

THE HOLLOW WEST

A ROLE PLAYING GAME OF FANTASTIC ADVENTURES IN THE HOLLOW EARTH



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The Hollow West

A Role Playing Game of Fantastic Adventures in The Hollow Earth.

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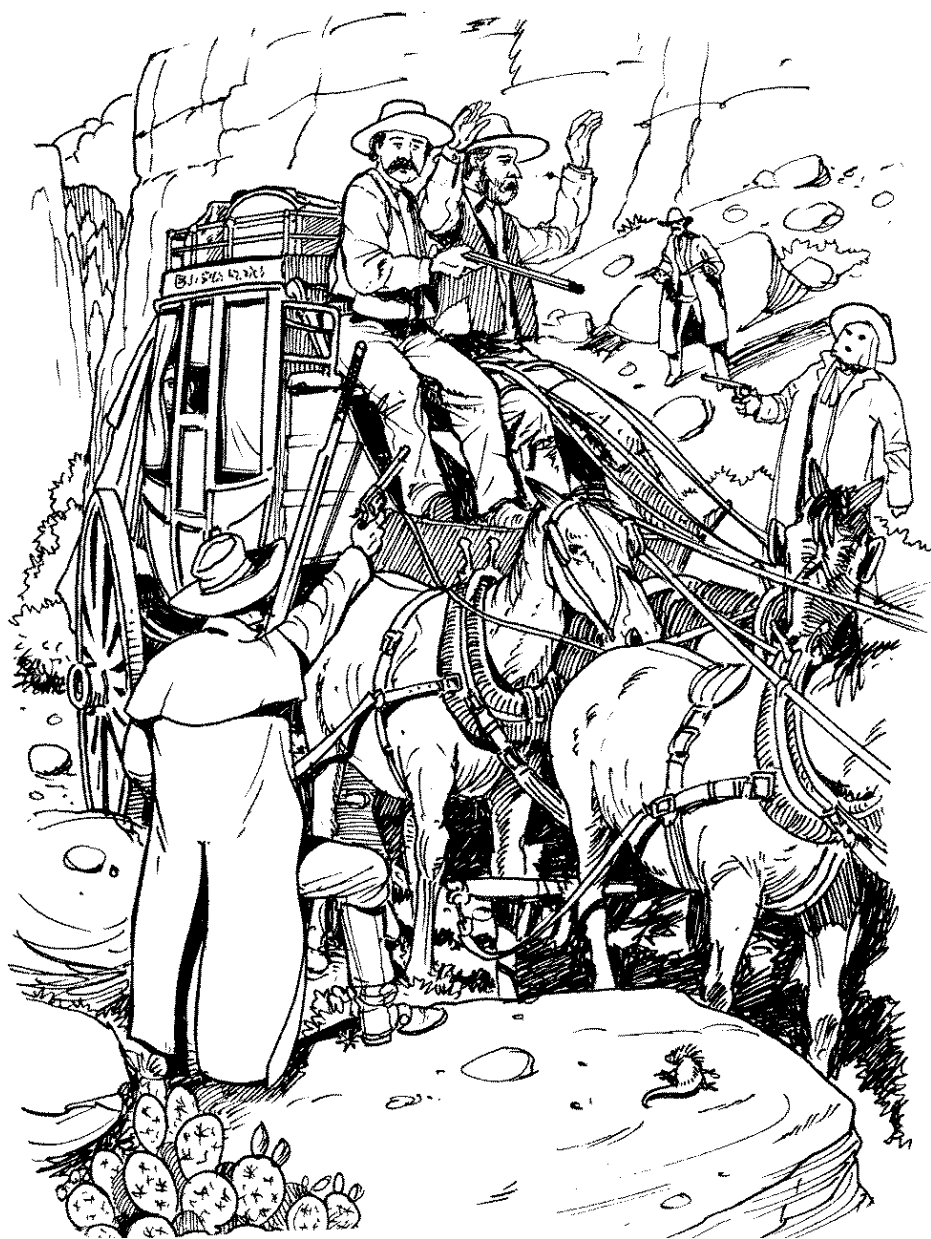
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A Players' Guide to the Hollow West



Chapter 1

About this Book

The Hollow West is a role-playing game set in a Wild West at the centre of the Hollow Earth.

The world is hollow, and deep within the Earth's depths is a lost world where dinosaurs still live. After the Spanish Conquest of Central America, the Aztec survivors escaped here and re-established their empire. Native Americans, displaced from their lands by the white man, have arrived more recently, and begun to set up hidden communities. This settlement, in turn, has led the European settlers in America here. Finding gold and gems, a promise of more has caused a new gold rush and a new wild frontier. Every day, the new Great Subterranean Railway line brings new settlers to New Texas.

Players take on the role of cowboys, gunslingers, academics, Native Americans, and even occultists all looking for adventure on the edges of civilisation, in the wondrous and vast unknown of the Hollow Earth in the year 1895 AD.

In this book, we present complete game. There are rules for character generation, how to play, and details of this fantastic new Wild West. There are details of the different factions present, along with the geography of the Hollow Earth, supernatural beasts and a complete introductory scenario.

The Fortune System, by Paul Michener

The Fortune System is a light version of the Fate rules (<http://www.faterpg.com/>), designed for historic fantasy RPGs.

This version of Fate was influenced by the Jadepunk RPG (<http://jadepunk.com/>). The Fortune System provides a straightforward approach to resolve tests and conflicts in historic fantasy settings.

Useful Links

- For more information about D101's range of Fortune Games visit, D101Games.com/fortune.
- Dr Mitch's Patreon Campaign, patreon.com/drmitch.
- The Fate system's home page, faterpg.com.

The Hollow West Player's Summary

At the end of the Great Indian Wars of the 19th Century, high numbers of the surviving Native Americans disappeared on the way to their new reservations. The reservation authorities discovered they had escaped via the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and similar cave systems which reached deep into the Earth's crust. Initially, it wasn't clear where they had gone, but in 1865 cave explorers, sponsored by great East Coast industrialist and rail baron Frederick James "F.J." Stevenson found that they had fled to the Hollow Earth that existed within our own.

In 1869, the Trans-Continental Railway joining the Central Pacific line and Union Pacific line was completed, linking the east and west coast of America. F.J. Stevenson obtained the agreement of his fellow rail barons to begin work on the Great Subterranean Railway, from Mammoth Cave to the very centre of the Earth. By 1880 the town of Stevenson was built at the Hollow Earth end of the railroad.

Gradually, settlers from the USA and beyond started grabbing land in the region around Stevenson Town which became known as New Texas. The name was due to a similar climate to its surface counterpart. New Texas is experiencing both a rush for land and the newly discovered gold in the further reaches of the territory.

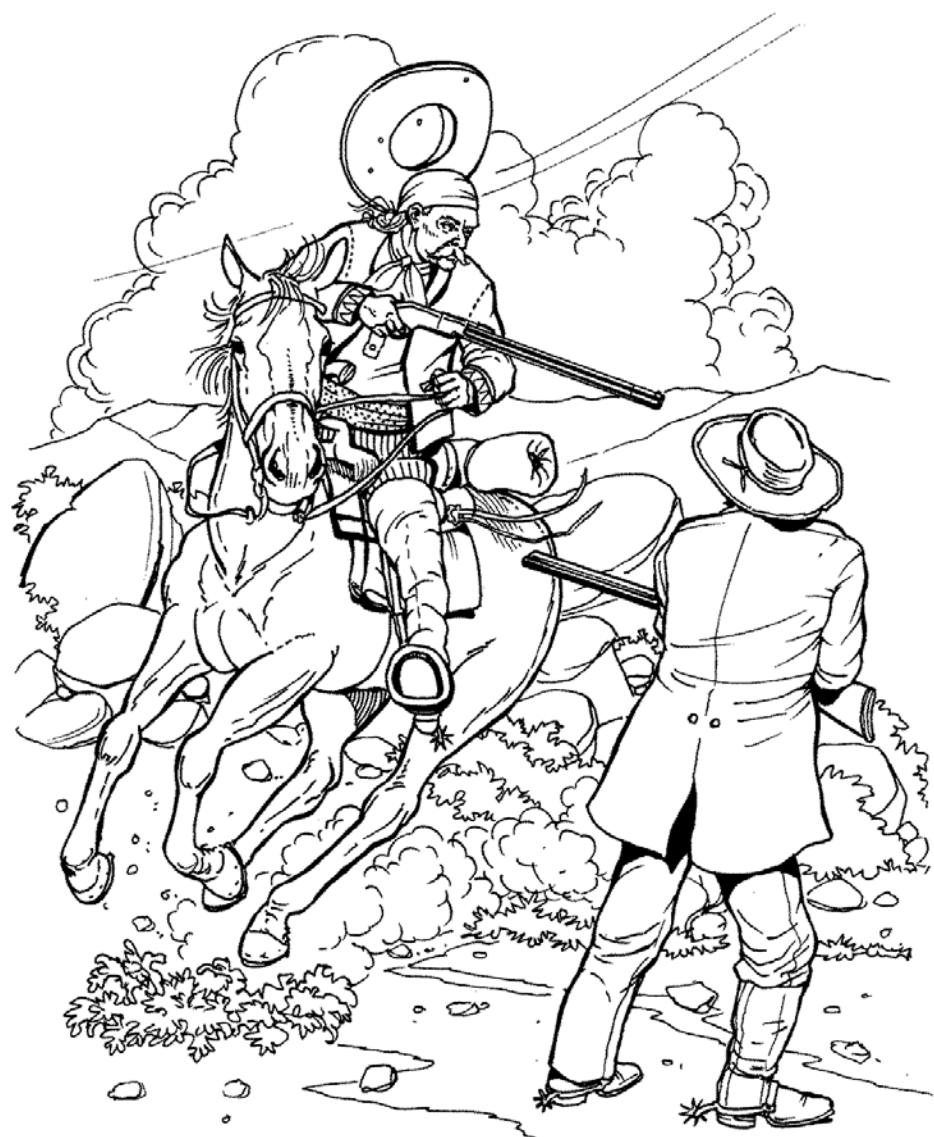
Beyond New Texas is the lawless Badlands, a homeland for outlaws and exiles. Native Indian tribes and dinosaurs both make their homes here.

Occultists and Mystics have travelled to the Hollow Earth drawn by the legends of the place, such as the mystical city of Agartha. Most are misguided charlatans, but a few are authentic students of magic.

The industrialised Age of Steam is in full swing, and engineers and inventors have travelled to Stevenson Town to take advantage of Mr Stevenson's generous patronage. As the Badlands become tamed, and New Texas expands, the Great Subterranean Railway stretches ever further west.

The Peoples of America

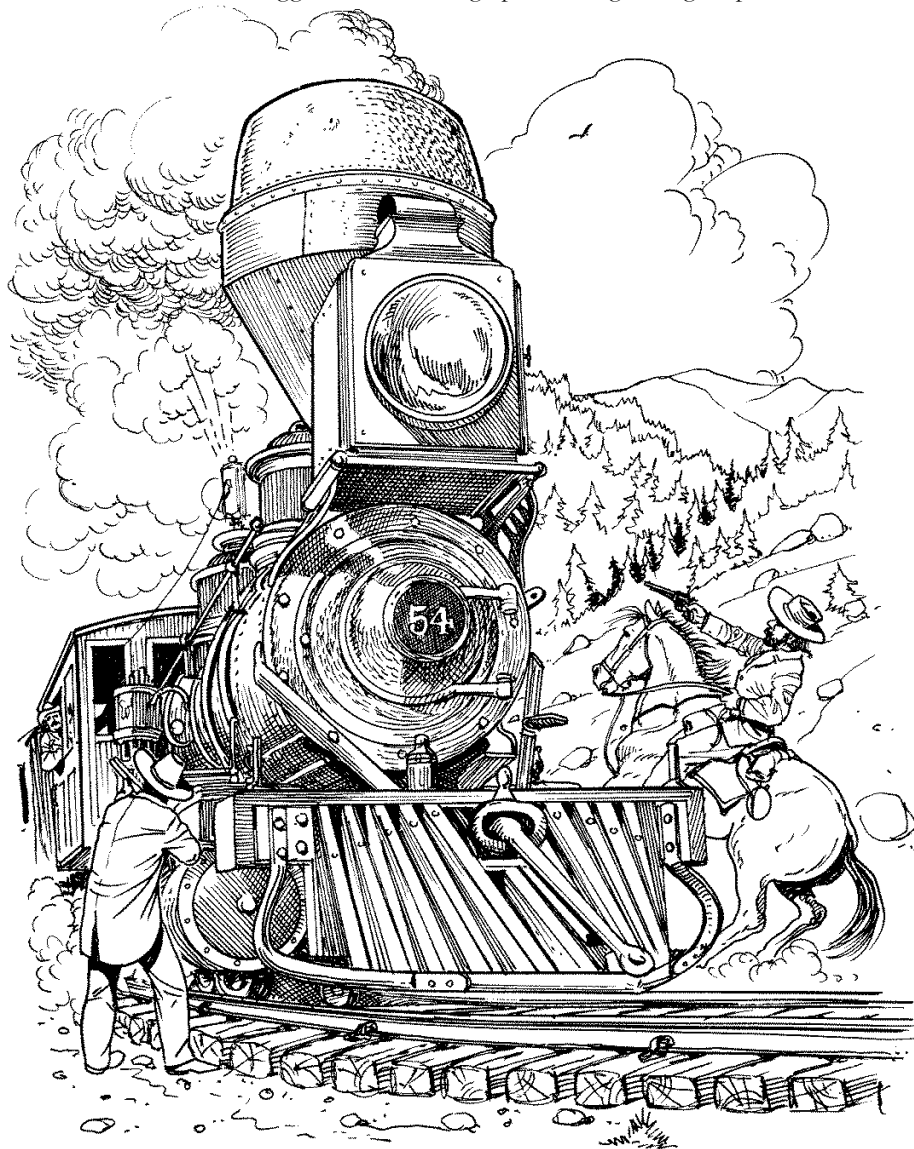
The indigenous peoples of America have suffered greatly in our history, in the face of the colonial expansion across modern day America, and nothing in this book is intended to make light of that suffering. There is some confusion on the correct terms to call these peoples. In this book, we use the term Native American.



Chapter 2

The Hollow West

This chapter provides both players and referees with a basic orientation to the wonderful hollow world that is the Hollow West. It's a roughly equivalent to the depth of knowledge of a resident who came from the surface world six months ago, who has stayed in Stevenson or one of the bigger towns, soaking up knowledge and gossip.



Getting to the Hollow West

The pioneers who initially found the Hollow West came through subterranean cave systems that have their entrances on the surface and went down through the mantle of the earth and emerged in the Hollow Earth. This route is an uncomfortable journey full of dangers. Modern settlers travel in comfort using the *Great Subterranean Rail Road*, which has its surface terminus at the entrance to the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and plunges down through the mantle to Stevenson.

Stevenson was the first significant settlement in the Hollow West and has been the central hub for the colonisation of New Texas for the ten years since its establishment. It is a small city of about ten thousand permanent inhabitants and has all the facilities of a surface American city, provided by entrepreneurs encouraged to do business there by its owner, F. J. Stevenson.

Hollow West Basics

"When you talk to most folk, what they mean by the "The Hollow West" is a territory as big as Texas on the surface. The sparsely populated settled area, has farms, cattle ranches and towns, is similar in terrain and climate to Western America, which is why many folks are right at home here and have called it "New Texas".

Beyond the line in the sand drawn up by F.J. Stevenson and the Cattle Barons, which defines the limit of New Texas, is the Badlands. Here the terrain is harder, rockier and in some areas breaks down into a desert. This place is where the outlaws and Indians live. Beyond the Badlands is anyone's guess although explorers like Professor Susan Smith say the Badlands end with impassable mountains, which she's christened the Skyreach Mountains (on account of how they reach up to the sky), and beyond them is a vast steaming Jungle filled with all manner of snakes."

So far, I'm making it sound as if it's just like on the surface? Well, there are differences, though you'll soon get used to them. Instead of a horizon, the Hollow Earth has a "curvature", where you can see the land curve upwards to the up to about 25 miles away, and up to a hundred miles if the terrain and weather are clear. Talking about the weather it's somewhat predictable, and the daylight and seasons aren't as variable as on the surface. There's no snow in winter here, and you'll need to go to the surface if you ever want a White Christmas.

Everything seems to be managed by our little sun – which looks like a smoky orb in the sky. We call it "Old Smokey" (it's also a brand of traditional cigars made by the Stevenson Tobacco Company by the way). We've got weather scientists looking into how and why – so far they think the Hollow Earth follows its natural laws."

Official Stevenson Welcomer at the Stevenson Great Subterranean Railway station, Stevenson New Texas.

New Texas

Named after its surface counterpart due to its similarity in terrain and climate. The New Texans are a mixed lot all attracted to this new territory by its opportunities. The vast majority of colonists – encouraged by the Stevenson Land Agency to resettle in New Texas – are of European descent and have come to work the land as farmers. Then there is a sizeable community of industrial workers who are mainly working on extending the Great Subterranean Rail Road into the wilds of New Texas and beyond. The Chinese are also present as workers on the railroads, and there is a sizeable contingent of Mexicans who have followed their Dons here. They have grabbed land and set up large cattle ranches.

New Texas has yet to join the Union. Negotiations underway and a small US Military presence, but everyone knows that the rail baron Frederick James Stevenson, an influential man of English descent who came to the Hollow Earth to amass power and land, will never let it slip out of his control. The ‘Stevensons’ are FJ’s private police force and are easily recognisable in their black leather long coats and broad-brimmed hats. They enforce his will and keep his order. Outside of this is a system of sheriffs and circuit judges who report to the town Mayors who are currently appointed by FJ.

The Badlands

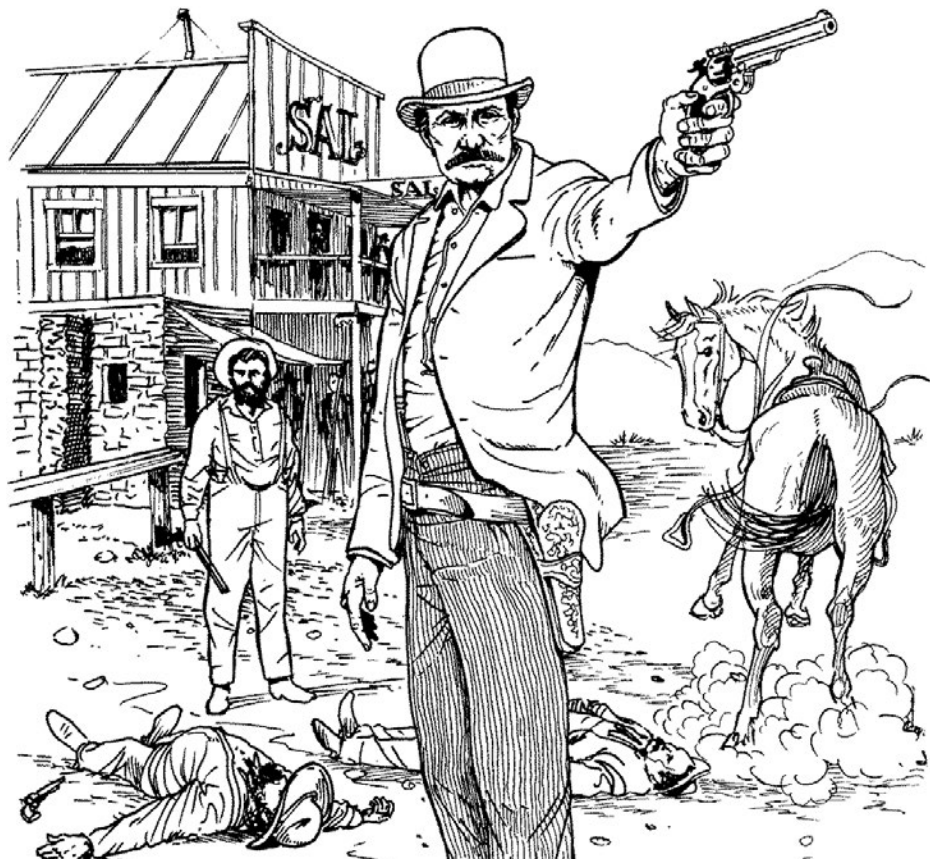
This broken land is on paper the land of outlaws and exiles from justice, but it’s also the home for free thinkers and radicals whose view of the future does not match FJ’s industrial vision.

It’s also where the Native Indian tribes have ended up, carving up the lands into new nations during the two generations they have been here. So far there’s been no trouble between the Native Americans and New Texas, but the US Government have been gradually building up a military presence in a series of fort’s dotted around the settled lands in New Texas as a precautionary measure.

The main threat that’s emerging out of the Badlands are the dinosaurs. FJ’s scientists are beyond belief at the reports of lone carnivores, such as Tyrannosaurus Rex, coming out of the wilderness to prey on herds of cattle, while a whole new influx of big game hunters is arriving in Stevenson to hunt these terror lizards back into extinction.

Beyond the Skyreach Mountains

The sightings of the dinosaurs have intensified the exploration programme sponsored by FJ. Stevenson into the jungles that lie beyond the Skyreach Mountains, the traditional border of the Bad Lands. The archaeologists and historians who accompanied these expeditions not only reported herds of dinosaurs but also peoples of a civilisation long lost to the surface world



Timeline

The 1820s onwards. Native Americans escape to the Hollow Earth after losing lands in the Great Indian Wars.

1861-1865. US Civil War.

1865. The Deep Earth Expedition. Following rumours that Native Americans had used large extensive deep cave systems to make their disappearance, explorers sponsored by F.J. Stevenson discover the Hollow Earth.

1869. Trans-Continental Rail Road completed connecting the East and West of USA.

1870. With the agreement of the other rail barons, F.J. Stevenson starts building the Great Subterranean Railway, with the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky as its surface entrance.

1880. The town of Stevenson established at the Hollow Earth end of the Great Subterranean Railway Tunnel.

1895 Now, your adventurers arrive in Stevenson New Texas to find fame and fortune in the Hollow West!

Chapter 3

Game Concepts

This chapter outlines the terms and basic rules that you'll be using to play the Game.

Players

Players create characters (called *player characters*, or just *characters* in this book) using their imaginations and the rules of the game and the setting. A character is a player's presence in the group's shared narrative. A player's primary job is to describe what his or her character does, developing the story created by the Referee, modifying it by his activities, and forming the overall plot.

The Referee

To play, one of the group takes on the role of Referee. The Referee is responsible for everything in the game that is not an act of a character. They form the starting narrative, the challenges the characters face, mediate the rules and create and play the 'non-player characters', or NPCs, who both populate the setting and interact with the player characters.

Characters

A character has a name, background and motivations. They also have abilities measured by game mechanics. For a character, there are four basic mechanical elements:

Aspects. Descriptive phrases that say important things about the character.

Professions. Packages of skills representing a character's training. Each profession has a rating, from +1 to +3 for a starting character.

Extras. Special abilities or equipment which grants a character other abilities.

Stress. A measure of resilience when in a conflict.

Actions and Fudge Dice

Many things a character does in the game- walking, talking, opening a door, and so on- are automatic, and require no reference to game rules. When something is more challenging, this is an action, which may succeed or fail, or have consequences.

An action has an associated difficulty number. To resolve whether your character's action is successful, pick a relevant profession and roll four Fudge dice (also called Fate dice). These dice are six-sided, and each side is marked with [+], [-], or left blank. When you roll these dice, count each [+] as +1, and each [-] as -1, to generate a number from +4 to -4. Take this number and add the rating of your profession.

