

GURPS<sup>®</sup>



**WEIRD  
WEST**



**BY ANDREW HACKARD AND STEPHEN DEDMAN**

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

# THE SPAGHETTI WESTERN — WITH MEAT!

The year is 1877, but the history is not our own.

In 1863, a vengeful warband called the Last Sons unleashed the otherworldly, demonic manitous upon humanity, and nothing has been the same since.

The American Civil War rages on, neither side able to establish a clear advantage. Much of California has fallen into the sea. The Sioux Nations have reclaimed the Dakotas. And the dead walk among us.

A few relentless heroes have returned from the grave to battle the abominations of these new myths and twisted legends, and their mysterious masters, the Reckoners.

In *GURPS Deadlands: Weird West*, players take on the roles of hexslinging Hucksters, Mad Scientists armed with weird steampunk gizmos, deadly Gunfighters, fearless Indian braves, and wizened Shamans. *Weird West* has:

- ☠ Details of character types including Gunslingers, Cowpokes, Texas Rangers, Hucksters, Shamans, Preachers, Soldiers, and more.
- ☠ Three magic systems – Miracles, Indian Shamanism, and Hexslinging according to Hoyle – with new spells.
- ☠ Gadgets for Mad Scientists.
- ☠ Critters and abominations, from Prairie Ticks to Mojave Rattlers.
- ☠ A guide to the Weird West – its history, people, places, laws, and other hazards.

Saddle up, and go west to the Deadlands. If you dare.



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*GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised* and *Compendium I* are required to use this supplement in a *GURPS* campaign. *GURPS Deadlands: Weird West* can be used with *any* roleplaying system.

## The HARROWED:

Written by

**ANDREW HACKARD AND  
STEPHEN DEDMAN**

Edited by

**ANDREW HACKARD,  
STEVE JACKSON, AND  
MONICA STEPHENS**

Cover by

**BROM**

Illustrated by

**TOM BIONDOLILLO,  
PAUL DALY, ALAN NUNIS,  
CHRISTOPHER SHY, AND  
LOSTON WALLACE**

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# GURPS®



By Andrew Hackard and Stephen Dedman

Based on the award-winning *Deadlands* game by Shane Lacy Hensley

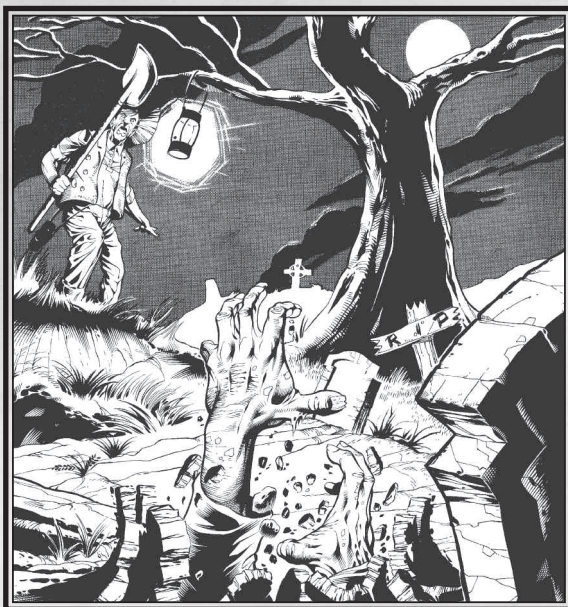
Edited by Andrew Hackard, Steve Jackson, and Monica Stephens

Additional material by Shane Lacy Hensley, Kenneth Hite, and Sean Punch

Cover by Brom

Illustrated by Tom Biondolillo, Paul Daly, Allen Nunis, Andy Park, Christopher Shy, and Loston Wallace

Additional illustrations by Jacob Rosen and Kevin Sharpe



*GURPS* System Design ♠ STEVE JACKSON

*GURPS* Line Editor ♦ SEAN PUNCH

*GURPS* Project Manager ♥ STEVEN MARSH

Page Design ♣ HEATHER OLIVER

Production Artists ♠ HEATHER OLIVER and JEFF MACKINTOSH

Art Direction ♦ PHILIP REED

Prepress Assistants ♥ MONICA STEPHENS and NIKOLA VRTIS

Chief Executive Officer ♣ PHILIP REED

Chief Creative Officer ♠ SAM MITSCHKE

Chief Operating Officer ♦ SUSAN BUENO

Director of Sales ♣ ROSS JEPSON

*GURPS* FAQ Maintainer ♥ VICKY "MOLOKH" KOLENKO

Lead Playtester ♠ MICHAEL SUILEABHAIN-WILSON

**Playtesters:** Frederick Brackin, Marco De Stefani, Peter Dell'Orto, Bob Huss, Jonathan Lang, Kenneth Peters, Jeff Raglin, Allen Smith, Brian Smithson, Dan Tompkins, and the *Pyramid* posse.

