

**WINDHAMMER PRIZE**  
FOR SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

# Gunsmoke Along The Fey Frontier

AN ENTRY IN THE 2015 WINDHAMMER PRIZE FOR  
SHORT GAMEBOOK FICTION

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## Gunsmoke Along the Fey Frontier by Richard Penwarden.

In Gunsmoke Along the Fey Frontier YOU take on the role of a tough bounty hunter in a fantasy Western setting.

### The Basic Rules

You will need to keep track of a few things during your adventure:

#### **Posse-O'-Pips (Extra Dice):**

**Aces:**

**Bounty (Coins):**

**Codewords:**

If you play the basic game, you are a human bounty hunter. You begin with the following; **Posse-O'-Pips: 4 Dice, Aces: 2, Bounty: 0 Coins. No Codewords.** Rules for an advanced game follow the end of the basic rules; these allow you to play a tribal elf, a dwarf miner or a halfkin homesteader. You can even begin with a bad reputation, a Desperado, for extra dice in your Posse-O'-Pips.

Skill checks are resolved with a basic six sided die in this gamebook - this one die is called the "free" die as it will always be available for you to use. Checks take the form of either **Tests** or **Challenges** (explained in detail later). Basically a Test is a one-shot skill check - you either **Pass** or **Fail**; such as if you try to spot a hidden clue. A Challenge is a series of Tests made from **Attempts**, you will either eventually **Succeed** or finally be **Defeated**: Combat is the best example of a Challenge.

You bring along some extra help with these Tests and Challenges in the form of your **Posse-O'-Pips**. The Posse-O'-Pips represent extra six sided dice you can spend in addition to your "free" die, where Lady Luck rides shotgun! You may spend these extra dice at any time you are asked to make a Test or Challenge. You do not have to, of course, you might want to save them for what you consider really important checks. The Posse-O'-Pips represent an edge you have in a particular situation and could take the form of something useful you possess, perhaps you have knowledge or experience in the current circumstances you find yourself in or maybe you just have a burst of adrenalin, confidence or motivation to get you through. It doesn't matter what grants you this edge, let your imagination go wild! Once spent, though, the dice are gone but you may be able to pick up some more as you adventure. Important! When you spend dice from your Posse-O'-Pips on a Challenge, you can only receive one **Success** no matter how many dice you spent on *that particular Attempt*. You can of course spend dice again on the following Attempt. There is no limit to the number of Dice you can carry in your Posse-O'-Pips. You can either make a note or physically keep the extra dice near you, though you might want to keep them separate from your basic "free" die to avoid confusion.

If you Fail a Test you may **Play an Ace**, pulling an Ace from up your sleeve, or victory out of the bag, to turn that Fail into a Pass.

If you are Defeated by a Challenge you may Play an Ace for every Success short you were to Succeed. If you do not possess enough Aces for the number of Successes needed, you are still Defeated.

You may never have more than 4 Aces at any one time. You can either make a note or physically keep the same number of aces from playing cards near you.

Your **Bounty** is measured in coins. This represents the price on your own head! It does not represent a

specific number of Dollars, it just gives an approximation of how wanted you are by the law. The higher the Bounty, the more likely you are to find dealings with law-abiding citizens difficult but, conversely, the easier it will be for you to seek assistance from the criminal element. Performing honest and decent actions enhances your reputation and will reduce the Bounty on your head. Behaving without morals - stealing and so on - will increase your Bounty. Occasionally you will have to "Try Your Reputation". To do this you need to toss a number of coins equal to your Bounty - the number of "Heads" you receive indicates that you have been recognised as being wanted and the folk you are encountering will act accordingly. If you have no coins available, you can roll dice using Odd results for Heads and Even for Tails. You can either make a note of your Bounty or physically keep the same number of coins near you.

Certain **Codewords** will be given to you as you interact with the world. Some Codewords will be useful to you. Codewords may represent vital clues discovered, actions you have taken previously that help the situation you now find yourself in or even a specific piece of equipment that is ideally suited for your current action. Beware! Under some circumstances a Codeword might actually be more of a hindrance. Always consider carefully your actions and the ramifications they may create. When making a Test or Challenge possession of one or more of the relevant Codewords mentioned will reduce the Difficulty by one point: Note if you possess more than one Codeword you still only reduce the Difficulty by one. Certain special Tests and Challenges will be affected by Codewords in different ways but these are explained at the time.

### Tests and Challenges

As mentioned a **Test** is a single one-off skill check. You have one chance to either **Pass** or **Fail**. A Test will look like this:

#### **[Disguise Test:4] (Cloak, Make-up)**

The square brackets will give a single word description of the skill check (in this case "Disguise") the type of check (Challenge or Test; Test for this particular check) and the **Difficulty Number**: the number your die has to equal or be greater than for you to Pass (4 on this occasion). The round brackets/parentheses indicate any relevant Codewords that reduce the Difficulty of the Test by one. If we had either Cloak or Make-up (or even both) the Difficulty Number would be 3.

A **Challenge** is a series of Tests made from Attempts in which you must obtain a certain number of Successes. A Challenge will look like this:

#### **[Climb Challenge:5] {3 Successes} (Lasso, Elf)**

The braces/curly brackets indicate the number of Successes you require to Succeed. Your first Attempt is calculated in exactly the same way as any normal Test and you may use dice from your Posse-O'-Pips to help you in the same way.

If you Succeed in an Attempt you receive one Success and **reduce the difficulty for your next Attempt by one**.

If you do not you must **increase the difficulty for your next Attempt by one**.

The Challenge continues with Attempts until you either reach the required number of Successes to Succeed or the Difficulty Number reaches 7, making the Challenge impossible and thus you have been Defeated. Remember you can Play Aces equal to the number of Successes you still need to Succeed if you are Defeated. Should you reduce the Difficulty Number to 1, by a combination of Codewords and Successes, you ARE number one! You automatically win the Challenge regardless of how many Successes you still need as it is impossible for you to be Defeated.

*Hint: Using Dice from your Posse-O'-Pips at the start of a Challenge will help improve your chances of an early*

*Success and therefore following Successes too.*

That's all the rules you need to start the game. An Example of play follows to show a Test, Challenge and a Reputation Check in action. The Advanced Game Rules follow the Example of Play.

When you are ready to begin your adventure - Turn to 1.

### **Example of Play**

Ex-con Willie the Kid, a young dwarf, is trying to track down a wanted outlaw, Jedd Kelly. Willie has 3 Dice in his Posse-O'-Pips, 2 Aces and a Bounty of 2 Coins. He has the following Codewords: **Dwarf**, **Shotgun**. If he can bring Jedd to justice he'll get a full pardon. Willie meets with a local marshal to see if the lawman knows where the outlaw is hiding. Willie has to Try his Reputation (Bounty), he tosses 2 Coins and gets 2 Tails, the marshal doesn't even realise Willie has a price on his head and co-operates, if Willie had got Heads he may have found himself back in prison! Willie follows the marshal's directions to the bandit's hideout.

#### **[Track Test:3] (Elf, Map)**

Willie isn't an Elf and hasn't picked up the Map so the Difficulty remains 3. He decides to boost his chances by using one die from his Posse-O'-Pips, so he rolls two six sided dice (remember you always throw one "free" die). Unfortunately he rolls a double one - snake eyes, a Fail. Willie Plays An Ace and turns the Fail into a Pass. He has 2 Dice and 1 Ace left.

Willie eventually finds Jedd Kelly after several long hours tracking him and a desperate gun battle ensues.

#### **[Duel Challenge:5] {3 Successes} (Shotgun, Dwarf)**

Willie has both the Shotgun and Dwarf Codewords but can only reduce the Difficulty to 4. Confident Willie rolls a single die for his first Attempt but gets a 3. The Difficulty rises by one to 5, if it reaches 7 the fight is lost! For his next Attempt Willie uses both remaining dice in his Posse-O'-Pips: He rolls three dice getting a 2, 5 & 6. Although both 5 and 6 are Successes he can only have one Success per Attempt. Willie notes one Success and reduces the Difficulty to 4. He has no extra Posse-O'-Pips dice left and for the next Attempt rolls a 2, the Difficulty rises to 5 and then he rolls a 1 on his following Attempt, increasing the Difficulty to 6. Sweating Willie rolls again but as luck would have it rolls a 6 giving him his second Success and reducing the Difficulty to 5. The following roll is 1, raising the Difficulty to 6. The final roll is 4, the Difficulty reaches 7 and Willie would be defeated, however, Willie Plays an Ace (his last Ace) to get his third Success - he Succeeds and the battle is won. Jedd is defeated and Willie gets his full pardon (-2 Coins as it turns out).

### **The Advanced Game**

The Fey Frontier isn't just inhabited by humans. Across the plains and woodlands, secretive and worldly-wise elves live their nomadic existence. In the mountains, brave dwarfs seek gold in all-but-exhausted mines. Whilst anywhere there is a stove, you can be sure to smell the wondrous cooking of the halfling homesteaders, or halfkin as they are known in these parts. You can take on the role of a bounty hunter from one of these unusual races instead of playing as a human if you wish.

If you choose to play as an elf you have excellent reflexes, note the Codeword **Elf**. You also begin with the following; **Posse-O'-Pips: 2 Dice, Aces: 2, Bounty: 2 Coins** (Elves do not understand the normal laws of more civilized folk and break them without realising).

If you choose to play as dwarf you are small but battle-hardy, note the Codeword **Dwarf**. You also begin with the following; **Posse-O'-Pips: 3 Dice, Aces: 1, Bounty: 1 Coin** (Dwarf tempers are feared).

If you choose to play as a halfkin you are small and curious - you pay great attention to the mannerisms of others, note the Codeword **Halfkin**. You also begin with the following; **Posse-O'-Pips: 2 Dice, Aces: 1, Bounty: 0 Coins**.

In addition to whether you choose to be human, elf, dwarf or halfkin, you may opt to be a Desperado bounty hunter - your methods mean you have achieved success by any means possible in the past. You can increase the number of dice in your Posse-O'-Pips by 3 but you must add 2 Coins to your Bounty and add the Codeword **Desperado**.

When you are ready to begin - Turn to 1.

.....

1.

There is a loud bang and a flash of gunpowder. Five.

You instinctively duck, as the bullet passes your head by what seems like a hair's breadth. You cling on to the train's carriage with one hand and save your hat from falling into the Rattle River Canal far below with the other. Not for the first time you wonder how you ended up in this predicament as you drop down to a safe spot between the cars.

You are a bounty hunter by trade and a damn good one too. You have lost count of the number of times you have clung on for dear life on the roof of a train whilst being shot at by a wanted criminal. Your latest quarry is no exception, a vicious piece of work known as "Gator" Stele.

Gator is ugly, even for an outlaw. They say he is a half-orc. His mother was a human from Snakewater but his father was an orc from the northern badlands, no-one knows for sure. Gator didn't get his name from his looks, even though his teeth are unusually crooked. No, apparently when Gator makes a kill he cries afterwards. Do alligators cry crocodile tears? Well so far he hasn't cried and you aren't about to have him crying over you.

The wind whips coldly across your face and the train lets out a shrill whistle. You poke your head out gingerly to see what new development has occurred. Gator is near the rear of the train, you cannot see him but you turn your head in the direction of the engine to see what's ahead. The locomotive is coming to the end of the viaduct having crossed the newly-built canal underneath but this is no time for sightseeing. With a sinking feeling you realise the reason for the train's whistle.

Ahead lie the Copperknock Mountains, home of the dwarf gold miners. The train track leads a winding course between these great rocky peaks through a series of ingenious tunnels, the first of which is only a few hundred yards ahead.

You turn back just in time to briefly see Gator's ugly mug before another shot rings out. The projectile hits the train sending a spray of splinters into the air. Gator Stele curses.

Six, time for him to reload - he's out of bullets!

