



Catch a Falling Star

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"The final frontier" produces an awful lot of trash. Some of that trash falls to earth and causes all kinds of Hell.

The Story So Far

A few months back, a meteor fell to earth at the foot of the Peacemaker Mountains. A freelance mercenary named Tin Lee was hired to drive out to the coordinates and see if there was anything there. Sometimes satellites and other technological goodies fall from the heavens, so the resource-poor Rangers scavenge anything and everything they can get their hands on.

Tin was paid \$100 to check out the fall—\$50 up front and \$50 when he returned. He never came back, and Ranger Ross and Dallas just assumed he skipped town with the money or met an untimely end at the fangs of some savage Banshee-beast. Either way, more pressing business diverted their attention, and the matter was forgotten.

The Screaming Begins

Ten days ago, prospectors in the Peacemakers began to turn up dead. They had been ripped to

pieces, as if by a T-Rex or some other large predator.

The local law from the nearest town, Damon's Delight, radioed in and claimed they couldn't find whatever was doing the killing, but that several well-protected farms had been wiped out too. This was a job for the Rangers.

The Setup

You can guess where this leads. The Rangers hire your posse to go out and find the predator. If your group contains a Ranger, she's detailed to the task and authorized to bring along her companions. The bounty on the "creature's"

head is \$500.

No equipment is provided, but the Rangers can drop the heroes off at Damon's Delight via helicopter if they don't have vehicles of their own.

Now comes that part in the adventure where we tell you to change the details if needed to get the group to go on the hunt. Figure out what it'll take your posse to strap on their big guns and get ready to start this tale smack in the bustling shanty town of Damon's Delight.

Chapter One: Damon's Delight

Damon's Delight
Fear Level 2

This small town, located at the edge of the Peacemaker Mountains, is a sparsely populated place during the week. During the weekends, however, its population swells with miners and other folks from the hills looking for a good time. The town was established only a few years ago when a very successful ghost rock miner named Damon Martin decided to retire and live off his wealth and the continued wealth of other ghost rock miners.

The primary purpose of Damon's Delight is entertainment and resupply for the miners. The second, and more important purpose, of course, is to separate the miners from their money.

There's one important clue the party should stumble across here, though at first it won't seem to have any bearing on their particular assignment. The clue is simply that a merc working for the Rangers came through here two months ago and then headed into the Peacemakers to look for an asteroid.

The posse doesn't likely have a radio that reaches all the way back to Temptation, but Mayor Martin has a powerful relay transmitter at his command bunker. If the group contacts the Rangers about Tin Lee or his mission, they recall only that yes, he was hired to check out a meteor strike near here but never returned.

A Place To Hang Your Stetson

Damon's Delight serves as a forward base of operations for this adventure, so you need to know a little about what's in the town and its major players.

On a weekday, the town is a quiet place. Visitors see people wandering the shanties but beyond that, the streets of the town are usually empty. If they mosey in on a weekend, then they are sure to see the several hundred miners who rely on their weekend visits to shrug off the tedium of ghost rock mining. Either way, the heroes need information.

Martin's Bunker

The self-appointed leader of the town is Mayor Damon Martin. He lives in the center of town in a pre-fabricated mobile command bunker (not so mobile anymore) he found in some forgotten military cache.

Damon keeps three armed guards around his place in case of real trouble.

Mayor Martin hired a "sheriff" to keep trouble to a minimum. His choice was a veteran fighter by the name of Dean Bortnick (see above). Although Mayor Martin owns the town and is the boss, he's learned that crossing Bortnick is more trouble than it's worth—the man is an ex-marine and has too many friends around Banshee. Martin and Bortnick mostly ignore each other most of the time.

Damon's Casino and Lounge

Ambitiously named by Damon himself, this large building is the only three-storied building in town. It hosts games of chance on the first floor, an extensive bar up the second, and rooms for rent (specializing in "hourly rates") and offices on the third floor. On the top of the building sits the town's only radio tower, with obvious signs of damage. (*See below for details.*)

A "dancing" girl named Sally Strang is one of the half-dozen or so gals who work here. She did the horizontal tango with Tin Lee before he set off into the mountains. Sheriff Bortnick might mention this (see below), or the group might ask about him at some point while visiting the casino. If so, Sally says that Tin was a bit rough, but not unusually so. He said he was heading into the mountains east of here to look for a meteor. He knew the mountains were full of angry anouks, and wanted one last dance in case something happened to him.

The only dedicated lawman in the area, Sheriff Dean Bortnick, operates out of his offices here. Most times he just sits around the office, reading news bits or watching over the occasional prisoner in the second-floor cells.

