



By Lord Circe

A decade ago, a crow-masked cult swept through a western town. The sheriff was killed, and the church set ablaze. Everyone in town was rounded up, man, woman, and child, and forced to undergo torturous rituals. Townsperson after townsperson fell dead from the days of torture, their bodies discarded in the swamp.

Isabella was one of them. Just a young girl, she was dumped out with the rest in the swamp, her eye missing from the ritual she had undergone.

But she survived. She rose, surrounded by the corpses of those she loved, the golden Crow's Eye burning in her socket. She fled from that place, wandering to survive. Training herself for the day when she could take her revenge.

That day is now. You will be stepping into the boots of Isabella, arriving as she stands in the middle of the ruins of her childhood hometown. She has staked her life on the defeat and destruction of the accursed cult, and so they are drawn in to face her.

You must Kill The Crows.

Rules

You start with +0 CP. You can gain more through drawbacks.

You start with Isabella's body and memories (meaning you will not have the benefits of your Body Mod or any front loaded perks or powers). You will have a minute or so to adjust before the first crow cultist enters the town to try and take you out.

You cannot exit the borders of the town or the Gauntlet will end.

The cultists will constantly appear around the town and enter to try and kill you. Your prize for this Gauntlet will depend on how many of the cultists you manage to kill before you finally fall.

Once you reach the requirements to achieve a given prize, you will automatically gain it, meaning that you will become stronger the longer you manage to last.

Every 100 kills, one of the bosses of the crows will appear, starting with the Reaper, then the Shaman, then the Hunter.

At 400 Kills, the Reaper will reappear, and a silver bullet will load itself into your gun for the final showdown. Can you bring down the Reaper once and for all?

Drawbacks

You can take any number of the following drawbacks to gain extra CP to use on making purchases later in the document.

Call Me Isaac (+0): You can select this toggle to be male.

Tumbleweed Winds (+100): Sudden gusts of wind can stir up out of nowhere, throwing off your aim and possibly causing you to stumble. This wind can also blow up dust that can get in the eyes and make it difficult to see.

Swamp Mists (+100): The swamps stir as the showdown approaches. Swirling mists blow through town, obscuring your sight lines and those of your opponents.

Die By The Gun (+100): You swore that you would put a bullet in the head of every crow. You are unable to use anything other than your gun to kill cultists. No traps, no melee weapons, no friendly fire.

They Came From Inside The Town (+100): The crows will no longer only appear at the edges of the town and make their way inward. Now, they have a chance to appear behind walls, inside buildings, and really anywhere outside of direct line of sight of you.

Zealous Rush (+100): Some of the crows have been blessed by their devotion to the dark rituals they have performed. Occasionally, crows will appear that are faintly outlined in red, with glowing red eyes. These crows will move and attack far faster than normal.

Elite Chaos (+100): Ordinarily, the first crows you would face would be basic cultists, wielding slow-firing pistols or axes. Now, however, all types of cultists will appear from the very beginning, including suicide bombers, scythe wielding assassins, or colorful necromancers.

Hurtful Misses (+100): You must make every shot count. Every shot that you don't hit a crow will cause you to feel a sharp harsh stinging pain somewhere on your body. It will fade within moments, but even a few seconds of distraction can be deadly in a fight.

Gunjam (+100): Your gun will sometimes jam after a shot. You will feel it immediately. To clear the jam, you must focus like you are reloading, but it will take three times longer than it would normally take to reload a bullet.

Diving Flock (+100): Large crows circle above the town, and they will occasionally swoop in to distract you. Killing them won't count towards your total number of cultists killed.

Grasping Spirits (+100): Patches of earth will randomly glow an eerie green, with spectral hands rising from them and grasping at anything that walks over the area. This can easily trip you up, but it can also function as a trap for crows if you are careful.

Death Throws (+200): Bombers aren't the only enemies you need to worry about when they die. Cultists will often get off some last attack as they die, whether a final shot of the pistol or a clumsily thrown axe or something along those lines.

Standing Proud (+200): You swore you'd no longer cower in fear. You can't crouch or dodge roll during your fight. You must stand upright the entire time.

