



**SECO
CREEK
VIGILANCE
COMMITTEE**

by **KEITH STETSON**

CITIZENS!

BY ORDER OF THE

SIEG O CRETEK

VIGILANCE
COMMITTEE

NOTICE IS GIVEN that any person
found Pilfering, Stealing, Robbing, or
committing any act of Lawless
Violence will be summarily

HANGED



KEITH STETSON,
RECRUITING OFFICER

SCV CRPG VIGILANCE COMMITTEE

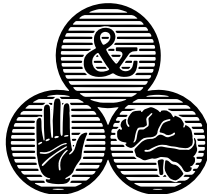
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**HUMAN HAND
& BRAIN**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
SETUP & DESCRIPTION	9
FACTIONS	16
FAVOR	16
NEGOTIATION	17
CONSEQUENCES	19
KEYS	20
BURDENS	20
PRIVILEGES	21
RUNNING THE GAME	25
GIVING & TAKING FAVOR	28
Levels of Favor	29
Examples of Giving & Taking Favor	34
SETTING SCENES	37
PACING	41
EPILOGUES	43
POSSIBLE OCCURRENCES	45
CONTINGENCIES	47
PLAYING WITH 4 PLAYERS	50
PLAYER SAFETY	52
HISTORICAL ACCURACY	53
PRINCIPLES	55
APPENDIX	59
BENEFACTORS OF SECO CREEK	60
PLAYER CHARACTERS	61
NEW PRIVILEGES	72
GLOSSARY	73
INSPIRATIONS & INFLUENCES	75
INDEX	76





INTRODUCTION



SECO CREEK VIGILANCE COMMITTEE **IS A GAME OF JUSTICE, LAW, REVENGE** AND THE DIVERGENCE **WHAT IS RIGHT & WHAT IS GOOD** BETWEEN

Three notorious outlaws sit in Seco Creek's jail. The evidence against them for the current crime is scant. They're probably not guilty—at least of this. But their reputation precedes them and the townsfolk have no intention of letting them make it to trial. You're part of the posse that apprehended them and the fate of the three outlaws is tied to your actions. But so is your own.

What will you do?

This book is organized into three parts. The first part is **SETUP & DESCRIPTION**. This is a quick start version of the rules and how to get up and running. The second part is **RUNNING THE GAME**. This offers a more in-depth look at the rules. The final section, **PRINCIPLES**, offers insight into the philosophy of running the game. In order to run Seco Creek, you must read the first section, you should read the second, and you may read the third.

If you are reading this, you will probably be playing as the Judge. The Judge's job is to look at the players' actions and judge the world's reaction.

The focus of this game is not if characters can do something, it's what they're willing to endure in order to do it. If a character can plausibly do something, let them do it; the Judge should focus on what happens after the action rather than the action itself.

Seco Creek is not a murder mystery. We're not interested in if the outlaws committed the crime. We're interested in what the players do and how they react when duty and desire conflict.

SETUP &
DESCRIPTION





☞ Gather the following:

- ☞ Four or five friends, in addition to yourself (see page 50 for advice on four-player games)
- ☞ These directions
- ☞ One printout of each character sheet, five in all (all printable material is available on humanhandandbrain.com)
- ☞ Two or more printouts of the **New Privileges** sheet
- ☞ Four different colors of poker chips, 15 each, to be used as **Favor** tokens
- ☞ Name tents, either printed or written on index cards
- ☞ Key icon, either printed or drawn on an index card
- ☞ NPC cards, either printed or written on index cards
- ☞ Blank index cards for recording **Consequences**
- ☞ Pencils (preferable to pens as information on character sheets will change)

☞ Before starting, discuss safety tools (more information on page 52) and ensure everyone is on the same page in terms of the game's tone and maturity level. This is a game in which the characters will be forced to make hard decisions, in a town that could slip into lawlessness and violence. In this game Western archetypes are taken to their furthest extent, but the

world is not a cinematic one. Blowing up a jail cell with dynamite is more likely to kill the incarcerated than free them, and if you take on a gang single-handedly you'll end up full of lead. Not everyone has a gun, and not everyone who does is a sure hand at it, but taking a bullet isn't something to be thought lightly of. Make sure all players are aware of the tone and aware of what they can do if the game moves into an area they are uncomfortable with.

🔪 Read the starting situation aloud.

Three infamous outlaws sit in the Seco Creek jail. You and your posse just deposited them there for the crime of knocking over the Weaverville stage. One lockbox missing and one life lost. The evidence against the desperados in the cell behind you isn't as robust as you'd hope; they're probably not all guilty—at least not for this. But their reputation precedes them and the townsfolk have no intention of letting them make it to trial in the territorial capital of Bright's City. It wouldn't be the first time that any of the three have gone to trial there, and surely it would be far from the first time their gang leader Duke Cahill used his influence to get them off. The people of Seco Creek know this, just like they know that as powerful as he may be, Duke Cahill won't be able to get them off the end of a rope if it's tied tight and dropped fast. Some of the citizens of your fair town are gathering outside the jail right now and the train to Bright's City doesn't leave until 3:10 p.m. tomorrow. What will you do?

🔪 Hand out character sheets to players at random, and have each player read out a character's point-of-view paragraph. If there are only four other players, the Judge reads the fifth character.

- ↪ Sheriff Damien Walter
- ↪ Deputy Alonzo Marquez
- ↪ Lee Owens, proprietor of Owens Feed
- ↪ Thomas Duval, rancher
- ↪ John Gammon, former outlaw

🔪 Have players choose their characters. Review each character's **Burdens** as a group and determine which are known by the characters and which have yet to be revealed.

🔪 Set out the non-player character (NPC) cards. Give a quick introduction for each.

- ↪ The three criminals in the cell: Maebelle Wescott, Trevor Krieg, and Billy Gammon, the character John Gammon's brother
- ↪ Outlaw boss Duke Cahill (at his ranch outside town, but always a presence in Seco Creek)
- ↪ Mayor Clayton Dix, Politician
- ↪ Saloon Owner Lindsay Hale, Merchant
- ↪ Town drunk Morgan Baird, Townsfolk
- ↪ Jasper Phelps, owner of the local livery, Merchant
- ↪ Carolina Ruiz, teacher, Townsfolk
- ↪ Elwood Grant, agent of the territorial governor Smalls, Politician

🔮 Determine the information about the person who was killed in the robbery.

Ask the group about the person who died in the robbery. This person was significant to every one of the characters for one reason or another. Who was this person? Were they young or old? What was their position in town? How will the town be different with them gone?

Write this person's name on an index card. Ask each character individually, "What personally upset you about this death?" Record the answers on the card. Players should err towards being obvious, not clever. Repetition is fine. The purpose of this question is to tie the person into the life of the town and make the players feel the loss.

