

Mission Creek

Introduction

This game is played in real time. It is also based on real events.

It's 10pm, Saturday the 1st of September, 1894. Your character is a person of some importance in the small town of Mission Creek, Minnesota. It has been a long and hot summer, one of the driest on record. Over the last few days several small fires have broken out in the dark forest of tall white pine trees that surrounds the town. This is worrying, but nothing unusual.

Then, a few minutes ago, a rider came into town. He told stories of hellfire and damnation, of terror and chaos. The woods to the south are ablaze in a terrible inferno and it's spreading rapidly. There is no time to waste. Within two hours, the firestorm will reach here and everything will be destroyed.

But you have a plan. You and the other important people in the town have gathered together in the backroom of the local saloon to figure out the details. Collectively, the town has two horses and four two-man fishing boats. The people you put on the horses can go with the rider and head east. As long as they leave within the hour, they should be able to outrun the fire and make it to the safety of the Rocky Hills. The people you put on the boats will be able to push out into the river and avoid the fire altogether - as long as they do it in the next two hours. Then, at midnight, the fire will sweep through the town and destroy everything in its path.

The people you choose to leave behind will burn to death.

Characters

Each player chooses one of the characters below. They are the most respected or feared people in the town and the ones the community will look up to for leadership in this difficult time. If you have less than five players, any characters left over are assumed to have already left town for some reason and will play no further part in this scenario.

Each character description includes: some suggestions on how to roleplay the character, an example catchphrase to use when you are trying to Assert Your Authority during a conflict, and a special rule that can turn a tied conflict into a victory..

Finally, each character is assumed to have a firearm of some kind. This will become important later on.

The Doc

Roleplay the doc with the following traits in mind: curious, defiant, logical, sympathetic.

Assert Authority: *"It's for the greater good"*.

Special Rule: Win ties on all checks where you are on the majority.

The Mayor

Roleplay the mayor with the following traits in mind: fawning, greedy, sarcastic, venal.

Assert Authority: *"I'm in charge here. This is my town"*.

Special Rule: Win ties on all Persuasion checks where you are trying to appeal to people's own self interest.

The Minister

Roleplay the minister with the following traits in mind: bombastic, determined, hate the guilty, pity the weak.

Assert Authority: *"It is God's will"*.

Special Rule: Win ties on all Persuasion checks where you are trying to appeal to people's better natures.

The Saloon Owner

Roleplay the saloon owner with the following traits in mind: calculating, confrontational, ruthless, swears profusely.

Assert Authority: *"This is my goddam saloon and I make the goddam rules"*.

Special Rule: Win ties on all Violence & Intimidation and Murder checks that you initiate.

The Sheriff

Roleplay the sheriff with the following traits in mind: bad tempered, proud, reserved, wants to be a hero.

Assert Authority: *"I am the law"*.

Special Rule: Win ties on all Violence & Intimidation and Murder checks that you do not initiate.

Resolution

The mechanics of this game are concerned with winning arguments and getting your way.

Negotiation

Each potential conflict begins as a negotiation. The players talk to each other in character and either come to an agreement or thrash out some kind of mutually beneficial compromise. Most of the game will consist of this kind of interaction.

Sometimes, however, you just cannot agree. The discussion starts to go round in circles and negotiations become deadlocked. In those situations the two sides must try to win each other over directly by winning an opposed **Persuasion** check, as described below.

Persuasion

Form the characters up into two sides. Each side should re-iterate the main thrust of their argument with a brief snatch of in-character dialogue and then roll 2d6.

The side that gets the highest score wins the argument and gets their way. They may not necessarily have convinced the other side that they are right, per se, but they have certainly made it impossible for them to argue back. The losing side must either **concede the point** or **escalate the conflict** by resorting to a **Violence & Intimidation** check, as described below.

Violence & Intimidation

The escalating side describes the threats and acts of violence their characters are performing and rolls 2d6. The other side should describe their own response, whether they are responding in kind or trying to defuse the situation peacefully, and also roll 2d6.

