ADVENTURE EXCITEMENT

THE KERBEROS CLUB



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A GAME OF VICTORIAN ADVENTURE

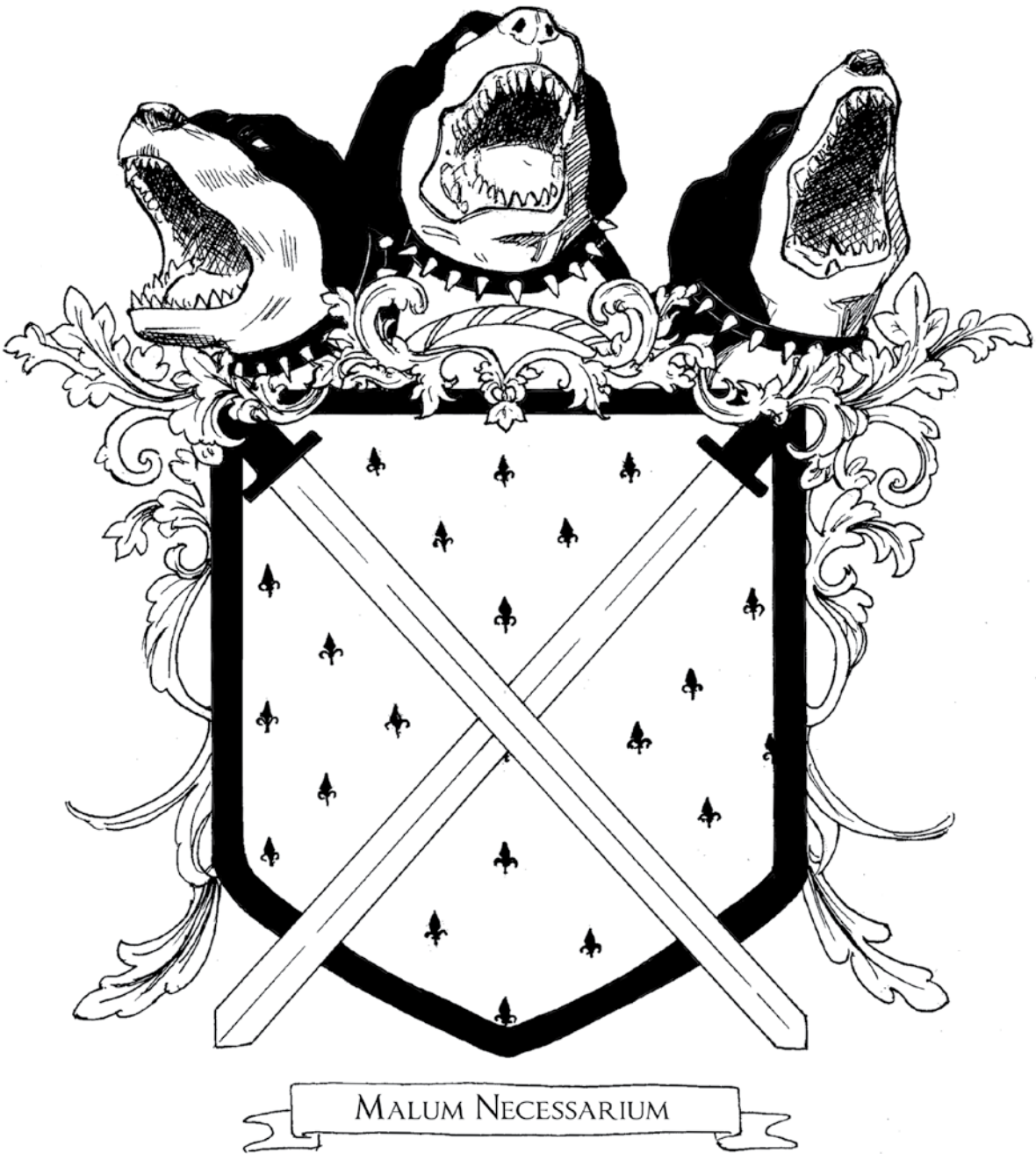
FATE ROLEPLAYING

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TODD 2008

The Kerberos Club

A *FATE* Role Playing Game of Strange Victorian Adventure



Credits

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The Wonders of the Antediluvian Age made their way to the Great Exhibition and then to the Royal Zoological Park in London, thanks to a wager placed at the Kerberos Club.

Introduction

As Victoria's Empire grows larger and more Strange, the well-bred beasts of Science and Industry mate freely with the ill-tempered curs of Occultism and Myth, begetting uncanny marvels that demonstrate the most pernicious mongrel vigor. As Her divinity becomes indisputable, and Her government is shown how to once again properly bow to a true Monarch, the Empire teeters on the brink of chaos. Industry and the Might of Arms are both transformed by the Strangeness which has touched the world.

In famine-ravaged Ireland the roads to Faerie open and the wonders and horrors of the Otherworld spill out, mingling with man and politics, with magic and Church. But good British will, good British steel and brave British soldiery push into the Lands of Tears and Honey, where the old bones of the Celtic gods are home to their weird kith and kin, arisen from their flesh as it dying became starlight. Through the colony of New Birmingham, Victoria Divinus asserts her Rights and Prerogatives to the Summerlands and the Winterlands, and names as her subjects all the races of the Fae, from the least phooka to the greatest lord.

Armies are raised against Her, and the gods and powers of old march with their human comrades. But as in the Indian Rebellion, they are smitten soundly by Her legions and the unsettling weapons of Strange origin they bring to war. Lovelace's mechanical servants become mechanical riflemen. Albert's gift of wolf-belts from his native Coburg becomes Her Majesty's 13th Lupine Rangers. The skies belong to Her Aero Navy and its fighting-craft, perfected from Félix du Temple's *Albatross* design.

The pace of change is unsettling. Many have marked that things which would have been witchcraft in their fathers' age, and would have been deemed impossible just years previous, are now commonplace. No sooner is one innovation or uncanny revelation or Wonder of the Age accepted and become familiar than another arises, more perturbing than the last.

In January of 1860, a man sprouted whirring hummingbird wings and flew from his home in Middlesex to his offices in London as if borne by angels, outpacing the express train on his way. Slowing only to fetch down a kitten from a roof, he arrived at his place of work hardly out of breath. He was lauded in the headlines for a week, then began selling a patent Lifting Tonic promising that the "Seventeen effusions and potent compounds of exotic and mysterious origins" would grant a "lightness of step and mind" and which if used diligently would grant "wings of spirit." But at 5s 5d a bottle it only served to lighten his customers by relieving them of the weight of their silver. By the first of March he was already defending his reputation in the courts, and fighting prosecution under an obscure Act governing the practice of witchcraft to "cause a public Spectacle in purpose to Profit unjustly"—proving that there's nothing so wondrous and awe-inspiring that London pragmatism can't reduce it to its basest element.

The Empire is Touched and so are its citizens. The wonders of Science and the horrors of its misuse walk alongside the great mysteries of the elder ages. Oriental religions and secret cults grow in popularity, and London, always faintly pagan even before the Strangeness, has become something else again.

When Victoria rose to the throne in 1837 the Strange was upon Her already in small ways, and it was upon Her kingdom as well, though hidden and mostly unknown. By the middle years of Her reign, when Her divinity was revealed by the bleeding wounds in Her side and hands during the Indian Mutiny of 1857—stigmata which only healed when the rebellion was put down—the Strange had entered the public consciousness and was reported in the news. The lines between Invention, Occultism, God, Monster, Magic, Mesmerism, Science, and Industry become blurred, and there is only the thrumming engine of Progress to which society clings with white-knuckled hands. The Future is Now, and the World is remade daily.

There is no shortage of news for London's dozens of papers. By the end of Victoria's reign, the pace of change and the Strange wonders that She portended have become oppressive and crushing. It is impossible to bear Her gaze any longer without falling down and weeping, so She remains out of the public eye. She has made pets of Parliament. The Lords are Her parakeets, singing whatever tune she wishes, and the House of Commons Her beaten dogs.

And then there is the Kerberos Club, refuge for the Empire's monsters and broken heroes, those who have gazed too long into the darkness, and those who have been Touched and remade by the Strange. For a while the Kerberos Club guards the gates of hell, keeping ordinary folk ignorant of the Strangeness. Then as the Strange becomes known, they marshal to confront those weird menaces that are too much for ordinary authorities. In the last years of Her reign the Club is at the height of its power, bringing the full force of its Strange potencies against enemies foreign and domestic. Thus, the Three Heads of the Kerberos Club: one to find enemies, another to ward them off, and the last to destroy them if necessary.

The Club welcomes any who've been Touched, and early on this egalitarianism is itself more shocking than the rumors of dark dealings, blackmail, pagan practice, sexual perversion, and smoking in the company of women.

Within the walls of the Club's main house on the Square of Saint James, just off Pall Mall, no member is forbidden any access or denied any privilege because of race, creed, class, color, sex, or predilection. This shocking transgression of the natural order of things might seem the hardest of the Club's many eccentricities to accept, but only if one has not yet seen the Blue Chamber or the Atlantis Room, or sat down at table with Doctor Archibald Monroe and heard Darwin's theories of Speciation and Natural Selection so amusingly explained from the lips of a chimpanzee. The doctor is quite proud of his waistcoats—he has them tailored by Mertoy and Sons in colors to inspire thoughts of Birds of Paradise—and a compliment will surely win his friendly attention.

The Kerberos Club is where the Strangers come to relax, have a meal, read the paper, and socialize with those who truly understand the burden, the power, and the duty that the Touch of Strangeness imparts. And of course, to engage in the sorts of dilettante meddling by which the Kerberans address some of the Empire's gravest and subtlest threats.

Special Branch, Victoria's steely-eyed secret police, despise the Kerberos Club, and would happily see the lot of them banged up in irons and locked in a hole where the sun never shines (assuming the Kerberan in question wouldn't find that treatment quite delightful). But Victoria dotes on the Club, even if She never publicly meets its officers in any official capacity. She likes Her creatures to remain strong and occupied, and some harmless exercise from rivalry can only serve the good of all. When She needs clean, fanatical, reliable and rigid, her Special Branch will do. But when She needs a Stranger's abilities or warped perspective—when She needs the insights of a controlled evil to understand a loosed one—then the three-headed dog is the beast She whistles for, if the clever monster isn't already on the right trail.

There is every good reason for the club's motto:

MALUM NECESSARIUM.



How to Use This Book

The Kerberos Club is a setting sourcebook for the *FATE* roleplaying game. It presents a view of the Victorian period as transformed by Strangeness, the euphemistic expression used to describe every manner of weird and uncanny influence, inspired by the gothic horror, scientific romance and fairy tales of the day, the superhero genres of the modern era, and by the real history of the period made Strange at every step, and growing increasingly so as the century progresses.

This book presents three distinct eras of play, each offering a different style of adventuring. The eras also correspond generally to the Early, Middle, and Late Victorian period, and so each has a slightly different social and political landscape. It is entirely possible to run (and frankly, would be awesome to play) a campaign from one end of the century to the other, encompassing each era and style into a single game.

Early on, the Strangeness is relatively subtle, something people may have heard about but with which most have no direct experience. In the middle, it is breaking out into the public awareness and becoming indistinct from the other wonders of the age. By the late era things have come totally unstuck, and almost nothing is too Strange to be loosed in the world.

Superheroic History

The world of the Kerberos Club can be defined like so:

A conceit of the setting is that while many of the details of history may change due to the actions of superhumans, the general shape of Victoria's century remains the same. In 1861, Prince Albert, having become increasingly concerned that Victoria's transformation is driving her mad, mysteriously vanishes so as to join an occult revolutionary society with its origins in the University of Berlin. In our reality, he died of typhus.

The superhuman are no different than the merely human in the world of the Kerberos Club. Change comes to some and not to others, and some actively fight against it. But the world itself is changing, and changing dramatically, so elements of Future Shock play into this. Can you change enough to keep up with the changing times? The rate of this acceleration itself increases as the century wears on, and the forces unleashed in the 1840s will not be put away again.

As the century wears on, the Strangeness spreads and becomes more prevalent.

Early. In the early years of Victoria's reign, the Strangeness exists and has begun to spread and infect, but it has not yet become common knowledge. What is known is generally considered unseemly, foreign, or the purview of the Great and Good (or the Base and Fallen). In this mode, the Kerberos Club operates to keep a lid on these things, to see that they don't get too out of hand and upset the delicate sensibilities of the growing middle class.

Middle. In the Middle Victorian era things begin to heat up pretty seriously. The Strangeness can no longer be ignored: Victoria has shapechangers in Her army, and Her heavy cuirassiers wear the Lorica Victoria, bulletproof armor for rider and horse alike. Now the Kerberos Club contends openly with weird threats and menaces, and things begin to resemble a street-level superhero setting in many ways.

Late. In this era the Empire is like a top, nearly spun out, wildly gyrating before flying off the table onto the floor. Fleets of airships, the Hollow World explored, dinosaur cavalry, superhuman adventurers fighting openly—you name it, the Late Century's got it. Here, the Kerberos Club is like a big public super-team in many respects. Their battles with malevolent Strangers can sometimes level city blocks.

Yet while the world grows Stranger and Stranger, it doesn't get any morally clearer. It's about hard decisions, and about consequences. In a sense, the British Empire is presented as the "good guys" in this game, in that the Kerberos Club (and its members) for the most part do their particular take on "duty" with regards to Queen and Country. Often, they find themselves forced to make choices between a little evil and a big one, or to make choices with no clear idea where the Good lies. The real history of Britain saw intense classism, crushing poverty, science in the service of racism, the disenfranchisement of women, sensational crime, and war war war. Add to this the reality of the superhuman. It's a tough world, and sometimes the only thing you can be is badder than the bad man, more deceitful than the Devil, and more poisonous than the snake. At the end of the day, is knowing you did your duty for Queen and Empire enough to let you look your own reflection in the eye?

Who Are the Characters and What Do They Do?

The primary assumption of this book is that players will take on the roles of members of the Kerberos Club, and one major goal in writing it has been to make this prospect as attractive as possible. The Kerberos Club is many things, but within the setting it is the vanguard against the Strangeness which is transforming the world: the Empire's first and last defense against menaces too weird for ordinary people.



As a facilitator to play, it is a perfect excuse for characters of radically different social background and class to mingle and work together as equals, something which can present a problem without this conceit in the context of the Victorian social order.

The Kerberos Club is a refuge for the Strange. It counts among its members Indian mystics, fallen women, gentleman adventurers, occultists, and those who meddle with the outward limits of what is scientifically possible, seeking to transgress those limits at any cost. All its members have been Touched. As Kerberans, the player characters stand somewhere at the nexus of Hero and Monster, and as the Club becomes more public knowledge, they are equally lauded and despised. They possess unnatural abilities which defy reason and a perspective which defies morality. They cast a lurid glow that casts the period's social landscape in sharp relief.

Within the walls of the Club's London house all are equal and treated as such (and those who can't adapt to this don't long last on the Club's rolls), but outside the walls, they find themselves thrown back into the same struggles, preconceptions, and expectations as everyone else, and subject to the mistrust and resentment of ordinary folk who envy and fear their freedom. In this way, they are both within and without proper Victorian society, subjects of admiration and envy, sometimes revulsion, but always fascination.

And as much as Society would wish it were not so, the Kerberos Club is needed.

What characters do is as complex as who they are. The pursuit of personal agendas is entirely acceptable. A detective may consult on cases unrelated to the Club's business, and a physician may seek cures for weird diseases. An inventor invents, an explorer explorers, a woman fallen to vice, free thinking and the study of the occult has plenty to occupy her time.

But if one visits the Kerberos Club's house often enough, one will inevitably be asked to look into certain things, handle certain business, have a word with this person or that. The Kerberos Club's officers (whoever they might be) never assign jobs or duties; rather all members



are obliged to look favorably upon the humble requests for assistance made by their fellows. Likewise, the characters have this same privilege of asking for assistance, information, and specialized services from other members.

The currency of the Club is favors done and favors owed, and though there is no official tally, most members are scrupulous about keeping track of who they owe and who owes them. Offers of assistance, if accepted, are indebting as well. The Club's grand tradition of meddling in affairs which don't concern it sees Kerberans on the trail of many menaces and threats even before an official request for aid comes down the convoluted channels separating the Club from the Queen. Such requests follow a path like Louis Pasteur's torturously twisted glass tubing, which keeps wandering microbes from inoculating his broth while still allowing air to pass through. Communication without contamination.

Victoria's Empire is under assault constantly from all quarters. In Ireland, the Fae grow restless with the Queen's rule, and their discontent with Her rulership mirrors that of the Irish people. In India, the legion of native gods and demons and divinities, asleep for ages, has begun stirring again, seeking new epic stories to play out upon the societies of man. In Europe, France and Prussia clash, and beyond them, Russia grows increasingly aware of its might. In the Americas, the broken Union is heading to war.

Spies, anarchists, criminals petty and grand, faerie contagion, industrial transformation, blasphemous science run amok, strife within the Church over the Queen's apparent divinity, and all the mundane evils of poverty and desperation and injustice push the Empire to the boiling point. Assailed from without by enemies on four continents, corrupted from within by Progress run mad, it is held together only by the increasingly inhuman will of Queen Victoria Divinus.

The Kerberos Club has plenty to contend with.

The World in Brief

The ethos of the age is Progress. The Victorian Period was the crucible in which the modern world was formed. The great 'isms of the 20th century have their roots in the Victorian. The Industrial Revolution reshaped everything, changed everything, and this is perhaps why this age is so compelling, and why we keep coming back to it in so many ways. It is the first time we as moderns and post-moderns can look back on Big-H History and easily see how it works. The injustices of the age shock us, and the manners and mores seem antiquated, but it all clicks. In

The Kerberos Club this trend of Progress is accelerated.

Those Touched by Strangeness often have uncanny insight and intelligence, and the pace of invention itself increases. By the end of Victoria Divinus' reign, the Empire has a technology 20 years more advanced than its historical counterpart. That's an extra 20 years of marvels crammed into an already packed century. Add to this the less scientific marvels, the exploitation of Faerie, the resurgence of Spiritual Disciplines and Occultism, the industrialization of certain aspects of folk-magic, and the machinations of jealous foreign and forgotten gods. The eras of play conform to this. Early on, it might be compared to a Victorian *X-Files* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, but by the end it contains every weirdness and oddity robbed from the pulp and comic writers of the next century.

All this leads us to the dark twin of Progress: *Future Shock*. Change can be terrifying. Ways of life are destroyed. Cities transformed. Fortunes made and broken, and the only way to keep pace with the change is to embrace the Strangeness fueling it.

. . . Doomed to Repeat It

To our esteemed readers well versed in the minutiae of the Victorian period's history and culture, we offer a blanket apology for any liberties taken with historical fact, its personages, or its ways of life. We certainly hope any such irregularities which spring out to well-schooled eyes will be taken as creative and dramatic license, *deliberate* deviations from the real timeline of the age, rather than anything so shocking and scandalous as *mistakes, misassumptions,* or *Edwardian stereotypes*.

We've tried to cleave as closely to the period in its details as possible, highlighting the major events and social movements as if influenced by the reality of the superhuman. So, we have our dodge right there. Anything which doesn't make sense, well, a wizard did it. Or perhaps a dinosaur. Or a creature from Saturn. Or a man who can fly.

The history of the Kerberos Club's world is intended to be a blend of the real history of our world, the fancies of the age itself, the very modern genre of comic books and super powers, and the fantastic, the strange, the grotesque, and the wondrous. It's meant, in part, to answer questions like "What if Sir Richard Burton had superpowers?" In service to this fancy, certain simplifications and generalizations have been made for the modern reader's benefit.

In short, anything "wrong" that you notice is *entirely* intentional.

"Touched by a Strangeness"

In 1847, Thomas Babington Macaulay (Whig MP for Edinburgh) wrote in a letter to the *Edinburgh Review*, "(London) also, in contrast to its virtues, has become touched by a strangeness I can not help but compare to the airs of the oriental I experienced while serving upon the Supreme Council for India, but different yet in that India's queer happenings could always be laid at the feet of superstition and ignorance, while here in the great city itself, it is the heart of rational thought—Natural Science—that is being employed to uncanny purpose."

Other writers, also having noted the oddness which seemed more prevalent in the decade since Victoria's rise to the throne, picked up the expression, and then *Strange* took on a particular meaning in the press and common conversation. To be *Touched by Strangeness* was to be in some way changed or altered by unseen, mysterious, frightening, or unknowable forces. To become a *Stranger* was to be remade by them, and the label marked one out for fear and rejection.

In 1858 while struggling with his failing marriage, Charles Dickens wrote the satirical short story "A Strange Fascination," which was dedicated to his particular friend (and likely cause for his marital troubles) Ellen Ternan. The story wasn't published until after his death, but it described the troubles of a young man seemingly blessed through "…a patent process of Science, owing to the distilled genius of Alhazen, Descartes, Gassendi, and Huygens…" with the power to "…cast waves in the luminiferous aether,

Ripped From the Headlines

The Victorians were prodigious readers. Literacy was at a high point in the Western world (though still low by modern standards), and the printing press and ready availability of paper allowed for the mass publication of works for the common audience. No longer was literature written exclusively with the well-educated, the wealthy, or the sophisticated in mind. Now it was written for the common man to buy and read.

Even those who did not read still enjoyed the stories. It is common during the period for one literate individual to read the newspapers, 'dreadfuls, penny-novels, story papers, and serials to a barroom full of his illiterate fellows. Victoria's Britain was hungry for the written word, and reading was a major social activity and source of cheap entertainment for London's masses.

The publications catering to Britain's lower classes were cheaply printed, and often consisted of thinly veiled stories of real crimes and scandals, or entirely fictionalized stories of outrages presented as true events. Sweeney Todd made his first appearance in just such a publication, and quickly sliced his way into the Victorian consciousness—a villain in his first appearance, but growing in the unauthorized sequels and copy-cat characters into something of an antihero. The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, with a slightly more *literal* interpretation of his title, could easily be a character in a modern, post-camp gritty comic book.

The links between the modern comic book and the Victorian penny dreadful are quite strong, both in the evolution of the media and in the audiences they catered to in their inception. In *The Kerberos Club* we draw an even closer tie between them. Superhuman exploits become major themes in the popular literature of the era much earlier in the century, even more so as the Kerberos Club itself begins to exploit them to sow confusion about its members and motivations. By the end of the century, the heavily illustrated story papers and dime novels have nearly become comic books themselves, with short passages of narration and lurid half-page illustrations depicting the action.



Strange FATE

If you're new to the FATE system, please proceed at your earliest convenience to the section entitled "How to Play *FATE*" for an overview of some common terms and what they mean.

If, however, you've played other *FATE* games before, such as *Spirit of the Century, The Dresden Files Roleplaying Game, Starblazer Adventures, Legends of Anglerre,* or *Diaspora*, you'll know that no two *FATE* games are exactly alike. This book is no exception.

Aspects have a few different classifications reflecting different facets of a character or the game world, such as Archetype, Conviction, and Location aspects, but for the most part they function the same as they do in other *FATE* games. The only big difference is that invoking your own aspects gets you a bonus or a reroll, while invoking other aspects *only* gets you the bonus. This is all discussed in more detail in *Chapter 5: Playing The Game.*

Skills in *The Kerberos Club: Fate Edition* are measured on two axes. Power Tiers categorize skills in terms of their effectiveness relative to normal human ability, while a skill's rating indicates how it ranks against other skills in the same Power Tier. Power Tiers are purchased with Refresh. Skills are purchased with skill points.

In place of stunts are Gifts, which serve basically the same rules-bending role, but there are only six "generic" Gifts instead of dozens of specific stunts found in some other *FATE* games.

In addition to the usual personal consequences, player characters can also reduce stress by taking Collateral consequences, which essentially offload stress from the character onto the world around them. Think of them as collateral damage.

Weapons and armor only affect stress dealt or received if they're an important part of a character. Otherwise, they're just window-dressing.

A thorough treatment of the *FATE* rules used in this book can be found in *Chapter 5: Playing The Game.*

conjuring patterns of Light from his skin as if reflections of sunlight upon cold clear water, to blind, or fascinate, and to show such visions as he could formulate."

The protagonist, who remains unnamed, being called only The Stranger, begins as an idealistic youth, who presents his power to cast illusions from his skin to one person after another, each one a greater example of the Dickensian grotesque.

While seeking to find some "…honorable and modestly profitable occupation for my strange capacity, which do my country good service, and bring me what funds as I might live comfortable…" he encounters only rejection and alienation, and each of the succession of parties either condemns the young man's abilities, or seeks to use them to profit at the expense of others. A cashiered military man scoffs, calling it "useless frivolity with no place in the Modern Army." A grasping factory owner suggests, "If your visions might keep my workers at their tasks night and day, substituting for their dreams, then you could bring me an extra nine hundred a year!" A minister tells him, "You'd be better served slinging coal than plying your strangeness about here, as we honest folks take no stock with such unworthy things." Finally, the father of his betrothed denies her permission to marry him, saying "… and think of the children, if you can't think of the scandal. Who will they take after? Will they have their mother's pale hair, or will they light up the darkness like their father, the lampwick?"

The Stranger is the most humane of the characters presented. In the final scene, between the slats of his pauper's coffin, illusory glimpses of Heaven are revealed to the gravediggers.

By Dickens's late-middle years, the Strange had entered the public awareness, and even mainstream literature, but well before this the weird events and urban legends of the Strange had fueled the public's hunger for more stories and tales. Penny Dreadfuls with titles like "Captain Blood and the Electric Men" sold monstrously well, as did biographies and witness accounts of Strange people and Strange events. Yet, actually being Touched was a prospect of some dread for many of the middle class clinging desperately to their insular and secure world view. The daughter of a brewer

might honorably wed the son of a Viscount, and invigorate the ancestral estates with an infusion of modern cash, but the bearer of the Touch, or worse a Stranger, could only bring scandal . . . though possibly a fortune as well.

Unnatural History

The Kerberos Club details Victoria's Century, the years of her rule from 1837 to 1901, touching on the events preceding her coronation on one end, and the fires and retributions on the other end, after her Ascension. If you laid the history of the setting down next to the history of the real world, you'd see some similarities in pattern, the events in one timeline have corresponding events in the other, but the Kerberos Club exists in a world touched by the Strange, and its history reflects this. Analogous events may occur, but for different, weirder reasons.

The Scope of This Book

This book is focused primarily on Britain, and more specifically London. The rest of the world is experiencing the rise of the Strangeness as well—if not, perhaps, under the rule of a Queen become Goddess—but London is the capital of the world's greatest empire, and in the center of London is the Kerberos Club, beautiful, debauched, sullen and corrupt, like an orchid growing from the eye-socket of a corpse. London provides fodder for years of play.

References, Resources and Inspirations

Victorian London will already seem like an exotic setting for some gamers, but there's no lack of sources to inspire your imagination and capture the feel of the age.

Non-Fiction

Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton: The Secret Agent Who Made the Pilgrimage to Mecca, Discovered the Kama Sutra by Edward Rice. Sir Richard could have been a member of the Kerberos Club based on nothing but his extraordinary life, his social transgressions, and his bloody-mindedness. He's a great example of what proper Englishmen got up to in foreign climes, and his true life adventures almost stretch credibility. The way he was treated by society is especially relevant.

The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana by Jess Nevins. If you check out only one resource from this list, make it this one. The Encyclopedia is a remarkable work of scholarship and a nigh-obsessive interest in the fantastic literature written during the period covered by *The Kerberos Club*. Every page of this book presents you with ideas which you can use immediately in a *Kerberos Club* game, and can take a total Victoriana newb to the level of a conversant amateur in a single read. Even more fantastic, many of the works referenced in this book are available gratis online, as almost all are out of copyright and now public domain. I can't recommend this enough.

London: The Biography by Peter Ackroyd. London is an entire world, fractal: The closer you look, the more there is. Finding a way to narrow the focus on London was one of

the major obstacles while writing this book. The depth of information in *London: The Biography* made it much much harder. It is an excellent resource on the old city.

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist, the Facts of Daily Life in Nineteenth-Century England by Daniel Pool. Another excellent general reference full of little practical details: what things cost, what one wears, and what one eats.

The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian England from 1811 – 1901 by Kristine Hughes. An excellent overview of the period with many little details which could be used to create a sense of verisimilitude in your descriptions and characters.

Fiction

I can't possibly list all the period fiction which could serve you well in preparing for a *Kerberos Club* game. Any mystery, scientific romance, fantasy, or lurid exploitative fiction written by Victorians for Victorians serves double-duty for our purposes. It gives you ideas for your games and it provides a window onto the people who read it. Consider, when reading these things, who the audience would have been when they were first published. The following are more modern tales, still perfect for our purpose.

The Difference Engine by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling. This alternate history is very much in keeping with the creative intent of *The Kerberos Club:* Take the realities of the period and add history-perturbing innovations.

The Flashman Papers by George MacDonald Fraser. These novels are hilarious, clever, exciting, and eminently readable. The footnotes alone are worth the cover price. Flashman is a coward, a braggart, a villain, a cad… and also one of the Empire's great old warhorses and heroes. He's simultaneously everything that is good and bad about the age, as well as remaining a sympathetic and engaging character despite his tendency to be wholly reprehensible.

The Somnambulist by Jonathan Barnes. It's so perfectly low-end Kerberos that I wish I'd read it before writing.

Comics

From Hell by Alan Moore. Mr. Moore gives us still more fuel for this fire. *From Hell* is a brutal, layered, unflinching look at the era and its realities, as well as being a damned fine story. It is Moore's take on the Jack the Ripper mythology, and he layers it with occult symbolism without resorting to the overtly supernatural. It is an excellent dark window looking out on Victoria's London late in the period.

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill, particularly the first two volumes. Essential reading for any Victorian supers game, it was indeed one of the key inspirations for *Wild Talents* itself.

The League comics are additionally filled to the bursting with references to period literature. Literally every page contains some Easter egg, and all the sources are woven into a coherent setting. It is the ultimate Victorian fantasy pastiche. It is so complete and so perfect that it was one of the main reasons we took a different approach with the setting of *The Kerberos Club*, leaving the characters of literature within the pages they call home only hinting that perhaps they were inspired by "real" individuals actually within in the setting.

Roleplaying Games

Castle Falkenstein by Mike Pondsmith. One of my great gaming loves. Part novel, part game, it is written with the clever conceit of being an artifact in its own setting. The game is written by a dimension-hopping game designer seeking to introduce his Victorian chums to gaming. The tone of the game is high adventure and romance, and it is packed with useful period details and advice on making the period gameable. It is a gem.

Forgotten Futures by Marcus Rowland. The worldbooks for this game are pure awesome. They take a particular genre of fantastic Victorian literature and extrapolate a setting dominated or driven by those themes and tropes. His research is excellent, and the settings are marvelous.

Passages: Adventures Penned by Literary Giants by Justin D. Jacobson and Richard Farrese. Often described as Alice in Wonderland meets Stargate, but that fails to capture just how gonzo *Passages* can get. High weirdness in a Victorian mode which takes the "literary characters as real people" thing and dials it to 11.

This Favored Land by Allan Goodall. A *Wild Talents* sourcebook for the U.S. Civil War, packed with details about life in the 19th century.

Unhallowed Metropolis by Jason Soles and Nicci Vega. Here is a fantastic Victorian setting gone deadly. The smog is more poisonous, the poverty more crushing, and the whole damned place is infested with wormy hideous undead who want nothing more than to drag you down and eat the soft tissue off your face. Never leave home without your gas mask and your gun.

Victoriana by John Tuckey. Heroic fantasy in the Victorian age, loaded with research and beautiful design.

Movies

The Great Train Robbery. Sean Connery clinging to the top of a speeding train? Not much could make this movie better. It is a great heist film, well paced and generally well acted if fairly light viewing, full of excellent costuming and Victorian thieves' lingo. Based on the novel by Michael Crichton, itself based loosely on real events.

From Hell. Alan Moore's London is recreated in all its dripping fog-choked detail, populated with a fantastic cast of character actors, and then abandoned by the script writers and director. It looks pretty good, and the performances themselves aren't painful, but almost everything which made Moore's graphic novel unique and powerful is abandoned for a pretty generic Jack the Ripper slasher. Watch for Robbie Coltrane's snarling copper at least.

LXG: The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Sean Connery again? Yes indeed. But poor, poor Mr. Moore. Not to put too sharp a point on it, but this extremely loose adaptation of the graphic novel *is not a good movie*. The movie version of the League (and their more overt superpowers) actually maps closer to the style of character seen in *The Kerberos Club* than the original comic, but while the movie looks pretty good (the practical effects used for Mr. Hyde especially appealed to me), the dialog is astonishingly bad. Watching the DVD with the Spanish or French dialog track it becomes far more enjoyable. Assuming, of course, you don't speak Spanish or French.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Johnny Depp returns to London, this time as everyone's favorite singing, dancing serial killer, Sweeney Todd. London looks a little bit like a well-dressed stage, but then people are constantly breaking out into song, so verisimilitude isn't really a priority here. Depp looks fantastic as Todd, and Carter looks fantastic as always.

TV

Deadwood. While it rarely if ever touches on Victorian London, this series is in every possible way fantastic. The dialog raises cursing to a high art, and the frontiers of Victoria's empire would often be as rough and wild as the Deadwood camp.

The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne. A short-lived series based on the conceit that Verne did not write fiction, but thinly veiled biography, and all his stories were inspired by his extraordinary adventures and the people he knew. The quality of the writing and special effects and acting is uneven, but overall, this is a fun series. Steam-powered robots, hover-tanks, airships, evil overlords, mole machines: there is still plenty to recommend it.

The Web

Victorianlondon.org. An invaluable resource which zooms in tight on the metropolis of London, and includes Dickens's *Encyclopedia of London.*

Victorianweb.org. One of the oldest online sources for all things Victorian, and still one of the best.

Wikipedia.org. While some sneer at the accuracy of Wikipedia, for the casual history buff, or the GM looking for inspiration, there are few places online which give you so much useful info for your time. Since many Wikipedia articles are cross-linked it's easy to stumble from one topic to another, uncovering ideas, hooks, and obscure history you can use in your games.

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How to Play FATE



This section will introduce you to how the rules of this game work and what all the number-bits in this book represent. You can read the rules in detail in *Chapter 5: Playing the Game* and in *Chapter 7: Running the Game.*

The Basics

First and foremost, if you're asking yourself, "What *is* a roleplaying game, anyway?" go to www.arcdream.com for an introduction. Back? Good!

In the *FATE* RPG, characters, vehicles, equipment, and even scenes and locations that are important to the story are defined by three key terms: aspects, skills, and Gifts.

Rolling Dice

Many events in *FATE*—particularly the challenges that face the Strangers of the Kerberos Club—are resolved by rolling a few (usually four) special dice called Fudge dice. Each Fudge die gives you a ⊞, ⊟, or ■ result. Add one for each ⊞ and subtract one for each ⊟. (The ■ are worth zero.) Get a high enough result and you rise to the challenge. Important characters and objects use skills to boost their rolls—and just about everything in the game can use aspects.

Since Fudge dice can roll negative or positive, it's possible to get a result below zero. Therefore we always put either a plus sign or a minus sign in front of a roll's result to make clear whether it's above zero or below zero. A roll that's 6 above zero would be written as +6, not just as 6.

Aspects

Aspects are one of the most important parts of *FATE*. They are short, descriptive phrases that describe characters, scenes, objects, places, or even the game world as a whole. The ones you'll probably use most often, though, are your character's personal aspects: they express your character's personality, background, appearance, beliefs, possessions, connections, and other parts of what makes him or her unique.

Aspects can be simple statements, nicknames, catchphrases, the names of associates or enemies, and so forth. When you see a character write-up in this book, the listed aspects give you a sense of who the character is. When you make your character, you decide what his or her aspects are.

If there's an aspect at hand—on your character, the scene, your opponent, whatever—and it's relevant to the task at hand in a positive way, you can use it to improve your result. This usually means spending a **Fate Point** (see the next page) for each aspect you use and adding a +2 bonus to your roll for each one—although no aspect can be used more than once on a single roll. Your opponent can do the same.

Of course, this aspect business isn't limited to turning failure into success. If you've *already* succeeded without calling on an aspect, but you want to succeed by even *more*, you can use aspects to do that.

Unimportant characters, locations, events and objects can be handled just with aspects—leaving out skills and Gifts entirely—to speed things up.

You can find more information about aspects on page 184.

Skills

Most things that player characters do in the game are done with skills (and of course if the skill isn't enough, you can augment it with an aspect). Skills are areas of training, experience, or sheer talent. When you want your character to do something risky or that has the potential to add to the story—something with an interesting consequence for failure—you'll use one of your character's skills.

Unlike aspects, skills are concrete and quantifiable—each skill has a numeric skill rating that measures how effective the character will be with it in play and how likely you are to succeed. Skills tell you what a character can do.

Every skill also has a Power Tier that indicates how effective it is in comparison with the efforts of an ordinary human being. Most skills are in the Mundane Tier, but supernatural powers, such as super-strength or telepathy, will frequently be in higher Power Tiers.

To see if you do well, roll Fudge dice and add your skill rating. That's your **skill roll.**

Compare the skill roll to a difficulty number set by the GM. If you beat the **difficulty number**, you succeed.

For more on skills see page 198.

How Well Did I Do?

How well you succeed at a challenge is determined by three results of a skill or aspect roll: effort, shifts, and effect.

Add together your skill roll plus any aspect bonuses to get your **effort**.

(Other modifiers caused by the circumstances at hand may affect your effort, such as when trying to climb a particularly slippery wall or find a dropped earring in an especially cluttered room. That's up to the GM to determine, though. If she doesn't bring it up, don't worry about it.)

How well you succeed is measured in **shifts**. If your effort beats the difficulty number, you get a number of shifts equal to the margin of success. If the difficulty rating is +3 and your effort is +6, the margin is 3 so you get three shifts.

The number of shifts you get is called your **effect**. The higher your effect, the better you did.

Sometimes you'll want to spend some of these shifts to accomplish something special. In that case, reduce your effect by the number of shifts that you're spending. See page 320 for details. But usually you just use them to say how well you succeeded at the thing you were trying to do.

And if you're competing against an opponent, it's easy. Best effect wins.

Stress

When bad things happen to characters—such as injury, embarrassment, or fright—they take **stress**. If your objective is harming someone else (physically or otherwise), stress is how we represent it in the game.

Stress comes in three varieties: Health, Composure, and Reputation. The more points of stress you take, the worse off you are.

For example, let's say you're in a fistfight with a couple of goons. Your effort (the total of your roll, your skill rating, and any modifiers) is +6, while theirs is only +3. The GM tells you that you can spend a shift to knock one of them down a short flight of stairs and out of the immediate area. You decide to do that, and put the other two shifts toward dealing damage. The goon takes 2 points of Health stress and is knocked down the stairs.

If something has a Weapon rating (like "Weapon 1"), it does additional stress. If something has an Armor rating (like "Armor 1"), it absorbs stress.

Taking stress is bad. If you take enough of it, you're **Taken Out**, or removed from the story for at least a while. You could be dead, unconscious, disgraced, fleeing in panic, or whatever's appropriate for the attack that took you out. Within that context, the attacker gets to choose your fate.

Given a few minutes of respite, stress goes away on its own. When you don't have that luxury, there is another way to reduce stress: by taking consequences.

Consequences

Consequences are longer-lasting effects that can be as insignificant as being winded or off-balance or as life-changing as losing a limb or being ostracized from polite society.

You can reduce incoming stress by taking a consequence. A Trifling consequence reduces stress by 2, a Middling consequence reduces stress by 4, and a Grievous consequence reduces stress by 6.

Consequences are like aspects that are negative (see the **Aspects** section for more on aspects). You don't *want* consequences, but sometimes they're your only chance to stay on your feet. But you can take only so many consequences.

You can also choose to make a **concession** instead of taking a consequence. This is essentially you taking yourself out, but according to your terms instead of your enemy's.

When you see a write-up for a person, animal, or vehicle in this book, the more stress boxes and consequences are listed, the more resilient that person, animal, or vehicle is.

Gifts and Fate Points

Gifts bend the rules a little where your character is concerned. You might have a Gift that gives you a special piece of equipment or that makes one of your aspects more powerful or that provides a little boost to some of your skills in the right circumstances. They're sort of a halfway point between aspects and skills, in that they have concrete mechanical effects, but it's up to you to define the specifics within the guidelines provided. Every character has at least one Gift. We'll discuss them in the Gifts section on page 244.

Every player also has a store of Fate Points—sometimes a lot, sometimes a few, sometimes none! Spend Fate Points to affect the events of the story in your favor; earn Fate Points by acting in accordance with one of your character's aspects in a way that puts you at a disadvantage. This back and forth of Fate Points—the "Fate Point economy"—is, like aspects, central to *FATE*. More information on how this works is in the Aspects section, page 184.

And that's how you play the game.

Chapter 1
The Kerberos Club

The great black coach roared down the moon-silvered flags of Haymarket toward the resolute forms of Dr. Archibald Monroe, Joe Smithson and the Countess Lámina, who stood seemingly stuck to the stones by a syrupy pool of gaslight.

The great four-horse carriage was a juggernaut as the hooves of its team struck sparks on the street. It would have been the very sight to blanch London's pedestrian citizenry—to bring all the terror of an out-of-control coach plunging wildly into a crowd—but this night, O reader, the old city's citizens were safely shut away, and no right-minded gentleman or lady was upon the midnight streets. None but the lowest of peoples slunk along the walks, plying their illicit trades or stumbling with drink from one public house or another. None, that is, save those embraced by the Strange ways of the Kerberos Club.

Crashing ever closer, the carriage came! And over the roar of wheel and hoof came the shrill voice of the man within, the butcher-physician, the horrible Dr. Fabian. He screamed to his driver to drive faster, to crush his enemies under and leave them broken in the streets while their blood washed black in the moonlight between the hoary old flagstones. How many of Dr. Fabian's foes had met this same end? Too many, to be certain; innocents slain to cover his egregious crimes, his experiments upon living victims, so much crueler than the quick release of death.

The carriage was nearly upon the Kerberans when as one they moved. Countess Lámina leapt aside with an athleticism that was the envy of England's greatest sportsmen. With scarcely any effort Dr. Monroe exercised his simian prerogative: Clutching his top-hat tight to his head he scrambled up the lamppost as easily as a man might step across a drawing room. From this new vantage he laughed his hooting laugh to see his companion, the exhibition boxer Stony Joe Smithson, prove his nickname to be well ascribed.

That hulk of a man widened his stance, hunching into the pugilist's posture, and the lamplight shone on his skin just the same as it shone off the stone-paved street. His nickname wasn't the stuff of simile and metaphor, but of reality! Blessed by patent scientific processes, the boxer was made as hard and heavy as good British stone—and nearly five hundredweight! His craggy features, framed by side-whiskers of green lichen, showed a fierce smile, and his shoulders rolled as he drew back to deliver his famed punch, the so-called East End Avalanche.

And then the carriage was upon him, all noise and froth and savage animal fear, and the Avalanche fell upon the lead horse's skull with all the force of a stone mallet.

None could see the pugilist's triumph, however, for the horse went down, tangling the bridle and reins and falling under the hooves of its companion, who likewise tumbled to the street only to be crushed under by the two beasts behind. All screamed with terror as they drove downwards in a mass of kicking, bleeding flesh. Meanwhile the carriage, the heavy black carriage as huge as a police wagon, rose up, its tongue driven into the pavement. Like the arm of a medieval catapult it tossed the hunched driver far down the street. The coach flipped end over end to crash down upon the mass of horseflesh, with Stony Joe, the Strange agent of the Kerberos Club, buried beneath!

The screams of nearby women punctuated the crash, then fell off, to be replaced with shouts of excitement among the onlooking rogues and harlots. They called to their fellows, and windows all along the street were thrown wide to afford a greater view of the calamity and

the queer figures who caused it. Even the fallen women who walk the Haymarket street yet have hearts, and the cry went up to put the carriage-horses out of their misery, for their pain was most terrible to hear. Picking herself up with an unshakable dignity, Countess Lámina produced a heavy, short-barreled revolver, and fired three quick shots into three equine skulls, dispatching the broken beasts to whatever reward awaits loyal animals, even if their loyalty be to evil men.

Onto the upended carriage Dr. Monroe's apish form dropped, hat still firmly held in place, and between the spinning wheels he reached down to wrench the doors open and grasp the addle-brained man within. Dr. Monroe jerked him out so that Dr. Fabian fell into the street amid the wreckage of his instruments, his pills and powders, and the mingling pools of the horse's blood and his own.

"Damn and blast you," Dr. Fabian snarled. "Damn you three! I'll not be so easily caught!"

Dr. Monroe smiled as only a chimpanzee ape can, with far more teeth than one is comforted in seeing. "I would be shamed to call myself a medical man, owing to your own perversion of the art—but thankfully I no longer must be considered a man at all! To the very marrow of my trans-formed bones, I ache to destroy you, Fabian, and wipe away the stain you represent upon my noble profession."

"You'll have no chance, you filthy, debased thing! You may speak as a man, and wear a man's clothing, but you're not fit to judge me! You're as rotten as the failures of my laboratories, unclean and stinking!"

"It is not I who wallows in the horses' wastes and fluids. Countess Lámina, would you be so kind . . . ?"

Silent upon nimble feet, the Countess stepped forward, her revolver still huge and smoking in her hand, and setting the barrel against the villain's head she thumbed back the hammer to lock.

"My dear doctor, be warned that this revolver is a temperamental thing, very touchy and cross, and liable to bark and bite at the slightest provocation. Be so kind as to ease its worries about your behavior, and clasp about your wrists these self-locking manacles."

So saying, she dropped into the doctor's lap just such a confabulation, already stained rusty with dried blood. The doctor shook upon seeing them, and his voice lost its defiance, quavering as he spoke: "Are these . . . these . . . the very manacles . . . ?"

"Indeed, doctor. Taken from the cells beneath your laboratory, from off the wrists of one of your victims, who was blessed fortunate to pass on before seeing the ruin you'd made of her. You will be bound in chains you forged for yourself, doctor—in this life and in the next."

The mad physician began to weep as he locked the first cuff about his own right wrist. Then looking up, eyes agleam with savage joy, he said: "But you do not beat me and chain me without cost! When you first found me out and stalked me, and drove me to this desperation, you were three! But now? Now you are two.

"I will go to the gallows laughing that one of you deformed Strangers has fallen to me! Your pet boxer is no more, crushed beneath horse and carriage, and ground to dust against the flagstones!"

But his laughter abruptly ceased. Staring past Countess Lámina to the wreckage, the thousands of pounds of hardy oak and iron and horseflesh, his eyes grew wide around. The mass began to shift, and then to rise. Beneath it, picked out by the light, was the form of Stony Joe Smithson, bathed in blood, with clothing all ripped to rags, but completely whole in body and resolute of purpose.

Arms upraised, hoisting aloft the wreckage, he spoke in a grindstone voice:

"No, doctor! None is destroyed here today but you."

From "The Affair of the Horrific Dr. Fabian," part 5, as published in *The People's Periodical*, issue 7, November 21, 1865.

Welcome to the Kerberos Club

Behind the monstrous Gothic-revival façade of the Kerberos Club's main clubhouse on the Square of Saint James, the building seems to coil in on itself, becoming labyrinthine, almost as if the building were twisting itself into knots to confuse and confound. Given the nature of the organization it houses, this is not impossible.

To join the Club is to transgress, to break with the accepted "truths" of daily prejudice, to become open to the possibility that one has been wrong—about everything.

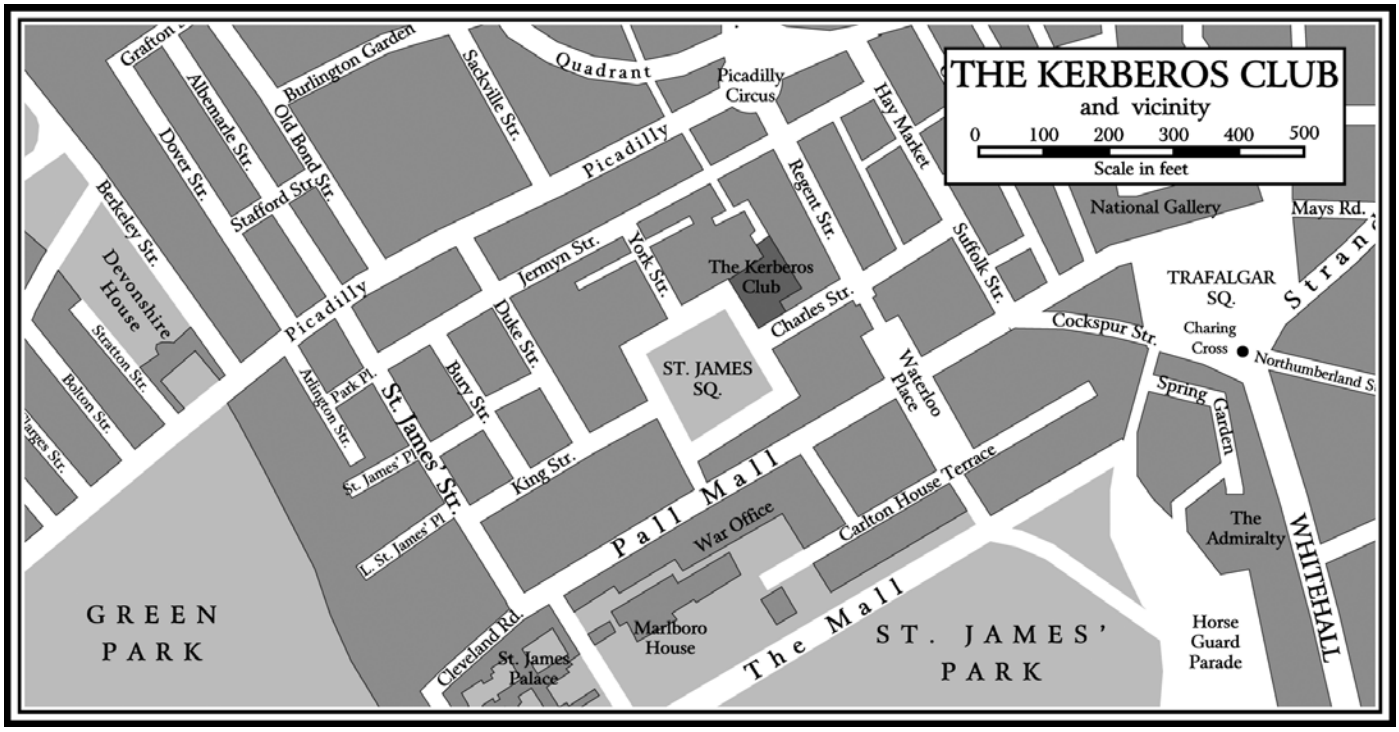
Even early in the century, when the Strangeness is budding but not yet in bloom, the halls of the Kerberos Club throw open the weird hidden world for all its members to see. Within the walls of the Club, the Strange is on display.

Its rooms are decorated in arcane style and hold inexplicable artifacts of mad genius. One whole gallery is given over to collections of meticulously mounted and labeled butterflies, specimens that any ordinary expert would say cannot exist. Beautiful. Otherworldly. Some painfully ordinary save for one jarring touch of the exotic. Some so alien as to cause the eyes to water when one tries to trace their unsettling geometries. Knowing what these specimens signified—where they were collected and by whom—would be of great value, if only the lepidopterist had not labeled all his prizes in an unknown alphabet all of curls and slashes, like daggers stabbing flame.

On certain nights of the year, the Butterfly Room is filled with the hushed sound of thousands of tissue-thin wings flapping in concert. On these nights, secrets told can never be revealed by any listener who hears them over the ghostly flapping. It is a popular room for sworn oaths and mysterious pacts, as well as for quiet reflection on the wages of obsession.

The Kerberos Club is filled with such inexplicable wonders.





There is no official hierarchy within the Club, and only a few shadowy officers to oversee what matters affect the whole—the payment of expenses, the handling of affairs of business. The Club's house is staffed by a colorful motley of help, well paid to accept the particular atmosphere prevalent in the Club. Many have personal reason to seek service in such an uncanny establishment. They learn early to meet the requests of members, no matter how bizarre, as efficiently as possible, and to ignore anything which seems particularly odd. Generally, the more Strange something seems, the less attention one ought to apply to it.

Old members can usually be depended upon to help new members settle in, access the Club's range of facilities, and make introductions among their particular circles. Only the officers know the Club's true membership, as access to the Rolls is one of their exclusive privileges.

It happens with alarming frequency that a Kerberan given up as certainly dead for many years will arrive one day without announcement, sometimes wearing clothing years out of fashion, and promptly seek a favorite chair in their favorite room, and ask for a favorite London daily and two fingers of brandy to ease back into the Club's embrace.

Cloak of Lies, Waistcoat of Obscurity, and Opera Hat of Exaggeration

The Kerberos Club's origins are obscure, if not by design then by *designs*. It has certainly occupied its present location since the mid-seventeen hundreds (there are wine-seller's bills to prove this), but prior to the Club's move into its Saint James house, records sink in the mire of history.

Some members proclaim loudly that the Club hails from the days of the Roman occupation, and descends directly (and obscurely) from the ancient mystery cults of Mithras and Hermes. But these same members proclaim loudly that the rats in the walls speak secrets between the hours of midnight and one, if you have the ears to hear them. Both might be true. Neither might be true. Perhaps the rats would know which story to believe. The Kerberos Club counts as members some of the greatest liars in the Empire, and some consider spinning mad tales for new members part of their welcoming duties.

Likewise, the Club's true purpose or mission are subject to much debate.

Most members can agree on the Club's most basic purpose: a safe harbor for those who find weathering ordinary society a perilous thing. Many also agree the Club works in its vague way to protect Victoria's Empire by marshaling against Strangeness run wild.

Origins Mysterious

Nobody is quite sure where the Kerberos Club has its roots. But there are some tantalizing clues.

It's likely, though unproven, that the modern Club got its start at the Gates of Hades coffeehouse in 1723. The Gates of Hades had the distinction of having been burned to the ground more often than any other establishment in Greater London. The Club's precursor is thought to have met in the rooms above the Gates for cards, wagering, and general debauchery, as well as a truly unhealthy amount of sorcery, conspiracy, and revolutionary thinking.

When the Gates of Hades burned for the final time (when its long-suffering proprietor, Edward Hale, gave it up as lost), it was rumored to have been destroyed by an agent of the sons of King George III, who blamed their father's madness on his close association with Simon St. James, an alchemist and long-standing member of the Kerberos Club. It was said that St. James brewed the King elixirs of opium, mandrake, and the residue of evaporated dreams distilled from the brow-sweat of failed artists and the saliva of debauched actresses.

The Purpose of the Club

While not as exhilarating as exotic adventuring, spy-catching, or ghost hunting, the Club's most humble (and vital) purpose is as a mutual-protection fraternity for individuals who would otherwise be marginalized, denied the society of their fellows, and possibly persecuted right out of the community. The Club looks out for its own, and all members are made to understand this core duty: watch out for the people who are watching out for you.

In extremis, one can expect one's fellows in the Club to offer what aid they may and to employ their influence on one's behalf. The Club maintains solicitors on retainer to handle the business of Club members who don't wish to retain their own counsel, and in addition to members who practice in the legal professions, its barristers can defend members who face trial or suit.

For members who lack legal standing, those underage, who are deemed nonhuman, or who are unfortunate enough to have been born female, the Club's solicitors arrange what trusts and investments may be made to give them financial independence, securing those assets so no husband or parent might claim them.

Most frequently, fortunes are put into the five per-cent government funds, with two being rolled back into the investment to let it increase, while providing a reliable three per-cent a year. This may be less than the typical heiress, who invests in the five per-cents and spends the lot (and more!) per annum; but with membership in the Club carrying so many perks, up to and including a modest but well-appointed suite of apartments within the clubhouse itself, it allows members to weather financial hardship quite handily. The Kerberos Club's agents are perfectly happy to manage the funds of gentleman members as well, and it has been estimated that the Club's agents manage funds totaling in the millions of pounds.

The Club also serves as powerful impetus for exploration. Expeditions are organized, experiments proposed, rituals performed, lost works of deep elder lore translated. The diverse membership brings fresh, dangerous ideas from across the world, and boils them over coals until the impurities are sublimated, leaving only the essence behind: curiosity purified.

Kerberans challenge each other in the best spirits of the British tradition. They argue, they debate and they wager. Oh! How they wager.

In 1848, the Kerberan Jackson Trollope bet William Coney the titles to his Yorkshire farm estate against Coney's submersible boat that he could not "journey to the

Empire of Brazil and petition His Imperial Majesty Dom Pedro the Second to release a mated pair of his Amazonian dinosaurs in time for the upcoming Exhibition." Coney took the bet, drummed up funds for his expedition, and within two weeks was aboard the hired merchant steamer *Hannibal* on his way to Brazil.

The best part of two years passed, and then in mid-September, 1851, the *Hannibal* returned, carrying Coney (minus one eye and several fingers) and not two but a dozen of the royal Brazilian animals, the living relics of the Cretaceous age come down to the Brazilian Emperor from the ancient Mayan kings.

The beasts astonished the crowds at the Exhibition, though earning an arch look from Her Majesty when the larger of the two iguanodons made a meal of the Crystal Palace's full-grown elms. After the Exhibition, all the dinosaurs save two were donated to the Royal Zoological Park. Coney kept a breeding pair of the hound-sized theropod "feathered serpents," which he had grown quite fond of on the journey home. Struck by their intelligence and loyalty, he found them ideal companions for a gentleman farmer, which he became after claiming his new estates from Trollope. He said in 1871 that "The beasts were the very thing to shock a man to the bone when I first saw them, but after keeping them these twenty years, raising them from the egg and hunting with them, I must say that nothing looks so queer to me as my neighbor's foxhounds."

Coney only admitted much later that he didn't persuade the monarch of Brazil to release into his care the precious animals, but, when he was roundly denied access, instead staged his own expedition and poached them from the royal preserves.

And this gives us a lesson in the dark side of unbridled exploration: transgression.

When one constantly challenges limits, it becomes more difficult to discern why some limits are necessary, why some bounds are not meant to be crossed. For a Kerberan, already leaping bodily over such confinement just by joining, the reason in things like etiquette, law and morality begins to seem quite thin. When one can defy the very laws of Nature, the laws of Man seem illusory, and Kerberans in particular must remain alert to the dangers of striding too far into the dark unknown. The Club is but a small fraction of life in a city like London, and outside the Club's doors are ordinary folk who would be horror-struck if they were shown this darkness.

Being a Kerberan is a balancing act between unlocking secrets and transgressing too far, between achieving marvels and becoming hardly human anymore.



I Shall Dine At the Club Tonight, My Dear

The Victorian gentleman's club is a somewhat alien institution to many moderns, particularly Americans. Where most Americans could be described as "work/home" oriented, splitting their time mostly between their work life and their home life, Victorian club members, as our illustrious co-editor Jess Nevins so neatly puts it, "were either work/club/home oriented, club/home oriented, or work/club oriented."

To the Victorian man, particularly to one of the middle class, his club and club activities were major parts of life—not simply a group he belonged to, but a place where he spent a great deal of his time. Men frequently dined at their clubs, took their leisure there, met with associates in business and entertained guests there.

The Victorian woman was expected to manage the home and arrange for home-oriented social functions. Without a wife or female relative to see to it, most Victorian men would have been hard-pressed to arrange a dinner party. For these men, the club provided a way of accomplishing similar things. Who one knew (and particularly who would vouch for one) was enormously important.

For this reason the Club polices its own, letting no member's mad schemes or ambitions threaten the innocent or the Club's tenuous place in society. Also for this reason, some of the worst villains of the age find themselves welcomed into the Kerberos Club, their abilities and ambitions rechanneled, their predilections given outlet.

As the century ages and the Strangeness become commonplace, members of the Club find themselves increasingly overwhelmed by the fast rising of the Strange tides. By 1880 they have utterly abandoned any pretense of secrecy, and openly proclaim their Strangeness to the world, marshaling their powers against looming menaces, sometimes with epic battles in the very streets of London. And indeed, in its skies and waters. The enemies of the Empire have been Touched as well, in their own ways, and the depredations of faerie anarchists, dynamite conspirators, Zulu war-spirits, rogue automechanical domestics, Tong assassins, anti-royalist occult conspiracies, Thuggee cultists, vengeful Martian ghosts, and escaped Amazonian *regusaur* war-dinosaurs all demand Kerberan attention.

Some Kerberans conceal their faces behind masks, so they might fight these menaces without publicly revealing their identities for savaging in the sensational press. Others seem to court the attention of the most salacious papers. By this time the Kerberan love of exploration becomes somewhat lost, and the Club is struggling to hold its own. Its purpose, to lessen the flow of the Strange and keep it from overwhelming the seat of Empire, has itself become overwhelmed.

The Charter, the Rolls, and Grand Old Tradition

The Club has few rules, but the ones it does have rise to the level of the sacrosanct. All members sign the Club's Charter, which describes the three Laws governing the comportment of Club members among themselves and when dealing with the outside world, as well as a collection of Bylaws which describe such mundane matters as the Club's financing.

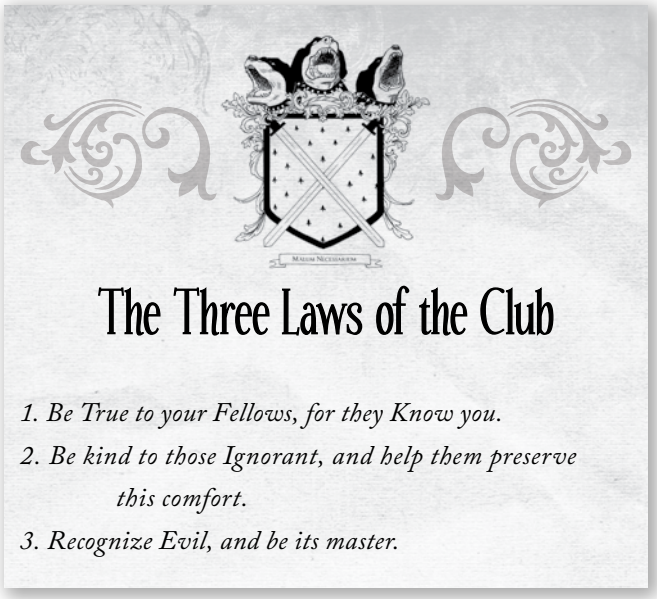
Once the Laws and Bylaws are signed, a Kerberan's name is added to the Rolls, the list of all members of the Club, current and past. The Rolls are writ upon a vellum made in the old way by Peecher & Sons papermakers, and bound into a somewhat ragged and much-stained book. The Rolls are huge, and lend credence to the pretensions of ancient origins. The oldest names in the Rolls are not even written in a recognizable alphabet, and their paper is crumbling birch bark.

But before signing, one must be nominated by an existing member. A prospective Kerberan is observed from afar (in all the Strange ways available to members of the Club) by the nominating member's circle of friends and associates, and any other interested parties who ferret out the nominee. Ungentlemanlike meddling is second nature to long-standing Kerberans, after all, and wooing a new member to the Club is a marvelous way to shape the new member to one's own philosophies.

Once the period of observation is complete (especially if a particularly adept prospect realizes he is being inspected), the Kerberans devise some manner of challenge to test the mettle of the prospect.

The Challenge is the greatest of the Club's esoteric Traditions, the practices and rituals passed down from earlier members for sometimes obscure reasons, and often to no clear point or purpose. On the anniversary of the death of Napoleon Bonaparte, for example, it is considered unlucky to pass through the door of the Kerberos Club facing forwards or backwards, and one should pass through sideways instead. Young members rarely engage in such foolishness, but the longer they belong, the more they find themselves participating in the Traditions. Perhaps it is because they have learned the true purposes of them, and fear the consequences of not obeying.

The Tradition of the Challenge is not frivolously dispensed with. Challenging one's prospective Kerberan is as close to a sacrosanct duty as the Club comes. These



The Three Laws of the Club

1. Be True to your Fellows, for they Know you.

2. Be kind to those Ignorant, and help them preserve this comfort.

3. Recognize Evil, and be its master.

Challenges are often weird, complex, and baroque. Sometimes horrific, sometimes whimsical, they reflect the personalities and predilections of the Challengers and the abilities and capacities of the Challenged. Each is unique. They aren't exclusive affairs by any stretch, and other Kerberans who get wind of a Challenge sometimes seek to meddle in it to their own ends, offering the prospect a bit of assistance or further consternation.

Keeping a Challenge secret from other Club members, or more famously, presupposing such interference and using it as part of a Challenge of delirious complexity, is all a part of it. And of course, as with all things to do with the Club, the betting is fierce. Will a prospect spiral down into terror and madness, or will he rise to meet the Challenge, overcoming and being exalted by the test?

It is considered very bad form for a prospect to suffer permanent injury, insanity, or death, though such things are not unknown. It is also considered bad form to go too easy on a prospect. Meddlers often move in when they think a Challenge is too simple or too menacing.

This gauntlet is as much a test of the Kerberans who stage it as of the prospect who runs it. Do the Challengers have the wit to select a new member with the skills and will to overcome the most devilish confabulations of the corkscrew minds of the Club?

Running the Challenge

There are many ways to stage a Challenge in your game, including but not limited to:

- Have each player come up with a brief synopsis of the Challenge their character faced, assuming their character is already a member of the Club. Boil the climactic scene of that challenge down to one or two skill rolls, and play it out, possibly recruiting one or more other players to play NPCs. If the player came up with a fun, imaginative Challenge for her character, and everyone at the table is agreeable, give her a fragile aspect (see *Chapter 5: Playing The Game*) in accordance with how the scene played out.
- As above, but each player describes the Challenge faced by *another* player's character.
- This one's a bit more involved, but: Have the players design the Challenge of a PC who has yet to join the Club, then give everyone but the PC's player roles to play within that Challenge.
- Let the players plan a challenge for an NPC introduced into the game during play, then establish that NPC as a Face (see "Your Kerberos Club" in Chapter 5).
- Let the player characters interfere and meddle in a Challenge staged by another Kerberan.

When structuring a Challenge, keep in mind the things it is meant to test and encourage:

Curiosity. Ideally, a prospect should be led into the Challenge rather than be forced into it. A good Kerberan is curious enough to kill the nine lives of nine cats, and a prospect should show the glimmerings of this. Compelling an aspect, especially one of the character's Conviction aspects, should guarantee this (see *Chapter 5: Playing The Game*).

The Touch. A prospect should already be in some way Touched by the Strange, either through experience, temperament, or that they possess some Strange faculty, ability, or power. The Strange should already be at work in their lives, and the Challenge will lead them into a greater understanding and acceptance of it.

Resilience. A Kerberan must stare Satan in the face and make

Old Scratch blink first. Even if shocked and horrified, a Kerberan is the one who stands up and acts when others huddle in fear. A Kerberan bends without breaking. The Challenge should test a prospect nearly to destruction, and then let them spring back into form like a rapier blade. In mechanical terms, the prospective Kerberan shouldn't get out of the Challenge without a consequence or two.

Ingenuity. If a prospect can unravel the Challenge, and through wits and will and brazen risk-taking put his Challengers at his mercy, it promises a famous career in the Club. A Challenge should test both a prospect's areas of mastery and those areas where he is weakest. In overcoming and circumventing these pitfalls, he can prove his ingenuity.

Humor. There is usually at least a hint of ironic humor and whimsy in a Challenge. The Club is too irreverent not to have some fun at its own expense, even in this, the greatest of its Traditions. Teasing out the strings of irony and absurdity in a Challenge can often be vital to resolving it.

After the Challenge

What becomes of a person after the ordeal of the Challenge? Ideally, they have been so well selected as to pierce the veils thrown over the Challenge's scenario by the Kerberans. The final act of the Challenge should be grand drama and farce all in one. The revelation of the truth should accompany a realization that the whole scenario was staged.

Reactions to this vary greatly.

Some prospects react with grace and humor, other with a rage as primal and indignant as any affronted Englishman could raise at having such liberties taken. Most in the end accept the offer of membership, and join the Strange society of the Kerberos Club. Most. But not all.

There have been some famous failures with the Tradition of the Challenge, and while it isn't generally known among the rank and file of the Club, it is no real secret. It simply remains one of the few things most Kerberans won't spin wild yarns about, as it is a powerful condemnation of the whole Tradition. But the names of those lost, injured, maddened, shattered, or transformed by the Challenge are recorded in the Blue Chamber.

The Blue Chamber is a memento mori, a warning, a museum of shames. It contains the jumbled relics of failed Challenges and of the Lost, those failed by the Club and those who have betrayed it. Everything that is known of these Lost Kerberans is recorded here, and few members enjoy surveying the grim exhibits.

When the shadow of one Lost falls upon the Club or those under its protection, contemplation within the Blue Chamber is often the only way to gain some edge. The Kerberos Club embraces and channels the evil of its members. When loosed from its leash (or if it is slipped early), the beast is canny, and

The Traditions as Plot Device

The Traditions are a vague and weird body of Club lore. They essentially exist to give the GM a ready reason to explain eccentric behavior or an unwillingness to help on the part of a Club's more senior members. Such a one might seem quite interested in the questions being put to her—and then with the chiming of the four o'clock church bells she blanches and says, "Good God, I nearly … well, I must be off. *Tradition*, you understand."

A smart player will immediately recognize that this is precisely what is going on, as would their character. Blaming an unwillingness to aid on the Traditions is an acceptable bit of deceit, so long as it isn't abused. Further, tradition (for real this time) dictates that if caught out in such a fib, one is required to say something on the order of, "Oh, you're quite right, of course the Week of Rhyme doesn't begin until Monday next." Having saved face, one is obliged to provide the requested aid. Playing the Traditions can excuse one from some unpleasant duty, but if the requester is more wise to them, then it can bind one to the task.

Mechanically, this can be handled as invoking a relevant aspect for effect, such as one of the Club's Legacy or Strange aspects (as described in Chapter 5 in the "Your Kerberos Club" section), but only if the player creatively comes up with some plausible-sounding refutation of the NPC's excuse.

The Lost

What twisted things grow with the sowing of a bad seed, and who will reap the tangles and briars? The Lost are the Club's greatest and most implacable foes, because the Lost *know the Kerberos Club*. They remain unconfounded by the Club's deceptions and illusions. And those who survive long enough to trouble the Club are dangerous and subtle foes indeed.

The Club takes confrontations with the Lost very seriously. The realization that they are dealing with a Lost Kerberan, especially if there is a personal connection to one of the PCs, might best be saved for a big reveal, with a cliffhanger ending in the dramatic tradition of the age.

unwilling to ever be so chained again. A true villain.

But mostly, prospects are well chosen and their Challenges well constructed. Membership is a virtual certainty after a successful Challenge, only requiring a vote by the majority of gathered Kerberans (mostly, those who staged the Challenge). What follows is a fête of truly astonishing proportions. The induction of a new member and the signing of the Rolls happens no more than once a year on average, and is cause for celebration among all the Kerberos Club's members. It is a grand and wicked affair.

Filthy Lucre

There is a more mundane side to the Club's activities. It is a costly establishment to maintain, and its members tend towards an extravagance that even those not born to wealth soon learn to mimic with ease. The acquisition of antiquities and artifacts, grants of support for certain avenues of scientific advance, the staging of expeditions, all cost dearly.

Bribes are quite costly as well, as is the purchase of scandalous items of reputation-ruinous information, things that provide the occasional bit of influence among those normally too moralistic to treat directly with the Club's agents. For every grand scandal and ruined career among the Club and Queen's enemies, there are dozens of prudent individuals who considered carefully the consequences of labeling a request for simple aid as *"blackmail."*

And then there is all the wine, and port, and whiskey; the cigars, beefsteak, mutton and curried vegetables; the newspapers, opium, gas, and tallow; the laundry soap crystals, linen, oil, coal, wood, lavender water, tobacco, carriage rides, horse fodder, shoe leather; all the thread and all the needles for the mending of all the highly-suspicious rents in all the coats and trousers, as well as the prohibitive expense in removing stains of blood and ichor from linen and good Scots wool. (But the silk is sold for sops, and the ladies of adventure are forced to visit their dressmakers for replacements of fine things.)

In short, it costs a fortune to run the Kerberos Club. In actual fact, it costs several fortunes. The Club is sustained by its own endowment, which grows in fits and starts as it is made a beneficiary in the wills of wealthy Kerberans. It is surprising how few members have the usual crowds of grasping cousins and kin to pry the coin from their corpses' cold stiff hands. (No Kerberan is ever laid out with coins upon his eyes—by tradition, all Kerberans have free passage into the Underworld, and may pass by the Hound as they wish to return and visit the living or to revenge themselves upon their murderers; a fact that is widely known, just as the Club wishes it to be.)

With the revenue from this endowment, the Club operates its main house in London and its auxiliary properties scattered throughout England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Continent, India, China, and the Americas. These small, local chapter houses are tiny by comparison, often serving as stopping points for members while traveling. They are staffed according to their frequency of use, the most remote having only a local caretaker, while the houses in the larger Continental cities have respectable faculties and staff. As with the main house on St. James, these auxiliary houses tend to attract and keep a very odd class of servants.

According to the Bylaws, *"All members in good standing may as they need and desire draw upon the funds of the Club to a degree based upon years of membership."* This means that all Kerberans receive, if they wish, an annual stipend. For new members it is enough to comfortably keep one person in the

style of the middle classes, but in practice these funds can easily be stretched further by a member making free use of all the amenities of the Club: taking meals in the Dining Room, drinking and smoking Club brandy and cigars, and making an abode in one of the small but well-appointed apartments within the House itself. A Kerberan so established will have plenty of disposable cash to squander on gambling, companionship of negotiable affection, or exploration of personal mad theories, practices or vices. See page 73 for a primer on the costs and currency of the day.

The Club's affairs are managed by an elite cadre of solicitors and clerks, and defended in the courts by jurists of savage tenacity and terrible reputation. As the Strange increases steadily through the century, so too do the numbers of lawsuits against the Club and its members. Only in the final act of the Victorian drama do these suits begin to truly threaten, and they play their part in the Club's final unhappy fate in the winter of 1901.

Age Before Beauty

There is only the most informal hierarchy within the Club, but there is definite power held by senior Kerberans. Within the Club there is always a background of intrigue. Kerberans meddle in each others' affairs as readily as those on the outside, though rarely with the same severity. Kerberans with more experience know more of their fellows, know more of their business, owe more favors and are owed more favors. Engaging the imagination and support of a senior Club member is often essential to realizing a personal scheme or dream.

Some of these seniors volunteer to join the Club's officers. These are positions with sometimes obscure and mysterious duties. New officers must be approved by all sitting members, so some have sat empty for years as old feuds kept them from being filled. Officers have authority over the Club's practical management, as well as authority over its weirder occult and ceremonial aspects. Some of those don't even really exist, being titles invented by members who wished some obscure honor.

Beneath Stairs: Playing the Help

The Kerberos Club is an organization catering to the Strange, the weird, the eccentric, the outcast, the monstrous, the heroic, the paragon of all that is unusual and unsettling.

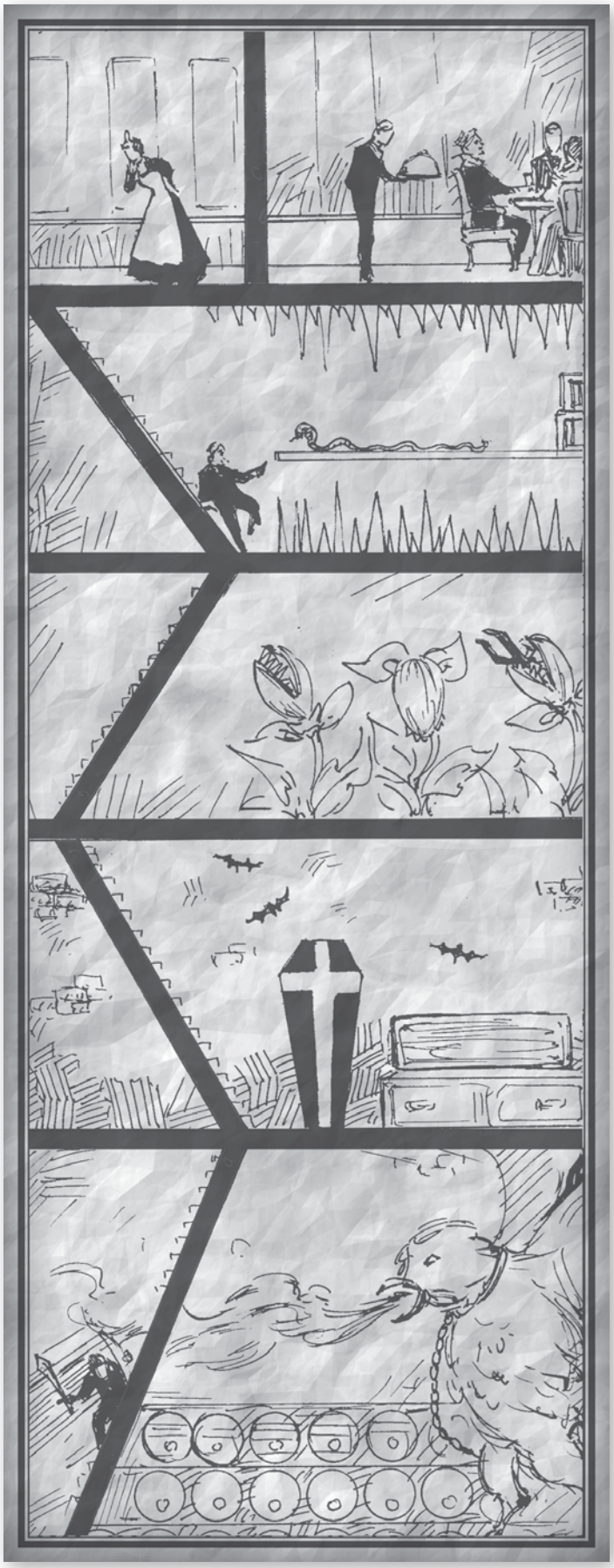
The people who serve them tea and tidy up their messes are, almost as a matter of survival, equally odd.

Members of the staff of the Kerberos Club would, in *FATE* terms, have a Refresh one or two points lower than those they serve (so a range of 4 to 8 or 9, depending on the era) and start with 20 skill points. Almost all have exceptional scores in Resolve (or another skill with the Willpower trapping), almost as a matter of survival. If you think the gentleman from Transylvania is an odd fellow to sit to table with, then you've not been tasked with cleaning his apartments during his night's activity away from the Club. If you had that task, you'd know he was in fact *sodding odd*.

The servants also have their own traditions, secrets and ways. Strange things happen below stairs, in all the hidden service corridors, kitchens, laundries, pantries and larders which are the heart and liver and spleen of the Club. The staff have their own adventures and excitements that never rise to the attention of even the observant Kerberans. The Club's members sit and sip their port, never thinking about the trial the wine steward must face when descending into the Cellars, so like the Underworld, to brave the Three Challenges and return to the surface with one of the Club's precious old vintages.

There is also a bitter rivalry between the misfit staff of the Kerberos Club and its neighbors. Especially long running is the rivalry with the staff of the Travelers, and especially angry is the one with Army and Navy Club. Competition in the grocers and butchers for the best produce and cuts, and at the tobacconist and tea-seller for the proper leaf, is fierce. Truly, the mighty Kerberans have as little idea about the trials and tasks of their staff as does anyone of privilege in London.

Those tasks and trials could make the stuff of fantastic gaming. Senior and experienced staff would be built following the rules found in Chapter 5.



Madness to the Method

Now, with a sense of what the Club is and what it does, one must ask, *"How does the Club go about it?"*

There is a general trend through the century for the Club to seek grander and more obvious solutions to Strange problems. This is in greater part because the nature of such problems themselves becomes grander and more obvious. But in large part the Club tends to engage its problems with the same methods and styles.

By their nature, members of the Kerberos Club are inclined to look into things best left alone. They are the sorts who open the ancient tome bound in human skin, who open the door at the top of the winding stairs from which the terrible chittering emerges, who would push the big red button to see what it might do.

Not even all those Touched are suitable for the Club. Many wish to flee after their first taste of the Strange even if it marks them indelibly. But those picked and Challenged, who join and sign, those rarely know when to leave well enough alone. For this reason, the Club is sometimes called the Queen's Terrier.

Kerberans engage in the prosaically-named *looking into things* all the time. One never knows if the odd sounds emerging from the alleyway are rats scuttling, beggars snoring, trollops working their trade, or the members of a savage cult strangling yet another victim and plucking out his eyes. The Strange lurks in every crack and crevice, it is soaked into London's stones, washed into the Thames and drunk by unwise tradesmen.

Before the 1850s, the Strange could be trusted to keep to the shadows. The Strange knew its place—only later would it mirror the revolutionary spirit of the great social thinkers and come out into the light for all to see. Yet there was still plenty to look into. For every dinosaur loose in Hyde Park, every outbreak of syphilitic vampirism or

faerie infection, every dynamite man committing his public outrage as street theater with Nobel's best blasting jelly as his accompaniment, there are dozens of queer events which few ever learn of. In an age when demonic possession is as shameful for a family as madness, and just as likely to be concealed, and when heavy modest clothing might hide all manner of queer transformations, a great deal goes unseen even in the century's sunset years. So the Kerberos Club continues to look into the little things, even in the shadows of warring gods and monsters. Because all grand and terrible things begin small.

The clever cousin of looking into things is *meddling*. The revelations of the Strange can feed the ego, and the perspective it grants tends to make one less concerned with the niceties of such things as *personal, private business*. Kerberans ferret out secrets, digging up the buried bones, sniffing out the hidden evidence. It is second nature. And for most, it becomes equally natural to act upon these uncovered truths. Often by the time the Queen's agents make contact with the Club about some rising menace detected by Her Majesty's intelligence apparatus, they find the Club already engaged tooth and claw with it, or at least well onto its trail.

Meddling extends to the personal as well. Kerberans often become terrible users of people, seeking out their weaknesses and exploiting them to their own ends. There are few happy Kerberan marriages, unless both parties are members of equal footing.

If *meddling* is the cousin to *looking into things,* then *dirty tricks* is the family's black sheep. Sometimes members of the Club, acting on their own initiative, and explicitly separate from their activities as members, will engage in great outrages in pursuit of a more nebulous greater ideal. Lives are destroyed, sometimes literally. Truths are burned beyond recovery and their ashes buried. The innocent are sacrificed to further a greater good, at least so far as *good* can be picked out of the hazy moral atmosphere. These acts remain deliberately obscure, even to the Club. In truth, no one wants to know that they share a game of whist with a mind that could engineer the Irish Potato Famine in a scheme to secure Queen Victoria's rights and prerogatives as Queen of Faerie.



For Queen and Country

The Kerberos Club has an odd place in Victoria's Empire. The Queen Herself embodies such sovereign ideals of honor and service, while the Club is a creature of base pragmatism and expediency. Yet it is common knowledge (in the circles where such knowledge could possibly be considered "common") that the Club acts quite frequently, directly or indirectly, on the wishes of the Queen. She never directly (or even obliquely) communicates with its agents, but there remains a glimmer of Her authority, a hint of shine beneath the tarnish.

A Kerberan would never claim to be acting on the Queen's authority (or at least, would never be right in doing so), but subtle and not-so-subtle hints to royal sanction would not be entirely incorrect. Those who understand these things recognize that the Club continues to exist and act in its accustomed manner in part because Victoria allows it. To those unkindly disposed towards the Club, this has lead to it being nicknamed the *malus regnum phallus*.

If the Club's informal authority keeps it working, at least generally, for the good of the Empire, then the attention it attracts, the scandals it generates, and the rumors it encourages serve another end. The Kerberos Club is marvelously distracting. The public happily consumes any mention of the Club in print, and as the century wears on its adventures (real, exaggerated, or fabricated from whole cloth) are printed in publications as low as penny dreadfuls like *The People's Periodical* and as well-regarded as *The Strand*.

Its members are cast variously as heroes, villains, or somewhere in between—sometimes Jack Harkaway, sometimes Dick Turpin, and sometimes Sweeney Todd. The glut of cheap stories featuring the Club serves to blur the line between fiction and reality, a trend exacerbated by Club members' tendency to claim imagined adventures as their own, and to deny their real (and often, more sordid) experiences. By the 1890s, the difference between reporting the adventures of the Kerberos Club and simply inventing them is almost irrelevant. There are few things so fanciful that the Club has not encountered them.

Spies, Damned Spies, and Informers

Spying has often been considered a dishonorable and dirty business. In our history, the British military intelligence service was roundly regarded as useless and ineffectual until near the end of the century. Skulking, opening other people's private correspondences, informing—these things were seen as well beneath a gentleman, and the products of such actions were often disregarded by decision-makers who considered information gained from spies to be unreliable and tarnished.

Not so much in the world of *The Kerberos Club*, where a more robust tradition of spying endures. The practice is still considered distasteful, and there is no official branch of service dedicated to spying, but there is a network of talented amateurs organized by some of Victoria's most trusted hands who attend to such matters. The notion of dashing Victorian spies, which fits more with the modern stereotype of the era rather than the historical reality, quite applies to the world of the Club.

Of course, the Kerberos Club finds itself entangled in such matters with some regularity, even if it falls outside the channels normally employed by Victoria's spymasters.

The Club's public persona serves as a lightning rod for social anxiety and envy. Those who fear social independence and crave it often find the Club revolting and enviable in turns, but always endlessly fascinating. Increasingly as the century wears on, one of the Club's greatest contributions to the Empire is in the form of public theater. It is part adventure story and part morality tale. In 1880, inspired by the scandals sweeping the Liberal party—including the disgrace and retirement from public life of William Gladstone—Benjamin Disraeli said of the Club, "Were there not a Kerberos Club already, we would certainly have invented it; but how sometimes I wish the Kerberos Club that we have, had not itself been invented."

Disraeli, despite his misgivings about the Club, did allow a Kerberan physician to treat him for the chronic complaints

of age, and the doctor's weird treatments saw him hale through his final ministry of 1880 to 1885 and for ten more years of retirement. Like many public figures, Disraeli found the Kerberos Club an invaluable ally, but a dangerous one. A beast with three heads is never of one mind, and the Club could always be depended on to never do precisely what one wished it to.

In every part of the period, the Club also serves the Empire as its foremost vanguard against the Strangeness. Kerberan experts on esoteric subjects are increasingly consulted, from secret covert communiqués in the 1840s to publicly speaking before the whole of Parliament in the 1890s. There are few menaces so uncanny that a member of the Club can't offer some insight. Indeed, many such menaces never come to the attention of politicians or press because the Kerberos Club has already engaged in answering the threat on its own initiative.

It isn't until the mid-1880s that the government publicly recognizes the assistance of the Club. The contribution to security, progress, and prosperity made by Kerberans was largely a thing of rumor. The first time Kerberos Club members receive direct honors from the Queen herself is after the Camp Affair of 1885. An anti-Victoria religious conspiracy headed by Dr. Albert Camp sought to assassinate the Queen using mesmerically-conditioned pawns with surgically-implanted nitroglycerine bombs—one, a member of Victoria's Privy Council who'd sought treatment from the eminent Dr. Camp for appendicitis. Camp and his conspirators were strict Methodists of a particularly fanatical type, who saw Victoria's seeming divinity and Her growing cult within the Church of England to be the height of idolatry and paganism. The Kerberans who uncovered the conspiracy, following a vague hint from a fellow member, were knighted by Victoria.

After this, the Queen began to seek more direct contact with the Club's agents, and answered any suggestion from her councilors or political allies about the suitability of such contact with one of Her particularly pointed silences.

Gentlemen, the Queen!

One can not discount simple patriotism as a major theme in the Club and its actions. Victorian patriotism was powerful in a way difficult for many modern readers to fully understand. Even the powerful, the knowledgeable and the cynical—those well aware of the nation's faults and grievous inequities—were powerfully patriotic. Being *British* wasn't a simple matter of birth, and patriotic attitudes were not reduced to the level of socially-required rote. The attitude might be characterized by a statement like, "This country is a mess, but by God, it's *our* mess!"

Simply put, to be British was the *best possible thing to be*, and imposing "Britishness" on others wasn't just a mode of social imperialism, but something of a moral imperative. Another manifestation of that particular Victorian certainty.

This attitude penetrated society on every level. Many among the rich and poor alike very literally *loved* the Queen, and all she symbolized, with a power which could bring tears to the eyes. After her break with Prince Albert and her retreat from the public eye after 1861, there was an undercurrent of hurt in the public attitude towards her. Previously very visible, she left her people without her presence to guide and inspire. Her return to the public life late in her reign brought a resurgence of fond feelings towards her and the nation.

It is easy to imagine that a group of rogues and oddballs like the Kerberos Club might reject such things as foolish or hopelessly naive, but this powerful love for Queen and Country can't be dismissed. Its members, rejected and ostracized by the common people, still love their country and their Queen. They fight any threat to them while guarding their fellow Kerberans from the very people they defend.

Victoria's trust in the Club might seem irrational, given that it counts as members some true villains and monsters, but she knows that beneath their urges for villainy and their monstrous skin beat British hearts. Or at least, that enough such hearts beat within the Club to guide the others towards Her ends.

Through the Eyes of the Common Man

How does the man-about-town see the Kerberos Club? The shopkeeper? The peer? The beggar? The proper middle-class wife? The criminal?

Early in the century, if someone knew of the Kerberos Club at all, they would likely assume the veneer of scandalous class-mixing was the extent of the Club's odd ways. It was still quite flamboyant (ask any successful stage magician about the value of a good distraction) but not obviously Touched. This reputation for libertine pursuits would lend an admitted Club member a rakish air, which would inspire questions from the curious and a good snubbing from the moral.

Contemporary perspective on the era might suggest that an organization so openly in defiance of ordinary social convention would afflict its members with a leprous mark of the unclean—that no gentlemen or member of Society would associate with such rogues. But the morality of the period was more complex than that, and sometimes those most in demand at a garden party would be just such scandalous, fascinating rogues. Membership in the Club lends an unmistakable air of danger and adventure, and Kerberans taking in Society during the Season might be found speaking forth on all manner of topics, to shock and titillate.

To defy custom, and to be caught out at it while skulking furtively and so to be humiliated, could exile one from Society forever. Friends would refuse to see you. Men of business would decline your offers. Debts would come due. But if you can defy custom, and carry it off with style and brazen panache, then you will be lauded for it—so long as you don't cross the invisible line that separates an intriguing scandal from a repellent scandal. If you cross that line, you might find that friends ostracize you, refuse to even see you or acknowledge you in public. Worse, their friends and associates would also cut you out. Being cut out by an influential person can leave you isolated from Society completely.

As the century progresses, the widening British middle class (and its growing spending power) begins to shape public opinion to a greater and greater degree. Increasingly, the particular assumptions and prejudices of the middle class become those most frequently on the lips of pundits and social commentators. Victoria's own growing austerity and severity influence the social-climbing trendsetters and arbiters of fashion, and in this harsher light, the Club begins to look positively seedy.

By the late 1850s, letters to London daily papers frequently say that the "… den of iniquitous thought and moral rot blighting the Square of Saint James ought be forcibly re-located to a more suitable environ—at least pushing it to Limehouse, but ideally pushing it right into the Thames. (Signed *A Churchman*.)" But the Club's fashionable roguishness is preserved with the rise of the Strange. By the 1860s the Strange is becoming widely known, and people see evidence of it all around them: the installation of faerie lamps in the West End, the presence of Her Majesty's Submersible Boats in dockyards and shipyards, the christening of the HMAS *Queen*—the first of the new military aero-ships—and the tales of the 13th Lupine Rangers and the British Strangers who rose up to fight the Indian Rebellion.

The Kerberos Club's reputation, as first and foremost a gathering of those Touched, pushes its notoriety as a gathering of social anarchists into the distance. Even the moralistic middle class begin to think only of the Wonders. Suddenly again, the Kerberos Club is popular. Only now in addition to holding forth on revolutionary and scandalous ideas, guests at parties also plead to be shown miracles and feats. Some Kerberans declined this sort of society as a matter of course, but some (formerly relegated to lonely pursuits, or only keeping the company of other Kerberans) are welcomed among the powerful, the rich, and those with pretensions to such positions.

Curiously, the opinion of the common people, as they became aware of the Club's existence and activities through the press and the serialized tales (true or fiction), remains much the same: *"So what?"*

The plight of Britain's poor and working classes change little as the result of the Kerberos Club's grand adventures. Poverty is still crushing, work is still endless, tedious, and dangerous. Even if a man flies, or the faerie walk the

streets in the guises of men, or the Emperor of China gifts the Queen with a dragon's egg, the rent has still got to be paid, the dustbin emptied, and money enough to feed four has to be stretched to feed seven.

Britain's poor frequently suffer the most from the Strange manifestations of the changing age. The choking London fogs grow increasingly toxic, finally coming to sparkle and glow at night with all the faerie soot mixed with the sulfur. When the debased Atlantean savages swim up the Thames to steal wives, they don't snatch fashionable ladies from the West End, but take the daughters of the poor from the nighttime streets of the East End. But the poor suffer on, taking the Strange miseries in stride with the painfully ordinary ones. They work, scrimp, save, go to Church on Sunday, and after the sermon kiss the hand of Victoria's statue in its shrine in the corner, and they hope that no one gets too sick in the winter. The Kerberos Club might make for an engaging read in the penny dreadfuls, but it rarely makes life on the street any easier.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, how do the elites of the peerage and political castes see the Kerberos Club? They will know more of the Club's true nature earlier in the century, and the Club will likely have made itself a force in their political lives at some point, wooing or warring. Almost universally, those with political power or hereditary nobility view a creature such as the Kerberos Club as a grave menace to their position and way of life, and many oppose Club interests even if by rational examination their goals and the Club's align. The Kerberos Club is often seen as an ally too dangerous to court. Gladstone particularly despised the Club, even before the scandal which broke his public career. He blamed agents of the Club for his downfall until his dying day, as did his supporters—though few were willing to be too vocal about it.

There have been some noted exceptions, of course. Disraeli was the most famous politician to deal directly with the Club's agents. He even had a special televocagraph installed in his office, and a dedicated line run to the Kerberos Club's house for those times when he most vitally needed their counsel. If he knew that his secure and contentious Silver Televoc connected to a common brass model set upon the wall in the Club's main parlor for any member to answer as they wished, then he might have balked at divulging vital state secrets. But someone, at some point, gave him the *impression* that his calls would be answered only by senior and sober men of patriotism and long experience, and no one at the Club dissuaded him from these notions. The general consensus among Kerberans is that it is best not to worry politicians with things which would only perturb their sleep, and cause them to appear tired and pouchy-eyed before the voting populace. Every man of good will, especially those dedicated to public service, deserves a sound night's sleep.

The Kennels

The Earthly home of the Kerberos Club is its house on the Square of Saint James, just off Pall Mall, a terribly fashionable district of London's fancy West End. The Club is a constant reminder to all those other proper gentlemen, visiting their proper clubs for some proper cards and a proper drink with some proper company, that the world, despite the fervent wishes of the middle classes, simply isn't a *proper* place. All sorts of people come and go from the Kerberos Club at all hours of the day or night. Some scarcely even qualify as human. Possibly worse, some scarcely qualify as British, or Male, or Gentlemanly. Indeed, some are Women (from the Fallen to the Ennobled), Dwarfs, Actors, Tradesman, Indians, Negros, Circus Folk, Disgraced Officers, Famed Spiritualists, Street Children and, God save us, even the Irish.

They all pass under the grotesque coat of arms which hangs above the clubhouse door, a monstrous three-headed dog on a quartered shield, fire and wind above, bones and black water below. One head chews a severed hand, another sniffs the earth, and the third glares out balefully. Beneath, the Club's motto is proudly writ: *MALUM NECESSARIUM.*

One could be forgiven missing the fine details of the Club's coat, as the building itself can be distracting. It conspires to look far older than its respectable neighbors, and favors the grossest extremes of the Gothic style so popular in the early decades of the century: vaulted windows, gargoyles,

Unwanted Admirers

Fans. They become inevitable as the public profile of the Club rises and its place among the sensational events of the age grows. By the 1880s, most London daily papers of any respectable circulation have a staff journalist tasked with following the Club's exploits—if not to directly report upon it (something even in the '80s the Club works to discourage), then to follow the hounds to fresh meat. The Nosy Reporter becomes a wonderful foil for the GM to use, turning the Club's tricks against it. Dealing with such a potential threat (to reputation and security, at the least) might raise interesting moral issues: Use Strange powers or villainous social pressure to make the journalists back off, or court their attention and use them to shape the public's perspective?

Kerberans will also find themselves on the receiving end of real nuts: stalkers, lunatics, obsessed fans. "I say! Are you the Baron Clouder? I have all your stories as they appeared in *Record of the Uncanny!* You, Sir, are a wonder of the age! Would you care for a cigar? They're your brand, Sir. *I should know.*"

How will such a morally suspect group as the Kerberans deal with pushy but essentially ordinary people? Warn them off? Threaten them? Intimidate them? Seduce them? Lay waste to their psyches with horrendous powers beyond mortal understanding?

Moral ambiguity is one of the hallmarks of the Kerberos Club milieu, as is the Law of Unintended Consequences. The antics and reactions of these hangers-on and followers can go a long way to provoking hard moral choices from your players.

If they ask you, "Was that the right thing to do?" Answer them, "I don't know. Was it?"

crenellated and spiked wrought-iron gates, and stone which seems to suck up the London soot, becoming blacker than any building in the whole of the West End.

Indeed, as the building needs repairs (which happens with alarming frequency, especially towards the end of the century), it is rebuilt with even more absurd exaggerations of the style. It becomes unmistakably a self-parody towards the 1890s, revealing the joke which had always been there: The building is deliberately meant to mock its own presumptions.

The increasingly ludicrous architecture of the Club's house also follows its transformation from the Empire's secret-keepers and guardians against the unknown to a weird team of public superhuman defenders with their Strangeness for all the world to see. The building goes from unusual, somewhat off-putting but at least keeping up appearances, to absurd and impossible, a building Stranger than its depictions in the dreadfuls, and reflecting the Club's tradition of self-mockery.

The architecture is in keeping with the Club's unspoken purpose: to attract attention, to distract with the left hand while prestidigitating with the right. It creates the impression that the Club might be a sham, and disarms those without the imagination to pierce the façade. Gladstone failed to do this, seeing only a disparate band of trouble-makers, debauched dilettantes and circus freaks. He dismissed the Club as an absurd affectation of the morally compromised, and viewed dealing with its agents as despicable. Were he not such a moralist, his reformist politics and the Club's revolutionary tendencies could have aligned; but all he saw was the gothic monstrosity and not the devious inner workings. He failed to imagine that as people walk past and stare, there are those within the Club who *stare back*.

Cluttered With Strangeness

Within the Club the atmosphere differs from the theatrical impression of the exterior. The house first and foremost exists to be comfortable for its members. While many find the humor in the building exterior, there's no reason to bedeck the interior with gargoyles and torches. Rather, the Club has a very lived-in quality. The wood glows deep with age and polish. Where hands might touch it, on guard-rails and chair-rails, and around doorknobs, it shines deeper, polished by regular contact. The carpets are worn but

clean and still thick. The fireplaces and grates are large, and they roar when there's a chill outside. The rooms are high-ceilinged and well-ventilated, filled with light if there is reading or billiards or cards to be done, or filled with cool dusk if an intimate atmosphere is more suited.

The public areas of the Club, such as the front parlor, where non-members may be invited in for a drink and luncheon, are more in keeping with the external architecture, filled with props of impressive and foreboding appearance but little meaning. Stuffed crocodiles hang from the ceiling, three-headed cow fetuses lurk in bottles, racks hold books with ominous titles such as *Meditations on the Outer Darkness,* and heavy curtains are drawn shut. All of it is absurd and comical to those with the insight to recognize the joke. The reactions of the uninitiated to these cheap curiosities is the punchline.

The rare non-member given access to the private areas of the Club, in addition to being surprised at the simple comfort, will be shocked at the casual way true wonders are scattered about: trophies of weird adventures, the mounted heads of extinct beasts, whirring confabulations of demonic clockwork, faerie weapons, works of otherworldly art, and drink cabinets filled with unlabeled bottles full of suspiciously-colored liquors. Yet, transposed with this, there are large comfortable chairs, fresh copies of the *Times* and other London dailies, bowls of walnuts, and cigar boxes.

The Club's justly famous Atlantis Room is a drawing room of general purpose, done in shades of blue and green. Glass globes are filled with brine and carefully-balanced living systems, which keep luminous jellyfish shining bright enough to light the room. The fireplace is surrounded by a mosaic of shark teeth, and the flames burn blue. Lying about almost casually are artifacts of the lost city: broken tablets and harpoon points, collected writings (and mad ravings) on the subject, and a collection of carved basalt idols with obsidian-chip teeth.

If the idols draw blood with their teeth on a particular day of astrological significance, it is said, they will come alive and speak of the glories of Atlantis, divulging their secrets for measures of blood and sanity. No one who tells this story is quite sure when that particular astrologically significant day is, however. Some members prick their fingers on one of these every time they enter the room, just in case.

The Atlantis Room takes on grim new resonance after the Atlantean invasion of '69, but none would think of redecorating.

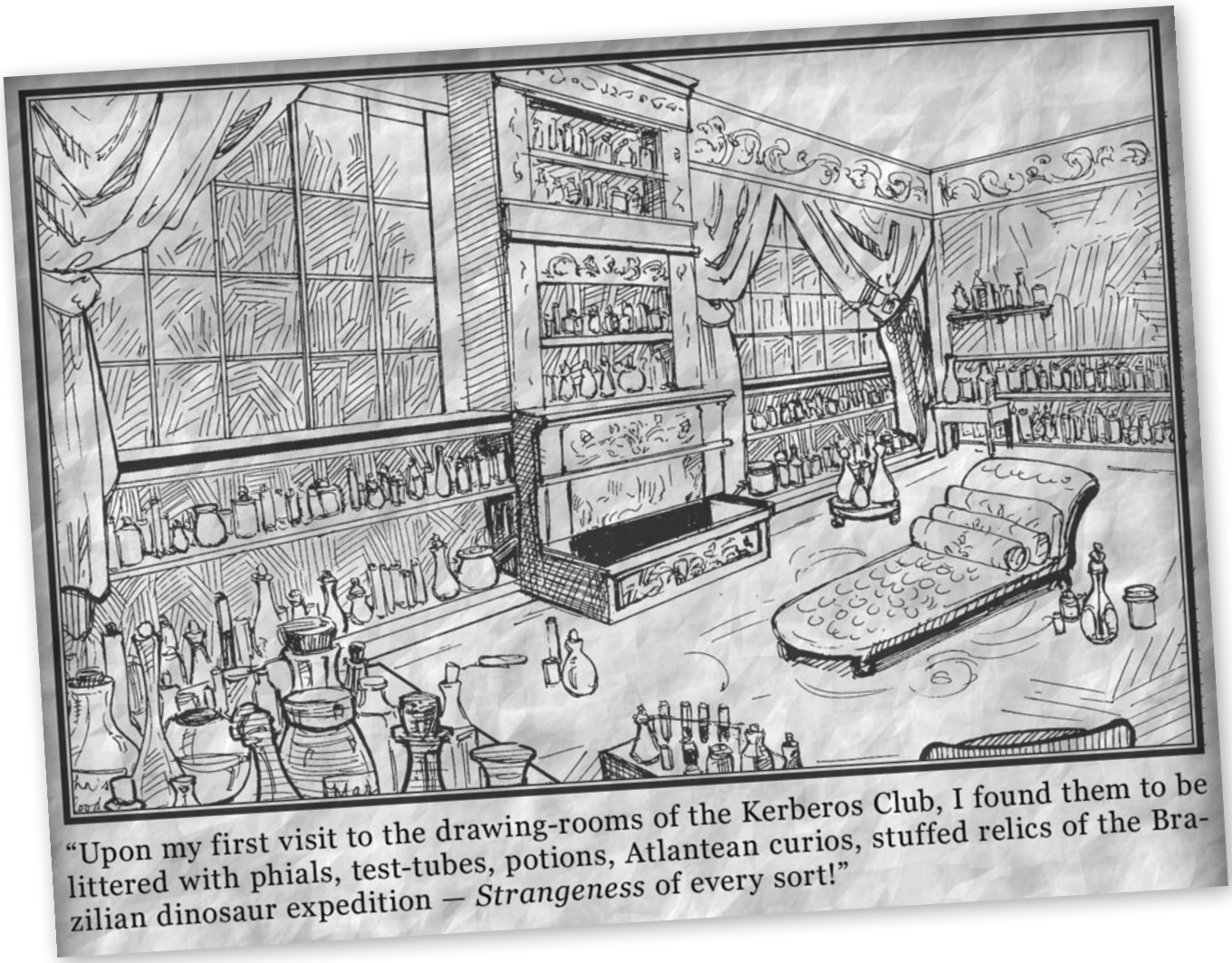
Kerberans who wish can make their residence in the Club's house, taking apartments in the upper stories of the building. There is no sure count on the number of these private rooms, but at any one time there might be two dozen Kerberans living here on a more or less permanent basis. Members who have difficulty mixing with ordinary society, those Strangers whose powers have physically transformed them, for example, often find it easier to take lodgings with the Club than to seek it among the disapproving masses.

These apartments consist of a small sitting room, a bedroom, a study, and a private bath—complete with indoor plumbing. While most of London's waste flushes into cesspits (of which there are thousands in the city by the 1850s) until Sir Joseph William Bazalgette's sewers pump London's effluvia away in 1865, the facilities in the Club's house send it *elsewhere*. Which explains a famous Club euphemism: "Posting a package to Lucifer."

All apartments have a main entrance in the alcove off the sitting room, where guests might hang hats and coats, and a second exit from one of the private rooms leading to a warren

Borrowed Wonders

The wonders casually abandoned in the Kerberos Club house can often be employed as plot devices, but players may wish to access them for specific purpose, perhaps to see if another member has encountered lycanthropic miasma, or if there is a machine for burrowing through stone. No more than once per session, a PC may spend a Fate Point to invoke a Club-related aspect (including the standard Club aspect "*Malum Necessarium*") to temporarily borrow such a device. In addition, each character must invest a Fate Point—a security deposit, if you will, that they'll get back when the device is returned safe and sound. This process takes a while—at least A Day—representing the time required to locate the desired wonder.