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# CONTENTS



<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>	Skills .....	42	The Path of Protection .....	90
<i>About GURPS</i> .....	3	New Skills .....	44	Ritual Modifiers Table .....	91
<b>1. THE WEIRD WEST</b> .....	<b>4</b>	TEMPLATES .....	44	The Path of the Spirit .....	92
A HISTORY LESSON .....	5	<i>Spirit Advisors</i> .....	47	THE HARROWED .....	92
The Great Quake .....	6	WHO'S WHO OF THE WEIRD WEST .....	51	Voices in Your Head .....	94
War Machines .....	6	JOB TABLE .....	56	The Nightmare .....	94
<i>The Reckoners</i> .....	6	<b>3. GUNS, GEAR, AND GADGETS</b> .....	<b>57</b>	Manitou Limitations .....	94
The Battle of Washington .....	7	GHOST ROCK AND GADGETS .....	58	THE UNLIFE OF THE HARROWED .....	94
<i>The Texas Rangers</i> .....	7	Creating Weird Gadgets .....	59	HARROWED POWERS .....	97
MACHINE, MAGIC, AND MIRACLES .....	8	WEIRD GADGETS .....	59	RELICS .....	97
TODAY .....	8	<i>Quick-and-Dirty Gadgets</i> .....	59	Before the Reckoning .....	97
<b>A TOUR OF THE WEIRD WEST</b> .....	<b>9</b>	<i>Madness</i> .....	59	<i>Manitou's Will</i> .....	97
THE DISPUTED LANDS: KANSAS,		<i>Malfunctions</i> .....	59	<b>5. CRITTERS AND ABOMINATIONS</b> .....	<b>100</b>
OKLAHOMA, COLORADO, UTAH .....	9	<i>Other Gadget Malfunctions</i> .....	60	THE BLACK HATS .....	101
Bloody Kansas .....	9	WEAPONS .....	63	Too Many Monsters? .....	101
Dodge City, Kansas .....	10	Black Powder Weapons .....	63	Key to the Bestiary .....	101
<i>The Revenant</i> .....	10	Ammunition .....	63	BLACK MAGIC .....	103
<i>Fear Levels</i> .....	11	WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS .....	63	Special Rules for Black Magic .....	103
<i>Where to Go in Dodge</i> .....	12	Automatics .....	63	<i>Learning Black Magic</i> .....	103
MAP: DODGE CITY .....	13	Carbines and Rifles .....	63	<i>Black Magic Misfires Table</i> .....	103
<i>The Agency</i> .....	14	<i>Sample Inventions</i> .....	64	Spells .....	104
Denver, Colorado .....	14	Pistols, Single-Action .....	64	Powering Black Magic .....	106
Salt Lake City, Utah .....	14	Pistols, Double-Action .....	65	BESTIARY .....	109
THE HIGH PLAINS: MONTANA, WYOMING,		Derringers and Pepperboxes .....	65	Black Riders .....	109
NEBRASKA, DAKOTA .....	15	<i>Firearms in Melee</i> .....	65	Desert Thing .....	109
The Badlands .....	15	Shotguns .....	66	Devil Bat .....	110
The Black Hills .....	16	Other Ranged Weapons .....	66	Dust Devil .....	110
<i>Deadwood Creek Treaty</i> .....	16	Hand Weapons .....	67	Ghoul .....	111
MAP: DEADWOOD .....	17	CLOTHES AND ARMOR .....	67	Ghoul King .....	111
Deadwood .....	18	<i>Explosives</i> .....	68	Gremlins .....	112
<i>Where to Go in Deadwood</i> .....	18	COMMON GEAR TABLE .....	68	Hangin' Judge .....	112
<i>Satan's Garden</i> .....	18	Cheap Gear .....	69	Jackalope .....	113
Yellowstone .....	18	<i>Mounted Combat</i> .....	69	Los Diablos .....	113
THE WILD SOUTHWEST: TEXAS, NEW MEXICO,		Reading the Weapon Table .....	70	Maze Dragon .....	113
ARIZONA .....	19	<i>Money</i> .....	70	Mojave Rattler .....	114
Nacogdoches, Texas .....	19	WEAPONS TABLE .....	71	Night Haunt .....	114
The Grand Canyon .....	19	<b>4. MAGIC AND MIRACLES</b> .....	<b>73</b>	Pole Men .....	114
Tombstone, Arizona .....	19	HUCKSTERS .....	74	Prairie Tick .....	115
<i>Pestilence</i> .....	19	The Game .....	75	The Revenant .....	115
MAP: TOMBSTONE .....	20	CASTING HEXES .....	75	Tumblebleed .....	115
<i>Where to Go in Tombstone</i> .....	20	Manitous .....	76	Walkin' Dead .....	115
<i>Fort Huachuca, Arizona</i> .....	21	HEXES .....	76	Veteran Walkin' Dead .....	116
GREAT BASIN: SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, NEVADA .....	21	Hex Descriptions .....	76	Wall Crawler .....	116
The Ghost Trail .....	21	<i>Poker Hands</i> .....	77	<i>The Bloody Ones</i> .....	116
The Santa Fe Trail .....	22	<i>Hex Backlash Table</i> .....	77	Wendigo .....	116
Death Valley .....	22	THE HOLY .....	79	White Wendigo .....	116
The Devil's Postpiles .....	22	Invoking Miracles .....	80	Werewolf .....	117
The Mojave Desert .....	22	INVOCATIONS AND MIRACLES .....	80	CRITTERS .....	117
The Great Maze .....	22	Miracle Descriptions .....	80	Buffalo .....	117
The City of Lost Angels .....	24	<i>Sins</i> .....	81	Cattle .....	118
<i>Western Food</i> .....	24	SHAMANS .....	81	Horse .....	118
The Rail Wars .....	25	Spirit Advisors .....	83	Mountain Lion .....	118
<b>TIMELINE</b> .....	<b>26</b>	HERBALISTS, DREAMERS, AND SHAMANS .....	83	Sasquatches .....	118
<b>2. CHARACTERS AND CORPSES</b> .....	<b>28</b>	Learning the Trade .....	83	Bounties .....	118
<i>The Fairer Sex</i> .....	29	Making Medicine .....	83	<b>6. ADVENTURES</b> .....	<b>119</b>
CHARACTER SKETCHES .....	29	Manitous .....	85	<i>The Law</i> .....	120
<i>Rock Fever</i> .....	32	Favors for Non-Shamans .....	83	SPAGHETTI WESTERNS .....	120
<i>Army Posts</i> .....	34	<i>The Vision Quest</i> .....	83	<i>Get a Rope!</i> .....	121
ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS .....	35	SHAMANIC RITUALS .....	84	HELL ON WHEELS .....	121
Advantages .....	35	Charms .....	86	<i>Adventure Seeds</i> .....	124
<i>Status and Cost of Living</i> .....	36	The Path of Dreams .....	86	<i>Campaign Crossovers</i> .....	126
New Advantages .....	36	The Path of Health .....	87	<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	<b>127</b>
Disadvantages .....	39	<i>The Sun Dance</i> .....	87	<b>INDEX</b> .....	<b>127</b>
		The Path of Luck .....	88		
		<i>The Old Ways</i> .....	88		

# INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the Weird West – a land of miracle-workers and mad scientists, manitous and maze dragons, poker hands and Pinkertons, shamans and shootists.

The year is 1877. The Civil War rages on. Much of California has fallen into the sea. The Sioux Nation has reclaimed the Dakotas. A whole passel of dead folks walk the Earth, as do stranger things. Jackalopes. Wendigos. Mojave rattlers. And that's not mentioning the varmints that fly or swim. Just as well you've got God and the Great Spirit on your side, and a trusty Gatling pistol *at* your side.

This book contains new character types, new magic systems, new advantages, new weapons, and detailed background information for the Weird West. GMs will need the *GURPS Basic Set*, *GURPS Compendium I*, and *GURPS Compendium II*, as well as the usual dice, paper, pencils, and junk food.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Andrew Hackard recalls reading the *AD&D to Boot Hill* conversion chart, way back when, and thinking that a Western roleplaying game couldn't possibly work. He's thrilled, two decades later, to eat his words. He has edited or co-edited several SJ Games books, including *GURPS Atlantis*, *GURPS Low-Tech*, *GURPS Old West, Second Edition*, and *Transhuman Space*, and co-edited the *Ravenloft* book *Denizens of Darkness* for Arthaus. Andrew lives in Austin, TX.