Sheriff Bortnick doesn't like Rangers—he fought them on several occasions when their interests and the UN's crossed paths. He was discharged for striking his superior officer and left dirtside for his troubles. That hasn't made Sheriff Bortnick a very happy man.

Fortunately for you, Marshal, this makes him a great red herring as well. An anti-Ranger sheriff might seem very suspicious given what the posse learns in Chapter Two.

Bortnick says the predator is probably just a band of good-for-nothing savages (anouks). There have been several reports of hunting parties in the local hills lately, and the excessive damage the victims suffered could easily be chalked up to the bite of their massive chanouks.

Bortnick is really unhappy with insinuations that he can't handle the "predator." That's outside of his jurisdiction. Mayor Martin pays him to protect the town, and that's just what he's done. "I'll give a damn about the squatters and bean-busters when someone pays me too."

If he's asked about Tin Lee and hasn't been antagonized too greatly, Bortnick says that yes, he saw the man come into town. He bought some stuff from Gerhard, shacked up at the casino for an hour with a local girl named Sally Strang, then headed off into the hills to the east.

Doctor Strang

Doctor Strang is a young man with a dark past. Both he and his sister Sally were Reapers for a long time. They both truly believed in the cause, and only fled when the recent trouble with Nicolai proved the Reapers were murdering bastards rather than eco-terrorists.

His real name is Doctor Harvey Mills, but he and his sister now live under the name Strang. They admit to being brother and sister is asked—the resemblance is uncanny—but say only that they "traveled a lot" before the World Storm and their arrival here.

Doctor Mills looked over the few victims that were brought in. Most were too grotesque or dismembered for those who found them to transport and so were left where they lay. He also traveled out to one of the farms to see

the damage for himself, but Mayor Martin secretly threatened to shoot him if he risked himself like that again (the Mayor needs a doctor in his town).

Strang buried the bodies, but can show the posse pictures on his palmcorder if they'd like. He says the victims were horribly mangled, and suffered both from tight constriction, rending claws, and tissue dissension. That last part he says with a stutter. What he really means is that folks were literally pulled apart.

Strang is very nervous around Rangers for obvious reasons, but forgets himself a bit when discussing the details of the case. His nervousness might lead the group to believe that he's in on something. The fact that he has a sister in town who just happened to sleep with Tin Lee is also suspicious to veteran roleplayers who aren't used to such connections, but is actually just a coincidence.

Gerhard's Store

A one-story store selling a wide array of mining supplies at high prices, as well as a good assortment of foodstuffs. It's owned and operated by Gerhard Martin.

Gerhard is several years younger than his older brother, Damon, but the two bear a striking resemblance. Within moments of speaking with Gerhard, however, it's obvious who got the brains in the family. Gerhard speaks slowly and thinks for a moment before he answers questions. Investigators might think he's trying to hide something, but Gerhard just operates slower than most folks.

He has an uncanny memory, and drops one tiny clue that might be important to the group later on. When the opportunity presents itself (whenever he hears the word "Ranger" or sees one), he mentions that another man working for the Rangers was here a few months back. Read the following when this happens—very slowly in your best Forrest Gump voice.

I like the Rangers. They're good to people. That man two months ago wasn't a Ranger, but he said he was. I think he just wanted me to give him a discount, but I told him I couldn't on accounta my brother don't like that.

His name was Tin. He bought a six-pack of Bubbly Fizz Cola, four RoadToad brand travel dinners (one with fish and two with fried hot moss), and one bag

of LaCroix's Spicy Cajun trout-flavored potato chips. His total was \$28.37, and he paid with a \$50.

Red's Beds

Red's Beds is a flophouse, renting cheap and tiny rooms to visiting miners and their rented companions. The owner is a 42-year old red-haired Irishman from Earth. Everyone just calls him Red, and though he drinks and bitches constantly, he's quite happy providing decent places to sleep for "his people."

Shanties

The rest of the buildings in and around town cannot really be described as permanent. There are currently about fifty crudely constructed shanty-homes around the city. The people living there range from "retired" miners to desperate families and shady operators, with everything in between. The only commonality between them is their extreme poverty and desperation.

There are about half again as many shanties as there were a month ago before the killings began. The people are in worse shape than ever because they can't go into the hills to work for fear.

Should the people find out why the heroes are in town, they'll mob them—begging them to put an end to the creature (whatever it is) so that they can get back to work.

Nothing to See Here, Move Along

That's really all there is do and learn in Damon's Delight. Now it's time to head into the country and eat a lot of peaches.

Bounty

Discovering the story of Tin Lee: 1 white chip for everyone

Somehow discovering the true identity of Harvey or Sally Strang: 1 blue chip for those involved in the discovery.

