

FIRE DOWN BELOW



A ONE SHEET ADVENTURE FOR THE DAY AFTER RAGNAROK BY PAUL STEFKO

Lawrence is a town of nearly 300 in the heart of coal country. (In the Poisoned Lands, Lawrence could be located anywhere in Appalachia from Pennsylvania to the Grand Duchy of Birmingham, as well as southern Illinois and as far west as Wyoming.) Yesterday, disaster struck the nearby Darby Company mine: an underground coal fire is burning, threatening Lawrence and its inhabitants.

WELCOME TO THE BARBECUE

The characters are called upon by the local authority to evacuate the town. This is not as easy as it sounds. Like many small towns these days, Lawrence is insular and distrustful of all outsiders.

The characters must mount a campaign to convince the Lawrencians their lives are in immediate danger, and they only have the better part of a day to do it. As the fire builds, gases are released and escape through the ground. The heat grows so intense that spot fires break out. By the next morning, the town could be ash. (In truth, it will burn much sooner than that. See **Eruption**.)

The people of Lawrence are frightened but holding a united front. There are 65 able-bodied adults with arms and experience ready to defend the town. This includes a dozen women who are as good with a rifle as their husbands and brothers. Due to the war and the dangers of the post-Serpentfall world, the men have a noticeable age gap between the late teens and early 30s.

The nominal authority in Lawrence is Deputy Sheriff Jack Lloyd. Lloyd is convinced that the mine fire is being played up to get the people of Lawrence out of their homes and into Darby Company camps, where they can be more readily exploited. He's heard rumors of whole towns disappearing into virtual slavery following disasters. He'll speak of "Bayard, after the flood" and "the twister that tore through Gilmore last spring" and about how no one has heard from those people since. He resists the evacuation with determined rhetoric and tense armed standoffs.

HAZARDS

The two major dangers from the underground conflagration are gas leaks and spot fires. Use these hazards with greater frequency as the adventure goes on.

- **Toxic Gas:** The burning coal creates a lot of toxic smoke and fumes. That gas has to go somewhere, and the easiest

way is to pass up through cracks and other natural vents. These gases can overcome even the strongest heroes if they get a faceful. Treat this as a Lethal poison (p. 89 of **Savage Worlds Deluxe**). Smart heroes may bring gas masks, making them immune.

- **Spot Fires:** The extreme heat underground can cause structures on the surface to spontaneously combust. Use the normal rules for fire; the smoke causes fatigue, but a fire can be accompanied by toxic gas as well. Being caught in a sudden spot fire may prompt a fear check.

DELIVERING THE BAD NEWS

The bulk of the evacuation can be run as a dramatic task (p. 84 of **Savage Worlds Deluxe**). This requires five successful Persuasion rolls at -2. Each roll takes an hour, and the characters have 8 hours before the **Eruption**. The characters can make cooperative rolls as they cover the town. Each successful roll convinces more and more townspeople to leave Lawrence. If the characters succeed at five actions, they convince all of the residents to evacuate, with the exception of Garrett McClelland.

In place of a Persuasion roll, you may run a scene where the characters combat a hazard to save some residents.

Perhaps they save a child from a spot fire and return her to her parents on the edge of town. This requires different rolls, with the outcome counting as a success or failure in the dramatic task.

If the Action Card is a Club, the characters encounter an angry mob, and the roll for that action takes an additional -2. Failing this roll means the characters take 2d4 damage and are run out of town, ending the dramatic task. If they hope to save the remaining townsfolk, they must forcibly remove them. When the characters deal with Garrett McClelland, they have to deal with an extra 1d4+3 angry townsfolk. (The players should be discouraged from fighting the mob, but if they insist, run a combat against 2d6+2 townsfolk. This automatically fails the action and ends the dramatic task. The town is convinced the characters are enforcers for Darby or the Mayoralty.)

LAST MAN STANDING

Forty years ago, Garrett McClelland built his house on the edge of Lawrence so he didn't have to deal with neighbors. The town grew around his land, surrounding him with other homes. In the



process, McClelland became the grumpy old man who terrifies kids and worries parents. His only companions are his Irish wolfhounds, Brigitte and Finn, who he has trained as reluctant guard dogs.

