

Roswell: 1897

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(This scenario was inspired by Mr. Ken Hite's remarkable "*Suppressed Transmissions*" article: "*Six Flags over Roswell*".)

Background

Starting in 1895, reports of cigar-shaped craft flying throughout the skies of North America began appearing in US and Canadian newspapers. It is widely assumed by many people that some unknown inventor has mastered the secret of flight. But the truth is much bigger than that.

On April 17, 1897 an "airship" crashed (actually, it exploded at a low altitude) in Aurora, Texas. Upon investigation of the wreckage, it becomes obvious that the "airship" was actually a spacecraft filled with marvelous technology far in advance of that which any nation on Earth possessed. But the clincher was the body of what was presumed to be the pilot of the crashed vessel. He was definitely not human.

The US government immediately clamped down hard: concealing all evidence of the crash, contradicting earlier newspaper reports, swearing the locals to secrecy, and taking control of the Aurora crash debris and the body of the alien pilot that was found in the wreck.

The McKinley administration assigned Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt to command the top-secret Office of Aerial Intelligence (OAI). That agency was tasked with investigating the Aurora event. The OAI has its major facility located in Dallas, Texas. All of the material from the Aurora crash has been moved there. At that facility, "top men" are studying the wreckage, the various artifacts found in the wreckage, and the body of the alien pilot.

For the purposes of this scenario, it is early July of 1897 and the PCs are agents of the OAI – or outsiders who have found themselves dragooned into OAI service. The OAI agents know what happened at Aurora, and they've seen both the wreckage and the corpse of the alien pilot.

The Mission

On July 4, word of a second airship crash begins

trickling out of New Mexico. This ship apparently crashed during a thunderstorm somewhere near a small cow-town called Roswell. A team of investigators is hurriedly assembled from the OAI's facility near Dallas and is rushed to New Mexico.

The PCs are members of the OAI or have been hurriedly drafted by that organization in order to help with this mission. OAI agents are usually either US Naval officers or civilian scientists or engineers. Navy enlisted men, eccentric inventors, and miscellaneous other scholars are also possible members of the OAI. For this mission, other government officials might be drafted into helping as needed: US Marshals, Secret Service Agents, and Army officers or enlisted men are all possibilities.

On the Way to Roswell

The distance from Dallas to Roswell is roughly 500 miles. By train, the trip will take about a full day. Unfortunately, the PCs have a tail. The British have tumbled to the fact that something is going on and have sent a man from their consulate in New Orleans to investigate that mysterious American facility in Dallas. Captain Bond isn't a spy -- he's a soldier. It hasn't even occurred to him to pretend that he's anything other than an Englishman, and his form of intelligence gathering is unsubtle to say the least. But the Captain isn't stupid, and he has noticed that the PCs have been sent with no little urgency from that interesting American facility to... somewhere else. So he's decided to follow them.

It's kind of hard for the PCs not to notice Captain Bond. The players will have to deal with him eventually, but with the degree of difficulty that their superiors will certainly consider it unsporting and inappropriate to simply kill him. But Captain Bond is a tough and determined man – in the end he may not give them much choice.

Welcome to Roswell

Chaves County, which contains the town of Roswell, has a population of about 4000 people. About half of that population lives in Roswell itself. The railroad passes through Roswell (on a north-south route -- the PCs will come in from the north). Note that New Mexico won't become a state until 1912, and it is currently a territory. GMs should feel free to describe Roswell as a typical movie-Western ranching town.

Nobody in Roswell knows who the PCs are or why they have arrived. The local authorities have been told by the Territorial government to "wait for some experts" and they are doing just that. The crashed "airship" is the talk of the territory and several local newspapers have sent reporters to investigate. Most of the journalists are currently hanging around the various saloons of Roswell, but Helena "Hell" McCall from the "Albuquerque Daily Journal" has beat both the PCs and the other reporters to Roswell by several hours. She's rented a horse and is on her way out to the isolated ranch where she's been told that the "airship" crashed. Helena is another person that the PCs just can't shoot -- although she will probably make the idea somewhat attractive.

The mayor of Roswell (Mr. Sylvester Cooke) has some of the wreckage from the crashed "airship" locked in the vault of the "Bank of Chaves County". It consists of fragments of a very light and tough, silvery metal. Nobody local can identify the metal, but any PCs who are a long-term part of OAI will recognize it as identical to material recovered from the Aurora crash. It's an alloy of aluminum and magnesium -- with traces of titanium -- that is giving the engineers and metallurgists back in Dallas fits.

