

The Barreville Flap

By Michael Grasso
RPG Geek Username: mgrasso
RPG Geek One Sheet Contest 2015

GUMSHOE: Moon Dust Men, and Night's Black Agents are trademarks of Pelgrane Press Ltd and used with permission. I agree to allow Pelgrane Press, Ltd and to allow anyone to redistribute me my submission non-commercially. This submission cannot be distributed commercially. Map graphic Public Domain courtesy US Geological Survey

The Hook

A series of UFO sightings and cattle mutilations (an event known in UFOlogy as a "flap") in the north-central Montana town of Barreville leads representatives of Project Moon Dust to investigate.

Project Moon Dust

Project Moon Dust was founded as a top secret U.S. Air Force (USAF) unit to investigate unidentified flying objects (UFOs) in both domestic U.S. and foreign airspace. Project Moon Dust gathers intelligence, extraterrestrial technology and/or biological entities, and engages in disinformation ops to throw curious civilians off the trail of the UFOs.

Your Mission

In this scenario, your agents' mandate is to investigate the UFO presence in Barreville, and to calm down the UFO "flap" currently occurring. Whether this means your agents go into town brandishing their true identities as USAF-affiliated personnel, using either military, law enforcement, or civilian Cover identities (see Special Rules boxes), or a mix is up to your players.

Priorities for Moon Dust investigators, in increasing levels of importance, are:
• Gather and/or confiscate physical evidence of UFOs
• Interview and/or debrief* any witnesses to UFOs
• Interview and/or debrief* any contacts with UFOs
• Spot and track the activities of any UFOs in the area for relay back to Moon Dust HQ at Fort Belvoir, Virginia for further surveillance and/or intercept out of Carroll AFB.
*In this context, "debrief" means use appropriate means to silence, distract, or render witnesses unwilling to tell their story.

On Page 2 you will see the events and Core Clues that will lead this mission to one (or more) of three Denouements. This scenario is intended to take place over three or four days of game time, with the agents conducting several parallel investigations and researchers into the effects that the flap is having on Barreville, its populace, and the surrounding areas.

Time Period

Please note! Both Moon Dust Men as a GUMSHOE setting and this scenario are set in the year 1978. Keep this in mind as you consider technology (no internet, no cellular phones) and culture in this scenario.

UFOs were everywhere in pop culture in 1978: movies, TV, supermarket tabloids, countless paperbacks, etc. General awareness of UFOlogy among civilians is higher.

Special Rules

- Backslash Points (Moon Dust Men, p. 7): Backslash Points allow for "weird" uses of Investigative Abilities. Backslash Points can allow your investigators to interpret clues and press their investigations into alien technology, culture, or motivations into fringe sciences and theories. B.S. Points allow the scenario to spin off into weird directions, at the agents' instigation.
- Psychic Abilities (Moon Dust Men, pp. 56): Some of the GMCs in this scenario are "contacts" who may or may not be exhibiting authentic psychic abilities.
- Cover, Network, Heat rules (From Night's Black Agents, pp. 27-28, pp. 31-32, pp. 87-90) Feel free to use the Cover and Network rules from Night's Black Agents for a richer, more complex espionage-themed scenario. In addition, if your Moon Dust agents like to do black ops and aren't particularly skilled, they could pick up Heat from the local, county, or state authorities. This may only prove a temporary obstacle, given Moon Dust's resources and military authority.

Barreville

Barreville is a small Montana town of about 5,000. It is 35 miles east of Carroll Air Force Base (while not Moon Dust-affiliated, Moon Dust personnel can requisition resources here if they're careful with judicious Military Science or Preparedness spendings). Barreville was a gold rush boom town in the 1880s: its former Wild West downtown is now literally underground and is part of a museum complex which brings in many tourists.