Stephen Dedman began roleplaying in 1977, and sold his first *Villains & Vigilantes* adventure in 1985. He's the author of *GURPS Dinosaurs* and the novels *The Art of Arrow Cutting* and *Foreign Bodies*, and co-author of *GURPS Martial Arts Adventures*, *GURPS Space Atlas 4*, and *GURPS Old West, Second Edition*. His fiction has been nominated for the Bram Stoker Award for Horror Writing and the Sidewise Award for Alternate History. Stephen lives in Weird Western Australia.

## ABOUT GURPS

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*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are at [sjgames.com/errata/gurps](http://sjgames.com/errata/gurps).

## PAGE REFERENCES

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are CII for *Compendium II*, M for *Magic*, MY for *Myth*, SU for *Supers*, and TT for *Time Travel*. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at [gurps.sjgames.com/abbrevs.html](http://gurps.sjgames.com/abbrevs.html).

In 1863, the Last Sons followed Raven into the “Hunting Grounds” via a Micmac burial ground, killing the older and wiser shamans and warriors who tried to restrain them. Once there, Raven released the manitous – evil spirits – into the world. Or, as the preachers say, they walked into hell and set the demons loose.

Either way, on the day Raven returned from the Hunting Grounds – July 3, 1863 – the dead rose at Gettysburg, 5,000 Union troops were mysteriously slain in New Orleans, and mad scientists began dreaming up new inventions inspired by the manitous. Later that year, people began seeing monsters in the west, and both the Union and Confederate governments sent troubleshooters to investigate these incidents.

These troubleshooters – the Pinkertons and the Texas Rangers – discovered that horrors like the walking dead and other abominations were attracted, or maybe even created, by violence and fear. The more people knew, the more frightened they became, and their fear summoned more monstrosities. Hearing this, Lincoln and Davis called a ceasefire, and soldiers were told that they’d suffered hallucinations brought on by “battle fatigue.” Things returned to normal – but not for long.

By 1864, the Civil War had flared up again, especially after Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, but that wasn’t enough for Raven and the Reckoners.

## THE GREAT QUAKE

Early in 1868, Raven traveled to California, and vandalized ancient rock paintings that were sacred to the earth

spirits. He further angered the spirits by casting a spell to start a minor tremor. The earth spirits amplified the tremor into a massive earthquake. Huge cracks opened across California and were flooded by the ocean, turning the land that remained into a vast labyrinth.

Thousands were drowned or crushed by the quake, while many survivors had to choose between starvation and cannibalism, but that was only the beginning of the terror. More fortunate survivors discovered veins of black rock in the walls of the canyons near San Diego. It burned much hotter, brighter, and longer than coal, and emitted low, eerie moans as it did. This was “ghost rock.”

Some inventors, inspired by manitous, discovered that ghost rock could be used to power machines such as the world had never seen. The press branded these men “mad scientists”; the name stuck even after these “madmen” started producing flying machines, horseless carriages, and new weapons for the armies. The price of ghost rock hit \$100 a pound, and the “Great Maze” was soon the most hotly disputed piece of ocean-front real estate on Earth.

## WAR MACHINES

In January 1869, President Jefferson Davis declared that the Maze was now a Confederate Territory. Inspired by the efforts of the mad scientists, he planned to use ghost rock to make new, powerful war machines to counter the Union’s numerical superiority. Teams of Texas Rangers combed the West to recruit inventors with knowledge of ghost rock.

## THE RECKONERS

When Raven gathered the Last Sons, he promised them a “Reckoning” – revenge against the white man. Since then, the evil forces that live in the Hunting Grounds have been known as “the Reckoners.” Before that, voodoo practitioners knew them as the *Mayombe*, the cannibal spirits; they have also been called Corruptors, Eaters of Life, Devourers, demiurges, and demons. Most of the dark gods worshipped by black magicians and feared by saner people are only manifestations of the Reckoners’ awesome power.

The Reckoners are spirits, like their servants the manitous, but faceless, apparently deathless, and incredibly more powerful. They live on fear the way humans live on food or water or air, but they also use it to create yet more fear – rather like farmers, keeping some seed grain for next year’s crop. In the case of the Reckoners, the “crop” is mostly monsters and abominations, but it might be anything else that can increase the fear level in an area; for example, Reckoners created the ghost rock which has mechanized warfare and inspired a newer and bloodier “gold rush.”

Perhaps fortunately, Reckoners never physically emerge from the Hunting Grounds, so the best way to fight them is to dispel the fear they have created. Attacking their servants – the manitous and abominations – and sending them back to the Hunting Grounds is a good start, but convincing people that the lands are now safe can be just as important. That’s why Bard skill may be as useful around the Deadlands as magic or combat skills or a fancy gun.



Shamans need the Initiation (Shamanic) and Spirit Advisor (Great Spirit) advantages, and the Great Vow disadvantage. Voice, Charisma, Autotrance, and Empathy are useful. High Social Status is common, although some shamans face Social Stigmas within their tribes. Epilepsy, Addiction (to hallucinogens), and Split Personality can be interesting. Ritual Magic (Native American) is the most important skill (see p. CI144). Most shamans have Acting, Bard, Fast-Talk, Theology, and Dancing skills; Animal Guise and Symbol Drawing may be needed for some rituals.

## MAD SCIENTISTS

Mad Scientists are inventors and engineers who use ghost rock to create infernal devices of steam and steel. These often deranged individuals need the Gadgeteer advantage, and Science!, Mechanic, and Engineering skills. See p. 48.

## MARSHALS

Marshals and their deputies chase fugitives and criminals all over the West. Though they have the authority to assemble posses on occasion (see p. 35), they usually have to work alone. Marshals need Tracking as well as good combat skills, and are expected to know some Law. Legal Enforcement Powers are required, for 10 points (see p. 35). Duty is also required. Many older marshals responsible for large territories concentrate on Administration, leaving the legwork to their deputies.

Strong Reputations (good and bad) are common, as is a Status level of 1 or 2. Leadership skill may be needed to call together a posse. Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, or Intimidation can

resolve some situations peacefully. Contacts and the Area Knowledge and Streetwise skills help marshals keep track of fleeing bandits and outlaws.

Marshals and deputies are expected to bring outlaws in alive; no fees or allowances are paid for dead prisoners.