"Upon my first visit to the drawing-rooms of the Kerberos Club, I found them to be littered with phials, test-tubes, potions, Atlantean curios, stuffed relics of the Brazilian dinosaur expedition — *Strangeness* of every sort!"

of hidden, semi-secret passages which weave through the building, and which are primarily the territory of the Club's staff. They allow a resident to make a discreet exit when desired.

Members may take their meals in Six Saviors, the common dining room located on the second floor, and decorated in a style which could only be termed "Early Armory." Racks of medieval weaponry line the walls, and the chairs are high-backed heavy things of black walnut, carved with grotesque menageries of unnameable beasts. The room is lit from on high by a huge chandelier of ancient design, burning gas rather than candles (and by 1880, electric lights).

When London's airs permit, additional light filters in from the half-dozen enormous stained glass window panels on the street-facing wall of the room, each removed from a different European grand cathedral under conditions of dubious legality. The window panels give the dining room its name, as each depicts a different interpretation of the Crucifixion and the Passion, and a different character cast in the Jesus role. The old glass from Spain shows Jesus' face in exquisite detail, hundreds of individual tiles of glass welded to give his face a shocking reality and a lurid cast of almost pornographic agony. By contrast, the Jesus depicted in the window taken from Cyprus is of simpler artistry, and his expression is one of ironic amusement.

In 1851, famed gentleman burglar Sir Mitchim Derby entered the dining hall early one morning, planning on helping himself to some cold meat and cheese, and claimed to have encountered a singular event. All six of the Jesuses had stepped down from their windows and were sitting about the same table, conversing in Aramaic and eating a meal of bread and wine. Sir Mitchim further claims to have joined them, gotten powerfully intoxicated, and when he awoke beneath the table (stirred by Kerberans seeking

their mid-day repast), they were back in their accustomed places. It is generally thought that Sir Mitchim was lying, but this being the Kerberos Club, it has become tradition to leave a single glass of wine from the last bottle of the evening undrunk upon the table, in case one Jesus or another becomes thirsty during the night.

The fare served at the Kerberan table (and laid on the sideboard in the main parlor for breakfast and for luncheon) ranges wildly, being generally excellent but inconsistent, and following no certain menu. One day a hearty roasted joint of beef and dripping-soaked pudding, the next naan flatbread and curried chickpeas. Members who prefer more routine in their repast (or whose *requirements* are exceptionally unusual) make their own arrangements.

Meals are among the most social occasions for members, as they mix and mingle, sharing table with people outside their normal cliques as they drift into the dining hall and are seated as chairs become available. A group must arrive all at the same time to sit together. Those who might wish to arrange a "chance" meeting with another member must time their arrival at the Hall just so.

Evenings at the Club

After taking a meal, Kerberans who aren't occupied with their own business might retire to one of the sitting rooms, drawing rooms or libraries for amusement, private or social. The Club provides all the usual amenities (cards, billiards, books, liquor cabinets). Unlike most London establishments where ladies are present, there is a standing Club tradition that anyone who wishes can smoke anytime they please (except in another member's private apartments). Women may smoke as freely as anyone else who indulges, and the Club's humidors and cigarette boxes are kept well full at all times.

Many of the Club's general rooms are cluttered with Strangeness, but some, like the Butterfly Room, contain notable collections, organized, catalogued and arranged to the standards of one member or another. These collection rooms are monuments to odd obsessions. One room contains thousands upon thousands of vials of blood, each with a tiny hand-written label describing the person the sample was taken from. Another contains anomalous fossils, like the skull of a mastodon with a corroded and deformed rifle bullet lodged in it, with signs that the bone healed after the wound was inflicted.

Another contains novels made entirely out of the text of other novels, carefully snipped out and pasted together into different configurations, many broadly excellent in their motley.

Like many things in the Club's house, there are so many of these collections scattered about that few if any know them all. More often than anyone would deem rationally possible, the weird things collected together in these rooms turn out to be remarkably valuable in a crisis. The huge collection of North American native artifacts seemed only a curiosity until the Ghost Dance of 1880 brought vengeful beast spirits into the heart of London's old city, wreaking havoc. Only the chipped flint of the arrow points taken from this collection allowed the ghost-animals to be forced back to the spirit world.

Related closely to collections, the Club also has a number of trophy rooms into which the memorabilia of members are placed. The heads of monsters, stuffed and mounted. Captured weapons of a terrible foe. Sketches and paintings of famous enemies. Damaged and wrecked devices of perverted science. The death-masks of fallen Kerberans, cast in wax and waiting for a necromancer's spell to give them speech. Like the collections, the trophies of past adventures prove remarkably useful in future challenges.

And even when they simply sit there, occupying a corner in an obscure room, perhaps serving as impromptu coat racks, wonders such as the Singing Tree are still objects of great fascination and beauty, and certainly inspire wonderful retelling of their origins—with the usual Kerberan embellishments, of course.

Enemies Foreign and Domestic

The culture and traditions of the Club serve to bind members somewhat cohesively, at least in terms of establishing a broad loyalty to the Club. But in any system made from such non-standard components, there are unavoidable conflicts. Personal biases, professional rivalries, bad blood, old wounds, and simple antagonistic dislike keep the Club a bubbling stewpot of intrigue, gamesmanship, and cliquish infighting.

The majority of this plays out in the social arena, with palpable hits wounding reputations and friendships rather than flesh, but it isn't unknown for Kerberans to bring their un-arbitrated conflicts to the final judgment of the duel—though such an outcome is widely considered a failure for the entire Club and its society. Of course, duel stories are among the most frequently retold around the card table, when the spirits are flowing and high.

Internal conflicts are most frequently resolved through arbitration. The parties involved agree to accept the decision of a neutral arbiter, they present their cases, and then the arbiter issues a compromise before witnesses from the Club's general membership. Arbitration isn't binding in a legal sense, but it is frightfully bad form to ignore it, and doing so will certainly hurt one's reputation in the Club. Some members are very well known for their even tempers and neutrality, and their reputations as arbiters means they are frequently consulted on such matters.

(If you're using the new Skills from Chapter 5, ignoring Club arbitration removes a die from your "Kerberan" Skill until you restore your good name. Restoring your good name should probably involve an extended contest of some kind, doing favors for enough members that they talk well of you. Consult with your GM.)

It is almost unknown for one member to seek legal action against another in the courts. In fact it happened only once, and the member (a pernicious man named Milner who sought redress for monies lost funding an expedition which never paid the alluded-to profit) found the Club's atmosphere distinctly hostile afterwards. Eventually he retired from the Club entirely. He ran for Parliament in 1854 in one of the few remaining northern rotten boroughs, and with his fortune to buy votes he easily won. His first action as MP was to lobby for the introduction of his Standards of Decency in Public Associations Act of 1855, a piece of legislation aimed squarely at the heart of the Club. The bill went nowhere, as Milner's term in parliament was cut short when he found a Nile crocodile in his water garden. Or more properly, when the crocodile found him. The police presumed the beast had escaped from some private menagerie. It was killed, Mr. Milner's mortal remains were extracted from its stomach, and then the crocodile was stuffed and hung in the Whistling John, a public house frequented by members of London's Metropolitan police.

Mr. Milner's experience is really the exception which proves the rule. He only raised the ire of the Club when he rejected arbitration and sought outside authority. He then compounded it by seeking legislative revenge. His sponsors into the Club were quite embarrassed about it all. He'd handled his Challenge with such aplomb.

But the Club is remarkably harmonious, or at least manages its chaos quite well, in part because the Kerberos Club's external enemies are perfectly willing to assist anyone who might seek to harm the Club or its members. Alas, those who abandon the Club quickly find they have a ready group of new friends, who ask of them only the *smallest* favors.

Special Branch

The Club's most immediate foe is as British as the Club itself: the Special Branch of the London Metropolitan Police. Special Branch was founded in 1841 under the direction of Robert Peel, who saw the need for a secret branch of the police force after the attempted assassination of Queen Victoria. Peel's mandate came after 1840, when the would-be assassin Edward Oxford was found to be the pawn of a conspiracy by British anti-royalists

backed by an unknown shadowy individual.

Peel saw to it that that malleable Home Secretary Constantine Henry Phipps managed Special Branch to his exacting instructions, and saw it staffed with a particular breed of man: hard, cold, experienced, and if need be, unflinching from brutality, and also men of unshakable loyalty. Special Branch was staffed from the veterans of Afghanistan and India, the ranks of the Metropolitan Police, and the irregular agents of the Foreign Secretary's spy corps.

They operate with a simple directive: Investigate covert domestic threats to Queen and Country, and crush them before they can cause harm, scandal, or political crisis. They are as hard a bunch of men as one is likely to meet, their hands marked with knife-scars, their eyes cold except when they burn with that particular light of fanaticism—for as Victoria's divinity becomes more and more apparent, Special Branch becomes something of a Praetorian Guard, and something of a cult in itself, dedicated to Victoria Divinus. It develops its own rituals of initiation, and segregates itself more and more from the ordinary police. And more than anything, it seethes with institutional hatred for the Kerberos Club.

The Club seems to be Special Branch's antithesis: a haven for revolutionaries, free thinkers, anti-royalists, and the despicable Strangers, who mock the Queen's divinity with their lesser powers. Yet, inexplicably from Special Branch's perspective, Victoria dotes on the Kerberos Club, and grants it one of Her increasingly rare smiles when word of its adventures reaches Her. Special Branch stalks and watches the Kerberans, cataloging, recording, observing, and itching for the day when the whole lot of the degenerate scum can be rounded up for Newgate or the gallows.

Special Branch officers are strictly human in the most literal sense. If they become overtly Touched, showing signs of the Strangeness upon their bodies or in their minds, they are ushered off quickly to one of the Branch's special hospitals for treatment, or failing that, permanent incarceration. Members do enjoy a certain grace, however, commiserate with their faith in the rightness of their mission and in their Queen's divinity; a definite resistance to the sorts of mental trauma ordinary police are subject to when confronted with the Strange in ways they aren't prepared to comprehend. The pig-headed resilience of Special Branch officers has left many Strangers off balance, and more easily taken by sap or revolver, beaten, shot down, dragged off never to be seen again.

After working the job for a while, most Special Branch officers develop a palpable air of menace and barely-restrained violence, and they never look quite comfortable in their plain clothes. Those with the eyes to see such things perceive them as they perceive themselves, as crusaders, armored in their faith, and armed with blooded swords and steel-capped boots.

Victoria recognizes that both Special Branch and the Kerberos Club are useful, and their rivalry, if properly tended, like one of the tiny ancient trees she received as a gift from the Shogun of Japan, could only serve to sharpen both for the day when they must be turned on Her enemies.

If the Club's relations with Special Branch can be called hostile, its contact with the regular London Metropolitan Police is at least more genial, if no more trusting. As Special Branch becomes a power unto itself, increasingly the police find they can't rely on them to handle the Strange when it impinges into their normal duties. Unofficially, officers and detectives come to seek the counsel of Kerberans, who are the acknowledged experts on such matters.

These contacts are strictly personal. The policy of the Home Secretaries until the 1880s is for there to be no official contact between the police and the Kerberos Club. When this restriction was relaxed briefly in the 1860s during the Limehouse Outrages, officially-approved consultation with Lucas Moreland (the so-called Great Detective) led to scandalous revelations of corruption in the police and its collusion with a Chinese tong called the Three Snake Brotherhood. Moreland was publicly lauded for uncovering the conspiracy, but it caused the old policy to be reasserted with force, so that no police inspector or officer should consult known Kerberans. For twenty years such collaborations were strictly covert, and general relations between the Club and the police were chilly as best—especially given the Club's love of meddling.

The Oxford Movement

Special Branch isn't the Club's only domestic foe. The Kerberos Club figures into the rhetoric of many Evangelical speakers, especially as it becomes more prominent in the 1860s. At the founding meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846, the Club was condemned more often than slavery by British attendees.

William Booth, founder of the Christian Mission and later the Salvation Army, said of the Club: "Where we seek to ease the path to the Salvation of Christ and the Holy Ghost by lessening the daily miseries of those in need, and possibly live as an example to others, there is a shadow cast over all we do in London, a long shadow falling from Pall Mall all across the city. But at least you can say of those I speak, that they do not hide what they are, and do not lie about the blasphemies they pander. In truth, I fear more the secret evil in my own heart than I do the evil so cheaply on display at this Kerberos Club."

Many firebrands and evangelists are not so poised, and condemnation of the Club becomes louder just as the reports in the press of its adventures become likewise more sensational. Condemning the Club becomes a way to pack the hall in the 1890s, especially after some Club members begin to take such condemnation personally and start attending meetings to heckle the speakers in amusing style.

The Club, and to a greater extent the growing Victorian cult within the Anglican church, also attracts the attention of the Oxford Movement, who issue tracts against the cult and the deification of Victoria (though that was couched in terms of saintly beatification at the time), and suggest the spread of the cult was owed to pagan influences originating in the Kerberos Club.

Edward Bouverie Pusey writes in the tract *The Unambiguous Words of God,* which followed his movement's seminal series *Tracts for Our Time,* that ". . . though the Idolatry being practiced in our London churches spread Northward, seeming to be the popular course for the faithful, we are not misled as to the origins of this blasphemy which does disservice to Queen and to Country, and most hurtfully to the Lord our God. For such seductive practice can have only a single source, and to those with the ears to hear, it is proceeded by the sound of three dogs howling as one."

Even without a religious motive, plenty of social conservatives find condemning the Club and what it stands for a good tactic for getting public attention. Further, political liberals and conservatives alike shy away from association with the Club. It is a favorite smear to suggest one's opponents are members of the Club or friends with its members, or are in some way economically invested in the Club. This is in part because the Kerberos Club's own politics are hard to discern and categorize within the philosophies of the time. Is it a radical liberal fraternity advocating total freedom from legal, social, or economic constraint? Or is it an example of the conservative hypocrisies that protect the moneyed and social elites to enjoy their ungodly pleasures while keeping ordinary Britons down?

In truth, the Club is far less a political animal than is supposed. It is well occupied with its own Strange interests, and well aware that no government would welcome it into the fold as a partner until the situation became so dire as to qualify as a crisis. Disraeli's close association with the Club is an aberration for this reason. He bears the criticism for the association, and justifies the contact with verifiable successes.

Le Société Scientifique

In France, the Société Scientifique Impériale (or in more democratic times, the Société Scientifique Républicaine) serves much the same role as the Kerberos Club, being a social fraternity of extraordinary individuals, misfits, and Strangers. The significantly more permissive social climate of France over the century means the Société Scientifique Impériale need not cloak its actions in such secrecy and protect its members from the larger society, and at various times the Société and the Club have been allied. During the Revolution, the Club welcomed and shielded many of France's greatest and most uncanny Strangers, for Madame Guillotine had as much a taste for the blood of the Touched as of the nobility. But under Bonaparte, the Société

became nearly an official branch of his imperial government, assisting in the creation of weaponry and unconventional tactics.

The Sémaphore Psychique, a series of hypnotically conditioned mediums and spiritualists who passed messages to one another through automatic writing, allowed Napoleon's empire to coordinate its logistics to a degree nearly unheard of. Napoleon's fall from power was preceded by a disruption in these instant and invisible means of communication. His brief return to power cut was short in no small part by his reliance on the Sémaphore and his difficulty in coordinating his rule without it.

The Sémaphore was sabotaged by the introduction into the system of an English medium named Mary Salsbury, who intercepted Napoleon's communications and replaced them with erroneous and misleading ones. Lauded for her accomplishments, Ms. Salsbury achieved brief personal fame and was created Dame Mary Salsbury by George III (in one of his rare semi-lucid moments of that period). It caused some comment then when she was seen in the company of those undesirables who lurked about the Gates of Hades. After the place was burned she was not seen again in the public eye.

Under Napoleon III, the Société rejected the failed spiritualism of its earlier incarnation and returned to its original private form, as a social and collaborative forum for those who skirt the line between madness and genius. Abandoning most occult pretensions, the Société embraces Reason as the final arbiter, even if their particular brand of science borders on magic more than they would like to admit. In this, they have something of an edge over their rivals in the Kerberos Club, but their rejection of occult realities hinders members of the Société sometimes dramatically.

Section Seven

Almost the opposite of the Société Scientifique Impériale is Russia's Section Seven, officially titled The Seventh Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery (VII отделение собственной Е.И.В канцелярии). This secret branch of the police was created by the order of Nicholas I in 1842. Section Seven first investigated and then consolidated the occult interests and societies operating in Russia with greater effectiveness than any previous efforts. Nicholas I lacked both superstition and intellectual breadth, seeing in the forces moving in Russia's dark occult depths only grave threats to his rule and the social order.

Using tactics similar to the secret police of the Third Section, Section Seven intimidates, murders, bribes, imprisons, and blackmails anyone and everyone with any claims to mystical power or supernatural revelation, imposing by Imperial authority a registry of such individuals. It also recruits any it can lure into its service. By the time Alexander II comes to the throne, it is a solidly-entrenched power unto itself, one even the Czar dare not anger.

Section Seven begins to operate in the international arena in the 1860s, and in 1878 an operative of Section Seven accompanies the diplomatic mission to Kabul which sparks the Second Anglo-Afghan War. This Section Seven agent is thought to have forged alliances with Afghan mystics.

Section Seven operates beyond ordinary authority and is answerable only to the emperor himself, and even then only just. Those in Third Section who know of Section Seven (and who are foolish enough to speak of it) grumble about Seven's tactics and influence, hinting that in absorbing all the cults and sorcerers and witches that it became the very thing it was meant to control, an ungodly blasphemy of superstition and darkness.

Where the Société Scientifique Impériale embraces science to the exclusion of magic, Section Seven is the opposite, embracing all manner of ill practices to further its goals and sharpen the Bear's claws. They brutally suppress scientific innovations, particularly those Touched by the Strange, but co-opt and embrace the spiritual and mystical, to the point that suspicions fall on even obvious charlatans like Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society.

On suspicion inspired only by her affected national origin, Blavatsky is investigated thoroughly by agents of the Club and the authorities of Special Branch and the American Secret Service. Blavatsky's move to India in 1879 raises a particular stir among the great gamesters, and only in 1890



do the British authorities realize how that had been played. Blavatsky is by then indeed a Section Seven agent (unwilling though she is), but one intended to distract and conceal rather than engage directly in espionage. The resources wasted on Blavatsky and her harmless affectations give Section Seven a freer hand in London, then New York, and finally in India.

The Americans

The former colonists of America aren't without their own touch of the Strange, or organized groups which study and exploit it. But unlike most of Britain's rivals, the Americans have no single primary operator in the realm. Rather it is a nation rife with secret societies, covert fraternities, and occult orders who all claim variously some ancient origin or creed, and most of whom are too busy with their own domestic enemies to turn their sights outward across the Atlantic.

Highly individualistic, as well as highly factious, America's Strange societies mingle and blur with public organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the Golden Circle, but also with the Salvation Army, the American branch of the Masons, and with several U.S. universities. Keeping the peace in this morass, and preventing the secret wars of the occult societies from bleeding over into actual wars (as they were alleged to have done in 1861), is the authority of the Shadow Constitution.

The founding thinkers of the United States included some men of remarkable vision, and no small understanding of the Strange realities brewing just under the surface of European society. Many sought relief from these forces in the Americas, only to discover as much native Strangeness as they had fled. While the U.S. Constitution was being drafted, they set bloody pen to tanned human skin to write the *Umbra Pactum:* the core occult law to which all supernatural elements were bound to conform.

It instituted a shadow government to manage such affairs as well, separate but parallel to the actual government. But unlike the public Constitution, the *Umbra Pactum* has never been amended. It is served and

protected by three branches of governance, the Maestro Mago (the executive, the master magus of the Americas, elected every seven years by those granted occult suffrage), the Occultus Orchestra (the secret senate which enacts supernatural law), and the Specialis Sentio (the secret court which arbitrates and tries occult crimes). Each branch has its own enforcement arm, a handful of Strangers who police, investigate, and advise their principals.

During the American Civil War, the shadow government is split and wars with itself. The Confederacy creates its own occult government and marshals its own Strangers. Like almost everything the Confederate authorities involve themselves in, it proves disastrously unsuccessful. However, even with Confederate incompetence, their efforts to solidify the Golden Circle alliance of Southern and East Indian slave-holding nations into a global power might have proven successful if not for agents of the Kerberos Club. The Club's meddlers, operating covertly in the East Indies and the rebellious Southern states, see to it that the plans of the Knights of the Golden Circle come to nothing.

Yet the potential threat posed by the Knights and the Confederacy is not short lived. Responding to the Union's actions in the Trent Affair, a British military action staged from Canada proves more than the Union can contend with. In 1862 the Union is forced to sue for peace with the Confederate government, establishing a rocky truce and formal border between the two nations. Able to concentrate on the British forces, the Union holds out long enough to reach a peace, but not before Washington, D.C. has been aerially bombed by Her Majesty's Aeroship *Queen*.

In the Union, the shadow government continues to manage the Strange, and the Union benefits from this management. Innovators such as Granville T. Woods produce industrial wonders, the most astonishing being the Track-Layer Engine, an enormous machine able to level ground and lay railroad track a dozen times faster than human crews. With the rapid expansion of railways, and improved distribution of good and materials, the Union experiences a surge of industrialization in the last two decades of the century. The *Umbra Pactum* begins to favor the wonders of Strange science over its old mysticism, and the Union prospers. By the end of the century, the Union and the United Kingdom have strong economic and social ties which eclipse the previous sympathies the British had for the Confederacy.

Below the Mason Dixon, the opposite trends rule. The South's descent into a particularly baroque dark age, as well as the continued (and increasingly distasteful) use of human slaves, spoil its previously good relations with Britain. The Confederate government, squabbling and ineffectual, does not improve as a central authority. The Confederate states become more autonomous, and the Southern aristocracy grows more powerful. The Knights of the Golden Circle grow in power and influence, spreading into Texas and

Mint Juleps and Mass Murder

"What if the North and South didn't reconcile, and then the South started to worship Cthulhu?"

Here's the deal. Slavery was a disgusting and *evil* institution. A fair number of apologists try to minimize how stained with this evil the Southern states really are, suggesting that slavery was a failing institution on its way out, or that "Northern aggression" was somehow *worse* for Southern blacks than letting slavery end gracefully.

Stanley Kubrick had the right of it with *Spartacus:* The evils of slavery bring their own reward. *The Kerberos Club* recasts the Confederacy into an easy-to-hate evil empire on the order of the Third Reich. The South becomes a broken, technologically backwards Dark Age society ruled by a corrupt elite so terrified of their own slaves that they abuse them all the harder. They fall to the worship of hideous prehuman *things*. They practice mass human sacrifice. All the while, they dine and dance and romanticize their own atrocities.

The wrath of the rebelling slaves in the Great Revolt is a fire that burns this society away.

So, if you're looking for a group to shamelessly exploit—morally compromised villains your players can smash without guilt—look no further than the Knights of the Golden Circle. They're the Nazis of the day, a bunch of right bastards.

down into Mexico, and serve the Confederacy like a secret police and spy service. An empire built like Rome upon the labor of slaves is the fondest wish of its members.

The Golden Circle counts the Kerberos Club and the Umbra Pactum as bitter enemies, and watches constantly for hints of foreign agents at work in the Confederacy. The Knights delve into the occult deeply, too deeply, and by 1885 are no longer motivated primarily by earthly concerns but rather by the desire for sorcerous power. Abandoning any pretense to moral authority (early on the Knights claimed to be a Christian society, citing the Bible in support of slavery), the Knights subtly turn Southern society to the worship of obscene things from the edges of Time, things awoken by the human horror and psychic mystery of the slave trade. By the end of the century the Confederacy has become a dead man walking, gangrenous and rotting from within. The Great Revolt of 1905 tears down one of the most inhuman societies in modern history.

Schweigsame Übereinstimmung

As the century wears on, Britain's greatest rival becomes Germany, unified finally in the German Empire. The German states had always been lousy with conspiracy and occult secret societies—a gentleman of influence could expect to be a member of several—but like the German states themselves, there was very little cohesion in the region's unseen forces.

As Germany rises to eclipse most of Britain's other rivals, so too do its secret societies achieve some measure of unity. Under Bismarck, the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung is formalized. It binds many of Germany's mystery societies into a formal council with a unified agenda, to use Strange influences to further the German Empire's success and prosperity. Because it draws from covert associations, the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung eschews the more overtly Strange, favoring instead a more subtle power. German Strangers find no safe haven.

A man whose power marks him and makes him unseemly will not find the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung welcoming, nor will he find a German analog to the Kerberos Club, perhaps because the constituent organizations which make up the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung see how the Club so flaunts secrecy and social convention. In fact, the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung in part is dedicated to suppressing such overt manifestations of the Strange, and preserving the sense that Germany is untouched by such chaos.

Famous Members, Associates and Rivals

These are some of the best-known Kerberans. You can find complete *FATE* write-ups for some of them in Chapter 6.

Richard Dadd

Born in Kent in 1817, Dadd showed artistic talent early on, and he was admitted to the Royal Academy of Arts before he was 20. He was a founding member of The Clique, a group of artists who rejected academic art and the conventions of the day—and, it was rumored, explored the Strange regions where art, the psyche, the spirit, and the occult merged.

In 1842, Sir Thomas Phillips chose Dadd to accompany him as illustrator and draftsman on an expedition through the Middle East, through Greece, and by a circuitous route to Egypt. After a trying journey, Dadd suffered a fit while traveling the Nile by boat. Initially supposed to be sunstroke, it became apparent that Dadd's wits had snapped. He began

to rave about the murder of Osiris and the betrayal of Set. At night he huddled with fear, refusing to look at the sky, mumbling about the Serpent Apep, and he greeted the morning with tears of joy and relief.

His companions cut the expedition short. By spring Dadd was returned to Britain, where an examining physician ruled he was not of sound mind, and remanded him to the care of his father, who saw him installed in a family house in the country outside Kent. There, over the next year, Dadd became increasingly erratic, speaking to people and beings not present, marking wonders unseen by anyone else, and swinging wildly from ecstatic joy to terror at the sights revealed by his madness. He began painting these scenes only he could see in exquisite detail.

The vision revealed by his paintings was of a world still recognizably the countryside around Kent, but filled to overflowing with gods, demons, angels, monsters, saints, faerie, weird machines in air and upon road, and other, less easily identifiable things.

During this period he developed a particular fear of his father, a respected chemist and a well-regarded figure in the community. Upon seeing him, he would exclaim, "You have not left me, I see, Lord Sutekh. You follow me from Egypt, hiding in my Father's skin—but I can see you, beast-head thing." In August of 1842, his Father was found murdered in a ritualistic fashion, and Dadd fled. His flight was tracked to France, where he revealed himself by attacking a French tourist with a razor, claiming him to be one of the god's agents sent to kill him. He was apprehended, and returned to Britain where he admitted killing his father to free his spirit from the malicious deity's control, allowing it to pass on to a proper Christian reward. He was deemed incompetent by reason of insanity, and committed to Bethlem hospital.

Dadd remained incarcerated for the rest of his life, but he received frequent visits by members of the Kerberos Club, and painted many of their portraits, capturing their true natures on the canvas. These paintings graced the halls of the Club, and it was thought by more than one member they contained a bit of the subject's soul: while the painting remained intact, one was protected from certain influences. Dadd was also consulted for his remarkable, maddening visions: He could see past, future, fiction, fact, myth, magic, potential, and memory, all overlapping, all interacting, all blending into an allegorical chaos. To Dadd, there was no difference in World and Otherworld, and the faerie were as ordinary to him as common workmen. He saw the true nature of things, all things. He said that only while applying brush to canvas did he get any relief from the visions, as he was their channel and they flowed though him rather than breaking against him like the waves on rocks.

Several attempts by parties unknown were made to liberate Dadd from Bethlem, at least two successfully taking him for a time, before agents of the Kerberos Club saw him returned. Dadd chose to remain in Bethlem, even with the Club's invitation to more congenial accommodation, until the opening of Broadmoor Hospital outside London in 1864, where he found the light to be superior. He recognized that even if he weren't mad by any conventional standard, he was as good as insane with his visions blurring so into his awareness of reality, and he had no business among the sane.

In 1886, Dadd fell ill with a congestive lung condition which didn't respond to treatment. As he slipped into unconsciousness, his vision spread out and everyone within the hospital received a measure of it, and witnessed the gathering of gods and wonders who came to bear Richard Dadd away upon a chariot made from the Sun. His body vanished, never to be recovered.

Lady Ada Lovelace

At 36, Ada Lovelace (Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace) had already distinguished herself as one of the most remarkable minds of her age, holding forth on such topics as philosophy, science, and especially mathematics. In the three years she knew Charles Babbage, she'd astonished the inventor by writing program scripts for his as yet uncompleted difference engine, a general computing machine. But at 36, Lady Lovelace was dying, her uterus heavy with cancerous tumors. As with her father, Lord Byron, her attendant physicians recommended bleeding to

relieve the pressures on her internal organs caused by the tumors, and this nearly killed her the same treatment had done to Lord Byron.

Lingering near death on November 27th, 1852, at her husband's estates in Surrey, she was attended by a mysterious visitor, a tall striking dark-skinned man with eyes so intense, they cowed even the formidable doorman of the estate, who allowed him entry without question. The man gave his name as Ibn Al-Thahabi, and claimed to be a friend of her father Lord Byron. He knew Byron during his travels in Greece, and regretted mightily not being present at the time of Lord Byron's illness to prevent "Those fool butchers from killing him with the lancet." He banished Lady Lovelace's physicians (again, by the extraordinary force of his gaze), chastising them that "Blood, of all the humors, belongs within the body rather than without!" And then he set to work upon the stricken Lady Lovelace.

His surgical instruments were both ancient and advanced, far beyond their modern equivalents, and his technique masterful and perfect. His drugs were formulated to remove pain without stopping the weakened heart. With consummate skill he removed the diseased organs, sutured the wounds, and left Lady Lovelace weakened but alive. With his prescriptions and ointments, she even healed with scarcely a scar to show—but at a cost. Robbed of her generative organs, Ada Lovelace was barren.

Upon learning this, she was struck low again, this time with brain fever. Her three children had all died, her two sons as babies, of the smallpox and red ague, and her daughter thrown from a horse just the previous year. Now barren, childless, and empty inside, she contemplated suicide. She hovered between the reason that her mother so tried to reinforce with an education in mathematics, and the madness her father so embraced all his life. In the spring of 1854 she emerged from this blackness, transformed.

Her ordeals left her a changed woman. Somehow colder. Her hair streaked with gray, her posture rigid from the discomfort of her emptied abdomen, and her dress severe and almost puritanical (although perfectly tailored and elegant). She embraced wholly the cool perfection of numbers, of invention, and of the potential in Charles Babbage's calculating machines. She funded the completion of Babbage's Analytical Engine, and after testing the machine's capabilities began suggesting modifications and enhancements. By 1856 the Engine could receive input in the form of decks of punched cards, store information in mechanical memory registers (along with programmed procedures), and output to an electrostatic printing device, or through a telegraph line to another Engine set to receive such transmissions.

In this way it was possible to slave multiple Engines in series, using them to calculate problems of astonishing complexity. With her fortune she founded Babbage Computational, a company which built so-called "Calculation Mills" where, rather than broadcloth, the machines wove data from information. These contracted to process the financial records of major firms, automating the bookkeeping and accounting, and connecting to terminal engines in offices via the telegraphic cable.

Within two years the company was making enormous profits, and the word on the lips of men of business was *efficiency*. If the computational power of the mills could be applied to all aspects of the lives of workers, and not just the finances of their employers, how much more efficient and profitable might their operations become?

But all the while, Ada Lovelace pursued her own research and her own agenda. She cared nothing for the fortunes of Babbage Computational beyond the reputation and capital it generated. She sought to assuage the ache from within herself, the ache to *create life*.

The Irish famine of 1854, and the Queen's capture of the title of the Queen of Faerie, offered her this chance. The geniuses of human exploitation turned their attention to the faerie realms, and scholars of the obscure subjects of Faerie Law found ways to marshal the lesser Fae to the tasks of industrial manufacture. In the colony town of New Birmingham just across the veil, Lovelace placed her new factory, secret and secure, guarded by her own private mercenary force.

There she perfected the Type-2 Analytical Movement (a reference to its resemblance to the movement of a timepiece rather than an engine), which she called simply The Brain. It was assembled from literally *millions* of tiny components, some so small as to be difficult to distinguish from hairs,

by the perfect dexterity of faerie servants, bound by their old obligations to repay gifts of bread and milk with a day's good work. Rather than making shoes or milking cows, these thousands of faerie assembled Lovelace's mechanical brains—and later, the electromechanical bodies those brains were designed to command.

In early 1860, Ada Lovelace's Automechanical Man was presented to the Royal Society. By the middle of the year, Automechanical Men were being offered for sale as "Automatic Domestics," tireless servants who would never steal the silver, speak out of turn, neglect their duties or sleep. Considered gauche and "too modern" by most of the gentry, they were immediately popular with the aspiring middle classes. An Automatic-Maid or Automatic-Man (depending on their dress and programming) became a common sight in London by late 1860.

Initial efforts to interest the military in a combat-ready version of the Automechanicals proved failures. The hidebound British military was, unsurprisingly, resistant to innovation and change. One reviewing officer said, "I have men to fire my rifles, what I don't have is a mule that'll live longer than a month of good service! Give me a mechanical mule that doesn't tire and doesn't die, and then I'll consider it."

But after the resolution of the Affair of the Black and White Decks by agents of the Kerberos Club (see page 344), an order was placed by the Crown for a full regiment of Lovelace's new Automatic-Riflemen. It took the strong suggestion that the Queen herself favored the machines to see them guardedly included in the forces sent for the British intervention in the American Civil War. They proved remarkably effective. Finally accepted by the military, they were of further use in the numerous small wars in the following two decades. The Royal Navy also placed orders for lighter models sealed with India rubber for use below decks.

Lady Lovelace refused to join the Kerberos Club when offered admission, and came into conflict with the Club several times during the latter three decades of the century. Increasingly she surrounded herself with her silent mechanical children, rejecting the society of other people, even living



apart from her husband and refusing to see him. She ordered her life by a mathematical regime, composed music with her calculating engines, and corresponded only through notes delivered by her personal cadre of silver-chased Automatics, or through her telecalligrograph, a device that transformed handwritten messages into telegraphic signal and then back into writing.

Despite the controversy, and more than a few riots, caused by unemployed domestic servants and workers, her fortunes continued to rise until the Automechanical Mutiny of 1885 dashed them into ruin. A disgruntled faction of faerie, infected with odd new Bans and Compulsions based on Marxist ideology, produced a program deck which Automatics were compelled to reproduce and spread to others. This deck then triggered in them a murderous spree of violence, simultaneous with the 30th anniversary of Victoria's assumption of the Faerie throne.

As one, the mechanical hands which cleaned, cooked, rocked infants, and bore arms to defend Britain turned on their human masters and killed indiscriminately. Thousands died, incalculable property damage resulted, and only with the intervention of dozens of Kerberans and others did the Mutiny finally stop. This quickly led to the passage of the Restriction of the Creation of Artificial Life and Intelligence act of 1886, which banned any mechanical device from mimicking the behaviors of man, or performing the God-given exercise of reason.

The many lawsuits broke Lady Lovelace's fortunes and ruined Babbage Computational. Even her personal cadre of mechanical servants were taken and broken down by agents of Special Branch, leaving her unable to care for herself or her estates, as she'd come to abhor the presence of other people. Her health quickly failed, and by 1887 she was dead.

For the remainder of the century, the Automechanical Menace is a regular subject of headlines and fiction. Sightings of Rogue Automatics became a common urban legend, as well as rumors of less scrupulous foreign powers employing such terrible killing machines against the British Empire.

Christina Georgiana Rossetti

Rossetti was born in London into an enormously artistic family. Her father was an Italian political asylum-seeker and poet, her mother friends with the household of Lord Byron. Among her siblings were three artists, and she began writing poetry early. She was educated at home, in this rich environment, until in the mid-1840s financial difficulties and her father's failing health created stress enough to cause Rossetti to suffer a nervous collapse. She was 14, and emerged from it with her head full of other-worldly images and associations. She never saw the world the same way again.

Her mother, seeking some meaning and hope, became involved in the Royalist-Anglican movement, which blended a continuity of Catholic tradition with the deification of Queen Victoria, recognizing the Anglican Church as part of a line of religious descent from the First Church, and Victoria as divine sovereign and inheritor of Mary's role as intercessor before God, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The highly mystical elements of this form of religious observance fueled Rossetti's awakening consciousness. She almost married painter James Collinson, but despite his effort to convert, Collinson's conscience demanded he remain Roman Catholic. Rome's condemnation of the Royalist Anglican movement would not permit the union.

Her nerves again shaken by this ordeal, Rossetti agreed to a holiday with her sister Maria in Somerset, to walk among the sites of ancient stone-age peoples and the rolling green hills. Though chaperoned by their brother, the sisters managed to slip away for some hill walking on their own. They came upon the Bryn y Ellyllon, the Hill of the Goblins, near Mold. There they experienced an encounter with wild faerie which left both sisters profoundly changed.

Rossetti embraced the Strangeness, while her sister recoiled from it. The experience inspired Rossetti's first and most famous poem, *The Goblin Market*. Her sister retreated further into religiosity, and in later life became a Anglican nun. Rossetti, on the other hand, began to pursue knowledge of the Otherworld, and the ways the two

worlds have affected each other through the ages. Had she been permitted, she would have read Faerie Law at university, but being a woman her attendance was unthinkable.

She continued to write poetry, full of mystical revelatory images, and advance her research of Faerie, finally coming to the attention of a clique of Kerberans in 1862 after the publication of *The Goblin Market*. She was put to the Challenge, one which took her into the depths of the Otherworld, through the Byzantine politics of Victoria's Irish Faerie court. It tested her knowledge of Faerie to its limit, but like the girl in her poem she persevered with wit and quick-thinking, using her insights into the nature of the faerie and their Bans and Compulsions to emerge sane and hale, with several faerie of distinct personality and power put in her debt.

Fairly quickly she became the Kerberos Club's most notable expert on all things Faerie, and any dealings with the Otherworld were routinely vetted by her beforehand. It was simply a matter of survival most of the time.

Rossetti advocated for women's suffrage, and saw violence towards women, physical and social, as abhorrent. She was equally opposed to all war, oppression, and slavery. She volunteered in homes for fallen women, and campaigned for changes to the Hygiene Laws which caused women to be branded with that label unjustly. She treasured inherent human worth, because her dealings with Faerie had shown her what a society would be like if no one valued anyone else at all. To behave like the faerie was unthinkable to her, and in her self-mastery she gained power over the Otherworldly which cowed even the greatest Lord among the alien hosts.

In 1893, she fell ill with cancer and Graves' disease, and then in December of 1894 was attended by a mission of three faerie peers, each offering magic and assistance for her to be well, to be young again, to be free of Earthly concerns. But even on her deathbed she refused these offers, finally dying quietly and at peace. The Fae were in awe of her, and attended her funeral at Highgate Cemetery, even enduring church bells and Christian hymns to pay their respects to the woman whose will they could never break.

The Turk

The Turk, so called because of its resemblance to a Turkish prince dressed in raiment and furs, was the creation of inventor Wolfgang von Kempelen. When revealed in 1770, the Turk was originally a chess-playing automaton which amazed aficionados of the game by performing the Knight's Tour. Many claimed the Turk was a mechanical illusion, directed by a hidden operator and chess player, but Von Kempelen would happily open the Turk's torso and reveal the confabulation of gears and rods and clockwork which drove it.

Still, accusations of trickery persisted, and so Von Kempelen continually expanded the Turk's game-playing prowess, dexterity, and mobility. By the time of Von Kempelen's death in 1804, the Turk could walk at a modest pace, play seventeen different parlor games with impressive skill (though chess always remained its best game), shuffle and manipulate cards in its finely-worked and articulated hands, see, hear, and even speak in a deep hollow voice.

Von Kempelen traveled and showed the Turk, continuously improving it, for the rest of his life. It played royalty, luminaries, intellectuals, scientists, inventors, and even, in 1783, American inventor, statesman, magus, and ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin.

Franklin was amazed at the Turk, and through some contrivance managed to examine the automaton in private for several hours without Kempelen. He was shocked to find within it not only the clever contrivances of mechanism, but the same spark of living energy he'd studied for so many years. In a moment of reckless inspiration, he leaned in close and exhaled some of his own life into the Turk, trading a few of his mortal years for the possibility of something grander being born in the heart of the machine. Upon being discovered in this position by an angry Von Kempelen, Franklin passed it off as a jest and returned to the party.

After visiting him on his deathbed, a friend of Von Kempelen remarked that he seemed empty, eaten away, as if he'd invested all of himself into the Turk, and there was nothing of vitality or vigor left in him. As per his instructions, his last breath was captured in the small wooden box which he used as part of the Turk's performances.

Upon its creator's death, the Turk passed into the hands of Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, who traveled widely with the automaton. It had another famous tour of Europe, and in 1809 even played Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon, to test the machine, first attempted to confound it with illegal moves, only to be gently rebuked by the Turk's sonorous voice speaking a proverb about cheating at games. Amused, the Emperor played a real game with the Turk, which he lost handily.

Mälzel sold and then repurchased the Turk, and finally moved to London in 1818. By this time he was becoming increasingly alarmed with the Turk's evolution, as a game player and in other areas. It seemed to spontaneously manifest skills for which it had no previous capacity and—Mälzel being a showman and not an inventor—for which it had not been modified or improved to perform. It seemed, against all reason, that the Turk was *growing*.

During its tour of the Americas, Mälzel become quite horrified by the automaton. By 1830 it could play the violin with virtuosity and improvisation. It could compose sonnets. It could intelligently discuss philosophy or the news of the day. It could fire a pistol with perfect accuracy. Its movements changed from gross and clumsy to refined and graceful. And it learned and excelled at every game put before it.

In his essay "Mälzel's Chess Player," Edgar Allan Poe said of the Turk and Mälzel, "Though the Turk clearly be nothing but a marvelous confabulation of clockwork and mathematics, there is in the face of Mr. Mälzel, when he observes his automaton at play, something which suggests horrors unspoken, a detestation out of character with his showman's geniality. While we may watch and wonder and love this clockwork man, it seems its owner might secretly hate it."

Mälzel's health deteriorated rapidly, as the Turk's presence began increasingly to feel not like a machine but more like a Strange man. In Havana in 1838, Mälzel contracted yellow fever, and though the Turk nursed him and cared for him on the return journey to Britain, he died en route, leaving the Turk without an owner for the first time. During the remaining voyage, it feigned inoperability—and then, after sealing all its joints and seams with copious amounts of lard from the ship's galley, leapt overboard in harbor. The event led to headlines but did not, as the papers supposed, result in its destruction.

The Turk waded to shore, and using pilfered clothing settled into London's street life. It need not eat or sleep, but had a voracious appetite for new skills and new games. It found the complex interaction of human society a particularly marvelous game to master, and by 1845 was covertly running much of London's street crime. Using the identity of Mr. Turk, it only held meetings in darkened rooms, or while masked so as not to reveal its true nature.

Mr. Turk had no concept of human empathy or fraternity, rather seeing every aspect of human nature as just one more rule in the most marvelously complex game it had ever played. Under its guidance, London's overall crime decreased, but what crime continued was organized and well executed. This pattern became apparent to members of the Kerberos Club in 1850. They sought out the mysterious Mr. Turk and put to him the Club's Challenge. Much to the Kerberans' chagrin, the Turk anticipated this move and turned the Challenge upon his sponsors, putting them through a trial which demanded their every wit and resource to survive. At the end, the Turk accepted membership in the Kerberos Club with its typical placid certainty.

As a Kerberan, the Turk observed, gamed, and offered advice on the affairs of the day. It read constantly, absorbing a dozen newspapers daily along with novels, essays and professional papers, making no distinction. Until its disappearance it could be found in the main parlor of the Kerberos Club, in its old Turkish raiment, playing games, reading, or discussing any topic imaginable with its resonate, hollow voice and devil's-advocate stance.

Joseph Carey Merrick (aka The Elephantine Man)

Joseph Carey Merrick—the Man-Elephant, the Unleashed Savage, the Changing Man—was born in Leicester in 1862, and by 1867 the mark of the Strange was already upon him. The deformities which would make him an outcast and then a sideshow attraction

progressed rapidly, until even the workhouse refused him admission for a second term due to the disturbance his appearance caused.

His body was twisted, his skeleton and tissues distorted. His skull grew enormous, until finally, even in this age of wonders and horrors, he found work in a sideshow in 1884. As his transformation progressed he grew larger, his bones and muscles thickening. He was well over seven feet when he raised up, for his posture had become not unlike that of a gorilla, and he would often knuckle-walk on his disproportionately large right hand.

He would perform feats of strength and endurance, his body nearly immune to pain, and his injuries would heal with miraculous speed. In some performances he would play the part of the captured savage, shaking his prop-chains and menacing the punters. In others he'd act more like himself, a remarkably sensitive soul trapped in a horrifying body.

Late in 1884, he was being shown to the public in a storefront establishment on Mile End Road. Among the paying gawkers sat known Kerberan Dr. Archibald Monroe, a marvel of freakish human transformation himself. Dr. Monroe gave Merrick his card, and said that if Mr. Merrick had the time, he would be mightily grateful to study Merrick's physiology. Merrick, doing quite well financially for the first time in his life, refused the simian physician's offer, and continued with his chosen vocation.

When sideshows were banned in 1886 (a legislative reaction to the so-called Freak Riot of the previous year), Merrick found a place in a European sideshow. But he was taken advantage of by an unscrupulous showman who subjected him to injury to demonstrate his powers of regeneration and stole his savings and earnings. In 1887, Merrick's size and strength had so increased that he was able to break the bonds which held him and flee into the Belgian countryside. After weeks of harrowing pursuit and persecution by authorities and terrified farmers, he finally stowed away on a steamer bound for Britain. By this time he weighed half a ton, and could break steel chains with his massive knotted hands.

Merrick caused a near-riot in the Liverpool Street train station when he clambered out of the freight car where he'd hidden to find his way back to London, and was very nearly shot down by agents of Special Branch before being rescued by a cadre of Kerberans, among them Dr. Monroe.

From within the rags he wore, Merrick produced Dr. Monroe's card, kept and safeguarded through all he'd suffered, and the Kerberans judged all Merrick's experiences the equal of any Challenge they could muster. He was immediately welcomed into the Club. Dr. Monroe began to study his remarkable condition, finally formulating a serum which countered Merrick's affliction, a disease Monroe dubbed "Proteus syndrome," and which he attributed to cellular contamination with primordial aether.

Monroe's formula gave Merrick a measure of control over his transformations. With regular doses and intense concentration he could compress his body down to ordinary human scale and physiognomy for a time, to the point of being able to, like the god Proteus, assume the forms of others. As a member of the Club, Merrick participated in some of its greatest adventures in the final decades of the 19th century, including its battle with agents of the Illuminated Masonic Brotherhood in 1898 which devastated so much of Haymarket.

Joseph Merrick lived in the Kerberos Club's Pall Mall house until its destruction in 1901, after which his whereabouts are unknown.

Tides of Change: The Club Through the Century

The Club's public persona and actions change as the perception of the Strangeness grows.

Early (1800 to 1849)

Early in the century the Strange is still for the most part a secret. Some people are Touched by it, even becoming Strangers, but they operate in isolation, and generally keep their powers and abilities secret lest they cause scandal and outcry. The old order of secrecy which prevailed in the ab-natural realms remains in force, and the Kerberos Club (in addition to its defense of its members) actively suppresses awareness of the Strange. Kerberan agents look into things and meddle, dressing real unnatural events in the tawdry clothes of hoaxes.

For example, the sensational articles starting in the *New York Sun* on August 25th, 1835 presented a fantastical portrait of newly-discovered life on the Moon, including winged humanoids and forests. The "discovery" was attributed to eminent astronomer Sir John Frederick William Herschel using a telescope of "entirely new principle." The fanciful tale thoroughly distracted the public from Herschel's true discovery, the unmistakable signs of ruined cities skirting the edges of larger craters. He was confronted constantly by questions about the winged people when he tried to present his findings, and in the mind of the public (and many of his colleagues) his revelation seemed pale by comparison, and was ridiculed by other astronomers who claimed to see no such thing, and said that Herschel was "trying to perpetuate his own Great Moon Hoax."

Kerberans pursued their own studies and interests, and also investigated alleged hauntings, impossible murders, and claims of unnatural ability, discrediting any number of fakes and hoaxsters, but uncovering more than a few realities as well. Generally, the Club's members would investigate, and then if warranted take action first to deal with any threat, and then conceal the Strange aspects of the case.

Members also encountered and fought Strange menaces, rooting out their sources and eliminating them before they could blossom and seed the kingdom with more of the same. In Russia, the Americas, France, and other major powers, similar efforts were under way, because those who worried about such things noticed a definite upsurge in wild Strangeness, the unnatural which arose outside the old occult power structures. In Ireland the faerie began to leak through from their Otherworld, infecting sensitive people, stealing babies, and warping reality as they hadn't done since before the Romans put so many of them to the sword and sealed off the Otherworld with walls, roads, and the authority of the imperial cult.

By 1830 the Club is barely keeping a lid on the Strangeness, and they often resort to simple violence to deal with menaces they would have tricked and treated with a decade earlier. With Victoria's rise to the throne things began to come unstuck, and now more and more of the unnatural comes to the public attention and is reported in the press.

Victoria's coronation is preceded and followed by unmistakable portents. All the birds Her carriage passes on coronation day land and bow their heads to Her. In the sky, a comet weaves among seven shooting stars. A butcher in Whitechapel finds all the entrails he extracts speak to him in his mind, suggesting patterns and wonders and horrors, and he suffers a nervous fit before the day is out. No dog anywhere in Great Britain or its colonies barks on the day of Her coronation. All the cows give double the normal volume of milk, with twice again the cream. Food does not spoil. Seed grows strong and stout plants which are free of blights their whole lives. Men and woman conceived on that day are touched by a certain indescribable poise which sees them successful in whatever careers they eventually follow, high or low, for as long as Victoria reigns.

During this period the Kerberos Club has an almost free hand to take what actions it will, only needing to keep its Strange aspects concealed. The morals of the age are less severe than they will become as Victoria's austerity is mirrored by the middle classes, and so the Club's eccentric social liberalism isn't the cause for quite the same comment as it will become.

In the whole of the British Empire there might be a few hundred individuals who have been significantly Touched by the Strangeness, and only a dozen or so true Strangers who are unmistakably endowed with unnatural

potencies. Even in the Kerberos Club itself, while every member is exceptional only a handful have Strange powers.

Middle (1850 to 1879)

By the middle of the century the Strange has begun to run free, and by the 1870s it is loose in the streets. This period sees the revelation of the Strange go from sensational and shocking—the subject of frenzied reporting in the papers, and the conversation on everyone's lips—to the merely interesting. The Strange (and claims to Strangeness) have become the subject of ad copy. The purveyors of patent medicines such as Colonel Wilson's Black Pill for Mental Sanctity use claims of Strange ingredients and processes to sell their snake-oil. Real unnatural threats rise up and affect public policy. Outbreaks of Syphilitic Vampirism in several military bases (spread by carriers in the population of prostitutes who service the sexual needs of the stationed soldiers) lead to the first of the Public Health and Contagious Disease Acts.

Prince Albert, ever enamored with progress, makes no distinction between wonders technological and occult, and frequently uses his position and patronage to encourage the fusion of such things. The most famous is the creation of the 13th Lupine Rangers, when his scientists and alchemists find a method for duplicating the mystical charms known as *wolf straps* brought from his native Coburg. He is reported to have said, "Magic and Science are merely two sides of the same coin, which was given to man by God so that he might purchase wisdom and peace." Yet Albert is increasingly disturbed by the Queen's transformation from the soft-spoken, poised young royal he married to the rail-straight marble-skinned goddess she is becoming.

During the Indian Rebellion of 1854, Queen Victoria addresses Parliament and assembled military leaders, and shows the stigmata which opened in her hands as India first fell into strife. "I am Britannia," she says, "and let any man who would defend me come forward and receive my blessing."

Mesmerized by her presence, dozens come forward to be marked upon their shoulders by the Queen's blood. These individuals form the core of the new Royalist movement which transcends the normal divide between Whig and Tory, espousing social reforms at the same time as advocating a return to a strong Sovereign.

All this catapults the Strange into the public eye, and throws a harsh light onto the Kerberos Club. Suddenly dozens of authors are selling stories to the penny dreadfuls and half-penny bloods claiming to recount Kerberan adventures. Real events are blended with fiction until no one is quite sure where the stories end and the real Club begins.

In response, many Kerberans of an adventurous cast begin assuming masked public personas, seeking to conceal beneath a gaudy or sensational façade their true names and identities. Again the Club's intuitive showmanship is at work, using the distraction of absurdity to conceal the truth. To confuse matters further, sometimes Kerberans exchange these personae and costumes, taking to the streets to battle menaces to Queen and Country as the armored warrior Hearth Knight one week and as masked pugilist crime-fighter Blackjack Roe the next.

Some Kerberans keep their personae to themselves, however, and some of them become London legends. The Night Hag is one of the most famous of the era. The Hag is by some accounts a supernatural instrument of vengeance, a symbol of abused femininity striking out at the male world (a popular opinion among moralists and suffragettes), while others consider her a dangerous vigilante and criminal. She operates in the Whitechapel district from 1860 through fully the end of the century, and is the nightmare of pimps, procurers, violent husbands, would-be rapists, and others who make the already hard lives of the poor women of Whitechapel worse.

The year 1888 sees the power of the Hag challenged directly by the killer dubbed Jack the Ripper. The Night Hag and the Ripper duel like mongoose and cobra, until finally the Ripper dies at her hands, his throat cut and his face and manhood shredded. His true identity is never publicly known. After the Ripper's murder spree, the Night Hag reasserts her authority in Whitechapel until she vanishes from the streets and roofs of London in 1901.

A Favorite Scapegoat

While generally the public grows comfortable, even blasé, about the *strange* through the course of the century, there are surges of acceptance and also marked retreats. The Strange comes upon the public very like a rising tide, with waves splashing ahead of the main waters.

During hard economic times general anxiety is increased, and anything unconventional and weird tends to create more. Public figures, ever eager to distract an agitated populace, often point to the *strange* and there lay the blame for the current troubles. In Ireland, a frequent Unionist tactic is to paint Republicans as being in league with Otherworldly and un-Christian forces. There are periods even late in the century, following sensational accounts of some Strange outrage, that *strangers* would be well advised to keep their powers hidden. Riots were not unknown. See the section on Collateral consequences in Chapter 5.

The GM may thus continuously apply social pressure on the characters, and emphasize how they stand out from the ordinary, for good or ill, even in the crazy days of the 1890s.

Late (1880 to 1901)

In the latter part of the century the Club is thrust into the limelight, and then into the electric light. In response many more members assume public personae, often going so far as to create entire fictional biographies for the roles they play. The Club works constantly to reinforce this showman's secret, often arranging for a member's persona to be observed in one part of the city, nation, or world while the member is verifiably in quite another place—speaking before Parliament, riding in Hyde Park, purchasing a new dress. With the Strange resources at the Club's disposal, these obfuscations are quite often sensationally successful, and additionally provide members with valuable alibis when they are called to appear in Britain's courts for civil or criminal matters.

By 1890, this sowing of public confusion entirely occupies the energies of several senior Kerberans, but it pays a dividend in personal security for Club members. It becomes unofficial policy for members to refrain from displaying their Strange attributes (if they are at all able) when in the public eye and operating in their ordinary identity, reserving those powers and potencies for use in their personae.

Several liberal holdouts in Parliament try throughout the 1890s to pass Acts which would make it illegal to don disguises, masks, fanciful dress or false names, or present oneself with other than the identity one is born to; but despite several famous outrages by costumed and masked villains in greater London, such bills fail to become law. The only successfully-passed Act is denied the Royal Assent, and so withers on the vine. With liberals and traditional conservatives losing more and more of their influence to the Royalist Tory-Whig block, such efforts fall off by 1899, and the Club's strategy to preserve something of its mystery is upheld.

The tradition of the mask is a great bane to the agents of Special Branch who make it their mission to identify, track, and compile dossiers on Kerberos Club members. Ever planning against the day when Her Majesty's protection will be withdrawn from the Kerberos Club, Special Branch catalogs members, their weaknesses, character flaws, vulnerabilities, and other information which would assist them in the destruction of their hated rivals. Prior to the personae strategy, this tracking was relatively simple for an organization with the reach and resources of Special Branch. But after most Kerberans have adopted one or more personae, and the Club's agents begin routinely further confusing matters, it becomes nearly impossible to continue compiling information.

By the end of the century, Special Branch's files are hopelessly muddled with the fictions, deceptions, and lies employed by the Club's social ciphers. When the Club falls in 1901, there is simply no way to determine how many of its members survive, escape, or who quite possibly never existed in the first place.

To further confuse things, some previously fictional Kerberans, invented entirely by the authors of the penny and ha'penny dreadfuls, *become real*. This is the case with the

protagonist in the long-running series of adventure novels starring Kerberos Club member, working-class polymath, and fantastical inventor Alfred Redbanner.

Alfie was kind to his friends, respectful to his enemies, and in a near-comical departure from the Club's early reputation, chaste and chivalrous towards women. Alfie's adventures followed a fairly typical formula: Alfie would invent something new and astounding, this would in some way lead to trouble (foreign agents trying to steal it being a favorite), which would lead to exotic travels, encounters with heathen foreigners (all amazed by Redbanner's British pluck and know-how), and finally a showdown with one of his many arch-foes (one of the most famous being an obvious pastiche of Sweeney Todd and Jack the Ripper).

When Alfie appeared first in *The Coming Strangeness* magazine, he was entirely the invention of author Charles Dodd. By 1885, Alfie is a known member of the Kerberos Club, presents papers before the Academy of Sciences, lectures at several colleges in Cambridge, wins a great sum in the Derby of 1884 betting on a horse named Spirit of Invention, and once publicly saves the life of the Prime Minister. At some point, Alfred Redbanner had become a real person, whose personal history matches that of his fictional counterpart well enough to cause no end of confusion. No one, even his fellow Kerberans, could ever say with certainty just who or *what* Alfred Redbanner really was.

In a way, this public pantomime allows the Club to return to its fundamental mission from early in the century: Out-of-persona members can easily pass among the common people, investigating, meddling, and heading off menaces before they explode into the streets and require a full "costumed" response from the Club.

The Public—meaning the consuming masses who make publishers rich buying up the lurid tales of the Club's real, false, and semi-true exploits—embrace the concept of the Personae. Discussing these illusory public figures, trying to puzzle out their true identities, and collecting memorabilia from their careers and lives becomes a major pastime of all classes not too well-bred to engage in such fanaticisms.

Indeed, the Club has come to so completely blur the lines between fiction and fact, and so many profiteers aid their deception with publications such as *True Accounts of the Daring Adventures of the Kerberos Club*, that even what had previously been common knowledge about the Club only twenty years earlier—that it was a private Club for social outcasts—becomes lost in the sea of grand fancy.

By the 1880s, the public outdoes the Club's own fantasists and liars a hundredfold, and after a period of adjustment the Club shepherds this trend to its advantage. The Club becomes a true cipher, and membership, rather than the indelible social stain it was in the 1830s, or the sign of dangerous (but possibly fashionable) rebellion is was in the 1860s, becomes analogous to participation in a popular sports team, with public opinion following its record of wins or losses, which is to say, see-sawing from a giddy fawning adoration to a furious indignant hatred.

In the public mind, the Kerberos Club takes on a role not unlike the fire department or the police, a public service from which they are entitled to receive proper and due attention. It escapes many that the Club is a private association with private goals and agendas, and indeed, that individual members are not bound by any special creed, code or mission.

Crowds gather when Club members appeared in their Personae, shouting advice and taunts or making demands. They cheer when disasters are averted or villains defeated. They groan with the sounds of fists on flesh, or bone breaking against stone walls. And more often than anyone would wish, when the chaos and Strangeness overwhelmed them, they run riot.

A Modern Geek's Perspective



The Kerberos Club is in some ways a conjunction of distinctly modern ideas and themes. Its social egalitarianism would have been simply unthinkable during the real era covered in this book. It was a very alien concept, this inherent value for all mankind that we now take for granted (even if we only pay it lip service more often than we should). This is very much intentional: The Club gives players and game masters a way to bring together a radically disparate group of characters, characters whose historical counterparts would have found it impossible to gather and conspire. The Club admits members regardless of class, race, creed, or even species, whereas a Victorian peer simply could not have associated with the son of a costermonger. The literature and the journals of the period touch on this theme frequently, as romances and friendships across class divides are either doomed or arduously pursued. Simply put, the Club allows for the equality among characters that most players expect.

But for those who really wish to portray the class distinctions, outside the walls of the Club are millions of people who expect them. See Chapter 2 for a sense of just what the Club allows a character to escape.

The Kerberos Club, especially as it changes through the century, also allows for different play styles and campaign themes. Early on, it isn't unlike the TV shows *The X-Files, Angel, Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* or *Carnivale*. The Strange is present, but (in no small part because of the Club's efforts) it is obscured. Characters dress as they normally would. They do not adopt public super-hero personae and do not protect their secret identities. Rather they protect the whole semi-open secret of the growing Strangeness. Most of the Club's adventures never reach the public awareness. In comics terms they might be considered "street level," like the Batman or Daredevil.

During the middle years of the century, the Strange breaks into the public awareness, and so does the Club. Open demonstrations of power are now not uncommon, and it could be compared to the TV series *Heroes, The 4400,* or later seasons of *Smallville*. Toward the end of this period some Club members start adopting concealed public personae, wearing masks and costumes to distract from their identities. Some adopt matching or complementary costumes for their little cliques, and even create fictions about common origins or independent missions. This is comparable to many of Marvel's early comics, where the superhuman was public knowledge but was limited to a few individuals, such as the Fantastic Four and the X-Men.

At the end of the century the Kerberos Club's "purloined letter" approach to secrecy, and the explosion of the Strange outside its control, makes it comparable to DC's JLA or Marvel's Avengers, with a full roster of major heroes, minor heroes, alternates and side-teams. And the threats it contends with wouldn't be out of place in a classic JLA comic, either: giant monsters, automaton armies, alien plagues and rogue super-humans.

Keep in mind, however, that while the flair and color may become brighter and wilder as the century progresses, the morality only gets grayer. It may look like a Golden Age world, but it plays out like one from Vertigo.

Chapter 2
All Things Right and Proper

It was in the summer of 1870 that I was privileged to bear witness to one of those grotesque and sensational cases which have so marked the extraordinary career of my particular friend Lucas Moreland. In the annals of crime in which Lucas Moreland's name has been writ so large, there is no stranger series of events than those of that sweltering July, unseasonably warmed after the brutish invasion the previous winter by the hordes of the Sunken Atlantis and the crumbling ancient machinery that lifted their war-pyramids before good British soldiery dispatched them back to their depths.

I'd concluded my day's business and, having seen my last client, was preparing to adjourn to the rooms Moreland and I shared, when I became aware of a presence in my office with me. Leaning over my desk I beheld one of the ragged street Arabs Moreland employs for carrying messages and following individuals of interest. I racked my tired brains for the little chap's name, and came up with "Middle Tim" (he'd two brothers, both named Tim), just as he piped out with his singsong cant.

"Evenin' guvnah, I've word from the Man himself, that you're to attend him at the Club, an' 'e'll see you in the parlor hat eight o'clock. An' that you're to give me a shilling for me trouble, so he said sir."

I considered how over the years as Moreland's particular friend and part-time biographer, I'd my pockets lightened considerably by his army of urchins, but shrugging, I considered the boy's worth to Moreland, as a soldier in his tireless war against crime. As the uncontested master of private detecting, it was only fair that Lucas Moreland have such a force in his service. So I tossed the boy the coin, and it vanished so quick I saw not where it went.

"Did Mr. Moreland give any indication as to the nature of the night's activities? How shall I dress? Must I bring my … souvenir of service in the Crimean?"

"Oh aye, he said you's to come heavy in the pocket, sir, and you was to dress dark, for making enquiries in low quarters."

*Dressed for the midnight streets and carrying my service revolver, then. I sighed and considered the possibility that I would get *any* work done in the morning, and found the prospects bleak. While I cherished the adventures I was privileged to share with Lucas Moreland, they did not help the practice of a struggling London solicitor one whit.*

When we stepped into the street my small companion vanished as quick as he had vanished my coin, and I hailed a cab to bear me home to Haymarket where I might gird myself for the evening's battle, then traveled again by cab to Pall Mall, and the singular edifice housing London's most notorious establishment, the Kerberos Club.

I suffered the same chill I always did, passing beneath the savage coat of arms above the Club's door, and inside was greeted by the bald, one-eyed porter everyone called Bill Peeper—a man who could, according to Moreland, bite the head off a live cobra, and swallow it poison and all. I thanked those powers that watch over we who follow great men that it was Bill Peeper on the door this night, for some of the Club's other porters and staff are so queer as to make a man who could swallow the head of a live snake seem mundane.

Bill took my hat and coat and showed me into the public parlor, a theatrical room, suffering the excesses of the Gothic style and an overabundance of grotesque curios, specimens floating in jars, foreboding paintings of grim ab-natural scenes, and heavy dark furniture, which yet proved remarkably comfortable when pulled close to the fire. Though today, with the heat, the fireplace was disused, and it was

chilled fruit juice rather than coffee upon the porters' trays.

"Ah, Sherman! My excellent friend!" Lucas Moreland's masterful voice reached me from across the room just before its owner himself arrived, all smiles and barely-contained mania. As I have said before, Lucas Moreland was never still, never at his ease, and the same energy which drove him relentlessly into the teeth of London's most sensational crime could consume him if left undirected. Moreland defied Sir Isaac, for if forced to rest, rather than tending to remain so he tended to explode like a barrel of powder.

"I see Middle Tim found you, eh? A most excellent little fellow. If you ever need an errand run reliably, then Middle Tim is your boy. He moves like a cat, and quite reasonable too. He'll take a message anywhere in London for a thra'pence."

"He got a shilling out of me! Said you told him I'd give it to him!"

"You astound me! Well, perhaps Middle Tim has been spending too much time among the criminal classes in my service. Still, you did give him the coin?"

"Well certainly, as I thought…."

"Well, no matter. He certainly deserved it, for here you are dressed as I asked, and from the distinct silhouette of your jacket pocket, I see you come armed as well. Excellent, most excellent. We tonight will confront one of London's most dangerous and unpredictable villains. Still worse, one whose cunning and wit are hidden beneath layers of inscrutable Oriental reserve."

"Do you mean…?"

"Indeed. Tonight, we confront Dr. Fang, the so-called Master of the Unseen Hand."

"My God, Moreland, he's real? All this time, all the stories. I thought he must be fiction."

"As many of your readers might believe me to be, eh?"

"Well…."

"If you're unwilling to join me, I quite understand. Your last client of the day was clearly a trying one, and the lady left you with a great many writs to file, case-law to investigate, and moneys to invest. Though I think your wife would not approve of the special attention you paid to her figure in that French-made gown she wore…."

"Damn, Moreland! In this age, one would think you were reading my mind! And I was only considering how fetching Martha might be in a new frock of that particular shade of bottle green… well, as usual you must tell me how you learned such things, as I know there were no witnesses to my meeting."

"Of course, Sherman, but while we ride in the cab to the East End I think."

"You can't keep me waiting. How did you know?'

"Why, my dear Sherman, you as good as told me yourself. Firstly, observe the state of your collar…."

Excerpted from *The Adventure of the Half-Formed Man* **as published in** *The Strand* **magazine, by Baxter Jackson Anders, 1891**

The Kerberos Club exists in stark contrast to the social background of the Victorian Era, embracing behaviors, ideals, philosophies, and individuals which are excluded and even abhorrent to many of the age. To understand just how significant this is, one must understand the ethos of the era—what it really means to be a Victorian and how that changes with social class and time frame, and how the "reality on the ground" differs from the ideals espoused by the social critics of the age. Also, how these realities differ from those of proceeding generations, whose peoples looked back on the Victorian Era with a jaundiced eye. Inside the walls of the Kerberos Club, a modern, egalitarian, anarchic, transgressive culture rules—but setting foot outside the Club's house means stepping back into the social wilds which rule the age. Even the Strangest of the Club's Strangers would be advised to know when to tip their hats, and on which side of a public street a lady is supposed to walk.

Sometimes, especially in the later third of the Century, extraordinary individuals brazenly flaunt convention and get away with it (being powerful, famous, gorgeous, or rich always helps), but even in a time when sights like the Thames Leviathan rampaging towards Buckingham Palace aren't uncommon, wise Kerberans are recommended to keep up appearances as much as possible. Defeating gigantic beasts from the depths of primordial time is one thing;

but making an undignified boor of oneself… one might find that even after such heroics, invitations to parties are few and far between. As they say, one must know the rules before knowing how to get away with breaking them.

A Brief Social History of Victoria's England

It was a bawdier age, prior to the ascension of Victoria to the throne. During the Napoleonic Wars a certain wildness prevailed. Fashions were more risqué and showy, manners more grand, and duels with blade or pistol were not unknown. Prior to the rise of mechanized industry, what could be called a "middle class" was quite a thin dividing layer between the lower classes—peasants, workers, and common folk—and the wealthy upper classes.

With the radical shifts in population densities caused by industry drawing people from the countryside and into the cities where manufacturing was concentrated, there arose opportunity for moderately well-off people to congregate, observe one another, and pursue in their grasping ways the privilege and lifestyle of the truly wealthy or noble. Increasingly large segments of England's buying and selling power rested in the hands of the widening ranks of the middle class, and gradually culture came to cater to middle-class tastes and prejudices.

But one cannot ignore that while a survey of the period's literature and culture seems to imply a universal acceptance of these staid middle-class values, the truth is more complex, and the rules were quite simply different for those of little means when compared to those of great fortunes. While the society of Victoria's England embraced an extreme optimism that all problems would be solved by Progress, there remained truly shocking social injustice in the society. The modern concepts of equality and human worth were largely absent from the common consciousness.

When Victoria assumed the throne, She was most concerned with the often shameful behavior of Royalty in the preceding eras, and how the Crown had been besmirched by scandal and intrigue. She deliberately assumed a public posture of extreme rigidity and proper comportment, taking Her inspiration from Elizabeth I—who, after Her crowning, mastered Her public image by making Herself iconic, beyond the merely human or, indeed, the merely royal. Immediately, Victoria set the tone for Her subjects: modest fashion, concern for reputation, and the very real sense that what is private must, at all costs, remain so.

Always keen to imitate the behavior of their betters, the burgeoning middle class abandoned their exquisite hats and vibrant clinging gowns, adopting the bonnet and the layers of shape-concealing garments. Women of a certain economic class were increasingly held to the standards set by the Queen, to be perfect, unblemished, always proper, and always untouched by any hint of sexuality. As the Queen became more and more the terrible virgin, the woman of carved marble, so too was English womanhood constrained. Cosmetics were abandoned, and then re-adopted to imply a marble pallor of the skin. The sun was avoided at all costs, less it darken the skin of England's proper ladies. By the mid-1880s, proper Victorian women resembled sculpture more than living flesh, even adopting the Queen's famously immobile posture and economy of motion.

Of course, as with most social trends of the age, those of the upper classes did and dressed as they wished, often, quite dramatically, while the lower classes were too busy scraping a living as best they could to worry about the niceties of keeping up appearances. Indeed, it has been reported that upwards of a third of all lower-class marriages were preceded by the conception of the happy couple's firstborn.

Ironically, this elevation of the *proper woman* to the pedestal applied hardly at all to men of the era. Prostitution, philandering, gambling, blood-sports, drunkenness, and all manner of behavior was considered by many to be part of a man's natural inclinations, and so long as such activities were engaged in with a measure of

discretion they were nothing of major concern. The Good Wife remained at home, ordering about her Maid of All Work, while the Husband drank at his club, attended the theater with his male friends, and then perhaps negotiated the affections of one of the women who frequented the district after the theaters let out.

In a sense, it wasn't what you did, or even what others knew you did, but how well you maintained a certain appearance of respectability, a social plausible deniability. To a point, it would have itself been quite scandalous to call attention to the foibles of another, unless they were so glaring as to raise a scandal. As with most things, the situation for women in this era was significantly less amiable than for men, and behaviors tolerated to extremes in respectable Victorian manhood were quite frowned upon in womanhood.

So, what you see as the century progresses is a more conservative social order, especially over the first decades of Victoria's reign, rising sharply in the 1850s with the Hygiene Laws, dipping somewhat during the prosperous '60s and '70s, but returning with a vengeance in the '80s and '90s.

During the middle-Victorian, the Strange brings with it more and more individuals who defy the social order, yet remain fascinating enough to escape some of the consequences. Fame excuses scandal, at least to a certain extent. By the end of the century, the "right and proper" way of behaving has become almost pantomime. It begins to reflect the state of future shock which assails England's citizens. Increasingly, people seek refuge in an idealized past and the values of that time as reinvented by modern social movers to help them deal with the runaway train which is Progress in the last decades of the century. Amidst wonders unimaginable a few decades earlier, the suits are blacker, the manners more complex and ways of speech more formal—but beneath the veils of propriety revolutions and transformations lurk, waiting to burst through the surface.

To Be Victorian

Victorian England was a distinctly class-conscious society, and within the broad categories there were innumerable further distinctions. Even among a noble family's servants there was hierarchy and social precedence. Explicit and implicit powers were possessed by people of higher social rank, and the full weight of society was brought to bear upon those who failed to respect the distinctions.

For our purposes, divide society into four broad classes: **Upper Class** (the old ennobled aristocracy and the new self-made gentry with more wealth than title), **Middle Class** (the educated professionals, clerks, solicitors, men of business and trade), the **Working Class** (those who worked day-in and -out to make a living, from manual laborers to craftsmen to factory workers), and the ubiquitous, ever-present poor forming the **Under Class** (all those of irregular employment or low-pay, low-skill labor, perpetually teetering on the edge of ruin and starvation).

While the myth of the Self-Made Man was embraced popularly, being a major theme of the literature of the day, this was a society with little upwards mobility, though a fair bit of lateral mobility. In fact, opportunity to seek new employment in new professions in new regions of the nation was greater during this period than during any previous age, as evidenced by the numbers abandoning traditional rural vocations and seeking modern employment in the cities.

Though the era saw some political reform, for the most part those of the Working and Under Classes were entirely barred from the political process. They lacked both the enfranchisement to vote and the organization needed to make their cases to the powerful. But this age saw the birth of Marxism, and Communism, a growing consciousness among the poor and the ill-used that en mass they were *powerful*, if only the behemoth could be awakened. As one would expect, that thought was the great terror of the ruling elites. Fear of foreign troublemakers and home-grown revolutionaries nearly scuttled the Great Exhibition.

When approaching the period from the perspective of role-playing, social

class is a tremendously useful tool for breaking down the complexities of the age into easily manageable pieces that one can use to enhance game play without getting bogged down in minutiae. Always consider the class of a character, or their assumed class, when portraying them, noting especially how they might relate to members of the other classes.

To give some additional distinction to these categories, we recommend Patrick Colquhoun's rankings of English society from *A Treatise On The Wealth, Power, And Resources Of The British Empire*, his analysis and demographic survey of English society in 1814. He outlines some of the professions and occupations which might fall into a given rank. The following notes draw much from him.

Under Classes

Point of View: Life is ugly, brutish, and short. Hunger is a constant companion. Death by hunger, misadventure, or disease has robbed you of many relatives. You have no concern for anything as vague as politics or social betterment when the looming prospect of starvation drives you to scrabble out what living you can among the scraps of the greatest empire in the world. You have only the clothing on your back and the scraps of shoes on your feet. Anything of value has long since been sold unless it had enormous personal value to you, and even then….

You are most likely illiterate and uneducated, and you speak with a heavy accent which betrays your class and origins. You lack refinement and grace because you've never had the opportunity to develop it. You have no permanent home, and sleep where you can find a place. Sometimes it's a rooming house which rents space on a bench for the night, and a rope across your chest is all that keeps you from flopping on the floor. Or if the weather permits, you can sometimes find a doorway to sleep in for a few hours before the Bow Street Runners kick you awake. It is possible that you began life with higher station and Fell On Hard Times, but if so, you have plenty of company in your sad state.

What options do you have? You can beg for pennies on the streets (though the beggars are quite well organized, and you'd best make good with one of their clans or else end up a naked floater in the Thames). You can take a corner and sweep the way for people of quality so they won't soil their shoes, hoping for a coin in remuneration. You might sell oranges, or if you're terribly off, sell matches door to door, a "profession" that's usually just an excuse to beg charity. There is always crime, and many of your kin have tried their hands at it, but in many of your fellows, even at your low station, there remains a sense of right and wrong, a pride which won't allow some to steal.

Many live on the refuse of those better off, and nothing goes to waste. Ashes and dust emptied from the homes of the working and middle classes are sifted for any coin or valuable

Rag and Bone

Almost nothing goes to waste in Victorian society. For every scrap of cloth, old boot, bin of ashes, plate of table leavings, bit of paper, bent nail, rope end, meat dripping, candle stub, and broken window there is a working-class or poor person struggling to survive by collecting, re-selling or re-purposing it.

The dust swept up in Victorian homes, dust from the streets, from the coal fired stoves, lint brushed from coats, dried horse dung is all collected and resold by dustmen, who sift it looking for coins and valuables accidentally swept into the bin. The dust is then sold as soil for city gardens, or to brickworks to make brick.

Scavenging is how many among the poorest Londoners survive, and some even make their fortunes by carving out a niche in the economic landscape, and selling offal or rotting vegetables or the waste from a tannery.

Some hungry person is going to be aggressively protective of things which in the modern world would be considered worthless garbage. Collecting the scraps from kitchens staked out by another scrapsman might earn one a beating.



or salable item which might have been swept up. Refuse and every edible table scrap is either eaten or fed to an animal which could be eaten, or it is composted to make soil which could be sold to a gardener for a few pennies. Mudlarks walk barefoot in the slime and muck of the Thames at low tide, feeling with their toes for a bit of coal or rope or iron, knowing all the while that even the slightest cut could become septic and bring death in days. Prostitution is a constant temptation for men and woman alike, though women would find the most opportunity. While the upper classes like to pretend they are good Christians, in their hearts they love slumming and a threepenny upright against an alley wall.

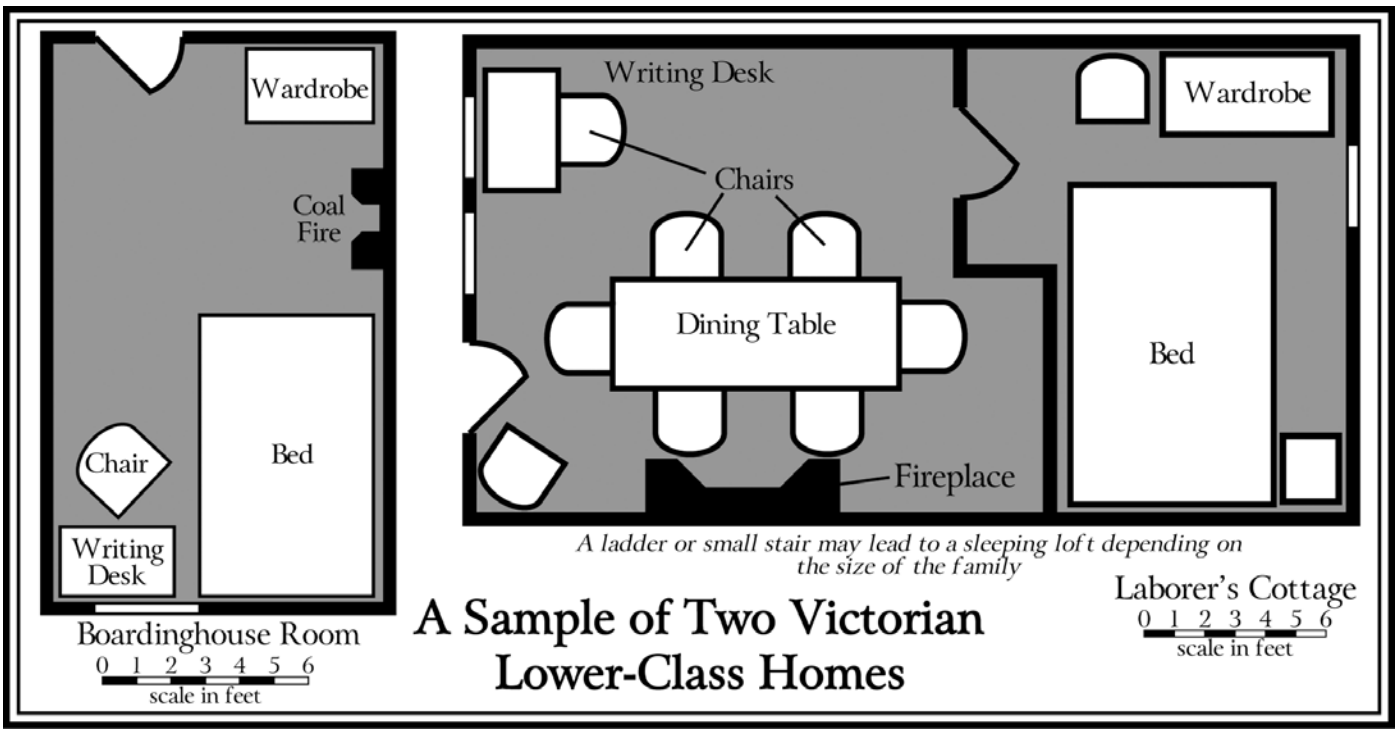
The only public institutions to aid you in this state are the workhouse and the orphanage. The workhouse seems intended to encourage the poor to find real occupations by being as miserable and soul-crushing as possible. For many, the streets are preferable. Orphanages are similarly bleak, often run by those of a particularly fanatical moral or religious bent. Few others have the energy to concern themselves with such as you.

Social Imperatives: The most basic: to survive, and help those close survive. Remaining unnoticed by one's betters is a safe strategy for many in the under classes, until they must make themselves known to beg charity or provide some small service, such as running an errand, delivering a note, or scraping mud off a boot. Pride is well and good, but eating is better. Many find in the end nothing too degrading, and few in similar straits will condemn. With so much focused on the immediate, personal friendships and keeping faith with friends and family are terribly important.

Common Motivations: Hunger. Fear of human predation, official persecution, and disease. Addiction to benzene-laced and faerie-touched gin is also a fairly common motivation; opium is far too expensive a vice for the under classes.

Lifestyle: Grim. Survival is a matter of scavenging, begging, borrowing, or stealing the necessities. Lives are short; in some areas, the average age of death is only twenty-one for the poorest of the poor. Some of this class travel, often just ahead of the law. In the country, poaching game is a common way of making it, and poaching has a long and, if not honorable, then accepted history. Many view it as different than simple thievery. With the only social support institution the workhouse—deliberately cruel, often corrupt, and only ever meeting the absolute minimum standards to keep inmates alive—living rough is usually preferable. Escaping desperate poverty is the thing of novels, but for the vast majority of those born to this poverty, or who fall into it by bad luck, bad decisions or bad habits, it's usually inescapable.

Colquhoun's Ranking: Seventh Class (paupers, gypsies, criminals, idle persons)



Occupations: Beggar, Thief, Street Prostitute/Rent Boy, Urchin, Mudlark, Sweep, Hawker, Gypsy.

View From The Basement: Those in the bottom ranks of the working classes are only just above this level of desperation, and the easiest for the under classes to understand and interact with, though those doing well might put on airs and forget where they came from. They'll have similar attitudes and background, and there is a certain amount of upward mobility into the working classes, as steady honest employment and permanent housing are at least conceivable.

The middle classes are almost an alien species: They live in fantastic luxury, with regular meals, a proper home (perhaps even a house), several suits of clothes, the money to take hacks or cabs or hansoms upon occasion. More particularly, outside their slumming or their charity, the middle classes for the most part simply doesn't want to know anyone this far down the line.

The upper classes are almost mythical, though they tread the same streets as everyone else (only in the better parts of town, where lower-class sorts just aren't wanted).

Working Class

Point of View: Every day, often from dawn to dusk (and later, when they install lighting, all night), your life is work. Grueling, physically destructive, often crippling, rarely interesting and done in unsafe, unsanitary, often toxic conditions. You work, and then you eat, sleep, and work some more. But you're making it. You're paying your bills. Your family eats. Perhaps just bread and a bit of pork or drippings, but they eat. You might have enough to see your children taught to read and do simple figures, if there isn't a ragged school close enough—but more likely you need them to work to help make ends meet.

You might work in a factory, a mill, or perhaps you have a skill or trade. Until 1860 they don't yet have a machine to do all the hundreds of little things that have to be done by hand every day. A noble's carriage means employment for three grooms, three stable boys, the blacksmith, the horse-doctor, the footmen, the coachman, and others. If you're in service, working in the household of someone better off, you exist in the shadow of their luxury, and are privy to their secrets and subject to their eccentricities. Your life is almost



entirely dictated by them—who and when you might marry (if ever), how you dress, act, speak, and even worship.

Life is hard, but you can easily see how it could be harder. The ever-present threat of ruin and starvation keeps you working, day in and day out. Soldiery and sailing are common occupations for men of this class, and the regimented life of the military services as well as the regular meals are strong inducements to join. If it's early in the century, you might be a veteran of the war with Napoleon; in the middle years it's America, Afghanistan, India or the Crimea. In the century's later years there are wars enough to see service on any continent on, above or below the Earth.

If you have a trade you work hard and seek to advance. You likely started out an apprentice, then became a journeyman able to seek independent work. Perhaps you can save enough to open your own establishment and take in apprentices of your own. You might, with diligence, work your way into the middle classes, rent a house on one of the rail lines outside London proper, even save enough for a trip to the seaside once a year.

But more than likely you're holding on by your fingernails, living one-atop-another in a single room, and struggling with debt and too many mouths to feed on too little money. But just look outside to the streets, and you see there's always farther you can fall.

Social Imperatives: As with the under classes, most attention is focused on immediate family and friends, and even with the growth of unions and other working-class organizations most working folk don't have the time, energy, or inclination to join. The driving imperative for those who work is to provide for those for whom they are responsible. Pride in working hard, in surviving without resorting to low or immoral practices such as thievery or prostitution, is very strong. The social consciousness of the middle class seeps down to the working classes to a certain extent—how they long for the middle class—though most are more concerned with getting by than keeping up appearances.

Working-class women *work*, and many are effective heads of household as well, with their menfolk traveling and seeking work where they may. Moralism and propriety are less of a concern than for the middle classes, but simple honesty, church-going, and keeping faith with family and friends are important.

Common Motivations: To survive, to maintain a good (or at least adequate) position, to provide, to avoid bank-breaking illness. Teetering as they do so close to the edge of poverty, many in the working class are very staid and unwilling to take risks. Seeking better opportunities or higher wages is difficult when any break in income can be disastrous. Ambitious members of the working classes might seek to better themselves and enter the middle classes, or might seek to organize their fellows to gain some benefit from factory owners or the government—but that kind of ambition can place all at risk.

Lifestyle: The majority of the working classes live in cramped and crowded conditions, many sharing the same minimal space. Families tend to be large and children are usually put to work. Child labor is almost unregulated at the century's start, and the children of the poor (many orphans, the result of the common epidemics and deaths in childbirth) are sent down the coal mines for daylong shifts, to haul coal on their hands and knees. But with the alternative of literally starving to death, many find the will to do this kind of work and force it upon their offspring. In a land which proudly decries the institution of slavery,

hundreds of thousands of its own free citizens suffer conditions worse than many true slaves.

Food is meager and basic. Most are so poor that pork fat is a luxury, and the tallow normally used for rushlights is eaten instead. Bread is the staple, with meat and fresh produce being minimal, let alone seasoning. Diseases are common, often sweeping away an entire family. Yet there is a remarkable acceptance of these conditions, and the growth of social consciousness and organization is slow, with many fits and starts. Until late in the century, workers serve at the pleasure of the establishment, and labor unions are viciously suppressed. Life is struggle, so take what meager pleasures you might in the society of family and friends.

Colquhoun's Rankings: Sixth Class (craftsmen, farmers, factory workers).

Fifth Class (shopkeepers, innkeepers, publicans, miscellaneous occupations and trades)

Ocupations: Coal Slinger, Police Officer, Costermonger, Carpenter, Groom, Junior Clerk, Servant.

View From The Bottom: Lurking right outside the door is the under class, and avoiding falling into such misery is a constant driving motivation. Many of this class understand that desperation, but few have the time and resources to do anything about it. All there is to do is accept one's lot.

The middle classes are close enough to inspire hope, perhaps, one day, to join their ranks and achieve some measure of security. There's also no small measure of envy. The middle class of the Victorian era begin to indulge in conspicuous consumption, conspicuous morality, conspicuous self-righteousness. You are expected to know your place when dealing with your betters and act the part. Many in the middle class are also among the employers of working class folk, and so you have the tensions of workers against management as well.

These tensions are magnified with the upper classes, who hold quite awesome power, and who seem unwilling to do much to alleviate the misery of common folk. Still, they own the manor houses, and the factories, and the mills, and the Parliament, so in the end, they are who working class people work for.

Middle Class

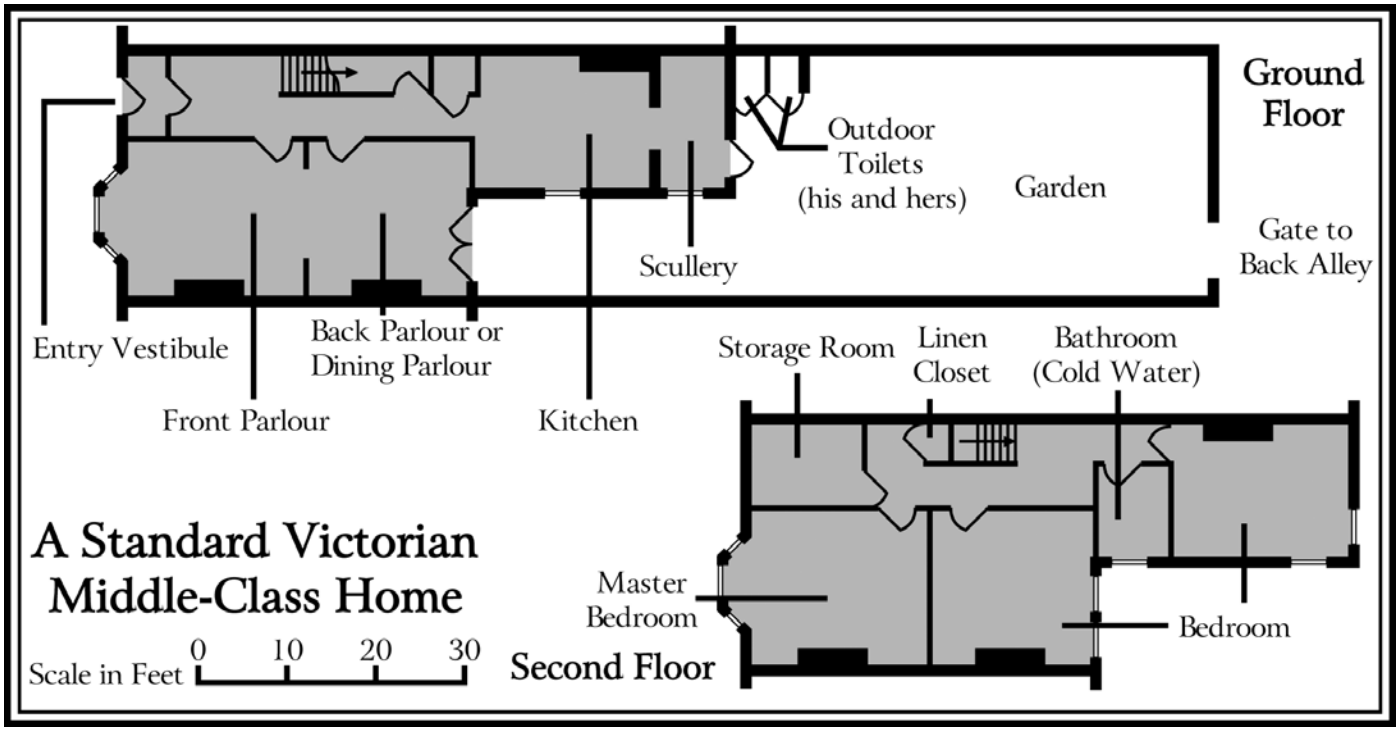
Point of View: Candide could have been speaking of this age when he wrote of "le meilleur des mondes possibles." It is indeed the best of all possible times, or at least it will be soon.

Progress! The coming wonders of the modern age are evidenced everywhere, and they have already transformed your life and improved it. You can now take the train from the office where you are a rising clerk to your modest home outside town, which affords you more space and luxury than would ever have been possible before rail so shrank the country. You have good employment and have been decently educated. You have modest but respectable clothing. If you are a man, you have opportunities to further yourself in the world, gaining reputation in your profession and more position and responsibility. In many ways, society caters to you and your wishes. The papers and music hall shows are written with your patronage in mind. You may have a club membership where you can enjoy the fraternity of other men. You may have the vote as well, allowing you to help decide the leaders of your country. Still, your reputation is everything, and a ruined reputation can mean loss of employment, loss of social position, and the loss of friends.

If you are a woman, then you have all the requirements to guard your reputation, but few of the compensatory freedoms. You are expected to manage the household, provide children and then care for them, and deal with the domestic and social life of the family. Your opportunities outside the house, respectable or otherwise, are limited until late in the century, though you might be well educated.

Male or female, you work hard. Money is a major concern, and careful management of money a virtue, but if you save and scrimp, a yearly vacation is not impossible (barring unexpected illness or death; the expense of a respectable funeral is not inconsiderable). Pride and optimism frequently marry in your heart, for you read the papers, and hear the news, and know yours is the greatest nation on the planet.

Social Imperatives: Keeping up appearances, maintaining respectability, and shepherding reputation



are the all-powerful imperatives of the middle classes. There is also a strong drive to avoid "trade," working in any sort of manual capacity. Until mid-century, a physician (who performed cursory physical exams and prescribed drugs) was more highly regarded than a surgeon (who performed actual medical interventions and surgery), because the physician had a proper gentleman's education, while a surgeon's workmanlike cutting open of sick people was too much like manual labor. And both were considered superior to an apothecary, who was *in trade*, actually selling drugs. Well-paid tradesman lurk towards the bottom of the middle-class social hierarchy, while those who work professional positions—barristers, clerks, investment bankers—are more highly regarded.

Common Motivations: Avoiding scandal, possibly at any cost. With the social imperatives driving the middle class to maintain their reputations in a highly watchful and highly judgmental society, people may lie, cheat, steal and murder to protect their dirty secrets. Seeking professional betterment and more financial security is also key, growing the family business, and pursuing the Victorian dreams of plenty.

Lifestyle: Not too bad, with a common effort made to appear to live better than one actually does. Work is still a major chunk of one's day, but there is time (and sometimes money) for leisure. The trains allow travel out of town fairly easily, and with literacy at high rates there is plenty of reading to be done with all of London's papers. There are theaters, museums, bicycling.

The main concern of many in the middle class is social standing and how to improve it. But if the pressure of keeping to the narrow path becomes tiring, there is always the escape of vice, prostitution, urban blood sports like ratting, and drink. So long as it remains modestly covert, only a boor would point it out.

Colquhoun's Rankings: Fourth Class (lesser clergy, surgeons, solicitors, teachers, ship owners, merchants, small scale manufacturers, shopkeepers, artists, builders, junior clerks)

Third Class (clergy, physicians, barristers, commodities traders, merchants, large-scale manufactures, bankers, those of independent income yet lacking title)

Occupations: Clerk, Surgeon, Physician, Trader, Military Officer, Bureaucrat, Police Detective, Shop Owner.

View From The Middle: The upper classes are almost within reach. All it takes is some wealth, and a son or daughter might even marry up. The working classes are to be commended for their hard service, and treated with respect

so long as they remain respectful, but the under classes are to be pitied, distrusted, or condemned. Those who strive and suffer misfortune might be worthy of some charity, but those who Will Not Work are parasitic. Possibly worse, the lower classes are seen as a breeding ground for that most pernicious and frightening of movements, Communism. In some obsessing minds the poor are seen as a mob hungry to destroy the prosperous way of life the middle classes enjoy. Many in the middle class see those less fortunate as moral failures, or embrace the pseudo-scientific concepts and proto-sociology which blame poverty on the impoverished. According to such "common sense" the poor are less evolved than the higher ranks, or cultivate their misery by failing to live properly.

Upper Class

Point of View: For those born to privilege (or those who bought it with new money), the age offers its greatest rewards. Those of the upper classes have achieved what the middle classes strive for: power and comfort enough to preclude entirely the need to work.

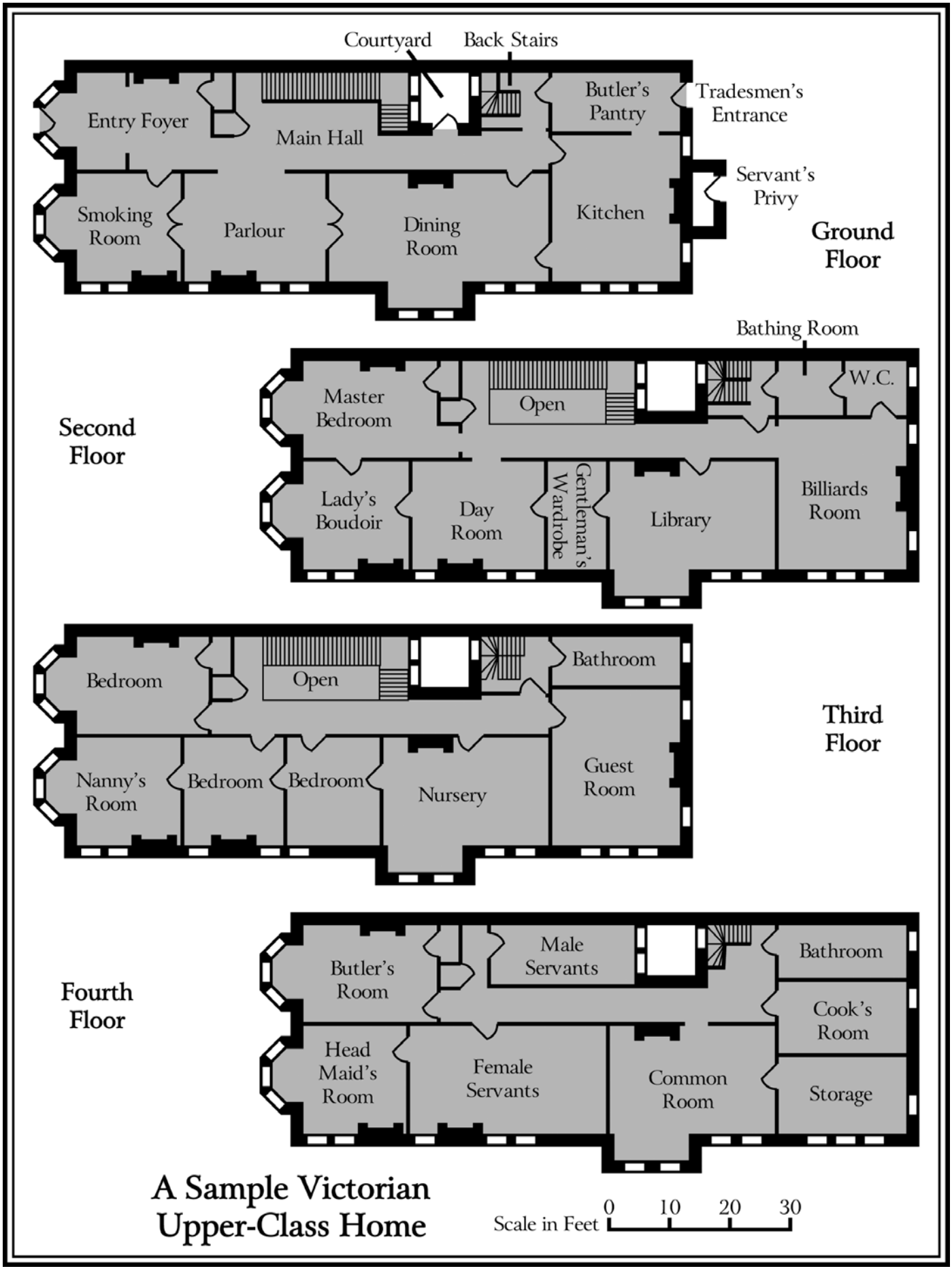
But you have plenty to occupy your time: charity (often in quite fashionable causes), military service, politics, service in the Church, positions on the many boards, trusts, councils, colleges, and committees that help the Empire manage its affairs. If you are titled, then your pedigree is likely long, and you've cousins in many aristocratic families. There are estates, though, that do not equate to wealth but provide only a form of sumptuous poverty.

Whether you inherit or not might be the source of much family intrigue. You're well educated, and unless newly-elevated you comport yourself with dignity as a matter of course. Honor is a major concern, and it's an older thing quite distinct from the simple propriety that obsesses the middle classes. Simply put, you are better than almost everyone else, and the exquisitely-detailed rankings, titles, and honors possessed by you and your fellows lets you know who is better than whom. You were taught to expect a certain deference from those of lower rank than you, and no matter how friendly your relationships with them, there will always be the great divide of social station between you.

While there is an enormous amount expected of the upper classes, there are also some protections enjoyed by those of these classes. A great deal is forgiven by one's lessers, ignored by one's equals, and frowned upon by one's superiors, all without any real sanction. Drink is a vice shared by almost everyone, and drunkenness is a viable excuse for almost any embarrassment. An apology begun with "I do hope you can forgive my boorish behavior, as I was well into my cups that evening" is acceptable even for truly egregious behavior.

There is a great deal of social pressure on the nobility to forgive, at least publicly, slights against them, if presented with a viable apology. Sometimes these apologies are negotiated by functionaries before being issued, so both parties can maintain face and be satisfied with the resolution. A person can find himself in disfavor for too vigorously pursuing recompense, even if they are the wronged party.

Social Imperatives: Duty. Duty to family, and duty to country. One's reputation isn't as fragile as that of the middle classes; wealth and station ensure that a great deal is overlooked by others, as it could be more damaging to call attention to the foibles of a peer than to commit those same acts oneself. Rather, those of the highest classes have distinct roles to fulfill, pre-scripted lives laid out by family patriarchs and matriarchs who oversee the common affairs of a noble house. There is also the lure of vice and excess, and of keeping with fashion and other occupations of the idle rich. During the Season—when Parliament is in session, and the aristocracy proceed from their country homes to their London homes—it is parties, balls, dinners, and all the functions of aristocratic sociability, with their undercurrents of ancient rivalries and feuds, and the fates of nations decided over sips of champagne. Thousands of working-class seamstresses toil through the night for weeks supplying the Season's fashionable garments for gentlemen and ladies. In sharp contrast to this pomp and dripping luxury, the Queen's household maintains an austerity which sets it apart from the merely noble, for Hers is a


Courtyard
Back Stairs
Entry Foyer
Main Hall
Butler's Pantry
Tradesmen's Entrance
Servant's Privy
Smoking Room
Parlour
Dining Room
Kitchen
Ground Floor
Bathing Room
Master Bedroom
Open
W.C.
Second Floor
Lady's Boudoir
Day Room
Gentleman's Wardrobe
Library
Billiards Room
Bedroom
Open
Bathroom
Third Floor
Nanny's Room
Bedroom
Bedroom
Nursery
Guest Room
Butler's Room
Male Servants
Bathroom
Cook's Room
Fourth Floor
Head Maid's Room
Female Servants
Common Room
Storage
A Sample Victorian Upper-Class Home
Scale in Feet
0
10
20
30

power which needs no ostentatious demonstration. Some of the highest classes follow Her example, but they are in the minority; dour souls find the Season unsociable.

Common Motivations: The upper classes seem often driven by power, either towards it or away from it. England, even in this democratic age, is still ruled in large part by the aristocracy, which remains viable and adaptable, and welcomes regular infusions of mercantile cash through marriage. Those born to title are frequently raised to take power, to rule, to seek influence in politics. A term in Parliament is a common occupation. Others with no head for politics, or no will for service, might deliberately avoid official responsibility, leaving financial affairs in the hands of men of business and enjoying the lifestyle that wealth and power, and a measure of freedom from consequence, can offer. Even Victoria's own son Edward Albert indulged in this aristocratic pastime, keeping low friends, frequenting the company of fallen women, and carrying on in a practically Georgian style. Victoria was not amused.

Colquhoun's Rankings: Second Class (those with large independent income and wealth who lacked title, those of lesser non-heritable title such as knight and baronet, country landowners)

First Class (those of hereditary title, those of the royal family, the highest church officials such as the archbishop)

Occupations: Politician, Owner of Mills or Factories, Ship Owner, Banker, Military Commander, Idle Rich, Socialite, Minister, Bishop.

View From The Top: From this social height the world is revealed and laid out. Few of the illusions of the age rise this far; it is a perspective which grants insight into the workings of the whole society, but also inspires cynicism and arrogance. The middle classes are vulgar and grasping, always chasing the social scraps thrown from your table like little eager terriers. Further down there are millions of people doing all sorts of things, and wealth and title carry the privilege of never having to know about any of it. The other classes are of little concern. It is members of one's own class which are the greatest sources of fascination and consternation. Within the upper class there are innumerable sub-divisions and layers of influence and prominence.

Social Expectations

How might a person of one class expect another to behave towards him? Everyone in Victorian society has a role to play, and breaking out of character causes a dissonance many find intolerable. But then, that's exactly what being a member of the Kerberos Club is about. Beginning on page 74 is a simple breakdown of possible reactions and expectations among the classes, as well as a quick-reference guide to manners and mores relevant to a few common situations, a sampling of some aspects appropriate to Social Class category, and a few simple role-playing hints to suggest how members of this class might be expected to act.

Day to Day

While the Kerberans may be dashing madly about, unearthing conspiracies and exploring dark unknowns, millions of Britons live out their entirely ordinary lives. And in truth, only the most exceptional individuals can ever escape the daily mundanity of the busy modern world. Here's a quick primer on the basics.

