

RAVAGED EARTH

RELICS & RUMORS #2



BLACKBEARD'S CUTLASS * BOOMERANG OF
WATI-KUTJARA* CHIEF CRAZY HORSE'S RIFLE *
CHARLEMAGNE'S CROWN * CRYSTAL SKULL OF DOOM



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BLACKBEARD'S CUTLASS

History is filled with the misdeeds of evil and treacherous men and women, people whose hearts were rife with darkness. The level of cruelty achieved by several of these individuals leaves a stain on the world around them. The notorious 18th century pirate known as Blackbeard was just such a person, and his wicked legacy lives on with his most infamous effect – a simple cutlass with a dark past.

Shortly after this meeting Teach changed his name to Blackbeard and took over a French slave ship. Renaming it Queen Anne's Revenge, the pirate set out plundering and pillaging across the deep blue waters of the Caribbean. He quickly gained a reputation as a merciless murderer, raiding fat merchant ships for years, and was never seen without the razor-sharp cutlass given to him by Hornigold.



History

Edward Teach was a British-born man who took to the sea early in life. After serving the crown of England in the early part of the 18th-century he turned his attention towards piracy, learning the trade from a man named Benjamin Hornigold. Hornigold gave his protégé a finely wrought cutlass as a gift shortly after their first meeting. The older pirate claimed the weapon was forged years ago by the turks of the Ottoman Empire and would help make a respectable pirate out of Teach. Hornigold was not known to have ever used the blade in any situation and was never seen carrying it.

In 1718 Blackbeard and his pirate fleet blockaded the port city of Charleston, South Carolina, but in an unusual move he only demanded a supply of medicine from the city in exchange for a group of prominent citizens kept aboard. The ransom was delivered and Blackbeard released the prisoners unharmed.

After losing two of his ships to shallow waters, Blackbeard stripped the remaining ships of their treasure, marooned the crew, and accepted a general pardon, retiring to an inlet on the coast of Virginia to enjoy his treasure. The governor of Virginia decided to do away with the pirate, however, and sent Lieutenant Robert Maynard and two sloops to kill Blackbeard.

The battle was fierce, and during the fighting the retired pirate was shot five times and stabbed over twenty times, and still he fought on. Eventually Maynard



decapitated Teach and returned to collect the bounty. Maynard asked to keep only one item from the pirate's loot – a finely wrought cutlass Blackbeard had used since taking up pirating years earlier.

Maynard slipped into relative obscurity after this, but ten years later was kicked out of the Royal Navy for killing a superior officer in an unprovoked attack. The weapon used in the attack, a masterfully crafted cutlass, was confiscated by the Royal Navy as evidence and taken away. What happened to the weapon after this is unknown, but given its history of violence and bloodshed it is only a matter of time before it resurfaces.

Physical Description

Blackbeard's Cutlass appears as an expertly-forged weapon of exquisite, though simple, beauty. The basket hilt is made of gold, but seems to carry an almost crimson sheen in certain lights. The blade itself is balanced to the point of perfection and cuts just as easily through flesh as it does rope. At the base of the hilt is set a small ruby.

Powers

The cutlass used most famously by Blackbeard is a weapon capable of great destruction and debauchery. There is a malevolent intelligence interred within the blade, though not an actual sentience – more of a gnawing need for bloodshed and violence. Something happened during its forging that created this terrible hunger, and in Blackbeard it found a perfectly willing host.

The cutlass can be used in combat as an effective melee weapon (Str+d6+3, AP 2). Anyone who possesses the blade gains the *Mean* hindrance; if they already had it, it gets upgraded to *Bloodthirsty*. For as long as the person carries the cutlass this hindrance remains.

In addition, if the bearer of Blackbeard's Cutlass ever suffers a wound (even if the weapon is sheathed) a Smarts check must be made. If the roll fails the holder of the blade goes berserk, attacking everyone! This is similar to the Berserk edge (page 21 of the ***Savage Worlds Explorer's Edition***) except that it lasts for 2d6 rounds and the berserker is allowed to use Shooting and Fighting. It cannot be ended earlier.

The bearer of the cutlass can reach deep down into the weapon's sinister center and call upon its most powerful ability. By expending a benny and wielding the cutlass, the holder can stave off the effects of death in a blood-crazed frenzy. This is similar to the berserk ability (and can be triggered during such a berserk) with a few important differences. For one, it lasts 2d6 rounds after the benny is spent, regardless of whatever time is left on the previous berserk.

It also allows the wielder to continue fighting regardless of how many wounds are suffered. He does not suffer any Wound penalties and does not get Incapacitated – he simply continues to fight under the effects of the berserk. Once the 2d6 rounds have passed, regardless of how many Wounds have been suffered, the cutlass steals the life from the wielder killing him immediately. This should be viewed as a last act of desperation in only the most desperate of circumstances.

Rumors and Speculation

Why did Blackbeard demand only medicine from the residents of Charleston when he had the whole city blockaded and at his control? Rumors circulated by abandoned crew members say that Teach wanted a certain type of medicine created by a druggist in Charleston, but for what purpose is not known. It's possible he wanted the drug to enhance the power of the cutlass, perhaps even to give shape and form to the malevolence inside the blade – or maybe it was the only way to free himself from its wicked powers

...



Ravaged Tale: Rise of the Black Thrasher

The cutlass used by the pirate Blackbeard was confiscated by the Royal Navy over two hundred years ago, and since then it has passed not only from officer to officer but also from force to force. At some point the Royal Air Force got a hold of it, and it was given over to a well-deserving pilot named Thomas Kruger as a symbol of honor. Kruger was stripped of his rank and title and he became a sky pirate, but his obsession over the cutlass knows no bounds.

This Ravaged Tale features several possibilities for aerial combat and dogfights against a pirate fleet and its zeppelin. If one of the heroes is a pilot or Rocket Ranger than this is their chance to shine! Other heroes could man mounted guns or try to take the fight to the interior of the zeppelin itself; be sure not to leave them out!

Background

Thomas Kruger was a decorated lieutenant in the Royal Air Force. A skilled pilot known for being cool under pressure, Kruger was thoughtful of his fellow soldiers and respectful of the chain of command. As recognition of his services, the RAF awarded Kruger with a beautiful cutlass – an honor afforded to few members of the Royal Air Force.

Unaware that this weapon was Blackbeard's legendary weapon, Kruger underwent changes almost immediately. He became surly, talking back to superior officers and challenging orders. The cutlass had found a soul similar to Blackbeard himself and it took root deep within Kruger, unleashing a bloodthirsty streak not before seen from the officer.

When Kruger challenged and almost killed a fellow officer over a petty slight, he was brought up on charges and found guilty. Stripped of his rank and his sword, Kruger fled England with a group of thug-like loyalists that sprung up around him. Somehow he acquired a zeppelin, which he named the Black Thrasher, and gathered a small sky pirate fleet to accompany it.

The Black Kingfisher and its accompanying ships plied the unfriendly skies over America, making small time hits against banks and other businesses along the coast. But Kruger never lost sight of the cutlass – as a matter of fact his mind splintered and he became obsessed over it. By tapping into a network of spies and informants he learned that his cutlass was given over to a respected British officer named Colonel Conrad Cook, and that Col. Cook was married to an American woman. His wife's family is from the small town of Victoria, South Carolina, and it just so happens that the couple is taking some well-deserved vacation with her side of the family.

It's just such an opportunity Kruger has been waiting for, and the pirate plans on attacking Cook on his drive to Victoria through the pleasant hills of South Carolina. On a cloudy day he chooses to strike while Cook stops for gas in Milltown. Unfortunately for him, the heroes also happen to be gassing up at the same time ...

Full Service at Gunpoint

The scenario begins with the heroes stopping at a fill-up station in Milltown, South Carolina. It's a nothing town with barely one hundred residents, but it's on the main highway and gets quite a few travelers. Read the following to start the scenario:

South Carolina is a beautiful state, with rolling green hills and friendly people. You've stopped at a small filling station along the highway; the worn sign declared this place to be Milltown, though it's not much of a town at all. A collection of farms scattered about the countryside, though you do spot an airstrip not too far away with a large barn. Probably for county fairs.