See also *Bounty Hunters*, *Gunslingers*, and *Sheriffs*.

## MUCKRAKERS

Muckrakers are journalists who believe in reporting the truth above all else – no matter who it offends. Most are curious beyond belief, and it amazes them that common folk can't see what's going on right before their very eyes. The only paper willing to publish their wilder stories is the notorious *Tombstone Epitaph*. The "truth" often needs some embellishment to appeal to the skeptical masses, so muckrakers need Bard and Writing skills to get their messages across. Many of them have extensive networks of Contacts as well.

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Photographers are rare and often in great demand in the Weird West. Traditional cameras of the day are too slow to capture action, but they can certainly record the aftermath of a gunfight or an encounter with an abomination. Of course, most people think the latter pictures are staged phonies, but at least the *Tombstone Epitaph* usually buys the plates. Photographers can also make a few bucks off famous outlaws looking to get their portraits made as well. It's steady work, but occasionally dangerous. Photographers need Photography/TL5 skill to operate their equipment, and Merchant to run the business.

## ROCK FEVER

Mad scientists and miners who spend too much time working with ghost rock can catch something called "rock fever."

Anyone who spends a week of handling ghost rock for more than four hours a day, or working in a mine filled with ghost rock vapors, should roll on HT. If he fails, he contracts rock fever. The first symptoms are light-headedness and a high fever – some victims even report feeling as though their blood were on fire.

If the roll succeeds, nothing happens – that week. The victim has to roll after each week of direct, prolonged contact with ghost rock, at a cumulative -1 penalty for every week until he's rolling at -8. After that, check once per month at HT -8.

Treat Rock Fever as an ordinary disease as covered on p. B133; HT loss is -1/day, and other attributes and skills receive a -2 penalty until the disease breaks. If the victim's HT drops to 3 before he recovers, he suffers brain damage and acquires a -10-point mental disadvantage.

If the victim suffers a critical failure while rolling on HT, he spontaneously combusts and is consumed by fire from the inside out. Little remains except some ashes, a few fillings, and a lump of ghost rock about the size of his heart. Anyone witnessing this event should make a Fright Check at -3.





## MAD SCIENTIST

150 POINTS

*"Just a minute, please. I need to douse this fire. Hair catches fire so easily, you know. DON'T TOUCH THAT!"*

*"Yes, Apache Joe was here. He stole my temporal accelerator, a time-travel device I was working on. Years of work down the – DON'T TOUCH THAT!"*

*"The temporal engine? Yes, of course it works. It propels the device and its passenger into the past or the future at the rate of a month a second.*

*"It's a confounded nuisance that he stole it when he did. I'd nearly finished designing a temporal brake that would stop it. DON'T TOUCH THAT!"*

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 15 [60]; HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Gadgeteer, Quick [50]; Gizmos ×3 [15]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Manual Dexterity 1 [3/level]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** -40 points from Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Age [-3/level]; Bad Sight [-10]; Delusion, Major (Greatest scientific genius ever) [-10]; Insatiably Curious [-15]; Odious Personal Habit (Speaks in scientific jargon constantly) [-10]; and Paranoia (Everyone's out to steal his inventions!) [-10].

**Primary Skills:** Science! (M/VH) IQ+1 [12]-16 and Weird Science (M/VH) IQ-1 [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Chemistry/TL5 (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-14; any two Engineer/TL5 skills (M/H) at IQ+1 [4]-16†; Mechanic/TL5 (Any) (M/A) IQ [1]-15\*; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-15; Scrounging (M/E) IQ [1]-15; and 6 points from one or more of Demolitions/TL5 (M/A), Explosives Ordnance Disposal/TL5 (M/A), Guns/TL5 (Any) (P/E), or Guns/TL6 (Flamethrower, Machine Pistol, etc.) (P/E).

**Background Skills:** A total of 7 points in Language (M/A); Climbing or Riding (Horse), both (P/A); Area Knowledge or First Aid/TL5, both (M/E); or any primary and secondary skill.

\* Includes +1 for Manual Dexterity.

† Includes +1 for Versatile.

## MUCKRAKER

100 POINTS

*"Tell me everything you know, fast. I've got to wire in my story by morning to make the Sunday Epitaph.*

*"Can I take a picture of the critter you killed? Good. A picture really makes you sit up and look at what's happening in the world."*

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 12 [20].

**Advantages:** Collected [5] and a total of 30 points selected from Acute Hearing [2/level]; Acute Vision [2/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contacts [Varies]; Danger Sense [15]; Daredevil [15]; Language Talent [1/level]; Luck [15]; or Reputation [Varies].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (To his employer, 9 or less) [-5]; Extremely Curious [-10]; Obsession (Learn the truth and print it) [-5]; Overconfidence [-15]; Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Detect Lies (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Interrogation (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Writing (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** Area Knowledge (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Bard (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ [1]-13; Streetwise (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 11 points in Disguise, Language, Lockpicking/TL5, Photography/TL5, Sign Language, Shadowing (all M/A); Brawling or Guns/TL5 (Pistol) (both P/E); Climbing, Riding (Horse), or Stealth (all P/A); or any primary and secondary skill.

## PREACHER

135 POINTS

*"There are demons walking this Earth, punishing us for our sins. My brothers back East may scoff, but the Devil has truly returned to our world.*

*"But fear not. Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, the power of the Good Book and a Colt .45 will comfort thee.*

*"Now get thee back in thy grave, you varmint. I am a man of the cloth and a humble servant of peace, but you're standing where I intend to shoot."*

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** Clerical Investment 1 [5]; Divine Favor (Appears on a 12 or less) [60]; and 20 points selected from Charisma [5/level], Collected [5], Fearlessness [2/level], Higher Purpose [5], Patron (Church) [Varies], Pious [5], Strong Will [4/level], Reputation (Holy Man) [Varies], or True Faith [15].

**Disadvantages:** Vow (Missionary; attempt to convert heathens, give a sermon every Sunday, reduce the Fear Level) [-10]; and -30 points from Fanaticism (Religious fanatic) [-15], Intolerance (Religious) [-10], Odious Personal Habit (Constantly quotes the Bible) [-5], Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15], Poverty (Poor) [-15], or Sense of Duty (Everyone) [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Bard (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Performance/Ritual (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-16; Theology (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-15.



This spell is risky if used more than once per day by the same caster on the same subject. Skill will be at -3 the first repetition, -6 for the second, and so on.