Quick as a flash you are up and onto the roof of the carriage desperate to close the distance on Gator. Bracing yourself, and as the train blows its whistle again, you leap forward to the next carriage but just as you jump the wind catches the smoke coming from the engine and blows it directly across your path, obscuring your landing....

**[Jump Test:4] (Elf)**

If you Pass - Turn to **76**.

If you Fail - Turn to **37**.

**2.**

'...That's Gator Stele. You're after the bounty! Well why didn't you say so. Hand me my medical kit, it's in the bottom drawer over there.'

Glad of his assistance you open the drawer as you are told but there is no bag inside. You are just about to ask the deputy if you got the right desk when there are a couple of subdued shots.

The halfkin chuckles to himself and stands over your broken body pointing his twin pistols at your face.

'Nice bounty, shame about the hunter,' he says and fires again.

Your Adventure Ends Here.

**3.**

You are too slow, the rattlesnake sinks its fangs into your wrist and injects a powerful toxin into your system.

Gator finds you writhing around on the ground in pain. It is a mercy for him to pick up your gun and put you out of your misery, shedding tears as he does so.

Your Adventure Ends Here!

**4.**

The streets are deserted as you make your way to the barn. A sun-blistered sign outside identifies it as the Sheriff's official residence but anyone who knows him knows he is married to the job: Greyson spends most of his time living at the jail when he is in town.

Inside it is more of a museum or gallery than a house. Unusually for a dwarf, he isn't camera-shy judging by the amount of photographs of himself decorating the place. There must be at least a hundred! Each one has Greyson with a huge shotgun, almost as tall as he is, striking an impressive pose or receiving thanks from some local dignitary or other. According to the captions his weapon even has a name - "Bessie". There is no sign of any photos of a wife or family.

From a few personal letters in Greyson's bureau, you learn that the Sheriff comes originally from Jakers Crossing. That township is notorious for its jackrabbit problems, hence the name. You saw many photos of Greyson with a brace of coney when you first entered. There are certificates on the walls too, merits for his shooting skills keeping the pests under control from the railroad and other trading companies. The correspondence informs you that Greyson's reputation with Bessie earned him the Sheriff's badge

in later years.

Suddenly it dawns on you that in all the photos you have seen, not one of them shows the sheriff with a pistol. After a quick search of the remainder of the property, you find bucket-loads of shotgun cartridges but not one bullet. Your suspicions are confirmed. Greyson doesn't have a pistol and why would he need one with Bessie? Therefore, it could not have been the dwarf who shot Eric. Add the Codeword **Buckshot**.

You hear raised voices and shouting as you are finishing up - Turn to **20**.

**5.**

As he sits beside Big Al, Gator gives some words of encouragement: 'Don't fall off!'

Serena shows you where the contestants line up waiting their turn. Jessie has already ridden lasting way longer than his nearest rival. You begin to wonder what made you agree to this when in no time at all you find yourself sitting on the horse they are using. It is called "Rawhide" and it is not hard to work out why.

**[Rodeo Challenge:4] {4 Successes} (Elf)**

If you Succeed you win the rodeo - Turn to **89**.

If you are Defeated you must lose **-1 Die** from your **Posse-O'-Pips**, if you have any left, as you rub your sore buttocks:

You may now either wait for the stagecoach - Turn to **82**.

Or try to steal some horses, much harder since the distraction of the rodeo is over - Turn to **29**.

**6.**

You are a true hero in the eyes of the townsfolk and as such they willingly join you in attacking the escaped prisoners. Your people may only be armed with pitchforks, ropes and flowerpots but the weight of numbers easily turns the tide of victory in your favour.

In no time at all the six ne'er-do-wells are tied up ready to go back to jail and your thoughts turn to the sheriff and his deputy.

If you want to check Sheriff Greyson is okay - turn to **23**.

If you want to chase after Gusty without further delay - Turn to **39**.

**7.**

You come across a curious formation, a giant termite mound modified with cosy round windows and a brightly painted front door. Round of course.

You have hardly finished knocking when a jolly middle-aged halfkin woman throws open the door and welcomes you like long lost family. Petunia Peabody, though everyone calls her Purdy, welcomes you to her humble home and begins to ply Eric and yourself with delicious home cooked pies and sweetmeats.

You learn that she saw you being turned away from the gate, she doesn't agree with the curfew herself and thinks folks should help each other out more. She has stayed up late baking because tomorrow there will be celebrations in the town. *The Southern Belle* paddle steamer returns to South Varmin with Mayor Rifferd Banton and his wife Geraldine as guests of honour.

The food is delicious but you both make the mistake of emptying your plates so Purdy provides you with more. You soon learn that the only way to stop her feeding you is to leave plenty of food on the plate. After your meal she lends you some blankets and you can dry your clothes by the fire before indulging in a deep sleep. Add **+2 Dice** to your **Posse-O'-Pips**.

Turn to **25**.

**8.**

You scurry down the gangplank as quickly as you dare before the croupier changes his mind.

You dump the box of vegetables around the first corner and move deeper into the town. In front of you is the undertaker, Mr. Mauden, striding purposefully towards *The Southern Belle* accompanied by some of the crew who are trying to outdo each other with wilder and wilder theories as to who killed the mayor.

Rather than risk an awkward confrontation and a barrage of questions you decide to nip down a side street.

If you want to go right, down a broad street passing several warehouses along Stevedore's Way - Turn to **68**.

If you want to go left, along a very narrow un-named alleyway - Turn to **32**.

**9.**

Leevan stifles a yawn as you start to ask him about Snakewater. He apologises and informs you that he has indeed passed through the small town on several occasions, the last not too long ago. As he talks his head begins to fall sideways before he forces himself upright again but it is a futile gesture and he soon falls asleep.

'It's the excitement, it's too much for him,' says his wife, Kat.

Kat gently removes the shotgun from where Leevan's arms cradle it lovingly and places the weapon across her lap, ready if Gator should try anything. You have no doubt she knows how to use it.

With that she turns to you and asks about yourself. She has that strange little old lady way of making you give just a little more information than you are comfortable with and you become quite loose-lipped with the old girl.

If you have the Codeword **Desperado** she is unwilling to talk further - Turn to **13**.

Otherwise Try your Reputation (**Bounty**).

If you get at least one Head - Turn to **13**.

If not - Turn to **70**.

**10.**

You breathe a sigh of relief as you and Gator sneak up to the fire and find there is no-one around. A fresh-filled red coffee pot proves too tempting to resist and you both take a hearty swig as you examine this makeshift camp.



You see a couple of packs holding supplies and weapons along with more usual equipment like bedrolls and mess kits. It occurs to you that you could help yourself to some loot before moving on.

If you want to steal some items - Turn to **54**.

If you move on instead - Turn to **99**.

#### 11.

The roof ends a short distance from the paddles, it would be a simple matter to climb down to the deck below without making too much noise.

The dark flowing Rattle River looks cold and uninviting here. You could throw the knife into it. If you are caught in possession of Mayor Banton's murder weapon, it would be hard to prove your innocence. On the other hand, it might provide a vital clue to help you unmask the real murderer.

If you want to toss the knife into the Rattle River - Turn to **69**.

If not - Turn to **77**.

#### 12.

You cannot believe it when you see the wig but this is the local judge, absolutely blind drunk! He arrived in town yesterday aboard the paddle-steamer. He asks you to help him and you try to lift him up but he protests - he wants you to help him find a drink!

If you possess **Bourbon** and wish to give it to him - Turn to **35**.

If you do not have that Codeword, or wish to keep it - Turn to **79**.

#### 13.

You wipe away the condensation on the grimy little window of the carriage. The view is quite breathtaking. The sharp peaks of the Copperknock Mountains slowly give way to the rolling hills that form the northern boundary of South Varmin. Cattle stand near the tracks grazing away, totally disinterested in the speeding train. Here and there stout buttes stand proudly at the border before giving way to fertile floodplains and field systems further south, like sentries guarding from northern invaders.

Eventually the train pulls into the brightly decorated station at South Varmin, heralding its arrival with a long whistle blast.

The platform and much of the town have been adorned with brightly coloured ribbons that flap vigorously in the stiff breeze, their gay colours quite in contrast to the black clouds building overhead. A storm is coming but many of the townsfolk do not appear to have noticed.

Down at the wharf where the Rattle River sluggishly flows through the town the concentration of people is greatest. An enthusiastic brass band plays popular tunes for the locals to sing along to.

The Northwoods informed you on your journey that the grand opening ceremony of the Banton Canal was being held today. The mayor of Snakewater has paid, at great expense, for the waterway to be built connecting South Varmin to his hamlet. In the past boats have been unable to traverse the Rattle River between the two towns due to a large section of rapids. The residents of Snakewater are hoping that there will be an increase in trade for their town, not only with folks coming upriver from South Varmin but downriver to Snakewater from Jakers Crossing and beyond. Not everyone is celebrating the

development. The railroad companies tried to block the construction - they have the main trade route through the area but no stops between the stations at Jackers Crossing and South Varmin, they are concerned at the potential loss of business. Local saloon bars also tried to protest about the canal when they heard of *The Southern Belle* a twin-stack paddle steamer that has been commissioned to travel along the canal providing patrons entertainment in the form of liquor and gambling.

You speak to a young man in dark tweed called Wayne. He is stood on the jetty listening to the band and tapping his feet along to the lively music of their final song. He tells you that *The Southern Belle* left for Snakewater almost an hour ago.

Cursing your luck you stroke your chin and look upriver, willing the steamer to return and pick you up but to no avail. Gator chuckles at your misfortune as he sits himself down on some nearby crates. Snakewater is a long way on foot.

Wayne tells you that you might be able to find someone who can help you at The Empty Barrel, the local saloon. Alternatively, if you don't mind waiting till after noon, you could catch the stagecoach to Snakewater.

As you are talking to Wayne you find it difficult to hear what he is saying. The band have retired but all of a sudden great shouts and cheers signal something else occurring. On the outskirts of town a rodeo is just starting to take place to mark the end of the canal-opening celebrations.

If you would like wait for the stagecoach to Snakewater - Turn to **82**.

If you would like to enter the saloon - Turn to **33**.

If you want to watch or even enter the rodeo - Turn to **61**.

If you want to steal some horses and ride to Snakewater - Turn to **46**.

#### 14.

You return to the ranch the conquering hero bringing all the remaining cows with you to the cowboy's delight. Add the Codewords **Round-up** and **Lasso** if you do not have them (if you have the Codeword **Desperado** you may delete it if you wish). You may also Add **+1 Ace** (remember you can only have a maximum of four).

The farmers are overjoyed that the precious livestock were saved and place them in the pens ready for the train tomorrow. They offer you a bed for the night but you want to get to Snakewater without any more delays.

Turn to **43**.

#### 15.

With perfect timing you land between the paddles just as the section you are on emerges from the water. You see a flash of gunfire but there is no sound as two bullets strike the paddle in front of you that you are using as a shield.

Gusty's face is a picture and his jaw drops as you use the momentum of the paddlewheel to propel yourself onto the deck. You pause, hiding behind a stack of crates, expecting to be shot at any second but there is nothing.

Risking a glance up at the roof and smoke stacks you are surprised not to be able to see Gusty. Then

there is a loud whistle blast, at first you think it is from the steamboat but you realise it is much further away and higher up. Your journey has brought you back to where you started - you are near the section of railroad where you first fought Gator and the train is coming.

If you possess the Codeword **Rifle** - Turn to **34**.

If not - Turn to **72**.

**16.**

Luckily the captain has disappeared back into Rifferd's cabin and does not see you re-enter the boat. You sneak into the kitchen area, ducking below a worktop to avoid a rather clean looking chef who washes his hands after every single piece of food he touches.

As you pass through you cannot help but notice the implements around. The killer's knife came from the galley here judging by its similar design.

At the far end of the galley are the crew's quarters, very small cabins. In one you find a wardrobe containing a porter's clean shirt, it is just the right size for you to wear.

