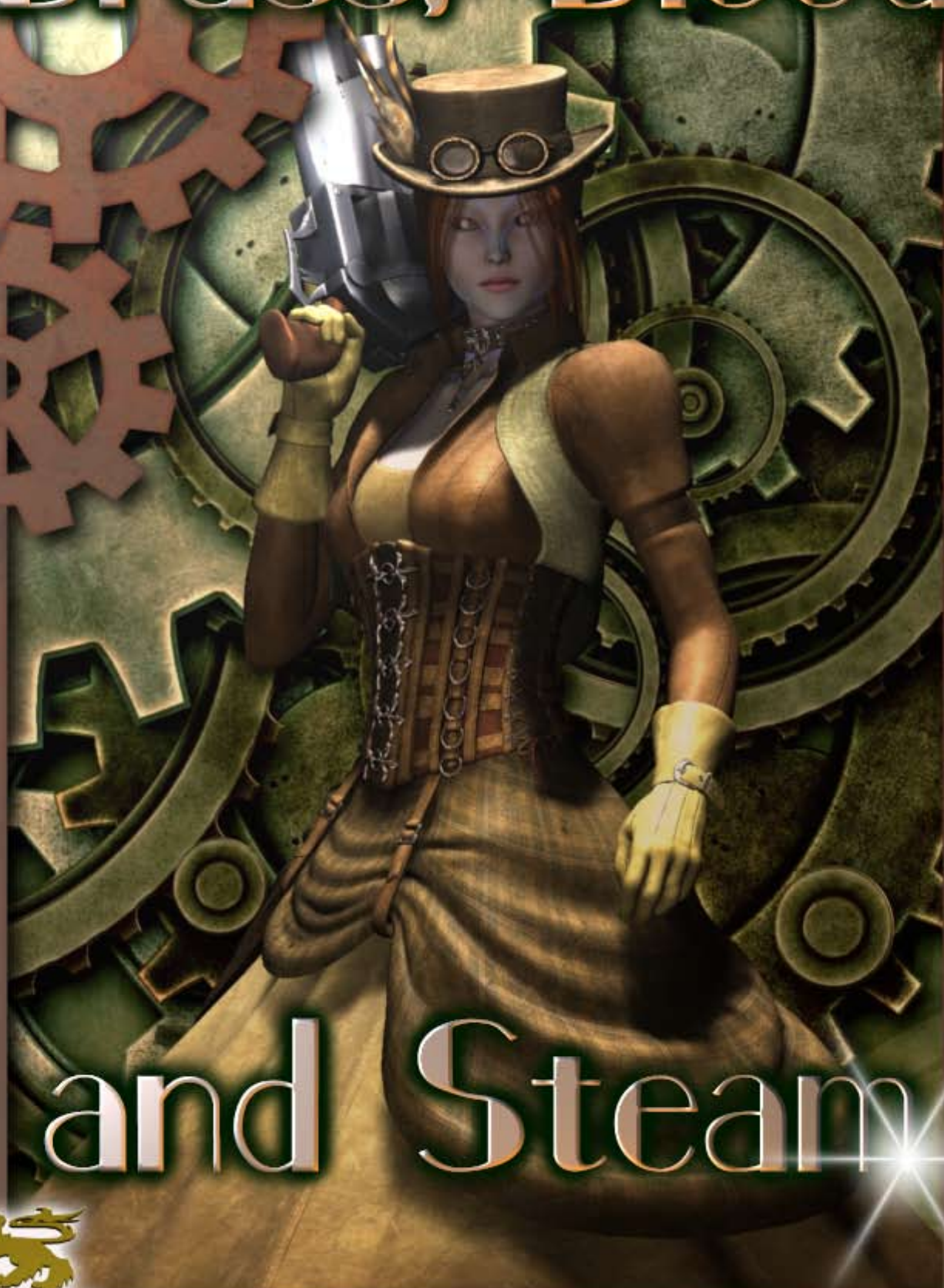


# Brass, Blood



# and Steam



Richard Fannon

# Brass, Blood and Steam

## A Steampunk source book

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# Brass, Blood and Steam

## Introduction: Retro-Victorian Scientific Romance

As we begin a new century, many of us are looking back to a period that ended as the last century began. Viewed through goggles of brass and leather, the Victorian period can look like a lost golden age – a time of excitement and adventure, opportunity and possibility. Writers, artists, film-makers (and gamers) have all revisited the speculative fiction of that period, mining it for ideas.

Retro-futurism is a process whereby a writer or other artist re-interprets the how a particular historic society viewed the future; steampunk is a label that has stuck to retro-futuristic visions of the Victorian period. Steampunk writers and artists have taken the worlds of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Edgar Rice Burroughs (among others) and created new works based on the tropes and themes that these authors used, but viewed through modern eyes.

SotC is a OGL role-playing game written by Evil Hat Productions and based on their FATE system (the game on which SotC is based is in itself a retro-future take on the pulps of the 20s and 30s). This supplement contains additional rules to tailor

SotC to the steampunk genre. The SRD for SotC can be found at <http://www.faterpg.com/dl/sotc-srd.html>. If you don't want to use this game, the information will be useful for any tabletop campaign.

As well as the rules, this book also contains a history of the steampunk genre of fiction, the early science fiction works that inspired them and an exploration of their influence on today's society. This genre is about looking as honestly as possible at one of the most important periods in the history of our species. Hopefully, this will help you, the GM, to create worlds that celebrate the best aspects of our Victorian ancestors while not shying away from the worst.

The title of this work refers to three concepts that I feel are at the heart of the spirit of Victoriana (and, thus, at the core of the genre that emulates the Victorians). Brass: an elegant material for a more elegant time, used to stand for the decorative style of period. Blood: standing for the spirit and passion of the Victorians – for better or for worse. Steam: mastery of steam power was the driving force behind the Industrial Revolution at the heart of the (Victorian) British Empire. Steam stands for technology and the technological and social changes during this time.



# Brass, Blood and Steam

## Brass

If two words can sum up the Victorian style they are “order” and “ornamentation”. A Gothic Revival church, a Great Western Railway steam train and a Gieves & Hawkes suit have simple, ordered lines, but with intricate detailing; gargoyles, corbels and grotesques on the church and the accessories (buttons, tie pin, etc.) intended to be worn with the suit. The period is renowned for the elegance of its design – more tasteful than simply baroque. Some of the materials are considered archaic – brass, cast iron, leather, lace – but their use today adds to the sense of nostalgia that surrounds steampunk.

In 1853, the critic and thinker John Ruskin released an three-volume epic called “The Stones of Venice”, based on his study of that city’s architecture. A chapter in volume two entitled “The Nature of Gothic” was tremendously influential on the artistic style of the Victorian era. While attempting to describe the essence of the Gothic style of building he suggested that the architect himself would have and express the following mental traits: “1. *Savageness or Rudeness.* 2. *Love of Change.* 3. *Love of Nature* 4. *Disturbed Imagination.* 5. *Obstinacy.* 6. *Generosity.*”. The parallels between what Ruskin saw in the buildings of Venice and the conflicting traits at the heart of his own, Victorian, culture don’t need to be spelt out.

Ruskin’s ideas merged with those of the designer William Morris to create what became known as the Arts and Crafts Movement. Effectively a romantic idealisation of the craftsman taking pride in their work, this was a reaction against the “soulless” mass-produced output of the Industrial Revolution.

Mass production triggered the beginnings of consumerism. Possessions have always indicated status, but now one could buy into the middle or upper class with the appropriate purchases – and now a family had to “keep up with the Jones” (a phrase that doesn’t appear until after the Victorian period, but tapped into a pre-existing feeling of social anxiety).

## Blood

The spirit of the Victorian age is one of (controlled) passion and optimism. Man (and the Englishman in particular) had used his mastery of technology to conquer the natural world and was beginning to master himself.

“Blood” has its darker side; the Victorians were obsessed with breeding. The fact that the Britannia ruled not only the waves, but half the globe indicated the superiority of the English race. On the other side of the Atlantic, slave-owners were selecting for increased strength and stamina, justifying their behaviour with “scientific” research proving that non-Caucasians were inferior sub-species of human. The British aristocracy had to be kept pure (in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Lady Catherine de Bourgh exclaims “*Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?*” at the prospect of her nephew choosing what she sees as an inferior marriage partner). To ensure this, women – particularly those of the middle and upper classes – had to be kept under control (note my deliberate use of pronouns at the beginning of this section). Divorce was difficult and almost impossible for a woman to initiate. It was often cheaper and easier for the husband to take mistresses and confine his wife to an asylum for the insane. Sexual education was patchy and inadequate, contraception unreliable, abortion illegal and dangerous while both pregnancy and child-birth were almost as hazardous. The Victorian adventuress is a staple of retro-Victorian fiction, but rare in reality (luckily, all SotC characters are exceptional in some way).

This obsession with purity emerges in strange ways. Publicly, the Victorians were prudish and almost puritanical; privately, prostitution and sexually-transmitted diseases were rife. More than one critic has noted that *Dracula* has a venereal subtext while *The Island of Moreau* has an obvious theme of miscegenation. Death was so commonplace in the Victorian period that it developed into a recurring theme within the culture. Death masks were taken from the recently deceased, much ornamentation had a morbid theme (particularly in architecture) and Victoria herself led the development of mourning

into almost an art form.

## Steam

The Victorian period is synonymous with the age of steam. Steam power was mastered, powered the factories of the industrial revolution; steamships and steam trains brought the world closer together.

Science was still in its adolescence; by science I mean the idea of observing behaviour, creating hypothesis that explains this behaviour, testing this hypothesis (and thus producing a theory) and allowing your peers to review your work. These principles began to be codified during the Victorian period (and the technological development of the time depended on them), but prejudices about race, sex and class remained unchallenged. Pseudoscience was even used to support these bigotries.

However, the first true piece of evidence-based medicine was the discovery that cholera was a waterborne disease. This led directly to the great Victorian sewers and water mains that are still used to day. More importantly it was just one of the discoveries that led to the belief that human intellect could conquer the random, unpredictable chaos of the natural world.

Society could not keep up with the pace of technological change. Increased mechanisation and improved farming techniques meant that less people were needed to work the land and the opportunities seem to be greater in towns and cities. Urban populations swelled and the existing housing and infrastructure couldn't cope. Conditions in these new slums and tenements were truly appalling. Dickens toned it down for his audience; the recent movies of *From Hell* and *Sweeney Todd* came closer to the truth, but film can't capture the stench of an open sewer.

## A Short History of the Steampunk Genre

### Scientific Romance

Science fiction as a whole began in the Victorian



period with the Scientific Romances. Despite what the name might suggest, these weren't love stories, but followed the chivalric romance tradition of Medieval and Early Modern Europe where a heroic knight would go on a quest.

The writers of these stories were inspired by Charles Babbage, Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla and the spirits of technology, colonialism, scientific research and industrialisation that pervaded Victorian society. Notable authors include: Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, H. Rider Haggard, George Griffith, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Garrett P. Serviss, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain and Edgar Rice Burroughs. Rudyard Kipling had a brief foray into the genre (*With the Night Mail*) and we mustn't forget Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. A common tread among these tales is a central narrator figure – almost always male and of high moral character (a knight figure) – who goes on a fantastic adventure (a quest).

Victorian society was full of contradictions. New technology had allowed colonialism to improve the standard of living for the rich and middle classes while creating a literally Dickensian squalor for the poor and the powerless. The literature reflects these tensions and (as always) the best writers held a distorting mirror up to their society, showing and warning about the problems. Parts

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of H. Rider Haggard's work read like colonialist bigotry today, Wells destroyed London on more than one occasion and Verne's misanthropic anti-hero Captain Nemo is just one way he illustrated the dangers of mis-applied technology.

## Retro-future in the atomic age

Scientific romance died in the trenches of WWI; science created mustard gas, the machine gun and was unable to prevent trench foot and trench fever. While the pulps and the silent movies looked to the genre for inspiration, the stories were set firmly within the 1920s and '30s. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* looks steampunk in hindsight, but filmed it was intended to be futuristic.

Science fiction's golden age began with the end of the Second World War. With the advent of atomic power and the Cold War, film-makers co-opted plots from the romances into xenophobic and apocalyptic films like the 1953 version of *War of the Worlds* or the 1960 adaption of Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*. Walt Disney wanted to prove that his studio could do more than kiddie matinée cartoons, so he took a gamble when shooting the 1954 release of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* as a period piece. Disney realised that the Victorian Era was changing in the minds of the American public from their forefathers backward past to a nostalgic golden age. It's quite possible that he drove that change; construction began on Disneyland while *20,000 Leagues* was in pre-production; the visitor entered the park either by a narrow-gauge steam train or walked up a re-imagined Victorian-American main street.

Disney kicked off a wave of Retro-Victorian Scientific Fantasies (and revisited it again with *Swiss Family Robinson* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*). Ray Harryhausen animated *The Mysterious Island*, *First Men in the Moon* and the cowboys and dinosaurs film *The Valley of Gwangi*. James Mason starred in the 1959's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, Vincent Price in 1961's *Master of the World* and 1965's *War-Gods of the Deep*. If you prefer your research to be more literary, in 1967 Ronald W. Clark released an alternative history novel called *Queen Victoria's Bomb*. He was a historical biographer by trade and brought together

many of the figures he wrote about in his day job into a tale about a 19th century atomic device.

On the other side of the Iron Curtain (and, thus, independent of both Disney and Hollywood) of a Czech auteur called Karel Zeman came to the works of Jules Verne with a European perspective. His 1958 film, *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne* was inspired by all of the author's novels rather than one in particular and looks like the original illustrations from his books have been brought to life. In 1967 and 1970 he adapted two Verne novels with *The Stolen Airship* and *On the Comet* while his *Baron Munchhausen* (1961) is filled with elements of Retro-Victorian Scientific Romance.

## New Wave

The term "steampunk" wasn't coined until 1987, but the genre had its antecedents, particularly in the "New Wave" of science fiction (a movement starting around the time Michael Moorcock took over editing *New Worlds* magazine in 1964, peaked around 1971 and was characterised by experimentation in form and content). Michael Moorcock was the first of the New Wave to examine Victorian visions of the future through modern eyes with the 1971 *Warlord of the Air* (and followed it up with the other novels in the *Nomad of the Timestreams* sequence). Harry Harrison responded with *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah* in 1972. At around the same time, Philip Jose Farmer began his *Wold Newton Family*. This series of pastiches shared a premise that a fictional 18<sup>th</sup>-century meteor impact at Wold Newton in Yorkshire, England, caused genetic mutations in the occupants of a passing coach. Their descendants were purported to have been the real-life originals of fictionalised heroes and villains such as Sherlock Holmes, Tarzan and Fu Manchu. Robert Silverberg's *Majipoor* series are not pseudo-Victorian, but are scientific romances (particularly *Lord Valentine's Castle*) and are well worth reading for steampunk inspiration.

In comics, Bryan Talbot wrote and drew *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* in 1972 (and followed it up with *Heart of Empire* in 1999). He also had a steampunk-influenced stint in the mid-80s on the *2000AD* comic, *Nemesis the Warlock*.

