SECOND-LOWEST-RANKING SOLDIER'S

PLAYER: Read the third Raid card

Read the third Raid card aloud, then choose an Action card and share a vignette. You should describe your character doing something that relates to the chosen Action card, this time in the commercial crossroads of Rocky Mount. Rotate and repeat. After Rocky Mount is plundered, each player will have three Action cards.

LOWEST-RANKING SOLDIER'S

PLAYER: Read the fourth Raid card

Read the fourth Raid card aloud, then choose an Action card and share a vignette. You should describe your character doing something that relates to the chosen Action card, this time in the hotly-contested Rocky Mount Depot. Rotate and repeat. After the Depot is in flames and the Wilmington & Weldon rails are wrecked, each player will have a checkered record of service full of murder, debasement and destruction—and four Action cards.

EVERYONE: Read the prompts on the

Action cards you drew to yourself

Read the prompts on the Action cards you drew during the Prologue to yourself. Think about interesting ways to incorporate them into the game. You can share these if you like, asking for ideas and inspiration, or keep them close to the vest if you prefer.

Begin Act One when you are ready.

ACT ONE: ABANDONED

HIGHEST-RANKING CHARACTER'S

PLAYER: Read the first Escape card aloud

EVERYONE: Create a scene for your character

Create a *scene* for your character describing events on the journey back toward New Bern. Scenes can happen in any order, but every player creates one per act.

Unlike the brief vignettes from the Prologue, your scenes should include more interaction with other characters. You should feel free to introduce and play extra characters that your soldiers meet along the way.

When you are building a scene, be mindful of your chosen tone. Create descriptions that are suitably spooky, dramatic, or gritty as appropriate.

Your scene must include your character killing, destroying something valuable, or disgracing himself. When this occurs, draw an Action card from the associated stack and add it to your hand. If none remain in a particular stack, choose from an available suit and describe your character's action accordingly.



Scenes cannot include the death of any player's character, including your own. Anything else, including grievous injury and the most terrible of fates for the people you encounter, is fair game.

EVERYONE: Play Action card prompts on scenes.

During any player's scene (except in the Prologue), you may incorporate one or more prompts from an Action card in your hand. When this occurs, narrate the details into the scene and put the relevant card on the table in front of you face down, so that the point value is hidden. You'll reveal these values and total them up at the end of the act.

Similarly you may introduce either prompt which appears on your Character cards. When this occurs, flip that card over to the bloody side—you will add its point value to your total for the act.

It's up to you to use your prompts well—resist the temptation to use them as trivial details, instead weave them into the fabric of the developing story as best you can, heightening what has gone before. You don't have to use every detail of a prompt, either—let them inspire you and see where the scene goes.



Remember that a card's prompt is not directly related to the suit in most cases, so your scene doesn't have to incorporate that suit into the story.

EVERYONE: When the last player's scene is finished, count your points

Add the points for any prompts introduced into scenes from Action or Character cards. You are not obligated to use all your available prompts during the game; zero is a legitimate score.

Discard all used Action cards. Point-scoring Character cards remain bloody side up as a reminder that they have been used.

PLAYER OF THE CHARACTER WITH THE FEWEST POINTS: Your soldier dies

The character with the lowest score dies. In the event of a tie for lowest total, the highest ranking character dies. With input from your friends, create an additional scene detailing your character's demise. If you prefer it can happen

ignominiously and out of view. You then become a Swamp Ghost. Keep any unused Action cards in your hand.

After each player has had a scene and drawn an Action card, points have been counted, and one character is dead in memorable fashion, Act One ends. Act Two can begin whenever you are ready.

ACT TWO: GONE TO GROUND SWAMP GHOSTS

As characters die at the end of each act, they join the ranks of the Swamp Ghosts and are considered a composite player—they collectively frame a scene in each act wherever they like. Any Action cards they still hold are shared among them, and they are encouraged to consult one another and scheme. The job of the Swamp Ghosts is to compel the survivors to reflect on the horrors and atrocities in their past and guide them into an unspeakable future.