After changing out of your blood-soaked clothing you look around for somewhere to lose your own shirt. There is an engineer leaving the boiler room to answer the call of nature. You give him a nod in greeting and he returns the gesture in bemused acknowledgement as he passes.

Whilst he is gone you enter the boiler room and stow your shirt into one of the furnaces where the evidence will be burned. Deduct **-1 Coin** from your **Bounty**.

With nothing else to be done, you leave before anyone starts to ask too many questions - Turn to **40**.

**17.**

Quick as a flash you are out of your seat, kicking the door open. You grab the outer rail and haul yourself up into the driver's seat ready to take the reins. Unfortunately the reins are no longer there, you can see that they have fallen down between the horses and drag along in the dirt. You may try to grab the reins but it is very risky.

If you wish to abandon the reins - Turn to **50**.

If you still want to reach down and get the reins:

**[Reaction Test:5] (Elf)**

If you Pass - Turn to **74**.

If you Fail - turn to **50**.

**18.**

You pass between the twin buttes and the countryside opens up before you. The scene is one of breathtakingly unspoilt beauty.

To your right the majestic Copperknock Mountains rise so high their peaks are hidden inside the dark storm clouds above. Somewhere in that direction is the railroad you fought Gator on. In front of you lie featureless plains as far as you can see and to the left wooded copses of trees dot the landscape here and there. As you stare at the woodland you become aware of a high wire fence, a tell-tale boundary

between the so-called civilised world and an elven reservation. You are now deep within the area known locally as the "Fey Frontier".

'Whatever they's payin' you hunter, it ain't enough,' says Gator awed at the stunning vista. 'You saved my life and I won't ferget it.'

He offers his hand to shake and promises not to try to escape again - he has already attempted to run away half a dozen times on your journey to Snakewater but you are always one step ahead of his doomed plans.

The man has changed, though, true to his word he doesn't try to leave again. As you shake his hand he tells you his true name is Eric, though no-one ever uses it. You begin to think maybe he isn't so bad after all. Eric shrugs when you ask him which way forward is best.

How would you like to head towards Snakewater?

If you would like to ride left along the fenced elven reservation - Turn to **49**.

If you would like to carry straight on along the open plains - Turn to **67**.

If you want to travel right, passing close to the Copperknock Mountains - Turn to **31**.

**19.**

There is no sign of any struggle in the cabin. Whoever stabbed the mayor must have known him well to have been able to get so close.

'Rifferd? Y'alright?' Comes a voice from outside and the handle is tried.

You are just about to leave when you notice something strange. A large pile of earth has been spilled out onto the carpet where a fern pot plant got knocked over during the mayor's final moments. Written in the dirt, by what looks like Rifferd's hand, is your name! Someone is trying to frame you. You quickly scrub the writing out. Deduct **-1 Coin** from your **Bounty**.

If you possess the Codeword **Sheriff** - Turn to **64**.

If not - Turn to **88**.

**20.**

There is a large congregation of residents from Snakewater gathered in the market square. Many are armed with pitchforks, ropes and other tools. It is difficult to see what is going on so you decide to climb onto the roof of the general store to get a better view.

In the middle of the crowd, hitched to a strong white stallion, there sits a wagon. Stood on the back are two small figures. One you recognise as the barefoot halfkin deputy, Augustus Trailtoes. He has a ridiculously large white Stetson almost swallowing his head. The other, who is badly beaten, is a dwarf - Sheriff Greyson no less by the badge. A third person, a well-dressed woman, sits beside the deputy. She is crying into her lace handkerchief, trying to appeal for calm but the crowd seem by and large to ignore her.

'You should thank us Geraldine,' one of the mob shouts, 'we've got yer 'usbands killer. We'll see justice done.'

With that Mayoress Geraldine Banton cries all the more.

The rest of the crowd are calling for Greyson to be hanged. They seem to be in no doubt as to who is to blame for the killings in town.

Next to your rooftop, a two-story building used for storing wheat and grain has a large wooden bar jutting out of the first floor doorway. The pulley is used normally to load carts but half a dozen cloaked men are setting up a noose. They seem to be preparing to hang the dwarf.

One of the men with the noose sees you from where he is stood and alerts the others. The crowd call for you to come down and when guns are cocked you realise you are surrounded.

You are dragged onto the wagon and the crowd then begins to argue amongst itself who should be hung first - you or the dwarf.

Mr. Mauden appears in the throng and a sudden hush descends. There is something about his profession that subdues normal folks.

You call out to the undertaker, reminding him that you were with Gator in a crowded street when he was shot and you were at the jail with Mauden when the mayor was murdered.

Mauden strokes his chin thoughtfully before nodding, your story has him convinced and the lynch mob let you go free.

'So who killed Gator and Rifferd then?' Pipes up a voice, others echo the cry.

'Any idea?' Asks Mauden.

You cast your mind back to the moment of Eric's death. "G-g-g-" he'd said as he pointed at that water trough. It suddenly occurs to you that he was trying to identify his killer!

If you accuse Mayoress Geraldine Banton (you may NOT if you have the Codeword **Mayoress**) - Turn to **59**.

If you think it is the dwarf, Sheriff Greyson (you may NOT if you have the Codeword **Buckshot**) - Turn to **91**.

If you blame halfkin Deputy Augustus Trailtoes (you may NOT if you have the Codeword **Boots**) - Turn to **47**.

If you have all three Codewords or cannot decide - Turn to **75**.

**21.**

You and Eric are shown to the spare room where you can spend the night. There is only a single bed. You shut the door and hear all manner of strange noises through the night as the moonshiners prepare their potent homebrew. Outside a gale howls and rain spatters against the window pane, you are grateful for your small comforts and have a few hours sleep at least. Add **+1 Die** to your **Posse-O'-Pips**.

Turn to **25**.

22.

It is a tight fit but you are able to pull yourself into a small chamber. Somewhere ahead you can hear a faint cry for help. Despite the gloom you have no trouble rescuing the casualty whose legs had become trapped by falling rock.

It turns out that you have saved a dwarf goldminer called Shaemusson. Failing veins of ore have made him take his profession into the older, more unstable mines. You offer to help him outside but he won't hear a word of it. There is so much work to be done putting the props back up.

He thanks you before you go and offers you his spare weapon, Add the Codeword **Shotgun** if you wish to take it. He also promises to tell his extended family about the help you gave - you may Deduct **-1 Coin** from your **Bounty** if you have any.

To leave - Turn to **99**.

23.

'Don't fuss over me!' Shouts the black-eyed sheriff angrily. 'Mercy, you'd make someone a lovely wife. Well don't jus' stand there, go get after that no good double crossing deputy of mine!'

Satisfied Greyson is fine you chase after Gusty.

Turn to **51**.

24.

The gentle motion of the train is not dissimilar to the motion of a mother rocking her baby to sleep. Satisfied that Gator is securely bound and Leevan is keeping a watchful eye on him, you allow yourself to drift off into a dreamless sleep. (You may add **+2 Dice** to your **Posse-O'-Pips**.)

It seems like you have only been asleep for five minutes when there is a loud whistle blast. You wake to see Leevan rousing also and in a sudden panic look for Gator but you have no need to worry. Leevan's wife has Gator fixed with her steely gaze, her husband's loaded shotgun resting across her lap.

'Did you sleep well dear?' She asks in a voice like butter wouldn't melt in her mouth.

'Yes,' both you and Leevan answer in unison - unsure as to which of you she was speaking to, it was best to cover all options.

Turn to **13**.

25.

You breakfast early with Eric and are standing by the town's gates at sunrise, watching tumbleweeds in the breeze as you wait for the gatekeeper to let you in.

As you are standing there Eric comments on what a silly nickname "Gator" is, for a start the saying pertains to crocodile tears not alligator and, besides, his tears are genuine. He has a young family to feed and no option but to turn to a life of crime.

Snakewater is a quiet rustic town normally but the same colourful bunting you saw at South Varmin bedecks the buildings here to. Perhaps the decorations are a little less grand but it is no secret that the

town's finances are low with the cost of the canal and the lack of taxes since the goldmines dried up. You dismount and walk along the main street.

The residents make the best of things, though, and you watch small children, each with a basket of pies skipping along the road. Even at this hour there are several youngsters around preparing for a street party.

'Reminds me of my own chi-' Eric starts to say as he swats a fly from his neck.

Suddenly you realise something is wrong. Eric withdraws his hand to show fresh blood on his fingers. A bullet has lodged in his neck, though you didn't hear a thing. The outlaw slumps to his knees, his finger points to a distant water trough... the location of his hidden killer?

'G-g-g-g-' he tries to say, 'g-g-g-g-'

Eric's eyes roll back into his head and his body goes limp. You are stunned at the sudden turn of events and look around for help.

**[Search Test:6] (Elf)**

If you Pass - Turn to **97**.

If you Fail - Turn to **84**.

**26.**

It is a simple matter to pick the lock and you enter the house.

Inside you see nothing that you hadn't already viewed through the window except for a ginger cat, purring in its sleep by the kitchen hearth.

The only blot on this domestic paradise is a pair of muddy boots tossed haphazardly under the kitchen table. If you have the Codeword **Boots** you must delete it.

Unable to discover anything else you decide your next move.

If you want to go to Mayoress Geraldine Banton's mansion - Turn to **98**.

If you visit Sheriff Greyson's converted barn - Turn to **4**.

**27.**

You are quite experienced at clambering around on railroads and just manage to reach the train as the final car is passing by. Fortunately the locomotive is not travelling too fast yet, otherwise trying to jump onto a moving train might be a different story.

A loud whistle blast from the engine draws your attention. The driver is trying to warn you about the series of tunnels up ahead but you are well aware of them thanks to your earlier conflict with poor Gator. You waste no time in racing along the roof of the cars, much to the excitement of the passengers. At one point your hat almost blows off but you have the reactions of a viper and somehow keep hold of it with one hand.

Gusty strikes the driver behind the head with a coal shovel and the man slumps to the floor unconscious. The train starts to accelerate alarming as you near a bend but the halfkin deputy merely

laughs at the danger, the joviality of that race can be so infuriating.

You just have time to reach the last carriage before the coal tender as the locomotive enters the first tunnel.

'You'll never take me alive,' comes the halfkin's high pitched voice as he fires at you.

**[Duel Challenge:6] {4\* Successes} (Rifle)**

\*If you have the Codeword **Halfpint** you only need **3 Successes**.

If you Succeed - Turn to **100**.

If you are Defeated - Your Adventure Ends Here!

**28.**

'...I know you, the gatekeeper told me about you. That's Gator Stele. You're after the bounty! Hundred and fifty dollars dead, five hundred dollars alive. Oh.'

The deputy introduces himself as Augustus Trailtoes. Deputy, jailer, town clerk, gunsmith and ex-engine driver. He has his fingers in many pies, and for a halfkin that's saying something! He takes a look at the outlaw but Gator Stele is dead - in his final moments a single tear rolled down his cheek.

He apologises about Gator but there is no way that you will be paid the full bounty. You protest, Eric was alive when you arrived in Snakewater. Deputy Trailtoes makes sympathetic noises but you suspect that the cash-strapped town would be hard pressed to pay such a high price.

'Tell you what I'll do,' he says, 'you keep an eye on the prisoners and I'll go fetch the sheriff. He's with the mayor for the opening of that damn canal. I'll send for the undertaker too.'

You have little choice but agree.

If you want to pass the time talking to the prisoners - Turn to **86**.

If you want to pick up the books you knocked off the table - Turn to **90**.

If you would rather search Eric's body for clues - Turn to **41**.

**29.**

It will not be easy stealing a pair of horses. The crowd are leaving the rodeo and heading back to their own homes. You find a leafy corral in a quiet corner of town and instruct Gator but the wily outlaw drags his heels making it harder for you.

**[Rustle Test:6] (Desperado)**

If you Pass - Turn to **95**.

If you Fail - Turn to **66**.

**30.**

It is late afternoon when you notice a large ranch. There is much activity with several cowboys riding along herding cattle into makeshift pens.