As The Crow No Longer Flies (+200): Your enemies are determined to kill you, but they can and will be clever about it. Cultists will no longer beeline towards you when entering the town, but will instead move strategically, including setting up ambushes.

Don't Blink (+200): Never forget, the eye that burns in your head is a tool of the enemy. Using your Crow's Eye power will cause a sharp pain behind your eye with each use, growing more debilitating the longer you use it. Long rests in between uses can cause this pain to recede.

Loading Stations (+200): You are no longer able to freely reload your gun wherever you please. Instead, there are small immovable scarecrows dotted around the town, and you will only be able to reload your weapon when within a dozen feet of one of them. Your Showdowns can still fully reload your weapon as normal.

Storm Ring (+200): The Shaman's curse lays upon the town. Every so often, you will feel your hair stand on end, the air will crackle, and a faint spectral ring will appear, centered on you. Quickly exit the ring and look away, as very shortly, a lightning bolt will strike within it.

Explosive Dodges (+200): The Hunter's curse lays upon the town. Whenever you dodge or narrowly avoid an attack, a landmine will appear under your feet. Each landmine will take a few seconds to arm itself, and will then only detonate when you step on it, not any crows, though a well-placed bullet might be able to set it off.

Dead Crow Rises (+300): You may have killed the crows, but they are not necessarily staying dead. After a short while, cultists you have killed will revive, rising again from wherever they lay to attack you. Killing them again will not count towards your total number of cultists killed, and the only way to actually force them to die for good is to shatter their mask.

Feed The Worms (+300): The cults rituals have stirred something beneath the desert sands. A monstrous worm tunnels underneath your feet, lured by the vibrations of gunfire. It is immune to weapons itself, and will surge to the surface if you stand and shoot too long in one place.

Ghost Town Blues (+300): You fight amid the ruins of your childhood home, and you are not unaffected by it. Throughout your fight, you will be beset by hallucinations of the dead townsfolk walking around with the twisted wounds inflicted on them by the cult. Some may stop and accuse you of failing to save them, of cowardly running while they all died. These hallucinations will not prevent you from seeing the cultists, but they can distract you and cut at your heart.

First Blood (+400): You can't afford to take so much as a scratch. Any damage dealt to you by the crows, even a glancing blow, will spell the end of your time here.

Grow Strong And Survive (+600): You will no longer be arriving here in the middle of town. Instead, you will awaken as a child in the swamp, surrounded by the dead. You will have to survive for a decade in the wastelands of the west as a young orphan before your showdown can occur. You will not gain the Marksman Perk automatically, but instead have to train yourself up for the conflict. Then, a decade after you've arrived, you will have to have made it back to this town, ready for the final showdown to begin. You can try hunting crows prior to this point, but doing so will not prevent this showdown from occurring, and none of them you manage to kill ahead of time will count towards your total. On the positive side, none of your other drawbacks will kick in until the final showdown starts.

Perks

Markswoman (Free): You have trained for this day for a decade. Your body is honed to levels many action heroes would be jealous of, capable of fighting for hours if required without rest. Your aim is incredible, capable of firing from the hip with the same sort of accuracy you could get from carefully sighting your shot.

Crow's Eye (Free): The power sought after by the cult. The golden eye that glows in your head can allow you to cause time to slow to a crawl, a phenomenon called Showdown. In this state, you can only turn your head, focusing on targets within your line of sight. Then, upon release, you fire as many bullets as you could normally hold in your gun in a blur of motion, each one aimed perfectly towards your selected target. This power charges with death, requiring six kills outside of this state before it can be used again, and only two full charges can be held at a time.

Glimmers of Gold (100): Can be taken multiple times. Each time you take this, the number of charges you can hold for your Crow's Eye is increased by one.

Environmentalist (100): You have a preternatural awareness of your surroundings and sightlines, allowing you to make good use of cover while avoiding ever backing yourself into a corner or getting tripped up by a bit of loose boarding.