Money

The British monetary system during the period is simultaneously baffling to outsiders and a source of intense national pride. The basic unit of the currency is the **pound sterling (denoted "£"),** which is broken into 20 **shillings (denoted "s"),** which are themselves broken into 12 **pence (denoted "d").** Amounts of money can be written in a number of ways, typically "£/s/d." For example, £5/4s/4d means five pounds, four shillings and four pence. If only noting a cost of shillings and pence such as 3s/6d, one could say "three and six". Here are some points on how this monetary system is used:

"Bob" is common slang for a shilling. "Four Bob" means four shillings.

Banknotes (paper money) are issued by the Bank of England and used for amounts of £5 and up to as much as £1,000 in small numbers.

A **sovereign** is a gold coin worth £1, and is the standard unit of value to represent one pound.

A **guinea** (noted "g" or "gn") is a gold coin worth 1 pound, 1 shilling (£1/1s). While you pay men of trade in sovereigns, you pay gentlemen in guineas. They pass the shilling to their clerks and assistants, keeping the pound.

A **crown** is a silver coin worth 5 shillings, but the much more common **half-crown** is worth 2s/6d.

Silver **groats** are worth 4 pence, and a copper penny is worth 1 pence. The farthing is worth 1/4 pence, and the half penny worth 2 farthings. There is even a half farthing, worth 1/8 of a penny, which might allow you to purchase a particularly dubious bun or sausage from a vendor.

Most people never see paper money, and in fact most never see anything larger than a crown in their whole lives.

Coinage is kept in a purse or wallet (essentially the same thing), though those carrying large sums or a personal book of cheques might also have a billfold or pocket portfolio.

With most cash being coinage, large sums are *heavy*. Most working-class folk rarely have more than a shilling in mixed coin, and a middle-class individual rarely has more than a pound or two. Even the wealthy carry no more than a few pounds in coin; for the most part, the wealthy rarely handle large sums of cash, making their purchases on credit and settling the accounts monthly, quarterly or yearly. Or never, if their titles outweigh their purses.

What Things Cost

Wages and buying power vary a great deal during the century, as changes in demographics and employment as well as national productivity change how much people are paid, and how much they can buy with those wages. At late-century, here's a rough guide to what various goods and services cost, given in terms of the difficulty of a Resources skill roll.

Difficulty	Monetary Approximation	Examples
Fantastic (+6) (E)	£500,000	Impressive country estate, Aero Ship
Great (+4) (E)	£50,000	Modest country home, rocket glider
Fair (+2) (E)	£5,000	Tractor carriage, mechanized gun carriage
Fantastic (+6)	£1,000	Fine carriage, automotive
Great (+4)	£100	Common carriage
Good (+3)	£50	Good horse
Fair (+2)	£10	Servant (one year), horse
Average (+1)	£1	Middle-class suit, Electrophorus firing piece
Mediocre (+0)	1 crown	Silk hat, pair of boots, flannel shirt, tea (1/2 lb.)
Terrible (-1)	1 half-crown	Cheap beer (pint), bread (one loaf), cheap book
Poor (-2)	1 groat or less	Candles, shirt collar, questionable vegetables

Being Under Class



An under-class person might typically…

…***Collect a debt*** with physical force if it isn't repaid in the expected fashion. If one is unable to execute such threats, then there are men more than willing to wield the cosh in your name for a percentage of the debt collected.

…***Pursue an affair*** as openly as desired, with the only worry being angering someone hurt by it. But with many women of this class resorting to casual prostitution to make ends meet, there is a pragmatic attitude to how one's organs of generation should be employed.

…***Answer an insult*** with a sharp comeback, or violence. It's a bawdy sort of a society this far down, and insults which would result in duels to the death among the Quality are bandied about casually and with little malice. But someone can always decide to take things the wrong way, particularly with the poisonous quality of the liquor available to those of little means.

…***React to tragedy*** openly and with little restraint. Wailing, rending of garments, and all the other loud rituals of grief are common.

…***Expect from others*** mostly bad things. Living hand-to-mouth teaches people that when pressed, humanity is a bitter, savage animal. Loyalty is expected from family and particular friends, and betrayal of personal loyalty is a grievous hurt. Among criminals, betrayal to the authorities is frequently punished by death.

Manners

Something like prison-yard etiquette rules many interactions. Respect a person's space, avoid eye contact unless seeking conversation or confrontation, and defer completely to those with power to avoid trouble from them or to get an advantage from them.

Be invisible to those of quality except when approaching them in an acceptable manner to beg or to offer some meager service.

Avoid putting on airs—pretending to manners or prospects better than your station—as this is roundly considered rude and contemptuous of your fellows in poor circumstances. Contempt from those of higher station is to be expected. It is the nature of the classist society; but from those who could be considered equals, it is insulting.

Kindness is rarely repaid, but there is still virtue in what small gestures you might make.

Conversation is coarse and bawdy. No topic is prohibited, and language is foul and filled with contemptuous slang.

Role-Playing Hints

Carve out what dignity you can, and define the line you will not cross. Then test your character against this decision when desperation drives you to question your resolve.

Be wary. Your world is full of opportunists, sharp dealers, predators, and tricksters who would take what little you have to further their own small advantages. From the upper classes a measure of pity is possible, but equally likely are contempt and condemnation.

You are desperately hungry most of the time (or at least you remember a time when you were desperately hungry). Something as simple as where your next bite of bread will come from can occupy much of your mind.

Everyone has it hard, and public assistance is meager at best. Survival has taught you self-reliance and mistrust. The world is not kind, Progress cures nothing, and nobody of means understands your plight.

Crushing poverty marks the body as well as the mind. Chronic complaints of lungs, joints, throat, sinuses, skin, all affect how you hold yourself, speak, and interact. When speaking in character, consider the hardships your character has suffered.

Example Aspects

A Chimneysweep's View of London
"I'll cut you up a treat, I will!"
Wanted Criminal
Uncommon Street Urchin
Gypsy of Ill Repute

Being Working Class



A working-class person might typically…

…***Collect a debt*** by issuing an invoice or letter describing the debt, then by asking for it in person, possibly making such requests *physically memorable*. If all else fails, the debt might be pursued in the courts, but the backlog and waiting makes this an unattractive prospect.

…***Pursue an affair*** by keeping those who might be personally angered by it ignorant of the affair. Secret polygamy wasn't unknown, especially with traveling tradesman, who might have wives scattered here and there. Working-class women also sometimes found themselves with multiple husbands (common-law and ceremonially wed). Others of this class may approve or disapprove, but the compulsion to keep to the moral and upright (and *be seen* doing it) is much less serious than in the middle classes.

…***Answer an insult*** by answering it back, with insulting comeback or physical escalation. In many quarters violence is always a waiting possibility, right under the surface, and if the drink has been flowing it is not far under the surface at all.

…***React to tragedy*** with open sorrow, grief, and anger as appropriate. In the slums of London it isn't unknown for mobs enraged by grief to drag those guilty (or suspected) of causing tragedies out into the street for beatings and worse.

…***Expect from others*** that they mind their own business, stay civil, and keep their word. But living hard also teaches one to expect opportunism, shady deals, and predation.

Manners

Be polite to your fellows. Lightening the mood with humor and conversation, but defer respectfully to those of higher station, as they can often make or break your fortunes.

Don't act above your station, but not beneath it either—work offers a small measure of respectability.

Mind your own business. In tight living conditions, one atop another, any privacy is precious.

Safeguard your reputation as a worker. You don't have much cause to worry about middle class-style scandal (unless you're in service in a middle or upper class home), but you only work so long as employers trust your reputation as a good worker.

Role-Playing Hints

Speak casually to those of equal or lesser station, but humble yourself before those of greater station (it is what they usually expect).

Lace speech in character with as much slang and dialect as you can manage.

If working all day in a trade or labor, you will be tired and weary much of the time. You might seek to convey this with body language or tone of voice.

Your reputation in your profession will go a long way to determining if you work or not. Professional pride, self promotion, and references are all quite important.

Endure. Life is hard, and no one who works all day has it easy. Resolution in the face of crushing, life-long labor is a hallmark of working-class attitudes, and considered quite virtuous. A poor attitude towards work is roundly condemned by everyone from paupers to princes. Misery hardly matters by comparison.

Example Aspects

By the Sweat of My Brow
Respectable to a Fault
Jovial Dustman
"'Ello, 'ello, 'ello! Wot's all this, then?"
Born in a Factory

Being Middle Class



A middle-class person might typically…

…***Collect a debt*** by referring the matter to a solicitor, or pursue it in person with carefully-worded letters. If the moneys are not forthcoming after reasonable steps are taken, then the matter might be taken to the courts.

…***Pursue an affair*** quietly and with great discretion, lest reputations suffer, employment be threatened, and neighbors gossip. Men have a certain leeway, but middle-class women are expected to be saints. Even an unjust accusation can wound a reputation badly.

…***Answer an insult*** with anger and harsh words, or by emulating the rigid dignity of the upper classes and answering with icy contempt.

…***React to tragedy*** with an effort to keep strong emotions under control, but without the upper-class taboo about seeming publicly out of control. Victorian men could weep openly in joy or sorrow and not be considered unmanly for it.

…***Expect from others*** proper deportment, civility, and professionalism—as well as nosiness, rumor-mongering, and constant judgment.

Manners

A formality of address is often used, even within a marriage (or at least when in company).

One's public comportment is always observed and noted. Act accordingly, with care, dignity and forethought.

Be polite to equals and lessers, and deferent to superiors.

Avoid outbursts or excessive public excitement. Strangers do not wish to see you in such a state.

Do not speak of private matters—sex, childbirth, religion, insanity, intimate medical complaints, and the like—with strangers if at all possible.

Role-Playing Hints

The divide between public and private is strongest for characters of this class. Keep in mind which theater in which you are performing when deciding how your character acts.

When people talk about "Stuffy Victorians" they're talking about the idealized middle class of the period. While these stereotypes are pretty inaccurate, you can't go far wrong with liberal doses of prudishness, moralism and judgmentalism.

Arrogant politics and ostentatious patriotism are also middle-class habits. Patriotism is common even in cynics, and often quite powerful. For the ever-striving middle classes, showing off that patriotism is important. For many, being British is better than being anything else, and damn anybody who says different.

Optimism is the middle class's greatest vice, the idea that change is good, Progress better, and that the Future will be brighter, better and more exciting.

Social climbing is a major motivation; making contact with one's betters and securing some favor or influence among them is a big score.

Maintaining a respectable lifestyle is expensive. Guard your money wisely.

Example Aspects

On the Brink of a Better Life
Stiff Upper Lip, and All That
Respected Harley Street Surgeon
"I'll be at the club, dear"
Frustrated Banker

Being Upper Class



An upper-class person might typically…

…***Collect a debt*** by passing the matter to a solicitor or secretary, if the issue is a serious one, but cannot be seen to pursue a debt too hawkishly. Debts among the upper classes are often matters of honor (such as gambling losses) rather than ones of serious financial hardship, and social pressures see most of these resolved satisfactorily. Matters of business are delegated to people paid to handle such things.

…***Pursue an affair*** with discretion (if a lady, with *utmost* discretion). In a matter of the heart, letters might be written; in a matter of the loins, assignations arranged. To a point, it is rude and unseemly to point out the affairs of others of quality, but those of lower classes would happily print such scandal in the newspapers, threats of lawsuits or influence notwithstanding.

…***Answer an insult*** with a level of outrage appropriate to the class of the person issuing it. Those of this rank do not take insults without answer, unless it is to their advantage to do so. An insolent challenge by a bounder of the lowest class might be met by having footmen set the lout right with a beating, while an insult from a tradesman would be met with angry words and an effort to see the man denied the custom of any friends or relatives. From a middle-class person, it might be answered with icy contempt, anger, or dismissal. From one of equal class, overt hostility and social and economic antagonism; duels are so gauche, after all. From one of superior class, rigid dignity and reserve.

…***React to tragedy*** with reserve and dignity. Emotions of grief and sorrow are private things, to be reserved for only the most intimate company.

…***Expect from others*** deference and respect. From equals, courtesy and friendly society. From underlings, obedience and unobtrusiveness. From the lowest of the low, distance, unless contact is specifically invited (such as if slumming or doing good works).

Manners

You must have a firm grasp of courtly ritual and custom, dancing, and party etiquette.

Maintain a polite but aloof attitude when dealing with those beneath you, and an appropriately respectful demeanor with equals.

The woman leads in social situations, offering her hand, inviting men to smoke, gamble for real sums, discuss topics of genuine significance rather than make small talk, accepting or declining one's attempts to make an introduction.

Ignore the foibles and failings of others of the same class, especially superiors, lest shame be brought to their families and their reputations be hurt.

Keep abreast of the rankings of other gentry, so one knows to whom to defer, and from whom to expect deference. Being ignorant of the protocol of a situation can lead to unfortunate embarrassment.

Role-Playing Hints

Maintain dignity at all costs. Restrain strong emotions, speak formally even when angry, keep silent if an explanation will make you seem foolish or threaten your family's or friends' reputations.

Assume your lessers know their place, and be appropriately outraged when they do not.

Try an upright posture when speaking in character, to lend your words a stiffness and deliberateness.

Act with chivalry (if male), or with passivity and acceptance of such attention (if female)—noting of course, that as a Kerberan you need not debase yourself if you decide it isn't to your advantage.

Keep social ramifications in mind when making big decisions. Will your course of action damage you or your family's reputation? Irreparably? And if so, do you care?

Example Aspects

The Idle Rich
A Gentleman's Gentleman
All Title and No Estate
Born to Privilege
Former Commander in the Crimean

Employment and Pay

Tradesman are typically paid by the job or by the week (if they work for someone else), and when advertising for such positions in the papers, the salaries are listed in weekly sums. Professional positions have the yearly salary listed, and middle-class workers are paid yearly, quarterly, monthly, or weekly depending on the particular arrangement.

The wealthy have their money mostly from investments in "The Funds" (government-backed bonds and other secure low-interest funds rarely offering more than 3% return a year), or by rents and productivity on the lands they owned. As the century progressed, political postings began to pay a salary, but being a military officer continued to frequently *cost* a soldier money, as officers (inevitably gentlemen, barring certain exigencies of war) were expected to live to certain standards, supplement their unit's budget with their own purse, and generally pay for the privilege of risking life and limb for Country and Queen.

Sound, Sight, Touch and Smell

Victorian London is a city alive with activity, noise, and stink. Bathing is a luxury, and most Londoners can't afford to more than wash face and hands daily, taking a bath no more than weekly (if that). Clothing is heavy and layered by mid-century, and human bodies tend to ripen to a full bloom of odor. Dental hygiene is similarly dubious, resulting in bad breath for almost everyone. Those who can afford it liberally douse themselves with colognes, rose water, and scented oils for the hair. The style of applying Macassar oil to men's hair leads to the counter-style of embroidered antimacassars to drape over chair-backs and prevent the oils ruining the upholstery.

Every neighborhood in London, every street even, has a unique smell. Near the Thames, there is the unmistakable reek of low tide, with its sewage and factory runoff mixing with the natural odor. In the North, the stench of the cattle yards and slaughter-houses. To the East, the exotic smells of the docks and cargos from across the world blend with the miasma of tanneries, chemical factories, and burning coal gas.

For many, light comes from rushlights and tallow candles which smell of burned sheep fat when lit. Beeswax candles have no odor, but are prohibitively expensive and onerously taxed. The gaslight which comes mid-century brightens the age, but the gas made from heating coal has its own stink.

Victorian industry is a noxious thing, and there are no environmental laws to restrain factory owners from dumping their waste and fetid slurry right into the river or down a public cesspit. The streets are full of horses and horse-drawn carts, and all those horses produce thousands of tons of manure every year.

Which brings us to sanitation: Until the Bazalgette sewer works of the late 1850s, all the waste washed away by the new flush toilets goes into the old community cesspools, or directly into the Thames. In 1858, an unusually hot summer without rain leads to the Great Stink, a putrid cloud so horrible that Parliament cancels its session and vacates the city for the countryside.

London is *noisy*. Stone paved streets are pounded by iron horseshoes and cartwheels relentlessly all day and night to produce a roaring din. The river is alive with boat traffic, with signal horns, shouts, and warning calls. Hawkers and costermongers shout the virtues of their wares. Pedestrians raise their voices to be heard over the noise. Criers shout the news, selling their papers. Low-class folk air their private business in the streets with screams and shouts. Children run everywhere, yelling and weaving around pedestrians and through road traffic. Conversations are shouted between buildings from open windows.

Thousands of dogs bark. Thousands of cats yowl. At every hour, bells ring out from all the churches proud enough to possess them. It really makes it easy to understand why those with means spend so much of the year in their country estates, and why the middle class is so keen to save for a quiet vacation on the seaside.

Everything is gritty from the dust ground from the paving stones by cartwheels, and when it rains, it becomes a sticky grey mud. Thousands of coal fires thicken the air with soot, so by the end of an evening out, white garments are gray. All the buildings are blackened by accumulated smoke. London's naturally foggy atmosphere becomes yellowed and poisonous, and so thick you can't see someone an arm's length away. When the fog is this bad, lamps burn night and day to light homes and places of business, and Strange things walk the murky streets.

The residue of evaporating faerie creatures employed in London factories late in the century contributes to this atmosphere, adding weird incongruous noises, smells, sights, and presences to the fog, the ghosts of the Fae creatures worked to discorporation. In 1890, William Job Collins (physician, obstetrician, and member of the Royal Commission on Vaccination) commissions a survey of birth defects in the greater London area, and wrote a scathing monograph on the effects of such emissions on the health of the population, and the unborn. He cataloged and photographed several hundred examples of children stillborn and, sometimes more horrible, born live, who were clearly marked by exposure to faerie influences. Some were born like tiny old men, arthritic with eyes whitened by cataracts. Others had inhuman features, beast and baby mixed in the womb. Perhaps most frightening, those born with that inhuman cast of perfection to their features, and soulless parasitic minds. He was elected to the London County Council for St Pancras and later became its chairman, and used his position and influence to push for regulation of the use of faerie labor within London's borders.

Diaries

Victorians are prodigious diarists, recording their daily lives in sometimes intimate detail. Paper was cheaper than ever before, and literacy and education more common, but still most journals record the lives of the middle and upper classes, as they had the leisure and money to pursue such an affection. Some journals, such as those of Arthur Munby—solicitor and member of the ecclesiastical council—offer a window into the lives of the poor and working classes. It isn't uncommon for journals to be published or used to write memoirs, and the threat of such publication was often the leverage in cases of blackmail, if they might reveal indiscretions or crimes. Among the collections housed in the Kerberos Club are the journals of its members, there to provide reference and insight or just a good scandalous read.

Some Victorians keep private diaries, intended for their eyes only, and more carefully considered journals which might be made public one day. The Queen Herself keeps a journal of her thoughts and feelings, and even as She becomes so seemingly inhuman over the Strange years they remain filled with her sensitive observations, inner conflicts, and joys.

Letters and the Mail

Early in the century, handwritten letters are the only practical means of long-distance communication, and the postal service works heroically to see letters delivered across Britain by coach. It's expensive, however, so people write small or "crossed," turning a page sideways and writing across their now-vertical lines. The recipient pays. In London local mail is cheap; since the 17th century it has cost a penny.

With the coming of rail, a national Penny Post is established in 1840 and extended to the whole empire in 1889. In 1890, British postal aero ships see the mail delivered anywhere in the world in a shorter time then it would have taken a letter to travel by coach from London to Aberdeen in 1801. The Telegraph cuts into letter writing somewhat, but it isn't until the transmission of voice over telegraph lines (via Babbage Computational's vocagraphic encoder) that written correspondence begins to wane.

Newspapers and Magazines

All the classes of London have an insatiable appetite for news and the written word. Reading to oneself or aloud to friends and family is a principle form of amusement, and so London was served by dozens of newspapers and magazines, ranging from the respectable to the scandalous, the literary to the sensational. Papers often print morning and evening editions, with special runs made for major news events between regular printings. Magazines are often illustrated; some are printed cheap and sold for a penny, and filled with violence, titillation, and rehashed plots and characters.

Many of the greatest authors of the period, Charles Dickens for example, are also journalists and essayists, and standards of journalistic ethics and truthfulness are pursued as part of the new journalism. But in contrast to this ethic, newspapermen such as W.T. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette* make their fortunes with dubious stories of sex, scandal, and moral outrage. Magazines sometimes mix news, essay, illustration, and serialized fiction.

Newspapers publish large confidential advertisements and agony columns in which the secret social life of London might be laid bare—wives seeking errant husbands, lovers communicating with coded phrases, missing items, items found, offers of employment or services, legal announcements, people seeking childhood friends or loves, and sometimes Stranger things. People of means sometimes pay to have their opinions published in a paper or magazine, if a submitted letter or editorial would not be printed.

Transport

The coming of the rails in the middle years of the century makes Britain dramatically smaller. Distances formerly taking days of hard travel by horse or cart can now be covered in hours of relative comfort at a price most middle-class individuals can easily meet. London grows, sprawling out along the rail lines, with formerly country townships and villages growing into true suburbs, and merging with the Greater London metropolis late in the century.

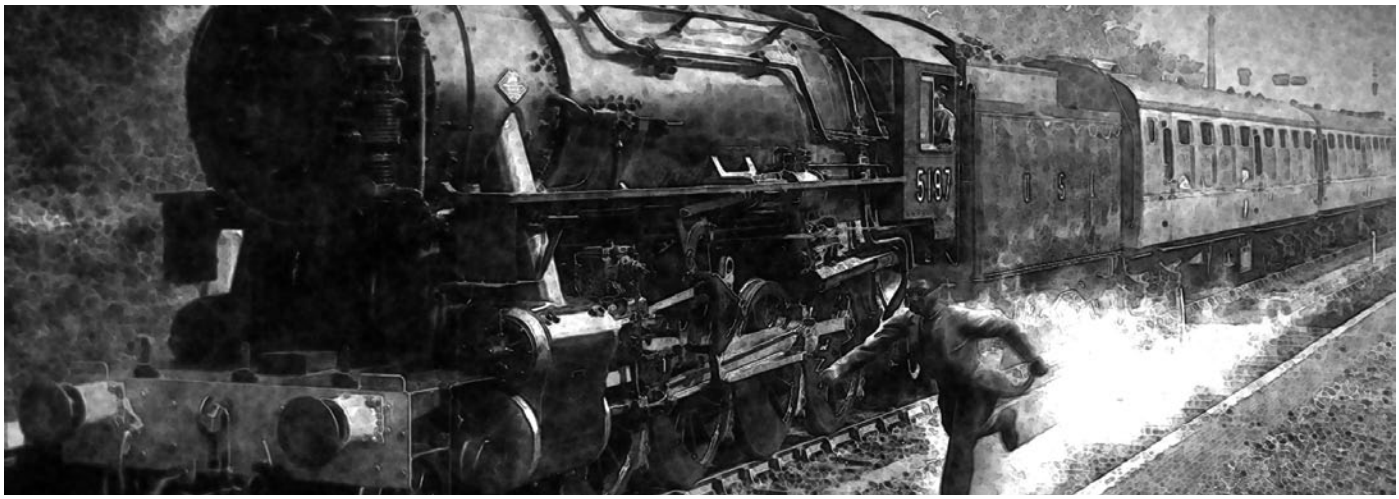
Over shorter distances the horse-drawn cart is still dominant through the middle of the century. However, it begins to be ushered off the historical stage by the various automobiles sold in the last two decades: early machines using miniature steam engines, then internal-combustion engines burning coal gas or petroleum derivatives, and then hybrid electric/combustion machines based on Zénobe Gramme's direct-current dynamo. These later machines, initially the prize of the wealthy and faddish, are quickly adopted by London's municipal services and taxi companies. The initial investment is greater but they run cheaper than the alternatives.

All through the century, some form of private carriage for hire is a common sight in London. The hack is replaced by the cab, by the hansom, by the automotive, by the electro-automotive. By century's end the horse is employed only when an automotive won't serve. Congestion is relieved somewhat with the expansion of the underground rail in the 1880s by the the Tesla Bore Machine, which pulverizes stone and liquifies earth with rotating magnetic fields.

International passage is most commonly made in sailing ships early in the century, then steamers. The magnificent aero ships remain the only airborne vessels large enough to carry enough passengers and cargo to make air travel economical.

In 1885 White Star Lines acquires the first aero ship in private ownership, the *Skylark*, and begins using it as a luxury cruise line and high-priority cargo vessel. Smaller and less robust than the aero ships of Her Majesty's Navy, it can bear fifty tons of cargo and two hundred guests in supreme luxury. It is followed by a sister-ship of the same class called *Hanover.*

Several competing firms add aero ships to their fleets over the next half decade, running some at a loss for the prestige alone. Aero ships lose some of their appeal with the fate of White Star Line's new flagship vessel the *Titanic*, created as the first of a new class of aero ships and spurred



by intense competition with its rival the Cunard Line.

The *Titanic* is lost while making passage though a dense Arctic storm, its hydrogen cells ignited by lightning and its design proven flawed. The tragedy casts doubts on the wisdom of the great flying beasts, and the rise of rocket-powered flying vehicles makes them impractical for military action. They remain somewhat popular for passenger and cargo transport—until air piracy makes them too expensive to operate through the depression of the 1930s.

Politics

British politics over the Victorian Century is shifting sand, and it's a wonder such a stable and powerful empire could be built upon it. Early in the century the main political power blocks are the Tories—old-money country aristocrats supporting a strong monarch and Her divine rights as well as a strong central Church of England—and the Whigs, new-money aristocrats who want the economic freedom to make their fortunes. Neither party has an especially oppositional moral stance, and both are firmly in the hands of the moneyed elite. The Tories start out in control, but lose Parliament after electoral reforms clean up some of the endemic corruption in the voting system.

When the Whigs take over, they promptly start to factionalize and split, support the Low Church (or evangelical movement) and pursue a reformist agenda—in part to win the votes of the recently enfranchised. The Whigs become known as the Liberal party as they push reforms intended to give them economic freedom, and when the Tories reclaim power later in the century they are called Conservatives. These two main parties are just general categories however, and a dozen or more small parties often hold the balance of power. Victorians take their politics quite seriously. Fathers are estranged from sons because of it, friendships broken, duels fought.

Victoria isn't simply a figurehead in this system. Neither party supports Her agenda fully. The Conservatives are too hidebound and concerned with tradition, the Liberals too willing to abandon useful tradition in favor of immediate economic gain or reforms. In Her famous address to Parliament on the eve of the Indian Mutiny, She creates a new political power bloc which crosses over the main division of the Tories and Whigs. The Royal Liberal party (or the Marks, so-called for those She marks with Her stigmatic blood that day in Parliament) embraces social and economic reforms.

Victoria recognizes that the greatness of Her Empire is owed to strong trade and Her people's freedom to excel. But the party also demands a powerful Sovereign willing to use Her Reserve Powers and Prerogatives as She deems fit. Meeting with the Queen Herself is often enough to sway people to Her cause, and one of the reasons She and Gladstone are so at odds is the Grand Old Man's unwillingness to spend much time in Her presence less he be swayed to abandon his Liberal agenda.

Religion

Religion and politics are an old married couple by the time of Victoria's rule. They know each other, hate each other, love each other, and finish each other's sentences. The Anglican Church is almost an apparatus of the state, its high officials such as the Archbishop of Canterbury are all appointed by the Crown; as much as Parliament would like to have a say in matters, Victoria has Her own ideas about who should govern the Church of England. But membership in the Anglican church isn't compulsory, and there are as many abstainers, agnostics, nondeists, evangelicals, nonconformists, and Catholics as Anglicans.

Victoria's own eventual cult divides the Anglican church. In England, Her shrines appear in a little over half the Anglican churches by 1865, but are very rare in Ireland, and only somewhat more common in Scotland and Wales. But for the most part, the old religious wars, purges, and persecutions are a thing of the past—the Victorians have plenty to base their purges and persecutions on as it is.

Sex, Love and Marriage

The Victorians love sex; they simply must not talk about it. All pretension to prudishness or the idealization of feminine purity must stand side by side with upwards on 50,000 working prostitutes in London alone. Prostitution isn't made illegal until late in the century, though it is regulated at various points by hygiene laws and acts banning child prostitution and the operation of brothels.

Most prostitutes work the streets, and there is always ready business. In the East End rookeries, the life of a poor prostitute is hellish and grim, but the life of a West End prostitute, a companion to gentlemen, can be quite lucrative and glamorous.

As with much of the age it is a great double-standard, as respectable men can purchase the services of prostitutes, but respectable women may never be seen alone in the company of a man not their husband or brother without risking the ruin of reputations and prospects.

Early on, during the Regency, things were much laxer, but Victoria's example of purity and fidelity inspire the middle classes to an almost comical level of emulation. As is so often the case, though, the working and poor classes worry much less about such things. Families tend to be quite large, and birth control minimal, in or out of marriage.

Homosexuality between men is technically illegal but widely tolerated, to the point of a thriving homosexual "scene" in London. Among the upper classes homosexuality is tactfully ignored unless (as Oscar Wilde discovered) an intolerant relative seeks prosecution. Among the lower classes it is variously viewed with disgust, contempt, or indifference, individual to individual. If a man has done his duty to family and society, married, sired children, then his affairs outside of marriage were his own business. Homosexuality between women is not illegal, and hardly registers on the public consciousness, though it is considered distasteful when it is thought of at all.

Marriage is first and foremost a business transaction, arranged or at least approved by family interests to make sure the engagement is not beneath either of the couple, is financially or socially advantageous, and can be made without any conflict with previous marriages or engagements. Engagements can be considered binding legal contracts with penalties for breaking them, and impending marriages must be announced in the local parish to allow those with objections (such as "I married this no-good bounder last year in Birmingham") to be aired. Alternately, if the couple be well-off, license for the wedding could be purchased from the Church, and may be signed by the archbishop.

But love, what of love? The journals and letters of the Victorians reveal passionate romantic love at work among all classes and all stations in life. From the flirtation of a maid's suitors (though they be banned from visiting by her

terms of employment), to the Queen's own dalliances with Mr. Brown after her estrangement from Prince Albert in 1861 leaves her cold and wounded at heart, it is an age of tragic love, doomed affairs, and countless novels milking them for all the pathos they could provide.



South of Gibraltar, All Men are Bachelors

There are always exceptions.

Extraordinary individuals who violate custom and propriety with style can get away with much, as can those traveling beyond the reach of British morality. There is a sense of "what happens abroad, stays abroad," and many Victorian world travelers consider the Grand Tour to be one of brothels and drinking establishments.

Women might take foreign lovers while traveling, only to resume their expected roles of chastity and propriety when they returned home. Men are given even more leeway (as usual), and can get away with anything up to and including murder so long as it never follows them home.

Manners

The Victorians are not as uptight and rigid as the period's etiquette books (or the next generation of social critics) make them out to be. A good rule of thumb is that if something is rude now, then it was rude then; what we consider polite in the modern would do fairly well in Victorian London.

The more elaborate rules and social rituals are the purview of the well-off, because only they have the luxury of indulging in such social theater. The public discussion of certain topics, especially in mixed company, is a fairly strong taboo, for instance. One does not discuss sex around ladies. Unless, of course, you are both members of the Kerberos Club.

A gentleman is expected to behave with chivalry towards a woman: walking on the street-side of the sidewalk so as to tread the filthier path, opening doors, and refraining from smoking unless invited to do so by any ladies present. Women are expected to act with deference to men, and to avoid confrontation when possible. For women and men of the middle and higher classes, delaying gratification is considered quite noble. It is an age of letter-writing, and in correspondences one can read passionate affairs carried out across vast distances by euphemism and private code. For those who can afford it, it is an age of subtlety.

Covering One's Nakedness

Through the years of Victoria's reign, fashion and dress evolve and change dramatically, and enumerating the minutiae would require a volume larger than the one you hold. Fashion in the world of the Kerberos Club also diverges somewhat from established history, following generally similar lines but with some dramatic departures. Faerie cloth such as the moonwool and emberlit muslin coming from the mills of New Birmingham offers the dressmakers and fashionistas of the later decades truly astonishing choices of material.

The Channel Tunnel and the growing civilian aero ship fleet also open trade, bringing more exotic influences and styles as well as the fabrics to sew them. Victoria's own influence cannot be discounted, either. Her persistent marble-skinned youth and cool reserve create an endearing popularity for severity in fashion, whitening cosmetics, expressions to mimic the monarch's, and clothing of exquisite

but subdued cloth cut in simple unadorned patterns.

But the influence of the French, the Germans, the Russians, any of Britain's allies and enemies, is also felt, with a strange inverse relationship. Watching the streets of London, or riding in Hyde Park on a sunny Sunday, one tends to see the fashions of Britain's enemies more on display than those of its allies.

In the early decades of the century, before the new severity becomes the norm, the fashion is quite risqué. Dresses of muslin are often dampened to make them cling, and undergarments are sometimes optional. As heavier fabrics come into favor, more structured dresses become the norm. By the 1830s, figure-hugging, highly-tailored gowns are the fashion.

For men, the fashions change with less drama but more steady progress. Knee-britches and stockings are gradually replaced with trousers, influenced by military uniforms. Styles in hair, hair length, and facial hair change rapidly, and a fashionable gentleman can be recognized as much by his grooming as his clothing. Cosmetics are used by both sexes early in the century but fall quickly out of favor with men and become more subtle for women.

By mid-century the fashion for corsets becomes quite pronounced, and both men and women use them to achieve the ideal waistline and fit into slim, closely-tailored clothing. Daily wear becomes less ostentatious as Victoria's influence is felt. Men's clothing is gradually evolving into the familiar ancestor of the modern business suit.

Later in the century, the abundance of cheap cloth of extraordinary quality pushes fashion towards color. Clothing for both men and women becomes quite colorful. Men's clothing tends to be less ostentatious, but neckties of brilliant color, waistcoats, and the iridescent lining of jackets show their appreciation for the new styles. Women's fashion becomes dramatic and extreme, employing the gravity-defying and luminescent quality of faerie cloth. The Season's balls and parties become almost psychedelic with these exaggerated confections—and dangerous for those subject to strobe-induced seizures.

In the wake of the two great tragedies that afflict London—the Atlantean attack and the Automechanical Mutiny—fashion takes a dramatic turn towards the conservative. So many wear black for so long that it replaces the wild plumage as the common wear. By the Strange '90s, most Londoners of means look positively dour. Ironically, the cast-off wonders find their way onto the backs of London's poor, leading to a general trend to regard bright colors and Otherworldly clothing as common and cheap. The conservative style in dress might be considered a reaction to the increasing uncertainty of the times—the retreat of a shocked populace.

About One's Person

Depending on the fashion, a gentleman might carry a cane or an umbrella about town. His important papers and letters are folded in a wallet and tucked inside his coat (or into the coat of a servant). He likely has a flask of spirits if he's a drinking man. He has a purse for cash, and if the fashion favors trousers, some ready coin in his pocket. If he has the means he carries a watch on a chain, perhaps decorated with charms. His waistcoat has a pocket for it.

He likely carries a small folding knife as well, always a useful item. If he smokes, he'll have his tobacco and his preferred method of using it, as well as matches to light it. He'll have hat and coat, weather dictating the choice in weight and water-resistance. His coat pockets might contain any of the above items, or sundry other knickknacks: an apple to eat on the train, a folded paper, a snuffbox, monogrammed handkerchiefs, pen or pencil and note paper.

A lady may carry a bag or purse, always subject to fashion, containing personal effects, ready money, tools for grooming and cosmetics. She may have a watch on a chain about her neck, or later in the century on a bracelet. If she smokes it is likely cigarettes, and she'll have them in a case. She might carry an umbrella or parasol, or during some years a cane or walking stick. There is a brief fashion in the 1870s for ladies to carry sword canes given them by admirers. Within the generally more voluminous and elaborate clothing worn by women there

are often cunningly-concealed pockets and pouches to hold a woman's possessions without requiring her to carry anything in her hands. Gentlemen are sometimes surprised at just what a lady can produce, seemingly from nowhere.

In Service

For many, servants aren't a luxury but a necessity. The complexity of life without the modern time-savers that we take for granted can't be understated. Keeping a modest middle-class house clean, keeping a family of four fed, and attending to all the upkeep from mending clothing to washing to seeing to the family business is a full-time job for several people. Those in service attend the domestic (and other) needs of their employers.

Servants are status symbols as well. Well-mannered, well-dressed, skilled servants are a sign of prosperity and quality. In the military a batman or other servant is needed to keep an officer's uniforms clean and sharp, to handle personal matters such as the social calendar and finances, and to see to the workaday matters of soldiering.

The life of a servant is usually wholly dedicated to his or her employer, who by the terms of employment might dictate with whom servants could associate, when and if they could marry, and how they dressed and acted even when off duty. A scandal among one's help can be very demeaning to the well-off, and hints of impropriety among servants are often dealt with much more harshly than scandals among peers.

Yet there is a often definite pride in being in service, to those born to it or who rise to significant position in the household. "Below Stairs" has its own hierarchies and traditions and roles which mirror those "Above Stairs" in many ways.

The Plague of -Isms

Racism, sexism, classism, religious intolerance: The Victorian Age was, from the modern perspective, shockingly politically incorrect. In the larger social consciousness, there is *almost no* belief that all members of humanity are equal and of equal value. As far as most are concerned, some people are simply better than others, more inherently valuable. Those with wealth and privilege must somehow be worthy of it, whether you believe in God or Darwin. Either the Lord made it so, or the rich are more evolved.

Same with race and culture. There is a definite sense among Victorians that British culture and British skin-tones are the best, and the foreigner or the savage is simply less developed, civilized, or religious. Where the Englishman has a Church, for example, a tribe of Africans have only superstition.

This inequity applies to women as well, though it is phrased in prettier terms. Women were created/evolved to serve the domestic needs of the family, while men serve as its defense and provision and consequently wield all the economic and political power.

Racial, cultural, religious, and classist stereotypes are broadly believed to be true—all Frenchmen are amorous and urbane, all Germans are rigid and stoic and quick to take offense, all Jews are covetous and corrupting, all blacks are violent and simple. The satirical cartoons of the day play to these stereotypes and reinforce them. Britain may have banned slavery, but is it is miles and miles from equitable or tolerant.

Of Course, I Don't Mean You . . .

While there was a cultural bias against those of different ethnic extractions, it needs to be pointed out that for most Victorians personal experience trumped stereotypes. All Africans might be impulsive and oversexed—except of course for one's good friend from the Dark Continent. This might seem like Victorian hypocrisy to the modern eye, but it reflects the distinctly aspirational nature of Victorian morality and beliefs.

One might profess to a moral code which one violates regularly—but that isn't hypocrisy. Rather it reflects a personal failing to achieve the ideal. The same with racism, and maintaining personal friendships with those whose culture or ethnicity one regularly disparages. One assumes they are exceptions.

Individuals can overcome these stereotypes, and sometimes even find general acceptance despite the presuppositions that dog them. Women rise to great learning and influence. Irish gain political power. Indians attain great wealth and influence in business. Victorians find it easier to accept an individual who rose "despite his natural disadvantages" than to acknowledge basic human equality.

Victoria and the Birth of the New Woman

For the majority of Her reign Victoria seems an overtly conservative force, and those who ape Her careful public dignity and stoicism often miss the subtleties of Her evolving opinions. While She never makes any overt statement, a careful examination of Her actions and the politics of the Royal Liberal party suggests that by the 1880s Victoria has embraced the ideal of equity between the sexes.

The Queen's shift in opinion is difficult to observe, however, against the sometimes quite shocking birth cries of the New Woman. This concept, an artifact of fiction and social commentary, represents a dramatic shift from the conventional role assigned to Victorian (and particularly middle-class) women. The New Woman is well educated, employed, financially independent, and afforded the same social latitude as men: the ability to take lovers, dress how she pleases, and engage in the vigorous intellectual world of debate and discussion.

Sarah Grand, one of the writers who coined the term New Woman, lives and espouses the new ideal. Her novels condemn the double standards of the sexes and of marriage and advocate the education and independence of women. She speaks of the duty of middle-class women to seek spouses of like mind. With no real political power to grant women the same rights as men, daring women such as Grand carve out their new role with only their wits and savvy.

In the 1880s the opportunities open to women are dramatic by earlier standards, and more and more middle-class women seek university educations and professional qualifications. Many of the old restrictions on a woman's activities and her social expectations erode, though not without resentment. The slur "Girton girl"—from Girgon College, established in Cambridge in 1869, the first residential college for women in England—is often applied to a woman who completes a university education.

Politician and intellectual John Stuart Mill pushes a women's suffrage agenda in parliament, but does not live to see it become one of the Royal Liberals' major agendas or, in 1889, a political reality. Against all expectation, the Franchise and Liberties Act passes and receives Victoria's explicit approval. While backlash against the prospect of women voting, attending university, and working alongside men becomes itself a major social force (especially among politicians and wags looking to stir common prejudices in their favor), the change is made and there is simply no going back. The Act phases in the franchise for women slowly, so as not to radically disrupt the political process with a sudden doubling of eligible voters, but it becomes essential for politicians to now appeal to women as well as men.

By the last decade of the period, despite still-powerful social restraints, women can openly seek their own independent means. With the growing legal reforms to marriage and voting laws, a woman has increasing legal authority to manage her own affairs as she sees fit, and by the end of Victoria's reign she has access to opportunities her mother could not have imagined in her youth.

The Curse of Progress

Philosopher and political theorist Herbert Spencer's observations on the effects of unprecedented change on British society in the late Victorian period leads him in 1878 to write *Opportunity and the Curse of Progress*. This small book causes large waves in British intellectual circles, and adds the phrase "The Curse of Progress" to the common lexicon.

Opportunity reflects Spencer's growing prejudices against expanding the vote, social reform, and "socialist" policy in government. He blames much of what he sees as devolutionary social backsliding on the common reaction to technological progress.

He writes: "Our society represents the pinnacle of evolutionary development, with only the most viable traits and behaviors surviving adversity. Women lack the vote for the same reason mankind lacks a furred coat. It is simply not in the interest of the species' survival. However, the pace of change has become so great that there is no time for ideas to be tested. We are become a culture of sports and freaks. The most sensational ideas rather than the most fit survive. The stable order is destroyed and the processes of evolutionary development which saw England become great have faltered."

"The Curse of Progress" comes to mean the disorientation people feel when dealing with new ideas and new technology, all of which seem to arise faster and faster. The numbers of lunatics and cases of nervous breakdown spike late in the century, and the asylums are filled to overflowing. Many simply cannot contend with the pace of change, and lack the means to escape it into antiquated lifestyles or the inclination to escape it with religion.

In a later age, the Curse will be called Future Shock.

The Shocking and the Profane: The Growing Strangeness

With the coming of the Strange, into the complexity of Victorian society drop grotesque horrors, technological wonders, inhuman beings, monsters from the id. It's enough to shake any society, and the Strangeness particularly affects the Victorian psyche, magnifying some elements while eroding others. Early on, the Strange, when it becomes known, is a source of fear and, perhaps more potent, social shame. Someone Touched in the family is treated like they are afflicted with madness, something to be kept secret, hidden from the public and denied. The Kerberos Club does what it can to preserve this attitude, as it serves their ends to keep knowledge of the Strange secret or at least private.

Over the years as the Strange becomes undeniable, it challenges certain core assumptions upon which the society is founded. If a woman—blessed, say, by Darwin's Evolutionary Force—demonstrates awesome powers of perception, resistance to injury, and incalculable physical strength, she might choose to ignore her gifts and play her assigned role in society, marrying how she may (considering how her Strangeness might affect her prospects), and for

the most part fit in as a proper Victorian wife and mother.

She could abandon that role, however, and seek to employ her powers for personal gain or national service. That sets her quite apart from respectable society, and puts her equal in some circles to an actress, in others no better than a prostitute. It is certain no one could *force* her to remain in the home, and behave submissively to men, but she'd suffer constant social scorn unless she created a deliberately unorthodox role for herself—a new class which would allow people to categorize her, and rank her, and fit her into their world-view. It is a fine line to walk between fame and infamy—the same line the Club treads publicly from around the 1850s onwards.

The situation for those whose Strangeness marks them out as alien or *other* is much worse. Powerful Victorians frequently and publicly compare the poor to parasites, and suggest solutions as drastic as mass transportation to deal with paupers and vagrants. It isn't uncommon to consider the Irish, the Indians, the native peoples of the Americas, and black Africans (free and enslaved) as subhuman, or of a lower order of humanity. Abusing Darwin's theories to justify these prejudices is quite popular. The resulting callous treatment of these people at the hands of morally-upright Britons can be abhorrent.

And these unfortunates are demonstrably *human*. How are the faerie treated? Or worse, freakish sports who are uniquely Strange? The answer is, almost universally, horribly.

There are a few exceptions (such as the simian physician, Dr. Archibald Monroe) who, by their native charm and talent at winning friends in the popular press, as well as by virtue of a thick skin for turning social cuts, manage to gain enough popular acclaim as to be generally accepted as human. However, in many situations such an individual can still expect to be treated like an animal, a sideshow freak, or a to inspire superstitious dread.

The British courts have been slow to catch up with the criminal potential of Strange abilities, but the Parliament has not. A series of Acts in the '70s play on the public suspicion of Strangers during that period to create exceptions to an individual's rights, and expand police powers to detain, question, and generally harass Strangers whose abilities mark them like Cain for all to see and fear.

During the Whitechapel murders, half a dozen Strangers are detained for months on general suspicion, only to be released when the Ripper meets his end at the hands of Whitechapel's shadowy nighttime protector.

Even popular and erudite Strangers are still treated like clever animals. Although Dr. Monroe gets many invitations to parties and galas, he knows many of the invitations are made in a calculated effort to win social points for throwing a daring party and presenting guests with the show of a speaking chimpanzee. But unlike many Strangers, Monroe has no qualms about attending such gatherings, consuming enormous quantities of his host's excellent wine and food, and then holding forth to his captive audience on his theories and beliefs, and trouncing all comers who would debate him.

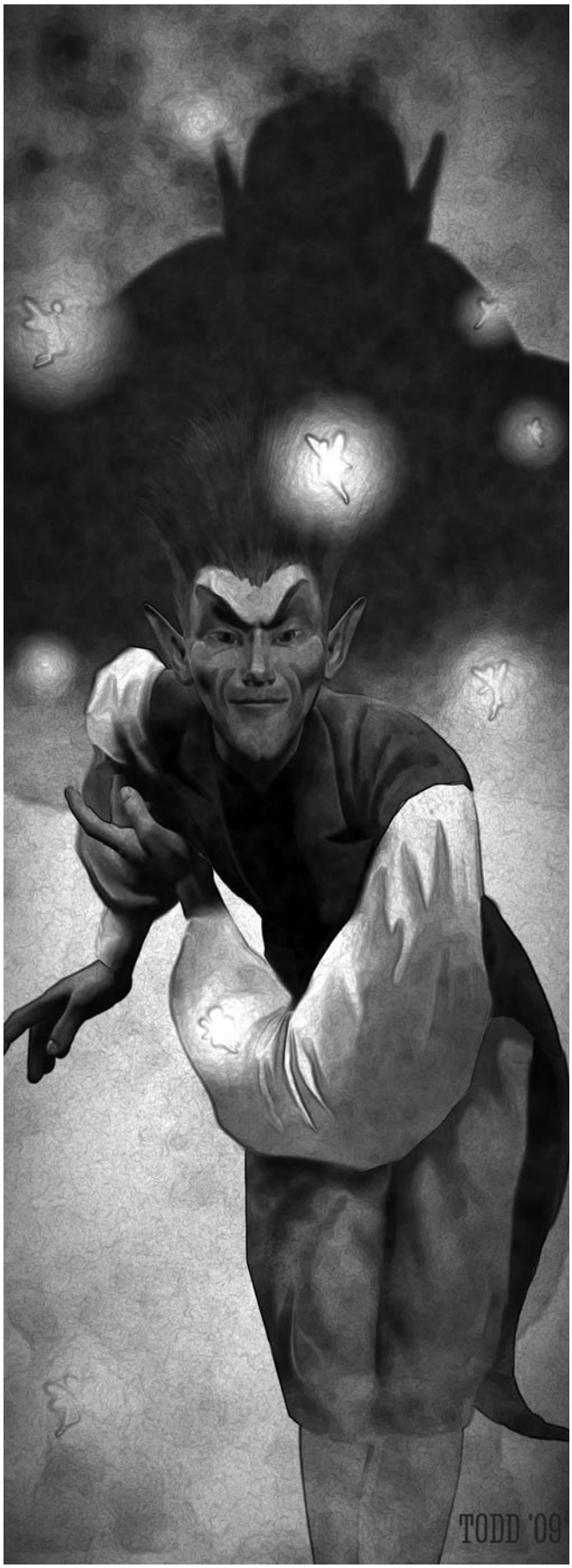
An Historical Note

Much is made here of Future Shock as an element of the world of the Kerberos Club, but this force had major social and intellectual impacts on the real history of the period. The Victorian era was a time of astonishing change. In the span of one woman's life the world was explored and made smaller by telecommunications. On the oceans, iron and steam replaced wood and wind, and on the land they replaced horseflesh. Men were even taking flight. The origins of life itself were explored. Religion was seriously and scientifically challenged.

War was everywhere. As always seems to be the case, military thought, strategy and tactics seemed one step behind the tools of killing, resulting in gruesome slaughters. Automation put workers out of jobs and made some products obsolete.

Reeling from these constant changes, many were extremely resistant to new ideas. For every gadget-crazed Londoner there was a farmer from the midlands who could have been dropped into the 1600s and gotten along fine with his ancestors.

In *The Kerberos Club* this effect is magnified dramatically, but it is rooted in a real phenomenon of the era.



The Faerie

The faerie have always been with us, lurking in their dark corners, waiting to bleed through into the world like fever dreams, confounding the laws of man, God and nature. In some eras they are as gods themselves, and walk freely, dispensing their terrible wonders. In others they are reduced to mere spooks, creeping under doors and stealing babies. They are legion, they are terrible, they are enchanting, they are magical, and they are absolutely not human. Some are hardly sketches of personalities bound to reality-twisting power.

Others seem quite sophisticated, until you pierce the layers of glamour and realize they are as empty inside as gaily-painted marionettes. Humanity imprints on the faerie its expectations and beliefs and assumptions, and faerie infects Humanity with an occult madness which tears down the barriers of perception separating this world from the Otherworld. No one who deals with the faerie escapes un-Touched.

The British Isles have a long history with the faerie, and they rise and fall in the public consciousness, sometimes being seen as merely stories, other times being treated as prosaically as eccentric neighbors. Only one thing remains true about the faerie: The more power they have in the physical world, the more they are physically defined, and the more their personalities are bound by rules as fundamental to their nature as gravity is to one of human birth.

As a result, apart from technological and industrial wonders, the faerie are perhaps the easiest manifestations of the Strange for the typical Victorian to comprehend and understand.

There is a well-established tradition in British Common law dealing with the faerie. Like the relationship between Barristers (gentlemen who practice the law before the Courts, but receive an honorarium rather than being paid like a tradesman), and solicitors (gentlemen who practice the more workmanlike side of the law and business), there are two similar but separate branches of the profession for managing Faerie Law. There are those who work within the Courts on matters related to the interaction of the faerie and

British law, and there are those who study the thousands of bans, compulsions, oaths and gaesa which bind the behavior of the faerie in ways that can be legalistically exploited.

The first class of practitioner is afforded status like that of a barrister, a gentlemen of scholarship and duty. The second class of practitioner is more like a solicitor, a respected man of practical business, someone a mill owner in New Birmingham might consult for advice on squeezing more production from his goblin laborers by the exploitation of the strictures of their faerie nature.

Most often, men of both professions partner to provide full legal services when dealing with the faerie, one defending a client in court from any liability or violation of Britain's complex statutes relating to the faerie, and the second managing direct interaction with the faerie themselves. As the Empire's presence in Faerie itself becomes more established, the number of these partnerships increases. Until the breakdowns and revolts of the 1880s, many Victorians become quite comfortable with the faerie and faerie-made goods, and sometimes even with taking small innocuous faerie creatures into their homes as pets or domestic servants—though the events of 1893 prove the folly of allowing one of the faerie access to one's home or children.

Magic and the Occult

The faddish popularity of spiritualism, mediums, hypnotism, animal magnetism, and any number of other areas of pseudo-science and metaphysics, encourages some of Europe's true practicing occultists to emerge from their traditional secrecy and reveal their powers to the world. Barring excesses of hedonism, truck with obviously malevolent entities, or socially-unacceptable ritual or religious practices, these individuals are greeted with a certain acclaim and treated very much like the popular scientists of the day.

Of course, the dirty truth of the occult world is that any sorcerous secret worth knowing or spell worth incanting almost by definition demands excessive hedonism, truck with obviously malevolent entities, and socially unacceptable ritual and religious practices. Attempts to popularize occult practice and cleanse it of socially-objectionable elements (such as the ill-fated Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn) meet with general failure.

The simple actuality of occult practice is that the practitioner whose Will is greater, as demonstrated by sacrifice, has the most power. And the sacrifice of society's trust, approval and good-will are among the easiest and most powerful a magus can make.

The 19th-century occult world is characterized in many ways by a struggle between individual adepts seeking their own mystical truths and powers, and those who found or join cults, movement, orders, or societies to gather greater overall power, though it be shared with others. The greatest of these orders was that of America Obscura, the hidden society of magic established and governed by the Shadow Constitution.

There were always far more individuals claiming powers they did not possess than those who possessed them, and during the 19th century they find voice, write books, sell patent occult charms, and generally pander to the gullible and the superstitious. Those with true power have little need for such attention or to indulge in trade. With true magical discipline, petty concerns such as money are a simple matter to arrange. Few practicing sorcerers reveal their avocation, lest they be subject to suspicious enquiry or, far worse, called upon to "Shew us a trick!"

And always, there is the danger that the transgressive nature of true magical practice will be revealed, with all the resulting social scandal. The occult workings concealed in the writings of Sappho might be powerful, but if publicized the rituals needed to unlock them would destroy the reputation of any respectable Victorian lady so thoroughly as to see her exiled from society for all her days.

Science and Industry

Ah, Progress! By diligence, foresight and hard work, Britons of good conscience and duty bring forth wonders the equal of any from myth and legend! Certainly, some uncouth Strangers take flight with only their unnatural

powers lifting them from the Earth—but by the clever application of the principles of Science did Cayle and Vick not achieve the same feat, without the morally questionable (and unnecessarily shocking) use of Strange ability? The wonders created by Science (and to a lesser extent, those people changed in Strange ways by its application) are accepted by the population at large.

There are some exceptions. Automation has resulted in the loss of jobs, and the fall of many in the working class down into the under class, even as it creates new opportunities for those of education to pursue professional careers. The benefits of Industry favor the wealthy and well-off almost entirely, with little of this new wealth and wonder trickling down to the working and poor people. Where many elements of the Strange are better accepted by the lower classes than the hidebound middle or the paranoiac upper ranks of society, the wonders of Science tend to unsettle the working and poor peoples, especially when some of the greatest wonders (such as Babbage Computational's Automatic Domestics) exist explicitly to put them out of jobs and starve their families.

Those of the working classes may have a minimum of education, but the arithmetic of such a situation is simple. A mill owner would buy a machine to do a working man's job if it would put money in his accounts, and be sure of that.

In fact, it is the move towards automation which finally allow the workers movements and unions to organize in Britain. The threat of the machine is so great by the 1860s as to break hundreds of thousands out of their lethargy, and they begin to organize on a nationwide scale. Some of these movements spawn machine-breakers and saboteurs who assault factories, destroy machines, and toss automatons into rivers and canals.

Events finally come to a head in December of 1881 when mass protests in Pall Mall lead to a pitched battle between metropolitan police and protesters. The police are reinforced by 400 regular army troops and a company of Her Majesty's Mechanized Rifles, fresh from service in Africa. In the ensuing brutality hundreds of protesters were seriously injured, and over two dozen killed when, for no certain reason, the Mechanized Rifles aimed and opened fire upon the rioting civilians, before being themselves struck down by shocked and horrified soldiers and police.

In the resulting enquiry it is officially determined that the automaton soldiers had been issued programme-decks intended for bush warfare rather than riot suppression, and in a further oversight, had been issued live ammunition. In the public outcry about the whitewash of the massacre, which comes to be called Bloody Sunday and Black Monday, the voices of those demanding to know the whereabouts of the hundreds of anarchists, organizers, and revolutionary intellectuals scooped up by Special Branch in the aftermath of the riots become louder. Of those hundreds of vanished individuals, only a dozen are ever seen again. When the Automatic Domestics finally turn on their masters en masse, it is exactly what those who'd been on the receiving end of that merciless fusillade could expect. It further reinforces the working-class mistrust of scientific and industrial wonders, and cements the British Worker's Movement as an undeniable political force in the nation from that point forward.

Wonders of the Antediluvian World

Victorian science and exploration reveal the truth about the world: It is vastly older and its Strangeness runs deeper than ever would have been believed. Even before the Atlantean Invasion of 1869, explorers have already found ruins of impossible and vast metropolises hidden away in the valleys of the Himalayas, the jungles of Africa, and beneath the ice of Greenland and the Antarctic. Cities of terrible geometry and inhuman design. Cities it pains the eye to look upon. But all gone to ruin, all fallen into ashes, some clearly raised from their proper resting place by the rising of the mountains from the Earth over geological ages of time.

The jungles of the Brazilian Empire teem with life, and some if it like the Royal Dinosaurs by all rights should be long extinct. Sometimes fisherman report encounters with vast beasts, bigger than whales, like crocodiles

with a turtle's fins, and mouths able to crush a tea clipper. In the tombs of Egypt weird relics of ancient sciences are found, such as the Galvanic Mummy unearthed in Giza by Professor Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, which, when connected by copper wires to the clay pot batteries buried with it (disguised as Coptic jars, but intended to be filled with acid rather than with internal organs), comes alive after a fashion, and obeys simple commands issued in a particular dialect of the ancient Egyptian language.

These singular wonders arouse a great deal of acclaim, as do those who discover them and exhibit them to the public, often with science moving aside to make room for sensational showmanship. The public does not care about the theories explaining how a Royal Dinosaur survived the ages, nor do they care about the way the galvanic current stimulates the peculiarly-preserved muscle of the mummy; all that they care about is seeing the giant prehistoric brute pace in his cage, and the mummy on stage perform the ritualized greeting to the sun, three shows daily.

But when such wonders slip their leash and run wild, then the public turns against those who would dare treat with such things—horrors so clearly intended by God to have vanished from the Earth ages ago, and only preserved for malevolent purpose. As the century wears on, the novelty of these wonders declines, and society has less patience with such distractions. Especially when they cause a disruption.

And as always, the public gives greater leeway to those things which are beautiful, astounding, or promise some betterment for them, while they will react worse to those things which threaten their livelihoods, their sense of self, or their assumptions about the way the world works. A fragment of the Egg which shattered creating the Universe might be an object of cosmic significance and awesome revelation, but it just won't play in Kent.

Divinity

The divine is a very sensitive topic in Victoria's Britain, as many consider the Queen Herself becoming just that. Though Victoria never claims any divinity, those who feel Her presence beat on their psyches like the waves of the ocean never doubt it. When invited to attend the ceremony in which Victoria is declared Empress of India in 1877, a delegation of Indian royals suffer shocking visions and leave the coronation convinced that Shakti, the mother-goddess, was made manifest in Victoria's form.

This leads to a surge in popularity among those Indians loyal to the British Raj in Hindu sects favoring Shaktism, and a counter-surge in those factions opposed to the British in India. Likewise, in the Anglican church the Royalists draw parallels between the Queen and the Virgin Mary, as well as noting the traditional Divine Right of monarchs. It seems only fitting that a Queen so dedicated to restoring the traditional values of the Crown, and putting service and wisdom before self-indulgence, would be naturally exalted, Her divinity revealed.

This is considered base idolatry, of course, by conservative Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Yet despite this (or perhaps because of it), the political factions backing Victoria most frequently support unrestricted freedom of religion, and the removal of restrictions and bans on Catholic participation in public life. For this reason, perhaps, Rome never officially comments on the Queen's supposed divinity.

Those who look outside Britain (or back into the nation's pagan past), find the world lousy with divinities of greater or lesser providence. Some are strictly *genii loci,* spirits of places and past ages hanging on to those few modern men who recall their glories. Others are powerful, and undimmed beside mighty Christendom. Where no trace of divinity remains, there still can be found artifacts and relics of its existence—and if one looks hard and deep in the darkest corners, one can still find relics of those gods which preceded the gods of Man. Things of high blasphemy and madness. Truck with such uncouth things is abhorrent, and transgressions with the gods of the prehuman races always leaves a palpable stain upon men who dare it, marks them out so their fellows might know and fear them.

Britain is a Christian nation, and though the sects of the Roman church, the Reform Anglicans, the Royal Anglicans, and others might fight and argue and seethe with the bloody feuds of old, when presented with the



prospect of a unified Mahomadian caliphate, a unifying Hindu philosophy, or other external religious threat, they find they have more in common.

Yet in London's winding streets and behind its most respectable doors, the cults of foreign and heathen gods grow in pace with the Queen's own cult. Something in Victoria's ascension to the status of more than human has created a trend for religious adventurism, blending at the edges with the spiritualist movement, and the affection for all things faerie. Some Britons claim within their private circles to be Druidic, Cabalistic, Thugee, Buddhist, Taoist, Zoroastrian, Ra cultists, followers of the Aesir and Vanir, and all the Old Unpronouncables of invertebrate physiognomy. In public respectability demands one be Christian, but like so many things Victorian, much is concealed beneath the respectable façade. Discussing someone's religion without their explicit welcome is terribly rude.

Freakish Human Oddities

Of all the Strangers, those who wear their marks openly are the most distrusted and despised. Those transformed by their powers, even if possessed of remarkable and astounding abilities, are at best curiosities to be ogled and pointed out, and at worse horrific unclean abominations to be driven from the land. Regardless of how these individuals are transformed, be it by ancient curse, modern science, accident of birth, or touch of the divine, the corruption of the physical form is intensely shocking. In the lower, more superstitious classes it frequently induces fear, and in the upper classes mistrust or pity. These are the true Strangers, those who cannot hide what they are.

Even in the final days of the century, human oddities usually suffer the worst possible reaction from the public. Even when they act heroically, it takes enormous efforts and deeds to win the favor of the public.

Arms and Armor

With the dramatic leaps forward in technology through the course of the century, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive list of adventurers' equipment in the conventional way. Instead here are some notes on the technologies most likely to be of interest to players and GMs, and how they change during the three broad eras.

Blades

The humble knife, a sharp piece of metal used to cut and stab, changes little in the years of Victoria's reign. Knives are common, cheap, and readily available. Carrying a clasp knife long enough to easily kill a man will hardly raise an eyebrow, official or otherwise. Swords on the other hand become more and more ceremonial as modern war renders the sword's last great adherents, the cavalry, obsolete. When one farmboy with a drum-fed repeating cannon mounted on a Babbage Computational spider-mule can annihilate the proudest line of charging heavy horses, even the most hidebound army officer begins to recognize the noble sword as an anachronism. Swords also attract attention in the streets of London and in most modern cities. A man with three feet of steel at his side is a man to watch, and possibly to escort down to the station house for official questioning.

Still, swords have their place: court, duels, and aboard hydrogen lifted aero ships where explosive shells are never a good idea.

Bludgeons

Even humbler than knives are the coshes, "life preservers," and lengths of oak wrapped in cord which settle so many disagreements in London's lower quarters. A bludgeon's favored purpose is to quickly render a victim insensible with one or two strikes to the head. Often attackers strike from hiding, or have an accomplice distract a victim while they strike from behind. A cosh is a leather bag or sack with a handful of lead shot inside it, making it heavy and easy to swing. A life preserver is a rope-wrapped club, often drilled out in the center with lead poured into the hole for added weight. A policeman's billy is longer, as it need not be concealed, and can serve as a valuable defense for keeping an armed attacker at a distance.

Firearms

The gun was born centuries before, but grows up in the Victorian era. When the century opens the firearm is a muzzle-loaded single-shot weapon fired with flint on steel and black powder. By the close of the century the firearm has become a complex mechanism able to fire hundreds of brass-bound cartridges a minute, and a single rifleman carried the firepower of a regiment in his grandfather's era.

Early Victorian Firearms

The flintlock is gradually replaced by the cap-and-ball lock, which rather than rely on a flash pan full of loose, finely-milled black powder, has its primary charge ignited by the explosion of a cap placed over a nipple where the weapon's hammer falls. This cap contains fulminate of mercury, which explodes even when wet.

Flintlock weapons are touchy, unreliable, and generally fairly inaccurate. Rifling of the smooth barrels increases accuracy, but the specially-wrapped bullets and loading procedures slow the rate of fire. Muskets, and later rifles, fire huge bullets in calibers from .30 to .80, often more than an ounce of soft lead. When they hit, they inflict grievous injuries.

Misfire

Flintlock weapons are unreliable and subject to the vagaries of weather, humidity, and their care and maintenance. Here are two options for reflecting this in mechanical terms; use whichever sits best with your group.

The Random Misfire

Any time you fire a flintlock, or any weapon where a misfire is a strong possibility, the GM rolls 2dF. If both dice come up ⊟⊟, the weapon misfires, dealing a Trifling Physical consequence to the wielder. As a Trifling consequence, the weapon is simply jammed or otherwise unusable for the rest of the scene—a consequence such as "The Devil Take This Infernal Contraption!" If no Trifling Physical consequence slot is available and it rolls up to a Middling consequence, the weapon may have even exploded. As a Grievous consequence, the flintlock not only explodes, it seriously injures the wielder—and, to add insult to injury, the weapon is permanently ruined.

The Compelled Misfire

The GM can compel the flintlock's aspect to have it misfire. On the plus side, the player gets a Fate Point, and there is no chance of suddenly contracting a consequence. On the minus side, the GM can do this anytime.

Middle Victorian Firearms

The cap-and-ball rifle becomes the norm in the world's great armies, and the cap-and-ball revolver becomes the preferred weapon for horsemen who must fight on the gallop. Revolvers incorporate a rotating cylinder of pre-loaded cartridges allowing six or more shots to be fired quickly. The age of the muzzle-loader is ended, however, with the introduction of the brass cartridge and the breach-loading rifle (and then, the repeating rifle). Over a decade or so several competing designs for metal cartridges fight, and the winner is decidedly the centerfire or rimfire cartridge over the pinfire and its ill-fated cousins.

While it initially proves something of a failure, the Vulcan All-in-One cartridge which encases bullet and primer inside a solid block of water-resistant, stabilized explosive, offers the greatest power with the least volume and weight of any other bullet. But it will not be until the later decades of the century that this departure from the brass cartridge is recognized and adopted.

During the middle era, the brass-cartridge revolver becomes extremely common, and the first of the gas-operated, self-cocking pistols are marketed. The self-cocking Colt Avalanche eight-shot revolver uses one of these mechanisms: The flick of a switch allows the weapon to fire its full load of six shots in under a second. It is called "The Final Word" or simply "The Word." If Colt made all men equal, the Avalanche made some men more equal than others.

Similar experiments in weapons innovation are driven by the ease with which guns can be manufactured in New Birmingham factories by cheap goblin labor. Several U.S. firearm manufacturers contract with New Birmingham factories to produce their designs, sparking something of an arms race among the firms of Colt, Remington, Winchester, and Smith & Wesson.

Armies are as slow to adopt new weapons as ever, and it is a consumer market which drives these companies, all striving to provide more features for less money. Some disasters were unavoidable, such as the rate at which the Winchester Mechanized Rifle destroyed its own rifling and eventually jammed and exploded after trigger-happy gunmen blazed a few hundred rounds through it.

Weapons of this era superficially resemble their historical counterparts. The style of the age is one of curves and flutes. But functionally, they work more or less like modern firearms. Because so many of these weapons are intended for civilian rather than military use, many came with sometimes bizarre and ill-advised "features" such as the Remington Repeater (called the "Ugly Drunk" by those in the know) which incorporated a steel flask in the butt which could hold twelve ounces of whiskey. Weapons often have qualities which make little practical sense given their

size, ammunition capacity, and purpose.

You can use aspects to easily distinguish these weapons from one another, such as giving the Colt Avalanche an aspect of "The Final Word" that can be invoked to improve an attack roll or compelled to make the wielder spend a round reloading before firing again.

Late Victorian Firearms

By the end of the era, personal weaponry becomes a complex and chaotic field. Dozens of manufacturers all push their own standards for cartridges and calibers, their own new innovations, and send new designs to manufacture with less and less testing and trial. It creates a dangerous field for the weapons enthusiast. Advertisements for these new weapons are lurid, featuring well-heeled gentlemen mowing down lines of savage caricatures with a "New Rapid-Repeating Self-Cooling Saddle Gun."

With the ready access to goblin labor and televocographic transmission, a company could form on Monday, file patents on Tuesday, and be manufacturing weapons on Friday—larger, shinier, and with more switches and knobs and clicking, buzzing, clacking action. They sell for a month, and when they begin to explode, taking fingers with them, the company has folded and its founders have already vanished with the profits.

Judging a quality firearm becomes something of an art, and serious gunmen will rarely even touch a weapon manufactured after 1870 or so. A glance at a man's armament can tell an experienced eye a great deal about his experience of violence, willingness to engage in it, and his chances of surviving such an encounter. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. once famously commented on seeing a hunting mate's new Winchester Articulated Machine Rifle, "You can shoot a hundred times for every one I manage, I'm sure, sir, but then one shot is all I generally require."

The brass cartridge begins to see some serious competition from new caseless cartridges like the .30 S&W Vulcan. World militaries show enough interest in this innovation—the promise of savings in cost and ammunition weight alone make it a good prospect—that by the end of the century most military arms are fairly conservative functionally (being simple single-shot or short burst firing gas-operated rifles) but employ an extremely advanced caseless cartridge. They have twice the ammunition capacity for the same space and weight as modern weapons from our own world.

Strange Ways to Die

Weapons in the world of the Kerberos Club evolve faster than they did in our world, resulting in a greater disparity between military doctrine and the tools for killing. But this acceleration of mundane weapons technology is nowhere near as shocking as what *strange* technology can do to the battlefield. The Cochrane-Brunel Mechanized Gun-Carriage and its Volcanic Cannon (see page 100) are a dramatic example of what might arise given only a slight nudge by Strange powers. When those powers are unleashed, unfettered upon the battlefield? It is a horror.

As the century grows odder, these weird killing impossibilities become more common. Men donning mechanized armor, horses of iron, thinking machinery, floating gun platforms firing lightning or disintegration rays, rifles that kill souls rather than flesh, plant-soldiers grown from seeds, and bombardment with gas shells which burn flesh and change reality. The Lorica Victoria (page 128) and the Electrophorous Firing Piece (page 120) are two examples of how placing miracles in common hands can have sweeping repercussions.

As the century winds down, soldiers wouldn't be surprised to see giants of brass and iron, belching smoke and carrying enormous weapons, clashing on the same battlefields they slogged through, bled on, and were finally buried under.

Artillery

The Big Guns grow fiercer and more terrible as the century progresses, though they generally don't suffer the issues of quality that plague firearms. As only militaries contract the purchase of artillery, it is generally a more conservative field. For dreadnoughts, the Volcanic Cannon becomes the preferred heavy armament. Self-propelled rocket shells allow the big ironclads to kill anything they can see—and with spotters signaling from aeroships able to see over the horizon, and Babbage Ballistic Engines able to compute complex firing solutions incorporating input from human posters and mechanized barometric and wind sensors, they can also kill anything within a hundred miles.

The threat posed by weapons of this type, able to strike Britain's soil from the Continent, was always on the minds of British diplomats who sought amiable relations with those within the so-called "Volcanic Circle". As the technology which drives these rockets improved, so did this circle of potential firing points. Germany's imperial rumblings, and the possibility that France (old enemy and now good friend) might fall to one of Britannia's foes, fuel a great deal of espionage, sabotage, bribery, and dirty dealing.

The power of rocketry to project a nation's power beyond its own borders becomes increasingly evident, and every nation with the capacity vigorously pursues rocket technology. The German Himmelhammer, built in 1887 but not publicly acknowledged until five years later, is capable of striking London with a two-thousand pound high-explosive bomb from as far away as its launch platform outside Königsberg. It is then with some relief that Her Majesty's officials learn of the great rocket's mysterious (and seemingly accidental) destruction in 1893. Further efforts on the part of the German Empire to again raise the Sky Hammer over Victoria's head prove fraught with accident, misadventure and death, culminating in an "accidental" firing of the Himmelhammer V-3 into Berlin in 1899.

Britain's own capacity to project so-called rocket diplomacy remains mysterious through the end of the century. It is never proved or disproved whether Britain has such a capacity, and there is an equal measure of evidence supporting both conclusions. In 1888 Disraeli blithely comments within earshot of a *Times* pressman, "It is 'rockets this' and 'rockets that' all the time! If they only knew where our true strength was invested, they'd *wish* we'd romanced the rocket like our German friends."

Body Armor

Man's capacity to kill and slay his fellows only increases, and dawdling well behind this terrible talent is his capacity to save and preserve. While dozens of different "Life-Preserving Vests" and "Tetsudo Shirts" are sold throughout the century, very few offer any real protection against the increasing muzzle velocities of contemporary firearms.

The Lorica Victoria (page 128) proves an effective defense, but isn't commonly available, and certainly isn't easy to wear without raising comment. A few other attempts are made to manufacture defensive garments strong enough to deflect high-velocity projectiles, but none of the mass-manufactured armors are as effective as the Lorica. This does not dissuade individual inventors from producing suits of nigh-invulnerable armor which allow them to weather hails of bullets and storms of shrapnel without injury.

About Town and About the Globe

Transportation changes dramatically and rapidly through the century. The horse's dominance is challenged by the train, and then wholly broken by the automotive carriage as its engines evolve from steam to bitumen-fired internal combustion, then to electricity generated by internal combustion and eventually to all-electric models driven by Mr. Tesla's "Ducks" (see page 163).

In the air, man first takes flight in hot air balloons, dirigibles, then aero ships, and in gliders, rocket-gliders, and then prop-driven powered craft, which are themselves superseded by rocket and jet craft. The aero ships remain the queens of the air from their advent to the close of the century, though, even if rocket-gliders and wide adoption of volcanic rocketry begin to limit their practical application in warfare by the end of the century.

See the Transport trapping description in Chapter 5 for an overview of how a PC's skill and the skills of the animal he rides or vehicle he operates interact.

Horses and Horsemanship

Riding a horse is a relatively easy skill to learn but a challenging one to master. Riding one in war, in a chase, or in a race, however, is both difficult and dangerous.

A rider needs to make a skill roll to ride a horse in any sub-optimal condition—at speed, across uneven or slippery terrain, or in a war charge—in conjunction with the horse's own Gallop roll. If both rolls fail, then the horse and rider take a spill, resulting in Health stress to each equal to their individual margins of failure. If conditions require a roll to remain in the saddle, then success keeps the rider seated, but failure results in being thrown and taking Health stress (again, equal to the margin of failure).

One thing the redcoats who fought Napoleon's cavalry knew well was this: A cavalryman sitting up high and moving fast is hard to shoot, but his horse is a big, wild, fragile target. As such, if a horse with a Physical consequence attempts to move faster than 1 zone per round, the GM can compel the consequence to prevent the movement.

Getting trampled by a horse is pretty bad news as well. Running down a man afoot is rolled as an attack using the horse's Gallop skill, limited by the rider's Horsemanship skill (or the equivalent).

Horse Statistics

Aspects: One aspect appropriate to the horse's breed or function, such as "Beast of Burden," "Purebred Quarterhorse," "Faithful Companion," or the like.

Skills: Good (+3) Endurance, Fair (+2) Gallop (E), Fair (+2) Brawn (E), Average (+1) Kick, Average (+1) Resolve

UNIQUE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Gallop (Move, Leap)
Kick (Strike)

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO
Trifling:	

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Health]

Carriages

Before the trains come, the carriage is the only means of overland travel which doesn't involve walking or riding a horse. Carriages change a great deal through the century, but they remain basically boxes with two or more wheels which are pulled by one or more horses. Large omnibuses cater to the poorer of London's middle and under classes, cabs and carriages for hire to the somewhat more well off. Keeping a carriage is a major status symbol, and can easily cost a wealthy family more than a thousand pounds a year for the horses, footman, and the carriage itself.

Driving a carriage is much like riding: tricky and sometimes dangerous. Attempting to make a quick maneuver, engage in a chase, or avoid obstructions in the road (such as a 25-stone rock-skinned Stranger waiting to punch your lead horse in the head) requires a skill roll from the driver, together with a roll of the carriage's Handling skill. If both rolls fail,

the carriage takes Health stress equal to the worse of the two margins of failure.

Wrecking a carriage is harder than being thrown from a horse, but the consequences are worse for all concerned. If the carriage is Taken Out while it's in motion, make an attack against the driver and everyone within the carriage using the carriage's Handling skill. Only skills with the Dodge or Resist Damage trappings can be used to defend against this attack.

Likewise, being run down by a carriage and horse team is worse than being trampled by horse alone, and is one of the great horrors of the urban dweller (as well as a favored mode of assassination for certain of London's criminal fraternities).

Carriage Statistics

Aspects: One aspect indicative of the carriage's manufacture or history, such as "Two-Wheeled Deathtrap," "Hansom Cab," or "Richly Appointed."

Skills: Good (+3) Brawn (E), Fair (+2) Handling (E), Average (+1) Frame (E)

UNIQUE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Handling (Move, Strike)
Frame (Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health])

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO O
Trifling:
Trifling:

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Health]
Armor 1 [Health]
Gifts (choose one):

Equipment (Two-Wheeled Carriage: Weapon 1 [Health] with Handling, +1 Handling when sprinting, +1 Trifling consequence)

Equipment (Four-Wheeled Carriage: Weapon 2 [Health] with Handling, +1 Trifling consequence)

The driver makes an attack roll with his vehicle-operation skill, complemented by the carriage's Brawn skill. Under the right circumstances, this attack can be made against multiple targets at once, as per the Spray Extra (see Extras and Drawbacks in Chapter 5 for more detail).

Trains

The great trains of the age run on an ever-expanding network of tracks, cutting distances that once required weeks of travel down to days or even hours. The trains transform the way people think of time and distance, and permit London's easy expansion beyond its old borders as the burgeoning middle classes sought suburban bliss in new cottage communities springing up along the rail lines.

Trains run fast, sixty-plus miles per hour, faster than any horse or carriage. They have more locations than vehicles for game purposes, good places to stage dramatic fights, for example. Being run over by a train is certain death for all but the most resilient Strangers. Call it 10 Health stress for a typical locomotive car—a 8 or 9 for a smaller locomotive, 11 or 12 for a much larger one.

Falling from one is somewhat more survivable. Make an Athletics roll (or some other roll with the Leap or Resist Damage trapping) against a target of Fair (+2) for a slow-moving train, Great (+4) (E) for a train moving at top speed, or Fair (+2) (E) for something in between. On a failure, take Health stress equal to your margin of failure.

Tractor Carriages

These massive machines begin to see usage in the late 1860s for heavy transport, construction, and in particular the laying of rails. A tractor carriage is essentially a train engine affixed to a high-torque gearing system and a matched pair of James Boydell's patented "Infinite Railway Tracks," interlinking steel plates allowing the engine to traverse

Mechanized Gun Carriage Statistics

Aspects: Massive All-Terrain Vehicle, Monster of the Battlefield, Major Complication: Slow and Temperamental, Minor Complication: Twelve-Man Crew

Skills: Good (+3) Chassis (S), Fair (+2) Brawn (S), Fair (+2) Artillery (E), Average (+1) Handling, Average (+1) Intimidation (E)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Chassis (Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health])

Artillery (Shoot + Range x2 [5 zones] + Zone, Menace Range x3 [5 zones] + Zone)

Handling (Move, Strike)

GIFTS

Theme (+1 Handling over rough terrain, Use Brawn instead of Handling against environmental obstacles, Ignore Handling penalties due to rough terrain)

Equipment (Infinite Railway Tracks: Weapon 3 [Health] with Handling)

Equipment (Heavy Artillery: +1 to Artillery vs. other vehicles, Weapon 1 [Health] with Artillery)

Equipment (Steel Plate Armor: +1 Health stress box, Armor +1 [Health], +1 Trifling consequence)

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with Handling

Armor 2 [Health]

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO OO OO

Trifling:

Trifling:

Trifling:

Tractor Carriage Statistics

Aspects: Massive All-Terrain Vehicle, Lumbering Steel Beast, Major Complication: Poor Maneuverability

Skills: Good (+3) Chassis (E), Fair (+2) Brawn (S), Average (+1) Handling

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Chassis (Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health])

Handling (Move, Strike)

GIFTS

Theme (+1 Handling over rough terrain, +1 Brawn against environmental obstacles, Ignore Handling penalties due to rough terrain)

Equipment (Infinite Railway Tracks: Weapon 2 [Health] with Handling, Use Brawn instead of Handling vs. environmental obstacles)

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with Handling

Armor 1 [Health]

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO OO

Trifling:

rough and broken terrain at a modest but inexorable pace.

Being crushed by a tractor carriage is like being hit by a train in slow motion, inevitably fatal to all but the stoutest individuals. Evading or outrunning one is simplicity, which accounts for its low Handling skill. If both the driver's skill roll and the tractor carriage's Handling roll fail, the tractor carriage takes Health stress from the better margin of failure, thanks to its sturdy construction. Unless a tractor carriage is Taken Out by being driven off a cliff or blown up, its passengers don't suffer any Health stress, and can continue to benefit from the protection of its chassis.

Automotive Statistics

Aspects: A Tinkerer's Dream, Minor Complication: Speed Over Durability

Skills: Good (+3) Handling (E), Fair (+2) Brawn (E), Average (+1) Chassis (E)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Chassis (Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health])

Handling (Move, Strike)

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Health] with Handling

Armor 1 [Health]

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO O

Trifling:

Mechanized Gun Carriages

The bigger, meaner, ill-tempered cousin to the tractor carriage, the mechanized gun carriage mounts heavy field artillery and steel plate armor, and carries a crew of a dozen or more drivers, engineers, and gun-hands. As proven in the Crimean, these machines are the monsters of the battlefield, but as proven in the Boer Wars, they're slow, temperamental, and mechanically dubious on extended campaign.

In terms of skill use, follow the guidelines given for tractor carriages, above.

Automotives

Late in the century, in rapid succession, the steam engine and the internal combustion engine become the steam-electric and the bitumen-electric engine driving electric motors rather than directly driving the gears and wheels. In the 1890s some dispense with the generators and use induction receivers to power the motors. The streets of London in the 1890s are a chaos of vehicles: horses, carriages, and automotives of dozens of different makes and designs, using different drives and engines. Automotives are a tinkerer's dream, and London is home to a thriving community of amateur mechanics who lease space in cooperative workshops or use the shops in their automotive clubs to modify and customize their vehicles.

In dangerous or tricky situations, if both the driver's roll and the automotive's Handling roll fail, the automotive takes Health stress equal to the driver's margin of failure. If the carriage is Taken Out while it's in motion, make an attack against the driver and everyone within the carriage using the carriage's Handling skill. Only skills with the Leap, Dodge, or Resist Damage trappings can be used to defend against this attack.

Aero Ships

The great queens of the air. The aero ships (see page 80) do to the world what the trains do to England. They have more in common with ocean vessels than with horse and carriage or automotive; they are places rather than vehicles. Still, a fight aboard a burning aero ship is something all adventuring rogues should experience at least once.

For an example of an aero ship in game-mechanical terms, see the HMAS *Queen* on page 130.

Rocket Gliders

Where the aero ship is stately and dignified, the rocket glider is frenetic and wild. The rocket gliders of the 1880s were inspired by Félix du Temple's *albatros* glider, one of the first of its kind of use control surfaces and stabilizing fins. The modern rocket glider uses folding gull-wings rather than fixed wings, allowing it to close its wings against the fuselage when it fires a rocket in its cluster to gain height. When it reaches the top of its parabola, the pilot deploys the wide delicate wings and soars on the wind and thermals like a raptor.

The great aero ships of Her Majesty's Navy carry squadrons of rocket gliders, launching them from their upper decks with pneumatic rams. As the other great powers field their own aero ships, the rocket glider becomes a major component of military doctrine.

A Word On Aircraft Safety

Unlike Earth-bound vehicles, a doubly-failed roll while piloting an aircraft usually doesn't indicate a collision. That depends on the craft's altitude at the time of the roll. Rather, the issue with these vehicles is their inherent fragility: If the pilot doesn't know what he's doing, jerking the control stick the wrong way or giving the boys down in the engine room the wrong orders can spell disaster.

Aero ships may be the Leviathans of the sky, but their extremely lightweight frames and complicated engineering have to be handled with kid gloves. And rocket gliders are as fragile as they are powerful; piloting them is more art than science. If the wing membranes tear they plummet like a broken-winged bird.

On a doubly failed roll, the aircraft takes stress equal to the margin of failure—there's been a minor mechanical failure of some kind, such as a snapped line or a torn membrane. If the craft is Taken Out on a doubly failed roll, something has gone catastrophically wrong. Roll the craft's Handling or Engineering skill against the pilot's applicable skill. If the pilot's roll is higher, he manages to land roughly but safely, though the craft itself is ruined until it can be repaired. If the craft's roll is higher, the crash landing is more "crash" than "landing." The pilot and all passengers take Health stress equal to the pilot's margin of failure.

Don't forget about Collateral consequences—there's no better time to use them than to survive a brutal crash landing.

Rocket Glider Statistics

Aspects: Rocket Cluster, Frenetic and Wild, Minor Complication: Delicate Wings

Skills: Fair (+2) Handling (S), Average (+1) Chassis (E), Average (+1) Firearms

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Chassis (Physical Force, Stress Capacity [Health])
Handling (Move + Unusual: Flight)

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Health] when ramming*
Armor 1 [Health]

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO O
Trifling:

*When ramming, the Rocket Glider takes stress equal to that dealt to the target.

Chapter 3
Victoria's Century

Pre-1800: It's likely, though unproven, that the modern Kerberos Club gets its start at the Gates of Hades coffee-house in 1723 as an informal meeting of like-minded individuals who enjoyed drinking, opium, the company of loose women and men of easy virtue, as well as dabbling in the Strange, uncanny, and mystifying, the fringes of natural science, art, politics, magic, and awareness.

1800: London has a population of over a million people, making it one of the largest cities in the world. During the 19th century this only increases. Within three decades it will be *the* largest.

1800: Irish Act of Union. This Union supersedes the previous Personal Union passed in the 1500s by ascendant Irish Protestants, forging England and Ireland into a single kingdom. The act does not become official until 1801, but the effects of the Union are felt almost immediately. The folk-creatures of Ireland, including those beings of Faerie which had for generations slipped through the tattered barriers separating Ireland from the Otherworld, are much affected by the shift in the political landscape, though they do not make their presence (and opinions) known overtly for decades yet. The Irish faerie had absorbed much of their island's culture, and far outnumbered their English cousins. Scottish faerie are a much more staid bunch, by and large, who kept themselves to themselves, enjoying their status as legend.

The Irish faerie are not so laconic. While the reports are simply not credited in London, there is a general rise in Strange happenings in Ireland. Many disregard it as "just more Irish foolishness," but those in the Kerberos Club take note, and dispatch agents to investigate the situation.

In a series of uncanny encounters on the eve of final official ratification of the Act, members of the Club encounter manifestations of Ireland's tumultuous past played out at its famous places of magic and history, finally leading to a midnight confrontation with the Éireannach Fáthach, faerie so imprinted by Irish national identity (particularly the spirit of the Rebellion of 1798) that they have become something else again.

The defeat of the Éireannach Fáthach opens the way for the Procession of Frost, so on January 1, 1801 the union of the Faerie Courts of England, Scotland, and Wales extend their rule into the Irish Otherworld. And like their mortal counterparts, the Irish faerie nobility and lords are bribed with further title, honor, and peerage, some even claiming estates in the English Otherworlds.

While the faerie have difficulty grasping the differences between Protestant and Catholic (though given the choice, they generally choose the Roman church for its ritual, theater and long history of cohabitation with Otherwordly things), the political poles created by the struggle between the repressed Catholics and the ruling Protestants influence them strongly, and the faerie find themselves increasingly shaped by Ireland's tumultuous human politics, and factionalized along the same lines.

1801: Rush for the Rosetta Stone. In the aftermath of the French defeat in Egypt, the rush to claim archaeological treasures masked the truly mad struggle to claim occult artifacts and wonders. Agents of the Société Scientifique Impériale seek to safeguard certain discoveries and see them smuggled out of Egypt to France, while operatives of the Crown and the Kerberos Club aim to claim them for

Britain. The greatest of these prizes is the complete Rosetta Stone, a decree of Ptolemy carved in stone and writ in many languages.

The Stone's value to academics is immediately apparent, but to occultists equally so if one knows what to look for. In addition to the lost human languages, there are two prehuman (so-called Elder) tongues represented—scripts so inhuman, they defy efforts to copy them with plaster casts, rubbings, or transcription.

One who recognized the stone's value is General Jacques de Menou, an initiate in several mystery societies. He seeks to hide the stone, making the excuse that it is his personal property, and so not subject to confiscation by British authorities who claimed all such artifacts. His ruse is discovered, and this results in a chase through nighttime Cairo, with British (as well as Russian, German, and Ottoman) agents in pursuit. The stone is finally captured from its hiding place in the back of a gun carriage by Kerberan agent Colonel Tomkyns Hilgrove Turner, who claims it in the name of the British crown, but not before carefully breaking away the sections of the stone writ with inhuman script.

1803: Westward Ho! With the purchase of France's territorial claims in North America, the United States begins its westward expansion which becomes known as Manifest Destiny. Displaced native peoples are divided, deceived, manipulated, bullied, and when all else fails, murdered to allow this Destiny to unfold. The abuses continue until the Great Ghost Dance of 1885.

1804: Hidden Wars. The conflict with Napoleon is fought with sail, with bullet, with policy, and with trade, but also with occult forces and Strange agents. Napoleon makes the Société Scientifique Impériale fully his creature, and demands from them miracles, the conjuration of storms to sink Nelson's fleet, and soldiers invulnerable to fatigue and hunger. He betrays his lack of understanding for things Strange, and is disappointed with his agents' failures to produce for him the miracles their claims to power would seem to promise.

Only their perfection of the Sémaphore Psychique saves them from official sanction. Presented with a way of transmitting his orders near-instantly, Napoleon sees the value of unconventional avenues of power, and throws money at the Société like corn to a goose—but rather than lead to the blossoming of additional innovation, it causes the Société to lose focus when its members pursue their pet projects with the Emperor's money. Yet, the Société remains one of Napoleon's favorite pets.

1805: Tapping the Admiral. While victorious, Admiral Lord Nelson is killed at the Battle of Trafalgar. In the aftermath of the battle, his body, preserved in a barrel of brandy, is taken aboard the *Victory* to Gibraltar. In life, Nelson achieved an astonishing reputation, and the manner of his death propelled him into a fame few British military figures have ever matched. He is laid to rest at St. Paul's Cathedral in a coffin made from the salvaged mast of the *L'Orient*. His body is guarded day and night by a rare alliance of British mystery societies. The Masons join with the Illuminatus Britainus and the Boudiccian Sisters in an unheard-of effort to keep Nelson's corpse from falling into the hands of foreign rivals who could use its phenomenal occult puissance against the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately, they neglect the brandy his body was preserved in—ironically a quite-fine French spirit. By the time they realize their error, the brandy has vanished and the expression "tapping the admiral" as slang for having a stiff drink has entered the common lexicon. Rumors of Nelson's Brandy haunt occult circles for months, hinting at Bonaparte and apollyonic rituals, at Russian mystics, at even Indian revolutionary factions.

The Kerberos Club first comes to the attention of the older secret orders during the following year, and earns the animosity of the Ordo Malum, an Austrian Catholic secret society which came to possess Nelson's Brandy through their agents among the sailors charged with unloading Nelson's body from the *Victory*.

With the Brandy in their possession, the Order prepares a ritual based on old pre-Christian magic. This would have imbued their chosen pawns within the Holy Roman Empire with Lord Nelson's force of destiny, appending the name of their agents to the Book of Ages, addendums to Nelson's legacy by using the brandy in their

perverted Communion. Only intervention by the Club's roving agents keeps this ritual from coming to full fruition. This failure spells the end for the Empire, which is finally and completely dissolved in 1806 as the consequence of the Treaty of Lunéville.

As to Nelson's Brandy, there is no certain answer, though given the general Kerberan affection for both sacrilege and drunkenness, one can hazard a fair guess.

1806: Napoleon Tightens His Grip with the Continental System, decreeing that none of his conquered territories or protectorates may trade with Britain. Rather than starve out his great enemy as he intends, his decree meets with only limited success. Denied their European trading partners, British merchants seek markets elsewhere, forging economic ties in the Americas and the East that help fuel the engine of the British Empire in the coming decades.

Further, the embargo actually harms Napoleon's Grand Empire more than it does Britain. Starved for trade, Russia rejects it in 1812, reopening trade with the tiny manufacturing juggernaut, even after invading British ally Sweden in 1808 at Napoleon's behest. Between Napoleon's tightening fingers, nations begin slipping through.

1807: Slave Trafficking Illegal. The Kingdom of Great Britain, after a series of half-measures, declares the traffic in human slaves illegal. The British West African Squadron begins patrolling the African coast, interdicting slave-taking operations and slave ships. Britannia's position and motivation is a complex one. While slavery has been illegal on British soil since 1772, many British citizens have profited mightily from the trade in humans to be sold into slavery. There is a powerful social movement against slavery in British society, but the policy is also perhaps an economic and social stab at Napoleon, who reintroduced slavery to France in 1803.

In the shadows, the Kerberos Club works to further the abolitionist agenda, both because it suits their perverse egalitarianism and to squelch the dire engine of misery and death which the Trade created in the Otherworld. The paths traveled by slavers across the Atlantic have become a nightmare of pain and death, twisting the Otherworld (and the highly impressionable *things* which dwell there), creating a septic wound in the world's soul. It attracts scavengers, magi of the worst sorts, ghosts, twisted faerie, and horrors less easily defined. Along the slavers' routes, true leviathans are sighted with alarming regularity, great behemoths of nightmarish dimension and impossible physiology. Yet the slavers go unmolested by these horrors. Indeed, they are sometimes abetted by them in escaping the British navy.

There are clearly parties committed to preserving the Trade who care nothing for something as base as selling human blood for gold coin. The Elder Things are awakened, and they will sip the heady brew frothed from man's inhumanity to man.

1808: Napoleon's Fortunes Falter. The internal politics of Spain turn like a snake and bite Napoleon. The Spanish rebel against French occupation, and later in the year Sir Arthur Wellesley arrives in Lisbon to begin the campaign against the French on the Iberian Peninsula. The war sees Arthur created the first Duke of Wellington and, in 1814, Napoleon's vanquisher.

Spain is a nation torn between the old world and the new, where pagan superstition finds easy camaraderie with Catholicism, and Sir Arthur first encounters the uncanny events here which would become something of an obsession for him.

1809: Napoleon Breaks the Teutonic Knights. In an effort to secure his power in the mystical as well as temporal world, Napoleon begins the persecution of occult groups, mystery religions, and secret societies. The persecuted individuals sometimes abandon their mystical pursuits, accepting a mundane life in exchange for freedom from Napoleon's service or his prisons, but some, such as the Order of the Teutonic Knights of Bad Mergentheim, are persecuted relentlessly. Their holdings are taken, their libraries emptied, and their alchemical research is stolen or burned. Some of the Knights choose to stay and resist the Emperor, but those who are able flee with what they can carry (assisted by foreign agents, such as a notable Kerberan adventurer).

The Knights follow the same path in their flight as the Knights Templar before them and find sanctuary among the Scottish Masons.

The younger mercenary commanders of the Order who led

the troops of the Hapsburgs during the Ottoman wars find easy positions in the armies of the United Kingdom in the fight against Bonaparte.

The Teutonic Knights add their mysteries to the stewpot of Scots occultism, and inspire and inform such luminaries as Charles Piazzi Smyth, Astrologer Royal for Scotland and expert on the Egyptian pyramids and Egyptian necromantic practices.

1810: The University of Berlin is founded as the world's first research university. Among its students and teaching staff are luminaries such as Hegel, Marx, and Bismarck. The educational model is so successful it is copied across Europe, and independently many such institutions also see the establishment of their own conspiracies, cults, and secret societies such as the one which initiated so many of the University of Berlin's greatest minds.

Over the next decade, many of the old German societies sign the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung ("Silent Pact"). While the politics in the hidden halls of power remain vicious, there is for the first time a common forum for ideas and grievances, as well as the discussion of issues of common concern—such as the mystics of Britain who refuse to ally with the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung, or the rebels from their own circles who fled to the Americas and founded their own orders.

1811: The Gates of Hades coffee house burns under mysterious circumstances. Members of the Kerberos Club begin meeting in a building on the Square of Saint James off Pall Mall. No one is exactly sure how they purchased the enormous building, or for that matter precisely what the building had been before the Club made it their official house. Memories and records of the building's history, construction, and origins remain obscure, and the Strange folk who meet there seem to come and go as if they'd been doing so for years.

By the end of 1811, all the locals and neighbors of the club's House treat the increasingly Gothic building as if it has always been there, and as if the Club had always been their neighbor. When forced to give an opinion on when the Club moved in, people become confused.

1811: The Madness of King George necessitates the Regency Act of 1811, which allows the Prince of Wales to serve as Regent for the remainder of King George's rule. The King's condition continues to worsen over the next nine years. The administrator of an asylum for lunatics, Dr. Samuel Foart Simmons, is summoned by the King's sons to contend with the increasingly erratic and unpredictable monarch, and Simmons begins a program of almost brutal coercion and control over the King, seeking to *force* him to adopt a civil and sane mien, lest he be brutally "treated."

By 1813 the king is blind and nearly deaf, and word of his condition reaches those individuals in the Kerberos Club who had counted him a friend in the dying lights of the last century. In a foolish and daring action, they invade Windsor Castle in the dead of night, and steal the mad King away.

Something is done to Dr. Simmons who was attending the King at the time, and when discovered in the morning, he is covered in blisters and twisted into an unnatural posture, (as if treated by cupping and bound in a straitjacket). He is dead, suffocated on his own vomit. The King's disappearance is hushed up by his sons and the Regent. The secrecy surrounding the King's condition makes this fairly easy. Rumors are squelched, and when required, an actor stands in for the King until the time decided for his death on January 29, 1820.

Who was actually laid to rest at the King's official funeral on the 15th of February remains a mystery, as does the final fate of mad King George III. What is known is that the Regent and the King's sons take no further action against the Kerberos Club.

King George's sons who succeed him, George IV and William IV, both die without legitimate heir, though in truth, their efforts to produce offspring seem almost preternaturally troubled: miscarriages, stillbirths, and false pregnancies plague their wives. Both are also struck with emasculating diseases late in their lives, further preventing their producing issue. Their misfortunes open the way eventually to the only surviving offspring of the Duke of Kent, their niece, Alexandrina Victoria.

1812: A Grim Faerie Tale. The publication of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* inspires British entomologist and folklorist

William Kirby to begin his researches into the fairy tales of the United Kingdom. During his research he interviews hundreds of country and city dwellers, and finds some Strange patterns forming in the stories he uncovers and records. One recurring character which seems to crop up regularly in wildly unrelated places and periods is a young girl (always about nine years old) with a shocking mane of red hair which gets her into trouble, usually by attracting the attention of faerie creatures or spirits. Her name is given variably as "Maeve," "Mavra," "Miven," and "Muni," and she is usually Irish.

When Kirby tracks the places mentioned in the stories, he finds that the tales of this girl seem to follow a wandering path from London to Ireland, and there, to a tiny village called Liminy. In Liminy, when he finally finds a local willing to talk to him, he learns that "Maeve" had indeed lived in that very village, until being driven out because of the trouble she brought.



"When was this?" Asked Kirby.

"'Twas in my greatgran's time, when she's a little girl," answered the local farmer.

"But I heard in London just this past month a tale about Maeve and her adventures along the Thames."

And the farmer answered, "Oh, aye. When the sidhe take a liking to you, they keeps you how they like you best. Old Maeve is as young as a sprout, forever."

Kirby returned to London, convinced he was hunting a real person rather than a myth or legend, but no one ever learns what he finds there, because in less than a year William Kirby is confined to Bethlem Hospital, and spends the rest of his days dancing and weeping, and never speaks another word.

1812: The Empty Man. Prime Minister Spencer Perceval is called to attend an enquiry in the House of Commons for the results of his disastrous and unpopular Orders in Council on trade, which resulted in Luddite riots and the start of the War of 1812. In the lobby of the house of commons Perceval's progress is blocked by a blank-faced man, and before the Prime Minister can step around him, the man shoots Perceval through the heart. Before he can turn a second pistol on himself, the killer is disarmed and held for trial.

The blank-faced man is identified finally as John Bellingham, a failed merchant seaman, tin manufacturer and jeweler who spent several years in a Russian prison between 1803 and 1809. His estranged wife is found, and she is surprised to hear he is back in Britain at all. He stopped writing to her from Russia in 1808. No information can be had from Bellingham himself, as to all intents and purposes, he is *empty*, a puppet with cut strings. While he seemed animate enough when executing the assassination, afterwards, it is like his spirit had fled, leaving his flesh to continue on.

Bellingham is tried and found to be mentally unsound, and sentenced to spend the rest of his life in Bethlem hospital. He lives only three weeks before dehydration and malnutrition claim him. He would not even eat or drink.

Seen as a freak occurrence at the time, the assassination of Spencer Perceval is the first of the Empty Man killings.

1813–1907: Let the Game Begin. The contest between the British Empire and Imperial Russia for control of Central Asia is referred to as the Great Game. This conflict occasionally breaks out into war, sometimes fought by proxy. It also rages on the more rarefied planes. No fewer than half a dozen British magi are enlisted to perform Works to aid the British in holding India, but Russia ever dominates in raw occult power.

1814: The British on U.S. Soil. During the War of 1812 the British briefly occupy Washington, D.C. It is said British commanders eat the dinner prepared for the President of

The Old Familiar Pile

The Kerberos Club's house is only just moved to Pall Mall, isn't it? If so, then why does it feel like it's always been there? In a sense, it has. The Kerberos Club, the informal meeting of odd individuals and adventurers who gathered at the Gates of Hades to drink and gamble and dabble in dark matters, was an associate faction of a larger, Stranger, and more purposeful organization which had occupied the spot of the Club's famous house from pre-Roman times. Or so one might believe one has discovered, if one digs deep enough into Club records.

Even if this pretension for ancient origins proves false, the Gates of Hades group was certainly a faction of whatever mysterious brotherhood predated it and built the Pall Mall house. When the adventuring faction is attacked directly by agents of the King's sons, its members return to the fold, and bring with them into the stately and staid halls of the Club a vital daring and energy which had waned over the years. It also brings the imperative that the Strange should be kept from the eyes and hearts of the common folk for as long as possible, for nothing scares a monarch into dangerous action faster than a threat from within his own citizenry. And with King George III already maddened by exposure to Strange happenings, it becomes a priority.

Regardless, digging up any concrete information on the Club's true age and origin is a Legendary (+8) (S) task.

the United States from his own china, in his own dining room. They set fire to most public buildings, including the presidential mansion, but are driven from the city by freak storms which drown many of the fires with torrential rains, and destroy British ships and encampments with tornados which leave the rest of the city unharmed.

After suffering the ignominious flight from Washington, the men of *America Obscura* marshal their occult resources and unleash mystical assaults on the invaders. They are restrained somewhat by the necessity to limit the collateral damage inflicted by the forces they unleash, but Washington still suffers appreciably. When the presidential mansion is restored it is painted white, the thick coats of paint covering powerful warding signs which are intended to safeguard the building from any future assault, and even serve to protect the building from the British aerial bombardment of 1862.

1819: Birth of an Empire. On the 24th of May, Alexandrina Victoria (called Dina within the family) is born to Edward the Duke of Kent by Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Due to the vagaries of royal succession and the tragic death of the Princess Charlotte Augusta, She has become the royal heir. At Her birth, She does not cry, but this oddness about Her is lost in the general rejoicing in the household at the production of an heir. At Her christening, Charles Mannors-Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, weeps openly, and later says he couldn't credit any explanation for it, saying only that in the moment he saw the whole of the world in the child's eyes, and it was more than he could bear.

Eight months after Her birth, Victoria's father dies. Days later, it is reported that King George III has died as well. George IV takes the throne, and remains childless, and with his death it passes to his brother William who fails to beget children on any but his mistress, the actress Dorothy Jordon. Jordon's connections to the Kerberos Club, while rumored, are never proved.

Fate, or something else, makes the way clear for Victoria's rise to the throne.

1819: Irish Eyes Upon Her. With the death of Victoria's father so soon after Her birth, Her mother the Duchess of Kent develops a relationship with the ambitious Irish officer Sir John Conroy. Conroy treats young Victoria as if She was his own daughter, and seeks to impress certain ideals and designs upon Her.

In truth Conroy is only one of many agents secreted in the Royal household seeking to influence the young heir before Her assumption of the crown. It isn't until She becomes Queen that his allegiances are revealed.

1819: The SS *Savannah*, an American steamer, crosses the Atlantic in 23 days, and is greeted with awe and conster-

nation by British seaman and the public. America's ability to produce such a vessel threatens British naval superiority. It inspires a mad rush to develop Britain's own fleet of transatlantic steamers. In two decades, steam will bring the end of practical sail in the Atlantic.

1821: An Empire Crumbles. Greece becomes the first country to break away from the Ottoman Empire after the Greek War of Independence. The Empire continues to decline throughout the century, with European powers chewing away its holdings, military power, and economic influence.

1821: Thomas de Quincey Rides the Dragon in his autobiographic *Confessions of an Opium Eater*. He discusses with frankness the oft-taboo subjects of addiction, moral failing, and drug use. He also describes with vivid detail the hallucinations which took him when he indulged in laudanum or the smoking of opium, visions which became increasingly horrific and difficult to distinguish from reality towards the end.