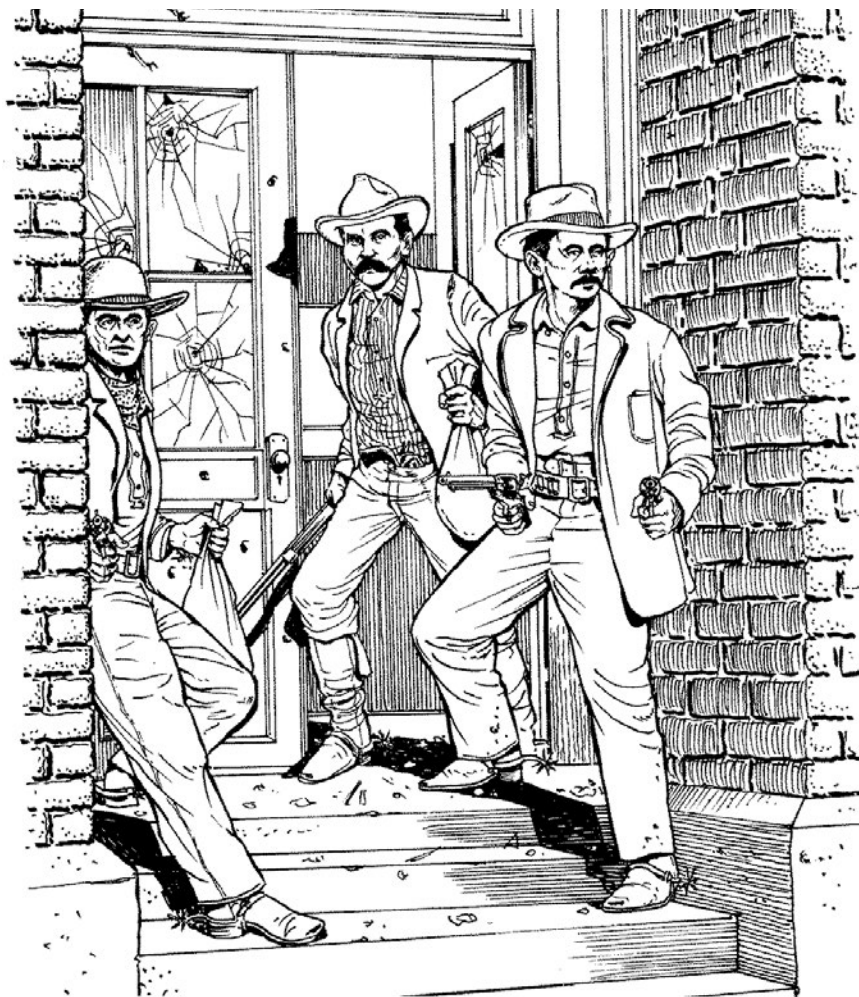
If the result equals or exceeds the difficulty number, congratulations! You have succeeded in your action.

Aspects and Fate Points

Aspects are short descriptive phrases referring to characters, the scene, and sometimes objects. Each character has a pool of fate points. You can spend one of your character's fate points, and name an aspect which applies to the situation, to get a +2 bonus to the result of a roll for an action. You do this after rolling the dice.

This process is called *invoking* an aspect.

The Referee can *compel* a character's aspect, suggesting a course of action or using it to enliven the story. You can pay a fate point to ignore this, or go along with it, and earn a fate point. Thus it is important for aspects to have a negative as well a positive side.



Chapter 4

Characters

This chapter deals with the creation of characters before play and how they change during play because of their adventures, otherwise known as advancement.

Character Creation

Character Creation is a five-step process as follows:

1. Think about your Character
2. Choose Aspects
3. Choose Professions
4. Work out Extras and Fate Point Refresh Rate
5. Determine Stress

Step 1. Think about your Character

Before beginning, reflect on a name and what sort of character you want to play. Take time to visualise them and get a good picture of them in your head. Step into their shoes and think how they would react in different situations. You will discover more details about your character in the process of creation.



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Step 2 Choose Aspects

Each player character is made up of five defining aspects.

For each aspect, write a short sentence or phrase.

Portrayal

This aspect is in some ways your main aspect. What do you do? What impression do you give others? This aspect is the first step in defining your character. Pick a short sentence or phrase as an aspect.

Examples: Smooth and roguish card sharp, World-weary former gunslinger turned farmer.

Background

Where did you grow up? Were your family rich or poor? Did you stay in one place or travel? Use what you know here to pick a short sentence or phrase from this as an aspect.

Examples: Grew up on the streets of Dodge City, Had the best education that money can buy.

Destiny

Why did you come to the Hollow Earth? What are you hoping to achieve there?

Examples: Looking for fame and fortune, Hunting down the killers of my family, Looking to make a fortune in the gold rush, Bringing law and justice to the land.

Belief

What do you believe in? What drives you? What is your philosophy? If you can sum this up in a short sentence or phrase, or pick something out, then you have this aspect.

Examples: You have sworn an oath to defend the helpless, The world is full of sadness and woe, The Rule of Law keeps the world in order, Only the good die young.

Trouble

Do you have a dark secret? Enemies? Were your other aspects leading to a particular recurring problem? Choose this Aspect wisely, for it's likely to be a primary source of fate points when you compel it.

Examples: Ex-member of a criminal gang who won't give up on you, Haunted by the ghost of a dear friend, Price on their head, Wrongly accused of a crime. Everyone I know dies.

Step 3 Choose Professions

A player character begins with up to five professions, with a rating from +1 (representing limited training, or natural aptitude without training) to +3 (expert).

To create a player character, you have seven points to spend on ratings in different professions.; No profession can exceed a rating of +3 during Character Generation but may exceed this after the first session of game play.

Available professions include the following. You can also make up professions with a similar scope. You can also rename a profession if it better suits your character. For example, the Athlete profession renamed Labourer, or the Soldier profession renamed Brave.

Athlete

An Athlete is skilled in physical activities such as running, swimming, throwing, swimming, defence in a physical conflict and feats of strength.

Cowboy/girl

This profession is a bit of everything needed to look after cattle on the Range. Riding, shooting, using a lasso and checking the landscape for danger are all included in this skill set.

Detective

The character is skilled in investigating crimes, analysing evidence, finding clues, interrogating suspects and informants, and searching official and public records.

Occultist

Somewhere along the line the player character has either joined a secret society dedicated to preserving and teaching the hidden magical techniques from ancient times or embarked on a solo career learning from old forgotten tomes and hidden teachers of the magical arts.

This profession gives the character access to methods to identify and use items of supernatural power and recognise and decipher occult symbols that have their origins in the lost civilisations like Atlantis.

Performer

Actors, musicians, poets, and show people are all types of Performer. They are sensitive to moods and able to sway both individuals and large audiences with an appeal to aesthetics or the emotions.

Politician

A politician is familiar with political power, even if they don't currently wield it. Almost all with this profession come from the upper ranks of society. Politicians know how governments function, how to use knowledge, and the law.

Preacher

Hell and damnations are what the Preacher threatens the non-believer with and the lapsed Christian who doesn't take the word of the Bible as the way to live their life. As

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well as fearsome skills of oratory, the Preacher has social skills, to listen to and provide comfort to any of their flock.

A player character with this profession can also use the Preacher profession to recognise magic and defend against supernatural influences.

Rogue

Rogues are skilled in secret and criminal dealings, including stealth, deception, sleight of hand, and burglary.

Sailor

A Sailor's life is one of travel. As well as handling ships, this profession is useful for tying knots, climbing and navigation. Despite being landlocked, there are many Sailors in the Hollow West finding gainful employment on the many river boats, which ferry passengers and trade around rivers like the mighty Washington.

Scout

A Scout is at home in the outdoors, knowing survival and tracking skills. They are also skilled at stealth and ranged combat.

Scholar

All forms of academic knowledge are the preserve of the scholar. Scholars are not, without extras or the Preacher profession, proficient in or sensitive to magic, but they know about the supernatural and paranormal creatures. Scholars also learn the art of rhetoric and so can persuade others by arguing a point.

Soldier

Trained in skill with weapons, tactics and military leadership. It is the primary profession used in a fight. Not everyone with the soldier profession trained as part of an army-thugs and gunslingers may well also have this profession, perhaps renamed.

Trader

Traders are skilled at haggling, bargaining and making deals, not necessarily just financial ones. They also know the markets and trade routes, how to appraise goods, and how to find information and contacts.

Step 4 Work out Refresh and Extras

Your Refresh is the number of fate points you get at the start of a game session.

It begins at 5, but you can buy extras (see the next chapter) which reduce your refresh. Each extra costs one or more points of refresh.

You may buy a maximum of four points of extras, which reduces your refresh to 1.

Step 5 Determine Stress

A starting character has a stress score of 3 unless extras change this.



Character Advancement

At the end of a game session, you get to do one of the following.

- Change an aspect.
- Remove an extra, increasing your refresh accordingly.
- Add an extra, reducing your refresh accordingly, to a minimum of 1.
- Change two professions with ratings one number apart. For example, you can change your professions of Athlete (+2) and Soldier (+3) to professions of Athlete (+3) and Soldier (+2).
- Change a profession with a rating of +1 for another profession with a rating of +1.

At the end of a scenario lasting for two to three sessions, you can also increase one profession by one.

At the end of a scenario arc, lasting for two to three scenarios, increase your refresh by one.



Chapter 5

Extras

Extras are special abilities that reach beyond a character's professions. They can be special techniques the character has learned, supernatural abilities, or special devices

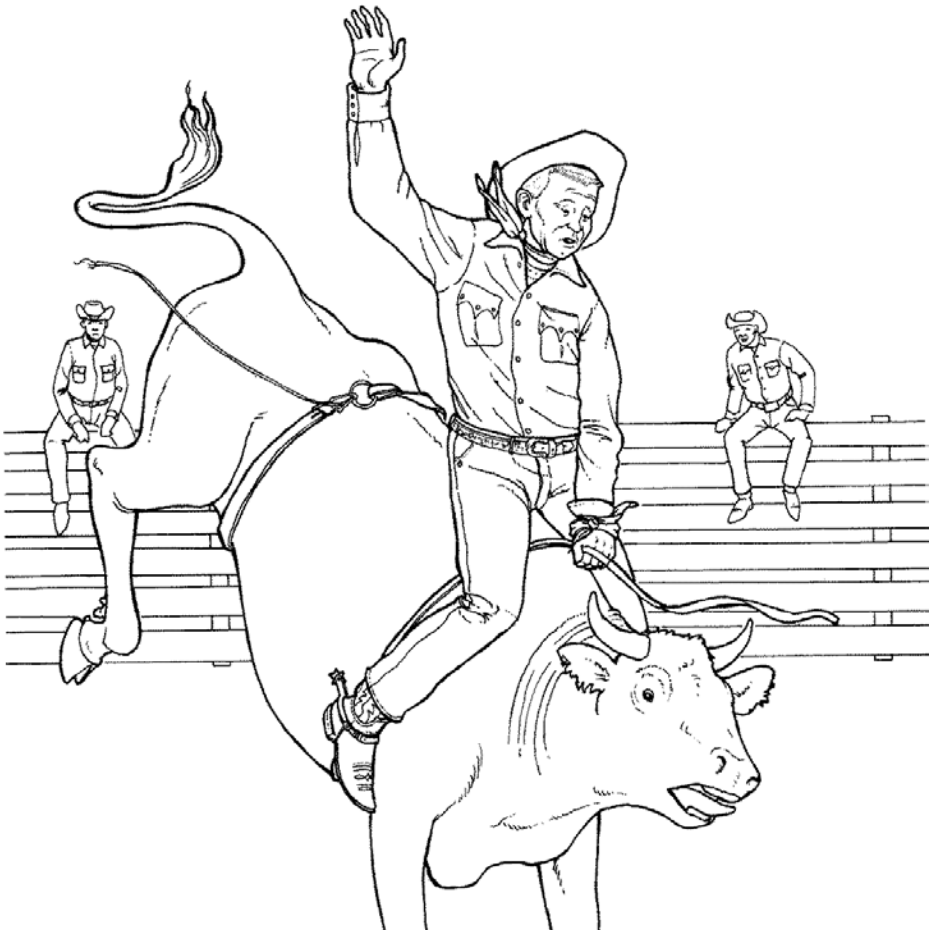
Techniques and supernatural abilities which are linked to one of a character's aspects.

Devices need not be linked to an existing aspect- rather, each device has an aspect of its own in addition to any of its other traits.

Each extra costs a certain amount of refresh, depending on their benefits and flaws.

Rules for creating extras are at the end of this section.

For the Non-Player Characters (NPCs) in this book, we use the following extras. You can use them for your characters, or create your own.



Extras List

Animal Companion (cost 2)

Benefits: Damaging, focus.

The character has a loyal animal companion, of above average intelligence for its species, which can emphatically communicate with the character.

When the companion attacks with the character they give +1 damage.

The companion can be a Horse, Dog, Bird of Prey and has 2 stress for damage.

Horses give +1 to riding actions. Both Dogs and Bird of Prey give +1 to Scouting actions.

Boom! (cost 1)

Benefits: Remove difficulty or restriction.

The character can use their shotgun to blast through doors and similar cover, shooting at opponents as if the cover was not there.

Bar Room Surgeon (cost 1)

Benefits: Remove difficulty or restriction.

The character can set up a surgery, in a tent or a back room in a busy bar and treat rotten teeth, broken bones and gunshot wounds for a silver dollar or two. Heck, they can also provide rudimentary pain relief using whiskey and gin.

Requires the Doctor extra.

Blessings and Curses (cost 2)

Benefits: New action (x2).

Flaws: Limited (x2).

Blessed by God or the gods the character follows, they can bless and curse others in their name. A blessing is a create advantage action with the Preacher (or similar) profession, at difficulty 2.

A curse lets the character attack another character with Preacher or a similar profession, and inflict physical and mental damage, according to how much the action succeeds by, as usual for an attack. If the target suffers consequences, the player of the attacker decides these by the nature of the curse. The character may only bless and curse once each per scene.

Requires Preacher, Occultist, Shaman or similar magical or religions profession.

Cavalry Officer (cost 3)

Benefits: Focus x2, new action.

Flaws: Demanding.

The character has led men on horseback into combat in the US Army at some point in your career. This extra gives the character the following benefits.

- +1 when fighting with a cavalry sabre.
- Respect from settlers (+1 to all social actions).
- The ability to lead a dramatic sweeping horseback charge and not be hit in the first exchange of combat.

This extra is demanding because it requires the character to uphold the honour of the US Calvary at all times. Any action where the character is not doing so gets a +2 difficulty.

Requires Solider profession.

Card Sharp (cost 1)

Benefits: Focus.

+1 to actions when playing card games such as Poker. Can be taken up to three times.

Charming (cost 1)

Benefits: Focus

The character can charm the pants off anyone and has +1 when trying to influence someone. This extra can be taken up to three times.



22 Extras

Decipher Ancient Script (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Limited.

Once per session, the character can automatically translate an ancient script and interpret its meaning.

Requires some form of academic or occult profession.

Defensive Rituals (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Fate point cost.

The character can spend a fate point to have the tools and rituals at hand to use the Preacher or Shaman profession to defend against a particular type of magical attacks for a scene. The character can even use this to defend against physical attacks from a highly supernatural being.

Requires Preacher, Shaman profession or some form of occult or spiritualist background.

Disguise (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Fate point cost.

By spending 1 fate point, the character can take on flawlessly the appearance of any other person.

Requires some form of occult/spiritualist aspect.

Divination (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaw: Limited.

This magical ability may involve tarot cards, the entrails of small animals, reading of tea leaves and other more obscure methods to predict the future. It requires concentration and a quiet area to conduct the divination that takes at least a scene. The Referee should then reveal an aspect of the future that the player may invoke for free when they encounter it. These aspects are never particular and quite vague.

This extra requires some form of occult/spiritualist profession. You can use it once per game session.

Doctor (cost 1)

Benefit: Focus (x2)

Flaw: Limited.

The character is a skilled healer. Once per scene, they get a +2 bonus to a Scholar roll they make to heal someone.

Faster Than You'll Ever Live to Be (cost 1)

Benefits: Remove Difficulty.

Flaws: Limited.

Once per session, the character with this extra gets to go first, before any other character.

Requires the character to have the extra Quick.

Faultless Tracker (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Limited.

The trail has gone cold, or was far too faint and implausible to pick up in the first place, but not for this experienced tracker. Once per session, they can find a trail that leads them to their target without rolling.

Requires the character have the Scout profession.



24 Extras

Fight Dirty (cost 2)

Benefits: Focus x2.

When the character is fighting dirty, they get +2 to their roll in hand to hand brawling.

Fistful of Dynamite (cost 2)

Benefits: Remove difficulty or restriction, focus.

This extra allows the character to use explosives without accidentally setting them off confidently. The character gets +1 to rolls using them.

Go West! (cost 1)

Benefits: Focus x2.

Flaws: Limited.

Once per session the character declares a spirit of exuberant exploration, usually by shouting that they are to “Go West!”, and gets +2 for their next action.

Guardian Angel (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Limited.

The character has a supernatural Guardian Angel who looks after them. Once per session, they can get away from danger scot free. For example, they escape a gunfight, or miraculously avoid injury from being shot in the head.

This Extra requires a Preacher or Occultist profession.

Hostess with the Mostest (cost 2)

Benefits: Remove difficulty or restriction, focus.

The character can throw a party for a community, which will draw even the reclusive out of hiding, once per session. The party needs a minimum of planning or materials at hand. The character's charm and charisma at such events gives a +1 to roll.

Maverick (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Limited.

Once per session, the character is able to find the biggest card game in town and score an invite.

Requires Rogue.

Medicine Man (cost 1)

Benefits: Remove difficulty.

The character has learned the Native American's arts of healing, using herbalism and other methods frowned upon by orthodox Doctors. This gives them an extra go at healing a character where 'white man's medicine' has failed or does not apply.

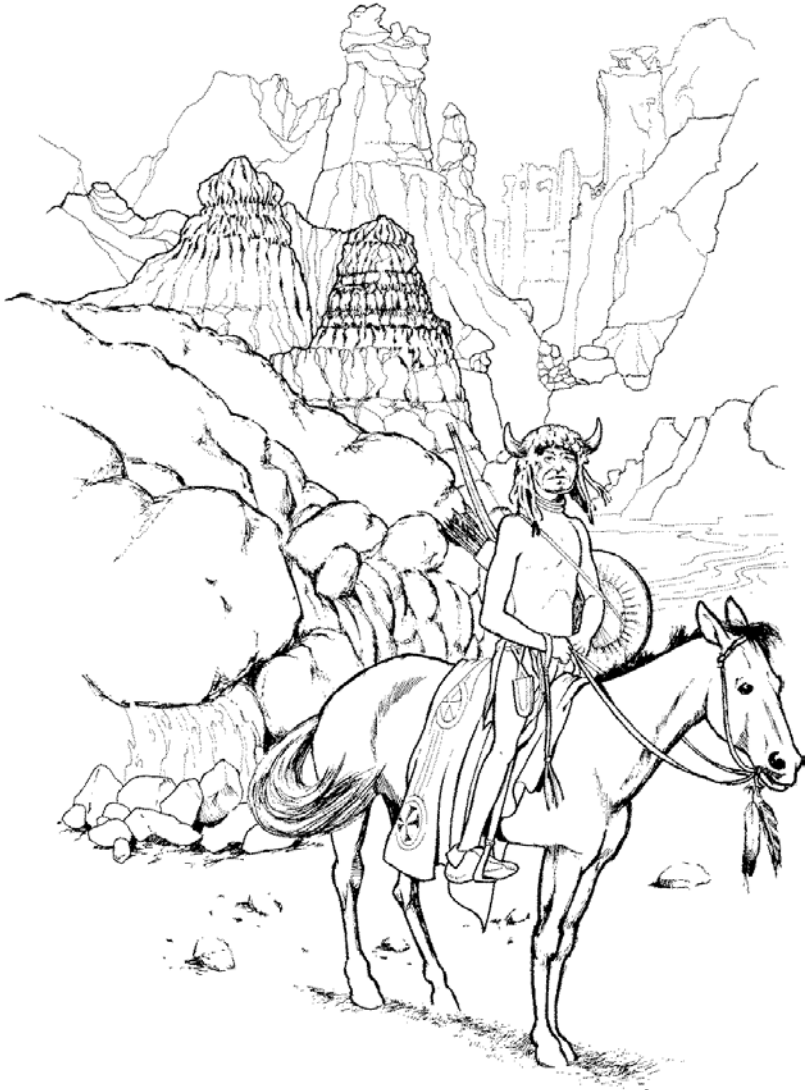
This extra requires a character to have a Native American background or the Native American Friend extra.

Native American Friend (cost 1)

Benefits: Focus x2.

Flaws: Troubling (Aspect: Targeted by Native American Haters).

The character has spent some time with Native Americans and is sympathetic to their plight. In return, you are well regarded by them, and gain +2 to any Social Action involving them. On the downside word gets round that the character is an “Indian Lover” and any they gain the Trouble “Targeted by Native American Haters”.



Pop up Pistol (cost 1)

Benefits: Remove difficulty or restriction.

The character has got a hidden pistol on their person, which they can just whip out quickly as a free action firing straight away.

Professor (cost 2)

Benefits: Focus x2.

This extra provides both social status and practical advantages. Your character has +2 to any Action that involves the authorities or dealing with academic institutions or staff.

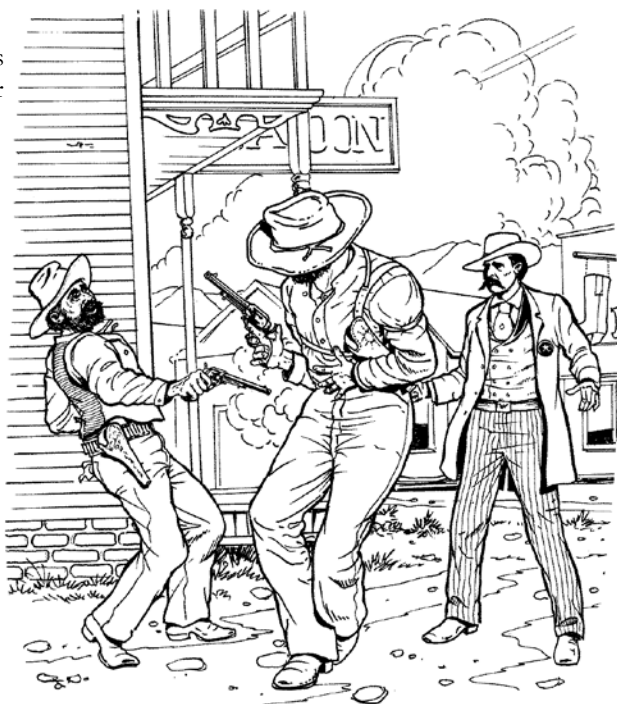
Requires some form of academic profession, such as Scholar, or background.

Quick (cost 1)

Benefit: Remove difficulty or restriction.

A character with this extra always goes first in a conflict, unless facing an opponent who also has this extra. The Referee cannot pay a fate point to go first.

An npc with this extra acts before player characters in a conflict without the referee paying a fate point. If both a character and an npc have this extra, the usual rules apply for who acts first.



Ride'm Cowboy (cost 2)

Benefits: Focus x2.

The character is an experienced horse rider and gains +2 for any action involving horses or riding.

A Scoundrel in Every Town (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Limited.

Once per session, your character can find an 'old friend' who can help with the task in hand.

Shoot from the Saddle (cost 2)

Benefits: Remove difficulty or restriction, focus.

The character is never penalised for shooting while riding a horse. Indeed, they gain a +1 bonus because they are so at home. You can take this extra up to five times.

Something Big (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaws: Limited.

When the character has a big outrageous plan, once per session they can get an automatic success in an action while pursuing it.

Snappy Dresser (cost 2)

Benefits: Focus x2.

In the dirty and torn world of the Hollow West, mud does not stick to this character's fine duds. They get +2 to relevant social actions.

Unlikely Hero (cost 1)

Benefits: Focus x2.

Flaws: Limited.

Once per session, when you spend a fate point on an aspect when doing the right thing rather the wrong thing, you get a +4 rather than a +2 bonus to your action.

When a Man with a Rifle Meets a Man with a Pistol (cost 1)

Benefits: Focus x2.

Flaws: Limited.

When armed with a rifle in a gunfight, you get the jump on a character with a pistol. For your first roll, you have +2 bonus. The bonus is part practical experience, part egotism.

Whip Crack Away (cost 1)

Benefits: Focus.

The character is proficient in using a horse whip as a weapon. Also, they can use the whip to do other tricks. They get +1 to relevant rolls.

Creating Extras

A basic extra costs one refresh, and grants a single benefit. You can buy further benefits for an extra by either giving the extra a flaw for each additional benefit or by increasing the refresh cost by one for each extra benefit after the first.

This procedure is a loose system- please don't abuse it by taking flaws which have no effect. The Referee has to approve a player-designed extra, but "yes" rather than "no" should be the default answer- and "yes, but with these changes" is a better answer.