Another car pulls up on the other side of the filling station, the only other visitor that you can see in the area. A man dressed in a smart British uniform steps out and looks around; his wife sits in the passenger seat. Suddenly a gunshot rings out from behind the station and a band of wicked looking men



step forward. They've got guns drawn and are led by a distinguished looking man with an eye patch. He sneers and calls out in a British accent, "Hands in the air!"

There are two pirates for each hero along with Kruger. The pirates are armed with submachine guns and keep them trained on the heroes. Kruger steps forward, ignoring everyone but his target, and slaps Cook across the face. He sneers and grabs the cutlass from Cook's side and a look of triumph crosses his face.

Then he orders his pirates to grab Cook's wife and take her aboard. At that moment a large zeppelin appears out of the clouds above everyone, with ropes dangling down. Kruger, the kidnapped Mrs. Cook, and half of the sky pirates are lifted into the gondola of the zeppelin. This leaves the other half of the pirates distracted, which is the perfect time for the heroes to act!

After the remaining pirates are dealt with, Col. Cook beseeches the heroes for help. He identifies the eye patched man as a disgraced RAF officer named Thomas Kruger, though what he wants with the sword he doesn't know. Cook only wants his wife back and needs help from the heroes.

The zeppelin slowly pulls away with ropes dangling from the gondola.

Zeppelin Away!

The events of this section are left up to the heroes to determine, based on their ingenuity and skill. There is a nearby airstrip with a beat-up biplane that the heroes could borrow from the kindly old farmer if they want; this may be the best option for pilot heroes and those who can fire from the gunner position. Rocket Rangers can take to the sky with just their jetpack.

The rest of the heroes can take actions as they see fit. Ropes dangle from the base of the Black Thrasher and can be climbed to reach the gondola of the

zeppelin; this takes three rounds and a Climbing check each round. As long as there is someone keeping the pirate airplanes busy they leave climbing heroes alone, focusing on the flying threat(s).

Inside the zeppelin gondola are the crew and one pirate for each hero, along with Captain Kruger and the kidnapped Mrs. Cook.

Since the Black Thrasher cannot stall it must constantly be moving forward, and once Kruger is aboard with the cutlass and his prisoner he pushes forward with all speed. One or more of the heroes could give chase in a car on the ground, trying to keep up to catch the ropes dangling from the zeppelin.

Aftermath

Kruger does not utilize the deathless frenzy ability of the cutlass; he's not quite ready to die. If the heroes are having a tough time of the situation a friendly band of Rocket Rangers can show up at just the right time to give them a hand, but dealing with Kruger aboard the Black Thrasher should be the heroes' job.

It is possible that Captain Kruger gets away, perhaps with Blackbeard's Cutlass (and hopefully not with Mrs. Cook!). If Kruger does escape he plots his revenge against the heroes – this certainly isn't the last time they've seen the pirates of the Black Thrasher!

BEAT-UP BIPLANE (SMALL AIRCRAFT)

Acc/Top Speed: 10/30 (75 mph); **Climb:** 10;

Toughness: 10 (1); **Crew:** 1 + 1

Weapons: Twin Vickers machinegun (Fixed Forward, 24/48/96, ROF 3, 2d10, AP 2), one rotating machinegun (180 degrees rear/side firing, 24/48/96, ROF 3, 2d8, AP 2).



BLACK THRASHER, MODIFIED VN-91 WRAITH (MEDIUM ZEPPELIN)

Acc/Top Speed: 10/100 (75 mph); **Climb:** 15;
Toughness: 12 (2, gondola)/10 (envelope); **Crew:** 4
Weapons: 1 mounted Lewis machinegun on front and rear (180 degrees, 24/48/96, ROF 3, 2d8, AP 2); twin mounted machineguns on both sides (180 degrees, 24/48/96, ROF 3, 2d10, AP 2)
Notes: 6 hook and cranes for Small aircraft; cannot stall; cannot suffer critical hits to the envelope.

PIRATE AIRPLANES, CURTISS F9C-2 SPARROWHAWK (SMALL AIRCRAFT)

Acc/Top Speed: 12/36 (90 mph); **Climb:** 15;
Toughness: 10 (1); **Crew:** 1+1 (1)
Weapons: Twin Lewis machineguns (Fixed Forward, 24/48/96, ROF 3, 2d10, AP 2).
Notes: Each pirate airplane has only one crewmember. The twin machineguns are linked and use one Shooting roll for both, so the damage was increased to compensate (2d8 to 2d10).

THOMAS KRUGER, SKY CAPTAIN



Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Tracking d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6
Hindrances: Mean, Bloodthirsty, Obsessed (Blackbeard's Cutlass), One Eye
Edges: Command, Natural Leader
Gear: Webley & Scott revolver (12/24/48, 2d6+1), eye patch, Blackbeard's Cutlass.

SKY PIRATES

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d8, Guts d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Piloting d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5
Hindrances: Greedy
Edges: Connections (sky pirates)
Gear: Knife (Str+1), Beretta M1918 submachine gun (12/24/48, ROF 3, 2d6, AP 1)



BOOMERANG OF WATI-KUTJARA

Australia is an island nation of striking contrasts. The eastern coast contains major cities like Brisbane and Sydney where people live much like they do in other civilized parts of the world. Go west, however, and the land quickly becomes lawless and wild, with great sweeping plains, majestic mountains, and many tribes of indigenous Aborigines prospering without modern aid. Here the legends of the ancestors are passed on through oral tradition, and they sing songs about the wandering Wati-kutjara and their deeds of adventure.

thus they would become part of the world of mortals. Aborigines still believe this spirit realm exists, and the world is crisscrossed with a myriad of paths where the line between our world and the spirit world is thin; they call these Songlines, but they are known by many names across many cultures (druids in England called them ley lines, and the swamis of India call them naga lines).

The most famous tale sung of the Wati-kutjara involves the Man on the Moon, who tried to force himself upon the first human woman. The spirit brothers, being good and protectors of humanity, intervened and crippled the Man on the Moon by using a powerful



History

Aboriginal history is passed down from one generation to another through extensive an oral tradition of singing. These native Australians sing about the creation of the world, which was literally named into existence by ancient spirits. A common tale sung around many parts of the Outback involve the Wati-kutjara – two lizard spirit brothers who wandered the Dreamtime, giving names to trees, plants, and animals and singing them into existence.

According to Aboriginal mythology Dreamtime is a parallel existence to our own where the spirits live and play. For a long time there was only the Dreamtime, but then beings such as the Wati-kutjara called objects into being by giving them names, and

boomerang. Each brother had their own boomerang though like themselves the items were identical in shape.

One of the Wati-kutjara passed his boomerangs to one the tribes of Western Australia, while the other gave his to a tribe in eastern Australia. The boomerang was an important aspect of many Aborigine tribes, used for hunting, hand-to-hand combat, creating music, starting fires, and play, and the civilized world was introduced to them through the Turuwal Aborigines in New South Wales. They claim to be the tribes from eastern Australia gifted with one of the Wati-kutjara boomerangs, but lost the relic through warfare and trade over the hundreds of years.



The boomerang has not surfaced, so it is possible it is still in the possession of a hidden tribe somewhere deep in the wild lands of the Outback.

Physical Description

The Boomerang of Wati-kutjara is actually two identical items, each used by one of the lizard man brothers and given to an Aborigine tribe. They are large, intricately carved wooden items, with a simple grip, a curved body, and light script written on both sides of the relic. A normal boomerang can be a returning or non-returning type depending on the curve, but the Boomerang of Wati-kutjara is crafted to be functional as either. The inside of the curve is sharpened to a razor-edge as well to be effective in melee combat.