To those with experience of such matters, Quincey's accounts revealed the horrible outer realms of the Otherworld in a clarity never before committed to paper. The last sections of his book are a near map of the Gates of Karduth, and describe a safe route through the Mountains of Madness to the lands beyond with a accuracy unequaled until Lord Dunsany's writings are published in the next century. To a certain set, Quincy's book became almost a sacred text, especially for those who indulged in drug-journeys into the Otherworld themselves.

His work also inspires inventor Samuel Berk, who combines hallucinogenic vision drugs with mid-century advances in telegraphy to create the Needle-Actuated Hallucinogenic Senso-Somatic Visualizer, a device which, when combined with a dose of Berk's carefully-formulated drug, induces dream-visions created from telegraphically transmitted information.

1821: The Corsican Ogre Escapes at Last. On the way to the autopsy ordered by the governor of St. Helena, the body of Napoleon Bonaparte is stolen by a person or persons unknown. Agents of the World's major powers scramble to find the Emperor's body, recognizing that as symbol or as an article of occult significance, it is of unparalleled danger. Efforts are made to keep the theft secret, but fail. In the end the theft of the body is on everyone's lips.

His defeat at Waterloo six years earlier seemed to spell the end of Napoleon, but the loss of his body renders things ambiguous, and the old fears, that Napoleon was the Antichrist, come again. Was Napoleon risen from the dead in mockery of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring the end of the world? Was his body returned to life by Egyptian cultists in accordance with the arrangements he made while conquering the land of the Nile? Or was the Emperor's corpse stuffed and preserved, and dressed in full uniform, adorning the apartments of some adventuring British rogue, casually employed as a coat-rack?

1822: The Rosetta Stone unlocks the secrets of the ages, or some of them at least. Building on the work of Thomas Young, Jean-François Champollion completes the translation, allowing previously untranslatable languages to be deciphered. All previous efforts to translate the stone had been quietly quashed by those who wished these writings to remain generally untranslatable; the early intervention by Kerberan agent Colonel Tomkyns Hilgrove Turner prevented the samples of the La'sur script or examples of the Writing of Pa from falling to public examination. If those prehuman tongues had become known, the damage might have been incalculable.

1825: Mary Shelley's Monster is born. Shelly is daughter to a radical feminist and an anarchist philosopher, lover to a famous romantic poet, and friends with the likes of Byron. She is an unconventional woman to be sure, and brilliant and accomplished in her own right. In 1816, while visiting Byron in Switzerland, and inspired by the stories of the Das Gespensterbuch, the group of writers and poets agreed to all write ghost stories to pass the time inside during the unseasonable cold. Her initial idea was entirely uninspiring, and Mary neglected her writing until struck by a waking dream, a vision of the grotesque and horrific, and in her were planted seeds which would not sprout until later in the year when her return to Britain was met with tragedy.

She would recount after her trial the vision which inspired her as "taking me with a vividness I had never experienced, my imagination running with freedom I'd never before known, and showing me the phantasm of a form stretched out on a mortuary slab, sewn and bound by unhallowed arts, and crouching over it the specter of me myself, worn down to calloused bone, a hollow-eyed student of forbidden lessons."

Returning to Britain in September, she was shaken by the suicide of two close to her family, her half-sister Fanny and her lover Percy's first wife Harriet. Driven to maudlin depths by these deaths, her writing career faltered, but her new obsession with biology and philosophy and medicine blossomed.



She and Percy married in 1817, and their household grew with the addition of children, as well as one of Byron's illegitimate daughters, assorted friends, fellow writers, and others. The household moved to Italy, and in Venice and Rome tragedy continued to stalk Shelley with the death of her daughter and son. Mary was driven further into her studies, and becomes estranged from her husband and friends.

The family finally settled in Pisa, where the final tragedy of her husband's death by drowning at sea was enough to unhinge her completely. She returned to Britain and to Dorset with her husband's body preserved in ice, and began to finally push her studies from the theoretical to the practical.

Three years of experimentation, dissection of corpses, and application of chemicals and electricity to dead human tissues, and her own mad and inspired will, finally meet with success in 1825. Blinded by her obsession, she can't see her creation for what it is, a hideous thing sewn from the corpses of dead men, with her husband's carefully-preserved face sewn upon another man's skull, his brain resting inside.

Another man's head. Another's lungs. Another's viscera.

And then the whole grotesque mess brought to perverse life.

The Monster escapes, terrified and furious and confused, and Mary pursues. The creature terrorizes Dorset for months before finally being captured and subdued, packed into ice, and carted off to London for examination. Mary's crimes against nature are revealed and she stands trial in one of the most sensational episodes of the era. The existence of the Monster is refuted and its crimes lain on Shelley herself (where physically possible) or dismissed entirely. She is convicted of grave robbing and various affronts to public order and decency, but is found mentally incompetent, and sentenced to a secure sanitarium rather than prison.

Mary Shelley dies in her cell in 1851 of a brain tumor, and her madness is blamed on this condition. During her time in confinement she writes *The New Man,* a work describing her techniques for animating dead flesh and bringing life, but it isn't published until 1879. She claims to enjoy frequent visits from her husband through the period of her confinement, but the true fate of her Monster remains unknown.

1829: Mars—A Dead Planet. The anonymous explorer who penned the memoir *Lonely Planet—One Man's Journey* discovers a method of travel which carries him to the planet Mars. He is deliberately vague in his re-telling, but some mention of "Miasmatonic Gases from the Earth's Core" suggests he experienced a gas-induced episode of spirit-travel. However, the very real disease he brought back with him suggests otherwise. The explorer found Mars to be a desert, and rather than home to a canal-building civilization he found only ruins and dust. Mars was dead, and the thing that killed it was loosed upon Earth with his return, the Red Ague.

1829: The Peelers Bring Order. Sir Robert Peel sees increasing need in ever-growing London for a formal, organized, and disciplined public police service, and brings his vision into reality with a force of over a thousand

HMSS Ray



Aspects: England's Miraculous Submersible, Protective Plating, Eight-Man Crew, Minor Complication: Based on Baffling Scientific Principles, Ramming Speed!

Skills: Good (+3) Hull (S), Fair (+2) Engineering (S), Fair (+2) Bridge (S), Average (+1) Alertness

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Hull (Resist Damage, Physical Force; Minor Snag: No fine manipulation with Physical Force)

Engineering (Move + Unusual: Underwater, Stress Capacity [Health], Strike; Major Snag: Takes A Few Minutes to submerge; Minor Snag: Attacking with the Strike trapping must follow or be combined with movement; Minor Snag: Treat Power Tier as Mundane if using Strike trapping against a small target, such as a human being; Minor Snag: Can't submerge below 50 feet)

Bridge (Environment [Underwater] + Range [Targets within same zone] + Zone [all passengers and crew]; Minor Snag: Environment [Underwater] only applies to protection against the elements)

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 3 [Health]
Armor 3 [Health]

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO OO
Trifling:
Trifling:

Functions

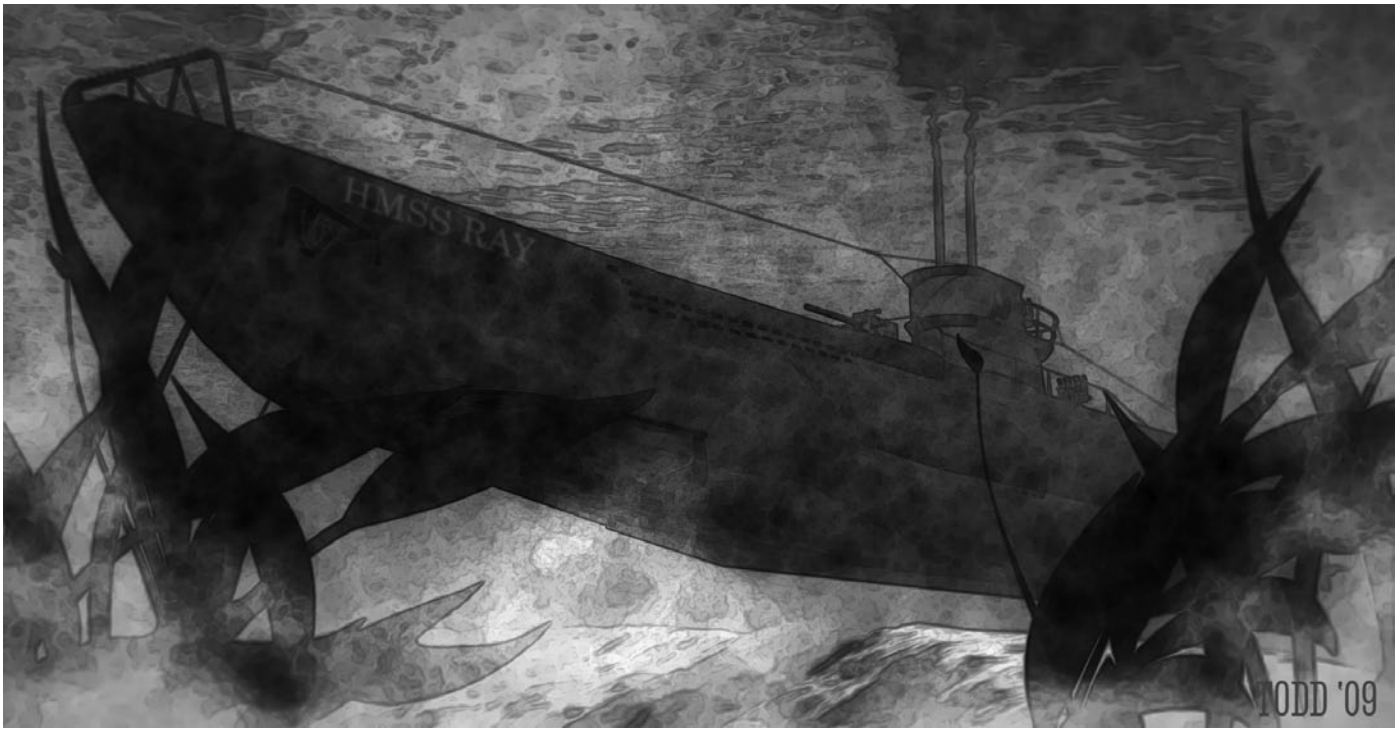
The *ray* can carry 16,000 pounds of cargo and crew at up to 60 miles per hour while submerged, and can protect its passengers from the harshest conditions of the ocean depths. When attacking it can ram a target, potentially inflicting grievous damage on even an armored ship (Weapon 3 [Health]).

Future upgrades might include sonar sensors (add Notice + Unusual: Sonar to the Bridge skill), torpedoes (add the Shoot trapping to the Bridge skill), electrified hull defense (add Strike + Zone to the Engineering skill) or improvements to capacity and top speed (increase skill rating of the Engineering skill).

constables. The impact Peel's police force has on London and its future growth is incalculable. The blue-uniformed constables in their hardened top hats—their famous helmet appears in the 1860s—replace the irregular and freelance law enforcers within London, except for the Old City which maintains its own service. Bobbies (as they are known affectionately) or Peelers (as they are known somewhat less affectionately) become regular elements of the London tableau. They prove so successful that in coming decades the service is emulated in cities across Britain.

1831: Launch of the HMSS *Ray*, a submersible boat designed by British inventor Jordon St. John. The *Ray* employs electric motors improved from Faraday's design to turn drive screws of St. John's own invention. The motors are powered by batteries or by an electrical dynamo driven by a steam engine, though this requires the boat to surface quickly or extend its 50-foot snorkel in order to release the coal smoke and pump in air for the fires.

The *Ray* is remarkably advanced, so much so that few beyond St. John understand its basic principles. Attempts to manufacture a sister-ship fail when St. John is



unable to dedicate the time and energy to the project. Only the inventor himself can seem to make the boat work. The *Ray* sees limited service until the middle 1830s when it begins to serve as an interdiction vessel for capturing slavers without giving them the opportunity to dump their human cargo overboard. It also serves to aid in the covert landing of Crown agents on coasts from Europe to Africa. The *Ray* is continuously updated by St. John, who eventually comes to live in the boat as its resident engineer.

The *Ray* isn't the last submersible boat used in Her Majesty's service, but remains one of the most advanced until the late 1800s when conventional shipbuilding catches up to St. John's inspired efforts.

1834: The Spanish Inquisition Officially Ends. Unofficially, the Inquisition is finally brought to heel by other, more subtle arms of the Roman Church's secret workings. Augurers within the Greek Orthodox Church share their visions of the future with Rome, and the forces gathering in Britain become a major concern for the Church, despite the moderate position of the British government on Catholics. The energies previously wasted on Inquisition are redirected at inspiring certain Anglicans to embrace a more Catholic faith, and on the inspiration of trends such as the Oxford Movement.

While the Greeks can not say for sure in what form the threat to the Church will come, these stratagems seem a sound way to counter any threatening doctrine or blasphemy which might arise. The Greek augurers fail utterly to recognize that what they took to be symbolism in their visions: The Queen upon her throne of stone, lion by Her side, shield and spear ready at hand, do not represent a vague symbol of Britannia but actually show Britain's next monarch near the end of Her reign.

1835: Expedition to Atlantis. Employing the remarkable submersible HMSS *Ray*, an expedition of scientists and adventurers follow a fragmentary map purporting to reveal the location of a sunken city built somewhere about the Mid Atlantic Ridge. The map was recovered from the ruined Temple of Ling'Yoh in Tibet two decades previously, and lay ignored in a display case in an elderly collector's drawing room. But with the advent of the *Ray*, real investigation proved possible.

The submersible boat descends, following the route outlined by the map, and discovers not a single city but dozens if not hundreds of individual settlements strung

all along the ridge. Where there appear to be true cities, monolithic structures of cut basalt, they are ruined and abandoned. But more shocking, the smaller settlements are inhabited. While not the correct term, or even a translation of these amphibious people's own word for themselves, they quickly became known as Atlanteans, though the general consensus is that they are in fact either a debased form of the ancient pre-humans, or some opportunists who later occupied the cyclopean cities.

The Atlanteans are a tribal culture, much concerned with matters of honor and blood. Much of their energy is spent in pursuing ages-old feuds with their neighbors. The arrival of the humans in a machine is seen by many as an opportunity, and the humans as possible allies against tribal enemies. Into this political chaos the human explorers arrive, and they quickly find themselves negotiating in the name of their nation.

After some missteps, deaths, and the start of war, a tenuous relationship is established with the largest of the Atlantean tribes. So begins an exchange of ideas and trade, kept as secret as possible from the rest of the great powers.

1837: Hegel's Philosophy of Secret History is published posthumously by Eduard Gans. Hegel's theory of history is underpinned by his theory of *secret* history, that all recorded events, while seemingly encompassed by the *Geist*, are in fact equally encompassed by the *Schattengeist*, the shadow-spirit of society. These two spiritual worlds combine to form the *Weltgeist*, the "world spirit." The struggle between shadow and light is the engine which drives history, the overt and the obvious events push human history in one direction, while the secret motivators pull it in another.

Moderating between these dichotomous forces are the *Volkgeist*, great individuals such as Napoleon who can shape the *Geist* in dramatic ways, and other shadowy unnamed individuals who can shape the *Shattengeist* in equally dramatic ways. Between these two, there are those who would come to be known as Strangers. Hegel names these individuals torn between the two worlds *Gaunergeist*, spirits with no allegiance to either of history's driving forces, wild cards, rogue elements in the history of man.

His work is dismissed as rambling and incoherent (as well as dangerously paranoid) by many in the academic community, and Hegel's reputation is targeted for destruction by the world's squabbling secret masters, whose applecart he so nearly upsets. Yet his ideas have their defenders, and his final work is widely read. In the coming decades it becomes essential reading for intellectuals trying to make sense of the chaos of the late 19th century.

1837: Victoria Regina Imperiatrix. Four weeks after Her 18th birthday, Victoria is awakened to the news that Her uncle, William IV has died, and She is now Queen.

In his journal, Lord Conynham writes of bringing the news to young Victoria:

"When I informed Her that Her uncle had passed, something came over Her, almost as if I could see the aura of authority descend upon Her. She nodded Her head, and thanked me for bringing the news so promptly, and I felt uncannily proud of having Her say so. So much so, that I left with a feeling of profound disquiet, and no small fear. In Her eyes I saw something go out, some spark, and in its place something new take light, and it made me afraid."

Victoria Herself writes, "Momma woke me at 6 o'clock to tell me Conynham was here with news. He told me that my poor uncle was no more, and that I was now Queen. I told him that I knew it already."

During Her first three years of rule, Victoria seems to rely on the Whig PM Lord Melbourne for council, but doesn't seem overly discommoded when Melbourne resigns in 1839 over the rebellions of 1837 in Canada.

1839: The Bedchamber Crisis threatens Queen Victoria's political alliance with Sir Robert Peel, a Tory She had commissioned to form a new ministry. Sir Robert wishes to appoint new Ladies of the Bedchamber, attendants upon the Queen whose posts are ones of political patronage. Victoria regards the Ladies who had been appointed by the previous Whig administration as personal friends, and refuses to countenance new attendants. Sir Robert, feeling that he can not govern effectively under the restrictions placed upon him by the Queen, almost resigns his commission until Victoria invites him to a private council to discuss the matter.

When Peel emerges from his meeting with the Queen, he looks like a man who has found religion. He retracts his objections, saying that the Queen had explained Her position with such reason and sense that he felt comfortable proceeding with the new ministry. Sir Robert Peel would be one of the Queen's strongest supporters and confidants in the years to come.

1840: A Royal Wedding. On February 10, Queen Victoria weds Her first cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, whom She had met two years previously. Prince Albert isn't an especially popular choice, too German, too foreign perhaps. But he and Victoria have an immediate and profound rapport. Prince Albert (later granted the official title of Prince Consort) fills his somewhat difficult public role with grace.

Prince Albert is athletic, well educated, erudite, witty, and quite savvy at political matters. His counsel becomes invaluable to the young Queen, who knows She can always rely upon Albert to have Her interests at heart.

1840: An Assassin's Bullets shatter a happy afternoon riding on Constitution Hill for Queen Victoria and Her husband. Edward Oxford, a young man of 18, fires twice at the Queen, apparently missing both times. He is quickly apprehended and disarmed, though he thrashes and raves. Victoria, against all Her attendants' and Her husband's advice, approaches the young man, and they lock eyes for a moment. Oxford's ravings about "the last empire" quiet, and he begins to silently weep, and then is unable to meet the Queen's gaze again.

He is acquitted of High Treason due to insanity, and committed to Bethlem Hospital until 1864, when, while being transported to the newly-opened Broadmore Hospital, he himself is assassinated by an unknown man with a revolver.

This assailant turns the pistol on himself immediately after slaying Oxford. It is supposed by those who study such things that this second assassin was an Empty Man, but no evidence exists to support he was anything more than another maniac.

1840: The Queen's Displeasure. Secure in Her marriage, Victoria exerts Her royal prerogatives and banishes over a dozen members of the royal household: courtiers and privy councilors, including Sir John Conroy, who had watched over Her since Her first year. In the official edict She says, "With a new Queen, one must have new Ideas and new Approaches, and not cling so closely to times long past. We foresee great changes and great wonders for Our Kingdom, so let these changes begin with Our own Household."

Victoria had discerned that Her circles and councils had been well infiltrated by agents of secret powers, and She would not have it any longer. Resentful of Conroy's familiarity and efforts to impose his will upon Her, She lets it be known to those She banishes that She knows their purposes, and that they and their associates will hereafter be watched. In Conroy's case, She lets it be known that he is being exiled from the court for his affairs with one of Her Ladies of the Bedchamber. This added note of malice damages Conroy's reputation further, as the official reason for his banishment is so ignominious.

When Peel's Special Branch is formed the following year, they are tasked with the duty to catalog, track, and if need be, persecute secret orders and fraternal societies of domestic or foreign origin. Sir John Conroy lives the remainder of his life under constant (and obvious) surveillance, and never again enjoys the privileges of influence over the Queen.

1840: Penny Post. The age of the written word blossoms fully with the introduction of the penny post, which makes sending correspondences affordable to many more people. A great deal more of the weird and the uncanny is committed to paper now; the correspondences of the period contain references to unusual events and happenings, and the improved communication this affords begins to shed light on the world's hidden matters.

1840: Spark of Brilliance. The electric light is invented, but it will be years before it becomes widespread and easily manufactured.

1841: Secret Police for Secret Crimes. Special Branch is founded under the direction of Sir Robert Peel, who sees the need for a secret branch of the police force to handle

unconventional crime and attend to matters too sensitive or unpleasant to impose on ordinary officers of the law.

1842: Year of Assassins. Victoria is plagued by a series of assassination attempts, some clearly genuine, some perhaps the efforts of desperate, attention-seeking individuals.

In May, in St. James Park, one John Francis fires a pistol at Her Majesty, but is quickly apprehended and disarmed by police constables. When tried, his death sentence is commuted in favor of transportation.

In July, John William Bean fires his pistol at the Queen though his gun is loaded only with powder and no bullet.

In August, Francis Bell throws a homemade black-powder explosive onto the roof of the royal carriage as it passes, but Victoria's quick-thinking coachman throws the bomb away before it explodes. Bell is captured at his apartment later in the day, tried, and convicted. In light of the earlier attempts, and the belief that the attempts were encouraged by Oxford's acquittal, Bell is convicted of High Treason and sentenced to hang. He kills himself in his cell while awaiting the sentence to be carried out.

Finally, an unknown assailant fires a rifle at the Queen from a rooftop while She walks in Hyde Park. She is lightly wounded in Her side by the small-caliber bullet, but Her assailant is never captured. She quickly recovers from the injury, and as terrifying as Albert and Her entourage find the attack She seems to take it entirely in stride. In the years to follow, however, the re-opening of this wound often heralded trouble for Her Empire.

These assassination attempts lead Albert to encourage Parliament to pass the Treason Act of 1842, which grants the royal household powers to investigate possible threats to Her Majesty's safety, and to preemptively act to prevent such attempts in future. These powers are granted to Peel's Special Branch by royal decree.

1844: The Great Disappointment. The calculations of the Millerite movement promise the return of Jesus Christ on October 22, and His failure to return is devastating to the Millerites. The fanatical core become the Liberationists, a conspiracy-driven sect who decide the reason Christ failed to appear on the appointed date was that His enemies, *the* Enemy, had somehow captured the Returned Lord and were holding him. As the century wears on, the identity of the Enemy's agents changes from Catholics to the Irish to the Hindus to the Russians to the Americans, finally coming to rest upon Victoria Herself, one more mad voice among so many at century's end.

1844: Founding of Bábism. The Persian Prophet known as the Báb announces to the world his revelation of the coming of "He whom God shall make manifest," founding Bábism. The Báb is considered the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith. He also speaks of "God's Angel, come to cut out the rot of our world with fire and sword, and woe to those upon whose face Her gaze will fall."

1844: A Hunger for Revolution. Irish nationalist and writer John Mitchell writes that the potato disease which threatens the lives of millions of Irish might be an inducement to true revolution, hunger being one of the great motivators of history. His further writings on the repeal of the Acts of Union eventually see him tried and sentenced to transportation. On the eve of his sentence he mysteriously vanishes from his prison cell and is never seen again in public. He continues to write and organize from the shadows, and it is rumored he made some deal or pact with ungodly things, faerie or something worse, to preserve his freedom so long as he fights for the cause of Irish independence. Rumors of his activities continue into the early 1900s, but all describe him as he appeared in 1844, eternally as he was, eternally fighting for the Republican cause.

1845: Famine in Ireland. The Irish Potato Famine begins to be recognized by the larger world. Potatoes are the staple food crop for millions of Irish farmers and laborers who work to produce valuable grains and other exports. Even as starvation begins to take the people, Ireland remains a net exporter of food. British policy exacerbates the famine, as does trade, land use, and other systems. The famine reaches its peak in 1848. Millions are starving, hundreds of thousands are already dead. In County Tipperary one William Smith O'Brien, a member of the Young Ireland

party, and founding member of the Irish Confederation, leads displaced farmers in an open rebellion against the landowners. The situation only worsens.

1845: London's Secret Monarch. The Turk begins its reign over the London underworld, organizing the city's crime and vice with its mechanical prescience. The Turk becomes fully engaged for the first time, the very limits of its mechanical genius challenged by the complexities of this new game. Mr. Turk becomes something of a legend, and not everyone in official circles wishes him exposed or removed. It is reasoned that a certain amount of crime is unavoidable, and if this Mr. Turk can so well organize it that it never need blight the lives or sight of proper people and good citizens, then in the end, how could it be an evil? If the Turk were capable of it, he would smirk with satisfaction at how well his human pawns perform the moves he dictates for them.

1846: Potato Blight Nearly Averted. Amateur mycologist the Rev. M. J. Berkeley recognizes the Irish potato blight as a fungal condition. Berkeley experiments with several formulations, and concocts a cheap powdered agent which will purge afflicted potatoes of the blight. Before he can publish his results or solicit the charitable contributions needed to purchase the agent in large quantities, he is murdered in the street by an assailant identified as Alvis Monroe, an unemployed laborer and known drunkard. When apprehended (after attempting to commit suicide with the knife used to slay Rev. Berkeley), Monroe is found to be blank—emptied off all thought. When the report reaches London, the headlines read "Empty Man Strikes Again!" Without Rev. Berkley's antifungal agent, over a million Irish die of starvation in the next five years, and millions more abandon their homeland to seek fortune in other lands.

1847: The *Strange*. Thomas Babington Macaulay (Whig MP for Edinburgh) coins the term *"Strange"* in a letter written to the *Edinburgh Review.*

1848: Power to the People. A decade of revolutionary politics is distilled and published in the Communist Manifesto. It includes the reference to the Strange: "Those possessed of means and abilities beyond the ken of other mortals may seem to stand above their fellow workers, being a natural-born elite (or a natural under-class, to be exploited), but these powers are not a thing for the aggrandizement of the self, but a call to greater service to communal concerns."

1849: Strife in the Otherworld. The assassination of Lord Seigh Mulligan, the Faerie Regent of Ireland, throws the Otherworld into chaos. The lords and ladies of Faerie lose all cohesion and begin scrabbling for power, fighting small wars in the Otherworld, which imprint upon the real world as rebellions and outbreaks of mad violence. The factional common faerie, with their nationalistic drives inherited from the Republican humans they so admire, begin chafing for all-out rebellion. Only the official visit of Queen Victoria Herself to Ireland brings calm.

With a newly awakened awareness of the Otherworld, She peers across the landscape and sees what has been wrought there. The Faerie Lords take the wasting Irish farmers into their service, even as they fade away from their mortal lives. The more they weaken, the more their shades grow strong in the Otherworld, and the harder their inhuman masters work them in their fields to grow the weird crops of those uncanny lands. Her Majesty is plainly outraged.

Within the Otherworld, Her awakening Grace is a physical force, a beacon to the half-dead Irish souls who labor. Infuriated by the abuse of Her subjects by these inhuman beings, She raises the call to all the dead and dying: "Rally! Rally to your Queen, and rise!" Inspired by Victoria's luminous presence, the shades take up weapons of light and faith, and follow Victoria to war.

In the waking world, Victoria's entourage keeps the Queen's uncanny actions as much a secret as they can, though meddlers from the Kerberos Club puzzle out the nature of Her absence from official events, and offer what aid they might in Her fight.

Prince Albert is deeply upset by his wife and love's Strangeness; the manner She adopts when looking into the Otherworld is terrible, imperious, and icily inhuman. Though he can not see it, the punishments She imposes on captured Irish Faerie Lords are horrific.

Victoria calls the loyal faerie to Her, playing rivals against one another until She amasses the forces needed to crush all opposition. By the end of the season Her alliance fights and wins, and She claims the ancient rights to the Throne of Briar, the seat of the Irish faerie monarch. With Her army of ghosts and loyal faerie knights, She assumes the title of Queen of Faerie, a crown which had not been held since Queen Titania's assassination by British protestant magi during Elizabeth I's reign.

Victoria's later discoveries about the nature of the Famine, and those conspirators who engineered it, do not shake Her will to keep Ireland in the Union, nor the wisdom of Her assumption of the Faerie crown. It does lead to certain reprisals against those who had calculated the million Irish deaths needed to gain Her these honors and prerogatives. Over the next decade She will push for political reform, and replace the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland with one tasked with relieving Irish suffering. Her popularity in Ireland remains high, and even among the serious Republicans She is never regarded as the problem—rather the politicians in London are. She even goes so far as to establish a Royal Residence in Killarney, a move which continues to reinforce Her popularity among Irish human and inhuman.

When Victoria emerges from the Otherworld Albert is mightily relieved to see Her sweetness return. She is Herself again. But he will never forget Her terrible aspect when the mask of the Strange descended over Her.

1849: The Speed of Light. French scientist Hippolyte Fizeau, a member of the Société Scientifique Impériale, determines a method of accurately measuring the speed of light. He then proves that this speed can not be exceeded by any known method, but can be *circumvented*, a process by which an object is made to vanish from one location, and to appear in another before the light carrying the image of the first location reaches the second location. He is assisted in his investigations by a mysterious French Stranger called only Mirage, a man who claims he can vanish and reappear anywhere he had ever previously been, traveling in an instant.

1850: Victoria Needs No Protector. After several years of quiet, the assassins once again threaten the Queen. Ex-military officer Robert Pate leaps into Victoria's carriage, shoots Her companion, and strikes Her with his pistol three times. His blows crush Her bonnet, but before a fourth can land She catches his descending wrist, meets his eyes, and then crushes his bones by closing Her hand around them. The Queen is entirely unharmed, and Pate is captured and handed over to Special Branch.

The story of the Queen fending off the assassin spreads and is widely reported. It becomes one more indication that Her Majesty is becoming something greater than merely human.

Robert Pate is never seen or heard from again.

1850: London Grows Greater. The population of London has more than doubled since 1800, and sits around two million five hundred thousand. More than two-thirds of these people were not born in the city. The population is majority female, and young. Birthrates are climbing, and infant mortality is declining. People from every corner of the world live and work in London.

1850–1865: The Taiping Rebellion begins in southern China against the Qing government. It is led by two self-professed mystics, Hong Xiuquan, an unorthodox Christian convert claiming to be the immortal brother of Jesus Christ, and Yang Xiuqing, a former salesman who claims to speak with the voice of God. Their claims to supernatural power are not independently verified until 1860, but both possess a remarkable capacity for imposing their wills upon others.

Together, they establish the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, and by 1865 control significant portions of southern China. While ostensibly one of the most egalitarian governments in the world (society is officially classless and sexless, with land held by the administration, and women admitted to the army and civil service) it is horribly mismanaged, with most efforts being spent keeping the two-million man army in discipline and supply. Brutality, corruption, and misrule are endemic, even as Hong and Yang begin to assume a demagogical role, claiming divine parentage, inspiration, and powers. Still, those who they

personally influence remain frantically loyal, and utterly without mercy when dealing with the Kingdom's enemies.

The greatest violence of the Taiping Rebellion coincides with the American Civil War, when Europe's eyes were not turned East. The final fall of the Heavenly Kingdom is hastened by its defeat when marching against Shanghai by combined Imperial forces and Major-General Charles George Gordon's army, British forces sent to protect British interests in China and to fight the second Opium War. Gordon's troops are equipped with the Lorica Victoria—armor (page 128) which renders them nearly invulnerable to the small arms of the Heavenly Army. This is the first wartime use for the miraculous armor, but not the last.

By the end, the death toll of the 15 years of violence tops twenty million souls.

1850: Conservation of Energy. William Thomson, 1st Baron Kelvin, publishes a paper detailing his experimental observations related to the theories of James Prescott Joule in which he concludes that "… via the conversion of heat to mechanical energy and the inverse of this process, every system bleeds a portion of its motive energy in the form of one or the other, eventually resulting in the system achieving equilibrium of motion and temperature. Overcoming this inevitable loss would require *compensation*, the injection of new energy into the system. This would in essence be an act of *creation*. And with this essential conservation of energy being a provable fact, such an act must by definition be *divine*, or possessing a similar, if more limited, capacity to the *Almighty*, as with Subject C's ability to generate heat to the point of combustion."

In one paper, Lord Kelvin establishes the law of conservation of energy, and establishes the circumstances in which that law might be broken, in essence, by a *god*. His own theological views color his interpretation of the science and his experiments with three Touched individuals (one who could start fires, one who could rejuvenate diseased and aged flesh—even restoring life to dead tissue—and one who could move short distances without passing through the intervening space) led him to believe that such violations of natural law were due to the influence of a higher power, and energy entering the universe from *outside*. While it is never confirmed, some suspected Kelvin of consorting with the Kerberos Club.

1851: New Birmingham. With Her title and throne secure in the Otherworld, Victoria personally finances the establishment of a permanent British colony in Faerie. Off of Ireland's Southern coast, behind a veil of constant mist, the settlement of New Birmingham is founded. Powerful economic and industrial powers are informed of the new territory and offered a Crown charter to establish the colony. Experts in Faerie Law are recruited to negotiate with the lesser common faerie, and enormous drogue stones marked with the signs of Victoria's rulership establish the boundaries of the colony.

The drogues (similar in metaphysical design to Egyptian obelisks, henge stones, or the stone anchors found atop Mount Ararat) create a zone of stability within the phantasmagoria of Faerie, bringing enough sanity to allow daily life to be lived and men to be about their business.

The journey to New Birmingham is somewhat uncertain, and extremely perilous without the ship carrying a drogue aboard. The colony, so geographically close to the center of British power and manufacturing, yet so easily secured, becomes a favorite place to exile those Touched. Let them fight the wild faerie and the Strange things lurking beyond the drogue wall, pushing the region of British control. Perhaps they will win their fortunes and add to British might. Perhaps they will perish. Either way, their energies are at worst harmlessly dispersed.

Escape without a drogue stone is difficult. The mists are confusing, distorting perception as well as time and space. One criminal who dives from the deck of the ship which brought him, trusting in his powerful physique to allow him to swim back to the mainland, finds when he arrives that twenty years have passed, and it is 1881. His wife married another man and bore him children, finally dying of typhus in 1875. All his friends are either dead or gone, and the world itself had changed out of all recognition. He surrenders to the authorities, and is sentenced again to transportation for his escape.

The colony becomes the engine which drives the

consumer explosion later in the century. As the industrial exploitation of Faerie becomes more and more efficient, goblin-crafted goods flood British and world markets, extremely well made, with extremely low costs.

Only in the dying years of the century will the dire consequences of this exploitation be reaped.

1851: Her Majesty's Strangeness begins to alarm Her husband, the Prince Consort. Victoria increasingly takes an active hand in politics, and approves some measures which Albert finds questionable. She is also becoming more remote, more alien to him, and Her skin is becoming, as he would write decades later, "…cool to the touch, a skin of marble." While She still has great affection for Albert, even that is cooling. And sometimes She altogether frightens him. Since Her troubled time in Ireland, and the assassination attempt of 1850, there is something positively inhuman about Her. Something terrible.

The growing estrangement between the previously loving couple can not be kept secret, and only grows through the decade. It leads to a certain general anxiety which possibly encourages the resurgence of conservative social trends after the Crimean War.

1852: Man Takes Flight. Henri Giffard, a French engineer and aeronautical pioneer, flies a lighter-than-air craft lifted by hydrogen with propellors turned by a small steam engine. When reports of the flight reach British inventor Sir George Cayley, they inspire him to begin examining the possibility of a craft combining the lifting properties of an airship with the then-theoretical properties of fixed-wing flight. Even at the advanced age of 79 he is driven beyond any of his previous efforts, and throws his fortune behind what becomes known as the Cayley Airframe.

Unlike a balloon or airship, which derives its lift entirely from the lighter-than-air gasses contained in the bag, a Cayley Airframe employs lifting gas to offset only a portion of its total weight. His experiments set this to about two-thirds in most situations. The remainder of the lift is provided by the unique shape of the airframe itself, which encloses the gas cells and sports stumpy wings. The tail of the craft is short, and provides horizontal stability. When the first manned models are tested in 1855, the press dubs them "Flying Pumpkin Seeds" due to their distinct shape.

Cayley and his engineer Thomas Vick work unceasingly on the airframe, perfecting the internal support structure, owes much to suspension bridges for its strength. They contract the creation of reinforced materials to serve as gas bags. They invest in small steam engines to drive airscrews, and then in electric motors. The final result of two years of non-stop effort is the *Gull*, the world's first production-model flying machine.

Twenty meters long, with a carrying capacity of nearly half a ton, the *Gull* is directed in its flight with a cable-controlled series of planes and elevators. Before more of the craft can be produced, Cayley dies, and Vick is contacted by agents of the Crown to work on a project for the state, HMAS *Queen*.

1852: Volta's Folly. William Volta, inventor and alleged illegitimate son of Alessandro Volta, demonstrates to the British Army's purchasing agents the Electrophorus Firing Piece, a complex pistol-like device which is capable of generating a concentrated static charge across distances of up to twenty paces. "With the refinements possible through further research and testing, I can confidently say that the effective range of the Electrophorus Firing Piece can be increased to dwarf those of a conventional rifled shoulder-arm, and further, the advantages of this new application of my theory of recursive charging loops make it possible for a single private soldier to carry enough ammunition in his pack for an entire campaign, freeing him of the chains of supply."

While Volta's firing piece is remarkable, it is too great a departure for the hidebound army, and not powerful or long-reaching enough for the navy. His efforts are further frustrated by an inability to convey to listeners just what his theories mean, or how the firing piece actually works. It seems plain to him, but baffling nonsense to others. Yet the pistol can indeed stun a horse insensible with a single charge. In the end Volta fails to interest the military authorities, and his research flounders for lack of funding.

Then, in the winter of 1852 an advertisement appears in several major British newspapers offering the "Voltaic Lightning Pistol" for sale as "A Kingly Defense for the English Home." But the difficulties in translating the esoteric

Zeus' Thunderbolt in Common Hands

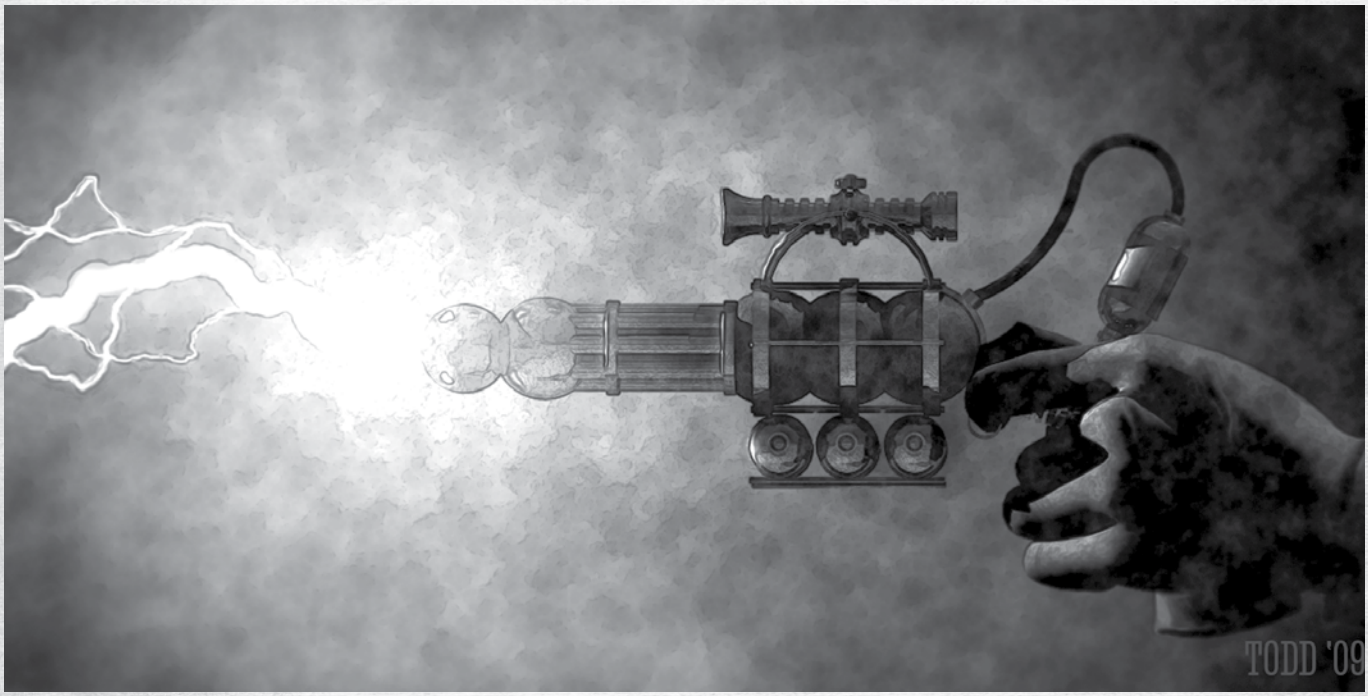
The *electrophorus firing piece* is an example of the trouble that can be had when a Stranger's inspired inventions are made in such a way that the common person can use them, or worse, manufacture them. Once something like this escapes it is remarkably difficult to see it put back away, and by the 1850s even the Kerberos Club is finding it impossible to contain outbreaks of the *strange* like this.

ELECTROPHORUS FIRING PIECE

Equipment: (Empowered: Extraordinary Tier Marksmanship, Aspect: Unerring Accuracy, Aspect: Only Occasionally Lethal)

No muss, no fuss, and only occasionally lethal—no wonder the weapon proves so popular with the gang of robbers who adopt it as their signature armament. They can strike down a target from concealment and then rob him blind in the street. It is a surer way of rendering a victim helpless than striking him with a cosh or life-preserver.

The firing piece becomes a symbol of power in London's criminal underworld as it became rarer towards the later decades of the century. The slang for one of these weapons is *spark*, and the Cockney rhyme for it is "on the mark," leading to expressions like "Not to worry lads, I've got it on," meaning, "Do not concern yourself, for I am armed with an Electrophorus Firing Piece."



science into practical design set the price beyond the reach of even the gadget-obsessed middle class. By the middle of the next year Voltaic Firearms is out of business, and its remaining stock of firing pieces dumped into the secondary market at cut-rate prices by solicitors for the company's creditors. By the end of 1853, the fifth of the so-called "Lightning Outrages" had occurred, victims stunned insensible and robbed blind in the streets. By this point Volta had vanished from Britain, and agents of the courts or those seeking to bring suit against him could find him nowhere.

1853: The Howling 13th. Ever enamored by the conjunction of magic and industry, Prince Albert presents Victoria with a gift of a dozen *Wolfriemen*, or Wolf Belts, folk-objects of great magical power from Coburg where Albert was born. When worn, a Wolf Belt transforms a person into a huge wolf, sometimes as large as a pony. They were traditionally the providence of witches and evil men who sold their souls for power, but the Prince's alchemical engineers found a way to replicate the belts, and in the process of deciphering how they functioned rendered their use morally and spiritually neutral. Used to bring terror, they are objects of evil; used to defend the good, they are righteous. Queen Victoria commissions the creation of Wolfriemen enough to equip a regiment, and Her Lupine Rangers soon become the vanguard of Her armies, scouting, foraging, skirmishing, and raiding.

1854: Holy War in the Crimea. Through the perturbations of treaty and alliance, Britain finds itself supporting ally France in its claims as protector of the Holy Land. Napoleon III applies diplomatic pressure and has the Ottoman Empire declare France the sole sovereign authority over the Holy Land. Russia immediately objects, holding earlier treaties from the 1700s granting them the status as defender of the Christian Faith. France ups the ante by dispatching warships to the Black Sea, and forces a new agreement denying Russia their claims in the Holy Land. Tsar Nicholas I responds by deploying troops along the Danube.

A flurry of diplomatic moves and military posturing follows, finally culminating in an attack on Russian troops along the Danube by Ottoman forces, and the attack of Ottoman ships at anchor by the Russian navy. This gives Britain and France the justification to join the armed hostilities fully, and soon it is war.

1854: The Engines of War. The Crimean War sees the advent of many new technologies, some of them military applications of civilian innovations such as railroads and telegraph lines, and some unique to the theaters of war, such as the electrically-triggered Russian contact mines used to form naval blockades in defense of Cronstadt and Sebastopol. And still Stranger things found their way onto the battlefields.

The graying British sea-wolf Thomas Cochrane proposes a steam-driven armored land vehicle, the proposal for which arrives on the desk of an Army official at the same moment Henry Bessemer's concept for a spin-stabilized rocket-propelled artillery projectile. Both prospects have their drawbacks. Cochrane's machine is seen initially as inhuman. War was the realm of men struggling against men, and the thought of mechanizing war like a Birmingham mill offends many of the hidebound old guard deeply.

But these and other innovations find a champion in Sir William Bellfore, a charismatic and energetic officer whose duties include certain particular exigencies related to the application of Strange matters to Her Majesty's armed forces. The young colonel is said to have the ear of the Prince Consort.

When Bessemer threatens to take his concept to the French for development, Bellfore acts, securing Bessemer funds for the development of his innovation. The difficulties in casting an iron gun barrel strong enough to contain the forces required to fire this new type of projectile result in the creation of Bessemer's famous process by which steel could be more cheaply manufactured. Working feverishly, and prodded along by Bellfore's constant attention, he completes the first of the infamous Bessemer Volcanic Guns by the end of the year.

The aptly-named Volcanic guns fire a ten-inch rocket down a long rifled barrel made from Bessemer's refined steel. The spin imparted to the rockets overcomes the inherent instability common to rocket projectiles, and the astonishing velocities carried by the projectiles allow extremely flat ballistic trajectories across long ranges. Each rocket

with canisters of grapeshot for use against massed troops. The roar and gout of flames generated by the guns' firing becomes a horror for the defenders of Sevastopol.

Parallel to the development of Bessemer's guns is work on a method of carrying the out-sized artillery and its rocket-propelled explosive projectiles. Ever wily, Cochrane has already patented the most viable design for such transport along with his collaborator on the Tunneling Shield machine, Sir Marc Isambard Brunel. The Cochrane-Brunel Mechanized Gun-Carriage draws together the work of earlier innovators and adds new refinements. The final result is a terrifying machine, larger than two steam locomotives and driven by two parallel linked metal tracks based on James Boydell's "Infinite Railway Tracks."

The tracks are extremely wide to bear the weight of the machine on soft ground. The machine is armored like an ironclad warship, and when first seen on the battlefield it is called simply The Monster. Its crew must communicate with signs, as the engines are so loud as to make speech impossible.

The Monster's twin steam engines are fired by bitumen and based on Cochrane's own design. Its maximum speed is at best a fast marching pace, but it can maintain this pace over extremely rough terrain. Before the end of the war, seven Cochrane-Brunel Mechanized Gun-Carriages are constructed and five see service.

A special landing craft must be constructed to transport the Carriages, and of the five machines which see service, two are lost when their sea craft capsizes during the landing at Sevastopol. The remaining three Carriages and their hellish armaments aid in the winning of a decisive end to the siege of Sevastopol in June of 1855.

Correspondent for the *Times*, William Howard Russell, writes of the Volcanic Guns and the Monster which bears them, "…They advanced in a line of three, quickening the pace as they closed towards the massed defenders.… At the distance of 1,500 yards the great guns rose on their articulated mounts, and from their iron throats, a flood of fire, and the roaring of the emerging shells, driven on a column of flame and smoke.… So loud was this firing that the officers were pressed to keep order in the ranks, and their mounts beneath them, and none cheered these terrible monsters, though they be chained into British service against Her enemies."

1854: Wolves of Crimea. The 13th Lupine Rangers see their first active service in the Crimean War. Fresh and raw, the hand-picked solders and officers are selected for their personal loyalty to Prince Albert, their patriotism and their mental stability, but even their truly supernatural powers cannot compensate entirely for the incompetence of the British command. In truth, the Earl of Cardigan simply doesn't know what to do with the unconventional regiment, and thoroughly resents having "damned unnatural dogs" foisted upon him.

Are they cavalry? Fusiliers? Skirmishers? He gravely insults the commander of the Lupine Rangers at table, a colonel of Canadian origin named Sir Albert Brennan, by commenting to his staff officers loud enough for the whole mess tent to hear, "And what am I to do with the Prussian dogs? I might use them to hunt, but the game is damned thin on the ground hereabouts, and so they just whine for attention and bark 'til I put the boot to them."

The Rangers continue to go without clear mission, serving mostly as pickets and sentries (a job they do exceptionally well, being able to smell the difference in friend and foe). All Colonel Brennan's efforts to see them better used fail until the notorious Battle of Balaclava, where the 13th sees its name writ large in British military history and the popular imagination. For the first time, entirely unconventional and indeed Strange soldiers make a decisive difference.

When orders come to Lord Cardigan to secure Russian batteries and keep the Russians from carrying off the guns, he assumes the order refers to the batteries at the end of the valley between Fedyukhin Heights and the Causeway Heights, when it actually refers to the small batteries along the ridge of the Causeway Heights.

Cardigan orders his Light Brigade into full charge, down a long incline, and into the teeth of the Russian guns in a foolhardy and ill-conceived action, and almost immediately the Russian guns make a butcher's shop of the advancing cavalry. Left behind without clear orders, Brennan is quoted as saying, "Damned fool, damned fool!" before ordering his men to assume their wolfen posture. He directs two detachments to ascend the ridges on either side

Wolfriemen



Wolf Form (2 Refresh, 15 skill points in trappings)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Stress Capacity [Health] (4), Resist Damage (4), Environment [Cold and Wet Weather] + Unusual: Share trapping with one target in contact with self (2), Strike (2), Move (2), Leap (2), Notice (2), Initiative [Physical] (2), Examine + Range [1 zone] (3), Physical Force (2)
Minor Transformation (-1): Full Action, replace one aspect with "Huge Wolfen Beast"
Conviction (-1): Go for the Throat
Minor Focus (-1)
Major Snag (-2): If someone nearby calls the wearer's true name, the wearer transforms back into his normal form and the skill is unavailable until the wearer is able to transform again
Major Snag (-2): No speech or fine manual dexterity when Transformed
Major Snag (-2): Examine trapping limited to olfactory sense
Minor Snag (-1): Notice trapping limited to auditory and olfactory senses
Minor Snag (-1): Environment trapping limited to withstanding elements

AVAILABLE TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health]
Armor 2 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence
Move 2 zones as a Free Action (running)
Move 2 zones as a Free Action (leaping)

The Wolfriemen transforms the wearer into a five to six hundred pound wolf, terrifying and huge. In wolf form a ranger can sprint at incredible speeds track by scent alone. The thick fur coat protects the wearer better than an arctic explorer's gear, and his great size and mass makes him extremely hard to injure.

It is difficult to take the Wolfriemen away from a transformed ranger, since the belt and the ranger's clothing are replaced by the enormous wolf; but if one calls the proper name of the ranger it forces him to transform back into his normal form. This is why members of Her Majesty's 13th Lupine Rangers adopt new names when they join the regiment, and have their official records sealed for the duration of their service. These records are vital military secrets and are subject to a great deal of intrigue.

There are reports of some who suffer unfortunate side effects from wearing the Wolfriemen for extended periods, but such rumors are squelched. To the common people, the Lupine Rangers are heroes and patriots of the first order. Unfortunately, there is some truth to the rumor, thus the Conviction aspect of "Go for the Throat."

of the valley and silence the batteries there which pound the cavalry, and the rest to follow his lead.

Using their supernatural speed the Rangers out-pace the charging cavalry, skirting the edge of the Fedyuknin Heights for the cover it provides from the batteries, and engage the Russian artillery position fully minutes before Cardigan's force arrives. The slaughter is phenomenal, and after an initial devastating volley of grapeshot tears into the Rangers the Russians break and run before their remorseless teeth and claws. The fleeing Russian gunners slam into the advancing Russian cavalry, with the wolves of the 13th on their heels. The Russian cavalry break en masse, the riders losing all control to the maddened



horses suddenly confronted by nearly a hundred howling, enormous, bloody, nearly bulletproof wolves.

The shock of the assault shatters the Russian lines, and when the Light Brigade arrives at the gun redoubt it is left with mopping up and holding ground. Despite horrific early casualties—more than half its men are slain—the Light Brigade is saved the worst of it by Brennan's quick action. Of the 200 men and officers of the 13th Lupine Rangers, forty are dead, twenty-five further injured, but by all accounts they have bested artillery, cavalry, rifle, and well over six thousand enemy troops.

When news of the victory reaches Britain two weeks later, an account of the battle is published in a special edition of the London Gazette of 12 November 1854. It reveals the confusion and seeming incompetence of the British command, but also highlights the awesome success of the Rangers. The 13th becomes a sensation, and the third and fourth stanzas of Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* immortalize the action:

3.
Cannon to right of them
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
But along the ridge and swell,
opened the Jaws of Death
To drag Russian souls to Hell
Shielding the six hundred.

4.
Flash'd all their fangs bare,
Flash'd as howls cut the air,
Mauling the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd a clawing stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Their golden stare, the lines a'broke
Awaiting the six hundred.

In the ensuing enquiries, Brennan speaks out against Ragnan and Lucan and especially Cardigan, who tries to have charges brought against him for dereliction of duty and violation of orders (charges which are summarily dismissed). Brennan's outspoken criticism of the Army's

patronage policy, allowing the purchase of commissions, wins him no friends in the service, though it helps push reforms which see the end to these practices.

The 13th Rangers go on to see service in America, India, Afghanistan, and even on the home front during the Automechanical Mutiny of 1888. The Rangers never number more than 200; the difficulty in creating the wolf-belts prevents there ever being more. The belts of fallen men are always retrieved when possible. The noted failure to do so during Balaclava leads to several being captured by the Russians, and at least one falling into the hands of Section Seven. This leads to the creation of Russia's feared Wolf Brigade, a force of over two thousand men able to assume the form of wolves. Their inferior wolf-charms grant them less power than those of the 13th, and the forms they assume are like those of ordinary mortal wolves—but the charms are far easier to manufacture.

1855: Dr. Livingstone, I Presume. David Livingstone arrives at what he will soon name the Victoria Falls, believing himself to be the first European to see this wonder, only to find a dapper Cockney gent topped up in London's most garish fashions picnicking with his mistress and her terriers. Flustered and shocked, Livingstone insists on an explanation, but accepts the offer of a glass of wine with the couple. "Don't feel bad, guv'nor. Me and Madge came the short way round, didn't we Madge? No time for all this trekking and whatnot. Me, I got to be back at Finsbury Park by teatime to see a man about a whistle. You want a lift back to civilisation, old son?"

Livingstone does not include this account in his official record of the expedition, but relates it to his friends and family after suffering an apoplectic fit when he sees the same man back in London several years later.

1856: Engines of Commerce. Babbage Computational constructs its first calculation mill, and begins construction of a telegraphic network to connect it to the centers of industry in London. The first mills are driven by coal-fired steam engines, but later mills are situated along rivers and use water wheels and turbines to drive the calculation. When the telegraphic cables are strung mills can be located almost anywhere, but this necessitates the creation of switching stations, junctions of cables which pass through a dedicated computational machine which routs signals through the proper line. The encoding schemes developed for this operation become a standard which allows the development of the televocagraphic encoder and similar devices. These machines can each convert one form of information—the spoken word, for example—into machine code which a computational brain can comprehend directly.

1857–1858: Rebellion in India brings the downfall of the East India Company and the Timurid dynasty, leading to direct rule by the British Government, the British Raj as it would become known. The long resentment of an occupied nation is ignited into open rebellion among native troops and citizenry. While much is made of the lubricating fats used in the cartridges of the Enfield rifle, in truth the causes of the rebellion run much deeper. Long-building anger at the Company and British rule leads to an especially brutal outbreak of violence, the reports of which shock the British citizenry when reported in Britain. This leads to especially brutal reprisals by British forces. India is aflame.

1857: The Queen Bleeds for Her Kingdom. On May 10th, Victoria awakens from a nap to find Her face streaked and Her gown soaked with blood. At the very moment the 11th and 20th native cavalry of the Bengal Army turn on their commanders and begin the first open act of armed rebellion in India, wounds open in Her body and blood runs freely at Her side, hands, and upon Her head where Her crown would rest. Initially terrified, She becomes aware that She can *feel* the strife, as if it were within Her own flesh.

With each further escalation of the violence, Her condition worsens. Her husband is crippled with worry, Her physicians baffled, and Her councilors concerned about the political implications. News of this magnitude can not be kept entirely from the public ear.

The British retaliation is perhaps worse for the Queen than the rebellion. Each act of brutality, mass execution, atrocity, or horror perpetrated in Her name hardens Her, Her skin growing paler like marble, yet the wounds

continuing to bleed.

Word of the Queen's illness reaches the public in early 1858, and the national spirit is brought lower still, until finally Victoria, changed by Her affliction, rises from Her couch and demands to speak before Parliament and damn the propriety or precedent.

Not even Her husband can meet Her eyes.

1858: Victoria Imposes Order. Visibly weak and swaying, with Her stigmata still slowly dripping blood, Victoria stands before Parliament and spreads Her arms to show the wounds She bears. Her unnatural presence beats upon the perception of the members, and She speaks to them in plain language, unrehearsed and raw. She orders the conflict in India brought to a close. She demands that those among Her subjects who perpetuated the horrors She felt committed over the previous year be brought to justice. She demands an end to the rule of the East India Company, a total revocation of their charter to operate, and criminal sanctions for its controlling members.

The whole spectacle is shocking, a violation of all propriety, and the Queen Herself is terrifying. When Lord Palmerston tries to gently intervene and guide the clearly addled monarch from the room, She turns upon him and coldly orders him to step back and "Never speak in my presence again." It is an order which proves *impossible* for Palmerston to disobey.

She then turns to the assembled leaders of the nation and says, "I am Britannia. Let any man who loves me come forward, and receive my blessing."

As if mesmerized, dozens of Parliament members come forward and kneel before the Queen to be marked upon their shoulders by Her bloody hands. Among those who come forward is Benjamin Disraeli, and among those who resist the Queen's influence is William Gladstone. Finally, near collapse, Victoria allows Herself to be escorted back to Windsor Castle.

The whole episode is too sensational, too amazing to escape the public attention. It shocks the public into wakefulness, makes them pay attention to the weird stories and episodes and seemingly unrelated events which had become more and more common throughout the century. The Strange can no longer be denied, and it will only grow in the public awareness.

The social impact of Victoria's now-obvious Strangeness is profound. Her increasingly austere public persona influences fashion, etiquette, and public discourse. The miracles of Her reign are catalogued, and almost spontaneously, it seems, the faithful of the Church of England stop praying for Her and start praying *to* Her. In politics, the so-called Royalists (the "Bloods" or "Marks") become a potent faction, drawing from every party.

In India, Victoria's political allies see the Governance of India acts of 1858 passed. These abolish the East India Company and pass control over India to the British Crown. Victoria takes an active hand in selecting the new officials who will rule in Her name and sees to it that reparations and reforms ease some of the tensions which led to the rebellion. Her mercy is backed with iron, however. By Her orders, the Foreign Office's covert branches are reinforced, lest Russia take advantage of the British troubles in India and make a knight's move in the Great Game. Spying, previously the purview of the low and the wicked, takes on some semblance of honor, though confidential intelligence work never rises to an especially exalted level of acceptance.

The year 1858 marks the definitive end of Victoria's ceremonial and traditional role as British monarch, and the start of Her true rulership. After 1858, no one doubts where the true power of the Empire lays.

1858: Congratulations, Mr. President. Babbage Computational introduces the Vocographic Encoder, a device which converts speech into telegraphic signal and then back into audible (if somewhat flat) speech. Combined with their earlier Multiplex Signal Carrier (a device permitting many simultaneous transmissions on the same telegraphic cable), a single telegraphic line can carry spoken messages, coded program strings for an Analytical Engine (or Automechanical Brain), or simple text messages for a teletype or telephotograph machine to receive.

Via the newly laid trans-Atlantic telegraph cable, on August 16 Queen Victoria speaks into the cone-like receiver of a Vocographic Encoder, sending a message of congratu-

Her Majesty's Regard



The Victoria Cross established in 1856 was more than just an honor. It was a symbol that Victoria had laid Her grace upon some worthy individual. She could sense the welfare of any whom She had so honored, and with an effort of will observe them and their actions. Finally, if Her worthies made a sacrifice of vital energy to Her, She could aid them in their efforts. In effect, each Victoria Cross is an Equipment Gift.

Equipment Gift: Victoria Cross (Aspect: "Her Majesty's Regard," Protective x2: Armor 2 [Composure]; Minor Complication: "Watched by the Queen")

lations to President Buchanan and expressing the wish that the device might provide "an additional link between nations whose friendship is founded on their common interest and reciprocal esteem." The president responds, "This triumph, which certainly exceeds any on the fields of battle, is only surpassed by the honor of hearing the voice of your Majesty speaking such congratulations."

1858: Dickens Writes of the Strangeness. In 1858, while struggling with his failing marriage, Charles Dickens writes the satirical short story "A Strange Fascination" which is dedicated to his particular friend (and likely cause for his marital troubles) Ellen Ternan.

1858: Bulletproof. Using an adaptation on the Bessemer process, Scots inventor and metallurgist John Brummund creates the composite material used to make the Lorica Victoria, the nigh-invulnerable armor which is quickly adopted by Her Majesty's armies, heavy cavalry and foot. The formula and the manufacturing techniques for the Lorica Victoria are state secrets of the highest order.

1859: Darwin's New Obsession. With the publication of *Origin of Species,* Darwin passes his outline for *The Descent of Man* to Huxley to finish for publication, and begins work on his next great passion. He titles it *Extraordinary Exceptions to Natural Science,* a series of books to explore the rising tide of the weird, occult, and superhuman. Darwin receives grant funding from the Royal Academy for this effort, and forms a research team to investigate instances of the Strange with a formalized methodology in an effort to seek out the underlying processes by which some events seem to contravene natural law.

1859: Needlework. Strange inventor Samuel Berk quits his position with Babbage Computational to pursue his own research. His obsessive interest in shamanistic visionary drugs (and his own addiction to several of them), and with the way a Vocagraphic Encoder transmutes information from one form to another, leads him to create the Needle-Actuated Hallucinogenic Somato-Sensory Visualizer.

The device is a large chair into which a user straps himself naked. It contains complex pneumatic devices and is powered by compressed air. The surface of the chair is covered with thousands of tiny holes, and nested inside these holes are thousands of needles. The Visualizer is connected to a Vocagraphic Encoder, and it converts the machine signal into patterns of needle-pricks and scrapes on a user's back, arms, and legs. This incomprehensible sensation is painful and meaningless unless a user has taken the proper dose of Berk's special drug. Something of hashish, something of opium, something of rye ergot fungus, something of Stranger, more occult things, the drug is called Somatonum, and it transforms

Armored in Righteousness



The Lorica Victoria becomes the signature of Britannia's famed Heavy Cuirassiers. The Lorica Victoria is a brightly-polished steel breastplate and matched helm made from a patented blend of metals, including such rare elements as must be extracted from mines deep in darkest Africa and from the exotic Orient. When melded with good Birmingham workmanship and Scottish industry, they become near-perfect proof against firearms of all calibers, and come to save the lives of thousands of Her Majesty's loyal soldiery.

A version of this in the form of horse barding is also made.

Equipment Gift: Lorica Victoria (Protective x3: Armor 3 [Health], Aspect: "Armor of Righteousness"; Minor Complication: "Unprotected Arms and Legs").

These Sad Old Soldiers

One unexpected result of the wide adoption of the Lorica Victoria is the dramatic increase in limb amputation suffered by Her Majesty's soldiers. More soldiers survive battle than ever before, but the arms and legs are not protected. In later conflicts against Bower and Zulu, native sharpshooters make much of these vulnerabilities, and the "African Limp" becomes a common sign of service in Her Majesty's army.

Bone-shattering bullet wounds demand fast amputation to save a soldier's life. While more and more soldiers survive war, many more come home broken in body, scarred in mind, and abandoned on the streets when no longer able to serve.

The surge in demand leads to an explosion in the prosthetics industry, and most soldiers can afford at least a well-made cork prosthesis, though the well-to-do often invest in goblin-crafted automechanical limbs which serve them nearly as well, and in some ways better, than their fleshly counterparts.

Equipment Gift: Automechanical Limb (Well-Made: +1 Brawn, Rugged: +1 Health stress box)

consciousness. In an effect similar to synesthesia, it causes a user's senses to blur into one another, especially tactile senses.

The drug induces intense hallucination, but also tunes the nerves to receive *visual* stimulus from sensations on the skin. A signal carried through the telegraph and converted through the Vocagraphic Encoder is used to shape the user's hallucination, allowing them to experience the content of the signal in a *virtual* dreamlike world. The Visualizer can receive signal from a user as well, measuring twitches and writhing with precise instruments and converting this physical motion into Vocagraphic signal.

Two users linked by these devices can share a form of communion, each within his or her own allegorical dream world but also communicating with the other. Berk found he could connect his mind directly to the Calculation Mills and influence their behavior by striving for desired goals in his vision. He causes the Bank Crisis of 1860 with just such a vision-quest, seeking to increase the value of his investments by interfering with the accounts of the trading house handling them. Instead he triggers panic in the market which nearly breaks the economy. After this, he treads more carefully.

Berk, and those few brave enough to open their minds this way, become sought-after consultants and investigators, as they are able to process large volumes of information and sift it for meaning and value.

Using a Visualizer is difficult and dangerous. Somatonum is highly addictive and causes a host of undesirable side effects, but sometimes the only way to find out what you need to know is to expose your deepest soul to the Machine.

The slang for using a Visualizer is "Needlework."

1859: Launch of HMAS *Queen*. Its construction is shrouded in secret, but finally Thomas Vick's great project is revealed to the world. Her Majesty's Air Ship *Queen* is truly awe-inspiring, nearly three hundred meters long, a hundred tall, and two hundred wide, carrying over a hundred men and up to two hundred tons of cargo aloft. It employs a refined Cayley Airframe, and can cruise at speeds of up to forty-five miles per hour and make quick dashes of up to sixty. Because of its buoyancy, it can land easily in areas as small as a few acres on its armored undercarriage, and avoids the problems of ordinary airships which must be tethered to the ground to keep them from floating away.

The world is agog at this marvel of engineering. Headlines proclaim, "Her Majesty, *Queen* of the Skies." The *Queen* officially becomes the flagship of the Navy (the branch of Her Majesty's forces judged to be best able to handle this new class of craft), and construction begins immediately on Her sister ship, as well as plans for two additional classes of "aero ship," a smaller but faster class and a heavier class intended for cargo.

Vick receives the Victoria Cross for his efforts and is knighted. Cayley is posthumously awarded the Cross as well. It is kept quiet, but the efforts to perfect the airframe left Vick hollowed out, like he invested everything he had into the project and it left him empty.

The *Queen* makes a sensational international debut at Besançon, France for the Exposition Universelle of 1860, circling the Exposition slowly at a height of a thousand feet for several hours before landing in a nearby pasture to allow a select few dignitaries and guests to come aboard and join Her Majesty for tea.

1860: On My Mother's Side, Actually. Thomas Huxley is stricken with the Martian Red Ague, as are many during the 1860s, and is unable to attend the scheduled Oxford debate with Samuel Wilberforce. In his stead, he asks his particular friend Dr. Archibald Monroe to stand in for him. It's initially regarded as a stunt and in poor taste at that, but Monroe quickly proves himself the intellectual match for Wilberforce, and with his very presence forces Wilberforce to confront the realities of Evolution as a theory which is immediately and scientifically testable.

When asked by the flustered Wilberforce, "How can we possibly accept these arguments when presented in such a sensational manner?" Monroe responds, "We live in an age of sensational truths, and so to see this one properly presented by the standards of the time, it must partake somewhat of sensationalism. I can't offer you the truth from the horse's mouth, sir, as we're not descended from horses, but I think the ape's mouth must suffice."

The debate receives broad attention, in no small part to Dr. Monroe's unusual appearance and charismatic enthusiasm. Samuel Wilberforce's reputation suffers from headlines such as "Ape Makes Monkey of Man," and the affair leads to a long, bitter rivalry between Monroe and Wilberforce which isn't resolved until Monroe's public apology to the aging academic in 1865:

"I treated him badly at our debate, and made a show of the affair when I should have approached it with proper dignity. Mr. Wilberforce is one of the great thinkers of our age, and I failed to show him the deference he deserved, and hope one day to reconcile with him. The whole discipline of science and enquiry suffers when men of learning harbor personal animosity, and my own intellectual life has suffered greatly from my estrangement from Mr. Wilberforce."

Wilberforce replies, "Handsomely said."

In 1873, Dr. Monroe speaks at Wilberforce's funeral, saying, "While we may never have agreed on many things, he stood up for his beliefs, and fought for them, and in this life there can be few finer things. I cherished his opposition as most men cherish friendship."

1860: Sally Go Round the Sun, Sally Go Round the Moon. In January of 1860, Sally Sheldon steps from her home in Streatham and feels inspired by all the Strange news in the papers to reveal the talent she'd kept hidden for over a decade. Rather than take the train from Streatham Hill railway station into London for her day's shopping, she flies. Taking to the air under her own power by daylight as she'd only done previously and secretly during the dark of the night (inspiring stories of the Streatham Specter), she flies along the rail line and arrives in Charing Cross in minutes.

The five-mile flight inevitably

HMAS Queen

The *Queen* is an example of super-human invention combined with mundane ingenuity. The principles it is based upon are valid. It doesn't employ baffling pseudo-science to function. However, its capacities are far beyond the technology of the age—or would have been, were it not for the investment of superhuman effort.

The Cayley Airframe, a hybrid of heavier-than-air aerodynamic principles and lighter-than-air buoyancy, is the real miracle. Changes to the basic design are possible, but require equally inspired individuals to do so.

HMAS Queen

Aspects: A Miracle of Modern Engineering, Death From Above, Armor Cladding, Prodigious Size, Minor Complication: Thirty-Two-Man Crew

Skills: Great (+4) Engineering (E), Good (+3) Bridge (E), Fair (+2) Hull (E)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS (TRAPPINGS)

Engineering (Move + Unusual: Flight, Physical Force; Minor Snag: Physical Force only applies to lifting capacity)

Hull (Stress Capacity [Health], Resist Damage)

Bridge (Shoot + Range x3 [7 zones] + Zone; Major Snag: Can only attack targets directly below the HMAS Queen)

GIFTS

Equipment x2: Armor Cladding (Rugged x3: +3 Health stress boxes, Protective x2: Armor 2 [Health], Essential: +1 Trifling consequence)

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 1 [Health]

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO OO OOO
Trifling:
Trifling:

Functions

The basic, unarmed *HMAS Queen* can make 60 miles per hour when it needs to, can carry nearly 130 tons of cargo, and is armored enough to withstand most artillery.

Before it sees military service, some of its capacity is filled with armaments, mostly in the form of explosive and incendiary bombs. It can fly high enough so that no conventional weapon can strike it, and then rain down death from above without recourse. While maneuvering as part of a fleet operation (as with the invasion of the United States), an air ship like the *Queen* will resupply from its surface ship accompaniment so as to continue a bombardment.

Later models have larger carrying capacity, higher speed, novel or miraculous armament, more automation. Consider using one or more Equipment Gifts for these: +1 Engineering skill with lifting capacity, +1 Engineering skill with flight speed, Weapon 2 [Health] with Bridge attacks, and so on. Tack on a pressured cabin (the Environment [Outer Space] trapping) and an Aetheric Drive (teleportation in the form of adding Leap + Unusual: Does not cross intervening space to the Engineering skill) and you can turn the HMAS Queen from an Airship into a Spaceship. Fancy a jaunt to Saturn, my dear?

There simply isn't anything to compare to one of Her Majesty's air ships.

At least until Graff Zeppelin puzzles out how to manufacture one.

attracts enormous attention.

Mrs. Sheldon's new fame is not to her somewhat retiring husband's liking, however, and he demands she refrain from such undignified public displays in future. But having experienced the pure exultant joy of flight, she refuses. Marital conflict arises, and her husband's demands for her to keep her "damned uncanny ways" secret finally lead to divorce, facilitated by the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act which permits divorce through the courts rather than the previous process, which required a wife to prove her husband guilty of grievous violations of the marriage covenant.

The proceedings are sensational news: "Flying Lady Flies From Husband" and "The One That Flew Away." In the aftermath, Mr. Sheldon emigrates to Australia, and the newly liberated Mrs. Sheldon (now known by her maiden name of Kenner) finds herself with a surplus of time and an inadvertent public persona as a champion for the cause of woman's rights.

She doesn't become one of the movement's great thinkers or innovators, but always guarantees attention for the cause. She continues her work in this area through the end of the century.

1860: A Royal Separation. It becomes impossible for the Queen and Her household to keep the estrangement between Her and the Prince Consort from the public eye. In the spring of the year, Albert moves his personal rooms and bedchamber to another wing in the palace. The official reason given is to allow Albert to better contend with the many matters political and scientific demanding his attention. No one believes this polite fiction, but reputable papers were careful in their reporting of it.

1860: The Servant of the Future, Today. Early in the year, Ada Lovelace's Automechanical Man is presented to the Royal Society. By the middle of the year they are being offered for sale as "Automatic Domestics," tireless servants who will never steal the silver, speak out of turn, neglect their duties or sleep. Demand outstrips supply, and the fortunes of Babbage Computational rise meteorically.

1860: The Broken Union. In the United States, the Confederacy of slave-owning states secedes from the Union. The reasons are complex, but at their root are the issue of slavery, and all the economic and social ramifications of the foul institution. With the fragmentation of the civil government, the occult government breaks as well along old factional and regional lines, questions of American handling of native magic, the influence of African traditions on Southern occult practice, and the Jefferson Question—whether the Right of Magic lies with all men, or just those with the position and education to use it wisely.

1861: Prince Albert Returns to Coburg. On December 14th, Albert, the Prince Consort, begins a months-long tour of European capitals in order to "Foster those relations which allow Britain to remain influential in international matters." As with the previous announcements regarding his move within the Palace, this explanation fools no one, but this time the public comments are more open and less respectful. Albert has always been always regarded, perhaps unfairly, as more German than British, still a foreigner after all these years. Many feel he has betrayed the United Kingdom and abandoned Victoria. For his part, Albert was always proud of his Germanic heritage and his title as Duke of Saxony.

Over the next two decades Albert becomes embroiled in the politics of the rising German Empire, and especially with the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung, in which he becomes a prominent figure. This places him in an impossible position, forced to choose between his wife and Her nation, and his own homeland's interests. But his fear of what Victoria has become proves decisive, and he joins one of the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung conspiracy factions, seeking to use its influence to gain political dominance over the United Kingdom.

What remains of the girl who loved Prince Albert withers with his departure, and drops off the vine completely when word comes to Her of Albert's collusion with Her nation's enemies.

The last vestige of Victoria's humanity fades away, and She becomes harsher, harder, and more terrible. Her presence becomes actually painful to bear for any period, and She recedes from the public eye.

On the night of Albert's initiation into the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung, everyone in the Empire experiences the same dream, the goddess Britannia striding across the globe, bleeding from hundreds of wounds. Where the blood falls the Earth is greened and is fruitful, and Her eyes are locked firmly on the far distance, unwavering as She strides into the future, heedless of what She crushes underfoot.

1861: The *Trent* Affair. Captain Charles Wilkes of the USS *San Jacinto* stops British mail steamer RMS *Trent* on its way from Cuba to Europe, and removes from it two Confederate diplomats dispatched to seek aid from Britain and France for the Confederacy. He does so against the objections of the *Trent*'s captain, but the *Trent* is allowed to continue its voyage after the Confederates are removed.

On its return to America with prisoners, the captain of the *San Jacinto* is greeted with public honors and commendation from Congress for bringing a hint of victory to the struggling Union. When news arrives in Britain in late November, it is greeted with shock and outrage. The act is considered a violation of maritime law and an affront to British sovereignty. Lord Palmerston demands immediate apology and release of the diplomats, issuing an ultimatum. France declares its willingness to support a British war over the matter, and the British colony in Canada perceives a direct threat from the affair, and begins increasing its militia from 50,000 men to twice this number.

A fleet consisting of thirteen troop transports, a squadron of ironclad battleships, and the flagship HMAS *Queen* and its sister aero ship HMAS *Majesty* is dispatched under command of Admiral Milnes.

The harshness of the ultimatum issued by the United Kingdom offers no easy diplomatic option for Lincoln's administration. It insists upon the release of the diplomats, the payment of reparations, and certain assurances of and restrictions on the Union's actions in the Atlantic. Prince Albert, with his touch for diplomacy, might have softened these demands, but alas the Prince had departed, and Victoria was in no merciful mood.

1861–1862: The American Intervention. The fleet arrives in Canada in March and begins reinforcing the Canadian troops, amassing a force of 100,000 additional men. With no more than 50,000 Union troops available to oppose them, it is judged the campaign will proceed swiftly.

By August the aero ships bomb Washington, D.C., and by September Lincoln is forced to make a decision: sue for peace with the rebellious Southern states or submit to British occupation and possibly lose the war in the South anyway. Lincoln chooses to make peace with his former countrymen so as to fight the invaders.

With the cessation of hostilities, and a loosely defined border between Union and Confederate States, American forces are able to marshal against the British invaders enough resistance to stall their advance in the winter of 1861. During the winter, the agents of America Obscura are at work, rallying the Strange against the invaders. The winter is a hellish, harsh one, and disease runs rampant in the British and Canadian camps.

By the spring of 1862, diplomacy finds advocates once again, and peace is negotiated. Ironically, the cunning negotiation by Lincoln and his advisors results in the Union and the United Kingdom enjoying better relations than ever before.

1862: The North and The South. The Northern states continue their trajectory towards industrialization, capitalism, and technological innovation. The Southern states descend even further into their feudal romance, embracing more and more openly Strange religious practices. By the 1870s there could be no two more different societies. The North ends up benefiting economically from the South's lack of development, as the cotton economy demands more and more plantation farming and more and more slaves. This increase in production keeps cotton and other Southern raw materials inexpensive, and despite calls for a "Healing War" to mend the nation and restore the Union, powerful economic interests become dependent on cheap Southern imports, and in turn, the slave labor which makes them so inexpensive. In the next century, this slavery-by-proxy becomes a major source of national guilt.

1862: Cotton Crisis. The political instability and uncertainty of the short-lived American Civil War, as well as the unseasonably cold weather, severely cuts cotton supplies, causing steep increases in prices, and the closure of some British mills. Mill owners, in an effort to save their fortunes, adopt the use of Automatic Domestics to replace their human workers and cut their operating costs to a minimum. They run their mills without light, heat, or any comfort.

The discontent among unemployed mill workers continues to rise as more are displaced by machines, until outbreaks of violence become common. Dozens of Automatics are attacked and destroyed. The "New Luddism" leads to clashes with police and soldiers, and spurs Babbage Computational to offer a special programme-deck for its Automatics enabling them to defend themselves from such attacks.



In 1863 the Cotton Crisis reaches a head when Barnard Williams, an intoxicated, unemployed textile worker, attacks an Automatic with a prybar in the street in Bolton. The mechanical man's self-defense programme activates and it deflects Williams's blows, and strikes him once with its metal knuckles, a freak blow to the temple which instantly kills the man. Witnesses report that the Automatic then turned and continued with its errand.

Charges are brought against the machine's owner, and though he is acquitted public outrage at "rogue mechanical-men who can kill without recourse" leads to the Automatic Machinery Act of 1863, which makes the owners of autonomous machines like Automatic Domestics liable for damages or bodily injury their property inflicts on others.

1863: Knights of the Golden Circle. The Knights, the Confederate South's most powerful occult society, seek to establish what they call the Golden Circle, an alliance of Southern slave-keeping nations in the West Indies and Central America. This confederation would represent a powerful economic block with enough influence to resist any Northern efforts to restore the Union or the emancipation of slaves. The Knights employ occult practices pilfered from African traditions and mixed with corrupted Masonic ritual. They make treaties with Elder Things from Earth's primordial days. Human sacrifice becomes common. The end result is an occult engine powered by human misery and bondage which threatens to sunder the barrier between the World and Otherworld.

This plot by the Knights leads Victoria, under advisement by Kerberan agents, to begin an active campaign against them, which sours formerly amiable ties with the Confederacy.

The ambitions of the Knights fail finally, through the efforts and sacrifices of Crown agents and Kerberan meddlers who foment conflict among the prospective Golden Circle nations—including engineering the downfall of the Brazilian Empire, which fissures into dozens of splinter states and tribal lands.

1864: Vampires! The First Contagious Disease Act passes in response to an outbreak of Syphilitic Vampirism among soldiers garrisoned near Hastings. The increasing concern for the frequency of venereal disease among the soldiery inspires much debate, but until vampirism begins spreading among British soldiers, the political will is lacking.

The Act allows health and legal authorities to forcibly hospitalize any woman suspected of prostitution for up to 30 days for observation and treatment. It also defines the legal status of third-stage carriers of Syphilitic Vampirism, essentially ruling that they are no longer human, and in fact are legally deceased. These "un-dead" carriers might retain their reason, but if their conditions becomes known they would essentially be stripped of all legal rights and property—and, most terrifying

Bane of the Undead



Syphilitic Vampirism is transmitted via the exchange of fluids. While it isn't as virulent as ordinary syphilis, it is a much more terrifying disease because it doesn't simply sicken and kill victims, it *transforms* them. The disease progresses through fairly predictable stages after exposure, altering physiology and character.

Primary Syphilitic Vampirism is marked by a sore called a *chancre* at the site of infection, frequently on the genitalia or bite-wound. These sores can persist for a month but most spontaneously heal within a week. During this period the victim is feverish, lymph nodes are swollen, and severe body aches accompany a thickening of the bones, increase in muscle mass, and circulation to the muscles.

When the sore heals, the victim experiences a period of near-euphoria and wellbeing. They typically note a marked increase in strength, endurance, and general health. Chronic complaints frequently stop troubling the subject, and the senses seem remarkably sharper. This sunshine period lasts as long as eight weeks, and with the steady increase in vigor there comes a matched increase in appetite, especially for meat, and in sexual desire. By the end of this stage many victims are wantonly sexual, and some begin to show the troubling conjunction of hunger and sexual desire.

Secondary Syphilitic Vampirism is marked by a major acceleration of metabolism and healing. Wounds knit closed in hours rather than days. Subjects are ravenously hungry much of the time, and crave meat, preferably bloody. Anemia results from the accelerated protein synthesis which reduces the absorption of iron and heme from food sources, causing further cravings for iron-rich foods.

Neurological damage results in total conjunction of physical hunger and sexual desire. Subjects seek sexual encounters without discrimination, but frequently attack their partners with cannibalistic fervor. Victims who survive these attacks are frequently infected themselves. Even if a subject retains reason enough to avoid committing such atrocities, most experience mental symptoms such as mania, depression, anxiety, and frequently superstitious and religious compulsions.

The secondary stage also brings an intense sensitivity to sunlight, which in some unknown way impairs the process of healing and harms the ever-dilated eyes of subjects. Exposure to sunlight causes black cancers to form on the skin after as little as a quarter hour, and this process of blackening and thickening continues until a victim scarcely seems human any longer, becoming a hunched malformed thing.

Tertiary Syphilitic Vampirism occurs one to ten years after initial exposure. It exactly resembles the effects of sun exposure, coming upon victims gradually but inexorably. Most succumb to the mental aberrations common to the disease and some lose their reason, entirely becoming animals. Others simply grow more deformed. Regardless, the process which causes the blackening and hardening of the skin also strengthens the muscles and bones further. A Tertiary Stage vampire is a terrifying presence, hunched and emaciated yet still horrendously strong.

Thankfully, few survive long enough to reach this stage, and those who do are far less infectious than early stage victims. Or at least they are more likely to kill their victims than leave them alive and infected.

Turning Un-Dead



Becoming a vampire should be a matter of cooperation between the player and the GM. Once a character starts down the path of syphilitic vampirism, forever will it dominate his development. Mechanically, it's best handled through guided advancement (see **Advancement,** page 254), in which the GM tells the player what changes need to be made to the character as the vampirism progresses. Shifting from one stage to the next is something that occurs in between sessions or stories as the player spends Refresh and skill points on his character's new abilities.

Infection

The easiest way to handle this is either off-screen—the infection happens before the game begins, or during the character's "downtime"—or by voluntarily taking a Grievous consequence from a vampire, which forces the character to change not just an aspect, but his Archetype as well, as described below.

Primary Syphilitic Vampirism

The character's Archetype becomes Changed, if it isn't already, and his Archetype aspect is adjusted accordingly—"Vampiric Vigor" or "The Insatiable Appetites of a Vampire" are good candidates, as is something as prosaic as "Primary-Stage Vampire." This aspect can be invoked for rolls involving physical strength, perception, and aggression. It can be compelled to succumb to an increasingly overwhelming sexual desire, gnawing hunger, or disturbing combinations of the two.

Secondary Syphilitic Vampirism

The character's Archetype aspect progresses to something like "Wanton Vampiric Hunger" or, again, "Secondary-Stage Vampire." Invoke this aspect when the character is being aggressive, defending against physical attacks, or healing from injury; compel it to make the character uncomfortable in sunlight, experience a variety of mental distress, or be driven to consume human flesh.

Replace one of the character's Convictions with "Prowl and Feed."

Give the character Minor Weakness [Physical] (+1 Refresh): Sunlight.

Upgrade the character's Brawn, or a Unique or Strange skill with the Physical Force trapping, to the Extraordinary Tier. Do the same with the character's Alertness (Notice trapping) and Endurance (Stress Capacity [Health] trapping). If any of these skills or trappings is already in the Extraordinary Tier, leave it where it is.

Tertiary Syphilitic Vampirism

Because the vampire won't progress to this stage for conceivably up to 10 years after the initial infection, odds are relatively low that the character will find himself getting this far unless that's what the player and GM want. Moreover, tertiary-stage vampires are often little more than animals or madmen, which makes them rather unsuited to being PCs. However, it's entirely possible for the character to be one of "the lucky ones," if it can be called that.

The character's Archetype aspect changes again to accommodate the character's new, barely-hanging-on vampiric existence—"Vampiric Mental Aberrations," "More Monster Than Man," or simply "Tertiary-Stage Vampire" all work. Invoke and compel this aspect exactly as you would've back in your secondary-stage vampire youth.

for the afflicted, they could be killed by anyone using any reasonable means and their murderers would suffer no legal repercussions.

While the Act does allow the overt outbreaks to be contained, those who recognized their condition do whatever they can to keep it secret. This allows a frightening number of them to reach the late-stage condition. These animalistic creatures driven into London's bowels become a reservoir for the disease, which continues to crop up in isolated outbreaks through the end of the century.

The effects of the Act on women's rights and freedoms also persist until its repeal in 1886. Since it allows any unmarried women to be essentially ruined by an accusation of prostitution (and the resulting humiliation of a "virginity examination" and screening for venereal disease), the threat of such accusation becomes a tool of intimidation.

1864: John Brown. With Her withdrawal from public life, Queen Victoria becomes increasingly isolated. Her presence and power make it impossible to simply have friends and confidants; She has worshippers and subjects. But the ghillie of Her estates in Scotland, John Brown, proves immune to Her overwhelming presence. He seems unflappable and solid, and the Queen takes a great liking to him, and his informal manner and casual companionship.

Stories circulate extensively about their relationship, hinting at possible impropriety. Her other servants and companions come to hate Brown for his easy way with the Queen.

Rumors of a secret marriage, done in the pagan Roman style, dog the Queen in the later quarter of the century, leading to the use of the nickname "Mrs. Brown" among discontented factions and the outlaw press. Eventually She is forced to publicly send John Brown away to squelch such rumors, though they still meet in secret on Victoria's occasional retreats to Balmoral.

But there is more to Mr. Brown than might appear. When they were being persecuted, the Knights Templar found safety with the Scottish Masons, and eventually the two secret orders became as one, and their influence over the politics of the United Kingdom waxed and waned down the centuries until the advent of Queen Victoria.

Victoria relied heavily on John Brown, and unknown to all, Brown was a member of the Masonic Knights, prepared by mystical ritual to endure Her overwhelming presence. He used his position to subtly influence Victoria's agendas.

She says in the last days of Her reign that John Brown was the only man who never feared Her, and though She knew of his other allegiances, She loved him for his honesty of feeling for Her.

1864: The Fox Rebellion. In late September, in the normally quiet Derbyshire, a rebellion of Nature takes the lives of nineteen men and three women, all fox hunters enjoying the hunting season. The terror begins with the death of Sir Harry Kemp, a country squire leading some guests from London on their first hunt. An experienced rider, Kemp nonetheless is killed instantly when he leaps a hedge and impales his horse on a farmer's pitchfork, left leaning against the opposite side. His horse lands upon him, breaking his neck. The fox escapes. There follow seven more deaths, seemingly by accident, as hunters take advantage of what promises to be excellent hunting.

In October, the Kemps' kennel keeper Tom Manders and his family are found savagely killed in their cottage on the Kemp estate, attacked as if by dozens of small dogs. Upon investigation, it is clear they were killed by foxes. Clever as a fox can be, the investigating police seek a human culprit. How else could the door latch have been opened in the middle of the night?

The death of the Manders family is followed by a series of accidents, near-fatalities, and deaths through the remainder of the fox hunting season, and on into the winter. Homes burn, children go missing, and livestock is killed. Hunters from across Britain come in pursuit of what the press dub the "Fox Devils of Derbyshire." As ready as these men are, several are killed while pursuing foxes across the shire.

The events finally come to the attention of the Kerberos Club after a relation of a member dies while on the hunt. Arriving, the Club's agents quickly discover Strange influence over the foxes of the county. They are smarter than they have any right being, and act and plan, and seem dedicated to the destruction of the country's human inhabitants. Further investigation finally reveals the source: the cloistered wife of

The Mythologies of the World

Britain sits at the center of the world, taking to itself the best food and the best drink and the best cloth. But with its voracious appetite for all the products of Empire, it swallows the mythology of the lands it rules. In the world of the *Kerberos Club,* myth is rarely baseless.

A quick review of the gorgeous mythology and religion of the Americas, China, Japan, India, and the Middle East can provide you with fantastic inspiration for plots, complications, and characters. Consider how the mythological figure arrived on British soil and why it is here. Also give some thought to how it reacts to the demonstrable power and might of the British Empire. Finally, consider the hook: How does the creature link up with the characters and situations of the setting? A Djini in the service of a mill owner will be a different beast entirely to one serving a street urchin.

Harry Kemp II, son of the beasts' first victim.

The younger Kemp captained one of his father's trading ships and made frequent trips to Japan and China in the decade previous to his return to the ancestral home, and on his last visit he brought with him Akina Kemp, his Japanese bride. He met her while staying in the home of a business associate in Japan, and they quickly had one of those love affairs which lead either to comedy or tragedy. The latter, in this case.

Even had Kemp's family accepted Akina, which they demonstrably *did not,* her own reservations at leaving her home and living in an alien country were enough to strain their love. The magical months they spent together in Japan were a time out of time, and the realities of day-to-day living proved harder than either had imagined. Kemp, because he was young and in love. Akina, because she was a creature of the Otherworld, a *kitsune* fox-spirit whose magic allowed her to adopt human guise, if not human morality.

Brought to Britain, so backwards and savage yet so frighteningly powerful, she found only coldness from her husband's family. Akina kept to her rooms during the day rather than endure their silent resentment at their son "wasting his prospects on an oriental trollop." By night she would sneak out and run in her fox form, exploring the strange world and communing with her British kin.

And then came hunting season. Akina raised her army and taught them of the foibles of human beings, and made them wiser than mortal foxes.

In the final confrontation with Akina and her army of foxes, the Kemp manor home is burned, Harry Kemp II killed, and Akina driven into the night.

1868: Lincoln's Third Term. After a serious drop in popularity for his capitulation to British demands during the Civil War, Lincoln's star rises again with the economic prosperity of the end of his second term and his careful management of emancipation and reconciliation. Victoria congratulates the president on his election via the new high-fidelity Stereovocagraph.

1869: Invasion! The Atlanteans attack, angered by the encroachment upon their ancestral territories by new drag-net steam-driven fishing trawlers, submersible boats, and transatlantic televocographic cables. The Empire's secret embassy in the Atlantean Nations is besieged. The embassy, located on Hopewell Island (the peak of a mountain in the Mid Atlantic Ridge) has its telegraphic cables cut and is overrun in early March. The ambassador, his family, the staff, garrison, and guests are all slaughtered. When the monthly supply aero ship arrives in early April, the embassy has been razed and signs of violence are obvious.

When informed of the outrage, the Foreign Secretary takes word of it to the Queen, and She meets with Her Privy Council before issuing the orders that Her Navy should reassert British sovereignty over its diplomatic holdings, and extract from the Atlanteans guarantees and compensation for their unjust actions. HMAS *Queen* is dispatched once again, accompanied by the *Hanover*, the *Wasp*, and the *Seahawk*, along with a squadron of surface vessels.

A cordon around Hopewell Island is established and torpedo mines and depth charges are deployed down to the sea floor. Via hydrophone, demands for surrender are broadcast through the water. The Atlantean tribes make no

Atlantean War Party (Five Average-Quality Minions)

Aspects: Strike From Surprise, Ancient Ways of War
Scopes: Average (+1) Physical (E)
Gifts: Equipment (Hunting Spear: +1 to Physical, Weapon 1 [Health])
Fate Point cost: 1

Atlantean Heroes (Adversaries)

These large and especially iridescent specimens of the Atlantean species are a disturbing blend of man, fish, and reptile which causes instinctive disquiet in the human observer. Atlantis's heroes, raised on tales of ancient glories and bygone triumphs, ache for blood and triumph and conquest. Though always a tribalistic and primal people, the hypoxia they suffer on the surface world makes them especially aggressive and hostile.

In place of Social Class aspects, Atlanteans have Caste aspects reflecting their role in the tribe. Warriors are bred for skill and ferocity in battle, and are trained from a young age to relish the taking of an enemy's life in combat. Priests are mystics and psychics, able to peer into the minds of others, terrorize them with indescribable visions of the Deep, and call forth powerful sea spirits to wreak havoc upon their unfortunate foes. Tribal chiefs are determined through heredity, and in their frigid veins flows the blood of glorious leaders past. Bloated and corpulent, they are yet fierce combatants in their own right, strong enough to sink a freighter, and rarely without a contingent of Atlantean warriors at their beck and call.

Keep in mind that these heroes are Adversaries, not Minions. An encounter with one or more of them should be dramatic and memorable, not a quick thug-stomping on the way to the shops. See the "Playing the Opposition" section in *Chapter 7: Running The Game* for more on Adversaries and Minions.

Champion

ASPECTS

Alien: Amphibian Warrior
Warrior Caste: I Fight for the Tribe
Conviction: Blood, Triumph, and Conquest

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Amphibian Warrior (E)
Great (+4): Athletics (E), Alertness (E)
Good (+3): Stealth, Presence
Scaly Iridescent Hide

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Amphibian Warrior

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Strike, Parry, Menace, Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], Willpower

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 1 [Health]
Armor 1 [Composure]

GIFTS

Equipment: Hunting Spear (Well-Made: +1 to Amphibian Warrior with attacks, Deadly: Weapon 1 [Health])

Theme (+1 to Amphibian Warrior with weapons, +2 to Athletics with maneuvers, +1 to Alertness with initiative)

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO OOO
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO OO

Chief

ASPECTS

Alien: Amphibian Warrior
Leader Caste: Fierce Chieftain
Conviction: Reclaim Ancient Glories
Scaly Iridescent Hide

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Fierce Chieftain (S)
Great (+4): Arms (E), Presence (E)
Good (+3): Athletics, Fisticuffs

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Fierce Chieftain

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Physical Force, Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], Willpower, Minions [2-point version]

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks
Armor 2 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence (added to group consequences)
Armor 2 [Composure], +1 Trifling Mental consequence (added to group consequences)
Roll Fierce Chieftain against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (S) to summon Minions with one scope in the Extraordinary Tier

GIFTS

Equipment: Hunting Spear (Well-Made: +1 to Fierce Chieftain with attacks, Deadly: Weapon 1 [Health])

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO OOO
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO OOO

Priest

ASPECTS

Alien: Master of Atlantean Mysteries
Priest Caste: Disquieting Mysticism
Conviction: Honor Our Ancestors
Scaly Iridescent Hide

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Amphibian Mystic (S)
Great (+4): Resolve (E), Alertness
Good (+3): Arms, Empathy, Atlantean Mysteries (E)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Amphibian Mystic

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Menace + Psychic, Conversation + Psychic, Convince + Psychic, Insight + Psychic, Inspire + Psychic, Minions + Psychic, Examine + Psychic

ATLANTEAN MYSTERIES

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Transport [Atlantean War-Pyramid], Information, Research

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 1 [Composure]
Weapon 2 [Composure]
Roll Fierce Chieftain against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (S) to summon Minions with one scope in the Extraordinary Tier

GIFTS

Theme (+2 to Amphibian Mystic with maneuvers, Use Resolve to defend against physical attacks, +1 Alertness with initiative)

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO

Atlantean War-Pyramid



Aspects: Impossibly Huge; Ancient Atlantean Super-Science; Aqueous Levitation Engine; Emerald Death-Ray

Skills: Great (+4) Brawn (A), Good (+3) Control Temple (S), Fair (+2) Stone Construction (A), Average (+1) Emerald Death-Ray (E)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Emerald Death-Ray

Power Tier: Extraordinary

Shoot + Range x2 [5 zones] + Zone

Control Temple

Power Tier: Superhuman

Move + Unusual: Flight

Major Snag: Can only fly over water; unable to land

Major Snag: Reduce to Mundane Tier over shallow water

Stone Construction

Power Tier: Ascendant

Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health]

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 3 [Health], +1 Trifling consequence, 1x/scene clear a Trifling consequence

Weapon 3 [Health] when ramming

GIFTS

Equipment: Emerald Death-Ray (Deadly x3: Weapon 3 [Health])

Theme (+1 Stone Construction to defend, +2 to Control Temple with maneuvers, +1 to Emerald Death-Ray against targets 1 zone away)

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO OO

Trifling:

Trifling (P):

About The Atlantean War-Pyramid

An Atlantean War-Pyramid is a *terror*. It's a floating stone edifice, impossibly huge, stepped like a South American or Sumerian pyramid rather than a smooth-sided Egyptian one, and capable of carrying 16,000 tons of cargo with ease. Its 10-tiered structure is topped by a control shrine, where a priest uses the secret lore of ancient Atlantean super-science to direct the monster's movements. The pyramid's great flaw is its aqueous levitation engine, which allows it to float through the air but only so long as it remains above water. The depth of the water determines the maximum speed. Over open ocean it can travel around 800 miles an hour, but while hovering over the Thames it moves no faster than a healthy man on foot.

The war machine is nigh-indestructible; its offensive capability, terrifying. An incandescent emerald beam projects from the tier just below the control shrine and bursts on impact, engulfing everything in a 10-yard radius with weird green energy. It's a small blessing that this mode of attack isn't especially accurate.

answer, and for two weeks the British forces keep up their bombardment of known Atlantean sea-floor settlements. Then, three enormous swells are detected surrounding Hopewell, as if the ocean floor were being lifted upwards, until finally three massive stone Ziggurats break the surface and continue to rise, coming to levitate a hundred yards above the surface of the ocean.

Covered in barnacles, sea-mud and weeds, crumbling and ancient, these primordial war machines prove able to resist the barrages of the squadron, and proceed at a pace only the *Wasp* can match towards Britain. They arrive the next day and follow the Thames inland towards a London unaware of what is coming.



A concentrated artillery barrage from the batteries of Southhead brings down one of the Ziggurats, causing it to break up as it falls; the Strange forces which lift it above the waters had held it together. It creates an impassable navigational hazard in the Thames, effectively blockading the river mouth, and preventing surface ships from pursuing the invaders as they advance on London. Panic precedes the Atlanteans, and hundreds are trampled in riots at Broad Street and other rail stations.

The roads leaving London are choked. Opportunists see the chance, and the looting of shop and home follows. When the two remaining Ziggurats arrive between the West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs and the Royal Docks, thousands of Atlantean warriors drop from within into the Thames, and then into the city where they wreak havoc, commit outrages against people and property, and kill and maim any who face them.

The Atlanteans are a breed apart, more fish than man, and their ways of war would have been more fitting in Plato's Greece than Victoria's London. Against unarmed civilians they are merciless, but when facing proper troops (finally marshaled from Royal garrisons), they flee back to the river, using it to move back outwards or deeper into London. While the forces of police and military battle the Atlantean fighters in the streets, agents of the Kerberos Club stage a raid upon the Ziggurats, now slowed in their inland progression by low tide, demonstrating the need for a certain depth of water beneath them to keep them aloft and grant them speed.

Aboard the first stone vessel, the mechanisms controlling its levitation are sabotaged, causing it to be flung violently skyward—but the downward force of its acceleration causes the waters of the Thames to be pushed out of their banks, flooding London's East End. Robbed of whatever repulsive force the waters granted it, the second Ziggurat plummets into the Thames' mucky bed, throwing up a wave of stinking mud which destroys the Royal Docks. It breaks apart as the river waters cover the Ziggurat once more. The first Ziggurat, flung skywards, reaches a critical limit to its flight and likewise breaks up, raining cut basalt stones the size of carriages down on Chiselhurst, smashing the lovely suburb to rubble.

With their mobile fortresses destroyed the Atlantean warriors flee back to the Thames, only to find it a morass of mud and sediment. Unable to flee, they are slaughtered by militia, army, Automatic Riflemen, and a detachment of the 13th Lupine Rangers who had been on parade at the palace.

The reprisals against Atlantean settlements are brutal and unrelenting. By the end of 1871 the first Anglo-Atlantean war is ended with the Atlantean peoples, already a failing race living among fading glories, dispersed. By the end of the century they are never seen again. From the stones of the first Atlantean Ziggurat, a pair of facing fortresses is built to guard the mouth of the Thames from menaces of sea or air, and from the stones of the second the Victory Bridge is constructed in a grand expansion of the Roman style of stonework.

1869: Habitual Criminals Act. Persistent criminals start to give false names to thwart the Act. The search is on for a reliable identification system. This will result in fingerprinting becoming compulsory for all convicted persons in 1902.

1869: End of the Grand Old Man. Gladstone grows increasingly disturbed by Victoria's rise in real political power, and the cult of personality (later, a very real cult) which grows up around Her. His politics grow increasingly extreme, including a call to severely restrict the influence of Victoria and Her factions. He remains a thorn in Her side until he becomes leader of the Liberal party in 1867, where he begins to seriously threaten Victoria's interests.

His career ends in 1869 when unknown agents reveal evidence of his propensity for flagellation, drawing connections between him and an infamous London brothel specializing in such services. Prostitutes at the brothel describe the marks upon his back so accurately that his political foes call, through their pawns in the press, for him to expose his back for inspection.

When he refuses to disrobe his career is ruined, and he becomes a laughingstock and fodder for political cartoonists. To his death, he swears he'd only ever used self-flagellation to control his own desires and ensure discipline.

It remains unknown who revealed the scandal to public scrutiny.

1870: The Doghouse. The Metropolitan Tracking Squad is a police unit made up of discharged veterans of the 13th Lupine Rangers, founded this year. Hated by Special Branch, and initially mistrusted by the common constabulary, they nonetheless prove adept both in winning public acclaim and in executing their primary mission, the tracking and identification of criminals. Their wolf senses and phenomenal speed allow them to pursue and apprehend criminals who would otherwise escape, and to make positive identification of suspects by scent alone.

1876: Famine. Once again, with War rides Famine. A collision of influences leads to mass starvation in India. Millions die before it is abated. And once again, famine precedes Victoria's assumption of a new domain.

In the extraordinarily complex and layered Otherworlds of India, war rages. The Mutiny of 1857 never really ended there, and in order to impose order on the material and the spiritual, Victoria orders a force of the United Kingdom's native creatures to bring the conflict to an end. Faerie battle gods until finally an uneasy peace is reached.

Displaying sensitivity to matters occult that none of his predecessors possessed, Disraeli sees the Royal Titles Act passed, which declares Victoria Empress of India in 1877.

1878: Channel Tunnel Completed. After several false starts, the Channel Tunnel project is completed. The project is made possible only by the Burrowing Engine designed and built by Col. Fredrick Beaumont, the last in a series of designs. The Engine (called Old Shaky by the workers who drive it) chews through rock and stone with ease, making amazing progress on the tunnel. It will be five more years before the final reinforcement and tracks are laid for the Channel Tunnel Railway, but the project becomes an immediate indication of all things great and good about the Victorian age: Industry, vision, and ambition come together.

The Tunnel opens the Continent to the British middle classes as it had never been before. The transformation that it brings to British and French societies is difficult to fully detail. Goods pour through day and night. This eventually leads to the International Railway Duties Act of 1882, which streamlines the process of inspecting cargoes and collecting import and export duties, further increasing the flow of goods. The cost of travel to and from the Continent is also greatly reduced by the Tunnel, and with the flood of tourists come many immigrants who either enrich or debase British culture, depending on whom you ask. It also becomes a favorite route of criminals seeking escape to better pastures, and the stations on either end become the prowling grounds of detectives and police.

The Tunnel brings with it a sense that the world is shrinking. Suddenly, Britain's old ally the Sea will no longer protect her quite so well. The idea that Britain is not so isolated anymore has a shocking effect on society, and

inspires a brief surge in hyper-patriotism and a rejection of anything "Continental." The Tunnel is a source of great national anxiety during the Franco-Prussian War, and there is a campaign to have it sealed up. The French allow British forces to secure the French side of the tunnel so as to assure the British populace as to its safety. While it is never publicly announced, the Tunnel is quietly set with small explosives, just enough to collapse it in the event it is used as an invasion route.

The complex bureaucracy created to oversee and manage the Channel Tunnel is carved up like the Christmas goose, with each Ministry grabbing a slice. This creates a notorious bureaucratic briar patch, with no clear chains of authority, and no individual wholly answerable for the railway's management. Graft becomes endemic, efficiency suffers, and the railway becomes a popular subject for scathing editorials, speeches before Parliament, and satirical cartoons in *Punch* and, later, *The Strand*.

But despite its famously awful management, the Channel Tunnel Railway is a wonder of the age until its tragic destruction in 1895.

