



 **BRASS** 
 **& STEEL** 
A GAME OF **STEAMPUNK ADVENTURE**





B **RASS**
& **S** **TEEL**
A GAME OF STEAMPUNK ADVENTURE

First Edition Rulebook & Gaming Manual

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BRASS & STEEL DESIGNED BY:

*Shane B. Bauer
Greg Kveberg
Ken Vinson*

ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN FOR PAMEAN GAMES BY:

Shawn Kavon

EDITING:

Shawn Kavon and Timothy P. Kitzinger

INTERIOR ART:

Grace Palmer and Shawn Kavon

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

about Brass & Steel and Pamean Games, visit us online at: **www.pameangames.com**

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W elcome stalwart travelers to the world of Brass & Steel! What you have before you is the result of long hours of review and play testing, and is the first version of our game that we're showing to the public. Brass & Steel is the product of countless discussions between the three of us and our many brave, noble and long-suffering friends. We are proud of the book in front of you. We set out to create a fun, fast-paced game of steampunk adventure, and here it is!

We will be continuing to develop our game over the coming months and years, and we would very much like to hear from you. If particular rules or concepts are hard to understand, we want to know, and we'll try to fix or explain them. If something in the game delights you, we would like to know that as well.

We have ideas for books on different corners of our world; something on gear and technology, including tinkering, a topic that didn't make it into this release; manuals to expand the arcane arts, or dreaming, or both; and much else besides. We are also planning an expanded future release of the core Brass & Steel rules which will incorporate feedback from players and play testers. Please take a moment to visit our forums at www.pameangames.com, and let us know what you think. We check the forums regularly, and look forward to participating in the discussion. We will be putting useful downloads out on our site as well, such as character sheets; cheat sheets for arcansim, dreaming and combat; a guide to steampunk costuming and other things over time, so be sure to take a look.

We hope that you enjoy playing Brass & Steel as much as we have enjoyed shepherding it to this point. It has been a labor of love for us and we look forward to making it, with your help, even better in the next release. So don your top hat or aviator helmet, rev up your velocipede's engine or stoke your airship's Hotaether boiler, and go forth to adventure! We're glad you're with us.

Shane B. Bauer

Greg Kueberg

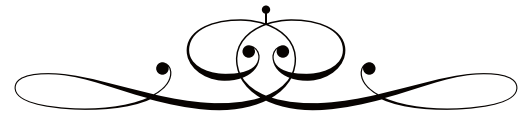
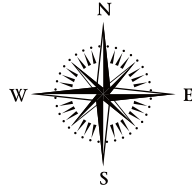
Ken Vinson



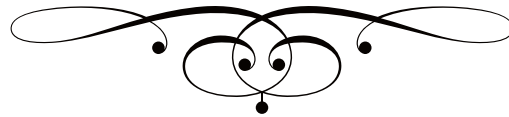


SECTION I
CHARACTER SYSTEMS





INTRODUCTION



- *Welcome* •
- *What is Brass & Steel* •
- *Historical Timeline* •
- *Game Concepts* •
- *Glossary of Setting Specific Terms* •
- *How to Use these Rules - LARP vs. Tabletop* •



WELCOME



How do we go about understanding the heathen mind? There's a good question. Let us begin by reflecting on Creation. The heretic Magoi hold that the imperfect demiurge Yaltabaath created the cosmos with power stolen from the supreme Godhead. The shamans of the eastern steppes will, if you can stomach the fermented mare's milk long enough to hear the tale, say that the Great Dreamers created our world out of their cosmic dream and ruled it as gods until they grew bored and moved on to newer imaginings. The Mohammedan holy book, as we will discover in E.H. Palmer's excellent translation, tells a tale of creation nearly identical to that of the Old Testament. Our enemies in Imperial Aztlán maintain the grotesque belief the Earth and Sun were birthed by their Snake Mother, that the moon is the severed head of her own child. <dark muttering in audience> Our allies among the Apache will tell you the Earth was created from spider sweat. <audience laughter>

Quiet down, this is a serious matter. The point I am laboring to drive through your thick skulls is that the heathens you encounter during your career as agents of Her Majesty's Colonial Service don't just dress funny and speak an unpronounceable language. Their entire conception of the universe and how it functions may be different from your own.

Over the next sixteen weeks I have the regrettable and likely hopeless task of breaking down your preconceptions and prejudices just far enough to ensure that they don't fatally trip you up when you deal with the absurd and often delicate sensibilities of the Empire's colonial subjects. If you are unable to comprehend the culture of the heathens you will be unable to perform your duty to the Queen. You must learn to break bread with a Bedu in his desert tent without mortally offending this or that honored tradition, to negotiate a peace between feuding Lakotah chieftains, to take your damned shoes off when you enter a Turkish Masjid. It's an ugly, brutal, heathen world out there but Her Imperial Majesty intends to bring it all under her benevolent dominion and so it is our duty to help deliver it.

•excerpt from the introductory lecture to "Practical Ethnography for the Colonial Service", as taught by Lt Col Sir Alfred Randolph Bell, KCMG, PhD, FRHistS, Reg. Prof. Modern History (Oxford)

WHAT IS BRASS & STEEL?



Brass & Steel is a game of steampunk adventure set in an alternate Earth beginning in the year 1905. You are invited to help us paint stories on a vast canvas, conjuring up the joys and fears, the hopes and dreams of steampunk adventurers in the late Victorian Age. Exploration, intrigue, and mysticism are just a few of the many themes to be explored while playing Brass & Steel. Players take on the roles of characters living in this exciting time, making important choices that affect the course of their own lives and that of the world around them. Archetypes are drawn from characters, both real and fictitious, in the idiom of the late Victorian era. Characters inspired by those found in fictional sources such as Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, the whimsies of Jules Verne, or your favorite story may adventure alongside those modeled on real-world explorers like Sir Richard Francis Burton, David Livingstone and Mary Kingsley. Characters in Brass & Steel can be adventurers, scholars, soldiers, aristocrats, rakes, scoundrels and much more. Characters can wield mysterious powers as arcanists or delve into the dreams of others as lucid dreamers; they can also conceive of and build steampunk inventions as artificers and craftsmen. We've also made it possible to dabble in several of these things and still create a character you can have fun with. Generalists are welcome!

The world of Brass & Steel is very like our own, but there are some important differences. For one thing, magic, of a sort, is undeniably real and noticeable everywhere if one knows how to look for it. In the world of Brass & Steel, mysticism and superstitions often have a solid basis in fact. For thousands of years real sorcery was limited to a small number of secretive practitioners called Magoi. These arcanists, having delved deeply into Things Man Was Not Meant to Know, were changed in disturbing ways by their power and were unable to mix with society at large. Occasionally the mystical impinged on larger historical events. It is in these "inflection points" that the differences between our real world and that of Brass & Steel



emerged. These inflection points became more prominent, and their changes more far-reaching, starting in the 16th century with the defeat of Hernan Cortes by a mystically-endowed Aztec Empire.

Magic in the world of Brass & Steel, called arcanism, was brought to the attention of the wider world through the efforts of Enlightenment scientists like Sir Isaac Newton, whose obsession with alchemy garnered fascinating and practical results. The famous industrialists and scientists of the Age of Steam built on Newton's discoveries and incorporated magical compounds into their industrial processes and inventions, resulting in a number of mystically-imbued technologies that substantially changed the course of world history in the 19th century.

Now, in the early years of the 20th century, Hotaether-powered airships whisk the wealthy between exotic destinations and steam-powered velocipedes dart along the streets of London. Elixirs may heal the sick and wounded, so long as they have sufficient wealth to pay the apothecaries. Artificial clockwork limbs restore crippled warriors to service. Elite soldiers wield strange, powerful weapons conceived in the labs of inventors Michael Faraday and Nikola Tesla and manufactured in the factories of Vickers and Maxim. While the lives of the wealthy have been made easier, the lives of the great huddled masses are not much improved and forces for oppression and imperialism have been made even more powerful by the strange new technologies proliferating across the world.

In 1905, the British Empire is even more vast and powerful than it was in the real world and is still ruled by a suspiciously spry eighty-five year-old Queen Victoria. The British enjoyed a near-monopoly on many of the inventions of the second industrial revolution until very recently, and used that power to bolster their position in the world. The Ottoman Empire is no more, and a British Viceroy rules the formerly Ottoman provinces of the British Near-East from the colonial capital of Constantinople. The United States, facing stiff resistance from native tribes protected from smallpox and other diseases by their shamans, has never expanded west of the Mississippi River. The Aztecs and Incas remain free and independent, the former warlike and expansionist and the latter decadent and peaceful. Tensions between European nations are on the rise. The German Empire, which is young, proud, and powerful, has risen rapidly, and threatens the dominance of the British. Germany's allies in Austria and Russia are less technologically sophisticated, but are renowned for their skill at intrigue and for the vast size of their armies and territories. The Aztec Empire has adopted many modern technologies and has recently embarked on a campaign of conquest and expansion. Intrigue abounds, and danger and opportunity lurk around every corner.

Introduction

HISTORICAL TIMELINE



The history of the Earth in which Brass & Steel is set resembles that of our Earth. The presence of arcane powers, dreaming, and new varieties of improbable technology have changed that history in several important ways. The major points of divergence from our history and some of the subsequent developments stemming from those changes are listed below.

Pre-History: The End of the Age of Dreams.

The Great Dreamers withdraw into the deepest Sovereign Realms of Dream

c. 3300 BCE

Early Sumerians codify sorcery, learning to make use of the mutated natural elements found in 'thin' zones, later called Loci. Techniques are devised to refine these elements into usable substances which, when ingested by humans, allow greater feats of sorcery to be performed. Despite the danger of ingesting the unnatural substances, some risk it and become the first "Inoculated" Magoi.



c. 3300•2800 BCE

Despite great secrecy and the inherent dangers of Inoculation, knowledge of sorcery spreads across Mesopotamia and into Egypt. The number of inoculated Magoi remains very small.

2590 BCE

Gilgamesh, the fifth King of Uruk and a powerful Magos, unites the city-states of Sumer into an empire spanning the Fertile Crescent. His 25-year campaign culminates in the invasion of Egypt.

2570 BCE

Gilgamesh of Uruk defeats Khufu of Egypt. Lower Egypt is incorporated into the Sumerian state while Upper Egypt remains under native Egyptian rule. The Great Pyramid of Khufu is left half-finished. Monumental ziggurats are built on the Giza plateau over the next several decades. The unfinished Great Pyramid is used as a building platform for the largest ziggurat ever constructed. For centuries the most important monumental structures of the Sumerians and their successors are built on similar platforms.

2464 BCE

After reigning 126 years, Gilgamesh disappears attempting a tenth Inoculation. The fragile Sumerian Empire collapses, undoing Gilgamesh's work in a few short years.

2270 BCE

Sargon usurps the throne of Kish and begins a series of conquests that reunite the Sumerian Empire. He builds a new capital at Akkad with the help of the great sorceress Althan•Ya.

2055 BCE

Mentuhotep II of Thebes ascends to the throne of Upper Egypt. With the Akkadian Empire disintegrating and its control over Lower Egypt slipping, Mentuhotep invades. By the end of his fifty-one year reign all of Egypt is under native rule for the first time since the defeat of Khufu five hundred years earlier.

343•335 BCE

During his time in Philip of Macedon's court, Aristotle learns about sorcery in dialogue with Queen Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great. Olympias was trained as a Magos but refused her first Inoculation, marrying Phillip instead.

335 BCE

Aristotle returns to Athens, founds the Lyceum and writes his greatest works. Spurning inoculation as inhuman, he spends the rest of his life attempting to formulate an indirect means of understanding and using the magical substances. His unfinished treatise on the subject is lost after his death, though fragments can be discerned in both his surviving work and through references in the surviving work of contemporaries.

c. 100•300 CE

Various flavors of Gnosticism become popular among the Magoi in the vast Roman territories. The Magoi retain a Gnostic-tinged philosophical tradition up to the present day. Latin-speaking Magoi begin using the terms 'arcanist' and 'arcanism,' derived from the Latin *arcanus*, meaning secret or hidden, to describe themselves and their art.

c. 1310 CE

A number of Latin texts regarding alchemy and metallurgy surface under the pen name of "Geber." Geber is a Latinization of the name of a 9th century Persian alchemist. It was unknown if the works were new or merely translations of the work of the earlier Persian alchemist. The works included discussions of the "magical elements" of the Magoi and describes attempts to isolate and distill the magical essence from the unusual substances found in Loci. The Magoi attempt to destroy all copies of the *Summa Perfectionis Magisterii* but are not completely successful before the invention of the printing press in the 1440s ultimately makes their efforts at suppression futile.



October 1520 CE

Aztec priests of Tezcatlipoca, called the Smoking Mirror, use arcanism of an unknown nature to contain and eradicate the outbreak of smallpox in Tenochtitlan that occurs after the expulsion of the Spanish forces under Hernan Cortes.

Jan•Mar 1521 CE

The new Aztec Emperor, Cuitláhuac, destroys the weakened Spanish force before Hernan Cortes can make alliances or receive reinforcements from Cuba. Cortes is sacrificed and flayed at the festival of Tlacaxipehualiztli in March. His skin is worn by the chief priest of Tezcatlipoca for twenty days.

1500•1800 CE

Native shamanism and arcanism mitigate the impact of European pathogens. A number of plant species native to the Americas prove to have very powerful medicinal properties when blended with arcane compounds derived from Loci, and form the basis of this ability to stave off disease. Several Indian cultures in eastern North America form confederations to resist European incursions. By 1800, the east coast is controlled by European powers and the interior is dominated by the Huron and the Iroquois in the north, the Powhatan in the mid-Atlantic and the Cherokee and Creek in the south. In the tropics, the Spanish take possession of much of the Caribbean but never again make inroads into the mainland domain of the Aztecs.

1656 CE

A printed English translation of a previously unknown work of the 16th century physician and astrologer Paracelsus surfaces. Collectively titled the Archidoxes of Magic, it is a refutation of the beliefs and practices of the Magoi and attempts to present a rational basis for the existence of magic in the world. It also presents a system of three elements, the Tria Prima of Mercury, Sulfur, and Salt to explain the properties of the magical substances used by the Magoi to perform their magic. Rapid dissemination of printed copies of this manuscript again makes suppression by the secretive Magoi impossible. This event marks the beginning of the integration of Magoi into larger society. The Magoi are still treated with varying degrees of fear and respect but by the mid-nineteenth century their presence in society is well known.

1693 CE

Famous English natural philosopher Isaac Newton suffers a nervous breakdown. From this time until his death in 1727 he is observed to grow more and more eccentric in his behavior. In light of the posthumous publishing of a large body of Newton's writings on alchemy, dreaming, and prophecy, it is thought that around this time Newton successfully isolated and extracted the magical essences now known as the "Alchemical Salts" and distilled the substance now known colloquially as Lucidose, setting the stage for the industrialization of arcane power in centuries to come. Newton's nervous breakdown is attributed to his ingestion of Lucidose and his abrupt and untutored introduction to the Sovereign Realms of Dream.

1755 CE

Isaac Newton's great-niece publishes his collected works on alchemy, the realms of dream and a surprising amount of prophecy which Newton claimed to have received in the "highest" realm of Dreams. Newton's work on alchemy served as the foundation for later alchemical research which eventually led to the discovery of Hotaether and thence to the development of modern British industry. His taxonomy of the Dreamworld is still used by modern Dreamers.

1760•1800 CE

British and German scientists develop and add to Newton's work on alchemy and scientific mysticism just as they have done with his work in mathematics, physics and optics.

1776 CE

The Age of Steam is considered by many to have begun with the first successful commercial applications of James Watt's much-improved steam engine. In subsequent decades, a number of inventors, engineers and industrialists make use of the latest scientific and alchemical advances to push the United Kingdom into the forefront of the industrial revolution.



1793 CE

Introduction of Dr. Ebenezer Sibly's "Reanimating Solar Tincture," a healing elixir that was about as likely to kill the imbiber as cure them. Sibly's successor J.R. Saffell refined the elixir and changed the name to Physicane.

1808 CE

John Dalton publishes his "New System of Chemical Philosophy" in which he details his experiments with a substance he calls Hotaether.

1803-1865 CE

Despite promises to the contrary, the United States government makes only a token effort to prevent white settlers from moving into Indian lands. The encroachment provokes a series of uprisings among native populations. Tecumseh of the Cherokee, Red Eagle of the Creek and Thayendanega of the Iroquois create the Triple Alliance, a military pact intended to repel the white settlers, beginning a decades-long bitter, bloody struggle that sequentially pushes the allied native tribes further and further west.

1827 CE

In response to the crushing of the Greek Revolution by combined Ottoman/Egyptian forces the United Kingdom, France, and Russia send a navy to the Aegean that annihilates the Turko-Egyptian fleet. The naval successes are quickly followed up by victories by Greek and British forces on land.

1831 CE

In the aftermath of defeat in Greece, the Ottoman Sultan fails to deliver promised rewards to the Pasha of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, in return for Egyptian assistance against the Greeks. Infuriated, Muhammed Ali invades Syria, defeats the Ottoman army and drives them deep into Anatolia. Intervention by the British and French halt the Egyptian advance and force the warring parties into a cease-fire.

1832 CE

The Treaty of Constantinople establishes the Kingdom of Greece in the Peloponnese and Central Greece.

1839 CE

After a years-long cease-fire, war resumes between Egypt and the Ottomans. In response, the UK sends an expeditionary force under the command of one of Britain's most famous and decorated soldiers, Field Marshal Sir Arthur Wellesley, former Prime Minister and 1st Duke of Wellington. The British force, with some Greek elements, make short work of the Egyptian military and occupy Egypt and the Levant. When negotiations with the Ottoman Sultan break down Wellesley, without authorization, marches on the undefended city of Constantinople and occupies it, making the new Sultan his "guest."

1842 CE

The second treaty of Constantinople cedes former Ottoman territories of Western Thrace, Thessaly, Macedonia and Ionia to Greece. The treaty nominally returns control of Eastern Thrace (including Constantinople), Egypt, Syria, and the Levant to the Ottoman Sultan. In reality the Sultan is completely under the power of the British and British military forces begin setting up permanent bases in Thrace, Egypt, and Syria. To mollify the other European partners, former Ottoman territories in North Africa are ceded to the French and territories in the Crimea and the Caucasus to Russia. Free passage through the Bosphorus is promised to all European powers. The Greeks are incensed at being denied possession of Constantinople but are completely under the power of the British and rely on them for their independence.

1843-45 CE

When it becomes obvious that the Sultan is a puppet of the British the Ottoman governors of the Asian provinces in Anatolia, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula all declare themselves Sultan, Emir, or Caliph and establish independent states that immediately start squabbling with each other over territory and precedence. The Duke of Wellington and his



successor spend the next decade bringing these wayward provinces to heel, forcing them to acknowledge the Sultan's, and thus the British Empire's, authority.

1847 CE

Isambard Kingdom Brunel's "Atmospheric Railway" system of pneumatically driven trains revolutionizes travel in England, whisking travelers to their destinations at speeds up to seventy miles per hour. Over the next 50 years atmospheric rail lines are built connecting the great cities of Europe, and all across Britain.

1851 CE

The Great Exhibition opens in London, showcasing British industrial might. Notable for the first public demonstration of "Ampheres," portable power supplies based on Dalton's Hotaether.

1852•1855 CE

William Armstrong, 1st Baron Armstrong, completes experiments and refinements that ultimately lead to standardized Ampheres. In the same time frame he creates both a black powder and Hotaether version of a heavy field gun for the British Army.

March 4, 1865 CE

In his second inaugural address, United States president Abraham Lincoln seeks to soothe a nation fatigued and drained by its decades long war against the Triple Alliance, saying, "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

June • November 1865 CE

A series of stunning victories against the Triple Alliance by U.S. forces under the command of General Robert E. Lee allows Lincoln to keep his word to the nation and conclude the decades-long Indian Wars. The remaining natives are forcibly removed west of the Mississippi and the Treaty of Fort Defiance sets the western border of the United States at the Mississippi River.

1883 CE

The luxury Orient Express atmospheric rail line is opened between London, Paris, Munich, Vienna and Constantinople. Travel time from London to Constantinople is about three days.

1884 CE

William Armstrong invents the Aetherspark Rifle. The pistol follows two years later. In the years leading up to his death in 1900, Armstrong is also responsible for various other refinements and applications of Hotaether technology for military purposes including experiments in clockwork, Amphere-powered artificial limbs.

1893 CE

The luxury airship service between London and Constantinople begins. It provides sleeper service with a total travel time of about a day for those wealthy enough to afford it.

1895 CE

The 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution officially ends slavery in the United States. As a compromise to get the support of southern slave owners, slaves are required to purchase their own freedom. A large proportion of former slaves are effectively indentured to their former masters under this system.

1901•1902 CE

Jaguar Guards of the Aztlán Empire emerge from the desert to invade the southern lands of Kali Forno. Simultaneously the airborne Eagle Guards land at the mouth of the so-called 'great bay' of the Ohlone tribe and begin fighting their way south. The disunited and technologically backward tribes of Kali Forno fall one after another until by mid-1902



Aztlán controls all the territory between the mountains and the Pacific Ocean, from the Isthmus of Panama to the Great Bay of Kali Forno.

1903 CE

Aztlán begins construction of a naval and aerospace base on the peninsula south of the mouth to the Great Bay, calling the settlement Atoyatl in reference to the strong tidal currents passing through the mouth of the bay.

Introduction

GAME CONCEPTS

CORE MECHANIC

Brass & Steel uses a single 20-sided die (d20) as a randomizer for all task and conflict resolution. Because Brass & Steel uses only one mechanic • only one d20 is ever rolled to resolve a given conflict or task, subject to the appropriate target number and modifiers • we refer to this roll as a test. Throughout these rules, calling for a test is simply asking a player to roll a d20 to resolve some complication. All tests are made by adding a character's appropriate Attribute + Skill to determine a target number. The relative ease or difficulty of the task, as well as situational and environmental conditions, may modify this target number up or down. A table showing the relevant modifiers is located in the appendix. Once the final target number is determined the player must roll equal to or less than that target number on a single d20. The difference between the target number and the actual result of the die roll is called the Degree of Success or Failure, depending on whether the result was lower or higher than the target number. The Degree of Success or Failure is generally used to determine the overall outcome of a test. A test that just barely succeeds is typically good enough to get the job done, but a greater Degree of Success is usually desirable, particularly when a character is actively opposed in their efforts by another character, whose Degree of Success is usually subtracted from that of the acting character. In the event of a tie in an opposed test the "defender" wins.

WHICH ATTRIBUTE WITH WHICH SKILL?

Brass & Steel is designed to be as flexible as possible over a wide range of situations. However, we have also tried to keep the core mechanic simple so that play can proceed very quickly. Even combat, often the bane of players that like their game fast and easy, will proceed quickly and without the bogged-down slog that is common in many games. However, we did want to preserve as much flexibility in test resolution as possible, which is why in many cases we did not provide a suggested Attribute to go with a given Skill for testing. There will often be an obvious combination that works, but other times there may be cases where a less obvious combination is appropriate. Players should feel free to suggest what they feel is the appropriate test in a given situation, subject to GM approval.

WHERE ARE THE CRITICALS?

Our desire to keep the pace of gameplay brisk has necessarily created some design compromises, and among these is our decision to omit a system for critical success or failure. Our system already incorporates Degrees of Success and Failure as a natural byproduct of the way that tests are resolved. The only recommended additions to this have to do with the extreme results - rolling a 1 or a 20. We recommend that if a player rolls a 1 then their character succeeds, whatever else is true. Good judgement should be used for truly impossible tasks, but in general a 1 should succeed. Alternately, a 20 should always be a failure. Even the best sharpshooter misses once in awhile and this slight complication makes tests that are easy but important meaningful. (And if the test isn't important, why are you rolling anyway?) Occasionally in this book you will see reference to extreme success or failure. In general this just means rolling 1 you succeed, or a 20; you fail. There are a handful of cases where there are other effects, and these are explained in the appropriate section of the rules. Your group can, of course, choose to ignore extreme successes or failures.





DIFFICULTY AND MODIFIERS

The Brass & Steel core die mechanic is intended to keep the action fast-paced and streamlined. To that end, it is strongly advised that GM's and players not get tied up in figuring out every modifier that might conceivably apply to a given situation. To aid in that effort, Brass & Steel assumes that the default difficulty of any test is 'moderate' and requires no modifier. If a character is performing a task in midst of combat, or not in combat but under moderate time pressure, there is no modifier to the player's roll. If a character is performing a simple task under no time pressure, then perhaps you should ask why the test is called for in the first place. If a task is difficult but performed with no time pressure and excellent conditions, then the GM can give the player a bonus on that test.

Another tactic to keep things moving is to try to figure out the three most important modifiers and make the test. If a character is trying to fire a pistol at a medium range target (-3), in 'dim' light conditions (-2), while also defending (-2), and moving (-1), a GM could use her discretion and use the three most significant of those modifiers. GM discretion and player preference are key; what works for table-top play may not work for live-action play, and group preferences vary widely. Consistency is important, so whichever method you choose, try to stick with it for at least that session.

Example 1: Annabelle wishes to bluff her way past the guards at the French Consulate. She adds her Wit Attribute, which is 6, to her False Promises skill, which is 7. The guards are paid to be suspicious and she isn't on the guest list. The GM decides to impose a -4 modifier to the test, resulting in a final Target Number of $6+7-4 = 9$. She rolls a 7 on her d20, which indicates she accomplished her goal with 2 Degrees of Success. The guards reluctantly accept her story and let her through.

Example 2: Alfred is engaged in a gun battle with a dastardly Austrian spy. He has an Agility Attribute of 8, and a Barking Irons skill of 7, with a familiarity in pistols, which confers a 2 point bonus. Alfred and the spy are exchanging gunfire at close range, and no other modifiers apply. Alfred rolls a 11, which is 6 less than the 17 ($8 + 7 + 2$) that he needed, giving him 6 Degrees of Success. The Austrian spy sensibly attempts to get behind cover and avoid being shot. He rolls a test against his Agility of 6 and his Duck and Cover skill of 7. He rolls a 7, which succeeds by 6. As the Austrian is the "defender" in this situation, he wins the tie, and Alfred's shot slams harmlessly into the wall, which does not get a defense roll, and must take the damage in stony silence.

A comprehensive list of suggested modifiers appears in the appendix at the back of this book, for easy reference.

Introduction

GLOSSARY OF SETTING-SPECIFIC TERMS



Brass & Steel employs a number of specialized terms that are unique to the game world. This is a list of the most common and important. All will be discussed further in later sections, but a brief introduction will eliminate a good deal of confusion.



Alchemical Salts • Refined product of mutated natural materials found in Loci. Alchemical salts can be used by inoculated arcanists to boost their arcane powers, at some personal risk. Prolonged exposure can warp a user in unexpected and unpleasant ways. Alchemical salts form the basis for most of the other wonders of modern medicine and technology.

Amphere • Term for the "steam battery" containing compressed Hotaether. Available in a variety of sizes and used to power any number of clockwork devices.

Arcanist • Generic term for any person capable of wielding arcane powers of any level. An inoculated arcanist has altered their body with alchemical salts in order to be more powerful. A minor arcanist relies only on their innate human abilities.

Diamondpane • Nigh-unbreakable "glass" as hard as steel. Originally designed for use in submersibles and similar vehicles, it has acquired dubious popularity among assassins, as a Diamondpane blade is sharp as steel and perfectly transparent.



Charms • Less powerful arcane workings available to non-inoculated arcanists.

Ephemera • Images drawn from the Dreamscape that can be skillfully manipulated to manifest in the minds of observers in the physical world creating, in effect, illusions.

Hotaether • A magical gas produced by specially imbued steam engines. In its compressed form, the gas stores phenomenal amounts of energy compared to regular steam. Uncompressed Hotaether, or "Slack" as it is known in this form, is lighter than air, allowing airships to float.

Ember • A crystal that grows flaming hot when blown upon; used commonly as a lighter by the wealthy and otherwise well-equipped. Embers are very small and fit into pocket-sized cases or mountings, but the very rich can afford fireplaces filled with them, effectively creating never-ending flame for heat and warmth.

Fate Cards • A device used to allow characters to influence the course of events by allowing repeated tests to resolve a situation or granting additional narrative discretion to a player. Fate Cards are generally represented in play by a deck of Tarot cards, though regular playing cards can be used.

Figments • Defenders of a person's Reverie created by the subconscious when an invader is attempting to force his way into a target's dream.

Inoculation • The process by which an arcanist imbues themselves with alchemical salts to increase their powers. The process is increasingly dangerous as more inoculations are undertaken.

Locus (*pl. Loci*) • A region, variable in size, where the barrier between dimensions is especially thin. Natural materials are mutated over time by exposure to alien energies.

Lucidos • Arcane drug used by Dreamers to enter the collective unconscious. Lucidos is not physically addictive, but has proven to be psychologically addictive in some cases, and temperance campaigners can be heard railing against the evils of Lucidos in most major cities.

Lumen • A product of industrial chemistry and alchemical salts, Lumen is a pale blue crystal that naturally forms in wafer-thin sheets. Lumen emits a harsh blue-white light when electric current is run through it. It is used as an inexpensive form of illumination.

Magos (*pl. Magoi*) • The ancient Greek term for a sorcerer. Used exclusively to refer to arcanists trained in the ancient ways by one of the secretive societies of sorcerers. This term is becoming archaic, and has been replaced in common parlance by "arcanist", or by a variety of slang terms.

Patterns • Structured arcane workings that allow inoculated arcanists to create more powerful and predictable effects, and to do so more safely.

Physicane • Generic term for a number of patent medicines derived from alchemical salts. These medicines are expensive, and can have side effects, but greatly enhance the human body's ability to recover from traumatic injury.

Power • In addition to the more mundane meanings of the word, "power" is the most common term for the arcane energy that an inoculated arcanist can store in their body and use to create and sustain arcane effects. Some serious academics insist on the term "arcane potential," and some stodgy old mystics employ the term "mana," but both are becoming less common in ordinary usage.

Elixir • A generic term for any variety of mystically-imbued patent medicines. These, too, make use of the properties of alchemical salts. Elixirs are specifically designed to combat particular ailments. Their creation and use is a key part of medical training.

Voxcrystals • Voxcrystals, grown in factories like other steam-age products like Diamondpane, are columnar crystals much longer than they are wide. In their freshly-grown state they look similar to natural tourmaline, with bands of colors, especially reds and greens, along the striated edges of the crystals. Slices cut from a single crystal, up to 10 to 15 for a large specimen, will vibrate in sync even after separated. This means that crystals placed in the appropriate housing, a "Voxbox," and powered can be used as a means of remote communication.



GLOSSARY OF GENERAL GAMING TERMINOLOGY



Brass & Steel also uses a set of terms and concepts, most of them common to many games. A short list is provided here for anyone who has limited experience with role-playing games. A few basic terms specific to this game are included as well for general reference.

Degree of Success or Failure • The margin of success or failure of a given test. If a test requires a 12 to succeed and the player rolls a 4, this is 8 Degrees of Success.

Game Master or GM • The Game Master is the main narrator in a game of Brass & Steel. Some groups prefer to have a GM construct the whole plot of a game, while others opt to have extensive input from the other players. So long as the group agrees, either of these styles can work well. The game master assumes the roles of all the antagonists, allies, and minor characters in the story. They also describe events and scenes as the players explore them. In a LARP style of play, a GM may assume a particular persona, or may remain a nebulous presence, dictating results and explaining events.

Player Character or PC • A character in the shared story told by the group that is directly controlled by one of the players. Each player will typically control a single PC at a time, although different styles of play are possible, in which a player may have two or more PCs.

Non Player Character or NPC • A character in the shared story that is controlled by the game master. NPCs run the gamut from fierce antagonists that dog the player characters story after story, to adorable street urchins present only for two minutes of local color. Players in many games suggest ideas for NPCs to the game master, which can help to take some of the creative burden off of the shoulders of a GM.

Tabletop • A style of gaming in which characters describe the actions of their characters, but do not directly act as their characters.

LARP • Live-action role-playing, a style of gaming in which players act out the actions of their characters, with some notable exceptions for safety. As a general rule, no player should ever touch another player during the course of a LARP, and combat absolutely should be resolved without live-action elements, beyond perhaps the occasional dramatic speedy exit or entry from a room. Safety first.

HOW TO USE THESE RULES • LARP vs TABLETOP



Brass & Steel is specifically designed to work as either a tabletop game, in which players and the Game Master sit around a table, with character sheets and dice in front of them, or as a live-action role-playing game, or LARP. One of our main priorities in designing Brass & Steel was to create a game which uses identical character and resolution systems for both modes of gameplay to facilitate smooth transitions between the two styles. One or perhaps two sheets of paper, plus a few note cards, can keep track of all the information needed to describe a PC's characteristics. We have found it helpful to put a die in a small, clear plastic container with a screw-on lid to complete tests while LARPing. This helps keep the 20 sider from getting easily lost and the flat bottom provides a rolling surface wherever you are.

Players and game masters should feel free to get up and move about the cabin during the course of the game. If, during a session of tabletop play, a particular scene seems as though it would work better as a live-action game, then we recommend playing it as such. Conversely, a drawn-out combat might well work better as a tabletop scene, even in a game that is run mostly as a LARP. We hope to encourage table-top groups to experiment with live-action and LARP groups to experiment with tabletop gaming. The rules for Brass & Steel do not change based on how a scene is being played out. (Granted, some scenes, such as a dangerous chase through a collapsing pyramid, might be bad choices for LARPing, for safety or logistical reasons).



WHAT IS IN THIS BOOK

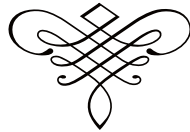



This book is divided into three sections:

SECTION ONE - CHARACTER SYSTEMS, consists of chapters one, two and three and covers the specifics of character creation and advancement. These chapters provide information on the process of creating a character, and also give details about what the various skills and attributes in the game mean and what they are used for.

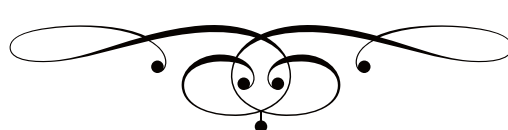
SECTION TWO - GAMEPLAY, consists of chapters four through eight and provide additional information on specific parts of the game. One chapter covers fate cards, which govern character luck and offer a bit of control over the plot. One chapter covers the ins and outs of arcane power. Another deals with lucid dreaming and the skills and systems that are needed by dreamers. An additional chapter is full of equipment, ranging from humble prison shivs to terrifying land-crawling behemoths. The chapter on combat explains how the game's core mechanic is used to resolve violent confrontations ranging from impromptu bouts of fisticuffs to duels between airships.

SECTION THREE - THE WORLD OF BRASS & STEEL includes the final chapters of this book, which address issues of plot, setting, and gaming philosophy. We take a moment to offer you our ideas about gaming and gamemastering, which you are free to love, hate, laugh at, or ignore. An additional chapter offers some background information on the general state of the world, and very briefly highlights several areas that might make good settings for adventures. The final chapter covers the city where we have set our first batch of adventures. Constantinople is a city with a vastly complicated and colorful past. It is also a city on the front lines of covert conflict between the great powers, and it might well be on the actual front lines in the event of a war. A group of adventurers should find plenty of things to keep them busy in Constantinople, the "Queen of Cities."





CHAPTER I
CHARACTERS



- *Introduction* •
- *Archetypes* •
- *Attributes* •
- *Skills* •
- *Resources* •
- *Contacts* •
- *Priorities* •
- *Character Power and Advancement Guidelines* •
- *Sample Characters* •



INTRODUCTION



The capabilities of each character in Brass & Steel are defined by a set of attributes, skills and advantages/disadvantages. Attributes and skills normally have values between 1 and 10 while advantages and disadvantages are classed as major or minor. A typical person has ratings of 6 or so in areas where they are competent, and at least one embarrassing 2 or 3 that crops up at humorous moments to keep them humble. Attributes primarily reflect the innate characteristics of the human mind and body. Although attributes can be improved over time, they tend to change little once adulthood has been reached. Skills represent learned information and acquired sets of habits and reflexes. These are much more apt to improve through use.

CHARACTER CREATION:

The mixture of attributes, skills, skill familiarities, and advantages/disadvantages that defines a character in Brass & Steel can be chosen in one of two ways. They may be purchased using a pool of character points, or may be chosen by customizing a character template. There is no character point advantage to either system, as the templates are built on a number of character points equivalent to a character built from scratch. Templates are designed to give players a rough idea of the skills and abilities needed to be successful in certain roles, rather than to strictly limit character creation. Some thoughts on how many character points are suitable appear later in this chapter, but as a rule, humble characters require 300 character points, competent characters 600, and elite characters are built on 900.

CHARACTER CREATION STEPS

1. Determine the total number of character points to be used.
2. Choose an archetype (*or create your own*).
3. Choose priorities (*archetype and priorities will help guide the rest of the process*).
4. Choose one or more background advantages. Make note of the categories and ratings of connections and resources granted by your background advantages.
5. Purchase attribute ratings.
6. Choose skills and purchase ratings. Make note if a particular skill requires a familiarity.
7. Choose advantages and disadvantages. Adjust the point total to reflect character points refunded by disadvantages.
8. Arcanists choose Patterns or Charms. Dreamers choose starting Ephemera.
9. Create starting contacts appropriate to the character's chosen background advantages. A good rule of thumb is to create no more than one contact per point in background advantages. Characters will acquire further contacts during gameplay.
10. Consult your resource categories and ratings and outfit the character with the sort of kit they would take on an adventure.
11. Calculate values for physical damage track, Stamina damage track, and, if applicable, power.
12. Fill out the character sheet.
13. Begin work on your costume, if desired.

SUMMARY OF POINT COSTS

Only a few rules are used to determine how much skills, attributes and advantages cost. These rules were used to build all of the sample characters listed later in this section, and players should feel free to "reverse-engineer" any of those characters to suit their own styles of play.



The only hard-and-fast rule of character point allocation is that every character must purchase at least one point in every attribute. The increasing cost associated with higher levels of skills and attributes means that it is generally better to purchase several skills and attributes at levels appropriate to the power level of intended campaign than to buy one or two at maximum ratings.

Attributes cost 2 character points per level to purchase, and each level must be purchased in sequence, cumulatively. *(In other words, before buying level 4 for 8 character points, a character must pay 2 character points for level 1, 4 character points for level 2, and 6 character points for level three, for a total of 20 character points.)*

Skills cost 1 experience point per level to purchase, and, as with attributes, each level must be purchased cumulatively and in sequence. Use the table below as a reference for attribute and skill costs.

Minor advantages cost 10 character points. Major advantages cost 20 character points. Minor disadvantages yield 10 character points, and major disadvantages yield 20. Background advantages cost 5 character points per level. Story flaws cost no character points, but are mixed blessings that confer both positive and negative traits. Skill familiarities cost 5 character points each. Note that some skills require that at least one familiarity be chosen, though most do not.

Some aspects of character creation are only indirectly influenced by point expenditures. Patterns and Charms are acquired automatically by characters with the appropriate Background advantages, and never cost character points, either at character creation or later in the game. Inoculation also does not cost character points directly, but requires access to a group or mentor able to perform the rituals needed, also granted by the appropriate background advantage. A character beginning play as an inoculated Arcanist incurs debilities and flaws as normal for their tier of Inoculation, as detailed in Chapter 6.

Ephemera are free as well. Characters with the dreaming skills to capture ephemera should generally be allowed to choose a few common and low-power ephemera at character creation, and have the opportunity to discover and capture more interesting and powerful ephemera during game play.

Access to equipment is determined by resources scores granted by background advantages. This is also how a character gains access to a network of contacts, that is, people useful for them to know. Equipment falls into the categories of Mundane, Technological, and Arcane. Characters with background advantages that provide the appropriate level of access to one of the three aforementioned categories may start the game with equipment from that category.

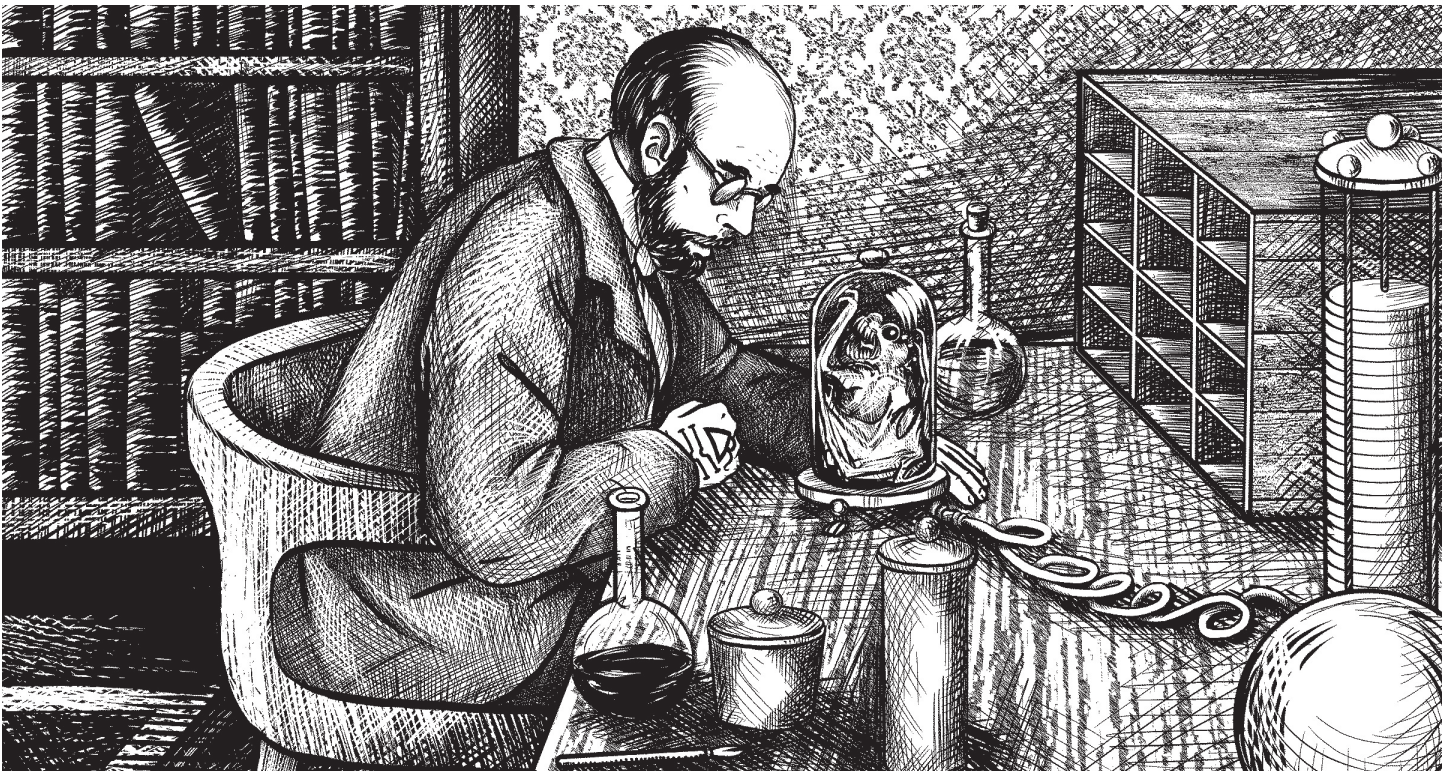
POINT COSTS FOR CHARACTER CREATION AND ADVANCEMENT

ITEM	COST
Advantage, Minor	10
Advantage, Major	20
Disadvantage, Minor	-10
Disadvantage, Major	-20
Background Advantage	5 per level
Patterns and Charms	Provided by background advantage
Ephemera	Free with skill in Morphean Artifice
Inoculation	Provided by background advantage, causes side effects
Equipment	Provided by background advantage

INCREMENTAL AND CUMULATIVE COSTS FOR SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

LEVEL	SKILL <i>incremental</i>	SKILL <i>cumulative</i>	ATTRIBUTE <i>incremental</i>	ATTRIBUTE <i>cumulative</i>
1	1	1	2	2
2	2	3	4	6
3	3	6	6	12
4	4	10	8	20
5	5	15	10	30
6	6	21	12	42
7	7	28	14	56
8	8	36	16	72
9	9	45	18	90
10	10	55	20	110
11*	11*	66	22	132

** An inherent rating above ten is possible only through the selection of an appropriate advantage. Certain modifiers – Hotaether limb replacement, skill advantages, and so forth – may increase effective skill or attribute ratings, but do not affect the actual base rating.*



ARCHETYPES



Characters in Brass & Steel can come from many backgrounds and careers. Below is a list of suggested character concepts, divided into general categories. This list is not comprehensive and players are encouraged to be creative when brainstorming a concept for their character. These archetypes do not come with hard-and-fast restrictions on skills and attributes, but are instead meant to help players conceptualize their characters.

ACADEMIA

Doctor, Lawyer, Theologian, Priest, Antiquarian, Professor, Occultist, Artist

DREAMER

Illusionist, Thought-stealer, Shaman, Incubus/Succubus, Analyst, Dream guardian

ARCANIST

Magos, Monk, Minor (hedge) Arcanist, Arcane Physician, Scientific Arcanist

SCOUNDREL

Dipper, Cracksman, Con-Artist, Gypsy, Spy, Courtesan, Thug

ZEPPELINEER

Ex-Royal Aerospace Force, Zeppelin Pirate, Airship Crewman, Airship Captain

JACK OF ALL TRADES

Explorer, Dilettante, Diplomat, Bureaucrat, Master of the Universe, Bohemian, Businessman, well-rounded criminal, Archaeologist with a surprising array of other talents

EX-SOLDIER

Army, Navy, Marines, Mercenary, Deserter, Retired Officer, Retired Sergeant, Abandoned Super-soldier

ENGINEER

Steamneticist/Gadgeteer, Hotaether Engine Mechanic, Mad Scientist, Inventor

OUTCAST

Deserter, Political Prisoner, Beggar, Urchin, Exile, Abomination

ATTRIBUTES



MIGHT

This attribute represents raw physical power. Might is helpful in bashing and stabbing one's foes, and factors into a character's ability to absorb physical damage. A score of 3 would be typical for an office clerk, 6 for a longshoreman, and 9 for a gigantic tribal warrior.

VITALITY

Vitality represents a mixture of toughness and aerobic conditioning, as well as general health. This attribute determines how much Stamina damage a character can sustain before falling unconscious. A score of 3 is typical for wine-sipping poets, a 6 for sturdy field laborers, and a 9 for Olympic-level athletes.

REASON

This attribute represents a mixture of raw mental processing power and affinity for structured mental activity. It is useful for Arcanists, dreamers, engineers and academics. A surly village drunk might average a score of 3, a typical accountant a score of 6, and a powerful arcanist a score of 9.

AGILITY

The attribute of Agility represents a character's deftness, dexterity, and reflexes. This attribute is very useful in combat situations, and is critical for anyone planning on working with delicate mechanical instruments or investigating the contents of other people's pockets. A score of 3 would be typical for a burly fishmonger, a 6 for skilled soldier, and a 9 for an Olympic fencer who moonlights as a catburgler.



WILLPOWER

Willpower denotes mental focus, determination, and the ability to concentrate. Willpower is helpful in enduring both physical and Stamina damage, and is crucial for success as an arcanist or a lucid dreamer. A meek counting-house wage-slave might have a score of 3, a hardy explorer a 6, and a legendary mentalist a 9.

WIT

The Wit attribute indicates a character's ability to think and react quickly. It is useful in social situations, and is also crucial in determining the order of action in combat situations. It is of use to lucid dreamers as well, for certain specialized tasks. A dim-witted thug might have a wit of 3, a veteran soldier a 6, and a legendary star of variety theater a 9.

FATE

Fate indicates a character's luck, karma, fortune and destiny. It limits the number of fate cards that a character can have and is sometimes used in tests to determine the effects of luck or fortune, good or bad. A character may normally hold one fate card for every two character points or fraction thereof invested in their Fate attribute. A failed gambler might have a fate of 3, the winner of a small lottery prize might have a 6, and that soldier whose tiny pocket-sized copy of *das Kapital* just stopped some shrapnel probably has a 9.

• *Players are encouraged to use the helpful acronym "MVARWWF", pronounced "mmmvarwoof", to remember these attributes.* •

Chapter 1

SKILLS

The skills in Brass & Steel are fully explained in the next chapter but here is a list, organized by category, for reference purposes. While familiarity (detailed knowledge of some sub-field) is possible for any skill, those marked with an asterisk (*) require at least one familiarity to be chosen.

