

TO LIVE AND DIE IN
THE WEST

THE SHOWDOWN AT THE SALT SALOON



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Setting

Arizona

This arid and dry landscape tests the skills of anyone who dares try to live here. Vast stretches of low valleys extend far into the horizon, interrupted only by plateaus and mountains. The plants that survive in this place are sharp and covered in thorns. The animals that make their home here hunt primarily at night. Packs of coyotes roam, looking for anything that finds itself alone in the dark. Rattlesnakes hide under bushes and in holes, waiting for their prey to take a wrong step. While nature reigns supreme here, the greatest enemy of anyone that wishes to live here is the heat. The sun beats down with oppressive force during the day, turning the ground into a bed of coals. Water is scarce, meaning anyone caught in the wild without it will find death before reprieve.

A testament to the will of man, people still choose to live in this place. In fact, they thrive. Hundreds of miles of railroad tracks cross the unforgiving landscape, bringing civilization to towns and settlements deep in the desert. The first breaths of industry can be seen in these remote outposts. Copper, salt, and other minerals are painstakingly mined from the earth and shipped back east. These natural resources bring life to a place normally filled with death. Everyone who scratches a life from the rocks and dirt knows how fragile their home really is. If the mines fail, there will be nothing left to bring people or resources to their towns and life will drain from these places, leaving only bones to be claimed by the desert.

The Town of Salt

One of these towns is the town of Salt. Named for its primary export and vast mines, Salt is as dry of a place as you can get. Passed over for a new expansion of track by the railroad company, Salt is at the beginning of its slow but inevitable decline into extinction. Though its fate has been sealed, the citizens who call this place home maintain that it is one of the finest towns in the territory. The shops still carry supplies needed for daily survival. The saloon in the center of town is still considered a fine establishment, complete with seating, poker and roulette tables, beds, and washrooms. Most importantly, crime remains in check. While local law enforcement is not the most well-armed force, they keep a close eye on the town, making damn sure that nothing destroys what remains of their desert home.

Adventure Background

Two days ago, the Edmund's Gang knocked a Kirkland Bank coach over. After Clancy Edmund struck up a conversation with a bank employee, he managed to convince the man to give up the armored coach schedule in exchange for a piece of the profit. They scored \$3500 cash and left no one alive. After the job was pulled they sent Winston Stillwell, a lesser member of the gang, to tie up their loose end. Winston botched the job and the bank clerk escaped into the desert. Unbeknownst to Winston, the bank clerk, Ned Welsh, doubled back after a while and returned to town.

The Edmund's Gang now celebrates their spoils in the Salt Saloon, drinking and smoking their score away. As far as they're concerned, they've just guaranteed easy living for a few months and intend to enjoy themselves.

As the gang kicks back to relax, Sheriff Jebediah Moss gets his men together for his evening patrol. Little does he know the nightly routine is about to be shaken up by the confession of regretful Kirkland Bank employee. This evening, Salt teeters on the edge of a full blown Wild West shootout.

The Salt Saloon

The Salt Saloon is a two-story building near the center of town. It has a large wraparound porch that surrounds the main entrance. A soft glow of light leaks out from the first and second floor windows. An alley flanks the east side of the building, where a staircase leads to the second floor. The saloon is full of patrons (as is typical on most nights) and the noises of revelry spill out from the front entrance. A couple of people dwell on the front porch, smoking, drinking, and enjoying the night air. Horses wait idly, tied to the hitching posts. Inside, most of the tables are full, the bar is lined with drinkers, and people wander around while making small talk and laughing loudly.



Preparation

At the beginning of the session, you should first ask the players which side of the law they want to be on. For the sake of this playtest, you have been provided with 10 pre-generated characters, 5 with moderate **Fame** and 5 with moderate **Infamy**. These characters represent opposite sides of the law in this module. Once the players have chosen their side, you will proceed to the appropriate section based on their choice.

The Law

If the players have chosen to fight for the law of the town of Salt, hand out the Sheriff and Deputy character sheets. Each character is a member of the law enforcement of Salt. At this time, identify the player who has chosen **Sheriff Jebediah Moss**. Their job is to protect the townspeople and root out criminals. The deputies assist the Sheriff with various tasks and keep keen eyes on the comings and goings in town.