Benefits

Damaging

An extra with this benefit does a point of damage as a result of an action where no damage would typically result. You can take this benefit as many times as you can pay for it.

Focus

The character gets a +1 bonus to actions made for a particular use of a profession. You can take this benefit twice.

Harmful

When you make an attack action using this extra, you do an additional +2 damage if successful. This extra is only used for actions that normally cause damage; it does not add to the damaging benefit, above. You may take this benefit twice for a +4 bonus to damage.

New Action

The extra lets you use a profession to do something it couldn't do before. Either a mundane but clever reworking of a particular skill to operate in new situations or be magical in nature.

A new action counts as two benefits rather than one.

Protective

This benefit means the extra grants you an extra point of stress. It can represent armour or special toughness. You can take it up to three times.

Remove Difficulty or Restriction

This benefit lets you ignore a particular restriction that will normally prevent a benefit from being used, or ignore complicating factors that will increase the difficulty of a particular type of action. For example, a character could attempt acts of stealth without any cover.

Flaws

Demanding

With this flaw, to use an extra you either need to take an action to use it where you wouldn't normally have to, or an action you take when using an extra has +2 to the difficulty.

Fate Point Cost

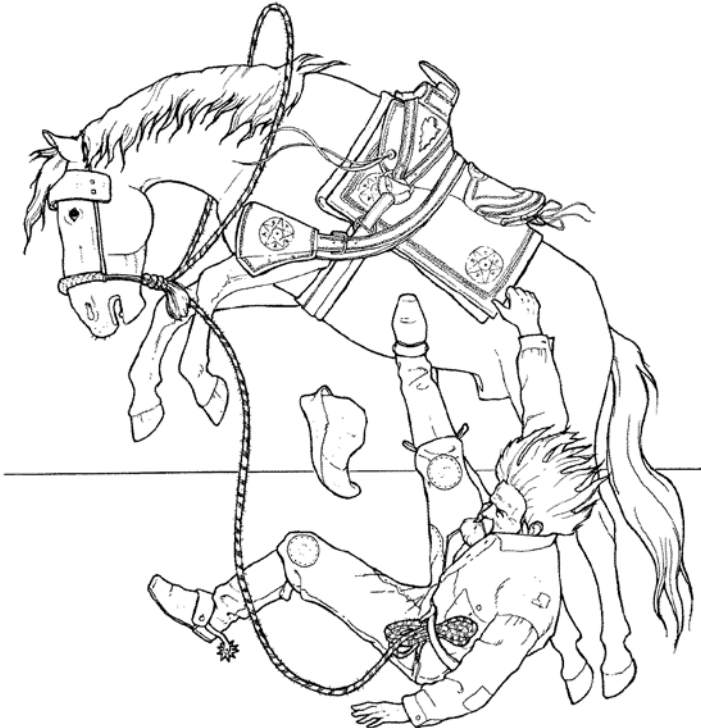
The extra costs a fate point to use. If you take this flaw once, you spend a fate point to activate it for a scene. If you take this flaw twice, you need to spend a fate point each time you use it. Taking this flaw twice is only appropriate for extras you might use several times per scene.

Limited

You can only use the extra once per scene. This flaw is good for actions and extras that would otherwise be used several times in a scene, such as special weapons in a fight. For an extra that would only come up once per scene anyway, this flaw means it can only be used once per session.

Troubling

Your extra has another aspect, almost all negative. The Referee can compel this aspect to cause difficulties.



Chapter 6

Playing the Game

Actions

An *action* is an activity with an uncertain outcome. Mechanically, it's when you roll the dice, using a profession, and possibly aspects, against a difficulty number. If you beat a difficulty by 3 or more, you succeed with style; there may be an additional effect, depending on the action.

If an action is against the environment, it has a difficulty number of 0, plus 2 for each complicating factor. The most typical difficulty number is 2; it is rare to have no complicating factors, and a task at difficulty 0 is easy for most characters.

If an action is against an opponent, they usually get to oppose it using the defend action described below.

There are four types of action.



Attack

An *attack* is an attempt to cause physical or mental harm to another. The opponent gets the chance to defend against an attack, by making a defence action with a relevant profession. If your result beats your opponent's defence, you do damage equal to the difference. If you tie, you do no damage, but do get to place a temporary aspect as if using the create advantage action.

Your opponent deducts the damage from their stress pool. For further details, see below. Since succeeding by a greater amount in an attack does more damage, there is an additional benefit to succeeding with style.



Create Advantage

When you manoeuvre to gain the upper hand in a conflict or assist another character with activity, this is a *create advantage* action. Depending on the nature of the action, it may be against a difficulty number, or the enemy could get the chance to defend themselves.

If you succeed in the action, you create a temporary aspect. The first time you or an ally

invokes the aspect, they can do so for free, with no fate point cost.

If you succeed with style in a create advantage action, you and your allies can invoke the new aspect twice for no fate point cost.



Defend

When you try to stop someone else's action, it's a *defence*. Defence is most common against attacks, but you may get the opportunity to stop other actions. To successfully defend, when you roll the dice, you must beat your opponent's result. A successful defence means nothing happens, but if you succeed with style, you get to place a temporary aspect you create as if using the create advantage action.

Sometimes, you might face an environmental effect at a particular difficulty number which requires a defence action. Failing this roll means you suffer stress equal to the difference between the winning and losing score. The difficulty numbers for such rolls are two higher than usual; taking a small amount of stress from such events is common.



Overcome

An action that does not fall into one of the above categories is an *overcome* action. The overcome action is used to get past obstacles such as locked doors, hunt for information, and so on.

If you succeed with style in an overcome action, you get to place a temporary aspect you create as if using the create advantage action.

Example

Professor Susan Smith is trying to use her rank to convince a Librarian to grant access to the private Stevenson Library. This action is an Overcome action at difficulty 2, using Susan's Scholar profession, which has a rating of +3.

When Susan's player rolls four fate dice, she gets a result of -2, a result of $3-2=1$. The Librarian fetches his superior, who will have some tricky questions for Susan.

32 Playing the Game

Aspects and Fate Points

You begin each game session with fate points equal to your refresh. However, if at the end of the last session, your fate points were more than your refresh, you should record this, and begin to play with the higher total. This situation will be rare.

Invoking Aspects

As already noted you can invoke an aspect and spend a fate point for a +2 bonus to an action. You may do this after the roll. You may use aspects other than your own; you may use aspects on the environment, those of another character, or those of one of your extras, when relevant.

If more than one aspect applies, you can name more than one of them, and spend more than one fate point, to get several +2 bonuses. You can also spend a fate point to reroll the dice. You don't need to name an aspect to get a reroll, and you may reroll more than once if you have the fate points to spend.

Example

Susan's player was not happy with a result of 1 versus a difficulty of 2 to convince a Librarian to let her into F.J. Stevenson's private collection of books. She uses her aspect "Fearless when dealing with Bureaucracy" to get a +2 bonus to her result, gaining a final result of 3. This score beats the required difficulty number, so Susan succeeds in her attempts at persuasion.

Compelling Aspects

When the Referee compels an aspect, they suggest a course of action or event and pay you a fate point to have you go along with it. You can refuse the compel by giving the Referee a fate point.

When you act in a way that emphasises an aspect, mention this to the Referee; if they agrees, you earn a fate point as if compelled. You're compelling yourself! The Referee may even do this without a prompt.

You may also compel another character or NPC. To do this, offer the Referee or the character a fate point. They can accept the compel and take the fate point, or refuse it. It does not cost a fate point to refuse a player compel. Compelling another player is a good way to give them fate points if they are in trouble, and you have a ready supply and want to help.

Example

While chasing his quarry through the crowded streets of the poorer parts of Stevenson, Dr Jonathan Black hears a scream and a growl coming from a side alley. The Referee compels Dr Jonathan Black's aspect "I talk to Spirits on the other side" to make him give up the chase and investigate.

If Dr Jonathan Black goes along with this course of action, he earns a fate point. Conversely, if he elects to ignore the noise, he will have to pay a fate point.

Stress and Consequences

When you suffer mental or physical consequences, you take damage. You deduct damage from your stress. Such stress goes away at the end of the scene, as soon as you've had a quick rest.

If circumstances reduce your stress to zero, you're taken out. Someone taken out is out of action in a way decided by their opponent. The character is not usually dead, even in a fight, though it may well be in a climactic battle. They cannot act for the remainder of the scene if they live.

To avoid being taken out when suffering stress, you can choose to take a consequence.

Minor Consequences

A minor consequence is little more than a set-back. In a fight, it might be a scratch or a broken weapon. In a mental contest, it might be a mild headache. When you choose to take a minor consequence, you reduce damage by 2 but take a new aspect reflecting the consequence.

A minor consequence goes away at the end of a scene where you or another takes an appropriate action to remove the consequence, at difficulty 0. Examples: Cuts and bruises, Ringing blow to the head, Red with embarrassment, Distracting headache

Moderate Consequences

A moderate consequence is more lasting than a minor consequence. It could be a flesh wound in a fight. In a social contest, it could be a public shame. When you choose to take a moderate consequence, you reduce damage by 4 but take a new aspect reflecting the consequence.

A moderate consequence goes away at the end of the game session, providing you takes a related action (such as healing) at difficulty 2.

Examples: Broken rib, Twisted ankle, Banned from using the Pony Express, Loss of confidence

Severe Consequences

A severe consequence is a long-term setback. In a fight, it could be a serious injury or a broken limb. In a social contest, it could be social humiliation and scorn. When you choose to take a severe consequence, you reduce damage by 6 but take a new aspect reflecting the consequence.

A severe consequence goes away at the end of the game session after the one where you took it, providing you or another takes a relevant action at difficulty 4.

Examples: Broken arm, Wounded side, Social humiliation, Crushing loss of faith in self

An opponent may invoke an aspect from a consequence once with no fate point cost as if they introduced it through the create advantage action.

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The Fate Point Economy

Fate Points will go up and down, and the players should not fear spending them.

As a player, you can spend a Fate Point to:

- Invoke an Aspect to get a +2 bonus to an action. You can do this after a die roll. The Aspect does not have to be your own- it could be another's or part of the environment. You can use more than one at a time.
- Reroll the dice after a failed roll.
- Compel another player character or NPC to take a particular action in line with one of their Aspects. If they don't take the action, you keep the Fate Point.
- Refuse a Compel for a particular action coming from the GM.

Note that the Create Advantage action creates a temporary Aspect which you or an ally can invoke once for a +2 bonus at no Fate Point cost. This is how you help allies, or manoeuvre for an advantage.

An enemy can also use one of your Consequences (which are Aspects) once at no Fate Point cost.

As a player, you can earn a Fate Point for:

- Accepting a particular Action another player or the GM compels you to do in line of an Aspect.
- As a reward from the GM for a story complication arising from an Aspect.
- For example, if an enemy shows up because of one of your Aspects, this earns you a Fate Point, even though you're not compelled to do anything in particular because of this.
- Taking a course of action that's disadvantageous for your character in line with one of your Aspects (compelling yourself).
- Conceding a conflict or contest. It's important to note that Fate Points mean you can often win when it's important- but you're not going to win in absolutely everything you come across- or get through every conflict unscathed.

Contests

A contest is such a thing as a duel or a high-stakes debate between a pair of characters. Each contest is made up of a series of rounds. Each round, each character makes a roll using a relevant profession. The one with the higher result does damage to the loser equal to the difference in results. A loser can take consequences as usual.

You can, if you want to, concede a contest you are losing- you lose, but on terms you suggest, providing your opponent agrees. Losing in this way may prevent fatalities in something like a duel. When you concede, you earn a fate point for being such a good sport. A Referee should be generous when a character concedes, as long as what he offers is a genuine defeat.

An onlooker can help with a contest through a create advantage action, though only one observer can help per round- and it may not go down well if an onlooker is caught helping, which is, of course, the difficulty.

Example

The alchemist Dr Jonathan Black has an enemy, Mr James Johansen, who tries to convince the Elders of the Order of the Rosy Cross that Dr Black is guilty of illegal black magic. In a hearing in their hidden Chapter House before a jury of old occultists, Dr Black, naturally enough, defends himself. James uses his profession of Lawyer, with a rating of +4, to attack Dr Black.

Dr Black defends himself using his profession Scholar, with a rating of +3. The GM calls a contest, and both Dr Black and Mr Johansen have stress scores of 3. In the first round, Mr Johansen presses his case, and Dr Black reacts, saying how insulted he is at such vile allegations. Dr Black rolls well, getting a result of +5, whereas Mr Johansen has a mere +4.

However, the Referee, playing Mr Johansen, pays a fate point to use Dr Black 's *I talk to Spirits on the other side* aspect to get Mr Johansen a further +2 bonus, pushing his result up to 6. Note that this is simply Mr Johansen invoking the aspect, rather than a Referee compel. Anyway, Dr Black suffers one point of damage, reducing his stress to 2.

The next round, Dr Black cites his enemies, and the good work he has done with his magic while implying his opponent is lazy and good for nothing. Mr Johansen continues his line of attack, mentioning Dr Black 's secrecy and alluding to suspicious activities. Mr Johansen gets a result of +4 on his Lawyer roll, whereas Dr Black just has a result of +2.

This result would be enough to reduce Dr Black 's stress to zero, meaning he has to take a consequence or lose the case, leading to a prosecution. He can't afford this, so he plays his Guardian Angel extra, a supernatural power that allows him to get out of trouble scot free. Dr Black's player narrates a group of Stevenson men bursting through into the secret courthouse in a raid to arrest the Elders and the rest of the members of the Order. Dr Black uses the ensuing chaos to slip out unnoticed, his reputation still intact.

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Conflicts

A conflict is a full-blown fight with many opponents. Most conflicts which come up in play are physical, but a social conflict is entirely possible. Like contests, conflicts are divided into rounds, during which each character acts once.

The order of action is:

- Any character is performing a create advantage action.
- Any character is performing the attack action.
- Any character is performing other actions.

Player characters act before NPCs unless the Referee pays a fate point, in which case the NPCs act first.

When a character takes damage, they can, as usual, take consequences.

You can, if you want to, concede in a conflict, meaning you're out of action, but on terms you suggest, rather than those your opponent dictates, as is the case if you were to be taken out. When you concede, you earn a fate point but can take no further part, for good or bad, in that particular conflict.

Example

Dr Jonathan Black, the occultist sharpshooter, and Mildred Morgan, the ex-tavern owner and showgirl, are in the town of Cody tracking down an old circus clown who knows something about the murder of Mildred's husband.

Suddenly there is an almighty crash as a Triceratops with blazing red eyes comes charging through a wooden house next to them.

When they come to their senses, Mildred nods knowingly at Dr Black and jumps up onto the back of a nearby horse that is tied up by the road. Quickly untying it, she wheels it around in front of the enraged herbivore whooping and yelling at it.

Mildred's player rolls to create an advantage versus a difficulty of 4, 2 for jumping on the back of the horse and an extra +2 simultaneously untying it and pays a fate point to invoke Mildred's "Exciting and exuberant showgirl" aspect to get a +2 to her Performer of +3. She then rolls a total of +1, adding this to her +5 (+3 Performer +2 aspect bonus +1 dice roll) meaning that the Triceratops is well and truly distracted on a result of +6. Mildred's player writes the "Dinosaur distracted by Mildred's horseback antics" on the back of a post-it note and places it in the centre of the table. This aspect is now a one use aspect that any of the rest of the players can invoke for no cost once. If Mildred had scored +7 or higher, she would have succeeded with style, and the created aspect could be used twice at no fate point cost.

Meanwhile, Dr Black quick draws his Colt 45 and takes careful aim. Needing a +2 to hit the Triceratops, he starts at +2 for his Gunslinger profession. He takes aim and shoots rolling a -1, bringing his total to 1 a miss! Dr Black's player decides not to mess around. He pays one fate point and invokes the Dr's Precise Sharpshooter aspect and invokes "Dinosaur Distracted by Mildred's horseback antics" aspect created by Mildred earlier for free, for a total of +4. This result gives Dr Black +3 overall, so the bullet noticeably

grazes the Triceratops, causing to lose one stress point, out of a total of seven. This score means that it's still very much in the conflict. Also, the 'Distracted' aspect has now been used up, and Mildred's player crumples up and throws it away.

The narrator decides that Mildred and her prancing pony is very much in harms away of the triceratops gore attack. The charging dinosaur adds a roll of +1 to its Dinosaur profession of +2, for a total of +3. Mildred rolls 0 but decides to spend her last fate point on a reroll. Her player rolls +1 which with her Performer profession (the Narrator and Player between agree that as well as singing and dancing this profession include her time as a Wild West Cowgirl), gives her a +4. The Triceratops goes slamming past her into another building, taking another stress point in the process.

With it being at stress 5 however it pulls itself out of the debris and quickly turns around to face our duo. While the characters are uninjured, Mildred has spent all her fate points. The players of Mildred and Dr Black consider what they are going to do next round; whether they have a cunning plan up their sleeves to bring the dinosaur down, or whether Dr Black jumping on the back of Mildred's pony and the pair of them skedaddling is the better course of action.



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Some Quick Examples

You are trying to jump over a wall on your horse. An overcome action, a base resistance of 2, modified by +2 for each complication, e.g., +2 because it's a tall wall, +2 because the horse is being distracted by outlaws shooting at it.

You are in a quick draw shoot off with Bad Boy Williams. Run a contest with Bad Boy Williams as the opponent.

You and your posse get into a big shootout with a gang of outlaws in town. Use a conflict with lots of nameless outlaws with Gunslinger +2 and stress 2 and a couple of gang leaders with stress 3, Gunslinger +4 and perhaps a couple of extras to personalise them.

You are being chased by a group of Native American Braves on horseback, either

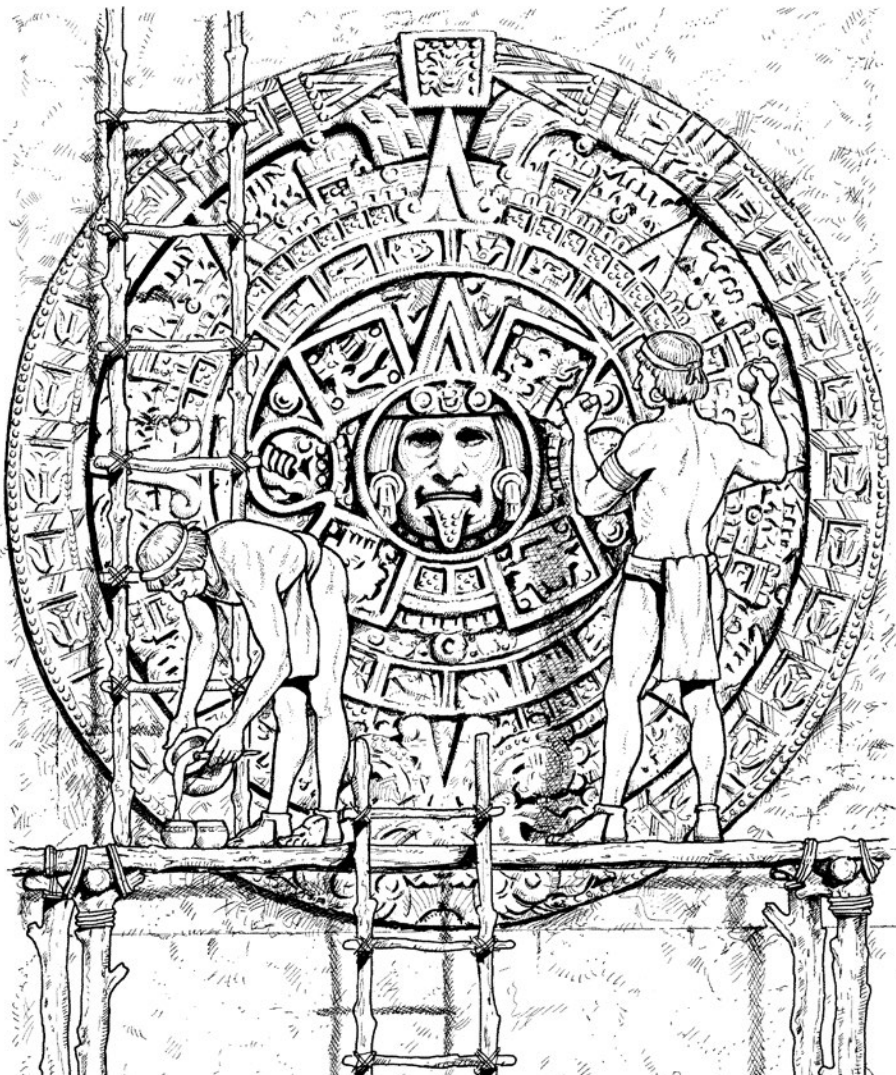
Run a contest to quickly outrun them, using their leader's skills as opposition.

OR

A full-blown conflict where as well as trying to outrun the Natives on horseback you and your posse are trading gunfire and trying to drag your opponent's off their horses.



The Referee's Guide to the Hollow Earth



Chapter 7

Secrets of the Hollow Earth

This chapter is intended for the Referee only. As the title suggests, it collects the secrets of the setting that should only be made known to the players because of their characters' adventures.

Zones of Play

This idea is expanded on in Chapter 12, *Hitting the Trail*, but the Hollow Earth is split into five Zones which radiate out from Zone 1. The Zones reflect not only a physical area, with its characteristics, but the deepening of the mysteries, and the danger encountered.

The five zones are

Zone 1: Stevenson. The city that the characters initially start in, fresh off the Great Subterranean Railroad.

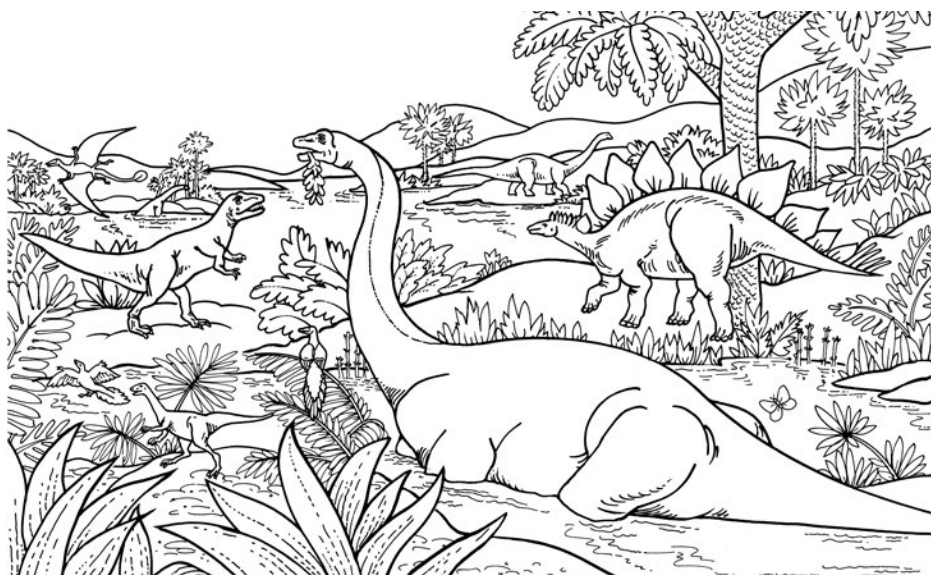
Zone 2: New Texas. The surrounding range around Stevenson.

Zone 3: The Badlands. The broken lands where only Native Americans and outlaws abide.

Zone 4: The Lost World. Beyond the Sky Reach Mountains, a land of steaming jungles and ancient ruins.

Zone 5: The Heart of the Hollow Earth. Agartha, the fabled city of Enlightenment.

A quick understanding of what a Zone is important since many Secrets, People and Monsters are encountered in some Zones but not in others.



Agartha

The people of Agartha are seven-foot tall humans who predate human history. They are the Giants and Titans of mythology, who fought wars against the gods. The gods banished them to the Inner Earth for the crime of teaching early humans many secrets of civilisation which allowed them to free themselves of the gods' domination. The Agarthans once ruled the prehistoric global civilisation of Atlantis, memories of which exist as the Atlantis legend, was the result of them nurturing the 'lesser humans'.