Chapter Two: Harvest of Blood!

Sure that's a melodramatic title, but it just fits so well.

Mayor Martin, Sheriff Bortnick, or even Doc Strang can all point out the GPS coordinates of the murder sites. There are two types of sites, the prospecting camps and the farms.

There are a few clues in common at all the sites.

First, the creature doesn't seem to leave footprints, though close observation can detect drag marks and occasional bits of black goo on rocks or other obstacles in its path. The tracks can't be easily followed because of recent rain and Banshee's high winds.

Second, the creature doesn't seem to eat its victims. It certainly takes big chunks out of its prey, though whether by tooth or by claw is difficult to discern. If it does eat the missing flesh, it certainly doesn't consume an amount proportionate to its size. In truth, the creature simply feeds off the fear, violence, and destruction it causes.

Prospecting Camps

The prospector camps are uniformly the same: a jumble of equipment, torn tents smeared in blood, tools, and the signs of many animals (who fed on the corpses before the bodies were found). A skeleton can be found at one of the sites as well. Half of it lies on one side of the camp, the rest lies scattered a few dozen yards distant. A casual observer might believe animals fighting over the carcass dragged it to this position. A Hard (9) *medicine* roll tells a different tale. The bones have been gnawed on, but started relatively intact from their current positions. That implies that the body was pulled apart and the two halves flung to their current position.

Hoover: The heroes also run across a few living miners still lurking in the hills. They claim a party of anouks is responsible for the massacres. One of the miners, a fellow named Hoover, claims he saw the anouks kill his friends with his own eyes. He was doing his business higher up the hill when the anouks attacked. They killed everyone, then used their big beasts to rip the bodies apart—some sort of bizarre, alien ritual, Hoover claims.

In truth, Hoover came back from his "business" in time to see the anouk hunting

party looking at the remains of the massacre. Hoover hates anouks though, and honestly believes they were responsible. He believes a little embellishment will do some good here if it clears the anouks out of the hills.

Farms

The McGruder Farm: Two farms have also been hit. The first is the McGruder farm. There's a single house here and a barn with two dead horses. The horses have suffered the same wounds as Doc Strang described on the people. Fortunately, the family was away when the thing attacked. The father, Daniel McGruder, is currently hunting in the area looking for the thing while his family waits at a friend's "house" back in Damon's Delight.

This is the farm Doctor Strang visited.

One important clue can be found here. The McGruders have an electrical fence around their property to keep out the local beasts and hostile anouks. Whatever attacked somehow circumvented the barrier without injury.

Daniel McGruder turned off the fence so that Doc Strang could investigate, and it remains off at this time, allowing the heroes to enter the half-acre square ranch if they choose.

An hour or so worth of following the fenceline and a Fair (5) *search* roll reveals another clue as well. A dark, goopy substance covers a section of wire near the back—closest to the mountains. This is some of the creature's blob-like flesh, torn loose as it "oozed" through the electrified fencing.

The Hopkin's Place: The second farm family wasn't so lucky. The Hopkin's fence is the same as the McGruders (and was breached as described above), but the creature's flapping tentacles actually knocked out a transformer and caused live wires to writhe like electric eels. Locals reported the family demised three days prior, but no one has seen fit to enter yet. That makes entry a bit of a challenge for the heroes.

Leaping through the torn section of fence is certainly possible, but risky. It only requires an Onerous (7) *Nimbleness* roll (Dexterity DC 15), but failure results in a deadly shock of 4d6 massive damage. More clever methods—flight, shorting out the system, etc—are much safer. You'll have to handle these situations as they arise, Marshal.

Curiously, the fence is covered with crispy critters—small predators and scavengers who smelled the fresh meat inside and got fried on the fence. You can use this to creep the

party out, but the varmints really just wanted an easy meal.

Inside the fence's perimeter is quite a mess. The Hopkins were in their mid-fifties with no kids, thank God, but they had a half-dozen honest-to-goodness milk cows. These now lie sprawled about the farm in a disgusting mess, covered with insects, birds, and other small vermin that could pass through the fence without getting electrocuted.

The small, three-room farm house is wrecked as well. The Hopkins seemed to have barricaded themselves in a back bedroom, but something obviously broke through the stucco wall and dragged them out into the yard. Their corpses have mostly been consumed. A Hard (9) *medicine* roll (DC 20) can tell that the bite marks were made by small predators, probably not the beast the group is looking for.

Where Now?

Once the group has visited some of the scenes above, they'll have to figure out what to do next. The best way of finding the creature is to put together the story about Tin Lee and the meteor. They can then radio back to Temptation, get the coordinates for the sight, and go directly to Scene Three.