As restless spirits, Swamp Ghost players must give up their seat at the table. They should move around, always over a shoulder or whispering in an ear. If the Swamp Ghosts need to rest or coordinate, they should do it outside the circle of the other players.

HIGHEST-RANKING SURVIVING CHARACTER'S PLAYER: Read the Act Two Escape card

Read the Act Two Escape card aloud. This may be the same person who read the first Escape card; that's fine. Three characters remain alive.

EVERYONE: Create a scene

Take turns setting scenes describing events on the increasingly perilous journey back toward New Bern. Procedures are identical to Act One. The player of the dead character continues to participate as a Swamp Ghost.

SWAMP GHOST: Create a scene

Set a scene as usual but do not draw Action cards. Your scene should focus on increasing the pressure on the survivors and punishing their misdeeds.

If you incorporate a prompt from an Action card you still hold, Place the card face-down on the table as you describe the scene. The value will be treated as a point penalty on a surviving character. This represents danger and disaster and impacts their end-of-act totals.

If as a Swamp Ghost you have no Action cards left, your scenes incur no penalty. Don't let that stop you from making them awful, however.

SWAMP GHOSTS: Assign any penalties incurred by cards

Award penalty Action cards you used, if any, to the individual surviving characters who were the subjects of your scene.

PLAYERS OF SURVIVING CHARACTERS:
Count your points for Act Two

Add up all the point values for prompts you used in Act Two, minus any penalties incurred by the Swamp Ghost.

For example, if your character has seven points from prompts you played during the act and a then a Swamp Ghost awards you a three-point Action card, your character's end-of-act total will have a three-point penalty, leaving a final total of four points.

PLAYER OF THE CHARACTER WITH THE FEWEST POINTS: Your soldier dies

The lowest-scoring character dies and their player becomes another Swamp Ghost. Any leftover cards in that player's hand are pooled with those of the existing Swamp Ghost player.

Act Three begins whenever you are ready.

ACT THREE: THE LAST MILE

HIGHEST-RANKING SURVIVING CHARACTER'S PLAYER: Read the third Escape card

Read the third Escape card aloud. Two characters remain alive; yours and one other terrified, flat-footed goober.

EVERYONE: Create a scene

In any order, each player (including, collectively, the Swamp Ghosts) creates a scene describing events on the impossibly horrific journey back toward New Bern. Procedures are identical to previous acts. If prompts remain, there is no reason to hold back if they can possibly be applied.

PLAYERS OF SURVIVING CHARACTERS:
Count your points for Act Three

As before, add up the point values for any prompts used, less the penalties inflicted by the Swamp Ghosts. The lowest-scoring character dies. This leaves a sole survivor.

EPILOGUE

PLAYER OF THE SURVIVING CHARACTER:
Read the fourth Escape card aloud.

PLAYING WITH MORE OR LESS THAN FOUR

Once you've played the game with four players, feel free to mix things up by running it with one less or with more than four. Here's what you need to do.

MISSING MAN

If you are a player short, the game works fine with three. There's only one change—no one dies at the end of Act Two. One of you will still die at the end of Act One and assume the role of Swamp Ghost, as usual. Then play through Act Two normally but ignore the point totals at the end. Somebody just got very lucky.

ANGRY GHOSTS

If you play with more than four people, the extra participants are Swamp Ghosts from the beginning.

As with the standard rules, players who start as Swamp Ghosts aren't seated at the table with the soldiers. They should move around, whispering at the shoulders of the survivors, or otherwise sit outside the circle of other players at the table.

During the Preparation phase, every player who begins the game as a Swamp Ghost (that is, every player over the initial four) draws an Action card. Hold on to this card to use against the living during the acts.

Swamp Ghosts don't participate directly in the Prologue, and will neither create vignettes nor draw cards. They can be called on to play extra characters, as necessary.

During Act One, Swamp Ghosts will act collectively to create one scene, with a focus on creating adversity for the living characters. You may use any Action cards that are appropriate and apply the penalty at the end of Act One.

As usual, players whose characters die in Acts One and Two join the Swamp Ghosts, adding any unused Action cards to their collective hand.

