

The Ballad of Bad Bob McKlusky

Bounty Hunters of the Atomic Wastelands



THE BALLAD OF BAD BOB MCKLUSKY

An adventure for Bounty Hunters of the Atomic Wastelands by Polar Blues Press.

Summary

Wanted: Bad Bob McKlusky

Why: cattle rustling

By: Jerome Jenkins (rancher)

Bounty: \$ 800

Background

This adventure presents itself as a routine case involving a cattle rustler. A gang of outlaws lead by Bad Bob McKlusky raided the Double J Ranch and stole a herd of 200 cattle from rancher Jerome Jenkins.

What the Bounty Hunters are not aware of is that back in his home town of Troy, McKlusky has the law in his pocket. A further challenge is that the stolen herd has been drinking contaminated water which eventually will turn the livestock into violent, rampaging, radioactive monsters.

Note that the posted reward is for the capture of Bad Bob McKlusky. Jerome assumes that once the cattle thief is caught he should be able to reclaim his herd.

Hook

As catching a cattle rustler may not draw the player's attention at first, you may consider starting this adventure in media-res. The Bounty Hunters find themselves under attack by Atomic Scorpions (1 per Bounty Hunter) while investigating the location at the Double J Ranch from which the cattle were stolen.

Atomic Scorpions are giant sized arachnids with stinging tails and nasty claws.
Toppings: Atomic Scorpions get an extra attack with their tails (see the Head Butt Stunt) at +2 damage.
Make sure you describe a green glow around the Atomic Scorpions (these aren't your garden variety Atomic Scorpions) so that you can tie it to mutant cattle later in the adventure.

Alternatively you can start with the Bounty Hunters noticing a new wanted poster outside the Mu-Town sheriff's office for the capture of Bad Bob McKlusky and just let things progress naturally from there. You can always use the Atomic Scorpion encounter later in the adventure.

Location - The Double J Ranch

The Double J Ranch is located at the edge of Big Fall Out City, the radioactive ruins of a once large city. It belongs to Jerome Jenkins. The cattle ranch gives the impression it may have seen better days, with fences broken in various places and buildings in a state of disrepair that predates the cattle raid.

The ranch consists of a main area with Jerome's house and a cluster of other utility buildings and a wide expanse of grazing land. The ranch is surrounded by a fence though if the Bounty Hunters investigate they will find the gaps where the fence needs to be repaired.

A point of interest the Bounty Hunters will only notice if they explore the area is the stream the cattle and other wildlife use for drinking. This has become contaminated by the corpse upstream of a massive, toxically radioactive critter and has caused increased, dramatic mutations in the local wildlife. The ranchers have their own well the water of which is still pure.

Clue - Jerome Jenkins

Jerome is a struggling rancher. His ranch is uncomfortably close to Big Fall Out City so he is always fighting off mutated critters that originate from the ruins. Recently this has got much, much worse. A number of ranch hands have quit claiming the job was too risky and even his wife has been talking about moving into town with the children. This raid could be the last straw.

He isn't aware that the stream his cattle drink from is contaminated.

Clue - Witnesses Elmer Stork

One of the ranch hands recognised Bad Bob McKlusky as the leader of the rustlers. Both he and Bad Bob grew up in Troy, a small town north of Rubens. He describes Bad Bob as an all round bad guy. Though the raiders wore masks he recognised McKlusy's voice and more significantly his two-headed horse. Elmer assumes McKlusky is still based in Troy.

Clue - Tracking

The witnesses will all claim the raiders were headed North-North-East. It's been two weeks since the raid but even so 200 cattle leave a lot of tracks. Tracking the cattle all the way to Troy will require a GOOD result on a Thinking test.

Location - Troy

Troy is a rowdy little town with plenty of saloons and not a single church in sight. Not a lot of children or old folk around either. Bad Bob pretty much runs the town. Businesses pay him protection money and he's got the sheriff in his pocket. None of this is necessarily obvious to anyone just passing through.

Complication - Finding McKlusky

If the Bounty Hunters get to Troy, finding McKlusky is easy. He'll be playing cards with three of his men at the Golden Nugget Saloon. He denies any charges but is willing give himself up peacefully just as long as they clear it with the sheriff first.

Outlaw Desperados (McKlusky's gang)

Toppings: Any individual outlaw desperado with a Critter Rating of GREAT can use the Two Gun Fighting Stunt.

Complication - Cattle Branding

The stolen cattle is corralled in town. McKlusky has altered the "J J" brand on the cattle into a "M" with curly ends.

Complication - The Sheriff

Troy's sheriff Dwain Dilcott, backed by a group of armed men, will step in at any point the Bounty Hunters seem to want to take McKlusky away by force. He works for McKlusky as everyone in town does, but he will keep the pretence of being an honest lawman as long as possible. If McKlusky is captured and dragged out of town before he can react, the sheriff will lead the pursuit.

During the first serious confrontation with the Bounty Hunters, sheriff Dilcott should have a strong strategic and numerical advantage over the players with 2 men per Bounty Hunter made of a mix of deputies and McKlusky's men (see Outlaw Desperados stats). This may make the Bounty Hunters consider a more indirect approach or provide a glorious moment of bloodshed.

Sheriff Dwain Dilcott

Despite his unfit appearance, Dwain is a GOOD ranking critter.
Toppings: Leadership

Complication - The Gruesome Brothers

McKlusky's two top men, the Gruesome brothers, are out of town at the start of the adventure enjoying some R&R in Rubens. As soon as the Bounty Hunters make their presence known McKlusky will secretly send for them.

Nate and Seth Gruesome

The Gruesome brothers are GREAT ranking gunslingers. Lean and mean, everyone in Troy is terrified of them.

Toppings: Nate has Quick Draw, Seth has Two Gun Fighting Stunts.

If the Bounty Hunters act quickly (snatch McKlusky before anyone can react) the Gruesome brothers will come seeking revenge at the end of the adventure or act as the primary opponents in the next adventure.

If the Bounty Hunters proceed very slowly and cautiously, the Gruesome brothers will link up with McKlusky before he is captured.

Otherwise bring them into play after the Bounty Hunters have had their first fight with McKlusky's men.

Complication - Atomic Stampede

While all this is happening, the cattle have been slowly mutating. At some point they will go on a wild destructive stampede. Ideally this will happen at the worse possible moment. You should compensate the players with a Fate Point each for the additional complication.

If you prefer a more structured approach the cattle stampede will start at high noon on the day after the scenario starts. That of course means the players may miss out on this event altogether.

Atomic Cattle

The vast majority of the mutant cattle are bellow MEDIOCRE, don't bother tracking them, they are just window dressing. Three critters per Bounty Hunter will be GOOD a one further critter SUPERB.

Toppings: Natural Weapon and Rad Screen (with a faint green glow).

What happens next?

This adventure has a lot of moving parts. The timeline depends entirely on how the Bounty Hunters approach things.

If the Bounty Hunters go for a quick snatch and grab, the thrust of the adventure will likely be about getting back to Mu-Town with McKlusky's men in hot pursuit.

Should they succeed quickly Jerome could offer the Bounty Hunters a bonus to ride with him back to Troy and reclaim his herd only to discover that they've since turned into mutant, killer bovines. He may also ask the Bounty Hunters to investigate the source of these mutations (the above mentioned contaminated stream).

Alternatively the bulk of the adventure might be taken up by the investigation in Troy with the Bounty Hunter's not quite sure who to believe. If the events in Troy end up taking up the entire session the whole atomic cattle stampede section at the end can be omitted entirely or saved for another session.

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