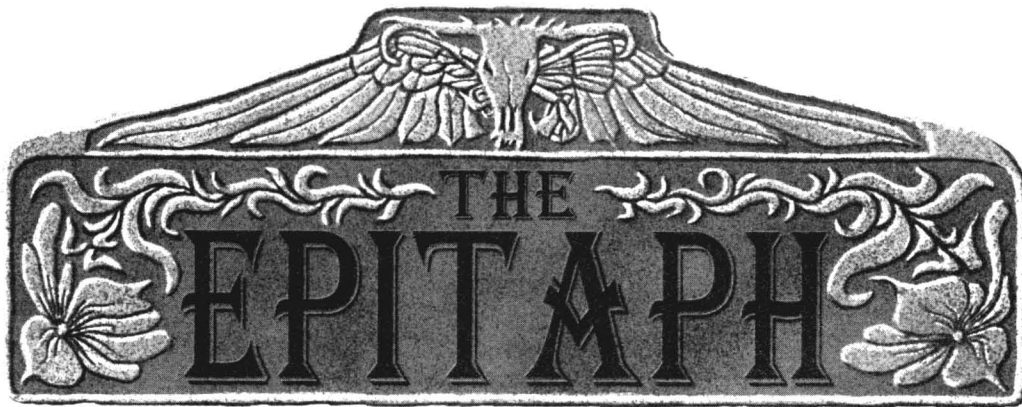




Featuring

TROUBLE AT TABLE ROCK

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THE DEADLANDS EPITAPH

Volume 1, Issue 1

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Written by: John R. Hopler; Illustration by: Tom Fowler

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**Written by: Clay & Susan Griffith; Illustration by: Richard Pollard;
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Dedicated to Teller.

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Deadlands Dispatch

— The Big Picture —

Ola amigos! If you're perusing this peculiar publication, you probably know that this new magazine is dedicated to the various *Deadlands* realms created by Pinnacle Entertainment Group.

Those of you who are new to our macabre setting can get a quick and bloody taste of what *Deadlands* is all about by reading the full-color comic wickedly written by Creepy Clay & Susan Griffith (who did some of the finest work in our recent *Anthology With No Name*), and perilously penciled by Rustlin' Richard Pollard.

You'll also be thrilled with our newest Dime Novel (formerly stand-alone books we've now incorporated into the *Epitaph*). Jumping John Hopler has a surprise for those of you who have been following the exploits of a certain Wasteland storyteller—and the Wasted West of *Hell on Earth* will never be the same again.

You bald-headed brainers wandering the Irradiated Plains will be pleased as punch to know that we have an all-new *Veteran o' the Weird West Table* just for sykers. *Veteran o' the Syker Wars* is a character-churning piece by Wasteland Warlord Jay Kyle.

Veterans of the Weird West can also find one of the most popular *Deadlands* adventures to never see print—until now. Jurassic Joe Wolf's infamous convention adventure *Trouble at Table Rock* sets the standard for future writers of this magnificent mag. With art by Jamming Jay Rozen, you know this tale of the Weird West has teeth.

Gruesome John Goff also makes an appearance with a few twisted teasers about what's going on in the Weird West. Then Junkman John Hopler gives us the skinny on *Hell on Earth*, and just what the *Boise Horror* adventure means for the Wasted West.

We'll even tell you how to get your own nifty nickname by writing for the *Epitaph*. So saddle up, load both guns, and push that Stetson down tight. It's going to be one Hell of a ride.

And since you've been very bad this year, we're introducing you to the whole corral o' PEGHeads. You'll see just what we look like, and can even cut our pictures out and put 'em on your favorite wanted poster. Or your dartboard if you get angry when we're late with a new book.s

Happy Trails!





WEIRD WEST ROUNDUP

We've got a lot of catching up to do and not much time to do it, so let's get right to the yellowist journalism on the High Plains.

GOMORRA

One of the Weird West's top field reporters, Reggie Cornell, has been sitting on one of the biggest stories of the year up in a little Maze boomtown called, aptly enough, Gomorra.

That bastion of truth, the *Tombstone Epitaph* is still waiting to get the full details on what happened recently thereabouts, but from preliminary reports, it's big. Big enough to draw the attention of both the Texas Rangers and their slightly-more-subtle Northern counterparts, the Agency.

Seems like a real knockdown-drag-out fight took place there recently, laying waste to half the town. More surprisingly, the Rangers and Agency fought on the same side! That's *real* unusual behavior for those two organizations—they're usually at each other's throats on first sight—so whatever was going on, it was serious.

Word on the street has it that a full-fledged demon straight out of Hell broke loose up the place they call "Doomtown." The *Epitaph* prides itself on responsible reporting, however, so until it receives confirmation from one of their own, they're keeping the details to themselves. (*But you can find out all about the events that took place there by picking up a few decks from the award-winning Deadlands: Doomtown, by Alderac Entertainment Group.*)

PROBLEMS FOR THE AGENCY?

In the aftermath of the big hoedown in Gomorra, even though reports indicate it came out on top of the scrap, the Agency has plenty of problems of its own.

A number of veteran "operatives," as they call themselves, are down in the line of duty and twice that many are on the injured list. Worse yet, it seems the elusive head of the Agency's western branch, the enigmatic Ghost, may be missing in action!

GRIMME'S MISSIONARIES

Tombstone has had its own "personal saviors"—in the form of missionaries from the Church of Lost Angels—for several months. Folks there are getting used to seeing the eccentric (and somewhat creepy) "Angels" preaching on street corners.

Now, other communities are getting their own mouthpieces for Reverend Grimme's somewhat...unusual beliefs. According to dispatches received at the offices of the *Tombstone Epitaph*, Grimme's errand boys are popping up all over the Maze and into Nevada and Arizona as well.

Looks like the Lost Angels are gearing up for a big membership drive. An inside source says the cult...uh, church...is showing particular interest in a little town up the coast a way—that coincidentally might be named Gomorra.

BAYOU VERMILLION IN THE RED?

A New Orleans newspaper has reported that there may be trouble in the front office of the Bayou Vermillion Railroad. Apparently, "Baron" LaCroix's belligerent tactics are telling on his bank account, if not his rail workers.

It seems the constant drain on equipment and resources caused by his continual skirmishes with competitor Dixie Rails has caused him to cut back some local operations. What effect this may have on his race to the Maze remains to be seen.

Oddly enough, LaCroix seems able to make his payroll, however. At least his glassy-eyed railworkers never seem to miss a day of laying track.

Dixie Rails remains locked in right-of-way negotiations with the Santa Fe & El Paso railroad, so LaCroix hasn't lost his lead yet in spite of his financial difficulties.

THE RAIL WARS

Speaking of the Rail Wars, fans of the game should check out our website at www.deadlands.com. We've got the revised rules, *High Noon*, available there for free! Yeehaa!





HIGH TALES OF HELL ON EARTH

Throckmorton's strength continues to increase. Travelers in the Colorado area—otherwise known as “fools” by most sane individuals—have reported increased patrol activity along the Combine's borders. The Sky Pirates have also had an increasing number of skirmishes with Raptors probing the passes through the Rocky Mountains.

Despite these signs of aggression toward Junkyard, rumors continue to leak from the Denver Resistance that Throckmorton has insufficient fuel reserves to sustain a full-scale offensive. These rumors have caused many people to think that the Combine's first move may be to attack south into the Texas oilfields. Colonel Meadows, the leader of Oil Town, has placed the 3rd Armored Regiment on alert to repel any such assault—even the squabbling members of OPEC have temporarily stopped feuding with each other in order to be ready for the Combine attack.

When Throckmorton does finally strike, he may find he's bitten off more than he can chew. Following the events of *The Boise Horror*, he now has a powerful new enemy (we'd say more, but we don't want to spoil the surprise for those who haven't played this adventure yet).

GOT YOUR LIBRARY CARD?

The Librarians have opened a branch library in Junkyard. This offshoot of the Grand Library in Sacramento houses a few thousand volumes in the library of Hellstromme High. Those who wish to use the library pay 50¢ per book requested or a monthly fee of \$15 for unlimited access to the stacks. The proceeds from these fees are being used to support the high school run by Librarians Loudon and Metzger. As with the Grand Library, this new facility doesn't lend books—they can only be examined inside the library. Brainers who aren't big on taking

notes can have copies made for 10¢ a piece or they can have the book transferred to data slugs for the cost of \$1 a page.

TURTLE ISLE ATTACKED!

The enormous pleasure ship known as the Turtle Isle was recently attacked by a swarm of croakers. The amphibious attackers gained entrance to the vessel through an open docking bay in the lower levels of the ship. Accompanied by a small group of shraks, the croakers rampaged through the ship and managed to reach the upper decks. They were stopped there by Turtle Isle security troops, but not before killing one of the ship's most prominent residents, Frances Lovell III. Lovell, a highly respected banker prior to the war, was one of the ship's biggest investors when Kang Consolidated first proposed it back in 2069. He was onboard the ship when the bombs fell. Since the end of the Last War he served as one of Manchu's most-trusted advisers. Following Lovell's death the ship's warlord proclaimed a weeklong period of mourning, during which time the ship's casinos and bars were shut down.

To learn more about Turtle Isle, the events that transpired there, and other goings-on in the Great Maze look for the upcoming *Shattered Coast* supplement.

WRITING FOR THE EPITAPH

Every month we get tons o' letters and e-mail asking us how to write for Pinnacle. Well, the honest truth is if you haven't got quite a few published game books under your bandoleer, we probably aren't going to let you do much either. Don't get discouraged, compadre. We just need to see if you can dot your i's and cross your t's before we give you any major work. Seeing as how most tinhorns use those fancy computers these days, it shouldn't be hard—but you'd be





surprised what we see around here sometimes.

So how can we judge your work if we won't let you write anything? Easy. Write a short article for the *Epitaph* or our Weird Website. We're always looking for cool, short ideas, adventures, and source material. Ideally, *Epitaph* articles are anywhere from 1000 to 8000 words. Web articles should be about the same length, though we can handle longer pieces a little easier there (though they may take us longer to get to).

Even folks who have published a ton of stuff should do a short article for us first. Just because you can write high-fantasy doesn't mean you "get" the tongue-in-rotted-cheek humor and horror of *Deadlands*.

What kind of stuff are we looking for? Just about anything. But there are a few things that are pretty much off-limits. Stories about our major characters are great. We love reading about a day in the life of Ezekiah Grimme. Just don't expect to kill him off. We've got big plans for these guys. You also won't have much luck if you change a character's personality too drastically. Raven isn't about to have a change of heart and seed the High Plains with tulips. And if you don't know who these guys are, you need to read a few more of our books. *Deadlands* has an intricate story that weaves between the three lines, and anything that mucks with that story gets the ax no matter how cool an idea it is.

You should also start small. An 8000 word article on the triads of Shan Fan has a lot more chance that a sourcebook on the same city. In fact, our major sourcebooks are pretty much always booked because they're written by our Brand Managers themselves. Currently, only our adventures, web, and *Epitaph* articles are written by freelancers. This can change—particularly if a really strong writer proposes a book that he's intimately familiar with—but don't bank on it.

As for what your short article should be about, here's a quick list of things we'd like to see: gizmos and junker devices (made with the rules in *The Junkman Cometh*), alternate Veteran, Mysterious Past, or Mutation tables,

monsters, monsters, monsters, adventure seeds for particular locations, new hexes, miracles, and powers, new weapons, new black magic, new martial arts powers, new cyborg devices, and so on.

We also love real life tales of the Old West where you tell folks what really happened, then give it a *Deadlands* twist and tell us what *really* happened. For *Hell on Earth*, a twist on a modern urban legend works equally well.

Adventures are also great, but be careful. Rules are made to be broken, but we like 'em a certain way around here. In our opinion, the best adventures start with a mundane purpose, have subtle hints of the macabre followed by some gunslinging action, then turn into an all-out horrorfest by the end of the tale.

ADVENTURES

Here are a few other guidelines to writing *Deadlands* adventures.

Deadlands is a Faustian tale (Faust was a fellow who sold his soul to the Devil). Our bad guys made conscious choices to be evil, and once they set foot upon that path, were rewarded with dark power by the Reckoners. Good people may sometimes do bad things, but they're not villains.

Creatures that can't be slain by normal means are great. We love it when the posse has to figure out some great puzzle or mystery to bring down the ultimate horror in the climax of the adventure. You need to remember that not everyone can use the magic whatsit, however. Make sure there are plenty of other critters for the posse's gunslingers to play with while the Doomsayer blasts some radioactive ghost into isotopes.

The best adventures are well-balanced and have something for everyone. In *Deadlands*, the recipe includes action, horror, camp, and of course, the spaghetti western. If playing the opening to *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* isn't appropriate every other session or so, you might want to rethink your play style just a bit.





Also, don't go crazy on the rewards. A hungry posse is much more willing to take on a job with "bad vibes" than one that's sitting at the saloon buying rounds for the whole house. This is especially true with *Hell on Earth*. If the heroes are attacked by bikers, make sure all the guns they round up afterward have only a few bullets left in them (even if the bikers were blazing away on full-auto a few moments earlier—heck, that's why they're almost out).

Finally, your article should be fun to write, and most importantly, fun to read. Probably 75% or more of the people who buy *Deadlands* game products never play them—they just love to read. Remember that. A treatise on artillery in the Weird West is a yawner—unless it includes fun, easy rules for using cannons and maybe a campy critical hit chart for those caught in the blast.

THE TECHNICAL STUFF

If you haven't been scared off yet, the next step is to get on our Weird Website. If you don't have a computer or access to the web, go to your local library. Many of them offer public access these days. You'll need to download one of our Evaluation Waivers and send it in with **anything** you submit to us. If you don't, we can't read it. We can't even look at it.

Chuck this sucker in an envelope with a query letter and self-addressed stamped envelope. Make sure to put your name, address, phone number, and email address on the article inside as well. These things get separated sometimes and there's no way to tell who wrote that really cool article that got left on John's desk with no name on it.

If you don't include the SASE, we'll email you if you include that. Otherwise, there's a very slim chance the Pony Express is going to make it back to you, whether we loved the idea or not.

Your query letter should be a very brief description of the idea you want to write about. If you want to do an article on junker devices, for instance, just list a few of the devices and what they do. If it looks

interesting, we'll be in touch within a month of receiving your submission.

Once your idea has been accepted, you'll be asked to go ahead and write the article. Be warned. This kind of work is almost always done "on spec." That means you do the work, we read it, and if we don't like the finished product—for whatever reason—we're not obligated to use it. Be sure you want to put the effort into a project before you get this far. We hate it when someone does a ton of work and we have to turn it down.

One last word of warning. You should also be careful what you wish for. We get passels of letters proposing to do full-length adventures, epic campaigns, and sourcebooks. Trouble is, new writers don't know just how much work it is to write a 30,000 word adventure or 58,000 word sourcebook. We've had plenty of veteran freelancers drop the ball and quit in the middle of a book—and these are people who have done it before. Don't get yourself into something you can't handle.

ART

You artistic types are welcome to submit portfolios to us as well. But first take a look at our books. If you like watercolors and charcoal sketches, that's fine, but it doesn't fit any of the *Deadlands* settings. Don't try to force your style on us. We've established a certain tone for each of our lines and we're happy with it. If you can't match that style, you might want to send us your portfolio anyway. We have new projects in the works all the time, and your style might be just what we're looking for. Just don't expect us to change the look of one of our established lines for you.

By the way, the official style of each book is:

Deadlands: the Weird West: Silver age comic style done in black ink.

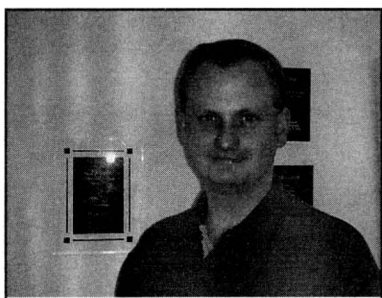
Deadlands: Hell on Earth: Both grayscale and line art are acceptable. Full page work is always grayscale.





WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

Ever wonder just who brings you all these deadly *Deadlands* books, soundtracks, t-shirts, comics, and miniatures? Since this is our first issue, we thought we'd show you just who's responsible for these twisted tales, in the order in which they signed their souls away.



SHANE LACY
HENSLEY

Shane created *Deadlands* after a long trip back from GenCon in '94. Inspired by a

Brom painting of a Confederate vampire (which became the cover to White Wolf Studio's *Necropolis: Atlanta*), the idea of cowboys and zombies just wouldn't get out of his head. Shane had written a ton of products for TSR, West End Games, SSI, FASA, and others, and had recently published a set of historical miniatures rules *Fields of Honor* and John R. Hopler's *The Last Crusade* under the brand name of Pinnacle Entertainment Group.

Starting a roleplaying game company was a full-time commitment, however, and Shane knew he'd need help. He first snatched up his longtime friend, John Hopler, then invited help from two of the industry's most-respected freelancers, Matt Forbeck (*Brave New World*, *Wildstorms CCG*) and Greg Gorden (*TORG*, *Earthdawn*). These two liked the idea so much they wanted in on the company as well. Greg had to move on due to personal reasons, but Matt became PEG's President and was with the company until he created his own game, *Brave New World*, in 1999.

Shane is 31 years old (though his manitou whispers that he's much older), and is married to Michelle Hensley, one Hell of a cowgirl. They have one son, Caden Lacy

Hensley, and another lil rustler on the way. Shane wants to name him Ronan, but Michelle needs a little convincing yet...

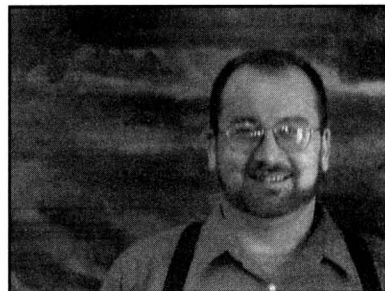
JOHN R.
HOPLER

John originally hails from New Jersey, where he grew up playing football and *Dungeons*

& *Dragons* (yes, he was one of those "nerdy jocks.") He moved to Blacksburg, VA in 1986 (Ah, the Reagan years) to become an engineer at Virginia Tech (go Hokies!). Over the years, his passion for game design (and the fact that no one had done a good World War II CCG yet) convinced him to design *The Last Crusade*. Shane and Charles Ryan of Chameleon Eclectic agreed to publish it as a Pinnacle "label," and a star was born.

When *Deadlands* came around, John did all the hard work, and wrote most anything that had to do with mad science, trains, and physics (the engineering manitou in him just won't stay down). Now he's the Brand Manager for the Wasted West, and you won't believe what's about to happen there over the next year!

John lives in the boonies of Blacksburg (which is saying something), his wife and long-time playtester Christy Hopler, and his only current child, a cuddly little Pentium III.



MICHELLE
HENSLEY

Marshal Mitch is currently on-leave. She's got a prairie tick inside her and it's just about to bust. When she's around, she handles the bookkeeping and makes



EPITAPH

sure the crew has a place to hang their hat at the summer conventions.

Michelle just hit the big 3-0, but she doesn't look a day over 12. Her main job these days is taking care of the little los diablos running around her house, and keeping Shane sane.

JOHN GOFF

John was John Hopler and Shane Hensley's AD&D game master in college. If he hadn't run

such a good game, the two of them might have gone into a real industry.

After a stint in the Army as an interrogator, Sergeant Goff returned to Virginia and visited Shane. John fell in love with *Deadlands* (mostly because we included rules for the one-handed rifle-spin), and was quickly put to work writing his first and still-legendary Dime Novel, *Night Train* (often called the PC Death Train). John went on to write some of the bestselling *Deadlands* books including *Hucksters & Hexes*, *Fire & Brimstone*, and *River o' Blood*. When the opportunity arose, Pinnacle quickly snatched him up and made him the Weird West Brand Manager. John's plans for the High Plains are so creepy even we shudder to think about them.

John now lives in Richmond, VA with Joyce. His incredible output nearly broke him—and he now works in a therapeutic device his mates jokingly call his "MODOC" chair.



good stuff for the now defunct *Babylon Project*. When those companies went the way of the dodo, Pinnacle quickly snatched him up, chained him to a desk, and put him to work coloring pictures, putting together covers, and yelling at Brand Managers who don't do their art orders right.

Zeke is currently hard at work defining the look of the Way Out West, our third and final tale of *Deadlands*.

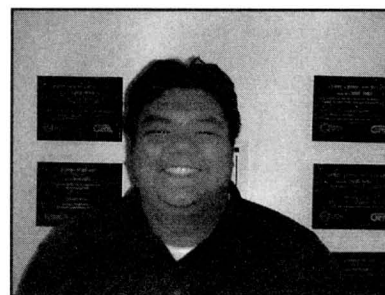
LEE BANSEN

Lee first met the Pinnacle crew in the Blacksburg softball league. The "Gamers" went on to a record season

(12 losses, 1 win, and the highest blowout ever recorded of 49-0!) Fortunately, the next few seasons went a little better. Like they could get any worse.

Lee was manager of Fun-N-Games, a game and comic store started in 1992 by Shane, Michelle, Dave Wilson, and Angel McCoy (now with Wizards of the Coast). Lee did such a good job there that he became Pinnacle's Sales Manager frantically trying to get *Deadlands* products from the printers to our fans.

Lee was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in the shadow of the LKCC (the tallest building in the world and the set of most every major action movie in the last year). He now lives near his family in the "Burg" where he secretly wears a Pikachu costume on his rare days off.



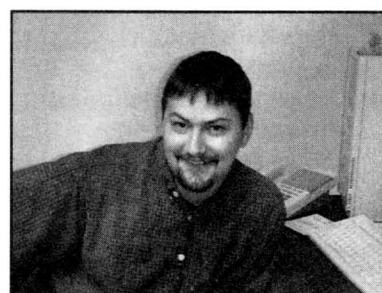
ZEKE SPARKES

Sparky used to work for Wireframe and then Chameleon Eclectic where he did all the



CHRIS LIBEY

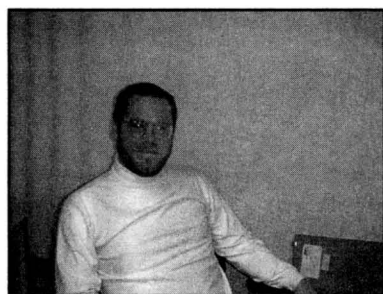
Chris was a happy young Jedi, whiling away his time





after graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University in Painting and Printmaking.

