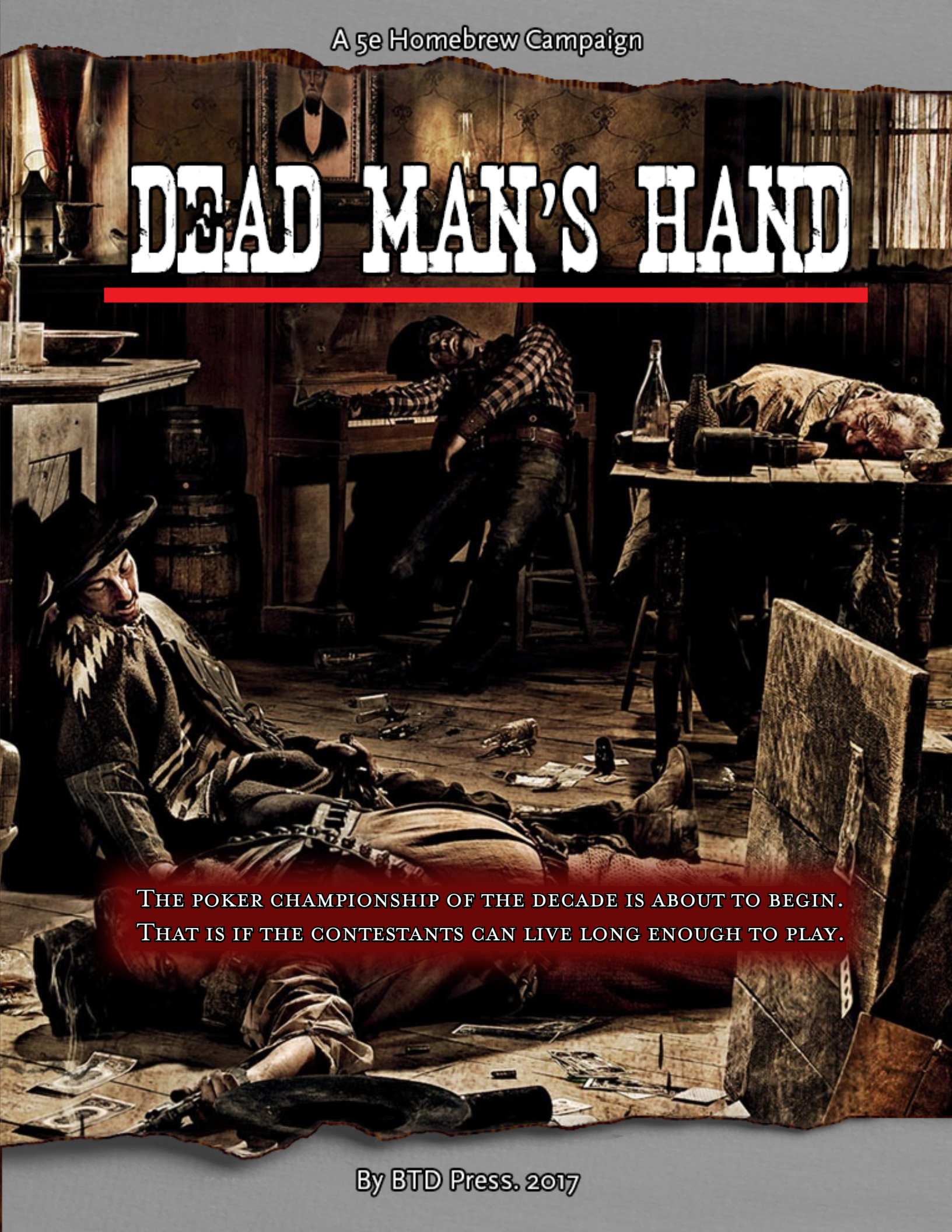


A 5e Homebrew Campaign

DEAD MAN'S HAND



THE POKER CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE DECADE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.
THAT IS IF THE CONTESTANTS CAN LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO PLAY.

By BTD Press. 2017

DEAD MAN'S HAND

BY DALE EASTERLING



A
FRONTIER
CAMPAIGN



BTD PRESS. 2017.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

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DEAD MAN'S HAND

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FOREWORD

When I first released the *Frontier* campaign setting for D&D 5th Edition in April 2016, I was overwhelmed by the positive response from play-testers and gamers. In the time since I've come to realize, as fun a concept as D&D in the Wild West might be, there is are very few resources for DM's looking to run a campaign in the setting. Unlike fantasy or even sci-fi, there isn't much in the means of premade campaigns or modules. This book aims to correct that.

"Dead Man's Hand" is a full campaign story arc that should ideally lead a group of characters from Level 1 to 10. This leaves room for DM imagination thereafter, or potentially new material from us at a later date.



DEAD MAN'S HAND



INTRODUCTION

Dead Man's Hand is a tale of desperate gamblers and corrupt lawmen, of criminal subtlety and supernatural mystery. Characters begin at 1st level, and by the end of the campaign they should be by 9th or 10th level. The ideal party size is four characters. If your group is larger or smaller, you can adjust the adventure's difficulty by reducing or increasing the number of enemies present in a given encounter.

Dead Man's Hand is set in the American Frontier circa 1872. The region, known as Western Valley, is a fictional territory not intended to be a specific location. As such, there is no conflict with birthplace or recent places of living for the characters. Everyone arrives in Western Valley just the same, and no culture is more foreign than any other. A combination of roads, railroads, and even a few rivers connect the various settlements of the valley.

Adventure Supplements. You can play this adventure with just the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS basic rules and the Frontier campaign setting, which contains all the enemies and items not described in this book. The basic rules are available as a free download on DungeonsandDragons.com, and the campaign setting can be found on DriveThruRPG.com.

Character Advancement. At your option, you can use the milestone experience rule. Under this rule, you pick certain events in the campaign that cause the characters to level up. In general the characters gain a level after completing each episode except episode 5.

BACKGROUND

Dakota Territory. 1872.

The gold that once birthed the boomtown of Red Gulch has begun to dry out. To keep pioneers in the city and invite in more, Mayor Ellis has called for a poker tournament with stakes too high for folks to pass up. On the second night of the tournament, however, a tavern girl screams as her drunken patron slumps over with a knife in his back. Over time, more and more residents and visitors – many of them participants in the tournament – end up six feet under. Can the remaining players and curious bystanders solve the mystery of Red Gulch before it's too late?

THE CAMPBELL GANG

Sloan Campbell is a local crime boss, loan shark, and stone-cold killer. Just the kind of feller a stranger doesn't want to meet. He's also a rather famous gunfighter and crack shot. Using his reputation and friends in low places, Campbell has established his own criminal empire. His gang shakes down local businesses for "protection money," extorts strangers, rigs gambling competitions, and generally kills anyone that gets in their way.

Though based primarily in Red Gulch, The Campbell Gang makes its presence known throughout Western Valley. They particularly enjoy harassing new arrivals at Johnstown. They have paid off Sheriff Sumner and most of his deputies, and so are allowed to carry out their dastardly deeds in broad daylight without repercussions.

THE MIDNIGHT BOYS

Several nights ago, strangers started appearing in the streets and alleys of Johnstown. Some of them look familiar, but others are completely new. The men (and a few women) amble slowly in a vacant state. They never speak, rarely acknowledge others, and don't seem to be of particular danger or threat. However, no one can doubt their eerie nature and otherworldly gaze. Dubbed "Midnight Boys" by the locals, they have been known to stare into windows at night, spook horses, and terrify children.

Sheriff Sumner has no qualms with arresting these harmless drifters. He delights in having a high inmate count, and Midnight Boys are easy to arrest. They are not so easy to keep, however. They have been known to suddenly vanish from jail without a trace or means of escape.

THE WATCHER

Perhaps even more mysterious than the Midnight Boys is the rare and ominous sighting of the figure known as The Watcher. The man is always cloaked in shadow or silhouetted by light, and so can't be identified. He wears a distinctive top hat and carries a cane with a round gem at the top which glows with an ethereal blue light. Most sightings of the Watcher are brief, tending to occur shortly after each character's arrival at Johnstown, and he vanishes when they turn their backs or amongst flashes of lightning. He almost never speaks, and if he does it is a cryptic message warning against "piercing the veil."

THE SECRET

WARNING! This section contains a major spoiler that is pivotal to the campaign and the Narrator's description of events. If you are a player (though you should not be reading this book anyway) please skip the paragraphs below and move on to the Overview.

Despite any character hooks drawing them into the area, the reason all characters arrive at Johnstown is because they have died. Western Valley is a form of Purgatory, and almost none of its occupants know the truth. Determine how each character met their demise, and slowly incorporate clues to their untimely end into the campaign as it unfolds.

For example, a British character who arrives by train could have nightmares of rough seas on the voyage over - with The Watcher gazing from the edge of the deck. An inscrutable outlaw may have recurring itches around his neck, a subtle portent to his demise.

The Watcher is, in fact, an avatar of Death and watches to ensure the arrivals keep the status quo. Midnight Boys are recently departed, and are lost between afterlives. When the Watcher comes for them, they disappear.

If at any point a character becomes wise to this truth, the Watcher will come for them. You can determine if they get a sporting chance by running away or making a Wisdom save against a DC of 20. Otherwise, just presume the Watcher wipes them from existence.

Throughout the campaign, it will be strongly and intentionally implied that Campbell is behind a string of mysterious deaths and disappearances. Conveniently enough, these victims are almost all participants in the Red Gulch poker tournament or planning to become one.

Whenever an NPC dies in these cases, they are discovered (by player characters or reported as such) to have died in the manner in which they did in life. For example, a Midnight Boy in prison rambles about being hung soon. Later he is found lynched in his cell, but when a PC returns for help he is gone.

OVERVIEW

For one reason or another, the party arrives in Johnstown. If they are not locals, they arrive by train at the Johnstown Station. Otherwise, you can find any reason for them being in town or use one of the Character Hooks in Episode 1.

Soon after their arrival, the assorted and likely unaffiliated characters each hear that there is a poker tournament in Red Gulch starting in about a month - the pot being 10,000 gold pieces, enough worth killing a man for. The next day, they get their first taste of the Wild West. Outlaws rob a general store, either with the characters inside or walking by. Once the shootout has passed, if any outlaw survives, they can be questioned to reveal they were stealing to afford the high buy-in to the tournament - 25 gold.

That night the Midnight Boys make their debut. The eerie stalkers lure the players toward one of Sloan Campbell's safehouses. The brigands inside mistake the players for Midnight Boys, and a shootout commences. Though it was a misunderstanding, this puts the players on Campbell's radar. The next few days, they are ambushed and attacked by his gang while poker contestants start to disappear.

Once they head West on the long road to Red Gulch - either for the tournament or to hunt down Campbell - the players encounter several interesting events. A mysterious woman in white named Laura asks for a ride, but keeps disappearing before she arrives at her requested destination. Bandits charge over the hill to plunder and raid the travelers. A stampede of cattle threatens to trample the party and cost their cowboys a fortune.

The players arrive in Snake's Bend for some rest and resupply. Yet there as well, Midnight Boys and Campbell's thugs cause problems. The hall and home of the upstanding Mayor Churchill catches fire, and it is up to the motley crew of heroes to save him. The grateful mayor - or his defacto replacement - reveals they were negotiating peace among the local Native tribes. The American folk didn't take too kindly to such measures, hence the fire. Now the players are asked to visit the feuding tribes and stop an impending war from reaching as far as Snake's Bend.

After negotiations have passed, the players return to Snake's Bend and take a train to Red Gulch. Aboard that train they come under attack by robbers. From the caboose to the engine room, dining cars to the rooftops themselves, the players must defend the train full of innocent travelers.

Finally they reach Red Gulch, in time for the tournament. The week-long poker championship is intense, with threats or outright murder whittling down the competition. The winner not only wins a fortune in gold, but also determines the fate of themselves and their friends at the hands of the Watcher - who has come to collect his own dues.



EPISODE 1: ARRIVAL AT JOHNSTOWN

Considered by many to be a mere stopping point on the way to more alluring mining towns, Johnstown was named for the railway tycoon Walter Johns. Johns pushed to have a train station and railway built in the frontier valley, and his ambition paved the way for commerce and settlement. The train station is in fact the most famed feature of the town. With the railway feeding trade, goods can be found in and shipped from the town that are not available anywhere else in the area. Quite a few entrepreneurs and wealthy merchants have come out of Johnstown lately, giving the town an almost opulent feel despite its relatively small size.

One other feature Johnstown does possess is a rather large prison. Presided over personally by Sheriff Sumner, it houses a considerable number of ruffians, drunkards, bank robbers, and other varmints. Sumner takes great pride in the number of criminals he maintains in custody, and it takes little more than an accusation to land someone in one of his cramped cells.

Whether arriving by train, horse, foot, or already being locals, have the party relax and get settled for a day before anything severe happens.

CHARACTER HOOKS

If the player characters don't already have their own reasons for being in Johnstown established, you can use any of the following character hooks:

- ♠ **The Gambler:** Having heard of a major poker tournament coming in a month, you have decided to try your hand at the low-level tables at the No. 9 Saloon in Johnstown.
- ♠ **The Outlaw:** You've run on hard times, and were arrested by Sheriff Sumner or his deputy brothers. Finally released, you wander the streets in search of a new start - or a new score.
- ♠ **The Lawman:** Sloan Campbell and his gang of low-lives have been causing nothing but trouble lately. Hearing Campbell is in Johnstown, you've arrived to investigate his operation and bring him down.
- ♠ **The Local:** A Native American or simply a longtime resident, you begin your daily routine in town. With rumors of mysterious happenings, you aim to find the cause of the problems threatening your home.
- ♠ **The Drifter:** Johnstown is just another town along your trail. You're headed further out west in search of gold or simply a plot of land you can call your own.

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TOWN FEATURES

There are a few general locations to be found within Johnstown, each potentially with their own mini-missions or plot hooks. Mills' General Store has already been covered.

♣ **Johnstown Prison:** Attached to Johnstown Sheriff's Office, the prison is nearly packed full with criminals or accused criminals that Sheriff Sumner likes to collect like bottle caps.

♣ **Johnstown Station:** This large train station is the arrival point for most newcomers to town. Those who hang out at the station long enough may notice that no one departs the city through the station, even though the conductor calls for any passengers. If the players take a train east out of town, they may mysteriously find themselves arriving back at the same station hours or days later.

♣ **Shamrock Livery:** Owned by Irish immigrant Liam Murphy, Shamrock claims to board and breed the "luckiest horses in the West." They occasionally hold horse races in their field, challenging visitors and rewarding them with discounts or potentially even free horses for entertaining performances.

♣ **The Happy Kitty:** The largest and most popular brothel in the city, The Happy Kitty is operated by the tough and scrupulous Big Al. Big Al protects his ladies with the ferocity of a bear, but treats them with about as much warmth as one. The Happy Kitty is an active meeting point for everyone from drifters to lawmen, and prides itself as being the eyes and ears of the town.

♣ **No. 9 Saloon:** Though a far cry from the largest saloon in Johnstown, No. 9 is notable for being a rather bustling gambling den. With contests and single games daily, many aspiring high rollers get there start here. It is operated by Old Ben Waters, a former gambler himself turned business owner.

♣ **High Noon Saloon:** Sloan Campbell feels no need to hide, and High Noon is prime example. He owns the saloon and entertainment hall. While he may not always be present, his goons are. The saloon acts as a headquarters for his gang. Everyone knows about it, but few are brave enough to dare act on it.

♣ **Iron Gate Cemetery:** Just to the northwest of town is the small but growing Iron Gate Cemetery. Run by caretaker Phyllis Whitman, it has the distinction of having the largest number of Midnight Boys sightings in town.

IMPORTANT NPCs

Sheriff Beauford Sumner. Sumner was born and raised in the Republic of Texas, the oldest of six boys. He was appointed as a deputy in Houston for a time, but when his superiors were slow to promote him he relocated. For several years he picked up odd jobs, ranging from grave digging to bounty hunting. The newly constructed railroad brought him to the frontier region, where he applied for the recently vacated position of Sheriff. The former sheriff was killed breaking up a bar fight and had no deputy to replace him. Since then Sumner appointed two of his brothers, Earl and Franklin, as his deputies.

William Sumner. Though he refers to himself as "Deputy," William was never officially deputized by his brother and Sheriff Beauford Sumner. William, despite his lineage, is a hardworking and honest man who cares deeply for his town and the people in it. He is dependable and just, and many prefer coming to him with problems rather than invoke Beauford's wrath by daring ask the Sheriff for help.



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MILLS' GENERAL STORE



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STORE ROBBERY

The following sunrise, presume at least one player is going for daily supplies. You can describe the new day and awakening of the town as follows:

Sun rises over the quaint trade city of Johnstown. Whether a recent arrival or a longtime local, you awaken to the sounds of horses whinnying, hooves clapping on trod dirt, the smell of dust and leather, and the humid breeze of summer. Stores open their doors and townsfolk walk the streets as the day begins. While some of you are out shopping for the day at Mills' General Store, three scruffy-looking ruffians enter and saunter over to the counter. Mills holds up his hands defensively as you hear the following exchange:

MILLS: "Boys. Morning. I.. I was just about to send for Mister Campbell."

THUGS: "No need, Mills. We're here. I presume then that since you were fixing to send for us, you have the money I loaned Campbell? Right?"

MILLS: "No.. No. Not exactly. I mean, I have money. Look here's... here's fifty-two dollars. I can have the rest for you later today."

THUGS: "I think we'll just take the rest now."

With that, they pull their revolvers and prepare to fire.

You can resolve this encounter by using the map on the following page. Use the *D&D Monster Manual*, there are three bandits - using pistols instead of crossbows, which deal the same damage. Once the bandits are defeated, and surviving thugs admit under questioning that they work for Sloan Campbell. They have arrived to get the 200 dollars (gold) that James Mills owes them plus 75 dollars extra. The extra "interest" is actually their own idea, because they wanted to buy into the upcoming poker championship in Red Gulch. If the questioning players have not heard of the tournament yet, have a thug tell them the following:

"Where you been, under a rock? The whole valley's talking about it. That Mayor Ellis of Red Gulch is putting on a tournament in a month. One thousand big ones to the winner! Ain't no way in Hell we're passing that up. Tables here are drying up. This was our shot. So if you're gonna take our money, go ahead and shoot us now. We're as good as dead if we see Campbell empty-handed."

If questioned further, the hired guns know nothing else of Campbell's plans or operations in town.

WANDERING ENCOUNTERS

Despite the boastings of the pompous Sheriff Beauford Sumner, Johnstown is a virtually lawless town. Bar fights and shootouts break out on a regular basis, and most general townsfolk are too afraid to do anything about it. Strangers ride through with guns blazing and off into the sunset, with little fear of retribution. From back alleys to saloons, bedrooms to the middle of the street, violence can break out anytime and anywhere.

If characters walk around town during the day roll a d6 for each destination they intend to visit. A result of a 1 begins an encounter from the Episode 1 Encounters table below. Roll a d8 to determine which encounter that may be. If the characters walk around at night, reduce the initial die to a d4, and a result of 1 still results in an encounter.

Episode 1 Encounters

d8	Encounter
1	5 bandits
2	4 bandits and 1 gunslinger
3	3 gunslingers
4	2 gunslingers and 2 medics
5	2 thugs
6	1 scout and 3 rustlers
7	5 rustlers
8	1 spy

EVENTS

Events in Johnstown aren't truly related to one another, and do not need to be accomplished in any particular order. These are tasks the party can perform to start making a name for themselves and potentially dig up information on Campbell, the poker tournament, or the mysterious happenings throughout town.

If characters take a short rest during an event, unless otherwise stated the event is considered failed. Depending on the event, such as a horse race, they can try again later. With others, such as discoveries or escort missions, the opportunity is lost and no rewards are given for completion.

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BANK HOSTAGES

Frank Potts and his gang have just robbed the Johnstown Bank. They hold the unfortunate patrons hostage as they force the clerk to open the vault.

The party can be alerted to danger while talking to William Sumner by a civilian who runs in to tell him. Alternatively, they can be simple bystanders when the shooting begins.

The Main Street crowd murmurs and cries as they surround the Johnstown Bank. Several dastardly looking outlaws duck behind half-opened windows, guns pointed and any who would dare approach. A robbery is in progress, and soon the gang may have what they're after. When one of you approaches, a man shouts through the window and a woman's whimpers can be heard from inside.

"That's close enough, partner! One more step and this purty little lady get one right between the eyes!"

The front of the bank is approximately 40 feet wide and 25 feet tall, two stories of stone and mortar. There is a second floor, but climbing to it would take a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check and a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid been seen by the gunslingers inside.

Foes. Occupying the building are 5 **gunslingers** and Frank Potts himself. Use a **thug** (*Dungeon Master's Guide*) for him, with a club and a rifle.

Shooting their way into the bank is one option for the party, but after 2 rounds the gunslingers start killing one hostage per round if any gang member is still alive except Potts. There are 7 hostages to begin with, who neither fight nor move - though they will flee once all gang members are neutralized.

The gunslingers fire on anyone approaching the bank, preferring to use the **three-quarters cover** from inside the windows. If someone in the party makes it inside the door - which is closed, but not locked - the gang is not above using hostages as human shields. Provide them with **half cover** in this case. Hostages die (or are taken down with nonlethal damage) with any successful hit of AC 10, removing the cover bonus to the gunslinger holding them. Gunslingers will also try to hide behind the only counter in the 30 foot by 40 foot bank.

One possible means of distracting, or at least hindering, the gang is to steal their horses. Untying any of their 8 **riding horses** requires an action. After the second horse, at least one gunslinger will rush outside desperately shooting at the horse thief. They will have no cover against attacks, and if they survive for two rounds without killing the thief, they retreat.

Around the back of the bank is a rear door inside a 10 foot wide by 80 foot long alley. Two **bandits** stand guard by the door and attack anyone armed that they see - and threaten anyone unarmed. The door they guard leads to the back room and the vault. The bank room is 30 feet wide by ten feet long, and currently **Frank Potts** and the clerk are there. The clerk, John Garner, is treated as a hostage. 15 Rounds after the party first arrives on the scene, the clerk gets the vault open. 5 Rounds later, Potts makes off with over 2000 dollars (gold) in cash. He tries to get to his horses, but if that direction is cut off he will run down the alley on foot. Any surviving **gunslingers** or **bandits** follow him and fire on pursuers. Once they reach an end of the alley that is not in view of the party, they are gone.

Rewards. Award the party 25 XP for each hostage left alive at the end of the encounter. If Potts was stopped and the money recovered, add an additional 100 XP. William Sumner will also give a 5 gp award for Potts and 2 gp for each member of his gang brought in alive.

YELLOW DAN

Daniel "Yellow Dan" Tweed is a former fur trapper turned thief. He'll take anything he can get his hands on, and today he's got his hands on something of value carried by the party.

This chase scene can be a good introduction for several strangers among the party, as well as a debut event for new arrivals. Choose one member of the party and something of value they possess. By some means, **Yellow Dan** now has that item and is running away from the crowd. If there is no person or item applicable, claim a wealthy woman named **Elizabeth McClaren** points and shouts "thief," hoping someone will come to the aid and recover her stolen necklace.

The Chase. Rather than determine movement or actions by land speed as normal, start any players who are chasing after Yellow Dan on Card 1 of the Chase Map on Page 14. Yellow Dan begins on Card 4.

Each card has a brief description and a skill (or choice of skills) the players must use to proceed. Have each player make an ability check using the appropriate skill. Use the following results to determine how and if they proceed:

16+:	Move 2 Cards ahead
11-15:	Move 1 Card ahead
6-10:	Do not move
2-5:	No move; Disadvantage next round

On a Natural 1 for any ability check, the player is out of the chase.