Agartha is the name of the city that exists at the heart of the Hollow Earth. It is a tranquil and peaceful place. Most Agarthans live an enlightened lifestyle of contemplation within the city and never concern themselves with the events in the outside world. They are ruled by a very conservative Council of Elders, who work to maintain Agarthan isolation and harmony. A small splinter group venture into the outside world and work as 'Guardians'. Most of them are posted at gates, which lead to large deep cavern complexes which connect to the surface world. Others are posted at old ruins of magical significance which the Agarthans abandoned during their war with the Serpent Men.

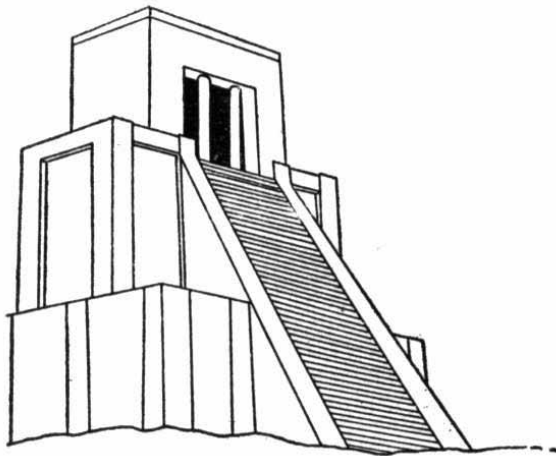
The Shining Ones (see *Factions*"The Shining Ones" on page 48) are renegade Agarthans who choose to interact with the Hollow Earth outside their city, either teaching enlightenment to promising candidates or eliminating perceived threats amongst the humans of the Hollow West.

Zones Encountered in:

Guardians and most Agarthan Gates are found in Zones 4 and 5.

Mentors are usually located in Zone 3, and occasionally heavily disguised in Zone 2. Zone 1 is anathema to them, so they never go there; even their adventurous spirit is dampened by the spiritual toxicity of the place.

Agartha itself is in Zone 5.



The Serpent Men

The Serpent Men are an ancient race, who were lords of the surface world in the time of the dinosaurs. The gods themselves chose to wipe out the Serpent Man civilisation to make way for the ascent of humanity. The means the gods chose was a meteorite strike, which not only killed the Serpent Man empire but ended the age of the dinosaurs.

The Serpent Men who survived the meteorite fled to the Hollow Earth. Meanwhile, on the surface, the Agarthans ruled Atlantis, and so humanity. When the Agarthans were exiled to the hollow Earth (though some legends say the Agarthans were there *before* the Serpent Men), they and the Serpent Men managed to dwell in peace for thousands of years.

But a devastating war came. The Agarthans discovered the Serpent Men not only taking control of Atlantis on the surface, the civilisation they had set up before their exile, but manipulating key Agarthan settlements. The war affected both the surface world and the hollow Earth and only ended with the event known as the Fall, which ended the Atlantean civilisation. Some say the Fall was a Serpent Men or Atlantean super-weapon, others that the gods interfered again.

Either way, the war and the Fall was devastating to both Serpent Men and Agarthans.

The Serpent Men did not become a significant force again for tens of thousands of years, when a small band of Aztecs, warriors and servants of the Emperor Montezuma, arrived in the Hollow Earth in the Jungles beyond the Sky Reach Mountains from the Surface World. The Serpent Men disguised themselves as humans and claimed to be a lost Aztec tribe. They quickly made contact and infiltrated the Aztec Nobility. Under Serpent Man guidance, the Aztecs re-established themselves in the Hollow Earth, forming seven new city states ruled by a God Emperor, with the Serpent Men controlling everything from behind the scenes.

When the Americans arrived in the Hollow Earth 15 years ago, the Serpent Men Priests detected their arrival and predicted a great war soon. This prediction stirred the Aztec Empire of the Hollow Earth into a rigorous cycle of training and arming for war, with the number of human sacrifices to the 'Gods' increasing. The conspiracy which is known as the Union of the Snake (see Factions "The Union of The Snake" on page 48) came into being at this time. In short, the whole Serpent Empire braces itself like a coiled snake for war with F.J. Stevenson's forces.

One reason Serpent Men are such a threat is that they can dominate the minds of both humans and giant prehistoric monsters- the dinosaurs.

Zones Encountered in:

Serpent Men live in the Aztec Empire that exists in Zone 4 'The Lost World'.

They have a presence in the Badlands (Zone 3) due to a 'convert' in Don Fernandez, who is their primary agent there.

It's only a matter of time before Serpent Men in human disguises reach the towns of New Texas (Zone 2), and they have sent one of their mind-controlled dinosaurs, a T-Rex that Buffalo Bill christened "Old Red Eye", ahead to test the New Texan defences.

The Legacy of Atlantis

Atlantis was a civilisation spread across the planet, established after humankind freed themselves from the slavery imposed by the old Gods with the help of the Agarthans. It was a place of high spirituality, advanced energy based technologies and architecture on a grand scale. The civilisation's heart was on a large continent in the Atlantic Ocean.

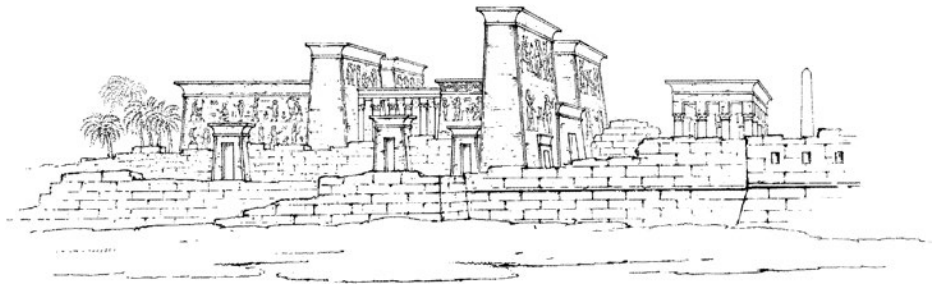
Eventually, the Atlantis culture became corrupt and decadent. Its leaders were in league with 'devils', Serpent Men who from their base in the Hollow Earth had infiltrated Atlantean society. The war between Serpent Men and Atlanteans spread to the surface, and a super-weapon wrought devastation. Or according to another story, the Gods intervened to end Atlantean wickedness, perhaps sending another meteorite. The event is known as the Fall.

The Fall gave birth to the Biblical stories of the Fall of Lucifer, the expulsion of the Garden of Eden, and the Flood. As a result of the Fall, the sea levels on Earth rose, and the major cities of Atlantis drowned overnight. Remnants of Atlantean wisdom survived in Ancient Egypt and the Minoan Empire, both of which were outposts of Atlantis.

The modern day Order of the Rosy Cross considers itself the inheritors of Atlantis's legacy, and regularly sponsors expeditions to find artefacts in the old ruins.

Zones Encountered in:

The Atlanteans were present in the Hollow Earth and had 'contact settlements' where they received teachings from the Shining Ones of Agartha. These contact settlements entirely depopulated during the Fall, but their ruins still contain advanced technology from days of Atlantis. These ruins can be found in the Badlands and the Lost World (see Ruins of the Past in Chapter 11, Thrilling Locations, for more information).



The Big Take Over

Originally from a banking family in England, F.J. Stevenson was already an active Freemason and member of a Black Lodge at the age of 23, when he came to America in 1850 on a fact-finding mission for his family. Not only did F.J. find new investments, but he also explored esoteric sites he had learned about from occult contacts in the Freemasons.

One of these places was Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. This site was rumoured in occult circles to be one of the entrances to Agartha, a magical and enlightened civilisation at the centre of the Earth. When he got there, he found the caves were a gypsum mine, and the black slaves experienced guides to the system. He hired one such guide, Malcolm Williams, the most experienced and knowledgeable of the miners, and together they penetrated deeply into the Earth. So deep that they encountered one of the Agarthan Guardians who was protecting the Gate to the Hollow Earth. The Guardian prevented them going into the Hollow Earth, and blanked their minds before safely returning them to the surface. While Malcolm remains amnesic to this day, F.J. was able to avoid the Guardian's mind wipe by employing his occult training.

F.J. returned to America in 1860, just in time to take control of his family's considerable holdings in America directly, becoming one of the richest and most powerful men in America overnight. In 1861 he returned with a small group of occultists to the Mammoth Cave, and this time challenged the Guardian directly, overcoming them and destroying the Agarthan outpost with dynamite. Not only did he not want the Agarthans to send another Guardian to protect the Gate, but he also did not want any trace of it when he returned to build the Great Subterranean Railroad.

Once the Great Subterranean Railroad had pierced Earth's mantle, F.J. busily set about establishing the city named after himself, Stevenson, as the hub of his activities in the Hollow Earth. He fully intends it to be a centre of finance and industry, independent of the United States. He has resisted pressure to join the Union as a result and ruthlessly devoted his energies to building up Stevenson. Once he's established his power base in Stevenson, he intends to sweep through New Texas bringing the Cattle Barons under his control. The taming of the Badlands is next on his agenda. An army of corrupt administrators and politicians, and his army of gunslingers, the black suited Stevensons supports him.

F.J. knows about Agartha and the Legacy of Atlantis, and regularly sends out secret expeditions to loot their secrets. He sees himself as the ultimate master of the Hollow Earth and knows that he will eventually have to engage the Agarthans in occult warfare. F.J. is gathering as many magical devices as he can from the Atlantean ruins to aid him in this final powerplay.

Zones Encountered in:

Zone 1, Stevenson, is F.J.'s main power base. One can meet the great man himself in the Grand Mansion that he has built at the centre of the web of factories, banks, offices and administration buildings that make up the city that bears his name.

FJ's agents are to be found at work in Zone 2, New Texas, secretly disabling the power of the Cattle Barons and the independent system of government ahead of FJ's Big Take Over.

Expeditions sponsored by FJ scour Zone 3, The Badlands, for ancient repositories of knowledge and magic items left behind by the Atlanteans and Agarthans.

As yet FJ. has yet to send any of his agents beyond the Sky Reach Mountains into Zone 4, The Lost World, and is unaware of the Aztec Empire that lies beyond.

How the Native Americans escaped to the Hollow Earth

The Native American peoples are a diverse group made up of many tribes and nations. Not that the Early European Explorers who thought they were discovering a passage to India appreciated this, and they misnamed them 'Red Indians'. The waves of colonists who followed the explorers daubed them savages and branded them a menace to the lifestyle they brought with them from the old world. Countless wars were fought, and the survivors were forced to sign humiliating treaties that stripped them of their tribal lands and had them resettled far away in new reservations.

But the Natives have traditions and legends that stretch back further than the White Man could know. The tribal elders knew of a time when their ancestors were part of the Atlantean Civilisation. Of Pyramids now buried under hills in the great plains. Gateways to the Hollow Earth, used by their ancestors to visit the 'Shining Ones' of Agartha. So, in defeat, these Gateways became escape routes to new lands and a new beginning. Officially the thousands of missing Natives were victims of disease and other hardships they endured on the hard road to their new reservations. This story is the one that most Americans believe, certainly on the surface. In the Hollow Earth, it's a different matter. The Natives settled in what is known as the Badlands. With the recent arrival of the railroad and the cattle ranchers, history is in danger of repeating itself. Mistrust is high on both sides, memories of the Indian Wars being fresh in the minds of both parties.

Zones Encountered in:

Zone 2 New Texas. On the warpath driving away settlers or torching US Army Forts, or as cattle raiders Zone 3 Badlands. Either as protective warbands at the border with New Texas, herding the buffalo, or in their homes in the new Indian Nations.

Chapter 8

Factions

The Stevensons

The organisation working towards F.J. Stevenson's plan for domination over the Hollow Earth is called *The Stevensons*.

They take their inspiration from the world-famous Pinkerton Detective agency but wear black suits and hats. They are loyal to the death to F.J. Stevenson. There are rumours of an indoctrination camp out in the Badlands.

The first layer of the group is the Enforcers. Enforcers are the most commonly encountered Stevensons. They act as agents and errand runners, and guardians of F.J.'s property.

The next layer up is the Officers. Officers know a little bit more about their master's grand plan for the Hollow Earth and see themselves as its guardians. They are responsible for keeping the lower ranks acting by the plan, often without them knowing why.

Getting closer to the inner circle are the Wardens. These are the last of the 'visible' Stevensons and are responsible for conducting field operations. They are practising occultists and take part in rituals that occur in the districts that they work in.

Captains (as in Captain of the Ship) are the real inner circle of the Stevensons, who report directly to F.J. himself. Unlike the rest of the organisation, Captains are individuals and are not required to wear the black suit and hat uniform. Captains are often pillars of their communities. They are responsible for conducting the rituals in their districts as well as taking part in regularly scheduled rituals held by F.J. in Stevenson City.

Unlike the lower ranks, Captains are high ranking occultists of high power and capacity for free thought. F.J. needs this so they can operate out in the territories without his direct supervision, and so that they can help him with his grand occult schemes, but occasionally it leads to infighting between them and worse still rebellion from the ranks.

The Order of the Rosy Cross

This group of occultists claims to have their roots in the occult traditions of Europe. The 'Elders' of the Order were invited to come and live in safety in Stevenson by F.J. in 1873. Initially, he was kind and supportive of their research, especially in the areas of finding and collecting artefacts from old Atlantis (see "Ruins of the Past" on page 85). By 1880 that period of good will expired, and each Elder was given a stark choice, namely to join the Stevensons as a privileged Captain or die. Some took up F.J.'s offer and are part of the command structure of his organisation to this day, assassins killed the others in a bloody purge, and only a handful escaped to the Badlands where they carry out the Order's original mission from fortified hiding places.

Since the Red Betrayal of 1880, as the Order calls Stevenson's purge of them from Stevenson City, the Order has officially been at War, in a covert sense, with F.J. and his underlings.

New Texan Cattle Barons

The Cattle Barons are a rough independent group of cattlemen and women, who struck out into the lands around Stevenson and formed the territory known as New Texas. Some live on their huge ranches, herding cattle and in some areas Buffalo (which were brought by the Native Americans and had multiplied in vast herds). Some live in large towns surrounded by happy settlers who enjoy and feed their wealth. They currently have an ambivalent attitude towards F.J., but as long as he stays in Stevenson, they are happy and in the main unthreatened by him. Wiser Barons know that, like a spider, F.J. will eventually extend his web of influence into New Texas and war will take place between the Stevensons and the Cattle Barons' hired guns. They know only their superior numbers prevent this at present.

New Texas Rangers

The Rangers are a volunteer force of ex-lawmen and other talented individuals from the surface initially set up using money provided by the Cattle Barons. The group of about fifty are now self-sufficient, relying on individual donations, as they refused to become the Cattle Barons' police force. This conflict came to a head when the Rangers tracked down and brought to justice the infamous David Bullhead, a cattle baron who had committed multiple murders of cattle hands who spoke out against his treatment of his workers.



48 Factions

As a group, the Rangers they are pro-Indian land rights, pro-workers' rights, anti-big exploitive business, and pro joining the Union of United States. These views immediately puts them up against Stevenson's Agents, and on their guard for any meddling by F.J.'s officials in the New Texan towns.

The Shining Ones

Unlike most Agarthans, who are conservative and isolationist preferring to stay live in the tranquillity of Agartha itself, this small group of individuals go out in disguise into the wider world.

Their motives are mixed. Some want to help the people they come across achieve a higher state of being and rise above their base motives. Others ruthlessly eliminate anyone that they perceive to be a threat to Agartha. Both types of Shining One take on the role as spiritual mentor to individual pupils to achieve their ends. When conflict occurs within the group, the Shining Ones use their students to fight their battles for them.

The existence of The Shining Ones is neither approved or condemned by Agarthan Council of Elders.

The Union of The Snake

The Union of the Snake are people trying to bring back the dominance of the Serpent Men in the Hollow Earth. As a group, these sorcerers and Serpent Men disguised as humans who work principally within the Aztec Civilisation and primitive tribes that exist beyond the Sky Reach Mountains. Some agents of the Union have gone so far as to infiltrate the Badlands, hiding in small farming communities, taking over positions of power in some towns, and manipulating criminal activities of the larger gangs.

As well as many subtle mind control magics, the Union possesses the super weapon ability to control dinosaurs. A dinosaur under mind control has bright red glowing eyes; the signs are clear to those few who know them. The Tyrannosaurus Rex named "Old Red Eye" who terrorised farmlands in New Texas before being driven off by Wild Bill was an example of such a mind controlled dinosaur.

The Aztec Empire

In 1521, Montezuma the last Emperor of the Aztec Empire escaped its conquest at the hands of Cortés' Conquistadors by escaping to the Hollow Earth via a cave system in Mexico taking all his gold and treasure with him.

Now 364 years later the current God Emperor of the New Aztec Empire rules an alliance of city-states unimagined by here surface dwelling predecessors. The sacrifices to the gods to keep the Smokey Sun burning go on unhindered and every summer Flower Wars are fought between the cities to amass more sacrifices. Aztec warriors readily raid even the primitives who dwell in the lands around the Empire. The only fly in this perfect ointment is the fact that many of the influential people of the Empire are members of the Union of the Snake, perhaps even Emperor Coaxoch.



The Native Americans

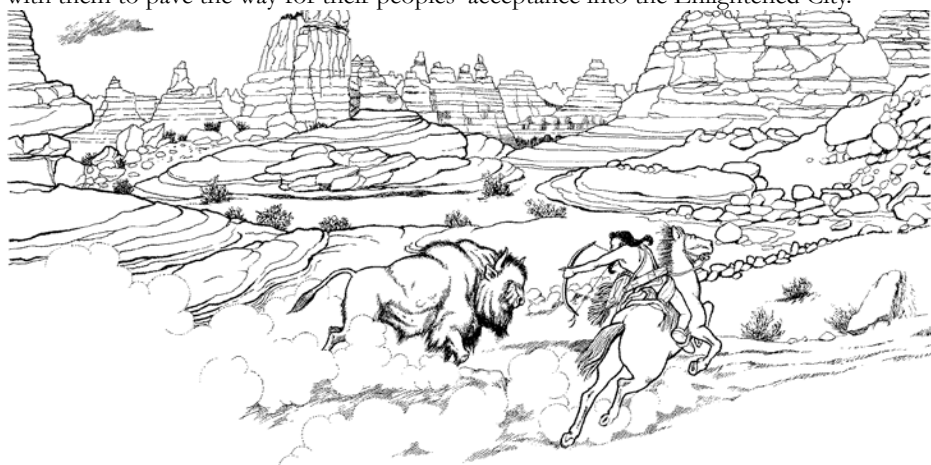
With links to the Atlantean Civilisation through their ancient ancestors, the Native Americans used the knowledge preserved in their mythology to escape through the gateways to the Hollow Earth.

Once there they settled in the area known as the Badlands, many years before the European settlers arrived via the Great Subterranean Railway. They rebuilt their way of life and their buffalo herds. When the Europeans arrived, it was the New Texan cattle barons who first contacted them. Unfortunately, the two peoples clashed quickly as the native buffalo herds and the New Texan cattle herds competed for grazing in the New Texan plains. The natives quickly withdrew their herds and people back into the Badlands, the more peaceful elements hoping that they would be left alone.

Some of the young, reckless braves have formed war bands under veteran leaders who are still on the warpath from their treatment on the surface. Their aim is to act as a protecting force that drives off white settlers and destroys the forts that the US Army are building on the edge of the Badlands before they have a chance to get close to the new peaceful Indian homelands. The Serpent Men use this red-hot anger in some cases, feeding off it and using their magical powers control key figures in the war bands, escalating the violence (see page 62 for such an example).

While the Serpent Men remain a hidden menace, a more obvious threat is the increasing numbers of dinosaurs in the Badlands sent over the Skyreach Mountains by their Serpent Men controllers. This migration may be the catalyst that gets the Indian Nations and the Cattle Barons of New Texas to form an alliance. A menace to both the Indian's buffalo and the New Texan cattle herds, not to mention settlements, at the present only forward-thinking leaders like Buffalo Bill see that long term both sides are better teaming up.

Meanwhile, a circle of wise elders who protect the secrets of their people is seeking to contact Agartha for its protection. So far that city's isolationist Council of Elders ignores the circle's requests, but some of the more proactive Shining Ones have started working with them to pave the way for their peoples' acceptance into the Enlightened City.



Chapter 9

People

This chapter gives you some of the movers and shakers of the setting, plus some example non-player characters to pick up and use in your games.

Note: you can also use the pre-generated characters from Chapter 13 as non-player characters, and it is easy to use the character generation system to create NPCs who are peers of the player characters.

Zone 1 Stevenson

Frederick James “F.J.” Stevenson

Originally from England, Fredrick James Stevenson is a wealthy industrialist and entrepreneur, who set up the Great Subterranean Railroad and the city in the Hollow Earth that shares his name.

F.J. is a powerful and imposing figure of a man, standing six foot plus tall, with a full head of thick grey hair and an impressive black moustache. He is always impeccably dressed in a long frock coat and an elaborately embroidered waistcoat while in town, or a long coat made of a bear pelt when in the country. F.J. has many golden pieces of jewellery about his person that show off his wealth and status, including a hand-crafted jewel encrusted watch made by master craftsmen in Switzerland.

For more of F.J.’s history and his plans for the Hollow Earth see page 44.

Aspects: Ruthless rail baron, Owner of Stevenson, Shady high ranking Freemason, Friends in the US Government, Charming and suave.

Trouble: Ruthless Leader of a Secret Society, Likes to Gamble.

Professions: Rail Baron +5, Gunslinger +2, Occultist +5.

Extras: Charming 3, Maverick, Cardsharp 3, Divination, Guardian Angel.

Stress: 3.



52 People

Stevenson Enforcer (aka Black Suit)

These impeccably black-suited gunfighters are the public face of FJ's empire. They keep order, eliminate enemies, and enforce FJ's iron will. They have a limited understanding of FJ's secret plans for the Hollow Earth, and are low level initiates into the Cult of Personality that FJ weaves around himself.

Aspects: Sharply Dressed in Black Suit.

Trouble: Fanatical agent of F.J. Stevenson.

Professions: Detective +4, Gunslinger +3, Occultist +1.

Stress: 2.



Mayor Angela Drisco

(aka The Witch or The Wicked Witch of the Hollow West)

The mayor is a middle aged woman who dresses impeccably, with greying hair swept back into a bun.

When FJ wanted an apolitical, dedicated administrator to be responsible for the day to day running of Stevenson, he looked no further than Angela Drisco, who had run one of his New York Companies during the Civil War. This company was an arms manufacturer, and Angela had coldly done deals with both sides, maximising FJ's profits. So within the first year of Stevenson's existence, in a blatantly rigged the election, Angela became Mayor and has continued ever since.

Despite her nickname amongst the overwhelmingly male populace of Stevenson ("The Witch"), she has no ties or ability with the occult. The name is partly derogatory due to her sex but also recognises of her fearsome skills as a city administrator. She's increasingly disillusioned with and scared of FJ's emerging plan for the Hollow West, and as time goes on may oppose it. She will need powerful allies willing to stand up to him and his army of Black Suits and as a meticulous planner has already started looking for such people and forging alliances.

Aspects: Mayor of Stevenson, No nonsense Administrator, Autocrat who wants things to be done by the book, Helped by a small army of clerks.

Trouble: Appointed by FJ., Fears FJ's plans.

Professions: Politician +5, Trader +3, Scholar +1.

Extras: Hostess with the Mostest.

Stress: 3.

Hired Gunslinger (aka Gun Monkey)

Relics of the old west, these has-beens hang about the Great Subterranean Railroad station looking for patrons. They are often hired en masse as 'Deputies' of the Mayor's office when Mayor Drisco needs some muscle.

Aspects: Grizzled Veteran of the Indian/Civil War/Range Wars.

Trouble: Out of work and low on money.

Professions: Gunslinger +2, Rogue 1.

Stress: 1.



Zone 2 New Texas Territory

Head Ranger Jenifer Petersen

Jenny is a rough frontier woman in her thirties and dresses appropriately. A racoon skin hat sits atop a full head of long mousey-coloured hair.

Jenny was brought up on the wild frontier by trackers and hunters. When the land she lived in became tame once the railroad reached her stead, she upped sticks and moved down to the Hollow Earth. She joined the early hunting parties sponsored by F.J. Stevenson and quickly came to hate everything he stood for, seeing first-hand how he didn't respect nature and how he saw the Hollow Earth as a resource to ruthlessly exploit. Jenny quickly struck out as an independent guide and scout and was hired by the fledgeling Cattle Barons.

