



Rascals, Varmints & Critters



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Our fans, who brave the Weird West.

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Note: The names of the folks who submitted the critters are in parentheses after the critters' name. If there's an asterisk (*) after the name, we're not

POSSE TERRITORY



JUNGLE





CHAPTER ONE: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE



So your heroes have captured vicious outlaws, foiled the plans of insane scientists, faced down the best gunfighters at high noon, engaged evil sorcerers in arcane battles, and foiled the plans of nefarious cultists.

We bet you think you're pretty tough.

But how tough are you? You may think your heroes are the biggest, baddest hombres on two legs, but have you faced everything on four? Or more? Do you know the full power of the creatures called abominations?

We didn't think so.

Rascals, Varmints & Critters may make you think twice about just how tough you are. Inside the pages of this book, there's a wealth of information on those lurking fearmongers that help make the West as Weird as it is.

This book is divided up into three sections just like most of our sourcebooks.

In Posse Territory there are expanded rules for animal sidekicks and a few archetypes from the world of monster hunting.

No Man's Land is made up of the *Explorers Society Bestiary of North America*. This document has been seized and banned by the Pinkertons, so make sure you get your Marshal's permission before you read it.

The Marshal's Handbook contains the real deal about all the abominations in the *Bestiary*, as well as some guidelines for the Marshal on using critters in his game. You posse members should keep your peepers out of here unless you want

the Marshal to unleash a whole zoo full of trouble on you.

So get your hunting rifle, hire yourself a good guide and, without further ado, let's see just why we call it the *Weird West*.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS

Not every hero in the Weird West is the two-legged kind. Sometimes an animal of exceptional courage or outstanding ability becomes almost as large a part of a hero's legend as the hero himself. Where would the Lone Ranger be without Silver? Brisco County Jr. without Comet?

These rules are specifically made for creating animal sidekicks for heroes in *Deadlands*. To gain one of these valuable companions, the character must take the *sidekick* Edge or obtain his new friend through an adventure.

Dogs and horses are the two most common animal sidekicks, but others are certainly possible. More exotic companions, like hawks, cougars, wolves, or bears, are special. These animals are very rarely tame, so it is their tameness (around the hero at least) that makes them unique. Anyone could have a horse or a dog, however, so for one to be special, they have to be created from scratch. Luckily, this book tells you how to do just that.

Please note these rules are for creating extremely special animals. Even the so-called "exceptional" horses are average by comparison.



ANIMAL COMPANION TRAITS

Note: Mental Traits are relative. A dog with a 3d8 *Smarts* is not smarter than a man with 1d6. Also, *Deftness* here relates to how well the animal can manipulate objects with its mouth.

DOGS

Card	2	3-8	9-J	Q-K	A
Deftness	d4	d4	d4	d6	d6
Nimbleness	d6	d8	d8	d10	d12
Quickness	d6	d8	d10	d10	d12
Strength	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12
Vigor	d6	d8	d8	d10	d12
Cognition	d4	d6	d6	d8	d8
Knowledge	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Mien	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12
Smarts	d4	d6	d6	d8	d8
Spirit	d4	d6	d8	d10	d12

HORSES

Card	2	3-8	9-J	Q-K	A
Deftness	d4	d4	d4	d6	d6
Nimbleness	d8	d10	d12	d12	d12
Quickness	d4	d6	d8	d8	d10
Strength	d8	d10	d10	d10	d12
Vigor	d8	d8	d10	d10	d12
Cognition	d4	d6	d6	d6	d8
Knowledge	d4	d4	d6	d6	d6
Mien	d4	d6	d6	d6	d8
Smarts	d4	d4	d6	d6	d8
Spirit	d4	d4	d4	d6	d8

JOKERS

Drawing a Joker is as weird for animals as it is for people. If you draw a Joker, it counts as an Ace for whichever Trait you use it for. Draw another card for the Coordination. In addition, the animal has a "Mysterious Past." See that section at the end of this chapter.

Don't bother to use these rules unless the animal is extremely important. Otherwise, use the standard profile.

CREATING A FOUR-FOOTED FRIEND

To create an animal sidekick, follow these six easy steps.

1. Concept (including species)
2. Traits
3. Aptitudes
4. Hindrances
5. Edges
6. Background

ONE: CONCEPT

This is easy. What kind of dog? What color horse? What is he trained to do? Who does he belong to, and what is their relationship?

TWO: TRAITS

Animals have 10 basic Traits, just like humans. The difference lies in the range of those Traits. To determine Traits for an animal, draw 10 cards from a fresh deck. Do not discard any cards.

Assign these cards to Traits as you would for a human character. The Coordination is determined by the suit just like for humans. The die type for the Trait is determined by the card and which Trait you wish to place it in. Use the tables at left to determine Traits for dogs and horses.

SIZE

Dogs start at size 4; horses at size 10.

A dog's size can vary wildly. By taking various Edges and Hindrances, a dog's size can range from 1 to 7. The following chart shows the relative sizes of some sample breeds of dog.

DOG SIZES

Size	Breed	Maximum Strength
1	Chihuahua	d4
2	Beagle	d6
3	Poodle	d6
4	Bloodhound	d8
5	Husky	d8
6	Great Dane	d10
7	Mastiff	d12



Horses, on the other hand, are limited to between 9 and 12. Mustangs tend to be around 9, and Clydesdales are size 11.

WIND

Wind is determined by adding *Vigor* and *Spirit*, as with human characters.

PACE

Pace for dogs is equal to their *Nimbleness*+4.

Horses have a Pace equal to their *Nimbleness*+8.

THREE: APTITUDES

Animals can learn Aptitudes just like humans, but they are extremely limited in which ones they can learn and how they can use them. Appropriate Aptitudes are listed here, though Marshals might allow others to be introduced if they're reasonable.

APTITUDE POINTS

Dogs get a number of Aptitude points equal to their *Smarts* plus *Knowledge*.

Horses get a number of Aptitude points equal to their *Smarts*.

These are spent on beginning skills just like they would be on any other character.

BASIC SKILLS

Each critter begins with certain skills instinctively. These can be raised through experience or training if the Marshal allows.



Skill	Dog	Horse
Fightin': Brawlin'	1	1
Swimmin'	1	2
Trackin'	1	0
Guts	1	1

The Aptitudes that animals can take are listed below. Unless noted otherwise, the skill is used just like normal.

Keep in mind that these are animal versions of these skills and do not exactly correspond to the human equivalents. For example, while a human with a *professional* Aptitude can actually tell you quite a lot about her job as well as do it, this isn't the case with animals.

DEFTNESS

FILCHIN

Anyone who's carried apples in their pockets near a farm knows how sneaky horses can get when they want a treat. And of course, many a canine bandit has made off with that extra muffin or even an entire roast.

To use this Aptitude, the animal surreptitiously grabs with its mouth and attempts to get away before anyone notices. Because dog and horse lips are not made for fine manipulations, animals suffer a -4 penalty to all rolls with this skill.

NIMBLENESS

DODGE

Some critters know to be where the bullets ain't.

FIGHTIN': BRAWLIN':

Dogs can cause *Strength*+2d4 damage with their teeth, or *Strength*+1d4 with their claws.

Horses inflict *Strength* damage with their teeth or *Strength*+3d4 damage with their hooves.

SNEAK

While not the quietest of animals, dogs can creep right up on a soul. Horses, being as big as they are, make all *sneak* rolls at -4.

SWIMMIN

Both dogs and horses are naturally pretty strong swimmers, although horses have the edge on endurance.

COGNITION

SCRUTINIZE

The main difference between this and the human skill is that most horse and dog *scrutinizin'* is done with the nose.

SEARCH

Although better than humans in some respects, horse senses aren't quite as acute as those of dogs. All horses make *search* rolls at a penalty of -4.





TRACKIN

Some dog breeds can track a scent for miles. A horse *can* track, but it's not nearly as common. Horses make all *trackin'* rolls at -4.

KNOWLEDGE

AREA KNOWLEDGE

Both dogs and horses are often familiar with their home territory. Some know it better than humans.

TRADE

Plowhorse, drafthorse, racehorse, cavalry mount, stalking horse, watchdog, hunting dog, sheep dog

Many an animal has been called on to contribute to its owner's income. As mentioned earlier, the animal's score in this Aptitude merely shows how good it is at actually *doing* the job.

MIEEN

OVERAWIE

When riled or trying to establish who's the dominant animal, both dogs and horses can be quite fierce. No one really wants to get a bite on the leg or catch a hoof to the head.

PERFORMIN: TRICKS

An animal can be taught a number of tricks equal to its *Smarts*. For dogs, the following five commands all constitute the first trick: sit, heel, lay down, come, and stay. Other tricks take work.

SMARTS

SURVIVAL

Most wild animals don't need an Aptitude to survive in their home environment. Domesticated animals don't have it so easy.

SPIRIT

GUTS

Remember, these are exceptional animals. If they didn't have guts, they wouldn't make very good sidekicks.

FOUR: HINDRANCES

Critters can take Hindrances too, and since they are basically extras, there is no real limit on how many points worth of Hindrances they can take. Hindrances available to animal sidekicks are listed below. Unless otherwise stated, the Hindrance works as it is originally written

AILIN

35

No animal with a fatal ailment could survive long enough to become a sidekick. It could still suffer from a lesser ill though.



Ailment Severity	Points
Minor	3
Chronic	5

BAD EARS

35

Only dogs may take this Hindrance, as a horse with bad ears would be put out to pasture or put down.

BAD EYES

35

Only dogs may take this Hindrance, as a horse with bad eyes would be put out to pasture or put down. (It's a hard life being a horse. Folks put up with a lot from their dogs. That's the difference between a pet and a beast of burden.)

BIG UN

12

Some breeds of dog and horse are just bigger than others. Of course, some horses are just fat tubs of goo, and some dogs are waddling piles of blubber.

For the 1-point Hindrance, add +1 to Size and reduce Pace by -2 (unless it is above 12, in which case subtract -4 to get the new Pace).

For 2 points, add +2 to the size and reduce the animal's Pace by -4 (or -6 if the Pace is still above 12).

BLOODTHIRSTY

2

Once an animal tastes blood, it can develop a hankering for more.

CURIOUS

3

The cat isn't the only animal that curiosity can kill.



JUNGLE

FERAL

3

This animal has returned to its wild roots. None of this domestication stuff for it. A feral dog or horse can not learn the *trade* or *performin'* Aptitudes. The animal hangs around the hero only because of a sense of loyalty. It does not respond to commands from anyone other than its "master." Each time the master attempts to get the animal to do something—like let him ride, or come when he calls—the master and the beast must engage in a test of wills (*animal wranglin'* vs. *Mien*).

The hero is still the beast's friend, however, and it stays by his side and protects him when necessary.



LAME

3/5

Horses can only take this for 3 points. A really lame horse would be put down.

MEAN AS A RATTLER

2

Some animals are just born bad.

RANDY

3

In dogs, this can sometimes mean an embarrassing affection for trouser legs.

SLOWPOKE

2

Reduce Pace by -2 (or by -4 if it is over 12)

BRAVE

2

Contrary to what you might think from his name, Ol' Yeller was as brave as they come.

THIN-SKINNED

3

Some animals are spooked by just about anything.

BRAWNY

3

Horses cannot take both Brawny and Big 'Un.

TUCKERED

1/5

Endurance is more important to animals than to humans, so for each level of Tuckered the animal takes, he loses only 1 Wind instead of 2.

FLEET-FOOTED

2

While there can be fast pooches, there's nothing like a fast horse.

YELLER

3

Granted, this wasn't where Ol' Yeller got his name from, but some animals turn tail at the first sign of danger.

THE GROWL

1

This is the canine version of "the voice." Some dogs have a growl that can cause an hombre's cojones to shrink up into his belly. This adds +2 to *overawe* rolls. Only dogs can take this edge.

FIVE: EDGES

Using some of the points gained by taking Hindrances (and only those points), you may now choose some benefits for the critter. Unless otherwise noted, these Edges function just like normal.

MUSTANG

2

Only horses can take this Edge. Mustangs can be tamed, but sometimes one of them retains its free spirit and wild nature. A mustang's *Spirit* is raised +1 step, but due to the harsh conditions on the plains, its *Size* is reduced by -1.

JUNGLE

NERVES O STEEL

13

The cost of this Hindrance is still 1 point for dogs, but horses are extremely skittish by nature, so this edge costs them 3 points.

PURTY

1

A handsome animal with a clean, glossy coat always gets a better reaction from folks.

RENOWN

13

For an animal to have this edge, the master usually also has to have it.

SADDLEWISE

1

This horse seems to know what its rider wants before the command is given. Anyone riding this horse gets a +2 to all *horse ridin'* rolls.

SENSE OF DIRECTION

1

Funny how an animal can just be more in tune with his environment than his master is. This is a good one for St. Bernards leading folks out of mountain passes.



THE STARE

1

This can really creep a cowpoke out.

THICK-SKINNED

3

Nothing bothers these animals—well, almost nothing.

TOUGH AS NAILS

1-5

Some critters can take a kicking and come back for more.

WOLF DOG

2

Occasionally, domestic dogs and wolves mate, producing a hardier if occasionally unpredictable crossbreed. Wolf dogs receive +1 to Size, and their teeth inflict *Strength+d6* damage.

SIX: BACKGROUND

The last step is to make up a bit of background for the beast. This doesn't need to include a lot of detail. The animal can even borrow some of its background from its owner.

If a Joker was drawn during Step Two, the Marshal needs to draw from a fresh deck to find out what's unusual about the animal. Animals are not as prone to weirdness as humans, so only one card is drawn, even if two Jokers were drawn.



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ANIMAL COMPANIONS & BOUNTY POINTS

Animals usually stay the same for a long time, but sometimes a beast improves with training. Normally, animals don't earn Bounty Points or Fate Chips. The only way animal Aptitudes can be raised is if the animal's master spends twice the normal number of points it would cost. Animal Traits can never be raised.

The Marshal could, however, award a few Bounty Points to an animal for a purpose. A critter that swims a lot might receive points to raise that Aptitude. Likewise, the Marshal might award Grit to a special animal to reflect its acclimation to weird events.

Keep in mind that these are companions for the hero, not heroes themselves. They should enhance the hero, not supplant him. If your hero's horse is outclassing him in fights, it might just be time for the hero (or the horse) to retire.



CRITTER COMPANIONS

FAITHFUL STEED

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 1d4
 Filchin' 1
 Nimbleness 2d12
 Fightin': Brawlin' 1
 Swimmin' 2
 Quickness 3d8
 Strength 1d10
 Vigor 4d8
 Cognition 3d6
 Knowledge 4d6
 Mien 2d6
 Overawe 1
 Performin':
 tricks 5
 Smarts 2d8
 Spirit 3d4
 Guts 2
 Wind: 14
 Pace: 20
 Edges:
 Saddlewise 1
 Sense o'
 direction 1
 Tough as nails 1
 Hindrances:
 Curious -3

PERSONALITY

Perhaps not the fastest of horses, this beast is clever and has learned several tricks. He responds well to his master and sometimes even has ideas of his own.

Quote: "Nay-hay-hay-hay-hay!"

GUARD DOG

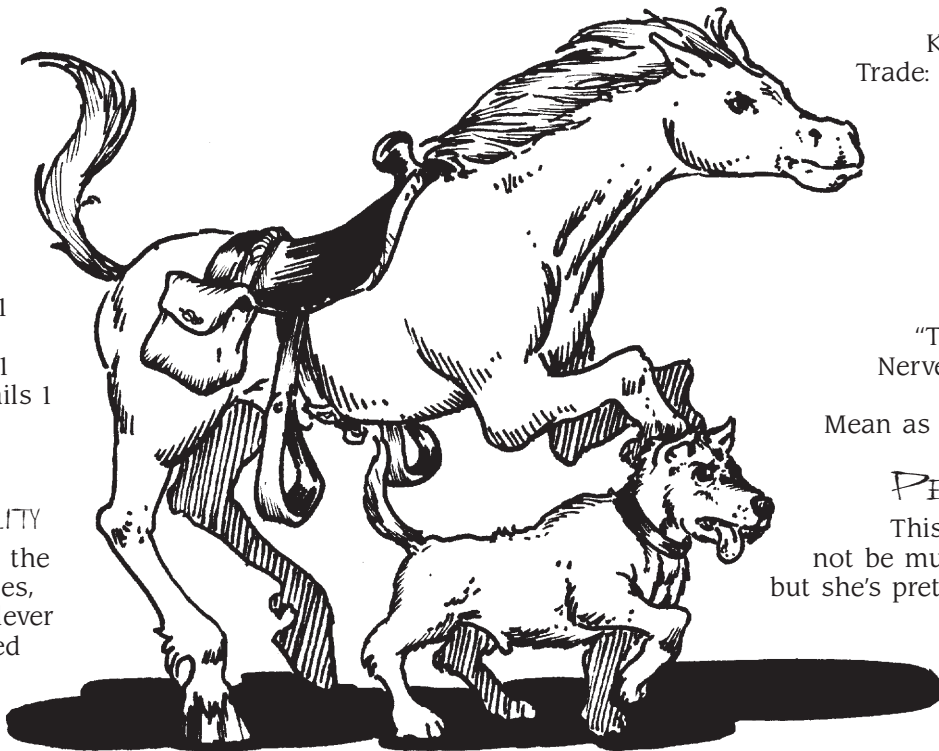
TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 3d4
 Nimbleness 4d8
 Fightin': brawlin' 2
 Swimmin' 1
 Quickness 4d10
 Strength 2d10
 Vigor 3d8
 Cognition 2d8
 Scrutinize 2
 Search 2
 Trackin' 1
 Knowledge 1d4
 Trade: watchdog 1
 Mien 3d6
 Overawe 3
 Smarts 2d6
 Spirit 1d8
 Guts 2
 Wind: 16
 Pace: 8
 Edges:
 "The growl" 1
 Nerves o' steel 1
 Hindrances:
 Mean as a rattler -2

PERSONALITY

This critter might not be much on charm, but she's pretty effective at threatening intruders to stay away from her master.

Quote: "Growf!"



ARCHETYPES

EXPLORER

TRAITS & APTITUDES

Deftness 3d6
Shootin': pistol 4
Nimbleness 1d8
Climbin' 2
Fightin': fencin' 3
Horse ridin' 2
Sneak 1
Swimmin' 2
Quickness 4d6
Quick draw: pistol 2
Strength 3d6
Vigor 4d10
Cognition 3d8
Arts: sketchin' 1
Search 3
Trackin' 2
Knowledge 2d12
Academia: occult 3
Area knowledge 3
Native tongue 2
Language:
Indian sign 2
Medicine: general 2
Mien 2d10
Persuasion 3
Tale-tellin' 2
Smarts 1d6
Scroungin' 2
Survival: forest 3
Spirit 2d6
Guts: 3
Wind: 16
Edges:
Dinero 2
Gift of gab 1
Kemosabe:
Sioux 2
Sense o'
direction 1
Veteran o' the Weird West
Hindrances:
Curious -3
Heroic -3
Gear: Double-action Peacemaker, box of 50
bullets, Sharps Big 50, box of 50
bullets, hatchet, bedroll, compass,
brave horse, \$200 in Federal money,
\$200 in Confederate scrip, \$100 in gold.

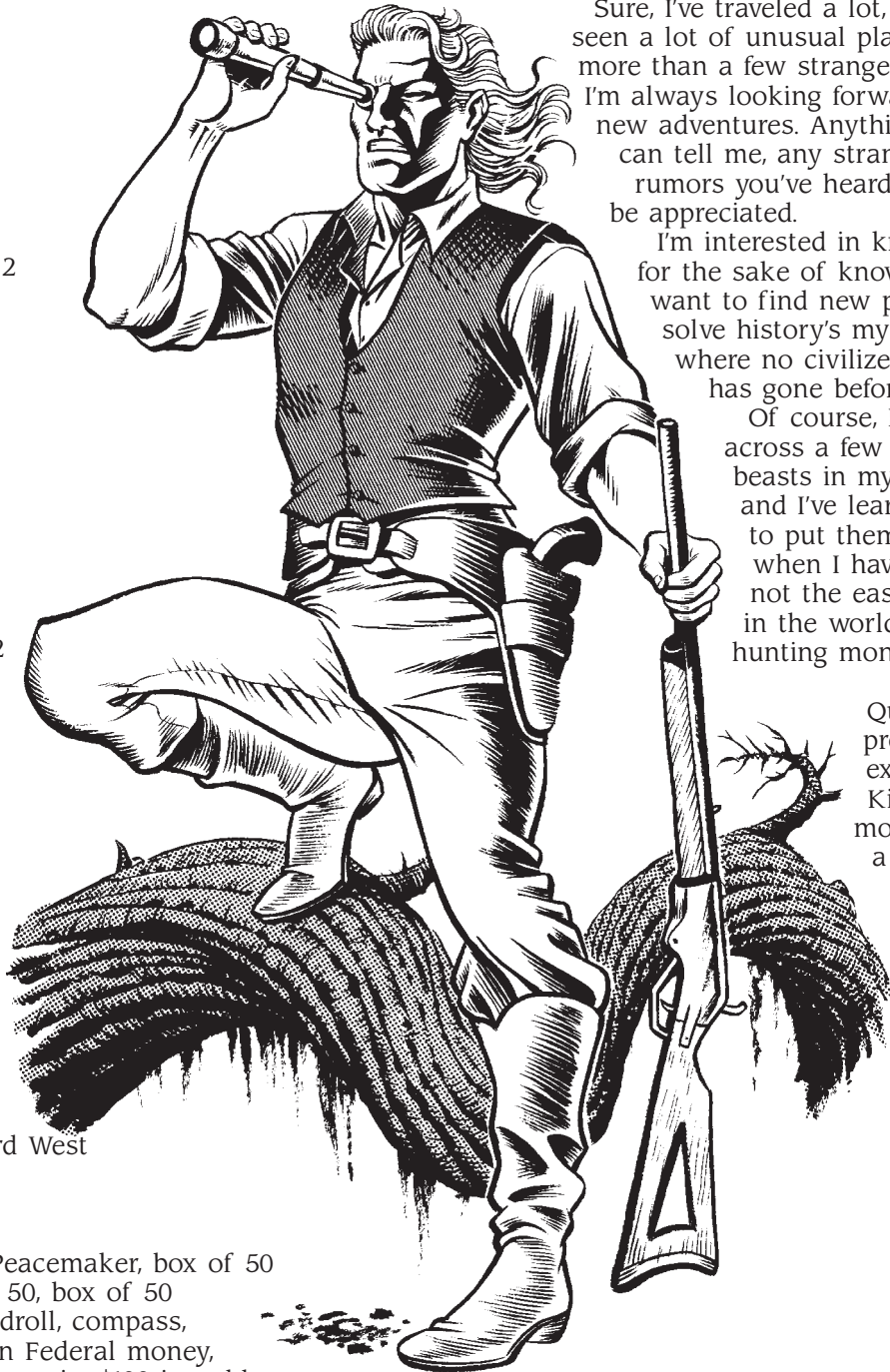
PERSONALITY

Sure, I've traveled a lot, and I've seen a lot of unusual places and more than a few strange things. I'm always looking forward to new adventures. Anything you can tell me, any strange rumors you've heard, would be appreciated.

I'm interested in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. I want to find new places, solve history's mysteries, go where no civilized man has gone before!

Of course, I have run across a few strange beasts in my travels, and I've learned how to put them down when I have to. It's not the easiest thing in the world to do, hunting monsters.

Quote: "My profession is exploration. Killing monsters is a hobby."





ARCHETYPES



TROPHY HUNTER

TRAITS & ABILITIES

- Deftness 3d12
 - Shootin': rifle 5
- Nimbleness 1d6
 - Climbin' 1
 - Sneak 2
- Quickness 3d10
- Strength 2d6
- Vigor 4d6
- Cognition 2d10
 - Search 2
 - Trackin' 4
- Knowledge 3d6
 - Area knowledge 2
 - Native tongue 2
- Professional:
 - military 2
 - Trade: huntin' 3
- Mien 2d6
 - Leadership 1
 - Overawe 3
 - Tale-tellin' 2
- Smarts 3d8
 - Ridicule 1
- Spirit 1d8
 - Guts 2
- Wind: 14
- Edges:
 - Belongings: special rifle 2
 - Dinero 3
 - Nerves o' steel 1
- Hindrances:
 - Ferner: British -3
 - High falutin' -2
 - Stubborn -2
- Gear: Customized Bullard Express and 100 bullets (Range Increment 25, Damage 5d10), Evans Old Model Sporter and 100 bullets, mule, tent, camp equipment, horse, \$500 in gold.

PERSONALITY

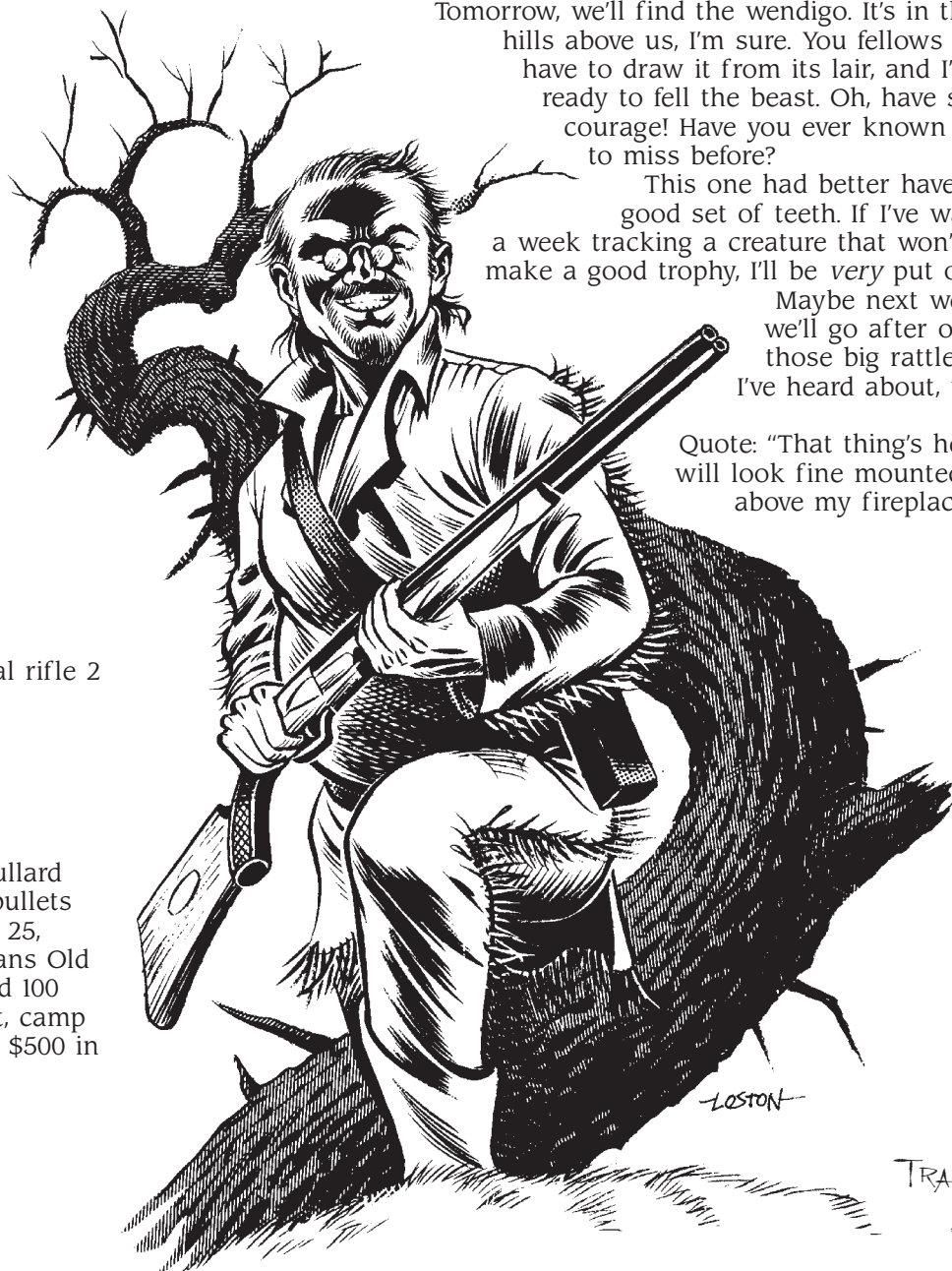
Set down the gear over there, and start putting up the tent while I check my rifle. Yes, go ahead and gather wood for a fire. Must I tell you everything that need be done?

Ignorant peasants. I'm surrounded by idiots! Tomorrow, we'll find the wendigo. It's in the hills above us, I'm sure. You fellows will have to draw it from its lair, and I'll be ready to fell the beast. Oh, have some courage! Have you ever known me to miss before?

This one had better have a good set of teeth. If I've wasted a week tracking a creature that won't make a good trophy, I'll be *very* put out.

Maybe next week, we'll go after one of those big rattlers I've heard about, what?

Quote: "That thing's head will look fine mounted above my fireplace."



TRAITS
&



ARCHETYPES

WRANGLER

APTITUDES

Deftness 2d6
 Shootin': pistol 2
Nimbleness 3d8
 Climbin' 1
 Fightin': lariat 3
 Fightin': whip 3
 Horse ridin' 4
 Sneak 1
 Teamster 3
Quickness 3d6
Strength 1d6
Vigor 3d6
Cognition 1d8
 Search 1
 Trackin' 3
Knowledge 2d10
 Area knowledge 2
 Native tongue 2
 Medicine: veterinary 3
 Science: zoology 2
 Trade: trappin' 2
Mien 2d12
 Animal wranglin':
 bronco bustin' 2
 Animal wranglin':
 dog trainin' 3
 Animal
 wranglin':
 falconry 2
 Overawe 2
 Persuasion 3
Smarts 4d6
Spirit 4d10
 Guts 2
Wind: 16
Edges:
 Knack: born under a
 blood-red moon 5
 Sidekick: dog 5
 Veteran o' the Weird West
Hindrances:
 All thumbs -2
 Loyal (critters) -3
 Pacifist -3
 Stubborn -2
 Mysterious past: animal ken
Gear: Double-action Peacemaker, box of 50
 bullets, whip, lariat, Bowie knife, bed roll, \$27.

PERSONALITY

Don't you go shootin' at that poor lizard! It's just a big iguana defending its territory, and it wouldn't have breathed fire at you if you hadn't gotten into its territory. You just back away—slowly.

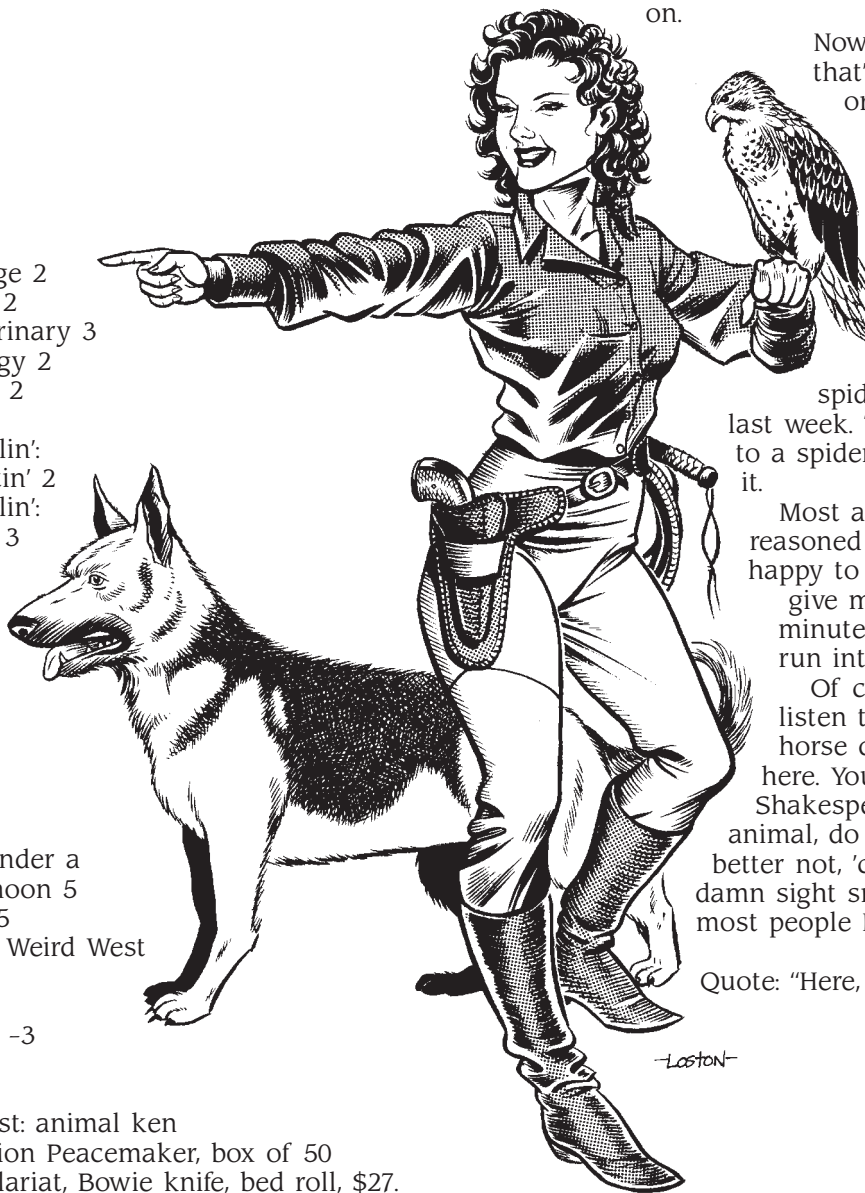
Shakespeare, you bring his horse over here. That's a good boy. Now we can ride on.

Now, I'll kill a critter that's hurt real bad or that's become a danger, but I won't put up with anyone pickin' a fight with an innocent thing like that lizard. You take that big spider we ran into last week. There's no talkin' to a spider; we had to kill it.

Most animals can be reasoned with, and I'm happy to do it if you just give me a couple of minutes next time we run into one.

Of course, they'll listen to me, like your horse does and my dog here. You don't think Shakespeare's a dumb animal, do you? You'd better not, 'cause he's a damn sight smarter than most people I know.

Quote: "Here, critter, critter."



NO MAN'S LAND

Warning!

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TOP SECRET
PINKERTON DETECTIVE AGENCY
ALPHA CLEARANCE ONLY!

To: Allan Pinkerton
From: Joshua Neff, Badge #345
RE: The Explorers Society

My first question when I got this assignment was "Why do I always get the nut details?" Who was it that had to shut down that "coven" of little old ladies in Des Moines? Why Joshua Neff, of course. And who do we get to scare the pants of those kids straying a bit too close to the true occult in Martinsburg? Just call Agent Neff; he'll take care of it.

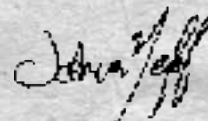
I want to apologize for doubting your judgment on this one. It was big, Allan. Really big. If you hadn't gotten that tip from Agent Trevalyan--well, I don't really want to think about what could have happened if these Explorers Society nuts had actually gotten this little book of theirs published. Its a shame we can't shut them down for good, but I guess that would be a bit too high-profile. The last thing we want to do is call attention to them. We'll just have to be satisfied with seizing all the copies of this book of theirs.

We got to the printing plant in Denver just in time actually. They'd printed up about a thousand copies of the book and were loading them up on a wagon for distribution when my squad and I hit them. We "neutralized" all the workers involved (don't worry, we used the soft option) and hijacked the wagon with its load. I had a few men scour the printing plant and clean up any evidence relating to the book, and then we took our leave. I then personally supervised the destruction of the entire print run.

So, as far as I know, this little "Rascals, Varmints & Critters" thing is a dead proposition. The one thing that worries me is Pennington-Smythe and Trevalyan's reference to the Legion. If there is one thing we don't need, its a bunch of half-informed, self-styled "monster hunters" running around and getting in our way. Our Confederate counterparts are enough of a pain in my ass as things stand.

By the way, I was sorry (but honestly not surprised) to hear about Agent Trevalyan's disappearance. Jocelyn was always a good operative, but I think getting her to sell out her own brother may have been too much for her. Still, I get the sneaking suspicion we'll see her again. Lets just hope she's on our side when we do.

Awaiting further orders,



Joshua Neff
Badge #345

The Explorers Society, in Conjunction with the Tombstone Epitaph, Proudly Presents
the 1876 Edition of the Bestiary of North America:

RASCALS, VARMINTS & CRITTERS



RASCALS, VARMINTS & CRITTERS



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**1876 EDITION,
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A Hearty Welcome!

Greetings, my colonial friends. Allow me to introduce myself. Captain Roderick Pennington-Smythe is the name, late of the Royal Navy, currently Chairman of the North American Division of the Explorers Society.

It is my pleasure to introduce the 1876 Edition of the Society's *Bestiary of North America*. It has been almost 15 years since the last edition of this most valuable and informative manual, and with the profusion of new creatures that have been discovered in America since then, the time for a new edition is ripe!

It has also become evident to our membership that we must make the knowledge that we have at our fingertips available to the public. There are strange things afoot in the world today, and the Explorers Society intends to do its part to inform the public of what it *must* know.

The Submission Process

Months ago, we placed advertisements in several periodicals throughout the United States and Confederate States of America, as well as disputed areas, calling for people to send us personal accounts of encounters with beasts of all sorts. In addition, several members of the society collected previously published articles, conducted interviews, and in some cases reported their own encounters. We received an overwhelming response in the form of letters, articles, reports, interview transcripts, and excerpts from personal journals. The Society's officers studied the various entries, checked sources, and performed a myriad of other tasks, including a rather radical restructuring of the book necessitated by the information gathered.

A New Format

While previous editions of the *Bestiary*, both in America and in the British Isles, had remained confined to animals of various sorts, we decided to expand the scope of the book to include various humans and humanoids, as well as a variety of phantasms and creatures once believed to be mythological, so long as we could confirm, with some assurance, their actual existence.

Finally, the manuscript, which we had come to refer to as *Rascals, Varmints, and Critters*, was given to one Nicholas Trevalyan, late of the Royal Army, where he served as a Major in the

16th Lancers, the Queen's Own. Nicholas, like his father, has long been a member of the Explorers Society, and further, has spent quite some time in the Americas, where he has encountered many of the creatures included in this book.

When Nicholas finished editing, adding the occasional pithy comment where necessary, the manuscript went to the offices of the *Tombstone Epitaph*, a newspaper that often devotes space to reports similar to those found between these covers (indeed, some of the *Bestiary* entries first appeared in that worthy journal). There, editor John Clum and reporter Lacy O'Malley saw to the typesetting and printing of the American printing of the *Bestiary of North America*.

I will turn this tome over to the capable hands of Master Trevalyan momentarily, but first allow me to say a few words about the Explorers Society. It is a fine organization, to which I am proud to belong.

The Explorers Society

Truly, the Explorers Society is an organization with roots deep in the past. While our records before the 1600s are sparse, we have traced the history of the organization back to the days of ancient Rome. The Explorers Society's roots seem to lie with a quasi-mystical order of what can best be described as "monster hunters." According to the texts we have uncovered, this group, known simply as the Twilight Legion, was secretly charged by the rulers of Rome with defending the people from any marauding beasts.

While this history has been known to the Society for some 50 years, it is only recently that it has become relevant. In the past, we have scoffed at our "monster hunting" roots, dismissing them as fairy stories. Events recently have made us think twice. But Major Trevalyan shall speak more of that.

The Society Today

Although today's Society has roots centuries old, it was not organized in its modern form as a guild of gentleman adventurers, until the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Records have been kept in good order since 1660 and show a roster of members sometimes illustrious and often scurrilous. Truly, some members could easily lay claim to both titles. The oldest journals of the Society hold accounts from Africa, China, Australia, and the Americas, as well as many places in the British Isles and

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upon the Continent. Our membership has been nothing if not well-travelled.

Indeed, that was one of the foundations upon which the modern association was built: a willingness to travel for the purpose of exploring, finding lost civilizations, observing unusual forms of life, and journeying to places where no civilized man had set foot before. It was this dedication to the adventuresome discovery of knowledge that so attracted numerous gentlemen to the Society's ranks, as it continues to do even now.

The Search For New Blood

We hope that tales of our exploits, as contained herein, will inspire a new generation to seek entrance to our ranks. Many come to the Society because it provides information useful for hunting and obtaining trophy animals, while others find the Society a comfortable companion in their quests for knowledge. Some simply desire a bit of excitement in otherwise dreary lives in today's too-civilized world.

Whatever the reasons these people seek to join our assemblage, they find themselves welcome, provided they meet our requirements for basic membership. The oldest of these, the unspoken restriction of membership to men only, has been abolished, and we are now prepared to welcome courageous women into our proud fraternal order.

The second requirement, that members also belong to the gentry, has likewise been broadened, as the inhabitants of the Northern American nations claim to have no gentry, and so it becomes difficult to determine social status. Therefore, we have, with regret, changed the second condition to a payment of dues in the amount of \$1,000, trusting that our third requirement will discourage those who are not truly serious about supporting the organization.

This final condition for membership demands attendance at one or more meeting per calendar year. At meetings, each member must report on his activities and discoveries of the preceding months. Meetings are held monthly in or around London, with the exact locations published in the annual minutes. Members are encouraged to attend as many meetings as possible.

Hereditary Membership

Once a member has remained in good standing for 10 years, he or she is awarded the title Explorer and made a permanent member.

Membership is passed on to heirs of Explorers, provided those heirs maintain good standing through adherence to the third condition of membership for 10 years, after which time they are made permanent members as well. Incidentally, you who are already Explorers should not worry yourselves; your status will not be altered.

Parties interested in joining should inquire at the headquarters (Explorers Mansion just outside London) or at any of the many subsidiary offices in cities around the world. In the American nations, Explorers Offices are located in New York, Boston, Richmond, Atlanta, Des Moines, Kansas City, Dallas, Denver, Tombstone, and Virginia City. At the time of this writing, we are also in the process of establishing locations in Shan Fan and the City of Lost Angels, and are in negotiations with the Sioux for an office in Deadwood.

Rascals, Varmints, and Critters

As promised, I will now turn over this book, which I am sure will be an invaluable resource, to my friend and fellow Explorer, Nicholas Trevalyan.

Have a jolly good safari!

A Note from the Editor

As mentioned by the good Captain, I am Nicholas Trevalyan, a long-time Explorer, and I welcome you to a most intriguing source of information regarding the creatures that have recently been encountered in the so-called American West. I myself have had dealings with a great many bizarre creatures and what I shall loosely term "people."

For the most part, I have left the entries as they are, including colloquial speech and often atrocious grammar, so the true flavor of the Weird West might reach you, the reader. However, I have used my experience to offer commentary, where appropriate, on the accounts contained herein. Such comments appear in italic script, and are followed by my initials. *In this manner.* — N.T.

Welcome to the more traditional section of this resource, that which discusses creatures. Previous editions of the *Bestiary of North America* have been devoted solely to unintelligent animals, those creatures that might be hunted as trophies.

Things have changed.

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The Haunting of North America

I arrived in North America some three years ago, having spent many years before that traveling, sometimes in the service of the Royal Army, sometimes for personal enjoyment and enlightenment.

All the things I had seen did little to prepare me for the strangeness in the American nations, other than to develop my courage and my calm in the face of the Unknown.

Indeed, the weird events of the last few years seem to have changed the character of the American flora and fauna. Where before, one could observe and hunt such creatures as the grizzly bear, the buffalo, and the mountain lion, those relatively normal animals now pale in comparison to such exotic beasts as the desert thing, the Mojave rattler, and the quaintly named tumblebleed.

Where Monsters Walk

And then there are the once-human beings, things changed, twisted by a dark malevolence that leaves little but a human shape and a dark, lingering intelligence. It is those creatures that demanded the greatest change in the *Bestiary's* format.

However, the unusual nature of the other animals also demanded a broadening of the Society's horizons. In these pages, you will read about creatures so bizarre as to seem mythological, so frightening as to defy the imagination, and so hideous as to make even the most avid trophy hunter think twice before using them to decorate his mantle. Many of the beasts described herein defy normal classification and might seem to be the weird imaginings of deranged creative writers.

Unnatural Selection

Let me assure you, however, that such creatures do exist. I have seen—and fought and slain—things that I would have dismissed as legends a few years ago.

Something unusual has happened in the American nations, an event that seems to have brought legends to unnatural life. While I am acquainted with the recent writings of Charles Darwin (I refer the reader to his *Origin of Species*), and would tend to agree with his conclusions, some event must have changed evolution in the world, altering normal animals into strange and monstrous beings, while

allowing others to appear as if by spontaneous generation. The things that walk the world now are not as nature would have them.

Hunters or Hunted?

I confess that I do not know the true nature of the supernatural forces that animate bones, dead bodies, mechanical devices, and a variety of other materials. I have, however, felt the malevolence of the entities. Anyone who encounters them will almost certainly feel the same thing: an almost palpable evil.

Whatever the reason, the fundamental relationship between man and animals has changed. We are used to our place at the "top of the heap," if you will excuse the expression. These days it is all too common for humans to be prey rather than predator.

Dare to Believe!

I realize many of the readers of this resource are skeptical. So once was I. However, over the past few years, I have seen many unusual sights, and I have become more, shall we say, open-minded. After all, it is difficult to deny the existence of the supernatural when a man, shot dead by your own hand, stands up and walks.

For in the western portion of North America—in the American West—the dead do walk.

A Call to Arms

When I and my fellow Explorers used to read about our history, our Roman roots, and the "monster hunters" called the Legion, we would sit in our comfortable clubs, drinking our brandy and laughing at our ancestors for believing in children's tales and jumping at shadows.

We do not laugh anymore.

As strange as it may seem to the man on the street, it may be that the time for the Twilight Legion has come again, and the people of the world may need protection from forces beyond their reckoning. Interested parties should contact the Explorers Society for further information.

If you need more persuasion, I can only direct you to the pages that lie ahead. Read the following accounts. You will see nothing so mundane as a wolf or wildcat. And while I cannot verify the truth of every tale, I have seen enough with my own eyes that I believe.

And once you have read about them, so, surely, will you.

—Major Nicholas Trevalyan, December 1876.

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Animal Men

A letter written by Explorer Nicholas Trevalyan to his father in England. Submitted by the author. Me, that is.—N.T.

Hello again from the Weird West. I am well, as is Jocelyn, who sends her regards. She remains as headstrong as ever, but still carries herself as a proper lady in social situations. She is, nonetheless, intrigued by the strange happenings of this unusual region and continues to go off on the occasional quest. Naturally, I go with her; I'd never allow my sister to wander into danger without my protection.

I will tell you about our most recent exploit, but first, a reassurance. I know you enjoy reading my letters to the gardener's son, Herbert, but that his father has complained they prompt unhealthy imaginings in the boy. Rest assured that this adventure, while it holds certain fantastic elements, is rather tame, containing somewhat less blood and death than many of our other exploits, which you have used to entertain the young fellow.

Our most recent excursion took us to the area called the Maze by the former colonials. We have acquired a bit of a reputation as heroes in the American west, and a request for help came to us, imploring us to travel to a particular area in the Maze and investigate sightings of bizarre people with pronounced animal-like features, including fur, snouts, and the like. One such creature supposedly had wandered into a small settlement, where it promptly died.

While I have seen a great many odd creatures during my time here, I remain wary of rumors, but Jocelyn was quite agitated, consumed by curiosity and a desire to examine the creatures. I sometimes regret having allowed her to help me

study during my medical training, but her help in memorization was quite welcome at the time. And admittedly, she has shown great aptitude for the medical profession.