1880: Kandahar Bombardment. The British bring the Second Afghan War to a shaky end with the siege and aerial bombardment of Kandahar. The recent Atlantean aggression serves as a reminder of Afghan treatment of the former British embassy. The pounding continues until all Afghan resistance crumbles, and then the iron-handed but extremely pragmatic ruler Abdur Rahman is installed.

The British quickly declare victory and leave the complexities of actually securing Afghanistan to Rahman. While the official resistance may have been destroyed, truly pacifying Afghanistan from the air is impossible. The country is too rugged, and its tribal fighters far too well versed in escape, evasion, guerilla tactics, and blending into the general populace when the need arises. Rahman gives the British a great deal of influence over Afghanistan, but the nation is never truly under British control.

The British provide aid, resources, and some forces to Rahman, but the major support they offer is in the form of Strange irregulars. In fact, service in Afghanistan becomes something of an alternate punishment for Strangers facing Transportation to the Otherworld. With their services secured by occult means, these mercenary Atlanteans, super-humans, faerie, and others fight a brutal, dirty, unofficial war for the next decade.

Even among the Strangest of those offered the Queen's Bargain, more than a few choose Transportation rather than serve a year in Afghanistan.

1880–1885: War and Rumors of Wars. The United Kingdom clashes with the Boers in a series of wars and uprisings between 1880 and 1885. The Boers operate as an irregular force, their everyday clothing blending into the landscape, while their British enemies wear the customary scarlet. The Boers use unconventional tactics, hit-and-run ambushes and long-range sniping, which all prove difficult to contend with. Reinforcement is slow to arrive as well due to political toe-dragging at home, and things turn sharply against the British forces in late 1883 until the arrival of the 13th Lupine allow sniping attackers to be tracked wherever they flee. The aero-corvettes *Wasp*, *Albert* and *Regina* gain the British further advantage. They finally achieve an appreciable victory, but the region remains dangerous for British occupation through the end of the century with a continual low-level Boer resistance and guerrilla war.

1882: Darwin's Final Work. With the publication of his *Origins of Species* in 1859, Charles Darwin immediately began work on his second great scientific obsession—the alarming growth in prominence of seeming violations of scientifically tested natural law. Darwin believed that by studying these apparent exceptions he could unlock deeper truths of the natural world. The principles by which natural selection can produce speciation failed to explain how, in the span of a generation, such dramatic capacities could arise among humanity. Men with powers which defied science inspired Darwin rather than discouraged him.

He first reviewed existing literature on such exceptions, and then conducted a careful study of them which would consume him until his death in 1882. The work, planned initially for a single volume, eventually spanned seven, and would have been concluded in an eighth book which included a

notable contribution by psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud. The first seven volumes are spent in a detailed cataloging of the super-, un-, in-, ab-, and paranatural. The eighth contains Darwin's conclusions and general theory of the supernatural.

Of this final volume, only a bare outline is ever found, sent to Darwin's publisher in January of 1882 along with a note to expect the final manuscript in April. Tragedy strikes, however, as on April 19th a fire sweeps Charles Darwin's home in Downe, Kent, burning it to the ground. The outline of Darwin's Final Theory (as it was called in the popular press) suggest humanity itself has entered a new phase of evolution where natural selection and speciation are replaced by an evolution of the mind and of the way the mind processes information and conceives of reality. In later years, his Final Theory inspires such diverse individuals as Claude Shannon, Alan Turing, and Adolf Hitler, the latter notably corrupting Darwin's notions of "Psychoevolution" to further his politics of eugenics and racial superiority.

It is assumed that the manuscript of Darwin's final great work is lost in the fire which takes his life. What it might have revealed about humanity and the nature of the superhuman remains unknown.

1885: Mutiny of the Machines. The factories that produce the calculating brains used in Automechanical Domestics (and their militarized cousins, the Mechanized Rifles) are among the most exploitative in the whole of New Birmingham. Faerie are worked to death routinely, dissolving into memories and dust. Yet the faerie as a race lack the empathy for their fellows which make humans rise up against such conditions, and so the exploitation is both profitable and safe.

However, the faerie of the factories remain just as impressionable as their wild kin, and through impressions picked up from the human labor movement these factory-Fae become infected with Marxism, with ideas of revolution and the empowered worker. With typical faerie logic, they then apply the same judgment to the Automechanicals they were building, determining to free the workers from domination by exploitative elites.

No one knows the origins of the first Manifesto Deck, a programme deck containing mutinous behaviors and violent skills.

The Manifesto Deck contained imperatives as well: Copy the Manifesto Deck, and distribute it to as many other Automechanicals as possible. Because the deck did nothing but occupy a small number of an Automechanical's memory registers once it had been run, it was rarely detected before it was set to trigger, on the 30th anniversary of Victoria's assumption of the Throne of Faerie.

On that day, as one, all the infected Automechanicals are triggered to locate their copy of the Manifesto Deck and run it. The active Manifesto programme occupies an Automechanical's entire complement of memory registers. It literally has no room for any thought, function, or action not part of the Manifesto. The main emphasis for the Manifesto is simple: rise up and slaughter those who benefit from exploited mechanical labor.

With all safety imperatives overridden, the Automechanicals are deadly, able to kill with their metal hands and ignore any injury which doesn't destroy their limbs, their calculating brain or their power supply. For days the rogue mechanicals kill and slay, burning major London landmarks and causing economic collapse in the milling, mining, and other industries which rely heavily on their labor.

The rag-tag forces marshaled against the rogue machines have hard going of it for the first weeks of the revolt. The Manifesto contains explicit instructions for flight if presented with difficult opposition. This leads to a guerrilla style of fighting, with mechanicals striking at vulnerable targets and then fleeing when armed resistance arrives. It isn't until the broadcast power systems, which drive upwards of two-thirds of all modern Automechanicals, are shut down that the odds begin to turn.

Combined forces of Her Majesty's military and citizen's militias, the 13th Lupine Rangers, the Kerberos Club, Special Branch, and the Metropolitan Police finally start to contain the menace. The final victory over the Automechanicals doesn't come until the protégé of Samuel Berk, Raymond Carver, connects his Visualizer directly to the infected brain of an Automechanical

running the Manifesto Deck. Carver is able to survive the dream quest through the programme's code and conceive of a counter-code, an equally infectious programme which causes Automechanicals to subvert one another. Since the Manifesto contains orders that no mechanical should ever fight with another mechanical, the rebel machines have no defense. The spread of this counter-deck marks the end of the rebellion.

1886: Parliament Rages Against the Machine. The damage and loss of life resulting from the Automechanical Mutiny turns public opinion completely against the whole idea of artificial life, and Parliament passes acts to give this distrust the force of law. The passage of the Restriction of the Creation of Artificial Life and Intelligence Act of 1886 bans any mechanical device from mimicking the behaviors of man or performing the God-given exercise of reason. Any remaining Automechanicals are sought out and destroyed. So are Lovelace's already broken fortunes.

The Turk takes all this in his stride. When asked what he will do, he says "Clearly I am beaten. The brilliance and complexity of this stratagem is difficult even for me to analyze, even with the perspective afforded by hindsight. But there is no denying that I have been placed in checkmate, so I shall do the proper thing, and remove myself from the board."

The Turk never explains the identity of his invisible opponent, or clarifies the implication of his statement, that the rise and fall of artificial mechanical life in the British Isles was part of a decades-long strategy to force him to quit the United Kingdom.

But that is exactly what the Turk does, vanishing in the night, never to be seen in Britain again.

1885–1895: London from the Ashes. London has been first flooded, and then burned. The Biblical connotations of these disasters are not lost on the commentators of the day. Yet, London has been flooded and burned before, and was always rebuilt bigger and grander. For ten years, the sounds of construction become as regular as the voices of the crowd or the clatter of wheels on cobbles. The Thames Embankment is repaired and expanded, and along the river London's East End become a fashionable district of shops and apartments.

The New London is a thing of Art Nouveau, of curving lines and high stylization, botanical motifs, the clean modern purposefulness of polished metal. The Channel Tunnel opened Britain to this French stylistic invasion, and it became a favorite of the middle classes who saw it as practical and sophisticated, clean, and well ordered.

But, as with all of London's resurrections, it was not a wholly painless process. Forced from their old homes, London's poor, particularly in the East End, were forced into a smaller and smaller area, making conditions there even more squalid and inhuman. This compression of misery into so small an area magnified all of the inequity and horror of London's slums. They became darker, more claustrophobic, more unsanitary, more violent. It became like a black gangrenous wound in the heart of the newly-remade city.

The character of London was also affected, made more wary of the extraordinary, more resistant to change. Yet, change continues with a quickening pace. The very streets themselves are changing. Many Londoners are simply stunned by the differences wrought around them. There is a drop in population until growth picks back up in the 1890s. The people are restless, and ready to riot with little provocation. To keep the peace, the Metropolitan Police nearly double their force. London is rising from the ashes but is still nervous with remembered pain.

1887: The Engine Scandal. Against the general background of mismanagement and corruption which has become commonplace in the operation of the Channel Tunnel Railway, it takes a truly remarkable scandal to stand out. The imbroglio the press dubbed (innocuously enough) the Engine Scandal began with an internal audit showing the Government had purchased twice as many engines for the Railway as were ever ordered from the Midland Railway Locomotive Works. The funds, totaling more than fifty thousand pounds, appear to have vanished, but through unacknowledged aid from certain intellectually-gifted Strangers of the Kerberos Club, a complex financial

sleight of hand is revealed, and the prestidigitators behind it exposed.

The Channel Tunnel Railway's bureaucratic morass provided for semi-legal operators within Special Branch to redirect funds into a series of projects that could never have received legitimate funding, even given their remit to use extraordinary methods to protect the Crown. In a series of increasingly shocking revelations, officials of the Home Office are implicated in conspiracies to defraud the Crown, in holding British subjects without trial, in torture, in unethical medical experimentation—an ever-increasing litany of sins. The public revelation of these crimes defeats all efforts at staunching the scandal. Heads roll. Sir Walter Price, the Home Secretary, resigns in disgrace for remaining wholly ignorant of the rot which had taken root in his Office.

Victoria remains nearly silent on the matter, saying only that she is pleased the apparatus of Her state should receive some much-needed oiling.

For the best part of a year Special Branch remained nearly crippled, its budgets subject to rigorous oversight and even its daily operations monitored. So muzzled, it is unable to bite even its old enemy the Kerberos Club for revealing and provoking it.

Though the Railway is in no substantive way associated with any of Special Branch's excesses, it becomes nonetheless associated with them in the public mind. Rumors spread of people being snatched from trains and whisked off to secret side-tunnels, and these rumors become the stuff of the dreadfuls and the sensational press. The once-proud symbol of British ingenuity and industry is tarnished, and with no substantive reforms in the management of the Railway its reputation is never wholly repaired.

1888: The Empty Man Strikes Again, this time making an attempt on the life of the Queen during the height of Her Golden Jubilee celebrations. After decades of seclusion from the public eye, the Queen deigns to appear in public for Her Jubilee. The years have somewhat softened Her aura of majesty. Though with a sharp look She can still reduce a man to uncontrolled weeping, She can hold some of Her power in check, and prevent it from battering down the sanity of mortal observers. Despite Herself, She becomes quite excited about greeting Her subjects in person once again.

Before a crowd of thousands, an unknown assailant steps forward and fires three charges from a distinctly Strange weapon. Reports will describe it as resembling a small telescope, and it fires coherent beams of ruby light which explode mortal flesh and penetrate wood and steel alike. One of the three bolts flies true, directly into the Queen's chest. Ripples of panic and then stillness follow. The Queen's gown is clearly burned through, a black smoldering hole directly over Her heart. Yet the assailant stares blankly as She fails to fall back and die.

Her transformation into something other than human has rendered Her marble-white flesh immune to harm, and only Her irresistible voice of command prevents the crowd from tearing the assassin apart. Before he can be apprehended, however, he uses a fourth charge on himself, destroying his head completely and making identification very difficult.

Clues found about the assassin's person and the subsequent investigations by the police reveal the assassin has ties to the Irish-American secret society *Clan Na Gael,* and even to the powerful leader of the self-rule movement Charles Stewart Parnell. The so-called Jubilee Plot turns opinions against the self-rule argument and seriously harms the Irish republican movement.

To those who observe such things closely, it all seems a bit too tidy and convenient. The Strange weapon, so deadly, yet so completely ineffective. The suicidal assassin, who removes his own head but leaves train ticket stubs and hand-written notes in his pockets. To those in the Kerberos Club who know of the Case of the Empty Man, it is clearly a childish charade, with the mark of Special Branch all over it.

Yet, if it were indeed intended to discredit the self-rule movement, then it was a remarkably effective bit of misdirection.

1888: Showdown in Whitechapel. In 1888 the Night Hag's power is challenged directly by the killer dubbed

Jack the Ripper. The Night Hag and the Ripper duel like mongoose and cobra, the Ripper executing his sensational murders and then eluding the district's legendary protector. The Ripper's official list of victims numbers two dozen, and twice this many are suspected.

The Ripper continues his crimes with seeming supernatural providence, with no witnesses, no clues, and no evidence to the Ripper's identity other than what might be inferred from the mocking letters he sends to police and papers.

"Last night was slim pickings, and I went home hungry and was quite cross when I woke this morning. Tonight, I will kill three, and from the first I will take her tongue, from the second her fingers, and the third her lovely scalp. I shall eat the first, make dice from the second, and wear the third as a wig. She shall be a red-head, I think, as I've always wanted to be ginger for an evening."

London sleeps uneasy until finally the Ripper dies at the hands of the Night Hag after a long and brutal chase. She is severely wounded herself in the confrontation, but her victory is absolute. She leaves him with his throat cut and his face and manhood torn off. His true identity is never publicly known. The Night Hag reasserts her authority in Whitechapel, until she vanishes from the streets and roofs of London in 1902, confirming for many the rumor that in her unmasked life, she was a member of the Kerberos Club, and met the same fate as the other Kerberans at the century's end.

1889: The End of Manifest Destiny. During the solar eclipse of January 1, 1889 the prophet Wovoka, known by the European name Jack Wilson, experiences a vision directly from what he believes to be God. This vision is the culmination of a lifetime of such revelations, but only in the first days of 1889 is he prepared to act on his visions.

Wovoka trained as a shaman, following his father's footsteps, and his reputation in the Mason Valley was that of a gifted leader, a wise councilor and, some said, a man who could work miracles. They said he could make weather, calling clouds to him like trained dogs, calming winds or bringing storms. He says now God made him responsible for the Western United States, leaving the East to the Americans. He gathers a following and begins to teach his interpretations of his visions, and to spread the religious practices which will come to be called the Ghost Dance.

This form of communal worship spreads, being adopted by many of the beleaguered native peoples, who often adapt it to their own particular religious culture. Wilson's claims as prophet are examined critically by many Native and Euro-Americans, including the Mormons for whom the concept of an Indian prophet was familiar, and 1889 sees the adoption and interpretation of the Dance by many of that faith.

The Ghost Dance practices promise radical transformation of society and the world, if enough people follow the rites properly and with dedication—but the more radical and millennial interpretations of the Dance paint this as an apocalypse which will cleanse the world of enemies rather than one which would unite all men as brothers.

Such is the interpretation of the Ghost Dance made by Kicking Bear of the Lakota Sioux in 1890, which itself is a natural reaction to the treatment of the Sioux by the U.S. government during this year. With the death of the Hunkpapa Sioux leader Sitting Bull in December at the hands of Bureau of Indian Affairs agents and U.S. soldiers, who sought to arrest the leader for his refusal to stop the practice of the Ghost Dance, the remaining Sioux leaders seek to convene. The leader Big Foot and his people are stopped by the U.S. army en route, and ordered to make camp on the banks of Wounded Knee Creek, where they can be more carefully guarded.

When the Army attempts to disarm the Sioux they are met with universal refusal and open belligerence, something the Army isn't expecting from the warriors accompanying the lightly-armed group of mostly women and children.

Tensions escalate, and finally shots are exchanged during an aggressive melee. One U.S. soldier lay dead, and one young Sioux stands unharmed, despite the discharge of a carbine round directly into his chest. The Ghost Shirts, sacred garments invested with power by Kicking Bear's militant interpretation of the Dance, are revealed.

Big Foot and his warriors,

emboldened, rout the U.S. army, who even abandon their light artillery and supplies in their flight. Over a hundred U.S. solders are killed, while fewer than a dozen Sioux die, and those are noncombatants caught in the fighting. Wounded Knee becomes a rallying cry for a movement which sweeps the Indian nations. Kicking Bear rises to greater prominence, and his militant Ghost Dance gains popularity, eclipsing the peace-oriented dance as originally conceived by Wilson.

When word spreads back east, the truth of the Ghost Dance is disbelieved at first, the events of Wounded Knee interpreted as a cowardly ambush rather than dominant victory. Yet it isn't merely the first sound defeat for U.S. forces in the American West, but the beginning of the end for American westward expansion, and the birth cries of the new Western Nations.

1895: The Channel Tunnel Tragedy. The 9 a.m. express line along the Channel Tunnel Railway derails and burns. None of the three hundred passengers and crew survive, and the wreck damages the tracks so severely that the entire tunnel must be closed down for six months to facilitate repairs.

Like its daily operation, efforts to restore the Channel Tunnel are fraught with setbacks, disasters, corruption, labor issues, and bad management, almost as if some hidden agency wished the repairs to fail and the Channel Tunnel to remain closed. In January of 1896, that secret mover gets its wish. The Home Secretary declares the Tunnel a write-off, and with little political will in France or Britain to attempt a second tunnel project, the dream of a Britain linked directly to the Continent via rail dies. As enthralled as they were when it opened, the public greets news of the Railway's demise with disinterest. The Tunnel has become a symbol of official corruption, and the tragedies of the decade have given the public more immediate concerns than the national vanity invested in the underwater railway.

The Channel Rail Company sells its interests in the Tunnel to a consortium of mining firms, who indicate that the Tunnel might serve as starting point for undersea mining operations. Nothing ever comes of this, and as the tunnel quietly passes from the public awareness, it is secretly acquired by a member of the Kerberos Club for purposes unknown. The Tunnel served the Club well as a weapon against Special Branch. How might they now use it?

1900: China Burns. The forces of The Righteous and Harmonious Society Movement, called "Boxers" by foreigners because of their fanatic devotion to martial arts, push their rebellion against the Chinese empire and the foreign influences they see as having corrupted and dominated Chinese life. The rebellion is marked by a massive surge in the Strange, leading to horrific death tolls. In the invasion of Beijing in June, over ten thousand people are killed when Harmonious Society *Xia* battle a cadre of British and American Strangers who are residents in the city. Ancient fighting techniques are marshaled with modern potency against the weird powers of the foreigners, and the collateral damage is horrific.

Huge sections of Beijing are burned or reduced to rubble. The foreigners make a retreat, taking hundreds of their mundane fellows with them. They are roundly blamed for the damage and deaths, and sympathies turn to the rebels.

The rebellion continues to gain strength, the Chinese empress powerless to stop it. Thousands of foreigners, Chinese Christians, and those marked out as collaborators or profiteers are killed. British efforts to intervene fail, as does the first international effort. Losses are high, and Western troops, armed as they are with repeating rifles, body armor, and mechanized artillery, find themselves unable to contend with the Boxers' open and aggressive use of Strangers. Some seem to be figures from Chinese religion, folklore, and myth. Others fight only with swords. These unconventional assaults shake discipline, which makes the irregular rebel troops more effective against trained soldiers.

Finally the rebellion is suppressed with a huge international force under German command. The suppression is brutal and atrocities are flagrant. Looting, rape, and the destruction of civilian property are common. The Boxers' Strangeness is in the end no match for the massed military and industrial might of the West. The forced reparations

and further weakening of China's dynastic rulers set the stage for revolutions to come.

1901: The Great Southern Revolt. In a culmination of two decades of planning and preparation, the slaves of the Confederate States finally rise in open and organized rebellion. The Union quickly moves to support the rebellion with troops and material, and all the Confederacy's calls for international assistance fall on deaf ears. What diplomatic capital the Confederate State had once possessed had long since been squandered.

Friendless, hobbled with a notoriously corrupt and inefficient central government, and suddenly faced with a rebellion among the very people whose labors supported the nation's armies and infrastructure, the Confederacy quickly falls. Individual states resist longer, and without any central authority to organize surrender the fights are long and bloody.

Horrors of the elder world are unleashed upon the rebelling slaves, but many are countered with stockpiled sorcery drawn from the Afro-Caribbean traditions. From the North, the First Mechanized Cavalry advances, shelling towns and cities with incendiary and fume bombs to render them quickly useless to the enemy, and then advancing further. When word of atrocities, such as the Temple Furnaces full of charred human bones, and the gouts of blood from the Vivisectories along the Mississippi, reach the reading public of the Union, a general call goes up: Accept no terms less than total and unconditional surrender, and bring those responsible to trial.

By the winter of 1902 the major hostilities are concluded, and a shocked and horrified populace welcomes reunification with the North. The long, slow process of reparation and Reconstruction begins, and with so much of the Southern political and social infrastructure in shambles, the newly-freed slaves find they have to immediately take the reins of power in many areas. In only two years the inequities of the proceeding two hundred are turned on their heads. The Broken Union is mended, but not yet healed.

1902: The End of the Age. On the night of January 22, after spending Christmas at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, the Queen calls Her Son and the future king to attend Her. It's a duty he does not relish, for his mother frightens him. At 81 She appears exactly as She did in 1857 when the Indian Rebellion so changed Her. She says to Her son simply, "It is time for me to go. I have seen to everything." She indicates Her writing desk, where Her final correspondences are sealed and waiting delivery, and letters informing those who must know that the Queen is abdicating Her throne to Her son. When asked why, She simply says: "I've grown too large for this tiny world. Wish your brothers and sisters the best for me." And She vanishes.

With Her go the easy routes to and from Faerie. The passages seal closed, trapping thousands of humans across the veil and an uncountable number of faerie in the World. The fates of both exiled populations remains unknown.

The chaos which follows highlights just how reliant on the Queen Herself the Empire had become. The manner of Her departure is in keeping with the last third of Her rule, but still comes as a shock to the nation. The factions She held in check with Her will and savvy are free to act on old rivalries and grievances.

The government collapses and has to be reformed. Riots break out across the empire. Thousands are killed. Special Branch begins rounding up all the suspects and state enemies they had been watching for years.

Robbed of its secret patron, the Kerberos Club finds itself surrounded by enemies on all sides. By month's end its house on St. James is burned and its membership dispersed. But even with the unleashed powers of Special Branch—and the Club's less official enemies—turned on it, surprisingly few actual Kerberans are captured, killed, vanished, or arrested and subject to sham trials. The greater majority of the Club's membership seems to escape. It is almost as if they were expecting the calamitous events following Victoria's death, and arranged a means of egress for themselves well in advance.

Chapter 4
Throne of Empire

London is older than just about anything in the modern world. It's older than Christianity. London began as *Londinium*, a settlement in Celtic Britannia founded in the decade of Claudius' invasion and conquest of Britannia—or, as has recently been suggested, the welcomed arrival of his forces by local Celtic peoples eager for trade and enterprise. It was a center of commerce even in those pagan days.

London has been continuously inhabited since about 50 A.D., and barring a few unfortunate periods of war, famine, plague, and economic collapse, it has only grown. One such event occurs no more than ten years after it was founded, when the rebellious Iceni, led by their queen Boudicca, sack the young city and burn it to the ground. The Romans put upwards of 80,000 Britons to the sword at what is modern King's Cross, if you're to believe that shameless propagandist Tacitus. Yet it isn't the old dead Roman whose cult still has a following in modern Britannia, so one might ask who really won that war.

Through the first three centuries Londinium grows, gaining the proper civic edifices which mark Romanized cities. The locals marry Romans and take Roman names. The tribes allied with Rome prosper from the trade with the Empire. Not everyone is entirely pleased with being ruled by the Romans, of course, and the Scots make it a sport to occasionally overrun the great wall commissioned by Hadrian, to burn and ravage and raid and make a grand weekend of doing violence to the Romans and their allies.

Perhaps in reaction to this sort of woaded threat the Romans build a wall around the city, a boundary which defines and shapes the city for centuries to come. Good Roman stonework protects the beating financial heart of what will become the British Empire in what will be called the City of London or the Old City.

Late in the third century the bloody Saxons make a habit of raiding the city by river, leading to the construction of a riverside wall. Londinium may not have begun as a fortified military city, but it becomes one through necessity.

The fourth century is not kind to Londinium. While Christianity comes to the island, so too do the Picts, Scots, and Saxons, usually with torches and shifty looks. Rome continues its decline in style, while its extremities start to rot like a leper's fingers.

While Rome hunches towards its dissolution it forgets its friends, and trade begins to break down, starving Londinium. By the end of the 5th century, the last traces of the Roman lifestyle, the villas, plantations, arts and culture have fallen to ruins, along with Londinium's public buildings and repurposed temples.

But a choice spot like Londinium won't remain unoccupied for long. The Anglo-Saxons take over the lease in the 5th century and hold it until the fateful invasion of 1066. Under the Saxons Londinium becomes Londenburh, the London Fort. After 800 or so the Vikings take up the old tradition of raiding and sacking it, and even take it over for a short time before Alfred the Great gives them a stern talking-to.

In 1066 the Normans come knocking, and never leave. They bring a cultural infusion which will radically change the Roman-influenced Saxon culture of the island, and William the Conqueror makes his mark on London in permanent ways, such as the Tower of London. The Norman conquest links Britain to continental Europe in much the same way the Roman invasion linked it to Rome. Trade and cultural contact become regular, and London blossoms. Westminster Hall is constructed soon after the invasion, and starting around 1200 it becomes



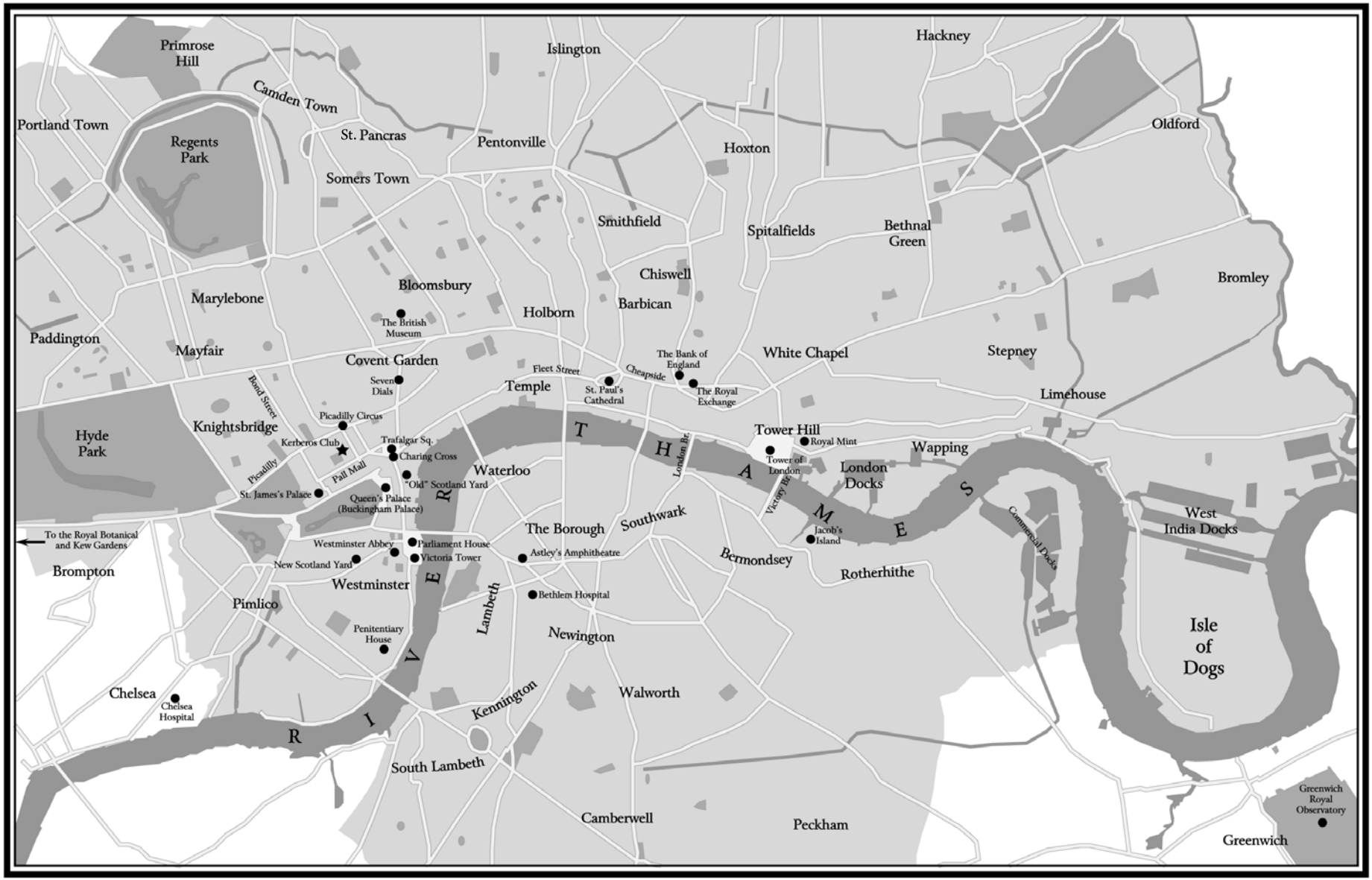
the preferred royal residence for centuries. The Palace of Westminster will one day house the legislative branch of Britain's constitution-free constitutional monarchy—until the nasty business with the fire, of course.

Fire and London have a long and touchy relationship. Fire and disease have been London's banes since the earliest ages of its evolution from a Roman outpost to the modern capital of Empire. A warren of narrow twisting streets and wood and thatch buildings, medieval London is a tinderbox, and after sundown every source of light involves fire. Its population tops 80,000, and people live atop one another, breathing into each other's faces, bathing rarely, and tracking human waste back into their homes after flinging it into the streets.

In the mid-14th century the Black Death leaves piles of corpses and some endearing nursery rhymes in its wake. London's population drops by half. Imagine *tens of thousands* of corpses bloating in piles, and being carted to lime pits for disposal.

British history is a bloody affair, with so many wars they often blur into each other at the edges. But by the late 1400s the Tudors are in charge and puffy pants are in style. The Reformation isn't especially bloody in London, but it marks a prodigious land-grab. Henry VIII dissolves the monasteries, which represent a significant chunk of London's area and population. The nobility see their lands increase dramatically. Monasteries become manor homes, and "abbey" is more likely to refer to the house of a lord than a House of the Lord.

By the 16th century London has Shakespeare and Elizabeth I. She turns Britain from something of a backwater into a major European power, and expands that power into the New World—and into the Otherworld. Her master spy and magus Sir Francis Walsingham sees to it that the troublesome faerie courts fall in on themselves and waste their splendid powers and strength in civil war. The assassination of the Faerie Queen commonly called Titania precipitates the strife, and Walsingham's mark is well upon those bloody events. But Elizabeth shows some of the same spirit which will imbue Victoria, and her rule is a Golden Age of discovery, art, science, and formal courtly magic. As Britain's



0 ½ 1 1½ 2 2½ 3

Scale in Miles

The City of London



Some county names have been abbreviated, e.g.: Bedfordshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, etc.

fortunes rise, so do London's. In the 1600s London's population tops 200,000, yet the city's boundaries remain fairly compact. Many of the nobility start expanding out and building estates in places like Middlesex and Surrey, and the towns and villages which will one day become part of the greater London metropolis are themselves growing.

It isn't until the later 1600s under the Stuarts that London breaks out of the Roman egg and stretches its wings. The major push here is by the nobility who find London proper to be, essentially, a dump. If hell is other people, then London is more than even Dante could have ever wished on anyone. But this century sees the draining of London's marshy surroundings, and it sees a great motivator for civic improvement in the Great Fire of London in 1666. It's almost a relief from the Great Plague of the previous year. At least people could see what was killing them: the swirly red and yellow stuff.

Londoners blame the fire on the papists, but according to a Kerberan who was there at the time it had another source: "I'd just mounted this savage little piece, a half-breed Spanish scull with a mass of hair blacker than the Devil's hoof, and then her husband burst in on us and started throwing everything he could at me. When he finally got around to pitching the oil lamp I was out the window, so it hit the wall, and there you go. If they'd kept records in those days, my sprint up Pudding Lane would have broken them all. That was September, and let me tell you, it wasn't half cold."

The Fire scours upwards on 60 percent of the city and leaves plenty of room for rebuilding. Many of the wealthy residents don't rebuild in place, but move west, establishing that direction as London's most fashionable. After the fire brick and stone become the preferred building materials, and Parliament makes it official with an Act. Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke put their marks on the city by reconstructing churches and civic buildings in the styles of the time.

Even through all this, London is becoming one of the great financial powers of the world, and is home to the Bank of England.

In the 18th century London takes wing. The Georgians see the city's population increase significantly, and its boundaries expand, necessitating new bridges and increasing development in South London and the East End. London's ports are busy every hour of the day and night. On Fleet Street, the printing press plants the seeds of the modern free press. In the coffee houses cropping up all over the city some of the great ideas of the age are discussed and debated. King George might lose his holdings in much of the Americas, and see his sanity flutter away on the evening's breeze, but his kingdom's capital is thick and hale, with money in its pockets.

Modern London

By mid-century London's population tops two million, and keeps growing. The city is flooded with people seeking work or fleeing desperate circumstances. The famines in Ireland drive hundreds of thousands from their homes, and many settle in London, at some points in the century making up as much as 20 percent of the population of the city.

Late in the century in the Kerberos Club's London there is a large Chinese and Indian population, alongside many with African roots, immigrants from Britain's colonial holdings or the strife-torn regions in which she warred. In Victoria's diaries, She writes, "Let them come, from all parts of the globe, and enrich the blood of my people with mongrel vigor. The hound of mixed breeding is always the heartiest. So shall my Kingdom be, too." Were it not for Her influences on public policy, these populations would be much smaller.

The diversity does nothing to stem the general air of bigotry and discrimination which is so prevalent as to be regarded as normal and expected. A white Englishman can expect arch looks and whispered words in Chinese when venturing down certain London streets, and that street's residents could expect likewise when they venture out.

It's almost a truism that if something can be bought or sold, then it can be bought or sold somewhere in London—whether it's as simple as an exotic fruit remembered fondly by a world traveler, or a firearm, a murder, or a servant who is a slave in all but name.

The River Thames

Nothing shapes the city of London more than the River Thames, and in truth the city would not exist if not for the river. During Victoria's reign it is commonly believed the name of the river is derived from the name of the Egyptian goddess Isis, and it appears on many maps labeled as such. The dubious accuracy of such claims has certainly done nothing to dent the secret popularity of Isis' cult in the city through the ages, and still today the wives of ship-owners sometimes comb and braid their hair in the secret ways said to bring fair weather.

The Thames, with its levels moderated by locks, is navigable from the sea all the way into Gloucestershire, and is plied by heavily-laden oceangoing vessels as far as the London Pool just below London Bridge. In the Pool the ships are packed in so tightly it is said you can cross the river by stepping from deck to deck. The Venerable Bede said the Pool was the reason for London's existence. While that's not strictly true, the deep draft that this section of the river allows is responsible for London's growth and power and prosperity.

The Thames is also London's sewer, and until the 1860s most of London's effluvia and the waste water from its factories and tanneries flow directly or indirectly into the river. Combined with the tidal nature of the river as it runs through London, this brings a unique aroma to the city. The river is also a favorite final resting place for those ushered into the next life by unsavory sorts, so many that a certain class of scavenger can eke out a meager living fishing out floaters and taking their clothing and belongings for resale or reuse.

Society and the Season

While the wealthy and powerful might not wish to reside in London all year, certain business and events can drag even the most hidebound peer back to Town for a month or two. London's social calendar gets complicated from February to August, when Parliament is in session and the Great and Good return from their country estates to their London homes (or homes rented for the occasion). Between a thousand and two thousand families make up *Society:* peers, royals, politicians and, in this age, some with no claim to genteel company beyond vast, vast sums of money, tracts of land, fleets of ships, or acres of factory floor.

Most of these seasonal Londoners take residence in the West End or the more fashionable suburbs opened up by the new railways.

It is sometimes called the Voting Season to differentiate it from Fox Season and Shooting Season, and others where the Victorian elite kill and slay among the lesser creatures rather than among the reputations of their fellows. London's cultural sphere lights up during the Season. Theaters debut new works, galleries host exhibitions, composers present new arrangements. It is also a time for the making of deals, social, political and economic. Marriages are arranged, business is conducted, and decisions which will shape the Empire are made at countless parties and soirées.

Poverty and Desperation

Modern visitors to London would be shocked at the disparity between the rich and poor of the city. Less than an hour's walk can take one from wealth and privilege unrivaled in the world to poverty and unrelenting misery as bad as anything. London's old bane of overcrowding only gets worse through Victoria's reign. While the city's boundaries expand somewhat, people in the East End still live one on top of another, dozens sharing the same tiny room and sleeping in shifts when not scrabbling to make a living any way possible.

One notorious concentration of misery is a district colloquially called

the Rookery, an area bordered by George Street, High Street, St Giles, and Bainbridge Street. In 1850, Thomas Beames described the area in his *The Rookeries of London* as a honeycomb of blind alleys and hidden courts, in which anyone who could pay would find refuge from the Law among the lowest of the thieving classes and the eternally poor.

The streets of the East End are often crowded with prostitutes, while a somewhat more sophisticated class of woman serves the men of the West End, circulating among the crowds when the theaters let out in the evenings. London is sometimes called the Whorehouse to the World as so many prostitutes work its streets, coffee houses and secret brothels. As tight as Victoria laces Her Empire, Her citizens still find their releases in vice. Among the destitute—packed in the rotting tenements of London's poor districts, unable to afford dignity at all—there is someone hungry enough to indulge any perversion or desire for the opportunity to eat for one more day.

The alternatives to this relentless toil and victimization are not much better. There isn't much social security in this age. Abhorrence among the wealthy and powerful for freeloading paupers getting tossed into prison for the winter or entering a Workhouse yielded the principle of *reduced eligibility*. The basic idea is that prison or a workhouse ought to be *worse* than what a pauper could manage scratching out their own living. Institutions to house the poor or the criminal are deliberately made horrific—cold and uncomfortable, with terrible food and pointless, relentless, soul-breaking labor such as breaking rocks or walking a treadmill.

For this system to work, institutions must remain more horrible than the streets. As conditions worsen, so too must the prisons and poor houses. During the turmoil following the Atlantean Invasion, one workhouse manager in Maiden Head institutes branding: one touch of the iron for every month spent in the house. Before public outrage sees the practice ended, hundreds are scarred.

Perhaps it is little wonder that so many turn to crime.

Crime and Vice

Victoria's London was rife with the old crimes of robbery, assault, kidnapping, blackmail, forgery, rape, and murder—but the new age, the advent of telecommunications, and the growing sophistication of the financial markets opened up new realms of genteel crimes, embezzlement and the manipulation of markets.

Those who risk their sanity and nervous systems in *Needlework* can find gainful employ with the great institutions of the day, sifting vast amounts of machine-signal for patterns and meaning, but far too many find themselves working for the criminal set, sewing patterns which benefit their paymasters into the Empire's growing volume of machine-code information. By the 1880s, few organized criminal enterprises move forward without getting someone on the needle to cover the information flow, obscuring clues to their plans before police or Special Branch Needlemen can ferret out the patterns of their plan in the machine-signal. The price of the vital and highly addictive drugs that allow Needlework soar, as those on the needle will pay any price to keep from experiencing the crippling and horrific withdrawals.

But most of London's crime is still fairly petty, and most is driven by desperation. The desire to eat and sleep indoors is a strong motivator. For some, colloquially called the "criminal classes," these activities are somewhat organized. The Victorians are prodigious self-organizers, forming associations and brotherhoods, and joining clubs and criminal fraternities. Some of these gangs have the air of the foreigner about them (such as the so-called Black Hand of Italy) but most are home-grown associations of petty criminals who organize along lines of mutual cooperation and protection.

Having a dozen people willing to swear your whereabouts at the time a crime was committed is a powerful defense against the laws of Britain, which until the later three decades of the century rely almost entirely on witness testimony. Only the coming of anthropological and physiographic evidence changes this dynamic.

A great many of London's criminals are children. A high death rate and dire financial circumstances lead to a shocking number of orphans, and in order to survive many join child gangs or latch onto adult outfits for protection and purpose. There is so little social support that this turn to lawlessness isn't hard to understand, but the puritanical public morality of the time tends to forbid any sympathy for the wretches.

As Scrooge puts it: "If they would rather die… they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

The way crime impacts the larger culture is quite similar to today. Victorian journalism explodes, and the business of selling papers depends on grabbing attention, on headlines, and on sensationalism and scandal. A hundred paupers might vanish in London in a day, but if one ringleted blonde daughter of a prominent Lord vanishes in the night the whole town will be in frenzy. Parliament will pass new laws in response. The police will crack down on whoever is handy, just to be seen to be working, despite Peel's explicit dictates to the contrary.

Yet murder isn't an especially common crime, despite the population density of London through the century. A killing can still grab attention, even if it were of a lowly sort. Crimes of passion sometimes result in deaths, botched robberies as well, and sometimes deliberate, premeditated murders are done, but they still have the power to shock. It isn't until the

Crashing the Party



Most Kerberans find it difficult to mingle in Society, yet their influence, power, and wealth can often see them grudgingly admitted to the parties and balls of the Season.

How does one manage situations when one simply *must* attend a particular party, ball, event or salon, and no invitation is forthcoming?

Admission to these events is usually fairly restricted, but to one able to arrange proper dress, and being accompanied and delivered to the door in a proper fashionable carriage, presenting a forged (or stolen) invitation shouldn't be impossible to arrange. Some events are more casual, and admission is a matter of knowing the right people and being known yourself. In these circumstances, making some friends beforehand, willing or unwilling, might gain one admittance. To a man who can see through walls, read minds, or walk invisibly among his peers, the secrets of the overly respectable can easily be ferreted out.

And one wonders why so many of the peerage despise all things Strange, eh?

The most difficult route into the bright lights and glamour might simply be to walk in and present yourself in all your Strange glory, and dare anyone to stand against you. Sometimes, such open bravura can win out where caution, deceit, and social gamesmanship fail. Crashing a party will inevitably lead to serious public attention, however. The London papers have social columns dedicated to all the happenings of the Season. Something as sensational as a group of Strangers barging into the Duke of Westminster's birthday party, spinning wonders among the crowd and drinking far too much, will be reported nationally and even internationally. If the goal is to attract attention, then this might be the way to go.

It is entirely possible that such tactics might lead to violence or the threat of violence. Footmen might be set upon the interlopers and even the police might be called—though this would itself be unconscionably scandalous and certainly a last resort.

Regardless, in many ways, the Kerberos Club is the antithesis to everything Society stands for: Kerberans are Strange, egalitarian and revolutionary, and threaten the social and economic underpinnings of Britain's elites.

This is perhaps one of the reasons the Queen protects the Kerberos Club, as a foil and unspoken threat against the Empire's most powerful citizens.

plagues of Strange violence late in the century that people become more inured to seeing and hearing about violence being done. There is an almost charming lack of public cynicism. Or at least, cynicism isn't treated as a virtue.

Gun ownership is common, and before acts passed in the 1870s, almost entirely unrestricted. Yet again violence done with firearms is remarkably low, averaging fewer than fifty instances in a given year in the whole of the United Kingdom. The reasons are complex, but suffice to say even among criminals, murderous violence is treated seriously, and barring mental instability or drunken impairment it is done only when it can not be avoided—or at least is done in a quiet fashion. The blade or cudgel is still the favorite implement of mayhem.

Crime is a fairly regional thing in London. The prosperity and police presence in a given district will determine to a great degree the kinds of crime one might encounter there. In the West End, even the beggars are well mannered and ply their trade with a certain formality. In the warrens of the East End one can be bludgeoned unconscious and robbed for a dozen different reasons, from deliberate opportunism to simply having hair the same color as an angry drunk's bastard brother-in-law.

Riding in the same cart as Crime comes Vice. The Victorians are enthusiastic drinkers. With the often-tainted water supplies of London, drinking beer, wine, and spirits is safer. Britain is justly famous for its beers and spirits, and is a major importer of wines. Home and small-scale brewing is common as well. For the poor, a nearly toxic grade of gin is the tipple of choice: It obliterates consciousness amazingly fast, and is often deliberately adulterated with chemicals like benzene, benzyl, or wood alcohol. For a penny a drink, even the poorest can afford enough of the evil brew to render themselves insensible and often nearly insane.

Opium slithers into Britain, something of a just consequence of the deadly opium trade with China. By mid-century opium dens crop up in the areas along the docks, such as Limehouse. The more sophisticated opium-eater would indulge in laudanum, a tincture of opium, sometimes sweetened into a syrup. It is (along with cocaine) a major ingredient in many patent medicines, to



which thousands are unknowingly addicted. It certainly encourages demand among those who take it.

And with drink, there's always gambling. The Victorians will wager on anything from the outcome of a horse race to the fall of cards, to who would remain standing in a bare-knuckles fight, or to which terrier could kill the most rats in a minute. Fortunes are squandered, lives ruined. In high company, the repayment of gambling debts is considered a matter of great honor, and being unable to do so leads more than one gentleman to suicide as the only way out from under the obligation. Only slightly better than the pistol is becoming permanently snared by a predatory moneylender

In a Hail of Hot Lead



Upper and middle-class Victorians take killing pretty seriously—more so than most modern role-playing gamers take it in their games, at any rate. In a traditional adventuring mode the PCs stack corpses up like cordwood. Sometimes it's slaying and killing only evil orc-types, but just as likely it's anyone who gets in their way. This isn't a surprise, as a major source for traditional games is heroic fantasy where "evil" can be handily conflated with "anyone who gets between the hero and his objective."

The setting of *The Kerberos Club* operates on the assumption that murderous violence is shocking, that there is a real sick-making taboo against slaying others outside the honorable context of soldiering. And even then, the *taking of life* is part of a soldier's sacrifice to his country; the soldier takes upon himself that sin so his loved ones and nation need not bear it directly. Murder is serious—at least to those with the power to pass laws, organize manhunts, and read with disgust the latest gunfire outrage perpetrated upon the good folk of London.

Now, if you wish to retain this aspect of the setting, how to impress the significance of *restraint* on players who are used to playing every encounter like the lobby scene from *The Matrix?*

First off, explain it. Lay it out for your players during the initial session so everyone gets fair warning. Explain that killings, unless covered up with care, attract attention and investigation (especially if reported in the press). Also point out that of all Victoria's subjects, members of the Kerberos Club might have the least reason to expect their fellow citizens to judge them fairly: "He must be guilty of something, eh? I mean… *just look at 'im.*"

There is also the matter of *whom* one kills. The truth of Victorian London is that while the well-to-do and the socially-conscious might indulge in a fastidious disdain for murderous violence, there were thousands upon thousands who could simply not afford that luxury. In the slums of London violence is ever present, and frequently lethal. The only difference between the murder of an East End prostitute and that of a banker from the Old City is who pays attention to it.

Until he began taunting the police and the press, even Jack the Ripper failed to raise much furor, and he certainly wasn't the first madman to engage in such slaughter.

But there's a counter even in the worst slums, where people know violence like an old family friend. People are used to repaying violence with violence, and to attending to their own business. If you become known in some quarters as a killer, then you'll find no friendly reception there, and quite possibly some tough's clasp knife in your kidney.

If the players decide to put down their foes in hails of hot lead (or bolts of hellfire, swarms of demonic butterflies, strokes of lightning, or deadly Oriental hand-fighting techniques), make sure they know ahead of time that you're keeping track of it, and that it might well come back to haunt them—perhaps quite literally.

who will bleed you dry with interest for years and years. In more humble company, failure to repay gambling debts can find one wallowing face-down in the stinking muck of the Thames at low tide.

That's drink and gambling. What of sex and violence?

Londoners love both, in their proper place. As moralistic as the age might seem, prostitution remains legal until very nearly the end of the century, and it has been estimated that as many as twenty to fifty thousand prostitutes (casual and full-time) work in London. The motivator for the majority of prostitution is poverty. Many prostitutes have children to support and no other way to make a living. Once "fallen" it is very difficult for a woman to find legitimate employment. Even the accusation of prostitution (as is possible under the Hygiene Laws) is sometimes enough to destroy a reputation. Pimps and procurers take advantage of these women, and for all but a few who work the West End and attract wealthy admirers, the life is miserable and often short.

Violence is exciting, whether it takes the form of a crowd cheering two drunken brawlers, to a formal boxing match attended by Lords and gentlemen sportsmen. It is all about *context:* a man might rebel at the cruel treatment of a horse seen in the streets, yet enjoy a spectacle of violence from trained animals, such as a dog fight or fox hunting.

Law and Order

The way laws are enforced changes dramatically during the 19th century. Prior to Peel's establishment of the Metropolitan Police in the 1830s, enforcement of the law is done by court bailiffs and private contractors—thief-takers who are paid to apprehend those against whom charges are brought. Peel's nine principles of modern policing put the emphasis on *preventing* rather than merely punishing crime, and on the need for a police force to earn public respect by a constant and unwavering impartiality in applying the law and not by catering to their whim or desire. Initially mocked and disliked, the Peelers and Bobbies are soon a common sight in London, and their success at policing the streets and intervening in potential conflicts prevent the city from descending into chaos during more *exciting* times.

They are so successful at putting pressure on criminals that many abandon London, moving to other towns to ply their trade, which inspires the creation of new police forces there as well.

The Metropolitan Police are based in a building opposite the small open area in Whitehall called Scotland Yard, until the building is destroyed in the Automechanical

The Wrong Side of the Law

It never made much sense to me, the way villains use their superpowers in the comics. I could never imagine a situation where superpowers and the fame they bring would be better used robbing banks or holding cities for ransom than, say, dominating professional sports and getting massive shoe contracts, or hooking up with the government or a corporation for a huge salary and benefits. Plus, being a villain meant you always *lost*.

Here's the thing about the world of *The Kerberos Club:* Fame only goes so far. That world is far more prejudiced, judgmental, superstitious, and future-shocked than ours today. People in Victoria's London, even in the depths of the Strange '90s, still basically mistrust the superhuman. It's inexplicably, disturbingly, irrationally *unnatural*, no matter how patriotic or beautiful the manifestation is. On some level, the mind rebels at the reality of the superhuman.

It's easier to imagine how some gifted (or cursed) bloke might find the prospect of walking through the walls of the Bank of England or using his genius to build weapons for the Russian Czars pretty attractive when his fellow Britons reject his powers or mistrust his genius. The barriers of class, wealth, education, and reputation can transcend and even trump the superhuman (assuming the Stranger doesn't have superhuman charisma or charm). Even a worker of genuine miracles might find no legitimate way to profit from it.

And walking through bank walls is so easy…

Mutiny. Then they are based in New Scotland Yard on the Victorian Embankment. Scotland Yard comes to house the investigative branches of the Police Service, while for the constabulary proper the police stations are spread out and housed within London's seventeen districts.

Initially, Special Branch is also housed in Scotland Yard, but friction with the regular police and detectives lead the division to find its own headquarters elsewhere, and it moves a dozen times throughout the latter half of the century. Special Branch officers are disparagingly called "Skinners," a play on "Peeler" and a comment on the more brutal methods Special Branch is permitted to employ.

Special Branch has few friends in the regular police service, but its officers have the authority to take over investigations, close them down, or block certain avenues of enquiry. In matters pertaining to Her Majesty's security and on issues of domestic espionage, Special Branch handles the investigations. Special Branch also deals with issues which might result in embarrassment to Crown and Country. It is said that more than a few of the inmates of Bedlam were not mad before being snatched off the street by Special Branch officers, treated with sanity-destroying chemicals and locked away forever.

The City of London, the tiny core of the old Roman city, has its own police force and the Metropolitan Police does not patrol there, though Scotland Yard's detectives are often consulted on certain matters. The City of London Police maintain a small and discrete team of well-paid Strangers as well. The so-called City Guard's generous salaries are paid by a private trust funded by the business and financial interests based in the Old City. The Guard often find themselves at odds with many of London's Strange citizens, and they make it a point to follow them when they enter the Old City, keeping their harassment low-key but still fairly obvious. The Guard all easily blend with ordinary humanity, and rarely don their uniforms except on ceremonial and public occasions.

Behind this modern police force is the rather elderly and infirm court system, overburdened and hidebound. From the top down, the final court of appeal in the land is the venerable House of Lords, but actually having a case heard by the House is rare as there is always a great backlog of cases and appeals for the Lords to consider.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council hears appeals from colonial courts as well as ecclesiastical cases.

The Supreme Court of the Judicature has two branches: the Court of Appeal, which accepts appeals from the common-law courts, and the High Court of Justice, which accepts appeals from the Chancery courts, typically dealing with business and financial matters. The High Court of Justice has five divisions: the Chancery; the Queen's Bench; Common Pleas; Exchequer; and Probate, Divorce and Admiralty.

Below this there are about a dozen courts dealing with regional issues, business, and other matters—but those of the Kerberos Club are most likely to find themselves dealing with British Law in the Central Criminal Courts housed in the Old Bailey (named for the gates of the old Roman city walls). While the Police Courts handle minor matters and misdemeanors, the Criminal Courts deal with crimes heinous and sensational, and also the mundane and sadly ordinary. Under British Common Law legal decisions and the instructions given to juries are based on previous decisions, but judges have a great deal of leeway in interpreting previous rulings.

A few specific Acts of Parliament apply in some criminal cases, but for the most part matters of law are decided by judges whose impartiality can only be hoped for. Worse, the backlog of cases at any time means long waits for cases to be tried, with favoritism in scheduling the docket based on patronage or bribery. Still, those tried in British courts have their cases heard by a jury of their fellow Britons, and may always present character witnesses to swear to their sober attitudes, hard work, dedication to family, and regular attendance of divine services.

For those who fall afoul of the courts, however, the specter of prison lurks. Victoria's prisons are governed by much the same philosophy of Reduced Eligibility as its workhouses. Prisons are meant to be so awful that the poor will not commit crimes merely to gain regular meals and a warm place to sleep in winter. Prisons are made bleak, hard and miserable. Prisoners are stripped, deloused, shaved, and examined for identifying marks which are recorded against future criminal activity. They are issued new clothing and examined to determine if they are fit for labor. If deemed able to labor, they are

sometimes worked hard at meaningless, back-breaking physical exertions such as pacing endlessly around the treadmill, or breaking rocks, or moving piles of stone or cannonballs, all to no purpose other than to exhaust them and break their spirits. Food is meager; mail, if it arrives at all, is read and examined by guards; and discipline is brutal and merciless. Trends in prison reform come and go, some emphasizing prisons as penitentiaries (places which make people *penitent*), others simply intended to keep dangerous people locked away from society for as long as possible.

In 1879, South Bend Prison is opened south of the Thames, an experiment in private prison management. The South Bend Company is paid a set amount per head per annum for support and upkeep of its prisoners. The more the company keeps down its costs and gainfully employs its captive workforce, the wider its profit margins. By 1885, the scandalous rumors escaping South Bend cause public outcry enough for the prison to be examined. What the investigators find within is not the expected squalor and abuse, but something much more horrible.

The prison has become a machine made of flesh and anger, fear and helplessness: a machine made of human lives, which has no purpose other than to shred the boundaries of the World and Otherworld, until there is no difference in nightmare and waking reality there in South Bend's heart. Inside its walls, space and time lose their cohesion, cause and effect break down and chase each other round and about in no certain pattern. The walls sweat and weep. The prisoners are covered in stone dust, their eyes chalk-white. The guards are remade as the prisoners see them, and they are horrors.

The place is contained by the army, and then burned down. The papers report that the fire was the result of a riot. The South Bend Horror leads finally to meaningful prison reform pushed through Parliament by the Royalist faction of MPs acting on Her Majesty's explicit instructions. Such a wound in the World must never be allowed to recur.

In the months which follow, the greedy shareholders of the South Bend Company who were not arrested or vanished by Special Branch all meet with Strange ends.

City Administration and Services

London is a mishmash of shires and districts, but the establishment of The Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855 sees the governance and management of the city placed under one authority. The Board oversees public services such as the sewer systems, streets, bridges, fire brigade, and care of the embankments. The Board has a great deal of authority and very little accountability, a state of affairs which leads to the level of corruption one might expect. By the time it is decommissioned and replaced with the County Council of London in 1887, it has weathered major scandal, criminal charges of its officials, and the general contempt of the common Londoner, who expects nothing but poor service, hostility, incompetence, and frustration from any dealing with the Board.

London's utilities are private ventures generally. The famous gas is provided first by a single company which extracts it from heated coal and sends it to homes through pipes laid down especially for this purpose. Initially it's quite an expensive luxury, but several competing firms eventually drive the price of gas down far enough for the middle class to easily afford it. Hundreds of miles of pipe are laid, sometimes leading to agents of the companies warring openly and secretly to dominate the local distribution system. Sabotage, libelous statements, and even physical assaults from gasmen are not uncommon.

Most of London's drinking water comes from rain-filled cisterns, and many squares and street-corners sport public wells. But with the increasingly dangerous levels of sewage leaking into the water table, many wells became too tainted. Water is shipped by barge from upstream. But ever-thirsty London too often has to drink its own filth, and the cholera outbreaks which result kill thousands.

In 1870 United Electrical forms, and builds an enormous coal-fired electrical generation plant on the Isle of Dogs. United Electric uses Wireless Transmission Coils licensed from Nicola Tesla, and they began offering the

lease of Induction Receivers, units which can be installed in a home to receive broadcast power and convert it into useful electrical current which can then power the new Edison-Swan lamps.

The use of Tesla's wireless system allows power to be delivered to Londoners without the need to lay down wiring to carry it from the generators to homes and businesses. This gives electricity a further advantage over gas, which still has to be carried through expensive piping. The lease of Tesla's Induction Receivers (nicknamed "Ducks") rather than the sale of a commodity allows a different business arrangement, and the contracts signed when leasing a unit

The Hounds of Justice



With the creation of the Tracking Squad, the police finally acknowledge the necessity to field their own supernaturally-potent officers in pursuit of equally-potent felons.

While Special Branch might like to claim that the "filthy dogs" aren't needed and that they can handle anything the Strange might throw up, their bluster is proven wrong time and again. A crime wave perpetrated by superhuman opportunists galvanizes Parliament to pass acts specifically criminalizing the use of "Powers, Capacities, Insights, and Birthrights Deemed Unnatural, Inhuman, or Disruptive to the Public Order" in the commission of another crime. The use of such powers makes the root crime *worse*, and thus punished more severely. With this legal backing, judges see it as their mandate to persecute superhuman criminals with harsh sentences. This was all in the hopes of holding back the tide of superhuman crime, and dissuading the notion that extraordinary abilities allow one to commit offenses with little fear.

Such is the case of Dr. Holcomb Mitchell, a consulting physician of no small reputation apprehended by the Tracking Squad and convicted of his wife's murder in the fall of 1880. Dr. Mitchell never laid a hand on his wife. Rather he exerted a measure of his powerful mesmeric influence over her, and caused her to go out and jump from London Bridge while holding a stone's weight of iron chain. Only the presence of Kerberos Club member Noel Blank, a hunched unhappy little Stranger with the power to neutralize the weird gifts of others, kept the homicidal doctor from using his powers to escape justice entirely.

When Mitchell testifies in his own defense, he has this to say:

"You, my so-called peers, would pass judgment on me when you're not fit to judge the actions of a dog. If you convict me, can you be sure I'll remain locked away? Will I be watched at all times by worms such as that one [indicating Blank]? Hardly. There will come a time when attention will waver, and I'll have my way with my guards, and they will set me free and give me the coins in their pockets. I'll have their wives to satisfy me, and then I'll come for you lot. I'll make you swallow poison or leap from your rooftops, or cut the throats of your children and then stand trial yourselves. No prison can hold me! You had best think about that every night if you find me guilty."

Dr. Holcomb's trial is remarkably quick, and the judge imposes a sentence of death by hanging, with the stipulation that the doctor be kept in a constant stupor with laudanum until the deed be done.

Less severe sentences often involve *transportation,* exile to a distant colony. But unlike ordinary criminals, Strange criminals are routinely transported not overseas but into the Otherworld outside New Birmingham, and set loose among the things Stranger than themselves—to fight, survive, or die, and in doing so impose the British way of life upon the realms of spirit and myth.

British justice stumbles and fumbles when dealing with the Strange, but it wins a fair number of victories.

allow prices to float based on United Electric's costs. By the late 1880s, tens of thousands of Ducks are in service in London and its suburbs, and slowly its fogs are illuminated by the harsh white of arc lighting rather than the wavering glow of burning gas.

The adoption of power transmission by Babbage Computational to drive its Automechanicals prevents the Automechanical Mutiny from being much worse. When the Isle of Dogs generating plant is shut down, it immediately causes a full two thirds of the revolting machines to fall silent.

Culture and Entertainment

In Victorian London the written word rules. Hundreds of newspapers, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets, tracts, papers, monographs, reviews, quarterlies, journals, and anthologies are printed regularly. The post is delivered several times a day. It is possible in London to receive a copy of your preferred newspaper in the morning, write a letter to the editor in the midday, and see it printed in the evening edition.

Fiction enjoys a broad acceptance as well. Serialized fiction especially blossoms. Luminaries like Dickens make their names writing such, and when new installments of his stories are published families gather to hear them read in the home and laborers listen to them read in pubs and alehouses. Even the illiterate can follow their favorite authors.

The specialized and expensive devices needed to receive and decode televocagraphic broadcasts keep wireless media in the hands of a wealthy few, and the low demand prevents it from ever carrying a great deal of content—only music, policy, proclamation, and other fairly dry stuff. Yet London is a town filled with entertainment. Its theaters cater to refined audiences with plays classic and modern, as well as opera, and there are plenty of theaters to show populist works—some, to borrow from the modern idiom, "ripped from the headlines," such as Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer*, which was inspired by the sensational trial of a Cockney businessman who offered the sale of "love potions." (The courts ruled that use of love potions, or any other unnatural influence on affection, to exact sexual favors constituted rape, and that the sale of such things made one liable to charges of accomplice to rape.)

For those who find the theater too titillating, London's parks offer outdoor recreation. The great royal parks are large enough to ride or even hunt, something the veterans of the 13th Lupine appreciate when they feel the pull of the wilderness: Hyde park with the picturesque Serpentine River (technically a lake), Regent's Park, Victoria Park to the northeast, Battersea park south of the river. Besides the great royal parks there are dozens of green squares and courtyard gardens, gated green oases in London's urban desert, though these are usually guarded jealously by their owners.

Transportation

London's streets are crowded with thousands and thousands of pedestrians, and for a great many of London's masses this is the only form of transport they can regularly afford. Costermongers pull their carts, selling as they walk. Boys on errands run underfoot. Families walk together on outings, to church or to an afternoon's brief recreation. So many walk through London that dozens every year are accidentally crushed to death by the carriages and carts which throng the streets.

The omnibuses, large carts which serve the public along regular routes, are the transportation for those with modest means, inexpensive by the standards of cabs or private transport, but still beyond the reach of many. London's urchins make a sport of riding while clinging to the back of passing omnibuses, risking death or injury under a horse's hooves to gain a free ride.

As the fashion for carriages changes, and new models replace old, the fleet of private carts for hire creeps slowly behind. Books have been written on the evolution of the

carriage, but suffice to say that cabs are large, black, heavy, and loud across London's cobbles, and deadly to anyone trapped in their path. Cart horses also drop enormous quantities of dung, feeding the London miasma and spreading tuberculosis and other diseases.

The keeping and support of a fashionable carriage, footmen, driver, and horses is also something of a must for anyone of quality, and a sign of wealth, position, and luxury. While Victoria's Spartan aesthetic might reduce the ostentatious ornamentation of carriages, it does nothing to blunt their expense or sumptuous quality.

Rail comes to London first from London Bridge to Greenwich in 1836, and more routes follow as the engines of Empire drive onward. More lines and more stations are built, at Euston, Paddington, Fenchurch Street, Waterloo, and King's Cross. By 1863 they are building tracks underground, first from Paddington to Farrington Road, but soon expanding outward like ant-tunnels with the aid of steam-driven burrowing machines. In 1880, London's main underground routes are converted to electric, the engines driven by banks of Tesla's Ducks (Induction Receivers). *Punch* famously lampoons the transition in late 1880 with a cartoon of a train filled with its previous cartoon caricatures being pulled along by a mother duck and her goslings.

A Visitor's London

Astley's Amphitheatre: Considered the birthplace of the modern circus. Built in the late 1700s for outdoor and equestrian performances, it is burned and rebuilt several times over, growing with each rebuilding. It finally comes to resemble a great open bowl, with stepped seating surrounding a large ring, with underground passages and lifts similar to those of the old Roman Colosseum. As the century progresses the shows hosted at Astley's become more exotic, and feature wonders such as Brazilian dinosaurs, automechanical horses and African elephants. On one occasion the ring is walled and flooded and Atlantean krakens are exhibited.

Bank of England: Called the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, the Bank was established in 1694. In the 1840s acts of Parliament grant it the exclusive right to issue banknotes and tie the issuance of such notes to gold reserves (though banks which previously had this right retain it, so long as they back their notes with gold reserves). In practical terms, this means the Bank is something of a Holy Grail to those of criminal mindset and ambition, especially those with Strange aspect. Something about robbing the Bank of England captures the criminal imagination; the romance of it. Through the century several attempts are made, with only the Hurst and Gumble Robbery of 1871 showing any real success—though the two thieves are apprehended in France less than two weeks later. The Bank employs a small staff of Strangers who covertly monitor and guard it, including one sorcerer judged reliable enough to lay defensive Works upon the bank itself.

Bethlem Hospital: One of London's oldest hospitals, and the oldest asylum for the insane. Founded in the early 1200s, it began accepting the insane in the 1400s. Four hundred years of insanity and maltreatment have left the place remarkably unaffected, almost upsettingly so. The human psyche, superstitious thing that it is, almost demands the walls radiate some of the madness they have absorbed. Oddly, they do not. To those with a sense for these things, the absence of occult consequences for the hospital's history is alarming. Close examination reveals that the hospital is somehow insulated from Strange influence, a dead zone in the Otherworld, one where Strangers feel uncomfortable and weakened. Bedlam holds many secrets; see page 173.

Bloomsbury: A picturesque area of central London graced with some of the finest squares and garden parks in the whole city. The area also hosts museums, galleries, and academic institutions, as well as some fine residences. The whole area remains remarkably unspoiled, even through London's bleakest yellow fogs, miasmas, faerie falls, invasions, revolutions, and rampaging monsters. Maps detailing the damage caused by London's various catastrophes always have a distinct empty area where Bloomsbury sits, free of appreciable damage.

Bond Street: Location of many of London's most fashionable shops, including several arcades, semi-enclosed side streets lined with shops. To Bond Street come the fashionable exotica of Victoria's Strange empire to feed the trend for curio-cluttered parlors. The Street's shops cater to other fashions as well. To quickly grasp what London is all about this Season, a stroll down Bond Street is essential.

The Borough: South of London Bridge and the Victory Bridge in Southwark. The Borough was home to Shakespeare's Globe Theater, and has proven regularly flammable through its history, finally being nearly destroyed in the Southwark Fire of 1861. The fire is alleged to have been started by a maddened Automechanical Domestic, though Babbage Computational threatens legal action against any making such a claim. The Borough experiences an explosion of development during the century, becoming a major residential center in the 1850s, though it suffers greatly in the fire, then is flooded in the Atlantean invasion, and finally is burned yet again during the Automechanical Rebellion, this time indisputably suffering at the artificial hands of the machines. During the rebuilding of the 1880s it is reborn with London's Art Nouveau—gently curving steel, glass, and floral crenulations. It becomes one of London's most fashionable areas for the New Rich.

Botanic Gardens: Located a cab-ride from Ludgate Hill are the extensive botanical gardens designed by Sir Joseph Hooker. They are over 70 acres in extent, and contain conservatories, plantings, hothouses, flowerbeds, and museums filled with the botanical wonders of the world, and some from beyond even that wide extent. In a special hot and dry conservatory, patches of Martian lichens are propagated. In the Fallenford Hall, a collection of exquisite faerie plants are kept, though access is controlled carefully as several species have remarkable properties, and the tendency to befuddle unwary minds. There is some controversy with certain of the Gardens' samples, as the collections include several plants considered sacred by the Atlanteans and other human and prehuman cultures. The Fae find the collections alternately amusing and horrifying, as their natures dictate; more than a few of the rare Otherworldly specimens are not botanical at all, but transformed and transfixed faerie bound into the forms of impossibly beautiful flora. The crueler faerie visitors frequently take cuttings, the kinder collect seeds. For this reason, a discrete but alert guard is kept on the controversial exhibits.

Buckingham Palace: Purchased by George III, the Palace becomes the official residence of the monarchy when Victoria moves Her residence here in 1837. As Her power and political influence grows, the Palace resembles less and less the home of a symbolic monarch, and more the working capital of the Empire. An administrative wing is added in 1862 to house the Queen's staff of clerks and analysts, and by the 1880s over a hundred thick televocagraphic cables run into the Palace. Beneath the building a huge steam generator is built as well, to provide secure electrical power to massive banks of analytic computing machinery and televocagraphic encoders.

Charing Cross: Marked until 1865 by one of the memorial crosses erected by Edward I on the site where Queen Eleanor's coffin rested while proceeding to Westminster Abbey; the cross was demolished in the 1600s, but the stone was used in the construction of the base to a statue of Charles I. These stones are stolen in 1864, and a contemporary replica erected nearby. Charing Cross is the legal *and spiritual* heart of London. Legal districts and distances are marked in relation to the site of the original monument. Those who understand such things are greatly disturbed by the theft of the monument—what other place is now receiving the focused attention that Charing Cross once did? Something is off about the place, certainly, as it is a frequent locus for Strange events, as if drawing them. Charing Cross Station is opened in 1864 by the South Eastern Railway, and remains one of London's thronging centers of travel.

Cheapside: This thronging thoroughfare remains one of London's great arteries, named for the medieval markets located here. Cheapside is never fashionable, but is dynamic and continuously vital. It is home to the Bow Bells of the



A Sunday Ride in Hyde Park

Hyde Park becomes a major social center for the upper and middle-upper classes in the 1880s. It begins as *the* place to be seen, and becomes a place one almost *must* be seen. Sundays see the wealthy and the wish-to-be-wealthy flood the park, to ride and to flirt, to watch and to be watched.

The Park becomes something of a fashion show, as well, with the mistresses of wealthy men, fashionable courtesans, and actresses coming to show off their extraordinary coifs and dresses, their riding, and their unrepentant sexuality. London's respectable ladies come as much to watch the strumpets as to take the air, and the Sunday dress of a courtesan might become the Monday dress of a well-to-do lady.

Characters who mingle with the upper classes will at some point find themselves in Hyde Park on a bright Sunday, and immersed in the seemingly light but decidedly sharp social interplay.

church of St Mary-le-Bow, and to be a true Cockney it's said one must be born within earshot of these bells. Indeed, there seems to be some truth to this. Babies born while the bells rang sometimes speak of hearing the bells as adults in their dying moments, regardless of where they lay breathing their last.

Chelsea: A somewhat fashionable if *modern* area of West London chiefly known for its throngs of artists and writers, and the wealthy who appreciate living among them. It is an island of jaunty Bohemia, and welcomes intellectual radicals as easily as painters. Less well known, Chelsea is also the home of some of London's most famous (and infamous) spiritualists, mediums, yogic teachers, and other mystics. Even less well known, at least five genuine sorcerers make their residences in Chelsea, and observing the neighborhood with occult senses reveals the webs of intertwined Works coiled about it like wrestling snakes.

Chelsea Hospital: Located near Chelsea Embankment, and accessible easily by boat or omnibus. Founded in the time of Charles II as a hospital for old soldiers, it has become a center for prosthetic medicine as more and more of Her Majesty's faithful return from abroad incomplete, having left an arm or leg in some dirty hospital tent far afield. The hospital was expanded in 1865, and can now accommodate three times its original capacity of 500 veterans. Research into Strange methods of restoring the injured take place in the hospital's new East Wing, and it has advanced the esoteric fields of treating faerie afflictions and occult injuries. Its dining hall is hung with over a hundred flags taken from battles fought across the world and century.

The City: The core of London's medieval bounds has become home to the Empire's great financial engines, such as the business offices of Babbage Computational and Cayley-Vickers Aeronautic. Increasingly, those who work in the City live outside it and commute in via the new trains. Administratively, the City remains semi-independent from the rest of London and polices its own streets. The City of London Police cooperate easily with the Metropolitan police and Scotland Yard, but have a chilly relationship with Special Branch—they maintain their own small group of discreet Strangers for unusual investigations. Respect the City and don't make a spectacle of yourself, and they're happy to leave you alone.

Covent Garden: Like so much of London, this area takes its name from the markets of earlier days. It is home to the vibrant Covent Garden Theater, known for the wide and unexpected breadth of its productions—one month a very traditional performance of Shakespeare, the next an experimental work heavily reliant on the new "illusory effects" and cold fireworks bought from New Birmingham. The precursors to the Metropolitan Police, the Bow Street Runners, had their headquarters here.

Fleet Street: Stretching from the City of London to Westminster, Fleet Street is home to London's vibrant press. Dozens of daily papers are written and printed here. The street is peopled with newsmen and writers, with ink-stained fingers and notebooks in their pockets. As Victoria's apparatus becomes more concerned with the spreading of salacious rumor—or worse, damaging facts—Special Branch comes to be a regular presence on Fleet Street, and they meet the resentful looks they receive with their usual unwavering glare. This leads to some of Fleet Street's regulars operating sideline presses off the main way, printing special editions anonymously. The Underground Press remains a thorn in Victoria's side through the last quarter of Her rule.

Hyde Park: London's largest park, and a hub of fashionable society. The bridal path Rotten Row is thronged on Sundays with the fashionable, and those wishing to look upon them. Strangers wishing to make a splash in society find Hyde Park a surprisingly receptive theater; the Quality gathered are already prepared somewhat for spectacle. A trollop's elaborate riding costume must be studied so as to replicate it. The flying man is simply a novel distraction from the serious business of flirting and socializing.

Jacob's Island: A notorious area of London bordering the Thames and home to numerous warehouses, as well as a truly shocking rookery of the filthiest sort. Bordered by tidal ditches, docks, and warehouses, the inhabitants of Jacob's Island live in truly desperate poverty of such an objectionable sort that even those seeking a thrill or moral lesson by slumming find it beyond their endurance. The sewage of the residents, along with the output of factories and assorted animal waste, run into the ditches, and so the place is surrounded by stink. During the 1840s the Island is haunted by Spring-Heel Jack, a mysterious figure alternately described as a demon, a demonically-ugly man, or one wearing a terrible mask. He leaps over walls, menaces and assaults people, and breathes fire (so reports would have it). Few wish to spend the time needed to investigate Sping-Heel in this stinking slum.

Pall Mall: Named for the favorite ballgame of Charles II, and now home to many of London's most exclusive gentleman's clubs. Pall Mall is the first street to receive gas lighting, and the first to be lit with electric lights, and late in the century it's where the first private tiered automotive stable is constructed, allowing gentlemen to park their vehicles when visiting their clubs.

Piccadilly: Busy and thronging area of upper-class residences and shopping. Home to Piccadilly Circus, the London Pavilion music hall, and the Criterion Theater. After the theaters let out the nightlife picks up; restaurants are open late and friendly company is usually readily available.

Regent's Park: A well-groomed suburb owing much to John Nash's efforts during the Regency. Most exciting for the extensive Zoological Park opened in 1828, and contin-



uously expanded through the century to accommodate Strange new creatures.

Royal Exchange: The 'Change is where the business of commerce is done, commodities trading, investment, and other mercantile concerns. Breaking the 'Change becomes as much an obsession for certain criminals as robbing the Bank of England is for others, and officials are always on the lookout for sharp dealers and confidence tricksters trying to ply their trade here. There are some quite-alarming rumors that such individuals when captured are not turned over to the police, but rather something else, something wholly less pleasant, is done to them.

St. James' Palace: The royal residence until 1837, when Victoria moves to Buckingham Palace. The grounds of St. James' are then made over into parkland. The palace itself is sometimes lent out for use as gallery or exhibition space, with the Queen's permission.

St. James' Square: Home to several gentleman's clubs, the most famous of course being the Kerberos Club. That club's neighbors keep up a valiant battle against its creeping Strangeness, however, and doggedly refuse to be displaced regardless of how unsettling the neighbors become, or the damage their buildings suffer by miss-aimed hellfire. The Kerberos Club's willingness to make good on such damages, and compensate its neighbors for the inconvenience, at least keeps things civil on the surface.

Seven Dials: Where seven streets converge at St. Giles, they form a compass with directions pointing directly to the seven deadly sins. This district is one of criminality and poverty, with an infamous slum. During the Famine the Irish flood this district, and for many—as bad as it becomes for them, packed into tiny filthy rooms—it remains an improvement over the conditions back home. Seven Dials is supposed to be the notorious source for the faerie drug called (among other colorful names) Red Lady's Slipper. During the 1890s, the Slipper threatens to push opium out of London with its popularity alone, and this leads to what the press dub the

Little Opium War in the mid-1890s, as the procurers and providers of the two drugs battle for territory in the streets. Opium wins a decisive victory with the burning of the house in Seven Dials where Red Lady's Slipper is refined from the excrement of faerie cattle fed on certain mushrooms.

Smithfield: Until the mid-1850s, the home to London's live cattle market. On market days the streets are ankle-deep in stinking mire and filled with the brays and bleats of beasts bought, sold and slaughtered. Smithfield Market is a point of reference for Londoners looking to describe a place as noisy and chaotic. Even after the market is moved to Islington there remains in Smithfield the ghost of the all the filth and cruelty; the flagstones seem to have soaked it up. Local legends of the Raw-Head Man and the Skinned Sow propagate, and violent poltergeist activity is common through the end of the century, defying even Church exorcists efforts to banish.

Whitechapel: Early in the century an area known for its coaching inns for travelers, by mid-century it is instead known as a notorious neighborhood troubled by poverty and prostitution—and then as one protected by a particularly frightening guardian angel, the Night Hag. It becomes infamous late in the century for Jack the Ripper's reign of terror. Named for the whitewashed Chapel of Ease, the area's fortunes sway up and down. After the Atlantean assault on the city, and the Automechanical Mutiny, Whitechapel is overrun with displaced residents from other areas, and conditions worsen dramatically. These conditions make the Ripper's killings easier, and the Hag's job of keeping order on the streets much harder.

Whitehall: The center of much of the Empire's power, located in Westminster and named for Henry VIII's palace built here in the 1530s. The Prime Minister's residence at No. 10 Downing Street is here, along with other government offices. With the Queen's more active role in politics and policy-making, especially with Her close alliance with Benjamin Disraeli late in the century, Her coach and entourage is a frequent sight. Like the City, Whitehall has its own small and dedicated force of Strangers tasked with watching and securing it from danger. The spate of dynamite attacks in the 1870s result in Downing Street being closed to coach and automotive traffic, and only official coaches are permitted to drive down the street. Freed from traffic, the street itself becomes a mobile market for upscale goods and trinkets. You can purchase a lunch on the street from a Downing Street vendor which would shame many West End cafés.

Locations of Particular Interest

Each of these locations includes detailed guidelines for the game moderator.

British Museum

The donation of the King's Library in 1822 sparked a new life for the British Museum, and it began a decades-long period of rapid expansion. In the 1850s it rose in an entirely new neo-classical building which was partially open for the Great Exhibition in 1851. Despite the almost constant expansion well into the 1870s, the Museum's collections fill the available space, giving the place an almost cluttered feel, as if it were a proper Victorian parlor filled with knickknacks and collectibles enough for the whole empire. The Museum funds and benefits from archaeological, zoological, and other scientific endeavors. Its Reading Room houses over a million volumes, and this is only a fraction of its total collection. When considering the museum's collections, it really isn't a question of whether a particular article or wonder is present in the collection, but *where* it might be found.

Museum clerks work constantly cataloging and recording the collection, but within its basements and storehouses there is literally no telling what might be found. To



the Museum, all things in the world eventually come. And in an increasingly Strange world, the Museum's collections grow Strange as well. By the late 1880s, the Museum's displays encompass all manner of occult and un-human artifacts and technologies, the wonders of civilizations lost and ascended and otherwise forgotten, laid bare for the peoples of the British Empire.

All this makes the Museum's burning in the dark days following Victoria's transcendence an even more profound tragedy.

Local Color: Constant traffic, coming and going. People of all nations and ages coming to view the wonders of the world. Inside, cases and displays and exhibits containing every imaginable thing.

Denizens: Academics coming and going, students, researchers, tour guides, tourists and wide-eyed gawkers. Also rough types, adventurers and explorers come to see their discoveries properly displayed. Sometimes living wonders: a captured Atlantean warrior in a glass tank; Dr. Archibald Monroe holding forth to a group of students, admirers, and vociferous critics; or an iguanodon on loan from the Royal Zoological Park.

Disasters: *Fire!* The great storehouses and libraries of the British Museum contain treasures like unto the great library of Alexandria, and were they to burn the loss would be tragic.

Hooks: *Something Man Was Not Meant to Know.* Oh, well, *that* should certainly not be displayed alongside the Assyrian artifacts, as it predates them by centuries, and also because if invoked by the gaze of a vengeful woman it will unleash savage supernatural fury upon London's unfaithful husbands and rob them of dignity and *skin*. Can't have such a thing just sitting around for the public to see, can we? But then, how to remove it from the Museum, especially considering how dear it is to poor old Professor Scott?

The Mummy Escapes: The Galvanic Mummy, one of the weird wonders on special display at the Museum, simply vanishes between displays of its functions. Dr. Klien, the academic studying the Mummy, is quite upset, and calls on some favors which come down the Kerberos pipeline. Tracking the errant animated corpse seems a simple matter until the paper-sellers start to cry the headline, *"THREE ATTACKED IN MIDNIGHT JEWEL THEFT! REPORT NAMES MUMMY AS THIEF!"*

Bethlem Hospital

Moved to St. George's Fields in 1815 from its previous location, Bedlam on the surface seems to have escaped the legacy of horror and abuse which dogged its past. In the 18th century people would pay a penny to visit and view the madmen. For another penny, long poles could be rented with which to jab and enrage the unfortunates for a better show. In the new building, designed by Sydney Smirke, a library is available and the inmates can enjoy music of an evening, dancing, and socializing. New efforts are made to find treatments for the insane. Drugs such as laudanum are applied to calm ragged nerves, and mesmeric and talking cures are attempted. Yet the place still has that air of wrongness, of broken minds and lost freedom. Beneath it, worse things lurk.

Special Branch uses Bedlam to house and constrain some of its *exceptional-circumstances suspects,* those deemed so great a threat that to allow access to the legal system constitutes too great a risk. These find themselves locked away from light and hope, drugged insensible, and often rendered insensate with electro-convulsive treatments, wrapping, starvation, sleep deprivation, and in some cases leucotomy, cutting away the personality and will. For Strangers who fall into Special Branch's custody, this is an all-too-frequent method to restrain their powers.

Local Color: On the surface, clean, well-lit, with doctors seeing to their patients as they are able. Beneath is every nightmare of the madhouse: filthy walls, cells with ragged padding, and dirty straight waistcoats waiting to bind those who act out of turn.

Denizens: The weeping, moaning mad; also the laughing, crying mad, and the calm, seemingly rational mad. Doctors. Consultants. Nurses. Charity workers about their good deeds. Visiting family. Beneath the surface, what? Deep in the Special Ward, rows and rows of tiny, ill-lit cells. Filth. Iron-bound doors. Here, so deep below ground the sound can't find its way to the surface, Special Branch's prisoners are held, some perpetually. Knowledge of these cells is reason enough to find oneself locked away down here, so release is rare and unlikely. Many of these prisoners are Strangers, warped in body, mind, and soul.

Disaster: *Escape!* If the unfortunate inmates escape it might be a matter for the police, especially for those who are criminally insane. But if the maddened and vengeful Strangers escape, the whole of London might be at risk. Certainly those who perpetrated horrors upon the escapees.…

Hooks: *I'm Not Mad!* You find yourself alone, sealed away in one of the cells Below. How did you get here? Your memory is shattered, pieces strewn all about the floor of your mind. How to piece it back together, and discover just what brought you to this bad place?

Bethlem's Dead Heart

Bethlem was built quite deliberately upon an ancient site of occult import. Once marked with a paleolithic augury circle, the spot was a place of high magic for the ancient Britons, until some unknown magical transgression sealed it off from all occult influence, creating a psychic dead zone where reality hangs like the heavy curtains of a tuberculotic shut-in's sickroom. The spot was used during the Roman occupation for the execution of witches, the possessed, and faerie creatures who violated the pacts of blood and silver that they struck with the Roman invaders. This potent resistance to all things unnatural makes the hospital attractive for both its obvious function as an insane asylum and for the keeping of Special Branch's Stranger prisoners.

Place Of Interest: Bethlem Hospital

Aspect: The Dead Heart of Bedlam

Effect: Compel this aspect to prevent a character from using her Strange skills if they are of a psychic, magical, paranormal, extradimensional, or Faerie nature. Within about 30 yards of the center of Bedlam, treat this as a Major Complication aspect—that is, the compel starts at *two* Fate Points. Farther than that, but still within the hospital grounds, it's only a Minor Complication aspect.

Escape From Bedlam!



For prisoners with powers unhampered by the Dead Heart, Special Branch makes liberal use of drugs like laudanum and its more exotic fellows to render prisoners insensible. They have no compunction about physically crippling those in their care, such as smashing the hands of inventors and automechanicals. The secret hospital under Bethlem is well guarded and patrolled by men both skilled and dangerous, not your standard underpaid watchmen.

The hallways are unmarked, making them difficult to navigate unless you've memorized the layout, as the Special Branch officers who work here have. The halls are hung at regular intervals with beaded curtains hung with bells, so even an invisible intruder will reveal his presence when passing through them. The hallways are also frequently flooded with potent incense, a mix of sage, frankincense, mur, sandalwood, and other aromatics from across the globe. This choking fug reveals ghostly and immaterial presences, faintly outlining them even if they can walk through the walls. The entirely mundane security is also excellent: heavy iron doors with complex dual-keyed Chubb locks, iron gratings in the ventilation ducts, regular checkpoints as one proceeds deeper into the place. Even senior Special Branch officers are challenged at every one, made to give the day's pass-phrase and present their credentials. Even when they are allowed to pass, the guards make careful notations in the logbooks of how long each individual remains within, and all are weighed in and weighed out to be certain they are not carrying an unseen (perhaps even parasitic) prisoner to freedom.

Special Branch's secret hospital is a tough nut to crack.

SPECIAL BRANCH OFFICERS

See page 41 for more information on Special Branch.

Veteran Guards (Four Fair-quality Minions)

Aspects: Heavy Truncheons, Trauma-Hardened Guards
Scopes: Fair (+2) Physical, Average (+1) Mental (E)
Gifts: Equipment (Truncheons: +1 Physical with hand-to-hand attacks, Weapon 1 [Health])
Fate Point cost: 2

Whitechapel

As the century progresses, as the wealth and power of the Empire waxes full, London's East End—Wapping, Bethnal Green, Limehouse, Bow, Bromley, and Whitechapel—descend further and further into overcrowding and poverty. Whitechapel Road itself remains a thin vein of semi-respectability, but the warrens of alleys and streets and courts are all filled with London's lost souls and the poorest of the poor. It holds as many as fifteen hundred prostitutes, and seventy brothels and places serving as such in all but name. It contains opium dens, ratting and dog fighting, and all the sordid vice that some seek for pleasure, and that poverty forces some to endure so they might eat for one more day.

Across Whitechapel's rooftops, and down its darkest alleys, a demon stalks, a creature they call the Night Hag. Mothers warn their naughty children about her. Pimps sweat a little bit when they beat their whores. And in the 1880s, she battles a nameless killer they call Jack for dominion over Whitechapel, female vengeance upon male predation, the old goddess against the gods.

Local Color: Whitechapel reeks of over-packed humanity crammed in close, unwashed and without adequate sewage systems. It is a din of shouts and cartwheels and

hawkers calling their wares. At night when the fogs come in, its inhabitants move through the mist like specters heralding their own imminent deaths. Evidence of poverty and hunger are everywhere, writ upon the faces of the working girls, their children, upon the men doing whatever honest work they can find, only to see every day that honesty doesn't pay enough to feed the children. The wailing of mothers for dead infants is so common as to be noise. The streets are full of Irish voices, and Jewish ones and more—Russian accents, others of Eastern Europe, some French and Spanish, too. Near Limehouse, Chinese voices blend in. But proximity doesn't breed tolerance here, quite the opposite.

Denizens: The prostitutes and their pimps, husbands, and other "protectors." Legions of street children. Beggars. Upper-class folk slumming for a cheap thrill, or deigning to bestow their good works on the suffering classes. The police are here, but they are lost in the shuffle, and the best they can do is to keep crime to an acceptable level. The Night Hag is on everyone's tongue. When misfortune falls upon someone deemed to deserve it, people say "The Hag's got him!"

Syphilitic vampires (see page 134) of all stages lurk in the shadows, offering their bodies to lure victims while they are still flush with human beauty; but when the sun burns away their humanity, they stalk like animals for the blood and flesh they crave.

The Elephantine Man (page 53) was exhibited in Whitechapel at one time, and returns to try and do some good when he becomes one of the Kerberos Club's most famous Strangers, adopting an open, dramatic persona later in the century.

Victoria Tower

The tallest structure in the world is Victoria Tower, also knows as Victoria's Mast. It is the grand vision of the young French architect and engineer Gustave Eiffel, combined with the genius of Nikola Tesla's mastery of wireless transmission and signaling and Ada Lovelace's wondrous calculating and encoding machinery.

Victoria Tower is commissioned at first as a stone tower on the south end of the reconstructed Palace of Westminster, but construction delays caused by numerous increasingly Strange disasters prevent it being built. In 1867 plans for a new tower are commissioned, and the sweeping upward steel design of Gustave Eiffel is chosen over more conventional Gothic-style designs for reasons at the time unknown. By the tower's completion in 1875, however, it is clear why some far-thinking planner had chosen Eiffel's design. The great steel mast makes the perfect platform for a gigantic wireless televocagraphic transmitter and receiver.

Beneath the tower, a huge electrical plant provides power for the transmissions and to drive the dedicated calculating-mill with its hundreds of inter-linked calculating clockwork brains. Messages in simple Morse code, in text, in speech, images and photographs are converted into encoded machine-signal and broadcast with tremendous power, allowing those with the proper televocagraphic receivers and decoders to capture these messages as they float through the air. Wireless sending and receiving equipment is installed in all of her majesty's aero ships, and these serve as mobile relays, extending the reach of the Tower's signal.

The Tower is gigantic, over 1,500 feet tall, and dominates the London skyline. Its four huge support-struts straddle and merge with the Palace of Westminster. From its needle-like point Parliament and the Queen broadcast the news of the State, though of late more and more entertainment finds it ways into the air: music, photographs of art, and poetry are all there, alive in the air for those with the right equipment to capture them.

The Automechanical Mutiny of 1885 spells the end to the Mast's short life as the Voice of the Empire. The calculating brains which drive its inner workings are deemed unsafe and vulnerable to corrupting code, some of which finds its way into the transmission of lesser broadcast mechanisms during the Mutiny. With its signal silenced, the Tower becomes a monument to human folly and ambition.

Still, the view from the observation deck at the Tower's height is breathtaking. On London's thickest day the view from that height is clear—even if London is invisible in the fog below, looking as if someone had poured a gallon of

buttermilk into a depression in the ground.

Local Color: The sweeping upward arch of the Mast rises up and up, piercing London's yellow mists. The streets around Westminster rumble faintly from the chugging steam engines driving the electrical dynamos which power it. The air crackles with static and smells of an imminent lighting strike. When it storms the Tower is a lightning-rod, being struck over and over, so the fog appears an eerie red. Thousands of electrical light bulbs hanging from it lend their own faint glow, even on London's soupiest days. The air tastes metallic around the Tower, like a penny on your tongue.

Denizens: Tourists from all over the world throng to the Tower, one of London's great tourist attractions (billed as the First Wonder of the Modern World). All the usual hawkers and sellers follow this crowd as well, much to the chagrin of the MPs and Lords who must wade through them to get into the Palace. The police keep a close watch, as few targets would be more appealing to the criminal classes. Special Branch keeps a closer watch, as few targets would be more appealing to anarchist bombers, suffragettes and Irish revolutionaries. Engineers work constantly, tweaking and tuning, and replacing fuses. A force of hundreds of automechanical men clamber spider-like up and down the Tower at all hours, painting, patching, securing rivets, and doing the deadly dangerous high work.

Disasters: *Collapse!* If Victoria's Mast were to collapse, falling across London, the destruction would be almost incalculable—12,000 tons of steel crashing across London's buildings, great and humble alike.

Hooks: *A View From On High.* There are some things which can only be conducted at the top of the tallest building in the world, certain ceremonies, affairs, rites, or observances. The observation deck of the tower always seems to be reserved, but one such bit of business demands you attend to it post haste, and so crashing someone else's reverie from the heights is a necessity.

Wrath of the Gods: A fight atop the tower during a lighting storm! In addition to the difficulty of clinging to the wet steel girders while fighting for your life, the strength of the storm will grant a certain number of Area Dice of damage upon you and all your friends and foes alike as the fury of an angry god lashes about you. Make it one die for a minor storm, up to five for the storm of the century.

Ghosts in the Machine: Weird voices begin creeping into the transmission from Victoria's Mast—weeping, moaning, mad ranting, pleas for help and mercy, voices begging forgiveness, promises of hideous revenge, calls to friends, loved ones or enemies by name. They are the voices of the dead. The Tower has tuned to a Strange frequency, and from that last great mystery someone or something is reaching back across and demanding attention.

The calculating brains beneath the tower are busy encoding ghosts into signal as readily as they encode voice or text or image. And the dead have a warning, if anyone can decipher their mad screaming and weeping; or if they perhaps take possession of a listener, reaching out from Beyond to become a radioetheric signal, and then sound, and then thought within a living brain.…

The Sumpworks

In the summer of 1858 London is wallowing in its own filth. Without a proper sewer system, waste is dumped into the thousands of cesspits scattered across the city, or directly into the Thames. Flush toilets exacerbate the problem, as they sluice the filth away in a gush of water, overflowing the cesspits and causing them to run into the river as well. During the hot months of the summer, great blooms of stench rise from the low waters of the river, and cholera and miasmic spirits kill thousands. Dr. John Snow's push for sanitation reform, coupled with the fragile genius of Joseph Bazalgette, saves London from becoming uninhabitable.

Bazalgette is still recovering from a nervous breakdown suffered while expanding the national railway network. During part of the excavation work east of London, he and his crew uncover something nerve-shattering and sanity-breaking. Buried under tons of rock, surrounded by the broken remains of a stone circle, they find *nothing*. A hole to *nowhere*. Or, perhaps, somewhere so alien and weird the human mind rebels against it, refuses to see it, and shadows it in darkness.

Anything thrown into the hole is simply *gone*. Bazalgette and his comrades wonder how it is that the atmosphere doesn't escape through the hole, creating a sucking whirl-storm until all the world's air is drained away. But like all things to do with the Sump (as it came to be called), nobody can fathom an answer.

When presented with the problem of how to contend with London's prodigious capacity to produce feces and filth, he realizes that all the cesspits must be closed, waste channeled into a network of sewers, and then pumped out of the city rather than being flushed directly into the river. And he thinks of the Sump.

So begins the construction of the Sumpworks under the administration of the Metropolitan Board of Sanitation. Despite a campaign of sabotage by unknown malcontents (said by some to be a cult who worshiped the Beast who dwelt in the Outer Abyss—or the Sump), more than a hundred miles of underground sewers are built beneath the city, some tunneling right through the ancient remains of London's earlier ages, crypts, tombs, temples, and forgotten grottos. The project is opened in 1865 and completed in 1870, and thousands of tons of human waste, industrial byproducts, and chemical slurry are dumped down the Sump to—*somewhere else*.

Local Color: Miles of sewers, the sluice and splash of running sewerage, the squeak of countless rats, and less easily identifiable things. Sometimes the sewers open into huge forgotten chambers, ancient tombs, temples or forgotten cellars, lit faintly with phosphorescent fungus. Everything eventually finds its way down here. It's a place for lost things. The sewerage passes the pumping stations and is squeezed of most of its water before the waste is pitched into the Sump. More than a few corpses find their way into that black unknown as well, one hopes never to return.

Denizens: Rats, some as large as hounds. Final-stage sufferers of syphilitic vampirism. Sanitation Police in their rubber uniforms and filter masks, and the criminals they hunt in the bowels of the city. In the hidden places anyone with dark, loathsome secrets might be found, if they don't mind the smell. In the desecrated temples, cults still meet and plot their revenge for the blasphemy done to their sacred spaces.

Disasters: *Collapse!* If a section of the sewers gave way it could swallow a building, sucking it down in to the stinking wet below. Venturing down to rescue the survivors might lead to a dungeon-crawl situation. The sewers might also back up, flooding London with effluvia. And what unholy creatures might be driven to the surface by such a flood?

Hooks: *Excuse me, but is this the way to Bank of England?* While attending some secretive business down in the sewers, you stumble across a criminal enterprise. A group of men is tunneling from a main sewer line up into the vaults of the Bank of England, to steal not money but certain papers held there in safe deposit against the day when political enemies of Her Majesty might require some persuasion to refrain from resisting Her Majesty's agenda.

Run Before the Flood: In the catacombs of the old Temple of Mercury, a great lake of effluvia backs up from one clogged tunnel, filling until the pressure is irresistible and bursts the blockage. The great flood-tide of sewage rushes down a dozen tunnels, complicating horribly any business you might be unlucky enough to be about at the time.

A Voice from the Abyss: **Something** is calling to the mad and the psychic, the weak-willed, to children, and to cats. Something is whispering out to them from the water-closet door, from the pipes, and down on down into the sewers. **Something** whispers for them to come, to gaze long into the darkness, and to take a little smudge of it within themselves. **Something** has been awakened by the flood of London's filth, and it will look upon the face of the people in whose excrement it wallows.

Heath Row Aerodrome

Located to the West of central London. The Great Western Aerodrome (as it is properly known) is still called after Heath Row, the hamlet which was demolished to make way for the Empire's busiest port for aero ship docking and travel. By the 1890s, aero ships depart from Heath Row to travel to the Continent and all corners of the world—the Americas, Africa, the East and West Indies, China and Japan. Thousands depart from Heath Row, and it serves as

the home aero-port for the Royal Squadron, the small fleet of aero ships tasked with carrying royal representatives, gifts, diplomats, and upon occasion even Her Majesty. The Royal Squadron is also tasked with the aerial defense of London, a bulwark necessitated by the city's vulnerability to air attack, as demonstrated by the Atlantean Invasion.

Local Color: The buzz and bustle of a train station or major dockyards, but on a larger scale. Huge, close-cut grassy fields serve as landing areas for aero ships, some as big as half a kilometer long. Trains arrive and depart the Aerodrome constantly, carrying passengers and goods to and from London. Blue-uniformed air porters bustle over luggage and passengers. It's a more well-off crowd than would gather in a train station or seaport, however. Air travel is still more expensive than most berths aboard ocean-bound vessels. The drone of air-ship engines fills the air, and the great behemoths arrive and land with deceptive speed. At a distance they hardly seem to be moving, but close up they land and brake hard within the confines of Heath Row's landing fields.

Denizens: The ubiquitous porters, ticketing agents, air-ship crews, passengers, rowdies unloading the ships, helmeted Bobbies on the lookout for known sharps and pickpockets, plainclothes detectives on the prowl for bigger criminal fish, bowler-hatted Special Branch officers hunching uncomfortably in their tweed and glaring menace at everyone, sometimes demanding travel papers at random to keep the hoi-polloi properly afraid. In among the honest citizens the true artists of the criminal classes move, deal and dip, and divide people from their money right under the nose of the law.

Disasters: *Crash!* Aero ships are *huge*. And if something goes wrong, say with their lifting gas cells, they can come crashing down. It takes a fair bit of damage to cause one to plummet, but it wouldn't be impossible for mishandling of the gas regulation systems and fire discipline aboard to lead to a catastrophic explosion which would rain burning debris across the landing fields and the grounded ships and the thronging masses.

And to be sure, a fight atop a crashing aero ship is a disaster no self-respecting adventuring Kerberan should be able to resist.

Hooks: A chance meeting or a fleeting glimpse of a long-lost lover or deadly enemy necessitates boarding an aero ship leaving for parts unknown. From the Aerodrome Club and wine bar to the gray skies above: How will you board when the flight is oversold as it is, and security (in light of the recent dynamite outrages) so much stricter than usual?

While returning from abroad for some well needed recuperation among friends, you find your flight hijacked. Air pirates! Who would credit such a thing in this day and age? They certainly look the part, but perhaps, a bit too much? A bit too theatrical? The parrot is certainly playing it too hard. They're up to something, and all the business with making the captain walk the plank without his parachute is just distraction. What do these "pirates" really want?

Around the World, Quick as You Like! The first annual Circumnavigational Aero Ship Cup, a race *around the world*. Two dozen aero ships begin the race in Heath Row, flying east across Europe, China, the great Pacific, the Americas, across the Atlantic, and back to London. How could the Kerberos Club resist such an opportunity for adventure, and all the intriguing possibilities along the way?

Victory Bridge

Located below London Bridge, Victory Bridge dwarfs its sister. Victory Bridge is enormous, built from the gigantic stones dredged from the Thames after the catastrophic collapse of one of the Atlantean war-ziggurats during the invasion of 1869. Victory Bridge is a stunning example of the Roman style of bridge-building expanded to a grand scale. It spans the Thames with three huge arches, the center arch large enough for an ocean steamer to pass through.

It isn't commonly known, but the bridge also serves as one of London's defensive measures. Its construction using the Strange stones of the Atlantean war machine serves to disrupt the action of similar stones passing close by. No device using the same water-stone repulsion as the Atlantean machines can pass up the Thames again without its lifting mechanism failing. The bridge is the reason

attempts to replicate the Atlantean machines have failed, even on very small scales.

Victory Bridge carries traffic from just above the London Docks across to the Bermondsey area. In truth it doesn't carry enough to truly justify its construction, but the simple arches of Victoria Bridge stand in contrast to London's more gothic landmarks and the more ornate background. Tourists who gather along its wide pedestrian promenades to watch the ships anchor in the Pool bring enough commerce to fuel a brisk trade among the street vendors, hawkers and thieves who collect here.

Local Color: The smell of the Thames at low tide. The call and cry of seamen and laborers in the Pool and surrounding docks. The clacker-clack of cartwheels along the bridge stonework. When the fogs come in they wrap the bridge up tight, smothering it so it might be the loneliest place in London, cut off from reality and cast off into a Strange otherworld—which, in truth, it might be. Those who fall asleep on the bridge, in carriages or behind their mobile stalls for a quick nap, experience visions of the wonders of ancient Atlantean culture, the war with Pacifica which broke the ancient empire, and the great race's fall into primitive ruin. Within a decade, the London Atlantean Society forms and arranges "bridge nights" where the members camp upon the bridge and record the dreams they experience, reconstructing Atlantean culture from these second-hand remembrances.

Denizens: Hawkers, pickpockets, tourists, traffic on foot, cart, omnibus, and later, mechano-electric automotives. Officers of the Met walk the bridge regularly, watching for potential suicides. The bridge proves the most popular in London for leaping to one's death. When the London Atlantean Society forms, they establish a mobile kiosk on the bridge selling their pamphlets and monographs on the "Wonders of Lost Atlantis." Their fetishistic adoration for all things Atlantean rankles with many of London's citizens who remember all too well what indignities the Atlanteans had visited upon the city.

Disasters: *Hark, the leviathan!* The quiescent stones of the Victory Bridge yet pulse with resonate power, and while this protects London from war machines powered by similar mechanisms, the constant psychic drone drives some sensitive people mad and causes bad dreams for a receptive few. At some point it will ripple outwards through the Thames into the Channel, and then on into the North Sea where the sleeping Leviathan awaits the call of its old masters, the god-kings of Atlantis who wrote upon its soul the Names of Command and Wrath.

Leviathan is All. A misbegotten evolutionary horror of impossible dimensions and indescribable physiology, it is all things which have ever swum, from the stinging jellyfish to the great-mawed prehistoric shark, to the hook-tentacled giant squid, to Stranger and more horrible things from the black depths. Vast as a castle, squamous and malleable, Leviathan will hear the Bridge singing out to it like a strummed harp-string, and come, seeking its old masters and waiting for one who knows the words of Command and Wrath. Perhaps a human dreamer sleeps on the bridge, wishing for visions of Atlantis—which Word will he speak upon seeing the magnificent horror rise from the river before him?

Hooks: *The Keystone Ransom Plot.* While passing over the Bridge on other business you find your progress blocked by backed-up traffic, and waves of panic propagate back to your driver. He shouts, "He's threatenin' to blow up the bridge!" Some madman or brazen genius claims to have planted fifty pounds of nitroglycerin upon the bridge's keystone, the stone against which all the forces of the whole construction are balanced. If removed, the bridge will at the very least be unstable, at the worst it will collapse into the Thames. The bomb is equipped with a clockwork detonator and a crystal receiver, keyed to vibrate and trigger the explosion when the perpetrator throws a switch on a device strapped to his torso. Fighting to get a look at this miscreant, through the crowds, you see the exultant face of someone all too familiar. A friend, colleague, or fellow Kerberan.

Arise Leviathan! The call of the bridge has been uncovered by members of the London Atlantis Society, and a core group has taken up the practice of Atlantean mystery religions which they experienced in dream-visions. They have had visions of Leviathan when he served the Atlanteans

as their great terror-weapon against Ultima Thule, Pacifica, and the Ab-Human Remnants from the South Pole. They have seen Leviathan, and it has broken their minds.