Then Chris stepped into the Weird West and found out that "DRAW!" meant something a little different in the Pinnacle corral. When Chris isn't fantasizing about blowing up the Death Star, he jacks into his computer and does graphic design on whatever project is most late at the time.



PAUL DUKE

Paul Duke looks like G.I. Joe, and even spent some time serving Uncle Sam in the US Army as a Military Intelligence

Analyst at the NSA Building. (Creepy!)

Paul was another treasure recovered from Fun-N-Games. A promising writer and serious history buff, Paul is the lead editor on the Epitaph, and Brand Manager for our WarMaster line, which includes the new *Fields of Honor* and John R. Hopler's *The Last Crusade*.

DAVE WILSON

Dave and Shane met shortly before they opened Fun-N-Games together. Life's twists and turns gave

Dave the store for some time, then Shane got it back while Dave ran off to join corporate America. Unfortunately for Dave, being the manager of a major software chain didn't allow him to slip away to Vegas and cheat the mob out of their millions. Pinnacle is a bit more forgiving (as long as they get their cut), so Dave up and joined our crew.



Now the Tall One serves as Pinnacle's Business Manager. He helps Lee sell these quirky products of ours, makes sure no one gets paid a decent wage, and manages the hordes of artists we work with.

Dave lives in the 'Burg with his two cats, Minuit (French for midnight) and Simba. He's a Hell of a quarterback and one mean wide-receiver. On Pinnacle/Fun-N-Games' softball team, he usually plays left field, where his long runs and diving catches have earned him the nickname "Crazy Legs."

NEXT ISSUE

Next issues brings you a brand new 14 page cull-color comic set in *Deadlands: Hell on Earth*. See what happens to our crew after the events of *Story's End*, featured in this issue. It's called *Hell Hole*, and you don't want to miss the creepy ending Clay & Susan Griffith have in store for our Wasteland Warriors.

We'll also give you a sneak preview of *Lost Colony*, the new setting for *Deadlands*. It starts as a trading card game this summer, then debuts as a full-fledged roleplaying game this Winter. Look for some early card designs, and some cool news about...*Lost Colony* novels!

You'll also find a Weird West Dime Novel, featuring everyone's favorite dead gunslinger, Ronan Lynch. Ronan's starting to get mixed up in the real story of the Weird West. That means trouble for him and the Agency—and one Hell of a good time for us readers!

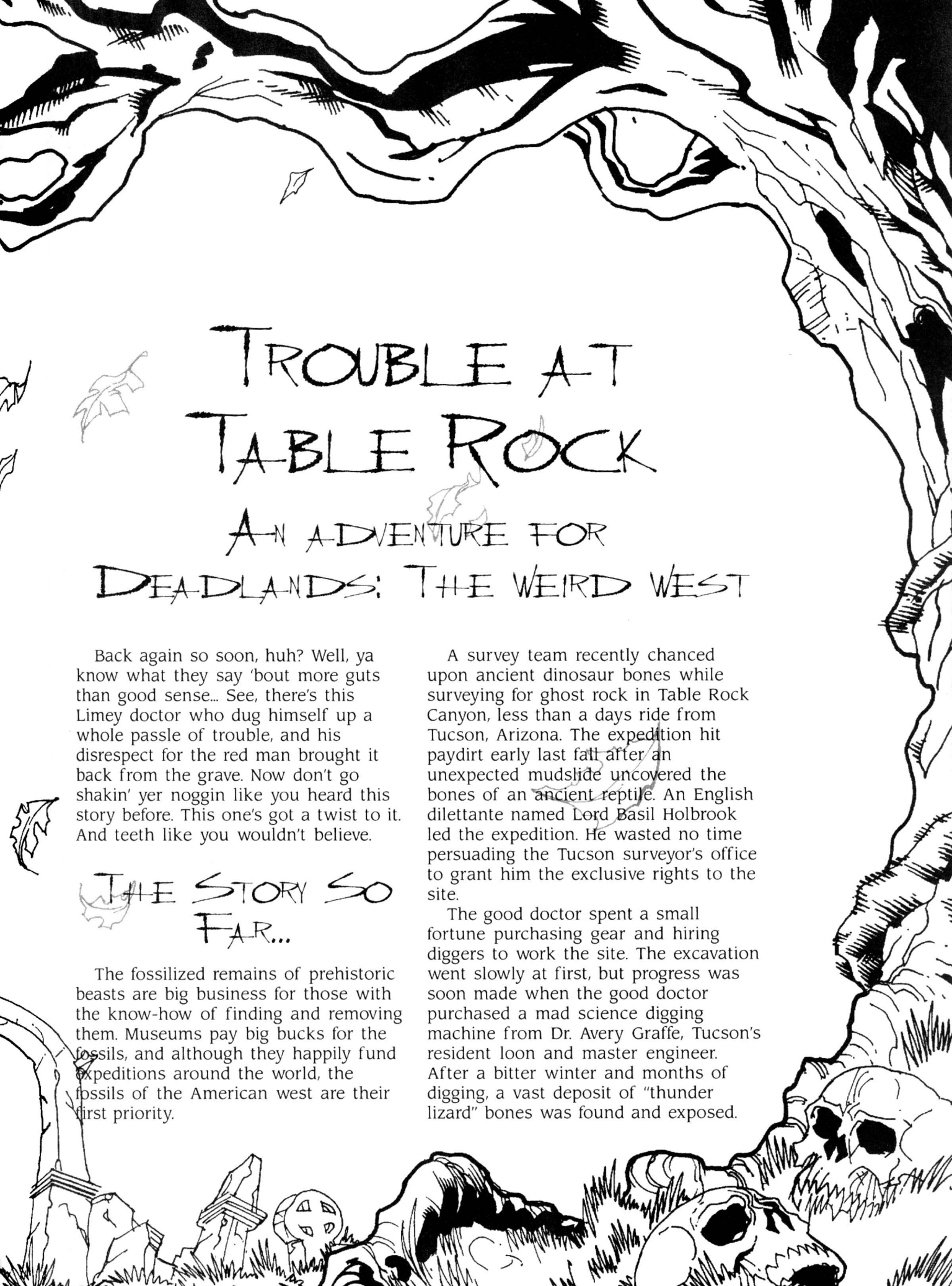
We'll wrap up this issue with a full *Hell on Earth* adventure called *Biodome*, by the original inspiration for Teller and Wasteland Warlord wannabe, Jay Kyle.

And of course, we'll have more updates on the world of *Deadlands*, a cool new contest for you to involve your posse in, and as many cool extra tidbits as we can fit.

Finally, we've got a surprise announcement for those of you true gamers out there!







TROUBLE AT TABLE ROCK

AN ADVENTURE FOR DEADLANDS: THE WEIRD WEST

Back again so soon, huh? Well, ya know what they say 'bout more guts than good sense... See, there's this Limey doctor who dug himself up a whole passle of trouble, and his disrespect for the red man brought it back from the grave. Now don't go shakin' yer noggin like you heard this story before. This one's got a twist to it. And teeth like you wouldn't believe.

THE STORY SO FAR...

The fossilized remains of prehistoric beasts are big business for those with the know-how of finding and removing them. Museums pay big bucks for the fossils, and although they happily fund expeditions around the world, the fossils of the American west are their first priority.

A survey team recently chanced upon ancient dinosaur bones while surveying for ghost rock in Table Rock Canyon, less than a days ride from Tucson, Arizona. The expedition hit paydirt early last fall after an unexpected mudslide uncovered the bones of an ancient reptile. An English dilettante named Lord Basil Holbrook led the expedition. He wasted no time persuading the Tucson surveyor's office to grant him the exclusive rights to the site.

The good doctor spent a small fortune purchasing gear and hiring diggers to work the site. The excavation went slowly at first, but progress was soon made when the good doctor purchased a mad science digging machine from Dr. Avery Graffe, Tucson's resident loon and master engineer. After a bitter winter and months of digging, a vast deposit of "thunder lizard" bones was found and exposed.

Lord Holbrook was ecstatic. Not only would the find establish him within the academic world, it would also validate the expense of the expedition. The fact that it would also make him filthy rich was the last thing on his mind. He boxed up many of the early specimens and had them shipped to New York in order to placate his impatient backers.

DEEPER & DEEPER

Not willing to rest on his laurels, Lord Holbrook set out to find more specimens deeper in the canyon. Within a few days, he discovered an ancient and undisturbed Navajo burial site atop the mesa known as Table Rock itself. Like many scientists of his time, Holbrook leapt at the opportunity to be the first to examine the contents of the burial lattice. Without a thought of the consequences, the impertinent doctor tore into the mummified remains, casting aside worthless trinkets and withered cloth in pursuit of priceless treasure.

Of course, the action didn't go unnoticed. The Reckoners watched silently from their lairs in the Hunting Grounds. And smiled. Here was an opportunity for some grand mischief.

Holbrook had unwittingly plundered the remains of an outcast Navajo shaman by the name Black Owl. This twisted medicine man had been driven from his tribe for crimes against the Great Spirit and consorting with manitous. Amongst the now dead shaman's worldly possessions, the "scientist" found a gut bag full of a mysterious glowing elixir. The philter defied identification, but the bag appeared to be somehow alive!

LABOR DISPUTES

Holbrook returned to the dinosaur dig to find tempers were running high over a labor dispute. The diggers were tired from weeks of backbreaking labor and hadn't been paid for over a month.

It didn't help that Dr. Holbrook had purchased an expensive autocar at about the same time. During the fiery argument that ensued, the hotheads among the diggers started a right good brawl. Things might have turned out all right, but Dr. Holbrook's goods from the Navajo grave, including the ladder containing the elixir, got knocked into a box containing fossilized bones. The strange liquid reacted violently with the ancient fossils, and began to smoke and hiss. Then a horrible wailing seemed to emanate from the very stone. The crew stood dumbfounded in shock and horror as the bones righted themselves and grew flesh and skin before their very eyes, restored to life by the ancient potion. Within moments the small creature had returned to life! The thing hissed at the workers then high-tailed it for the desert.

"UM, IS THAT A GOOD IDEA?"

Incredulously the good doctor dripped what remained of the weird fluid on the exposed animal skeletons around the site, but this time without apparent effect. Fortunately for Holbrook, the bizarre incident stalled his labor strike and the crew retired for the night while their minds tried to comprehend what they had seen.

Hours later, as the crew lay sleeping in their tents, the elixir took effect. Two monstrous predators grew in the camp and instantly wreaked havoc. Most of the workers became the ravenous beasts' first meal in a few million years.

The survivors ran for the hills and took refuge in the caves, cowering from the prehistoric monstrosities and waiting for help to arrive. Sadly, the isolation of the canyon coupled with Holbrook's reclusive policies insured that help would be a long time coming...if ever. Now, with their supplies dwindling and the monsters' attacks growing more frequent as the local game becomes scarcer, the survivors are ripe for a rescue.

The Local Navajo were all too aware of the danger of the canyon. It has been taboo to trespass on the sour earthed depression since the time of the Old Ones. Forewarned by their shamans and fearing for their lives, the

local Navajos collapsed the entrance to the canyon, trapping both the thunder lizards and the digging crew. The Indians regret the loss of life, but see the incident as a warning from the Great Spirit not to toy with forces man was not meant to know.

NICE TRAP

Of course, the Navajo's trap didn't work on anyone but the scientists. Two vicious varmints known in scientific circles as oviraptors managed to scramble over the rockfall and cause all kinds of trouble. These predators are nasty scavengers about the size of large dogs or small ponies. Two days ago, the oviraptors chanced upon ol' Hattie's hen house. The nasty critters didn't waste any time finding a way in and snatching a couple of her prize pullets. The opportunistic devils have returned each night thereafter for the easy pickings. Of course, the missing chickens didn't go unnoticed by ol' Hattie. She set a few traps for the varmints but was unsuccessful in so much as seeing the culprits. Pissed as Hell, she headed into town for more ammo and ran into the Marshal at the local watering hole. Enter our heroes. Surely they can take care of a lowly-chicken thief.

A BRIEF PALEONTOLOGICAL DISSERTATION

At this time, paleontology is a very young science. Young in that there is little credible evidence to support the various theories and notions of beasts that roamed the earth millions of years ago. In 1877, dinosaurs re thought to be distant relatives to modern reptiles. They were cold-blooded, lumbered about devouring each other and their young indiscriminately, and possessed unbelievably small brains.

Scientists of the 1800's were more prone to conjecture supplemented by a hearty dose of assumption. Put simply, the theories put forth by moldering 19th century scientists were rooted in supposition as opposed to hard facts derived from fossil evidence. This situation is aggravated by the fact that



the territories and states of the US which hold the most deposits of dinosaur bones are Montana and Utah, disputed lands occupied by warring tribes and hostile natives.

Of course, with the coming of the Reckoning, things are a little different. The Reckoners use any development, especially science, to sow fear and discord. As detailed in *Rascals*, *Varmints*, & *Critters*, the skeletal remains in museums have on occasion animated and chomped an unsuspecting curator or onlooker into dino-bites. The alchemically resurrected behemoths featured in this tale are quite different, for they are not undead. They are alive and well and running amok in the Indian Territories.

The monsters do not act out of malice, but rather out of instinct and hunger. That doesn't mean they aren't ornery as prairie ticks in heat, they're just not evil like most of the abominations the Reckoners have cooked up.

THE SETUP

There are two ways to set this adventure up. The standard way is offered below, but be warned it probably won't work on veteran posses. Most veterans of the Weird West consider checking on chicken thieves a little beneath their station. For those types, you'll want to skip directly to Hattie's House. Have your posse run across it as they travel through the area (and concoct a reason for them to be traveling this way if needed). Natural curiosity ought to do the rest of your work for you.

For young posses who haven't become too jaded yet, they find themselves in one of Tucson's finer watering holes, the Brass Tack to do a little bragging and wash down the trail dust. Marshal Wrath Thompson, the only real law in Tucson, recognizes the posse as more than the local sodbusters. He gives them the usual stare and asks and asks them to check out the claims of the town spinster, Hattie Weatherwax.

Hattie alleges that some rapscaillon has been sneaking in after nightfall and filching from her hen house. She's already lost most of her prized hens and those that remain have stopped laying eggs altogether. Under ordinary circumstances, Wrath wouldn't pay the problem any mind, but seeing as how Ol' Hattie just left town with a crate of whiskey and three boxes of rifle ammo, he believes there's just cause for a little look-see. He's mostly afraid Hattie will wind up shooting some starving Indian (who he believes is the real culprit) and start the locals on the warpath.

Wrath can't offer much of a bounty—\$50 for the whole party. But he can also arrange for a free stay at the nicest hotel in town, including meals. Start trouble with the Indians, however, and Wrath will give them free room and board in jail until hanging Judge Elster Bean comes 'round.

HATTIE'S HOUSE

Fear Rating 2

Read aloud, paraphrase, or wing it.

An hour before sunset, you come within sight of a rickety shack sticking up from the scrub grass and saguaro. The house looks deserted. The front door is banging freely in the wind and the walls look as though they haven't seen paint in years. The roof sags from the mish mash patches and a fieldstone chimney sticks out at an odd angle from the jumble of shingles and tin plates.

Surrounding the dismal property is a wooden picket fence. Most of the planks have fallen free of the railing and lie at the base of the enclosure. A shoulder-high fence of posts and mangled chicken wire is just visible around back. As soon as you near the house, you hear a God-awful growl coming from the outhouse out back.

Hattie is nowhere to be found. She took refuge in the outhouse last night after unsuccessfully ambushing the egg snatchers when the nasty critters turned the tables on her. She's fast asleep and snoring loudly with her Sharps Big 50 clutched in her calloused mitts, hence the horrible growling. Of course the bourbon helped. While the outhouse was being attacked, Hattie downed a full bottle of Tennessee bourbon, to steady her nerves and sharpen her aim. The bottle was dropped into the pit and is beyond retrieving without an incredible effort on the heroes' part.

GODAWFUL NOISE 'ROUND BACK

If anyone investigates the unearthly noises coming from the outhouse, Hattie awakens suddenly, panics, and fires off a misplaced shot in the direction of the approach. The shots unerringly go wild, but don't tell the posse that. Although none of the posse is hit. Hattie continues to pop off shots

through the crescent moon peephole in the outhouse door until someone calls her name or otherwise indicates peaceful intent. Even then she comes out nervously, never letting down her defenses or letting go of her shotgun.

OL' HATTIE

When you think of Hattie, plenty of unpleasant words leap to mind: bitter, abrasive, and ornery. Hattie takes nothing at face value and takes no handouts out of pride. She's a woman with many convictions and a demeanor that could curdle fresh milk. She'll take any man who opens a door, tips a hat, or shows her too much courtesy. Her fiancé left her at the altar thirty years ago and she's still a little sore about it. She grumbles a lot, but she's decent enough with most folks who stay out of her way, which suits her just fine.

Long, unruly gray hair, bushy eyebrows and mean eyes are Hattie's most outstanding features. She looks like twenty miles of rough, sun-baked terrain. Her complexion is like cracked cowhide and darker than some redskins. She's had a hard life and it shows. She's average height and a little heavy set. She's taken to dressing like a man complete with hat, britches, and denim shirt with the sleeves rolled up. Her arms are almost as hairy as a man's and grayer still than the tangled locks on her head.

And now she's a little roughed up, so you can imagine what she looks like. If she comes bounding out of the outhouse, a posse member is likely to take a potshot at her. Make sure to spend a chip for Hattie though, the information she has to reveal is pretty important. Besides, Hattie will probably outlive the posse. The mean ones always do.

PROFILE: HATTIE WEATHERMAN

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:1d6, Q:1d6, S:1d8, V:4d6

Shootin': rifle 2d6, fightin': brawlin 1d6, horse ridin' 2d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:2d6, M:1d10, Sm:2d8, Sp:1d10

Area knowledge: Tucson 3d6, faith 2d10, guts 2d10, languages: Spanish 2d6,



languages: Tahona O'odham, overawe 1d10, ridicule 3d8, scrutinize 2d8, search 1d8, trackin' 1d8

Edges: Brave

Hindrances: Intolerance: to cavalier displays in men, Mean as a Rattler, Stubborn, Ugly as Sin

Possessions: Sharps Big 50 (5d10 damage), several reloads, an aging swaybacked gelding named Henry (not coincidentally the name of her missing fiancé).

NICE DIGS

After a brief show that the posse's what they seem to be, Hattie leaves the relative safety of the outhouse and hobbles unsteadily towards the house. She's scratched up and her clothes are lightly dappled with dried blood and spilled whiskey, souvenirs from last night's encounter with the hen snatchers. By her stiff movements and slow gait, she's got more than a touch of rheumatism and a killer hang-over.

Once the posse enters Hattie's shack read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The interior is just as shabby as the outside. Drab lighting from kerosene lamps, crude wooden furniture, and dingy walls are the decor of the moment. Across from the hearth stands a ladder leading to a loft, leading (presumably) to Hattie's lonely bed.

The place reeks of dry rot and dust covers every surface. The only item of worth is a beautifully crafted rocking chair of immense size, in front of which lies an overturned basket of threadbare clothing. To the right of the front door is a cramped, dark kitchen with a sink full of dirty dishes and a small potbellied stove.

A table stands in the center of the kitchen covered with the scraps of a chicken dinner, now torn apart and scattered on the floor. Hattie overlooks the mess, steps stiffly over the fatty bits of chicken, and heads for the coffee pot. She looks mad as Hell, which makes most of you reluctant to break the silence.

Kindhearted heroes with the *medicine: general Aptitude* realize Hattie's injuries are superficial, mostly scratches and a few bruises. Those attempting to administer to her using either hexes, favors, or other supernatural hokum had better talk fast or be ready for a fight. Hattie's a God-fearing woman and won't abide any witchery in her presence. She will begrudgingly submit to the tender mercies of one of the blessed, accepting a miracle without too much fuss, but remember, most folks don't even believe in these.

After several cups of coffee, Hattie can be goaded into relating what she knows.

She noticed several of her chickens missing five days ago. Her rooster, Cletus, turned up missing the following morning, as did the entire day's eggs. Hattie figured that polecats or coyotes were responsible, so she set a few traps only to find them the following day picked clean of bait and sprung. Worse still, the critters had struck again. The nasty lil' bastiches had even gone so far as to dig under the chicken wire, finagle the gate open, and tear through the thinnest parts of the fence to get at her stock.

Out of desperation, Hattie took to staying up all night in hopes of catching the critters in the act. Yesterday, shortly after nightfall, the critters returned and began plundering her pullets. Taking rifle in hand, she crept out into the dusky haze intent on getting the jump on her tormentors. She saw movement in the coops and

fired blindly, hoping to blast the beasties back to Perdition. She can't be sure, but she believes she managed to wing one of them. The critter let loose with a terrible wail and whipped around, and then she found herself blindsided, bushwhacked by one of the little devils. She shows off several nasty cuts on her arms and a scratch across her forehead to substantiate her tale. She fought the varmint off and managed to beat a hasty retreat to the outhouse where she kept the still-unseen things at bay until morning when she passed out.

In truth, Hattie got a better view than she admits to. She just doesn't want to sound addled. With a *Hard (9) persuasion* roll, the heroes can coax a bit more information from her. The hen-snatchers looked vaguely like lizards, walked around like geese, and moved like greased lightning.

Those who successfully *scrutinize* Hattie realize she's been drinking. If confronted by this fact, Hattie she it's purely medicinal...and leaves it at that. Besides, she started drinking *after* the varmints attacked. Or so she says.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK...

Trail-wise heroes may want to get a gander at the tracks, which they'll find in abundance around the entire property, although the critters left most of their tracks around the outhouse and within and around the chicken coops.

Locating the tracks requires a *Foolproof (3) trackin'* roll, although it doesn't require the Aptitude to realize the tracks don't belong to any common critter. A single raise on the *trackin'* roll indicates the critters walked on their hind legs with their weight on their toes. They also weighed less than a man, and more than a dog. Two raises are required for the heroes to arrive at the conclusion that there were three of the varmints.