Townspople

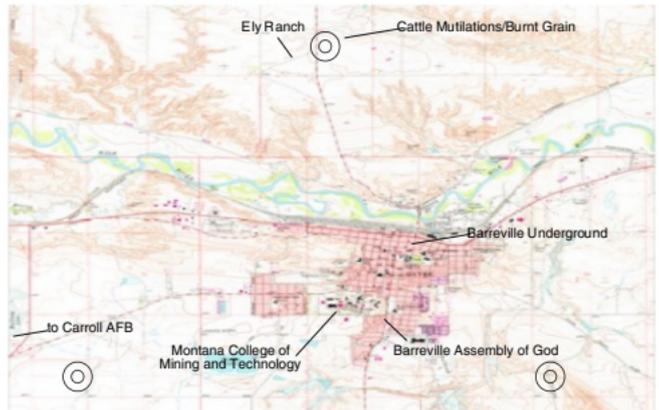
- Mayor Fred Rouleau: "Mayor Fred," as he is known to Barreville's citizens, is the gadabouting scion of one of the first settlers of the area (History or Research). He is more than all right with the UFO flap leading to "saucer tourism," but the cattle mutilations have him unnerved, given that the ranch-owners are major political players in the area.
- Sheriff Rich Stowley: Barreville is the county seat, and as such WHIW the county sheriff's. Harry Stowley is a great WWII veteran with a respect for the military but a stoic caution to protect the citizenry. He responds well to PCs with Cop Talk, Military Science, or Reassurance.
- Reverend James Sundown and his wife Lorraine: James Sundown is the shortsleeved leisure-suit-wearing Evangelist preacher at Barreville Assembly of God Church. His congregation is the most influential in town. Lorraine Sundown is a very active preacher's wife, and has been known to speak in tongues even before the UFO flap.
- Sarah Chapin is the young museum manager of the Barreville Underground. She is an open, friendly source of historical information for the town and the Underground.
- John Ely is the most prominent of the local ranchers. He is deeply unsettled by his and his fellow ranchers' cattle being destroyed, and will want to find out who did it.
- Various townspeople with witness stories and/or Close Encounters of the Second Kind (a sighting with physical evidence but no contact with entities) can lead the PCs to realize that the UFOs' pattern appears to have started on the outskirts of town and moved in towards the center of town, where the old Underground is (Traffic Analysis, UFOlogy).

Out-of-Towners

- The UFO flap has attracted a number of out-of-towners, in addition to the PCs, with their own UFO-related agendas.
- Andrew MacInnes and Gerry Fantana, reporters for the Hollywood Observer, a supermarket tabloid whose stories have been edging into the Weird throughout the decade.
- Barbara DeWitt, a former Miss North Dakota who has been working as a TV reporter and producer and is doing a documentary series on UFO sightings in the U.S.
- "Noah" and "Na-mah": The Arkwrights, a.k.a. Steven and Gladys Benson, two middle-aged former schoolteachers from Texas who purport to be alien contacts and have formed a wandering UFO cult of about a dozen dedicated members. They are currently using this UFO flap to recruit on the campus of Montana Mining & Technology.
- Karl Brunk, a West German industrialist who has spent the last few years traveling the world gathering historical evidence of UFOs. He espouses the "ultra-terrestrial" theory.

Phenomena

- UFO sightings: The first sightings occurred four days before the Moon Dust PCs arrive. Most were clustered outside of town in ranch areas, although several witnesses claim to have seen UFOs over town. A UFOlogy spend after an interview or analysis of a witness plus use with Photography will reveal that these UFOs seem to be of the "red orb" type associated with alien scouting activities.
- Cattle mutilations: The cattle mutilations were the first tangible physical evidence. Several ranchers outside town have had cattle killed, and their eyes, ears, udders, and sex organs surgically removed. The evidence is in the local butcher's while investigators can examine the dead cattle (Biology, Forensics) to see clearly that this is not a result of predator attack, but instead from incisions with a tool at a level of keenness not possible using human technology.
- Underground Barreville: There have always been tales of weird happenings in the old underground "Wild West" town center (History, Occult Studies, Sulkish Detector in an interview), mostly stories of luminous ghosts or early explorers of the underground sinking into the ground and disappearing without a trace. The frequency of these type of sightings has picked up in the weeks and months leading up to the UFO flap.
- Psychic contact/automatic writing: Several psychically-sensitive individuals in Barreville (most notably Lorraine Sundown) have been receiving faint psychic messages in the weeks leading up to the flap. Only a scant few will get the more concentrated messages as the scenario unfolds. Finding and analyzing these rumors (Occult Studies, Backslash spendings in Electronic Surveillance or Interrogation) will get easier as the scenario continues.
- Montana College of Mines & Technology Campus: This university campus has great resources for investigators to co-opt, like computers and underground sonar equipment, as well as the best library in town. It's also (temporarily) home to the Arkwright cult.