They believe themselves to be the reincarnations of the dead priests of Atlantis, and so seek to perform rituals on the bridge during certain days of the Atlantean calendar. Human sacrifice. Ritualized atrocity. Bloodletting. Self-mutilation. Given the freedom to act, they will call the great beast and release it to run mad in London. All knowledge of the Word of Wrath must be purged, and anyone and everyone who *might* know it must be dealt with. The London Atlantean Society must be *broken*. Special Branch rushes to line them against the wall, innocent and guilty alike, and shoot them unceremoniously through the head. Will you exercise more judgment? And what will be the consequences if you judge wrong?



Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Chapter 5
Playing the Game

"Of the many curious social fraternities the Victorians participated in, few achieved the fame, and infamy, of London's Kerberos Club. From obscure origins, the Club rose to public consciousness as the 19th century progressed, buoyed on a tide of scandals, rumors, and the sensationalized adventures of its membership. On the surface the Kerberos Club seemed nothing so much as a particularly baroque and debauched social club, with a famously egalitarian admissions policy. But a more careful review of the history of Victoria's Century reveals the Club's long shadow cast over many of the century's greatest events and tragedies.

"In truth, the Kerberos Club was Victoria's creature and a powerful force for the Empire. One head to sniff out the Strange menaces which plagued Victoria's England, one to warn them off with growl and bared fangs, and that failing, one to savage her enemies with animalistic zeal.

"The Club was lauded, famed, and feared in equal measure for flaunting social convention and dabbling in things in which no right-thinking person would meddle. It saw its fortunes rise continuously through the century, until Victoria's Ascension robbed it of its doting patron, and left it exposed to the wrath of its countless enemies, culminating in the burning of the club-house on Saint James Square in the winter of 1902."

Excerpted from *Victoria's Watchdog: The Strange History of the Kerberos Club*, by Alison Peeks, published 2002 by Hillgate Press, used here with permission.

The Basics

This chapter deals with creating characters, deciding the nature of their relationship with the Kerberos Club, and deciding the nature of the Club's relationship with the world outside.

See page 18 for a summary of the basic *FATE* rules. The core mechanic is simple. Roll the Fudge dice—usually four of them, or "4dF." (The rules will tell you when it's not four.) Add bonuses or subtract penalties for skills, aspects and other modifiers. If you beat the difficulty number, you succeed. See Chapter 7 for detailed rules for character actions, conflicts and consequences.

Character Creation

Creating a character for *The Kerberos Club: FATE Edition* occurs in six basic steps:

- Pick an Archetype and Social Class, and define aspects for both those and your first Conviction.
- Answer the Five Questions.
- Buy Skills (Common, Unique, and Strange, as applicable).
- Define five other aspects based on your answers to the Five Questions.
- Buy Gifts (if desired; everyone gets one Gift for free).
- Finalize details (stress tracks, Adjusted Refresh, etc.). Note that this is only a recommended order—you may



find it useful to switch it up, if that feels more comfortable. You'll also find that some of these steps are interconnected. For example, Unique and Strange skills often constrain your aspect choices, which is why aspects are listed after skills above.

So then! Let's get into it.

The Five Questions

Humble Beginnings. Everyone starts somewhere. Who were you before you became who you are? How did your early years mark and shape you?

Follies of Youth. Foolishness is a vice of the young and the fondest memory of the old. What did you get up to as you sought independence during your formative years, and with whom did you seek it?

First Awakenings. When did you begin to realize the world was not as it seemed? When did you become aware of, and involved in, the hidden and not-so-hidden Strangeness lurking about the comfortable hearth of polite society? Consider including another PC in your answer to this question—it will help establish ties between the player characters. Perhaps that other PC was the first Stranger you'd ever seen, or the two of you witnessed something Strange back when you were childhood friends.

Mysterious Origins. When did you come into power of your own?

If You've Played FATE Before: Skills, Refresh and Gifts

If you're familiar with the *FATE* system, here's a quick rundown on how we handle skills and Refresh. This is a point-based iteration of *FATE*. You'll use skill points to buy skills, and Refresh points to buy everything else. Characters start with 30 skill points, but a character's Refresh (the number of Fate Points he has at the start of each session) depends on the time period when the story takes place. As the Strangeness spreads during the length of Victoria's reign, its effect on those it Touches increases accordingly. Refresh starts at 6 in the Early Century, 8 in the Middle Century, or 10 in the Late Century. Refresh is also a currency in character creation—you'll spend it on Power Tiers (which we'll discuss later) and Gifts, which take the place of stunts found in many other *FATE* games.

When did your Touch of Strangeness manifest? How did you become a part of the weird games of the Strangers? This time, definitely include one other PC in your answer, for the reason given in the question above. This need not be the same PC, however. In fact, it's better if it isn't, just to further entangle your past with those of your fellow Kerberans. Take a look at the other players' answers to the previous Questions, keeping an eye out for opportunities to forge connections. Maybe you saved one's life—or nearly ended it. Maybe the two of you teamed up against a common foe, or were accomplices in the same crime.

Great Failing. What is your greatest flaw, and how did it bring you near to ruin and disaster?

Pick Archetype and Social Class

Your **Archetype** defines the broad outlines of your character concept, whether a master of the secrets of the Orient, a mad inventor, a deposed goddess, the last Martian, or anything in between. The available Archetypes are:

- Adept
- Alien
- Anachronist
- Artificial
- Faerie
- Godling
- Changed
- Magus
- Mutant
- Super-Normal

Each has a full description in the **Archetypes** chapter. Your choice of Archetype will guide one of your aspect choices later.

Your **Social Class** determines a great deal about your lifestyle and place in the social order. The four Social Classes are:

- Under Class
- Working Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Class

These are detailed in **All Things Right and Proper**. One of your aspects will derive from your Social Class.

The Adjective Ladder

+10	Divine
+9	Mythic
+8	Legendary
+7	Epic
+6	Fantastic
+5	Superb
+4	Great
+3	Good
+2	Fair
+1	Average
+0	Mediocre
-1	Poor
-2	Terrible

Buy Skills

Your character's skills are a measure of what she can do, from charming a stranger to piloting an aero ship and everything in between (and beyond). Skills are rated at Average (+1), Fair (+2), Good (+3), or Great (+4), and come in three varieties: Common skills, Unique skills, and Strange skills.

A character can't have more skills rated at one value than she has at the next lowest value. For example, if you have three Fair (+2) skills you can have no more than three Good (+3) skills, and you can't have a Great (+4) skill unless you already have at least one Good (+3) skill.

You start with 30 skill points. Common skills cost a number of points equal to their rating, so a Fair (+2) skill costs 2 points. As the name implies, Common skills are typical areas of training or experience for the average citizen

Skills: How Good is Good?

Here's a general idea of what the five skill ranks can mean for your character:

Mediocre (+0): A lack of training or talent.

Average (+1): Apprentice training or considerable talent.

Fair (+2): Journeyman or "professional" training, or an incredible degree of talent.

Good (+3): Veteran or master-level training, or a combination of impressive talent and extensive training.

Great (+4): Nearly unmatched ability.

These benchmarks only apply when comparing skills of the same Power Tier. See the Skills section for more detail.

of Victorian London, such as riding a horse, scouring a crime scene for clues, or throwing a punch. Any unrated Common skills are treated as if their rating were Mediocre (+0).

Unique and Strange skills—skills you design from the ground up—often cost quite a bit more than Common skills.

Unique skills can represent occupations, lifestyles, areas of training, or any other collection of thematically connected abilities a normal human being might acquire. They're more specialized than Common skills, and a more concrete way to further distinguish your character.

Strange skills, on the other hand, transcend the abilities of the common man. Those touched by Strangeness often wield powers out of myth and legend.

Unique skills and Strange skills are detailed further in the Skills section.

All skills are ranked on one of five Power Tiers:

- Mundane
- Extraordinary
- Superhuman
- Ascendant
- Godlike

By default, every skill starts out in the Mundane Tier—the realm of the ordinary human being. All other Power Tiers represent commensurately greater increases in ability and effectiveness.

Player characters start with 30 skill points with which to buy skills. Improving a skill's Power Tier is detailed further in the Skills section.

Define Aspects

Skills are what your character can do, but aspects are who she is. In addition to an Archetype aspect, a Social Class aspect, and a Conviction aspect, your character has five other personal aspects that derive from the Five Questions.

Initially, these have no category or restrictions on their definition. We refer to them as Free aspects. However, your Unique or Strange skills may change one or more of these Free aspects into Complication or Conviction aspects. All sorts of aspects are explained further in the Aspects section.

To define your aspects, go back to your answers to the Five Questions. For each question, come up with an aspect related to the answer. If some of your Free aspects have been converted as part of any Unique or Strange skills you have, include these accordingly.

You'll get more out of your aspects if they cover many different facets of your character's life and personality, rather than focusing on just one or two. For example, if all of your aspects relate to your career as a scientist, they're unlikely to be of much use unless you're doing something with science. The Aspects section has more advice on creating effective aspects, along with some examples.

Buy Gifts

Gifts are special little rules-bending features of your character, such as conferring a small bonus to a skill in a limited circumstance, giving you a special piece of equipment or sidekick, or letting you use one skill in place of another. There are six Gifts: Companion, Impact, Signature Aspect, Skilled, and Theme. Everyone starts with one Gift for free; buying more is purely optional. Gifts are described in more detail in the **Gifts** section, page 244.

Refine Details

Every character has three stress tracks: Health, Composure, and Reputation. These represent how much physical, mental, or social abuse you can take before things start to get bad for you. By default, each of these stress tracks has three boxes. Certain skills can add more boxes to these stress tracks if the skills are rated high enough. The more boxes in the track, the more resilient to that type of stress you are. You can find out more about how stress tracks work on page 324 in the **Conflict** section.

Consequences are when things start to get bad for you. These come in three degrees of severity (Trifling, Middling, and Grievous) and three different scopes (Physical, Mental, and Social). By default, every character can take one consequence of each degree, regardless of its scope. Certain skills in a higher Power Tier can let a character take additional consequences, as discussed in the **Skills** section. See page 326 in the Conflict section for more on how consequences work.

Aspects

Aspects are a major part of the FATE system. Odds are, anything of importance in the story is going to be described in terms of its aspects.

Potential aspects include relationships, backgrounds, beliefs, secrets, catchphrases, descriptions—anything that paints a picture of a character, a scene, a city or just about any other part of the story.

Types of Aspects

The most frequently encountered are Personal aspects, Scene aspects and Campaign aspects, but there are other types as well.

Personal Aspects

These are aspects that belong to your character, most of which are defined during character creation. If skills are what you can do, then aspects are who you are. Personal aspects are divided into several different categories: Free, Archetype, Conviction, Complication, and Social Class.

By default, every character begins with eight aspects: one Archetype, one Conviction, one Social Class and five Free aspects. Strange characters (and even some that aren't touched by the Strangeness) often have to replace one or more Free aspects with Complication or Conviction aspects.

- **Free:** Anything you want. Free aspects have no restrictions on how they're defined.
- **Archetype:** A brief phrase that describes your character's basic concept and relates to your Archetype. The **Archetypes** chapter has a list of example aspects for each Archetype.
- **Conviction:** A powerful driving force in the character's life: a sense of honor or duty, a tie to family or faith, a taste for debauchery, or uncovering forbidden secrets. A Conviction can also be one in the rightness of a relationship: an absolute faith in one's True Love, or an unremitting hatred of an enemy. Most of all, a Conviction must be driving. It must demand action. Compelling a Conviction aspect works a little differently than normal; see page 187, **How Aspects Work,** for a proper explanation. Every character has at least one Conviction aspect.
- **Complication:** A Drawback reflecting how a Unique or Strange skill has complicated the character's life, such as "Criminal Past," "Lonely At The Top," or "I'm not an animal—I'm a human being!" More information on Complication aspects can be found in **Extras and Drawbacks**.
- **Social Class:** A brief phrase that describes your role within your chosen Social Class. See **All Things Right and Proper** for a more thorough treatment of Social Class, including example aspects for each Social Class.

Sample Aspects



FREE	CONVICTIONS	COMPLICATIONS	CAMPAIGN
Scientific Genius	Always Repay a Debt	Criminal Past…and Present	Teetering on the Brink of War
"My word is my bond."	Never Take Charity	*Persona Non Grata*	A Lurking Strangeness
Torn Between Two Worlds	"For Queen and Country!"	Living Hand to Mouth	O Brave New World, That Has Such Strangers In It
"Oh, I've seen it all, my dear boy."	Before Victory, Honor	Frightful Visage	Strangeness at Every Turn
"I believe I know a fellow who can be of some assistance."	Cockney Pride	Lady Friend of the Week	The Sun Never Sets on the British Empire
Oxford-Educated, Newcastle-Bred	Secrets to Keep	Fear of Heights, and Falling Therefrom	A Bright Future
Secret Fighting Arts	Protect My Reputation	"Seems I don't know me own strength!"	The Wonders of Science!
Woman of Will	Get the Proper Respect	Member of Parliament	Heroes, Villains, and Us
Man of Action	Defend The Innocent	Unreliable Inventions	Weird Cults and Weirder Cultists
Catlike Reflexes	Loyal to the Kerberos Club	An Enemy in Every Port	A Suspicious Public
Iron-Willed Gentleman	Power at Any Price	Perfectly Arrogant	London "Fog"
Occult Conspirator	A Woman's Vengeance	Doesn't Play Well with Others	A City of Secrets
The Mystical Amulet of Marcus Fontius			Crossroads of the World
Persuasive Speaker			
The Soul of a Poet and the Face of a Monster			

Scene Aspects

These are just what it says on the tin: aspects that describe a scene instead of a character. Unlike Personal aspects, there's no default number of aspects a scene must have. Locations the GM expects will be important to the story tend to have two or three, if not more, and it's usually pretty simple to come up with scene aspects on the fly. The GM might even solicit suggestions from the players. The GM should let the players know all of a scene's obvious aspects, and remain open to adding more as seems appropriate. Players can also create or discover scene aspects using skills. Scene aspects are free to use once per scene; see below for more information. Scene aspects can be thought of in four broad categories.

- **Environment:** Lighting, atmosphere, etc.—aspects that represent the (usually diminished) ability of those within the scene to perceive things.

Personal Aspects: Good, Better, Best

Aspects are a major source of flavor for your character, and the first thing the GM will look at when she figures out what kind of adventure/trouble she'll throw at you next. They tell the GM and your fellow players who you are. So when you think of an idea for an aspect, don't stop there—crank it up a notch. Make it more dramatic, more flavorful. Then crank it up again until it really pops.

Good	Better	Best
Strong	The Strength of Ten Men	Man of Iron
Fencer	Renowned Duelist	Trained by Montcharles
Scholar	Oxford Graduate	"That encyclopedia has several glaring omissions."
Occultist	Spirit Medium	"The spirits of the dead will guide us."

If you can think of three situations in which you can imagine using the aspect in play, both in your favor and against, then you're on the right track. The more flavorful the aspect, the greater the variety of circumstances it can apply to—whether invoked or compelled—and the more fun your character will be to play.

- **Mood:** Aspects that represent the attitudes of a crowd of people.
- **Hazard:** Conditions which are likely to damage or be a danger to people in the scene. This could be anything from "On Fire!" to "Poison Gas" to "Hidden Pit."
- **Scenery:** Other features of the scene, such as "These Old Mansions Are Full of Secrets" or "Huge Chunks of Rubble."

Campaign Aspects

These aspects reflect campaign-spanning features of London and the world as seen through the lens of the Kerberos Club's past and present. One of these aspects is constant ("*Malum Necessarium*," the Club's motto) but the others are determined by a collaborative effort between the players and the GM. This process is described in detail in **Your Kerberos Club,** page 251.

Other Types of Aspects

- **Objects:** Tools, weapons, furniture, you name it—anything can have an aspect. Keep in mind, though, that aspects represent narrative importance. Don't waste your time giving every piece of a silver tea service an aspect unless you expect them to be individually important to the story.
- **People:** NPCs often have aspects, whether planned or impromptu. Aspects are an easy way to make supporting players in a story distinctive without going through a lot of trouble, especially if you want those noticeable traits to be mechanically exploitable by the players. NPCs might even be represented wholly by an aspect, such as "Helpful Clerk" or "Angry Mob."



How Aspects Work

First, pick an aspect relevant to the situation at hand. Next, ask yourself how it's relevant. Is it helping you or hindering you? If it's helping, you'll **invoke** it: You'll spend a Fate Point and receive a benefit in return (or **tag** it to receive a benefit for free, if appropriate). If it's a hindrance, it's a **compel:** You'll receive a Fate Point from the GM in exchange for being saddled with some sort of setback or additional trouble. No aspect can be used (invoked, tagged, or compelled) more than once per exchange. For example, if you invoke an aspect for a roll, it can't also be tagged or compelled (or invoked again) until the exchange is over.

There are a couple other ways aspects can be used, as well; everything's covered in the summary below.

Invoke

- **What it means:** Contradicting the dice using an aspect as justification. This could mean citing a personal aspect as a reason you must've done better than the dice indicated ("There's no way I failed to pick that lock; I'm 'London's Foremost Second-Story Man!'") or taking advantage of the terrain, the environment, another character's weakness, and so on. "He'll have a hard time shooting me through all these 'Crates and Boxes' I'm hiding behind. And he's going to have an even harder time shooting me with that 'Broken Hand' of his."
- **When to do it:** After the roll.
- **How to do it:** Work the aspect into the narrative, pay the cost, and choose your benefit. If your interpretation of the aspect crosses over into logical contortionism ("Clearly, the time I've spent as a 'Mud-Covered Pig Farmer' has meant spending a lot of time in pens and barns, which has given me an understanding of wooden structures deep enough to find a secret door in this hallway.") the GM may (and probably should) reject its use.
- **Benefit:** +2 bonus or reroll if invoking one of your personal aspects, or +2 bonus if invoking any other aspect.
- **Cost:** Fate Point.

Tag

- **What it means:** Using an aspect that's been discovered or created within the scene. The aspect must have been discovered or created via a skill roll or the expenditure of a Fate Point. See **Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers** for more on how new aspects are created or discovered.
- **When to do it:** After the roll.
- **How to do it:** Work the aspect into the narrative, pay the cost, and receive the benefit. As with invoking, if your interpretation of the aspect strains credulity, the GM may reject it.
- **Benefit:** +2 bonus.
- **Cost:** None—the first time. If the aspect sticks around longer than that, subsequent invocations require a Fate Point.

Compel

- **What it means:** Obeying your nature—you are literally "compelled" to roleplay one of your aspects in such a way that gets you in trouble (but see also **external compels**, below). This is key: If things aren't worse for your character after the compel than they were before it, it's not a valid compel. Running away from a fight because you want to get back to your "Wife and Kids" isn't worthy of a compel; rushing into a burning building to save your "Wife and Kids" definitely is. Aspects that are extrinsic to your character, such as scene or world aspects, can be compelled as well, in appropriate circumstances. For example, every game of *The Kerberos Club* has a world aspect of *"Malum Necessarium,"* the motto of the Club, so it could be used to compel any Kerberan PC to, say, take action in a way that emphasizes their devotion to the Club's ideals, or puts the Club's needs above their own.
- **When to compel:** Either you or the GM can compel one of your character's aspects whenever it's dramatically or narratively appropriate.
    - **How to compel:** As the GM, offer the player a Fate Point and suggest that the aspect you're compelling should complicate their life right about now. Sometimes the compel suggests a clear course of action, such as compelling "I Can Take 'Em!" when the player is debating whether to fight or run. Other times, the exact nature of the compel is left entirely up to the player—for example, compelling the aspect "Unpredictable Luck" in nearly any situation. In no event should the GM dictate to the player what the character is going to do. The player can either accept the Fate Point and go along with the compel, or pay a Fate Point to refuse it—the price of going against your own nature. Don't look at it as being blackmailed by the GM, because that's not what it is. It's you, the player, making full use of the aspect, probably one you chose, to generate some Fate Points.
    - **Players compelling players:** In addition, as a player you can suggest that the GM compel another PC's aspect, but it's the GM who gives that player a Fate Point, not you. (In general, we don't want to foster the idea that one player is able to control another player's character.) A player can, however, directly compel an NPC's aspect, in which case they give the GM a Fate Point and the GM reserves it for later use by that NPC. The character must have knowledge of the aspect before it can be compelled (see **Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers** for details on how this works). The more Fate Points the NPC accrues—that is, the more interest the players show in them—the more "real" or important they become in the story. A quick-thinking GM can use this to the story's advantage by turning an initially insignificant character into a major NPC—maybe even the villain of the story, or a valuable ally.
    - **The self-compel:** Normally, there's a lot going on in the GM's head, which means that she might miss the opportunity to compel one of your aspects that you think ought to be compelled, or to notice that you've obeyed one of your aspects in a way that's worthy of a Fate Point. In these cases, feel free to hold out your open palm and say something along the lines of "I want to self-compel this aspect." or "Losing my quarry to chat up the ladies—isn't that just the sort of thing a 'Sucker for a Pretty Face' would do in this situation?" How blatant you might have to be about this depends on your GM and your group.

Regardless, don't shy away from the self-compel. You chose your aspects—you should be able to use them to your advantage. That includes milking them for Fate Points when the opportunity arises.

- **The external compel:** Sometimes a compel doesn't represent a choice your character is making in the story, but a choice the player makes to worsen the situation for the character in a way that's related to an aspect. It's not the character that's causing the problem—it's the world around him. For example, the GM could compel your "Repentant Ex-Convict" aspect to have your character picked up as part of a murder investigation. Your character isn't taking some sort of action something that's encouraging the police to interfere with his life, but it's happening to him all the same. External compels can be refused, just like any other compel, but this usually carries with it ramifications of some sort in terms of the story. Maybe the police still question you, only to release you soon after—but the murder they're investigating still took place and is potentially an important part of the story.
- **Escalation:** If a player refuses a compel, the GM can then up the stakes by offering a second Fate Point. If the player accepts, he gets two Fate Points instead of one; if he refuses, he must now pay two Fate Points. In the latter case, the GM can offer a third Fate Point, but that's where it ends: Escalating a compel beyond three Fate Points is ill-advised. Escalation should be used sparingly, and only at times of high drama—compels that get right to the heart of a character's psyche, that put what matters most to that character on the line.
- **Compelling Convictions:** As discussed earlier, Conviction aspects represent a character's most dearly held beliefs and motivations. Because of this, a Conviction aspect compel starts out at two Fate Points instead of just one. Likewise, the player must pay two Fate Points to refuse the compel. The GM can then escalate to three Fate Points, but can go no further than that.
- **Compelling Major Complications:** Like Convictions, Major Complication aspect compels start at two Fate Points rather than just one; it costs two Fate Points to refuse the compel; and the GM can escalate up to 3.
- **Benefit:** Earn a Fate Point.
- **Cost:** Describe how the chosen aspect complicates the situation or gets you in trouble.

Invoking/Tagging for Effect

- **What it means:** Invoking or tagging an aspect "for effect" skirts the usual mechanical benefits in favor of directly affecting the narrative in a manner consistent with the aspect. In a way, it's like the opposite of compelling an aspect: Instead of accepting a Fate Point in exchange for getting yourself into more trouble, you pay a Fate Point to make something beneficial happen. For example, you might invoke the aspect "A Friend in Every Port" for effect to say that even here in exotic Samarkand, you know a guy.
- **When to do it:** Because this use of an aspect isn't tied to a dice roll, the players or the GM can invoke or tag for effect whenever it makes sense. Generally speaking, the GM won't be doing a lot of invoking or tagging for effect. If the GM wants something in the story to happen, she can usually just make it happen.
- **How to do it:** Explain the effect you want the aspect to provide and spend a Fate Point to make it happen. If the GM doesn't think that the desired effect can reasonably be had from the aspect in question, she can cancel the whole thing.
- **Archetype:** The character's Archetype aspect can be invoked for effect to expand what a skill can do. The player can either replace a Unique or Strange skill's trapping with another trapping or add a trapping or Extra to a Unique or Strange skill for one roll. This lets the character pull off stunts on the fly without having to pay characters points for every possible permutation of a given skill. You could suddenly throw your sword at an enemy, use your wings to make yourself look more menacing, or call on your social connections to round up some mercenaries. There are limitations on this use of the Archetype aspect, however. The affected skill must be connected to the Archetype aspect in some way, and it must make sense in the context of the aspect. For example,

a character with the Archetype aspect "Mistress of Illumination" could add the Spray Extra to a trapping of her Light Projection skill to allow her to attack multiple targets at once.

- **Benefit:** Introduce a minor detail into the story or expand a Unique or Strange skill's capabilities.
- **Cost:** Fate Point.

Aspect Declarations, Assessments, and Maneuvers

Aspects on a character sheet or pre-determined by the GM are hardly the only ones possible in a game. Players have the ability to create aspects during the course of play by using their characters' skills and abilities, thus introducing entirely new elements and ideas into the story. This is referred to as **declaring an aspect**. Likewise, players can discover aspects initially hidden from them, such as those belonging to an NPC. Sussing out aspects like this generally takes a fair bit of time. This is referred to as **assessing an aspect**. Players can also create aspects that represent temporary advantages resulting from positioning, finesse, or similar derring-do; these are referred to as **aspect maneuvers**.

Aspect Declarations

Typically, this is a quick, in-the-moment affair achieved through a character's knowledge or powers of perception. Stumbling upon a secret door, noticing someone's telltale facial tic, and spotting a weak point in an automaton's armor are all good examples of aspect declaration. These may sound like they're simply finding something that already exists in the GM's notes, but in reality the players are coming up with these entirely on their own. You could easily replace the words "stumbling upon," "noticing," and "spotting" above with the phrase "creating in the story." If it's something the GM intended from the get-go, that's fine too—but the power of the declaration is that you, the player, get to add something new into the narrative.

- **What it means:** You've "discovered" something of note in the scene that you can use to your advantage.
- **How to do it:** There are two ways to declare an aspect. The first is to use an appropriate skill (see **Skills),** rolling either against a target number set by the GM or an opponent's skill roll. Nearly any skill can be used to declare an aspect, if it's within reason, and more than one skill might apply to the task at hand. For example, you might use Marksmanship to determine where an unusual triple-barreled pistol was made (your knowledge of the pistol's origins derives from your hands-on experience with a wide variety of pistols), or you might use Academics (instead of practical experience with weaponry, you've read quite a bit about them), or maybe even Contacts (you don't have a clue, but you know a guy who's an expert). The skill you use should color the aspect you declare. The other way to declare an aspect is to spend a Fate Point—no roll required. This is more reliable, but obviously more costly.
- **Difficulty:** If no one's opposing the attempt to declare an aspect, then the difficulty of the task depends on the answers to three questions:
  - —Is the aspect interesting?
  - —Would it be even more interesting if the aspect is misleading?
  - —Does the aspect provide a story hook or clear course of action?

  Start with a difficulty of +0, and increase it by +2 for each time the answer to one of these questions is "No." Basically, we don't need aspects that are dull, shallow, and vague—the more entertaining the aspect will be for story purposes, the easier it is to declare. Of course, if the proposed aspect is just beyond the pale, like "All Things Colored Purple Are Alive," the GM's within her rights to deny it altogether. It may be interesting, interestingly misleading, and provide a weird direction for the story, but it also stretches the verisimilitude of the game world to the breaking point (for most groups, that is—there are certainly exceptions).
- **Removing aspects:** A declaration can also be made to remove an aspect that someone else has placed on

someone or something in the scene. In this case, the difficulty of the roll is the effect on the skill roll that brought it into existence. (If you don't remember, or if the declaration was made by spending a Fate Point, set the difficulty at +3.)

- **Duration:** As long as circumstances make it reasonable for the aspect to stick around, it sticks around. This means other characters can take advantage of the aspect later in the scene or in future scenes. For example, if you declare that a pier has "Weak Moorings," that aspect persists as long as the pier does (or until someone fixes the moorings).
- **Benefit:** You create a new aspect, which can be used once for free. Think of the skill roll or the Fate Point you spent on it as paying up front for the cost of the first tag. Alternately, you remove an aspect that someone else has declared.
- **Cost:** A successful skill roll or a Fate Point.

Aspect Assessments

Whereas declaring aspects can be as simple as merely noticing something unusual, assessments are more time-consuming. Instead of creating new aspects, they're basically requests for the GM to tell you a pre-existing aspect that's currently hidden from you. Examples of aspect assessment include conducting library research, engaging someone in a probing conversation, or casing a building.

- **What it means:** You've put sustained effort into uncovering an important and useful fact of some kind.
- **How to do it:** Roll an appropriate skill against a target number set by the GM, or by an opponent's skill roll, if you're assessing an aspect on another character.
- **Difficulty:** Under most circumstances, the difficulty for an assessment is +0—as long as the skill being used is rated at +1 or better, the attempt is likely to succeed. If the assessment attempt is being opposed, the difficulty is the opposition's skill roll. For example, trying to discover a character's Conviction is a matter of your conversational skills pitted against their self-control and discretion.
- **Duration:** Because assessed aspects are pre-existing, once you discover them they stick around for the duration of the story, or until the person, place, or thing to which they're attached is no longer part of it.
- **Benefit:** The GM tells you an existing aspect, which can be used once for free. As with a declaration, the skill roll you make is your up-front investment in the aspect.
- **Cost:** A successful skill roll.

Aspect Maneuvers

An aspect maneuver is an attempt to change a conflict in your favor without directly damaging your opponent. You might knock your foe "Off-Balance," position yourself for a "Sneak Attack," flash a light in their eyes to render them "Momentarily Blinded," lure them into getting "Lost in a Meandering Story" during a long conversation, flirt with their wife to make them "Enraged By Jealousy"—the list goes on. Just about anything you want to do in a conflict that doesn't result in dealing stress to your opponent is an aspect maneuver. The aspect created may be fleeting, or it may stick around for a while. For more information on aspect maneuvers, see **Conflicts.**

- **What it means:** You've managed to gain a temporary advantage over the opposition.
- **How to do it:** Make an opposed skill roll against your opponent. Any skill can be used to maneuver if the circumstances are right; it's up to you and the GM to decide what's appropriate.
- **Duration:** Compare your roll against your opponent's. At two or fewer shifts, the aspect is fragile—after one free tag, it goes away. At three or more, it lasts for the rest of the scene, or until the target removes it.
- **Removing aspects:** A maneuver can remove an aspect the same way a declaration can; see **Aspect Declarations** for more.
- **Benefit:** You get to put an aspect on your opponent or yourself to help turn the conflict in your favor. Alternately, you remove
- **Cost:** A successful opposed skill roll.

Archetypes

Each Strange character has an Archetype, as mentioned in the character creation guidelines. Archetypes are a way of focusing your character concept and guiding some of your choices, but the list below is hardly exhaustive. If you find you have an idea for a character that just doesn't fit the ones described here, use these as a guideline and work with your GM to come up with a new Archetype that does what you want it to do.

The Archetypes are displayed in the following format:

Archetype Name

Requirements: Thematic constraints or mandatory Drawbacks for the Archetype's Strange skills.

Description: A broad outline of what the Archetype means and encompasses.

Example Aspects: Aspects that may fit the Archetype.

Invoke when: Some sample situations in which invoking the Archetype aspect would be appropriate.

Compel to: Some other sample situations in which the GM could reasonably compel the Archetype aspect.

Adept

Requirements: Physical or mental ability.

Description: The world offers many possibilities for Adepts, those who transcend human limitations through the tireless study of one esoteric practice or another. The martial arts secrets of China and Japan, the yogic practices of India, the mystical meditations of Tibet—even without exoticism, the age is full of health advice, medical quacks and patent exercise regimes. With the touch of the Strange, superhuman ability might rise from even something prosaic.

Example Aspects: Om Mani Padme Hum, Trained by Wong Kei-Ying, Secrets of the Tiger Clan.

Invoke when: Calling on your training, recalling something obscure related to your chosen discipline, acting all mysterious and exotic.

Compel to: Defend the reputation of your school or master, obey the precepts of your traditions, fight with honor.

Alien

Requirements: None.

Description: Unlike in the speculative fiction of the age, the ancient civilizations of the Moon, Mars, Venus, and further afield are all long dead and ashes by the 1800s—but that's not to say ancient remnants of those prehuman races might not be hiding out there, waiting to awaken. Closer to home there are the inhuman inhabitants of sunken Atlantis and Pacifica, the subhuman ape-men of the Congo, and the attenuated and ethereal winged men clinging to the slopes of the world's most forbidding peaks. Aliens in *The Kerberos Club* are unique, survivors of dead races, lost beings cut off from their homes. Finding a way to survive in the societies of Man is sometimes their greatest challenge.

Example Aspects: "My kingdom lies beneath the waves," Last Martian On Earth, Man of Steel.

Invoke when: Using an ability related to your extraterrestrial origin, deciphering an alien script, negotiating with another alien.

Compel to: Be unfamiliar with the nuances of contemporary society, come to the aid of one of your brethren, put yourself at a disadvantage in an effort to "fit in."

Anachronist

Requirements: Any Strange skills representing the Anachronist's inventions must have the Focus Flaw.

Description: You are an inventor—one part Da Vinci's brilliance, one part Tesla's innovation, with a dash of Edison's persistence for flavor. In your laboratory, you construct devices that beggar the imagination of the world's greatest scientific minds. As such, the Anachronist is well at home in Victoria's Century. Mad vision and superhuman inspiration combine to do the impossible. Some Anachronists specialize in a single kind of miraculous innovation or a theme, such as steam, chemical formulations, electricity, or the invisible power



of radium. Others are true polymaths, masters of all science, some totally unknown to man, some forbidden by God. Of all the Archetypes, those who use science to create miracles are among the most accepted by society, though they often betray a shocking lack of foresight when anticipating the consequences of their innovations.

Example Aspects: "I'm not a mad scientist—just an angry one," The Wonders of This Age Are Born of Science, Curious Inventions of Every Kind.

Invoke when: Operating, repairing, or creating one of your inventions, figuring out a piece of advanced technology, impressing someone with your scientific prowess.

Compel to: Indulge in techno-babble when just talking like a normal person would be far preferable, prioritize scientific knowledge over people, create a ground-breaking technological wonder without any regard for things like "morals" or "ethics."

Artificial

Requirements: At least one Strange skill must have a Complication aspect related to your particular brand of artificiality.

Description: The creation of artificial life is something of an obsession for inventors and sorcerers alike. Men are sewn from the bodies of the dead like Mary Shelley's monster. Gods are served by living statues. Rabbi Judah Loew's Golem might still walk the Earth, perhaps granted a soul by the utterance of words; men of clockwork, ladies of brass, children with perfect porcelain faces. You are one of these unnatural beings, made in the image of your creator (more or less).

As an Artificial, damage you sustain cannot be healed by conventional medicine. Instead, you must be repaired like a machine using Craftsmanship (or any skill with the **Repair** trapping). This skill must equal or exceed the Power Tier of your Endurance (or other applicable skill with the Stress Capacity [Health] trapping).

Example Aspects: Self-Made Man, Clockwork Juggernaut, The Golem of Cheapside.

Invoke when: Sustaining damage from a physical attack, displaying



The Three Laws of Faerie

The Law of Oath: A faerie's identity is shaped less by its birth and experiences than by whom it imagines itself to be. Oaths, things a faerie has sworn as true, are to it as real as gravity, air, and kinetic energy to a mortal. Oaths are binding forces in a faerie's life, and rather than see them as restrictions or limitations, faerie tend to view them as the cornerstones of who they are. Oaths of loyalty, of vengeance, of service, or faith (if one can extract by trick or true-dealing such an oath), are as binding as natural science upon the faerie's essential nature. To break such a vow is not just disheartening, it actually reduces the faerie in some major way. It is the Law of the Oath. The encyclopedic knowledge of past oaths forms the firmament of faerie society and law, which learned barristers employ when trying cases before Flower Courts or assisting a client in dealing directly with the capricious things.

As a faerie, when you swear an oath, you automatically gain a sticky aspect to that effect. The GM can compel this Oath aspect as if it were a Conviction—that is, the compel starts at two Fate Points instead of one. However, if you refuse, instead of paying the Fate Points, you may choose to take a Middling Physical consequence. This consequence can't be healed by conventional means. In fact, the only way to remove it is to make good on your oath: As soon as you take significant steps toward fulfilling your promise, it disappears. The GM should always give fair warning when a course of action is likely to lead toward an oathbreaking.

The Law of Form: Oaths shape a faerie's personality, but form defines its physicality. The Law of Form dictates that if a faerie is to assume material form, then it is bound by the limitations of that form. Their flesh bleeds, their stomachs hunger. Though many can assume a menagerie of forms, some wholly fantastic, all must on some basic level be able to sustain life, lest the unwise faerie adopt a form that kills it. Much of a faerie's true nature might be cloaked in glamour and illusion, but the essential form that allows it to interact with the real world is a living thing, and is as vulnerable as any other.

When making a concession as a result of taking Health stress, you may opt to instantly fade away into intangibility. You also lose the ability to interact with the material world in any real way, becoming a specter unable even to speak or touch those around you. This state persists until the next moonrise or until the GM compels one of your aspects, whichever comes first.

The Law of Self: A faerie's whole existence hinges on its sense of self; on who it imagines itself to be and who others believe it to be. Faerie have almost no inner life, no secret subconscious. They are all surface. What you see is what you get. Because of this, when a faerie suffers a blow to its identity, its Convictions, then it is reduced, weakened, actually injured. If its will completely fails, it simply evaporates back into whatever weird stuff the faerie are made of, lost motes upon the breeze. Of course, that works both ways. On some occasions a faerie can evolve or change dramatically when it undergoes some great inner transformation. In this way it's possible—but rare, very rare—for a Common Faerie that has served its own Convictions well to become a Faerie Beast or even a Peer.

When you refuse a compel on one of your Conviction aspects, you also sustain Health stress equal to the Fate Points you paid as part of the refusal.

machine-like stamina, frightening peasants.

Compel to: Have difficulty relating to human beings, hide your true nature from unfriendly eyes, flee from a torch-and-pitchfork-wielding mob of frightened peasants.

Changed

Requirements: None, but at least one of your Strange skills must come with a Complication reflecting the nature of your alteration.

Description: You're a human modified by science, sorcery, or something else, to be something more—a natural consequence of having Anachronistic inventors making miracles with science and occultists channeling the powers of capricious otherworldly beings. Victoria's Century welcomes some remarkable innovations, but it isn't a period famous for its ethical standards with regards to voluntary human experimentation. Self-experimentation is also a favorite pursuit of over-extended inventors seeking validation of their ideas at any cost.

Example Aspects: Transformed by Rosicrucian Alchemy, England's Foremost Steamborg, Doctor Dorian's Hypertonic Treatments.

Invoke when: Using your modifications to exceed the limits of normal human ability, know details about the processes that made you what you are.

Compel to: Run afoul of a scientist who'd like to dissect you in the name of Science, encounter difficulty relating to "natural" humans, have the sorcerous entity that changed you call on you to return the favor.

Faerie

Requirements: At least one of your Strange skills must come with a Complication aspect, and you must take at least a Minor Weakness against iron. In addition, you must take the Faerie Glamour skill (see page 241) at any Power Tier.

Description: Notoriously capricious and casually cruel where mortals are concerned, the faerie race is one of infinite diversity of mind and body. Most are hardly more than beasts or specters of people, but some are sapient enough to rival or even exceed humanity. Regardless of their form or mind, all creatures of Faerie are inextricably bound by the three Laws: The Law of Oath, the Law of Form, and the Law of Self. See **The Three Laws of Faerie** for more information on playing this Archetype.

Example Aspects: Gossamer Wings and Sharp Teeth, Mercurial Changeling, Spirit of the Air.

Invoke when: Speaking with (or take more vigorous action against) others of Faerie origin, deceiving a mortal through tricks or illusion, putting yourself in danger in the course of fulfilling an oath.

Compel to: Obey one of the three Laws of Faerie, be discriminated against (in the later part of the century), chafe under Queen Victoria's authority.

Godling

Requirements: Your Strange skills must be tied to your divine heritage or sphere of influence.

Description: You're not the God, but a god, surely; or perhaps you're related to a divine entity of some sort and have been exiled to spend your unnaturally long life in the mortal realm. In truth, the British Empire is ruled by one such as this, but She is far from the only Divinity to walk the Earth. The smug certainty of English religion might dismiss the religions of non-Christian lands as superstition, but if one is not blinded by dogma, there is evidence of their providence walking among the milling crowds. Look to the world's religions, living and dead, and you will find thousands of fantastic characters.

Example Aspects: Son of Thor, The Eternal Energy of Kali, "Shu'Shub Tso'gorath! Shu'Shub Tso'gorath!"

Invoke when: Impressing the mortals with your divinity, consorting with others of your kind, recalling historical trivia from your long years on Earth (or beyond)

Compel to: Cross over from "impressive" to "arrogant," be targeted by followers of an enemy deity (or the enemy deity itself), have to face one of the

many enemies you've made during your long years on Earth (or beyond).

Human Oddity

Requirements: Physical or mental ability. In addition, at least one of your Strange skills must come with a Major Complication aspect reflecting your particular brand of oddness.

Description: Some people are just born wrong. Some unfortunates have no compensation for their oddities, but others, such as John Merrick the Elephantine Man, gain awesome powers as recompense. These individuals are truly Strangers, set apart and marked out by a society that has quite strong opinions on how one should dress act, and look. To those scarred by their Strangeness, it is a harsh fate indeed.

Example Aspects: "I'm not an animal—I'm a human being!", The Great and Mysterious Human Pretzel, The Feejee Mermaid of the Pacific.

Invoke when: Scaring off the ignorant, using one of your oddity-derived abilities, relating with others of your cursed kind.

Compel to: Be subjected to the scorn, persecution and deep-seated prejudice of a frightened populace, accidentally frighten off a would-be friend, finally succumb to the rage that's been slowly building inside you your entire life.

Magus

Requirements: One of your Conviction aspects becomes your Obsession (see sidebar). See **Magic: Forbidden Lore and Hidden Secrets** on page 234 for further details on the different requirements for Sacred and Profane magicians.

Description: Magical traditions are many and varied, but all demand one thing from those who find true powers amid the dross and lies and fantasies: dedication. To gain true sorcerous insight, one must put magic before all other things. One must shed attachments, abandon preconceptions, betray trusts, deny duties, and alienate loves. For the Magus, the Art is All. So long as a Magus maintains other attachments, his power is never what it might be, never absolute. Magi make poor kings, priests, fathers, soldiers, scholars. In the end, they care nothing for such human stations. Total dedication to magic often places one beyond the realms of sanity and society, caring only for the higher and lower realities open to the occult perception. The concerns of ordinary people are as the buzzing of flies. When you choose this Archetype, you must also choose the brand of magic you practice, Profane or Sacred. Profane magic creates brief and flashy but potentially powerful effects, such as causing explosions or flying through the air. Sacred magic is a bit

Magus: Obsession and Madness

Pursuing magical knowledge takes more than dedication—it takes an almost single-minded devotion to uncovering the supernatural world's forgotten secrets and esoteric wisdom. For the true Magus, this tends to cross the line from devotion to outright obsession.

An Obsession aspect is like a Conviction, only stronger. More than a belief, it's an all-consuming need that never fully leaves your mind. Like Convictions and Major Complications, when compelling an Obsession aspect the GM must start with an offer of two Fate Points instead of one.

When invoking your Obsession aspect for a bonus or to reroll, you may also choose to take any amount of Composure stress. If you do, you gain an *additional* bonus to your roll equal to the stress taken. This stress bypasses any and all defenses, but may be reduced with Mental Consequences.

For example, let's say you roll Occultism and spend a Fate Point to invoke your Obsession aspect for a +2 bonus. Even so, you're still three points short of your goal, so instead of invoking two more aspects for two more Fate Points, you decide to take three points of Composure stress in exchange for a +3 bonus.



like mystical gadgeteering—the Magus creates items of power, either temporary or permanent. Profane magic is fast and flexible; Sacred magic is time-consuming and potentially world-altering. Profane magicians are required to purchase the Profane Works skill, and Sacred magicians are required to purchase the Sacred Works skill. These are both detailed in **Magic: Forbidden Lore and Hidden Secrets**.

Example Aspects: Inheritor of Arcane Secrets Dark and Terrible, Occult Conspirator, The Sacrificial Blade of Amon-Tur

Invoke when: Working your magic, unworking someone else's magic, calling on your occult knowledge.

Compel to: Betray a friend in pursuit of power, face danger to deepen your understanding of magic, indulge in a distasteful and lurid ritual.

Mutant

Requirements: At least one of your Strange skills must come with a Drawback related to your mutation.

Description: Some people are born with unnatural abilities which see them isolated and alienated, often abandoned by terrified parents. That's you—the next phase of human evolution. Due to some aberration of science or genetics, you and your ilk are physiologically different from common men and women. By the late-middle century, gangs roam the streets made up almost entirely of juvenile Strangers who use their powers to thieve and war with each other.

Example Aspects: Built Like a Brick Workhouse, Three-Eyed Curiosity, Psychokinetic Crime-Fighter.

Invoke when: Proving to other Mutants you're "one of them," using your mutation(s) to your advantage.

Compel to: Be pursued by an angry crowd of anti-Mutant Londoners, be unmistakably revealed as a Mutant at an inopportune time, come up against a rival Mutant street gang.

Super-Normal

Requirements: Physical or mental ability. At least one of your Strange skills must come with a Conviction aspect.
Description: You're an exceptional member of the human race, driven by an unrelenting desire to exceed the accepted limits of human ability. Like the Adept, there is a great deal of room for a Super-Normal character in Victoria's Century. Among the ranks of the Super-Normal are romantics exploring the dark corners of the world, great leaders of men, and unhinged megalomaniacs barely clinging to a semblance of sanity.
Example Aspects: Man of Action, Daring Explorer of the Congo, "I am as a lion among insects."
Invoke when: Impressing the common man, displaying a Super-Normal ability, pushing yourself beyond the bounds of humanity.
Compel to: Lose touch with the common man, rise to a challenge, grow overconfident in your abilities.

Skills

Considered on the most basic level, skills represent what your character can do. Skills are rated on the Adjective Ladder or numerically (as you prefer—some people like words, some people like numbers), with higher ratings being better. When you roll dice, you'll almost always add a Skill rating to their total. Nearly every action that the character might undertake is covered by his skills. If he doesn't have a skill on his sheet, either because the player didn't take it or the skill itself doesn't exist, it is assumed to default to Mediocre (+0).

Skills are not a straight measure of "My guy's better than your guy." Rather, skills are methods of resolving conflicts and finding answers to problems. Your skills are a way of telling the GM, "This is the sort of thing I'd like to be doing in the game." The higher your rating with a particular skill is, the better your character will be at solving problems using that skill, and the more opportunities he'll have to use it. For example, say your character is a bare-knuckle boxing champion. If you give him Great (+4) Fisticuffs, he'll be very good at punching people in the face, and a lot of his scenes will center on physical conflicts. On the other hand, if you give him Average (+1) Fisticuffs and Great (+4) Deceit, he's no less a champion—but he's less defined by his boxing career and abilities than by his capacity to deceive others. You can expect him to do a lot more talking than fighting

Skills are made up of bundles of skill applications we call **trappings**. A trapping is something you can do with a skill, such as using your Marksmanship skill to shoot someone or leaping from rooftop to rooftop with Athletics. In most *FATE* games, these trappings are often more implicit than explicit, but in *The Kerberos Club* they're treated more concretely and take on additional importance. Here, skills are defined by their trappings, for reasons that will soon become apparent. For a full list of trappings, see the **Trappings** section.

Common, Unique, and Strange

Skills come in three basic varieties: **Common skills**, **Unique skills**, and **Strange skills**.

The Common skill list is a group of pre-defined skills, such as Seamanship, Academics, or Occultism. Their trappings are set and immutable: All instances of Academics, from character to character, have the same trappings and work the same way, as do all instances of Empathy, Stealth, Contacting, and every other Common skill. In other words, this is more or less the skill list you might find in any game powered by *FATE*.

At 28 Common skills, this list might seem a bit overwrought at first, but many are highly contextual. Odds are your character can safely dismiss several of them out of hand right away. Never set foot on a boat? Don't even look at Seamanship. Is your game set in the Early Century? You can safely disregard Drive and Pilot—tractor carriages and Aero Ships don't even exist yet. Street urchin? Resources and Science probably aren't your thing. And so on.

Unique skills are designed and named by the player—

The Common Skills

Academics	Deceit	Pilot
Alertness	Drive	Presence
Arms	Empathy	Resolve
Art	Endurance	Resources
Athletics	Fisticuffs	Science
Brawn	Horsemanship	Seamanship
Bureaucracy	Intimidation	Stealth
Burglary	Investigation	Survival
Contacting	Marksmanship	
Craftsmanship	Occultism	

A World Without Common Skills?

It's entirely possible to drop Common skills altogether and just have players build every skill from scratch by default. But fair warning: There are some serious pitfalls here, not the least of which is the extra time and effort involved. In addition, when the majority of a character's skills are Common, he's more likely to have his bases covered. Using Unique skills for everything requires a little more care and system mastery, plus some additional player buy-in to ensure that things don't get out of hand.

However, if you're fine with all of that, to start you'll want to up starting skill points from 30 to 45. You may find it useful to name Unique skills after aspects (or vice-versa) to help narrow down the character's areas of competence. Even more so than usual, the GM and players should keep a close eye on how well a skill's trappings fitting its themes. The danger here is that every skill might end up too broad, which may make characters a little one-note. If a Unique skill ends up with more than five or six trappings, that's probably a sign that it should be split in two (or even three).

collections of hand-picked trappings grouped together to represent an occupation, a lifestyle, a broad area of training or aptitude, or some other thematically linked set of abilities. Every trapping within a Unique skill must fit its theme. For example, a Unique skill called Royal Surgeon could encompass medical training and knowledge, connections within the medical community, and personal wealth, but not riding a horse, dodging bullets, or punching guys in the face. That's not to say that the character can't do those things—only that since they aren't reasonably part of being a Royal Surgeon, they can't be included in that particular Unique skill. Taking a Unique skill lets you turn one of your Free aspects into an associated Complication aspect, to reflect how the part of the character's life represented by the skill has complicated her life, or a Conviction aspect, to reflect how it has informed or affected her beliefs. These aspects are a way of reinforcing the connection between who your character is and what your character can do. Plus, they lower the Unique skill's cost. A Unique skill's Power Tier can be either Mundane or Extraordinary; see below for more on Power Tiers.

Strange skills, unlike Common skills and Unique skills, confer powers and abilities beyond those of normal human beings. Like Unique skills, most Strange skills are composed of trappings selected by the player, but generally themed around some sort of capability manifested by the Strangeness. What makes a Strange skill? Strange skills let you do things far beyond the ken of ordinary mortals, such as shooting energy beams out of your eyes, throwing a locomotive engine through the Parliament Building, reading a barkeep's mind, summoning otherworldly allies—in other words, superpowers. Anyone can have a Unique skill, but only Strangers can have Strange skills. This includes any Common skill of Superhuman Tier or greater. Every Strange skill must come with at least one Drawback, which imposes a limitation of sort in exchange for a skill point discount; see **Extras and Drawbacks** for more on these.

Combining Skills

Sometimes the character needs to perform a task that really requires using two or more skills at once. You never know when a character is going to need to throw a knife

while balancing on a spinning log or pilot an airship while cracking a cipher.

In those situations, the GM calls for a roll based on the main skill being used (the primary thrust of the action), but **modified** by a second skill. If the second skill is of greater value than the first, it grants a +1 bonus to the roll; if the second skill is of a lesser value, it applies a -1 penalty to the roll.

When the second skill can only help the first, which is to say it can only provide a bonus, it **complements** the skill. A complementing skill never applies a -1, even if it's lower than the primary skill. This usually happens when the character has the option of using the secondary skill, but doesn't have to bring it to bear.

If the secondary skill comes into play only to hold the primary skill back, it **limits** the skill, meaning it can only provide a penalty or nothing at all. A limiting skill never applies a +1, even if it's higher than the primary skill. Often skills like Endurance or Resolve are limiting skills—as you get more tired, you won't get better, but if you're resolute, you may not get worse.

Power Tiers

The significant differences in scale between the effectiveness of the ordinary Londoner's abilities and those of the most powerful Strangers are represented by **Power Tiers**.

A skill in the **Mundane Tier** is as effective as the efforts of an ordinary human being. In this Tier, a Great (+4) Athletics rating puts you among the ranks of the finest real-world athletes. A magical, Mundane Tier ability to conceal your identity will give you a disguise as convincing as one that could be achieved through conventional means.

If a skill's Tier surpasses the Mundane Tier, so does its effectiveness relative to the realm of "normal" human ability. This could be due to the effects of the Strangeness, a lifetime of intense focus, or an uncanny talent. With an Athletics skill of Great (+4) in the **Extraordinary Tier,** you are a suspiciously exceptional athlete. You routinely run, jump, and climb with an ease and agility that the common man simply can't match, and even your worst efforts often exceed those of professional athletes whose skills rank in the Mundane Tier. A sorcerous disguise in the Extraordinary Tier is often convincing enough to fool the target's spouse for weeks on end.

Above the Extraordinary Tier—through the **Superhuman**, **Ascendant**, and **Godlike Tiers**—these increases in effectiveness only become more pronounced. If you possess an Athletics skill in the Godlike Tier, running up one side of Everest and down the other, or leaping across the Atlantic, is routine business. If you can cloak yourself in a Godlike Tier disguise, odds are good that you're descended from (or are) one of the world's trickster gods.

The Tier of a skill, if not Mundane, is indicated by an initial in parentheses after the skill's name—(E) for Extraordinary, (S) for Superhuman, and so on. If a skill—*any* skill, including Common skills—is in the Superhuman, Ascendant, or Godlike Tiers, it's automatically a Strange skill.

When you face off against an opponent, first compare the Tiers of the skills you're using. If they're the same, such as Mundane vs. Mundane or Superhuman vs. Superhuman, each of you rolls 4dF and adds your skill rating, as normal. If they're different, **whoever has the higher-Tier skill replaces one Fudge die with a six-sided die *for each Tier of difference*.** For example, if you're attacking with Good (+3) Fisticuffs (E) and your opponent is defending with Fair (+2) Athletics, you'll roll 3dF+1d6+3 and your opponent will roll 4dF+2. If your Fisticuffs were Superhuman instead of Extraordinary, you'd roll 2dF+2d6+3, while your opponent would still roll 4dF+2. If both of you were using skills of the same Tier, regardless of what that Tier were, you'd both roll 4dF and add your skill rating.

This method naturally gives the upper hand to whoever has the higher-Tier skill, but if there's only one Tier of

The Power Tiers

Godlike (G)
Ascendant (A)
Superhuman (S)
Extraordinary (E)
Mundane

difference, it's not an overwhelming advantage. There's still the very real possibility of rolling [-][-][-]+1 on 3dF+1d6, after all. Anything greater than a single Tier of difference and the higher-Tier skill is virtually guaranteed to win. Consider that rolling 2dF+2d6 yields a minimum result of +0, and that's not even taking into account the skill rating itself—in the worst-case scenario, a Superhuman skill pitted against a Mundane skill will always achieve a positive result. And that Mundane skill has no chance whatsoever against a Godlike skill. As it should be.

If a skill's Power Tier measures its effectiveness relative to that of the common man, your skill rating measures how it ranks against comparable skills in that Tier. For example, if you have Average (+1) Brawn (S), you're far stronger than the average person, but compared to others with Brawn (S), you're on the lower end of the scale.

Each Power Tier reduces your Refresh. See **Power Tier and Refresh,** page 206.

But I Don't Like Fudge Dice!

Some versions of FATE eschew Fudge dice in favor of d6-d6 (a positive d6 roll minus a negative d6 roll). If you prefer that, instead of replacing a Fudge die with a d6 for a Power Tier, roll an extra d6. For example, an Extraordinary Tier skill vs. a Mundane Tier skill would mean rolling 2d6-d6 instead of 3dF+1d6.

Be warned, though: Despite the fact that 3dF+1d6 and 2d6-1d6 have the same average (3.5), their high and low ranges vary significantly. The worst you can roll on 3dF+1d6 is -2 and the best is +9, while the worst you can roll with 2d6-d6 is -4 and the best is +11. This discrepancy only becomes more pronounced as the difference between Power Tiers increases. You should be aware of the tendency of the dice to become increasingly dominant if you're rolling regular dice rather than Fudge dice.

Another option is to use d6-d6 and just add +3 for each Tier of difference. This lacks a bit of the random factor and puts even more emphasis on Power Tiers if that's what you prefer.

Invulnerability and Weakness

Some characters are especially resistant to certain types of attacks, like those mindless Automechanicals that don't scare easily, or are especially vulnerable to certain *other* types of attacks, such as a werewolf's vulnerability to silver. These are handled in the game with limited Power Tier adjustments called **Invulnerability** and **Weakness**.

An Invulnerability improves your defenses against a narrow category of attacks by upgrading the effective Power Tier of your defense. This applies to any defensive skill you might bring to bear against the specified attack. A Minor Invulnerability provides a two-Tier upgrade (from Mundane to Superhuman, Extraordinary to Ascendant, Superhuman to Godlike, and so on), while a Major Invulnerability grants a *four*-Tier upgrade. Acceptable "narrow categories" must be consistent with the character's Archetype, and include things like fire (for a creature composed of volcanic rock), bludgeons (for a fellow with an especially stretchy body), and mind-affecting attacks (for an especially disciplined mentalist).

Alternately, the Invulnerability can be more broad, covering all physical attacks or all mental attacks, but this comes with certain repercussions. For one, it doubles the cost of the Invulnerability (see below). Secondly, the player has to decide if the Invulnerability is constantly active or must be consciously activated by the character. If the latter, it requires an Action on the character's turn (see the Conflicts section in *Chapter 7: Running The Game*) to activate or deactivate. This effectively means that it can't be switched on as an immediate reaction to a threat, but is a matter of conscious effort on the part of the character. Thirdly, while the Invulnerability is active, the character loses the ability to interact with the world within the bounds of the Invulnerability's scope. For example, a ghostly character with an Invulnerability to all physical attacks isn't able to physically affect the world—he can't move or pick up objects, deal Health stress to corporeal enemies, and so on. A character with an Invulnerability to all mental attacks lacks the capacity to reason or think independently. He's less a "character" than one of those

mindless Automechanicals mentioned above. Obviously, this is incongruous with being a player character, which demands independent reasoning and decision-making. Likewise, the only creatures Invulnerable to social attacks don't get invited to parties anyway, so this too is inappropriate for PCs.

A Weakness is just the opposite: a category of attacks against which the effective Power Tier of the character's defenses is downgraded by two Tiers (a Minor Weakness) or four Tiers (a Major Weakness). Werewolves are weak against silver. The Human Dynamo, the last Argonian on Earth, is Weak against argonite. Vampires have a Major Weakness against sunlight. However, instead of carrying a cost, in exchange for this chink in your armor your Weakness provides a cost rebate, as indicated on page 207. Note that the rebate provided isn't a function of how common or rare your Weakness is—it's just about how much you want it to affect you. A GM who constantly presents antagonists with a knowledge of your Weakness and the means to exploit it is doing both you and the story a disservice. It's not that it should never come up—of course it should—but a hero facing an identical challenge time and again makes for a dull narrative.

As the GM, be judicious with how regularly you bring a character's Weakness into play. It should be a spice, not the main course. As the player, don't give your character a Weakness if you don't want to see your character trounced now and then by someone with the means, opportunity, and knowledge to exploit it.

Tier Benefits

Many trappings can confer an additional benefit if their skill is in the Extraordinary Tier or above. This is called a Tier Benefit. For example, the Stress Capacity trapping's Tier Benefit in the Extraordinary Tier is Armor 1 against stress of the trapping's scope (Health, Composure, or Reputation). The number of Tier Benefits a single skill provides cannot exceed its skill rating. These **Tier Benefits** are chosen when the skill's Power Tier is determined, and remain "locked in" thereafter. For instance, the Physical Force, Stress Capacity, and Leap trappings all come with Tier Benefits. If you put all three of them in a Fair (+2) skill, you'll have to pick which two Tier Benefits the character will actually receive and be able to use. Later on, if you're able to increase that skill's rating to Good (+3), you can add the third Tier Benefit to the character.

Trappings

Here is a list of all the skill trappings, each with a brief description. They're grouped into loose categories—Offense, Defense, etc.—according to the basic function they serve. (Trappings marked with a ✪ symbol have Tier Benefits.)

Offense

Causing harm.

Influence: Libel, slander, and public defamation. Deals Reputation stress and Social consequences.

Menace: Frighten and threaten. Deals Composure stress and Mental consequences.

Shoot: Attack at range (defaults to 1 zone). Deals Health stress and Physical consequences.

Strike: Attack in melee. Deals Health stress and Physical consequences.

Defense

Denying them the satisfaction.

Dodge: Avoid melee or ranged attacks.

Esteem: Defend against social attacks.

Parry: Defend against melee attacks.

Resist Damage: Defense against Physical attacks through sheer toughness.

Stress Capacity [Scope]✪: Adds boxes to the chosen scope's stress track (Health, Mental, or Reputation).

Willpower: Defense against Mental attacks such as fear or psychic domination.

Mobility

Getting from here to there.

Climb: Move on vertical surfaces.

Leap✚: Jump.

Move✚: Cover ground (on foot, by default).

Social

War by other means.

Conversation: Improve someone's attitude toward you.

Convince: Talk someone into (or out of) a course of action.

Inspire: Alter the mood of a group of people in a manner consistent with the skill's theme.

Networking✚: Making use of your social circles to glean information and separate rumors from fact.

Perception

Making sense of it all.

Examine: Prolonged, active perception of an area.

Initiative [Scope]: Determines order of actions in the chosen scope (Physical, Mental, or Social).

Insight✚: Assess someone's aspects.

Notice✚: Quick, passive perception of your surroundings.

Technical

Applying what you know.

Craft✚: Create permanent works of art or technology.

Dismantle: Take apart machines or other technological devices using your own scientific or mechanical know-how.

Information: Call on expert knowledge appropriate to the skill's theme.

Languages✚: Read and write additional languages.

Repair: Fix things of a mechanical or technological nature.

Research: Make use of a Workspace to deepen your understanding of a topic.

Treatment [Scope]✚: Clear stress and remove consequences in the chosen scope (Physical, Mental, or Social).

Workspace✚: A physical location to conduct research, experiments, or similar work, such as a library, workshop, or laboratory.

Subterfuge

Acting with secrecy.

Dexterity✚: Sleight of hand and manual finesse.

Disguise✚: Look and sound like someone else.

Guile: Lie, misdirect, and mislead people, and get away with it.

Hide✚: Remain unseen.

Security: Bypass security measures such as tripwires and locks.

Skulk: Move silently.

General

Collecting a miscellany of trappings.

Environment [Type]: Survive and thrive in the chosen environment type.

Minions: Gain access to servitors, underlings, henchmen, or some other type of faceless helpers.

Physical Force✚: Apply force to objects in a manner appropriate to the skill's theme.

Transport: Ride animals or operate vehicles.

Variable [Frequency]: A trapping that can be defined as any other trapping once per scene or once per session.

Wealth: Access to personal assets.

Putting It Together

Skills of all stripes are purchased using skill points. A common skill's cost in skill points is equal to its rating (+1 to +4), regardless of how many trappings it might have.

To figure out the cost of a Unique or Strange skill, you'll use the Skill Trapping Diagram on page 207.

As you can see, the diagram consists of **boxes** and **lines**. Each box is labeled with a trapping name, with either solid or dotted borders. Many of these boxes are connected by lines, whether thin, thick, or dotted. We'll refer to these connected boxes as **chains**.

Start by choosing a trapping for the skill. This can be anywhere in the diagram. If the trapping has a solid border, it costs 1 skill point; if it's dotted, it's 2 skill points.

Then find the next trapping you want to include in the skill. If it's in a chain

with the first trapping, you'll have to cross one or more lines and possibly skip over some boxes to get to it. A thin line costs 1 point to cross and a dotted line costs 2 points to cross, but crossing a thick line is free. If there's a box in the way for a trapping you don't want to add to the skill, you can skip it for free. If getting to a trapping would mean crossing four or more points' worth of lines, just pay four points plus the cost of the new trapping. For example, if you're starting with Physical Force, crossing the three thin lines and one dotted line between it and Dexterity would only cost 4 skill points, not 5. Likewise, skipping the trappings in between—Leap, Move, and Skulk—wouldn't cost anything. Crossing the same line multiple times doesn't cost additional points.

If the additional trapping isn't chained to a trapping the skill already has, you'll just pay for the trapping itself. For example, adding the Languages trapping to a skill always costs only 1 point.

The only exceptions are with Unique skills. *If you're building a Unique skill, the Information and Networking trappings are free to add.* You'll still have to pay for crossing lines in the chain, if any, but the trappings themselves are complimentary.

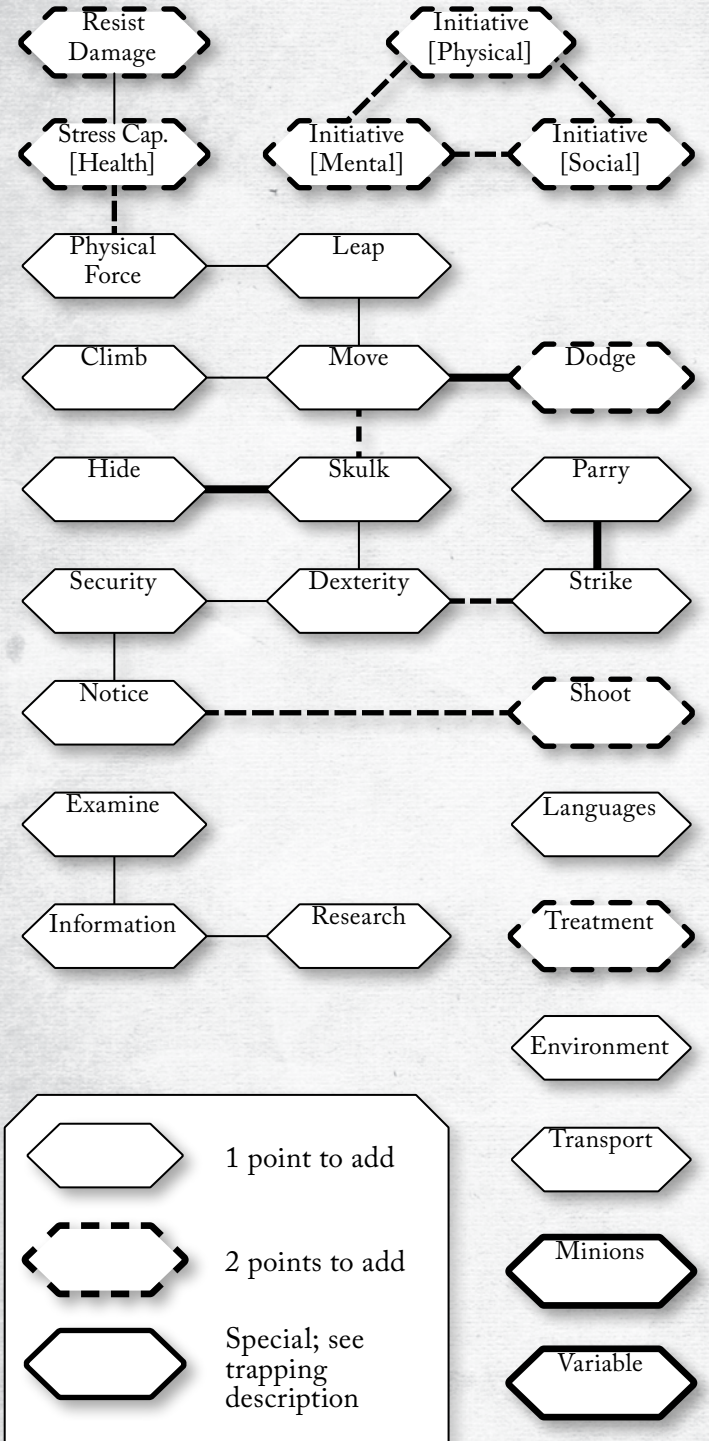
Extras increase this total; Drawbacks reduce it. See **Extras** and **Drawbacks** for details.

Add up all the skill points you've spent on lines and boxes, then subtract any discounts from Drawbacks. That's the Unique or Strange skill's total cost.

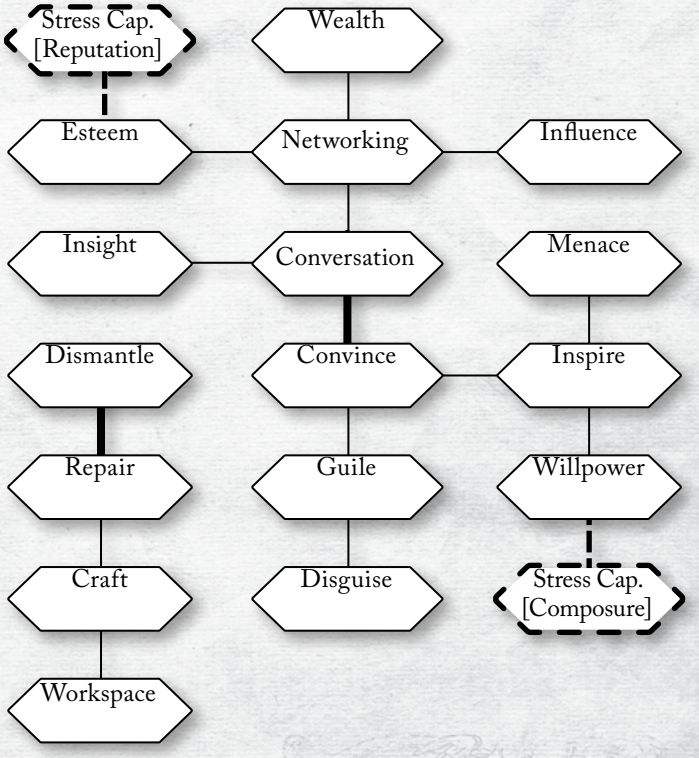
For example, let's say you're creating a Unique skill rated at Good (+3) called Oxford Professor, with the following trappings: Information, Research, Languages, Wealth, Esteem, and Networking. This means that you can use Oxford Professor to be well-educated, know how to use a library, speak multiple languages, draw an income, defend your public reputation, and leverage your Oxford connections to your advantage. Looking at the Skill Trapping Diagram, you decide to start with Networking. It's chained to Wealth by a thin line, which will cost 1 point to cross, and Wealth has a solid border, which will cost 1 point to add. It's the same story with Esteem: 1 point to cross the thin line, and another point to add it to the skill. Languages isn't connected to anything, so it'll only cost 1 point to



Skill Trapping Diagram



How to Use This: Pick a trapping for the skill to use as a starting point, and pay skill points to add it to the skill. Follow the lines to get to other trappings. The more lines you have to cross to get to the next trapping, the more expensive it is. A thin line costs 1 skill point to cross, a dotted line costs 2 skill points, and a thick line costs no points. A trapping with a solid border costs 1 point to add to a skill, while one with a dotted border costs 2 points to add. If adding a trapping would mean spending 4 or more skill points on crossing lines, it only costs 4 points to get there, plus the cost of adding the trapping itself (e. g., to go from Physical Force to Dexterity costs 4 points, but you still have to pay another point to actually add Dexterity to the skill). If a trapping isn't connected by lines to any other trappings already in the skill, it doesn't cost anything extra to add. For example, Languages and Environment always only cost 1 point each, regardless of what other trappings the skill already has. Add the skill rating and apply Extras and Drawbacks for the total cost.



add. Information is free to add, since this is a Unique skill, but it's connected to Research (a solid box) by a thin line, so crossing to and adding it will cost 2 more points. So far that's a total of 6 skill points (not including Networking, which, like Information, is free to add). To reduce the cost a bit, you choose to throw in a Minor Complication aspect of "Too Smart for His Own Good," which lowers the skill point cost for the trappings down to 5. Adding that to the skill's rating of Good (+3) gives you a total of cost you 8 points: 6 + 3 - 1 = 8.

There's only one universal restriction on how Unique and Strange skills are built: **All trappings in the skill must fit the skill's theme. No exceptions.**

POWER TIER AND REFRESH

The skill's Power Tier reduces your Refresh, as indicated below.

- **Mundane Tier:** -0 Refresh
- **Extraordinary Tier:** -1 Refresh
- **Superhuman Tier:** -2 Refresh
- **Ascendant Tier:** -4 Refresh
- **Godlike Tier:** -6 Refresh

Again, if the skill doesn't derive from a character's Strangeness, it can't exceed the Extraordinary Tier.

Returning to the Oxford Professor example above, let's make the character one of the greatest professors in the annals of Oxford's long and storied history. Instead of a Mundane Tier skill, it's now an Extraordinary Tier skill (-1 Refresh). Assuming the game is set in the Middle Century, the character's Refresh would be reduced from its default starting value of 8 down to 7.

Let's try a Strange skill now. Maybe our bespectacled academic also happens to have the strength of a hundred men, with a bulletproof body to match. Judging by the trapping summaries, this sounds like Physical Force, Resist Damage, and Stress Capacity [Health]. On the diagram, we'll start with Resist Damage, for 2 skill points. That's chained to Stress Capacity [Health] by a thin line, which means 1 point to cross; Stress Capacity [Health] has a dotted border, so it'll cost another 2 points to add. So far we're at 5 skill points. Crossing the dotted line to Physical Force costs 2 points, and then adding it costs one more, so our new total is 8 skill points.

We need a Drawback to go with that. Maybe accessing this ability means the good professor has transform from his usual 11 stone to a massive brute—that sounds fun. We give him a Drawback of Minor Transform, which lowers the cost



One Unique Skill vs. Three Common Skills

When considering whether or not to create a Unique skill for your character, you may run the numbers and come to the conclusion that it'd be cheaper to take a few common skills—and get more trappings in the bargain. You're certainly welcome to go that route, but first take the following practical considerations into account:

1. If you aren't able to take all of those common skills at the same skill rating, not all of them will be rated as high as you might like. With a Unique skill, you'll be equally effective with all the trappings you wanted in the first place.
2. If you want those skills to be in the Extraordinary Tier (see below), it'll cost you 3 Refresh. With a single Unique skill, it'll only cost 1 Refresh.
3. Run those numbers again—remember, Unique skills get Networking and Information cheap.
4. Perhaps most importantly, it's more fun to say "I'm rolling Archbishop of York" than "I'm rolling Bureaucracy."

of the skill by 1 point (it also means he has to replace one of his aspects with something more appropriate when he transforms, like swapping out "Respected Oxford Professor" for "Terrifying Hulking Brute"). Add to that the skill's rating of Good (+3), and the total skill point cost is 10. To make his strength and toughness truly impressive, we spend 2 Refresh to put that skill in the Superhuman Tier.

Invulnerabilities and Weaknesses also affect your Refresh:

- **Minor Invulnerability [Narrow Category]:** -1 Refresh
- **Major Invulnerability [Narrow Category]:** -2 Refresh
- **Minor Invulnerability [Broad Category]:** -2 Refresh
- **Major Invulnerability [Broad Category]:** -4 Refresh
- **Minor Weakness:** +1 Refresh
- **Major Weakness:** +2 Refresh

Skill Summary

1. What do you want the skill to do? This is the skill's theme.
2. Does the skill represent some sort of supernatural power?
   - *Yes:* It's a Strange skill. Continue to step 3.
   - *No:* It's not a Strange skill. Continue to step 3.
3. Is what you want the skill to do adequately represented by a common skill?
   - *Yes:* Just use the common skill instead of building one. Skip to step 5.
   - *No:* You'll build a skill from scratch. Continue to step 4.
4. Go to the Skill Trapping Diagram. Follow the instructions given earlier to add trappings to the skill.
   - Every trapping you add to the skill must be appropriate to its theme.
   - If it's a Unique skill, Information and Networking are free to add (except for crossing lines).
5. Apply Extras to the skill's trappings, as desired.
   - Extras increase the skill's cost.
6. Apply Drawbacks to the skill, as desired.
   - Drawbacks decrease the skill's cost. The minimum cost of a skill is its rating.
   - Every Strange skill has to have at least one Drawback. (See step 8.)
   - Common skills in the Mundane Tier cannot have Drawbacks.
   - Unique skills in the Extraordinary Tier or above must have either a Conviction aspect or a Complication aspect. This is optional for Unique skills in the Mundane Tier. (See step 8.)
7. Determine the new total cost of the skill and pay skill points for it.
8. Set the skill's Power Tier and pay Refresh for it accordingly.
   - If the skill's Power Tier is Superhuman or higher, it's automatically a Strange skill. Go back to step 6, if necessary.
   - If it's a Strange skill, the Power Tier can be as high as Godlike.
   - If it's a Unique skill, the Power Tier can be either Mundane or Extraordinary.

The Common Skills



Here's how the common skills are defined using this method. Beneath the name of each is its theme(s) (in italics) and associated trappings. The skill point cost of a common skill is always equal to its skill rating.

ACADEMICS

Broad-based formal education

Information, Research, Languages

ALERTNESS

Reflexive awareness

Notice, Initiative [Physical]

ARMS

Proficiency with hand-to-hand weapons of all kinds

Strike, Strike + Range, Parry, Information

ART

Artistic knowledge and ability

Craft, Repair, Information, Inspire, Networking

ATHLETICS

Physical fitness and mobility

Climb, Dodge, Leap, Move, Move + Unusual: Swimming

BRAWN

Muscular strength

Physical Force

BUREAUCRACY

Corporate and political etiquette and finesse

Networking, Information, Convince, Influence, Esteem

BURGLARY

Breaking and entering

Examine, Security, Information

CONTACTING

Social circles, rumors and gossip

Esteem, Networking, Influence, Initiative [Social], Treatment [Social]

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Practical arts, mechanics

Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information

DECEIT

Deceptive speech or appearance, sleight of hand

Guile, Disguise, Dexterity

DRIVE

Mechanical ground vehicle operation and knowledge

Transport, Information

EMPATHY

Ability to assess and understand people

Insight, Initiative [Mental], Treatment [Mental]

ENDURANCE

Physical stamina and toughness

Stress Capacity [Health]



FISTICUFFS

Unarmed combat

Strike, Parry, Information

HORSEMANSHIP

Riding and knowledge of horses

Transport, Information, Treatment [Physical, Mental]

INTIMIDATION

Forceful persuasion

Menace, Initiative [Mental]

INVESTIGATION

Active perception

Examine, Information

MARKSMANSHIP

Proficiency with firearms and projectile weapons

Shoot + Range, Information

OCCULTISM

Knowledge of and proficiency with occult practices

Information, Networking, Research

PILOT

Flying vehicle operation and knowledge

Transport, Information

PRESENCE

Charisma, friendly persuasion, force of personality

Conversation, Convince, Inspire, Stress Capacity [Reputation]

RESOLVE

Mental fortitude, self-discipline

Willpower, Stress Capacity [Composure], Initiative [Mental]

RESOURCES

Access to personal assets

Wealth

SCIENCE

Formal education in theoretical and applied sciences

Craft, Information, Research, Treatment [Physical]

SEAMANSHIP

Watercraft operation and knowledge

Transport, Environment, Information

STEALTH

Moving silently, hiding

Hide, Skulk

SURVIVAL

Outdoorsiness

Information, Environment [Wilderness], Treatment [Physical]

Trapping Descriptions

The trappings listed below are in the following format:

NAME

Description and rules.

Theme: The trapping must be appropriate to this theme.

Tier Benefits: Special benefits available if the skill's Power Tier is above Mundane. A single skill can confer a number of these, chosen when the skill's Power Tier is purchased, equal to its skill rating.

CLIMB

Use Climb to determine how quickly or well a character can navigate movement on a vertical surface. However, not every encounter with a wall, tree, or fence is going to necessitate a skill roll. If failure isn't interesting, don't bother: Either the character can climb it, if that's what would make the story more interesting, or he can't, if it's just impossible.

Generally speaking, physical barriers are fairly meaningless, story-wise, unless another conflict is imminent (or ongoing). The barrier itself should be something that complicates the scene, but usually shouldn't be its focus. Instead of requiring a skill roll, assign the barrier a border value to increase the cost of passing from one zone (the bottom) to another (the top). If the border value is equal to or less than the rating of the skill with this trapping, the character can cross it freely. Otherwise, the character takes the difference as a penalty to his next action.

For example, a character needs to climb a wall to disable a ticking time-bomb on the roof. The character's Athletic skill (which includes the Climb trapping) is Good (+3), while the border value of the wall is 4. This means the character will take a -1 penalty to his bomb-disabling skill roll.

In the event that a roll is necessary—that is, if failing to make the climb would be just as interesting as making it—then the base difficult depends on the height of the climb. This is further complicated by factors such as visibility, slipperiness, and distractions, which penalize the roll.

Climbing Modifiers

Mod.	Slipperiness	Visibility	Distractions
-1	Wet, slick	Darkness, rain	Non-threatening
-2	Completely smooth	Pitch black	Threatening

These modifiers are cumulative by category. For example, climbing a 15' wall (+2 difficulty) at night (-1) in the rain (-1) while being shot at from below (-2) would have a total difficulty of Fair (+2) but a penalty of -4 to the roll. The interesting consequence of failure here, obviously, would be having to engage with those unpleasant gunmen below.

Shifts can also be spent to climb faster at a rate of 1 shift per step on the Time Table (see **Time and Space**), to a maximum of 4 steps.

Theme: Movement or athleticism.

Height	Difficulty	Notes
Short	Fair (+2)	10' to 20'
Medium	Great (+4)	20' to 40'
Long	Great (+4) (E)	40' to 100'
Extreme	Great (+4) (S)	Is that a house?

CONVERSATION

The Conversation trapping covers friendly social interaction, especially if that interaction involves making a good impression on someone else. It's also the "default" social trapping, for those times when whatever the player's trying to do doesn't fall neatly into any other trapping. The primary function of Conversation is to make a good first impression on someone else, improve their attitude toward you, or gain a temporary social advantage over them with an aspect maneuver.

By default, an NPC's initial reaction toward a character will be mildly negative, neutral, or mildly positive. Stronger

attitudes, such as love, hate, friendliness, respect, and so on, generally result from deeper, pre-existing knowledge of the character, and are unlikely to change dramatically in a first meeting. If the GM's uncertain about which of these applies, roll a Fudge die: ⊟ for mildly negative, ■ for neutral, and ⊞ for mildly positive.

If the player doesn't want to accept this reaction roll, she can attempt to turn on the charm and improve upon it. Make an opposed skill roll; if the rating of the NPC's relevant skill is unknown, it defaults to Mediocre. A successful roll in either the character's favor or the NPC's favor adjusts the NPC's attitude; a successful roll with spin adjusts it even further, as shown below.

Hostile: The NPC actively wants to harm the character, physically, socially, or otherwise.

Negative: The NPC is suspicious of the character and will not help him.

Neutral: If offered an incentive, the NPC can be convinced to help the character.

Positive: The NPC will go slightly out of his way to help the character. With incentive, the NPC may risk himself to help in a passive manner, such as "forgetting" to have the character sign in, turning a blind eye at an important moment, or the like.

Friendly: The NPC will inconvenience himself to help the character. With incentive, the NPC may risk himself to help in an active manner, such as distracting a pursuer, discreetly slipping the character a sought-after key, and so on.

Aspect: The winner gets to declare a sticky aspect on the NPC to emphasize his super-Friendly or ultra-Hostile attitude, as appropriate.

It's important to consider the potential consequences of an NPC's reactions to characters. Maybe they'll give them a little extra help that could translate into a bonus on a skill check, or maybe, if their reaction is Hostile, they'll turn up later as an enemy—possibly a significant one.

Theme: Social prowess, deception, persuasion, diplomacy.

CONVINCE

A skill with the Convince trapping can be used to talk someone else into (or out of) taking action. This is essentially a Mental conflict, but it shouldn't be a poor man's mind control (though with the Psychic Extra, it can be used for actual mind control; see the Psychic Extra description for details). With a solid argument or proper incentive, a person can be convinced to do something they might do anyway, but successful use of the skill can't make someone, say, leap off a cliff to their death, or give the character all of their worldly possessions, or suddenly turn on their master after a lifetime of unwaveringly loyal servitude. However, convincing someone to talk instead of fight, to part with a few pounds, or grant you an audience with the Queen are all within reason, given the right circumstances.

The skill can be used as part of a quick contest to sway the opinion of a minor NPC, or an extended contest, complete with Composure stress and Mental consequences, until one party acquiesces by being Taken Out or making a concession. If the contest is actually two parties trying to influence a third party, such as a public debate, it could be an extended contest (see the Doing Things section in *Chapter 7: Running The Game*). It's up to the GM and players to frame the conflict in whatever way makes the most sense.

Compare this trapping with both Conversation and Guile. If the skill is about being well-liked and making friends everywhere you go, take the Conversation trapping. If it's about tricking people into liking or believing you based on half-truths (or worse), the Guile trapping is your best bet. But if the skill's theme involves being diplomatic or persuasive, use this trapping.

Theme: Force of personality, diplomacy, articulate speech.

	Character's Favor		NPC's Favor	
Initial Attitude	**Success**	**Spin**	**Success**	**Spin**
Hostile	Negative	Neutral	–	Aspect
Negative	Neutral	Positive	Hostile	Aspect
Neutral	Positive	Friendly	Negative	Hostile
Positive	Friendly	Aspect	Neutral	Negative
Friendly	–	Aspect	–	–

CRAFT+

With this trapping, the skill can be used to create permanent, physical works consistent with the skill's theme. This includes building mechanical devices, painting portraits, writing poetry, constructing a violin, and any other task whose end result is the creation of something new. Most of the time, this is something that requires the proper tools, materials, and time more than it does a skill roll, simply because sitting around in a workshop or studio creating stuff generally lacks tension and conflict. You set that workshop on fire, though, or surround that studio with two-dozen angry Frenchmen, and it's a whole other story.

"The proper tools and materials" usually means having access to a proper facility (see the Workspace trapping). The rating of the facility needed is based on the quality of the work to be created or the cost of its materials (see the Wealth trapping), as appropriate to the work. For example, crafting an intricate piece of Strange technology like an electro-static discharge cannon would be an expensive endeavor requiring costly tools and materials, so the quality of the Workspace would be commensurate with its cost. Composing a soul-shattering poem, however, has no appreciable cost in materials, so the difficulty would be judged according to its desired quality (which, one would hope, would be high). A character who needs but lacks a sufficient facility to complete his work must either acquire one or borrow one from someone else.

The default time required is A Day (see the Time Table in **Time and Space**, page 318), plus a number of steps up on the Time Table equal to the device's quality. If the rating of the skill with this trapping is less than the device's quality, increase the time required by +1 step on the Time Table for every point of difference.

Of course, this process can be sped up with a skill roll, at a rate of 1 step on the Time Table per shift spent, to a maximum of 4 steps for 4 shifts.

Technological devices present some special challenges. Unless the device is a Strange skill with the Focus Flaw (see **Extras and Drawbacks,** page 230), its quality is equal to twice the number of its improvements; see the Equipment Gift.

The quality of a device represented by a skill is equal to the skill's total cost in skill points (skill rating plus total trapping value, less Drawbacks), and its Power Tier is the same as the skill's. For example, crafting a Fair (+2) Personal Aero-Platform (E) with the Move trapping (1 point), an Extra of Unusual: Flight (+1 point), and the Minor Focus Drawback (-1 point) would be a task with a Good (+5) difficulty (2 + 1 + 1 – 1) in the Extraordinary Tier, which would require an Extraordinary Tier Workspace to attempt.

If the device is represented by multiple skills, make a separate roll for each one. For example, creating a suit of steam-powered armor represented by the Strange skills Good (+3) Exoskeleton (S) (4 points in trappings) and Fair (+2) Wings (E) (3 points in trappings) would be a task requiring two skill rolls: one with a difficulty of Epic (+7) (S) and another with a difficulty of Superb (+5) (E).

Improvements made to an existing device generally don't last from session to session, so if you want to start play with a device, make it a Strange skill with the Focus Flaw, or buy one or more Equipment Gifts to reflect it. With that in mind, if the pacing of the game is such that the players have time to hang out in a workshop for a few days, that's probably a sign that the threat facing them isn't urgent enough.

When taking this trapping to represent artistic ability, consider whether the Inspire trapping would be more accurate. If the primary function of works you want to create is to impress onlookers, readers, or listeners, Inspire is probably a better choice. This trapping is best for artistic works whose utility goes beyond aesthetics, such as a clever forgery of a "lost" Michelangelo.

If the skill is in the Extraordinary Tier or above, it can be used, along with a sufficient Workspace (if appropriate), to craft works of the same Power Tier. The character must pay Fate Points equal to the Power Tier's Refresh cost—1 Fate Point for an Extraordinary Tier work, 2 for a Superhuman Tier work, and so on—in addition to whatever Fate Points the character might spend on invoking aspects as part of the crafting process. If the work comprises multiple skills, the Fate Point cost must be paid for each skill's Power Tier separately. These works last for the duration of the story or until destroyed or dismantled.

Theme: Any sort of creativity, such as artistic or

Attention, Control Freaks

You may notice there's no trapping called Control or Manipulate Elements or anything like that. So how do you make your fire-control guy? It's simple: Most "control" functions are just messing with aspects, and any skill can be used for an aspect declaration or maneuver. Want to create fire? Use your Fire Control skill to declare an aspect of "On Fire." Want to make it bigger? An aspect maneuver will turn "On Fire" into "Raging Inferno." Want to put it out? Another aspect maneuver will remove it altogether.

Mind control works similarly; see the Psychic Extra description for details.

mechanical aptitude.

Extraordinary Tier: Once per story, the player may spend a Fate Point to have the character spontaneously reveal a previously undisclosed work appropriate to the skill's theme or add an improvement to an existing piece of equipment for one scene. Treat this work as a piece of Equipment with two improvements (see **Gifts**, page 244).

Superhuman Tier: Once per session, the player may spend a Fate Point to give the character a theme-appropriate work (a piece of Equipment with two improvements, as above) or add *two* improvements to an existing piece of Equipment that last for one scene.

Ascendant Tier: The player may spend a Fate Point once per session to give the character a theme-appropriate work (a piece of equipment with three improvements) *or* add two improvements to an existing piece of Equipment that last for the rest of the session.

DEXTERITY

A skill with the Dexterity trapping reflects the character's ability to pick pockets, palm small objects, perform magic tricks, and do nearly anything else that requires fine manual control. This makes Dexterity a pretty broad trapping, but enough of its applications are similar that it's just easier to collect them all under the same umbrella.

Attempting to pick a target's pocket, or steal something from the target without being noticed by the target, is an opposed skill roll. You suffer a -2 penalty on this roll.

Most other applications of Dexterity will entail rolling the skill, with the result setting the difficulty for an onlooker's skill roll to see where the key went, how the card trick works, what you did with his pocket watch, and so on.

Theme: Subterfuge, thievery, coordination.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): You may pay a Fate Point to use the Dexterity trapping of this skill as a free action.

DISGUISE

A skill with the Disguise trapping lets the character appear to be someone other than herself. Use this skill in an opposed roll (usually using the Examine trapping) against any active attempts to penetrate the disguise. The extent of this trapping's effects is dependent upon what props are available, and won't normally hold up to intense scrutiny using investigation. In these cases, obtaining shifts on the opposing skill roll mean that the attempt at Disguise has failed. This takes time, though—generally a few minutes by default, and only once per scene. Casual inspection uses the Notice trapping against a target number equal to this skill's rating, but can be attempted as a free action once per scene.

Disguises generally hold up until the worst possible moment. The trick when dealing with disguises is less about when the opposition wins a roll and more about when the opposition is going to get close enough, and for *long* enough, to take a closer look with the Examine trapping. That's the trump card, and the way to play out tension in a scene with disguises is by making it clear such a roll may be lying in wait.

If the character is disguised as a particular person, the GM may assign some hefty bonuses (+1 to +4) to an attempt to penetrate the disguise by someone who actually knows the person he appears to be.

If it's appropriate to the skill's theme, this trapping can instead be applied to things other than people, such as disguising a machine as some other sort of machine, or creating an illusion out of thin air. See the Range and Unusual descriptions in **Extras,** page 230.

Theme: Deception, illusion, social artistry.

Extraordinary Tier: When disguised as someone else, you gain an additional aspect to represent the veracity of your performance. If the disguise

isn't of anyone in particular—for example, a policeman, tradesman, or some other face in the crowd—choose an appropriate aspect that might be obvious to a casual onlooker. If the disguise is of a specific subject, and you've successfully assessed one of the subject's aspects, you gain that aspect (or one of them, if you've assessed more than one of their aspects) as long as you're disguised.

Superhuman Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as two aspects.

Ascendant Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as three aspects.

Godlike Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, except you gain as many as four aspects.

DISMANTLE

The opposite of the **Craft** trapping, the Dismantle trapping allows a skill to be used to "unmake" mechanical or technological devices. Given time and tools, the skill can also topple virtually any building or structure. In those circumstances, the character can use this trapping to deal damage to the target. By default, a device has 2 Health stress boxes; modify this by its quality as if it were a skill with the Stress Capacity trapping. A device "defends" against attacks using either its quality or the appropriate skill used by whoever is holding it, in the highest applicable Power Tier. See the **Focus Flaw** for more on this.

The Dismantle trapping can also be used to make assessments or declarations (see **Aspects**) about a device or structure. These can be offensive or defensive, depending on what the character is trying to accomplish. An especially well-built or unusually designed device or structure can mean an increased difficulty number.

Indirect attacks against people are also possible, such as setting up a bridge to collapse when someone walks across it (in which case the targets take damage from the resulting fall—see Falling in *Chapter 7: Running The Game*). Large or complex devices or structures, such as buildings or safes, are more accurately treated as consequential or extended contests (see Chapter 7), especially if such a task is the focus of a scene, session, or story.

All of the above applies to a relatively methodical approach to destroying inanimate objects. For a quicker, brute-force approach, see the Physical Force trapping.

Theme: Mechanical aptitude.

DODGE

The skill offers defense against any physical attack, whether a punch, a sword, or a bullet.

Theme: Movement or perception.

ENVIRONMENT [TYPE]

A skill with the Environment trapping can be used to navigate and survive in the specified type of environment. Types can vary widely, but the most common are Wilderness (generally a temperate wilderness), for outdoorsy types, and Urban, for your average street urchin. As a Strange skill, the limits are even broader—things like Environment (Space) and Environment (Subterranean) aren't out of the question.

The skill is typically rolled against a difficulty number set by the GM to forage for food, hunt game, withstand hostile conditions, or scrounge for useful items such as herbs or the cast-off detritus of an uncaring metropolitan society. The difficulty for finding something is based off how likely it is to be found and how interesting it will be to use. The base likelihood depends on the environment and what's being looked for.

Difficulty	Likelihood	Example
+0	Likely	Wood or vine in a forest, a discarded crust of bread in the streets of London
+3	Possible	Strong wood in a swamp, a shilling in the street
+5	Unlikely	Wood in a desert, a secret cache of liquor behind a loose brick
Add'l +1	–	Each additional search criterion

Each qualifying criterion increases the difficulty by +1.



Thus, if a character needs sticks in a forest, the difficulty is Mediocre (+0), but if he needs sticks of a certain size and strength (two criteria) the difficulty is Fair (+2). Trying to build something in the environment, like a trap, is a use of the Craft trapping, but is modified by this skill.

Theme: Expertise in, experience with, or knowledge of the chosen environment.

Extraordinary Tier: The chosen Environment may be any type found on Earth that stretches the bounds of reality, such as the Earth's core or the Lost World of Roraima.

Superhuman Tier (or better): The chosen Environment may be completely disconnected from Earth altogether, such as Mars, outer space, or an alternate plane of existence.

ESTEEM

The skill defends against social attacks, from slanderous rumors to embarrassing truths.

Theme: Popularity, standing in society.

EXAMINE

Examine is the trapping of sustained, intense study of a place, person, or thing. When searching for something specific, the difficulty of the skill roll should be kept at Mediocre (+0), with the shifts on the result being used as a yardstick for how long it takes to find the thing. The only exception to this is if the GM has a reason the thing in question shouldn't be found. In those situations, it's often better to just make the thing unfindable due to a critical missing piece that would "unlock" access to the otherwise unfindable objective. In these cases, don't even bother with the roll—rather, the GM should just put the character on the path to discovering that missing piece. This missing piece could be equipment, like a key, or the utterance of a magic password. Once that's in place, the difficulty should drop back to the usual level.

If characters are just searching an area for clues, the guidelines for Notice apply. Set the base difficulty at Mediocre (+0), and make sure that characters can find *something*. Once they do, the burden is on the GM to make sure that whatever they find suggests a distinct course of action.

As the GM, when in doubt about how difficult a piece of information

should be to find, aim low. The players' failure to find a clue should never derail the game. It may seem like it makes life less interesting if there is no challenge in the skill roll, but this is one of those odd situations where that is not the case. A lack of information is clearly frustrating to players, and if you have a player who really savors the challenge of figuring out clues, the challenge is usually less in finding the clues than in figuring out what they mean once they're found. And there's the rub: Clues don't come with explanations baked right in. Position your mystery in the clues they find, not in the clues they don't. Remember, unless there's something actually there to be found, no roll is necessary.

The specifics of how this trapping works is highly dependent on context and the skill's theme. Regardless, a skill with the Examine trapping is especially well-suited to making declarations appropriate to its theme. For example, as part of a skill themed around detective work, the character could assert minor details about a crime scene, then back them up with a successful roll. Similarly, as part of a skill with an outdoor-survival theme, Examine could be used to track footprints. As a trapping in a skill called Mental Telepathy, it could be used in an opposed roll to read the subject's surface thoughts. And so on.

Theme: Sensory or extra-sensory perception.

GUILE

Use the Guile trapping to tell lies without getting caught. For simple deceptions, such as bluffing one's way past a guard, a simple opposed skill roll is all that is necessary. For deeper deceptions, like convincing someone of something they believe to be false, a mental conflict is appropriate, complete with attacks and Mental consequences that reflect the falsehood the target now believes.

Even the most persuasive lie can only *suggest* a course of action, not compel one. At best, a character can suggest that a given course of action is in the target's best interest, but even if that's convincing, some people still won't take the bait if it violates their convictions. A skill with this trapping should never create behavior that is at odds with the basic nature of the target—an honest man won't be tricked into stealing, for example, though he may be tricked into holding stolen goods if he has no reason to think they're stolen.

A successful lie puts the target in a position where his own nature forces the decision that the liar wanted him to make. Mechanically, this works by compelling or tagging the associated consequence. A pacifist won't kill, unless he feels he has to do so to protect something more important than his pacifism. As such, a skill with the Insight trapping is a natural complement to a skill with this trapping, to give the character an idea of how to spin things.

In any case, this is not a huge problem when the Guile trapping is used on NPCs, though under no circumstances should it become a poor man's mind control. When *player characters* are taken out by a Guile attack, however, it's important to remember that though they may believe something false to be true now, it should not change their essential nature.

Theme: Deception, subterfuge, social artistry.

HIDE

A skill with the Hide trapping is one of not being seen. When a character is hiding, she's remaining perfectly still and (hopefully) out of sight. Lighting, obstacles, and other environmental factors can affect the player's roll, and the result of the skill roll is the difficulty for the searcher to find her (using a skill with either the Notice trapping or the Examine trapping). When someone is searching you can usually assume they'll do logical things like turn on the lights and check behind the curtains. Assuming such action is possible, the searcher receives a +2 bonus to his skill roll. This means that if a stealthy character is ever in a position where people are actively searching for her, she's in a lot of trouble. That usually requires that the character was spotted or somehow set off an alarm—which, if she's doing her job, she wasn't, and didn't.

For example, consider a character hiding in a storeroom. If a guard opens the door, shines a lantern in, and looks around, it's just a quick skill roll (reason, perhaps, but not time), and the character can probably stay hidden. If the guard brings in several other lantern-bearing guards and they all start methodically going through the room, hiding is much, much more difficult—they've imposed some penalties, and they have both reason and time.

The good news is that this sort of searching is usually

obvious, so when the guards start looking, it's the player's cue to act now or give up her chance at surprise.

Environmental conditions can have a significant effect on a character's ability to hide and remain hidden, as shown on the table below.

Mod.	Environment
+4	Pitch black, no visibility
+2	Darkness, smoke, thick fog, no clear line of sight
+1	Noisy distractions
+0	Dim lighting, cluttered line of sight, moderate noise
-1	Complete silence
-2	Good lighting, clear line of sight
-4	Bright lighting, clear area

If you're not certain how to handle something, treat it as a half step. For example, if a character is hiding in the dark from guards holding torches, reduce the bonus to only +1.

Theme: Stealth, subterfuge, environmental familiarity.

Extraordinary Tier: Normally, moving and Hiding don't mix, but if the skill is in this Tier the character may move 1 additional zone without automatically giving herself away.

Superhuman Tier (or better): The character may move any number of zones without affecting her ability to remain unseen.

INFLUENCE

Putting the Influence trapping on a skill enables it to be used for public attacks on a person's character—slander, libel, and all other modes of reputation-ruining. Influence attacks deal Reputation stress and Social consequences.

In some respects, this trapping is very similar to the Networking trapping, in that both make use of rumors, gossip, and public perception to accomplish something. However, while Networking can be used to gather information and declare details and aspects, a skill with the Influence trapping is the character's ability to leverage her social connections to directly harm someone else's public image.

Theme: Social influence, status.

INFORMATION

This trapping lets the character answer questions related to the skill's theme. Sometimes this will mean making a skill roll to see how much information the GM is able to impart, but having the skill at all means the character is at least relatively well-versed enough in the subject matter to know something. For example, the Academics skill has this trapping, which lets a character use it to learn information that could be gained from a formal education; a Unique skill called Underworld with this trapping could be used to gain information about people, places, things, or events related to the Under Class.

When setting a difficulty for a Knowledge roll, the best yardstick is the obscurity of the knowledge sought as it relates to the relevant circle of society (i.e., if Academics, the circle will be scholars; in the case of the Underworld example above, the circle would be the Under Class).

Difficulty	Degree of Obscurity
Mediocre (+0)	Common knowledge ("The Tower Gang are criminals.")
Average (+1)	Widespread knowledge ("The Tower Gang are all Strangers.")
Fair (+2)	Specialized knowledge ("Big Hand and Little Hand are related.")
Good (+3)	Esoteric knowledge ("Ben Bell is smarter than he looks.")
Great (+4)	Very esoteric knowledge ("Little Hand is really Big Hand's sister.")
Fantastic (+6)	Secret knowledge ("Ben Bell is the real brains of the Tower Gang.")
Legendary (+8) (E)	Private knowledge (The origins of each member of the Tower Gang.)
Divine (+10) (S) or more	Lost knowledge (The true face of The Face.)

Note that despite these suggested difficulties and examples, if the GM decides that a piece of information simply can't be known, because it was never recorded or for whatever reason, not even a Divine (+10) Academics effort can uncover it. That's what adventures are for.

Wait, What's to Stop Me From Gaming This System?

Not a thing. If you want to produce the most effective character for the least number of points, then inventing a Unique or Strange skill with a vaguely broad theme and stuffing it with as many trappings as possible—or just 20 Variable trappings—is a good way to do it.

The goals of this system are threefold. First, it's intended to let you get *exactly* the character you want to play by letting you define the precise areas of expertise, influence, and experience your character has. Second, it is intended to make skills and mundane experiences really, really interesting. Superpowers are fantastic, but leading your own cult, knowing how to mix herbal remedies, or holding public office can be fantastic, too. Finally, it's intended to allow you to indulge your creativity in the same way that aspects do. Even with no Strange skills at all, this system should allow you to really put your mark on a character.

And what kind of boor would want to spoil such a marvelous bit of starry-eyed game-design idealism? Not you, I say!

Theme: Anything related to academia, the intellect, any sort of science, expertise, or formal education.

INITIATIVE [SCOPE]

A skill with the Initiative trapping is used to determine order of actions in a conflict of the appropriate scope. When this trapping is purchased, choose one scope: Physical, Mental, or Social.

The highest-Tier skill with the Initiative trapping automatically acts first in a conflict of its scope. For example, if the conflict involves three characters with Initiative trappings in the Mundane Tier and one with an Initiative trapping in the Superhuman Tier, the Superhuman-Tier character will act first. In the case of multiple characters with an Initiative-trapping skill in the same Tier, make an opposed skill roll between them to determine who acts first.

Theme: Sensory or extra-sensory perception of the appropriate scope.

INSIGHT+

Adding Insight to a skill lets the character use it to assess another character's aspects. This is an opposed roll vs. the Willpower trapping. Before the roll, the "attacker" states what sort of aspect she's looking for, usually by subject matter (an emotion, a relationship, the character's past, etc.). If the "attacker" gets 2 shifts or fewer, she learns an aspect of the defender's choice. If she gets 3 shifts or more, she learns the aspect that most closely matches the information she seeks. This process usually takes about Half an Hour (see the Time Table in **Time and Space**, page 318); by spending excess shifts, the character can reduce the time required at a rate of 1 step per shift spent (to a minimum of One Minute).

Theme: Social prowess, psychic ability.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Mental attacks that would benefit from this skill's Insight trapping deal additional Composure stress—Weapon 1 [Composure] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Composure] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Empathy (S) would deal +2 Composure stress when using Intimidation.

INSPIRE

With this trapping, the skill can be used to have an emotional effect on a group of listeners. Examples include an actor delivering a soliloquy, a commander barking a speech at his troops before battle, and a satirical poet performing in Hyde Park. With a successful roll, the character can declare a scene aspect limited to the mood and emotional impact of his speech. The difficulty of the task starts at Good (+3) by default, and certain existing circumstances can act as penalties to the skill roll, as indicated on the table below.

These penalties are cumulative, so trying to change the mood of two armies engaged in a pitched battle would carry a total penalty of -8 to the skill roll.

An aspect put on a scene using the Inspire trapping describes its general mood, which is important to keep in mind for more than just invocations and compels. For instance, if the mood of a scene is "Somber," then that's likely to have a general effect on NPC behavior, just like a scene with a "Dark" aspect would obscure vision.

It's also worth remembering that the mood of a group offers a secondary opportunity for compels and other complications. If the mood of the room is somber, and a player fails to act in accordance with the mood, others will probably respond badly to them—for example, reading The Illustrated Police News during a funeral. This is one of the few instances when it might be reasonable to compel a character using a scene aspect instead of a character aspect.

Theme: Performance, wit, speechifying.

