



Reloaded Player's Guide

SHANE LACY HENSLEY AND BD FLORY

SAVAGE WORLDS BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

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A Letter from the Editor

FAITHFUL Readers,

Many of you have written over the past year to express your consternation at the disappearance of the *Epitaph's* own Lacy O'Malley. Some believed I had fired Mr. O'Malley for his flights of fancy, while others wondered if perhaps one of the many horrors of which he writes had finally claimed him.

I wish to extend my gratitude to you all, however, for remaining loyal to the *Epitaph*, despite Mr. O'Malley's prolonged absence.

But rest assured, gentle reader, that he is safe and well. His frequent expeditions into these wide lands lead him far from Tombstone, but he always returns with a new story with which to regale us. And so it is on this occasion.

I shall now turn the remainder of this extra edition of the *Epitaph* to our prodigal son, as so many of your letters have made it quite clear why I employ Mr. O'Malley rather than subject you any longer to my own pale prose.

Regards,

John Clum
Editor, *Tombstone Epitaph*

GREETINGS

MANY of you, I'm certain, wait with bated breath for my harrowing tale of the horror that managed to bring me low. Others probably salivate at the thought of the wild tale of my abduction by the Agency or its southern counterpart, the Texas Rangers, as part of an effort to silence a free and independent press.

Although such an article would be the unvarnished truth, I must confess that it is the momentous events that loom large on the horizon of which I write today. Even as I pen these words, a new age approaches.

Peace Breaks Out

As anyone old enough to toddle around on his own must surely realize, the long Civil War that has rent our nation asunder ended nearly nine months ago. Though the peace we currently enjoy is dubbed a ceasefire by the press offices of both American nations, it is our sincere hope here at the *Epitaph* that the tree of liberty has drunk its fill, and the blood of patriots need no longer be shed.

As faithful readers know, we here at the *Epitaph* have had our eye on another struggle for some time now: the race to the coast waged by the rail companies of America. Though I have in the past cast aspersions on the methods employed by several of these companies, I

must admit to a growing pitch of excitement here at the offices of the *Tombstone Epitaph*. For the very first time, travelers will enjoy the splendor and majesty of America without subjecting their bottoms to the rigors of the saddle, or their purses and persons to the danger of stagecoach robbery.

Though even now the rail companies' enforcers battle one another across the West, we can only hope this too shall pass with the end of the aptly named "Great Rail Wars." It is a tribute to the American spirit that despite the troubles and turmoil of these recent years, such a monumental—nay, Herculean—feat can still be achieved.

I am honor-bound to extend a note of caution, however, to the readers who have already begun to pack. The West remains an untamed land, and should you decide to make the journey despite my counsel, stay close to the rail lines and the roads well-traveled. Despite the age of enlightenment just around the corner, many are the nooks and crannies of the West that have yet to face the shining light of truth. Here there be shadows, Dear Friends.

And they bite.

Your Chronicler
Lacy O'Malley



Out West

The year is 1879, and the history is not our own...

After almost two decades of bitter fighting, the American Civil War has ground to a standstill. The Confederate States are still free. California has fallen into the Pacific Ocean. Rail Barons fight bloody battles to decide who the victor will be in the race for a transcontinental railroad, while a superfuel called ghost rock advances technology by unpredictable leaps and sometimes dangerous bounds. The Sioux have retaken the Dakotas and the Coyote Confederation dances the Ghost Dance on the High Plains. Some even say the dead walk among us.

We know it's a lot to take in, partner, so let's start at the beginning.

The Late Unpleasantness

The American Civil War began as it did in our own history. After more than a decade of conflict over the States' right of self-government, Abraham Lincoln's election to the American Presidency was the straw that broke the camel's back. Seven Southern states seceded to form the Confederate States of America and laid claim to federal property within the borders of the young nation.

Not even sworn in, President-elect Lincoln was faced with an immediate dilemma. Though many of the Confederate government's claims did not present immediate crises, the question of federal forts garrisoned by Union troops would not stand unanswered for long. Lincoln ultimately decided to resupply two forts in immediate danger of capture by Confederate

forces — Fort Sumter near Charleston and Fort Pickens in Pensacola Harbor. Infamously, the former would be the match that lit the powder keg.

Upon receiving news of the resupply, the Union garrison refused to surrender in a timely fashion, hoping to hold out until help arrived. On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces attacked, and a new nation — the Confederate States of America — was baptized in blood.

A House Divided

The Battle of Fort Sumter prompted four more states to secede from the Union, or more accurately, three and a half. Virginia, like the Union itself, was divided. The residents of the western counties of the state refused to secede, instead forming the new state of West Virginia.



The rest of Virginia followed the footsteps of its Southern neighbors. The Confederacy now included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. With Virginia's secession, Richmond was named the Confederate capital. The battle lines had been drawn, and the war was on.

For the next two years, generals and soldiers of the North and the South battled to decide the fate of two nations. The stakes were high, and the costs higher. During the Antietam campaign, a single day's fighting inflicted over 20,000 casualties, both blue and gray.

Then something changed...for the worse. Union forces, led by Major General Gordon Meade, met and defeated General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Though Meade scored a victory, he was unable to pursue the retreating rebels. A lot of folks make a lot of claims about that day. Some say Meade's uniform changed from blue to yellow, while less stable folk claim dead soldiers rose up and shot at their living comrades.

War Without End

Whatever the case, Lee's forces escaped to fight another day, and fight they did. Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Appomattox, on and on, over and over. While the North held the advantage in men and materiel (that's guns to you and me, amigo), the Confederacy relied on the tenacity of its troops and brilliance of its generals. Ground was bloodied, gained, and lost all across the front, but just as at Gettysburg, a decisive victory for either side seemed out of reach.

The war ground on, with no end in sight. Though battles in the West were few and far between thanks to the low concentration of forts and troops on both sides, battlefields in the East were bloodied again and again as both sides gave and gained the same ground over and over. It was so common to fight on ground once thought secured that generals