When they sponsored the creation of the New Texas Rangers, she found herself joining impressed by the organisation's noble ideals. After a quick succession of Head Rangers had met their end in the field, Jenny found herself thrust into the leadership position despite her lack of law enforcement background.

Aspects: Leader of New Texas Rangers, Enemy of F.J. Stevenson, Kind and Strong Heart.

Trouble: Headstrong and rash leader.

Professions: Hunter +5, Detective +2, Athlete +3

Stress: 3

New Texas Ranger "Browncoat."

The typical Texas Ranger is a gruff, independent type with little time for the brand of civilisation F.J. is bringing to the Hollow West. They gain their nickname from the long brown leather duster coat that they wear as a badge of their office.

Aspects: Honest upholder of the New Texas Law.

Trouble: Member of a semi-legal organisation.

Professions: Scout +3, Lawman +4, Gunslinger +3

Stress: 2

Buffalo Bill (aka William Cody)

Now in his fifties, Bill has long greying hair and an impeccably trimmed goatee beard. He wears brown leather clothes with tassel trims. Bill wears Native American jewellery as a symbol of his friendship with them. He also has a Medal of Honour awarded him by the US Government in recognition for his services as a scout in the US Army.

After a distinguished career as an army scout, hunter and showman on the surface world, he moved down to the Hollow World in 1885 which he saw as a new opportunity for him and his famous Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Like so many of the early settlers, he was sponsored by F.J. Stevenson, who he came to distrust once he had the measure of the man.

So Bill moved his show's base from Stevenson to the emerging New Texas and started building what would become the town of Cody. Cody sits near the border of New Texas, and the Badlands, deliberately remote from civilisation, and as well as its population of show performers is home to radical freethinkers, free spirits who don't see a home in either Stevenson or the New Texan towns.

Buffalo Bill keeps good relations with his New Texan Neighbours and the Native Americans of the Badlands and leads a quiet life touring his Wild West show during what counts as Spring and Summer in the Hollow Earth. In the Autumn and Winter, he returns to Cody to rest and train his performers. The only break from this routine was in 1894 when he famously fought and drove off the Tyrannosaurus Rex known as Old Red Eye. Buffalo Bill seeks a rematch and is looking for 'stout and sturdy spirits' to help him track down the beast.

Aspects: Ex Cavalry Scout, World famous travelling showman, Fair-minded libertarian, Leader of the Town of Cody, Old and wise.

Trouble: Ageing and not as fast as he used to be.

Professions: Scout +6, Gunslinger +5, Wild-West Showman +4.

Extras: Ride'em Cowboy +3, Native American Friend.

Stress: 3



56 People

Cassidy Ranch

Cassidy Ranch is a typical ranch out in the wild plains of New Texas. It's of modest size, struggling to reach the massive size of some of its neighbours due to resourcing issues and the random Indian attack.

Big Frank Cassidy

Frank cuts a distinctive figure in his fine leathers and cowboy hat, part gentleman and part rancher. His nickname comes from his wide six feet plus frame and the big heart that he displays towards his employees.

He is one of the Cattle Barons of the New Texan Territory. A latecomer, he forged an alliance through marriage with the larger Montano Ranch which is his nearest neighbour. As well as a mutual interest in his young wife Victoria, the two ranches help each other with the recent spate of Apache raids.

Aspects: Patriarch of the Cassidy Clan, Big and Imposing Figure.

Trouble: Struggling with a new role as a businessman.

Professions: Cowboy +4, Gunslinger +2.

Stress: 3.

Jonny "Red" Cassidy

Red is a typical cowboy dressed in a mix of tan leathers and white cotton shirts. He has inherited his father's large frame, but also a shock of blonde hair from his mother. He regularly goes around with a wide-eyed look.

Red, named after the old horse of Bills, is Bill's son from a previous wife killed in an Indian raid on their former ranch in on the surface world. Despite being in his early twenties, he is somewhat straightforward and naive and often relies on his Uncle Dan for help. He possesses a simple charm that gets him attention from the ladies and the friendship of his fellow ranchers.

Aspects: Good old boy cowboy, Likeable and sociable.

Trouble: My Dad doesn't understand me.

Professions: Cowboy +2 Gunslinger +1.

Extras: Charming 2, Unlikely Hero.

Stress: 3.

Uncle Dan Cassidy

Dan Cassidy is Frank's no-nonsense younger brother. He wears a mix of black leathers and black shirts, edged with bits of silver.

Like the rest of the Cassidy clan, he's an experienced cattle rancher, but in recent years has spent more of his time acting as the ranch's troubleshooter. He is beginning to resent Frank for leaving the day to day running of the ranch increasingly to him, including the raising of Red.

Aspects: Ruthless Troubleshooter, Experienced Rancher, Former Cavalryman of the Indian Wars.

Trouble: Prone to Violence.

Professions: Gunslinger +4, Cowboy +3, Scout+3.

Extras: Tough.

Stress: 5.

Cassidy Ranch Hand

Aspects: Rough and hardworking cowboy, Loyal to the Cassidy family.

Professions: Cowboy +2

Stress: 1



Montaño Ranch

Don Victor Montaño

In his mid-sixties, always dressed in the finest *vaquero* costume, Don Victor embodies the tradition of honourable horse worker and rides the best of horses.

The Don is a Spanish cattle baron who came to the Hollow West with already considerable wealth to set up a new ranch for a new start. He after he gave up his lands in California after the death of his wife. He is a highly capable man, used to being treated with respect. This attitude puts him odds with his increasingly rebellious son Emilio. He wishes that Emilio was more like his sister Victoria, who has obediently married Big Frank following his wishes, to cement an alliance between the two ranches.

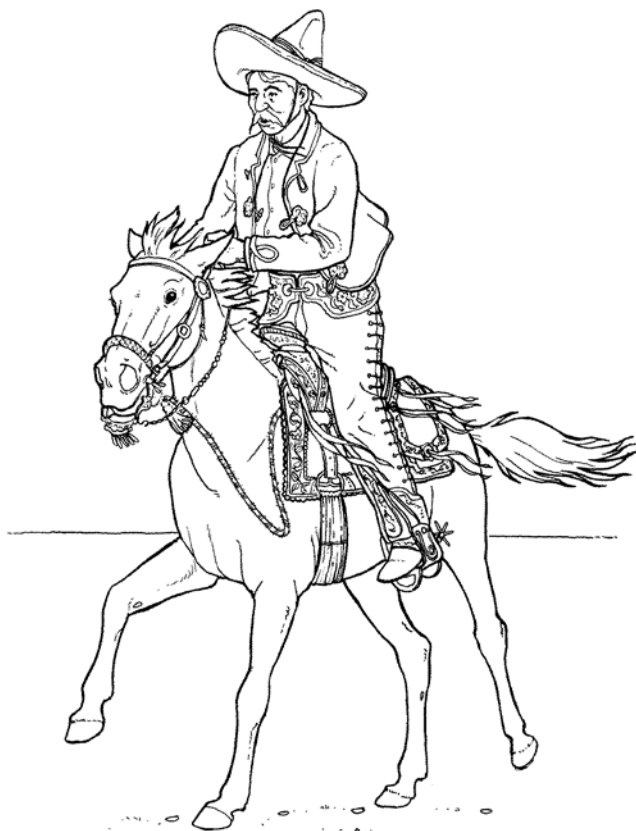
Aspects: Honourable member of the Vaquero tradition, Elder statesman.

Trouble: Demands respect!

Professions: Vaquero +4.

Extras: Ride em' Cowboy 3, Snappy Dresser.

Stress: 2.



Emilio Montaña

His mop of black hair dangles across his laughing face. He wears a mariachi's outfit, and slung across his back is a guitar case.

Emilio just wants to play his guitar and have fun in the wide expanses of New Texas, much to the annoyance of his father Victor who wants him to "grow up" and take over the management of the family ranch.

Aspects: Irresponsible man-child, Dramatic, Happy and optimistic.

Trouble: Doesn't want to inherit the family ranch.

Professions: Vaquero +1, Rogue +3, Gunslinger +2, Performer (Mariachi) +4.

Extras: Maverick, Cardsharp, Charming 2.

Stress: 2

Victoria Montaña

A classic Latin beauty, Victoria, although only 25, wears the long dresses and jewels of a woman much older with grace and dignity to please her new husband.

Well-settled in the family's ranch in California, Victoria was initially lost when she came to the Hollow West. That was until she met Don Carlos in a nearby town seemingly by chance. Don Carlos already had a reputation as a "respected teacher", and her father agreed to have him come to live at their ranch as Victoria's tutor.

There he gradually revealed himself to be a benevolent Shining One, and Victoria became his pupil gladly absorbing his teachings. While initially horrified at the idea of marrying the much older Big Frank, the last thing Don Carlos had done before he left to wander the wilderness was reassuring her that although difficult personally, it was the beginning of a spiritual trail that she would have to travel to reach Agartha. Victoria is aware that she has an important part to play in the upcoming Range Wars between F.J. and Agartha and that her "trail will take her through to the place of Lost Souls and beyond". As well as the spiritual teachings of Don Carlos, Emilio has taught her how to handle a gun and defend herself.

Aspects: Bright and Sharp, Stunning Natural Beauty, Strong Willed.

Trouble: Focused on her Trail to Agartha.

Professions: Scholar +4, Warrior +1.

Extras: Divination, Blessings and Curses, Guardian Angel, Native American Friend.

Stress: 3.

60 People

Montaño Vaquero

Unlike their Cowboy counterparts, the Vaquero is a noble and dignified group whose name means “Horse Worker”. They will live on the Ranch that they work with their family. The Vaquero who follow the Montaño family are excellent examples and are steadfastly loyal to Don Victor who they have followed down to the Hollow Earth leaving all they knew on the surface world behind.

Aspects: Loyal to the Montano family.

Profession: Vaquero +2.

Stress: 1.



Don Carlos Santana

Carlos looks like an incredibly aged old man of Native American descent, dressed in a mess of blankets and a sombrero. Don Carlos leans on a crooked walking staff that has various medicine charms hanging from it and a live raven perching on it. Such is his most familiar “mask”, though he can use his Disguise extra to create other appearances, although all feature his companion Raven in some way that is almost his calling card.

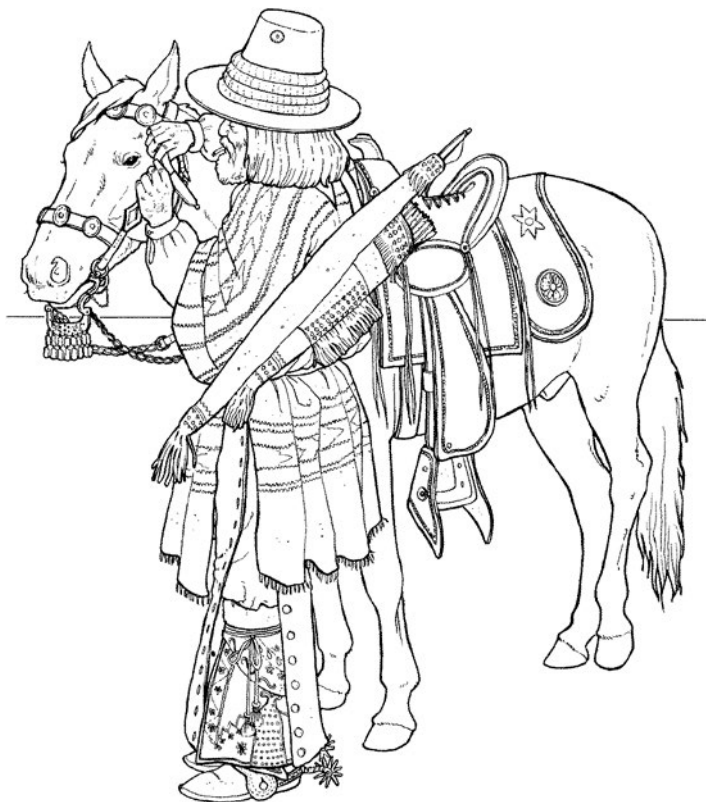
Don Carlos is a Wandering Shining One who seeks to enlightenable pupils to the Agarthan Way. He was previously Head Guardian at the Gate to the Hollow World that connected to the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky until F.J. and his occultists destroyed it. He is acutely aware of F.J.’s threat to Agartha and actively seeks to oppose it.

Aspects: Enlightened Agarthan.

Professions: Shaman +5, Scout +3.

Extras: Animal Companion (Raven), Charming 2, Divination, Disguise, Blessings and Curses, Guardian Angel, Faster Than You’ll Ever Live to Be, Faultless Tracker, Indian Friend. Medicine Man, Quick, Tough.

Stress: 5.



Zone 3 Badlands

Rising Fist War Band

This group are typical of the Native American war bands that are now forming to resist the encroachment of the white man on their lands. What is unique to this group is that their Shaman is part of the Union of the Snake, and can employ serpentine magic alongside his shaman powers.

Chief Black Wolf

A proud and active man in his mid-fifties, who wears the full regalia of a war chief.

Tough and grizzled Black Wolf remembers when the US Army killed his brothers and forced his people to move from their lands to the new reservation, killing hundreds in the walk through flood land. He is determined not to see a repeat of this and sees war as the only solution.

Aspects: Native American War Band Chief.

Trouble: Sees War as the only solution to white settlement in Indian Lands.

Professions: Warrior +3, Scout +2.

Extras: Flawless Scout, Warband Chief (Cavalry Officer, changed to meet Native American Warrior Values).

*Stress:*3.

Porcupine Bull

Elderly and sad-faced, this powerful shaman hides his power by appearing as a hunched presence almost falling off his horse.

Initially, he joined Black Wolf's war band in a spirit of vengeance and anger. Then he encountered Don Fernandez, who was equally angry with the white man, who initiated him into the Union of the Snake. Since then the shaman has spent many an hour in trance states talking to the snake spirits and their venomous whisperings which have further increased their hold on him.

Aspects: Pessimistic World View, Sorcerer of the Union of the Snake,

Trouble: Selling humanity out to the Serpent Men.

Professions: Shaman +5, Scout +2, Warrior +1.

Extras: Animal Companion (Coyote), Blessings and Curses, Divination, Medicine Man.

Special: Knows the Snake Dance Ritual that allows him to mentally control dinosaurs (see Serpent Men on page 73 for more details).

Stress: 3

Native American Brave

This warrior is a regular war band member. As well as spears and clubs, these warriors have Winchester rifles stolen from the US Army.

Aspects: On the Warpath.

Professions: Warrior +2, Scout +1.

Stress: 2.



64 People

Lost Souls

Don Teodoro Fernandez

Don Teodoro is a suave and well-dressed Latin nobleman, in his mid-forties with pure white hair and pale white skin.

Originally from Spain, Don Teodoro relocated here for land but was rejected by the mainly white Cattle Barons. He, went on an expedition into the jungles beyond the Skyreach mountains to find Montezuma's gold, where he encountered Aztec Sorcerers who gave him a choice be sacrificed to the gods or serve them as a Vampire Priest. Teodoro relished the chance to become a blood drinker, as revenge against the Cattle Barons.

Teodoro set up the town of Lost Souls, a haven for circus freaks, oddball occultists and anybody who didn't fit in with FJ's or the New Texan Cattle Barons view on society. The only people who aren't welcome in Lost Souls, and who disappear quite quickly if they try to stick around, are outlaws and criminals who prey on others. Three beauties, known as the Brides of Fernandez, are the thralls of Fernandez; he gave eternal life to them in return to servitude. They act as his deputies round the town. Use the standard profile of a Vampire (see page 74) for the Brides.

Aspects: Vampire Nobility originally from the Old Country (Spain), Cool and calm tactician, Ruler of the town of Lost Souls.

Trouble: Thrall to the Serpent Men.

Professions: Sorcerer +2, Warrior +5, Spanish Don +4.

Extras: Charming, Blood Drinker, Fierce, Fear, Tough.

Stress: 5.

Sheriff Olaf Petersen

The sheriff is a slightly overweight man in his thirties, who wears a long coat over his pear-like frame. He wears a settler's broad-brimmed hat and sports an under-chin beard. If it weren't for his Sheriff's star, you'd mistake him as just another settler on the trail to his new home.

Olaf once had a family. He was a settler who never made it in the old west, so he headed down to the Hollow Earth. He dragged his wife and daughter all over New Texas looking for somewhere 'good' to settle until he ended over the border in the Badlands. There his wagon was ambushed, and bandits slew his wife and daughter. Amidst the wreckage, half alive Don Fernandez found him, healed him and brought him back to his town of Lost Souls.

It wasn't long after that the Don promoted him to the vacant position of Town Sheriff, noting his rage against lawbreakers that lurked beneath his placid surface.

Aspects: Sheriff of Lost Souls, Affable personality,

Trouble: Self-righteous rage.

Professions: Gunslinger +3, Farmer +2.

Stress: 3.

Deputy Henrietta Timberlake

On first glance, Henrietta is the same in appearance as Olaf. They could be twin brothers. Then if you look closely, you'll see a softness to the face and some lumps in the torso area.

Henrietta originally ran away from travelling circus on the surface. She briefly was a member of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, jumping ship when they settled down in the town of Cody because she heard the rumour that her first circus had found her and was coming to retrieve her. She ran into the Badlands and by chance found the town of Lost Souls. There Olaf kindly took her under his wing and was accepting of her.

Aspects: Deputy sheriff of Lost Souls, Suspicious nature, Protective of Olaf.

Trouble: Bearded lady on the run from the Circus.

Professions: Athlete +4, Gunslinger +2.

Stress: 3.



Zone 4 Lost World

Emperor Coaxoch, God Emperor of the Aztec Empire

Coaxoch means *Serpent Flower* in the Aztec language, and it is almost a cruel joke on his human subjects. Coaxoch is a Serpent Man in magical disguise. He is a member of the serpent bloodline that replaced the Aztec nobility almost immediately when it arrived in the Hollow Earth. He is hundreds of years old and is treated by as a god by his people.

Aspects: God Emperor of the Aztecs in the Hollow Earth, High Ranking Serpent Man nobility.

Trouble: Vulnerable to attack if true form exposed.

Professions: Emperor +4, Warrior +2, Sorcerer +5.

Extras: Blood Drinker, Charming 4 (when in human form)/1 (when in Serpent man form), Disguise (Human form), Fear.

Stress: 5.



Jaguar Warriors

These warriors dress in Jaguar skins, wield clubs inset with obsidian blades and bear small brightly coloured painted shields.

They are spiritual warriors infused with Serpent Man magic by the God Emperor who they fanatically serve. While not full vampires, they can drink the blood of sacrifices to gain strength and heal wounds. They train for war always, in drills and by playing Temple Ball.

Aspects: Spiritual warrior, Fanatically loyal to the God Emperor. *Professions:* Warrior +3 Athlete +3 Hunter +3.

Extras: Blood Drinker, Tough.

Stress: 5.

Note the God Emperor's and Jaguar Warrior's Blood Drinking extra is detailed in Chapter 10 Monsters on page 68.



Chapter 10

Monsters

This chapter outlines some of the monsters that live in the Hollow West.

Why even have monsters? The Hollow West comes from a cinematic monster movie tradition. They add an extra element for the referee to play with and present for their player's enjoyment. They add thrills and spills. They are the threat that gets enemies united and forgetting their hatreds.

Monster Encounter Frequency

A continuation of the idea that as the characters move through the zones, the more strange and supernatural powers come into play.

Monster frequency is zero in Stevenson (Zone 1), it would be a major breakdown of how reality works there.

They are an uncommon occurrence in New Texas (Zone 2), the only documented encounter being Old Red Eye's rampage through the farmlands around Cody.

Once the characters have travelled into the Badlands, they should face monsters more frequently as singular threats, which are often the focus of an adventure.

In the Lost World zone, the frequency goes up. For example, vampires and Serpent Men overrun the Aztec Civilisation, and Dinosaurs freely roam the jungles, but the Referee should bear in mind that monster encounters should be something that is unique and magical.

Most encounters should still be with the Human non-player characters, like those detailed in Chapter 9 People.

Professions and Extras

Monsters follow similar rules to human characters, but there are some changes to professions, especially for unintelligent creatures.

The Athlete and Hunter professions are unchanged, though animals cannot ordinarily use ranged combat. Combat skills are governed by a new Fighter profession, which replaces Soldier. Some supernatural beings have a further profession, Sorcerer, which measures both their inherent supernatural power and willpower.

We also present some extras that are specifically suited to monsters.

Blood Drinker (cost 1)

Benefits: New action.

Flaw: Troubling (Aspect: Fills living beings with repulsion).

This extra is the ability to drink a living being's blood. If the blood drinker has taken stress damage, it heals Stress on a one to one basis. If used to remove consequences it takes two stresses to remove a minor consequence, four stress for a moderate

consequence and six stress for a major consequence. If the drinker is undamaged, it gives an additional fate point that may take them over their normal maximum for each point of Stress inflicted on the victim. The use of this extra fills all living beings with repulsion, and the character gains that as a trouble that the Referee can invoke, even when the non-player character does not know that the character is a blood drinker consciously.

Fear (cost 2)

Benefit: New action.

You can use the sorcerer profession to attack and inflict mental damage, even in the middle of a physical conflict. If the target suffers consequences, they reflect fear or your mental domination of them; you can decide. If you increase the cost to 3, the attack does +2 damage.

Fierce (cost 1)

Benefit: Harmful.

The creature does +2 damage on a successful attack. You can take this extra twice.

Scent Tracking (cost 1)

Benefit: Remove difficulty or restriction.

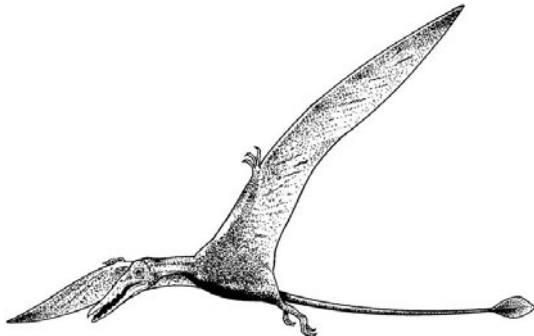
The creature can make a Hunter roll at difficulty 2 to follow a trail even without tracks, finding someone they seek. This extra may work through smell, in which case countermeasures such as crossing a stream can work. Alternatively, this extra could be supernatural in scope, in which case only magical countermeasures (in the form of an opposed roll with a relevant profession or extra) can stop it.

Tough (cost 1)

Benefit: Protective (x2).

Flaw: Troubling.

The creature has two extra stress levels, except against a particular vulnerability (which requires research, or the very least a Scholar roll at difficulty 4). This vulnerability also presents itself as an aversion to the object of vulnerability, which enters play as an aspect. You can take this extra more than once.



The Monster List

Grizzly Bear

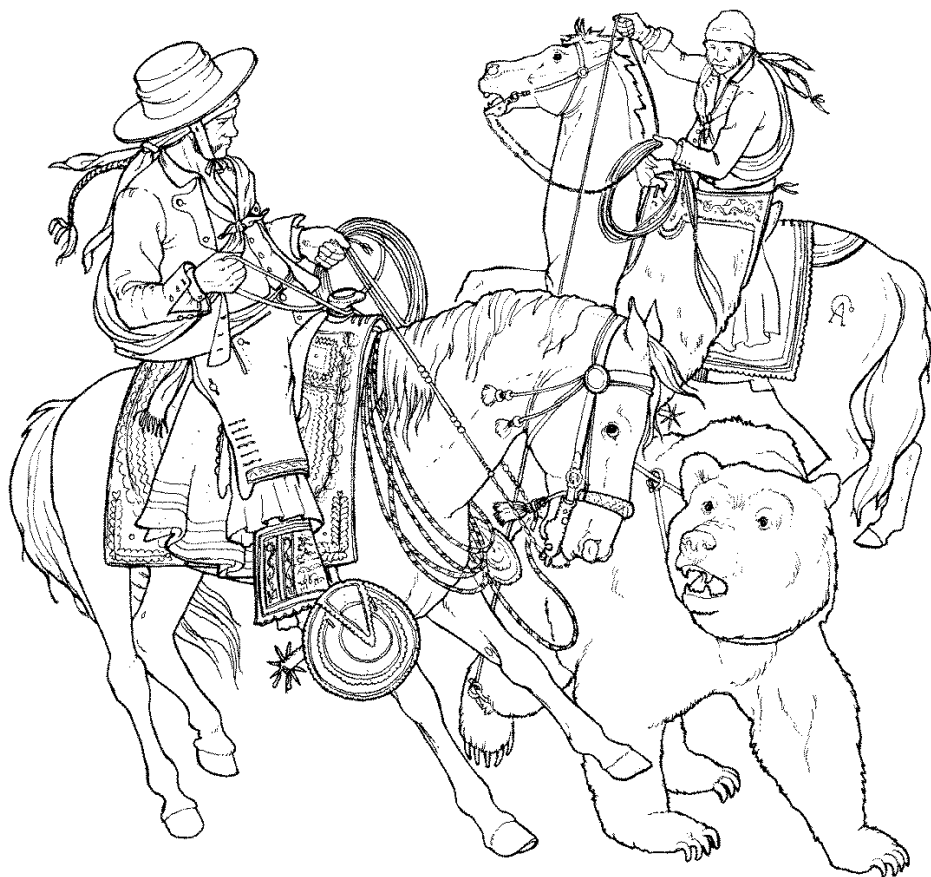
This giant fierce member of the bear family rules the forests of New Texas, achieving an almost mythical reputation amongst the Big Game Hunters who travel to its realm to hunt it.