Anyway, we were soon packed and headed for the Maze. The trip was almost uneventful, with an encounter with a very large worm in Utah, and a gunfight near Virginia City. We soon reached the fragmented coastal area of California and hired a boat to take us to the island where the "animal man" had been seen.

We soon arrived at the island, which was sorely lacking in amenities, and we set up a small camp near one of the shores before proceeding into town.

Once inside town, we had little trouble finding the body of the animal man. In the fashion of this barbarous land, it was in an open coffin on full display in front of the undertaker's shop, with some of the locals charging a small fee to viewers. Once we had explained that we weren't casual viewers, we were able to arrange a time for a private viewing and dissection.

Though the creature had suffered several weeks of decay, some effort had been made to preserve it. We determined that while the

creature was basically human, it was indeed part animal as well. To be more specific, it appeared to be part dog, with an extended snout that held several long, sharp teeth. Its entire head was covered with fur, and slightly pointed ears thrust out from its head. The rest of its body had patches of fur, and the thing's legs were shaped like those of a dog as well. Finally, it had stubby fingers, each with a short black claw on the end.

While the creature had a number of unusual scars, the canine parts had not simply been sewn on, as we first suspected. Nor was it a werewolf, for my experience with those creatures suggests they always change back into human form upon death.



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We returned the beast to its display and began questioning the local populace. Most were ignorant, inarticulate, and unclean, little better than beasts themselves. Even worse, the recent influx of tourists had inflated the stories to the extent that it was impossible to determine the truth. We did, however, discover that most sightings had been on the north end of the island, and two witnesses claimed the dead creature had wandered in from that direction as well. Because we had camped to the north, and we did not wish to partake of the local hospitality, we went back to our camp.

We looked for tracks, but as neither of us is especially adept at this skill, we were unsuccessful. We set up a rotating watch and settled down for the night. It wasn't until the next night, however, during Jocelyn's watch, that our patience was rewarded. I awakened to Jocelyn's admonition to remain silent as she gestured toward the shoreline, which lay down a gentle slope. I armed myself, and we both moved away from the light of the campfire. Soon, three humanoid figures approached.

They wore ragged clothing, including hoods that covered most of their heads. However, they crouched and seemed to sniff at the air, and one of them looked toward the spot where Jocelyn hid in the shadows. I decided we should take the opportunity to make our presence known before they could gain an advantage. I signaled to Jocelyn, and as we stepped into the dim light, she said, in an authoritative voice, something like "Stay where you are."

They were startled by our sudden appearance from among the trees, and I feared they would run away. Instead, a most peculiar thing happened: They reacted with awe and dropped to the ground. As neither of us had drawn our weapons, I was rather puzzled.

Jocelyn and I warily moved closer to them, and I told the three intruders to approach. As they came closer, they glanced up cautiously, revealing beastly countenances. One had the appearance of a pig, while another had cat-like features, and the third, who we later learned was female, wore a frightened rabbit's face.

When they reached the fire, the cat-man began to stand and issued a very feline hiss. I warned him to behave, but then he turned toward me, and long claws sprang from his fingers. Then Jocelyn spoke again, in that commanding voice, and he halted, confused.

To make a long story short, it turned out we had been lucky Jocelyn spoke first, for she was

much like these creatures' mistress, including her red hair and cultured accent. That gained their initial respect, which we managed to turn into a grudging truce through persuasion, threats, and sheer force of will.

It seems these three had been sent on an expedition to find food. The rabbit-woman claimed to be swift and adept at detecting danger, while the pig-like man was reputed to be quite intelligent and skilled at locating food. The cat-man, or puma-man, as he corrected us, was there as a guardian. His claws and teeth seemed formidable weapons, but he also carried an old pistol tucked in a pocket of his ragged trousers.

The three were quite obviously rather disturbed to have been detected and were reluctant to share many details of the location of their home or of the life that they lead there. What information we did glean was gathered only by the seeming reverence (and slight fear) that the creatures felt toward Jocelyn.

The three told us they had rowed from an island to the north, where they lived in a small community of animal men, all under the rule of a woman they knew only as the Mistress. They ascribed almost mystical power to the woman, claiming she had created them and continued to make others like them. We spoke with them for hours, during which they queried us as to our origins, and asked about the outside world. We then gave them a large portion of our rations, and they went peacefully on their way.

Jocelyn and I discussed trying to find the island but decided to wait and bring along several of our friends and companions. We go to Denver next, by way of Salt Lake City. I will let you know if anything happens along the way.

Respectfully,
Your son Nicholas

Since the events described in this letter, word has come to me of more animal men sightings in the Maze. I was disturbed to hear that most of the confrontations seemed to come to a violent conclusion.

One story actually accused the animal men of kidnapping people from various points around the Maze! While this seems totally at odds with the rather inoffensive encounter that my sister and I had with the poor beasts, I can only go by what I have heard.

I must admit to being disturbed by the creation of these creatures by the hand of man (or woman, in this case). There are certain fundamental principles of life that should not be meddled with. There are enough abominations

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already.—N.T.

The Black Regiment

A letter written by Ned Wallace to his mother, Mrs. Henry Wallace of Birmingham, Alabama. Donated to the Society by Mrs. Wallace.

My Dearest Ma,

I hope this letter finds you and Beullah in better spirits than I. In the four years since I marched off to do my patriotic duty, I thought I'd faced every terror a soldier can. Three nights ago, I learned this just isn't so. There is more horror in war than any mind can contain. And even if one man was ever able to comprehend all of it, they would invent a new terror.

I am forbidden to tell you where I and my squad were three nights ago, but we had been tricked by a false trail and ambushed by Bluebellies. The Yanks outnumbered us five to one, but we were determined to make them pay dearly for every drop of Dixie blood.

I had just seen our standard bearer fall and was about to take it, to rally the boys, but I never got to it. Another man stepped out from behind me and quickly hefted that standard high. A bugle call sounded from the Yankees' flank, and a new unit joined the battle.

At first, I thought we were saved, but as the battle raged, I noticed things. First, the new men wore black uniforms. I know of no such colors, even in these days of haphazard supplies and mismatched boots. Second, on that subject, not a single one of them was wearing boots or even shoes.

And then there was the way they fought! I know I saw one fall, shot through the chest, but he got back up and advanced on the Bluebellies. They seemed determined to make a bayonet charge, marching ever forward, disdainful of the Union volleys. When they finally got in range, they viciously slashed with their bayonets, rather than just stabbing. Some of them advanced with loaded rifles and waited until they were within a few feet of the Yankees, shooting their targets, quite precisely, in the belly, the knee, or the face.

The sight of this butchery, even on the Yankees, was too much for me. I finally caught up to one of them, grabbed him by the shoulder, and spun him around to dress him down for needless brutality. My hand came down on something sticky and oozing on his shoulder, but I didn't think about it then. He turned to look at me, and my world fell apart.



You may think I'm making this up, but I swear to the Almighty, the man before me was dead at least a month. He gaped his mouth in what might have been a grin and I almost passed out from the stench. He pulled a pistol from his belt (no doubt stolen from a fallen officer) and leveled the weapon directly between my eyes. I knew I was about to die, but I was unable to move!

A rifle shot took off the dead man's head and saved my life. I looked at the soldier who saved me. He was wearing blue. In that moment, I realized who the enemy really was. For the rest of the fight, both sides, blue and gray, fought the blood-soaked interlopers.

I alone survived, but no one here at the field hospital will believe my wild tale. By the time you receive this, I will be in the madhouse in Tallahassee.

Please tell people my story. We must fight against the true enemy in this war.

Your son,
Cpl. Ned Wallace, C.S.A.

For centuries, soldiers have told of a regiment of the dead. Some suggest there is but one such regiment, its ranks ever growing with the worst

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of those killed in battle, and that it appears only in the most horrible of conflicts.—N.T.

Bloodwire

An article by Helen Fairfax, printed in the Cheyenne Reporter and submitted by Explorer Lenore Benson. Reprinted with permission.

Range War Heats Up—Three Men Dead

In Kellersville, Wyoming, last week, three men were slain by gunfire, apparently from a neighboring ranch. The cowhands, who have not been identified (but were in the employ of rancher Edgar Chase), were patrolling the northern perimeter of Mr. Chase's land. The bodies were found near Chase's barbed-wire fence, a point of heated contention with his neighbor, Martin MacElroy, a sheepherder.

The three men had all drawn their guns, and one had even gotten his Bowie knife out, but they apparently did not even wound their attackers. All three were riddled with bullet wounds on the chest and arms.

MacElroy denied accusations that he had his own men kill the cowpokes, offering this



alternate explanation: "I seen the thing did that to 'em! It done the same thing to one o' my best border dogs. This weed-lookin' thing snaked out from the bob-wire and wrapped around ol' Flint. He yelped and yowled, but I couldn't get to him in time, and he died before I got through the flock. The thing just slithered away while I held my poor, dead dog. That's what done it. Flint looked shot up too, but he warn't."

When the circuit court judge returns to Kellersville in two weeks, very few here doubt that a guilty verdict and the gallows await Mr. MacElroy.

Bogie Man

A letter from a young man whose name has been withheld, written to Lacy O'Malley, who forwarded it to the Society.

Dear Mr. O'Malley,

I think your newspaper is the best in the whole world, even though mama won't let me read it. I am writing to you because no other grown-up will even listen to me.

There is a monster-man who has been scaring us kids and doing nasty things to people. We call him the Bogie Man. I have seen him a lot of times. He looks like a bunch of sticks with an old dry tumbleweed for a head. He doesn't have any proper eyes, just a few thorns that kind of look like eyes.

Whenever I've seen him, he was fixing to do something mean to somebody. Once I saw him loosening the saddle straps on Mr. Fallup's horse, right on the street. When Mr. Fallup came over to his horse, the Bogie Man looked right at me, smiled real big, then ducked into the alley. Mr. Fallup got on his horse and started to ride off, and his saddle came undone, and he fell.

Another time, I saw him through the window of the sheriff's office. He saw me too and waved at me to come on over. I don't know why, but I did. The Bogie Man was showing me what he was doing. He was messing around with the sheriff's and the deputy's guns. The next day, when the sheriff cornered a horse thief, he got killed because his bullets wouldn't shoot.

That was when I decided I had to tell someone. I tried to tell the deputy, but I can't. Every time I start to talk to him about it, I get to feeling kind of faint, like I'm going to throw up.

Please come and do a story on the Bogie Man so people will know to look out for him.

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This creature takes care to allow no adults to see it. However, it does exist, and its "pranks" can be deadly.—N.T.

Bone Fiend

An excerpt from an interview with Explorer Jim Koda, self-styled "Monster Hunter Extraordinaire."

The bone fiend is one of the more gruesome critters I have encountered in my line of work.

I had ran into one such accidentally when me and a couple pards were hot on the trail of a different critter. We were ridin' into New Mexico from the west when we seen the remains of a wagon train on our far right. Even from that distance, we could see bones sprawled over the whole area, and even an arrow here and there. We figured that it was an Indian raid, probably Apaches.

As we rode up for a closer look, we seen somethin' movin' in one of the bigger piles of bones. Then all at once, dust blew up in our faces, blindin' us for a moment. When we could see again, a big skeletal monster was there to greet us. You could tell the thing used the bones layin' around, 'cause there were hardly any bones left in the area. The critter had a longhorn head what looked right at us and let out an ear-piercin' scream. And to top it off, the damn thing had four arms, two holdin' a shotgun and each of the others with a pistol!

As it fired on us, we jumped from our horses, and responded with our own shootin' irons. The junkpile of bones moved with amazin' speed and took cover behind an overturned wagon. It was even a pretty good shot, puttin' a hole in my hat and hittin' one of my pards in the leg. Our bullets didn't seem to harm it much at all. I even placed a couple of bullets right between its eyes with no effect.

That's when I noticed a little sack tied at its waist. I started aimin' for the sack, and when the thing figured out what I was up to, it rammed the sack inside its extra-tough ribcage. I was bound and determined to hit that damn sack now! I was yellin' out to the others where to shoot when the critter up and disappeared behind the wagon. It was all quiet for a while, so we decided to flank it to see what it was up to.

It was in a pile of bones again, like if it never come to life in the first place. I figured one of us must have hit the sack, but I wasn't takin' any chances. I lit a stick of dynamite and blew the



bones and wagon to smithereens. I thought it was all over 'til somethin' caught the corner of my eye. There was the same sack, hidden under a bush. Just then, two bony arms sprouted from the ground and grabbed a hold of my legs.

Then another bone beast hurled itself up from the ground in front of me, this time with the skull of a horse and a tomahawk high over its head. I had both my pistols in my hands so fast I was able to fire on the bag before the critter could move again. Me and my pards unloaded our bullets into the bag, and the bone fiend exploded bone fragments all over, cuttin' me up pretty bad.

And after all that, you can bet your last dollar I took a gander in that little bag. All that was inside was pieces of a blackened skull. Weirdest dang thing I ever saw.

Explorer Koda is correct about the importance of the small bag and its contents, a pitch-black skull that apparently serves as a control center for the creature. I once opened a bone fiend's bag before destroying the creature and noted an unearthly glow from within, as well as a bit of animation. That is, its mouth moved. The fiend protects its black skull well, not only by hiding

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it, but with arcane defenses as well.

The bone fiend bears some interesting similarities to the 'glom and the dark beast. Those interested in classifying unusual creatures should refer to those entries as well.—N.T.

Braincrawler

An excerpt from the personal journal of Dr. Elias Franks, deceased. Submitted by Explorer Lenore Benson.

Monday, July 27: Telegram from Orville asked me to head over, lend some medical expertise. Told me to bring surgical instruments, big knife.

Weds, July 29: Greeted by Orville, who took me to undertaker's, showed me corpse of rustler shot by local cowboys. Explained deceased was piano player at local saloon, went loco and started killing cattle, resulting in gun battle in which he was killed. Examination of corpse revealed worm-like creature burrowed into back of neck. Extracted it. Appeared to be attached to deceased's spinal cord. Orville gave me specimen to examine and swore me to secrecy.

Thurs, July 30: Barkeep's wife woke town by

running down street shooting rifle. Luckily, few bystanders at that hour. She was shot by deputies after injuring one of them. Discovered similar worm-like creature, still alive. It detached from deceased, scuttled at terrified deputy. Orville, calm as ever, grabbed it and tossed it in pickle jar for me to examine. After examination and dissection, looks like the things live on fluid sucked from host spinal cord or brain. Orville agreed to take me to piano player's house.

Fri, July 31: Arrived at piano player's house to find mother of piano player on top of roof. Unable to prevent her from leaping off. Upon examination of corpse, found worm. Burned it. Obviously, these creatures are somehow connected to the townsfolk's strange behavior. Time to call in professional help.

The following three pages had been neatly cut from the journal.—N.T.

The account of J.B. Lancer, as recorded in L. Prevost's book, Great Murders of the Frontier.

Nobody seen old Bill yet that spring, and he shoulda been into town for supplies a month afore, so me 'n Chickasaw Mike Hanrahan and Pete Jackson all decided to check on him, about two day's ride. When we got there, somethin' din't feel right. Jackson noticed the valley was quiet as a grave. No birds, no varmints, nothin'. Still felt like someone was watchin' us.

When we got there, it was gettin' dark. Damn, did the sun disappear that night. Anyways, Bill wasn't there, and his stuff was all over the floor. Even that dandy new Winchester he bought last fall was there—bent in half. We decided to stay a couple days to see if we could figure out what happened. We din't have to wait long.

We just got the fire lit when Chickasaw's ears perked up like a coon hound's. Something was outside. We grabbed our shooters and went out there. Then Old Bill jumps out of the shadows, wavin' a wood splitter above his head. Jackson never saw it hit him, but I ain't never gonna forget that, 'cause I froze. Chickasaw emptied his scattergun into Bill's chest.

Bill falls back, and suddenly he's up again. I ran but saw one thing before I did: Bill's eyes were coal-black. As I high-tailed it, I heard Chickasaw fire a couple more rounds, probably from his Navy pistol. Then, I heard him scream.

I guess it took me a week or so to get back here to town. Call me yellow, but if I'd stayed, I know I woulda wound up like Jackson. I can't say for sure what happened to Chickasaw Mike, but I know Bill's out there. Whatever he's



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become, he's out there, and he's waiting.

My personal observations indicate these accounts refer to the same worm-like creature. It is often possible to remove the braincrawler safely if the victim is first rendered unconscious.—N.T.

Canker

An excerpt from the journal of Cassius O'Hare, submitted by him to the Society.

Ever since the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the death of her daddy, Miss Ruby O'Shea nurtured a madness in her breast. Over time, this madness grew a physical form which consumed the debutante as surely as gangrene.

Thomas O'Shea was a war hero in the South, but on the death of his wife, he took a pension and moved to his family's estates in Wishbone, west of Wichita, to raise his daughter away from the roughness of military life. Dysentery denied him his hero's death.

On the eve of his funeral, some blackguard stole his corpse from where it lay in state. For this bizarre and mysterious event, I have uncovered no explanation. Miss Ruby took this whole affair very badly. She insisted the room remain exactly as arranged until the body was recovered. Then she was a debutante, on the verge of coming out. That was 10 years ago, and time has not been kind.

Miss Ruby was something of a local tragedy. While maintaining a kind of wasted beauty, she was a pale, haggard recluse. Except for a loyal handful of servants, she lived alone on the overgrown plantation. Alone, that is, except for the occasional gentleman caller. The O'Sheas were wealthy, and many scoundrels thought they could attain her fortune through seduction. Those men were never seen again, though townsfolk assumed they had just moved on.

We visited the estate as a group and found Miss O'Shea to be charming, if somewhat distant. The drawing room was set for a wake but had not been tended in years. The food was rotten, the casket infested with vermin. However, she was a perfect hostess and embodied those genteel virtues that southern maidens are said to hold—until she invited young Michael to sit with her a while and watch the stars.

An elderly maid acted as chaperone, but we scarce realized that it was Michael whose welfare needed protecting. His screams alerted us



to his distress. A strange insect-like creature was upon him, seeking to place a sucker-tube in his throat. It was hard and jointed like a hermit crab, but quite unlike anything I had seen before.

It was Miss Ruby's madness given form over time, under the weirdness that late pervades the land. Her body was quite limp without this wicked thing controlling her. Her abdomen was hollowed where the thing had resided, and two legs still reached down inside her throat.

Michael later told us that she had immodestly tried to kiss him, or so he thought. Fortunately he is an upright man of virtue and this saved him from the tumorous creature.

The servants had been somehow dominated by the madness and had to be subdued. We tracked the flight of the wounded beast to a quiet copse of trees where it had suspended its victims. Corpses, some years old, hung from the trees, wrapped in some ungodly webbing. One young man was still alive but suffering from the most terrible wounds. The doctor said he would live but was concerned about the hard tumorous mass which could be felt in the boy's belly.

Without her creature, Miss Ruby wasted away. She refused to eat anything, and the Doc supposed she had no digestive organs left.

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While O'Hare suggests cankers are madness given form, I suspect not madness, but despair and other dismal festering sensations, promote the growth of this parasite. While removing an adult canker may kill the host, young ones may be harmed by positive emotions, like those engendered by humorous or noble tales.—N.T.

Chinook

A transcript of an interview with Ravens Flying High, recorded for the Society by Explorer Jasper Colfax in the U.S. territory of Washington.

The elders have told these stories for years. Like many of my tribe, I did not entirely believe them, but we did not disbelieve either.

We have the story of the chinook, the warm, evil wind that causes the high country to thaw. The bears awaken and avalanches threaten all. It is a bad thing when the chinook is loose.

Two summers ago, I saw the chinook in the mountains. I thought it was a wolverine, but it was not. It was large, as large as a kodiak, with the claws and head of a wolverine, but with huge feet. The chest was large and deep, with

brown markings on gray fur.

I watched it stalk a herd of elk through the forest. The elk were in the middle of a large glade with deep snow when the beast attacked. The chinook roared with a sound like thunder, and the air grew warm. I could hear the snow on the mountain break free around me, and I feared an avalanche. Waves of heat, like in the southern desert, danced around the elk. They grew terrified, but could not flee. The ground had turned to thick mud, and they were trapped.

The chinook leapt among them, the mud not hindering him a bit, and killed six of the elk in moments. The rest of the herd escaped into the forest while the chinook ate.

It was then that I saw the bear. A large black bear, it must have heard the noise or smelled the elk. It stood at the edge of the glade, challenging the chinook. The chinook's hackles rose, and he began to hiss, much like the iron-horse.

I did not see what happened. The wind began to pick up. In minutes, a snow storm had started, and I barely made it back to my camp.

This account might seem confusing, almost the blending of two legends, the embodiment of the violent storm in animal form. There is, however, an explanation.

The creature itself appears to be a gigantic form of wolverine, albeit one with markings slightly different from the regular, smaller version. However, like the normal wolverine, the creature that has become known as the chinook is a vile-tempered carnivore.

Its rather colorful name comes, as indicated by the above account, from the warm wind that causes early thaws in the Northwest Territory (which itself derives its name from the one of the tribes in the area, as I understand it.) Like the warm wind, the chinook creature represents a dangerous alteration in prevailing conditions.

Further, the creature seems to have an arcane ability to manipulate the local weather conditions, altering them to suit its needs. Though Ravens Flying High mentions weather changes as coincidence, Explorer Colfax, himself schooled in mystical pursuits, claims that the beast has supernatural abilities. Apparently, the chinook, though unintelligent by conventional definitions, can actually cause a sort of localized "heat wave" capable of melting snow almost instantly, and even transforming soft earth to a tarry consistency. It uses this to trap prey or harm pursuers and can also create blizzard-like conditions to cover its retreat.

While this may be difficult to believe, such

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oddities have almost become the norm in the American West, symptoms of a pervasive affliction that threatens to change the very fabric of reality in the Americas. For those interested in hunting the chinook or even hunting in the beast's range, I would recommend a large group, some of whom are skilled in the supernatural arts.

Either that, or a few sticks of dynamite.—N.T.

Chupakabara

A letter sent to the Tombstone Epitaph by a source who prefers to remain anonymous. Submitted to the Society by Lacy O'Malley.

Sir, I know most people ain't gonna believe me when I tell this story, but your paper has the reputation of printing the most unbelievable stories, and I thought you might hear me out.

The stories in the Epitaph do tend to be a bit sensationalized but are believable to anyone who has traveled extensively in the Weird West.—N.T.

Last spring while working on a spread in Texas down near El Paso, we started to find cattle that had been attacked by something. Now, I have seen a *lot* of animal carcasses in my day, but nothin' like this. The eyes had been sucked out, and part of the mouth were gone. There wasn't a drop of blood left in this critter neither. We found that somethin' had split the body open, and some of the organs were gone. The foreman blamed it on prairie ticks, but this wasn't the same. Some of the Mexican hands started mumbling something about the chupakabara. That translates roughly as "goat sucker."

They told me that the chupakabara is created when a person commits a terrible betrayal against a family member. The sinner is transformed into a hideous beast that must feed on the blood and eyes of animals.

About five days later while taking my shift on overnight watch, I noticed that the herd was getting a bit spooky. Then out of some brush, I saw something hit a cow on the edge of the herd. The rest of the cattle spooked and started stampeding away. The rest of the night watch took off to try to stop the herd, and I went to investigate the downed cow.

To this day, I wish I had not. The critter was shaped like a small, hairy man with clawed feet and hands that it was using to grasp around the neck. It had its mouth wrapped around the

mouth of the cow so it could not breathe. Well sir, the sight of this thing scared my horse so bad that it threw me to the ground, and the thud I made attracted the attention of the monster.

When its glowing eyes met mine instinct took over and I slapped leather and fanned my Colt and emptied it and was still fanning on the empty chambers when I realized the thing was gone. Now, I can't say if I even hit the critter, and I wasn't going off to find out. Tell the truth, that morning I got my wages and headed north. I don't plan on heading back, but wanted to do something to warn people.

While in Arizona, my sister and I decided to investigate the claims of this anonymous fellow. We found several victims, mostly animals, but a few people as well. As described, these victims were missing parts of their anatomy. Eyes were removed, as were lips, and often parts of the noses. Many of the victims had suffered trauma to the throats and were missing internal organs as if they had been ripped out—though the victims had no wounds that would allow such removal. Finally, the victims were almost bloodless, though little blood was found nearby. We discovered one of the small, ape-like



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creatures in the process of reaching long claws down the throat of a victim. While it was fast, I have become very adept at the quick-draw, and I was able to kill the brown-and-gray, vaguely humanoid creature.

Legends suggest that a chupakabara can be truly killed only by the person it betrayed originally. The one I put down seemed well and truly dead. We dissected it and burned the carcass without apparent incident, and killings in the area ceased.—N.T.

Dark Beast

An excerpt from the report of Bill Querty, Dixie Rails Deputy Head of Security, on the disappearance of a group of engineers led by Professor Henry McNutt.

From: William S. Querty
To: Fitzhugh Lee
Date: June 20, 1876

At the current time, there is no hint of involvement by our rivals. We know that Union Blue and Black River are at each other's throats, and that Bayou Vermilion is still stuck between

Apache and Mexican forces.

The last time Professor McNutt's group was seen was when they left Albuquerque for Roswell. Bob Fox of the Texas Rangers assured me he had explored the whole area and found nothing of McNutt's group.

To be as complete as possible, I should relay what Bob Fox's Wichita guide told me. According to Towa, the area where McNutt's group vanished is known as the "dark beasts' soul."

These beasts are said to be spider spirits that gain nourishment from darkness and human blood. Long ago, a brave warrior named Magic Arrow had been captured by these beasts and used by them as their slave for years. Then came the day when Suncatcher, son of Magic Arrow, was mature enough to come to his father's rescue with some braves from his tribe.

Their first encounter with one of the dark beasts was disastrous: Several braves died, and the beast appeared impossible to kill. Lighting enough bright torches to repel the monster, Suncatcher escaped the dark beast. In their cave, Suncatcher found his father and the secret of the dark beasts' invulnerability.

Suncatcher didn't kill the beasts, in exchange for their promise to never kill an Indian again.

Fox's guide told me that, since that day, Indians have never been enslaved or killed by the dark beasts again, but he added that the promise didn't include "white faces" and that McNutt's group wasn't the first to disappear.

Although I am convinced that this crazy tale is pure folklore, it might be interesting to investigate the hills of the area. In fact, the tale could be based on some large animal or, more likely, on some other tribe's practices.

While this tale may have originated as folklore, it is equally likely that the truth gave rise to a story that became legend. Or as I have discovered, it is possible that the strange forces pervading the American West, have worked to bring a simple story to life.

In any case, this series of disappearances warranted investigation. Two teams of Pinkertons entered the region. One disappeared, and the second returned with a strange tale. While it can be difficult to get information from the Pinkertons—they try to protect the general populace from the weirdest parts of the west—I have friends.

The second Pinkerton team discovered a cave and, within, several pitch-black creatures. The beasts staged an ambush but were driven back by fire. It seems the Pinkertons had questioned

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Towa, and while he wouldn't reveal the source of the beasts' purported invulnerability, he did describe their hatred of light.

The Pinkertons found the remains of several people and, deeper in the caves, strange objects hanging from the ceiling. The dark beasts went to great lengths to guard the hanging objects, which were not fully investigated but might hold the key to some of the beasts' power. Most creatures seem to generate power within, but it is possible that dark beasts, like bone fiends, keep the source of their power in an external location.—N.T.

Dread Wolf

An interview with Phillip "Fat Phil" McCallister, ex-buffalo hunter. Transcript submitted by Explorer Duncan Starr.

Jack, Shorty, Deadeye Debbie, Texas Tommy and me, we set out with a half-dozen skinnners from Dodge City to make us some money doin' what we do best: shootin' buffalo. That first day went great. I got me four of 'em, and everyone did fine. But that night, we was all sittin' around the fire when we heard it—and I hope never to hear it again, the Good Lord willin'.

I've heard wolves howl before, and this here weren't no ordinary wolf. Now I ain't no coward; I've been in huntin' parties that tangled with Sioux raiders before, but that howlin' just made my courage pour right down into my boots. It sounded like a hundred wolves bein' dragged down screamin' into the very pit of Perdition! I just about soiled myself right there on the spot.

I looked over at my friends. We stood there shakin' a moment, then we all got the sudden urge to vamoose at the same time. Unfortunately, so did the horses; they broke tether and skedaddled. Then the skinnners done run off into the banshee—we heard their screams after a few minutes. That just left the five of us to fend 'em off. So we each grabbed a stick from the fire and prepared for the worst.

It was a terrible fight. They came at us from all directions, but they didn't just attack. They played with us until we was dead tired, then they grabbed us one by one and drug us off into the night to be et. And the whole while they was a-howlin', and I'll tell you, I was never so afraid in my whole life. Pretty soon, it was just me and Texas Tommy—then it was just me. How did I survive, you ask? Well sir, I reckon I didn't.

We've all heard the phrase "dead men tell no tales." However, it simply isn't true in the Weird West. More information on talking (and walking) dead men appears later.—N.T.

An incident at Smoky Pete's, a trading post along the Oregon Trail, as recorded for the Society by Explorer Jasper Colfax.

"Yep, they run pretty thick around here." Smoky Pete looked over the weary travelers as he set their drinks on the table. "If you only heard them, then you been lucky. Most folks figure you hear 'em, you'll soon be in 'em—their bellies that is. Yep, you been real lucky."

The travelers sat talking quietly. The news of their near brush with death clearly shook them. Their journey suffered from more than the bad weather. Like so many people from Back East, they had no knowledge of the territories they traveled through. Many people disappear along the Oregon Trail. The fact that these folks had made it so far surprised Pete.

The door banged open in a gust of wind and ice as two hulking figures staggered in from the storm. "Pete! Help me!" one figure pleaded as he struggled to carry his injured companion. "My brother has been bit. The wolves! They are near!"

The travelers stared in horror as Pete helped the newcomers to a bench. "When did this happen, Ernst?" Pete began removing the injured man's garments. Frozen blood covered both men.

"We were only a few miles from here when we heard that terrible howl," replied Ernst. He removed his hat. His eyes looked around the room. The travelers could see fear and exhaustion in his face.

"We tried to hurry but they came at us from out of the tree line. There were three wolves." Ernst's words were quick and shaken. His normally deep, German voice rose with nervous tension. "We slowed one down with our rifles, but the others were too fast."

One of the travelers handed Ernst a steaming cup of coffee. "Danke!" he replied as he took the vessel in his shaking grasp. "One of the wolves went after my horse. The other went after Hans. I left my horse to its fate and ran to help mu—mu-my brother." Ernst began to stammer. He looked first at his brother, then at Pete.

"Don't worry Ernst." Pete looked up from his work. "You made it here in time. We'll begin treatin' the bad blood right away. Hans is strong. He'll fight it."

Pete grasped Ernst's shoulder. "Don't worry none," he consoled. "For now, we gotta clean

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and dress his wound. I have a strong bed we can tie him to. We'll know shortly if the spirits o' disease are in 'im."

"Oh my!" one of the travelers gasped. Several crossed themselves and said a short prayer to ward off evil. One of the travelers walked up to Pete. "Is there is anything I can do to help?"

Pete looked at the fellow, then nodded. "Yep. I could use a hand tendin' the bad blood."

The young traveler looked seriously at Hans, then at Pete. "What is the bad blood?"

Pete's brow creased in thought. "Near as anyone knows, it's rabies. Only this type of rabies infects people differently. A feller, name of LaSalle, was the first one to show up with it. He came around and started shootin' at people. Fortunately he was never any good with that rifle. Took some time, but ol' Jed finally got the drop on him. Funny thing, though, for a new corpse, he looked and smelled pretty bad. And you know, he had the reddest eyes I ever saw. Crazy-looking, you might say. His mouth and neck were covered in dried blood. It looked like he had been slobberin' gore on himself."

Pete began to remove Hans' boots. "I took a good look at LaSalle's corpse, and it seemed he was bit by something. Someone went around his cabin and found it all tore up. Looked like a pack of wolves attacked the place. We figured that's what happened to ol' LaSalle.

Since then folks have been hearin' this unearthly howlin' at night. The few folks that have escaped an attack tell about a pack of wolves with red eyes and gore-matted fur."

Wolves, at least normal ones, usually avoid humans. They are smart, and they can often find other prey. The wolves mentioned here, however, are not normal wolves.

These unusual creatures have several names: banshee wolves, blood wolves, dread wolves. All three of the most common names indicate something about them. They have unearthly howls, they carry a disease in their blood, and they cause fear in those who see and hear them. While fearing wolves may seem just a sensible thing to do, these wolves actually have a supernatural ability to cause fear in the



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observer, like the chinook can manipulate the weather.

The ability to generate fear can be found in many creatures of the Weird West. Often, creatures appear just as fearsome as one would expect them to appear. Other times, creatures are actually able to generate fear. One must have a great deal of courage or, as the natives call it, "grit" to stand up to some of the beasts of the American West. And while cowardice is frowned upon, it has saved a few lives.

I personally prefer to stand my ground, but I understand those who occasionally feel the need to engage in tactical retreat. Sometimes in the face of supernatural power, they simply have no choice—N.T.

Duster

An incident in the C.S. territory of Arizona, as recorded and submitted by Explorer Vance Gladstone.

"Yes, sir, this looks to be the site."

"Yes, sir, that is indeed the missing family's wagon. And it does in fact still contain all of its provisions."

"No, sir, there is no water. It appears all the canteens have been completely emptied."

"Sir? Yes, we did find the family. It looks as if they have been in the desert several years."

"Sir, excuse me? Because the bodies were dried up and shriveled, like they'd been in the sun for a long time."

"No, sir, there have been no reports of other civilians in the area."

"Sir, there is no water in any of their canteens, barrels, or bottles."

"Rabbits, sir? There can't possibly be any within a hundred miles! Look at this desert!"

"Yes sir! We will deploy and shoot on sight anything looking like a rabbit we—Sir? I think we better investigate that screaming!"

Thus ends Explorer Gladstone's rather stylistic account of the conversation between an enlisted man and his commanding officer.

However, Gladstone enclosed the following letter by way of explanation.

"Rubbish!" This was my initial reaction when I heard the Confederate lieutenant order his men to look for rabbits, and the sergeant to whom he spoke obviously had similar thoughts. I suspect that he, like me, thought the officer a baffling and pitiable madman.



Our mutual wonderment changed in the next few moments, however, as we gained a bit of respect for the officer, and his unusual claims became, at least in part, verified.

It seems the screams we heard, at the termination of the above interview, belonged to a young man who had gone to relieve a fellow posted on sentry duty. Once calmed, this man explained he had found the first sentry dead, apparently desiccated by the desert heat, though he had spoken to him less than 30 minutes earlier. In addition, the dead sentry held in his arms a small, dusty rabbit, which his relief initially believed was trying to burrow into the sentry's body, thus explaining the shots fired by the relief, who thought the scrawny rabbit had caused the death of his friend.

While at first we thought this ludicrous. But as we fired on the rabbit, it began hopping about with great speed. As we attempted to gun the thing down, it would occasionally charge at a soldier. If it touched the man, he would collapse in agony, the flesh withering on his body. It looked as if the emaciated rabbit was draining water from the fellow's body!

Although we eventually managed to slay the fast-moving creature, with several well-placed

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shots, as well as bursts from shotguns, three soldiers were reduced to dry husks before we succeeded. I must admit that I am flummoxed, for the thing was so damaged by the projectiles that little was left but a few tattered pieces of dusty fur and some bleached and brittle bones. I'm at a loss to explain the whole experience.

Gladstone is correct about the beast's nature: It has a supernatural ability to drain water, both from containers and from those people and animals it touches. However, the Explorer failed to note that the creature need not resemble a rabbit. Some look like cats, squirrels, or other small mammals. Also, later investigation suggested that water could somehow harm the things, though the method was unclear.—N.T.

Flesh Jacket

A letter from Explorer Harold Bane to Society Secretary, Sir Miles Thacklethwaite.

To Sir Miles Thacklethwaite,

It is some time since I have last reported concerning my investigations in Cairo. I can only

say that I have been rather busy.

After the encounter with the strange sect in Egypt, I put myself to finding their leader. This took longer than I could have imagined, as the natives are ill-disposed to aid an Englishman such as myself. Perseverance overcame, and, harried by fanatic followers of the sect, I traced the leader to Morocco, where he had embarked the day before for America!

I boarded the next vessel to America, a ship suggested by a local innkeeper. It was a rueful morning, three days later, when the crew revealed themselves as members of the sect, locking me in the hold. I've no desire to recount my travails at sea, but time passed, and soon we anchored off New York City. I was transported in a crate to an unknown building. Further time passed as I grew weaker in a dank cell.

Finally, I was led to a large room full of unholy images. There the sect leader conducted a vile operation on a volunteer whilst I strained at my manacles. The victim's skin was slowly and methodically removed from his body as he screamed in unthinkable pain, yet still blessed the sect.

The skin, bloody yet pristine in nearly every aspect save the lack of head and the slit from groin to neck, was immersed in a vulgar cask while the sect moaned and chanted. The liquid in the cask swirled and splashed, and much to my disgust and horror, the skin flopped out in a wet heap! Indeed, it lived! With unnatural motivation, it crawled about the floor, the boneless arms gripping at the flagstones.

Then, a man who obviously wished no part in the depraved ritual was led in. He seemed a chap of refinement and bearing, but exactly who he was I cannot say. Upon sighting the animated flesh, his struggles intensified, but to no avail. He was clubbed senseless, stripped, and placed near the wiggling skin.

As I watched in disgust, the skin-thing engulfed the naked man, pulling itself onto his body like fleshy jacket and trousers. The process completed, I could see strange filaments of some kind extending from the skin's edge and entering the man's neck in a most unsettling way. Mere moments passed before the man stood, smiled at the leader, and began to dress as if nothing odd had happened.

The sect leader then regaled me as to the nature and purpose of his "flesh jacket." The skin of a willing supplicant may be imbued with a hideous malevolence, after which it can control a victim it encases. I was to be the next

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victim of such an abomination.

As I found the prospect of a "second skin" in no way to my liking, I used some ingenuity and daring to effect my escape. Mere hours later, local authorities at my heel, I returned. The building was empty, with no evidence of my confinement or the rituals. The constabulary thought me insane, and left laughing.

My endeavors to put an end to the sect have not ceased. I have succeeded in expunging their influence from New York City, where they orchestrated all manner of political corruption and murder by taking over an organization known as the Tammany Society. This threat is over, yet their leader escaped.

I shall continue to seek him.

Yours sincerely,
Harold Bane

'Glom

An excerpt from the journal of Explorer Dr. Heldon R. Lysinger, submitted by him to the Society.

Fredricksburg,
Virginia, C.S.A.

Before traveling west, my party made a short sojourn in Richmond. On a lark, we accepted the offer of a Confederate officer, Colonel Cahir, to view the site of a recent battle in northern Virginia. The trip there and back would take less than two days, so I saw no harm in the expedition. Besides, I thought, it would make an interesting entry for the travelogue.

Our train arrived in southern Fairfax County by noon, allowing plenty of time for touring. I would like to stress that while many continental scholars claim the American Civil War has stagnated, the battlefield we saw did not lend credence to this claim. Easily a thousand bodies littered the meadow we saw, and artillery emplacements bracketed the

southern edge.

The colonel left us in the able care of an artillery captain, one Thomas Potter. Captain Potter was most helpful in his narrative, but I couldn't help noticing he and his troops remained unusually attentive to the now-quiet field of battle. I inquired as to this, and Captain Potter informed me that often the battlefield was more dangerous after the battle than during. I was just about to ask him to explain his statement, when one of his sergeants yelled, "Sir, we've got a 'glom!"

Without hesitation, the captain directed his men prepare the cannon. They moved with celerity born of experience. I studied the area which they were targeting and saw only a pile of corpses. Then the mound of bodies began to shudder and surge upward, as if something was rising from beneath it. In the mass, I saw

what appeared to be a feebly waving arm. I turned to point this out to the captain, but before I could I was almost deafened by the roar of the cannon. An explosive round detonated right in the center of the pile and scattered the remains.

"My good man," I exclaimed, "you could at least have given warning! I must question your judgment here! I'm certain I saw a person moving out there!"

"Then, believe me, he's much better off now."

"Could you not have waited an instant?"

"No. You have to get them while they're still small."

With that, he turned back to his vigil and said no more.

Dr. Lysinger sent in this personal account, saving me the time of

writing up my own memories of similar incidents. The creature's colloquial name is a shortened form of "conglomerate," which is more descriptive, as it appears as a gathering and melding of corpses. The animating force seems to be an ethereal creature, much like the one that animates the bone fiend. Note the



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distinction: The monster here is a formless entity, which acquires a physical form by animating once-living material.

Like other such entities, this one requires housing for its essence, and the key to defeating it lies in destroying that which contains it. While the bone fiend prefers to place its essence within an empty skull, the 'glom's core essence rests in the head and brain material of one of the first unfortunate corpses it animates.

Thus, it is possible to kill the creature with pistols by destroying the "core head." However, finding the core head and placing a few shots into it, might prove problematical, for the thing acquires new corpses for its mass as fast as possible, to place a barrier of dead flesh around its core. Flamethrowers and explosives are recommended.—N.T.

Hand

An interview with Norbert Strang by reporter Timothy Page. Submitted by the reporter.

I was watchin' Crazy Jake O'Hara try to cheat at cards for the umpteenth time when Hank

Johnson staggered through the door of the Dirty Dog Saloon, shakin' like a leaf in a hurricane. He beelined his way to the bar and downed five shots o' Mack Wesson's cheapest whiskey afore he could say a word. And even then the words that came out din't make no sense.

Hank was at the big tribal frolic, doin' a little bit o' card sharpin'. Well Hank, he don't know much Injun speech and evidently he got in a little over his head. Near as I can figure, he ended up bettin' his right hand against a young brave's. Lucky fer Hank, he knows more about cards than Injun speech, and he won the game pretty easy.

Now, I don't doubt fer a second that Hank would never have collected on his winnin's (or even have made the dang bet, fer that matter), but afore he could do a thing, well, the injun got all worked up over losin', whips out a piece o' rawhide, ties it all tight-like around his wrist, and pulls out the biggest knife you ever did see.

Hank, he was just a-starin' at this Injun fella like the brave had gone off his tree, but then the brave does it! The crazy fool cuts his own hand plum off!

The brave's friends haul him off (to git some medical attention, I guess), and Hank is left sittin' there with the hand in front of him. Then an old, gnarled lookin' man, a shaman from the crazy Injun's tribe mos likely, come up and pointed at Hank, cursin' him for the wrong he done.

It looked bad for Hank, what with all those Injuns and jest one o' Hank, but they all jest up and left. Hank picked up his winnin's (minus the hand, o' course) and got out, wonderin' if they was gonna follow and kill him in the dark. He got back to camp and tucked in and went to sleep, his hogleg under his bedroll.

He woke in the middle of the night an' thought one of those Navajo creepers was on him—you know, the big spiders? Anyway, 'cause it kinda was scuttlin over and up to his face! A second later, he knew it weren't no Creeper 'cause it had ahold of his neck, jest squeezin for all it was worth!

Well, Hank sez he grabbed and pulled at the infernal thing, all the time his sight gittin'; dimmer and dimmer, like he was blackin' out! He didn't remember how he got it off his neck, but when he did, he had to chase the thing around his campsite with a fryin' pan, trying to squash it, whatever it was (you understand, the only light was from the fire, and there were shadows flickerin' about). At one point, the thing even

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scuttled under Hank's bedroll and got a hold o' Hank's Colt Walker. Before he knew what was happenin' the thing was crackin' off shots at him!

Well, the thing's aim was mighty poor, at least, and it ran outta ammo pretty quick. Hank finally got a good (or lucky, more likely) hit in, and knocked the thing flyin' straight into the fire.

Only then, when the thing was burnin' up in the fire, did he finally get a good look at it. He could see perfectly well the Injun's hand, burnin' and wrigglin' outta that big pile of coals. He high-tailed it and ain't goin' back for nothin'.

Even left his pack mule Sarah.

These particular annoyances (although they can be deadly) are usually the result of a deliberate curse put on someone. I've even heard of cases of people being hunted and haunted by their own hands. My recommendation? Shoot them.—N.T.

Headless Horseman

An account written for the St. Joseph Journal by a Missouri schoolteacher who wishes to remain anonymous (for obvious reasons). Submitted by Explorer Duncan Starr.

I know that my story will sound outlandish, but I swear that I am by nature a sober individual and that what I relate is the truth.

I am not a very brave soul, yet I sometimes find it necessary to ride alone after dark because I work long hours, in a place some miles from my home. Two nights ago, I rode home on my gelding, trying to ignore the sounds of the night as darkness settled firmly over the landscape. But my efforts were in vain, for soon I heard the sounds of hoofbeats behind me. I looked over my shoulder and, when I saw nothing, looked again at the road in front of me, assuming the rider would soon catch up.

I realize this sounds absurd, but I found something horrible about the sounds of the hooves. When moments passed and I saw nothing of the rider, I turned and looked again. Still nothing. My horse was becoming spooked by this time, and I felt some comfort in the fact that the gelding felt nervous as well.

I looked all around, the horse stepping nervously beneath me, as I tried to locate the other rider. Suddenly, the rider appeared just yards away on the road, as if from thin air. I will admit, this strange and abrupt appearance

caused no little fear in me, a fear that soon grew to terror as I noticed that the rider, who otherwise seemed to be a normal cowboy, had no head. Unless, that is, the eerily glowing, round object in its left hand qualified.

The headless rider pulled his ebon horse to a stop, and the great beast reared into the air, with a shriek that split the air. Neither my mount nor I could stand this, and we began moving away as fast as possible. The figure followed us, maintaining the same breakneck pace.

Now, like any American child who has had schooling, I have read Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and I thought of this as I rode. Looking again over my shoulder, I saw that the creature was of improper proportions, a dark-clad cowboy: without a head.

I also saw that the object in its hand was a grinning jack-o-lantern, which appeared to hold the fires of Hell! Then the lighted pumpkin's grin changed into a snarl of such malevolence that I lost my breath and nearly fainted.

I turned and rode. I spurred my horse to greater and greater speed, faster than I would have imagined possible, and still I spurred the poor beast. I was frightened out of my wits, and believed that if I looked over my shoulder again,



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I would surely die of fright. Still, I could not resist looking back, and I fainted dead away at the sight of the rider holding the leering jack-o-lantern in one hand and a cavalry saber in the other, and the hollow sound of evil laughter.

I awoke the next morning, sore from a fall and after a long walk, found my horse shivering near my home. I will be careful to avoid riding after dark, but I worry about what I will do when winter comes and daylight does not last so long.

I encountered one of these creatures as I rode long after dark in Iowa. As described, it appeared from nowhere, after I'd heard the growing sounds of its hoofbeats. However, as a veteran of the Weird West, I stood my ground, and held control of my courageous mount, Valiant. The horse reared, the pumpkin leered, and the thing even drew a saber. The first rays of the sun were just visible on the horizon and, with a horrible laugh, it turned and rode away. Without the dawn, I no doubt would have been in for quite a fight.—N.T.

John Henry

An article written by Helen Fairfax for the Denver Democrat. Submitted with additional information by the author.

Workers for the Union Blue Railroad were shocked to find the dead bodies of eight men just ahead of the U.B. railhead yesterday. Judging by the evidence at the scene, the deceased desperadoes had been setting a deadly ambush for the Union Blue work gangs expected to be in the area in the next few days. Explosives had been rigged into the face of a cliff beneath which the Union Blue work crews would have labored in just a few days.