The side that gets the highest score faces down or beats up the other side and gets their way. The losing side is angry and scared but not seriously injured. They may either **concede the point** by backing down or **escalate the conflict** even further by attempting to **Murder** the other side, as described below.

If the conflict is not escalated further, every character on the winning side gains a new special rule: 'You lose all ties on Persuasion checks until you initiate one yourself and win'. Every character on the losing side gains: 'You lose all ties on Violence & Intimidation checks until you initiate one yourself and win'.

Murder

The escalating side describes their attempt to murder the characters on the other side and rolls 2d6. The other side describes their own efforts at retaliation or self-defence and also rolls 2d6.

If the escalating side gets the highest score, every character on the losing side is murdered and plays no further part in the game. The characters on the winning side gain the following special rule: 'You only roll 1d6 during Persuasion checks from now on'.

If the defending side gets the highest score, they may either murder their aggressors as described above or disarm them. Disarmed characters gain the following special rule: 'You only roll 1d6 during Violence & Intimidation and Murder checks from now on'.

Other Conflict Notes

- You can drop out of a conflict at any point before rolling.
- If one side outnumbers the other, they may roll an extra d6 per additional character and pick the highest two results.
- Multiple tie-breakers cancel each other out.
- On an unbroken tie, the result is a stalemate. Neither side gets what they want and the characters must either come to a compromise or roll again later.
- Characters can do anything they want as long as the GM agrees it is reasonable. If another player wants to try and stop them, they must initiate a conflict in the normal way.

Asserting Your Authority

Each character also has the option of asserting their authority at any point in a conflict. Describe how the character tries to use his position of importance to gain extra leverage in the current conflict and reroll your dice. If you win this reroll, you have spent your political capital and may not Assert Your Authority again for the rest of the game.

The Town

Mission Creek consists of a dozen or so wooden houses on the banks of the Snake River. There are six families of people to consider today: the Morgensterns, the Elswits, Mr and Mrs Bandy, the Coopers, the Stocktons, and Old Man Tilford. In total this adds up to 14 people in addition to the player-characters themselves.

All adult NPCs are considered to be armed.

1 The Morgensterns

Bernard Morgenstern is a quiet and reclusive widower in his mid-forties. He has two children to look after, Jake (aged 5) and little Sarah (aged 3). The two children count as one adult for purposes of fitting on a horse or a boat. However, Mr Morgenstern himself is a big fat bear of a man and counts as two adults for these purposes. He will automatically **panic** if he is separated from his children.

2 The Elswits

Joe Elswit lives with his two adult sons Bob and Dan. They are a proud and close-knit family known for their reckless and selfish behaviour. If the Elswits panic, they win all ties on both Violence & Intimidation and Murder checks.

3 Mr and Mrs Bandy

Tom and Elizabeth Bandy are a young family from out West. Mrs Bandy is very heavily pregnant and will not be able to take part in the action if her husband panics.

4 The Coopers

Marvin Cooper was a local thug and small time crook who has seen the error of his ways and now spends his time doing unpaid work for the inhabitants of the township. His mother Jane, however, is very proud of him and will stick up for him at every opportunity.

5 The Stocktons

Burt and Eileen Stockton are devout Christians with a precocious teenage daughter called Mary-Sue.

6 Old Man Tilford

Old man Tilford was a hero in the civil war and practically built this town in the old days. He is very sick. If he panics and the conflict escalates, roll a d6. On a 5 or 6 he has a heart attack and dies.

Secret Agendas

Write the following secret agendas out onto scraps of paper and give one to each player at random.