Powers

The Boomerang of Wati-kutjara can be used as a weapon in both melee and ranged combat. It can be thrown (4/8/16, Str+d4+3) and returned with a raise on the Throwing roll, or it can be used with a Fighting check in hand-to-hand combat (Str+d4+3).

The ancient Aboriginal script written on the sides are songs, and when sung while holding the boomerang the singer can try to persuade the Wati-kutjara spirit to aid them. The spirit powers are Neutral to begin with, and the singer must make a Persuasion check at -2 (or no penalty if the singer is of Aboriginal descent) – this singing takes one action to complete. If the Wati-kutjara is made Friendly he allows the singer and up to ten others instantaneous travel along the Songlines that crisscross the world, meeting at spiritually important intersections (such as the Ululu Rock in Australia or Stonehenge in England). This affects everyone within 10" of the singer up to the maximum number of people. Time freezes for the singer and one of the Wati-kutjara brothers appears before him, asking where they wish to travel.

If the spirit is made Helpful (with a raise on the Persuasion roll) he offers a boon or immediate access to the Songlines of the world. This boon is in the form of some minor altering of reality. The Wati-kutjara can change a single action from success to failure or failure to success that happened within the past two rounds. This ripple is from the spirit imposing the power of the Dreamtime onto reality. The repercussions of this change are left to the GM to devise based on the situation, but damage could be negated (or even death!) by the altering of one action.

If the singer rolls a natural 1 on the Persuasion check (regardless of the Wild Die), the Wati-kutjara is angered. This anger manifests itself similar to the Dreamtime reality ripple where the spirit makes one action that succeeded fail or vice versa, but it happens to the singer sometime in the next 24 hours at the spirit's discretion and always for the worse. The Wati-kutjara is also offended and does not respond to any singers for the next three days.

Rumors and Speculation

The Wati-kutjara were responsible for singing into existence many aspects of the world, and they imbued much of their power into their pair of boomerangs. One legend sung by the Kariyarra tribe of Western Australia say that the true power of the Wati-kutjara can only be achieved by joining their two boomerangs together. By doing this and singing the correct ritual on a full moon, the Dreamtime and reality will separate once again and everything will be as it was at the beginning of time. There are some Aborigine tribes who would want to see this happen as they watch civilization encroach upon their land and destroy the beauty of the world. They would, of course, need to first find both boomerangs before a band of heroes stops them ...



RAVAGED TALE: DREAM OF SONGS

An unscrupulous business man with a greedy eye towards the future and an ancient Aborigine shaman collide, with the heroes and the Boomerang of Wati-kutjara in the middle of it all. Mortimer Mansfield IV owns the small but very prosperous Mansfield Industries based out of New York, and he is an accomplished world traveler with his eye on the boomerang. Jarrah, a prophetic Aborigine shaman, has been chosen by the spirits to keep the relic from his hands. But he needs some help.

Background

Mortimer Mansfield IV is a man born into high culture. The Mansfield family has been living in the upper crust of New York society since before the American Revolution. They keep a low profile, never doing anything too drastic but always keeping their eye on the bottom line. Mansfield Industries has turned a tidy profit for many years under Mortimer in the twenty years since he took over from his father and life couldn't be better for the family.

But the new Mortimer wants more, and he doesn't care who he has to step on or remove to get it. He's traveled the world several times over, hunting endangered species in the wilds of Africa and Asia for nothing more than the sport of it. While visiting the Australian Outback he learned of the potent powers of the Wati-kutjara's boomerang and found a definable goal to cement his power base. With control over time itself he could do anything he wanted; the possibilities were endless.

Mortimer scoured the world in his quest for the boomerang, the quest becoming an obsession. He hired a ruthless Australian hunter named Owen White to be his eyes and ears on this search, as Mansfield IV had duties to attend in New York City and could not be everywhere. The search went on for five years, with White tracking down every lead and leaving a trail of bodies in his wake.

In Bombay, the Australian hunter hit pay dirt. He found one of the ancient boomerangs for sale in the marketplace and tracked the seller back to their home. There White slit his throat and stole the Boomerang of Wati-kutjara, wiring to Mansfield that he had finally found the relic. Mortimer was ecstatic and sent word that White should return to New York City with all haste.

The Wati-kutjara do not sit idly by while their artifacts fall into the wrong hands, but neither do they act directly outside of the Dreamtime. So they contacted a venerable Aborigine shaman living alone in the Outback named Jarrah. Jarrah was tasked with stopping Mortimer Mansfield IV from acquiring the Boomerang of Wati-kutjara. With the boomerang already on its way to New York, the shaman utilized powerful Aborigine magic to access the Songlines and arrive in the city before White and the relic, but only just barely. He has one day to stop Mansfield.

The Stranger in the Crowd

Alone in the Big Apple, however, Jarrah quickly realized he would need some help. And so he picks the heroes. He is an old man with no knowledge of the city nor its ways, but he does have access to the Dreamtime which he can use to contact the heroes.

As the heroes go about their business in New York City they see a near-naked, old black man with a steel-gray wiry beard in the middle of a crowd, accompanied by the sound of piping didgeridoos. No one else but the heroes sees him or hears the music, since the shaman is using the Dreamtime to project himself. Jarrah carries a crooked walking stick for support and smiles serenely. When the heroes approach he disappears in the blink of an eye.

Jarrah approaches the heroes in this fashion three times over the course of the day. On the third time, after his image winks out of existence, the heroes turn around and find themselves facing the old man directly!



Spirit Request

The Aboriginal shaman speaks only broken English. He says that the Wati-kutjara, ancient lizard spirits of the Dreamtime, told him to come to New York and stop a wicked man from taking possession of one of their powerful relics. Jarrah does not say what this relic is as he does not know himself, but he does explain that the spirits gave him a time and a place when the item was being delivered – East Dock, Pier 91, at midnight tonight.

Jarrah does not know the ways of civilization and was told by the spirits that the heroes could be trusted to help in his endeavor. The men they are stealing the relic from are wicked and evil and would use the spirits' gift with dark intentions. They must be stopped.

The old shaman insists on coming with, but he has a slow Pace (4) and is not helpful at all in combat scenarios. He can, however, direct the heroes to where the spirit's relic is located by following the pulse of the Dreamtime.

Midnight on the East Dock

Owen White is aboard the cargo freighter Good Mansfield, a small vessel owned and operated by Mansfield Industries. It comes to dock at precisely midnight at Pier 91 of the East Dock. Aboard is the Australian hunter and a group of hired thugs who run the ship and do his bidding; there are two thugs for each hero.

Jarrah points the heroes to the cargo hold of the ship. To reach the hold they must bypass the crew who busy themselves on the main deck; there is one thug for each hero on deck performing duties. They are armed but otherwise not expecting a fight, suffering a -2 to Notice rolls.

The cargo hold contains many crates, and Jarrah quickly finds the one that contains what they're looking for. With determination the shaman reveals the Boomerang of Wati-kutjara inside.

The Power of a Boomerang

If the heroes were able to sneak past the guards or otherwise incapacitate them without raising an alarm, White decides to check up on their cargo just as the heroes pry open the crate. He's accompanied by one thug for each hero at this point and does not take kindly to thieves aboard the vessel. If the heroes were not so lucky and forced their way into the hold he shows up with the same retinue at the same moment.

White doesn't have a clear understanding of what the boomerang does or why it's important, but does know that Mortimer Mansfield IV paid him a very large sum of money to acquire it. The Australian hunter is not about to lose it some group of nosy heroes and orders his men to open fire.

Jarrah tells the heroes to protect him while he prepares to call upon the power of the spirits to aid them. The shaman needs two rounds to prepare, during which he holds the boomerang and chants loudly in Aborigine. The heroes need to protect Jarrah during this time, after which he sings the song of summoning inscribed on the relic. Assume his Persuasion roll is a success without a raise.