What Happened

The instrumentation in the alien spacecraft somehow became disorientated and the ship was forced down. The ship crash-landed on the ranch of Mr. Maxwell Brandt, but after an hour or so it lifted off again. Unfortunately, the patchwork

repairs made to the ship quickly failed and the ship crashed again -- this time permanently -- into an isolated range of hills located a few miles west of the Brandt ranch.

Mr. Brandt saw the initial crash, but was preoccupied with some loose cattle and did not approach the "airship". The next day, just before taking his wagon into town on his usual weekly trip to purchase supplies, he picked up some wreckage to take with him. It made for an interesting story to tell the guys down at his favorite saloon.

The mayor of Roswell heard Mr. Brandt telling his story. Thinking that the wreckage might be important, the Mayor asked Mr. Brandt if he could have it, and Mr. Brandt was happy to give the wreckage to the mayor. It is currently stored in a bank vault.

The Brandt Ranch

Maxwell and Ella Brandt own a small cattle ranch about five miles southwest of Roswell. They have two sons, Max, Jr. and Joe. Mr. Brandt has no idea of the mess he's found himself in -- hey, he just saw something strange land on his property and told other folks about it. He doesn't even know where the "airship" finally went down after it took off again.

However, Mr. Brandt's boys know where the ship finally crashed. Joe "saw" the crash-site and told his brother. Max rode out and found the ship. This happened while Mr. Brandt was in Roswell. Max is keeping quiet about finding the ship because he "borrowed" his dad's riding horse without permission in order to go take a look.

The Initial Crash Site

The location of the crash-landing was on Mr. Brandt's property. It dug a hole about thirty yards long, five yards wide, and a yard at its deepest. Debris is scattered all around the point of impact. Most of it is the same kind of strange metal

described previously, but some is also a kind of instrumentation apparently based on poorly understood electrical principals that the PCs have also seen in the Aurora debris.

Mr. Brandt saw the crash. He described the "airship" as cigar-shaped, but because of the thunderstorm, he couldn't make out many details. Mr. Brandt will say that he was occupied with chasing down some cattle that had been spooked by the storm and never got around to getting any closer to the ship. After an hour or so, the ship took off again and headed west. Mr. Brandt thought it looked a little wobbly as it flew away off to the west.

After looking at the crash site, examining the debris, and hearing Mr. Brandt's description, the PCs will get the idea that the Roswell ship was larger than the one that crashed in Aurora. And it was definitely in better shape the last time Mr. Brandt saw it.

The Final Crash Site

The alien ship has impacted into a low range of hills about four miles west of the Brandt ranch. The PCs can find it either by following a trail of debris (call for either a Tracking roll, or a Notice -2 roll). This will take about four hours. Or the PCs could convince either Max, Jr. or Joe to tell them where the ship crashed.

The hills are dry and rocky and covered with scrub and pines. The ship crashed into the mid-slope and slid along the slope line. The ship is partially concealed by low trees. Once reaching the site of the wreck, a successful Survival roll (or Notice -2 roll) will note that the local wildlife is avoiding the area.

The ship consists of a control cockpit, a truck-sized cargo hold, and an engine compartment. Describe the interior somewhat like that of a modern jet aircraft.

The cockpit is quite cramped and small and its sole seat is sized to accommodate someone about four to four-and-a-half feet tall. On the other hand, the

cargo compartment has a much larger seat (adjacent to the door leading into the cockpit) that is comfortably sized for someone of human size.

The ship is badly damaged -- the hull being ripped open in the cargo engine compartments. However, it is still far more intact than the scattered fragments that are all that was left of the Aurora ship. This is obviously an important find for the OAI.

An initial examination finds no sign of any crew -- although there is a sticky yellow substance that the OAI-agent PCs will know is alien blood splattered throughout the cockpit. There is no paper of any kind in the wreck -- something that was also noticed at Aurora. However, some miscellaneous loose gear is present (see the list below). The GM should feel free to make up more gear -- trust me, the players will ask about that sort of thing.

Miscellaneous Items That Found In The Wreckage

A small flashlight (about four inches in length) that is made of black metal. It is incredibly tough (you would need a sledgehammer to break it), the intensity of the light (from "off" to "very bright") can be adjusted by twisting a ring around the lens. It never seems to run out of power.

A thin metallic belt that has a complex-appearing tongue-and-groove buckle. The buckle is obviously broken. This is actually a sensory enhancement device, but most of the mechanism is in the broken buckle, so it's useless. It appears to be sized for one of the Gray aliens.