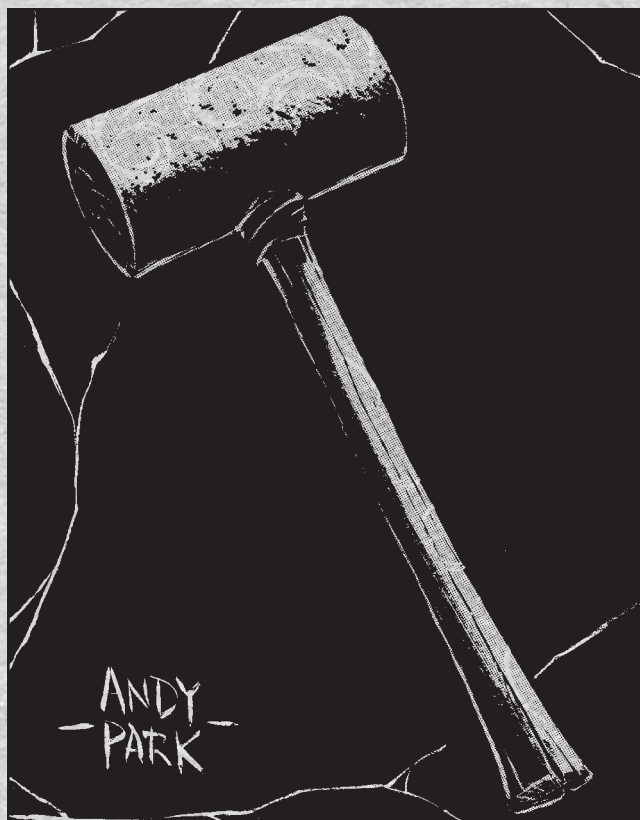
The U.S. Marshals have been reluctant to discuss details of the killings, saying only that the eight men appear to have been shot to death in their sleep. However, one worker who was with the group that discovered the bodies described a very different set of circumstances.

The railman, who wishes to remain anonymous, recounted that the group of men were most definitely not killed in their sleep. "When we found 'em, it looked as if there had been a right big fight in their camp," he opined. "All their hoglegs was out o' ammo, but nary a bullet wound on any one o' them. And every single one o' them boys was beat to death by what musta been some sorta hammer, maybe a railroad sledgehammer."

Our source described in rather gruesome detail how the bodies of the dead men lay scattered about the camp like broken dolls. "All that, and only one man's tracks enterin' and leavin' the camp. I ain't seen anything like it."

U.B. spokesman Otis Robertson issued a statement identifying the eight men as employees of a competing rail line. "We've continually had trouble with sabotage," said Robertson. "We're just lucky that someone got to these men in time and avoided a great tragedy. Were it not for the intervention of an unknown person, many of our workers would likely have perished." Robertson has offered a reward of \$500 and legal expenses to the person who can prove they were responsible for the incident.

Such a person is unlikely to come forward, however, as he would have to face the wrath of the local U.S. Marshals. Alvin Thomas of the U.S. Marshal's office discounted the anonymous worker's account as "drunken hysteria" when it was told to him. "There was nothing strange about those killings other than the fact that the



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perpetrators managed to get all eight of them. Anything else you hear is balderdash."

While the Marshals are sticking to their story, it is rumored that agents of the Pinkerton Detective Agency have taken over the investigation. This reporter's questions about why this case warrants Federal involvement has been met with stony silence.

Unpublished addendum, by Helen Fairfax.

I later spoke to a witness to the massacre, a man who admitted to the attempt to sabotage Union Blue and claims to have been away from the camp when his partners were slain.

"I know the man what did it. John Henry, it was. I knows he were dead, but he's a walkin' and a hittin' like he were alive." While I have been unable to confirm this tale and certainly didn't want to put it in a newspaper, it had the ring of truth.

Indeed, the story of the fortunate survivor does seem truthful when put with other accounts that claim John Henry, railroad legend, still walks, though he died in 1871 following his famous contest with a Hellstromme rock drill powered by ghost rock.—N.T.

Horned Serpent

An article from the Tombstone Epitaph, written by Max Foster, "reporter at large," who submitted it to the Society.

The Zuni Indians have many legends. Most of them are just stories. But stories don't usually come crawling into camp to get you. In '75, when I started working for the *Epitaph*, Jeremy Clarke and I were assigned to do a report on the Zuni Indian Snake Dance. We headed out to find the tribe with the help of a talkative Pueblo guide called Running Dog.

Clarke and I spoke with the Zuni medicine man over several days, building up our story. In that time, the old fellow told me a tale or two about the Zuni, where they came from, and where they were going. The tale I'll never forget is that of the horned serpent.

It goes something like this: One day, a young girl from the tribe is sent out to gather water from the river. While she is there, filling her skins, she is struck dead by the bite of a serpent who drags her into the river and devours her. I suppose it thought this was just a taste of a good thing, because then it takes on the form of



the little Indian girl and, with filled water skins, heads back to the village.

That night, while everyone is sleeping, the serpent sheds its false skin and creeps into the room where the mother lies asleep. It takes the mother in its coils and makes it back to the river to eat. Not a sound is heard, and neither mother or child are ever seen again.

I wouldn't have given this story a second thought if not for what I saw with my own eyes. The sight of Clarke being hauled off by a 12-foot long snake, or that wild headdress the thing bore, aren't things you forget. Running Dog was gone too. I hadn't even noticed he'd been quiet the whole way back from the village.

One can never be too sure when a reporter is telling his own story or adopting a story told by another. In this case, even though he relates it with a flair for the dramatic, Mr. Foster does seem to be telling a story as it actually occurred.

I met Max Foster a few hours after the incident described, while he struggled valiantly for calm. He was still rather upset by the loss of his two companions, and somewhat afraid he would be blamed for their deaths. I had corresponded with Foster for some time, this

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was my first meeting with him. We had arranged to meet at the village.

I listened patiently to his story, and we went together back to the river that was apparently the root of the problems. There we discovered the tracks, of a very large and heavy snake. Despite our best efforts, however, we could arouse nothing from the waters.

After several hours of searching and study, we decided to go back to the village and perhaps to return to the river at a later time. We looked around the village, but our search there was unsuccessful as well. The medicine man told us we should abandon our efforts and wait. We did.

Our reward came about an hour after dark, when "Clarke" returned to the area where Foster slept—and where I stood guard in the shadows. The thing looked at Foster's sleeping form and seemed to smile a little as its tongue flicked quickly between its lips.

At this point, it began to look closely around the room. The flick of its tongue had apparently detected my scent. When it found me in the shadows, I shot it in the eye, awakening Foster in time for him to see "Clarke" regain the shape

of a large serpent. With the assistance of the villagers, we were able to subdue the beast. The creature was disposed of by the medicine man in a quiet ritual of banishment.—N.T.

The Humbug

A letter from Captain Bacon, U.S. Army, to his immediate superior, dated March 12, 1876. Submitted to the Society by Captain Bacon.

Sir:

You asked for a report on the so-called "California Humbug" and an assessment of its military potential. Here are my findings.

The California humbug does indeed exist. It appears to be some sort of giant cicada bug, though one can only guess at where it originated or how it got to the desert. Dr. Martin believes someone brought a cicada to this region and it transformed into the humbug as the result of exposure to ghost rock vapors. I find his theory somewhat lacking, since plenty of other animals have been exposed and are perfectly normal.

The humbug is quite large, maybe a foot or so in length, and likes to crawl under rocks, hide under branches of trees, and otherwise conceal itself. It can actually change colors, and Professor Weingarten is trying to extract chemicals from it in an attempt to produce a dye, but so far she has met with no success.

As you most certainly recall, the humbug first came to our attention when it seriously disrupted the sleep of my troops. It let out a droning so loud that even our near-deaf cannons had trouble resting. This went on for three or four days, and it finally got to the point where the men's fighting effectiveness started to suffer. As you can imagine, sir, I was not about to lose our position to the Confederates because of some damnable bug, so I led a detachment into the nearby desert to search for the creature.

The sound seemed to come from everywhere, so my men and I (over a dozen of us) rode around a five-mile area for nearly an hour before we even knew where to look. But once we did, we knew we were on the right track. Professor Weingarten's spectacles broke from the noise! We continued to circle in on the source of the sound until we finally saw it sitting inside an old coffee tin. Many of my men (and even a few of the horses) fell to the ground, incapacitated by the agonizing screech.

Dr. Martin decided to capture the humbug for

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scientific research, so he crept up on it and tried to slap a board over the top of the coffee tin. The fly sensed his approach somehow, and it flew up out of the tin just before the board clapped over the container.

The thing circled around us like mad, and the buzzing suddenly took on a new, darker tone. The sound couldn't be heard so much as felt. My teeth ached, my eyeballs felt like they were going to go flying out of my head, and my hands reflexively clenched into fists so tight I drew blood from my own palms. It's difficult to explain how horrible the droning is, but suffice it to say Dr. Martin's head literally exploded from it. That was when I put a bullet in the center of the bug.

Further examination shows that although the California humbug makes a devastating weapon, it is far too difficult to capture and transport. I also submit that it is as dangerous to our own forces as the enemy.

I strongly advise against the Army's request to start a captive breeding program, even if they succeed in building their "white noise makers." I suggest they simply make big horns and honk them at the rebs.

Respectfully Submitted,
Andrew Bacon, Captain, U.S. Army

The creature's drone doesn't necessarily grow in volume as one approaches. However, the vibratory effect does, and the humbug can possibly be tracked that way.—N.T.

Living Legends

A transcript of an interview with "Chop" Swenson, lumberjack, Washington Territory. Recorded and submitted by Explorer Jasper Colfax.

We was back in der camp, it being dark, an' we was telling stories, bragging like we did lots, 'bout how many trees we cut, an' how we could split logs wit' one chop, an' such. I can't talk for der rest, but I was tinkin' 'bout old Paul Bunyan, big legend of der woods, him an' his big blue ox, when der door near to come out its hole, someone knocking so hard.

Well, Herb, he yell, "Come in afore you knock der door down," an' der door open. In come a big man, big as Jock, der biggest man in camp. An' when he come in, Jock, he stan' up, an' when I look back, der new man, he look even bigger.

He was a big man, in a coat, he had him a beard, an' carry a big ax wit' two heads. He laugh, near to shook der rafters, an' ask if food be on. Cookie say sure, an' point to stew pot, an' ask, "Who be you, stranger?" Well, he say he was Paul Bunyan, an' he laugh der laugh again.

Den everyone laugh, at der joke, we tink. But den, he sit, an' he eat all der stew, five bowls, an' say he still hungry. Well, we din't know what to tink, but Jock say, "You ain't Paul Bunyan." An' true, he look smaller now dat someone say it.

But he stan' up, an' he smiles, an' he say, "I can drop a tree faster den any man, an' carry a bigger load, an' eat more den anyone too." Well, some of der men, dey laugh, but some of us maybe believe him. Old Jasper, he say it too late for cuttin' now, we best get sleep. So we lay down, maybe-Paul by der door.

He still by door in the monin', sitting, smiling, awake an' waiting for us. He still big. An' when Cookie make flapjacks, he like t'never stop eating. Well, when all us done an' starting to head out, he finish in two bites, an' come too.

Most mornings, we go right to cutting, but today, we not sure what to do, because maybe he Paul Bunyan, maybe he not. Well, we walk out to der trees. Paul, he look at a big tree, an' ask



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who our best. Well, two, den four men step up, an' me too. Paul say he can beat any of us, so we all gets trees, Paul too, an' start cutting.

Well, first, he 'bout like us, but den like he get bigger, an' faster too. Pretty soon, couple men say dey can't keep up, an' stop to rest, but me an' Paul, we keep going, an' everyone else quiet, an' looking at him, like dey believe him now, an' he look maybe two heads taller dan Jock, an' big arms too. So, he put der tree down first, an' I finish, a bit later. Den Paul, he come over, an' he slap me on my back, like to knock me down, an' he smile an' say "You a good man, good wit' ax."

We all got to cuttin', an' we clear more den any day afore, tanks to big Paul Bunyan. An' at der end of day, Paul, he whistle, an' dis big blue ox come out from woods, an' Paul start loading logs on harness, an' der ox drag most whole forest to river, where we keep it till time to go.

Paul, he stay wit' us all dat season, an' we cut more lumber den ever afore. Cookie say he make more food den ever, too.

Well, end of season coming, an' Jock say he tired of Paul getting more food, an' tired everybody liking Paul, who he say ain't real. Well, Paul, he smile, an' say he real enough. Den Jock, he hit Paul, an' we figure Paul make short work

of any man, even Jock, an' dat's what happen, Paul knock him in der head, an' Jock's head, it come right off. Den everybody sad, an' Paul, he walk into woods. We never see him again.

We've all heard of "living legends," but in this case, it seems that some force has actually brought a legendary—and fictional—character to life. More in a moment.—N.T.

A transcript of the testimony of "Ugly" Fred Jackson, Dallas, Texas. Recorded and submitted by Texas Ranger Louise Cutter.

Yep, I seen the man what killed Little Billy, er, I mean, William Hanson. Hanford. Whatever. But it weren't no man, I say. Weren't Hank, leastwise. Yessir, I'll come to the point about Tuesday night. It were Pecos Bill what done in Little Billy.

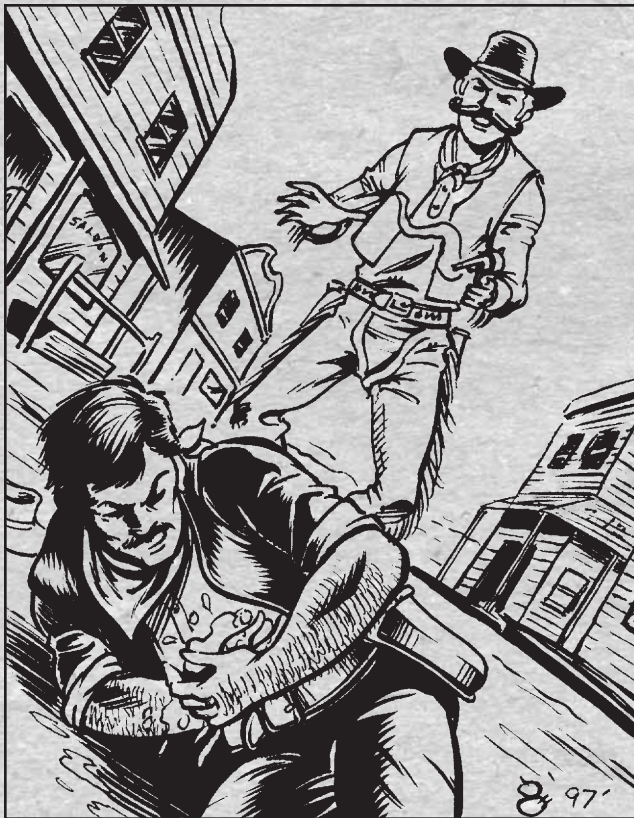
I never thunk he were real. I mean, sure, I heard stories, same's anyone. S'posed to be the biggest cowboy around, best wrangler, rider, roper, shooter. Well, I s'pose he proved the last when he shot Little Billy. Right: William Hanford.

I were with a buncha fellers in the theater. No, Mister Persecutor, sir, I ain't no cultured man, and I don't reckon any other o' them men were neither. Just the same, we were in there, watchin' the show, what were about Pecos Bill. This funny little feller were on stage, tellin' jokes for a bit, then this purty girl, she said the little feller were gonna come out on stage and play.

Yessir, I reckon she mighta said "put on a play," if it makes a difference. Anyways, he come out and started walkin' around the stage, playin' with some other fellers and girls, pertendin' to be Pecos Bill. He were right funny, too, up on them little stilts so he were taller, walkin' around, spittin' chaw, and braggin' about he's the best at ever'thin', and then he took out this huge pistol, like a cannon with a handle, and I don't know how he could lift it even, it were so big, and waved it at this feller he were playin' with, askin' if that feller thunk he could outdraw him.

Well, sir, we all commenced to laughin', then the door flew open. In came the tallest man I ever seen, with a big, ol' hat and a coupla big six-shooters, walked clear to the stage in about three steps, grabbed the little feller and said "You makin' funna me, stranger?"

Well, we laughed again, as it were obvious this were s'posed to be the real Pecos come to call out this feller what were playin'. Well, this new Pecos Bill, he turned on us, alla us, his eyes just little slits under his hat, and he said, "Are you fellers laughin' at me?" Well, I stopped my chucklin' right there, as I think this new feller



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were right serious. And he didn't look right, like he weren't flesh. Mosta the others stopped, too, and I think the feller on stage wet hisself.

Anyways, this new feller looked over the crowd a us, and most ever'one shut their holes when he looked on 'em. All 'ceptin Little Billy, who were a ways to my right.

Yessir? Oh, I guess it is my left hand, ain't it? On my left, then. Well, Little Billy never feared nothin', and he stood up, still chucklin' a bit, and says, jokin' like, "Well, 'Pecos,' I'm callin' you out." And he flipped back his coat, like he were ready to draw, jokin', like it were all parta the show.

So this new Pecos Bill, what I guess were the real one, he had a pistol in each hand quicker than anythin'. I didn't even see him draw, and then he shot Little Billy six times before he even blinked. We all were purty startled, and a coupla fellers fell over, fainted when Pecos Bill looked on 'em. Then he just walked away and liked to disappear when he got out to the street.

See, Hank bragged later what he were the one what shot Little Billy, so I reckon I see your confusion, but it were Pecos Bill. Fact is, Hank fainted the first time Pecos Bill turned on us, before Little Billy even called him out.

There have been many similar reports of "living legends" from popular fiction appearing throughout the American West. Only these two have been verifiable by multiple witnesses and so have been included herein.

We have collected several accounts of other notable characters, but none from reliable sources. This may change by the time we're ready for the next edition of this book—N.T.

Mexican Dragon

An article by Timothy Page, printed in the Tombstone Epitaph, and submitted to the Society by the author.

Living Dragons!

That's right, dragons! And I'm not talking about the huge creatures of the Maze, far, far away. No, these dragons are land-dwellers, much closer to home, just a few short miles away. In fact, they might be crossing the Mexican border right now, headed this way!

With a handful of rugged companions, I was making my way east along the southern border of the territory of Arizona. Why, you ask? That, my friend, is unimportant to this tale. Suffice to say that one day soon, that purpose will be



revealed to you, in a future edition of the *Tombstone Epitaph*.

We had just crossed over a small hill when the horse of one of my companions, a lady who prefers to not be named, reared up, throwing her to the ground. I looked over to see an iguana, sidestepping away, its tail whipping toward the horse. Why would the horse be spooked by an iguana? Well, my friends, this was no normal iguana. This dusty orange creature was no less than 15 feet long from nose to tail!

It seems we had startled it as it was trying to eat. It began nodding at us, bobbing its head up and down, shaking the dewlap that hung beneath its chin. I have been informed, reliably, that an iguana will do this to claim territory and warn off potential enemies. Well, a few of us were willing to leave the creature in peace, but before we could put our plan into action, a couple of the more deadly of our number, Texas Nick Springer and Woody Forrest, slapped leather, bringing their smokewagons to bear on the creature. A hail of lead smashed into the great lizard, faster than you could say "iguana!"

The bullets did little more than make the creature mad, though, and he turned his head, glaring at us with one yellow eye. Then he

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turned back to us, and I will swear on any stack of Bibles you care to give me, breathed a stream of flame at us! Yes, friends, we suddenly had a fire-breathing dragon among us!

The iguana is a dangerous-looking creature at the best of times, with spikes down its back, a pebbled skin, a head that looks carved from stone, and those glaring eyes. Add a gout of flame from the mouth, and you have a creature from the Inferno. Indeed, our horses appeared to think so, and most of them turned tail and ran. By this time, my lady companion's horse had run off, but I was able to scoop her onto my horse before the dragon blinked again.

Now friends, I am no slouch with a pistol, as a pair of rats in Dodge City could attest, if they could still attest to anything. Nor am I a coward. But if you were to find yourself face-to-face with a fire-breathing dragon, just you and a friend on a single, spooked horse, what would you do? Well, we decided—my friend, my horse, and I—that discretion was the better part of valor, and we turned and followed the companions that had already, through no fault of their own, turned and shown their fading backsides to the dragon.

As I looked back, I saw the creature watching us, no doubt wanting to be sure that it could eat

in peace. When we managed to regroup and calm the horses, Woody and Texas Nick wanted to go back on foot and “teach the critter a lesson,” but as we had other duties to occupy us, we decided to move along instead.

Perhaps you'd like to join these fine fellows on a dragon-hunting expedition?

Mr. Page's account, while a bit sensational, seems accurate.—N.T.

Mourning Mist

A letter from Penelope Argent to her sisters. Submitted to the Society by the author

Dearest sisters:

I have heard the voice of Hell.

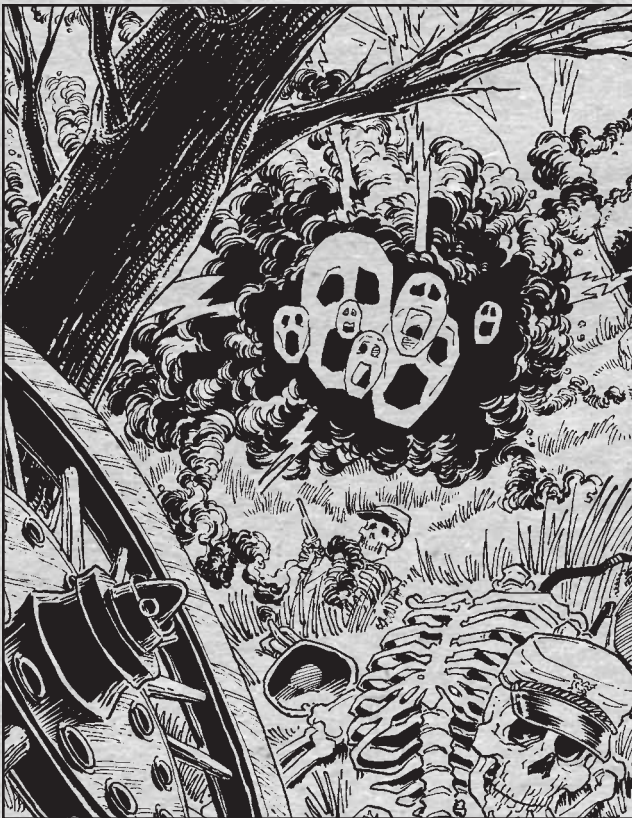
You may think me melodramatic, but the things I have encountered during my search for our brother have forever expunged any trace of the overwrought romantic from my person. No, it is impossible to maintain any childish illusion after witnessing the dead rise up, as I did outside of Pittsburgh and all those other places between our home in New England and here. And the cold touch of a corpse's fingers as they clamp around your throat would surely—

Enough. I am dwelling on the past when I have new terrors to relate.

I write this letter from Champaign, Illinois. The townsfolk here are possessed of two strong emotions: weariness and fear. The source of the weariness is the same for them as for much of the country. Though firmly part of the Union, this small college town—indeed, all of what the locals call “downstate Illinois”—has seen its share of fighting. The fields that surround the place are scarred by trenches and pocked with shell craters. No family Bible fails to list a member sent to an early grave by the war.

The source of their fear is, I pray, unique.

Between dusk and dawn, on all but the clearest nights of the full moon, a thing rises from the trenches and creeps across the battlefields. Few have seen it—at least few that survived the meeting with minds intact. Those who have encountered the abomination and kept their wits describe it as a blood-red mist shot through with streaks of silver and blotched with sooty patches that roil through its mass like puffs of smoke. The same survivors speak in whispers about the killing frenzy the mist inspires. As many of these “sane” witnesses blame the mist for murders they committed



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while hunting the thing, their stories are considered less than Gospel by many.

But while the accounts of its physical form are unreliable, every citizen of this place knows the horrible wailing of the thing. The screams and rumblings, like the ghostly echo of some distant battle, fill the night. The noise creeps into dreams, turning them to nightmares. It is much like mourners keening for the dead, and much like the wailing of the dead too. I have heard both and recognize them in the strange ululation. Perhaps the sound can best be labeled as in my opening words: the voice of Hell.

You will be surprised to learn that I am staying in Champaign a while to help rid the town of this "mourning mist." Then again, after all the adventures I have described to you these many months, perhaps you will not be so surprised.

My reasons are not entirely altruistic. A professor from the college has heard of our dear, lost brother and his work. He promises to help me in my search should I aid him and a local man against the mist. (Lizzie, you especially will be amused to learn that the professor has taken to calling me "Silver Penny," a play on my name he has declared as unalterable proof of my inexhaustible good fortune. I hardly agree and consider him a bit mad, admittedly in a charming fashion.)

With that one bit of lightness, I will close.

Your loving sister,
Penelope

Miss Argent reports on another formless entity, like the 'glom and bone fiend. This one, however, chooses not to animate once-living material and houses its core in a remnant of battle.—N.T.

Murderous Horde

An article by Theodore Rouke, printed in the Tombstone Epitaph, and submitted to the Society by the author.

Mike Willis skillfully walked through the small cornfield. The sound of Sheriff Riley and myself snapping the tender stalks, as well as the constant cawing of the crows, obviously offended his farmer's instincts. "But," he muttered grimly, "it's not like Eric's really going to care about his crop now."

He took care to avert his eyes when we reached the clearing. Riley stepped clear of the



corn and heaved an audible sigh of relief. Just beyond him, I could see what looked to be the ragged scraps of a scarecrow.

"How the blazes you can keep your sense of direction in this green forest is..." Sheriff Riley's voice trailed off into nothingness for a minute. "Holy Mother of God." I pushed my way past him to get a better look.

In front of me was a corpse of a man leaning across a tilted scarecrow. All the flesh had been removed from the face and arms. His exposed back was a ragged mass of clean white bones. A crow sat on its head, picking at the scalp.

I must admit, I was unable to prevent myself from looking away from the spectacle. Fortunately I was able to steel myself as I set up the camera. Mike nodded slightly and continued to stare deeply into the corn. I could tell that the sight of Eric Lake's bone-picked carcass would haunt this farmer's dreams for years to come.

"I told you it wasn't a normal attack, sheriff."

"Christ." Riley took off his hat and wiped his face with a handkerchief. His jaw twitched slightly as he put his hat on and carefully circled the corpse. "How long'd it been since last time you seen him?"

"Three days ago. He'd come over for dinner.

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He'd brung the girls some dolls he'd whittled." His face hardened for a second. "He was always good with his hands."

"Well, whatever it was didn't leave tracks." The sheriff wiped his face again as he looked at the body. "Was he havin' any animal trouble?"

"Just crows, sheriff. Just crows."

This rather cryptic entry required a little research before its inclusion in this bestiary. (It was published in the Epitaph as part of a series of "unsolved mysteries," which explains why it feels incomplete, in any case.—N.T.)

I spoke to Mike Willis, who gave me the following statement.

"Eric and me talked a bit the last time I saw him. He asked me if I ever worried about crows. Said the ones in his field were watching him. Said he could feel the evil in 'em.

"And I'll tell you what. I felt it too, when I found him. Like they were darin' me to do something about it. All I did was get the Sheriff and that Rouke fella.

"I been watchin' for crows ever since."

After speaking to Willis, I gathered a small posse and went to the field in question, where

we provoked a fight with a murder of crows. Normal weapons seemed to do well enough. We discovered that members of the horde avoided salt, but we were unable to test its effectiveness as a weapon.

I believe this to be yet another formless entity, one which splits itself among several animals to control them. And while it may concentrate its energies in the strongest of the animals, I do not believe the death of that animal destroys the animating force, unless all other members of the horde are killed as well. Also, note that animals other than crows can be controlled.—N.T.

Nagual

A report to the Society by Explorer Vance Gladstone.

As most of you know, my latest explorations have taken me to the American Southwest, where I have conducted interviews and made other efforts to help fill the new *Bestiary* for the Explorers Society. I am first and foremost a hunter, however, skilled with a rifle and afraid of neither man nor beast.

When I was growing up in Missouri, my daddy taught me to pay attention to what was around me, and he encouraged the book-learning that eventually led me to the Society. I have become a capable researcher, and I have learned to study the creatures I wished to hunt, especially those of an unusual nature.

These researches, especially those using the extensive resources of the Society, have often served me in good stead. Recently, my ability to read and study saved my life. It happened in New Mexico, in a small village inhabited mostly by Mexican peasants who tried to farm near a small spring.

It seems that a group of bandits, mostly former Confederate soldiers, had been plaguing the area. They stopped in several villages for "recreation." However, they always avoided the village in question, and I became curious as to their reasons.

I questioned one of the bandits over tequila, and he told me that bandits died near that town, attacked by animals that apparently protected the people. I went to the town and spent several days nearby, befriendng the villagers without being a burden. Eventually, I felt comfortable enough to swap stories with them, and I asked about their mysterious protectors.



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An old man referred to them as "nagual," either sorcerers who could take animal form or magical animals that could take human form. I was never quite clear which. Anyway, the old man claimed that the village was protected by jaguar naguals, what I would be tempted to call werejaguars.

Naguals differ from werewolves in several ways, though. For one thing, werewolves are known to pass on their affliction by biting, infecting the victims that survive with a disease that makes them werewolves. Naguals, at least those in the village, pass their shapeshifting abilities on to their offspring. The old man claimed these naguals could trace their ancestry back to the time of the Aztecs.

The legends say that the last Aztec emperor, Moctezuma, ordered his most powerful sorcerers to concoct a suitable revenge to use against the Spanish conquerors. The sorcerers put the spirits of jaguars into nine of the emperor's best warriors, giving them sorcerous powers of their own and transforming them into nagual. While the nagual—and the rest of the Aztecs—were unsuccessful in overthrowing the Spanish conquerors, they lived and would continue to plague the Spaniards for decades.

Later, their descendants spread to other lands, yet still tried to protect the oppressed from those who would abuse them. The old man claimed that several lived in this and other villages, usually in the form of humans with Aztec blood, able to change into jaguars when their services were needed. They are stealthy creatures, with wonderful fighting abilities.

While my natural skepticism has taken many blows during my recent travels in the Weird West, I was still reluctant to believe the old man. Until he became a jaguar before my eyes.

He swore me to secrecy, so I will reveal neither his name nor that of his village.

Night Raven

The personal account of Shelby Davis, as recounted to Explorer Nicholas Trevalyan, who submitted the report to the Society.

Shelby holds on tightly to the straining bush. Carefully he seeks a solid purchase with his feet, but the cliffside is far too loose. He tries desperately to pull himself up by the shrubbery he caught when he fell. His grip is slick with sweat, and the plant is beginning to break under his weight. The dirt that falls into his mouth



only adds to his irritation and fear.

Shelby curses his horse, its splattered remains scattered several hundred feet below him. He curses the rattlesnake that startled his horse. It must surely be pleased with itself for being the meanest thing on this mountain. Finally he curses himself for the stupidity of choosing such a dangerous route. Now not only will he be late for his brother's arrival, but he will have to get himself a new horse. Poor Dancer. Poor stupid animal.

Shelby takes in a slow, deep breath and steels himself for the difficult climb. Cautiously he reaches for another branch with his right hand. Holding on firmly, he then reaches higher up the first branch with his left. Sweat stings his eyes as he pulls himself upward.

Suddenly the bush breaks loose. Shelby claws at the cliff as he falls into open space. A growl of fear and frustration escapes his lips. His limbs flail the air as he rushes downward. Glaring sunlight burns his wide, fearful eyes as he braces himself for the bone-shattering impact.

Another cry and a gasp for breath brings Shelby bolt upright in his bed. A chill night breeze brushes the cold sweat that covers his tense body. Slowly he looks around the room

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and begins to realize it was only a dream.

A raven calls from outside his window. He can see its dark feathers glowing in the moonlight. Strangely, it sits there as if it had been watching him sleep. Their eyes meet, and Shelby is wracked by an overwhelming sense of fear. The bird calls again, then flies off into the darkness.

Shelby takes a deep breath to calm himself. He wipes the sweat from his brow with his hands. They feel warm and sticky, and suddenly he realizes there is pain. Moving to the window he examines his hands in the moonlight. They are covered in dirt and blood. His palms are scraped raw. Bits of rock and soil are wedged under his nails.

Fear runs down his spine, and he shakes uncontrollably. As he looks out his window, he realizes that this isn't the first nightmare he has had. Recently there have been others. But as the night raven's call echoes in his mind, he fears his nightmares may now be something more.

I watched Mr. Davis for six consecutive nights, and this account is compiled from observations and interviews. On more than one occasion, I watched scratches and other wounds appear on Mr. Davis while he slept, though there

was no physical cause for those injuries.

I discussed the incident with my sister, and we came to the conclusion that the man's dreams were being manipulated to the point where, at least for him, they were real. It was Shelby himself who identified the night raven as the cause of his difficulties.

The nightmares had been getting worse for several days, and they became increasingly terrifying for Shelby during the period we observed him. We eventually set up a trap for the night raven, using Mr. Davis as bait. While I watched over him, my sister Jocelyn was able to get close enough to the night raven to identify and kill it.—N.T.

Pit Wasp

An excerpt from the testimony of Arnold J. Rivers, Sr., regarding the Massacre of River Oaks. Transcript recorded and submitted by U.S. Marshall Grant Hawthorne.

I myself have frequently been responsible for a number of unusual happenin's in these parts, but although I was present at your famous "Massacre of River Oaks," I was not at all involved with those folk's demise.

My accountin'? Certainly. Be glad to.

My gang and I wandered into River Oaks one afternoon, lookin' for liquor and a bed. This was just after our holdup of that bank in New Orleans, so sometime in July. We was in River Oaks' local tavern and was havin' a good time, when all of a sudden, all the townfolks start screamin' about "barrin' yer windows and lockin' yer doors" and 'bout "Red Coats" a-comin'. So of course, my gang's interest was peakin' and all.

We stepped outside to have a gander, thinkin' it was some hot-shot crew come to bust some heads and steal some money or somethin', but all we seen was this weird cloud comin' in from the east, by the river. We was real curious. But somethin' about the way folks was yellin' made me wanna git inside, just in case.

So we gets back into the tavern and start nailin' boards to the windows like it was hurricane season or somethin'. A few minutes later, we started hearin' this strange buzzin' noise. Like a thousand angry bees, only low like a broken-up steam engine. And quick after, the whole tavern starts shakin' like somethin's bangin' against the walls real powerful-like.

Well, we was right frightened. The tavern owner kept runnin' around, lookin' at the boards,

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sayin' somethin' 'bout how they could git into any openin' and how smart they was and all. He looked so worried, I told my men to load up and look out.

All of a sudden, there's this rattlin' from the chimney, and this *thing* comes flyin' down. The barkeep tried to shove a crate in front of the hole, but this critter busted through afore he could. It was about the size of a big dog. Looked like a wasp, 'cept way bigger.

Anyways, it whipped its tail around and stung the barkeep dead in the throat. While he was clutchin' at his neck, me and my boys put lead in that insect. It dropped all fine and all, but about five more come down after it. We started shootin' as fast as we could, but there was so damned many of them, we had to climb upstairs and bar a room to keep them from comin' in.

To make matters worse, while we're in that room, they keep tryin' to weasel their way around the door. They beat up against it and all. Made a horrible noise, lemme tell ya. And all the while, you could hear the sucker's bangin' on the walls outside and wreckin' the whole darn town.

This went on for an hour or so, then started dyin' down. Fine with us, 'cause the darned varmints had started messin' with the locks and hinges of the door! Smart little bastards! But before they got in, all the buzzin' freaks up and left. Migratin' or something, I reckon.

Oh, us? Oh, we was fine. And yeah, maybe we did liberate a little money from the town bank afterwards. Wasn't nobody left in the town to enjoy it anyways. Come to think of it, wasn't much of the town left either.

Anyways, that's my 'countin' of what happened. So if you got one pea in your head, you'll know I'm tellin' the truth, and that I ain't responsible for one death in that town. You can blame those creatures.

Shoot to kill and don't get stung.—N.T.

Poison Woman

A campfire tale told by Runs Holding Knives, Lakota shaman. Recorded and submitted by Explorer Lenore Benson.

Now I will tell you the story of the little brother and the poison woman. The little brother came to a dark tent on the shores of a lake. He was lost and tired, and he had nothing to eat, but he could smell delicious food cooking within and see smoke rising from a hole in the hides.

So he approached the house, and as he did so, a beautiful woman emerged and invited him to come inside.

She offered him a place to lie down and rest, and told him that she would cook him a wonderful soup. So the little brother made himself comfortable and began to drift off to sleep. But just as his eyes began to close, the most horrible thing happened. He saw the woman reach up to her head and pull out part of her brain! She took the brains and threw them into the soup, and just kept stirring the soup as if nothing had happened.

Well, the little brother almost got sick, but he somehow managed to remain calm. He pretended to be asleep, but instead called to his friend the gopher. Once the hole-in-the-head woman had finished making the soup, she moved to wake the little brother, and gopher quickly went to work, gnawing a hole in the bottom of the cooking pot. The deadly soup drained down into the ground, and the little brother approached the empty pot and pretended to eat the soup.

The poison woman was pleased and laughed. "Ha! Now that you have eaten my brains, you will die!" Imagine her surprise when the little brother suddenly jumped up alive. The little



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brother had no weapons to fight the evil creature and looked around in a panic. Seeing only the cooking fire nearby, he grabbed hold of a hot coal and dropped it into the woman's head, and it sizzled and hissed with the sound of cooking flesh.

The poison woman screamed and fell dead on the spot. If the little brother had not been so brave and clever, then all women would still have the power to poison men by mixing their brains into food!

My sister finds this final sentence, the "moral of the story," rather insulting. I can't say I blame her. On an interesting note, the chief of this particular tribe has a crippled left hand that bears the remnants of severe burns. This, combined with the chief's pleased silence whenever this story is told, made me wonder whether this legend has some truth in it.

I searched for similar tales and found some. A few stories concerned encounters between white men and poison women. In only one of the stories did a white man prevail. He had prospecting gear with him, which the woman had him leave outside the cave where she lived. When the man realized what she was, he ran and grabbed a pickax, killing the poison woman by hitting her in the top of the head.

Well, it took a while, but I found a poison woman as well, by following rumors of men found dead in the wilderness. She lived in a small cabin a few miles from Deadwood, and I visited the area late one afternoon. She invited me in, and I was surprised to note that she was white. I had thought from the tales that it was a curse confined to the Indians. She eventually revealed herself as a poison woman, at which time I placed a trick shot into her brain, killing her.

I discovered much in the cabin, including a diary that related her tale, with the story of how she had poisoned her cheating husband, then

somehow been transformed.—N.T.

Pox Walker

A report to the Society by Reverend Jebediah Stanford, Church of St. Matthew, Fort Worth.

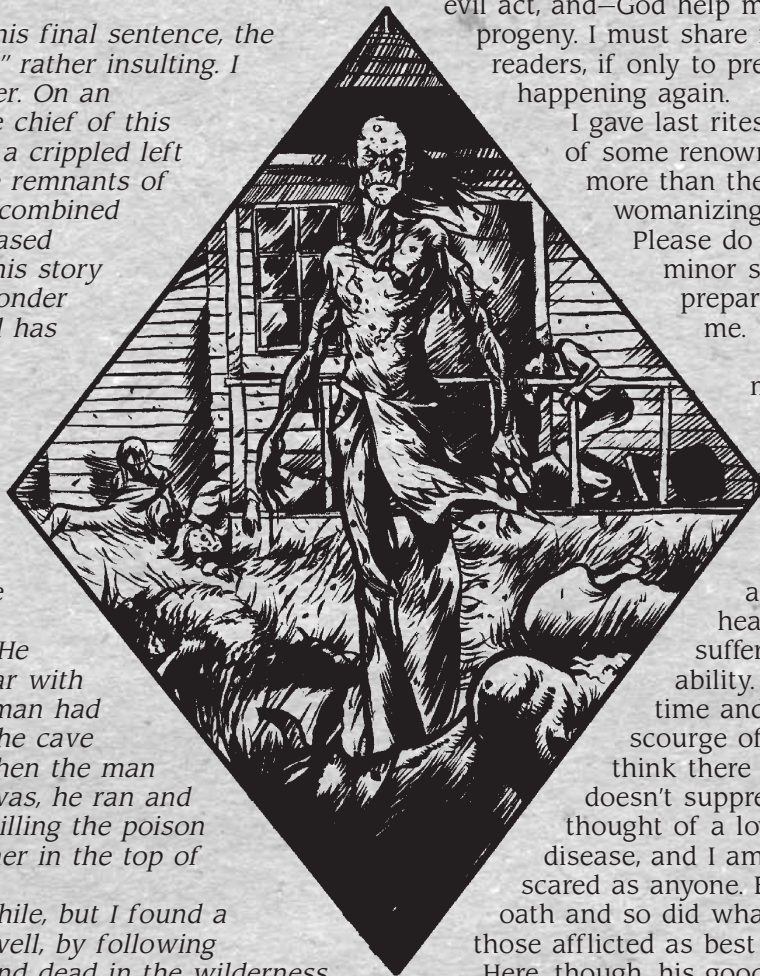
Seldom is it necessary for a man to come to terms with the evil we as a nation (or indeed as a race) can do, but I have learned of such an evil act, and—God help me—have seen its progeny. I must share it with you and your readers, if only to prevent this from happening again.

I gave last rites to a frontier doctor of some renown, expecting little more than the usual: a little womanizing, gambling, lying. Please do not think these are minor sins, but I was not prepared for what he told me.

This doctor (who must be nameless; I am breaking the bonds of confession by telling this much) went where needed, helping both North and South. He was, I am told, a good doctor, healing and easing suffering to the best of his ability. One ailment he saw time and again was the scourge of smallpox. I don't think there is one of us who doesn't suppress a shudder at the thought of a loved one catching this disease, and I am told that he was as scared as anyone. But he had taken an oath and so did what he had to, helping those afflicted as best he could.

Here, though, his good deeds were tarnished by other actions. The doctor also treated Indians when he had cause to travel through their lands. Bowing to the temptation of avarice and a certain prejudice toward the Indians, he sold them blankets used with smallpox victims, in exchange for goods he could use or sell himself.

He did this for some time, profiting from human suffering. He heard of outbreaks of smallpox among the Indians and thought little of them, seeing the Indians as "Godless heathens."



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Many in my congregation agree with him, as may some of your readers. But I digress.

The doctor found himself in Indian territory again and stopped at a village he had visited recently, only to find the ladders to the pueblos pulled up and the doors covered. He called out, but nobody replied or uncovered a door. Night fell, so he built a fire and settled down to sleep, thinking it was some holy custom or other and they would appear in the morning. The fire would keep coyotes away.

He was awakened by a rattling wheeze from the darkness. He drew his pistols and called out to see who was there. The only answer was a raspy wheeze. Finally, the fearful doctor took a torch from the fire and went to see what it was.

An Indian brave crouched in the dim light, bare to the waist, flesh pocked with pus-filled sores oozing yellow fluid, flesh hanging limply where sores had burst. The eyes were milky, the body wracked by tremors, but whether from disease or rage the doctor could not tell.

The doctor shot at the apparition, but it was too quick, leaping through the air, bearing him to the ground with unnatural strength, knocking his pistols away, and straddling his chest. Froth gathered at the corners of its mouth as it bent down and exhaled foully into the doctor's face, dribbling gobbets of sputum as well. Then, without another sound, it ran into the darkness.

Soon after, the doctor contracted the pox, a virulent strain that incapacitated him for over a month. Wracked with agony, he told me his story, which I first thought was but an apparition of his guilt. Then as I left his home after giving last rites, I saw the pox creature hiding near his home. Its look of blighted satisfaction has haunted me since. I steered well clear of it, lest I incur its wrath.

That is the truth as I have heard and seen it. God have mercy on us all.

Sometimes we reap what we have sown. Still these creatures are far too dangerous to be allowed to live. —N.T.

River Leviathan

An interview with an unnamed witness, as recorded by Professor George Remington, and submitted by Explorer Lenore Benson.

During the late 1860s, the now-deceased Professor Remington traveled widely across America compiling his Definitive Modern Dictionary of Speech. Using his marvelous

sonograph machine, he recorded the conversations and monologues of many a western character at their leisure. This one in particular, although obviously undocumented, is remarkable enough to warrant our interest.—N.T.

If not for the reward, the posse would be alive today. The reward and two days of Big Joe McCluskey's Indian tricks had us all fired up.

So when we saw the injured horse on the other bank, we didn't figure on using the ford down the river a ways. Naw, we just jumped in like Big Joe musta done.

And that was what killed us.

The first snake got Paulie's roan. It wrapped right around the critter's neck and snapped it like a twig, as quick as you can say it. Then it curled round and fastened itself on Paulie's face. He was dead before he knew what done it.

One popped up next to me but got itself caught in my old rucksack. While it thrashed around, all bothered like, I got myself a good look at it. Thick as a tree branch it was, but quicker than spit. And it had no eyes, just sharp edged suckers. I'd never seen anything like it, but I figgered that it would die just as well as any other livin' thing. Yessir, a couple shots o' lead made it think some.

The others weren't so lucky. Luther went under cursin' hellfire while Callahan screamed for his momma like some kid. I ain't gonna forget that in no hurry.

I made for shore like old man Satan hisself were after me. By the time I was safe, there weren't nothing left 'cept drifting blood.

There weren't nothing of Big Joe and his gang neither. So's at least I got me the reward.

I figure there's only one right way to spend it. I got me some dynamite and a boat. Once I finish this bottle, I plan on settlin' some scores with a messa snakes.

I assume the subject of the interview died, unless he realized in time that he was fighting not several creatures, but a single, huge one, the tentacles of which attacked his posse.—N.T.

An excerpt from the diary of Herbert Calhoun, reporter at large. Submitted by the author.

July 18th

It was our third day out on the Mississippi, heading toward our rendezvous at the gulf when I was called to the pilothouse of the steamer. Captain Holmes was in a state of some agitation when he pointed at the large amount of ink-black smoke arising from the river around the bend in front of us. As we watched, a small

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Confederate ironclad sailed smoothly toward us.

Relieved that this was no hostile raider, the captain ordered a small party of officers to the deck to greet the warship as we passed. Lt. Carver expressed doubts, even as the party was assembling, due to the fact that the oncoming ship flew no national emblem on the mast. Concern was raised even more, as I waited on deck with the officers, when the master sergeant of the marines recognized the craft as the *Savannah*, sunk three years prior in the Gulf running the federal blockade.

Nervousness assailed us all, even as the captain assured us the sergeant must be wrong and cast doubts about the sobriety of the man. In any event, the ironclad's gunports were closed, and she seemed to be no immediate threat, despite the oddness of the inky murk that belched from her stack in great amounts. As the ship neared, the wind must have shifted suddenly, and the smoke swept across our deck, choking us all with a terrible sulfurous stench.

Eyes watering, fumbling around blindly, the captain called to the pilothouse to steer away, fearing a collision in the haze. As we wheeled to starboard, we all watched in amazement as the little craft stopped suddenly, turned swiftly on

the spot and made for us at an ever-increasing speed, apparently ready to ram. Panic gripped me as we watched in horror. Summoned by the sergeant, more marines appeared beside us on deck, the captain bellowing orders to the helmsmen all the while. The inky smoke drifted off of us as the ship increased its speed, and it was in the full light of the Sunday sun when I saw what I will now describe.

At the last minute, the oncoming craft turned astern of us, and her forward port gunport swung open. But it was not the mouth of a 7" columbiad that greeted us. Rather it was a shiny black surface that looked strangely soft and seemed almost to be pulsing. As quick as a blink, a great black tentacle, much like one used by an octopus, burst out of the gunport and snatched up one of the marines on deck. The poor soul didn't even have time to scream before he was pulled quickly through the gunport and into the strange craft. No sound emerged at all.