The tracks head off to the southeast, towards Table Rock Canyon. If this is brought to Hattie's attention, she mentions that she heard some sort of blasting from that direction a few days back. If further questioned, or if the heroes need a little goading, she

mentions that there's been some hubbub thereabouts for months. Ghost rock mining she reckons. She goes on to say that the fellow running the show is from Back East, and might even be an Englishman. Word is he hired every strong back and digger in Tucson willing to work for pennies. The sounds of their digging have been coming from the canyon for days, but it's been quiet of late. In fact, it's been at least five days since she's heard so much as a peep in that direction. Other than that, she's unaware of the canyon's significance in the greater plot.

COYOTES DON'T DO THAT!

Out around back, something or someone has made numerous attempts to dig under the fence. Much of the chicken wire has been repaired and boards have been placed at ground level to prevent further excavations by the snatchers. If asked, Hattie provides a quick tour of her estate, showing off her mangy horse and the tiny shack used as a stable. The chicken thieves already learned not to harass the horse. Hattie also shows the tracks leading up to her porch and around the house to the grimy windows. Not only are the hen snitches unrepentant thieves, they're peeping Toms.

TABLE ROCK

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The interior of the chicken pen is huge, easily capable of holding hundreds of chickens, but now there's just a blanket of feathers and eggshells on the dirt floor of the coop. In many places, the chicken wire has been torn and bent. If the posse attempts to follow the tracks, they lose the trail a hundred yards or so from the pen. Besides, it's getting dark and the desert is no place for anyone to be wandering around nightfall

TASTES LIKE CHICKEN

Chances are the posse'll wait around until after sunset in order to get a look at the critters when they come back. They may also want to set sentries, traps, pits, deadfalls, and just about any other measure to minimize risks and effort on their part. Let 'em. The snitches have been clever enough to elude the cagey Hattie for the last five days and the posse has less than an hour to make preparations. Be fair, but don't let the scene drag on for too long if you can help it.



The hen snitches come around 1-4 hours after sunset and begin making a beeline for the coups. One holds back and acts as a lookout, relying upon its natural defenses and the shadows to obscure its presence. The others stealthily head for a weak spot in Hattie's repair efforts.

The posse receives a +2 to all *Cognition* rolls to detect the approach of the snitches because of the ruckus the chickens raise. At first the snitches are curious about the sudden appearance of the heroes. The critters put up quite a show attempting to drive off the larger humans, lunging forward in an attempt to *overawe* the nearest character.

If one of the critters is wounded or killed, the remaining raptors turn mean and the situation gets ugly in a hurry. At this point, the encounter turns into a free-for-all as the heroes deal with the enraged raptors.

Remember that this encounter should be exciting and interesting as opposed to being gory, that comes later when the posse runs into the Rexes still trapped in the canyon. Use the speed and agility of the snitches to their advantage, but don't waste your Fate Chips in prolonging the encounter. Have the raptors run around squawking and dodging the heroes' attacks. The hen snitches are surprisingly aware and intelligent, for lizards. Given half a chance, the beasties happily fall upon a sick or wounded target before attacking healthy prey. Still, raptors are cowards at heart and flee from combat if it's obvious they're outclassed.

The hen snitches look like plucked turkeys, possessing thin bodies with long necks terminating in oblong heads. Two bright intelligent eyes crown their heads, providing wide angle vision. Long tails for balance brings the creatures' length to just under two yards. When standing fully erect, oviraptors creature are four feet high at the crest. Their legs and arms are muscular, powerful and tipped with

razor-sharp four-inch claws. The creatures' skin is photoreactive, affording them a superb ability to blend in and camouflage themselves amongst the surrounding terrain. When they move, they do so like birds, heads bobbing and turning and wheeling. Oviraptors are highly vocal, can use hisses and chirrups. To communicate and hunt as a highly developed team.

PROFILE: OVIRAPTOR

Corporeal: D: 2d6, N:2d10, Q:1d12+2, S:1d8, V:2d6

Fightin': brawlin' 3d10, filchin' 2d6, dodge 3d10, sneak 5d10

Mental: C:2d8, K:1d4, M:1d10, Sm:1d8, Sp:3d8

Guts: 4d8, overawe 2d10, search 2d8, scrutinize 3d8

Terror: 5

Size: 6 (4 feet tall and 6 feet long)

Pace: 18

Attacks:

Claws: STR+1d8

Special Abilities:

Camouflage: the critter's skin is like a chameleon's and changes to match the background. All ranged attacks suffer -2 to the attack roll. It's *sneak* skill rolls receive a +2 bonus.

Leaping Lizards!: The critters are incredible jumpers and may execute jumps of up to 10 yards at a run.

When the last of the hen snitches is finished off, the corpses rapidly decompose and return to fossils. Flesh and blood crumble turn to dust and blow away in the wind before the posse's very eyes.

BOUNTY

For eliminating the egg snitches
1 white chip a piece

Hattie will begrudgingly mutter her thanks, forcing a few chickens upon the heroes as payment for their help with her little problem.

CHAPTER TWO: TABLE ROCK CANYON

TABLE ROCK

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Fear Level 3

Table Rock Canyon is a deep depression measuring two by five miles with sheer walls that plummet nearly two hundred feet to the canyon floor below. Attempts to descend the walls are precarious at best due to their crumbly nature and the lack of hand and footholds.

The canyon is named for a table-like rock formation on its floor, a flat sheet of rock supported by three columns like the legs of a table. The formation rises up fifty feet above the canyon floor and measures about seventy feet on a side.

A slow moving stream runs along the floor of the canyon towards the back of the depression. The water contains dangerously high levels of alkaloids, highly toxic salts and other minerals. Drinking from the stream causes a serious case of the runs if imbibed regularly. Most animals of the region know this and find water elsewhere within the canyon.

The floor is uneven and broken by low spots and stone columns of unusual size and shape. The walls are striated with many different types of sandstone and painted like the Grand Canyon. Hundreds of shallow caves line the walls at all heights, some of which contain remnants of an ancient people who made the canyon their home centuries before the coming of the Europeans. Ancient pictographs can be found here and there on the walls and land features. The people responsible for the markings are a complete mystery and their language has so far gone untranslated.

The single entrance was to the southwest, but recently a band of angry Navajos caused an avalanche and now tons of rock seal the entrance. Foot traffic is perilous and anyone attempting to climb the boulder-filled entrance must watch their step to avoid falling to their deaths or being crushed by a precariously balanced boulder disturbed by a careless footfall.

Even stranger, stillness hangs in the air and sounds seem muffled—as if the canyon doesn't want them to be heard. At night, the place is unnervingly quiet except for the occasional howl of a coyote or the shrill cry of a night bird. The stillness stems from the fact that both Lil and Big Rex have managed to finish off just about every critter large enough to be snagged and gulped down, and they are slowly starving as a result. The whole area has a Fear Rating of 3 due to the otherworldly atmosphere of the canyon, especially at night.

THE CAVALRY HAS ARRIVED

The heroes find the canyon easily enough, though what they discover there chills their bones. The canyon is gloomy and radiates an aura of malice just under the otherwise placid facade. Occasionally, a thunderous boom or distant roar echoes softly from the mouth of the canyon. This is Lil and Big Rex lumbering angrily about in search of prey.

From the edge of the cliffs, the posse can spot the remains of a large campsite. Few details are evident from here, but with a Foolproof (3) *search* roll, a hero can just make out ripped tents, broken crates, and other debris. This is the devastation wrought by the monsters on the dig site.

Besides these few clues, the posse must descend to the canyon entrance to gather more clues.

ENTRANCE & STONE FOREST

The entrance to the canyon is at the southwest end. Prior to the Navajo dynamiting the entrance, the path meandered its way down to the canyon floor. Now a twenty-foot wall of boulders blocks further travel on

horseback, so the heroes will have to go the rest of the way by the old heel-toe express (that means by foot for you tinhorns).

Progress along the stagecoach-sized boulders requires two successive Fair (TN 5) *climbin'* rolls. Failing either of the rolls results in a fall causing 1d6+5 damage to a random location. If the heroes decide to tether themselves together, the difficulty of the *climbin'* roll is Foolproof (TN 3). As they make their descent, build up the suspense by occasionally mentioning crumbling rock formations above their heads and the otherworldly nature of the canyon.

Once the heroes have successfully negotiated the entrance, they should be able to make out the dried-up remains of the stream and the remains of a campsite.

TIMBER!

Table Rock Canyon is home to a veritable forest of stone columns that rise nearly to the height of the canyon walls. Many of the columns are seventy or 100 feet in diameter, the tops of which wave unsteadily in an unseen breeze; like the canyon walls, the columns devour every sound save the heroes' footsteps. Only a precisely-placed dynamite charge, requiring a Fair (TN 5) *demolitions* roll, can send one of the massive column crashing to Earth. A single raise on the roll indicates the column falls in the direction of the hero's choice. Two raises allows a domino effect, with several columns falling in succession in the direction of the hero's choice.

Because of the nature of the columns, little overhead light penetrates to the canyon floor. Areas of deep shadow and pools of light are the result. Play upon the posse's fears by occasionally requesting *scrutinize* rolls. The rolls have no meaning but it adds to the uncertain nature of the scene. And we just love to mess with those loco players.

THE TABLE ROCK FORMATION

Table Rock itself measures seventy feet on a side and rises to a height of fifty feet. A flat stone resembling a tabletop is balanced precariously upon three columns, each measuring fifteen to twenty feet in diameter. Should one of the legs be destroyed, the others collapse as well, causing the huge stone slab to slip. Anyone underneath takes 8d20 damage unless an Incredible (TN 11) *dodge* roll is made.

The surface of the structure is unusually smooth, as if from thousands of years of sandblasting. The slow-moving stream has collected in a shallow stone depression roughly 40 feet in diameter. Animal bones, including cougar, bear, antelope and buffalo, lie half submerged under a thick layer of greasy brown mud.

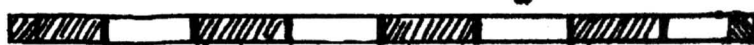
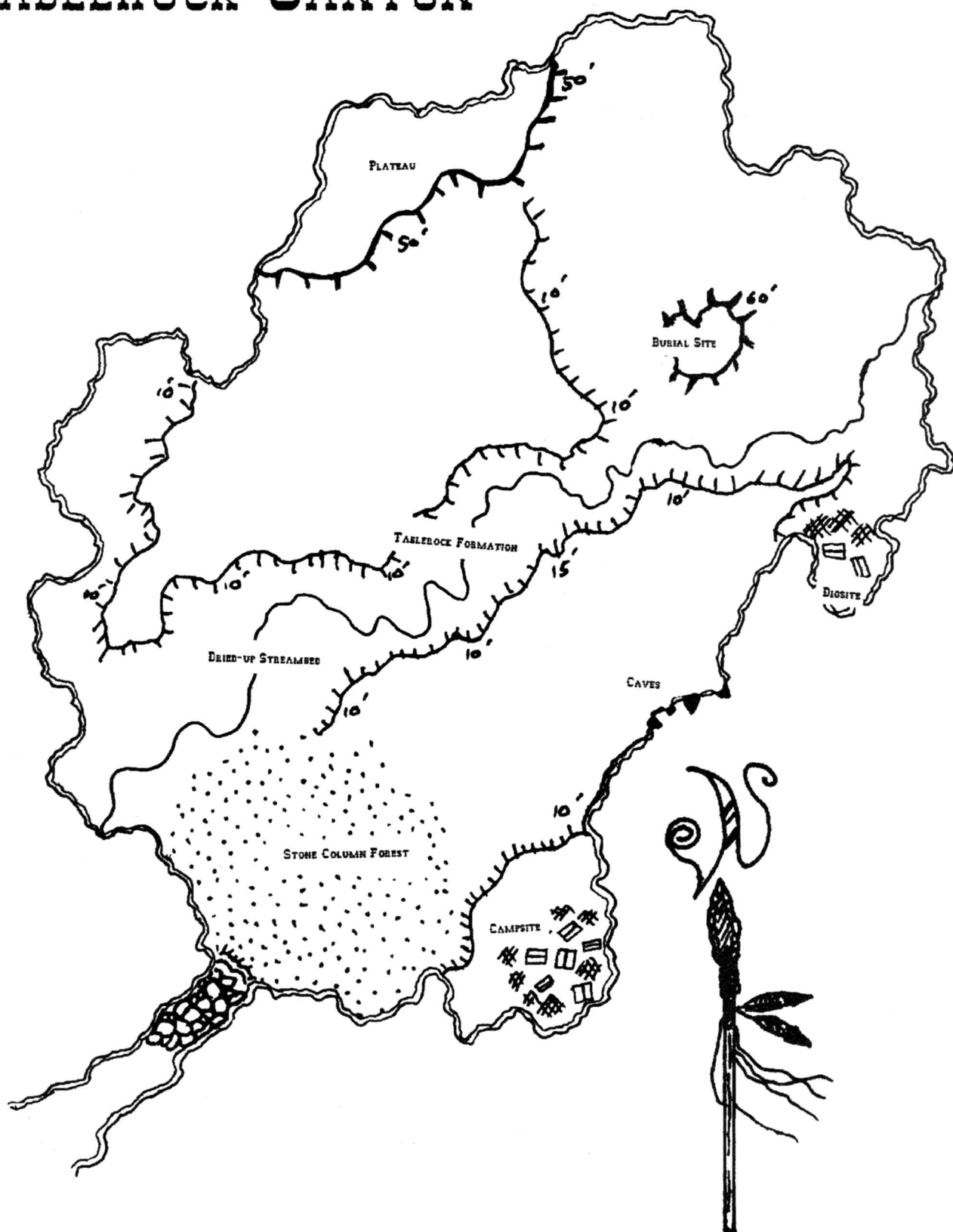
THE DRIED-UP RIVER

The old river bed consists of sun-baked mud interspaced with highly polished stones. The latter ring small shallow pools of muddy, foul-smelling water that's poisonous if drunk in any quantity. Those who do suffer -1 step to all Corporeal Traits within one hour of drinking unless they pass an Onerous (TN 7) *Vigor* roll. Lost trait steps return one level per two days of drinking fresh water and ample bed rest. On a botch, the character loses all Wind and is immobilized by stomach cramps for 1d4 hours. After this he begins to lose one level off each Corporeal Trait per hour until he receives supernatural aid in the form of the *medicine* favor, the *lay on hands* miracle, or a Hard (TN 9) *medicine: general* skill roll. Should any of the hero's Traits drop below 1d4, he perishes from dehydration, leaving a grisly mummified corpse for his compadres to deal with.

THE DIG SITE

When the heroes approach the remains of the site, they notice immediately that the area has been picked over and flattened. The splintered remains of specimen crates, ruined tables, and busted tools litter the ground.

TABLEROCK CANYON



1/4 1/2 3/4 1 mile 1 1/4 1 1/2 1 3/4 2 miles

Contours
Stone Forest



DIGGING MACHINE HYBRID

Dur.	Pass.	Pace	Turn	Travel	Fuel	Rel.	Mod.
50/10	4	15	5	8 mph	3	14	+4

Hit

d20 Roll	Location	Armor	Mod.
1-2	Driver	2	-2
4-6	Passengers	1	-1
7-10	Arms	2	0
11-15	Wheels	3	0
16-20	Boiler	4	0

MALFUNCTIONS

D20 Malfunction

1-10 Arms

Minor: Joint freezes up, all further attacks are at a -2 to the roll until a Fair (TN 5) tinkerin' roll is made.

Major: Jammed: limb won't articulate until a successful Onerous (TN 7) tinkerin' roll is made.

Catastrophic: Limb jerks backwards striking either a passenger or the driver, who sustains 3d12+4 damage, rerolling aces as usual. Limb imbeds itself into the machine's frame and is disabled until an Incredible (TN 11) tinkerin' roll is made to free it.

11-15 Wheel Malfunction

See page 59 of *Smith & Robards* for the information on malfunctioning wheels.

16-20 Boiler Malfunction

See page 59 of *Smith & Robards* for the information on malfunctioning wheels.

A water reservoir atop a wooden scaffold once stood above the dig site but was overturned and destroyed by the rampaging dinosaurs. The area directly around the water tower is now muddy and bears the tracks of both Big & Lil Rex. A Fair (5) *trackin'* roll reveals just what the heroes are up against. Since the posse is probably not

schooled in dinosaur tracks, simply tell them they're looking at two more of the monsters they fought earlier (the oviraptors), but perhaps 2-3 times their size.

Surprisingly, the demolitions shack remains intact, having been obscured by falling rock and the torn bits of a canvas tent. Inside, along with picks and shovels (+1 Def., STR+1d10 damage, but *fightin': brawlin'* attacks suffer a -2 to the attack roll due to the unwieldiness of the makeshift weapon) are two boxes. One contains 17 sticks of TNT and the other has four 2-pint bottles of nitro.

DR. AVERY GRAFFE'S AUTONOMOUS DIGGIN' APPARATUS

The rusted hulk of a digging machine lies towards the eastern wall of the site. It needs repairs on several of its vital functions before it can be safely operated. The device was obviously dreamed up by a mad scientist for it has several huge boilers, two mechanical arms tipped with a pair of spiked stone grinders, and an integrated conveyor system.

The arms collect stone chunks in a forward-facing bucket and the conveyor passes them backwards for inspection and deposits them in a pile behind the machine. While the machine is operating, the driver sits in front of the two main boilers while a copilot operates a series of winches and pulleys to manipulate the articulated arms into the cliff face.

The machine requires periodic maneuvering via ox or mule and is not self-guided or propelling.

The device was designed and built by Tucson's foremost engineer and gentleman scientist: Dr. Avery Graffe. The machine superficially resembles a doublewide wagon reinforced with riveted steel plating riding atop four spiked iron-shod wheels. Two cylinders make up the boilers, one for ghost rock and the other for water, both of which sit to the rear and provide necessary ballast while the vehicle is in operation.

Two ten-foot steel arms are affixed and articulated with levers, pulleys, and wheels. Each arm ends in a pair of counter-rotating grinding cylinders, each of which does 3d12+4 damage to anything struck by them. Using the machine requires the *drivin': digging apparatus* aptitude. The operator sits 5 feet above the arms inside an armored crow's nest that provides level 2 armor and chest-high cover to the driver.

A massive scoop and bucket are at the fore of the machine, behind which a seven foot set of counter rotating cylinders grind rock into smaller pieces to be transported along a conveyor for inspection and deposit at the rear of the device. Victims of the grinder suffer 3d20 damage and must pass an Incredible (TN 11) *Strength* roll to remove themselves from the jaws or continue to sustain 3d20 damage each round thereafter.

The digging apparatus was damaged by the sudden attack of the thunder lizards and requires an Onerous (TN 7) *tinkerin'* roll to be restarted. Needless to say, this can be a powerful weapon against the dinos if the posse can get it running again.

THE PLATEAU

The plateau lies like a shelf 50 feet above the canyon's floor. The dinos aren't able to climb to the surface so the posse can retire here and catch their breath. The canyon walls loom overhead, providing a welcome relief against the unrelenting sun of the Sonora Desert. The overhang is especially difficult to traverse, all *climbin'* rolls are Nigh-Impossible (TN 13).

THE BUTTE & BURIAL LATTICE

Atop this foreboding stone plateau stand the remains of a Navajo burial lattice. It consists of six wooden poles lashed together with rawhide. The lattice has long since been abandoned to the elements.

The structure is mostly intact in spite of Dr. Holbrook's pillaging. The corpse upon the lattice is, now little more than dust and bone. It rests on a makeshift bed of leather hides some

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eight feet above the ground. The bones of a favored mount lie undisturbed beneath the lattice; the dead horse's bit and bridle still clenched in its jaws.

If the posse chooses to take refuge from the dinos here, they'll find that the climb is too great for the thunder lizards. The monsters remain at the base of the mesa, roaring in anger. Big Rex patrols around the base of the mesa for hours, but gives up eventually. Lil Rex, being more cunning and focused on filling its empty belly, lies in wait amongst the rocks and attempts to ambush the unwary until sunset.

Hidden at the base of the butte is Holbrook's autocar. In his haste to return to the dig site, he neglected to reclaim his auto. It has half a tank of ghost rock fuel and is in excellent condition. The vehicle has remained undisturbed by the thunder lizards since Holbrook's ill-fated return to the dig site.

If a hero succeeds in a Fair (TN 5) *trackin'* roll, he notices a set of parallel vehicle tracks leading to a cleft in the side of the butte. The conveyance conforms to the statistics presented in the *Smith & Robards* tome for the Open Topped Wagon save that it has sustained one Wound from Dr. Holbrook's careless bravado. As a result, all *drivin': autocar* rolls suffer a -1 penalty until repaired. Repairing the auto requires a Fair (TN 5) *tinkerin'* roll.

Messing with the body is not a good idea. This is the "Weird" West after all. We don't have room to do a whole new Scooby adventure here, but Marshal, feel free to cook up some sort of undead, revenant Indian spirit to follow anyone who violates the body. Just make sure you wait a bit—the dinos are plenty to worry about for now.

THE CAMPSITE

It looks as though an iron horse tore through the campsite. The ground is crisscrossed with deep footprints, those of Big and Lil Rex.



The tattered and bloody remains of five tents billow in the wind from broken tent poles and frayed rope. The ground is strewn with trampled supplies, shattered crates, and barrels. Scattered around the wreckage the heroes can find the remains of tools, boxes of fossilized specimens packed in sawdust, a ruined phonograph, and other human comforts such as cots, blankets and minor personal effects.

The ground is also stained red where men were set upon and torn limb from limb by the voracious dinos. Rifle and pistol cartridges are discovered if one or more heroes successfully make a Fair (TN 5) *search* roll. Since the initial attack five days past, the thunder lizards have periodically returned to the campsite to forage. The survivors (detailed later)

know better than to come here during the daylight hours.

The photo is of none other than Dr. Holbrook himself (see above). A muckraker came around a few days ago and took pictures of the dig. The vain Dr. Holbrook asked for a shot of himself in return for the exclusive (not that there were any other journalists—yellow or otherwise—about anyway). The muckraker now rests in Big Rex's belly. Holbrook and a few other survivors are detailed shortly.