A small box (about the size of a thin paperback-book) that is made of red-enameled metal and has a swing-open lid. The box is open and contains four ceramic-like vials with complex-looking metal caps. Some of the yellowish alien blood is smeared on the box and the vials. This is actually a first-aid kit filled with expended auto-injectors, although that might not be obvious.

A metal ball (somewhere between baseball and

softball in size) that is made of gray metal. There are various random penny-sized indentations on the ball. This is actually a small maintenance robot. When active, it deploys legs and multi-jointed arms and has a Repair 8 skill (with a Wildcard dice). If placed near some broken machinery of some kind or another, it might activate (roll a 5 or 6 on a d6) and repair the item in question. Oddly, it's making no effort to repair any part of the ship in which it is found.

The Grave

If the PCs have time to search the area, they will eventually find a shallow grave that's holding the body of an alien similar to the one recovered from the Aurora crash. The alien is wearing a one-piece dark-gray jumpsuit. The cause of death is indeterminate, but the body has suffered a great deal of blunt-force trauma consistent with a crash.

A device about the size of a pocket calculator is also present in the grave. It is a black metal box with a glass-like panel. In the glass panel, a red light flashes about every three seconds. There is a soft beeping the sounds off in time to the light. This is an active emergency distress beacon. It's actually broadcasting a radio message -- the light and sound are just indicators that it is active. A button located behind a sliding panel turns the beacon on or off.

And All Hell Breaks Loose...

The cargo hold of the crashed ship is filled with a large metal module that's about 6 yards long, 2 yards wide, and 2 yards tall. It's obviously not a part of the ship, and was attached to the deck of the hold by attachment locks. However, those locks are broken and the module is resting at an angle inside the hold. The module is warm to the touch and a display light on one end of the module is flashing an alternating green and red light.

The module is holding live specimens of a particularly dangerous alien creature in a suspended animation field. At a moment that's dramatically convenient for the GM -- and very

inconvenient for the Players -- the damaged module will open up and disgorge its furious cargo (see "Alien Critters" below). The number of creatures is up to the GM, but there should be no more than a dozen.

Aftermath

Assuming the PCs survive, they will have a lot to mull over. Just how much of what's happening has the British Empire figured out? Who buried the alien? Is there another alien -- or aliens -- on the loose somewhere? Why was the crashed ship carrying a load of deadly monsters? Why the human-sized seat in the ship's cargo compartment? Have there been other crashes -- perhaps outside of the United States? Is it just a coincidence that this ship crashed near the home of a boy who has strange powers of the mind?

Just what the heck is going on?

Author's Note

If time permits, I'll be doing another scenario or two in this background. Maybe a few of the above questions will be answered then...

NPCs and Critters

Captain Bond -- *dramatic pause* -- Andrew Bond (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Charisma: +4; Pace: 6; Parry: 6 (7 if using Sword-Cane); Toughness: 7

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Quirk: Enjoys the High Life, Vow: to Serve Queen and Country.

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Brawny

Gear: Traveling clothes, Sword-cane(Str+d4 damage, +1 Parry), Revolver(12/24/48 2d6+1 ROF 1 Shots 6), and about a hundred dollars in cash and gold.

Notes: Captain Bond is a brave and competent soldier who has been asked to be a spy. Unfortunately, that's a task he has no particular talent for. Assuming that Captain Bond survives the scenario, his grandson will be a far better intelligence agent.

Helena "Hell" McCall

Attributes: Agility 6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d8, Notice d6+2, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d6.

Charisma: +4; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5.

Hindrances: Curious, Stubborn, Quirk: Uses Feminine Wiles.

Edges: Attractive, Very Attractive, Alertness.

Gear: Traveling clothes, notebook and pen, derringer(5/10/20 2d6+1 ROF 1 Shots 2, AP 1).

Notes: Helena is a consummate reporter. Once she sinks her teeth into a story, she just won't let go.

Helena should be portrayed as relentless pain-in-the-butt who is constantly dogging the PCs or arriving at important places just before them. Helena is ridiculously pretty and is not above using her looks to get what she wants.

The Brandt Family

Maxwell and Ella Brandt are the owners of the ranch on which the "airship" first touched down. They're in their thirties, but a lifetime of toil has made them look older. Both are decent, God-fearing people who want nothing more than to raise their sons and cattle in peace.

Maxwell Brandt

Attributes: Agility 6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8.

Skills: Driving d6, Fighting d4, Guts d6, Notice d6, Repair d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6,

KS:Ranching d6.

Charisma: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 6.

Hindrances: Habit: Tobacco.

Edges: Fast Healer.

Gear: Work clothes, Rifle(24/48/96 2d8 ROF 1 Shots 15 AP2).

