



THE BLOODY FIRST

WEIRD WAR I

THE DOUGHBOYS' FACE OFF AGAINST UNFATHOMABLE CREATURES IN THE FIRST AMERICAN BATTLE OF THE GREAT WAR.
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THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The date is May 28, 1918 and the first American-planned and led battle of the Great War is underway. The US 1st Infantry Division is eliminating a German salient overlooking the Allied lines by retaking the once sleepy village of Cantigny, France. In the wake of a massive Franco-American artillery bombardment, followed by a creeping barrage to protect the advancing Doughboys, the first phase of the attack was largely successful. Cantigny itself is almost totally destroyed, with homes, businesses, churches—every structure in the town—reduced to piles of rubble.

The French cannons, which reinforced the 1st Division's own batteries, now leave the field to support another part of the Allied lines elsewhere. Without the additional guns to help keep the German artillery and machine guns suppressed, the enemy puts the new American positions—as well as likely routes for reinforcements—under terrible fire.

MOPPING UP

The Doughboys' squad is part of the third wave of the assault on Cantigny. Their mission is to assist a two-man French flamethrower team in clearing any remaining Germans from the ruined town. The veteran Poilus' method of clearing any cellars or underground bunkers that survived the assault is simple. First, the flamethrower operator shouts in (bad) German for the enemy to come out and waits. If no reply is heard within fifteen seconds or so a jet of flame pours into the bunker, followed by a grenade tossed in by the second Frenchman who carries a bag of bombs. The heroes' squad then moves in to capture any survivors (it may be helpful to have a few American Extras in the squad to escort prisoners back behind the lines).

Due to the intensity of the Allied bombardment there aren't many Germans left alive in Cantigny. Many bodies are visible among the wreckage. Even so, there are many cellars, basements, and bunkers that must be checked for holdouts. Most of the Germans who did survive are still dazed from the shelling. Soldiers who make successful Notice rolls see that the remaining Germans are largely a mix of teenage boys and middle-aged men who are more than willing to surrender, but there are a few diehards like Leutnant Karl Brenner who remain. Brenner and his men emerge from their bunker, take positions in the rubble (see

Cover & Obstacles in *Savage Worlds*), and attempt to ambush the Doughboys (see **Surprise** in *Savage Worlds*).

- ✘ **Leutnant Karl Brenner:** Use the Seasoned German Officer profile in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*, but he has the Fanatic Hindrance. He's clever though and hides it until he can cause the most harm to his captors.
- **FRENCH POILUS (2):** Use the Seasoned French Poilu profile in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*, but one has a Strength of d8, a Schilt 3-bis flamethrower, and no rifle. The other carries a bag of 12 No. 1 grenades (Range 5/10/20, Damage 3d6, MBT). Both also carry Modèle 1892 pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1), and wear heavy, flame-retardant, leather overcoats giving them +1 Armor, and reducing their Pace by 1.
- **GERMAN INFANTRYMEN (1 plus 1 per hero):** See the *Weird War I Player's Guide*.

INCOMING!

One of the last underground bolt-holes checked by the Americans remains intact, but all the Germans within are dead, victims of flying shrapnel. Two such bodies lie face down on the stairs leading up and out of a former root cellar, as if they had been climbing up when they were killed. Squad members who make a Notice roll realize their wounds were taken from behind. A closer examination of the corpses and a successful Healing roll reveals the only wounds on their fronts are exit wounds, where shrapnel apparently passed completely through their bodies from behind. Should the soldiers make their way into the cellar itself, they discover a total of twelve German bodies. Some of the dead seem to have been cut down while moving towards the stairs, while others lie on the floor in a semicircle in front of a three-foot diameter hole in the north wall of the room. These men were victims of the splitterspinnen (see page 2).

While the squad finishes their search, German artillery and machine guns bring Cantigny under fire. The Doughboys and any allied Extras must sprint for cover from the barrage. They face a mix of both light and medium artillery (see **Artillery Modifiers** in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*). From this point forward, barrages sweep through Cantigny every three to five rounds as the enemy tries to prevent reinforcements from reaching the new American front lines. The safest places to be are in one of the remaining cellars. Squad members who take shelter underground don't have to make checks against artillery.



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No matter where the Doughboys seek shelter, the artillery brings forth splitterspinnen to attack. They either burrow through cellar walls, up through the ground, or seem to coalesce out of thin air in the immediate wake of exploding shells. The splitterspinnen cavort through the blast waves, hunting fresh prey.

- **SPLITTERSPINNEN (1 per hero):** See below. Note that more splitterspinnen can assemble from the shrapnel being created by the current artillery strikes.

SPLITTERSPINNEN (SPLINTER SPIDERS)

Sometimes as men cower beneath particularly heavy bombardments unable to do anything but wait and pray the shells don't find them, maim them, vaporize them, or bury them alive in their dugouts their fear, madness, shame, rage, and deaths take on an unholy life of their own. Splitterspinnen are creatures made of animated shrapnel, either from shells themselves or various materials turned into deadly splinters by the surrounding blasts. Despite their name, splitterspinnen only superficially resemble arachnids. Sharp spears of steel and wood, slivers of stone and brick, bits of buttons, buckles, and dog tags, even razor-sharp shards of human and animal bone with gory flesh still attached, can all become part of a splitterspinnen. This central core of debris is surrounded by long, strangely jointed legs extending from the central body from a variety of points and angles. Each of these limbs ends in a stiletto point capable of spearing through flesh and bone.

Area Appearing: Any location subject to high-intensity artillery bombardment.

Attributes: Agility d12+2, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Skills: Athletics d12, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Splitterspinnen are made of metal, concrete, bone, and other hard materials.
- **Burrow (10''):** Splitterspinnen can tunnel through ground, blocked only by solid bedrock.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Detonate:** When a splitterspinnen's Action Card is 10 or higher, it can attempt to explode by making an Athletics roll. If successful, it causes 3d6 damage in a Medium Blast Template or Cone Template (GM's choice). The creature shudders and shakes for just a moment before detonating. The damage can be Evaded, but the roll is made at -2 if the creature got a raise on its Athletics roll. The explosion doesn't kill the horror though! In the round immediately following the detonation the creature makes a Vigor roll. With success, it reassembles and is Shaken. With a raise, it reassembles and isn't Shaken (but can't

Detonate this round). Anyone who suffered a Wound from the creature's last blast takes a level of Fatigue as the pieces of the splitterspinnen burrow their way back out of their bodies!

- **Fear (-2):** Splitterspinnen are unnatural horrors.
- **Fearless:** Splitterspinnen are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Immunity (Explosives):** Splitterspinnen can't be harmed by explosives, but they do cause the creature to Detonate potentially hitting anyone within a Medium Burst Template.
- **Natural Weapons (Claws):** Str+d4.
- **Partial Invulnerability:** Splitterspinnen have no vital organs, so non-fire-based and non-magical attacks only cause half damage.
- **Wall Walker:** Splitterspinnen can walk on vertical or inverted surfaces at their normal Pace.
- **Weakness (Acid/Electricity/Fire):** Acid, electric, and fire-based attacks cause normal damage.

THE WAR GOES ON

This is the Doughboys' first real operation of the war, and their first experience of the weirder aspects of the conflict. Poilus or German prisoners who have been fighting for years may well have encountered splitterspinnen before and mention they're far from the oddest or most terrible things they've encountered. For the Americans, this is just the beginning. The squad goes forward into six more months of increasingly brutal combat amongst the horrors of the Weird Wars.