With the ship now barely 10 yards astern, our boys began firing at the ironclad, but with little effect. The ship seemed to retain all of the armor it had been built with, and the carbine rounds bounced harmlessly off it. Again to my amazement, the ship stopped, turned toward our



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stern, and began to give chase. The smoke engulfed us all again, and another abominable growth swept out from the forward gunport of that accursed craft and knocked half a dozen of the crew into the river. To this day, I have never forgotten their calls for help as smaller strands of that infernal creature burst from the ports and plucked them from water as it sailed past them.

At this time, a roar arose from our vessel, vibrating the deck beneath us. My fears subsided as I heard our crew cheer. Someone had had the presence of mind to man and fire our ship's 8" Dahlgren at the beast. Again, the smoke drifted off our deck, and I could see the craft clearly.

The solid shot from the Dahlgren had not penetrated the forward armor on the enemy ship, but it had severed the great tentacle that had menaced us. The stump flailed about wildly, oozing a horrid, purple ichor, and an acrid vapor arose from where the vile fluid touched metal. Again the Dahlgren cannon fired, this time with a shell, even as the aft of our craft shuddered from the impact of the beast tearing our rudder away with a submerged tentacle.

The shell, while not penetrating the armor, started a small fire on the ironclad's wooden deck. To our own amazement the ship veered away quickly, making best speed away from us in the opposite direction. It quickly faded from view, leaving us all to ponder what had occurred. We stopped at Caperstown to have our rudder repaired, but to my knowledge none of the crew, myself included, discussed the apparition with any of the locals.

Though these accounts sound radically different, they almost surely refer to the same type of creature. In the first account, the thing rested along the bottom of the river, reaching up with its tentacles to obtain food. In the second account, the creature had found the wreckage of the Savannah and adopted it as a shell, as other, smaller animals sometimes adopt shells abandoned by other creatures. Both accounts mention the correct way to fight the creatures: explosives.—N.T.

Saddle Burr

A report to the Society by Texas Ranger Louise Cutter.

These little pricklies are the most annoying critters you can run into on the Plains. They're



about the size of walnuts, with brown quills sticking out of them like a prickly pear. Since they're light enough to be carried by a good wind, hombres can expect them almost anywhere they don't want them.

Once a burr is kicked up by a cowpoke's horse or by the wind, it tries to attach itself to the first thing it touches. Once it gets hooked into something, it bends its quills so it can't be pulled out easily. Although saddle burrs don't seem to drink blood, they have a sting that makes you sore for days. It would take a whole bunch of them to fatally harm anything, but they can irritate the Hell out of you.

Not only can their poison cause swelling and pain for a few days, but the things multiply very fast, apparently in response to quick motions. Remain calm and be careful. And never, ever shoot a saddle burr. Trust me on this.—N.T.

Scarecrow

A conversation between a traveler and a barkeep, as recorded by Explorer Duncan Starr, who submitted the transcript to the Society.

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I'm not one for tall tales or jawboning for the heck of it, but I'll tell you what I saw, and if you think me not a fool, I'll give you some advice.

My grandfather told me many things, some of value, some to ponder, and some to never forget. Something I'll never forget is his warning, "Make sure you're out of the corn field 'fore the sun go down."

I was a young lad in love—or lust—then; and the quickest way to Mary's house was through old man Hansen's corn field. It was a Friday night in late Autumn, and I just had to see her.

Now old man Hansen was a mean old bastard that hated everyone and everything. Rumor had it that he killed a man in that same corn field I was foolish enough to cut through.

Well, I had other things on my mind that were softer and sweeter smelling than old man Hansen. Being in a hurry, I decided to cut through his yard and corn field that one fateful night.

As I was going through his yard, pondering the better things of life, I tripped on some wire by the toolshed and fell in a heap. What a ruckus! Needless to say, the back door opened, and old man Hansen glared at me something

fierce. I ran into that corn field quicker than a rabbit with a hungry hound on its tail.

The corn was high by this time of year, and I guessed I could easily lose him in the stalks. I heard him thrashing about behind me, but I was safe. Or so I thought.

I was going in the right direction and could still make out old man Hansen's thrashings and cursing behind me, but something was moving in front of me. Towards me. I thought that it might be a deer until I heard that pitiful wailing question, "Whoooooo?" It froze my bones, and then I saw it.

It stepped out of the stalks a good seven feet high, its big pumpkin head looking down at me. Its body was made of tightly woven corn stalks and gave me the impression of a man skinned alive, with green muscles beneath. Its long fingers were of corn, opening and closing as if waiting to grasp my throat. It took a few steps toward me and wailed its question again, "Whoooooo?"

Just then, old man Hansen came crashing in through the stalks. He stood there with his mouth open like a cow struck by lightning. The thing turned its head, ever so slightly towards him, and leered. Old man Hansen turned towards me and in a calm commanding voice said, "For the love of God, boy! Run!" I did.

A terrible wail and thrashing about began as I ran for my life. I heard old man Hansen cursing God to come down, but then all was quiet. I emerged out of the corn field and ran home afraid to say a word.

The next day, the farm hands found old man Hansen strung up on a pole in the middle of the corn field, neck snapped, head hanging to the side like some worn-out, forgotten scarecrow.

My grandfather merely shook his head and said in a low voice, "Should have stayed out of the corn field when the sun go down."

A report to the Texas Rangers by Louise Cutter, who also submitted the report to the Society.

I first saw these critters in Kansas almost a decade ago, not long after I'd become a Ranger. A farmer (and former Ranger) plus all his kin, had been brutally murdered with their own tools the week before, so the Rangers dispatched us to look into it.

We'd been riding for a couple days in western Kansas, where there ain't much but miles and miles of miles and miles. We rode into this little town called Green Gulch to talk to the local law,

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a man named Magruder. Well, he smelled like he'd been dipped in whiskey, but he managed to tell us how to reach the scene of the murders.

We got out there and found a little house, a scrawny cow, and a cornfield. The bodies had already been taken away, and tracks messed up, but we decided to bed down for the night, and make a thorough search in the morning. Fortunately, we posted a watch.

I got woke up in the middle of the night when the man on guard duty shook me and motioned to the cornfield while he shook the other two awake. There was a noise in the cornfield, a rustle, some movement. Then something came around from behind the house, carrying a scythe, looking like old man Death.

You may not want to believe this, but it seemed that some force was making the local scarecrows—there were three in the field—animate and go on a rampage. We all slapped leather pretty quick, even the two men in their skivvies, and we unloaded a hail of lead into the moving scarecrows. Didn't do much good.

Finally, I grabbed a stick from the fire and stuck it in one of the critters. I figured if they were made of hay, like my family's scarecrows always had been, they'd burn right nice. And they did. We put the three scarecrows down.

These critters look no different from the typical scarecrow you'd see standing in a cornfield. In fact, I expect that's exactly what they are, but something real mean got inside. One of these critters might have a carved pumpkin for a head or a grain sack with button eyes and stitching for a mouth. Whichever, flames seem to burn in the eyes. The thing's body is usually twisted corn shucks dressed in old clothes.

Late at night, they start walking, picking up tools to use as weapons. Pitchforks, sickles, and scythes are especially favored. And once they start moving, they don't stop until they kill or get killed. They're tough to hurt, but fire gets them pretty good. I highly recommend it.

These creatures, sometimes called "corn stalkers," seem to arise in cornfields that have been the scenes of violent crimes. Some believe the scarecrows can't be truly destroyed if the crime remains unsolved.—N.T.

Sin Eater

An excerpt from the journal of Reverend Parker Davis, July, 1872. Submitted to the Society



by the author.

When I first came out of Boston's seminary college and was told to take up a parish in the Ozark Mountains, I didn't know what to think. I hadn't expected a distinguished posting, but the backwoods were hardly what I had in mind. Still, the Lord leads us where He will.

I traveled south and then west, riding the rails as far as I could, then hired a capable man named McClure to lead me up to the town of Parcell, where I'd be rekindling a parish that had died out with its last priest some 10 years ago. As we traveled higher into the hills, the surroundings began to look vaguely unsettling, though I couldn't put my finger on exactly what was so troubling. After a time, we neared a small, country graveyard. It was getting close to sunset, and McClure picked up the pace a bit.

I asked him why, and he gave me this answer. "Round these parts, folks hadn't had no preacher in ages. They kinda made up their own way of shriving the poor folks what passed on. They came to believe in a critter called the 'sin eater.' Way it works is, you put an apple on the grave of someone's passed on, and the apple takes all the sin out of 'em. Then this critter

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comes at night and eats the apple, lettin' the departed go to Heaven sin-free."

Said I in reply, "That doesn't sound so terrible. Even if such a creature truly existed, surely it would not bother the living."

Then McClure looked at me in an odd way, and resumed speaking as we kept up our trot. "Well, a few years ago, the apples actually started gettin' et, from what I hear tell. But the critter what does it ain't as nice as what you might hope. It ain't jest eatin' the folk's sins, I'll tell you that. Had a friend, Joe, died up here. They buried him in their way, and I stayed hid to see what'd happen. Then I seed the thing with my own eyes.

"T'was the biggest fright o' my life. The easiest way to describe what I saw was a big sack, but clear, and inside were faces and hands writthin' in pain, tryin' to get out. It sorta rolled over the apple and sat right there on the grave—and then I saw poor Joe's face in that thing. I waited 'til it were gone, then ran for my life, and I ain't never gettin' caught near that place again. You might got your faith, preacher man, but it takes a saint to look Hell itself in the face."

I was still skeptical, but something in his face told me that he, at least, believed what he'd seen

as gospel truth. And so we rode on into Parcell, and I began the arduous task of refurbishing the abandoned and neglected church there.

I have no direct experience with this particular kind of creature, but further correspondence with the good reverend reveals more information about it.

Apparently, before the Reverend arrived in the parish, it was not uncommon for the locals to see the recently departed members of their community walking about, doing strange things, causing problems. Each one would make appearances for a day or two, then never be seen again. From what I've been told, quite often someone else in the family would die soon after a visitation.

That is, until Reverend Davis arrived. After he became aware of the reports of post-death visits, he enlisted McClure's help and waited in the graveyard after a burial, to see for himself. He and McClure saw the thing and tried several different ways to dispatch it. Eventually, after quite a fight, they managed to cut the thing apart and bury it in the cemetery. This seems to have worked.—N.T.

Skinshifter

A account by reporter-at-large Max Foster, who submitted it to the Society.

At the Rendezvous, trappers love to tell stories about as much as they love good whiskey. These days, there are plenty of tales of weird things creeping out of the West. Just about everyone had a skinshifter story. This has me worried. The skinshifter, as far as I knew, was an old Indian witchcraft legend. I had never met anyone who had seen one. Now I had about a dozen grizzled frontiersmen saying they'd come face to face with one.

According to legend, skinshifters are cannibalistic witches who hide out in deep caves. They decorate these places with perverse artwork and perform dark rituals to evil spirits. One man I spoke with claimed to have come across such a cave. He holed up there for a night, waiting out a torrential rain storm. He claimed the place had a cold feeling about it and that his sleep was troubled by bad dreams. In the morning, he left, warier than before, to seek out safer ground.

There are no consistent records of the appearance of these things. Some say they are

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phantoms that prey on lost souls who have wandered into the mountains. Others claim they are simply Indians. The eyewitness accounts I heard paint a vivid picture, which I shall try to convey here.

Skinshifters are frail-looking souls, skin and bones with hollowed eyes. Their builds make them appear tall and gangly. They have an eerie glow about them, and their eyes gleam with a violet light in the darkness. Most of them wear coyote skins.

Despite their frail appearance, it appears that skinshifters are both quick and deadly cunning. Of the dozen eyewitnesses I spoke with, all encounters were narrow escapes. One man claimed to have killed a skinshifter by knocking it off a mountain ledge. Never was more than one encountered at a time, which should be good news to the traveler. All sightings are confined to the upper Northwest, west of the Sioux Nations. Thankfully, the only people in those parts are largely trappers. Of course, the Mormons at Salt Lake may have some stories to tell as well.

I would have been happy to see if the Mormons had such tales, but I was unable to spend an extended period of time in their territory.

In any case, I wanted to see what I could discover, as Foster's brief tale lacked pertinent details, and it was also difficult to discern a difference between skinshifters and poison women, also sometimes identified as cannibalistic witches. There are some prominent differences.

For starters, skinshifters are often male, and all that have been encountered were Indians. It seems there is a secret ritual that grants power to the Indian who performs it, but at the price of a hideous transformation.

The person becomes emaciated in the extreme, and must consume blood for nourishment. After drinking a victim's blood, the being then acquires the ability to look like the victim. This ability, it seems, is what gives the skinshifter its name: the power to wear another's skin, as it were (though this should not be confused with the flesh jacket).

Older Indian tales speak of skinshifters in another way, identifying the stick-thin blood-drinkers as different creatures and describing skinshifters as people with the ability to assume the shapes of animal (and perhaps these skinshifters can, after drinking an animal's blood). The two legends seem to have merged to

produce the skinshifter in its present form.—N.T.

Stone Man

An article from the Tombstone Epitaph, written by Helen Fairfax, recording a story told to the reporter by a Cherokee who wishes to remain anonymous. Submitted to the Society by the Epitaph staff.

I tell you there really is such a thing as a stone man. I have seen it with my own two eyes. But let me start at the beginning.

When I was a child, I was attacked by one of the great worms. I was mauled badly. No one thought I would survive, and I quickly became ill with fever. My spirit soared from my body into the sky, and I looked into the Hunting Grounds. When I recovered, the healer told me that I was destined to become his apprentice.

I spent many years studying with him until one day he told me he was going to show me a secret. He told me he knew powerful medicine, taught to him by a man called Raven. He told me he could make the mountains walk. I did not know what he meant, but I was his student, and



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I followed him out into the mountains.

We traveled many days until we came to a place where the white men were mining ghost rock. One of the miners fell ill with fever and thrashed about in agony. It reminded me of the sickness I bore as a child. My teacher told them that he could make him well again if they would allow us to take the man to a secret place with us. The miners agreed, and we put the sick white man on a litter, and carried him high up into the mountains, to a secret place, just as my mentor told them.

It was a place of evil. Skulls surrounded us on every side, and a dark, bloody circle stained the stone at my feet. My teacher told me to place the sick man in the center of the circle. I hesitated for a moment, but fearful of his power, I did what he said.

Then—no, I cannot speak of what happened then. It is better that you do not know. He performed a rigorous ordeal to attract the attention of the spirits he sought. More than that I will not say.

When the ritual ended, the man on the ground screamed in agony and burst into flames! The spirits came rushing down from the sky and

swirled around us, and a body of earth and stone came up from the ground and consumed the dying white man. The ghostly forms fell upon the newly formed stone man and entered his body through the heart.

The sight horrified me, and I ran from the place, never to return. To this day I hear tales of hunters killed and eaten by a stone giant that lives in the mountains. Many braves have tried to slay it, but all have failed.

I tell you, better that you find the shaman who controls it and force him to send the vile spirit back to the mad Hunting Grounds that spawned it. I shall say no more.

A powerful tale. Explorer Duncan Starr reported an encounter with what must surely be the same creature: a humanoid made of black stone. The thing seemed almost invulnerable, resisting most attacks made upon it, and the Explorer and his posse had several encounters with it. The thing is vulnerable to fire, but takes a very long time to burn. Starr reports that a pair of wooden stakes, given to him by a frightened Indian girl also seemed to cause damage to the abomination. Unfortunately, Starr was unable to verify the origins of the stakes.

The gigantic stone man also has weapons of its own, notably a great club that can easily break bones. Interestingly, the creature seems to rely on the club for its sense of smell and uses the club to track its prey.—N.T.

Tarnished Phantasy

A report to the Explorers Society by Explorer Nicholas Trevalyan.

Here, Captain, is a creature you are certain to find interesting. I also believe you should consider its inclusion in the Society's *Bestiary of North America*. While not a "beast" as such, it is unusual. Perhaps you would consider devoting a section of the bestiary to human, once-human, and human-like creatures? I will also remind you of my offer to put my experience to use by serving as an editor on the project.

I now call upon one of my experiences for the story of a being called the "tarnished phantasy," a dangerous female creature not unlike the succubus of legend, but with the distinct flavor of the American West. Its form is phantasmal, and it seems to spring from the "soiled doves" seen in saloons and bawdy houses.

This is the story of a fellow who encountered

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one of these creatures. His name was Hank Mathers, and he had helped a group of friends and I to uncover the truth behind a mystery near Denver.

The resolution of that adventure sadly led to the death of an acquaintance, Trixie, who perished in a tragic mishap with dynamite. Not long after this sad event, Hank came to us again and asked for help. He looked very haggard and, in an embarrassed manner, complained of dreams that left him without strength and with wounds apparently gained during the dream.

Thinking the culprit might be a night raven (*see the earlier entry.—N.T.*), I suggested he tell us about the nightmares. Again, he seemed embarrassed, insisting they hadn't been nightmares, but dreams. Then he asked that my sister Jocelyn and my cousin Samantha, leave, as the dreams shouldn't be discussed with ladies present. They obliged, and Hank told us his dreams had a decidedly erotic nature. Further, he awoke with scratches on his back and to the scent of perfume in his room. Finally, he insisted that the subject of the dreams was Trixie, with whom he'd had a, well, relationship of sorts.

We resolved to observe Hank that night, feeling the situation urgent, because the fellow was already pale, weak, and shaky. We were not sure he could survive another, well, encounter. That night, we waited in the room, and there was no visitation. The next night, we waited outside the room, with Jocelyn and another of our group on patrol outside for ravens, just in case. I waited just outside Hank's door with the preacher and my cousin, who, while young, is rather skilled in the mystical arts.

Late that night, we heard certain sounds from Hank's room, and the three of us quietly entered to discover the man in an intimate embrace with

what seemed a phantasmal image of the late Trixie. Sparkles of dim light moved from Hank's body to the phantasy's mouth.

I immediately drew my pistols and fired into the thing's head, believing that Trixie may have become one of the walking dead. My bullets had no effect other than to awaken Hank from his trance-like state. The preacher held out his cross and uttered a holy passage which seemed to have little effect on the ghostly figure.

Then my young cousin, who I'd rather had not witnessed the scene, slipped past me, muttering to herself in some unknown language and shifting her hands together.

The preacher quoted a different Biblical passage. I judged further shooting useless, but encouraged Hank to resist Trixie's attentions. The creature was apparently destroyed, the result of a blend of the preacher's ministrations, my cousin's arcane skill, and possibly Hank's resistance.



Terrormental

An interview with an anonymous source, conducted, recorded, and submitted by Pinkerton Agent Jocelyn Trevalyan. My sister.—N.T.

I saw 'em up in the mountains. Up on Smoky Knob. There was four of 'em. Women. Wearin' strange dresses. One was dressed all in red. Another in blue, another in white, and the last in brown.

I think they was witches. Or somethin'. Kept chantin' "earth, fire, water, and air," over and over.

We was pannin' Cold Creek for gold when we heard 'em. Me and Pete sneaked up on 'em, thinkin' maybe they was Injuns. Pete was taken by their attractions and walked on up the knob.

That's when it happened.

The one in red burst into flames! The one in white turned all ghostlike, and the one in brown crumbled to dust. The one in blue melted smack into the ground, and I don't even know what

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happened to her.

Then it got all quiet for a spell. Pete walked over and kicked at one o' the dresses, but there wasn't nothin' in it. Not even ashes or bones.

Then there was this rumblin' deep in the earth. Like Mother Nature was about to chuck somethin' up. Then this huge mound o' dirt rose up like a mud fountain. It was all wet but somehow burnin' just the same. An' the smoke comin' off o' it was thicker than the clouds on Smoky Knob.

Pete was standin' right on top of it. I heard him scream. Then I ran. I ain't proud of it, but if'n you won't laugh, I'll tell ya why. Promise?

See, there was eyes in that fiery column of smoky mud. And it gave me the evilest stare I ever saw in all my born days.

Now it's cloudy up there on the Knob, you know. And I know men sometimes see things when they been out in the mountains for days on end. But I saw it. An' Pete saw it, too. An' it was the last thing he ever saw.

An interesting tale, but obviously incomplete. My sister conducted the above interview during the course of an investigation into the smoking mud thing. She believes Pete and his friend



witnessed the formation of an unusual creature formed of the four classical elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Further, Jocelyn offers the theory that the creature was created, by arcane means, to foment terror.

Jocelyn also offers the following observations.

I was able to talk at length with a member of a strange cult, a fellow who wanted to recruit me to the worship of the classical elements and of creatures made from those elements. I expressed great interest—not feigned—and asked many questions about the “elementals” he wanted to summon.

Apparently, an elemental can be made from each of the four elements: one made of air, able to manipulate gasses; another created from water, with the ability to pull water from victims; a third that is literally living fire; finally, a creature made of earth. *(Like the stone man in some ways.—N.T.)*

What Pete and his friend observed was a creature composed of all four elements, as if the elementals had all been merged into a greater, more dangerous whole.

Battling a terrormental is problematic. One must counter the element or elements involved, by using water against fire, creating a vacuum to destroy the air, and so forth. This is easier said than done.

I hesitate to think of the difficulties involved in destroying a creature mad from a combination of all four elements.—N.T.

Texas Skeeter

An interview with Zopher McLaury, conducted and recorded in Arizona by Explorer Vance Gladstone, who also submitted the report.

Yep, things are bigger in Texas. I useta live there, 'fore I decided to come out West and look fer gold. Tho' silver's more likely out here.

What things? Well, most ev'rythin', I reckon. Like skeeters. You grew up in Iowa, right? They had skeeters there? Little bloodsuckin' bugs no bigger than a button. Well, last year, in east Texas, I seen some big skeeters. And I mean BIG.

Me an' my buddy Zeke was huntin', and we passed this smelly, little pond. T'weren't much bigger than a puddle and all covered with scum. Well, we kept walkin', nothin' to see in the pond, then Zeke says, “Hey.” I ast him what, and he pointed up in the sky. I looked and saw what looked like a flock o' birds, 'cept they was flyin'

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funny, kinda jerky like. Well, they got closer, a dozen or more we seen, and we lifted our Winchester and drew beads on a couple. When we shot, they sorta splattered, looked like, but no feathers. Then the rest came closer.

What we seen was skeeters, big 'uns, each 'bout as big as yer hand, flyin' around, and gettin' a little closer. I said, "Zeke." Hmph. "Zeke," I says, "You think them are good eatin'?" He just sorta shook his head, kinda shocked like. So I says, "Well, I gwest we oughta be goin' home then." An' he sort nodded, and we started walkin' home, lookin' over our shoulders. Seemed like the skeeters was gettin' closer, so I says, "Zeke, how 'bout we race home?"

He says "yep," and we started runnin'. Well, by the time we done it, it were too late, and the skeeters were right on us. Felt like a damn fool to be scart of bugs, even if they was big as a hand.

Well, we up runnin', and a couple of 'em lit on Zeke, an' a couple on me, needle-noses big as yer little finger. I swatted one, kept runnin'. Zeke, he started hollerin' and stopped, and a couple more of 'em lit on 'im. I slapped the other one on me, ducked out the way of another, and kept runnin'.

I looked back, and Zeke was still standin' there, tryin' to hit the critters, but jes' about covered by now. I yell at 'im to come on, and slow down a bit, swattin' at the couple still follerin' me. Zeke, he tried to run, an' went a couple steps, then fell right down. Skeeters landed all over 'im. I wisht I had my shotgun, some buckshot woulda stung him some, but woulda scattered them things, I reckon.

T'weren't nothin' I could do, I figured, so I ran on home. Got my shotgun and got back out there 'bout an hour later. No sign of the skeeters, and Zeke looked like he was dried up, holes in him here and there, and big welts in places. I went to pick him up, an' one o' them things flew up from by him, an' I could see Zeke's blood in its fat, clear belly. It started flyin' away, sorta lazy like, and I shot it down with my shotgun, blew it outta the sky.

T'were after that I decided to come out here. No skeeters in the desert.

While Mr. McLaury certainly has colorful speech patterns, he provides a good description of the creatures he encountered. Basically, they are mosquitoes, just much larger than encountered elsewhere. They develop in stagnant water, suck blood from people and animals, and so forth.



Zopher hinted at some items but didn't enter into great detail. For example, the creatures move very sluggishly just after they have fed. However, if you try to wait for that point, you might find yourself providing the meal that makes them sluggish. Also, they are repelled by smoke.—N.T

Tunnel Critter

An excerpt from the journal of Doctor Andrew Zerstoitan. Submitted by L.E. Potts, who traded an army canteen to an Crow warrior to obtain the journal. Zerstoitan is reputed to have been associated with Dr. Darius Hellstromme and the Wasatch Railroad before his disappearance in 1875.

October 3: Another two natives disappeared today. Wells thinks they've dug an escape tunnel, to sneak off in ones or twos. Perhaps they think that we won't notice. On the upside, this has created the perfect pretense to explore the lower caverns. Perhaps that's where the savages have concealed their escape route...and where I will find the object of my search.

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I wish we didn't have to keep up the pretense that we are actually mining, but my superiors want this whole thing kept as quiet as possible. Well, if I find what I think I may, it will all be worth it.

October 4: I think we may have a problem. Wells sent his men down into the lower caverns yesterday, and they haven't come back yet. He wants to send a larger group down to see what happened to them. The natives have been restless today—we had to flog five of them publicly before they'd enter the mine this morning. They are continually nattering on about the "earth devils" that dwell in the caves. I thought the "accidental death" of their chief would settle all this superstitious nonsense.

October 5: Wells found—how do I put this—parts of his men in the lower halls today. The men look like they'd been savaged by some sort of large beast. I'm suspending all my other activities for a few days, until we can determine what, if anything, is going on in the lower caverns. I've decided to lead the exploration team personally.

October 12: I have made an amazing discovery! We descended into the lower depths of the caves yesterday, eventually coming upon a most

incredible cavern deep beneath the earth. A lake seems to fill a large part of this huge chamber and we actually could not see the opposite side on the cavern across it!

It was on the shore of this subterranean mere that we found the native's "earth demons" and proved my theories correct! A species of arthropod never before seen by civilized man! Success at last!

And what an arthropod! They're the size of large dogs, with bodies like centipedes. They are armed with large mandibles and vestigial eyes in front. Each segment has 4 claw-tipped appendages, for movement, digging, or even limited manipulation. I have named this monstrous insect *Chilopoda Zertoitus*, in honor of my own vision and genius.

There were some complications, however. While scouting ahead, Wells and his men were attacked by a group of the creatures. Two men were bitten and paralyzed, and one of the two was killed. The survivor recovered from the paralysis, but another man, one of the missing natives, was found still paralyzed. He had been missing for almost four days, and whatever toxin was in his body was still active. I have a very interesting hypothesis about this. I have isolated him to check it.

Aside from the attack, Wells claims to have seen the remains of several other chewed up natives below as well; It's good to know they didn't escape after all. Wells also reported sighting a much larger version of *Chilopoda Zertoitus*, but admits he and his men were too busy running to get a clear look at it.

Useless fools. We'll just have to go back down there and get a look at it. I'll try to capture a live specimen if possible.

October 15: What a magnificent creature *chilopoda zertoitus* is! Last night, my hypothesis proved correct when a swarm of tiny creatures burst from the native paralyzed earlier. Death was almost immediate, as the hungry little devils used him (and each other) as an immediate food source. Sadly, I was only able to catch three fit specimens.

Today, we took half of the men to the lower caverns. (The natives were naturally ungrateful for a day off; I assigned half rations.) We found more human remains, as well as two specimens larger than a horse! One grabbed, bit, and began laying eggs in one man; the other merely killed two (including Wells), clearly for sustenance. We unfortunately had to dispose of both of the murderous creatures. It was a great shame, as



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they were definitely the finest specimens we have come across yet.

Pistols proved useless due to the chitinous shells of the creatures, but rifles were effective. I have to capture one alive, if the men don't panic again. Morale was low, so I examined Lawrence (the man that the eggs were laid in. The eggs were removed, and the patient's body eventually overcame the poison. I should investigate the venom's use as an anesthetic.

October 17: The situation is deteriorating, but I am still in control. Wells' steady hand (and ready whip) is greatly missed. The trouble started when a few missed eggs hatched in Lawrence. I had to shoot one man and several natives to quell the riot.

We descended again to the lower caverns, but were unable to capture a grown specimen. I also failed to get an Indian impregnated before the men emptied their rifles into the a creature.

Then the real trouble began. Last night, a group of natives strangled the guards and freed their companions from the stockade. It was two hours before I noticed, as I was arguing with the men over their slumping morale. In the end, I doubled their pay. I need to replace Wells. He could talk the men's language.

October 18: Further explorations today found no specimens, but I noticed strange ripples in the underground reservoir, and a few of the men say that they saw something moving in the depths. I have an interesting, and disturbing thought. If there were larger specimens than the adults we have encountered, they might not be able to lift their own weight on land. Not even the hard exoskeleton of *chilopoda zertoitus* could carry that much weight around. So, the largest versions of the things would probably be restricted to an aquatic environment. The creature living in that underground lake could be absolutely enormous! I will go down tomorrow to test this theory.

Later: One of the men woke me; he saw a party of natives in the distance. As if we need be concerned with these primitive savages! I am surrounded by imbeciles. I will be glad when I can leave this barbaric land forever and return to the civilized comforts and surroundings of my home.

However, I am *determined* to return to the lower caverns. I will have my live specimen! I will show those who laughed at my theories who the true fools were!

There seems to be some disturbance outside. I had better see what's going on.



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This is the final entry in the journal and the last few pages of this journal are spattered—soaked almost—with what appears to be human blood. It seems that Dr. Zerstoitan may have met a less than savory end.

I am afraid I have no personal experience with these creatures, and I have not found any references to them in my researches. If you do come across any of these rather disturbing creatures, for goodness sake, be careful.—N.T.

Two-Faces

An article from the Tombstone Epitaph, by Robert J. Swift, recording a story by Sharp Fox, Cheyenne shaman. Submitted by the Epitaph staff.

"So it has begun, the taking of children. Ugh! The evil has returned, and you, young shaman, believe that half-trained you are a match for this dark spirit? You are not!"

The old shaman sat upon a fallen log and puffed on his nearly empty pipe. "No, my son," he continued. "Neither you, your white friends, nor this newspaper man can stop it by the old means. Drive it away? Perhaps, as I did many years ago. But still it has returned as I feared. Who can say what the new ways can do?"

He paused. "Let me tell you of Two-Faces. That is what these beast-men are called. All Cheyenne tribes know them by this name, given to them because each bears a face on the back of its head as well as the front. They take young children to feast upon their ears and drink their rich blood. This thing lives on them, taking the ears of those who will not use them, drinking only blood hot enough to warm them.

"That sickens you, does it? Be forewarned, they are unseen in shadows. One glance into their cold ice-eyes will deaden mind and body, so its prey is helpless. You young bloods are eager for a challenge, as I was years ago. Nothing I say will change your mind. So be it."

He stood up and took a few faltering steps on bony legs. "Tell your white friends that when they took all that was good in our lands, they inherited the evil also. I know of what I speak."

The old shaman pulled aside his long, gray hair. Only a scarred cavity remained where his left ear should have been.

"I know of what I speak."

This was another in the Epitaph's "unsolved mystery" series. The two-faces may be a legend

brought to life; its preference for eating the "ears of those who will not hear" and drinking "hot blood" is the stuff of tales told to make children behave. However, as with many such creatures, it is difficult to tell if the story came first and its presence in many minds gave it life, or if the creature was first and the tales built around it.

In any case, these monstrous beasts prey exclusively on children. Many tribes know rituals for keeping them away, and the creatures do not like salt or bright light. Neither do they like bullets in their flesh, but who does?—N.T.

Union Pride Ghost Train

A report to the Society by Jarvis McEvoy, former surveyor for Union Blue.

Back in the early days of the Great Rail Wars, most rail companies spent their time laying track and making trains instead of sabotage and murder. Nowadays, you can't talk about the Rail Wars without some dirty, underhanded goings on being jawed about. Some folks laugh about 'em, and others are disgusted by 'em, but either way, anyone you meet out West has got a story about 'em, and I ain't no exception.

Ya see, I used to be a surveyor for Union Blue, under that great man Joshua Chamberlain. He was, and is, the most honest, upstanding man ever to walk OR ride this country. Even met him once, back in the early days up close to the Missouri border. Proudest day of my life when he came up and asked which way I thought we should lay the track to make it safest for the workers. A damn fine man. Just in case any of you are thinking of saying anything against him, you'd better think twice. I may be old, but I'm fast enough with this here Colt to make sure you regret your words.

I can tell you about one of the first incidents of violence ever in the "rail wars." It was back a few years, when Union Blue was just about to leave Union territory. We were building our line through Iowa, and as we got near Missouri, we had to choose which way to go. The only clear path that didn't go through Confederate Missouri or Sioux territory was taken by the Wasatch line, and there weren't any room to go next to it.

Chamberlain himself came down to the end of the line and tried to puzzle out what to do. The General didn't quite know what to make of things, so he asked me, like I said, and I told him my mind. We had to go through Missouri.

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Now, it weren't a popular idea with anybody, but we didn't have much choice. Back then, you went where you could instead of stealing someone else's right of way, or blowing up some track. Anyway, since it was my idea, I was put in charge of the surveying of the line. I spent many long nights trying to find the best, meaning the shortest, route through the Confederacy.

We built that leg of track in record time. We had some motivation. The General said that if we built the line quick, without makin' any trouble, we'd all get a nice, fat pay bonus! That, and the fact that the longer we were in Rebel territory, the more likely we was to get shot at. I chose the shortest and most deserted path that I could, and we only managed to get a few dozen miles into Missouri before we were out again, into disputed Kansas.

When we started into Kansas was when real trouble started. Seems a Confederate patrol led by one "Ornery" Will Jenkins found the line. Now, Will hated the Union with all his might. He volunteered for border duty so he and his gang could cross into the Union and raid farms and cause trouble. Finding this line, with the Confederate Dixie Rails miles to the south, sparked somethin' in his empty head, and he figured it wasn't right. He and his boys started to follow the tracks east.

The Blue Pride was the newest and fastest train that had been built in the North at that time. It was bright and shiny and new and burned ghost rock in its boiler to make it speed through the plains. This was its maiden trip, bringing workers, travelers, and supplies to the end of the line in Kansas. It was decked out in red, white, and blue ribbons, and flags of the Union. It truly was the Pride of the Union Blue Railroad. It just happened to be on its way through that short bit of Missouri when Will and his gang were investigatin' the track.

The train sped at Will and his gang, and seeing all its Union glory was too much for him. He snapped and rode straight for the train, screaming and hollering about Union trespassers on Confederate soil. His crew followed him, and they managed to board the train, with guns blazing. Now, back then it was unheard of for somethin' like this to happen. Some folks thought it just wasn't right to hijack a train, or destroy an outfit's hard-laid track. Matter of fact, most decent folks still think it ain't right. Well, them boys got on and started shootin' everyone in sight.

Will worked his way to the engine, killing as he went. When he reached it, he shot one of the engineers in the back. The other engineer leaped out the door, leaving Will alone. Looking round the engine, Will suddenly remembered that he couldn't drive a train. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to have shot the only one who could.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, for Will, he hadn't killed that engineer, and soon had him on his feet with a gun on him, telling him to stop the train. Now, Yankee pride runs just as deep as any kind, and that engineer couldn't bear to have the Blue Pride in the hands of no "Rebel scum" like Will. He closed his eyes, knowing Will would kill him for what he was about to do. He threw open the throttle as wide as he could, and set the whistle screaming until Will shot him dead.

As the train hit the end of the tracks, it smacked the dirt so hard that Will was thrown against the boiler, which burst from the impact. The ghost rock inside exploded, setting Will on fire. I tell you, with all the screaming going on that night, I swear that Will's was the loudest, and the longest. You could hear that wail above the thunder of the train as it rolled over itself, killin' everyone on board that weren't already dead, and many of the folks in the rail camp too.

The train's wreck burned all night, and in the



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morning only the engine was still alight, as it is to this day. Many folks say they can hear "Ornery" Will Jenkins' wail at night, over the sound of a train coming down that stretch of track. Others say they've seen the Blue Pride traveling that same route, and have taken to calling it the Ghost Train.

I have seen the ghost train myself, but sadly, had business elsewhere, so was unable to take the time to board it and investigate personally.—N.T.

Personal testimony of Dr. John G. Clemens as to the events of the night of September 17th, 1876, Kissenger, KS. Relayed to the Explorers Society by Explorer Franklin Bruno.

It was around eight in the evening when we first heard the train whistle in the distance. I thought it a bit strange, because there was no train due until morning. As the sound grew nearer, it took on a strange and sinister tone. It was as if the train whistle was mixed with howls and screams of pain. The noise continued to grow louder, and I decided to go down to the station and see what all the fuss was about.

Kissenger isn't a real big place, only about 200 people, and there were quite a few folks that I knew down at the station already. Ulf Norburn was the first man to notice the glow, and as we watched a train hurtled around the bend at an absolutely incredible rate of speed. That's when we noticed that the glow was coming from the train's boiler, a huge plume of fire pouring from it as the train sped along.

Never let it be said that the people of Kissenger were stupid folk. All of us, every one, fled the station, sure that a ghost rock train was about to crash into it and blow the whole place to kingdom come!

Imagine our surprise when instead of a horrible explosion, we heard the screech of brakes, and the train slowed with supernatural smoothness and pulled into the station. The howling screaming whistle continued to blow, and it was easier to pick out individual voices from the cacophony.

A few fellows with more guts than sense decided to head back into the station to see if they could help. As they opened the station house doors, a Hellish light poured from within, the glow from the burning train. As we looked on, a silhouette walked toward the entrance. It looked like there were actually people on the train! The whole group of us looked on incredulously as the figures came slowly toward

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the station house doors.

Clark Perkins caught the first bullet, and Liam O'Grady went down next. About that that time I ran. I ran faster than I have ever run in my life, praying the whole way. I ran straight home, grabbed my lovely Sara, and we headed for the hills. We didn't come back for three days.

And I never even saw who they were.

U.S. Government records report that in September of 1876 CSA raiders burnt the town of Kissenger, KS was to the ground, and killed every man woman and child.—N.T.

Walking Fossil

An excerpt from "Ephemeral Compounds in Ambulatory Cadavers: An Experience with a Thunder Lizard," Journal of Esoteric Sciences, Volume XI, Issue 3, May 1876. Written by Professor Oswald P. Colder III and submitted to the Society by the author.

Allow me to preface my commentary with an admonition to anyone who automatically thinks of the nascent science of paleontology upon seeing the words "Thunder Lizard." This Doctor of Esoteric Science and Arcane Phenomena understands the difference between the staid and, one might say, stale Field of Paleontology and the more interesting and dynamic, indeed, ever-changing, domain of the Esoteric Sciences to which this proud journal is dedicated.

No, Gentle Reader, this piece shall instead open your mind to the field of Cadaverous Animations, perhaps broadening your horizons, as it were, to include the remains of quite Ancient Creatures.

It begins in the spring, in Utah, when passage into certain mysterious caverns became possible to a poorly led and underfunded paleontological expedition made on behalf of an eastern university and with the permission of the Mormon inhabitants of the land. It seems that Petrified Remains had been found in the area in question. For those unfamiliar with the study of such things, certain remains become "petrified" when the majority of their substance has turned to stone due to the pressure of inhumation underground and the Sympathetic Relationship developed between the remains and the surrounding stone. Further, huge lizards of yore have been found in such a state, that is to say, petrified. These creatures, due to their size, have been dubbed "Thunder Lizards" by the less

eloquent members of our Learned Community, because they were imagined to have made a sound like thunder when promenading.

Because the Editor demands this author reach a point with alacrity, this author will dismiss with the early findings of the expedition, pass over the Strange Deaths that occurred, make mere mention of the summons that appeared to request this Good Doctor's expertise in Matters Arcane, and move directly to the experiences endured in the mountainous terrain in which that intellectual yet adventuresome Student of the Arcane found himself.

This August Personage arrived one afternoon to find the camp in an uproar. Another corpus had been discovered not far from the expedition's makeshift quarters. On this particular occasion, however, a Moderate Precipitation had occurred that morning, leaving the ground in a malleable state, ready to accept the evidence of the perpetrator's passage. That is to say that near the Cadaver in Question or, more correctly, in proximity to the partially decomposed and oddly dismembered remains of a young and eager student, tracks were found.

While none of those present were able in such a base ability as following animal spoor, these marks clearly led from the mouth of the cavernous underground into which the Fledgling Scientists had been regularly descending to discover the Ossified Remnants that had brought them to the site, and away into a small fissure in the rock, formed, no doubt, by the collection of rain being drawn by Gravitic Influences to a lower altitude.

Noting that Said Traces also resembled those left by lizards, yet gigantic by comparison, this Intrepid Soul ventured the opinion that the nefarious creature be pursued, at which point, the expeditionaries, bowing to demonstrated intellectual prowess, acceded. We followed the aforementioned imprints for the better part of an hour, Your Reporter carrying his esoteric equipment, the others bringing little more than themselves, a few mining tools, and the projectile launchers so favored by the ill-tempered, the impatient, and less-educated, as means by which all problems can be solved.

We came upon an Ambulatory Cadaver that exceeded in agedness any previously discovered—or as one might say, a Walking Fossil. The unusual creature, composed of such stone as had been noticed within the nearby terra firma, stood upon its rear legs, the extremities of which boasted lengthy claws, which it soon used, immediately after bounding through the air, to

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neatly bisect the front of an unfortunate Comrade in Science. As two ignorami unlimbered their pistols and began using said weapons to hurl bits of metallic matter at the Massivacious Beast, and said lizardilian closed its dentition around the Cranial Extremity of the Unfortunate Companion, this Humble Warrior of Science readied an Inferno Expulsor. Upon determining the deceased condition of the Unfortunate, Your Author used his enigmatical device to elevate inflammatized constituents at the Grand Atrocity.

Alas, this conflagration proved nearly as ineffectual as the previously mentioned leaden projectiles, so, with the process of thought accelerated by impending Dangerous Conditions, exhibited on the dexter manipulating appendage of another Disfortuitous Fellow, even as the decapitation of the Previous Victim passed through a rupturation in the crocodilian's abdomen, the Humble Scientist determined that a celluloid substance soaked in nitroglycerides might prove more efficacious.

After application of a small flame to the wick of the Explocious Truncheon, the Rampaging Reptiloid found itself confronted by imminent detonation as my feet transported me to a safer location.



The eruption destroyed the Cranial Cavity, the repository for animatory Ephemeral Compounds. While these compounds are extraordinarily difficult to confine, experimentation has conclusively proven their existence with results that could be attained no other way. Indeed, all Ambulatory Cadavers seem to be activated in the same manner, with control resting in the cranium.

At times, reliable witnesses report Smoky Remnants of the compounds leaving the region of this upper extremity as animations cease. To date, unfortunately, no person, even This Doctor, has managed to apprehend conclusive Material Evidence, leading us to postulate about the composition of the Ephemeral Compounds responsible.

In the interest of brevity, the remainder of the article will not be reprinted here. In fact, I wish I could have deleted more, but I was not always sure what, exactly, the professor was saying.

I disagree with the author about the animating force. He apparently believes that certain "ephemeral compounds" cause the semblance of life. Readers interested in such theories should consult the Journal of Esoteric Sciences.

My personal belief is that such animations cannot be explained by modern science. Rather, as I have mentioned before, I believe in the existence of formless entities, which some call manitous. These entities can inhabit various forms, animating those forms and sometimes other objects as well.

While these entities are powerful, they are vulnerable. If one destroys the vessel in which the entity's essence is contained, the entity is banished, perhaps even destroyed. In this case, the destruction of the thing's head released the entity. It is the dissipation of this entity, from solid form to chaos, that has been occasionally observed upon the destruction of walking dead.—N.T.

Wave Shadow

An excerpt from the memoirs of Nick Valentine, Explorer and noted big-game hunter. Submitted by the author.

The Maze is as good a place as any for someone looking for a little excitement, but I heard some particularly interesting rumors coming out of the northern part of the Maze in

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the summer of '71. It seems that some ramshackle mining town had been wiped out, seemingly overnight. I'm not naive. These little Hellholes disappear regularly, but reports I had heard spoke of one insane survivor who babbled about "the demons from the deep."

I took a little trip over to where that town was supposed to be located, with one of my regular hunting pals, Brian Concho-bar, a self-professed, kilt-wearing Scot that I had met while serving in the Black Hats under Simon Cutler. If you know anything about the Iron Brigade, you know that we had seen a lot, but that didn't prepare either one of us for this town.

When we reached the location, we scaled down the side of a cliff until we reached this town, which sat on a flat spot just a foot or so above the waterline. The flies were so thick down there that I had to brush them off a wooden sign at the edge of town to read that its name was "Hattiesport." I smelled the corruption that must have attracted the flies.

Brian and I scouted the town out for a while, peering into houses and stores. I didn't see anyone, but I couldn't shake the feeling that we were being watched. By this time we'd worked up a powerful thirst, so we decided to see if the local watering hole had any "water" left in it. We strolled over to what looked like a saloon, hoping to get lucky and find some liquor. We poked around for a while, but no luck.

That's when we realized that the stench that filled the town was coming from a connected icehouse. Looking back, I really don't know why I went in there or what I expected to find. All I got was a boot filled with my own vomit.

The town didn't smell good, but the stench in that icehouse was ungodly. Guttured human corpses filled the place. Chunks of them were missing; some crazy was using the icehouse as a larder. Brian and I ran back to the saloon to get our gear. Tough or not, we were getting the Hell out of that town! But the second we passed through the saloon's swinging doors, out of the water came these things. The sun was setting, and I was looking directly into it, but I swear these creatures were walking shadows.

I aimed my Sharps Big 50 at the center of one of these shadows and fired, knocking that shadow back into the water. Brian opened up with both his Gatling pistols, and we began our rapid-firing withdrawal to the cliff where our ropes dangled down. We had just made it to them when, out of the twilight gloom, one of these things lunged at me. I felt a burning pain in my side as I was engulfed by the shadow. In



desperation, I raised my Sharps and fired.

The shadow flew back and then dissipated. In place of the shadow lay a lizard-faced man wearing tattered Union blue and carrying an old-fashioned pirate cutlass with some of my blood on it. All I could do was stare at the absurd, grotesque creature until Brian yelled at me to get moving. I shimmied up that rope away from that accursed town and never looked back.

Well, "tough or not," Mr. Valentine probably made a wise choice when he left. Wave shadows dwell deep beneath the water and are dangerous enough in small numbers that I would prefer a trained regiment with me if I faced more than a dozen of the vicious creatures.—N.T.

Weeping Widow

The confession of an anonymous source, as submitted to the Society by Reverend Jebediah Stanford, Church of St. Matthew, Fort Worth.

Reverend Stanford is not in the habit of publishing the confessions he hears. However, he felt this one, and that concerning the pox

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walker, were important enough to relate to our readership. Again, and with good reason, Reverend Stanford insists the source remain anonymous.—N.T.

Bless me father, for I have sinned.

I'd be lyin' if I said I could remember my last confession. Truth is, after some o' the things I done, I figger no amount o' Hail Marys gonna make up for 'em. Guess my biggest sin was bein' convinced there weren't no God no more, leastways not one looked after the likes o' me.

What I saw a week ago proved me wrong.

I ain't gonna lie, father. I ran with a rough crowd. We was generally up to no good of one kind or another. I've taken a few lives, and I must confess not every occasion was in self-defense. And I suppose the same could be said of every one o' my companions. We thought we were mighty bad men, kinda took some pride in it, in fact. But you know better'n anyone what they say about pride and the fall.

So it came to pass that we happened to get some folks angry at us, and well, they up and formed a posse and headed out after us and the saloon keeper's daughter, who we had taken a fancy to. So we had to lie low for a little while.