A Typical Evening

It is a typical summer evening in Salt. The sheriff and deputies sit in Jebediah's office on the main drag of town.

Though the sun has set, the hot daytime summer air hangs inside the sheriff's office, dry and stale. In these months, only a shared bottle of liquor can dull the day's hardships. You sit in a semicircle, telling stories to pass the time and taking pulls from the bottle. The jail cell in the office sits empty. It's just about time to take the evening patrol when a knocking sound comes from the front door.

On the other side of the door is **Ned Welsh**. Ned's clothes, once in fine shape, are now disheveled and dirty. Dirt, sweat, and cuts cover his face. A *standard success* on an *observation check* indicates these scrapes originated from some sort of struggle. A *hard success* also reveals that Ned seems to have spent considerable time in the desert heat recently. On an *extreme success*, the player can deduce that, based on his cuts and uncleanness, he was likely fleeing from some kind of struggle. Ned will ask permission to enter the office.

When Ned enters, he immediately asks for a drink. If appeased, he will take a long draw, savoring the calming effects of the booze before he recants his story. Otherwise he sits down reluctantly and begins speaking. He explains that he was robbed by the Edmund's Gang. (A *standard success* or better on a *Research Check* allows a player to recall them as being an up-and-coming gang of outlaws in the area.) Ned was on his way to town when he was beset from all sides by the gang and forced to give up his horse and possessions. He believes that the gang is currently holed up in the Salt Saloon.

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If the players press Ned for more information, his story will begin to fall apart. He has no answer to why they let him live. He knows they are at the saloon because he recognizes their horses tied up outside. A *hard* or *better success* on an *Intuition Check* reveals that Ned is lying. A *hard* or *better success* on a *Bullying* or *Persuasion Check* will cause Ned to become emotional and tell the truth.

"I work for the Kirkland Bank up in Rust Lake. One night I was drinking at the saloon and I struck up a conversation with this rough lookin' fellar. He seemed friendly enough and after a couple hours of talkin' and drinkin' I may have let slip what it is I do fer a livin'. Well this fellar revealed himself to be none other than Clancy Edmund. Now I'm a reputable man, but I've heard of the Edmund's Gang, ya know?"

My first instinct was to turn tail and get up on out of there. I don't know if it were one too many drinks, or maybe I just had the devil in me that night, or maybe it was just nice to talk to someone new, but the conversation turned to shipments.

I saw that boy's eyes light up and he made me a proposition, see? He said it would be simple. No one needed to get hurt on account of the fact that I know the ins and outs of the money runs. He said if I "sold" him the schedule for the next month's armored carriage runs, he would send me a correspondence to meet up and give me a cut of the take.

True to his word, a few weeks later I heard that one of them Kirkland armored coaches was knocked over. A few days later I received a letter instructing me to meet Clancy in a spot just outside of Salt so I could pick up my portion of the score.

I went out there to that meeting place, but I was greeted by some other man. When I asked him for my fair share he drew his gun on me and said something about tying up loose ends. He told me he'd give me to the count of ten just to be fair. I tell ya boy I high tailed it like the wind. I could hear those bullets whizzing by my head. I never looked back once, and I ran until my legs gave out. God must have spared me, ya know?"

I made my way back into town and saw Clancy's horse saddled up alongside the horse of the man that tried to kill me. I thought it must a' been a sign from God above tellin' me to march down here and make this right."

- Ned

Any success on an *Intuition Check* tells the players that Ned is telling the truth. After recounting the tale, Ned grows quiet.

Roleplaying Ned

Ned is a Kirkland Bank employee who never seems to earn enough to pay for his love of drinking. He is a contemporary man for the time and remains quite mannerly but will initially lie to the players about his involvement in the robbery out of fear of the repercussions. Ned narrowly escaped certain death in the desert. His attempt to extort his share of the profit from the Edmund's Gang robbery almost cost him his life. Ned is now uneasy and shaken. His guilt has led him here, and it only takes a small amount of pressure to get him to crack.