*Duration:* Permanent

Hand	HT restored
Pair	+2
Jacks (or 4 fatigue)	+4
Two Pairs (or 6 fatigue)	+6
Three of a Kind or better (or 8 fatigue)	+8

## HUNCH

Cast on any inanimate object (or 1-hex section of a large object), lets the caster determine the recent past of that object, user's personality, etc. – but no names!

The better the huckster's hand, the better the information he gets about the target's history. The huckster can concentrate on a specific question, but the target doesn't "know" about events that did not happen in its presence.

## MIGHT

Raises the subject's ST temporarily. This will affect damage, encumbrance, fatigue, and possibly readying times for weapons. A caster *can* raise his own strength, but note that if the subject's fatigue is higher than his ST when the spell wears off he will immediately lose consciousness.

*Duration:* 1 minute. Maintaining the spell for longer costs 2 points of fatigue per minute per extra point of ST.

Hand	Modifier
Pair	+1
Jacks (or 2 fatigue)	+2
Two Pairs (or 4 fatigue)	+3
Three of a Kind (or 6 fatigue)	+4
Straight or better (or 8 fatigue)	+5

## MISSED ME!

Turns any missiles harmlessly aside by the tiniest fraction needed to ensure they miss the target; the game effect is that the missile continues in a straight line past the target. Works on nearly all kinds of missiles – arrows, bullets, falling rocks, missile spells, shrapnel, cream pies – everything except blast from explosives, fire from a flamethrower, and other area-effect attacks. The GM should conceal the existence of the spell from the caster's foes as long as possible, saying they just missed! The huckster must Concentrate to maintain the spell. Minimum hand required is one pair; better hands have no further effect.

*Duration:* 1 minute.

## PHANTOM FINGERS

Allows manipulation of items. Ropes may be untied, doorknobs or keys turned, etc. Hucksters often use this hex to cheat at cards or pull an enemy's gun from his holster. The caster need not touch the subject. Any activity complex enough to require a DX roll at a penalty to perform requires the same penalty to this hex. The better a hand the huckster gets, the larger the object affected or the more subtle the manipulation can be, GM's call.

*Duration:* 1 minute.

*Time to cast:* 3 seconds.

## INFORMATION

## REGULAR

## REGULAR

## REGULAR

## POKER HANDS

The object of poker is to build a hand consisting of certain card combinations. The more rare the combination, the more valuable the hand is. If you aren't familiar with poker hands, or want to dispense with playing cards and just judge the success of any hex with a dice roll, here's a handy cheat sheet.

Hand	Cards	Spell roll made by:
Pair	2 cards of the same value and any suit	0-3
Jacks	A pair of jacks or better	4-5
2 Pairs	2 pairs of cards of the same value	6-7
3 of a Kind	3 cards of the same value and any suit	8-9

The following hands are extremely rare (less than 0.5% probability); if using dice, these results will only crop up on a critical success. Roll 3d and consult the table below.

Hand	Cards	Roll:
Dead Man's Hand	2 black aces, 2 black 8s, Jack of Diamonds	3
Straight	5 sequential cards	4-10
Flush	5 cards of one suit	11-13
Full House	3 of one card, 2 of another	14-15
4 of a Kind	4 cards of the same value	16
Straight Flush	5 sequential cards all of the same suit	17
Royal Flush	10, Jack, Queen, King, Ace, all of one suit	18

Note that in most cases, a Dead Man's Hand merely counts as Two Pair.

If you're not using cards at all, any Critical Failure while casting a Hex counts as drawing a joker – the huckster must roll against Hex Backlash, but can roll again to see whether the Hex succeeded anyway.

## HEX BACKLASH: ROLL 3d

Roll	Effect
3-9	Brain Drain: The manitou fries part of the huckster's mind with energy from the Hunting Grounds. The huckster's spell fails, and he must make a Will Roll at -5 or his skill with that spell drops by 1.
10-12	Backlash: The manitou rebels and overloads the huckster's system with magic from the Hunting Grounds. The huckster takes 2d damage to the torso (armor doesn't protect, but Toughness does).
13-14	Spirit Drain: The manitou tries to take over. The huckster manages to retain control but loses 2d Fatigue in the spiritual struggle. The hex fails only if the huckster goes unconscious.
15-16	Madness: The manitou ruins the spell and, worse, drives the huckster insane (see p. 59).
17-18	Corruption: The manitou twists the spell's effects. Damage-causing hexes hit friendly characters, protection hexes protect the enemy or make the huckster more vulnerable, etc.

## BESTIARY

There were six of the demons, eight or nine foot tall from their clawed feet to the tips of their horns, and their black batlike wings looked big enough to blot out the sky. One came swooping down towards me and I froze, but Big George was quicker; he fired up into the air, and the monster dropped to the ground right in front of me. Close-up like that, I could see that the “horns” were really ears; it had wings but no arms, and looked more like a bat than a man. One of those wings hung down, shattered by George’s shot, but it wasn’t dead; it came scrambling towards me like a man with a crutch trying to run. George and I fired in the same instant, and it staggered backwards, then the marshal gave it a blast of buckshot from his LeMat, which made the creature’s face a damn sight prettier. Then I heard a shriek as another of the monsters swooped down and picked up one of the gamblers, a scrawny little Frenchman known as Slim.

I turned around and saw the marshal drop his gun and make a grab for Slim as he rose, but he was a mite too slow, and the monster and the gambler disappeared into the darkness. Another of the demons dropped out of the sky and sank its talons into the marshal’s shoulders; Big George and I grabbed at the marshal’s legs with our free hands while we fired at the damn thing. I heard a scream behind me, and looked over my shoulder. Another of the monsters had grabbed a woman off the saloon’s balcony and was flying away with her. As I aimed at it, hoping not to hit her, she drew a pepperbox out from under her skirt, rammed it up between the creature’s legs, and fired off all the barrels. The monster dropped her, and she grabbed the edge of the roof on her way down.

The one that had grabbed the marshal finally gave up the ghost, and it and the marshal fell on top of me, knocking me to the ground. I looked up to see another one of them swooping towards the preacher from behind. I yelled a warning, and the preacher spun around and pointed his gun at the damn thing. I reckon he would have got it through the heart if he hadn’t been all out of bullets.

Then the creature seemed to stop in mid-air a few inches from the preacher like it had smacked into a window, and took off into the darkness. One of the gamblers fired into the sky, but the marshal advised him to save his ammunition. “Everyone get under cover, reload, get yourself fixed up,” he said. “I don’t reckon they’ll come back tonight, but they might.”

He was bleeding like a stuck pig, so George and I helped him to the stable, where the blacksmith bandaged him. “Those creatures,” I said, “are they responsible for the disappearances?”