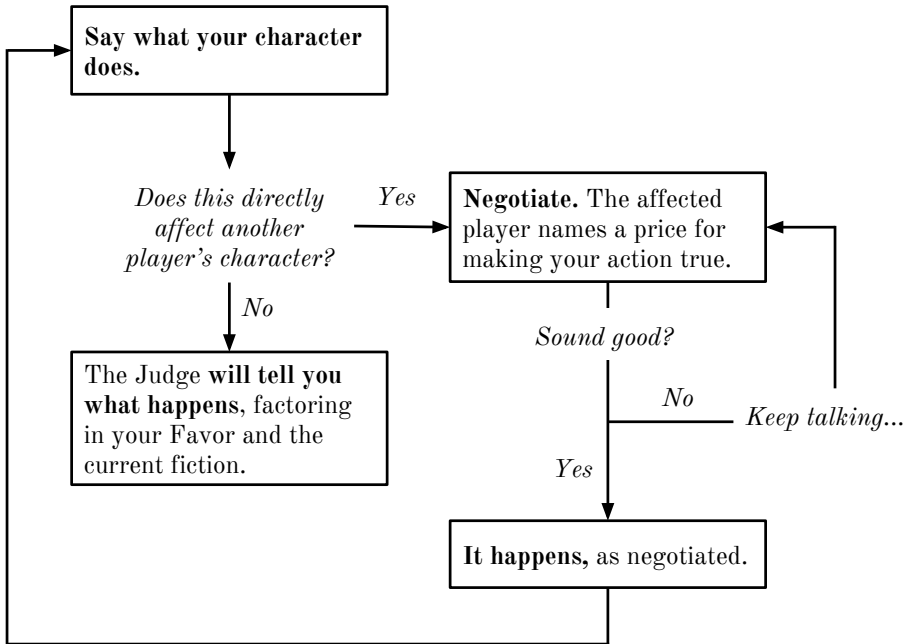
When finished recording the connections, tear the card in half and place it with the other NPC cards.

🔮 Briefly review the mechanics. Read this summary paragraph aloud to the players:

"Each of you will play a character, and say what they do. As the Judge, I will tell you what happens in reaction to what your character does, depending on the fiction and your character's Favor with different groups. If your action is upon another

player's character, you must Negotiate with them. The acted upon player will state a price to make your action true. You may accept, refuse, or continue to Negotiate. Negotiations must make sense in the fiction. Both mechanical and fictional elements can affect Negotiations and may be offered as part of them, as well."

All of these elements will be explained later in greater detail.





FACTIONS

NPCs in Seco Creek are divided into four **Factions**: Townsfolk, Politicians, Merchants, and Outlaws. Each **Faction** has a desire.

- ⤵ The Townsfolk desire to be safe from harm.
- ⤵ The Politicians wish to remain in power.
- ⤵ The Merchants want to grow and prosper.
- ⤵ The Outlaws (both in and out of the jail cell) wish to be free.

If characters' actions play into these desires, they can gain **Favor** with the corresponding **Faction**. Each **Faction's** desire also indicates a point of leverage players can use in order to get things done.

FAVOR

Favor is an indicator of how well respected, heeded, adored, or tolerated a player's character is by a particular **Faction**. **Favor** is represented by a different colored poker chip for each **Faction**. Player actions during the game will cause them to earn as well as lose **Favor** with these **Factions**. The higher a player's **Favor**, the more likely it is that members of the **Faction** will help things go their way. **Favor** is a tool. You can look at a stack of **Favor** and gauge how powerful that tool is.

The more **Favor** a player's character has in that **Faction**, the better they are at wielding them as a tool. That doesn't mean they're using it wisely, or that it won't break if they use it for the wrong job, but with enough **Favor**, they have the tool at their disposal, no matter how they choose to use it.

Everyone starts with one Favor in each Faction. This will be modified by the History questions answered later in character creation. Assign a color of **Favor** token to each **Faction**.

NEGOTIATION

Normally when a player's character takes an action, if it's possible in the fiction, they simply do it and the consequences and reactions to it come to pass. The exception is when that action is taken upon another player's character.

In that case, the player taking the action must **Negotiate** with the acted upon player(s). The acted upon player will state a price to allow you to take that action. This price can include changes in **Favor**, **Consequences**, fictional positioning, or even future promises (although they are just that—promises—and not guarantees). The acting player may accept the terms or continue to **Negotiate**. The results of **Negotiations** must make sense in the fiction. **Consequences** affect **Negotiations** and may be

offered as part of them, as well. The acted upon player should say what they truly want for allowing the action to happen. This may be a little or a lot. It may be more than the acting player wants to give. The two players should try in earnest to find an agreed upon price, but if none can be found, the Judge takes over and narrates what happens—most often to the detriment of both characters.

Teresa (playing Thomas Duval): I aim to punch John Gammon in his no-good, two-side-talking mushmouth.

Judge: Unless you got a **Privilege** says otherwise, this sounds like a **Negotiation**.

Teresa: That's fine by me, so long as I get to plant one on Gammon.

Jennifer (playing John Gammon): In that case, I get to name a price and it turns out Thomas is going to end up breaking his hand on my lantern jaw.

Teresa: Ha! No dice. I'm too damn tough for that. How about I end up looking like an ass in front of everyone?

Jennifer: Everyone sees what a classless bully you are? I'm down for that. How about you lose a **Favor** with the Townsfolk on account of that as well as get the **Consequence** "*bully*"?

Teresa: Call me what you want, tenderfoot, but it looks like you're getting the **Consequence** of "*broken jaw*."

Jennifer: My jaw will heal, but I'm not sure if your reputation will. It's a deal.

Thomas's swing connects with Gammon's jaw. Teresa removes a Townsfolk chip from her stack and writes down "*bully*" under **Consequences** for Thomas. Jennifer writes down "*broken jaw*" under **Consequences** for Gammon. Either of

these **Consequences** could get leveraged in another **Negotiation** down the line.

When Negotiating, players can also ask an open-ended question. “How can I get you to relinquish the keys to the cell?” “How can I convince you to ride out to Cahill’s ranch with us?” The questioned player should answer honestly with whatever it is that would truly convince their character to so act.

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are labels placed on characters as the result of their actions. They may affect a player’s ability to take other actions or impact their ability to Negotiate. **Consequences** can be quite literal—such as *bleeding out* after taking a fusillade of bullets—or more metaphorical, such as being painted a *bullshit artist* for difficulties with speaking the truth.

Harm is tracked by **Consequences**. The most common case is that one gunshot, knife wound, steer kick, etc., will give the character the **Consequence** *wounded* and the next will be *bleeding out*. *Bleeding out* means the character will be dead shortly without intensive and skilled medical intervention. If a character receives a particularly grievous wound, they may skip *wounded* and go immediately to *bleeding out*. **Privileges** may modify this.

When a character receives a **Consequence**, write it on an index card and hand it to the player to place where everyone can see it.

KEYS

Keys are the actions that define a character. Whenever a player takes an action that is listed under a **Key**, they gain an **Experience Point** for doing so. This is called Turning the Key. If, instead, they do the direct opposite of the **Key**, they can Buy Off that Key. It is up to the player to decide if an action is important enough to count as Buying Off a Key. If they do Buy Off a Key, they gain an **Advance** but do not replace the **Key**. **Advances** can be getting a new **Privilege** (see page 72) or gaining one **Favor** in any **Faction**. Any change in **Favor** must be explained in the fiction. Players can also take an **Advance** when they gain four **Experience Points**.

BURDENS

Burdens are a weight that each character is shouldering as they enter the game. They do not directly interact with other mechanics, but can be used as leverage by the Judge or other players. **Burdens** may not be character knowledge but they can—and should—be player knowledge. The **Burdens** of Deputy Marquez

and John Gammon are common knowledge at the start of the game; discuss as a group which characters (if any) know about the other characters' **Burdens**. Secrets are much more fun when they are dragged into the light.

The **Burden** of the Keys is unique in that it can transfer from one character to another. When play starts, the deputy holds the only set of keys to the jail cell. Use an index card with the key icon to keep track of who has them throughout the game. Remember, the keys are the only way to open the cell without opening up the inmates, as well.

PRIVILEGES

Privileges are how players bend the aforementioned rules. For example, when a player wants to take an action upon another player, the two players must **Negotiate** the outcome...unless one of the players has a **Privilege** that says otherwise. Make sure to go through all the **Privileges** prior to play in order to avoid anyone feeling sideswiped by an unknown power.