Ella Brandt

Attributes: Agility 6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Guts d6, Healing d6+2, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Riding d4, Shooting d4, KS:Ranching d6.

Charisma: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 3; Toughness: 5.

Hindrances: Loyal.

Edges: Healer.

Notes: Joe's psychic talents come from Ella's side of the family -- take a look at her healing abilities.

Maxwell "Little Max" Brandt, Jr.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d4, Guts d6+2, Notice d4, Repair d4, Riding d8, Shooting d6, KS:Ranching d4.

Charisma: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5.

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal.

Edges: Brave.

Gear: Work clothes.

Notes: Max is 17 years old and is a typical frontier-rancher kid of the time. He loves his strange brother dearly and defends him fiercely.

Joseph Brandt

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (actually d8), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Driving d4, Guts d4, Riding d4, KS:Ranching d4, KS:Wood Carving d4, Psionics d8.

Charisma: 0; Pace: 8; Parry: 3; Toughness: 5.

Hindrances: Outsider, Quirk: Quiet and Withdrawn.

Edges: Fleet-Footed, Arcane Background(Psionic).

Gear: Work clothes, Knife(Str + d4), various bits of strangely carved wood.

Power: Signs and Portents -- whenever it's dramatically appropriate, roll Joe's psionic skill. On a success, he has a vision of some sort. It can be of some far place, or of an event in the near future. Joe doesn't really control this ability.

Notes: Joe is 13 years old and most folks consider him to be "touched" or a "half-wit". Actually, Joe is usually lost in a world that most of the rest of humanity can't see: a world of psychic shadows and whispers. Joe is a psychic who can see things far away and sometimes seems to be able to predict the future. His family is aware of the fact that Joe has odd talents, but they don't talk about it to others.

Important Locals in Roswell

Mayor Sylvester Cooke

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

Skills: Driving d4, Intimidation d6, KS(Law) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d4, Shooting d4.

Charisma: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 3; Toughness: 5.

Hindrances: Quirk: Self-Important.

Edges: NA.

Gear: White suit and hat.

Notes: Mr. Cooke is a chubby local lawyer who got elected Mayor of Roswell a few years back. He's a bit full of himself, but honestly tries to do what he thinks is right for the community. He's also a lot smarter than he looks (which comes in hand in the courtroom). If he decides that the goals of the PCs and the US government are at odds with the interests of the local folks, he could be difficult.

Sheriff Lester Hobbs

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8.

Skills: Driving d4, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d6.

Charisma: 0; Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 7.

Hindrances: Loyal, Ugly, Quirk: Doesn't Talk Much.

Edges: Brawny, Quick.

Gear: Work clothes, Tin-star, Revolver(12/24/48 2d6+1 ROF 1 Shots 6).

Notes: Sheriff Hobbs is an ex-US Army cavalryman who lost his ranch a few years ago after a run of bad luck. He took the Sheriff's job as a temporary stop-gap, but has never moved on. He does a good job. He's getting a bit on in years, but is still a tough character. He will tend to react positively to appeals to patriotism and duty.

Alien Ship Pilots

No stats or skills are included since the only one of these guys the players see in this adventure is dead.

The Pilots of the two crashed ships (one in Aurora and the other in Roswell) are spindly, gray-skinned, humanoids. Their bodies are proportioned somewhat differently than adult humans – appearing childlike in many ways. Their hands have three fingers and a thumb – all of which are elongated to about twice human proportional size. Their feet has four toes. The head is over-sized and has large, pure-black eyes.

In other words, they are the stereotypical “Grays” of modern UFO lore.

Alien Critters

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10.

Skills: Fight d10, Notice d6+2, Stealth d6, Track d6.

Charisma: NA; Pace 8; Parry: 7; Toughness $7 + 2 - 1 = 8$.

Edges and Powers:

Alertness, Fleet-Footed, Small (-1 to hit, -1 Toughness), Armor 2, Fearless, Infravision.

Large Claws: Str+d8 damage.

Notes: Science fiction is full of alien "bugs" -- deadly and merciless insectoid creatures – and these are more of the same. These are the soldier-creatures of an alien hive-mind, but the PCs will probably see them as pack-hunting carnivores. Currently isolated from the hive-mind, these creatures only instinct is to pursue and kill -- even eating is secondary as long as moving prey is in sight. These creatures are capable of simple stratagems of the, "you two charge, while the rest of us sneak in from behind" level of sophistication. They run on all fours, but fight by standing on their hind legs and swiping with their claws – at which time they look roughly humanoid. They are covered with dark-brown chitin and their eyes are solid orange in color.