The Action in The Salt Saloon

The **Edmund's Gang** is currently scattered around the saloon. **Temperance Westwood** and **Austin Williams** sit at the bar, **Winslow Hiccum** and **Elroy Baker** sit at a table in the back, **Donnie Lenhof** is upstairs getting rest in a rented room, **Winston Derry** is drunk in the back alley taking a leak, and **Clancy Edmund** is playing roulette in the back VIP room.

An *Observation Check* upon entering reveals a few things. On a *standard success*, players recognize a number of new faces in the saloon. At the bar sits a man and a woman they have never seen before. On a *hard success*, they also notice two new faces sitting at a table far in the corner. On an *extreme success*, they will also notice that Winslow Hiccum is staring straight at them.

If given a chance, one of the men in the back corner will stand up quietly and attempt to warn Clancy of the group's arrival. If Clancy is tipped off, he will attempt to sneak out the back door and make a break for their secret stash of money. The rest of the gang will also attempt to leave secretly, but if they are stopped or questioned, they won't hesitate to shoot their way out.

If any of the gang (including Clancy) is subdued without the other members' knowledge, a *hard success* on a *Bullying Check* will pressure them into revealing the locations of the other gang members. An *extreme success* will cause them to reveal that the rest of the money is stashed in the dentist's office nearby. If there are no other living gang members, they will reveal all the information on a *standard success*.

If a fight does break out, the bar will immediately erupt into chaos. All innocent patrons will attempt to flee the bar. It takes two full rounds for them to escape. Any missed shots will have to roll an additional die. A roll of 15 or above will strike a random person.

Apprehending the Criminals

The gang will fight to the death. Clancy, however, will attempt to make a run for the money if he loses more than half of his gang. The rest will stay and attempt to slow the deputies down.

If Donnie Lenhof is not found, he will reveal himself on the upstairs balcony and flank any players downstairs. If he becomes wounded, he will then take desperate action by throwing two sticks of dynamite on the players below. If the balcony supports are caught in the blast radius, the balcony will collapse.

If Clancy exits the saloon, he will immediately run to the dentist's office. If he is caught with the money or inside the building, he will challenge the sheriff or anyone who catches him to a duel (*see Dueling*). If the duel is declined, Clancy will immediately open fire and fight to the death.

Once the gang has been subdued or captured, the players are free to do what they wish. They can assure the town that everything is safe now, jail the remaining gang members, or bury any dead companions.

Roleplaying Clancy Edmund

Clancy is a typical gang leader: greedy, manipulative, and charismatic. His power lies in his effect on other people, convincing them to follow and fight for him. He is an accomplished fighter after three years in the Union army. If the players converse with Clancy, he remains calm and collected, attempting to talk his way out of any interaction with the law. He will subtly suggest things could get ugly and violent if he is arrested and will try to appeal the law's need to minimize collateral damage. If negotiations start to go south, Clancy will draw and shoot first. He will never go quietly.

Rewards

For their defense of the town and for the capture or killing of the Edmund's Gang, each player gains 10 Fame points and a \$25 reward for their bounty dead. Each gang member left alive is worth an additional fame point and \$5 more per living member.

If the sheriff and deputies manage to take one or more of the Edmund's Gang alive, they can be kept in the jail cell inside the sheriff's office. A quick correspondence out to the city will bring federal marshals in to pick up the gang members in a few days.



The Outlaws

If the players have chosen the outlaws, hand out the Edmund's Gang character sheets. At this time identify the player who has chosen **Clancy Edmund**. He has coerced, deceived, and murdered his way into power. Each of the gang members respect and fear Clancy, with the exception of Winslow Hiccum. Winslow is here purely because he has an unending thirst for blood and is always looking for a good fight.

Ale and Revelry

A fine blanket of tobacco smoke diffuses the light in the saloon, giving the entire place a soft, warm glow. This comforting feeling is welcome after what you have been through. The stagecoach robbery went off without a hitch, but bullets did fly, and a couple of guards were killed. Not unusual, but still, better you than them! Taking care of that bank employee who sold you the information about the job was easy enough. The man was a fool to meet Winston in the desert outside of town. He should be feeding the buzzards by now. That idiot really thought he was going to get a cut of your profit. Stashing the money at the dentist's office was easy enough, a quick lie to the old man about a hundred dollar reward was simple, and taking care of him when we retrieve the money will be even simpler. Now it's time for a couple drinks, some roulette, and a well-deserved rest.