We found a deserted house, all shot up and ransacked like some men like us had been through some time before. But we'd seen our share o' that stuff, so we holed up for the night. Round 'bout midnight, I woke up with a start, 'cause I hear someone cryin'. It starts as a low, moaning sob and starts to get a little louder. It sounded like a woman, which meant it had to be the girl we brought with us, 'cept we had knocked her out to keep her quiet. Gil, who was up keepin' watch, went over to check on her.

I heard him say somethin' to her, and then he's yellin', stampin' up and down, and wavin' his hand like he's touched a hot stove. "YEEOW!" he yells and calls her a name which I'll not repeat for respect to this here church, father, and pulls back his other hand to lay it upside her head.

Now I know this sounds a little loco, padre, but I'm swearin' on mah soul here that it's the truth. The noise woke us all up and someone lit the lamp. The girl looked, well, different. She was dressed all in black lace, with a veil over her face. She was sobbin', and every tear that rolled off her cheek and hit the floor made a little sizzlin' sound, like water hittin' a hot skillet. Lightnin' fast, she stepped toward Gil and slapped him hard across the face. He screamed and fell down, and we could smell burnin' flesh where her hand touched him. When she did, her veil flew back enough I could see her face. It wasn't the saloon keeper's daughter! It was the woman in the picture over the mantle. The picture was faded, but it was her for sure.

I know I was the only one got to see her, padre, cause I was the only one turned my tail and ran and ran. I weren't proud no more, no sir. The screams of my former bad friends was fillin' the night, the gunshots I was hearin' didn't seem to do much, and I wasn't thinkin' 'bout nothin' but puttin' one foot in front of the other. But as the screams faded, I heard a voice shriek even louder than them screams.

"Know pain as I have. Know a mother's grief!"

Padre, I'm walkin' the straight and narrow from now on. That was one tough mother.

I'd suggest taking a preacher along if you plan on facing one of these beings.—N.T.

Will o' the Wisp

An interview with "Crazy" Eddie Eddington, ghost rock prospector. Recorded and submitted by Explorer Kaspar Schwartz.

THE MARSHALS HANDBOOK



ABOMINATIONS



MARSHAL: 76



CHAPTER THREE: USIN ABOMINATIONS



This is the part we know you've been waiting for, the bit where we tell you how we think you should use what's in this book. Well, Marshal, the short form is it's pretty much up to you. But some guidelines, thoughts, and suggestions follow, just in case you find yourself wondering what to do with all the new critters and information we've given you.

Some of the stuff should be pretty obvious. You can let the players read the first parts of this book. In fact, you should *encourage* them to read it. The best thing it can do is get one of your brave heroes to ask if the posse can track down one of the critters they've read about.

You need to give that part a gander too, because it might hand you some ideas for adventures to throw at the posse, whether they ask for them or not. And the nice thing is, while the posse can read about the critters and rascals, we saved all the juicy secrets just for you and put them in the next chapter.

You also want to read all about critter sidekicks in Chapter One, because sooner or later (and maybe even before now), some wiseass posse member is going to think he's getting the best end of the deal when he sets up an animal sidekick. You should know how one of them is created, and you should help the player come up with the animal (or just create the critter for him). Most of all, though, you should remember that a critter sidekick is an extra, a character that you, the Marshal, control.

Most animals aren't much in the smarts department, but these sidekicks are pretty special, and sometimes they have ideas of their own. More correctly, they can act out ideas the wise, benevolent, and tricky Marshal has, like running off and leading the posse into a new adventure. Sure, most of the time they do just what the hero wants them to, but remember, they belong to you.

Well, that's it for the quick advice. The rest of this chapter has more long-winded guidance: some suggestions for making use of the Explorers Society that collected the stories for the heroes, a bunch of ideas for using abominations and the like, and some definitions and information about manitous, abominations, and other servants of the Reckoners.

THE EXPLORERS SOCIETY

The Explorers Society is an adventuring guild that started (at least in its present form) almost four centuries ago. Its original roots are far more ancient. At that time, a lot more of the world was unexplored by Europeans, and it was a time of swashbuckling adventure. The Society of the present day romanticizes the Society of old.

Nowadays, a lot of Explorers are armchair adventurers who'd rather brag about how they shot an unsuspecting tiger than actually spend time traipsing through the jungle. Fortunately for the real adventurers, though, the Weird West



ABOMINATIONS



provides plenty of new opportunities for people who long for exciting exploits—the kind that gets the blood pumping, the sweat running, and, on occasion, that little trickle flowing down the leg.

THE SOCIETY'S PAST

As far as most people who know of them have heard, the Explorers Society has been around since the 1400s. It has a reputation as an exclusive gentlemen's club whose members are known for their hunting and exploration expeditions. The true history of the Explorers Society is far longer than that.

THE TWILIGHT LEGION

The first incarnation of what is today known as the Explorers Society arose in ancient Rome. The Twilight Legion was the elite and secret monster-hunting society organized by the rulers of the Empire. Whenever a strange and dangerous beast was menacing the populace of the Empire, the Legion was there to deal with it and keep it as quiet as possible. In some ways they were the Pinkertons of their day, keeping the citizens of Rome safe but in the dark.

When the empire turned Christian, so did the Legion, but when the Empire fell, the Legion did not. The Twilight Legion's leaders had come to realize that there was a sinister intelligence behind the abominations they fought. Just because the Roman Empire was no more did not mean the Legion wasn't still needed!

The Legionnaires went underground and continued to fight arcane menaces wherever and whenever they found them.

VICTORY ACHIEVED?

When the Old Ones made their pact and the Reckoners were banished from the Earth, the Twilight Legion's members didn't know what to think. There were no more menaces to fight. It was as if all the abominations had disappeared.

Most members figured that they had at long last won their battle with whatever they had been fighting. The Legion began to fragment.

Some members were not quite so convinced. They conceded that the monsters were indeed no longer around, but they were afraid of what might come in the future. So a tradition began of passing down the secrets of the Twilight Legion from generation to generation, preparing for the return of the abominations.

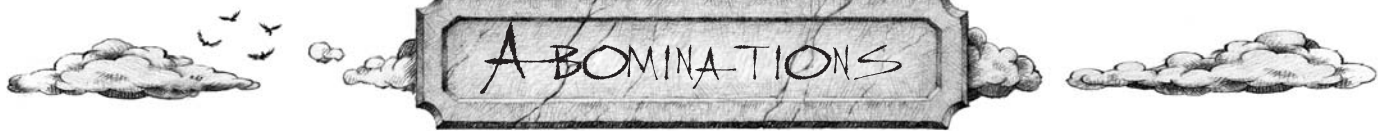
The Explorers Society was formed by some of these core members to ensure that there would always be someone to pass this knowledge to.

THE SOCIETY TODAY

Most members of the Society are completely unaware of the Twilight Legion, and in fact there were only two members who still carried the Legion's secrets when Raven pulled his little stunt in 1863. They were Captain Roderick Pennington-Smythe and Major Nicholas Trevalyan.

Since then, the Legion has been actively recruiting members from the ranks of the Society. There are 20 members of the Twilight Legion today. Trevalyan and Pennington-Smythe would love to expand the membership dramatically, but they have been quite frankly appalled at what pompous do-nothings most members of the Explorers Society are.

The publication of *Rascals, Varmints & Critters* was a desperate gambit on both men's part to draw new blood to the Society, people that would believe. They realized that most people would dismiss the book as fiction, but they were looking for that tiny percentage who would read and want to know more.



FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Apparently Pennington-Smythe and Trevalyan do have some very powerful connections, though to who no one seems sure. While the Twilight Legion tries to keep a low profile, attracting attention when you're in the business of killing monsters is almost unavoidable.

Both the Pinkertons and the Texas Rangers take a dim view of the Society, considering them "amateurs" who have no business shilly-shallying around with forces they don't understand. Never mind the fact that in many cases the Twilight Legion's vast library of personal accounts of creature hunting actually tells more about dealing with a particular threat than either of the "professional" groups know.

Strangely, neither organization has shut down so much as a single chapterhouse of the Explorers Society. Given the ruthless reputations of the Men in Black and their Texan counterparts, this is more than a little strange.

Even after the Pinkertons' outright seizure and destruction of (almost) every copy of the Society's *Rascals, Varmints & Critters* publication, the Explorers operate unimpeded.

THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

The membership of the Explorers Society is about evenly split between folks that really have hardy souls and a thirst for danger, those who want adventure but think it's all fun and games, and the windbags that just want to sit around and talk. It's the windbags who run the headquarters, which are usually set up as gentlemen's clubs, with comfortable chairs, good liquor, and plenty of cigars. It's the others the posse really has to worry about.

The real adventurers aren't so bad because they have some idea of what they're getting into (how they handle it is another question). On the other hand, they might be looking for trouble and be more than capable of finding it, not to mention bringing it to the heroes. Some of these folks are inexperienced, while others are capable monster hunters. The explorer archetype is an example of the true adventurer.

The trophy hunter, on the other hand, shows you what to expect from a blowhard who wants only the "fun" part of a quest: anything that doesn't get dirt under his manicured fingernails. A lot of these types only *think* they know what they're doing, and they have enough money and

free time to be really dangerous to anyone who tags along.

Naturally, it's possible for the players to set up characters using the archetypes or something like them. Or you can bring in those types of characters as extras to make the heroes' lives more exciting. Either way, the Explorers Society can be an effective tool in getting an adventure off the ground.

For example, an Explorer might hire the posse as guides. A vain character might be inclined to use the heroes to carry his equipment or as bait to draw critters into the open and otherwise set the Explorer up for the perfect shot at a desirable trophy. Some Explorers might be honest about their intentions to find a certain place or abomination, but they might have some of their facts twisted around and unintentionally put themselves and the posse into danger. Others might be smart enough to know when to ask for help.

JOINING THE SOCIETY

Alternately, one or more heroes might join the Explorers Society, although the cost is relatively prohibitive. Old Pennington-Smythe and his cronies wouldn't want any low-class fellow members after all. Still, if the money proves too prohibitive, you can always adjust the cost to suit your own needs.

Suppose one of the windbag types is just dying to have someone go off and bring back a report about Mojave rattlers. He might start a membership drive and offer reduced rates to one or two people who look fairly respectable.

For that matter, there's nothing in the group's rules about where the money should come from, so a successful rustler might be able to raise herself enough dinero to join. Heck, a nice Marshal might even count a membership handed down from Daddy to be a couple points worth of the *belongings* Edge.

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRICE

However a hero joins, the Society can be used to send her on the occasional quest. It might need an area mapped, or maybe some high-ranked Explorer wants some poor junior member to find out if a wall crawler really eats meat.

For the most part, the Society can only make requests and suggestions rather than issuing orders. On the other hand, if it's time for the once-a-year meeting and the hero can't make it, the Society could threaten to revoke her



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membership unless she performs a service for the association.

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

Some of the heroes might expect benefits from an organization that charges so much for people to join. Well, they won't be too disappointed, because there are a few advantages to joining the ranks, besides just better opportunities to get into trouble.

For one thing, it gives Explorers a nice place to go for a little relaxation, and they can even bring guests sometimes. While they're in the headquarters, they might run into some people who could help them out with skills the posse lacks. Finally, the Society can act as an information source. Not only did it attempt to publish its bestiary, but it has records dating back hundreds of years.

If they can be contacted, the Twilight Legionnaires probably have some people who have studied those reports and could offer some advice about the unusual critter that chewed on half the posse the night before.



Just remember that the Twilight Legion is a small organization, and its members hardly represent the Explorers Society as a whole. The majority of the Society is just a bunch of adventuresome souls joined together by a common interest in finding new things and maybe bringing back a few trophies. Anything else is pretty much up to you.

USING THE EXPLORERS SOCIETY

The Explorers Society can be an extremely useful plot device, both as a vehicle for creating adventures and as a method of bailing the heroes out when they get in over their heads.

Obviously the Twilight Legion is a fine vehicle for creating adventure. Just because a member of the Society isn't part of this inner circle, doesn't mean that he won't be called upon to help someone who is! In fact the Legion uses this as a recruiting technique to test the mettle of fellow Explorers.

Most adventures with the Twilight Legion should center around the destruction of some sort of abomination. That's the Legion's specialty. They kill monsters.

On the bail-out side, the heroes may approach the Society if they are in over their heads with a particular creature. The Twilight Legion has been known to share information with outsiders on occasion, but there is always a price. Usually the Legion requires a return favor at some later date. When you're killing monsters, you can use all the help you can get.

GETTIN THE MOST OUT OF YOUR ABOMINATION

Any Marshal can sic an abomination on her posse. It doesn't take much imagination to just have a critter jump the heroes from out of nowhere. Anyone can do that. Doing it with style, though, is another thing.

We're not saying there's necessarily a right way and a wrong way to use abominations and critters, but some methods tend to work better than others. The nature of the game suggests a few ideas for using critter adversaries to good effect.

You might want to take what we say with a grain of salt though. The best way to do things is the way that entertains you and the players the most. If our advice doesn't provide



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enjoyment for your group, and the things you've come up with on your own do, then ignore what we've got to say and go with what works for you.

That said, here's what we think.

SCARY, WEIRD & FUN

People play games to have fun, so they choose games they think are fun. Obviously, if you've chosen *Deadlands*, you are expecting to get a certain type of enjoyment from it.

The *Deadlands* game is about weirdness, fear, and the Wild West. The last part of that, the Western flavor, implies bold heroes, a code of honor (the Code of the West), and a certain black-and-white point of view—meaning things are either right or wrong, and there's not much in between.

Now, add to that a level of weirdness. Part of this is in the form of unusual technology, the inventions of mad scientists which duplicate many of the effects of modern devices but without the advantage of microchips, assembly lines, and synthetic materials. Several forms of magic and the existence of monsters and spirits just pump the weirdness factor up even further.

Finally, mix in the fear. Not only are there weird things around, but a powerful hidden force is using them to terrify the regular folks. And not only does this force want to generate more fear for itself to feed on, but it wants to create such a level of fear that the land itself changes and it can drop by for a visit.

So what does all this mean?

A STRANGE BREW

Put the elements together, and we've got bold heroes, some of them a little odd, fighting against mysterious forces to eliminate the fear of the common folks, sometimes by using weirdness of their own against that of their adversaries. Unfortunately, they don't really know what they're up against, because the forces behind the whole thing—the Reckoners—are so mysterious that even their own servants don't know what they're like.

What it boils down to is a gigantic mystery.

THE GAMES A FOOT!

That gives us a direction for our adventures and suggests some ideas for the "proper" use of abominations.

For one, nothing should ever be

straightforward in this game. The Reckoners want to generate the most fear they can, and they've learned that people fear the unknown more than anything else. So they do their best to keep their servants out of the limelight, dropping occasional horrific hints about their nature.

One abomination lurking at the fringes of society, sowing as much terror as possible, is worth a dozen ravening, bloodthirsty beasts. Remember, the scariest monster is the one you know is out there, but you don't know where!

MAKE EM THINK

So what does this mean to you as a Marshal?

Well, it means you make the players figure out what's going on. You never say "the townspeople have asked for help because prairie ticks have been eating their children and pets." Instead, you describe the scene, a town full of sad and frightened people. When the posse members talk to the townspeople, they discover that children and animals and a few adults have been disappearing. Sometimes they turn up dead, drained of blood and with their chests burst out.

With some good questions and some poking around, the heroes should figure out what the problem is. But you don't want that to be too easy for them, so you should throw them a few curves and mislead them. You can do this by using some red herrings, making it look like the culprit is something other than it really is.

For example, if there are bloodless bodies around, you could throw in a local that thinks the cause is some particularly vicious form of bloodwire. You can try a sort of "bait and switch" and throw in barbed-wire salesman that fell victim to a prairie tick while working on a fence. If the heroes take the bait, they're going to waste precious time inspecting miles of fence while the ticks knock off more victims.

KEEP EM OFF-BALANCE

The really cool thing about this is that your false clues don't actually have to be untrue. Maybe the town *is* plagued by both prairie ticks and bloodwire. Or to use another example, maybe the heroes track and kill a wendigo that's been eating people, only to discover that the wendigo was the only thing keeping the local dread wolves from attacking the townspeople.

Using multiple critter types in the same adventure can be pretty effective. In some cases, it might be coincidence that brought both abominations to the area, or perhaps they just



decided they make an effective team.

Look at the wendigo and dread wolves example again. Maybe the wendigo was leading the dread wolves, keeping them out of town to save the best hunting ground for himself. Then, after the posse kills the wendigo, the dread wolves come in for revenge—and some easy hunting that had been off-limits to them before.

With this little twist, the wendigo and dead wolves intrigue becomes not just a team-up, but a simple example of a layered plot. In this scheme, whenever the posse solves one piece of the mystery, they're led to another part. The best layered plots use a web of conspiracy with several components, in which the different pieces don't even seem related—until the posse discovers the common thread.

KEEP EM INTERESTED

Let's look at another example. Suppose people in a certain town start acting insane, shooting each other for no apparent reason, and otherwise getting extra rowdy. The posse finds that braincrawlers are the problem, and they get rid of them and move on to the next town.

There, they find the same thing, an infestation of braincrawlers. This should make them suspicious enough to investigate more thoroughly, and when they do, they discover that in both towns the people who first fell victim to the braincrawlers received packages a day or two before they went loco. Investigating the packages leads the posse to yet another town, where they discover mechanical control devices on people, and a plot by a local mad scientist who had been studying braincrawlers and using the other towns as field experiments.

To add a little flair, maybe the scientist was in the other two towns during the previous troubles, posing as a harmless reporter or traveling salesman. Then we have not only a layered plot, but (potentially) a recurring villain—especially if he escapes after the posse finally figures out he was behind the whole thing.

SOMETIMES BAD GUNS LIVE

Recurring villains (and other characters) can be a lot of fun for the players. They provide a focus for them, and the eventual defeat of the dastardly character feels like a huge accomplishment. Just be careful, though, not to overdo it. Sure, get all the use you can out of a well-built villain and his cronies—but if he always gets away, even when the heroes have a

very clever plan which they execute without a flaw, the players are going to get mighty frustrated. After all, it is a game, and the goal is for everyone—not just the Marshal—to have fun.

Now don't get us wrong: It's a good thing for the players to feel frustrated sometimes. It shows that the game isn't too easy for them, and it makes an eventual victory just that much sweeter. Still, a little frustration can go a long way. Just try to make sure the heroes eventually have a victory, because everyone likes to at least feel like they're winning.

SOMETIMES GOOD GUNS DIE

As Marshal, you should know that not every character has to live for the posse to claim victory. If the posse has lost a few members on the way, that also sweetens the final victory. You should be careful to balance the danger as much as possible with the abilities of the posse.

The important thing is to make the players think their characters might kick the bucket. If you have to kill one or two heroes to get the point across, that's okay. As before, though, watch the frustration level. If the players have to create too many new characters, they could lose interest in the game or at least go and find another Marshal.

Of course, killing off heroes does have other advantages in this game. You can always make them Harrowed (or some other once-living abomination) and bring them back as enemies for the rest of the posse. If the heroes are really careful, they might even manage to "rescue" the Harrowed character, allowing her to fall under the control of the player again.

The important and difficult thing is to try to make each situation challenging while not necessarily deadly. In this game, that's a challenge in itself, because the system makes it easy to kill a hero pretty quickly. So what happens if you overdo it?

THE FICKLE FINGER OF FATE

First, you should decide if you're really overdoing it. After all, the players should expect to lose a few heroes. Here are a few rough guidelines for judging the situation.

If the player is truly afraid of losing his hero, you've done your job, and you don't need to go ahead and kill the poor sap, no matter how much fun it is. You've gotten what you (and the Reckoners) really want: FEAR.

Other things to consider are luck and action.



ABOMINATIONS

For instance, if the player has done everything right and has just hit a string of rotten luck, her hero doesn't necessarily deserve to die. On the other hand, if the player has made every mistake possible and the dice go against him, go ahead and knock off the character.

Finally, look at the distribution of luck. If one player has lost three characters and nobody else has even lost one, maybe you're doing something wrong, like coincidentally having a lot of abominations attack those characters. Again, it might just be the player. Maybe he always makes *curious* characters with *big britches*. If so, go ahead and kill the heroes; you may be doing them a favor.

LETTING EM LIVE FOR NOW

Suppose you've decided, for whatever reason, that you shouldn't kill a particular character. Then what? Well, you've got several options. Most of these work only before you've actually killed the hero, so try to decide beforehand if you're going to go through with it.

First, maybe the enemy leaves without finishing the job. Not every adversary has to fight until it kills. Of course, if the heroes won't let the creature leave in peace, they deserve what they get. Second, there's the possibility of a timely rescue (the cavalry charging over the hill), but don't overuse it. Third, you should always feel free to fudge rolls—but make sure to complain about how rotten your rolls are. Finally, you could say it was all a bad dream, but that's pretty cheesy.

SERVANTS OF THE RECKONERS

The Reckoners have a lot of servants, including a lot of critters and folks that don't necessarily know they're serving anyone. Those who assist the Reckoners mostly fall into three broad categories: abominations, manitous, and unwitting dupes. All three types have been around for a very long time.

UNWITTING DUPES

Unwitting dupes, for example, have served the Reckoners for as long as there have been people, usually just by doing what they want to do. Bandits, murderers, and other criminals all do their part for the Reckoners by generating the fear that provides energy for their masters.

Some of these nasty people are out for revenge and know that greater powers exist. Unwitting doesn't mean unwilling.

And unwitting doesn't mean they don't have any idea what they're doing. Some cultists know (or at least think) they're serving powerful entities. They just don't know the full power or true nature of those entities.

Lastly, just because they're dupes doesn't mean they're powerless. Cultists have black magic, and even pawns can capture kings.

ABOMINATIONS

Abominations are often in the same boat, seldom realizing they serve the purpose of another—and those who suspect the existence of a greater power have no real concept of that power's nature. The wiser ones are usually those abominations that have been around for a long time and act as fearmongers (those abominations responsible for the Fear Level in the shadow of the place the fearmonger haunts).

Some abominations realize they gain more power when more people are afraid of them, though they don't necessarily have any inkling of





why this is so. And a lot of them are clever enough, or have instincts good enough, to stay on the edge of the unknown. That which stays mysterious and hidden creates more fear than something that kills without caring who knows it. If the mortals get jaded, they start fighting back instead of just cringing in fearful anticipation. Scared prey is *easy* prey.

What most abominations don't understand about fear, though, is that it goes to feed the Reckoners—or that the Reckoners use some of that fear to create more abominations. There's one consistent exception: los diablos. These critters know they serve the Reckoners by pursuing those who have set back the Reckoners' plans.

To every rule there are exceptions, however. Some abominations do come to truly know the full "majesty" of those they serve. Usually these are the most powerful of horrors. The Reckoners don't reveal themselves to just anyone.

MANITOUS

Nobody but the Reckoners themselves know what their plan is, but manitous are important to the scheme. These spirits are general-purpose servants, and they perform a wide variety of tasks. While they know they serve powerful beings, they (like abominations and dupes) don't truly comprehend the character of those beings.

PAWNS IN A GREATER GAME

What manitous do know is that they're responsible for channeling fear to the Hunting Grounds. Most manitous spend the majority of their time in the Hunting Grounds, which they share with the hated nature spirits.

Manitous usually remain in the Hunting Grounds, but they can enter the physical world at will. They can only *affect* the physical world through a mortal shell. Some can enter living beings, but most cannot. The ones who do are responsible for the tales of "demonic possession" common to most religions. When expelled, the manitou simply returns to the Hunting Grounds. A few manitous can enter living animals as well. When this happens, they can be exorcised just as if they were in a human host.

Entering a corpse is an ability most all manitous possess. If the shell is empty, the manitou simply crawls inside, animates as much flesh, muscle, and bone as is still attached, and starts doing its dirty business. This is where walkin' dead come from—they're simply corpses

animated by manitous. That's why these undead are smarter than some other types that use different methods to animate the body.

Most manitous use the brain as their focus. That's why walkin' dead stop creeping around when you bust their noggins open. Some have more control and can use other body parts, like the heart, a hand, or so forth, but those are much more rare. If the brain is ruined while the manitou is hiding out in an otherwise empty carcass, the demon simply goes back to the Hunting Grounds.

So what about the Harrowed? They're special. In this case, the soul of the body is still in the corpse. This is the only way the manitou can get control of all the things that make a character more than just a corpse. When the demon has control, it can use a gunslinger's incredible skill, a huckster's hexslinging ability, or a mad scientist's incredible intellect.

The danger here is that to gain this kind of control, the manitou must bond with the body *permanently*. If the Harrowed's brain is destroyed, the manitou is slain forever. In fact, this is one of the very few ways in which these spirits can *ever* be destroyed. It's a fantastic risk for the manitou, but the potential reward for sharing the body of a real hero is so much greater than when merely using an empty corpse.

MARSHALING THE UNDEAD

A manitou in a walkin' dead or other animated corpse doesn't care what happens to the body. It "feels" when a body part is blasted off, but as an alarm instead of genuine pain.

The Harrowed are a little different. They have to "live" in their shells for a long time—maybe forever. If someone blows off a kneecap, the Harrowed may not cry like a baby, but he's not as willing to ignore it as a manitou inside an animated corpse it's going to discard in a while. Also, Harrowed can eat meat to heal their wounds, so they've got a stomach or a few other "gizzards" to worry about that walkin' dead don't.

All this means walkin' dead and similar creatures should be a little tougher than a Harrowed—at least in terms of how much damage it can take. Here's how you can adjust the *Undead* special ability some creatures have if you feel your walkin' dead are a little too fragile.

Roll bonus dice normally when a shot hits the noggin.



ABOMINATIONS

A LEXICON O EVIL

Abomination: A "seed" of fear given life by the Reckoners. Some are altered versions of existing creatures, others are legends brought to hideous life, and some seem to be the creative output of the Reckoners. While most abominations know nothing of their origins, some suspect the existence of powers greater than themselves.

Coup: The essence of a fearmonger, released when it is destroyed. A Harrowed individual, if nearby, can absorb this essence and gain part of the fearmonger's power.

Deadland: An area of the Earth with a Fear Level of 6. A Deadland is a macabre and twisted landscape where everything is dark and tainted by evil. Once the entire Earth has become a Deadland, the Reckoners will walk upon it.

Fear: Food of the Reckoners, generated by abominations and other horrors on Earth, then carried to the Reckoners by manitous.

Fear Level: The amount of fear in a given area. The Fear Level represents a sort of background effect in the area after abominations have created a lot of fear in the locals. Higher Fear Levels also change the atmosphere of the area. A place with a Fear Level of 6 is a Deadland.

Fearmonger: The abomination or abominations most responsible for an area's Fear Level.

Grit: What heroes earn for defeating a fearmonger. When a fearmonger falls, the heroes realize they've defeated a power from beyond, and they gain strength and resolve which allow them to fight even longer the next time they face something terrible.

Hunting Grounds: A place beyond our world, home to spirits. Both nature spirits and manitous dwell there. Weird gizmos made by mad scientists draw energy from the Hunting Grounds, as do Hucksters.

Living Legend: An abomination created from the energy of the Hunting Grounds by the collective beliefs of a large number of people.

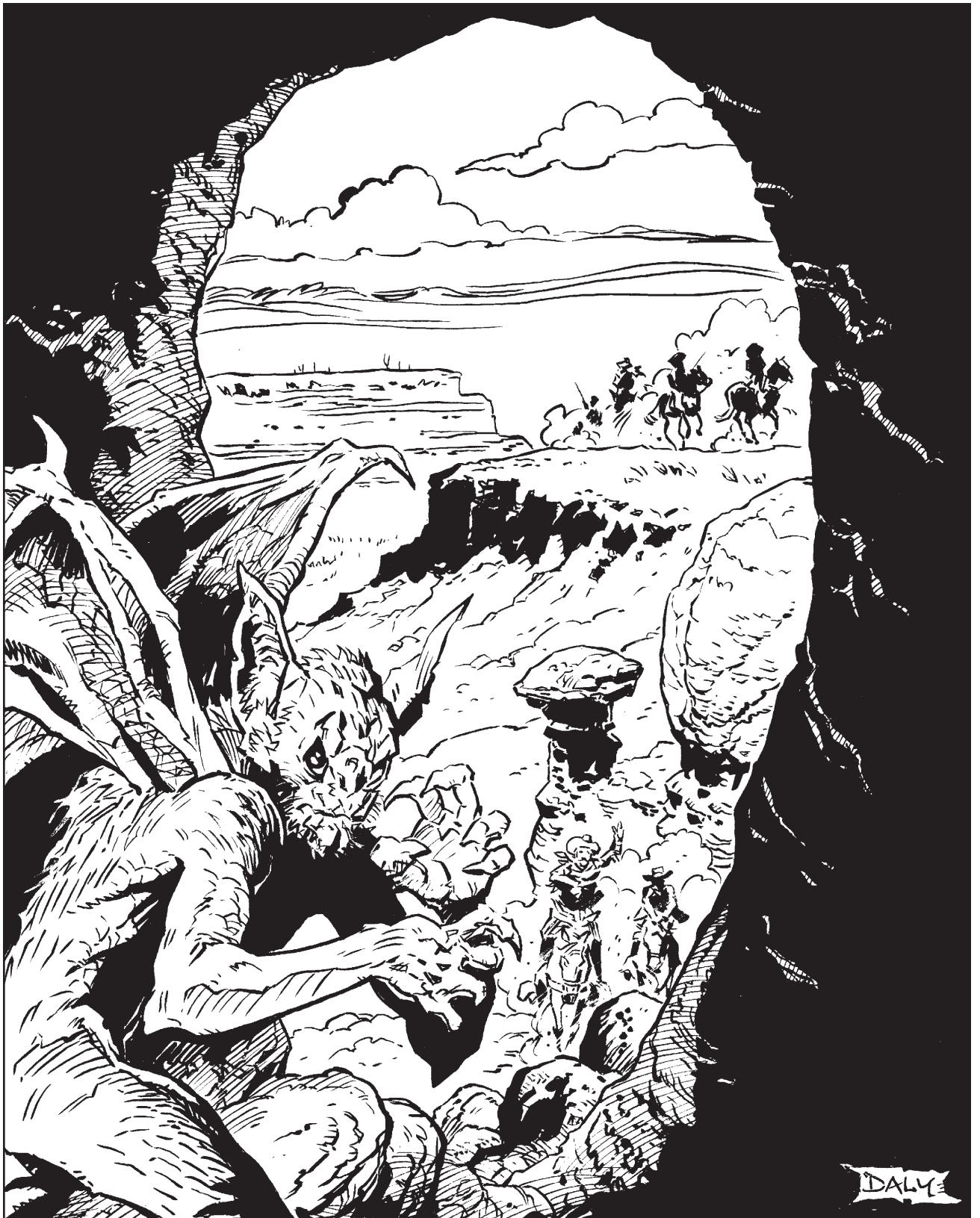
Manitou: A spirit who serves the Reckoners. Manitous carry fear to the Reckoners and can enter the brain of a corpse to animate it as a Harrowed character. Manitous also consort with hucksters, providing magical effects to those who best them, and with mad scientists, giving inspiration for weird gizmos.

Nature Spirit: A good or at least neutral spirit. Nature spirits live in the Hunting Grounds and work with shamans to provide them with arcane power.

Night Walker: A creature generated by nightmares when an individual's nightmare is powerful enough to pull energy from the Hunting Grounds and give birth to this form of abomination (see *Book o' the Dead*).

Reckoners: The mysterious powers that make the West weird. Their identities, powers, and exact plans are unknown to everyone but themselves, but they involve generating enough fear to change the whole earth into a Deadland so they can drop in for an extended visit. In the meantime, they do what they can to cause more fear to be generated so they can use it to make more abominations to generate more fear. Their other uses for fear are unknown.

NUMBERS





CHAPTER FOUR: NUMBERS & RULES & SUCH



Well, Marshal, here's the rest of what you need to make the posse miserable: the inside dirt on all the beasties. We probably don't need to tell you, but the best dirt is the kind we keep just between us. Comprende?

The less the players know about what they might someday come up against, the more challenging the adventure is going to be for them. They learned enough from the first part of this book, so make them work for the rest.

We've divided this chapter into two sections. The first part covers the critters and rascals, just like Chapter Two did for the players. After that, we've provided a bonus, a piece about some of the regular animals of the Weird West, what we call varmints. The whole thing wraps up with some words about how to set up the mysterious past of an animal sidekick.

Oh, by the way, you might remember this whole thing was set up as a contest. Well, a lot of entries were sent in, and some were good and some were great. Some didn't make the cut, and some made it with a little bit of help. All the entries that got published were winners in a way, but since you might be curious about the top three, here they are.

The first-prize winner was the pox walker, by Jacques DuRand. The murderous horde, by James McPherson, claimed second place. And finally, Lee Garvin's bogie man was awarded third place. Congratulations to these folks!

Now on to the abominations.

CRITTER PROFILES

ANIMAL MEN

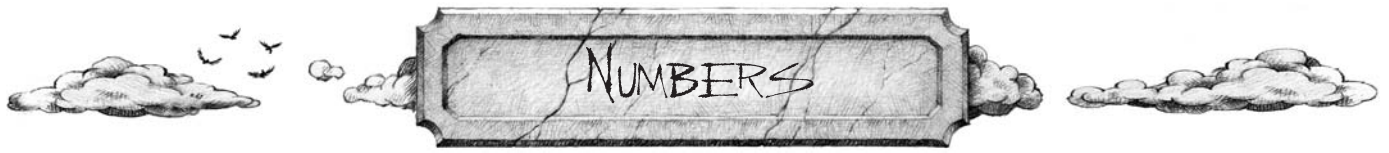
About six years ago, a young British woman, one Lady Pamela Danvers, visited the Weird West with her husband. She was an amateur scientist, and when the happy couple visited the Maze, she became very interested in ghost rock. She started studying it and experimenting with it. A few months later, her husband, no longer happy, but rather disgusted with the directions of her experiments, returned to England.

Lady Pamela didn't even notice his absence.

She was too absorbed in her experiments and the bizarre directions they were taking. She'd started making solutions of ghost rock in various chemicals and feeding it to animals. When this wasn't enough, she hired a couple of thugs to find some human "volunteers."

Eventually Lady Pamela built a weird sort of projector, the Evolver as she called it. Being rather enamored of Charles Darwin's theories on the development of the species, she was anxious to find out what happened when various animals evolved toward human stature and intelligence. With her Evolver and her solutions and no little surgery skill, she began combining humans and animals, creating for herself a batch of servants, creatures that seemed part critter and part rascal, so to speak.





By now, she has claimed an entire island in the Maze and populated it with nearly 100 of her experiments, some successful, some not. She treats the “better results” as favored pets, and the “rejects” as wild animals and fodder for future experimentation. Either way, all of them have low human intelligence, and you don’t have to be all that bright to realize you’re being exploited and oppressed. Still, Lady Pamela has always been careful to give her creations a healthy dose of awe for her, and they see her as a godlike figure: very powerful, but capricious, someone to be both worshiped and feared.

The lady scientist has a small house and a large laboratory built of stone and wood, at the center of her island. The huts of her favored experiments stand nearby, while the rejected masses live farther out, in caves or in rough-hewn hovels. The Lady sometimes sends her “pets” to other islands for supplies, and they all have standing orders to bring trespassers to her so they might find a better life through science and join her other experiments.

So far, Lady Pamela has confined her experiments to mammals, but she is considering trying to combine humans with birds or reptiles—if only she could find the right human subjects, like a brave posse.

Here are typical statistics for the animal men, with notes on different species. These are the basics. Feel free to adjust anything.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d8, S:2d6, Q:3d6, V:2d8

Mental: C:3d8, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d8, Sp:2d8

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Bear: Heightened *Strength, Vigor, Mien, Spirit.*

Fightin': brawlin'. Size: 8. Claw: STR+2d8.

Dog: Heightened *Vigor, Cognition, Knowledge, Smarts. Scroungin', scrutinize, search, swimmin', trackin'.* Bite: STR+1d6.

Pig: Heightened *Vigor, Knowledge, Smarts, Spirit. Ridicule, scroungin', survival.* Bite: STR+1d4.

Puma: Heightened *Nimbleness, Quickness, Mien, Spirit. Fightin': brawlin', guts, persuasion, sneak, survival.* Claw: STR+2d6

Rabbit: Heightened *Nimbleness, Quickness, Cognition, Smarts. Persuasion, scrutinize.* Sixth sense.

Raccoon: Heightened *Deftness, Quickness, Smarts. Filchin', lockpickin', scroungin', shootin': pistol, tinkerin'.*

BLACK REGIMENT

The Black Regiment is a unit made up entirely of the reanimated bodies of soldiers from both sides of the Civil War. Their uniforms are blackened by the blood of the slain. Because these soldiers have all fallen once before, their comrades have already removed their boots, so they are all barefoot. The only way to tell which side a particular soldier belonged to in life is to look at their belt buckles: former Union soldiers still wear the “U.S.A.” buckle, while Confederates wear either the “C.S.A.” emblem, or the “U.S.A.” inverted. Otherwise they look like “normal” walkin’ dead.

The size of the regiment seems to depend on the battles they join in. They always side with the underdog and always appear in sufficient numbers to even the odds. This is not out of any heroism, but rather to insure greater bloodshed and to terrify as many soldiers as possible.

The men of the Black Regiment prefer to fight viciously rather than effectively. They favor bayonet charges (slashing instead of stabbing with their rusty blades) and called shots to the knees, belly, or face. They attack their chosen enemy mercilessly, but do not act in any way to protect their “allies.” In fact, if an ally gets in the way or questions their actions, they quite happily turn their fury on him.

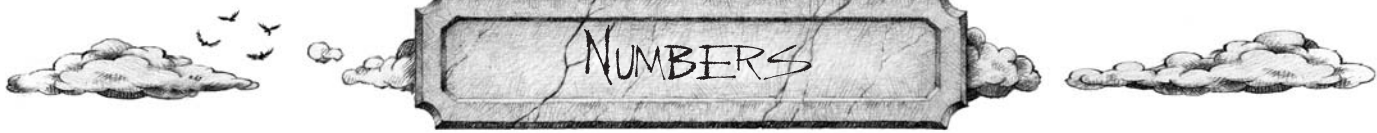
The only members of the unit who seem to have any individuality are the bugler and the commander. The bugler carries a special bugle that sounds a horrific charge and terrifies the enemy. The commander actually has the *leadership* Aptitude.

The regiment cannot be destroyed, although the individual members can be killed (again) easily enough. Between battles, the bugler and the commander, as well as the rest of the troops, are replaced from the ranks of recent casualties.

Burying recently killed soldiers with their boots on ensures that they will not return as new recruits of the Black Regiment.

In between battles, the Black Regiment seems to disappear. Then they might show up suddenly at another battle many miles away. The Black Regiment spends this time in the Hunting Grounds. When the call goes out for the Black Regiment, a gate opens between the Hunting Grounds and the new battle site. At the end of the battle, the remainder of the Regiment, plus any new recruits, travel through a similar gate back to the Hunting Grounds, where they “rest” until called up again.





PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, S:3d8, Q:2d10, V:2d8
Climbin' 1d8, dodge 2d8, fightin': bayonet 3d8,
shootin': pistol 2d6, shootin': rifle 2d6, sneak
3d8, swimmin' 1d8

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d6, M:1d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4

Leadership 3d6 (commander only)

Size: 6

Terror: 11 (entire unit only), 9 (individuals)

Gear: The soldiers of the Black Regiment are "issued" muzzle-loading rifles (treat as Springfield rifles, but with a Range Increment of 10 and a Reliability of 19) mounted with rusty bayonets (STR+1d6, Defense Bonus +2). Some of them may have other weapons taken from fallen enemies.

Special Abilities:

Immunity: To Wind or physical stress. They are affected by other forms of damage just like Harrowed characters.

Terror Bugle: The bugler can sound this horrible horn once during each battle for every twenty men on the opposing side. Each time it is sounded, everyone on the opposing side must make a new *guts* check against a Terror of 11.

Coup: A Harrowed who kills the bugler gets the bugle. By blowing this horn, the Harrowed can force mortal foes to make a Hard (9) Terror Check

BLOODWIRE

Related to tumblebleeds, bloodwire has escalated the already violent hostilities between many shepherders and cattle ranchers.

Anywhere a rancher has erected barbed-wire, bloodwire can set up housekeeping. Unlike its more mobile cousin, bloodwire likes to wait for prey to come close to it, and then lash out, wrapping itself around its victim, and draining blood through its thorny tendrils.

To the casual observer, the puncture wounds left by the bloodwire's vicious thorns can resemble bullet wounds from a small-caliber weapon (except, of course, that bullets are never found in the wounds). A Fair (5) *medicine* roll reveals that the wounds are not, in fact, from any gun.

Bloodwire wraps itself around fences with barbed-wire on them, and is indistinguishable from it until it feeds. Bloodwire that has recently fed looks like fat red milkweed, and slowly slithers along the fence to find a fresh spot where it can lurk safely.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D: 1d4, N:2d10, S:1d6, Q:2d4, V:1d4
Climbin' 6d10, fightin': brawlin' 4d10

Mental: C: 1d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Size: 3 (6' to 8' long)

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Thorns: STR (brawlin' damage). Lost Wind is actually drained blood. Bloodwire saliva contains an anti-clotting agent, so Wind lost in this way returns at the rate of 1 per day.

Surprise: Characters suffer a -4 to Cognition checks for surprise against bloodwire.

BOGIE MAN

The bogie man is an abomination aimed specifically at children. He's careful not to let adults see him, and he goes out of his way to make sure children witness his shenanigans. He likes to pull nasty pranks that hurt or kill adults. Whatever these "pranks" are, the children who witness them have a hard time reporting them, because of the bogie man's special powers.

Any child (under 16) who sees the bogie man and fails a Incredible (11) *guts* check is unable to tell any adult about the critter. The child can tell indirectly; by telling another child or writing it down (if this skill is known), but is not likely to be believed, especially since she'll be compelled to deny it if confronted by an adult.

He's gangly and spindly, made out of twigs and sticks, with a dry tumbleweed for a head. No one has ever heard him speak, and it is unknown whether he can.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D: 4d10, N:5d12, S:3d8, Q:6d12+2, V:2d8
Climbin' 3d12, dodge 3d12, fightin': brawlin' 2d12,
filchin' 6d10, lockpickin' 6d10, sleight o' hand
5d10, sneak 7d12, throwin': knives 3d10

Mental: C: 3d8, K:2d4, M:5d12+4, Sm:4d6, Sp:3d10
Overawe 5d12+4, ridicule 5d6 (with gestures only),
scrutinize 3d8, search 4d8, tinkerin' 3d6

Size: 5 (gangly)

Terror: 9 (13 versus children)

Special Abilities:

Claws: STR+1d4

Vulnerability to Children: A child with a melee weapon can kill the bogie man with one blow if he succeeds with a Hard (9) *guts* check and can hit it in combat.

Coup: A Harrowed killing a bogie man gains a permanent +4 bonus to *sneak* rolls.





NUMBERS

BONE FIEND

Most manitous are capable of taking material form by entering the brain of a corpse, but they need gray matter that's relatively intact. Some manitous, however, are either especially persistent or particularly gifted.

The manitou that animates a bone fiend first finds a human skull with at least a little bit of brain matter left and sets up shop. It starts in whatever bits of gray matter are still left, then spreads its essence throughout the skull itself. This turns the skull as black as pitch. Usually the skull rests near a lot of other bones, because this type of manitou—a bone fiend—specializes in animating bones.

Since the black skull holds the manitou's essence, and its destruction would send the manitou back to the Hunting Grounds, the bone fiend goes to great lengths to protect the black skull. However, the ebon cranium must remain within 50 feet of the animated bones, or they collapse.

The bone fiend does its best to hide the skull and won't use it as its head. It usually wears another skull, focusing its senses through that skull, while hiding the black skull somewhere, like inside its chest or—if it doesn't plan on going anywhere any time soon—hidden somewhere nearby.

The bone fiend cannot be totally destroyed unless the black skull is broken (maimed). The skull is actually Size 1, but is treated as a Size 6 creature for damage purposes.

In addition, the bone fiend can place the skull inside a cage of bones, giving the vital piece Armor 1.

The bone fiend can use any sort of bones, human or animal, and always keeps a lot of spare parts around. The lair of any bone fiend is knee-deep in all sorts of bones.

As long as there are bones to be had, the bone fiend's body can't be killed, only temporarily disrupted. A serious wound (or greater) shatters a body location. Missing pieces can be replaced easily next round, so long as intact—or relatively intact—bones remain nearby. It takes one action for the bone fiend to replace any and all bones lost.

The bone fiend can animate enough bones to give itself up to six legs and as many as four arms, provided enough bones are nearby. The creature can vary its size as well, even in combat, by adding a few more bones to its mass. This takes a single action.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d10, N:4d10, S:4d8, Q:3d12, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10

Mental: C:3d10, K:2d8, M:3d8, Sm:2d8, Sp:4d12

Size: 2 to 9

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Bite: STR

Claws: STR+1d4

Variable Size: While the bone fiend usually assumes the size and general shape of a person, it can increase to Size 9, (about 10 feet tall) provided it has enough bones at its disposal, or shrink down to about the size of a jackalope. A change in size requires an action.

Bone Explosion: If the fiend is desperate or has a large surplus of bones, it might choose to use this attack, hurling its body's component bones outward with the same effect as a stick of dynamite, but causing only 2d20 damage. It takes two full rounds for the bone fiend to take shape again.

Undead.

BRAIN CRAWLER

There's little that's more fearsome than looking into your buddy's eyes and realizing it isn't him that's staring back at you.

Braincrawlers are attracted to people who live in fear, especially those whose sanity has suffered, making them easier to control. This little worm waits until the victim sleeps to burrow into the back of the neck and the base of the brain, leaving an open, but painless, wound through which it can be seen writhing around. Once attached, the 'crawler whispers dark tales to the victim, and lives off its host's fear. This has an interesting side effect: the 'crawler eats the fear before the host can feel it, making the victim completely fearless.

This artificial bravery removes any inhibitions the victim may have had and, combined with the braincrawler's dismal whisperings, causes madness to grow in the host's mind. Eventually, the victim's psyche gives in, he acquires a dementia, and the parasite takes over completely.

From the moment the braincrawler attaches itself to a victim's brain, the victim feels no fear. All required *guts* checks are automatic successes. In addition, the character receives the *big britches* Hindrance, for as long as the 'crawler remains.

A victim must make a *Spirit* roll to remain in



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control of his own actions each day that a 'crawler nests in his noggin. The check starts at Fair (5) plus the area's Fear Level and increases in difficulty by one step for every day the braincrawler remains attached. The first time the victim fails this *Spirit* roll, he gains a dementia (use the mad scientist's Dementia Table).

When the braincrawler (often referred to as "the voices" by a victim) takes control, the host changes physically as well. First, the host's eyes become a solid black; they reflect the evil of the braincrawler. Second, because the critter sits in the victim's brain running the show, it can tap into the victim's energy reserves, increasing resistance to pain and damage, as well as some Corporeal Traits. Finally, since the parasite has different tastes, the victim isn't very picky about what he eats, and insects, worms, carrion, and human flesh are all considered good snacks. Alcohol is avoided, because braincrawlers don't like it (refer to its vulnerability).

While these critters prefer victims who live far from other people—they are easier to manage, with no one to help or calm them or to find the 'crawler—some few have made it into populated areas, carried along by hosts taken back to a town after being killed. In an area with several inhabitants, braincrawlers reproduce quickly (each individual can produce offspring if well-fed on fear), the young leaving through the host's ears or nose to find other likely victims, and madness can spread quickly through a town.

The Corporeal Traits listed are for a typical victim of a braincrawler. If a posse member or prominent extra is infected, use their Corporeal Traits instead. The braincrawler itself has d4 in all physical attributes.