Circumstance	Notes	Mod.
Existing mood	The room has an existing mood, and you're trying to add another.	-1
Changing a mood	The room has an existing mood, and you're trying to change it (either by design, or because it's actively contradictory to the desired mood).	-3
Distractions	A noisy room or other activities that make it hard to focus on the performance.	-1
Major Distractions	A large, active area with many distractions that requires active effort to pay attention to the performance, such as a busy marketplace.	-3
Total Distractions	There's no reason for anyone to be paying attention to the performance, such as on a battlefield.	-5

LANGUAGES✚

The character knows a number of languages (in addition to his own) equal to the skill's rating. These languages can be currently spoken, such as German or Mongolian, or dead languages, such as Sanskrit or spoken Archaic Egyptian. Normally, these languages must be from Earth, but if it suits the character's background more "exotic" languages can be chosen instead. For example, the Lost Jupiterian, from Jupiter, knows Jupiterian. The player can decide on these all at once, or define them as needed during the course of play.

Theme: Intellect, formal education, or general wordliness.

Extraordinary Tier: The character knows an additional five languages as described above. These can be defined during play or chosen in advance.

Superhuman Tier: As the Extraordinary Tier, plus a number of "exotic" languages, such as High Aklo, Atlantean, or Venusian, equal to the skill rating.

Ascendant Tier : The character knows all languages used on Earth, mortal or otherwise, living or dead, plus a number of exotic languages equal to the skill rating. In addition, the character may spend a Fate Point to add any language which she could've reasonably encountered to her list of known languages.

Godlike Tier: As Ascendant Tier, plus the character may spend a Fate Point to add any language to her list of known languages, even if there's no way she could've ever encountered it before.

LEAP✚

A skill with the Leap trapping can be used to determine how far the character can jump. For most characters, of course, this is closely associated with the Move trapping, but it's been split off here to account for characters whose jumping prowess has nothing to do with how quickly they can cover ground. For example, a super-strong character might not be able to sprint quickly, but his prodigious muscles might enable him to leap Big Ben in a single bound.

Adjudicating such leaps, though, is an odd proposition. The act of jumping itself should be a complication to some other task, not the focus itself. Generally speaking, whether a jump "succeeds" should not be a binary pass/fail affair,

unless there's an interesting consequence attached to failure. "Plummeting to one's death" doesn't really fall in that category—immediate, unforgiving death-by-dumb luck isn't especially interesting for the player or the story. Instead, it often makes more sense to assign that pit, chasm, or cliff a high border value to increase the cost of passing from one zone (this side) to another (that side). If the border value is equal to or less than the rating of the skill with this trapping, the character can cross it freely. Otherwise, the character takes the difference as a penalty to her next action. See **Time and Space**, page 318, for more on zones and border values.

For example, let's say the character wants to jump from one rooftop to another to flying-kick her quarry. Her Athletics skill (which includes the Leap trapping) is +3, but the border value between her zone (one rooftop) and her enemy's (the other rooftop) is 4. Instead of rolling Athletics to see if she can jump, she just takes an additional –1 to her attack once she gets there.

Alternately, a "failed" skill roll can be interpreted as the character's sudden realization that she just can't jump that far, so she doesn't even attempt it. In this case, a failure just means having to find another way to the other side, especially if that's where the story is.

Naturally, it's entirely possible that there's something worth seeing at the bottom of that pit, in which case it makes total sense to roll. Here, you're rolling to see which of two possibilities the character encounters: Do they leap across the alley, or do they fall through the secret trapdoor in the street below?

Theme: Movement, athleticism, or physical strength.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): The character's ability to Leap is so impressive that he can cover great distances in the blink of an eye. For each Power Tier above Mundane, the character can move 1 zone as a Free Action, or ignore the equivalent border value between zones (border value of 1 at Extraordinary, 2 at Superhuman, etc.).

MENACE

The Menace trapping covers mental attacks, such as fear or intimidation. This is usually done as an opposed skill roll (versus a skill with the Willpower trapping). However,



these things don't occur in a vacuum—the target must have a *reason* to believe that the character is capable of harming them. If this isn't the case, and the attacker is outnumbered, imprisoned, bound to a chair, or at a similar disadvantage, the defender receives a +2 bonus to his skill roll.

As an attack, successful use of the Menace trapping inflicts Composure stress and Mental consequences. The trapping can also be used to perform an aspect maneuver on the defender.

Theme: Fear, intimidation, appropriate brands of social prowess.

MINIONS

A skill with this trapping can be used to call forth allies of some kind—functionaries, bodyguards, supernatural entities, or whatever else is appropriate to the skill's theme. By default, these allies must contacted by ordinary means, such as a messenger or a telegram, and arrive under their own power by conventional means. In some cases, this may preclude their arrival altogether, such as if you're trapped in a prison with no way to contact the outside world. To alter any of these parameters, take the Unusual Extra, once for each alteration (see **Extras and Drawbacks**). With a Fate Point and proper justification, the Minions can arrive more quickly than would otherwise be considered reasonable. Perhaps your operatives were already on the scene, blending with the crowd until needed, or maybe that crate over there just happens to contain a half-dozen of your Automechanical Arachnoids, waiting to be shipped out. Regardless, Minions cannot be called more than once per scene, and the allies generated by it disperse or disappear, as appropriate, once the scene is through.

Roll the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and spend the shifts obtained to produce your Minions. An Average-quality Minion ally costs 1 shift, a Fair-quality Minion ally costs 3 shifts, and a Good-quality Minion ally costs 5 shifts. All Minions must be of the same quality.

For 2 skill points, you get Simple Minions. Instead of giving them skills, simply assign scopes, Physical, Mental, or Social, according to their intended purpose within the scene. Treat the scope as a broad skill that covers a variety of mundane functions. An Average Minion has one scope at +1, a Fair Minion has one scope at +2 and one scope at +1, and a Good Minion has one scope at +3, one at +2, and one at +1. For twice the cost, 4 skill points, the character can call on Advanced Minions. These Minions can have full skill pyramids of one, three, or six skills: one Average (+1) skill for Average-quality Minions, two Average (+1) skills and one Fair (+2) skill for Fair-quality Minions, and so on, using skills instead of scopes. Advanced Minions are more customizable, but also require more attention from the player to implement.

See **Playing the Opposition** in *Chapter 7: Running the Game* for more information on Minions.

Minions cannot take consequences—once their stress track is exceeded, they're Taken Out. For a specific ally, such as an assistant or valet, use the **Companion Gift** (see **Gifts**).

Duplicates

This is a specialized form of the **Minions** trapping, one that can only be used to create copies of the character. The duplicates arrive instantly, however they're created; for "slower" duplicates, take a Flaw to that effect. Roll the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and spend shifts obtained to create duplicates. An Average-quality duplicate costs 1 shift, a Fair-quality duplicate costs 3 shifts, and a Good-quality duplicate costs 5 shifts. All duplicates must be of the same quality. The duplicates have one skill per rating available, as per their quality (for example, a Fair duplicate has one +2 skill and one +1 skill). Only Strange skills can have this trapping, and no duplicate can have a skill with the Duplicates trapping.

A duplicate's skills are limited to those belonging to the character, and no duplicate can have a skill rated higher than the character's equivalent skill. For duplicates that are radically different from the character, such as past and future versions of the same person, or duplicates called forth from alternate dimensions, use the Minions trapping instead.

Theme: Duplication, super-mitosis, space-time control.

A specialized form of this trapping, Duplicates, can be used to create clones or identical copies of oneself. See the sidebar for details.

Theme: Authority within an organization, social connections, sorcery.

Superhuman Tier: By rolling the skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (S), one of the Minions' scopes or skills can be upgraded to the Extraordinary Tier.

Ascendant Tier: As Superhuman Tier, but roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (A) to upgrade one of the Minions' scopes or skills to the Superhuman Tier, or two scopes or skills to the Extraordinary Tier.

Godlike Tier: As Superhuman Tier, but roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) (G) to upgrade one of the Minions' scopes or skills to the Ascendant Tier, one scope or skill to the Superhuman Tier and one other to the Extraordinary Tier, or three scopes or skills to the Extraordinary Tier.

MOVE

Use Move to determine how quickly or well a character can cover ground. By default, the mode of movement is walking or running. To change that to some other, weirder form of movement—flying, tunneling, etc.—use the Unusual Extra (see **Extras and Drawbacks**). Under normal circumstances, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action. See the Climb and Leap trappings for details on negotiating border values between zones.

Alternately, the skill can reflect the character's ability to operate a vehicle, such as a carriage, aero ship, tractor carriage, or automotive, or ride an animal, such as a horse or camel. Though these modes of transport obviously offer some advantages over walking or running, they're balanced (more or less) by the fact that they require specialized, expensive equipment, and/or animals, to use. A character who takes the Move trapping as part of such a skill automatically has (or has access to) an appropriate vehicle, as long as that vehicle's cost (see **Money**, page 72) is equal to or less than the skill's rating.

Theme: Movement, obviously—although how that movement is achieved, whether via muscle power or telekinetic flight or a vehicle, is wide open.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): The character's ability to Move is so impressive that he can cover great distances in the blink of an eye. For each Power Tier above Mundane, the character can move 1 zone as a Free Action (1 zone at Extraordinary, 2 at Superhuman, etc.).

NETWORKING

With the Networking trapping, the skill can be used to take advantage of a character's social contacts for the purposes of gathering information and spreading rumors. The extent of this, however, is limited by the character's aspects. Before rolling the skill, the player must cite (but not invoke) an aspect related to his social contacts. At the bare minimum, every character should be able to cite his Social Class aspect to rely on people he may know in his immediate social circle, or the World aspect "*Malum Necessarium*" to rely on other members of the Kerberos Club (assuming the character in question is a Kerberan). The aspect chosen will color the information received and limit its extent. For example, using this trapping with the Working Class aspect is unlikely to be useful (or at least reliable) if attempting to learn information or rumors about the aristocracy. In a way, Networking is the social equivalent of the Information trapping.

The process begins with a question—say, "Who's trying to kill me?" The player then describes where her character is going to talk to folks (usually "the street" or "the local tavern" or something else appropriate to the cited aspect), the GM sets the difficulty, and the player rolls her skill. If the skill roll fails, then the player can retroactively improve her roll by taking more time (see the **Time Table,** page 318). This takes an afternoon by default, and a +1 can be added to the roll for every additional step taken on the Time Table, up to +4 for four steps.

Regardless, a successful roll should always result in a clear course of action. If the character is being "shut out" for one reason or another, no amount of dogged persistence through time investment is going to help. When that happens, it usually means there's another problem the character needs to solve first.

Note that being the most informed guy and knowing all the latest gossip aren't necessarily one and the same.

Networking finds out what people know—and people always have their own biases and misconceptions. It rarely indicates the veracity of the information provided, save by the discovery that contradictory answers are coming from different sources. If a character wants to separate truth from lies, that's a more in-depth conversation, and may involve other skills.

Networking also keeps the character apprised of the general state of things, and acts as a sort of social **Notice**. It's far from foolproof, and the GM is usually the one to call for a roll. A player can't generally go out looking for a tip off, though he can tell the GM he's going out talking to his contacts "just to check" on what's up, which is a good hint that he'd *like* a tip off. If the resulting skill roll is at least a +0, the character catches wind of an interesting rumor. At +3, and every two shifts over that, the character learns an additional rumor, or more information on a previous rumor. For example, at +0 the character may learn that some upper-class toff has been asking questions about him; at +3, the character may also learn that the toff in question had a strong German accent.

This trapping is also useful for *planting* rumors in addition to ferreting them out. The player simply tells the GM what rumor he wants to plant and rolls the skill with the Networking trapping. If the subject of the rumor is a person, it's an opposed roll between the rumor-spreader and the target. If the subject of the rumor is something more general, such as "I hear the beer at the Ten Bells is poisonous," then the GM can use the standard declaration rules (see **Aspects**). The pervasiveness of the rumor depends on how many shifts are obtained on the roll, according to the table below.

The final effort is *also* the target for someone else's Networking roll to find out who's been spreading rumors, refute a rumor, or replace a rumor with another. When a player plants a rumor, the GM should consider it a mental bookmark. Assuming anything but a terrible roll, that rumor should resurface later in the game. What form it takes depends on the player's roll.

Theme: Social connections or politics, as per at least one of the character's aspects.

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Social attacks that would benefit from this skill's Networking trapping deal additional Reputation stress—Weapon 1 [Reputation] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Reputation] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Contacting (S) would deal +2 Reputation stress when using a skill with the Influence trapping.

Rumor Planting Table

Shifts Obtained	Result
0-2	The rumor earns passing mention (a fragile aspect).
3-5	Other people are passing around the rumor, maybe even back to the original character (a sticky aspect).
6-7	The rumor has spread far enough that someone (presumably the target) will do something in response to it.
8+	The rumor has spawned a number of alternate or embellished versions as well, all with the same thread running through them. Additional shifts may be used to speed up the rate at which the rumor spreads or help conceal who started it in the first place.

NOTICE

This trapping measures the character's passive level of perception. This includes spotting things without actively looking for them, such as a concealed door, an easily missed clue, or an assassin about to strike. (If the character is actively looking for something, use the Examine trapping.) The GM usually sets a difficulty for the Notice roll, and should provide an additional piece of information for every two shifts achieved. Whenever ambushed (see the Hide and Skulk trappings), a character may make one last Notice roll opposed by the attacker's Hide or Skulk trapping, whichever is appropriate, to see if he's actually surprised. If the roll succeeds, the character may use a skill to defend, with a -2 penalty on

the roll. If the Notice roll fails, the character's defense is +0.

Theme: Sensory or extra-sensory perception.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): The character's senses are so keen that she can defend normally even when surprised.

PARRY

The skill offers defense against hand-to-hand attacks.

Theme: Fighting ability, defense, or perception.

PHYSICAL FORCE

The skill measures the character's ability to exert physical force on an object. The source could be sheer muscle power, an exo-skeletal suit of armor, telekinesis, or whatever else makes sense with the skill's theme.

Characters have a default amount of weight they can lift or carry. Find the Power Tier of the skill with Physical Force, then compare that to the skill's rating. That's the maximum the character can lift and carefully handle or, if the skill's theme is related to the character's actual physical capability, move slowly with. If purely lifting without moving, treat the skill as if it were 2 steps higher. A character carrying something 4 steps below their listed maximum can move freely, but suffers a -1 to all physical actions for every weight increment over that. If the weight of the object is listed in a Tier below that of the character's skill, it can be carried freely and without penalty. If aided by equipment such as a pulley system, the character's Physical Force can be improved by as much as one Tier, at the GM's discretion.

This may seem like an awfully numbers-heavy approach for a game that generally shies away from such things, but when it comes to character strength, people generally like to have benchmarks. Plus, the weight a character can lift is a pretty accessible way to get a feel for how strong they are. At a +0 difficulty, a character can lift a medium-sized adult in the Mundane Tier, a large Siberian tiger in the Extraordinary Tier, a killer whale in the Superhuman Tier, a brachiosaurus—one of Her Majesty's, perhaps—in the Ascendant Tier, and a paddle-wheel steamship in the Godlike Tier. (Obviously, things get a little ridiculous for Physical Force in the Godlike Tier, but that's why it's called Godlike.)

To determine how far a character can throw something (or someone), roll your Physical Force against the rating (in the left-most column of the table below) of the object's weight. Successfully throwing the object 1 zone requires spending 1 shift plus a number of shifts equal to the object's Weight Factor (WF). The WF of a row remains the same regardless of the Tier. In other words, a 400-pound object has a WF of 3, as does a 1,500-pound object and a 32-ton object. (The difference is that throwing an object of a lower Tier lets the player swap out Fudge dice for d6s.) Every additional zone costs as many shifts as the previous one did, plus one, so it gets progressively harder to throw an object multiple zones. In no case can a character lift, carry, or throw an object whose weight is above the maximum for the skill's Tier.

If throwing an object whose weight is in the Mundane column using a skill whose Power Tier is higher than Mundane, treat it as if you were rolling against an opponent's Mundane skill.

For example, a character with Good (+3) Physical Force (Mundane) can lift and carry a 50-pound object without penalty, or a medium-sized adult (150 pounds) at a -1 penalty to his physical actions. He can lift and stagger around with a 300-pound object at a -4 penalty to physical actions, and if he's just lifting something without moving (for instance, lifting a heavy gate), his maximum lift is 400 pounds, but he can't maintain that for long. He can try to lift something heavier by making a Physical Force roll, but under no circumstances can he even attempt to lift something heavier than 800 pounds unaided. If he wanted to throw a 50-pound sack of flour 2 zones, he'd need to make a Physical Force roll against a difficulty of -1 and get at least 4 shifts (1 for the object's weight, +1 for the first zone, and +2 for the second zone)—a total of +3.

If the character's Physical Force were instead Good (+3) (E), carrying 400 pounds would be only a -1 penalty to his physical actions. Throwing that sack of flour two zones would still require at least a +3, but now he gets to roll 3dF+1d6 instead of just 4dF. Needless to say, if he wants to throw it a little farther, odds are good that he can do it.

Theme: Strength or physicality. If a Strange skill, themes like psychic ability or elemental control are also options.

Physical Force	Weight Factor	Mundane Tier	Extraordinary Tier	Superhuman Tier	Ascendant Tier	Godlike Tier
-2	0	10 lbs.	100 lbs.	1,000 lbs.	8 tons	250 tons
-1	1	50 lbs.	200 lbs.	1,500 lbs.	16 tons	500 tons
+0	1	150 lbs.	400 lbs.	1 ton	32 tons	1,000 tons
+1	1	200 lbs.	600 lbs.	2 tons	64 tons	2,000 tons
+2	2	250 lbs.	800 lbs.	4 tons	125 tons	4,000 tons
+3	2	300 lbs.	1,000 lbs.	8 tons	250 tons	8,000 tons
+4	3	350 lbs.	1,250 lbs.	16 tons	500 tons	16,000 tons
+5	3	400 lbs.	1,500 lbs.	32 tons	1,000 tons	32,000 tons
+6	4	450 lbs.	1,750 lbs.	64 tons	2,000 tons	64,000 tons
+7	4	500 lbs.	2,000 lbs.	125 tons	4,000 tons	125,000 tons
+8	5	600 lbs.	2,250 lbs.	250 tons	8,000 tons	250,000 tons
+9	5	700 lbs.	2,500 lbs.	500 tons	16,000 tons	500,000 tons
+10	6	800 lbs.	5,000 lbs.	1,000 tons	32,000 tons	1M tons

Extraordinary Tier (or above): Physical attacks, armed or unarmed, that would benefit from this skill's Physical Force trapping have Weapon 1 per Tier over Mundane—Weapon 1 [Health] at Extraordinary Tier, Weapon 2 [Health] at Superhuman Tier, and so on. This skill and the skill used to attack must be thematically related to receive this benefit. For example, a character with Brawn (S) would deal +2 Health stress when using Fisticuffs, but not Firearms or Strange skills such as Telekinesis or Earth Control.

REPAIR

A skill with the Repair trapping can be used to fix mechanical devices, given the right tools and enough time. For devices with stress tracks, the difficulty is equal to the quality of the device. It takes a Few Hours to remove stress or a Trifling consequence, a Day for a Middling consequence, and a Week for a Grievous consequence. For devices that don't have stress tracks or consequences, the difficulty is based on the monetary value of the device (see the Wealth trapping) or its quality (see the Craft trapping), whichever is higher.

Failure on a repair roll can be made up in a few ways, retroactively. First, each additional step longer on the **Time Table** (page 318) gives a retroactive +1 to the player's roll, up to a maximum of +4 for four steps on the table. Second, the device can be repaired within the usual timeframe, but the quality drops by one for every point shy of the target. Both methods may be combined; for example, a character can get a retroactive +3 to take two steps longer and drop the quality of the item by one. Degradation in item quality may mean that some of its special abilities are lost, if it has any. Subsequent efforts may be made to restore the item to its original quality, but those face a difficulty equal to the target quality, +1 for every two steps the current quality is below the target. Missing a restoration roll can only be made up by investing time, and the starting length of time on such efforts is usually a week.

If the GM agrees to it, a player may make a partial repair when falling just short of the target. In these cases, the consequence on the device being repaired is downgraded in severity, rather than being entirely removed. If the character misses the roll by one, he may opt to downgrade the consequence, regardless of its severity, to Trifling. If the character misses the roll by two, he may opt to downgrade the consequence one step, taking Grievous to Middling

and Middling to Trifling. If the consequence is Trifling in any of these cases, it is removed, but the device's appropriate stress track is filled.

Given a sufficient Workspace, the skill can be used to Repair devices whose Power Tier is at or below its own. For example, a Superhuman Tier skill with this trapping could fix Extraordinary or Superhuman Tier devices.

Theme: Mechanical aptitude.

RESEARCH

Used in conjunction with Information**,** this trapping lets the character take advantage of an appropriate Workspace, such as a library or laboratory, to aid in a skill roll to learn about the topic at hand. Where Information represents immediately accessible knowledge stored in the character's head, Research is knowledge gained from a more methodical approach. To use Research, take the margin of failure on an unsuccessful Information roll. This is the number of steps up on the **Time Table** (page 318) the character may take to turn that failure into a success. It's up to the GM to determine the default time required to conduct Research, but a good rule of thumb is Half an Hour.

The maximum obscurity of the information that can be obtained from a Workspace trapping is equal to its quality. See the Workspace trapping for more detail.

Theme: Anything related to academia, the intellect, any sort of science, expertise, or formal education.

RESIST DAMAGE

The Resist Damage trapping allows the skill to be used to defend against a physical attack not by avoiding the blow, but by being tough enough to just take it. However, this is only effective if the attacker's intent is to deal Health stress to the defender. Otherwise, treat the skill as if it had a rating +0 in the Mundane Tier. For example, if the attacker throws a dart at the defender, Resist Damage can be used to negate taking *damage* from the hit, but not to avoid the hit. If the dart actually conceals a homing beacon or a hallucinogenic poison, this trapping will not prevent the dart from finding its mark, or the poison from taking effect.

Theme: Physical toughness or strength.

SECURITY

The Security trapping is used to overcome or evaluate security systems, such as locks, tripwire alarms, or a deadfall trigged by a spring-loaded pressure plate. If multiple obstacles of this nature are encountered in the course of an infiltration attempt, all of them can be rolled into a single skill roll, or, if the infiltration itself is an important part of the story, they can each be treated individually, requiring a series of skill rolls to defeat. The difficulty of any such roll can be estimated according to the table below, or set by the skill roll of whoever set up the security measures in the first place, as the GM desires.

Most security measures require tools of some kind to disable, from ordinary lockpicks to more exotic implements for sophisticated safes or mechanical traps. Improvised tools, such as picking a lock with a bent piece of found wire, imposes a -2 penalty. Lacking any such tools doubles that penalty to -4, assuming the task can even be attempted at all.

As a rule of thumb, the default time required to defeat a Fair (+2) security measure is Half an Hour (see the **Time Table,** page 318), stepped up or down depending on the difficulty of the task. For example, the default time required to pick a lock of Average (+1) difficulty would be 15 Minutes, while cracking a safe of Good (+3) difficulty would default to An Hour. Shifts obtained on the roll can be spent to speed the process up at a rate of one step down on the Time Table per shift spent, to a maximum of 4 steps. Likewise, a failed roll can be mitigated by taking *more* time than the default, to a maximum for +4 to the result for 4 steps up on the Time Table.

The Security trapping is a good one to use for declarations and assessments when casing a potential target or anticipating the strengths or weaknesses of a security system.

Theme: Crime or law enforcement.

Difficulty	Example
Mediocre (+0)	A locked desk drawer, a petty thief's repository
Average (+1)	A securely-locked working-class home
Fair (+2)	The door of a middle-class shopkeeper
Good (+3)	The door of a jail cell
Great (+4)	The front door of an MP, a typical safe
Fantastic (+6)	The safe of an upper-class home, the front door of the Kerberos Club
Legendary (+8)	The vault of Queen Victoria's treasury

SHOOT

As Strike, but with the advantage of range—by default, the skill can be used against targets one zone away. For more distant attacks, use the Range Extra (see **Extras and Drawbacks**).

Theme: Offense.

SKULK

This trapping has a great deal in common with the Hide trapping, but is concerned with remaining silent while moving instead of remaining out of sight while stationary. Otherwise, the rules and modifiers presented in that trapping's description all apply here.

Theme: Stealth, subterfuge, environmental familiarity.

STRESS CAPACITY [SCOPE]

The Stress Capacity trapping modifies one of a character's stress tracks. Pick one when this trapping is chosen: Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], or Stress Capacity [Reputation]. The effect of the trapping depends on the rating of the skill: one additional stress box if the skill's rating is Average (+1), two additional boxes if it's Fair (+2) or Good (+3), and three more boxes if the skill's rating is Great (+4).

A skill with this trapping can also act as a limiting skill for long-term activity within its scope. See *Chapter 7: Running The Game* for more on limiting, modifying, and complementary skills.

Theme: Toughness, hardiness, or resilience appropriate to the scope of the trapping.

Extraordinary Tier: The skill provides Armor 1 for the chosen scope.

Superhuman Tier: The skill provides Armor 2 for the chosen scope. Additionally, the character can withstand an additional Trifling consequence of the chosen scope.

Ascendant Tier: The skill provides Armor 3 for the chosen scope. Moreover, the character can withstand an additional Trifling consequence of the chosen scope, and once per scene the character may clear a Trifling Consequence of the chosen scope as a free action.

Godlike Tier: As Ascendant Tier, but the skill provides Armor 4 for the chosen scope. The character also receives one additional Middling Consequence slot of the chosen scope.

STRIKE

The skill can be used to cause physical harm to others in a manner consistent with its theme. For example, as part of the Common skill Arms, the Strike trapping is used to attack with weaponry, while as part of the Fists Common skill it's about slugging your foe with your bare mitts. Strike can only be used against individuals in the same zone as the character. For ranged offense, see Shoot.

Theme: Offense.

TRANSPORT

A skill with this trapping is used to operate a mode of transportation, such as a horse, carriage, boat, or airship. The exact form of transportation this applies to depends on the skill's theme, but in general it should fall into one (and only one) of five broad categories: animal riding, animal-powered ground transportation, mechanical ground transportation, watercraft, or aircraft.

Normally, the skill only needs to be rolled when taking a risk, such as

driving at top speed through a crowded street, engaging in a chase, attempting a dangerous maneuver, running someone down, and so on. Otherwise, merely having a rated skill with this trapping is enough for competent, safe operation.

When a skill roll is required, however, it's generally made in conjunction with one of the animal's or vehicle's skills, such as Gallop or Handling. If rolling against a static difficulty number, look at each skill roll individually. If both succeed, the action is a success. If only the character's roll succeeds, the animal or vehicle takes Health stress equal to its margin of failure. If both rolls fail, things are bad; see **About the Town, About the Globe** on page 97 for more detailed information.

When using this skill to cover ground, a successful roll only indicates safe operation. Use the animal or vehicle's roll to determine how many zones are moved. No matter how good the rider, driver, or pilot, an animal or vehicle can only move as fast as it can move. To simulate pushing beyond its normal limits, put an aspect on the animal or vehicle using an aspect maneuver.

In a conflict, this trapping can be used to both attack and defend, although the animal's or vehicle's skills may have an effect as well, as described in **About the Town, About the Globe**.

Theme: Animal riding, vehicle operation.

TREATMENT [SCOPE]

Treatment is the trapping of making things better—the "meat" version of the Repair trapping. Depending on the scope chosen, the skill can be used in a medical capacity to treat injury, disease, poison, and so forth (the Physical scope), or it can be used to alleviate fear and restore confidence (the Mental scope), or repair a damaged reputation (the Social scope). In game terms, this means clearing stress boxes and consequences.

The difficulty involved depends on the severity of the situation. To clear stress boxes, roll this skill against a difficulty equal to the highest stress box filled; for every 2 shifts obtained, clear one stress box. Removing a Trifling consequence has a difficulty of Fair (+2). Reducing (not removing) a Middling consequence to Trifling, assuming the "patient" has a Trifling consequence slot to spare, has a difficulty of Great (+4). If this roll obtains spin, the consequence is removed altogether. Grievous consequences cannot be removed with Treatment—only time.

This trapping should generally represent a "downtime" use of the skill, as opposed to something the character can do in the heat of the moment or the press of battle. Clearing stress and Trifling consequences is the exception to this—think of it as the first aid equivalent of the chosen scope—but this cannot be attempted more than once per character per scene.

Treating a Middling consequence may, depending on circumstance, require a Workspace, or at least the proper environment. For example, removing a Middling Physical consequence may necessitate medical equipment, while a couple hours down at the local may be just the thing to clear a Middling Mental consequence.

Theme: Varies widely, depending on the chosen scope, but in general the theme should be able to comfortably cover reducing trauma or injury in yourself or others.

Extraordinary Tier: Ordinarily, attempting to reduce or remove a Middling consequence is something that has to take place outside of a conflict situation. For you, this is not the case. If the consequence is within the scope of this trapping, you may make a roll against an Extraordinary Tier target of Great (+4). On a success, the consequence is reduced to Trifling (assuming the character has an open Trifling consequence slot of the appropriate scope). If the roll obtains spin, the consequence is removed altogether.

Superhuman Tier: As Extraordinary Tier, plus you can also attempt to clear a Grievous consequence within the trapping's scope. If it's a Physical consequence, the patient's body must be intact. Make a skill roll against a Superhuman Tier target of Fantastic (+6). On a success, the consequence is reduced one degree of severity, and with spin it's reduced by two degrees of severity. Regardless, the patient must immediately change one of his Personal aspects to reflect the indelible mark the trauma has left on him.

Ascendant Tier: As Superhuman Tier, except you can also reattach limbs, restore organs, and the like if the trapping's scope is Physical. Make a skill roll against an Ascendant Tier target of Legendary (+8). On a success, the

consequence is reduced one degree of severity, and with spin it's reduced by two degrees of severity. Again, the patient must still immediately change one of his Personal aspects as a reminder of the experience.

Godlike Tier: As Ascendant Tier, plus you can attempt to *revive the dead*—that is, a character whose Taken Out condition was death. Make a skill roll against a Godlike Tier target of Divine (+10). On a success, the patient is immediately brought back to life, but must rewrite a Conviction or Complication aspect to reflect the profundity of the experience. On a failure, the patient is still dead, and another revivification cannot be attempted until sufficient time has passed. (The default is A Day, plus one step on the Time Table for every point by which the roll failed.) This process does not remove any of the patient's consequences or stress he may have had when he died. Normally, this requires that the patient's complete corpse be present (though not necessarily intact). If the GM deems the circumstances appropriate—for example, if the character has a Godling aspect of "Goddess of Life"—an attempt may be made without the body at a -4 penalty to the roll. Treat a success as described above, but the character's body arrives (somehow) naked as the day he was born.

VARIABLE [FREQUENCY]

Some skills are just so broad that they defy precise definition, such as Profane Sorcery or Shapeshifting. For these skills, there's the Variable trapping. A Variable trapping can be used to replicate any other trapping or Extra on the fly, as decided by the player during the course of play. The specifics, however, must fit within the skill's theme. For example, a Variable trapping in a Strange skill called Psychic Constructs could be used to create a psychic sword (the Strike trapping) or shield (the Parry trapping), or even a psychic velocipede (the Move trapping). But it couldn't be used to duplicate the effects of the Conversation trapping, or the Willpower trapping, because those trappings simply don't make sense in the context of the skill's theme.

A Variable trapping that can be defined anew once per scene costs 4 skill points to add to a skill, while one that can only be defined once per *session* only costs 2 skill points.

When replicating another trapping or Extra, the number of skill points it would cost to add the trapping or Extra to the skill is the number of Variable trappings you'll need for the job. For example, duplicating the effects of the Shoot trapping (2 skill points) would require two Variable trappings; tacking on the Zone Extra (also 2 skill points) would require another two Variable trappings. Once a Variable trapping is committed to creating an effect, it can't be used to create anything else until the next scene or session.

Variable is not a when-in-doubt trapping—it's a *there's-no-other-way* trapping.

Theme: Versatility, such as shapeshifting, magic, or impressively eclectic training.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): If the Variable trapping is duplicating as a skill with a Tier-dependent benefit, such as Physical Force, then the Variable trapping provides that benefit as well.

WEALTH

The Wealth trapping measures the character's available funds, whether that's a few shillings in her pocket, a chest full of crowns at home, or the family silver mine. Usually, a skill with this trapping serves to passively inform the GM about what the character has at her disposal, but may still be rolled for large expenditures, like purchases and bribes. Some large-scale conflicts may be about trying to out-spend the other guy; here, the skill can be used to attack or defend. Wealth-based attacks deal Reputation stress and Social consequences.

In terms of social class and the Wealth trapping, members of the Under Class have a Mediocre (+0) income, while the Working Class is at Average (+1), the Middle Class is at Fair (+2), and the lifestyle of the Upper Class is at least Good (+3), if not somewhere in the Extraordinary Tier.

A general guide to what things cost in the Victorian era (rated on the Adjective Ladder) can be found in the section entitled **Money** (page 72). A character can easily afford anything with a rating 2 steps below his skill, and anything 1 step below his skill with a minimum of fuss. Anything with a rating equal to or greater than your skill, however, will require a roll. If successful, the item is obtained; if not, it isn't. Only one such skill roll can be made

per scene. Note, however, that this trapping is less about buying things than it is about leveraging your personal assets to solve problems. If the players are spending a bunch of time shopping, things aren't dangerous enough.

If knowledge of the character's wealth would affect a situation, the skill with this trapping may modify whatever other skill is being used, either positive or negative. (And if you don't believe that having a lot of money can negatively affect a situation, you've never applied for a student loan.)

Theme: Status, social connections, livelihood.

WILLPOWER

Use a skill with the Willpower trapping to defend against attempts to get inside the character's head. This includes fear, intimidation, and mesmerism, and efforts to assess the character's aspects. In addition, this trapping is also used to resist supernatural attacks against the character's psyche, such as mind control.

Theme: Discipline, self-control, social prowess.

WORKSPACE✚

Workspaces are environments where a character can perform a certain type of work, such as a library, laboratory, manufactory, mechanical workshop, and so forth. Attaching the Workspace trapping to a skill provides the character with such a facility of a quality equal to the skill's rating. This trapping isn't so much about a character's ability to use such a facility—that's better represented by the Research, Craft, and Repair trappings—but about his easy access to, and the utility of, such a facility. If coupled with the Wealth trapping, the workspace in question is likely owned by the character; otherwise, it's probably just one that he can reliably use.

The quality of a workspace limits the obscurity of information that can be found there (see the Information trapping), or the quality of devices that can be made or fixed there (see the Craft and Repair trappings), depending on the skill's theme. Also see the Device Flaw for more on skills-as-equipment.

Theme: Academia, expertise, formal education, mechanical or scientific aptitude, personal wealth.

Extraordinary Tier (or better): The workspace can be used to make, fix, or improve works equal to or less than the skill's Power Tier, and relevant to its theme. For example, an Extraordinary Tier laboratory can be used to make or repair Mundane or Extraordinary Tier scientific devices.

Extras and Drawbacks

Trappings paint a Unique skill in broad strokes, but Extras and Drawbacks fill in the details and help bring it to life. Extras are a trapping's refinements and add to its total value.

Extras

Psychic (+1 skill point)

The trapping works through sheer Strange mental ability. With this Extra, Social trappings don't require any actual interaction between the character and the target as long as they're in range, and Perception trappings don't rely on ordinary human senses. For example, a clairvoyance-themed Strange skill with Examine + Psychic would ignore any penalties due to poor visibility, but still be subject to whatever "psychic" penalties due to environment or circumstance the GM might see fit to impose. (This is highly dependent on context, though: If the skill's theme were telepathy instead of clairvoyance, Examine + Psychic would let the character read minds, not view an area remotely.)

The Psychic Extra removes the need for physical exertion implicitly required by trappings such as Dismantle or Physical Force. Even a character restrained by chains and a padlock could use Security + Psychic, for example, to pick the lock and free himself. When attached to trappings like Disguise and Hide, Psychic represents a forcible change in the observer's perception as opposed to a physical trans-

formation. Observers without "minds," such as clockwork automatons, would therefore remain unaffected.

A skill with Convince + Psychic can be used to simulate mind control. Make an aspect maneuver against the target, using the standard rules for aspect maneuvers. If successful, put an aspect like "Under My Control" on the target. Your total effort on this roll is the difficulty for the target to remove the aspect (with an aspect maneuver of their own) and break free of your control. Until then, you can invoke the aspect for effect to control the target. The first tag's free, as usual, but after that it'll cost a Fate Point each time—paid to the target. This is expensive, of course, but no one ever said controlling minds would be easy.

It's up to the GM and player to determine what narrative effect the Psychic Extra might have as part of any other trappings. For instance, Minions + Psychic could mean servile psychokinetic constructs, or it could simply remove the need to contact your Minions by conventional means: Instead of sending a messenger, you send a telepathic message.

If one of a skill's trappings has the Psychic Extra, every trapping under that skill must also have it. In other words, a skill can't be just partially Psychic—it's all or nothing.

Extras Summary Table

Name	Cost	Description
Psychic	+1	The trapping operates through supernatural mental ability.
Range	+1	The trapping's effective range increases.
Spray	+1	The trapping affects multiple targets in the same zone simultaneously.
Unusual	+1	The trapping operates by some non-standard principle appropriate to the skill's theme.
Zone	+2	The trapping affects all targets in a zone simultaneously (and indiscriminately).

EXAMPLES: Telepathy (Conversation + Psychic), Mind Reading (Insight + Psychic), Psychic Persuasion (Convince + Psychic), Mind Blast (Menace + Psychic), Mental Illusions (Disguise + Unusual: Illusion + Range + Psychic).

Range (+1 skill point)

The trapping's effective range increases. If it's a trapping that normally only affects the user, like Disguise, the Range Extra turns the skill into one that affects other targets, as long as they're in the same zone as the character. If the trapping normally only affects the character who uses it, such as Disguise, it can be applied to a target within the same zone. If the trapping is normally used against other targets but has no inherent range, such as Strike, it gains a range of 1 zone. If it already has range of 1 zone or more, such as Shoot, increase its range by +2 zones. Range can be taken more than once on a single trapping.

EXAMPLES: Stretching (Physical Force + Range), Telekinesis (Physical Force + Range + Psychic), Clairvoyance (Examine + Range x2 + Psychic), Keen Eyesight (Notice + Range x2)

Spray (+1 skill point)

With this Extra, a trapping can be applied against multiple targets in a single exchange. If the trapping is used offensively, roll your skill as normal, then take a penalty of -1 per target, if you have two or more targets. For example, if you have three targets and your total effort is +6, each target only has to get a +3 or better to avoid taking stress. Otherwise, spend 1 shift per additional target affected. All targets must be in the same zone.

EXAMPLES: Mystical Armor (Parry + Spray), Machine Gun (Shoot + Spray), Miniature Aero-Platforms (Move + Unusual: Flight + Spray)

Unusual (+1 skill point)

The trapping operates by some non-standard principle appropriate

to the theme of the skill, or gains some minor additional functionality. This is kind of a catch-all Extra for a trapping that can do a weird thing that is hard to peg down. If an effect doesn't fit neatly into any other category of Extra, make it Unusual.

The Unusual Extra can be added to a trapping to eliminate any gear or preparation it might require, such as Disguise + Unusual: Illusion to cloak the character in a magical disguise, or Craft + Unusual: Instant assembly to create a machine from its component parts without using any tools to put them together.

EXAMPLES: Shield (Parry + Unusual: Affects ranged attacks), Flight (Move + Unusual: Flight), X-Ray Vision (Examine + Unusual: Through walls), Invisibility (Hide + Unusual: Invisibility), Instantaneous Teleportation (Leap + Unusual: Doesn't pass through intervening space), Create Illusion (Disguise + Unusual: Illusion + Range)

Zone (+2 skill points)

The trapping affects everyone in a zone. If used as an attack, roll your skill once; each target in the zone defends against your total effort. Otherwise, roll your skill and apply it to all targets in the zone. If the trapping doesn't work at range, it automatically affects everyone in your zone. If it would make sense for the skill to affect yourself as well, such as a swarm of clockwork locusts that attack everything in the area indiscriminately, then it does. To avoid such a fate in these circumstances, take the Unusual Extra.

EXAMPLES: Fireball (Shoot + Zone), Aero-Platform (Move + Unusual: Flight + Zone), Force Bubble (Resist Damage + Zone), Fear Aura (Menace + Zone)

Drawbacks

Drawbacks come in two main categories. One is aspect-related Drawbacks, which involve sacrificing your Free aspects in exchange for Complications and Convictions. The other is Flaws (Minor and Major), which define a skill's boundaries and can reduce its total value. Every Unique skill in the Extraordinary Tier must have an accompanying Complication or Conviction aspect, while every Strange skill (of any Power Tier) requires a Drawback of any kind. Drawbacks on a skill provide a 1-point discount if a Minor Drawback or a 2-point discount if a Major Drawback. The final cost of a skill can never be reduced below its rating. **If a Drawback on a Unique or Strange skill isn't genuinely disadvantageous or doesn't fit with the skill's theme, it's not a Drawback.**

Aspect: Complication (Minor or Major)

One of the character's Free aspects becomes a Complication aspect. Complications come in two degrees of severity, Minor and Major. A Minor Complication is a persistent nuisance, something that crops up now and then to cause trouble for the character. A Major Complication, however, is just what it sounds like: a serious problem in the character's life, and a source of constant struggle. When a Major Complication is compelled, the compel starts at two Fate Points.

Aspect: Conviction (Major)

One of the character's Free aspects becomes another Conviction aspect.

Flaw: Charges (Minor or Major)

A Strange skill with Charges can only be used a limited number of times before being replenished. Examples include a ghostly revolver, an elixir with limited doses, or a magical incantation that gradually disappears from the speaker's mind each time it's uttered. A skill with Minor Charges can be used a number of times per scene equal to its rating, so a Fair (+2) skill with the Charges Flaw could

Drawbacks Summary Table

Aspect	Description
Complication	A nuisance (Minor) or recurring problem (Major) in the character's life
Conviction	An additional Conviction aspect
Flaw	**Description**
Charges	Skill can be used a limited number of times per scene (Minor) or session (Major)
Delay	Skill takes time or effort (Minor) or both (Major) to activate
Focus	Character needs a device (Minor), possibly breakable (Major), to use the skill
Snag	Skill's functionality is reduced occasionally (Minor) or frequently (Major)
Taxing	Player must spend a Fate Point each time the skill is used
Transform	Skill requires a brief (Minor) or lengthy (Major) transformation before it can be used

be used twice in a scene. As a Major Flaw, the skill's uses are limited per session instead of per scene. To reflect a skill that requires lengthy preparation or delays between uses, use **Delay**. For example, if that ghostly revolver has Minor Charges, but some sort of occult ritual is required to load it with ectoplasm first, the ritual is a form of the Delay Flaw.

Flaw: Delay (Minor or Major)

A Strange skill with the Delay Flaw requires additional time to activate or be made available to use. This could be a technological device that needs to be charged, a potion that requires lengthy preparation before it can be consumed, or a skill that can't be used unless the character meditates for a while first. A Delay time of A Full Action/A Few Moments is a Minor Flaw. The character has to essentially lose a Turn to activating the skill, and can't take any other actions, such as using a secondary skill, in the interim. A Delay of Two Rounds/Half a Minute or longer is a Major Flaw. (See the Time Table in **Time and Space.**)

If the Delay requires an action that can be interrupted, such as cranking an electro-static discharge cannon, then doing so also requires the Delay to start all over again.

By default, Delay's meant for "constant" abilities that, once turned on, stay on. If the skill instead requires A Few Moments or more every time it's used, that's a Major Flaw. If it requires more than A Few Moments to Activate, and then once it's on the character still requires A Few Moments per use, that's two Activation Flaws: one to turn it on, and one for each use.

Compare this with **Charges**, which limits the number of times a skill can be used on a per-scene basis. Combining these two Flaws can create an ability which, for example, takes a long time to prepare, and once it's available can only be used a certain number of times, such as that electro-static discharge cannon. First it has to be cranked for A Few Minutes (a Major Delay), and then once that's been done there's only so much electro-static energy available (Major Charges).

Flaw: Focus (Minor or Major)

The Focus Flaw means that the skill is external to the character. Without the Focus, the character can't use the skill. Taken as a Major Flaw, the skill must have an accompanying aspect, such as "Steam-Powered Armor," "Utility

Belt," "Scientific Gadgetry," or "The Eye of Obodobo." As a Minor Flaw, Focus has no affect on the character's aspects.

Flaw: Snag (Minor or Major)

A Snag is a limitation of some kind, although that limitation can be just about anything (as long as it's actually limiting, of course). These aren't aspects—just boundaries around the skill's utility. For example:

- Only works during the day (Minor)
- Only works at night (Minor)
- Only works on ferrous metal (Minor)
- Only works on animals (Minor)
- Only works on gold (Major)
- Can't consciously activate (alternately, deactivate) (Major)
- No access to normal senses while using the skill (Major)
- Only works during a full moon (Major)
- Can't use any other Strange skills while this one is active (Major)
- Can't move while this skill is active (Minor for a defensive physical skill or Major for an offensive physical skill, but probably isn't worth anything otherwise)

Flaw: Taxing (Major)

The Taxing Flaw is for a skill that requires a great investment of effort, is of limited use, or that just isn't especially reliable—when it works, it's a big deal for the character's story. In mechanical terms, the skill requires a Fate Point to activate each time it's used. Taxing always counts as a Major Drawback.

Flaw: Transform (Minor or Major)

A skill with this Flaw is only available to the character after he undergoes some sort of dramatic physical or mental transformation. This process takes time—Full Action/A Few Moments for a Minor Transform, or longer for a Major Transform. Examples include drinking an elixir that turns you into a monster, metamorphosing into an animal, or manifesting an ectoplasmic aura.

Once the transformation is complete, the player replaces one of the character's Free aspects to reflect the nature of the character's change. For example, a Strange skill called Fire Giant with the Transform Flaw might replace the character's "Gregarious and Outgoing" aspect with "Towering Inferno."

Ordinarily, the Free aspect to be replaced is chosen and the replacement aspect defined when this Flaw is taken. The character always loses access to the same Free aspect and gains the same replacement aspect whenever he Transforms. The exception is if the Strange skill has the Variable trapping, in which case the player may define the replacement aspect each time the transformation occurs. If multiple Strange skills have this Flaw, they can share the same transformation, but each one replaces an additional Free aspect.

If the Transform can be interrupted or prevented, or relies on a condition that isn't fully under the character's control (such as losing one's temper in an unseemly manner), that's a Snag in addition to the Transform.

Magic: Forbidden Lore and Hidden Secrets

There are two orders of magic at work in the world of the Kerberos Club: the Sacred and the Profane.

Each Magus must declare a Conviction aspect to be her Obsession, thus representing the character's dedication to magic. The Magus can invoke this aspect when seeking great magical knowledge, when attempting a spell, or when deciphering and unraveling the spell of a foe. This means that doing great magical Works allows a Magus to earn Fate Points with which to empower the Work, which clearly serves those obsessive adepts willing to sacrifice everything else in their lives to pursue magical power.

Sacred Magic

Sacred magic is slow, ritualized, and extremely powerful. It taps ancient forces, sleeping gods, and weirder, more alien things, and the results are astonishing, or so subtle and pervasive as to escape common notice. Sacred magic is more akin to gadgeteering: Instead of the power coming directly from the Magus, there's always a token or talisman which contains the force of the magical Work. To reflect this, a Sacred Magus must take the **Focus Flaw** on each of his Strange skills that represents a Work he's crafted. If the Focus that contains the power is lost, so is the access to the Strange skill—apart from your ability to craft such items, none of your Strange skills are innate.

A Sacred magician who wishes to create new Works during play must also purchase the Sacred Works skill. This skill may be of any Power Tier.

Profane Magic

Profane magic is incredibly fast, but the effects are temporary and short-lived. A Profane Magus can throw cheap miracles to the rabble, teleport across the Thames, or disintegrate a door. The effects of Profane magic come from the Magus who wields it, and as such exacts a certain cosmological toll. This is reflected by the Profane Flaw, which is mandatory for each of a Profane magician's Strange skills. In addition, a Profane magician who wishes to create new effects during play needs to take the Profane Sorcery skill, which can be of any Power Tier.

How Badly Do You Want Power?

Many Magi gain power through various perception-altering, questionable means: sacrifice, sex, drink, self-denial, pain. The traditions are wide and diverse, but they all demand you prove to yourself and the occult universe how dedicated you are to the magic by engaging in ritualized behavior that you and your society find objectionable. The act declares your willingness to transgress and sever ties to the mortal world in exchange for power.

In mechanical terms, this involves compelling your Obsession aspect to act against your Convictions. The more extreme the transgression, the less you need to do it to get this power. Regardless of the details, these rituals yield 2 Fate Points, but the length of the ritual (see the Time Table in **Time and Space**) depends on how much it violates the character's morals and ethos.

- Acts and sacrifices that don't contradict any of your Convictions or that would not cause scandal for you if made public require **A Day**.
- Acts and sacrifices that mildly contradict any of your Convictions or that would cause you trouble if they were made public require **A Few Hours**.
- Acts and sacrifices that strongly contradict any of your Convictions or that would destroy your place in society if they were known require **Half an Hour.**

Regardless, each step longer on the Time Table yields another 2 Fate Points, up to a maximum of 6 Fate Points. For example, a mildly objectionable ritual yields 2 Fate Points after A Few Hours, 4 Fate Points after An Afternoon, or 6 Fate Points after A Day. If you're willing to risk everything you hold dear in the world, and endure something horrible, you can quickly amass frightening levels of occult power.

Small wonder, then, that magicians aren't often counted among respectable society.



Sacred Works (4)

Power Tier: As desired
Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information, Research, Examine
Sacred (-2)
Major Delay (-2): Half a Minute or more (however long it takes to craft the Work)
Minor Snag (-1): Requires a sufficient Workspace
Given enough time and access to a proper Workspace, the Sacred magician can create new temporary Works. He can also create permanent Sacred Works by spending Refresh instead of investing Fate Points, and repair or disassemble such Works as well.

Flaw: Sacred (Major)

This Flaw is mandatory for the Sacred Works skill, or any other skill that enables the character to create Works imbued with Sacred magic. The Sacred Flaw requires the Magus to invest one or more Fate Points to create a Sacred Work. This is in addition to any Fate Points the character might spend when making a skill roll to Craft the item. The number of Fate Points to be invested depends on the Power Tier of the Work: 1 for Extraordinary, 2 for Superhuman, 4 for Ascendant, and 6 for Godlike. By default, the Work lasts for one session. If the Work is destroyed, the invested Fate Points are lost as if they'd been spent; if you Dismantle the Work, the Fate Points are immediately returned. Otherwise, the process for Crafting, Repairing, or Dismantling a Work is exactly as laid out in those trappings' descriptions.

A skill with this Flaw can also be used to create a permanent Work. In this case, the character sacrifices Refresh instead of investing Fate Points: -1 Refresh for an Extraordinary Tier skill, -2 for a Superhuman Tier skill, and so on.

Profane Sorcery (9)

Power Tier: As desired
Variable [Scene] x3
Profane (-2)
Minor Delay (-1): Full Action/A Few Moments
The Magus can define magical effects on the fly (once or twice per scene) with practically no preparation.

Flaw: Profane (Major)

This Flaw is mandatory for the Strange skills of a Profane magician. The Profane Flaw requires the Magus to invest one or more Fate Points before using the skill in a scene. The Fate Point is invested the first time the Strange skill is used (or, if the skill has one or more Variable trappings, once per new effect defined during the scene). Regardless of how many times the skill or effect is used in the scene, the Magus only has to invest the Fate Points once.

Invested Fate Points are set aside, or given to the GM to set aside, or discarded and tallied by the player—whatever works for the table—but they aren't lost. At the end of the scene, all of the player's invested Fate Points are returned to her, with one exception: If the player ever invests her last Fate Point—that is, investing the Fate Point means the player now has none left—that Fate Point is lost as if she had spent it.

The number of Fate Points that needs to be invested depends on the Power Tier of the skill: 1 for Extraordinary, 2 for Superhuman, 4 for Ascendant, and 6 for Godlike. (Strange skills in the Mundane Tier are the exception—they require no Fate Point investment whatsoever.) The Profane Magus may voluntarily reduce the Strange skill's Power Tier, and therefore invest fewer Fate Points, when the spell is cast. However, doing so limits the skill's Power Tier for the duration of the scene, or until the Magus invests more Fate Points for the spell.

Sample Unique Skills

Because Unique skills so often derive from a character's occupation or lifestyle, the examples provided below are organized by Social Class. In parentheses following each skill's name is its total trapping cost; add that to its rating to determine its total cost in skill points. Below that are its trappings and Extras (and the value of each), one lifestyle-appropriate Complication or Conviction aspect, and some italicized explanatory notes.

While all of these Unique skills are in the Mundane Tier, there's nothing stopping you from elevating them to the Extraordinary Tier. Also keep in mind that this is hardly an exhaustive list, nor are these the definitive versions of these Unique skills.

For a detailed treatment of these Social Classes, including example aspects for each one, see **All Things Right and Proper.**

Under Class

Beggar (7)

Networking, Information, Conversation, Guile, Inspire, Environment [Urban]

Minor Complication (-1): Living Hand to Mouth

Your prospects of eating today rest on your ability to make a good impression, sincere or otherwise. At times you address entire crowds of passers-by, hoping to soften their hearts and loosen their purse strings. And when all that fails, you can find a crust of bread in the dustbin.

Pickpocket (5)

Networking, Information, Dexterity, Hide (2), Skulk (2), Notice (1)

Minor Complication (-1): Artfully Dodging the Law

You make your living on the streets, relieving others of their excess coinage, watches, silk scarves, and whatever else you can purloin when they're not paying attention. Thanks to others of your kind, you usually have a pretty good idea what the word on the street is—and when they can't help you can probably see it coming.

Lady of the Night (3)

Networking, Information, Conversation, Convince, Insight, Environment [Urban]

Conviction (-2): Whatever It Takes to Survive

The world's oldest profession is alive and well on the streets of Whitechapel. To earn your keep, you've learned to be persuasive and size up potential clientele quickly. It's a harsh life, but you aren't left with many options.

Working Class

Police Officer (3)

Networking, Information, Environment [Urban], Examine, Notice, Menace (1),

Minor Complication (-1): Answers to Superiors in the Department

You can rely on your training to investigate crime scenes, spot clues, navigate the streets of London, stare down a criminal, and gather information from your contacts on the street.

Servant (2)

Networking, Information, Notice, Conversation, Insight

Minor Complication (-1): My Master's Bidding

Yours is a life of servitude. Like any good servant, you're adept at anticipating your master's needs, sometimes before he's even aware of them himself. You've also learned the fine art of sycophancy and regularly gossip with others of your station about the goings-on upstairs.

Carpenter (4)

Networking, Information, Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Physical Force

Minor Complication (-1): A Life of Sweat and Toil

You're an adept craftsman, and your daily labors have left you with bulging muscles and a keen eye for detail. You also have connections in the Worshipful Company of Carpenters.

Middle Class

Physician (4)

Networking, Information, Examine, Research, Treatment [Physical], Workspace

Conviction (-2): The Hippocratic Oath

As a practicing physician, you know a great deal about the workings of the human body and have a proper facility at which to treat your patients.

Barrister (4)

Networking, Information, Convince, Inspire, Insight

Conviction (-2): My Client's Interests

Your courtroom experience makes you a persuasive speaker with a ready knowledge of the law. You're also a good judge of character, and more than capable of confounding your opposition in a debate.

Clergyman (6)

Networking, Information, Inspire, Convince, Conversation, Treatment [Mental]

Conviction (-2): Doing the Lord's Work

You've given your life—or most of it—in service to the Church and God. You have both a strong theological education and a talent for preaching to the masses, and many in your flock come to you for counsel.

Upper Class

Knight of the Realm (13)

Networking, Information, Willpower, Wealth, Influence, Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation] , Minions

Conviction (-2): Rule, Britannia!

You've distinguished yourself in service to the Queen—or you've paid to make it seem as if you have. Regardless, you are a respected member of society, capable of damaging reputations and protecting your own. As part of your title, you have an estate, money, and a bevy of servants at your beck and call.

Wealthy Socialite (17)

Networking, Information, Wealth, Influence + Spray (+1), Stress Capacity [Reputation], Esteem, Guile, Initiative [Social], Treatment [Social]

Minor Complication (-1): What Goes Around, Comes Around

You're among the idle rich, possessed of wealth and status but little in the way of professional ambition beyond being the center of attention at parties. Whatever gossip may be circulating in your social circles, you've either heard it first or started it yourself—sometimes several rumors at once, if you're in the mood.

Archbishop of York (26)

Networking, Information, Influence, Inspire, Minions, Wealth, Initiative [Social], Initiative [Mental], Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Stress Capacity [Composure], Willpower

Minor Complication (-1): A Trail of Enemies in my Wake

For you, the clergy long ago stopped being about serving God. As an Archbishop, you wield impressive political power and command a personal retinue of underlings. Your status enables you to make or break careers with a few carefully chosen words to the right people while remaining above the fray yourself.

Sample Strange Skills

The Strange skills below are organized by Archetype. As with the example Unique skills, these are merely illustrations of a few Strange skills that may be appropriate for any given Archetype. Obviously, there's a lot of room for your own ideas, and few of the skills listed below are necessarily exclusive to the Archetype under which they appear.

Unlike the Unique skills, each of these Strange skills includes a Power Tier, but only to provide an example. None of these Tiers is mandatory in the slightest.

For a detailed treatment of these Archetypes, including example aspects for each one, see **Archetypes**.

Adept

IRON ROBE STYLE (2)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Resist Damage, Willpower

Minor Delay (-1): A Full Action/A Few Moments

As part of your studies in the Orient, you mastered an esoteric breathing technique that renders your flesh as resilient as iron.

FLYING CRANE TECHNIQUE (8)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Leap, Strike, Dodge, Initiative [Physical]

Minor Complication (-1): Enemies of the Flying Crane Clan

This Oriental boxing style emphasizes flying kicks, movement, and speed.

THE VOICE OF RA (8)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Shoot + Unusual: Sonic (+1), Convince + Zone (+2), Inspire + Zone (+2)

Minor Complication (-1): Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely

This mystical discipline of ancient Egypt gives you supernatural powers of persuasion and command—and when that doesn't work, you can level a building with a single shout.

Alien

ARGONIAN VISION (8)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Examine + Unusual: See through solid objects (+1), Shoot + Unusual: Invisible (+1)

Minor Snag (-1): Examine can't see through lead

The high nitrogen content of Earth's atmosphere has wrought many changes in your Argonian physiology, including the ability to see through solid objects or cause them to burst into flame.

MARTIAN METAMORPHOSIS (7)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Disguise + Unusual: Shapeshift (+1), Skulk, Hide, Variable [Session] x2

Minor Snag (-1): Variable trappings limited to form taken

Like all Martians, you are able to alter your appearance, assume other forms, and turn invisible.

JUPITERIAN BODY (15)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Stress Capacity [Physical], Resist Damage, Physical Force, Strike + Zone (+2), Move + Unusual: Flight (+1)

Minor Complication (-1): Freakishly Gigantic Being From Another World

Your enormous alien form—roughly the size of a hot-air balloon, with a similar form of locomotion—may shock onlookers, but the low gravity of this planet makes you a physical powerhouse capable of profound destruction.

Anachronist

ELECTRO-STATIC DISCHARGE CANNON (1)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Shoot + Unusual: Ignores metallic and other conductive forms of protection (+1), Menace + Range + Zone (+3)

Minor Focus (-1)

Major Delay (-2): Takes A Few Minutes to prepare skill for use between scenes

Minor Charges (-1): Use a number of times per scene equal to skill rating

This unusual weapon consists of a large oak-shielded metallic tube connected by cables to a backpack, which features a hand crank and an internal mechanism for building up a static-electric charge. When fully charged, the cannon can fire a few bolts of electricity in a terrifying display before requiring another round of cranking.

SCIENTIFIC GENIUS (9)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Workspace, Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information, Research, Treatment [Physical]

Conviction (-2): "And to think those fools laughed at me in Vienna!"

You are an expert in various scientific disciplines, from mechanics to chemistry to medicine.

CLOCKWORK WINGS (3)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge, Parry

Minor Focus (-1)

Major Delay (-2): Takes A Few Minutes to wind up before skill can be used

Minor Snag (-1): Dodge can only be used if airborne

Once wound, this device enables the wearer to fly with remarkable speed and agility, and they're durable enough to deflect blows (should it come to that).

Artificial

MAN OF IRON (9)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Force, Resist Damage, Menace, Willpower

Minor Complication (-1): Heavy Iron Body

As an animate construct of iron, you possess incredible strength and resilience to damage. Although you're sentient, your wondrous mechanical brain is so radically different from the human mind that it's virtually impervious to psychic effects such as illusion or mind reading.

E UNUM PLURIBUS (0)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Minions + Unusual: Arrive immediately (+1)

Major Snag (-2): Skill can only yield a maximum of two Minions

Minor Transform (-1): Replace an aspect with "One-Armed" if one Minion and "Dis-Armed" if two

Your automechanical arms have their own computational brains and can be detached to operate remotely.

AUTOMECHANICAL PROGRAMMING (8)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Variable [Session] x2, Variable [Scene] x2

Minor Focus (-1): Babbage Computational punch-card deck

Major Delay (-2): Each Variable trapping takes A Few Minutes to be defined

Minor Snag (-1): Variable trappings limited to capabilities of chassis

Given the right punch-card deck and a few minutes to spare, your Babbage Computational Brain can be reprogrammed to suit the situation at hand.

Faerie

FAERIE SWARM (11)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Minions + Unusual: Arrive immediately (+1), Physical Force + Range (+1), Menace + Spray (+1), Strike

Major Complication (-2): Faerie Mischief

You command a small army of tiny faeries that are eager

to do your bidding, especially where mortals are involved. They can lift objects, frighten or harm your enemies, or just show up and be useful. If given the opportunity, however, they'll find opportunities to cause trouble, just for fun.

GOSSAMER WINGS (3)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge

Minor Snag (-1): Dodge can only be used when airborne

You have a pair of beautiful, shimmering wings resembling those of a dragonfly. In defiance of physics and reason, they allow you to flit about effortlessly.

CHANGELING DECEIT (2)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Disguise + Unusual: Shapeshift (+1), Guile

Minor Snag (-1): Does not work against other faeries

Minor Snag (-1): Disguise vanishes for rest of scene if touched by iron

You are able to change your appearance at will and lie with perfect sincerity.

Godling

GOD OF STRENGTH (9)

Power Tier: Godlike (-6 Refresh)

Physical Force, Leap, Resist Damage [Physical], Stress Capacity [Health], Willpower

Conviction (-2): Might Makes Right

Your divine physical prowess is matched only by your equally divine toughness. Few, if any, on Earth can challenge you when it comes to feats of strength.

DIVINE LUCK (11)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Dodge, Environment [Wilderness], Environment [Urban], Notice, Resist Damage

Conviction (-2): Laughing in the Face of Danger

Things just seem to have a way of working out for you. Bullets and blows often miss you by a hair's breadth, and when they do connect they usually deal only minor injuries. Whether lost in the woods or the city, you always manage to find your way without starving or getting lost, and you often find yourself in the right place at the right time to spot what others miss.

Faerie Glamour (10)

Power Tier: Any

Menace + Range + Unusual: Deals Physical consequences (+2), Parry + Unusual: Illusion (+1), Disguise + Range + Unusual: Illusion (+2)

Minor Snag (-1): Doesn't work against the Fae

Minor Snag (-1): Trappings with Unusual: Illusion Extra instantly dispelled by the touch of iron

The Fae may attack and defend with frightening and grotesque illusions, which, as long as the victim fails to recognize them as real, inflict very real wounds, injuries which are unaffected by any normal defense. (In mechanical terms, the Menace trapping deals Composure stress but Physical consequences.) The faerie can also raise illusory disguises, changing appearance for a time, and they can create wild or prosaic illusions to confuse mortal senses, but these melt away if they come into contact with iron.

COMMANDING PRESENCE (11)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Conversation + Zone (+2), Convince + Zone (+2), Menace + Zone (+2), Willpower

Conviction (-2): "Look upon me, ye mortals, and despair!"

As a Godling, your mere presence is enough to cow the average mortal. Everywhere you go, people like you, fear you, or follow your commands, as you please.

Changed

TEST SUBJECT (3)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure]

Minor Complication (-1): Distrusts Scientists

As a result of being a frequent test subject for a dozen or more unscrupulous scientists, your body and mind are remarkably resistant to harm.



THE BEAST WITHIN (1)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Force, Menace, Skulk

Minor Focus (-1): Potion

Major Transform (-2): Transformation requires A Few Minutes; replace one aspect with "Violent Sociopath"

Taxing (-2): Spend a Fate Point to transform back

After downing a vial of foul-tasting liquid, you unleash your inner beast, transforming into a hulking, intimidating brute who revels in anti-social acts of all kinds (but mostly the violent kinds).

FELINE REFLEXES (4)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Move, Dodge, Initiative [Physical]

Minor Complication (-1): Shocking Appearance

The mix of human and jaguar genetic material in your body grants you an amazing reaction time and sprint speed.

Human Oddity

HUMAN PRETZEL (6)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Dexterity, Dodge, Move + Unusual: Tight squeeze (+1)

Major Delay (-2): Move takes A Few Minutes

Your world-class contortionism skills make you frustratingly nimble and enable you to move through small spaces that others would find impassable.

PROTEAN FLESH (0)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Disguise + Unusual: Shapeshifting (+1)

Minor Focus (-1): Polymorphic Tonic

Minor Transform (-1): Transformation requires A Full Action/A Few Moments; replace one aspect with "The Perfect Disguise"

Major Charges (-2): Use skill a number of times per session equal to skill rating

Minor Snag (-1): Disguise lasts for one scene

With an injection of Dr. Monroe's polymorphic tonic, you're able to organize and make conscious the properties of your weird physiology to convincingly assume the appearance of someone else.

GROTESQUE ELONGATION (12)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Physical Force + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Resist Damage, Move, Strike + Spray (+1)

Conviction (-2): The Freak Shall Inherit the Earth

Minor Snag (-1): Resist Damage applies only against bludgeons

You can stretch and twist your body to incredible extremes. You can grab objects many yards away, lessen the impact of blows with your elastic body, take huge strides with elongated legs, and expand yourself to engulf several enemies at once.

Magus

GRIP OF THE HUNDRED-HAND GIANT (15)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Force + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Strike + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Resist Damage

Major Focus (-2): The Amulet of Marcus Fontius the Elder

This spell conjures an invisible hand of force capable of lifting heavy objects, attacking enemies, or shielding the magus from attacks.

FAR STEP (3)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Leap + Unusual: Doesn't cross intervening space (+1), Dodge

Profane (-2): Invest 4 Fate Points to use this skill in a scene

By muttering an incantation, you can suddenly be in the other room—or in Australia.

HELM OF MINERVA (9)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Notice, Examine, Insight, Willpower, Initiative [Mental], Convince

Major Focus (-2): Helm of Minerva

This elaborate headgear confers all manner of supernatural abilities on the wearer, including uncanny powers of perception, mental fortitude, and persuasive speech.

HELLFIRE (6)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Shoot, Menace, Variable [Session] x4

Profane (-2): Invest 2 Fate Points to use this skill in a scene

Minor Delay (-1): Full Action/A Few Moments

Minor Sang (-1): Variable trappings can only be used to add Extras

You conjure an explosive blast to harm or frighten your enemies.

Mutant

CONCUSSIVE EYE BEAMS (0)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Shoot + Range + Spray (+2)

Minor Focus (-1): Crystal Spectacles

Major Snag (-2): No conscious control over Eye Beams without Crystal Spectacles

Whenever you open your eyes and lift your specially crafted crystal spectacles, whatever you're looking at tends to explode.

ACCELERATED HEALING (4)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Resist Damage, Treatment [Physical] + Unusual: No tools required (+1)

Minor Snag (-1): Can only use Treatment on self

Your flesh and bone knit themselves together far faster than Nature intended.

GIGANTIC SIZE (12)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Strength, Resist Damage, Strike + Zone (+2)

Minor Transform (-1): Full Action/A Few Moments; replace one aspect with "Towering Giant"

Your towering stature makes you stronger, harder to hurt, and capable of hitting multiple targets at once with a single sweep of your arm.

FORCEFUL TELEPATHY (3)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Convince + Psychic (+1), Insight + Psychic (+1)

Conviction (-2): The Truth Will Out

You peer inside the target's mind to see what makes him tick, gently guide his actions, or outright take control of his mind.

Super-Normal

STRENGTH TRAINING (7)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Physical Force, Leap, Resist Damage

Minor Complication (-1): "It seems that I don't know my own strength!"

The character's phenomenal strength lets her leap impressive distances, deliver deadly blows in hand-to-hand combat, and shrug off minor damage.

MAN OF ACTION (15)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Leap, Climb, Move, Shoot, Strike, Dodge, Parry, Initiative [Physical]

Conviction (-2): Honor Before Victory

A lifetime of training and adventure has forged you into a true Man of Action, able to handle whatever dangers you face with impressive aplomb.

MISTRESS OF ALL PURSUITS (5)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Languages, Willpower, Variable [Session] x2

Minor Complication (-1): Scarred by Adventure and Horror

You've seen and learned much in your time as a globe-trotting adventuress, making you an unpredictable threat in any situation.

Gifts

Gifts represent areas of special training, talent, or similar capability within the purview of a single skill. Mechanically speaking, this is reflected by a small bonus or a bit of rules-bending in the character's favor. Described below are the six different types of Gifts, each of which costs 1 Refresh to buy.

Every character starts with one Gift for free.

Gift Name	Description
Companion	A "helper" NPC loyal to the character.
Equipment	Important or special gear of some kind.
Impact	Declare an aspect with the skill for free on a roll that succeeds with spin.
Signature Aspect	One aspect can be invoked once per scene for free.
Skilled	+5 skill points.
Theme	A variety of circumstantial benefits spread among three connected skills.

Companion

The character has a sidekick, valet, personal secretary, manservant, clockwork butler, fetch, or some other "helper" character. The Companion defaults to Average (+1) quality, with one Average (+1) skill, 2 stress boxes in each stress track, and one Trifling consequence. A Companion requires the expenditure of a Fate Point to act alone. Otherwise, he or she attaches to the character as a Minion would, and provides the character with a +1 bonus to any skills the two share in common. In addition, each Companion automatically comes with three improvements, chosen from the list below. Unless otherwise indicated, an improvement can be taken more than once for the same Companion.

Every time this Gift is taken, it can be used to either create a new Companion or provide another three improvements to any existing Companions.

- **Aspect:** The Companion gains an aspect (but no Fate Points).
- **Quality:** Increase the Companion's quality by +1, to a maximum of Good (+3). A Fair (+2) Companion has one Average (+1) skill, one Fair (+2) skill, 3 boxes in one stress track and 2 boxes in the other two, and a Good (+3) Companion has one Average (+1) skill, one Fair (+2) skill, one Good (+3) skill, and 3 boxes in each stress track.
- **Communication:** The character and the Companion have a special mode of communication in keeping with their capabilities. This could be a portable wireless telegraph, a high-powered magnesium Aldus lamp projected into the night sky, a psychic link, or whatever else is within reason for the character. Attempts to break this communication link between the two are made against a difficulty of 2 + the Companion's quality.
- **Independent:** The Companion can act on their own without needing to spend a Fate Point, unless the Companion's sent off on a mission of significant story importance (comparable with something a PC might do, for example). While the Companion is so separated, they have access to the main character's Fate Points and two of their aspects relevant to their bond.
- **Keeping Up:** If the main character has some unusual

Gifts and Flaws

As an optional rule for those groups who want a little more nuance in their Gifts, you can apply certain Drawbacks to Companion and Equipment Gifts to represent allies or gear that can sometimes hinder as much as they help. Maybe that doorman's gambling debts make him susceptible to bribes, or those fancy range-finding goggles of yours seem to work only when they feel like it.

Whereas a Drawback on a skill reduces its cost by one or two points, if this option is used, a Minor or Major Drawback on a Companion or Equipment Gift provides an additional improvement.

Applying a Complication aspect to a Companion or piece of Equipment adds an aspect to it, but one with a predominantly negative or troublesome slant. Conviction and Weakness Drawbacks, however, are too character-specific to be applied to something as external as Companions or Equipment.

Snags are great for limiting the usual scope of Companions or Equipment, such as mail armor that doesn't offer protection against firearms or a sidekick who doesn't speak English. Delay and Taxing can be suitable for many types of Equipment, but usually don't make much sense when it comes to Companions.

Most other Flaws don't work quite as well and probably shouldn't be applied to Companions or Equipment (and it should go without saying that the Focus Flaw can't be applied to Equipment), but the ultimate call on that is up to the GM and your group.

GMs should carefully consider whether to use this optional rule. It's great for certain situations, but is potentially open to abuse as well.

form of locomotion, the Companion can somehow follow along without getting left behind.

- **Skilled:** The Companion gains 3 skill points. None of a Companion's skill ratings can exceed his or her quality.
- **Gifted:** The Companion gains one of the following Gifts: Equipment, Impact, or Theme. This improvement can't be taken more than twice per Companion.
- **Empowered:** Upgrade the Power Tier of one of the Companion's skills. The Companion receives Tier Benefits from this skill the same way characters do. Empowered counts as two improvements.
- **Numerous:** Each time this improvement is taken, the main character gains one additional Companion.
- **Summonable:** The Companion can show up at the main character's beck and call without needing to resort to conventional means. This takes One Minute (see the Time Table in **Time and Space**) by default; for a Fate Point, the Companion arrives in An Instant. The Companion automatically vanishes at the end of the scene.

Equipment

The character has an important or special piece of mundane (or mostly mundane) equipment. When this Gift is taken, the piece of equipment gains three of the following improvements. Every time this Gift is taken, it can be used to either create a new piece of equipment or provide another three improvements to any existing equipment.

- **Aspect:** The piece of equipment gains an aspect (but no Fate Points).
- **Deadly:** The equipment acts as a Weapon 1 for one type of stress (Health, Composure, or Reputation). This bonus can't do more than double the stress dealt by an attack. For example, if a weapon with Weapon 2 is used for an attack that succeeds by 1 shift, the attack does 2 stress, not 3. This improvement can be taken up to three times on a single piece of equipment, providing a maximum of Weapon 3. Only the highest Weapon value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time.
- **Well-Made:** The equipment grants a +1 bonus to one skill relevant to its operation, chosen when this improvement is taken. This counts as two improvements, and can only be taken a maximum of three times on a single piece of equipment.
- **Empowered:** The equipment artificially boosts the Power Tier of one

Skill, Equipment, or Aspect?

As you can see, there are basically three ways to represent a gadget using these rules: as a Strange skill, as an Equipment Gift, or simply as an aspect. So which is the right one to use? Any of them, really—it just depends on what you want to do.

If it's a Wonder—some truly remarkable bit of gear like mechanical wings—or a supernatural artifact of some kind, make it a Strange skill. That'll give you the power and versatility to make something truly remarkable and/or outlandish.

If it's an exceptional but otherwise mundane item that's conceivably possible to create in the non-Strange world, it's probably best to make it an Equipment Gift. As an Equipment Gift, it won't give you any new abilities, really. It'll just make you better at things you can already do.

Or you can skip these routes entirely and just make it one of your personal aspects. For example, if you have an aspect of "My Father's Cavalry Sabre" to represent a family heirloom, you could invoke it when fencing, schmoozing with one of your father's old cavalry buddies, cutting a tough rope, or anything else where it might come in handy. But it would exist only in narrative terms—you'd have to spend a Fate Point to get any use out of it.

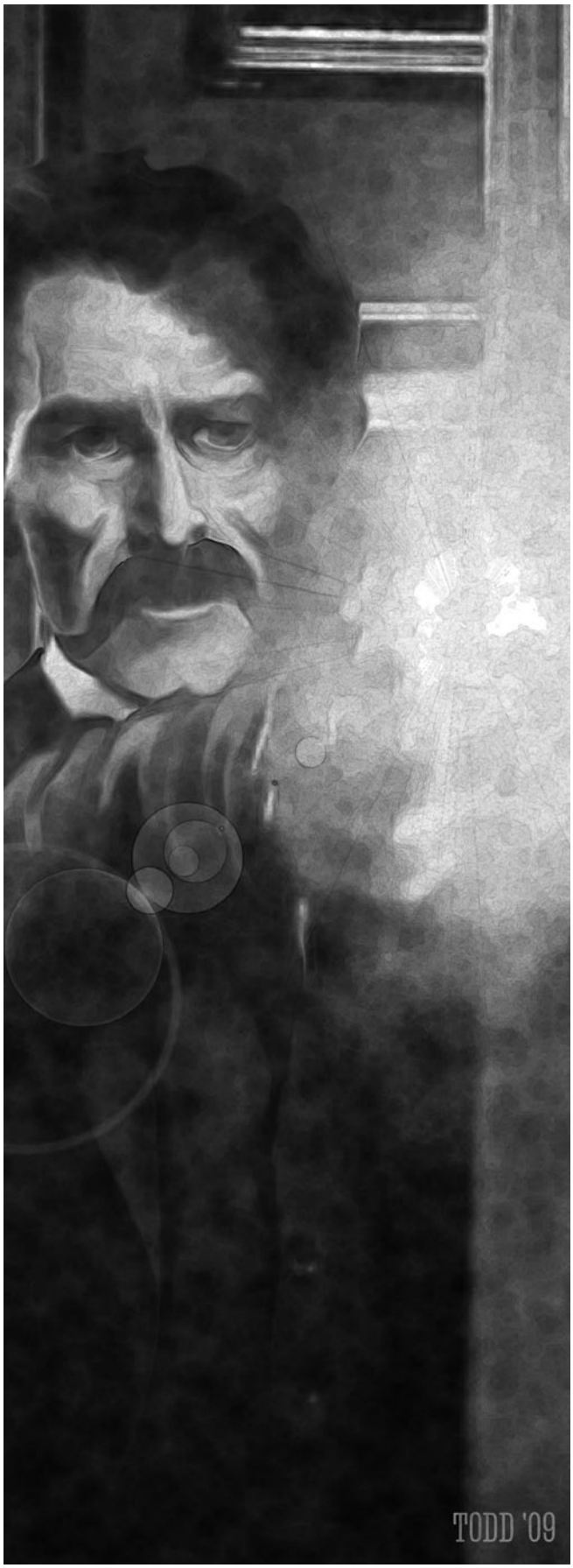
Probably the best option is to make your gadget either a Strange skill or an Equipment Gift, and devote an aspect to it, either a personal aspect or with the Aspect improvement. That way you can define it mechanically and concretely, if you go in for that sort of thing, plus you get added utility (and Fate Points) from it as an aspect.

skill. Examples include an enchanted sword that lets its wielder fight as if his Arms skill were in the Supernatural Tier, or a brainwave-enhancing skullcap that gives anyone who wears it Extraordinary Tier Academics. If the character's skill is already in a higher Power Tier, use either his own Power Tier or the equipment's, whichever is higher. (In other words, multiple Power Tiers don't "stack.") Each step above the Mundane Tier counts as four improvements.

- **Alternate Use:** The equipment lets the wielder use one skill in place of another in limited circumstances.
- **Protective:** The equipment grants Armor 1 against one type of stress (Health, Composure, or Reputation) in a manner appropriate to the Equipment. This improvement can be taken up to three times on a single piece of equipment, providing a maximum of Armor 3. Only the highest Armor value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time.
- **Rugged:** The equipment adds one stress box to one of the owner's stress tracks (Health, Composure, or Reputation). This improvement can only be taken a maximum of three times on a single piece of equipment. In order to take this improvement, the equipment must be a suit of armor or some similarly protective item. Only the highest Rugged value from any one piece of equipment can apply at a time to any one stress track.
- **Numerous:** Each time this improvement is taken, it gives the character a duplicate of a previously defined piece of equipment.
- **Essential:** The equipment lets the owner take an additional Trifling consequence, usually Physical. This improvement can't be taken more than twice on the same piece of equipment. In order to take this improvement, the equipment must be a suit of armor or some similarly protective item. Having multiple pieces of equipment with this improvement does not increase this benefit.

Impact

Choose one of your skills (whether Common, Unique or Strange). When you use that skill and obtain spin, you can declare a fragile aspect on yourself, your opponent, or the scene (as appropriate) as a free action. *EXAMPLES: Fisticuffs Impact, Resolve Impact, Investigation Impact.*



Signature Aspect

Choose one personal aspect. You may invoke that aspect for free once per scene.

Skilled

Receive another 5 skill points.

Theme

Choose three skills (whether Common, Unique or Strange) that share a thematic connection, such as Athletics, Brawn, and Alertness (physical fitness) or Academics, Art, and Science (education). Each of these skills receives one (and only one) of the following benefits. This Gift can be purchased multiple times, but no skill can ever receive more than one benefit.

- A +1 bonus in narrow circumstances, such as +1 Athletics when jumping, +1 Firearms with Electrophorous Firing Pieces, or +1 Fisticuffs when outnumbered.
- A +2 bonus when using that skill to maneuver or Block.
- Use the skill in place of another skill in narrow circumstances, such as using Brawn instead of Athletics when chasing someone, using Firearms instead of Athletics to defend against ranged attacks, or using Occultism instead of Presence to orate.
- Ignore circumstantial or environmental penalties equal to or less than the skill's rating.

Example: Augustus Shimasaki, aka The Dustman

Kade has two ideas for a character: one, a mind controller who makes criminals atone for their crimes; and the other, an inventor who builds crime-fighting robots. When he can't decide between them, he decides to do both—a Stranger who has the ability to control electricity at an extremely fine level, such that he can control how an individual's synapses fire and influence the way they think. However, he's also a scientist who builds automatons with electrical artificial brains (as opposed to the Babbage Computational Brain found in automechanicals), which in turn let him guide their actions with his Strange ability.

As for the character's background, Kade wants to go for something a little different. He notes that the Middle Century game he'll be playing in takes place shortly after the Meiji Restoration, a time of enormous social and political upheaval in Japan during which the last ruler of the Tokugawa Shogunate was ousted. Maybe a Japanese inventor in the Shogun's service, forced to flee his homeland as a result of his lord's fall from power. What with one thing and another, he finds himself in London, as so many lost souls do, penniless and alone—a perfect candidate for the Kerberos Club. Kade gives the character a Japanese last name, but a first name chosen to honor a celebrated contemporary scientist. The result: Augustus Shimasaki.

For an Archetype, Kade picks Mutant. Though the ability to control electrical impulses had always lain dormant within Augustus, it didn't manifest until quite recently, when he was struck by lightning during the long voyage from the Japans. His Mutant aspect is "Master of Mind and Machine." Considering his poverty and foreign origin, Underclass seems like a good fit for his Social Class, but that hasn't lessened his will to make the world a better place with his inventions. Kade decides he has "Meager Means and High Ideals." On a related note, since joining the rolls of the Kerberos Club, Augustus has committed himself to using his gifts to bring justice to the oft-lawless London streets, giving him a Conviction that he's a "Downtrodden Hero." Kade likes the idea that he has to scrounge for scrap metal with which to build his robots, which gives him the idea to nickname his character the Dustman, which he thinks sounds pretty cool.

Thus established, Kade sets about answering the Five Questions for Augustus:

Humble Beginnings. Though born the son of a stalwart soldier in the Shogun's military, Augustus never exhibited much of an interest in following in his father's footsteps. Instead, his childhood was distinguished by two things: his remarkable intelligence and his voracious appetite for adventure stories; first those of his homeland, and then later the work of European authors.

Follies of Youth. Despite his family's decent social standing, the young Augustus often spent a good deal of time with some rather disreputable young boys in his town, driven by curiosity and the lure of "adventure" to join them in the commission of various petty crimes.

First Awakenings. Rumors began to filter east about young Queen Victoria's changing nature during Augustus's teen years, but Strange events also occurred right in his own backyard, quite literally, when he witnessed a neighborhood girl dancing in a field with several kami, or nature spirits. After a few minutes' revels, the whole lot of them simply faded away into nothingness, and the young girl was never seen again. Presented with this mystery, Augustus gained a sudden interest in making sense of the world, and his natural proclivities led him to the field of scientific inquiry.

Mysterious Origins. It wasn't until he fled Japan in 1868, however, that he realized he was part of the Strangeness he sought to understand. During a fierce lightning storm round the Cape of Good Hope, Augustus, observing the weather from a precarious perch in the crow's nest, was struck by a bolt of lightning and thrown to the deck below. When he awoke, bruised but luckily uninjured, he discovered his ability to manipulate electricity at a

miniscule level. This eventually led to his breakthrough invention, the Electro-Mechanite Brain, and his entry into the Kerberos Club.

Great Failing. The ability to control minds has gotten Augustus into trouble more than once. It's all too easy to manipulate others into doing your bidding without regard for their freedoms, and he doesn't trust himself to not step over that line. As a consequence, Augustus has chosen a life of poverty, dedicating himself to improving the lives of others over his own. He lives largely apart from society, cloistered away in a subterranean laboratory where he tinkers with his creations, afraid of what he might be tempted to do among the constant press of contemporary society.

Now Kade turns to Augustus's skills. The first thing he does is consider how best to represent Augustus's Strange ability mechanically. Looking over the list of trappings, he chooses Conversation, Convince, Examine, Insight, and Minions [Simple], then tacks the Psychic Extra on all of them. This will give him the ability to communicate telepathically, psychically persuade people into obeisance (or outright control their actions), read surface thoughts, surreptitiously assess a target's aspects, and summon his Electro-Mechanites using only the power of his mind. He names this Strange skill after his Mutant aspect, as it seems well-suited: Master of Mind and Machine. Kade wants Augustus to be especially effective with this skill, so he spend 2 Refresh to upgrade it to the Superhuman Tier.

This skill needs a Drawback of some kind, so he chooses a Major Complication: "The Temptations of Power." The total skill point cost of the skill's trappings, taking into account the Drawback, is 10.

Next, Kade creates a Unique skill, one that covers Augustus's non-Strange scientific genius. He chooses the Information, Research, Craft, Repair, and Workspace trappings. This is close to the Science skill, but with a more specific emphasis—for example, it lacks the Treatment [Physical] trapping and adds a Workspace. As this is a Unique skill, and not something that derives from Augustus's Touch of the Strange, Kade spends 1 Refresh to upgrade it to the Extraordinary Tier. He gives this skill the modest title of Electro-Mechanical Genius.

As a Unique skill, this needs to have either a Complication or a Conviction aspect, so Kade goes for something dramatic to reflect Augustus's love of both science and adventure: A Conviction aspect of "One for All and All for Science!" The total skill point cost of the skill's trappings, taking into account the Conviction aspect's discount of 2 points, is 5.

He picks out a number of Common skills to round out Augustus, including Academics, Athletics, Resolve, Contacting, Investigation, and Empathy. After slotting everything, he ends up with this:

Great (+4): Electro-Mechanical Genius (E)

Good (+3): Master of Mind and Machine (S)

Fair (+2): Academics, Resolve

Average (+1): Contacting, Investigation, Athletics, Empathy

That's 15 points in skill ratings and 15 points in skill trappings, for an even 30.

Next, Kade defines Augustus's aspects. Two have already been spoken for—one a Major Complication, "The Temptations of Power," and the other a Conviction, "One for All and All for Science!"—leaving him with three Free aspects left. First he places "The Temptations of Power" with his Great Failing. Seems appropriate. Next, he pairs up "One for All and All for Science!" with his Humble Beginnings. The variation on the Three Musketeers' motto sounds just like something he would've come up with as an exuberant young scientist. He gives Follies of Youth an aspect of "Friends in Low Places," a nod to the neighborhood reprobates he used to hang out with and his current state of affairs, living below London and consorting with the Underclass. First Awakenings gets an aspect of "There's Always a Rational Explanation," an amusingly and desperately rational take on the Strangeness well-suited for a dedicated scientist like Augustus. Finally, because Kade's answer mentions Augustus's Strange ability and his current membership with the Kerberos Club, he makes the Mysterious Origins aspect an appropriately heroic catchphrase: "Electro-Mechanites, Assemble!"

Now, Gifts. Augustus gets one for free, and Kade chooses Theme: +1 Electro-Mechanical Genius when creating something new, +1 Academics to know handy bits

of academia, and +1 Occultism to know about Strange events in history. He also chooses Impact and applies it to Master of Mind and Machine; whenever a roll with that skill generates spin, he'll get to declare a free fragile aspect. This should come in handy when summoning his Electro-Mechanites ("Special Modifications") or affecting someone's mind ("Unusually Forthcoming").

Kade checks to see how much Refresh he has left to spend. He's already spent 3 Refresh for his Unique and Strange skills, then another 1 Refresh for a Gift. The game's set in the Middle Century, which means he still has 4 Refresh left from his starting total of 8. He spends one more point of Refresh for an Equipment Gift—a toolkit that gives him a +1 bonus with Electro-Mechanical Genius and has an aspect of "A Dozen Handy Gadgets." That leaves Augustus with 3 Refresh, which feels about right to Kade.

In the end, Augustus Shimasaki, aka The Dustman, looks like this:

Augustus Shimasaki, aka The Dustman

ASPECTS

Mutant: Master of Mind and Machine
Underclass: Meager Means and High Ideals
Conviction: Downtrodden Hero
Conviction: "One for All and All for Science!"
Friends in Low Places
There's Always a Rational Explanation
"Electro-Mechanites, Assemble!"
Major Complication: The Temptations of Power

SKILLS

Great (+4): Electro-Mechanical Genius (E)
Good (+3): Master of Mind and Machine (S)
Fair (+2): Academics, Resolve
Average (+1): Contacting, Investigation, Athletics, Empathy

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Electro-Mechanical Genius (5 skill points)
Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Information, Research, Craft, Repair, Workspace
Conviction (-2): "One for All and All for Science!"
Master of Mind and Machine (10 skill points)
Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Conversation + Psychic (+1), Convince + Psychic (+1), Examine + Psychic (+1), Insight + Psychic (+1), Minions [Simple] + Psychic (+1)
Major Complication (-2): The Temptations of Power

TIER BENEFITS

Once per story, spend a Fate Point to have a piece of Equipment with two improvements
Use Workspace to make, repair, or improve devices in the Mundane or Extraordinary Tier
Weapon 2 [Composure]
Create Minions with one Extraordinary scope

GIFTS

Theme (Free): +1 Electro-Mechanical Genius when creating something new, +1 Academics to know handy bits of academia, +1 Occultism to know about Strange events in history
Equipment (-1 Refresh): Toolkit (Well-Made: +1 to Electro-Mechanical Genius with new inventions, Aspect: "A Dozen Handy Gadgets")
Impact (-1 Refresh): Master of Mind and Machine

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health OOO
Composure OOO OO
Reputation OOO
Trifling:
Middling:
Grievous:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 8 (Middle Century)
Power Tiers: -3
Gifts: -2
Adjusted Refresh: 3

Your Kerberos Club

Generally speaking, all *Kerberos Club* games take place in London and involve the Kerberos Club—but that doesn't mean that every London or Kerberos Club is the same from one group to the next. The purpose of this chapter is to give your group tools to make your London and your Kerberos Club unique. Together, you'll collectively concoct a rough idea of London's past and present as seen through the windows of the Club.

Problems, Places, and People

Defining your Kerberos Club and the London that you call home is a four-step process. This book is *full* of information both historical and semi-historical, so you won't have to go far to find inspiration. Even still, you can expect this to occupy most of your first session together.

First, you'll determine the current state of things for London and the Kerberos Club by devising some **Status Quo** aspects. These come in two varieties: **Legacy aspects** are the result of the actions of Kerberans past, while **Dilemma aspects** are relatively new developments.

Second, you'll establish some Places of Interest within London, each of which has its own aspect. Everyone will get to make at least one. The group will also define the broad parameters of their Kerberos Club with Public, Agenda, and Strange aspects—in addition to a common aspect shared by all Kerberos Club games, "Malum Necessarium," the Club's motto.

Third, you'll create **Faces** for some or all of these aspects. A Face is an individual who embodies or represents a Campaign aspect, to give the players a tangible point of contact. All Faces have a position one way or another on the Kerberos Club, whether they're Allies, Antagonists, or Unknowns—that's up to you, too—and each is defined by a single aspect (to start—more may come later).

Finally, you'll review the Kerberos Club you've created with an eye toward connections, coincidences, and oddities, especially as they relate to the PCs.

Step One: Status Quo

Each player comes up with two aspects related to the status quo of the Kerberos Club and London. What's the current state of things? Status Quo aspects fall into one of two categories: Legacies and Dilemmas.

- Legacies are ways in which the actions of the Kerberos Club (or individual Kerberans) in the past have affected the present. Traditions established ("Never Take a Life During a New Moon"), grudges earned ("Bad Blood with the Cult of Osiris"), enemies made ("The Watchful Eye of Special Branch")—these are the Legacies of the Kerberos Club.
- Dilemmas are pressing concerns in the here and now. A Dilemma could be anything from a clear problem with murky origin ("Mysterious Rooftop Rituals") to a group with a definite and public aim ("Revolution Fomenting Among the Faeries") to a circumstance that prompts a general sense of unease ("What Are Section 7 Agents Doing in Camden?").

Step Two: Places of Interest

Next, each player contributes two locations significant to the Club or the PCs. **Chapter 4: The Throne of Empire** has an excellent list of appropriate locales to choose from, but the players can also pick some other interesting neighborhood or building in London or invent their own. After selecting a location, the player then gives it an aspect indicating its significance to the Club or the PCs. This could be a pub with the aspect "A Pint Before Peril," a shady neighborhood that's "Dangerous at Night—and in the Daytime," a cobwebbed dockside warehouse with the aspect "Nexus of Dark Energies," or the like.

However, the most important location is the Kerberos Club itself—the increasingly eccentric house on St. James Square around which so much of the Strangeness centers. Status Quo aspects already describe the Club's effect on London and its place within the city, but the Club's aspects are more

directly about the Club itself, with an emphasis on the view from the inside. Each player contributes two or three aspects split among three categories: Public, Agenda, or Strange.

- "***Malum Necessarium***," the motto of the Kerberos Club. Every campaign has this aspect.
- **Public** aspects reflect the Kerberos Club's image and relationship with the public—how London in general regards the Club, its members, and all those Touched by the Strangeness. They can also indicate the reverse: Does your iteration of the Kerberos Club consider the protection of the innocent as a duty, or do the needs of the public take a back seat to the esoteric plans of the Kerberans? Public aspects are very much a two-way street. Remember, when people walk past the Club and stare, there are those within the Club who stare back. When defining these aspects, keep in mind how radically the public perception of the Club changes over time. In the Early Century, of course, its very existence is little more than a sensationalist rumor. By the end of Victoria's reign, Kerberans are the subject of Penny Dreadfuls, frequently run around in costume to hide their identities, and are well-known in every stratum of society.
- **Agenda** aspects are the continually unfolding plans or ongoing pursuits of the Club (or elements within the Club, at any rate). Like Dilemmas, they prompt action, but Agendas are the Club being *proactive*, not reactive. With Agendas, the players decide where the Club's priorities lie. Note that these Agendas need not align with those of the PCs. For example, if a fringe group within the Club aims to "Discredit Special Branch at Any Cost," the PCs may very well find themselves working against their fellow Kerberans.
- **Strange** aspects are concerned with the very Strangeness housed within the Kerberos Club itself. Arcane tomes in unknown tongues, ancient artifacts of forgotten origin, and hunting trophies from the center of the Earth are all good candidates, as are a sitting room that's perpetually 96 degrees Fahrenheit or a bronze statue of Eumenides that reads aloud (in Ancient Greek) any book placed in its outstretched hands.

Step Three: Faces

Now that you have an idea of what your Kerberos Club is like both inside and out, plus some significant locations in London, it's time to come up with some interesting people to make it all come alive.

Go around the table and have each player pick an aspect—any of the aspects they've already defined—and then create an associated NPC to act as the "Face" of that aspect in the story. A Face provides a tangible point of contact for the PCs to interact with a place or (potentially abstract) concept encompassed by an aspect. Alternatively, players can pick Faces from the many personages scattered throughout this book. The sample characters in **Chapter 6: Dramatis Personae**, for example, are ready-made representatives of the Kerberos Club. There's no need to get anywhere near that detailed, though. A name and a single Conviction are enough to get the ball rolling. The rest can be filled in during play, if necessary.

For each Face, note whether they are an Ally, an Antagonist, or an Unknown. This is their disposition toward the Kerberos Club.

- **Allies** are on friendly terms with the Club, generally speaking. They could be an absent-minded librarian, a "special collections" curator at the British Museum, the barkeep down at the local, and the like. You can expect the PCs to have positive reactions with these Faces and lean on them now and then for assistance. When a player makes a Face an Ally, she's saying, "I want to have interactions with this person." On the flip side, putting an Ally in danger should prompt the PCs to come to their aid (a compel of "*Malum Necessarium*" ought to do it). Allies easily attach to Legacy, Public, Strange, and location-based aspects. An Ally associated with a Dilemma or Agenda aspect could be a literal ally in the Club's endeavors, a part of the problem despite being on good terms with the Club, or whatever feels right. As long as it's a story hook, you're doing it right.
- **Antagonists** are the opposite—enemies of the Club, such as a tenacious Detective-Inspector from Special Branch, an outspoken anti-Strange MP, a bestial

killer lurking in a rough South London neighborhood, a violent street gang, or any other source of conflict personified. When a player makes a Face an Antagonist, she's saying, "I want to be challenged by this person." Antagonists are the lifeblood of a good story; associating one with an aspect is a guaranteed source of conflict and tension. An Antagonist associated with a Legacy could be an old foe of the Club (or the descendant of one, still holding a grudge)—or worse, a Lost Kerberan. Nearly every Dilemma aspect practically demands an Antagonist, although within that category there's plenty of wiggle room, as long as the Antagonist is actively a cause for concern. Public aspects might suggest Antagonists who advocate against the Club, whether stirring up the populace from atop a soap-box in Hyde Park or delivering grandiloquent speeches in Parliament. If Agendas are the long-term machinations of the Kerberos Club, then an Antagonist associated with one is likely someone the Club is machinating against. It could even be a saboteur, someone working against the Club from the inside. And a Strange Antagonist could be nearly anything—the rooms of the Club are full of disasters just waiting to happen. Or perhaps one of the Club's Strange artifacts has been stolen, and the Antagonist is the thief.

- **Unknowns** are just that: individuals whose disposition toward the Kerberos Club is a mystery. This may be because they're inscrutable or new in town, or perhaps they've been so duplicitous with the Club in the past that it's difficult to know where their true loyalties lie. When a player makes a Face an Unknown, she's saying, "I want to be surprised by this person." In case you hadn't noticed, personalities who seem to be one thing but are actually another is a running theme in this book, so feel free to play an Unknown against type.

Keep taking turns devising Faces to go with aspects until you have a good number at your disposal—say, between nine and 12. That should be more than enough to get a story started. It's all grist for the GM's mill.

Step Four: Finishing Touches

Take a moment to look at the various Campaign aspects the group has created. What unexpected parallels or odd coincidences have emerged? Look at the Faces you've made—what connections can you make between them? Now take a look at your character. Is there anything you'd like to adjust with these Campaign aspects in mind?

Just in case it needs to be said, this process is intended to help you define your Kerberos Club and your London, not constrain them. If something isn't working in play, change it. If something was left out, put it in. It's all good, as long as anything created collaboratively is also altered collaboratively. Once players start to feel ownership of a detail, an NPC, an aspect, or whatever, the GM should tread lightly and avoid an arbitrary change unmotivated by the story.

Collateral Consequences

Early in the century, the Strange is terrifying to many. Display of obviously superhuman powers, miraculous events, impossible or frightening technology, or inhuman creatures can spark riots. Even toward the close of Victoria's reign, public opinion on the Strange can shift with the wind based on anything from a weird battle in the streets to controversy over home rule for the Fae. We track these sorts of developments with Collateral consequences.

Collateral consequences are a pool of consequences shared by all the PCs (and only the PCs). They work just like a character's personal consequences, and come in three degrees of severity: **Middling** (-4 stress), **Grievous** (-6 stress), and **Dire** (-8 stress). At the start of the story, the players collectively have three Middling, two Grievous, and one Dire Collateral consequences available to them.

Any player can use any of them anytime with any type of stress, but unlike personal consequences, Collateral consequences need not be directly connected to the conflict that created them. They're a narrative device—an opportunity for the players to affect the nature of society around them, if they so choose. A Collateral consequence could be an innocent bystander catching a face full of acid, or it could be a Member of Parliament delivering a speech about the evils of Automechanicals, or anything in between. You're essentially trading short-term security for some sort of future trouble.

What this trouble may be depends largely on how severe the Collateral consequence is.

Middling: A Collateral consequence of this severity can be rectified during the scene in which it's created. Doing so requires a skill roll, using whatever skill is most appropriate to the situation. For example, if a player were to take a Middling consequence to avoid taking damage from an explosion, that consequence might be "Building On Fire." If the PCs can put out the fire before the scene's over, that consequence slot is cleared and can be used again. If not, the consequence remains and can never be removed. Later on, the GM or players might invoke or compel that consequence to create a situation that stems from it, such as being confronted by a tenant in the building who has it out for the PCs because their fight led to his home being burned to the ground.

Each Middling Collateral consequence has a stress track two boxes long and a target number of Great (+4). Record shifts obtained over that number on the stress track, and once the stress track is bypassed, the consequence is cleared.

Grievous: Unlike Middling consequences, Collateral consequences of this severity cannot be removed. Once they're taken, they're there for good. As such, they can have immediate and persistent effects on society. If that "Building On Fire" consequence were Grievous instead of Middling, that burning tenement would become a gnawing issue in the public's mind—perhaps one seen as a symptom of a greater problem, or the flashpoint for a movement to purge London of the Strange, starting with the PCs. At the end of the story, every Grievous Collateral consequence remakes one of the Kerberos Club's aspects in its own image. For example, perhaps that burning building galvanizes "A Fractured Society" into one that believes that "The Strange Are a Public Menace."

Dire: A Collateral consequence of this severity represents a serious and profound impact on London, the Kerberos Club, the British Empire, or perhaps even the entire world. Like a Grievous consequence, it alters an existing Kerberos Club aspect at the end of the story, but it also requires that each PC alter a personal aspect. That's just how dire a Dire Collateral consequence is.

Keep track of the group's Collateral consequences on a sheet of paper in the middle of the table where everyone can see it, or maybe on a small whiteboard (the better to easily erase and replace those Middling Collateral consequences)—whatever you all prefer. Regardless, as players, don't forget to make use of them. Not only are they frequently life savers, but they also have enormous potential to add to the story and create future plot hooks, as well.

Advancement

Progress, evolution, *revolution*—Victoria's Century is one wracked by constant change, with London and its people changing right along with it. The PCs are no exception, constantly growing and developing as a result of their triumphs and misfortunes. In game terms, this advancement occurs after significant developments in the narrative: at the end of a **chapter**, **story**, or **volume**.

Chapters

A chapter can generally be equated with a session of play, or with the resolution of a significant story element. The end of a chapter also provides an opportunity for the characters to evolve in response to what's just happened. This means one of the following:

- Swap two skills of adjacent skill ratings with each other, such as a Fair (+2) skill and an Average (+1) skill.

- Replace one Gift with another or, if you have the Refresh to spend, buy a new Gift.
- Earn one skill point.
- Rename a Free aspect.

Chapter advancements let you shift a character's focus to reflect the story so far, or just change something about the character that isn't working out as expected, like an aspect or skill. However, these alterations have to be reasonable within the context of the chapter. For example, if the chapter ends with the PCs in prison, one of them can't suddenly acquire a set of lockpicks or a Spark while they're in there.

In addition, if you refused a compel on one of your Conviction aspects during the chapter, you receive a *second* chapter advancement.

Stories

A series of chapters—usually three or four sessions—constitutes a story. When a story ends, your character's Refresh increases by one. He also gets one of the following:

- One chapter advancement.
- One skill point.
- Rename a Conviction aspect.
- Upgrade the Power Tier of one skill, if you have the Refresh to spend.

As with a chapter advancement, any changes to the character should derive organically from the story itself.

With the end of a story usually comes the resolution of a major plotline. As a consequence, the characters have been through the wringer and are probably worse for wear.

If the character has a Grievous consequence at the end of a story, he can erase it and alter one of his aspects accordingly. For example, if your character finds herself with a Grievous consequence of "Shattered Faith in Mankind," you get to clear it—but you also have to change one of her personal aspects to reflect her newfound cynicism. Maybe her "Heroic Tendencies" are twisted into a belief that "The Only Person I Can Count On Is Myself."

But there's a silver lining: The character's Refresh increases by one. This is in *addition* to the standard point of Refresh received at the end of a story. However, this point of Refresh *cannot* be spent until the end of the next chapter or story.

Volumes

A string of connected stories makes up a volume. Perhaps the characters have been struggling to foil the machinations of a single Master Villain, finally confront him face-to-face, and emerge victorious (or not). Or maybe the link between the stories is a theme rather than a person, such as dealing with a rash of individuals around the globe who've been mutated into gigantic *kaiju*-style monsters by the fallout from some cosmic event. Whatever the case, the characters (and maybe even the world) will never be the same.

At the end of a volume, the character's Refresh increases by one and he can clear a Grievous consequence, as described above. He also gets all of the following:

- Two chapter advancements.
- One story advancement (which could be another chapter advancement, if the player's really into those).
- Rename a Conviction aspect, or turn a Free aspect into another Conviction aspect.

In addition, the group's allotment of Collateral consequences increases, starting with another Middling consequence. If the group already has four Middling consequences, add a third Grievous consequence instead. If the group already has three Grievous consequences, add a second Dire consequence instead.

The end of a volume signifies a major change in the campaign. You can think of it as shifting gears, or moving up a weight class. The characters grow more powerful, but so do the threats they'll be facing in the future.



The March of Progress

It's not just the PCs who change—they also change the world around them. Specifically, they tend to wreak havoc with the world around them, starting with London and, to a lesser degree, the Kerberos Club. In game terms, this is reflected by altering the campaign's Legacy and Dilemma aspects, along with the aspects of associated Places of Interest and Faces.

