



# MECHANOMANCY REDUX

Requires Unknown Armies (Third Edition) from Atlas Games.

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# MECHANOMANCY

## AKA CLOCKWORKERS, GEARHEADS

The leftovers of modernist magick, the clockworkers are a dying breed. They once had a glorious history stretching back to the first century with Hero of Alexandria and his steam-powered aeolipile, but it's all lost now, every bit as forgotten as their own memories.

Because that's the rub, isn't it? Clockworkers create by using the detritus of old civilizations — old technology, old artifacts — culminating in them sacrificing their own memories to fuel their clockworks. And as the twenty-first century rolls forward, there are fewer and fewer of them. The gearheads from the old country are dying out, killed by the fallout of the Cold War and subsequent “ethnic cleansing,” not to mention the typical dangers to people in the occult underground. Of course, old age and senility are probably far more lethal to their ranks, and as the old masters die, few replace them. There are a handful of second- or third-generation mechanomancers in the world, but few new would-be magi come to the art on their own. In addition to the world being increasingly digital, it's also hyper-specialized — nobody just works on generalized “machine repair” anymore, and people who get obsessed tend to get obsessed in their own field. Obsessed auto mechanics become *viaturges*, obsessed gunsmiths become *fulminaturges*, and people into steampunk become *sociomancers*. It's probable that mechanomancy will probably be totally dead within a generation or two, unless weirdos come out of the steampunk or DIY communities and start trying to make eldritch gizmos.

As noted above, the inherent paradox of mechanomancy is trying to build a future from the past, and sacrificing their own humanity (i.e., their memories) to grant humanity and volition to inanimate objects.

### MECHANOMANCY: A HISTORY

Mechanomancy first appeared in the *Unknown Armies* core rulebook for first edition, on pages 96-97. Rules for Automata as unnatural entities and characters appear in *Postmodern Magick*, pages 124-128. (Although an Automatic, as they're called by American adepts, appears as a playable character in *One Shots* well before *Postmodern Magick*.) Additional history for mechanomancy (and d20 system stats) appear in Rick Neal's *The Ascension of the Magdalene*. Mechanomancy makes a return in the second edition core rulebook on pages 137-140. (The Lonesome Lunchbox and the SUVirus first appear there, too.) Finally, the school gets a mention in *Book Three: Reveal* on page 62 (or 61 if you're using the pdf).

### STATS

**Generate a minor charge:** To generate a minor charge, the clockworker just spends a day working on the current project. Each day spent working on a clockwork allows you to add capabilities as per the minor effects below.

**Generate a significant charge:** Here's where it starts to get tricky. To generate a significant charge, the mechanomancer gives up a minor memory. The memory should probably relate to whatever you're building, so a memory of a lovely picnic with a good friend will probably help you build that fun little music box, while that time you were assaulted and robbed might be more appropriate for that murder-bot you've been building. Work out with your GM how this memory impacts your character, but in game terms, you can risk Identities, Relationships, or your own sanity. Risking Identities or Relationships is straightforward: you roll the Identity or Relationship, and if you fail, lose 1-5 points off it. (Mental or social Identities are probably most appropriate, although you could probably make a case for how forgetting your big boxing match somehow makes you a worse boxer.) Risking sanity means you take a rank-10 shock against whatever gauge your GM thinks is appropriate to the memory in question. Helplessness and Isolation are strong contenders for this trauma, although any gauge might be appropriate, depending on the memory.

A far simpler method involves getting a non-mechanical object with historical or occult significance, like Buddy Rich's drumsticks, or a ritual athame owned by Aleister Crowley. The clockwork should be thematically appropriate, though, so you can incorporate Buddy Rich's drumsticks into your music automaton, or Aleister Crowley's dagger into your fancy clockwork *godemiché*, but neither would be appropriate for making a firearm.

**Generate a major charge:** A mechanomancer can generate a major charge by sacrificing a string of memories, typically relating to a loved one (a sibling or spouse, for example), or some event (serving during the war, that diner job you held for five years). This gets very dangerous, as our memories define us, and divesting oneself of them means erasing oneself. In game terms, you can again risk an Identity, Relationship, or sanity. If you risk an Identity or Relationship, roll against it. If you succeed, you lose a number of points equal to the sum of the roll. If you fail, flip-flop the roll and lose that many points, like a gunshot straight to your memories.