VEHICLE SKILLS

Hell Bent for Leather*

The Big Guns

Beast Wrangling

COMBAT SKILLS

Bash and Stab

Up Close and Personal

Duck and Cover

Bows and Bombs

Barking Irons

Sergeant's Eye

SOCIAL SKILLS

False Promises

Huckster's Eye

Buy Low, Sell High

At Home Among Strangers

Leadership and Intimidation

ADVENTURING SKILLS

Olympian Spirit

Stealth and Camouflage

Devious Devices

Skulduggery

Call of the Wild

Heroic Vigor

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS

Natural Philosophy*

Artifice*

Investigator's Eye

Liberal Arts

Law*

Medicine

CRAFT SKILLS

Soldiering

Airship Crewman

Forgery

Still Mastery

Monasticism

MAGICAL SKILLS

Channelling

Precision

Focus

Arcanist's Eye

Arcane Memory

DREAM SKILLS

Dreamer's Eye

Lucid Dreaming

Clarity of the Self

Languages of the Spirit

Morphean Artifice



RESOURCES



Brass & Steel, despite having two commodities in its name, is not intended to be a game that focuses too carefully on gear and equipment. That said, whirring gadgets, impressive goggles and pistols with peculiar design features are major elements of steampunk, and gear and equipment have a role to play in Brass & Steel. Characters have access to equipment determined by their resources, which represent a mixture of connections and assets, and by the amount of cash that they can muster.

Three categories of resources exist: arcane, technological, and mundane. Arcane resources are purely concerned with access to arcane items or substances, such as Alchemical Salts. Technological resources are not ordinary tools and gizmos. Instead, they are devices powered by Hotaether or reliant on other exotic and rare technological substances. Such items are not generally available for purchase. Mundane resources represent everything else, from blankets to steam-powered yachts.

A character's background advantages determine the level of resources to which they have access. All categories of resources are rated on a scale from 1 to 5. Note that resource ratings of the same category are not additive with the purchase of multiple background advantages. For example, a minor aristocrat (Aristocrat 2) who is also a criminal mastermind (The Criminal Underworld 4) has a Mundane resource rating of four, not six. Background advantages which offer access to Arcane and Technological categories of equipment may only be taken up to a rating of three, as the most powerful such items are so rare that they cannot normally be purchased, and are held by governments, secret societies, and other powerful interest groups. Such items could perhaps be acquired during game play, if a group wishes to play out a story involving a very high level of character power.

A character who wishes to acquire a particular item must be able to have access to resources at a sufficiently high level, and those resources must be of the correct type. The sole exception to this rule comes when characters wish to purchase mundane items. These items may be purchased using any type of resources.

MUNDANE RESOURCES

Mundane resources broadly determine a character's wealth and social class. All of the descriptions below are written from the perspective of a British citizen living in or around London or a provincial capital such as Constantinople. These descriptions should be adapted for wherever your character finds themselves.

Level Zero – Beggars, street walkers, and street urchins: What resources? You live in the streets and beg, or worse. You can scrounge together maybe 1 shilling per story of spending money.

Level One – Unskilled Workers, "Successful" Prostitutes, Privates and Seamen: You aren't completely destitute, but you live what is, to be kind, a spartan existence. You live in rented housing with many other similarly poor people. You walk most everywhere you need to go, because you can't afford anything else. Your Sunday best is one of your two shirts, cleaner than usual. You have 4 shillings per story of spending money.

Level Two – Skilled Workers, Yeoman Farmers, Factory Foremen, Sergeants: You rent housing, but it is superior in quality to those less fortunate than you. If you don't live in the heart of a metropolis you may own a horse, or more likely a handful of donkeys, and maybe a hauling cart. If you are in the provinces you may be able to afford a single native servant. You have 16 shillings (3/4 pound) per story of spending money.

Level Three – Merchants, Low-Level Doctors and Lawyers, Junior Officers: You are solidly middle class. You live in a home you own and have modest property. You may have one or two household servants. You travel by taxi in a city. In the provinces you may live a bit better, perhaps in a rented villa with a team of servants and the like. You have £4 per story of spending money.



Level Four – Lower Gentry, Successful Merchants, Doctors and Lawyers, Senior Officers: You’ve made it! Either because you were born in the right family, worked very, very hard, or got very, very lucky you have obtained a comfortable standard of living. You own a nice home, have a number of servants, your own fine carriage, and generally lead a leisurely life while the money lasts. If you are at this level of resources you may be a very successful tradesman, in which case you are not a lady or gentleman, or one of the less-well-off idle rich, in which case you are. (According to the upper classes, the very definition of a gentleman is one who does not work.) In either case you may have been knighted into a lower to mid-status order. You may also be a senior or retired military officer. You have £20 per story of spending money.

Level Five – Upper Class: Let’s not mince words, you’re rich. You have so much wealth you don’t know what to do with it all. If you are British it is extremely likely that you inherited the land that enabled you to reach this exalted position, or that a family member is a great lord, and likewise that you have purchased status-related advantages along with this wealth. You have two primary homes, one fine residence in the city and a lavish country estate, and perhaps a handful of others for relatives, vacations, and so on. You have so many servants, horses, carriages and what-not you have no idea how many you have. When you visit foreign lands you stay in rented palaces. At this level of wealth it’s considered unseemly to know much about money, so you have a senior servant and a team of bankers and lawyers that handle all of that for you. In fact, it is considered entirely right and proper amongst the upper classes to know nothing whatsoever about daily tasks, so your servants are, or are made to seem, mandatory if you are to survive. For some reason this makes those of a lower class and your peers think more of you. Your job is to get into the “in crowd” and once there, stay put. You have £100 per story of spending money, if you can find a way to spend it.

Level Five+ – Filthy Rich: Unavailable to player characters, at least to start, at this level of wealth you can buy most anything you’d want at any time. You have numerous homes filled with expensive furniture, elegant clothing, silver and gold, jewels and furs and other items. You have an army of servants to ensure you never have to lift a finger except to smack them out of the way. You own many vehicles and horses, from fine carriages to a small airship. You can afford to spend all of your time figuring out ways to spend your time. You don’t have to work all that much at getting into the “in crowd.” You are the in crowd. If a Player Character were to get to this level of wealth in play their spending money would be something like £500 per story.

TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Level Zero – No Advanced Technology: You have no access to advanced technology.

Level One – Minor Access: You have own one or two minor items of advanced technology and some limited opportunities to obtain more during play.

Level Two – Moderate Access: You have access to advanced technology, perhaps including a minor lab or repair shop.

Level Three – Good Access: You have access to a wide array of advanced technology, certainly including a fully-equipped research laboratory and/or repair shop.

ARCANE RESOURCES

Level Zero – No Arcane Resources: You have no access to arcane items.

Level One – Minor Access: Your connections enable you to inoculate once, if you so choose. You have a steady supplier of Alchemical Salts, and access to a modest library of known Patterns.

Level Two – Moderate Access: You have access to a locus that provides you with a low-cost supply of Alchemical Salts as well as the supplies needed to inoculate up to twice. You have access to a large library of Patterns, including some that are quite unusual.

Level Three – Good Access: You can procure a large volume of Alchemical Salts and access to two or more loci. You can inoculate as often as you wish, although you are limited to the third tier at character creation. Your connections give you access to peculiar Patterns, and perhaps some more exotic arcane research on energy and the dimensions. These later effects are subject to GM interpretation.



CONTACTS

Useful individuals with access to specialized skills, gear, or information are known as contacts. Contacts are not purchased individually. Instead, a character has background advantages that detail their connections and history. A character might, for example, have a background advantage in organized crime. When a character wishes to make use of a background advantage to locate a useful contact, they must make a test against their fate Attribute plus twice the rating of the appropriate background advantage. Note that like resources, ratings in contacts are not cumulative and ratings for different categories are tracked separately. If the Aristocrat background advantage is taken at two levels and Academic is taken at level one, that character has a contacts rating of 4 (level 2, x 2), not 6 for aristocratic circles. The character also has a contacts rating of 2 (level 1, x 2) for finding useful people in academic circles.

This test is modified based on the circumstances. A London thief should have no difficulty locating a fence in the East End. He'll have more difficulty doing so in Capetown, but might still manage. He'll have a devil of a time finding a useful contact in a small Russian village just north of Novosibirsk. The modifiers for the tests just mentioned would be, approximately, a 6 point bonus, a 2 point penalty, and a 10 point penalty respectively. The GM may choose to impose further modifiers for particularly useful or powerful contacts.

Example: *Lars Andersson, a Norwegian sailor with a Fate of 6, finds himself in Cairo and would like to offload some Lutefisk. Given that only another Scandinavian would touch the stuff, Lars' player announces that his former shipmate Bjorn has put into port a couple of weeks ago. That Lars would know a fellow Norwegian sailor that liked Lutefisk is quite likely so to Lars' Fate + 2 (Military Rank 1) roll, the GM agrees to a +5 modifier. However, that Bjorn would happen to be in Cairo at the moment is perhaps quite unlikely, so they agree the net modifier is -3 (+5 for knowing Bjorn, -8 for the scant likelihood that Bjorn is in Cairo). The required roll is therefore 6 (Fate) + 2 (Military Rank) - 3 (net modifier) = 5. Lars' player rolls a 10, a failure. Lars better come up with another way to get rid of his odorous fish.*

Characters and Game Masters may choose to keep a list of contacts. This is recommended for areas that serve as home bases for characters, as such non-player characters add depth to the setting by peopling it with a recurring cast of characters. A player and GM might wish to work up a few known contacts during the process of character creation, to give players and the GM ready-made NPCs for use as story hooks and plot enablers. A GM may still require a test when a PC wishes to connect with a contact - contacts have lives, too, and don't just wait around sipping gin and tonics and hoping that the PCs will call.

PRIORITIES

In addition to choosing a new character's traits (attributes, skills and so on), players of Brass & Steel are encouraged to state one or more Priorities appropriate to their character. These statements should be specific and unambiguous statements of things which are important to the character. These Priorities help define what your character believes and wants and also serve as signposts to the both the GM and the other players regarding the direction you wish to take your character. Priorities help clarify which things you want to emphasize about your character's personality and the themes you wish to explore within the game. The GM can use Priorities as starting points for story hooks involving a character. Here are some examples of Priorities, though you can and should come up with many more on your own for your characters:

- Life is nasty, brutish, and short. Empathy is for chumps.
- I will not accept the role my family expects me to fulfill as a gentle-born daughter.
- I will restore my good name and wreak vengeance on those who slandered me.



- A revolution is coming, and I will do my part to bring it about!
- The Germans are a plague upon the earth, and I must inspire my nation to struggle against them.
- All of the bad luck in my life comes from the curse on my family.
- Arcanism is an abomination; practitioners should be eliminated.

Game Masters are encouraged to reward players who appropriately roleplay their character's Priorities. GMs could even reward other players who skillfully set up a situation in which another character is able to prominently fulfill one of their Priorities. Suggested rewards include bonus character points or a draw from the Fate Card deck.

Chapter 1

CHARACTER POWER & ADVANCEMENT GUIDELINES



Characters in Brass & Steel can be created at almost any point level. A person grabbed at random from a crowd would be built on between 200 and 300 points. (They'd also be confused as to why they'd been pulled from the crowd and quizzed on their abilities, but background characters in games must endure such indignities.)

There is no single "right" level for player character creation. A group should collectively agree on the type of game that they wish to play, and build characters at the appropriate level. Agreement on this decision, as on the other decisions about campaign scope, power, and direction, makes a game flow much more smoothly, and increases the odds that fun will be had by all.

- A low-power character can be built on 300-400 points. This character will have an average attribute of 5, and 6 or so skills at level 5, with a few points left over.
- A medium-power character can be built on 400-600 points. This character will have skills and attributes that average 6. Six hundred points is the default power level assumed in published scenarios.
- A high-power character requires 600-800 points. This character will have skills and attributes that average 7-8, with a good bit of room to specialize in multiple areas.
- An ultra-elite character can be built with 800-1200 points. This character can be the best in the world in a few areas, with one or more 10's in various traits, and a broad base of supporting skills and advantages.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Character advancement in Brass & Steel uses the same point system used to initially create characters. Characters receive additional character points as they have adventures and gain experience.

The rate at which character points are awarded is not fixed. A group should consider what sort of game they wish to run when deciding how many character points are to be awarded, and on what basis those points will be given out. Some groups prefer to leave this decision in the hands of a GM. This works well when there is basic agreement between players and GM, but can be a source of conflict and unpleasantness when agreement is lacking. You will have to work together to find what works best for your gaming group. The combination of starting character power and pace of advancement does much to shape the course of a game. Some examples:

The Hero's Journey: this is perhaps the single most common advancement model in role-playing games. Characters begin at a low power level, but advance relatively rapidly to become, after some period of play, heroes of legend. Characters in this sort of game might begin with 300 character points, but receive 20 points or more per game session.

Common People: this style of game focuses on the much smaller-scale stories and struggles of more typical people. Gang members, petty criminals, conscripts or prisoners could all be characters in such a game. Starting points are low in this game, perhaps 300 character points per character, and advancement is also slow, at about 5 points



per session. These characters will never be titanic powerhouses, but this style of game play can also offer excellent roleplaying opportunities.

The Competent Adventurer: this style of play focuses on competent, above-average people having extraordinary adventures. Characters in this style of campaign come from all walks of life but what they all have in common is that they are near the top of their game in their chosen profession. These characters will possess very good ratings in skills related to their specialty and competent ratings in a number of secondary skills. Six hundred points is the usual starting point for these characters and the rate of advancement can range from 5 to 20 or more points per session. The mid-level starting point leaves room for advancement without turning the characters into super-heroes.

Paragons and Legends: in this style of game, characters begin at a very high level of power. This frees players to do things other than worry about how they will gradually become more powerful, and allows great deeds to be accomplished from the get-go. Eight hundred or more character points should be used to build these characters, and rewards per session can range from 5-20 points, depending on the preferences of a given group of gamers. This type of game allows characters to have more control over the world, and to be less at the mercy of outside forces and Non-Player Characters, and perhaps even to take charge of the story and act instead of reacting to events in the game world.

REAL LIFE AND CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

The real life situation of a gaming group should also be considered when determining the pace of character advancement. Some gamers have a great deal of free time, and play often. A weekly game produces 50 sessions per year, and 20 character points per session could turn peasants into demigods after two years of play, which might not be such a good thing. On the other hand, gamers with less free time, who can play at most once per month, would have only advanced to the middle ranks of power during this time period. In other words, it is probably best to tailor the pace of character advancement to the whole arc of a story that a group wants to play, and to make sad but necessary allowances for real life.

Character Advancement Mechanics

Character points awarded during game play are no different than those used during character generation. In other words, a 300 point character who had gained 300 additional character points while adventuring could have exactly the same set of skills, advantages and familiarities as a character created with 600 character points.

The rate at which a group awards character points should fit with the scheme of advancement chosen by the group. There are no hard and fast rules for how these character points should be awarded, but some possible ideas for awarding character points follow. Many groups will find that a mixture of these methods best suits their style of play.

- Points for achieving group goals: character points may be awarded to a group of characters when they succeed in a mission, or accomplish a difficult task of some sort.
- Points for showing up: character points can be given out simply for playing. At the end of each game session, each character receives a certain fixed number of character points.
- Points for achieving personal goals or roleplaying: some groups may prefer to award some character points as a reward for good roleplaying or for faithfully pursuing character Priorities and achieving character goals. For example, a petty criminal who manages to take down a mob boss and thereby avenge his wife's death would certainly get these points. If this system is used, a group should discuss how points are to be awarded. Some groups may prefer to rely only on the judgement of the GM, while others may find that such an arrangement causes conflict, and might be happier voting on character point awards.
- Points for danger, points for hard lessons learned: some groups award extra character points to those characters who are the victims of ill luck or circumstance, and who experience some sort of informative misfortune during the course of a game session. These points might be awarded for barely surviving a fight that the character should have been clever enough to avoid, or for failing spectacularly on a critical die roll.

These systems can easily be combined, mixed-and-matched, and supplemented with any other system that allocates new character points in a way that keeps a game flowing smoothly.



As a general rule, ten or so character points equal one improvement for characters at an average level of power. Therefore, ten character points per session might be a good target number for a group that wants to see slow but steady advancement of their characters. After 30 game sessions, which might take two years of real time, characters would have gained 300 character points, and become noticeably tougher.

Five points per session is a good benchmark figure for groups that want slower character progress, and 20 points per session might be appropriate for groups that want characters to develop very rapidly.

The circumstances of a campaign will contribute to decisions about how character points should be allocated. A game where characters are soldiers, thrown into the trenches and forced to fight for their lives, should probably feature very rapid advancement, as characters either learn or perish. A game in which characters play out games of subtle intrigue among the gentry might be a good candidate for a much lower rate of advancement. In addition, the starting level of the characters may influence a group's preference for advancement. Players starting with 800 point characters may have little need or appetite for rapid advancement.

A default rate of character advancement is up to 10 points per session, awarded as follows:

4 points - Attendance: The character was present.

2 points - Group Achievement: Player characters accomplished their primary goals for the session.

2 points - Personal/Roleplaying Achievement: Awarded if a player role-played their character effectively, or if they made notable progress in the pursuit of their character goals.

2 points - Lessons Learned: The character experienced a perilous situation, in which they could test and hone their abilities, awarded even if the character was unsuccessful in realizing her objectives.

Character points acquired in the course of gaming can be freely spent to increase skills and attributes, with a few restrictions:

- No skill or attribute can be increased by more than one rating point per game session.
- Character points cannot be spent in the heat of action. Many groups limit the expenditure of character points to quiet periods between gaming sessions. In no event should characters be able to, say, increase their Barking Irons skill while preparing to fire a pistol at a foe in a running gun battle.
- A character should not be allowed to purchase a skill or familiarity that is completely alien to that character's experience. A typical English vicar cannot simply purchase a familiarity with rain forest survival, and a shaman from Borneo cannot learn how to pilot an airship. Of course, if the vicar were trained by a grizzled explorer, or the shaman hired on as a deckhand, then it would be perfectly appropriate for them to purchase these skills.
- Common sense should be used when purchasing advantages during game play. Some advantages, such as inoculated infant, simply cannot be purchased after character creation. Any advantage that could be learned or trained can be purchased.
- Disadvantages gained during game play do not normally confer additional character points. Do not allow the tiger to maim your leg because you're just eight character points away from another level of Hell Bent for Leather.
- Background advantages may be purchased during game play. Any character may use roleplaying and in-game activity to make specific contacts or to acquire equipment or property. These things do not need to be paid for with character points. On the other hand, a character who wishes to establish an entirely new network of personal connections must spend the character points to purchase a new background advantage.



Optional Advancement Rule: Training and Use

Some groups may find that it makes more sense to require characters to train and practice their skills before advancing in power. The amount of training required to raise a skill should be agreed on before play begins. It is never a good idea to give characters a wealth of character points, but to prevent them from using those points by imposing impossible training requirements.

A different approach to training allows characters to increase skills and attributes that they have either used or practiced. A combat soldier in a front line action could easily justify increasing their Barking Irons skill. A country vicar could justify raising Barking Irons, too, so long as they were receiving instruction in shooting and had time to practice.



SAMPLE CHARACTERS

This section presents a number of sample characters representing the careers of individuals following some of the archetypes listed earlier in this chapter. These templates have a dual purpose. First, they are intended to serve as a guide for players creating characters, to let them know which attributes and skills are considered important for a particular archetype. The templates are also intended to provide ready-made characters that merely need a few customization points spent to finish them off before they are ready for play. Each of the characters below is present at 300 point, 600 point, and 900 point levels, representing a continuum from early to late career.

Each character has a number of customization points available for each power level. Players may use these points to tweak attribute and skill levels, or to purchase additional advantages or familiarities. Note also that additional disadvantages may be taken, granting even more points to customize the character. If a template has a familiarity you don't like, feel free to replace it with a different one.





ARCANIST

“Andrew Warton”

Andrew begins play as an inoculated arcanist and a member of an established arcane secret society. His first patterns focus mostly on self-defense. As he adventures and improves his skills he learns a wider variety of patterns, and branches out to acquire some other traits and tricks as well. Late in his career, he invests the proceeds from a particularly lucrative venture in a small but thriving industrial concern in East Anglia. Although the local industrialists are happy to have his money in the economy, they continue to look on him with suspicion.

TRAITS	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Might	4	5	6
Vitality	5	6	7
Agility	4	5	5
Reason	6	8	9
Willpower	6	8	9
Wit	5	6	7
Fate	4	5	5



SKILLS

COMBAT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Bash and Stab			1
Up Close & Personal	2	2	2
Duck & Cover	3	6 (ranged)	7 (ranged)
Bows & Bombs			2
Barking Irons	2	4	4
Sergeant's Eye		3 (ambushes)	7 (ambushes)

ADVENTURING	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Olympian Spirit	2	4	4
Stealth & Camouflage		3	3
Devious Devices			
Call of the Wild		2	2
Heroic Vigor	1	3	5
Skulduggery			

INTELLECTUAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Natural Philosophy			
Artifice			
Liberal Arts			
Investigator's Eye	3	5	5
Law			
Medicine		4	4

CRAFT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
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SOCIAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
False Promises	2	2	4
Huckster's Eye	2	4	5
Buy Low, Sell High	2	2	2
Among Strangers		2	2
Leadership/ Intimidation		2	2

VEHICLE	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Hell Bent for Leather	5	6	6 (motorcars)
The Big Guns			
Beast Wrangling		3	4

MAGICAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Channeling	5	7	8
Precision	4	5	8
Focus	4	5	8
Arcanist's Eye	4	5	8
Arcane Memory	4	6	9

DREAM	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Dreamer's Eye			
Lucid Dreaming			
Clarity of the Self			
Languages of the Spirit			
Morphean Artifice			



ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Inoculation tier 2 (no cost)	Inoculation tier 2 (no cost)	Inoculation tier 3 (no cost)
Salt Tolerance I (10 pts)	Salt Tolerance I (10 pts)	Salt Tolerance 2 (20 pts)
Animal Foe (-10 pts)	Animal Foe (-10 pts)	Student of the Bizarre (10 pts)
		Animal Foe (-10 pts)
		Gimpy Leg (-10 pts)

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Arcane Connections 2 (10 pts)	Arcane Connections 2 (10 pts)	Arcane Connections 3 (15 pts)
		Industrialist 3 split 1 contact & 5 resources (15 pts)

PATTERNS/EPHEMERA		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Greater Deflection	Greater Deflection	Greater Deflection
Eyes in Darkness	Eyes in Darkness	Eyes in Darkness
Pressure Blast	Pressure Blast	Pressure Blast
Flash	Flash	Flash
	Flight	Flight
	Incinerate	Incinerate
		Fleshweave
		Boneweave

SIDE EFFECTS		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Odd Odors	Odd Odors	Odd Odors
Veins of Light	Veins of Light	Veins of Light
		Firebug

CUSTOMIZATION			NOTES
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts	
none	50 pts	90 pts	



DREAMER

"Beatrix Roamer"

Beatrix begins play as a humble street dreamer, and moves up to perfect her skills, even going so far as to spend some time studying university materials to learn more about other cultures to aid in dream interpretation. She is not much of a fighter, but by the end of her career she has been in several pitched gun battles, and has the skill necessary to make good her escape. She never does manage to stay focused on one project for long enough to make any money, however, and never finishes any of the university programs that she begins.

TRAITS	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Might	4	5	6
Vitality	5	6	8
Agility	3	5	5
Reason	6	7	8
Willpower	6	8	9
Wit	5	7	7
Fate	5	5	5



SKILLS

COMBAT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Bash and Stab			3
Up Close & Personal	2	3	4
Duck & Cover	3	5	6
Bows & Bombs			
Barking Irons			2
Sergeant's Eye			3

ADVENTURING	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Olympian Spirit		2	3
Stealth & Camouflage	2	4	5
Devious Devices			
Call of the Wild		1	3
Heroic Vigor			4
Skulduggery			

INTELLECTUAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Natural Philosophy			
Artifice			
Liberal Arts			4
Investigator's Eye			(anthropology, history)
Law	2	5	7
Medicine			

CRAFT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
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SOCIAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
False Promises	2	2	4
Huckster's Eye	2	3	5
Buy Low, Sell High	2	3	4
Among Strangers		1	3
Leadership/ Intimidation			2

VEHICLE	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Hell Bent for Leather			
The Big Guns			
Beast Wrangling	1	3	5

MAGICAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Channeling			
Precision			
Focus			
Arcanist's Eye			
Arcane Memory			

DREAM	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Dreamer's Eye	4	6	8
Lucid Dreaming	4	6	9
Clarity of the Self	3	7	8
Languages of the Spirit	2	6	8
Morphean Artifice	4	7	9





ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Vivid Imagination (10 pts)	Vivid Imagination (10)	Vivid Imagination (10)
Love is for Poets (10 pts)	Love is for Poets (10 pts)	Love is for Poets (10 pts)
Poor Depth Perception (-10 pts)	Urban Explorer (20 pts)	Urban Explorer (20 pts)
Bohemian Work Ethic (-10 pts)	Poor Depth Perception (-10 pts)	Poor Depth Perception (-10 pts)
	Bohemian Work Ethic (-10 pts)	Bohemian Work Ethic (-10 pts)

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Lucid Dreamer Street 2 (10 pts)	Lucid Dreamer Street 2 (10 pts)	Lucid Dreamer Street 2 (15 pts)

PATTERNS/EPHEMERA		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Darkness	Darkness	Darkness
Wall	Wall	Wall
Seductress	Seductress	Seductress
Spiders	Spiders	Spiders
	Wolf	Wolf
	Water	Water
	Snacks	Snacks
		Self
		Goblin

SIDE EFFECTS		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts



CUSTOMIZATION			NOTES
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts	
20 pts	60 pts	90 pts	





EX SOLDIER

"Xavier Durand"

Born poor in Paris, Xavier was a big rowdy child who became a brawling teenager who started running with a street gang. When he got caught, the authorities persuaded him to join the French Foreign Legion, a haven for foreigners and domestic troublemakers. Xavier was shipped off to Africa and soon found himself fighting Amazon warriors in the Second Franco-Dahomean war of 1892-1894. The three hundred point version of Xavier represents him near the middle of his six-year enlistment. After leaving the Legion, Xavier returned to France and fell in with a group of Anarcho-Syndicalists, wholeheartedly adopting their cause. It soon became clear that Xavier was more fond of the anarchy part of his comrades' ideology and was happy to be used by them as a bruiser. The six hundred point version of Xavier is in about 1899, just before he murdered a politician to whom he was supposed to be "sending a (non-lethal) message." Xavier fled Paris and made his way to Constantinople, where he became a feared enforcer for local organized crime. The nine hundred point version of Xavier finds him at the top of his game in 1905, an extremely dangerous man skilled with a variety of weapons and very hard to fool.

TRAITS	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Might	6	8	10
Vitality	5	7	9
Agility	5	6	7
Reason	4	4	5
Willpower	4	5	6
Wit	5	6	7
Fate	3	5	7



SKILLS

COMBAT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Bash and Stab	5	5	6
Up Close & Personal	3	8 (<i>fisticuffs</i>)	10 (<i>fisticuffs</i>)
Duck & Cover	4	5	6
Bows & Bombs			
Barking Irons	5	6	7
Sergeant's Eye	4	6	8

ADVENTURING	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Olympian Spirit	2	5	5
Stealth & Camouflage	2	5	5
Devious Devices			
Call of the Wild			
Heroic Vigor	4	5	7
Skulduggery		2	4

INTELLECTUAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Natural Philosophy			
Artifice			
Liberal Arts			
Investigator's Eye	3	5	6
Law			
Medicine			

CRAFT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Soldiering	3	5	5

SOCIAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
False Promises	1	4	5
Huckster's Eye	2	5	7
Buy Low, Sell High			2
Among Strangers		3	5
Leadership/ Intimidation	3	6	7

VEHICLE	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Hell Bent for Leather		4 <i>(velocipede)</i>	6 <i>(velocipede)</i>
The Big Guns			
Beast Wrangling			

MAGICAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Channeling			
Precision			
Focus			
Arcanist's Eye			
Arcane Memory			

DREAM	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Dreamer's Eye			
Lucid Dreaming			
Clarity of the Self			
Languages of the Spirit			
Morphean Artifice			





ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Thick Skull (20 pts)	Thick Skull (20 pts)	Thick Skull (20 pts)
Parasites (-10 pts)	Conspiracy Theory (no cost)	Conspiracy Theory (no cost)
Poor Impulse Control (-10 pts)	Anarchist's Heart (-10 pts)	Hard to Kill (20 pts)
	Unsettling (-10 pts)	Anarchist's Heart (-10 pts)
		Unsettling (-10 pts)

PATTERNS/EPHEMERA		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Criminal Underworld (1 pts)	Criminal Underworld (2 pts)	Criminal Underworld (3 pts)
Military Rank army (1 pts)	Military Rank army (2 pts)	Military Rank army (2 pts)

SIDE EFFECTS		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts



CUSTOMIZATION			NOTES
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts	
15 pts	30 pts	30 pts	





SCOUNDREL

“Ellie Hirsch”

Slim and pretty, but not beautiful, Ellie grew up in her father’s Yiddish theater in the East End of London. Her mother died giving birth to Ellie and she was raised by the theatre folk, as her father was too busy running the theatre to raise a child. A stagehand named Mucker Blitz became her mentor, teaching her dipping, Cockney slang for pickpocketing, and using her as an accomplice in small-time con jobs. The three hundred point version of Ellie is sixteen years old and still working with Mucker Blitz. When she was seventeen, Ellie fell in love with the captain of an airship and traveled the world with him for several years. An attack by pirates left her lover dead and Ellie stranded in Constantinople. Twenty-three, penniless and in a strange city, Ellie fell back on her skills as a dipper and con-artist. An old friend of her lover whom she’d met on the airship, a lucid dreamer named Stefan, found her in Constantinople and made her a partner in his elaborate Dreaming-related scams. The six hundred point Ellie is working mid-level scams with Stefan and reasonably prosperous. By 1905, a thirty-five year old Ellie is running high-profile scams all over the eastern Mediterranean; with operations in Constantinople, Cairo, Athens, and Damascus. At 900 points, Ellie is a master con-artist, fluent in Turkish and passable in Greek and Arabic, and possessing substantial resources. Ellie’s long-term association with Stefan has garnered her some skill in Lucid Dreaming but she is plagued by recurrent nightmares.

TRAITS	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Might	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	5
Agility	6	8	8
Reason	4	5	5
Willpower	4	6	7
Wit	6	7	9
Fate	6	7	9





SKILLS

COMBAT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Bash and Stab			
Up Close & Personal	3	4	6
Duck & Cover	3	5	7
Bows & Bombs		4	6
Barking Irons		(throwing knives)	(throwing knives)
Sergeant's Eye		3	4

ADVENTURING	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Olympian Spirit	2	3	4
Stealth & Camouflage	4	7	7
Devious Devices		4	4
Call of the Wild			
Heroic Vigor		3	4
Skulduggery	4	8 (pickpocket)	9 (pickpocket)

INTELLECTUAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Natural Philosophy			
Artifice			
Liberal Arts			
Investigator's Eye	3	6	8
Law			
Medicine			

CRAFT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
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SOCIAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
False Promises	5	7 (con-artist)	10 (con-artist)
Huckster's Eye	5	7	9
Buy Low, Sell High	3	5	7
Among Strangers	3	5	8
Leadership/ Intimidation			

VEHICLE	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Hell Bent for Leather			
The Big Guns			
Beast Wrangling			

MAGICAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Channeling			
Precision			
Focus			
Arcanist's Eye			
Arcane Memory			

DREAM	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Dreamer's Eye			4
Lucid Dreaming			4
Clarity of the Self			3
Languages of the Spirit			2
Morphean Artifice			4





ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Delicate Fingers (10 pts)	Delicate Fingers (10 pts)	Delicate Fingers (10 pts)
Low Pain Tolerance (-10 pts)	Language (passable) Turkish (10 pts)	Language (fluent) Turkish (20 pts)
	Low Pain Tolerance (-10 pts)	Language (passable) Arabic, Greek (20 pts)
	Lonely Heart (-10 pts)	Low Pain Tolerance (-10 pts)
		Lonely Heart (-10 pts)
		Twisted Dreams (-10 pts)

PATTERNS/EPHEMERA		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
		maximum 4

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Criminal Underworld (1 pts)	Criminal Underworld (2 pts)	Criminal Underworld (4 pts)
Urban Classes (1 pts)	Urban Classes (1 pts)	Urban Classes (1 pts)

SIDE EFFECTS		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts



CUSTOMIZATION			NOTES
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts	
15 pts	30 pts	30 pts	





AIRSHIP CAPTAIN

“Arthur ‘Artie’ Hughes-Remington”

Artie was born in the late 1870’s in Plymouth, England to a family with a long blue-water naval tradition. His most illustrious ancestor is Admiral Percy Hughes who fought as a midshipman with Nelson at Trafalgar and went on to a distinguished naval career, as did a number of his sons, grandsons, and so on. Artie “scandalized” his family when he became an Airship officer instead of following the family tradition and going out to sea. Because of this, while Artie had a very comfortable upbringing, as an adult he has been perpetually short of funds. Artie purchased the RMS *Aethersprite* from its former owner and captain when the elderly gentleman retired. Artie had been like a son to the old man and he received very favorable terms, but the loan on the airship has put further stress on Artie’s finances, and made him willing to consider a wider range of cargos and prospects than would perhaps be true otherwise, as long as no one is likely to get hurt. The former owner of the *Aethersprite* was killed shortly after selling Artie the ship, and he has vowed revenge on the scallywag that did it. The 600 point version of Artie is appropriate for playing him in around 1905, when he is a still-struggling owner and captain, but has a good deal of experience running his ship. The 900 point character is maybe 5 or so years later when, having caught some breaks, things are looking better for the *Aethersprites*. Artie has gotten his revenge and is perhaps looking towards an early retirement.

TRAITS	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Might	5	5	7
Vitality	4	6	6
Agility	6	7	9
Reason	5	5	6
Willpower	4	5	6
Wit	5	6	7
Fate	4	7	7



SKILLS

COMBAT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Bash and Stab		7 (<i>swords</i>)	7 (<i>swords</i>)
Up Close & Personal		4	6
Duck & Cover	4	6	7
Bows & Bombs			
Barking Irons	5	7 (<i>pistols</i>)	10 (<i>pistols</i>)
Sergeant's Eye		5	7

ADVENTURING	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Olympian Spirit	2	4	6
Stealth & Camouflage		4	5
Devious Devices		2	3
Call of the Wild			
Heroic Vigor		2	5
Skulduggery			

INTELLECTUAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Natural Philosophy			
Artifice		3	3
Liberal Arts		(<i>hotaether engines</i>)	(<i>hotaether engines</i>)
Investigator's Eye	3	5	7
Law			
Medicine			

CRAFT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Airship Crewman	5	5	5

SOCIAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
False Promises		6	7
Huckster's Eye	2	5	6
Buy Low, Sell High	1	4	6
Among Strangers	2	4	6
Leadership/ Intimidation	3	6	7

VEHICLE	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Hell Bent for Leather	4 (<i>airships</i>)	5 (<i>airships</i>)	8 (<i>airships</i>)
The Big Guns	1	1	4
Beast Wrangling			

MAGICAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Channeling			
Precision			
Focus			
Arcanist's Eye			
Arcane Memory			

DREAM	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Dreamer's Eye			
Lucid Dreaming			
Clarity of the Self			
Languages of the Spirit			
Morphean Artifice			

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

300 pts

600 pts

900 pts

Fame, minor
Aerospace
(10 pts)

Fame, minor
Aerospace
(10 pts)

Fame, major
Aerospace
(20 pts)

Obsession
(-10 pts)

Add Steam
aetherspark pistol
(20 pts)

Add Steam
aetherspark pistol
(20 pts)

Obsession
(-10 pts)

PATTERNS/EPHEMERA

300 pts

600 pts

900 pts

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES

300 pts

600 pts

900 pts

**Life in the
Clouds**
(3 pts)

**Life in the
Clouds**
(4 pts)

**Life in the
Clouds**
(4 pts)

SIDE EFFECTS

300 pts

600 pts

900 pts

CUSTOMIZATION

NOTES

300 pts

600 pts

900 pts

15 pts

25 pts

25 pts



NOBLE/DILETTANTE

“Courtney William Charles Windham”

Courtney (his friends call him “Court”) was born the youngest, fifth child, and second son, of The Right Honorable Charles Windham, Earl of Timpley. Court’s older brother will inherit the title, leaving him with little to do. Court does his best to fill his time, however. Known as both witty and handsome, Court has developed quite a reputation, one that would be worse yet if not mollified somewhat by his equal measure of charm and style. The beginning version of Court finds him in his early 20’s, just after turns at Eton and Oxford where he will be remembered as a bon vivant and gifted athlete, if an unremarkable student. Eschewing the military, the traditional road for well-born second sons, Court is at the beginning of a several-year stint as a bachelor man-about-town in London. These years did nothing for his reputation, never much to begin with, but he redeemed himself somewhat when rather unconventionally for a man of his station, he joined the foreign office and was assigned to British consulates in first Ceylon, and then Constantinople. The 600 point version of Court finds him in the middle of his diplomatic career. His blue blood and charming manner have won him both friends and enemies, and rumors with varying degrees of likelihood have continued to swirl about him of illicit affairs he may or may not have had. A gentleman never tells. Finally, the 900 point version of Court finds him in the years before World War One, unexpectedly heir to his father the Earl on the untimely death of his older brother. He has been named a Knight Grand Cross of the Bath (GCB) by the Queen for his service to the Empire. Court holds the courtesy title Viscount Havington and his diplomatic service make him (perhaps frighteningly) likely to become Foreign Secretary one day from his seat in the House of Lords. That is, if he ever troubles to marry.

TRAITS	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Might	5	6	7
Vitality	4	7	7
Agility	6	7	8
Reason	3	5	5
Willpower	3	5	5
Wit	7	7	8
Fate	5	7	7



SKILLS

COMBAT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Bash and Stab	3	5	6
Up Close & Personal	1	2	4
Duck & Cover	1	3	6
Bows & Bombs			
Barking Irons	2	5	7
Sergeant's Eye		3	6

ADVENTURING	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Olympian Spirit	4	4	5
Stealth & Camouflage	2	2	2
Devious Devices		2	4
Call of the Wild			
Heroic Vigor		3	4
Skulduggery		(3 cards)	(5 cards)

INTELLECTUAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Natural Philosophy	1 (chemistry)	1 (chemistry)	1 (chemistry)
Artifice			
Liberal Arts	3	4	6
Investigator's Eye	2	6	7
Law	1 (english)	3 (english)	7 (english)
Medicine			

CRAFT	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
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SOCIAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
False Promises	4	5	10
Huckster's Eye	2	7	10
Buy Low, Sell High			2
Among Strangers	3	5	6
Leadership/ Intimidation	3	5	8

VEHICLE	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Hell Bent for Leather	2 (motorcars)	4 (motorcars)	6 (motorcars)
The Big Guns			
Beast Wrangling			

MAGICAL	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Channeling			
Precision			
Focus			
Arcanist's Eye			
Arcane Memory			

DREAM	300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Dreamer's Eye			
Lucid Dreaming			
Clarity of the Self			
Languages of the Spirit			
Morphean Artifice			




ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Animal Magnetism (10 pts)	Animal Magnetism (10 pts)	Animal Magnetism (10 pts)
Party Animal (10 pts)	Fame, minor Diplomatic Corps (10 pts)	Fame, major Diplomatic Corps (20 pts)
Low Pain Tolerance, major (-20 pts)	Party Animal (10 pts)	Party Animal (10 pts)
Bohemian Work Ethic (-10 pts)	Bohemian Work Ethic (-10 pts)	Poor Impulse Control (-10 pts)
Poor Impulse Control (-10 pts)	Poor Impulse Control (-10 pts)	

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts
Aristocrat (4 pts)	Aristocrat (4 pts)	Aristocrat (5 pts)

PATTERNS/EPHEMERA		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts

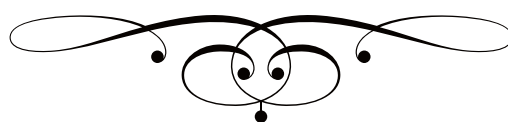
SIDE EFFECTS		
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts

CUSTOMIZATION			NOTES
300 pts	600 pts	900 pts	
20 pts	30 pts	30 pts	



CHAPTER 2

SKILLS



- *Overview* •
- *Vehicle* •
- *Combat* •
- *Social* •
- *Adventuring* •
- *Intellectual* •
- *Craft* •
- *Arcane* •
- *Dream* •



OVERVIEW

A character in Brass & Steel possesses a number of skills. Skills, unlike attributes, represent accumulated knowledge, training, and experience more than innate ability. A rating of 5 in a skill is typically sufficient for that skill to be used professionally, a 7 indicates mastery of the skill, and a 9 or above is possessed by an extremely accomplished character. The skills in Brass & Steel have been intentionally designed to be fairly broad in scope. A character can learn to be proficient in large areas of endeavor by taking a single skill. The skill Bash and Stab, for instance, allows a character to effectively use any type of melee weapon to do violence to his or her enemies.

Greater specificity of character knowledge can be obtained by selecting familiarities. Familiarities represent areas of particular character competence within a skill. A character with the skill Barking Irons can use any type of small firearm, but would be notably better (typically a 2 point bonus) in using pistols if they possessed a familiarity in pistols. Some skills, such as Hell Bent for Leather, which covers piloting and driving, require at least one familiarity in order to be useful. Excellent airship pilots are typically good at driving cars as well, but do need to familiarize themselves with the controls and techniques. Similarly, characters skilled in one branch of Natural Science will be able to use their broad scientific training to work in other branches of science once they have obtained a familiarity, which represents, in this case, knowledge of the particular theories and practices relevant to the study of physics or astronomy. Characters may not use a skill which *requires* familiarity for an application for which they do not possess the appropriate familiarity; if a test is required it is made using only the appropriate Attribute rating.

Example: First Officer Sarah Willoughs of the RMS Aethersprite is an expert at the helm of her beloved old airship. However, she finds herself on the ground in Calcutta needing to deliver a Royal Mail parcel to the British Consulate in a hurry. She rents a steam-powered velocipede from a stall and attempts to navigate the crowded streets of the capital of the Raj. Because the Hell Bent for Leather skill requires familiarity and Sarah only possesses the "Airship" familiarity and not "Velocipede" she must rely on her Agility alone to aid her. Once Sarah has familiarized herself with the controls of the velocipede and driven it a few times she can spend five points and purchase the familiarity, enabling her to test against her full **Agility + Hell Bent for Leather**.

THE "EYE" SKILLS.



You may notice that a number of skills in Brass & Steel are labeled as "Eye" skills. All of these skills represent a character's general awareness and perception in that arena. *Huckster's Eye* helps a character spot a liar, while *Arcanist's Eye* will enable a Magos to sense the presence of nearby arcane energies. The most important 'eye' skill for most characters will be *Investigator's Eye*, it being the skill most often tested for general awareness of one's surroundings and miscellaneous clue-finding. Unless you've got a pretty good reason not to take it, most characters should take at least a point or two in *Investigator's Eye*, as depending on your group's style of play it may be tested frequently.

VEHICLE SKILLS

These skills allow a character to operate different types of motorized vehicle, and also to man the weapons that are mounted in some militarized vehicles. The ability to manage animals effectively is included here as well, as most people are still more likely to use animals as transport than powered vehicles. Vehicle skills are most commonly paired with Agility, except Beast Wrangling which is most often tested with Willpower.



Hell Bent for Leather · Allows for the operation of mechanical conveyances. Familiarity advantages are required and confer the ability to operate specific types of vehicle effectively. Familiarities include boats and ships, airships, automobiles, velocipedes, undersea vehicles, walkers /exoskeletons (will require a very high tech background, as well).

The Big Guns · Allows for the operation and repair of large vehicle-mounted or crew-served weapon systems. Familiarities includes mortars, artillery, torpedoes, heavy automatic/Gatling weapons, and flamethrowers.

Beast Wrangling · Allows for the care, feeding, and handling of domesticated animals (and the wrangling of some fierce wild creatures, as appropriate) familiarity with types of animals confers bonuses, and familiarities include common varieties such as horses, elephants, camels, dogs, and birds.

Chapter 2

COMBAT SKILLS

Combat skills come into play whenever a character would like to do another harm, or to avoid, say, being brutally gunned down by an irate Tunisian sock merchant armed with a surplus rifle from the Boer war. Combat skills are most commonly paired with Agility, except Sergeant's Eye, which is usually tested with Wit.



Bash and Stab · This skill indicates proficiency with medium-large cutting, slashing, smashing, and stabbing weapons. It is used both to attack with these weapons and to parry with them. Familiarity confers bonuses. Familiarities include swords, maces, axes, spears/bayonets, fencing blades and pole weapons.

Up Close and Personal · This skill indicates proficiency with both unarmed combat and with small weapons, such as knives, brass knuckles, and the like. This skill is used to attack and parry / block with these weapons. Familiarity confers bonuses. Some example familiarities: knives, blackjacks, ninja arm claws, punching aids, fisticuffs, wrestling.

Duck and Cover · This skill allows characters to get out of the way of bullets, arrows, grenades and the like. It is more effective in areas where there is cover to get behind. Some example familiarities: gunfights, melee attacks, fires, artillery and explosions.

Bows and Bombs · This skill allows characters to use muscle-powered ranged weapons. Familiarity with weapon types confers a bonus. Miscellaneous odd range weapons such as bolas or lassos may require a specific familiarity at GM discretion. Some example familiarities: firebombs, grenades, throwing knives, spears, bows, atl-atls.

Barking Irons · This skill allows characters to employ ranged weapons that do not rely on muscle power. Familiarity confers a bonus. Some familiarities include rifles, pistols, crossbows, and automatic weapons. Aetherspark pistols and Aetherspark rifles each require a separate familiarity, as these weapons behave quite differently compared to their more pedestrian cousins.

Sergeant's Eye · This skill allows a character to make the most of a combat environment, confers advantages when possessed by a leader and can aid in ambushes, escapes, and the like. Some familiarities include ambushes, small unit tactics, fortifications, and trench warfare (perhaps the most depressing familiarity in all of Brass & Steel).



SOCIAL SKILLS



Social skills come into play when characters wish to obtain some advantage for themselves in social interactions with others. This may take the form of reading the body language of other characters, obtaining a better price on a shiny new boot dagger, or passing oneself off as a legitimate member of the royal family. Social skills are most commonly paired with Wit.



False Promises · This skill allows characters to effectively mislead others. Convincing a suspicious guard that a character's hastily-forged credentials are legitimate would fall under this skill, as would convincing a young heiress that she really is the one true love of your life. Familiarities include seduction, bluffing and con artistry, poker face, and bravado.

Hucksters Eye · This skill allows characters to read subtle social cues. It can detect falsehoods told by an unpracticed liar, and can be used to gauge another character's mental or emotional state. Familiarities include romantic encounters, first impressions, spotting lies and empathy.

Buy Low Sell High · This skill governs social interactions that involve negotiation. It is often used when dealing with financial matters. It governs any social interaction that involves the exchange of goods and services, from buying a yacht to bribing a guard. Familiarities include haggling, merchanting, banking, investments, and bribery.

At Home Among Strangers · This skill governs general social interaction, and confers the ability to move smoothly in and out of different social settings, avoid faux pas, and generally fit in. Familiarity confers bonuses. Familiarities include military, high society, bohemians, criminals, rural folk and workers.

Leadership and Intimidation · Two sides of the same coin, this skill involves persuading others to do something they would rather not do. This skill can be used to interrogate prisoners, as well, although Huckster's Eye is needed to be sure that they're telling the truth. Familiarities include oratory, battlefield inspiration, interrogation and intimidation.

ADVENTURING SKILLS



Adventuring skills provide a mixed bag of capabilities, generally useful to characters who spend their time running around out in the wild (including the fierce urban wilderness) getting into trouble in pursuit of grand adventure or personal gain. Adventuring skills could be commonly paired with Might, Vitality or Agility as appropriate.



Olympian Spirit · This skill allows characters to run, swim, climb things, and lift kettle bells with great skill and panache. Familiarities include specific types of athletic activity, including climbing, running, swimming, and possibly badminton.

Stealth and Camouflage · This skill allows characters to blend in with their surroundings, move silently, and conceal objects, people, and installations from view. Familiarities include shadowing, urban camouflage, outdoor camouflage and stealth.



Devious Devices · This skill allows characters to pick locks, open safes, and jimmy doors, and also allows them to detect, analyze, and disarm most types of trap. Familiarities include safecracking, lockpicking, and mechanical traps.

Skulduggery · This skill covers many different nefarious activities, including the ability to pick pockets, skill at gambling, crude forgeries, bribery and begging. Nefarious skills that require technical skills or mechanical devices are covered by the Devious Devices skill instead. Familiarities include games of chance and pickpocketing.

Call of the Wild · This skill allows characters to travel and survive in the wilderness. It includes the ability to navigate and create and read maps and charts, track, and the like. Familiarities associated with this skill include orienteering, arctic training, desert training and hunting.