- You have blackmail leverage over the character to your left. You win all ties on Persuasion checks against him.
- You know the weakness of the character to your left. You win all ties on Violence & Intimidation checks against him.
- You have a fierce hatred for the character to your left. You win all ties on Murder checks against him.
- The Bandys have been good to you. They took you in when times were hard and now you feel like you owe them. Win all ties on checks to get them onboard a horse or boat.
- The deceased Mrs Morgenstern was a cousin of yours. You promised her you'd see to her kids if anything happened to her. Win all ties on checks to get them onboard a horse or boat.
- The Elswits don't scare you. Win all ties against them on Violence & Intimidation or Murder checks.
- Marvin Cooper has been a big help to you. It's only Christian to forgive a man his past mistakes. Win all ties on rolls to get him onboard a horse or boat.
- Marvin Cooper owes you big time. The rest of the town might be prepared to forgive and forget but you never can. Win all ties on rolls to keep him off a horse or boat.
- Old Man Tilford deserves this town's gratitude and respect. Win all ties on rolls to get him onboard a horse or boat.
- Mary-Sue Stockton is pregnant with your child. Win all ties on rolls to get her onboard a horse or boat.
- You are having a torrid affair with Eileen Stockton. Win all ties on rolls to keep Burt Stockton off a horse or boat.
- Tom Bandy is a scumbag who beats his wife. Win all ties on rolls to keep him off a horse or boat.

Playing The Game

The characters must decide first which characters get a horse and secondly which characters get a space on a boat. The best way to do this is to actually write up a list of spaces and characters on a piece of paper or blackboard and work through them one by one. If you have time, draw up a provisional shortlist and narrow it down afterwards.

When NPCs Panic

When an NPC panics, roll 1d6 to determine what they do. Add +2 if it is now Five To Midnight or if they have panicked before.

- 1-3 Initiate a Persuasion check vs. the PCs to change their mind.
- 4-5 Initiate a Persuasion check vs. a random NPC to try and take their place or convince them to bow out.
- 6-8 Attempt to take one of the boats/horses for themselves

The GM determines the specifics of what happens and how far the NPCs are prepared to escalate. If the players want to try and stop them, they must initiate a Persuasion check of their own, escalating to Violence & Intimidation or even Murder if necessary.

Scheduling

This game is played in real time, so you should set an alarm clock to go off in two hours' time and put it somewhere everyone can see.

The below timetable is a suggestion only. The GM is well within his rights to call for additional Panic checks if the game slows down, or to skip over one if things are already too hectic.

10pm

This is the time the game starts.

10:30

The inhabitants of the town begin to assemble outside the saloon. Everyone is very concerned and the crowd starts to get restless. Roll d6: that family **Panics** as described above.

11pm

The horses must leave now if they are to try and outrun the firestorm and make it to safety. Remember there are two spare horses to fill. You can try to fit more than one person on a horse but it will make the whole expedition much less likely to succeed.

11:30

Thick clouds of black smoke are now billowing into the town. The very air itself is now oppressively hot. Roll d6: that family **panics**.

Five To Midnight

At five to midnight the characters must sell the list they have decided on to the rest of the community. They do this by initiating a Persuasion check against the crowd as a whole. If they succeed, roll a d6 for everyone that will be left behind - on a 6, they **panic**. If they fail, everyone that will be left behind automatically **panics**.

Midnight

When the alarm clock goes off you may finish any conflicts you have initiated. Every boat that has been finalised can set off safely. You may try and fit 3 people onto a boat but it is dangerous and the chances are that it will just sink. Anyone left over is stuck in town for good.

Aftermath

Every character on a two-man boat survives. If a boat has 3 people on it, roll 1d6. On a 1-3 it stays afloat and the characters survive. On a 4-6 it sinks under the excess weight and everyone onboard drowns.

Roll 1d6 for the group of characters who headed east on horseback. Add +2 to the roll if they left after 11pm and a further +1 for every horse that had more than one person on it. On a 1-4 the group reached the hills safely and survived. On a 5-6 they failed to outrun the firestorm and were killed.

Every character still left in town dies. Some bright spark might have the idea of trying to shelter from the fire inside a well or a swamp or something. NPCs in this position will automatically die, but player-characters left behind in this fashion may roll a d6: on a 6, their cunning plan works and they emerge from the carnage unscathed. On any other result they die a slow and grisly death.