Nikki's character Desdemona keeps tinkering with designs to make a clockwork harem. (Don't ask.) She wants to make a very skilled coin-operated boy with lots of features, so she decides to go for major mojo. She uses the memories of her ex-boyfriend, Ashley, to power this device. Once upon a time, he was her Favorite, but now she's glad to be rid of him. (And given the fact that she's an adept building creepy sex dolls in her basement, the feeling's probably mutual.) She has Favorite: Ashley 30%. She takes the big plunge, goes *Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* on Ashley, and rolls. If she rolls a 26, that's a success, and she only loses eight points off that relationship, bringing it down to Favorite: Ashley 22%. If she rolls a 38, that's a failure; she flip-flops it and subtracts a whopping 83 points, dropping Favorite: Ashley to 0%. She takes a rank-4 Isolation check for *losing a relationship*, but in either event, now has a major charge.

See Book One: Play. “*Viaturgy*” is on page 167, “*Fulminaturgy*” is on page 151, and “*Sociomancy*” is on page 159.

Mechanomancy is mentioned on page 61 of Book Three: Reveal.

See “*Relationships, Lost and Gained*” on page 39 of Book One: Play.

The less sanity-searing way to get a major charge is to incorporate a complete, functional, and historically-relevant piece of machinery into the clockwork, something like James Watt's first steam engine (or you can go with the de Ayanz y Beaumont, Savery, or Newcomen models if you're a hipster), or John Hinckley's .22 Röhm RG-14 revolver. As with significant clockworks, the incorporated device must be thematically relevant to the clockwork.

**Taboo:** Clockworkers can't use functioning technology in common use after 1900 or so. If you incorporate a functioning telephone, laser, or microprocessor in your clockwork, it fails to function. Mechanomancers can use modern materials in their clockworks, and can potentially incorporate modern technology so long as it is disassembled or misused. Using a modern device for aesthetic reasons is perfectly fine.

**Random Magick Domain:** Clockworkers only build effects into their own hand-built machines using the tables below. No cyborgs, unless your epideromancer and mechanomancer figure out how to play well together.

**Note:** Clockworkers don't "cast spells" so much as build gizmos. So rather than the standard spell list, mechanomancers get a list of capabilities they can build into their creations. A clockwork device can't do anything supernatural (so no aura-seeing robots or demon-trapping cages or invisibility devices; major charges, as always, are the exception). However, they can replicate the functions of basically any animal or modern machine, which you'll note gives them a pretty broad range of abilities. Something that can learn like a person and travel into space like a rocket is nothing to underestimate.

Clockworks can look like anything, and typically reflect the creator's aesthetic tastes. A chassis of vacuformed plastic wrapped so carefully in vinyl it's indistinguishable from a human being? Totally possible. A creepy, hunched armature of bone and wire that runs on human blood? Sure! A rusted monstrosity that looks like the Terminator's endoskeleton had a drunken one-night stand with a drill press? Absolutely. Remember that you can't use modern devices in clockwork construction, but modern materials are acceptable, and the magick is what allows the clockworker to bridge the gap between a glorified pocketwatch and something that can fight, fly, think, and learn.

One last thing: clockworks are sturdy as hell, and only take hand-to-hand damage (that is, the sum of the dice) from firearms attacks. Melee attacks against clockworks do the sum of the dice as normal.

## MECHANOMANCY MINOR EFFECTS

**1 Charge:** Build a small clockwork. For our purposes, "small" is about a foot or so long and weighing about ten pounds. (For our metric friends, that's about 0.3 meters and 4.5 kilograms. For visualization purposes, think of your average housecat.) These clockworks aren't too smart, but can fulfill commands of a number of words equal to the sum of your Magick (Mechanomancy) roll. (So, if you roll a 49 when making your clockwork, it can understand commands 13 words long.)

This clockwork gets 60 points to put into Identities, although its Identities work a little differently than normal Identities: they only get one feature each. So, if you want a clockwork spider that picks locks, you probably want to give it a feature such as Unique: Picks Locks 30% as an Identity. Unlike a normal person, you can give clockworks unique features that represent things animals or machines can do (like climbing walls or making fast calculations) in addition to things regular humans can do. Supernatural Identity features are right out, though, so no gutter magician clockworks. Most clockwork functions at this level are improbable but mundane, like a souped-up "As Seen on TV" device. Maybe it's a Rube Goldberg-style device that peels potatoes, or maybe it folds laundry, or maybe it just plays the same song perfectly each time.

Clockworks also don't automatically get volition or wound threshold, so you probably want to set aside a couple of points for *provides initiative* or *provides wound threshold*, otherwise you'll have a very slow clockwork that breaks if anyone looks at it the wrong way. Similarly, clockworks don't get shock gauges, so they don't get any abilities for free, but on the plus side, they don't have to worry about stress checks.