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Capturing Dan. Dan moves 1 Card at a time every round automatically. He has an initiative of 0, so he always goes last. When a player lands on a card on which Dan is standing, they must succeed in one last ability check as determined by the card. If they fail, he moves ahead. If they succeed, he is caught. Should Dan step off of Card 12, he escapes.

Rewards: Grant each player who participated in the chase 25 XP. The player who captures Yellow Dan (if anyone) gets an additional 75 XP, as well as whatever item he took. If he took Elizabeth McClaren's necklace, it is worth 50 gp.

YELLOW DAN CHASE CARDS

#	DESCRIPTION	ABILITY CHECK
1	<u>Johnstown Station:</u> Yellow Dan has stolen something! Run after him and don't let him get away!	Athletics
2	<u>Face in the Crowd:</u> A large crowd of townsfolk block your path. Scatter them like crows before you lose Dan!	Intimidation or Persuasion
3	<u>Gutter Trash:</u> Dan has run down an alley, and has thrown barrels and crates to slow you down. And watch out for clotheslines!	Acrobatics
4	<u>Conjecture Junction:</u> You reach a four-way intersection between buildings. But which way did he go? Trust your gut or follow tracks.	Insight or Survival
5	<u>The Good Samaritan:</u> A witness said he saw Yellow Dan running toward the old Hilltop Church. He just didn't give directions. Do you know where to go?	History or Religion
6	<u>Let Sleeping Dogs Lie:</u> From sprinting to sneaking, you round the corner to see several vicious dogs sleeping nearby. Don't wake them....	Animal Handling or Stealth
7	<u>Hot Tin Roof:</u> Yellow Dan scurried up onto the roof somehow. Can you spot how that old man got up there?	Investigation or Perception
8	<u>Moving On Up:</u> Now that you know how Dan did it, you gotta do the same. Climb up and keep running before Dan high-tails it!	Athletics
9	<u>No Rooftops For Old Men:</u> The wood creaks and snaps with your footsteps. Find safe passage across the roof until you can climb down.	Acrobatics or Survival
10	<u>This Ain't What It Looks Like:</u> You climb down safely - right into the back of a general store. Better talk your way out of this one quick, Slick.	Deception or Persuasion
11	<u>A Man About a Horse:</u> Yellow Dan looks to make off with a horse from Sham-rock Livery. Find a fast one of your own to catch him before he bolts!	Nature
12	<u>Sunset Rider:</u> Ride down Yellow Dan on your newfound steed. One good lasso throw should wrap up this thief once and for all!	Animal Handling



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YELLOW DAN CHASE CARD TABLE



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A DAY AT THE RACES

Liam Murphy and his wife Aislinn have decided to hold a race in an effort to boost horse sales and recognition. As usual, they are offering one of their prize horses instead of cash to the winner - which some contestants only begrudgingly accept. Most figure they'll just sell the horses later anyway.

The race will have no more than 6 contestants, and each must have their own horse. If they don't, they can "loan" a horse for 5 gp - though there is no refund if they lose. Alternatively, they can simply make bets and double their wager if they win.

To fill the roster of contestants, you can use any of the NPCs below:

- ♦ Alice Fletcher
- ♦ George Young
- ♦ Austin Hicks
- ♦ Cole Baker
- ♦ Juan Manuel Ortega
- ♦ Broken Tree

The Race. The rules of the race are simple. There are 5 rounds. Each round, all contestants involved make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. The rider with the lowest result loses that round and is effectively removed from the race. The fifth round will have 2 contestants, and the highest roll wins. For NPC riders, use a +4 total skill modifier.

In the event of a tie, those who did so will roll again. The eventual winner between the tied contestants moves on. Additional tie-breaker rolls do no affect their prior standing.

For example: In Round 3 there are four riders left. Alice Fletcher and George Young roll 10 and 12, respectively. Austin Hicks and Cole Baker both roll a total of 8. When the roll again, Austin gets a 16 and Cole gets a 5. Cole is eliminated, and Austin comes in 3rd Place with an ending result of 8.

Rewards. In addition to keeping their entry fee (if any), the victor wins a prize horse. Roll a d8, and use the table below to determine the type of horse and the additional benefit (if any).

d8	Type	Description	Benefit
1	Pony	<u>Napoleon (m)</u> - Short, white, aggressive, loyal	Other riders have disadvantage to handle
2	Riding Horse	<u>Slow Sue (f)</u> - Gray, dappled, dependable	50 foot land speed
3	Riding Horse	<u>Wind Spirit (m)</u> - White, long mane, sleek	70 foot land speed
4	Riding Horse	<u>Digger (m)</u> - Light chestnut, white nose, black mane	Ignores difficult terrain
5	Draft Horse	<u>John Henry (m)</u> - Dark brown, muscular, brave	Immune to fear effects
6	Draft Horse	<u>Avalanche (f)</u> - Spotted gray, white mane and feet	Resistant to cold damage
7	Warhorse	<u>Ares (m)</u> - Black, white star on forehead	Rider can dodge as a bonus action
8	Warhorse	<u>Athena (f)</u> - white, brown star on forehead	Rider can dash as a bonus action



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THE MIDNIGHT BOYS

A mysterious and eerie stranger peers through the window, unsettling those inside. With a vacant gaze he turns and moves away quickly. It may be time to put these ghostly speculations to rest.

By now Midnight Boys should have been mentioned and possibly appeared (and disappeared) for at least one person in the party. They should be hyped as apparitions that are frustratingly difficult to catch or get answers out of. Their appearance this time around should be enough to lure curious players out into the night to follow one.

Stirred from your peaceful rest, you flinch as you see a middle-aged man staring at you from outside the window. His eyes are dark and hollow, and he slowly opens his mouth in a silent scream. His peppered black hair seems to drift in a nonexistent breeze as he stands rigid. Once he realizes he has been spotted, however, he closes his mouth and turns - running into the darkness down the road.

If no one pursues, add the following:

From the shadows you hear a young woman scream. On looking out the window you see the creepy stranger holding her in his arms. He opens his mouth as if to bite, but instead groans with a terrifying hiss.

Presuming someone rushes out to aid the woman, have the man drop her and run off.

The man runs in the direction of the High Noon Saloon. Read the following description:

Three men, known lackeys of crime boss Sloan Campbell, cock and raise their rifles as you round the corner and come into view. One of them shouts, getting the attention of the other apparently terrified drunkards.

"There's another one! Let's get 'em, boys!"

The wooden saloon is approximately 50 feet across and tall, three stories in height. The only way up to the second or third balcony is to climb or jump - requiring a DC 15 Athletics check. The swinging double doors into the saloon are halfway across the face of the ground floor.

Foes. Outside there are 3 **gunslingers** to begin with. There are 2 more **gunslingers** and 3 **bandits** inside. Most are on the ground floor, though a few could potentially open fire from the 2nd floor balcony. Resolve combat outside as normal, remembering any **concealment** from being outside the few oil lamps hung around the outside of the saloon.

Tending the bar is the gorgeous Lila Devareaux. The brunette former saloon girl turned Madame uses the **thug** statistics if attacked. However she has no intentions of dying or causing problems, so she will duck behind her counter unless attacked.

Due to the large crowds screaming, running, ducking and generally scurrying, presume all targets subject to ranged attacks have **half cover**.

Rewards. Award XP for defeated foes. If Lila is left alive, she will give up the following information with a DC 10 Persuasion or Intimidation check. Otherwise, a DC 10 Investigation check will find the information in a note near the cash register:

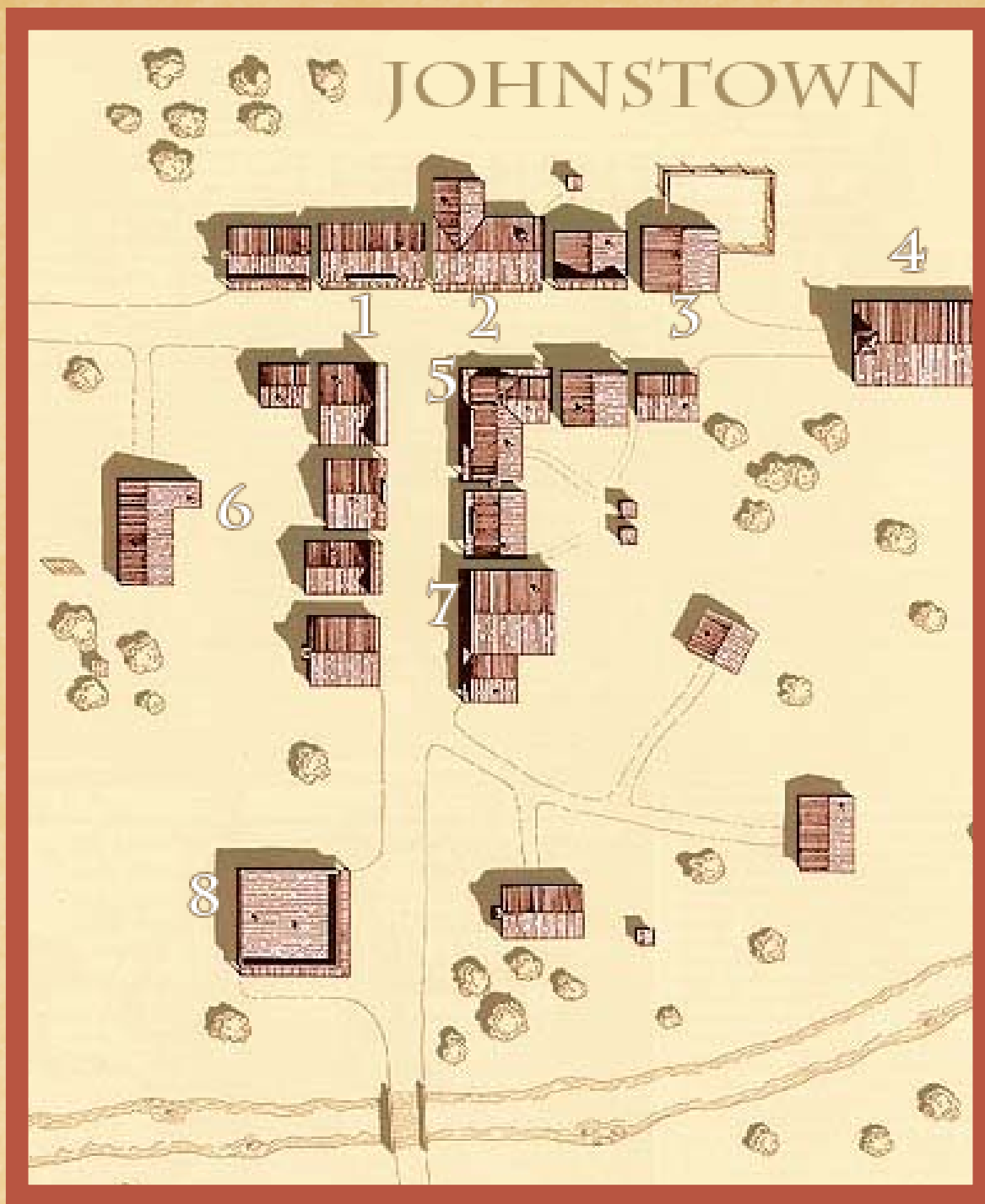
"Sloan ain't here. He never comes by this place. Just picks up the check, has fun with the girls, then hits the old dusty trail."

"He's headed to Red Gulch. Said he has some business to tend to over at Snake's Bend first. He's been there for about three days now. You want him? That's where he is."

After this encounter, the party becomes known to Campbell if they weren't already. Random encounters and attacks will begin to increase in following events and subsequent episodes.



DEAD MAN'S HAND



JOHNSTOWN MAP LEGEND

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Sheriff's Office | 5. No. 9 Saloon |
| 2. Prison | 6. High Noon Saloon |
| 3. Shamrock Livery | 7. The Happy Kitty |
| 4. Johnstown Station | 8. Iron Gate Cemetery |



EPISODE 2: WELCOME TO SNAKE'S BEND

The oldest American settlement in the region, Snake's Bend was originally established as an outpost for trappers and travelers who used the narrow river system. When roads came through linking nearby towns, the outpost sat at the heart of major intersections. Trade flourished, and Snake's Bend is now one of the fastest growing towns in the area. This is also due in no small part to the efforts its Mayor Churchill has made to make peace with the Natives who already claimed the land. The Dakota and Cheyenne especially have united in an unofficial treaty, and no hostilities have been instigated by any parties. Even so, many fear it is only a matter of time before blurred boundaries cause conflicts.

Whether in pursuit of Sloan Campbell, headed toward the poker tournament, or simply victim to wanderlust, the party should have some reason to travel west. The next major city along the worn dirt road is Snake's Bend, though there are a few small settlements along the way. The trek to Snake's Bend constitutes nearly half of this Episode, with several Events that can potentially make for an exciting adventure worthy of tall tales.

Travel Pace. Snake's Bend is just under 400 miles away from Johnstown, which at a normal pace would take approximately 18 days to travel by horse. This is presuming the party participates in one or more of the following events. Otherwise the trek will be faster.

ON THE ROAD

The nearly three-week journey to Snake's Bend has several encounters and events in store. Yet even by itself, long-distance travel can cause its own dangers. Every time the party takes a long rest, roll a d8 and consult the table below for general environmental hazards. If the description calls for an ability save, have the entire party roll. The one who rolls lowest suffers the effect.

d8	TRAVEL HAZARD
1	<u>Disease</u> - Constitution Save. You are diseased for 48 hours.
2	<u>Depression</u> - Charisma Save. You have disadvantage on Charisma saves and Charisma-based ability checks.
3	<u>Bad Weather</u> - Travel speed is halved for 24 hours.
4	<u>Got Lost</u> - Travel speed stops for 12 hours. A DC 12 Survival check gets the party moving again, or try again in 12 hours.
5	<u>Bandits</u> - Char
6	<u>Injury</u> - Constitution Save. No off-hand attacks or half movement (DM choice) for 48 hours.
7	<u>Good Day</u> - Travel speed is doubled for 24 hours and you gain 1d4 food rations.
8	No Effect

DEAD MAN'S HAND

WOMAN IN WHITE

About 20 miles west of Johnstown is the tiny junction of Pine's Crossing, little more than a post office and a tavern. It is also the last rest establishment to be found along the trail to Snake's Bend. The Crossing tends to have a constant fog of eeriness about it. There are no chirping birds, no crickets. Few stars can be seen at night. Overall, it is deadly quiet.

The post office is run by the elderly Connor McCall, and his wife runs the tavern. If the party arrives during the day, either will greet them happily and provide whatever services they can. If they arrive at night, the post office is closed and Ana is seemingly on edge and nervous. Read the following if anyone enters the tavern at night.

A light shines from the upstairs hallway as someone draws closer. An elderly woman holds a lantern as she descends the stairs. She squints to see you, and after a moment offers a slight smile of relief and speaks with an Irish accent.

"Oh. Thank God. You're not Laura. Good evening to ye. Will ye be looking for a room and breakfast? That would be a dollar for the night, food included."

If asked about Laura, Ana is hesitant to discuss her. A DC 10 Persuasion check will allow her to relax and divulge more.

"Laura. Poor wee lamb. The girl comes around almost every night. Keeps asking to go to Johnstown, she does. Never says anything else. But every time someone offers, she comes right back here. Like a ghost. She doesn't mean any harm, I don't think. But truth be told she frightens me just the same. I wish I could help her. But I don't think anyone can."

While staying in Pine's Crossing, choose one player to have an encounter with Laura. Though she will never attack anyone, even if threatened, you can use the **spectre** statistics if you need to. Laura is always dressed in a white dress and carries a lantern. A DC 10 Insight check lets an observer know that, despite the lantern, she seems to see just fine in the dark. She always begins conversations as follows:

"Excuse me? Sorry to bother you. Are you headed to Johnstown by any chance? I could sure use a ride, if you have the room."

If allowed to accompany the players, she offers to wait by their horses or in their carriage until they leave. She doesn't sleep, and if more than a few minutes passes without talking to her, Laura forgets she met the characters and begins her dialogue all over again.



Resolution. Laura is the ghost of Laura Hendrickson, a Texas resident. She was the fiancée of current Johnstown lawman William Sumner. She got cold feet on her wedding day and ran off, catching a severe fever and dying of illness. Sumner never knew what happened to her, and her spirit has not rested since. She constantly returns to Pine's Crossing, the place where she died, and her body is submerged in a creek not far away. There are two means of helping Laura find peace.

One option is to find her body. Laura doesn't know she died, much less where her body is. But a DC 15 Survival check and 1d4 hours of searching can find her. Burying her with proper prayers will set her soul at ease. During her funeral, choose a player that happens to notice The Watcher observing from the shadows of a tree. He soon vanishes.

The second option is to find William Sumner and convince him to come see Laura. Simply mentioning her name should do the trick. When they are reunited Sarah will offer her heartfelt apologies for leaving, and Sumner will forgive her. At that point, Laura simply vanishes in a glowing mist of white light.

Rewards. For setting Laura's ghost to rest, award the party 200 XP. If Sumner was involved, he also considers the party close friends and will grant them more favors in the future if they return to Johnstown.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

HIGHWAY ROBBERY

At some point in the journey to Snake's Bend, a posse of outlaws - or perhaps Native raiders - charge over the hill to raid the party. Read the following:

Dew covers the grassy fields as the sun rises in the East. The silence and beauty of the dawn is soon replaced by the thundering of hooves and whooping of man. From over a hill, nine raiders charge and holler, rapidly approaching with obviously hostile intent. One of them fires a rifle, the bullet whistling past your ear.

Foes. 6 Bandits and 3 gunslingers ride into battle. Presuming everyone is on horseback you could stop to circle the wagons or use yours as cover - if any. Otherwise, run the encounter on a long map that is 60 feet wide by 120 feet long.

For the purposes of running movement speed, presume a carriage moves 5 feet (1 square) per round. A driver who makes a DC 10 Animal Handling check as a bonus action doubles that movement speed. Lone horseback riders move 10 feet (2 squares) or 15 feet with a successful DC 10 Animal Handling check. If the party makes it lengthwise down to the far end of the map, presume they escape. Attacks and weapon ranges are resolved as normal.

The raiders are more interested in loot than killing. If the party surrenders at any point, the raiders will hold them at gunpoint and steal anything of value they can find. They will then leave the others in peace, as long as the party doesn't attack or do anything to antagonize them.

Rewards. Award XP for defeated foes. If the party escapes off the edge of the map, reward an additional 50 XP.

STAMPEDE!

A herd of cattle has been spooked along their drive. Now the thunder across the plains. Will the party risk their lives to save the livelihood of strangers?

Riding across the rolling plains of Western Valley, you hear whistling and watch as a brown cloud rolls toward you. Nearly two dozen spooked cows thunder just in front of you, followed by two cowhands that shout to you as they pass.

"Stampede! We gotta get 'em! We'd sure appreciate your help!"

Foes. There are 20 cattle in the stampede. Use the **bison** statistics in Chapter 5 of the *Frontier Campaign Setting* for each, if need be. For the purposes of the Horseman's Round Up class ability, the cattle are considered Rushed, not Stamping - as they have calmed somewhat since running off.

For the purposes of running movement speed, presume a carriage moves 5 feet (1 square) per round. A driver who makes a DC 10 Animal Handling check as a bonus action doubles that movement speed. Lone horseback riders move 10 feet (2 squares) or 15 feet with a successful DC 10 Animal Handling check.

Cows move 2 squares per round in as straight a line as possible. If the last remaining cow makes it lengthwise down to the far end of the map, they are presumed to have run off.

As an action, a player can make a DC 15 Animal Handling check to placate an adjacent cow. If anyone results in a total of 5 or less on their check, the cow moves again as a reaction. The goal is stop or placate as many cows as possible.

The two cowhands, John and Elias Westwood, join in as well. They automatically pass any Animal Handling checks they make.

Rewards. Award 25 XP for each cow stopped by the party. The Westwoods don't count. If no cows escape off the map, grant an additional 50 XP and the Westwoods give the party 15 gp for their aid.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

SNAKE'S BEND

After a long and arduous journey, the party finally arrives at Snake's Bend. Larger than Johnstown and just a bit more civil, The Bend straddles the winding Sweetwater River. The oldest American settlement in the region, Snake's Bend was originally established as an outpost for trappers and travelers who used the narrow river system. When roads came through linking nearby towns, the outpost sat at the heart of major intersections. Trade flourished, and Snake's Bend is now one of the fastest growing towns in the area. This is also due in no small part to the efforts its Mayor Churchill has made to make peace with the Natives who already claimed the land. The Dakota and Cheyenne especially have united in an unofficial treaty, and no hostilities have been instigated by any parties. Even so, many fear it is only a matter of time before blurred boundaries cause conflicts.

On riding up into the city, describe it as follows:

After many weeks of riding and rain, stampedes and sickness, you finally rise above a hill to see a town on the horizon. Larger than Johnstown, Snake's Bend is sprawled across a twisting river basin. Wooden walls surround the fort near its heart, and countless dozens of homes and buildings spread to the horizon like petrified buffalo.

Riding up into town the sounds of hustle and bustle grow louder. Horses whinny and clop down the muddy street. Pigs squeal as they are ushered into pens behind the butcher's shop. Large crowd shout, talk, laugh and get into fights. Probably the only things missing from this sprawling boomtown are the houses of ill-repute - a testament no doubt to the rather religious Mayor Churchill.

There is no shortage of inns and taverns in Snake's Bend. Without so much as making their first turn through the city streets, the party will have ample opportunity to rest and resupply. Overall the people are colorful, vibrant, and eager to see more of the fabled Great West. But not everyone in Snake's Bend is so eager to see the party.

THE CAMPBELL GANG IS BACK

Safe from their headquarters at the river pier, the notorious gang of gunslinger Sloan Campbell operates with a certain amount of leniency within Snake's Bend. Though reviled as bank robbers, murderers, and all around hoodlums, Campbell has maintained a sense of thieves' honor. He never commits crimes outside of self-defense in the city, and in general puts on a respectable show. In exchange, Mayor Churchill

has offered a social pardon as long as Campbell and his gang behave themselves. It is a tentative deal at best, but one that has held strong for the better part of a decade.

SIDEWINDER SHOOTOUT

Not everyone in Snake's Bend is happy to see the party in their town. Chief among them is Campbell's second-in-command, Cobb "Sidewinder" Black. Black is known to be wary of strangers, and will often go out of his way to intimidate, shake down, or even try to recruit those who seem to have made a name for themselves in his town.

If the party participated in *The Midnight Boys* on Page 16, initiate the following scenario. Otherwise, proceed to the next scene or come up with your own events. One day, around high noon, read the following to a party member:



DEAD MAN'S HAND



SNAKE'S BEND MAP LEGEND

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Fort Ridge | 4. Mayor's Estate |
| 2. Sixer Saloon | 5. Sweetwater Pier |
| 3. Hognose Bridge | 6. Calvary Church |

DEAD MAN'S HAND

As the sun hangs high above the bustling town, you hear murmurs and gasps among the crowd. The names Sidewinder and Cobb Black float around in whispers. Soon the crowd clears the wide central street, revealing a man in a leather duster and wide-brimmed hat. He holds a pistol on his hip and rubs his black goatee, a dark glint in his eyes. He shouts, further silencing the crowd:

"Well, look who just rolled in with the tumbleweeds. I heard y'all had a good ol' time in Johnstown. But 'round these parts, I call the shots. To be neighborly instead of pumpin' y'all full of lead, I'm just calling out one of you. We settled this. Your gang to ours. Who here's gonna draw on the Sidewinder?"