One moment the heroes are pinned down by a larger force of goons and a ruthless hunter, and the next they find themselves standing on top of an enormous rock in the middle of the Australian Outback! Jarrah bequeathed the Wati-kutjara to transport them to Uluru, a massive rock foundation in Australia.

The heroes are likely confused and disoriented, and the old shaman does little to explain the situation. Jarrah only says that the power of the Wati-kutjara is tied to the Songlines and that they traveled via the Dreamtime to this holy spot near his home. What Jarrah decides to do with the Boomerang of Wati-kutjara is up to you. Either way, the heroes have made an enemy of both Mortimer Mansfield IV and Owen White. Mansfield does not give up easily and sends White to hunt down the heroes. How this plays out is entirely up to you ...



HIRED THUGS

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Piloting d4, Shooting d8, Notice d4

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

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Beretta M1918 submachine gun (12/24/48, 2d6, ROF 3, AP 1), knife (Str+1)

OWEN WHITE, AUSTRALIAN HUNTER

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d6, Fighting d10, Knowledge (Outback) d8, Notice d10, Riding d8, Shooting d12, Stealth d10, Survival d10, Tracking d12

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Arrogant, Wanted (Major)

Edges: Attractive, Danger Sense, Dead Shot, Marksman, No Mercy, Steady Hands

Gear: Khaki outfit, Outback hat, Smith & Wesson M27 revolver (12/24/48, 2d6+1, AP 2), Sharps Big 50 rifle (30/60/120, 2d10, AP 3)



CHARLEMAGNE'S CROWN

So many times the powerful and the wise look to the past for answers. They seek to plumb the experience of those who came before, usually in the hope of finding solutions to their current problems. One such life experience many people have sought to emulate is that of Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, a wise ruler who held at one point most of civilized Europe under his command. His lasting legacy lie in the crown he wore as King of the Franks and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

the Frankish people did and he was not afraid to walk amongst them. Still, he always wore a simple golden crown adorned with ivy leaves, a symbol of his piety and faith.

The crown became synonymous with the great ruler as he conquered territory after territory. He ruled for almost fifty years, during which the Frankish Empire stretched from central Italy north to Denmark, and from modern day France east through Germany. Charlemagne is viewed as the father of both French and German monarchies as well as Europe itself.



History

Charlemagne's Crown was created by the grateful Pope Hadrian I in 774 AD after the Frankish ruler defeated Desiderius, King of the Lombards, a would-be Roman conqueror. Charlemagne declared himself the Lombardy King and was given crowned with the Iron Crown of Lombardy. This item would go on to serve other kings in the future, but it is not the crown for which Charlemagne became known for.

Charles the Great was a man of the people. He did not stand on formality and wore simple clothes, and he always had a sword at his side. He dressed as

When he died in 814 AD he was interred in the magnificent cathedral in Aachen, the western-most city of current Germany. A monk from the famous Bobbio Abbey in Italy penned the *Planctus de obitu Karoli*, "Lament on the Death of Charlemagne," a medieval poem eulogizing the fallen emperor. Charlemagne was buried with his simple crown as a symbol of his everlasting legacy.

In 1165, Frederick I - German King and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire - moved the remains of Charles the Great into a sarcophagus beneath the floor of the cathedral. No mention is made of the



crown being present or not, but the memoirs of the later Frederick II – who moved Charlemagne into a gold and silver casket – indicate that the headpiece worn by the body was platinum and encrusted with jewels of all kinds. Somewhere between his death and later movement the crown was lost.

No other mention is made of Charlemagne's crown, but historians have pointed to the *Planctus de obitu Karoli* as a source of information. The first line of the 17th phrase of the poem makes the following reference: "O Columbanus, hold back your tears". Saint Columbanus was an Irish Catholic missionary who died in 615 AD and was venerated at Bobbio Abbey in Italy. Most archeologists believe the crown was moved to the famous library at the abbey for safe-keeping, but in 1796 Napoleon raided the place and sold most of the treasure. If the Crown of Charlemagne was located there it most certainly isn't today.

Appearance

Charlemagne's Crown is a simple relic made of gold that never seems to tarnish. It is decorated with intricately carved ivy leaves meant to resemble the laurels of ancient Roman emperors. At the apex of the crown where the leaves come together is a single milky-white opal of particular value. The inside of the headpiece bears the following inscription – "The King who does not venerate his people will lose his people."

Powers

The Crown of Charlemagne is a powerful relic more for its historical significance. Anyone who wears the item gains a +3 bonus on Charisma checks, as he exudes an aura of authority and wisdom.

If the crown is worn by a ruler during a mass battle situation, the wearer's side gains a +3 bonus to the Knowledge (Battle) roll each round. In addition the crown bearer gains the Command, Inspire, and Natural Leader Edges, and his abilities affect Wild Cards within

range. If he already possessed these edges his command radius is tripled from 5" to 15".

With a successful Charisma check, the crown wearer can also create a holy glow that surrounds him. This glow acts as an Armor spell with a duration of 3 rounds; it grants 2 points of Armor with a success or 4 points with a raise.

Rumors and Speculation

Charlemagne ruled the Frankish Empire for almost fifty years and fathered the monarchical lines of both France and Germany. With Hitler shoring up his powerbase in the newly modified city of Germania and Prime Minister Leon Blum in France looking to keep the power-hungry Nazis at bay they both could use the support that would come with finding such a prize. The problem is just that, however – the Crown of Charlemagne was lost after the ruler was buried in Aachen Cathedral in 814 AD. Groups of Nazi archeologists have scoured occupied Aachen for months and haven't turned up anything. French spies have also searched Bobbio Abbey in northern Italy but since Napoleon's raid 150 years ago the crown hasn't been seen. The answer may lie with the Order of the Knights of Saint Columbanus – an Irish Catholic brotherhood formed in Belfast, Ireland, and closely tied to the government there ...

RAVAGED TALE: SAINT'S TEARS

In this Ravaged Tale the heroes become embroiled in the quest for Charlemagne's Crown, a potent relic sought by Nazi forces and other, less obvious seekers. It is set in Paris, the City of Lights, and sends the heroes into the catacombs to find the remains of ancient cathedral and the treasure stored within.

Background

Adolf Hitler has many advisors at his beck and call, and he enjoys the support of the occult-oriented



Thule-Gesellschaft. The Thule-Gesellschaft and their masters, the Vril Society, are dedicated to preserving the true origins of the Aryan race, which can be traced back to the capital of the ancient Hyperborean culture. Hitler shares this point of view, but has also been seeking to expand his rule through the acquisition of other historic relics.

One that he has had his eyes on lately is the Crown of Charlemagne. Possession of this item would greatly expand his sphere of influence and create a larger, more loyal power base at home. Hitler has sent covert teams of archeologists and spies searching for the crown, pursuing all rumors.

He is not the only one. French Prime Minister Leon Blum sees the rise of Nazi Germany as a very real threat to his people, but feels that the current republic is inadequately equipped to handle the rising power in the east. Blum sees the restoration of the French monarchy with the government placed in the hands of one competent leader as a very possible road to future salvation. Towards this end he has had spies sent out over the world searching for Charlemagne's Crown.

Both powerful groups are aware of the history of Charles the Great and the events concerning his death. One historian, Dr. Ambrose Pierce, put a piece of the puzzle together just recently at the behest of both parties. The phrase referencing St. Columbanus is most often associated with the great library at Bobbio Abbey, which Napoleon raided 150 years ago. But the saint also founded Luxeuil Abbey, where he taught for many years. His apostles went forth throughout the land to spread his teachings, and one of them was St. Eustace. Eustace came to Paris in 627 AD and built the Cathedral of St. Eustace, but it was torn down during one of the many revolutions in the hundreds of years afterwards.

Dr. Pierce found references indicating that order of St. Eustace was bequeathed a great treasure from the library at Bobbio Abbey. Details were sketchy as to what this treasure was, but Pierce believes it could

be the Crown of Charlemagne. The only thing that remains of the Cathedral of St. Eustace today is its secret storehouse hidden behind a secret door in the catacombs below Paris.