Heroic Vigor · This skill represents intensive physical training and toughening. It aids in the resistance of many physical and environmental hardships, and also adds to rolls to resist death or unconsciousness from injury. Familiarities include resisting coercion, enduring fatigue, laughing at the effects of wounds, and not dying (a very useful familiarity, if a bit hard to practice).

Chapter 2

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS



These skills provide characters with capabilities that generally require some sort of formal training, or, at a minimum, careful mental focus. Intellectual skills will be most commonly paired with Reason, but Willpower will also be appropriate in certain cases, and Investigator's Eye is most commonly paired with Wit.



Natural Philosophy · This skill governs expertise within a particular scientific discipline, as well as giving a character the ability to do theoretical research, if they want to do so for some reason. This skill requires at least one familiarity be taken. Suggested familiarities include: astronomy, physics, optics, biology, and chemistry.

Artifice · Allows for the construction, design, and repair of machines, devices, and gadgets. Used to build and maintain vehicles. Familiarity for particular disciplines is required. Skill in Natural Philosophy is often helpful when using this skill. Sample familiarities include metallurgy, small devices, gunsmithy, boats and ships, automobiles, velocipedes, and airships.

Investigators Eye · This extremely useful skill allows a character to carefully observe their surroundings. It allows adventurers to spot small but crucial clues. A familiarity with clues and crime turns a character into a great detective, whereas a familiarity with research methods is of great assistance to a more academically-minded character. Familiarities include crime scenes, observing people, research, and searches.

Liberal Arts · This skill represents a character's broad familiarity with the entire range of humanities and social sciences, most notably history and anthropology. Familiarities include history, anthropology, classical studies, and sociology.

Law · This skill covers legal matters. Familiarity is required, and familiarities include English law, French law (which is based on the Napoleonic Code, and quite different from English law), and Russian law, as well as academic subjects such as Roman law or international law.

Medicine · This skill governs the healing arts. This skill deals mostly with conventional medicine, which includes the use of such specialized healing tools as elixirs and Physicane, as well as more conventional medical and surgical knowledge. Familiarities include pharmacology, surgery, battlefield medicine and infectious diseases.



CRAFT SKILLS

Each craft or profession can have a skill of its own. These skills typically offer access to some specialized knowledge particular to the craft, but much of their general practical utility may be duplicated with other, less-specific, skills. Soldiering can be used, for example to set camp in the wilderness, but Call of the Wild is also a perfectly valid choice for such a task, and may be better in non-military applications. Call of the Wild will do nothing to teach a character about military base operations, however. Craft skills mainly serve to provide additional flavor to the game. Craft skills will be paired with many different attributes as needed. For example, the test above to set camp could be **Reason + Soldiering** if the intent was to find the correct site, or **Agility + Soldiering** if the test was made to determine the equipment was being set up correctly. As is always the case, tests should only be called for when the outcome has some importance, as in the case where there will be a flash flood and the GM wants to know if the players set their tents above or below the flood line.



EXAMPLE CRAFT SKILLS

Airship Crewman · This skill represents the myriad skills needed to perform the duties of an airship crewman.

Soldiering · This skill represents the myriad skills needed to perform the duties of an enlisted soldier.

Forgery · This skill represents the many sub-skills and extensive knowledge needed to be a professional forger capable of producing high quality forgeries of complicated documents. Crude forgeries of simple documents or signatures can be performed with the Skulduggery skill.

Still Mastery · Although it sounds like some sort of secret martial art, this skill actually covers all of the things that one needs in order to produce spirituous beverages of the very highest quality. Still construction and operation, the use of herbs and other adjunct compounds to produce flavor, and different techniques for aging and bottling are included.

Monasticism · This skill gives knowledge of the many daily rites and rituals that are part of the life of a typical monk. It includes knowledge of prayer, philosophy, and various crafts and tasks associated with this life.

ARCANE SKILLS

These skills are specifically used by those who wish to use arcane power to manipulate the world. Any human can learn these skills, but they are far more effective for arcanists who have been inoculated with Alchemical Salts, as they are much better able to wield arcane energy. Note that use of arcane skills is explained in more detail in Chapter 6 - Arcanism. Reason is used for tests to invoke free form effects and for most tests involving Arcane Memory. Willpower is used for invoking Charms and Patterns. Arcanists Eye is generally tested with Wit.



Channeling · This skill measures and limits the amount of raw power that an arcanist can employ in their works, and is used in tests involving raw power.

Precision · This skill measures an arcanist's ability to balance and direct the power that they summon. It is employed in invoking arcane effects where the careful application of power is important.

Focus · This skill measures the ability of an arcanist to establish and maintain arcane concentration. It is used in tests to avoid distraction or interruption, and it also determines the number and power of arcane effects that an arcanist can maintain at any given time. Every effect that can be maintained requires a certain number of focus points - although some very minor effects do not require constant upkeep, they do still count as a single point against the overall effect limit for an arcanist. This skill also improves an inoculated arcanist's ability to replenish their reserves of power.

Arcanists Eye · This skill governs an arcanist's ability to sense arcane energies and manifestations in the world, as well as their ability to use arcane power to perceive and study the world. It is used in the invocation of arcane effects that are designed to gain information.

Arcane Memory · This skill determines how quickly an arcanist can learn new patterns, and also determines the maximum number of patterns that an arcanist can retain in active memory at any given time. (Other patterns, once learned, are not forgotten, but an arcanist must take some time to meditate and re-configure their mental library to swap patterns out of deep memory).

Chapter 2

DREAM SKILLS



These skills deal with the manipulation of the dream realms and of Ephemera (images and impressions brought from the dream realms into the waking world). Any character may learn these skills, but they may prove to be of relatively limited use to characters who do not focus on dreaming as a specialty. Dream skills use Wits, Reason or Willpower as described in Chapter 7 - Dreaming. Perception tests in the Dreamscape are generally made using **Wits + Dreamer's Eye**, but there are several other specialized uses for that skill that involve other attributes.



Dreamers Eye · This skill is used to see and understand the underlying nature of dreams. This skill makes navigation through the dream realms possible. It is also used to detect hidden entities or objects in the dream realms. The skill also allows a dreamer to attempt to remain unnoticed in the dreaming, and to is particularly important when trying to blend into another person's Reverie. Skill in Dreamer's Eye also aids a character in detecting Ephemera that have been manifested in the waking world, and may be useful to characters with no real interest in the other aspects of Dreaming.

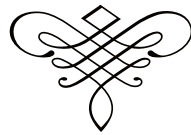
Lucid Dreaming · This skill allows the dreamer to exert their will over the dream realms - this serves both to shape the background imagery of the dream realms and as an attack skill, since an attack in the dreaming is basically an attempt to transform parts of someone else's dream-self. This skill does not make lasting changes to the dreaming - that is covered by Morphean Artifice.



Clarity of the Self · This is a skill that allows a dreamer to preserve their own form while travelling through the dream realms. This skill provides for environmental resistance against whatever strange fires, storms and other terrors a dreamer might encounter, and also serves as a defensive skill while dreaming, by allowing the dreamer to protect their form and substance against people or entities seeking to destroy or manipulate them.

Languages of the Spirit · This skill allows a Dreamer to interpret the images that they encounter in the dream realms. It is used to analyze and understand the parts of the dream realm that relate to the real world. If a Dreamer is attempting to make sense of images from someone else's Reverie, they use this skill to do so. This skill also allows Dreamers to understand how best to modify dreams in such a way as to shape the emotions or thoughts of people in the waking world.

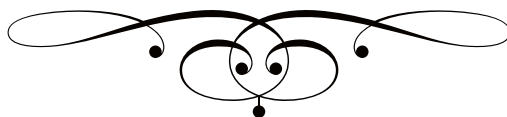
Morphean Artifice · This skill allows the creation of "artifacts" within the dream realms. Normally, only things directly associated with a dreamer's form have any kind of permanence in the dreaming – this skill allows a dreamer to imbue dream creations with a portion of their will, enabling them to endure for a limited time on their own. Creating anything lasting within the dream realm requires the expenditure of a point of Stamina. Items persist for a number of evenings equal to twice the degree of success on this roll. A dreamer may create permanent changes to their own Reverie using this skill. These changes require only periodic pruning and upkeep. This skill also allows dreamers to capture Ephemera within the dream realms, which may then be released in the real world as illusions of a sort.





CHAPTER 3

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES



- Advantages •
- Disadvantages •
- Background Advantages •



Not all characters are created equal. Some seem to be blessed or cursed by the capricious fate. Advantages and disadvantages detail the ways in which characters have an easier or harder time of things.

Story Flaws



A character may take one advantage as a "story flaw." The advantage costs no character points, but is a mixed blessing, conferring both bonuses and penalties to the character. Story flaws are intended to serve as role playing hooks, and a character should have only one. Players should use story flaws as an opportunity to make more interesting characters and not to get something for nothing. Game Masters are encouraged to actively work to ensure that a story flaw is indeed a mixed blessing.

Each advantage and disadvantage is rated as either minor or major. Minor advantages cost ten character points, major advantages cost twenty points. Minor and major disadvantages award ten and twenty character points, respectively.

There is no hard-and-fast limit on how many advantages or disadvantages a character in Brass & Steel may possess, though common sense should be used when designing and approving characters. No character should have tremendous power because they have seven mental illnesses, a bum leg, one eye, and a peanut allergy. Using disadvantages in this way is not in keeping with the intended spirit of Brass & Steel.

The list below is not intended to be all-inclusive. Players and Game Masters should feel free to create new advantages and disadvantages as appropriate to the stories they would like to tell. When a new advantage or disadvantage is created it should be given a name and a description and assigned minor or major status. Any new advantage or disadvantage is subject to group or GM approval. However, characters intended for use in other groups, for example larger LARPs, should be built using only stock advantages and disadvantages.

Chapter 3

ADVANTAGES



Add Steam (*Major*) • A character may take this advantage to acquire a single item of rare technological gear; a clockwork-limb replacement, an Aetherspark pistol, or similar device. A compassionate GM will allow the character to replace this item with some difficulty should it be lost or damaged during game play. Please note that characters with any level in Tech Resources would have no reason to purchase the Add Steam advantage.

Adrenaline Surge (*Major*) • A character may elect to receive a 1 point bonus to agility and strength when there is a very real chance that they will die within the next five minutes. Once the stressful situation has passed, the character suffers 2 boxes of Stamina damage.

Always Stands Their Round (*Minor*) • The character is known to deal fairly and generously with their friends and allies. All background advantages possessed by the character are treated as being one point higher for purposes of determining if the character can locate a contact. However,

if a character is ever shown to have betrayed a contact, this advantage becomes the Gets No Respect disadvantage.

Animal Friend (*Minor*) • The character received a +2 animal handling bonus, and animals will generally be well-disposed toward them, even animals such as guard dogs that should know better. This advantage will be lost if a character mistreats animals that they encounter.

Animal Magnetism (men or women) (*Minor/Major*) • The character receives a +3 bonus in situations where sex appeal might prove useful. This advantage may be taken as a major advantage, granting a +6 bonus, producing a character who is irresistible to both men and women. It may be taken as a story flaw, in which case it costs no points, but tends to cause trouble, as the character is simply too sexy for their own good and will be propositioned at inopportune moments and in inconvenient ways. This can, for example, make meetings with the Sultan of Burundi quite awkward.



Arcane Recall (*Major*) • The character is especially good at remembering arcane patterns. This advantage confers a +2 bonus to the Arcane Memory skill. This advantage may be taken by the non-inoculated, and might even be used by a character who lacks Arcane Memory skill.

Avatar of Misfortune (*Major*) • The character may use Fate Cards normally. In addition, once per session, they may play a Fate Card against an opponent, forcing them to roll multiple times and choosing the result most beneficial to the player possessing this advantage.

Complicated Person (*Minor*) • The character in question is just plain peculiar. Ordinary folk may react somewhat negatively to them, and rolls to blend in are made at a -2 penalty. However, being weird has some advantages. The mental landscape of such a person is downright strange, and any dreamer operating in their personal dream realm will suffer an additional -2 penalty for lack of familiarity, which can only be offset with a great deal of exposure and analysis.

Conspiracy Theorist (*Minor*) • A character with this advantage is very good at spotting the secret plots and cabals that shape the world. This can be dangerous knowledge, but it can also provide excellent story hooks, and get characters out of very difficult situations by letting them know what's really going on. GM's should be generous in allowing such characters leeway when finding the truth that is out there, and should provide hints as appropriate. As a story flaw, the signal to noise ratio is just a little bit off on the character's knack. They spot real conspiracies, but they also spot not-so-real conspiracies, and they tend to blow minor conspiracies out of proportion.

Creature of the Night (*Minor*) • No, not a vampire, just someone who does their best work after dark; a, well, night person. A character with this advantage is more comfortable working at night. They have good night vision, for a +2 bonus when appropriate, and are comfortable working under cover of darkness.

Delicate Fingers (*Minor*) • The character's hands are well-suited to tasks involving fine manipulation. In any situation where this might prove to be an advantage, the character receives a +2 bonus.

Fame (*Minor/Major*) • This advantage indicates that a character is famous for some of their accomplishments. This can be helpful, when dealing with people who would be impressed by those accomplishments, but it can also make it difficult to be inconspicuous, and can make enemies of people who would disapprove of the actions that brought the character their fame. As a minor advantage, Fame grants a +2 bonus

to all social tests where the person has heard of the famous character. As a major advantage, the bonus conferred is +4. As a story flaw, the person's reputation is dubious, granting a bonus when dealing with unsavory types but a penalty when dealing with proper society. (Alternatively, the character could have a bonus in dealing with the elite, but be looked on as a right bastard by everyone else). Other special cases may also make for interesting story hooks.

Familiarity (*Special - 5 character points*) • A special type of advantage, familiarity governs the narrower application of a skill. As noted previously, some skills require familiarity – a lawyer cannot practice law without specific knowledge of the legal system in which they are working. Some other skills benefit from familiarity, but do not require it. A great swordsman can probably manage to hit a foe with a shovel, but will be much better with a sword in hand. In this case, having the appropriate familiarity confers a +2 bonus. Each type of familiarity is a different advantage. This advantage can be taken any number of times.

Friends in Odd Places (*Minor*) • The character has a knack for knowing people in the strangest places. This advantage negates the first five points of negative modifiers applied to a test to locate contacts.

Gifted Minor Arcanist (*Minor*) • the character is a better than normal user of arcane abilities – he or she takes 1 less point of Stamina damage whenever a charm is employed. This may reduce the cost of some Charms to zero. This advantage applies only to Charms, and has no effect on the more powerful Patterns employed by inoculated arcanists.

Hard to Kill (*Major*) • The character with this advantage may disregard the bleeding effect of the third column of their physical wound track. They also receive a +2 bonus when attempting to avoid perishing from their wounds.

High Pain Tolerance (*Major*) • High pain tolerance reduces wound penalties by one rank. This advantage may also confer bonuses to characters when they are attempting to resist torture, intimidation, or interrogation.

Inoculated Infant (*Major*) • Inoculation is hideously dangerous. It is even more dangerous for children. However, if a child is inoculated and survives, the physical side effects of the first Inoculation are muted, although psychological trauma tends to result. In game terms, this advantage indicates that the character was inoculated by some group of arcanists with little regard for human life, and may take a mental disadvantage rather than a physical side effect for their first Inoculation, making it easier for them to move in some parts of society. They will also likely have had access to unusual arcane resources while growing up.



Language Skill (*Minor/Major*) • All characters are automatically proficient in their native language. Characters with this skill are proficient in an additional language. A minor advantage allows useful communication, but with a humorous accent and the possibility of occasional misunderstandings. A major advantage indicates true fluency, and the character either is or can pass for a native speaker in all situations.

Lightning Reflexes (*Major*) • A character with lightning reflexes is never wholly surprised. In a situation where the character would normally be surprised the character is still able to defend herself, though the character will be unable to take any non-defensive actions during the surprise round.

Love is for Poets (*Minor*) • The character believes that romantic love is a dangerous lie. They are immune to attempts to play on their affections. They can enjoy a good roll in the hay, and can play along with a seduction attempt, but they'll not get all mushy about it. Adorable puppies have no power over such characters. If taken as a story flaw, the character assumes that everyone, apart from a few close friends, has an ulterior motive, and will have great difficulty making new friends or recruiting new contacts.

Man of the Crowd (*Minor*) • Some characters have charisma, charm, or moxie - something that makes them stand out in a crowd, and makes passersby say 'Egads, what a marvelously fascinating bloke!'. This character does not have such a quality. Instead, they have a knack for blending into crowds. Any attempt to note the character when they are part of a larger group is at a -3 penalty, and any attempt that they make to blend into the background is at a +3 bonus.

Mystic Item (*Major*) • A character may take this advantage to acquire a single item of minor arcane power. If the item should ever be lost, stolen or destroyed a kind GM might allow a similar item to fall into the character's hands.

Nine Lives (*Major*) • Once per session, a character may discard a fate card instead of playing it, and automatically succeed on a defensive test. This advantage may be invoked after a normal test has been attempted.

Noble Title (*Minor/Major*) • This character has a noble title in a nation which has an aristocracy. Taken as a minor advantage, the character possesses the title of Gentleman (Esquire), Knight, or Baronet and receives a +1 bonus to all social tests with persons who respect (or fear) the title. Taken as a major advantage, the character is granted the title of Baron or Viscount and also grants the character a +2 bonus to all social tests with persons who respect (or

fear) the title. Note that taking this advantage makes the a character the bearer of a actual noble title; if they are British they will be a peer. Having an aristocratic background is enough to come from a noble family. Though unlikely to come up during play, the titles of Baron and Viscount in the United Kingdom entitle the holder to a seat in the House of Lords. (An all-lord adventurers game might be fun, though...although deciding how the characters were to be seated at a dinner party could consume an entire game session.)

No Fate but What We Make (*Major*) • This character may never have or use Fate Cards. However, no Fate Card can be used against them. Their grim determination also allows them to avoid the effects of one of their failures per session, permitting a second test to be rolled, and that result taken instead.

Not Born Yesterday (*Minor*) • The character is very difficult to bluff, con, or otherwise deceive, receiving a +3 bonus to see through such shenanigans.

Observant (*Minor*) • An observant character receives a +2 bonus to detect things, and rolls should be made for them to notice even hard-to-detect things in their environment.

Party Animal (*Minor*) • The character with this advantage is particularly good at social interactions involving parties and revelry. They are friendly drunks, and receive a 2 point bonus to social interactions in appropriate party environments.

Salt Tolerance (*Minor/Major*) • Salt tolerance makes a character better able to absorb and process alchemical salts. Both versions confer a bonus to inoculation tests, and also increases the amount of power restored per point of damage inflicted when using alchemical salts to restore power on the fly. Minor salt tolerance allows a character to regain two additional points of power when taking alchemical salts. Major salt tolerance increases this bonus to four additional points.

Secret Life (*Minor*) • The character has a whole other side to them, which would not be a good fit for the rest of their life, but which gives them access to a whole other social world. This secret life offers an opportunity to make different contacts, but would be a source of great embarrassment, or possibly real danger, if it were discovered.

Sharpshooter (*Minor*) • The character is particularly adept at aiming a firearm. Any time they use an aim action, they receive an additional 2 point bonus.



Skill Mastery (*Minor*) • A character is an acknowledged master of a particular skill. They may raise that skill to II, and may re-roll a failed test using this skill once per session. A character may only master one skill.

Smarter than their Player (*Minor*) • This advantage is for characters who are smarter than the players running them, and should only be allowed when a character's intellect truly would be difficult for their player to simulate. Once per session, a character with this advantage may circumvent the cluelessness of the person playing them, and ask the GM for a flash of insight. If appropriate, it should be granted. Also, a GM may choose to bestow additional clever tidbits on the character.

Student of the Bizarre (*Minor*) • The character has an affinity for the peculiar, creepy, and troubling. A character with this advantage can be assumed to have some basic knowledge of the creepiest and strangest bits of the world of Brass & Steel. They might have an inkling that tentacle-covered horrors are real, or have heard legends about the most distant and alien of dream realms. This confers a 3 point bonus on tests to understand or fight extra-dimensional entities and similar abominations, and a 3 point bonus on any test to avoid panic in the face of such horrors.

Talented Tinkerer (*Major*) • This advantage allows a character to excel when working with all manner of mechanical devices. They receive a 3 point bonus on rolls to fix, build, understand, talk to, seduce, or otherwise interact with machines. They make excellent mechanics. If taken as a story flaw, they receive a 3 point penalty on all rolls to interact with people.

Thick Skull (*Major*) • The character's skull seems to have been specially designed to resist blunt impact trauma. They may automatically disregard the effects of the first injury that would normally require them to make a successful test in order to remain conscious, and receive a 2 point bonus on all such tests. Would-be muggers may be disconcerted by the dull thumping noises made when they smash the character on the back of the head.

Tree Friend (*Minor*) • A character with this advantage is at home in the wilderness, and receives a 2 point bonus on most nature-related skills. If taken as a story flaw, the character also suffers a 2 point penalty on any rolls made to navigate cities and/or on rolls to interact with unfamiliar urban folk.

True Romantic (*Minor*) • The character believes in love with all of his or her heart. This includes both romantic and

platonic love. This advantage confers a 2 point bonus in situations where a strong will would let them protect someone that they care about, and allows a character to disregard wound penalties for three combat turns when attempting to defend such a person. Such characters need never succumb to seduction attempts if they are currently besotted with someone else. If taken as a story flaw, the character falls in love too easily, and suffers a 2 point penalty to resist efforts to take advantage of their gentle nature.

Uncanny Savvy (*Major*) • The character is eerily good at picking up on subtle social cues. They suffer no penalties to their social skills for interacting with people from different cultural or social backgrounds. The GM should also make an appropriate social test on behalf of the character when something peculiar and interesting is going on that the player failed to spot.

Unlikely Contact (*Minor*) • This advantage allows a character to have a contact that falls well outside of their normal social sphere. If you want your English gentleman scholar to know a Tuvan throat singer this is the advantage for you!

Uncanny Insights (*Minor*) • The character has particular insight into some area of the world – economics, military affairs, organized crime, and so forth. This will often generate adventure opportunities, and will provide other useful information or bonuses from time to time.

Unusual Cultural Background (*Minor/Major*) • This advantage allows characters to hail from very peculiar backgrounds. In addition to having role playing value, it makes their dream realms very alien to other dreamers, which is a major defensive advantage. A minor advantage allows for a peculiar culture (Basque, Amish), while a major allows a very rare culture, possibly one with special training in dreaming (Australian Aborigine, Yanomamo). Especially odd subcultural backgrounds can qualify for this advantage.

Urban Explorer (*Major*) • A character with this advantage is naturally at home in urban environments, and receives a 2 bonus on rolls to navigate or understand cities, and on most social rolls to interact with their inhabitants. This may be taken as a story flaw, in which case the character also suffers a 2 point penalty to most skills having to do with the natural world.

Vivid Imagination (*Minor*) • The character is particularly creative. This makes them unsuitable for many jobs in government service, but gives them an edge in manipulating dreams. They receive a 2 point bonus when crafting dream items using Morphean Artifice, and when manifesting Ephemera.



DISADVANTAGES



Addiction (*Minor/Major*) • A character with an addiction is physically and/or mentally addicted to a dangerous substance. This flaw cannot be taken for substances, such as tobacco, whose use was widely accepted, and whose deleterious effects would not manifest during a typical game. Opium and alcohol, however, while legal, are excellent candidates. Characters with a minor addiction can typically control themselves and function for eight hours per day. Characters with a major addiction are apt to show up stumbling drunk at the worst possible moments.

Anarchist's Heart (*Minor*) • A character with this disadvantage has a chip on their shoulder when it comes to authority. They have trouble holding down a day job. They talk back to the police. They'd do 300 extra push-ups every day in basic training. In game terms, the character has a 3 point penalty to any social interaction with characters who believe themselves to be of a higher social status or more important than the PC, and act that way. The character may be called on to make a Willpower + False Promises test to avoid doing or saying something stupid and confrontational when dealing with the authorities.

Animal Foe (*Minor*) • Animals hate the character. They suffer a 2 point penalty when dealing with creatures. Furthermore, animals will go out of their way to harass the character. The guard dog will always bite the animal foe, and monkeys... well, the less said about monkeys, the better.

Arcane Allergy (*Minor*) • The character is badly allergic to arcane energy. They will suffer painful allergy symptoms if arcane energy is used around them. They will suffer 10 points of physical damage if ever exposed to alchemical salts, and cannot ever learn any arcane abilities. They should probably avoid romantic entanglements with inoculated arcanists, as well...

Blind (*Major*) • A blind character cannot see. Seriously. Look it up!

Bohemian Work Ethic (*Minor*) • The character is not so good at working on tasks that take more than an hour or two. They tend to be easily distracted by nearby taverns, adorable kittens, shiny pebbles, and the possibility of napping or having coffee cake. In game terms, this inflicts a 3 point penalty on tasks that take place over an extended period of time, and Game Masters should feel

free to impose larger penalties for certain other tasks that require a great deal of long-term focus, such as completing a doctoral dissertation or (re)discovering radium.

Can't Hold Their Liquor (*Minor*) • The character is a pathetically cheap drunk. They're tipsy after a glass of wine, and propositioning the furniture after three. A Vitality + Heroic Vigor roll can partially offset this for a time.

Chemical Intolerance (*Major*) • The character's immune system reacts badly when confronted with healing elixirs of any sort. All rolls to derive medical benefit from a compound or elixir such as Physicane are at a 2 point penalty, and any elixir that inflicts damage inflicts three additional boxes of wounds.

Coerced (*Minor*) • A character with this flaw is under some other character's power. This may involve blackmail, a debt of honor, or good old fashioned debt – in any case, the character will occasionally be forced to do favors for their controller. A character who escapes from their controller should buy off this disadvantage, or select a different minor flaw.

Credit Risk (*Minor*) • The character has a terrible time dealing with money. They suffer a 3 point penalty on rolls to manage money or to use their background advantages to purchase items.

Deaf (*Major*) • A deaf character cannot hear... or perhaps that's just what they want you to believe... Nah, if they took the points, they can't hear.

Destined for Mediocrity (*Minor*) • The character's destiny is a humble one. They have and use Fate Cards as normal. However, they may never use the story-altering ability of the Major Arcana.

Dodgy Heart (*Minor*) • The character's heart isn't what it should be. They will randomly suffer a fatal heart attack at some point during game play... Err... okay, that wouldn't be any fun. Instead, they take an extra point of Stamina damage whenever they exert themselves, and will periodically need to thump their chests and cough heroically.



Fastidious (*Minor*) • The character is obsessed with cleaning and grooming. They tend to bathe at least twice each week. They are apt to devote a good deal of time to cleaning their surroundings. The character will be deeply uncomfortable in messy or filthy situations. A 3 point penalty, at a minimum, should be imposed on the character when they are forced to endure such squalor.

Frightens Children (*Major*) • The character is terribly, terribly disfigured. Perhaps they have chemical burns over their whole face, have survived being scalped or endured some similar catastrophe. The character will have great difficulty in many social and romantic situations, but may write beautiful music in the evening, play the organ, and have a tendency towards inter-generational relationships.

Gets No Respect (*Minor*) • The character is held in contempt by their supposed friends and allies. The player's background advantages count as one level lower than they actually are for purposes of finding contacts. Contacts may also be rude or overcharge the character.

Gimpy Leg (*Minor*) • The character suffered a leg wound at some point. They move more slowly, and have a 2 point penalty to things that require them to scamper around quickly.

Ham-Fisted (*Minor*) • The character's hands are stubby and awkward, not made of delicious ham (or any other pork product). They receive a 2 point penalty on any test involving fine motor skills, but, as a bonus, inflict one extra point of damage when they use their hands for punching.

Inside the Box (*Minor*) • The character is not good at thinking creatively. They are not necessarily of low intelligence, but they are bad at creating new things. This means that they have a 2 point penalty when modifying Ephemera. Also, it takes twice as long for them to invent new devices or develop new patterns.

Lonely Heart (*Minor*) • The character would desperately like to be romantically involved with someone... anyone... but seems to be cursed. Perhaps they just get tongue-tied easily; perhaps a chemical accident tainted their pheromones. Regardless, they suffer a 4 point penalty whenever they attempt romantic relations.

Low Pain Tolerance (*Minor/Major*) • Low pain tolerance increases wound penalties by one rank, as a minor disadvantage, or two ranks, as a major disadvantage, whenever the character suffers physical or Stamina damage.

Lucidos Addiction (*Major*) • Lucidos is not physically addictive, but some Dreamers find it to be psychologically addictive. Using Lucidos more than once per day will eventually lead to the perception of a mingling between the dream world and the real world. In game terms, the user's subconscious mind will create Ephemera, to which the character will be subject. Others may or may not be affected, as appropriate for story purposes, with milder cases less likely to affect others.

Obsession (*Minor*) • A character with an obsession has a deep and uncanny interest in something or someone. This flaw will tend to limit a character's ability to do things that do not relate to their obsession, and will confer a 2 point penalty in many social situations, when innocent bystanders are forced to endure a miniature lecture on the virtue of whole wheat bread or suffer some similar indignity.

Parasites (*Minor*) • The character is infested with one or another variety of the parasites that afflict a great portion of humanity. These are depressingly common even in polite society. A character may have tapeworms, other intestinal parasites, or some other unwelcome bodily guests. This disadvantage represents a strain of parasite that is resistant to the elixirs normally used to treat such ailments.

Phobia (*Minor/Major*) • A character with a phobia suffers a 3 point penalty when forced to deal with the object of their fear. Phobias should be things that are interesting and that will crop up in an adventure. Spiders, the dark, and loud noises are fine phobias. A fear of Doric columns, pygmy marmosets or poets would not typically be appropriate. Whether this disadvantage is minor or major depends on the likely frequency with which such objects will be encountered. A classically-trained archaeologist might well deserve points for a fear of Doric columns.

Poor Depth Perception (*Minor*) • The character is bad at judging speeds and distances. This may confer a 2 point penalty on vehicle skills and on the Barking Irons skill. The character will also be tragically terrible at golf.

Poor Impulse Control (*Minor*) • The character is all about action. They prefer "get 'em" as a plan of attack, and are unlikely to invest carefully in preparation for retirement. They may be required to make a **Willpower + Heroic Vigor** test to resist acting at the earliest opportunity. The character may also suffer from a -3 penalty to resist seduction.



Proletarian Lump (*Minor*) • As a result of spending years around arcane industrial processes and wastes, the character has acquired an odd deformity. These deformities are similar to those inflicted by inoculation, and range from the purely physical, such as a patch of lizard skin, to the downright bizarre, such as always smelling vaguely of cod or being unable to see things that are circular.

Salt Addiction (*Major*) • A character with this flaw is addicted to the effects of alchemical salts. This is a serious, physical addiction. Alchemical salts are expensive, often illegal, and physically damaging. A salt addict will want to use alchemical salts at least once per day, and may attempt to use them more often – the damage inflicted by long-term use of alchemical salts can be fatal. Furthermore, a non-inoculated user who takes more than five doses in a single day will become inoculated, but will typically suffer serious harm during the process, as they must roll on the inoculation table with a 4 point penalty. (This sort of accidental inoculation lacks the careful safeguards employed by saner arcanists).

Salt Intolerance (*Minor/Major*) • A salt intolerant character suffers an additional level of wounds when using alchemical salts to restore power. They will also suffer a 1 point penalty when inoculating. The character will also develop a rash and other symptoms when alchemical salts are nearby, regardless of whether or not they come into physical contact with them. Salts carried by another character are typically close enough to trigger this effect. This disadvantage is a major flaw for inoculated arcanists, and a minor flaw for all other characters.

Secret Shame (*Minor/Major*) • The character has a dark and terrible secret of some sort. Perhaps they had a scandalous affair when younger, or perhaps they are a secret member of a Bolshevik revolutionary cell. In any case, the revelation of this secret would cause terrible problems for the character, and confers no benefits or useful contacts. If this secret is ever revealed, the character must buy it off, with new disadvantages or by sacrificing contacts (who

recoil in horror and will have nothing to do with such a filthy person), status (I'm ruined!) or the like.

Tale-Mangler (*Minor*) • The character is a failure as a storyteller. They can't deliver a punchline or spin a yarn. Small children wander away and lose interest as the character reads their beloved favorite stories. In game terms, the character suffers a 3 point penalty when telling tales, i.e. many uses of the False Promises skill, and will have difficulty providing convincing explanations, either to potential clients or to the authorities.

Timorous Heart (*Minor*) • The character is unnerved by such things as loud noises, sudden movements, and angry-looking dogs. They suffer a 3 point penalty on combat initiative rolls, and at least a 3 point penalty when confronted with intimidation or the threat of violence.

Twisted Dreams (*Minor*) • The character's subconscious is deeply troubled. They have a 3 point penalty to any attempts to re-shape their Reverie in a way that would be helpful. They are also especially appealing to hostile entities from the darker and spookier corners of the land of dreams.

Unsettling (*Minor*) • The character is just hard to be around, and suffers a 2 point penalty whenever they attempt an action that requires them to put some other character at ease. However, they do receive a 1 point bonus when attempting to threaten or intimidate another character.

Wall Flower (*Minor*) • The character with this disadvantage does not do well with crowds, loud noises, or, well, most of the things that other people consider to be fun. They suffer a 2 point penalty in noisy, boisterous, or crowded environments, and are apt to make an embarrassing gaffe or two along the way.

Chapter 3

BACKGROUND ADVANTAGES



These advantages deal with social connections, resources, membership in groups, and obligations to others. They typically offer access to certain specialized types of gear. Background advantages confer the ability to find and maintain Contacts. A character with a background advantage may attempt to locate a useful contact as dramatically



appropriate. Contacts in Brass & Steel are a great opportunity for players to contribute creatively to the ongoing story. Players are encouraged to imagine interesting and useful people their character may know, especially when traveling to new cities or territories. This is done by testing the characters Fate plus twice the appropriate background advantage rating. If the player succeeds in this test, the NPC they have envisioned comes to life, though still controlled by the Game Master.

Each level of a background advantage cost five character points. The maximum level that can be taken in a particular Background Advantage is noted in parentheses after the name. Background advantages may be added during game play. This process may require the expenditure of cash, and will require the expenditure of character points.



Splitting Contacts and Resources

In some cases a player will want their character to have only the resources or connections from a particular background advantage. For cases like these the GM may allow the character to split their background advantage rating into separate numbers for Contacts and Resources and shift one point between them. For example, a character with three levels of Aristocrat may take Contacts 4 and Resources 2 by shifting a point from Resources to Contacts. This shift would represent a character from a venerable and respected, but embarrassingly poor, family. He/she has very good connections amongst the nobility, but little money.



Academic (*four levels*) • The lower end indicates an undergraduate career and connections to some old university buddies while the higher end denotes a substantial career in academia, with professorships and access to resources and a wide network of academic contacts in the character's chosen field. Resources granted are Mundane, and often musty.

Arcane Connections (*three levels*) • This background indicates that the character is affiliated with an arcane group, or mentor, able to provide training, assistance with patterns, access to alchemical salts, and help with inoculation. A starting character may choose to be inoculated up to a number of times equal to their level in this advantage. A character may begin with two patterns per level of arcane connection, up to the level permitted by their skills. (New patterns may be learned easily through an arcane connection, but may also be developed through research and practice).

Aristocrat (*five levels*) • This background indicates that the character was born into the gentry of their home nation. Higher levels indicate wealthier and better-connected families. The resources granted are Mundane. Note that this background advantage does not automatically grant noble title; that is a separate advantage.

Artist Bohemian (*three levels*) • From starving street artist to successful career artists, this background advantage grants modest Mundane Resources and an extensive social network of artists, bohemians, and, at the maximum third level, a wealthy patron

The Criminal Underworld (*five levels*) • From petty thieves and pickpockets at the low end to major crime bosses at the top level, this background advantage confers criminal and underworld connections and Mundane resources.

Diplomat (*four levels*) • This background advantage denotes time spent in the diplomatic service of one nation or another. At one level the character has experience as a low-level bureaucratic functionary or embassy staff. At the highest level the character has extensive diplomatic experience and Contacts are spread throughout international diplomatic circles. Resources conferred are Mundane.

From the Country (*four levels*) • This background indicates that the character was born in a village or small town and spent their formative years in rural environs. At the lower levels are poor farmers, laborers and peddlers. At the upper reaches are wealthy craftsman, farmers, and merchants. This background advantage grants Contacts for the appropriate rural social network.

Intrepid Explorer (*three levels*) • This background advantage denotes time spent as an explorer, charting lesser-known (by Europeans) portions of the globe. Contacts granted by this background advantage are quite diverse, but are concentrated among other explorers and members of the Royal Geographic Society. The resources granted are Mundane.



Inventor Engineer (*three levels*) • At the lowest level, this background advantage denotes an independent tinkerer or a worker in the shop of a more successful inventor or engineer on a small airship. Three levels of this advantage indicate a successful career in high-tech industry. The resources granted are Mundane and Technological; they may also go 'ping' or 'whir.'

Life in the Clouds (*four levels*) • This background advantage indicates that the character has spent time as an airship crewman or, at higher levels, captain. There is a brotherhood of sorts among independent airship captains and their crews. Though rivalries for cargos and routes can be fierce, airship crews will tend to set aside their differences to protect one of their own from an outsider. In addition to other airship crews, Contacts include port authorities, smugglers and anyone else involved in airship travel and cargo handling. Resources granted are Mundane.

Lucid Dreamer (*Academic, three levels*) • This background indicates association with people engaged in the academic study of Dreaming. The character probably studied with Freud, Jung, or a handful of other academic practitioners. This background advantage enables the character to make a Test to locate contacts in the academic and Dreaming communities. This background advantage provides access to mundane Resources.

Lucid Dreamer (*Street, two levels*) • Though many Dreamers learned their skills in the salon of one of the great dream academicians, skill in lucid dreaming is extremely valuable to a certain class of criminal, and has filtered into the streets. This background advantage indicates that a character gained their dreaming abilities by less-than-respectable means. Perhaps he was part of an organized crime gang or the student of an academic dreamer turned criminal. Either way, this background offers contacts in the streets, the opium dens, and among criminal brotherhoods rather than the rarefied circles of academia. The Resources granted are mundane.

Military Rank (*Army/Navy/Aerospace Force, four levels*) • This background advantage indicates time spent in a military career. Higher levels denote longer service and higher rank. The first level can be seen as lower enlisted ranks, the second as senior enlisted ranks, and the third and fourth being officer ranks. Contacts are available to the character in the appropriate branch of service, though particularly high-ranking character may have crossover connections in other branches of service. The resources granted by this background advantage are mundane.

Minor Arcane Connections (*one level*) • This background indicates association with a group of minor arcanists. This allows a character to learn arcane skills, and allows them to learn three charms at character creation. This may represent connections with an ancient but obscure folk tradition, but might also indicate an affiliation with a gang of thieves who make use of minor arcane effects, or a friendship with several noble dabblers in the arcane.

Police Constable (*three levels*) • This background advantage indicates time spent as a police constable, as a Patrolman at the low levels, up to a Detective Inspector at three levels. Contacts are in criminal justice circles and, to a lesser extent, among the criminal underworld. Resources granted are Mundane.

Radical (*three levels*) • This background advantage represents time spent as a member of any of dozens of national and international level political organizations; everything from revolutionaries, socialists, anarchists, to radical trade-unionists are included. Resources conferred are mundane and Contacts are among radicals of similar ideology to the character, though those Contacts can be widespread.

Special Branch (*Nation, three levels*) • This background denotes time spent in a career in the national security and intelligence service of a specified nation. For the British, this is called Special Branch but each nation has its own version of secret police. This background advantage bestows Contacts among spies and certain major criminal or paramilitary organizations. The resources granted by this background advantage are Mundane and Technological. This advantage may confer specialized theme music to the more dramatic moments in the character's life.

The Urban Classes (*five levels*) • This background advantage encompasses everything from poor factory workers living in the East End to wealthy merchants and barristers. It confers Mundane resources.







CHAPTER 4
FATE CARDS



- About Tarot Decks •
- The Minor Arcana •
- The Major Arcana •
- Using Ordinary Playing Cards as Fate Cards •



The use of Fate Cards in Brass & Steel is intended to represent a character's luck and good fortune and can help a player turn odds in their favor at key moments of play. Fate Cards are represented in play by a tarot deck, examples of which are readily available online and in stores everywhere. At the beginning of each game session the player draws a number of Fate Cards determined by taking a character's Fate attribute and dividing by two (round up). If a player wishes she may retain one Fate Card of her choice from session to session; any other unused cards are surrendered.

Fate Cards are generally replenished at the beginning of each session. In cases where a session ends in the midst of a combat or other dramatic scene, a Game Master may wish to delay replenishment until the scene's conclusion or even to not allow replenishment of fate cards that session. GM's may also award additional fate cards to characters during play for excellent role playing, or allow characters to replenish their stock of Fate Cards if a single game session includes a major break in game time, such as three months of downtime between an expedition to Egypt and an elegant shooting party in Somerset.

Chapter 4

ABOUT TAROT DECKS



Each tarot deck is comprised of two types of cards, known as the "minor" and "major" arcana. The minor arcana consist of cards that belong to one of four suits, usually Wands, Pentacles, Swords and Cups. Some decks diverge from this standard nomenclature - sometimes Pentacles is Coins instead, Cups is sometimes called Chalices, and other permutations are possible. Note that the suits of a common deck of playing cards relate to the suits of the tarot as follows: Wands - Clubs, Pentacles - Diamonds, Swords - Spades and Cups - Hearts. If a tarot deck is not available, Brass & Steel can be played substituting a normal deck of playing cards as described below. Each suit contains cards from 1 (Ace) to 10 and also four "face cards," namely the Page (or Knave), Knight, Queen and King.



In addition to the minor arcana, there are 22 major arcana. For those unfamiliar with the tarot these cards will be least familiar and are the biggest difference between modern playing cards and the tarot. (The addition of an extra face card, the Knight, is another difference.) The major arcana are unique, belong to no suit, and possess special individual meanings.

A group wishing to minimize the impact of Fate Cards on the game, or without access to a tarot deck, may elect to play the game without using the major arcana. Playing entirely without the use of Fate Cards is not recommended, as this skews certain elements of game balance.

There are hundreds of different tarot decks available, and the major arcana vary somewhat from deck to deck, both in terms of their design and the names of the cards. Fortunately, they are almost always numbered 0 to 21, so which card is which should be easily determined. In Brass & Steel, we have chosen one common set of nomenclature for the major arcana and will use them whenever referring to these cards. They are listed below.



THE MINOR ARCANA



Each suit of minor arcana aligns with a particular category of skill in Brass & Steel:

SKILL CATEGORY	APPROPRIATE SUIT
Dream	<i>Cups/Hearts</i>
Vehicle	<i>Pentacles/Diamonds</i>
Combat	<i>Swords/Spades</i>
Social	<i>Cups/Hearts</i>
Adventuring	<i>Swords/Spades</i>
Intellectual	<i>Wands/Clubs</i>
Arcane	<i>Wands/Clubs</i>
Crafting	<i>Pentacles/Diamonds</i>

The Minor Arcana are used to influence skill tests. After a test is made a player may opt to use a Fate Card to attempt one or more re-rolls. Court cards are more useful than number cards, and cards of the suit related to the skill being used, as noted in the table above and on the character sheet, are more useful than cards of an off-suit, but any card may be used to influence any die roll, as follows:

Number Card of a non-matching Suit	<i>Roll again, must take second result</i>
Number Card of a matching Suit	<i>Roll again, take better of the two results</i>
Face Card of a non-matching Suit	<i>Roll up to two additional times, must take last result</i>
Face Card of a matching Suit	<i>Roll two additional times, take best result of the three</i>

THE MAJOR ARCANA



When playing the major arcana, the use of Fate Cards becomes more a narrative device than a mechanic to affect die rolls. While a player may use any Major Arcana card to roll two additional times, taking the best result (like a court card of the correct suit for that test) or to grant a test in a situation where it may otherwise be impossible, the major

arcana can also be used to fundamentally change the outcome of a playing session. When a player wishes to use a major arcana card in this fashion, they should refer to the listing below to determine the basic meaning of that card. The player should describe how playing the major arcana card at that time will affect play and how that relates to the meaning of the card.

A major arcana card often will not instantly transform the game, but may instead introduce a new character or element. These elements will typically appear as soon as it makes sense to add them to the story. (In some cases, of course, a Major Arcana card may produce more immediate results, such as a deus ex machina heroic rescue).



Major arcana cannot be used on another Player Character without that player's consent under any circumstances. Players are encouraged to collaborate to use major arcana to tell stories together, with GM approval, but no player can ever be forced to be the victim or beneficiary of a major arcana card.

All rulings as to the outcome from the play of a major arcana card are subject to Game Master approval. This is one way that a GM can set the power level of her game. Making major arcana only marginally superior to other Fate Cards can make for a fun, challenging game, but one that is a little more predictable. Making them extremely powerful can lend a more "comic book" feel to Brass & Steel, and can give players more control over the course of a campaign. In any event the level of power associated with Fate Cards should be discussed and understood by all participants at the beginning of a campaign.

The brief meanings, for purposes of Brass & Steel, of the Major Arcana are:

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<p>1 The Fool <i>beginnings, something new, imagination</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>2 The Magician <i>earning and experimentation, self-confidence, magic</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>3 The High Priestess <i>wisdom and self-reliance, unseen powers, dreams</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>4 The Empress <i>fertility, fulfillment, birth</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>5 The Emperor <i>society and civilization, laws and logic, stability, conformity</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>6 The Hierophant <i>hidden knowledge, perhaps deep-dream realms, evolution</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>7 The Lovers <i>union, love, harmony, attraction, joining</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>8 The Chariot <i>power, ambition, drive for success, discipline, control, single-mindedness</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>9 Strength <i>inner peace, physical power, chi</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>10 The Hermit <i>discovery and truths, memory and "inner wisdom"</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>11 Wheel of Fortune <i>perhaps the most powerful card; just about anything can happen</i></p>	<p>12 Justice <i>cause and effect, karma, punishment and reward</i> <i>Pentacles/Diamonds</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>13 The Hanged Man <i>"the mysteries of the world," self-sacrifice, non-conformity</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>14 Death <i>end of the old and start of the new, sudden change</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>15 Temperance <i>self-knowledge, finding one's best path</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>16 The Devil <i>darkness, limits, fear of change, depression, hopelessness</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>17 The Tower <i>breaking free, knocking down walls, destructive change, shocking events</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>18 The Star <i>balance, peace, calm, hope</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>19 The Moon <i>lunacy, nightmares, being tested, the unknown, madness</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>20 The Sun <i>rebirth, renewal, triumph, optimism</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>21 Judgment <i>rising above problems, effective action</i></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>22 The World <i>journey's end, infinity, conclusion</i></p>
<hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/>



Example: *Horatio Weatherby, a dashing Lieutenant in Her Majesty's Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards, is attempting to persuade a band of surly natives to help him storm the French camp nearby. Horatio could make a Wit + Leadership and Intimidation test to see how convincing he is, resisted by each of the targets. However, given his modest skill level, his total lack of knowledge of whatever language they are speaking and the generally uncooperative bent he is sensing from the crowd, he feels his chances for success will be minimal. Luckily, Horatio's player drew The Chariot as one of his Fate Cards at the beginning of this game session and looking at the description, it seems to apply. Horatio's player plays The Chariot and explains that he would like the natives to follow him in attacking the camp. This seems reasonable to the GM, and through the mystical powers of the major arcana, Horatio manages to get his point across through pantomime. The natives, apparently haters of the French, quickly gather their weapons and set off with Horatio in the lead.*

USING ORDINARY PLAYING CARDS AS FATE CARDS

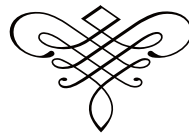
Using the suits described above, replacing the minor arcana with ordinary playing cards is fairly simple. Just remember that the suits of Cups, Pentacles, Swords and Wands correspond respectively to Hearts, Diamonds, Spades and Clubs. The probabilities are slightly different as there is one less court card per suit, but this will not have a major impact on game play. The larger issue is the absence of the major arcana. One solution is to treat the Jokers as if they were the Wheel of Fortune card. Alternatively, the game can simply be played without the use of major arcana.




IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR STEAMPUNK TAROT CARDS...

Pamean Games is delighted to recommend the Steampunk Tarot, created by Barbara Moore and Aly Fell, as the official tarot deck of Brass & Steel. A world of roaring engines and gleaming metal, top hats and corseted silk gowns is exquisitely fashioned in this stunning new tarot deck. Retooling the gears of the Rider-Waite tradition with a steampunk edge, the artwork evokes the complex relationship between society and technology in the Victorian era.

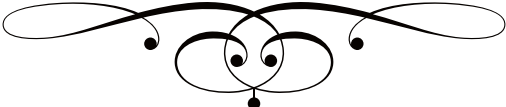
To purchase or find more information about the Steampunk Tarot, please visit www.steampunktarot.com.