The Mental Traits represent the braincrawler alone, not the person controlled. The critter isn't very smart and doesn't talk except for the occasional one-syllable word, but it "remembers" a few facts from its host's life (like where he they lived) and the faces of a few friends—now potential hosts for the critter's young.

The braincrawler, once detected, can be removed either by setting it on fire or dousing it in alcohol greater than 100 proof (the latter method is usually preferred). No matter which method is used, the victim suffers one wound to the noggin for each week or portion thereof that the critter was attached. Fate Chips can be used to cancel these wounds ("Good job, doc, he came right out!"). The little guys can scuttle around pretty quickly, but are mighty easy to kill once out in the open.



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d4, N:3d8, S:4d12, Q:2d8, V:4d10
 Fightin': any weapon 4d8, shootin': any 3d4, sneak 2d8

Mental: C:4d10, K:2d4, M:4d6, Sm:4d6, Sp:4d12
 Area knowledge 2d4, trackin' 4d10

Size: 6 for the host, 1 for the 'crawler

Terror: 5 ('crawler)

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1 (host only)

Attack: Weapon of choice.

Pain Resistance: The host never has to make stun checks, and he takes no Wind damage from physical attacks (arcane attacks still inflict Wind damage). In addition, hits in the gizzards do not add a bonus die of damage, though a shot to the noggin gets its regular bonus.

Vulnerability to Alcohol: If the back of a victim's neck can be doused in any sort of alcohol (in combat this requires a called shot to the head), the 'crawler must make an Incredible (II) *Spirit* roll or be forced to head for greener pastures. This causes damage to the victim as noted in the description above.

CANKER

The canker is depression and worry given form, a cancerous expression of the distress of the mind. Prior to the Reckoning, a person under such stress might simply have taken ill with ulcers or even cancer. However, since that dark day, the Reckoners have taken to placing seeds of their energy into people consumed by despair, bringing those feelings to life, complete with a hard shell and a malevolent consciousness.

Cankers live like hermit crabs in the bodies of their hosts. The critter looks like an insect or similar beast and might be mistaken at first for a prairie tick, though the canker is much more insidious. The canker's hard-shelled body starts out small, about the size of a chicken's egg, but grows over time, reaching feelers and legs into the recesses of the body to gain nourishment.

After the canker has lived in its host for about a month, it begins consuming the internal organs while taking over their function, extruding weird appendages wherever it needs to reach. After about six months, it even reaches its feeding tube up into the victim's head to consume the eyes, which it then replaces with its own, on long, jointed eyestalks.



The canker eventually achieves complete control over the host's body, at which time it starves the victim's brain until it loses all higher function, leaving just enough of the host's original mind to know the horror it suffers. The body is just a shell controlled by the canker.

After this, it can no longer safely leave the host body completely. When it exits to implant an egg in another host, it leaves various limbs and tubes extending down its host's throat.

By the time the canker takes over the host body, it can mimic the host pretty well, using its *performin': actin'* skill, which starts at 1d8 and gains an additional 1d8 for every two months it has been in its host. In addition, it can mimic the host's Mental Traits, with scores up to 2d8 in each.

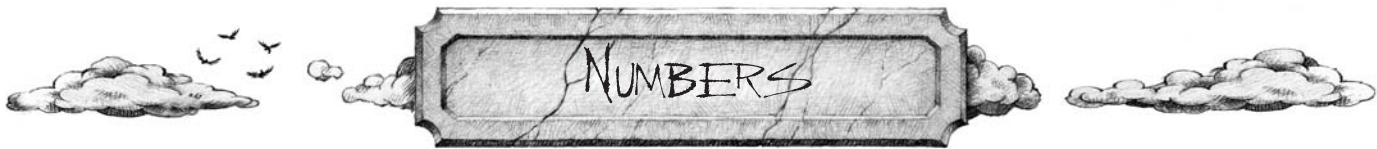
The parasite is adept at mimicking behavior too. It takes years for a canker to take complete control of its host, and by this time it can do a passable impression of that person. Still, it is but an impression, and the creature is nothing more than a sophisticated (and disgusting) parrot. It cannot learn anything new and does not respond well to new situations.

Cankers are formidable foes but not very dangerous in a toe-to-toe fight, especially if forced out of the host body, even partially. They are possessed of a sinister cunning and usually use the innocent appearance of their host to lure a victim away from their compadres and then do him in. They may appear as seductive as a pale debutante or in other innocent guises such as a physician or priest.

Cankers can reproduce by implanting eggs inside a victim. They do this by prying open the victim's mouth and forcing a new egg down his throat. Once in the poor sod's belly, the egg is hatched by exposure to stomach acids. Soon after, the chitinous thing starts to grow.

The new canker is an exact duplicate of its parent, including its knowledge to the time of reproduction. Thus, it is possible for an infant canker to know many lives' worth of knowledge and behavior. However, the implantation process often turns violent, and the canker sometimes has to kill the intended host before the egg is implanted.

Cankers choose new hosts carefully. They prefer loners, folks that aren't going to be missed by anybody. Alternatively, they tend to pick the distraught or insane, since if the host suddenly decides to from society (as he's bound to), chances are good that no one is going to suspect the real reason for this.



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:4d8, Q:1d10, S:4d12, V:4d10 (these apply to both the canker and its host)
 Fightin': brawlin': 5d8
 Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d10
 Performin': actin' (varies)
 Size: 6 for the host, 1 or 2 for the canker
 Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Claws: STR+1d6

Domination: If a canker is far enough advanced to have replaced the eyes of the host with its own beady peepers, it can use these to hypnotize a victim. A person must make an opposed *Spirit* roll to resist the canker's weird influence. A dominated person performs simple functions within the experience of the canker, usually something like "protect me" or "kill them all." The domination ability is most often used to get a victim to hold still for the implantation of an egg.

Implantation: The canker must succeed in a *fightin': brawlin'* roll to grab the intended victim. It can do this while using a host body or when scuttling about. After a successful grab, it extends a nasty-looking organ and tries to stick it down the victim's gullet to implant an egg. It must win three contests of *Strength* to do this (allies can aid the victim). If the victim wins more tests than the canker, he can try to wriggle free with a *fightin': brawlin'* roll of his own.

Spinnin': The canker can spray out a sticky, weblike stuff from a little tube by its mouth. It can also stick the tube out from its host's mouth to do the same. The stuff isn't strong enough to use as a weapon, but it's pretty useful for confining wounded or dying victims while the canker's offspring grows inside.

CHINOOK

The chinook is a massive beast that looks like a giant wolverine with gray and brown markings. It has oversized paws with large claws to move easily over snow or through mud. Even more vicious than the animal it resembles, the chinook is extremely dangerous.

The chinook hibernates in summer. If found and attacked during the warmest months of the year, it receives a -4 penalty to all its rolls. It does not suffer this modifier in spring or fall when it is partially active.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d8, S:3d12+2, Q:3d10, V:2d12+4
 Fightin': brawlin' 4d8, sneak 2d6
 Mental: C:2d8, K:2d4, M:3d12, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d10
 Size: 12

Terror: 3 (8 when angry)

Special Abilities:

Bite: STR+1d4

Claw: STR+1d6

Blizzard: The chinook can start a miniature blizzard that typically manages to spawn a true storm. The chinook uses the blizzard as cover to return to its lair. The little storm (about 200 yards in diameter) usually only blinds people, but if they fail a Fair (5) *Cognition* check, they wander in circles in the blizzard, losing all sense of direction. If a real storm starts, a lost victim can freeze to death.

Heatwave: Once per day, the chinook can cause the air temperature within 100 yards to soar to about 60° in one round, even from -20°, and stay at that temperature for 10 minutes. This causes snow and ice to instantly begin melting. In the mountains, this can make the area ripe for an avalanche or mudslide. After this ability is used, any loud noise (like a gunshot or the roar of a chinook) has a 1 in 20 chance of causing an avalanche or mudslide, whichever is more appropriate. Victims caught downhill from the event suffer damage as if they'd been caught in an explosion of dynamite (1d20 to 3d20, depending on how much stuff lands on them).

CHUPAKABARA

A chupakabara, or goat-sucker, is produced when the Reckoners take note of a person who willingly betrays a family member. They send a spark of their energy to alter the betrayer. The family member who was betrayed can also be changed into a chupakabara if he has the chance to kill the betrayer and does not do so.

A chupakabara is a small gray or brown creature with a vaguely monkey-like appearance, a large head, long arms, and short legs. Each of the creature's hands and feet has three digits, each of which ends in a vicious claw. They are nocturnal and have large round eyes.

The critter has a rounded mouth filled with jagged teeth, and it feeds on the blood of animals, usually domesticated beasts like goats.



Besides drinking blood, the chupakabara also likes eating the soft, tasty bits of critters, like eyes and lips. It can also reach its long arms down a critter's throat to pick out other "delicacies."

A person who betrays a family member and becomes a chupakabara is always gray in color, and can only be killed by the person it betrayed. Wounds inflicted by anyone else might knock the critter down, but it'll be back the next night unless the person it betrayed delivers the killing blow. If the betrayed person has the chance to kill the betrayer and doesn't, then he also becomes a chupakabara, and both beasts turn a greasy brown. Brown chupakabaras can be killed normally.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d10, S:2d8, Q:3d12, V:3d10
 Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 6d10
 Mental: C:3d6, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d6
 Size: 5
 Terror: 7
 Special Abilities:
 Bite: STR+2d6
 Claw: STR+1d6



Night Vision: The critter can see as well in the dark as most folks can in daylight.

Unseen Movement: By expending 1 Wind each turn the chupakabara can move without leaving a trail. When moving this way, it appears as a fast-moving blur and all attacks made against it suffer a -4 penalty.

Coup: Harrowed who feast on the essence of a gray chupakabara gain its ability to move without leaving a trail (at the cost of 1 Wind per turn).

DARK BEAST

Though the Wichita tale of these creatures is more than a century old and may be based on even more ancient legends, the dark beasts have been given new life by the Reckoning. Whether ancient beings or new abominations created by the Reckoners, dark beasts are every bit the fearsome monsters described in the legends.

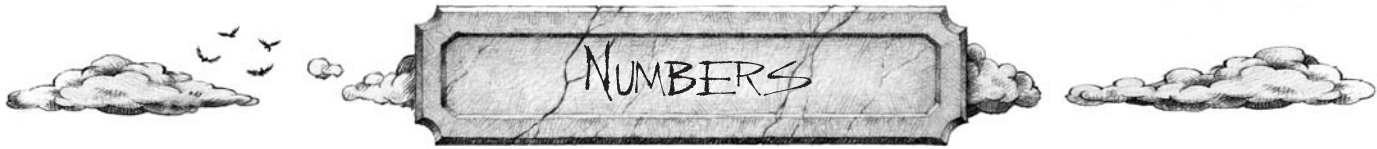
Dark beasts live only in deep caves with hidden entrances. The typical "clan" is composed of a mated couple and their hideous spawn. Because dark beasts are always hidden in shadows or twilight and their corpses turn into oily smoke when struck by bright light, no precise description of them can be given. They have a vaguely humanoid form with about a dozen clawed arms and legs which give them a spider-like appearance.

Dark beasts are gifted with limited intelligence which enables them to speak simple sentences and imagine devilish schemes to capture the human beings from whom they drain blood for nourishment.

Dark beasts usually try to ambush humans, setting traps in wilderness areas near their lairs. They grab their victims, then bite and drain blood. Many victims are drained until they die, while others are severely weakened. These are taken back to the lair of the dark beasts and thrown in nightmarish pits, so they might provide grisly meals for several days.

Young dark beasts can also spit deadly darts of black ice, useful for driving victims into ambushes. These darts are said to be generated in their cold, dark hearts.

The greatest strength of the dark beast rests in their dark hearts, for a dark beast cannot be slain unless its heart is pierced. Unfortunately for anyone who might want to puncture the heart of a dark beast, the creatures can remove their hearts and leave them in the lair when they go out into the night to hunt. The bulbous red masses of the dark beast's hearts hang from



the ceiling of the lair, waiting for their owners to return.

Destroying the heart of a dark beast instantly kills the beast that owns it. Of course, dark beasts never leave their lairs totally unguarded. Usually, one or two stay behind as guards for the hearts, as well as for any prisoners. In addition, the hearts are usually protected by traps (pits and falling rocks are favored).

A dark beast without its heart takes damage as normal, but does not die when it takes what would normally be lethal wounds. Instead, it immediately retreats, able to do little but run away. The wounded dark beast returns to its lair, where it slips its slimy heart back into its body and rests, unconscious and helpless, for a full day. When it awakens, it is completely healed. The only way to kill a dark beast is to destroy its heart, which is size 3. A single wound is enough to destroy it.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d12, S:3d10, Q:3d10, V:3d12
Dodge 3d12, fightin': brawlin': 3d12, sneak 5d12,
throwin': ice dart 3d6
Mental: C:2d10, K:1d8, M:3d10, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d10
Size: 8 (young) to 10 (adults)
Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2

Bite: STR+1d8

Claws: STR+2d6

Blood Drain: Once a dark beast has bitten a victim, it holds on until until the victim wins a *Strength* contest or dies. Other people can help the victim. As long as the dark beast holds a victim in its grip, it drains blood at the rate of 1d6 Wind per action.

Ice Dart: Only young dark beasts (size 8) can use this. The dart is very similar to a thrown knife: Speed 2, damage STR+1d6.

Sensitivity to Light: Dark beasts cannot bear strong light. They never go out in daytime, and torches keep them away until they find a way to get the torchbearer to drop his torch.

DREAD WOLF

Dread wolves, sometimes called blood wolves or banshee wolves, are created whenever a pack of normal wolves consumes the flesh of an abomination or of one of the Harrowed. The corrupt essence of the flesh transforms the

wolves into servants of the Reckoners and infects them with an unnatural form of rabies known as "bad blood."

Dread wolves have blood-red eyes, and their mouths drip a bloody saliva that coats their fur with gore. Their mangy and ferocious appearance is intensified by a strong carrion stench. The smell and sight of a dread wolf causes normal animals to flee recklessly, and it doesn't do much good for people either.

Despite their appearance, dread wolves act much like normal wolves, traveling in packs of 4d4, looking for lone stragglers and other easy prey. However, dread wolves are stronger, faster, and tougher than normal wolves and also have some special abilities.

Dread wolves like to chase down lone victims, feinting at the prey from all directions until it drops from exhaustion, then moving in for the kill. Every round that a target is attacked by two or more dread wolves at the same time, he must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll or lose 1 Wind due to exhaustion.

Any living thing that survives an attack by dread wolves may become infected with "bad blood," a disease far worse than any illnesses commonly known.

Anyone receiving at least a light wound from a dread wolf must make a *Vigor* roll against infection. The severity of the wound determines the difficulty (5 for a light wound, +2 per each extra wound level). Treatment difficulty is equal to the initial infection difficulty. Curing the infection with the *medicine* Aptitude takes a number of days equal to the treatment target number. However, few people know how to treat the infection, and infected individuals are often simply put down.

The infection is similar to rabies but much worse. Afflicted animals become crazed and bloodthirsty. Infected people become homicidal psychopaths, as well as cannibals. Early symptoms include headaches, stomachaches, and dizziness. Advanced symptoms include bloodshot eyes and bloody frothing at the mouth. Bad blood has no effect on the Harrowed.

Characters with the *arcane background* Edge can try to cure bad blood using their powers.

Hucksters using the *helpin' hand* hex must draw a hand one step greater than usual. Restoring a light wound and curing bad blood requires Jacks, restoring a critical wound and curing bad blood demands a Flush. The wound the wolves caused can be healed without curing the disease, but the hand required is the same.

Blessed characters using the *lay on hands*





miracle have a Target Number one greater than normal (a light wound's target number is 6, and maimed is 14). Shamans using the *medicine* favor need one more Appeasement Point: light wounds require 3, and so on.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:3d10, S:2d8, Q:4d10, V:2d10

Fightin': brawlin' 3d10, sneak 3d10

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d6, M:1d12, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d8

Overawe 3d12, trackin' 4d10

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Bite: STR+1d8

Howl: Dread wolves use their *overawe* ability by howling. Anyone who hears the howl must make a *guts* check against the wolves' *overawe* roll. If the wolves win, the victims must roll 1d6 plus 1d6 per raise scored by the wolves on the Scart Table. This is in addition to normal effects for a test of wills.

Infection: Anyone wounded by dread wolves may become infected with bad blood (see above).



DUSTER

In the Weird West, looks can be deceiving, and the duster is no exception. Per ounce, they're the cutest little killers in the Weird West. They live only in the most inhospitable and arid of places, waiting for unwitting travelers to see their sad little eyes and invite them into their hearts and other organs.

Dusters look like scrawny, emaciated, little rabbits—or other critters—that blend extremely well with their surroundings. They live by sucking the water out of other living beings. Those who have lived to tell of encounters with them believe the desert looks the way it does because of these malevolent little furballs.

Once among humans, they use their supernatural ability to absorb water and slowly empty any available water. Once they have absorbed all the group's water, they move in closer to absorb the water from the bodies of the people they travel with, enjoying their gasps and slow death. Once the people are dead, the duster drains any remaining water it can, leaving behind dried husks that look decades old, lying in the burning sun.

The duster can detect any water within 1 mile and quickly attempts to make contact with any detected source.

The duster can absorb up to five quarts of water per hour through the air. This includes water in closed containers within one foot. The critter doesn't get any bigger; the water just seems to be evaporating at a phenomenal rate.

Dusters match exactly the dun-colored sand they inhabit. When still, they have a +8 to *sneak* attempts, but this drops to +2 if they are in motion. The thing seems to kick up a little bit of dust wherever it goes, even in seemingly spotless places. Any characters who have an *ailin'* Hindrance having anything to do with their lungs or noses suffer ill effects when nearby.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:4d10, S:2d4, Q:3d10, V:4d6

Dodge 4d10, fightin': brawlin' 2d10, sneak 4d10

Mental: C:4d8, K:4d4, M:2d12, Sm:3d6, Sp:2d6

Persuasion: 4d12

Size: 2

Special Abilities:

Water Drain: In combat, the duster can use its water drain to devastating effect. The thing is lightning fast and can easily dodge most attacks due to its small Size and extreme Nimbleness. If it manages to touch a living



creature's exposed skin, it instantly drains some of the water from the victim's body. This attack does not cause wounds, but inflicts 2d6 Wind and lowers each Corporeal Trait by one die type (until the victim can drink a quart of water per die drained). Any victim who has all its water drained (loses all Corporeal Traits) dies, leaving behind a mummified, shriveled corpse. The attack has no effect on the Harrowed (whom the duster leaves alone because they have no useful water in their bodies anyway).

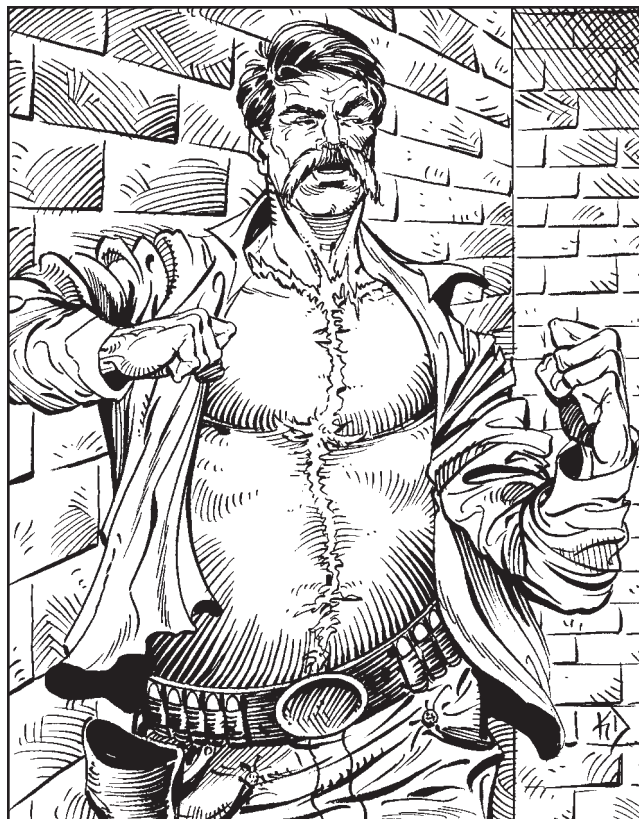
Vulnerability to Water: Strangely, these critters are extremely vulnerable to the actual touch of water. If water touches any part of a duster except its nose, it burns the critter, raising a horrible stink. Any water splashed on it acts like a flamethrower, inflicting 1d4 damage to a random location per ounce of water. Total immersion, though unlikely, kills a duster in two actions, though it raises a tremendous cloud of stinking steam as the duster tries to absorb the water before it fries.

FLESH JACKET

The flesh jacket is the disgusting creation of various insidious cults around the world. By removing the skin from a willing cultist, a sorcerer can give it a weird sort of life using an obscure ritual, perhaps a highly specialized version of *puppet* from *The Quick & the Dead*.

The spell gives the flesh jacket limited mobility, and if it can envelop a victim, it can attempt to assume control. The flesh jacket and the host body engage in an opposed *Spirit* test. The magic of the ritual gives the flesh jacket a +6 bonus to the roll. If the jacket is victorious, it gains complete control of the host, who can still comprehend what is going on with his body. The flesh jacket has access to all the host's memories and skills. For Mental Traits, the abomination can use its own Trait, or the host's, whichever is higher. The corporeal Traits of the victim are increased by +1 die type each, as the flesh jacket lends the host strength for their mutual survival.

Once in control, the flesh jacket gains sustenance by invading the host's stomach with gory tendrils that allow it to consume all therein. For the host body to stay alive, it must consume enough to sate the flesh jacket while still supporting itself. This means the host of a flesh jacket becomes a voracious eater, consuming surprising amounts of food. If a host body does



not eat enough, the flesh jacket begins to devour the body.

As long as the host wears heavy clothing and conceals the obvious existence of the flesh jacket, notably at the neck and chest, others have a hard time noticing the thing's presence. However, shaking hands with a controlled body might reveal very loose skin.

While the flesh jacket *can* keep a dead body moving as long as the jacket is still healthy, the creature attempts to find a new host as soon as possible. Hauling around a carcass is no easy task, after all.

While without a host, a flesh jacket is quite vulnerable and very sluggish, with limited abilities. It waits to attack until a victim is asleep, unconscious, or injured.

There is a rumor that the skinless volunteer is also used to create another type of foul creature, but this has not been confirmed.

It is possible, but difficult to kill just the flesh jacket and free the host. It's recommended to subdue the host first before this is attempted. Otherwise the consequences can be unfortunate.



NUMBERS

PROFILE

Corporeal: Use the host's Traits.

Fightin': wrasslin' 4d4, plus the host's skills.

Mental: Use the host's Traits.

Use the host's skills.

Size: 3 (when hostless)

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Damage Allocation: When an attack is made on a flesh jacket and its host, roll hit location normally. If the attack hits the noggin, all damage goes to the host. If the attack lands in another location, damage is divided between the host and the flesh jacket. Only one quarter of the damage from puncturing damage (such as stabs and bullets) applies to the flesh jacket, with the rest going to the host. Against slashing and crushing attacks, as well as arcane assaults, the flesh jacket sustains one half damage, with the rest going to the host. Fire damage is divided as well, with one quarter going to the host, and the rest to the flesh jacket. If the attack hits the gizzards, the extra die of damage applies only to the host. In all cases, divide the points of damage as indicated (rounding down), then assign wounds based on size. For example, if an attack causes 24 points of damage, with 12 going to each the host and the flesh jacket, the host takes two wounds, while the jacket takes three. Since the flesh jacket has no noggin or vital organs, it is difficult to kill. For a flesh jacket to be slain, it must take maiming wounds to each area of its body: right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg, and guts.

Pace: 2 (without a host)

Wall Crawling: Hostless flesh jackets can crawl along ceilings and walls at no penalty to Pace. They prefer to drop onto victims from above.

GLOM

Most manitous are strong enough to animate only a single corpse, creating a Harrowed individual (see *Book o' the Dead* for all about these). Some manitous, though, have grown strong enough to animate several bodies at once.

A 'glom (short for conglomerate) is a group of corpses joined together into a horrifying mass and animated by an especially strong manitou. The parts of the component bodies can be seen clearly, although they are merged inseparably

into a single abomination. Limbs protrude in all directions, and a variety of heads and faces can be seen all over the mass. Often the various heads giggle or gibber incoherently as the monster moves.

'Gloms are usually found on battlefields where the Fear Level is particularly high. The creation of a 'glom not only requires a very high Fear Level, but also vast quantities of corpses. During the first months of the Reckoning, 'gloms rose from piles of the dead on several battlefields.

'Gloms require at least two corpses to form. One corpse, in which the manitou houses its primary essence, must be relatively intact, but the others need not be so tidy. Most 'gloms are formed from considerably more than two corpses. Even more terrifying is the 'glom's ability to join other corpses to its seething mass, increasing its power proportionately. Early in the war, reports of monsters with more than 15 bodies were not uncommon.

With the apparent stalemate in the war and fewer large scale battles, these abominations are becoming fewer in number. Only in a few recent cases, such as the mass starvation in the City of Lost Angels, have there been circumstances favorable to the formation of this particular corruption.

The manitou that drives a 'glom houses its essence in the brain of one of the first bodies it animates. As long as this brain remains intact, the 'glom cannot be destroyed. Wounds can damage and destroy individual pieces of the 'glom, but the essence and the animating force remain as long as the core brain does. The 'glom naturally goes to great lengths to protect the core brain, often creating a wall of flesh and bone around it, in much the same way the bone fiend (a closely-related creature) does.

A 'glom can graft additional recently dead bodies to itself. These corpses must have been dead for longer than 10 minutes. It takes one action for a 'glom to add another corpse to its mass. During that action, the 'glom can do nothing else because grafting requires concentration.

'Gloms grow in size and power by grafting bodies to themselves. Each Trait in the profile that's marked with an asterisk increases by one step per added body beyond the first, to a maximum of d12+8. The 'glom likewise increases its Size by +3 for each additional body grafted to it. The mass has one *fightin'* attack for every 2 bodies in the mass. Small 'gloms of two to five bodies have a Terror of 9. Those of six or more



NUMBERS

body grafts have a Terror of II. Additionally, for each body beyond the first, the mass gains +10 Wind.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, S:2d6*, Q:3d8, V:2d6*

Fightin': brawlin' 6d6, shootin': any 3d6

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d6, M:1d4*, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d8

Overawe 5d4*

Size: 9+ (see below)

Terror: 9+ (see below)

Special Abilities:

Damage Resistance: It is difficult to damage a 'glom in a way that slows it down. First of all is the thing's Size, which is at least 9, when the thing is composed of only two bodies. Each additional body adds +3 to the size, making it difficult to cause wounds to the creature with any but the largest weapons. In addition, any time the 'glom is wounded, not only must the location of the hit be resolved, but the exact body that's hit must be determined as well. For example, one shot might land in the gizzards of the first body, and another in the gizzards of a different body. The wounds would not then be cumulative. It might be easier to use the shortcut methods and keep track of hits instead of specific wound locations for the 'glom. There is one bit of hope, though. If the posse can determine which head holds the core brain and inflict a lot of damage on it, it might still be possible to kill a 'glom without resorting to dynamite or other weapons of mass destruction.

Undead.

Weapons: 'Gloms can wield guns if available.

In general, there is no more than one gun per two bodies in the 'glom.

HAND

This abomination, an animated hand, comes into existence after a hand has been severed by some means, preferably one that makes it worthwhile for the hand to seek vengeance. Then the Reckoners take a hand (pardon the pun) in things, throwing a little fear-seed into it and giving it a disgusting life of its own.

The thing skitters along using its fingers as thumbs, and it can sit up on its stump to manipulate other objects. If it can find something to lean against so it can balance the weight, it might even use a pistol. However, if it does use a weapon, it's more likely to try a knife



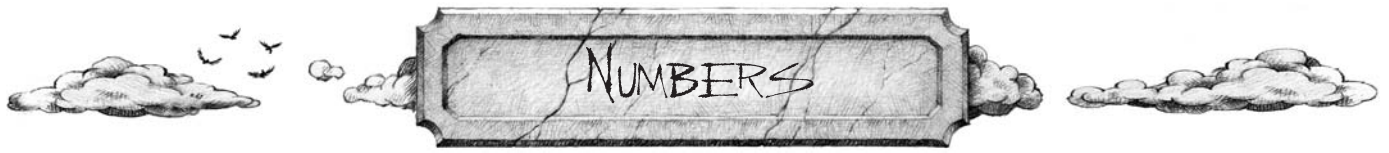
or something else small—and sharp.

The hand always has a specific target, but it doesn't mind harassing and terrorizing anyone that gets in its way. It loves to ridicule and tease its victims before closing in for the kill. It might knock and knock, always stopping to hide before its enemies can locate the sound, or it might slam doors, set tripwires, shove things off shelves or even find a match and light some dynamite (if it feels like pulling a really explosive prank).

Eventually, though, after making folks fearful for a while, it gets around to the business at hand (so to speak) of getting real revenge on the person it blames for its early separation from its home arm.

The thing is pretty adept at avoiding damage, and it's resistant to a lot of things that might annoy other abominations. This can make a hand a very persistent and irritating opponent.

The hand might have some identifying characteristic, like a ring or tattoo. Identifying it doesn't really do anyone much good but it might make a revenge victim a little more fearful to know exactly what's after him.



PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d10, Q:3d12, S:4d8, V:3d6
 Climbin' 3d10, dodge 5d10, fightin': brawlin' 2d10,
 fightin': knife 2d10, filchin' 4d8, lockpickin' 2d8,
 quick-draw: pistol 2d12, shootin': pistol 3d8,
 sleight o' hand 4d8
 Mental: C:3d8, K:1d6, M:2d6, Sm:3d12, Sp:1d10
 Demolition 2d6, ridicule 3d12, search 3d8
 Size: 1
 Terror: 7
 Special Abilities:

Undead.

Stranglin': The hand can latch onto a person's throat with a successful *fightin': brawlin'* roll. The victim then has to make a Hard (9) *Vigor* check at that point and at the beginning of each new round. If he fails, he takes the difference in Wind damage. The victim can pull the hand off by getting a raise on an opposed *Strength* check.

Wounds: The hand has only one hit area; any attack that hits is assumed to hit the guts. Unfortunately, it takes 10 wounds to knock it down, and that only lasts for one round, then it's up and scrabbling again. The hand can be permanently destroyed by fire or acid or some other thing that breaks down the flesh of the hand.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

The headless horseman is an abomination created when someone dies from decapitation. Chances are increased if the person was riding at the time of death or was a professional rider such as a Pony Express rider or a cavalry soldier.

When the poor unfortunate is transformed into a headless horseman, he is assigned the task of causing fear along the roads and trails of North America. The thing performs its job by doing increasingly frightening things, hoping to get someone to ride away from it. While it creates fear to feed the Reckoners, it thrives on the thrill of the chase.

Of course, if it actually catches someone, the horseman is more than willing to take her head. The abomination is not all that happy about its headless state, and vainly hopes to find a suitable replacement for the one it had in life.

The headless horseman looks pretty much like a normal rider (except missing a head) on a wild-looking black horse. It performs increasingly impressive antics meant to inspire fear and is usually successful.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:3d12, S:2d6, Q:4d8, V:3d8
 Horse ridin' 5d12, fightin': saber 4d10, shootin':
 pistol 4d8, throwin': head 5d8
 Mental: C:4d8, K:2d6, M:3d10, Sm:2d10, Sp:2d8
 Overawe 5d10, ridicule 4d10, trackin' 3d8
 Size: 6 for rider, 10 for horse
 Terror: 5+
 Gear: Cavalry saber, double action peacemaker.
 Special Abilities:

Undead: While on horseback.

Increasing Terror: The horseman starts out with a Terror of 5, which is the score for his invisible gallop, during which he can be heard but not seen. The next step is to make the horse rear and shriek (Terror 7). Then, the pumpkin head he carries starts making faces (Terror 9). After that, he causes the pumpkin head to laugh (Terror 11). Finally, he can throw the pumpkin head (Terror 13). In addition, the rider can shout or shoot or perform riding tricks to use actions for *overawe* or *ridicule*.

Pumpkin Head: Besides being animated by the horseman, the pumpkin head bursts into flames when thrown. It does 4d10 damage and ignites flammable materials.

Vulnerability: Unlike most dead things, the headless horseman isn't vulnerable to shots to the head. However, if he can be knocked off his horse, he loses his *undead* status and can be killed by a maiming wound to the guts.

JOHN HENRY

John Henry was born sometime around 1850. It is said that on the night of his birth, thunder and lightning cracked the sky asunder and a low rumbling was heard from beneath the earth. He reportedly rolled right out of his mama and went to work for the railroads.

While all these tales are exaggerated, Henry was indeed an almost preternaturally powerful man. While he lived, he could bend steel rods in his bare hands and floor most men with just one punch. He worked on a track crew for the C&O railroad, blasting paths through the mountains to lay down the tracks for the trains. He loved the work like no other. Henry could drill a blasting hole faster than any man alive, and tales of his skill spread far and wide.

All this led to his famous duel back in June of 1871. His foreman took a \$100 wager that, armed only with two sledgehammers, Henry could out-



drill the company's newest rock drill, a machine invented by Darius Hellstromme and powered by ghost rock. John Henry won that bet, but the strain was too much, even for a man of his massive strength, and as the song tells, he died with his hammers in his hands.

Of course, this was not the end for Henry. A few days after his burial, souvenir hunters exhumed his body to steal the fabled hammers buried with him. Imagine their surprise when Henry opened his eyes and got up! Dazed by his experiences beyond the grave, Henry managed only to frighten the men off. They ran away, taking one of Henry's hammers with them.

Since that day, John Henry has been walking the earth. His physical prowess has kept him employed wherever he goes, but he has always been careful not to show the full range of his strength. His wanderings have gradually taken him west, and he has returned to the life he loves, that of a railroad man.

Henry is not really sure what has happened to him, but being a religious man, he figures that it's all part of the Lord's plan for him. He tries to do right when he can and cares deeply about his fellow workers. Woe to the boss who mistreats his crew while John Henry is around. His rage is a frightening thing to behold.

The only thing that sometimes bothers Henry is what happened to his missing hammer. He is aware that the one he's still got has become something special, and he worries what someone might do with its twin. He can sometimes feel the other one out there somewhere.

John Henry is not as huge as one might think from the profile below. He stands just over 6' 4" tall and weighs 255 pounds. Every muscle in his body is as strong as a steel cable, and there seems to be not an ounce of fat on the man. He keeps his head shaved and usually wears simple work clothes. He is almost never found without his trusty sledge hammer, which he hefts as if it were made of air.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:1d10, S:3d12+6, Q:2d8, V:3d10
 Climbin' 2d10, fightin': brawlin' 5d10, fightin':
 hammer 7d10, swimmin' 2d10, throwin': hammer
 4d6
 Mental: C:1d6, K:2d4, M:2d10, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d12
 Demolition 5d4, faith 5d12, guts 5d12, overawe
 5d10, scrutinize 4d6, search 2d6, survival:
 mountain 2d6, tale tellin' 3d10, trade: rail
 buildin' 5d4,
 Gear: One of John Henry's hammers.



Special Abilities:

Grit: 4

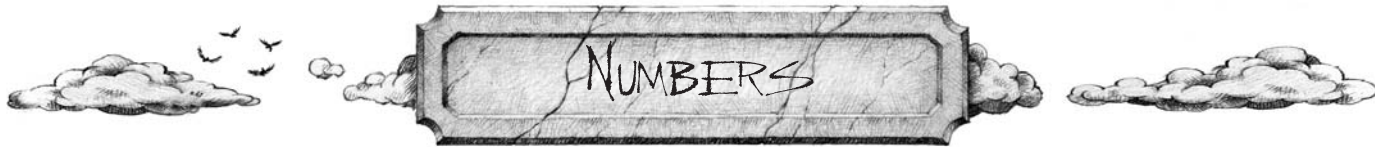
Harrowed Powers: Reconstruction 5, relic 2,
 stitchin' 5

JOHN HENRY'S HAMMERS

The passion and will that John Henry expended in his race with the ghost rock drill (along with a healthy dose of the *relic* Harrowed power) has imbued his hammers with a bit of his essence, plus his skill at laying rails. Henry only has one of his hammers. The other was stolen by grave robbers.

Power: The hammer that Henry carries (as well as its missing twin) is a magical weapon, able to harm abominations not normally subject to physical damage. The wielder of the hammer must have at least a d10 in *Strength* to fully realize its capabilities. The hammer delivers STR+2d10 damage and has a Speed of 1. In addition, the hammer lowers the Target Number of any task having to do with rail building by -2.

Taint: In John Henry's hands, none. In the hands of others, the hammer haunts its owner with dreams of John Henry's fatal struggle with the ghost rock drill. They gain the *night terrors* Hindrance.



HORNED SERPENT

Horned serpents dwell in the deeper rivers of the Southwest. They are huge, about twice the length of a normal man's height. The creature's belly is solid black, while the rest of its long body is covered with scales of multiple shades of green and blue. The coloration gives it great camouflage underwater. The head of a horned serpent is viper-like, similar to that of a rattlesnake or water moccasin. From the crown to the base of the neck, however, runs a series of small, bony horns. On either side of this crest of protrusions is a long, sharp horn, each about two feet long.

Horned serpents hunt by waiting beneath the surface of the river, watching for prey to come and drink. When it does, the serpent strikes, delivering a poisonous bite, then coiling about the prey to hold it while it eats. The venom is not deadly, but it does cause a temporary paralysis. Mercifully for most victims, they tend to sleep through dinner.

The most insidious quality the serpent possesses, however, is its ability to change shape. It can take the form of anything it wraps in its coils. A perfect physical likeness is assumed: size, shape, bad breath—it's all there. The serpent's only flaw is that it doesn't get any smarter (it can't speak). It also smells a bit funny, something animals pick up on really quick. You never see a horned serpent in the saddle. While there are ways to pick up on the ruse, the serpent is crafty.

Skeptics may attempt a Hard (9) *scrutinize* check to realize there is something wrong. Most animals (dogs, horses, etc.) catch the scent of the serpent and know the truth. The *scrutinize* is Fair (5).

The change lasts only 24 hours at most. If the serpent resumes its old form, the effect cannot be reassumed. The horned serpent uses its shape-changing ability to hunt outside its normal domain, especially when large prey is scarce near its river.

If the serpent is discovered, it reverts to its true form and attempts to escape. If it's cornered, it never gives up without a fight. However, it always fights with a view towards beating a hasty retreat. One of its favorite tactics is to just paralyze as many people as possible and head for the hills. These serpents are firm believers in living to fight another day, but if there is no way out, they'll try to take down as many people with them as possible.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8; N:1d12; S:3d10; Q:2d10; V:3d8
Fightin': brawlin' 2d12; sneak 3d12; swimmin' 3d12
Mental: C:3d6; K:1d4; M:2d10; Sm:2d4; Sp:2d8
Overawe 2d10, trackin' 4d6

Size: II

Terror: 9

Special Abilities

Bite: STR+1d4

Coil: STR

Horns: STR+1d8

Poison: Anyone bitten by the serpent must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll. Those who succeed lose 3d6 Wind. Those who fail their *Vigor* check lose all remaining Wind immediately and are rendered unconscious for 1d4 hours, plenty of time to become a meal for the hungry serpent.

Shapeshift: The serpent can take the form of any creature it has wrapped in its coils in the past hour. The effect lasts 24 hours, unless ended before that.

HUMBUG

The mercifully rare humbug is related to the common cicada. It mostly keeps to itself, but when it gets to feeling randy, it lets out an awful screeching whine intended to attract a mate. Unfortunately, few other creatures can take the noise, which covers a huge range of frequencies at a ridiculously high volume.

The humbug's mating call is so loud that it disturbs everyone within five miles, keeping them awake. Towns usually go into a tizzy if they've got a humbug nearby, because almost nobody can get any sleep.

Hindrances can actually help when dealing with the bug's racket. Those with the *heavy sleeper* Hindrance (or wearing really good ear plugs) can get some shut-eye if they make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll. Those with *bad ears: mild* need only a 5, while those with *bad ears: stone deaf* can get to sleep on a Foolproof (3) roll. You'd think they could sleep with no problem, but the noise is so loud that the floors vibrate.

The humbug's cry shatters glass within one mile, and everyone in that radius suffers a -2 penalty to all die rolls. Those who approach within 100 yards of the critter must make a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll each minute or lose 1 Wind. Nothing as simple as ear plugs prevents these effects, which are caused by the physical vibration of the sound more than the noise.

If attacked, the humbug can modify its mating



call to be downright deadly (see below).

The humbug is a cowardly little critter that loves to hide in hard-to-reach places. It can change colors like a chameleon and gets +2 to *sneak* attempts when it changes colors to match its surroundings.

However, if all else fails, the critter finds a mate after 2d20 days and finally shuts its yapper.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:4d4, N:3d12+4, Q:5d8, S:1d4, V:3d6

Dodge 6d12+4, sneak 5d12+4

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Size: 2

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Bite: STR+1d4

Flying: Pace 20

Sonic Attack: If anyone attacks the humbug, it changes the sound of its drone to an angry buzzing that can shatter bone. Each time the critter's action comes up after it has been attacked, every person and critter within 10 yards (except humbugs) must make a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll or take 1d6 damage directly to the head (no bonus is applied for hitting the noggin). There's really no way to avoid this damage (unless some mad scientist manages to build a white-noise generator), except by moving farther away from the little noisemaker. If more than a round goes by without the humbug being attacked successfully, the critter goes back to the drone that's only loud enough to torment.



most part, good, that isn't necessarily true of all legends—or even these legends all the time, as seen in the tragic endings of both accounts. Legends are primarily enigmatic, puzzling creatures that appear and disappear without warning, to act out bits of the legends about them—and create new legends.

Other legendary figures, both good and evil, could come to life in this manner. And it is also possible that legendary versions of real people could come to life as well, all adding to the general confusion and fear in the Weird West.

PAUL BUNYAN

While John Henry is a legendary but real person who became Harrowed, Paul Bunyan never existed. Paul Bunyan is said to be the greatest lumberjack that ever (or never) was. Stories say he is able to cut more trees, eat more flapjacks, and lift more than any other man. And when legends are brought to life, the stories about them—and the belief of people in those stories—give the legends power.

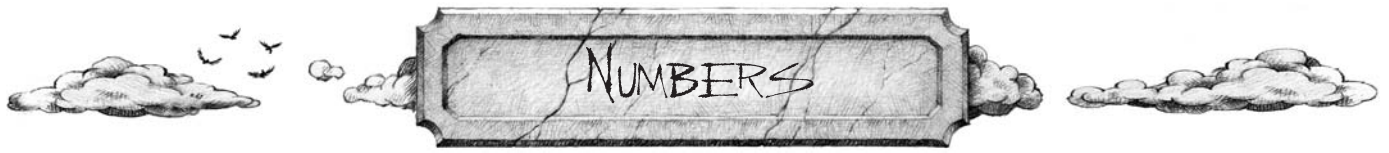
Paul Bunyan appears the way people expect him to: as a huge lumberjack dressed in warm clothing from his boots to his floppy woolen hat,

LIVING LEGENDS

Living legends are brought to life by the power of the unconscious mind pulling energy from the Hunting Grounds. But while night walkers come from the nightmares of sleepers, legends come from several people, all awake and thinking of the same legendary figure. In a manner similar to that in which night walkers are created (see *Book o' the Dead*), these characters have been given a limited life.

Also like night walkers, legends gain their power from the beliefs of those who give them life. However, while night walkers remain the same as long as they exist, a legend might gain or lose power from moment to moment, depending on what the mood of its audience is.

While the legends mentioned here are, for the



carrying a huge, double-edged ax. At first, he appears not-quite-real, as if he were made of something other than flesh—which he is. Sometimes, he is accompanied by Babe, a blue ox that stands 8' at the shoulder—as does Paul sometimes.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d8, N:2d6, S:4d12, Q:2d6, V:3d12
Fightin': ax 5d6, teamster 4d6, throwin': ax 5d8
Mental: C:2d6, K:1d6, M:3d8, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d12
Overawe 4d8, trade: lumberjack 6d6
Size: 7
Terror: 5
Special Abilities:

Belief: When Bunyan first shows up, it's like he's not fully finished but the more people believe in him, the stronger he grows. For every three people that believe in him, he can increase a Trait or Aptitude by one step. Since he only appears when people believe in him, this isn't very tough, and once folks see him, they believe even more.

Immunity: To almost everything. As a legend, Paul Bunyan can't be harmed unless the majority of the people think he can. The way to defeat a legend is to stop believing in him and to convince other people to not believe either.

PECOS BILL

Like Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill is a character out of legend, a work of fiction brought to life by the collective subconscious of people. Like Bunyan, Pecos draws his strength from the belief people have in him.

The stories say that Pecos Bill is the best rider, shooter, roper, and all-around cowboy there ever was or will be. As long as people believe it, that's exactly what he is.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d12, N:2d12, S:2d10, Q:4d12, V:2d8
Fightin': lariat 4d12, horse ridin' 6d12, quick draw:
pistol 4d12, shootin': pistol 10d12
Mental: C:3d6, K:2d6, M:4d10, Sm:3d8, V:4d6
Overawe 5d10
Size: 7
Terror: 5
Special Abilities:

Belief: See Paul Bunyan's profile

Immunity: See Paul Bunyan's profile

MEXICAN DRAGON

This creature is a huge iguana with the ability to breath fire. The dragon is mostly orange in color, with black stripes on the tail and belly, and gray and white patches on the head and belly. While iguanas are native to Mexico, a few of these creatures have crossed the border into the southern states and can be found in southern Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

The Mexican dragon is relatively peaceful and does not seek trouble. Still, the creatures, both male and female, are fiercely territorial. Also, while some of their smaller cousins are purely vegetarian, the Mexican dragon has a taste for meat, preferably warm. Carrion, if not too old, works too. Whatever it eats, the Mexican dragon aggressively attacks its chosen meal and defends it from interlopers as well.

If a Mexican dragon is startled, it may respond with a warning display, bobbing and shaking its head (treat this as its *overawe*). If this does not work, it turns to present its side to its opponents, glaring at them with one baleful, orange eye (this also counts as an *overawe* against opponents).

If molested, threatened, or attacked, the iguana might strike in one of three ways. Its first choice is to sweep with its tail if an opponent is in range. The tail makes up half the creature's length (about 12 feet in total) and can slap one or two opponents if they are close to the creature's hindquarters. The dragon's second preferred attack is breathing fire. Finally, if the opponents remain, the iguana attacks with its bite.

The Mexican dragon, like its normal cousins, is a stubborn animal. The dragon is persistent, and receives a +2 to any *guts* checks it makes to resist *overawes*.

Efforts have been made to capture these creatures, without any success so far. When entangled by lariats, whips, or similar weapons, the giant iguana uses an action to roll over, barely changing its location. The creature can pull the other end of a whip or lariat out of an opponent's hands by winning an opposed *Strength* roll. Because of the force with which the creature flips its body over, it adds +2 to its *Strength* roll.

Rumors tell of a flying version of this critter, a great, bat-winged monster even closer in form to the dragons of western myth, but these tales are unconfirmed. Still, if the Marshal wants to add a little extra challenge, give one of these beasts a pair of wings and a flying Pace of 20.

A flying Mexican dragon would make strafing



runs with its flaming breath, striking with its tail while still in flight, before landing to confront its opponents directly.

