

SAVAGE TALES of Horror

SAVAGE
WORLDS



2

SAVAGE TALES

of Horror

Volume 2

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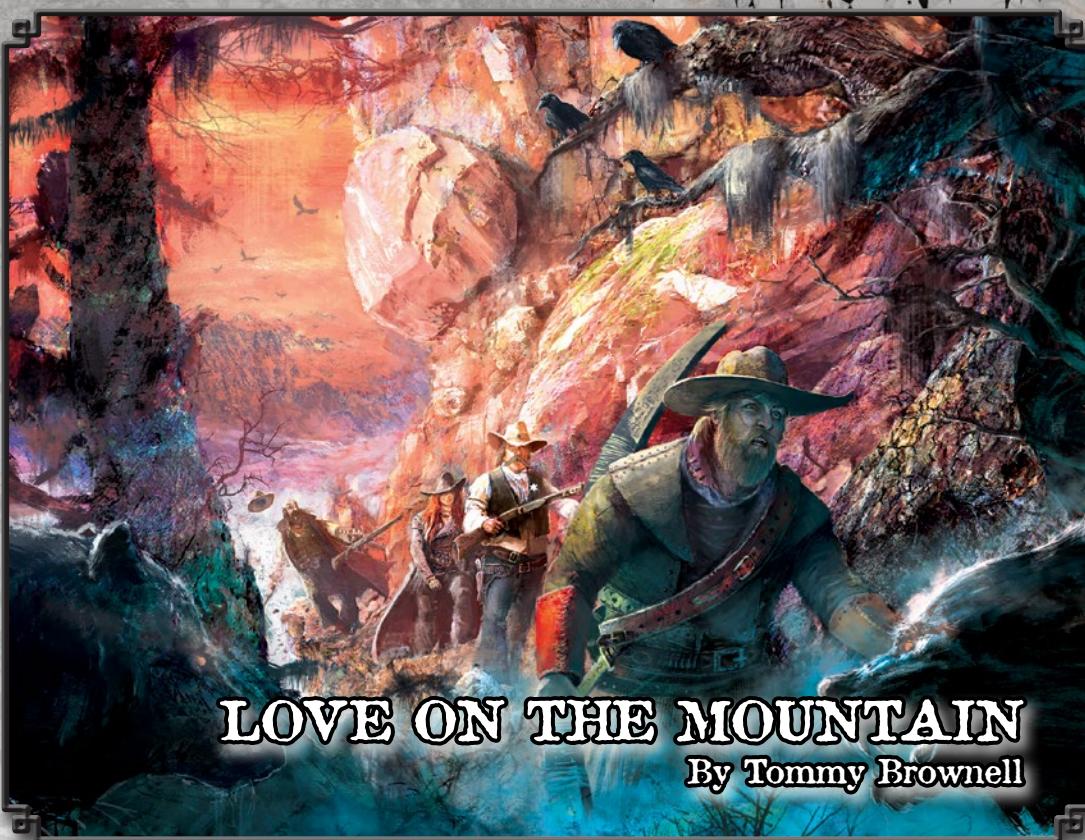
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Entries marked with a  symbol are Wild Cards.



LOVE ON THE MOUNTAIN

By Tommy Brownell

True love is hard to find, and a father's love can be a difficult obstacle for a well-meaning young suitor to contend with. When Merle King first laid eyes on the alluring and mysterious Jo Ann Clifton, he knew he had to marry that girl and take her Back East with him. Surely no one could object to their daughter marrying the eldest son of William Markham King, one of the most powerful bankers and investors in the Union? Claude Clifton was not impressed and flatly refused to give his daughter's hand in marriage.

The posse, fresh off their latest adventure and unwinding in a boom town bolstered by the free purse strings of prospectors, witnesses a tense encounter between the dapper Merle and the grizzly Claude, which stops just short of violence. A despondent Merle explains to the posse that Claude is holding his daughter against her will up on his mountain. He pleads to their sense of romance to help him navigate the wilds of the mountain and reach Jo Ann. Merle would pay them, of course, but his last guides merely took his money and laughed as he screamed threats of retribution at them. If the posse is willing to confront the first guides, a thuggish set of hired guns, Merle gladly turns the pay over to them.

The mountain strikes a foreboding presence and tests even the hardiest outdoorsmen, as branches and brush thicken and slow the path up the mountain, and predatory animals stalk the posse. The animals on the mountain work in concert, and the birds signal ahead, warning Claude about the posse's every move. At the end of the first night of travel, a pack of wolves attacks the camp, disrupting the posse's sleep and attempting to steal whatever food or provisions they can.

Claude soon stalks his prey, using his knowledge of the mountain and the assistance of the manitou-possessed wildlife to help him keep the posse from reaching his home on the mountain. Ultimately, the posse has to decide whether or not to try and sway him to their side. The decision has grave ramifications on the resolution of their task, for Jo Ann, bitten by a wild animal and dying, was saved when her father's prayers were answered by something older than the Reckoners! Now she is a savage abomination who is trying to escape the mountain, host to an eldritch entity wanting to reclaim its place back in the world and feast on what has come since. The servants of the Reckoners are actually trying to keep the

posse off the mountain, and if the posse frees the creature that used to be Jo Ann, they are in for a war!

CHARACTERS

This adventure is meant to be dropped into an existing campaign. Any type of character who is a sucker for a sob story, a romantic at heart, or at least available for hire is appropriate for this adventure, as this should cover most of the likely reasons for the posse to get involved in this sordid tale. Characters should have some sense of how to handle themselves out in the wild, so Survival and Tracking skills are greatly beneficial, as is the Wilderness Man Edge.

If you want to create characters specifically for this adventure, use the following guidelines:

- Characters are Seasoned Rank.
- One or more characters should have Tracking and Survival of at least a d6, but a d8 or better wouldn't hurt...trust us.

If you are using this adventure in an existing campaign, the only thing you really need to worry about is whether or not your posse agrees to help Merle.

KNOWING WHEN TO LET GO...

Claude Clifton sure loves his daughter Jo Ann, more than anything in the world. A stunning young beauty with many suitors, Jo Ann proved to be as much a source of anxiety for Claude as she was happiness. When his wife, Ethel, fell ill during a particularly harsh winter two years ago, Claude begged the people of Fire Ridge to help, but Doc Looney refused to make the trip for the intimidating bear of a man. Instead, he gave Claude a tonic and sent him on his way. Claude gave the medicine to Ethel, but he and Jo Ann were left watching in horror as Ethel had a violent reaction to the tonic and died on the cold floor of their cabin. Claude marched back across the snow and tried to rip Doc Looney apart in revenge, but several townsfolk managed to restrain him and lock him up. It was only the pleas of his daughter Jo Ann that ultimately spared Claude from

Unfamiliar with Deadlands?

If you aren't familiar with *Deadlands*, you'll need to make a few tweaks to get the full use out of this adventure:

“Magic” Bill Higgins is no longer a Hexslinger or a Huckster, but instead has Arcane Background (Magic).

References to Fate Chips should be replaced with Bennies.

Deadlands uses the Guts setting rule. If you choose not to use it, then substitute Spirit rolls for the Guts skill.

Ignore references to Fear Levels.

Finally, we reference The Reckoners a little bit. In the Deadlands mythos, Reckoners are ancient spirits who have manifested as The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and feed off fear.

prison. Claude, filled with anger and distrust towards the more civilized world, took Jo Ann to the mountains overlooking Fire Ridge, where he built them a new home. Jo Ann didn't argue — much — feeling as though taking care of her father should be her responsibility now. Nobody in Fire Ridge missed them very much.

Except Merle King.

Merle King first headed west to carry out some business for his father, banker and investor William Markham King, when he reached Fire Ridge and immediately fell in love with the beautiful Jo Ann Clifton. Unlike her usual suitors, Merle couldn't ride a horse, shoot a gun, trap a squirrel, or track a deer, but he could write the most endearingly corny poetry a girl had ever heard. Jo Ann found herself attracted to the surprising gentleman from Back East, a fact she kept concealed from her father. The two pursued their affair behind his back, an act none of her previous suitors had been brave enough for, but Claude Clifton was no fool. One night as Merle King slipped home from a rendezvous, Claude gave pursuit, trapping him in the woods, beating him fiercely, and putting a fright into him. Most folks would have learned their lesson there.

Not Merle King.

King vowed he and Jo Ann would be wed, and he would take her away from the frontier town and back home to Massachusetts, far



away from Claude Clifton and his domineering ways...and that's when Ethel Clifton died. While Merle struggled to regain full use of his lame leg, Jo Ann visited him one last time to tell him she was leaving with her father, to care for him in his grief. Merle King hasn't seen Jo Ann now in two long years, only occasionally crossing paths with her father when he ventures into Fire Ridge. Merle is set on confronting Claude and that mountain and freeing Jo Ann once and for all, but it's difficult finding men who will take him. Townfolks say the beasts of the mountain speak to Claude and warn him of intruders...but Merle has a lot of money and a lot of will, and has vowed to find a way.

Unfortunately for Merle, there is no Jo Ann left to save. Eight months ago Jo Ann was bitten by a wild animal and took ill like her mother. Claude exhausted every natural cure he knew and when nothing worked, he turned to prayer. Whatever answered his prayers was not The Good Lord and when Jo Ann woke up, she was very different. Twisted, even. Claude knew his daughter was gone, but he couldn't bring himself to put her to rest, even if she were really a demon wearing Jo Ann's face. So Claude has locked his daughter away in his cabin and taken to sleeping in a cave in the wilds, still leaving food for the creature wearing her face, unable to end her wretched existence and ever fearful that someone will release the abomination that was Jo Ann upon the world.

Someone like Merle King.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MOUNTAIN

There's not much in this world that makes the Reckoners nervous, but whatever was resting in the mountain is very old, very evil, and operating on a very different agenda than the Reckoners. Or rather, it was in prime position to snack on the fear the Reckoners like to gorge themselves on. When it heard Claude Clifton's desperate prayers and woke up, it used his love and desperation to gain access to Jo Ann's body, and a vessel with which to assault the physical world. Claude was smart enough to realize things had gone very, very wrong.

Luckily for him, he didn't have to figure out how to stop this creature wearing his daughter's face.

No, the Reckoners gave him all the information he needed to know to bind "Jo Ann" to her home, and then helped him learn the secrets of the mountain to keep anyone from reaching her. They unleashed a swarm of lesser manitous to possess the animals of the mountain to act as Claude's eyes and ears against intruders. The ancient power living in the mountain has unintentionally warped the mountain as well, causing a multitude of strange occurrences to befall travelers over the years.

The Power in the Mountain wearing Jo Ann's face is very weak and vulnerable, but if it ever truly got free, it could perhaps force its way to the Reckoners' dinner table, and that's something they just cannot stand for.

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

The adventure begins with the posse recuperating from their last adventure, having had a good night's sleep and a warm bath (if they're into that sort of thing), before taking care of any necessary business around town. Around 1 pm in the afternoon, Merle King and Claude Collins cross paths as Claude gathers a few supplies in Jeremiah Joshua's Supplies & Fresh Market. If any of the posse are present for this, they can witness the beginning of the confrontation. If not, don't worry, it spills into the street soon enough. Read or paraphrase the following, depending on where the posse is when the argument begins:

The banter in the Market falls silent as a burly man draped in animal skins enters the building. His eyes practically glow white under the caked mud—and blood—on his face. The slobber on his bottom lip catches the light, or else you might not have spotted his mouth in his beard. He moves about the market, shoving aside anyone that doesn't move out of his way, scooping up supplies. More than one person would need, for sure. Most folk part for him, but a well-dressed man, in his early 30s if you guessed, stands firm between the Mountain Man and Jeremiah's son Bartholomew, attempting to stand as

tall as he can, though he wavers ever so slightly.

The dapper man has sweat beading on his brow and his hands are flexing nervously.

"Out of my way, King."

Claude's hands are obviously full, so he's not an immediate threat to violence. Anyone watching Merle closely notices the nervous energy, but doesn't see a weapon. Anyone succeeding on a Common Knowledge roll doubts Merle would know what to do with a gun if he had one.

"King", as the Mountain Man called him, balls up his fists.

"You can't keep her away from me forever, Claude."

"The Hell I can't, boy. I'll be rottin' in the ground before you get near Jo Ann again. Now go home to your Momma before I bend you over my knee in front of everybody."

Several of the men in the market snicker at that, despite being nervous at the mountain man's presence. King's face turns bright red as the Mountain Man steps past him.

"You listen here, Claude...I will take that mountain and I will free your daughter from your hands and I WILL go back home, but she is coming with me to be my wife, because I love her and she..."

At this point, Claude spins and slings handfuls of food onto Merle, and lunges in to hit him. Any posse member who is watching for violence can attempt to beat Claude in a normal initiative draw. If no one tries to stop the conflict, Claude knocks Merle to the ground, then begins a savage beating, culminating in throwing Merle out of the market and into the mud. At this point, he draws a knife and grabs a handful of Merle's hair, pulling his head back. If no one has intervened at this point, the town marshal fires his gun into the air and gets Claude's attention.

If the posse gets involved, Claude backs off without any violence, not because he fears any one or two individuals, but because he fears the whole town deciding to lynch him. Claude won't

turn tail and run, but he extracts himself from the situation. Note that Claude sheaths his knife and backs up before any posse member attacks, based on their reaction. If someone shoots him, and especially if they kill him, there is lots of explaining to do to the town marshal. Before he leaves, Claude locks his gaze on the posse (if they intervened):

The Mountain Man's eyes fall over you and you feel a hard lump in the pit of your stomach. There is something unsettling in his gaze as he locks eyes with you, and it takes a moment to register: He doesn't see people standing before him, he sees prey. Animals. Trophies.

Each member of the posse rolls Spirit against Claude's Intimidation. Claude is using his Hunter's Edge ability against the posse, and gains a chip for each success and raise over each individual posse member for use later in the adventure. Similarly, note which posse members managed to get a raise on their Spirit roll and give them a chip for each success and raise they gained on Claude. See **Hunting (the) Party** (page 15) for details.

As the confusion settles down, Merle King picks himself up and attempts to dust himself off, but the mud cakes his clothes pretty badly. He composes himself and graciously thanks his rescuers for their assistance, especially if they stood up to Claude directly.

Assuming the posse helped him against Claude, Merle asks them to meet him for dinner that evening at the Gossamer Hotel, as he has a business proposition for them.

A DESPERATE DINNER

As the afternoon starts to give way to the evening, Merle is waiting for the posse at The Gossamer Hotel. The hotel is a bit nicer than the rest of the town, and the dining room is a particularly spacious chamber designed to impress. Merle, having washed off the mud and embarrassment of the day, smiles broadly and waves the posse over to his table as they enter. Merle tells the waitress to place the posse's meals on his tab. Anyone studying him closely notices his perfectly poised appearance seems barely under control. His eyes have a little extra baggage to them, his hair is slicked back but

starting to stick out in a few places, his nice suit is slightly rumpled, and his hands have a nervous quiver.

Merle makes small talk until the food is on the table and everyone is well into their meal. He asks a lot of questions, zeroing in on clues about the posse member's appearance to discern what he can about them and their capabilities. He is a Doubting Thomas, so he's not picking up on Arcane Backgrounds or the like, and he rationalizes anything too obviously supernatural (like a Harrowed who looks more dead than alive). He also dodges too many questions about himself, especially those relating to Claude Clifton and his daughter. He happily opens up about being a school teacher, his family's investments and most other topics to put them at ease. Once everyone is deep into their meal, he steers the conversation to the reason he brought them here: Recruiting them to help him rescue Jo Ann.

Merle targets the most likely member of the posse to sympathize with his "Hopeless Romantic" argument, so use common sense and knowledge of the posse's backgrounds to figure out where best to direct this. Merle won't lie to the posse—he has no reason to, as he and Jo Ann were legitimately in love before Claude took her up the mountain—so anyone looking for deception in his words to find none.

Of course, if the posse is not interested in marching Merle King up the mountain to reunite with the beautiful Jo Ann Clifton in the name of love and romance, they may wish to ask for some compensation instead. If the subject switches to Merle hiring the posse, he becomes guarded and nervous. A successful Persuasion or Intimidation check gets him to speak up with little problem, and he reluctantly tells the posse he is, at present, completely broke. He explains that a group of guns he hired, led by a crazed hedonist named "Squeaky" Steve, demanded \$500 up front...then laughed and spit in his face when he showed up the next morning to hike up the mountain and find Jo Ann. He says that, if the posse can agree on a reasonable price, he can send a telegraph to his father, though it takes some time for the money to arrive. If the posse has a bit more honor about them, and asks about Squeaky Steve, Merle tells them Steve and his gang (five in all) are still in town, and they are crazy enough that the town marshal doesn't even want to deal with them. If the posse wants

to get Merle's money back from Steve's gang, they are welcome to it. Merle's not afraid to pay someone to help him, he just genuinely does not have the money to spare. Merle warns that Squeaky Steve's gang is nasty, though, and won't give it up without a fight.

Before the posse heads off to confront the outlaws, Merle offers them a warning about what to expect from the gang:

As you finish dinner and prepare to go looking for Squeaky Steve and The Boys, Merle clears his throat to get your attention. "Just so you know, Squeaky Steve's gang is five strong. Steve himself is very erratic, often consuming large amounts of alcohol and whatever mind altering substances he can acquire. His chief lieutenant brokered the deal initially. I only know him as Yoni. He can be a tad condescending if he does not respect your intellect. Dirty Dan and Magic Bill Higgins claim to be brothers, though I don't see a resemblance. Dirty Dan is every bit as mean as Squeaky Steve is crazy. Steve may hug you and he may shoot you, but Dan will only choose between cutting you and shooting you. Bill, on the other hand, is as polite as I have ever seen. The last is Rugged Ron. I heard he ran away from the war and fell in with Steve and The Boys. Watch out for his shotguns. Yes, I said shotguns, plural."

Have each posse member make a Common Knowledge roll. If they have a suitable background (such as being a Marshal, Agent or Texas Ranger), give them a +2 on the roll. On a success, they recall rewards (\$5000) out for Squeaky Steve for horse thieving, theft and murder in Kansas. On a raise, they also recall that Dirty Dan and Magic Bill have small bounties (\$400 each) on their heads around New Orleans. Anyone who speaks Cherokee recognizes "Yoni" as the Cherokee word for "bear."

SQUEAKY STEVE AND THE BOYS

If the posse goes looking for Squeaky Steve and The Boys, they aren't hard to find. They are raising hell at the Twisted Wheel

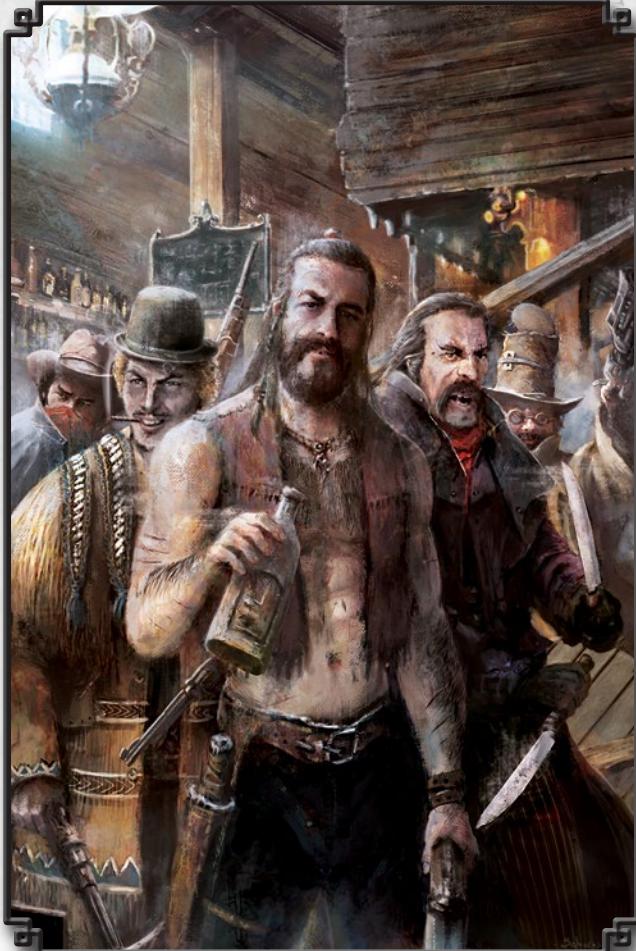
Saloon and are getting quite bored when the posse arrives. Squeaky Steve and Dirty Dan eagerly greet the new arrivals, especially if the posse looks like they are spoiling for a fight. Squeaky Steve feigns hospitality, as if he owns the Twisted Wheel.

As you enter the Twisted Wheel Saloon, a lean, wiry man with filthy hair, a wide grin, and a saloon girl on each arm seems to dominate the room. He turns and looks you up and down, then laughs. "How's it goin', guys? Here to join the party?"

As he slips free from his girls and starts across the saloon towards you, you see a taller man with a weak chin and about twenty pounds extra on him slip his hand inside his coat. Next to him is a quiet, bespectacled man looking like he's trying to disappear into the background. A skinny man with a cocky smirk is nursing a bottle at a back table, whispering something to an Indian woman, but watching you the entire time.

Have the group roll Notice, if they haven't picked out the obvious yet. Rugged Ron is not in the room, because he's heading down the side of the building and circling around to the door. Being on the run from the military has made him paranoid and he sees the posse coming unless they take extra special care to avoid detection.

How this all plays out depends in large part on how the posse approach it. Squeaky Steve and Dirty Dan gladly fight, but none of the gang attacks without Steve's signal. If the posse tries to bargain with Squeaky Steve, he's not interested in much except for money, booze, drugs and women. He has the Strong Willed Edge, so Intimidation won't be easy, and a failure provokes him into signaling for an attack. If the posse talks long enough for Rugged Ron to get into position behind them, Steve grins maniacally and gives the signal for Rugged Ron to attack. Use the Surprise rules to see if Ron gets The Drop



on them. He unloads with both barrels of his double barreled shotgun, then drops it and pulls his scattergun from his duster. Magic Bill is a Hexslinger (see *Stone and a Hard Place Player's Guide*) and uses the bar for defensive positioning while unleashing *bolt* or *smite*. Dirty Dan rushes any Law Dogs or the physically weakest character (use your best judgment, taking Strength and Vigor, as well as Hindrances like Ailin' into consideration), hoping to get them with his knife. Yoni is an intelligent sharpshooter and he has been assessing the posse the entire time to pick his targets. Squeaky Steve double teams opponents with Dirty Dan, or cheap shots anyone who turns their back on him. Once Squeaky Steve takes two Wounds, he calls for his men to back off. He's crazy, but he doesn't want to die. Of course, if your posse wants to push the issue, the gang keeps fighting.

However, if the posse challenges Steve to a card game, a drinking contest, or some other challenge, a simple Persuasion roll can

convince him to put Merle's money on the line. If the posse member competing with Steve wins, he grows belligerent about handing over the money, but Yoni intervenes and pays off the debt.

If Steve and The Boys wind up losing to the posse, in a gunfight or any other contest, they hold a grudge and stalk the posse later, on the mountain. If they wind up dead, then the power of the Mountain will make sure the posse sees them again, but Steve and the gang won't be in the driver's seat anymore...

- **“Squeaky” Steve:** See page 19.
- **Yoni:** See page 20.
- **“Dirty” Dan Murphy:** See page 19.
- **“Magic” Bill Higgins:** See page 19.
- **“Rugged” Ron Thompson:** See page 19.

TAKE A HIKE

Fire Ridge Mountain (Fear Level 3)

The next morning, Merle meets with the posse to head up the mountain. He's a little apprehensive about the meeting because the last guys agreeing to take him were psychos who laughed at him. A clear look of relief washes over his face as the posse shows up, ready to hike. He does a poor job of hiding his enthusiasm as he shakes each of their hands and thanks them for coming. No one is sure just how far up the mountain Claude Clifton lives, but most guesses have him hiking a day or so to get to the town. Unfortunately for the posse, guiding Merle up the mountain takes longer because he's a schoolteacher from Back East and not a mountain man.

The road from town which winds around the mountain is easy to follow. The heroes even spot the side trail that breaks up the mountain with ease. The trail quickly becomes difficult to follow though, especially as it forks off a couple of miles into the hike. The posse can use Tracking to find Clifton's path, and isn't too difficult since Claude hasn't bothered covering his tracks. If the posse isn't clearly marking their path, then after six miles of Tracking, regardless of whether the Tracking rolls have been successful or not, the posse finds themselves staring at the crossroads again. If they have been Tracking well, give the Tracker a Fate Chip to compensate for the magic on the mountain messing with them.

Shuffle a deck of cards. For each mile the group travels, draw a card. On a club or spade, draw again and consult the **Random Encounter Table:**



Card	Event
Deuce	<p>The posse finds a pack hanging off a tree and bloody smears on the trunk. Use the color of the card drawn to determine what's inside the pack. If the card is red, the pack has some dried meat, a couple of boxes of bullets (you decide on the caliber), and a compass. If the card is black, a coiled snake is inside the pack. Use Surprise rules as normal, as the snake snaps out of the pack and tries to bite whoever opens it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snake (1): Use the poisonous snake profile from <i>Savage Worlds</i>.
3	<p>A lone wolf is watching the posse from a ridge and, after a moment, it howls. Use the color of the card to determine what happens next. If the card is red, he is acting as a scout for Claude, and the howl alerts Claude to the posse's location. The wolf runs off, its job completed. If the card is black, the wolf's howl draws a pack (two per hero), who circle the posse and attack.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wolves (2 per hero): Use the Dog/Wolf profile from the <i>Savage Worlds</i>.
4	<p>The posse spies a stack of bones piled next to a tree. At first glance, it looks like a pile of animal bones. Closer inspection reveals human bones mixed in. If the card is red, there is a small, crude necklace around the neck of a skeletal human torso. Anyone wearing it is ignored by the animals of the mountain due to its protective magic. If the card is black, the jawbone of a skull slowly creaks open a horrible sound comes out, before the whole pile shakes apart at the posse's feet. Have each posse member roll a Guts check.</p>
5	<p>The trail leads the posse up the side of a cliff, on a narrow ledge. The path gradually becomes less solid and covered in gravel. If the card is red, each member of the posse must make an Agility Test to avoid slipping back down the ledge. Those who fail must make a Vigor roll or suffer Bumps and Bruises. On a critical failure they fall from the ledge and take Falling damage from 20 feet (2d6+2). If the card is black, a boulder rolls down the ledge. Have each hero make an opposed Agility roll against Agility d8 to jump clear. On a success, they take half Falling damage. On a raise, they manage to break the fall completely. Anyone hit by the boulder suffers 4d10 damage.</p>
6	<p>Hidden just off the trail is a dilapidated cabin. The flicker of lamplight can be seen through one of the windows and the door is cracked open slightly. If the card is red, when the posse peers inside the cabin, they find it dark and dusty, with an old, broken lantern laying on the floor. If the card is black, the ethereal form of a crying woman appears in the cabin. She says "Merle?" and reveals a horrid, ghostly face. She fights the posse for three rounds before disappearing and leaving the cabin dark and dusty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghost: Use the Ghost profile from <i>Savage Worlds</i>.
7	<p>As the posse is struggling along the trail, the ground begins to give. If the card is red the character with the lowest Agility must make an Agility Test or fall into a sinkhole, then a Vigor roll or suffer Bumps and Bruises rule. If the card is black, clawing hands reach up from the ground and Walkin' Dead tear out of the ground.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkin' Dead (1 per hero): See page 20.
8	<p>The underbrush and branches grow thick as the posse tries to force their way through them. If the card is red, each posse member (including Merle) has to make a Vigor Test or suffer Fatigue. If the card is black, treat every posse member as if they are being attacked by the <i>entangle</i> power. Two swarms of Texas Skeeters emerge from the brush and attack the posse, focused on any entangled members first.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Skeeters (two swarms): See page 19.

9 The wagon of a snakeoil salesman is overturned in the road. If the card is red, potions of *Ephraim's Eagle Eye* (aim), *Standingbear's Stone Skin* (armor), and *Devlin's Diabolical Disappearing Draught* (invisibility) are still intact and can be found by anyone succeeding on Notice roll at -4. They each have enough Power Points to be activated for the power's base duration. If the card is black, whoever is searching the wagon finds the skin of the snakeoil salesman. Have them make a Guts Check, then check for Surprise as the Skeleton of the snakeoil salesman quietly rises out of the wreck and tries to attack them. After the skeleton is defeated, the wagon appears to be an abandoned wagon with no sign of the skin or skeleton.

• **Skeleton:** Use the skeleton profile from *Savage Worlds*.

10 A rushing stream crosses over the posse's trail. The water sparkles and smells so clean. While the posse can see there are deep spots in the stream, there is an ample amount of room to get across. If the card is red, it seems like a great time to refill their canteens as well. The water feels wonderful going down. If the card is black, then the posse sees their reflections in the water while filling their canteens, except they are dead and rotting (or, if they are Harrowed, they see their Manitou instead). Everyone makes a Fear roll. Anyone failing suffers the normal effects of failure and drops their canteens, which are carried away in the water.

Jack The sound of giggling fills the air, though its location can't quite be placed. Mysterious whispers surround the posse. If the card is red, the whispers are benevolent nature spirits and they provide the posse with guidance. Give each posse member a draw from the Fate chip pot to represent the guidance, aid and comfort given by the whispers. If the card is black, the whispers are the manitous are driving the mountain animals insane. Any Harrowed present immediately have to make a Dominion roll. If there are no Harrowed present, the manitous instead possess twisted crows and attack.

• **Twisted Crows (1 per hero -2, minimum 1):** See page 20.

Queen A bloody shawl dangles from a tree branch. Unless Merle is Incapacitated, he panics and rushes towards it, screaming "Jo Ann!" If the card is red, Merle clutches the bloody shawl to his chest and begins to lose his composure. A Persuasion or Intimidation (at -2) roll can snap him out of it. If the card is black, he falls into a Tiger Pit and lands on wooden stakes, sustaining $2d6+5$ damage.

King Thin wires are strung out along the path in front of the posse. A Notice roll is required to see them, and Agility Tests are needed to cross them. If anyone disturbs them, intentionally or accidentally, check the color of the card. If the card is red, the trip wires launch a hefty swinging log at the posse. Roll Shooting d6 for each posse member. Anyone hit takes $2d6$ damage. If the card is black, the wires are actually webs and $1d6+2$ Giant Spiders descend on the posse.

• **Giant Spiders (1d6+2):** Use the Giant Spider stats from *Savage Worlds*.

Ace Claude Clifton is in a sniper nest, watching the posse closely. He takes a single shot at Medium range, aiming for the character he gained the most successes and raises over in the Test of Wills in town (see page 18). If he didn't obtain a single success or raise, he shoots at Merle instead. The posse has one round to spot him and issue return fire. It requires a Notice roll with no penalty if the card is red or -4 with a black card.

• **Claude Clifton:** See page 18. He is armed with Winchester '76 (.45) (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 2).

Joker The magic of the Mountain seeps into the posse's minds and causes them to have hallucinations. Describe strange noises, faces in the trunks of the trees, snakes in their peripheral vision that disappear when they turn, that sort of thing. The trail

itself runs to a cave entrance on the mountain. Inside the cave, if the card is red, the posse witnesses a vision of Claude tending to a bloody and pale Jo Ann, which causes Merle to lose his composure but which should provide a valuable clue for the final encounter. If the card is black, deal the posse initiative cards. A ghastly vision of the posse member with the lowest card appears in the cavern, rushing the group. Any damage dealt to this vision is dealt to the posse member it is imitating. After suffering one wound the vision ends, and the posse finds themselves on the trail again, with no sign of the cave.

LATE NIGHT SNACK

The posse, dealing with whatever Fatigue and Wounds they have suffered from their trek thus far, eventually need to settle down and make camp for the evening. The mood in the camp depends heavily on just what the posse has seen and experienced thus far. If they are paranoid about the mountain and the creatures on it then, well, they probably should be!

Late at night, a pack of wolves circle the camp. They attempt to take the camp by surprise. Whoever is on watch checks for Surprise. The pack is not here to kill the posse; they focus their attacks entirely on the posse's food, backpacks, bedrolls, gunbelts, boots and other equipment.

These wolves aren't too concerned with losing companions, but they scatter after inflicting a few rounds of damage to the posse's gear.

- **Wolves (two per hero):** Use the Dog/Wolf profile from *Savage Worlds*.

THIS MOUNTAIN IS NO PLACE FOR A TINHORN

If Merle happened to be killed before the posse camped down, they may be deciding this whole trip is no longer worth it—especially if they are being paid after the fact. The magic of the mountain messes with the trails to keep them from finding their way back to town. If that happens, the posse should get Fate chips for each successful Tracking roll. If the players are buying into the mountain's magic, then this can be a suitable method of pushing them up the mountain. If they get frustrated by the rails, let 'em go and put 'em on another adventure, Marshal. "Jo Ann" ain't going anywhere and Claude Clifton and the Reckoners make sure no one else climbs the mountain.

If the posse hikes a ways up the mountain before Merle falls, you can always have the lovely vision of Jo Ann appear before one of the characters.

You decide which one, but we recommend you use the following: A character with an Arcane Background (Hucksters being the most likely, Blessed being the least), the character with the highest Spirit die, or the character most likely to be swayed by a pretty face. You can even time it with the wolf attack above, because your posse is very likely to be suspicious of the apparition, so clearly establishing that the creatures on the mountain are against her should do a nice job of spurring the posse on.

If Jo Ann appears before a posse member, read or paraphrase the following:

"Merle?"

A soft, scared voice catches your attention and you see a stunning vision of a western beauty before you. She looks as fragile as a china doll, but the light accentuates the soft curls of her hair and makes her porcelain skin almost glow with an ethereal shine. She looks like she's maybe seen twenty years at most, except for her eyes, which are deep pools of rich green. If this is Jo Ann, you can certainly see why Merle felt the need to climb this mountain, and what would compel a father to want to keep suitors away.