CHAPTER 5

TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT



- Acquiring Gear •
- Equipment Quality •
- The Fabulous Compounds and Substances of Brass & Steel •
 - Weapons •
 - Clothing and Armor •
 - Heavy Weapons •
 - Gadgets and Devices •
 - Mundane but Useful Gear •
 - Vehicles •



Hotaether technology has shaped an industrial revolution. It offers the developed nations the possibility of true prosperity. The capitalist nations, however, squander the great potential of Hotaether. The endless and ruthless competition among masters finds its highest and final expression in the great struggle between nations. The capitalist powers have exploited their colonies mercilessly. Now they tear vast craters in the earth in search of greater steam power. The broken workers of the Salisbury mine pits cry out for justice, and are greeted only with the iron clubs of the strikebreakers. The great price of Hotaether-driven engines of war threatens to bankrupt even the richest of nations, but all countries pursue them still, for to fall behind in this arms race is to vanish from the face of the Earth. Some day soon this endless race will lead either to poverty and desperation so great that no amount of force can suppress the working classes or to a new and terrible war that will plunge the capitalist world into a storm of blood and steam.

-- V.I. Lenin, *Steam Imperialism, the Final Phase of Capitalism*, (1905)

Although some few characters may get through life with little more than the clothes on their backs, most characters require specialized equipment to ply their trades. This gear ranges from mundane items such as trousers to exotic items such as steam-powered mechanical replacement limbs or arcane devices to aid in channelling extra-dimensional energies.

Chapter 5


ACQUIRING GEAR

The Simple Version


A character can be assumed to be able to acquire any item that they could afford with their resource ratings between adventures. A character who is willing to spend an appropriate amount of time shopping can be assumed to be able to locate an item during the course of an adventure as well. Sometimes, however, characters need custom-fitted armored corsetry right now, and can't afford to wait. In this case, a character may make a resource test by rolling **Reason + Resources** + a modifier assigned by the GM if appropriate. A success finds the item right away. A failure means that the character will either have to shop normally or make do with less-sturdy corsetry.

Paying Cash

The exact cash price for items varies to some degree. The following table gives a rough indication of how expensive every day consumable goods at a given expense level might be. Consider this a starting point for how much an item at a given expense level might be and use good judgement in adjusting upwards from there. Rare items tend to cost more, but common items rarely cost less. Remember, Brass & Steel is about steampunk adventure, not Victorian economics.



0 – less than 1 shilling
1 – roughly 1 shilling
2 – 4 shillings
3 – 1 pound
4 – 5 pounds
5 – 20 pounds



Optional Rule:

Acquiring Gear • The Detailed Version

Groups looking for a more realistic feeling in their steampunk shopping may use this more detailed system when looking to acquire gear, especially in odd or foreign places.

When a character wishes to acquire an unusual item of gear, use the following guidelines to determine the success of the character's efforts. As a general rule, items that fall two or more levels below a character's resources rating should be considered trivially easy to acquire. The owner of a sprawling industrial concern in Manchester need never worry about his ability to procure a fine rifle or elegant suit. Mundane items purchased directly with cash should also not require a test - if the character has the spending cash, and can find someone willing to sell, then they can purchase the item.



- Determine the category of gear the item falls into, Arcane, Technological, or Mundane.

- Determine the Expense Rating of the item desired, rated from one to five. Also determine the rarity of the item being sought, rated in four steps from Very Common to Very Rare. A character may not attempt to acquire a piece of gear whose Expense Rating is more than one point higher than their Resource Rating. The GM will need to determine the Expense Rating for an item which does not appear on the list of example items.

- Determine the modifiers for the test. A character seeking a common, inexpensive item rated below their own resource rating will have a positive modifier on their test while a character far from home seeking a rare piece of gear rated above their own Resource rating will have a significant negative penalty on their test.

- The gear test is made with the Reason attribute plus the appropriate Resource Rating, plus or minus the appropriate modifiers. If the test succeeds, the character is able to acquire the desired piece of gear. Failure indicates that the character is just not able to acquire the desired item in this adventure. GMs may, at their discretion, let the player try again in a subsequent adventure.

- All items have a base time to acquire of five days. The GM should use the following table to modify both the test and the base time. A common item below the character's Resource rating should be available the same day. Common items which are equivalent, or slightly above, the character's Resource rating should probably take a couple days to acquire; mostly time spent securing lines of credit, liquidating assets, or hitting up your pals for the necessary cash. Rare items of any resource level should take longer; several days for rare but inexpensive items to weeks for rare and expensive items. Each Degree of Success achieved in a successful resource test subtracts one day from the modified base time, with a minimum of a few minutes.

CIRCUMSTANCE	MODIFIER TO TEST	BASE TIME MULTIPLIER
Character is seeking item while in:		
Home Turf	+2	x 0.75
Familiar Area	0	x 1
Totally Unfamiliar Area	-4	x 1.5
Expense Rating of item sought is:		
Below Character's Resource Rating	+3	x 0.75
Equal to Character's Resource Rating	0	x 1
Greater than Character's Resource Rating	-3	x 1.25
Item sought is:		
Very Common	+4	x 0.5
Common	+2	x 0.75
Rare	-2	x 2
Very Rare	-4	x 4

Chapter 5

EQUIPMENT QUALITY

Not all gear is created equal. Characters wishing to use gear of non-standard quality may do so, provided they pay the listed price, and explain why their gear is better. In order to purchase an excellent pistol, a player must devise an explanation, perhaps, for example, to include a visit to an elite arms factory leading to the painstaking construction of a revolver by the very best gunsmith in all of Scotland.



Weapon Quality Modifiers

Poor Quality

1/2 cost and misfire or break on an extreme failure.

Good Quality

2x cost and +I bonus

Excellent Quality

5x cost, +2 bonus, and +I Rarity

Best Quality

Sky's-the-limit cost, +3 bonus, and +2 Rarity



Armor Quality Modifiers

Poor Quality

-2 to Agility tests
(could be poorly designed, damaged, etc.)

Good Quality

2x cost and +I bonus

Excellent Quality

5x cost, +2 bonus, and +I Rarity

Best Quality

Sky's-the-limit cost, +3 bonus, and +2 Rarity

Chapter 5

THE FABULOUS COMPOUNDS & SUBSTANCES OF BRASS & STEEL



Diamondpane

Nigh-unbreakable "glass" as hard as steel. Diamondpane is very expensive to produce - about twenty times more costly than high-grade steel. It is entirely resistant to corrosion, however, and has many uses in industry and the military because of this property and its resistance to damage. Diamondpane is often used to fortify the view ports of naval and aerospace vessels, and has been used in the construction of grand submersibles and airships. It has more humble uses, as well, in the construction of some versions of Aetherspark firearms for example, and in the construction of extremely durable lab ware. Diamondpane has been used to produce a number of edged and bladed weapons, as well.

Dreg

As the name implies, this substance is one of the by-products of modern industrial use of alchemical salts. It contains most of the impurities and toxins filtered out by the manufacturing process. Dreg is a serious environmental problem in some areas, as it is often simply dumped into spent salt pits. It is used, at times, as a poison because it cannot be treated with any medicine or elixir produced using alchemical salts. The Russian secret police are reported to have used Dreg to carry out several high-profile assassinations, although this has never been proven.

Ember

A crystal that grows flaming hot when blown upon. Ember's unique chemical properties are still being investigated. The substance was developed only three years ago, as a by-product of a new method for the tempering of Ampheres. At this point, ember is mostly an expensive curiosity, used to light cigarettes and boil tea for wealthy curiosity-seekers and show-offs.

Hotaether

The foundational technology of Brass & Steel's steam technology, Hotaether is a substance produced in special boilers from base materials including water. Compressed Hotaether, more commonly simply called Hotaether, drives the engines that power the world's most fantastic machines. Hotaether is also to be found under pressure in "steam batteries" called Ampheres. These batteries come in various sizes to power things from weapons to clockwork prostheses. The largest Ampheres can be



Diamondpane - (*Expense 4*)

Dreg - (*Expense Varies; often free*)

Ember - (*Expense 3*)

Hotaether - (*Expense Varies*)

Hotaether • Slack - (*Expense Varies*)

Lucidos - (*Expense 2; approx. 4-8s per dose*)

Lumen - (*Expense 4*)

Physicane - (*Expense 3; approx 15s per dose*)

Vox Crystals - (*Expense 4*)



found in personal vehicles. For large applications - trains, airships, large ships, large walkers, and so on, Amperes simply cannot contain the needed power and a boiler is needed to produce the Hotaether required.

Hotaether - Slack

Lighter than air, lighter even than hydrogen or helium, Slack allows airships to float. It is nothing more than un-compressed Hotaether and is decidedly not flammable. Slack is mildly poisonous and corrosive, however, and prolonged exposure will cause blistering and can cause difficulty in breathing. It is, therefore, a poor choice for the inflation of children's celebratory balloons.



Theories on Hotaether

Compressed Hotaether is a fascinatingly unique substance, but thanks to the work of John Dalton and others it does not exist entirely outside of scientific observation. Contrary to theories promulgated by certain academic publications, Hotaether follows the basic law of ideal gasses - within certain limitations. Most notably, it contains a much greater energy density than other gasses, operating with a different value for Ludwig Boltzmann's constant. And it is from this property that we can infer that the substance is of extra-dimensional origin. Over the coming weeks, I will perform a series of experiments that will demonstrate these unique properties of Hotaether:

First, that when high concentrations of Hotaether are exposed to pressure above 120 bar and temperatures above 2000°F, a pinhole to another dimension is created, allowing more of the substance to spontaneously come into existence, creating the excess that powers our airships.

Second, when in low concentration under moderately high pressure between 50 and 80 bar, Hotaether seeks out and bonds to certain metal alloys, permanently embedding within the molecular structure and changing the mechanical properties of the alloy. For example, many alloys containing copper (such as bronze and brass) display significantly higher melting points and are remarkably stronger, with enhanced resistance to fracture, after treatment by Hotaether precipitation. However, Hotaether is strangely corrosive to alloys containing iron. As a result, Hotaether-treated brass is almost universally used in industrial applications meant to contain high-energy reactions.

Third, when in the presence of some combustion process, the reaction speed increases, seemingly with exponential relation to the concentration. The effect of this is readily seen in the power of Aetherspark weaponry.

Finally, at pressures near that of our normal atmosphere one of the most curious phenomena occurs: Hotaether acquires buoyancy exceeding that of hydrogen or helium. In fact, a container filled with un-compressed Hotaether, called 'slack' in aeronautical applications, behaves as though the atmosphere were substantially more dense than it actually is, resulting in a buoyancy force several times greater than that of hydrogen or helium. This last property is one that requires a good deal of additional research to fully explain.

—Professor Diederik Brandt, PhD, from his address to faculty at Oxford University, delivered November 10, 1896

Lucidos

First concocted in the laboratory of Sir Isaac Newton, Lucidos is a mystical drug which enables the user to enter the collective unconscious as a lucid dreamer. Lucidos is manufactured by specialist apothecaries and typically sold in single-use vials. Each vial is sealed with wax. The liquid within is usually a brilliant green and has a vaguely herbal flavor. A single vial weighs less than an ounce. The drug takes effect very rapidly, but does not actually induce sleep, merely making lucid dreaming possible. Consequently, a character must manage to doze off on their own. Many dreamers employ other substances to aid in sleep.

Lumen

Lumen is a durable blue crystalline substance that is formed in sheet-like wafers. It glows in a very narrow spectrum of blue-white light when a low power electric current is run through the crystal. The light produced by lumen is harsh and unpleasant but very cheap, although the crystals themselves are very expensive. Lumen crystals have been installed in many factories to permit night work. Workers hate laboring under the harsh glow of lumen crystals, claiming that it ruins their eyesight.

Vacuum-bulb electric lights, in contrast to lumen crystals, are expensive to operate but generate a much more pleasing light. They are used primarily by the wealthy, due to their greater cost and the fact that they use more electrical power. Some attempts have been made to light up cities with lumen crystals instead of gaslight. These have failed, as residents have engaged in campaigns of vandalism and sabotage in large numbers.

Physicane

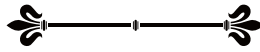
Physicane is one of the most widespread and successful products of arcane technology. The term was originally the name of a particular brand of healing elixir, but has become the common term for all drugs that allow very rapid healing of wounds



and trauma. Physicane is distilled from alchemical salts and a variety of other, mostly herbal, ingredients in large industrial facilities, and although pricey, is widely available in the industrialized world.

Voxcrystals

Grown in factories like other steam-age products like Diamondpane, Voxcrystals are columnar crystals much longer than wide. In their freshly-grown state they look similar to natural tourmaline, with bands of colors, especially reds and greens, along the striated edges of the crystals. Slices cut from a single crystal, up to 10 to 15 for a large one, will vibrate in sync even after separated.



WEAPONS

Even the most peaceable of characters are apt to find themselves in situations where violence is likely. A sturdy weapon is of great comfort in such situations. The following weapons are available in Brass & Steel. Each weapon lists the amount of damage that is able to inflict. The damage caused by melee weapons is also increased by the strength score of the character wielding the weapon. The damage of all weapons is increased by the net degrees of success achieved by the attacker in the opposed test.

•———— FIREARMS ————• • Pistols •

Muzzle-loader

Damage 12

Expense: 1, Rarity: Common

(reloading penalty)

A large, heavy pistol, typically around .50 caliber. This gun hits hard, is inexpensive, and is slow (4 turns) to reload. It is often used by the desperate, those from less-industrialized areas, and cutlass-wielding pirates.

Heavy Revolver

Damage 12

Expense: 2, Rarity: Very Common

Ammo Capacity: 6

This is a large-caliber revolver, such as the Webley that has served the British with distinction for generations. These revolvers hit hard, and are extremely durable, but reloading them can take a painfully long time. (Typically two bullets can be loaded per action).

Light Revolver

Damage 10

Expense: 2, Rarity: Very Common

Ammo Capacity: 6

A smaller version of the heavy revolver, this type of pistol makes a solid sidearm or backup weapon, but will probably take too long to bring down a charging grizzly and, like its heavier cousin, takes a very long time to reload.

Dainty Little Firearm

Damage 8

Expense: 2, Rarity: Common

Ammo Capacity: 4-8

A toy pistol, a target gun, or an easily concealed backup weapon, this gun may be either a clip-fed pistol or a tiny revolver. In either case, it is best used as an emergency backup weapon or an elaborate costume piece.

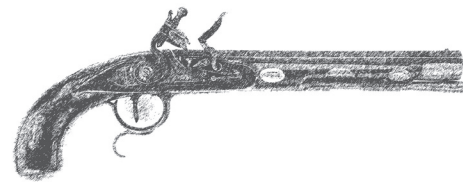
Heavy Pistol

Damage 12

Expense: 2, Rarity: Common

Ammo Capacity: 7

This type of pistol is one of several larger-caliber self-loading pistols, such as the early versions of the famous Colt .45. This type of gun uses a clip of ammunition, making reloading much faster, and hits very hard.



Light Pistol

Damage 10

Expense: , Rarity: Common

Ammo Capacity: 12

This is a smaller-caliber cousin of the heavy pistol. These guns are also clip-fed, do not hit quite as hard, but tend to carry more bullets. The Mauser c96 is a good example of the breed.



Aetherspark Pistol

Damage 15

Expense: 4 (Tech), Rarity: Very Rare

Ammo Capacity: 24

This very rare variety of pistol uses Hotaether rather than gunpowder to fire projectiles. Hotaether can store more energy than chemical explosives, and release it more rapidly. Thus, the heavy bullets fired by these pistols are terribly dangerous. These guns are hideously expensive, however, as they waste expensive Hotaether with every shot. Unlike ordinary firearms, they are sure to attract attention from police or soldiers in any part of the world. They have an excellent ammunition capacity, as they store propellant and bullets in different chambers, but reload slowly (5 turns to replace both cartridges). These weapons are also very large and bulky, because of the need to contain the extreme pressure produced when they are fired. They must be made largely of brass, because of Hotaether's corrosive effects on steel. Rumors exist of a one-shot variety built into canes or umbrellas.

•———— FIREARMS ————• • Rifles •

Muzzle-loader

Damage 14

Expense: 1, Rarity: Common

(reloading penalty)

Suitable for Crimean War re-enactors or members of colonial militias, these weapons may or may not be rifled. In either case, they hit hard, but take 5 turns to reload. Powder must be hand-loaded into the gun for each shot, after which a bullet and a firing cap must be mounted. Rifled muzzle-loaders are just as accurate as any other variety of rifled long arms. Smooth-bore guns are not terribly accurate, and should be considered to have the same effective range as pistols.

Heavy Rifle

Damage 16

Expense: 2, Rarity: Common

Ammo Capacity: 6

A heavy repeating rifle, typically either with a clip or a tube magazine. (Some revolver versions do exist, but are fairly rare). This type of weapon is very dangerous, and is standard issue in most military units. Bolt-action varieties require a turn to operate the bolt between shots, semi-automatic rifles and revolver rifles do not.

Rifle

Damage 14

Expense: 2, Rarity: Common

Ammo Capacity: 8

This is a sporting rifle. This type of gun is common throughout the world, on ranches and noble estates. A rifle is accurate, dangerous, and usually has either a tube or a clip magazine. As with heavy rifles, many versions are bolt-action and require a round to chamber a new bullet.

Light Rifle

Damage 10

Expense: 1, Rarity: Very Common

Ammo Capacity: 12

These smaller rifles are ubiquitous in less-developed areas, as they are used to hunt predators and to hunt for the pot. They, too, can have semi-automatic or bolt actions. They are less dangerous than heavy rifles, but their excellent range makes them a threat that must be taken seriously.

Aetherspark Rifle

Damage 20

Expense: 4 (Tech), Rarity: Very Rare

Ammo Capacity: 24

These very heavy and staggeringly expensive rifles operate on the same principles as Aetherspark pistols. They inflict terrible wounds, both to any enemies that they might hit and to the finances of anyone using them. They are very rare within the British Empire, and are nearly unheard-of in other territories.

Tesla Rifle

Damage: 4 Physical, 20 Stamina, Electrocutation

Expense: 4 (Tech), Rarity: Very Rare

Ammo Capacity: 3 charges

This bulky rifle-shaped weapon is man-portable, barely. It has a bulky set of capacitors in front of the trigger housing and two stubby prongs instead of a normal rifle barrel. The Tesla Rifle does not seem to have come from the labs of the great man himself but that hasn't stopped the nickname from taking hold. When fired an arc of electrical energy lashes out to its target with a thunderclap and distinct scent of ozone. The unlucky individual hit by the discharge will suffer contact burns and be electrocuted. See Chapter 9 for the effects of being electrocuted. The weapon only works out to Medium Range and fires three times before needing to be recharged. There are two options for recharging, either turn a crank for about fifteen minutes or walk around with the rifle strapped to your back for about three hours to make use of the induction charger mounted in the stock. Degrees of Success do not add to the damage for this weapon.



Humble Prison Shiv**Damage:** Might**Expense:** 0, **Rarity:** Very Common

This is an improvised knife. It might be made by attaching a broken razor to a piece of dowel, or it might be crafted by sharpening a tuckpointing trowel. It does physical damage, but not a lot of it.

Bitsy little Knife**Damage:** Might + 1**Expense:** 1, **Rarity:** Very Common

Having a knife is better than not having a knife. A small blade such as a table or pocket knife is not the ideal tool for fighting an angry tiger, but it probably beats not having a knife.

Fighting Knife**Damage:** Might + 2**Expense:** 1, **Rarity:** Common

Armies the world over issue fighting knives to their soldiers. The basic model is about five inches long, with a leather-wrapped handle and a small guard at the hilt.

Diamondpane Knife**Damage:** Might + 3**Expense:** 3 (Tech), **Rarity:** Rare

A knife made of Diamondpane is essentially invisible in shady places, and is every bit as sharp and strong as the finest steel. These knives are illegal in many nations, but are prized by street thugs and assassins alike.

Brass Knuckles**Damage:** Might + 2**Expense:** 1, **Rarity:** Very Common

The one real problem with the human fist is that it isn't made of metal. While Hotaether-powered mechanical fists solve this issue, they are both expensive and hard to find. Brass knuckles also solve this problem, by covering the fist with a sturdy layer of metal, suitable for punching things and people.

Spiked Knuckles**Damage:** Might + 3**Expense:** 1, **Rarity:** Common

Like brass knuckles, but with additional bonus spikes!

Blackjack**Damage:** Might + 2**Expense:** 1, **Rarity:** Very Common

A specialized weapon for kind-hearted muggers, the blackjack is designed to stun a victim, instead of killing them. The first eight points of damage done with a successful attack are treated as Stamina damage.

'Little Friend'**Damage:** 14 (or as knife once expended)**Expense:** 4 (Tech), **Rarity:** Very Rare

This small weapon consists of two metal tubes nested within one another. It has a total length of about eight inches. It can be used as a blackjack, but it has an extra surprise. The inner tube is spiked, and when a trigger is depressed, a small Amphere activates and exerts tremendous pressure on the end of that tube, jabbing it effectively into whatever it happens to be pressed against. This is a favorite weapon of thugs and assassins. The Amphere contains enough power for ten attacks.

Club**Damage:** Might + 3**Expense:** 0, **Rarity:** Very Common

A club is, in essence, a heavy thing with which to hit someone. Tree limbs, hunks of wood, and lead pipes all make excellent clubs. A club may be used to stun, in which case the first six points of damage done by an attack are Stamina damage.

Hatchet**Damage:** Might + 3**Expense:** 1, **Rarity:** Very Common

The hatchet is a sturdy weapon, suitable for use in camping or combat. This is a one-handed weapon.

Golf Club**Damage:** Might + 3**Expense:** 2, **Rarity:** Common

From the lowly putter to the mighty sand wedge, all golf clubs can double as weapons in a pinch.

Cricket Bat**Might:** + 3**Expense:** 1, **Rarity:** Very Common (in the British Empire)

A sturdy cricket bat can just as easily smash heads as cricket balls. Bonus points for characters who manage to hit a grenade in flight.

Axe

Damage: Might + 5

Expense: 1, **Rarity:** Very Common

The wood axe makes a fairly effective weapon. It requires two hands to wield properly, and can also be used to chop down trees.

Sabre, Combat

Damage: Might + 4

Expense: 2, **Rarity:** Common

This sabre is designed for actual combat. A sabre typically has a slightly curved blade, for reasons having something to do with cavalry combat. Many military uniforms include a sabre, which is typically a sturdy model suitable for actual combat.

Sabre, Diamondpane

Damage: Might + 5

Expense: 4 (*Tech*), **Rarity:** Rare

A Diamondpane sabre is as light and strong as one made from the finest steel. It holds a lovely edge, and is nearly impossible to see except when glinting under bright light. An un-blooded Diamondpane sabre inflicts a 3 point penalty on attempts to parry, but also inflicts a 3 point penalty to users who do not have a special familiarity with the weapon, as it can be very difficult to determine where the point of this blade is. Colored versions of these weapons are sometimes used for novelty effect, and confer neither bonuses nor penalties.

Sabre, Dress

Damage: Might + 2

Expense: 3, **Rarity:** Common

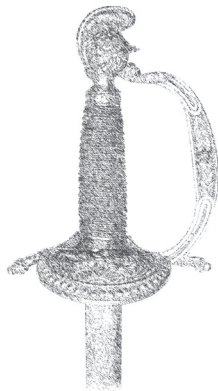
This sabre is more of a shiny edged toy than a serious weapon. Many dress uniforms include smaller, ornamental sabres, and this weapon is such an item. It looks keen, at least to those who don't know all that much about sabres.

Sword

Damage: Might + 5

Expense: 3, **Rarity:** Rare

This is a good old-fashioned longsword, scimitar, or similar device. It comes complete with two to three feet of sharpened steel, and is good for stabbing or slashing. Swords stand out as anachronisms in a way that sabres do not, as swords are no longer part of standard military attire.



Spear / Fixed Bayonet

Damage: Might + 3

Expense: 1-2, **Rarity:** Very Common

Whether it is a plain old spear or a knife mounted on the end of a fancy rifle, this weapon features a sharp blade on a long handle. The spear/fixed bayonet requires two hands to use effectively.

Faraday Cane

Damage: 4 physical, 12 Stamina, and Electrocutation

Expense: 3 (*Tech*), **Rarity:** Rare

A stylish gentleman's walking stick fitted with an insulated handle and a set of Mr. Edison's latest dry cell batteries. With a sharp twist of the handle the metal end of the stick becomes capable of delivering an electrical shock to an unsuspecting foe. The batteries only hold enough charge for three uses before they must be replaced. Degrees of Success do not add to the damage for this weapon but the victim is electrocuted as described in Chapter 9.

Gentleman's Friend

Damage: 18 (*or as spear once expended*)

Expense: 3 (*Tech*), **Rarity:** Very Rare

Sword canes are all well and good for making a fashion statement, but when it comes to discrete and lethal melee combat, they can't hold a candle to this Amphere-powered stabbing accessory. This weapon looks like a sturdy and elegant walking stick or cane. When a trigger is pressed, an Amphere is activated and propels a hidden stabbing blade out of the end of the cane with tremendous force. The Amphere contains enough power for ten stabs. After that the device can be used as an improvised spear, with a -1 penalty, or as a club.

Battleaxe

Damage: Might + 7

Expense: 3, **Rarity:** Very Rare

The battle axe is a large, bulky weaponized version of the common axe. It is well-suited for smashing through a layer of chain mail armor. Battle axes are even more anachronistic than swords, and a character carrying one in public is almost certain to attract the interest of the authorities. The battle axe requires two hands to use effectively.

Halberd

Damage: Might + 9

Expense: 3, **Rarity:** Rare

The halberd consists of an axe-like head on a long, sturdy wooden pole. The weapon is swung through a large arc, and delivers a terrible blow. This weapon is anachronistic for anyone who is not formally guarding a national monument, and will immediately draw all sorts of attention.



Atl-Atl

Might + 1

Expense: 1, Rarity: Very Rare

This device is essentially a giant lever used to hurl a small spear. It has a shorter range than a bow, but the darts hurled by these devices pack a surprising punch. An atl-atl looks out of place in any area other than the jungles of Borneo or some similarly remote location.

Bomb

Damage: 40/30/10

Expense: 2, Rarity: Rare

A bomb is a satchel-sized explosive. These can be hurled a short distance. They may use a fuse, or may use an electrical detonator on a short timer. In either case, they inflict 40 points out to melee range, and 30 points out to short range. Characters out to medium range may take shrapnel damage, if the bomb is a shrapnel bomb.

Bow, Composite

Damage: Might + 2, minimum Might of 4

Expense: 3, Rarity: Rare

Composite bows are made of several layers of sturdy material glued together. This process allows a smaller bow to pack very serious punch. These bows are smaller than longbows, but very rare outside of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, where some Magyars and steppe nomads still use them.

Bow, Light Sporting

Damage: Might +1, up to a maximum Might bonus of 4

Expense: 3, Rarity: Rare

This simple bow can be used to hunt small game, or to practice target shooting. It uses a straight stave and a sturdy cord for a bowstring. Typically 3-4 feet long, these bows require an action to re-load, three actions if the wielder lacks skill in Bows and Bombs.

Bow, Long

Damage: Might + 3, minimum Might of 5

Expense: 3, Rarity: Very Rare

The longbow is a very powerful weapon. A typical bow is six feet in length, and made of sturdy yew. These bows are expensive, as they are difficult to craft, and they are far from inconspicuous, but they are deadly in the hands of skilled archer.

Bow, Mechanical

Damage: 12

Expense: 3 (Tech), Rarity: Very Rare

This bow is more a dandy's toy than a practical weapon. It is made of steel and Diamondpane. A series of Amperes and gears provide mechanical power to draw the bow, and a toggle on the handle fires the weapon. It uses a steel cable in place of a normal bowstring. Heavier versions could be built, if there was some reason to do so.

Bow, Medium Sporting

Damage: Might + 1, up to a maximum Might bonus of 7

Expense: 3, Rarity: Rare

Simply a large version of the light bow, all the same rules apply.

Fire Bomb

Damage: special

Expense: 0, Rarity: Very Common

The friend of revolutionaries everywhere, a fire bomb is a rag in a bottle filled with gasoline, creating a handy improvised weapon. These bombs create a 5-foot diameter pool of burning gasoline, which will ignite any combustible materials or characters. Characters covered in burning gasoline are on fire, and will want to do something about that. A character who succeeds in dodging or taking cover against a fire bomb attack will have managed to avoid the fiery blast entirely.

Hand Grenade

Damage: 30/20

Expense: 2, Rarity: Rare

The most recent model being of Serbian invention, the hand grenade consists of an explosive charge surrounded by wire or metal beads that become deadly shrapnel when the grenade is thrown. A grenade inflicts 30 points of damage at its point of impact and on all characters within melee range of that point, and 20 points on characters in short range.

Sling

Damage: Might

Expense: 1, Rarity: Very Common

A sling is simply a leather pocket attached to four sturdy cords. A stone or metal slug is placed in the pocket, which is then spun very rapidly and released, causing the stone to fly (ideally) toward a target (or, in the hands of an unskilled user, straight backwards into the face of the group's arcanist).

Stick o' Dynamite

Damage: 20/15

Expense: 2, Rarity: Common

A stick o' dynamite consists of an explosive stick with a gunpowder fuse on one end. This fuse burns at a rate of one inch per combat turn. A character must light a stick of dynamite with one action, and throw it with the next (or a later) action. Readyng another stick also requires an action, so a bomb-hurling character could throw one stick o' dynamite every three turns. The explosion from a stick o' dynamite inflicts 20 points of damage on a target character and anyone in melee range of them, and 12 points on all characters within short range of that character. Degrees of success do not add extra damage with dynamite.



CLOTHING AND ARMOR

Items of clothing or armor with two listed values provide the higher value when used against melee attacks, and the lower value against firearms and most arcane effects. The number after the entry is the number of damage levels negated for any given attack.

Armor, Light – 7/3

Expense: 2, Rarity: Rare

Light armor might consist of a set of medieval mail armor, or of a heavy leather duster with metal plates sewn in to create a modern version of brigantine armor in an attempt to gain an edge in a gang fight. In any case, light armor shares metal armor's weakness in resisting projectile weapons.

Armor, Metal – 9/4

Expense: 4, Rarity: Very Rare

This armor would make any Gothic Knight very happy. It consists of heavy layers of metal plate and chain, and impedes the movements of all but the strongest characters. It offers exceptional protection against most attacks, but is quite vulnerable to projectile weapons, including bows and crossbows.

Clothing, Heavy – 3

Expense: 2-4, Rarity: Very Common

Heavy clothing typically consists of medium or light clothing plus heavier outer garments. A cowboy in a drover's coat and an arctic explorer in a parka are both wearing heavy clothing.

Clothing, Light – 0

Expense: 1-5, Rarity: Very Common

Ordinary street clothing, ranging from business suits to bathing costumes to loincloths. Useful for preserving modesty, carrying loose change and keeping the sun off, but not much help in a fight. Higher Expense Rating gets you a very nice set of clothing, indeed.

Clothing, Medium – 2

Expense: 1-3, Rarity: Very Common

Medium clothing is heavy enough to offer some protection from injury. A worker's heavy clothes or a cowboy's getup both qualify as medium clothing. Most durable adventuring clothing fits into this category.

Corsetry, Armored – 6/3

Expense: 3-4, Rarity: Rare

All corsets offer a certain degree of protection. This version is designed for adventuring, and features more steel boning than is strictly needed for bosom containment. It also allows for much more freedom of movement, and contains a handful of sneaky secret pockets for knives, small guns, and similar trinkets.

Helmet, Leather – 1

Expense: 2, Rarity: Common

A helmet in this category may be an anachronistic protective leather hat, or may be an aeronaut's headgear.



Helmet, Metal – 3

Expense: 2, Rarity: Common

Any military helmet offers some protection for the head. Such helmets are not much different from those worn by many miners, construction workers, or firefighters, and these helmets confer the same protection.

Hotaether Powered Armor, Light - 10

Expense: 4 (Tech), Rarity: Very Rare

Available only to very well-connected individuals or elite members of special military forces, this armor uses gyroscopes and Hotaether-driven pistons and gears to aid and protect its wearer. Such armor could not possibly be more conspicuous, and is designed for either show or for use in front-line combat.

Hotaether Powered Armor, Heavy - 12

Expense: 5 (Tech), Rarity: Very Rare

This powered armor boosts the wearer's effective Might by three points. It turns any soldier into a tiny land-battleship. Some experimental versions include built-in Aetherspark cannons that draw power from the armor's reserves. This armor exists only in Britain and Germany, with perhaps a few prototypes elsewhere in the world.

Shield – 6/2

Expense: 2, Rarity: Rare

A sturdy shield is a great help in a fight, or at least in a knife fight. Shields stand out, but a shield can be disguised to look like a tool or lid, if a character needs to pass a (very) casual inspection.



HEAVY WEAPONS - OR - "THE BIG GUNS"

Small arms are all well and good for causing destruction on a small scale, but there comes a time in the life of many adventurers when they require much more serious firepower. The gunsmiths of the world are happy to oblige.



Automatic weapons

All automatic weapons fire multiple bullets in a single combat turn. They may either target an area, in which case the user makes attacks against a number of targets equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ the number of bullets fired, all of whom must be close proximity, or they may target a single individual or target, in which case the gunner receives a damage bonus equal to the number of bullets fired x 2. Weapons subject to these rules have "(auto)" listed after their damage value.

Gatling Gun

Damage: 16 (auto)

Expense: 3,

Rarity: Very Rare

Ammo: 300 (belt)

Rate of Fire: 10

This early type of automatic weapon allows a great deal of lead to be hurled very quickly. The most common model uses a hopper to feed bullets into a series of crank-operated revolving barrels. A crew of four is typically needed to operate this weapon.

Machine Gun, Heavy

Damage: 20 (auto)

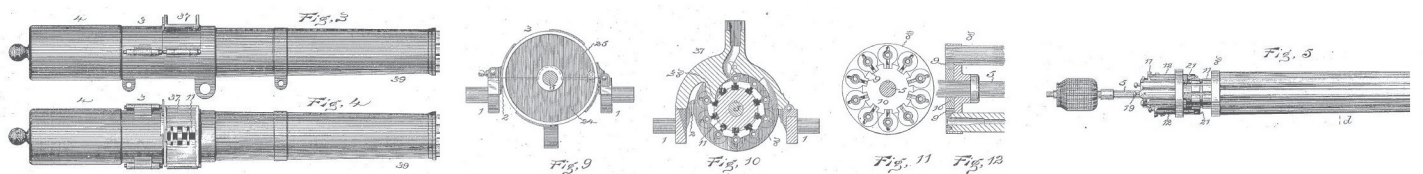
Expense: 4,

Rarity: Very Rare

Ammo 50 (canister) or 250 (belt)

Rate of Fire: 10

The heavy machine gun fires a notably larger bullet than do standard rifles. They can tear through light vehicles, and are used as infantry support and defense against airship raids. They weigh in the neighborhood of 50 pounds, and require a crew of three to operate effectively, though a squad of eight is usually used to be able to move the weapon, lug all the spare parts and extra ammunition.



Machine Gun, Light

Damage 14 (auto)

Expense: 3,

Rarity: Very Rare

Ammo 50 (canister) or 300 (belt)

Rate of Fire: 10

The light machine gun uses rifle bullets of modest size, and is lighter and more portable than its heavier cousin. These guns are now generally deployed by every major army, and make massed infantry charges a very risky and expensive proposition. They cannot effectively be fired from the hip and generally still have a crew of two or three.

Rifle, Automatic

Damage 16 (auto)

Expense: 3, Rarity: Rare

Ammo 20 (clip) or 100 (belt)

Rate of Fire: 10

The automatic rifle is a light squad support machine gun. It could possibly be fired from the hip at a -3 modifier by a very sturdy character (Might 7 or greater). It can be fed using either clips or a belt of ammunition, but will overheat if fired continuously.

ARTILERY

Artillery pieces fire large projectiles over great distances. They are used to hurl explosive shells at infantry targets, to fire anti-airship rounds into the skies, and to smash through the armor of heavy warships and behemoths. Expense and rarity for all of these weapons can be considered out of reach for the individual player character. If somehow a group of characters gained access to any of them it should be temporary and for some significant reason. Light armament is relatively more common on airships and civilian naval vessels, including those owned by player characters



Artillery Ammunition

Conventional artillery may fire three different types of projectiles:

- *Penetrators are designed to defeat armor. These rounds inflict the gun's full potential damage at a single point of impact.*
- *Shells are designed to mangle soft targets. They inflict ½ of the gun's full potential damage over an area with a radius equal to ¼ of the gun's base damage in feet. Characters can only dodge a shell attack if there is some sort of solid cover for them to hide under or behind.*
- *Shattershells are designed to engage airships. They inflict only ¼ of the gun's full potential damage, but over an area with a radius 3 times that of the gun's base damage. These projectiles have a 4 point bonus to hit due to their large area of effect. They use fuses that detonate the projectiles at a designated range (much like flak shells). These projectiles could be used against infantry, but attempts to take cover against them have a 4 point bonus, as they rely on shrapnel rather than explosive force to inflict damage, and almost any type of solid cover offers good protection against a Shattershell attack.*

Aetherspark artillery can only fire Penetrator rounds. The massive force generated by these guns would instantly detonate any artillery shell, with spectacular and painful results.

Field Gun, Heavy

Base Damage: 120

Ammo: 1

These large cannon are used mostly to bombard fixed positions and as armament on medium-sized naval vessels. They can be used to target airships, but require very sturdy mounting points, and cannot be used as portable anti-airship cannon. They cannot be fired from the hip. A crew of 4 is usually required, and these guns average 6 inch diameter barrels.

Field Gun, Medium

Base Damage: 80

Ammo: 1

Medium artillery has longer range than light artillery, and packs a greater punch. These weapons are used as field artillery, as the main guns on some naval vessels, and as heavy anti-airship weapons. They are the largest gunpowder cannons that can effectively target the faster varieties of airship. They normally require three rounds to reload and take a crew of three or four to operate. They average 4 inch diameter barrels.



Field Gun, Light

Base Damage: 40

Ammo 1 (or 12)

Light artillery is used for many tasks on the modern battlefield. Light cannon provide the bulk of firepower directed against an enemy infantry charge, as they can be re-sighted much more quickly than can larger guns. Light artillery is used to engage airships, although they lack the power to target high-flying vessels. Most light artillery requires manual loading, although these guns take only two turns to load for a skilled crew. The French have begun experimenting with a clip-fed version of this cannon, which requires reloading only every twelve shots, but needs a third crewman, since it's a bad idea to have one artilleryman carry 240 lbs of high explosives all by himself. These guns average 2 inch diameter barrels.

Naval Main Armament, Heavy

Base Damage 600

Ammo 1

These cannon, which have a barrel diameter of around 16 inches, are used to engage fixed objects or large naval vessels. They cannot effectively target small or fast-moving craft, in fact. They require 40 turns to reload, and have a range roughly equal to the horizon.

Naval Main Armament, Light

(for certain values of Light)

Base Damage 400

Ammo 1

These colossal cannons, with 12 inch diameter barrels, are the standard weapons on older, pre-dreadnought battleships. They are slow to aim, but deliver a colossal amount of firepower. They can only really be used against land or naval targets, but can engage those targets at ranges of up to 15 miles. They require 30 turns to reload, and a crew of at least six.

Aetherspark cannons are terribly expensive, and are not used for most ordinary military purposes. They are typically employed as the armament on hunter-killer airships, for their long range and accuracy, and as the main armament on the newest class of dreadnought warships, where their great penetrating power and relatively high rate of fire are most useful.

Aetherspark Colossus

Base Damage 700

Ammo 1

The Colossus is the largest Aetherspark cannon ever built. It, and a German version with similar stats, are used as the main armament on the new Dreadnought-class warships. This cannon can engage any target within visible range, and is very accurate. It draws power from the main Hotaether power plant and can load new projectiles mechanically, allowing it to fire every 20 rounds. If the loading mechanism was damaged, a well-organized crew could load a new projectile every 60 rounds.

Aetherspark Phoenix

Base Damage 50

Ammo 12

The Phoenix is a light Aetherspark cannon. They fire a small(ish) projectile on a nearly flat trajectory. They are excellent for engaging enemy airships, and are used by all types of vehicles important enough to warrant such expensive weaponry.



GADGETS AND DEVICES

The world of Brass & Steel is full of inventors and scientists, from well-intentioned do-gooders seeking to improve the lot of mankind to mad scientists hatching their nefarious plots in ancient castles perched on mountainsides. There are innumerable products, some mass-produced, some unique, that come out of the laboratories of this golden age of technology. Listed below are some examples that can be used to liven up your games or challenge your characters.



Automaton

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

The advanced materials science of the new age of steam has enabled the construction of some fascinating mechanical marvels. Automata are mechanical devices that move under their own power. They lack computational power, and are thus capable of only very simple behaviors. Small crawling spider-like machines are popular, as are powered children's toys. Designers have produced a small number of clockwork avians, whose gossamer-thin tinted Diamondpane wings can keep them aloft briefly when powered by several cunningly-placed miniature Ampheres. Such devices are rare and precious, although not terribly useful for anything other than being awesome. Rumours abound of advanced humanoid automata fitted with compact Babbage engines enabling more complex programmed behaviors, but no specimens have been confirmed.

Bellycutter

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

Bellycutters were developed as improvised weapons by British soldiers fighting in the Boer War. These devices consist of a Diamondpane blade or spear-like object, held in place and aloft with a bipod of Diamondpane poles. They are deployed with one end braced solidly in the earth. Anyone charging through an area containing one must roll **Wits + Sergeant's Eye** if the weapons are known to be present, or **Fate** if they are not, or inflict a **Might + 5** attack on themselves. Bellycutters are considered devilishly unsporting by soldiers, but are favorite tools of spies and saboteurs. Spike strips and other hideous versions of this device also exist. For example, Diamondpane razor wire is not widely-produced, but is absolutely terrifying in its effects.

Bender

Expense: 3 (*Tech*)

Rarity: Rare

This is a generic term for a wide range of devices that use Amphere power together with mechanical gearing to exert tremendous force. Industrial models are used to drive complicated metal stamping presses. Smaller, portable models can be used as self-powered jacks to lift very heavy objects. Criminals sometimes make use of small benders to aid in breaking and entering, often using them to simply rip a door right out of its mounting, lock and all.

Babbage Engines

Expense: 3-5 (*Tech*)

Rarity: Rare-Very Rare

These complicated devices perform mathematical calculations. The earliest versions were huge contraptions weighing up to fifteen tons and standing eight feet tall. The most recent innovations have resulted in Amphere-powered devices that are the size of a shoebox that are capable of performing the same polynomial calculation as the larger versions, though with less precision. The most advanced analytical engines are able to perform more complicated operations, and can function as simple analog computers programmable through the use of Jacquard punch cards. The larger versions can be steam or hot-aether operated.

Chatterbox Bomb

Expense: 3 (*Tech*)

Rarity: Very Rare

This diabolical weapon consists of a Voxcrystal attached to a sensitive and shielded detonator. A loud shout into the triggering Voxbox activates the detonator and produces a terrible explosion.

Devil's Jacks

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

These are nothing more than caltrops made of Diamondpane. They are shaped so that they always land with one spike pointing up. A character running through an area covered in these must roll a **Fate + Sergeant's Eye** test, suffering 6 points of damage if they fail and are not wearing heavy foot gear.

Emberbomb

Expense: 3

Rarity: Very Rare

Ember has only been available for a few years, but it has already been used as a weapon. Anarchists associated with the People's Will movement used a bomb with a detonator made of Ember to destroy a carriage in St. Petersburg, Russia. The Emberbomb was placed so that wind would blow through its case, causing the ember to glow hot, and igniting the fuse on a bomb.

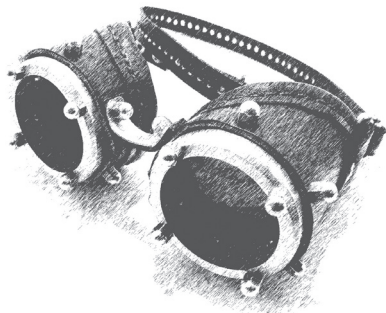


Gas Umbrella

Expense: 3 (Tech)

Rarity: Very Rare

A strange device supposedly developed by Britain's "Special Branch," the Gas Umbrella will cause its bearer to rapidly grow tired and incoherent. If not interrupted, anyone under the umbrella breathing the fumes will take 1 point of Stamina damage each combat round (every few seconds) and will be unconscious in a minute or two. The reason for this will be very unclear, so there is every possibility that the Gas Umbrella will perform its intended function and put someone's lights out, especially if it's held by someone else.



Goggles

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

Various eyewear have been developed that use the products of the magical industrial complex to enhance wearers' vision in various ways. The most common varieties allow for the injection of various thick, viscous liquids, called gels, into the space between two glass or Diamondpane lenses. Some examples are listed here. They each require one round to activate and last for one hour. Only one can be used at a time, and washing and recharging the system requires several minutes.

Redgel

When liquid is inserted into a pair of goggles it amplifies the light coming through the eyepieces. Redgel eliminates all darkness penalties up to but not including total darkness.

Bluegel

Bluegel magnifies images. This can be disorienting if the target is moving quickly or rapidly closer (GM option), but generally eliminates range penalties up to medium range.

Greygel

Greygel is a special case in that it has no affect other than a grey tint to the goggles when first applied. However, by pressing a switch and introducing a momentary current to the gel the user creates a black and white photo negative, which can be developed into a picture as large as 10 inches with reasonable clarity. Each lens can take one shot and must then be recharged as described above.

Grasshopper

Expense: 3 (Tech)

Rarity: Rare

This is a peculiar and dangerous device. It employs a medium-sized Amphere attached to a backpack frame. The device releases a short but extremely powerful and carefully-aimed burst of hotaether. This is directed to allow the user to make spectacular jumps. The device only contains enough hotaether for a total of 12 seconds of very expensive flight time, but this allows a single 'jump' of over 200 feet, or several shorter hops. Using a grasshopper requires an **Agility + Olympian Spirit** (grasshopper) test. Failure on this test tends to have serious consequences, and require the services of an undertaker.

Hotaether Powered Arm Prostheses

Expense: 3 (Tech)

Rarity: Rare

These replace conventional arms with Amphere-powered clockwork versions. In order to function the interior of the arm must be filled with the user's tissue and nerves, but this is easily, if painfully, accomplished with the proper elixir, even in the event of total amputation of the original limb. Powered Arms grant the user **+2 Might**. The character may choose to also gain +1 armor if the arm is bulky and obvious, as opposed to slightly noisy and somewhat less obvious. There is no effect to having either one or both arms, other than the Might bonus applies only to actions using the arm(s).

Hotaether Powered Leg Prostheses

Expense: 3 (Tech)

Rarity: Rare

Like the Powered Arms, Powered Legs permanently replace one or both of the user's biological legs with Amphere-powered clockwork versions. There is no game effect beyond the "cool factor" and the optional 1 point armor bonus as described in the Powered Arms entry above for having one Powered Arm. Having both legs replaced however will grant the user x2 to movement and +2 to Duck and Cover rolls. The main effect of the movement bonus is being able to move an extra step or two and still act in a combat round and the high likelihood that if you're chasing someone, you will catch them. Characters with two Powered Legs can also be assumed to be good jumpers, the game effect determined by the GM.



Lock Popper

Expense: 3 (*Tech*)

Rarity: Rare

This tiny device consists of a slender probe that can be inserted into a lock. A small Amphere is then expended through the probe and its contents are released, causing tremendous pressure and bursting open a lock. This device adds 8 points to an attempt to pick a lock, but can be used only once, and destroys the lock it is used on.

Lumenstick

Expense: 3

Rarity: Common

A lumenstick or lightstick is simply a flashlight that uses a sheet of lumen to generate light instead of an electric filament. These devices run many hours on even a simple dry-cell battery. They produce the unpleasant blue glow typical of lumen wafers, but this is better than pitch blackness.

Manticore

Expense: 3

Rarity: Very Rare

The manticore is an insidious device consisting of several dozen short, parallel tubes, attached to a medium-sized Amphere. Each tube contains a projectile. Large versions use darts or slugs for this purpose. Small versions use poisoned darts. Both are used as expensive but deadly fixed defenses. A tripwire or other triggering device causes the Amphere to release its charge, and fire all of the projectiles in a 30-45 degree arc. Anyone in that arc is subject to 10-Fate attacks, which inflict 12 points of damage each, or 4 points of damage plus poison. Any attack that is stopped by armor causes no poison damage, and the small poison darts are treated as melee weapons rather than bullets when determining armor's ability to stop them.