If the Marshal wants, these critters can be trained by especially powerful abominations—but not heroes—who could use them as guardians or perhaps even transportation.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d10, S:3d10, Q:4d8, V:3d12
 Climbin' 3d10, dodge 2d10, fightin': brawlin' 4d10,
 shootin': flame 3d6, swimmin' 2d10
 Mental: C:2d6, K:1d6, M:3d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:1d8
 Guts 2d8, overawe 3d10
 Size: 7 (6 feet long plus a 6-foot tail)
 Terror: 7
 Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Bite: STR+1d6. When the critter bites, it really digs in and holds on. Unless the posse can think of some way to make it let go, it holds on, jerking back and forth and causing its bite damage again on its next action.

Tail Slap: STR+2d6

Breathe Fire: The Mexican dragon can breathe fire as often as once per round, up to 10 times per encounter. It recharges the ability by eating meat and a variety of minerals found in the desert. The creature's flame jet has a range of 10 yards. The jet inflicts 2d10 damage on any opponent it hits, ignoring armor, and also lights any flammables on fire.

Too Stubborn to Die: The critter is treated as if it had twice as much Wind as normal, and does not fall unconscious until all its Wind has been depleted.



battlefield, but mists have been known to follow an anchor that has been removed from the place of its disgrace.

The most striking and memorable thing about the mourning mist is the sound it produces. The mist's chilling cry is comprised of several different elements: the moans and sighs of dying soldiers, the sharp retort of rifle fire, the low rumble of cannons, the shriek of wounded horses. These battle sounds combine to form a low, haunting drone that can be heard for several miles when the mist is active.

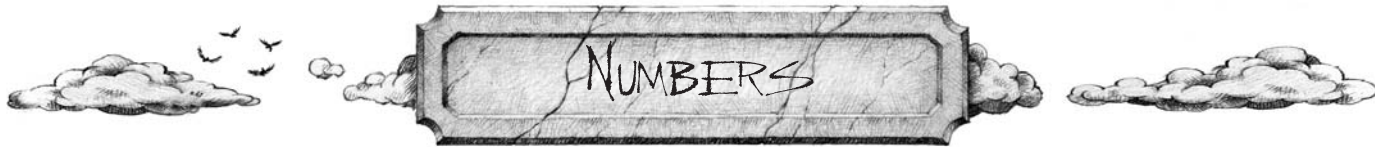
Because of the cry's supernatural nature, it is usually impossible to locate its source. The sound seems to emanate from everywhere and nowhere. But when the mist is attacked, the cry's source becomes obvious, and the noise can grow to unnerving loudness.

A mourning mist appears as a 15-foot cloud with a dark-red core between 8 and 10 feet in diameter. The entire mass pulses and flows on the breeze. The cloud is amorphous with thick tentacles and thin tendrils extending far beyond the core. The mist pales in color beyond the center, eventually trailing into sickly pinks and leprous whites at the edges. Puffs of sooty smoke and streaks of silver move through the

MOURNING MIST

Mourning mists are born at the sites of particularly ignoble battles, places where cowardice or treachery of an extreme nature caused a disastrous defeat or the loss of many lives. They are largely but not exclusively nocturnal.

Each mist is linked to a specific inanimate object, an "anchor" that embodies the nefarious act that first brought the mist into existence—the bugle that sounded a craven retreat, for example, or even the corpse of the general who issued the retreat order. The anchor is always within 10 miles of the mist to which it is linked. Most often, the item remains on the infamous



mass, ghostly reminders of cannon bursts and saber slashes. A study of the mist from closer than 10 feet reveals shadows of human faces twisted in screams of agony and moving through the creature's entire body.

The mourning mist is driven by one desire: to free itself from its weird existence by prompting someone to destroy the anchor to which the mist is linked.

To this end, the mist seeks to draw people into the empty trenches and blackened craters of its battlefield. The mist may roam far and wide, questing vainly for someone that can understand it. The mist prefers lone targets, as groups of people usually either attack or flee.

When a target nears, the mist reaches out with up to six tentacles, each of which can extend 20 feet in any direction. The phantasmal limbs do not cause damage directly at first, but they touch the victim's mind, projecting a nightmare vision of the event that created the mist into the victim's mind.

This usually has the unfortunate effect of driving the victim insane—or at least scaring the Hell out of her. Most lash out at the mist physically. While the mist can reform on the following day if it is destroyed, this causes the critter an extreme amount of pain, and it defends itself vigorously against any physical attack.

If the creature's anchor is discovered and *sanctified* by a character with the *arcane background: blessed Edge*, the mist disperses forever. A shaman can also remove the anchor's evil aura, which is considered a 7-Appasement Point *curse*.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d12, N:4d10, S:2d10, Q:3d8, V:1d12+4

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:2d10, K:1d4, M:1d12, Sm:1d10, Sp:1d8

Size: 12 (8' core)

Terror: 10

Special Abilities:

Hovering: Pace 24. Mourning mists hover a few feet off the ground and aren't slowed by material objects.

Immunity: Mourning mists are immune to all ranged weapons. However, fighting attacks and magic can affect the mist. If the mist is destroyed it reappears at the next sunset unless its anchor is destroyed.

Shared Pain: When initially encountered, the mourning mist attempts to share its pain with its victims. If the mist attacks successfully, it inflicts waking nightmares.

The victim must make a Hard (9) *Spirit* roll immediately. If he is successful, the mist's touch causes only a strong uneasiness and terrible sense of doom that costs the victim his next action. If he fails, his mind floods with images of the inglorious battle that created the mist. These images are chaotic, surrealistic, and nightmarish, but hold hints as to the nature and location of the anchor that must be destroyed to free the mist. The victim loses any remaining actions for the current round and is paralyzed for the next round too. Once the vision has ended the victim must make an Onerous (7) *guts* check, or lash out at the mist with his bare hands for 1d4 rounds.

Killing Touch: The mist always uses at least one of its tentacle attacks to "share its pain" with a victim. When physically threatened, however, it uses at least half its other attacks to defend itself. The mist can attack up to three targets on a single action, doing 3d6 cold damage as it inflicts the chill of the grave on its opponents. Non-magical Armor does not help against this attack.

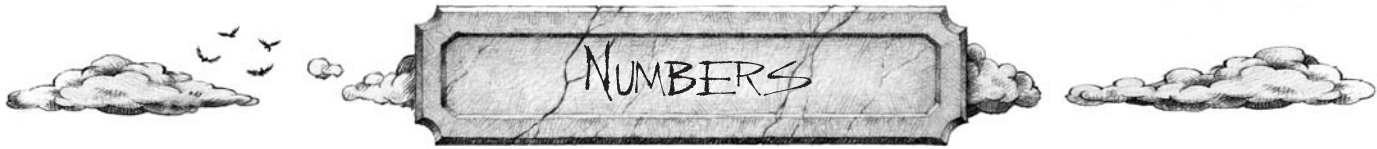
Voice o' Hell: Once a physical battle turns against a mourning mist, its cry becomes unnervingly loud within a 20-yard radius. This has the same effect as the *voice o' the damned* power described in *Book o' the Dead*. The mist's power level is considered 4 for the test of wills. The check need be made only once, regardless of how long the character stays in the screech's area of effect. The screech also gives all characters within range the *bad ears* Hindrance for 1d4 hours; those who make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll receive the *mild* Hindrance, while those who fail go *stone deaf*.

MURDEROUS HORDE

Not all the abominations loosed by the Reckoning have corporeal forms. Many are spirits that "borrow" the bodies of others, much as a manitou possesses a corpse to create a Harrowed. Some spirits just aren't interested in corpses, though, and devote their attentions to living animals, turning normal, everyday critters into bloodthirsty killers.

The spirit takes control of the lead animal (the "alpha") in a group of animals and, through it, the other members of the flock, pack, or whatever. The horde can also take control of other animals of the same species. Trained





animals or pets resist its domination but become agitated and are likely to snap at their owners.

The horde's controlling spirit can be banished by killing the alpha. The alpha is always the largest, most powerful animal and stands out from the others. Under the control of the horde spirit, the alpha seems unnaturally intelligent and radiates an almost palpable aura of evil.

The alpha recovers one wound level every day.

PROFILE

Corporeal: None. Use the possessed animal type and add +1 Coordination to all Traits for the alpha.

Fightin': as animal (the alpha adds +1 Coordination here too)

Mental: C:3d6, K:2d6, M:2d12, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d10

Overawe 4d12

Size: As animal

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Control Animals: The horde can control up to 3d12 Size in creatures (larger critters tend to be harder to control).

Critter: The horde has the same special abilities as the type of animal it controls.

Vulnerability to Salt: Salt disrupts the spirit's control. Any of the horde's controlled creatures that consume any salt are freed; most immediately flee the area. Should the alpha be tricked into eating salt, it immediately takes 3d6 damage to the guts. Rock salt loaded into a shotgun inflicts an extra 2d6 damage.

Vulnerability to Magic: Miracles, hexes, and favors can directly attack the spirit. *Soul blast* causes full damage to the horde spirit, plus half damage to the host.

NAGUAL

The naguals are creatures out of the ancient history of Central America. In the last days of the Aztec Empire, the emperor's most powerful sorcerer-priests attempted to concoct a suitable revenge against the Spanish soldiers that had ravaged the Aztecs once-mighty empire.

Nine of the emperor's best warriors were chosen to undergo a ritual to give them the power of the jaguar. In the darkness of the new moon, the sorcerers tore out the warriors' hearts with obsidian knives and replaced them with the hearts of jaguars, sealing the powers of the great cats in the breasts of the nine.

The warriors fought well in the guise of

jaguars, waging a nightly war against the invaders until only three warriors were left and their Empire was no more. These three agreed they must fade into the shadows and produce children who could carry on the fight for subsequent generations.

Eventually, some of the descendants of the original warriors, who held the essence of the jaguar within their breasts, migrated northward, settling in the lands that would eventually become the United States and the Confederate States of America. Here, the naguals changed form but rarely, always using their abilities to aid the poor and oppressed.

Then came the Reckoning. The arcane energies released from the Hunting Grounds warped and twisted some naguals, turning them into creatures of sinister cunning with a dark hatred of humanity.

Even the naguals that still fight for causes they feel to be right cannot help but generate fear in their victims and enemies, and so feed the Reckoners like any abomination. As a result, most even they eventually become tainted by evil and begin to terrorize the innocent.

Naguals are superficially similar to werewolves, humans able to transform themselves into animals. However, while the werewolf is the master of unbridled fury and rage, the nagual expert in cunning and stealth.

Like lycanthropes, naguals are affected by phases of the moon, and are forced to assume their jaguar forms on the dark nights of the new moon, which provide cover for their actions. Unlike standard wereforms, though, the nagual retains all its human intelligence and cunning in all its forms.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d10, N:3d12, Q:2d12+4, S:3d10, V:2d10
Climbin' 2d12, dodge 4d12, fightin': brawlin' 3d12, sneak 5d12, swimmin' 3d12

Mental: C:2d12, K:2d6, M:2d12, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d10
Trackin' 1d12

Size: 6

Terror: 5

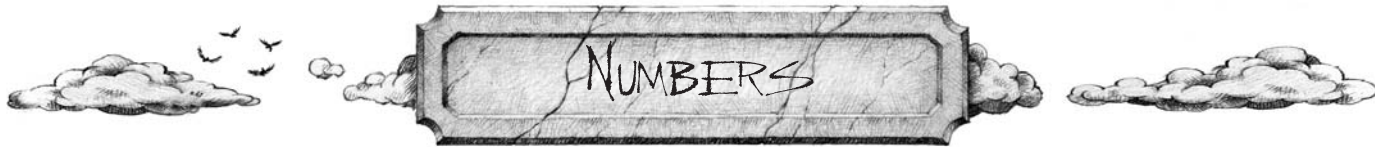
Special Abilities:

Claws: STR+1d6 (can attack twice per action)

Resistance: These critters take half damage from mundane attacks. Weapons of obsidian, as well as magical attacks, cause full damage.

Weapons: Naguals can use any normal weapons, but most prefer their natural ones.





NIGHT RAVEN

Everyone has nightmares, particularly in the Weird West. Indian legend tells that bad dreams are sometimes brought by dark birds in the night. These night ravens then feed off the fear generated by their victims' nightmares.

Night ravens can sense a sleeper's unconscious activity. They are attracted to vivid dreams and establish a psychic link with the dreamer. The raven then alters the content of the dream by drawing upon the sleeper's worries and fears, changing the dreams to generate even more anxiety and fear on which it feeds.

A night raven chooses a victim to whom it can return for several nights. At first, the changes it makes in the sleeper's dreams are minor, but with each visit the terror increases.

Night ravens never physically attack, and they flee from dangerous situations. When threatened, they try to make eye contact and frighten the attacker long enough to allow escape.

Night ravens are nearly indistinguishable from common ravens. However, while feeding, a night raven takes on a dark glow that suggests its evil nature. Anyone who sees a feeding raven must make a *guts* check against the bird's Terror.

Night ravens have been known to work as servitors of other abominations and even human sorcerers. These night ravens usually inflict nightmares on enemies of their masters.

When a night raven first selects a new victim, an opposed *Spirit* roll is made. If the sleeper wins, the raven tries again the next night. In any case, the night raven tries only three times before seeking an easier target.

If the raven wins, it can alter the sleeper's dreams. The first night, the nightmares are relatively mild and require the victim to make a *guts* roll against Terror 5. On each subsequent night, the power of the nightmare increases, and the Terror rises by +2. The dreams become more and more vivid, until, by the time the terror reaches 11, the victim suffers the physical ill effects of the nightmare. For example, if he was wounded in the nightmare, a wound appears on his waking form. Damage from the nightmares, however, is limited to Wind (after all, if the victim is to die, the raven wants it to be from fear). The visits continue until the raven is killed or the victim dies of fright.

The night raven's feathers can be used to make powerful dream catchers. Dream catchers made with a night raven's feathers prevent anyone sleeping under them from having nightmares. A night raven's feathers even help a person with *night terrors*, who, while sleeping under the feathers, needs only an Onerous (7) *Spirit* roll to have a restful night's sleep.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d6, S:1d4, Q:2d8, V:1d10
Mental: C:3d10, K:2d6, M:2d10, Sm:1d6, Sp:4d6

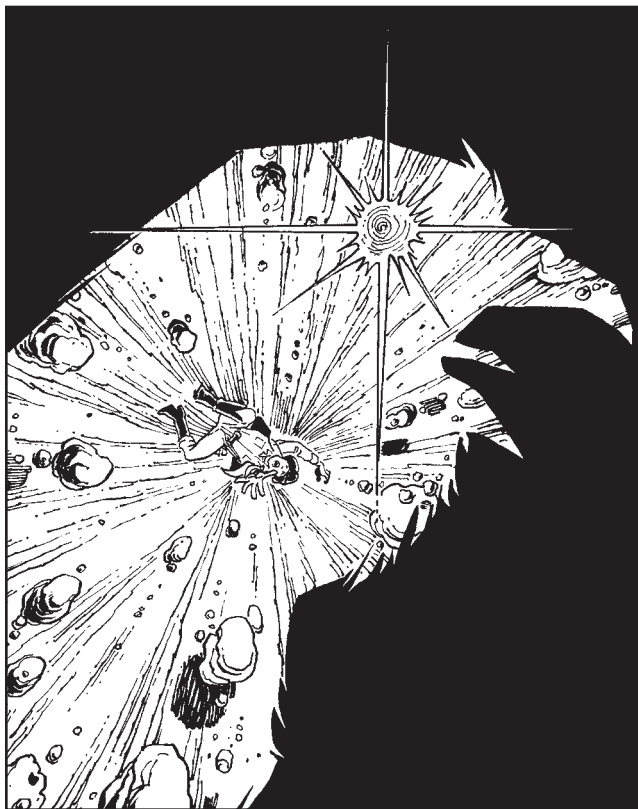
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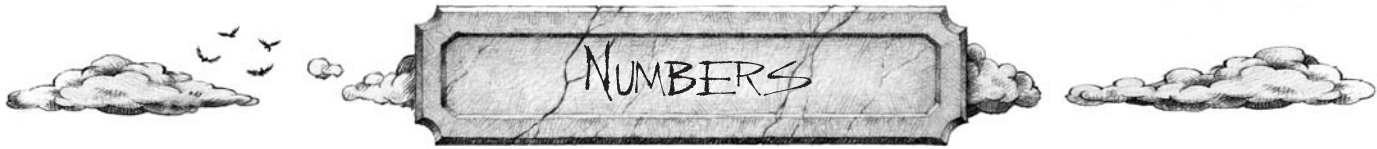
Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Baleful Stare: The night raven tries to make eye contact with anyone who would dare try to threaten it. Doing this is automatically successful against anyone who looks directly at the bird, though an Onerous (7) *Cognition* check allows a person to realize what is happening in time to look away. Anyone trying to avoid eye contact with the critter suffers a -2 penalty on any attacks made against it. A person who meets the raven's stare must immediately make a *guts* check with a -2 penalty to the roll because the creature's eyes convey an awful sense of supernatural horror.

Flight: Pace 20





PIT WASP

The pit wasp is a form of gigantic wasp with a hive mentality. Its spiky exoskeleton is predominantly red, so some people unfortunate enough to live close to a hive of the critters call them "red coats." The things range from about 2 feet long for the workers, to 3 feet for warriors and 6 feet or more for the queen.

Pit wasps chow down on wood and have been known to demolish small towns in search of sustenance. The wasps transform some of the cellulose into building material for their nests. Normally found in wooded areas, these nests are usually 12 to 30 feet tall and 20 to 90 feet across, with tunnels and pits dug beneath them. The tunnels branch out into the ground, and the entrance to the nest can be located up to a mile from the main body of it. These underground passages sometimes run close to the surface, and it isn't unheard of for a person or animal to fall through the ceiling of a tunnel. This makes the wasps pretty mad, and they swarm out to make short work of their unlucky visitor.

Fortunately for any wasp hunters, the nests burn easily, being composed of paper, more or less. However, the closer a person gets to the nest, the more wasps he meets, in three convenient sizes. The smallest are the workers, which make up about a third of the hive's population. Each of these critters is about 2 feet long and very strong, able to fly while carrying up to 40 pounds. The workers gather food and other necessary materials for the hive's survival and do all the building necessary.

Guarding the workers are the warriors, which make up most of the remaining third of the hive. Each of these nasty beasts measures about 3' in length. Warriors are fast and smart; they can solve problems creatively, and are difficult to trap or capture. Warriors have stingers connected to glands that secrete a powerful tranquilizer. Warriors guard the nest, the workers, and the queen.

Running the whole hive is the queen, a rarely seen critter. She usually stays underground, attended by a few males (useless critters that don't even have useful attacks) and a handful of workers and warriors. She directs the rest of the wasps by some unknown form of communication and lends her wisdom to the other members of the hive. The queen also produces a lot of eggs, and a hive that has only a dozen members one week might have a much larger population when next approached.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d6, S:2d4, Q:3d10, V:3d4

Dodge 2d6, fightin': brawlin' 1d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:2d6, Sp:1d10

Size: 2 (worker)/4 (warrior)/6+ (queen)

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Air Supremacy: When flying, a pit wasp increases its *Nimbleness* to 2d12. This also changes the critter's Aptitudes that are based on *Nimbleness* (*dodge* and *fightin'*).

Flight: Pace 12

Hivemind: Pit wasps within 100 yards of the queen are assumed to be in communication with her (even if separated by solid material) and use her Mental Traits. Because the queen has a higher *Spirit*, this increases the Wind of the other wasps.

Queen's Will: The hive's mother and director has 2d6 in *Knowledge* and 2d10 in both *Smarts* and *Spirit*.

Stinger: STR+1d6

Tranquilizer: Warriors and queens have poison stings. Any victim stung by one of these pit wasps takes 1d6 Wind damage at the beginning of every round thereafter until unconscious. The effect of multiple stings is cumulative, so someone who gets stung twice takes 2d6 Wind at the beginning of the next round.

Warrior's Prowess: Warrior pit wasps double the Coordination of their *dodge* and *fightin'* Aptitudes and add +3 to their flying Pace. In addition, they have a *Smarts* of 2d8.

Worker's Strength: A worker pit wasp has a *Strength* of 2d6 and a *Quickness* of 3d8.

POISON WOMAN

An old Sioux legend claims that once upon a time, women could pull their brains out of their heads and use the old gray matter to brew poisons. While some might simply dismiss this as a misogynist tale, there is a bit of truth to it—at least since the Reckoning.

Men are not subject to this particular curse. Whenever a woman kills a man with poison within the borders of the Sioux Nations (including Deadwood), there is a chance she becomes a poison woman. From a fresh deck, draw 1 card, plus 1 card for each point of Grit she has. If a Joker comes up, she attracts the attention of the Reckoners, who throw a little seed of nasty energy into her head, blowing the top of it off.



NUMBERS



Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Arcane Abilities: Some poison women can use shamanic abilities or black magic.

Invulnerability: Poison women are immune to all forms of harm. Attacks simply inflict no damage. The only way to harm a poison woman is to attack her through the hole in her noggin. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to hit her brains. Attackers suffer a -10 penalty to attacks to hit the hole, and then only if they manage to position themselves so they can see the hole.

Kick: STR+1d6

Coup: Any Harrowed who absorbs the essence of a poison woman can scoop out some of his or her own brains and use them to poison the walkin' dead. Any walkin' dead smelling the stuff drop whatever they're doing and chow down on the brains for 1d4 rounds, after which they must make an Incredible (II) *Vigor* roll or drop dead (for good this time) on the spot. This little stunt causes an automatic wound to the Harrowed character's head, which can't be cured by magic or first aid, though the *stitchin'* power still works, as does normal Harrowed healing.

A poison woman looks exactly as she did before except that her legs are much thicker and stronger than before, and the top of her skull is missing and part of her brains are exposed. She wears a hat or something to cover up her brain, since it is her only weakness.

The truly grotesque part of all this is that a poison woman can pick out hunks of her brain and use the stuff to poison foods. She takes no damage from doing this, and the lost brain matter regenerates within an hour or so.

The poison, once in food, is difficult to detect, requiring an Incredible (II) *Cognition* roll. A subject who ingests the poison must make an Incredible (II) *Vigor* check once every 10 minutes for the next two hours. Each failure on the *Vigor* test means the victim takes 1 wound to the guts. If the target goes bust on a *Vigor* roll, he dies immediately.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d8, N:2d4, Q:1d10, S: 1d12, V:3d8
 Fightin': brawlin' 4d4, filchin' 6d8, sleight o' hand 7d8

Mental: C:3d4, K:4d10, M:3d10, Sm:5d12, Sp:5d8
 Bluff 5d12, persuasion 5d10

POX WALKER

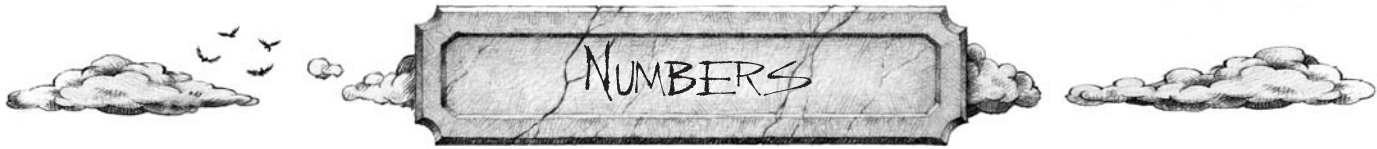
It was an evil practice, but it happened all the same. Diseased blankets and utensils were sold to the Indians, and tens of thousands of them died from diseases brought by the white man.

Some of them decided not to take it lying down.

When a particularly angry brave or shaman dies of smallpox or some other disease brought by the white man, there is a chance the Reckoners take notice of this fact and give the body new life as an abomination so it can spread the pestilence. After all, there's nothing like a good plague to cause a panic.

A pox walker is an Indian who has died of smallpox (or another virulent disease) and has been animated to spread it and the fear it generates. They are solitary creatures who use stealth and vicious cunning to spread the disease among those they feel have wronged them. Fortunately, thus far, the appearance of a pox walker is incredibly rare.

Fighting a pox walker is particularly difficult, as close contact may be enough to pass the disease on to whoever is nearby—especially if



one of the boils on its body bursts, which it might do in combat (see below).

Pox walkers shun firearms, preferring to fight their prey close up (the better to spread the disease). However, some pox walkers, particularly those from the Apache Nations and the Coyote Confederation, have been known to stab themselves with arrows, covering the arrowheads with pus before firing them.

Pox walkers choose a white man over all others—and anyone else before an Indian—as an opponent. Some have thrown themselves off cliffs or into rivers rather than attack the native peoples, but these are few and far between. Woe betide any brave who thinks himself safe because of his race.

Once the pox walker is dead, the body must be burned immediately, or else there is a good chance that flies or other vermin may carry the disease elsewhere.

Like the pox walker itself, the disease it carries has been altered by Reckoners, changed into a vile combination of several diseases.

Anyone who contracts the pox begins suffering symptoms within the hour. The symptoms get worse as time goes by. Every day after contracting the Pox, the victim must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* check. Failure means the victim moves into the next stage of the disease. In all cases, the symptoms mentioned are permanent until the course of the disease is reversed.

In every stage of the disease, the victim loses 1d4 Wind and takes a wound to the guts. Each of the victim's Corporeal Traits is reduced by -1 die type. So, for example, by stage three the victim loses 3d4 Wind, has a serious wound in the Guts, and all his traits are reduced by three die types.

At stage one, the symptoms are merely a case of the chills and a slight cough.

In the second stage of the disease, the victim's cough gets worse, a fever develops, and bright red sores appear all over the victim's body.

At the third stage, the cough and fever worsen, and the sores begin to itch and fill with pus. The victim also becomes contagious, as if he had the pox walker's *virulent breath* (as described below).

In the next—and final—stage of the disease, the victim's body is wracked by constant tremors and chills. The coughing is almost constant, and the victim's vision blurs. The sores begin to burst, oozing pus, and the victim gains the pox walker's *spatter* ability. If a victim in the fourth stage of the disease fails another *Vigor* check, his body is wracked by a final, great spasm as he dies. After death, if a card draw indicates that

the victim would become Harrowed, he instead becomes a pox walker.

During the course of the disease, if the victim's Wind drops to nothing, he falls into a delirium, able to do little more than thrash around semiconsciously. If the victim's *Strength* or *Vigor* drop below d4, he becomes unable to walk or even crawl, and cannot lift anything or perform even the simplest of physical actions. If any other Traits drop below d4 appropriate penalties should be applied. For example, if his *Cognition* drops to nothing, he becomes blind and deaf. If all Traits drop to nothing, the victim dies.

Healing can be attempted at any stage of the disease. Use the wound level to the character's guts to find the difficulty of the healing attempt. One successful attempt is necessary to arrest the development of the disease, and another is needed to reverse the disease by one stage. If the victim has advanced more than one stage, a successful healing attempt is required to reverse each stage. The disease can't be reversed faster than it advanced, so after stage 3 is reversed, a day must pass before an attempt can be made to reverse stage 2.

If healing is unavailable and the Marshal doesn't want this to be fatal to a posse member, roll 1d4 for the stage of the disease, and another 1d4 to see how long it lasts before the hero recovers. The victim still suffers all the symptoms up to and including the stage rolled.

Harrowed characters are immune to the effects of the disease, but if subjected to it (through either *spatter* or *virulent breath*), they must make a Hard (9) *Spirit* check or become carriers of the disease, as described in the coup section.

PROFILE

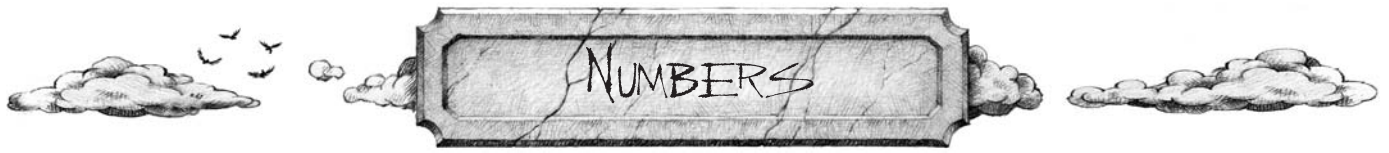
Corporeal: D:1d8, N:2d6, S: 2d10, Q:3d8, V:3d10
Bow 3d8, climbin' 3d6, dodge 2d6, fightin': knife
3d6, fightin': wrasslin' 4d6, sneak 2d6
Mental: C:2d8, K:1d8, M:1d6, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d10
Area knowledge: home area 4d8, search 2d8,
trackin' 4d8

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Gear: The pox walker usually carries at least a knife and a bow and arrows, both of which it coats with the toxin from the sores on its body. This coating is good for one hit, and the pox walker can re-apply the toxin with an action. Whenever hit with one of these weapons, the target must make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll, or come down with the pox.





Special Abilities:

Spatter: Any time the pox walker is hit in combat, it makes a Fair (5) *Vigor* roll. If it succeeds, one of the sores on its body bursts, spattering pus around. Anyone within a 10-foot radius has a chance to be hit with a bursting puss-filled sore. Anyone within that radius must make an Onerous (7) *dodge* roll. Those that fail must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll. Failure indicates they enter the first stage of the pox.

Virulent Breath: A pox walker tries to grapple with antagonists whenever possible, attempting to breathe its foul, disease-tainted breath into the face of whoever comes into contact with it. If the pox walker wins two consecutive opposed *fightin': wrasslin'* rolls, it pins a victim long enough to breathe in his face. The victim must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll or enter the first stage of the pox. Even if the victim makes the *Vigor* roll, he takes 2d6 Wind, and receives a -2 to all Corporeal Aptitude and Trait rolls for the next two rounds, due to the noxious smell of the pox walker's breath. The effect is cumulative if the same victim gets breathed on again before recovering.

Coup: A Harrowed who counts coup with a pox walker gains a variant of the *sicken* power (detailed in *Book o' the Dead*). If the Harrowed comes into contact with a person infected with a disease (be it a cold, smallpox, or even gangrene), she can try to absorb that disease by making an Onerous (7) *Vigor* roll. If successful, the Harrowed absorbs the disease, and the victim is "cured." If she fails, the disease is not absorbed, and the victim is not cured. If she goes bust, not only is the victim not cured, but the disease actually gets worse, and the Harrowed becomes a carrier anyway. Only one disease can be carried (and one victim cured) at a time. To stop being a carrier of the disease, the Harrowed must deliberately pass the disease on to someone else. If the Harrowed decides not to pass on the disease and simply holds it, after about three weeks, the disease starts to bleed off into the air around her and affect people anyway. After a number of people equal to the Harrowed's *Vigor* die type have been affected—or a period of two months goes by without any living human contact—the disease fully dissipates.

RIVER LEVIATHAN

As might be expected in the Weird West, this is a right strange critter. The river leviathan, sometimes known as a river fiend, is an octopus altered by the Reckoners. This huge abomination is a formidable foe.

The leviathan looks like a big, black octopus about 40 feet across, with tentacles each about 20 feet long.

Most of the time, this critter sits on the bottom of a river, tentacles extended upward to grab prey. It can also rise to the surface of the water and sometimes adopts a wrecked ship or other large object as an improvised shell and then goes in search of prey.

Whether the leviathan goes hunting, or lies in wait for its prey, it attacks first with its long tentacles. In fact, many victims see nothing of the critter but the tentacles and think they're dealing with a bunch of black, eyeless snakes. Those who live past their capture, though, might just catch a glimpse of the leviathan's body before the tentacle deposits them in the thing's mouth.

The loss of a few tentacles doesn't really hurt the abomination; it can replace a lost tentacle in about a week.

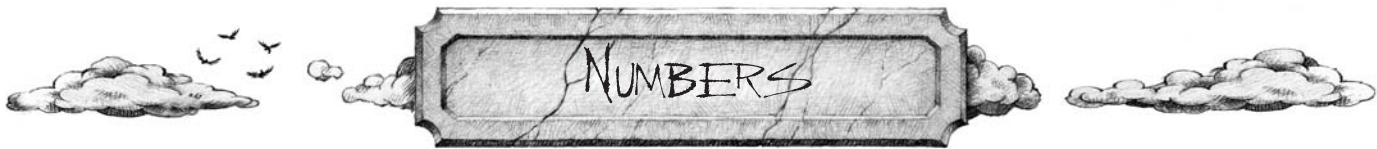
Because damaging the tentacles doesn't hurt the body, the tentacles are considered separate entities for the purpose of wounds. This makes the abomination a two-tiered threat: the posse can face just the tentacles, or can take on the body too. Of course, if the critter comes along wearing an ironclad, the posse might not have a choice.

The leviathan locates its prey by sensing heat with patches on its long tentacles. As a result, the critter equates greater heat with larger prey (so long as the source moves like prey), and might be duped into attacking a torch or other fire source (a successful *bluff* roll must be made by a hero attempting the deception).

A leviathan that has housed itself in a wrecked ship can move like its "shell" would. A hero who succeeds on an Onerous (7) *search* roll notices something out of the ordinary. Of course, the critter gives itself away when it attacks, as not many ships have tentacles.

Much like the octopus that it resembles, the leviathan can exhale clouds of ink into the water to mask its retreat. It can also exhale this ink into the air as plumes of black smoke. This helps its imitation of a steam-powered ship, and allows it to blind and confuse prey.





PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d10, S:4d12, Q:4d10, V:2d12+4
 Fightin' brawlin': 3d10, sneak 4d10, swimmin' 4d10
 Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:3d10, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d12
 Size: 4 (tentacle) or 24 (main body)

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Artificial Armor: The Missouri River leviathan sometimes makes a home for itself in a shipwreck or even in a house that has collapsed into the water. From its protected location, it can still attack with its tentacles. The amount of armor depends on the material used (refer to the Armor section, under Combat, in the main rulebook). Fortunately, there are usually gaps in armor of this sort.

Big Bite: The critter's central beak, 6' across, inflicts STR+2d8 damage.

Big Gulp: The leviathan can swallow opponents that it bites with its central mouth, provided the victim is no larger than Size 8. A swallowed person (if she lives) is also in a position to inflict great damage to the abomination, because the creature's vital organs can be struck from inside the stomach. Any successful attack made by someone in the stomach hits the leviathan's unarmored gizzards. However, besides worrying about drowning and any wounds already suffered, the gut-diver also takes 2d6 damage per round from the critter's digestive juices.

Body Wounds: The leviathan can take twice as much Wind as expected (56 instead of 28) before falling unconscious and sliding beneath the waves to recover. For attacks that actually cause wounds, roll location normally. A result of legs or arms damages the critter's multitude of tendrils. Although the leviathan has no head as such, if the hit location is the noggin, the attack has hit the critter in an equivalent region.

Heat Sense: The leviathan can "see" with its tentacles, sensing heat from living creatures. It's possible to distract the tentacles into attacking a big enough heat source if it moves like it's alive. If someone tries to distract the beast like this, consider it an opposed test between the hero's *Nimbleness* and the leviathan's *Cognition*.

Swimming: Pace 30. The leviathan can change its depth at will, and can swim while wearing the hull of a wrecked ship.

Tentacle Grab: On a successful *fightin'*

brawlin' roll, the leviathan can grab a victim within its reach. The abomination needs three rounds to then drag its victim to the central mouth; during this time, the victim can free herself by getting a raise on an opposed *Strength* roll.

Tentacle Wounds: A tentacle takes wounds according to its Size. All Wind damage to tentacles is ignored because it doesn't affect the main body and the tentacles can't be rendered unconscious. If you track wounds by location, use three different locations: base (results of legs or arms), center (results of guts or gizzards), and tip (noggin). A maiming wound to any of these locations severs the tentacle at that point.

Vulnerability to Fire: The leviathan is especially sensitive to fire and takes an additional die of damage from any fire-based attack. If the critter is using a ship as armor, and that ship is set ablaze, it usually breaks off any attacks and dives for safety—though some especially persistent individuals will dive only long enough to extinguish the flames, then continue attacking.



SADDLE BURR

If the Reckoners created the Black Regiment from the fear generated by the Civil War, saddle burrs must come from the fear produced by a bug down the pants. Rarely are the burrs enough to make anyone water their boots, but the *consequences* of a burr bite might. Running from a lynching party to find that your horse can barely stand or that you can't use your trigger finger may be cause for alarm.

Saddle burrs stick to anything that touches them until smashed or attached to something else—a cowpoke who picks the critters off his horse's legs only finds the danged things stuck to his glove. Anyone who tries to squish a burr pushes the quills into her hand, getting a little jolt of poison unless something sturdier than hardened leather is used as protection.

Burrs should be used to add a little humor to the campaign or to cause special problems for the posse—like not being able to use a gun hand in a duel the next day. The posse might run into 1d4 burrs while out riding the plains or even just strolling around a frontier town. The prickly little things seem to come from nowhere.

Whenever the posse rides into or kicks up

saddle burrs, roll one die per burr. On an even number it sticks to the mount; on an odd number it sticks to the cowpoke. Then roll to see where it sticks. The burr's quills are sharp enough to pierce even hardened leather, so a cowpoke trying to pick them off his horse only finds them stuck to his hands instead.

If the hero touches a burr, the critter gets to make a *fightin': brawlin'* roll to jab him with a quill. If the character grabs and pulls, he forces the quills into his own skin, giving the critter an automatic hit. Once a quill has pierced skin, it sucks up a drop or two of blood (not even enough to cause Wind damage) and injects a mild poison. The poison makes the spot swell up and become very tender for 1d4 days.

While the spot is sore, the victim receives a -4 penalty to all rolls that require the use of the stung area. For example, a gunslinger stung on the trigger finger gets a -4 to *shootin'*; and a cowpoke who sat on a burr takes a -4 to *ridin'*. A horse that is stung gets ornery for a few days, much more likely to throw anyone trying to ride it. An extra sting to the same area causes an additional -2 penalty.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d10, Q:4d12, S:1d4, V:1d6
 Dodge 2d10, *fightin': brawlin'* 2d10
 Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:2d4, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d4
 Size: 1 (up to 1" in diameter)
 Terror: 3

Special Abilities:

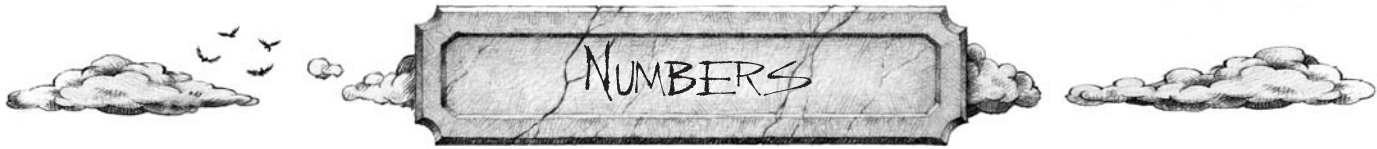
- Pace: 1. The burr doesn't move much on its own, but can roll along a little if it must.
- Proliferation: Saddle burrs reproduce using kinetic energy. Someone who tries to shake off a burr soon has two burrs. If a burr is shaken for an action, it duplicates itself, and the new burr attaches right next to its prickly pappy.

SCARECROW

The abomination known as the scarecrow is a malevolent creature, animated by the Reckoners so it might scare more than just crows. And if it has to cause a little mayhem to frighten folks, that's okay too.

A scarecrow is made from clothing once worn by a person, stuffed with corn husks or straw. The head is often a pumpkin or dried gourd, but it might be a grain sack with buttons for eyes and a stitched mouth. And while normal scarecrows don't often have hands or feet, this





abomination has both. These extremities look like ears of corn from which the kernels have been stripped: flaky, dry, and pocked.

These critters are active only at night during the growing season and they "sleep" the rest of the time, usually hanging on a pole, pretending to be normal scarecrows. When they come to life though, there's nothing normal about them. They stalk their fields, attacking anyone that trespasses in their domain, sometimes traveling short distances from the fields to find other victims. Scarecrows favor sharp farming tools like sickles (treat as Bowie knives) and scythes or pitchforks (treat as sabers).

Once a scarecrow has taken a life, it can reproduce. It starts by growing seeds (like giant, black kernels of corn) in rows along its belly, one seed for each life it takes. Once these seeds get to be about the size of a fist (in about a month), they can be planted. The next night, a lesser scarecrow, sometimes called a "corn stalker," sprouts. It quickly grows to around 2 feet in height, with sharp claws, scrawny body that looks like twisted corn husks, a head that resembles a pumpkin with a leering face, and sharp claws. A corn stalker obeys the scarecrow, until it takes a life or the scarecrow is destroyed.

If the corn stalker takes a life, it leaves its home field in search of a field with a normal scarecrow. Once it finds one, the corn stalker nestles inside, spreading its evil essence through the thing and animating it, becoming a full-fledged scarecrow itself. If instead the scarecrow is destroyed, the first corn stalker to take a life grows into a scarecrow in that same field.

Any damage taken by a scarecrow or corn stalker is completely healed while the abomination sleeps the next day.

Destroying a scarecrow is no easy task because most weapons can't harm it. If its head is destroyed, it falls down as if dead, only to reanimate again the next night. The only sure way to kill a scarecrow is to burn it to ashes.

PROFILE (SCARECROW)

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:4d10, S:2d8, Q:4d10, V:3d6
 Fightin': scythe or sickle 4d10, sneak 3d10
 Mental: C:3d8, K:1d6, M: 2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d8
 Size: 6
 Terror: 9
 Special Abilities:

Brainless and Gutless: Since the scarecrow has no vital organs, attacks to the noggin or gizzards don't cause any extra damage. Still, a maiming wound to the head puts the

scarecrow down until the next night.
 Immunity: To Wind or physical stress. The scarecrow suffers no damage from unarmed attacks, and attacks from firearms are treated as if the scarecrow had Armor of 1.
 Vulnerability to Fire: Fire causes normal damage to scarecrows. If it causes enough damage to kill the scarecrow, the thing's death is permanent.

PROFILE (CORN STALKER)

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d8, S:2d6, Q:3d10, V:3d6
 Fightin': brawlin' 3d8, sneak 3d10
 Mental: C:3d6, K:1d4, M: 1d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d8
 Size: 2
 Terror: 7
 Special Abilities:

Brainless and Gutless: See the scarecrow.
 Claws: STR+1d6
 Go to Ground: The corn stalker can spend an action to enter the soil as if sucked into the ground. On its next action, it can reappear anywhere in its home field.
 Immunity: To Wind or physical stress.
 Vulnerability to Fire: See the scarecrow.

SIN EATER

The sin eater is a fearmonger generated by the Reckoners to take advantage of the beliefs of simple folk. While the eating of an apple left on a grave is the way the creature works in the Ozarks, all that it really needs is the grave of a person buried in unconsecrated ground. Once it finds such a grave, the sin eater absorbs the body and can then call upon the memories and knowledge of the dead and can even take on the appearance of the departed soul for short periods of time. It uses these powers to cause fear among the enemies of the deceased, as well as grief for the departed's family.

The sin eater looks like a large, clear sack of translucent jelly with shadowy, writhing forms inside. Occasionally, a hand or face comes to the surface of the creature's skin, as if attempting to escape its awful prison.

The sin eater can take on the physical appearance of any person whose soul it has devoured. The sin eater usually can only hold this shape for an hour, after which it reverts to its original form. It uses this ability to torment the friends and family of the deceased. The sin eater is able to read the souls it has absorbed, allowing it to know personal details about that person's life, down to accent, manner of speech,



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and any painful secrets or facts in the person's history. The sin eater visits the people close to the person absorbed, causing as much psychological pain and suffering as possible. After dropping a disguise, the sin eater must rest for eight hours before trying a new one.

The only way to drive off the sin eater is by physical violence or discerning its true nature. If attacked, the sin eater strikes back, fighting until it kills at least one person close to the soul that it has devoured. If driven off, it continues to return in the form of the devoured soul until it claims at least one life. Then it moves on.

Anyone who was close to the mimicked individual has a chance of noticing a fault in the performance with a Hard (9) *scrutinize* check. If its disguise is penetrated and the sin eater knows it, it reverts to its true form (to cause one last bit of fear) and oozes away into the night.

The sin eater can be put down by normal weapons, but it always arises at the site of the next body buried in unhallowed ground. The only way to permanently destroy the sin eater is to cut it to pieces and bury each piece in consecrated ground. This can be difficult, because many graveyards throughout the West have never seen a practicing minister and thus

have not been blessed. Sacred Indian burial grounds would do just fine, but Indians would be upset to find a paleface burying grisly pieces of some slimy critter in their holy ground.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:3d8, S:2d10, Q:2d8, V:4d12
Climbin' 3d8, dodge 4d8, fightin' brawlin' 2d8
Mental: C:3d8, K:2d6, M:1d8, Sm:3d8, Sp:2d6
Overawe 4d8, persuasion 3d8, ridicule 3d8
Size: 6 (can adjust to any size from 4 to 8)
Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 3. The sin eater's resilient body absorbs damage—to a point, if you'll pardon the pun. Stabbing and slashing weapons such as bayonets, knives, and sabers are unaffected by this ability. Damage caused by all other weapons is reduced as if by armor and heals at the rate of 1d10 Wind and 1d2 wounds per 10 minutes. Damage caused by bladed weapons heals at the normal rate.

SKINSHIFTER

Skinshifters are Indians who have sacrificed their souls to the Reckoners for power. While not Harrowed, they share many aspects of the undead, including considerable power. They appear as frail shadows of men, with pasty white skin that hangs from their bones. Their eyes glow with an evil, purplish light.

As part of the ritual to become a skinshifter, an Indian must devour the heart of an innocent, usually a child. After this act, the Reckoners transform the criminal into a creature of legend.

Skinshifters are nocturnal, hiding in their caves by day, where they perform rituals with sand paintings depicting foul deeds perverse by the standards of even the non-religious.

The power of the Reckoners poisons the skinshifter's body, and its life force must be replenished by that of others. In this regard, skinshifters are much like the vampires of Europe. If a skinshifter goes more than a week without feeding, its body wastes away.

Their victims are usually solitary people lost in the wilderness. When a camped group is encountered, the skinshifter tries to lead one of them away to a place where he is isolated and vulnerable. After feeding, the skinshifter gains certain physical characteristics from the victim, which remain for a day or so. It is from this ability that these creatures get their name.

When the skinshifter has completely drained



a victim, it can assume some of the victim's characteristics. The Marshal draws a card from his Action Deck. The higher the value, the closer the skinshifter comes in appearance to its victim. The suit determines the duration. The base duration (Clubs) is 24 hours, and each successive suit adds an extra day. The critter assumes only the physical likeness, none of the personal quirks, so it's pretty easy for friends of the deceased to figure out this thing is nothing but an impostor.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d10, S: 3d8, Q:2d12, V:3d6
 Fightin': brawlin' 3d10, sneak 3d10
 Mental: C:2d10, K:3d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d10, Sp:1d8
 Overawe 2d8, scrutinize 3d10, trackin' 4d10
 Size: 6

Terror: 10

Special Abilities:

Claws: STR+1d8

Shadow Walking: The skinshifter has the ability to teleport itself between shadows.

The critter merely steps into a shadowy place and reappears in another such area within 30 yards. This is not an effortless action, and each use costs 1d4 Wind.

Drain Soul: This is like the Harrowed power *soul eater* at level 2. This power is modified: The skinwalker must drain one victim each week or die.

Coup: A Harrowed character who absorbs the essence of a skinwalker gains the *soul eater* power at level 1.

STONE MAN

Stone men result from difficult rituals performed by shamans who have chosen to forsake the nature spirits in favor of commerce with darker powers. Posse members can never learn the rituals necessary.

To create a stone man, the shaman must first locate a man in the final stages of ghost rock fever. The unfortunate soul is brought to a secluded place in the mountains or other rocky territory, placed inside an arcane circle, and nailed to the ground with nine wooden stakes. Once the victim is secure, the shaman begins a complex ritual, the details of which make other rituals look like Sunday picnics. As the victim begins to spontaneously combust, the shaman calls out to the manitous and their dark masters for attention.