Encounter. Cobb Black has called for a *Shootout*. The rules for a Shootout are listed below and can be used for any similar encounter in which the party may engage. The result is always a death, and a surge in popularity for the victor. After all, shootouts are what Legends of the West are made of.

Shootouts are contests of honor. If either side gets support from outsiders, has thugs fire on the winner, or in any way dishonors the duel, their Reputation Score (See Page 25) is automatically reset to 0. Should anything happen to interrupt the Shootout, it becomes a normal encounter. Cobb Black is supported by a gang of five **bandits** and two **thugs**.

SHOOTOUT

A Shootout is a specific kind of duel between two individuals, in which both stand openly in a clear area and draw pistols on one another. Shootouts are do the death, and often public spectacles, often held for the settlement of feuds, rivalries, or even drunken disputes. Due to their open and fair nature, Shootouts are rarely persecuted by local law enforcement unless they have specifically banned the practice. Because of this, many use the duel as a means of eliminating their enemies without punishment.

The process of a Shootout is as follows:

- The duelists stand roughly 40 feet apart with no cover between them.
- Each duelist rolls opposed Initiative up to three times. The first participant to accrue two victories shoots first.
- The first shooter makes an attack roll. If they hit their opponent's AC, the opponent dies. If they miss, the opponent gets to make an attack roll. The first duelist to take a hit is reduced to 0 HP - regardless of current health. From there they must be healed or start making death saving throws.
- In case of a tie, reroll Initiative.

If there are more than two participants involved, evenly-matched groups can match one duelist to another. If the groups are not evenly-matched, such as a three-on-one-duel, the outnumbered duelist must beat the opposed initiative of all opponents each time they roll.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

COBB "SIDEWINDER" BLACK <i>Medium Human</i>					
Armor Class 14 (Leather) Hit Points 58 (9d8+18) Speed 30 ft.					
STR 11 (+0)	DEX 16 (+3)	CON 14 (+2)	INT 11 (+0)	WIS 14 (+2)	CHA 12 (+1)
Skills Insight +5, Intimidation+5, Persuasion +4 Senses Passive Perception 12 Challenge 2 (450 XP)					
Focused Shot. As an action Sidewinder can grant himself an action on his next attack roll, provided the attack occurs within the next 1 minute. Safety In Numbers. Sidewinder can Dodge as a bonus action if he is within 5 feet of an ally.					
ACTIONS					
Multiattack. Sidewinder makes two revolver attacks or one rifle attack. Revolver. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 40/120, one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage. Rifle. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 80/240, one target. Hit: 8 (1d10+3) piercing damage.					

Resolution. If Black is defeated, roll death saving throws for him. None of his men have medical training, so unless a bystander or party member takes pity on him he may die. If he does, the shooter gets a reputation boost. They become a whispered name in the city, and their legend is born. Word will eventually spread to Sloan Campbell himself, but as long as the shootout was honorable he will not judge Black's killer too harshly. If the player is defeated, they are treated as reaching 0 HP as usual. The party can attempt to heal or stabilize them if possible.

Rewards. For defeating Black, award XP as normal. In addition, the shooter who defeats Black gains 1 Reputation Point (described below). Black also drops 1d10 gold pieces, which his men don't bother to pick up.

REPUTATION

In the Wild West, a person's reputation can spread like a prairie fire with a tailwind. From cunning commanders to uncatchable outlaws, from relentless lawmen to fearless heroines. Songs and novels weave tall tales of their exploits, while newspapers and word of mouth fan the flames. A person's reputation is like a wake before a ship, washing into a town before they ever ride in. Even those who prefer to avoid the spotlight by using a false name or sticking to social shadows may find their nickname or even general appearance talking about in saloons and markets.

Reputation represents how the general public perceives the player characters, whether positively or negatively. Reputation means different things to different types of characters, reflected in the social and cultural values of different regions. A character who embodies the qualities of a hero in one region may be seen as wicked or disreputable in another.

Reputation is marked on a scale of -10 to 10, and is used to represent the general consensus of the people within Western Valley. Of course, individuals or groups may still vehemently trust or utterly despise a character regardless of their Reputation score. Characters begin with a Reputation Score of 0.

Reputation is a nebulous thing. Reputation Points can be earned or lost rather easily by great deeds, public stunts, or grave mistakes. Depending on their Reputation score, the default DC for Charisma checks and Charisma-based skill checks against NPCs are the first set of the following number:

SCORE	REPUTATION	DC
-10 to -9	NOTORIOUS	22/2
-8 to -7	VARMINT	20/4
-6 to -5	BANDIT	18/6
-4 to -3	HATED	16/8
-2 to -1	DISLIKED	14/10
0	STRANGER	12
1 to 2	RECOGNIZED	10/14
3 to 4	KNOWN	8/16
5 to 6	HERO	6/18
7 to 8	TALL TALE	4/20
9 to 10	LEGEND	2/22

The opposite of these skill Difficulties would be Intimidation, in which take the second number. For example, a Hero trying to persuade a shopkeeper to let him hide out there would only need a DC 8 Persuasion check. If he tried to intimidate her, something unbecoming of his status and heroic reputation, it would be an Intimidation DC of 12.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

FIRE AT THE MANOR

One night as the party is resting, screams of panic begin to sound throughout town. The Mayor's manor is on fire! Some civilians rush for water, while many others merely gather to stare and gasp. Once any of the party arrives on scene, read the following:

A rumbling like a thousand horses across the plain grows louder as he rush toward a large, burning building. The flames are so bright and consuming you feel the heat even from as far away as the gaping crowd. As if the sun itself had touched the ground, the dark of night looks like high noon. As folks rush to gather water from the river, someone from the crowd points and yells:

"Look! There's the one that started it. One of them Midnight Boys! There!"

Sure enough, to the side of the manor is a gaunt-looking young man with gray eyes and a pale expression. He watches the house burn for a moment until he realizes he's been spotted, then he turns and rounds around the back as fast as he can.

Before you get the chance to pursue, you hear someone else shout: "Mayor Churchill and his family are still in there!"

The party must decide whether to chase the arsonist, save the Mayor, or split the group and do both.

MAN OUT OF TIME

Cornered within a 40'x40' square segment of the town wall, the stranger - named **Billy Carson** - turns and draws his revolver. Before anyone attacks Carson attempts to plead his case:

"Wait! You don't understand. I didn't try to kill nobody. I just wanted to see the light. Bring electricity to the wilderness. Set up that moonlight tower, like they got in San Jose."

His eyes begin to darken as anger and fear well up within him. "I ain't gonna live in darkness no more. I want the light, same as everyone else. Y'all can go to Hell, far as I'm concerned."

If a player character manages to Persuade him to talk first, Carson reveals his name and the fact that he can't remember how he got to Snake's Bend. He's never even heard of the place. The last thing he remembers is accidentally setting fire to a warehouse while experimenting with electricity.

In actuality, Billy Carson died in 1882. This is the "present," even though the party believes it is 1872. As is the case for all Midnight Boys, Carson is a recent arrival to limbo - lost, confused, and scared.

Encounter. Billy Carson is a gunslinger, with no particular bells or whistles. He's not intended to be a challenge for the party, merely a catalyst for insight into what the Midnight Boys are.

Carson fights to the death, though he makes no efforts to finish off anyone who is dropped to 0 HP. He'd rather escape than kill. Once Carson falls, however, something mysterious happens.

From the man's wounds, a faint plume of fire emerges. Within seconds he is consumed with flame, burning as does the manor nearby. The ashes immediately fade in the breeze, as if he had never been there at all.

Rewards. Grant 100 XP as usual, divided among any party members who assist in taking him down. Grant an additional 200 XP if anyone gets Carson to introduce himself or explain his situation before he starts shooting.

Increase the Reputation of any who assisted in the fire rescue by 1.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

MAYOR'S ESTATE



GROUND FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

DEAD MAN'S HAND

SAVING THE FAMILY

Mayor William Churchill, his wife Mary, and daughter Abigail are trapped in their burning home. Though civilians are doing what they can to douse the flames, none have braved to jump into the searing, smoke-choked manor just yet. It's up to the heroes.

The Manor. The Mayor's Estate is 80 feet wide by 40 feet long. Fire has engulfed the entire northern side of the ground floor, with the southern side primarily engulfed as well. In the center room is a stairwell leading upstairs.

Smoke and Fire. The entire house is heavily obscured due to dense smoke. Player characters can either hold their breaths (using Suffocation rules from the PHB) or they suffer the effects below. Exhaling to talk or any other reason while inside the house also begins these effects, even if they hold their breath again. Precautions such as wrapping a wet rag around their faces give characters advantage on the Constitution saves needed.

Beginning when a character enters the burning house, they must make a DC 5 Constitution save. This DC increases by 1 every round, to a maximum of DC 15. Any time a character fails this save, they suffer one level of Exhaustion. If a character does not get in and out quickly, they may very well fall victim to the choking smoke or roaring flames.

In addition, the house is falling apart. Every 1d4 rounds roll to determine a random player character. Have that PC make a DC 14 Dexterity save. On a failure they take 2d6 bludgeoning damage and 1d6 fire damage. On a success, they take half of this amount. Either way, a PC hit by falling debris is no longer holding her breath - if she was already.

Rescue. Churchill and his family are on the second floor, in the northwest bedroom. Mayor Churchill has fallen unconscious due to the smoke, but is stable. Though Mary and Abigail have been trying to revive him, they have staved off the effects of the smoke - until the party arrives. At that point they lose consciousness, and must be dragged or carried out of the house.

Blocking the way into the bedroom are four squares of fire. Each can be doused as an action using a bucket of water or a thick blanket. Because they lead to a wall and a door, a PC can't jump over them. Walking through the fire incurs 1d6 points of fire damage every round, and a PC that does so catches fire. They continue burning until they or someone else decides to take an action to put it out.

Rewards. Once the Churchill family is carried to safety, they awaken 1 minute later to express their gratitude. Award 2,000 XP to the party for their safe return. Award 1 Reputation Point per PC as well.

INTO THE WEST

Later in the day, once everyone has had a chance to rest, Mayor Churchill calls to better thank his rescuers. If the players did not rescue the Mayor, you can substitute the following for John Tatum. As Assistant Mayor, Tatum could have heard of the PC's reputation and called for their aid anyway.

Presuming Churchill survived and called for them, read the following:

The sun shines brightly over Snake's Bend as you head toward Fort Ridge, overlooking the town. Mayor Churchill has called to meet you in a more official and coherent manner. You walk through the high-walled fort, its massive door swung open for you. Dozen of US soldiers march on patrols, engage in training exercise, and stand at attention.

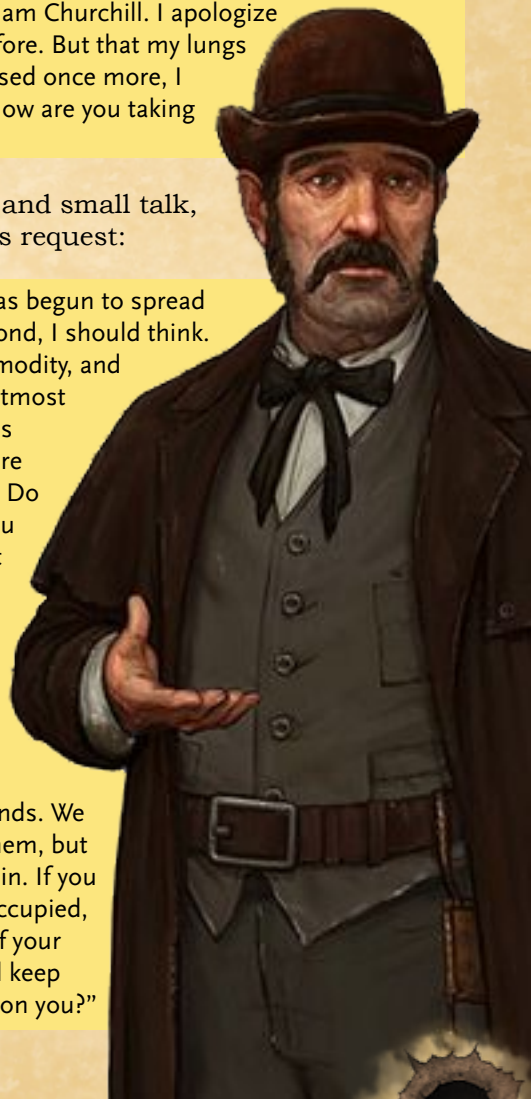
Inside the main building you are greeted by Churchill himself. The stout British man smiles, wrinkling his black mustache, and extends a hand hardened with years of hard work.

"Good day to you. William Churchill. I apologize for any belligerence before. But that my lungs are clear and eyes focused once more, I wished to thank you. How are you taking to this fair city?"

After introductions and small talk, Churchill gets to his request:

"Word of your deeds has begun to spread around town - and beyond, I should think. This is a valuable commodity, and I can assure you with utmost certainty that a person's reputation is worth more than gold around here. Do not tarnish it. But, if you would, I have a request that may foster it.

"For years I have sought to strengthen our relations with the natives. The closed-minded call them savages, but I have always called them friends. We have set a truce with them, but that truce is wearing thin. If you are not otherwise preoccupied, I could use someone of your standing to step in and keep the peace. Can I count on you?"



DEAD MAN'S HAND

If the party agrees to help or asks for more information, Churchill continues:

"To the southwest of here is a small village called Waynoka. It means "sweet water" to the natives, hence the name of the river here. Many residents of Waynoka have been displaced from other villages – driven out by Americans and rival tribes. The people there are skilled hunters and trappers. Though once they had subsisted predominately on buffalo, their traditional hunting grounds have since been claimed by the a rival tribe to the north - the Takoda.

"After decades of battling for territory, the Waynokans have settled on fishing and hunting smaller game such as deer and fowl. But the Takoda? They are less willing to forgive and forget. They continue to attack Waynoka, even though the villagers do not fight back. Waynoka has looked to us for protection, but Major Stanton and the US Army will have no part in it.

"I do not ask you to combat the Takoda. But would you see to the Waynoka for me? Assure them that their plight does not go unnoticed, and perhaps aid them however you can. Food. Rebuilding shelter. Anything would help. You would have my complete support and backing the matter, and any supplies you need just have them charged to me."

Churchill politely smiles and waits for an answer.

If the players decide against taking the mission or ask for time to think it over, Churchill thanks them for their time and again for their services.

If they agree to the mission, Churchill heartily shakes their hands and continues.

"Bless you. Truly. Just outside this building is a general store. I will send word to have your equipment granted free of charge. We do not have much, but what we do we offer gladly. If you need a place to rest, I can also put you up at the Sixer Saloon nearby. It is modest, to say the least, but safe. The proprietor is Rachel Beckett. Everyone just calls her Rachel. Thank you again, for everything. And God speed to you."

Fort Pike General Store: The portly shopkeeper **Franklin** allows the party up to 500 gp worth of food and equipment, provided they were sent by Mayor Churchill. If they happen to come by otherwise, he charges for goods and supplies like normal.

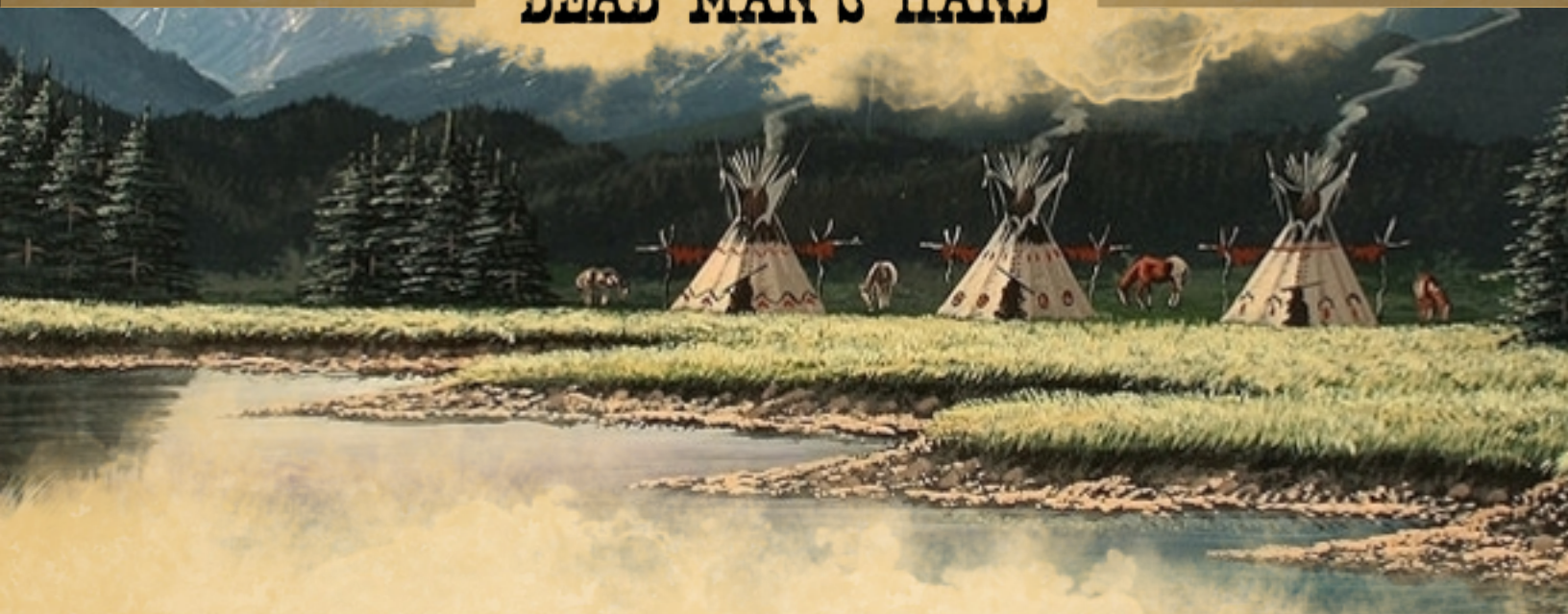
Sixer Saloon. Just as Mayor Churchill mentioned, the saloon and in is run by a woman named **Rachel Beckett**. A mulatto from Mississippi, Rachel was born of a slave mother and her owner. Her mother secreted Rachel away into freedom, and the child grew up in the West.

Reputation has begun to spread of the players' deeds, and they should begin seeing the effects by now. With the house fire and Sidewinder shootout, the players could be Known in town. If so, Rachel gladly offers drinks on the house and some of her better rooms.

Gambling is a regular occurrence at Sixer. For rules on gambling and drinking, see Chapter 2 of the *Frontier Campaign Setting*.



DEAD MAN'S HAND



WAYNOKA VILLAGE

Adventurers can travel by land to reach Waynoka, but it is much faster by river. Canoes can be purchased for 20 gp and seat three. If the players prefer not to row alone, they can hire a guide for 1 gp per hour. It takes 3 days to travel to Waynoka by land, or 24 hours by river.

Environmental Hazard. Though the river trek to the village is generally safe, there is a chance of mild flooding due to rains. Roll 1d4 for each day of waterborne travel. On a 1, have the players make a DC 12 Dexterity (Water Vehicles) check. Include the guides if any, which have a +5 bonus to the roll. If one character in a boat fails, the canoe is forced to the river bank and loses 1 hour until it can be patched up and made ready again. If all characters in a canoe fail, the boat flips. It is a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to swim to shore, and the canoe is lost to the river.

ARRIVAL AT SWEETWATER

Whether by land or river, read the following passage as the party finally makes it to Waynoka Village:

As you approach the colossal Western Valley Mountains in the distance, you see trails of white smoke rising from just around the riverbend. Dozens of buffalo-hide tipis, decorated with paint and mud, dot the tranquil village of Waynoka. Horses whinny and stomp as they eat lush grass. Native children laugh and chase each other along the river. Women wash clothes in the river while men prepare fish and game they have hunted. Elders play wooden flutes and sing as you approach, but when they notice you they stop. Soon the entire village seems to stop and take notice, some moving closer while others cautiously move away.

CHIEF TWO MOONS

A middle-aged man with peppered-black hair steps forward. He holds his hands to his sides as he approaches and nods in greeting, though if any character extends a hand he will shake it. He clasps the hand gently, as opposed to the firm “pumping” of European settlers. He introduces himself with a deep, slow tone to his weathered voice:

“Welcome to Waynoka. I am Taaesehe’nese, One of the chiefs of this tribe. You may call me Two Moons.”

Two Moons knows very little English, and his greeting comprises most of his vocabulary. If anyone speaks Algonquin or Siouzan, he will continue to converse. Otherwise, he merely points out empty tipis, places to find food, and a trading post.

For those who do speak his languages, Two Moons can comment more on recent events and the situation of the village:

“Food has become scarce for the people. Snake’s Bend up river has taken most of the fish, and now the settlers have chased the deer north beyond the mountains. We thank the Wise One that we have fowl to hunt, but they will not last long. We have sown crops as well. They are our hope for lasting the winter - but harvest is not for another few months.

“The Council of Forty-Four recommends we move again, as we have always done. As for me, I am tired of wandering. We have made a good home here. If you are truly here to help, I would appreciate your assistance in acquiring more food. Enough to last us until harvest, at least.”

After making more small talk or discussing anything else with the party, Two Moons excuses himself. There are a few ways the party can assist Waynoka during the next week, should they decide to do so.

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Each day, have each player determine which of the following they will do to assist the village. They can each only do one per day, but can change the task after a long rest.

♥ HEALING THE VILLAGERS

Five of the villagers have fallen ill with influenza. Three are hunters and two are the most skilled fishermen in the village, and their sickness has jeopardized food production.

Helping Out. A Healer or Healers can help cure the sick villagers and prevent the flu from spreading. The five patients are quarantined in the same tipi, and each suffers from **influenza** (see Chapter 6: Bestiary of the *Frontier Campaign Setting*). As such each patient requires 10 Cure Points, for a total of 50 cure points. The patients all have 3 levels of Exhaustion, so time is of the essence. The Healer's Touch feature can be refreshed no more than three times per day using short rests for this activity.

Rewards. For each patient cured of the disease, grant the Healer(s) 200 XP. Should all five patients be cured, the village chiefs also give medicinal salves in thanks. These equate to two *potions of healing* and a *potion of poison resistance*.

♣ HUNTING THE HUNTERS

The more meat that can be gathered and preserved for the coming months, the better. There is a limited amount of deer in the area - due not only to them being chased north but also the presence of bears, wolves, and mountain lions. If these predators are reduced in number, the game animals will flourish.

Helping Out. If one or more party members head out in search of prey, have one among them make a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check every hour for up to 4 hours. On a success, roll a d4 from the table below and begin combat as normal. The PCs can only hunt one creature or group per day.

D4	CREATURE	D4	CREATURE
1	1 Grizzly Bear (Polar Bear)	3	6 Wolves
2	2 Mountain Lions (Lion)	4	5 Poachers (Scout)

Rewards. The Waynoka will gladly trade 1 gp for any predator pelt returned. A DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check could acquire one worth trading. If players return from successful hunts every day they head out, for at least 3 days, the Waynoka grant a *Necklace of the Hunter* for each player who assists. Consisting of animal claws and beads, it grants its wearer a Reputation standing of 1 higher than normal when dealing with the Waynoka or Takoda.

♦ NEGOTIATING THE TRADE

Snake's Bend currently holds a monopoly on the fishing industry along Sweetwater River. They could potentially be persuaded to decrease their haul in exchange for goods from Waynoka - such as pelts and herbal remedies.

Helping Out. If one or more party members commutes back and forth between Waynoka and Snake's Bend, have each among them make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check every trip for up to 3 trips - which lasts up to 6 days total.