Minor clockworks can never exceed a unique feature and initiative of 50% each, nor can they have a wound threshold higher than 80. Likewise, minor clockworks can't be programmed with a feature their creator lacks, so if you can't play the fiddle, you can't program a clockwork to do it, either. A clockwork programmed with a Struggle ability can make attacks just like any other melee attack, although matched successes and crits don't mean anything special. (The GM may cause breakdowns and catastrophes on matched failures and fumbles, though.) Clockworks with firearms attacks typically can't do anything else and need to be stationary; they can't even move or reload, although a smart mechanomancer can make multiple devices to do these things in tandem.

Finally, some minor clockworks are "always on," while others need to be activated when they're going to be used. They also can't differentiate between people, so if you set one to guard a room, it's going to shoot any person crossing the threshold.

**1 Charge:** Each additional minor charge spent adds about three pounds (about 1.4 kg), with a proportionate size increase, and another 10 points to divide among Identity features.

## MECHANOMANCY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

**1 Charge:** Build a clockwork roughly the size of a human being. Significant clockworks have 60 points to spend on Identities. Unlike minor clockworks, significant devices start with 50 wound points and gain Identities with three features like normal characters, although one of those features does not have to substitute for an ability. They're very limited in intelligence, equivalent to a smart dog with limited initiative, creativity, or curiosity. Clockworks at this level are capable of speech, but typically only to fulfill a specific function or repeated recorded data. Likewise, significant clockworks possess all senses necessary to complete their assigned tasks.

The Identity features "provides wound threshold," "provides initiative," and "unique" all appear on page 44 of Book One: Play.



Significant clockworks can possess Identities and features their creator does not, although it does have to make sense for the design of the clockwork; your murder-bot probably isn't going to play the clarinet unless you have some brilliant rationale. However, a significant clockwork still cannot possess supernatural Identities or features. A clockwork with a Struggle ability resolves melee damage like a firearms attack with no damage maximum. They can resemble animals or people at no extra cost, although you get 10 extra Identity points if you build significant clockworks as efficiently as possible — that is, as weird mechanical monsters that are maybe worth a rank-1 or 2 Unnatural check.

**1 Charge:** Reduce the clockwork's size by 75%. This has no effect on its toughness or operation, and this feature can be purchased up to 10 times. (You know. In case you want a clockwork that weighs one ten-thousandth of a pound.)

**1 Charge:** Add 10 points of Identities to your clockwork, or 15 points to an obvious one.

**1 Charge:** Look at it, it's got anxiety. Your clockwork now has a full set of shock gauges that you can notch as you like, and it can *improve its Identities* in the usual manner.

## MECHANOMANCY MAJOR EFFECTS

As is typical for major mojo, all bets are off. Major charge creations are practically indistinguishable from life — if you want it badly enough, you could probably make a facsimile of your dead lover in such minute detail that no one would ever notice the difference. You can make these creatures like regular characters, but with 220 points to spend on Identities. Major clockworks can also incorporate immaterial essences and may have limited paranormal abilities.

## SAMPLE CLOCKWORKS

### THE COPPER THIEF

Back in the late 1990s, a down-on-his luck checker named Jimmy Acosta commissioned this clockwork in exchange for a string of memories regarding his ex-wife. (A Merchant dealing in memories paired with a mechanomancer is a dangerous thing.) He specifically wanted a clockwork that would efficiently strip the copper out of old buildings, because scrap copper is always a booming business, and he wanted an edge to make him competitive. (Plus, it's more efficient to do it in teams, so being a one-man copper-stealing operation means he gets all the profits.) What he got is this twenty-pound metal spider that fits in a briefcase. When unfolded, it's roughly the size of a small dog made out of rusted scrap metal. It scuttles along walls, searching for acoustic differences that suggest copper wiring, and then it gets to work, punching holes in walls with its mandibles and rolling the wire onto a spool on its abdomen. It can strip a small house in an evening. Jimmy started in Detroit but worked his way through Michigan and started into Indiana, at least until getting caught. Nobody knows what happened to the Copper Thief. Some think it ended up in a police evidence room in Gary, IN, deactivated and awaiting its next instruction. Others think it's still roaming the wilds of

northern Indiana, looking for copper. Assuming it wasn't destroyed, it could appear anywhere.