You stop a cowboy and ask what is going on to be informed that a tornado destroyed most of the



fencing but left the farmhouse intact. There's a whole herd of cattle destined for the Jakers Crossing train tomorrow, if the can catch them all in time!

If you want to ask him directions to Snakewater - Turn to **43**.

If you want to offer your help with rounding up the steers - turn to **83**.

**31.**

Your path leads you close to some foothills of the mountains. You can make out some hoof prints in the dirt that you suspect belong to a mule used by a miner or prospector.

After a short distance you hear a muffled explosion to your right. A couple of crows nearby caw loudly as they take flight.

If you want to investigate the explosion - Turn to **65**.

If you want to reach Snakewater without further delay - Turn to **99**.

**32.**

The alley is perfect for your needs, surrounded by tall buildings most of the way is hidden in shadows even at noon. Unfortunately it is also perfect territory for robbers.

You are just over halfway down when a rough pair of hands grab you from an open doorway. Before you can shout a sweaty palm is placed over your mouth, gagging you.

'Jus' gimme your money and you won't get hurt,' says the man's voice in the darkness.

You nod your head slowly and try to say something to the man, indicating your pocket. The second he releases his grip to hear what you have to say, you punch him hard in the throat. He steps back coughing, unused to a victim who resists. You seize the advantage and swing your fists as a gun would draw too much attention.

**[Duel Challenge:4] {3 Successes} (Dwarf, Lasso)**

If you win, you have knocked him out. Finding nothing of use you continue - Turn to **68**.

**33.**

A rusty sign swings in the increasing breeze. A keg of ale is depicted on its side with a grip and sight sticking out of either end - the caricature of a revolver.

'The Empty Barrel,' you observe drily 'noted for its "shots"!'!

Gator does not laugh, presumably he didn't understand the joke.

The place certainly lives up to its name, it is empty save for a couple of dwarfs playing cards in the far corner. The bartender rushes over and welcomes you in and introduces himself as Doc. He glances uncertainly at Gator, whose hands are still tied, but you vouch for your bounty and as a gesture of goodwill offer to buy the three of you a drink. You untie Gator's hands and tuck the bonds into your gunbelt, adjusting your bullets afterwards as a reminder of how well armed you are.

Doc pours a strong smelling concoction into glasses that quickly appear from nowhere. It is clear from his actions that he is keen to do business.

'Yessir, it's mighty quiet today what with the *Belle's* maiden voyage and the Dusters keeping my reg'lars away.'

You ask Doc who the Dusters are as Gator is the first to quaff his drink. The bartender informs you that they are a local gang of bandits who have threatened to rob travellers coming to the canal opening. They are named after the great clouds of dust that their horses kick up when they ride due to their vast numbers. So far there have been no incidents. Doc then begins to bemoan the canal, complaining at the amount of trade it will take from him.

You take a swig of your drink and stifle a cough as it burns your lungs. Both Doc and Gator laugh before Doc continues complaining and your face returns to a normal colour.

Reluctant to listen to Doc all day you decide to take your leave, though you may if you wish sit in with the dwarfs and play a few hands of Varmin Draw. To play cards you must possess an Ace to gamble with:

**[Gambling Challenge:4] {3 Successes} (Desperado\*)**

\*You may choose to reduce the difficulty with the **Desperado** Codeword if you possess it by cheating but if you do you must Add **+1 Coin** as the dwarfs later realise what you did!

If you Succeed you may Add **+2 Aces** (remember you can only have a maximum of four).

If you are Defeated you must Lose **-1 Ace**.

When you have finished here, to wait for the stagecoach to Snakewater - Turn to **82**.

If you want to watch or even enter the rodeo - Turn to **61**.

If you want to steal some horses and ride to Snakewater - Turn to **46**.

**34.**

Above the canal, running briefly on a parallel course, a wood and iron viaduct carries the railroad. You can see Gusty perched just below the lip of the track waiting for the train. You are surprised at the speed with which he climbed the bridge and resolve to do the same when the next leg between the spans passes close to your position.

Gusty laughs at you, raising a small silver hip-flask, he takes a refreshing drink.

You un-shoulder the rifle in one smooth movement and take aim, confident that he is just within range.

**[Sniper Test:3]**

If you Pass, Gusty loses a finger and you knock the flask clean out of his hand: Note the Codeword **Halfpint** - Turn to **87**.

If you Fail, he takes another swig - Turn to **87**.

**35.**

Delete the Codeword **Bourbon**.

The judge is delighted at your choice, pointing out it is an even better drop than the local sheriff drinks. You do not have the heart to tell him and leave him to it.

The judge has absolutely no idea what day it is after a few swigs and is convinced that you and he are

lifelong friends after half the bottle has gone. When he next looks around you cannot be found but he tells everyone he meets what a thoroughly decent person you are.

If you have any **Coins** for your **Bounty**, toss one. If it comes up Heads you only have ONE single **Coin Bounty** remaining, if it comes up Tails you can delete ALL the **Coins** in your **Bounty**. You can also delete the Codeword **Desperado** if you have it.

Turn to 79.

36.

A pair of moonshiners, virtually the only people up at his hour, hold their creaky door open just a fraction asking your business. You explain that you only wish for somewhere to spend the night, no questions asked, perhaps to dry off too. The door is slammed shut and there is excited whispering for a few moments before the door opens again, the hinges screeching in protest.

‘Come in,’ says one of the bearded men with a curious twinkle in his eye.

If you want to enter and the **Bounty** on your head is 5 Coins or more - Turn to 62.

If you want to enter and the **Bounty** on your head is 4 Coins or less - Turn to 21.

If you would rather not enter you can seek shelter elsewhere - Turn to 85.

37.

‘You’ll never take me alive,’ cries Gator as his thick fingers struggle to load the bullets.

You land to one side of his carriage, nearly falling off.

‘Wrong,’ you say recovering. ‘You are worth five hundred dollars alive and only a hundred and fifty dead. I don’t know why the good folks of Snakewater want to pay so much for you but I ain’t about to lose three hundred and fifty bucks.’

His brow furrows as he tries to understand what you are saying.

‘I want you alive!’ You shout as the smoke once again comes across to obscure your view.

The smoke clears as soon as it arrived and when it does so you can see Gator, his face streaked with tears from the smoke. He is about to say something but stops - he sees something behind you that makes his mouth split into an ugly toothy grin of anticipation.

The tunnel! At the last second you remember and drop flat onto the roof of the car as the rocky maw passes by harmlessly overhead. All is pitch black for several seconds and then the train bursts back into bright sunlight.

Gator has used the time wisely. Fully reloaded he points his revolver at you but the final words he shouts are drowned out by the train’s whistle. More low tunnels are on the way. It is time to end this, now.

**[Duel Challenge:5] {3 Successes} (Catch-up, Dwarf, Halfkin)**

If you Succeed - Turn to 92.

If you Fail - Turn to 56.

38.

With the tornado almost on top of you, you gun your mount down a narrow ravine and yell at Gator to follow. A flying cactus comes at you from the side but your horsemanship skills do not fail you.

In a daring move you slide off the mount as the prickly plant passes overhead. Using the momentum of your manoeuvre you kick hard against the ground to vault back up onto your horse. Your hat falls off, as it is wont to do, and you are forced to complete your acrobatic display one-handed - the other safely retrieves the hat from the threat of the tornado's deadly embrace.

Gator, struggling to control his own mount, is stunned at your skills. Open mouthed he almost falls from his horse but you pull alongside and grab him keeping him propped up and ahead of the twister.

The tornado changes path and scoots off towards Snakewater leaving you free of its clutches. You are left to ride towards a pass between two buttes at a much less punishing pace, relieved to be leaving "tornado ravine" behind.

Turn to 18.

39.

You run along the main street towards the docks following the horse and cart. You know Gusty's destination before he has even reached it.

With a toot of triumph from *The Southern Belle*, the halfkin deputy lets out three loud whistle blasts. The captain and crew are his hostages and he plans to escape downriver.

With not a moment to lose you unhitch the beautiful white stallion from the wagon and mount him bareback. The animal isn't used to being ridden and rears up on its hind legs. Your hat nearly falls but you catch it with your free hand and hold on to the mane. The townsfolk who see you cheer and applaud your prowess thinking that you are doing a display of trick-riding skills.

As soon as all four hooves touch the ground you dig into the horse's flanks and he responds with a burst of speed as if he has been ridden all his life.

The paddle steamer cannot reach full speed yet, fortunately, and Augustus Trailtoes can only watch with dismay from the deck as you gallop ever closer. Drawing his twin pearl-handled pistols, with silencers, he takes to the roof for a better view as *The Southern Belle* begins to leave the Rattle River and enter the Banton Canal proper. Next stop, South Varmin.

As you gain on him, the deputy starts to take pot shots. You are not going to get close enough to jump onto the deck. As the sides of the canal start to narrow you realise it is now or never and jump towards the paddlewheel instead.

**[Jump Test:3] (Elf)**

If you Pass - Turn to 15.

If you Fail - Turn to 96.

40.

The croupier stands at the top of the gangplank with his back to you, tossing his coin. There is no way past without him noticing and no other way off the ship without arousing suspicion.

A bold idea springs to mind and you pick up one of the vegetable produce boxes nearby.

'Excuse me, coming through,' you tell the man, not even stopping as you walk past. 'Chef says these are off and if I don't get fresh veggies it'll be my head on his chopping block!'

The croupier's brow furrows.

Test your Reputation (**Bounty**).

If you get no Heads - Turn to **8**.

If you receive one or two Heads - Turn to **81**.

If you have three or more Heads - Turn to **53**.

**41.**

Eric was killed by a bullet from a revolver or pistol as far as you can tell but it troubles you that you did not even hear the shooting take place. What possible reason would anyone have for killing the outlaw? After all, you were bringing him to justice - it's not like he was trying to escape.

The rest of the body is exactly as you expected, the only personal effects were those you had allowed Eric to keep. It just doesn't make sense.

At length you hear someone approaching but it isn't the sheriff or his deputy.

Turn to **73**.

**42.**

The half elven girl, Hazel, shakes her head. 'Mistress Geraldine isn't at home and Master Rifferd, Master Rifferd...'

She breaks down and sobs. Instinctively you step forward and give her a hug to console her. At first she freezes and begins to pull free but when she realises you mean her no harm she relaxes into your hold and has a good cry.

'It's okay,' you say trying as best as you can to comfort her. 'I know about Rifferd.'

You tell Hazel that there are some people in town spreading nasty rumours about Mistress Geraldine, saying that she might have done it.

She nods, she has heard the rumours too. Hazel thinks it is a bounty hunter from out of town who has killed the mayor but it could have been Sheriff Greyson. He is a dwarf and they are known for their temper. The sheriff, deputy and mayor have all fallen out with each other at various times due to the cost of the canal to the local taxpayers.

She tells you that Geraldine and Rifferd have argued about *The Southern Belle* and the type of entertainment it will be supplying on the new canal. It seems the mayoress is not keen on gambling but, as a concession to her, if she supported the canal, Rifferd had promised that his next act as mayor will be to improve relations with the elves of the Fey Frontier. The mayor had even told Geraldine that he would have the wire fence between the two removed.

You can either leave and check out Sheriff Greyson's converted barn - Turn to **4**.  
Or investigate a growing commotion in the centre of town instead - Turn to **20**.

#### 43.

It is dark when you finally reach the outskirts of Snakewater. You can hardly believe you are finally here after your eventful journey, the past hour of which has included constant rain. You and your companion are soaked to the skin. If you have the Codeword **Saddleless** you may delete it now.

When you reach the main gate to the walled town you are in for a shock. A pedantic old timer on guard refuses to let you in. Apparently it is the law in Snakewater that the gates are shut at sundown and not opened until sunup. A curfew has been introduced because Dusters, local bandits, have been spotted several times in the past week between here and South Varmin.