"Please, Merle...help me. He's—"

A sharp sound catches your attention and she's gone, just like that.

The distraction can be the wolves above, or the another posse member, whatever works best for the situation.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

When the posse sets out the next day, they have good reason to believe there are forces on the mountain set against them. Play up the paranoia of this, especially if they had multiple animal encounters the day before. Some suggestions include:

- A squirrel is perched partway up a tree, just watching the posse advance. If the posse advances quickly, it scurries up the tree and disappears. If they are cautious, they suddenly realize a half-dozen other squirrels are on the ground and up on trees, staring at them before scattering at the approaching posse.
- The birds are chirping as the posse makes their way up the mountain, but after listening for a while, one of the characters realizes the chirps are clearly in a pattern. Have each character make a Common Knowledge roll. If they get a raise on it, they realize the birds are communicating via Morse Code. Possible messages heard could include “The gunmen are heading them off,” “I hope they don’t starve to death. I like meat on the bones” or “Don’t worry, the bear will get them.”
- As the trail winds around the mountain, and the posse has been hiking for some time, they smell fresh water and hear a brook babbling ahead. The cold, crisp and clear smell pierces the fatigue and drives them forward. When the brook comes into view, the sound fades and the path of the stream contains no water at all. Nothing in sight seems to be impeding the flow, and the rocks in the stream bed show some moisture, as if water has been flowing through here but stopped.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

If the posse veers off the beaten path, they have a chance of finding something very interesting: The cave Claude Clifton is now living in! The cave is not especially hidden, as the only thing on the mountain Claude fears is locked away in his old cabin and wearing his daughter's face.

The exterior of the cave is covered with animal skins and carcasses strung up and drying in the sun, the first clue this cave is something more than an animal's lair. Read or paraphrase the following if the posse finds the cave:

The climb down to the cave is surprisingly steep, but the brush proves to be concealing footholds that allow you to make your way down to the cave entrance with relative ease. A picturesque grove rests across the clearing in front of the cavern, but it is definitely the cave entrance that catches your attention. It is obvious this is no

animal's lair because the smell of fire and cooking meat still lingers in the air. You have seen many strange things, but a bear cooking meat is not one of them. Animal skins are stretched out and tanning in the sun, and a crude bedroll is laid out inside the cave. Someone is clearly living here.

Claude has placed traps around the cave, and the posse's investigations trigger them unless they are particularly diligent (Claude's no fool...give them -2 on Notice rolls to spot these traps, and lower it to -4 if they are being cavalier about their approach). The first trap, a few hundred yards from the cave, is a tripwire which launches a spear at the back of the group using Throwing d6 and inflicting 2d6 damage on a hit.

The second trap is in the grove, and springs when anyone investigates it. A net, large enough to snatch up two adult-sized humans, hangs anyone it ensnares from the trees. Treat it as a Grappling roll with Fighting d6. If the net scores a raise, the posse member(s) ensnared can't reach for a knife or other item to free themselves. Even if they are able to cut free, they are fifteen feet off the ground and take 2d6+2 falling damage when they hit the ground.

The most insidious trap is inside the cavern. Read or paraphrase the following to anyone investigating the lair of Claude Clifton:

Yep, definitely something human inside this cave, though whoever it is may not be right in the head. The bedroll looks uncomfortable and out of place, consisting of old quilts with a very feminine flourish to them. There are a couple of changes of clothing in the cave, though all the clothes are dirty and soiled and meant for hard work, not show. Stacked up against the wall are two rifles, a pistol, two knives and a long blade. About forty five feet back, the cavern narrows into a tunnel shrouded in darkness.

If no one else has pieced it together yet, Merle (assuming he is still alive) picks out the one item sticking out among the rest:

“Oh my God...”

Your employer staggers across the cave in disbelief and scoops up a dirty piece of fabric. As he holds it up, it begins to unfold into what used to be a very pretty dress before some manner of bug or animal took a liking to it.

"Jo Ann..." Merle whispers weakly, as his eye begin darting around the cave. "Has that crazy old man been keeping my Jo Ann here?"

A success on a Notice roll spots a rusted locket under Claude's pillow. Opening it reveals images of his wife and Jo Ann, though the pictures are warped and faded from moisture. A raise on the roll allows a character to see that a decent sized stone has been disturbed. Lifting it reveals a dirty journal with torn and cracked pages. Anyone reading it finds a number of passages, first written by Jo Ann and later by Claude. Read the following excerpts aloud:

- "...I'm glad Mother convinced Dada to move to Fire Ridge. I love animals so much, and Dada does, too."
- "Stanton Vey came to see me again. His family comes from a country I've never heard of, and the way he speaks sure makes me smile. I don't think Dada wants me to go away, though..."
- "I admit that Merle is silly, but he's so sweet and thoughtful. Mother thinks bein' a schoolteacher is noble, even if Dada doesn't think it's real man's work."
- "We buried Mother today. I'm scared for Dada. I have to take care of him."
- "I wish we hadn't come here. I see...things. Things that talk to me. I tried to warn Dada, but he thinks that it's more suitors."
- "I thought I saw Stanton one day, but he wouldn't speak to me. I don't know how he got so high up the mountain."
- "...just wanted to keep Jo Ann safe after her Mama died. Never meant for this..."
- "No one's ever getting' up this mountain. Not since them birds started talking to me. Told me that boy, Preston Jarvis, was lookin' for my Jo Ann. Not anymore."
- "They stare at me funny when I come into town. No one wants to take a shot in town, so they follow me back here. Stupid."
- "I wish the blasted voices would shut up when I'm sleepin'."

There are no other signs that Jo Ann is, or has ever been, here. As for the last trap? Well, anyone venturing into the tunnel and failing a Notice roll triggers a cave in, blocking the tunnel entrance. There are few efficient means of clearing out the cave-in, but anyone trapped can go deeper, looking for a way out. There is an eventual exit, it just crosses paths with the other inhabitant of the cave: A large, angry grizzly bear.

We recommend you shuffle a deck and draw a card when the posse finds the cave. On a Joker (red or black), Claude Clifton is not out hunting when the posse arrives, but he is lurking around the cave. You can decide if he's in the grove, lurking in the tunnel or somewhere else, but he won't take kindly to the posse traipsing around his home, and he waits for an opportune moment to attack (such as when someone gets caught in the net).

Additionally, if you want to give the posse a chance to spot the cave even if they are sticking to the beaten path, have them roll Notice while hiking past it. On a success, they can at least catch the smell of a dying fire to attract their attention.

If the posse fails to spot the cave on their own, let them climb a while further before finding a winding trail down that anyone can clearly see heavy boots have beaten down. This is a decoy trail by Claude and has a well-covered pit trap at the base of the slope. One person isn't heavy enough to break the covering—which spans about ten yards—but three are, and when the third posse member steps onto the covering, it breaks and dumps the three posse members on it into the spiked pit below, inflicting $2d6+10$ damage.

This whole encounter proves to be very informative to people paying close attention: A) Claude and Jo Ann are no longer in the same place, despite the fact Claude was still buying provisions for two the last time he was in town, B) Claude clearly cares very deeply for Jo Ann, despite whatever happened and C) Claude's road to Hell was paved with good intentions.

SWEET REVENGE

If the posse had a run-in with Squeaky Steve and The Boys in town, then one way or another, Steve and The Boys were humiliated. They don't take kindly to and have been using Rugged Ron's Tracking skills to figure out

Dead Men on the Mountain

It is entirely possible the posse managed to avoid ever confronting Squeaky Steve and The Boys, especially if they altruistically agreed to help Merle out of the kindness of their hearts. In that case, they can still run afoul of Squeaky Steve and The Boys. In this instance, Steve and Dan got the bright idea to rub the insult in Merle's face by going up the mountain to take his girl after taking his money. That did not go as planned, as they were hunted to a man by Claude Clifton, and left to rot on the side of the mountain. When the posse reaches the plateau, a sick croak says a single word:

"Merle..."

The schoolteacher shivers in his boots as though someone walked over his grave...and that may yet be an apt comparison as a lean, stringy-haired man with very pale flesh, a rictus grin and three bullet holes in his chest lurches forward.

"Hey Merle..."

Keep in mind that Walkin' Dead can still use weapons and Claude didn't strip them of all their arms. Pick a weapon from each gang member's stat block (see page 18) to still be on their person, but otherwise use normal Walkin' Dead stats...

If the posse killed Steve and the gang back in town, the Mountain raises Steve and Yoni as Harrowed, and the rest as Walkin' Dead. Give Yoni the Cat Eyes Harrowed Edge, and Steve the Spook Harrowed Edge. If you aren't using the *Deadlands* rules, use Steve and Yoni's stats with the Walkin' Dead special abilities. Both Harrowed remain Wild Cards in (un)death.

where the posse has gone and how best to get ahead of them.

Remember, they went out of their way to shut down the earlier fight if it started getting out of control. Even if Squeaky Steve perished in the fight, then Yoni has decided to do right by his crazy friend and lead the rest of The Boys on

a revenge run against the posse. Rugged Ron has found The Boys an alternate trail (aided by the Reckoners manipulating the magic of the mountain), and they are rested and waiting after a particularly rough climb onto a plateau. If the posse refused to back down in town and killed one or more of The Boys, the remaining members open fire, shooting to kill. If they chose to humiliate Squeaky Steve instead, he has The Boys cover him as he confronts the exhausted and weary posse, mocking and threatening them as Yoni and Bill draw beads on whoever was the scariest in the earlier fight. If this encounter comes to bloodshed, no one backs down

HUNTING (THE) PARTY

When the posse gets within a couple of miles of the cabin, Claude goes on the hunt. The wildlife starts getting louder and more obvious. Observant posse members realize the animals are communicating with each other as one large unit. For instance, a hawk screeches as it swoops down past the party, setting off a wolf howl. After a beat, the wolf howl is met with the loud roar of a bear, and so on. This chorus of animal calls only grows in volume and frequency as the posse scales the mountain and closes in on their destination.

Remember earlier in the adventure, when Claude stared down each member of the posse? We recommended you make a stack of chips for Claude, because that psychological edge comes into play now. Claude can spend those successes and raises in this fight to gain the upper hand against his targets. Use these advantages wisely, Marshal, and don't be afraid to make this fight one to remember...Claude shouldn't be a pushover. Here is how Claude can manifest his Hunter's Edge (choose one for each Chip spent):

- Gains +2 on a Stealth roll against his prey.
- Gains +2 on a Shooting, Fighting or Throwing roll against his prey.
- Gains a +2 on an Intimidation roll against his prey.
- Trigger a trap against his prey. You can use the traps mentioned this adventure or use traps from other *Savage Worlds* products.
- Trigger the environment to separate his prey from the rest of the party. Use game logic to explain this, such as a rock slide cutting one character off from the rest, or a tree falls.

Remember the mountain is magic, which Claude can manipulate at a primal level.

Now, not everyone is going to be spooked by Claude. Anyone who resisted gains the ability to spend a chip for the following effects, or use them as normal:

- Gain +2 on a Notice roll to find Claude.
- Gain +2 to their Parry or the Improved Dodge Edge for one round (against Claude only).
- Gain +2 to Spirit rolls to resist Claude's Intimidation.
- "Find" Claude and his prey if they become separated.

It is very likely Claude does not spend much time directly targeting those who resisted him in the town. Does it mean these bonuses are for naught? Not necessarily. If the character who resisted Claude has chips to spend and has either Leadership Edges or the Common Bond Edge, she can spend those chips on behalf of companions Claude marked as prey, evening the battlefield as it were!

Use the terrain to its fullest here, Marshal. This is a forest trail on the slope of a small mountain, so avalanches, falling trees, uneven terrain, ravines, thick brush and demonic animals can all play a part.

The posse can't actually kill Claude, no matter what they do, but they can temporarily incapacitate him. If he would become Incapacitated, have him plummet off the mountain, or fall in the brush, only to be missing when the characters rush to finish him off. This doesn't mean they can't win, but Claude's death won't be that easy.

If you can't have his body vamoose, even with the magic of the mountain, let him lay there like a corpse. Your posse probably plugs him a couple more times, but when he doesn't get back up, they'll move on up the mountain. At this point, the Manitou-possessed animals give them a wide berth.

IF YOU LOVE HER LET HER GO

The climb back up the mountain grows steep and treacherous, especially for a mentally and physically exhausted posse. Climbing rolls are called for, though the only penalties are

whatever Wound and Fatigue penalties the posse members have accumulated. The trail levels out under a strange outcropping looming over a cabin. If the posse experienced the "ghost cabin" as a random encounter early in the adventure, they find this one to be identical. Read or paraphrase the following:

At last.

You stopped that crazy old man and finally found his cabin. This has to be where he's stashed Jo Ann away from the world. A sense of anxiety fills the air: What condition is she in? Does he have this place trapped? What are the chances there's yet another guardian?

Assuming Merle has survived thus far, he doesn't hesitate. He breaks into a dead run at the cabin, screaming for Jo Ann unless he is stopped (and most posse members should be able to restrain him, even talk some sense into him if they just make the effort).

A thorough search of the cabin grounds reveals no traps and no obvious tricks. A Notice roll at -2 spots a strange circle of salt around the cabin, and any Blessed, Texas Ranger, Agent, or anyone with the appropriate background making a Common Knowledge roll figures out that this is a seal, keeping something *in*.

Jo Ann's pleading voice issues from the cabin, begging for someone to free her. If Merle is there, it doesn't take much to convince him to break the seal. Any posse member with the Curious Hindrance is compelled to open the cabin as well, but toss 'em a Fate chip for it. Read or paraphrase the following when Merle and Jo Ann are reunited:

Your whole body clenches when you see Merle pull the cabin door open and break the salt circle. Every last nerve ending of your body screams out and you feel the urge to do everything in your power to prevent the foolish schoolteacher from walking through that cabin door.

What is coming through? Is it a grotesque dead thing, making a mockery of the living, and the blind love that has spurred this expedition on? Or has she become a crazed, rabid murderer? Or is this blasted mountain mimicking her now?

And then Merle King walks out of the cabin, tears streaming down his cheeks. The emotion on his face twists and turns, breaking into a smile at you as he steps aside and...

...the beautiful young daughter of Claude Clifton stands before you. No bloody dress, no scrapes, no wounds. Golden hair peeks around a dirty brown, and her pursed lips have a smile of relief and joy. Her frame is slight and her steps unsteady, as though she hasn't touched solid ground in months or longer. Her eyes are old beyond her years...so, so old...though no crow's feet disturb her perfect face.

She turns Merle toward her and there is no hesitation as the young lovers embrace for a long kiss.

Just as the kiss stretches to an uncomfortable length, the sound of a hammer cocking breaks the moment:

"You stay the Hell away from her, you hear?"

And Claude Clifton has somehow pulled his carcass up the mountain to spoil this reunion.

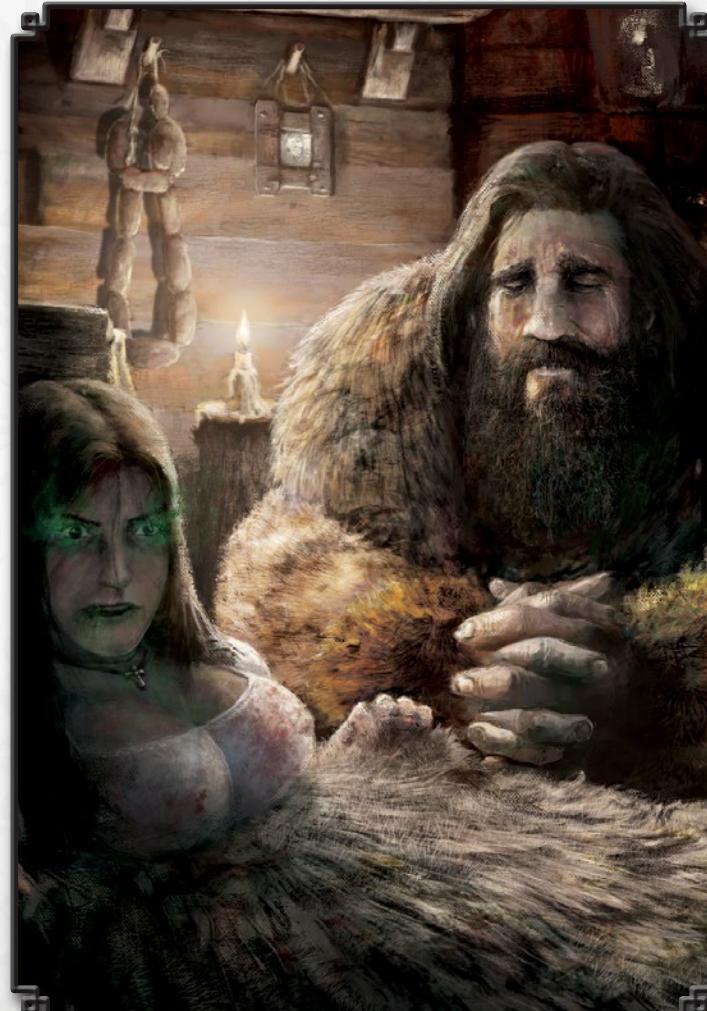
This one's all on your posse, Marshal. Merle tries to shield Jo Ann, which is a silly thing to do, as Claude is aiming to shoot Merle, not The Thing Wearing His Daughter's Face.

Enter combat as normal. Jo Ann is still weak and watching this play out, but is absorbing ambient Fear from the mountain and growing stronger. After three rounds of being free, she makes her move and attacks Merle: One of the two people who can put her to rest.

As for Claude, all semblance of tactics and tricks are fading away here, as he's cracking at the sight of his daughter. He still can't be killed, but each Wound he sustains causes him to open up to the posse:

- **One Wound:** Claude spits through the pain, anger and...sadness? "You've made a horrible mistake."
- **Two Wounds:** "Why couldn't you leave it all alone? I could have kept her safe..."
- **Three Wounds:** Claude sobs out through the blood, "I loved her too much to let her go...even after what she's become..."

If the posse gets Claude to open up about Jo Ann before she's recovered enough strength to harness her demon powers, anyone looking at her sees how ancient and inhuman her eyes have become. If no one else attacks her, on Merle's initiative card he clutches her close and fires a derringer into her chest. There is a ghastly sound and eruption of light from her eyes and mouth, and Merle slowly lowers her to the ground, weeping. Claude, enraged and having been healed once again by the power of the mountain, is fueled by his grief as he



attempts to kill everyone on the mountain, starting with Merle. With Jo Ann dead, however, he is completely vulnerable to damage and if the posse brings him down this time, they can put him down for good.

If Jo Ann recovers her power before Claude falls, she takes on an eerily beautiful, but evil, appearance and attacks Merle, attempting to rip his heart from his chest. Claude, confronted with what his daughter has truly become, stops attacking the posse. If the posse defeats her, read or paraphrase the following:

Jo Ann, or the Thing That Was Jo Ann, falls before your assault at last.

Or does she? You hear a soft curse and you realize you probably said it as you see her wounds start to close up and her body begin to stir. Why can't things ever be simple anymore? As you look around to take stock of your companions and what kind of fight you still have left in you, the severe form of Claude Clifton moves past you with purpose and the big man stares at his daughter, hatred and a lack of recognition in his eyes.

Then his face cracks softly and the big man bites his lip, drawing blood.

“Dada?” Jo Ann croaks.

“I am so sorry,” Claude chokes out. “So sorry I didn’t let you go.”

The sudden report of the revolver causes you to jump, as Claude Clifton finally lets Jo Ann go.

THE CURTAIN CLOSES

The aftermath of the adventure depends largely on how the encounter with Jo Ann plays out. If Claude laid his daughter to rest, Merle is probably dead, and Claude disappears into the brush, making his way down the mountain. The posse later hears a second gunshot, and if they examine his cave on the way back to town, they discover Claude has taken his own life.

If Merle turned on Jo Ann and was killed by Claude, the posse can handle disposal of the bodies as they will. As they hike down the mountain and towards town, one of the posse catches a vision out of the corner of their eye. If they look, they see the ghostly forms of Merle and Jo Ann, holding hands and staring into each other’s eyes for a few moments before fading from view.

FRIENDS AND FOES



Claude Clifton

Once an overprotective father, now Claude Clifton is a savage hunter who stalks the mountain, swooping down on any who would come near his daughter. On some level, he understands his daughter has changed into — or been possessed by — something dark and evil, but his fatherly love doesn’t allow him to see her for what she truly is, nor does it allow him to do what needs to be done.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Survival d12, Tracking d12

Face: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Delusional (“Jo Ann is still my daughter”), Vow (Protect Jo Ann)

Gear: Varies.

Special Abilities:

- Creatures of the Mountain:** Claude can summon 1d10 hawks, 1d6 wolves or a single bear. This uses an action and a Spirit roll at -2. If successful, the summoned creature(s) arrive from the wilds in 1d6+2 rounds.

- Fearless:** Claude Clifton is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- Hunter’s Edge:** Claude can establish psychological dominance over other characters and attempt to mark them as “prey.” He accomplishes this by making a Test of Wills, using his Intimidation versus their Spirit. Rather than apply the normal effects of Intimidation, Claude gains a Fate Chip for each success and raise to power his hunting abilities. See **Hunting (the Party** (page 15) of this book for the effects of this ability, as well as the benefits of resisting it.

- Infernal Guardian:** While Claude Clifton can be damaged, and even become Incapacitated, he cannot be killed as long as The Power in the Mountain possesses Jo Ann Clifton. Three rounds after becoming Incapacitated, he heals up fully. This ability, as well as his other abilities, disappears as soon as the possessed Jo Ann Clifton is killed.

“Dirty” Dan Murphy

A big, mean and vicious thug, Steve loves him because of his volatile temper and willingness to hurt who Steve says to hurt.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Streetwise d6

Cha: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Clueless, Mean

Edges: Brawny

Gear: Single-Action Colt Peacemaker (.45) (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1), Bowie Knife (Damage Str+d4+1, AP 1).

“Magic” Bill Higgins

Bill and Dan aren’t actually kin, but they have been friends for years. Bill sticks with Dan out of concern for his brother in arms, and would much rather be studying the lost lore in the world than knocking over banks or cutting throats for money.

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

Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d6, Hexslinging d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Minor), Loyal (To Dan and the gang)

Edges: Arcane Background (Hexslinger), Dodge

Powers: *aim, bolt, smite.* **Power Points:** 10

Gear: Pearl Handled Colt Lightning (.38) (Double Action) (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1), Colt Navy (.36) (Single Action) (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1).

Merle King

 Merle King has no sense for business, which is a source of some disappointment for his father. However, the King patriarch has allowed his son the freedom to run. Merle’s first love was teaching, but that was supplanted when he laid eyes on the beautiful Jo Ann Clifton – and all of his energy is now focused on reuniting with her.

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

Skills: Investigation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Doubting Thomas, Tenderfoot, Vow (Rescue Jo Ann)

Edges: Dodge, Jack-of-all-Trades, Rich

Gear: Derringer (.41) (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1).

“Rugged” Ron Thompson

Ron, like others before and after him, decided war wasn’t for him. No one is 100% sure whether he fought for the North or the South, but he’s very paranoid of anyone in a uniform.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Tracking d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Cautious, Yellow

Edges: Alertness, Danger Sense

Gear: Double Barrel Shotgun (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1-2), Scattergun (Range 6/12/24, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1-2).

“Squeaky” Steve

 Squeaky Steve is the demented leader of the gang. A full blown hedonist, he rarely thinks anything through and is only motivated by women, alcohol, narcotics and money, and not always in that order.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6, Taunt d8

Cha: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Overconfident, Wanted (Major)

Edges: Charismatic, Hip-Shooting, Killer Instinct, Quick Draw, Strong Willed

Gear: Single-Action Colt Peacemaker (.45) (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1), Knife (Damage Str+d4, AP 1).

Texas Skeeters

Their name referring to their size, these nasty bloodsuckers need a lot of blood to survive and tend to attack in large enough swarms to kill rather than simply annoy.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Notice d8

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- Bite/Blood Drain:** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny stings every round to their victims, draining a small amount of blood each time. They hit automatically and cause 2d4 damage to everyone in the swarm’s template.

- **Flight:** Pace 10.
- **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the swarm is composed of many smaller creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area effect weapons work normally.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Skeeters do not like fire, or even smoke, and don't normally attack anyone close to a fire.

The Thing Wearing Jo Ann's Face

Jo Ann is now more demon than human, as the Power in the Mountain is overwhelming her and using her as its new vessel in this world.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Occult) d12, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Creatures of the Mountain:** Jo Ann can summon 1d10 twisted crows, 1d6 wolves, or a single bear. This uses an action and a Spirit roll at -2. If successful, the summoned creature(s) arrive from the wilds in 1d6+2 rounds.
- **Fear (-2):** As Jo Ann begins to twist into her demonic form, anyone encountering her must make a Guts roll (-2).
- **Fearless:** Jo Ann is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Invulnerability:** Jo Ann only takes half-damage from all attacks, and can only be laid to rest by a person who truly loves her (Merle or Claude).
- **Coup:** If a Harrowed absorbs the essence of The Power in the Mountain, it gains the ability to summon 1d6 wolves with a successful Spirit roll at -2. If successful, the summoned creature(s) arrive from the wilds in 1d6+2 rounds.

Twisted Crows

The power of the Mountain has fueled these wicked creatures into large, predatory versions of crows, imbuing them with the killer instinct of hawks and the malicious nature of manitous.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d12+4, Stealth d8

Pace: -; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Blind:** When attacking large prey (such as characters), crows go for the eyes. If the crow scores a raise on its Fighting roll, it has hit the character's face. The character must make an Agility roll. On a failure, he suffers the One Eye Hindrance until his wounds heal. A roll of 1, regardless of Wild Die, results in his gaining the Blind Hindrance for that time.
- **Claws:** Str.
- **Flying:** Flying Pace 8", Climb 1
- **Size -2:** Murder crows measure up to 2' in height.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls because of the beast's size.

Walkin' Dead

The Walkin' Dead are mean and clever. They know people think they are slow and stupid, so they act that way to get in close. And by the way, they do feed on brains.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fearless:** Walkin' Dead are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage (except to the head).
- **Weakness (Head):** Shot to a walkin' dead's head (-4 called shot) do +2 damage, for a total of +6.

Yoni

The brains of this operation, Yoni keeps Steve on course and the gang from getting in over their heads. When the gang works as hired guns, Yoni is the one who brokers the deals.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6

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

Hindrances: Arrogant

Edges: Attractive, Jack-of-All-Trades, Level Headed

Gear: Double-Action Colt Peacemaker (.45) (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1).



By John Dunn

This terrifying tale of science gone wrong is inspired by the giant monster movies of the 1950s! The heroes discover that a giant spider descended upon a small American town in search of food. A blasphemous creation of Atomic Energy, the monster is a horrific example of science gone wrong. Fortunately, the team of scientists is available to use their expertise to overcome the threat, likely working in concert with the might of the United States military.

The adventure begins slowly, as the researchers arrive in the sleepy town. Initial investigation reveals some cause for alarm, but the scientists must do their best to keep the townsfolk from knowing the full scope of the danger. Once word leaks about the monster, panic sweeps through the area, and the heroes must play the voice of reason.

Fortunately, a series of calls is enough to draw military aid to the problem. A bombing run defeats the immediate threat and restores the faith of the community. That's when further investigation reveals an even greater danger. The monstrous spider has already bred and left its offspring in the area of the town. Science might overcome this new threat, but at what

cost? As the adventure concludes, it leaves the researchers wondering if they could have possibly eliminated all of the monsters, or if some might have escaped their grasp!

CHARACTERS

In *Skitters*, the heroes are a research scientist and his team, who are called in to investigate the predation taking place in Greenfield, Colorado. The scientists are ostensibly experts on wolves, which the locals blame for the missing sheep. In keeping with the genre conventions, however, any scientific knowledge is equally applicable in ecology as it is in subatomic physics. Their expertise with wolves confers a solid understanding of radiation, spelunking, and arachnology.

A team of six heroes is found at the end of the adventure. It includes a scientist, his technician, a graduate student, undergraduate researcher, handyman, and young daughter. The team is collectively intended to offer a group of characters capable of analyzing and overcoming the threat posed by the overgrown spiders within the adventure, while reflecting the types of characters that characteristic of

classic giant monster movies. All are Seasoned adventurers, with 30 Experience Points.

Game Masters or players may decide to generate their own characters rather than use the included examples. Alternative characters should be created using the *Savage Worlds* core rules, including advancement to Seasoned Rank. For smaller groups with as few as two characters, the Knowledge (Science) and Tracking skills are essential. Familiarity with the military is also quite helpful. Characters should be equipped with civilian grade gear, though they could be veterans of either World War or the Korean War. Any equipment should be at a technology level appropriate to the 1950s.

GREENFIELD, COLORADO

A small agricultural community, about two hours Southwest of Denver, Greenfield has only a few hundred residents, most of whom make their living supporting the area's agriculture. Farmers and ranchers from the surrounding region regularly visit town to obtain supplies or just for social interaction. The village's downtown is crowded around its one traffic light. The center of town includes a few small shops, the diner, a bar, the police station, and a chapel. The police station also serves duty as city hall and the post office, making use of a meeting room in the basement. A sprawling feed and supply store with an associated stockyard is located a few miles from the main part of town.

Only a few homes are located in the central part of Greenfield. Most who consider themselves village residents live within a few miles of the town square. The locals enjoy the privacy this grants, and many have small farms on their land. There is no hotel proper in the city. Instead, any visitors — such as the heroes — need to rent spare rooms from a local or set up camp outside of town.

“COULD YA TAKE A LOOK AT THIS?”

The adventure opens when the heroes arrive in the town of Greenfield, Colorado. They arrive

Ent Air Force Base

Located just over an hour away in Colorado Springs, Ent is a major installation for the United States Air Force. Aircraft from the facility — including many supersonic models — frequently soar through the sky over Greenfield. Many of the farmers insist that the air traffic is bad for livestock, as it provides a frequent distraction.

A few times each year, cadets from the Air Force Academy pass through town. Usually, it's uneventful, but some of the farmers and ranchers blame them directly for the excess noise. The servicemen resent the accusations, and trouble has been known to brew.

shortly after sunset, during the mid-summer's heat. They have spent many long hours cramped into a car and a pickup truck, with boxes and boxes of scientific apparatuses. Today they drove along countless narrow and twisting county routes, all of which were poorly labeled. The researchers undoubtedly took a number of wrong turns along the way. By this point, all of the heroes are relieved to have reached their destination. While they are undoubtedly excited by the prospect of scientific discovery, the more immediate needs are a warm meal, a cold drink, and a comfortable bed.

Meeting Hughley

Upon their arrival, Officer Hughley (page 35) is the first local to meet with the science team. The police station is visible upon entering town, with the village's only police cruiser parked in front of it. Hughley initiated the call for assistance, which led the researchers to visit Greenfield. He has also coordinated their lodging, reserving rooms for them through Mrs. Dorothy Evans (page 35).

The scientists have instructions to meet with Officer Hughley upon their arrival in Greenfield. If they decide to explore the main part of town on their own first, there really is little to see. Greenfield is a very small town, and the heroes are obviously not locals. The various businesses — the diner, the bar, and the shops — offer them polite service, but the employees are far more interested in the

presence of strangers than in the process of doing business. Within a few minutes of the characters starting to look around town, someone calls Officer Hughley to alert him to their presence. He is quick to respond, and friendly but firm as he greets and directs the characters to the Evans residence.

Hughley recognizes it is already late in the day, and does not want to pressure the team to start any kind of formal work at this point. There might be activity out at one of the farms tonight, but he thinks it would be far safer for the scientists to begin their work in the daylight. He is perfectly willing to risk the lives of a sheep or two tonight rather than risking the lives of the scientists by having them wandering around in unfamiliar territory in the dark. The officer is happy to help them get settled in at Mrs. Evans' home. He invites them to come to the station and share a cup of coffee once they get moved in—he explains he usually sticks around the station until midnight or so.

The Evans House

Officer Hughley made arrangements for the characters to stay at Mrs. Evans' House. She is the only town resident whose home has enough spare rooms to accommodate the research team—though it does require two people per room. The house is a large and airy farmhouse. It is kept clean and neat, but there are signs of wear—evidence Mrs. Evans might not be able to perform the occasional necessary minor repair. The rooms are small, but are adequate for a short stay. All of the guests share a single bathroom. The town is covering the cost of the rooms, so the researchers need not be concerned about that expense.

After Hughley introduces the characters, Mrs. Evans quickly lays down the ground rules of the house. Essentially, breakfast is served promptly at 7 AM. She is the only person allowed to use the kitchen. No use of the showers or bath after 9 PM. No loud music. Even as she lays out her ground rules, Dot is extremely friendly. Her friendliness, however, has an artificial, saccharine feel. She is generous with her offers of any special accommodations, but she exhibits no follow through on them. For example, she cheerfully accepts requests for hot tea, spare towels, or a toothbrush, but the requested items never arrive. If the characters ask, she apologizes profusely, makes new assurances, and still fails to deliver.

Dot is an unrepentant gossip, and cannot resist prying into the life stories of any and all of the researchers. This is the one instance that can actually provoke generosity from the woman. She is happy to provide tea, cookies, and other snacks to anyone who will sit down and “dish” with her about the village. While she does work hard to get every bit of information that she can from her guests, she is also generous with stories about the village and its inhabitants. She is happy to report who served in the war, news about the town's romantic pairings, and anything anyone might be doing which could possibly be interpreted as sinful or even illegal.

A Little Chat

The researchers could decide to take Officer Hughley up on his offer to meet later that night after they get settled at Mrs. Evans' House, or they could decide to wait until the next morning. Regardless of the time, they need to cover the background on the reason for their trip. Hughley is happy to meet with them and eager to get down to business.