The second way to find the creature is to be a real pain in the tuckas about following the tracks. In general, Banshee's harsh environment has wiped out the horror's trail, but a persistent character could crawl along on his hands and knees looking for droplets of viscous goo on the obstacles in its path. This sets a crawling pace—about 2 miles per hour with a successful Fair (5) *trackin'* roll (DC 10) every hour, but does get them there to the big finale.

Finally, the heroes can do the whole triangulation bit. That narrows the search to about a 10 mile square area. A little footwork, aerial spotting, or circular patterning can then lead them straight to the end of this twisted little tale.

When one of the above happens, move on to Chapter Three.

Bounty

Each clue found: one white chip to the investigator.

Getting the truth out of Hoover: one red chip to whoever forces the truth out.

Chapter Three: The Hunt

The beast has slain both humans and anouks alike, but the takalas aren't ones to sit and wait for someone else to solve their problems. They've assembled a hunting party of six warriors and a shaman to find the creature and put it down.

When the party heads into the hills to find the thing's lair, they first run across these veteran hunters.

What happens next depends on how trigger-happy your group is. The anouks aren't particularly friendly toward humans, and only one of them speaks any English at all, so the odds are pretty good that tempers will flare and Banshee will get another healthy watering of blood.

If cooler heads prevail, however, the anouks can share some very interesting information with the posse. First, they know the creature is not of Banshee. The creature was born of a black rock from space that is neither tannis nor ghost rock. The planet thinks of the thing as a kind of parasite, and wants it dead.

Second, the creature cannot be killed by normal weapons. The anouks fought it once already when it rampaged through their village. Unlike the "stupid" humans, anouks know to run when they cannot win, and managed an escape. But neither the strongest warrior nor the most skilled shaman could make a dent in the thing. If the anouks are handled properly, they may share their assumption that destroying the rock will destroy the creature—or at least make it mortal.

The anouks don't know where the rock is yet, but they claim Banshee has led them to the mountains. The closer they get to the rock, however, the less contact they seem to have with the planet.

Assuming some parleying goes down, a really cool character might be able to talk the anouks into a temporary alliance. This requires at least a raise on a *persuasion* roll (opposed Diplomacy rolls, anouks have a +4 circumstance bonus to the roll due to their hatred of humans in the Peacemakers).

Deadlands Profile: Anouk Warrior

Climbin' 4d8, dodge 4d8, fightin': brawlin',

6

Falling Star

chakatl 5d8, ridin': chanouk 5d8, shootin': rifle 3d6, sneak 5d8, throwin': balanced 4d8
Mental: C:2d8, K:3d6, M:2d8, Sm:3d6, Sp:3d8
Bluff 2d8, guts 3d8, language: Anouk 2d6, leadership 3d8, overawe 4d8, ridicule 3d6, scrutinize 2d8, search 4d8, trackin' 4d8, survival: (native area) 4d8

Edges: Tannis sense 1, race: anouk

Hindrances: None

Wind: 16

Pace: 8

Size: 8

Special Abilities:

Strain: 8

Weapon charging: The anouk warrior can charge his weapons and armor as described in Chapter 3.

Gear: Anouk (AV2), chakatl, 3 ataxes, chanouk with chaknik.

Description: Anouk warriors are members of a proud warrior culture.

D20 Profile: Anouk Warrior

Anouk Warrior: CR2, Medium-size Anouk, Class: Awr 2, hp 18, Init +1, Spd 30 ft., AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 Armor), Atk Chakatl +5, atax +3, AL CN, SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0, Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +4, Search +3, Spot +3, Survival +3; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (atax), Martial Weapon Proficiency (chakatl), Power Attack, Tannis Sense, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Weapon Focus (chakatl)

Special Qualities: Energy weapon, Strain: 8
Possessions: Chakatl, 3 ataxes, chanouk with chaknik, aknouk

Deadlands Profile: Anouk Shaman

Corporeal: D:3d6, N:3d6, S:3d10, Q:2d8, V:3d6
Climbin' 3d6, dodge 2d6, fightin': brawlin', ka'nil 3d6, ridin': chanouk 3d6, sneak 2d6, throwin': balanced 2d6

Mental: C:2d8, K:3d8, M:2d8, Sm:3d8, Sp:3d10
Academia: occult 2d8, academia: anouk history 4d8, guts 3d10, energy tap 4d8, language: Anouk 2d8, leadership 3d8, overawe 4d8, scrutinize 4d8, search 3d8, trackin' 2d8, survival: (native area) 3d8

Edges: Arcane background: anouk shaman, tannis sense 3, race: anouk

Hindrances: None

Wind: 16

Pace: 6

Size: 8

Special Abilities:

Strain: 10

Favors: Banshee's pain, heal, guiding wind
Weapon charging: The anouk shaman can charge her weapons and armor as described in Chapter 3.