'But I bring Eric-, I mean Gator Stele. There's a bounty on his head!' You protest.

The gatekeeper will not listen and tells you to return in the morning.

You look around at the few outbuildings and resolve to knock on doors in the hope that someone will give you shelter for the night. Eric offers to help and you consider his request, he may have some useful contacts hereabouts but it is unlikely that they will be decent law-abiding citizens.

Try Your Reputation (**Bounty**). (You may if you wish accept Gator's help - Add +4 Coins to this attempt only.)

If you achieve one or less Heads - Turn to **7**.

If you get two to three Heads - Turn to **85**.

If you receive four or more Heads - Turn to **36**.

#### 44.

You are well experienced at clambering around on railroads and make short work of grabbing onto a middle carriage. Fortunately the locomotive is not travelling too fast yet, otherwise trying to jump onto a moving train might be a different story.

A loud whistle blast from the engine draws your attention. The driver is trying to warn you about the series of tunnels up ahead but you are well aware of them thanks to your earlier conflict with poor Gator. You waste no time in racing along the roof of the cars, much to the excitement of the passengers. At one point your hat almost blows off but you have the reactions of a viper and somehow keep hold of it with one hand.

Gusty strikes the driver behind the head with a coal shovel and the man slumps to the floor unconscious. The train starts to accelerate alarming as you near a bend but the halfkin deputy merely laughs at the danger, the joviality of that race can be so infuriating.

You just have time to reach the rear of the coal tender before the locomotive enters the first tunnel.

'You'll never take me alive,' comes the halfkin's high pitched voice as he fires at you.

**[Duel Challenge:5] {4\* Successes} (Shotgun, Rifle)**

\*If you have the Codeword **Halfpint** you only need **3 Successes**.

If you Succeed - Turn to **100**.

If you are Defeated - Your Adventure Ends Here!

**45.**

Lost Tooth whispers into Fire Voice's ear. The wise elf nods approvingly and claps his hands. From nowhere elven men and women bring great platters of food and an impromptu feast is served. You cannot tell what half the fare is but it tastes delicious. Add **+2 Dice** to your **Posse-O'-Pips**.

As a further gift for saving his son, Fire Voice gives you a beautiful lasso made of cactus silk thread. If you do not already possess it, Add the Codeword **Lasso**.

Eventually the time comes to press on. Lost Tooth shows you a secret short-cut that will save an hours travel at a grove where he removed more of the fencing days ago. As long as you promise not to tell Fire Voice!

To leave - Turn to **99**.

**46.**

It will not be easy stealing a pair of horses but at least the crowd at the rodeo provides something of a distraction. You find a leafy corral in a quiet corner of town and instruct Gator but the wily outlaw drags his heels making it harder for you.

**[Rustle Test:4] (Desperado)**

If you Pass - Turn to **95**.

If you Fail - Turn to **66**.

**47.**

'I think it was Augustus Trailtoes.' You say.

Some of the crowd laugh thinking it is a joke.

'It could be,' says Geraldine.

The mayoress stands up and tells the crowd that Greyson was with her all morning. They had gone down to examine the canal. Geraldine had spotted something in the waterway when *The Southern Belle* came upriver and she wanted Greyson to confirm it before she went public. They were with each other the whole time but Augustus, or "Gusty" as locals know him, was in town all morning.

Geraldine and Greyson agree with your reasoning. If you have the Codewords **Buckshot** or **Mayoress** you may Add **+1 Die** to your **Posse-O'-Pips** for each one you have noted.

Turn to **80**.

48.

Outside the jail the early morning sunlight blinds you temporarily. As your sight returns to normal you notice that life is returning to normal after the shooting. The tables have been set back up and the children are busy taking fresh pies around in their wicker baskets, though they seem a little subdued now compared to before.

About halfway to the paddle steamer you nearly trip over a bundle of rags to one side of the street. You are about to move on when you hear a grumble coming from the garments and realise it is the body of a man.

If you want to stop and investigate - Turn to **12**.

If not, continue to the steamer - Turn to **79**.

49.

The miles slip by in no time at all, you cannot help but think that some magic from the elven reservation is seeping out and providing new strength to your horses.

Ahead of you, just the other side of the fence, a commotion is taking place. There is too much dust to see clearly but by the noise you can tell several wild coyotes are attacking some sort of defenceless animal on the ground. Nearby a section of the fence has been destroyed, it would be simple to help the poor creature.

If you choose to ignore the disturbance you may ride away - Turn to **67**.

If you want to save the animal you will need to scare off the coyote pack with some well-placed shots:

**[Scare Challenge:3] {2 Successes}**

If you Succeed - Turn to **93**.

If you Fail you have no choice but to ride on - Turn to **67**.

50.

Some of the Dusters laugh at the stagecoach as it bounces wildly out of control. They fire wildly but you are moving so fast now it is a job to hit the carriage. One shot smashes the window pane and the female passenger screams as wicked shards of glass embed themselves in her chest. In a spray of blood she falls, her artery cut, much to the amusement of the bandits.

'We cannot stay here,' you warn the others, 'we'll have to-'

You do not get a chance to finish. The stagecoach strikes a huge boulder to one side of the trail, sending you all tumbling to the ground. You land heavily rolling to reduce the impact. Dust clouds and bullets fill the air as the stagecoach is splintered into matchsticks. The poor young man lies with his head at a sharp angle by the rock, his neck broken - death was instantaneous.

You look around for Gator, he has found the horse belonging to the Duster you shot when the driver was killed. As he tries to mount up you see a bandit riding towards you both, determined to add your name to his list of kills. Furious you draw your gun, keen to get revenge for the death of the young couple.

**[Duel Challenge:4] {3 Successes} (Dwarf)**



If you Succeed you take his horse and you and Gator make good your escape - Turn to **58**.  
 If you are Defeated, Gator joins the Dusters and eventually becomes their leader - Your Adventure Ends Here!

**51.**

You run along the main street towards the docks following the horse and cart. You know Gusty's destination before he has even reached it.

With a toot of triumph from *The Southern Belle*, the halfkin deputy lets out three loud whistle blasts. The captain and crew are his hostages and he plans to escape downriver.

With not a moment to lose you unhitch the beautiful white stallion from the wagon and mount him bareback. The animal isn't used to being ridden and rears up on its hind legs. Your hat nearly falls but you catch it with your free hand and hold on to the mane. The townsfolk who see you cheer and applaud your prowess thinking that you are doing a display of trick-riding skills.

As soon as all four hooves touch the ground you dig into the horse's flanks and he responds with a burst of speed as if he has been ridden all his life.

The paddle steamer cannot reach full speed yet, fortunately, and Augustus Trailtoes can only watch with dismay from the deck as you gallop ever closer. Drawing his twin pearl-handled pistols, with silencers, he takes to the roof for a better view as *The Southern Belle* begins to leave the Rattle River and enter the Banton Canal proper. Next stop, South Varmin.

As you gain on him, the deputy starts to take pot shots. You are not going to get close enough to jump onto the deck. As the sides of the canal start to narrow you realise you have delayed for far too long already and jump towards the paddlewheel instead.

**[Jump Test:4] (Elf)**

If you Pass - Turn to **15**.

If you Fail - Turn to **96**.

**52.**

As you ride towards Snakewater showers become more frequent and the wind whips up little dust devils in between. Gator fires off a few choice swear words when the last downpour turns into hailstones, some the size of your fist.

The horses become nervous and skittish all of a sudden, Gator turns to shout something to you but the look on his face is of sheer terror. You turn to see what he is looking at.

Behind you, and gaining ground fast, a huge tornado is chewing up the dirt sending all manner of busy scrubs and other vegetation high into the air.

As the whirling column looms closer you spur your horses in an attempt to outrun the twister.

**[Ride Challenge:4] {3 Successes} (Elf)**

If you Succeed in outrunning the tornado - Turn to **38**.

If you are Defeated - Turn to **71**.

53.

'Over here, Captain! The murderer, Captain!' Yells the croupier at the top of his voice attracting attention from the dock.

You hurl the box of foodstuffs squarely into his face. The poor fellow falls into the river as a result and screams again - it turns out he cannot swim.

As you reach the bottom of the gangplank you see some locals running towards you blocking your exit. Before you have a chance to decide what to do next there is a loud gunshot and a sharp pain stabs into your back.

The captain is a no-nonsense kind of man. As far as he is concerned he has the mayor's killer and dished out exactly the kind of justice he thinks is deserved.

Your Adventure Ends Here.

54.

You may add any of the following Codewords if you do not already possess them; **Lasso, Pocketwatch, Shotgun.**

Unknown to the two of you a human male and elven woman watch you from their hiding place further upstream. She is heavily pregnant and they are heading for the sanctuary of the elven reservation after being persecuted for their forbidden love. They will tell everyone they meet of your despicable actions - for every Codeword you just added, Add **+1 Coin** to your **Bounty**.

To leave - Turn to **99**.

55.

It isn't hard to find the small cottage, Gator pointed it out on the way through this morning. As you would expect the place is immaculately clean and pristine looking. The walls are whitewashed and the windows are polished to a dazzling shine. When you look through the glass you can see neatly stacked bookshelves, a well-stocked pantry and, further outback, a well-equipped workshop.

You try the front and back door but both are locked.

If you want to try picking the lock:

**[Lockpick Test:3] (Halfkin)**

If you Pass - Turn to **26**.

If you Fail, or do not wish to try you may:

Go to Mayoress Geraldine Banton's mansion - Turn to **98**.

Visit Sheriff Greyson's converted barn - Turn to **4**.

56.

You close your eyes and wait for death.

'Don't ya even think about it boy,' comes a gruff voice with a strong drawl.

You open your eyes and see an elderly man stood beside you, pointing his shotgun at Gator. He is thin

and wiry but the ginger moustache he sports is proud and bushy. He doffs his hat in gratitude to you before expertly disarming the outlaw, including another gun hidden in his boot.

'If it's all the same to you two young-uns, can we take this inside?' He quips. 'The view's mighty nice from up here but the wind gets into some truly unmentionable places.'

.....

'Northwood, Leevan Northwood.' Your rescuer pauses from binding Gator's hands together long enough to shake you by the hand.

'Ranger-' he continues but is interrupted by the stern-looking lady sat beside him.

'Retired ranger,' corrects his wife. She scowls but you can tell that secretly beneath it all she is fiercely proud of her brave husband.

'Now hold still' she instructs as she tends to your wounds, 'oh it doesn't sting, don't be such a baby.'

Gator chuckles despite his predicament.

'I don't know what you're laughing at, you're next,' she threatens.

Leevan and his wife inform you that the next stop is South Varmin. Your heart sinks, that's the opposite direction to where you are headed. Gator is wanted back at Snakewater and there is no station or railroad that leads that way, traditionally it is an isolated town. With a sigh you settle for listening to the old married couple argue like, well, an old married couple and watch the scenery drift by. You wonder if Leevan, being a ranger and all, might have information about Snakewater or South Varmin - places of interest, who you should seek out and who you should avoid and so on. If you can brace yourself for the rambling stories that will no doubt follow, you might learn a thing or two by talking to him. Alternatively, you could take the opportunity to have a rest - Leevan will keep an eye on Gator for you whilst you do so. It will be a long time before you get the chance to sleep without one eye open again. On the other hand you could just look out of the window and take in the scenery, perhaps noting some of the local landmarks. (If you have the Codeword **Catch-up** you can delete it now.)

If you want to talk to Leevan further - Turn to **9**.

If you want to watch the scenery out of the window - Turn to **13**.

If you want to take a nap - Turn to **24**.

**57.**

Lost Tooth is delighted and proceeds to tell you something of his father on the way. Fire Voice always tests strangers with a riddle on meeting them. Being elves, answers involve nature or old customs like the sea, wind, arrows, flames, music or even your shadow.

You do not notice to start with but eventually become aware that you are being watched. Prairie pixies along with cactus sprites, elves and half elves quietly observe your progress and before long a silent procession forms up behind you as you prepare to meet the chief.