Rewards. For each successful day of persuasion, grant the negotiator(s) 200 XP. If all three days are successful, increase the negotiator(s) Reputation by 1. If two or more days are unsuccessful, reduce their Reputation score by 1.

♠ TENDING THE CROPS

The crops of wheat, corn, and other vegetables are doing rather well - but production could be improved. Irrigation, fertility, and other farming methods could be strengthened to harvest a larger and richer crop come autumn.

Helping Out. If one or more party members assists with farming, have each among them make a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) or Wisdom (Farmer's Tools) check every day for up to 4 days.

Rewards. For each successful day of farming, grant the farmer(s) 100 XP. If all four days are successful, they Waynokans grant the party 1 week of trail rations for their journey.



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THE FOUR ARROWS

Though the people of Waynoka are an eclectic blend, and not meant to represent a specific Native American tribe, many of their cultural aspects and descriptions are based on the Cheyenne. Among these is the observance of the Four Arrows, a bundled quartet of the items treated with utmost respect and sacred honor.

Around the time the party arrives at Waynoka Village, the people are participating in a ritual called the Renewal of the Four Arrows - in which the people restore the sacred energy within them. This is why the party may find themselves on their own during most of the week in which they are helping.

Only males can participate in the ceremony; the women must remain in their tipis during the four day ritual. Three ceremonial lodges are placed in the center of a circle of tipis: the Sacred Arrow Lodge, the Sacred Arrow Keeper's Lodge, and the Offering Lodge. The Sacred Arrows, or *Mahuts*, are four arrows: two for hunting and two for war, kept by the tribe through the generations. Men perform various rituals in and among the lodges to renew the Sacred Arrows and the spirit of the tribe.

WHISPERING HORSE

At some point over the course of the week, anyone who spends any time getting to know the people of the village will meet Whispering Horse - the local shaman. She is a wise old woman that knows more about spirits than anyone. She believes that Waynoka and its surrounding area is the "center of the world," and everywhere else is the "Great Beyond." Most in the village accept her ramblings even if they don't understand them.

Whispering Horse warns of a coming attack to those who will listen - speaking only in Algonquin:

"They are coming. Those from beyond. They seek the power of the Four Arrows, drawn to it like moths to a flame. With screaming horses and weapons of thunder, the Howling Takoda will rain metal and blood upon Waynoka. They are drawn to the heart of this land."

Whispering Horse offers a clue to "The Secret" mentioned in the introduction. The Howling Takoda are, in essence, Midnight Boys. Freshly arrived, they are indeed drawn to the sacred energy of the Four Arrows for reasons they don't understand. They only know they must seize it.

What the Takoda themselves don't contemplate is the Four Arrows contain a powerful ability: resurrection. Anyone who holds such an Arrow can cast *banish* as per the spell on a human target.

The affected target is banished permanently, and once it is used the Arrow must be renewed by another ritual to use it again.

Because Western Valley is essentially Purgatory, the "banished" target is actually restored back to life in the real world. If a player is banished their character is removed from the game. However, it allows the player to know the truth of the campaign. Feel free to describe their character waking up where you had imagined them dying before they arrived at Johnstown at the beginning of the campaign.

ATTACK OF THE HOWLING TAKODA

The Arrow Renewal ceremony finishes during the week the party is assisting the village. On the last night they rest in Waynoka before heading back, a gray fog silently rolls into the village. You can describe the scenario to anyone standing guard or keeping watch as follows:

Through the tranquil night you hear the soothing lullaby of crickets and frogs, marked by the occasional loon or whip-poor-will. Near midnight, however, you notice these sounds have faded. The ground glows with moonlight as a light gray fog hovers inches above it.

It is then that you hear something else: wolves. The horses neigh and stomp, unsettled by the eerie call. You yourself feel something unnatural about the howls. Soon you realize it is because they wolf howls are being made by humans, and they are approaching quickly.

If the rest of the party or village scouts are roused and warned, they realize dozens of Takoda have crossed over the mountains. Armed with rifles and nearly all of them mounted, the thundering of hooves is the call to battle that finally wakes the village.

Mass Combat. For rules on engaging in Mass Combat, see *Chapter 3: Mechanics* of the Frontier Campaign Setting. Use the following map as a reference for the battle.

At the beginning of battle, designate (or roll randomly for) one player character to be the Commander. The others can choose an allied unit (Blue) to which they are attached. That unit has advantage to all Intelligence (Battle) checks. However, if the unit is defeated and the Commander is also defeated or withdraws, the PC has died.

Four Arrows. Place the Commander token near the Blue Star token, which is where the Four Arrows are kept. If an attacking unit reaches the Star, uses an action to steal the Arrows, and retreats off the edge of the map, the Arrows are lost forever - devastating the Waynoka village and people.

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ATTACK ON WAYNOKA VILLAGE



BATTLE AFTERMATH

Presuming the PCs are triumphant, Waynoka suffers casualties but will recover. The Takoda may be marked as wanton marauders by the party, but eventually any Takoda representative they speak to will deny involvement. They have a right to, as they truly had no idea who this attacking group was or what they wanted. They were random arrivals to Western Valley.

Once they party returns to Mayor Churchill in Snake's Bend, if all activities are decidedly successful, the PCs Reputation increases by 1. Churchill also gives a 1,000 gp reward and the party receives 5,000 XP. PCs suffer a Reputation loss of 1 for a failure at Waynoka.

Milestone Experience

If you are running this campaign using the Milestone XP method, player characters should be Level 2 at the beginning of Episode 2, and Level 4 at the end.



EPISODE 3: RED GULCH OR BUST

Nestled into the foothills of a narrow but tall mountain range, Red Gulch rose nearly overnight when gold was discovered there seven years ago. It was founded by residents of Silver Ridge who decided to pan the nearby rivers, and named for the endless swaths of red clay they dug up. A city quickly rose up around the initial quarries, and soon after its original panhandler – Mayor Ellis – was elected mayor.

In the years since its formation, Red Gulch became famed for its opulent saloons and dance halls, bringing dancers and prostitutes from across the West. Banks and prisons soon followed, as well as a bevy of general stores and trade outlets. Today it is the largest city in the area, though Snake's Bend is quickly growing to overtake that status claim.

By the time the party has returned from Waynoka Village to Snake's bend, they should have only a few days until the Great Poker Championship in Red Gulch. Fortunately Red Gulch is less than a day away - thanks to the Western Valley Railroad that runs between the two cities.

The railroad trip to Red Gulch is frequented by civilians and dignitaries alike. Unfortunately this also draws the attention of thieves and bandits. Though short, the trek north will not be without danger.

THE IRON HORSE

The train ride from Snake's Bend to Red Gulch is just over 120 miles. Chugging along at 20 mph, it will take six hours to make the trip - barring delays or stop-offs, of course.

The Western Valley Passenger Line is a 10-car steam locomotive, powered by coal. The steam engine is followed by a baggage car into which is stored passenger luggage, mail, parcels, crates, boxes, and even some animals. Six passenger cars follow, double seats on either side of a center aisle within each. A wood stove near the door stands to supply heat in winter, though now they are dormant. Toilets are available in small cubicles near an entrance door.

Unlike the fancier trains out East, there is no diner car. Passengers and crew can eat at their seats or just wait until the train stopped for water and fuel. The train's crew itself changes at each stop, as the train doesn't make long stops for rest.

Behind the passenger cars are two private cars; one for the crew and one for important guests. Both are owned by the railroad itself.

At the end of the train is the caboose, office for the conductor, brakeman and a flagman. Once under way, the trainmen sit up in the cupola and watch for smoke or other signs of trouble from overheated wheel wells (called hotboxes).

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PASSENGER PERSONALITIES

There are approximately 100 passengers on the train when the party travels north. They have come from all walks of life, and head to Red Gulch for many reasons - the vast majority are going for the poker tournament. Below are a handful of colorful folk the group may come across or with which they may strike up a conversation.

ADA MÜLLER

A German immigrant, Ada only recently arrived by boat. Her grasp of English is tenuous at best, and she would prefer to speak German if anyone knows it. Otherwise, she explains that she is going to Red Gulch because her brother Hans entered into the poker tournament. She hasn't heard from him in weeks, which isn't that out of the ordinary for Hans. Still, she hopes to run into him in the city.

Ada is roughly 20 years old, with dark blonde hair which she keeps in a long braid. She has a sweet look and complexion, timidly avoiding eye contact when she speaks. As an outsider, she does her best to avoid notice and public scrutiny.

CHRISTOPHER SLATER

Christopher is a third-generation British-American. Born and raised in Chicago, grew up in poverty. He lost two of his brothers in the Civil War, and for a time got wrapped up in a life of petty crime. Once he got out and sobered up, he set off West in search of purpose as much as riches. He has rarely held a gun before, outside of what his brothers taught him, and he is enthralled by gunslingers and notorious outlaws. If a PC is a Gunslinger or Soldier, he would like to sit and talk with them for hours.

Christopher is 25 years old, clean-shaven with short brown hair. He bounces excitedly when he talks, thrilled to be in the famed "Wild West."

JETHRO PICKETT

Hailing from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, Jethro is a tall and heavy-set man with a long brown beard. Jethro professes to knowing "two things good: drinkin' and gamblin'." The middle child of eight siblings, he aims to win the poker tournament so he can buy his mother a decent house. Theirs is small, old, and very cramped. Jethro wants to get her a big place by the river. Though he may seem slow-minded to some, his heart is truly golden. He looks for every opportunity he can to help out his "Mama" and his kin. If the PCs befriend him at all, he will help in any railroad encounters as a **gunslinger** with a rifle.

JIM BOSTON

Jim is a young African-American born on a plantation in southern Georgia. He was freed during the Civil War as a child and headed north, taking the namesake of his new hometown. For years Jim sought to educate himself, reading all he could. Among the reading were stacks of dime novels telling tales of the Wild West. When the North proved only slightly more welcoming than the South, Jim headed to the West. He hopes to make a living in a place where people treat him the same as everyone else.

Jim is tall and lanky, and looks to be about 20 years old - though he honestly doesn't know. He wears reading glasses and dresses well, and will hold polite conversation with anyone who does the same.

MONIQUE RENAULT

With a long nose held so high she could drown in the rain, Monique is an elderly woman with snow-white hair. She wears an elegant blue dress, with a necklace of diamonds and earrings of gold. She understands English just fine, but will only speak to others in French.

Mademoiselle Renault is an heiress from eastern France. She came to New York because the work of her husband Jacques required it. In the years that followed her daughters returned to France and Jacques died of disease. Her "foolish sons" Jean and Michel caught gold fever and headed west, prompting Monique to follow. Now she hopes to find her children and drag them back to France, one way or another.

If any PC can talk Monique into a civil conversation (DC 10 Persuasion check) she will offer a reward of 100 gp for each son they find in Red Gulch and convince to return home.



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TRAIN ROBBERY

Approximately two hours into the train ride, a pack of wolves in the form of whooping men on horseback ride up behind the train. They jump into the caboose first to prevent the conductor and crew from sounding an alarm. Then others pour into the back of the last passenger car, where they plan to move forward a car at a time, demanding money and jewels from the passengers as they go. The bandit leader and a few lackeys keep riding to the front of the cars, cutting off crew or passenger retreat.

The Heist. Gang leader **Lou Walsh** and three **gunslingers** board the train between the baggage car and first passenger car (see map below). Two of the gunslingers hold up the crew in the baggage car, rummaging through storage for anything of value. If a PC has stored anything in the car, roll a d6 at the beginning of very round during this encounter. On a 1, choose randomly or roll to determine something that was stolen from a PC.

Four **gunslingers** board the rear of the last passenger car, while one more keeps the caboose at gunpoint. The two groups work their way toward each other, holding up the passengers and demanding valuables. If unopposed, the outlaws take 1 minute to accrue wealth per car. They gain 10d100 gp after the minute is over, then move on. If a PC is in a car that gets robbed and doesn't resist, they lose 1d100 gp or all they have (whichever is less). Unless stopped the two groups converge between the 4th and 5th passenger car, then high-tail it to the caboose where their wagon is rolling at top speed to keep up with them.

Good Guys With Guns. PCs can attempt to persuade the bandits to only steal from them or con them into believing the passengers have nothing of value. This is accomplished with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Deception) check respectively.

Should the PCs decide to fight, resolve combat as normal. Due to the presence of civilians, however, this can be dangerous. Any time a PC or train-robber misses their intended target, roll a d6. On a 1, a civilian is killed in the crossfire or by an errant shot. If the PC started the shootout and more than 1 civilian is killed by robbers, reduce the Reputation of the conflict-starter by 1.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

ACROSS THE ROOFTOP

Lou Walsh is not one to swap lead with would-be heroes if he can help it. The round after combat breaks out in a car Walsh is in or adjacent to, he uses the Dash action to scurry up to the roof. Any PCs who follow can resolve combat as usual, but with a few exceptions due to the hazards of traversing a moving vehicle. Walsh will make any attacks he can, but every move will be, if possible, toward the rear of the train.

Jumping and Running. The rooftop of the moving train is considered difficult terrain. Movement speeds are halved, rounded down. If a character takes the Dash action along the roof, or if they attempt to jump between cars, they must first succeed in a DC 15 Athletics check. If they fail by less than five, their movement is reduced to 0 until the end of their turn. If they fail by 5 or more, they fall prone and must make another check at the same difficulty to catch themselves. Failing that, they fall off the train and take 3d6 bludgeoning damage as they roll to a stop on the ground.

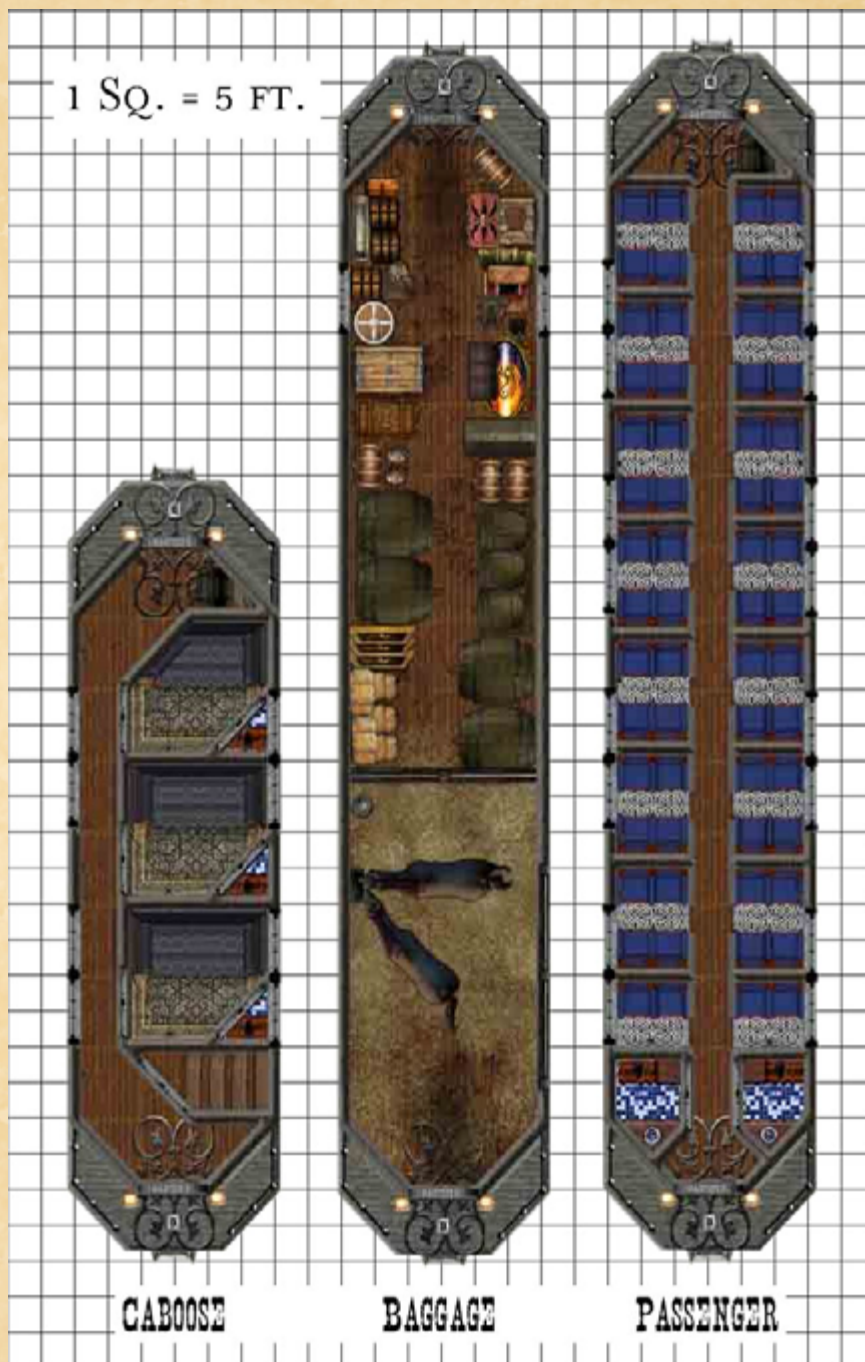
The Tunnel. Once during the encounter, as determined by the DM, the train speeds through a mountain tunnel. Anyone currently standing on the train rooftop must make a DC 12 Dexterity save to fall prone and avoid hitting the tunnel entrance. On a failure, the character takes 10d6 bludgeoning damage on impact and falls from the train. If this impact reduces the character to 0 hit points, they suffer 1 death saving throw loss when they hit the ground.

Passing through the tunnel takes 3 rounds. If at any point a character moves or is shoved toward the tunnel ceiling, they must make the Dexterity save again or suffer the same consequences.

Caboose and Horses. There is one gunslinger waiting in the caboose, and any remaining train robbers fall back there as well. If Walsh has survived by running across the rooftops or moving through the train, he and the others board the awaiting carriage behind them and withdraw a round later. The thieves fire on anyone who tries to pursue them or Walsh, but stop when they retreat.

If Walsh has not made it, the thieves attempt to flee. Once everyone has made it into the carriage they retreat. There is one **rustler** driving the carriage, but he doesn't fire when he's driving.

Resolution. If Walsh is stopped, any valuable he or his defeated gang members had are returned to their rightful owners. Anyone who happened to take down Walsh while on the rooftop gains 1 Reputation Point. If they had already lost Reputation due to friendly fire (see above) they gain nothing for defeating Walsh.



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Anyone who searches the body of Walsh or someone in his gang finds pay stubs for Romano Mining. A DC 12 History check reveals that Antoni Romano is a shrewd mining mogul who helped forge the train line. Though it's not confirmed if Walsh was hired by Romano to rob the train, it at least draws a connection between them.

Rewards. In addition to any potential Reputation awards and XP from defeated enemies, the party gains 125 gp in unclaimed loot and 500 XP. An additional 1000 XP is granted for stopping Walsh.

LOUIS "LOU" WALSH <i>Medium Human</i>					
Armor Class 15 (Studded Leather) Hit Points 65 (10d8+20) Speed 30 ft.					
STR 15 (+2)	DEX 16 (+3)	CON 14 (+2)	INT 14 (+2)	WIS 11 (+0)	CHA 14 (+2)
Saving Throws Str+4, Dex +5, Wis+2 Skills Athletics +4, Deception+4, Intimidation+4 Senses Passive Perception 10 Languages English, Italian Challenge 3 (700 XP)					
Grappler. Lou has advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to grapple or resist grappling.					
Safety In Numbers. Sidewinder can Dodge as a bonus action if he is within 5 feet of an ally.					
ACTIONS					
Multiattack. Lou makes two revolver attacks or two unarmed attacks.					
Revolver. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 40/120, one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.					
Unarmed. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, one target. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (DC 14 escape). Lou can only grapple one target at a time.					



ROMANO MINING CAMP

In the middle of the train ride, three hours into the six-hour journey, the train slows for temporary repairs at a large construction site. The camp - which features primarily Asian- and African-American workers - crawls with laborers, dust and the smells of iron and stone.

If the party was not made aware of Romano Mining following the train robbery, they may very well sit and wait patiently for about 30 minutes until they are cleared to continue. However, anyone now suspicious of the place - or that observe the harsh treatment of the laborers - may wish to investigate.

SLAVE LABOR

The Romano Mining Camp is roughly 200x150' at its core. You can describe the dismal scene as follows:

As the mid-day sun hangs high the waves of heat shimmer on the horizon. The Romano Mining Camp is sprawled across a dry river basin, with only a narrow trickle of water running through it. Large wooden wheels creak and groan as they turn, sluicing for gold while the ring of pickaxes and shovels echoes from the distance.

Over a hundred laborers make their rounds throughout the camp, quarrying limestone and sifting for any signs of precious metals from the meager river runoff. The workers are all notably non-European, ranging from former African slaves to Native American women, Asian foreigners to Mexican prisoners.

Their decidedly paler foremen stomp around with chips on their shoulders and coiled whips in their hands. An older Oriental man carrying a basket of unlit dynamite stumbles slightly but recovers. Still, the snafu is enough to rile one of the foremen.

"Hey! You sorry, yella crowbait. What the Hell you think you're doing? You're gonna blow us all up to kingdom come!"

The foreman cracks the whip on the man's back. The worker yells, kneeling a moment before gathering the sticks of explosives once more.

The workers at the camp are paid mere dollar a week, a fifth of typical labor wages elsewhere, and the food they're given is bland and stale. Most workers are illiterate and few if any speak English, and those who can communicate with the party simply presume this is how things are in America. Talking to laborers is frowned upon by the foremen, who will attempt to intimidate or threaten any gawkers with violence or enslavement - claiming the law "don't reach them way out here."

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LIBERATING THE CAMP

If the sight of inhumanity, unwarranted violence, and indentured servitude are enough to spur a party into action, they may decide to free the people. Deciding to stay out of the operation has no effect on PC Reputation, though aiding the laborers certainly will. There are several means of assisting the workers:

Guns Blazing. Though completely lacking in discretion, sometimes the simplest means can be effective as well. The laborers dive for cover and try to run away from combat if it breaks out. There are 20 bandits and 7 gunslingers acting as foremen in the camp.

Award XP for defeating them as normal, but do not award a Reputation Score increase. In fact if the foremen did not start the altercation, reduce the triggering PC's Reputation Score by 1.

Negotiation. Though no one is allowed to meet with Antoni Romano except by permission only, he does relay message through his lead foremen. One of them is named Marcus Tucci, and holds himself with an air of importance. If the party attempts a diplomatic solution, Tucci will relay an offer to sell workers for 500 gp each. A DC 12 Persuasion check will lower this offer to 450 gp, and a second DC 15 check will lower this to 400 gp. Romano will not go below this number, and if anyone presses the matter he forgets negotiations altogether.

Award 200 XP per worker purchased in this manner. If at least 3 workers are purchased and then set free, increase the responsible PC's Reputation score by 1.

High Stakes. Tucci will also accept an offer to play poker, the stakes for him being 5 workers (which can later be raised as part of the bet.) In exchange he wants the gambler to wager his or herself, vowing to remain as a laborer if they lose. If stakes are raised during the game, they can offer other party members as well. Tucci has a +5 bonus to his gambling checks (See Chapter 2: Mechanics in the *Frontier Campaign Setting*).

Award 200 XP per worker freed in this manner and increase the responsible PC's Reputation score by 1. If the PC loses, reduce their score by 1. They are contracted to manual labor for 1 week - which would cause them to miss the Poker tournament and effectively disappear until Episode 4. If the PC(s) refuse or fight their way out after losing, remove an additional 1 Reputation point.