The venerable Dr. Pierce brought this information to the French, who gave him the authority to travel into the catacombs to find the secret treasury of the fallen cathedral. He was trying to play both sides, however, and when he met with the German forces later that day he was discovered as working for the French. The German Gestapo agent, Wilhelm Schwanhauser, shot Dr. Pierce after learning the location of the Cathedral of St. Eustace.

Unfortunately the Germans did not learn that the entrance to the cathedral was hidden and so they go unprepared. Dr. Pierce stumbles into the crowded Parisian street and spots a convenient group of heroes nearby who can stop the Germans from succeeding

Meeting in Paris

The scenario begins with the heroes enjoying a meal on a pleasant Parisian day at an outdoor café. They are visited by a man who is not having a good day and literally dies on the table before them. Read the following to begin.

The sun is shining on this picturesque summer day in Paris. Throngs of people meander by on the streets around you as you sit and enjoy a peaceful moment, unfettered by the cares of the day. The outdoor café you are enjoying has a lovely view of the Eiffel Tower in the distance. All in all a grand scene.

A man suddenly stumbles out of the crowd, his eyes focused on you. He is an older man, with gray hair and a neatly trimmed beard. His face seems a bit on the pale side and he holds a leather briefcase close to his chest as he steps right up to your table. "I was hoping I could discuss a matter of some urgency," the man says after a slight dizzying spell passes over him.



This is Dr. Ambrose Pierce, a Swiss historian. A hero with a background in history or archeology can make a Common Knowledge roll to recognize him. He's well known in academic circles as being somewhat of an arrogant know-it-all who specializes in European history.

Even if the heroes tell him to shove off Dr. Pierce takes a seat. He says that there isn't much time and that the heroes must stop the Germans. He places his briefcase on the table, revealing the blood from the gunshot wound to his belly, before plopping his head down. Dr. Ambrose Pierce dies at that moment. After a few moments, a waitress shows up to ask if the newcomer would like anything to drink (moment of comic relief).

Inside his leather briefcase is a single document, a blood-stained map of the catacombs below Paris with a point marked "Cathedral of St. Eustace."

A Rose By Any Other Name

The heroes don't have long to ponder this new situation before the situation catches up with them. Rose LaFontaine is an accomplished French spy and espionage master who was assigned to watch Dr. Pierce. It's lucky she was, since this brings her into contact with the heroes.

Give the heroes some time to try and figure out what's going on and maybe start discussing what to do with the body. A few minutes pass and then another stranger shows up at their table. This time it's a woman, an exceedingly beautiful French woman who introduces herself as Rose LaFontaine. She explains the situation to the heroes as much as she feels the need to, which boils down to something like this:

She represents the Catholic Church who hired Dr. Ambrose Pierce to find the storehouse of a lost cathedral dedicated to St. Eustace. Dr. Pierce sold the information to German agents in the city as well, which is how he wound up in his current predicament. The Germans know the location of the cathedral now and she needs help to stop them. Rose tries to avoid

admitting that she's a spy or what they're really after.

"Now is the time to act," Rose LaFontaine says, and she rushes the heroes to the nearest entrance to the Parisian catacombs. She insists on going.

The Cathedral of St. Eustace

Navigating the catacombs below Paris would be almost impossible, but luckily the heroes have Dr. Pierce's map. As they traverse the catacombs have them make Stealth and Notice rolls; the results don't mean anything but it lets them know that there might be something out there. It takes them about an hour of sloughing through varying passages of reeking muck and relative dryness before they finally reach the spot marked on the map.

Schwanhauser and his undercover Gestapo agents have arrived at the site already. They cannot figure out how to get in, since Dr. Pierce left out that information before he was shot. Roll Stealth and Notice rolls for the Gestapo and have the heroes do the same.

If Schwanhauser and the Germans successfully keep their presence unknown to the heroes they wait for them to open the storehouse; proceed with the next section, with the Gestapo agents showing up just as the wall pulls away revealing the inner door. Otherwise they try to pose as German tourists who got lost, shooting the intruders at the earliest possible moment.

There is one undercover Gestapo agent for each hero (and Rose). Schwanhauser will try to escape when the fight goes badly for his side.

The Saint's Riddle

The site marked on the map as the Cathedral of St. Eustace is nothing more than catacombs, the same as all the others. It is not marked in any obvious way, but heroes taking a look around can make Notice rolls to find the word "dall" chiseled in tiny letters in one of the rocks. It is Latin for "blind," and Rose explains that the cathedral's storehouse was hidden from outsiders by the faithful of St. Eustace.



St. Eustace was reputedly given the power to heal the blind. Dr. Pierce discovered the secret to entering the storehouse was to close your eyes and place your hand on the Latin inscription. Then you say the phrase "St. Eustace, be my guide in the land without sight."

Doing this triggers an ancient mechanism that swings open a part of the wall. Beyond is revealed an ancient doorway decorated with Catholic symbols depicting St. Eustace before a large crowd. The door is not locked, but opening it does trigger the trap.

The priests of St. Eustace knew they carried a sacred treasure and placed a devious trap on the door. Opening it would release a cloud of corrosive rock salt in an area in front of the door covering a Medium Blast Template. All within must make Agility rolls at -2; if they fail they suffer 2d6 damage before they can dodge out of the way.

Inside is an empty storehouse. Resting on an ancient, dust covered shelf is a jeweled box. The top of the box reads "O Columbanus, hold back your tears, /pour forth prayers on his behalf to the Lord— /Alas for me in my misery!" The box contains two diamonds, each in the shape of a tear.

This is the whole 17th phrase of the Planctus de obito Karoli lamenting the death of Charlemagne. The two items are called the Tears of St. Columbanus, or just the Tears of the Saint, and they do not have any overt special abilities besides being priceless. Rose is frustrated but thankful at least to have stopped the Germans from succeeding.

The Next Stop on the Road to the Crown

This is only the first step on a possibly long and dangerous road. What do the Tears of St. Columbanus have to do with the resting place of Charlemagne's Crown? Rose LaFontaine is not ready to give up, and if the heroes are willing she could use some help on the next step of the journey. Of course, the Germans are not likely to give up either, especially if Wilhelm Schwanhausser escaped. What could follow is a classic pulp race against powerful forces to find the legendary relic.

Where does the next step lead? Perhaps to Belfast, Ireland, to the home of the Knights of St. Columbanus. Perhaps to Bobbio Abbey in Italy. Perhaps this is a dead end.

ROSE LAFONTAINE, FRENCH SPY

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

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d12, Shooting d6, Taunt d10

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

Hindrances: Obligations (Major, French Republic), Quirk (flirtatious)

Edges: Attractive, Animal Magnetism, Charismatic, (Wo)man of a Thousand Faces, Marksman

Gear: Webley Bulldog revolver (12/24/48, 2d6)

UNDERCOVER GESTAPO AGENT

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

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

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

Hindrances: Obligations (Nazi Party)

Edges: Man of a Thousand Faces, Quick Draw

Gear: Mauser Military pistol (10/20/40, 2d6)

WILHELM SCHWANHAUSSER, SENIOR GESTAPO AGENT

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6

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

Hindrances: Loyal, Mean, Obligations (Nazi Party)

Edges: Investigator, Level Headed, Man of a Thousand Faces, Strong Willed

Gear: Mauser Military pistol (10/20/40, 2d6)



CHIEF CRAZY HORSE'S RIFLE

The Wild West – where gunslingers, cowboys, and outlaws stalked the dusty trail from Kansas City to Tombstone – has only recently begun to disappear, replaced by the wonders of modern life and technology. But even in the post-Martian invasion world of 1936 there are still people who remember events taught now in the history books across the nation. Events like General Custer's last stand at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, where the Union general was defeated by a band of Indian tribes led by the fierce warrior Crazy Horse and his totem-blessed rifle.

killed Conquering Bear – the chief of the tribe – and the American soldiers were massacred by the Indian warriors.