In The Zone (100): You can keep your cool under fire, acting decisively without rushing or panicking, and you can force your way past the pain of injuries from glancing blows, continuing to use limbs normally, even if they have taken a bullet or two.

Dual Wielder (100): You have the ability to duplicate any weapon you are holding in one hand, and create an exact duplicate in your other hand. This duplicate will vanish if dropped, and perfectly mirrors the state of the original, including sharing the same 'pool' of ammunition. This also makes you perfectly ambidextrous.

Sidestep (200): You are able to channel a bit of your Showdown energy without entering the full Showdown state, gaining a burst of speed that can allow you to move fast enough to sidestep a bullet from point blank range. This burst of speed can only help you move and dodge, not attack, and takes up the energy of a single kill.

Counter Shot (200): Whenever an enemy misses an attack on you, you can instantly snap your gun towards them and counter-attack them with a fired bullet that does not actually expend any ammunition. The missed attack must have passed within a few feet of you for this to trigger, and you must use the counter attack within a second or so. If you fire towards a different target instead, the bullet will be expended as usual.

Mark Your Enemies (200): You have what amounts to a small series of floating mental arrows, each of which points to someone with a desire to see you dead within the range of a small town. It only gives you a direction to each enemy, giving no indication of level of danger or distance.

Danger Lines (300): You can sense danger in the form of glowing lines, tracing out the path of any enemy's attack a few seconds before they actually take it. These lines can start out as general cones of potential danger, narrowing down as an enemy decides on a specific attack, and the lines will pulse right before the attack is actually taken. You can always feel these lines as they pass through your body, even if you aren't looking at them directly.

One Shot (400): Every hit is a kill. It doesn't matter where you hit them, as long as one of your shots physically strikes an enemy and causes some harm to them (even through clothing), they will die.

Items

Revolver (Free): An ordinary looking six-shooter, the last heirloom of Isabella's family. It will always appear in your hand when you reach out your hand for it. You are always aware of exactly how many bullets you have left, and you can take a moment of focus to cause a spent shell in the gun to vanish and be replaced by a fresh bullet. It takes just under a second for each new round to appear. It will automatically fully reload itself after each use of your Crow's Eye.

Extra Chamber (100): Can be taken multiple times. Each time you take this, the number of chambers in your revolver is increased by two.

Spurs And Boots (100): A pair of well-maintained boots with matching spurs. You can run and dodge faster than you would normally be able to, you'll never slip or trip while wearing them, and you get a further burst in speed for a short time after every kill or Showdown.

Tobacco and Oil (100): Pick your poison. You have a tub of chewing tobacco and a bottle of oil which both have the same effect when chewed or swallowed. They will grant you a brief boost in accuracy, aiming speed, and general body coordination. This lasts for several seconds, and neither container ever runs out, but it can be a bit difficult to find a free moment in combat to take another mouthful.

Gloves and Bandoleer (200): A pair of gloves and a leather bandolier. While wearing them, your revolver will automatically reload itself when not being fired, at its typical rate, and when you are actually focusing on reloading it, the speed of reloading will be tripled.

Locket and Harmonica (200): An old locket and harmonica, both of which seem to resonate with your Crow's Eye. While you have them on your person, you will find that kills made in your Showdown state can contribute some charge towards your next Showdown (each being worth roughly a third of a normal kill each), and when you are standing still, you can hum softly to cause your Showdown energy to rise, at a rate of roughly one kill worth every five seconds.

The Blind Tarot (200): A mysterious tarot card that can give you a flash of insight into an immediate lethal danger. This insight comes in an instant, and with enough time that you can potentially act to mitigate or avoid the danger, but it is up to you and your skills to actually do so. Once an insight is given, it will take a minute or so until a new insight can be granted.

Scarecrow Hat (300): A worn and weather-beaten hat. You can pull it off your head and throw it out, which will cause a bouncing scarecrow to appear underneath it, hopping across the dirt. This scarecrow will appear to be you to your enemies, while they will be unable to actually perceive you directly unless you unleash an attack while in their direct line of sight. The various cultists will move and aim towards this scarecrow instead of you. After two or three hits, the scarecrow will vanish and the hat will appear back on your head, causing you to reappear to your enemies. You will have to wait for a minute before you will be able to toss out the hat again.