ANTONI ROMANO

If somehow the players are able to talk, sneak, or force their way into the office of Antoni Romano they are in for a surprise. Antoni Romano is actually *Antonia* Romano, an Italian woman who has worked her way to the height of prosperity with her aggressiveness, wealth, and incredible charm. She uses the **commander** statistics from the *Frontier Campaign Setting* with a Charisma Score of 16, but doesn't claim to be a fighter. She would rather strike a deal than draw her exquisite short sword. Anyone bold enough to learn her secret is someone she finds more intriguing than dangerous. She will strike up conversation, offer drinks, and inquire greatly as to where the party is headed.

If the Poker Tournament is mentioned, Antonia admits that she will also attend. If the conversation is civil, Antonia wishes the PCs luck and hopes to see them there.

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LAST KISS GOODBYE

If (and only if) the party should run afoul of Antonia Romano, whether by shooting up her men or causing some other disturbance, the fiery woman scorned decides to enact her wrath. If all goes smoothly at the mining camp, bypass this section and move on to Red Gulch.

Romano makes her fortune off of constructing bridges and railroads, and has no qualms about creating business for herself. She also will not abide competition at the upcoming poker tournament, so if a PC makes their intentions on entering known without sweet-talking Romano in the process, she will try to eliminate them for that as well. In either case, an explosive surprise is being prepared for the party.

HEAD 'EM OFF AT THE PASS

When the party returns to the train, have them all make a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice three **rustlers** on horseback making a hasty gallop ahead of the train toward Red Gulch. If no one passes, anyone who asks someone on the train what happened while they were gone points them out. Barring that, the heroes are out of luck. The riders will make it to the bridge 1 mile ahead.

If the riders are spotted, they can be chased down if a PC jumps on one of the five horses secured to posts nearby. Shooting from horseback is done so with disadvantage. The riders begin at 200 feet away but the gap is closed by 20 feet for every DC 10 Animal Handling check made. In 30 rounds the riders will reach the bridge.

LIGHTING THE FUSE

The riders take three rounds to unload and light a satchel of dynamite in the center of a 500-foot bridge. Once lit the riders high-tail it back the way they came, which could potentially lead to them passing the party or the train. If the party didn't notice them before, this would certainly be an ominous sign.

Roll initiative for the dynamite. After 5 rounds go by, the dynamite explodes on that initiative. Each creature within 20 feet of that point must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10d6 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Anyone who fails the save must also make a DC 12 Strength saving throw or fall off the bridge.

The fuse can be cut easily as an action if a PC is within range. The fuse can be shot, but it is risky. The fuse as 1 HP and an AC of 20. If a shooter misses by 5 or more, they hit the bundle of dynamite which then explodes.

THUNDER IN THE MOUNTAINS

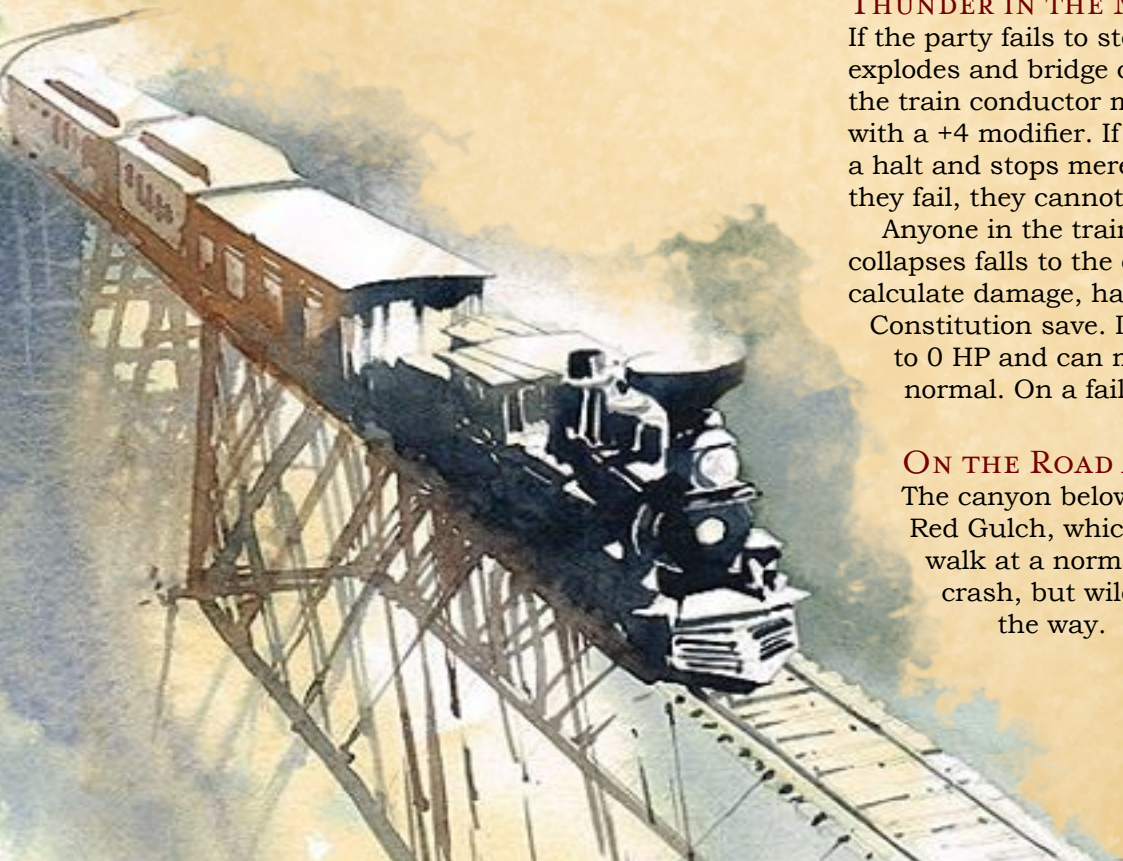
If the party fails to stop the riders, the dynamite explodes and bridge collapses 1 round later. Have the train conductor make a DC 12 Perception check with a +4 modifier. If they succeed, the train grinds to a halt and stops mere feet from the former bridge. If they fail, they cannot stop the train in time.

Anyone in the train or on the bridge when it collapses falls to the canyon below. Rather than calculate damage, have everyone make a DC 15

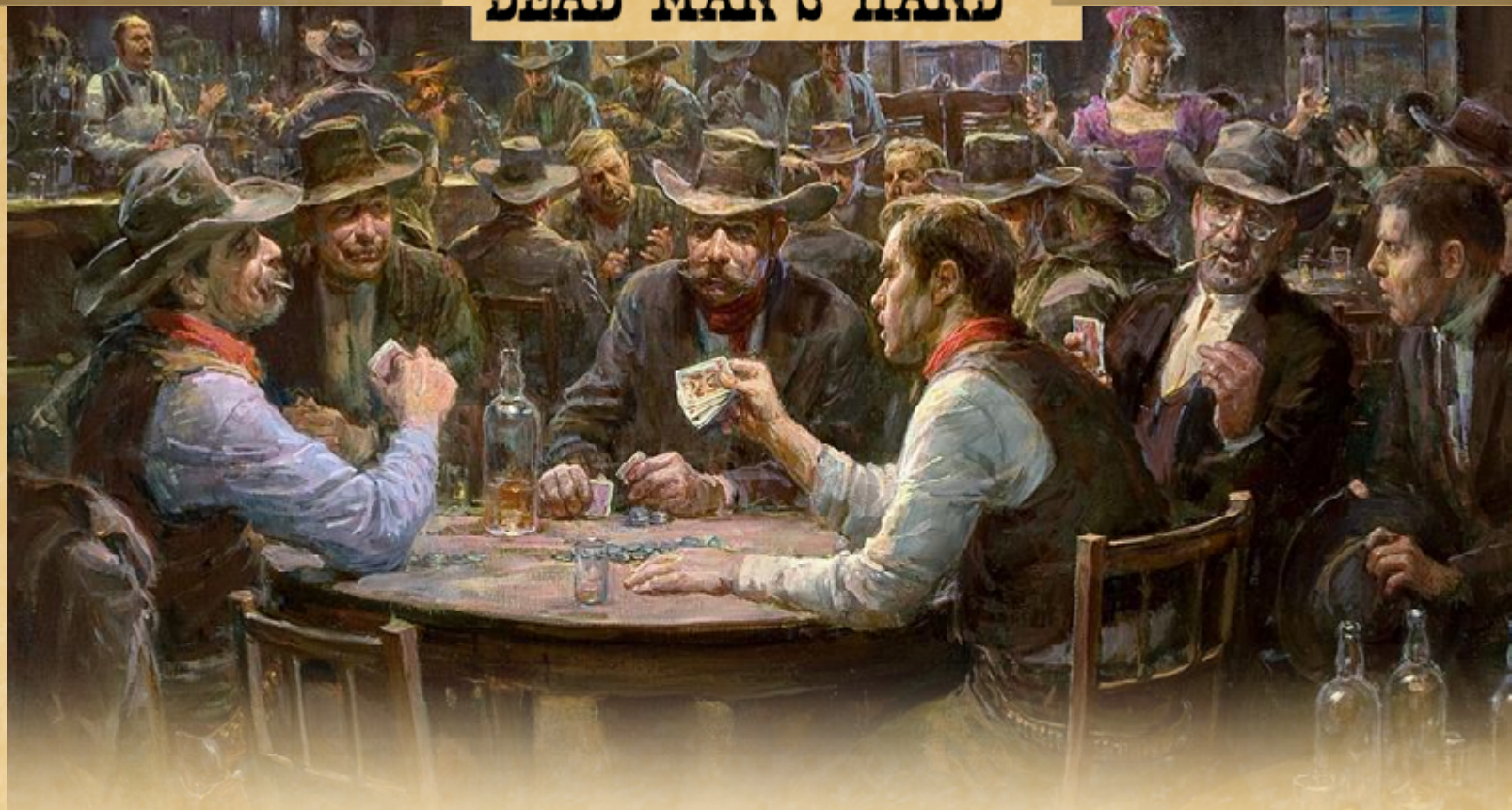
Constitution save. If they succeed, they are reduced to 0 HP and can make death saving throws as normal. On a failure, they have died.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The canyon below is also a road. It is 50 miles to Red Gulch, which would take about 2 days to walk at a normal pace. No horses survive the crash, but wild mustangs may be found along the way.



DEAD MAN'S HAND



GOLD FEVER

Presuming the party has made it in time, they finally arrive in the large city of Red Gulch to find it abuzz with activity. As if a traveling carnival was in town, Red Gulch is swarmed with thousands of visitors from far and wide. You can describe the festive scene as follows:

After weeks of travel and preparation, gunfights and stampedes, fires and storms, you finally arrive at the mountain town of Red Gulch. Though only a few square miles in size, the city crawls with enough people to make New York jealous. The roar of thousands carries through the packed streets like an avalanche, blending with parade-like music from trumpets and guitars. It is mere days, hours, before the poker tournament of a lifetime is to begin.

Day or night doesn't matter. Red Gulch won't sleep, not until after the tournament. Merchants hock their wares, while prostitutes laugh and peddle a completely different form of service. Lawmen bump shoulders with outlaws, and rich foreigners avoid the hacking and coughing of locals. The smell of cigars, booze, and perfume is thicker than the mud on the roads leading out of the city.

Every saloon is crammed with gamblers ready to make a name for themselves, and children roll dice on the streets as they boast about their future fame. Some fools who have gambled themselves broke before the tournament even starts drink their sorrows away, wondering how they will get home.

Most products and services can be obtained in Red Gulch. Player characters are free to purchase just about anything they have the gold for. From food to lodging, ammunition to pleasurable company, everything is for sale in Red Gulch.

PRELIMINARY EVENTS

In addition to the countless poker tables loaded throughout town, there are other games of chance and skill to be found - and gambled upon. In the days and hours leading up to the main event, PCs are free to engage in any of these activities if they so choose. Gambling is required for most, though an event coordinator might be talked into a "just for fun" attempt once or twice.

See Chapter 2: Mechanics in the Frontier Campaign Setting for rules on gambling and drinking.

POKER

By far the most common event is poker, and there is nary an establishment at town where a PC can't find a game to join.

Participating. Using standard gambling rules, the House DC is set for 15 at most poker tables before the tournament begins. During the tournament, the standard will increase to DC 20.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

ARM WRESTLING

In a week dominated by contests of brains, sometimes brawn can be just the ticket. The Battle of the Bulk can be just as competitive, and the strongest in town is no one to mess with.

Participating. When two people sit down to arm wrestle, they can wager if they like. The winner gets the loser's bet. The PC and Opponent make opposed Strength checks. Both start with a status of Neutral. On a success, the wrestler is Winning (advantage on Strength checks). A Winning wrestler who then succeeds in the next Strength check wins the match, otherwise they go back to Neutral.

Arm Wrestling tables continue during the Poker Tournament, and become popular face-savers for bankrupt gamblers.

BLACKJACK

Seen by some in Red Gulch as "beginner's poker," blackjack tables are a good warm-up to the bigger poker games about to begin. For those who have little to spend, or aren't particularly skilled in gambling, blackjack is a viable alternative.

Participating. Using standard poker gambling rules, the House DC is set for 10. There is a maximum opening bet of 10 gp, however.

Once the poker tournament starts, all blackjack tables close down.

FIVE FINGER FILLET

A challenge of daring and skill, Five Finger Fillet is one of the few "solo" contests to be found. Observers have the option of betting against the gambler, which the gambler must match if they lose. The gambler then places their hand on a table and quickly stabs the wood between their fingers, moving as fast as possible until a full sequence is complete.

Participating. The gambler makes up to three attack rolls using a dagger. If they meet or exceed an AC of 15, they win the round and do no harm to themselves. The AC is 17 for the second round and 20 for the third. On a failure, the gambler stabs themselves and takes damage as normal - thus failing the challenge and is required to start over. On a roll of a Natural 1 the gambler stabs their own hand in the middle, doing double damage and becoming unable to participate in this challenge again until they take a long rest.

Five Finger Fillet tables continue during the Poker Tournament.

HORSESHOES

What some call luck, others call skill. Horseshoes involves two people who toss up to five horseshoes at a small metal stake in the ground 40 feet away. Competitors are free to place bets against each other, but it is not required.

Participating. The two competitors make opposed attack rolls using an improvised thrown weapon. Due to the range, these rolls are made at disadvantage. The winner of 3 out of 5 rounds wins the contest. If a competitor rolls a Natural 20 it is a "ringer," in which the horseshoe actually wraps around the stake, and the competitor wins the contest automatically.

Horseshoe areas close down once the Poker Tournament starts.

LIAR'S DICE

Liar's dice is a class of dice games for two or more players requiring the ability to deceive and detect an opponent's deception. Five dice are used per player with dice cups used for concealment. Each round, each player rolls a "hand" of dice under their cup and looks at their hand while keeping it concealed from the other players. The first player begins bidding, announcing any face value and the minimum number of dice that the player believes are showing that value, under all of the cups in the game. Ones are often wild, always counting as the face of the current bid. Turns rotate among the players in a clockwise order. Each player has two choices during their turn: to make a higher bid, or challenge the previous bid—typically with a call of "liar." In the end, all cups are lifted and the truth is revealed.

Participating. All players involved place an opening bid. Each round the players make a Charisma (Deception) and a Wisdom (Insight) check. If any PC or NPC has a Deception check higher than anyone else's Insight, they move on to the next round. This continues until there is one winner.

Liar's Dice tables close down once the Poker Tournament starts.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

RODEO

One of two events held at the Mesquite Riding Grounds for a week preceding the tournament, the rodeo brings an air of raw physicality and excitement to the otherwise studious week of events. Some of the strongest and wildest mustangs and bulls from across Western Valley have been saddled up to bounce would-be buckaroos to fame and riches.

Participating. Riding in the rodeo involves two phases: preparation and the ride. In preparation, getting set on the steed, the participant makes a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. On a result of 1-10 the rider will have disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) checks in the ride phase. On a result of 11-15, the checks are made normally. On a result of 16+ the rider will have advantage.

In the second phase the steed is released from its corral. The rider makes an Athletics check under the conditions of phase one. This check is made every second for up to eight seconds. The DC begins at 13 and increased by 1 per second, ending with 20. If the rider succeeds in all eight Athletics checks, they jump from their steed and win that round.

Riders compete in brackets until only one winner remains. A few other competitors and their skill bonuses are:

NAME	HANDLING	ATHLETICS
Bart Winslow	+6	+2
"Lucky Luke" Patterson	+5	+3
Jose Gomez de Serrano	+4	+4
Richard Smith	+3	+5
Dedrick Dergossa	+2	+6

The rodeo holds one contest per day for a week preceding the tournament. The winner of the daily contest gets 500 gp, and a winner of the rodeo or stunt riding cannot participate in the rodeo again.

SHARPSHOOTING

A common gathering sight for gunslingers and courting couples is the good old firing range. Participants purchase shots, typically five for 1 gp, and try to shoot bottles and other targets. The prize can either be gold or an item crafted from any number of smiths and seamstresses in the city.

Participating. The participant shoots at targets placed 20 feet away for pistols or 60 feet for rifles. The AC for the targets is 20. If a shooter hits at least 3 targets they win a minor prize or the reimbursement of their purchase. If they hit all 5 targets they win a major prize or double their purchase.

Shooting galleries operate during the tournament.

STUNT RIDING

The second of two events held at the Mesquite Riding Grounds for a week preceding the tournament, the stunt event features riders navigating an obstacle course. Rounding barrels, jumping hedges, and ducking obstacles, man and horse become one for this contest of skill.

Participating. Stunt riding uses the same rules as the Rodeo, except the mount's Athletics check is used instead of the rider's. The typical **riding horse** has an Athletics modifier of +3. Instead of seconds, the rider makes one check per stunt for seven stunts.

Stunt riding holds one contest per day for a week preceding the tournament. The winner of the daily contest gets 500 gp, and a winner of the rodeo or stunt riding cannot participate in stunt riding again.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

RED GULCH



MAP LEGEND

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. The Bannock House | 9. Leroy's General Store |
| 2. Redstone Mining | 10. William S. Mills, Blacksmith |
| 3. The #2 Saloon | 11. The Grand Hotel |
| 4. Silver Ridge Stage Coach | 12. Wallace Livery Stable & Feed |
| 5. The Black Earl Saloon | 13. Ivan's Dairy & Grocers |
| 6. Lady of Grace Chapel | 14. Chinese Quarter |
| 7. 7th Infantry Army Camp | 15. Red Gulch Jail |
| 8. Red Gulch Train Station | |

DEAD MAN'S HAND

RED GULCH LOCATIONS

The city of Red Gulch is a growing and busy town on the edge of the wild frontier. Its buildings showcase its rich history and diverse roots, and can provide ample amounts of exploration and side missions for any visitor or party.

1. THE BARTON HOUSE

This is the oldest house in town and, apparently, the most haunted. Now abandoned and falling to ruin, this once stately home was built by the first settler to find gold in the Western Valley Mountains: Marston Barton. The story goes that, one night, Bannock - dead drunk - heard intruders in his parlor. Taking down his rifle, he headed downstairs and fired at two bodies that stood before the silver cabinet. Going over to them, he saw not intruders, but the bodies of his wife and young son. Barton hung himself from the beam above their corpses and, it's said, his corpse was still crying when they found it. Locals say that their ghosts still roam the halls and you can hear, if you dare to creep close enough, Marston Barton still begging for forgiveness from his murdered family.

The legends are true, and Barton is a "Midnight Boy" that refuses to pass on.

2. REDSTONE MINING

Set up early in the life of the town, Redstone was co-owned by Marston Barton and his partner from back East; Hamish Ellis. After Bannock's suicide, the business was given over in its entirety to Ellis. Not considering himself a businessman, Ellis hired entrepreneur Sloan Campbell to run the operation. Redstone is the largest mine in the area and both Ellis and Campbell have reaped the benefits.

3. THE #2 SALOON

Rebuilt by Carter Barrow after his #1 saloon burned down, the #2 once doubled as a meeting place and courthouse before the Town Hall was built. To this day many businessmen conduct their affairs from Carter's sturdy (but stained) tables.

4. SILVER RIDGE STAGE COACH

Before the small mountain town of Silver Ridge ran dry of its namesake, there was considerable trade that regularly made the long trek through the winding passes. Now almost no one goes to Silver Ridge, whose oddly defensive residents seem to prefer. The Stage Coach sits at the ready, in case anyone should happen to have a need to head north.

5. THE BLACK EARL SALOON

One of the newer buildings in town, the Black Earl has been steadily accumulating custom, cash and notoriety since it arrived, boasting the largest array of gaming tables in the county. It is owned and operated by none other than Sloan Campbell, and the final round of Poker Tournament games are held here. While The #2 Saloon retains much of the old-time clientele, the Black Earl is attracting many of Red Gulch's newcomers and has even begun to branch out into offering... other services. Needless to say, Mama won't be pleased.

6. LADY OF GRACE CHAPEL

The untamed frontier is often seen as lawless but Western Valley also considered to be rather godless, too. That is, until Gabriel McCall built his church on a ridge overlooking the river in Red Gulch. Since then, bodies have been buried in proper graves, rather than being left to rot up in the hills.

7. 7TH INFANTRY ARMY CAMP

The Western Valley Mountain region has become a kind of staging area for exploration of the plains beyond - largely controlled by the Takoda tribe. As a result, the US Corps of Engineers and various expeditions have been staged from Red Gulch for some time.

8. RED GULCH TRAIN STATION

Owned and operated by the jovial George Fuller, whom many consider the unofficial face of Red Gulch. With his long beard, soot-stained cheeks, and infectious laugh, Fuller is everyone's friend.

9. LEROY'S GENERAL STORE

"We got what you want" is the slogan painted in bright red letters across the top of Jack Leroy's door, and he ain't lying. Dry goods, tools, prospecting gear, building supplies, clothes and just about anything that comes in a box or a can can be found amongst the shelves and bales in the General Store.

7. WILLIAM S. MILLS, BLACKSMITH

William Mills arrived early in the burgeoning town. At first, work was slow and Bill began to rely on favors and hand-outs, until the second influx of prospectors and settlers hit, and suddenly Bill was hip-deep in busted up iron. Since then, Mr. Mills has been a cornerstone of Red Gulch and has taken on two apprentices to carry on the trade in the Western Valley Mountains - Art Bishop and Cody Dawes.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

11. THE GRAND HOTEL

While most prospectors, miners and cowboys settle in bunkhouses or shacks, the more well-to-do arrivals in Red Gulch often lay aside a little gold to live more comfortably in the Grand Hotel. Run by Madame Dubois and her husband, the hotel is a sanctuary of culture in this sea of hideous wilderness. Breakfast is served, every day, from six to nine along with the best fresh coffee in the city.

12. WALLACE LIVERY STABLE & FEED

In frontier towns, horses are a sure thing. Former slave Abraham Wallace bought a plot in Red Gulch when the prices were low and the Mayor was desperate for residence, and immediately set about boarding horses. Eventually, he had enough money to buy and train his own and, now, you can hire mounts, stable horses or buy equine produce from this most affable and gentle of men.

13. IVAN'S DAIRY & GROCERS

Ivan Mikhailov's dairy is something of a wonder amongst the townsfolk of Red Gulch. Constructed at great pains and kept at great expense is a cold store, sunk at least ten feet below the floorboards of this oft-frequented establishment. On delivery days, when fresh ice is rushed from the train station, Mr. Michaelov shaves ice into cones of paper and hands them out to children and adults alike. The butter sold there is always fresh and richer folk pay to keep their milk in the store, alongside other goods that benefit from cooler weather.