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## A Genre Emerges

The word first appears in 1987 in a letter sent from K.W. Jeter to the science fiction magazine *Locus*. Jeter coined it in an attempt to describe the “gonzo-historical ... Victorian fantasies” that he and fellow authors Tim Powers and James Blaylock were writing. Steampunk comes from cyberpunk; at around the same time William Gibson, Michael Swanwick and Walter Jon Williams were exploring the the interface between man and machine in futuristic Dickensian dystopias. Jeter, Powers and Blaylock realised that some of tropes common to cyberpunk had analogues in the scientific romances of the Victorian era. Jeter started the process in 1979 with the Wellsian *Morlock Night*, followed in 1987 by *Infernal Devices*; Powers released *The Anubis Gates* in 1983, *On Stranger Tides* in 1987 and *The Stress of Her Regard* in 1989; Blaylock contributed *Homunculus* (1986) and *Lord Kelvin's Machine* (1992). Amongst others, these initial authors were followed by Stephen Baxter's *Anti-Ice*, Diane Duane's *To Visit the Queen* and Paul Di Filippo's *The Steampunk Trilogy*.

In 1990, steampunk broke through in to the mainstream when Bruce Sterling and William Gibson, two authors who practically defined the cyberpunk genre, released *The Difference Engine*. They postulated a future based on the premise that Charles Babbage, the real-life Victorian mathematician and engineer had been able to complete the Difference Engine of the title – a programmable mechanical, analogue computer. As a result, the Information Age started over one hundred years ahead of schedule. One critic,

John Clute, congratulated Gibson and Sterling for “making London in 1855 worse than it was in fact” – the word “Dickensian” does not begin to cover it. However, the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (that he wrote with Peter Nicholls) also notes the nostalgic threads within steampunk fiction – including blatant dystopias like *The Difference Engine*.

## Steampunk proper

Apart from the period of the setting, the significant difference between steampunk and cyberpunk is that cyberpunk tends towards the “harder” end of the “hard-soft science fiction continuum” whereas steampunk is much “softer”. Let me explain: in sci-fi criticism, fantastic stories that either work within what we already know about the universe, or only bend the rules are regarded as being “harder” than those who throw the rulebook out of the window (as a rule of thumb, if the writer only breaks one law of physics, it's hard sci-fi). Compare *Babylon 5* (hard-ish sci-fi) with *Star Trek* (so soft it squidges), but SF fans argue about the hardness or softness of individual works more than comic fans argue over who could take Batman in a fight<sup>1</sup>.

It's interesting to note that none of the technology in Sterling and Gibson's *The Difference Engine* is unreasonable (there's a model working of Babbage's Difference Engine in the London Science Museum, created from his plans). Because of this, it's arguable that the book doesn't qualify as steampunk (it's a cyberpunk novel that just happens to be set in the 19th Century) or even that it's not science fiction<sup>2</sup>.

Steampunk can assume that the wildest fantasies of the Victorians were plausible – or even take Victorian speculations and transfer them into another universe. For example, the novels of China Miéville (*Perdido Street Station*, *The Scar*, and *Iron Council*) and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy. In Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* a future sub-culture has made

1 Squirrel Girl – and possibly Madonna

2 This is one of the many reasons why some SF fans and authors insist that it stands for Speculative Fiction rather than Science Fiction



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a conscious decision to take the best of Victorian style and culture while eliminating the worst.

Steampunk in film developed independently of the novels. Disney returned to the genre with 1974's *Island at the Top of the World* (a commercial failure). In contrast, the special effects in the 1975 adaption of Edgar Rice Burrough's *The Land that Time Forgot* were rather dodgy – even by the standards of the time, but it was enough of the a success for the producers to follow it up with *At the Earth's Core* (1976) and *The People that Time Forgot* (1977). Spielberg played with the genre in 1985's *Young Sherlock Holmes*; Terry Gilliam in the Zeman-influenced *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988). *Back to the Future III* (1990), set in the Old West, wears its Verne influences on its sleeve (for example, a flying, time-travelling steam train).

This second wave of Retro-Victorian films peaked with *Wild, Wild West* – a classic example of concept over content. The effects are sound and the actors are doing their best, but are fighting against a mindless script. However, it captures the look of steampunk aesthetic and, for a long time, the best way to describe “steampunk” to an outsider was “like *Wild, Wild West* – but better”.

Disney jumped back into the genre: *Tarzan* (1999), *Atlantis: the Lost Empire* (2001) and then fused steampunk with piracy and space opera in the 2002 *Treasure Planet*. At the same time, they remodeled Disneyland's Tomorrowland, removing the NASAesque white plastic and replacing it with brass, iron and copper (probably based on the steampunkesque Discoveryland of Disneyland Paris). The 1996 *Doctor Who* movie featured a steampunk TARDIS interior (and the current reboot is similar).

Steampunk did not fair particularly well on television. The best of the genre series was the Canadian *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne*, the worst probably *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World* while Bruce Campbell managed to elevate both the Napoleonic *Jack of All Trades* and the Western *Adventures of Brisco County Jr.*

Ignore the movie – Alan Moore's graphic novel *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and its sequels are the work of a writer and an artist that

are both at the height of their powers (only the first two books have a retro-Victorian theme). Mina Murray (of *Dracula* fame), Allan Quatermain, Captain Nemo, the Invisible Man, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are brought together by a secretive group within the British Government to combat threats against the Crown. In the first volume they foil Fu-Manchu's plot to use the anti-gravity metal “Cavorite” (familiar to any reader of H.G. Wells) to destroy London; in the second they are pitted against the Martians from *War of the Worlds* (with more than a little help from a certain Dr. Moreau). Alan Moore's meticulous research and supporting material (including a global gazetteer in the second volume) make this an essential read for any serious fan of the genre.

Japan produced a number of films, series and franchises influenced by Steampunk, including *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, *Full Metal Alchemist*, *Robot Carnival*, *Steamboy*, *Sakura Wars*, *Last Exile*, *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water* and *Escaflowne* as well as the Gothic Lolita and Gothic Aristocrat styles of dress.

## Today - Putting the “punk” back into Steampunk

As soon as any “scene” becomes mainstream there are always those who complain that it's become too fashionable and the newcomers don't understand what it's all about. Steampunk is no exception.

In terms of the fashion style, there is a distinct overlap between the retro-Victorian style of dress and the existing gothic, cyberpunk and rivethead styles. For many designers in Camden or Greenwich Village it was just a matter of changing the black lace to white, the black leather to brown and the chrome into brass. The purists growled, but then they always do.

The Victorian period was the last time that someone could truly be a polymath (C.B. Fry and Mary Somerville, for example) and where a university graduate could fully understand all of the technology of the age. Punk has always been about doing it yourself (“here's three chords – now form a band”), genuine antique Victoriana is expensive and the Victorian Arts and Crafts movement (see page 4) celebrated the work of

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a craftsman. The combination of these three factors make it quite natural for the community to laud “punkers” who make their own costume and artifacts (in fact, the purists expect it). The Internet allowed the community to develop – a swapping ideas, patterns and techniques. There’s a strong crossover between the Maker community (core philosophy: if you can’t take it apart, you don’t own it. Instead, it owns you).

Any counter-culture is a reaction against negative aspects of the prevailing culture and steampunk is no exception. Steampunk doesn’t dumb down; instead it celebrates intelligence and education. Modern western culture is risk-averse; Steampunk Magazine (see page 46) contains articles on building your own electro-plating machine or welding equipment (admittedly with warnings about the dangers of working with acids or high-voltage electricity, but still...) Steampunk culture downplays the worst aspects of Victorian morality, while concentrating on courtesy, manners and respect for self and others – things which are often

missing in today’s society.

Any work of speculative fiction looks at the world and asks the question: what if things were different? By looking at a different way that our society could have developed, steampunk makes us take a good, hard look at our lives and the world that surrounds us.

## Steampunk Campaigns

### “Historic” Steampunk

Many adventure ideas from the pulps and the default setting of the SotC SRD translate directly to the Victorian period. Nazis become colonialist rivals (French, Belgians or Germans), the Orient is still Mysterious and Scientists can still be Mad. One major difference is that the world is still a very big place. Travel between countries can take weeks; travel between continents, months and is still unreliable and occasionally dangerous.

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Reliable intercontinental communication was still remarkable. Britannia rules the waves and almost half of the the globe; the United States a young upstart and occasional rival.

Many technologies that were more fully developed in the period covered by the pulps are unknown during the Victorian period or still in their infancy. “Infernal machines” will be larger and more clunky. Items listed as “day to day” or “modern marvels” in section 7.1 of the SotC SRD will be considered futuristic (with the exception of the sawed-off shotgun – which is basically a blunderbuss and considered practically archaic). The “soon to come” are utterly fantastic and placing them in a game is likely to break immersion.

## Lost Worlds

During the Victorian period, significant parts of the world are still being explored by so-called civilised men. The discovery of strange, new, lands, beasts and beings is the theme of many Victorian scientific romances. The “trope namer” is, obviously, Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World*. A jungle plateau filled with dinosaurs and “missing links” could be a cliché, so perhaps, like Edgar Rice Burroughs’ (*The Land That Time Forgot*) you could transport it to an area of Antarctica (still almost completely unexplored) and have it kept warm and hospitable by volcanic activity. The “Hollow Earth” theme is more usual in the pulps of the 20s and 30s, but Jules Verne did *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and so can your players.

Exploration will throw up colonialist themes. Expect your players to emulate Alan Quartermain and impress incredulous natives by (e.g.) predicting an eclipse (in SotC terms an Academics roll was used to make a declaration, then both it and an aspect on the native tribe were tagged to push an already good Deceit roll into Epic territory). A GM will need to tread the thin boundary between realism and racism, particularly when creating characters born into a societies that were inherently racist (see page 6).

## Spiritualism

The Victorian obsession with mortality naturally

lead to them asking questions about what happened after death. Spiritualism was and is a monotheistic faith that emerged from mainstream Christianity and teaches that communication is possible between living humans and this spirits of the dead. It began in the United States as a synthesis between the teachings of two pre-Victorian figures: Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Mesmer.

Both Swedenborg and Mesmer claimed contact between humans and supernatural beings, but their outlooks couldn’t be more different. Swedenborg believed he communicated with spirits while fully concious and described an afterlife with a series of higher and lower heavens and hells and “Divine” that uses spirits as means of communication. Mesmer taught techniques rather than beliefs; if you haven’t already guessed, Mesmerism (see section 5.20.2 of the SotC SRD) is named after this showman and lecturer. Mesmer claimed that his subjects reported contract with supernatural beings while entranced. It will be up to the GM to decide the truths behind both Mesmer and Swedenborg in his or her campaign, but they did produce fascinating material.

Mysteries skill and stunts will operate in a Spiritualism campaign as described in the SotC SRD.

## Ghost-finding

The stories of William Hope Hodgson’s *Carnacki. the Ghost-Finder* feature more direct conflict between humans and the supernatural – reminiscent of a optimistic, Victorian, Lovecraft. Ghost-finding campaigns would focus around uncovering the truth and source of a particular manifestation before confronting the spirit (though Carnacki frequently just pulled down the building or utterly destroyed the haunted artefact). Additional rules for ghost-finding campaigns can be found on page 14. *Cthulhu By Gaslight* (see page 47) offers plenty of ideas for further occult Victorian adventures.

## Alternative futures, alternative pasts

Assume that the wildest fantasies of Tesla and Edison were feasible and then let your imagination run riot. This would give you a setting with all

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of the the themes and potential of the pulps, but with even wilder technologies. Need to get from London to New York in a hurry? No problem, my friend, just take the new Transatlantic Tunnel or – if steam isn't your thing – the nine o'clock ethergyro will get you there in time for lunch. If you don't mind your atoms being scrambled and the potential for duplication, Tesla has just unveiled his "tele-porter". With increased communications, the sun might never have set on the British Empire – colonialism might even have spread into space (see below).

This might would fit a more tongue-in-cheek campaign, but playing it straight could be more interesting. Technology might lead to an overall increase in the standard of living, but someone still needs to keep the machines oiled and the boilers stoked. While set in a 1920's view of the future (rather than being retro-Victorian) Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* offers some inspiration for this type of campaign.

## Victoriana - In Space!

If you want to explore colonialist themes without getting into uncomfortable territory, an option is to have the colonising powers spread out into the solar system. It will be more socially acceptable

for a GM to use racially charged language when playing a bigoted NPC if it's directed at a green-skinned alien rather than another human being.

Colonialism is about exploration and exploitation; new lands are discovered and then investigated for resources that can be extracted and returned to the centre of the empire. Unless the players enjoy being the bad guys, their characters should primarily be interested in "pure" exploration and discovery, improving the lives of the "benighted heathens" (even if it's just teaching them the rules of cricket) and upholding the finest traditions of the Empire.

*Space: 1889* (see page 12) is set in this style of campaign world and provided some of the inspiration for this section. Another source would be the *Barsoom* and *Amtor* stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs.

## The Positive Apocalypse

One interesting idea is setting a steampunk campaign in the future – our future. Assume that our society collapses (the apocalypse can be environmental, economic, biological or due to a combination of factors) and the survivors are beginning to rebuild. As has been noted previously, steampunk encourages technological self-reliance. The skills (and, more importantly, the attitude) needed to build and make your own costume and accessories are the sort of things that would be useful.

An apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic campaign will be about searching for resources (food, water, energy sources or information), while avoiding hazards (pollution, radiation, collapsing buildings, mutants) and then defending what you have and what you've built from those who want to take it from you.

Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* is set several generations after a collapse of this sort, but the members of the "Neo-Victorian phyle" (or tribe) have designed their sub-culture around the best aspects of Victorian life. *A Steampunk's Guide to the Apocalypse* (see page 46) teaches the reader how to thrive in a world of this sort and the writers seem almost to be looking forward to it.

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*Green Shoots and Ashes*, a supplement tailoring the SotC SRD to apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic campaigns, is currently in the planning stage.

## Women in a Steampunk campaign

I touched on the place of women in Victorian society on page 4. It wasn't until 1882 that the Married Women's Property Act prevented a husband from gaining title over everything his wife owned before their marriage. Women were utterly bared from the professions until quite late in the Victorian period (Margaret Ann Bulkley had to disguise herself as a man – Dr. James Barry – in order to become a surgeon; her secret was only discovered after her death) and it was almost unheard of for a married woman of middle or upper class to work outside of the home. Indeed one of the marks of entering the middle classes was that you (the husband) were rich enough that your wife didn't have to work. Money and status always bend the rules; Countess Ada Lovelace was one of the few people with the education and insight to fully understand the potential of Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine (she is generally accepted to be the first computer programmer). The phrase "Victorian adventuress" has gained a more positive meaning today, but, during the period, "adventuress" was an euphemism for a social climbing courtesan.

However, SotC characters are always exceptional and often pioneers; the whole steampunk genre is based on asking the question "what if the Victorian period was different?". This combination means that any character concept that is valid for a male character is also valid for a female, but a female character should take one or more aspects that represent her rebellion against the limited set of roles that her society has assigned to her.