After this terrible event, Crazy Horse began to receive visions. He traveled north and east into the heart of the Black Hills, where he witnessed many prophetic events sacred to his people. Along his travels, he met an ancient medicine man named Horn Chips who gifted him with the secret of war paint, a black stone to protect his horse from harm, and a powerful blessing upon his rifle, which Crazy Horse was told would be as the strongest shield in battle. He thank the old man, and vowed to use his gifts wisely.



History

Crazy Horse was a respected war leader of the Lakota Indian tribe, who roamed what is currently South Dakota and Wyoming for several hundred years. They were part of the larger Sioux tribes that covered the Great Plains for many generations. During his young years Crazy Horse distinguished himself amongst his peers by being a fearless warrior, courageous and strong.

In 1854, an American lieutenant by the name of Grattan led a force of soldiers into Lakota territory and Crazy Horse's village. Through miscommunications, arrogance, and simple misunderstandings, Lt. Grattan

Crazy Horse returned after this trip renewed, and distinguished himself on many fronts. He fought off rival Indian tribes countless times, and led his Lakota tribe to victory after victory against all enemies. In June of 1876, General George Armstrong Custer led his 7th Cavalry forces into battle against a Lakota tribe. The ensuing Battle of Little Bighorn cemented Crazy Horse's reputation as one of the fiercest Indian warriors on the plains.

Witnesses to the battle say that Crazy Horse moved constantly, urging his fellow warriors onto greater victory and never faltering. Custer and his forces were defeated soundly.



Unfortunately, victory was short-lived. In early 1877, after Crazy Horse had been named chieftain of a band of tribe-less Lakota warriors, the overwhelming might of the American forces opposing them forced him to back down. It was not in battle that defeated Crazy Horse and his men, but the environment – beaten by cold and hunger, they surrendered to Union forces.

Taken into custody, Chief Crazy Horse tried to negotiate a peace for his people. In a show of faith and good will, the legendary Indian chief passed his sacred rifle to the American leader who defeated him at Wolf Mountain, one Colonel Mackenzie. Crazy Horse died later in September of 1877, a victim of a bayonet stabbing by a camp guard.

Mackenzie took the rifle as a trophy of honor, and served with some distinction over the next few years. However, while serving as brigadier general over the Department of Texas, the distinguished officer began to show signs of mental instability and degenerated quickly into madness. He was admitted to the Somerville Asylum in Belmont, Massachusetts, where he reputedly would not relinquish hold over Crazy Horse's rifle. Doctors noted an unhealthy fixation with the firearm, which Mackenzie never kept loaded.

Mackenzie died in 1889. Most of his effects passed to his sister, who lived in New York City, after which no one knows what happened to the rifle.

Appearance

The blessed rifle of Chief Crazy Horse is an old Sharps Model 1849 rifle, with a scratched wooden stock. The metal barrel is dull, but does contain an important distinction – a red lightning bolt is painted along each side of the barrel. This was Crazy Horse's personal symbol, seen decorated on his face with war paint during battle. The rifle has an overall comfortable feel to it and never jams during reloading.

Powers

Chief Crazy Horse's Rifle is a powerful weapon of war, despite its outward appearances. It never runs out of ammo and has the following statistics: range 24/48/96, damage 2d8+2, RoF 1, Weight 8, AP 10. The weapon is considered magical and can harm creatures normally immune to gunfire, including ethereal opponents, and considering its high armor piercing rating it passes through most things with ease.

As long as the rifle is carried, the wielder gains the deflection power at all times (all attacks suffer -2 to hit) as the blessed relic bestows a web of invisible strands against foes. Unfortunately, there is a cost for such constant protection.

Every hour that the wielder carries the rifle and doesn't shoot it he must make a Spirit roll. If the roll is a failure the wielder suffers a -1 to all subsequent Spirit checks made for any reason; this is cumulative with each failure. With a raise the penalty can be lessened by 1, but it can never be made into a bonus.

The Spirit roll penalty disappears the round after the wielder hits someone with a shot fired from the rifle.

Rumors and Speculation

Legends of the Lakota Indian tribes tell of two brothers, Iktomi and Iya. Iktomi was a spider trickster god, depicted as both good and evil at times, while his brother Iya was a storm monster who ate humans and kept heads for trophies. These two gods were known for meddling in the lives of the Lakota people, and many medicine men believe that one of the two were the ones to bless Crazy Horse's rifle so many years ago. But which one? Iktomi is also seen as the god of technology and advancement while Iya represents more pestilence and death; there are attributes of both in the rifle's characteristics. Both have seen a marked increase in followers since the Martian invasion of 1898. Recently, however, a deranged medicine man and



believer in Iktomi was exiled from a Lakota reservation for claiming that the spirit of Crazy Horse himself commanded him to unite the disparate tribes and rise up against Iya, who he claimed to be behind the terrible Dust Bowl currently ravaging the Great Plains. To do this he was told to find Crazy Horse's old rifle

RAVAGED TALE: BLACK HILL TECH

The old ways of the Wild West and the new scientifically enlightened world collide in this Ravaged Tale set in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The heroes are aboard a train traveling through the area, along with the only daughter of Colonel Mackenzie's sister. She's giving the rifle of Chief Crazy Horse back to the Lakota people at their behest, but the train isn't going to arrive. A crazed exiled gadgeteer wants the rifle for his own studies.

Background

Humphrey Klumperbeek had a hard life growing up in Rapid City, South Dakota. He didn't fit in well with the other kids his age. When they were out playing, he was inside tinkering whatever bits and scraps of electronics he could get his hands on. One game fascinated him however—Cowboys and Indians.

He watched the other children playing pretend cowboys and Indians in the streets and Black Hills around Rapid City, and saw in the innocent game the moral stage of man's eternal struggle. Nature against civilization, the old ways against the new, yesterday against tomorrow, and so forth. Humphrey wanted the ways of yesterday destroyed forever.

Attending the Institute for Modern Scientific Research, Humphrey Klumperbeek distinguished himself in the field of advanced robotics. His stance on creating a future full of robot servants and robot warriors alienated him from most of his peers, and when he attacked John Red Arrow – a Lakota scientist attending the IMSR – the IMSR Board of Ethics kicked him out.

Humphrey had gained focus during his time. He studied the legends of the Lakota people, learning what he could from John Red Arrow, and learned of the blessed rifle of Chief Crazy Horse. If he could study such a modern weapon blessed with the power of ancient spirits, he could gain the edge he needed in his war against nature.

After being kicked out of the IMSR Humphrey returned to his hometown of Rapid City. The city was the gateway to the Black Hills where civilization ended, and the bitter scientist hated everyone who lived out there. Through his contacts back east he learned that Ms. Joanna Evans, the only daughter of Colonel Mackenzie's sister, was returning the sacred rifle of Crazy Horse to the Lakota tribe. And they would be traveling through the Black Hills on their way to the rendezvous.

Humphrey could not resist this perfect. So, gathering his small force of robot cowboys, he headed out into the Black Hills to set an ambush. He would get the rifle and study its powers so that he could have an edge against savage forces.

A Rough Ride in the Black Hills

Luckily, the heroes also happen to be traveling on the train passing through the Black Hills of South Dakota. Perhaps they were hired to escort Ms. Evans on the journey; perhaps they are just in the right place at the right time. Regardless of why, they find themselves in little company on a small train passing through the western edge of South Dakota when they pass into Dr. Klumperbeek's trap.

Read the following to get started:

The rolling expanse of the Black Hills stands out amongst the grass and dust covered Midwestern Plains. It's a beautiful area of the country, where this small mountain chain rises up almost in spite of the great flatness all around it. You're grateful for the change; the train you're traveling on has been passing through this great flatness for many



hours and it was starting to get boring. The train is a small converted freighter, with only a few cars and no facilities.

A single other passenger is aboard, and boy is she a looker. Clearly from somewhere out east she seems out of place in this wilderness. Your thoughts are shaken by a sudden explosion as the train car rocks to one side in a tumble!