The Horrible Truth

You can choose one of the origins below for the phenomena in Barreville.

- **Extraterrestrial:** These are the typical inscrutable alien visitors. Feel free to use the Greys (Moon Dust Men, p. 9) for a more traditional '70s alien encounter, or the Nordics (Moon Dust Men, p. 9) if the Arkwright cult is right about their "celestial brethren."

- **Ultraterrestrial:** The beings around Barreville instead reside on Earth, just... sideways from our existence. Maybe a deal was struck with these ultraterrestrials a century ago to make Barreville a successful Gold Rush town, and the ultraterrestrials are taking back, in cattle and humans, what they were promised.

- **Above Moon Dust:** These are experiments, both physiological and psychological, being undertaken by forces in the U.S. government (or global government) far above Project Moon Dust. Or it's a faction of Moon Dust, and by the end of the scenario, the PCs are Burned and don't the run from their former employers.

The Spine(s)

The Core Clues in this scenario are the bare minimum necessary to make sense of the UFOs' agenda in Barreville. On Page 1 there are a number of opportunities for non-Core Clues and Spends.

Feel free also to cross over Core Clue trails or have non-Core Clues lead back to the Core; for example, if the investigators have looked into the town's history, they may make their way to the Barreville Underground.

Color Code

Green Core Clues are Investigative and offer little danger or conflict.

Yellow Core Clues offer both Investigative and General ability opportunities, can result in conflict, and sometimes feature Stability Loss.

Red boxes signify one of three Denouements (see below).

Denouements

Real-life UFO flaps usually flare up with many concentrated sightings and/or contacts and then fade away. But that wouldn't make for an interesting RPG scenario. So try out these three different levels of conclusion for your agents' investigation. You can mix and match the denouements here or very easily ramp up from Minor through Major and eventually to Catastrophic. Remember to assess Stability tests of appropriate Loss for events in each Denouement.

Remember that Moon Dust agents must hold the UFO threat at bay and keep it under wraps, so if you opt for the Catastrophic Denouement and the PCs cannot prevent it, the survivors of the op may need to come up with a very big lie to explain the disappearance of an entire Montana town.

Close Encounters of the First Kind: Sightings

Everyday Citizens: With Bullshit Detector, Cop Talk,

Interrogation, or Reassurance, PCs can find out that the sightings began with red orbs sighted over the hills.

Interviewees will say they've seen photographers over there taking pictures.

Puzzling Evidence: The tabloid journalists have photos of larger, octahedral craft over the town. Electronic Surveillance or Photography will alert PCs to their presence in town and then infiltration in their motel can help PCs confiscate the photos.

Data Analysis: Ufology, a B.S. Traffic Analysis, or another reasonable ability will lead the PCs to deduce that this flap is slowly escalating, and that the UFOs have ceased operations in the hills and are making their way to the center of town.

Enquiring Minds: The various reporters and ufologists in town aren't going to stand pat with their evidence. They're going to try to get their photos/film out of town. Moon Dust agents have to stop them. Intimidation, Reassurance, or Impersonate spends might accomplish this.

Look to the Skies: PCs can wait for UFO sightings to peak either downtown or in the hills: a downtown sighting can lead to any of the three Denouements, while a hills sighting could eventually lead to Major or Catastrophic. Sighting a UFO defying Physics is Stability Loss: 3.

Close Encounters of the Second Kind: Physical Effects

An Unearthly Slaughter: The pattern of this series of cattle mutilations is similar to others: eyes, genitals, and udders were expertly removed with clean incisions (Biology, Forensics). Metallic ash in the hoofs of the dead cattle should lead to an investigation at the mutilation sites.