Fire Voice has a darker tan than the other elves and sits expectantly behind a huge campfire. No-one says a word and Fire Voice stands before you holding his palms up in greeting before he folds his arms

and speaks his riddle.

'When I see my enemy

I always retreat

Such flight is required

To forge victory from defeat.

What am I?'

If you give an answer - Turn to **78**.

If you say nothing - Turn to **45**.

**58.**

You look down at yourself and Gator, scarcely able to believe your eyes - that neither of you have been shot. You do not have time to dwell on the shock of this or the deaths of your fellow travellers, though, as the Dusters chase hard after you.

'We'll head 'em off at the pass!' Shouts one.

In front of you, the valley you are in narrows between two buttes. If you can just make it beyond that you might have a chance to escape.

The Dusters give chase but they are not prepared to push their horses in the way the two of you have little choice but to do. Eventually after a mile they call off pursuit, instead heading back to the remains of the stagecoach to see what loot can be salvaged from the wreckage.

You and Gator breathe a sigh of relief as you pass between the buttes - Turn to **18**.

**59.**

'I think it was the mayoress, Geraldine Banton.' You say nervously.

There is a gasp from the crowd.

'I bet she has a lover,' you hear an old woman say.

The mayoress stands up and tells the crowd that Greyson was with her all morning. They had gone down to examine the canal. Geraldine had spotted something in the waterway when *The Southern Belle* came upriver and she wanted Greyson to confirm it before she went public. They were with each other the whole time.

'Told you she had a lover,' says the woman, the only person who still thinks Geraldine is guilty.

You feel a fool for accusing someone without any evidence. Deduct **-1 Ace** if you have one.

Turn to **80**.

60.

You deftly grab the snake below the head and hurl it away from you before it can strike.

Rising to your feet you realise that the tornado has passed and watch its destructive path toward Snakewater with a mixture of fear and excitement.

Your horse is not far away but it has lost its saddle in the chaos if it had one. (Note the Codeword **Saddleless** if you do not already possess it, also if you have the Codeword **Lasso** you should delete it as that has also been lost.)

You find Gator's mount in a similar state with the half orc still trapped underneath.

It is a miracle that you have somehow made it out of "tornado ravine" alive, with only cuts and scratches to show for it. Still shaking your heads in disbelief, you climb back onto your horses and ride on, heading for a small pass between two buttes.

Turn to **18**.

61.

There is a fair crowd gathered for the rodeo. Men women and children either sit or stand on the roughly hewn logs of the fencing surrounding a large square of dirt. Gasps, cheers and laughter follow the various fates of the cowboys and girls entering the event.

A slightly plump blonde women with a matching pair of white boots and Stetson looks you up and down and asks if you want to try your luck in the ring. First prize is apparently a local stallion known as Zephyr, fastest mount this side of Snakewater. It occurs to you that you need two mounts ideally but perhaps you could trade Zephyr for two lesser horses.

You explain about Gator and the woman assures you that her husband, Big Al, can make sure your captive doesn't escape. To be honest Serena, as she's called, is desperate for someone else to win the rodeo. Serena's brother-in-law Jessie is the undefeated champion five times in a row and family gatherings tend to descend into long and boring anecdotes of his victories.

If you want to enter the rodeo - Turn to **5**.

If you would rather leave and wait for the stagecoach - Turn to **82**.

If you want to try to steal some horses instead - Turn to **46**.

62.

As you enter you hear the sound of a shotgun being cocked from a dark corner.

'That's far enough,' says a strong female voice. 'Lodgin's ain't free to the likes of you. Check 'um boys.'

To stay you must pay a bribe. If you have any of the Codewords **Shotgun**, **Rifle** or **Pocketwatch** you must choose ONE of them to delete as a bribe. If you have none of those Codewords you must lose all of your **Aces AND Dice** from your **Pose-O'-Pips**.

If you pay the bribe, you may stay - Turn to **21**.

If not, you must leave - Turn to **85**.

63.

Your pleas fall upon deaf ears. The townsfolk are too scared of the escaped prisoners and won't help you at all. You are forced to roll up your sleeves and take on all six by yourself.

**[Duel Challenge:5] {6 Successes} (Dwarf)**

If you win:

You may check Sheriff Greyson is okay - turn to **23**.

Or you may to chase after Gusty without further delay - Turn to **39**.

64.

It crosses your mind that you could plant the spare Sheriff's badge you found belonging to Greyson here as false evidence. True you would be framing him but, for all you know, he may have done it. Dwarfs have a reputation for tempers as it is and from what you have heard around town, Greyson has a notorious temper.

If you leave the badge: Deduct the Codeword **Sheriff** and **-1 Coin** from your **Bounty**.

To leave - Turn to **88**.

65.

It does not take you long to discover the source of the noise.

Eric waits with the horses whilst you climb a steep escarpment to reach a partially blocked cave entrance. Smoke still curls from the cave-in and you brace yourself for a tight squeeze.

**[Caving Test:3] (Halfkin, Dwarf)**

If you Pass - Turn to **22**.

If you Fail, you must leave - Turn to **99**.

66.

There is a lot of shouting as you mount up and a loud bang!

You turn and see an old man with a blunderbuss emerging from an outhouse, his pants still down around his ankles. His face is red with anger at your audacity to take his horses whilst he is on the latrine.

You laugh, or at least try to. You find yourself having a coughing fit and a dull pain in your chest forces you to look down. Red blood stains your shirt and your vision becomes blurred.

As you slip from the horse, Gator rushes to your side, far from helping you he takes your gun and empties it into your chest just to be sure. It is little consolation that the old man shoots Gator Stele whilst he is trying to reload because you are already dead!

Your Adventure Ends Here!

67.

You make great progress for a couple of miles before you notice something you hadn't seen when you entered the Fey Frontier.

A small canyon runs across your chosen route, forcing you to find a way down. At the bottom of the gully you find a small stream and allow the horses to drink.

Eric, Gator, draws your attention to a thin column of smoke rising nearby - a campfire. Intrigued you decide to investigate. You do not notice a tripwire attached to some billy cans to act as a warning system until it is almost too late.

**[Stealth Test:5] (Elf, Desperado)**

If you Pass - Turn to **10**.

If you Fail you must leave the area - Turn to **31**.

**68.**

At the far end you stop beside a general store overlooking a market place. The building has been placed on some decking to give it greater prominence but some parts are badly in need of repair and it is a simple matter for you to pry a couple of boards apart to create a suitable hiding place.

The day isn't even half old and yet your mind is reeling at the events. First Eric is shot and then the mayor. It does not make any sense.

Your thoughts are disturbed by a couple of women out shopping who meet close to where you lie. They chat excitedly and you learn much of what is going on in town. No-one seems too concerned about Gator but the mayor's death on the other hand is hot news. The two women talk at length as to who might be responsible. The few suspects who have no alibi shocks you. Your name is mentioned, as you expected, but the only other people in the frame are anti-gambling Mayoress Geraldine Banton, hot tempered Sheriff Greyson and miserly Deputy Augustus Trailtoes. Everyone else is accounted for apparently.

The women talk at length and as the subject starts to change onto knitting patterns you decide it is time to take action. You decide to hunt for clues at one of the suspect's houses but who will you visit?

If you want to go to Mayoress Geraldine Banton's mansion - Turn to **98**.

If you visit Sheriff Greyson's converted barn - Turn to **4**.

If you head for Deputy Trailtoes' small cottage - Turn to **55**.

**69.**

The blade makes a satisfying plop as it disappears into some weeds on the riverbed. You couldn't have hidden in better if you tried. Deduct **-1 Coin** from your **Bounty**.

Turn to **77**.

**70.**

Kat Northwood smiles sweetly as you tell her your story, nodding sympathetically in relief when she realises you are a good-un.

'Snakewater's not a bad old place...' she begins as she tells you a little of the history behind the town you find yourself heading towards.

When you arrive you are to seek out Sheriff Greyson, a dwarf! He's in charge of law and order in the

area and does a good job too. Like many of his kind, he has a quick temper and strong fists - the local would-be criminals know better than to get on his bad side. Aiding Greyson is his deputy, Augustus Trailtoes.

Not as jolly as some of his halfkin brethren, Augustus acts as clerk to the mayor and is always worrying about money. It almost seems that he carries the burden of the town's woes on his shoulders more so even than the man in charge of running the town - Mayor Rifferd Banton.

Kat knows the mayor extremely well and goes on at length about his wife, Geraldine, who it turns out is a distant cousin. You get the mayoress' entire life story; Kat is very fond of her. From humble beginnings you hear how Geraldine and her twin brother, Clark, worked in the circus as a sharpshooting act. One day tragedy struck and Clark was killed during the performance. The mayoress blames herself to this day, even though it was not her fault. Even so Geraldine has never touched a gun since. She met Rifferd and settled down in Snakewater. Geraldine takes quite a hands-on role with local politics, using her position and influence. She is currently trying to introduce tough new anti-gun laws, ban gambling and promote peaceful relations and trade with the residents of the nearby elven reservation.

By the time Kat has finished talking, you feel like you know Mayoress Geraldine Banton as if you had met her in person. This may prove useful to you later - add the Codeword **Mayoress** to your notes.

Turn to **13**.

**71.**

With the tornado almost on top of you, you gun your mount down a narrow ravine and yell at Gator to follow. Your riding skills fail you as a flying cactus strikes you from the side and you are sent tumbling to the ground.

The roar of the twister is deafening but you become aware of another sound, like that of a baby's rattle but far more sinister. Lifting your head up off the dirt you see an angry rattlesnake an arm's length away. The tornado has frightened it and in its panic it strikes out at your face! Without time to draw your gun, you must wrestle the snake with your bare hands.

**[Reactions Test:3] (Elf, Dwarf)**

If you Pass - Turn to **60**.

If you Fail - Turn to **3**.

**72.**

Above the canal, running briefly on a parallel course, a wood and iron viaduct carries the railroad. You can see Gusty perched just below the lip of the track waiting for the train. You are surprised at the speed with which he climbed the bridge and resolve to do the same when the next leg between the spans passes close to your position.

Gusty laughs at you, raising a small silver hip-flask, he takes a refreshing drink. He cocks a snook at you and blows a raspberry, safe in the knowledge there is nothing you can do but wait for your opportunity.

Turn to **87**.



73.

Mr. Mauden, the undertaker, arrives with a sharp rapping at the door. Without waiting for a reply he opens it and enters, briefly greeting you before measuring the body.

‘Well, well, Gator Stele eh? Well done indeed.’ He congratulates you.

‘His name is Eric,’ you say but Mr. Mauden does not appear to have heard you and carries on with his work as if you aren’t even there.

Minutes tick by and still neither the sheriff nor the deputy return to the jail. Surely it shouldn’t take this long to return from *The Southern Belle*. Mauden tells you if you want to go and find them, he can keep an eye on the prisoners.

If you want to go to where the paddle steamer is moored yourself - Turn to **48**.

If you want to snoop around the jail a bit more - Turn to **94**.

74.

Despite half-hearted gunfire all around, you keep your cool as the stagecoach heads on a collision course with a large boulder. Summoning your reserves you grasp the errant reins at the last second before disaster.

‘Yeeehawww!’ You cry as you vault back into your seat and pull back the reins sharply. Add **+1 Ace** (remember you can only have a maximum of four).

The carriage narrowly misses the rock and the bandits take out their frustration in bullets. The stagecoach is peppered with shot. The woman screams in anguish as the euphonium player takes a bullet in the eye. Gator ducks down behind her skirts to hide, does the man have no shame?

There is the sound of the rifle again and one of the horses whinneys in pain. The Dusters have resorted to dirty tactics. As the poor creature falls down, the following horse crashes into it sending the stagecoach rolling out of control. Great clouds of dust are sent spewing into the air.

You extricate yourself from the wreckage. The woman was not so lucky, the window of the carriage shattered into her chest, there is blood everywhere. With nothing you can do for her you look around for Gator.