REPLAY

PREPARATION

ARA invites three friends—BRIAN, CHRIS and DALAL—over to play Carolina Death Crawl. He sets up a table with one nice plush chair and three wooden hardback chairs and sorts the cards out on the table.

Once everyone arrives ARA pitches them on the game, explaining how it works and how they'll create characters and use the various cards. After some discussion they agree on a default "Southern Gothic" tone for their game.

Everyone takes a seat (DALAL grabs the comfy one, with ARA, BRIAN and CHRIS next in order around the table) when they are ready to begin.

CHARACTERS

ARA takes a moment to explain who their characters are.

ARA: So our characters are soldiers in the First North Carolina Cavalry. We're North Carolina natives and Union loyalists fighting against the Confederacy.

CHRIS: So wait—Confederate means Southerner and rebel, our enemy right?

BRIAN: Yes.

CHRIS: But we *are* Southerners, and we're fighting for the Union?

ARA: That's right. You might even be from around here. It's an awkward combination. Recruitment is messy and nobody asks too many questions as long as you can ride a horse, shoot straight, and are willing to kill somebody you probably grew up with.

DALAL: Well, that's us! How do we get started?

ARA explains the character creation process and they begin. DALAL chooses a given name card for the player on her left, who is ARA. She chooses "Pembroke." Then she selects a surname card for CHRIS on her right and picks "Shanks."

ARA chooses "Henry" for BRIAN, to his left, and "Eager" for DALAL, on his right, figuring that she'll make a good criminal.

BRIAN chooses "Isaac" for CHRIS, to his left, and "Ross-Tucker" for ARA, on his right. Chris will be playing Corporal Isaac Shanks, intellectual and deserter. ARA will be playing Bugler Pembroke Ross-Tucker, greenhorn and idealist.

CHRIS chooses "Charles" for DALAL and "Comfort" for BRIAN. DALAL will be playing Lieutenant Charles Eager, officer and criminal. BRIAN will be playing Private Henry Comfort, swamp rat and ass-kicker.

DALAL, as if by uncanny premonition, is playing the ranking soldier and only officer, Lt. Eager. She stays in the comfortable chair. CHRIS and ARA switch seats—Corporal Shanks to her left, played by CHRIS, then Private Comfort, played by BRIAN, then lowly Bugler Ross-Tucker to the Lieutenant's right.

Everyone takes a moment to think about their character. DALAL's officer and criminal, she decides, will be a vicious little martinet obsessed with taking trophies. CHRIS' Corporal will be a two-time shirker straight out of a Joseph Heller novel. BRIAN's swamp rat, he figures, is a violent man with low tastes and dubious allegiances. And ARA is delighted by the match of greenhorn and idealist, a doomed combination if ever there was one.

Overall, they are not the most promising group of heroes ever assembled, but they have everything they need for a sweet Southern Gothic drama.

PROLOGUE

DALAL, as the player of the highest ranking soldier, begins by reading the first Background card. The others follow, taking turns in clockwise order and reading the remaining Background cards. Then the raid begins.

DALAL reads the first Raid card aloud—the soldiers arrive in Greenville to cause some mayhem.

DALAL: OK, my vignette for Greenville. You guys ready for Lt. Eager?

She takes a Disgrace Action card.

DALAL: There's some general chaos as we arrive, and we see Eager hitch up his horse and walk into a jewelry store. A moment later he comes out, his arms full, and dumps several dozen pocket watches into his saddlebag.

BRIAN: Private Comfort is on horseback, watching him with utter disdain.

DALAL: What are you staring at, Corporal? Secure this street.

BRIAN: Yes, sir.

DALAL: And that's it, that's my vignette.

CHRIS: I'm next.

CHRIS takes a Disgrace Action card.

CHRIS: I think Corporal Shanks sees two local Greenville militia guys jump another soldier and just turns on his heel, doesn't get involved. He walks away and then there's a shot.

ARA: Ugh.

BRIAN: Perfect!

BRIAN takes a Kill Action card.

BRIAN: The Lieutenant shooed me away and I'm drawn to that shot. Comfort rounds the corner and there are two Confederate militiamen standing over the body of a Union cavalry soldier.