BUFFET ON THE HOOF

While the posse's scrounging around the camp site, they spot movement coming from the cliff caves. Read the following aloud or paraphrase:

You catch sight of a handful of men moving quickly from the security of the caves to the riverbed. They rush to fill their canteens, all the while looking nervously about. Even from this distance, they look haggard and tired; their clothing looks bloodstained and torn. Suddenly, a huge shape looms above them. The monster rises from behind a rock formation and snaps its monstrous jaws about the foremost figure. It thrashes its powerful neck about, sending the lower torso flying 20 feet, the legs reflexively kicking in the dirt. The other three men head for the safety of the caves, the beast hot on their heels.

Lil Rex caught the scent of the posse and headed in the direction of the campsite but chanced upon the skulking diggers first. It waited in the shadow of a large rock formation in ambush and—well, you know the rest.

Make sure to overemphasize the monster's movements and include plenty of detail when describing the beast bearing down on the fleeing men. If the posse doesn't get involved, Lil Rex will run down another man, allowing the remaining pair to race for the safety of the caves while Lil Rex

takes its time carefully pulling apart its flailing and screaming meal.

However, if the posse gets involved, such as by drawing away the monster or by firing at it, Lil Rex turns its attention towards them and charges.

Suggest to the posse that it might be a good idea to take cover within the stone forest. The monster pursues the heroes into the columns but may lose them if they climb out of reach or successfully *sneak* against the monster's *search*.

While the heroes fight, hide, or climb for their lives, the surviving diggers cluster around the cave mouth and won't lend a hand until the dino is dead or driven off (generally after receiving three wound levels to a single location).

LIL REX

Lil Rex's most embarrassing secret is that he isn't a Rex at all. He's actually an allosaurus. This distinction is usually lost on those who are sliding down its throat.

Despite his mistaken *nom de plume*, Lil Rex is a towering monstrosity 12 feet in height and 18 feet in length. The mouth is huge and full of 5-inch serrated teeth. The neck muscles are strong enough to allow the allosaurus to pick up and run with an animal the size of a horse. Unlike Big Rex, the forelimbs of Lil Rex are not vestigial but fully functional, powerfully muscled and ending in a razor-like claw six inches long.

The toes are no less formidable or impressive. Surprisingly, this massive monster is almost as fast as a horse, but due to its three ton bulk, Lil Rex is unable to run for distances greater than a few hundred yards before tiring. Surprisingly, Lil Rex is capable of horizontal leaps of up to 20 feet. Leapin' lizards!

Lil Rex is driven by an intense need to hunt, kill, and devour anything unfortunate enough to cross its path. His raging instincts drive Lil Rex to indiscriminately kill to establish and maintain his territory. And an occasional screaming snack, of course.



PROFILE: LIL REX

Corporeal: D:1d6, N:4d8, Q:1d12+4,
S:5d12+4, V:2d12

Fightin': brawl in' 4d8, sneak 4d8

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, Sm:2d4, M:2d10,
Sp:2d10

Guts 4d10, overawe 4d10, search
3d6, trackin' 4d6

Terror: 9

Size: 12 (12 feet tall 18 feet long)

Pace: 18

Attacks:

Bite: STR+3d10 damage

Claws: STR+3d6

Special Abilities:

Armor: 2 (except for the eyes and inside of the mouth, which have 1 level of armor)

Blood Scent: the monster receives +2 to all *search* and *trackin'* Aptitude rolls when pursuing wounded prey.

Regeneration: 1 wound per day

Thick Skinned: ignores 1 wound level per location.

Coup: Harrowed near the dying Lil Rex acquire the abomination's ability to spring long distances, roughly twice their *Nimbleness* die in yards forward and half that straight up. On the down side, their legs become slightly bowed and warped, with the knees facing backwards.

AND NOW FOR THE MAIN COURSE...

Once Lil Rex is killed or driven off, the sound of something even bigger approaches. The survivors in the cave urge the posse to take shelter before Big Rex comes to investigate the noises and the smell of fresh blood. If the posse chooses to engage the monster, let 'em. Chances are that several posse members will be killed trying to kill the monster. The survivors should then flee for their lives.



Either way, Big Rex makes an appearance and rushes the fleeing characters. Unless somebody falls, i.e. fails a Foolproof (TN 3) *Nimbleness* roll to run up the hill into the cave, the heroes make it to the sanctuary just as the monstrous reptile closes.

If Lil Rex has been killed, the larger predator sniffs about the rapidly desiccating carcass. If Lil Rex fled, Big Rex sniffs around the cave opening before pursuing his smaller cousin.

That's it for now. Smart posses will take the time to come up with a plan. After meeting Dr. Holbrook and his diggers, that is.

DR. HOLBROOK, I PRESUME

Huddled in the back of the cave is what's left of the expedition—nine laborers. They're alive, but haunted, as if they've survived a terrible trial only to sink to apathy and helplessness. Seeing as how that's just what happened, it's not surprising they look that way.

Many of the crew have sustained various injuries during the last few days, but most are just minor lacerations and scrapes, accompanied by fatigue brought on by consuming rotten food and drinking the toxic water that runs through Table Rock Canyon.

PROFILE: TYPICAL DIGGER (9)

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:2d6, Q:2d6, S:3d8, V:2d8

Climbin' 1d6, dodge 1d6, fightin' brawlin' 2d6, sneak 1d6

Mental: C:2d6, K:2d6, Sm: 2d6, M:3d6, Sp:1d8

Area Knowledge: Table Rock Canyon 3d6, demolitions 2d6, guts 2d8, professional: minin' 2d6, Science: paleontology 1d6, scroungin' 1d6, survival: desert 2d6, tinkerin' 1d6

Wind: 8 (usually 16 but all are sick and low on sleep)

Gear: shovels & picks, tattered work clothing, 2 Winchester '73 rifles and half a box of ammo.

Note that because of their weakened state, Dr. Holbrook and the diggers are at half their normal Wind—should it become important.

THE SURVIVOR'S STORES

Crates and boxes are neatly packed against the wall of the survivors' sanctuary, supplies scavenged from the wreckage of the campsite two days ago. Most of the boxes are empty. The food has all but run out and soon the survivors will have to resort to hunting and gathering what they can from the desert, which isn't much. Put simply, they're in a sad state.

The expedition's leader Dr. Holbrook, seems none the worse for wear, but this has only aggravated his already mutinous crew. The doctor's clothing is fresh and clean, he's uninjured, and his overall appearance is that of a gentleman on a Sunday picnic.

The reason for Holbrook's spotless appearance is twofold: first, he flatly refuses to dirty his hands by scrounging about like an animal. Second, he's been sneaking out of the cave after nightfall after everyone is asleep to visit a trickling spring of fresh water in one of the nearby caves.

Dr. Holbrook has managed to scavenge some supplies of food from the campsite and has secreted them in the cave with the spring, enough to feed the entire crew for two days. While his crew weakens daily, he's maintained his health and vigor, proudly claiming his British fortitude to be the cause.

In the Englishman's eyes, he's entitled to the supplies because of his station and vaunted position as the leader of the expedition. If the crew were to learn of his hoarding, they would openly revolt and throw him to the thunder lizards.

After introductions are made, Dr. Holbrook steers the conversation towards the posse's plans to capture the thunder lizards.

DR. BASIL HOLBROOK

Pompous, overeducated, and filled to the brim with British superiority, Holbrook has bounced from one field to another, staying with each only as long as it is profitable. His interest in academia is merely a dodge to avoid having to find more respectable work. He hates his older brothers with a

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passion, who stand to inherit the family titles, lands, and holdings back home.

Like any other pampered blue-blooded limey, Dr. Holbrook has a washed-out complexion, hazel eyes, short-cropped brown hair parted down the center, and a neatly trimmed handlebar mustached. His most distinguishing feature is a mole on his left cheek. He's slight of frame but doesn't appear frail and is of average height, standing around 5'9". He never seems to sweat, a picture of perfect passivity. Even under the most adverse conditions, Holbrook's clothing always looks as though it just came back from the nearest Chinese laundry.

PROFILE: DR. HOLBROOK

Corporeal: D:4d6, N:2d8, Q:3d6, S:1d8, V:1d10

Climbin' 1d8, dodge 2d8, drivin': autocar 2d8, fightin': boxin' (Queensbury rules, of course) 3d8, filchin' 3d6, horse ridin' 1d8, quickdraw: pistols 3d6, sneak 2d8.

Mental: C:1d12, K:4d10, M:2d6, Sm:1d10, Sp:3d8

Academia: occult 1d10, history 1d10, philosophy 1d10, area knowledge: Table Rock Canyon, bluff 2d6, demolitions 1d10, gamblin' 1d10, guts 2d8, language: Latin 1d10, leadership 2d6, medicine: general 1d10, science: anthropology 1d10, archaeology 1d10, biology 1d10, paleontology 2d10, scrutinize 1d12, search 1d12, tinkerin' 1d10

Edges: Big ears, friends in high places
Hindrances: habit: interrupting others while they speak, greedy, self-righteous, intolerance: anyone not born British.

Gear: khaki exploration gear, pith helmet, rock hammer (STR+1d4 damage) & chisel, aviator's goggles, .36 navy pistol (3d6), in quickdraw holster, magnifying glass, leather shoulder satchel with compass, "mysterious" elixir in hip flask, maps & journals & pen.



Dr. Holbrook offers the posse a fortune for their assistance in capturing the rogue dinosaurs, reminding them that he, not them, is legally entitled to the beasts and will even show them the paperwork guaranteeing him exclusive rights to any finds within the canyon.

No doubt, the posse will have their own plans, but first:

BOUNTY

Saving all the fleeing men from Lil Rex (minus the one we killed off): 1 white chip a piece

Driving off Lil Rex: 1 white a piece

Killing Lil Rex: 1 red chip a piece

THE BIG FINISH

The heroes cannot afford to wait out the dinosaurs. The survivors won't last that long. Starvation and sickness will eventually drive the diggers to violent revolt, or at least to foolish acts such as making a run for it. The goal of this adventure is to rescue these surly survivors, and that means eliminating the threat of the rampaging thunder lizards. To accomplish this task, the heroes must work together and use their limited resources. Here are some possibilities, but as always, heroes can and will do the unexpected.

The heroes could potentially lure the dinosaurs into a rockslide, either trapping them or killing them outright in an avalanche. Doing so requires the heroes back to the demolitions shed to retrieve the explosives if they didn't find them earlier. Once the TNT & nitro are secured, the posse can set the charges and lure the dinos into the trap while avoiding blowing themselves into smithereens and being chomped at the same time.

The posse could also use Holbrook's autocar and the remains of Graffe's digging machine to make a mechanical terror akin to a steam-belching clockwork tank. Holbrook might suggest this if the posse doesn't think of it first. Such a contraption has a reasonably good chance of defeating the dinos with a head-on confrontation. Because of the availability of materials, the total construction time is less than a day, but as the dinosaurs are most active during the day so the heroes would have to work at night. The dinos rush to the sounds of construction, so some of the non-tinkering characters might have to serve as a distraction (read: running bait) while the eggheads work.

The heroes could also bait the monsters into eating or at least approaching a dynamite-garnished meal and blowing the unholy monsters back to Hell.

Regardless of their actions, the posse must eventually face Big Rex. But then, isn't that what everyone's been waiting for? We know we have.

BIG REX

Even more driven with the urge to hunt and kill than his smaller cousin, instinct and hunger are the only true motivations for this four-ton eating machine.

Big Rex stands nearly twenty feet tall and measures just over forty feet from the tip of his blunt snout to the tip of his powerfully muscled tail. This titanic reptile truly deserves the title of "king of the reptiles". His teeth are eight inches in length and serrated like a steak knife. The beast can easily dismember oxen and swallow half the carcass in one gulp.

Unlike Lil Rex, the claws of Big Rex are vestigial and disproportionately small when compared to his massive bulk. The head is overly large, lending a sinister yet comical look to the monster's appearance. A thick tail extends from the great beast's back, acting as a counter balance when the monster is on the move.

Play the Big Rex with a combination of stalking horror and outright, thrashing, eating machine. You've seen *Jurassic Park*. Feel free to rip off the "vibrations in the water" scene when the walking mouth approaches.

KEEPING BIG REX ALIVE

The finale to this adventure ought to be something special. You don't want to let some gunslinger just put a bullet in Big Rex's eye and end the adventure too easily. If you need to keep Big Rex alive from a lucky shot, first spend chips to cancel his wounds. If it survives, let the thing run away for a while and hide. When it comes back, its wounds are healed (thanks to its miraculous healing).

Try to get the posse to come up with a clever plan (such as discussed above) for a suitably legendary ending.

PROFILE: BIG REX

Corporeal: D:1d4, N:1d10, Q:1d8, S:4d20, V:4d12

Fightin': brawlin' 2d8

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:3d8, Sm:1d4, Sp:2d12

Overawe 4d8, Guts 5d12

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Terror: 11

Size: 20 (20' tall & 40' long)

Attacks:

Bite 2d10/STR+4d12 damage

Special Abilities:

Armor: 3

Coup: A Harrowed character receives a truly unsavory gift from the death of the "King of Reptiles". Harrowed characters receive the Claws 3 power but with a twist. Instead of the harrowed character's hands becoming talons, his mouth becomes a snaggletoothed maw capable of delivering horrible wounds on a successful *fightin': brawlin'* attack. The feature is permanent and is difficult to conceal without a cowl or handkerchief wrapped around the character's head. The character acquires the *ugly as sin* Hindrance, or a further -2 is applied to social rolls if that hindrance is already possessed. If you're feeling kind, you can allow the character to "improve" his ability. By spending 5 Bounty Points, the jaws can be "retracted" to form a normal mouth. Reactivating the jaws is a Speed 1 action.

Regeneration: 1 wound per day

Once the thunder lizards are eliminated, the surviving diggers can be safely transported to the canyon's entrance. Should Holbrook survive, he'll have to face Arizona law for his actions. He might also get a visit from the Texas Rangers.

BOUNTY

Escaping the Canyon without killing all the dinos: 1 white chip each. (Try a little harder fellers!)

Combining the digging apparatus and autocar: 1 red chip to those involved.

Defeating Big Rex: 1 blue chip each; add a Legend chip to the pot.

EPILOGUE

After rotting in a jail cell for a month, Dr. Holbrook faces the CSA circuit judge, receiving a slap on the wrist for disturbing the peace. The Texas Rangers make sure no one spreads word about dinosaurs. The most they'll admit to is "a new breed of rattler," but they're more partial to the "It was a mountain lion," story.

If the laborers found out Holbrook was hoarding food and water, the Englishman gets in a little deeper trouble but buys himself a high-priced attorney and weasels out of that one too. He is ordered to pay a substantial fine, which of course he pays, and the money arrives by telegram a day or so later.

The surviving diggers (if any) are outraged, so Holbrook hires a couple of gunslinging bodyguards to escort him around town. Word comes a week later that he's made preparations to travel Back East and meet his backers. Then he's headed back into Table Rock to bring back "a treasure" of some sort. The posse should realize, of course, that he's talking about bringing a real life dinosaur back.

That night, while the smug sumbitch is wandering the streets of Tucson, he's attacked and killed by an incredibly swift predator from the shadows. Strange tracks point to something otherworldly, something with tracks like a runty version of Lil Rex. Remember the first critter resurrected by Holbrook that first fateful night? Holbrook didn't.

What's left of Holbrook's carcass is buried in a cigar box in the boneyard the following day. The Texas Rangers quietly cover up the entire event. In a month or two, nobody even remembers him. That is, until something starts picking off livestock at the Double K ranch

To be continued in the Tribulations of Table Rock. It ain't over yet.

RELIC

The magical elixir that started this whole mess is pretty potent stuff. Assuming the posse finds out it's what caused the walking fossils, they just might try to sprinkle a little on anyone who gets chomped by them. Here's all the information you need to add this nifty relic to your game.

REANIMATION FLUID

This glowing green juice was made by the shaman whose burial cave the posse likely trashed. What few know is that this outsider stole the secret from the mysterious Anasazi, the same enigmatic race we discussed at some length in *The Canyon o' Doom*.

It was supposed to resurrect the Anasazi from their long sleep—under circumstances we can't reveal just yet. That's why a little goes a long way. A few gallons of this stuff was supposed to raise the entire Anasazi population. A few drops on a dino works wonders.

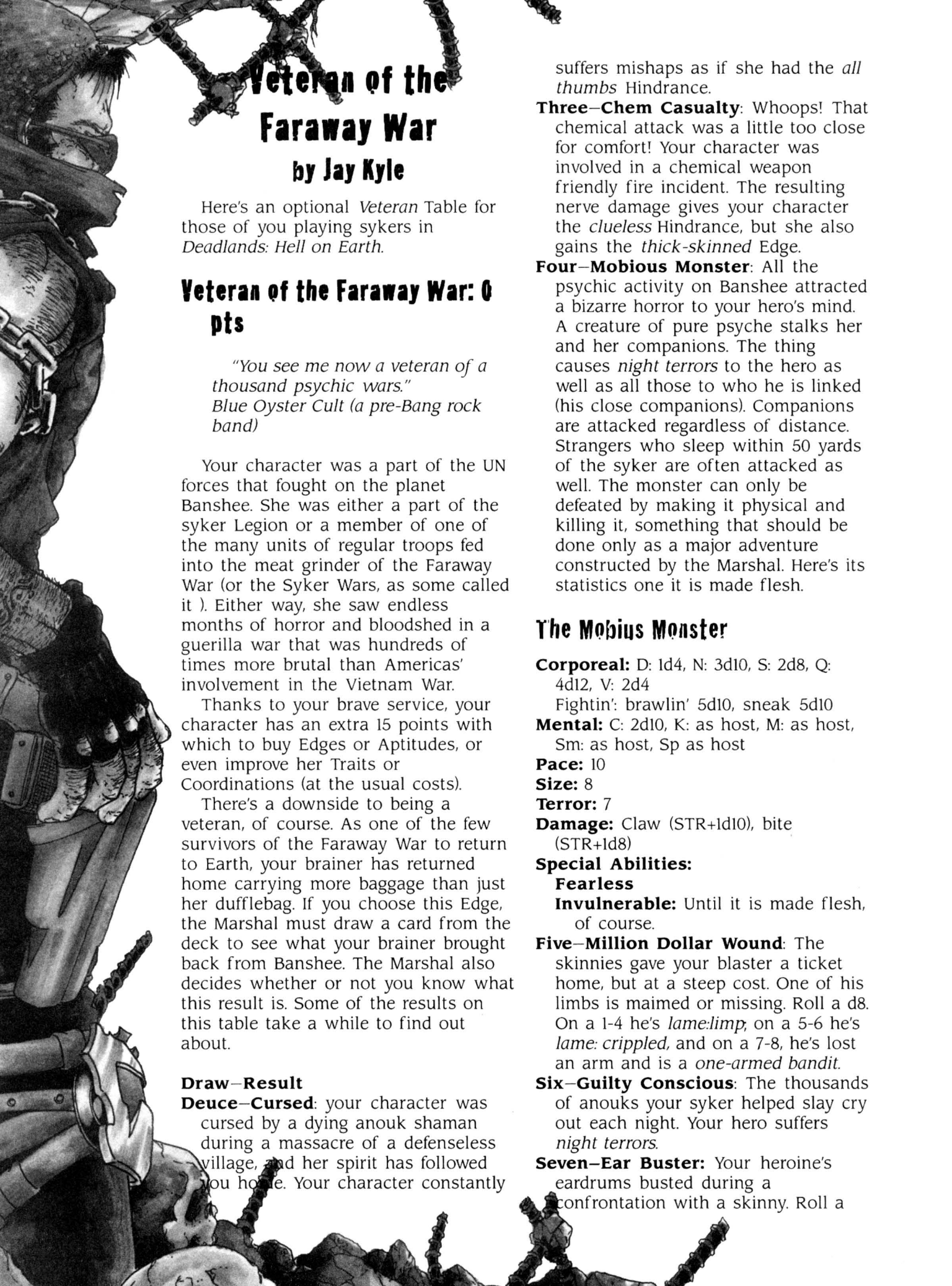
Power: A few drops on a dead body, even a badly decomposed one, brings it back to life. It even gives the poor sucker the ability to *regenerate* one wound per day—24 hours after the wound is inflicted, for you rules lawyers, that is.

Taint: This happy horse juice doesn't come without a price, of course. See, to be reanimated, one must first be *un*-animated. Read that as dead, friend. And those who aren't Anasazi get only a temporary reprieve from the Reaper. The potion wears off exactly 13 days after the juice is sprinkled on a corpse. Just to be creepy, non-Anasazi rise from the dead with 13 small scratches on their arm. Each day, one of these fades.

Enjoy your two extra weeks on Earth, muchacho. It's more than most folks get.

(And yeah, the dinos in *Trouble at Table Rock* are destined for the museum as well, but the heroes don't need to know that. And it's just possible the Reckoners can let these unwitting minions out of that particular loophole. They giveth, and they can certainly giveth more if the dark urge takes them.)





Veteran of the Faraway War

by Jay Kyle

Here's an optional *Veteran* Table for those of you playing sykers in *Deadlands: Hell on Earth*.

Veteran of the Faraway War: 0 pts

*"You see me now a veteran of a thousand psychic wars."
Blue Oyster Cult (a pre-Bang rock band)*

Your character was a part of the UN forces that fought on the planet Banshee. She was either a part of the syker Legion or a member of one of the many units of regular troops fed into the meat grinder of the Faraway War (or the Syker Wars, as some called it). Either way, she saw endless months of horror and bloodshed in a guerilla war that was hundreds of times more brutal than Americas' involvement in the Vietnam War.

Thanks to your brave service, your character has an extra 15 points with which to buy Edges or Aptitudes, or even improve her Traits or Coordinations (at the usual costs).

There's a downside to being a veteran, of course. As one of the few survivors of the Faraway War to return to Earth, your brainer has returned home carrying more baggage than just her dufflebag. If you choose this Edge, the Marshal must draw a card from the deck to see what your brainer brought back from Banshee. The Marshal also decides whether or not you know what this result is. Some of the results on this table take a while to find out about.

Draw—Result

Deuce—Cursed: your character was cursed by a dying anouk shaman during a massacre of a defenseless village, and her spirit has followed you home. Your character constantly

suffers mishaps as if she had the *all thumbs* Hindrance.

Three—Chem Casualty: Whoops! That chemical attack was a little too close for comfort! Your character was involved in a chemical weapon friendly fire incident. The resulting nerve damage gives your character the *clueless* Hindrance, but she also gains the *thick-skinned* Edge.