## Grease-stained Fairies

This is most definitely not the first RPG with a steampunk setting (given that any subculture peaks shortly after it hits the mainstream, it may be among the last). In 1988, Paul Chadwick released *Space: 1889*, which assumed that Victorian theories about the cosmos and the

solar system were correct and the ether-flyer's of Thomas Edison had opened up new fronts for conflict and colonialism. This was followed by the entirely fantastic *Castle Falkenstein* (named after the unbuilt castle of King Ludwig II of Bavaria), which mixed magic and mythical creatures into a steampunk setting. Marcus Rowland still produces the shareware *Forgotten Futures* (and has also collected together several rare pieces of out-of-print Victorian Scientific Romance, providing guidelines as to how to run games within the universes of Professor Challenger or Carnacki the Ghost Finder). Steve Jackson Games obtained the licence to republish *Castle Falkenstein* as a supplement to their GURPS RPG system and followed it up with the award-winning GURPS *Steampunk*, GURPS *Steam-Tech* and the horror-related GURPS *Screampunk*. The *Girl Genius* webcomic is set in a fantasy steampunk universe and can be found at <http://www.girlgeniusonline.com/>

*Thousand-Faced Heroes* (also by this author) would be essential for anyone attempting a campaign SotC-based campaign of this sort.

## Rules

This is the meat of this book, a series of optional additions to the SotC SRD that allow the GM to customise it to a steam punk campaign.

## Stunt Aspects

As it sounds, a stunt aspect adds an aspect to a stunt. For example: the player of an inventor could add the stunt aspect "robotic clockwork horde" to their Minions stunt. This would be written on their character sheet as "Minions (robotic clockwork horde)". When this stunt is in use that can be tagged or compelled as normal. For example, a compel could make a minion's clockwork run down at an inopportune moment or the player of the character can tag the Robotic aspect to indicate immunity to (say) poison gas. Certain new stunts (see the New and Modified Stunts section on page 22) have optional or obligatory stunt aspects. Existing stunts (either from the SotC SRD or another source) can have stunt aspects added to



them with the GM's approval.

If a character derives their powers from a technological source then this might come with restrictions. These can be represented by stunt aspects. If preparation or special ingredients are needed for certain stunt then it might have a stunt aspect of "Frequent Oiling" or "Mysterious Elixir". If the character attempts to use the stunt without the ingredients or the preparation then the GM can compel the use of a fate point.

## Optional Character Generation Process

The standard character generation process in the SotC SRD is tied pretty strongly to the default setting and doesn't seem very appropriate for an steampunk campaign. If you don't want to use Fast Character Creation, here are some guidelines:

### Character ideas

Most of the character ideas in SotC can be used without modification, but the lower (or at

least different) level of technology means that the "Two-Fisted Pilot" would be inappropriate (unless, perhaps, they own an ether-flyer or zeppelin instead). Here are a few other ideas for steampunk characters.

### *Experiment*

As the name suggests, the Experiment is a product of science. He, she (or even it) is no longer human or perhaps never was. The creation of Doctor Frankenstein and the animal-human hybrids of Doctor Moreau are good examples. Intelligent steam-powered robots might be a stretch, but could be appropriate in some campaigns. Your inhuman nature means that you'll be feared, distrusted and perhaps hated by the majority of society. Alternatively, experiments of your type might be commonplace in this society, in which case you could be a slave (escaped, freed or otherwise). Either way, you're something special. Your relationship with your creator, his associates and the wider populace will define your character.

**What are you doing:** Finding out what it means

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to be you – something unique even in a world of marvels.

## ***Ghost Finder***

A cross between the scientist and the man of mystery, the ghost-finder is named from the lead character in William Hope Hodgson's *Carnacki* stories. Beneath the surface of this world is a terrifying mystic reality and you are one of the few people bringing a scientific mind-set to its exploration. Despite everything you have seen, you still cling to the notion that there is an underlying order which you can discover.

**What are you doing:** If it exists, it can be measured. If it can be measured it can be understood. If it can be understood, it can be controlled.

## **Phases**

These phases replace the character generation phases found in the SotC SRD. They're completely optional and are intended to get you thinking about your character in terms of aspects. In each phase you should select between one and four aspects, for the usual total of ten.

### ***Phase one – origin***

In this phase you decide where your character came from and the events of their youth from around birth to just before they're considered an adult by their society. In this phase you choose one or two aspects related to their family, place of birth, a childhood friend or a significant event from this time.

Where the character grew up and who they grew up with will influence the character's attitude towards nature, towards science and technology and towards foreigners. Are they cosmopolitan or xenophobic; a Luddite or superstitious? These attitudes might be important enough to reflect as part of an aspect. If the place of origin is famous or an important trading hub then this can become part of an aspect.

### ***Phase two – background***

This phase covers your character's teenage

years and early adulthood (if they are an adult). If your character completed secondary or tertiary education or undertook professional training then an aspect could reflect this. A first love is always significant and some friendships – or enemies – made at this time can last a lifetime. At this point your character be starting on their initial career – professional relationships and adversaries can be a source of aspects.

While we're on the subject of relationships – has this character ever been in love (if his/her/its species does "love"). Have they been married (or equivalent)? How did it work out? Do they have offspring? What's happened to them?

### ***Phase three – uniqueness***

All SotC characters are exceptional in some way. In this phase you decide how this unique nature is reflected in their aspects. An aspect should be linked to your character's Superb skill, customising or clarifying its use. In addition, aspects can be related to their Great skills to one or more stunts (particularly if they are in a chain of pre-requisites).

Is there something else that makes them special? Are they the heir to a politically important family or the head of a guild; famous or infamous for something they didn't actually do, but legend has blown out of all proportion?

### ***Phase four – motivation***

This is the phase where you tie your character to the rest of the party or into the campaign. The GM might have a list of allied or protagonist organisations – if your character has an aspect that relates to one of these organisations it will be easier to relate the character to the GM's concept of the plot.

What does the character want? Money? Power? Fame? A successful career? To find or rescue their true love? The character's drives and goals should be reflected in their aspects.

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Do the character's already know each other? Are they acquaintances, friends, professional rivals or even enemies? What is it that will get each character in the party to the first scene of the first adventure of the campaign?

## *Phase five – rounding out the character*

If you're still stuck for that last aspect, think about their hobbies, passions, pet peeves or prejudices. If completely clueless, Risus<sup>3</sup> clichés are practically identical to SotC aspects and the Risus Companion has many ways of generating that last #@!% cliché including the “Megaversal Omnigroovy Background Machine”, “The Random Bad Thing That Just Happened To My Character Table” and, of course, “The Last #@!% Cliché Table”. If you're *still* stuck, then just leave a gap and add it in play.

## New and Modified Skills

### Drive

The gasoline-fueled internal combustion engine was a Victorian invention, but they were rare novelties during the period. In most steampunk campaigns, the Drive skill should also cover trains, horse-drawn carts and steamships. It should also cover sailing ships, unless the campaign will have a nautical focus. If a lot of sailing is planned, consider the new Sail skill from *Thousand-Faced Heroes* (by the same author) or the up-coming pirate-focused supplement (as yet un-titled).

### Engineering

In historic steampunk campaigns, the standard of technology is generally lower than in the default setting of SotC. Because of this, the GM should ensure that the use of this skill fits in with his or her conception of the campaign world. Either the GM can research the make decisions about what technologies have been invented (a timeline from the real world can be found on page 18)

<sup>3</sup> Risus™ is S. John Ross' trademark for his Anything RPG. It (and the excellent, but completely optional, Risus Companion) can be found at <http://risus.cumberlandgames.com/>

or can use compels and declaration of minor details as individual items come up in play. For consistencies sake, the GM should still keep track of the technology level.

### Fists

I can't let this section go past without mentioning bartitsu, the Victorian martial art. Late in the Victorian period, Edward William Barton-Wright, an engineer who'd just returned to England after spending the previous three years in Japan, announced to the world the formation of a “New Art of Self Defense”. He named it bartitsu, a portmanteau of his surname and the martial art of ju-jitsu. While originally a fusion of ju-jitsu and judo, he expanded the arts taught at the “Bartitsu Academy of Arms and Physical Culture” (67b Shaftesbury Avenue, Soho, London) to include British boxing, Swiss *schwingen* (a form of wrestling), French *savate* (kickboxing) and a Swiss system of stick fighting called *la canne*. This “Bartitsu Club” was described by one reporter as “... a huge subterranean hall, all glittering, white-tiled walls, and electric light, with ‘champions’ prowling around it like tigers”.

Sherlock Holmes attributed his defeat of Moriarty to a knowledge of “baritsu” (probably intended as a reference to bartitsu). The martial art has recently had a renaissance and is likely to feature in the upcoming Sherlock Holmes movie.





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## Leadership

For a character with aspects that represent military training, this skill also covers strategy and tactics. This is used in an almost identical manner to casing (see section 5.6.1 of the SotC SRD). When performing reconnaissance or planning an upcoming conflict, the player can declare minor details or attempt to place aspects on the target(s). The player then makes a roll against a difficulty determined by the GM. If they succeed then the fact is true and an aspect has been added to the relevant scene, location or character(s). As always, the first +2 is free and subsequent tagging costs a fate point.

Strategy and tactics doesn't have to be restricted to military matters. A lawyer can use Leadership in the same way when planning a court case or a corporate takeover.

## Mysteries

Spiritualism was an important part of Victorian culture and even normally hard-headed skeptics like Conan Doyle were taken in by what we now see as obvious fakes. If it is real in your campaign, then the Mysteries skill will govern its use (as usual). If not, it would be covered by

a combination of Deceit, Sleight of Hand and – in some cases – Art). For more ideas on how spiritualism will effect a campaign, see page 10.

## Psychic Combat

In some campaigns, the ghosts will take centre stage. Combat featuring unquiet spirits (called “psychic combat” in this section) requires more detailed rules than are presented by the SotC SRD.

The Voices from Beyond stunt (section 6.20.4 of the SotC SRD) is a pre-requisite for psychic combat. An attacker will roll Mysteries to inflict stress on the Composure stress track; the defender will defend with Resolve.

If the PCs investigate before this conflict may uncover aspects of their opponent's character that they can tag during combat. The use of Academics to pore over dusty volumes in an attempt to find (e.g.) the source of a curse is obvious, but other skills are useful. Engineering or Art checks might find unusual architectural features; Art can be used to infer the occult history of a painting, sculpture or other artefact. If the GM has decided that there are scientific aspects to spiritualism, then Science rolls (and appropriate equipment) can be

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used analyse any manifestations. As always, any physical clues can be uncovered with Investigation. With the GM's approval, all of these skills can be complemented by Mysteries.

## Pilot

Sustained, controlled heavier-than-air flight was not achieved until after the end of the Victorian period and even balloons and gliders were still primitive. If this is still the case in your campaign, then you (as GM) may decide to remove the Pilot skill (and stunts) entirely and have primitive aircraft controlled using Engineering. In non-historic campaigns, all bets are off. The Pilot skill (and stunts) should be used as normal in (for example) *Victoriana – In Space!* campaigns (see page 11).

## Science

As described in the section on Engineering, above, the level of technology lower in historic steampunk campaign than in the default SotC setting. Of course, steampunk generally assumes a higher or at least different level of technology than in the real-world Victorian period so Lab Work, Medical Attention and, of course, Science! will work as described in section 5.25 of the SotC SRD.

## Weapons

Fencing was still considered a gentlemanly sport in the Victorian era (women did participate, but it was rare). Bartitsu (see the section on Fists, above), did also cover the use of weapons, in particular the use of the walking stick and umbrella. It was written too late to be considered Victorian, but the Bartitsu Compendium (see page 47) has a semi-serious article on how a Edwardian woman can defend herself using a bicycle; the Anything Goes stunt (see section 6.29.3 of the SotC SRD) is more than appropriate for a bartitsu master (though crude improvised weapons such as a broken bottle would be considered ungentlemanly).

## Morse Code

Morse code is the language of the telegraph and

should be treated as a separate language to English (knowledge of languages is covered by Academics as detailed in section 5.2.4 of the SotC SRD). It's common enough to be covered by the Linguist stunt (section 6.2.1 of the SotC SRD). Semaphore was commonly used when Morse was unavailable or inappropriate so a GM can assume that a character who knows the one will have more than a passing familiarity with another. Even by 1890, it was known that individual telegraph operators had a distinctive style (known as a "hand"). Detecting an unexpected "hand" is a Deceit vs. Empathy contest.

## Gadgets and Gizmos

### State of the Art

If there are two unquestionable features of the Victorian period they are that it was a time of great social and technological development and that it went on for a long time (sixty-three years in fact). As such, it's difficult to talk about the "state of the art" during the period because it changed too much and so rapidly. I've chosen 1890 as a fairly arbitrary, but interesting default date for a steampunk campaign. These are the technologies that were in general use, and in development, on and around that date. I'll also be focusing on the centre of the Industrial Revolution – the United Kingdom.



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## *Day to day*

By 1890, these items are an every-day part of Victorian culture. However, an individual item might draw attention if it's expensive, fancy or particularly well-made.

Steel	Safety Matches	Steam trains and steamships
Sewing Machines	Postal service	Tarmac
Concrete	Gas lighting	Electric lighting
Flushing toilets	Ice cream	Underground railways
Peddle bicycles (particularly the "penny-farthing")	General anesthetic (using chloroform or ether)	Antiseptic surgery using carbolic acid
Microscope	Binoculars	Intercontinental telegraph

## *Modern marvels*

Cutting-edge technologies, these items are subjects of newspaper articles, topics of conversation and will draw attention, particularly in remote areas.

Typewriter	Telephone	Local anesthetic using cocaine
Steam sterilisation of surgical instruments	"Safety" bicycles with chain and equally-sized wheels	Fully automatic machine-guns (Gatling or Maxim guns)
Light bulb	Truly portable "box" cameras	Fountain pen
Electric trains and trams	Gramophone	Pneumatic tires
Vaccination	Fingerprint identification	Ball-point pen

## *Soon to come*

These technologies will be invented or discovered in the next ten-to-twenty years. Scientist characters might be building the prototypes for science heroes to use.

Zeppelin	Open-heart surgery	Heavier-than-air flight
X-rays	Radio	Hydro-electric power
Cinema	Practical automobiles	Automatic pistol



## **Pounds, shillings and pence**

One significant bonus to a RPG with an abstract wealth system comes up during a Victorian-based campaign – you won't have to cope with pre-decimal currency. Before decimalisation in 1971, the United Kingdom used pounds, shillings and pence: a pound consisted of twenty shillings; a shilling was equal to 12 pennies or pence. There were a bewildering array of coins in circulation, from the farthing (worth a quarter of a penny) to the gold sovereign (worth a pound). White paper pound notes were used for larger amounts; the Bank of England issued notes denominations

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from five to a thousand pounds. These were large ungainly pieces of white paper, using elaborate watermarks to guard against counterfeiting. They were normally used only when one needed to carry large amounts of money – coins were much more common. The pound sterling was denoted by an L with a line across it (£) or just L. This is an abbreviation for the Latin *librum* or pound. Amounts in shillings were shown by an “s”; values in pence by a “d” (from the Latin *denarius*). A combination of shillings and pence was separated by a slash, so three shillings and six pence would be written as 3/6 (and pronounced “three and six”).