“Them and the dust devils,” said the marshal, wearily, “and the tumblebleeds and other varmints account for some, too. But mostly, folks just gets up and leaves. I reckon they just don’t like it here.” He looked out the doorway at the darkness. “Don’t understand it meself.”

## BLACK RIDERS

**ST:** 15      **Move/Dodge:** 6/6      **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 15      **PD/DR:** 0/0      **Wt.:** 180 lbs.  
**IQ:** 14      **Damage:** 6d#  
**HT:** 12      **Reach:** C      **Habitats:** Death Valley

**Special Abilities:** *Damage:* Revolvers; 6d+ crushing damage, never need reloading; other stats as for Colt Army .44.

*Coup:* A Harrowed who takes a rider’s essence can instantly detect other Harrowed by simply looking at them.

*Invulnerability* – All.

*Terror:* +4

*Vulnerability:* Blessed Weapons: The riders can only be destroyed by receiving at least 3 points damage to the brain from a weapon blessed by an ordained minister (see Sanctify skill, p. 44)

**Skills:** Brawling-17; Guns/TL5 (Pistol)-20; Intimidation-17; Riding (Horse)-19.

The Black Riders haunt Death Valley. They wear tattered black shrouds with a single holster at their waists. Beneath their black cowls, should anyone get that close, are skulls with two glowing red sparks for eyes.

The Riders’ black horses seem to be ordinary saddle horses, but are protected by the Riders’ invulnerability while the Riders are mounted. Black Riders despise all life and kill any living beings they see.

## DESERT THING

**ST:** 25-35      **Move/Dodge:** 1/6#      **Size:** 7  
**DX:** 14      **PD/DR:** 2/6#      **Wt.:** 1-2 tons  
**IQ:** 4      **Damage:** 5d imp#  
**HT:** 13/39      **Reach:** C-7      **Habitats:** D, Sub

**Special Abilities:** *Terror* +4. *Special Limitation:* Always On. See p. 39.

A desert thing is basically a gaping maw in the sandy desert floor, a body 8’ in diameter surrounded by 20’ tentacles.

Desert things move very slowly but stealthily beneath the dunes (Stealth-14), dwelling along popular trails or in or near a water hole. When a hapless traveler passes by, the thing grabs its legs or hooves with its long tentacles and drags it into its circular maw, which bites for 5d impaling.

Desert things can sense approaching prey (anything from 5 to 300 lbs. qualifies) up to 50 yards distant on a contest of Hearing (14) versus the prey’s Stealth skill. When the prey gets within reach of its 20’ long tentacles, the creature attacks.

Each of the thing’s eight tentacles can grapple prey; if the grapple succeeds, the victim’s fate is determined with a contest of ST. Every win for the Thing means the prey is dragged one yard closer to its teeth; the victim needs to win two contests in a row to break free.

The only other way to escape the creature is to kill it or mangle a tentacle. The rest of the beast (DR 14, no Dodge) lies protected under several inches under the sand (+1d to DR), and the tentacles themselves are tough and difficult to cut (DR 7, 7 hit points, Dodge 6). The Desert Thing opens its huge mouth (-1 to hit) when its prey is within 3 yards; throwing a few sticks of dynamite inside bypasses all DR, but requires precise timing.

# GLOSSARY



**Agency, The:** U.S. government department that investigates bizarre and supernatural events (formerly the job of the Pinkerton Detective Agency), founded by President U.S. Grant in 1877.

**Blessed:** *Deadlands* term for characters with the Divine Favor advantage (not to be confused with the *GURPS* "Blessed" advantage).

**Boot Hill:** The temporary cemetery above Dodge City, where cowboys and gunfighters who died with their boots on were buried with their boots as a pillow; later, any frontier cemetery.

**buffaloing:** The "gentle art of bending a revolver barrel around a lawbreaker's skull."

**bullwhacker:** Driver of an ox team.

**cornfield meet:** A head-on railroad collision.

**coup:** Powers gained by the Harrowed by defeating powerful abominations.

**cowpoke:** Originally a railroad employee in charge of penned cattle waiting shipment by train; later used for cowboys.

**"Dead Man's Hand":** Two black aces, two black eights, and the jack of diamonds; the cards Wild Bill Hickok held when shot in the back by Jack McCall.

**Deadland:** An area with a permanent Fear Level of 6.

**dodgers:** Wanted posters.

**dominion:** Control of a Harrowed's body, fought over by the original personality and the manitou who has animated the body.

**Fear Level:** The modifier to Fright Checks in a particular area. Most places have Fear Level 0; *Deadlands* have Fear Level 6.

**fearmonger:** The creature responsible for raising the Fear level in a particular area; the main horror of any adventure.

**greenhorn:** An inexperienced person; also called a "tenderfoot" (a term originally applied to cattle).

**Harrowed:** Undead raised and possessed by a manitou.

**Hell on Wheels:** One of the tent cities of gamblers, whores, and thieves that followed the laying of railroad tracks.

**hex:** Huckster's term for a spell.

**holy:** Possessing the Divine Favor advantage.

**huckster:** A sorcerer, witch, or warlock.

**Hunting Grounds:** The supernatural plane where manitous and other spirits roam.

**joker:** Another term for a manitou.

**Last Sons:** Raven's followers.

**manitou:** The Indian term for a malignant spirit of the type that gives hucksters their power and animates the Harrowed.

**Maze, The:** A labyrinth of jagged mesas and flooded sea-channels in earthquake-ravaged California.

**miracle:** Divine intervention, invoked by those with the Divine Favor advantage.

**Old Ones:** Elder shamans of the Indian tribes, slain by Raven and his Last Sons.

**Raven:** The vengeful young Susquehanna shaman who brought about the Reckoning by releasing the manitous from the Hunting Ground.

**Reckoners:** Ancient, evil, unearthly beings seeking to remake the Earth to their own liking.

**Reckoning:** The Reckoners' battle to turn the whole Earth into *Deadlands*.

**rust-eaters:** Workers who lay railway tracks.

**shaman:** 3rd-level Initiate in shamanic ritual magic.

**shebang:** A general store. "The whole shebang" indicates everything that might be found in a well-stocked store, and by extension, every part of whatever is being discussed.