Four—Mobious Monster: All the psychic activity on Banshee attracted a bizarre horror to your hero's mind. A creature of pure psyche stalks her and her companions. The thing causes *night terrors* to the hero as well as all those to who he is linked (his close companions). Companions are attacked regardless of distance. Strangers who sleep within 50 yards of the syker are often attacked as well. The monster can only be defeated by making it physical and killing it, something that should be done only as a major adventure constructed by the Marshal. Here's its statistics one it is made flesh.

The Mobious Monster

Corporeal: D: 1d4, N: 3d10, S: 2d8, Q: 4d12, V: 2d4

Fightin': brawlin' 5d10, sneak 5d10

Mental: C: 2d10, K: as host, M: as host, Sm: as host, Sp as host

Pace: 10

Size: 8

Terror: 7

Damage: Claw (STR+1d10), bite (STR+1d8)

Special Abilities:

Fearless

Invulnerable: Until it is made flesh, of course.

Five—Million Dollar Wound: The skinnies gave your blaster a ticket home, but at a steep cost. One of his limbs is maimed or missing. Roll a d8. On a 1-4 he's *lame:limp*, on a 5-6 he's *lame:crippled*, and on a 7-8, he's lost an arm and is a *one-armed bandit*.

Six—Guilty Conscious: The thousands of anouks your syker helped slay cry out each night. Your hero suffers *night terrors*.

Seven—Ear Buster: Your heroine's eardrums busted during a confrontation with a skinny. Roll a

d6. Odd, she has the *bad ears: mild* Hindrance. Even, she has the *bad ears: stone deaf* Hindrance.

Eight—Peacenik: Your brainburner's time on Banshee sickened her of the military and fighting. Your character is a pacifist who has a severe *intolerance* (3 pts.) to military organizations of any kind.

Nine—Addict: Your blaster found relief from the war in drugs and alcohol. Now she has a severe *hankerin'* for one or the other.

Ten—Diseased: Your hero should have paid more attention during *Saving Ryan's Privates*. A chance encounter on leave at Tranquility Base gave her a bad case of STD that just won't go away. Your character has a burning sensation in her pink parts that gives her the *ailin': chronic* Hindrance.

Jack—Cursed Relic: a souvenir your baldie took off a dead skinny acts as a horror magnet, drawing evil to her like moths to a candle. Double the number of creatures encountered whenever the scenario calls for a roll to determine numbers. No matter how hard the character tries, he can't rid himself of the magnet. On the plus side, it acts as a 3 point Banshee stone for sykers.

Queen—Sole Survivor: Your brainer is the last member of her unit, or lost her best friend/lover to the anouks and their human allies. She has a bad case of survivor's guilt, and now has the death wish Hindrance.

King—You Bastard!: Your character was an unpopular officer who ordered hundreds to their deaths under the orders of "Overkill" Warfield. As a result, most veterans of the Syker Wars hate her bloody guts. She's renowned among those who fought on Banshee, but considered an enemy by most.

Ace—Mind Rider: A skinny used your brainer's gray matter as a pawn during the War, and a piece of its consciousness remained in there. The skyer gets twice his base Strain, but every time he uses his power, he must draw a card. If the draw is a Joker, the power is warped. It either affects the wrong target (chosen randomly on a red Joker, randomly among allies on a black Joker).

At the Marshal could use the H u c k s t e r Backlash Table for from *Deadlands: the Weird West*.

Red Joker—Super Soldier: They told you never to volunteer in the Army! The experimental serums they injected your brainer with in the last stages of the War transformed her into a Super Soldier. Modify your character as per the Wasted West description, including increasing her Traits to match the prerequisites.

Black Joker—Infested: Something got past the starport quarantine—inside your hero! Your character was infected with a strange organism native to Banshee that the anouks used as a bioweapon. Your character has the *ailin': chronic* Hindrance. Draw a card at the start of each session. On a Black Joker the organism comes bursting out, killing your syker and then looking to infest another lifeform. You've seen the movie. You know how it works.

Skinny Gutripper

Corporeal: D: 1d4, N: 2d10, S: 2d8, Q: 4d12, V: 2d4

Fightin': brawlin' 4d10, sneak 5d10

Mental: C: 2d10, K: 1d4, M: 1d8, Sm: 1d4, Sp 1d4

Guts 4d4, overawe 3d4, search 2d10

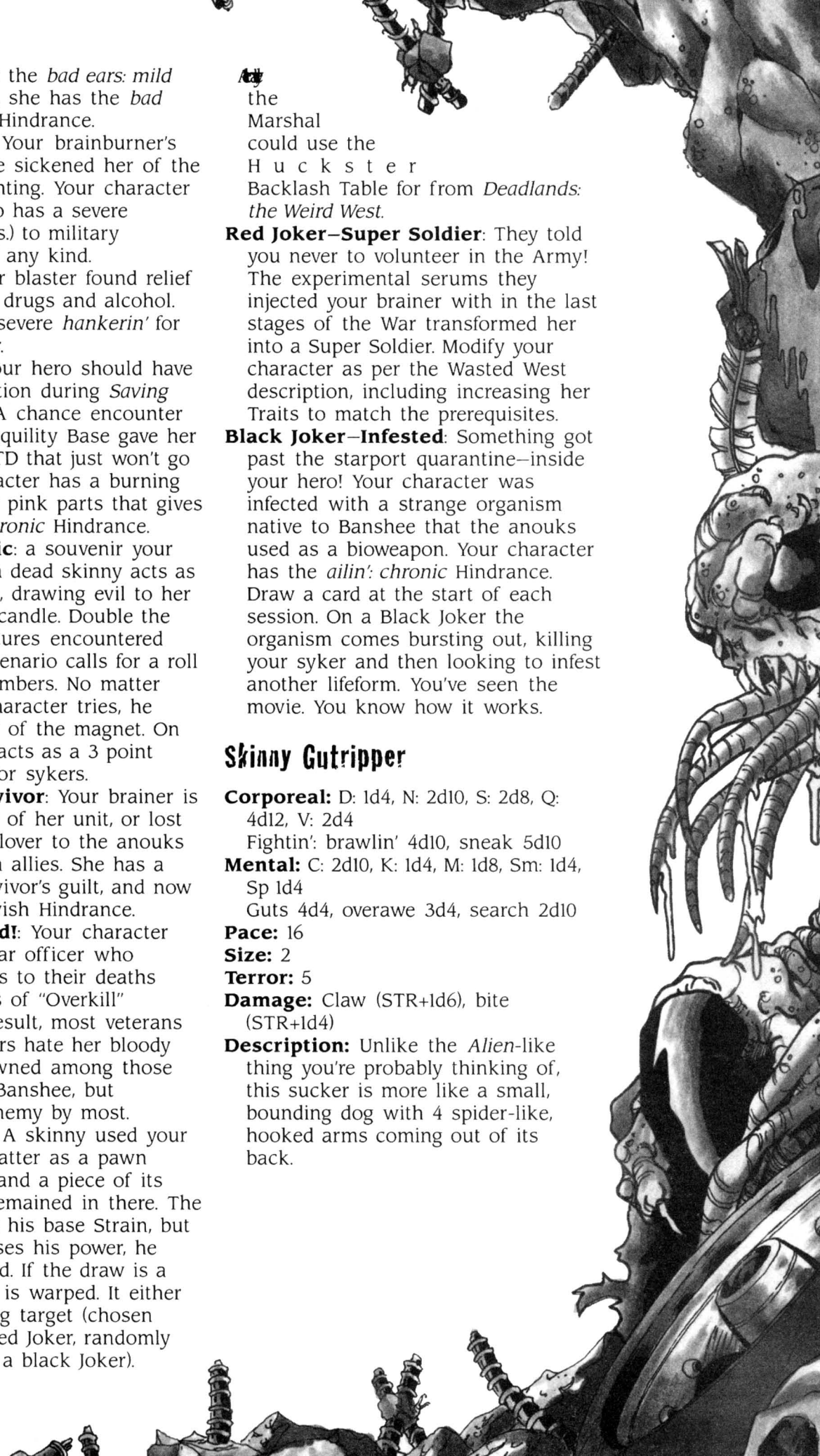
Pace: 16

Size: 2

Terror: 5

Damage: Claw (STR+1d6), bite (STR+1d4)

Description: Unlike the *Alien*-like thing you're probably thinking of, this sucker is more like a small, bounding dog with 4 spider-like, hooked arms coming out of its back.







Story's End

A Dime Novel for *Deadlands: Hell on Earth*
By John R. Hopler

Roth was awakened by a sudden jolt and the screech of metal on metal. He opened his eyes to see a highway guard rail flashing by only inches from his face. Beyond the rail was a steep drop of nearly forty feet and a thick forest of snow-covered trees. A steady string of curses flowed from the seat to his left.

The mini-van bounced against the guard rail a second time, spinning it sideways. Teller wrestled with the steering wheel as the van skidded broadside down the icy highway. The vehicle rose briefly on two wheels before sliding off the opposite shoulder into a deep snow drift. The engine stalled, and for a moment the only sound in the car was the crunch of compacting snow and the chiming of the dashboard warning bells.

Roth reached over and pulled apart the exposed wires protruding from the steering column, silencing the bells. "If you wanted me to drive," he said, "you just needed to ask."

"Damn it, Roth!" yelled an exasperated and shaken Teller. "If you hadn't gotten us kicked out of that last

town, we wouldn't be driving through this blizzard. When are you..."


"Look, it was self defense. He drew down on me. What was I supposed to do?"

"Gee. People pulling guns on you seems to be an awful common occurrence. I wonder why that is? Maybe it's because..."

A shrill whistle sounded from the back seat. "Boys!" hollered the petite Templar sitting in the rear of the vehicle, "Stow it or I'll put you both in a time-out. How about we deal with getting out of here?"

"No problem," rumbled Roth as he buttoned up his trenchcoat. The lean gunslinger opened his door and stepped out into the storm.

The driver's side door was jammed shut by the snow drift. Teller was about to climb out through Roth's door when the gunslinger slammed it shut without looking back. The ex-veterinarian was able to yank his hands back just in time to avoid losing some fingers. The wind howling down the deserted highway meant Teller's newest string of expletives went unheard by its target.



Roth surveyed the scene. The van had slid off the left shoulder into a deep drift. It was tilted at almost a 30° angle and its right front tire hung almost six inches above the pavement. Not that the nearly bald tires on the dilapidated vehicle would be much use in pulling the mini-van back onto the road. Without a tow truck, the van wasn't going anywhere until the spring thaw.

The gunman turned as the side door slid open. "...your mouth out with soap," Sam was saying as she and Teller stepped out of the vehicle. Roth chuckled to himself. Samantha Stark was a newly knighted Templar. She couldn't have weighed more than 110 pounds soaking wet, but she was determined to prove she was the baddest thing to hit the West since the Reckoners. Sam had been a squire to Jo, the Templars' legendary second-in-command, and it showed. Besides her tough-as-nails attitude, she had an annoying habit of treating all men as if they were mentally-challenged 10-year-olds.

"Anyone got a AAA card?" asked Roth.

Teller looked over the van. A few choice cuss words escaped his lips.

Roth knew he was pushing his luck, but he couldn't resist. "You know, for a storyteller, you've got an awfully limited vocabulary," he said.

Teller muttered something unintelligible and took a step toward the gunslinger. Before he could advance any farther, Sam slid between the two and placed a hand on each man's chest. "I don't know about you two, but I'm cold. I saw a sign a few miles back that said there was an exit coming up. Why don't we see if we can find a warm place to hole up for the night?" suggested the Templar sweetly.

Teller turned back to the van and grabbed Roth's pack from the back. He tossed it none too gently at the tall gunslinger. Sam moved to the back,

opened the rear hatch, and started pulling out weapons and equipment. Within a few minutes, all three were loaded down with packs, ammunition, and longarms. Turning their collars up against the blowing snow, the trio began its slow march up the highway.

"I hate to leave all of that equipment behind—especially the explosives," yelled Sam over the howling wind.

"Well," hollered Teller, "No one with a lick of sense is going to be out on a day like this." The ex-veterinarian shot a hostile glare in Roth's direction, but the gunslinger continued to trudge along at the head of the group as if he hadn't heard the comment. "Once the weather clears, we'll come back and get the rest."

The three continued to walk in silence, their heads down against the driving wind and blowing snow. Visibility was so low at times the travelers were forced to feel their way along the guard rail with frozen fingers. After what seemed like an eternity, the rail began to curve down and to the right and the trio found itself on a downward sloping exit ramp.

The group paused at the bottom of the ramp in the lee of the highway overpass. To either side were the clusters of gas stations, convenience stores, and fast food joints typical of most interstate exits. They had that well-looted look which was all the rage following Judgment Day.

Roth pointed to the right. "I think I saw some houses down that way. Let's see if we can find a home with a fireplace." The other two grunted their assent and they started off.

Another fifteen minutes of walking brought the three into what looked to have been a fairly nice middle-class neighborhood. All of the homes bore the signs of thirteen years of neglect. Many had broken windows from which tattered curtains fluttered like the arms of beckoning spirits. Wind moaned through the jagged openings like the souls of the damned.

The three weary travelers fanned out and quickly canvassed the area. They settled on a small brick ranch with a large fireplace in the living room. The lock on the front door was broken, and the house's interior looked

as if it had been ransacked. Judging by the amount of dust which had accumulated and the fact that there was still cookware in the kitchen and blankets in the linen closet, it seemed to Roth that the house had been looted right after the war when scavengers were still looking for valuables rather than the necessities of survival.

Setting up camp in an abandoned house was nothing new to the trio. They went to work without saying a word. Roth plugged the broken windows with cushions from the furniture while Teller gathered blankets. Sam went into the kitchen and took her sword to the table and chairs, quickly turning them to firewood. Within a few minutes, flames crackled in the fireplace and some of the chill began to recede from the living room.

"I don't think I'll ever be warm again," said Sam as she dumped another load of chair legs on the hearth. She plopped down on the sofa next to Teller and pulled some of the blankets covering the shivering storyteller over herself. "Share the warmth," she smiled as she leaned against him.

Temporarily ignoring the cold that was causing his bones to ache, Roth got up and went into the kitchen. He rummaged through the cabinets and was rewarded for his efforts with a box of bullion cubes and a few packs of instant cocoa mix. The gunslinger stuffed them in his pockets then grabbed a kettle from the stove and some mugs from a rack above the sink.

"Hey, I found some..." began Roth as he returned to the living room. He stopped in mid-sentence, the kettle and mugs crashing to the floor. The shattering glassware startled the sleepy Templar, who sat up with a frightened cry.

The gunslinger's twin Tokarevs appeared in his hands. He crossed the room to the window in a few long strides and looked out.

"What is it?" asked Teller as he threw off the blankets and reached for his assault rifle. Instead of an answer, the ex-vet was hit by a blast of cold air as Roth disappeared through the front door.

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"Damn him!" growled Teller as he pushed himself off the couch and headed for the door.

"Language," said Sam, pulling her sword. She gave the storyteller a light swat on the butt with the flat of the blade.

The pair rushed from the house and looked around. Roth was barely visible through the swirling snow as a dark blob receding down the street. Sam and Teller set out after him.


When they reached him, Roth was crouched over a small form sprawled in the snow. His pistols were holstered, but the gunslinger had a small hatchet in his right hand. As the pair drew nearer they could see the figure on the ground was a small boy bundled in ragged clothing and a threadbare jacket. The snow around the child was littered with table legs and other fragments of wooden furniture.

"Where do you live? Are there others around here?" asked Roth gruffly. His only answer was a stifled sob.

"Oh please," exclaimed Sam as she walked up behind the gunman. "Let me handle this." She pushed her way past Roth and knelt down beside the boy. "It's okay, honey, we won't hurt you," she said to the frightened child. She turned to Roth, who had already stood and was moving away. "Well, at least you didn't shoot him," she remarked.

Roth moved over to stand beside Teller as the Templar attempted to soothe the sobbing boy. "I saw a head in the window," he explained to the storyteller, "All I could make out was a silhouette. I had no idea it was a kid." The gunman held up the hatchet. "He had this in his belt. He must have been collecting firewood."

Teller and Roth stood silently while Sam talked quietly with the boy. After a few minutes, the Templar and the child stood, gathered up the fallen wood, and walked over to the two men. "Josh," said Sam, "this is Teller and Roth. They may be able to help with your problem, but



first let's get back inside and warmed up."

Once back inside the house and seated in front of the fire with a mug of chalky, but hot, cocoa, Sam coaxed Josh's story from him a second time. The shaken boy explained that he lived less than a mile away with his family and a small group of survivors. Until just a few days ago, they had been left to live in relative peace. Then a gang of scavengers discovered their small settlement and decided to stay. The group killed the few people who tried to resist and forced the rest to wait on them hand and foot. This morning, the leader of the group, a man named Swain, had taken Josh's sister and a few of his goons and disappeared into the storm.

Josh was sent out later to gather firewood, and he decided to take the opportunity to try to find his sister. "I was going to sneak up on Swain and kill him with my hatchet," insisted the boy fiercely. Instead of finding the scavengers and his sister, Josh had run across Roth and the others. When the gunslinger pulled his guns, the boy ran away.

"Good job," whispered Teller.

"I told you I couldn't see who it was. Not that you would have noticed while you were playing cuddlebunny there on the couch," responded Roth quietly.

Teller's face turned red, but he had no comeback.

The men's exchange went unheard by Sam. She was still questioning Josh about the scavengers. The Templar learned that including Swain, there were eleven wasters armed with a variety of weapons; everything from pistols to civilian and assault rifles. Four of the gang members had gone with Swain and Josh's sister, Gwen. The other six were guarding the remaining townspeople in the settlement's meeting hall, an old country-style restaurant about a half-mile beyond the

highway exit in the opposite direction from which the travelers had come.

Once Sam had gotten all the information she could from the boy, she zipped up his coat and walked him to the door. "Josh," said the Templar, "we'll help you, but you need to be brave. You need to go back before the bad men start looking for you. We'll come and get you, and help you look for your sister, but until we do, you can't tell anyone else about us. Okay?" The boy nodded slowly and looked as if he might start to cry. Sam gave him a hug. "It'll be okay, honey," she said. "Oops," the Templar exclaimed as she wiped cocoa from Josh's face, "can't have you going back looking like that."

Josh walked slowly out of the house, the bundle of chair legs in his arms. Sam stood in the doorway and watched his small figure disappear into the blowing snow.

"What, no test of worth?" said Roth.

Sam rounded on the gunslinger angrily. "I'd say any eight-year-old who was willing to fight a grown man with a rusty hatchet to save his sister is worthy of help!" she snapped.

"Oh, I agree completely," growled Roth. "I just wanted to make sure you felt that way."

Sam was about to say more, but the gunslinger's expression caused the words to catch in her throat. His normally light blue eyes had turned the slate gray of a storm-tossed ocean.

"Enough," interrupted Teller. "So how do we want to play this one?"

* * *

The trio of would-be rescuers halted less than a block from the restaurant and stashed their rifles in an abandoned building. After much debate, the three decided they needed to get inside the building before they could make their move—they couldn't take Josh's information at face value. They decided to go with a slight twist on the truth: their car broke down on the highway, they smelled smoke and followed it to the restaurant, hoping to find shelter and maybe some food.

Roth had voted for leaving their rifles behind. "If we look harmless, they'll be overconfident. Besides, pistols and Sam's Mac-10 are better for close

quarters work like this anyway," he said.

"Is it *possible* for you to look harmless, Roth?" Teller had asked.

In the end they decided to cache most of their weapons, including Sam's sword, in case they needed the extra firepower.

Roth surveyed the scene as the trio trudged toward the restaurant. The building in question was a small, single-story, country-style affair. Some of the windows had been boarded over and shutters were pulled tight over most of the others. Smoke curled from a chimney rising from the center of the building and was quickly whisked away by the wind howling down the street. There were three motorcycles, a battered pickup truck, and a black VW bug with a crude skull painted on the hood in the parking lot. The only tracks visible outside the building appeared to be Josh's, and even these were rapidly filling with snow.

Just before the group reached the door, Teller muttered, "Let me do the talking, please."

The three stepped onto the porch and Teller pounded on the door. There was no answer.

In his mind, Roth could picture what was going on inside the restaurant almost as well as if he were looking in the window: The bikers look up at the door in surprise, look at each other, and then draw their weapons. The leader tells everyone, "Stay cool and act normal and no one gets hurt." Weapons are lowered, and one of the hostages is sent to answer the door. He'd seen it many times before.

Teller raised his hand, but before he could knock again, the door was opened by a large matronly woman. Roth chuckled quietly to himself.

"What's so funny?" hissed Sam.

"Nothing," muttered Roth.

The woman was in her late forties, her brown hair tied up in a tight bun. She wore a heavy, threadbare, sweater and a thick, gray wool skirt that had been patched numerous times. A wide smile was plastered on her face.

"Oh, hello. What are you folks doing out on a day like this?" she said. The woman's voice sounded cheerful, but Roth could hear a slight waver to it.

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"Well, ma'am," began Teller in his best aw-shucks voice, "our car broke down up on the highway. We came down here and smelled smoke, and we were hoping that maybe we could share your fire and perhaps some food if you can spare it. We can pay."


"Uh, well, I suppose..." stammered the woman.

"Come on in and warm yourselves," yelled a raspy voice from inside.

The woman moved away from the door and motioned for them to come inside. "I'll get you some soup," she said.

Roth and the others entered the restaurant and stopped just inside the door to stomp the snow off their boots—and assess the situation. The center of the main dining room was dominated by a large circular fireplace in which a pile of logs and broken furniture crackled merrily. A wooden counter with a cash register ran across the back of the room, behind that a pair of swinging doors led to the kitchen.