## Travel and Communications

The quickest and most reliable method of communication was the telegraph. By the 1890s even a telegram to Australia took less than three hours to process, transmit and receive. In the major metropolitan areas, telegraph offices could be found every few blocks. The telephone network was less extensive and reliable. All calls had to go through an operator and few lines were free from noise and interference. However, by 1890, there were nearly 25,000 telephones in operation in London and it was possible to call most of England and (via cables) the major Continental cities.

The postal service was superb – the envy of the world. All districts in London had at least eleven deliveries a day and most local letters

Price	Amount	Can buy
Terrible	Under 1s.	Snack, a pint of cheap beer or bottle of rotgut, bed for a night in a flophouse, newspaper, box of pencils, playing cards or dice, London Underground fare, tram or omnibus fare, national postal message, tip to porter, messenger (per mile or per hour), box of matches, bottle of ink
Poor	Under 5s.	Short ride in a hansom cab, knife, night in a boarding house, national telegram, cheap (lower class) meal, steerage class on the Channel ferry, cheap seat at a music hall, backpack, fountain pen, umbrella
Mediocre	Under 15s.	Cheap clothes, night in a hotel, week in a boarding house, burglary tools, national train ride (e.g. London to Dover or London to Liverpool), average (middle class) meal, cheap shoes, hand tools, disguise kit, sabre, fencing foil, dagger, handcuffs, international telegram, seat at the theatre, tent
Average	Under L.2	Medical equipment, ammunition, fancy clothes, box at the theatre or opera, tool kit, burglary tools, sword cane, rent of a flat for a month, quality clothing, expensive meal, quality boots, travelling bag, musical instrument, silver pocket-watch, field glasses (binoculars)
Fair	Under L.10	Revolver, shotgun, hunting rifle, military equipment, horse-drawn cart and horse, expensive/fashionable clothing, row-boat, sea voyage US-UK (steerage class), bicycle, typewriter, microscope, gold pocket-watch, sail boat, box camera (inc. film and developer)
Good	Under L. 50	Riding horse and tack, carriage and horses, sea voyage US-UK (First Class), rent of town house for a year
Great	Under L. 500	Small country estate, large town-house, small business, sailing ship
Superb	Under L. 10,000	Large country estate, mansion in town, factory, personal train
Fantastic	Under L. 100,000	Multiple estates and businesses, train company, steamship
Epic	Under L. 1,000,000	Private island
Legendary	Money is no object	Monarch of a country

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were delivered on the same day they were posted. Paid messengers (“Commissionaires”) were also common – particularly for confidential, valuable or particularly urgent material.

Newspapers were the only true form of mass media during this period. By 1890, London was served by nearly 500 newspapers. The most prestigious were the *Times* and the *St. James Gazette* (there were reporters and then there were “gentlemen from the *Times*” – a much more respectable profession). At the opposite end of the scales was the *Illustrated Police News*, whose cover showed an artist’s conception of the mutilated body of Mary Kelly (the Ripper’s last victim) the morning after her murder. Magazines (*The Strand*, *Beeton’s*, *Pearson’s*) were also widely distributed, as were the popular novels known as the “penny dreadfuls” or “shilling shockers”

(depending on the price). *Sweeney Todd* began life as penny dreadful.

A passenger liner took between six and ten days to cross between UK and the US (usually between New York and Liverpool). A train between London and Liverpool took between 4 ½ and eight hours. If, instead, you wanted to get to the Continent, the train from London to Dover lasted 2-3 ¼ hours and the ferry from Dover to Calais took 1 ¼ to 1 ¾ hours.

## Improving Things

The rules as detailed in the SotC SRD stand, with a few exceptions:

An Independent or Concious gadget has a single skill, at Mediocre level – this can be improved by



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the Upgrade or Craftsmanship improvements. The Independent improvement has the Futurization improvement as a pre-requisite.

If the Armored improvement is applied to a wearable suit, then its effect is extended to the wearer. This means that if someone is struck for a single point of stress while wearing a gadget with this improvement, then the damage does not roll up even if that box is already checked off (it doesn't prevent the stress, just the roll-up).

If the gadget also has the Futurization improvement, Armored can be taken twice. This means that if the gadget, or someone wearing it, is struck for one or two points of stress, the damage doesn't roll up even if those boxes are already checked off (it doesn't prevent the stress, just the roll-up).

Armored usually applies to Health stress, but it can also apply to Composure stress in (e.g.) telepathic combat. The decision about which type of stress it applies to should be taken when the improvement is selected; the Armored improvement may be taken twice so it will apply to both Health and Composure stress.

## New Improvements

The following improvement can be added to any gadget or artifact in a steampunk campaign, subject, as always, to the GM's approval:

**Fully Automatic:** A Fully Automatic ranged weapon gains a +2 on any attempt to use it to perform a block action (see section 4.3.4 of the SotC SRD)

**Aggravated Damage:** Some weapons cause damage by disintegrating their target, melting it into the ether or causing the sub-atomic bonds between its particles to weaken. Any attempts to repair damage or treat injuries caused by this weapon are made at +2 difficulty. Depending on the campaign, Futurization, Speculative Science or Unbelievable may be pre-requisites

## Sample Gadgets

### *Doctor Hill's Electric Pentacle*

The ghost finder's secret weapon (see page 14), this gadget is based on the recent discovery that certain types of electromagnetic radiation repel or disrupt ghosts and psychic projections. Any immaterial entity attempting to cross the pentacle needs to defeat its operator in mental combat.

**Doctor Hill's Electric Pentacle** (ward, □□□): Armor (psychic attack), Special Effect (attempts by ghosts or psychic projections to cross the pentacle may be resisted using mental combat, rolling Mysteries vs. Mysteries), Upgrade (+2 when using the Mysteries skill to resist attempts to cross the boundaries of the pentacle)

### *Electro-Ether Pocket Pistol*

The technology might be inexplicable by the science of the time, but the effects are undeniable. Electro-ether rays disintegrate their target, so the damage or injuries are difficult to treat or repair. Science checks to provide medical attention and Engineering checks to repair damage are made at +2 difficulty.

**Electro-Ether Pocket Pistol** (gun, □□□): Craftsmanship (+1 to Guns), Unbelievable, Aggravated Damage (see page 21)

### *Da Vinci*

Having trouble with your minions? Da Vinci is a fully autonomous mechanical man, designed to act as a lab assistant. He can interpret simple commands delivered via voice or stamped onto cards similar to those designed for the recently manufactured Jacquard mechanical loom.

**Da Vinci** (robot, □□□): Unbelievable, Concious, Independent

### *Portable Gatling-Maxim Rifle*

During this historical period, fully-automatic weapons practically needed infrastructure. This latest product from the Gatling-Maxim weapon-making dynasty has miniaturised the popular quick-firing gun to the point it can be carried and

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fired by a single person.

**Portable Gatling-Maxim Rifle** (rifle, □□□): Craftsmanship (+1 to Guns), Miniaturization, Fully Automatic (see page 21)

## ***Brossard and Sons Patent Bullet-proof Waistcoat***

Brossard and Sons have provided clothing for the discriminating explorer for over fifty years. This latest invention weaves steel and other alloys into the tweed of a standard waistcoat, giving in some protection against bullets and knives. Comes in a variety of styles (including plaids for our Scots cousins) and with the Brossard signature pocket-watch, hip-flask, compass and multi-tool.

**Brossard and Sons Patent Bullet-proof Waistcoat** (armor, □□□□□): Armor, Rugged, Additional Capability (explorers' tools)

## ***Tesla Electro-Capacitance Rifle***

Despite designing several weapons systems, the great inventor despised violence, so the concept of a weapon that was designed not to kill appealed to him. This gun fires “bullets” that carry a high-voltage electrical charge and are designed not to pierce the skin. The effect is something similar to cross between a modern bean-bag round and a taser.

**Tesla Electro-Capacitance Rifle** (rifle, □□□): Speculative Science, Special Effect (causes Composure stress instead of Health Stress), Upgrade (+2 when performing a block action against a single target)

## **New and modified stunts**

The following stunts are appropriate for any steampunk campaign, at the GM's discretion.

### **Life Support (Endurance)**

The character can survive in hostile environments (including arctic cold and desert heat) and does not need to breath. Certain extreme environments (including, but not limited to, molten lava and strong acids) will still harm him or her. For reasons of game balance, this doesn't provide any

immunity to Weapons, Fists or Guns – no matter how unrealistic you might find this. This stunt requires both aspects and stunt aspects (12) to describe the source of this ability.

### **Catch the Pearl of Death (Fists)**

The character can block or dodge any normal ranged attack (such as a bullet, arrow or thrown knife) using their Fists skill. This won't work against fully automatic fire, artillery shells or ray guns.

### **Natural Melee Weapons (Fists/ Weapons)**

The character has teeth, claws, tentacles or other pointy implements of destruction built into his, her or its body, making them impossible to disarm without major surgery. These weapons are operated using either the Fists or Weapons skill (decide when the stunt is picked). This stunt should have stunt aspects; note this on the character sheet as (for example) Natural Melee Weapons (cat-like claws – use Fists) or Natural Melee Weapons (razor-sharp beak – use Weapons).

### **Natural Ranged Weapons (Guns)**

The character has some sort of ranged attack “built-in” to his or her body. This can be fire breath, the a machine gun for an arm or something else. The Guns skill is used to attack with this ability. A stunt aspect (see page 12) should be taken as part of this stunt.

### **Military Mind (Leadership)**

You have had extensive training in military strategy and tactics. You gain +2 to Leadership checks during reconnaissance or while planning an attack (as described on page 16).

### **Military Genius (Leadership)**

**Requires Military Mind and one other Leadership stunt**

When performing reconnaissance or planning an attack (as described on page 16) a player

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normally only reveals or declares one aspect about the location or opponents, in advance. With this stunt, however, if the character gains spin on his roll, he may reveal or declare one or more additional aspects (one additional aspect at 3 shifts, two at 5 shifts, or three at 7 or more shifts). Further, regardless of spin, if the player is using the declare method with this stunt, he may save off from making his declarations until he's already in the middle of making the combat – in essence, retroactively introducing elements he'd “already planned for”. Only one such retroactive declaration may be made per scene, but (except for truly epic battles), a combat rarely lasts only one scene.

Alternately, the character may trade in one of his “retroactive” aspect picks in order to declare up to three non-aspect-based lesser details about the scene. This may be done in addition to making an aspect pick for the scene.

## Dynamic Aspects (Science)

The character can transform between two forms, has two personalities or can change their nature in some other way. They have two sets of aspects and can switch between the two at any point by invoking an aspect for effect and spending a fate point. The lists will have at least some overlap – one or more aspects should cover the two lists, the differences between them and the trigger (if any) that causes the character to switch between the two sets of aspects.

## Dynamic Form (Science)

### Requires Dynamic Aspects.

This is a more extreme version of Dynamic Aspects where the character can completely alter their form. As well as two lists of aspects, the character has two lists of skills and two lists of stunts (both lists must include Dynamic Form and Dynamic Aspects). As with Dynamic Aspects, the character can switch between the two sets of lists by invoking an aspect for effect and spending a fate point.

## Memory Palace (Science)

After meticulous study of his own mind, and that of others, this scientist (or perhaps he will prefer the term “mentalist”) has built a mental construct that he uses to store almost everything that can be known. At all times they are considered to have a Library with a quality equal to their Science skill. In addition they can substitute Science for Academics when researching a topic or declaring minor details.

## Full Contact Grant Application (Science)

Most inventors are perennially short on funds, so there is an ever-present temptation to acquire the necessary materials through nefarious means. A character with this stunt has taken this a step further, turning subterfuge from an art or a craft into a true science. They may use the Science skill to complement any Burglary roll. In addition, the Science skill can be used instead of the Burglary skill when casing (see section 5.6.1 of the SotC SRD).

## Alienist (Science)

The science that became known as psychiatry is still in its infancy (and currently called “alienism”), but it still has practical applications. The character can use the Science skill to modify Deceit rolls and they can also use Science instead of Deceit in





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an appropriate social conflict.

## Facial Profiling (Science)

“Reading a face” isn’t just a expression – it’s simply a matter of learning the language. The character can use the Science skill to modify Empathy rolls. They can also use it instead of Empathy in an appropriate social conflict.

## Applied Physics (Science)

The character has an instinctive knowledge of the underlying principles used to build and maintain technology. The character can use the Science skill to modify Engineering rolls .

## Scientific Boxing (Science)

Surely wrestling is just a matter of leverage and a knowledge of medicine would allow the pugilist to know where and how hard to hit an opponent? A character with this skill certainly believes this and may use the Science skill to modify Fists rolls. The character is likely to know bartitsu (see page 25) or a similar, scientifically based, martial art. Stunt aspects would be appropriate for this stunt (representing the particular school of martial arts).

## Ballistics (Science)

It’s all about angles, gravity, calculating the effect of air resistance and allowing for the wind. This character may use the Science skill to modify Guns rolls.

## Ray Guns (Science)

### Requires Weird Science.

Not only has the character has made some sort of scientific breakthrough, but they have used their knowledge to create new forms of weaponry. They have access to weapons based on unusual principles that only the character (and possibly his minions) understand. These ranged weapons are fired using the Science skill at targets up to two or three zones away, but can not be used against characters in the same zone. This stunt requires stunt aspects (“electric lightning gun” or “ectoplasmic ether-

ray”) and may not be appropriate in campaigns where ray-guns (of whatever sort) are commonplace.

## Stick of Pain (Science)

### Requires Weird Science.

This stunt is identical to Ray Guns, but the new weapons can only be used against characters in the same zone.

## My Intellect is Superior (Science)

A powerful mind is always intimidating, but this character has made a study of the exact words, gestures and facial expressions that will be the most effective at destroying another person’s ego. They can use the Science skill to modify Intimidation rolls and, in an appropriate social conflict, can use Science instead of Intimidation.

## Forensic Science (Science)

As a science, forensics is in its infancy, but it’s a science nonetheless. The character can use the Science skill to modify all Investigation rolls. In addition, the difficulty of all Lab Work used to analyse clues uncovered by Investigation is reduced by two steps (but never below Mediocre). This skill does not overlap with Forensic Medicine (see section 6.25.1 of the SotC SRD) – the player must chose which stunt will apply to any given roll.

## Tactical Logistics (Science)

It’s just a matter of locating the precise place to apply the force. The character can use the Science skill to modify all Leadership rolls and can use Science instead of Leadership when commanding troops or organising workers.

## Parapsychology (Science)

Some call it mysticism, but you call it science. The character can use Science to modify all Mysteries rolls and can use it instead of Mysteries when performing Mesmerism (see section 8.3.19 of the SotC SRD) or when Artificing (see section 5.20.5). The Workshop of a character with this



stunt will function for them as an Arcane Workshop of the same level and the Library of this character will also function for them as an Arcane Library. This means, for example, that a character with a Resources of Great and the Parapsychology stunt, who selects Workshop as their workspace (see section 5.24.3 of the SotC SRD) will have a Fair Workshop (Great-2) that also functions for them as an Arcane Workshop.

## Force of Will (Science)

This character has applied logic and reason to the weaknesses in their own character, curing or mitigating their worst flaws or phobias. The character may use the Science skill to modify all Resolve rolls and may use it instead of Resolve in an appropriate social conflict.