Sheriff's Badge (400): A shiny badge, marred with a few spots of long dried blood. It failed the sheriff a decade ago, but it won't fail you. This badge will protect you in the event that you take a lethal attack, shattering while causing you to be fully healed of any wounds you might have and rendering you invulnerable for a few seconds. During this Jump, this badge will reappear after shattering once you've made fifty kills. After this Jump, it will also reappear after shattering once a month has passed.

Prizes

Prizes are based on what 'round' you've reached, and what enemies you've managed to kill during the round. A round consists of 100 enemies, and then a boss fight. Once you've reached the prerequisite for a prize, you automatically gain it.

ROUND ONE

Gunman Crow: A cultist wielding a slow-firing pistol. They appear from the beginning, and if you manage to kill at least one of them, you will get to keep the Revolver when you leave here.

Slasher Crow: A cultist wielding a large axe. They appear from the beginning, and if you manage to kill at least one of them, you will get to keep the Markswoman Perk (if you gained it) when you leave here.

Sharpshooter Crow: A cultist wielding a high-powered rifle that releases a burst of long-ranged shots. They appear after 25 kills or so, and if you manage to kill at least one of them, you will gain the Staccato Bullet. When reloading, you can make one of your bullets a staccato bullet, which will fire itself three times in quick succession with one pull of the trigger while only using a single bullet.

- Special Bullet Note: All special bullets follow the same rules, though these rules can change due to later prizes. You can only have a single copy of a special bullet in your revolver at once, and you must make twelve shots after firing a special bullet before you can reload it. You can always sense which chamber your special bullets are in and which effects they have, and can mentally rotate past a special bullet, keeping it in your gun until you decide to fire it. You cannot stack multiple effects on a single bullet.

Defender Crow: A cultist wielding a large flail and a thick wooden shield that can block your shots. They appear after 40 kills or so, and if you manage to kill at least one of them, you will gain the Shield Bullet. When reloading, you can make one of your bullets a shield bullet, which flies at a walking pace when fired, creating a hardened shield of air around it that will block incoming shots, but won't block shots coming from behind it. It doesn't cause damage on impact.

BOSS - Reaper Crow: The boss of the cultists. He will summon a cloud of spectral crows to defend himself, and summon gravestones which will burst into ghostly slasher crows to try and attack you. If you manage to break through his defenses and defeat him, you will get to keep all of the Perks and Items you gained here, including the Crow's Eye. From this point onward, you can choose to 'quit' the Gauntlet at any time, allowing you to leave without actually dying. You gain +2 Max Bullets for your Revolver, and you can fully reload it by focusing for three seconds, rather than reloading bullets individually. You gain +1 Max Showdown Charge, -1 Kill Required per Charge, and you can enter a 'pseudo-Showdown' state where you cannot move at all, but which does not use up any energy, allowing you extra time to think.

ROUND TWO

Bomber Crow: A cultist that will try to charge at you and detonate a suicide bomb. This bomb will explode on their death, potentially damaging cultists around them. If you manage to kill at least one of them, you will gain the Bomber Bullet. When reloading, you can make one of your bullets a bomber bullet, which will detonate upon impact with a strong explosion.

BOSS - Shaman Crow: A mad cultist that can summon lightning from the sky, and slow-moving spheres of electricity that will try to chase you, as well as gravestones which will spawn slasher crows like those summoned by the Reaper. He is defended by crystals marking out a wide barrier, which you will need to shatter to be able to attack him. If you manage to defeat him, you will gain the Storm Showdown. This will allow you to expend a Showdown Charge to call down a large burst of lightning on yourself. This lightning will not harm you, but will blast away enemies that are near you, with some lightning chaining out to stun enemies that are farther away, and will grant you a significant boost in speed for a while after being struck. You gain +2 Max Bullets for your Revolver, and each bullet can now pierce through enemies and thin obstacles to strike enemies behind them. For special bullets, you can choose whether the first or last impact will trigger their special effects. You can now stack two special bullet effects on top of a single bullet, and it only requires six shots after firing before you can reload a special bullet. You gain +1 Max Showdown Charge, -1 Kill Required per Charge, and when in Showdown or pseudo-Showdown, you gain 360 degree vision around yourself, which you can use for targeting enemies behind you.