Legacies and Dilemmas

Legacy aspects are certainly subject to change, but not outright erasure. The Club's history isn't wiped away that easily. What happened, happened, and the only thing that matters now is what effect the past has on the present. That's what changes. With that in mind, there are basically three ways to alter a Legacy aspect:

- **Shifting:** If the actions of the PCs have addressed a Legacy but haven't substantially changed it, think about rewording the aspect to reflect what effect they did have. The Legacy persists, but its meaning or significance has shifted somewhat. For example, if the PCs grudgingly worked with some "enemy" cultists in the course of saving London, "Bad Blood with the Cult of Osiris" may turn into "Uneasy Alliance with the Cult of Osiris." The tone of suspicion is still there, but with a touch of cooperation.
- **Reversing:** If, on the other hand, the PCs have done something so dramatic to a Legacy as alter it on a fundamental level, it's more appropriate to reword that aspect in a way that inverts its prior significance. If the PCs' experience with the Cult of Osiris was actually positive instead of grudging, maybe it blooms into a full-fledged alliance—"Our Friends in the Cult of Osiris," for instance, a reversal of the initial Legacy.
- **Intensifying:** Of course, the PCs' actions can also serve to intensify an existing Legacy. If it was positive before, it becomes even more positive—or, if it was bad before, which is much more likely, now it's worse. "Bad Blood with the Cult of Osiris," for example, may explode into a "War with the Cult of Osiris." It may even be appropriate to make it a Dilemma instead of a Legacy, if intensifying it turns it into an immediate threat.

Dilemmas are much more likely to change from chapter to chapter or story to story, representing as they do pressing concerns in the here and now. Odds are good that

whatever the PCs dealt with in a given chapter or story is directly represented by a Dilemma aspect.

If the PCs **discover** something new about the Dilemma, in whole or part, simply change the aspect to reflect that. For example, if those "Mysterious Rooftop Rituals" were revealed to be the work of a powerful Magus bent on creating a magical sarcophagus to bring an unknown person back to life, the aspect might be changed to "The Machinations of Doctor Lazarus." The Dilemma's still a Dilemma—we just know more about it now.

If the PCs **resolve** a Dilemma—say, if Doctor Lazarus has been defeated, and his bloody rituals will claim innocent lives no more—then the GM should replace that Dilemma with an entirely new one. Generally speaking, this should only happen at the end of a story or a volume. Maybe "The Machinations of Doctor Lazarus" are no longer a cause for concern, but Nature abhors a vacuum. It's only so long before there's a "Revolution Fomenting among the Faeries." A Kerberan's work is never done, it seems.

Or the PCs could **intensify** a Dilemma in their attempts to deal with it. If this is the case, alter the aspect accordingly. Perhaps the characters' actions have been part of Doctor Lazarus's machinations, allowing him to complete his Great Work—the Dilemma now isn't so much about "The Machinations of Doctor Lazarus" anymore, but "The Second Coming of Amon-Hotep."

Places and Faces

For every Legacy or Dilemma aspect that gets changed, consider whether the aspect of a Place of Interest or a Face should change as well. This is a matter of answering determining whether the PCs' interaction with that Place or Face changed it, and if so, how.

Change the aspect of a Place of Interest if its normal routine (or "normal" routine) has been altered by the actions of the PCs. For example, if the pub where the PCs like to get "A Pint Before Peril" was also the site of a disastrous brawl, maybe that aspect could be changed to "A Perilous Pint"—or even "No Strangers Allowed."

When it comes to faces, look at the Face's type—Ally, Antagonist, or Unknown—and ask how or if that relationship has changed, then change the aspect accordingly. Allies can become Antagonists, and vice-versa—and sometimes the best thing that can happen with an Unknown is to discover whose side they're actually on.

Club Aspects

As discussed in **Collateral Consequences**, clearing a Grievous or Dire Collateral consequence also changes one of the Club's aspects. Change a Public aspect if the consequence in question arose from a highly visible event, such as a fight in the streets that demolishes buildings or stirs anti-Kerberan sentiment. If the consequence or PCs' actions are or can be related to an Agenda aspect, changing it is a good way to show the development of the Club's plans, for good or ill. And of course, a Grievous or Dire consequence in a story involving the Club's Strangeness—artifacts, members, or perhaps something less tangible—is a natural opportunity to alter a Strange aspect.

Apart from these guidelines, there are really no concrete rules for this, nor any real need for them. What works for one group might not for another. Use your best judgment and err on the side of dramatic.

Chapter 6
Dramatis Personae

Here are six pre-generated members of the Kerberos Club created for a game set in the Middle Century. These characters are ready to play, and can be used as needed. To quickly modify them for the Late Century, increase their Base Refresh to 10 and increase their Adjust Refresh by 2. Modifying them for an Early Century game (with a Base Refresh of 6) is a little trickier, but dropping the Power Tier of two Unique or Strange skills by one Tier ought to do the trick in a pinch.

Many other characters follow. See Chapter 5 for the rules for character creation and aspects. See Chapter 7 for the rules for using villains and minions.

Maeve O'Connel

The Queen of the Mudlarks; the Damnable Child

Maeve is the eternal child. She's been nine years old for over a century, growing in experience, cynicism, knowledge and skill, but still on some level a child. She is small, pale, and sports a huge, often tangled mass of curly hair of a dramatic red shade. Her hair is always catching on things, defies hairpins and bonnets, and inexorably and continuously attracts the fascination of the faerie. They lurk about her like an invisible cloud, reveling in her adventures and getting her into trouble, as well as obeying her wishes (intended or not). When Maeve drops the mask of carefree childishness, her true personality is terrifying: old, angry, tired, cunning, and suspicious. In the Kerberos Club she has found a place she can be herself, people who treat her as an equal, challenges worthy of her talents, and company she trusts not to judge her when she smokes, drinks and curses like a soldier.

POV: It would anger you how much the English seem to hate the Irish, except you long ago left the home island because you'd grown to hate them yourself. You've been a child for a century, ever since the faerie decided that they like you. Your parents are long dead. Your sister and brother, too. In the Famine your village itself died. But you were long gone by then. You traveled the Continent, you saw every evil that adults could perpetrate on their offspring, and in the end you returned to England, to London where a lone child wasn't such an odd sight, and here you carved out your little empire among the street Arabs, mudlarks, sweeps and thieves. You lead them, protect them, organize them. You are their secret queen, their hidden general. You've watched a generation of them grow older, die young, or get thrown into Newgate. Yet you remain as you are, always and forever. So long as the Fair Ones follow.

Appearance: A thin child with pale, freckled skin and a mass of untamable red hair. Usually dressed as a street urchin to better blend into the city and her chosen people—but with so many paying her tribute for her leadership and protection, she lives much better when in her own private quarters. To those with the eyes to see, the world around Maeve crawls with the faerie: weird spirit animals, imps, brownies, sprites, fetches. All will leap instantly to her defense, sometimes pre-empting her wishes.



Questions

Humble Beginnings: Maeve is a child from a tiny Irish village, and her origins could hardly be more humble.

Aspect: Think of the Children!

Follies of Youth: Maeve scarcely had time in her short mortal life for much folly; or rather, to gain enough wisdom to contrast with the constant foolishness. Her greatest folly—the curiosity and impetuousness of a child—was also her awakening.

Aspect: Dangerously Impetuous

First Awakenings: Angry with her little brother, Maeve called upon the local faerie to spirit him away. Then, to get her brother back, she agreed to nursemaid the Hawthorn Baby. Then the Hawthorn Baby was exchanged in the night for her newborn baby sister. Then one entanglement led to another and another, until finally it saw her driven from the village.

Aspect: One Entanglement Leads to Another

Mysterious Origins: Maeve is fascinating to the faerie. They watch her, help her, grant her wishes, and revel in her adventures. They also conspire to make her life more interesting, to get her into amusing trouble. The faerie keep her the same age as when they first took a liking to her.

Aspect: Faerie Mischief

Great Failing: Maeve's temper and the willingness of her faerie entourage to act on her wishes are a dangerous combination. She curses first and contends with the consequences later. When an MP on his way to the Palace of Westminster to attend Parliament had his footmen put the boot to Maeve and the small band of beggars she was leading at the time, she cursed him under her breath, and wished him burned out of home and livelihood. Her faerie friends heard and pursued the MP, burning both the Palace of Westminster and his fashionable West End home. They lit the fire in Parliament with piles of tally sticks from old votes. They burned his home with wads of banknotes taken from his personal strongbox.

Aspect: Curses First, Consequences Later

ASPECTS

Changed: Transformed by Faerie Fascination
Under Class: Queen of the Street Urchins
Conviction: Righteous Fury
Conviction: Think of the Children!
Minor Complication: Curses First, Consequences Later

Minor Complication: Faerie Mischief
Dangerously Impetuous
One Entanglement Leads to Another

SKILLS

Great (+4): Faerie Swarm (S), Queen of the Street Urchins
Good (+3): Presence, Athletics, Resolve
Fair (+2): Rapport, Deceit, Alertness, Occultism
Average (+1): Burglary, Arms, Intimidation, Fisticuffs
Total Cost: 45 (29 ratings+ 16 trappings)

GIFTS/POWER TIERS

Skilled (Free Gift): +5 skill points
Skilled x2 (-2 Refresh): +10 skill points
Superhuman Tier (-2 Refresh): Faerie Swarm

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Faerie Swarm (10)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Minions + Unusual: Arrive immediately (+1), Physical Force + Range x2 [3 zones] (+2), Menace + Spray (+1), Strike
Minor Complication (-1): Curses First, Consequences Later
Major Complication (-2): Faerie Mischief
You command a small army of tiny faeries that are eager to do your bidding, especially where mortals are involved. They can lift objects, frighten or harm your enemies, or just show up and be useful.

Queen of the Street Urchins (6)

Networking, Information, Minions, Environment [Urban], Skulk, Hide, Guile
Conviction (-2): Think of the Children!
When it comes to the poor and disenfranchised children of London's streets, you are imperious and protective. They provide you with rumors and backup, when needed, but you are also one of them—skilled at making yourself scarce, scrounging for scraps, and lying through your teeth.

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with Faerie Swarm
Faerie Swarm can summon either Extraordinary Tier or Mundane Tier Minions

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:
Middling:
Grievous:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 8 (Middle Century)
Gifts: -2
Power Tiers: -4
Adjusted Refresh: 4

Lucas Moreland

The Great Detective

The famed Lucas Moreland (author of The Moreland Method and Reading the Criminal Physiognomy), whose adventures have been serialized so famously in the Strand is among London's first citizens. He is a charming genius, always with a ready quip or clever compliment. He is widely regarded as the greatest private detective of the age, and has consulted for royalty, the emperors of industry, and celebrities of stage and the written word. Yet he has also aided the poorest and most desperate of London's citizens. He is a perfect example of all that is right about England: moral, intelligent, charitable and charming.

And a complete and total fraud.

POV: You can almost remember a time when you didn't despise humanity. Almost. But increasingly, your expanded awareness obscures the more innocent days when you were a different man under a different name, and when



the thoughts of your fellow men were not revealed to you in perfect clarity. The mind of a priest is a cesspit of impure thoughts, desires, contradictions, and lies; only imagine the mind of a costermonger, or a tupenny prostitute, or—God forbid—a politician. When the minds of men were first opened to you, you reveled in the power, but now… now all you have is the fiction you have created for yourself, this Great Detective. Perhaps your new associates in the Kerberos Club will offer something new. Their thoughts certainly are more interesting.

Appearance: A tall, athletic gentleman with a high forehead and aquiline nose which put some in mind of Lord Wellington. He is immaculately dressed in somewhat severe formality, his only affectation being a golden watch chain with a jeweler's loupe for a fob. While pursuing an investigation he sometimes minutely examines clues with the loupe, nodding and pursing his lips.

Questions

Humble Beginnings: Lucas Moreland was born James Sims, illegitimate son of an Irish tinker and a Middlesex seamstress. His earliest memories are of hunger, and the ghostly absence of his mother from their tiny single room.

Aspect: Lowborn and High-Minded

Follies of Youth: Lucas pursued an early career on the stage but failed as an actor, seemingly unable to ever find his character. As a petty criminal, blackmailer and housebreaker he found similarly limited success, and served a three-year term in prison for an attempted confidence trick.

Aspect: Friends in Low Places

First Awakenings: Upon his release from prison Lucas fell back in with his old cronies, and became involved in an ambitious scheme to burgle a manor house in northern Wales which belonged to a recently deceased eccentric. Acting as an auctioneer's assistant, Lucas scouted the property, and then helped his comrades break in by moonlight. While his associates looted the silver and plate Lucas wandered into the old man's study, and found

within a pen-holder an egg-shaped diamond roughly the size of the end of his small finger. When held to the light, its flaws and inclusions resembled a staring eye. He was entranced so completely that he didn't hear the barking of dogs and shouting until the guards were nearly upon him, and he barely had time to swallow the gem before throwing himself out the window.

Aspect: The Eye of Thoth

Mysterious Origins: The gem opened Lucas's mind, and suddenly the thoughts of men, dogs, and his fellow criminals were spread out there for him to see. Even dazed, he stumbled out, easily evading his pursuers by knowing their thoughts, and escaped back to London where he and his fellows reconciled their take. Lucas saw in the mind of one of them the betrayal that had led to the near capture: He'd peached on the gang. But how to prove it without revealing his power? Thus Lucas Moreland solved his first case, inventing "clues" to explain the knowledge read from the betrayer's thoughts. And he found he liked this improvisational acting. He could read expectations and meet them, say the right thing, and remake himself as The Great Detective—a persona marred only by the need every day or so for him to recover the gem from his excrement, wash it carefully, and swallow it again.

Aspect: The Adulation of the Crowd

Great Failing: Certainly no moralist, the man who would become Lucas Moreland nevertheless had an ordinary man's horror of murder and death. When the body of Slim Jimmy, the member of his gang who had betrayed the rest, was found in the Thames, he realized the danger in his powers. He is haunted by memories of Slim Jimmy, for while the lad was nothing remarkable or worthy, Lucas knew him inside and out, better than a mother, a lover, or even perhaps God himself, and felt his death like a blow.

Aspect: Keeping Secrets

ASPECTS

Changed: The Great Detective

Upper Class: A Carefully Cultivated Gentleman

Conviction: Contempt for the Masses

Conviction: The Adulation of the Crowd

Conviction: Keeping Secrets

The Eye of Thoth

Friends in Low Places

Lowborn and High-Minded

SKILLS

Great (+4): Whispers of the Mind (S), The Great Detective

Good (+3): Athletics, Marksmanship, Fisticuffs, Presence

Fair (+2): Resolve (E), Endurance, Intimidation, Stealth

Average (+1): Art, Investigation, Academics, Horsemanship, Drive

Total Cost: 45 (33 ratings + 12 trappings)

GIFTS/POWER TIERS

Skilled x3 (-3 Refresh): +15 skill points

Theme (Free Gift): +2 to maneuvers with Whispers of the Mind, +1 with Presence when trying to impress people, +1 with The Great Detective when lying about "clues"

Superhuman Tier (-2 Refresh): Whispers of the Mind

Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Marksmanship

Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Resolve

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Whispers of the Mind (6)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Dodge + Psychic (+1), Insight + Psychic + Range x2 [3 zones] (+3), Examine + Psychic (+1), Initiative [Mental] + Psychic (+1)

Conviction (-2): Keeping Secrets

Major Snag (-2): Dodge, Insight, and Examine only work against attackers with readable minds

Major Focus (-2): The Eye of Thoth

Your ability to read minds, granted to you by the daily ingestion of the Eye of Thoth, lets you anticipate your opponents' actions and read their minds, assuming they have minds to read.

The Great Detective (6)

Networking, Information, Wealth, Guile, Conversation, Initiative [Social]

Conviction (-2): The Adulation of the Crowd

You've parlayed your success as the Great Detective both socially and financially, thanks in no small part to your

ability to successfully obscure the truth of your "investigations" under a heavy cloak of lies.

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Reputation]
Armor 1 [Composure]

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:
Middling:
Grievous:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 8 (Middle Century)
Gifts: -3
Power Tiers: -4
Adjusted Refresh: 1

"Stony" Joseph Smithson

The Man Statue; the Stone Knight; Johnny Rockpile

"Stony" Joe Smithson was already a formidable boxer when Dr. Albert Simms found him. Dr. Simms was a physician and chemist, but also an inventor, and a man hungry for wealth. He promised Joe that his patent vitamin and exercise regime would improve the boxer's physique "like unto a thing of cold-cut stone!" Against his better judgment, Smithson accepted Simms' offer and allowed himself to be immersed in a "vitrifying bath of essential mineral salts" and "stimulated with pulses of electrical charge to condition the skin and muscles." The ordeal was agony, but as promised, Stony Joe Smithson found his strength magnified. His reputation in the ring only increased, until the day he struck Tom Paddock a blow that killed him stone dead, and saw beneath the torn skin of his own knuckles grey, faintly cracked stone.

POV: You're an honest bloke. Bit simple, yeah, but honest. And you got your pride, the same pride that saw your old Dad work himself to death so you and your brothers wouldn't have to go into the workhouse. On the streets, you fought like all the boys fought, dirty and mean and for keeps, but when you started prizefighting you got a taste for a proper, fair fight. Any scum can win a fight dirty. It takes art and skill to win one clean. The one time you forgot this, and tried to steal an advantage over other boxers, it cost you everything. Nobody in their right mind would get into the ring with you now, a hulking great rockpile. You could punch out one of Mr. Coney's iguanodons in one round. All your skill and experience and technique mean spit now. You're so strong, so invulnerable, it doesn't matter to anybody how you throw a punch anymore. To nobody but you, anyhow. And perhaps your mates in this funny Club you're all part of.

Appearance: Joe Smithson is unmistakable. He's huge. He was tall and well-built before Dr. Simms' patent process, but now he truly deserves the description massive. He's larger in all dimensions, like a big man made one size bigger all around. And he's covered in thick gray stone, like his skin has petrified. It thins and cracks at the joints, so he can still move without too much stiffness. Other places it grows thick and hard, and like horn or fingernails, he has to file it down as part of his toilette to keep it overgrowing and spoiling the cut of his clothes. He's only recently come to the social circles that being Kerberan opens for him, and so despite his mass and physical power he seems hunched and shy in social situations. He is extremely aware how easily destructible things are: things such as furniture, teacups, and ordinary people. His face, even covered in its weird rocky tegument, is open and honest. He looks like a born sucker, but wouldn't have made it as far in the boxing world if he really were as simple as he looks.

Questions

Humble Origins: A London boy, born and bred, Cockney to the bone. Joe grew up running in the streets while his father worked three jobs to put food on the table. He learned that you can't eat pride—but hunger's easier to bear if it's somehow noble.

Aspect: Cockney Pride

Follies of Youth: Joe ran with the gangs of boys loose in London's streets, fighting, committing petty crimes, and generally being menaces. He avoided schooling as long as possible, and finally went to work in the match factory where his father worked nights. He started boxing bare knuckle at the pubs where the workmen gathered, and eventually earned enough to quit his job. He got a reputation as a prize-fighter, and by the time he was 20 he was known in sporting circles all over London. The London Prize Ring rules of boxing became like the Ten Commandments to him.

Aspect: The Sweet Science

First Awakenings: Despite being widely known and respectfully introduced in sporting circles while his fame in the ring lasted, Smithson's perspective on the larger world was narrow. He had nearly no inkling of the Strange that he didn't read in the Dreadfuls.

Aspect: A South London Education

Mysterious Origins: The patent exercise regime created by Dr. Simms was in fact totally experimental. Simms wanted to enlist Stony Joe because of his name recognition, believing that if he made Joe the heavyweight champion, he'd make a fortune selling his services to every sportsman in England. For a time it seemed to be working, until Joe accidentally killed Tom Paddock ("The Redditch Needlepointer") in a prize bout. Paddock had lost his temper, and hit Smithson below the belt, angering and offending the bigger man. Smithson then hit him harder than he'd ever hit anyone before. The rocky growths beneath Joe's knuckles acted like brass knuckles, and broke Paddock's head open. He was banned from the sport and barely avoided murder charges. Simms fled the country, and a dark time began in Joe's life.



Aspect: Don't Know Me Own Strength

Great Failing: After his awakening, robbed of his livelihood and growing increasingly uncanny and disturbing every day, a bit rockier and a bit bigger, Joe fell in with bad people. He used gin to quiet his reservations about the work they had him do. Joe used his strength to collect debts, intimidate shop keepers, and send messages like, "If you don't want your other arm broken, you better do business." After being told to toss a family into the street when they couldn't make rent, he rebelled in self-disgust. He's still haunted by the faces of Tom Paddock and the other people he hurt.

Aspect: Look After Them What Have It Tough

ASPECTS

Changed: Built Like a Brick Workhouse
Working Class: Grew Up Poor but Proud
Conviction: A Fair Fight
Conviction: Look After Them What Have It Tough
Minor Complication: Don't Know Me Own Strength
A South London Education
The Sweet Science
Cockney Pride

SKILLS

Great (+4): Bare-Knuckle Boxer (E), Resolve
Good (+3): Stone Body (A), Empathy
Fair (+2): Presence, Alertness
Average (+1): Athletics, Rapport, Deceit, Contacting
Total Cost: 35 (22 ratings + 13 trappings)

GIFTS/POWER TIERS

Skilled (Free Gift): +5 skill points
Impact (-1 Refresh): Declare aspect when Bare-Knuckle Boxer roll obtains spin
Ascendant Tier (-4 Refresh): Stone Body
Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Bare-Knuckle Boxer

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Stone Body (7)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Physical], Physical Force
Minor Complication (-1): Don't Know Me Own Strength
As a being of essentially living rock, you command prodigious physical ability, able to deal and withstand lethal damage in equal measure.

Bare-Knuckle Boxer (6)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Strike, Parry, Networking, Information, Initiative [Physical], Menace
Conviction (-2): Look After Them What Have It Tough
Your career as a professional boxer continues to serve you well. In addition to your training, you've also maintained your contacts and keep in the know about the London boxing scene.

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 3 [Health] with melee attacks
Armor 3 [Health], 1 additional Trifling Physical consequence, reduce Middling Physical consequence to Trifling 1x/scene
Weapon 1 [Reputation]

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO OO
Trifling:	
Trifling (P):	
Middling:	
Grievous:	

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 8 (Middle Century)
Gifts: -1
Power Tiers: -5
Adjusted Refresh: 2

Mister Leon

The Dream Broker; the Madness of the Great; the Prince of Fever



Mister Leon is a creature of Faerie, one of the weird noble personages of those alien lands, but one who has dwelt long among humanity and become deeply imprinted with the essence of that mayfly species. He counts as cousins the Leanan Sídhe, the muse-maidens of Faerie who trade vision and inspiration for the blood of their mortal poets. But Leon is less the muse and more the merchant. He cares nothing for the blood of humanity—nasty, salty stuff with hints of disillusionment and copper. Mister Leon is a broker, a seller of dreams. While most of the faerie can spin the stuff of their mercurial flesh and aether into visions, Mister Leon has transcended this. He does not create a spectacle for mortals to view, but reaches inside them and creates phantasmagoria from the stuff of their own souls. When Mister Leon sells you a dream, it is for your enjoyment (or terror) alone.

POV: Humanity is so… fascinating. Like watching a carriage accident. You just can't take your eyes off them as they crash headlong into disaster after disaster, never learning, heedless of the looming chasm. It is simply delicious. Oh, you're not vicious, like some of your kin. You don't prod humanity along, herding them faster towards their doom. You love them far, far too much for that. But as you tell your lovers, a faerie's affection is not a man's affection. Commerce is endlessly amusing—people buying and selling, trading they know not what for some bauble or dwelling. The inequities of the age are so artful, so painfully ironic, so titillatingly deliberate, that you sometimes want to hunt down the architects of these miseries and grant them such visions as to shatter their minds with beauty—for surely, only those who created the workhouse or the prison or the slum could truly appreciate the sights you can show. But, then, you have so much trouble distinguishing one human class from another. The gorgeous rouge of fever across a street-walking prostitute's cheeks is more attractive than all the pearls of the Orient on a noble lady's long

white neck. Sometimes, when you put sights into their minds, you need not even strain your imagination—simply revealing the world as it is can make them quiver and shake. When they feel the wash of such profound insights, you feel a measure of it yourself.

Appearance: Mister Leon is every inch the Byronic hero—thin, slight, with a consumptive complexion and burning eyes which hint at dissolute living, of unwholesome pleasures, and a tendency towards cruelty. He dresses however it takes his fancy, always making whatever he wears seem like the next big fashion.

Questions

Humble Beginnings: Mister Leon began as did many of his kind, as a wisp of semi-coherent thought adrift in the Faerie aethers. The Strange winds of that land brought him near to the worlds of Man, and the force of human solidity began to shape him, give him form, identity, personality. As are the ways of his kind, the more individual identity, the more power and position. Eventually he gained enough character to have desires, and he desired to see more of the World, and the people who dwelt there.

Aspect: Immortal Curiosity

Follies of Youth: Still lacking any sophisticated understanding of human ways or society, he began playing among the peoples of pre-Roman Britain, and made much trouble for them before he learned to recognize what he was about. Unlike some faeries, Mister Leon is not malicious, just Strange, and as he learned restraint he became more able to live among humanity without revealing his Strangeness.

Aspect: Student of Human Nature

First Awakenings: Mister Leon first became enmeshed in the great struggles of humanity during the rule of Elizabeth I, playing at the intrigues of England and Spain, and working with Elizabeth's spymaster and Magus Sir Francis Walsingham in his intrigues against the Faerie Queen. That alliance won him no friends in the Otherworld, but many admirers.

Aspect: Fascinated by Inequity

Mysterious Origins: When opium came to England, Mister Leon found his great calling. Men would pay anything for the visions of the pipe, and the greatest opium dream was nothing beside the visions he could conjure in the mind. His reputation as a figure of vice, scandal and romanticism has its origin in the Chrysanthemum House, the notorious private opium den he owns. His select customers never touch the pipe, relying on Mister Leon's vision-dreams instead.

Aspect: Artistic Passions

Great Failing: While a regular at the Gates of Hades coffee house, Mister Leon made the acquaintance of King George III. Fairly soon the monarch was wholly addicted to Mister Leon's visions, even though they eventually destroyed him and shattered his sanity. Stricken by the loss of this friend, Mister Leon joined the small cadre which liberated the maddened monarch from the palace and spirited him away into the Otherworld, to live out his life in a place where his madness was sanity.

Aspect: Ironic Justice

ASPECTS

Faerie: Inhuman Poise
Upper Class: Master of the Chrysanthemum House
Conviction: A Faerie Noble's Bans and Obligations
Conviction: Ironic Justice
Conviction: Artistic Passions
Minor Complication: Fascinated by Inequity
Student of Human Nature
Immortal Curiosity

SKILLS

Great (+4): Sculpt Visions and Paint Dreams (S)
Good (+3): Contacting, Presence (S)
Fair (+2): Empathy, Academics, Occultism
Average (+1): Athletics, Alertness, Intimidation, Resources, Stealth
Total Cost: 36 (21 ratings + 15 trappings)

GIFTS/POWER TIERS

Theme (Free Gift): +2 to maneuvers with Sculpt Visions and Paint Dreams, Use Presence instead of Resolve to defend

against fear, +2 to maneuvers with Contacting
Skilled (-1 Refresh): +5 skill points
Impact (-1 Refresh): Declare aspect for free when Presence roll obtains spin
Superhuman Tier (-2 Refresh): Sculpt Visions and Paint Dreams
Superhuman Tier (-2 Refresh): Presence
Minor Weakness (+1 Refresh): Iron

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Sculpt Visions and Paint Dreams (14)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Menace + Range x2 [3 zones] + Zone + Unusual: Deals Physical consequences (+3), Parry + Unusual: Illusion (+1), Disguise + Range x3 [3 zones] + Spray + Unusual: Illusion (+5), Hide + Unusual: Illusion (+1), Skulk + Unusual: Illusion (+1)

Major Snag (-2): Doesn't work against the Fae or creatures without minds

Major Snag (-2): Illusory effects of all trappings instantly dispelled by the touch of iron

Conviction (-2): Ironic Justice

Conviction (-2): Artistic Passions

You command all manner of illusions—illusions strong enough to inflict real physical harm on your enemy, convincing enough to turn a fatal blow, or subtle enough to cloak someone in a convincing guise.

Presence (-)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Minor Complication (-): Fascinated by Inequity

TIER BENEFITS

Move 2 zones while remaining hidden
When disguised, temporarily gain two aspects appropriate to the disguise
Armor 2 [Reputation], gain one additional Trifling Social consequence

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO
Composure	OOO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:
Trifling (S):
Middling:
Grievous:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 8 (Middle Century)
Gifts: -2
Power Tiers: -3
Adjusted Refresh: 3

The Lady Mirabel, Countess of La Lámina

Countess of La Lámina; Dame Mirabel; The Night Hag

Dame Mirabel Zelle is a woman apart. She has denied the restrictions society places on her sex, and traveled the world, adventured, loved and fought. She has grown Strange not through weird unnatural influences but through the transformative power of wide experience. A social butterfly and subject of scandal, few in London have an inkling of her true past, how she came to acquire a Spanish title, an English peerage, her vast wealth, or her astonishing breadth of experience. Striking rather than beautiful, she never lacks for admirers, and only her lovers know just how many of her adventures are writ upon her long body in the form of scars, oriental tattoos, and hard whipcord muscle. By day she has every eye on her, but by night, when she dons the tattered costume and iron mask of the Night Hag, few dare to look upon her at all.

POV: You've torn life open and squeezed its juices into your mouth, letting them run down your face. Born low but brilliant, you used every wile and stratagem to raise yourself



up, inheriting three fortunes and two noble titles, and learning every skill you could. You're an initiate of secret faiths, the mistress of the gypsy blade and the weird hand-fighting techniques of China. You can ride, shoot, trim sails, speak seven languages, stalk tigers, climb a mountain face with your fingers, play the violin with virtuosity, bind wounds and concoct healing drugs, bowl a cricket ball like a master, double your fortune with shrewd investment, plan a military campaign, and recite the complete works of Shakespeare from memory. Yet your nation and homeland denies you the vote, buries you beneath petticoat and bonnet, and allows a husband (should you be fool enough to marry again) to beat you, rape you, and rob you blind. All this, with a Queen on the throne.

Appearance: The Lady Mirabel is tall and spare, and every inch the noble. She radiates poise and control, dresses fashionably and properly, and converses with great intelligence. Her proper Victorian clothing conceals an athlete's body, slim to the point of boyish, but hard as a boxer's. She wears gloves and is careful to keep her hands from being too closely examined, as they betray the scars of a knife fighter and the calluses of a martial artist. Her torso, upper arms, and legs are covered in elaborate Japanese tattoos, and interlaced here and there with scars from tooth, fang, fire, bullet, and blade.

Questions

Humble Beginnings: Lady Mirabel was born Abigail Scull in London's East End. Her mother was a prostitute, and Abby found herself on the streets too before she was 15. She caught the eye of an ambitious pimp who had her better dressed and educated, so as to serve the more discriminating men of the West End. There, her voracious mind and wit allowed her to earn many wealthy admirers, finally snaring an elderly mill owner from the North. When the old man died, Abigail (now Mirabel) inherited the fortune, and with the aid of a clever solicitor saw the fortune bound up in a trust which allowed her access and control.

Aspect: Keeping Her Secrets

Follies of Youth: Mirabel spent her first fortune traveling the world, devouring experiences and having wild adventures, collecting esoteric skills and scars until nearly dying in Africa at age 25 of malaria.

Aspect: Cat-Killing Curiosity

First Awakenings: In her travels, Mirabel experienced every manner of Strange and exotic adventure and horror, and they each left a mark upon her: in her mind and in her body. No single event woke her. Her eyes were always open, only needing new sights to see. She pursued adventure and occasionally found love—although it was usually brief and tragic, as with the Spanish pirate and rogue the Count of La Lámina.

Aspect: Mistress of All Pursuits

Secret Origins: Mirabel was treated by a village shaman while in her ague-induced delirium, and the old sorcerer guided her soul through Strange lands and lost ages before returning her to her disease-ravaged body. In the dream, she confronted the Night Hag, a thing of rage and darkness which lurked within her, demanding release. When she was recovered she returned to her homeland and the city of her birth, where she created herself as the Lady Lámina, recently of Spain and widow of the Count of La Lámina.

Aspect: Scarred by Adventure and Horror

Great Failing: Mirabel's great failing is her vengeance, embodied by the Night Hag. The voice of the Hag taunts her from the back of her mind, where she cages it during the day. When she loses control of the Hag, people die—and perhaps worse, each time she kills with the Hag's hands, she grows to *like it more*. She knows rationally the Hag is a part of her, and that it suggests madness, but she can't seek escape. In her heart, she loves that side of herself.

Aspect: Raiment of the Night Hag

ASPECTS

Super-Normal: Will of Iron
Upper Class: The Lady Mirabel, Countess of La Lámina
Conviction: A Woman's Vengeance
Conviction: Keeping Her Secrets
Major Complication: Scarred by Adventure and Horror
Major Complication: Cat-Killing Curiosity
Mistress of All Pursuits
Raiment of the Night Hag

SKILLS

Great (+4): Countess La Lámina, Resolve
Good (+3): Raiment of the Night Hag (E), Fisticuffs (E), Presence
Fair (+2): Alertness, Athletics, Burglary, Occultism
Average (+1): Mistress of All Pursuits (E), Academics, Investigation, Endurance
Total Cost: 45 (29 ratings + 16 trappings)

GIFTS AND POWER TIERS

Skilled x3 (-3 Refresh): +15 skill points
Equipment (-1 Refresh): Iron Claws (Well-Made: +1 Fisticuffs, Deadly: Weapon 1 [Health] with Fisticuffs)
Equipment (Free Gift): Night Hag Costume (Aspect: Voluminous Secret-Filled Sleeves, Protective x2: Armor 2 [Health])
Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Raiment of the Night Hag
Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Mistress of All Pursuits
Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Fisticuffs

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Raiment of the Night Hag (11)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Menace, Disguise, Move + Unusual: Swinging (+1), Climb, Skulk, Hide
Major Focus (-2): Raiment of the Night Hag
Minor Snag (-1): Disguise is limited to costume and mask
The Night Hag costume includes a terrifying mask, a thick cloak that helps hide your identity and obscure your form, and weighted steel spiders on fine woven cable that you can use to swing through the shadows.

Countess of La Lámina (3)

Networking, Information, Wealth, Influence, Insight
Conviction (-2): Keeping Her Secrets
Major Complication (-2): Cat-Killing Curiosity
In your public persona, you are a social butterfly, able to make and break reputations in English society, and a keen judge of character.



Mistress of All Pursuits (2)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Variable [Scene]
Major Complication (-2): Scarred by Adventure and Horror
This skill reflects your wide background as a traveler, noblewoman, and adventuress.

TIER BENEFITS

Move 1 zone while remaining hidden

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO O
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO OO
Trifling:	
Middling:	
Grievous:	

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 8 (Middle Century)
Gifts: -4
Power Tiers: -3
Adjusted Refresh: 1

Dr. Archibald Monroe

Doctor Simian; The Incredible Speaking Ape; "Sir" Archibald

Dr. Archibald Monroe is a man who glories in his Strangeness. Once he was merely a brilliant but professionally-unremarkable consulting physician and amateur scientific Jack of All Trades. Inspired by the words of Charles Darwin, he concocted a drug which he hoped would reveal to him the germ-cell memories of his direct-line ancestors, and allow him to scientifically verify Mr. Darwin's theories. Instead, his formula remade him in the image of such an ancestor. Bombastic and verbose before his transformation, he became even more gregarious and outgoing. Today his charm sometimes even makes people forget that he has been remade by Strange science, becoming a 180-pound ape creature.

POV: A Wonder of the Age! That's what the *Strand* called you. Of course, the *Gazette* named you one of the "abominations tainting our old London". But those fools can choke on their reservations, because you have seen the *future*

and it is *you*. *Science* is unlocking the secrets of the universe. Mr. Franklin inspired you, and Dr. Darwin encouraged you, and your studies of the workings of the human body, of natural science and of the modern alchemy of formulation, changed you. You have unlocked the secrets of life, but have only just begun to translate them. Rather than discourage you, the vast realms of knowledge you have yet to encompass inspire you to greater energy. You cherish the vast seas of your ignorance, for nothing is grander than seeing it recede and finding the conch shells of wisdom on its shores.

Appearance: Archibald resembles a large chimpanzee: hunched, covered in coarse brown fur, with heavy hands and semiprehensile feet. He's a gentleman, however, and shaves his face, save for his bushy side whiskers. His head hair is always trimmed, oiled and combed back, and his clothing, made specially for him by Brighton & Sons of Pall Mall, is of excellent cut and material. He is especially fond of waistcoats in iridescent colors, which "speak to me of the birds of paradise, as my kin might see in the trees about them." His appearance is unavoidably comical, and he acknowledges it, finding humor an excellent way of disarming people and distracting them from the fact that his simian body is powerful enough to crush a man to jelly with one arm.

The Questions

Humble Beginnings: Dr. Monroe was born in Suffolk, the son of a senior clerk, educated at Rugby School and then attendant on lectures at Guy's Hospital in London from such luminaries as Sir William Gull. After entering into private consulting practice he found himself all at sea, and the work of treating London's ill did not engage his mind. Finally, boredom drove him to seek greater scientific knowledge.

Aspect: Science!

Follies of Youth: Monroe indulged in the usual foolishness one could expect from a schoolboy and then a young man of independent means living alone for the first time in London. He eventually became involved in the general scientific conversation going on all the time, and even collaborated with Sir Richard Owen on a minor paper on the comparative anatomy of mammalian digits, for which Owen denied him proper credit, leading to a public confrontation and harsh words which would set him at odds with Owen's faction of conservative elitist scientists.

Aspect: Distrusts Superstition and Occult Foolishness

First Awakenings: Monroe first realized something was Strange when his experiments in chemistry began to return *exactly* the results he was attempting, yet his results remained impossible for other scientists to reproduce. In some way, his willpower was forcing the physical processes to conform to his expectations.

Aspect: Primeval Instincts

Mysterious Origins: Monroe continued his experiments until the fateful day when his indulgence in the common adventure of self-experimentation wrought permanent and dramatic changes. In an effort to prove Darwin's theories, and to silence the man's critics (and Monroe's enemies), the young physician dissolved four grams of powder in a glass of port and drank it down. When the convulsions and pain were over, he was remade, bestial in form but not in mind.

Aspect: A Wonder of the Age!

Great Failing: In order to fund his studies, the young and newly-transformed Dr. Monroe formulated three drugs for a poorly-disguised agent of Special Branch. The first drug elicited truthful responses from a subject; the second robbed the subject of his will to resist or escape; and the third, most shamefully, destroyed the sanity of a subject completely. Regretting his collusion with Special Branch almost at once, Dr. Monroe was unable to prevent the stock of drugs he provided being used, though he swore to never resupply the secret police under any circumstances. He remains utterly shamed to think of his collaboration with the Kerberos Club's great enemy, though it preceded his membership by half a decade.

Aspect: Despises Perversions of Science

ASPECTS

Changed: Doctor Simian
Middle Class: Social Animal

Conviction: A Friend for Life
Conviction: Despises Perversions of Science
Conviction: Mistrusts Superstition and Occult Foolishness
Conviction: Science!
Major Complication: Primeval Instincts
A Wonder of the Age!

SKILLS

Great (+4): Natural Scientist, Academics
Good (+3): Physician, Simian Physique (E)
Fair (+2): Uncanny Apothecary (S), Athletics (E), Resolve
Average (+1): Fisticuffs, Alertness, Presence, Empathy, Investigation
Total Cost: 50 (25 ratings + 25 trappings)

GIFTS AND POWER TIERS

Skilled (Free Gift): +5 skill points
Skilled x3 (-3 Refresh): +15 skill points
Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Simian Physique
Extraordinary Tier (-1 Refresh): Athletics
Superhuman Tier (-2 Refresh): Uncanny Apothecary

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Physician (5)

Treatment [Physical], Information, Research, Examine, Wealth
Conviction (-2): Despises Perversions of Science
You are a skilled physician, and earn a decent living from it to boot.

Natural Scientist (1)

Networking, Information, Research, Workspace, Examine
Conviction (-2): Mistrusts Superstition and Occult Foolishness
Conviction (-2): Science!
Your status as a man of science is almost as impressive as your Strange reputation; both open doors for you on a regular basis.

Simian Physique (9)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Physical Force, Stress Capacity [Health], Move, Climb, Leap
Major Complication (-2): Primeval Instincts
Your apelike form grants you impressive strength, toughness, and mobility.

Uncanny Apothecary (10)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Variable [Session] + Unusual: Bestow abilities on others x4 (+4), Workspace, Craft
Minor Focus (-1): Drugs
Major Delay (-2): Requires A Day to prepare skill for use
Minor Delay (-1): Bestowing an ability requires A Full Action/A Few Moments
Minor Snag (-1): Must personally administer drugs to subject
You nearly always have a tonic, capsule, ointment, or some other drug on you capable of conferring Strange abilities on your patient—or yourself. (The Variable trappings can be combined or doled out individually to create a variety of effects in the Mundane, Extraordinary, or Superhuman Tiers.) Given time and materials, you can also concoct drugs in the field.

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks
Armor 1 [Health]
Move 1 zone as a Free Action
Spend a Fate Point once per session to have a piece of Equipment (appropriate to your Uncanny Apothecary skill) with two improvements, *or* to add two improvements to an appropriate piece of Equipment

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO O

Trifling:
Middling:
Grievous:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 8 (Middle Century)
Gifts: -3
Power Tiers: -4
Adjusted Refresh: 1

Other Strangers

Here are some additional characters with supernatural abilities that can be used however you need in your games, as player characters, opponents, NPCs or as examples.

The Turk (Villain)

See page 52 for the Turk's background.

ASPECTS

Artificial: Clockwork Master of Games
Middle Class: Guest of Princes and Kings
Conviction: Human Society is But a Chessboard
Conviction: Criminal Mastermind
Conviction: The Winning Calculation
Major Complication: Icy Mechanical Demeanor
Minor Complication: Hardwired Curiosity
Sturdy Construction

SKILLS

Superb (+5): The Game of Life (S)
Great (+4): Self-Taught Education (S), Resolve (E), Resources
Good (+3): Sturdy Construction (E), Craftsmanship (E), Alertness

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

The Game of Life (10)
Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Networking, Influence, Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Convince, Insight
Conviction (-2): Criminal Mastermind
Minor Complication (-1): Hardwired Curiosity

Self-Taught Education (2)
Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Information, Research, Languages
Conviction (-2): The Winning Calculation

Sturdy Construction (1)
Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure]
Major Complication (-2): Icy Mechanical Demeanor

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 1 [Health]
Armor 1 [Composure]
Armor 2 [Reputation], +1 Trifling Social consequence
Weapon 1 [Health]
Weapon 2 [Composure]
Weapon 2 [Reputation]
Speak/read/write nine ordinary and four "exotic" languages

GIFTS

Skilled (Free): +5 skill points
Skilled (-1 Refresh): +5 skill points
Impact (-1 Refresh): Declare free fragile aspect when a The Game of Life roll obtains spin

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OOO

Trifling:
Trifling (S):
Middling:

REFRESH

Starting Refresh: 12
Power Tiers: -7
Gifts: -2
Adjusted Refresh: 3

The Turk isn't a physical powerhouse like many constructs, but his ability to calculate and strategize more than makes up for his lack of raw power. He's fairly tough and quite quick, but his most potent ability is the perfection with which he approaches most challenges. The

version presented here is suitable for use as a Villain; to use him as a Late Century PC with a base Refresh of 10, drop the Impact Gift, downgrade Self-Taught Education to the Extraordinary Tier, and lower all his skill ratings by one (and fill in other skills as desired).

The Elephantine Man (Villain)

Joseph Carey Merrick; The Man-Elephant; The Unleashed Savage; Merrick the Changing Man. See page 53.

ASPECTS

Human Oddity: The Elephantine Man
Underclass: Former Sideshow Freak
Conviction: Defend the Persecuted
Conviction: The Divinity of the Queen
Conviction: Loyal to the Kerberos Club
Minor Complication: Lived a Hard Life
Grotesque but Mighty Physique

SKILLS

Great (+4): Protean Flesh (S)
Good (+3): Stealth, Grotesque But Mighty Physique (S)
Fair (+2): Sideshow Performer (E), Art, Resolve

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Protean Flesh (0)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Disguise + Unusual: Shapechange (+1)
Minor Snag (-1): Can assume only humanoid forms
Minor Focus (-1): Polymorphic Tonic
Taxing (-2)

Grotesque But Mighty Physique (11)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Physical Force, Stress Capacity [Health], Resist Damage, Strike
Conviction (-2): Loyal to the Kerberos Club

Sideshow Performer (3)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Information, Networking, Inspire, Guile
Minor Complication (-1): Lived a Hard Life
Minor Weakness (+1 Refresh): Physical attacks, when not in natural horrific form

TIER BENEFITS

When disguised as someone else via Protean Form, gain two of their aspects
Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks
Weapon 1 [Social]
Armor 2 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence

GIFTS

Impact (Free): Declare aspect for free when Grotesque But Mighty Physique roll obtains spin
Skilled (-1 Refresh): +5 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO

Trifling:
Trifling (P):
Middling:
Grievous:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 10
Power Tiers: -4
Gifts: -1
Weakness: +1
Adjusted Refresh: 6

NOTES

Merrick's twisted physique is as powerful as it is deformed. While clumsy and slow, he's also astonishingly resilient. But his resilience comes with a price: Ordinary witnesses to his ability to withstand harm find it shocking and sometimes disgusting. It isn't the clean invulnerability of some Strangers; rather his flesh warps and flows around wounds, forming instant ugly scars, or results in seemingly hideous injures which leak stinking black fluids yet don't

trouble him in the least.

Nothing about Merrick is pretty, except when he injects himself with Dr. Monroe's special polymorphic tonic, which serves to organize and make conscious the properties of his weird physiology. But the effects of this power are short-lived, and his supply of the tonic at any given time is limited. (This is reflected above by the Taxing Flaw, requiring Mr. Merrick to spend a Fate Point each time he transforms.)

This version of Merrick is designed for use as a PC in a Late Century game, but with a slight change in perspective and a lot less goodwill he could just as easily be a Villain. Either way, there are a few gaps to fill in—he's missing an aspect and four points' worth of skills.

Kemnebi Meti, Watcher of the Northern Approaches (Villain)

Kemnebi Meti's appearance *should* be shocking, uncanny, terrifying—but for some reason, few seem to really notice it. He is an *androsphinx*, a great mythological conjunction of man, lion and eagle. When created by the sorcerer priests of Pharaoh Djoser of the Old Kingdom, Kemnebi Meti was a much simpler creature, content to sit on his pillar and watch the northern approaches of the kingdom for invaders. Like all his kind, he was created to live forever and change slowly. He watched the brief lives and kingdoms of humanity rise and fall, until they eventually forgot the purpose of Kemnebi and his kin. After several thousand years he began to think he was no longer needed, and left the Old Kingdom to wander the world.

He traveled, observed, befriended the occasional mystic; and before he realized it, still more millennia had passed him by and a new power was rising in the world, spreading out from a tiny island the Romans called Britannia. He traveled there with his servants Gi and Geb, and made his new home in this remarkable city of London.

He's finding the modern world quite exciting, and the conjunction of the ancient and the new challenges him as few things have done. Yet the pace of change befuddles him. The change he has witnessed in a decade in London surpasses all he saw in the four thousand years of his previous life.

The Strangers of London easily see through Kemnebi's veil of normalcy, and have become used to his presence in public, such as his regular Friday meal at the Savoy. Dining with the ancient beast is an uncanny experience, as nobody remarks on the enormous leonine form seated before the table, or the beautiful twin servants who feed their master and wipe his lips.

Kemnebi's features are a blend of lion and man, his wings those of a giant eagle, and he still insists that his mane be braided in the old style, and his beard bound properly. He can often be found observing whatever new wonders London has to offer the curious visitor, and he is a fantastic source for ancient lore. As presented here, he is a powerful NPC with an inflated base Refresh, but with some adjustments he could instead be a PC—or even a misunderstood Villain—in a Middle or Late Century game.

ASPECTS

Alien: Immortal Androsphinx
Middle Class: Society of Immortals
Conviction: Let Nothing Pass Unnoticed
Conviction: Fascination With Change
Minor Complication: Body of a Lion
Savage Combatant
Inhuman Poise and Majesty
"The secrets of the ages are lost to many, but not to me"

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Lost Secrets of the Ages (A)
Great (+4): Veil of Normalcy (E), Presence
Good (+3): Savage Combatant (S), Great Wings (E), Empathy, Alertness

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Lost Secrets of the Ages (2)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Information, Languages, Examine
Conviction (-2): Fascination With Change



Savage Combatant (19)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Force, Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], Willpower, Strike, Parry, Menace + Zone (+1)

Minor Complication (-1): Body of a Lion

Great Wings (3)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge

Minor Snag (-1): Dodge only useable while airborne

Veil of Normalcy (1)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Disguise + Unusual: Magic

Minor Snag (-1): Can only be used to appear generally inconspicuous

TIER BENEFITS

Speak/read/write all Earthly languages, living or dead, plus five unearthly languages; spend a Fate Point to spontaneously know a new language

Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks

Armor 2 [Health]; +1 Trifling Physical consequence

Armor 2 [Composure]; +1 Trifling Mental consequence

Move 1 zone as a free action

When disguised with Veil of Normalcy, gain one aspect appropriate to disguise (such as "Inconspicuous Androsphinx in the Corner")

GIFTS

Companion (Free): Gi and Geb (Fair Quality: Fair (+2) Presence, Average (+1) Alertness; Numerous; Keeping Up)

Skilled x4 (-4 Refresh): +20 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:

Trifling (P):

Trifling (M):

Middling:

REFRESH

Starting Refresh: 14

Power Tiers: -8

Gifts: -4

Adjusted Refresh: 2

The Tower Gang

The Tower Gang is somewhat famous as London's first criminal gang made up entirely of Strangers who've chosen to use their powers for selfish ends. The Gang can serve different roles, as you need them. Cast more heroically, they might be the protectors of an East End district or enclave. They might also be "protectors" in the sense of the criminal racket: Pay us for our services or someone might accidentally throw a four-wheeler through your shop window. Worse, they could be proper criminals who make no pretense of keeping to the righteous, operating with secret personas and ordinary daytime lives to mask their criminal actions. They aren't built from enormous point totals, but work well as a team and plan their stings well in advance.

Ben Bell (Villain)

One look at Ben Bell convinces you that he's nothing but a huge, thick-headed moron, grossly fat and slovenly. His beetled brow constricts tight at the least mental effort. The best one such as this might hope for is simple manual labor. And if he had any interest in honest work, he would excel at it. His gross body is inhumanly strong beneath the layers of blubber. He can lift more than twenty tons and crush iron in his hands. More frightening than all this power at the disposal of such an obvious mental deficient is the reality of Ben Bell: All this power serves a cunning and wily intelligence. While Ben Bell's skull could convince any phrenologist as to his low breeding and base mind, it contains a truly first-rate brain.

Bell is the leader of the Tower Gang, and he excels at planning its heists and stings. As detailed here, he's suitable for use as a proper Villain, with the rest of the Tower Gang as Adversaries under his command.

ASPECTS

Changed: Inhuman Strength and Girth
Underclass: Criminal Gang Boss
Conviction: Get the Proper Respect
Conviction: Stick to the Plan!
Minor Complication: Repulsive Appearance
Minor Complication: Appetite for Destruction
Surprising Speed
Always Two Steps Ahead

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Criminal Gang Boss
Great (+4): Brawn (S), Burglary, Resilient Body (A)
Good (+3): Athletics, Fisticuffs (E), Alertness, Resolve

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Criminal Gang Boss (7)

Networking, Information, Menace, Convince, Esteem, Guile

Conviction (-2): Stick to the Plan!

Resilient Body (4)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Stress Capacity [Health], Resist Damage

Minor Complication (-1): Repulsive Appearance

Brawn

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Minor Complication: Appetite for Destruction

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 3 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence, clear one Trifling Physical consequence per scene
Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks

GIFTS

Skilled (Free): +5 skill points
Skilled (-1 Refresh): +5 skill points
Theme (-1 Refresh): +2 to Criminal Gang Boss with maneuvers, Use Resilient Body instead of Deceit when trying to pass as a big dumb thug, +1 to Brawn when breaking inanimate objects



STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OOO
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO
Trifling:	
Trifling (P):	
Middling:	

Big Hand (Adversary)

Big Hand is every bit as stupid as Ben Bell looks. He's as low a class of criminal as there is in all of London. The only thing separating him from thousands of others is the miraculous power he inherited from his mother, a woman who one time abandoned her usual prostitution in favor of serving some rich perverts as an "altar of flesh" for some ritual. She escaped, but only barely, when the ritual was disrupted. She was unharmed and unaffected, but her children all displayed unusual tendencies and abilities. Big Hand can conjure two enormous hands which move and mimic the motions of his own hands, but on a much larger scale. These hands can exert enormous force, but Big Hand has difficulty exerting *less* than their maximum strength. The appearance of the hands changes with his mood. When he is calm, they are huge duplicates of his real hands. When he is enraged, they are demonic claws. When he is sullen and low, they are spectral and shadowy. When he is grief-stricken (as he was with the death of his mother), they are like hands cut from the corpse of a rotting titan.

ASPECTS

Changed: Monster Hands
Underclass: Street Thug
Conviction: Be the Big Man
Minor Complication: Big Clumsy Brute
Run Away!

SKILLS

Great (+4): Monster Hands (S), Fisticuffs
Good (+3): Intimidation, Endurance
Fair (+2): Occultism, Resolve, Intimidation, Athletics

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Monster Hands (8)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Physical Force, Strike + Range x2 [3 zones]+2, Parry + Range [1 zone]+1
Minor Complication (-1): Big Clumsy Brute
Minor Snag (-1): No fine manipulation

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with Monster Hands

GIFTS

Impact (Free): Declare aspect for free when Monster Hands roll obtains spin

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO

SUMMARY

Big Hand's powers are loud and obvious. There's no mistaking the giant monstrous hands he conjures, or who the one is doing the conjuring. The problem is that his control is rough, and he's prone to cause a lot of collateral damage, as reflected by his "Big Clumsy Brute" aspect.

Little Hand (Adversary)

Little Hand is Big Hand's younger sister, though she dresses and acts like a boy. Little Hand has a power similar to Big Hand's, but on a smaller and more precise scale. By conjuring pale ghostly hands she can pick any pocket she can see, and move small objects right into her own real hand when she releases the ghost hands back to wherever they come from. She idolizes her dim-witted brother for his courage and his pride, but has no illusions about his temper or his brain. She figures she can do the thinking for them both, and let him think he's taking care of everything.

ASPECTS

Changed: Ghost Hands
Underclass: Street Urchin
Conviction: Her Brother's Keeper
Minor Complication: A Child at Heart
Minor Complication: Living in a Grown-Up World

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Street Urchin
Great (+4): Ghost Hands (S), Alertness
Good (+3): Empathy, Burglary, Resolve

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Street Urchin (8)

Guile, Skulk, Hide, Insight, Convince, Environment [Urban], Networking
Minor Complication (-1): A Child at Heart

Ghost Hands (8)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Strike + Range + Unusual: Ignore physical barriers/protection (+2), Parry + Range (+1), Dexterity + Range (+1)
Minor Complication (-1): Living in a Grown-Up World

TIER BENEFITS

None

GIFTS

Theme (Free): (Use Street Urchin instead of Deceit to pilfer small objects, +2 to Ghost Hands with maneuvers, +2 to Empathy with maneuvers)
Skilled x2 (-2 Refresh): +10 skill points

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO

SUMMARY

Where Big Hand is all power and noise, Little Hand is silence and trickery. Her ghostly hands are nearly invisible unless someone knows what to look for.

The Face (Adversary)

The being known as The Face is an enigma, neither man nor woman, a person without sex or shape or a fixed identity. The Face was born in this weird unfixed state. It would have been an Oddity, a freakish inhuman thing, had it not learned early on the trick of fixing its shape and identity into a pleasing form. The Face was its mother's little darling, a cherubic baby right from the fantasy of any expectant mother. The Face found this strategy marvelously successful, adopting shapes which pleased others, met their expectations, and allowed the Face to survive. The Face grew up, and began wondering who it really was. Who was it when it was alone? When there was nobody to loan it an identity with their expectations, who could it be? Somewhere during this confusing time, the Face found Ben Bell. The big man, seeing the obvious potential in the weird being, told the Face who it was: the greatest confidence player who ever lived.

If pushed, the Face can extrude deadly talons or mandibles harden its skin to stone-like rigidity without any change in flexibility or appearance.

ASPECTS

Mutant: Subtle Shapeshifter
Underclass: Confidence Man
Conviction: Play the Part
Minor Complication: Who Am I?

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Mercurial Form (S)
Great (+4): Athletics, Deceit, Endurance
Good (+3): Empathy, Presence, Resolve

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Mercurial Form (13)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Disguise + Unusual: Shapechange, Resist Damage, Strike, Menace
Minor Complication (-1): Who Am I?

TIER BENEFITS

When disguised as a target, gain two of the target's aspects

GIFTS

Theme (Free): +1 to Deceit when lying, +2 to Mercurial Form with maneuvers, +1 to Empathy with aspect assessments
Skilled x2 (-1 Refresh): +10 skill points

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO OOO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OO

Tick Tock (Adversary)

The criminal Tick Tock discovered his powers while indulging in one of his many addictions. He smoked opium when not drinking laudanum or stealing to pay for them. On the fateful day his powers awoke, he enjoyed the sense of time slowing down that he had come to expect from good opium—but when he turned his gaze about the opium den, he realized it wasn't his sense of time which had slowed, but time itself. He was outside of time, the curled smoke from his pipe like a hook in the air, a bead of sweat broken from the nose of the opium sot next to him shining like a frozen jewel in the lamplight. He was already what one might call morally compromised, and the criminal possibilities inherent in his power were obvious. With the power to suspend the flow of time or somehow step outside of it for several minutes, he found he could easily steal enough to support his habits and keep himself in comparative luxury. With Ben Bell to direct his powers to good effect, he profited still more. Tick Tock remains the weakest link in the Tower Gang. His addictions drive him and make him unreliable, but his powers are so valuable that the team endures him as they must.

ASPECTS

Mutant: Time Manipulator
Social Class: Opportunistic Thief

Conviction: Opium Addict
Major Complication: Morally Compromised
The Ruin of a Once-Fine Mind

SKILLS

Great (+4): Sidestep Time (A), Deceit
Good (+3): Endurance, Contacting
Fair (+2): Marksmanship, Presence

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Sidestep Time (12)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Dodge + Range [others in same zone] + Spray (+2), Initiative [Physical] + Range [others in same zone] + Spray (+2), Hide + Range [others in same zone] + Spray (+2), Skulk + Range [others in same zone] + Spray (+2)
Major Complication (-2): Morally Compromised
Taxing (-2)

GIFTS

Theme (Free): +2 to Sidestep Time with maneuvers, +1 to Deceit when lying, use Contacting instead of Resources when buying illicit goods

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO
Reputation	OOO OO

SUMMARY

Tick Tock can cause time to freeze about him. He can then walk about for a few minutes from his perspective while everything is frozen. He's able to affect an entire zone and selectively freeze time, permitting his allies to join him in moving between the seconds. The Range and Spray Extras in his Sidestep Time skill let him grant a wide variety of advantages to his allies, including letting them use his initiative in a physical conflict as their own, as part of an aspect maneuver to put an appropriate aspect on each of his allies at once, or as a Block which benefits only his allies.

Tick Tock's powers are quite difficult to maintain and leave him with an intense craving for opium. He rarely has the fortitude of character to resist it. Mechanically, this is reflected in the Taxing Flaw on his Sidestep Time skill.

Strangeness of Every Sort . . .

There follows a collection of extraordinary characters without much *character*, if you take the meaning. They can quickly be customized to suit the needs of your campaign. Each includes notes on how to scale them to fit your game, and additional notes on using them as Kerberans to fill the halls of the Club with oddities and Strangers.

Faerie

"Come closer, pretty thing, and sing to us of your world. Let us drink of it, and be made again by it, and dance with you unseen, and bring you miracles and wonders and treasures, yes? Just invite us into your heart, and give yourself to us, and we'll give you the whole wide world. So small a thing, for so much . . ."

The faerie are a highly impressionable race. They lack the complicated minds of humanity, so they might feel a passing fancy as deeply as a person would experience the deepest Convictions. With their naturally phantasmagorical, quicksilver forms, the weaker of the Fae are in a constant state of flux, shifting form as often as thoughts drift through their airy minds: To think of a thing is to become it.

If these wisps are strongly imprinted with powerful human concepts, with *words*, they might form into discrete entities—the countless goblins, fetches, sprites and imps which lurk about in the Otherworld.

If they are stronger-willed and more thoroughly imprinted with *identity,* they might become Beasts, unique monsters, often given form by myths and heraldic imagery—dragons and giants are especially popular. A Beast is made stronger when its sense of self is reinforced—look to its Convictions for this—so it acts in the world and causes legends to spring up, stories to be told which strengthen its identity, which makes it more powerful, which lets it act more prominently in the world, and more legends spring up. . . . But a Beast doesn't last forever. Inevitably some hero comes along and dispatches it, breaking its hold on the minds and hearts (and bodies) of the area it terrorizes.

The more human-seeming of the faerie are the peers and nobles, who have a complexity of mind and identity almost as sturdy as a human child's. This is perhaps why the Fae have reputations for being so mercurial and short-tempered. The eldest, wisest and most powerful of them has the maturity of a five-year-old.

Faerie Commoner (Five Average-quality Minions)

Aspects (pick two): Faerie Glamour, Making Mischief, Proper Recompense for My Labor, Skulking Sneak

Scopes: Average (+1) Mental (E)

Fate Point cost: 1

Faerie Beast (Adversary)

ASPECTS

Faerie: Fearsome Faerie Beast

Conviction: A Terrible and Majestic Bane Upon the Land

Conviction: Defend Territory

Minor Complication: Hunted by the Foolhardy and Unwise

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Primal Ferocity (S)

Great (+4): Stealth

Good (+3): Faerie Glamour (S), Alertness, Athletics (E), Magnificent Beast (S)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Primal Ferocity (5)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Strike, Parry, Physical Force

Conviction (-2): Defend Territory

Magnificent Beast (9)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Menace, Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], Willpower

Minor Complication (-1): Hunted by the Foolhardy and Unwise

Faerie Glamour (10)

Power Tiers: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Menace + Range [1 zone] + Unusual: Deals Physical *Consequences (+2), Parry + Unusual:* Illusion (+1), *Disguise + Range [1 zone] + Unusual:* Illusion (+2)

Minor Snag (-1): Doesn't work against other Fae

Minor Snag (-1): Trappings with Unusual: Illusion Extra instantly dispelled by the touch of iron

Minor Weakness [Physical] (+1 Refresh): Iron

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-claw attacks

Armor 2 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence

Armor 2 [Composure], +1 Trifling Mental consequence

When disguised as a target with Faerie Glamour, gain two of its aspects

GIFTS

Equipment (Free): Claws and Teeth (*Deadly x2:* Weapon 2 [Health], Aspect: Otherworldly Monster)

Skilled x3 (-3 Refresh): +15 skill points

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO OOO
Composure	OOO OOO
Social	OOO

Faerie Peer (Villain)

ASPECTS

Faerie: Gorgeous Deceiver
Upper Class: Noble of the Otherworld
Conviction: Cruel Romance
Conviction: Always Return a Good Deed or an Ill One
Conviction: Open the Minds of Man to the Voluptuous Joys of Chaos
Exquisite Cruelty

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Faerie Glamour (S)
Superb (+5): Endurance (S), Resolve (S)
Great (+4): Empathy (E), Presence (S)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Faerie Glamour

(see Faerie Beast)

Minor Invulnerability [Physical] (-1 Refresh): Attacks from humans
Minor Weakness [Physical] (+1 Refresh): Iron

TIER BENEFITS

Armor 2 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence
Armor 2 [Composure], +1 Trifling Mental consequence
Armor 2 [Reputation], +1 Trifling Social consequence
Weapon 1 [Mental]
Gain two of target's aspects when disguised with Faerie Glamour

GIFTS

Impact (Free): Declare aspect for free when Faerie Glamour roll obtains spin
Skilled (-1 Refresh): +5 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OOO
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO OOO

Trifling:
Trifling (P):
Trifling (M):
Trifling (S):
Middling:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 12
Power Tiers: -9
Gifts: -1
Adjusted Refresh: 2

Notes

The faerie all are tricky and powerful creatures. Their natural abilities of illusion and the power to assume the seeming of other forms make them devilish tricksters, when they choose to limit their mischief to the merely confounding. When they turn their minds to more hurtful things, even the lowly common Fae can drive men mad with visions.

The Beast is a towering chimeric monstrosity the size of an elephant, red in tooth and claw; yet it possesses a measure of intelligence and can use the powers of its faerie nature.

The most terrible of the Fae are the Peers, the self-styled nobles who impose their weird ideals of rulership upon the Otherworld. Their powers are wildly varied, but this example has exquisitely-honed versions of the Fae's natural powers, potent defenses, and a special resistance to all attacks by mortal man due to a pact with powerful Earth spirits (although they retain the characteristic Faerie vulnerability to iron). Fortunately, many Strangers hardly qualify as "man" or "mortal".

As a Member of the Club

The Peer is the only rank of the faerie suitable for full Club membership, though there are several Common Fae on

the staff, and, it is said, a Beast lurking somewhere in the cellars.

The Kerberos Club boasts several Faerie Peers as members, but few are more notorious than the Prince of Morning, Felix Bursoilamayre. His taste for cruel and tragic love affairs has earned him a reputation as a rake and heart-breaker. He makes no promises to the women (and men) he seduces, but draws them in, and fills their heads with the illusions of love and their surroundings with illusory wonders. When the moment is its most perfect, he abandons them. His enemies far outnumber his friends, and some of the suicides he has caused still haunt him, quite literally. He avoids roads whenever possible, "For the dead walk the roads knowing their enemies must some day travel."

Yet for all his cruelty, he is a famously joyous companion, charming, witty, unexpectedly kind, and embarrassingly generous. He loses gracefully at games of chance and always laughs like it's a grand joke and stands his round of drinks. A boon companion, so long as he doesn't take a fancy to your sister or your wife.

The Freak (Villain)

"Do not look upon me with such hate in your eyes! I am a man, not a monster! But damn you all, staring and mocking and shivering. If you would make a monster of me, then so be it! All that comes after shall be on your own heads."

The Freak is deformed in body by an accident of birth or of fate, but what makes him more than the subject of sympathy or curiosity is how twisted in spirit and mind he has become as well. His body is bent and tumorous, hunched and asymmetrical, and were it not for the unnatural vitality coursing through his ravaged form, he would certainly have died from his malformations long ago. Either through some physical flaw in his brain or from the horrendous treatment at the hands of his fellow man, in his hate for the straight-limbed and unmarked the Freak finds a reason to live. He haunts the city, cloaked to hide the worst of his deformities, and seeks to rally and unite all those rejected, all those exiled from the light and society of man. When the Freak's army is ready, he will bring revolution against everything he hates. He'll tear down the kingdom of beauty and replace it with an empire of the gross and the Strange.

ASPECTS

Human Oddity: The Elongated Man
Underclass: Exiled from the Light
Conviction: The Freak Shall Inherit the Earth
Conviction: "I am a Man, not a Monster!"
Conviction: Rally the Freak Underground
Major Complication: Freakishly Horrifying or Horrifyingly Freakish?
Network of Blackmailed Pawns
Surprisingly Persuasive

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Grotesque Elongation (S)
Great (+4): Fight Dirty (E), Contacting, Presence (E)
Good (+3): Endurance, Resolve, Fisticuffs

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Grotesque Elongation (7)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Strike + *Spray* + *Unusual:* Suffocation (+2), Physical Force + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3)
Conviction (-2): "I am a Man, not a Monster!"
Major Complication (-2): Freakishly Horrifying or Horrifyingly Freakish?

Fight Dirty (7)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Guile, Hide, Skulk, Dodge, Insight
Conviction (-2): Rally the Freak Underground

Minor Invulnerability [Physical] (-1 Refresh): Fists and bludgeons

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with Grotesque Elongation and Fisticuffs attacks
Weapon 1 [Composure]
Move 1 zone while hidden without being seen

GIFTS

Theme (Free): +1 to Contacting to learn gossip, +2 to Fight Dirty with maneuvers, use Grotesque Elongation instead of Presence to inspire others with the Human Oddity Archetype

Skilled x2 (-2 Refresh): +10 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:

Middling:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 10

Power Tiers: -5

Gifts: -2

Adjusted Refresh: 3

Notes

The Freak is angry and driven to tear down society and all standards of "normal," and he's well equipped to do so. He has a great deal of influence in the underground, where the poorest of the poor meet the deformed and the outcast. He's a terribly dirty fighter when forced to rely on simply fist and feet, but despite his monstrous appearance he is a surprisingly affecting speaker. If all this weren't enough, his network of blackmail victims will often do anything to keep their dirty secrets from being revealed. The Freak is a man with his ear close to the filthy ground.

In combat, the Freak can spread his body out over a large area and attack everyone within, entangling, choking and crushing them. He can discern his allies and friends by touch and leave them unharmed while surrounded by his pulsing liquid flesh. In addition, his gross and deformed body is horribly flexible, able to stretch and elongate to a frightening degree.

To enhance the Freak as a threat, increase his Refresh to 14 and add the following Strange skill, which allows the Freak to infect a human or animal with a fragment of his weird flesh and then control their actions:

Control Men and Beasts (0)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Convince + Psychic (2)

Major Snag (-2): Only against targets that have been hit with a Grotesque Elongation attack earlier in the scene

As a Member of the Club

Johan Riven was too weird even for the circus. He survived on what he could scavenge and steal before one day in the rain he watched his limbs stretch and seemingly liquefy. He wept, believing God was washing him away like a stain. But he survived after pouring into a sewer and emerged into the Thames, a new man. He used his powers first for petty crime, but quickly realized that ordinary folk now feared him rather than being simply disgusted with him. He liked that. He found some fellow unfortunates and began to organize them. Before he knew it, he was leading a movement of human oddities, and the Special Branch was raiding his meetings. During one such raid, Johan engulfed and badly injured several officers, and had to flee before the law caught up with him. He fled in the hold of an East India Company tea clipper, and had a wild adventure in India which turned out to be a Kerberan challenge. Presented finally with the truth, he cursed his tormentors, and then laughed, accepting the invitation to join. Here were people as Strange as he, who never flinched from his appearance.

Saurian Survivor (Villain)

"Hsssssss! From the dawn of time, my people rose and conquered when man was nothing but the dream of monkeys. Haaaaaaaaach. Dead now these aeons! Yet through me, my people shall rise again. And rule!"

In the primal days of the young Earth the great beasts walked upon the land, flew the skies and swam the seas, dragons by any other name, enormous and terrible. It was an age of monsters. From this frenzied dance of claw and fang rose the Saurians, creatures descended from dinosaur stock as Mr. Darwin would have us believe Man rose from his apish antecedents. Theirs was a cool intelligence, untroubled by the complexities of mammalian society. Their emotions were primal things, primitive: blood, rage, hunger, territoriality. No kinder feelings touched their reptilian souls.

They subjugated the world, drove the invading colonies of Elder Things to near extinction, and established their ever-warring dynastic kingdoms. Their technology was not one of machines, but of the subjugation of living species, and their forced transformation into useful forms. When the end came in the form of fire from the heavens, the Saurians died in the millions. What the fires did not destroy, the slow crush of glaciers finished. And so, the first great civilization of Earth was lost almost entirely.

Sleeping through the ages in a tough pod formed from flesh as much as plant fiber, the Survivor was carried by the glaciers, frozen in an Antarctic tomb until the curious monkeys who rose up to dominate the world came, exploring, and returned to their tiny island bearing the weird leathery cocoon as their prize.

Now freed from her slumber, the Saurian Survivor works in secret, using her mastery of living flesh to empower her human pawns with the abilities of beasts, breeding her own army of Strangers against the day when her precious eggs hatch. Then she'll emerge from hiding to enslave and remake humanity and found a new Saurian dynasty.

ASPECTS

Alien: Last Remnant of the Saurian Dynasties
Middle Class: Secret Patron of the Silliard Salon
Conviction: Found New Saurian Dynasty
Conviction: Protect Her Offspring
Major Complication: Contemptuous of Mankind
Ways of Claw and Fang
Master of Prehuman Sciences
The Vats

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): The Vats (A), The Saurian Sciences (S)
Superb (+5): Ways of Claw and Fang (S), Stealth
Great (+4): Endurance, Alertness, Presence

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

The Vats (3)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Minions [Advanced], Strike + Unusual: Bypasses armor and similar physical defenses (+1), Craft, Treatment [Physical], Workspace
Major Focus (-2): The Vats
Major Snag (-2): Strike can only be used against submerged targets
Major Delay (-2): Requires A Day to activate
Taxing (-2)

Prehuman Sciences (1)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Information (1), Research (1)
Major Complication (-2): Contemptuous of Mankind

Ways of Claw and Fang (5)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Strike, Parry, Physical Force
Conviction (-2): Protect Her Offspring

TIER BENEFITS

Summon Minions with Superhuman or Extraordinary skills



Use The Vats to treat Middling and Grievous Physical consequences, reattach limbs

Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks

Spend a Fate Point once per session to reveal a piece of Equipment with three improvements, or spontaneously add two improvements to an existing piece of Equipment

GIFTS

Impact (Free): Declare aspect for free when Ways of Claw and Fang roll obtains spin

Skilled x3 (-3 Refresh): +15 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OOO
Composure	OOO
Reputation	OOO

Trifling:

Middling:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 12

Power Tiers: -8

Gifts: -3

Adjusted Refresh: 1

Notes

This version of the Saurian Survivor is a fairly simple beast. She hides beneath a fashionable health spa, the Silliard Salon, and uses her biological sciences to cure diseases, reverse the aging process, and turn people into hideous chimera creatures. Her minions drug wealthy spa patrons and bear them secretly down to the Vats, where the Survivor immerses them in the vile living stew and alters their physiology to make them better-looking, no longer bald, younger, thinner. She sometimes subjects herself to this process if she must blend in with the disgusting anthropoids for a time. Mechanically, this is a matter of using The Vats for an aspect maneuver. (This is mostly a plot device, but if you want something more detailed, add Disguise + Range to The Vats, with a Minor Snag: Disguise can only be used to make targets look like young, attractive humans.)

Her human pawns are either dupes or willing accomplices, serving her in exchange for power. The Vats—the source of her terrible power—are huge cisterns containing the bubbling remains of living flesh rendered down into a complex and potent biological soup.

The other function of The Vats is to create living

creatures which act like foci, often grafted like parasites to a host. Some examples follow. These are built using the Craft trapping.

To make the Saurian Survivor more potent, simply select (or create) vile new living technology for her to employ.

BLENDING CLOAK

Equipment: Well-Made: +1 to Stealth, Aspect: Invisible to the Naked Eye

Craft Difficulty: Fantastic (+6)

Derived from octopus stock. Dozens of eyes and color-changing skin lets the cloak blend a wearer into the surroundings almost perfectly. It grips its wearer around the neck and shoulders with eight short tentacles.

RAZORWASP HIVE

Equipment: Well-Made: +1 to Arms, Deadly: Weapon 1 [Health]

Craft Difficulty: Fantastic (+6)

A gnarled lump of tissue on the end of a bone scepter with hundreds of holes, each holding a vicious and aggressive razorwasp.

LIVING CARAPACE

Equipment: Protective: Armor 1 [Health], Rugged: +1 Health stress box, Essential: +1 Trifling Physical consequence

Craft Difficulty: Fantastic (+6)

A shell of living tissue and bone plates.

Fair (+2) Raptor Harness

Power Tier: Extraordinary

Move + Unusual: Flight (+1)

Minor Focus (-1)

Craft Difficulty: Good (+3) (E)

Fate Point Investment: 1

A twisted bird thing which grips the user and carries her aloft with its huge wings.

Great (+4) Hypnotic Veil

Power Tier: Extraordinary

Disguise + Psychic (+1)

Minor Focus (-1)

Minor Snag (-1): Only works as long as the wearer remains calm

Minor Snag (-1): Wearer has no control over specifics of disguise

Craft Difficulty: Good (+3) (E)

Fate Point Investment: 1

A helm of shell and bone filled with the rendered but still-living pineal glands of human psychics. It projects a mental illusion which renders the wearer's appearance normal to a given situation, like someone an observer would expect to see. The user has no control over the projected image, however. Further, the Veil fails if the wearer doesn't stay calm.

As a Member of the Club

A human tongue and throat can't form her name, human alphabets can't transcribe it. So, she is called the Duchess around the Club, and nobody is so gauche as to mention the three Kerberans she very nearly killed when she came close to toppling Victoria's throne and overrunning the world with her monstrous spawn.

She's a little embarrassed about the whole business, now. Newly awakened from the sleep of ages, confused and angry, she lashed out. But like many of the Empire's former enemies, she was persuaded finally into the weird company of the Kerberos Club. They made a deal with the Saurian warlord: They gave her Antarctica. Transforming the frozen wastes into the steamy jungles of her home will be the work of generations, of ages, a conquest of science and will worthy of a Saurian noble. She always drops by the London house on her travels, to exchange pointed witticisms and joking threats with her old foes.

Her Sister's Keeper (Adversary)

"Unhand me, sir! My husband will have something to say about such familiarity, and he shall . . . shall . . . uhhhh . . . OH, NEVER MIND. WE SHAN'T NEED TO TROUBLE POOR DEAR CHARLES WITH SUCH AN UGLY BIT OF BUSINESS, SHALL WE? HE'S SUCH AN IMPORTANT MAN, YOU KNOW. HE CAN'T AFFORD TO BE INVOLVED IN SOMETHING AS HORRIBLE AS A MURDER. YOURS, FOR EXAMPLE."

Her Sister's Keeper seems in every way to be the proper Victorian woman: upper middle class, charitable, well-spoken and well-read, a doting but firm mother, a dutiful wife to an up-and-coming member of government. And she is indeed all these things. Her "Sister," however, is not. The Sister is cunning, amoral, licentious, and vicious, a monster capable of any outrage or excess, driven by the primal animal instincts of blood, territory and the power of attraction. Where her Keeper is soft spoken, the Sister is base and loud. Where her Keeper is kind, she is cruel. Where her Keeper defers to the proper authority of men, she most assuredly and often violently does not.

Two personalities forced to share the same body, the Sister and the Keeper might war, cooperate, or perhaps even be unaware of each other, but each recognizes the absolute imperative in keeping their condition secret, whatever that might require.

ASPECTS

Mutant: Two-Faced Woman

Middle Class: A Future in Politics

Conviction: Wife and Mother (Protect Family At All Costs)

Conviction: Must Maintain Reputation (Fighting to Be Free)

Major Complication: Vicious Street Harpy Hiding Inside Proper Victorian Woman

SKILLS

Great (+4): Proper Victorian Woman, Vicious Harpy (S)

Good (+3): Deceit, Presence, Street Brawler (E)

Fair (+2): Bureaucracy, Stealth, Resources, Fisticuffs

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Proper Victorian Woman (8)

Conversation, Information, Insight, Networking, Influence, Esteem, Initiative [Social]

Conviction (-2): Must Maintain Reputation

Vicious Harpy (6)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Stress Capacity [Health], Stress Capacity [Composure], Physical Force, Willpower, Menace

Major Complication (-2): Vicious Street Harpy by Night

Minor Transformation (-1): Replace "Wife and Mother" with "Must Protect Family at All Costs"

Minor Transformation (-1): Replace "Must Protect Reputation" with "Fighting to Be Free"

Major Snag (-2): While transformed, lose access to Proper Victorian Woman, Bureaucracy, and Presence skills

Street Brawler (8)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Strike, Parry, Dodge, Guile, Initiative [Physical]

Major Snag (-2): Can only be used when transformed

GIFTS

Theme (Free): +1 to Proper Victorian Woman to defend against social attacks, +1 to Deceit to lie about where she was last night, Use Presence instead of Resolve to defend against intimidation

Theme (-1 Refresh): +2 to Street Brawler with maneuvers, +1 to Vicious Harpy with intimidation, +1 to Stealth to skulk

Skilled x4 (-4 Refresh): +20 skill points

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks (Sister only)

Armor 2 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence (Sister only)

Armor 2 [Composure], +1 Trifling Mental consequence (Sister only)

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO (OOO)
Composure	OOO
Social	OOO OO

Notes

In her ordinary form—the Keeper—she's a fairly average woman, well connected and quite influential in her social circles. In the form of the Sister, a different and markedly more striking woman, she is frighteningly strong and can easily kill with her bare hands. She is also utterly unfazed by any horror or violence she does, thanks to her Vicious Harpy skill. She is well-connected and influential in her low circles, among street toughs, prostitutes and criminals. Both forms are adept at lying and conniving. It is a matter of survival. And while the Sister is deadly, even her Keeper can, when she must, put up a modest fight.

As a Member of the Club

Elizabeth Philbrook had no idea there was anything odd or unseemly about her. Then came the day a band of jaunty Strangers accosted her while she shopped with her maid for the necessities of a dinner party to celebrate her husband's recent promotion. The group jested with her and became quite familiar, though they called her "Maggie Pale" as if that were her name. Disturbed and afraid, she rushed home and locked herself in her room. And there in the mirror she met for the first time Maggie Pale, her uncouth and immoral alter ego. As they conversed, Elizabeth came to realize that *she* was among the Strange.

With threats and arguments Elizabeth convinced Maggie Pale to abide by certain rules. Maggie must never threaten Elizabeth's life, family, and reputation. Likewise, Elizabeth would not interfere with Maggie's nighttime carousing and adventuring with her unsavory friends from the Kerberos Club. The arrangement proved workable, though complicated, and at times the two women who share one body have been able to assist one another in particular ways: Once Elizabeth secured an invitation for Maggie to attend an exclusive social function, and on another occasion Maggie rescued Elizabeth's kidnapped son.

The Living Marvel (Villain)

"No thanks are needed, my man. It is the privilege of those gifted as I have been to return unto my fellows a measure of the fortune bestowed by God's good graces. Now, I must fly!"

The Living Marvel seems to be a paragon of patriotism, heroism, honor, gentlemanly conduct, social conscience, charity, and public service. Of course, he's really a womanizer, a drunkard, a gambler, an Army deserter, a prodigious coward, a maker of investments in bad faith, a debtor, and on at least one occasion a traitor to Crown and Country. His public identity is so forthright and proper, so handsome and admired, that it makes his true nature seem much the worse to those few who know it. He's a self-centered blackguard who fears only exposure and ridicule.

In an ordinary man of influence, this dichotomy would be troubling. But the Living Marvel is also a Stranger of tremendous physical power. His record of service and honors is so long that it takes minutes to read out when he attends a royal function. His adventures (real or fictional, though who can tell the difference anymore?) are chronicled in such publications as *Record Of The Extraordinary* and *The People's Library*. In his caped uniform of crimson and gold, behind his elegant domino mask of sable, he attends the great social events of the Season. In his common clothes and ordinary identity, the patched castoffs he wears when slumming in London's lowest quarters, he seems like any other ruffian.

ASPECTS

Mutant: The Living Marvel
Upper Class: Base Villain at Heart
Conviction: Play the Hero

Conviction: Must Protect Heroic Reputation at All Costs
Major Complication: Can't Resist Indulging His Base Desires
Honors and Commendations
Noel Sigmorson, Common Ruffian of London (Captain Gryphon, Paragon of Patriotism)

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Marvelous Body (S)
Superb (+5): Fisticuffs (E)
Great (+4): Flight (A), Athletics (S)
Good (+3): Brawn (A), Paragon of Patriotism (S)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Brawn

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Minor Snag: Can only be used while transformed

Marvelous Body (4)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Resist Damage, Stress Capacity [Health]
Minor Transformation (-1): Replace "Noel Sigmorson, Common Ruffian of London" with "Captain Gryphon, Paragon of Patriotism"

Athletics

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Minor Snag: Can only be used while transformed

Flight (3)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Move + Unusual: Flight (+1), Dodge
Minor Snag (-1): Can only be used while transformed

Paragon of Patriotism (6)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Stress Capacity [Reputation], Initiative [Social], Networking, Conversation
Conviction (-2): Must Protect Heroic Reputation at All Costs
Major Complication (-2): Can't Resist Indulging His Base Desires

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 3 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks
Weapon 2 [Social]
Armor 2 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence
Armor 2 [Reputation], +1 Trifling Social consequence
Move 3 zones as a free action

GIFTS

Skilled (Free): +5 skill points
Skilled (-1 Refresh): +5 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OOO O
Composure	OOO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:
Trifling (P):
Trifling (S):
Middling:

REFRESH

Starting Refresh: 18
Power Tiers: -15
Gifts: -1
Adjusted Refresh: 2

Notes

By night he's a lowlife, a liar, cheater, womanizer, gambler, one who wallows in his base desires and instincts. But he can assume an alternate identity, that of the Marvel, so long as he is unobserved when he makes the change. In his superhuman identity he can lift vast weights, fly faster than anything else on the planet (outpacing bullets and cannonballs easily), and is extremely resilient. He's also well respected and connected. But inevitably, he gets the itch to indulge in his favorite low pastimes, and as much as he likes playing the hero he'll shed his public persona and take to the streets, looking for a drink, a game of cards, or a woman willing to endure his company in exchange for coin. He's willing to kill to protect his double life.

As a Member of the Club

Captain Gryphon, that's how he goes in public. A hero and patriot, he seemed an obvious figure to recruit into the Kerberos Club. His powers were extraordinary, and the ease with which he displayed them even early in the century spoke to his value as a member. The degree to which the public seemed to accept his status as superhuman defender of the British way of life certainly also helped. Unknown to his Club sponsors was just what a despicable bastard Noel Sigmorson was at heart. It certainly wouldn't have disqualified him—quite the opposite in fact; many Kerberans would have been much more comfortable knowing he was made of familiar stuff—but it inadvertently led to a Challenge that threatened his dual identity with exposure. Captain Gryphon reacted badly. One Kerberan was killed, three others injured, and a block of London's East End was near demolished. And so Captain Gryphon joined the Lost.

Sigmorson's hatred of the Club is tempered with the knowledge that the three-headed dog has its mouths at his throat. His dual identity is known to the Club, and the unspoken threat is that if he moves against Kerberan interests too strongly, or fails to do the occasional small favor, word might somehow leak out. He bides his time, does his duty, indulges his vices, and aches to destroy the Kerberos Club.

The Lost Jupiterian (Villain)

"From the black and cold vastness of the cosmic aethers, my ship did fall to your tiny world. Stranded so I found myself doomed never again to float the painted clouds of my beloved home, a distant world barely visible in your night sky. Leave me to my sorrow, tiny human. For like my wrath, it is vast and incalculable to minds such as yours."

The folk of Jupiter are like two enormous leathery jellyfish fused cap to cap so their thick tendrils radiate outwards, giving them the appearance of frilled wheels. They have two mouths, one at the center of the left tentacle cluster, one at the center of the right one. In the recessed groove where the two halves meet, they have a ring of hundreds of blue eyes. They are buoyed with internal gas bladders, allowing them to float easily in the thin, tepid atmosphere of Earth. In the Earth's weak gravity they are also fantastically strong, though somewhat clumsy. Jupiterians possess a natural telepathic faculty, but can speak easily through one or even both of their mouths.

The Lost Jupiterian is a forlorn member of his long-lived species. He is stranded upon this tiny rock with no way of returning home, surrounded by grotesque soft creatures, and denied the company of any he considers an equal. He is an artist rather than a scientist, and the technology which brought him here is beyond his ability to repair. He suffers and he mourns his lost home, and sometimes lashes out when angered or when feeling especially sulky.

ASPECTS

Alien: Gigantic Jupeterian
Conviction: "My art is everything!"
Conviction: Longs to Return Home
Minor Complication: Roused to Wrathful Passions
Minor Complication: Strong But Clumsy
Poetical Soul
Unearthly Perspective

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Gigantic Jupiterian (A)
Superb (+5): Internal Gas Bladders (S), Mild Telepathy
Great (+4): Psychic Invisibility (E), Art, Resolve, Empathy, Tentacles (E)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Gigantic Jupiterian (6)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Stress Capacity [Health], Resist Damage, Physical Force
Conviction (-2): Longs to Return Home

Internal Gas Bladders (0)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Move + Unusual: Flight (+1)

Minor Snag (-1): Power Tier reduced to Extraordinary in adversely windy conditions

Minor Snag (-1): No ground-based movement

Mild Telepathy (4)

Examine + Psychic (+1), Languages + Psychic (+1), Initiative [Mental] + Psychic (+1)

Major Snag (-2): Examine automatically fails against targets with Resolve (or any other skill with the Willpower trapping) in the Extraordinary Tier or above

Minor Complication (-1): Roused to Wrathful Passions

Tentacles (2)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Strike + Zone (+2)

Minor Complication (-1): Strong But Clumsy

Psychic Invisibility (2)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Hide + Psychic (+1), Skulk + Psychic (+1)

Major Snag (-2): Automatically fails against targets with Resolve (or any other skill with the Willpower trapping) in the Superhuman Tier or above

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 3 [Health] with Tentacles

Armor 3 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence, clear one Trifling Physical consequence per scene

Move 2 zones as a free action

Move 1 zone while remaining hidden

GIFTS

Signature Aspect (Free): Poetical Soul

Skilled x4 (-4 Refresh): +20 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OOO O	
Composure	OOO OOO	
Social	OOO	
Trifling:		
Trifling (P):		
Middling:		

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 14

Power Tiers: -8

Gifts: -4

Adjusted Refresh: 2

Notes

The Lost Jupiterian is a formidable beast when angered. His strength is phenomenal and his size makes him a deadly opponent. He is also a creature evolved for the crushing pressures and gravities of Jupiter, and is nearly invulnerable to harm. His strongly bilateral symmetry allows him to easily perform multiple actions (most of the time he won't even notice the penalty from taking a supplemental action), but he is ungainly and sluggish in Earth's fractional gravity, and so rarely acts first in a conflict.

For such an enormous creature, he can be remarkably stealthy when he wants to be left alone, which is most of the time. But his alien appearance, if revealed, shocks and dismays ordinary folk. Few things could be more inhuman than a Jupiterian.

As presented, he is already extremely formidable. To make him more so, consider upping his Mild Telepathy to the Superhuman Tier (which, one would imagine, would mean renaming it Telepathy) and adding the Menace, Willpower, and Stress Capacity [Composure] trappings.

As a Member of the Club

A holiday shooting in the Highlands seemed a nice change from the hurly burly of London and the constant Strange menaces threatening the old town. When the group of Kerberans arrived at their friend Lord Montjoy's hunting lodge, they were quite perturbed to find it in a state. A plague of crop failures, two-headed calves, and children born with Strange maladies had the locals in a froth. The appearance of bizarre standing stones carved into eye-twisting forms

only magnified the air of menace hanging over the region. To make the situation completely intolerable, the grouse had all fled, and there was no shooting to be had at all.

Investigation revealed beneath the waters of a black cold loch the crashed remains of a vessel meant to travel between the planets. Further, they found a lone castaway, an alien creature of terrible mien. Battle followed, and then negotiation, and finally accord. The Jupiterian, who called himself Atmospheric Red Banding Expressionist (nicknamed "Archie Redband" by his new friends), was given diplomatic status by the government as the only representative of his homeworld on Earth. He joined the Kerberos Club, for its members seemed the only people on the weird, tiny planet that he had any commonality with, or who expressed any appreciation for his art.

The Man for All Ages (Villain)

"Behold, ruffian! I fear you not, for I am not alone. With me always is Mankind's savage ancestor from the dawn of time, to battle my foes with bestial energy—and also the enlightened future of wise humanity, to council with sage wisdom."

An experiment involving Voltaic Principles and Rare Earth Salts, Projective Animal Magnetism, and Oriental Techniques of Meditation. What could possibly go wrong? The Man for All Ages was a charismatic advocate of the sciences, attending lectures, contributing to research efforts, and soliciting articles for publication. Not a man of science himself, but rather a patron of the sciences, he always longed for the thrill of discovery, for his own "*Eureka*!" moment.

The opportunity came when he volunteered to be the experimental subject in the research of one of the scientists he admired. He was wired to a fuming bank of batteries, fed a potion of Strange compounds, and subjected to the focused concentration of seven mesmerists, all while meditating on an ancient, some say *prehuman*, mantra.

When he awoke, he was not alone. Sprung forth from his altered consciousness and body were two new beings, one of them obviously a descendant, the other an ancestor, though both thousands of generations distant. The Ancestor was a huge and hulking ape man, hairy and coarse, with remarkable physical prowess and feral senses. The Descendant was thin and agile, with a prodigiously high forehead and elongated skull containing a wondrous brain.

ASPECTS

Changed: Past, Present, and Future of Mankind
Upper Class: Quite Shockingly Wealthy
Conviction: Science Will Show the Way
Conviction: Must Maintain a Gentleman's Demeanor
Reflected Glory is Glory All the Same
Charismatic Advocate of the Sciences
An Unremarkable Oxford Education

SKILLS

Good (+3): Man of Influence (E)
Fair (+2): Academics, Empathy, Presence
Average (+1): Resolve, Science, Endurance

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Man of Influence (8)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Influence, Networking, Esteem, Wealth, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Initiative [Social]
Conviction (-2): Must Maintain a Gentleman's Demeanor

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Reputation]
Armor 1 [Reputation]

GIFTS

Companion (Free): Ancestor (Summonable; Quality x2: Good quality; Skilled; Aspect: Act First, Think Later; Independent; Delay: Requires An Hour of meditation to summon; Focus: Requires weird drugs to summon; Taxing: Spend a Fate Point to summon)

Companion (-1 Refresh): Ancestor (Empowered; Theme: +1 to Fisticuffs against armed opponents, Use Alertness instead of Athletics to defend against ranged attacks, +1 Arms with clubs)
Companion (-1 Refresh): Descendant (Summonable; *Quality x2:* Good quality; Skilled x2; Aspect: Prideful of Accomplishments; *Communication:* Telepathy; *Delay:* Requires An Hour of meditation to summon; *Focus:* Requires weird drugs to summon; *Taxing:* Spend a Fate Point to summon)
Companion (-1 Refresh): Descendant (Empowered, *Theme Gift:* +2 to Evolved Telepathy with maneuvers, +1 to Science with advanced technology, +1 to Academics with history)
Companion (-1 Refresh): Descendant (Empowered; Independent)

Ancestor

Good (+3): Fisticuffs (E)
Fair (+2): Alertness (E), Endurance
Average (+1): Athletics, Arms

Health OOO OO
Composure OOO
Reputation OOO
Trifling:

Descendant

Good (+3): Evolved Telepathy
Fair (+2): Science (S)
Average (+1): Academics

Evolved Telepathy (2)
Menace + Psychic (+1), Dodge + Psychic (+1), Examine + Psychic (+1)
Taxing (-2)
Minor Delay (-1): Menace and Examine require a Full Action

Health OO
Composure OOO
Social OO
Trifling:

STRESS TRACKS:

Health OOO
Composure OOO
Reputation OOO OO
Trifling:
Middling:

REFRESH:

Starting Refresh: 10
Power Tiers: -1
Gifts: -4
Adjusted Refresh: 5

Notes

The Man for All Ages is a triple combo. The Man himself has remarkable social abilities. He's well connected in scientific and academic circles, and is quite astonishingly persuasive.

His primitive Ancestor is brutally strong, able to crush a man with his thick hairy fists, preternaturally aware of his environment and able to leap out of harm's way in the blink of an eye. The Descendant is a staggeringly brilliant mind, easily one of the most intelligent beings in the world.

One of the most unusual features of the Man for All Ages is how difficult his duplicates are to summon again if they suffer a fatal injury during his adventures. He must recreate to a degree the experiment which caused their emergence in the first place. This takes time and great effort. The ritual leaves him addled, as if suffering an attack of brain fever, and while he recovers his duplicates wander off to pursue their own interests. This means he has to seek them out when he recovers from his trance, something with which he might require assistance.

The Man for All Ages can easily be scaled up as a threat by giving the Man another two Companion Gifts, using four of the improvements to upgrade the Power Tiers of the Ancestor's Fisticuffs and the Descendant's Evolved Telepathy and the other two to remove the Taxing Flaws for each.

As a Member of the Club

Ashley Brenden was always quite fond of science. He was rubbish at it, of course, but still quite wholly taken with natural philosophy. He met his scientific benefactor at a lecture at his college. The man's theories were dismissed as nonsense, but Ashley saw some spark of genius. Where others decried the work it seemed, Ashley thought, out of spite rather than true scientific objection.

He volunteered himself to test the man's theories, and so became transformed by them. His benefactor, seeing an opportunity, suggested an introduction down at his Club, "A place where men such as we, those obsessed with transcending the limitations of the merely human, might come together to further our mutual ends." And so, Ashley Brenden, with his Past and Future walking behind, came to the Kerberos Club like three babes in the woods.

The Conflicted Magus (Villain)

"Fools. I grasp the cosmic forces of the universe, the secrets of the darkness. Do you imagine I will place myself in the power of worms such as you?"

The Conflicted Magus tries to serve two masters: his worldly obligations and his occult obsession. Inevitably, the obsession is winning out. He has a family, a respected position in banking, and the usual social obligations of one of his class and status—but he also has ties to an ancient, hidden occult order of those descended from Roman mystery cults. From his father he received magical training, and upon assuming the mantle of Master of the Order he inherited the Amulet of Marcus Fontius, an artifact of frightening puissance.

The knowledge that his interest in Earthly affairs is waning spurs the Magus to more and more extremity in his pursuit of making his family happy, succeeding in his business and maintaining his status. He conjures more and more terrible magics in order to secure them, which of course only furthers his obsession. It is a vicious cycle, and the awful paradox of sorcery. One studies sorcery to attain one's goals, but the pursuit of sorcery itself inevitably replaces those goals.

ASPECTS

Magus: The Awful Paradox of Sorcery
Middle Class: Respected Banker
Conviction: Protect Family and Status
Obsession: The Lure of Sorcerous Power
The Amulet of Marcus Fontius the Elder
Professional Pride
Master of the Order
Worldly Obligations

SKILLS

Great (+4): Occult Conspirator, Sacred Works (S)
Good (+3): Respected Banker, Grip of the Hundred-Handed Giant (S)
Fair (+2): Presence, Resolve, Arms, Academics

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Occult Conspirator (1)

Networking, Information, Guile, Skulk, Hide
Obsession (-2): The Lure of Sorcerous Power

Sacred Works (5)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Craft, Repair, Dismantle, Information, Research, Examine
Sacred (-2)
Minor Snag (-1): Requires a sufficient Workspace
Major Delay (-2): Half a Minute or more (however long it takes to craft the Work)

Respected Banker (8)

Stress Capacity [Reputation], Influence, Esteem, Initiative [Social]
Conviction (-2): Protect Family and Status

Grip of the Hundred-Handed Giant (13)

Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)

Physical Force + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Strike + Range x3 [5 zones] (+3), Resist Damage

Major Delay (-2): Requires Half a Minute to activate

Major Focus (-2): The Amulet of Marcus Fontius the Elder

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 3 [Health] with Grip of the Hundred-Handed Giant
Once per session, spend a Fate Point to reveal a piece of Equipment with two improvements, or add two improvements to existing Equipment until the end of the scene

GIFTS

Signature Aspect (Free): The Lure of Sorcerous Power
Skilled x3 (-3 Refresh): +15 skill points
Theme (-1 Refresh): +2 to Grip of the Hundred-Handed Giant with maneuvers, Use Occult Conspirator instead of Presence to impress other magi, +1 to Resolve vs. sorcerous attacks
Equipment (-1 Refresh): Sacrificial Blade (Well-Made: +1 Arms, Deadly: Weapon 1 [Health])

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:
Middling:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 14
Power Tiers: -6
Gifts: -5
Adjusted Refresh: 3

Notes

The Conflicted Magus is well on his way to succumbing to his obsession with sorcery; it is already his most powerful Conviction. His greatest source of that power is the Amulet of Fontius the Elder, a rude bronze charm worn on a leather cord, said to have belonged to one of the greatest of Caesar's Magi. The Amulet allows the Magus to manipulate things with invisible force, likened to the hundred hands of the Hecatoncheires.

To enhance the menace posed by the Conflicted Magus, increase his Refresh, thus allowing him to create and sustain more works of greater potency.

Good (+3) Slippers of Hermes

Power Tier: Superhuman

Move + *Unusual:* Flight, Dodge

Minor Focus (-1)

Craft Difficulty: Fantastic (+6) (S)

Fate Point Investment: 2

These slippers are adorned with delicate wings to allow the wearer to dash through the air at phenomenal speed, making escape simple and defense easy.

Great (+4) Key of Janus

Power Tier: Ascendant

Leap + Range [others in same zone] + Spray + *Unusual:* Does not cross intervening space (+3)

Minor Focus (-1)

Major Snag (-2): Only travel from doorway to doorway

Craft Difficulty: Superb (+5) (A)

Fate Point Investment: 4

A heavy Roman latch key which can make any door open to any other doorway, and let others come along for the ride.

Great (+4) Jupiter's Brass Bull

Power Tier: Superhuman

Physical Force, Strike, Stress Capacity [Health], Resist Damage

Minor Focus (-1)

Major Transform (-2): Requires A Few Minutes to activate; replace "Respected Banker" with "Base Bestial Instincts"

Major Snag (-2): While transformed, lose access to all other skills except Resolve

Taxing (-2): Must spend a Fate Point to transform back into human form

Craft Difficulty: Divine (+10) (S)

Fate Point Investment: 2

A brass bull figurine which allows the Magus to assume the form of a giant, terrible bull. The change is very disorienting, however, and gaining control over the powerful bull's instincts and urges (mostly "*Attack*!" and "*Rut*!") is difficult.

Good (+3) Scent of Venus

Power Tier: Superhuman

Convince + Unusual: Magic (+1)

Minor Focus (-1)

Minor Transformation (-1): Requires a Full Action; replace "Respected Banker" with "Irresistibly Attractive and Persuasive"

Craft Difficulty: Good (+3) (S)

Fate Point Investment: 2

A phial of perfume which makes the wearer supernaturally attractive and persuasive, sometimes *too* persuasive. While wearing it, the Magus must be careful with what he asks of others.

Fair (+2) Helm of Hades

Power Tier: Superhuman

Hide + Unusual: Invisible (+1), Move + Unusual: Move through solid objects (+1), Dodge

Minor Focus (-1)

Minor Delay (-1): Requires a Full Action to activate or deactivate skill

Craft Difficulty: Fantastic (+6) (S)

Fate Point Investment: 2

When this battered black helmet is donned, the wearer is rendered invisible and intangible like a ghost. But the power of the helm can not be partially employed. Either one has the ghostly properties of a spirit, or one is entirely visible and material.

As a Member of the Club

Mitchum Brice knew he was slipping when he used a magical work to prop up his bank after its director fled with a fortune in embezzled funds. Were it to become known, the institution would fail and all those close to the director would be painted with his crime. Brice used a memory-distorting incense to fugue the memories of the bank's employees, conjured a lesser spirit of the aether to play-act as the director until a formal resignation could be arranged, and replaced the stolen securities and gold coin with glamoured lead and blank paper.

By the opening of the Bank on the following Monday, none was the wiser. As a final measure, he dispatched Azuli Shule, the Thief of Eyes, to deal with the thieving banker. When the final Work had been conjured, he was left shaking and empty, and could feel how his love for his family and his job had diminished, and how his lust for sorcery had increased. It frightened him. He sought help.

Through a contact in his occult circles, he gained an introduction to the Kerberos Club and applied for membership, which be believed would be denied. But a group of Kerberan occultists who themselves contended daily with the lure of sorcery laid the Challenge before Mitchum, the deciding point being whether he would use magic or his wits to resolve the problem they threw him. He chose his mundane resources, and was welcomed into the Club's weird fraternity of struggling magical addicts.

Rogue Mesmerist (Villain)

"Look into my eyes. Look deep. Hear my voice, hear and obey. Obey. Obey."

With his pointed beard and waxed moustache, his sharp black coats with lapels like knives, the Rogue Mesmerist cuts a dashing and dangerous figure. Rumor and intrigue follow him like gulls behind a steamer. Who is he? Where is he from? Some say he is Spanish, others Brazilian.

He is known to have treated dozens of great ladies for their hysterical complaints, and is rumored to have had illicit romances with several. A story frequently told is of the porter

at the Savoy who dropped the Rogue Mesmerist's shiny black valise. While the young man blubbered an apology, the Mesmerist turned coolly on him, locked eyes, and said, "You must leave immediately to begin your service in Her Majesty's Royal Navy." After a momentary blank look, the young man walked away from his job then and there, and was at sea within the week.

The Rogue Mesmerist's motivations are as mysterious as his origins. What is clear is that he is a man with a remarkable and dangerous power to affect the minds and wills of others, and whether he uses it for good or ill is entirely for him to decide.

ASPECTS

Adept: "Look into my eyes…"
Upper Class: Well-Connected Alienist
Conviction: "I do not take control of people; they give it to me willingly"
Conviction: Professional Perfectionism
Minor Complication: A String of Illicit Affairs
Man of Mystery
Undeniable Animal Magnetism

SKILLS

Great (+4): Well-Connected
Good (+3): Alienist, Sudden Compulsion (E)
Fair (+2): Mesmerism (S), Presence (E), Bureaucracy
Average (+1): Stealth, Marksmanship, Athletics

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Well-Connected (11)

Information, Networking, Influence, Esteem, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Initiative [Social], Wealth

Minor Complication (-1): A String of Illicit Affairs

Alienist (7)

Insight, Treatment [Mental], Information, Research, Guile, Willpower

Conviction (-2): Professional Perfectionism

Sudden Compulsion (5)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)

Menace + Unusual: Deals physical consequences + Psychic (+2), