



# THE DEADLANDS EPITAPH

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# Deadlands Dispatch

## The Big Picture

Howdy and welcome back to the second issue of the *Epitaph*!

If you're unfamiliar with our *Hell on Earth* setting, check out the full-color comic in the back, by veteran writing team Clay and Susan Griffith and drawn by one of our most popular artists, Richard Pollard. It features Gabriel Roth, his twin pistols, a whole passel of targets, and an old friend—or maybe foe!

We've also included another bit of prime salvage for our Wasted West fans—a *Hell on Earth* adventure by Jay Kyle, who's life's ambition is to become a post-Apocalyptic warlord. It spotlights the abominations dearest to our hearts here at Pinnacle: good, old walkin' dead. But lest you experienced wasters scoff, the zombies are liable to get a little *payback* in *Biodome 2*!

Our latest piece of fiction by *Deadlands* trail boss John Goff tells the tale of Ronan Lynch and proves that a little knowledge isn't always such a good thing. Join him as he begins to uncover the true secrets of the *Weird West*!

You'll also find the first installments of several regular columns, including *The Armory*, *Varmints!*, and several others.

This month's *Armory* piece, named *The Guns o' the South*, gives your Confederate gunslingers a few choices for hoglegs besides those confounded Yankee-made smokewagons. This article is just the thing to flesh out your favorite Texas Ranger.

*Varmints!* contains an abomination that's traveled half-way around the globe to make it into this issue, the spirit 'glom, a submission by our favorite Kiwi, Brian Leybourne. Backing up the new horror is an old one that snuck out of the pages of *Rascals*, *Varmints*, & *Critters II: The Book of Curses*.

We've got a few mistakes and misprints to correct and clarify in our *Gremlins* section. We'll be posting these to our website as well, but since not everybody has access to high-falutin' stuff like the Internet we thought we should put them in here too!

And that's not all that's hiding in this issue either, but it should get your mouth watering!

But first, it's time to catch our compadres up on what's been happening out there in the Weird and Wasted West. Kicking off this shindig are setting updates for both *Deadlands* and *Hell on Earth* by the respective brand mangers: John Goff and John Hopley.





## WEIRD WEST ROUNDUP

Since last issue, a whole stampede of trouble has broke loose in the Weird West. As usual, the best place to get the story is from Lacey O'Malley down Tombstone way, even if the viewpoint is a little slanted!

### THE CALIFORNIA FREE STATE?

For the better part of 15 years, the Union and Confederacy have been fighting over California, with Mexcio occasionally slipping in a sucker-punch or two. That doesn't even include the recent declaration of sovereignty by Reverend Grimme's Lost Angels or the numerous petty "warlords" who've staked out a claim in the ruins of the Maze. Well, it looks like the leveler heads out on the coast have finally had enough!

Over the past few months, politically-minded folks in the Maze have been promoting a democratic solution to the Golden State's dilemma. To resolve the issue, a referendum is being held soon in Sacramento, the state's capital.

Although the Confederacy has its supporters in the upcoming vote, the safe money is between the Union, which claims the lion's share of the state, or complete independence of the sort practiced by Utah, a.k.a. Deseret.

While many settled folks are partial to Union-leanings, observers shouldn't underestimate the number of free-spirits drawn to the Maze by the lure of easy money. It's possible these saddletramps may throw their weight behind a free California.

Insiders report that the Independence Movement, as it's calling itself, seems to have at least one powerful financial backer who's not yet revealed himself. According to the local rumor mill, this shadow behind the throne may be anyone from the northern rail baron Kang to the eccentric Emperor Norton to Reverend Grimme to Santa Anna himself.

This reporter finds all of those choices ironic, as they are the very reason for the push for a settlement! That news may darkly foreshadow the Maze's fate should Independence win the day.

## BAYOU VERMILLION THUGS FAR AND WIDE

If you remember, we reported last issue on the possible dire straits of the Bayou Vermillion Railroad's financial status. Our sources across the West have since noticed agents of the BV making appearances in regions outside the railroad's usual area of operations.

LaCroix's envoys have been spotted from eastern Kentucky all the way to central California. There are reports of BV representatives in Mississippi as well, certainly closer to the railroad's home of New Orleans, but nonetheless outside its normal routes—unless whispers about a buyout or partnership with the Kansas City & Little Rock rail company are true.

Even those regions aren't truly that surprising, however, given the Bayou Vermillion's ambitions of securing a trans-continental contract with the Confederate government. What is unexpected are unconfirmed visits by LaCroix's agents near Salt Lake City and Provo in Deseret and even crossing the border into the Yankee Northeast!

Exactly what purpose these far-flung excursions serve is unclear, although most folks in the know figure they tie in with "Baron" LaCroix's unsubstantiated monetary problems. This reporter has a nagging suspicion that there's more to the field trips than meets the eye—or accountant.

As always, you can count on the *Epitaph* to keep you informed!

### RUMBLINGS FROM THE SOUTH

If Bayou Vermillion's shenanigans weren't enough to keep eyes on the Southwest in fear of a renewed flare-up of the "Rail Wars," it looks like our one-legged friend from south of the border may be getting fiesty again.

If you'll remember last year, the "good" Reverend Grimme issued his Edict of 1877, declaring the City of Lost Angels and an area 75 miles around it to be an independent sovereign state. The Confederate government, not needing another target at which to point its guns, has steered clear of the area—so far.