Local farmers have been reporting higher than expected numbers of losses among their herds. They suspect wolves are the culprits. However, there is a general consensus Colorado's native gray wolf population was eradicated more than a decade prior. If something is preying on sheep and other domestic animals, then either the species has been reintroduced or something else has filled their ecological niche. Either possibility is of interest to the scientists. If there are wolves, then the scientists want to know where they came from. If another predator were attacking the herds, then they would like to identify it.

Hughley explains he was the one who made the requests to have the scientists come out. He admits he may have put the researchers into an awkward situation, as he did so against the Mayor's request. Mr. Hank Milson and Mr. Kyle Tappet (page 36) were pressuring him pretty unrelentingly to take serious action about the threat. Tappet has already lost a few dozen sheep. The locals downplayed Tappet's panic, thinking he was exaggerating matters. Then something took animals right out of Milson's stockyard, and everyone became a lot more worried about the matter. That's what prompted Hughley to make the call to the researchers.



The officer admits he has been trying to help Tappet with the missing sheep on his farm for months. It started out like the boy who cried wolf, with the occasional sheep missing, about one every few weeks. That sounded like it might be a counting error at first, or maybe just one straying away from the flock and getting lost. He made little of it, though Tappet was genuinely concerned. So, Hughley poked around the area, asked neighbors some questions, but did not turn up any good leads. This has been going on since late March, when the weather started to warm up. Over the last month, the problem became more pronounced as the numbers of missing sheep increased. Soon, Tappet was losing one each week, and the neighbors started to take him more seriously. Lately he has lost sheep even more often than that. With the animals missing from the stockyard, a few of the villagers are in an uproar.

Whatever is taking the animals has not left any remains Hughley or Tappet was able to find at the farm. The animal missing from the stockyard was the same way. A Knowledge (Science) check confirms this is not consistent with normal wolf predation — a wolf attack is typically gruesome. The officer thought for some time the issue could be

either someone pranking Tappet or someone actually stealing the sheep. However, the slow pace of disappearances — and targeting at the stockyard too — just does not make any sense. Searching the area he also has not been able to turn up any animal tracks or vehicle tracks that seemed out of place.

The officer is happy to answer any further questions on the situation but lacks additional information. He truly is at a loss, which is why he has appealed to the scientists. He hopes their expertise reveals something he missed, because his next step is to contact the state police to begin a more thorough criminal investigation.

OUT OF PLACE

This scene opens when the characters reach the Tappet farm to begin their investigation. It assumes the characters decide to visit the farm during the daytime. Officer Hughley comes along to make the necessary introductions. If the characters are particularly impatient to get started, or wish to see the area during darkness when the abductions took place, the Game Master must increase the difficulty for tasks due to the darkness and the unfamiliar terrain.

Mr. Kyle Tappet (page 35) is very excited the researchers have arrived, and feels vindicated by their presence. He is convinced something unusual is taking place on his farm, and he is certain the visitors can validate his concerns. Tappet's enthusiasm for the arrival comes across as overbearing in this scene. He is anxious to point out every single incident in exquisite detail to the scientists, and he expects to be fully involved in the study. He is certain something is horribly amiss, and he seems slightly unhinged by his obsession with the idea. He also carries a shotgun over his shoulder and a massive shearing knife in a makeshift scabbard on his belt.

Tappet is happy to show the characters around the farm, pointing out the different places where the sheep have gone missing. His land includes eight different pastures, each about ten acres in size. During the warmer months he splits his sheep into three flocks and rotates them through the pastures on a weekly basis. He uses dogs as well as a few farm hands to manage the flocks. Sheep have gone missing from each of the different pastures, though no one has ever seen them going missing. In each case, the dogs have been unwilling to go to specific parts of the pastures where the sheep have vanished. They whine and bark and act skittish around that area.

When they investigate the pastures, have the scientists make Knowledge (Science) and Tracking checks. With a success, after a full day's worth of searching, they find no evidence of wolf activity in the area. On a raise, they are confident this is not the work of typical predators. In fact, they do not find prints, spoor, or other evidence of any animals other than the sheep, farm hands, and sheep dogs Tappet already knows are present. This includes smaller wildlife, such as rabbits, squirrels, and even birds. All seem to have abandoned the area.

If the characters decide to investigate further, call for a Notice check -4. Researchers who achieve a success recognize a series of depressions in the ground, which are about eighteen inches in diameter. They hadn't stood out initially, because distances typically of fifteen to twenty feet separate them. Asking Tappet about them, he had not noticed them previously. His first thought is they could be places where sheep or dogs might have laid down, but further examination does not support

The Stockyards

If the characters decide to visit the stockyards prior to visiting Tappet's place, they are unable to find any convincing evidence there. The stockyards only suffered a single incident, and the area around the facility is harder with drier ground, which is poor for showing tracks. Mr. Hank Milson (page 36) is accommodating and concerned, but he takes the whole situation with a grain of salt. He thinks the most likely outcome is to rule out the presence of any predators, and verify someone is stealing the livestock. The one thing the characters do discover is the villagers' derisive attitude toward Tappet. Everyone they talk to asks if they have come to follow up on Tappet's reports. No one has seen anything out of the ordinary except for him. In fact, many other townsfolk think he has completely forgotten how to count.

this. Characters who study the depressions more closely can make a Knowledge (Science) or Tracking check. They soon recognize the prints are identical to spider tracks. If one of the researchers uses Knowledge (Science) to examine the prints with a chemist's kit, he even turns up tiny fragments of chitin-based hairs, identical to those found on a tarantula.

The researchers may not believe the evidence before them, but it seems irrefutable. Tappet's sheep appear to have been taken by an enormous spider. A quick calculation based on the size and spacing of the most recent tracks, estimates it with a leg-span of more than one hundred feet! Its very existence seems a perversion of biology as they know it.

APHONOPELMA GIGANTUS

This scene begins once the scientists become confident there is an enormous spider on the loose, somewhere near Greenfield. (If the characters did not confirm its existence, at Tappet's farm, the Game Master should

provide mounting evidence through other sources. Possibilities could include a large quantity of spider-webbing found near Milson's feed shop, tracks near the edge of Greenfield, or even disappearances from another farm. If another farm is used, the investigation could proceed similarly to the one at Tappet's farm.) No evidence exists that the huge terror attacked humans, but it is capable of devouring sheep — and possibly other animals. This suggests humans could become victims in the near future. Until the heroes actually have physical confirmation of their suspicions, they likely want to keep people safe without inducing a panic. In an effort to preserve their reputations, credible scientists are also unlikely to want to call in help until after they achieve some direct confirmation.

Officer Hughley takes a conservative view at this stage of the investigation. He knows Mayor Brock wants to avoid a scene at all costs. A formal government inquiry about a giant spider would be a tremendous embarrassment for the city, if it were inaccurate. Brock knows he would never live it down, and Greenfield's residents would be laughingstocks. Hughley knows he has to accede to the Mayor and avoid even the risk of such an embarrassment. He insists the scientists come up with some actual proof of their theories before bringing in another group. If necessary, he brings the Mayor into the discussion, who is even more fervent in his caution about state, federal, or military involvement. Some concrete proof must be obtained first.

Mr. Tappet, in sharp contrast, is far more excited about the presence of the monster than he is frightened by it. The sheep farmer is on the verge of running through town to start a panic, just because he feels so vindicated about his previous concerns. Fortunately, Hughley is able to quickly dissuade Tappet of any such dramatic notions — in the interest of public safety. Tappet's sole consolation is when Hughley agrees to let the farmer join any search parties to try to track down the enormous arachnid. Tappet has his shotgun, his shearing knife, and a determination to kill whatever absconded with his sheep.

If the characters decide to bring any other townsfolk on the hunt, they are happy to comply once they are fully informed. Greenfield's residents are generally a hardy lot, and they are more than willing to defend

their homes. Hank Milson is particularly willing to join in the expedition and agrees to commit five of his employees from the feed shop as well.

If the characters bring anyone into the discussion beyond Tappet's farm — including Mayor Brock — word leaks out, courtesy of Mrs. Evans. Game Masters can use their discretion to determine the best way. She is certain to eavesdrop on the town's party line but is not above actual snooping and listening outside windows. Alternatively, Mrs. Evans might even see the beast through her binoculars, while snooping about town. As soon as she learns there could be a giant spider near the town, she spreads the rumor to her neighbors.

Within hours, concerned citizens gather around the police station. Mayor Brock uses the radio to contact Officer Hughley through his patrol car. The Officer and the team need to come back to town and try to calm the crowd. The crowd is initially Uncooperative, and needs to be calmed with a Persuasion check. If the crowd can be moved to Neutral, they agree to remain in their homes. With a Friendly crowd, a few members agree to join in the search for the spider.

💀 **Aphonopelma Gigantus:** See page 34.

TRACKING THE BEAST

The characters travelled to Greenfield prepared to track wolves. Their equipment is inadequate for confronting a spider bigger than most houses. They do not have massive quantities of arachnicide. Nor did they have any justification to bring large quantities of explosives or military grade weapons. Similarly, no one in the town has such equipment — at least that they are willing to admit to.

If the Game Master wishes, one or more of Greenfield's citizens could easily be World War II veterans who returned with souvenirs or demolitions training from the war. If they become aware of the threat, they could offer their services to the heroes. Using supplies from the feed store, the group could synthesize powerful explosives. Scavenging materials is likely to draw unwanted questions and attention from other townsfolk. Similarly, the Mayor and Hughley remain strongly opposed to bringing in outsiders — including state police or the military — who might have such gear.

The way the heroes proceed with their investigation sets the tone for the initial interactions with **Aphonopelma gigantus** (page 34). The easiest and most direct approach is to use pickup trucks or tractors to quickly follow the different sets of tracks, searching the areas surrounding Tappet's farm. This can be slow going, as not all of the territory is suitable for motorized vehicles. Often, the characters need to proceed afoot. Some of the researchers may be concerned about their ability to outrun a spider the size of a house when they are on foot. The Game Master must use her discretion in assigning difficulties to track down the monster. Ultimately, the spider and its tracks are enormous. Given enough time, the characters are certain to eventually succeed. A Tracking check takes several hours of searching during daylight. Attempts made at night take eight hours, and incur a -2 penalty.

A safer alternative could be to use aircraft. If the characters think of this, they can get access to a crop duster from a small local airport. The only one readily available is a two-seater biplane, which was military surplus from World War I. The plane comes with a pilot, who is certain to ask awkward questions and ultimately report the story to Mrs. Evans. Each tracking attempt made using the plane takes only a single hour during daylight or night time, though it incurs the same -2 penalty at night.

Some teams may try to use the crop duster to apply pesticide to the spider. Most pesticides are ineffective against spiders. With a raise on a Knowledge (Science) test, the characters identify a chemical with limited effects. After applying it, the armor for the *Aphonopelma gigantus* is no longer considered Heavy.

Once the spider is found, the scientists may photograph it—either from the ground or the air. With this evidence in hand, they can confront the mayor and begin a formal process of obtaining outside assistance. If the researchers are slow to act, the creature strikes again in **The Spider's Move** (see below).

Trapping the Monster

Instead of tracking it, some researchers might try to draw the monster into a trap. The creature leaves its den to hunt each night, passing through Tappet's farm and the surrounding area. The heroes need to devise something structurally sound enough to contain the creature. The spider can climb out

of a simple pit and is far too strong to contain with lumber and barbed wire. Enterprising scientists might synthesize toxins or explosives using raw materials from Milson's feed store, though they would first need to bring him into the discussion. Ultimately, it is unlikely that the researchers could overcome the monstrosity with the tools at hand. However, particularly innovative groups might come up with a good solution. If they do defeat the spider at this stage, they still need to address its offspring in **Clearing the Clutter**, page 31.

The Spider's Move

During the day, the enormous spider rests in a box canyon a few miles from Tappet's farm. The canyon walls are roughly two hundred feet high, and the canyon is less than a half-mile across and about a half mile deep. The terrain near Greenfield is fairly rough, and there are a number of box canyons in the area. The locals are familiar with the territory and are able to check each of them in turn, if the researchers think to target such locations.

The canyon also attaches to a massive tunnel complex, miles in length. The cave network, however, is very well concealed, and none of the area's residents are familiar with it. Its connection to the box canyon is a narrow crevice, less than five feet in height and only about two feet wide. It is largely overgrown, though much of the usual brush has been displaced. That is because the complex is filled with hundreds or possibly even thousands of immature *Aphonopelma gigantus* (page 34). The offspring are the focus for **Clearing the Clutter**, page 31. At this stage, they remain concealed within the caves.

At night, the spider ventures out of the canyon in search of prey animals. If the massive spider somehow manages to find enough prey—this would require two to three sheep-sized animals—it becomes docile, and remains in the canyon complacently for several days. Its initial forays, months earlier, depleted most animals from the region. Lately, Tappet's farm has been the most accessible source of prey for the monster, so it continues to travel there each night. It has been unable to find enough food to keep it away for longer than two days.

If the researchers remove the sheep from Tappet's farm, then the spider moves to the stockyards as its next target. If that has also been secured, then the creature next

investigates the village of Greenfield proper. Even though it is most likely to stalk through the town during the dead of night, this is certain to draw the attention of the townsfolk and panic them. As people panic and flee into the streets, the spider is likely to even take humans as prey. If word had not yet reached the townsfolk about the danger, learning about it in this circumstance is enough to trigger a panic. Some begin to evacuate the town while others come to the Mayor and Officer Hughley demanding military intervention.

Ultimately, the creature needs food for itself and its young. The townsfolk—and the researchers—are just as viable as sheep. Once it secures two to three specimens, it returns to the box canyon. The creature is not malicious. It is simply hungry and considers everything its prey. Unless the characters have somehow synthesized the equivalent of heavy weapons or weakened the spider (see **Tracking the Beast**), there is little they can do to stop it.



CALL THE AIR FORCE!

After encountering the spider, the researchers soon realize any weapons they have are essentially useless against it. Officer Hughley, Mr. Tappet, and any other residents of Greenfield are all too happy to convince the Mayor the time has come for more drastic action. Given direct evidence of the immediate threat, his opposition to intervention fades immediately.

Once everyone agrees to call for help, there may be some discussion about the best option. A Common Knowledge check reveals that Ent Air Force Base is nearby. Researchers with a military background—or townsfolk who are veterans—know how to navigate the appropriate channels, but it does require some time. Game Masters must use their best judgment to set difficulties based upon the approach the scientists take. Keep in mind the soldiers manning the phone lines are certain to be incredulous at reports of a 100' spider. Persuading Colonel Tom Lloyd—the base commander (page 30)—to send a squadron of F-86 Sabres to bomb rural America requires more than a single test. Notably, heroes with Connections (i.e. Sarah Howell) can bring them into play at this stage to bypass some of the tests and get direct contact with the people who can make the necessary decisions.

For the sake of the adventure, convincing the Air Force to bomb a location on US soil is straightforward. Once the Air Force officers have convincing evidence they become willing to take direct action. If the scientists provide reasonable credentials and the relevant map coordinates, the Air Force can even be persuaded to commit planes to perform a fly-by to obtain visual confirmation of the threat.

BOMB THE SPIDER VERSION ONE: Stock Footage

Atomic horror films often included stock military footage. This scene briefly recaptures that element. Once the Air Force agrees to launch the planes, read or paraphrase the following:

A Pair of F-86 Sabres accelerate down a runway at rapid speed. Klaxons blare in the background. As the planes takeoff, their afterburners kick in with a fiery blast. The aircraft shoot up into the sky in an instant. The camera cuts to a side view, showing the two planes in flight. A confident voice crackles over the radio.

"This is Jaybird. We are two minutes to visual contact with target. Please advise, command."

As the planes prepare their attack, the heroes are at a temporary military camp, surrounded by Air Force specialists. Colonel Lloyd directs them to use the field radio to talk to the pilots. They must provide the pilots with information on how the spider is likely to move and where to strike it. The fighter-bombers' weapons are more than sufficient to eliminate the oversized spider. However, the canyon walls are not particularly stable. A poorly aimed rocket could cause the canyon to collapse, releasing dust into the air and possibly triggering a fire—either of which could provide the monster with the cover it needs to escape. The scientists need to convey the dangers and vulnerabilities to the pilots over the radio.

Have one of the players present her character's directions to the pilots—other researchers might add their own advice in the background. The acting character must then make a Knowledge (Science) test. The Game Master should provide bonuses for Cooperative Rolls as well as particularly well executed directions. As the dice roll, read or paraphrase the following:

The camera shifts back to show a pair of F-86 Sabres in mid-flight. Simultaneously, each of the planes fire two rockets—one from each wing. After firing, the planes tilt to their sides in perfect formation, looping toward the top of the screen.

If the characters succeed on the test, read or paraphrase the following:

The camera cuts to rockets striking the spider and exploding dramatically. The massive arachnid staggers. Its exoskeleton shatters and its internal organs and fluids burst forth from the explosion. Flames engulf the beast as it staggers and collapses to the ground, shaking the trees around it. A pilot's voice crackles in the background.

"Command, target is destroyed. We're heading home."

If the characters fail the test, read or paraphrase the following:

The image cuts to the rockets smashing into trees and canyon walls. Dust and gravel are thrown into the air, and trees explode and catch fire. The air fills with dust and smoke, obscuring visibility. A pilot's voice crackles in the background.

"Negative, command. Rockets impacted on the surface."

If the planes fail to hit the target, they can make two further attempts, each time with the scientists giving directions. However, dust from the missed shots makes these latter attempts more difficult. The heroes suffer a -2 penalty to their Knowledge (Science) test. On success or failure, use the same read aloud text as listed above, taking care to match any verbiage changes made when paraphrasing.

If the researchers fail to provide adequate directions on all three attempts, then the spider escapes the canyon, and the planes must return to the Air Force base to rearm and refuel. In their absence, *Aphonopelma gigantus* walks into Greenfield and begins attacking the town indiscriminately. The researchers and the Colonel Lloyd need to discuss the matter further before US planes can bomb an inhabited small town.

BOMB THE SPIDER VERSION TWO: Dramatic Task Approach

The Air Force does not have any experts on spiders, especially giant ones, on hand other than the scientists. Colonel Lloyd directs the team to a waiting helicopter, which will fly over

the canyon where they found the spider. They are to use a radio aboard the helicopter to provide the F-86 Sabre pilots with directions to target and eliminate the **Aphonopelma gigantus**.

The pilots are more than capable of hitting a target the size of a barn with their plane's rockets. The complication is that they are not familiar with the movement patterns of spiders, even ones this large. The scientists need to provide the pilots with information about where to target on the spider as well as how it is likely to move in response to their directions. Advising the pilots is resolved as a Dramatic Task (see *Savage Worlds* core rules), requiring three successes to complete. The characters have five attempts to achieve those successes.

The researchers provide accurate directions with a Knowledge (Science) roll at -2. The Game Master should provide bonuses for Cooperative Rolls as well as particularly well executed directions. If the characters succeed read or paraphrase the following:

The camera cuts to rockets striking the spider and exploding dramatically. The massive arachnid staggers. Its exoskeleton shatters and its internal organs and fluids burst forth from the explosion. Flames engulf the beast as it staggers and collapses to the ground, shaking the trees around it. A pilot's voice crackles in the background.

"Command, target is destroyed. We're heading home."

Each time the characters fail an attempt, the planes' rockets instead strike the surface. This imposes an additional -2 penalty to further Knowledge (Science) checks. On a failure, read or paraphrase the following:

The image cuts to the rockets smashing into trees and canyon walls. Dust and gravel are thrown into the air, and trees explode and catch fire. The air fills with dust and smoke, obscuring visibility. A pilot's voice crackles in the background.

"Negative, command. Rockets impacted on the surface."

If the researchers fail to achieve three successes in five attempts, or if the heroes

fail an action on a complication, the spider escapes the canyon. The planes must return to the Air Force base to rearm and refuel before further attempts can be made. In their absence, **Aphonopelma gigantus** walks into Greenfield and begins attacking the town indiscriminately. The researchers and the Colonel Lloyd need to discuss the matter further before US planes can bomb an inhabited small town.

Colonel Tom Lloyd

As the current Commander of Ent Air Force Base, Colonel Lloyd has little expectations of exposure to direct combat. He is currently working a peacetime assignment, focused upon training and working toward the space race. The base does occasionally receive crackpot requests, and he has enough experience working with the public to humor them politely. Just reaching the Colonel requires a bit of work. He is a decorated and busy military officer. He has people working under him to deal with the riffraff.

When speaking of military matters, the Colonel is no nonsense. He is a professional, and takes these matters extremely seriously. He does not want to unleash the US military against a threat unless he is convinced the threat is substantial, particularly on US soil. Doing so lightly could not only cost him his job, it could also besmirch the Air Force. He needs to see the threat is credible before he can initiate an appropriate response.

FIGHTING FIRE

In Colorado's summer heat, the trees in the box canyon are exceptionally dry. Flames from the explosion are certain to trigger a fire. Before the researchers can investigate the canyon, they need to extinguish that fire.

Volunteer firefighters from Greenfield and neighboring communities assemble, but the heroes need to direct them. Any poison sprayed upon the spider is dangerous to the firefighters at the concentrations used. The spider's surviving organs could also be dangerous. The bombing run damaged the canyon walls, leaving the potential for deadly landslides.

The researchers need to direct the firefighters to avoid these dangers. At this point in the investigation, the scientists have established their credibility. The firefighters heed their

advice without question. The researchers simply need to offer the right advice, with a Knowledge (Science) check. If the characters fail the check or do not offer to help the firefighters, three of the volunteers are killed fighting the blaze.

CLEARING THE CLUTTER

Once the giant spider is eliminated, the next step is to investigate its remains. Colonel Lloyd and Mayor Brock expect the researchers—as the experts—to handle this. Technically, the scientists also need to confirm its death. This is trivial, as the burned and shattered fragments of the creature now litter the box canyon. It is dead beyond a shadow of a doubt. At this stage, the most challenging part about the investigation is the attempt to assemble the remains.

The scientists need to exercise a degree of caution before entering the box canyon. The bombs triggered fires, which can take hours to burn out. They may also have left the canyon walls and floor unstable. A landslide could trigger easily. Note these would include only conventional explosives, so there should not be any radioactivity from the bombs.

If none of the scientists think to do so, a Knowledge (Science) test suggests they sweep the remains with a Geiger counter. (The researchers have one among their equipment.) A quick check reveals the spider's body emits

Death Elsewhere

During their initial search for the spider, the researchers are intended to discover the box canyon where it dwelt. This is also the place where it is most likely to have died. However, the characters may have slain it elsewhere using a baited trap or some other machinations. If the scientists do not think to investigate the canyon after the monster is killed, call for a Knowledge (Science) check. Characters who succeed decide that they should try to investigate the canyon where it had its lair.

low levels of radiation. There is not enough to be dangerous, but it is clear the monster was exposed to radioactivity, likely consuming some.

As the researchers search through the remains, a Knowledge (Science) test reveals another interesting fact. Normally, spiders leave the remains of their prey behind, after they consume the blood and organs. Certainly the bombs and the fire devastated the area, but the spider has consumed at least two-dozen sheep. Bones should be easy to find, but they do not discover any with their initial survey.

OFFSPRING

As the characters investigate the box canyon, a trio of immature *Aphonopelma gigantus* attacks. Now that the explosions have stopped, the monsters come out to investigate what caused the loud noises and heat. With their accelerated growth rate, these spiders are constantly hungry. They happily view the scientists—and any military or townsfolk who accompany them—as food.

The spiders are not, however, willing to risk their lives for a meal. Until the characters enter the caves (see below), when a spider dies, its surviving fellows retreat. If the characters pursue them, or follow their tracks, the spiders scuttle toward one of the canyon walls. They then slide through a narrow crack located along the base of the canyon wall. The opening is less than five feet in height and only about two feet wide. It seems too small to accommodate the large spiders, but their tracks make it clear they entered here.

A Notice check in the area around the opening reveals it was previously concealed by brush. The plants were likely destroyed in the explosion or the fire (If the mother spider died elsewhere, then the concealing plants are still intact). A raise reveals the presence of sheep wool clinging from the rock just inside the opening. It suggests that the remains of the missing animals may have been pushed through the crack.

Success on a Tracking check reveals a significant number of spider tracks around the opening. A raise pinpoints it to be the product of twelve spiders which have left the small cave since the fire and explosions. Clearly the others need to be tracked down quickly, lest they continue to grow and become a plague elsewhere.

The younger specimens are stealthy, but they are not as invulnerable as their parent — at least until a few months have passed. The researchers can work with the townsfolk and the military to track these specimens down, or they can instead focus directly upon the cave, which appears to be part of a much larger nest. Tracking and eliminating the individual specimens is a routine process, unless the researchers decide they want to take one alive for further study. Even then, the biggest challenge is trying to determine how the creature would be contained as it grew. The complexities of that process are left to the Game Master's discretion. Keep in mind the Air Force expects the researchers to assist in this matter. The military does not have experts on giant spiders at hand.

- **Immature Aphonopelma gigantus (3):**

See page 34.

THE CAVES

The entrance to the cave is quite narrow. The first fifteen feet are extremely tight, and pose a situation that could leave any of the investigators nearly defenseless against the attack of one of

the more maneuverable spiders. If a researcher enters without reasonable preparations, then one of the creatures immediately confronts him. This is likely to be an isolated conflict, as other characters could not easily attack around the lead character. Characters may wish to use flames, smoke, or poisonous gas to clear out the entrance, giving them time to enter the cave safely. They could obtain gas or smoke equipment through Colonel Lloyd with a successful Persuasion check.

Beyond the narrow entrance, the cave descends quickly, and then opens up quite a bit. The missing remains of dozens of domestic animals occupy a room that is roughly 20 feet in diameter and 15 feet in height, attached to the initial entry passage. Interspersed with the animal remains are spider nests, nearly a yard in diameter. A Knowledge (Science) check reveals these as egg pouches. Each pouch likely contained eggs that could give birth to as many as a hundred spiders. The researchers can find eight empty pouches in a quick search, but there may be more.

Three other passages branch off from this room. Each weaves in several directions, with countless splits. A quick survey reveals the cave complex is enormous, stretching for miles in



every direction. It is also labyrinthine. The tunnels are the product of water erosion over the course of millennia. The spiders have made the natural caves a home.

Characters with a Geiger counter note there is a low level of radiation present throughout the caves. A Knowledge (Science) check reveals that exploring the caves without protection for hours would be dangerous over the long term. Short-term exposure is a bad idea, but is not likely to have a significant effect.

The egg pouches suggest there are at least hundreds of the massive spiders dwelling in this cavern network. They range in size from less than a foot to up to eight feet, as described in **immature Aphonopelma gigantus**. The monsters are clearly still growing, and could soon pose a substantial threat.

The researchers need to use their best judgment to resolve the remaining threat. Game Masters must use their discretion and the results of the researchers' skill tests to determine the plan's effectiveness. Some likely examples follow:

Flooding the Caves

Spiders do need to breathe, so they can be drowned. Flooding the caves with water is one way to kill them. This requires a massive amount of water. The cave complex stretches for many miles. The researchers need to work with the military to determine some means of getting the required amount of water to the site in a timely fashion. Local wells and water towers do not have enough capacity to solve the problem.

Bug Spray

The characters may decide an arachnicide is the best approach to eliminating the huge numbers of overgrown spiders. Any of the characters can come up with a reasonable formula with a Knowledge (Science) check. The challenge is in obtaining the requisite quantity of chemicals and synthesizing it in a timely fashion. If they can do so, it could either be delivered with pumps or an aerosol explosion within the caves.

In Flames

The characters can pump gasoline or other fuels into the caverns, with the intent of burning the creatures out. The heat and flame is certainly an impediment, but there is not

enough air circulation in the caves to keep the fire going for long. Of course, the lack of oxygen could also kill some of the spiders. This requires a lot of fuel, but it is possible to obtain it, particularly with military assistance.

More Bombs

The Air Force Base can provide an inordinate amount of firepower, if the characters decide to go with this approach. However, someone must enter the caves to place the bombs. Simply detonating explosives at the entrance only seals this entrance to the caves. This approach could potentially leave thousands of the giant spiders breeding in the depths of the earth, just waiting for another opportunity to emerge.

The Nuclear Option

If convinced of the magnitude of the danger, Colonel Lloyd could be persuaded to appeal to his superiors to use nuclear weapons to destroy the cavern complex. This is certain to eliminate the immediate threat. Of course, it also destroys Greenfield as well as the surrounding region. Depending upon the weapon used, fallout could even affect many of Colorado's major cities. If the heroes worked to dig a large chasm to isolate the blast, they risk interference from spiders throughout the dig.

INTO THE TOWN

At the Game Master's discretion, any strategy to cleanse the caverns could have a catastrophic side effect. Two dozen **immature Aphonopelma gigantus** emerge from Greenfield's sewers, as they attempt to escape the caverns. The man-sized spiders skitter through the town, in search of food. Greenfield's citizens are salt of the earth people, and many were military veterans. There are ten residents armed with shotguns, and, in the face of giant spiders, they are prepared to use them.

The spiders move in a swarm, and utilize pack tactics. They smash through the glass windows of the diner, the bars, and the homes. Citizens are dragged into the street by the massive arachnids, where they web them to walls and posts — planning to feed only once the prey stop resisting.

The Air Force neglected to defend the city, and Officer Hughley is occupied coordinating with them outside of town. Without someone to lead the defense, the citizens operate

independently—a losing strategy in this case. The researchers may be able to defeat the spiders on their own, but if they coordinate the townsfolk, they can emerge as heroes.

- **Greensfield Townsfolk (15):** See page 34.

CLOSING SHOT

Depending upon how the researchers battled the tunnel complex, there might still be spiders to overcome. Some might have escaped through side tunnels, or others might have left the nest. Alternatively, nuclear fallout from a dramatic blast might create more mutants elsewhere. Some scientists might even have captured specimens for further analysis. As the scientists move on to their next challenge, the camera fades to black. A quick scene after the fade zooms in on a nest bursting open within a city sewer.

FRIENDS AND FOES

Aphonopelma gigantus

 A catastrophically mutated strain of the Mexican tarantula, *Aphonopelma gigantus* grows to have a leg-span of over 100 feet. Fortunately, these creatures are tremendously rare, only appearing in reaction to extraordinary levels of radiation—such as is found in places where nuclear weapons have been tested repeatedly. While not overly malicious, the specimen has an appetite proportionate to its size, making a single specimen a terrible plague upon a region.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+10, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d12, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d6

Pace: 12; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 24 (6)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +6:** Chitinous exoskeleton.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Fear:** A 100' spider is more than just unsettling.
- **Gargantuan:** The spider is Huge and suffers +4 to attacks against it. Its attacks count as Heavy Weapons, and its Armor is Heavy Armor.

- **Hardy:** The massive spider does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Size +10:** The giant spider has a leg-span of more than 100'. Its body is 80' long.
- **Paralyzing Venom:** Anyone who suffers a wound or Shaken result from the spider's bite attack must make a Vigor roll at a -2 penalty or be paralyzed and incapable of action for 2d6 rounds.
- **Wall Walker:** In spite of its enormous size, the spider remains capable of climbing walls and steep cliffs, as long as the structures can support its weight.
- **Webbing:** The huge spider can cast webs from its thorax the size of Large Burst Templates. This is a shooting roll with a range of 6/12/24. Anything in the web must cut or break their way free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.

Greensfield Townsfolk

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), double-barrel shotgun (12g) (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1-2).

Immature Aphonopelma gigantus

Young specimens of the giant tarantula remain a significant threat to anyone who encounters them. What they lose in size, they tend to make up in numbers, as birth cohorts of these specimens can number into the upper hundreds or even low thousands. At birth, they have a leg-span of just over eight feet.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d12, Fighting d10, Notice d8, Shooting d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Chitinous exoskeleton.
- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Size +2:** The immature giant spider has a leg-span of more than 8'. Its body is 6' long.
- **Paralyzing Venom:** Anyone who suffers a wound or Shaken result from the spider's bite attack must make a Vigor roll at a -2 penalty or be paralyzed and incapable of action for 2d6 rounds.

- **Wall Walker:** In spite of its size, the spider remains capable of climbing walls and steep cliffs, as long as the structures can support its weight.
- **Webbing:** The spider can cast webs from its thorax the size of Small Burst Templates. This is a shooting roll with a range of 3/6/12. Anything in the web must cut or break their way free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.

Mayor Charley Brock

Greenfield's Mayor is ostensibly an elected position, but it's hardly a full time job. Every six years, the city holds a vote, and for the past six cycles, Charley Brock won without opposition — no one else seems to want the job. Now in his late sixties, Charley remains staunchly opposed to any sort of change, and most of the village's residents joke about his attitudes. He didn't want to see the traffic light when it went in, and some still laugh about his arguments against installing phone lines.

Brock refuses to believe anything is a problem until he sees it with his own eyes. Even after he does, he tends to downplay problems. This is largely because Brock is extremely tightfisted with the village's limited funds. The Mayor also enjoys the village's relative solitude. He fears anything making a scene could draw reporters and other outsiders to the village, and he deplores the idea of such intrusions.

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

Skills: Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Politics) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Taunt d6

Cha: +2; Pace: 6; Parry: 2; Toughness: 4

Hindrances: Hard of Hearing (Minor)

Edges: Noble

Gear: Briefcase with important papers.

Mrs. Dorothy Evans

Mrs. Evans ("Call me, Dot.") is the prototypical town gossip. She knows everyone in town well, and is always thrilled to share their personal life stories. She always begins every discussion by pointing out how she hates to be critical, and then proceeds to share every imaginable foible in exquisite detail. She knows everything about everyone, and is always happy to share, especially over a cup of tea.