DALAL: A guy you know.

CHRIS: A guy Shanks abandoned, but I think Shanks is watching you now to see what you'll do.

BRIAN: Right, and Comfort rides the Confederates down like dogs and kills them both in a very efficient way, first one and then the other. End of vignette.

CHRIS: Shanks and Comfort, that's going to be interesting.

ARA: Last vignette in Greenville, let's see.

ARA takes a Destroy Action card.

Bugler Ross-Tucker is with a mounted squad carrying torches. He's essentially tagging along, just a kid.

CHRIS: His uniform is too big for him.

ARA: Right. And they reach the courthouse and one of these big horse soldiers hands him a torch.

BRIAN: Time to earn your spurs, little shaver.

ARA: And he doesn't want to, but he thinks it through, decides General Potter wouldn't order all this destruction if it wouldn't end the war sooner, and sets the building on fire. The end.

CHRIS: Nice. You're setting him up as a real innocent, Ara.

ARA: Thanks! That'll go well, won't it? OK, next Raid card?

CHRIS: I'm next. Tarboro, here we come.

This process is repeated for Tarboro, Rocky Mount, and Rocky Mount Depot. Each soldier's player takes an Action card and describes their character acting on that impulse in some way. By the time the fourth stop on the raid has been dealt with, each player has four Action cards and each character has done some terrible things.

Everyone reviews the prompts on their Action and Character cards, they take a short break, and then begin Act One.

ACT ONE: ABANDONED

As the player of the highest-ranking character, DALAL reads the first Escape card. It sets the mood—they are desperate and on the run far from safety.

DALAL: OK, anyone can build a scene. Who has an idea?

BRIAN: I do. The four of us are still on horseback, on the road, looking for some hidey-hole when we come upon a big gate. It's a plantation, Walnut Creek.

BRIAN puts an Action card on the table, face down. It's the "Walnut Creek Plantation" card, and at the end of Act One it will be worth two points for his character.

DALAL: The Lieutenant's piggy little eyes light up.

BRIAN: This is Henry Clark's place. Former Governor Henry Clark.

DALAL: Let's pay the gentleman a call.

BRIAN: Indeed. So we ride up, and there are slaves sort of watching us, stunned. Union cavalry in blue coats on Walnut Creek plantation.

ARA: Ross-Tucker is tipping his cap to the women nervously.

BRIAN: And there's the big house, and the former Governor's on the porch with a young woman, his daughter or niece or something. Clark has a pistol stuffed in his waistband and they are dressed for traveling. Chris will you play the Governor?

CHRIS: Sure, what's his deal? Anything in particular?

BRIAN: No, just wing it.

CHRIS: Gotcha.

DALAL: Governor.

CHRIS: Lieutenant. You have me at a disadvantage.

DALAL: My name's Eager, sir. I'm afraid we require some assistance. Provisions and so forth.

BRIAN: Private Comfort is eyeballing the young lady pretty openly. He gets off his horse.

CHRIS: I'm in no position to stop you, Lieutenant, although naturally I protest your robbery.

DALAL: Exigencies of war, Governor. Bugler, Private, keep these two company. Corporal, with me.

CHRIS: Corporal Shanks salutes. We're going into the house.

DALAL: The Lieutenant is going to steal everything not nailed down.

BRIAN: And you've left us on the porch, nice.

ARA: Oh dear.

BRIAN: Governor, perhaps you'd introduce us to your daughter.

ARA: That's not necessary, Henry.

BRIAN: Shut your bark-hole, Bugler.

DALAL jumps in as the young woman.

DALAL: I'm the Governor's niece and my name is Miss Toole.

BRIAN: See now, that wasn't so hard. My name is Comfort.

DALAL: Of the Raleigh Comforts?

BRIAN: Of the swamp Comforts.

DALAL: She sneers at you. Poor trash, then, and a thief and traitor on top of it. You must be very proud.

BRIAN: Comfort turns away and takes out his tinderbox.

ARA: I'm sure the Lieutenant will return shortly and we'll bid you good day.