If the shaman has done everything right, as



the victim is consumed by fever the Reckoners throw in a bit of their energy, causing the surrounding rock to reach up and encase the remains of the victim in stone. The result is basically humanoid, but made of rough rock.

The shaman—provided he survives the dark ceremony (there's about a 25% chance)—can issue orders to the stone man. If the shaman wins an opposed *Spirit* contest with the stone man, the abomination does what the shaman tells it to do (if you don't want to worry about the shaman, just assume he died during the ritual).

The stone man is expert at tracking, stealth, ambushes, and hunting, though it pursues only human prey. It eats anyone it catches, making it impossible for victims to come back Harrowed or be restored to life through any means.

The creature's thick hide is proof against many weapons, but it is far from indestructible. Its most curious flaw is that it is disgusted by any blood it doesn't spill personally. Another unusual weakness involves its club, which contains its sense of smell. The creature is unable to track or hunt if deprived of the club. It is also vulnerable to fire and to wooden stakes like those used to stake the victim of the ritual.

NUMBERS

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d6, S:5d12, Q:3d6, V:4d12

Climbin' 3d6, fightin': club 4d6, sneak 5d6

Mental: C:3d8, K:1d6, M:4d10, Sm:2d4, Sp:3d12

Search 4d8, trackin' 6d8

Size: 7

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 4. The stone man's armor is ineffective against fire and wooden stakes. It works just like regular armor against most other things.

Immunity: To Wind damage.

Squeamish: The stone man must make a *guts* check with a -4 penalty whenever it sees blood it hasn't spilled itself.

Stone Club: STR+3d8 damage, Speed 2, +1 Defensive Bonus. The stone man cannot track or otherwise use its sense of smell if it loses its club.

Vulnerability to Fire: A single wound from fire causes the stone man to burst into inextinguishable flames. Unfortunately, it takes a good 12 hours or so for the thing to burn to death, during which time it is perfectly functional and even inflicts an

extra 1d8 combat damage due to the flames. However, at the end of 12 hours, the creature crumbles to gravel with shards of ghost rock burning throughout.

Vulnerability to Wooden Stakes: The stone man can be harmed by wooden stakes like those used to pin the original victim during the ritual. Such stakes ignore the creature's armor and have statistics equivalent to a Bowie knife (including causing STR+1d6 damage). The creature can be finally destroyed if a maiming wound is dealt to its heart with a wooden stake. Of course, with the difficulty of hitting the heart (+10 to hit) and the creature's Size, it's still no easy task to poke it in the heart with a piece of wood while it hammers away with its club.

Coup: If a Harrowed character helps defeat the stone man, she can take the abomination's club—but she can't use it unless she has a *Strength* of 3d12 or better. It has the same speed and causes the same damage as for the stone man and even adds an extra die to the Harrowed's *trackin'* Aptitude.

TARNISHED PHANTASY

This abomination is created when a woman of questionable morals, like your typical saloon gal, dies in an effort to save someone she loves. While a noble death such as this would hardly seem likely to generate an abomination, the powers of the Reckoners can often twist good deeds to evil ends.

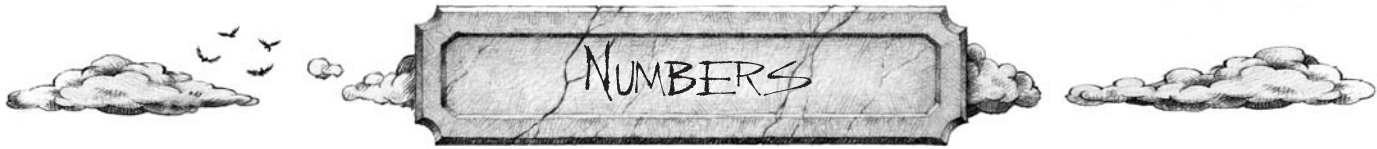
If the conditions are right, the soiled dove may return to the world of the living as a tarnished fantasy, a phantasmal creature that drains the life energy of sleeping men by visiting them with erotic dreams.

As a piece of delicious irony, the fantasy is first drawn to the very man who she sacrificed her life for—if he still lives. After destroying him, the tarnished fantasy turns fickle, "loving" almost any man she might encounter.

During her nocturnal visits to men, the tarnished fantasy drains them physically. Each visit reduces the victim's highest corporeal Trait by one die type (if there's a tie for highest, roll randomly). Reduction goes from d4 to nothing. A victim who has any physical Trait reduced to nothing dies of exhaustion.

This creature seems to be a modern variation on the mythological succubi, who drained the life out of men through sex. There also might be a connection to fairy-tale hags, who used to "ride" mortal men to death in their sleep.





PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d4, S:1d4, Q:3d8, V:2d8
 Mental: C:3d6, K:2d6, M:3d12, Sm:2d10, Sp:3d10
 Performin': actin' 2d12, persuasion 4d12
 Size: 6
 Terror: 7
 Special Abilities:

Immunity: To all physical damage, except that inflicted by her victim if he can be convinced to attack her. She is vulnerable to arcane damage from any quarter.

TERRORMENTALS

The terrormentals are terrifying memories from times gone by. These four creatures once walked the earth freely, sowing fear and destruction wherever they went.

Unlike elementals of mythology, these creatures are born and bred of the Reckoning. As such, their goal is destruction, mayhem, and above all, the creation of terror.

Each terrormental has its own attack form and way in which it can be slain. Unlike most such creatures, magical attacks don't hurt a terrormental just because they're magical. A magically conjured jet of water can hurt the fire terrormental just like regular water, but a *soul blast* won't even make it flinch.

Terrormentals can change forms as needed, so holing up in a cabin isn't going to protect a chosen victim much. Earth can collapse into the ground and erupt from beneath, while water, fire, and air can come in through any walls that aren't airtight.

These creatures are tough. If you plan on using them in your game, realize they're not like walkin' dead or other critters your posse can just fight its way through with a hail of bullets. Defeating each of these fiends is more like a deadly puzzle than a fight.

Legend speaks of a stone tablet bearing the secrets of controlling the elements. This tablet also is said to contain the ritual that can force a terrormental to return to earth *permanently*. Supposedly, the Texas Rangers took the tablet from a group of cultists in Atlanta several years ago. Mina Devlin has offered five thousand dollars to anyone who brings her this relic.

An ancient ritual allows a person to transform him or herself into a living vessel of the elements: earth, fire, water, and air. The petitioner becomes the terrormental and is consumed in the act—something some cultists seem to know and others don't until it is too late. It is even

possible for a cult leader to trick his followers into performing the ritual. The terrormental can be controlled with a separate spell.

These are black magic spells as outlined in *The Quick & the Dead*. Usually only cultists who worship nature or the elements have access to these dark rituals.

SUMMON TERRORMENTAL

Speed: 20 minutes

Duration: Varies

Trappings: Most often this spell involves worshipping, scattering, or otherwise manipulating earth, fire, water, and air—or perhaps all four at once.

When the ritual is complete, the earth shudders, and the terrormentals rise as one mixed column of burning, smoking mud. They then separate into their individual shapes over the next 1d4 rounds and part ways to wreak havoc on the Earth.



Level	Duration
1	1 hour
2	2 hours
3	3 hours
4	4 hours
5	1 hour for every year of the sacrifice's age

CONTROL TERRORMENTAL

Speed: 1

Duration: Until the creature is destroyed

Trappings: Multi-colored clothes, philters of the elements, ethereal chains from the creatures to the controller.

Terrormentals don't come into the world on a leash. Unless there's someone around to control them, they're just as likely to tear down the temple dedicated to them as they are the orphanage three miles away.

That's why discerning cult leaders also learn this handy ritual. *Control terrormental* doesn't mean the cultist controls the creatures like puppets. He can give them targets, order them not to attack specific folks, or hand down similar simple commands.

The cultist has no mental link. He could send each terrormental off to smash targets four miles in each direction, but he's able to influence the one he leaves with.





The cultist's level in this spell must be equal to the level of the spell used to summon the terrormental.

GREATER TERRORMENTALS

As if terrormentals aren't bad enough, a few persistent cultists have found a way to bind the four into one great big, steaming hunk of mud.

This combined monster can use each of its four parts each action. Thus fire could hurl flaming *bolts o' doom* while earth pummels some suffocating, dehydrated cowpoke into the dirt.

Killing this critter takes real effort. Since it is bound by magic, magical damage separates it into its lesser parts (as might a spell that dispels magic). But then the heroes have to deal with four very angry terrormentals as usual.

A greater terrormental has the best of all the statistics listed for terrormentals. Its Size is 15 (about 20' tall).

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d10, S:2d10 (earth is 3d12+6), Q:3d6, V:3d8

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10 (earth only), throwin': bolts o' doom 4d10 (fire only)

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d4, M:2d12, Sm:1d4, Sp:3d10

Overawe 3d12

Size: 10 (about 10' tall)

Terror: 13

Special Abilities: Each terrormental has a special attack form.

Earth has Armor 4 and attacks with its massive fists. Its damage with these is 3d12+6 (its *Strength*).

Fire can shoot bolts of flame like the black magic spell *bolts o' doom* at power level 4.

Fire is harmed only by water. Each bucket (about two gallons) thrown on it causes it 1d4 points of damage. Larger amounts of water inflict proportionately more damage.

Fire can also be slain by sealing it in a vacuum (as with air; see below).

Water can dehydrate a man from up to 50' away. The terrormental makes a Spirit roll, and the target does the same. If water wins, the difference is read as Wind damage. This Wind can be replaced only by drinking one pint of water per point lost. Most folks can absorb only up to their Size in pints every 8 hours. Water can be slain by boiling it away (fire does normal damage). It might also be trapped with a clever use of salt or some

kind of absorbent material. You have to make the final call as to whether or not your individual posse's plan "holds water." Air kills by drawing air out of its victims' lungs and suffocating them. Everyone within 50' of the terrormental is affected. The damage of the attack is 1 Wind lost every combat round. The Wind is recovered normally, but only if the victim is out of the terrormental's area of effect. Air is perhaps the most difficult terrormental to attack and destroy. Only by creating a vacuum can it truly be slain before its time on Earth is over. A mad scientist should be able to concoct such a device on a Straight or better. There are likely other ways to trap or slay a creature of air—the Marshal has to make the call based on the posse's actions.

TEXAS SKEETER

These hand-sized insects, gigantic versions of normal mosquitoes, travel in swarms, descending on warm-blooded victims to drain the blood that provides their sustenance. The name Texas skeeter refers to the critter's size, not where it can be found. These nasty bloodsuckers have been sighted up and down the Mississippi, as well as further east. They prefer swampy terrain, as that is where they breed.

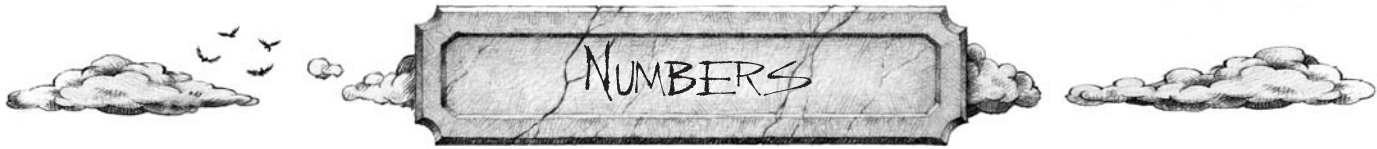
A swarm holds 12 to 20 skeeters. Unlike their smaller cousins, skeeters need a lot of blood to survive and tend to attack in such numbers that they kill their prey instead of just raising welts. A swarm that catches a person unaware can quickly drain them to a bloodless husk.

The entire swarm uses a single *Quickness* roll to determine actions. On each action, 2d4 attack whatever prey is in the area. If there are multiple targets, each skeeter's target is rolled randomly.

Once a skeeter sinks its proboscis into a victim, it stays there, draining blood at the rate of 1 Wind per action. Others continue to attack until all are attached to victims. Once a skeeter is attached, the only way to remove it is to kill it, or to bring open flame up to it. Skeeters do eventually detach of their own accord. A skeeter is sated after it drains 4 Wind, at which time it flies away at half normal pace.

These relatively weak creatures rely on stealth and numbers. They are most active at dusk or later, using darkness to hide until they are close to their intended victims. They are very quiet as well. Since several skeeters often attack a single victim, it is not unusual for a victim to fall





unconscious or even die from blood loss.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:4d10, S:1d4, Q:4d8, V:1d6
 Fightin': brawlin' 2d10
 Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:1d6, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4
 Size: 1 (6" long)
 Terror: 5
 Special Abilities:

- Bite: 1 Wind.
- Blood Drain: 1 Wind per action.
- Flight: Pace 10.
- Vulnerability to Fire: Skeeters, even Texas skeeters, don't like fire and smoke and avoid them. A person carrying a torch almost never gets attacked.

TUNNEL CRITTER

Tunnel critters are monstrous subterranean insects found in deep mines and caverns in the West. Living in darkness, they are blind but have a highly developed sense of touch. They are attracted to mines by the vibrations they cause and stay for the ready supply of food.

Very young tunnel critters are harmless, but after a month or so their shells harden and the poison glands develop. They feed on anything living, even each other, so old, large specimens are very rare. If one somehow lived long enough, it would eventually become too heavy to support itself on land and would have to dwell in underground lakes or rivers. No such specimens have been discovered—yet.

The larger tunnel critters get, the slower their reactions. Their *Cognition* is high due to their sensitivity to vibrations. Full-grown specimens can also tunnel (slowly) through earth. They are a bit faster in dirt and much slower in bedrock.

They attack by rearing, grabbing, and biting their target and injecting a paralytic poison. If they succeed in their *fightin'* roll, the target is held and has to win an opposed *Strength* roll to break free. While holding a victim, the tunnel critter uses each of its actions to bite and inject poison. The target is immediately paralyzed if she fails a *Vigor* roll against the poison's TN. Each successive poison check in that combat receives a +2 cumulative bonus. Once the target stops struggling, if the critter doesn't just eat him it bites one more time (damage and another *Vigor* check) and then lays eggs in him. The victim remains unconscious for 2d10 hours; eggs hatch in about 12. If the eggs hatch while they're still inside, the victim dies. Removing all the eggs

from a victim requires an Onerous (7) *medicine: surgery* roll.

Tunnel critters are sensitive to vibrations. Exceptionally large vibrations, like those generated by explosions, drive them off (even a tunnel critter doesn't want to get caught in a cave-in). Smaller vibrations draw the creature because it associates such sensations with food.

PROFILE

A tunnel critter's profile based on its size:

	Small	Med.	Large	Immense
Corporeal:				
Deftness	2d6	2d8	2d8	3d8
Nimbleness	2d6	2d8	2d8	2d10
Strength	2d6	2d8	2d10	3d12
Quickness	3d12	2d12	1d12	1d8
Vigor	2d6	3d6	4d6	4d8
Fightin': brawlin'	2d6	2d8	3d8	4d10
Mental:				
Cognition	4d4	4d6	4d10	4d12
Knowledge	1d4	1d6	1d6	2d6
Mien	1d6	1d8	2d8	3d8
Smarts	1d4	1d6	2d6	3d8
Speed	1d4	1d4	1d4	2d4
Size:2	4	10	18	
Terror:	5	5	9	11
Armor:	1	1	2	3
Pace:	9	12	12	15
Tunneling:	—	—	2	3
Bite:	STR	STR	STR+1d4	STR+2d6
Poison TN:	3	5	7	11

TWO-FACES

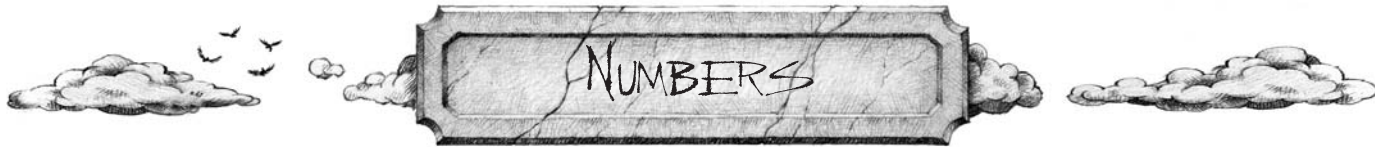
A two-faces is the spirit of an Indian who died because he failed to listen to advice and insisted on a foolhardy course. The spirit takes physical form at night because to appear in light would cause more shame than it could bear.

The critter is lean and wiry with long fingers that end in sharp, black claws. It takes its name from part of its physical form. Its face, with feverish eyes twisted by hatred, has a twin on the back of its skull. This second face reminds the creature to pay attention to its surroundings, preventing it from being surprised. Both faces have mouths full of sharp teeth.

The creature lacks ears because it refused to listen to advice in its previous life. As part of its penance for its ignoble death, it must feed on a diet of the ears of children who do not listen, washed down with their innocent blood.

While a small part of the two-faces' soul





realizes the torment it inflicts on others, another part revels in its hatred of youth, innocence, and vitality. What the two-faces lost, it cannot stand for others to have.

This malevolent creature is a sly and elusive killer that attempts to surprise its victims, waking them and then paralyzing them with the power of its gaze. It feeds on some victims immediately, while taking others back to its lair where it can dine at its leisure.

The two-faces must devour at least one pair of ears per week or it starves to death. Some of the creatures kill several victims at once, stringing extra ears on a necklace to avoid starvation. It enjoys only fresh blood, however, and might keep a victim alive for many days so it has a ready supply of blood as well.

A few shamans know of the weaknesses of the two-faces, and some know of a ritual of drum beats combined with the burning of fat that deters a two-faces from visiting the village. However, these same shamans also know that a two-faces hates light, and one cannot be sure the village is safe until sunrise or lanterns have banished all shadows. For this reason, warding rituals are kept up all night to assure success. A two-faces often loses patience with a warded

village and moves on—perhaps to a white settlement.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d10, S:2d12, Q:3d10, V:3d10
 Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, shootin': bow 3d8, sneak 5d10, climbin' 3d10

Mental: C:4d12, K:2d6, M:2d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6
 Overawe 3d8, search 4d12, trackin' 3d12

Size: 7

Terror: 9

Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Bite: STR. A two-faces can bite up to two targets in a single action.

Claws: STR+1d6

Freezing Gaze: The gaze of the two-faces paralyzes victims who fail an Onerous (7) *Spirit* roll. Paralyzation lasts 2d12 hours.

Light Sensitivity: When a two-faces is in the presence of a light source (other than the moon or stars), it receives a -2 penalty to all actions.

Vulnerability to Salt: A two-faces cannot abide the touch of salt. A typical handful thrown on a two-faces ignores the creature's armor and causes 1d8 damage. Larger amounts inflict more damage. This is the only way to permanently destroy a two-faces. If it is "killed" any other way, it returns the next night to wreak havoc on its attacker.

UNION PRIDE GHOST TRAIN

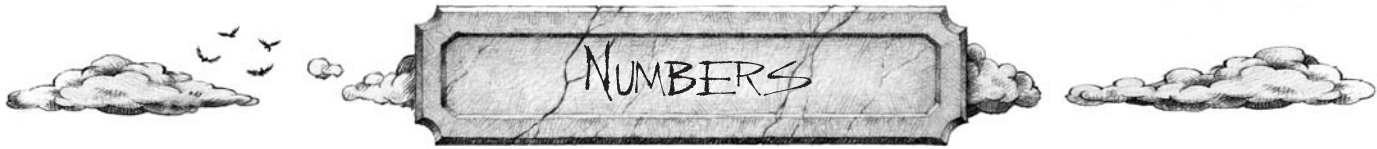
There is indeed a Ghost Train. It is the Union Pride, making its bloody run over and over again. It seems that the train is no longer tied to the site of its horrible crash, but roams freely on the tracks owned by Union Blue. Bodies have been found near the tracks, and people have seen blasts of ghost rock fumes from around a bend with no train coming.

At the site of the wreck, the Union Pride boiler is still on fire with ghost rock. The explosion tore open the engine, and although the rest of the train has been salvaged for parts and materials, the locomotive is still there, on fire until the ghost rock burns itself out.

The train manifests itself on every new moon, racing along a stretch of tracks with fire streaming from its boiler and screams coming from within. Anything on the tracks had better watch out. The spectral train has derailed at least three trains in the last year.

So far the only thing that has stopped the





train's deadly journey has been when it has arrived at a town. On several occasions, the Union Pride has come to stop in a town and Ornerly Will and his "men" have debarked for a short time. Will and company terrorized the town, looting and pillaging, only to climb back onto the train and vanish by sunrise.

The only way to put the apparition of the Union Pride to rest is to kill Ornerly Will and all of his men in one night. If all of the vicious bastards are not killed, the Union Pride appears again on the next full moon with any killed gang members brought back to unlife.

Treat each of the 12 gang members as veteran walkin' dead. Ornerly Will Jenkins is undead too but with a couple of quirks.

Ornerly Will still suffers from the crash. He is still on fire, and screams almost constantly as if in great pain (which he is). His skin and Confederate uniform are still visible, but the closer it gets to sunrise, the more they burn away. Just before he and the train vanish, he is a skeleton with a chunk of ghost rock in his ribcage.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d12, N:3d10, S: 3d10, Q:4d12, V:3d8
 Fannin' 2d12, fightin': brawlin' 4d10, quick draw:
 pistol 3d12, shootin': pistol 5d12
 Mental: C:4d6, K:1d8, M:2d8, Sm:3d6, Sp:1d10
 Area knowledge: Iowa/Missouri border 5d8,
 leadership 3d8, overawe 4d8 (screamin')
 Size: 6

Terror: 11

Gear: Two double-action peacemakers

Special Abilities:

Spirit weapon: Ornerly Will's pistol never needs to be loaded, because it fires small arcane bolts. Treat these like *bolts o' doom* Level 2, except they are fired from a pistol, so they use the *shootin': pistol* Aptitude. This is actually a power of Will's, and he can use this with any firearm he picks up.

Undead.

WALKIN' FOSSIL

Whether animated by determined manitous that manage to find a trace of brain matter, or simply created as entirely new beings by the Reckoners, walkin' fossils are dangerous predators.

In this case, the fossilized creature is Utahraptor, a quick predator some 20 feet long. Parts of these rare beasts may be missing, but

the petrification creates armor for the ancient animal. The whole creature appears to be made of stone, like a statue brought to life, except for its empty eye sockets, which glare with unholy light. The dinosaur has vicious teeth and foreclaws as well as great, curved, ripping claws on its hind legs. When moving, it sounds like rocks grinding together.

The walkin' fossil is a quick, dangerous hunter, a pack hunter, but very capable alone. The creature can track prey by smell and wait in ambush if necessary. Once it sees prey, the critter usually runs forward and leaps on it with foreclaws and mouth, then rakes with its hind claws. Biting and grabbing occur on the same action, while each rake of a foreclaw takes one action. Once a victim is down, the critter turns to other prey, eating only when all prey is down or gone.

Fortunately, these creatures seem pretty difficult to animate. While other forms of fossilized dinosaurs may be animated, the Reckoners and their agents typically prefer large predators.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:3d10, S:3d12+2, Q:4d10, V:2d12+4
 Fightin': brawlin' 5d10, sneak 3d10
 Mental: C:3d12, K:1d4, M:1d10, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d6
 Trackin' 3d12
 Size: 14 (20' long, including 8' tall)
 Terror: 7
 Special Abilities:

Armor: 1

Bite: STR+2d6. Once the creature bites successfully on the victim's upper body, it holds on to keep its victim in place while attacking with its rear claws. A victim held by the dinosaur's bite must win a *Strength* contest to get free.

Grab: A grab made using the creature's *fightin': brawlin'* skill causes no damage, but the victim of the grab must win a *Strength* contest to get free.

Immunity: To Wind, physical stress, and fire.

Leap: Can leap up to 20 yards with a running start. A leap causes STR+2d6 damage to whatever the creature hits.

Pace: 20

Raking Claw: STR+2d8. Only one claw can be brought to bear in a single action. Because the creature typically holds a victim upright while attacking, attacks that would go to the upper body miss. Only attacks to the legs, lower guts, and gizzards hit.



NUMBERS

WAVE SHADOW

Wave shadows are amphibious humanoids rumored to have existed in the ocean depths for centuries. While they may have existed prior to the Reckoning, giving rise to myths about mermaids, confirmed sightings have occurred only in the last dozen years, usually in the Maze.

The creatures are aggressive, living in large clans and preying on small, isolated villages, lone travelers and occasionally fully-crewed ships. They equip themselves with items taken from their victims, making themselves grim parodies of the people they have killed. They raid not only for goods, but for food as well: They consume their victims.

Some clans of wave shadows set up underwater camps near the isolated communities they have plundered. They leave spies hiding in the town, so they are aware if anybody enters the seemingly abandoned community. If the opportunity is good, the wave shadows hunt down uninvited visitors.

All wave shadows are constantly surrounded by a level-1 black magic *cloak o' evil*. This not only gives the usual Defensive Bonus (-2 to opponents' attacks) but aids them in sneaking.

Rumors persist of deep-sea wave shadows in the Caribbean and South Pacific. These creatures can supposedly create and control massive fog banks. However, these rumors have never been substantiated.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:2d10, S:2d8, Q:3d8, V:3d8
 Fightin': brawlin' 2d10, fightin': knife or sword
 5d10, sneak 2d10, swimmin' 6d10, throwin': knife
 1d6

Mental: C:3d10, K:2d8, M:2d10, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d10
 Scroungin' 3d6, search 3d10

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Claw: STR+2d6

Cloak o' Evil: A wave shadow's *cloak o' evil* is automatic between sunset and sunrise, forming a cloak of deep shadow around the creature, giving opponents a -2 penalty on attacks, and granting the wave shadow a +2 on *sneak* rolls.

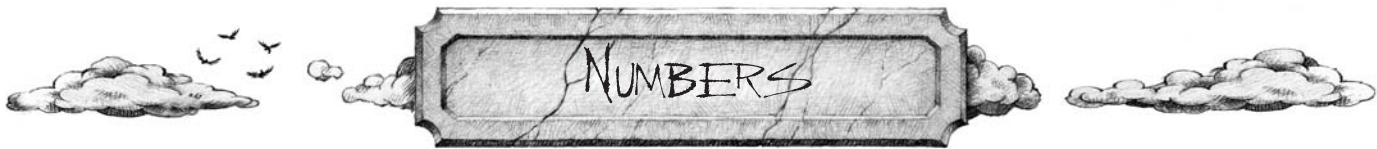
WEEPING WIDOW

The weeping widow is the grief-stricken spirit of a woman who has witnessed the violent death of at least one member of her immediate family and then died soon after, for whatever reason. These women never had time to properly mourn their loss, so the unfinished business of their grief and rage holds them to the physical world. Normally, the spirit is invisible, wallowing in self-pity, despair, and anger, wandering the vicinity of the tragedy. But if an adult woman enters the spirit's domain, the weeping widow takes over her body and exacts revenge—even if her victims had nothing to do with her sorrow.

The woman possessed by the widow always appears as the widow did when she died, but dressed in culturally appropriate funeral clothing, often with a veil that covers her face. Tears can be seen to streak her dress, and her gloves, handkerchief, and so forth are wet with them. She speaks and weeps in the voice of her host body. During combat, she shrieks howls of rage and pain at the top of her lungs, cursing the murderers of her sons or husband. She ranges from quiet sobbing to racking wails against fate when not fighting.

In her spirit form, a weeping widow can't do much but possess whatever woman enters her domain, so the information listed below refers to a typical woman possessed by a weeping widow.





If you want to give the woman the widow tries to inhabit a fighting chance, have the victim make an opposed *Spirit* roll. The widow can try once per round until the potential victim either leaves the area or steps inside the radius of a *protection* miracle, where the widow can't sense her. Any potential victim that successfully resists the widow has visions of a horrible massacre (the death of the widow's family), but does not know exactly why these visions are occurring.

The widow counts as a supernatural creature for purposes of being affected by blessed miracles. For purposes of resisting or being affected by miracles, reduce any of the widow's applicable checks by 2 die types. For example, if a preacher invokes a *protection* miracle, the Widow's *Spirit* counts as only 4d8, not 4d12. The widow is obviously afraid of any preacher, and seeks to avoid him, attacking whatever targets are furthest away from him.

If the widow can be incapacitated or bound, an *exorcism* releases the spirit into the afterlife and frees the woman possessed. If the widow defeats her opponents, she weeps over the bodies of those she has slain as if they were her lost family, and remain there until her host dies of thirst or starvation, at which point she reincorporates again. Any observers safe from her wrath may do whatever they wish in her presence, as long as they do not try to remove the bodies, which voids any protection from her. Killing the creature destroys it, but it often also kills the woman it is possessing.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:4d10, Q:2d12, S:4d10, V:3d12

Fightin': brawlin' 5d10

Mental: C:3d6, K:1d6, M:3d12, Sm:4d6, Sp:4d12

Area knowledge: home area 5d6, overawe 5d12

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Immunity: The widow is immune to whatever weapon killed her loved one(s). While often guns, it can be any weapon the Marshal chooses, depending on how difficult you want to make it. If hit by such a weapon, the widow should give a clue, shrieking something about how those weapons can't take anything more away from her.

Tears: The widow's tears, which cover her face and saturate her gloves and other clothing, are highly acidic. Anyone who touches or strikes the widow with bare hands (or other skin) immediately takes 2d6 damage to the

exposed area. Likewise, if the widow successfully attacks someone using her *fightin': brawlin'* ability, the attack inflicts an extra 2d6 damage. If the widow instead touches an item, or if an item touches her, that item loses 2 points from its Reliability (or now has Reliability of 18 if it didn't have a Reliability before).

Wind: Anyone possessed by the widow is immune to Wind damage, but regular wounds have normal effects—on both the widow and her host.

WILL O THE WISP

This critter looks like a ball of light about the size of a person's head. It has been theorized that it is a true physical manifestation of a manitou. Others have suggested they are simply the ghosts of those killed by quicksand, in mining accidents, or through other misfortunes common to the places where they are found. The truth is unknown, but they are a terrible hazard to any who encounter them.

The glowing beasts are found only in areas of great danger. They are commonly found in swamps of quicksand, but they have also been encountered in abandoned mines (especially those with explosive gasses in them), and even in the lairs of other abominations. They are nearly impossible to harm, but are incapable of causing any direct injury themselves. Instead, they have the ability to coerce others to follow them. They invariably lead the victims into danger, and then feast on the pain and suffering produced.

Wisps are intelligent and able to communicate via flashing patterns of light, and even in Morse code. They rarely communicate with humans, however, unless they are trying to manipulate the foolish mortals into making a possibly fatal mistake.

The will o' the wisp doesn't attack directly. Instead, it mesmerizes victims to manipulate them into doing what it wants. When someone first views the wisp, she must make an opposed *Spirit* roll against the critter. If she wins, the wisp tries again the next time it has an action; if she loses, the creature controls her actions for the next 10 minutes.

Invariably, the wisp tries to lead its victims into places where they can be hurt. The victim follows passively, even into obvious danger, at a normal walking Pace, but she responds with violence to any attempts to restrain her. The subject cannot speak or act normally.





A successful Onerous (7) *leadership* check by a companion allows a mesmerized victim another *Spirit* contest—but with a -2 to her roll. A wisp can mesmerize only one target at a time.

PROFILE

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:4d12+4, Q:3d6, S:2d4, V:4d8

Dodge 3d12+4

Mental: C:3d4, K:3d6, M:2d6, Sm:4d8, Sp:2d10

Bluff 4d8, overawe 3d6, persuasion 5d6

Size: 2

Terror: 5

Special Abilities:

Pain Drain: Whenever someone is hurt within 100 yards of the will o' the wisp, it feeds off the victim's pain. Each time anyone (including an abomination) gains a new level of pain modifiers, the wisp heals one wound level on itself. The critter can also gain a surplus; an extra 10 levels gained (and not used for healing) allow the wisp to reproduce itself.

Wounds: The wisp has only one hit location, which is considered the guts. Successful attacks cause damage as if the wisp had an Armor of 3. If it suffers 5 wound levels, it winks out of existence, to reappear again the next night.

Vulnerability to Electricity: An electrical attack of sufficient power can kill a will o' the wisp.

VARMINT PROFILES

The Weird West is populated by all sorts of nasties that make living there an exercise in fear and disgust.

And what about the rest of the animal kingdom? Supposing right after whupping on some dread wolves, your posse runs across a pack of his normal cousins? Or maybe you've finally tracked down the lair of that jackalope, but you've frightened a local skunk while doing so?

Space prevented the main rules from including too many normal critters, so here are a few of the varmints of the Weird West. All of the varmints presented here are the normal, non-abomination variety, and there is absolutely nothing supernatural about them. But that doesn't mean that they're not dangerous.

Note: Statistics for a few other normal critters—like bears, mountain lions, horses, and rattlesnakes—all appear in the *Deadlands* rulebook.

ANTELOPE DEER

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:3d8, Q:2d10, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 2d10

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4

Size: 6

Terror: —

Special Abilities:

Hooves: STR+1d4

Horns/Antlers: STR

Pace: 22

BUFFALO

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:4d12, S:2d12+4, Q:3d6, V:4d12+4

Fightin': brawlin' 2d12

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d6

Size: 12

Terror: 3 (7 when stampeding)

Special Abilities:

Hooves: STR

Horns: STR+1d6

Pace: 20

BURRO JACKASS

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, S:4d8, Q:2d4, V:3d10

Fightin': brawlin' 1d8

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d10

Size: 6

Terror: —

Special Abilities:

Hooves: STR

CATTLE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:3d10, Q:2d6, V:3d10

Fightin': brawlin' 1d10

Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4 (bulls have 3d8 Spirit)

Size: 8

Terror: —

Special Abilities:

Hooves: STR

Horns (bulls only): STR+1d6

CONDOR

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:4d8, S:2d8, Q:3d8, V:2d8

Fightin': brawlin' 3d8

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6

Size: 6

Terror: 5

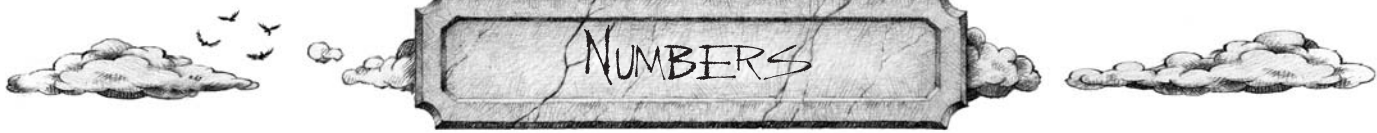
Special Abilities:

Talons: STR

Beak: STR

Flying: Pace 20





DOG COYOTE

For more information on dogs, see Chapter One.

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, S:3d6, Q:2d8, V:4d8
Fightin': brawlin' 3d8, filchin' 2d4 (coyotes only), sneak 2d8
Mental: C:1d4, K:2d6, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:2d6
Guts 4d6 (dogs only), overawe 2d6, performin': howlin' 3d6, scrutinize 3d4, search 3d4, trackin' 6d4
Size: 4
Terror: 1
Special Abilities:
Claw: STR
Teeth: STR+1d4

EAGLE

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:2d10, S:3d6, Q:2d8, V:3d6
Fightin': brawlin' 3d10
Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:2d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:3d8
Size: 3
Terror: -
Special Abilities:
Talons: STR
Beak: STR+1d6
Flying: Pace 24

ELK

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d12, S:3d8, Q:2d10, V:2d12
Fightin': brawlin' 1d12
Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d6, Sp:1d6
Size: 7
Terror: -
Special Abilities:
Hooves: STR+1d6
Antlers: STR
Pace: 20

FOX

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:3d6, S:1d6, Q:3d8, V:3d4
Fightin': brawlin' 2d6
Mental: C:2d8, K:2d4, M:2d6, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d4
Search 2d8
Size: 3
Terror: 0
Special Abilities:
Claw: STR
Teeth: STR+1d4

GOAT

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d8, S:2d6, Q:2d4, V:3d10
Fightin': brawlin' 1d8
Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d10

Size: 4
Terror: 3
Special Abilities:
Hooves: STR
Head Butt: STR+1d6

MOOSE

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:3d12+2, Q:2d4, V:3d12
Fightin': brawlin' 3d10
Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:2d6, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d8
Size: 12
Terror: 0 (5 when enraged)
Special Abilities:
Hooves: STR+1d12
Antlers: STR+1d6
Pace: 18

BOAR

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d6, S:2d8, Q:1d10, V:2d10
Fightin': brawlin' 1d6
Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:1d8, Sm:1d8, Sp:2d4
Size: 4
Terror: 0
Special Abilities:
Tusks: STR+1d4





SCORPION

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d6, S:1d4-2, Q:3d10, V:1d4
 Fightin': brawlin' 2d6
 Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4
 Size: 1
 Terror: 5
 Special Abilities:

Sting: STR

Venom: Scorpion venom comes in two varieties: annoying and lethal. The annoying variety has no lasting effects unless the victim is a small child or allergic to the venom. If so, use the rules for lethal, below. The annoying venom can be found in the larger yellow breeds of scorpion. Lethal scorpion venom is carried by the smaller yellow and the larger black varieties. Anyone stung by one needs to make a Hard (9) *Vigor* test. If he succeeds, the affected body part is paralyzed for 1d6 days. If he fails, the body part is paralyzed, and he dies in 1d4 hours. A *medicine* roll of 9 or better removes the poison from the system, provided the victim receives care before the last half hour.

SHEEP, BIGHORN

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:3d8, Q:2d10, V:3d10
 Fightin': brawlin' 2d10
 Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4
 Size: 6
 Terror: 0
 Special Abilities:
 Hooves: STR+1d4
 Horns/Antlers: STR
 Pace: 22

SKUNK

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d4, S:1d4, Q:1d4, V:1d6
 Fightin': brawlin' 1d4
 Mental: C:1d6, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d6
 Overawe 4d4
 Size: 2
 Terror: 5
 Special Abilities:
 Claw: STR

Stink: An agitated skunk sprays its odor all over any offenders. The stink stays on a person for a long time (weeks sometimes). The only way to get rid of it is to bathe in tomato juice. While the odor remains, all social interactions receive a -6 penalty. This penalty drops by -2 every five days.

TARANTULA

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:1d4-2, Q:2d8, V:1d4
 Fightin': brawlin' 1d10
 Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d4
 Size: 1
 Terror: 5
 Special Abilities:

Bite: STR

Venom: Tarantula venom hurts a lot, but is rarely fatal. If a cowpoke is bitten by more than three of the little buggers (or by one of the rare, lethal species), he must make a Hard (9) *Vigor* roll. If the roll fails, each of his Corporeal Traits drops one step for 2d6 hours. Each two hours after being bitten, the character should make an Onerous (7) *Vigor* check. If it succeeds, nothing happens. If it fails, the Corporeal Traits drop another step. If more than two Traits drop below d4 this way, then the poor S.O.B. dies an agonizing death.

TEXAS LONGHORN

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:2d10, S:3d10, Q:2d6, V:3d12
 Fightin': brawlin' 1d10
 Mental: C:1d4, K:1d4, M:1d4, Sm:1d4, Sp:1d8
 Size: 10
 Terror: 0, 7 (when stampeding)
 Special Abilities:
 Hooves: STR
 Horns: STR+1d6

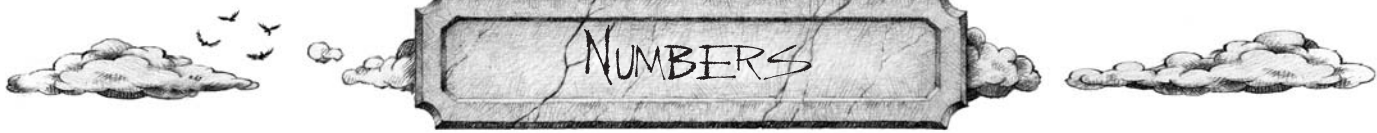
WOLF

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:3d10, S:2d8, Q:2d8, V:3d10
 Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 2d10
 Mental: C:1d4, K:1d6, M:3d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:3d8
 Overawe 2d6, search 3d4, trackin' 5d4
 Size: 6
 Terror: 3
 Special Abilities:
 Claw: STR
 Teeth: STR+1d6

WOLVERINE

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:3d10, S:2d6, Q:3d12, V:2d8
 Fightin': brawlin' 2d10
 Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:2d8, Sm:2d6, Sp:3d12
 Overawe 3d8
 Size: 3
 Terror: 1 (3 when angry)
 Special Abilities:
 Claw: STR+1d4
 Teeth: STR+1d6





MYSTERIOUS PASTS

When a player draws a Joker for the Traits of an animal sidekick, turn here to figure out what the animal's mysterious past is all about. Except where noted, the following backgrounds are as close to their human counterparts as reasonable.

DEUCE: CURSE

The animal has had a curse laid on it. Until the curse is lifted, the animal has the *bad luck* Hindrance. The one twist here is that the *bad luck* affects the owner as well as the animal.

T+HREE: UNNATURAL ENEMY

This animal sidekick has a particular hatred for a specific other species—and the feelings are mutual. Whenever possible, the animal attacks the object of its hatred with every intention of tearing it to shreds or trampling it to death.

In return, members of that species actually choose the animal as a target over any other available target.

Red: The enemy is a normal species: bear, eagle, cougar, wolf, etc.

Black: The enemy is an abomination or class of abomination (usually not a major foe): jackalope, Badlands devil bat, tumblebleed, gremlin, etc.

FOUR: POSSESSED

Something lies behind that dog's intelligent stare. Some form of spirit has possessed the animal, and it acts according to its own agenda.

Red: A nature spirit has possessed the animal.

Usually, the type of spirit is determined by the species. A dog can be inhabited by a dog spirit, a wolf spirit, or a forest spirit. A horse can be inhabited by a horse spirit, a plains spirit, or a wind spirit. The animal aids a hero for as long as the hero's goals and methods conform to the spirit's own. The spirit inside also has access to one shamanistic favor.

Black: Something nasty has inhabited the poor beast. The animal is now irrevocably evil. It has a nasty disposition to everyone (including its master), but it is still loyal to the hero. However, it does enjoy seeing the hero lose friend after friend to nasty "accidents." The beast has a single black magic power at its disposal. (see *The Quick & the Dead*). Choose something appropriate.

FIVE: GRIZZLED

The animal has a shock of gray or white fur on its head. Beasts with this sort of marking are predestined to lead lives of terror, but they do have one advantage. They can earn Grit just like a human. Normally, animals can't earn Grit.

SIX: SIXTH SENSE

Just like the human version, but the animal's master must spend the Fate Chips. The animal may react to a perceived threat, but its master may not know why until afterward, if at all.

SEVEN: SOULFUL EYES

Sometimes animals seem to react to thin air and buck and howl at nothing at all. Well, it ain't always nothing. For some reason, this animal can see ghosts and spirits even if they are incorporeal or invisible.

EIGHT: PEDIGREE

This animal's bloodline includes heroic critters from ages gone by. Perhaps a horse's ancestor was the mount for one of the Knights of the Round Table, or maybe a dog is descended from an animal that saved a tribe from destruction with a timely warning of fire. In any case, the animal has been gifted with one level of a Harrowed power, just like a human with the *ancient pact* background.

NINE: WHITE DOG WHITE HORSE

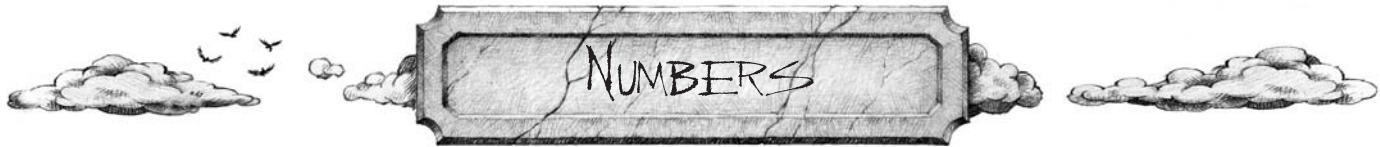
This dog or horse is completely white, but not an albino. Certain animals of this kind are sacred to many religions. As a result, it can cause an additional die of damage to any unnatural creature.

TEN: BLESSED BEWITCHED

This animal has been touched by the supernatural somehow. Perhaps a friendly Huckster enchanted it, or perhaps it was prayed over by a saint. Whatever the reason, it has a permanent spell or miracle laid on it.

Red: The animal has been blessed by higher powers. These abilities can be activated only by the animal's master shouting a command and making an Incredible (11) *Faith* check. The Miracles possible are: *lay on paws* (can heal humans and other animals; a really pious St. Bernard might have this), *smite*, and *succor*.





NUMBERS

Black: The animal can use a single hex by making an Incredible (11) *Cognition* check and expending 1 Wind per round over and above other requirements. Only a few spells can be used this way. They are: *corporeal tweak* (self only), *missed me!*, and *shadow man*.

JACK: HAUNTED

The poor beast is haunted by the ghost of a human, probably a former master. Otherwise, this is just like the human version.

QUEEN: ANIMAL HATRED KEN

For some unknown reason, the animal either gets along amazingly well with all other species or provokes other four-legged critters just by being around.

Red: Animals love the critter. The animal sidekick gets a +2 to any *overawe* check versus animals, or any *professional* check that involves other animals.

Black: Other animals hate the critter unreservedly. The beast is at a -2 to all of the above checks.

KING: PAST LIFE

Some Chinese rail workers (at least those with a Buddhist bent) have started spreading talk about how when people die they come back in another form based on how well they did in their previous life.

If the cowpoke in question was good during his time on this Earth, he goes on to be a human again, only in a better situation. If he was less than perfect, he might come back in a "lower form," that of some kind of critter—even a horse or a dog.

This animal had a past life, and whoever it was, it screwed up big. Now it has to go through life again in the shape of an animal. One of the animal's Mental Traits should be replaced with the human Trait for that card value. Decide which one using the table below.



PAST LIFE TRAIT

d10	Trait
1-2	Cognition
3-4	Knowledge
5-6	Mien
7-8	Smarts
9-10	Spirit

Red: The soul inside the animal knows it screwed up, and it has an honest desire to do better. The best way it has to do that is to be a good and faithful companion to a great hero.

Black: The poor twisted bastard is stuck inside a beast's shell and is none too happy about it. It is bitter, vicious, and mean, determined to make everyone around as miserable as itself.

ACE: RELIC CURSED RELIC

This animal came with a special item. It would most likely be a saddle, a collar, horseshoes, or something similar. This item's powers, whether good or bad, only work while with the animal.

Red: The relic is a good thing. It might be special collar woven by an Indian shaman for the animal, or the horseshoes from the first Pony Express rider.

Black: The relic is a cursed item. Maybe the animal's favorite chewing bone came from an Indian burial ground, or perhaps someone hexed a horse's horseshoes. Whatever the case, while the relic is in the animal's possession, the animal and its master suffer from the *bad luck* Hindrance.

JOKER: UNDEAD

That's right: the gallopin' dead.

Now normally, there's no way that an animal spirit would hang around in a carcass that's stopped moving and breathing. But once in a very great while, a particularly reckless or stubborn spirit decides that its not quite ready to move on yet. This leads to the occasional dog or horse that keeps on moving long after it should have been pushing up daisies.

Undead animals are privileged to some of the same powers as the two-legged deaders, but they come with a few other problems.

For one, no animal of any kind wants to get near the beast. This can make it difficult to travel in a group. Second, animals aren't as keen on keeping themselves respectable as humans are. Unless the critter's master is extremely diligent, people begin to notice little things about the beast, like skin falling off or bones poking through skin, not to mention the absolutely horrible smell.

On the upside, the animal can only be hurt as if it were Harrowed. But undead animals cannot count coup on abominations and cannot gain Harrowed powers.