Dot is in her early forties, and a widow. She owns a large home near the town center, and

is happy to let out rooms to visitors. Because she is extremely nosy, Dot pokes through any luggage that guests leave in her home when they are out exploring the town. Dot spends much of her free time eavesdropping on the town's party line, always happy to share in other's conversations. If she uncovers any information about town visitors, she is quick to share it with her neighbors.

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

Skills: Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Greenfield) d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Taunt d6

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 2; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Big Mouth, Curious

Edges: —

Gear: Binoculars (for "bird watching").

Mr. Kyle Tappet

Ultimately, Kyle is the person responsible for bringing the heroes to Greenfield. He has lost more than two-dozen sheep from his farm and wants to see the losses end. Initially, he thought it must be wolves preying upon his flock. However, he has not seen the kind of mess he would expect typical predators to leave behind. In all instances, the sheep have simply vanished, though he has found odd markings in his fields.

Tappet filed his first complaint with Officer Hughley months ago. By the time the heroes finally arrive to investigate, he has neared the end of his patience. He still does not know what is responsible for the losses, but he cannot afford for them to continue. Tappet is a practical man, and he can be persuaded to recognize the reasons for delay. However, he is not happy about them and is anxious to take direct action at the earliest possible opportunity.

Tappet has set traps and left poisoned meat out in his fields. Neither met with success. He has already spent a few nights out near the barn with his rifle, but he has fallen asleep each night before he saw anything. He did wake up one night when the sheep started a panicked bleating, but he does not know what caused the reaction.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (Agriculture) d6, Notice d6, Repair d4, Shooting d6, Survival d4

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Stubborn

Edges: —

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), double-barrel shotgun (12g) (Range 12/24/48, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1-2).

Mr. Hank Milson

Hank runs the feed shop and stockyard just outside of central Greenfield. Most of the local farmers and ranchers deal with his business on a regular basis. He knows everyone, and almost all of them owe him favors. Hank is easy going and helpful, but he expects a high level of professionalism.

Hank served in the 93rd Infantry Division in World War One, and returned as a decorated veteran. He has the respect of almost all of the townsfolk. Hank believes a successful business only happens with planning for every possible contingency. He is happy to fend for himself, but he values the opinion of experts, which is why he backed Kyle Tappet's request to bring in experts. If the heroes convince him they know what they are doing, he is a valuable ally. If not, he is happy to circulate his opinion, and his word goes a long way with the locals.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Knowledge (Agriculture) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 6

Hindrances: Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Rich

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), M1 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 1).

Police Officer Mack Hughley

Mack is an affable sort, more concerned with keeping the peace and the intent of the law than the letter of it. His biggest concern is that people in Greenfield and the surrounding area manage to get along with one another without stirring up too much trouble. He knows everyone in the area by name and is wary of outsiders, though he remains friendly toward them. He believes in a hands-on and personal approach to law enforcement.

Officer Hughley is willing to look the other way if folks are up to a small bit of mischief on their own property, but he refuses to do so if anything threatens public safety. He sees the safety and security of Greenfield as his personal responsibility — after all; he is the town's only law enforcement. Mack served in the 741st tank battalion during World War II. Those days are ten years behind him, but he remains willing and able to get his hands dirty should it become necessary.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Law) d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Vow (Protect Greenfield)

Edges: Alertness

Gear: Colt 1911 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1).



CAST OF CHARACTERS

DR. WINSTON CARMICHAEL, THE SCIENTIST

Winston Carmichael, Ph.D., is the dean of sciences at University of Colorado Boulder. He is a man of Science, and is firmly devoted to its many different fields. His specialty is biology, particularly focused upon the predatory animals of the western United States. In his younger days, he was particularly fond of fieldwork. In more recent years, he finds he still enjoys it, but appreciates having a team with him to do the heavy lifting. Carmichael is enthusiastic, but even-tempered in his pursuits.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d4, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Science) d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d6, Repair d6, Shooting d4

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Minor), Cautious, Code of Honor

Edges: Command, Inspire, Jack-of-All-Trades

Gear: Science kit, glasses, portable scientific library, swiss army knife, Colt 1911 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1).

Assignment and Team

Current Investigation: Dr. Carmichael recently received a request to investigate signs of wolf activity in the small town of Greenfield, CO, a few hours from the University. As the species is believed to be extinct in this area, he is excited to have an opportunity to confirm the re-emergence of the Gray Wolf in Colorado. He assembled a team of fieldworkers to investigate the claims.

Kurt Manning: Kurt, a current graduate student, is a promising young man who pursues his studies with enthusiasm. He is certain to have an excellent career in the sciences, as long as he buckles down and devotes the necessary time to his research.

Nick Stebler: Dr. Carmichael hired Nick as a field technician after the war. He has a keen

mind and capably overcomes his handicap. Dr. Carmichael trusts him implicitly.

Sarah Howell: Sarah insists she is enthusiastic about the sciences, but Dr. Carmichael is not convinced. He's agreed to let her help out with fieldwork this summer since her father made a generous donation to the university.

Jeannie Carmichael: Dr. Carmichael's daughter is very enthusiastic, but sometimes a bit too insistent. She's always excited to come along for fieldwork, and he has a hard time denying her anything. Since his wife passed away ten years ago, he's done his best to raise Jeannie on his own.

Bob Platt: Nick asked Dr. Carmichael to bring Bob along. Apparently he's a buddy from the war who was looking for work. Dr. Carmichael's not too sure about Bob, but he trusts Nick.

KURT MANNING, THE GRAD STUDENT

Kurt Manning is a graduate student, currently working on his Ph.D. in the laboratory of Dr. Winston Carmichael – dean of sciences at University of Colorado Boulder. Kurt loves spending time in the outdoors, so pursuing research that incorporated fieldwork was a compromise with his academic parents. Kurt's particular research interests focus around the effects on prey species' population growth when a predator population is eliminated. Dr. Carmichael's interests heavily influence his work.

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

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Science) d8, Notice d8, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Tracking d6

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Loyal (Friends and Coworkers), Overconfident, Stubborn

Edges: Alertness, Brave, Dodge, Quick

Gear: Camping gear, lighter, camera, hatchet, hunting rifle (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 1, AP 2).

Assignment and Team

Current Investigation: Kurt knows Dr. Carmichael is responding to a request to investigate signs of wolf activity in the small town of Greenfield, CO, a few hours from the University. He is excited to spend time away from school. The opportunity to compile new data for his thesis is an added bonus. Kurt worked closely with Nick to make certain they had all the necessary field supplies packed for the expedition.

Dr. Winston Carmichael: The professor is a brilliant man, devoted to the advancement of science. Kurt has the deepest respect for him, though he fears the professor is a bit prone to the isolation of the ivory tower. Kurt respects him and pays heed to his advice but tries to temper his input, since Kurt suspects he has little knowledge of how things work outside academia.

Nick Stebler: In many ways, Nick is more of a Kurt than Dr. Carmichael. He has the practical experience Kurt strives to earn for himself. He has seen the world, the good and the bad, and has proven the value of a scientific background throughout.

Sarah Howell: The Doc has saddled Kurt with training Sarah for the duration of the summer. She's nice enough, but she's flighty and seems to forget the most basic things. Kurt has a hard time believing she's serious about her pursuit of science.

Jeannie Carmichael: Since school let out, Jeannie has been a constant presence in the lab. The doc seems to think spending time around science is the best way for her to keep learning over the summer. She's certainly bright enough, but she's a pest with her constant questions about everything.

Bob Platt: Bob is a friend of Nick's, so he must be a solid guy, but he seems off. It's like he's up to something, and Kurt doesn't know what it might be. Kurt plans to be careful around him and make sure he doesn't have sticky fingers.

NICK STEBLER, THE TECHNICIAN

Nick Stebler initially served in the infantry of the US Army in World War II. He took a chunk of shrapnel to his left leg from an artillery barrage, and had to have it amputated. Not one to give in lightly, Stebler refused discharge and learned to get by with a prosthetic. He accepted

transfer to a technical position, spending the rest of the war repairing tanks.

Always a voracious reader, Nick took advantage of the G.I. Bill to finish a bachelor's degree after the war. He started working in Dr. Carmichael's lab as an undergraduate and took a position as a tech once he graduated. He's been working with him for nearly ten years.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Science) d6, Notice d8, Repair d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d6, Throwing d4, Tracking d6

Cha: 0; Pace: 4; Parry: 6; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Combat Shock (Minor), Loyal (Friends), One Leg

Edges: Common Bond, Improvisational Fighter, McGyver, No Mercy

Gear: Flashlight, rope, tool kit, Colt 1911 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1).

Assignment and Team

Current Investigation: The University is always receiving requests for a scientist to come look at some problem or another, and Dr. Carmichael tends to humor them when he has time. This one is an expedition out to some one-horse town far from Boulder, to look for wolves. It all seems kind of ridiculous, but if that's what the doc wants, then it's Nick's job to see it through.

Dr. Winston Carmichael: Nick has worked for the doc for a long time and trusts him implicitly. He's a good boss and a brilliant man. He just needs to learn to say "no" once in a while, because his generosity is always creating work for Nick.

Kurt Manning: Kurt's a good kid. He's earnest and enthusiastic about his research. He also seems to have a decent head on his shoulders and the ability to temper science with some real world experience. Nick has tipped back a few with him after hours and gets along well.

Sarah Howell: Another one of doc's charity cases. Sarah is a pretty little rich girl, who probably doesn't care one bit about the work she's ostensibly doing. As long as she's along, Nick knows it'll be his job to clean up her messes.

Jeannie Carmichael: The doc's daughter is generally a good kid, but Nick's less than thrilled that he seems to have become her babysitter. Admittedly, she's surprisingly

capable in the lab, so Nick has been able to offload some work on her. However, Nick never knows what she's going to try to do when he turns his back.

Bob Platt: An old army buddy, Bob's had a tough run of luck. He decided to stay in afterwards, and ended up going to Korea. He was discharged a year ago, and it sounds like he's seen some things. Nick convinced the doc to hire Bob on for this expedition, as the guy needs some work.

SARAH HOWELL, THE UNDERGRADUATE

Sarah Howell's father stubbornly refused to send her to Europe for summer vacation this year. Instead, he decided she needed to spend the summer at school, earning some practical experience in an internship. She decided if she had to spend the time there, an opportunity to work with something cute and fuzzy was the best bet. So, her father pulled some strings and put her into a summer research program with Dr. Carmichael. The work hasn't been what she expected, but she has been enjoying it, for the most part. She may even have learned a few things.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Science) d6, Knowledge (Politics) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Repair d4, Shooting d4, Swimming d4, Taunt d8

Cha: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Big Mouth, Clueless

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Connections, Filthy Rich

Gear: \$2500 spending money, 3 changes of clothes per day, umbrella, scientific field kit, Derringer (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1).

Assignment and Team

Current Investigation: Dr. Carmichael is taking the lab out into the middle of nowhere to look for wolves. Sarah was only allowed to bring three suitcases.

Kurt Manning: Kurt is Dr. Carmichael's other student. He's smart, but he's an insufferable know-it-all. Every time Sarah asks him a question, his answer seems to start with a deep sigh, as if he expects her to already know everything about science.

Nick Stebler: Nick is Dr. Carmichael's technician, which is like a scientific butler. Since Sarah is a student, she's pretty sure that means he has to take care of her.

Dr. Winston Carmichael: The doctor must be impressed with Sarah, since he agreed to let her work in his lab for the whole summer. Sarah's trying to work hard to prove to him his faith is well justified.

Jeannie Carmichael: Dr. Carmichael's daughter is a sweet kid, though she seems awfully devoted to actually trying to get work done on this trip. At least with her here, Sarah's not the only girl.

Bob Platt: Sarah doesn't really know why Bob is here, unless it's to do heavy lifting. He's kind of creepy.

JEANNIE CARMICHAEL, THE KID

Jeannie Carmichael is Dr. Winston Carmichael's twelve-year-old daughter. Her mother passed away when she was a toddler, so he has raised her as a single parent. Jeannie is a precocious young woman who has a strong interest in the sciences. She is enthusiastic in pursuing her studies, often at the expense of everything else around her. At times, her curiosity and impatience get the best of her, leaving her in a difficult situation when she should have shown better planning.

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Science) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Repair d6, Taunt d4

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Screamer, Stubborn, Young

Edges: Common Bond, Great Luck

Gear: Flashlight, pocketknife, field guide.

Assignment and Team

Current Investigation: Sarah's father is taking the lab on a trip to do some fieldwork, trying to confirm the existence of gray wolves in an area where they are thought to be extinct. This should be a fun chance to hone her fieldwork.

Winston Carmichael: Sarah's dad is one of the smartest people she has ever met. He works hard and he's extremely generous. She knows he loves her, and she knows if she smiles right, he'll let her do just about anything.

Kurt Manning: Sarah likes Kurt. He has the potential to be a solid scientist someday, though dad always says he needs to work harder. She tries to help him, by pointing out whenever he's doing things wrong and reminding him when he shouldn't be loafing.

Nick Stebler: Nick is dad's technician, and he's worked with him for as long as she can remember. He's kind of like an uncle to her, and he's taught her an awful lot of practical science skills, sometimes even things her dad said were too dangerous.

Sarah Howell: Sarah is dad's latest charity case—a student he took in who doesn't really know what she's doing. Sarah feels bad for her, because she seems to think she's competent. Sarah tries to humor her, because that's the polite thing to do.

Bob Platt: Nick had Dad bring Bob along on this expedition, so he must be an okay guy. Bob seems kind of quiet and withdrawn, so she's going to try to talk to him. Sarah figures if he had someone to talk to, he'd be more comfortable working with everyone.

BOB PLATT, THE HANDYMAN

Bob Platt was drafted into the United States Army when the country entered World War II. He served capably in the infantry, and decided to stay in after the war was up. He remained in the service through Korea, serving as an NCO during that conflict. In the waning days of the war, Bob received a Section 8 discharge after he was exposed to particularly savage events. Since then, he has drifted through temporary jobs and too many bad habits.

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

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d8, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Lockpicking d4, Notice d6, Repair d4, Shooting d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d4

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 6; Toughness: 6

Hindrances: Bad Luck, Poverty, Victim (Minor)

Edges: Brave, Brawny, Danger Sense, Marksman

Gear: Flask of cheap whiskey, crowbar, lockpicks, Colt 1911 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, AP 1).

Assignment and Team

Current Investigation: Dr. Carmichael is an egghead at UC Boulder who is taking a team of researchers out into the field to look for wolves. There probably aren't any, but Bob's coming along to help with the heavy lifting and to make sure they stay safe. It's probably only for a week or so.

Nick Stebler: A squad mate of Bob's in WWII; Nick lost part of his leg in the war. Bob has kept in touch whenever they were in the same part of the country. When Bob was passing through Boulder, Nick offered him a job helping out his boss on a field expedition.

Dr. Winston Carmichael: The doc is a smart guy, and apparently a decent one since he gave Bob this job. Bob's sure he can handle anything that comes up on the expedition, since it seems like it's basically a babysitting job.

Kurt Manning: The doc's grad student is a kid who seems nice enough, but he hasn't really had a chance to see the world at all. Bob doesn't mind chatting with him, as he's actually willing to listen to his advice.

Sarah Howell: This college girl apparently comes from money. She's not too bright and pretty well off, which seems like it could be a dangerous combination, so Bob's trying to steer clear of her as much as possible.

Jeannie Carmichael: The doc's daughter seems to have limitless energy and curiosity. When Bob accepted the gig, he knew it'd be security, but he didn't realize it was literally babysitting. Bob's trying to keep her out of trouble, but a certain amount of danger seems inevitable.





BLOOD ON ICE

by Christian Lindke

The heroes are all members of an Artemis Security and Intelligence protection detail. They are stretched thin and tired from serving on numerous security deployments in Afghanistan. After a major firefight during which the team almost allowed a valuable asset to be killed by insurgents, the team is badly in need of rest and relaxation.

When the call comes from operation command offering the team a cake-walk contract with high pay at the famous Frozen Hotel in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden, the team eagerly takes the job. The Frozen Hotel played host to a series of murders over the past two weeks. Local law enforcement and the Frozen Hotel internal security staff are not up to the task of solving the crimes or ensuring the safety of the hotel's guests. If the killers cannot be found, the hotel will not open for business at the end of the month. The hotel's new owner-manager Sven Helvete wants answers, and he wants them now. It is up to the Artemis Security team to find out who is responsible for the killings, while keeping the news of the murders from getting out to the media.

The first night, a long January night 200 km north of the Arctic Circle, goes without

incident. The team sets up a protective perimeter around the hotel's various facilities and sets up a watch rotation. After this has been completed, the heroes decide to take a nap during the brief winter day. The current day, January 8th, is just over two hours long. The days are getting longer, but the long nights can play havoc with sleep cycles. While the heroes sleep, what appears to be a large bearlike animal sneaks into the perimeter and attacks several team members. The victims of this attack are torn apart during the security team's brief nap.

Some of the heroes may wonder why no team member awakened during the struggle and why other team members who were assigned to hold watch did not notice the attack, but the first priority is to find the perpetrator and eliminate the threat. The security team uses their advanced training to find the trail of the killer, which leads the team to a small farm located on an island in the Torne River. The farm is home to the Varuly family of Jukkasjärvi, who happen to be a pack of lycanthropes. A hard-fought battle ensues and the heroes defeat the werewolf pack. They return to the Frozen Hotel to collect their fee

and celebrate their victory. How corporate explains the carnage to the legal authorities is above the team's paygrade.

Unlucky for the heroes, their adventure has just begun. After the team celebrates with a grateful Mr. Helvete and hotel staff, they settle down to bed for a well-deserved rest. Something disturbing happens while the heroes sleep. The entire team has the same nightmare. Each hero dreams of being connected to a medical table with transfusion tubes attached at the neck, draining them of their blood. It turns out Sven Helvete has a small secret. He and key members of his security team are vampires, and the Varulv family are hunting Sven and his vampire spawn.

When the heroes awaken, they find their nightmare was all too real. They are indeed strapped to medical tables. The team must find a way to escape from the vampire spawn currently draining them of their lifeblood. More than that, they must find a way to get revenge!

Will they succeed or will they be served as BLOOD ON ICE? The night is long, but anything is possible.

SETTING RULES

This adventure was inspired by classic horror comic books and more recent action/horror films where people who possess significant combat skills face foes they believed only exist in stories. The heroes of these stories are highly competent, but it is yet to be seen whether their training is enough to keep them alive. To create the correct tension between action and horror, it is recommended you use the following Setting Rules from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook and the *Savage Worlds Horror Companion* when running *Blood on Ice*:

- Blood and Guts
- Buckets of Blood
- Heroes Never Die
- Joker's Wild (This adventure is tough, so use this rule AND don't be stingy with Bennies.)

In addition to these Setting Rules, please make sure you are familiar with the rules for Fear and Fatigue. These provide important narrative tension to the actions in the adventure.

CHARACTERS

The heroes of *Blood on Ice* are all employees of Artemis Security and Intelligence (ASI). Employees of ASI are the best of the best from the intelligence and Special Forces communities. The players are highly skilled in tradecraft, combat, or. They are the kind of people who save the day. For this adventure it is recommended (but not necessary), one player takes on the role of squad leader and appropriate Leadership Edges. Don't tell the players what environment their characters are playing in, but do let them know their characters are often on mission in difficult environments. Highlight that the majority of their missions are in Desert and Arctic environments. While these characters are highly skilled with numerous modern weapons, one of the challenges of this mission is to find weapons which can harm their opponents.

Heroes are built with the following restrictions:

- All characters start as Seasoned (20 XP). As the best of the best, the characters have experience and enter into this adventure reflecting that experience.
- Every character must have Shooting d6 or higher. Even ASI employees who focus on surveillance and tradecraft are reasonably skilled marksmen.
- The following Edges are prohibited: All Arcane Backgrounds and Edges which require them (for example: Arcane Resistance, Adept, Champion, Holy/Unholy Warrior, and Wizard).

ANOTHER DAY IN THE SANDBOX

It's November 2007 and Artemis Security and Intelligence is one of seven private security firms assisting coalition forces in Afghanistan. The missions these firms take vary based upon the corporate mission of the individual firm. ASI tends to sign on for missions protecting Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), especially those who are building schools

Artemis Security and Intelligence

There is more to Artemis Security and Intelligence than meets the eye. Most private security forces were founded by experts in the intelligence and military communities who sought to apply their skills and earn a profit. ASI was founded for these reasons, and to combat threats most people believe to be purely imaginary. Co-founders Michael Silver and Ephraim Lerner were both high ranking analysts at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) when they stumbled across some old World War II era documents discussing what could only be described as supernatural events. At first Silver and Lerner filed these documents away in the “stuff too crazy to even think about” file, but they eventually began to see events in the real world that matched phenomena in the files.

Since Silver and Lerner were both rational men, they knew better than to report to their superiors the world was filled with demons, sorcerers, and other supernatural threats. Instead, they used their excellent reputations to found Artemis Security and Intelligence. To most of ASI's employees, the firm is a security and protection firm like any other. It hires highly trained personnel to handle delicate missions in difficult areas, and to provide protection to celebrities and members of state. To a rare few, those who have seen what must be seen to be believed, the firm is one of a few thin walls that stand between humanity and destruction.

The heroes are not yet a member of these few, which all depends on what happens in *Blood on Ice*.

and other necessary infrastructure. ASI rarely takes missions protecting members of the Interim Transitional Government of Afghanistan (ITGA), and instead focuses on what ASI co-founder Michael Silver calls the “little big picture stuff.” ASI's chief rival, Spectrum Securities, has a much lower moral threshold and is rumored to hire out teams to train insurgents and cartel muscle.

ASI teams often find themselves working with a combination of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), idealistic volunteers, and Local Nationals (LNs). It's hard work, as various resistance groups like to engage with these soft-targets to disrupt long term rebuilding efforts. It's also rewarding work which is free from the potential corruption of national politics.

The current team has been working together for a little over a year and are veterans of several successful missions, and no small number of firefights. There has been very little downtime for the team, and what rest is available is typically in harsh conditions. Containerized Housing Units are a far cry from a soft bed at home, and the characters are very much in need of rest.

THE PATROL

The adventure begins on a routine patrol in Afghanistan. The heroes are part of a convoy which is transporting four American university professors to a conference on democratic governance. Each professor has a different area of expertise, but all of them are considered experts in American or Comparative politics. The ASI team is responsible for their safe delivery to the recently constructed university campus where the professors give presentations on constitutional design and electoral reforms. The team expects this to be a routine patrol.

When you accepted employment with Artemis Security and Intelligence, you knew the job was challenging. You knew it was exactly the same kind of stress, discomfort, and hard work you had been doing for Uncle Sam for the past few years. There were two big differences though. ASI pays significantly more than the Federal government, and you had a lot more latitude in choosing your missions.

You've spent the past year in a constant stream of protection, detection, or elimination details. Your team is tired. When the chance came to lead a convoy of American intellectuals up to the new Afghanistan America University for a conference on democratic governance, you thought this was a shot for your team to get a little rest. Sure, the drive to

and from the school was stressful, but the dorm room beds you'd be using at night were a lot more comfortable than the cot in your Containerized Housing Unit—choo—for short. All you have to do is get there in one piece.

THE AMBUSH

BOOM! BOOM! An IED explodes, tearing through the Humvee running second in your small caravan. The militants were smart to wait until after the Cougar passed to set off the charge. You hope the extra plating your team installed last week has provided enough protection for Dave and Eddie, but you don't have enough time to check on them. Right now, your first priority is taking out the incoming squad of militants.

The attack happens in a small mountain canyon between Kabul and the university campus 40 miles outside of town. The ASI convoy consists of a number of transport vehicles equal to the number of player characters plus two. The lead and rear vehicles are MRAPs designed to withstand IED explosions, but the interior caravan vehicles are Frankensteined Humvees. Each Cougar carries six ASI security troops and the unexploded Humvees carry the player characters and four university professors.

Due to the constant stream of missions the ASI team has been on lately, the heroes must make a Vigor roll or start with one level of Fatigue, which recovers after 24 hours of R&R. The heroes must defeat the militants and keep the professors alive. If things get really hairy, allow the players to call in additional six ASI security troops, who arrive in 1d6 rounds.

- **ASI Security Troops (12):** See page 57.
- **University Professors (4):** See page 58.
- **Afghan Militants (12 plus 2 per hero):** See page 56.

Humvee (2+)

Large Vehicle: Acc/TS 10/30, Toughness 15 (4), Crew 1+6

Notes: Four Wheel Drive

Weapons:

- Top mounted DTMG (see *Savage Worlds*).

MRAP (Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected) (2)

Large Vehicle: Acc/TS: 10/20, Toughness 20 (8), Crew 1+6.

Notes: Four Wheel Drive.

Weapons:

- Top mounted DTMG (see *Savage Worlds*).

OUT OF THE FIRE

After the heroes have repelled the militants, and hopefully successfully protected their assets, they are transported stateside for a debrief session with ASI co-founder Michael Silver. He is concerned the team is losing morale and believes they are in need of rest. None of the team members have been approved for vacation time for at least the next two months, but it is clear constant stress is taking a toll on the team. Silver offers the team a mission at Jukkasjärvi, Sweden's famous Frozen Hotel, where he hopes they get some well-deserved rest.

One week ago, you were in the mountains of Afghanistan fighting a militant group and protecting a group of university professors. Today, you are in Washington, D.C. waiting for an additional debrief with the owner of Artemis Security and Intelligence. You don't know what makes you so special. You followed protocol and have already had your normal post-op interview with your immediate supervisor. It was a routine action; you're having a hard time figuring out why this warrants the CEO's attention.

After about two hours in the waiting room in front of Michael Silver's office, you are notified he will see you now. At least you are well rested. For the past couple of days, you've been hanging out at the indoor pool at one of Washington's fancier hotels. Truth be told, this is a nice break from flame, famine, and firefights. You just hope this meeting goes well, and isn't about how your team missed some key intelligence which could have prevented the last ambush.

As you walk into Michael Silver's corner office, you cannot help but notice the disconnect between the room and

the man inside of it. The office is Spartan and lacks any of the design elements you might expect from a CEO's office. There are no pictures of teams in action. There are no bookshelves filled with books no one has read. There is no collection of firearms. The room is unimpressive.

The same cannot be said for the man. While Michael Silver isn't tall, his presence seems to fill the office. He isn't physically intimidating, but he is intimidating none the less. He greets you with a smile which says, "I've got an offer for you which you do not want to refuse."

Have Michael Silver interview the heroes about their experiences with ASI and their past experiences in the military or with intelligence agencies. The purpose of this scene is to find out who the heroes are and what motivates them. Silver hires only the best and this is a chance for your players to do some background storytelling. If they aren't in the mood for this kind of storytelling, then you can move quickly into the discussion of their last mission. Silver has read the hero's files, but wants to get to know the people behind the paper.

Silver asks a series of pro forma questions, but focuses on how the team worked under less than ideal circumstances. He wants to know if the team believes it can be effective in similarly fatigued circumstances. After focusing much of the discussion on how overworked and tired the heroes must be, Silver makes his offer. He offers team members double their normal rate to do a security investigation for the Frozen Hotel in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden.

The Frozen Hotel is a famous vacation spot and the site is opening for tourists next month. Three brutal attacks of security staff have happened over the past two-weeks has worried the hotel's new owner and he wants to hire a security company to solve the problem. During this time period, the Frozen Hotel has lost nine members of its security staff. If the players ask why local law enforcement aren't handling the situation, Silver assures the team the corporation is in discussions with the local police and the heroes will not be viewed with a critical eye. Silver gives the team its assignment and hands them his card in case they do have any run-ins with law enforcement or need a quick extraction.

This last point is intended unnerve the team.

What Michael Silver Knows

Silver isn't being completely honest with the team when he tells them he is sending them to Sweden for a rest. He was very impressed with the team's ability to accomplish its mission even under the highest levels of stress. Rather than this being a mission being granted for R&R, it's a mission set aside for a team that can operate while in a state of Fatigue.

Silver doesn't know Sven Helvete's dark secret, but he does know something about the reported staff murders doesn't sit right. When Helvete offered to hire ASI, he sent pictures of one of the crime scenes. In this particular case, one of Helvete's personal security team had been torn to pieces by what appears to be a wolf or a bear. The attack was savage. Silver believes there may be some supernatural force involved which might threaten the guests of the Frozen Hotel.

He is willing to share details about the savagery of the killings at the site, but not his speculation that anything supernatural is going on. ASI has a strict policy of not informing operatives that the supernatural exists until after operatives have had a supernatural encounter. This is done to minimize lawsuits and maintain reputation. No one wants to hire the crazy security firm which claims that there are monsters in the shadows, even when the firm is protecting them from things better left unknown, and that affects ASI's bottom line. Silver knows how important ASI is as a valuable guardian and will not risk either a lack of profit, nor allowing innocents to perish who could have been saved.

DID YOU SAY FROZEN HOTEL OR FROZEN VILLAGE?

When the operatives finally arrive in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden, they are struck by the fact the Frozen Hotel isn't a "hotel" in the normal sense of the word. Instead of a large building

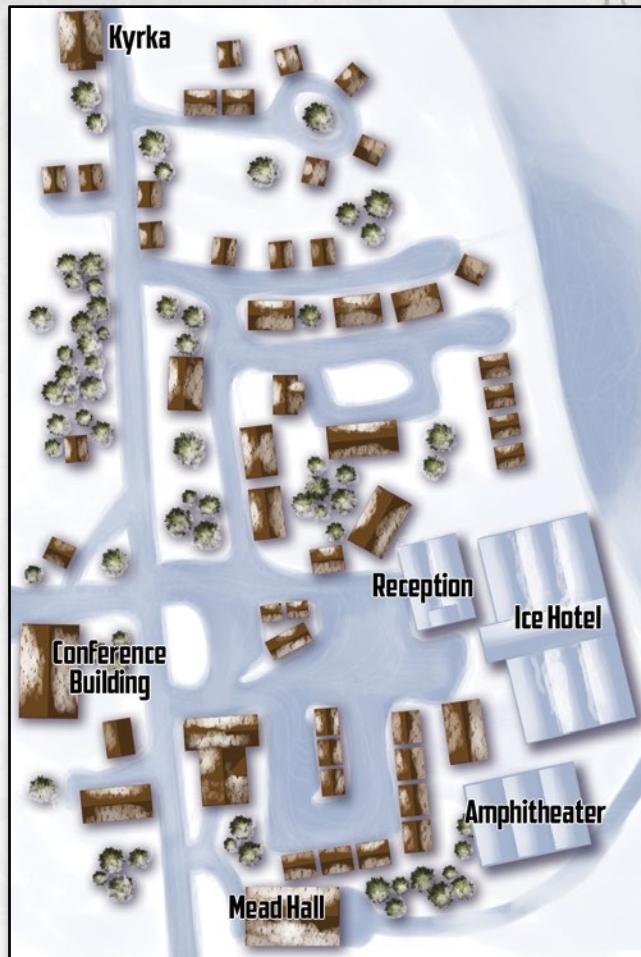
which contains all the amenities one could ask for on vacation, they find what can only be described as an ice village.

The Frozen Hotel is comprised of several smaller structures which provide various services to guests. Several intricately carved buildings comprise the "suites" where guests can sleep. A number of smaller buildings make up shared sleeping quarters and less audacious accommodations. A grand building looks like an ice sculpture of an ancient mead hall. It is a marvel to behold, but it may not be what the team was expecting. Rather than having to secure a small contained perimeter around a single structure, the team has to spread out to patrol the entire facility.

THE FROZEN HOTEL

The Frozen Hotel compound contains the following structures, only some of which are known to the operatives at the beginning of their visit:

- Reception:** The reception building is a relatively simple ice sculpture which was crafted to look as much like a small hotel as possible. The building has an arched entrance carved out of solid white ice, but it is the beautiful translucent entry doors that really attract attention. They are a beautiful and subtle touch. The inside of the reception building features a number of ice sculpted benches covered in fur. The check-in counter looks like the standard front counter found at any chain hotel. The one difference is that this counter is sculpted completely out of ice.
- Conference Building:** While many visit the Frozen Hotel to get married or celebrate an important anniversary, a number of businesses and non-profits use the site to host annual retreats. The conference building is a simple structure with a large auditorium and several smaller breakout rooms. Unknown to the ASI team, underneath the conference building



is a secret laboratory where people are strapped to exsanguination machines to serve as cattle for the new vampire owners of the hotel.

- The Frozen Amphitheater:** Among its many impressive offerings, the Frozen Hotel hosts theatrical and concert seasons for its guests. Each night of the week, the large Frozen Amphitheater features a major stage production, opera, or orchestral performance. During the heroes' brief stay, the theater is scheduled to feature presentations of a musical version of *Beowulf*, a dramatic rendition of *Hamlet*, as well as performances of compositions by Tchaikovsky and Bach by the Swedish National Orchestra. Due to the shows being scheduled this season, the theater's prop room has a couple of serviceable melee weapons. The stage performers for the *Beowulf* show are a renowned stunt troop who are famous for using real weapons. If this area is searched for weapons, the

heroes will find two hand axes, one battle axe, and a short sword.

• **Hotel Rooms:** These are the standard hotel rooms for the vast majority of guests of the Frozen Hotel. At maximum capacity, the Frozen Hotel is capable of accommodating 1,000 guests. The only people currently residing on the premises are hotel staff and the ASI security team. In one week's time, the performers for the Beowulf show are expected to arrive. The buildings are constructed of carved ice, as are all of the furniture, covered with various furs to allow guests to sit on them without freezing. Most of the rooms feature King and Queen sized beds, but there are a couple of rooms with two full sized beds. In addition to the private rooms, there are a couple of dormitory style buildings for use by youth clubs and those on a budget who are willing to share the space.