McClelland's house is a small bungalow, but his land is enough for three homes. He long ago enclosed the plot with a seven-foot wooden fence. A few trees stand far back from the fence to avoid questions of maintenance with the neighbors.

Near the end of the evacuation, the characters are approached by a frantic girl named Meredith Coleman. She explains her brothers, Patrick and Danny, snuck over McClelland's fence. The old man has been stockpiling ammunition for years, and Meredith's brothers wanted to help themselves in the confusion. McClelland caught them, knocked them out, and dragged them into the house. She saw it all through a hole in the fence. (If the characters have been run out of town, Meredith sneaks out to find them, claiming that Deputy Lloyd has a grudge against her family.)

When the characters near the fence, McClelland fires a warning shot from his roof. He shouts for them to leave him alone. If they try to talk him down, McClelland warns them off again, but doesn't fire if they keep their distance. Eventually, he climbs back into the house.

If the characters attempt to enter his property, McClelland gives up the pretense and shoots to kill. Anyone coming inside the fence is met by his dogs. (If the characters failed the dramatic task, the dogs' barking draws the attention of the townspeople.)

Finally, removing McClelland is complicated even further when the heat of the underground fire ignites part of the house. McClelland has been stockpiling ammunition in his spare bedroom. Left unchecked, the fire reaches the ammo in three rounds. Anyone inside the house when the cache cooks off takes 3d6 damage.

ERUPTION

Depending on their performance, the characters may evacuate the town. They may rescue Garrett McClelland or regretfully end his paranoid life. However it turns out, the final moments of the town of Lawrence come just before sundown.

It begins with a rumbling, centered on the town square. Cracks open in the earth, spewing toxic gas. With a deep roar, a hole erupts in the very middle of the square and a serpentine creature of burning coal emerges. As waves of heat roll off the beast, nearby buildings catch fire. If there are remaining townsfolk, they scream and run.

At first, the coal demon seems intent on just spreading fire. It attacks structures, setting them ablaze. Once the characters get its attention, however, it turns its full fury to the fight.

The demon is smart enough to use its environment to its advantage. It lures characters into patches of toxic gas, to which it is immune. It destroys any flammable cover the characters seek. It holds its explosive attack until it gets a number of characters in the area.

This should be a very difficult fight. Hopefully, the characters made a good showing evacuating the town, because this battle

will destroy whatever is left of Lawrence. Even after the demon is destroyed, the fires still burn and gas still streams from the ground. The characters should grab any townsfolk that remain and beat a hasty exit.

Angry Townsfolk

Use Thugs, **DAR** p. 83. One in three is of them is armed with a Winchester 1897 pump shotgun.

[WC] Garrett McClelland

For Garrett McClelland, use the statistics for the Loner, **DAR**, p. 80. Add Shooting d8 to skills. Garrett is armed with a Springfield M1903 rifle.



Brigitte & Finn

Use the Dog/Wolf statistics from the **SW** core book.

[WC] Coal Demon

The demon appears as a 10-foot-long serpentine body topped by a humanoid torso with thick arms and a hooded head like a cobra. The creature has a black, rocky hide with cracks that reveal a hellish orange glow within. Heat pours from it, and its very touch can burn. The demon's most dangerous attack, however, is its ability to violently explode, burning everyone around it.



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

SKILLS: Fighting d10, Notice d6

PACE: 8 **PARRY:** 7 **TOUGHNESS:** 11 (4)

Special Abilities

- **ARMOR +4:** Rocky hide.
- **ELEMENTAL:** No additional damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to disease and poison.
- **EXPLOSIVE:** Center a Medium Burst Template on the demon. Any other creature in this area takes 3d6 damage; any creature wounded is knocked back 2". The demon is shaken.
- **FIERY TOUCH:** Str+d6; chance of catching fire.
- **QUICK:** Discard action cards of 5 or lower.

Credits

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