Aspects: Lord of the Forests.

Professions: Hunter +3, Fighter +2.

Extras: Tough, Fierce.

Stress: 5.



Dinosaurs

Found in the lush jungles of the Lost World, these huge reptiles from Earth's Prehistory are the pets of the Serpent Men. Here is a sample of the diverse variety of dinosaurs found in the Hollow Earth.

T-Rex

Aspects: Huge towering Carnivore, Stomps across the land, Razor sharp biting jaws.

Extras: Tough x2, Fierce, Scent Tracking.

Professions: Carnivorous Dinosaur +3.

Stress: 7.

Triceratops

Aspects: Heavily armoured herbivore, Goring horns.

Extras: Tough x2.

Profession: Herbivore dinosaur +2.

Stress: 7

Velociraptor

Aspects: Small and cunning, Relentless carnivore, Viscous slashing foreclaws.

Professions: Carnivorous dinosaur +2.

Extras: Fierce, Quick.

Stress: 2.

Pteranodon

Aspects: Flying carnivorous dinosaur.

Professions: Carnivorous Dinosaur +2.

Extras: Fierce.

Stress: 2.

Notes: These predators often work as packs, so be sure to read the rules for Gangs (see Running the Game, page page 93).



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Crocodile

This fearsome reptilian predator is found in all of the big rivers of the Hollow Earth. They are as ancient as the dinosaurs and like them have a special link with the Serpent Men.

Aspects: Aquatic Predator, Always hungry.

Professions: Fighter +4, Swimmer +3, Hunter +2.

Extras: Fierce, Tough (while in water).

Stress: 5.

Winged Serpent

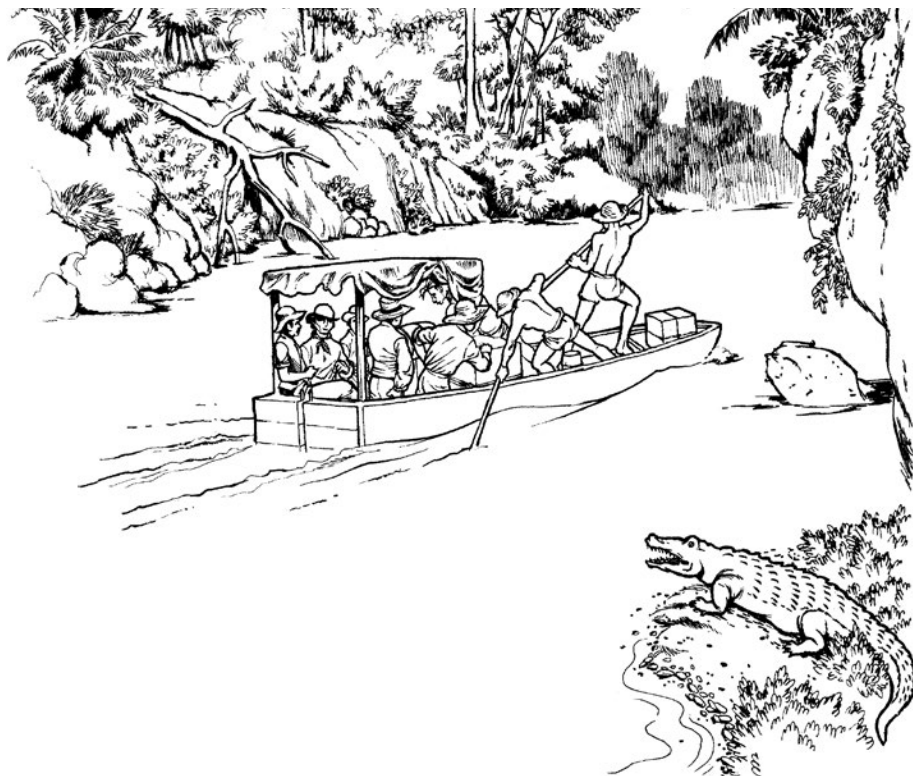
This serpentine flying horror with feathered wings guards old Serpent Man ruins and the inner sanctums of Aztec temples. As well as guard duty, Winged Serpents operate as assassins.

Aspects: Sleek flying predator, Quick and silent killer, Steadfast guardian.

Professions: Assassin +5, Scout +3.

Extras: Scent Tracking, Tough.

Stress: 5.



Serpent Men

The Serpent Men are an ancient race whose origin is in the primordial mists of time. Occultists who have studied ancient texts, such as the Sumerian Tablets, is that their civilisation was at its peak during the Age of the Dinosaurs. They built large cities on the surface and dinosaurs were pets and livestock. It was during this time they developed fearsome powers of mind control. Since the Fall of their civilisation at the end of the Age of the Dinosaurs, when the gods brought down an Asteroid on their capital city, Serpent Men have lived in the Hollow Earth.

Initially, they were guests of the Agarthans but fell out with them over their manipulation of the human civilisation of Atlantis. Since the devastating war with the Agarthans, which greatly reduced their numbers and reduced their last cities to ruins, they have lived in disguise amongst the first in the primitive societies of the Human jungle dwellers and then in Aztec Empire that arose from the survivors of the Spanish Conquest arriving in the Hollow Earth.



Serpent Men can emanate a cold aura of Fear that they use to dominate humans. As for Dinosaurs, they can automatically control any they come across, with the only tell-tale sign being that the dominated creature gains glowing red eyes. They are also able to use stolen life force to heal damage and give them enhanced power, by drinking the blood of living beings. This power was another way that they were able to dominate the Aztecs because they already had a tradition of giving blood from human sacrifices to the gods. In turn, Serpent Men can turn willing human worshippers into vampires (see below), which gives them eternal life in return for servitude.

Aspects: A scheming hateful being who would see humans under their dominion, Emotionally Cold and Reptilian.

Professions: Sorcerer +5, Warrior +4.

Extras: Blood Drinker, Charming 4 (when in human form)/1 (when in Serpent Man form), Disguise (Human form), Fear.

Special: They can automatically dominate and mind control over a vast distance any dinosaurs and other reptiles come into contact with. Use the Serpent Man's Sorcerer profession in any action where the characters try to break their dominance over the pet. The Sorcerer profession also is the limit of the number of Dinosaurs that the Serpent Man can have under their control at any one time.

Stress: 3

Vampire

These fearsome Blood Drinkers are from the Aztec tradition, and in full blood-gorged form have grey skin, fangs and crazy bloodshot eyes.

Human Thralls to the inhuman serpent men, they spend most of their time disguised as humans within their society. Chosen from the ranks of the faithful, the profile below is for a Warrior but they can come from the Priesthood (add Sorcerer +5, and the Extras Blessing and Curses + Divination). While superstition surrounds them, they are not vulnerable to sunlight and in fact undead creatures. Their blood drinking gives them supernatural power and if practised continuously eternal life (since the act of blood drinking heals damage).

Aspects: Highborn Aztec Warrior.

Trouble: Thrall to the Serpent Men.

Professions: Sorcerer +3, Warrior +2.

Extras: Blood Drinker, Fierce, Fear, Tough.

Stress: 5.

Wolf/Coyote/Wild Dog

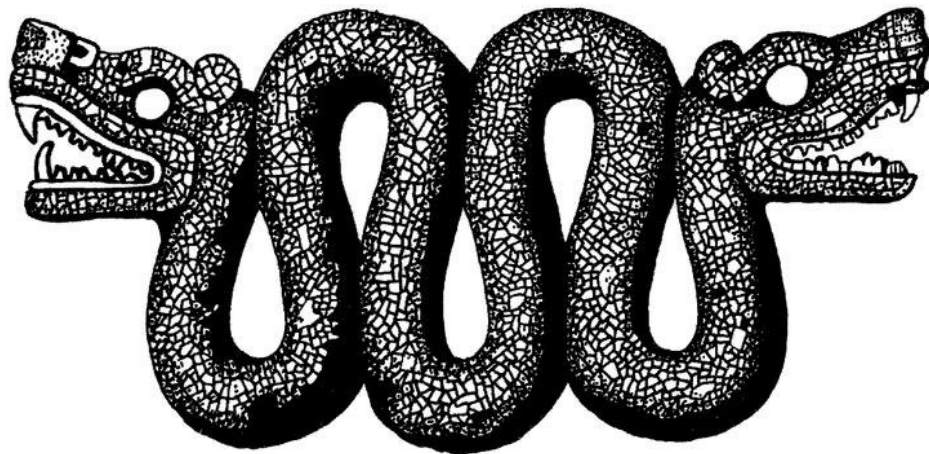
These relatives of the domesticated Dog are carnivores who roam in packs attacking weak members of herds. They are a persistent nuisance to Cowboys.

Aspects: Four-Legged Carnivore.

Professions: Hunter +3.

Extras: Scent Tracking.

Stress: 2.



Unique Monsters

These are one of a kind monsters that take a starring role in any adventure where they feature. They are created by taking one of the monsters on the monster list above as a template and adding extras, aspects and professions, along with an expanded backstory to explain its place in the Hollow Earth. The Great Winged Serpent, for example, is based off the Serpent Man and Old Red Eye uses the Tyrannosaurus Rex as its starting point.

The Great Winged Serpent

This monster is the ultimate ruler of the Serpent Men who live in Agartha as the 'guest' of the Shining Ones. Even though it unsuccessfully waged war against them in pre-historic times, a strange truce exists that allows the Winged Serpent to live with the enlightened ones, walking amongst them in human form (sometimes as a woman, sometimes as a man) soaking up their wisdom. A snake in the Garden.

Aspects: Scheming hateful being who would see all living under its dominion, Emotionally Cold and Reptilian, Ruler of the Serpent Men.

Extras: Extras: Charming 5 (in both forms), Disguise (Human form), Fear, Large Feathered wings (which can manifest in both Human and Serpent forms), Tough x 2.

Trouble: Egotistical and Arrogant.

Professions: Warrior +5, Sorcerer +6.

Special: This being has a Telepathic link to the rest of its race, and this is how it can rule them despite being far removed in Agartha.

Stress: 7.

Old Red Eye

This monster is a dominated T-Rex that terrorised the New Texan plains around Cody in 1894. It was already a strong bull amongst its species, but the Serpent Man sorcerer who controlled it toughened it up further using magical rituals. It gains its name from its glowing left red eye. Its right eye is a hollow socket full of scar tissue since Buffalo Bill gouged it with an spear during their fight.

Aspects: Huge towering Carnivore, Stomps across the land, Razor sharp biting jaws.

Extras: Tough x3, Fierce, Fear, Scent Tracking.

Professions: Carnivorous dinosaur +5.

Stress: 9.

Chapter 11

Thrilling Locations

This chapter gives a quick rundown of some of the places we've discovered through play. You might find more as you and your players hit the Trail.

Significant Geographical Locations

These are defining features of the setting, which span multiple zones.

The Washington River

Popularly known as the “Mighty Washington” this river starts in the Sky Reach Mountains, goes through the Badlands and New Texas, before swinging round Stevenson, where it carries on towards some uncharted sea. Some scientists have even posited the hypothesis that the Mighty Washington doubles back on itself and becomes its source. In many ways, it is the Amazon or Nile of the Hollow Earth.

The character of the river changes as it passes through the zones.

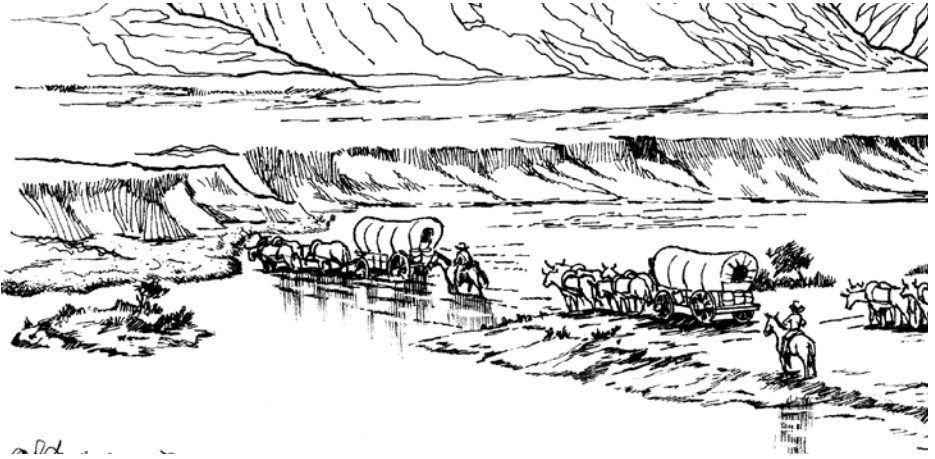
In the Badlands, it's a calm but murky river, which creates swamps and marshes as it travels through the land.

Aspects: Swampy and Boggy, Mysterious depths, Full of stinging and biting insects.



In New Texas, the water is clearer, but the river is broad and deep, requiring bridges or more often ferries to cross it. It provides water for the large cattle and buffalo herds, and the cowboy settlements that have sprung up along its length.

Aspects: Deep and Wide, Crocodile infested waters, Waterhole for passing animals.



In Stevenson, it turns back into a vast, murky expanse of water, partly because of the heavy industry that makes use of it to dump waste.

Aspects: Murky and full of industrial waste.



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The Border

There are multiple versions of the Border. The Stevenson/New Texas Border, where the crowded city is choked with dust and people, gives way to free blue skies and endless prairie. The New Texas/Badlands border where suddenly the sky darkens slightly and the land become broken and harsh. If you cross the border near a settlement, they have put up barbed wire fencing to keep the cows the right side and the outlaws out. The Badlands/Lost World Border which is magnificently defined by the Sky Reach Mountains. Whenever the characters cross a border, they should immediately know it, both in a visual sense but also they should feel a change in the atmosphere.

The Range

Aspects: Grass as far as the eye can see, Where the buffalo roam.

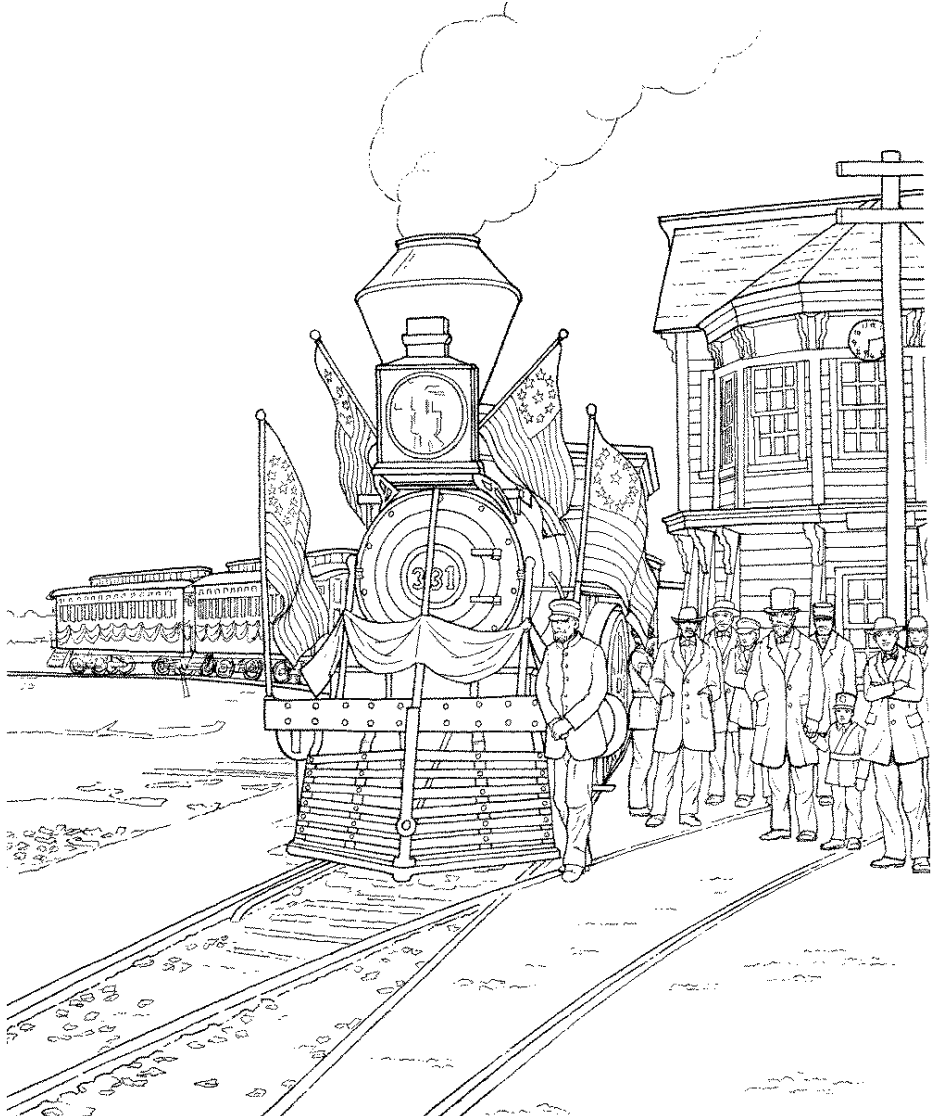
This area is the vast plain that dominates areas of New Texas and the Badlands. It's where the cattle ranchers hold sway, and their cowboys drive great herds of cattle to slaughter in Stevenson and other towns in New Texas.



The Great Subterranean Rail Road

Aspects: The commercial backbone of the Hollow West, Brings wave after wave of settlers

This railroad starts in the surface world with a large rail station built around the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. It pumps goods and people down to the Hollow West and brings raw materials from its mines and manufactured goods from Stevenson back up. There are whole train services dedicated to bringing settlers down to the Hollow Earth. Once the trains reach Stevenson, local services take passengers and goods to and from settlements in New Texas.



80 Thrilling Locations

The Veins of the Hollow West

Aspects: Dusty Trails, Bandit Ambushes, Long road to Nowhere, Route of the Pony Express, Route of the Hollow West Stage Coach Company.

If the Great Subterranean Rail Road is the backbone of the Hollow West, there is a network of dirt roads running off it that runs between the various settlements. Here the Pony Express delivers mail and the Hollow West Stage Coach Company takes people to their destination, despite the dangers of roaming bandits.

The Skyreach Mountains

Aspects: Mystical and enchanted mountains.

These imposing mountains seem to touch the sky, hence their name. They mark a clear border between the Badlands and the Lost World beyond, or the Known and the Unknown. If you are prepared to search them and scale almost sheer cliffs or find hidden paths, you will find lost temples, spiritual sanctuaries from the days of the Atlanteans.

The Primordial Jungle

Aspects: Almost impenetrably dense, Full of biting and stinging insects, Primordial jungle from the Age of the dinosaurs, Where the dinosaurs roam.

A major feature of the Lost World is this primordial jungle. Around the Aztec Empire that nests in it, it is virtually the same as the jungles of central and southern America. But getting deeper into it away from civilisation and it gradually turns into the prehistoric jungle of the Age of Dinosaurs complete with giant flora and fauna, and of course the dinosaurs themselves.



Thrilling Locations

These are some example locations to set your adventures in.

Zone 1: Stevenson

Stevenson

Aspects: A vibrant new city, Dangerous docklands, Fuming industry, Busy rail station, Exuberant and wild bars, Hub of the Hollow West.

Stevenson bears the name of its creator and owner, rail baron and industrialist F.J. Stevenson. It's his base of operations, and he has a hand in everything that goes on there. Day to day there is an organised administration led by Mayor Drisco, which deals with the business that has set up shop in the city and the streams of settlers who come from the surface world. Stevenson is everything the American Cities of the surface are, due to the mass migration of people from all over the USA. It's a place of golden opportunity for some, entrepreneurs are greatly encouraged, but it's a trap for others who get stuck in low paid jobs in Stevenson's factories.



Zone 2: New Texas

Cody

Aspects: A town of oddballs and individualists, The Circus is the Town.

This town was set up by William Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill, as a place where he and the rest of his Wild West Show could come and live in the off-season months, and as a safe place for their families to live all year round. On the surface, it looks like an immaculate, very average mid-western town, until you notice the training grounds on the edge of the town and slightly non-average nature of some of the town's inhabitants.

Cassidy Ranch

Aspects: Tough and manly cattle ranch.

The Cassidys were one of the first families to strike out into New Texas; in fact, local rumour has that it was Big Frank who came up with the name New Texas. They've had to work hard, and they have had their fair share of adversity over the years. The death of Big Frank's first wife Alice during one of the big Native American raids, a dispute over water with the nearby Smith Ranch, and an outbreak of disease amongst their herds that was only 'cured' by the intervention of the mysterious medicine man Don Carlos. But through it, all Big Frank and his Cowboys have kept Cassidy Ranch going.

Montaño Ranch

Aspects: Vast and wealthy ranch.

Set up by Don Victor Montaño after his wife died, quickly with large reserves of money (and some say gold). In comparison with neighbouring Cassidy Ranch, it's vast and well-organised, rich in water and ably manned by a small army of Vaqueros who are dedicated and loyal to their Don.

Zone 3: The Badlands

Lost Souls

Aspects: A place of dark mystery, A law unto Itself.

Every town has its dark side, things that go on behind closed doors and drawn curtains. But in Lost Souls, it's somewhat more out into the open. It's a town that fully acknowledges the rule of Don Fernandez, a dark, charismatic character who encourages the expression of personal freedom and bans any form of organised religion within the town's boundaries.

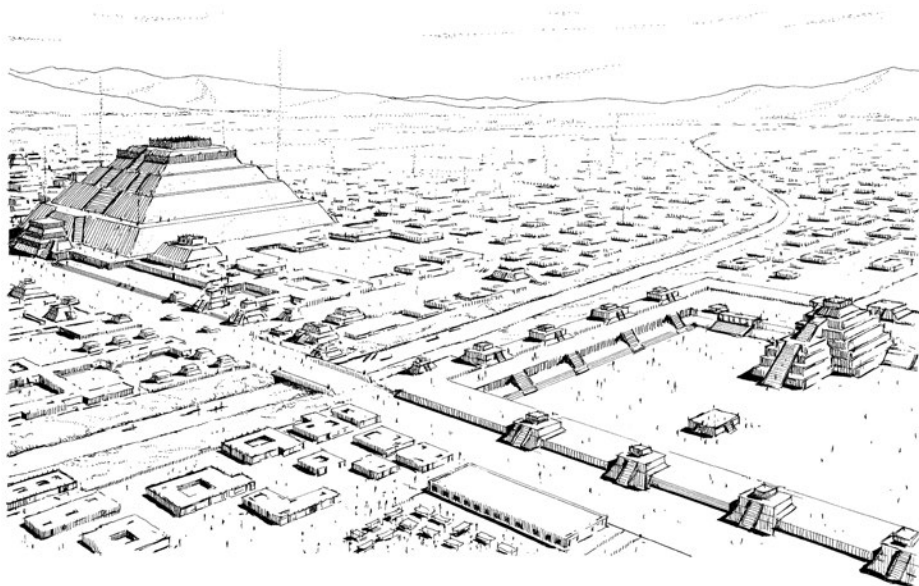
84 Thrilling Locations

Zone 4: The Lost World

The City of the Jade Serpent

Aspects: The Terrifying City of the Serpent Religion, Built on artificial islands in the water, Teeming with people.

The capital city of the New Aztec Empire. Built on a massive artificial lake on many floating islands, connected to the north, west, and south banks by bridges that can be collapsed and pulled up towards the city as a defensive measure. People get around on rafts and canoes. The lower classes live in reed houses on the outer part of the city, while the elites live in brick houses nearer the centre which contains the temples to the gods and the Palace of the God Emperor. Here the serpent men are worshipped openly as gods, and the bloodletting of public sacrifice, temple ball games, and annual Flower Wars against neighbouring cities is in full flow.



Zone 5: The Heart of the Hollow Earth

Agartha The City of the Shining Ones

Aspects: A place of peace and harmony, Isolated from the rest of the world.

Agartha exists in a protective sphere of energy raised by its inhabitants after the disastrous war against the Serpent Men. Within it is a peaceful and harmonious city, whose citizens live a long and enlightened life, completely isolated from the horrors outside.

Ruins of the Past

The Hollow Earth has many ruins from past civilisations that fell in the ancient wars between the Serpent Men and the Agarthans, were just abandoned due to their remoteness, or suffered natural calamities. Ruins are found in Zone 3 Badlands and 4 Lost World.

Agarthan sites

Aspects: Serene and tranquil repositories of ancient wisdom, Deadly and confusing traps.

These strange ruins are found in unlikely places, deep underground and hidden even in the wilderness. In many ways, their white stone structures, which often incorporate unusual crystal elements into their design, are as clean and vibrant as when abandoned millions of years ago.

These were often training areas for the Agarthans and surface dwellers. When it became apparent they would need to be evacuated during the War Against the Serpent Men, the Agarthans both buried and left them full of strange and beguiling traps designed to capture and kill only the brutish and spiritually impure.

Serpent Men Temples

Aspects: Vile and unclean, Writhing with serpents, Repositories of things that man was not meant to know.

Ziggurats into which are carved scenes of skull-headed deities and serpents. These were the centres of the old Serpent Men cities that now lie in ruins around them, covered in the dust or primordial jungle.

The Temples were the last points of resistance when the Serpent Man civilisation fell to the Agarthan Cleansing, and although now abandoned they are home to a sort of condensed evil that lingers despite their ruin. Within the Temples can be found lost magical secrets and the tombs of Serpent Men Priests (who are in a state of stasis), as well as legendary treasures such as gold and jewels to lure in the unwary treasure hunter.

Atlantean Outposts

Aspects: Grand and impressive monuments, Trapped with large complex devices, Gateways to large underground complexes.

Atlantean Outposts take the form of great stone pyramids and needles which are similar to those of Ancient Egypt (which was an outpost of Atlantis). They were built by the Atlanteans when they were invited down to the Hollow Earth by the Agarthans, to continue the sharing of knowledge that had started on the surface. Worried that the gods would once again interfere or steal back that knowledge, underneath the monuments, are vast underground complexes filled with traps that contain knowledge vaults. Since the Atlantean Monuments are found in the open in the Badlands, they are the most easily accessible ruins of Antiquity and therefore magnets for expeditions from F.J. Stevenson and The Order of the Rosy Cross.

Chapter 12 Hitting the Trail

This chapter explains how to create adventures set in the Hollow West, and create a continuing series called “The Trail”. It is primarily for the Referee and players will spoil the surprise if they read this chapter. Finally at the end of this chapter there is a section called “Running the Game” which gives the Referee some practical advice on how to get the most out of the Fortune system.

The Trail

Travelling to the Hollow Earth

It all starts with Character Generation in Chapter 2. The players and the Referee get together and tell the back stories of the characters they are going to play. For example, what they did in the Great Indian Wars or the Civil War. Were they a force for law and order, or were they a bit of a villain? Then it's down to the Hollow Earth via the Great Subterranean Rail Road, which deposits them in Stevenson. Describe the city they find themselves in, and the basics of the Hollow Earth (the curvature of the Earth, Old Smokey in the sky. See page 8 for a potted intro you can use.

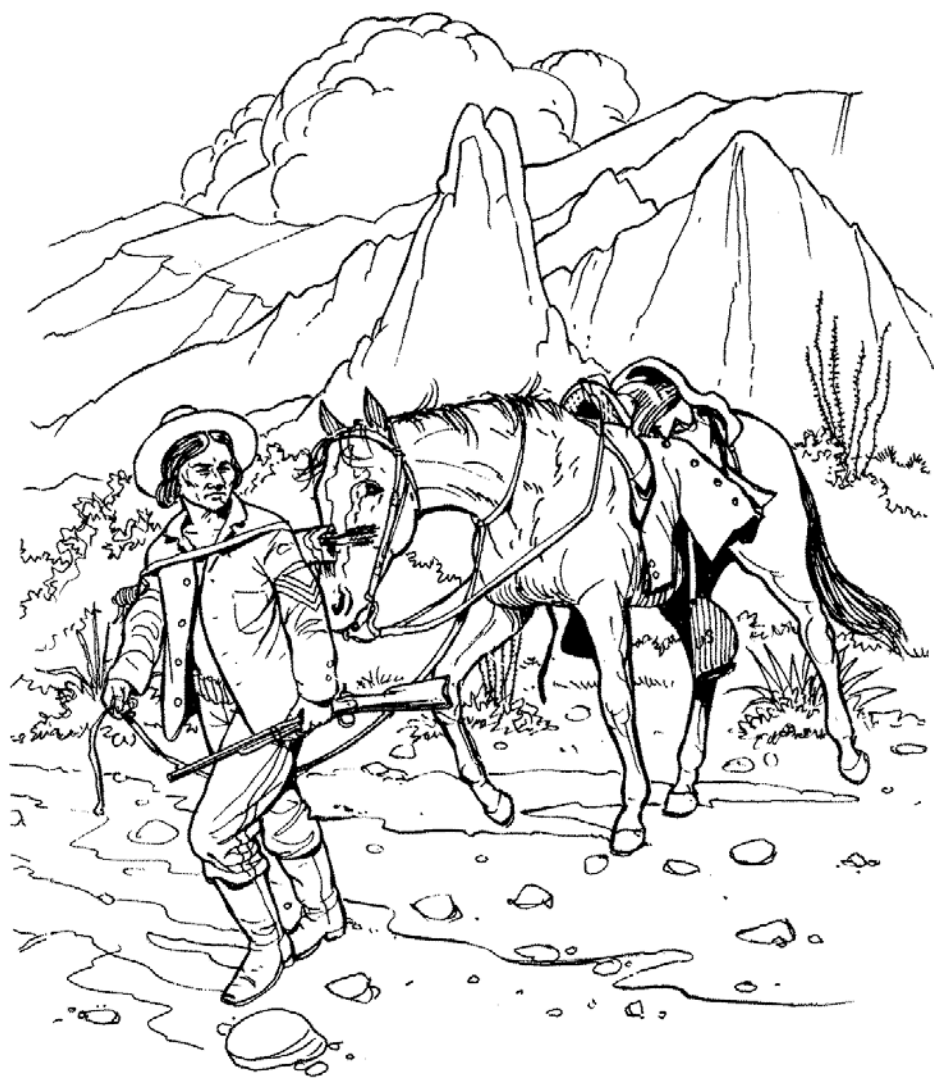
With this introduction over, the characters then have adventures in Stevenson, or may immediately ride off into the New Texan Sunset heading out into territories beyond.

Things to ask the players, the answers to which may make good aspects:

- Why are their characters in the Hollow Earth?
- How do they know each other as a group?
- Or if they don't know each other initially how did they come together?

The text assumes that most player groups will be working together for themselves, the standard set-up which allows various patrons representing the different factions (see Chapter 8 Factions) to attempt to hire them. If the players or the referee want them to be part of an existing faction, I would recommend the following.

- *The New Texas Rangers* for players who want a cowboy set up with a strong emphasis on doing the right thing.
- *The Order of the Rosy Cross* if you want adventures that are dealing more with the exploration of the ruins of the Hollow Earth (see Ruins of the Past page 85) which could quickly expand into the examining the various myths of the Hollow Earth (see Chapter 7 Secrets of the Hollow Earth page 40).



88 Hitting the Trail

The Stages of Play

Each session that the characters play through takes them farther into the mysteries of the Hollow Earth. The Trail progresses through five zones.

Zone 1 Stevenson. The last bastion of civilisation in the Hollow Earth, and the repressed Industrialised mess that the Hollow Earth will become if F.J. Stevenson's machinations come to fruition.

Zone 2 New Texas. Cowboys, Outlaws and settlers trying to make a new life thrive here. This zone is your standard Saturday Morning Cowboy TV show.

Zone 3 Badlands. This is where things touch on the weird and the supernatural. It's also where the grittier end of the Cowboy genre lives.

Zone 4 The Lost World. Without getting too pulp, remember the characters are working within the confines of the cowboy genre, but this is where our high riding characters encounter the Hollow Earth's past, in the form of mysterious ruins, dinosaurs and the murderous Aztec Empire.

Zone 5: The Heart of the Hollow Earth. This zone is where the characters reach the mythical city of Agartha, home to the Shining Ones. Will it be the end of the Trail, a bright enlightenment where the characters ride off into myth and legend? Will they discover the Great Secret of the Hollow Earth (see Chapter 15)?

Not all Trails end in Zone 5. Not all players will want to explore the overtly supernatural side of the setting. They might be more interested in resolving the Range War that is going to break out between F.J. Stevenson and the Cattle Barons of New Texas than the secret wars between F.J. and the Shining Ones of Agartha. Such a game may occasionally dip into Zone 1 and Zone 3, but have most of the action happen in New Texas (Zone 2) and certainly has its finale set there.

Also, let the players take as long as they want in each Zone. As long as they have had fun in a Zone continue to create adventures there. As soon as their interest wanes or they want to move on because that's the way play is heading, move on.

Things for the Referee to remember about the Trail

- It's not a railroad.
- It's not a set of random encounters and aimless wanderings.
- There is no map – build it as you play.
- It's your player's game, let them be the stars of the show who lead play.
- Players create the plot, despite there being an implied/stated metaplot (that's just how I see it).

Toy Box Style Play

I run The Hollow West as a Toy Box – a more fun version of a Sand Box.

The toys:

- People (see Chapter 9 People).
- Monsters (see Chapter 10 Monsters).
- Places to Explore (see Chapter 11 Thrilling Locations).
- Secrets (see Chapter 7 Secrets of the Hollow Earth).
- Adventure Ideas (these are liberally sprinkled in the text of the book, or should arise from your own and your player's imagination during play).

Setting up Play

The referee sets up each session of the game with help from the players.

The Pitch

A quick paragraph or two that sums up what your adventure is all about. Either written as a solo activity on the Referees part or at the start of a session with the players (“So what are we interested in doing this session?”).

Pre-game Preparation

If you are pressed for time or thrive off doing things in an improvised way you can set this up during play. It's also worth noting that no plan survives contact with a group of players, so it's useful to quickly adapt your bullet pointed lists generated below, or add new locations/cast/events in response to the players' actions.

Locations

As part of pre-game prep, the referee should have a quick list of places that feature in the adventure. The players can inform this list (“Hey next session can we go to the Town of Lost Souls, sounds like there's a lot of fun to be had there and I want to check out Don Fernandez and see if the rumours of him being a vampire are true”).

Cast List

Pick people and monsters who you want to appear in the adventure, informed by the Zone of the location. If you want to break them down into Supporting Cast and Extras. As you would in a movie. Note there is no ‘Star’ level; that's reserved for the Player Characters. For guidelines on how to create new non-player characters see “Non-player Characters” on page 92.

Events

For each location, write down a possible list of things that could happen. For example, a bar room brawl, an investigation into a lost ancient treasure, a stampede of buffalo that the characters must control or avoid. Five possible events is a good number for a three to five-hour adventure.

90 Hitting the Trail

The Game Session

This section explains what happens in a three to four hour game session.

The Recap

The Referee lets the players recap what happens the last session. This part of the game is a group effort where everybody is allowed to contribute, the reason being that everybody will remember different bits and between the players, they should be able to paint a good picture of events. If the Referee does it, there is not only a danger of the story being told from the referee's point of view but hidden bits of the story, which were not resolved in the open, being told. Also, it saves the Referee's voice for the rest of the session by avoiding the Ref having to do an opening monologue.

During the recap. If there are outstanding book-keeping issues, such as awarding experience (see Characters "Character Advancement" on page 18), sort them out now before play commences.

If you are just starting a new Adventure with new characters, read out or paraphrase the Pitch, go around the table and introduce everyone (real and in character names) before launching into play.

The Action

This part is the main meat of the adventure. Present the location that the characters are in and then let the players get stuck into it. Let them chat and interact with the cast and roleplay their characters. When they suggest outrageous plans, let them enact them. Use the rules in *Playing the Game* where appropriate, only roll the dice if it's essential. As referee keep the game flowing at a pace, which keeps the players are happy. Have slow, talky bits, have fast action parts, and summarise what's happened previously if the players get lost.

Resolution

This part of the game session is almost exclusively the preserve of the Referee. Not because the cooperative nature of the storytelling is breaking done at this point, but because the players will be too busy playing their characters or if the game has naturally reached a conclusion just chatting amongst themselves. So, it's the Referee's job to call time on a game that is satisfying to them and the players.

There tend to be two types of Resolution.

- *Finale.* The adventure naturally comes to an end. The big mysteries are solved, the villain of the piece has been defeated or has escaped, and the story has been 'played out'.
- *Cliff Hanger.* You and the players have either run out of creative energy or time. Frame the ending in a dramatic "...to be continued next episode" way and stop the game there.

During the Resolution, if time allows, players mark changes to their characters as outlined in the Character Advancement Section ("Character Advancement" on page 18) with the Referee's approval.



Running the Game

Non-player Character Fate Points

The Referee has a non-player character fate point pool. At the start of a game session, the pool has 3 fate points per player. For shorter game sessions, under 3 hours, you should reduce the size of the non-player character fate point pool to 2 per player.

The Referee spends fate points from this pool to invoke aspects for her non-player characters, in the same way, that players spend fate points to invoke aspects for characters. Compels on non-player characters do not increase the non-player character fate point pool. Neither does a conceding a contest or conflict (though the Referee is encouraged to do this to speed things up). The non-player character fate point pool refreshes at the beginning of each game session.

Compelling Player Characters

One tip is for you to note a couple of aspects for each player character before the game session begins, and think how you might compel each one over the course of a game session. Of course, you are not restricted to only compelling these aspects- but it's always a good idea to have some ideas for compels in mind- and it may be too much to remember all of the aspects of absolutely every character.

You can change the aspects you "highlight" from game session to game session.

Non-player Characters

You can create major non-player characters in much the same way as player characters, though you don't need to feel constrained by a skill cap, and refresh is irrelevant, so give whatever extras you see fit. Don't worry too much about balance.

Minor non-player characters do not need this amount of detail. Just give them from one to three aspects and a skill level from 1 to 3. This skill level is used instead of a profession for any actions the Non-player character takes. Non-player characters will only take actions consistent with their role; for example, a soldier Non-player character will be no use in a debate, and a court sycophant will be useless in a fight.

In a conflict or contest, a minor non-player character has stress equal to their skill level. Minor Non-player characters do not take consequences.

Non-player Characters and Consequences

It is not usually recommended that a non-player character takes the full run of consequences before losing a contest or conflict- even a fight to the death.

As noted above, a typical unnamed minor Non-player character will not take any consequences. An unnamed non-player character who has a little bit more importance, such as the commander of a group of soldiers, can take a single minor consequence before being removed.

Most named non-player characters will take a minor and a moderate consequence, but not a severe one. When it comes to Non-player characters, severe consequences are reserved for major characters and villains who will appear in climactic or multiple scenes in the game.

Gangs

Groups of minor non-player characters often act together in gangs. A gang gets a single action as a group rather than individual actions, but with a bonus to attacks depending on how many people are in the gang.

2 to 3 members: +1 bonus

4 to 5 members: +2 bonus

6 or more members: +3 bonus

When a player character inflicts damage on a gang, any damage more than their maximum stress bleeds over into the next one in the gang. Thus a good attack can take out several non-player characters at once.

The bonus from numbers only applies to the attack action. It only applies to the overcome and create advantage actions when numbers useful. It does not apply to the defence action.

Failing Forward

Outright failure at a task is not interesting unless it brings complications. So if a player character is contacting criminals to dig out information on an enemy, a failure need not simply mean they don't get vital information they're pursuing- rather it means that they run into trouble with a criminal gang in the meantime, or that the enemy is tipped off.

Similarly, a failure to pick a lock doesn't mean the heroes fail to get the door open. It might mean they must resort to noisy brutal means of opening the door- or the attempt takes so long that guards- or the monster that pursues them- is alerted.

This device isn't everything of course. Sometimes failure is just failure, and no interesting consequences are immediately apparent. That's fine, there's no need to hold the game up trying to think of something that's a perfect fit. But failure on a single roll should not block the story from proceeding.



Chapter 13

The Great Dinosaur Hunt of 1896

The Pitch

“Saddle up! Buffalo Bill is setting up a big hunt to go into the Badlands and hunt down Old Red Eye. You remember that big T-Rex that terrorised Cody a year or two ago. Well, Bill has finally got the stones to go after that critter! He’s looking for adventurers of all sorts to come with him into the Badlands after the terror lizard, and the New Texan Cattle Barons who are financing the whole hunt is putting up a mighty big prize for the beast’s head.”

The characters join Buffalo Bill in a hunting party as he heads into the Badlands to hunt down the monstrous Tyrannosaurs Rex, Old Red Eye.

Are you a Player?

If so stop reading here! The rest of this adventure is for the Referees’ eyes only. If you continue reading you will spoil the story for you and your fellow players.

Perhaps you should go away and think about what sort of character you would like to play in this dinosaur hunting adventure.



For the Referee, before you start

New to Referring?

Before you try to run, this adventure read Chapter 13 Hitting the Trail. This chapter explains the framework that this adventure uses and gives many useful tips on how to run the game.

Also, review the following Chapters in detail.

- Chapter 6 Playing the Game. You will need a substantial appreciation of the rules since even if it's mainly the players invoking the rules, you will be the final adjudicator of rules disputes.
- Chapter 9 People. Several of the cast of this adventure feature in this chapter. I give page references to this chapter rather than reprinting game information provided in Chapter 9, for your convenience.
- Chapter 10 Monsters. Old Red Eye's game information is in this chapter on page 75.
- Chapter 11 Thrilling Locations. This will give you an appreciation of the Badlands (Zone 3).and Lost World (Zone 4) where the adventure takes place.

Remember

- Take a deep breath in, breath out naturally and relax.
- Remember you are there to help everyone have fun.
- Let your players help you. Let them lead the way, and only be direct if they have become lost and confused. Often merely summarising the current situation is enough to get everybody back in the room.
- The text gives many suggestions for actions to run with difficulties. These are examples that you can either run as written to help you and the players get a sense of the rules, or adapt and change as circumstance dictates.

Who are the Characters?

Either create characters using the character creation guidelines presented in Chapter 4 (see page 13).

Or let the players pick one of the ready made characters at the end of this chapter (page 106 onwards)

The former method may take a bit longer, but the players should have a firm attachment to their characters, which they can then take forward through several adventures. The second method allows the players to pick up and play their chosen characters in no time at all.

On the trail of Big Old Red Eye

This adventure is made up of five locations with attendant events and cast. Here's a summary.

Cody, New Texas. Buffalo Bills' town of circus people, where he hires the characters to go hunting the monstrous T-Rex, Old Red Eye.

On the Range in the Badlands. The characters track Old Red through herds of stampeding buffalo, small slashing dinosaurs, consult wise Native American chiefs.

The Pass Through the Skyreach Mountains. The characters find an ancient, mysterious way using ancient technology through the otherwise impassable mountains.

Into the Lost World. Dodge docile herbivores and dart gun wielding tribesmen.

The Ziggurat of Doom. The finale. An unexpected sacrifice that only the characters can stop threatens the return of an ancient foe of humankind.

Location: Cody, New Texas

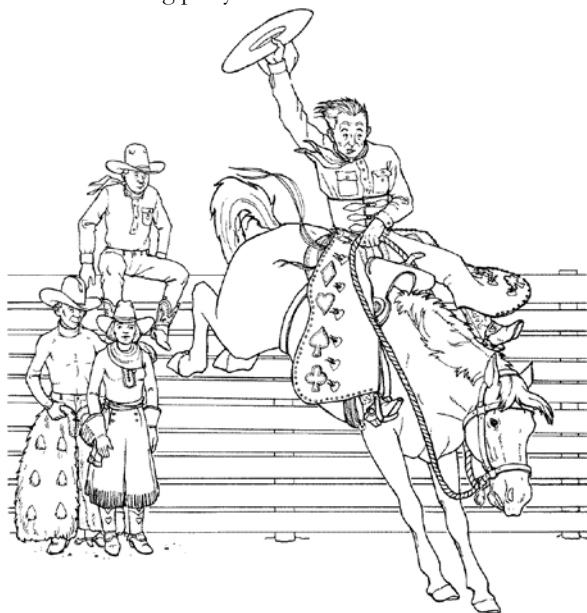
The adventure starts in Buffalo Bill's town of Cody, a gentle and peaceful town in the far reaches of New Texas. A good three days ride from Stevenson.

Cody is detailed in Chapter 11 Thrilling Locations on page 83.

Cast List

- Buffalo Bill (see page 55).
- The player characters.

If short on players, use some of the ready-made characters (See Chapter 13 Example Characters) to fill out the hunting party.



Event: Joining the Expedition

Buffalo Bill sits behind a makeshift desk in the town's square as men and women queue up to join the hunt. He talks to them quietly, learns a bit about them, and then quietly shakes his head and dismisses them. Before the characters arrive most of the applicants are glory hunters completely unqualified to join the hunt. Bill repeats this process with the player characters, and it's a good opportunity to introduce themselves publicly

Here are Bill's Questions:

"Name?"

"Where you from?"

"What do you do?"

"Why do you think you are qualified to join my dinosaur hunt? What skills do you think you have that are going to help you not get stomped on by a three-story-high T-Rex or shot full of arrows by Indians?"

Of course, the players should easily convince Bill that they are suitable for the job. If in doubt have the character roll an overcome action. Use their highest Profession vs. a difficulty of two. It's also worth doing this if the players are new to the system to give them a demo of how actions work. If the character still fails, let the player come up with a story of how the character tags along with the expedition unnoticed until they are well on their way.

When they are hired Buffalo Bill outlines the reward, a bounty of \$10,000 for Old Red Eye's death, that the Cattle Barons of New Texas are providing, and the freedom of Cody which Bill will grant them for their successful help.

Event: Gathering Supplies and heading off

Once the characters have joined up, they can source equipment for the journey. Minor things like tools, rope and provisioned are available on request. If any of the characters have not got a horse, Bill will provide one. More exotic items require an overcome Action to source against a Difficulty of 4 or even 6 for extremely hard to obtain items.

Event: Getting Help

What if the players want to get more help? One option is to go and get help from nearby Cassidy and Montaña Ranches and enlist help there. The heads of both are loath to release their men due to ongoing problems with the Native Americans. They see Old Red Eye as Buffalo Bill's problem and a problem of his making, an attempt to get in one last big game kill. So, players will have to employ charm as well as reasoning to get help. Run a simple Action against a difficulty of 6. If the character(s) convince the head (either Big John from Cassidy/Victor Montaña from the Montaña Ranch), they walk away with five ranch hands (see page 56 for Cassidy Cowboys and page 58 for Montaña Vaqueros), if not they leave with nothing. A less challenging route to gaining help, which requires an overcome Action against a difficulty of two, is to appeal to the headstrong and reckless members of either ranch. From the Montaña Ranch Emilio will readily join the hunt if it is framed as an exciting adventure while from the Cassidy Ranch Red wants to prove himself, which drags in Uncle Dan to look after the headstrong youth.

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Location: On the Range in the Badlands

The adventure gets underway properly as the hunters cross over the New Texan border into the Badlands. The emphasis in your description should be the moment in which the gently rolling plains turn into the more broken rocky dry land. Buffalo Bill will also explain the need for caution since they are on Native American land, and the Native Americans are currently on the warpath.