• **The Great Mead Hall:** The Frozen Hotel's great mead hall is inspired by the classic mead halls of old legend. It is a magnificent ice structure built around a massive replica of Yggdrasil, the World Tree. It is clear by the mead hall and by various touches throughout the hotel that this year's theme is Norse Mythology. Were the mead hall not constructed out of ice, it could easily be mistaken for Heorot. If asked, staff will mention how this year's mead hall is much grander than last year's attempt to create a translucent concert hall.

• **The Old Chapel:** The old Jukkasjärvi Kyrka was once a highlight of the Frozen Hotel. Guests once came from all over the world to attend services at this quaint building. The combination of Christian and Norse iconography on the interior was once an aesthetic delight. Rumor has it the site once housed two Crusader swords forged from starfell metal. All of this was before Sven Helvete bought Frozen Hotel Corporation two years ago. Since that time, the building has begun to fall into disrepair as nothing has been done to maintain the building. Sven hasn't condemned the building, but two harsh winters without any upkeep have not been.

[The interior of the Kyrka is very simple, deceptively so. There is a secret door underneath the altar, under which lie the twin Crusader swords made of starfell

metal. Helvete, being a vampire, cannot enter the building and the human staff he has sent in to look for the blades for disposal have not located the cache. A hero who makes a Notice roll at -2 will locate the cache. These are weapons to which Helvete has special vulnerability to.]

The Set Up

When the ASI team (the heroes and enough Extras with identical statistics to those given in **The Ambush** to constitute a 12 man unit) arrive at the Frozen Hotel, they are greeted by Sven Helvete (CEO/Owner) and Axel Nyquist (Chief of Security). Helvete discusses how nine of his security staff members have been murdered over the past two weeks. While Helvete has notified the local police of the murders, they have been incapable of determining any leads. When the local police recommended the Frozen Hotel contact Interpol, Helvete agreed to do so asking if he could have two weeks to hire a private firm before making the contact. Helvete used his mental domination powers to convince the local authorities, but tells the team it was ASI's stellar reputation that bought him the time. Convincing local media to give the story an embargo was easy. The community is completely dependent on tourism for prosperity, and a happy ending will bring more revenue to the community.

Helvete finds it particularly interesting that each time the killers attacked, they killed exactly three of his staff. He doesn't know why this is the case, but he is willing to speculate it has some kind of religious significance to the killers. It is possible the killers are performing some kind of pagan ritual and three is a magic number. Perhaps one of the protesters who wanted him to renovate the Kyrka is attempting to cast some kind of curse on the premises. Helvete laughs as he makes such speculations.

If the heroes can solve the crimes in short order, they can spend the remainder of the two week mission relaxing in five star accommodations without any large crowds to distract them.

Helvete also believes he barely escaped being murdered himself during the last attack. Four guards had been placed in the security room outside of his own private quarters. These men, who included Axel Nyquist, were brutally attacked and only Nyquist survived the attack. It is at this point the team learns the killers

are using some kind of trained wolf or bear to aid them in their attacks. After an initial vague discussion, Helvete meets the team for a briefing in the mead hall.

"I cannot thank you enough for taking on this job. Mr. Silver speaks very highly of your skill set. If you can perform as advertised, you may find your two week long assignment here is more vacation than vocation.

Truth be told, I wish we had not needed to hire outside security at all, but the recent losses to our security team required me to bring in outside assistance as our current team has been incapable of finding a solution.

Nyquist scowls at these words. It's clear he believes he is more than capable of handling the task and resents the involvement of outsiders.

When I first purchased Frozen Hotel Corporation, it was a dream come true. The deal was one which was good for me and for the local economy. Pleasantly, there was not a single protest against my purchase of the property during the first year. The peace ended late last year when local citizens began complaining about how much in disrepair the Kyrka had fallen.

I discussed with local leadership how guests no longer found the site as charming as they once did. There was a time when the Kyrka was one of the primary tourist draws to the community due to a connection to some legendary crusader knight. With reason finally coming into fashion, not even the locals attend regular services at the Kyrka.

Helvete smiles whimsically, with perhaps a touch of irony in his voice at this last point.

I even asked if they expected me to maintain a sight affiliated with a superstitious murderer because a handful of locals still attended mass there at Christmastime. I told them if the building was used in any way which could be considered regular, I might be convinced to dedicate resources to it.

But isn't this really an issue for some historical society?

These remarks seemed to irritate a couple of local families who organized a small protest, but this protest quickly subsided when my security team chatted with the protesters and informed them they were welcome to repair the Kyrka themselves if they could raise the money to do so.

I've personally never been on the Kyrka grounds. The building seems an odd anachronism. After this small protest ended, everything was quiet for the next few months, then came the first killing. It happened on a Tuesday night, as have all subsequent attacks.

I had never seen anything like it. Members of my security team, who had been responding to a report of potential vandals at the Kyrka site, were ambushed and murdered. Their bodies were torn apart and we found pieces of the team members spread out over a 30m area.

Axel and his team went on full alert. They contacted local law enforcement and set up a security perimeter. Then came a second attack, this time outside the mead hall, and a third outside my own quarters. It was after this last attack that I immediately contacted your agency. You have come highly recommended and I want you to work with Axel to set up a security perimeter and to begin locating the perpetrators. I want this crime solved!

Nyquist breaks into the conversation here and states:

It's Monday, so there won't be an attack tonight if things remain as they have for the past couple of weeks. We've got a day to set up our perimeter and devise a trap for the perpetrators. I'm happy to help you in any way you need.

The players can interview Helvete and Nyquist to get more details about the attack. Helvete and Nyquist are reticent to give more than a couple of pieces of information. They will initially give two of the following clues, but a successful Persuasion check will result in one

more clue with each additional raise resulting in another.

- The killers used some kind of trained animals, like bears or wolves, in the attack.
- The attackers must be locals because Nyquist had a hard time tracking them. (This is only partly true. Nyquist was able to track them to the bridge leading to their small farm, but was unable to cross the bridge onto the island because vampires can't cross the naturally running water.)
- The attacks always happen on Tuesdays.
- Helvete is dead set on convincing the ASI team this might be the activity of some kind of Norse cult who wants to use the old Kyrka for new Norse observations. The Kyrka includes a mix of Christian and Norse iconography inside.
- At no point does Helvete speculate there is any kind of supernatural element.

Frozen Hotel Staff

With the exception of an entirely new security team, the Frozen Hotel staff remains the same as it was two years ago when Sven Helvete purchased the Frozen Hotel Corporation. No one on the staff knows much about the killings, only what Helvete has told them. The staff is professional, creative, and talented. Each year the senior staff select a theme for that year's Frozen Hotel and the construction of the central nightclub and the high priced suites are designed to fit the theme. Last year, the nightclub was designed to look like a concert hall. This year's design is a great mead hall. The staff had selected "An Evening in the Clouds" as this year's theme, but they were overridden by Helvete who demanded they design the hotel in a Beowulf theme. Though they disagreed with the selection, the staff has done a magnificent job bringing Helvete's vision to life. Most of the non-vampire hotel staff have left the premises until the murders have been resolved. There are a couple of exceptions at the management level. These are people who feel a greater commitment to ensuring a good hotel experience than they experience fear. This is especially true with the addition of an ASI team. The key staff members of Frozen Hotel are:

- **Soren Bremer (Facilities Manager):** Soren is responsible for the construction and maintenance of all structures in the Frozen

Hotel compound. He is happy to assist the team as they set up a security perimeter. While he does not bring up the subject, he is happy to discuss his disappointment in the selection of this year's theme and with the disregard Helvete shows toward the old Kyrka. Soren is aware the Kyrka is rumored to be the hiding place of two Crusader swords made of star fell metal. He grew up on tales of an ancient crusader named Arn who battled supernatural evil, but laughs at these child's tales.

- **Tilda Ekstrom (Human Resources):** Tilda has worked for Frozen Hotel Corporation for 15 years. She has seen the site grow from a small and unknown seasonal concept hotel into the large compound and franchised locations the company is today. When the previous owners began to behave erratically, it was Tilda who lead the search for a new ownership team. She was impressed with Helvete's knowledge of the area and his vision for a chain of Frozen Hotels above the Arctic Circle. When staff members pushed back against Helvete's change of annual theme, it was Tilda who convinced the other staff members to support the change. She has a cold and efficient personality and does not share any sensitive information with the operations team. She tries to portray Soren Bremer as an unstable employee who she wants to see fired, if not for protective labor laws. As the heroes learn in *The Hunters Hunted*, Tilda is one of three vampire spawn at the hotel.
- **Filip Linquist (Head Chef):** Linquist was hired by the previous ownership team and retained by Helvete because of his sterling reputation as a chef. He has worked at several star-rated restaurants, and has earned a star at the Frozen Hotel for his ability to transform Swedish staples into high-end cuisine. Linquist doesn't have much to say to any investigators, and seems constantly disappointed with his staff's ability to create palatable food. This year he is even more critical than in the past due to losing his sense of taste after being transformed into a vampire spawn by Axel Nystrom, Helvete's chief of security, two months ago.
- **Axel Nystrom (Chief of Security):** When Helvete purchased Frozen Hotel Corporation, he had big plans. He wanted to

turn the famous hotel into a chain of highly specialized vacation resorts. In particular, he wanted to create a place where vampires could rest and feed without bringing any attention to themselves. Nystrom was the key innovator in creating the system which is being implemented across the hotel chain. Since corpses tend to attract attention, why not drug human guests and drain them of a sizeable amount of blood while implanting memories of wondrous vacations? Nystrom designed the exsanguination machines which are underneath the conference building. He also contracted with Incabolos Pharmaceuticals, to supply a constant stream of mind-affecting sedatives. Nystrom would be more than happy to take care of the perpetrators responsible for the recent murders, if not for the fact their hideout lies in the center of a vast river. His vampiric curse prevents him from crossing natural running water.

- Sven Helvete (CEO/Owner):** Sven Helvete purchased Frozen Hotel Corporation two years ago with a grand vision. He wanted to create a perfect vacation spot for people like himself, vampires. For too long vampires have hunted down their prey in ways which risk their discovery. While most people don't believe in the supernatural, there are those who are quick to react when any rumor of vampire activity surfaces. Helvete has been alive for 500 years, and he is tired of wandering around to conceal his activities. Helvete does everything he can to aid the operations team in locating the family who are killing his spawn. Like Nystrom, his efforts have been frustrated by the Torne River. He is also aware there exists somewhere on this site the means to destroy him. He can feel a divine presence surrounding the Kyrka and an even more intense power contained somewhere within.

If required, for human staff use the Victim profile from the *Horror Companion*.

The Attack

The Game Master should interact with the players to ensure the ASI team is able to set up a reasonable security perimeter and gain some initial information regarding the politics of the Frozen Hotel. The key areas are the Conference

Center and the Main Hotel Building. Given the skeleton crew on hand, most of the essential staff will be in one of those two areas. After the heroes have completed their set up, Helvete invites the leadership team for a final briefing. During this discussion, Helvete offers the heroes a non-alcoholic beverage of their choice. He understands the ASI team is on the clock. The Game Master should keep track of who agrees to have a drink.

Helvete also recommends the leadership team rest for the next eight hours and allow Axel to work with 6 ASI Security Troops to maintain the perimeter for the evening. He is certain tomorrow is when the real action will occur.

It is the night of January 8 and the next day's light is expected to be no longer than 2 hours and 10 minutes. The Game Master should play up how the short days can play tricks on the mind if people don't get sufficient sleep. The days get longer as the month continues, but won't be longer than 5 hours until February. The team expects to be here for the next two weeks, so they have to be prepared to adjust their sleep schedules accordingly. During the time the heroes are at the Frozen Hotel, assume that there are only two hours of daylight.

The evening attack can be played one of two ways. The Game Master can skip ahead in time and reveal the results of the evening attack to the players, or the evening attack against ASI Extras can be played out. It is recommended you play out the attack.

Around midnight on January 8th, two werewolves assault the Frozen Hotel compound targeting security personnel. They hope to eliminate enough to allow for an all-out assault against Helvete on January 9th.

This attack happens at night and anyone not equipped with night vision suffers from Dark lighting.

Read the following to team members who are resting during the first rounds of the attack:

You bolt awake in horror. Just moments ago, you were being torn apart by a beast like a combination of a bear and a wolf. What's even more bizarre is you can still feel the savage wounds as the beast tore out your heart. You look around, shaken and covered in sweat. You are safe in your room inside the Frozen Hotel. Suddenly, you hear chatter on your radio. Your team

has been attacked by an unknown assailant, some kind of animal. You grab your gear and prepare yourself for the worst.

The battle against the Varulv brothers takes place at the grand mead hall, a central location of the Frozen Hotel compound. The brothers attack a small team of ASI operatives, but there should be sufficient time for all ASI team members who are awake to arrive at the fight within three rounds. Keep the fight Fast, Furious, and Fun! The Varulv brothers are only there to test the strength of the new security and flee if injured, or after they have killed two ASI team members. The point here is to establish the threat. The Varulvs are a tough group, and the heroes have their work cut out for them when they find the family tomorrow. Because of his personal security team's ineffectiveness, Helvete has asked that the ASI team take the watch. Vampire Security Team members can join the combat at the same rate as the heroes, but will not take as many risks as the heroes. They want to survive and feed on the heroes when all is said and done.

💀 Rikard & Tobias Varulv:

See page 57.

The Aftermath

The bodies of the killed ASI team members are sprawled across the compound. It takes hours to find all of the body parts, time the team doesn't have. Use this as an opportunity to stoke up the heroes anger, leaving them eager to follow the Varulv brothers. Helvete happily stokes their rage and is happy to let the heroes leave without careful planning.

The players must make Cooperative Tracking rolls every hour (-2 for the darkness and skill of the Varulv brothers) to make sure they stay on the correct trail. The journey from the hotel to the Varulv household takes three hours by foot, but each failed Cooperative Tracking roll adds one hour to the time it takes to make the

Radio Communication

Life above the Arctic Circle can be frustrating for those used to reliable radio communications. When strong solar flares hit the atmosphere they produce a beautiful aurora borealis. They also play havoc with high frequency radio communications. The Varulv family is quite familiar with this phenomenon and uses it to their advantage. They time their attacks to occur during times of peak solar activity. Because of this, there is only minimal ability to use radio communication. Short range communication is largely unaffected, but the heroes will be unable to make radio contact for extraction during a flare.

The entire time the heroes are at the Frozen Hotel, the sky will be lit by beautiful lights. They will also be unable to communicate with their home base via radio transmissions. When they attempt to communicate via radio, have the heroes make a Common Knowledge roll to know radio communications are affected by solar activity.



Rikard & Tobias Varulv

Rikard and Tobias Varulv are the two youngest sons of Måns and Ingrid Varulv, and have inherited the gift of lycanthropy from their parents. They have been sent by their parents to test the strength of the new security team, and soften it up for tomorrow's full assault. Their lycanthropic blessing differs from the typical curse. It is not subject to lunar cycles, but it also does not provide invulnerability to non-silver weapons.

The Varulv family are descendants of the famous Crusader Arn Varulv. According to legend, Arn Varulv defended Sweden against trolls, dark elves, and a host of other supernatural monsters. Over the ages, the stories of Arn Varulv have become children's tales; to the point that even the Varulv family believes the legend of Arn's starfell swords is a myth. Even werewolves can be skeptics.

Måns Varulv

Måns Varulv is the last descendent of the great hero Arn Varulv, a crusader who returned home to Sweden to battle against a host of supernatural creatures. Sven has worked hard to uphold the legacy. When he discovered one of his neighbors had disappeared, he investigated and found Sven Helvete was collecting locals to serve as food for a vampire coven. He knew this had to be stopped and spent the past month working to put a halt to the evil. Little does he know the only way he could defeat Helvete is if he believed the tales of his ancestor's starfell blade. He dismissed those tales believing the real source of Arn's success over supernatural evil had been due to the lycanthropic gift.

journey. If the heroes are exposed to the frigid temperatures for more than four hours, they must make Fatigue tests due to the temperature. It is currently 2 degrees Fahrenheit, so any Fatigue tests are at a -2 modifier.

If the Varulv brothers survived the initial combat, the heroes catch up with Rikard and Tobias half-way to the Varulv farm. The brothers

attack the heroes and attempt to lead them away from the trail to their home and toward a cave 10km away. This fight is to the death.

THE VARULV FARM

After their brief battle with Rikard and Tobias, the heroes continue tracking the real base of operations of the Varulv family. If the heroes make a cooperative Tracking roll at -2, they can head straight to the bridge leading to the Varulv farm. If they fail this roll, it takes an extra two hours to reach the location and the heroes have to make a Fatigue test at -1 before they arrive at the farm.

The Varulv farm is located on an island in the Torne River. It is an ideal place to hide from vampiric pursuit, but it does not protect them from the heroes who are able to march across the bridge unhindered by an undead curse. Måns, Ingrid, and their oldest son Hjalmar are at the farm waiting for Rikard and Tobias to return. They are only now beginning to worry are watching. Heroes sneaking up to the simple home must make opposed Stealth rolls against the occupants Notice. If the heroes are detected, the family uses Stealth to attempt to get the Drop on team members. If they do not, then the heroes can attack them inside their home.

• **Måns Varulv:** See page 57.

• **Rikard & Tobias Varulv:** See page 57.

• **Ingrid & Hjalmar Varulv:** Use the Rikard & Tobias profile (page 57), except they are Extras.

After the heroes defeat the Varulvs, they can take time to search the home. If the players have conversed with Soren Bremer about local legends, they can make a Common Knowledge roll to connect the name of the Varulv family with the legendary Arn. If any heroes succeed on the Common Knowledge roll, they can search the home for any information related to the mythical Crusader. On a successful Notice roll, the heroes find a copy of *Arn's Lay* which discusses the legendary battles of the hero. The inside cover of the book features a cross image made of two intersecting longswords. Give the players a copy of the *Arn's Lay* handout which features some key sections of the text. By this time, the heroes finally understand the swords are real and somehow important. The heroes also notice the Varulv home has a land based phoneline.

EXCERPTS FROM ARN'S LAY

Then said Arn, as he leaned against the Church wall,

'Now will the light of God shine bright,
Since the metal of God hath fallen from
the sky in a great storm
Of God's glory.

The King heard whispers in the night,
laughs from

Sinister creatures of the night.
Foul beasts with skin that repulsed the
arrows of men.

Unholy cackles.

Then Utgar spoke to the Priest Ulli:
"Why do you rest here in this
unholy place?

The sky burns with the fires of Hell."
"Evil creatures wander the lands of men,
Despite our will to fight."

Ulli laughed:

"Dearest Utgar, cans't thou not see?
It is not the fires of Hell above thee.
"Nay, 'tis the glorious light of our Lord.
He who once we thought was Odin
And now call the Christ."

* * *

Arn whispered as he died:
"Guard the Chapel.
For there lies the gift.
Metal from Heaven,
In the form of two blades."
"Where the arrows of Men fail.
Where other swords bite frail,
Against these holy arms.
No evil can prevail."

Back at the Frozen Hotel

The heroes journey back to the Frozen Hotel with relatively little effort. Anyone suffering from Fatigue is still suffering from those effects, but there is no need for further checks. When the heroes return to Frozen Hotel, they are greeted by Sven and Axel and congratulated for their success. The murders have been solved and any messy legal matters can be solved by Helvete's attorneys and Michael Silver's international connections. It's time for the heroes to take Helvete up on his offer of two weeks of rest and relaxation. Have the heroes meet with Helvete at the

grand mead hall, where he gives the following speech after they all toast drinks to the heroes success.

My dear friends. I cannot thank you enough for dealing with these vile murderers. Axel tells me he has looked into the history of this family and discovered they are members of an ancient cult that venerated some obscure Crusader by the name of Arn. They viewed our neglect of the Kyrka as blasphemy which had to be punished by death. So they dressed themselves up in wolf skins to kill heretics.

Real lycanthropes you say? No, no, no. If you don't believe me, you can go back to the farm and investigate it for yourself. The short days must be playing tricks with your mind. It was nothing more than...

The heroes begin to feel dizzy and are slowly passing out.

It's really too bad your whole team died in the effort and our own personal security team had to finish the job. Oh well...the refund from ASI will come as a nice benefit...

As Sven Helvete speaks these words, the last hero falls into complete unconsciousness. It appears Mr. Helvete is a cruel businessman who likes to avoid paying unnecessary bills if possible. But this is not the end for our valiant security contractors. The heroes each receive a Benny because they are not able to resist the combination of drugs and vampiric mental domination to which they are being subjected.

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

You must have passed out. You are only now just beginning to awaken from a troubling slumber. Axel is standing next to your bed asking you to wake up, he's got something important to show you. What day is it? Did you dream the attack on the farm?

You groggily look around. You appear to be laying on some kind of steel surgical table. The room is dark, but you can see you are in some kind of medical lab constructed out of ice. Based on your memory of the hotel complex layout, you must be somewhere beneath the conference building. There are several operating tables scattered around the room. Lying on the tables are a couple of staff members you recognize, Soren for example, and other members of your team.

All of these people are asleep. They look so comfortable. A voice whispers inside your mind telling you to go back to sleep and reminding how comfortable the bed is. Is that Helvete's voice? Whoever it is, they are right. The operating table is a much more comfortable bed than the ice bed in your suite. You don't even notice as Axel straps you in and inserts an IV into your neck. You look up and see your blood being withdrawn and pulled into a strange device.

You look around and notice everyone else has IVs inserted into their necks too. You all look so peaceful. After months of exhausting combat, you finally get a chance to rest.

Suddenly you wake up in a cold sweat! It was all a dream. A disturbing dream. Wait...you cannot move. It wasn't a dream. You are really connected to some strange device slowly drawing the blood from your system. You can tell by the eerie glow surrounding you that it is currently daylight. How much daylight remains, you don't know. You have to get out of here and get your revenge on Axel, Sven, and whoever else is involved.

The entire team is in the laboratory basement of the conference center strapped to operating tables and connected to exsanguination devices. It takes a Strength check at -2 to break the bonds holding the characters and a Healing roll at -2 can remove the IV from any hero's neck. It takes one

minute to remove an IV and a failed roll causes one Wound, but does remove the IV from the character's neck. All of the heroes are currently suffering a level of Fatigue from bloodloss. The Fatigue is recovered after a half hour of rest.

There are only 10 minutes of daylight left, so make it clear time is of the utmost concern. The unarmed heroes are hunted as soon as the sun set. Axel and Sven are currently sleeping, but come to check on the status of their food as soon as night begins.

The heroes have a long night ahead of them. They must escape and find weapons. They also need to find warm clothing, as the winter nights can be very unforgiving. Sven and Axel have destroyed the heroes communication equipment, so the characters have to find a landline if they want to be extracted. The only landline the heroes are aware of is at the Varulv farm, which is four hours away on foot.

Depending upon how much information the characters gathered over the past few days, they have a couple options. They can search the Kyrka for the starfell metal longswords



of the long deceased Arn Varulv. This is one of the better choices available to them, as the sword is the only means of killing Sven and Axel. Their minions are more susceptible to mundane weapons.

The heroes can also return to their hotel suites to see if their regular weapons remain. Luck is on their side, as their weapons are there. This is a dangerous path, but one which is likely necessary if they are to survive. Their hotel rooms aren't the only source of weaponry. The Frozen Hotel's Security Team may be made up of vampire spawn, but they are well armed vampire spawn.

Assuming the heroes leave the lab just as the sun has set, they are spotted by two of the Frozen Hotel's Vampiric Security Team. The security team chases the heroes to stop them from escaping. The guards do not hesitate to kill the heroes. Some blood is better than no blood and an end of production. After the heroes dispatch the first two guards, they have 15 minutes to find weapons and equipment and get on their way.

Most of the team's equipment is located in their old rooms. As soon as the characters retrieve their basic equipment, the remaining 12 members of the Vampire Security Team hunt the heroes. The heroes have 12 minutes to roam free before the search becomes active. Once the search is active, the remaining members of Vampire Security Team break into three teams to search the area. Four are searching the Conference Center, four are searching the rooms where the highest ranking officer rested, and four are wandering the premises ready to ambush the heroes if they approach the Kyrka. While maneuvering around the compound, the heroes make cooperative Stealth rolls at -2 due to the high level of alert. On a failed result, the team encounters a four vampire unit in combat. The other units react to this combat and join

The Swords of Arn Varulv

These are finely crafted long swords forged from a meteorite which fell from the sky on Christmas Eve 1136 A.D. These swords were used by Arn Varulv as he battled a number of supernatural foes and are rumored to have magical enchantments enabling them to harm trolls and demons. Whatever the truth of those claims, Sven Helvete and Axel Nyquist are susceptible to their starfell meteorite metal. Each sword has the following statistics:

Sword of Arn Varulv: Str+d8 (+2 vs undead).

their peers. This is a tough fight. Remind the players they do not have to stand their ground and can attempt to find a more defensible position.

- **Vampiric Security Team (14):**
See page 58.



Getting the Swords

The twin starfell metal swords of Arn the Crusader are located under the altar in the abandoned Kyrka. The

heroes can find the blades with a successful Notice roll at -2 after 10 minutes of searching. Finding the swords provides the heroes with the only means of defeating Sven Helvete and Axel Nyquist, but it also takes valuable time.

The Kyrka may seem like the best place for the heroes to hold out against Sven and his vampire minions, but Sven's team know their weakness to holy ground and won't hesitate to shoot into the building and lob grenades at it. They cannot walk within a 10 meter perimeter around the building, as the entire area around the Kyrka has been consecrated, but this won't stop the vampires from attempting to starve out the characters by trapping them. Holding up in the Kyrka is a temporary solution at best. This is a good place for the 12 remaining

Vampire Security Team members to battle with the heroes. The Vampire Security Team throws one grenade into the Kyrka each round. After the third grenade explodes, the Kyrka catches fire and the heroes have to vacate the premises as soon as possible.

Getting out of Frozen Hell

Once the heroes are fully armed and have no place to hold up on the Frozen Hotel compound, they have to make it on foot to the Varulv farm to gain access to the farm's phone and contact Michael Silver for extraction. The farm is four hours away on foot and the heroes are being pursued by Sven, Axel, Tilda and Filip. Tilda and Filip have the same statistics as Vampire Security Team members, but Sven and Axel are Wild Cards who seek to pick off the ASI team one at a time. Use Chase rules from *Savage Worlds* to keep track of the journey, remembering to check for Fatigue if necessary.

If the heroes make it to the Varulv farm bridge, they have effectively made it to safety. Neither Sven nor Axel can follow the heroes across naturally running water, but holding out and waiting for rescue merely leaves the problem of Sven and Axel for another day. The characters now have to decide between being heroes and being mere survivors. The choice they make has implications on their return home; Michael Silver has no use for mere survivors in his organization. If the heroes stay and fight the vampiric infestation, they will be given promotions within ASI and join an Elite Task Force dedicated to finding and rooting out supernatural threats. If the heroes play it safe and flee as quickly as possible, they are handed their walking papers at the end of the mission.

The heroes can also make a valiant final stand sooner if they wish. Axel battles the heroes to the death, but Sven attempts to escape after he suffers his second wound. Sven wants to maintain his corporate empire after all.

💀 **Sven Helvete:** See page 58.

💀 **Axel Nyquist:** See page 57.

HOME AT LAST

After the heroes defeat their vampiric pursuers they contact Artemis Security and Intelligence for extraction, their helicopter arriving one hour after their call. They are transported to Stockholm where suites in a

four-star hotel await them. After a night of well-deserved rest, the team are transported to the airport and flown back to Washington, D.C. for another debrief with ASI co-founder Michael Silver.

You never thought you'd have an experience that would make you miss the blazing sun of the Sandbox, but you were wrong. Just three days in Jukkasjärvi and you are ready to return to a much warmer climate. It's hard to believe none of your team has a scheduled vacation for another month. So much for the private sector being kinder to the psyche than Uncle Sam.

Once more, you find yourself in Washington, D.C. waiting for a debrief interview with the owner of Artemis Security and Intelligence. This time you have a lot of questions. You don't want to believe it, but you are pretty sure your team just went toe to toe with a pack of werewolves...who were the good guys...and then escaped just shy of becoming a vampire buffet!

You patiently wait the two hours outside of Michael Silver's office. You watch his partner Ephraim Lerner walk out of the office as his secretary Janice lets you know you can enter now. You realize Lerner is a mirror opposite of Silver. Where Silver's intimidating presence comes from a sense he knows something you don't, Lerner has the subtle gait of the soldier who has been in desperate situations and returned with only scratches. You know that gait, it's the same walk you see among your team members. It's the walk of a killer.

You walk into Silver's office, your mind filled with questions. He greets you with a smile which says, "I've got an offer for you that you do not want to refuse."

FRIENDS AND FOES

Afghan Militants

These men are people who resent the creation of a Western style university in Afghanistan.

They hope stopping convoys like this one will convince Westerners to stop interfering with their traditions and lifestyle. These people fight to the death and if captured have no special information regarding the assets the heroes were assigned to protect. This is a random attack, in a not so random location.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: —

Edges: —

Gear: AK-47 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8+1, RoF 3, AP 2, Auto).

ASI Security Troops

These are standard Artemis Security and Intelligence troops. They are all well respected combatants, but they lack the experience of the heroes. These are new hires, similar to what the heroes were like when they were first hired by ASI.

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

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Cha: 0; Pace: 8; Parry: 5; Toughness: 9 (4)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: Fleet-Footed

Gear: M4A1 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 3, AP 2), knife (Str+d4), flak Jacket (Armor +2 vs. melee, +4 vs bullets).

Axel Nyquist

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d12+1, Stealth d10, Tracking d10

Pace: 6; Parry: 7; Toughness: 10

Gear: M4A1 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 3, AP 2).

Special Abilities:

- Invulnerability:** Axle is immune to damage except from his weaknesses. He can be Shaken by other attacks, but never suffer a wound.

- Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to disease and poison; does not suffer wound penalties.

- Weakness (Holy Ground):** Axel burns if he stands upon holy ground. After that

he suffers 2d10 damage per round until he is dust. Armor does not protect from this damage.

- Weakness (Naturally Running Water):** Axel is incapable of crossing over naturally running water. He can be transported by others, but cannot make the journey on his own.

- Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (-6) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it disintegrates to dust.

- Weakness (Starfell metal):** Axel takes an additional +2 damage from Starfell metal weapons.

- Weakness (Sunlight):** Axel catches fire if any part of his skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that he suffers 2d10 damage per round until he is dust. Armor does not protect from this damage.

Måns Varulv

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12+1, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Tracking d10

Pace: 8; Parry: 8; Toughness: 8

Edges: Acclimated

Special Abilities:

- Claws:** Str+d8
- Fear (-2):** Werewolves chill the blood of all who see them.
- Infravision:** Werewolves can see heat and halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.

Rikard and Tobias Varulv

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Swimming d12, Stealth d10, Tracking d10

Pace: 8; Parry: 8; Toughness: 7

Edges: Acclimated

Special Abilities:

- Claws:** Str+d6
- Fear (-2):** Werewolves chill the blood of all who see them.
- Infravision:** Werewolves can see heat and halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.



Sven Helvete

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Tracking d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Gear: M4A1 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 3, AP 2), Ancestral Long Sword (Str+d8).

Special Abilities:

- **Charm:** Sven can use the *puppet* power on any character with whom he has shared a drink. He uses Smarts as his arcane skill and can cast and maintain the power indefinitely. This power can only affect one character at a time.
- **Invulnerability:** Sven is immune to damage except from his weaknesses. He can be Shaken by other attacks, but never suffer a wound.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to disease and poison; does not suffer wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Holy Ground):** Sven burns if he stands upon holy ground. After that he suffers 2d10 damage per round until he is dust. Armor does not protect from this damage.
- **Weakness (Naturally Running Water):** Sven is incapable of crossing over naturally running water. He can be transported by others, but cannot make the journey on his own.
- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (-6) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Starfell metal):** These vampires take an additional +2 damage from Starfell metal weapons.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Vampires catch fire if any part of their skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust. Armor does not protect from this damage.

University Professors

John Shugart, Rachel Bishin, Emmanuelle Putnam, and Alexander Skocpol are all leading scholars in the field of Comparative Election Studies. They are not skilled combatants, but they know to keep their heads down and preserve ammunition. Prior to deployment they received ASI firearms basic training.

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

Skills: Knowledge (Politics) d10, Knowledge (Elections) d10, Driving d4, Notice d6, Shooting d4

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 9 (4)

Hindrances:

Edges: Scholar

Gear: Glock (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, AP 1), knife (Str+d4), flak Jacket (Armor +2 vs. melee, +4 vs bullets).

Vampiric Security Team

Unlike their masters, Sven and Axel, the vampires of the security team can be killed with mundane weaponry.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Gear: M4A1 (Range 24/48/96, Damage 2d8, RoF 3, AP 2), Grenade ×2 (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d6
- **Hardy:** These minor vampires are not invulnerable like their masters but are very resistant to damage. They do not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice unless the second damage is caused by one of their weaknesses.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to disease and poison.
- **Weakness (Holy Ground):** These Vampires burn if they stand upon holy ground. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust. Armor does not protect from this damage.
- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (-6) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Starfell metal):** These vampires take an additional +2 damage from Starfell metal weapons.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Vampires catch fire if any part of their skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust. Armor does not protect from this damage.



LARP OF HORROR

By Luke McCampbell

Gamers go to a Live Action Roleplaying event expecting to have a weekend of fun, some emotional roleplay, and, above all, sword fighting or spell slinging goodness. No one expects to be literally running for their lives!

In *LARP of Horror*, some poor unfortunate LARPers, including the heroes, discover the head of the LARP (Jay Diaz) has summoned an unholy being that could bring about the end of the world. The party needs all their wits and skills about them to survive.

The new heroes find themselves running from demons, saving other players of the LARP, discovering what Jay summoned, and finally fighting an epic battle against a horde of demons to close a portal to Hell and save the world.