There were only a few tables left in the dining room. It was no mystery where the rest had gone—a few table legs protruded from the stack of wood near the fireplace. Four men sat at one of the remaining tables, its top littered with shot glasses, playing cards, and a few bottles of some yellowish liquid—some empty, some not. Two of the men wore leather jackets and heavy biker boots, an MP-20 submachinegun hung on its sling from the back of one of their chairs, and a Northern Alliance assault rifle was propped against a nearby beam. The third man had his feet up on the table. He wore heavy winter hiking boots, denim jeans, and an open flannel shirt over a stained Harley-Davidson T-shirt. A Glock-20 lay on the table near him within easy reach. His long hair was back in a ponytail and his yellow teeth were exposed in a wide smile beneath his bushy mustache. The fourth man was in his mid- to late fifties. He had a



rugged, weather-beaten face and wore bib overalls and a flannel shirt. *Hostage*, thought Roth.

Roth looked left and right. Another man, dressed in leather pants and vest leaned against the wall just inside the front door, a large magnum automatic stuffed in his belt. He gave Roth a quick smile when the gunslinger looked in his direction, but there was no friendliness in the man's hard eyes. Roth gave him a quick nod.

There were foursomes at two other tables. They were mostly men, but Roth saw two women, one of them sporting a large bruise on the side of her face. Her eyes were puffy and red as if she had been crying. In each case, three of the people were dressed in rugged work clothes and the fourth wore clothing that marked them as someone who lived on the road. No weapons were visible, but at each table the fourth man kept one hand below the tabletop.

Bowls of soup sat untouched on the tables. The eyes of everyone in the place were either on the newcomers or focused firmly down at the floor.

Roth saw no sign of Josh.

"I'm Myra," said the woman who had greeted them.

"I'm Teller," replied the ex-veterinarian, extending his hand.

"Sam," piped the Templar.

Roth remained silent when the woman looked in his direction. After an uncomfortable silence, the gunslinger managed to growl, "Smith. Jim Smith."

Myra led them to a table near the fire. "I'll get you that soup now," she said as she retreated toward the kitchen.

"Thank you, ma'am," smiled Teller.

The long-haired biker at the center table swung his feet down, stuffed the pistol in his waistband, and sauntered over to the newcomers. "Bad day for car troubles. Bad day for traveling in general," he said. The man had a harsh, scratchy voice that sounded as if he

smoked a pack of cigarettes a day and gargled with battery acid. He circled the table slowly as he spoke.

"Yeah, well, we've got a long way to go. We're headed to Junkyard to look for work," said Teller.

"That so? Whaddaya do?" rasped the biker. He nodded toward the man at the front door, who moved to stand near the fireplace.

"I'm a veterinarian, and these two are mechanics," replied Teller.

The doors to the kitchen swung open and Myra reappeared with a bowl of soup. Behind her trailed Josh with another bowl, and a boy in his mid-teens, also carrying a bowl. The teenager had a bloody bit of cloth wrapped around his head, his upper lip was split and scabbed, and one of his eyes was nearly swollen shut. His good eye glared at the biker with undisguised hatred.

"I thought I told you to stay in the kitchen," said the biker.

"I forgot," said the teen defiantly as he set his bowl in front of Sam.

"What happened to you, boy?" asked Roth quietly.

"He fell while clearing snow," said the biker before the boy could answer.

"I didn't ask you, I asked him," said Roth, his voice as cold as the storm outside. The gunslinger ignored the warning glares from his companions. Myra and Josh set their bowls down and the woman quickly hustled the boy away from the table.

"Mister," said the biker slowly, drawing his pistol, "you mind your own business, and you'll find you live a lot longer."

"I've heard that before," replied Roth.

The metallic click of cocking weapons echoed through the now-silent restaurant.

"Okay," snarled the long-haired biker, "enough of this dicking around. Let's have your weapons. Now!"

The ganger near the fireplace moved to Roth's left where he could cover the three of them. Another biker got up from the center table, grabbed the MP-20, and moved to stand behind Sam.

"I said, cough up your pieces," repeated Long Hair. "Try anything and I'll shoot you, and then that sweet little kid over there for good measure."

Teller reached slowly into his coat, brought his 10mm out butt-first, and laid it on the table. Sam unslung her submachinegun from where it hung beneath her trenchcoat and let it fall to the floor.

"She's a sweet one," said the man with the MP-20. "I bet she's a real wildcat." He grabbed her hair with one grease-smeared hand, pulled her head back, and ran his tongue along her right cheek. "Can I have her?"

"In your dreams, buddy," spit the Templar.

The biker slammed her head down against the table hard enough set the tabletop awash in sloshed soup.

"What about you, hardcase?" said the long-haired biker, prodding Roth in the back with his pistol. "Think you're special or sumthin'? Give 'em up or I give you a third eye."

Roth sat unmoving.

"Hey boys, we got us a real hardcase here. He must think he's a gen-u-wine gunslinger, like that Gabe Roth guy we heard those stories about. Okay, Mr. Gunslinger, we're sorry. We give up. Please don't hurt us," said Long Hair in a mocking tone. This got him a round of laughs from the other bikers. The civilians in the place looked away and tried to make themselves smaller.

"Gabriel," said Roth in a low, flat voice that was nearly lost in the laughter.

"What?" said Long Hair.

"Gabriel Roth," said the shootist. Long Hair's eyes widened as he realized what the gunslinger had just said.

Roth's hands flew beneath his coat and tightened around the butts of his twin Tokarevs. He fired both guns before they cleared their holsters, two 9mm rounds punching through his coat and taking Long Hair in the stomach. As the gunslinger's hands swept forward, he pushed hard with his feet, toppling his chair backward. The chair overbalanced and fell back, but he caught the edge of the table with his toes and kicked, upending it and the now forgotten soup. There was a boom to his left and a bullet ripped through the air where Roth had been a split-second before.

Once the chair hit the ground, Roth rolled left, swinging both his guns

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toward the biker who had been covering the table. Smoke curled from the man's magnum as he rode the gun's recoil and tried to swing it to bear on the gunman on the floor. The laser sights on Roth's Tokarevs played over the biker's thighs and he squeezed off a quick double tap from each pistol, allowing the guns' muzzle climb to walk the rounds up his target's body. The biker collapsed in a heap.


Roth heard the smash of breaking dishes as more tables were overturned, the boom of a shotgun, and a rain of pellets impacting the table flipped up in front of him. He heard a grunt of effort from Sam just beyond the table and then the scream of a man in pain that was quickly cut short.

The gunslinger rolled up into a sitting position as a biker made a break for the door, holding a civilian in front of him. Roth fired low, hitting the hostage in the leg. The wounded townie stumbled and fell, exposing the fleeing gang member. Roth gave him a bullet from each pistol and the biker crumpled to the floor.

Sam's head and shoulders appeared above the toppled table. Blood trickled from her nose and dripped unnoticed from her chin. Roth heard the distinctive, low, booming stutter of her Mac-10 and a biker pitched back into the fireplace, filling the room with the smell of burnt hair and scorched leather. Hot shell casings flew over the table and pattered down on the floor around the gunslinger.

"Drop it! Drop it, now!" bellowed Teller somewhere out of Roth's field of view.

The gunslinger stood and scanned the room. All of the bikers were down—dead or soon about to be—except one. He was holding one of the townies in front of him with a pistol to the man's head. The biker's eyes were as big as the gaudy silver belt buckle at his waist, and he glanced nervously back and forth between Teller, Sam, and Roth. It was obvious to the gunslinger



the man was scared witless—making it hard to predict what his next action would be. The biker's head was visible above his hostage's shoulder, but Roth's angle was bad, putting the civilian's head in the way of a clean shot.

Most of the civilians had crawled clear of the danger area, but the woman with the bruised face lay motionless near the biker's feet, sobbing softly.

"Look, this doesn't have to end with you dead," said Teller in his most soothing voice. "Put down the gun and we'll talk."

"No! You drop your weapons or I'll decorate this place with his brains," yelled the biker. He was trying to sound menacing, but the wavering in his voice made him sound like a frightened schoolboy. *Teller, you don't control this situation, thought Roth, take the shot and end it.* The gunslinger began to slowly inch to his right, hoping to get a better angle.

"You hold it right..." began the biker. There was a deafening boom from behind Roth and the biker sprouted a new bloody eye in the middle of his forehead. The man stood motionless for a second and then flopped across a nearby table, adding more soup to the sticky mess covering the floor.

Roth whirled toward the sound, both Tokarevs straight out in front of him. To his surprise, the teenager was standing there, the dead biker's smoking .44 magnum in his hands. The boy's hands were trembling and his face was pulled back in a snarl of rage. Before Roth could act, the teen began kicking the dead body at his feet and fired two more rounds into it. The shots made the townspeople jump. The sobbing woman screamed in terror and began crying even louder.

Roth holstered his pistols and moved slowly toward the boy, who still kicked the bloody corpse. "He's dead, son," said the gunslinger. "Now give me the gun."

"I'm not your freakin' son," screamed the teen. Tears streamed down his face and snot flowed freely from his nose. Roth suddenly found himself looking down the business end of the magnum.

There was a blur of motion to the gunslinger's right. Sam appeared behind the boy. In one smooth motion she grabbed his arms and twisted, forcing him to drop the gun. The teen struggled for a moment, then collapsed against her, sobbing uncontrollably.

"I'm going to get the rest of our gear," muttered Roth. He stalked out the front door into the blowing snow.

* * *

By the time Roth returned with the trio's guns and packs, Teller already had the townspeople hard at work. The bikers' bodies had been dragged outside and stacked on the porch. As Roth reentered the restaurant, he could see that someone had propped the door open, despite the cold, in a vain attempt to rid the dining room of the smell of gunpowder, loose bowels, and burnt hair and flesh. Myra was laboring with a mop and bucket, trying to get the soup and blood up off the floor. Most of the other townspeople were gathered in small groups discussing the recent events—they all stopped talking when Roth walked in.

The gunman noticed Sam was now wearing her tabard and was busy laying hands on the townie he had shot in the leg. Josh sat beside her, watching with wide eyes. The teenager also sat nearby, trying to appear disinterested, but he kept sneaking glances in the Templar's direction. When he noticed Roth, he shot the gunslinger a sullen stare.

Teller met Roth at the door. "Thanks for grabbing the stuff," he said loudly. More quietly he said, "Some of them have heard the stories about Kansas. I tried to explain, but a lot of them don't trust you. It doesn't help that you shot Mike there in the leg."

"Next time I'll just let the bad guy escape to warn his buddies," growled Roth.

Teller sighed and turned back to the watching townspeople with a smile on his face. "Just try to be civil," he said quietly. "We've got another rescue

mission to mount and we're going to need these people's help."

"No problem. I'm too overwhelmed by their gratitude to speak," responded the gunman.

Teller motioned for everyone to take a seat at the only long table in the restaurant. Once everyone was settled in, the ex-vet went around the table and introduced Roth to everyone by name. When he finished, he motioned to a burly man with a beard and a battered John Deer hat, "Tom why don't you repeat what you told me about the other bikers?"

Tom recited descriptions of the remaining gangers and their weapons. Some of the other townspeople chimed in with additional observations. Roth was impressed by the man's concise briefing in spite of himself.

"You've got a good eye for detail," said the gunslinger.

"I was a cop before the war," replied Tom. Despite his obvious distrust, a brief smile flickered across his face at Roth's comment.

Tom continued on to tell how the bikers' leader, a man the gangers referred to as Swain, was interested in finding the home of Brad Zimmerman. All the townspeople had learned from listening to their captors was that Swain had served with Zimmerman in the US Army, and that there was something at Zimmerman's house the gang leader wanted.

Roth only half-listened to Tom's story. He was distracted by the dagger-filled stares the teenage boy, whom Teller had introduced as Doug Moore, kept sending his way. Finally, he couldn't keep silent any longer.

"Do you have a problem with me, boy?" asked the gunslinger.

"We didn't ask for your help and we don't need it now," the boy spat. "I put two whole boxes of sleeping pills in the soup, and I was going to slit their throats once they had fallen asleep."

"I'm sorry if we stole your thunder," offered Roth, "but you're too young to have that sort of blood on your hands." The gunslinger could feel Teller's eyes on him, so he thought he'd try to be conciliatory. "That was a good shot you made though, Doug."

"Go to Hell!" yelled the youth.

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Sam laid on a hand on Roth's arm. "They abused Doug pretty bad. He has bruises and cuts all over his body," the Templar said quietly.

"Okay," interrupted Teller, "let's get down to business." The storyteller turned to Tom and began discussing the best way to approach the Zimmerman place and who among the townspeople could handle a gun. That ended the confrontation, but Doug's eyes never left Roth.


* * *

Thirty minutes later Roth, Teller, and Sam, accompanied by Tom and four other townspeople armed with the dead bikers' weapons, were belly down in the snow in the yard adjacent to the Zimmerman house. After watching the house for ten minutes, they had spotted only two sentries. One was doing his best to patrol around the house in the swirling snow, while another stood just out of sight inside the front door, only his steaming breath betrayed his position. Unless Swain had more men than the townspeople had seen, it meant that only he and two others were inside the house somewhere—along with Josh's sister, Gwen.

Roth flipped the MP-20 he had taken off one of the bikers to suppressed mode and sighted down the barrel. He waited until the patrolling sentry rounded the corner of the house and was well out of sight of the guard at the door, then put a three round burst into the man's head.

Before the sentry hit the ground, Sam was up and running, sword in hand. Roth and Teller were only a few steps behind her with the townspeople trailing in their wake.

The Templar plunged through the door, impaling the startled guard on the tip of her sword. He died with a choking gurgle and slid off her blade onto the floor. Roth and Teller burst through the doorway behind her and fanned out to each side. The three



stood in silence for a moment, scanning for more opponents.

Barely audible over the wind whipping past the house came the sound of faint chanting. Roth used hand signals to indicate the noise was coming from an open cellar door in the adjacent room. Without waiting for the others to acknowledge his signals, he advanced slowly toward the dark opening.

The gunslinger paused at the doorway and peered carefully down the steps. The cellar was dark except for a flickering light source out of sight of the stairs. The chanting sound grew louder and more intense as he listened, as if it were reaching some sort of crescendo.

Roth felt a tap on his shoulder and turned back to see Sam and Teller behind him. He nodded toward the stairs and started down with his friends behind them. Out of habit, the gunman was careful to place his feet on the outside edges of the steps to keep creaking to a minimum—although the chanting was likely loud enough to cover any sound he might make.

Just as the gunslinger reached the bottom of the stairs the chanting abruptly ceased. He heard what sounded like muffled screaming and then a man's voice intoned, "By the blood of the innocent we do summon you."

Roth turned the corner at the bottom of the stairs. A surreal site greeted him. A panel of the basement wall had been opened to reveal a natural cave. In the center of this cave was a large man-made cistern that looked as if it had been old when Columbus first sighted the New World. Flickering candles around the edges of the hole provided the only light. A young girl with a gag in her mouth was strapped to a board balanced on the edge of the cistern. Standing over her was a man dressed in jet black robes, a large dagger raised above his

head. Two other robed figures knelt at the edges of the cistern.

The gunslinger didn't hesitate. He let loose a long burst from the MP-20 that caught the standing figure full in the chest. The man stumbled back, his black robe becoming even darker with his blood, and slumped against the wall. Roth fired a second burst at the kneeling figures, bowling one over. Stray bullets ricocheted off the cave's stone wall like angry hornets. The submachinegun's bolt locked back, the empty magazine ejecting automatically.

Roth didn't pause to reload. He dropped the empty gun and drew his Tokarevs. The remaining gang member pulled a pistol from under his robes and let loose a shot that went high and embedded itself in the ceiling above the advancing gunman. Roth shot him through the throat and the biker fell back, vainly trying to stop the arterial spray with his hands.

Sam plowed into the gunslinger's back and then peered around him. "Gee," she said, "you've really got to learn to share."

* * *

"...and so," said Teller to his rapt audience of townspeople, "judging from what we recovered from the basement, it looks like Zimmerman was involved in some sort of cult before the war. The cistern in his cellar looks to be an ancient portal to the spirit world through which he could invoke spells and summon demons to serve him."

"We can't be sure," he continued, "because Roth killed Swain just as he was completing some sort of ritual, but it appears as if Zimmerman confided his secret in some of his army buddies, and they came here looking to summon up some baddies of their own. They took Gwen with them to use as a human sacrifice." Teller paused and gave the girl a smile. "Luckily we got there just in time. In the morning, once the storm has died down, we'll get some explosives from our car, destroy the cistern, and make sure you good people aren't bothered by this evil in the future."

Why don't you tell them the whole story, thought Roth. Tell them about the book we got off Swain. Tell them about what he was summoning, and that if

we had been a second later and Gwen's blood had touched the water, we'd be hip deep in demons right now.

Teller went on, congratulating the people on their bravery and the invaluable aid they had provided, but Roth had heard enough. He slipped away from the back of the crowd and out the front door.

The wind still blew, but the snow was beginning to slow. Here and there, Roth could see stars through the breaking clouds. He stood for a long while, ignoring the numbness that began to creep into his feet and hands.

The gunslinger heard a crunch of snow behind him and turned. "Come on back in," said Sam, "you're a hero."

"For now," said Roth bitterly. "I won't be happy until the job is finished and that thing is sealed up for good."

"Oh, you'll never be happy," joked Sam. The Templar had left her coat inside, and she hopped from one foot to another while rubbing her arms.

How right you are, thought Roth. "Get back in by the fire before you freeze to death," he said gently. "I'll be in in a second."

* * *

Roth awoke with a start and looked around the room he shared with Sam and Teller in a house next door to the restaurant. The wind had died down outside, but the only sound he could hear was the veterinarian's ragged snoring. *Something's wrong*, he thought, though he didn't know why.

The gunslinger threw on his shirt and vest and shrugged into his shoulder holster rig. He was still pulling on his boots when there was a knock on the door.

"Huh, what's up?" said Sam groggily.

Roth yanked open the door. It was Myra. "What's happened?" demanded the gunslinger.

"It's Doug," sobbed the woman, "he's taken Gwen. Tom has gone after him."

"Wake the others," ordered the gunman, "we'll be down in a second."

"Josh had a nightmare. I was with him. I heard something downstairs and went down to see, but all I saw was Doug running across the road. I thought he was dragging someone, but it seemed so odd I didn't go after him. Then I saw Gwen was missing. Tom's

Story's End

45

gone after them already, but I'm afraid Doug's more than a match for him."

"Okay," said Teller, "Let's get after them." The storyteller led his companions and the assembled townspeople across the street to the restaurant. Both the black VW and one of the motorcycles were gone. Fresh tracks in the snow headed north toward the Zimmerman place.

Teller, Sam, and Roth piled into the cab of the pickup truck while the townspeople climbed into the bed. It took the ex-vet only a second to get the truck started, then the newly formed posse was soon slipping and sliding up the road in pursuit.


Teller brought the truck to a skidding stop a few blocks from the Zimmerman residence. Tom was sprawled in the snow on the side of the road, a crimson halo of blood surrounding his head. His motorcycle lay in a drift a few yards beyond, steam rising from the still-hot engine.

Sam leaped from the truck and ran to him, followed closely by the others. The Templar knelt beside Tom and felt for a pulse. "Too late," she stated flatly. The townspeople gathered around her and fell silent in stunned disbelief.

Roth took charge. "We'll come back for Tom later. Remember, the kid still has Gwen. And I got a bad feeling about what he intends to do with her." When no one moved, the gunslinger fired a pistol in the air. "Now, people!" he bellowed. The crack of the gun snapped the crowd out of their shock and they moved toward the truck.

A few minutes later, the group was assembled in the front yard of the Zimmerman house. The black VW was already there, parked at a crazy angle halfway up the curb. Fresh tracks in the snow showed where Doug had dragged Gwen into the building.

"Carl," said Teller to the man in the bib overalls, "you and the others fan out around the house. Don't let anyone leave until I give the all-clear. The three



of us are going in there to get Gwen back." Teller ran to catch up to Roth and Sam, already at the front door.

The three burst into the house much as they had earlier. There was no sign of Doug or the girl on the first floor, so the trio moved toward the cellar stairs. Roth peered through the doorway. A steady glow came from the direction of the hidden cave.

The gunslinger signaled the others and crept down the stairs. One of the steps gave out a loud creak. Roth cursed under his breath and jumped to the bottom. The blast of a large-caliber handgun sounded from the cave and a bullet tore through the staircase wall just in front of Sam. The Templar gave a startled yelp and fell back against Teller.

Roth hit the cellar floor and rolled. He came up facing the cave, which was lit by a small gas lantern. Gwen's bloody body was once again strapped to the board at the edge of the cistern. The gunslinger could tell from the girl's pallid complexion and limp posture that she was most likely dead or close to it.

"You're too late, killer," yelled Doug. His voice came from somewhere on the far side of the cistern. "I've completed Swain's ritual. We didn't need your help yesterday, and we won't need it in the future. You've got ten minutes to get your high-and-mighty self out of town or the guardian I've summoned will rip you to pieces."

Roth advanced toward the cistern in a low crouch with a pistol in each hand. Behind him he heard Teller and Sam following close behind him.

"You little fool..." began the gunslinger. He stopped when he felt Teller's hand on his shoulder.

"Doug," said the storyteller, "I know you want to keep anyone from hurting you or your friends ever again, but this is not the way to do it. There may still be time to undo this if we act quickly. I'm coming in unarmed, and I'm going to check Gwen. Don't shoot."

Roth continued to advance to the cave entrance while Teller spoke. He could see the tip of Doug's hat sticking up above the lip of the cistern. The gunslinger rested his pistols' laser sights on the hat's tassel and waited.

"You don't know anything, storyteller!" screamed Doug.

"I know none of this is Gwen's fault," Teller said calmly and continued toward her.

"Don't bother, she's dead," said Doug in a low, sullen voice.

The storyteller took another step toward Gwen and froze. A heavy mist began to bubble over the edges of the cistern and a low moaning wail echoed through the cave. He felt the ground tremble beneath him.

"What the..." muttered Roth.

The sound of rushing water gurgled from the cistern. It swelled rapidly, growing in volume until it seemed as if an enormous waterfall poured through the cave. Then the sound stopped abruptly and water splashed from the top of the cistern.

Teller took another step forward.

An enormous watery creature erupted from the pool, stretching upward until its head touched the cave's ceiling. The beast was humanoid in shape but was made entirely of water. Roth could see a refracted version of the back cave wall through its body. Its barrel-like torso sported two massive arms that ended in cruel, icy claws. The jaws of its immense head were large enough to swallow a small child whole and were lined with needle sharp icicles. Two merciless icy orbs stared down at the trio. For a second, Roth felt his heart stop within his chest.

