

SILENT NIGHT, HUNGRY NIGHT

A Savage Worlds One Sheet™ By Shane Hensley
for use with Deadlands™ or as a Western diversion



Merry Christmas, Marshal. And welcome to a tale that's been told before, but never quite like this... Use the Deadlands characters found on our Savage Website www.peginc.com or make your own.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The good people of Hooverville liked Christmas, a lot. But Gerald Goodman, who lived just north of Hooverville, did not.

Just why this hate grew in his tiny black heart isn't important any more, but what he did because of it is the reason for our Christmas tale of horror, woe, and maybe even a little heroism and hope.

Before we begin, Marshal, you'll get the reference fairly quickly as you read this because you're seeing the words in print. Your party likely will not, and will not even know the name of the creature they fight in the end since there's no one to name it. That's good, and the longer you maintain the mystery the better. When the light bulbs do finally blink on over your player's heads, hopefully it will be a very memorable moment.

Ideally, it's Christmas Eve, but anytime around the holidays works fine. The posse is travelling on a train to some destination when the locomotive develops a malfunction. It's nothing catastrophic, but it must stop in the small town of Hooverville for a few days to make repairs. The train pulls in just after breakfast on a

bright snowy day.

The railroad (most likely Smith and Robards) offers to let passengers stay and sleep on the cars for free, but there will be no heat and it's quite cold. There's a blanket of snow on the ground and a chill in the air, so the travelers' best bet is to head on into Hooverville and get a room.

HOOVERVILLE

Whether they travel singly or as a group, the heroes eventually discover that Hooverville is in something of a lockdown. The townsfolk have literally barricaded themselves in their homes. Signs of a fight—blood spatters on the snow, shell casings, and a few broken and now boarded-up windows—can be seen up and down Main Street. Signs of life are visible, such as smoke coming from chimneys or furtive glances from behind dark windows, but otherwise the town is dead and silent as a grave.

There are people in the homes, but they won't come out. A recent raid by the Goodman ranch has taken all of their provisions. When the raiders rode off, the townspeople realized they were without food and began fighting. Town Marshal LeSeig put an end to the fighting just before being grievously wounded, and now the people of Hooverville have holed up in their homes to avoid further violence with their neighbors.

There are three primary locations the heroes can visit to gather information.

The Louis Home: Sam and Ethel Louis live with their small daughter Cindy in the first private home the strangers approach. Sam has a shotgun and warns any visitors

off his front porch. "We've got nothing left to steal!" he yells. If forced to talk, he relates that men from the Goodman Ranch came to town recently and went mad. They shot up the place, invaded every single home, and stole all their Christmas presents and food. He has no idea why. He's known Goodman for many years, and while few liked him, he was never an outright thief.

Other private citizens tell similar stories. Make up more names as needed until the heroes realize there's no new information to be gained.

The Geisel Saloon and Steakhouse: Theo Geisel runs this small establishment with his wife, Helen. It's closed and he's accepting no customers. Geisel isn't armed, but he resists guests as sternly as possible. He says the Goodman gang came in, drank or stole all the liquor, then took the food they'd stored up for the annual town Christmas feast. They then went on a rampage through the town and broke into all the other businesses and private homes to take their food and Christmas gifts. Geisel has no idea what provoked these men to such action—he knew many of the ranch hands for years. "It was like pure meanness got into 'em and wouldn't let go til they'd done the whole town harm," he says.

Mayor Hoover's Home: The posse might think about talking to the mayor about the situation. If they do, they find his home ransacked and empty. The mayor and his family took off after the attack and haven't been seen since.

Jail: Town Marshal Ted LeSeig was shot and wounded shortly after the rampage. He's laid up in his office, barely conscious. He can't do much, but if the strangers want to help, he'll authorize an appropriate reward (typically up to \$300 for the whole group). "The people here are good people, but now they're starving. That'll make 'em ornery and mean. Get that food back and keep that bad side from comin' out, friends. Otherwise this good little town will turn into just another frontier boomtown



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without a conscience, and God knows we got enough of those out here." Ted offers to let the group borrow the town's last few horses if they need to, but swears to track them down and kill them if they steal the beasts as they might be Hooverville's only source of food if the town's stores aren't recovered.

THE GOODMAN RANCH

Given that all of the food in town was taken by the Goodman gang (or is being hidden and hoarded by the townsfolk), the posse should have little choice but to head out immediately and see about exacting a little justice. If they need a little incentive, tell them it looks like a blizzard is coming and they'll definitely want to store up with all the goods they can in case they get snowed in. The fable about the ant and the grasshopper might be a good push to those inclined to wait a bit. Or that whole Donner party business a few decades back.

Any of the sources can point the group toward the Goodman Ranch. It's a short five mile trek north of town, just at the foot of a high mountain. The estate is surrounded by barbed wire, but the gate along the road is wide open. The top of the gate is an arched, metal-worked sign that once read "G.G. Ranch." The first "G" has fallen off however, and lies half-buried in the snow.

On the way in, the posse sees bits of discarded food, a few simple presents, or scraps of wrapping paper lie along the road. A few minutes later, they see smoke on the horizon. It comes from the smoldering ruins of the main ranch house, as well as two bunk houses and a barn. All have been burned, likely last night, and are still quite hot.

Around the yard are a score of dead ranch hands. Make the scene as gory and graphic as you wish, but slowly let the heroes realize the ranch hands died by their own hand. It seems they fell to fighting among themselves once they got back to the Double G.

A Notice or Tracking roll reveals that at least some of the ranchers must have gotten away. Sled tracks lead from the smoking barn into the high mountains to the north. A Tracking or Notice -2 roll finds relatively fresh dog tracks pulling the sled. As it's snowing and some of the tracks are still visible, it's obvious the tracks are relatively fresh. If the group blows these rolls, they still find the tracks—it just takes them a bit longer.

TO THE TOP OF MOUNT CRUMPET

Gerald Goodman is slowly and unwittingly selling his soul to Famine. The jealousy in his heart for the good people of Hooverville, the decimation of his herd through the winter due to blight and prairie ticks, and a generally nasty disposition, drew his sleeping mind to the madness of the Hunting Grounds. There Gerald entreated with the most insidious of manitous, and for the small price of starving an entire town full of generally good people and murdering his own employees, Goodman was promised great power. And with great power comes... a change into a massive, nasty green demon of envy.

Goodman infected his own ranch hands with his madness and turned them loose on Hooverville. When they returned, he turned them against one another and reveled in the slaughter. At that moment he suffered a massive metamorphosis into a green, demon-like thing. Goodman lost most of his humanity in that moment. He doesn't even know his own name. He saw



the single remaining G over the gate to his estate and the word "Ranch" and strung them together to call himself "Granch."

Now the Granch has gathered up the stolen goods, lashed them to his winter sled, and tethered up his corrupted hounds to haul his ill-gotten gains high atop Mount Crumpet.

The posse can easily follow the tracks, though they might be amazed at some of the crevices and slopes the sled seems to have traversed. Finally they come to the entrance to a cave overlooking the valley far below, and the still quiet town of Hooverville.

The sled and dog tracks lead into the darkness beyond.

A few twists and turns into the cavern lead into a large chamber roughly forty feet across. If the group has no light, they hear heavy breathing and smell the odor of wet dog. With light, they just catch a blur of dark brown fur matted with blood and gristle leaping at them through the damp air.

GIANT MASTIFFS

Two giant dogs, mutated with demonic energy, pulled the Granch and his sled to the top of Mt. Crumpet. They're ravenous with hunger and cruelty and attack until dead. Both have gnarled horns atop their heads, jagged teeth, and vicious claws.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidate d10, Notice d10, Stealth d12

Pace: 10 **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Fear -2:** The dogs are hideous and covered in blood and chunks of meat.
- **Gore:** The first round a dog attacks it charges into combat with its ragged horns. This is a wild Fighting attack at +2 to hit and damage (but -2 Parry until its next action).
- **Improved Frenzy:** Each dog can make two Fighting attacks each action without penalty.

AND TO ALL A GOOD FRIGHT...

The thing that was Gerald Goodman watches from the back of the cavern. Once the hounds are dispatched, he slithers through the darkness, hiding behind rocks and snow drifts. He hisses at the party. "*Merrrry Christmasssss...*"

Don't go to initiative, but instead play this one for creeps. Give the heroes Notice rolls to catch glimpses of the long, gangly, pot-bellied thing. It has greenish fur with yellow slits for eyes, and seems to be wearing the tattered remnants of a red fur coat and cap.

The first few attacks may seem to miss—or hit but the effect is unclear in the darkness. Eventually, the thing hisses "*Yoooouuuuuuu cannnnnotttt killl meeee! As looong assss Hoovervilllllee boardsssss...I am invincible...*"

When the next attack lands, a stray beam of moonlight illuminates the truth. The hideous thing instantly regenerates whatever damage the adventurers manage to inflict! Reveal this with dramatic effect. The Granch rises to its full height in the pale light and roars as the wound closes. The group can see its tattered rags, the green-furred skin, the demonic yellow eyes, and the jagged teeth filthy with gore. (Guts checks all around!)

The Granch truly is invincible, so it plays with the group at first, taking only one of its two attacks or just batting them around for pleasure. Let this continue for several rounds. You want the party to feel increasingly desperate here. When that seems to have sunk in—and maybe a character or two has suffered an "incidental" wound of some severity—the Granch suddenly pauses. On its action it takes a swipe as usual then stops, as if listening. All the heroes can make Notice rolls to hear the sounds of singing in the valley far below. Should anyone be near enough to the entrance to see, the people of Hooverville have built a bonfire and are singing Christmas carols ("Silent Night, Holy Night," at the moment).

Proceed with the combat round after this revelation. Though the Granch is still invulnerable, it definitely feels any further punishment inflicted that round. On its next action, it glares evilly at whoever "hurt" it last and screams "*Mussttt killll... themmmmm...allll!*" At that, drop out of combat rounds for a moment to properly set the next scene.

The Granch races outside and leaps aboard the sleigh, which slowly begins sliding down the side of Mount Crumpet toward Hooverville. The creature is large enough that it can steer the gift and food-laden sleigh much like a child's sled.

The party's horses are hopefully nearby so they can give chase. If not, several gifts which have fallen off the sled may help. There are a couple sets of wooden skis and two children's sleds. All of these can be donned in the time it takes the Granch's sleigh to get up to speed so a heroic party can easily give chase. The adventurers might also try jumping directly on the back of the Granch's sleigh as well, though they'll have to climb over awkward burlap sacks full of stolen goods to get nearer the front. One way or another, make sure your posse can give chase and let the fun begin.

As the people of Hooverville sing—putting aside their worries and fears over the lack of food and gifts—the Granch loses its invulnerability. It's still a tough old sucker but now it can be killed.

Don't get too technical about the chase itself—this is meant to be a wild and fast-paced ride. On each action, have pursuers make an appropriate roll (Riding for mounted heroes, Agility for those on the Granch's sleigh or on skis or sleds). Success means they can attack normally (though with the usual -2 penalty for an unstable platform). Failure means they can't—but describe their experience in quick detail, such as nearly falling off the sleigh, steering precariously around a tree, etc. A critical failure is more disastrous. The hero falls, crashes into a rock or tree, or undergoes some other suitably dramatic tumble resulting in 2d6 damage. Should the cowpoke survive, let him get right back in the action a round or two later by putting his skis back on, "shortcutting" the chase by jumping off a cliff to the trail below, etc. Use your imagination and let everyone who isn't outright dead get back in on the fun.

The goal is to stop the Granch before he gets to town, which takes about 10 rounds (let the posse know this so they're well aware of the tension). Don't hesitate to remind them that the moment the Granch breaks up the celebration it's likely to become invulnerable again as well (it will).



THE GRANCH

The Granch is a 9' tall, gangly creature with a pot belly, long arms, green fur, and yellow slitted eyes. Its jagged teeth are horrible and filled with all manner of gristly bits. Before mutating into this form, Gerald Goodman was wearing the Santa coat and hat he used to wear for his children, long since left with his estranged wife.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidate d10, Notice d6, Stealth d12

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Fear -4:** The Granch is a grisly demon straight from the Abyss wearing the tattered remnants of a Santa suit.
- **Improved Sweep:** The Granch's flailing arms can hit all targets within 2" of its body each turn. Ignore any hits beyond the first two—the thin arms lose their momentum after first contact.
- **Slap:** Str+d6; Reach 2. The Granch's long arms slap a victim for damage and 2d6" of knockback, even if no damage is actually caused (Shaken or wounds).

THE BIG FINALE

There are two ways this could end. The awful ending is still very dramatic and fun—though the party is likely wiped out or has to run away (a wipeout is fun if this was a one shot). The Granch smashes into town on the sleigh in an explosion of stolen food, toys, and presents. It rampages through the townsfolk, massacring them left and right until there's not a soul left in Hooverville (though a few should escape into the nearby woods).

The happy ending is just as dramatic. The heroes slay the beast before it reaches Hooverville and it explodes in a scintillating burst of green light. The sleigh rumbles on down into town with the heroes in tow (or even better, on board), and comes to rest just before the large bonfire where the citizens have gathered to work out their differences and celebrate Christmas.

The posse are hailed as heroes and can begin handing out presents to every Hoo down in Hooverville.