14. CHINESE QUARTER

Much as with other gold- and silver-rush towns, the Chinese found their way to Red Gulch soon after the gold began flowing out from it. They tend to steer clear from mining themselves, but have set up baths, laundries and small livestock farms. The Chinese Quarter is also rife with gambling and offers lower cost pleasures than other places in the town. There is also a famous seer, Madame Zang, who can tell an individual's future from pig guts (which you buy, then give to her to eat afterwards).

15. RED GULCH JAIL

Where else do you put all the outlaws, murderers, thieves and rustlers that you catch in the frontier? One of the few stone buildings in town, the jail also houses the office of Sheriff Antonio Martinez and Deputy Luis "Happy" Rodrigo.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

FOUL PLAY

With so many people all vying for fame and fortune, instances of cheating and foul play are inevitable. From palming cards to drugging drinks, from poking rodeo bulls to making back alley threats, evidence of foul play can be either discrete or blatantly obvious.

To simulate foul play simply apply advantage to opponent rolls or disadvantage on PC rolls. Before the respective challenge begins, allow the PC an appropriate ability check to notice it. Set the DC to 15 by default.

For example, a gambler decides to slip a card from his sleeve into his hand. Allow any PC players or those specifically watching for cheaters a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If they spot it, they can call it out or take similar action. Failing that, the cheater has advantage on the gambling round.

In another example, a rival stunt rider tries to drug the PC's horse. Allow any PCs around at the time a Perception check to notice this. If there is none, allow the rider a Wisdom (Insight) check before starting to notice if the horse seems sluggish or unresponsive. Failing that, the horse has disadvantage on Athletics checks for the contest.

SLOAN CAMPBELL

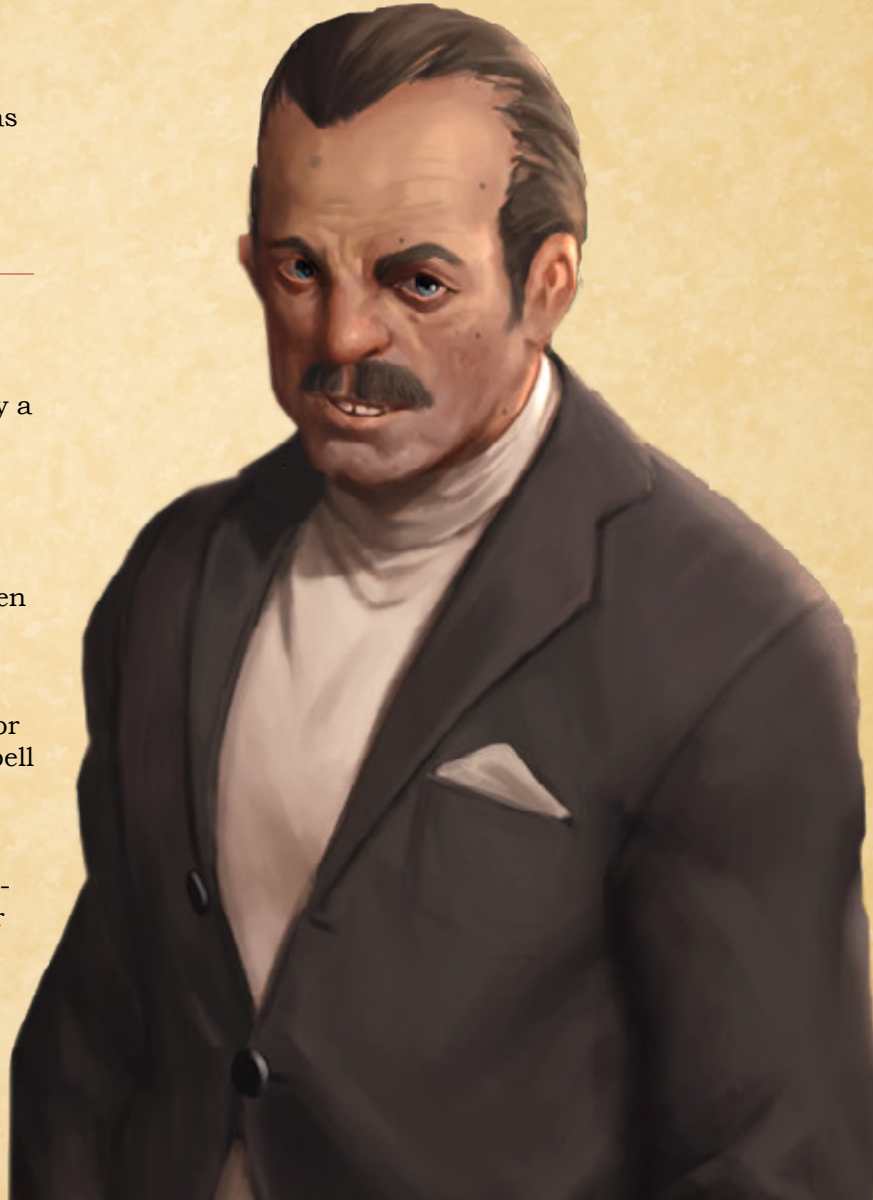
With so many thousands of gamblers and visitors, one name hangs heavily on everyone's lips: Sloan Malcolm Campbell. As a renowned gambler himself his participation in the poker tournament is already a subject of discussion and controversy.

Until now, Campbell has been mentioned and played up as a mastermind behind many of the adventures and events. His goons dominated Johnstown through extortion and violence. His lieutenant challenged and threatened the party. Even Antonia Romano is rumored to be affiliated with him. Though there is little evidence to support this in the Romano Mining Camp, anyone who inquires on local gossip can make a Charisma (Persuasion) or (Intimidation) check to uncover rumors that Campbell and Romano may in fact be romantically linked. The DC of this check is determined by the PC's Reputation Score (*See Episode 2, Pg. 24*).

Physical Description. Sloan Campbell is a well-dressed, stone-faced man who appears in his upper 50s. Despite the unassuming attire his physique and statue reveal his distant past as a soldier and notorious gunslinger. He has watchful eyes and a furrowed brow, though he will still smile when having cordial conversation.

Campbell always keeps two revolvers on his sides, even when in his Sunday's finest. He maintains a professional appearance and demeanor, but he is neither a fool nor will he suffer any to threaten him. Though he will avoid shootouts if possible, he is not above them. Campbell simply wants to run his empire and earn money. But any would-be hero that confronts him, challenges him, or subtly tries to puff their chest through intimidation will soon come to regret it.

Reputation. Campbell is *Notorious*, with a Reputation Score of -9. He is known as a murderer, crime lord, and ruthless outlaw - a reputation which he fosters to the best of his ability. He cares little for bargains or deals, as he simply takes whatever he needs or wants. He is not reckless, however, and would much rather use tact and intellect to manipulate behind the scenes than use crude force.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

SLOAN CAMPBELL <i>Medium Human</i> Class: Gunfighter (Outlaw) 11 Background: Gambler					
Armor Class 18 (Unarmored Defense) Hit Points 68 (9d10+19) Speed 30 ft.					
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)
Saving Throws Str+4, Dex +5, Wis+2 Skills Deception+8, Intimidation+8, Perception +5, Sleight of Hand +8 Tools Playing Cards +7, Dice +7 Senses Passive Perception 15 Languages English, Siouxan, Gaelic Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)					
Focus. Campbell can use an action to grant himself focus. Before the end of his next turn, he has advantage on the first attack roll, skill check, ability check, or ability save he makes.					
Safety in Numbers. Campbell can Dodge as a bonus action if he is within 5 feet of an ally.					
True Grit. As a bonus action, Campbell can grant himself a number of temporary hit points equal to his Charisma modifier. He must take a short or long rest to use this feature again.					
FEATS: Tavern Brawler					
CLASS ABILITIES					
Grit Points. 10 Deadeye (1) - No disadvantage on long range weapon attacks. Gunslinger Dodge (1) - Force enemy to reroll attack. Quick Draw (1) - Gain advantage on Initiative roll. Utility Shot (1) - Perform additional effect with pistol attack. Dead Shot (1) - Cluster all attack rolls into single damage roll. Notorious (1) - Cause attack to miss & counterattack ranged.					
Evasion Sneak Attack. +15 Damage if attack has advantage. Under the Table. Advantage against those of lower Initiative. Spend 1 grit point to Dash, Disengage or Hide as bonus action.					
ACTIONS					
Multiattack. Campbell makes three attacks.					
Revolver. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 40/120, one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+4) piercing damage.					
Unarmed. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, one target. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) bludgeoning damage.					

COMMENDING THE PARTY

Campbell is a man with his ear to the ground. He is, aside from a few details, aware of the party's accomplishments and movements. As fierce and intimidating as he may be, however, Campbell gives respect where respect is due.

Upon meeting anyone in the party, Campbell introduces himself. The higher the PC's Reputation Score, the more polite he comes across. He is not deceiving anyone, if they decide to make an Insight check against him. He is genuinely by anyone with extreme reputation - whether positive or negative. Fabled heroes stand as worthy adversaries for him, and notorious outlaws may be good additions to his growing empire.

Sloan has a very slight Scottish accent, being a third generation American. The indications of his heritage come more from his vocabulary than his manner of speaking. Depending on the accomplishments of the party, how much they have impeded or aided his operation, Sloan approaches the PC or PCs in question similarly to the following:

A solidly-built man in his fifties looks you over as he approaches. His hair is slicked back and he looks to have a permanent squint, his nearly trimmed mustache wrinkling into a faint smile.

"So. You must be the brave heroes bounding across the western planes, eh? Good to see you in the flesh. My name is Sloan Campbell. For now, Campbell will do. Your reputation precedes you, but I'm afraid you'll need more than a few tall tales to make it through this week. A poker tournament is a war, lads, fought with cards as bullets and tables as the battlefield. I suppose I may see you at one of them. As a sign of respect, I'll refrain from shooting you out of your boots where you stand. Instead I'll give this little nugget of wisdom: stay away from the Black Earl. I will not lose in my own house, much less to a tumbleweed with delusions of grandeur. However, if you are looking for fame and fortune, I am a wee short staffed of late. Come see me if you're looking for a job. Otherwise? Keep a pistol handy, and don't sit with your back to the door if you know what's good for you."

He begins walking away, but turns back as he straightens his gray suit. "Oh. And welcome to Red Gulch. I hope you enjoy it."

DEAD MAN'S HAND

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

Throughout the week leading up to the Poker Tournament, and increasingly so in the days prior, folks around Red Gulch have reported missing persons. While this may be unusual in itself, it is the means and frequency of these disappearances that borders on the truly mysterious.

- A gambler takes a drink from his beer and seconds later keels over dead. No amount of investigation can find a cause, and the beer shows no signs of poison.

- A woman runs frantically through town, pushing past people to get away from someone or something. She rounds into an alley, but when anyone follows her she is gone without a trace.

- Late at night a couple can be heard arguing from a nearby house. A gunshot goes off. If anyone comes to investigate they find the door locked and nobody home. It seems to have been abandoned for years.

- A woman pleads for help. Her three children have gone missing, last seen headed to the abandoned silver mine to the north where they often play. The party discovers deep within the mine three old, child-sized skeletons. When they return there is no sign of the woman, and no bystanders have seen anyone matching her description.

- A shopkeeper seems depressed telling the shopping PC to hurry up with their business. When the PC heads to the counter to pay, the shopkeeper is gone. His apron and hat are on the ground, as if they had simply fallen off of him.

- A rodeo rider looks like he has a heart attack while riding a bull. He keels over and aides rush in to pull him out. When anyone goes to check in on him, they find only an empty cot.

THE WATCHER'S HARVEST

With each disappearance names fly, fingers point, and rumor abound. The most common scapegoat for the incidents is Sloan Campbell and his band of miscreants. While it's true they are taking out a few opponents here and there, their body count pales in comparison to the true comparison: The Watcher.

The Watcher is a combination of Grim Reaper and Gatekeeper. His primary function is what he calls "protecting the Veil." Which is to say, he guards The Secret and prevents anyone from learning the truth of their spiritual existence. Those who start probing the nature of the Midnight Boys and mysterious disappearances will find themselves in more danger than usual. Packs of wild dogs chase them through the streets at night. Drunkards pick fights with them for no reason. Walls collapse. Houses catch on fire. The Watch will refrain from engaging in a curious party for now, though he may be forced to make an appearance if the PCs are persistent in their investigation into the paranormal events.

Many of the disappearances around town are the result of someone who may have peered beyond the Veil and learned The Secret - and immediately set upon by The Watcher. Witnesses or even the party describe The Watcher as a tall man in a black coat and top hat.

He holds a cane which does not seem necessary for walking, but the gem at the top glows with an eerie blue light. When he taps the cane to the ground he can disappear - or if he speaks to a person in a dream or vision he ends it with the loud bang the tap makes.

When The Watcher speaks, his voice is deep and ethereal - sounding like ten men are speaking at once. The few times he does bother or dare to speak he gives brief and ominous threats and warnings not to "look beyond the Veil" or "meddle in powers you do not comprehend."



DEAD MAN'S HAND

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

At sunrise on Monday, the day the Great Poker Tournament is to begin, the streets are abuzz with cheers and excitement. All shops and stalls close in anticipation of Mayor Ellis' speech, and the crowds gather at the City Hall (*between #2 and #12 on the Red Gulch map, Pg. 43*). Describe the much anticipated event as follows:

Gathered around the rather small City Hall is a throng of cheering gamblers and visitors. The air is thick with excitement as all eyes stare at the wooden doors as if a great wizard bearing gifts is about to emerge. When the doors finally creak open trumpets blow fanfare, which is quickly drowned out by loud shouting and applause. From within City Hall, escorted by the Sheriff and Deputy, is Mayor Ellis himself. The tall, red-headed Scotsman walks forward slowly with a wide grin, using a walking cane on the side of his bad knee. Ellis is a man of tall stature and boisterous laugh, waving with work-hardened hands and tucking a pipe into his coat near his overalls. Once he reaches some distance from the City Hall Steps he stops and waits for the crowd to quiet.

"Ladies and lads, I bid ye good day. Welcome, one and all, to Red Gulch. The Great Poker Tournament is about to begin! Official tables will start seating players at 11:00, and the first games begin at high noon.

"Before the first game, players can purchase up to 200 gold pieces in poker chips. There will be one round of poker playable per day - a round consisting of playing until only one player at the table has all the chips. This will continue for six days. On Saturday, any remaining players will compete - round after round - until we have a Grand Champion. As promised, that champion will be awarded the jackpot of ten thousand gold pieces!"

After a pause for cheers from the audience, during which Mayor Ellis checks and antique gold stopwatch, he continues:

"Due to the nature of this tournament, extra security precautions have been put into place. In addition to Sheriff Martinez and Deputy Rodrigo we also have the pleasure of hosting the US Army's 7th Infantry Division. The soldiers have been temporarily deputized, and will help keep the peace. So go and enjoy yourselves. Cheer your champions. May luck be your lass this week, and above all keep your chins up. Win or lose, this week is where the future is made."

POKER TOURNAMENT

The tournament commences as Ellis described. There is a buy-in of up to 200 gp, after which no chips can be purchased. Up to seven players can participate in a given table, and one table per day. The winners go on to compete the next day until up to seven players sit down to the Grand Championship - held on Saturday at the Black Earl Saloon.

Though only the winners proceed to the next stage of the tournament, other participants are free and encouraged to play in other games of poker, blackjack, and side activities until the week-long celebration is over.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

POKER CHAMPIONS

At the end of the week, up to seven champions are left to sit down at the Grand Finale. The Black Earl is packed to the rafters with onlookers, family members, visitors, and strangers. The anticipation is thick as the reigning champions compete for the unbelievable jackpot. You can use the following NPC personalities to supplement any PCs that have made it this far.

SLOAN CAMPBELL

It should come as a surprise to no one that Campbell makes it to the championship. Several other contenders have “mysteriously” disappeared, narrowing the field from ten to the final seven. Sloan’s presence only heightens the already fevered pitch of the final round. Being set in the Black Earl of all places, Campbell will not take kindly to losing.

Intelligence (Cards) Modifier: +7

BEN WATERS

“Old Ben” is the proprietor of the No. 9 Saloon in Johnstown. He passed control of the establishment temporarily to his daughter Rose while he seeks his fortune. His hope is to renovate the No. 9 and make it more accommodating to visitors.

Intelligence (Cards) Modifier: +5

HANS MÜLLER

Brother of the young and timid Ada, Hans is large and boisterous. He is one to slap friends and even rival players on the back, share drinks, and tell tales in broken English about his adventures crossing the American frontier.

Intelligence (Cards) Modifier: +5

MICHEL RENAULT

With his older brother Jean behind him for support, the rather handsome Frenchman has a smooth smile and piercing blue eyes. A fan of the ladies as much as they are of him, Michel often carries roses, kerchiefs, and other trinkets to hand out to admirers.

Intelligence (Cards) Modifier: +4

RICKY THE KID

Having only recently turned 18, Ricky is by far the youngest contestant in the tournament. His is a brash, cocky kid who has yet to face the harsh realities of life in the West. He dreams of being a famous gunslinger and frontier legend, and often boasts about deeds of dubious authenticity.

Intelligence (Cards) Modifier: +6

SELENE WORTHINGTON

The daughter of an English aristocrat, Selene is one of the few women to compete in the tournament and the only one to make it to the finale. She holds herself with a noble air and straight stature, but she has a bright smile and contagious laugh. Happy to be out of the confines of her family villa, she applauds what others may consider trivial things.

Intelligence (Cards) Modifier: +5

TOM YEW

Tom is a drunken farmer from Virginia. He has made it this far mostly on dumb luck, and only started with a 1 gold piece buy-in. He has no idea what he’d do if he wins, and sometimes forgets he’s even competing.

Intelligence (Cards) Modifier: +3



DEAD MAN'S HAND

DAMSEL OF DISTRESS

Presuming she was left alone until this point, Antonia Romano begins to weave a web of sabotage against any players who make it to the Final Round. She and Campbell's gang work to ensure his victory in any of the following ways, primarily against any PC's in the championship:

♦ BRIBERY

The first and easiest attempt Romano makes to dissuade any would-be champions is to bribe them. She offers 3,000 gold pieces as a "consolation prize" before the player even begins the final round.

Romano makes a Charisma (Persuasion) check with a +5 bonus opposed by the Persuasion or Intimidation check of the PC. Reputation modifiers do not apply, as she cares nothing for status. If she succeeds, the PC takes the gold and agrees to bow out of the tournament. If they later recant and show up anyway, they will find their name no longer listed among the eligible participants.

♣ POISON

Romano has any drink brought to the PC before or during the game, as long as it was provided by the establishment, laced with poison. The poison is arsenic (see Chapter 6: Bestiary of the Frontier Campaign Setting). It can be detected before drinking with a DC 20 Medicine check, or DC 10 if someone is using a healer's or poisoner's kit specifically to check for poison.

♥ SEDUCTION

Though perhaps not her first tactic, Romano is not above offering a physical distraction. Using the same rules as Bribery (but without the money) Romano attempts to Persuade a PC to follow her upstairs into one of the inn bedrooms during a break in the game.

♠ VIOLENCE

If all else fails, Romano and Campbell's gang turn to violence. If the player in question begins winning multiple hands over Campbell, a fire erupts from a store across the street. No one is in the store, but it causes a distraction and break in the game. While most people are outside, five **gunslingers** and **Antonia Romano** herself try to isolate the player and take them out. Antonia flees from battle if she has less than 15 hit points remaining, though she will command her subordinates to fight to the death.

SORE LOSER

If after all attempts to dissuade or eliminate any competition someone happens to win other than Sloan Campbell, they will face the crime lord's wrath.

Immediately after the final hand, Campbell stands and points in an accusatory manor.

"Away and boil your head, you jakey cheat! No one embarrasses Sloan Campbell. You. Me. Outside. Twenty paces. Let's see if your gun is as slick as your game. Just as crooked, I'd wager."

If the winner is an NPC, they hold a shootout but Campbell wins rather easily. If it is a PC, you can revolve the shootout as described in Episode 2.

DECLINING OR LOSING

If the winning PC declines the shootout or talks their way out of it, in full view of everyone, they lose 1 Reputation Point. If they get goading into attacking or fleeing outright, they lose an additional 1 point. If they fight in the tavern, use the Black Earl map on Page 52. Campbell gets backed up by his cronies in the tavern, seven **gunslingers** and two **bandits**. Should the gunfight spill out onto the streets, use the map on Page 53, where a few of the gang are stationed on the roofs and in the alleys.

If the PC loses the shootout, whether they live or not, they lose 1 Reputation Point.

WINNING THE SHOOTOUT

If the winning PC accepts and wins the shootout, they gain 1 Reputation score. Campbell makes death saving throws as normal and so may potentially stabilize. If the PC or someone in the party stabilizes him, he revives eventually with a sore attitude and retreats to his room in the tavern. However, in days to come and potentially after the Dead Man's Hand adventure is over, he comes around and could become a rather valuable ally to the PCs. As mentioned before, he respects skill - and anyone who could out-shoot him and let him live is someone deserving of his respect and allegiance.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

THE BLACK EARL SALOON



TOWN SHOOTOUT



DEAD MAN'S HAND

HOURL OF RECKONING

After the tournament, if any PC has won, Mayor Ellis congratulates them and explains he will be visiting Silver Ridge, to the north. On his return he will grant the reward to the winner. The 7th Infantry will be there to defend the gold exchange and escort the winner wherever they would like.

If Campbell was not dealt with during the tournament, he will linger around town. Any conflicts between him and the PCs should use either the Black Earl or Town Shootout maps on Page 52 or 52 respectively.

THE MORBID MUTT

Whether awaiting their prize or resting for the night, the party will likely be sleeping in an inn that evening. Near midnight, anyone standing watch or that makes a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check while sleeping hears a small dog growling in the street nearby. Anyone who goes to investigate finds the streets oddly empty despite the recent rush:

You find a faint mist as rolled into town. The city streets, once packed with cheering visitors and riotous drunkards are now eerily silent. As your boots crunch across the dirt you hear the dog again, growling and snarling from around the corner. Once there you see a small Yorkshire Terrier gnawing at a bone, its tiny stump for a tail wagging happily.

On seeing you the pup sits up, panting its tiny tongue. It is then that you see it is no mere animal bone it plays with - it is a severed human finger.

If the PC/PCs move any closer to examine the finger, the dog runs off with it. A DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) or (Survival) check is enough to follow the dog to its destination.

The terrier runs clear across town to Our Lady of Grace, and around to the cemetery. The pursuing PCs arrive just in time to see the dog bury the finger where it found it, an unmarked grave in a corner plot.

Anyone who investigates the grave or dares desecrate it discovers a shocking secret:

Within the grave you find the body of a large man buried without a coffin. Instead he is wrapped in a linen sheet and tied with rope. Animals seem to have dug into the grave over the years, and bore through the wrapping. There within you see traces of a well-dressed man with red hair. He contains no possessions except for an antique pocket watch, kept within his inside vest pocket.

A DC 12 Intelligence (History) or (Investigation) check reveals that the watch belonged to Mayor Ellis.

GHOST TOWN

When the party returns to the streets after investigating the cemetery - or awaken the next morning if they don't - they find Red Gulch deserted and silent. The few stragglers who remain claim to have seen nothing, and presume the people have gone home now that the tournament is over.

In fact, they have been harvested by the Watcher. Disguising himself as the deceased Hamish Ellis he held the tournament to make his job easier - bringing souls to him.