BRIAN: Yeah. Comfort grabs a broom and lights the bristles on fire.

ARA: What are you doing?

BRIAN: Burning down this fucking mansion.

ARA: Lieutenant Eager's still inside!

BRIAN: He'll get the message.

CHRIS: This is my home. I can't allow it.

BRIAN: You're going to stop me, Governor?

CHRIS: If I must.

BRIAN: What's the Bugler doing, Ara?

ARA: He's looking nervously into the house, hoping the others return. He's too afraid to interfere. He's muttering, "Laws of war..."

DALAL: Miss Toole's staring at Comfort with venomous hatred, almost daring you to do it, to prove her right.

BRIAN: What does the Governor do, Chris?

CHRIS: He puts a hand on your collar.

BRIAN takes a Kill Action card.

BRIAN: And I spin around, pistol in hand, and shoot him in the stomach.

CHRIS: He drops to the floor, writhing in agony.

ARA: Did you just kill North Carolina Governor Henry Clark? He doesn't die until 1874.

DALAL: Hey, what happened to "you don't need to know any history to play"? You told us not to get stuck on the historical details.

ARA: You're absolutely right. So Miss Toole is screaming. The broom went flying, and the Bugler rushes over to stomp it out.

DALAL: I think Private Comfort turns to look at Miss Toole and the Governor pulls out his pistol and shoots him back, in the meat of the shoulder. It's like a hammer blow!

DALAL puts an Action card on the table, face down. It's the "Tar River" card, and at the end of Act One it will be worth two points for her character.

BRIAN: And I curse him and shoot him again. And again. Third time's a charm.

DALAL: The Lieutenant and Shanks rush back with a half-full sack of jewelry. What the hell.

BRIAN: Fat little bastard shot me.

CHRIS: I smell smoke.

ARA: Comfort... never mind.

BRIAN: And that's my scene. I wasn't expecting to take a Kill card. I blame Chris!

Three more scenes follow in turn. Action cards are played and a few Character prompts come into play. Lt. Eager answers the question "What did you do that makes the character to your left loathe you?" by being everything Corporal Shanks hates in the entire world. The Bugler decides to side with the hateful Lieutenant and risks his life to save his commanding officer.

At the end of Act One, after each player has built a scene, they reveal their points.

ARA: I have three for my Character prompt and one from an Action card. Four!

BRIAN: I have two from an Action card, and that's it.

CHRIS: I have two from two fantastic one-point Action cards as well.

DALAL: Three from a Character prompt and two from an Action card back in Brian's scene. Looks like that's enough. High five, Ara, we're safe.

BRIAN: Chris and I tied for fewest points. How does that work?

ARA: The player of the higher ranking character dies.

CHRIS: Corporal outranks Private; I die!

DALAL: Oh man, you get a death scene right?

CHRIS: I do, but I'm out of ideas.

DALAL: What if the guy we met at Corn Creek came back, like he'd been tracking us and finds you alone?

CHRIS: Awesome, set it up.

They play out Isaac Shanks' death scene and move on to Act Two.

ACT TWO: GONE TO GROUND

As the player of the highest-ranking surviving character, DALAL reads the second Escape card, "Gone to Ground." The characters are now deep in the pocosin swampland.

CHRIS: So I'm a Swamp Ghost now?

ARA: Yeah, so you should stand up. You're the restless dead, no more chair for you!

CHRIS: So I get to lurk around and mess with you guys? Cool. Do I still get to do scenes?

ARA: Yes, but your goal is to make things difficult for us. Your scenes should focus on punishing us for our misdeeds. Any Action cards you play will actually be a penalty for us!

CHRIS: Ooh, I like that.

CHRIS looks at the Action cards he has left—they are worth one, two, and three points. They all seem like things he can introduce pretty easily. He stands up and observes from a distance.

DALAL: Everybody ready? Great, let's go.

DALAL reads Escape card Number Two.

BRIAN: So is it OK if scenes are short?

ARA: There's no rule about that, make it as short as you like. There doesn't even need to be any roleplaying if you just want to paint a particular picture for us.