Note on Bennies

Make sure to keep a close eye on how many Bennies the players have to spend. Bennies will allow characters to stay alive as they gear up against the demons. Remember to reward good roleplaying and use the Joker's Wild setting rule.

Can the heroes save the day? Does the Earth fall to the demons? Welcome to LARP of Horror.

SETTING RULES

Use the following Setting rules from *Savage Worlds* when running *LARP of Horror*:

- Critical Failures
- Heroes Never Die*
- Joker's Wild
- No Power Points

*** They Just Wish They Had:** Wild Card characters in *LARP of Horror* have a mild form of plot immunity. When Incapacitated, skip the Vigor roll and roll on the **Injury Table** as usual. He or she recovers from Incapacitation at the end of the encounter, but the injury remains. If the character's wounds get healed, they recover from the injury.

If you do not like plot immunity, you are welcome to ignore it, but you may need extra characters prepared should a party member die. You also need to explain how new heroes have the ability to close the portal in the final battle if they were not present at the portal's opening.

It's No Longer a Game

Once Jay completes the ritual and releases Tarhiel, the heroes are affected by an influx of magical energy from the portal. This magic manifests at various stages through the adventure, granting them additional abilities that reflect their chosen Boffer LARP Character (see Pre-Generated Characters below).

A LARP TO REMEMBER

The Dark Forest LARP started four years ago. Taking place on a farm in the small town of Riverburg, a mixed suburban and farming town, it was close enough to the interstate to attract players from the nearby city. While game was solid, it suffered from the micromanagement of the designer and director, Jay Diaz.

After a season of losing players to the new LARP, Jay was running out of funds and players to justify another season. Over the winter break, he desperately searched for a way to save his game. Angry with his players for abandoning him and at another LARP for "stealing" his players, Jay couldn't see his own actions caused the exodus.

In his searches Jay discovered rumors that Shallot, the eccentric old man at the edge of town, was an expert in occult matters. He befriended Shallot hoping he could use the man's knowledge to add something unique and irresistible to the next LARP.

Among the treasures of Shallot's library an ancient tome of dark lore, hidden at the back and long thought forgotten, felt Jay's pain, desire, and irrationality. It called to him at a subconscious level, and without truly knowing why, he quietly took it—returning home to delve into its mysteries.

While the book was beyond Jay's skill, he pieced together a translation. Jay believed the ritual it held would summon a helpful servant spirit from another world. Deluded by his own incompetence and the dark power of the book itself, Jay enacted the ritual.

The summoning worked and a tall man in a suit formed in the circle. He introduced himself as a spirit of creativity and asked for Jay's desire. Jay told the spirit he wanted to run such an amazing game that everyone who left the LARP would come back and admit they should have never lost faith in him.

They struck a deal and the spirit promised Jay he would help him run a game that "would astound everyone." During the current season, the spirit used his powers to make it the most successful season of Dark Forest ever.

Seeking all Wizards and Warriors to
Stand against the rising Evil in the

DARK FOREST LARP

Adventure takes place at the Riverburg Farm, over
the course of the last two weekends in October.

Season Finale on Halloween night!

and the greatest

Hosted by everyone's favorite storyteller, JAY DIAZ!

Boffer LARP 101

A Boffer LARP (Live Action Role Playing) is a large roleplaying game where people act out their characters, and combat is resolved with the use of fake weaponry consisting of PVC pipes safely padded with foam and stuffed cloth packets.

You do not need to know many details about LARPs to run this module, but here are some details to help set the atmosphere.

The weaponry is safe. More LARP injuries happen due to running through the woods rather than combat.

All LARPs inspect weapons for safety before the players are allowed to use them.

No real weapons are allowed.

Players cast fictional spells by saying a phrase (e.g. "By my god I heal you") and then touching a target or throwing a cloth packet filled with birdseed. If the phrase is incorrect or the packet misses, the spell does not happen.

A LARP is similar to a fantasy RPG with quests, combats, and roleplay. The systems are simpler though (e.g. if you are hit in the arm you cannot use arm until a healer character uses a heal skill on it).

A LARP is run by the game staff. They handle everything from playing non-player characters to out of game organization.

Any other necessary details are explained within the encounters.

The number of players has grown, everyone raving about how amazing Jay's plots are. Players are attending from surrounding states thanks to advertising. An influx of cash allowed the LARP to have high quality props and special effects.

While all this success should have made Jay happy, instead he has grown more paranoid. The other LARP has worked hard to compete against Dark Forest. They view this as friendly competition, but Jay views it as a betrayal by those he once considered friends.

Dark Forest LARP now approaches its season closer on Halloween night. Jay has announced this is an event no one will forget. The spirit has given Jay a ritual promising him revenge on all those who betrayed him.

DEFEND THE TOWN!

The tale begins with the players heading out on their first quest for the event. Read or paraphrase the following:

It has been an amazing year playing the Dark Forest LARP. The LARP runs at an old farm which has enough room for camping and a lot of woods, so staff can take players off for side quests.

Last year everyone thought the LARP would have to shut down. The director, Jay Diaz, somehow turned the LARP around. No one knows how Jay did it, but this year has been a blast. Every monthly event since January has exhibited more innovative stories, amazing props, and unbelievable special effects.

It is Halloween night and everyone is pumped for the season finale. You all stand outside the barn that is the center of the grounds, waiting for the LARP to begin. Jay Diaz steps up on a box and says:

"Welcome all. We are very excited about our season finale. I promise you it will be a game to 'astound everyone'. And with that let us begin!"

Jay steps down and heads away from the gathering. From behind, you hear the sounds of growling as staff members dressed in brown golem masks and brown tabards rush towards the gathered adventurers. You hear from the crowd the town's mayor, played by Lisa Evans, yell, "To Arms, defend the town!"

With that, the event begins! The game's first scene is an attack on the barn and tent camp. The characters need to help the other LARPers fight back the golem horde.

Run this as a standard combat, but describe the fight as being larger. The characters only need to deal with their enemies while other groups handle other enemies.

- **LARP Golems (2 per hero):** Use Innocent Victim profile from the *Horror Companion*, with a Fighting of d6 and armed with LARP short swords (Str+d6, -1 to Fighting, nonlethal).

Damage and LARP

Combat taking place inside the LARP use nonlethal rules for damage. When a character is incapacitated they are actually laying on the ground pretending to be dying rather than unconscious.

If someone else succeeds on a Healing roll on the wounded, the character heals all damage.

A QUEST

Read or paraphrase the following:

"With the golems defeated, a cheer erupts from the assembled heroes. LARPers portraying healers wander around using their skills to get characters back on their feet as the defeated monsters go out of game and head to the staff area. Everyone starts to slip into their parties to plan and prepare for whatever the staff is planning next. The town's mayor, a medium sized woman with bright red hair approaches you.

"Well met," she says. "Some of you I know. Others I have not met before. To you new adventurers, welcome. I have a quest for you if you would accept it. It seems these golems were not just wandering randomly. I have heard from our best diviners that they come from an evil wizard who is bent on destroying our town. Our diviners say he is preparing a ritual on the outskirts of town. I would like your party to go and investigate. We have a guide who will take you to the clearing. Attempt to disrupt the ritual, but if the fight goes badly don't feel shamed if you must return for help. Do this and the town will reward you. What do you say?"

The heroes should feel honored to say yes. It is of great value to be asked by the mayor, and at a more meta level it means the players are involved in the big plot for the weekend. The mayor is willing to sweeten the deal with promises of gold should they need further persuasion.

Once the party has agreed, she points them over to their "guide" who is one of the game staff, Ben Lithow (see page 75). He waits by his pickup truck to take the LARPers to where the side quest has been setup.

THE CLEARING

Ben drives the characters to the other side of the farm.

The quest is actually at the far edge of the farm, and due to the distance your party of adventurers gets a lift from Ben Lithow, one of the game staff. He drives down winding gravel roads for ten minutes and stops a short distance from a clearing.

"Okay. You are back in character. I'm just going to wait here for when you want to head back to town."

When the players glance into the clearing, read the following:

In the large clearing, a dark wizard stands reciting some strange language. Out of game, you know it is Jay Diaz, the director of the game. He wears a black cloak and holds a staff with a glowing green gem at the end. In front of him is a circle of white paint with intricate symbols painted inside. He seems to be focused on his role, adding to the authenticity of the scene.

Scattered throughout the rest of the clearing are a number of staff dressed as golems. They stand ready to defend the wizard as he continues his ritual.

If the party wants to plan, they can make it to the lightly defended side of the clearing with a successful Stealth roll. On a failure, the golems notice and attack. If they take too long planning, the golems notice the characters and charge, initiating combat.

The golems focus on stopping the heroes from getting to the ritual circle and Jay. If a player gets to Jay, they find their weapon strikes stop in mid-air as a bubble of wind surrounds Jay. The same effect occurs if a character attempts to disrupt the ritual circle. If a character interacts with the wall of air, a Notice roll determines no special effects machinery generating it.

- **LARP Golems (2 per hero):** Use Innocent Victim profile from the *Horror Companion*, with a Fighting of d6 and armed with LARP short swords (Str+d6, -1 to Fighting, nonlethal).

This just got real...

When the golems are defeated, Jay completes his ritual and the party now has bigger problems to deal with.

With a final word, the ritual is completed. A thunderous roar fills the clearing, making everyone stop dead and gape in confusion at the ritual circle. A portal appears in midair with an explosion of energy that seems to pass through you, making your insides burn for a moment. Next thing you notice is you are unable to move as supernatural energies infuse the air.

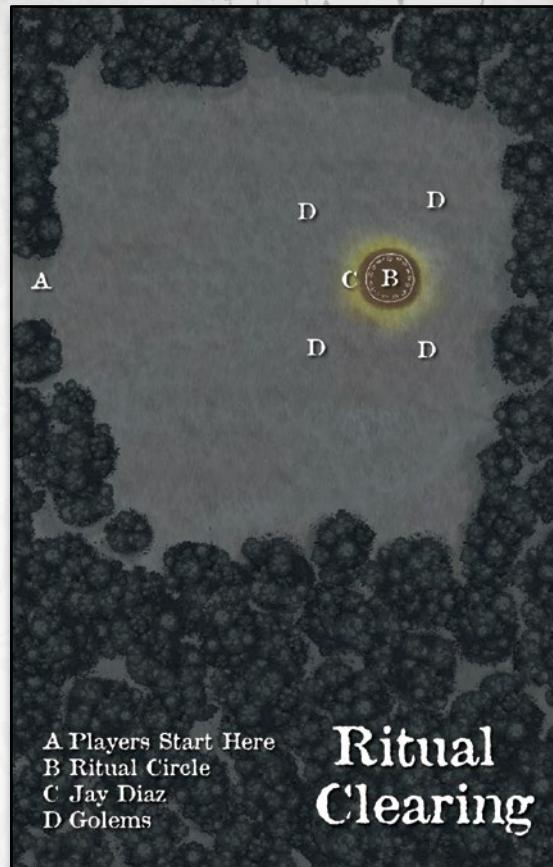
Through the portal wafts the smell of brimstone and fire as well as a view of an alien landscape. Small red-skinned creatures leap through the portal, sniff the air, and flick their tails with excitement as they notice the “golems” lying on the ground. The imps pounce on the prone staff members and tear through the golem suits with their sharp talons. The coppery scent of blood and muffled screams fill the air as the creatures begin to feast on the flesh of the struggling, horrified staffers.

Jay seems shocked and confused by this turn of events. He turns his questioning gaze on the tall grinning gentleman clothed in a finely tailored suit who steps nonchalantly out of the portal.

“Wait! This isn’t what you told me the spell would do!” Jay says.

The man’s sinister chuckle frightens you to the depths of your soul. As you watch transfixed, the man’s body morphs. The well-groomed gentleman in the crisp suit is replaced by a leather-winged demon with horns and hooves.

The demon says, “Oh, I fulfilled my end of the bargain, fool. This will indeed be a game to amaze one and all. Alas, I no longer require your services.”



He reaches out, slashes Jay’s throat with his claws, and shoves him through the portal.

He turns his gaze on you, waves a nonchalant hand in your direction, and says, “Kill them. I don’t want any loose ends.” The imps turn their malevolent attention to you.

With that, the LARP is over. Any nonlethal damage the characters have suffered is removed. From this point forward the damage is likely to be much more lethal!

- **Imps (8):** See page 75.

A Way Out

From here, the characters can either fight the imps with their fake weapons or flee. If they choose to fight, use the stats for the imps above, but it should become obvious to the heroes they cannot win the fight. Once the characters attempt to flee, run a Chase scene through the woods, using Agility. At the end of the fifth round, Ben comes to their rescue with his truck.

You hear a horn blare as Ben slides the truck to a stop between you and the imps. "GET IN!" he screams, giving you barely a moment to climb in before tearing out of the clearing.

The characters scramble into the bed of the pickup truck and pull away from the demons.

RETURNING TO THE TAVERN

It is a short drive back to the barn, but a good time to let the characters react to the horrors they witnessed following the ritual. If the team talks to Ben, he tells them he ran to get the truck when he realized the imps were not staff members. Ben tells the party he is heading back to the barn to warn the others then clams up in shock.

Ben drives like a madman, arriving at the center of the farm in record time. He skids to a stop next to the large barn currently sporting a sign reading Dead Dog Tavern. Around the barn are various tents pitched for the players. The lights are on inside the barn, and the sounds of people laughing and talking drift from inside, oblivious to the all-too-real dangers on their way. Ben, in obvious shock from the events of the evening, is near hyperventilation. He manages to gasp between hectic breaths, "We have to go warn everyone and get them out of here."

The heroes must convince the other LARPers there is a real danger, and the danger is on its way. This is going to be difficult since their explanation most likely sounds like a great LARP plot and they lack any hard evidence.

Convincing the LARPers of the threat is a **Dramatic Task** (see *Savage Worlds*) using Persuasion at -2. The heroes have five rounds to achieve five successes. Details on success and failure are below.

Complications arising due to a Club being drawn represent either a distraction that pulls attention away from the heroes or the stubbornness of the other players and/or staffers.

Whom they Must Convince

While this encounter is a Dramatic Test, allow the players to roleplay their arguments

with the Extras. Important Extras are listed below for use as inspiration. Feel free to add more or allow the characters to also try to convince the large mass of other gamers.

- **Tara Woodal:** Tara is assistant director of the LARP. She is a no-nonsense woman who can narrate with such skill to bring players to tears. Her first reaction to the news is confusion as it sounds close to the LARP plot, though the plan was for the evil wizard to summon golems rather than demons.
- **Lisa Evans:** Lisa has become one of the most respected players in the LARP, winning the title of Town Mayor. At first she welcomes the heroes back and asked them if they were able to stop the evil wizard. She believes the story is just part of the game at first.

Here Come the Imps

While convincing the others of the threat, the party can search for more effective weapons than their LARP weaponry. The kitchen contains items they can use as Improvised Weapons (see *Savage Worlds*) including a cold iron crowbar. Finally, they can arm themselves with a set of chef's knives (treat as daggers).

If the heroes completed the Dramatic Task successfully, all the gamers evacuate before the imps arrive. Award the heroes a Benny for saving the other LARPers. The heroes and Ben are the last group out, all piling into Ben's truck. As they leave, they see the imps emerge from the tree line and head toward the barn, seeking victims.

If the heroes failed the Dramatic Task, the gamers are not prepared when the imps arrive. Run the encounter with the imps as another Dramatic Task, but with a few changes. Each turn, every character can attempt to delay the demons. A character does this using any skill or ability they can justify (i.e. Fighting to hold them back, Intimidation/Taunt to distract them, etc.) with a -2 modifier. Dramatic task complications represent the demons in position to damage the hero; the hero suffers 2d6 damage.

The heroes must collectively gain ten successes over five rounds to succeed. Success means the characters, using their guile and quick thinking, shepherd all of the gamers into cars and on the road to safety. Award each hero a Benny for saving their fellow gamers.

Failure means the characters are unable to save everyone. Imps slaughter around half of the gamers. Their broken and dying bodies writhe on the ground as the last vehicle speeds from the barn.

Successful or not, the characters load into Ben's truck as he pulls out of the farm and onto the road. Give Ben to the players as an ally. The heroes gain their Stage 1 Special Abilities at this time.

- **Ben Lithow:** See page 75.

A VOICE FROM THE RADIO

The party races away from the farm and the rampaging imps, heading to Riverburg to regroup with the remaining LARPers and get help. Before they get there, the truck's CB radio crackles to life with an older male voice.

"Hello, is someone there? I should be talking to those who were at the center of the rift. Can you hear me?"

If the heroes respond in any way, the voice continues.

"Good. It worked. We can hear each other. This spell is sometimes unreliable. I am Dean Shallot, and I think I am somehow involved in the unfortunate mess that young Mr. Diaz has brought to our world."

Shallot takes a moment's pause, then continues.

Mr. Diaz came to me, curious about the occult. It seems he figured out I had some experience with it. Since the whole town views me as the strange old man to ignore, I enjoyed the company and taught him the basics. Simple things like shielding, good luck charms, and the like. Nothing dangerous or offensive. After a month or so, he thanked me and informed me he had to focus on his game. I have not seen him since.

Tonight though, I felt something dark and powerful rip into our world from the lower reaches of Hell. I had a bad feeling and examined my library.

Demonic Cell Phone Provider

If the LARPers get the idea to use their cell phones, they have full bars. When the characters actually try to call someone, the cell phone rings and connects to the sounds of screaming souls and demonic cries from Hell. Maybe even the sound of a dead relative crying for help. Make sure the players roll a Fear test.

If you really feel like pulling their chains, you can have Tarhiel answer and taunt the heroes.

An old book was stolen. A book I had locked away. I feared Mr. Diaz had done something incredibly unwise, so I cast a spell to talk to any who may have been present at the ritual. What, exactly, occurred?"

After the characters fill Shallot in, he continues.

"That presumptuous boy! That reckless, obtuse child! I can figure out how to sort out this mess, but I need to know exactly what Diaz did."

Ben adds that Jay recently took over the basement of the house they share. He refused to let anyone down there, and maybe Jay left some notes in the basement? Ben also adds he has weapons and a gun at the house.

After Ben provides the above information, Shallott continues:

That is a good lead and better than any I can think of. You should go see if there is any information on the ritual, he performed and bring it to my place.

I will do some research here and figure out what we can do to rectify the situation. Hurry, but be careful. The demons may be tracking you since you were at the rift when it opened.

We do seem to have one advantage. It appears whatever Mr. Diaz did interacted oddly with the surrounding area. Apparently, everyone within a certain radius of the ritual shifted into



a dimensional pocket just askew of our reality. The ritual seems to have pulled me along, possibly due to my long ownership of the book. This means the town should be safe back in our home dimension unless the demonic forces find a way to get there. Good luck and be careful."

At that, the radio clicks to static. The silence fills with the demonic screams of hell riders, rapidly gaining on the heroes.

The Riders from Hell

Tarhiel sent hell riders to eliminate the heroes. Run this as a short Chase (five rounds) from *Savage Worlds*. The riders focus primarily on damaging the heroes' transportation. If the truck wrecks, it crashes into the forest on the side of the road.

Ben's truck is an old but serviceable four-door pickup truck (Top Speed 36, Toughness 11(3)).

Anyone not driving can assist on the driver's next Driving check by performing a cooperative roll using Notice to warn of obstacles in his way.

Ben also has a real bow and 20 arrows in the truck.

The party can also throw obstacles in the way of the riders. In the back of Ben's vehicle are raw materials for the LARP: PVC pipes, marbles, wood, and other building supplies. A character using these items can make a Cooperative roll using Throwing or Fighting, whichever seems narratively appropriate. Successes earned are applied to the driver's next Force Maneuver roll.

If the characters escape, the rest of the route to Jay and Ben's house is clear of pursuit. If the characters fail to escape, the riders force the truck off the road. Ben frantically tries to keep control of the truck as it speeds through the forest. He screams at the heroes to jump out, as he loses control. Have each character make an Agility roll at -2. Those who fail suffer from Bumps and Bruises due to the rough landing.

The truck crashes into a tree shortly after the characters jump and in a cinematic fashion erupts into a ball of flame. The riders, seeing the explosion from the road, mistakenly assume everyone is dead and return to Tarhiel to report the heroes' deaths.

- **Hell Riders (2):** See page 75.
- **Demonic Steed (2):** See page 75.

JAY'S HOUSE

Once the heroes escape from the hell riders, the next logical destination is Jay's house to find details on the ritual.

Jay and Ben rent a two-story house in a new subdivision near the farm. The small subdivision has a handful of houses. Only a few are inhabited and the others are under construction or unsold. If the heroes explore the subdivision, they see lights on and signs of people inside the homes, but no one can be seen or heard other than the heroes. Should they choose to explore the unfinished homes, they may find a couple of iron crowbars from the construction sites.

The door to Jay and Ben's house is locked and requires either a key Ben has or one hidden in a fake rock by the back door. The latter requires a successful Notice roll at -2 to find. A Lockpicking check also unlocks the door.

The Surprises Tarhiel Left

After Jay left the house earlier, Tarhiel returned and filled the house with magical traps to snare those who might come to investigate. The first trap confines the heroes inside the house itself. When the characters enter the house, the doors lock behind them. The doors and windows become impervious to damage. The only way the heroes can escape is by destroying or triggering the trap in Jay's room.

Sitting Room

The sitting room is filled with props, costumes, sewing machines, tools, and a number of mannequins. One larger mannequin has a half-finished suit of armor on it. The boxes of props go from the floor to ceiling height, creating a small pathway through the room.

Tarhiel has trapped this room to distort its victims' senses. When the last character enters the room the trap triggers and they find themselves in what appears to be a twisted maze of boxes with many branches and passageways.

Each character must succeed on a Smarts roll to navigate inside the visual maze. On a failure the character wanders aimlessly in the maze, but receives a cumulative +2 check on their next roll.

On a success, the character discovers an open space in the maze with a glowing red sigil defended by maze mannequins. When

the maze mannequins are defeated the heroes can disrupt the sigil and the room returns to normal.

- **Maze Mannequins (1 per hero inside the trap):** See page 76.

Reward: Once all the characters disable the trap, they find a longsword sitting in the hand of one of the mannequins.

Living Room

The living room bears all the signs of gamers. The walls are covered in cabinets containing books and board games. A large flat screen TV hangs on a wall with a number of video game consoles beneath it.

Tarhiel trapped the living room to give the heroes a view of Hell itself. When they enter the room, the TV turns itself on with the sight and sound of static. An image of Hell appears that makes use of all five senses.

The character must make a Fear check with a -2 modifier. The smoke and fire flowing out of the TV surrounds and starts to suffocate and burn the hero. Each round the hero takes a level of Fatigue. A Smarts or Knowledge (Occult) roll breaks the illusion and allows them to see the smoke and fire are fake, and Fatigue levels caused by the Illusion are recovered. The TV continues showing this vision of hell until destroyed.

Reward: Above the TV hang a rapier and a medium shield.

Kitchen

The kitchen is downstairs in the back of the house. It is simple with a stove, microwave, and fridge.

When the party enters the room, a strange humming fills the air as all the utensils and chef knives in the kitchen rise out of the sink, floating in the air. They linger for a moment and then launch themselves at the characters.

The heroes must make an Agility roll to dodge the flying cutlery. Failure means the character takes 2d4 damage.

Reward: The kitchen has two sharpened cold iron daggers, now embedded into the wall behind where the characters were standing.

Upstairs Bathroom

The bathroom has a toilet, sink, and a bathtub/shower combination unit.

Upon crossing the threshold the trap triggers. A feeling of wrongness fills the room.

Any hero who succeeds on a Notice roll can make an Agility roll to dive out of the room before the trap springs.

When the trap springs, the door slams shut, seals itself, and all the faucets turn on. Quicker than it should, the room begins to flood with water. Within a few seconds, the characters are waist deep. Within a minute, the water fills the room, leaving no air. Use the **Drowning** rules from *Savage Worlds*.

To escape the trap, anyone either inside or outside must succeed at a Strength roll at -4 to break the door down; this can be a cooperative roll.

Once the door is broken open the water stops, but any water that had already filled the room crashes into the hallway and down the stairs.

Reward: Under the sink in a sealed, airtight container is a First Aid kit (+2 to Healing Checks).

Ben's Room

Ben's is the master bedroom. It is filled with papers, books, and a number of computers in various states of repair. Ben, besides being employed by the local internet service provider, is also a tech geek.

His walk-in closet is a graveyard of various computer parts and wiring. As soon as a character approaches the closet, the door flies open and the wiring transforms into a terrifying technosnake. It attacks the closest hero until it is destroyed.

• **Technosnake:** Use stats for Snake, Constrictor profile from *Savage Worlds*.

Reward: In Ben's closet is a gun box holding a Glock 9mm Pistol with 24 bullets. On his wall is a crossbow with 20 bolts.

Jay's Room

Jay's room is a smaller than Ben's with a bed, dresser, and closet. The bookshelves are all empty, and if Ben is with the group he says Jay has been moving his books down to the basement over the last few months.

The room is trapped with a spiritual sigil powering all the other traps, including the spell locking the characters in the house. If the characters are specifically looking for traps, a Notice roll at -2 reveals the faint outline of the sigil on the ceiling. The heroes can disable the trap by disrupting the pattern in some way (scratching it, throwing paint on it, etc.).

Doing so without stepping in the room takes an successful Throwing roll. Failure means the character triggers the trap.

If the heroes do not spot the trap, a person entering the room triggers it. The sigil blazes to life on the ceiling and explodes, doing 3d6 damage to any living being in the room and doorway, ignoring armor. Characters in the doorway can make an Agility roll (-2) to dodge out of the doorway and avoid damage.

Reward: Sitting on the nightstand is a key to the basement.

The Basement

The door to the basement is in the downstairs hallway and is secured with a heavy padlock. The door can be opened by a Lockpicking roll at -4 or with the key, which can be found in Jays' bedroom.

The door opens to a wooden staircase leading into the basement. A switch at the top of the stairs turns on the lights for the stairs and the rest of the room.

As you descend the stairs, you see the basement has been turned into a makeshift occult library. Lining the wall is a set of shoddy bookshelves filled with various occult books.

On the floor in white spray paint is a circle with complicated patterns inside it, surrounded by words in a foreign script. It glows with a dim white light.

When anyone approaches the circle, the leftover excess energy detects somewhere for it to go, aka into the heroes. The shapes grow brighter and the dim light flows up and into their bodies, and giving them their Stage 2 Special Abilities. A Smarts roll allows the heroes to recognize the sensation is the same as the one they felt when the portal opened. Afterward, the circle seems to go dark its energy expended. The energy has no other effect than to unlock their new abilities.

On a desk near the circle are stacks of papers and a handwritten journal. The journal's early



entries begin two years earlier and detail Jay's ever-growing rage and frustration with people leaving his LARP for another one. While the anger and frustration is clear, it seems he was more depressed than homicidal.

This changed when he began to seek more obscure ways to save the LARP and stumbled upon a ritual in the library of the "local crackpot," Mr. Shallot. Jay believed the ritual would summon a spiritual servant, and, with that servant, he could show everyone his LARP was superior.

The entries detail how the ritual worked, summoning a spiritual servant. This being told Jay he served as a muse to artists and could help him grow his LARP.

The entries continue, showing how the spirit's powers let Jay gain more resources and grow his game. Gradually, the entries change tone, becoming more scattered and hard to follow. Each successive entry reinforces Jay believed people were still laughing. The spirit, who had gained Jay's full trust, regularly reinforced this belief.

The final entry, the hardest to follow, explains the spirit provided a ritual to give Jay the power to get his revenge. The entry reads like someone who has gone off the deep end, corrupted by an influence beyond his control. A copy of the detailed ritual and circle, the same circle the characters saw in the field, is on the last page of the journal.

The heroes see Jay was a dupe in this entire tragedy, and the spirit is the real culprit behind all the carnage. With this information, and with the spell locking them in the house removed, the party can head to meet with Shallot.

THE WEIRD OLD MAN

Dean Shallot

Dean Shallot is Riverburg's resident eccentric. The man moved, an old house on the edge of town in his 40s. Since before Shallot's arrival the house had stood under rumors of being haunted. In truth, the house sits on an intersection of ley lines and Shallot needed such a place for his research.

Most of the town just lets him be, as he is quiet, pays his taxes, and donates to the local police, fire department, and churches. Those who have paid him social calls say he has artifacts from around the world in his house but does not talk a lot about his past.

What the town does not know is Shallot spent much of his youth exploring the world and researching the occult. He fought vile demons, spoke with divine angels, and thwarted scheming fae. His career in the shadows of the world ended when a djinn collapsed a pillar on him, damaging his leg. While the doctors could save the leg, he was forced to use a cane and walk with a severe limp. After recovering, Shallot decided to retire to Riverburg, a nice quiet place in the middle of nowhere. He moved in and has been enjoying his retirement.

Now in his 80s, Shallot rarely gets visitors, which is why he was happy to teach Jay the basics of the occult. He was unaware Jay had stolen the ancient cursed book until the events of this evening.

In his interactions with the characters, Shallot is helpful and willing to help the characters stop Tarhield in any way possible. Most of his more advanced abilities necessitate planning and rituals requiring more time than the town has left. However, he does have some tricks that could help the heroes.

- **Dean Shallot:** Use The Nerd profile from *Horror Companion*, replacing Knowledge (Computer) with (Knowledge) Occult.

Arriving at the House

Shallot lives in an old two-story mansion with a massive front lawn. It is hidden from the road by old oak trees. When the characters arrive, all the lights in the mansion are on and the screeching of inhuman voices emanate from the house.

As the heroes enter the library, they find the Shallot standing in the middle of a circle of mystical energy with imps trying to break through. When Shallot sees the LARPers he yells, "Please! Help me! I can't hold them back much longer!" His voice sounds weak from the strain.

- **Imps (1 per hero):** The imps turn and go after the heroes when they enter the library.

When the last imp drops, the old man waves his hand, dispelling the circle. He collapses into a nearby chair and heaves a labored sigh of relief.

"Thank you so much. I did not know how much longer I could hold up that shield. I assume you are the individuals I addressed earlier?"

After they tell Shallot the story of the ritual and show him the papers from Jay's workshop, read or paraphrase the following:

"Yes, this ritual could open a gateway straight to Hell. It seems only those who were present at the moment it was opened can close it. If you were to attack the portal itself, you, and only you, could damage it. That would explain why the demons are so determined to kill you. Apparently this demon means to conquer our world and you are the only ones who can bring to an end his assault. If you can close the portal, it should pull all the demons back into it, including the demon itself. Unfortunately, there is nothing here explaining why we have shifted sideways. Has anything else odd been happening? Is anyone acting out of the ordinary or able to do strange things?"

If the characters mention the odd powers they have been exhibiting, Shallot nod as comprehension dawns on him.

Ah, I see. Perhaps it has something to do with the creative energy you were all indulging in. Magic, at its core, is simply the use of will to alter the properties of the world around us. You may have somehow managed to corrupt the ritual with your own willpower, granting the abilities of the roles you imagined for yourselves. We may have shifted sideways when the ritual's basic assumptions about our world collided with the power you and your fellow players inadvertently summon every time you immerse yourselves in your own game world. We are, in point of fact, extraordinarily fortunate the town didn't simply implode when the two energies converged.

I believe I may be able to aid you in unlocking your full potential if you'll allow me.

If the characters agree, Shallot takes a marker and puts a mystical symbol on each character's forehead while chanting a series of phrases in a language none of them recognizes.

Gearing Up

By now, the characters should have real weapons of some sort to fight the demons. If any of them missed picking up something at Jay's house, there are weapons hanging on walls or in display cases in Shallot's library. There is enough weaponry equip the characters, either pistols or medieval weapon (Game Master's discretion). The other gamers have brought improvised weapons or have taken the foam padding off their LARP boffers.

Shallot does not have any explosives or modern military grade weapons.

As he does so, the characters again feel the familiar burning in their souls. The characters gain their **Stage 3 Special Abilities**.

"That is all I can accomplish with our time so limited. You must defeat the forces of Hell. From what I can determine about the ritual, destroying the portal should send all the demons back to from whence they came and shift us back into sync with our home dimension. I hope your friends arrive soon. I made contact with them shortly before the imps assaulted me."

Shortly thereafter, the sound of cars arriving up the driveway is heard. Shallot explains he was able to contact the other survivors and convinced them to come to the mansion to plan the attack on the portal.

Planning the Final Attack

Tara Woodal arrives with other survivors from the LARP. When she sees the characters, she strides toward them, relieved.

"Thank God you're still alive. We hadn't seen you since we left the farm. We made it to the town square, but it was like a ghost town. We could see doors open and close, but couldn't see or hear anyone. We were trying to figure out what to do and send someone to find you when Mr. Shallot's voice came over all the radios and told us all to come

here. Right as we were leaving we had to fight off demons. No one died, but we have wounded. Does anyone have any idea what's causing all this, and where the rest of the town disappeared to?"

After the characters fill in the group, Tara gives a long, amazed whistle.

"Well that explains a lot. If I hadn't actually seen the demons, I'd call you crazy." Tara chuckles, *"So we are in the middle of either a LARPer's fondest dream or worst nightmare."*

She takes a deep breath, claps her hands, and rubs them together vigorously.

"Okay! Let's do this. We can rally the others, but we need a plan."

The heroes can now plan to attack the portal. Shallot can fill the heroes in on details about the imps and hell riders such as their abilities and weaknesses.

Tara is behind any plan they come up with. However, she and Shallot attempt to ensure the plan does not put anyone at unnecessary risk. Shallot informs the heroes he is almost out of magical ability due to the strenuous events of the evening, but should be able to defend the house and the wounded.