Teller stepped back, but not quickly enough. The thing moved forward with blinding speed and impaled the storyteller on one of its wicked claws. It held him up like a trout on a stick, shaking him in the flickering lamp light. Teller tried to scream but the watery fist had punched straight through his lungs. The creature took one last sniff of the storyteller's death then flung him casually against the wall.

Roth screamed and emptied both pistols. His bullets ripped through the

creature but had no effect. Sam attacked next, slashing at the thing with her sword. It was blessed by the Saints themselves and worked to deadly effect on most unearthly creatures, but this one merely looked down at the annoying Templar and knocked her aside with a casual backhand. Then the thing flowed quickly up the stairs and out of sight. Rifle shots sounded from the yard.

Roth started toward Teller but was interrupted by Doug's appearance from behind the cistern with a gun in his hand. The boy's eyes were wide and unfocused. "I'm going to have that thing take you apart one piece at a time, killer," he cackled.

The gunman swung his pistols toward the grinning boy. His fingers tensed on the triggers, but he didn't fire. As he opened his mouth to speak, the teen's gun blossomed with fire and a bullet caught Roth high in the shoulder. His vest prevented the round from penetrating his body, but the impact of the heavy slug drove the breath from his lungs. The gunslinger's pistols cracked, but he knew as he fell that he had missed.

Roth took in a heaving gasp of air and looked up to see Doug standing over him. The boy leveled his pistol at the gunslinger's head, but before he could fire, a long stuttering burst from Sam's Mac-10 threw him back against the cave wall. He slumped there with his eyes and mouth wide open in surprise.

Roth crawled toward Teller, but Sam got there first. The storyteller lay in an expanding pool of blood, the precious fluid pumping from the immense hole in his chest. Sam tore strips from her tabard and desperately worked to plug the wounds, but it was like plugging a firehose with a wine cork.

"Roth," the storyteller gasped, pink froth forming on his lips. "By the blood of the innocent are the great ones summoned, and so too shall they be banished."

"What's he saying?" asked Sam as she tried frantically to seal the ex-vet's wounds.

Roth grimaced. "He's quoting from the book we got off Swain's body. This is only the first one. There are more on

the way. And there's only way to stop 'em." The gunslinger thought for a long moment, staring intently at the storyteller's wound. Finally, he reached under Teller's arms and pulled him slowly to his feet. Teller himself pushed them feebly toward the cistern.

"What? You don't mean. . . No. No! I won't let you," cried Sam. "I can heal him!"

"That's the sad part. You probably could," growled Roth. "But we can't fight these things. Maybe if we had a Doomie. Or even a syker. But that *one* thing is tearing those people to shreds. And there's a thousand more comin'." As if to emphasize his words, the cistern began to bubble and churn, and the sound of rushing water could be heard from somewhere deep within the earth.

Roth propped Teller on the edge of the cistern where Gwen's death had summoned the creature. He reloaded a single round in each pistol, then looked up to find the tip of a sword hovering at his right eye.

"Go ahead, do it," said Roth. "A whole lotta people'll thank you for it."

Sam moved to strike but didn't.

"Go on. But there's no guarantee your Templar mumbo-jumbo's gonna plug that hole in his chest."

Sam felt tears well in her eyes. Nothing she'd been through had prepared her for this.

The gunslinger sighed, then slapped the blade away in disgust. "Teller's made his choice. And I ain't that noble." Before the Templar could change her mind, the gunman brought his right pistol across his body in a hard swipe and caught Sam square on the jaw. She slid half-conscious to the ground.

"She's going to hate you for this," coughed Teller.

"She can get in line," replied Roth.

"It's been..." Teller trailed off, coughing out his last breaths in blood and pain.

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THE BLOOD OAK



THIS IS THE LAST TIME I TAKE
A BABYSITTING JOB.

WRITERS

CLAY AND SUSAN GRIFFITH

ARTIST

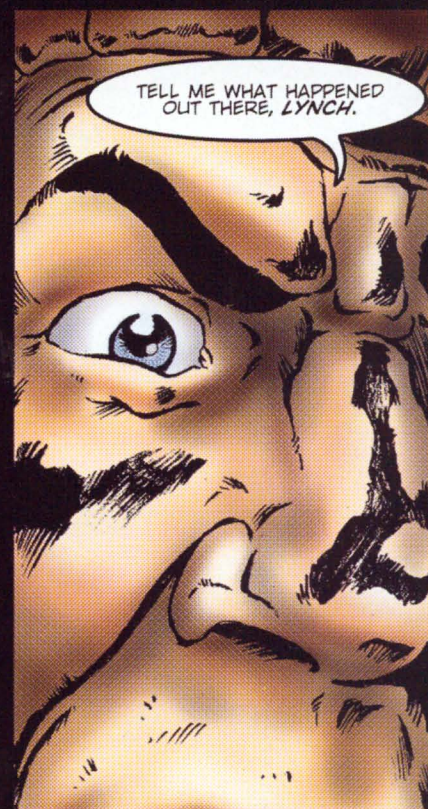
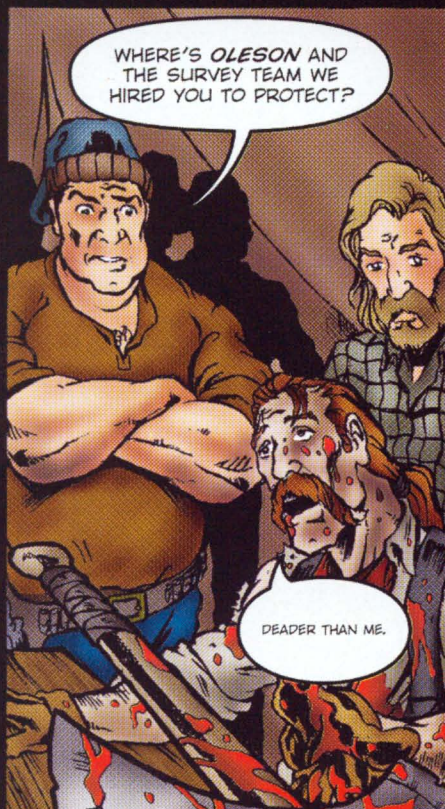
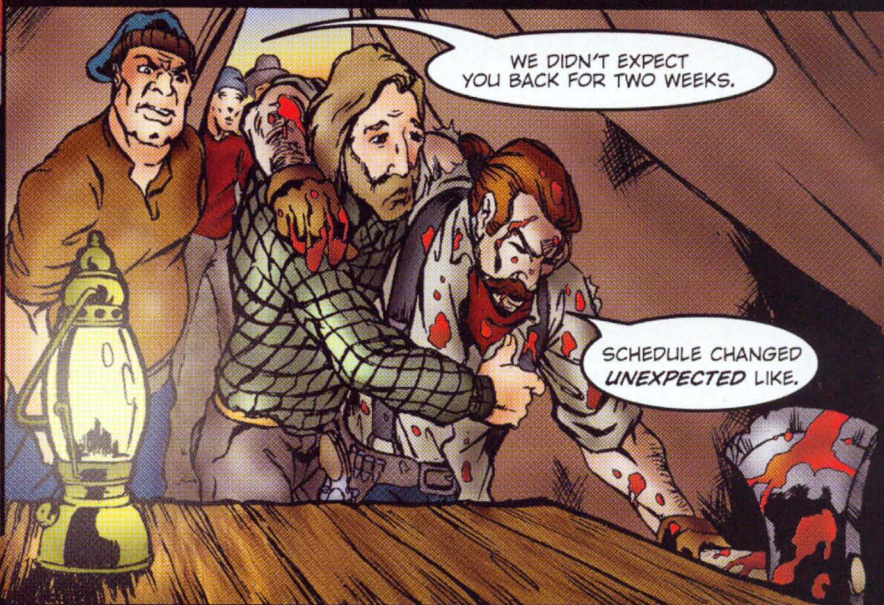
RICHARD POLLARD

COLORS

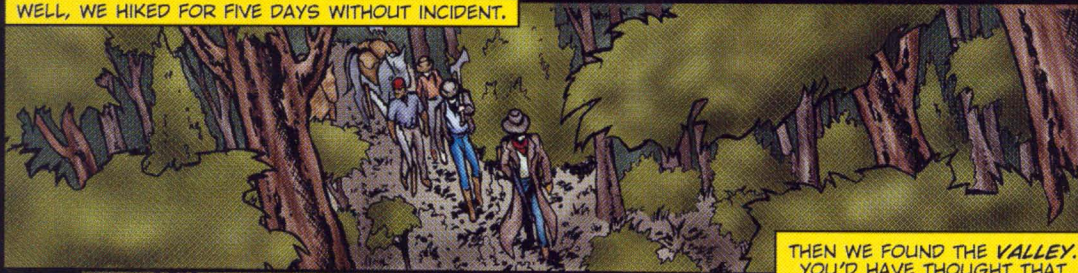
CHUCK CROFT

LETTERS

PAUL DUKE



WELL, WE HIKED FOR FIVE DAYS WITHOUT INCIDENT.

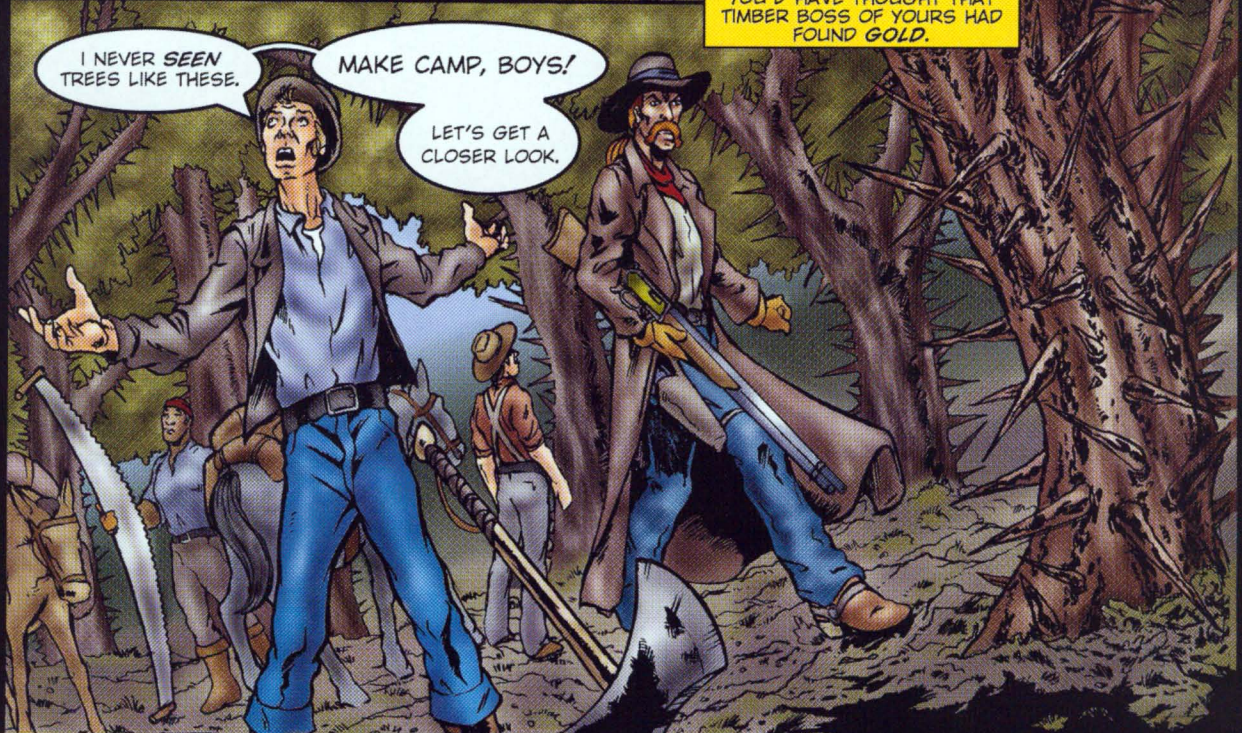


THEN WE FOUND THE VALLEY. YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT THAT TIMBER BOSS OF YOURS HAD FOUND GOLD.

I NEVER SEEN TREES LIKE THESE.

MAKE CAMP, BOYS!

LET'S GET A CLOSER LOOK.



I GOT A CLOSER LOOK, TOO. DIDN'T LIKE WHAT I SAW.



HEY, OLESON.

CRUNCH

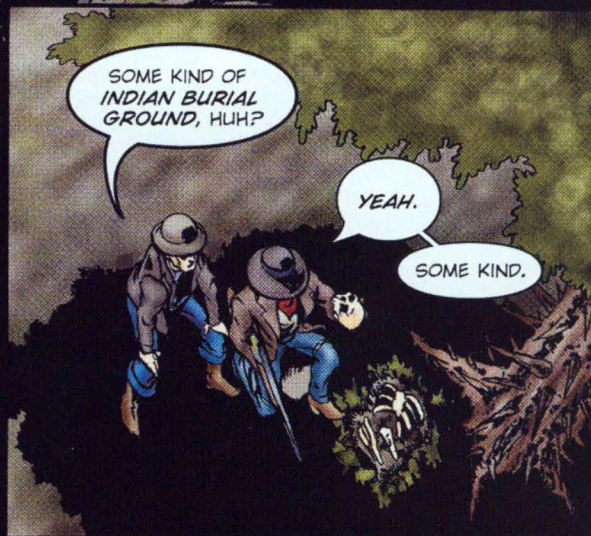
C'MERE A MINUTE.



SOME KIND OF INDIAN BURIAL GROUND, HUH?

YEAH.

SOME KIND.

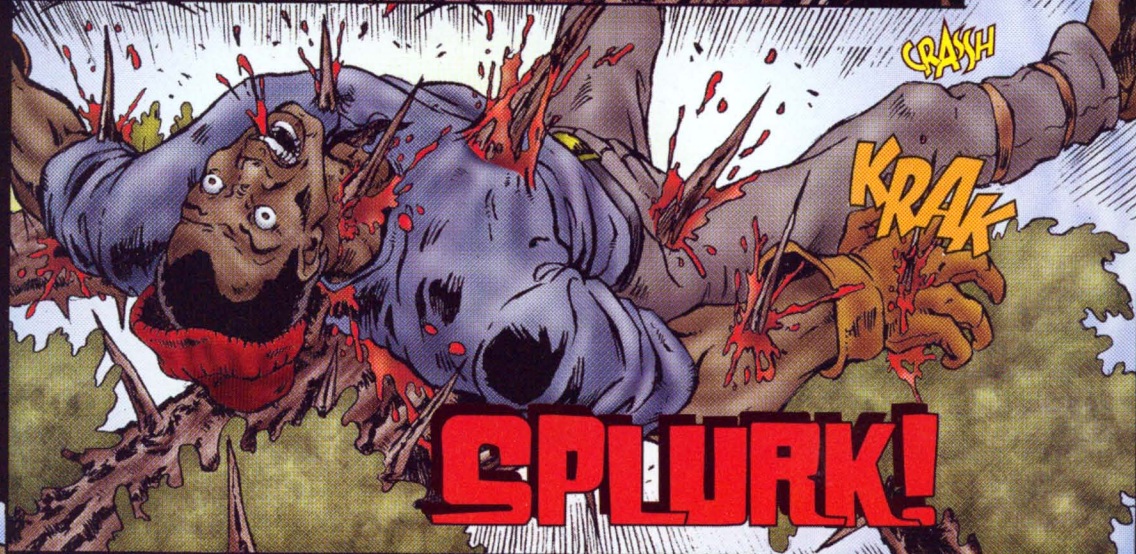
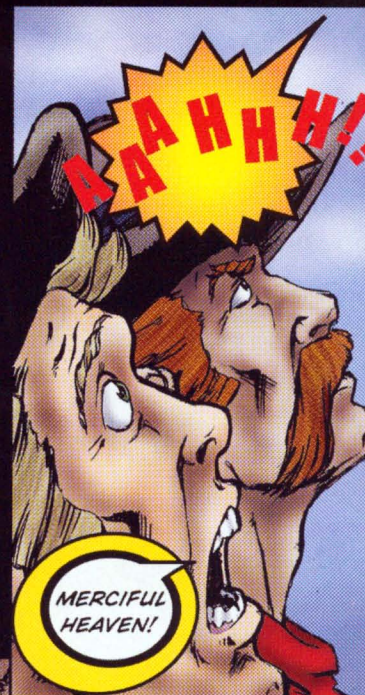
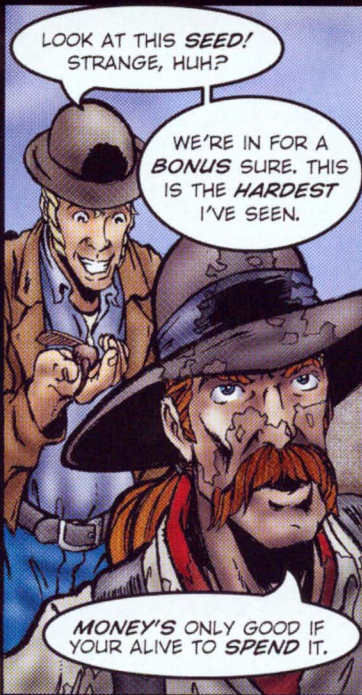
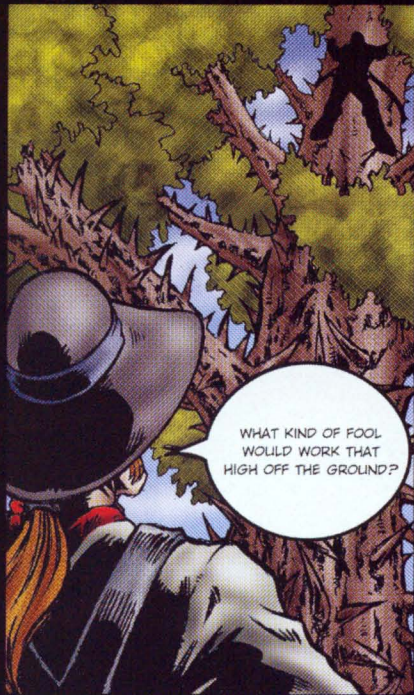


WE OUGHTTA MOVE ON.

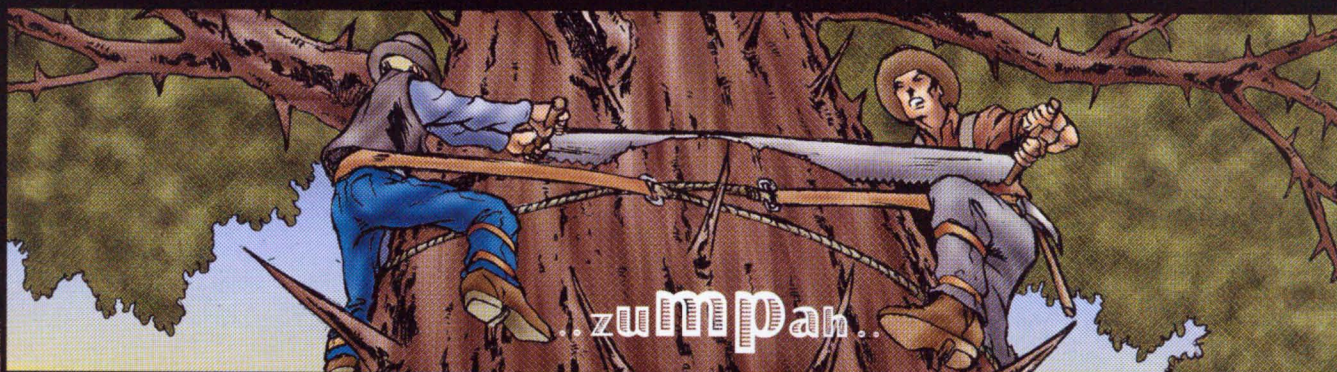
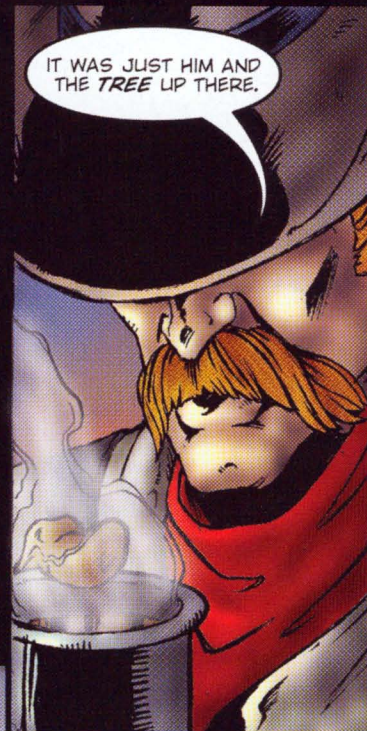
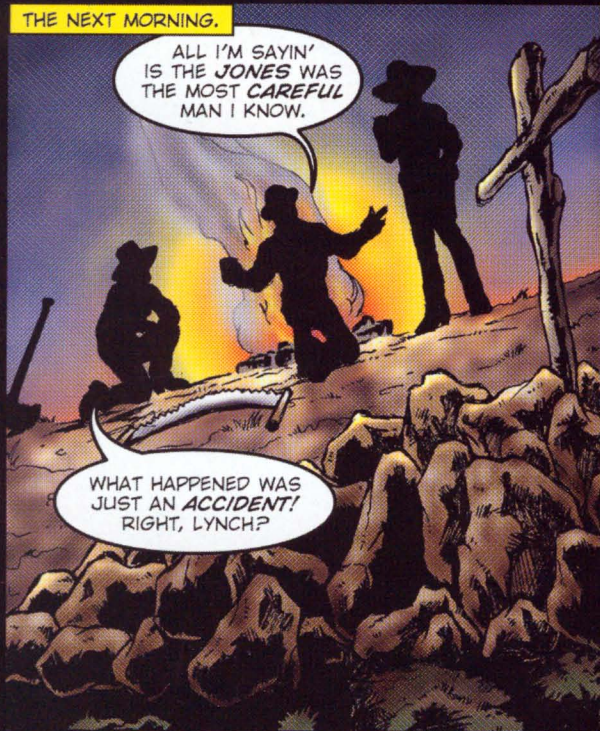
NO. OUR JOB IS TO SCOUT TIMBER. YOUR JOB IS TO PROTECT US.