ROUND THREE

Enforcer Crow: A bulky cultist wielding a large shotgun. If you manage to kill at least one of them, you will gain the Shrapnel Bullet. When reloading, you can make one of your bullets a shrapnel bullet, which will cause one to three 'shrapnel' bullets to fire from the point of impact. Each of these bullets will ricochet towards an enemy within line of sight of the point of impact, firing as if aimed by you.

Stalker Crow: A thin scythe-wielding cultist, which moves with strange leaping and zigzagging motions to rapidly approach you. They can appear very late in this round, and if you manage to kill at least one of them, you will gain the Engraved Bullet. When reloading, you can make one of your bullets an engraved bullet, which will curve and turn through the air to avoid obstacles and hit a desired target. It can make two turns of up to sixty degrees each second while in the air.

BOSS - Hunter Crow: A vicious cultist that is protected from harm by a pair of flying crystals, hovering over the town. He can strike with a monstrously powerful charge, which can break through thin obstacles, and he will randomly scatter landmines throughout the area as he is moving and charging, which will only be triggered off of your own movement. If you manage to break his defenses and defeat him, you will gain the Bull Rush. This will allow you to use up a bullet in your gun to suddenly charge at an enemy with bone-breaking force. You will be unharmed from this rush, and it will carry with it any effects of your expended bullet. You gain +3 Max Bullets for your Revolver, and each bullet can now be fired as a shotgun burst of short-range pellets. Special bullets can have their effect spread across the spray. You can now stack three special bullet effects on top of a single bullet, and it only requires three shots after firing before you can reload a special bullet. You gain +1 Max Showdown Charge, -1 Kills Required per Charge, and when in Showdown or pseudo-Showdown, your vision can expand outward for several hundred feet through obstacles, highlighting potential targets, and bullets you fire during Showdown can ghost through obstacles to strike targets.

ROUND FOUR

Spectre Crow: A cultist that is capable of turning themself intangible and ghosting around the level, only turning tangible to launch a deadly throwing knife at you. If you manage to kill at least one of them, you will gain the Blink Bullet. When reloading, you can make one of your bullets a blink bullet, which will act as a beacon for you after impact. If it is lodged within a person or corpse, you can expend the beacon to swap places with the person or corpse. If it is lodged in an object or obstacle, you can expend the beacon to simply teleport directly to that point. The beacon can last for an hour before fading, and any number of beacons can be present at once.

Magician Crow: A cultist wielding a potent necromantic magic. They can place a magic mark on cultists that stray nearby, which will cause that cultist to revive after death as a spectral crow. Melee based crows will revive as Slasher Crows, and ranged attackers will revive as a Gunman Crow. These spectral crows can't be magic marked. This cultist will start to appear roughly halfway through this round, and if you manage to kill at least one of them, you will gain the Wraith Bullet. When reloading, you can make one of your bullets a wraith bullet, which will cause a target that is killed by it to release a spectral ghost that will launch itself to attack your nearest enemy. These ghosts will last for several seconds, and can strike with lethal blows against as many enemies as they can reach while they remain.

FINAL BOSS - Reaper Crow: The Reaper returns, now with an even thicker cloud of spectral crows defending him, and with his gravestones capable of spawning any of the non-boss Crows you have fought, though they will primarily summon Slasher and Gunman crows. At the start of this boss fight, one of the bullets in your gun will transform into a Silver Bullet. If you land the final blow on the Reaper Crow with any bullet other than this Silver Bullet, then he will die, but the Gauntlet continues through a new round. At the end of that new Round, the Reaper will reappear, as will the Silver Bullet, and you will get to try again. If you manage to land the final blow on the Reaper Crow with the Silver Bullet, then the Gauntlet is over, and you gain the following prizes.