## Quick Pick Stunt Packages

### Experiment

You're a creation of science; a product of an inventor's mind. Perhaps you're an animal given (near-)human form and sentience. Perhaps a re-animated corpse crafted from the results of body-snatching. Perhaps you were even grown in a vat. For purely mechanical beings, see *Mechanical*

*Man* below.

**Core Stunts:** None.

**Other Stunts:** Natural Melee Weapons (page 22), Natural Ranged Weapons (page 22), Dynamic Aspects (page 23), Dynamic Form (page 23), any Science, Athletics or Endurance stunt.

### Bartitsu Master

A student of Barton-Wright (or a similar instructor), you've weaved the best fighting styles that the world has to offer into an eclectic, personal and – above all – Victorian martial art.

**Core Stunts (2):** Anything Goes (section 6.29.3 of the SotC SRD), Scientific Boxing (page 24).

**Other Stunts:** Any Fists, Weapons, Endurance or Athletics stunt.

### Ghost Finder

Your research into things man was not meant to know has had practical results. Untold perils lie beyond the veil, but a man (or woman) of science has a practical attitude towards danger.

**Core Stunts (3):** Psychic (section 6.20.4 of the SotC SRD), Voices from Beyond (section 6.20.4 of the SotC SRD), Parapsychology (page 24).

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**Other Stunts:** Any Mysteries or Science stunt, Big Man/Woman in Spiritualism (section 6.7.2 of the SotC SRD), Scholar (section 6.2.3 of the SotC SRD), Linguist (section 6.2.1 of the SotC SRD), Gift of Tongues (section 6.2.1 of the SotC SRD), Inner Strength (section 6.23.2 of the SotC SRD).

## Fake Spiritualist

Perhaps a parent had “the sight”; perhaps you had a few “flashes” early in your career; perhaps you always were a fraud. Either way you probably justify what you do by saying that you provide comfort and hope for the bereaved and suffering. If the character still has the occasional insight, you can combine with Mystic (section 10.19.3 of the SotC SRD) or Psychic (section 10.19.4 of the SotC SRD).

**Core Stunts (3):** Con Man (section 6.8.1 of the SotC SRD), The Honest Lie (section 6.8.3 of the SotC SRD), Cold Read (section 6.10.2 of the SotC SRD).

**Other Stunts:** Sucker (section 6.8.1 of the SotC SRD), Big Sucker (section 6.8.1 of the SotC SRD), Takes One to Know One (section 6.8.3 of the SotC

SRD), Heart’s Secret (section 6.10.2 of the SotC SRD), A Peek Inside (section 6.10.2 of the SotC SRD). Many spiritualists were exposed as frauds when their manifestations or demonstrations of their still were exposed as trickery – take Bump and Grab (section 6.26.1 of the SotC SRD) or Legerdemain (section 6.26.2 of the SotC SRD) to make sure this doesn’t happen to your character.

## Mechanical Man

Your inventor took Babbage’s analytical engine far beyond the great man’s wildest dreams. You’re machine, but with a mind of cogs, gears and levers.

**Core Stunts (2):** Life Support (page 22), Tireless (section 6.11.1 of the SotC SRD).

**Other Stunts:** Natural Melee Weapons (page 22), Natural Ranged Weapons (page 22), Dynamic Aspects (page 23), Dynamic Form (page 23), any Science, Athletics, Academics or Endurance stunt.

## Queen Victoria's Land – A Sample Campaign Background

### Introduction

In 1841, the HMS Erebus, under the command of James Clark Ross, on an expedition to the Antarctic, discovered what he described as a thermal enclave at around 77° S, 168° E. The weather was unnaturally mild, mild enough for a landscape reminiscent of Iceland or Scandinavia rather than the snowy desolation he was expecting. He named the island after his Queen (and received a knighthood in exchange), but was killed on a second expedition to Queen Victoria's Land when his men startled the primitive inhabitants. Subsequent expeditions confirmed that the land had preserved species that had become extinct during the last Ice Age – including the Neanderthal men that accidentally killed Ross.

Despite this traumatic start, a colony – Port Edward, named after Queen Victoria's son – was established and tentatively good relationships formed with the locals. The Belgians are also attempting to form a colony in another part of the enclave – far enough away that they can't be legitimately accused of encroaching on British territory. Without Tesla's genius and the British experience at asking the locals for their expertise, they are apparently having difficulties.

### State of the Art

The year is 1890. This history of this campaign begins to diverge from the real world in 1859 when Joseph Lister, the father of antiseptic surgery, failed to gain Regius Professorship of Surgery at Glasgow University. He decided to return to London to take up a post at his *alma mater*, University College, London. In our universe, the discoveries made by Lister, and his colleague Louis Pasteur, weren't widely accepted until the late 1870s; Glasgow was a considered a provincial backwater and Pasteur was, frankly, French. In this campaign world, Lister's research was performed in the scientific capital of the world. Preventative and evidence-based medicine were established fifteen-years

earlier than they did in our world. Most world-travellers and explorers will be vaccinated against small-pox, typhus and cholera – despite the risk of side-effects.

The second major change was in the relationship between the inventors Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla. In our world, Edison and Tesla fell out over money that Tesla claimed was owned to him by Edison. In this campaign, Tesla's genius was combined with Edison's business acumen to begin a second phase of the industrial revolution. Much of their output is still in the prototype stage (and can only be brought using stunts), but (for example) the British armed forces are experimenting with the use of the Tesla-Edison ether-flyer (a biplane that uses electromagnetism for both lift and propulsion) as a replacement for the reconnaissance balloon.

Tesla's ether-telegraph (radio) allows instantaneous communication between the major and minor population centres of the world. As an important scientific research station, Port Edward has an ether-telegraph station and a geothermal power station designed by Tesla himself. The inventor has a laboratory on a hill overlooking the town. Electric light is ubiquitous, large ships carry ether-telegraph stations and alternating current electric motors are beginning to replace steam for low-powered applications.

The portable Gatling-Maxim Rifle (see page 21), the Bossard and Sons patent waistcoat (page 22) and Tesla's electro-capacitance rifle (page 22) are examples of items that are available in this campaign to science heroes and similar character concepts.

### State of the Empire

The British Empire is at its peak. Canada, large parts of Africa, India and Australia all pledge their allegiance to Queen Victoria (just as in our own world, the prospect "home rule" for Ireland is a hot political topic during the late Victorian period). The United States is concentrating on developing and colonising its interior and is not considered a world power. The Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) unified Germany and began the series of stand-offs that would eventually lead to the First

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World War. This build-up is occupying much of the other colonial powers (with the exception of Belgium; the Belgians attempting to form another colony in Antarctica).

## Queen Victoria's Land

This is an area around the size of France centred around Ross Island (which has the same name in this world as it has in ours) which has a climate similar to that of Scandinavia due to geothermal activity. Floral and fauna is similar to that of the last ice age. Mammoth, yak-like auroch and giant stag are hunted by sabre-toothed tigers and stone-age Neanderthals. Due to the extreme inclination of the sun, there are long days during the southern hemisphere summer (December to February) and long nights during the winter (June to August). In fact there are several weeks in mid-summer where the sun doesn't set and, correspondingly, several weeks in the mid-winter where it does not rise at all. Port Edward has electric street-lighting and streets that are kept clear by steam-powered snow-ploughs, but few travel far outside of this beacon of civilisation during this time.

Hot springs are common; earthquakes infrequent, but not unknown. There are several active volcanoes in the area (four alone on Ross Island) and there have been two serious eruptions since the land was discovered. The land is a mixture of pine forest, tundra and barren volcanic rock-fields.

## Port Edward

This small town is based around a natural harbour on Ross Island. It was considered a desolate backwater until Tesla established his laboratory here four years ago. He wanted to study the *Aurora Australis* (the southern counter-part to the northern lights), other electromagnetic phenomena caused by the proximity to the south magnetic pole and, of course, the geological abnormalities that make Queen Victoria's Land habitable. His partner/employer, Edison visits around once a year to guide Tesla's researches back to a more practical direction and pick up his latest results. The port is used as a kind of test-bed for their inventions. It

has a modern sewerage network with a processing plant in the bay, electric street-lighting; every building has electrical power and is heated by hot water from a series of volcanic springs. There are even a couple of wagons powered by prototype internal combustion engines and used as hansom cabs (horses don't thrive in this climate). The Queen has not made the long and difficult trip to the colony, but her son, the port's namesake, has unveiled the statue of his mother that dominates the town square. Thanks to greenhouses heated and lit using geothermal energy and hunted animals supplied by the "brutes" (see below), Port Edward has recently become self-supporting in terms of food.

## Homo Neanderthalensis

In our world, this offshoot of our ancestors died out during last ice age. In this world, they survived in this prehistoric enclave. They were still using stone-age technology when the British arrived, but quickly supplemented this with steel tools supplied as gifts or in exchange for local knowledge. The residents of Port Edward refer to them as "brutes", but a true gentleman or lady will use an euphemism such as "our cousins" instead.

Pasteur's theories about germs and his development of vaccines are generally accepted by this time. While the Neanderthals are technically a separate species, the colony authorities suspect (correctly) that they may be vulnerable to the same diseases. The colony suffered from something that looked suspiciously like an outbreak of bubonic plague during their first winter, so a two-way quarantine has been instituted. Any outbreak of any serious disease on any ship travelling to or from Port Edward must be reported and the ship cannot land until the infection has run its course.

The Neanderthals have their own, guttural, language, but a pidgin of it and English is becoming more common (treat these as separate languages in game terms). Most Neanderthals who've made the journey to "civilisation" have died of diseases that to which they have no immunity. However, one survivor, whose English name is Nimrod Walks-Alone, acts as a kind of ambassador between the two species. Neanderthal player characters

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are quite possible; one of their aspects should represent their species and their relationship with the rest of their race.

## The Belgians

On the edge of Queen Victoria's Land, just

beyond the area claimed by the Crown, is a small collection of huts that the Belgian government calls a colony. It has neither the natural geothermal resources of Port Edward, Tesla's genius or the relationships that the British have formed with the Neanderthals. As you can imagine, it is struggling and is only being maintained by the Belgian



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government so that they have a legitimate claim over any future resources found on the continent. The main (and only) settlement in the colony is named Port Leopold after King Leopold II, the reigning monarch. There's a movement to call the Belgian lands "New Congo", but it hasn't yet caught on.

## Mysteries

Spiritualism is as much as a fad in this world as it is in ours, but there does seem to be "something in it". The Mysteries skill works as detailed in the SotC SRD.

## Diamonds in the Snow – A Sample Adventure

### Introduction

This adventure is intended as a campaign introduction, bringing the PCs together, introducing them to Port Edward and the major areas of tension. One character should be a medical doctor or be a noted scientific or academic genius with a Science of Good or better.

The characters should all have a reason for their journey to Queen Victoria's Land and should have an aspect that represents sufficient social status to be invited to dinner at the captain's table (a professional, upper middle or upper class or an aristocrat). In addition, all of the characters should have aspects that represent one or more of the following:

- a sympathy with or connection to the Neanderthals
- significant debts or greed
- always being “up” for any kind of adventure

If any PCs has the character idea of “Operator” (see section 2.2.7 of the SotC SRD) and is an agent of the British Crown, their contact in Port Edward will be Malcolm Jones at the Empire Import/Export Corporation (a common front company for the British Secret Service)<sup>4</sup>. Explorers, Plucky Reporters or Operators for a different country or organisation can be following up rumours that diamonds have been found in Queen Victoria's Land. Tesla and/or Edison would make great patrons for a Gadget Guy or Science Hero or an ally/competitor for Academic or Scientist.

### Plot Outline

Elements within the Belgian government wish to improve the influence of their colony in Antarctica

<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, a prototype portable ether-telegraph machine is a great Personal Gadget for an Operator or Science Hero character



at the expense of Port Edward and Queen Victoria's Land. Realising that the British relationship with the Neanderthals is the key to the colony's success, they've come up with a plan to remove this advantage.

While all the residents of Port Edward have been vaccinated against smallpox, the brutes have not. The practice of giving smallpox-infected blankets to unwanted natives is one that has been practiced by many colonial powers, so the conspirators are just continuing in this “fine” tradition. They're justifying this by saying to themselves that the Neanderthals are just animals.

The adventure will begin on the S.S. Ice Princess, a ice-breaking cargo ship *en route* to Port Edward. The two of the conspirators have disguised themselves as a delegation from a French humanitarian agency. When a crewman contacts smallpox from the blankets, they will kill him and the ship's surgeon before the surgeon can institute a quarantine on the ship. Hopefully, the PCs will solve the mystery and uncover the plot.

During their investigations, the PCs will discover the trigger for the Belgians attack on the Neanderthals. They've discovered diamonds in a part of Queen Victoria's Land that's remote enough for the borders to be ill-defined. Despite the



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Belgians having enslaved the local Neanderthals, the British can't act overtly against them for fear of triggering a war in Europe.

With the assistance of Nikola Tesla, the PCs will make the difficult journey to the diamond mine, free the slaves and escort them to safety.

## Act one: The S.S. Ice Princess

### Scene one: The Captain's Table

The adventure will open with the character's dining at the Captain's Table of the S.S. Ice Princess. The steamship has just left Melbourne for the four week journey to Port Edward. Dining with the PCs are:

Captain Cunningham (the captain).

Doctor Metheringham (the ship's doctor).

Emile and Amélie de Man (representatives of a French humanitarian organisation interested in improving the lives of the Neanderthals).

Thomas Edison (who needs little introduction – he's travelling to his annual meeting with Tesla).

Nimrod Walks-Alone (Neanderthal "ambassador", returning to his people).

This scene will introduce the characters to one-another, to potential allies (Nimrod Walks-Alone and Thomas Edison in particular) and to the protagonists for this section of the adventure (the de Man's). Captain Cunningham will attempt to draw everyone into the conversation; possible topics include:

The Tesla-Edison ether-flyer and it's recent trials by the British Army (Edison can't say much about the trials, but believes that powered flight will be as revolutionary as the ether-telegraph).

Tension in Europe, particularly between France and Germany over Alsace-Lorraine, a territory lost by France during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War. The de Man's will claim that they don't involve themselves in politics, giving characters with a high Empathy the opportunity to attempt a read on them (see sections 5.10.1 and 5.8.2 of the SotC SRD).

The de Man's proposed humanitarian efforts. Nimrod will be amused rather than offended ("clothing? Mammoth skin warmer than any Northerner clothing. Blankets? Blankets always useful. Boots? Boots good. What do you want for them?). He will pretend not to understand the concept of charity.

Nimrod's feelings about Victorian culture and technology. He's intelligent, but his vocabulary is a little limited, he will omit or make mistakes with pronouns ("he" and "she" rather than "him" or "her") and occasionally refer to himself in the third person ("this one" rather than "I"). He loves technology (especially steel) and enjoys the spectacle of theatre and the opera even though he admits he doesn't always understand what's happening on stage. He dislikes firearms ("cowards weapons") and finds London too smoky and smelly and Melbourne too hot.

The smallpox epidemic in Melbourne and how lucky we all are to have been vaccinated against this terrible disease (the de Man's obtained the blankets from the victims of this epidemic – mostly Aboriginal Australians).

The unmasking, capture and execution of Aaron Kosminski, the killer popularly known as "Jack the Ripper", due to fingerprint analysis, the latest miracle of science.