**sodbusters:** Prairie settlers who build sod houses.

**widowmaker:** An accident in which a rider's boot is caught in the stirrup and he is dragged behind the horse.

# INDEX



Agency, the, 14; *see also Pinkertons, Union Agents*.  
Animal Mastery, 104.  
Armor, 67.  
Backlash, 76; *table*, 77.  
Badlands, the, 15.  
Banish, 92.  
Bard skill, 6, 11, 42.  
Bayou Vermillion, 19, 21, 25.  
Black Hills, the, 16.  
Black magic, 103-107; *misfires and*, 103.  
Black powder weapons, 63.  
Black Riders, 109.  
Black River, 10, 25.  
Bloody Ones, the, 116.  
Bolts of Doom, 104.  
Bounties, 118.  
Bounty hunters, 29.  
Bowie's Last Knife, 97.  
Brocious, Curly Bill, 21; *stats*, 51.  
Buffalo, 117; *hunters*, 29.  
Bulletproof vest, 59.  
Bullock, Seth, 18; *stats*, 51.  
Calamity Jane, *stats*, 51.  
Call Lightning (Thunderbolt), 89.  
Call of the Wild hex, 76.  
Cat's Eyes, 36.  
Cattle, 118.  
Cattle Kings, 30.  
Character templates, 44-50.  
Charms, 86.



Chinatown, 18.  
Chinese warlords, 22.  
Cloak of Evil, 104.  
Clothes, 67.  
Clum, John, 21.  
Clumsiness hex, 76.  
Contagion, 104.  
Cortez' Sword, 97.  
Coup powers, 97.  
Cowboys, 30; *gang*, 21.  
Cowpoke, *template*, 44.  
Coyote Confederation, 31.  
Crazy Horse's Coup Stick, 97.  
Curse, 105.  
Curse (Malaise), 87.  
Dark Protection, 105.  
Dead Man's Bullets, 98.  
**Deadlands: Hell on Earth**, 126.  
**Deadlands: Lost Colony**, 126.  
Deadwood, 18; *map of*, 17.  
Deadwood Creek Massacre, 16.  
Deadwood Creek Treaty, 16.  
Death Valley, 22.  
Denver, 14.  
Derringers, 65.  
Deseret, 8, 14.  
Desert things, 109.  
Deserters, 30.  
Devil bats, 15, 110.  
Devil's Postpiles, the, 22.



Dexterity hex, 76.  
Disputed Lands, 9.  
Diversion hex, 76.  
Dixie Rails, 25.  
Dodge City, 9, 12, 14; *map of*, 13.  
Dream-Delving, 86.  
Dreamcatchers, 98.  
Dreamwalk, 86.  
Dust devils, 110.  
Earp, Wyatt Berry Stapp, 12, 14, 21; *stats*, 52.  
Earp's Badge, 98.  
Earth Speak (Seeker), 89.  
Eastwood, Clint, 120.  
Epitaph camera, the, 59.  
Excelsior, 18.  
Exorcism skill, 42.  
Explorers, 30.  
Explosives, 68.  
Extra Fatigue (Black Magic Only) advantage, 106.  
Fatigue hex, 76.  
Fear Levels, 11.  
Firearms, in melee, 65.  
Firewalker, 90.  
Flamethrower, 60.  
Flying Buffaloes, 7, 61.  
Food, 24.  
Foolishness hex, 76.  
Forewarning, 105.  
Fort 51, 7.  
Fort Huachuca, Arizona, 21.



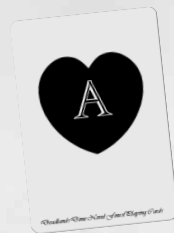
Frontier lawman, *template*, 44.  
 Gadgeteers, 58.  
 Gadgets, quick-and-dirty, 59.  
 Gatling pistol, 61.  
 Gear, *cheap*, 69; *common*, 68.  
 Ghost rock, 6, 58.  
 Ghost Shirt, 90.  
 Ghost Trail, 7, 21.  
 Ghost, the, 25.  
 Ghostly Servant, 105.  
 Ghouls, 12, 111; *kings*, 111.  
 Gizmos advantage, 35.  
 Grand Canyon, 19.  
 Great Maze, 22, 33.  
 Great Quake, 6.  
 Great Spirit, 31, 83.  
 Greenhorns, 31.  
 Gremlins, 88, 112.  
 Grimme, Ezekiel, 24.  
 Guardian Angel, *template*, 45.  
 Guiding Wing, 88.

Gunslingers, 31, *template*, 45.  
**GURPS Autoduel**, 126; *Aztecs*, 126; *Bestiary*, 101, 126; *Black Ops*, 101, 126; *Blood Types*, 101; *Creatures of the Night*, 101, 126; *CthulhuPunk*, 126; *Grimoire*, 126; *High-Tech*, 35, 63, 64, 126; *Horror*, 101; *Magic*, 76, 126; *Martial Arts*, 126; *Mecha*, 64, 126; *Ogre*, 126; *Old West*, 25, 58, 63, 85, 86, 101, 126; *Reign of Steel*, 126; *Religion*, 126; *Robots*, 64, 126; *Space*, 126; *Spirits*, 39, 83, 85, 86, 92, 126; *Steam-Tech*, 35, 59; *Steampunk*, 35, 59, 64, 126; *Swashbucklers*, 126; *Technomancer*, 126; *Time Travel*, 126; *Traveller*, 126; *Ultra-Tech*, 64, 126; *Ultra-Tech 2*, 64, 126; *Undead*, 101, 126; *Vehicles*, 64, 126; *Voodoo*, 39, 83, 86, 101, 126; *War Against the Chtorr*, 126; *Wizards*, 126; *Y2K*, 126.

Hanbloglaka, 83.  
 Hangin' Judges, 112.  
 Harrowed, 92; *advantage*, 36; *becoming*, 92; *needs of*, 96; *nightmare and*, 94; *powers*, 36, 97.  
 Hellstromme's Blueprints, 98.  
 Hellstromme, Dr. Darius, 15, 25, 62.  
 Helping Hand hex, 76.  
 Heraldry skill, 43.  
 Hexes, 31, 44, 75; *casting*, 75.  
 Hickok, Wild Bill, *stats*, 52.  
 Holliday, Doc, 21; *stats*, 53.  
 Holy Roller, 80.  
 Holy, the, 79.  
 Horses, 118.  
 Hoyle's *Book of Games*, 8, 74-76; *1769 Edition*, 98.  
 Hoyle's Cards, 98.  
 Hucksters, 31, 74, 77; *template*, 45.  
 Hunting Grounds, 6, 18, 75, 83, 85.  
 Illiteracy disadvantage, 41.  
 Illusion, 105.  
 Independent Body Parts advantage, 37.  
 Indian braves, 31; *template*, 46.  
 Indian shamans, 31, 32; *template*, 46.  
 Initiation advantage, 38.  
 Inspiration, 80.  
 Insubstantiality, 36.  
 Invulnerability, 101.  
 Iron Dragon, 18, 25.  
 Jackalopes, 113.  
 James, Frank, 9.  
 James, Jesse, 9; *stats*, 53.  
 Job Table, 56.  
 Kang, 24, 25.  
 Ketchum, Hank "One-Eye," *stats*, 53.  
 LaCroix, Baron Simone, 19, 25.  
 Last Sons, 5, 6.  
 Latter-day Saints, 14; *see also* *Mormons*.