Gear: Ceremonial robes, ka'nil

Description: Anouk shamans are the healers and sages of their clans.

D20 Profile: Anouk Shaman

Anouk Shaman: CR2, Medium-size Anouk, Class: Ash 2, hp 14, Init +1, Spd 30 ft., AC 11 (+1 Dex), Atk Ka'nil +2, AL N, SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +4, Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10

Skills and Feats: Concentration +5, Energy Tap +6, Heal +6, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +6; Extra Strain, Tannis Sense, Simple Weapon Proficiency

Special Qualities:

Energy weapon

Strain: 21

Favors: Banshee's pain, cure light wounds, entropic shield, light

Possessions: Ceremonial robes, ka'nil

The Landing Site

It's time to get to the gooey black meat of the matter. Of course it's best if you wait until night to let the group to find the thing, but of course it really depends on your individual situation.

The party's first clue that they're close is Tin Lee's jeep. The creature smashed it in its confused rage, and it now lies in a broken heap a hundred yards due south of the meteor, just below a small hill. It's covered in black goo, though a thirsty adventurer can dig out a few intact cans of Bubbly Fizz cola.

Between two small hills a few hundred feet up one of the Peacemaker's many unnamed mountains is a "black pool" roughly 20' in diameter. In truth, this is the rock's crater. The "pool" is the blob-like creature itself, lying dormant until it feels the need to feed again (or senses intruders).

The thing is one tough mother to put down, but it actually *can* be harmed by normal weapons. Of course the absolute best thing to do is lure it away from the pit and then destroy the chunk of rock in the crater. Doing that takes away the creature's high damage resistance so that it can be put down more easily (though it's still quite a challenge).

The rock requires 30 point of damage to destroy in classic *Deadlands*, and has an armor value of 4.

In D20, the stone is hardness 8, hp 90, Break DC 35.

Deadlands Profile: Dark Beast (Tentacle Horror)

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:2d6, S:5d12+2, Q:2d10, V:3d8

Dodge 4d6, fightin' brawlin' 5d6, sneak 3d10

Mental: C:2d6, K:1d4, M:2d6, Sm:1d6, Sp:2d6
Search 2d6

Pace: 6

Size: 12

Special Abilities:

Armor: 12. Once the meteor is destroyed, the creature's armor becomes 0.

Fearless

Tentacles: The creature can attack up to six targets in one round with its tentacles. If it hits with a raise, it has automatically grappled. On its next action, it tries to snap its prey in two with an opposed roll of its *Strength* versus the target's *Strength* or *Vigor* (victim's choice). With success, it causes normal *Strength* damage. With a raise, it snaps the victim in two, killing him instantly.

Viscous Body: The creature takes half damage (round down) from physical attacks.

Description: The beast looks like a giant black blob which oozes forth up to a dozen independent tentacles.

Dark Beast (Tentacle Horror)

Large Aberration

Hit Dice: 6d8+2 (33 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30ft.

AC: 17 (-1 Size, +8 Natural)

Attacks: 6 tentacle rakes; +3 melee

Damage: Tentacle rake 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. with tentacle)

Special Attacks: Improved grab, rip

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 20/+1

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +5, Listen +6, Spot +9

Feats: Alertness

Climate/Terrain: Must stay within five miles of a chunk of Dark stone

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Advancement: 7-8 HD (Large); 9-15 HD (Huge)

Combat

Damage Reduction: The creature has Damage Reduction 10/+1 as long as the meteor is intact. Once it is destroyed, this ability no longer applies.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the beast hits a Medium-size or smaller creature with a tentacle attack by +4 or more, it may immediately attempt a rip (see below).

Rip: A successful grapple (via Improved Grab) allows the beast to attempt its notorious rip maneuver. The victim must make an opposed roll of his Constitution versus the creature's Strength. If the creature wins, the victim takes damage a second time. If the creature wins by +4 or more points, the victim is pulled in half and dies instantly.

Viscous Body: The creature takes half damage (round down) from physical attacks.

Aftermath

Assuming the heroes live, the local miners, and even the local anouks are much friendlier to the posse in the future. They've won over some allies that may prove quite valuable in the deadly days the shamans say are coming to Banshee. But that's another tale...

Bounty

Avoiding a fight with the Takala hunting party: 1 red chip each.

Defeating the beast and destroying the stone: 1 blue chip each.



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