Edison's latest invention, which he's transporting to Port Edward for a field test and Tesla's input on the design. It's an internal combustion engine mounted on a cart and optimised for transport in the snow. He's thinking of calling it a "snow-mobile"

The PCs backgrounds and reasons for their journey to Queen Victoria's Land

Social conflicts using Intimidate will be a breach of etiquette; the captain warn any PC using this skill and then ask them to leave the dining room if they persist. Any PC asked to leave for this reason will be tagged with the aspect of "Bully" for the rest of this act. Social conflicts using Deceit or Rapport will be highly appropriate for this scene. Amélie will attempt reads on any attractive male PCs, searching for possible targets for seduction, should it become necessary.

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## Scene two: Smallpox?

The first half of the journey will pass uneventfully. As is traditional, when the first icebergs are sighted, a boat will be launched to chip off ice for the cocktails drunk by the first class passengers. At around half-ten in the morning, the day after this cocktail party, a steward will deliver a message

into a vein in his arm. He's dead – apparently of a heart attack due to cocaine overdose. The portholes to the office are open and the papers on his desk are in disarray.

Each shift on a Fair Investigation roll generates gains another piece of information from the table below:

Shifts	Information
1	Cocaine overdose. There's even a half-empty bottle of the medicine on the desk.
2	The weather's been fine all day. There isn't enough wind to have blown all of the papers around like this. There are scratches on one porthole and a smudged footprint on the wall underneath it – perhaps someone climbed out of the porthole? The doctor kept a daily treatment journal, but the most recent pages are missing
3	It's not cocaine, it's cyanide – the blood test confirms it. Add iron sulphate to the filtrate from the sodium fusion test, acidify with mineral acid and bingo! Prussian blue. There's another fresh hypodermic mark on his wrist that may be the point the poison entered his body. The pages scattered around come from the files on several different crewmen
4	The files don't have anything in common – the crewmen have different jobs and ranks. However, there is something interesting in the papers for Able Seaman Pollock include something usual. His record of vaccination (obligatory for anyone visiting Queen Victoria's Land) is a fake
5	The pages around the most recent entry have been removed so it's not easy to view the impressions left in the paper by Doctor Metheringham's pen. Whoever removed the pages, didn't reckon on the crime being investigated by a detective of your skills. The graphite powder reveals layer upon layer of impressions, but two things stand out from this morning's entry. "Able Seaman Pollock" and "smallpox"

from Doctor Metheringham to the medical doctor/academic of the party. The doctor sends his complements and asks the PC to meet him in his office in the ship's sick bay at their earliest convenience to provide a second opinion on an interesting case.

When the PC arrives, the door to Metheringham's office will be closed and the nurse will be a little unwilling to let him enter (Intimidation or Rapport check against her Average Resolve to convince her to let the PC knock on his door). There will be no response – if the PC leaves or fails to convince the nurse to let them approach then about half an hour later the nurse will attempt to offer the Doctor his eleven o'clock cup of tea and scream loud enough to alert half the ship (including all of the PCs).

Either way, the PCs will gain access to the Doctor's office. He's sitting behind his desk, slumped over and not breathing. He's in his shirtsleeves, one sleeve rolled up and a hypodermic needle stuck

## Scene three: Another disappearance

By this time, the character's will want to talk with Able Seaman Pollock – even if their investigations were unsuccessful, the sailor was the doctor's only appointment that morning and the doctor sent his message to the PC immediately after examining him. According to the nurse, he was complaining about a rash.

The Able Seaman will be nowhere to be found. He's not in his cabin or in his duty station in the cargo hold. No-one's seem him since he went back below decks after his doctor's appointment.

The de Man's have a spy among the crew who recognised the significance of the Able Seaman's rash (he caught smallpox while handling the cargo). Emile de Man coshed him while he was returning below decks and pushed the body through a port hole. Meanwhile, Amélie sneaked past the nurse, used her poison ring to kill the

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doctor, staged the overdose and escaped through the porthole (using her Universal Gadget stunt to create suction cups).

Further investigation will be futile. No-one saw Amélie or Emile and they wore gloves the whole time. If smallpox is suspected then it will need to be reported so the ship can be quarantined. Fortunately, the incubation period is such that – if no further cases are reported – then the ship’s voyage will not be delayed.

## Scene four: Jack Frost’s Ball

A party will be thrown for the first class passengers on the day that the ship crosses the Antarctic Circle – the Jack Frost Ball. The conceit is that first-time visitors (“skaldarks”) to the continent have trespassed into Jack Frost’s domain and they have to ask this monarch of the Antarctic (played hammingly by the First Mate) for permission to continue (the crew have a similar ceremony for first-time crew on this voyage, involving being dunked in icy seawater and having to eat hot chillies to warm up).

After a kangaroo trail, Jack Frost sentences the skaldarks to death, but will be persuaded to commute the sentence to a fine – a kiss from the most beautiful woman among the skaldarks. If none of the PCs are women, this will be Amélie de Man, otherwise make it a Rapport contest between everyone involved. The First Mate (Jack Hawkins) relevant aspects are: A British Tar, Secretly Gay, Wannabe Pre-Raphaelite. Amélie de Man’s aspects and Popular Girl stunt will be useless. If she loses, she will be outraged, but hide it well. It will take an exceptionally high Empathy to beat her Rapport and get a read on her.

Jack Frost will accept a chaste peck on the cheek from the winner, the ceremony will conclude and turn into another cocktail party. Jack Frost will change back into his uniform and return to being First Mate Jason Hawkins. During the party, one of the de Man’s will attempt to poison his drink. If Amélie won the contest then a jealous Emile will be the poisoner, otherwise it will be a vengeful Amélie. Either way, the character’s must make a Alertness check against the NPC’s Sleight of Hand. Amélie will invoke her Sparkling Cyanide

aspect; Emile will complement his Sleight of Hand skill with Stealth and invoke his Concealed Menace aspect.

If spotted and challenged Amélie/Emile will deny everything and drink the poisoned drink to demonstrate that it’s safe. After “proving” their innocence, both Amélie and Emile will hurriedly leave the party in order to take the antidote. A social conflict (Rapport vs. Resolve) will be needed to persuade the Captain to detain them for long enough for the de Man’s to blow their cover. The Captain Cunningham will offer a concession of detaining the de Man’s for further investigation in lue of a moderate consequence.

If the poisoning goes undetected or unchallenged, Jason Hawkins will collapse about five minutes later. Use the rules in section 8.3.10 of the SotC SRD. It’s cyanide, a poison of Good subtly and Great potency; Jason has a Fair Endurance. If accused at this point, the de Man’s will protest their innocence. Again, the Captain will need persuading that the de Man’s are responsible – a Rapport vs. Resolve social conflict; the Captain will offer a concession of detaining the de Man’s and searching them and their cabin in lue of a mild consequence. Searching the cabin is detailed in an optional scene below; a Great Investigation roll while searching either of the de Man’s will uncover her poison ring or an empty vial of poison on Emile (if he is the poisoner). Both will be carrying concealed weapons and lock-picks. The discovery of any of these items will be enough for Captain Cunningham to detail them both in the brig.

Unless the characters take further action or make further investigations, the rest of the voyage will be uneventful. Below are two optional scenes that could be run if the players take the game in that direction.

## Optional scene one: Searching the de Man’s cabin

If at any point the PCs wish to search the de Man’s cabin then use the following guidelines.

Firstly, locating their cabin will require an Fair Contacting check to obtain the location. However, the Amélie has asked her steward to keep an ear to

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the ground for anyone asking questions about them. The PC will also have to beat her in a Contacting contest to avoid her finding out that she is being investigated. Alternatively, the PCs could just ask one or both of the de Man's – a good excuse and a Fair Rapport check will obtain their cabin number. However, they will take the opportunity to get a read on the PC.

the maid has cleaned). If they detect any other intrusion, they will hide anything incriminating in a lifeboat.

Fourthly, once they are in the cabin, they need to search it. Each shift on a Fair Investigation roll generates gains another piece of information from the table below:

Shifts	Information
1	Nothing. The de Man's are exactly as they appear to be – French humanitarians.
2	They might be French humanitarians, but why do they know so much spy trade-craft? There are hairs stuck to the inside of the door and to the outside of the drawers
3	A-ha. There's a set of lock-picks in a secret compartment in Emile's suitcase and some uncut diamonds in a concealed pouch in one of Amélie's handbags. They're high-class thieves. As spin has been gained on this roll, the PC will gain +1 on their next skill roll that involves a social interaction with the de Mans (the PC knows – or thinks they know – the de Mans' secret and that gives him or her a psychological advantage over them)
4	There's a codebook and three enciphered messages in another secret compartment in Amélie's suitcase. There aren't any instructions on how to use the codebook, so deciphering the message will take an afternoon and Good Academics check. One of the difficulties that the deciphering PC will find is that they were assuming that the deciphered plaintext was French and it's not. A Fair Academics check will recognise that it's Flemish, one of the languages spoken in Belgium. If none of the PCs has the Linguist stunt and they've all declared all of the languages that they can speak (see section 5.2.4 of the SotC SRD) then they'll have to make a Fair Contacting check to locate someone on the boat who speaks the language (the Captain will be able to find out one of the stokers is Dutch). There first message reads "PACKAGE DELIVERED PLANNING DISTRIBUTION", the second reads "DISTRIBUTION COMPLETE RETURNING" and the last reads "EMPIRE IMPORT/EXPORT CORPORATION ASK FOR MALCOLM JONES" (see act two, scene five for the significance of the Empire Import/Export Corporation and Malcolm Jones). Anyone capable of deciphering the messages will know that lazy and/or overconfident spies often same time by enciphering messages before they are needed. The first two messages may have been prepared to be sent once the de Man's arrived in Port Edward

Secondly, they have to approach the cabin without being detected and remain at the door for long enough to pick the lock. As stewards and passengers are always roaming First Class, this will need a Fair Stealth check.

Thirdly, they will need to get into the cabin. The lock is only of Average difficulty, but Emile has set up some tricks to detect any intruders (hairs stuck to the door and drawers with saliva, papers arranged in a memorised pattern etc.). The PC will need to beat Emile in a Burglary vs. Burglary contest in order to enter and search the room without leaving evidence behind of their intrusion (the de Man's reset these "traps" every day once

## Optional scene two: A Séance

If one on the PCs has the Voices From Beyond stunt they can attempt to contact the spirits of Doctor Metheringham or Able Seaman Pollock by staging a séance. Unless the PCs keep this plan utterly secret (only discussing it within themselves), the de Man's will discover it if they succeed in a Contacting vs. Contacting contest (Amélie's Good Contacting vs. the highest Contacting in the party). If she finds out about it, the de Mans will claim that she's "sensitive" and insist on taking part.

A (genuine) séance in this period typically consists of the participants sitting around a large table and holding hands while the medium (the

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character with the Voices From Beyond stunt) attempts contact. Each shift on a Fair Mysteries roll while attempting to contact Able Seaman Jack Pollack gains another piece of information on the table below. We suggest that you write the individual pieces of information out onto pieces of paper and hand them one-at-a-time to the player of the medium, allowing him or her to role-play “the mists parting”, etc.

medium.

## Act two: Port Edward

What happens in Port Edward depends very much on the PCs actions. The scenes in this act are all optional and can happen in any order. It’s late spring as the ship arrives in the port, so the days and nights are roughly the same length and

Shifts	Information
1	The spirit is angry, hurt and confused. He doesn’t understand what’s happened to him.
2	He doesn’t know how he was killed – the last thing he remembers is walking below-decks back to his duty station when he was struck from behind
3	The spirit of Jack Pollack manifests. He appears to be soaked to the skin (because Emile de Man disposed of this body overboard). If Emile de Man is present, he will panic, throw himself at the spirit (who will vanish) and then the de Man’s will attempt to fight their way out.
4	The manifestation is clear enough for any doctor in the party to be able to inspect the rash on the late Able Seaman’s hand. It’s difficult to be certain, but it certainly looks like smallpox
5	“There’s a threat in the cargo hold – not to the ship – not directly – but to the whole colony. First Pestilence, then Famine, War and DEATH!” After crying this the medium will fall into a swoon (easily revived with brandy and/or smelling salts) and Pollack’s ghost will vanish

Each shift on a Fair Mysteries roll while attempting to contact Doctor Metheringham gains another piece of information on the table below. Again, we suggest that you write the individual pieces of information out onto pieces of paper and hand them one-at-a-time to the player of the

the weather is similar to a British winter.

Port Edward is a bustling dockside town. As the Ice Princess is towed into it’s mooring it seems like half the town has turned out to greet them – there’s even a brass band. If the PCs don’t already

Shifts	Information
1	So much life, so much vitality and potential wasted. The doctor was most definitely taken before his time and is frustrated and angry
2	It wasn’t an overdose. The doctor was tricked and drugged by a devious and seductive woman
3	The ghost of Doctor Metheringham manifests. If Amélie de Man is present, he will point at her and utter an unearthly moan. Amélie will be frozen in place until Emile attempts to fight his way out of the room. The ghost will vanish as soon as the violence begins; Amélie will recover from her shock after a single round of combat
4	The doctor was convinced that Able Seaman Pollock had smallpox – a case of this disease in someone who is apparently vaccinated is a very serious and reportable condition. Metheringham wanted to confirm the diagnosis before alerting the authorities. Amélie had been flirting and hinting at the possibility of an affair over the previous few weeks. This meant that when she sneaked past the nurse and into his office after the consultation with Pollock, he was taken off his guard. As she took his hand in hers and brought it to her lips, he felt a pin-prick in his wrist. That’s the last thing he remembers
5	If the medium promises to bring the Amélie de Man to justice then the conflict that is tethering the ghost to this plane is resolved and medium can guide them “into the light”. Grant the medium a fate point

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have reservations at the Imperial Hotel then the Captain can recommend some respectable boarding houses.

## **Optional scene one: The worst-case scenario**

If the PCs fail to detect or detain the de Man's, their cargo – including the deadly blankets – will be unloaded and distributed to the local Neanderthals in their cave complex in the hills surrounding Port Edward. The first symptoms begin around twelve days later: fever, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle pain and general malaise. The Port doesn't begin to hear about the disease until

two days later when the rash appears and starts to form the characteristic pox. A decision is taken to vaccinate the local Neanderthals (despite the risk of complications) because vaccination within three days of exposure will prevent or significantly lessen the severity of the symptoms. Tesla, Edison and any PC scientists will set up a production line producing the vaccine. Nearly three-quarters of the local Neanderthals are killed, including nearly all of the children. Even the residents of Port Edward are not immune. The virus mutates in it's new host and the conventional vaccine is not entirely effective. Once mutated, characters exposed to the disease must make a Fair Endurance check each day they are exposed (treating victims,



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etc.) or contract the disease. Smallpox should be treated as a slow-acting poison with a Good potency and Great severity (see section 8.3.10 of the SotC SRD); one Endurance check should be made every two days.

The epidemic is devastating to the colony. The nascent tourist industry ceases to exist and the Neanderthals are no longer supplying fresh meat and furs for trading. Indeed, the surviving Neanderthals move away from “cursed” Port Edward (spreading the pox through the wider population). Six months after the disease has run its course in the colony, the Belgians announce that they’ve discovered diamonds. A new “gold rush” begins, but it’s focused around New Congo and Port Edward diminishes until it becomes little more than a support mechanism for Tesla’s laboratory.