Dr. Klumperbeek does not want to destroy the train, only derail it, but he was a little overzealous in his explosive charges. Each hero must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken by the explosion; assume Ms. Joanna Evans is knocked unconscious by the blast. Unfortunately the conductor took the full force and was killed on impact.

The train car is on its side, so the windows are the only way out. As soon as the heroes get out they are confronted by Dr. Klumperbeek's insidious creations – robot cowboys.

Robots and Indians?

There is one robot cowboy for each hero and they march up the top of the lopsided train car with loud steel clanking. The robots are clearly metal, but dressed in ten-gallon hats and leather dusters with spurred steel feet. An electric gun in the shape of a hand clutching a large barreled pistol is affixed to their right arm.

They approach and announce in a robot voice for the heroes to drop their guns and raise their hands to the sky. If met with resistance, they attack.

If the heroes are having a tough time in the fight, have one of them make a Notice roll at -2. With a success they see a beat-up old rifle on the ground near Ms. Evans. This might be a convenient time for their own weapon to jam, forcing them to grab the rifle of Chief Crazy Horse. The enchanted weapon should make things go quite a bit smoother for the heroes. The last robot cowboy flees the scene and can provide a trail to its master's hideout.

After the fight Ms. Evans recovers. She doesn't know what is going on, but if the heroes don't already know she explains what she's doing and where she's going. With the train derailed and the conductor dead there's not much to do but continue on, and if they search around they can find an old trail that leads into the Black Hills back towards town. This also leads them to the hidden laboratory of Dr. Klumperbeek.

The Hidden Laboratory of Dr. Klumperbeek

Whether the heroes are looking for it or not they will likely find the lair of the insidious Dr. Humphrey Klumperbeek. He didn't hide it very well; it's only about a mile down the trail from the train tracks. There are plenty of robot footprints all around the area to follow.

Dr. Klumperbeek's laboratory is nothing more than an abandoned shack he found and converted for his own use. He's remodeled somewhat by reinforcing the walls and ceiling with iron plates, and the sound of the generator can be heard long before reaching the site.

The IMSR reject is quite insane, and sees any intrusion into his "secret lair" an unforgivable slight. If he notices the heroes or Ms. Evans carrying Crazy Horse's rifle he goes off the deep end, attacking with more robot cowboys. He keeps a small contingent of the robots at his laboratory, one for each hero.

If the fight goes against him he does not hesitate to flee using his Steel-Reinforced Tunneling Boots to burrow into the ground. He does this with a wave of his fist and a curse, "You've not seen the last of Dr. Humphrey Klumperbeek!" With Dr. Klumperbeek gone the robot cowboys shut down automatically.

Before leaving, of course, he sets off the self-destruct sequence on his laboratory. Entering the shack after the mad scientist leaves the area reveals a countdown of numbers dangerously close to 0. Have everyone make Agility rolls to avoid the inevitable explosion. A failure means they are Shaken.



Aftermath

Ms. Evans is very grateful to the heroes for rescuing her, and she might ask them to accompany her to the Lakota lands. While there it is possible the medicine men of the tribe recognize a destiny the heroes have – perhaps they are worthy inheritors to Crazy Horse's blessed rifle. Perhaps.

ROBOT COWBOY

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Special Abilities:

Armor +3: Metal coverings

Construct: +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; immune to disease and poison; immune to Fear and Intimidation

Electric Gun: 12/24/48, 2d8 damage

DR. HUMPHREY KLUMPERBEEK



Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Guts d6, Knowledge (artificial intelligence) d10, Knowledge (robots) d12, Notice d10, Repair d12, Shooting d6, Weird Science d12

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Obsessed (fighting nature), Quirk (intolerant)

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Gadgeteer, IMSR Gadgeteer, New Power (x2), Roboticist

Gizmos: Blast (self-propelled rocket-bomb tube), burrow (steel-reinforced tunneling boots), puppet (external neurologic mind probe); 10 Power Points.



CRYSTAL SKULL OF DOOM

Humanity is not alone amongst the stars, a fact that was highlighted during the Martian invasion of 1898. This terrible calamity caught the world completely by surprise, but perhaps it shouldn't have given the signs throughout history. The ancient Mayans knew more than their leftover artifacts tell, which includes a strange Crystal Skull with otherworldly powers – tied mysteriously to the Martian invaders and the light of the planet Venus.

Perhaps the most interesting facet of the Mayans was their accurate astronomical charts and calendars. From what has been translated off of the few codices remaining, they had a particular fixation with the orbital period of celestial bodies. This was the length of time it took for a planet to revolve around the sun. They had two primary calendars, one based around the Earth rotating around the sun and the other based on Venus' pattern.

The Venus orbital period calculated by the Mayans was 584 days, exactly correct – quite a feat considering



History

The Maya civilization saw its peak from around 250 AD to about 1500 AD, during which this ancient Mesoamerican culture developed many great advances. They farmed the land with sophisticated methods, they created art still considered to be some of the best in the region, and wrote in a complex and mathematical language. They were also a profoundly religious society, worshipping a wide variety of deities with sacrifices, both human and animal.

the tools available to them at the time. They also knew that this period coincided with 5 solar days on Venus (a solar day being how long the planet takes to rotate). The significance behind this has puzzled archeologists and scientists.

The most complete Mayan document surviving today is the Dresden Codex, which details the Venusian calendar and its significance to the culture. The point at which Venus was between the sun and the Earth



– every 584 days – was considered to be a time of great conflict for the Mayans. They used this time to wage war on neighbors and to prepare defenses. The planet was known as Xux Ek, the Wasp Star, by certain religious groups within the culture.

In connection with Xux Ek the Dresden Codex makes a cryptic reference to an item of great significance to these Disciples of the Wasp Star – “And in ceremonies of judgment the High Priest of Xux Ek would command the light of the skull of crystal to bring death. When so commanded, the skull brought death.” There is no other mention within the Codex of this relic.

There has been only one such relic found in the ruins of ancient Maya, discovered at Lubaantun in the British Honduras sometime in the latter part of the 19th century. Who recovered it is a mystery, but it wound up in the hands of a French archeologist named Eugene Boban by 1895. According to Eugene’s notes, the skull glowed fiercely during the 1898 Martian invasion, a difficult fact to prove but compelling nonetheless.

In 1908, during an auction for the Crystal Skull, Eugene died suddenly when his heart exploded. A medical examination turned up no foreign substances and he had no history of a heart condition. The Crystal Skull passed through several hands between 1908 and 1920, and each time the owner suffered a traumatic but unrelated death. The relic was dubbed the Crystal Skull of Doom by the press and the name stuck, though no official connection has ever been made between the item and an untimely demise.

Rumors persist that a handful of the skull’s owners gained some sort of mastery over the minds of men, but these have been unproven and largely discredited over the intervening years.

The Crystal Skull dropped off the public radar after 1920, but resurfaced 13 years later. Mr. Sydney Burney, a London art dealer, acquired the relic in 1933 from an anonymous source. If Burney still has the item he is keeping it under wraps, as it is not on display at his London art house.

Physical Description

The Crystal Skull of Doom is comprised of two pieces of solid quartz. The smaller is the lower jaw bone, while the bulk of it is a clear crystalline skull. The craftsmanship on the item is exquisite – jewelers today have no idea how the relic could have been carved with modern tools, let alone in previous ages. The Crystal Skull is cold to the touch, and the eye sockets are wider than a normal man’s. It has been observed that the eyes contain an unearthly blue fire on certain nights, but these reports are inconclusive at best.

Powers

The Crystal Skull has two primary powers, both of which involve gazing into the item’s eyes. The first and most legendary is its ability to cause death when willed by someone with sufficient faith. The skull must be held by the user for a full minute while the target stares at the relic; the target then receives a Spirit roll to resist. If successful the target is immune to the death effect for 584 days, but a side effect is that he or she suffers from temporary memory loss. This memory blank covers roughly an hour – 30 minutes before the death attack attempt and 30 minutes after.