Laughing Men, the, 19.  
 Law, and PCs, 120.  
 Lay on Hands, 81.  
 Leone, Sergio, 120.  
 Los Diablos, 113.  
 Lost Angels, City of, 22, 24.  
 Love Charm, 88.  
 Mad scientists, 32; *template*, 48.  
 Madness, 59.  
 Magical Aptitude (Huckster) advantage, 38, 75, 76.  
 Malfunctions, gadgets and, 59, 60.  
 Manitous, 75, 76; *limitations of*, 94; *strength of*, 94; *Will and*, 97.  
 Martyr's Cross, 98.  
 Masterson, William Barclay "Bat," 12; *stats*, 54.  
 Maze dragons, 113.  
 McCall, Jack, 52.  
 Medicine (Succor), 87.  
 Mexican Armada, 22.  
 Might hex, 77.  
 Miracles, invoking, 80.  
 Missed Me! hex, 77.  
 Mojave Desert, 22.  
 Mojave rattlers, 16, 114.  
 Money, 70.  
 Mormons, 8, 14, 62.  
 Mountain lions, 118.  
 Mounted combat, 69.  
 Muckrakers, 32; *template*, 48.  
 Mystic Symbol advantage, 39.  
 Nacogdoches, 19.  
 Night haunts, 114.  
 Night Terrors, 86.  
 Nightmares disadvantage, 41.  
 Occultism skill, 75.  
 Old Ways, the, 88.  
 Overweight disadvantage, 41.  
 Pact, 106.  
 Pact (Mastery), 92.  
 Path of Dreams, 86.  
 Path of Health, 87.  
 Path of Luck, 88.  
 Path of Protection, 90.  
 Path of the Spirit, 92.  
 Pepperboxes, 65.  
 Phantom Fingers hex, 77.  
 Photographers, 32.  
 Pinkertons, 8, 61.  
 Pirates, 33.  
 Pistols, double-action, 65.  
 Pistols, single-action, 64.  
 Poker hands, 77.  
 Pole Men, 16, 114.  
 Power Investiture (Black Magic) advantage, 103.  
 Prairie ticks, 10, 19, 115.  
 Preachers, 33; *template*, 48.  
 Predict Weather, 88.  
 Prospectors, 33.  
 Protection, 81.  
 Puppet, 106.  
 Quantrell, Bill, 9, 12; *Raiders*, 9; *stats*, 54.  
 Queen Ursula, 16; *stats*, 55.  
 Rail Wars, 25.  
 Rain Dade, 88.  
 Raven, 5, 6.  
 Reckoners, 6, 15.  
 Reckoning, 5, 31.  
 Relics, 97-99.  
 Revenant, the, 10, 115.  
 Ringo, Johnny, 21; *stats*, 55.  
 Ritual Modifiers Table, 91.  
 Rock fever, 32.  
 Rocket pack, 61.  
 Roswell, 7.  
 Ryan, "Chuckles," 19; *stats*, 55.  
 Sacred Tomahawk of the Sun, 98.

Saloon Gals, 33; *template*, 49.  
 Salt Lake City, 14, 15, 62.  
 Sanctify skill, 44.  
 Sanctuary, 90.  
 Santa Fe Trail, 22.  
 Sasquatches, 118.  
 Satan's Garden, 18.  
 Scrye, 106.  
 Sending, 107.  
 Shadow Walk hex, 78.  
 Shamans, 82-85.  
 Shan Fan, 24.  
 Sheriffs, 34.  
 Shotguns, 66.  
 Sign Language skill, 43.  
 Sins, 81.  
 Sioux Nations, 31.  
 Slumber, 86, 87.  
 Smite, 82.  
 Smith & Robards, 59.  
 Snake Oil Salesmen, 34.  
 Soar with Eagles, 86.  
 Soldiers, 34, *template*, 49.  
 Soul Blast hex, 78.  
 Soul Eater, 36.  
 Soul Rider hex, 78.  
 Spaghetti Westerns, 120.  
 Speed of the Wolf, 87.  
 Spirit Advisors, 39, 47, 83, 85.  
 Spirit Warrior (Warrior's Blessing), 88.  
 Spook, 107.  
 Spooks, 14, 50.  
 Star Chamber, 14.  
 Steam wagon, 62.  
 Stormcall, 107.  
 Strength of the Bear, 88.  
 Stun, 107.  
 Summon, 92.  
 Sun Bow, 99.  
 Sun Dance, 87.  
 Teamsters, 34.  
 Terror advantage, 39.  
 Texas fever, 10, 19.  
 Texas Rangers, 7; *template*, 50.  
 Texas tummy twister, 19.  
 Tombstone Epitaph, 20, 21.  
 Tombstone, Arizona, 19; *map*, 20.  
 Transformation, 107.  
 Trinkets hex, 79.  
 Troubleshooters, 14.  
 Tumblebleed, 115.  
 Undead, properties of, 102.  
 Unholy Host, 37.  
 Unholy Symbol, 99.  
 Union Agent *template*, 50.  
 Union Blue, 9, 25.  
 Vigor hex, 79.  
 Vision quest, 85, 86.  
 Vision Quest (Vision of Luck), 89.  
 Vow disadvantage, 40.  
 Vulnerability, of monsters, 102.  
 Walkin' dead, 115; *veteran*, 116.  
 Wall crawlers, 116.  
 Wasatch Railroad, 25.  
 Weapons table, 71-72; *reading*, 70.  
 Weapons, *hand*, 67; *ranged*, 66.  
 Wendigos, 116; *white*, 116.  
 Werewolves, 117.  
 Wild Bill's Six-Shooters, 99.  
 Wilderness Walk (Obscurity), 90.  
 Windstorm hex, 79.  
 Women, *in the Weird West*, 29.  
 Worm Canyon, 16.  
 Worm cultists, *stats*, 55.  
 Writing skill, 11.  
 Xitlan, *stats*, 55.  
 Zombie, 107.



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