## Optional scene two: The de Man’s cargo

Despite anything that might happen on the Ice Princess, Captain Cunningham will not allow the PCs to examine the de Man’s cargo while it’s still on board. All cargo has been lashed tightly to avoid it shifting in the high seas and the de Man’s crates are not directly accessible.

If the de Man’s have been arrested, PCs involved in their arrest can gain access to their cargo on a Good Rapport, Leadership or Contacting check. There’s nothing suspicious about the contents: second-hand boots, shoes, warm clothing and blankets. However, much of it has come from victims of the smallpox epidemic in Melbourne (the Aboriginal Australians had not been vaccinated) and, while all of the PCs should have been vaccinated, it’s not 100% effective. Anyone examining the cargo must make a Mediocre Endurance check or become infected.

The standard laboratory test for smallpox involves attempting to infect a chicken embryo – an expensive rarity in the colony (a Fair Resources check needed to obtain sufficient fertilised eggs). A Good Science check and a day in an appropriate laboratory (Tesla will not allow his facilities to be used for this under any circumstances, but the colony health institute has a lab – Good Contacting

or Rapport check to gain access) will verify that the blankets in particular carry a virus from the family that includes smallpox; spin on this roll will confirm that it is smallpox.

## Optional scene three: The de Man’s escape

The local magistrate isn’t qualified to try capital crimes such as the ones committed by the de Man’s. If arrested and charged, they will need to be returned for trial at the Crown Court in London on the Royal Navy icebreaker *HMS Resource* (due to arrive in Port Edward a week after the Ice Princess). In the mean time, they will be detained in the town lock-up.

Two nights after their arrest, they will escape (the security in the jail is no match for a Hatpin Maestro). They will equip themselves from a cache set up by Malcolm Jones (see optional scene five, page 38), steal Edison’s “snow-mobile” and head for Port Leopold. If Malcolm is still at large, he will assist them with the escape before returning to the Empire Import/Export Corporation. In this case, a Fair Investigation or Survival check when investigating the escape and theft will find the third pair of boot-prints, a Great Investigation or Survival check will track them back to the Import/Export Corporation and a Superb check will allow the PC investigator to identify Malcolm by his boots, Sherlock Holmes-style.

## Optional scene four: Visiting Tesla

For an Academic, Gadget Guy, Scientist or Science Hero, no trip to Port Edward would be complete without a visit to see the great man himself. The laboratory hangs over the town like a futurist Castle Frankenstein. Tesla is not a recluse, but he is very busy and the PCs will need an appointment and an introduction. A famous scientist or academic can invoke an appropriate aspect, Edison can introduce the PCs on a Good Rapport check or a Great Contacting check and a good story will arrange an appointment. Obviously, any character who has an aspect representing the patronage of Edison or Tesla won’t need any introduction.

Tesla is nothing if not a showman. He will meet the PCs in one of the larger spaces within

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the complex, dominated by a huge, sparking and flickering Tesla coil. If you need a model for playing Tesla as an NPC, David Bowie's film performance in *The Prestige* seems to me to capture what is

PCs with an aspect that represents connections with the British Secret Service can invoke this aspect for free.

Shifts	Information
1	It's a world-wide shipping company. Pretty dull really
2	Rarely appears in any trade press, but it must do all right. It has offices in all the major ports and capital cities.
3	It's a front for the British Secret Service, allowing them to ship people and information around the Empire (and beyond) without having to go through normal diplomatic channels. As spin has been gained on this roll, the PC can add or subtract one to the next roll the player makes that involves Malcolm Jones or the Corporation
4	The Port Edward office is a dull backwater. The only reason that there's even an office here is so that the Empire can keep an eye on Tesla. Postings here are usually punishments
5	Malcolm Jones is the station chief here. He's a screw-up – blew a major network in Turkey when he bungled a drop (allegedly due to a hangover). The only reason he's still employed by the Corporation is because his family is politically connected. He's a prime candidate for turning by a foreign power

known about the man. Tesla's latest invention is the Đuka (pronounced "thuka"). Named after his late mother, this is a large ether-flyer capable of operating from land, sea or snow. It's not quite finished yet, but he'll show it off and attempt to explain its innovations (which will make Edison twitch if he's present – Tesla doesn't care about patent protection).

Incidentally, Tesla has a phobia of germs and will not allow anyone into the laboratory complex if he suspects that there is a possibility of smallpox infection. In the event of any epidemic, his assistants will help out, but Tesla will remain in quarantine, sending out gadgets that he believes will be of assistance (for example, devices that use high-voltage electricity to sterilise the air entering or leaving a building).

## Optional scene five: The Empire Import/Export Corporation

Unless they have an aspect representing employment by the British Secret Service, only the most connected or knowledgeable PCs will know that the Empire Import/Export Corporation is a front for this organisation. Each shift on an Average Contacts or Academics roll gains the PC another piece of information from the table below.

Making an appointment to see Malcolm Jones will be very difficult unless one of the PCs works for the British Secret Service (Great Contacting, Deceit, Leadership or Rapport check to get past his secretary). Unless confronted by a member of the Secret Service, he will deny everything and throw the PCs out if they attempt a social conflict. The coded message is suspicious, but not enough to have him arrested. If, however, the PCs turn the message over to the authorities or produce evidence that he was involved in the de Man's escape then the Secret Service will send agents out on the next ship to have him quietly have him removed from his post.

If a member of the Secret Service – or one of his associates – engages him in a social conflict he offer a concession of confessing everything when a moderate consequence is inflicted on him. He's been a double agent for the Belgians for over two years. "Amélie de Man" seduced him while he was in Turkey (using the name "Elektra Harding"), blackmailed him into blowing the operation and arranged for him to be assigned to Port Edward. He doesn't know the nature of the de Man's mission or even their real names. Assuming that the Secret Service agent PC contacts his or her superiors (and if they don't – why not?) Malcolm Jones will be relieved of duty pending a formal investigation and (unless there's a good reason) the PC will be



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given temporary command of the station.

## Act three: Giving them a reason

In act four, the PCs will make the journey from Port Edward to the diamond mine near Port Leopold. The optional scenes in this act are intended to give each PC a reason to make this journey. During this act the PCs should be encouraged to make contacts with either Tesla or Nimrod Walks-Alone (preferably both). If not, the conclusion of this adventure (guiding the freed Neanderthal slaves to their new homeland) could be very difficult.

### Optional scene one: Nimrod's plea

If the PCs have struck up a relationship with Nimrod Walks-Alone, impressed him with their behaviour or have one or more aspects representing a widely-known reputation for honourable, noble and adventurous behaviour, then he will approach them a few days after their arrival in Port Edward. He's just heard news from one of the more distant Neanderthal tribes, close to the Belgian colony. The Belgians have captured and enslaved the tribe (the Entoku) and are forcing them to work in their diamond mine, or, as he puts it "Belgians take Entoku, make dig in big new cave for hard glass pebbles". If any PC shows him the uncut diamonds taken from the de Man's (or if they have uncut diamonds for some other reason), then he will show them a similar stone, taken by an escapee. A Great Contacting roll will confirm that the Belgians have been importing lots of chains, manacles and digging equipment. If spin is gained on this roll, then the enslavement and mining will also be confirmed.

The authorities in Port Edward can't become involved. The boundary between the two colonies is confused and it's questionable whether Neanderthals can be considered to be enslaved, given that they're not human. However, they will turn a blind eye if the PCs equip and lead a party of liberators.

### Optional scene two: chasing the de Mans

One or more of the PCs may be offended

(professionally or personally) by the idea of the De Mans escaping justice. While much faster than foot-travel, the snowmobile is no match for the Đuka or a well-trained team of sled-dogs. It also leaves leaves distinctive and obvious tracks (Mediocre Survival check to follow, the difficulty rising by one rank per 24-hours start that the de Mans have on the PCs, +2 difficulty if they are tracking them from the air).

The PCs will catch up with the de Mans about half way between Port Edward and Port Leopold. This should be played out as a chase (see section 8.3.8 of the SotC SRD) through a series of icy crevasses. If the PCs are using dog sleds, give both the lead sled and snowmobile three stress and pit the Survival or Drive of the PC driving the sled against Amélie de Man's Average Drive skill. Assuming that it's the snowmobile that's taken out, have it dig itself into a snow-drift and run a subsequent scene where the PCs attempt to recapture the de Mans.

If the PCs are flying in the Đuka (three stress), Tesla will be the pilot during the chase scene unless one of the PCs is a world-renowned pilot (unlikely in this campaign) and/or a trusted ally of Tesla. Even if they aren't driving or piloting PCs can still participate in the case as detailed in section 8.3.8 of the SotC SRD. Tesla won't risk his latest invention, so, if the Đuka is taken out, it represents him breaking off the chase because it's too dangerous (the PCs can anticipate the de Mans route on a Good Survival check, use the Đuka to get ahead of them and then set up an ambush). If the snowmobile is taken out then, again, have it dig itself into the snow-drift. The de Mans will set out for the colony on foot while Tesla (or the PC pilot) finds a place for the Đuka to land. Again, a Good Survival check will allow the PCs to track them or anticipate their route and set up an ambush.

### Optional scene three: Did someone say "diamonds"?

More mercenary PCs can be encouraged by the possibility of becoming rich. Uncut diamonds look like glass pebbles, but can be seen as something more valuable on a Fair Academics or Investigation check and this identification can be confirmed on

a Fair Science check. Anyone identifying them will know that they are very valuable and easily convertible by someone with the right connections (Good Contacting check).

Diamonds are mostly found in vertical volcanic structures known as kimberlite pipes. None have yet been found in Queen Victoria's Land, despite extensive exploration. However, a copy of a preliminary mineralogical survey of "New Congo" can be found in the town archives on a Good Academics check. This will show an area with the correct characteristics about fifty miles north of Port Leopold. Nimrod can't read maps, but if this location is described to him, he will confirm that this is where the Entoku live.

## Act four: A Snowbound Journey

### Scene one: The "Đuka"

Tesla is such an iconic figure that it's likely (and intended) that the PCs will have some contact with him during the previous acts. He will show off or boast about his latest invention in any meeting and offer his services if asked or told about the Belgians activities (he hates slavery and dislikes Belgium). It's just possible that the PCs will either decide not to meet the great man or not realise that the plane would be the ideal mode of transport. In this case, see optional scene one, below.

The Đuka is a wide-bodied twin-engined monoplane, designed with the capability to land and take off from land, water or snow. The large electro-ether turbines under each wing provide lift as well as propulsion and their housings double as floats when landing on water. It's capable of carrying Tesla, the PCs, any companions gained using stunts and a small amount of cargo. As described above Tesla will pilot the craft unless he knows and trusts the abilities of one of the PCs. The Đuka is Tesla's Universal Gadget for this adventure; Tesla has effectively taken an existing ether-flyer can given it Maximisation and Additional Capability (can land on snow or water).

If Tesla is navigating then the PCs should be able to find the mine without difficulty. While field-

testing other planes (but not the Đuka) Tesla has flown the route to Belgian colony on more than one occasion (memorably delivering a doctor and much-needed medical supplies). The newly built road, buildings and the smoke from the heating and cooking fires at the mine are easily visible from the air.

### Optional scene one: Sledges or Snowmobiles?

If the PCs do not have access to the Đuka or are unwilling to use it for some reason, they will need another method of transport: dog-sleds, "snow-mobile" or on foot

Dog-sleds are the fastest method of transport; if the PCs are chasing the De Mans, they will be able to catch up with them as described in optional scene two of the previous act. Dog teams are "driven" using Survival; one sled, driver and team of dogs will be needed per four characters. Nimrod (if available) owns a team and is an expert driver. Additional teams and sleds can be rented or requisitioned on a Good Contacting or Resources check. The journey to the mines will take five days by dog sled.

The snow-mobile that was stolen by the De Mans is a prototype. There are no others available unless a PC uses Universal Gadget (or some other stunt) or makes one using the guidelines in section 7.7 of the SotC SRD. A snow-mobile has a Good cost and there are a suitable workshops for hire in the docks (Good Resources or Contacting check). The journey to the mines will take ten days by snowmobile and the PCs will be unable to catch up with the De Mans.

Walking is a very bad idea. Anyone with any knowledge of Survival will know that dog sleds are a much better choice. If, for some reason, the PCs insist on making the journey by foot, it will take twenty days to make the journey to the mines.

While it is the beginning of spring in Queen Victoria's Land, the ground is still covered in snow, the wind bitterly cold and there will be the occasional snowstorm during the journey. Frostbite, exposure and hypothermia are still risks for the inexperienced traveller. So simulate

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this, each day make a Mediocre attack against each PC, resisted by their Survival. Any stress or consequences due to the environment will not heal until the PCs have chance to fully recuperate back in Port Edward.

The trail from Port Edward to Port Leopold is infrequently travelled, but is well-marked with cairns, etc. A character equipped with a map and compass would only need to make an Average Survival check for each day of travel to avoid losing the trail (and wasting a day finding it again). As they approach the colony, they will need to strike off the trail to reach the mine. While the location is easily found due to the smoke from the fires, one Good Survival check can be made per day in an attempt to find a route to the mines.

## Act five: The Diamond Mine

### Scene one: Reconnaissance

The mine is a huge, open pit dug into the kimberlite pipe at the centre of the caldera of an extinct volcano. The Neanderthals and their guards are barracked on the crater floor; each day the captives descend into the terraced pit on crude ladders to continue the excavations. A rocky trail leads up the thickly wooded side of the caldera to a guard post at the top, then down into the mine.

The trail is steep, but safe. However, parts of it are in full view of the guards and anyone approaching the guard post from the trail will need to make a Stealth check against the guards' Alertness to approach undetected. Climbing the side of the caldera requires a Fair Athletics check, but the guards don't patrol the crater rim so it will be quite easy to approach undetected. If the PCs ask, it is obvious that not all of the imprisoned Neanderthals will be able to repeat this climb as there are children and the elderly in the group. This scene is an excellent opportunity for military PCs to use the modified Leadership rules on page 16.

If the PCs travel in the Đuka, Tesla will land it some distance from the mine and stay with the plane.

### Scene two: The guard post

The trail crosses the rim of the crater through a high pass in the crater wall. There's a small guard hut looking out over the trail up the crater wall and small group of buildings at the centre of the pass in an area that's been rendered relatively flat by blasting.

The guard hut holds four guards – treat as a Mining Camp Guard (see page 46) with the Minions and Shot On The Run stunts – huddled around a stove, playing cards and occasionally looking out of the window.

The group of buildings includes a stable block with a train of mules and wagons designed to be pulled by them, officers quarters (containing a Guard Officer – see page 46) and a small barracks (containing two Mining Camp Guards with the Minions and One Hit To The Body stunts). There is an alarm wire linking the guard hut to the officers quarters.

The number of guards and officers in each building can be inferred with a few hours observation and a Fair Alertness check. If the observer is spotted (a contest between the PCs Stealth and a single guard's Alertness) then a patrol will be sent out to investigate – treat as a Mining Camp Guard with the Minions and Shot On The Run stunts.