☞ Make sure everyone has read their **Keys, Privileges,** and **Burdens**, and shared them with the group.

☞ Have players fill out the History section of their sheets, using existing NPCs whenever possible, and adding new ones only if absolutely necessary. Having NPCs with different relationships to two players' characters is an excellent source of tension during the game.

☞ Have players share their answers to their History questions. Hand out **Favor** as necessary. Make sure you record the players' answers to the questions as these will be your source material for much of what will happen later. There is an organizational sheet for this included with the character sheets.

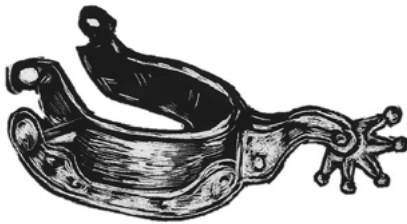
☞ At the end of play we will have an epilogue. Each player will give a brief telling about what happened to their character or their memory. The players' **Favor** with the different **Factions** will play a large role in shaping this part of the epilogue. Additionally, the player(s) with the most **Favor** in a given **Faction** will have the right to narrate the epilogue of that **Faction** and how its members thrive or fail in Seco Creek. Players may wish to play with this in mind.

One important consideration facing the characters and the town is that Seco Creek has not yet been incorporated. When a town is incorporated, it has received official status and a charter from the state. Incorporated towns will have elected officials, unlike unincorporated towns which exist only by tradition. Incorporated towns have more control over their own governance and can supercede or augment county rules. As play begins Seco Creek lacks this status and is at the mercy of the territorial government. This is why they must send the apprehended outlaws to trial in Bright's City.

The events of the game may make it more or less likely for Seco Creek to become incorporated, stay as it is, or even be absorbed by another town. As this is a political decision and will be settled in the epilogue, the player(s) with the most **Favor** with the Politicians will decide this important question at the end of play.

🔪 Begin play. Set a scene either immediately as the outlaws are imprisoned, or just after. Have every player's character in the first scene.

RUNNING
THE GAME





As the Judge, you have three primary responsibilities.

1. **Set the scene. Say what the NPCs and the world are doing.**

Where are we? Who is there? What do they look like?
What are they doing?

2. **Watch for Keys, Favor, Privilege, and Negotiation being triggered.**

Players will be watching for most of these, but you should also keep an eye out. If there is a moment that leaves an impression on you, it is likely that one of the game's mechanics has been triggered. If no one else mentions one, you should pause and consider if something has been triggered.

However, Seco Creek is a modular system. It is possible to play an entire, satisfying game without ever engaging in a given mechanic. If a player never takes an action upon another player's character, they never need to use **Negotiation**. If a player never pushes against an NPC, they may never engage with **Favor**. If a player is so engrossed in what's going on they forget to track XP or **Advancements**, they won't be at a disadvantage.

As Judge, don't try to force players into using the systems simply to have them used. The game works with all ratios of these mechanics.

3. **Determine the world's reaction to the characters' actions and tell the players before enacting it. Adjust the Favor characters have with each Faction accordingly.**

We're not interested in if a player can do something, but rather what repercussions they're willing to deal with to make it happen. When a player wants to do something, tell them the consequences and ask if they agree to those terms. Unless the action is upon another player's character, use the fiction and **Favor** to determine the consequences and see if they still want to do it. It is your job as Judge to truly and fully reveal those consequences before the player decides to commit.

For NPC interactions, here are some possible repercussions:

“You can do it, but...”

- ⤵ “...you'll lose **Favor** with _____ **Faction**.”
- ⤵ “...you'll gain the **Consequence** _____.”
- ⤵ “...you'll break/destroy/lose _____.”
- ⤵ “...you'll be separated from _____.”
- ⤵ “...you'll end up near _____.”
- ⤵ “...first you'll have to _____.”
- ⤵ “...afterwards you'll have to _____ or else _____.”

When they hear the ramifications, the player may not wish to take their action. That's fine. They can withhold that action and the ensuing ramification is likewise withheld. Your job is to judge, not punish.

For player vs. player interactions you do not need to determine these repercussions, but you can suggest possible bargains between players if they need assistance **Negotiating**.

Whatever the result, always be sure to pause and think if you should be taking and/or giving a chip of **Favor**. **Favor** is fluid and the Judge bears the brunt of responsibility for making it so.

GIVING & TAKING FAVOR

Favor is the hub around which the other spokes of the game revolve. As such, it is vital to know when to give and take **Favor**. The basics of **Favor** are simple.

- ⇒ **Favor** is a gauge of how well liked, tolerated, respected, or heeded a player's character is with a **Faction**.
- ⇒ If a character meets a **Faction's** desire or otherwise makes the situation better for them, that character should receive **Favor**.
- ⇒ If a character hinders a **Faction's** desire or otherwise makes the situation worse for them, that character should lose **Favor**.

Generally, **Favor** is gained or lost one chip at a time, but in extreme cases multiple chips may be gained or lost. Not every scene will have a transfer of **Favor**. Actions that don't affect **Factions** don't necessitate a transfer of **Favor** (unless a character's **Privilege** states otherwise).

Some **Privileges** affect how **Favor** acts (such as the deputy's **Privilege** to talk sense to the sheriff or Gammon's **Privilege** with his brother without affecting his **Favor** with the Outlaws.)

Levels of Favor

What follows is a general guide of how members of a given **Faction** will act towards a player's character with a certain amount of **Favor** in that **Faction**. All of this is dependent on the current fiction of the game. Three **Favor** and a strong fictional position for the character could equal four **Favor** and a moderate position.

0 - Hostile: Members of this **Faction** will actively undermine the character and seek to do them ill. All gradations of hostility live at zero **Favor**, from rumor-mongering to murder. Use the fiction as your guide for how hard to have this **Faction** press against the character.

1 - Neutral: Members of this **Faction** will generally neither help nor hinder the character. The character can tip them into affection or enmity by their actions, changing the amount of **Favor** in that **Faction**.

2 - Positive Regard: Members of this **Faction** will listen to the character if the character's words are in line with their beliefs. They may help the character if they don't have to go out of their way to do so, but are more inclined to support with words than deeds.

3 - Part of Group: Members of this **Faction** will listen to (though not necessarily agree with) the character regardless of what's being said. Members of this **Faction** will act for the character if the character is also acting by following their lead. They may go out of their way to help the character, but are unlikely to act exceptionally to do so.

4 - Esteemed Member: Members of this **Faction** will listen to the character regardless of message and may change their mind accordingly. Members of this **Faction** may act for the character even if the character is not acting.

5 - De Facto Leader: The character may not have the formal title of leader, but members of this **Faction** will act upon their suggestions if they do not directly violate the **Faction's** Desire. They will go out of their way to help the character and will attempt to anticipate their desires. Members of the **Faction** naturally turn to them for advice and direction.

6+: Same as five, as any additional **Favor** serves to solidify a character's position.

As an example of the above, imagine that after a few drinks Deputy Marquez stands up at Miss Hale's saloon and declares, "This town needs to learn to stand up for itself!"

If he has 0 Favor with the Townsfolk...they may respond with anything from jeers to thrown bottles to fired lead, depending on how much of a nuisance he's making of himself.

If he has 1 Favor with the Townsfolk...they may shrug it off and think he's had too much to drink and is talking to himself.

If he has 2 Favor with the Townsfolk...they may nod silently or say a few quiet words of agreement to themselves.

If he has 3 Favor with the Townsfolk...there may be a few shouted encouragements for him to continue.

If he has 4 Favor with the Townsfolk...they may raise their glasses to him and silence the room so he can speak his piece.