If asked about Mayor Ellis, the townsfolk confirm that he is indeed heading up to Silver Ridge. The PCs are free to ride after him if they like, though he will always get there before they do. Coincidentally (or inconveniently for the party) the Silver Ridge Stage Coach is out of commission because its operator, Stephen Bellamy, is sick with the flu.

RACE TO THE RIDGE

If the eerie circumstances, delayed promise of riches, and discovery of mayoral impersonation are not enough to goad the players into following Ellis, there is also a rumor that the "Mayor" is actually going to steal the wealth from Silver Ridge. A concerned citizen asks the party to please intercede and prevent that from happening.





EPISODE 4: SHOWDOWN AT SILVER RIDGE

Silver Ridge was settled twenty years ago during a short-lived silver mine boom. The mine was quickly stripped bare, and its inhabitants moved on to other settlements. Those few who did not relocate to Red Gulch or further west decided to stick it out, prying scraps from the mine walls in the hopes of finding riches missed by the original settlers. The current population is less than two dozen, but they do not take kindly to strangers. Because there is no trade to speak of and little other reason to visit, the desperate folks of Silver Ridge have a tendency to shoot first and ask questions later.

Their distrust of strangers goes even further. Having heard of Mayor Ellis' "tournaments" in the past and the tendency for residents of the city to suddenly go missing, the Silver Ridge denizens have shut themselves off from the rest of Western Valley. Their distrust turned to paranoia, and paranoia turned to superstition. Believing Ellis to be the Grim Reaper or even the devil himself - not an unfair assessment, really - they have warded their homes with crosses and other religious symbols. They have even sought the aid of the equally xenophobic Takoda clan, though the plains Natives are content to let the Silver Ridge settlement fend for itself.

Upon arriving at the desolate town of Silver Ridge the party finds themselves confronted with mindless soldiers, paranoid locals, and the Watcher himself.

SILVER RUSH

There are several means by which the party can head north to Silver Ridge, depending on their resources or skill sets.

- **RIDE**

The road from Red Gulch to Silver Ridge is approximately 220 miles, all twists and turns accounted for. At a steady pace by horse this takes about 9 days, rests included. Immediately this makes Mayor Ellis' claim to be back with the prize money the next day a flat-out lie.

- **WAGON**

If the party does not each have a horse, they can also purchase a wagon for 35 gp or horses for 75 gp each. The Silver Ridge Stage Coach could also do the job, but driver Stephen Bellamy is sick with the flu. He can be treated by a Healer (10 Cure Points and 2 Levels of Exhaustion), after which he will drive the party for free out of gratitude.

- **WALKING**

While certainly not advisable, it is possible to walk to Silver Ridge. Such a trek would take about 2.5 weeks in either direction.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

THE ROAD NORTH

For general rules on travel, weather, and health conditions for the journey you can use the On the Road table found on Page 18.

In addition, there are a few other encounters that could occur at any time by the DM's discretion.

PERFECT STORM

Thunder rolls in the distance and dark clouds sweep in from the horizon. Before you know it howling winds and stinging rain batter you nearly senseless. With no trees or sources of cover in sight you have two options: tough it out and keep moving, or bunker down and wait for the storm to pass.

The storm lasts for 5 hours. Designate one PC as the "Survivalist," who will make one Wisdom (Survival) every hour to ensure the safety and structural integrity of the travelers, horses, and carriages. The DCs are listed in the table below:

HOURLY	SURVIVAL
1	DC 14
2	DC 16
3	DC 18
4	DC 16
5	DC 14

On a failure, there is a setback such as a broken wheel or injured horse, requiring a long rest to rectify. Other PCs can make a Survival check as well, and if anyone gets above a 12 the Survivalist has advantage on their own Survival check.

Encounter. If the storm wasn't bad enough, just as it begins to lift on Hour 6 a different rumbling is heard. Seven no-account sons of crawdads come riding up, the leader firing a pistol into the air.

"Reach for the sky, folks! I see y'all are having a bit of a problem on account of the rain. Well, we're here to oblige. If you'd kindly hand over your gold and jewels we'd be plum delighted to lighten your load. Now."

A total of six **gunslingers** and one **bandit leader** spread themselves in a circle around the group. Resolve combat as usual. You can use the Long Road map on page 58.

Rewards. Grant twice the XP for enemies defeated, given the dire situations leading up to combat.

RAWLINS RUSTLERS

One day while headed down the road you see a most peculiar sight. A young man walks in the opposite direction toward you, leading two horses by their reigns. The horses limp slightly, indicating they are in no shape to ride. The man gives you a wide berth, not wanting to cause any trouble.

If the party stops to investigate or talk to the man, he explains his predicament.

"Oh, folks. I have had one doozy of a day. My name's Marshall Tate. Them Rawlins boys went and stole our family horses. Rustled them over to their ranch, set to sell 'em I reckon. I followed them, and got these two back. They left 'em behind, probably on account of their injuries. They ain't worth their time. But we got over thirty horses still missing. Look, I know it ain't your problem, and I wouldn't wanna trouble you none, but would you be willing to help us out? We can fix you up with a reward if you get 'em back. I can show you where they live, but... well, truth be told I ain't a fighter. What do you say?"

Encounter. If the party helps, Marshall directs them to the remote ranch of the Rawlins family. Eli, Lloyd, Orville, and Toby are **veterans** with rifles and short swords. Their sister Hattie and ma Wilma are **commanders**. You can use the Rawlins Ranch map on page 59 for the house, and approximate the field.

Rewards. Grant XP for enemies defeated as normal. During the encounter a Horseman (Cowboy) could attempt to steal groups of horses. Otherwise Marshall Tate could simply be called in after the encounter is over. Either way, grant 100 XP and 50 gp for each horse recovered. With 33 possible horses, that is a maximum of 3,300 xp and 1,650 gp.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

WATERSHED RAID

Along your journey you come across the small town of Watershed - little more than a school, post office, and jail. While stopping off there for supplies you are approached by Margot Slonaker, the local school marm. Though an elderly woman, her stature and stoic expression attest to her hardiness.

"Good day to you. I don't know what brought you out here beyond God's good grace, but I thank Him for His mercy. We've been beset by savages lately. Takoda, I believe they call themselves. They've raided and pillaged this town without rest for months. Red Gulch hasn't done a thing about it, but I pray you can. Their scouts are just outside of town. It's a sure sign of their attack. Please. I know we're just a tiny speck on a dusty road, but I beg you protect us."

Encounter. Presuming the party sticks around to defend the town, you can run the encounter using the Town Shootout map on Page 53.

A total of ten **scouts** and one **veteran** named Iron Bear charge through the streets on **riding horses**. In two rounds they start setting fire to buildings. Every 1d6 rounds they target another building and throw a torch onto the roof. Each building takes 1d4 minutes to burn completely. In addition to fighting the Takoda, the heroes can also use the well in town to help contain the fires.

Rewards. Grant XP for enemies defeated as normal. In addition, grant 500 XP for every burning building contained or inhabitants rescued from within. In the end, grant 1 Reputation Point for every party member who makes an earnest and public effort to assist the people of Watershed.

If anyone who speaks Siouxan interrogates one of the Takoda, they explain that the town has been known to aid the "*wakansica*," or "evil spirits." They see The Watcher (or Mayor Ellis) as a great darkness, and any who aid him should be destroyed as well.

COLD RECEPTION

After a long and grueling trek the party finally reaches the isolated city of Silver Ridge. You can describe the mining town as follows:

Crossing over a stone bridge you behold the desolate city of Silver Ridge. A vast collection of abandoned mines and homes stretches along the stripped mountainside. Dust and tumbleweeds blow across the dry ground, and mills that haven't seen water in decades grind slowly in the breeze.

When you approach the eerie silence of the ghost town is broken by a rifle shot as the residents, long known to be suspicious of outsiders, open fire.

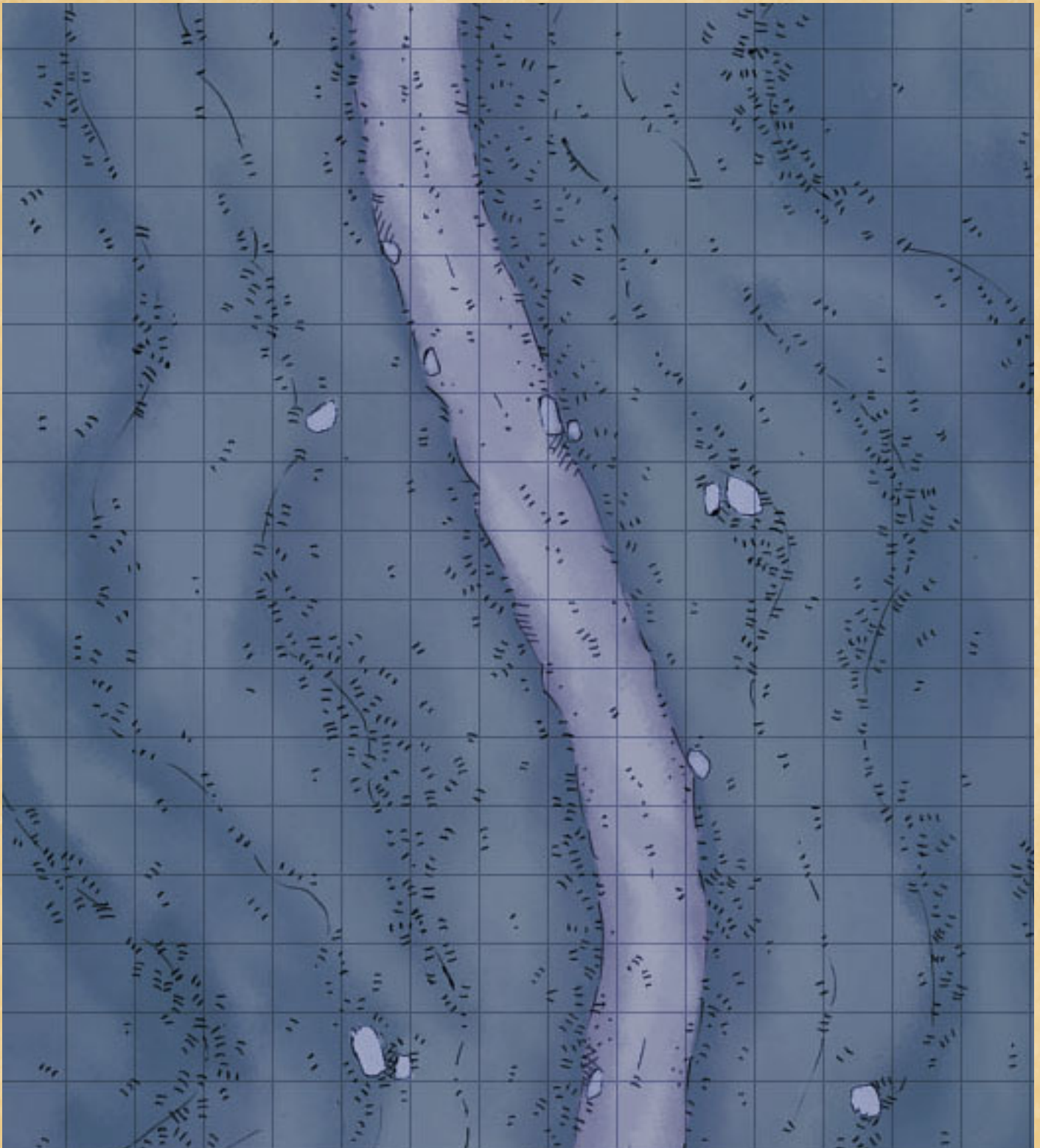
Encounter. Using a map similar to Town Shootout on Page 53, twelve **bandits** with rifles and pistols hide behind the buildings on the far end. Before combat begins, have any players who are actively searching make a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a failure, the bandits have advantage on their attacks against them for the surprise round.

Rewards. Grant XP for enemies defeated as normal. Once five or fewer bandits remain, they surrender (and grant appropriate XP). One of them admits to the following judgment.

"Don't kill me. Please. I thought you was with that Mayor Ellis. The devil himself, he is. He came 'round here years back and killed near half the city. Took them to Hell, soul and all. He keeps coming back, taking good folks in their sleep. He's holed up in Grey's Mine. Biggest one here. He's got his own army too. Hundreds. They got dark eyes. Kill you soon as look at you. Midnight Boys, I heard some people call 'em. You ain't getting in there without an army of your own, I can tell you that."



THE LONG ROAD



RAWLINS RANCH



DEAD MAN'S HAND

GREY'S MINE

On the north side of town is the entrance to a massive mine complex, fifteen feet across by ten feet tall. The area outside of it is an encampment of twelve buildings filled with soldiers and mindless minions of Ellis the Watcher. While Ellis is busy performing a ritual of some kind inside the mine, the mass of people outside makes approach nigh impossible.

There aren't enough civilians in Silver Ridge to face off against the Watcher's horde, so they lock themselves away and defend their own homes.

With a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion) check, civilians clue the party in to Ellis' plan and potential solution:

"The Watcher. That's what we call him, 'cause he just sits and watches from the shadows. Like a coyote near a dying buffalo. You know that poker tournament in Red Gulch? Well he has them every decade or so. Every time folks go missing. Almost the entire town, in fact. He calls it his "harvest," and anyone who gets in his way ends up dead. What exactly he does with them poor folks we ain't sure. As far as we're concerned Ellis is the Grim Reaper himself. Well we ain't going down without a fight. He's got some evil going on in that place, that's for sure. After three days he and his whole army up and vanish. Then they start it all over again.

"We're barely surviving up here, and we sure as Hell ain't fit to fight those demons. The only group up here with enough people to fight them would be the Takoda. Good luck getting any of them to help you. Them Injuns will kill you soon as look at you. But if you're feeling lucky, just follow the buffalo out west. Them Takoda will be doing the same. They got a witch doctor with them too. Maybe he'll know something we don't."

Any PC who is brave (or foolish) enough to investigate the mine won't get far before they are spotted and gunned down by Ellis' army. However, on the outskirts and outlying buildings they may find some interesting clues.

- ♦ A map of Western Valley with populations written beside the towns. With a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check it's noticed that the populations seem rather high. There are also three cities listed that aren't actually found in the area: Brookville, Mountainview, and Wayport.
- ♦ Areas of importance on the maps include sights of major battles - but a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check reveals the armies involved do exist, but they've never fought each other before.
- ♦ Holy symbols such as crucifixes and rosary beads have been tossed in the fire, some of them bashed apart first. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers them.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

FIRST VILLAGE

Though the heart of Takoda territory stretches hundreds of miles across rolling plains and valleys, there is a village relatively nearby. Nicknamed "First Village" by the Silver Ridge residents, it is actually called Iwiyohiyapata - meaning "to the east" in the Takoda tongue. Getting to First Village takes 24 hours at a leisurely pace, or about 18 at a hard ride.

The ride can go by without incident. When they begin to see smoke on the horizon the PCs are soon spotted by Takoda scouts unless they take the initiative to make a Dexterity (Stealth) check in advance. The Passive Perception for the scouts is 15.

Scouting Party. The group of scouts defending the village consists of eight **scouts** and three **berserkers**, all on **riding horses**. If anyone shouts to them in Siouхан they will whoop and holler as they taunt and circle the party - but they will listen to the speaker's plea before attacking. With a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check the scouts peacefully take the party to the village - though the PCs may feel more like prisoners than allies. Otherwise, they attack. Resolve combat as usual on an open field.

VILLAGE AND CULTURE

First Village can be described as follows once the party arrives:

Straddling a narrow river at the heart of a wide basin, the First Village stands like a smaller model of the mountains far beyond. Over a hundred tipis rise into the blue sky, and a herd of countless horses thunders across the plains. Women and children tend to the horses within the village, dressing and painting them while they sing and play. Men stride around the tipis and huts, adorned in war paint and ceremonial garb.

The people stare at you warily, the fact that you are escorted by scouts being all that prevents them from defending themselves against you. Even so they keep their weapons close, treating your presence with curiosity and suspicion.

Just as the Waynoka is loosely based on the Cheyenne Native American culture and language, the Takoda are modeled after the Lakota Sioux. As with Waynoka, Takoda is not specifically locked into this cultural reference and has several influences.

Diet and Supplies. The Takoda are hunters, and trade very little. Visitors will find plenty of meat to buy and eat, with fruits and vegetables being very rare. Any party member who barter fruit, vegetables, or bread will be able to acquire a far greater value in bison and deer meat.

Every Part of the Buffalo. The buffalo are significant for Takoda culture, because it provides the people with everything they need. Food, shelter, and tools can be made from the animal's giant body. The tipis that people live in are made from many buffalo hides sewn together. Anyone wearing parts of a buffalo, the Waynoka hunting necklace, or that have great hunting stories to tell find themselves rather popular among the villagers.

CHIEF HOLDING TWO FEATHERS

The chief of the Takoda is also a respected medicine man and seer of visions. Holding Two Feathers once warned his people of invasion, led them to rich hunting grounds, and successfully negotiated the surrender of rival tribes.

Holding Two Feathers is a proud, tall man with cloudy gray eyes. Like most in his village he speaks very little. He does not trust outsiders, but if they can prove themselves virtuous and respectable he can be persuaded to speak. When he does, he reveals a great secret that may shake the spirit and warp the mind of those who listen. His revelation changes the fundamental beliefs of the party and makes their agenda to stop the Watcher all the more paramount.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

THE FOUR VALUES

Chief Holding Two Feathers spends his time in his tipi, and if anyone asks for him he remains unavailable to meet with them. The others say he is in meditation and contemplation, which is partly true. He is also sending word to the village to test these outsiders for their integrity and values before he will aid them. With the hour, he has four values tested discretely and the results reported back to him:

Wacantognaka: The Siouxan word for generosity, wacantognaka means to contribute to the well-being of one's people and all life by sharing and giving freely. This sharing is not just of objects and possessions, but of emotions like sympathy, compassion, kindness. It also means to be generous with one's personal time. The act of giving and not looking for anything in return can make you a better person and make you happy.

Testing the party for wacantognaka is no simple or solitary endeavor. Over the course of an hour, several villagers will approach a PC and ask for gold, beads, fur, food, or other goods. They don't need these things, but will see how willing the PC is in offering it. They may also ask for their time an assistance, such as looking for a lost horse or holding a child still while they tell a story. If the PC declines these requests, especially without giving a reason why, they fail the test.

Wotitakuye: Wotitakuye, or kinship, is one of the important values coming from the tiyospaye, the extended family. It includes the ideas of living in harmony, belonging, relations as the true wealth and the importance of trusting in others. It is one of the values that made the tiyospaye work.

At some point each PC will be called away in private by a different villager. The villager will ask, in somewhat broken English, what they think of the rest of the party. They say that the PC in question has an honest face, but they are curious about the others. If each PC speaks indifferently or positively about the others in the party, they pass. If they speak negatively about anyone, they fail.

Wacintaka: Meaning fortitude, wacintaka means facing danger or challenges with courage, strength and confidence. Believing in oneself allows a person to face challenges. Fortitude includes the ability to come to terms with problems, to accept them and to find a solution that is good for everyone.

One PC, the most physically imposing or war-hardened, is asked to help defend the village from a large **brown bear** approaching. They make it clear that they must not use weapons, which would be disrespectful to nature and an insult to the bear. If the PC bravely decides to face the bear unarmed, they are in for a surprise. The bear - a village pet named Mato - rolls onto its back when they get close and tries to play - much to the laughter of the children around them. Refusing to fight the bear alone or using a weapon against their beloved Mato is a failure of the test.

Woksape: The knowledge and wisdom (woksape) of the elderly is very important for the well-being of the Takoda. This is understood to be something sought and gained over the course of one's entire life, but not just by adding years to one's life. Wisdom has to do with understanding the meaning within natural processes and patterns, and also being open to the dreams of the day and the night when spiritual direction may come to a receptive child or adult seeking wisdom.

The final test is a simple one. The oldest-looking PC is posed a riddle by a fellow elder, curious to know if the PC can solve it. If they do, they pass:

There are two villagers: a big one, and a little one. The little one is the big one's son but the big one is not the little one's father. How is this possible?

Answer: The big villager is the mother.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

THE VISION QUEST

If the party completes the tests for three out of the Four Values, Chief Holding Two Feathers agrees to lend the Takoda War Party in a battle against Mayor Ellis and his mindless miscreants. If the party fails, the Takoda considers the group unworthy allies and continues to remain defensive instead of offensive.

Before the Takoda go to war, Holding Two Feathers bestows a great honor - he entreats the visitors to embark upon a vision quest for guidance. Normally this sacred ritual takes many days and involves numerous rites and components. The vision quest is also typically sought only by individuals. Due to the limited time, however, he sequesters the group (those who wish to participate) into a large sweat lodge where they will remain for hours.

The chief hands each seeker a heavy robe made of buffalo hide and bundles of offering sticks to be burned. He also hands one of them - likely the "leader" of the PCs - a sacred pipe made from the bones of a white buffalo. The seekers sit on one end of the lodge near fire-heated stones, onto which water is poured to create stifling sweat. A rectangular place, approximately 5x5 feet, is cleared and a pole with tobacco offerings is put at the center. Other smaller poles are placed at the four directions, with offerings and the representative colors of the four directions tied to each of them. Sage is spread near the center pole as a "bed" for the normally solitary seeker to rest on when tired.

When the place is readied, the chief leaves and the lead seeker goes to the center pole and faces west, and then walks to the pole that has been placed in the west. Here he prays again with his pipe in his hands. He then returns to the center pole and goes to the north and repeats the process. Same with the east and the south, taking as much time as needed in any or all directions. When finished with all four, he starts prayer again, all day and into the night.

BEYOND THE VEIL

As the moon hangs high in the night sky, the seekers receive their visions. At last the veil of "The Secret" is lifted, and the intentions of the Watcher revealed.

Each player is told their vision privately. What they see is the cause of their death, which occurred before they arrived at Johnstown. This should have been determined by you the DM by now, teased until this point, and finally shown in detail.

One PC could have drowned in a shipwreck on their voyage across the Atlantic. Someone could have given their life heroically in a house fire. Perhaps they were a soldier killed in the final battles of the Civil War. Perhaps they were executed as a criminal, or killed by one.

Whatever the cause of untimely demise, the PCs should be made aware that any "memories" of what happened between death and Johnstown are vague at best. They were merely the soul's attempt to make peace with their death, and they now realize they were false. Midnight Boys, they now see, are simply new arrivals that couldn't process or accept the fact that they are dead. So they go insane.

With a DC 12 Wisdom save the PCs receive one more vision. Mayor Ellis stands in the depths of Grey's Mine. Unlike the false appearance he had before, he now appears as the ghoulish Grim Reaper himself. He meditates in a large chamber filled with corpses, performing a ritual which will "reset" Western Valley to a beginning stage once again. The poker tournament provided the bodies and souls he needed for the ritual, and he now reaps his harvest. Once he is finished, every single soul in Western Valley will cross over and vanish. The area will then become an "unexplored frontier" once more, and new arrivals to the valley will build new cities and start the cycle again.