‘Come on,’ he urges freeing the two uninjured horses from the carriage.

Not needing telling a second time you both mount up as the Dusters draw closer. It is difficult to ride without a saddle but the thought of their guns is all you need to spur yourselves forward. (Note the Codeword **Saddleless**.)

Turn to **58**.

75.

‘I... don’t rightly know’ you reply weakly.

There is a groan of disappointment from the crowd. Someone spits at you and more than one voice

mutters “yellowbelly”. They think that you are too cowardly to tell them. Your confidence is at an all-time low. Deduct **-1 Die** from your **Posse-O’-Pips** if you have any remaining.

‘Well it wasn’t me,’ says Geraldine.

The mayoress stands up and tells the crowd that Greyson was with her all morning. They had gone down to examine the canal. Geraldine had spotted something in the waterway when *The Southern Belle* came upriver and she wanted Greyson to confirm it before she went public. They were with each other the whole time.

Turn to **80**.

**76.**

Like a ghost you float through the air, passing through the smoke-cloud to land deftly on your feet. You perform a neat roll and spring back onto your toes like some irresistible force of nature homing in on Gator.

The outlaw panics at your swift progress and drops the bullets he was loading. (Add the Codeword **Catch-up**). He shoots the couple of bullets he has wildly and jumps onto the end carriage. He looks over the side of the train but you know he is too late to jump, the river has long been left behind. He has no choice but to stand and fight.

The train is seconds away from the first tunnel, you have little choice but to jump onto the final car and finish Gator once and for all.

Turn to **37**.

**77.**

You step onto the deck and hide behind a box of food supplies destined for the galley.

Standing on the gangplank are two men. The first looks like the captain in his smart uniform. The other man you discover is the croupier who oversees the gambling tables on the *Belle*. The captain asks the croupier to stop anyone from getting aboard the boat, adding that if he should see the mayor’s wife, sheriff or deputy the captain should be called straight away.

The croupier boredly agrees and as the captain leaves, the man amuses himself by tossing a coin playing heads or tails. You could try to get past him or you could take investigate the galley and boiler room.

If you want to try and bluff your way past the croupier - Turn to **40**.

If you want to investigate the galley and boiler room - Turn to **16**.

**78.**

The correct answer was an arrow! The riddle described the action of drawing back the bow before firing. If you did not guess correctly yourself there is a small chance your bounty hunter knew it:

**[Riddle Test:6] (Halfkin)**

If you successfully give the answer the chieftain smiles and hands you a beautifully decorated rifle. The stock and barrel are covered with stylized lightning bolts and eagle motifs. Add the Codeword **Rifle** if you accept this gift.

Turn to **45**.

**79.**

*The Southern Belle* is a beautiful sternwheeler with open paddles at the rear. She has been freshly painted with a dark green keel and bright burgundy line highlights. The upper decks are a stark whitewash in contrast. As you admire the vessel you notice only a thin curl of smoke from the twin smoke stacks - the riverboat is not quite yet ready to leave.

There is no-one around the gangplank, and you enter unobserved. All the stewards are busy preparing for the voyage. The interior has a similar colour scheme with lush green carpets and comfortable red velvet seating. You are wondering where to start looking when there is a noise from one of the nearby cabins. Out of concern you check the door and are surprised by what you see.

A pair of rhinestone boots are the first thing you notice as you squeeze into the opulent-looking first class cabin. You have to close the door behind you just to get in.

Lying on the floor is a late middle-aged man. You correctly guess him to be Mayor Rifferd Banton. You check to see if he is breathing but as you turn him over, you see that blood soaks his chest where he has been stabbed several times. The poor chap has been killed very recently but who would do such a thing and why?

A sudden knock at the door makes you freeze, you are crouched over the mayor's body with the bloody knife in your hand. Your shirt is also stained with the mayor's blood and none of the crew are expecting you to be aboard. Add **+4 Coins** to your **Bounty**.

Rushing over to the door, you turn the key in the lock to buy yourself some time.

If you want to escape out of the open window - Turn to **88**.

If you want to risk searching the cabin first - Turn to **19**.

**80.**

If you have the Codewords **Boots**, **Mayoress** or **Buckshot** you may delete them now.

Deputy Augustus Trailtoes starts to giggle.

'G-G-G-Gator was my first problem. Thought he'd tell you it was me who shot him, looked him right in the eyes I did but luckily he never got a chance to say "G-G-G-Gusty". He ever tell you what he was wanted for? Robbing townfolk when the mines went dry. Funny thing is, the reward for him was more than money he stole. He had to die! Snakewater couldn't afford to pay for him brought back dead, let alone alive. Never thought anyone would be stupid or desperate enough to come all this way and try it.'

Silence. Not one person in the crowd says a word. Trailtoes revelling in his moment of glory, draws his large pearl-handled pistols. You can see he has made a silencer for each.

'Killing him was easy but you were still a problem,' he indicates yourself. 'That damn canal has cost the town too much money and now a hunter turns up expecting a bounty when the coffers are dry! Well y'all will find out soon enough but my folks own shares in the railroad and the canal is taking away business. I tried telling Rifferd it was a bad idea, heck I even spent council money propping up my shares but to no avail. He still went ahead with his grand scheme leaving me to balance the books somehow. Rifferd was getting suspicious and you were in the way, killing two birds with one stone was almost too easy.'

Geraldine faints and Mr. Mauden carries her off the wagon. You are all too spellbound by the halfkin's story to react.

Augustus walks over to Sheriff Greyson, 'but that wasn't the real plan. What is it they say? Every halfkin wants to be Sheriff? You bet your, pardon the non-halfkin expression, boots they do! I've seen the way you run this town Greyson. Letting people off with cautions instead of fining them. "Oh but they cannot afford it" you say, well they shouldn't break the law in the first place. Raise the taxes and make the people pay, that's what I say.'

Gusty gives a shrill whistle and the cloaked men with the noose approach.

'Well, Sheriff, I've decided to take a leaf out of your book and let people off. I'd like y'all to meet some new associates of mine.'

With that the cloaked men reveal themselves as the prisoners from the jail!

'They cost too much to keep so they are working for me now. Get 'im boys!'

The men move to put the noose on Sheriff Greyson. As they near the wagon, Augustus kicks the dwarf off and the horse and wagon suddenly lurch forward sending you tumbling off backwards. Gusty laughs maniacally as he drives his way through the crowd towards the docks.

As the escaped convicts grab Greyson you call to the crowd to help you tackle them.

Try your Reputation (**Bounty**):

If you have one or more Heads OR the Codeword **Desperado** you are ignored - Turn to **63**.

Otherwise - Turn to **6**.

**81.**

The croupier tells you to wait while he checks you have permission to leave.

'Oh come on man, give me a break. I gotta get some fresh food pronto. *The Southern Belle's* due to set sail soon, the chef'll kill me if I'm not back with what he needs Tell you what, I can make it worth your while.'

With that the man's eyes glint greedily at the thought of profiting from the situation.

If you have the Codewords **Shotgun**, **Rifle** or **Pocketwatch** you may delete one of them as a bribe - Turn to **8**.

If not the croupier becomes suspicious - Turn to **53**.

82.

Fortunately you have enough small change to pay for both Gator and yourself. A thin man with round spectacles takes your dimes and gives you two tan-coloured tickets.

The stagecoach is well maintained inside with strong-smelling leather upholstery. You and Gator sit yourselves down and wait the final couple of hours before departure.

About half an hour before you are due to leave you hear a man and a woman approach, giggling like children. You peer out of the window to see the two, perhaps in their late teens, holding hands. They promptly let go when they see you. They are both dressed similarly and you recognise them as the euphonium and trumpet player from the brass band. They appear too young to be an actual couple. The looks they give each other when they stow their instruments, before sitting in the carriage, seem to indicate that they are in a secret relationship and disappointed not to have the stagecoach to themselves.

Eventually the driver arrives. He greets you gruffly, climbs aboard and then cracks the whip to set his four horses into motion. He grumbles as a few drops of rain begin to fall and casts his worn cloak around himself.

You have not been travelling for very long, watching raindrops race down the glass, when you notice something ahead and to your left.

A large cloud of dust can be seen moving in a direct path towards the stagecoach.

'Dusters!' Shouts the driver before there is a sharp crack of a rifle and he slumps sideways, dead before he hits the ground.

With the driver gone the carriage begins to veer wildly out of control. Hooting with glee the horse-riding bandits drive their mounts to intercept you. As one ugly fellow leaps from his saddle to take control of the carriage you shot him, point blank. The bandits were not expecting resistance and back off waiting for their leader to arrive.

You could take the opportunity to climb out of the carriage to the driver's seat but you would be a sitting duck, an easy target.

Will you bravely attempt to take the reins?

If so - Turn to 17.

If not - Turn to 50.

83.

'Much obliged!' He says, tipping his Stetson.

You and Eric spend the next hour chasing down the lost cattle whilst the farm hands busily repair the fencing. The cowboy informs the others of your assistance and they are most grateful, they'll even put in a good word for you around town if you are looking for work. You may Deduct **-1 Coin** from your **Bounty**.

It pours with rain at twilight and you and Eric find a small group of steers trapped by rising floodwater. You try to get them to the safety of the ranch.

**[Herding Challenge:4\*] {4 Successes} (Lasso)**

\*If you possess the Codeword **Saddleless** the Challenge difficulty begins at 5.

If you Succeed - Turn to **14**.

If you are Defeated, the cowboy thanks you for your help and you leave - Turn to **43**.

**84.**

You scoop Eric's body up into your arms and a little halfkin girl sees the blood pouring from his neck. She screams, dropping her basket of pies and then all hell breaks loose as children run back and forth knocking over trestle tables and treading home baked delicacies into the dirt.

You have no time to lose and race towards the jail but the children get under your feet and precious seconds are wasted as you try to avoid them. You press a handkerchief into Eric's wound, you haven't come this far to lose it all now.

Bursting open the door to the jail you push a pile of books from the nearest table and place his body as gently as you can on it.

'This man needs urgent medical attention,' you call out, surprised no-one has heard you enter.

'Alright, alright, I heard ya!' Comes a high-pitched voice from out back.

Huffing and puffing his way into the room is a rather plump, barefoot halfkin. He has a large pair of pearl-handled pistols holstered at his sides. The badge on his bright white shirt identifies him as the local deputy.

'He needs a doctor,' you plead.

'He needs an undertaker,' observes the deputy.

The halfkin takes one look at Eric and peers at nearby wall, neatly pinned with wanted posters. He then takes a good long look at you.

'Say, wait a minute...' He starts.

Test your Reputation (**Bounty**).

If you get four Heads - turn to **2**.

If not - Turn to **28**.

**85.**

Your best efforts turn up a blank. Gator points out an old barn quite a distance from any of the surrounding farmhouses, if you snuck in there it is unlikely anyone would notice at this time of night.

Inside the barn is dry, though a little draughty where some of the boards have fallen. The two of you make the best of it by piling up some hay-bales around you like cowboys drawing their wagons in a circle for protection.

The night passes by slowly. You wake a few times to the whistling of the wind and driving rain only to be unable to settle back down thanks to Eric's snoring.

Morning cannot come soon enough - Turn to 25.

86.

You are surprised to find half a dozen prisoners in an overcrowded cell, all awaiting trial. It seems the collapse of the gold mining business has driven men to take desperate measures. The local bounty hunters have had a field day and emptied the town's coffers by capturing so many wanted criminals.

At first none of the prisoners will talk but, under their instruction, you find a supply of Augustus' special chili bean and onion gravy pies. The men are much more talkative after that.

They tell you Sheriff Greyson is actually a dwarf. He's with the mayor and his wife for the inaugural voyage of *The Southern Belle*. Deputy Trailtoes and Sheriff Greyson run a tight ship around town, though they argue like a married couple over the silliest of things like whose job it is to brew the tea.