ARA: Oh, I've got a scene!

DALAL: Go for it.

ARA: Okay, so those guys Brian introduced who have been on our tail...

BRIAN: Nethercutt's Rangers.

ARA: Yeah, Nethercutt's Rangers have found us. We're in a schoolhouse, surrounded.

ARA puts an Action card on the table, face down. It's the "Daniel's Schoolhouse" card, and at the end of Act Two it will be worth four points for his character.

BRIAN: Oh great.

ARA: It's a good defensive position but we're so screwed. They are shooting at us, a few lazy pot-shots to keep us away from the windows, but they know our goose is cooked. The Bugler is sitting on a pile of moldy books shakily reloading his rifle.

DALAL: Steady on, men.

BRIAN: Can't outfight 'em, we gotta run.

DALAL: Hold your ground.

BRIAN: We gotta jackrabbit outta here, Lieutenant, or we're done for.

CHRIS steps up behind ARA and whispers, "You're a dead man," in his ear, then retreats.

ARA: The Bugler lines up a shot and there's a massive volley of incoming fire as he exposes himself. The window sill splinters and he falls to the floor.

DALAL: Get up or I'll shoot you myself!

CHRIS: There's a big explosion. A piece of the wall disintegrates, and you can see they've brought in a little brass cannon strapped to the back of a donkey. It is simultaneously ridiculous and terrifying.

CHRIS, as the Swamp Ghost, puts an Action card face down on the table in front of DALAL. It's the "Haddock's Crossroads" card, and it will be used as a one point penalty card at the end of the act.

BRIAN: We. Have got. To go.

DALAL: All right, we'll make an orderly retreat to the swamp. Private, provide covering fire.

CHRIS: *(Whispering)* That's not gonna work.

DALAL: Bugler, proceed to the treeline to the west and I will follow you. When we are safe, Private, you will join us.

ARA: The Bugler is wide-eyed with fear.

BRIAN: There's a church across the road, and time stops as Comfort looks above it and sees a magnificent shining star. And suddenly it is snuffed out by something huge and dark, and he realizes with a start that it's a vision of his own death.

BRIAN puts an Action card on the table, face down. It's the "Wesley Church Crossroads" card, and at the end of Act Two it will be worth four points for his character.

CHRIS: It isn't a clean death that's coming, is it?

BRIAN: Private Comfort literally kicks the Bugler out the door.

ARA: Right, awesome! And the Bugler's running as every one of Nethercutt's Rangers shoots at him, whooping and

hollering like it's a fox hunt. He drops his rifle, and he's screaming, tears streaming down his face.

DALAL: He's just a kid.

ARA: And he's completely lost it. But he makes it to the swamp.

CHRIS: And the Bugler's safe! And then wham, he plants one foot in a gopher hole and falls flat on his face, and there's a feeling of something unwholesome writhing down there, and then a sharp pain.

ARA: What?

CHRIS: You yank your foot out and a big old water mocassin comes with it, fangs still buried in your ankle.

CHRIS puts another Action card face down on the table in front of ARA. It's the "Panther Swamp" card, a three-point penalty.

DALAL: Oh, no.

ARA: I think that's my scene, right there.

DALAL: Did you take an Action card?

ARA: Oh no, I forgot, I guess it'd be Disgrace, huh?

BRIAN: Yeah, a little.

ARA takes a Disgrace Action card.

Three more scenes follow in turn. Action cards are played and more Character prompts come into play as the story unfolds. The Swamp Ghost—just CHRIS at this point—builds a scene as well, but doesn't take an Action card.

At the end of Act Two, after each player has built a scene, they reveal their points.

ARA: Four in my scene, plus two, plus one. Seven!

BRIAN: I also threw down four in your scene, and two in Dalal's for six.

DALAL: Three plus two plus one. Uh oh. Tied sixes.

BRIAN: Lieutenant beats Private. Eager is done for.

CHRIS: Wait a minute! The Swamp Ghosts have yet to pass judgment!

DALAL: That's right!

ARA: Technically you were supposed to hand out the penalties before we counted our points.