Circles in the Grain: Going out to grazing lands, Crash Scene Investigation, Chemistry, Notice, or Outdoor Survival should lead the PCs to find a slightly-curved arc of burnt grain, about 50m in length. Looking at the other two mutilation sites and plotting them on a map will reveal a giant circle with Barreville at the center (Stability Loss: 3 for the realization).

Rain of Meat: Leading into any Denouement, this Fortean event happens downtown near the Barreville Underground. A rain of various cow parts, including pieces not taken by the mutilators, will fall. Stability Loss: 5 if witnessed and the meat will be revealed to be from bison from breeds extinct since the 1800s (Biology, Forensics, B.S. abilities).

Minutemen: Unless dissuaded, John Ely will lead his fellow ranchers in a "stakeout" for the cattle mutilators; they suspect government agents. If the PCs are openly government-affiliated, this could result in a shootout. If the UFOs see them waiting in the hills, they might either unleash a Cryptid on them (Minor) or abduct or kill them (Major, Catastrophic).

Close Encounters of the Fifth Kind: Communication with ETs

The Preacher's Wife: Over the course of the investigation, interpersonal abilities will lead the PCs to witness Mrs. Sundown scribbling in a journal in a public place. If the PCs manage to convince her to show it (a spend here is necessary), or steal it, they will see a lengthy code, this code, once deciphered (Cryptography, Data Retrieval) can be used to lead out to the hills for a mothership landing site.

The Arkwrights: Pretending to be interested in their cult (Reassurance, Ufology, Impersonate, Flattery) will lead the cult to share their holy text, a mishmash of Christian, occult, and UFO lore, Anthropology, History, Occult or Backslash abilities will reveal that they are New Age frauds. They are true believers, however, which makes them dangerous when paired with Mrs. Sundown.

The Cosmic Connection: When Mrs. Sundown finally connects with the Arkwrights, wonderful and horrible things can happen. No-ah and Na-mah, both talented in finding occult patterns, can decode the messages Lorraine is receiving, and this will lead them to either meet the UFOs in a Major Denouement or commit a mass suicide in a prelude to a Catastrophic one.

The Mayor's Son: Mayor Fred's 11-year-old son, Jason, is hearing voices. He will disappear a few days into the investigation, triggering a regional police alert. Strangers in town like The Out-of-towners or indeed the PCs may come under suspicion. Jason is receiving messages to go to the Underground in Barreville to be taken by a Cryptid (Minor Denouement).

Minor: Cryptid

This Denouement could result from the following scenes: Look to the Skies, Minutemen, The Mayor's Son, and/or Rain of Meat.

The UFOs commit cattle mutilation for raw genetic material in the form of stem cells. They use the resulting Cryptids to act on Earth in places they cannot easily go. This particular Cryptid is made of parts from 1800s bison and recently obtained cattle. Use the stats for the Yeti (Moon Dust Men, p. 10).

This Cryptid will either rage (Minutemen, Rain of Meat) or attempt an abduction (The Mayor's Son, Look to the Skies).

Major: Mothership

This Denouement could result from the following scenes: Look to the Skies, Minutemen, The Cosmic Connection.

The red orbs are the scouts; the octahedrons the "crusers," but the Mothership cannot be mistaken for anything else. It is, indeed, an ark. The signals being beamed into contactees' minds for the UFOs give them landing coordinates, and this is where the pigmen will disembark for the stars. Project Moon Dust needs to stop this mass abduction. Aircraft Engineering Backslash spends can help USAF fighters down the ship; other Backslash spends can help in trying to get the cultists not to board.

Catastrophic: Harvest

This Denouement could result from the following scenes: Look to the Skies, Minutemen, The Cosmic Connection.

The UFOs have been visiting Barreville for at least 100 years, maybe longer. Many generations have been planted in the garden. It is now time to reap. This is the crazy, full-on alien invasion version of the story: buildings razed by UFOs, people reaped in half by tractor beams, legions of cryptids rendering humans into jellies of raw genetic material. The physical and mental danger is profound and the Moon Dust agents will need all their wits just to survive and then, if they do, to cover up this cosmic harvest.