'Every halfkin wants to be sheriff, so they say, and Gusty's no exception' says one.

'Gusty?' You inquire.

'Augustus,' comes the reply, accompanied by much belching and flatulence.

'If you've ever had his cooking you'd understand why everyone calls him Gusty. Don't know what his seasoning is, but it tastes amazing.'

They offer you some pie but you tell them you have already eaten today. At length you hear someone approaching but it isn't the sheriff or his deputy.

Turn to 73.

87.

You do not even wait for the leg-span to reach its closest point before you jump for it and begin to climb. Somewhere up there, Gusty yawns and lazily climbs onto the track with one pistol pointed straight at the train driver.

There is a terrible screeching of wheels but you do not wait to see what happens. With the paddle steamer passing below you and the locomotive skidding to a halt above you all you can concentrate on is climbing up the gantry.

You are halfway up when you realise the train has indeed stopped. Gusty climbs aboard the engine with his gun pointed at the driver. He swaps his silly giant Stetson for an engineer's cap, blows the whistle and forces the driver to drive off.

Your blood runs cold, you are still some way from the railroad. Your only hope to catch Gusty is that you can reach before the last carriage before the train has pulled away completely.

**[Climb Test:5\*] (Elf, Lasso)**

\*On this occasion, if you have the Codeword **Round-up**, the extra carriages of cattle reduce the

Difficulty Number to 3. You may still benefit from the Codewords **Elf** or **Lasso** to further reduce the Difficulty down to 2.

If you Pass - Turn to **44**.

If you Fail - Turn to **27**.

**88.**

It is a simple matter for a bounty hunter of your skills and experience to climb onto the roof of *The Southern Belle*. The wind blows keenly up here and you have to hold onto your hat with one hand to keep it on your head.

Below you, the sound of a gunshot as the lock is destroyed and a crew member enters the cabin. You hear shouts and commotion follow whilst you look for a way to escape.

There doesn't seem to be a clear way down from here, you could head to the bow, the front of the boat, or the stern where the paddlewheel is situated.

If you head for the bow - Turn to **77**.

If you make for the stern - Turn to **11**.

**89.**

Rawhide bucks and kicks but you cling on as if your life depends upon it. He almost throws you but you twist in the saddle and even manage to catch your own hat as it blows off your head before it hits the ground. After an eternity, Rawhide throws you but even as you land the crowd's reaction tells you that you have done enough.

A great cheer goes up, not least from Gator, Big Al and Serena. Jessie himself applauds you in genuine sincerity - losing to you means he will have plenty of tales to tell of how he was robbed of his sixth title. Your ego is greatly boosted, Add **+2 Dice** to your **Posse-O'-Pips**.

As he shakes your hand vigorously you ask him if he knows of anyone who would consider trading Zephyr for two horses instead. You are in luck, he has a couple of sturdy mounts himself - a young chestnut mare and a large dappled grey over sixteen hands tall. Jessie takes you to his ranch on the edge of town and insists on lending you some beautiful brown saddles, smelling of strong polish and featuring his personal family brand. As a final gesture of goodwill he hands you a lasso, just in case you ever need one (Add the Codeword **Lasso**).

With dark clouds on the horizon and a strong breeze at your back you leave South Varmin and head towards Snakewater.

Turn to **52**.

**90.**

The books belong to Augustus Trailtoes. Most of them are large cookery books but there are a couple of story books, railroad engineer's memoirs and, right at the bottom, a huge ledger for Snakewater town council's finances.

The halfkin's scrawling handwriting is so small in places you have difficulty trying to read the



numbers. On more than one occasion you cannot tell if a "7" is supposed to be a "1" or vice versa. How on earth the books balance is a mystery to you.

At length you hear someone approaching but it isn't the sheriff or his deputy.

Turn to **73**.

**91.**

'Sheriff Greyson,' you sigh.

Someone in the crowd yells 'get 'im!'

Before anyone can act though a woman's voice shouts. The mayoress stands up and tells the crowd that Greyson was with her all morning. They had gone down to examine the canal. Geraldine had spotted something in the waterway when *The Southern Belle* came upriver and she wanted Greyson to confirm it before she went public. They were with each other the whole time.

You feel a fool for accusing someone without any evidence. Deduct **-1 Ace** if you have one.

Turn to **80**.

**92.**

Your final shot nicks Gator's wrist forcing him to drop his revolver, it skitters along the curved roof of the carriage before tumbling over the side.

'Don't move!' You yell pointing the gun at him as the train enters yet another tunnel. You are relieved to see Gator kneeling submissively before you when you come out the other side, doubly relieved in fact because you know you are out of bullets. Tears stream down his cheeks, he glances at a red and white spotted handkerchief in his pocket before looking back at you imploringly.

You nod permission for him to wipe his eyes. You can hear the passengers cheering aboard the train, some have leant out the window and are relaying what is happening to the others, that the epic battle is finally over. You are a hero in their eyes. The victory greatly boosts your spirits, add **+1 Ace** and you may deduct **1 Coin** from your **Bounty** if you have any.

The passengers have distracted you though and as you turn back to Gator you are horrified to see him holding a small Derringer-style pistol he had hidden in his pocket. He raises it and gives a horrific grin.

'Six,' he says simply.

Turn to **56**.

**93.**

You are most surprised to see the "animal" was in fact a short elf-child. He thanks you and introduces himself by his elven name - Lost Tooth - and offers to take you to his tribe. You are unsure as to whether you can spend the time but he assures you that his father, Fire Voice, will reward you well.

Lost Tooth tells you that he was sabotaging the fence. His father, the elven chieftain, has ordered him to

leave it alone on numerous occasions. Lost Tooth does not like the way the elves are kept from the otherlands but Fire Voice says that the human's fence suits their purpose keeping the humans out.

Lost Tooth is impressed by your story but cautions you that Gator, Eric, will have to remain unbound whilst you travel in the reservation. It is not the elven way to take prisoners and all are free here, regardless of the crimes they have committed in the otherlands.

If you will not release Gator temporarily you must leave - Turn to **67**.

If you allow Gator to be unbound - Turn to **57**.

**94.**

You have to be careful, the undertaker seems busy enough but you cannot shake the feeling he has an eye on you. You resolve to sit at the sheriff's desk and, when Mauden seems preoccupied, take a quick shufty through the drawers.

Sheriff Greyson doesn't have much in his desk. A few shotgun cartridges and a pouch of tobacco but that is about it until you open the bottom drawer. In here you find a stash of his best stuff - a bottle of bourbon, his spare badge and some other useful bits and bobs - confiscated from the prisoners.

You may Add the Codewords **Bourbon** and **Sheriff** if you take the bottle and badge respectively. You may also Add **+1** to your **Posse-O'-Pips**.

You decide it is time to find out what is keeping the sheriff - Turn to **48**.

**95.**

Quietly you both mount the two nearest horses and ride off as fast as you can, jumping the fence rather than waste time opening the gate. A red-faced old man emerges furiously from a latrine armed with a blunderbuss. With his pants around his ankles he fires at you but the shot is badly aimed and falls far short.

As you leave South Varmin headed for Snakewater you cannot help but wish you could have saddled the horses. It will be an uncomfortable ride but beggars cannot be choosers.

Add the Codeword **Saddleless** and Add **+2 Coins** to your **Bounty**. Also, if you do not already have it, Add the Codeword **Desperado**.

Turn to **52**.

**96.**

You mistime the jump terribly and one of the paddles strikes you under the chin knocking you unconscious. You are dragged under by the current and by the time you surface, Gusty has had plenty of time to cock his pistols.

'Congratulations! It's twins!' He cackles and fires both barrels.

Your Adventure Ends Here.

97.

In the fresh mud after yesterday's rain, you notice that all the footprints around the water trough belong to the small feet of the children with their hobnailed boots. Perhaps there may be a small adult or woman's footprints there too but certainly not footprints belonging to a man. Add the Codeword **Boots**.

Turn to 84.

98.

Mayor Rifferd Banton didn't come from Snakewater originally. He made his money on a cotton plantation further south and, after several successful trading ventures, settled here as a young man when the gold rush really first began.

Although hard times have struck the town and there just isn't the employment opportunities there used to be, Rifferd is one of the few businessmen whose life has been pretty much unaffected. At least, his life was unaffected until now.

The Banton's mansion is one of the largest buildings in Snakewater and has nearly two acres of land for the mayor's small thoroughbred stud farm. Fortunately this makes the property extremely easy to find.

There is a long gravel drive leading up to the front door. The area is quite open and it would be difficult for anyone not to see you approach. You decide to ring the doorbell and wait patiently for it to be answered.

A dusky skinned servant, half elven by her appearance, opens the door. She curtsies and quietly asks if you have an appointment. She says that no-one is expected today.

You apologise and explain that you have some extremely urgent business you need to discuss with the mayoress.

Try your Reputation (**Bounty**).

If you get at least one Head she is too frightened to talk to you - Turn to 20.

If you do not have any Heads - Turn to 42.

99.

As you continue to ride you begin to despair of ever finding Snakewater. You had no idea it was this far away. Eric shrugs, apparently you took a wrong turn a few miles back and he didn't think to tell you till now.

As you look ahead you cannot see any sign of the town. If only you could have followed the canal but that cuts through a steep sided gorge near South Varmin making it impossible to take the horses with you.

If you possess a **Pocketwatch**, you can find your bearings. Pointing the hour hand at the sun you are able to discern south as halfway between the hour hand and noon on the dial - Turn to 43.

If you do not possess the Codeword **Pocketwatch** - Turn to 30.

100.

Despite Gusty being able to hide behind the metal shielding that the engine provides, you manage to disarm him with some well-placed shots.

Safe to approach, you keep your weapon on him as another tunnel approaches.

'Do it,' he dares you. 'Come on, shoot me. Get your revenge hunter!'

'All that money you took,' you say, 'but you know what? You're not even *worth* it! I'm gonna turn you over to the people you betrayed, I have a feeling they know just how to make you *pay!*'

A tunnel passes briefly and when you emerge you can see the colour has drained from Gusty's face. The enormity of your words begins to sink in, bullets he can handle but your mercy strikes him harder than any physical wound.

He holds his hands up in surrender. As you move closer to bind him, he leaps from the locomotive tumbling down, down to perish on the mountainside a hundred feet below.

'He said you'd never take him alive,' comments the engine driver as he rubs his sore head.

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It is high noon and you are standing on the deck of *The Southern Belle* as she slowly makes her way up the canal from South Varmin to Snakewater. The paddle wheeler is a hive of excited activity. Inside a croupier deals the cards out for high stakes Varmin Draw to some passengers whilst others sip their drinks.

You are joined at the rail by Mayoress Geraldine Banton and Sheriff Greyson, both indebted to you for your services to their town. The three of you watch a new development at the water's edge, something that Geraldine alluded to on the day her husband was shot.

About a dozen locals are sifting through the silt, panning for gold.

Bored of the gambling on the maiden voyage, the mayoress had noticed something gleaming in the Rattle River as the riverboat made its way to Snakewater. Suspecting gold she asked the advice of the only person she knew who could be trusted and was knowledgeable in this area - Sheriff Greyson. He confirmed her suspicions that the development of the waterway had, by chance, somehow triggered deposits from the exhausted mines to end up in the water.

'So what do ya say?' Asks the sheriff in his no-nonsense way. 'When this gets out all sorts of lowlife's will be headed this way. Just as the town has a chance of economic recovery, the gold rush'll bring as many problems as it solves. I'm a deputy down, but you can more than fill his boots so to speak.'

You've been mulling the offer over for most of the trip.

'Before I answer, I have one question,' you say with a wry grin, 'does it come with a hat that stays on...?'

THE END

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How did you do? The number of Aces you have left signifies your bounty hunter nickname!

**0 Aces** - "Hopalong"

**1 Ace** - "Wild"

**2 Aces** - "Kid"

**3 Aces** - "Lucky"

**4 Aces** - "Cool-Hand"

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