CHRIS: Sorry about that. Ara, the Bugler loses three points for the mocassin card.

CHRIS flips over the Action cards he placed on the table as penalties and reveals the point values.

ARA: Bringing me down to four.

CHRIS: And the brass cannon from Ara's scene—it makes sense that that goes to the Lieutenant. It's one point but it hardly matters since the Bugler's at four.

DALAL: Bugler dies.

BRIAN: Poor guy, I was pulling for him!

ARA: OK, here's what happens...

They play out Pembroke Ross-Tucker's death scene and then proceed to Act Three.

ACT THREE: THE LAST MILE

DALAL, still the player of the highest-ranking surviving character, reads the third Escape card, "The Last Mile." Two have fallen, two remain.

ARA and CHRIS are now both Swamp Ghosts. ARA brings his remaining Action card—a five point doozy—and shares it with CHRIS, who still has a two-point card. They'll have one scene together, so they put their heads together and scheme.

DALAL: Well this is unexpected. Just the Lieutenant and Private Comfort, the original swamp rat.

BRIAN: In his element at last.

DALAL: Got an idea for a scene?

BRIAN and DALAL build scenes in turn. Action cards are played and DALAL and BRIAN both use their remaining Character prompts. Only the Swamp Ghosts remain.

BRIAN: Swamp Ghosts, take it away!

ARA: Right. You two are standing on the banks of Contentnea Creek, staring up at the swinging corpse of a woman you've just hung from a cypress tree.

DALAL: Really.

ARA places an Action card face down on the table, pushing it towards DALAL. It is the "A Nameless Bend" card and will be a five-point penalty at the end of Act Three.

ARA: Really.

CHRIS: You had to do it, she was going to give you away.

BRIAN: What the hell did we just do?

DALAL: I take full responsibility, Private. This was an exigency of war and she was an enemy.

BRIAN: She was a friend of my cousin Clara.

DALAL: I don't care if she was the Empress of the Moon! She was a Confederate and a threat to our mission.

BRIAN: Our mission? What mission? We're not getting any medals even if we make it back to New Bern. They'll probably shoot us as deserters.

DALAL: Nonsense. We need to focus.

ARA: She wasn't alone. You hear voices, angry women. Flickers of torchlight. They are coming for you.

CHRIS: The women of men you've murdered.

BRIAN: I suppose we can discuss it later, Lieutenant. Let's move.

DALAL: Agreed. Lead the way, Comfort.

BRIAN: And we start bushwhacking.

ARA: It's hard going through thick vegetation. You know these creeks pretty well but it's dark and you're exhausted.

DALAL: Faster, Private, if you please, they are gaining on us. They appear to have farm tools and cutting implements.

BRIAN: Doing the best I can.

CHRIS: And suddenly you are on the banks of the Contentnea again, trapped in a little horseshoe bend.

CHRIS places another Action card face down on the table. It is the "Contentnea Creek" card, worth two points.

ARA: Just jump in, it'll be over in moments. The water is dark and inviting. You've suffered so much, just let it end.

DALAL: What do we do?

BRIAN: They don't appear to be in a surrender-accepting mood, sir.

DALAL: The Lieutenant readies his pistol.

BRIAN: You're gonna shoot down a bunch of women?

DALAL: If I must.

BRIAN: You are the most loathsome coward and yellow-bellied devil I ever laid eyes on.

DALAL: Measure your tone, Private.

CHRIS: And they start to emerge from the thicket on all sides—ragged, weary women carrying knives and pitchforks.

ARA: They are bent with grief and rage.

CHRIS: There is no doubt that they are going to cut you to pieces, and rightly so.

BRIAN: I grab the Lieutenant and throw him into the creek.

DALAL: The Lieutenant can't swim.

BRIAN: And then I'm in after him, fighting to keep us both above water.

ARA: Nicely done. That's our scene. The Swamp Ghosts have spoken!

As Act Three ends the Swamp Ghosts assign the penalty cards and everyone reveals their points.

ARA: First let's deal with your penalties. Private Comfort, getting trapped in the creek bend is for you and that's two points. Lieutenant, the hanging woman is all yours, and that's five points.