Oscillating Blades

Expense: 4

Rarity: Rare

Most personal weapons - knives, swords, even axes - can be modified to rapidly oscillate, powered by an Amphere. This provides a 2 point damage bonus to the weapon. Often sold under the brand name Colonel Wetherby's Oscillating Knives and Sabres (even when the blade is neither), in combat these weapons can provide an extra edge, pun intended, to their wielders. However, they are very, very loud. Any attempt to be stealthy will be at an 8 point penalty and casual conversation in the vicinity will be all but impossible. (That is, if anyone was inclined toward casual conversation with an activated Oscillating Blade nearby, which most people likely would not be.)

Portable Campfire

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

This toy for gentlemen explorers consists of a metal mesh box with a flat metal plate top. It contains an array of Ember crystals, a small fan, and some clockwork gearing and an Amphere to power the fan. The device has two speeds. On low, it will generate the same amount of heat as a small space heater for about 12 hours. On high, it will generate enough heat to allow cooking on the small metal plate top, and will last for about an hour.

Screamer

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

This odd tool and weapon consists of a single Amphere of Hotaether inside a small box containing several whistles. When a pin is pulled, a spring unwinds. When it has unwound fully the Amphere's pressure is discharged through the whistles, producing a terrible screeching cacophony that lasts for twenty seconds. The spring timer on a typical Screamer can be set for up to three minutes and is accurate to within five seconds, but other varieties are possible.

Skin Powder

Expense: 3 (*Tech*)

Rarity: Rare

Skin Powder is a tool often used by law enforcement. When sprinkled on a surface, any surface recently touched by a man or animal will appear dark orange. The general shape of the print will be visible, though not to a level of resolution as to allow fingerprinting, which no one has heard of anyway. The exact color depends on the time since the surface was touched - dark orange in the first hour, light orange in hours two to five, dark yellow hours six through nine and light yellow hours ten through thirteen. After this it fades completely.

Spybox

Expense: 3 (*Tech*)

Rarity: Rare

The Spybox is a very small version of a Voxbox. It is still not tiny, at an average of 4 inches by 3 inches by 3 inches, but can be hidden by an enterprising spy. It uses a chemical battery with a lifespan of a single day, and is thus not suitable for long-term emplacement unless it can be attached to a power source.



Steam Converter

Expense: 2-4 (*Tech*)

Rarity: Common

This class of device is designed to slowly draw power from an Amphere. Some varieties have connections to allow them to power mechanical devices. Others use the mechanical energy drawn from the Amphere to run electric generators. These devices are common on submarines, but are used in other situations where the cost of the Amphere is outweighed by the danger or inconvenience of using diesel or coal generators.

Thief's Ladder

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

This is another device made possible by Diamondpane. It consists of a slim metal pole with a hook on one end and pegs protruding every two feet on either side, in a staggered pattern. It is used by thieves to break into upper-story rooms. A thief can swing the ladder up onto a ledge or windowsill, and its sturdy hooks will hold it in place. The ladder is nearly invisible when so mounted, and can easily hold 400 lbs. These are, of course, illegal in most nations.

Voxbox

Expense: 3

Rarity: Common

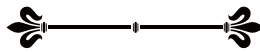
A large, usually ornate, wooden case at least 18 inches tall and 12 inches wide and deep, a Voxbox contains a Voxcrystal, mountings, switches to turn the box on and off and a power source (nearly always an Amphere). Voxboxes are used to communicate with other linked boxes, each containing a crystal from the same batch of crystals. Swapping out crystals is possible but takes several hours of skilled labor for most boxes, though some might be designed for rapid access. Using a Voxbox reproduces sounds being picked up by its sister boxes. A Voxbox's range is limited by the horizon and/or other massive obstructions, such as mountains.

Voxnet

Expense: 4

Rarity: Rare

Not so much a single device as it is a concept, a Voxnet consists of many Voxboxes all slaved to a single master crystal. The number of linked crystals remains limited, however, and production runs have failed to produce more than about four hundred crystals on a single frequency. Most Voxnet systems are used by military organizations, although both the London Symphony and the Berlin Opera broadcast over Voxnet to a select audience of a few hundred wealthy listeners. The sound quality is only adequate, and the range is limited to a portion of a city, but the broadcasts have novelty and prestige value.



MUNDANE BUT USEFUL GEAR

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but instead to provide a sampling of the mundane goods that are available for player characters to purchase. A quick peek at a merchandise catalog from 1905 will give a group of players many other ideas. You have one of those, don't you? No? Well, you're clearly clever; you're interested in Brass & Steel. Be resourceful.

Cable, Steel

Expense: 1-3

Rarity: Common

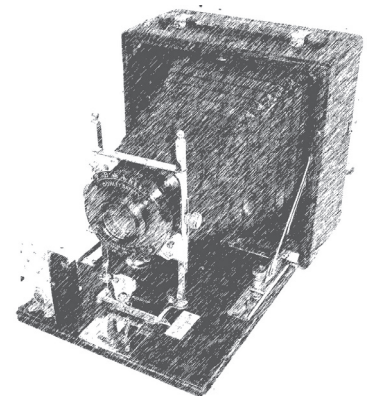
This is useful for mooring airships, securing suspension bridges, and similar feats of architectural engineering. Smaller thicknesses make useful climbing aids in some situations. It is slick and difficult to climb without a special tool, for a 3 point penalty, but it is incredibly strong - even a thin steel cable can hold 4000 lbs. Thicker cables can carry more weight, but are probably too heavy to be lugged around on adventures by all but the truly determined.

Camera, Plate

Expense: 3

Rarity: Common

Plate cameras are bulky affairs, but capture images of very high quality.



Camera, Film

Expense: 2

Rarity: Common

Film cameras are smaller, more portable, and much less expensive than plate cameras. They are suitable for use while adventuring.

Camera, Motion Picture

Expense: 4

Rarity: Rare

Motion picture cameras are available, but primitive and expensive. They are bulky, and the film itself is highly flammable. Do not bring them anywhere near an angry arcanist.

Doctor's Bag

Expense: 3

Rarity: Common

A doctor's bag contains all the tubes, forceps, and other medical gadgetry needed to make full use of the Medicine skill in the field. It can be used to provide characters with medical care, and confers a 1 point bonus on all medical tests. Under more sinister circumstances the tools contained in a doctor's bag would provide a 2 point bonus in Leadership and Intimidation tests.

Fishing Pole

Expense: 1

Rarity: Very Common

Amazingly enough, a fishing pole allows an intrepid adventurer to catch fish much more easily than with their hands. Or with a knife. And much more subtly than with a bomb. You get the idea.

Electric Torch

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

Portable Electric Torches are available, but pricey. They are also bulky and have a limited lifespan. They are better able to resist damp and wind than lanterns, however.

Lantern

Expense: 2

Rarity: Very Common

Lanterns come in many shapes and sizes. A lantern may be hooded, if a character wishes, so that its flame can be greatly dimmed. A lantern can also be focused, so that its light shines in only one direction. Colored glass is available, as are small cutouts of unicorns, although this is less apt to come up during play.

Parachute, Linen

Expense: 2

Rarity: Common

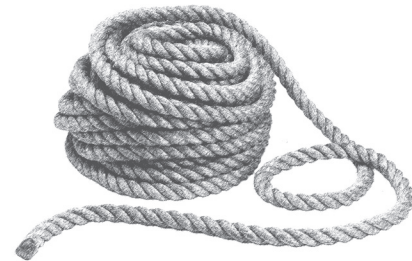
These cheap parachutes give those who inexplicably find themselves plummeting to the earth from high altitude a running shot at making it safely to the ground. They are both less effective and much bulkier than their silk counterparts. They weigh 50 pounds each, and fill a large backpack. They are most often used as emergency parachutes on airships, as they are relatively inexpensive. Using one requires an **Agility + Olympian Spirit**, with a three point penalty for the inferior quality of the chute. Each Degree of Failure will inflict three points of physical damage upon impact with the ground. They require at least three hundred feet to deploy properly.

Parachute, Silk

Expense: 3

Rarity: Common

These marvelous but expensive canopy parachutes offer a better than average chance of getting to the ground alive. They pack into a medium-sized backpack and are attached by a double-point harness, but do not offer any steering capabilities. Using one requires an **Agility + Olympian Spirit** test. Each Degree of Failure inflicts two points of physical damage when the wearer lands. Like linen chutes, they require at least three hundred feet to deploy properly.



Rope

Expense: 1

Rarity: Very Common

This sturdy rope is made of hemp, jute, sisal, or some other durable, heavy fibre that is murder on bare hands but very sturdy. It can hold 1000 pounds, but is heavy and bulky.

Rope, Silk

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

Nothing tricky here - this is rope made from silk. It is strong but slender. Climbing it without special gloves is very difficult, imposing a 3 point penalty, but it is feather-light, and still very strong, being able to hold 750 pounds.

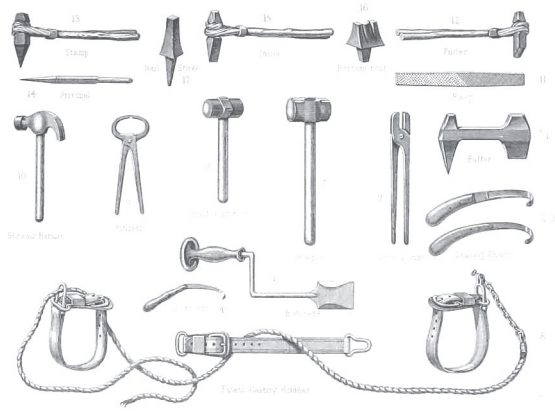


Tools

Expense: 2-4

Rarity: Very Common to Rare

Tools come in an enormous variety of shapes and sizes. All basic tools such as saws pickaxes, adzes, planes, spanners, shovels and so forth are available for purchase. Note that some tasks, repairing an engine for example, are difficult or even impossible without the proper tools. More specialized sets of tools are more expensive and harder to acquire. The base, unmodified test in these cases assumes the proper tools are available. Players wishing to use a specific tool as a weapon, and you know you do, should consult with their GM.



VEHICLES

Vehicles in Brass & Steel come in many different varieties. Some games may never pay much attention to vehicles, while others will revolve around their use. The list provided below is not intended to be exhaustive.

Each vehicle has an armor rating, a speed rating, and a durability rating. Armor functions just like armor for characters – it directly absorbs damage inflicted on the vehicle through combat or misadventure. Durability represents the overall toughness and structure of the vehicle. A very large vehicle with redundant systems might have a high durability but a low armor rating, whereas an armored fighting vehicle might have a great deal of armor but little durability once that armor has been breached. A dreadnought is apt to score quite highly in both categories.

A vehicle is rendered inoperable if its durability is reduced to zero. A vehicle moves at half speed if its durability is reduced to 50% or less. Some types of vehicles are further hampered by durability damage. A vehicle that is no longer able to move because of damage is not necessarily totally destroyed. A hail of bullets will destroy a car's engine, but it will still be a box on wheels. If the car was hit by a large artillery shell, on the other hand, it would be turned into a collection of unusual paperweights.

LAND VEHICLES

Motorcar, Electric

Armor 1 • Durability 50 • Speed 30 Mph

Expense: 4

Rarity: Rare

The electric car is a breeze to drive and avoids the vibration, noise, and fumes associated with other methods of propulsion. Unfortunately, it has a top speed of 30 miles per hour and a meagre range of 40 miles, making this vehicle primarily a wealthy person's city car.



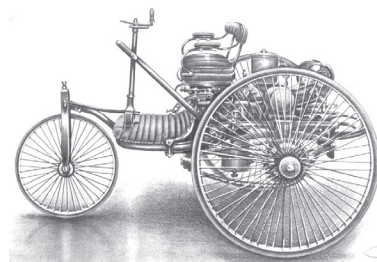
Motorcar, Hotaether

Armor 1 • Durability 60 • Speed 120 Mph

Expense: 4

Rarity: Rare

This type of car is the preferred means of transportation for the rich and powerful. These vehicles are manufactured by a variety of different firms, but all use medium-sized Amperes to provide power. They accelerate very rapidly, and make little noise while travelling. A single set of Amperes provides a 300 mile range on a typical vehicle.



Behemoth

Armor 120 • Durability 500 • Speed 6 Mph

Expense: 9

Rarity: Very, very rare

The behemoth is Britain's attempt to move a battleship onto land. These vehicles are fifty feet long, have fore and aft main turrets and smaller side-mounted guns as well. They weigh many, many tons, and have a crew of 37. A behemoth requires large Ampheres for power, and even they cannot provide enough motive force to move the vehicle rapidly. Viewing ports of Diamondpane allow crew members to see out with relative ease, at least until they are covered with the mud and muck of a battlefield. These vehicles use treads to spread out their weight, but are still prone to getting bogged down in moist earth, soft sand, or unfortunately most anywhere. Germany is reported to have developed similar vehicles, although their models are rumored to be smaller, faster, and armed with only a single main gun.

Bicycle, Safety

Armor 2 • Durability 20 • Speed up to 25 Mph

Expense: 1-2

Rarity: Very common

Bicycles of various types are common sights in much of the world and are enjoying a "golden age." If a small motor was attached the stats would not change, but the rider wouldn't have to do the work of moving herself forward.

Dasher, Hotaether

Armor 0 • Durability 12 • Speed 190 Mph

Expense: 4

Rarity: Rare

What do you get when you add Hotaether power to a lightweight two-wheeled frame and a lack of self-preservation instincts? Why, you get the Dasher, of course! These sport vehicles are all the rage among reckless and wealthy young men from the richer classes. They accelerate staggeringly fast, handle reasonably well, and explode dramatically when they hit things at top speed. Dasher was originally a brand name, but has become the general term for the whole class of Hotaether motorcycle. Poor judgement and/or failed Hell Bent for Leather tests are often fatal, but why should that spoil the fun?

Governor's Special

Armor 20 • Durability 100 • Speed 60 Mph

Expense: 5

Rarity: Very Rare

These rare and expensive vehicles are the armored limousines of their day. They are designed to transport dignitaries in safety through dangerous areas. They are expensive, and their ownership is carefully controlled. They rely on Ampheres for power, and most use a system of exchangeable cylinders to enable them to be rapidly re-fueled on the go.

Lorry, Cargo

Armor 3 • Durability 80 • Speed 50 Mph

Expense: 3

Rarity: Common

These steam-powered vehicles are the workhorses of cargo transportation. They consist of an engine and a car. The engine is little more than a small cabin atop a large boiler and coal reservoir, combined with the gearing to turn steam pressure into motive power. The car, which is towed behind the engine, is most often a box on wheels for hauling cargo, but can be a flat-bed or other design as well.

Steam Car

Armor 3 • Durability 60 • Speed 60 Mph

Expense: 3

Rarity: Common

The steam car is a much more humble powered conveyance. These vehicles burn coal to make high-pressure steam, which they use for motive power. They have a relatively short range, but can be easily re-fueled, and are quite inexpensive. They produce a large amount of smoke if fueled with anything other than the cleanest-burning anthracite grade of coal.

Velocipede

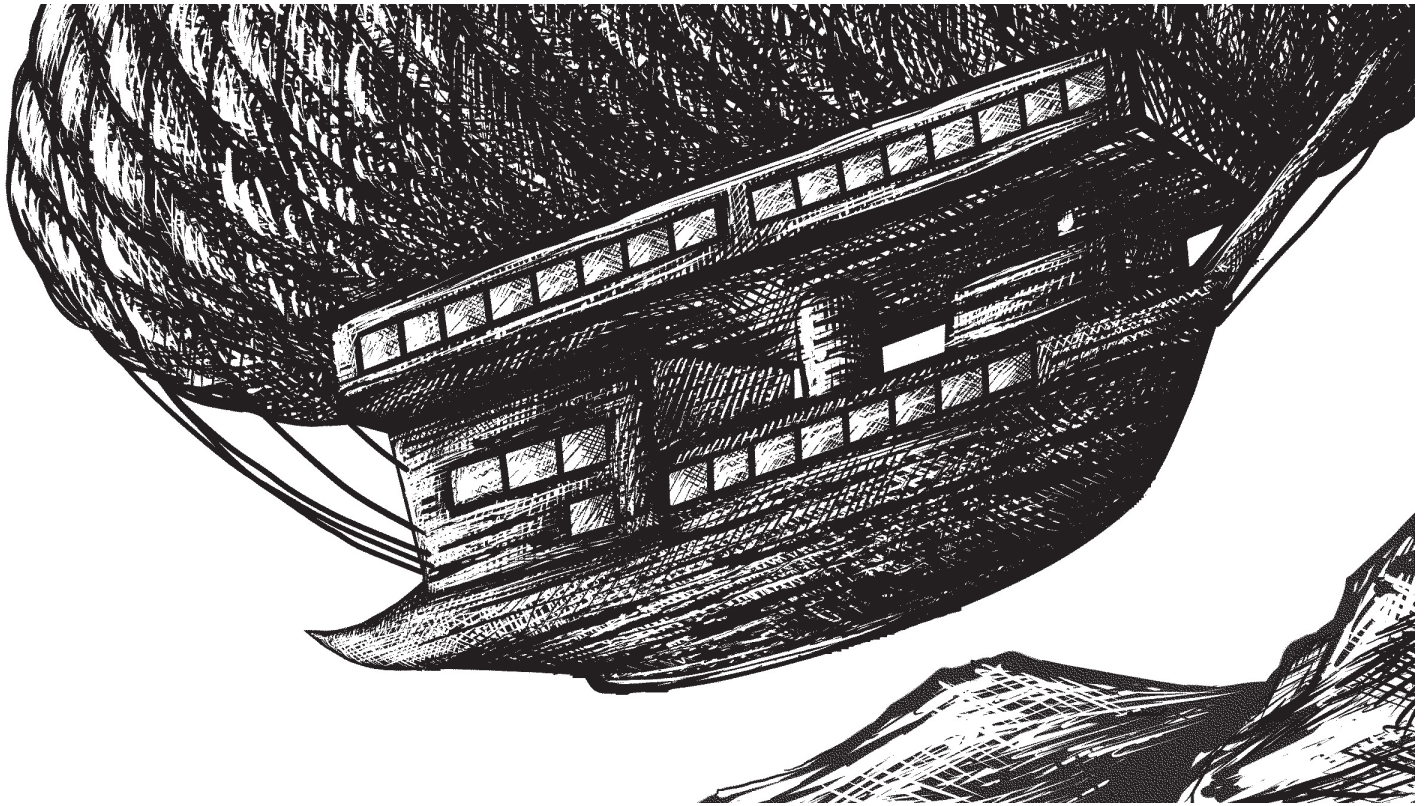
Armor 3 • Durability 25 • Speed 75 Mph

Expense: 3

Rarity: Rare

Formerly the term for human-powered two-wheeled vehicles, the term has been increasingly applied to the powered variety. A powered velocipede is a vehicle that could also be called a motorcycle. The stats provided assume a run-of-the-mill variety.





AIRSHIPS

The first generation of airships were constructed in a manner very similar to contemporary sailing ships, resulting in vessels that were basically flat-bottomed frigates, complete with a fo'c'sle and a quarterdeck, and equipped with a Hotaether boiler. The ship hangs a large balloon or rigid air frame in place of sails. Many of these older craft are still in service, especially among independent traders, couriers, smugglers and - you guessed it - pirates! (YAR!) Modern airship construction techniques call for a more integrated design with a sleek cigar shape reminiscent of real-world dirigibles, but with much larger ventral crew and cargo compartments made possible by the greater lifting power of Hotaether as compared to hydrogen or helium.

Airships, like other vehicles, have armor and durability ratings. Much of the bulk of an airship consists of gas bags inflated with Slack. As these are damaged, the airship loses the ability to stay aloft. For this reason, military airships typically have their lifting gas bags divided up into many smaller compartments. Airships can typically jettison cargo and use reserves of slack to remain airborne so long as they do not suffer more than 50% damage to their durability. At that point an airship will begin to descend at a relatively stately foot per second or so. If an airship's durability is reduced to 20%, that vessel will plummet toward the earth.

Bulk Hauler/Liner

Armor 3 • Durability 140 • Speed 90 Mph

Expense: 5

Rarity: Common

These large vessels can carry many passengers or a large amount of cargo. Passenger liners typically have several decks, while cargo ships usually have a single large hold, with a small crew deck above it, inside the area of the vessel that holds the slack.

Cutter

Armor 2 • Durability 30 • Speed 130 Mph

Expense: 6

Rarity: Rare

Cutters are the fastest ships in the sky. They sacrifice pretty much everything else in the interests of speed. A cutter will have room for a bare handful of passengers and a small amount of high-value cargo. They are lightly armed, if they are armed at all. They have sleek, streamlined lines with very prominent engines. They usually rely on banks of Ampheres for power, unlike other airships, which use Ampheres only for flank speed emergency power, and employ diesel engines for normal travel.



Freighter, Light

Armor 2 • Durability 80 • Speed 80 Mph

Expense: 5

Rarity: Common

Light freighters are the workhorses of the sky. They have a good mixture of speed, maneuverability and cargo capacity. A typical light freighter can carry twenty passengers and crew, and a reasonable amount of cargo as well.

Harpy

Armor 3 • Durability 40 • Speed 100 Mph

Expense: 5

Rarity: Very Rare

The Harpy is a British airship. Similar models are in use by other nations. This airship is a light, two-person craft designed for combat. Such airships are relatively speedy, and are armed with either one large gun or a rack of penetrating bombs. They fill the niche of fighter-bombers, although their relatively slow speed limits their ability to operate over battlefields where anti-aircraft weapons are present. They are useful for intelligence-gathering, and pose a real threat to larger airships, although the machine guns that they normally carry lack the range of the guns on bigger vessels. Some adventurers have been known to get their hands on older models of this type of airship and remove the guns and other heavy fittings, thereby creating small craft able to carry four to six people and a bit of gear.

Sky Cruiser

Armor 8 • Durability 300 • Speed 80 Mph

Expense: 7

Rarity: Very Rare

A sky cruiser is designed to engage enemy airships and sweep them from the sky. The fact that airships cannot bear heavy armor has led designers to focus instead on the weapons mounted on sky cruisers. These vessels generally employ the cutting edge of Aetherspark artillery, so as to be able to engage enemy airships at a range that makes return fire impossible. The sky cruiser design is new, and none have actually fired a shot in anger against another airship capable of defending itself, so this philosophy of engagement remains unproven.

Sky Destroyer

Armor 6 • Durability 160 • Speed 90 Mph

Expense: 8

Rarity: Very Rare

The destroyer is the smallest military airship to have real firepower. It employs either bombs or a battery of howitzers to target ground forces, and uses artillery and automatic guns to attack other airships. Destroyers are armored, but cannot carry enough armor to be completely safe from enemy attack, even from small arms fire. They thus tend to maintain a respectful distance above a battlefield. They are the wolves of the sky, and are designed to be able to hunt enemy air freighters.



SEAGOING VESSELS

The oceans of the world are full of vessels of all sizes and descriptions. The following are general categories, and real-world ships can be placed into those categories and tweaked if a group desires.

Naval vessels that sustain damage will begin to sink. A vessel that has taken $\frac{1}{2}$ of its total durability will begin to take on water, and will also be restricted to $\frac{1}{2}$ of its maximum speed, as water pours into internal compartments and hinders the ship's operation. The ship will suffer one additional point of damage every fifteen minutes. Damage control and pumps can mitigate this. A ship that has reached $\frac{1}{4}$ of its total durability will begin to take on water at a rate of one point per minute, and the crew should probably begin to deploy the lifeboats and set up the music stands for the band's final show. Most of the vessels below are capable of short bursts at 125% of the listed speed, but this can be sustained for only a brief time.

Battleship

Armor 300 • Durability 2000 • Speed 18 Mph

Expense: 9

Rarity: Very Rare

Battleships were the queens of the sea for a generation. They are heavily armored, although not always on their top deck, which leaves them vulnerable to airships. Crews of battleships average about 750. They relied on many heavy guns spread out over the ship. They are now becoming obsolete, but many are still in service around the world.



Civilian Craft, Heavy

Armor 20 • Durability 800 • Speed 20 Mph

Expense: 7

Rarity: Rare

These large workhorse vessels haul cargo in bulk around the world. Dressed up with shiny fittings and better engines, they carry passengers across the oceans in style.

Civilian Craft, Light

Armor 16 • Durability 300 • Speed 15 Mph

Expense: 5

Rarity: Common

Small freighters, large fishing vessels, powered whaling ships and small passenger liners all fit under the category of light civilian craft. These vessels are moderately durable, and can typically weather modest seas. They can hold a good deal of cargo, or two hundred passengers.

Cruiser

Armor 50-120 • Durability 1000 • Speed 18 Mph

Expense: 7

Rarity: Very Rare

Cruisers are workhorse naval vessels for all the navies of the world. With crews in the hundreds, cruisers' main weapons can damage even the largest dreadnoughts if they are aimed correctly, although such a match would not be sought out by a sane cruiser captain. They excel at protecting commerce from pirates, as most cruisers have long operational ranges.

Destroyer

Armor 40 • Durability 600 • Speed 20 Mph

Expense: 8

Rarity: Very Rare

Destroyers are capable warships, and are the backbone of many small navies. They have crews of 50 or so, and use a mixture of torpedoes, depth charges, and artillery weapons. Specialized destroyers are outfitted with Aetherspark artillery, to enable them to accurately target enemy airships.

Dreadnought

Armor 500 • Durability 3600 • Speed 21 Mph

Expense: 10

Rarity: Very rare

This new class of warships strike terror into the hearts of enemy captains, and into the hearts of ministers of finance. They rely on power from massive Hotaether boilers to achieve speeds that rival those of small craft. They use Aetherspark heavy artillery in batteries of two or three. These cannon can smash smaller warships flat, and could tear an airship from the sky instantly if they could hit it. Only Britain and Germany currently have vessels of this

class in service. The British have five, and the Germans two. More are being built, as part of a vast new arms race. Dreadnought crews average about 800.

Frigate

Armor 12 • Durability 400 • Speed 18 Mph

Expense: 6

Rarity: Rare

These light naval vessels are used as pickets, skirmishers and patrol craft by the navies of the world. Some versions carry torpedoes, while others rely on light artillery pieces.

Patrol Boat

Armor 12 • Durability 120 • Speed 25 Mph

Expense: 5

Rarity: Common

These small, speedy craft are used by coast guards and customs police the world over. They are able to weather moderate seas, and are fast enough to catch most smugglers and other waterborne miscreants. A patrol boat typically has one small cannon and a selection of small arms on board.

Small Craft

Armor 8 • Durability 80 • Speed 5-10 Mph

Expense: 3-4

Rarity: Very Common

The world is filled with small boats. Some of them are used to catch fish. Some carry supplies to and from large vessels. Most are not terribly glamorous. Individual small craft vary widely, but most conform to these basic statistics. Larger, ocean-going vessels belong to different categories.

Thornycroft Racer

Armor 8 • Durability 100 • Speed 18 Mph / 70 Mph

Expense: 5

Rarity: Rare

The Thornycroft Racer is a hydrofoil vessel. It moves at a respectable speed while flat in the water, thanks to its large engines. In smooth seas, however, it can make incredible speed, as it rises up out of the water on four metal fins, and its large Ampere-powered propellers drive it through the water. The ship looks like a standard small military vessel when cruising flat in the water. Its fins are mounted beneath the waterline. It has a crew of 18. Military models carry a few light weapons but are mostly used for patrol and scouting work, while civilian models are mostly employed as high-speed ferries for the elite.



SUBMERSIBLE CRAFT

Submersible craft can function like ordinary naval vessels, and operate at the surface of the water, although the shape of their hulls, designed for periods underwater, make for very unstable surface handling. Submersibles are even more vulnerable to sinking than are surface vessels when under water. They follow the same sinking rules as naval vessels when they are on the surface of the water. A submarine that is underwater, however, begins to take on water at a rate of one point/minute if it suffers ¼ of its total durability in damage, and will suffer a catastrophic hull breach at ½ of its total durability.

Feuersturm U-Boot

Armor 40 • Durability 200

Speed 16 Mph surface/8 Mph submerged

Expense: 9

Rarity: Very Rare

The Feuersturmunterseeboot, or Firestorm, is the largest and most modern submersible craft known to be in service. It was designed by the German Imperial Navy in an effort to partially counter Britain's advantages in sea and air power. This vessel has a crew of 30, and uses both a diesel generator and a series of Ampheres for power. It employs an experimental system that uses electric power to recharge Ampheres instead of steam pressure, allowing it to charge its Amphere banks without belching a vast plume of smoke into the sky. This vessel is armed with a light Aetherspark artillery piece for covert attacks on airships, and with heavy torpedoes to facilitate attacks on surface naval vessels. The Imperial High Command is hopeful that the six Firestorm-class submarines currently in service could pose a real threat to British capital ships.

Leviathan

Armor 200 • Durability 800

Speed 20 Mph surface / 16 Mph submerged

Expense: ?

Rarity: ?

If some wealthy and powerful madman were to desire to terrorize the world, he would do so from the elegant bridge of a Leviathan. No nation has built (or admits to having built) such a vessel. The Leviathan would have a crew of perhaps 200, and be able to travel deep beneath the surface of the ocean, powered by a large Hotaether boiler and special, huge Ampheres, which would be used both for motive power and to drive electrical generators to provide oxygen and light. This ship might contain large Diamondpane viewing windows to allow captured viewpoint characters to stare out and marvel at the wonders of the ocean floor. Such a vessel would be large enough to transport its passengers in reasonable luxury, and would employ smaller submersibles in the same fashion that surface vessels use small craft as tenders and escorts. Because Leviathans presumably have not yet been built, rumors of attacks on them by giant squid must be false.

Sea Skate

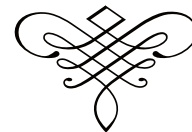
Armor 30 • Durability 100

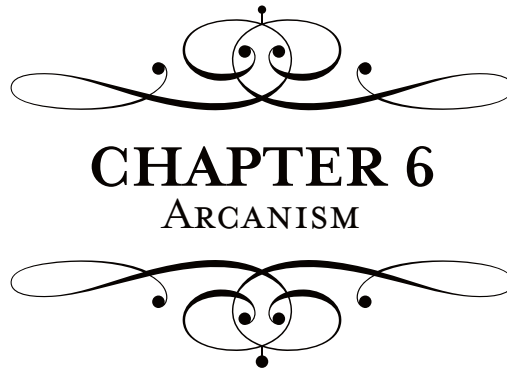
Speed 14 Mph surface/ 9 Mph submerged

Expense: 7

Rarity: Very Rare

The Sea Skate class of submarine, and an analogous German version, are slightly dated but still dangerous. This vessel is armed with gunpowder deck artillery and with torpedoes. Neither high command was exactly sure what these vessels were meant to do, and they were thus given limited abilities to engage airships, hunt shipping, and engage naval vessels. They are moderately dangerous to merchant vessels, but modern surface naval ships are much faster than these submarines, and careful captains have little to fear from them on the open seas. They use a crew of 20, and employ Ampheres combined with a scrubbed coal-fired boiler system. This reduces the amount of smoke produced when charging the Amphere bank, but the smoke is still quite visible.





CHAPTER 6

ARCANISM

- Overview •
- The Nature of Arcane Power •
- Alchemical Salts and Inoculation •
 - Arcane Systems •
 - What Can Arcanists Do? •
 - Minor Free-Form Effects •
- Arcane Patterns and Charms •
- Undergoing Inoculation •



OVERVIEW



Arcane power allows characters to perform incredible feats. Arcanists use the power of their mind and will to briefly change the shape of reality. They have great control over the fundamental forces of nature, including things such as heat, gravity, and inertia, and have some ability to conjure materials from alien dimensions. All human beings have at least some small degree of arcane power – this evolved as a survival mechanism to protect men and women from the arcane forces that fill the world. Untrained men and women cannot consciously make use of arcane power, but they can reflexively defend themselves against it.

Men and women can train themselves to be better able to shape and control arcane power. Anyone who has undertaken such a course of study and developed their natural abilities is referred to as a minor arcanist, and may make use of two types of arcane effect. He may employ free-form effects to make small, temporary changes in the world, such as creating a flash of light or catching a waffle before it hits the floor. He may also practice certain effects over and over, until they become deeply-ingrained in the memory. These effects, called Charms, can be somewhat more powerful, and can have more lasting effects. They are also more reliable than free-form effects. Minor arcanists fuel their powers by expending Stamina. Each attempt to invoke an arcane effect causes Stamina damage.

Arcanists hungry for more power may take the dangerous step of undergoing a process known as inoculation. This process infuses the human body with strange substances touched by alien dimensions. Inoculated arcanists can use free-form effects, and can make use of Charms. In addition, they have several other abilities. They can channel more arcane energy through their bodies, which allows them to produce more dramatic free-form effects, although at a greater risk to themselves. They are able to use more precise formulas for channeling arcane power, known as Patterns, which allow them to invoke more powerful forces. Finally, inoculated arcanists are able to store a certain amount of raw power within their bodies. This energy, known simply as Power, can be used to fuel arcane effects. Once an arcanist's supply of Power is exhausted, they may still use their Stamina to fuel arcane effects, just as a minor arcanist can.

In the descriptions of various arcane effects below the term Power will be used loosely to describe both the expenditure of Power by an inoculated arcanist and/or the expenditure of Stamina by either inoculated or minor arcanists.



What is Stamina?

A character has points in each of the four rows of his Stamina damage track equal to their Vitality + Willpower. A character will eventually lose consciousness as a result of taking stamina damage. More detail on this subject appears in the combat chapter.

THE NATURE OF ARCANE POWER



The universe of Brass & Steel is joined to a myriad of others. At most times and in most places, those connections are feeble and tenuous, exerting only the tiniest of influences. This is a good thing, because most of these other universes are totally inimical to life as we know it. Occasionally, stronger connections between this world and others form, and create rifts between the dimensions. These rifts are often referred to as Loci. In nature, these connections typically form and disappear quietly and uneventfully. Although most scholars believe that things have ever been thus, some heretical academics and arcanists speculate that this was not always the case, and attribute tales of ancient cataclysms to great rifts that might once have been torn between this world and others. A tiny mad few go even further, and argue that the great fires of creation that shaped the world were, in fact, vast tears in the fabric of the universe itself.



Over time some things have been learned about these rifts between dimensions. When small rifts exist over the course of many centuries, or perhaps even eons, they will subtly alter the material of this world. Scholars are nearly unanimous in their consensus that this process is responsible for the formation of the compounds that can be distilled into alchemical salts. Loci gradually alter (some might say “corrupt”) the fabric of this world. Over time, materials near a locus of power will be transformed, gaining odd properties. These materials can then be harvested and refined into alchemical salts and other substances useful in science and industry.

Humans (and perhaps other sentient beings, if there are any) manifest a limited ability to bridge the dimensions, and draw upon the strange forces and bizarre physical laws that exist in these alien realms. In normal humans, this ability is quite limited, and seems to serve mainly as an instinctive defense, a sort of arcane immune system. The un-augmented, non-inoculated human, even when carefully trained, can consciously evoke only minor arcane effects. A normal human might be able to call forth ghostly light, ignite a fire, chill a fruit, or conjure a few glass beads. Normal humans draw on the inherent energy of their bodies to power any arcane effects that they evoke, and can exhaust themselves quickly and spectacularly if they attempt major feats of arcane power. As noted above, arcanists who rely solely upon the power of their own bodies are referred to as minor arcanists.

Chapter 6

ALCHEMICAL SALTS & INOCULATION



Greater feats of arcane power are possible. The more powerful arcanists of the world rely upon secret formulas to imbue themselves with the energies and potential of alchemical salts. Through a variety of decoctions, tattoos, and other sinister treatments collectively referred to as “inoculation,” humans have learned to expand their ability to shape the fabric of the world. Such power, however, comes at a great price. Alchemical salts are, by their very nature, alien substances to this world. As a result, even when handled with the utmost skill and care, they can prove to be dangerous or even fatal. Each successive inoculation with alchemical salts confers more power upon a recipient, but also places greater stress on the frail human vessel.

The reason that there are few arcanists of great power in the world is simple: having exposed themselves two or three times to the dangers of alchemical inoculation, most arcanists accept that they have won a great gamble and refrain from further inoculation. In all of recorded history, only one sorcerer, Althan-Ya, is known to have survived more than ten inoculations. According to legend she endured eleven before disappearing from the historical record. She had built a vast empire with the power of her sorcery, but no record of her fate after her final inoculation has survived. Most arcanists who fail to survive an inoculation simply die in screaming agony – but some few do burn up or are otherwise destroyed by extra-dimensional forces. The end result is the same.

Arcanists who have succeeded in adapting to one or several courses of inoculation do not live normal lives. Each exposure to alien materials transforms an arcanist in some way. Some of these changes are simply physical – the first inoculation often causes minor side effects, such as causing an arcanist’s eyes to glow, or strange patterns to swim and shift beneath their skin. Subsequent inoculations, however, are apt to scar both the mind and the spirit. Reports of arcanists driven mad, unable to stand the light of the sun, or unable to fully control their powers are common, and some stranger effects have been noticed. Arcanists often refer to their ‘tiers’ of inoculation, each tier corresponding to one successful course of inoculation. A first or second-tier arcanist might pass for human, but those of the fifth tier are usually unmistakably alien entities.

The actual use of arcane power, especially among the inoculated, involves channeling dimensional energies in useful ways. All arcanists can channel energies simply by exerting their will, and using their innate connection to the multiverse to magnify that will to produce free-form arcane effects. However, the results of this form of magic are quite unpredictable, and very draining. Most arcanists find that it is to their advantage to train themselves, through careful study and practice, to access certain types of dimensional power. These memorized devices, called Patterns and Charms, allow an arcanist to produce reliable effects with less effort. Patterns and Charms function in much the same way, but Patterns are more powerful and versatile, and are used



only by inoculated arcanists. Charms are less potent, but are available to anyone with some skill in the arcane arts. An arcanist will typically train themselves in the use of a variety of different effects, often clustered together around a certain type of power. The number and power of such effects that an arcanist can master and retain at any given time is determined by their own skills.

ARCANE SYSTEMS



Arcane powers are governed by several attributes and skills. Three attributes are of paramount importance for aspiring arcanists.

TRAITS

Stamina Damage

Stamina provides raw power to fuel arcane effects. Minor arcanists rely solely upon their Stamina to power their abilities, while inoculated arcanists have access to more substantial internal reservoirs of extra-dimensional Power.

Attributes Used in Arcanism

Willpower is linked to memory and focus, and is used by arcanists to invoke known patterns.

Reason measures an arcanist's ability to spontaneously compose magical effects to change the world around them, and is the basis of all free-form arcane invocations.

Skills Used in Arcanism

Channeling - This skill measures and limits the amount of raw power that an arcanist can employ in their arcane effects, and is added to tests involving raw power.

Precision - This skill measures an arcanist's ability to balance and direct the power that they summon. It is employed in tests where the careful application of power is important.

Arcanist's Eye - This skill governs an arcanist's ability to sense arcane energies and manifestations in the world. It is used in the invocation of effects to gain information from or about the world.

Focus - This skill measures the ability of an arcanist to establish and maintain arcane concentration. It is used in tests to avoid distraction or interruption, and it also determines the number and power of arcane effects that an arcanist can maintain at any given time. Every effect

that can be maintained requires a certain number of focus points - although some very minor effects do not require the continuous expenditure of Power, they do still count as a single point against the overall effect limit for an arcanist.

Arcane Memory - This skill determines how quickly an arcanist can learn new patterns, and also determines the maximum number of patterns that an arcanist can retain at any given time.

Power

An inoculated arcanist can store arcane energy within her body. An arcanist may store a number of points of Power equal to his or her **Willpower** + **Vitality** + (10 x arcanist's inoculation tier). Power regenerates passively, at the rate of 1 point per inoculation tier every 15 minutes. A character may concentrate on recharging their Power, in which case they recover points equal to their inoculation tier + **Focus** every 15 minutes, but may take no other action. Power regeneration rates are doubled within Loci.

Arcanism can do a wide variety of things. Arcanists are primarily limited by the Patterns that they have committed to memory - the difficulties associated with free-form arcanism ensure that effects of more than modest scope are only practical through the use of memorized Patterns, and the greatest effects will require very careful preparation.

Invocation Tests

Whenever an arcanist wishes to invoke an arcane effect, they must make an invocation test to do so.

For known Patterns, an invocation test is (**Willpower** + 5) + (lowest needed skill of **Channeling/Precision/Arcanist's Eye**).



For known Charms, an invocation test is (**Willpower** + 2) + (lowest needed skill of **Channeling/Precision/Arcanist's Eye**).

For free-form effects, an invocation test is **Reason** + (lowest required skill of **Channeling, Precision or Arcanist's Eye**).

As shown above, effects may require more than one skill, in which case the lowest applicable skill is used. In other words, a vastly powerful but carefully aimed lightning strike would require a test using the lower of Channeling or Precision.

Use of Alchemical Salts

Large doses of alchemical salts are used in the ritual of inoculation. An inoculated arcanist may make use of much smaller doses to augment their arcane powers or replenish their internal reservoirs of power. Minor arcanists do not have the same ability to make use of alchemical salts, as their bodies have not yet become accustomed to the presence of such alien energies.

- An inoculated arcanist may use a dose of alchemical salts to add a 3 point bonus to an invocation test, at the cost of two points of physical damage.
- An inoculated arcanist may also use a dose of alchemical salts to restore their Power pool. One dose of alchemical salts can restore ten points of Power, at a cost of two points of physical damage.



WHAT CAN ARCANISTS DO?

Arcane power can do the following:

- Conjure or destroy matter - matter is not created, but is borrowed from other dimensions, or shunted to another dimension in the case of destruction
- Conjure or eliminate energy – this could take the form of electrical energy, kinetic energy, or thermal energy, also borrowed to and from other universes
- Manipulate the physical forces of the universe - gravity, electrical charge, magnetism, and the like
- Re-shape matter – although this is a more difficult task than creating or destroying matter
- Re-locate matter or energy – teleportation is possible, but fiendishly difficult, because the arcanist must simultaneously transport matter and modify the momentum of that matter
- Sense the physical world
- Create life... but with the caveat that this is staggeringly complicated, and involves assembling all the component pieces needed to make a creature, from scratch.

Arcane power cannot:

- Be used to control the mind of another, although very clever arcanists might be able to alter moods by manipulating the environment in subtle ways
- Directly influence the dream world. Arcanists can use Lucidos, and can learn the skills of dreamers... but their arcane skills will give them no advantage
- Allow time travel
- Contact the dead. They're dead.

FREE-FORM EFFECTS

Many arcane effects, especially relatively minor ones, can be achieved without the use of a prepared arcane Pattern or Charm. Free-form effects require no special planning, and are invoked by rolling against **Reason** + an appropriate casting skill.



No arcanist may spend more than their inoculation tier + 1 points of Power or Stamina on a free-form effect – this effectively limits minor arcanists to modest, although still useful, free-form effects that cost but a single point of Stamina. These simple free-form effects carry no real risk of serious failure, although Power or Stamina must be expended even if the attempt to invoke an effect fails.

All free-form effects are limited to a duration of one minute or less, and maintaining one even for that long requires all of an arcanist's focus, so that they cannot maintain any other free-form effects, Patterns, or Charms.



Quick and Dirty One Point Free-Form Effects

For one point of Power, a free-form effect can:

- Conjure a modest quantity of a common material – one gallon of water, five pounds of soil
- Break apart a small amount of ordinary material – punch a three inch hole through a wooden door
- Conjure a pleasant amount of light, equivalent to one electric bulb
- Heat a person-sized area by 40 or so degrees
- Conjure a small fire for twenty seconds
- Sense simple electrical or thermal forces (see heat, sense if a wire carries current)
- Sense arcane manipulations of great power (8+ power expended)
- Inflict about as much damage as a knife or a punch, once, to a single target (8 physical, 12 Stamina)
- Provide about as much defense against attacks as a small shield
- Manipulate small objects – lift a gun from a table and pull it to the arcanist's hand, aid in picking a lock or opening the catch on a window.

Greater Free-Form Effects

Inoculated arcanists have access to free-form effects requiring more than one point of Power. These free-form effects are more useful, but also more dangerous. Failure on a roll to invoke a free-form effect that requires more than one point of Power causes physical damage, rather than draining Power or Stamina damage from the arcanist.

Conjuring

Free-form effects can be used to cause items to pass from another dimension into ours. Materials conjured take some seconds to appear in this dimension. In game terms, this equals one round per point of Power or Stamina spent on the effect, during which time a shimmering is visible where the object will appear, and anyone with arcane senses can detect the invocation. An arcanist must maintain concentration on a conjuration while it is in progress.

Patterns or Charms cannot be used to duplicate these effects, because each act of conjuring brings material into the world, and changes the balance of forces so that a perfect repetition of that conjuration is impossible. For this reason conjuration is always a free-form effect.



• CONJURING •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Conjure a modest quantity of a common material – one gallon of water, five pounds of soil
2	Conjure a sizable quantity of a common material – ten gallons of water, or a small amount of an uncommon material – chalk, tin, iron
3	Conjure a great deal of a common material – 100 gallons of water, or a modest amount of an uncommon material
4	Conjure a vast amount of a common material – 1000 gallons of water, or a few ounces of a rare material – high-carbon steel, tungsten
5	Conjure an enormous quantity of a common material – 25000 gallons of water, or a modest amount of a rare material
6	Conjure a large amount of a rare material, or a tiny amount of a very rare material – gemstone, platinum, uranium



• BREAKING •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Break apart a small amount of ordinary material – punch a three inch hole through a wooden door
2	Break apart a modest amount of material – shatter an entire wooden door
3	Break a modest amount of a durable material – smash a hole through a metal-bound door
4	Destroy or break a large and sturdy object – smash and cripple the engine of an armored car
5	Destroy or break a fortified object – smash or destroy a reinforced concrete pillbox
6	Damage a very heavily fortified object – punch a small hole in the belt armor of a battleship



• SENSING •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Sense simple electrical or thermal forces <i>(see heat, sense if a wire carries current)</i> Sense arcane manipulations of great power <i>(8+ power expended)</i>
2	Sense the whole of the EM spectrum Sense moderately powerful arcane manipulations <i>(4+ power)</i>
3	Sense gravity, weight, and density of objects Sense modest arcane activity <i>(2+ power)</i>
4	Sense even the weakest of arcane manifestations Sense all varieties of radiation Accurately determine where the connections between worlds are thinner or stronger
5	Sense phenomenon at a range of 10 miles
6	Sense phenomenon at a range of 100 miles



• LIGHT •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Conjure a pleasant amount of light, equivalent to one electric bulb
2	Fill a large space with light as bright as day
3	Target a single individual with enough light to cause temporary blindness
4	Fill a large space with blinding light
5	Create a light that can be seen for miles, and which will blind those nearby
6	Create a light bright enough to burn flesh at close range



• TEMPERATURE •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Heat or cool a person-sized area by 30 or so degrees
2	Heat or cool a room by 30 degrees, or a person by up to 60 degrees
3	Conjure the heat of a blast furnace, briefly
4	Conjure heat that can melt glass
5	Conjure a large area of extreme heat
6	Conjure radiation



• DAMAGE •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Inflict about as much damage as a knife or a punch, once, to a single target (8 physical, 12 Stamina)
2	12 physical or 16 Stamina
3	16 physical or 20 Stamina
4	20 physical or 24 Stamina
5	24 physical or 28 Stamina
6	28 physical or 32 Stamina



• DEFENSE •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Provide 2 points of armor protection
2	Provide 4 points of armor protection
3	Provide 8 points of armor protection
4	Provide 12 points of armor protection
5	Provide 16 points of armor protection, or 4 points of protection over an area
6	Provide 20 points of armor protection, or 8 points of protection over an area



• LIFTING AND MOVING •



POWER USED	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
1	Manipulate small objects – lift a gun from a table and pull it the arcanist's hand, aid in picking a lock or opening the catch on a window
2	Briefly lift 200 lbs, lift 30 lbs steadily
3	Lift 1000 lbs for a moment, or 200 lbs steadily
4	Lift 2000 lbs for a moment, or 400 lbs steadily
5	Lift 4000 lbs for a moment, or 800 lbs steadily
6	Lift 8000 lbs for a moment, or 1600 lbs steadily



ARCANE PATTERNS AND CHARMS

Patterns and charms are less versatile than free-form effects but much more powerful and reliable. They have several advantages over free-form arcane effects. Patterns are used by inoculated arcanists. Charms are simply Patterns used by minor arcanists, and the mechanics behind the two are very similar. The differences are limited to the maximum Stamina usable in a Charm (3 points; remember that minor arcanists do not have Power) and the casting bonus conferred - a 2 point bonus to the casting test for a Charm, instead of the five point bonus provided by Patterns. In these rules, where there is no difference between how a Pattern works as opposed to a Charm, the term Pattern is used generically. Where there are differences they are explained.