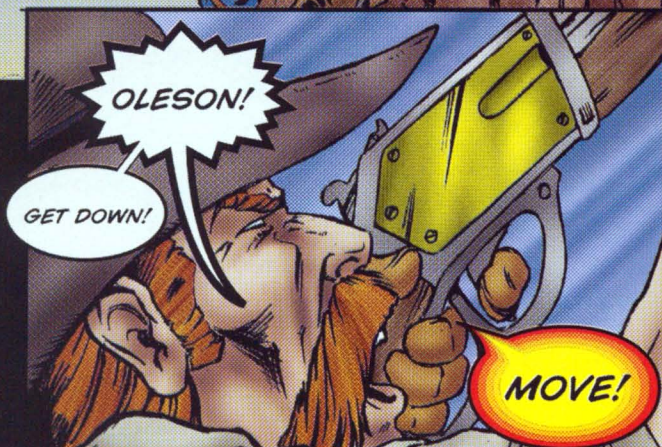
SO DO YOUR JOB.

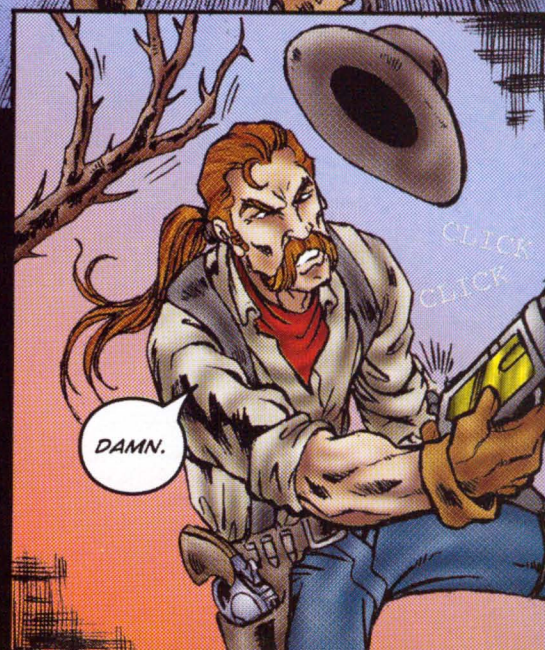
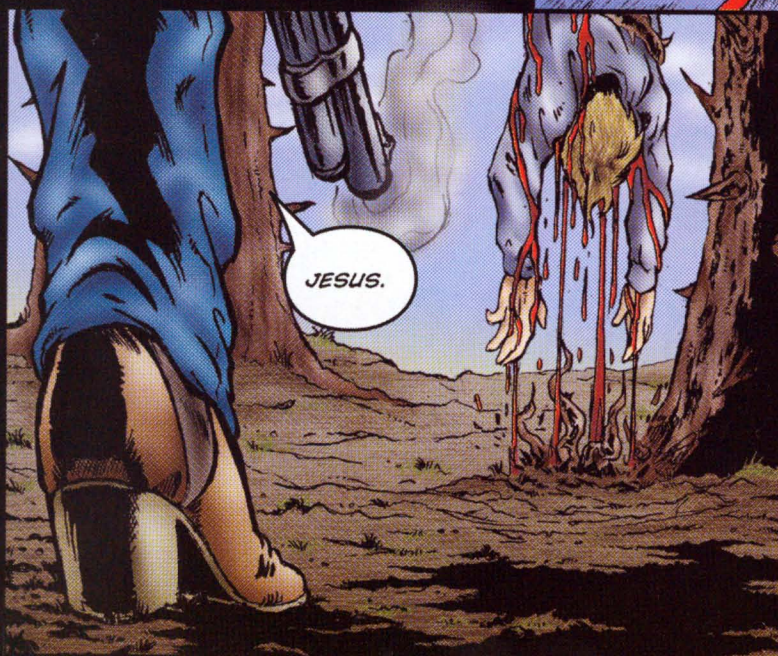
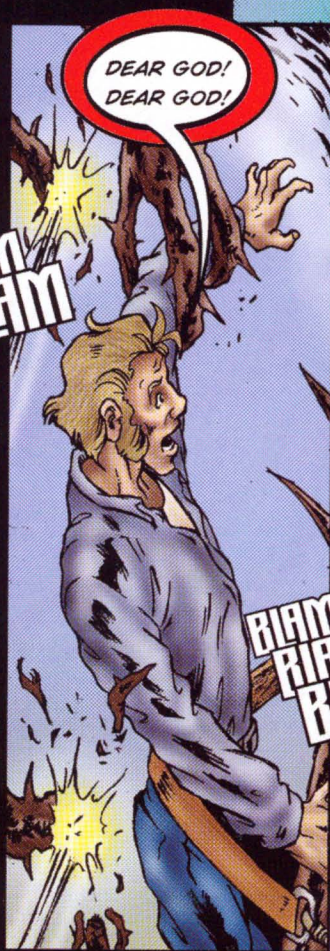


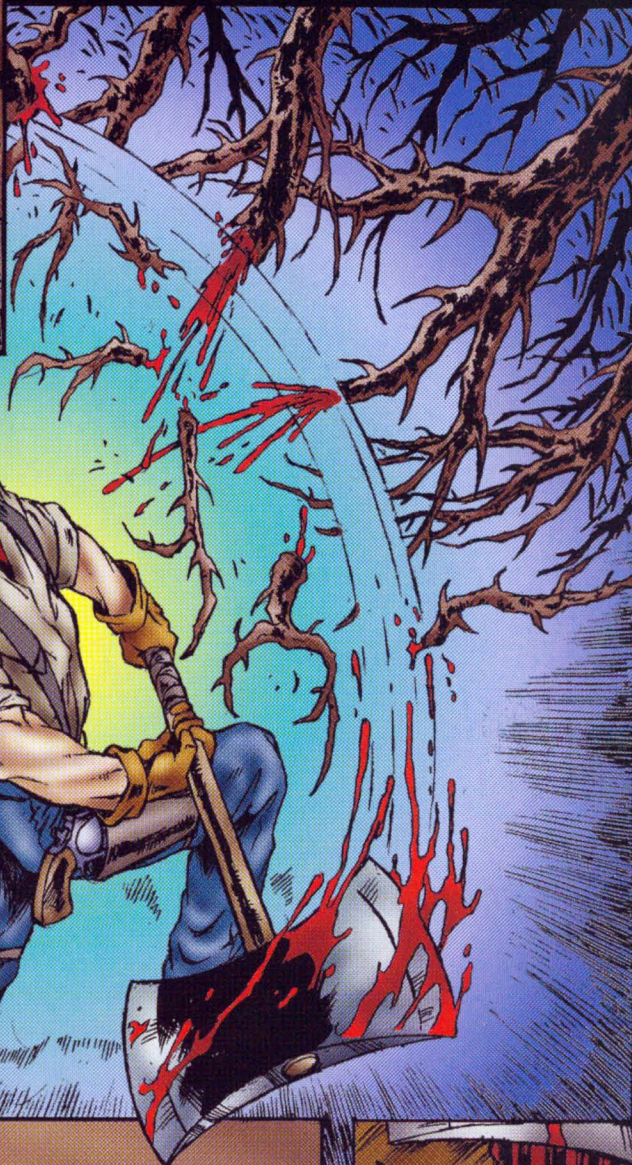


THE NEXT MORNING.









BLOOD THIRSTY
SONS OF *BITCHES*!

GET BACK!



I CUT MY WAY OUT OF THE
VALLEY AND FOUND MY
WAY BACK HERE.





I'M IN MY RIGHTS TO ARREST YOU, YOU MURDERING LUNATIC!



THAT'S RIGHT. I KILLED 'EM ALL FOR THEIR PRIZE AXE.

WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO TAKE A LOOK AT THAT VALLEY FOR YOURSELF, METCALF.



I NEVER TRUSTED YOU, LYNCH.

BRING HIM, BOYS! WE'LL FIND A GOOD HANGIN' TREE.



DAMN YOU, METCALF! THERE'S NO REASON FOR THIS!

MR. METCALF, WE DON'T KNOW HE KILLED THOSE MEN!



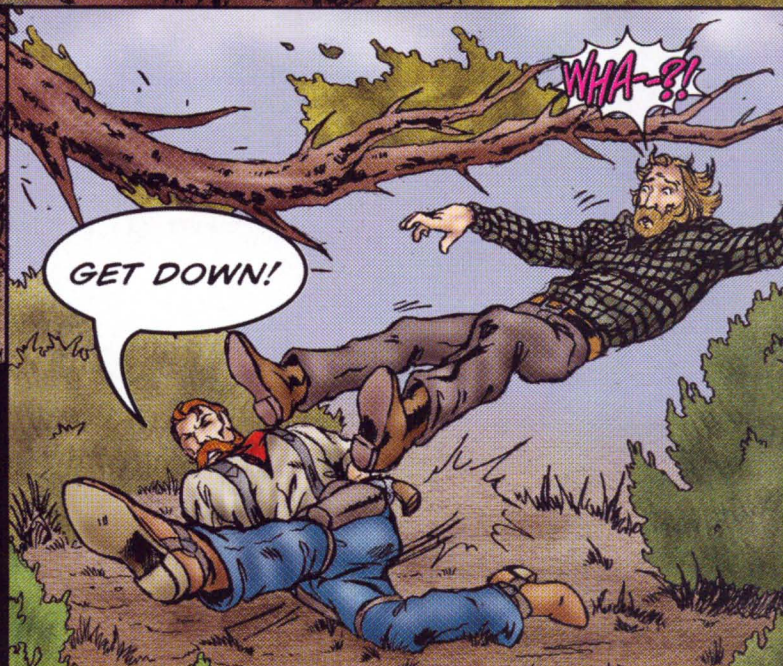
SHUT UP, SCHRENK.

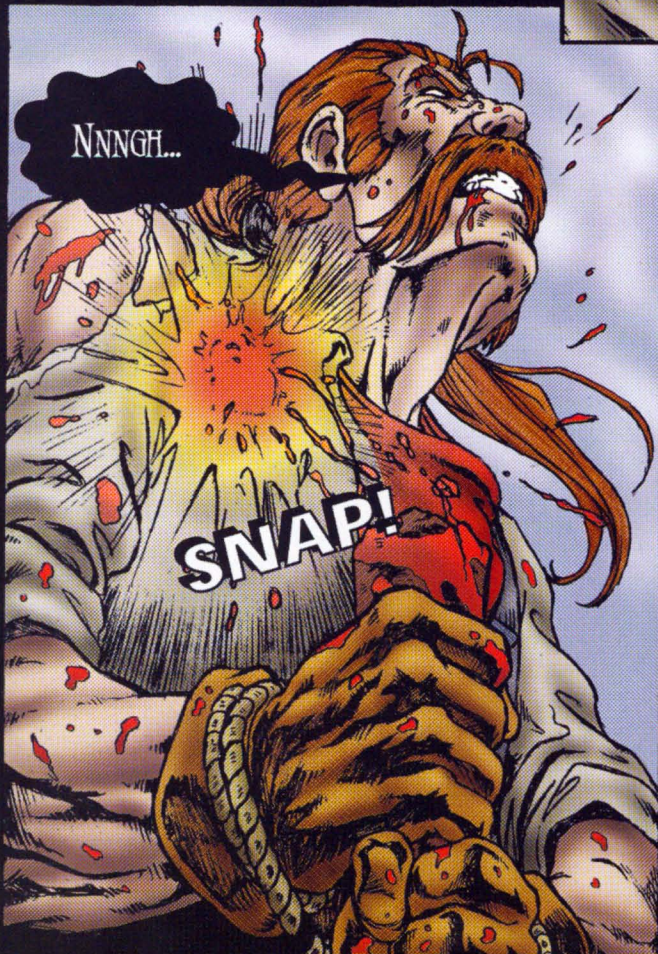
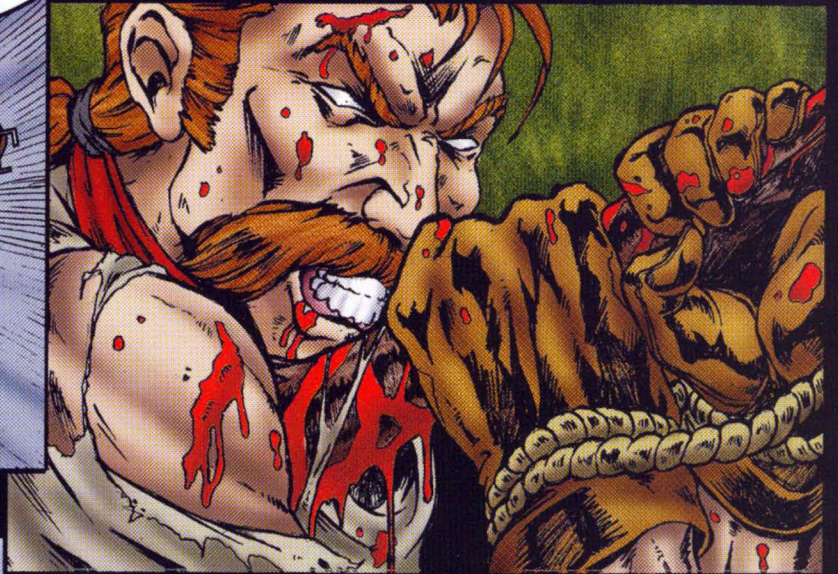
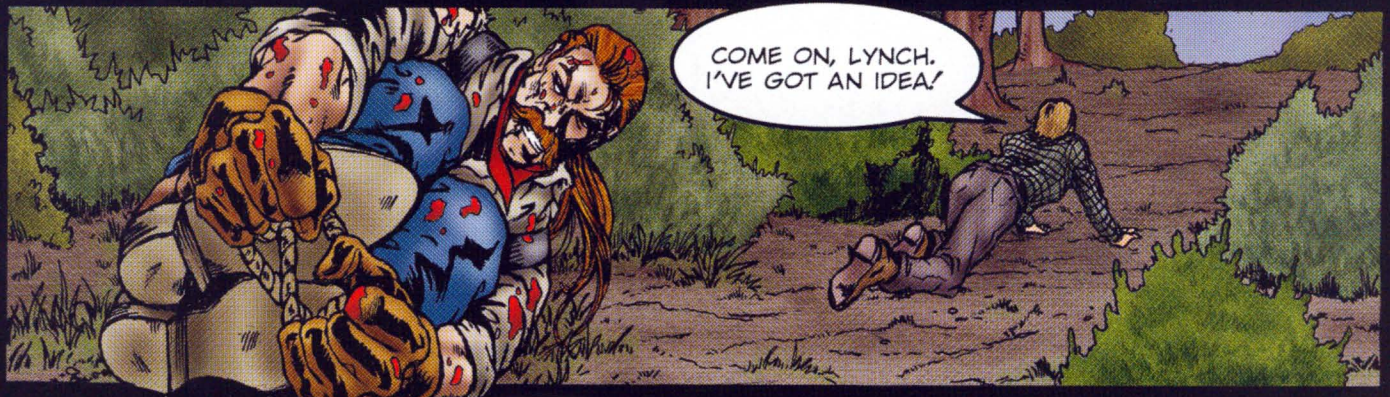


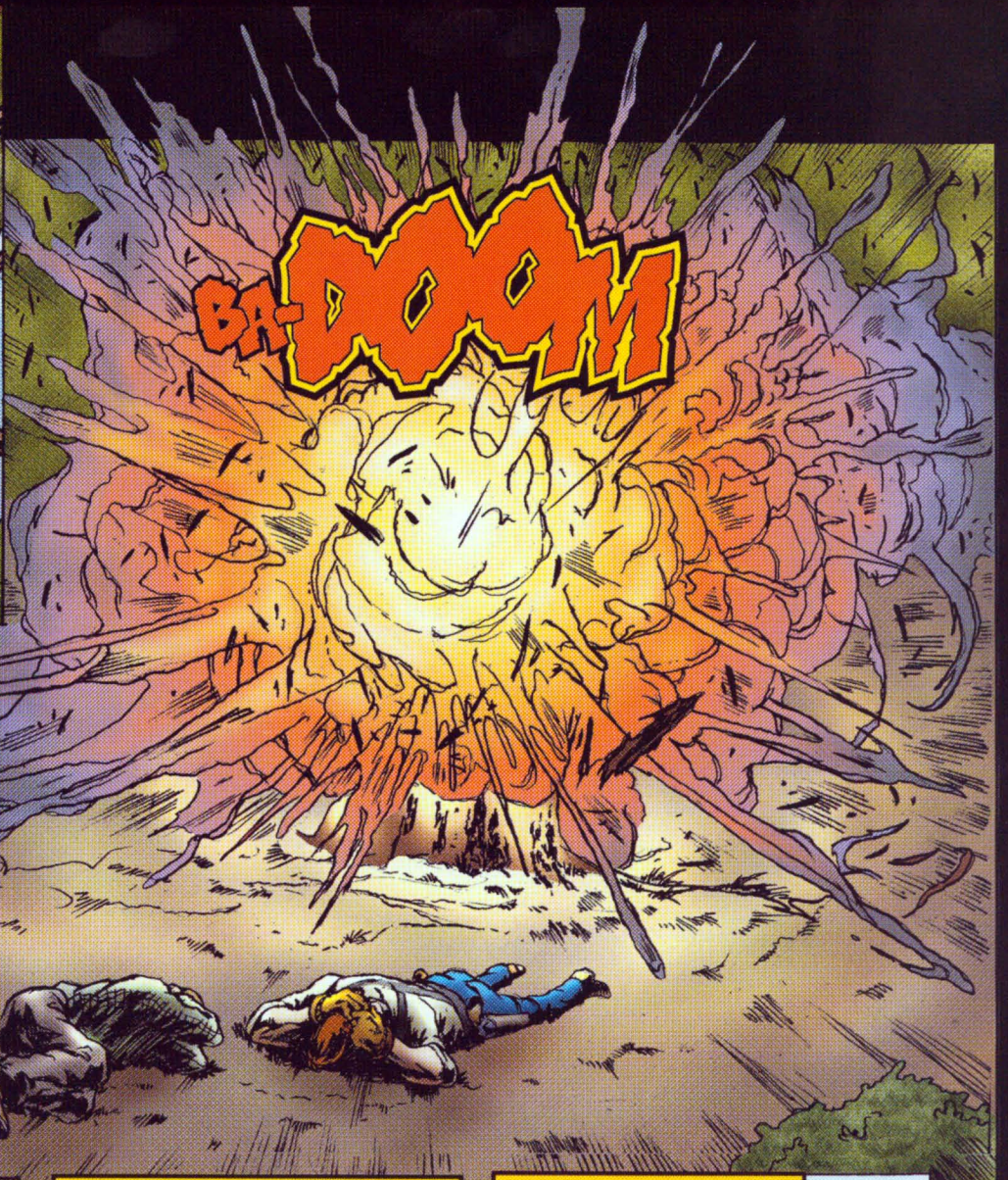
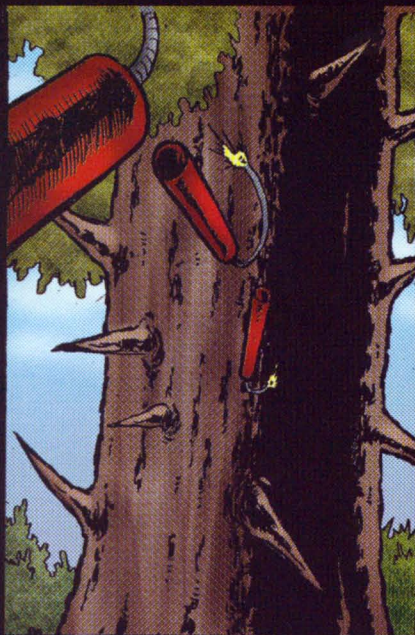
WAAAAH

METCALF! YOU FOOL!

THE TREES ARE HERE TOO, AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT!



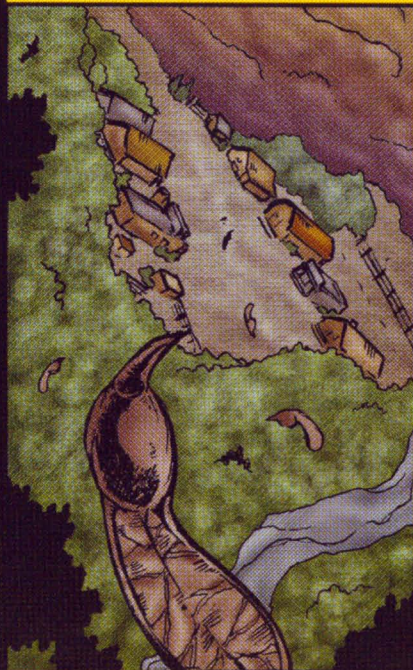




LYNCH,
WE DID IT!

YEAH, WE DID.
WE JUST BLEW THE
SEEDS FROM HERE
TO SEATTLE.

I HOPE YOUR TIMBER
TIMBER COMPANY HAS A
LOT OF **REAL BIG SAWS**.



OTHERWISE, WE'RE IN
BIG TROUBLE.



Deadlands

SINK YOUR TEETH INTO THIS!



Check out the new *Deadlands: Epitaph™* and get a big meaty mouthful of the most twisted tales in the Weird and Wasted West!

Our debut issue features a full-color comic starring Ronan Lynch called *The Blood Oak*. It's a creepy tale that'll make you think twice the next time you sit under that old oak tree in your front yard!

You'll also find *Hell on Earth™* Dime Novel #4, *Story's End*. Everyone's favorite tale-teller and his new companions—the twin-Tokarev-toting Roth and the young Templar Samantha—face an ancient horror deep in the heart of the Wasted West. And you won't believe the ending!

And then, of course, there's those big dinos you saw on the flip-side of this magnificent magazine. Jurassic Joe Wolf brings us *Trouble at Table Rock*, long a convention favorite among *Deadlands* fans and now in print for the first time ever!

Add to that a new *Veteran o' the Syker Wars* Table by Jay Kyle, updates by John Goff and John Hopler, and a guide to writing for future issues of the *Epitaph* and you've got a whole passel o' meaty goodness!

So get out your biggest dinosaur gun, load up some slugs, and let's go hunting. There's thunder lizards in them thar hills. And they're hungry, partner.



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