The second power is far more potent but has been used with less frequency. If someone gazes into the eyes of the Crystal Skull when Venus is closest to the Earth (every 584 days) there is a chance that the relic bestows psionic powers upon the gazer. The target must stare into the eyes for a full minute, after which they make an opposed Spirit roll against the skull, which has a Spirit of d12+2 (not a Wild Card). If the target fails they suffer from total mental exhaustion, knocking them unconscious for 2d8 hours. If the Spirit roll is a 1, regardless of the Wild Die, the viewer loses a die type in Vigor as a portion of their bodily essence is consumed by a vibrant white fire. A critical failure on the roll consumes the body and soul of the victim in a torrent of flames forever.



If the Spirit roll is successful, the viewer gains psionic powers from the otherworldly entities behind the relic. He gains the Arcane Background (Psionics) edge, one Psionic power of the GM's choice, and the Psionics skill at d4. He also suffers from the Bad Eyes hindrance (or goes completely Blind if he already had Bad Eyes) and his eyes change to a strange white-blue color. The viewer gains an additional die type in Psionics for every raise on the initial opposed Spirit roll.

Whatever alien entities are behind the powers of the Crystal Skull do not look kindly upon the unworthy. If someone already possesses Arcane Background (Psionics) and tries to use the skull to gain more power, they have to make the opposed Spirit roll as normal. However, any failure consumes the viewer with blinding fire in a spectacular display of power – instant death. If the roll is successful the viewer gains the benefit of the New Power and Power Points edges.

The Crystal Skull can only be used in such a manner once per person per night.

Rumors and Speculation

What is the connection between the Crystal Skull of Doom and Venus? Why did the skull glow during the Martian invasion of 1898? Why were the Mayans so obsessed with the rotation and orbital pattern of Venus? These questions have plagued owners in the past 38 years with no answers forthcoming. The strange manner in which previous owners have died has also been a subject of great debate, and some rumors point to a constant in each situation besides the skull itself – the appearance of a strange-eyed man of indeterminate age or race. The most reliable report of this is from the records of the 1908 auction of Eugene Boban in Paris; many people there claim to have seen a man dressed in heavy robes leaving the scene of Boban's death in the minutes after the accident. The auction ledger holds only one clue – the name Xux Ek, which was the Mayan word for Venus.

There is an obscure legend amongst the Mayan

people that claims that if the Crystal Skull were to be returned to the Sacred Temple of Chichen Itza a great power would be unleashed. The nature of this power is left vague, but there are certain people who would love to unleash it and try to harness it for their own gain.

RAVAGED TALE: WAR OF WASPS

The heroes are in for a bumpy ride when a strange entity comes to claim the legendary Crystal Skull of Doom from its current owner. This short Ravaged Tale begins in the London auction house of Sydney Burney, a prominent art dealer, who has invited many people to partake in the sale of pieces in his art collection. A band of strangers show up with a powerful ally searching for the ancient Crystal Skull, and it's up to the heroes to stop them. But is it the right thing to do?

Background

Sydney Burney is a very busy man. He is a distinguished artist in the greater London area with his own gallery of wonderful pieces, including many items of historic significance. The crown jewel of his collection is the legendary Crystal Skull of Doom, which he claims to have acquired in 1933. Mr. Burney refuses to identify the source, mostly because he doesn't actually remember!

In July of 1933 Burney was cleaning up his art collection when a man came to visit him. The next thing he remembers he's laying in his bed, the Crystal Skull set neatly on the stand next to him. No note, no explanation – just the skull. Burney was vaguely aware of the relic's sinister nature, but something about the way it looked at him prevented him from getting rid of it. He made a few inquiries as to the item's history but quickly was sidetracked with other projects.

What Burney doesn't know is that he was chosen by a secretive group of Mayan radicals known as the



Disciples of the Wasp Star. They believe that the Crystal Skull is a gift from ancient visitors from the stars, and they have been instructed to pass the item around the world to share its powers.

But not all of the Disciples of the Wasp Star believe this. A splinter group led by a mysterious figure calling himself Xux Ek have broken away from the lofty ideals of the group. They believe that the Crystal Skull should only bring death to non-Mayans who handle it. This schism has only recently occurred, a result of the Red War of 1898 when the few remaining pure-blooded Mayans went into hiding. As the Martians invaded they preyed in their temples, but they did not have the Crystal Skull. Xux Ek and his followers vowed never to be in such a circumstance again.

Over the years the two sides of the Disciples of the Wasp Star have fought over control of the Crystal Skull, each gaining a foothold at different times. Sydney Burney was given the relic by the good side in 1933, and it has taken Xux Ek three years to track it down. But he doesn't want to take any chances, so he calls forth a terrible creature called the Soul Wasp and sends it along with a band of his Disciples to reclaim the item.

Luckily there's a band of heroes present to try and stop them.

The Auction House Funk

The scenario starts with the heroes attending the latest auction of Mr. Sydney Burney's art collection in his London home. There are a number of interesting items for sale, including a statue of an ancient Mesopotamian fertility goddess, a rare painting of Louis XIV, and a set of pottery from ancient Rome. The Crystal Skull is not one of the items for sale, though heroes could have been led here if they were seeking the relic.

As the auction proceeds a strange white mist begins to creep into the house. Before anyone in the audience can react the mist thickens and envelops the room, and all around the heroes people fall unconscious. Have

the heroes make Vigor checks; if they fail they suffer a level of Fatigue but nothing more than that (they are heroes, after all!).

The mist does not clear, but a heavily Mesoamerican accented voice calls out from somewhere in the back of the room: "You are all judged unworthy of being in the presence of the Crystal Skull. May the Soul Wasp feast on your essence."

A buzzing sound fills the room as the Soul Wasp begins to hunt the heroes. The thick mist is considered a Dark environment (-2 to attack rolls, targets are invisible after 10") but the Soul Wasp's vision is unearthly and it sees through it. It goes for the target with the highest Spirit first, sensing the strong soul.

Search for the Skull Thieves

After the heroes have dealt with the Soul Wasp they need to find the remaining Disciples of the Wasp Star. There are two Mayan cultists for each hero and they are currently searching the upstairs (which the heroes can discover with a successful Notice roll). The upstairs of the house has not been infiltrated with the thick mist, which makes navigation much easier.

The heroes should catch the Mayans just as they discover the Crystal Skull. Have one of the Disciples gaze into the eyes of the relic – roll some dice, but consider the Mayan to have critically failed. The resulting display should give the heroes some pause before picking up the powerful item!

Aftermath

After the Disciples of the Wasp Star have been dealt with the mist clears rapidly and people regain consciousness downstairs. Mr. Burney is especially grateful, and if it fits with the campaign may reward the heroes with the Crystal Skull of Doom. Whether they want to receive it or not is completely up to them, but there are certainly more Mayan cultists out there – including Xux Ek himself ...



SOUL WASP

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Notice d8

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Special Abilities:

Armor +2: The Soul Wasp has thick, chitinous plates covering its body.

Flight: Flying Pace of 10 and Climb of 5.

Size +2: The Soul Wasp is 8' long.

Soul Drain: A raise on a Fighting attack, indicates the wasp attacks its opponent's soul and may attempt to drain some of their life energy; the victim makes an opposed Spirit roll, for each success the wasp gets, it causes one wound to the victim, and "heals" one of its own wounds.

Soul Vision: The Soul Wasp sees the world through a kind of "soul vision" that negates all vision related penalties. Inanimate objects are wispy, translucent outlines to the being that it can peer through.

DISCIPLES OF THE WASP STAR, MAYAN CULTISTS

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

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

Hindrances: Loyal (Disciples of the Wasp Star), Vow (retrieve the Crystal Skull from non-believers)

Gear: Ancient Mayan robes, Mayan blade (Str+d6, Parry +1), Wasp Star amulet



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