With the absence of a strong military presence and the rich veins of ghost rock tempting both Emperor Maximillian and his French puppet masters, it really was only a matter of time before Mexico made more aggressive "offers" on Californian real estate. It looks like time is quickly running out for the Maze, if not other areas of the Southwest.

Numerous reports have filtered into the offices here in Tombstone indicating the massing of forces on the Mexican border. Santa Anna may have been hoping for a surprise rush across the border, because word has it that much of the troop movements are taking place at night.

Who knows what this means for the upcoming Californian elections? Reverend Grimme may find himself in need of mending fences with the Confederacy. He and his "church" may talk tough, but this reporter doubts they're a match for a seasoned plunderer like Santa Anna!

## GOLD FOUND IN ALASKA TERRITORY!

It appears that U.S. Secretary of State, William Seward, wasn't as foolish as most citizens of the Union thought in purchasing the Alaska Territory from Russia. Rumors have filtered down from the Washington Territory that prospectors are claiming to have found massive gold strikes there.

Already, the Union's northwestern ports of Tacoma and Seattle are feeling an increase as miners begin filtering to the Great White North in search of fortune. It wouldn't surprise this reporter to learn no small number of former Confederates are filtering north to grab a few claims of their own. No doubt, profiteers will soon be gouging prices in the distant territory.

As an interesting complication, some of our sources are of the opinion that the strikes were actually found on Canadian soil. Given the current state of affairs between the Union and Canada, this should make for some interesting times up there if nothing else!

## "UNUSUAL" CATTLE SPELLS SUCCESS FOR

## MORGAN CATTLE COMPANY!

The Morgan Cattle Company of Ghost Creek, California has recently gained some notoriety among finer dining establishments back East. Their hybrid Angus beef is being lauded as the top choice among many of the poshest restaurants on both sides of the Mason-Dixon.

Scientists at the nearby Distinguished Collegium of Interspatial Physics in Gomorra have taken an interest in the apparently new breed of cattle—and they're not the only ones looking toward Ghost Creek. It seems the town is well named, as a massive ghost rock strike has just been discovered under the water table in the region. This new lode has caught the attention of a few other Gomorra residents as well, namely the Sweetrock Mining Company.

What this means for Morgan Cattle Company, long used to free range grazing, has yet to be seen...

## HIGH TALES OF HELL ON EARTH

Let's take a look at some of the happenings throughout the Wasted West.

## MYSTERY EXPLOSIONS

The survivors of a scattered Combine tribute caravan have been spreading stories about some mysterious explosions that destroyed a Black Hat outpost in southwestern Colorado.

According to the caravan members, their convoy was approaching the small fort the Combine had established to collect tribute when it was suddenly rocked by a number of large explosions followed by a series of small blasts that sounded like a string of firecrackers going off. "There was a bunch of sparkling explosions like fireworks," said one dazed survivor, "then the whole thing disappeared in a cloud of dust and smoke."





Most of the fort's garrison were killed or wounded by the explosions; the survivors were finished off by the members of the caravan, who then fled west. Some of the convoy members reported a loud wailing noise just before the explosions, suggesting that they may have been the result of some sort of artillery attack.

## DEATH IN TRANSYLVANIA

The undead have come to Transylvania—Transylvania, Louisiana, that is. This small survivor community on the west bank of the Mississippi was overrun by a horde of walkin' dead that emerged from the river. The dripping dead tore through the small town in a matter of minutes, leaving few survivors. Once the killer corpses had ravaged the town, they disappeared back beneath the waters of the Ol' Muddy.

This attack has prompted the River Watch to step up its patrols in the area, but no evidence of the undead horde or reasons for the attack have surfaced (like the walkin' dead need a reason).

## CROAKER ATTACKS ON THE RISE

Something seems to have put a bee in the croaker's collective bonnet. Miners and traders throughout the central Maze have reported an increasing number of attacks by croakers. One of the local Law Dogs, Angus McPherson reports that he has come across at least five derelict craft on his patrols in the area. All of these boats were found adrift without any crew aboard. There were no bodies, but plenty of signs of a struggle: bloodstains, empty shell casings, broken equipment, etc.

Croakers have always been a hazard in the area, but no one can remember this many attacks in such a short period of time. McPherson has taken up a collection from many of the local survivor communities and is using the trade goods to hire a posse. He plans to step up patrols in the area, and if he can recruit enough bodies, he hopes to provide escorts to traders.

## NEXT ISSUE

Next issues brings you a brand new 14 page comic and a brand new adventure. Of course, that's nowhere near all! We'll have more of our regular monthly installments (like the *Armory* and *Varmints!*), some inside info on *Lost Colony*, and—just because it fits the theme of the *Epitaph*—the scoop on journalists in the *Weird West!*

## SUBMISSIONS

As we mentioned last issue, the *Epitaph* is a great place to get your ideas, stories, or adventures for the *Deadlands* settings published by us. Our sourcebooks are kept pretty close to our vest, but the *Epitaph* gives us the opportunity to let our fans show off their own talent. And who knows? An article in this quarterly might be the stepping stone to even more opportunities down the trail!

Since we're trying to pack this book with as much material for our games as we possibly can, we're going to be partial to shorter articles—say 1000 to 3000 words. Adventures probably need to go a bit above that count, into the 8000 to 10000 word range. More than that, though, and the piece is taking a sizeable chunk of the *Epitaph*. If it is the coolest thing since the Clockwork De-Moler, we might can be convinced to accept a longer piece, but don't mortgage the ranch on it!

We prefer paper submissions mailed to our address below. Don't forget to include a signed copy of the evaluation waiver on our website; we can't even glance at your piece without it.

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