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A telegraph wire links the guard post to the main encampment. “All clear” messages are sent every hour, but the wire often breaks so if a message isn’t acknowledged it won’t be considered an emergency. Indeed, if it breaks at night, then the main camp will just send out a patrol to check that everything is OK at the guard post and then not even bother looking for the break until the morning.

## Scene three: The encampment

On the floor of the crater is a large stockade constructed from wooden posts and barbed wire, with guard posts at each corner and another guard post on the gate. Each guard post will have two Mining Camp Guards (see page 46) with the Danger Sense and Tireless stunts at all hours of the day or night. At the centre of the camp is a lookout post with an overview of most of the camp, two Mining Camp Guards (see page 46) with the Rain Of Lead and Fast Reload stunts and a Maxim machine-gun (Craftsmanship: +1 to Guns checks; Fully Automatic: +2 when executing a block action). The soldiers in the camp have access to two additional Maxim guns (mounted on gun carriages), that can be wheeled out at dramatically appropriate moments. The lookout post and each guard post has an alarm wire that allows them to alert the officer on duty and the lookout post also has an alarm siren.

Within the stockade is:

The officers quarters: This typically contains two or three Guard Officers (see page 46). Breaking into the quarters will take an Average Burglary check, but cracking the safe in the main office area containing a small fortune in uncut diamonds will take a Superb Burglary check. Only the commandant knows the combination (it’s not written down anywhere) and he must be taken out in social combat before he will reveal it. An extensive search of each of the officers rooms (Good Investigation check) will uncover a small number of uncut diamonds, skimmed off of the batches sent to Port Leopold.

The guards barracks: During the night, this contains the equivalent of five Mining Camp Guards (see

page 46) with the Minions and Reinforcements stunts. During the daytime, the barracks will be empty as the guards will be “supervising” the Neanderthals. The barracks contain nothing of real value, though particularly mercenary PCs might find small amounts of Belgian currency, a couple of tiny uncut diamond and a collection of low-quality pornographic photos.

The Neanderthal barracks: during the night, this a series of crude huts contain just under a hundred and fifty Neanderthals, of various ages, all in poor condition. During the day, the huts will contain nothing but lice-ridden bedding.

The Infirmary: the camp doctor (a Guard Officer – see page 46 with Fair Science replacing Endurance and the Doctor stunt instead of Scary) resides her along with a malingering Mining Camp Guard (see page 46) with The Honest Lie and Danger Sense stunts and three Neanderthals who are too ill to work, but not ill enough to be killed. Do I need to point out that there will be a mother among the Neanderthals who will refuse to escape without her son (who’s in the Infirmary).

Possible Belgian forenames include: Leopold, Marc, Alexis, Jean-Luc and Phillippe; typical surnames include Maystadt, Dehaene, Spaak and Janson. NCO ranks include Soldaat (Private), Korporaal and Sergeant; Officer ranks include Luitenant, Kaptein and Majoor.

The number of guards, officers and Neanderthals in each building and at each post can be inferred with a few hours observation and a Fair Alertness check. If the observer is spotted (a contest between the PCs Stealth and a single guard’s Alertness) then a patrol will be sent out to investigate – treat as a Mining Camp Guard with the Minions and Shot On The Run stunts.

## Scene four: The Rescue

If the PCs manage to take out the guards and officers in the guard post without them alerting the main camp then they will have an opportunity to rest and recuperate before the attack on the main encampment – run them as separate scenes for the purposes of stress and consequences. If, however, the main encampment is alerted then run the whole thing as a single scene.

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The PCs will have to infiltrate the encampment (Stealth is the most likely method, though Deceit is possible if the deceiver speaks Flemish) and cause a diversion significant enough for them to free the Neanderthals and get them out of the front gate. If it looks like they will wipe out all of the Belgians, add more guards and officers to keep the PCs pressed, but not overwhelmed.

## Scene five: The Pursuit

The Neanderthals are exhausted – many are ill – and, collectively, they can only move at a slow walk. Send two patrols of soldiers after them, each consisting of one Guard Officer (see page 46) and enough Mining Camp Guards to have one NPC per PC in the party (including Nimrod, if he's with them). Encourage the PCs to come up with clever plans for hiding their trail or sending the guards off on a false trail (perhaps intentionally triggering an avalanche?). There should be plenty of opportunity for drama during the pursuit. Small children could trip up and need to be carried. It wouldn't be too hard (Good Alertness, Investigation or Survival check) for the PCs to find a cave large enough to hold all of the Neanderthals and with an entrance that can be concealed (Stealth check versus the guards Alertness), but what if a baby starts crying as the guards approach?

## Scene five: the Aftermath

If present, Tesla can use the Duka to airlift supplies for the freed slaves and deliver the most ill or injured to the hospital at Port Edward. Otherwise, the trek needed to take the Neanderthals to a new, safer, tribal homeland will be very difficult (and nigh-impossible if Nimrod is also not present). While they are usually scared of humans, a sabre-toothed tiger (see page 46) could attempt to carry off one of the children.

## Act six: Wrapping Things Up

The British authorities will wish to keep the PCs actions as quiet as possible – if it became public knowledge that British citizens made an attack on the Belgian colony it would make a already ticklish diplomatic situation even more tense (in

fact, it would give the Belgians pretext to declare war). If the PCs successfully rescue the majority of the Neanderthals, they will become heroes to them. If any of the PCs has an aspect representing their relationship with the indigenous population, this can and should be changed to reflect this.

Assuming they survived, the de Man's should become recurring villains (no jail can hold either of them for long). The Belgians will still be looking for workers for their mines, so future adventures could involve a snowy version of Lawrence of Arabia as the PCs take part in a covert guerilla war against the oppressors.

## Character Descriptions

### Captain Cunningham

**Aspects:** Master And Commander, Larger Than Life, Bearded And Tattooed Sailor, A Girl In Every Port, A Thousand Stories Of The Sea

**Stunts:** Minons (sailors), Best Foot Forward, International, Cold Read

**Skills:** Leadership (+4), Drive (+3), Engineering (+3), Rapport (+2), Endurance (+2), Science (+2), Alertness (+1), Resolve (+1), Intimidation (+1), Empathy (+1)

**Stress:** Health   Composure

### Doctor Ian Metheringham

**Aspects:** Has Been To More Places Than You Have, Not As International As He Thinks He Is, Oxford Education, Your Life In His Hands, Secret Cocaine Addict

**Stunts:** Doctor, Walk The Walk, Heart's Secret

**Skills:** Science (+3), Academics (+2), Empathy (+2), Rapport (+1), Resources (+1), Contacting (+1)

**Stress:** Health   Composure

### “Emile de Man”

**Aspects:** Concealed Menace, Dark Secrets, Cover

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Identity – French Humanitarian, Secret Agent Of The Belgian Government, I Should Be In Charge, Jealous Passion, Man Mountain

**Stunts:** Takes One To Know One, Clever Disguise, In Plain Sight, Wrestler, Hatpin Maestro

**Skills:** Deceit (+5), Might (+4), Burglary (+4), Athletics (+3), Stealth (+3), Alertness (+3), Academics (+2), Guns (+2), Weapons (+2), Endurance (+1), Resolve (+1), Academics (+1), Contacting (+1), Sleight Of Hand (+1)

**Stress:** Health □□□□□ □ Composure □□□□□ □

## “Amélie de Man”

**Aspects:** Devious Seductress, Cover Identity – French Humanitarian, Secret Agent Of The Belgian Government, Untrustworthy Minions, Woman In A Man’s World, Continental Beauty, Who’s The Prettiest Of Them All, Sparkling Cyanide, Forked And Poisoned Tongue

**Stunts:** Popular Gal, Personal Gadget (poison ring: Special Effect (carries a single dose of poison), Additional Capability (can deliver the poison on a successful attack using Fists), Upgrade (+2 to Sleight Of Hand checks when slipping the poison into a drink, etc.), Universal Gadget (spy equipment), Takes One To Know One, Sucker Punch

**Skills:** Rapport (+5), Sleight Of Hand (+4), Investigation (+4), Fists (+3), Contacting (+3), Resolve (+3), Stealth (+2), Guns (+2), Deceit (+2), Academics (+2), Endurance (+1), Resources (+1), Weapons (+1), Athletics (+1), Science (+1), Engineering (+1)

**Stress:** Health □□□□□ □ Composure □□□□□ □

## Thomas Edison

**Aspects:** Tesla’s The Real Genius, Living The American Dream, Plodding Inventor, Turns Gadgets Into Products, The Wizard of Menlo Park (Industrial Research Lab), Hardly Sees His Wife And Children, Obsessively Focused

**Stunts:** Big Man In Science, Universal Gadget, Scientific Genius (physics), Headquarters,

Minions

**Skills:** Resources (+5), Engineering (+4), Science (+4), Academics (+3), Contacting (+3), Leadership (+3), Endurance (+2), Investigation (+2), Deceit (+2), Empathy (+2), Pilot (+1), Resolve (+1), Intimidation (+1), Drive (+1), Alertness (+1)

**Stress:** Health □□□□□ □ Composure □□□□□ □

## Nimrod Walks-Alone

**Aspects:** Surprisingly Sophisticated Neanderthal, Man Of Two Worlds, Few Words – But They’re Well-Chosen, Walks Alone, Mighty Hunter Of The Lord, Neanderthal “Ambassador”, Hidden Depths, Illiterate – But Has Excellent Memory

**Stunts:** One Hit to the Body, Developed Immunities, Smooth Recovery, Iron Determination, Brawler

**Skills:** Survival (+5), Endurance (+4), Weapons (+4), Fists (+3), Alertness (+3), Resolve (+3), Rapport (+2), Academics (+2), Athletics (+2), Stealth (+2), Empathy (+1), Resources (+1), Contacting (+1), Might (+1), Art (+1)

**Stress:** Health □□□□□ □□ Composure □□□□□ □□

## Malcolm Jones

**Aspects:** Blackmailed Double Agent, Fast Women And Slow Horses, Oxford Graduate, Discredited British Secret Service Agent, Borderline Alcoholic

**Stunts:** The Honest Lie, Gambling Man, Legal Eagle

**Skills:** Deceit (+3), Leadership (+2), Contacting (+2), Resources (+1), Academics (+1), Gambling (+1)

**Stress:** Health □□□□□ Composure □□□□□

## Nikola Tesla

**Aspects:** Phobia Of Germs, Naturalised American Citizen – Subject Of Austrian Empire By Birth, Obsessive-compulsive, Vegetarian And Animal-

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lover, Scientific Chastity, Brilliant Scientist/Showman, Edison Handles All That Boring Stuff, Synaesthetic Flashes, Photographic Memory

**Stunts:** Big Man In Science, Universal Gadget, Scientific Genius (physics), Theory In Practice, Scientific Invention, Weird Science, Headquarters

**Skills:** Science (+5), Engineering (+4), Academics (+4), Resources (+3), Pilot (+3), Drive (+3), Endurance (+2), Investigation (+2), Sleight of Hand (+2), Art (+2), Contacting (+1), Resolve (+1), Survival (+1), Leadership (+1), Alertness (+1)

**Stress:** Health   Composure

## Mining Camp Guard

**Aspects:** Belgian Slave-driving Thug, Bored And Cold Guard, Eminently Bribeable, Racially Superior

**Stunts:** Any two from The Honest Lie, Danger Sense, Tireless, One Hit To The Body, Brawler, Shot On The Run, Fast Reload, Scary, Aura Of Menace, Minions, Reinforcements

**Skills:** Guns (+2), Intimidation (+1), Alertness (+1)

**Stress:** Health  Composure

## Guard Officer

**Aspects:** Fascist Bully-boy, After Them!, Belgian Aristocrat, I Will Have You Shot!, Racially Superior

**Stunts:** Minions, Reinforcements, Shot On The Run, Scary

**Skills:** Leadership (+4), Intimidation (+3), Guns (+3), Resolve (+2), Endurance (+2), Academics (+2), Survival (+1), Resources (+1), Contacting (+1), Athletics (+1)

**Stress:** Health   Composure

## Sabre-toothed Tiger

**Aspects:** I Tort I Thaw A Puddy-Tat, Big And

Hairy, Nasty Pointy Teeth, I Did I Did I Did I Did Thaw A Puddy Tat, It's Behind You, Death From Above,

**Stunts:** Natural Weapons (Claws and Fangs – use Fists), Mighty Leap, Marathon Training, Fast As A Leopard, One Hit To The Body

**Skills:** Fists (+5), Endurance (+4), Resolve (+4), Alertness (+3), Survival (+3), Stealth (+3), Might (+2), Athletics (+2), Intimidation (+2), Investigation (+2), Deceit (+1), Leadership (+1), Empathy (+1), Rapport (+1)

**Stress:** Health   Composure

## Further Reading

The notable books, films and games of the genre can be found beginning on page 7), so this section is about other resources (mostly web-logs and online magazines) for the GM of a steampunk campaign:

**Steampunk Magazine** (<http://www.steampunkmagazine.com/>): Dedicated to all things retro-Victorian, this has everything from original fiction to fashion and etiquette advice to instructions on how to build your own electroplating machine. Excellent, inspiration and – best of all – the on-line version is free!

**A Steampunk's Guide to the Apocalypse** (<http://www.steampunkmagazine.com/inside/a-steampunks-guide-to-the-apocalypse/>): Another free text from the publishers of Steampunk Magazine, this is focused on the (alleged) imminent collapse of the developed world and how steampunks will be able to build their own utopia from the ashes. Some good ideas and useful advice, but irritatingly optimistic.

**Voyages Extraordinaires** (<http://voyagesextraordinaires.blogspot.com/>): This describes itself as “*weblog for people of intelligence and good breeding who enjoy Victorian-Edwardian Scientific Romances and Retro-Futurism, Victoriana and Neo-Victorianism, Voyages Extraordinaires and Imperialist Romances, Gothic Horror, Pulp Fiction, the Golden Ages of*

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*Hollywood and of Travel, silent and early films, points suprêmes and real life adventures into places exotic and historic.”*

**The Chap** (<http://www.thechap.net/>): *The Chap* is the bi-monthly magazine and associated website of a semi-serious movement that attempts to re-establish “pleasantness and civility” in modern society along with pipe-smoking, moustache-growing and the doffing of hats to ladies. While not all Chaps are steampunk, pretty much all steampunks have Chappist sympathies.

**The Bartitsu Compendium** (by Tony Wolf, ASIN: B00262QZHW): A compendium of Barton-Wright’s texts and articles on other Victorian and Edwardian martial artists. Essential reading for any player of a Bartitsu Master (see page 29).

**Everyday Life in the 1800s – A Guide for Writers, Students & Historians** (by Marc

McCutcheon; ISBN: 1-58297-063-7): As it sounds, this out-of-print book is a guide for writers wishing to set stories in the Victorian period; as such, it’s full of useful details for a GM. While most Victorian resources are focused on the British empire, this is specifically about life in the United States.

**Cthulhu By Gaslight** (by William A. Barton; ISBN: 0-933635-13-3): This supplement for the pulp horror RPG *Call of Cthulhu*, providing advice for GMs wishing to set adventures in the Victorian era. While not explicitly steampunk, it’s full of detail about England and London in the late Victorian period. This book is out of print, but has recently become available for download.



# Brass, Blood and Steam

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