If he has 5 Favor with the Townsfolk...they may stand and cheer for him and implore him to tell them what to do next.

The Town of

SECO CREEK



RAILROAD STATION

CHURCH

BARBER SHOP



Examples of Giving & Taking Favor

🔪 Sheriff Walter is ready to haul the prisoners away to the safety of the train, but Deputy Marquez desperately wants to prevent that.

Diego (playing Deputy Marquez): I rally the townsfolk and tell them they need to keep the sheriff out of the jail cell.

Judge: Yeah, you've got five **Favor**. With that much they'll follow your word even if you don't back it up with action. They throw their fists in the air and heed your call, making a human wall.

William (playing Sheriff Walter): "Stand down, folks. I don't want to hurt anyone."

Judge: You've got two **Favor** on these folks and two **Favor** ain't gonna get them to listen to you. They like you okay, but you're on the wrong side of this one.

William: If my tongue can't persuade them, maybe my gun will.

Judge: You pull a gun on these folks and you'll be down to zero **Favor** with them.

William: Ain't nothing for it. I need in that cell. I place a few shots at the feet of the line.

Judge (taking two chips from William): They hate your guts now, but the line quickly starts to break up under your assault. Deputy Marquez, are you going to let that stand? The sheriff's putting you in a tenuous position with the Townsfolk, yourself.

Note that the sheriff's action so violated the Townsfolk's desire for safety that he lost two chips of **Favor** with them. *Favor transferred: -2 Townsfolk for Walter.*

🐉 Lee Owens has had a few too many whiskeys in the saloon and leaps up on the table.

Lucinda (playing as Lee Owens): "I say, these outlaws have had the run of our town for too long!"

Judge: The patrons of the saloon raise their glasses in a toast to you. They're eating this up.

Lucinda: "In fact, I say that anyone who brings me the heads of those thieving assholes will get a C-note for each one!"

Judge: Are you offering a bounty for the prisoners sitting in the sheriff's jail?

Lucinda: Them and any other of the bastards people can bring me.

Judge: Awesome. Like I said, the Townsfolk are eating that up. They think with the outlaws gone they'll be much safer. Go through with your offer and you'll get a **Favor** with them. But news of this will make it to Mayor Dix fast and you're threatening his power base. It'll cost you a **Favor** with the Politicians if you make the offer.

Lucinda: The town is more than the mayor. I double my bounty.

Favor transferred: +1 Townsfolk, -1 Politicians for Owens.

🐉 Sheriff Walter and Deputy Marquez have been keeping watch on the imprisoned outlaws while various and sundry townsfolk mill around outside the office.

William (playing as Sheriff Walter): I look the reprobates in the cell up and down. "I don't want no one dying in my town. Not even you folks."

Diego (playing as Deputy Marquez): "What are you saying, sheriff? You know if you put these men on that train tomorrow they'll be walking free the next day."

William: "I'd rather 'em be walking by law than hanging by mob."

Judge: Sounds like you're saying you're giving those folks in the cell a path to safety, if not freedom.

William: I suppose I am.

Diego: "Sheriff, no!"

Judge: That'll get you a token of **Favor** with the Outlaws.

William: Not that I want it, but so be it. I follow the law.

Judge: The prisoners nod to each other, satisfied that things are going the way they should.

Diego: I leap out of my chair and pound the table, scattering our card game. "You know what they got in Bright's City ain't the law! It's cowed jurors and bribed judges who'll be setting these men free to terrorize our little town again and again. It ain't right and it ain't fair to the people of this town!"

Judge: Are you talking sense to the sheriff like that **Privilege** of yours says you might?

Diego: I am.

Judge: Sheriff, you know if you don't listen to that reason he can take one of your **Favor**.

William: I swore to uphold the law, not what the deputy calls reason.

Diego: I take one of his **Favor** from Townsfolk and put in on my sheet. I'm the one that's going to be keeping them safe from the Cahill gang.

Judge: Are you also buying off your **Key** of Duty?

Diego: Not yet, but maybe soon. We're getting close to a point of no return, I think.

Favor transferred: +1 Outlaw, -1 Townsfolk for Walter. +1 Townsfolk for Marquez.

🐾 Lindsay Hale sneaks into the sheriff's office to meet with John Gammon.

Judge (As Lindsay Hale): "Folks are getting revved up in the saloon, John. I'm worried what this means for your brother and the other two in that cell."

Jake (playing as John Gammon): "My brother tied his own noose and it serves him right if he comes to swing in it."

Judge: Talk like that will cost you **Favor** with the Outlaws.

Jake: Not if I'm only talking about my no-good brother. I have that **Privilege**.

Judge: Fair enough.

Jake: I sigh and turn to Lindsay. "Miss Hale, no matter what ought to happen to my brother, nothing bad ought to come of this town. I know not everyone here has accepted me, but enough has that I been able to have a life...and you know if we let these townfolk hang those Cahill boys, he'll burn this town down to cinders out of principal."

Judge: Keeping the town safe is something Lindsay is concerned about, even if she might not admit it right now. A town of ashes leads to no one prospering. Take a **Favor** with the Merchants.

Favor transferred: +0 Outlaw (due to Privilege), +1 Merchants for Gammon.

SETTING SCENES

The first scene you set occurs either as the posse is locking up the three captured outlaws or immediately

after. Before the posse can disperse, set a scene in or next to the sheriff's office with all characters present. Choose NPCs who have connections to the players' characters to place nearby. Are they glad the characters apprehended the criminals? Are they in agreement with what should be done? Press on the characters' connections and make them feel their weight. If no connections stand out, feel free to have the gathering mass of townsfolk outside the sheriff's office take concrete action; just remember that the strength of this action will do a lot to set the pacing of the game, and a session that starts off with disgruntled yelling will be very different than one that starts with tossing dirt clods.

After the initial scene you have many options for how you set scenes. Player request is often the impetus for a scene. "I want to talk to the deputy alone." "I seek out Doc Struthers and ask him for his advice." "I'm going to buy a round for all my brave posse mates." Generally if a player calls for a scene, you should acquiesce. Sometimes you might wish to set a different scene before the requested scene in order to set the stage for it, but don't do this too often or the players may feel that it is "your" story instead of "our story."

Look for players who haven't had input recently when setting a scene. Consider who might lean on them to give them an opportunity to act. Who do they owe? Who would be pleased or irritated by their recent actions? Who would it be interesting for them to interact with?

There are four combinations of characters that tend to produce the best results.

- ⤵ Put together characters who agree and let them formulate plans, scheme, and connive
- ⤵ Put together characters who disagree and let them argue, or worse
- ⤵ Put together characters who have a relevant backstory and see how it affects the present
- ⤵ Put together characters who have yet to come together and witness their interaction

In addition to the players' characters, consider who else might be in the scene. Are there other people there to witness what may happen, or are two characters meeting in secret? If they are not alone, the specific NPC(s) who are present may greatly affect player action. Sheriff Walter is likely to act quite differently towards the outlaws in front of Deputy Marquez rather than in front of his paramour.

Carefully choose the location of your scene. In addition to the type of place (saloon, stable, train station) be sure to consider the location's proximity to the jail cell. Why would you want the scene close to the cell? Why far? Is someone trying to get a character away from the cell in order to spring the outlaws? Or does someone want a character nearby to provide an alibi or security?



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PACING

Pacing is very important in *Seco Creek*. You need to watch the pot to make sure it does not boil too quickly. You can do this by gradually introducing elements into the mix.

During the first scenes, think about who among the detained outlaws is innocent and how innocent they may be. There are many different ways to play this. At least one of the three, however, needs to be 100% innocent of the stagecoach robbery and murder. All three could be innocent—perhaps they just picked up the lockbox from the bastards who committed the crime or maybe they found it after the original criminals ditched it. If they know who knocked over the stage coach they might even tell the players, depending on the characters' **Favor** with the Outlaws. Conversely, you could also have one of the jailbirds admit to killing the innocent victim in the robbery. This can really ratchet up the tension if one of the players had a strong connection to them and wants justice—or revenge.

After a few establishing scenes, slowly but steadily build the tension. Perhaps a few townsfolk gather outside the jail. One or two try to get in, maybe even some of the sheriff's friends by using guile or genuine curiosity. More people gather. Some drunken townsfolk congregate in the tavern and make plans to storm the jail. Rocks are thrown, maybe shots are fired in the air. Owens' Feed is stormed for pitchforks and torches.

This is not a prescribed series of events, however. A single disapproving relative might be more devastating than an armed mob, depending on the character. As the Judge you need to pay close attention to the players' desires and motives and push against them. This isn't to thwart them, but to make their actions important and worthwhile. Actions easily taken are not valued.

Relationships are an excellent tool for generating difficulty. Look at the History section to see where player-NPC-player triangles are and then apply pressure to as many sides as possible. Look to upset the existing balance and force characters into action.

If you are having difficulty creating interesting decisions for the players, try to identify the character or characters who are the moral center of the game and allow others to revolve around them. Many characters may quickly lean towards one conclusion or another on what to do. Who is the character who is sitting squarely between two or more courses of action? Who is truly trying to determine what is right? This is the moral compass of the game. More often than not this seems to be Deputy Marquez, but it could be any of the characters.

The game's pace will increase as some players' actions snowball and others paint themselves into a corner. Eventually things will come to a head and someone will do something they cannot back down from.

From a chronological standpoint, introduction and setup usually take around 45 minutes. Give the players a short break to digest the setup and prepare for play. Play for about an hour and a half, defining relationships, establishing stakes, and building tension. After this is a good time to take a break in play and check in with the players on how their characters are leaning in regards to the outlaws' fate. Your second act may take about another hour or more. Bring to pass any threats previously established. Epilogues then take fifteen to twenty minutes. Depending on your group's play style, you may also like to include a debrief.

EPILOGUES

When the dust has settled, it's time to tell the final epilogues of the town, its inhabitants, and our protagonists. First, start with the world epilogues. The player(s) with the most **Favor** in a given **Faction** narrate their future. They essentially have carte blanche for this, but below are some guiding questions that may be appropriate. Be sure to start by asking the player with the most **Favor** in the Politicians **Faction** about the town being incorporated, as many other answers may depend upon this.

Politicians

- ≈ Is the town incorporated?
- ≈ What happens to Mayor Dix?

Townfolk

- ≈ How do the Townfolk respond to the events of the past few days?
- ≈ Does anyone move away or otherwise change their life?

Merchants

- ≈ Does business increase or decrease after the events of the past few days?
- ≈ Who profits because of what just happened?

Outlaws

- ≈ Is Duke Cahill still in charge of the Outlaws?
- ≈ What becomes of the three apprehended bandits?

Using this information, the players can craft their own epilogues. Some players may request to go in a certain order and that's fine (for example, if Deputy Marquez wants to go after Sheriff Walter so he can pick up the badge if Walter puts it down). In this epilogue players have complete narrative authority over their own characters, but should respect what other players have said or may wish to say about their own characters.

POSSIBLE OCCURRENCES

When there is a lull in the action and you are unsure what to do next, consider choosing from this list. You can either try to reinforce previous occurrences, or select something that goes against what has already happened. If necessary, introduce a new NPC to take the action you've chosen. NPCs are great levers to get the ball rolling.

Have one of the detained Outlaws:

- ⤵ Admit to part of the crime. "Sure, I jacked the lockbox, but I didn't kill nobody!"
- ⤵ Beg, plead, and whimper. "...what Cahill will do to my family if he finds out..."
- ⤵ Admit to other crimes, but plead innocence for this. "I done some bad things in my time..."
- ⤵ Double down on meanness, taunt, and spit. "I wish I'da shot that ass twice!"
- ⤵ Rub the characters' powerlessness in their face. "Sure I did it, but Cahill will get me off like always."
- ⤵ Bargain for safety, perhaps in exchange for information as to whereabouts of someone or something. "I know where Doc Lattimore's body is. Let me out and I'll show ya..."
- ⤵ Blackmail. "I know them things you done..."
- ⤵ Warn of reprisal. "You hang us, you can't imagine the things Cahill will do to you and yours and this whole crap town..."

- ⤵ Turn on each other, verbally or physically. “I ain’t hanging with you bastards!”

Have other Outlaws (if you want them in town):

- ⤵ Act like this is just a regular day. “I’m just mindin’ my own business in this fine institution...”
- ⤵ Make light of the situation. “Gee, Sheriff, you say you got ‘em behind bars! Eep!”
- ⤵ Tell them how it is. “Duke’s got every judge in Bright’s City in his pocket.”

Have Duke Cahill:

- ⤵ Stay offscreen unless the characters search him out. It is rare that the Judge putting him in play leads to anything other than a hackneyed showdown. He is better used as a force of nature than a man.

Have Townsfolk:

- ⤵ List awful things the three outlaws did. “Sure, maybe he didn’t do this, but I remember the Coleman killings...”
- ⤵ Give humanizing details about the outlaws. “He might be bad now, but when he were a kid...”
- ⤵ Try to bribe, cajole or threaten characters to do or not do something. “Give me five minutes alone with him and you can have five minutes alone in my store...”
- ⤵ Free the outlaws to earn Cahill’s good will. “I know who really runs this town!”
- ⤵ Turn on each other. “Maybe you’re one of them!”

- ⤷ Arm themselves, perhaps by stealing pitchforks.
- ⤷ Storm the jail.
- ⤷ Try to stealthily attack the outlaws.
- ⤷ Get shot doing something foolhardy. “I thought he was stormin’ the jail!”

Have Politicians and Merchants:

- ⤷ Threaten someone’s job or livelihood. “Never forget how you ended up where you are...”
- ⤷ Bribe with money, land, or position. “There’s some choice lots east of town I happen to have the deed for...”
- ⤷ Blackmail. “Be a shame if the townsfolk found out that little secret of yours...”
- ⤷ Plead for sympathy. “What am I gonna do if people see what a mess we made of this?”
- ⤷ Bargain. “Well, maybe they don’t all have to make it to Bright’s City, if you see what I mean...”

CONTINGENCIES

If the characters seek out Duke Cahill:

Cahill is not hard to find. He has a ranch about a half day’s ride outside of town. It isn’t his obscurity that keeps him from arrest, but rather his power. At any given time there are a half dozen or more armed and violent outlaws at the ranch. A violent encounter will go poorly for all involved; get ready to have players circle the *bleeding out* **Consequence** if they go in guns blazing.

If the characters want to make a deal with Duke Cahill:

Remember he is governed by the Outlaws' desire to be free. He may or may not care about other issues, such as the safety of his imprisoned compatriots or revenge upon those who have wronged him, but he will not make a deal that violates his desire to have continued freedom in all senses of the word.

If a character gains significant Favor with the Outlaw Faction:

Follow the guidelines for what **Favor** means. You don't have to have committed a crime to be an esteemed member of the Outlaw **Faction**, only to have helped them achieve their desire. If a character has enough **Favor** to be considered a de facto leader, they should be so considered. This doesn't mean that they have replaced Cahill as top dog, but it means that if Cahill were deposed this character could naturally fill in the void.

If a character attempts to blow open the jail cell:

Have the world show them this will not work. Ideally do so in character, but if this is not possible then straight out tell them what will happen. If they persist, illustrate the results: a crumbling mess of a building with three (or more) corpses inside.

If there's a shootout:

It's going to be awful and it's going to be bloody. It's



likely anyone that pulls steel is going to end up dead. **Privileges** may make some characters more hardy, but more than a few bullets is going to take anyone out. Make sure players know this ahead of time. They will not be dodging bullets and making trick shots; they will be hoping the other guy dies before their own wounds do them in.

If the players seek out a doctor:

There is one in town. He's also the barber, of course, and he's not very skilled. Remember the time period and how (not) advanced medical science is. He can probably treat one gunshot wound to the extremities, but more than one bullet to the arms and legs, or one to torso, is probably beyond his capability to do anything about. Don't make him unavailable, however, as that's just obstructionist.

PLAYING WITH 4 PLAYERS

Seco Creek plays best with a Judge and five players, but it's not always possible to gather this many people together. Playing with just four players still provides a satisfying, if different, experience. There are a few changes you should make when playing with four:

- ⇒ Eliminate one or two NPCs to tighten the town. Make sure if you remove two NPCs that they are not from the same **Faction**.

- ⤷ Consider eliminating a character with a violent **Privilege** (Sheriff, Deputy, Gammon) to limit early bloodshed. If this ends up being the deputy, the **Burden** of the Keys goes to the sheriff.

When there are only four players, they are more likely to gravitate to the same side, so NPCs need to stand more firmly against them. Remember that this isn't to thwart them, but to make their actions important and worthwhile. Without resistance, there will be nothing for the players to act against and the game will fall flat.

- ⤷ If no one plays the sheriff, you need to account for where he is and why he is not available. Do not create an NPC sheriff or the players will all look to him for direction and to make their choices for them. Lacking a sheriff will create a bit of a power vacuum; embrace this. Who is supposed to be making these choices? Is the deputy in charge now?
- ⤷ If the deputy is missing, it will make it harder for the sheriff as there is no one for him to rely on. Make sure he has a supportive NPC around.
- ⤷ Missing Gammon will make it harder for people to relate to the imprisoned outlaws. Look for other ways to connect the players to the prisoners. Make sure the answers to the History questions regarding the prisoners in the cell are strong and can be used later to create human connections to the players.

If you decide not to remove a character with a violent **Privilege**, the game will be tilted in interesting—and sometimes difficult—ways.

- ⇒ Removing Lee Owens takes out the most civic-minded character. Lee is built to worry about Seco Creek’s future. Without that influence, there may be a lack of foresight, planning, and consideration. Lee is also the most “East Coast” character, and so brings a level of refinement to the players’ characters.
- ⇒ Removing Thomas Duval takes out the most traditionalist and independent character. People are much more likely to play nice and do as they’re told without him. Just as Lee is the most “Eastern,” Thomas is the most “Western” of the characters. Removing either of these extremes will tilt the scale the opposite way. Be mindful in choosing to do this.

PLAYER SAFETY

Seco Creek Vigilance Committee is designed to be an intense experience. As such, there are times when events in the game may begin to cut close to areas sensitive for some players. In these cases it’s good to have a tool that anyone at the table can use to negotiate the game content to a level that everyone is comfortable with.

One such tool is the X-card. The X-card is a player safety tool developed by John Stavropoulos and is, as the name says, a card with an X on it. This card is placed within easy reach of all the players. At any time if anyone feels uncomfortable with what's happening at the table, they can touch or point to the X-card. When someone does this, it is the responsibility of everyone at the table to edit out the objectionable content. Usually, what this content is will be obvious, and the person touching the card has no obligation to explain why they are objecting to it. Remember that players are more important than the game and a table that trusts and is comfortable with each other will come up with something fulfilling that is acceptable to all players.

For more information on the X-card, please see <http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

When gaming in a historical context, it's not necessary to have historical knowledge. Maybe you know enough cowboy lingo to tell Mayor Dix he smells like the south end of a northbound mule. If so, go for it! If not, feel free to say simply that you tell off Mayor Dix in an appropriately scathing way. Your character knows the world better than you do. Feel free to say your own badass line, but also feel free to point out that the

sheriff would know how to shut down his ex-lover. Of course Thomas Duval can talk about the merits of different kinds of stirrups, even if the person playing him doesn't know how to mount a horse.

If you are familiar with the setting, that's great! It can be a lot of fun to add historical details when setting up scenes or describing your character and their actions. However, be careful not to step on someone else's toes or make it a competition to know the most. If a player says their character is riding a Morgan, it's not necessary to tell them that it's more likely they'd be riding a Quarter Horse as Morgans were "city horses." Certainly, it's interesting information, but it's blocking that player from continuing their scene. Consider when it's appropriate to share your knowledge and when it is not. Remember that your primary goal is to tell a story together.

PRINCIPLES





These principles are some key ideas to keep in mind when running the game. They will help you as the Judge maintain the atmosphere and aesthetic.

- ⇒ *Maintain an uneasy balance *but* let the chips fall where they may*
- ⇒ *Follow the threads *but* don't be afraid to cut them short*
- ⇒ *Let them back down *but* don't be afraid to drop the hammer*

Maintain an uneasy balance *but* let the chips fall where they may

Maintain an uneasy balance means to keep situations from resolving too quickly. If a majority of the characters are pushing towards getting the outlaws on the train, have the town push in the opposite direction. The players should have time to sit with their decision and consider the ramifications of it.

...but

Let the chips fall where they may means you should not try to dictate how the story will end. When things come to a head, let them resolve as

the players and the previously established fiction dictates. This is not your time to push, but rather to sit back and enjoy the ride.

Follow the threads *but* don't be afraid to cut them short

Follow the threads means to see what interests the players and let the action follow that. Certain aspects of the situation may be more compelling to different people and you should give them license to expand the story in those directions.

...but

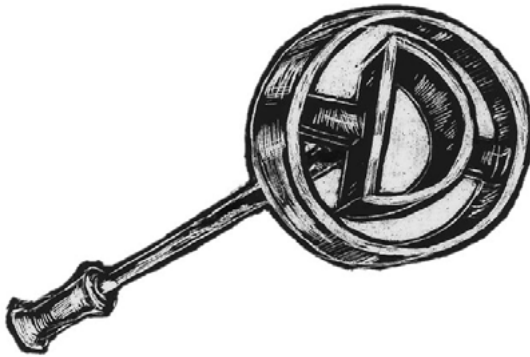
Don't be afraid to cut them short means to keep a close eye on if a plot thread is unravelling from the main narrative. Ultimately the game is concerned with how the players will decide to deal with the outlaws. If a thread doesn't look like it ties into that, it should be cut.

Let them back down *but* don't be afraid to drop the hammer

Let them back down means that sometimes when you tell them the consequences and ask (as you should always do), they will say no. This is fine. The action the player was proposing doesn't happen and the world doesn't react. There should be no penalty for this.

...but

Don't be afraid to drop the hammer means that when a player says yes, carry out the agreed upon consequences without remorse. Forgiveness is warranted when the players withdraw their action. When they embrace it you as Judge should drive home the established consequences without remorse.



APPENDIX



BENEFACTORS

OF SECO CREEK



DANIEL SCRIBNER



PHREDD GROVES



PATTY KIRSCH



SHERVYN



**PLAYER
CHARACTERS**



Printable character sheets
and reference material available at
humanhandandbrain.com

SHERIFF DAMIEN WALTER

“There have been a lot of sheriffs in Seco Creek, although there hasn’t rightly been a single one yet. That is to say, no one with the full force and power of the county court behind him. Nothing behind the badge but the man, and there won’t be till Seco Creek is incorporated. Of course that’s something that any lawbreaker who gets hauled from Seco Creek to the county seat in Bright’s City is more’n happy to point out to the judge, the jury, and anyone who doesn’t move away quick enough. But to me it don’t matter, and I think it’s the same for most of the people here in Seco Creek. A sheriff without backing stands only on his reputation and I think mine is strong. I’ve treated these people fair and never made exceptions except where they was warranted. I aim to keep that balance between freedom and order and keep Seco Creek a place where everyone can get a fair shot. That shot might not always come out the way the shooter wants, but I plan to make sure everybody at least gets the rights to line it up.”

HISTORY

- ⤵ Someone relies on you to maintain their position. Who? What would happen if you failed them? Add 2 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⤵ Someone has romantic intentions towards you. Who? How do you feel about them? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⤵ You let someone off with just a warning even though you had them dead to rights. Who? What did they do? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⤵ One of the outlaws currently in your jail gave you

a surprising sign that they respect your authority. Who? What did they do? Add 1 **Favor** to the **Outlaw Faction**.

- ☞ Someone in town resents your power and would see you laid low. Who? Why? Remove 1 **Favor** from their **Faction**.

KEYS

- ☞ **Key of Duty:** Turn this Key when you carry out your sworn duty as a law officer. **BUYOFF:** Flout the letter of the law or turn in your badge.
- ☞ **Key of Pride:** Turn this Key when you take action to show that you are superior to your fellow man. **BUYOFF:** Take a backseat to another or allow another to succeed at your expense.
- ☞ **Key of the Fair Shot:** Turn this Key when you aid the underdog or champion a hopeless cause. **BUYOFF:** Side with the front-runner.

BURDEN

- ☞ **Burden of Authority:** You are a sheriff in name only. There is no greater power behind you than your quick wit and quick draw. But you are all the law the people of this town have.

PRIVILEGES

- ☞ Because you are a trained shootist, when you attempt to inflict violence, you succeed without **Negotiation**.

DEPUTY ALONZO MARQUEZ

“It never fails to amaze me just how often it feels like I’ve stepped in a big old pile of horse shit. My eyes are on my destination and then my boot is in the shit. It’s that feeling of being stuck between two places, that awkwardness in between. You could be all the way here or all the way there, and probably either would be okay, but you ain’t fully in either place. You think, ‘Well, here I am again.’ Always finding myself in places I don’t mean to and trying to do my best in that situation. Same thing happens to Sheriff Walter, except I don’t think he knows it to be so. I envy that. Sometimes it’s so much better not to know. But then if you don’t know that train is coming you don’t know to get off the track. Guess that’s why the Sheriff’s got me. Guess that’s why this whole town’s got me.”

HISTORY

- ⇒ Someone thinks Seco Creek would be better served with you as sheriff. Who? Why? Add 2 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ Someone looks out for you like their little brother. Who? How do you feel about them? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ You helped someone out of a jam, even though it was beyond your duty as an officer of the law. Who? How did you help? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ One of the outlaws currently in your jail knew the man you shot and forgave you for it. Who? Why did they forgive you? Add 1 **Favor** to the Outlaw **Faction**.
- ⇒ Someone in town did not and will not forgive.

Who? How did they know the man? Remove 1 **Favor** from their **Faction**.

KEYS

- ☞ **Key of Duty:** Turn this Key when you carry out your sworn duty as a law officer. **BUYOFF:** Flout the letter of the law or turn in your badge.
- ☞ **Key of Brotherhood:** Turn this Key when you take action to protect the sheriff, either from others or from himself. **BUYOFF:** By action or inaction, allow the sheriff to come to harm.
- ☞ **Key of the Silver Lining:** Turn this Key when you find the good in a bad situation. **BUYOFF:** Abandon all hope.

BURDENS

- ☞ **Burden of the Past:** You were the faster draw, the surer shot. But later it came to light that the man you put in Boot Hill wasn't quite as guilty as he seemed when you pulled the trigger.
- ☞ **Burden of the Keys:** When play begins, you hold the keys to the jail cell.

PRIVILEGES

- ☞ Because of your heavy past, when you attempt to inflict violence on anyone except the sheriff, you succeed without **Negotiation**.
- ☞ Because you are wise, when you reason with the sheriff and he does not listen, you may move one **Favor** from an affected **Faction** from his sheet to yours.

LEE OWENS

PROPRIETOR OF OWENS FEED

“I guess if you’ve been anywhere at all you’d be likely to say that Seco Creek isn’t any kind of special place and you’d probably be right. But the thing about that is, we can make Seco Creek a special place. We can make it our own special place. Our beginnings have been as auspicious or not as any other place that became great. We just need the men and the women and the will to make it so. We already got ourselves a foothold out here and now we need to start climbing. But you can be sure that not everyone wants to see us climb up to greatness. We need to be ever vigilant against those that would drag us back and tear down what we’ve already built. I won’t lie: it’s going to mean sacrifices and struggle. Suffering today for success tomorrow. That’s how everything great got that way. It won’t be easy for any of us, but nothing worth doing ever has been.”

HISTORY

- ⇒ Someone in town owes you a significant debt of gratitude and, more importantly, currency. Who? Why did they need the money? Add 2 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ One of the town’s leading lights has thrown their weight behind your civic vision. Who? Why? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ Someone in town depends upon your store for their success. Who? What would happen if your store were no longer there for them? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ One of the outlaws currently in the jail managed

to aid your business, whether intentionally or inadvertently. Who? What did they do? Add 1 **Favor** to the outlaw **Faction**.

- ☞ One of your own creditors begrudges your debt to them. Who? Why? Remove 1 **Favor** from their **Faction**.

KEYS

- ☞ **Key of the Civic-Minded:** Turn this Key when you take action that puts the welfare of the town above that of any one person. **BUYOFF:** Renounce the town or let it be laid low.
- ☞ **Key of the Civilized:** Turn this Key when you settle matters like they would back East: due process, inalienable rights, habeas corpus, and other fancy words. **BUYOFF:** Commit Western justice.
- ☞ **Key of the Farsighted:** Turn this Key when you accept a hardship now to ensure success later. **BUYOFF:** Take the easy way out.

BURDEN

- ☞ **Burden of the Lender:** Many of the townsfolk have outstanding bills at your store. If several of them were to refuse to pay, it would bankrupt you.

PRIVILEGES

- ☞ When you attempt to convince a player to do something for the good of the town and they do not listen, choose one: they lose a **Favor** with a **Faction** watching or you gain a **Favor** with a **Faction** watching.

THOMAS DUVAL

RANCHER

“Some folks think I’ve got something against Seco Creek. I can’t say as they’re right, but nor can I say as they’re wrong. It’s just to most folks Seco Creek is the center of this place, the hub from which the spokes extend. To me that’s wholly backwards. I’ve been out here since before there was a place called Seco Creek, since before anyone even put up a building in the place that would later be called Seco Creek. When I came out here there was no cavalry to deal with the Indians or the Mexicans. There was no general store to buy your feed and supplies. A man did for himself. And me and my own did quite well for ourselves. Got damn near a hundred head of cattle and been turning a profit on them for more than half a decade. Did it all on our own, without the help of a town. I’m not saying I got anything against Seco Creek. I’m just saying I ain’t no spoke.”

HISTORY

- ⇒ Someone in town has prospered thanks to your ranch’s success. Who? How has your ranch helped them? Add 2 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ Someone in town has lived on this land almost as long as you have. Who? How do you feel about them? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ Someone in town knows about your cattle deal but hasn’t said anything...yet. Who? Why have they remained silent? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ One of the outlaws who brokered your cattle deal showed themselves as a true child of the West. Who? What did they do? Add 1 **Favor** to the

Outlaw **Faction**.

- ☞ Your ranch wasn't always as large as it is now. One of your neighbors feels that this expansion has infringed upon their land rights. Who? Are they right to think so? Remove 1 **Favor** from their **Faction**.

KEYS

- ☞ **Key of Survival:** Turn this Key when you act to preserve yourself and your interests. **BUYOFF:** Put yourself in danger for selfless reasons.
- ☞ **Key of Tradition:** Turn this Key when you do something the way it's always been done out West. **BUYOFF:** Do things like they do back East.
- ☞ **Key of the Iconoclast:** Turn this Key when you take an action despite (or perhaps because of) others' disapproval. **BUYOFF:** Go with the group and against your own desires.

BURDEN

- ☞ **Burden of the Deal:** You have gotten a damn good deal buying some of the stock the outlaws have previously rustled. Many suspect this, but few know for sure.

PRIVILEGES

- ☞ Because you're tough as old leather, you can ignore one *wounded* **Consequence**.

JOHN GAMMON

FORMER OUTLAW

“Some folks won’t ever let you forget. And there’s truth to the fact that maybe some things shouldn’t be forgotten. That doesn’t mean they can’t be forgiven, though. I guess lots of folks around here don’t agree with that way of thinking. Hell, maybe I’m even one of them. I don’t know if what I’ve done is forgive myself so much as move on. Of course, moving on is harder when your only living blood is still back where you were before. And there’s about as much chance of Billy moving on from the Cahill Gang as there is of folks forgetting what he and I and the rest of them boys did out there in the sagebrush. Something just shy of zero.”

HISTORY

- ⇒ You spared someone from being slaughtered by the Cahill gang. Who? How had they crossed the gang? Why did you save them? Add 2 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ Someone in town has known you since boyhood, since before you fell in with the wrong crowd. Who? How do you feel about them? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ A resident of the town has employed you doing odd jobs. Who? Why do they trust you? Add 1 **Favor** to their **Faction**.
- ⇒ One of the outlaws currently in jail was never as vile as the other members of the gang. Who? What made them stand apart? Add 1 **Favor** to the outlaw **Faction**.

- ↳ Someone refuses to believe you have changed your ways. Who? Why do they doubt you? Remove 1 **Favor** from their **Faction**.

KEYS

- ☞ **Key of Redemption:** Turn this Key when you take action to show that you have reformed from your previous ways. **BUYOFF:** Backslide, just this one time, just ever so much.
- ☞ **Key of Grit:** Turn this Key when you take an action that a lesser man would flinch at. **BUYOFF:** Back down from a task.
- ☞ **Key of the Fair Shot:** Turn this Key when you aid the underdog or champion a hopeless cause. **BUYOFF:** Side with the front-runner.

BURDEN

- ☞ **Burden of the Brother:** Your brother is one of the outlaws the posse brought in. Many in town think you still sympathize with him and your old gang.

PRIVILEGES

- ☞ Because you are a former bad man, when you attempt to inflict violence, you succeed without **Negotiation**.
- ☞ Because of your relationship with your brother, when you interact solely with him you may choose not to gain or lose **Favor** with the outlaw **Faction**.

NEW PRIVILEGES

When earning an **Advance**, players may choose to do one of two things: gain one **Favor** in any **Faction**; or gain a new **Privilege**. The new **Privileges** are listed below. They are non-exclusive, meaning that multiple players may choose the same **Privilege**. Write the name of the **Privilege** chosen on your character sheet.

- ⇒ Because you are a *bastion of reason*, when another character uses violence against you, you may transfer one **Favor** from their sheet to yours.
- ⇒ Due to your *commercial acumen*, you are considered to have one more **Favor** than shown on your sheet for an affected **Faction** when using financial matters as leverage. (0 counts as 1, 1 counts as 2, etc.)
- ⇒ Due to your *checkered background*, you may commit theft and other minor crimes without **Negotiation**.
- ⇒ Because of your *long history with a specific Faction*, you can choose to not lose **Favor** with them for any one action. After doing so, erase this **Privilege**. (You must have 4 or more **Favor** with the selected **Faction** when choosing this **Privilege**.)
- ⇒ Because you are a *born peacemaker*, you can prevent NPCs from using violence in any scene in which you are present. Describe how you do this.
- ⇒ Because you're *beloved by a specific Faction*, anyone using violence against you loses all of

their **Favor** with that **Faction**. (You must have 4 or more **Favor** with the selected **Faction** when choosing this **Privilege**.)

- ⤵ Because you're a *cantankerous* son of a cuss, you can always commit violence on someone who has just committed violence on you, without **Negotiation**.

GLOSSARY

Advance - A character improvement. One of two possibilities: gaining one **Favor** in any **Faction** or gaining a new **Privilege**.

Burden - A unique weight that character is shouldering as they enter the game.

Buy Off a Key - Performing the opposite of a **Key**. Allows a player to remove it and take an **Advance**.

Consequence - Labels placed on characters as the result of their actions. A character who has been stabbed would get the **Consequence** *wounded*; a character who turned their back on an ally might get the **Consequence** *traitor*.

Experience Point - Tracks use of a character's **Keys**. A character who has earned four **Experience Points** get an **Advance**.

Faction - A group of NPCs bound by common desire. The **Factions** are Townsfolk, Politicians, Merchants, and Outlaws.

Favor - A gauge of how well liked, respected, tolerated, or heeded a player's character is with a **Faction**. Gained and lost throughout play.

Key - An action that defines a character.

Negotiation - The process of an acting player and an acted upon player determining a price to make the acting player's action true in the fiction. May involve any game mechanic.

Non-player Character (NPC) - A character in the world not controlled by one of the players. That is to say, a character other than Walter, Marquez, Owens, Duval, and John Gammon.

Privilege - A special way in which a character bends previously established rules. **Privileges** can affect any game mechanic, including **Negotiations**, **Favor**, and **Consequences**.

Turn a Key - The act of performing a character's **Key**. When Sheriff Walter carries out his sworn duty as a lawman, he is Turning his Key of Duty.

INSPIRATIONS & INFLUENCES

Warlock by Oakley Hall

Lady Blackbird by John Harper

Dream Askew by Avery Alder

Apocalypse World by Vincent and Meg Baker, especially
the phrase “Tell them the consequences and ask.”

INDEX

- Advance, 20, 72
- Burdens, 12, 20-21, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71
- Cahill, Duke, 11, 12, 44, 46, 47, 48
- Consequences, 17, 18-20
- Desires, 16, 28, 30, 34, 42, 48
- Duval, Thomas 52, 68-69
- Epilogues, 23, 24, 43-44
- Experience Points, 20
- Faction, 16, 23, 27, 28-29, 43-44, 48
- Favor, 10, 16-17, 20, 23, 26, 27-37, 43-44, 48
- Gammon, John, 51, 70-71
- Incorporation, 24, 43-44, 62
- Keys, 20, 26
 - Buying Off, 20
 - Turning, 20
- Judge 8, 13-14, 26-28, 42
- Marquez, Deputy Alonzo, 42, 51, 64-65
- Moral Center, 42
- Negotiation, 14, 17-19, 26, 28
- Non-player Character (NPC), 12, 13, 16, 23, 26, 27, 38, 39, 42, 45, 50-51
- Owens, Lee, 52, 66-67
- Privileges, 21, 29, 50
 - New, 72-73
- Walter, Sheriff Damien, 51, 62-63
- Wounds, 19, 50