**Wound Threshold:** 35  
**Provides Initiative** 5%  
**Provides Wound Threshold** 35%  
**Unique: Sense and Strip Copper Wiring** 50%  
**Costs:**

- 60 starting Identity points = 1 minor charge
- +30 Identity points = 3 minor charges

**Total Cost:** 4 minor charges

### LITTLE KATICA

Notorious Chicago-area charger Predrag Knezevic made this lock-picking clockwork in preparation for a big heist he planned back in the late 2000s. To make it less conspicuous, it appears as a beautiful young girl, about nine years old. (Specifically, it appears as his niece of the same name who died during the Homeland War. Predrag escaped Yugoslavia; Katica did not.) It can talk and sing Croatian lullabies — most people are going to figure out it's not a real girl after a short conversation, although Predrag largely added those features so that he can pretend his niece is still alive — but most importantly, it can exude lockpicks and various other implements to crack mechanical locks, as well as exuding thin, spidery filaments to crack electronic locks.

Nobody really knows what happened to Predrag after about 2010 or so. Word on the street is that he was receiving dialysis treatment and on the wait list for a kidney before he disappeared, so maybe he just died. On the other hand, a couple of people claim to have seen him in Chicago since 2010, and at least one checker says he's actually up in Kingston, Ontario now. As for Katica, Predrag was notoriously absent-minded, and had a strange tendency to squirrel away various clockworks in boltholes and storage units around Chicago, so she might appear in a shipping container somewhere.

**Wound Threshold:** 60  
**Automated Locksmith 60%:** provides wound threshold, unique: picks locks, unique: cracks electronic locks  
**Beautiful Singing Voice 30%:** substitutes for Connect, substitutes for Status, unique: sings beautiful Croatian lullabies

**Costs:**

- 60 starting Identity points = 1 significant charge
- 1x size reduction = 1 significant charge
- +30 Identity points = 3 significant charges

**Total Cost:** 5 significant charges

### THE LONESOME LUNCHBOX

Everybody thought these annoying artifacts were gone for good until the Sleepers had to put down a horde of the damn things in a junkyard in Billerica, MA in November of 2015. (The fire made the news, but the Sleeping Tiger stayed asleep.) These things look like a cross between an old-style lunch pail and a lobster, and they crawl their way towards metal. If the clockwork finds a metal source, it reproduces. The bad part is that this reproduction is geometric — when one Lunchbox makes another, now both of them are capable of reproducing. And like that old Fabergé Organics

All the relevant information about "Improving Identities" is on page 45 of Book One: Play.

shampoo commercial goes, two become four, four become eight, eight become sixteen, and so on until they run out of metal. The infernal devices don't do anything other than reproduce, but they're either reproducing or seeking out metal reserves as long as there's any metal within a half-mile.

**Wound Threshold:** 5  
**Provides Initiative** 5%  
**Provides Wound Threshold** 5%  
**Unique: Find Metal and Reproduce** 50%  
**Total Cost:** 1 minor charge

## THE SUVIRUS

The SUVirus is a clockwork parasite that thrives in Lexus sport utility vehicles and *only* Lexus sport utility vehicles. (There's a long-standing rumor the inventor was a disgruntled employee, or someone who wanted to "prove" the vehicles are unsafe.)

The SUVirus appears as a flat, metallic butterfly, roughly the size of two human hands. (It is rarely seen in this form, as it can only remain animate for about an hour outside a vehicle. In this form, it crawls around looking for a host.) It usually lairs behind the front bumper of a Lexus SUV, extruding thin filaments throughout the powertrain of the vehicle and awaiting the right moment to take control.

"The right moment," in this case, is whenever it gets close to another Lexus SUV. When it does, the SUVirus takes control of the vehicle, and the driver is shut out — no

control over steering, brakes, ignition; even shifting gears will not deter the SUVirus. The vehicle controlled by the SUVirus then rams into the other Lexus SUV.

If the SUVirus takes enough damage to be destroyed, that's it — it's a bad accident, and the drivers and passengers might be injured, but nothing else happens. If the SUVirus survives, however, it divides into two proto-virii, and each proto-virus crawls into a host vehicle. When the host vehicles are repaired, the proto-virii steal components to repair themselves, and then finish installation behind the front bumper. The process can then begin again.

The SUVirus is a very subtle passenger. An auto mechanic with the appropriate Identity needs to make an Identity roll with a -30% shift to detect that something is wrong. (An Identity roll without a shift will suffice if the mechanic specifically looks behind the front bumper.)

**Wound Threshold:** 55  
**Lexus Camouflage 30%:** substitutes for Secrecy, substitutes for Notice, unique: hides in Lexus SUVs  
**The Relentless Pursuit of Perfection 55%:** substitutes for Pursuit, provides wound threshold, unique: viral replication in Lexus

**Costs:**

- 70 starting Identity points (obvious clockwork) = 1 significant charge
- 3x size reduction = 3 significant charges
- +15 Identity points = 1 significant charge

**Total Cost:** 4 significant charges



# AUTOMATA AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

It only takes eight significant charges to make a starting-level player character with mechanomancy. No doubt, some enterprising player will notice this and want to play an Automaton. This isn't appropriate for every campaign, but if your gaming group is on board, here are some guidelines. As always, feel free to ignore them if your idea is cooler and more fun.