How many of their fellow attendees made it to Shallot's depends on how many successfully evacuated the barn. If the characters succeeded, all 100 made it to the town square and to safety at Shallot's. Just over 50 of those are in fighting condition after the attack on the town square. If the character failed the Dramatic Task, only 50 made it. Just under half of those are still in fighting condition.

Once the heroes and any fellow gamers who are able to fight are ready, Shallot addresses them.

"I have one more thing for you," says Shallot.

He opens a box and pulls out what appears to be a crystal sphere. He waves his hand over it, murmurs some arcane words, and the sphere glows. He returns to the heroes and hands them the sphere.

"Use this on the field of battle as soon as the conflict starts. While I can't grant

abilities to your allies such as you have, this should make all of your weapons effective against the demons as if they are forged of cold iron."

Once they take possession of the artifact, the heroes and their army head back to the old farm to take the fight to the demons.

THE FINAL BATTLE

The party arrives at the field to find it surrounded by scores of imps, a dozen hell riders, and Tarhiel himself standing at the center of the horde.

While the demons have the advantage of numbers and their demonic powers, the heroes have their special abilities, weapons, raw determination, and a force of gamers to close this portal and save the world.

The party also has the sphere Shallot provided. Once activated, the sphere gives all the heroes' weapons the properties of cold iron as far as the demons' vulnerabilities are concerned until the end of the scene.

Running the Fight

While *Savage Worlds* has Mass Combat rules, a better solution is to direct this encounter as a running set of small combats focused on the heroes. The LARPers focus on fighting the horde and opening up a path to let the party to advance.

The heroes' previous actions affect the number of foes the heroes face as they battle toward the portal. If the heroes were successful at saving their fellow LARPers at the barn (see page 64) reduce the number of foes faced by two to a minimum of one.

If the heroes developed an innovative battle plan while at Shallot's, they gain a +1 to attack and damage rolls until the final confrontation with Tarhiel at **The Portal**.

While running the phases, describe the battle between the townsfolk and the demonic forces, with humans cutting down the demonic hordes and, at times, being cut down in return. Remember to lace in details from the heroes' battle plan also.

If the characters insist on stopping to fight in the melee, have Tara or Lisa remind them the portal is allowing reinforcements to come through. Every moment the gateway to Hell remains open, the demonic forces are growing

stronger while the numbers of the human forces are being diminished. Time is of the essence and the heroes are the only ones able to keep the Earth from being overrun.

The Outskirts of the Fight

The characters and the other survivors step onto the field of battle. Should they wish to scout, allow a hero to make a Stealth roll. A success allows them to plan their attack and gain a bonus based on careful thinking, with details in the table below.

If they have not used the sphere, the demons' natural armor holds back much of the damage from the weapons. If the characters do not decide to use the sphere on their own, describe the townspeople quickly losing the fight against the demons. Have Tara scream for the heroes to use the sphere, as they need help.

The characters find themselves in a battle with hell riders, preventing them from approaching closer to the portal itself. The riders try to run down the party and block them from moving forward.

Almost There....

With the hell riders defeated, heroes advance halfway to the portal itself. There are fewer allies here, but the battle still rages all around them. At this area, a set of imps to blocks the heroes.

Once the humans take out half the imps, make a group Spirit check on the remaining imps. A failure indicates the cowardly demons decide it is better to run away than die.

- **Imps (2 per hero):** See page 75.

Once the heroes defeat the imps, they can advance to the portal itself.

THE PORTAL

The characters push their way to the center of the field where the portal, two armored hellions, and Tarhiel wait for them. Read or paraphrase the following.



You make it to the center of the combat, the portal to Hell humming with its own energy. There stands Tarhield flanked by two massive guardians covered in metal armor, their glowing red eyes blazing through their helmets.

Tarhield's face is a mixture of amusement and annoyance.

"Well, I'm impressed you made it here. Still, you shall not halt my plans. I will take great pleasure in watching you suffer for my glory."

The two armored hellions leap into combat toward the heroes while Tarhield stays off to the side throwing bolts. If a character closes on the portal, Tarhield focuses on that character.

To close the portal, the characters must attack it with. Use the rules for Breaking Things from *Savage Worlds*. The portal is an item with Toughness 8, and all damage types work. When the portal is destroyed, end combat and continue to the closing scene below.

- **Armored Hellion:**
• Tarhield: SLieutenant Benjamin Driscoll, page 95

A Possible Trip to Hell

When the portal is broken, it begins to glow green and the light fills the sky. A gust of wind quickly builds to a gale as the demons are pulled back through the gateway by some mystical energy.

The forces of Hell do not go quietly. They grab any human combatants as they fly past trying to drag them into Hell.

This scene is outside of combat rounds, as it happens quickly. Each character must make an Agility roll to avoid being grabbed by a passing demon and dragged to Hell. On a failure, the hero finds themselves caught in the grasp of a demon being dragged toward the portal.

There is enough time for any hero not grabbed to make one Strength check to save a grabbed ally. If the Strength check succeeds the hero rips the ally free of the demon's clutches. A failure means the ally was not pulled free and is dragged through the portal.

Tarhield is the last demon dragged through the gateway. As he goes, he curses the heroes and swears to find a way back and personally slaughter them and their heirs one by one.

All is well that ends well...

In the quiet that follows the closing of the portal, the characters witness the decimation left by the attack. While the gamers took casualties, most are merely injured and in need of medical attention. With the portal closed, the LARPers reappear back in the real world. They may have to answer some awkward questions about dead and missing individuals.

Those poor souls who were drawn through the portal are now stuck in Hell, perhaps serving as a plaything or a meal for Tarhield and his demonic minions.

Although the heroes have saved the town and the world, Tarhield's threat hangs over them for the rest of their days. One day he may return and exact his revenge, but for now the characters are true heroes.

FRIENDS AND FOES

Armored Hellions

Armored hellions are creatures of pure, unadulterated violence. Unlike their lesser cousins, the imps, they don't care about eating the flesh of humans but instead revel in destruction and death. Hell sends these creatures to guard noteworthy demons or to simply spread terror.

They stand over six feet tall and are encased in full plate mail covered in spikes, with only red burning eyes visible through their helmets.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Metal Armor
- **Blades:** Str+d10
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear test.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation
- **Focused on Destruction:** Once an armored hellion has a target, it completely focus on that target until it is destroyed.
- **Infravision:** Armored Hellions can see heat and so halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.

- **Resistance (Normal Weapons):** Armored hellions suffer only half-damage from non-magical attacks except for those delivered by cold iron (see below).
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Armored hellions take normal damage from cold iron weapons. “Cold” refers to their relative purity—not their temperature.

Ben Lithow

Ben is a large guy in his mid-thirties. He has been into LARPing since his high school years and is the one guy on staff who absolutely everyone likes. He is the organization and planning expert of the LARP. When he is not LARPing, he works at a local ISP providing internet service to Riverburg. Ben also has a fascination with ranged weapons of all types. He has a small collection of bows and a couple of guns at his house.

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

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Knowledge (Mythology) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Throwing d6

Cha: 0; Pace: 5; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Loyal, Quirk (Cracks knuckles when nervous)

Edges: —

Gear: Bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6), 20 arrows (in truck).

Demonic Steed

Demonic steeds are primarily used by demons to travel around Hell. Rarely, they are gifted to loyal mortals to use as they will. Demonic steeds are jet black with red eyes and steaming nostrils. Their bits and bridles are made from twisted, barbed wire, and their horseshoes are hammered in with nails made from the ribs of sinners.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 10; Parry: 6; Toughness: 9

Special Abilities:

- **Fleet Footed:** Demonic steeds roll a d8 for their running die.
- **Kick:** Str+d6.
- **Rider Empathy:** If the rider of a demonic steed is evil, whether mortal or supernatural, he gains +2 to Riding rolls. Should he be good, he suffers a -4 penalty and the steed attempts to dismount and kill him at every opportunity.

- **Size +2:** Demonic steeds weigh between 800 and 1000 pounds.

Hell Riders

Hell riders come from the very depths of Hell. Riding their demonic steeds, they harry and run down souls of sinners being eternally tormented. While on earth, they take great delight in harrying and running down living beings.

Hell Rider sit tall in the saddle of their demonic steeds, cloaked in long black robes, and demonic bone masks covering their faces. They carry swords of fire in their hands as they ride towards their quarry.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Riding d8

Pace: 6; Parry: 6; Toughness: 6

Special Abilities:

- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Demonic Steed:** The hell riders have a personal demonic steed. They never willingly dismount the steed, but should the rider die or be forced to dismount, the demonic steed fades from this world as it reappears in Hell.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear test.
- **Flaming Sword:** The flaming swords of the hell rider do Str+d8+2 damage. These swords also have a chance to catch anything they touch on fire. See rules for spreading fire from *Savage Worlds*.
- **Infravision:** Hell riders can see heat and so halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Resistant to Normal Weapons:** Hell riders suffer only half-damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron (see Weakness).
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Hell riders take normal damage from cold iron weapons. “Cold” refers to their relative purity—not their temperature.

Imps

Imps are small demons that move fast and have sharp teeth and razor claws. They hunger for human flesh, and thus make perfect shock troops for the invasion of Earth.

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

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d6
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creatures must make a Fear test.
- **Infravision:** Imps can see heat and so halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Resistant to Normal Weapons:** Imps suffer only half-damage from non-magical attacks except for those delivered by cold iron (see below).
- **Size -1:** Imps stand 3'-4' tall.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Imps take normal damage from cold iron weapons. "Cold" refers to their relative purity—not their temperature.

Maze Mannequin

These mannequins appear to be made of pieces of human skin stitched together. Embedded in their hands is a longsword. These creatures can walk, but very slowly.

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

Skills: Fighting d4

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear test.
- **Fearless:** The mannequin is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Longsword:** The mannequin attacks with a longsword doing Str+d8 damage.

Tarhiel

Tarhiel is a demon lord within the ranks of Hell. Tarhiel knows that should he bring about some sort of visible sign of the destruction of earth, he will be noticed and promoted up the ranks. He was pleased to find Jay an easy pawn to help bring about, if not the complete subjugation of Earth, at least this one small town. From humble beginnings come great things.

In his demonic form, Tarhiel stands six feet tall. Great, leathery wings span from its back, horns adorn its head, and a long, snake-like tongue flicks from its mouth. In human form Tarhiel appears to be a five-

foot-tall, nondescript man in a well-tailored business suit.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Spellcasting d12, Notice d6,

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Hardened demonic skin.
- **Claws:** Str+d6
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Demonic Magic:** Tarhiel has the Arcane Background (Magic) and the following spells: *armor, blast, bolt, confusion, damage field, fear*.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear test.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Flight:** In demon form Tarhiel can use his leathery wings to fly. Flying Pace 10" and a Climb 0.
- **Infravision:** Tarhiel can see heat and so halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Resistance (Normal Weapons):** Tarhiel suffers only half-damage from non-magical attacks except for those delivered by cold iron (see below).
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Tarhiel takes normal damage from cold iron weapons. "Cold" refers to their relative purity—not their temperature.



PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

LARP of Horror is designed for use with the Pre-generated characters included at the end of the adventure. Keep the special abilities secret from the players. These will be unlocked during the course of play. Characters with the improved version of an Edge gained through their special abilities do not require pre-requisite Edge. This is intentional.

Jonathan / Joanne Daniels

Concept: The Abandoned Boy/Girlfriend

Background: You have no idea what a LARP is. Your significant other brought you to this game, but they went off to play with their own party. Luckily, you were able to hook up with some other players who seemed willing to show you the ropes. While you are angry with your significant other, you are going to try to have a fun weekend.

What you are playing: The staff helped you build a character for the game. Supposedly, because you are so good at singing and public speaking, you will be playing as a “performer.” That means you can inspire other characters or something like that. Your character’s name is Lord/Lady Duane.

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

Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d4, Knowledge (Music) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Steal d4, Taunt d6, Throwing d4

Cha: +2; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 6 (1)

Hindrances: Screamer, Quirk (Whistles when scared)

Edges: Attractive, Command

Gear: Backpack, cellphone, LARP short sword (Str+d6, -1 Fighting, nonlethal), leather armor (+1).

Voice and Song:

- **Stage 1:** The character can use her voice to bring change into the world. She gains the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge and the following powers: *boost/lower Trait, confusion, and fear*. She uses her Knowledge (Music) as her arcane skill.
- **Stage 2:** New Power (*dispel*).
- **Stage 3:** New Power (*puppet*).

Sonya / Sydney Lee

Concept: LARP Combat Aficionado

Background: You have always been involved in athletics of some sort. Then you found out about LARPing. Swords and shields? Heck yeah, even if they are foam! You don’t really get the whole “roleplaying” or “storyline” thing. You just let people point you at the monsters and you go to town.

What you are playing: You are just a sword and shield fighter. You just want to best as many people in combat as possible. They also required you to pick a name, so chose Alaran. It was the first thing that popped into your head.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Taunt d6, Shooting d4

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 6; Toughness: 8 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogant

Edges: Brawny, Sweep

Gear: Cellphone, LARP battle axe (Str+d8, -1 Fighting, nonlethal), chain hauberk (+2), small shield (+1 Parry).

Destiny of Sword:

- **Stage 1:** The blows of the hero’s foes do little to slow him down. He gains the Improved Nerves of Steel Edge.
- **Stage 2:** The hero is able to take advantage of his foe’s failed attacks. The hero gains the Improved Counter Attack Edge.
- **Stage 3:** The character can unleash a flurry of blows and has the Improved Frenzy Edge.

Paul / Patti Wise

Concept: Weekend Escape LARPer

Background: Life sucks. That is the easiest way to put it. You have a dead end job and you don’t really have the social skills or ambition to either excel at your job or play office politics. LARPing is different though. Here you can open up and be a major player in the game.

What you play: You play Bartholomew/Beatrice: the rogue with a heart of gold. You help other adventures by using your trapping and thieving skills in the dark dungeons and

quests. You are surprisingly good at it and have even practiced lockpicking and being stealthy at home.

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 6; Toughness: 6 (1)

Hindrances: Bad Eyes (Minor), Loyal

Edges: Luck

Gear: Cellphone, LARP crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, -1 Shooting, RoF 1), LARP short sword (Str+d6, -1 Fighting, nonlethal) with 20 LARP Arrows, leather armor (+1).

Well Placed Knife:

- Stage 1:** The hero's reflexes increase dramatically, gaining the Improved First Strike Edge.
- Stage 2:** As the hero continues to evolve with the influx of magic, she gains the ability to move around combat. The hero gains the Improved Extraction Edge.
- Stage 3:** At the height of her power, the hero gains the Arcane Background (Super Power) and the *invisibility* (self only) power, using Stealth as the arcane skill.

Denise / Donald Murphy

Concept: EMT LARPer

Background: Day to day you are in an ambulance in the nearby big city handling emergency calls. The LARP gives you a chance to actually get thanks for your skills. You are one of the two trained EMTs always on call in case someone gets hurt in real life, thankfully a rare occurrence. You have a radio on you at all times in case staff needs you.

What you play: You play Elan Murphyson: a healer in the LARP. You keep your in-game healing items and your real-world EMT gear together so you can always be on-call in either instance.

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

Skills: Driving d8, Fighting d4, Healing d8, Knowledge (Medicine) d8, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4

Cha: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 6 (1)

Hindrances: Cautious, Heroic, Loyal

Edges: Healer, Level Headed

Gear: Cellphone, LARP crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, -1 Shooting, RoF 1), 20 LARP arrows, LARP short sword (Str+d6,

-1 Fighting, nonlethal), leather armor (+1), LARP and EMT medical kit.

True Healer:

- Stage 1:** The hero finds that the magic flowing through him allows him to heal allies with a touch. The character gains the Arcane Background (Miracles) and the *healing*, and *succor* powers. He uses the Knowledge (Medicine) as his arcane skill.
- Stage 2:** The hero gains the *banish* power.
- Stage 3:** At the pinnacle of his powers, the character gains the *greater healing* power.

Nigel / Naomi Austin

Concept: In-Game Master Trader

Background: In your everyday life you are a used car salesman. While you have occasionally made the sleazy deal or two in making a sale, you have never done so to a fellow geek. Your LARP trade is a way for you to extend your sales ability into the game itself.

What you play: You play Grady / Ginger Kennedy: the town's jewel merchant and magical item crafter. You salvage components off dead monsters and construct items for other characters. You rarely get up close in combat, preferring to use a crossbow from the back.

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

Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Repair d8, Shooting d6

Cha: +2; Pace: 5; Parry: 4; Toughness: 7 (1)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Obese

Edges: Charismatic

Gear: Cellphone, LARP crossbow (Range 15/30/60, Damage 2d6, -1 Shooting, RoF 1), 40 LARP arrows, LARP short sword (Str+d6, -1 Fighting, nonlethal), leather armor (+1), crafting kit (Duct tape, tools, etc).

Touch of Authority:

- Stage 1:** The seeping magic increases the character's natural leadership abilities. She gains the Command and Command Presence Edges.
- Stage 2:** Able to inspire those around her to hold fast in the face of danger, the hero gains the Hold the Line Edge.
- Stage 3:** Reaching the pinnacle of her leadership, the hero now possesses the Fervor Edge.



ROSEWOOD

by Eric Simon

It is 2057. For five years now, the first full terraforming colony on Mars has been working steadily to convert the planet's atmosphere to make it habitable. All seemed to be going smoothly until nine months ago when communication from the colony suddenly stopped after a brief distress signal was received. An emergency rescue mission was immediately organized and sent, but that mission also went silent when it arrived six months ago. Now, a second emergency mission is being sent to find out what is happening on Mars.

It turns out the colony, now called "Rosewood," is the spawning source for a newly-discovered form of alien plant. The terraforming machines woke a dormant seed and helped it thrive and spread its shoots throughout the colony. The plant has the ability to control minds through the poison on its thorns. The first few colonists were controlled after accidental thorn pricks, but they then intentionally poisoned the rest. The heroes must fight off colonists, sentient plants, and possibly even each other as they try to escape this failed colony, realizing by the end that if they are unsuccessful, there is no one else to stop the growth of this alien menace!

SETTING RULES

Use these Setting Rules from *Savage Worlds* when running *Rosewood*:

- Blood and Guts
- Born a Hero
- Critical Failures
- Fanatics

CHARACTERS

This adventure is recommended for four or more characters. The heroes are all highly competent members of a team of astronaut troubleshooters. Because of this, Hindrances that would normally disqualify someone from military service or space travel should be strongly discouraged. There are always exceptions that make for an interesting story, but even allowing for extraordinary circumstances the Game Masters should keep such Hindrances to no more than one or two across the entire party.

Otherwise, the group may make their characters however they wish with a few exceptions:

- All heroes are Novice characters. (Note: the Born a Hero Setting Rule is in place to reflect their expertise.)
- All characters must have at least one Knowledge skill at d6, preferably related to general sciences (such as chemistry or biology), space travel (such as propulsion systems or long-range communication), or planetary colonization (such as geology or engineering).

Adapting For *Slipstream* or *The Last Parsec*

Rosewood is set in a mostly realistic version of Earth's near future. However, it could easily be inserted as a short adventure within a larger campaign in the worlds of *Slipstream* or *The Last Parsec*. In either case, the basic story structure can be kept very similar (although certainly moved off Mars), with just a few changes needed to adjust to the tones of those settings.

For *Slipstream*, focus on the heroic rescue aspect. Ares I might be a friendly station run by Anarchs who were particularly susceptible to the psionic control of the Rose. In this version of the scenario, the heroes might be more resistant to infection, and might even be immune to the higher levels. Alternately, the base could be controlled by Dracos who are trying to develop a biological/psionic weapon. In this case, it becomes more of a base assault, and the heroes can go in fully armed and prepared for conflict. In either case, keep in mind some races may be more or less susceptible to the Rose's infectious mind control. This may be the adventure where your Robot Man gets a moment in the spotlight.

Adapting the story for *The Last Parsec* is even easier. Simply run the adventure as written but change the names. Jumpcorp has no qualms about sending its operatives on a dangerous rescue mission like this without full information. Just keep in mind once again some races may be more or less susceptible to the mind control. Deaders and Constructs are certainly immune, but it could be interesting to make Florans very easy for the Rose to manipulate.

- The following Edges are prohibited: All Arcane Backgrounds and Edges that require them, Arcane Resistance, Connections, Beast Master, Noble, Rich.
- Adventurers are allowed any starting equipment reasonable for a well-funded but hastily-assembled space rescue mission. Large weapons and vehicles are unlikely due to storage constraints. However, some futuristic equipment is available, including the following items: molecular knife, molecular sword, laser pistol, laser rifle, laser MG, infantry battle suit, and hard armor. The last two are considered space suit variants, so removing the space suit inside the station would also remove the armor.

THE HISTORY OF MARS EXPLORATION

As long as humans have imagined space travel, they have had their sights set on Mars. It is our closest planetary neighbor, and even after we began to understand the difficulties of living anywhere besides Earth it remained our most likely candidate for extraterrestrial colonization. In 2016, with national space agencies continuing to take a slow, cautious, and robot-based approach to exploring the red planet, visionary financier Elon Musk decided to push the technological limits of his private space company, SpaceX. "To Mars!" he said, and to Mars they went.

SpaceX conducted the first manned flight to Mars in 2019, 50 years after Apollo 11 successfully landed humans on Earth's moon. In the years that followed, several more expeditions were sent, but Musk wanted more. As early as 2020, he began talking seriously about not only colonizing Mars but actually terraforming it. Scientists agreed it would take centuries if not millennia to develop a Martian climate that could actually sustain life, but Musk was undeterred. Rather than choosing any one terraforming strategy, he began to throw research money at all of them. He proposed using a "shotgun" approach to Martian terraforming—combining solar mirrors to warm and release polar CO₂, asteroid bombardment to add ammonia to the

Infection

The Martian Rose has the ability to infect humans, making them gradually fall under its control. Anyone Shaken or worse from an attack involving Martian Rose venom must make a Vigor roll or become infected. Those already infected who fail the roll increase their infection level (see below). Infected heroes receive a bonus to the Vigor roll equal to two times their current infection level. (For example, a hero with an infection level of 2 receives a +4 on the Vigor roll)

Stimulants give a +2 bonus to the heroes Vigor roll. These effects only last for four hours and multiple sources do not stack.

Each level of infection gives the Martian Rose a degree of control over the human as follows:

Level 1 (Decision Paralysis): Unless personally threatened, the character has difficulty making any move to stop an action being taken by the Martian Rose. The hero's mind and body freeze momentarily with indecision, as long as the Martian Rose itself is the one acting. At the beginning of combat involving the Martian Rose, the infected individual must make a Spirit check at -2 or begin combat Shaken.

Level 2 (Kindred Spirits): Due to shared psychic connections with the Martian Rose, the infected character begins to recognize other servants of the Rose and trust them implicitly. All other infected individuals have a +2 Charisma bonus, while non-infected individuals have a -2 penalty when interacting with the infected person. In combat, this hero must make a Spirit roll

at -2 to intentionally attack any human who is infected unless attacked first, but may still attack the Rose itself.

Level 3 (Devoted of the Rose): The infected character will now kill and die to protect the Martian Rose. On the hero's turn, if the Rose is threatened the character must make a Spirit roll at -4 or aggressively attack the threat. With a success the hero may act as normal.

Level 4 (Mind Slave): The character now acts entirely under the Martian Rose's direction. (Note: Unless you have discussed this possibility with your players and they agree it is narratively interesting, do not use this level on the heroes themselves. This represents the level of control the Rose holds over the residents of Rosewood.)

One suggestion for running this scenario is to have index cards with each of these effects described on them. You can then secretly hand them out as characters become infected. Alternately, you can use markers or tokens to indicate each person's level of infection, only explaining the effects as they become relevant. This allows for greater suspense regarding the nature of the horror. In the final confrontation the heroes can defeat the Rose even if they are all at infection levels one or two, though it is extremely difficult. However, if at any point during the mission all the heroes reach level three or beyond then they have become part of the Martian Rose's retinue. The rescue mission has failed read the ending labeled **Infection** on page 94.

upper atmosphere, and factories on the surface specifically designed to pump out a variety of greenhouse gasses.

By 2032, SpaceX was putting all these strategies into practice. However, the aging Elon Musk grew increasingly frustrated because he had been forced to resort to robotic solutions to make them happen. He still dreamed of a human colony actually living on Mars rather than just visiting—but the reliance on robots for terraforming threatened to delay that dream beyond Musk's lifetime. Musk decided he wanted to see a human colony

on Mars before he died, so he began rushing a colonization program he planned to launch by 2040. Sadly, the cost became too much for SpaceX to bear and the company went bankrupt in 2038. Elon Musk went into seclusion and the terraforming robots went blithely on with their work for another decade as Earth's attention turned away from Mars for the time being.

Finally, in 2048, an international collaboration between the European Space Agency and the China National Space Administration began to assemble a team to finally establish a permanent colony on Mars.

Shifting the Tone

Like any adventure, *Rosewood* should be viewed as a flexible framework. As Game Master, you can dramatically impact the experiences of your players with only a few small changes. The tone of the story as written is intended to resemble a classic Ray Bradbury story with its slowly developing eeriness culminating in a blatant reveal. However, if you wish to explore a different feel for your version of the story, here are some ideas for making that happen:

Survival Horror: If you or your players want an experience more like *Aliens* or *The Thing*, then emphasize the infection events. Think of the facehugger moments in the *Alien* franchise—that’s how those scenes should feel. You can push the “jump scare” effectiveness of the attacks even further by making the base abandoned. Turn all of the crew members into lurkers like Driscoll until the final confrontation and simply move any important information into the computer records.

Zombies/Pod People: The mind control aspect of this adventure offers a strong possibility for zombie-style drama in which infected characters suddenly turn on the party, and other heroes decide to heroically sacrifice themselves when they realize they are infected. For a story with these kinds of experiences, accelerate the infection rate. Be free with the infection scenarios, and

consider removing the bonus to the Vigor rolls to avoid increasing the level of infection. Bear in mind this can lead to greater attrition of characters and a much lower likelihood of success.

Heroic Monster Hunt: For a more action movie tone, make sure the heroes get the clues that lead them to using stimulants to hold off the mind control. They might lose one or two people along the way, but try to move them along to the final fight mostly intact. Then, for them to get their spectacular finish, they should definitely find the acetylene tanks in the garage and perhaps work out a way to control one of the wheeled drones without the station’s communications system.

Cthulhu Mythos: Although Lovecraft did not himself write any stories about plant gods, there are several in the expanded mythos. If your group is interested in mythos-style horror, you can quite easily present the residents of Rosewood as cultists who are working to protect their awakening god. Play up the fanaticism and throw in a few occult references (perhaps to Dzéwà or Ei’lor) in their computer records and you should be well on your way. If you want, you can even change the infection mechanic into Sanity (see *Savage Worlds Horror Companion*), with lower sanity making the person more suggestible.

They enlisted further support from India and the United States and launched the first construction flight in 2051. Once the primary facilities were in place, the first humans took residence in the station—dubbed Ares I—in late 2052.

Until 2056, the station maintained continuous contact, reporting frequently on its success. Supply flights traveled to Ares I once per year, and the CNSA maintained a rescue crew ready to launch with less than a day’s notice. However, shortly after the 2056 supply run, radio communication with Ares I was lost. The Chinese rescue mission was sent immediately, but that crew also stopped reporting back just after they arrived on planet. In a panic, the various international space

agencies have hastily assembled a second emergency team to investigate what happened to Ares I. This time, they are sending a mix of astronauts, scientists, and soldiers, who are being told to prepare for every possible contingency...

ROCKET SUMMER

The tale begins with an Interlude, as each member of the team considers what he or she has left behind on Earth—what he or she may never see again.

Read or paraphrase the following:

It has been a hard three months, followed by an even harder two weeks. When the signals stopped coming from the Ares I Mars base, you watched the news like everyone else. You hoped the rescue mission would find people alive, and you were surprised when the rescue crew from the China National Space Administration stopped broadcasting within minutes of their arrival on Mars. But then you were the ones who got the call. You would be next to go and find out what happened at Ares I.

As you lift off from the launch pad at Kourou, French Guiana, your impatience is almost overwhelming. You were ready to go as soon as you put down the phone, but the ship wasn't. No one would have thought it necessary to have a backup rescue mission ready. So you have had to sit for two weeks waiting for launch, and now you'll have to wait even longer in transit.

The urgent nature of this mission meant your team could not leave Earth when the two orbits were at their closest points. At this time, even the most efficient transfer orbit takes several months to complete. Spending that amount of time in space with a small group of people can be emotionally draining, and everyone manages that stress differently. During the course of your journey, you share with your fellow crew members some of the experiences that have brought you to this point.

This scene is run using the normal Interlude rules from *Savage Worlds*. However, there are some important differences:

- Everyone should participate instead of choosing only one player.
- If a player draws Clubs, Spades, or Hearts, she should describe events that happened prior to this mission. If a player draws Diamonds, the desire she describes should be on Earth.
- Some characters may refer to previous trips to Mars, but those trips must be prior to the establishment of Ares I. None of these

characters have been on Mars since the colony was completed.

If the players want to roleplay any interpersonal scenes during the flight, allow them to do so at this time. As Game Master, write down some notes about each character's Interlude so you can use the background information developed during these scenes at key points later. Try to refer to the Interludes when a hero is under stress. You might even use the memories as triggers for infected heroes to make a Spirit roll or increase their infection level. When the Interludes and any accompanying scenes are finished, read or paraphrase the following:

After months of flight and watching that red dot grow slowly larger, Mars is finally in range of your scanners. You land in two days, eager to gather as much information as you can to prepare for what you might find.

THE GREEN MORNING

As the ship begins its final approach toward Mars, the party may make some initial observations about Ares I with scanners and long-range cameras. Some of these are easy enough for anyone to spot if they are looking, but some require rolls. The most obvious information is as follows:

- There is some sort of green material on the planet's surface surrounding the base. From above, it almost makes Ares I look like it was built on an oasis, but that's obviously impossible.
- The base still possesses power, but there do not seem to be any of the external warning lights you would expect in the event of a breach.
- The communication array seems to be intact.

In addition, the following facts might be discovered based on skill rolls:

- There is no sign of the Chinese rescue mission. The ship does not appear to have

landed here, even though its last message to Earth claimed it had landed in sight of Ares I. (Notice at -2)

- The communication array is not broadcasting a repeater signal to verify it is receiving incoming messages, even though it apparently does have power. This suggests the problem is with the computer inside the base. (Knowledge (Communications) or another appropriate science Knowledge at -2)
- As crazy as it seems, those are definitely plants. But the atmospheric gases can't possibly be at levels anywhere near what they need to be to allow for outside plant survival. (Knowledge (Botany) at -2 or another appropriate science Knowledge at -4)
- The view through the Mars atmosphere is hazier than expected, and the ship heats up more than it should on the approach—nowhere near the temperatures that ships see when landing on Earth, but still noticeable. (Piloting at -2)

Other skills may yield minor pieces of information at the Game Master's discretion. However, these are the important facts available at this time.

THE CREW OF ARES I

In addition to observational assessments of the station itself, the heroes also have some reference material regarding the personnel they can expect to find on Mars. The Ares I station was established with five crew members—three experienced military officers and two civilians with critical expertise. Following are the summaries of their official files:

Group Captain Sasha Andreyevna Spender (Mission Commander): At 53, Commander Spender is the oldest crew member, a veteran of multiple long-term space missions including the record-setting longest consecutive residence on a space station. She accepted this mission as a form of working retirement largely because she believed her space-adapted physiology would not survive long into her later years at full Earth gravity. Spender's military rank comes from multiple combat tours in the RAF prior to joining the European Space Agency.

Dr. Elektra Heliades (Sustainability Officer): Dr. Heliades holds multiple advanced degrees in genetics, botany, and ecology. Her research was directly responsible for the hydroponics advances that have made long-term survival on Mars possible. On the station, she oversees oxygen, food, and waste cycles to minimize the number of resupply shipments necessary to sustain the colony.

First Lieutenant Benjamin Driscoll (Communications Officer): Lieutenant Driscoll is the only non-ESA member of the Ares I crew. Driscoll began his career in the USAF, where he spent several years as a sensor operator. This led to civilian freelance work operating remote repair drones and mining survey robots for several different asteroid mining companies. Prior to the Mars colonization mission he had spent very little time in space himself, although his extensive experience piloting drones did at least prepare him somewhat for isolation. His file contains a note to monitor his psychological adjustment carefully.

Dr. Michel Chaptal (Medical Officer): Dr. Chaptal is not the foremost authority on low-gravity health risks, but he has worked extensively under those who are. In addition, he has published several papers specifically studying Group Captain Spender's medical history. In the course of that research, he trained and qualified as an ESA astronaut so he could live on the International Space Station for several months and act as her personal physician. He comes to Ares I eager to continue work in ways that no one else can.

Hauptmann Werner von Opel (Engineering Officer): Hauptmann von Opel is the youngest of the current scions of the von Opel family, a family with a long history of rocketry and flight. Werner entered the Luftwaffe initially to train as a pilot, but soon found he preferred to work with his hands. He enjoyed adjusting and improving propulsion systems for both performance and efficiency, and his expertise in this area caused the ESA to request him on loan from the Luftwaffe. This loan was extended into a permanent transfer just before applications for the Mars colony project opened up. Von Opel applied primarily for the prestige, seeing it as an opportunity to once again raise his family's name to historical prominence. Unlike most of the other crew, he has made it clear he expects to be transferred back to Earth at some future date.

FINAL APPROACH

The ship's pilot may choose to land away from the base, perhaps to investigate a nearby CO₂ factory. Doing so, they find the factory is operating within normal tolerances but experienced a production spike approximately two weeks ago. Any other landing sites are uninformative. What really happened in the intervening months is the crew forcibly crashed their ship and fed its pieces into the CO₂ factory. Signs of this activity may be detectable but should be kept as vague as possible for now.

Whether they land close by or far away, the characters see what look like small bushes like desert weeds strewn around the area, as they approach Ares I. These plants have many small, spiky leaves and long thorns on the branches. They look like rosebushes, except without any flowers. The party may cut samples for later study if they wish.

When the adventurers enter the main airlock, they are greeted by Group Captain Sasha Andreyevna Spender, the commander of Ares I. Commander Spender does not seem particularly tall or thin, but she does seem somehow taller and thinner than her features suggest she should be, as if she has been stretched by her many years in microgravity.

Commander Spender greets the party warmly:

“Thank goodness you’ve come! No doubt you have noticed our long-range communication has been offline for some time now. As you will see, it is going to require more parts than we have on hand ourselves. I imagine you have brought some materials, but I believe it may require a more specific supply trip. I will let you make your own analysis of what parts might be needed.”

When the heroes ask what happened, Spender looks concerned.

“Unfortunately our communications officer, Lieutenant Driscoll, has fallen into paranoid delusions. He sabotaged the equipment beyond repair while yelling something about all of us being out to get him. We tried to restrain

him for a while, but it made him more frantic. Since Ben hasn’t actually hurt anyone, I decided to let him roam somewhat freely, though I have disabled all of his terminal access. He can’t get into any supply cabinets or open any airlocks. We see him every once in a while, but mostly he avoids the rest of the crew. I am hoping you can take him back with you so he can get the help he needs.”

The party may ask about the plants. When talking about them, Spender seems to brighten considerably.

“The Martian Rose? That is our greatest achievement! We are all very proud of the work Dr. Heliades has been doing. So much so that we have all started referring to the Ares I colony as Rosewood. She believes it can help us reach partial breathability in a matter of decades rather than centuries. But I’ll let her tell you all about that. She is in the greenhouse.”

If the adventurers ask about the previous rescue mission, Spender appears confused. She explains she thought this was the rescue mission and that no one else has arrived since the communication equipment was destroyed. She expresses concern that the mission may have crashed or become lost somewhere. She offers the use of their two-person rover if anyone wants to go looking for where it might have come down.

THE THIRD EXPEDITION

At this point in the adventure, the heroes may investigate a variety of leads in and around the base. Commander Spender continues to offer as much help as she can; staying with the main group if the party splits up. Each location has a method by which one of the characters might be infected. Some of these only happen if the character is alone and some can happen if they are not. Depending on the order the heroes visit the locations, multiple characters might already



be infected by the time the group arrives at one of these locations. If only one of the characters present is currently uninfected, treat the uninfected character as alone, while telling the others they find themselves inexplicably unable to intervene.

THE HYDROPONICS GREENHOUSE

The greenhouse is the largest single area of Ares I, larger even than the entire living quarters. Rows and rows of plants grow in shallow trays containing capillary pads and flowing water. The trays are arranged on staggered shelves so as to maximize their exposure to the sun through the clear plastic walls and roof. The greenhouse is essential to the colony's long-term survival. It produces a large percentage of the crew's regular dietary requirements, and it provides the all-important oxygen return portion of the respiration cycle.

Working in the greenhouse is Dr. Elektra Heliades, the head botanist. She welcomes the visitors warmly and appears eager to talk about her various projects. She shows them around the greenhouse and answers any questions they have about the plants. As she does this, a Notice roll at -2 reveals there seems to be some Martian Rose mixed into nearly every tray. Once this is spotted, a closer look reveals the Martian Rose plants are actually climbing around the trays and not necessarily confined to individual shelves. (However, looking more closely also triggers the infection scenario below.)

Through examination or appropriate questioning, the following additional information may be discovered in the greenhouse:

- The Martian Rose is able to live outside successfully because it possesses a closed cellular structure with retrieval mechanisms to retain the oxygen necessary for respirating the glucose created in photosynthesis as well as the water created by respiration. If there are any botanists or biologists in the party, they understand this is a remarkable achievement, essentially turning the plant's cells into a perfectly efficient system for converting solar energy into chemical energy. However, any appropriate Knowledge roll allows the party's scientists to realize such a closed

system would remove the possibility of oxygen "waste" that could then be used by the humans in the station.

- If asked, Dr. Heliades takes credit for the genetic modifications to the Martian Rose, explaining it was initially a personal side project that became something more. A Notice roll (-4) allows a hero to catch a slight glint of fanaticism in her eyes when she says this.
- If the heroes take the time to consider whether it is likely Dr. Heliades actually performed this genetic modification. A Knowledge (Genetics), Knowledge (Botany), or Knowledge (Biology) roll at -6 reveals the Ares I station probably does not have the equipment to make that kind of genetic modification without cross-breeding from an existing plant. They may reflect on this question at any time during their exploration of the colony.

Infection Scenario

If the party members examine any plant closely, a branch moves suddenly and for no apparent reason. This takes the form of an attack and the plants are considered to have The Drop on the unsuspecting hero. The plant rolls a d4 for both the attack and damage (with the usual +4 for The Drop). This attack can occur multiple times regardless of which plants the characters are examining because of the rose branches snaking throughout the greenhouse. However, if this is the first location the party visits, dramatic tension may be served better by only attacking one for now. You can always make more attacks later if the party returns to the greenhouse.

The first time this happens, Dr. Heliades laughs it off, saying, *"It's just a scratch. One of the many hazards of working in the greenhouse."* If the heroes insist it is actually a serious issue, she becomes defensive and accuses the heroes of criticizing her work. She hurries them out of the greenhouse, saying, *"If you're worried about such a minor scrape, you can always see Dr. Chaptal."*

THE COMMUNICATION CENTER

This is a smaller room dominated by a much larger computer setup than any of the individual stations in the living quarters.

Lieutenant Benjamin Driscoll

Driscoll is the communications officer for Ares I. Like everyone on the station, he is infected by the Martian Rose. However, he has responded differently than anyone else because of his pre-existing addiction to stimulants. Early in the process, he realized something was wrong with his mind but he had more control whenever he was on stimulants. For the last six months, he has been taking stimulants constantly during his waking hours until he collapses into utter exhaustion. The other crew members of the Ares I do not attack him directly because he is technically a servant of the Martian Rose. However, he does not completely understand the source of crew's strangeness, as evidenced by his obsession with rose branches. He can show up at various times to protect what he considers important, such as the communication equipment.

When he attacks, he always emerges from a hidden alcove and attacks with a thorny club made of a thick rose branch. If the targeted character becomes infected during the fight, Driscoll is no longer able to attack and instead runs away in confusion. Similarly, the first time Driscoll attacks, he runs away immediately upon taking one or more wounds. In either case, he seems to disappear around a corner, because he knows all the hiding places on the station. His wounds should carry over from encounter to encounter.

If Driscoll is subdued without being killed, he falls unconscious and does not wake up for the rest of the adventure. This is due to the overwhelming physical exhaustion Driscoll has suffered from his excessive stimulant use.

If any other Ares I crew members are around when Driscoll attacks, they attempt to restrain him without hurting him and call for Dr. Chaptal. When Dr. Chaptal arrives, he injects Driscoll with a sedative, leaving him unconscious as above. If Driscoll is killed, the crew members react with sadness but suggest it was only a matter of time, that his addictions would have killed him sooner or later.

Upon entering the communication center, the adventurers can plainly see the equipment has been wrecked. Monitors are smashed, wires are pulled, and various panels are open and showing broken electronics inside. If Commander Spender is present, she once again blames Lieutenant Driscoll.

Examination of the equipment by a character with an appropriate Knowledge skill confirms parts for long-range communication are completely destroyed. However, some of the parts for short-range communication may be recoverable, particularly those used to control the base's robotic maintenance drones.

In reality, the rest of the colonists disabled the communication equipment to prevent Driscoll from contacting Earth.

Infection Scenario

If a character is ever alone in the communication center—particularly if she is examining or attempting to repair the equipment—she is attacked by Lieutenant Driscoll (see sidebar).

💀 **Lieutenant Driscoll:** See page 95.

THE LIVING QUARTERS

Hauptmann Werner von Opel can be found here, relaxing between maintenance tasks. This area includes sleeping quarters, galley, workout rooms, computer stations, toilets, and hygiene stations. Each crew member has a bed, computer station, and locker assigned to them. The bed belonging to Lieutenant Benjamin Driscoll has been stripped bare. If asked, the other crew members explain Driscoll did that himself. There are also a number of other pieces of information to be discovered here:

- An Investigation or Knowledge (Computers) roll allows the heroes to access Driscoll's private logs. There have been no new entries for the past four months. Prior to time, his logs had grown increasingly paranoid. Driscoll wrote about specific crew members looking at him strangely, saying that he "knew what they were thinking." He also made multiple references to "hiding his secret" and needing to "stay alert." The earliest indications of paranoia seem to be a single line from about eight months prior that simply reads: "What did Elektra do to

me?" (If confronted, Dr. Heliades indicates she has no idea what this could mean.)

- Von Opel is happy to discuss his various jobs around the base. He expresses interest in getting the communication equipment running again so all the crew members can contact their families. This is a good opportunity to introduce additional red herrings and dead-end investigation paths if the players are moving quickly through the story, or to redirect a group of players who have drifted away from the most important points. Possible red herrings may include Von Opel's superiority complex and lack of concern about other suspicious events.

Infection Scenario

If any of the heroes investigate the locker belonging to Lieutenant Driscoll, rose branches fall out and they must dodge to avoid getting hit. Whoever opens the locker must make an Agility roll at -2. Failure means the adventurer is scratched by thorns and must check to see if she is infected ([Infection](#), page 81).

THE LAB

This area contains both the medical bay and a separate lab section. The equipment in the lab is compact but quite advanced, and there is a wide variety of materials for experimentation in chemistry, biology, and electronics.

Dr. Michel Chaptal is here, ready to help if necessary. He does not seem to be working on anything in particular. The following information is available at this location:

- An appropriate Knowledge roll (at -2) while analyzing the lab equipment can confirm there is insufficient equipment for direct genetic manipulation. There is a gene gun, which is used for inserting sampled genetic information into a new transgenic culture, but no equipment would allow the editing of DNA from scratch. (This information should only be available if the character making the roll has already visited the greenhouse.)

- Dr. Chaptal talks freely about everyone's health except Lieutenant Driscoll's. A Persuasion or Intimidation roll (-4) can get him to reveal Driscoll had not been following a normal sleep cycle for months prior to the destruction of the communications equipment. He had assumed it was due to poor adjustment to the Martian day cycle, but he soon began to notice missing medical supplies. Specifically, Driscoll was stealing stimulants of all varieties.
- An Investigation roll reveals there are no longer any stimulants of any kind in the medical stores. The one exception is the small supply of adrenaline shots used on the heart during emergency resuscitation.



- If the heroes are able to get plant samples, an appropriate Knowledge roll using the lab equipment reveals the venom on the thorns contains some unusual bacteria. Blood samples of infected individuals also contain these bacteria. Chemists, doctors, or biologists may conclude that, given sufficient time, a lab might develop an antibiotic cure for this infection. However, that is not possible with the supplies available on Ares I.

Infection Scenario

If any of the heroes come into the medical bay for healing after an unsuccessful infection attempt, Dr. Chaptal first injects them with what he claims is a local anesthetic. Mixed in with this anesthetic, however, is a purified version of the Martian Rose venom. By injecting it directly, the hero does not gain a Vigor roll to resist—the character is infected. However, this action cannot increase the hero's infection beyond the first level.

A Healing or Knowledge (Medicine) roll allows a hero to realize that injecting a local anesthetic is an unusual first step in any care procedure. If confronted, Dr. Chaptal tries to play it off casually, suggesting a local will act faster than a general. However, he backs down and puts away the syringe if the heroes push much more on this issue.

THE MACHINE ROOM

This is the physical plant for Ares I. It contains a number of large and important pieces of machinery including air filtration, climate control, and water reclamation. Power is supplied by solar generators outside of the main base, but there is also a pair of backup generators in this room. In addition, it appears someone has actually been living here for some time, as there is a collection of bedding tucked into a corner. If Spender has accompanied the party into this area, she explains they were indeed aware Driscoll was sleeping in this area, but she did not consider it dangerous because he had not shown any inclination towards sabotaging this machinery. She theorizes this may be because he was not emotionally attached to this equipment like he was with the communications equipment, or perhaps because he simply did not understand it as well.

A careful look around the room may provide the following information:

- A Notice roll (at -2) reveals a slightly less secure access panel in one of the larger air ducts coming from the filtration system. The screws on this panel appear to have been loosened frequently. The panel is large enough that a person could crawl into the ducts from this point.
- Close examination of the machinery allows the heroes to make a Repair roll (at -4). If they are successful, they find the machinery is mostly untouched, but there is a small alcove underneath the raised climate control equipment next to a surprisingly clean section of floor. This alcove contains an astonishingly large selection of stimulants—mostly pills but a few bottles of injectable stimulants as well.
- Spender's explanation of why she isn't worried about Driscoll sabotaging this equipment is definitely suspicious. Any hero who pursues that line of questioning further can make a Notice roll (at -2) to determine Spender is indeed hiding something, although she does seem genuinely unconcerned about Driscoll living here.

Infection Scenario

Lieutenant Driscoll emerges from hiding and attacks any character who is investigating this room alone (see sidebar on page 88). If his stash of stimulants is discovered, he attacks everyone regardless of how many uninfected characters are present and does not stop until they leave or until he is subdued.

THE GARAGE

The garage is a workshop area that also serves as storage for much of the equipment used outside the base. There is a small rack of power tools and a large locker next to a workbench along the inner wall. From the workbench area there is a step down to a dirt floor on which the whole room is built. In the middle of the dirt floor is the small two-person rover, and then the outer wall is a fully sealed garage door. There are also two small wheeled maintenance drones along a side wall, but these are currently unusable because of the damage to the communications system. The entire

room can act as an airlock, allowing the rover and other machinery to be worked on inside and then used outside.

The locker is closed, and Commander Spender suggests it is unlikely to be of much use. She strongly but politely discourages any further investigation. If an opportunity presents itself, the locker can be opened with a Lockpicking check (at -4). Inside are several welding torches of various sizes, as well as a number of spare acetylene tanks.

Infection Scenario

Lieutenant Driscoll emerges from hiding and attacks any character investigating this room alone (see sidebar). He is paranoid about anyone leaving the base, because he thinks they will bring something from outside to take it over. If he attacks anyone in the garage, he may start ranting incoherently about aliens during the fight. He makes many references to "them" and accuses the heroes of working for "them," though he is not sufficiently rational to be able to explain who "they" are.

THE OUTSIDE

There are many areas the heroes might examine outside of the base. Only a few yield relevant information, however. The rest of Mars is very empty, and exploration is necessarily limited by air supplies and the rover's battery power. No Ares I crew members accompany the party if they travel outside. Depending on where the party goes, they may discover one or more of the following pieces of information:

- There are strange marks in the dirt between the base and the nearest CO₂ factory. A Notice or Tracking roll allows the heroes to conclude something large was dragged there. Since it is no longer there, they can assume this thing was probably made of plastic, which is what the CO₂ factories use for fuel.
- The communications and navigation equipment in the rescue ship has been sabotaged. It does not seem to be as thorough a job as the sabotage in Ares I, but it would take several days to repair. This would need to be done before the ship could possibly return to Earth.
- A Notice or Knowledge (Botany) roll (at -6) reveals the plants do not seem to be

growing randomly outside of the base. They seem to be radiating out from it as if the base is the source.

- An appropriate Knowledge roll allows the heroes to realize that the living quarters are built differently from the rest of the station. Most of the station other than the garage is raised off the ground, but the living quarters have walls continue into the dirt. If the party looks more closely, they may determine the walls extend well into the ground.

Infection Scenario

As the adventurers walk or drive back toward the garage, one of the Martian Roses suddenly reaches out with a three foot long tendril and tries to slash across everyone's space suits. The plants outside are stronger than those in the greenhouse, so they roll a d6 for Fighting and damage. These attacks are particularly dangerous because a successful strike can puncture the suit as well as causing an infection risk. Treat the space suit as 1 point of Armor unless the hero has specifically equipped themselves with hard armor or an infantry battle suit. If a suit is punctured, the adventurer has two rounds before she must begin holding her breath. A character can then hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to her Vigor die. After that, the character begins taking one level of Fatigue every round. Incapacitation in this manner results in death, though the crew may be able to revive the adventurer if machine-assisted CPR is performed within two minutes. This must be done in the lab.

If the heroes try to explain what happened, the crew members of the Ares I express skepticism, insisting the victims must have brushed up against a plant without noticing.

THE EARTH MEN

At some point during the investigation, the heroes are likely to put enough pieces together to take action against the crew of Ares I, which in turn leads to the final confrontation. There are a number of potential paths for this transition, some of which are outlined below. If the party chooses a path not listed, these

can serve as guides for the GM to improvise an appropriate scenario.

Scenario #1 (Accusation)

At some point, the preponderance of evidence may convince the heroes that one or more of the crew members are directly responsible for the strange events they have witnessed. This scenario assumes the heroes are behaving as investigators and either accuse or detain the crew member they believe to be most responsible (probably Spender or Heliades). If this happens after only one or two pieces of evidence have been discovered, the accused individual should act appropriately shocked and make some misleading statements to introduce a red herring. If it happens after multiple pieces of evidence have been gathered, read or paraphrase the following:

As you interrogate the prisoner, your voice echoes off the cold plastic walls. The sound seems to have grown more hollow, more empty. It is only when you pause to take a breath that you realize how quiet the station has become. After a moment's consideration, you realize what has changed: the air circulation from the life support system has stopped. In a panic, you rush to the machine room, where you discover that the air recycler has indeed been off. You are about to turn it back on when you notice an open panel in the main intake vent large enough for a person to climb through. You hear voices through the vent. Quickly you climb into the vent and discover it has a branch that descending below what should be the floor of the station.

The heroes may want to make some preparations, but should be encouraged to descend as soon as possible into the underground chamber. At that point, you may move on to **The Martian**.

Scenario #2 (Discovery)

The clues outside and in the machine room may lead the heroes toward a more direct exploration of the facility. As a result, they may decide to figure out for themselves what is under the station rather than ask any of the crew. If they determine very early in the

adventure that there is something beneath the living quarters, make them explore more of the rooms by making the entrance difficult to discover. It is accessible through the vent system, but only from the machine room and only when the life support is temporarily shut off. Once they figure this out, read or paraphrase the following:

You climb carefully into the ventilation system, making as little noise as possible. You find a branch leading down below to what should be the floor of the station. This section seems to have been added after the fact, a conclusion made more apparent by the fact it ends in a jagged section of ductwork with no vent. You climb out into darkness, but moments later the room is flooded with light. As you blink away the brightness, a familiar voice says, "Welcome..."

You may move on to **The Martian**.

Scenario #3 (Betrayal)

With the situational nature of the various infection events, it is possible one of the adventurers may bear the brunt of the attacks. If this is the case, the character may have experienced multiple increases in infection level without anyone realizing what is happening. This provides an opportunity for the Martian Rose to take control of the character and force a betrayal of the rest of the party. Pick a point when all of the adventurers are inside in a location where there are rose branches, and then read or paraphrase the following, primarily directed at the traitor:

You feel a sudden uncontrollable compulsion to attack your fellow astronauts. You reach for a convenient branch of thorns and start swinging. However, you feel inexplicably exhausted and are unable to put much effort into the attacks. After a few swings, you panic and run. Although you are not quite sure why, you find yourself drawn to the machine room. When you get there, Commander Spender is waiting. She ushers you through a secret passageway into an underground chamber, where you

sense the presence of the most powerful mind you have ever felt.

After the traitor takes off, allow the rest of the party to follow close behind and then figure out the secret passageway. You may then move on to **The Martian**.

THE MARTIAN

Commander Spender and any remaining crew are waiting in the underground chamber. There are also four crew members from the Chinese rescue mission who have apparently been living in this room. The chamber is covered in roots and branches, all bristling with thorns. In the center is a larger plant mass with an enormous rose-shaped flower is mostly closed. Commander Spender calls out to the heroes.

“We woke something—a seed that has lain dormant for eons, until we gave it just enough warmth, just enough CO₂. Now it has begun to grow and thrive in this new Martian atmosphere. Rosewood will be the first of many nurseries that will help this great wonder thrive on Mars, and maybe someday on Earth! All it needs is time. We must give it time!”

In this final confrontation the four mind-controlled members of the Ares I crew protect the main plant, sacrificing themselves per the Fanatics Setting Rule (see *Savage Worlds*). The rescue crew members attack any uninfected characters. If any characters are infected at low levels and resisting control, the rescue crew are not able to attack them. Only the Martian Rose may attack those characters, as the Martian Rose may freely attack anyone.

If Driscoll has survived to this point without being subdued, he makes an appearance in this confrontation. With the resistance granted him by the stimulants, he

attempts to attack the Martian Rose as well, perhaps knocking out a couple of the Ares I crew members and drawing attacks from the Rose while the party members handle the rescue crew. Feel free to adjust his effectiveness based on the tone you are trying to achieve and how prepared your heroes are for this fight.

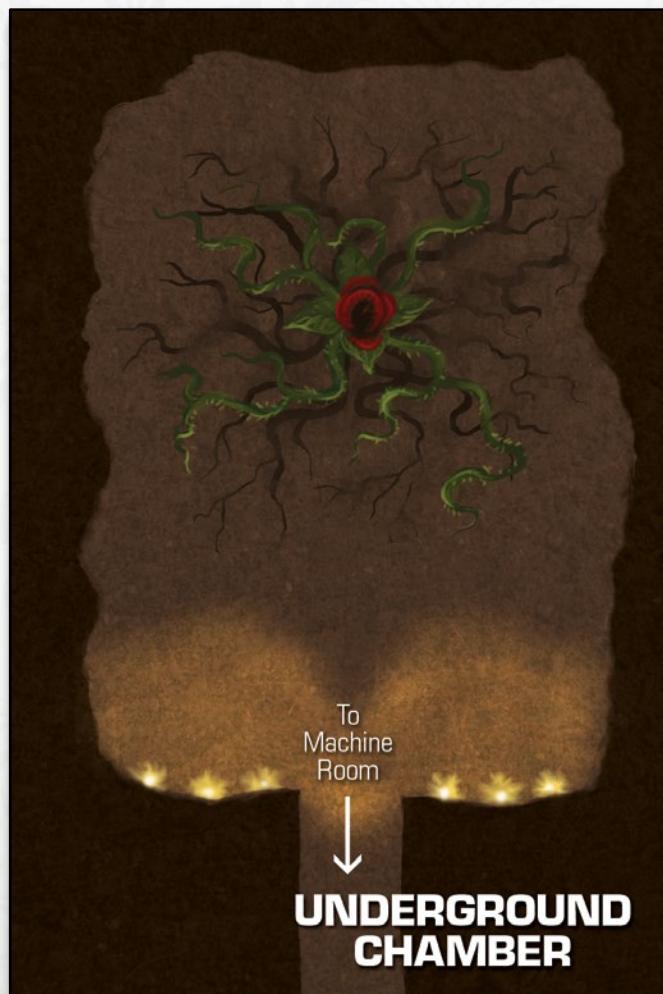
It is possible the fight may reach a tipping point where all of the remaining characters are infected at low levels. This may slow down the fight, as the heroes can only attack the Rose and only the Rose can attack back (while the crew members continue to step in the way to take incoming wounds).

- **Infected Rescue Crew (1 per hero):**

See page 94.

- **Martian Rose:** See page 95.

The confrontation ends when the Martian Rose is destroyed or all the characters are dead or at infection level 3 or higher. Read or paraphrase the appropriate ending below:



CONCLUSION

ENDING #1 (SUCCESS)

This ending assumes at least one hero has survived the final confrontation. That character might have been infected, but the death of the Martian Rose has lifted the effects. Any surviving rescue or Ares I crew members also find themselves suddenly free of the Rose's control.

You flee the underground chamber and exit Ares I as quickly as you can. As you hurry to your ship, you notice the plants around the station wilting. You lift off from Mars exhausted but grimly satisfied with the work you have done. As you clear the atmosphere, you look back and contemplate how these events impact future colonization. Your gaze lingers on the horizon, where you notice a few more patches of green spreading across the red planet...

ENDING #2 (INFECTION)

Read this ending if there are any highly infected characters alive after all the uninfected and mildly infected characters have been killed.

As you defeat the last of those who would stand against the Martian Rose, you look with satisfaction at your fellow protectors of this magnificent creature. Your mind feels clearer than it has ever been, and you understand your true purpose. You will protect and nurture this plant and all the other seeds buried beneath the Martian soil until Mars is green with their strength. Then you will help spread their offspring to an even richer home: Earth...

ENDING #3 (DEATH)

This ending occurs if all the heroes are dead. If there were any traitors, they also died in the fight, perhaps at the hands of their comrades.

You gasp your last breaths in the dark underground chamber as the servants of the Martian Rose stand over you. Your consciousness fades, and you cannot quite identify the voice that speaks, but you do hear the words: "We cannot thank you enough for the ship. The first one was damaged, but yours seems to be in good repair. Now we can bring the glory of the Martian Rose back home to Earth." Your last thought is a premonition—an image of a future where all those you knew and loved have been transformed into mindless slaves, tending to vast gardens filled with Martian Rose...

THE MILLION YEAR PICNIC

"It's time I told you a few things. I don't suppose it was fair, keeping so much from you. I don't know if you'll understand, but I have to talk, even if only part of it gets over to you... Science ran ahead of us too quickly, and the people got lost in a mechanical wilderness, like children...emphasizing the wrong items, emphasizing machines instead of how to run the machines...That's what the silent radio means. That's what we ran away from.

"You're young. I'll tell you this again every day until it sinks in."

—Ray Bradbury

FRIENDS AND FOES

Infected Rescue Crew

These are the crew members of the failed rescue mission. It seems they did make it to the station but were quickly converted. Will our heroes be joining them soon?

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Throwing d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (4)

Hindrances: Loyal

Edges: —

Gear: Body Armor (+4), Laser Pistol (Range 15/30/60, Damage 1-3d6, RoF 1).

Lieutenant Benjamin Driscoll

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Knowledge (Long Range Comms) d10, Piloting d8

Cha: -1; Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Habit (Major—Amphetamine)

Edges: Berserk

Gear: Thorny Club (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Infect:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by Driscoll's club must check for infection. See page 81 for the full infection rules.

The Martian Rose

The Martian Rose is a sentient plant with a vast interconnected root system. At its center is a single giant flower that does indeed resemble a rose. This is the only point where it is at all vulnerable—attacks against individual branches have no effect on the Rose's wounds.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A),

Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10,

Notice d8

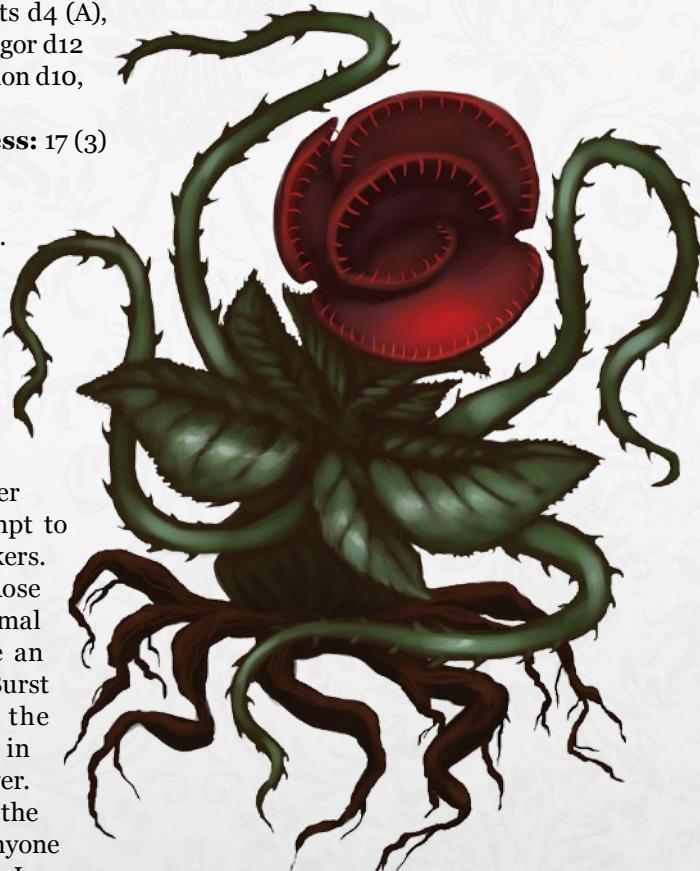
Pace: -; Parry: 6; Toughness: 17 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Thick bark.
- **Branches:** Str+d6. Reach 2. The Martian Rose has four branches and may use them all each round with no multi-action penalty. Only two branches may be used to attack a single foe, however.
- **Entangle:** The Rose's lesser branches and roots attempt to trip and entangle its attackers. Each round the Martian Rose may, in addition to its normal branch attacks, designate an area the size of a Medium Burst Template anywhere in the room and attack everyone in it as per the *entangle* power. The Rose uses Fighting as the arcane skill. In addition, anyone entering an area defined by a Large

Burst Template centered on the flower must succeed at an Agility roll or be affected by a constant *entangle* as if cast with a raise. In either case, once freed, the character cannot be entangled again without moving to a different position.

- **Fear:** Any uninfected individual seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** The Martian Rose is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Large:** Attackers add +2 to attack rolls against the Martian Rose because of its size.
- **Infect:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by the Rose's branch attack must check for infection. See page 81 for the full infection rules.
- **Resistance (Piercing Weapons):** The Martian Rose suffers half damage from piercing attacks, such as gunshots.
- **Size +6:** The Martian Rose sprawls across an enormous area within the underground chamber.
- **Weakness (Fire):** The Martian Rose suffers +4 damage from fire attacks, including lasers.



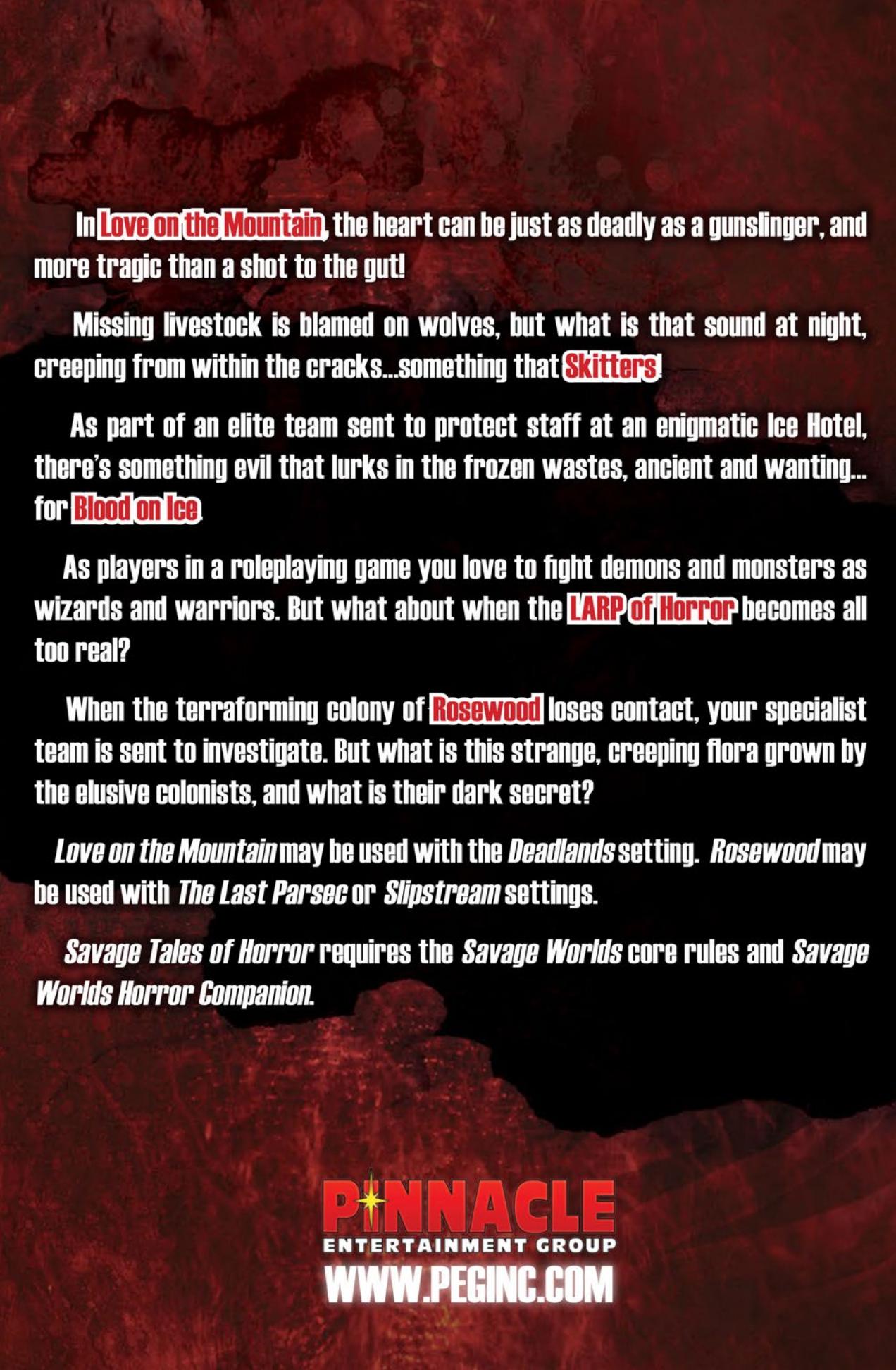
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Love on the Mountain may be used with the *Deadlands* setting. *Rosewood* may be used with *The Last Parsec* or *Slipstream* settings.

Savage Tales of Horror requires the *Savage Worlds* core rules and *Savage Worlds Horror Companion*.

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