Patterns

- Patterns can produce more stable effects than Charms or free-form effects. This means that they can have durations that exceed 1 minute. The cost to sustain a Pattern is usually half the cost to invoke the Pattern, with minor effects (those with a cost of only 1 point of Power) having no cost to maintain apart from their focus cost.
- Patterns are easier to maintain than free-form effects. Only one free-form effect can be maintained at any given time. A number of patterns governed by the arcanist's focus skill can be kept active simultaneously.
- Patterns allow for the channeling of greater amounts of arcane force. Even a very powerful arcanist cannot use more than 6 points of power in a free-form effect. No such limits exist for Patterns, however.
- Patterns are easier to invoke than free-form effects. They provides arcanists a five point bonus on invocation tests. This means that, in practice, a skilled arcanist who takes a moment to concentrate will almost never fail to invoke a Pattern.

Charms

- Charms are less powerful than patterns, but they allow minor arcanists to expend up to three points of Power to fuel an arcane effect. This offers access to many effects that the single point of Power usable by minor arcanists in free-form invocation does not.
- Charms provide a 2 point bonus to invocation tests and allow minor arcanists to access effects that require more than a single point of power to invoke.

Creating Patterns and Charms ("Effects")

The listing of Patterns found later in this chapter is intended as a representative sample of what is possible. While a more complete system for creating new Effects will have to await a possible future supplement to Brass & Steel, the guidelines shown here could allow enterprising GM's and players to take a stab at it.

- A damaging Pattern will produce 8 points of damage for the first point of Power, and 4 additional points of damage for each extra point of power. No pattern that can be targeted as a combat effect should do more than 24 points of damage.
- A Pattern that inflicts Stamina damage causes 12 points of damage for the first point of power, and 4 additional points for each extra point of power. Again, no pattern should cause more than 24 points of base damage.
- Patterns with multiple targets compute the price for each target.
- Patterns that affect an entire area have four times the normal cost.
- Patterns that combine two damaging effects cost an additional point per target, or 4 points if they have an area of effect.
- Healing done with arcane effects is expensive and difficult. Most healing effects should require medical skill to even be possible, and complicated effects should require an arcane perception effect to allow work inside the body. All healing effects are also resisted by their targets if those targets are unconscious, as they cannot suppress their own innate arcane defenses. Arcane healing typically costs one point of Power for every point of physical damage healed or potentially healed.
- As noted previously, neither Patterns nor Charms can generally conjure materials - each act of conjuration pulls some material from another world, and changes the arcane balance, making careful repetition impossible. Exceptions might be made for effects that could plausibly draw on a predictable reservoir of a material in another dimension - water from an alien lake, for instance, but in general conjuration is limited to free-form effects.



Steps of Pattern or Charm Creation

STEP 1 - determine the base effects:

- Using rules for free-form effects as a guideline, and observing the inherent limits on arcanism, determine the effect of the Pattern or Charm.
- An arcanist cannot invent a Pattern that they cannot invoke. An arcanist can invent a Pattern that they can invoke with limitations. For example, a combat Pattern that could target up to three characters could cost 3, 6, or 9 points of Power. An arcanist able to invoke a 3-point free-form effect could create this pattern.

STEP 2 - Determine the focus cost and upkeep cost of the Pattern:

- Upkeep is usually equal to half the cost of the Pattern.
 - *Paid per round for damaging Patterns*
 - *Paid per minute for defensive Patterns or for those that make major overt changes in the physical world, such as allowing flight*
 - *•aid per hour for Patterns that produce minor or passive effects*
 - *Paid per day for Patterns that do nothing more than strengthen the existing order of things (a pattern to fortify a door or a pattern to aid in the healing of wounds meet this criteria)*
- Patterns that produce minor or passive effects and have an initial cost of 1 Power have no upkeep cost.
- Patterns that absorb damage cost an additional half of their initial cost every time that they resist damage.
- The focus requirement of a pattern is equal to half the initial power cost, with a minimum of 1 point of Focus; combat patterns have a focus requirement equal to the whole initial power cost.

STEP 3 - Determine the skill or skills needed for the Pattern:

- A pattern must always have at least one of the arcane skills (**Channeling**, **Precision**, or **Arcanist's Eye**) as a component.
- Remember that it is often the case that more than one skill will be required for a given Pattern.
- Patterns that rely on raw force, such as most telekinetic effects and most damaging combat effects, require **Channeling**.
- Patterns that require either targeting (many combat effects) or great finesse (healing patterns, patterns that perform fine manipulation) require **Precision**.
- Patterns that rely on specialized knowledge of arcane of physical forces require **Arcanist's Eye**, as do patterns that extend the ability of an arcanist to perceive the physical world.
- Patterns that make use of some highly technical non-arcanic knowledge may have a mundane skill requirement as well. Any healing pattern that works inside of the body has **Medicine** as a requirement, for example.

STEP 4 - Begin practicing the desired effect:

- Each test requires a week of research, and the ability to freely invoke the effects of the new Pattern or Charm. This is not much of a concern for an effect that allows a character to use arcane power to detect copper, but can be tricky when developing a one to unleash a storm of electricity. Note that this prevents the creation of some extremely powerful Patterns, as typical arcanists cannot channel enough power through free-form effects to practice the invocation of such Patterns. Characters with appropriate connections may still be able to draw on the accumulated lore of various mystical organizations to learn such patterns.
- Make a **Reason + (lowest required skill)** test after one week has passed.
- If this test succeeds, then the Pattern has been learned successfully.

Learning and Remembering Patterns

The **Arcane Memory** skill determines how many Patterns a character may remember at any given time. A character may learn more than this number of Patterns or Charms, but will need to spend a day pouring over their notes in order to refresh their memory to re-learn the desired effect, and another pattern or charm will be partially forgotten and unusable until the process



is repeated. This process requires at least a week if notes on the Pattern or Charm are not available, during which time an arcanist can re-create their missing or lost notes if they so choose, amidst much swearing and tearing-out of hair.

Additional Patterns can be learned in two different ways:

- A character may learn an existing Effect. This typically requires a test against **Reason + Arcane Memory**, and requires one day per point of Power used by the pattern. This method requires access to an instructor who knows the pattern or charm, or access to a text in which the pattern or charm is clearly described.
- A character may also invent a new Pattern or Charm using the system described above.

EXAMPLE PATTERNS

The Patterns listed below are divided into categories for ease of reference. These categories have no game effect and would likely not be recognized by an arcanist in the world of Brass & Steel.

Each Pattern includes the following information:

THE PATTERN'S NAME (Which skills are required to invoke it, P,C,A for the three casting skills - **Precision, Channeling, or Arcanist's Eye**; other skills listed by name)

COST: the initial power cost of the pattern, plus any upkeep or extra costs

FOCUS: the number of focus points needed to keep a pattern active, usually equal to the initial cost plus the maintenance cost. No arcanist can maintain more effects than allowed by his Focus skill.

DESCRIPTION: a short description of the effects of the arcane pattern.

Note that any Pattern shown below with a Power cost of 3 or less could be learned as a charm by a minor arcanist.

UTILITY PATTERNS

Cloak of Mist (C)

Cost: 2+2/min (spec)

Focus: 1

This Pattern creates fog by cooling the air and adding moisture. This fog is natural, but will seem out of place in areas where fog does not normally occur. This pattern is easy to invoke in damp areas (1/1) and quite taxing in hot arid places (4/4)

Distant Hands (P,A)

Cost: 2 + 1/minute

Focus: 1

This Pattern allows an arcanist to manipulate visible physical objects at a distance of up to five meters, so long as they are visible. The force created by this pattern can lift about 200 lbs, and has an effective agility equal to the arcanist's precision skill, in addition to whatever skills the arcanist possesses.

Earth's Grim Embrace (C, P)

Cost: 4 + 2/turn

Focus: 4

This powerful pattern greatly increases the force exerted by gravity on a target. It effectively triples a target's weight. A **Might + Olympian Spirit** test with a 6 point penalty is required to stay upright if this is effectively used on a living being. This pattern is difficult to use on a living target, however, and so it is most often used on inanimate objects located in inconvenient places, causing them to fall far too fast.

Eyes in Darkness (A)

Cost: 2 + 1/min

Focus: 1

This Pattern allows an arcanist to perceive a much broader spectrum of EM radiation than normal. This allows for vision into the infrared and ultraviolet, and allows visibility in many nighttime environments.

Flash (P)

Cost: 1

This Pattern produces a very bright flash of light. It will destroy night vision utterly, and targets failing a **Wit + Duck and Cover** roll are blinded for 15 seconds, and at a 10 point penalty on tasks requiring vision for 15 seconds after that.

Mystic Lung (P)

Cost: 2 + 1/min

Focus: 1

This Pattern creates a sphere of clean, breathable air around the caster (other targets may be included as well). It allows the caster to breath underwater and also protects against poison gas.



Pixieswarm (P)

Cost: 2

Focus: 1

This pattern causes a cloud of tiny, firefly-sized points of light to emerge from a single point. These tiny motes of light whirl and dart randomly for the duration of the effect. They confer a 4 point penalty on any attempt to concentrate visually, and make it impossible to aim a firearm for a bonus, although they do not penalize normal shots. They provide a dim and awkward form of illumination.

Shatter (C)

Cost: 1-6

This Pattern breaks apart non-living material. Harder substances and larger objects require more energy. A successful invocation test by the arcanist will destroy a target object or damage some portion of a larger object. The exact details of this destruction vary from object to object. Glass and crystal shatter, metal is torn apart, fabric shredded, and so on.

Warm or Cool (P)

Cost: 2 +1-3/hr

Focus: 1

This Pattern keeps an arcanist or target pleasantly warm or cool. It costs more if a great difference in temperature must be overcome. It could conceivably either chill or overheat an opponent... over the course of an hour or so... which makes it a fairly useless offensive pattern.

Wisplame (P)

Cost: 1

Focus: 1

This Pattern conjures and maintains a glowing sphere (or other shape). It provides light enough to see/read/pick locks, and moves at the arcanist's command. It is cool to the touch. This effect is simple enough that it requires no upkeep other than a point of focus.

◀ SNEAKY PATTERNS ▶

Cloak of Whispers (A, P)

Cost: 3 + 1/min

Focus: 2

This elegant pattern suppresses the sounds made by an arcanist. Simply suppressing all sound is simple. This pattern is more subtle, and works by cancelling only the noises made by the arcanist. It confers a 10 point penalty to any attempt to detect the character through the sound that they make.

Grim Silence (P)

Cost: 2

Focus: instant

This pattern briefly suppresses all sound in a small area - roughly a 5 foot diameter sphere. The suppression lasts for two combat rounds, or six seconds. This is enough time to aim and discharge a firearm, or engage in 2 melee attacks, which is the point of the Pattern.

Lover's Whisper (A, P)

Cost: 3 + 1/min

Focus: 2

This is another pattern designed to shape and limit sound. It directs sound waves back and forth between two people. No one else may overhear any conversation shared by two people using this pattern to converse.

◀ MOVEMENT PATTERNS ▶

Hero's Leap (C)

Cost: 2

This Pattern allows an arcanist to jump a great distance, or to land safely after falling a great distance. A **Wit+Precision** targeting test is required to aim and land perfectly. An ordinary failure will only result in inconvenience. Extreme failure may result in a twisted ankle or other more significant consequence, but this should still be relatively minor.

Flight (C,P)

Cost: 4 + 2/min

Focus: 4 (*effectively a combat pattern because of the complexity of flying*)
This Pattern allows an arcanist to fly at approximately 30 mph. Additional weight can be carried at a rate of 1 per 50 lbs. This Pattern acts by directly modifying the effect of gravity, and so there is no storm of wind or other related effect.

Minor Teleport (P,A)

Cost: 6 (*special cost*)

This Pattern allows an arcanist to instantly disappear and re-appear at another location within easy viewing distance (100 meters or so). A faint whump accompanies the pattern's invocation. (Some less-common versions produce a Bamph! noise instead, but are in all other respects identical.) A failure on the invocation test causes the arcanist to fall and be disoriented on arrival, while an extreme failure, if used by your group, has serious and negative results.



Panicked Descent (C)

Cost: I + I/turn

Focus: I

This pattern, while not able to provide true flight, is better than nothing. It slows the descent of a target to about 10 feet per second. This means that a fall will require an **Agility + Olympian Spirit** test, and failure inflicts 3 points of damage.

Teleport (P,A)

Cost: 12 (special cost)

This very difficult Pattern allows true teleportation. Like its lesser cousin, Teleport generally results in “whump” or “Bamph!” noises at the points of arrival and departure. It requires a normal invocation test, in addition to a **Reason + Precision** roll to arrive safely at the intended target location. Failure on either roll causes the arcanist to appear in a dangerous situation. Extreme failure, if used by your group is almost sure to be lethal.

◆ DAMAGING PATTERNS ◆

Blade of Force (P)

Cost: 2 (damage + cutting effect)

This Pattern hardens the air to form an arcane blade, which delivers a fierce slashing cut. A target that fails to defend against the attack, which can be parried, suffers 8 points of damage, modified by Degrees of Success like a normal melee attack. This Pattern will cut even sturdy cables, although metal cable or very heavy nautical rope will resist.

Incinerate (C, P)

Cost: 5 (4 for 20 damage, 1 for secondary effect)

Focus: n/a

This Pattern creates a terrible blast of fire. If it hits, it inflicts 20 damage on a single target (full armor protection applies). It also sets flammable targets on fire, which must be extinguished normally. Oddly enough, many versions of this pattern operate by causing the air to burn in a particular fashion that leaves behind vast amounts of nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, as a combustion product.

Lightning Magnet (C,P)

Cost: 4/target

Focus: instant

This Pattern causes targets to be struck by a sudden surge of electrical energy. This energy causes light burn damage (8) and stun damage (12), and may (at the Game Master's discretion) damage sensitive items carried by the target.

Pressure Blast (C,P)

Cost: 2 (Stamina damage and knockback effect)

This Pattern hurls a concussive blast of force at a target. It is designed to incapacitate rather than kill its target. If it hits, it inflicts 12 boxes of Stamina damage, and will knock targets back several meters if they fail a **Might + Olympian Spirit** test.

Pressure Wave (C,P)

Cost: 8 (area of effect Stamina damage and knockback effect)

This Pattern blasts a wave of pressure over a 45 degree arc for four meters. Anyone in that area who is hit with by the pattern will suffer 8 boxes of Stamina damage, and will be knocked back if a **Might + Olympian Spirit** roll is failed.

Silent Scythe (C,P,A)

Cost: 12

This ancient and terrible Pattern is rumored to have been a curse imposed on the impious and disloyal by priests in ancient Babylon. It invokes a terrible blast of radiation. Modern science could detect the effect of this pattern, but in ancient Babylon it was mysterious and terrifying. A target hit by this Pattern suffers 6 points of physical damage every hour until they perish, starting two hours after exposure.

Suffocate (P)

Cost: 2 + I/round

Focus: 2

This Pattern is the dark twin of mystic lung. It works by depriving a target of air. It cannot suck air from a target's lungs, and so even if well-timed, it is cannot kill an enemy instantly. It can however be terribly distracting, and will eventually kill a target, who will take one point of Stamina damage per combat turn, two per term if active. (See the description of damage tracks in the Combat chapter.)

◆ PROTECTION PATTERNS ◆

Deflect (C)

Cost: 2 + I/min + I/attack

Focus: 2

This Pattern protects an arcanist by partially congealing the air around them. It grants the arcanist four effective points of armor against all attacks.



Greater Deflection (C)

Cost 4 + 2/min + 2/attack

Focus: 4

This pattern forms a more solid and durable barrier around an arcanist. It appears as a shimmering in the air, and offers 8 points of armor protection against any attacks.

Personal Warding (C)

Cost: 6 + 3/min + 3/attack

Focus: 6

This Pattern forms a shield around the caster. Objects moving at more than a modest speed are re-directed away from the caster and glance off the barrier. This confers the equivalent of 12 points of additional armor against all attacks.

Radiation Ward (C)

Cost 2 + 1/minute

Focus 2

This very recently-developed Pattern allows an arcanist to shield themselves from radiation. It offers complete protection against any source of radiation found on Earth, and would suffice to protect against radiation in earth orbit outside of the magnetosphere, if an arcanist somehow ended up there.

HEALING/MEDICAL PATTERNS

Boneweave (P,A,Medicine)

Cost: 8

This Pattern calls forth light and strong material to weave together broken bones. Bones healed with this effect are instantly and completely fused, and no ill effects remain from the injury. A failed invocation test results in a mis-set bone, and a critical failure results in two boxes of damage and a bone that must be re-broken and re-set.

Cauterize (P or C,P)

Cost: 2

Focus: n/a

This Pattern cauterizes wounds cleanly and instantly. If used offensively, it could inflict 4 damage. It's best use is as a method of preventing death by bleeding, however. It inflicts 1 point of damage, but then prevents further damage due to bleeding.

Fleshweave (P,A,Medicine)

Cost: 12

This Pattern conjures matter to weave together damaged tissue. If the invocation test is successful the target immediately recovers up to twelve condition boxes worth of health, but suffers a like number of boxes of Stamina damage, as the body's reserves are taxed by the healing process. A failure when invoking this pattern inflicts three boxes of damage, and a critical failure inflicts enough boxes to place the character at the beginning of the final damage track, or three boxes, whichever is worse.

Wound Discipline (P,A)

Cost: 4+4/day

Focus: 2

This Pattern employs arcane force to bind a patient's body into a configuration that allows it to heal properly. A patient under the effect of this pattern will not lose health due to bleeding, and should be treated as receiving medical attention for purposes of healing, with twelve effective successes on the healing roll.

Woundset (P,A,Medicine)

Cost: 4

This Pattern uses arcane energy to provide minor healing, and also serves to stabilize a wounded patient. A successful invocation restores two boxes of wounds, and stabilizes a patient. This Pattern can only be used on fresh wounds, and only once per wound. A failure when invoking this pattern inflicts one level of wounds, an extreme failure inflicts three.



UNDERGOING INOCULATION -or- The Crazy Things We Do for Ultimate Cosmic Power

As will be seen below, the process of inoculation is dangerous. In fact, if engaged in often enough, it is invariably fatal. Inoculation requires medical facilities and five doses of pure alchemical salts per tier of inoculation being attempted. A mixture of other chemicals is also needed, including Physicane (or its equivalent) and several specialized elixirs, which are crafted specially for each arcanist. The process of inoculation takes one day per tier of inoculation being attempted.

Each time a character undergoes inoculation, they must make a test with **Vitality + Willpower** - (minus) the new inoculation tier being attempted. A success on this roll leaves the character with an inoculation side effect from the list below, or determined



together by the player and GM. An extreme success produces an inoculation side effect that is less obtrusive than normal, such as blue veins of power that are located deep inside the body, rather than right under the skin, but all inoculations produce some side effect. A failure on the inoculation roll produces both a side effect and a debility, but the character still gains an inoculation tier. If a character rolls an extreme failure (a 20) on an inoculation test they gain a debility and do not successfully gain an inoculation tier. If a character acquires three debilities, they die screaming, consumed by arcane power. The exact nature of their messy demise left to the imagination of the GM. It should be horrible. Characters who begin the game with one or more levels of inoculation must still roll for side effects, but will never critically fail, and cannot receive more than two debilities. (Especially merciful groups may further reduce this penalty at their discretion). Fate Cards may not be used to alter the results of inoculation tests.



Summary Benefits of Inoculation:

Despite the terrible price paid by inoculated arcanists, it is a necessary tool for those seeking serious arcane power. There are three advantages that many feel more than compensate for these risks. All of these are also described elsewhere, but to summarize:

- *An inoculated arcanist can learn true Patterns. While minor arcanists can and do learn Charms, these are less helpful in invoking arcane effects, and cannot achieve the most powerful of arcane effects. Patterns suffer from no such limitations.*
- *An inoculated arcanist is also able to take advantage of the alien structures present in his or her body to store arcane Power. This allows inoculated arcanists to maintain a Power pool, which they can draw on to fuel arcane effects.*
- *The internal Power reservoir of an inoculated arcanist also allows them to directly make use of small doses of alchemical salts to boost the power of their invoked effects or to replenish their Power pool more rapidly.*

Sample Side Effects

Every time an arcanist undergoes inoculation they will pick up a side effect. You are encouraged to come up with your own side effects, subject to GM approval, using the proffered examples as a guideline; the stranger the better.

Odd Odors - strange smells follow the character around. These are not always unpleasant, but are usually distinctive, and make many animals very nervous. Even the less-offensive odors can be liabilities. After all, it may be difficult to intimidate one's foes if one smells like a delicious freshly-baked cinnamon roll.

Uncomfortable Moisture - water vapor condenses around the character. This does not lead to instant rain, but simply a steady increase in the relative humidity. Characters suffering from this side effect are advised to carry several spare pairs of dry socks.

Tiny Monsters - periodically, the character's power will open a portal and draw through a small (insect-sized) creature from some alien realm. These creatures cannot survive in our world, and will thus perish within a few hours at most, but may bite or be otherwise annoying and creepy before expiring.

Veins of Light - energy will appear to pulse and flow beneath a character's skin. The color is traditionally blue.

Gravity Glitches - periodically, gravity will stop working properly for a character, meaning that they are prone to unexplained falls and other small accidents

Firebug - small fires occasionally start for no reason in the character's presence. These are tiny fires, no larger than a dying ember, but will easily set fire to highly combustible materials, and pose a risk of damage to modestly flammable materials such as books, papers, or ancient mummies.

Misplaced Items - small items kept on the arcanist's person will occasionally vanish, sometimes to be replaced with other small items. Alien writing implements have been known to mysteriously appear in the pockets of arcanists with this side effect.

Keening - the character is accompanied by a faint but noticeable auditory manifestation - perhaps a hum, clicking, or whistling. This is annoying for most people, and will probably drive musicians into a bloodthirsty rage.

Altered Senses - one of the character's senses drifts away from human normal. Eyes may see slightly into the infrared, while losing the ability to detect colors. Hearing may shift out of the normal human range, and so forth. This effect may be mildly useful at times, but is just as apt to be a hindrance.



Fungi from Beyond Time and Space - odd alien mold begins to grow in areas where the character spends a great deal of time. This sickly yellow fungus does not thrive in our world, but neither does it immediately perish, and it will rapidly become a nuisance in any home owned by a character afflicted with this side effect.

Mental Malfunction - the character's brain is subtly re-wired by exposure to alien elements, and some aspect of a character's thinking becomes permanently distorted. This may manifest as the inability to understand certain

words, as an unshakable belief in a demonstrable falsehood, or some other small mental glitch.

Inappropriate Attraction - the character's limbic system is adversely affected by exposure to alchemical salts. The character may experience anhedonia -- the inability to feel pleasure. A character is more likely, however, to experience vastly inappropriate attractions. A character may feel powerful romantic urges when confronted with brass door hinges, or may have an almost irresistible desire to consume coal dust.

Sample Debilities

Debilities are obtained when the inoculation test is failed as described above. Remember that should a character ever obtain a third debility, it can be chosen for roleplaying purposes but they will very shortly meet a messy end. You encouraged to create more subject to GM approval. Debilities should never be easy to deal with or beneficial in other than the most unique circumstances. (Such as a fish-skinned arcanist meeting a randy paraphile with a fish fixation.) Note that many physical disadvantages can be used as debilities as well if modified to have a suitably bizarre twist. For example, perhaps the character now has a "limp" because their legs are now two or more sturdy tentacles.

Shrivelling - the character's body becomes sunken and wasted. This is typically not appealing, and imposes a 1 point penalty on all physical actions.

Scaly Patches - the character's skin comes to resemble that of a fish or lizard. We're not talking about minor eczema here, but real full-blown scaleage. Lizard scales are more noticeable, and will likely cause negative reactions. Fish scales tend to form first on the back and belly, and can be concealed, but must be kept moist for at least eight hours per day to avoid cracking, bleeding, and physical damage.

Corrupted Liver - the character's liver is invaded and damaged. The character risks very serious injury from alcohol consumption and takes an additional point of damage whenever arcane salts are consumed.

Corrupted Senses - the character's senses cease to function reliably. Eyes may only see the infrared when not augmented by arcane power, or the character's taste buds may perceive all food to be disgusting filth.

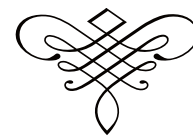
The Calling - the character is powerfully drawn to Loci of power. In these places, the character feels healthy and normal. Outside of these areas, the character feels weak and sickly, suffering a 1 point penalty on all rolls.

Radioactive - the character's body, in whole or part, has become modestly radioactive. Some prudent use of elixirs will be needed to keep him and his associates, pets, and

other frequent acquaintances from ultimately meeting an ugly, tumor-ridden end.

Oozing Sores - the character's hands and feet are permanently covered with messy, oozing sores. Some heal, leaving scars, but new sores are constantly opening up. The only effects are a one point penalty to the arcanist's **Focus** skill and any test requiring fine manipulation, but shoes and gloves, which will be quite uncomfortable, will need frequent changing if they are to remain clean, and only a hardened nurse will be able to avoid a degree of repulsion on seeing the character's hands or feet. Alternately, the sores could be on another part of the body, but it must be unpleasant and difficult to conceal.

Creeping Toxins - the character's body has become toxic. Their scent will cause mild nausea or other discomfort in people who spend time in close quarters with them. Living things frequently handled or touched by the character will become sick. Cannibals who consume the character are in for an extremely nasty surprise.





CHAPTER 7

DREAMING



- Introduction •
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- Travel To & From the Dream World •
- Actions in a Reverie •
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Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

- Alfred Lord Tennyson

Chapter 7

INTRODUCTION



In the world of Brass & Steel, dreams are interconnected. Millions of sleeping minds shape a shared world of beauty and imagination, madness and red screeching terror. Men and women retain a connection to the dream world even while they are awake through their subconscious minds, which spend all of their time, after all, in a slumber of sorts.

There are three levels to the dream world. The terms below are not universal, and in some circles other terms are used to describe the dream world. When referring to the whole of the sleeping realm, many refer to it simply as 'the dreaming.'

Reveries

The dreams and imaginations of individuals comprise the first and most basic level of the dream world. Most interaction with the waking world takes place in individual dream realms called Reveries.

These Reveries are given form and substance by the dreams of their owners. They reflect, but do not exactly mirror, the emotional and mental states of their creators. A dreamer who visits another person's Reverie will be able to share in the dreamer's experiences, spy on their dreams, or even make modifications to those dreams. A character with training and experience as a dreamer can exert some conscious control over the nature of their own Reverie, or over that of another individual with whom they have a close bond, especially if that other individual is a willing partner.

The Dreamscape

The next level of the dream world consists of the vast, shared dreaming "landscape," known as the Dreamscape. This Dreamscape is created collectively by sleeping and subconscious minds. All living things contribute collectively to the Dreamscape, both when awake and most especially when asleep. The Dreamscape connects individual Reveries to one another, and also offers access to the more distant Sovereign Dream Realms.

The Dreamscape tends to mirror the physical world, but the physical world not as it is, but rather as it is perceived and understood by the people living in it and dreaming about it. This means that a physical structure that is present in the waking world will typically also have a presence in the Dreamscape, but rather than exactly mirroring its reality, its dream version will reflect a weighted average of opinion and understanding about that structure. For example, a factory that is hated and dreaded by the workers who toil within it might take on the appearance of a terrible mechanical fiend; anchored to the earth, but still able to lash out with tentacles of metallic flesh to ensnare and devour workers unlucky enough to pass by. A local pub, on the other hand, might have a warm, comforting glow about it, a reflection of years of good times and happy memories, although probably slightly fuzzy and fizzy ones.

The Sovereign Dream Realms

The deepest and strangest level of the dream world consists of a wide array of Sovereign Dream Realms. These dream realms can only be accessed by travel through the Dreamscape. Sovereign Dream Realms vary widely, each from another. They are the least understood aspects of the dream world. Some of them seem to be the products of single events, moments or ideas. Others reflect a shared understanding so powerful and profound that it left a lasting imprint on the dreaming. Still others appear to contain remnants of men, women, or whole societies now dead and gone. Each Sovereign Dream Realm follows its



own set of rules, some glorious, some terrible. Each is unique with its own laws of physics, its own native entities, and so on. Some Sovereign Dream Realms closely mirror the Dreamscape and the physical world, and some decidedly do not.

Presences, Creatures and Constructs

The dream realms are inhabited by a diverse mixture of entities. The transient images of dreaming humans are quite common. The dream presences of ordinary people typically reflect some key truth or characteristic of a person. A woman consumed with sadness in her waning years may see the world in shades of grey, and may appear as a shapeless shadow of a woman, moving through the dream realms in grim silence. A six-year-old child might appear as a whirling, shifting little creature, all eyes and limbs akimbo, leaving a trail of color behind as she moves through the dreaming.

The dream world is home to creatures as well, entities that are not merely reflections of people in the waking world. These can take the form of anything that humans have imagined, and perhaps of things they have not. Any entity that features prominently in dreams will likely emerge as an independent creature. Most of these creatures reflect common aspects of the human subconscious. There are many succubi, as the images inspired by lustful dreams are commonly known. There is a vast array of oddly-shaped and foul-smelling monsters, spawned from the dreams of legions of frightened children. Stranger entities are also known to exist, beings that seem to have developed at a greater distance from the ordinary human subconscious. These entities may prey on dreams, infect dreams or attack other dream entities.

Chapter 7

THE SKILLS OF DREAMING



In the few decades since Lucidose has become more widely available, a number of schools of thought have grown up around the practice of lucid dreaming. One such group is led by Dr. Sigmund Freud in Vienna, while another centers around the noted dream sage Carl Jung in Zurich. Other lucid dreamers are self-taught, or derive their skills from ancient shamanic traditions that far predate the modern use of Lucidose (A visiting Tibetan monk was overheard complaining bitterly about untrained amateurs mucking about in realms that previously took half a lifetime of training and meditation to reach). For the purposes of Brass & Steel, all these disparate paths to the realms of dream can be described by the following set of skills

Dreamer's Eye - Used to see and understand the underlying nature of the dream realms - makes navigation through the dream world possible; also used to detect hidden entities or objects. Dreamer's Eye is used to determine initiative order for combat that takes place within the dreaming. This skill is also used to understand the structures and geography of the dream realms on their own terms, but is not used to interpret dream images in order to decipher their real-world meanings. That task is performed by the Languages of the Spirit skill.

Lucid Dreaming - Allows the dreamer to modify the dream realms - this serves both to shape the background imagery of the dream realms and as an attack skill, since an attack in the dreaming is basically an attempt to transform parts of another person's dream-self. This skill is also used to forge the bonds that bind an Ephemera to the character.

Clarity of the Self - A skill that allows a dreamer to preserve their own form while travelling through the dreaming. This skill provides for environmental resistance against the insubstantial but very real hazards of the dream realms, and also serves as a defensive statistic in the dream realms, by allowing the dreamer to defend his or her form against psychic assaults.

Languages of the Spirit - A skill for the analysis and understanding of parts of the dreaming that relate to the real world. If a dreamer is attempting to steal someone else's secrets, they need this skill to understand the images that they encounter in that person's Reverie. This skill allows dreamers to partially or wholly counteract the impact of cultural distance when working within the dream world, and aids in disguising oneself so as to pass undetected through the dreams of another. This skill also allows dreamers to modify aspects of a Reverie in such a way that they shape the emotions or thoughts of that person in the waking world.



Morphean Artifice - This skill allows a Dreamer to imbue dream creations with a portion of their will, enabling them to endure for a limited time on their own. Creating anything lasting within the dream realm requires the expenditure of a point of Stamina. Items persist for a number of evenings equal to twice the Degrees of Success on this test. A dreamer may

create permanent changes to their own Reverie using this skill. These changes require only periodic pruning and upkeep. As a rule of thumb, each point in this skill allows a character to add one point of defense or one useful or interesting feature to their Reverie. This skill is also used to employ Ephemera in the waking world.

Chapter 7

TRAVEL TO & THROUGH THE DREAM WORLD



To enter the dream world, a dreamer will typically take a dose of Lucidos and then either fall asleep naturally or take a sleep-inducing drug. Laudanum is a particular favorite, as it is felt to enhance the effects of Lucidos. This drug cocktail confers a 2 point bonus on all **Lucid Dreaming** tests, but renders a dreamer more vulnerable if attacked in the dream realms, as they may be unable to wake. A typical dreamer will be able to enter the dream world fifteen minutes after falling asleep. Dreamers emerge within their own Reveries. A **Willpower + Lucid Dreaming** test may reduce this time by two minutes per Degree of Success. A character may serve as a guide and focal point for others, in which case they may bring one other person per point of Lucid Dreaming with them into the dreaming. Details of this process are explained later in this section.

To travel deeper into the dream world, a dreamer must locate a passage into the Dreamscape. An experienced dreamer will typically know of at least one route from their own Reverie into the Dreamscape. Crossing through this passage requires a **Reason + Lucid Dreaming** test if the dreamer is in a great hurry, but may typically be accomplished automatically if time is not a factor. Failure on this roll does not preclude passage, it merely delays it temporarily. If in an unfamiliar dream realm, or even in their own Reverie if it has changed greatly, a dreamer rolls **Reason + Dreamer's Eye** to locate a passage. Again, a dreamer may bring others with them.

Once in the Dreamscape, several travel options become available to a dreamer. A dreamer may attempt to locate and then enter a different dream realm, either a Reverie or a Sovereign Dream Realm located deeper within the Dreamscape. Locating either requires a **Reason + Dreamer's Eye** test, modified as follows:

- Finding a familiar Reverie/Realm +1 to +5 at GM's discretion
- Either geographic proximity -5 to +5 -or- emotional proximity -5 to +5 (the better of these two ratings should be used). Closer Reveries are easier to find, more distant ones can prove a challenge, but travel in the Dreamscape is nearly instant, so this is not an impossible task. Physical distance plays a role in shaping the Dreamscape, but emotional distance matters just as much. A dreamer could quite easily find a path to the Reverie of their beloved child, for instance.
- Locating the Reverie of a human who is awake: -4 (while the subconscious still sustains a Reverie, it is more distant and fragile than that of someone who is asleep).
- Entrance defense: -1 to -5, depending on how much active work has been done to defend and conceal a given Reverie or Dream Realm.
- Sovereign Dream Realm obscurity: -1 for a typical Dream Realm, up to -8 or more for one truly legendary and bizarre.
- Cultural distance: -1 (or more) per degree of difference, mitigated by research

Dreamers may attempt to defend the entrances to their own Reveries. Each point of Morphean Artifice dedicated to protecting the entrance to a Reverie raises the difficulty of tests to locate it by 1, and also increases the difficulty of attempts to enter the Reverie, either discretely or overtly.



Cultural difference is far more of a hindrance than physical distance for a lucid dreamer. Locating a Reverie becomes more difficult for each cultural divergence between the dreamer and the owner or master of the realm. Religion, language, age, gender/orientation, class, and nationality each impose a -1 modifier on attempts to locate a particular person's Reverie. These factors can be mitigated by spending time familiarizing oneself with each aspect of a person's cultural background. Each day spent in such research allows an **Reason + Languages of the Spirit** test, which if successful negates one modifier. This research is only possible if appropriate materials for study are available. These materials might consist of careful anthropological fieldwork, a chat at a pub with a target's childhood friend, or anything in between.

Example: *Havelock the dreamer has no access to the materials needed to get a handle on the dreams of Yaro, a Polynesian islander from a society with no western contact. He would normally face three negative modifiers for cultural distance, one for language, one for religion, and one for nationality. However, if Yaro's cousin could be persuaded to assist Havelock, research would be feasible. Havelock could roll once per day, and each time he succeeded, he would be able to remove a modifier.*

Once a Dream Realm has been located, the dreamer must travel to it. This does not normally require a roll, but can take a while, especially if travelling to a Sovereign Dream Realm. A **Reason + Lucid Dreaming** test can reduce or eliminate this travel time. A **Reason + Dreamer's Eye** test should be made as needed during the journey, to detect and avoid any hostile dream entities en route.

As noted previously, a dreamer may serve as a guide to others. This is best accomplished by setting up a shared mental state before falling asleep. A dreamer may guide one person per point of Lucid Dreaming. (Sometimes larger groups can go together into the dreaming by sharing the expertise of numerous guides, but this is usually possible only among people with very similar beliefs, such as followers of mystics and visionaries.) The dreamer leading the group makes a single **Wits + Morphean Artifice** test to establish a connection between the dreamers. This requires the active and willing participation of the other subjects.

A dreamer who is guiding others makes most tests for the group, although they may be helped on these rolls by other members of the group who have the appropriate skills or knowledge. One common dreamer trick is to locate a willing accomplice who shares many of the same cultural traits as one's target, and who can, despite not being a dreamer themselves, offset culture penalties.

There are two key situations in which dreamers do not make tests for those they are guiding. First, any attempts at stealth or concealment must be made individually. More importantly, dreamers do not make combat tests on behalf of those they are guiding, although they can certainly step in to protect them from the hazards of the dreaming.

Chapter 7

ACTIONS WITHIN A REVERIE



Much of the most useful and intriguing adventuring done by dreamers takes place within the Reveries of other men and women. Before a character can enter another person's Reverie, they must locate and travel to it, as detailed earlier.

Once they have arrived at the entrance to a Reverie, they must make a choice. They may opt to enter the Reverie stealthily, and thus slip by their target's defenses, or they may, instead, rely on brute force, and hammer through those defenses. Each is described below.

The Sneaky Approach

A character attempting to subtly enter another's Reverie must peek into that realm with a **Reason + Dreamer's Eye** test. This gives them a sense of the "lay of the land" within that Reverie. They must then attempt a **Reason + Languages of the Spirit** test, this time modified by cultural difference, in order to conform to the dominant imagery within the Reverie. If



this test, which should be modified based on the cleverness of the character's attempted disguise, succeeds, then they have entered the Reverie undetected. If they fail, then the character's Reverie resists their efforts to enter, and they must either try again, at a cumulative 3 point penalty for each failed attempt on a given night, or give up on subtle methods and adopt the direct approach described below.

If a stealthy dreamer has entered a Reverie undetected they may either explore in search of images and information or modify the contents of the Reverie in order to subtly influence the character's thoughts and emotions.

A **Wits + Languages of the Spirit** test is required to make sense of the structure of the Reverie, and to locate any particular piece of information. Two factors influence the ease of locating specific information in a character's Reverie. Information that is fresh and interesting in the character's mind is much easier to locate than information that is either old or boring. The face of an attractive young woman from dinner the night before will be much easier to track down than information from an uninspired anthropology lecture months or years ago. In addition, information that a character feels to be intensely private is more difficult to locate. This sort of information is harder to locate not because it is not on the subject's mind, but instead because the mind naturally hoards and protects its greatest treasures and darkest secrets. An old shameful secret is very hard to locate, whereas a recent bit of juicy gossip may be trivially easy to locate.

***Example** – Grigorii has made his way into Anna's dreams. Grigorii is interested in obtaining information about a man who has purchased stolen goods from Anna in the past. She deals with her fence on a regular basis, and pays a decent amount of attention to him. However, she is very concerned that knowledge of her secret life as a cat burglar might slip out. As a result, Grigorii faces a -7 penalty because this information is part of a very important secret, and will be well-hidden and guarded. Grigorii's Wits (7) + Languages of the Spirit (6) test produces a 14, which fails to locate the desired information.*

Once a piece of information has been located in a Reverie, a further **Reason + Languages of the Spirit** test is required to make some sense of the images gleaned, and to derive images or information that can be used in the real world. Images can be captured as ephemera using a **Willpower + Lucid Dreaming** test. These images can be useful, and may contain some important information, but they are much less meaningful when taken from their natural context within a particular Reverie.

A failure on a test to locate information will typically require a dreamer to make another test to maintain their concealment within another character's Reverie. Failure on this test leads to the character's detection, and any additional activity must attempt to overcome the target's resistance using un-subtle methods.

In a Reverie, a dreamer may also attempt to communicate with another. Direct communication is only possible with another lucid dreamer. Attempts to communicate specific information to anyone who is not such an individual will rarely be able to convey more than a mood or a vague impression. Two lucid dreamers, however, are perfectly capable of meeting and having a conversation in the dream realms. Several recent pieces of spy fiction, and perhaps incidents of "spy fact" have hinged on exactly this sort of scenario.

Dreamers may attempt to influence the thoughts and emotions of an individual by re-shaping parts of their Reverie. A **Reason + Languages of the Spirit** test, modified by cultural distance, allows a character to determine what changes might be needed to nudge a character in a particular direction. A **Willpower + Morphean Artifice** test is then made for each change that a character wishes to make. Simple changes, such as making the memory of one young man at a ball stand out from the rest, require only modest effort. Lasting changes require major efforts, and a dreamer must constantly strengthen all of those changes. Some dark contemporary fiction is filled with tales of men and women who build nightmares in the minds of the unsuspecting, turning their sleep to shuddering terror. This is possible, but requires skill, time, and a great deal of effort.

A lucid dreamer may use **Reason + Dreamer's Eye** to note any changes that have been made to a Reverie. This is an opposed test against the **Willpower + Morphean Artifice** test used to make the changes.

The Un-Subtle Way

Although the subtle approach is elegant, and leaves no traces behind, it can be time-consuming, and is not always able to locate the most sensitive information. A less gentle, subtle or scrupulous dreamer can simply attempt to overwhelm a victim's Reverie through sheer force of will.



When a character directly assaults a Reverie, the mind of their victim attempts to defend itself. The attacking character will be confronted by Figments, or manifestations of their target's unconscious mind. A single Figment will appear immediately when a dreamer forces their way into another person's Reverie. Each additional dreamer will cause an additional Figment to appear. These Figments must be defeated in dream combat.

Figments will take a form appropriate to the nature of the Reverie and their capabilities are based on the mental attributes of the Reverie's owner. Each Figment has an attack score of (**Wits + Reason**) and a defense score of (**Reason + Willpower**). Figments can sustain (**Willpower + Wits + Reason**) points of damage before being destroyed. A Figment has a morphean weapon with a damage rating of (Wits) and morphean armor with a protection rating of (Willpower). A Figment uses its attack score to calculate initiative order. Figments are relatively stronger when protecting a dreamer's secrets; add the secrecy penalty normally assigned to the invading dreamer as a bonus to the Figments' Attack and Defense scores.

Figments will continue to manifest periodically whenever a character takes any action in another's Reverie that requires a test. A Figment produced when a character is attempting to steal secrets that are of great personal importance has its attack and defense scores increased. Each point of penalty that would be imposed on a dreamer who was subtly stealing secrets confers a one point bonus to both offense and defense. An invading dreamer does not face this penalty on rolls to steal secrets by force, only indirectly as a bonus for the Figment defending those secrets.

***Example** - Grigorii, frustrated by his failure to unearth Anna's secrets, abandons subtlety. He assails her subconscious directly. This may prove to be a mistake for Grigorii, however, as Anna is clever and strong-willed. A Figment immediately manifests and attempts to expel Grigorii from Anna's Reverie. The figment has an attack score of (Wits (7) + Reason (6) + 7 (from the -7 penalty to steal a profoundly important secret)) or 20. The figment's defense score is (Reason (6) + Willpower (9) + bonus (7)) or 22. It has a morphean weapon of rating 7 and morphean armor of rating 9. Its initiative score is a 13. Grigorii has his work cut out for him.*

When a Figment is destroyed, the character whose dreams are being invaded suffers five points of Stamina damage. If this damage causes them to fall unconscious, they suffer five further points of physical damage, and fall into a state of unconsciousness so deep that their Reverie collapses and temporarily vanishes. A dreamer in a Reverie when it collapses suffers 10 points of Stamina damage, and is thrown back into the Dreamscape.

Dream Combat

Combat in the dreaming is resolved using **Willpower + Lucid Dreaming** for offense and **Willpower + Clarity of the Self** for defense, usually modified by weapons and armor created using Morphean Artifice.

A dreamer may spend a point of Stamina and make a **Reason + Morphean Artifice** test to create objects that are useful in combat. A dreamer may create one weapon and one piece of armor, if they wish. Degrees of Success on these artifice rolls serve as bonuses on attack and defense rolls in dream combat.

Combat in the dream realm inflicts Stamina damage. Any damage that exceeds the dreamer's total Stamina will manifest as physical wounds, but the dreamer will then be forced awake. Dreamers forcibly awakened in such a fashion suffer three points of physical damage for each degree of immersion (three if they were in their own Reverie, six for the Dreamscape, and nine for another Dream Realm or Reverie). These wound penalties are doubled for dreamers using a drug cocktail.

A dream entity uses the same skills for combat, but will generally have permanent weapon and armor ratings. Defeated independent dream entities lose one point of power permanently, and require at least one night to re-establish themselves. Those from Sovereign Dream Realms will re-form within them. Those from the Dreamscape will re-form at a point that is idiomatically appropriate.



EPHEMERA



A dreamer may use their skills to capture some portion of the Dreaming. These Ephemera may be used to create illusions of a sort in the real world. A dreamer rolls **Willpower + Lucid Dreaming** to capture an Ephemera from the Dreaming. More exotic Ephemera are more difficult to capture - apply cultural distance modifiers. A dreamer may recall a number of Ephemera equal to their rating in Morphean Artifice.

Once an Ephemera has been captured, a dreamer may evoke it with an opposed test between the evoker's **Willpower + Morphean Artifice** and all observers' **Willpower + Dreamer's Eye**. A dreamer may choose to manifest either the exact image obtained from the Dreaming, or an image of an appropriately similar type. A beautiful silver flame shaped like a castle could be called forth as an object of art, or used to manifest the image of a roaring fire.

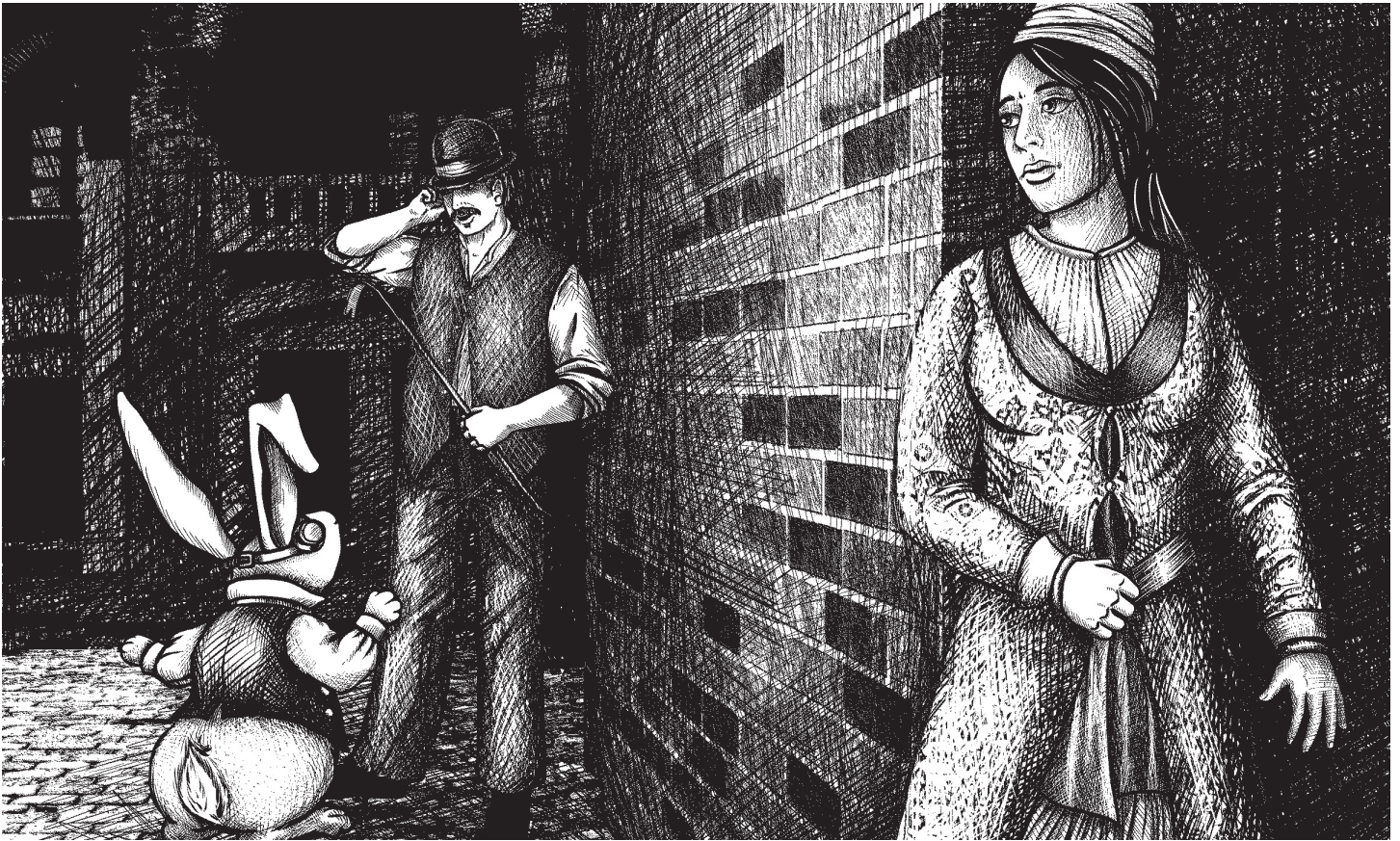
Images evoked with Ephemera appear real to all the senses of those who perceive them, so long as those observers are able to dream. All observers may make a **Willpower + Dreamer's Eye** test and compare their Degrees of Success to those of the evoking dreamer; characters with no skill in Dreamer's Eye test against Willpower alone. If the observer fails their test or fails to garner more degrees of success than the evoking dreamer, they are unable to resist the dream logic of the Ephemera and fail to see through the illusion. Observers who are willing participants are not required to resist the Ephemera. Bonuses or penalties may be added to this roll for Ephemera that are particularly outlandish and unbelievable or those that are especially reasonable. Ephemera that have been seen through may still cause some distraction, and do not simply disappear. An Ephemera may be evoked only once until the dreamer has had a chance to sleep for at least four hours. Once evoked, it will remain so long as someone is paying attention to it. Once all attention, including both observation and thought, ceases, the Ephemera will disappear in less than one minute, gradually fading from view.

However real they may appear and even feel to those affected by them, Ephemera have no physical effect on observers or the physical environment. Ephemeral fire causes the observer to feel heat and even pain but the dream flame causes no actual damage. Note that Ephemera may well cause a character to take actions that will result in bodily harm but it will be their actual environment, or other persons' reactions, that do them harm and not the Ephemera. Also, Ephemera cannot reveal information about the real physical environment that the observing character does not already know. Ephemeral fire may seem to bring light to a dim room but what is actually happening is that the observing character's subconscious is filling in the details of what they expect the dim room would look like if it were lit. The fire would not enable a character to read writing that they would otherwise not be able to make out because of darkness, nor to cook a meal. An ephemeral floor over a very real pit filled with jagged spikes, however, can cause great harm.

Example: *Xavier is following a target down the streets of Paris at night. Turning into a dark alley, Xavier finds himself facing a raging bonfire blocking his path. Xavier's player tests Willpower + Dreamer's Eye. Lacking skill in Dreamer's Eye, Xavier's player tests against Willpower alone and fails. Xavier believes the fire is real, any hesitation caused by the fact that it wasn't there a second ago swept away by the fickle logic of dreams. To Xavier's eyes, the alley is now lit by the flickering flames of the bonfire and he feels the fierce heat of it on his face. Because Xavier is extremely familiar with the back alleys of Paris, he knows that there is a painted advertisement for a gout elixir on the brick wall above where the bonfire appears to be. Because Xavier knows about the advertisement, his mind fills in that detail as the Ephemeral bonfire seems to light the wall of the building. Had he not been familiar with this particular alley, Xavier's mind would have filled in the details based on his expectations of what the wall of the alley would look like and he would not see the painted advertisement. Further, had a graffiti artist defaced the advertisement since the last time Xavier was in this alley, he would see the advertisement as it was in his memory and not the real and current defaced version. Similarly, since Xavier does not know that his target is crouching in a pitch-dark alcove a little further along the alley, the ephemeral bonfire does not reveal his antagonist's position. Once again Xavier's subconscious mind fills in the details, which would be an empty alcove if Xavier is familiar with the alley or even a blank wall if Xavier does not know the alcove is there.*

Some dreamers make a living doing nothing more than hunting for exotic Ephemera, which they then display in dream galleries, for the edification, titillation or procurement of their audience.





Types of Ephemera

Ephemera are limited only by the scope of human imagination, but some varieties and categories are common to most cultures, and appear frequently.

Fire - images of flame and burning, both beautiful and terrible

Water - peaceful, comforting, but also able to evoke fear of loss and drowning

Monsters - every type of hobgoblin, troll, and sewer alligator

Lust - images with a sexual charge, often called succubae/incubi (if male), are among the most common images in dreams, and come in every variety imaginable

Fog - wispy, calming, but concealing

Structures - buildings, fortresses, doors and walls

Machines - sometimes beautiful and elegant, sometimes terrible raging beasts with sharp teeth

Animals - all manner of critters, real and mythical; again with the sharp teeth

Plants - trees, shrubberies, cacti, and so forth

Smoke - pleasant and scented, or reeking of diesel and burning buildings

Doors - locked, open, barred

Vehicles - from grungy steam tugs to swift, sleek airships

Chapter 7

SOVEREIGN DREAM REALMS



The dream realms are as infinite and varied as all of human imagination. The following is not by any means an exhaustive list of the types of dream realms that players may encounter, but should provide useful material for Game Masters, including information on many of the more common realms.



Echoes: These are dream realms created when a single person undergoes an especially traumatic event. These experiences then create a dream realm that leeches out of the dreamer's Reverie and forms its own realm in the Dreamscape. Echoes reflect the nature of the events that formed them, but filtered through the particular consciousness of the original dreamer. A zeppelin pilot's dream of a fiery crash might be a scene in which he struggles helplessly with the controls, only to perish over and over again, whereas a three-year-old might produce an echo of the same event in which they were being chased through a collapsing world by metal monsters with claws of fire. Echoes are dangerous realms to visit - their logic is strong as iron, and their substance very difficult to shape. They are useful primarily as sources of information, although certain dreamers make a living by taking wealthy clients to relive other people's dreams of great pain or pleasure.

Prodigies: These small realms are also the legacy of a single dreamer, but they are produced by moments of great insight. The imagery will, again, depend on the idea and the dreamer. Each of these realms is formed by a single great idea - a visitor will actually have difficulty not coming to understand the nature of the insight that formed the realm. This a dangerous state of affairs when the prodigy in question is the result of a terribly flawed insight - a careless dreamer can return to the waking world convinced that they are a great prophet, or that the king is actually a foreign agent. Prodigies are best employed as tools to aid in learning, study, and understanding.

Solipsisms: These dream realms are akin to prisons. Each contains a lost dreamer or group of dreamers. These tiny dream realms are shaped by the minds of their inhabitants, who have become hopelessly deluded and lost, and generally believe themselves to be back in the waking world, and are, of course, resistant to any attempt to convince them otherwise. Some believe that the minds of those suffering from certain types of insanity are trapped in Solipsisms even when awake.

Heavens: These dream realms are shaped by the collective faith of members of a particular religious sect. Some reflect ideas of heavens and hells, some reflect the imagined homes of the gods or other powers. The greatest of these realms contain impressions of worshippers, who place a part of themselves into the realm by virtue of the strength of their belief that they will arrive at that afterlife, and many also contain powerful dream entities, shadow deities shaped by the hopes, dreams, and fears of a legion of worshippers. Some secular events and belief structures are powerful enough to create dream realms - the dream version of the French Revolution is one particularly powerful and famous example.

Remembrances: These vast dream realms, among the largest known, are left behind when climactic events rapidly and fundamentally alter the shape of the Dreamscape. When the Dreamscape shifts, the old Dreamscape may survive isolated as it's own Remembrance realm. These realms shift and change shape over time. As living dreamers remember and tell tales about past ages, they re-create the Remembrances of those past ages. Elements of the original dream-state generally linger, but are partially overtaken by new images so that eventually, the Remembrance accurately reflects only the nature of the stories told about the time represented.

The Invisible Empire: Among dreamers, there is a persistent legend that the ancient and legendary kingdom of the dreamers never fell, but was, instead, severed from the earth by the will of its visionary-kings. If it existed, this realm would be one of the largest and strangest in the dream world. One can only speculate as to what strange things have transpired there in the millennia since its inception.

Nests: Nests are among the strangest formations in the Dreamscape. They have almost nothing to do with the waking world and are the dens and habitats of dream entities. Entities are spawned by the dreams of mortals, but take on a life of their own after a time. The most powerful are actually able to carve out Nests for themselves. The variety of Nests is dizzying, and reflects the nature of the entities that have formed them. The beloved children's hero Theodore the Hare has a dream realm that consists of meadows, carrot patches, and miniature tea services. Black Water, a dream entity that personifies the fear of drowning, has a realm of perilous damp ledges and dark, cold, kelp-clogged ponds, with bottoms of sucking mud, with only flickering marshlight to illuminate the landscape. Theodore the Hare's Nest is a wonderful destination for dreamers that are young and young at heart; Black Water gets few visitors.



Things to Do When You're Asleep


The powers of dreamers have many different potential uses in game play. Dreamers are unparalleled in their ability to gather information. Arcane power and technology both tend to produce brute force solutions to problems. As such, they are unable to discern human thoughts or emotions, and are of limited use in spying or information gathering. Dreamers excel in both of these areas.



Dreamers have other powers and abilities, however. Dreamers may slowly mold the thoughts of others, through the patient modification of their dreams. Some dreamers are paid to treat mental problems and disorders through a careful pruning of the psyches of their clients. Other, less scrupulous dreamers, delight in tormenting the sleeping. The skills needed to plant the seeds of nightmares are difficult to develop, and communities of dreamers tend to police themselves and turn in known nightmare architects, in order to limit official persecution. Some few rogue dreamers pursue this twisted path in private, however, and may pose unusual challenges for Player Character dreamers.

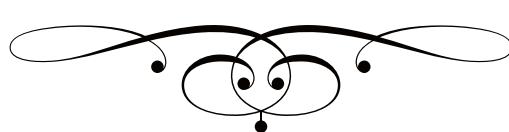
The ability of dreamers to manipulate the minds of the waking through the use of Ephemera means that they have a limited but very flexible ability to create illusions and confusion. These relatively subtle abilities make dreamers excellent spies, thieves, and secret agents.





CHAPTER 8

COMBAT



- *Initiative & Surprise* •
- *Resolving Actions* •
- *Resolving Combat* •
- *Complications* •
- *Damage, Injuries and Healing* •



Combat in Brass & Steel takes place in a series of rounds. Each round represents about five seconds of time. Because combat rounds fly by so rapidly, a character may generally do only one thing per round. Characters declare their actions in turn according to an initiative order, but all combat actions take effect simultaneously.

Chapter 8

INITIATIVE & SURPRISE

At the beginning of each combat, not combat round, each character makes a **Wit + Sergeant's Eye** test. A success of any magnitude on this roll (after any ambushing modifiers have been applied) allows a character to act during the very first round. Those that fail are unable to act in the first round but will be able to act in the second round and all subsequent rounds until combat is resolved. Combatants declare their actions in the initiative order as determined by their Degree of Failure. The initiative test is subject to the following rules and clarifications:

- Characters with a higher Degree of Success declare their actions later in a turn. Since all actions in a round are resolved simultaneously, declaring later is advantageous.
- There is no effect for extreme success or failure on an initiative roll.
- The initiative order begins with characters who failed their initiative roll with the greatest Degree of Failure. Initiative then proceeds through lesser Degrees of Failure, and then up through Degrees of Success, with the character who achieved the greatest Degree of Success declaring their action last in a round.
- If the precise order is important, characters who achieve the same Degree of Success should make a second initiative test with the winner declaring her action after the loser. Actions still take effect simultaneously.
- Once all characters have declared their actions, actions are resolved for the round. Resolution takes place simultaneously, so characters with a better initiative cannot simply duck behind doors and be immune to attacks.
- Initiative is rolled only once per combat. Any new additions to a combat roll initiative and join in the existing order, rolling off against other combatants as needed to resolve ties.
- In clear-cut, unambiguous ambush situations where the victims of the ambush have failed to perceive the trap (usually with a separate Wit + Sergeant's Eye test), the ambushers receive a single unopposed round of action. The normal Wit + Sergeant's Eye test is made following the ambush turn. Ambushed characters could conceivably not act in two consecutive turns if they fail the Wit + Sergeant's Eye test following the ambush turn. It sucks to get ambushed.

Optional Rule: *A character whose declared action would be invalidated by the success of another character's action may switch the target of their action, but not the type of action. For example, if a character was planning to shoot their pistol at one enemy, but that enemy was already killed, the character may shoot at a different target at a -2 penalty.*

Chapter 8

RESOLVING ACTIONS

A Character may do ONE THING from the following list in each combat round:

- A character may make one attack, invoke one Pattern or Ephemera, etc.
- A character may walk briskly (**Agility**) yards or run (**Agility x3**) yards. A running character may not use an active defense.

- A character may ready a single piece of gear. (Dropping a currently-held item is a free action; holstering or stowing an item costs an action).
- A character may operate some feature of the world. (Close a door, throw an adding machine out of a window, and so forth.)
- A character may aim a firearm to receive a bonus to a **Barking Irons** test made the following turn.
- A character may observe their surroundings in detail. A **Wit + Sergeant's Eye** or **Investigator's Eye** is made to determine how successful the character perceives their surroundings.
- A character may attempt to withdraw from melee combat. That character must succeed in an opposed **Agility + Athletics** test against anyone who wishes to keep them in combat. A failure here provokes a free attack from any antagonists in melee range.
- A character who wishes to both attack and defend in the same round suffers 2 point penalty to both of these actions.



"Free" Actions

In addition to performing one of the above actions, a character, in the same round, may also:

- Drop something to the ground.
- Make one short statement.
- Shift a handful of steps at most.
- Defend against either one melee attack (two if the character opts to do nothing but defend) or any number of ranged attacks.

Chapter 8

RESOLVING COMBAT



Most combat actions are resolved using simple opposed tests. Note that combat follows the standard rule in *Brass & Steel*, that no more than the three most relevant modifiers affect any test.

AN ATTACKER ROLLS:

- **Agility + Appropriate Skill** (+2 for Familiarity if appropriate)

A DEFENDER ROLLS:

- **Agility + Duck and Cover** if taking cover against ranged attacks, roll once per attacker, add bonus equal to position's cover rating if applicable.
- **Agility + Duck and Cover** if dodging a melee attack. A character may make only one melee defense per round, unless they opt not to attack, in which case they may make two.
- **Agility + (Close Combat Skill)** if parrying an attack in melee. A defender may parry a firearm if the shooter is in melee range, or even a Pattern if the invoker is. Parries, like dodging, are limited to one close combat defense, two if the defender does not attack that round.

RESULTS:

All rolls are adjusted as needed by modifiers, and the results of the attack are determined in this fashion:



- If the attacker fails, then the attack misses.
- If defender's Degree of Success is greater than or equal to the attackers, the attack misses.
- If attacker's Degree of Success is greater, then calculate damage:
 - Base weapon damage + net degrees of success (that is, attacker's - defender's) - defender's armor rating
 - unarmed damage is Stamina damage, as is damage from some blunt weapons
 - other damage is physical damage
- Attacks that are completely absorbed by armor do no damage.
- Stamina damage that exceeds the number of boxes on a character's damage track becomes physical damage. (That is, the Stamina damage track rolls over to the physical damage track if filled.)

Chapter 8

COMPLICATIONS

AUTOMATIC WEAPONS

Some weapons are capable of firing multiple rounds with a single squeeze of the trigger or turn of the crank. All of these weapons are listed together in the equipment section. As noted there, such weapons may either target an area, in which case the user makes attacks against a number of targets equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ the number of bullets fired, all of whom must be close proximity, or they may target a single individual or target, in which case the gunner receives a damage bonus equal to the number of bullets fired x 2.

ARCANISM IN COMBAT

Arcane effects are invoked using the formulae below.

Patterns and Charms:

- **Willpower** + (lowest applicable of: **Channeling/Precision/Arcanist's Eye/(necessary mundane skill)**) + (5, if the spell is a Pattern or +2 for a Charm)

Free-form Effects:

- **Reason** + (lowest applicable of: **Channeling/Precision/Arcanist's Eye/(necessary mundane skill)**)

Effects that directly affect another person are resisted by (**Willpower + Heroic Vigor + 5**). Effects that modify the environment around a character are not directly resisted; instead their effects are resisted as normal sources of physical damage.

Effects that could be dodged are treated as if they were either ranged or melee attacks, depending on the distance between the arcanist and their target. You can essentially parry a fireball by smacking the arcanist's arm away or otherwise distracting a hostile arcanist while in close combat. Successes dodging or parrying an arcane effect reduce the Degrees of Success obtained by the arcanist. If a defender scores more successes, then the effect fails to do damage, but will still take place if the arcanist was successful on their invocation test.

Example: *Hami is a powerful arcanist, and is engaged in a combat with an Austrian soldier. He attempts to slay the Austrian by invoking his Incinerate pattern. His Willpower is 8, his Channeling is 7 and his Precision is 6. Incinerate uses both Channeling (to summon raw power) and Precision (to hit something or someone with that power), so Hami's invocation total is Willpower (8) + Precision (6) + 5 for a known pattern, total of 19. He rolls an 16, which is three less than he needed. Roaring flame comes into being! The Austrian is no fool, however, and rolls his Agility (7) + Duck and Cover (6) to avoid being incinerated. He rolls a 7, which gives him six degrees of success, more than Hami had. Hami's incinerate pattern is invoked successfully, but blasts an innocent piece of furniture rather than the dastardly Austrian.*



DAMAGE, INJURIES AND HEALING



Each player has two condition tracks, each with four rows of boxes. Each box represents a point of damage that character is capable of sustaining. The number of boxes in each row of the physical damage track equals **Might + Willpower**. The number of boxes in each row of the Stamina damage track equals **Vitality + Willpower**.

If a box is checked in the second row of either track, it confers a 1 point penalty to all tests. If a box is checked in the third row, it confers a 2 point penalty. In addition, when physical damage enters the third row of boxes the character will lose an additional box every round from blood loss until their wounds are tended. If any boxes are checked in the fourth row, it incurs a 3 point penalty to all tests and for physical damage, the character will continue to lose an additional point per round. In addition, every time a character suffers new damage in the fourth row, he or she must make a **Willpower + Heroic Vigor** test. Bleeding damage does not cause such a test. Failure on this roll will result in death for physical damage or unconsciousness for Stamina damage. The effects are summarized on the combat cheat sheet found at the end of this book.

Any character who loses all of their physical damage boxes automatically perishes at the end of the turn when that damage was inflicted. A character who loses all of their boxes of Stamina has any remaining damage roll over to the physical damage track.

INJURIES AND HEALING

If a character survives a combat they will need to recover from their wounds. Stamina damage can be healed rapidly - a few hours of rest will typically allow a character to regain their strength, as they may make a test using **Vitality + Heroic Vigor** every ten minutes, and recover a number of boxes equal to their Degree of Success. This roll may be made even if unconscious.

Physical damage is more difficult to heal. A character attempting to heal naturally may make one **Vitality + Heroic Vigor** roll per day, and will heal one box for each three Degrees of Success they achieve. They may be aided in their recovery by a skilled physician, who can roll **Reason + Medicine** once per day, and allow an additional one box per Degrees of Success rolled, if proper medical facilities and supplies are available. Note that the Wound Discipline Pattern serves as medical attention, and allows the arcanist to roll an invocation test each day to aid in healing. A doctor cannot further assist this process.

Certain arcane effects offer either instant or near-instant healing. These effects are addressed individually. Arcane healing is a dangerous business, however, as an extreme failure (rolling a 20) on a healing roll can cause serious additional damage to a patient.

PHYSICANE

Healing elixirs, generally Physicane or variants thereof, aid healing greatly. When a patient takes a dose of a healing elixir, they make a healing roll (**Vitality + Heroic Vigor**) with a 10 point bonus and immediately heal one box for every three Degrees of Success. Over the following twenty-four hours, the character will recover additional health boxes equal to their Degree of Success on the healing roll. Additional doses of healing elixir taken within the same twenty-four hour period confer no additional benefit, but doses taken each day will continue this accelerated healing.



Other Healing Elixirs

Life for those that can afford the most modern treatments is quite pleasant, as all manner of diseases, infections, and parasites may be alleviated by the judicious application of one of hundreds of specialized elixirs being produced by entrepreneurial chemists. The character must have an accurate diagnosis to be given the proper curative elixir. Taking a single dose of the proper elixir allows the character to make a Vitality + Heroic Vigor test. Success on this test cures the malady and inflicts three boxes of physical wounds. Failure on this test does not cure the malady and inflicts three boxes of wounds. A critical failure does not cure the malady and inflicts twelve boxes of wounds. One dose may be taken every



twenty-four hours and it is fairly common that a cure will require more than one dose of elixir. Taking a dose of an incorrect elixir does nothing except inflict three boxes of physical wounds.

HORRIBLE THINGS THAT CAN HAPPEN DURING AN ADVENTURE

-or- Fire, Poison, Falling, Disease, Drowning, Asphyxiation and Other Nastiness

Fire

Fire causes damage to a character until it is extinguished. A character who is in a fire or is on fire suffers damage based on the heat of the fire every round. Armor does protect against this damage, so a character in heavy armor will not immediately suffer any fire damage.

Characters who are on fire should put themselves out, or have someone else do so for them. A character who is on fire may be extinguished by any character who has a heavy cloth or some other implement that could smother a fire. Alternatively, they can roll on a flat surface to extinguish themselves. In either case, a **Willpower + Heroic Vigor** test is required from the person attempting to extinguish the flame, and success on this roll removes points of damage from the heat of a fire, until it is extinguished.

Fire Damage

- **Small fire** - campfire, torch, stove: 4 points per round
- **Average fire** - burning clothing, large fire, covered in gasoline, victim of incinerate spell: 8 points per round
- **Hot fire** - coal-fired boiler, huge roaring bonfire: 12 points per round
- **Extraordinarily hot fire** - blast furnace, Hotaether boiler: 20 points per round

Electrocution

Electrocution causes surface burns and can render an individual insensate for a short time. If a character is exposed to a significant voltage they must, in addition to taking damage as noted in a weapon description, make a **Vitality + Heroic Vigour** test. A successful test results in frizzy hair and a persistent tingling sensation. Failure means the character falls prone and is unable to act until they succeed in a subsequent **Vitality + Heroic Vigour** test, made once per turn until the player succeeds.

Poison

Poisons cause either physical or Stamina damage to a character. Each poison has an onset time and a damage value. The onset time determines how quickly the poison begins to cause harm to a character, and the damage value determines how dangerous that poison is. A poison inflicts its damage value after the onset time has passed. Characters can attempt to resist the effects of poisons by rolling **Vitality + Heroic Vigor**. Their Degree of Success on this roll subtracts from the damage value of the poison. One resistance test is made each onset period. The modified damage value is used for subsequent tests, so successes will gradually weaken the poison in a character's body. A character who is constantly exposed to a poison will face its full damage value each time a test is called for until they can escape. For example, a character who is the victim of a gas attack will need to resist the full power of chlorine gas each time it's onset time passes until they can escape the toxic cloud, at which point the toxins effects will weaken.

Disease

Specific infections have unique effects on a character. The precise simulation of the effects of cholera is not generally helpful in maximizing the amount of fun had while playing Brass & Steel, however, so these effects are typically abstracted. Diseases, like poisons, have an onset time and a damage value. As with poisons, characters resist diseases by rolling **Vitality + Heroic Vigor**. Degrees of Success on these tests gradually decrease the damage value of an infection. A character who succeeds in completely eliminating a disease on the very first test never even shows symptoms, and has entirely fought off the infection.



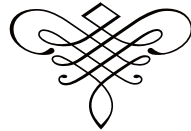
Falling

All characters in Brass & Steel are assumed to be moderately capable adventurers, and can fall 5 feet without taking any damage at all. Each foot fallen after this inflicts one point of damage to a character. Falling characters may roll **Agility + Olympian Spirit** to slow their fall and land gently. Each degree of success on this roll prevents one point of falling damage. Falls over 100 feet require a character to roll **Fate + Heroic Vigor**. A character who succeeds on this roll survives their fall with a number of boxes left in their physical damage track equal to their Degree of Success with a 3 point bonus.

Asphyxiation

Characters denied access to blessed, life-granting oxygen will gradually begin to die. A character can hold their breath for **Vitality + Heroic Vigor** rounds with no penalty. After that, a character suffers one point of Stamina damage every other round. Once a character passes out from lack of air, they will die in three minutes if they are still not able to breathe. Characters who manage to gain access to oxygen again will recover their Stamina normally.

Drowning characters use the same system as characters who are asphyxiating until they lose consciousness. At that point, they take water into their lungs. A character who has done this will die in three minutes unless another character succeeds in a **Reason + Medicine** test to expel the water from their lungs.





SECTION 3
THE WORLD OF BRASS & STEEL





CHAPTER 9
GAMING

• *Theme & Setting* •

• *Our Game Mastering Philosophy* •



As the HMS Ginger raced off toward the clouds, Mr. Cavendish the tortoise looked over at Priscilla the Porcupine and Donald the Otter and said

“Well, dear friends, this surely has been a marvelous adventure!”

“Yes, agreed Priscilla, but I shall miss Theodore terribly.”

“As shall we all, dear Priscilla, as shall we all, but Theo is a quiet sort, and not one for racing through the clouds. He’ll be happier at home in Greenburrow, and we’ll always be able to stop back for a fine cup of Bunnybest Breakfast tea.”

—Erma Pridewell, Theodore the Hare’s Great Airship Adventure, 1903

Chapter 9

THEME & SETTING



Why Steampunk? Why Not-Quite-Earth? Some Thoughts on Theme and Setting

People play games for a variety of different reasons. Some people play to escape from a humdrum real world, and have adventures that would probably get them fired from their day jobs. (If your day job involves having adventures, then we at Pamean Games officially envy you a bit). Some play for the joy of interaction and socialization. Some people play for the style and aesthetic of a game. Some people are drawn to the historical and fantasy themes, costumes, and settings. Our belief is that Brass & Steel and its world have something to offer to all of these types of gamers.

Historically, there was a great deal going on in the final decades of what historians often call the “long 19th Century”. The great European empires were jockeying for position and in the process edging closer and closer to the bloody First World War. Europeans were mixing, mingling, and fighting with people from all over the world.

This was a time of tremendous wealth and elegance for some – think of England’s stately homes and elegant weekend shooting parties. It was also a time of desperate poverty and struggle for others – picture the crowded slums of any inner city, or imagine workers crammed into the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. You’re free to play in either social world, or both, or to do something completely different.

Europe and the world were mostly dominated by old political institutions – empires and kingdoms abounded, and the democracies of France, Britain, and the United States were generally quite stable. At the same time, the fires of revolution were burning throughout the world. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were planning the revolution that would ultimately gain control of Russia, and similar bands of revolutionaries could be found in every country, from conservative Austria-Hungary to relatively progressive democracies such as France and the United States.

Take steampunk in its broadest definition and it amounts to Victorian science fiction. Science fiction has, from the days of Verne and Wells, been a “literature of ideas,” seeking to explore the consequences of scientific progress. Call what we’re doing steampunk, dieselpunk, or even teslapunk, but the essence is that we’ve used elements like arcanism, Hotaether technology, and lucid dreaming to work with and enhance all of the the real-world tension and conflicts described in the preceding paragraphs. As we’ve imagined it, steampunk technology sharpens the divisions between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor. Nations with access to Amphere technology drive themselves to the brink of bankruptcy in competition with one another, as the losers are doomed to be conquered. Technology makes many wonders available, but only to those with wealth and power.



OUR GAME MASTERING PHILOSOPHY



No style of gaming is right for every group. No one rule system is perfect and a system that works well for one person or group might drive somebody else crazy. These are a few of the things that we either look for in a game, or try to provide to our players when we run a game. Your mileage, of course, may vary.

1. Be a good loser.

Being a Game Master is largely about losing gracefully, time after time after time. You'll spend hours devising clever villains with sneaky, nefarious plots. You'll then need to allow your players to brutally shred all of this. It's not always easy to be a graceful loser, but doing so is critical to running a good game. Most games need to have at least the illusion of danger. A character may perish from time to time. An entire party may even die on rare occasions.

Mostly, however, players should be able to win. This isn't to say that they should be able to get away with being stupid, but there should always be a way for them to prevail. Ideally, there should be many different ways for them to prevail. The other side of this issue, of course, is the need to lose convincingly. The occasional climactic battle averted by a sneaky sniper attack will make players grin, but letting players win every fight without a sense of real struggle and danger will eventually lead to boredom.

2. Let the players be the stars.

The game is about the player characters. The players often aren't going to be the most important people in the world, but they should be the most important people within the scope of the game. If you have an NPC with the party, resist the urge to make them more powerful than the PCs. We even try to make our NPCs slightly weaker than the PCs. Deus ex machina works adequately well on the stage, but few things are more annoying than spending a whole game trying to solve a problem, failing, and then having the problem solved by a heroic NPC.

Along the same lines, the villains shouldn't be the stars of the show, either. Having a nemesis for the PCs can be a great deal of fun, but that nemesis should be within the scope of PC power. A clever plan should be able to rid the players of one of their enemies. Fighting against beings of near-infinite power is an acquired taste, and works best when the villains are covered in the mystic slime of ages and waving tentacles, rather than ordinary nominally-mortal antagonists. Some GMs work hard to have comic-book style recurring villains, and some players love this. Other players, however, crave nothing more than the chance to put a slug of good honest lead into the skull of their great rival. In general, it's good to let the villains die, at least after leading the players on a long and satisfying chase.

3. Tell the story that your players want to be part of.

A Game Master is only one participant in a larger group. You should agree with that group ahead of time on what sort of story you want to tell. Let the players provide clues as to what elements or characters they would like to interact with, and then try to provide those things. Add your own touches, of course, as you are a contributor to the shared game world as well, and don't be afraid to take the characters out of their comfort zone, but don't do it often, and don't do it without careful thought. Taking a combat-oriented gunslinger to an elegant dinner party once can be fun, but forcing that player to endure session after session of urbane cocktail chatter is probably not a good idea.

4. Focus descriptions on highlights, not detail.

Your players will be encountering many different characters and settings throughout the course of an adventure. Don't try to describe everything in detail, unless you opt to run a Brass & Steel adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, which we can't in good conscience recommend. Players won't and can't remember everything that you say when you describe a scene or character in great detail. Give each setting location or character a few very distinctive features, and rely on the imaginations of players to fill in the little details adequately. For example, describe the corridor of a zeppelin by mentioning the shining chrome paint and



upward-focused blue-white electric lighting and leave it at that. An NPC the party meets might be described by highlighting an enormous beard and too-tight trousers.

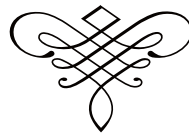
5. Pacing matters.

Play at a pace that is enjoyable for your group. Some groups like to agonize over every aspect of a battle plan or a heist. Others are content with “get ’em” as a battle plan. Play at a speed that keeps your group happy. Brass & Steel is designed to have fast-paced combat, but don’t feel wedded to that. We don’t use miniatures with the game, but that doesn’t mean that you can’t. On the other hand, if the rules for this game seem too complicated, then toss some of them out the window. As long as all players involved agree on any changes, there is nothing at all wrong with playing fast and loose with the rules.

6. Game like a movie

We’re big fans of cinema, and we like to employ a few cinematic tricks in our games. One technique Greg especially uses is cut scenes, in which he describes action that is taking place somewhere away from the characters. A cut scene of an enemy airship launching can do a lovely job of foreshadowing a coming combat. A scene in which two shadowy figures are scheming can highlight an upcoming betrayal. In our experience, players like to be kept in the know, and almost all will cheerfully play along with this sort of cinematic convention. Don’t tell the entire game as a cut scene, of course, but one to three per game session can be great fun.

Montage storytelling can be helpful, too. When the PCs are doing something fairly long and dreary, such as taking a boat to a different continent, use a montage scene in which you quickly describe a few different images that the PCs encounter along the way. Don’t gloss over a scene where the characters might have wanted to make choices, but using them in place of either role-playing an entire dull journey or simply saying, “you arrive in Singapore” can be very effective.





CHAPTER 10
THE WORLD OF BRASS & STEEL



- *Introduction* •
- *Great Powers* •
- *Second-Tier Powers* •
- *Money & Currency* •

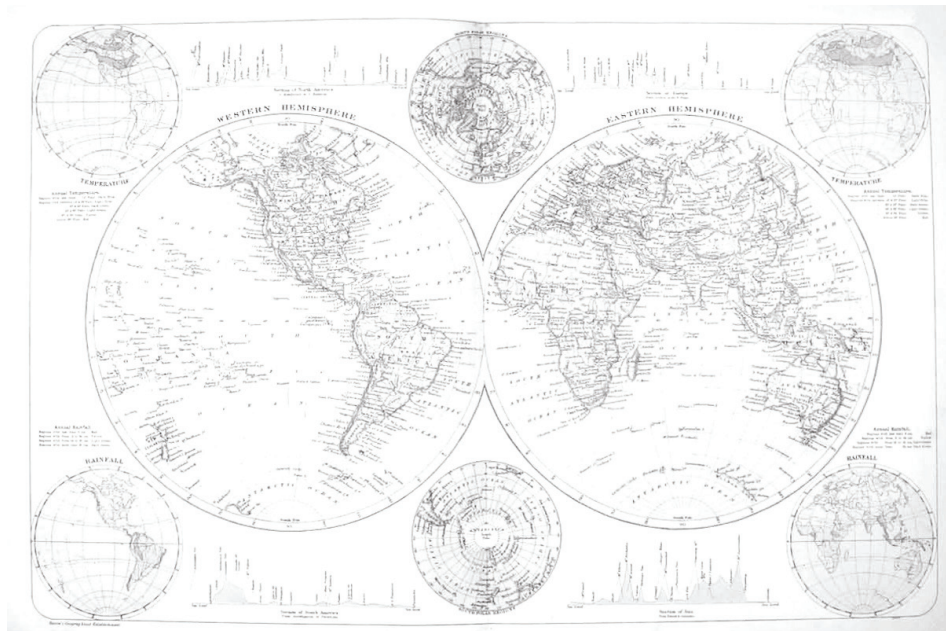


INTRODUCTION

Brass & Steel is set in a broad, fantastic world in a wondrous age. With Queen Victoria still on her throne, at least in our world, and sovereign of the largest and most powerful empire ever known, it seems to many in 1905 that the age of princes and empires will last forever.

But there is trouble brewing, near and far. The Czar may preside over the richest court in the world, but revolution is whispered of in pubs and parlors and increasingly even on the streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow. In Germany, a united nation for only a generation, an arrogant and un-careful Kaiser simultaneously loves and fears his British relatives and looks enviously at his Grandmother Victoria's throne and empire. In Austria, an aged emperor has outlived his usefulness and vitality. All three emperors project confidence and strength, but there are whiffs of violence in the air and none know how solid their rule will prove in coming years. All are bound in ties of blood, history and treaty, having signed on to the Three Emperor's League in response to growing British power.

France, a republic, has found itself an unnatural but necessary ally in Britain and her queen. Italy too has close relations with London and Greece rounds out a network of friendly states that establish peace and prosperity, or encircle and exclude the emperors, depending on your perspective.



And then there is the Near East. When Britain took Constantinople more than 60 years ago it created an untenable situation for the other European powers. Russia, otherwise a historic friend of the English, could never forgive another European power controlling the ancient seat of Orthodox Christianity. And so for all this time a series of Czars, all named Nicholas or Alexander, have chosen to value the integrity of their religious convictions over friendship with Queen Victoria and her government. British diplomats protest that they had little choice as the collapsing Ottoman Empire would have destabilized all of Europe, but the situation has certainly proven to be to their benefit.

The wealth and prestige gained from controlling the Near East has accelerated the British drive for glory. It has created an unstable environment where the British are near unto the world's first hegemonic "super power," outclassing any other or even any two other Great Powers. Such arrangements have proven historically to be quite unstable and, coupled with the Three Emperor's League, could lead the world to a Hotaether and gunpowder-fueled war the like of which has never been seen.

NATIONS OF THE EARTH



Selections from Highcastle's Guide to the Nations of the Earth, 1905 Edition

●————— GREAT POWERS —————●

GREAT BRITAIN

Territories

First among nations, the British Empire covers one quarter of the globe. Victoria's dominions stretch from New Zealand to Canada, and include such treasures as the Indian subcontinent, the territories of Southern Africa (recently annexed from the Boers), and much of the eastern portion of the Mediterranean. The British Empire is rooted in the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, and Ireland, together with the principality of Wales, and it is in these lands that the impact of British society and industry can be seen most clearly.

Politics

Great Britain is a parliamentary democracy. The Monarchy possesses great symbolic power, and no Prime Minister would dream of making major state decisions without consulting the Queen, but the day-to-day business of government is handled by an elected Parliament chosen through universal male suffrage.

Economics and Society

Britain is the leading industrial power of the world. Domestic British industry is concentrated in the north, around the coal and iron mines, and in the south and west, where the rare earths needed to produce many of the more esoteric marvels of the modern age can be found in abundance. The standard of living for all citizens in Britain is relatively high, although conditions and hours for factory and mine workers are brutal.

The division between rich and poor in Britain is stark. Medical advances have allowed many ailments to be cured, but at a great price. The rich, therefore, live significantly longer and better than the poor. Hotaether technology has also made the lives of the wealthy much more pleasant. Steam cars are the toys of the rich, and even in Britain, only the wealthy can typically travel via airship.

People from the colonies, along with the Irish and Welsh, tend to occupy the very lowest social rungs in Britain. They, together with a good number of ethnic English, live and labor in squalor, crowded into vast urban slums or dismal rural villages. The middle class is relatively large and prosperous in Britain. Middle-class Britons typically employ a servant or two, and live comfortably, supported by highly-paid jobs in finance and industry. The elite, made up of nobles with old money and members of the rising industrial class, live very well. These two classes have tended to blend together in Britain, as many rich factory owners are eager to give up their factories in favor of titles and country estates when the opportunity presents itself.

Military

The British military is excellent, but not large. The navy, both surface and airship, is the largest branch. The British rely on the natural isolation of the islands to provide some measure of protection. The Royal Navy has just begun to be drawn into an arms race with the German Empire. At present, the British rule the waves, and the British Aerospace Forces can guarantee the security of the skies over Britain. Small hunter-killer airships are a particular specialty of the British, as their doctrine specifically emphasizes the defeat of any airships bent on landing troops on the home islands. Older models of these airships are very popular among smugglers and couriers, for their speed, durability, and maneuverability.





GERMAN EMPIRE

Territories

Germany controls a large portion of central Europe. Germany was formed in keeping with the plan of Otto von Bismarck, who wanted to see a German state built around a northern, Prussian core, and which excluded Austria, which Bismarck viewed as both backward and unstable. Germany also owns a few small colonial territories including a few small pieces of Africa, some trading concessions in the Manchu Empire, and a few scattered island territories.

Politics

Germany is an empire. The current emperor, Wilhelm II, is a man in early middle age, with a modest intellect but a ferocious sense of national pride. The Kaiser shares with his people a sense that the British have been working to keep the German people from achieving their national destiny, and is eager to right this perceived injustice. The German government has followed a moderately bellicose foreign policy, confronting the British and the French and demanding more territories. The parliamentary institutions in Germany are weak, and do not have the power to rein in the emperor, even if they wished to do so, which they generally do not. They tend to share the Kaiser's vision of a larger and more powerful Germany.

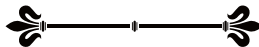
Economics and Society

Germany has recently overtaken Britain in conventional industrial output, although Germany lags behind in the fields of industry that depend on alchemical salts and Hotaether. The German economy is generally strong and prosperous. While not shared evenly it is more widespread than in Britain, thanks in large part to the social welfare legislation enacted when Bismarck was Chancellor of Germany in an effort to keep revolution from sweeping through the nation.

Military

Germany has a very large and effective military. The military traditionally relies on conscripts drawn from the rural regions of the Empire, a practice that has been re-examined in recent years because the rural population has not kept pace with the fast-growing urban population. Germany has a highly-sophisticated General Staff, and produces many of the best officers in Europe. Soldier-for-soldier, the German army is probably the best in the world, and is very well-equipped, although lacking in some of the very high-end Hotaether equipment used by the British elite forces.

The German navy is young and small, but plans have been put in place to greatly increase the size of both the maritime and aerospace branches of the navy at a tremendous rate over the next decade. These plans have drawn protest from the British, but the Kaiser shows no interest in backing down. German plans emphasize the development of an airship navy, as the *Kriegsluftmarine* command believes it will be easier to attain parity with the British in the skies than on land, and also believes that airships will be useful if colonial war must be waged.



RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Territories

Russia's Empire comes a very close second to Britain's in terms of total land area, but much of Russia's territory is inhospitable and lightly-populated. Russia stretches from Eastern Europe, where the once-sovereign territories of Finland and Poland mark the furthest extent of imperial expansion, through all of Asia to the Pacific Ocean, where Russia shares a border with the territories of the Chinese Manchu Empire.



Politics

Russia is an empire, ruled by Nicholas II, who is a hereditary monarch. The emperor is not subject to any checks or balances, and some recent emperors have still claimed to rule through divine right. Russia is part of the Three Emperors League, and has forged extremely close ties with the German empire, thanks in large part to German scientists' successful treatment of a case of hemophilia in the infant Alexi, heir to the Russian throne. Russia has come into periodic conflict with Britain, mostly over the British Empire's insistence on keeping control of Constantinople, a city with particular historical and religious importance to the devoutly Orthodox Russians.

Economics and Society

The Russian economy is developing, and doing so rapidly, but has not caught up with the economies of the leading nations as of yet. Moscow and St. Petersburg are both heavily industrialized, and German technical and economic capital have made it possible for Russia to begin to exploit some of the alchemical salt deposits found deep in Siberia, but the facilities to fully exploit these riches are still years from completion. Wealth in Russia is very unevenly distributed. Most Russians still labor under debts incurred by their parents as part of the end of serfdom (essentially slavery) in Russia. A small middle class is concentrated in the cities, and the elite is made up of a mixture of largely unproductive nobles and new industrial tycoons.

Military

The Russian military is of mixed quality. Army reforms put into place in the 1860s modernized both recruitment and officer training, and the best units of the army are on par with those of any modern nation. The arms industry in Russia is not yet large enough to fully supply the whole of the country's very large army however, so older weapons are often issued to second-rank formations, and some garrison troops still use muzzle-loading rifles over thirty years old. Morale and discipline tend to be good.

The Russian navy is unsurprisingly weak. The fleet is spread between bases in the far north, bases on the Black Sea, and a small force in the Far East. The bulk of the fleet is concentrated in the Black Sea, where is meant to defend against a possible British naval assault. The Russian airship fleet is very small, but of surprisingly good quality, thanks to the work of several eccentric geniuses in rocketry and airship engineering. Russian airships tend to be mid-sized vessels, able to operate effectively as either interceptors or bombers, and armed with a mix of guns, bombs, and dumb-fire rockets.



AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

Territories

The Austro-Hungarian Empire spans much of central and south-eastern Europe. The empire includes Austria proper, the heartland of the empire, as well as Hungary and many other smaller Balkan territories. Austria proper is well-developed, while the eastern territories are much less modern.

Politics

The Empire has fallen on hard times. The rise of nationalism over the last 100 years has caused tremendous trouble for the Austrians, whose empire is made up of a patchwork quilt of different national and religious groups, many of whom badly want to break away from Austrian control. The empire has become both more fragile and more repressive as a result. Otto von Bismarck, the architect of German unification, worked very hard to exclude Austria from his nation building, because he felt that the Austrians would have fatally weakened the German Empire.



Austria is ruled by a monarch, but one with limits on his power as a result of a compromise with the Hungarian minority within the empire. Franz Joseph, the ruler of Austria, is a tough old campaigner, but getting on in years. He and his advisers have pursued policies designed to strengthen their internal control, but with limited success.

Austria has a strong alliance with Russia and Germany, based on a shared opposition to the policies of the entente.

Economics

German industrial and financial support has allowed the western parts of the empire to modernize. Austria is also blessed with very rich deposits of alchemical salts in its mountainous southeastern regions. Exploitation of these riches has begun, but will take years to fully implement.

Military

The Austrian army is a hodgepodge. Soldiers in the army speak over 20 different languages. The German-speaking Austrian troops tend to be of very good quality. Troops from the other regions are less well-trained, and many secretly harbor a desire to fight for the freedom of their own countries, rather than for their Austrian overlords. The Austrian army is also only moderately well-equipped, with only elite units having access to any Hotaether gear at all.

The Austrian navy consists of six or eight patrol boats. The Austrian aerospace navy is made up largely of vessels purchased from Germany. These ships tend to be older, but were of good construction originally.

The Austrians have devoted a considerable amount of effort to building up a commando force in recent years. This special section attached to the Austrian Secret Police operates largely outside of the law, and some officers in the conventional armed forces worry that the special section is acting with near-autonomy, and pursuing some secret agenda.



FRANCE

Territory

The French Empire consists of European France, plus a scattering of colonial territories, including possessions in North Africa, the Caribbean, and several Island chains in the Pacific Ocean. The French have recently occupied Indochina. Two provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, which were part of European France, were lost to Germany during the Franco-Prussian war.

Politics

France is ruled by the Third Republic. French government has been unstable throughout much of the long 19th century, and has swung back and forth between republic and monarchy several times. French domestic politics are currently divided between a nationalist faction which is interested above all in reclaiming territory lost to Germany, and a large and vigorous social-democratic faction, which is interested in forming connections between workers in all the industrial nations, and in the peaceful overthrow of the capitalist system.

The French had long been enemies of the British, but the two nations were forced to make common cause after Germany united to form the German Empire. Britain needed a powerful ally on the continent to rein in German expansion, and the French badly needed an ally. German diplomacy delayed the formation of this alliance for some time, but in 1900 the two nations signed a formal treaty of alliance.

Economy

The French economy is modern, but not as well-developed as that of Britain or Germany. The loss of Alsace and Lorraine robbed the French of some of their richest deposits of coal and iron. Fortunately for the French, their greatest deposits of alchemical salts are located in the mountainous region of Provence, in areas near several odd archaeological sites of uncertain origin.



Wealth is not spread equally in France, but some social welfare systems do exist. The influence of social democrats in the Third Republic has gradually produced reforms and protections for workers.

The French educational system is an object of particular pride, and the Sorbonne boasts excellent faculties in many different academic disciplines. This Parisian university is especially famous for having the most advanced curriculum in the study of lucid dreaming outside of the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Military

The French army is of good quality, and generally well-equipped. The French rely on a two-tiered system, with most troops serving in reserve formations which can be mobilized swiftly in the event of war. Several divisions of regular army troops man the border with Germany, and six elite alpine divisions are stationed in the south, where they are mostly responsible for keeping desperate Spaniards out of France. French colonial troops are of mixed quality. Most troops are well-trained, but their equipment is often out-of-date. The French Foreign Legion is an exception to this rule, and is both well-trained and well-equipped. It is currently based in Saigon.

The French navy is of average quality. The French have several battleships, but no Hotaether-driven dreadnaughts. France has some of the best cruisers in the world, which aid in protecting commerce. The French Aviation Corps is of moderate size, but is the most innovative branch of the military, and uses a mix of different airship classes. Plans are in the works to develop several specialized craft as well.



PORTUGAL

Territories

Portugal controls a far-flung colonial empire. The Portuguese control much of eastern South America, as well as territories scattered through Africa and Southeast Asia. These territories are rich in resources, including several vast deposits of alchemical salts, which have only recently been surveyed. Portugal controls the western parts of the Iberian Peninsula as its home territory.

Politics

Portugal is a constitutional monarchy. The conservative party currently holds sway, and has focused on building up the already-extensive trading power of the nation. Portugal is a relatively calm country, as wealth from the colonies has made most people's lives comfortable. Portugal maintains a careful watch on its eastern border, in order to limit the number of desperate Spaniards seeking refuge. Portugal maintains a careful position of neutrality on the world stage, and trades with all interested parties and powers. Portuguese traders are notable for having established extensive trading relations with Aztlan in recent years, and may have sold a good many technical formulas to that secretive but wealthy empire.

Economics

Portugal is rich. Resources pour into the home country from the colonies, and are processed in a network of factories. Portugal exports extensively to the world market. Portugal's colonies are poor, however. The Portuguese are not gentle colonial overlords, and their territories are economically exploited.

Military

Portugal maintains a two-tiered military. The small but fast and modern navy is used for commerce defense and communication. The field army is comprised of several very modern divisions equipped with the latest arms and equipment. The territorial army is comprised of the dregs of Portuguese society and a levy of conscripts from all of the colonies. This force is adequately equipped for its task of suppressing revolt, but would melt away if faced with a modern army in the field.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Territory

The United States of America now number twenty-five and cover much of eastern North America from the 45th parallel in the north to the tip of Florida in the south and west to the Mississippi River. After the thirteen original colonies gained their independence from Great Britain, the new nation soon found itself engaged in a grinding decades-long war of attrition with the aboriginal tribes they sought to displace in their drive for westward expansion. The 1865 Treaty of Fort Defiance placed the western border of the United States at the Mississippi River, though the U.S. holds the formerly French city of New Orleans near the mouth of the Mississippi. Despite occasional raiding and border skirmishes this border has held firm for forty years.

Politics

The United States is a constitutional republic. Following the conclusion of the Indian Wars, American politics focused inward on rebuilding and finally resolving the slavery issue. In 1895 the 17th Amendment to the U.S. constitution officially ended slavery in all states and granted citizenship to former slaves but required that slaves purchase their freedom from their owners, though owners were free to reduce or eliminate this purchase price. Ten years on, there are still large numbers of former slaves effectively indentured to their former masters and even those free of that financial burden are finding it hard to find economic opportunity and political voice.

The current President is Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican. Under Roosevelt the United States is taking its first tentative steps back onto the world diplomatic stage, though as a second-tier power. The U.S. remains officially neutral in the affairs of the European Powers but has closer ties to the Entente Cordiale led by Great Britain and France than to the Three Emperor's League. The biggest foreign concern of the United States is the newly expansionist Aztlan Empire. Currently the allied nation of Texas is all that keeps the United States from sharing a border with Aztlan, and so the U.S. has been quietly providing Texas with military and economic support. Lacking a connection with the Pacific Ocean, the U.S. is barely involved with affairs in East Asia.

Economics

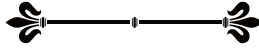
The United States has developed a strong industrial base in an east-west belt from New Jersey to Indiana. The U.S. also possesses an abundance of rich farmland and produces a surplus of agricultural products. Though lagging behind the UK in Hotaether technology, the U.S. is leaping forward in diesel propulsion and electricity thanks to an abundance of talented inventors and industrialists in the current generation. The U.S. has moderate deposits of alchemical salts which have only recently been mined to any significant extent.

Military

The United States has a small, moderately well-trained, poorly-equipped military, but all of that is rapidly changing. Mass conscription ended with the Fort Defiance Treaty in 1865 and that generation of hardened warriors has long since retired. The isolationist policies of the decades following the treaty resulted in substantial draw-down in the size of the military, leaving a small force of questionable morale focused on mitigating tribal raids over the western border and a small naval squadron to safeguard its merchant marine fleet.

Under President Roosevelt the U.S. has started saber rattling in earnest. The past few years have seen substantial increases in military spending as well as significant structural reforms meant to enable a more outward-looking military posture to meet the perceived threat from the Aztlan Empire. The Army Balloon Corps has been restructured into an independent Air Corps and the first of a new class of medium attack airships was recently launched at the headquarters of the Detroit Airship Corporation. The U.S. naval squadron remains small and outdated but construction has begun on new classes of Hotaether powered heavy cruisers and escort frigates at the Newport News shipyard in Virginia. The Army has been modestly expanded and its doctrine modernized. Its equipment is in the process of being replaced with modern gear, rumored to include the prototype of some sort of particle cannon devised by Nikola Tesla.





THE EMPIRE OF AZTLÁN

History

The Empire of Aztlán has its origin in an alliance of the Nahuatl-speaking city-states of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan. The alliance, formed in 1428, expanded through successive wars of conquest until by the start of the 16th century it controlled most of central Mesoamerica. In the century following the defeat of the Spanish force under Hernan Cortes in 1520, the Aztecs further expanded their domain to encompass all of Central America from the Isthmus of Panama to the northern desert. For most of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Aztecs consolidated their conquest and maintained an isolationist foreign policy, forbidding foreign traders from operating in their territory.

In 1872, an armed British merchantman airship arrived over the city of Tlaxcala and demanded to be allowed to trade with local merchants. When the Aztec garrison arrived to evict them, the merchants retreated to their airship and bombarded the garrison with impunity. Shocked by this attack from the air, the central government in Tenochtitlan underwent turbulent change, little of which is known to outsiders. What is known is that a new tlatoni, or Emperor, was declared in 1876. This new emperor, Cuauhtemoc III, proclaimed his nation as the Empire of Aztlán and undertook a rapid programme of industrialization.

Recently, the Empire has invaded the lands of Kali Forno along the Pacific Coast, incorporating a large province into the empire. Aztlán has also purchased the loyalty of the king of the Hawai'i island chain, who has granted them a port on the island of Oahu.

Territory

The Empire of Aztlán controls the entire Central American landmass from just south of the Isthmus of Panama to the Tó BaDáadi River bordering the nation of Texas to the northeast. In the west, the territory of the Empire extends up the Pacific coast all the way to the Great Bay of Kali Forno. Aztlán also controls, by proxy, the islands of Hawai'i in the central Pacific.

Politics

The Empire of Aztlán has always been, to the best of any westerner's knowledge, an absolute hereditary monarchy. The current tlatoni is not thought to be a blood relative of the previous emperor and is considered by outside observers to be the first in a new dynasty. The tlatoni would seem to govern with the advice of a council of priests representing the various cults of the Aztec gods but how much power this council actually possesses is unknown. Current foreign policy is belligerent and expansionist. The Empire does not maintain embassies in foreign lands, sending diplomats only when they wish to deliver a message.

Economics

The Empire has rapidly industrialized since 1876, resulting in spectacular economic changes and not a little turmoil. The working conditions in Aztec factories would shock Charles Dickens and it is rumored that captives from the conquered peoples of Kali Forno are being conscripted as factory laborers and shipped south to the Aztec industrial heartland. Technological progress is rapid but uneven, being a mishmash of stolen or purchased technology mixed with homegrown innovations. Despite the belligerent foreign policy, the Empire has opened a number of trade ports on its territory to merchants from East and West. Substantial air defenses have been placed in all major cities to avoid a replay of the incident in 1872. Aztlán merchant vessels, on both air and water, have begun to call in ports in Africa, South America, and Asia, using their port on the island of Oahu to extend their trade to the entire Pacific Rim.

Military

Thirty years ago the crack troops of the Aztecs were still wielding flintlock rifles and obsidian-edged swords. All that has changed. Unreliable reports from the invasion of Kali Forno depict ground troops wearing terrifying animal-visaged suits of personal armor and wielding automatic weapons of unusual design. The elite Jaguar and Eagle Guards are equipped with these state of the art weapons and armor but it is strongly suspected that all other ground forces are not so well-equipped as yet. Air



and naval forces are yet small in size but are rapidly closing the gap with the major European powers. A recent naval skirmish between Aztlán and Russian warships near Nippon proved disastrous for the Russians.



INKA EMPIRE (The Four United Provinces)

History

The state known to Europeans as the Inka Empire calls itself Tawantinsuyu, which means “The Four United Provinces” in the chief language of Quechua. Inka is the Quechua term for leader or ruler and is employed internally to refer to any member of the ruling social class. The empire was formed in the 15th century from the nucleus of the city-state of Cusco, located in the high Huatanay river valley. Conquests by successive Inka of the Cusco kingdom over the period of 1438 to 1533 greatly expanded the territory into an empire spanning most of western South America, from the Muisca Confederation to the north to the Maule River far to the south. Around 1530 the empire suffered a crippling civil war between competing royal sons. Nearly simultaneously a smallpox epidemic, introduced by the Spanish during their unsuccessful incursion into Aztec lands, ravaged the population until the priests of Inti, their sun god, hit on the proper formula for a mystical herbal remedy. The empire took a generation to recover from civil war and pestilence but embarked on another phase of expansion further north, south, and east during the period of about 1560 to 1670. In the 1670s the Inka began butting up against Portuguese expansion coming from the eastern coast of South America. Nearly thirty years of sporadic warfare pushed the Inka out of the Amazon basin and back into the Anti Mountains. The exhausted Inka sued for peace and a border was mutually agreed upon in 1699. Both sides spent the next several decades and much treasure building forts on either side of the long mountain border.

Around 1700 the Aztec conquests took their armies just south of the Isthmus of Panama, encroaching on both Inka lands and the Portuguese province of Venezuela. Fatigue on all sides resulted in a brief conflict followed by a treaty setting borders with the Aztecs agreeing to a border set at 6 degrees North Latitude and 77 degrees West Longitude.

The next hundred years saw a gradual lessening of tensions between the Portuguese and the Inka. Trade routes opened and flourished and cultural exchange gradually induced political rapprochement. Meanwhile, a series of weak emperors in the early 1800’s resulted in much power devolving from the central government in Cusco to the heads of the four provinces. In 1905 The Four United Provinces of the Inka are at peace with their neighbors and reasonably prosperous.

Territory

The Inka Empire controls a long but narrow stretch of land encompassing the entire west coast of South America, incorporating the entire Anti mountain range and the adjacent highlands. The Inka possess no overseas colonies.

Politics and Society

The Inka Empire is more aptly described by its name for itself, The Four United Provinces. The current government could be considered a loose federalism with a weak hereditary monarch and a strong oligarchy controlling much of the actual political and economic power. The emperor is basically mayor of Cusco, having little more than ceremonial power outside the capital city. With power having devolved from the central government down to the provincial governments over the centuries, the Inka have no strong federal institutions and no federal legislature. An informal group of provincial leaders gathers periodically under the “guidance” of the Inka Emperor to decide issues of foreign policy and to negotiate trade agreements.

The United Provinces have been at peace for a very long time and they have developed strong economic ties and good political relations with their Portuguese neighbors. Relations with Aztlán to the north are strained of late, but the common border is short and the Aztlán’s ambitions seem to lie elsewhere for the moment.

Culturally, the Inka maintain many of their ancient traditions. Most still worship their sun god, Inti, and believe in reincarnation for the unworthy. Those who obey the Inka moral code—*ama suwa, ama llulla, ama quella* (do not steal, do not lie, do not be lazy) go to live in the Sun’s warmth while others spend their eternal days reincarnating on the cold earth. The Inka also



maintain a strong tradition of mandatory public service, called mita. Much of the Inka's land is at high altitude and difficult to farm without extensive public works to maintain terraces and irrigation. There has been grumbling in recent decades that the mita should apply to the aristocracy as well, something the ruling Inka oligarchs seem unwilling to countenance. Portuguese culture and Roman Catholicism have made inroads into Inka society, especially in the lower echelons of society, where the easier salvation offered by Christianity has strong appeal.

Economics

The economy of the Four Provinces is a mixture of subsistence agriculture and mineral extraction with very little manufacturing. The industrial revolution has hardly touched the Inka and nearly all manufactured goods are imported from abroad, with only the oligarchs able to afford luxury goods. This small class of Inka oligarchs, descended from the old Inka royal families, has managed to maintain a complete stranglehold on land ownership in the provinces. Nearly all profits from extracting and exporting the nation's substantial mineral and alchemical wealth go to less than ten percent of the population. The wealth gap between the ruling aristocracy and the bulk of the population is a vast chasm.

Military

The Inkan military is basically four separate provincial forces with little or no coordination or training between them. Taken together they constitute a fairly large force which would be formidable if not for their poor training, poor morale and hopelessly outdated equipment. The few military airships and naval vessels possessed by the Inka were purchased second-hand from the Portuguese. Mita extends to mandatory military service by all males for two years. Thus the infantry is a poorly-equipped, low morale, high turnover force that wields muzzle-loaders and mostly sits idle in garrison forts. The greatest concentration of Inka troop strength is along the border with Aztlán but even those forces are woefully unprepared for hostilities with a modern military.



ITALY

Territories

Italy controls the Italian peninsula, as well as Sicily, Sardinia, a smattering of islands in the Mediterranean and a section of the Balkans stretching down to and including Albania. Italy also has control over Libya in North Africa.

Politics

Italy is a constitutional monarchy. Italian politics have remained modestly expansionist since unification roughly forty years ago. The government is essentially dominated by conservatives, although a good deal of tension exists between the government and the population as a result of the annexation of the Papal State during Italian unification. The Pope remains hostile to the Italian state because of this, and many Italian citizens follow the Papacy's line on politics. Italy is tentatively allied with the British, but the proximity of Austria and Germany has kept the Italians from agreeing to a formal military alliance, as they would be badly out-gunned in the event of war.

Economics

The Italian economy is developing, but is not yet fully modern. Northern Italy has a good number of factories, and a few plants able to produce Hotaether technology, but the south remains very under-developed. The Dalmatian territories are believed to be rich in alchemical salts, but these deposits have not been extensively mined, or even explored.

Military

Italy has a second-rate navy and a third-rate army. The best Italian units are well-trained and capable, especially the three Italian mountain divisions. Most of the Italian army is made up of poorly-trained and under-equipped conscripts, however. The Italian navy is relatively modern, but small. The Italians do have an experimental airship carrier, which makes them unique among nations, as other powers have opted simply to rely on land-based airship aviation.





SPAIN

Territories

Spain controls its section of the Iberian Peninsula, and a few scattered colonies throughout the world, mostly island chains and a few small sections of Africa.

Politics

Spain is currently a republic, dominated by the liberal party. No Spanish political party is held in much esteem, however, by the public or by the world. Spain has never been a player on the world stage, as Spanish efforts to expand into the new world were largely unsuccessful, and Spain's development stagnated.

Spain has almost no influence in the world, as it lacks both military and economic power, and is of little strategic interest.

Economics

Spain has only a tiny industrial economy. A few factories huddle miserably on the outskirts of Madrid. The rest of Spain is locked into a crushing cycle of poverty, as tiny farms are further sub-divided with each new generation, and masses of hungry and desperate men and women flee to the already crowded cities.

Military

The Spanish military is large, but vastly out-of-date. The navy is small and poorly-equipped. Spain's military is able to suppress dissent, but could not defend the nation against a serious aggressor.



NIPPON

Territories

Nippon controls several islands off the eastern coast of Asia, including the home islands and several nearby possessions.

Politics

Nippon is ruled by a warlord, known as the Shogun. This system has been in place for hundreds of years, and, while historians argue that it might once have provided dynamic and effective leadership, it is now deeply corrupt and massively inefficient.

Economics

Nippon depends primarily on subsistence agriculture and fishing. Nippon is poor in minerals, and has little to export. Nippon's stagnant political structure desires few imports, however, apart from a selection of luxury goods, and so this system functions adequately well

Military

Nippon's military is very outdated, and lacks even the simplest of gunpowder weaponry. Other advanced products of industry are also entirely lacking.



MANCHU EMPIRE

Territories

The Manchu Empire consists of China proper, together with territories to the north and east, including most of the Korean peninsula, save for a few Russian enclaves there. The Manchu dynasty also rules over roughly half of the territory of Mongolia, although this territory has very little economic or strategic value.

Politics

In theory, the Manchu Empire is a true empire, ruled by an emperor whose power is not limited by any checks or balances. In fact, the Empire is effectively ruled by the bureaucracy. The Manchu Empire was locked in cultural and political stasis for generations, until, in the 1840s, a conflict with Britain sparked a wave of nationalism. Chao Shen, a leading Imperial official, was promoted to a new position of First Minister by the outraged emperor. Chao's tremendous political and military skill allowed the Manchu Empire to stall for time, limit the influence of the British, and appeal to some of Britain's imperial rivals for assistance.

The Manchu Empire remains resolutely isolated from European affairs, but has a rich trading relationship with both the German and the Russian Empires. In 1896, Portugal attempted to use gunboat diplomacy to force new trading concessions from the Manchu. The tiny fleet assigned to this task was entirely insufficient, and was torn to shreds by the guns defending Shanghai, and then pursued and destroyed by the Chinese navy. Chao Shen died a very old man in 1899. He was succeeded as First Minister by Ming I'chen, who had served as his assistant for the last 17 years. Ming seems every bit as capable as his predecessor, but has not yet been tested by a major crisis.

Economics

The Manchu Empire has a huge population, and covers a vast swath of territory. The coastal regions, as well as some interior areas rich in minerals and alchemical salts, are now well-developed. The Manchu have an industrial base roughly equivalent to that of Austria, or perhaps Russia, although they have been careful to keep the true scope of their development secret from the other great powers.

Military

The Manchu employ a two-tiered military system. The banner armies are territorial forces, used for police duties and to watch the less-dangerous borders. The new model armies are essentially western forces, and are garrisoned primarily along the eastern coast. The Manchu navy and aerospace forces are small, but the Manchu have been building the factories needed to expand both. Coastal and air batteries have been installed over key sites in the Manchu Empire, making the prospect of an invasion an expensive one.

Chapter 10

MONEY & CURRENCY



The British Monetary System

At the turn of the 20th century, like today, the basic unit of monetary exchange in Britain was the pound sterling, abbreviated "£." The pound had been in common use for hundreds of years and the system used may seem counter-intuitive from a modern perspective, with all of us used to "decimalized" currency — that is 100 of some smaller unit (pennies or pence) valued at 1 larger unit (dollars or pounds). When writing out sums of money, various conventions were used with the units separated by dashes or slashes.



The “pre-decimalized” versions of British money were not as simple. The pound was worth 20 shillings (abbreviated “s”) which were in turn each worth 12 pence (abbreviated “d”), so each pound was worth 240 pence. These abbreviations were not always used for shillings and pence, with a slash used instead. Writing 16/ invariably meant 16 shillings. Writing 16/4 meant 16 shillings, 4 pence.

Further complicating the picture, the currency in circulation had its own denominations, starting with the Sovereign, minted in gold, which was worth 1 pound. (An older coin, the Guinea, worth £1/1s was no longer in broad circulation, though the prices of certain items, especially those traded, auctioned, or posh, including horses and high-end clothing, were still given in Guineas, presumably to maximize confusion.) There were also silver half-sovereigns (10s), crowns (5s), half-crowns ((2s/6d), and florins (2s). The smallest denominations of currency, and those most commonly used by the general population, were one silver coin (the sixpence – 6d – or “tanner”), and a series of copper and bronze coins valued at 4d (the groat), 2d (the half-groat), the penny (1d), half-penny (1/2 d) and farthing (1/4d). There were other coins in addition to these, so if you have an interest in even more detail there are many good resources available. This listing gives an idea of circulating coinage however.

Paper money was not unknown but was literally issued as bank notes, that is, a note drawn on a particular bank promising to pay a given sum of money. Such notes were common currency for the very wealthy but rarely seen by the other classes. A paper pound was known as a “quid.”

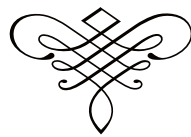
Comparing exchange rates across periods is notoriously difficult, in part because the goods and services bought in one period do not directly correspond with those in another. For purposes of playing Brass & Steel, we will vastly simplify this by simply stating that for purposes of back-of-the-napkin calculations, £1 had the purchasing power that \$100 does in 2011. So when calculating prices for various things players buy, use this as a guideline. (If prices in 1905 US Dollars are needed assume \$5 per pound or a purchasing power of 20 2011 US dollars per 1905 dollar.)

Of course, if this system seems unmanageable to Players or Game Masters you are free to ignore it completely and either assume decimalized currency (100 pence to the pound) or create your own system.

Ottoman Money and Exchange

The default setting for Brass & Steel is the city of Constantinople. It is the seat of the Viceroy of the British Near East Provinces but also the capital of the Ottoman Empire and home of the Sultan. As such, as is true in India under the Raj, much exchange takes place in the local denomination, the Akces, the currency has for decades been minted and printed by the British and bears the image of Queen Victoria or sometimes the Sultan and the Queen facing each other. However, a great deal of trade and exchange by westerners takes place in pounds sterling, so using this as the base currency for your Constantinople-based campaign isn't inconsistent.

If your characters are mainly non-westerners, you may find using Akces instead of pounds adds an appropriate flavor to your game. If your gaming group would prefer to use Akces instead of pounds, assume there are 2500 Akces per shilling or 50,000 Akces per Pound, making an Akces worth, in our simplified exchange, about 500 per 2011 US Dollar. For realism it should be noted that exchange by average people, in their own markets for common goods, may be priced considerably differently than these exchange rates would suggest, but you're playing Brass & Steel, not Accountants & Actuaries, so it would take a particular kind of gaming group to care. Perhaps enough period authenticity would be added to a game if your group burst into a master criminal's lair and found stacks of millions of Akces instead of hundreds of Pounds, and leave it at that.





CHAPTER II
CONSTANTINOPLE



- *A Brief History* •
- *Persons of Note* •
- *Provinces of the British Near East* •



A BRIEF HISTORY

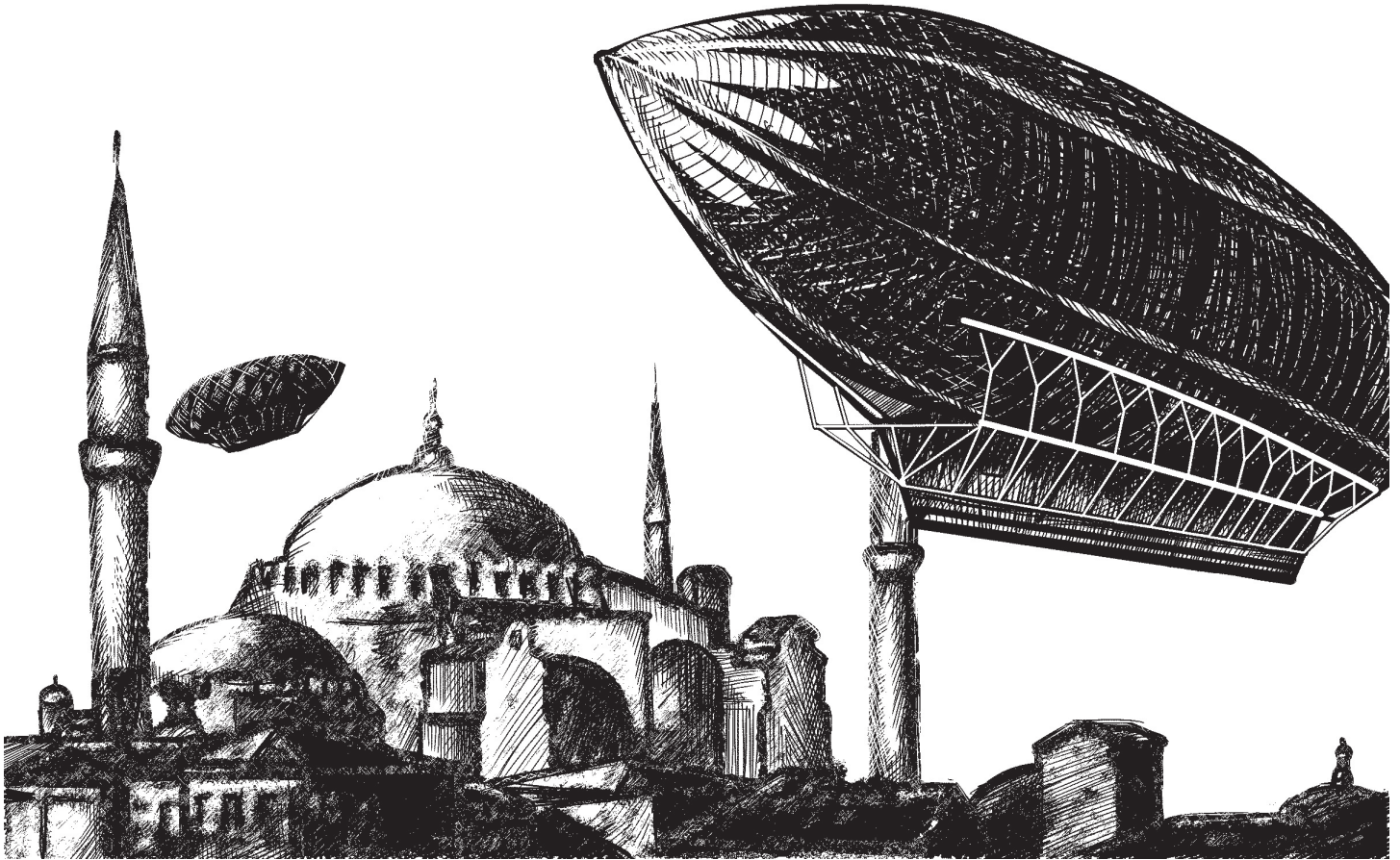
City of the Golden Horn

Queen of Cities

Eye of the World

the Door to Happiness

The town of Byzantium, on the site that was to become Constantinople, was founded in the 7th century BCE by Greek colonists. It rose to prominence when it was re-founded by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 307 CE as Constantinople, the name it retains to the present day. Constantinople was briefly capital of the entire Roman Empire, and was then capital of the Western Roman Empire, called the Byzantine Empire by modern scholars, for over a thousand years. The city was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 CE, at which time the city became the third and final capital of the Ottoman Empire.



In 1839 the city was conquered by British General Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. The newly acceded Ottoman ruler, the Sultan Abdülmecid I, was made a guest of the British forces. Though effectively made a puppet of the British by the Treaty of Constantinople in 1842, the young Sultan was Western-educated, reform-minded, and malleable. A number of laws and reforms were enacted in the Sultan's name with the intent of protecting property rights and guaranteeing justice for non-Muslims and non-Turks. There was a great deal of opposition to these reforms, seen by the provinces as a set of purely British

initiatives, resulting in the secession of several Ottoman provinces. A series of joint military operations between the British and Turkish armies over the next decade saw the forcible return of the breakaway provinces. A number of military reforms were implemented during this time which had the ultimate effect of making the Ottoman army a westernized colonial force under the command of British officers. The pretense of Ottoman self-rule was maintained until the death of Abdülmecid in 1861, at which time the British Viceroy was made regent for the Sultan's minor son, Mehmed V. Since 1861 the office of the British Viceroy has made little pretense about their total control of the Ottoman state, despite having never officially abolished the Sultanate. In 1905, Constantinople is a British protectorate and the administrative capital for the governance of the former Ottoman territories, now called the British Near East Provinces.

GEOGRAPHY

The city of Constantinople, home to more than a million people, sits astride the Straits of Bosphorus, which divides Europe from Asia. Major population centers exist on both sides of the strait, though most important sites and the wealthier districts of the city are on the European side. The oldest portions of the city sit on a peninsula with the Sea of Marmara to the south and east and a narrow flooded estuary known as the Golden Horn to the north. This area, comprising the old Roman city of Constantinople, and called Stamboul by the Turks, contains many historical sites including the Walls of Theodosius, the ruins of ancient forums and monasteries, and the Topkapi Palace, largest and most important seat of the Ottoman rulers. The great Orthodox cathedral of Hagia Sophia, again the seat of the Greek Patriarch, sits facing the mighty Sultan Ahmed mosque. The south-eastern third of the old city of Stamboul has been reclaimed by Europeans, much to the dismay of the city's still substantial Turkish majority.

To the north of the Golden Horn lie many of the more important buildings and districts of the modern age including the Yildiz Palace, used today as the Sultan's "retirement home," and the Dolmabace Palace, the British administrative center and home of the Viceroy, the Queen's representative. Various provincial government buildings and the consulates and residencies of various foreign powers are peppered across this part of the city. It is heavily Western in population and influence and most of the British citizens living or stationed in the city live in this area, the wealthiest residing in villas and townhouses along the coastline.

Across the Bosphorus Strait lies the Asian suburb of Scutare, home to several military citadels and a number of predominantly Turkish neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are increasingly overcrowded as a result of having absorbed most of the Turkish families forced out of their traditional neighborhoods in Stamboul by recently arrived European settlers. Unsurprisingly, Scutare is a hotbed of Turkish nationalism and a haven to members of the Ottoman restorationist movement.

Chapter 11

PERSONS OF NOTE



The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Minto, Gilbert John Eliot-Murray-Kynynmound

GCMG, Viceroy of the Near East

Born 1845, London England

The Earl of Minto is former Colonel of the South of Scotland Brigade (resigned 1889) and former Governor General of Canada (1898-1904). Lord Minto intended to return to England to semi-retirement after leaving Canada but was summoned to a very rare meeting with The Queen, after which his appointment to Constantinople was announced. It has been said that his Lordship was much better suited to his position in Canada, given, for example, his enthusiasm for competitive ice skating. Lord Minto has only begun his residence at the Dolmabace Palace and his intent is not yet well known. Already in their first months in the city the Viceroy has become moderately popular, in part due to hospital visitations and various humanitarian efforts initiated by his wife Countess Minto (the Lady Mary Grey).





VEHICLE	Rating	Familiarities	Pentacles
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Hell Bent for Leather
 The Big Guns
 Beast Wrangling

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COMBAT	Rating	Familiarities	Swords
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Bash and Stab
 Up Close & Personal
 Duck & Cover
 Bows & Bombs
 Barking Irons
 Sergeant's Eye

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.....



SOCIAL	Rating	Familiarities	Cups
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False Promises
 Huckster's Eye
 Buy Low, Sell High
 Among Strangers
 Leadership/Intimidation

.....

.....



ADVENTURING	Rating	Familiarities	Swords
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Olympian Spirit
 Stealth & Camouflage
 Devious Devices
 Call of the Wild
 Heroic Vigor
 Skulduggery

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INTELLECTUAL	Rating	Familiarities	Wands
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Natural Philosophy
 Artifice
 Liberal Arts
 Investigator's Eye
 Law
 Medicine

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CRAFT	Rating	Familiarities	Pentacles
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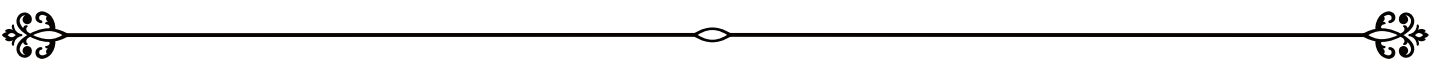


ARCANE Rating Familiarities Wands

Channeling Precision Focus Arcanist's Eye Arcane Memory	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	
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DREAMING Rating Familiarities Cups

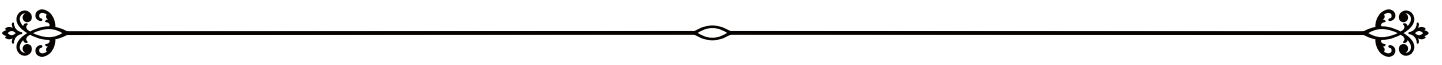
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INOCULATION GRADE:

POWER POOL:

MAX:



PATTERNS

EPHEMERA

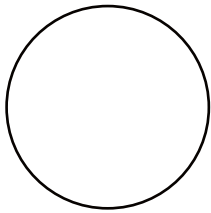
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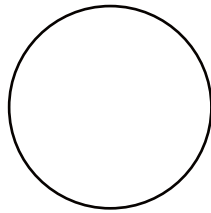


ARCANISM

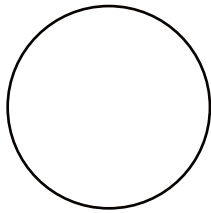
CHEAT SHEET



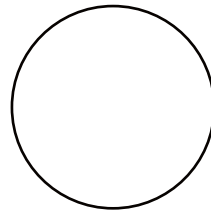
REASON



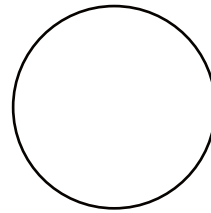
WILLPOWER



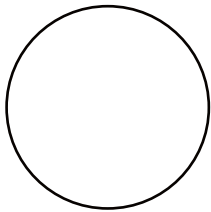
ARCANIST'S
EYE



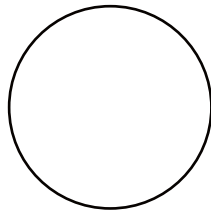
CHANNELING



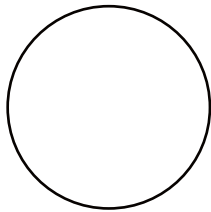
PRECISION



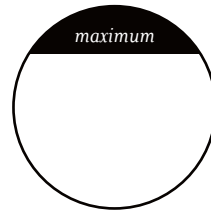
FOCUS



PASSIVE
POWER
RECOVERY
tier



ACTIVE
POWER
RECOVERY
tier + focus



maximum

current

POWER POOL
willpower + vitality + (10 x tier)

MECHANICS of INVOCATION

• **FREE-FORM EFFECT**

Reason + *(lowest appropriate casting skill)*

• **PATTERNS**

Willpower + *(lowest required casting skill)* + 5

• **CHARMS**

Willpower + *(lowest required casting skill)* + 2

Effects directly targeting an unaware or unwilling individual are resisted by:

Willpower + Heroic Vigor + 5

ABOUT ARCANISM

- Combat effects can be dodged (or sometimes parried) using normal defensive skills
- Both minor and inoculated Arcanists can draw on their Stamina damage track to power arcane effects
- An Arcanist has a power pool equal to *Willpower + Vitality + (tier x 10)*
- Minor Arcanists have only Stamina
- An Arcanist can maintain multiple Patterns. The maximum is a number of focus points equal to their focus skill
- Inoculated Arcanists recover Power passively at a rate of *(tier)* points every 15 minutes. An Arcanist can concentrate and regain *(tier + focus)* points every 15 minutes, but may take no other action
- Alchemical salts can be used by inoculated Arcanists to:
 - Add 3 to an invocation test, at a cost of 2 points of physical damage
 - Regain 10 points of Power, at a cost of 2 points of physical damage

FREE-FORM EFFECTS

All Arcanists can spend up to *(tier + 1)* points of Power on an effect.
Effects can last no more than one minute, and focusing on one takes all of an Arcanist's concentration.

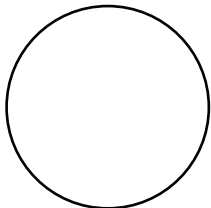
Power	Conjuring	Breaking	Light	Temperature
1	5 lbs common item (water)	hole in a wooden door	one electric bulb	heat/cool 1 person 30 deg.
2	2 50 lbs common, 1 lb uncommon (tin, chalk)	shatter that wooden door	small patch of daylight	room 30 deg, person 60
3	3 500 lbs common 5 lbs uncommon	smash through a sturdy iron door	enough to briefly blind one person	blastfurnace heat, briefly
4	5000 lbs common, 50 lbs uncommon, 1 lb rare (tungsten, fine steel)	break a sturdy object, shatter that iron door	fill a large area with brilliant light	melt glass

Power	Sensing	Damage	Defense	Moving
1	simple elect./thermal arcane effects 8+ power	8 physical 12 stamina	2 armor	small objects
2	whole EM spectrum arcane effects 4+ power	12 physical 16 stamina	4 armor	200 lbs briefly 30 lbs steadily
3	gravity, weight, density arcane effects 2+ power	16 physical 20 stamina	8 armor	1000 lbs briefly 200 lbs steadily
4	radiation, dimensions all arcane effects	20 physical 24 stamina	12 armor	2000 lbs briefly 400 steadily

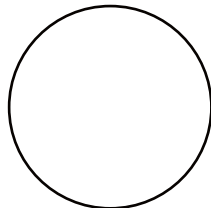
NOTES

COMBAT

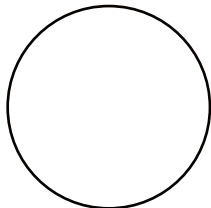
CHEAT SHEET



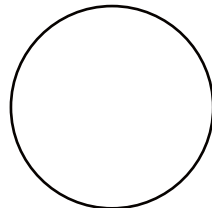
MIGHT



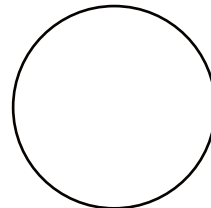
AGILITY



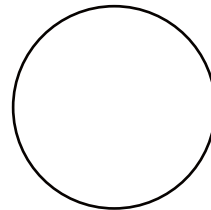
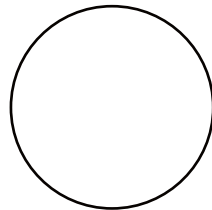
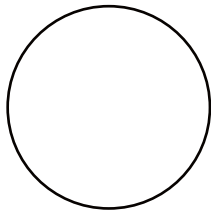
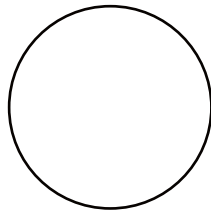
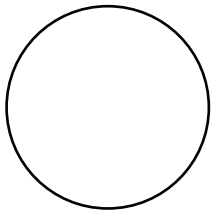
WIT



SERGEANT'S
EYE



DUCK &
COVER



CHARACTER'S PRIMARY COMBAT SKILLS

INITIATIVE

AMBUSH ROUND

Wit + Sergeant's Eye to detect ambush or no action in ambush turn.

FIRST REGULAR ROUND

All combats start with

Wit + Sergeant's Eye test.

Success may act in first round.

Failure may not act in first round.

Note: DoS or DoF for Initiative Score.

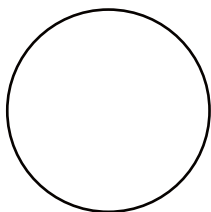
ALL SUBSEQUENT ROUNDS

Wit + Sergeant's Eye not re-tested.

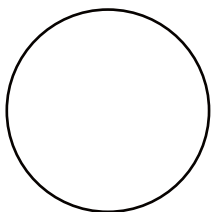
Declare in order from greatest DoF to greatest DoS.

ACTIONS IN A ROUND

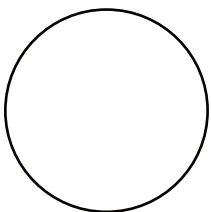
- Declare actions in initiative order, greatest failure to greatest success.
- Resolve actions; all actions resolved simultaneously within a round.
- A character may do one thing in each combat round:
 - Make one attack; invoke one Pattern or Ephemera; etc.
 - Walk briskly (*agility yards*) or run (*agility x 3 yards*), runners get no active defense.
 - Ready a single piece of gear.
 - Operate some feature of the world (open a door, etc.)
 - Aim a firearm to receive a bonus on the following round's test.
 - Observe surroundings in detail, allowing an appropriate Eye test.
 - Withdraw from melee combat: opposed Agility + Olympian Spirit.
 - Attack and defend in same round, -2 penalty to both actions.
- Free Actions: character may also drop something to the ground; make one short statement; shift a handful of steps at most; defend against either one melee attack (*two if no other action*) or any number of ranged attacks.



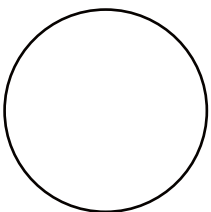
MIGHT



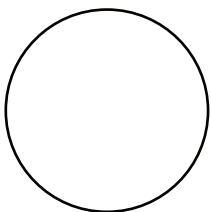
VITALITY



WILLPOWER



HEROIC VIGOR



OLYMPIAN SPIRIT

PHYSICAL DAMAGE

0													
-1													
-2													
-3													

(Each row = might + willpower)

Damage in the third and fourth columns results in an additional 1 point per round until medical attention is applied.

Damage in the fourth column requires a Willpower + Heroic Vigor test to avoid death.

STAMINA DAMAGE

0													
-1													
-2													
-3													

(Each row = vitality + willpower)

Damage in the fourth column requires a Willpower + Heroic Vigor test to avoid unconsciousness

RESOLVING COMBAT

• ATTACKER ROLLS

Agility + Appropriate Skill (+2 for Familiarity if applicable), with modifiers

• IF RANGED ATTACK, DEFENDER ROLLS

Agility + Duck and Cover, with modifiers including proximity of cover.

• IF MELEE RANGE, DEFENDER ROLLS

Agility + Close Combat Skill, with modifiers, if parrying. (*Can parry firearm or pattern*)

Agility + Close Duck and Cover, with modifiers, if dodging.

• If attacker fails, or defender's Degree of Success is greater or equal, attack misses

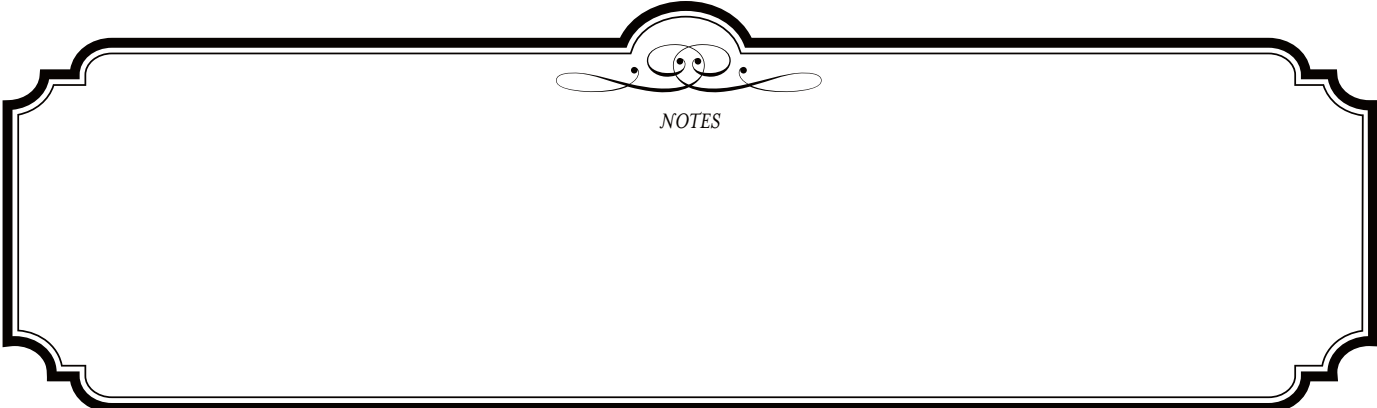
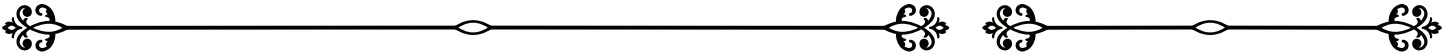
• If attacker's Degree of Success is greater calculate damage

DAMAGE

• Base weapon damage
+ attacker's net Degree of Success
- defender's armor rating

• Unarmed combat
and some blunt weapons
are Stamina damage;
otherwise physical

• Excess Stamina damage rolls over
to the physical damage track

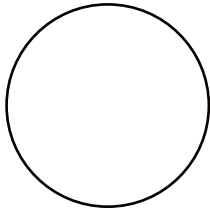


NOTES

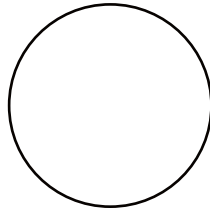


DREAMING

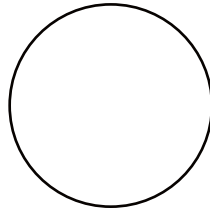
CHEAT SHEET



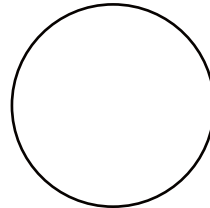
REASON



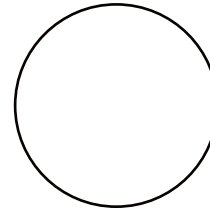
WILLPOWER



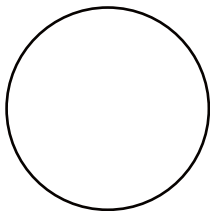
WIT



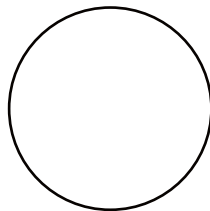
CURRENT
ARMOR
RATING



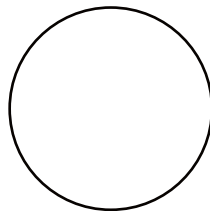
CURRENT
WEAPON
RATING



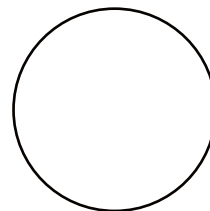
LUCID
DREAMING



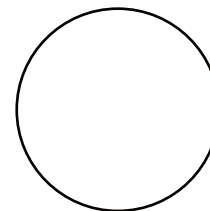
DREAMER'S
EYE



MORPHEAN
ARTIFICE



CLARITY OF
THE SELF



LANGUAGES
OF THE
SPIRIT

THE MECHANICS OF DREAMING

ENTERING DREAMING

Automatic: takes 15 minutes, reduced by 2 per success on a Willpower + Lucid Dreaming test

GUIDE A GROUP OF DREAMERS

Wit + Morphean Artifice; may lead up to (*lucid dreaming*) other people

EGRESS

LEAVING ONE'S OWN REVERIE

Automatic: Reason + Lucid Dreaming, If hurried

LOCATE PASSAGE OUT OF AN UNFAMILIAR REVERIE OR DREAM REALM

Reason + Dreamer's Eye

TRAVELING

LOCATE AND TRAVEL TO ANOTHER REVERIE OR A DREAM REALM:

Reason + Dreamer's Eye, modified by:

Emotional or physical distance (use the best): -5 to +5

Familiar destination: +1 to +5

Finding the Reverie of someone who is awake: -4

Reverie entrance defenses: -1 per point

Dream Realm obscurity: 0 to -8

Cultural distance: 0 to -5

Religion, language, age, gender/orientation, class, and nationality may each impose a 1 point cultural distance penalty, mitigated by research; one day of work and a successful Reason + Languages of the Spirit test can remove one modifier.

ENTERING A DREAM REALM OR REVERIE

ENTER A DREAM REALM
automatic, Reason + Lucid Dreaming if hurried

ENTER A REVERIE STEALTHILY
Reason + Dreamer's Eye to peek in,
then decide on a disguise
and test Reason + Languages of the Spirit

FORCE ENTRY TO A REVERIE
no test required,
but the subconscious will manifest
Figments to defend itself

ACTIONS IN A REVERIE

**LOCATE INFORMATION
IN A REVERIE**
Wit + Languages of the Spirit
Modified by cultural distance, also by 0 to -8
for information that the mind wants to guard carefully

**UNDERSTAND INFORMATION
IN A REVERIE**
Reason + Languages of the Spirit

**DETERMINE WHICH CHANGES TO MAKE TO
IMPACT THOUGHTS IN THE WAKING WORLD**
Reason + Languages of the Spirit

MAKE CHANGES IN A REVERIE
Willpower + Morphean Artifice

NOTICE CHANGES TO A REVERIE
Reason + Dreamer's Eye

CRAFT DREAM WEAPONS OR ARMOR
Reason + Lucid Dreaming, spending 1 Stamina per attempt
Rating equals Degree of Success; may share with other

DREAM COMBAT

INITIATIVE	ATTACK	DEFENSE
Wit + Dreamer's Eye	Willpower + Lucid Dreaming	Willpower + Clarity of the Self

DAMAGE
Attacker's net Degrees of Success + weapon rating - defender's armor rating
*(clever manipulation of the dreaming can cause additional damage,
typically in the range of 1-10 additional points, at GM discretion)*

All damage is taken as Stamina damage

A dreamer who loses all of their Stamina is thrown out of the dreaming
and suffers 3 points of physical damage if in their own Reverie, 6 if in the Dreamscape, and 9 if
elsewhere; these are doubled for dreamers using a chemical cocktail such as Lucidos and Laudanum

LUCIDOS & LAUDANUM

Lucidos is required by most lucid dreamers; one dose lasts for eight hours, at which point the effects gradually fade.

Laudanum and other sleep-inducing chemicals make it easier to dream, adding a 2 point bonus to all dreaming rolls, but make the process of being forcefully awoken more traumatic; double the amount of damage taken

EPHEMERA

Ephemera are phantoms from the dreaming, drawn from the collective unconscious and made manifest in the physical world. To evoke an Ephemera, the dreamer tests Willpower + Morphean Artifice versus all observers' Willpower + Dreamer's Eye. Apply a -4 penalty to the evocation test for Ephemera larger than a small room, up to a max 100 yard radius.

Observers who fail to resist accept the dream logic of the Ephemera and treat it as real.

Attempting to damage, interfere with, or otherwise disrupt an Ephemera grants the observer a re-Test of Willpower + Dreamer's Eye, no more than once per turn, with a cumulative +2 bonus per attempt.

A Dreamer who has resisted an Ephemera may attempt to dispel it entirely with an Opposed Test of Willpower + Morphean Artifice.

Each Ephemera may be used once between periods of sleep

Ephemera have no true physical impact on the world

Ephemera may be shaped and modified to some extent from their original form

Ephemera persist so long as someone is paying attention to them, and for a short period thereafter



MOD	TERM	RANGE	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	EQUIPMENT	SOCIAL
-10	all but impossible	far far away		paralyzed		seething hatred
-9						
-8	very hard	very long				strongly dislikes
-7						
-6			very dark abominable weather			
-5	hard	long		held down	improvised weapon (impractical)	poor reputation
-4			dark, poor weather slightly off balance	huge		
-3	difficult	medium	off-hand shot or swing			
-2			running, dim light also defending	Open Ground (ranged only)	improvised weapon (practical)	unknown person
-1			attacker moved slightly off balance	big		
0	challenging	short				civil relations
+1			on higher ground (melee only)	poor cover, small		
+2	routine		aimed pistol	good cover moving rapidly		
+3						
+4			aimed rifle	moving very rapidly or irregularly		
+5	simple		point blank	excellent cover, tiny		solid friend
+6			defender completely unaware		scoped rifle (aimed)	
+7	elementary					
+8						best friend
+9						
+10	trivial			complete, reinforced cover		love & affection



RANGE BANDS

toe to toe	<i>dirty dancing</i>
melee	<i>club dancing</i>
short	<i>up to a toss away</i>
medium	<i>well in sight, too far to throw to</i>
long	<i>a good ways away</i>
very long	<i>barely seen</i>
far, far away	<i>seen only if really looking</i>

TIME PERIODS

round	<i>five or so seconds</i>
scene	<i>a block of time, usually at one location</i>
story	<i>a series of related scenes</i>
campaign	<i>a series of stories, related or otherwise</i>



NOTES