Cast List

- A Rampaging Herd of Buffalo.
- Chief Black Wolf (see page 62).
- Velociraptors (see page 71).

Event: Tracking Old Red Eye

Get the players to explain how they are tracking the Tyrannosaurus. Roll an overcome action vs. a difficult of 4 if necessary. Once they pick up the trail (or not as the case may be), the group moves forward into the Badlands.

Event: Stampeding Buffalo

The hunters encounter a massive herd of Buffalo, at least 200 individual beasts, which stampeding out of control through a landscape of your choice. For example, a restricted canyon with lots of rocks to jump onto to get out of the way, or a flat plain where the characters have to outrun the stampede.

At the back of the stampede is the source of the chaos, a pack of five Velociraptors who are attacking the herd.

From a distance, a group of Native American, Chief Black Wolf and five Braves, watch the stampede of their Buffalo.

Many actions may be relevant here, depending what the players want to do.

For example:

Spot Black Wolf and his Braves. Use a profession like Scout versus a difficulty of 4 (2 base +2 because they are a long way away).

Stop the stampede. The Cowboy profession, or similar farmer/herder profession, is the obvious one to use here. It's quite a hard difficulty to beat using an overcome action, (a base of 2 plus 2 for the large numbers of buffalo's stampeding, plus 2 for the Velociraptors inspiring terror in the herd, making a total of 6).

Face and fight the velociraptors. Run a Conflict here using the Velociraptors' profile as given on page 71. There are five of these horrible small slashing dinosaurs. Once the characters have defeated the Velociraptors, think about the game's pacing. If the players seem up for it run the Stop the Stampede overcome action against a difficulty of 4 (now that the dinosaurs are out then the extra two that they brought into the difficulty is gone). If the conflict dragged on, let the defeat of the dinosaurs bring the automatic calming of the herd.

Event: Help from the Native Americans

Chief Black Wolf and his Braves are on the warpath against the settlers of New Texas, so any negotiations with them will be with someone they at least halfway view as a friend. If the character has the Native American Friend extra, they will be more open. If the players have calmed the Buffalo herd down and driven off or killed the Velociraptors, Black Wolf is more than happy to talk to them, no Action rolls required.

Black Wolf can tell the characters that their war party's shaman, Porcupine Bull, was responsible for the appearance of the Velociraptors. He walked into the wilderness away from the group, which is his want to talk to the Great Spirit, and returned with the vicious dinosaurs which followed him around like trained dogs. When he was questioned he merely said they were "The Hell upon which I will release upon my enemies".

Then this morning one of the Braves caught him walking out of the camp, determinedly in the direction of the Sky Reach Mountains. When questioned briefly, he answered, "I go to find Old Red Eye and take him home beyond the mountains". Then all hell broke out as the Native Americans discovered that the Buffalo, which they had herded together the previous day to take back to their people, were being attacked by the Velociraptors.

Event: Heading up Towards the Mountains.

After getting the tip of from Black Wolf, it is quite easy to find Old Red Eye's trail as he has stomped through the brush that extends all the way up to the Mountains. If characters are looking for Porcupine Bull's tracks, ask for an overcome action roll using Scout or similar profession against a difficulty of 4 (2 + an additional two because of Old Red Eye's tracks obscuring everything else). If they succeed they find the old shaman's footprints for a good five hundred metres from the Native American camp until they meet with Old Red Eye's. It was at this point that the shaman dominated the T-Rex and mounted it for a ride.



Location: The Pass-Through the Skyreach Mountains

These tall, imposing mountains reach up to the Sky, hence their name. They are eerily uninhabited, and if the hunters took the time to climb and explore them, they would find Atlantean ruins from pre-historic times.

Cast List

- The Guardian: Don Carlos (see page 61).

Event: Meeting Don Carlos and finding out what has happened.

Old Red Eye's tracks lead up to the base of the mountain and promptly disappear.

Old Red Eye has passed through a Hyper-Dimensional Tunnel, which was opened by Porcupine Bull. Don Carlos, who has also been tracking them, witnessed this and had been hiding in some nearby undergrowth. When the hunters appear, he reveals himself after they've poked around where the tracks vanish.

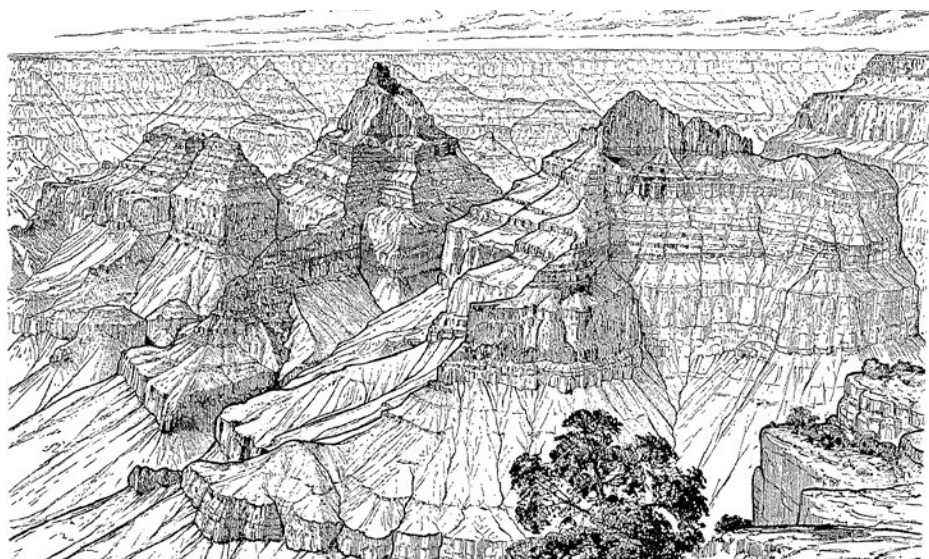
Any character with the Occult or Magical background can automatically sense the presence of the Hyper-Dimensional Tunnel.

Event: Going through the Tunnel

The tunnel is not a physical tunnel but a magical tunnel which opens a "Hyper Corridor" between the two gates, one on the Badlands side and the other on the Lost World side.

Don Carlos will explain this to the characters before reciting the chant to open it up. What he'll keep to himself, but explain if he feels any of the characters are worthy and the ask directly, was this corridor was used before The Fall so that Atlanteans of high enough spiritual standing could visit the city of Agarthra on the other side of the mountains.

At this point, he offers to come with the characters.



Location: Into the Lost World

Following the trail of destruction left by Old Red Eye, the characters proceed through a pre-historic jungle that gradually becomes Jurassic in nature.

Cast List

- Jungle Tribesmen (see below for profile).
- Triceratops (see page 71).

Event: These are unlike any plants I've seen before

As the characters go through the jungle, they notice after a couple of hours that the jungle becomes different. The plants and insect life become giant. The trees are like no trees that they've seen before. Scholars who have a historical interest can quickly work out that it's almost like they've gone back in time to the Age of the Dinosaurs, without the need of an Action.

Event: Peacefully grazing

As the characters make their way through the jungle, they encounter in a clearing a feeding Triceratops.

If they've been hacking and slashing their way through the jungle, without care to how much noise they make, it's an overcome action of difficulty 6 to avoid an angry herbivore cross and alarmed that its meal has been disturbed. If any of the characters fail, they gain the aspect "knocked prone into the undergrowth", which the Primitive Tribesmen (see Dart and Run below) can invoke once when they burst into the clearing alerted by the noise.

If the adventurers have taken a more cautious approach to their travels in the jungle, reduce the difficulty to two, and even if disturbed the Triceratops is much calmer, giving the characters chance to retreat even if they blunder into it quickly.

If the characters have crept up on the Triceratops' clearing, they can easily create an advantage by beating a difficulty of two, by throwing a rock to the other side of the clearing and distracting the beast. They can then invoke Triceratops' aspect of "Distracted" to help them slip around it undetected.



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Event: Dart and Run

Primitive Tribesmen with their dart guns lurk in the dense undergrowth surrounding clearing that the Triceratops is in, in an attempt to ambush the hunters.

Use a contest (see page 35) to determine whether or not the Tribesmen get the jump on the characters or if the characters notice them. If the characters lose, they could end up paralysed by the poison on the Tribesmen's dart and possibly being carried off to the Ziggurat as potential sacrifices (see The Ziggurat of Doom below). If they win, the Tribesmen, scatter and run, unless the characters actively try to stop them. If the characters won in style, they could do this automatically. Otherwise, it triggers another contest.

Tribesman

Aspects: Tough and skilled hunter, Fast and agile like a monkey.

Trouble: Live in fear of the dinosaurs and serpent men.

Profession: Hunter +3.

Stress: 1.

Of course, this event may have already been triggered when the characters were charged by the enraged Triceratops (see above).



Location: The Ziggurat of Doom

This location is an old Serpent Man temple from the time of their empire in the hollow earth thousands of years ago. Most of the time it is abandoned, occasionally used by the serpent men priesthood to perform human sacrifice to strengthen their collective magic. Today a more sinister sacrifice is being planned.

Cast List

- Old Red Eye (see page 75).
- Porcupine Bull (see page 62).
- Jaguar Warriors (see page 67).
- Primitive tribesmen (see above for profile).
- The Great Winged Serpent (see page 72).

Event: The Sacrifice

Initially, Old Red Eye lies sleeping belly up on top of the Ziggurat, snoring loudly.

Four Jaguar Warriors stand guard over the dinosaur.

A crowd of about forty primitives mill around the base of the Ziggurat chanting and drumming.

Porcupine Bull in full Serpent Man priest robes, snakeskin headdress, strolls up to the Ziggurat's stairs, with a jade dagger in hand.

If he is not stopped, he plunges the dagger into Old Red Eye's chest, ripping it open and then pulls out the still beating heart. As Old Red Eye dies thrashing about, a sinister snake-like shape appears in the air (see The Great Winged Serpent Manifests).

Of course, it is highly likely that the players, once they twig that something odd is about to happen, will try to stop it. Let them be creative and come up with big bold plans to halt the sacrifice of the Old Red Eye. If the T-Rex awakens from his drug induced slumber, this could result in a drugged Old Red Eye stomping around, completely out of Porcupine Bull's control, trashing tribesmen and anybody who gets in his way. Use Old Red Eye's profile on page 75 but with the aspect "Groggy and Drugged", which the characters can freely invoke.

This should all be run as a contest (see page 35). The referee should take careful note of who is involved. The active combatants are likely to be the Jaguar Warriors who protect Porcupine Bull, who will be trying to summon the Great Winged Serpent. He will successfully do this in three rounds (see The Great Winged Serpent Manifests). The Tribesmen will run interference round the base of the Ziggurat, but they are timid foes, and the characters will merely need to come up with some plan to scare them off. If they engage them in combat, they will run away after the first round that they lose. If the characters fail to remove them, the tribesmen as their action will create the advantage "Tribesmen getting in the way" that the Jaguar Warriors will be able to use at least once (more if the Tribesmen succeed with style).

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Event: The Great Winged Serpent Manifests

If the Old Porcupine achieves the manifestation of the Supreme Serpent Leader, then he and the Jaguar Warriors will take the Great Winged Serpent away into the deep Jungle. As well as all the magical energy expended to create the gate at the Ziggurat, the Great Winged Serpent is weak from the gate it created at the Agarthan end to escape; it has a Stress score of 7 but has the Major Consequence Greatly drained of energy. The primitive tribesmen will defend the Ziggurat as the Great Winged Serpent escapes, preventing the Hunters following them.

Resolution

The Finale to this adventure is either a bloody confrontation with the Union of the Snake Members, where the players triumph through force of arms, or a hard-fought battle where despite their best efforts the Great Winged Serpent disappears into the Deep Jungle, into some old serpent man city. If the latter the characters lick their wounds and return to Cody to recover. If the latter the survivors go back to Cody, wondering what threat in the future the Great Winged Serpent represents. Or players being players, they will come up with some cunning plan to take out Porcupine Bull and prevent the sacrifice of Old Red Eye, who they will probably decide correctly is best left alone (although Buffalo Bill may have other ideas). If your cunning players take this middle way, encourage them, help them create advantages to support their final actions and revel in their victory, for it is yours too!

Rewards and Consequences

In addition to the regular opportunities for character change (See Chapter 4 Characters, Character Advancement page 18), the outcome of the adventure may modify the characters for better or for a. All the characters may write the aspect “Participant in the Great Dinosaur Hunt of 1896”.

If any of the characters were especially friendly towards the Black Wolf and his Braves, returning Porcupine Bull safely without any influence of the serpent men especially gains favour with them, gains the characters involved the extra Native American Friend (see page 25).

If the characters maintained a positive relationship with Buffalo Bill and were successful in the hunt, they gain the aspect “Freedom of the Town of Cody” and are welcome there any time they are in town. Conversely, if the hunt is a failure and the characters have misbehaved towards Bill in the proces they will gain the aspect “Reviled in the Town of Cody”.

If the hunters failed to stop the Great Winged Serpent escaping, they gain the Trouble “Enemy of the Great Winged Serpent” in addition to the Trouble they have from character creation. This represents the fact the Great Winged Serpent, ruler of all the Serpent Men, is now their nemesis and that will attempt to cause them harm at every given opportunity through its agents, many of who are hidden in human society.

Opportunities for Further Adventures

Rather than being a beginning and an end in itself, this adventure could be used as a springboard to other thrilling stories.

Here are some suggestions.

The Rise of the Serpents

Even without the guidance of the Great Winged Serpent, the serpent men are gathering their forces to overthrow humankind. Their initial targets are the settlers of New Texas. The Union of the Snake rallies their followers in the Native American Warbands and disciples hidden in the towns rise and conduct a campaign of terror and mayhem. Once New Texas is a desolate ruin, they mass their forces to attack Stevenson.

Return to the Ziggurat of Doom

After the characters' return to civilisation, they are contacted by an agent of the Rosy Cross, who is interested in the contents of the Ziggurat itself. As well as the terrors of the Jungle, the dinosaurs and tribesmen (who consider the Ziggurat sacred ground and taboo to outsiders), the characters have to deal with a rival expedition sponsored by F.J. Stevenson and made up of his men the Stevensons. A race to see who gets to the abandoned Serpent Man Temple first ensues.

Buffalo Bills Wild West Show at the Centre of the Hollow Earth

If the characters impressed this Wild West Hero during the adventure, he in return could act as a patron providing the characters with a steady stream of adventures. Bill has his fingers in many pies. As well as being the leader of the Wild West Show, which with its oddball cast of performers is an adventure in itself, he has an active interest in foiling the plots of F.J. Stevenson, improving relations between the Native Americans and the New Texans, and of course hunting down any wandering Dinosaurs. Once he is aware of the machinations of the Union of the Snake, which is a highly likely outcome of this adventure, he will ask the players to investigate on his behalf.

Jeremiah Killingbach

"Killing is my Business, and Business is good!"

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Preacher turned bounty hunter..

Background:

Proud Confederate veteran of the Civil War.

Destiny:

Looking for Old Gilliam's Coffin of Gold.

Belief:

Wealth and riches will let me start a new life.

Trouble:

Haunted by his violent past.

Professions

- Solider +3.
- Scout +2.
- Preacher +2.

EXTRAS

Fight Dirty

When the character is fighting dirty, they get +2 to their roll in hand to hand brawling.

When a Man with a Rifle Meets a Man with a Pistol

When armed with a rifle in a gunfight, you get the jump on a character with a pistol. For your first roll, you have +2 bonus. The bonus is part practical experience, part egotism.



STRESS

○○○

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 2

Mildred Morgan

"I hear ya'll know who killed my William, I'd appreciate ya spillin' he beans on that one"

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Sassy and independent ex-tavern owner.

Background:

Exciting and exuberant showgirl.

Destiny:

Out to find husband's killers.

Belief:

The world is a playground and full of fun.

Trouble:

Doesn't know when to shut up.

PROFESSIONS

- Performer +3.
- Detective +2.
- Rogue +2.

EXTRAS

Charming

The character can charm the pants off anyone and has +1 when trying to influence someone.

Hostess with the Mostest

The character can throw a party for a community, which will draw even the reclusive out of hiding, once per session. The party needs a minimum of planning or materials at hand. The character's charm and charisma at such events gives a +1 to roll.



STRESS

○○○

CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 2

Dr Jonathan Black

"You'll find the Unknown forces predict that the probability is high today I'll get my reward"

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Sharpshooting occultist, player of chance and luck

Background:

I heard the call from the Hollow Earth and I came!

Destiny:

Looking for Argrarha, the Enlightened City, hidden in the Hollow Earth.

Belief:

I talk to spirits on the other side.

Trouble:

Pursued by the Order of the Rosy Cross.

PROFESSIONS

- Gunslinger +2.
- Occultist +3.
- Rogue +2.

EXTRAS

Guardian Angel

The character has a supernatural Guardian Angel who looks after them. Once per session, they can get away from danger scot free. For example, they escape a gunfight, or miraculously avoid injury from being shot in the head.

Divination

This magical ability uses a standard deck of cards to predict the future. It requires concentration and a quiet area to conduct the divination that takes at least a scene. The Referee should then reveal an aspect of the future that the player may invoke for free when they encounter it. These aspects are never particular and quite vague.



STRESS

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 3

Billy Boy Roberts

"Yee haw! I'm going West to get me some riches, some boozing and some wimmin! Yee haw!"

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Wild hard living Cowboy.

Background:

A rude cow-poke from Texas.

Destiny:

To be the best cowboy in the Hollow West!

Belief:

I like the ladies and the ladies like me.

Trouble:

Wants to be the centre of attention.

PROFESSIONS

- Cowboy +3.
- Scout +2.
- Rogue +2.

EXTRAS

Shoot from the Saddle

The character is never penalised for shooting while riding a horse. Indeed, they gain a +1 bonus because they are so at home.

Unlikely hero

Once per session, when you spend a fate point on an aspect when doing the right thing rather the wrong thing, you get a +4 rather than a +2 bonus to your action.

Tough

+1 Stress



STRESS

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 2

Lady Margaret

"You, yes you over there, will you please kindly help a lady with her luggage?"

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Aristocratic lady/con artist

Background:

Well connected in High Society.

Destiny:

Looking for a place in the Hollow West to settle down.

Belief:

There's always a man who will do it for me.

Trouble:

A con artist on the run from the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

PROFESSIONS

- Aristocrat +2.
- Rogue +3.
- Gunslinger +2.

EXTRAS

A Scoundrel in Every Town

Once per session, your character can find an 'old friend' who can help with the task in hand.

Disguise

By spending 1 fate point, the character can take on flawlessly the appearance of any other person.



STRESS

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 3

Professor Susan Smith

"I'm on a field trip to find artefacts for my latest paper, and after fifteen years in that stuffy University, you bet I'm having fun!"

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Whip snapping hands-on archaeologist.

Background:

Bored Academic. from the surface.

Destiny:

Discover ruins found in the Hollow West.

Belief:

There's a common secret history.

Trouble:

Hard livin' and hard drinkin'.

PROFESSIONS

- Scholar +3.
- Gunslinger +2.
- Scout +2.

EXTRAS

Decipher Ancient Script

Once per session, the character can automatically translate an ancient script and interpret its meaning.

Professor

This extra provides both social status and practical advantages. Your character has +2 to any Action that involves the authorities or dealing with academic institutions or staff.



STRESS

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 2

Swift Hawk

"Bring me the Horizon and I'll bring you the future"

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Adventurous Native American Brave.

Background:

A resilient survivor who fought in the Indian Wars.

Destiny:

To explore new lands for his people.

Belief:

With a whole new world to discover, he is optimistic the future is bright.

Trouble:

His temper gets the better of him.

PROFESSIONS

- Warrior +3.
- Shaman +2.
- Scout +2.

EXTRAS

Faultless Tracker

The trail has gone cold, or was far too faint and implausible to pick up in the first place, but not for this experienced tracker. Once per session, they can find a trail that leads them to their target without rolling.

Medicine Man

The character has learned the Native American's arts of healing, using herbalism and other methods frowned upon by orthodox Doctors. This gives them an extra go at healing a character where 'white man's medicine' has failed or does not apply.



STRESS

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 3

Emily Wildheart

"I'm just getting my hands dirty, just like the menfolk do."

ASPECTS

Portrayal:

Independent and driven Cowgirl.

Background:

Daughter of a murdered ranch owner.

Destiny:

To build a new life in the Hollow West.

Belief:

One day she'll have a ranch and thousands of cattle just like her daddy.

Trouble:

If someone tells her what not to do its like a red flag to a bull.

PROFESSIONS

- Cowgirl +3.
- Trader +2.
- Scout +2.

EXTRAS

Quick

A character with this extra always goes first in a conflict, unless facing an opponent who also has this extra. The Referee cannot pay a fate point to go first.

Ride'm Cowboy

The character is an experienced horse rider and gains +2 for any action involving horses or riding.



STRESS

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CONSEQUENCES

Mild (2):

Moderate (4):

Severe (6):

FATE POINTS

Refresh: 2

Chapter 14

The Great Secret at the Centre of the Hollow Earth

After reading all this book, you might be thinking how this grab bag of a setting can even exist? After all, it mixes Cowboys, Native Americans, Aztec warriors, occult conspiracies, enlightened humans of Extra Terrestrial origin, their devilish reptilian opponents, six shooters, pyramids, lost ruins, and of course dinosaurs all at the centre of a Hollow Earth?

Well, the answer is simple: It can because it exists in the collective imagination of its inhabitants.

To explain some more, the Hollow Earth is not a physical place at all. Once you enter it through one of the Gates at the end of the long deep winding road through the massive cave systems that connect it to the surface world, you enter a pocket dimension where thoughts and imaginings affect the solid composition more heavily than they do in our reality of 'Surface Earth'.

That is to say, if a refugee people need a jungle of prehistoric plants where their Dinosaur servants can thrive, like the Serpent Men did when they arrived in prehistory, then the Hollow Earth will create such an area for them. It's not an accident that the Cowboys from the Wild West found a place so uncannily like the wilderness that they were used to, complete with chaparrals, mesas, deserts and plains that they called it New Texas. If they understood the metaphysics of the place, then they would have realised it was inevitable.

Scientists will continue to scratch their heads about the slow almost imperceptible passing of the seasons and how Old Smokey hangs in the 'sky' and provides a consecutive night and day until they embrace mysticism and realise that these things happen because humans need them to happen for them to live there. Perhaps then they will start the journey through the zones of the Hollow Earth. From the ignorance and reliance on the materialism of Stevenson, through the new beginnings and clash of ideologies of New Texas, to the darkness and fear of the Badlands, to the glimpse of what could be buried beneath total terror of the Lost World, to finally Enlightenment in Agartha.

Perhaps one of the Agarthans will explain the Great Secret when they get there.

Happy Trails

;O) Newt

September 2017

Why Have I Written This?

When I was little (7 -9 years) in the 70s I loved Cowboys, Indians and Dinosaurs. TV series like the High Chaparral and the Lone Ranger were staples of my Saturday Morning Viewing, along with many Cowboy films. I saw the Ray Harryhausen film "Valley of the Gwangi" which mingled Cowboys and Dinosaurs together in one film, and it stuck in my mind forever. Also, a staple of Saturday/Sunday afternoon TV at the time were a slew of "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" movies. Based on the works of Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs' Pellucidar series which stamped indelibly in my imagination the equally tantalising and terrifying concept of a primitive but forgotten Hollow World. My young mind also mixed in the film adaptations of Edgar Rice Burroughs' The Land that Time Forgot and Sir Conan Doyle's Lost World.

Now that I'm bigger, I still love Cowboys, Indians (expanded to include the Aztecs) and Dinosaurs as much as did when I was a youngster glued to the TV. I want to Journey to the Centre of Earth, just not as a subject of the British Empire dressed in a Pith Helmet. I want to carry a Colt.45 and wear a Stetson hat. I also sneakily want to blend in the cowboy movies of my teenage years, The Spaghetti Westerns, and bring the tension and horror of modern day monster movies.

The Hollow West is my attempt to transfer this movie that is playing inside my head to the outside world.



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The Hollow West

Name:

Aspects

Portrait

Professions

Extras

Stress



Consequences

Fate Points

Refresh =