Go through *character creation* as normal. Automata can't take supernatural Identities — nothing with the *casts rituals* or *use gutter magick* features, no avatars, no adepts. Anything else is fair game. Most automata pick up a mechanical repair Identity, just because it "feels right" and because it helps them keep themselves operating.

Automata often lack an obsession (and therefore an obsession skill), although automata made with major charges can have them. Consider whether or not your automaton has an obsession. Incidentally, this is a sneaky backdoor for automata in the campaign — if the group has a player character without an obsession, the GM might nominate that character as an automaton without realizing it. (Gauge your group, though; not every player is going to like this revelation.) Finding out you're an automaton is a rank-10 Self check, probably followed by several other stress checks on the Unnatural and Self gauges. Finding out someone is an automaton (say, by watching them bleed gears and oil when stabbed) is probably worth a rank-3 to 5 Unnatural check. (Although that can rise if you're close to the person.)

Automata are made of metal rather than flesh, and so cannot heal naturally, nor can they be healed with the Medical feature. However, people with repair Identities (or the mechanomancy Identity) can roll to heal an automaton, allowing the clockwork to recover a number of wounds equal to the sum of the dice roll. (Matched failures and fumbles usually cause 1-5 points of damage. Crits heal 20 Wound Points.) On the plus side, automata can't be affected by magick that only affects humans or flesh or living beings. Along these same lines, automata only take melee damage (the sum of the dice) from firearms attacks, and deal firearms damage (with no damage cap) with their fists. (Incidentally, if you don't know you're an automaton, punching *through* someone is a great and terrifying way to find out.) They don't need to eat or sleep, can't be poisoned, all that good stuff.

Automata can take Magick (Mechanomancy) as an Identity, and it doesn't have to be an obsession skill. They just "get" it.

The last bit is something easy to overlook, but very important: keep quiet. You probably want to avoid doctors, X-rays, and metal detectors, or else the Sleepers will come looking for you. Along with anyone else who thinks a clockwork would be useful for their plans.

## ALL ABOARD THE POWER TRAIN

Automata must put between 3 and 40 Identity points in an Identity called "Power Train." This Identity is never rolled, and only has one feature: it powers the clockwork. Each day, the automaton spends one point of Power Train to keep operating. The automaton can also spend a point of Power Train to get a +10 shift to any physical action. If Power Train ever hits 0%, the clockwork dies. (Maybe it can be revived, maybe it can't.)

(Incidentally, this power consumption need means that unwitting automata are usually in deep, deep denial about why they don't need to eat or use the bathroom. Or maybe they just haven't figured out that their morning Bowflex routine is literally keeping them alive.)

As with Wound Points, the GM should keep track of the character's current Power Train rating, and should only let them know how run-down they feel. The Identity can never rise above 40.

An automaton can recover a point of Power Train by engaging in its recharging routine, whatever that is. Maybe there's a key in your back that needs to be wound, maybe there's a lever in your elbow that needs to be pumped thirty times, or maybe you're like Ivan Stahl, former sex clockwork for Catherine the Great, who is powered by sex acts. As you can tell, you typically need someone else to keep you powered (an automaton winding itself is a zero-sum game), although modern clockworks can often rig some device to a generator or similar contrivance that will keep them wound.

## NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH

Occult power allows for another way to power automata, but it's very unstable. A clockworker can install a free-energy engine — the fabled perpetual motion machine — into a clockwork for an additional significant charge. Free-energy clockworks are usually frenetic, and always trying to figure out how to bleed off excess energy, because if they absorb too much, they explode.

Instead of losing a point of Power Train each day, free-energy automata *gain* one point of Power Train each day, and gain another point each time they roll a matched success or crit. Unlike standard automata, free-energy Power Train can rise above 40, but once it hits 80, the clockwork explodes. Roll ten dice and add them together — everybody in ten feet takes that many wounds. Everybody in twenty feet takes half that.

If a free-energy clockwork dies for any other reason — Power Train drops to 0%, crushed in a drill press, torn apart by an angry mob — it explodes as detailed above.

See "Creating Characters: The Lonely Singles Club Version" on page 53 of Book One: Play. Alternately, Chapter 3 of Book Two: Run covers collaborative character and setting generation, starting on page 24.

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