DALAL: Oof. I have three, five, and two. Ten points minus five for a total of five.

BRIAN: Four and four for me, that's eight minus two—six!

CHRIS: That's it for the Lieutenant.

DALAL: Oh, that's perfect. We ended the Swamp Ghosts' scene with him and Comfort in the water and I just threw out that he can't swim.

BRIAN: Nice. I could save him, you know.

DALAL: You sure could. Comfort's a strong swimmer, a natural.

BRIAN: But I don't. I mean, I do for a minute out of pure reflex, and then I realize what I'm doing and who I'm saving.

DALAL: Private, help me!

BRIAN: Comfort takes an uncertain stroke away from you.

DALAL: Private, that is an order.

BRIAN: Nothing. He's just appraising you, looking you over.

DALAL: I'm going to drown! Help me!

BRIAN: Nothing.

DALAL: I beg you, help me! I'm begging! Please!

ARA: And Lieutenant Eager slips under the surface of the creek and he's gone.

EPILOGUE

BRIAN: Where's that last Escape card? Because Comfort is dragging his soggy ass into New Bern.

BRIAN takes the fourth Escape card and reads it out loud, as the player of the only character who lived to tell the tale.

GLOSSARY

Act: A segment of play. There are three acts in *Carolina Death Crawl* and at the conclusion of each a character dies.

Action Card: Action cards are divided into three “suits” of twelve and include a colorful prompt to inspire scenes. The suits correspond to specific sorts of behavior on the part of your characters, all of them somewhat grim.

Background Card: Color cards that provide additional context for the events to come and are used in the Prologue.

Bluecoat: A soldier or officer in the Union Army.

Character Card: Characters are a composite of information provided by two cards. The left-hand given name card and the right-hand surname card combine to make a character.

Color Card: Cards that contain short speeches you will give in character. There are three sets (Background, Raid, and Escape) of four Color cards.

Contraband: A freed or escaped slave. General Benjamin Butler reasoned that, since Virginia had decided it wasn’t part of the United States, it was necessarily a foreign power. Butler had no reason to return contraband to a belligerent foreign power. The name stuck.

Confederates / CSA: Confederate States of America. Secessionist rebels of the American South.

Escape Card: Color cards that set the stage for each act, detailing new circumstances the characters find themselves in.

First NC Volunteers: Natives of North Carolina who volunteered for service as Union cavalry in their home state; frequently employed as pickets and guides. The characters in *Carolina Death Crawl* are all soldiers in the First NC Volunteers.

Limber Wagon: A small wagon used to carry powder and shot for artillery pieces.

Nethercutt, Captain John: The commander of the 8th NC Cavalry, a band of Confederate partisan rangers who were greatly feared.

Pocosin: Eastern North Carolina swampland—sandy, dense, and covered in standing water the color of tea.

Potter, General Edward: The Union General who thought up and then led the successful raid on the Tar River Valley.

Prompt: A question, bit of color, or potential situation printed on an Action or Character card. Each has a point value between one and five which are used to determine survival at the end of each act.

Raid Card: Color cards that provide additional detail on each of the four locations Potter’s Raid passes through. They are used in the Prologue.

Scene: A moment of action established by a player during one of the acts, possibly informed by prompts from Action and Character cards. It may also include interaction between the characters.

Swamp Ghost: The group of players who are working against the surviving characters.

Tar River Valley: A rich valley in Eastern North Carolina consisting of the towns of Greenville, Rocky Mount, and Tarboro along the Tar River. The target of General Edward Potter’s 1863 raid.

Tone: Something for your group to decide on and stick to. Spooky Southern Gothic? Action-adventure? Gritty realism? Entirely up to you, but agree on one tone and stick to it.

Union / USA: The Army of the Federal government of the United States, also known as “the North.”

Vignette: A short, focused scene used in the Prologue with the express purpose of establishing the transgressions of the characters based on the suit of an Action card.

Wilmington & Weldon: The principal railroad through Eastern North Carolina, a vital artery to Confederate troops in Virginia. Cutting it was the ultimate objective of Potter’s raid.