- You gain the Silver Bullet as a Special Bullet. This bullet's effect is to prevent revival of those killed by it, as well as imposing the concept of death on immortal or unkillable beings.
- You can now have two copies of all Special Bullets at once, and you only need one shot after using a Special Bullet before you can reload it.
- You can choose one of the following two prizes:

Master of the Murder: You now have control over the Cult of the Crow, and can summon all of the 'flock' to fight for you. You can summon up to two dozen of the 'basic' cultists (Gunman Crows and Slasher Crows) at once, up to six of the elite cultists (Sharpshooter, Defender, Bomber, Enforcer, Stalker, Spectre, and/or Magician Crows) at once, and all three bosses at once. New cultists can replace any that are killed, at a rate of one basic cultist revived per minute, one elite cultist revived every ten minutes, and one boss revived each hour.

Massacre Avenged: You can now go to the location where a massacre or genocide happened at some point in the past, and fight a mini-gauntlet to retroactively cause that massacre or genocide to not have happened. The mini-gauntlet will have the same basic restrictions as this Gauntlet, and the number of rounds each mini-gauntlet will take depends on the size of the massacre being stopped. One Round for 1,000 deaths or less, Two Rounds for 10,000 deaths or less, Three Rounds for 100,000 deaths or less, and so on. No time will pass while you are attempting the mini-gauntlet, and if you should die while in it, you can simply instantly revive and try again. Upon successful completion of the mini-gauntlet, time will be altered, giving you a memory of both timelines. This will actually alter events to prevent the tragedy, and will not simply shift the date it occurred or cause some 'balancing' tragedy to replace it. Each mini-gauntlet is focused on a singular event, so it can't undo the effect of several separate battles in a given war or all deaths caused by a given disease throughout history. It could, however, undo the deaths caused by a single serial killer or specific mad scientist over a number of years. Once per year, you can reduce the number of rounds that a given mini-gauntlet requires by 1. If this reduces the rounds required to zero, then the mini-gauntlet is instantly considered complete.

Ending

However far you went, your time here is now done. Hopefully, you've done enough that Isabella's town can rest in peace. But even if you fell in battle, you will be able to move along on your Chain.

Changelog

Version 2.1 - Additions due to the Crimson Moon Rising patch. Seven new drawbacks, three new perks, two new items, and a few adjustments.

Version 2.0 - Adjusted the Rules and Prize section in light of the As The Crow Piles and Load Up That Silver Bullet patches, as well as the added Story Mode.

Version 1.0 - Release

FAQ

Q. If I took Grow Strong And Survive, will I get the Markswoman Perk at the end of the Gauntlet?

A. No. You will get to keep the results of whatever training you did over the decade, but you won't get the actual perk. That is something you give up as part of taking Grow Strong And Survive.

Q. Can One Shot apply to other attacks?

A. Yes, but it must be an actual serious attack intended to cause damage. So, a mere touch or small poke will not be sufficient.

Q. Once I've won it, can I use the pseudo-Showdown state even when I have no Showdown energy?

A. Yes.

Q. Why did you change when certain enemies will appear?

A. To better align with the timings that I was trying to balance between Story Mode and the more typical rounds.

Q. If I take Elite Rush, and I beat an enemy before their listed round, does that mean that I will earn their prize?

A. Yes.

Q. If I've earned the final set of prizes, can I stack my two copies of a special bullet on top of each other?

A. Yes. See the below list for what a 'double-stacked' bullet of each special bullet type looks like.

- Staccato Bullet: Burst of seven bullets at once.
- Shield Bullet: Larger shield which can add a bit of acceleration to bullets you fire through it.
- Bomber Bullet: A far larger explosion.
- Shrapnel Bullet: Each secondary bullet can release another burst of shrapnel bullets.
- Engraved Bullet: Bullet can move faster and half a dozen 90 degree turns per second to hit the target.
- Blink Bullet: Beacon lasts for six hours, and can be used up to three times before being used up.
- Wraith Bullet: Ghosts created last for up to a minute.
- Silver Bullet: No extra effect.