The players find themselves in the town of Salt after taking care of the final loose end of the Kirkland job. Now it is time to drink and celebrate, and what better place to do so than the Salt Saloon, a fine establishment on the main drag of Salt.

Once the players enter the bar, Winston Derry, an NPC member of the gang, immediately heads for the bar and begins drinking heavily. The bushy, mustachioed saloon owner, Jimmy, happily indulges him. The bar is fully stocked and a kitchen in the back means getting a hot, quality meal is easy. A private room in the back contains a couple of poker and roulette tables with people gambling and cheering. Baths are available for a dollar.

Anyone near the bar can make an *Intuition Check* on Winston. A *standard* or *better success* tells you that he is drinking with a purpose, as if something is bothering him. If no one notices Winston's unease, he will eventually decide to go out for a smoke. He'll ask one of the players to accompany him.

After Winston exits the bar and takes a few drags from his cigarette, he confesses that although he told them he had killed the banker, he had tried to have a bit of fun instead. Winston had told Ned to run, giving him a head start instead of shooting him immediately as he was instructed. Ned was faster than he had expected and he couldn't manage to hit him as he fled. After he ran out of ammo, he deemed Winston a lucky bastard and walked away, leaving the desert to do the job he was unable to do. Winston pleads with the player, asking them to not tell Clancy.

The Ticking Clock

At this point, set an actual running timer in secret for 15 minutes. As Winston tells his story, Ned Welsh walks into the sheriff's office and begins to tell his side of the story to Sheriff Jebediah Moss. The player, armed with this new information, has only *15 minutes* to do whatever they deem appropriate. At the end of that time, Sheriff Moss and his four deputies will leave the sheriff's office, head to the saloon, and attempt to arrest the entire gang.

10 minutes

Any players outside after the *10 minute* mark can see the posse heading towards the saloon with a *standard* or *better success* on an *Observation Check*.

15 minutes

At the *15 minute mark*, the sheriff and the deputies will arrive at the Salt Saloon. **Jebediah Moss**, along with **Alvin Sharpp** and **Calvin Dunn**, enter the front door and attempt to locate the gang based on Ned's information. **Catori Stonehawk** and **Grant Simmon** will attempt to flank on either side of the building, Catori takes the back stairs to the second floor and Grant heads towards Winston, who is outside the saloon in the alley drunkenly fretting his decision.

After the law arrives, they will attempt to apprehend the outlaws peacefully, or at least non-lethally, if possible. In the event that a shootout starts, the deputies and sheriff will fight to the death even if they are outgunned and outmanned. If the players manage to subdue any of the deputies or Sheriff Moss, a *hard success* on a *Bullying Check* will reveal that they have Ned in the jail cell in the sheriff's office. If the sheriff and deputies are subdued, the gang will not meet any more opposition in the town that evening. It won't be long before more of the law hears of the events, however.

Roleplaying Sheriff Moss

Sheriff Jebediah Moss is a physically-imposing man and a good person at heart. He served in the Civil War fighting for the Union army. After, Jebediah came out west to make a difference. Shortly after he arrived in Salt, he ran for sheriff and won handily. Since then he has conducted himself honorably and has done his best to make the town safe. Jebediah believes in redemption and is willing to offer criminals who show genuine guilt for what they have done leniency. Those who show no repentance are spared no mercy. He is a fierce fighter and an expert marksman. Though he prefers a peaceful approach to situations, he will not hesitate when it comes to drawing down on those who deserve it. Jebediah will attempt to reason with whichever outlaw player he encounters first. He will appeal to their better judgement, offering them a chance to give themselves up instead of opting for a fight. Jebediah's deputies will do the same if they encounter a player, but they are more easily intimidated. The sheriff and his posse will defend themselves if attacked and will pursue any fleeing outlaws.

Rewards

Their illegal actions give each living member of the gang **+15 Infamy** points and increases their bounty from \$25 to \$75. If they leave the sheriff or any of his deputies alive, they subtract 1 Infamy and \$1 for every member left alive.