If the Watcher is defeated, spirits will be free to live their lives - or unlives - as they see fit. The awakened souls within can help arrives adjust, preventing Midnight Boys and those who hunt them.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

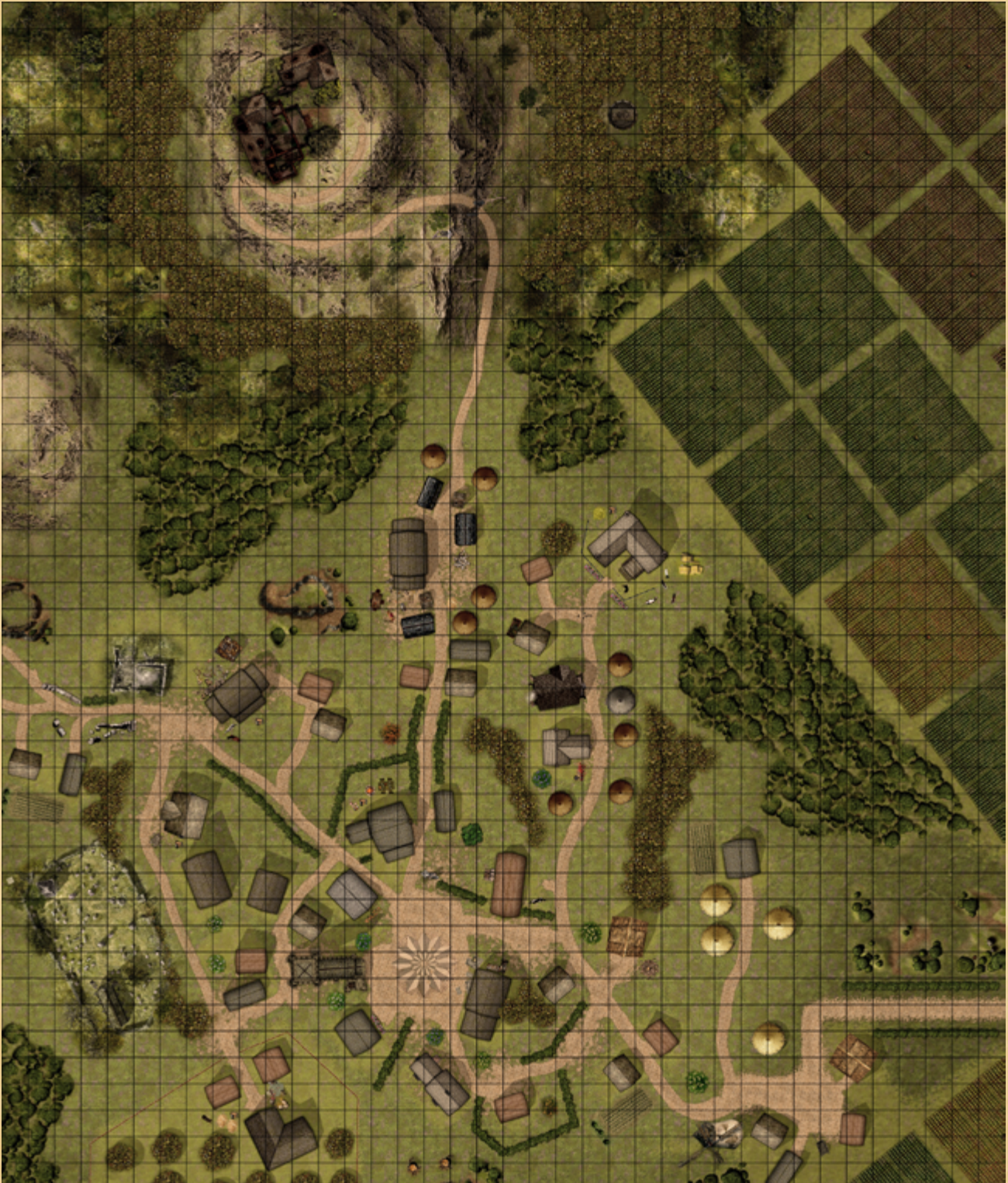
AN ARMY OF FEATHERS

If the Takoda go to war, use the units and placement of the Silver Ridge Battle map below.

In the early morning hours, a thunder rolls over the town of Silver Ridge. Dust rises from the west, soon revealed to be a mounted army of Takoda warriors. Hired mercenaries rise to defend Grey's Mine, and their master the Watcher within.

If the Takoda are successful, the PCs have Inspiration going into the final battle in Grey's Mine. If they lose, the PCs suffer disadvantage for the first minute (ten rounds) of combat.

Moving into Grey's Mine, use the map on Page 65. A contingent of soldiers will be waiting for them - though far fewer if the Takoda attack is successful.



GREY'S MINE ENTRANCE



Encounter. If the Takoda lose the Mass Combat on approaching Silver Ridge, there are 12 **bandits**, 5 **gunslingers**, and 2 **commanders** waiting for them. They use available cover and work to overwhelm, flank, and potentially chase off the intruders.

If the Takoda win, there are only 6 **bandits**, 2 **gunslingers**, and 1 **commander** left to defend the cave.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

GREY'S MINE - SECTION 1



GREY'S MINE - SECTION 2



DEAD MAN'S HAND

GREY'S MINE

Built decades ago at the dawn of a short-lived silver rush, Grey's Mine was one of the largest in Western Valley. It has long since fallen into disuse, the silver having dried up. Now it serves as the meeting place of the Watcher and his loyal followers. None of the Silver Ridge townsfolk dare visit the mine, even in the long stretch of the year between "harvests." They consider it haunted, rightly so, and those few foolhardy enough to wander too close tend to vanish without a sign or a sound.

The mine was commissioned and built by Walter Gray, an ambitious former banker from Boston. He used his life savings to come out to Western Valley, where he built the mine and attempted several others. He was killed in an unfortunate cave-in, and though some whisper of foul play there has never been any evidence of this. His body was recovered days later and set to rest in the city cemetery.

AREA 1

This small entrance to the mine is roughly 15 feet wide by 20 feet long. It has a ceiling of 10 feet, and contains nothing but the mining rail and a mine-cart filled with stone rubble. It makes an effective scouting area, able to see into the larger sections of the mine thanks to torches along the walls of Areas 2 and 3.

AREA 2

You can read the following description for this area:

The narrow entryway expands quickly into a large chamber of gray-brown stone. Easily 50 by 50 feet in size with a 15-foot ceiling, the chamber is divided in half by a single mining track stretching to the far end. A half-dozen torches along the wall flicker in the darkness, casting a dancing dim glow throughout the chamber. The smell of stagnant water and old wood is strong here, and the age of the place is evident.

Milling about the room are 7 **gunslingers**, casually drinking and joking with one another. They seem to have no awareness of the battle outside or the fact that strangers have infiltrated the mine. They have a Passive Perception of 13 if anyone attempts to observe them stealthily. Otherwise one of them points and shouts, and the gunslingers use rifles to keep the intruders at bay.

Anyone who takes the time after the battle to search the walls and mine-carts for leftover riches can make a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they recover 1d20 gp worth of silver ore.

AREA 3

At this mine junction, **commander** Jim Martin and his **gunslinger** partner Eddie protect the northern passage. If combat breaks out in Area 2, and it looks like the PCs are winning, they light a bundle of dynamite (6 sticks) on the mine-cart and high-tail it north. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check will spot this. The resulting explosion, four rounds later, is enough to cave in the mine. In addition to damage as normal for dynamite, each surviving PC must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to outrun the cave-in and retreat outside. Otherwise, they are crushed.

AREA 4

Leading west of the mine is an old tunnel extending 100 feet further into the mountain. There is nothing of importance along the length of this tunnel. However, the original miners stopped mining just shy of a mother-lode they never new existed. If the party gets the urge to take up the dusty pickaxes, they can mine for at least an hour to reach it. After an hour, have any miners make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success they immediately uncover raw silver ore worth about 10d100 gold pieces. It becomes evident with more prying that there is a very rich silver deposit in the hills. If properly extracted and mined, it could mean revitalizing Silver Ridge and making the new claim owner rich until the end of their days.

AREA 5

You can read the following description for this area:

Curving back on itself is a large tunnel carved into the western wall. Inside are dozens of sleeping bags, bed rolls, barrels of food, and other supplies. There are more sleeping spaces here than the handful of guards outside would warrant, indicated that the number of guards in the mine fluctuates.

In addition to replenishing food or water if necessary, the room also provides some interesting insight on the people risking their lives for the Watcher. Near one bedroll is a handwritten note:

"My love. I am so sorry I was not there for your passing. I swear to you I was true, and my heart desired only to bring us both happiness. Winters claim many lives. Yours, of course, but mine as well. I died shortly after you, which I suppose was all we wanted. I had hoped to find you in Western Valley, this heaven before heaven. But it was not to be. The Watcher said he can reunite us. By serving him, we will be together once more. If it is true, then I count the days until I hold you in my arms again. If it is a lie, then it is one I will defend regardless. You are worth the risk. I love you. Yours always. Samuel."

DEAD MAN'S HAND

AREA 6 - OLD STAIRS

Leading up to the internal rooms of the mine base is a creaky old wooden stairway. Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to sneak up into the base are made at disadvantage.

AREA 7 - SLEEPING CHAMBERS

This room is filled with over two dozen beds, 6 of them occupied by sleeping **bandits**. If roused it will take them at least a round to arm themselves and be ready for combat. They could be attacked in their sleep, but doing so would cause the loss of 1 Reputation point. A DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) or (Persuasion) check is enough to convince the men not to attack. If successful, they surrender peacefully and will follow the commands of the party to the best of their ability. If commanded to fight against the Watcher, however, they will risk death to grab their weapons and turn on the party.

AREA 8 - DINING HALL

You can read the following description for this area:

This 30x30 foot room crackles with the sound of an iron stove and the scent of roasted ham. Casks of wine line the walls, one of which is being enjoyed by the room's occupants. Among them is Antonia Romano, who raises a glass in a toast.

"To our fine Mayor. When Western Valley begins anew, we will reap its fertile riches. Baron Romano. I believe I like the sound of that."

Antonia Romano is joined by a **commander** and two **gunslingers**. If Romano has not survived until now for some reason, only the other three remain - and they look over a map of Western Valley as they determine how best to own it in the near future.

AREAS 9 AND 10 - STORAGE

Within these rooms are ample replenishing supplies, from food to ammunition to gunpowder.

AREA 11 - HIDDEN VAULT

The entrance to this room is hidden behind a large painting in the main hallway. The vault proper is locked, the key tucked in the coin purse of Romano or the commander in Area 8. Picking the lock requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check.

Within the vault are chests containing 5,500 gp, jewels, and personal items such as pocket watches and embroidered kerchiefs.

AREA 12 - WEAPONS STORAGE

Within this small room are wooden crates containing 200 bullets, 10 daggers, 10 short swords, 5 calvary swords (scimitars), 5 pistols, and 2 rifles.

AREA 13 - ELLIS' OFFICE

This simple office contains a map of Western Valley as well as outlying regions, including some new state called "Colorado." In addition, his drawers are filled with newspaper clippings for events that haven't happened yet - stretching as far as 1882.

AREA 14 - BONE ALTAR

Two veterans vigorously defend this hallway. If the party reaches the end, describe the following:

At the end of the hallway is a small stone altar, upon which is laid an adult skeleton. There is no blood, and the skeleton is completely clean. The skeleton seems to have cuts or scrapes across its polished bones, and a ceremonial dagger sits on the altar nearby.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies the skeleton as belonging to an adult male, and has likely been in skeletal form for several decades. A DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check can clue an observer in to further information:

The scrapes on the bones look to be a combination of Native American charms and southern Voodoo incantations. They amount to an anchor for a spiritual forces. Considering the gender, build, and importance of the skeleton in this place, it likely belongs to the Watcher - or at least once did. Since the Watcher is an immortal spirit, the damage or destruction of its protected skeleton could make him vulnerable to attack.

AREA 15 - TORTURE ROOM

You can read the following description for this area:

This morbid, 15 x 45 foot room is filled with crude iron cages, weapon racks, and a table outfitted with leather straps fixed to blood-stained wood. The smell of decay is nearly overpowering. The lone resident in the room wears butchers' garb and slowly stands to his full height of over 7 feet when he sees the door open. His still, stone-like face glares in your direction as he brandishes a butcher knife the size of an axe in one hand and bites off the last chunk of drumstick meat in the other. Without a word "the Butcher" raises his weapon to attack, knocking over buckets of entrails and cleaned bones as he barrels forward.

Encounter. The Butcher fights to the death, using his Intimidating Stare when possible to scatter the party. He would rather chase the PCs away or take them alive if possible, but he will kill if necessary.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

THE BUTCHER

Medium Human, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 16 (Studded Leather)

Hit Points 112 (15d8+45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str+7, Con+6

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation+5

Senses Passive Perception 9

Languages English, German (Can't Speak)

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brave. The Butcher has advantage on saving throws against fear.

Brute. A melee weapon does one extra die of its damage when the Butcher hits with it (included in the attack).

No Escape. When the Butcher hits with an opportunity attack, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Butcher makes two melee attacks.

Battleaxe. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, one target. Hit: 15 (2d8+4) piercing damage.

Unarmed. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, one target. Hit: 6 (1d4+4) bludgeoning damage.

For every minute in which the PC is tortured, have them make a DC 10 Constitution save that increases by 1 (to a maximum of 20), dealing 1d8 damage per minute. On a failure, they break and will answer truthfully any question asked of them. The PC then loses 1 Reputation Score Point.

If the PC holds out for 10 minutes, at which point the DC for the Constitution save is 20, the Butcher and interrogator give up. If the PC is still alive at this point, the Butcher reduces their HP to 0. Whether by this scenario or if the PC is reduced to 0 HP during torture, their body is thrown into one of the cells. They can make death saving throws as normal, and the Butcher pays no regard to them either way. The PC gains 1 Reputation Score Point if they do not break under torture.



The Butcher cannot speak, his tongue long since removed. However, if he is defeated and allowed to live he can be convinced to be helpful with a DC 15 Persuasion or Intimidation check. In such a case he can lead the party to the bones in Area 14 and gesture to break or snap them, follow the party as extra muscle, or assist in any other way his simple mind can comprehend. He will not fight against the Watcher, but he will help the PCs otherwise.

If at any point inside the mine a PC is left behind or captured in any way, they will be dragged to this Torture Room and imprisoned. In time Antonia Romano or some other commander will come by and question the PC, wanting to know what they are doing and what their future plans are. If the PC is less than forthcoming, the Butcher will then be tasked with extracting the information from them.

DEAD MAN'S HAND

AREA 16 - COMMANDER'S QUARTERS

The sleeping area of Antonia Romano or the presiding commander, this room is clean and scented with rose oil. The oil, sweet as it may smell, is also laced with poison.

If any PC stays in the room for longer than 2 rounds, have them make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against poison. On a failure, they lose consciousness. Every round thereafter in which they are in the room, the PC gains one level of exhaustion. Eventually they could die of exposure.

A DC 10 Medicine check identifies the poison in the rose oil on the dresser. Throwing the oil out of the room or burning it will stop the continuous effects, but the poison itself will need to be cured. The rose oil poison has 10 Cure Points before the PC can regain consciousness and recover exhaustion levels.

AREA 17 - TEMPLE OF DEATH

At the far end of the main corridor is a large room hidden away behind a solid oak door. It can be described as follows:

The heavy oak door creaks as it opens, letting escape a nauseating scent of rotting meat, pooled blood, and molding walls. Beyond is a 30 by 40 foot room of solid stone, arranged like a small church with rows of pews aligned to face an altar at the front. The pews, however, are buried beneath a massive pile of bodies. Dozens, perhaps over a hundred, sit dead still with lifeless eyes and open mouths. Flies buzz around them, creating a dull hum in the air. What little light shines in the room comes from flickering sconces along the wall.

At the front of the temple, where a priest might stand, is a tall man with a top hat and monocle. At first he seems like Mayor Ellis, and in a way he is, but here he allows his true form to be seen. With vacant gray eyes, the Watcher stands half leaning over a brass bowl of blood. He mutters something in a language you do not understand, but it seems to resonate within your very soul. The dark, guttural words echo through the room and cause the lights to waver slightly on certain pronunciations.

If the party has not destroyed the skeleton in Area 14, the Watcher ignores the intruders unless they come further into the room. He has nothing to fear from them.

If the skeleton is destroyed, or if the PCs take more than a few steps into the room, the Watcher speaks without needed to roll for Perception.

"Welcome, friends. If you are looking for the poker championship earnings, they are in the coffer behind me. Otherwise, have a seat. The world is about to be made anew, and you have the honor of bearing witness."

Moment of Truth: Inaction - If the PCs do nothing to attack the Watcher or disrupt his ritual in any way, he ignores them or speaks somewhat vaguely to stall for time. In one minute (10 rounds) from the time the PCs enter the room, his ritual will be complete. Until then, if asked about the bodies or his intentions, the Watcher replies along the lines of:

"Fear not. For like you, they were already dead. This form of theirs is little more than aether, spiritual essence made flesh to allow the soul time to make a choice. A choice on who they truly are. Noble. Cowardly. Hero. Villain. Friend. Enemy. Their day of reckoning has come. The harvest is complete. Now the fallen will usher in a new era. I hope your time in Western Valley has been enlightening. Be at peace."



DEAD MAN'S HAND

After one minute, you can describe the following:

Soon the bowl of blood begins to bubble and boil. It shakes and steams, and the Watcher smiles widely at the sight. He takes a step back, staring unblinking at the cauldron which threatens to erupt. Soon a bright red light flashes from within the bowl, blinding all within the room.

In an instant, it is over. Some of you behold a realm of light and gold, peace and serenity. The gates of Heaven are open to you. Some see only darkness and feel a deep, frozen despair as you stand in the depths of Hell. The purgatory of Western Valley is cleansed and reset, and once more souls begin to flood in - blissfully ignorant on the steps of their own adventures.

That is it. The game is over. The players are welcome to begin again as new characters on a new adventure.

Moment of Truth: Action - If the PCs attack or disrupt the ritual in any way, the Watcher growls and attacks. Screaming "you cannot prevent the inevitable," he brandishes clawed hands and attacks.

If the PCs did not destroy the skeleton in Area 14, use the **ghost** creature statistics for the Watcher. The difference is the Watcher is immune to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage - not just resistant to it. Needless to say, this will not go well for the PCs. If they uses the torches or other means of dealing damage and happen to destroy the Watcher, he will live to return another day in the future - though the PCs still gain a victory. If they later destroy the skeleton in Area 14, the Watcher will not return.

If the skeleton is destroyed before engaging the Watcher, use the statistics to the right. The Watcher fights to the death, and you can describe the following if he is defeated:

The Watcher falls back, looking over his injuries as though shocked he could have them. From each wound flame begins to erupt, flickering in dark red light. The Watcher's monocle falls out, and he looks to you in shock and rage.

"This... is not... possible. I cannot die..." With one final groan of pain, the man crumples into a heap on the floor. His body combusts with flame, consuming him in a howling ball and reducing him to ash. Just then, one of you feels a jolt of energy. The one who dealt the killing blow levitates slightly, your body bathed in golden-orange light. The power, and the responsibility, of the Watcher passes on to you. You feel it. The omniscience. The balance. You can sense where every soul in Western Valley currently is and what they are doing. Your feet touch the ground once more, no longer as a mere mortal. You are the new Watcher.

THE WATCHER

Medium Undead, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 17 (Natural)

Hit Points 84 (13d10+13)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis+6, Cha+6

Skills Perception +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks made with weapons that are not silver

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 16

Languages All spoken languages

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The Watcher can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Regeneration. The Watcher regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Watcher makes two melee attacks with its cane.

Cane. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, one target. Hit: 15 (3d6+5) bludgeoning damage.

Harrowing Scream (Recharge 6). The Watcher emits an otherworldly shout. Each creature of the Watcher's choice within 60 feet of it that is able to hear the roar must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 33 (6d10) psychic damage and be frightened for 1 minute. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw takes half as much damage and isn't frightened. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



DEAD MAN'S HAND

AFTERMATH

As denoted in the previous scene's description, the PC who makes the killing blow against the Watcher becomes the next Grim Reaper. They can either choose to accept this position or pass it on to someone else who is willing. In either case, the new Watcher can use the Watcher statistics on Page 72 as a template for their new statistics.

The new Watcher has the important task of determining the fate of Western Valley. Does the status quo continue as always? Are there changes? Expansions? Developments? Allow the new Watcher plenty of time to determine these things.

In addition to the XP of defeating the Watcher, there is a considerable horde of loot to be found. The Watcher was truthful in his statement: the locked chest near the altar has 10,000 gp in coins inside.

SILVER RIDGE

If the new Watcher decides to keep Western Valley as it is, there are a few things to consider and places to visit. Among them, of course, is Silver Ridge. The mine has been cleared and the people freed from the supernatural forces that haunted it. With access to a source of wealth once more, life can return to the dying town. Trade can be rekindled, travel and commerce expanded, and the local farming community developed. It may take years, but Silver Ridge can once more join the rest of Western Valley as a town worth visiting.

SNAKE'S BEND

With the potential peace obtained with the Takoda, it may be possible to mend the conflict between them and the Waynoka. Such a peace could usher in a new era of collaboration and trade between the rival tribes, and the unity of Natives could well mend some of the tensions between them and the American settlers as well.

JOHNSTOWN

The entryptpoint for wayward souls into Western Valley, Johnstown proves to be more important than perhaps initially thought. The new Watcher and the band of heroes that aided them could do well to clean up that town. By straightening (or perhaps replacing) Sheriff Sumner and cleansing the towns of any bandits, Johnstown could become a peaceful welcome into the land of the passed.

Alternatively, if altruism is not on the PC's agenda, it could also be reformed to be even more strict and militant - a sign to all who arrive of what is to come, and source of standing and wealth for the new Watcher and their crew.

RED GULCH

Though the of bodies sacrificed within Grey's Mine were came from across Western Valley, the vast majority were harvested in Red Gulch. Once their bodies are returned - or at the very least mentioned upon return to the city - a funerary service is held at Lady of Grace Chapel by Father Gabriel McCall. After giving a few words of respectful mourning, he offers a simple yet poignant poem for the fallen:

Make me no grave within that quiet place
Where friends shall sadly view the grassy mound,
Politely solemn for a little space,
As though the spirit slept beneath the ground.

For me no sorrow, nor the hopeless tear;
No chant, no prayer, no tender eulogy:
I may be laughing with the gods--while here
You weep alone. Then make no grave for me

But lay me where the pines, austere and tall,
Sing in the wind that sweeps across the West:
Where night, imperious, sets her coronal
Of silver stars upon the mountain crest.

Where dawn, rejoicing, rises from the deep,
And Life, rejoicing, rises with the dawn:
Mark not the spot upon the sunny steep,
For with the morning light I shall be gone.

Far trails await me; valleys vast and still,
Vistas undreamed of, canyon-guarded streams,
Lowland and range, fair meadow, flower-girt hill,
Forests enchanted, filled with magic dreams.

And I shall find brave comrades on the way:
None shall be lonely in adventuring,
For each a chosen task to round the day,
New glories to amaze, new songs to sing.

Loud swells the wind along the mountain-side,
High burns the sun, unfettered swings the sea,
Clear gleam the trails whereon the vanished ride,
Life calls to life: then make no grave for me!

ELSEWHERE IN WESTERN VALLEY

Across the rolling hills and rushing rivers, the majestic mountains and winding canyons, Western Valley is a virtually untapped haven of natural beauty. It could be preserved as it is, or the new Watcher could see to the responsible growth of the land. New arrives foster new towns - towns which will need lawmen to govern and trade to develop. The possibilities are endless. Adventure awaits!





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POETRY CREDITS

"Make Me No Grave" by Henry Herbert Knibbs

Dakota Territory. 1872.

The gold that once birthed the boomtown of Red Gulch has begun to dry out. To keep pioneers in the city and invite in more, Mayor Ellis has called for a poker tournament with stakes too high for folks to pass up. On the second night of the tournament, however, a tavern girl screams as her drunken patron slumps over with a knife in his back. Over time, more and more residents and visitors — many of them participants in the tournament — end up six feet under. Can the remaining players and curious bystanders solve the mystery of Red Gulch before it's too late?

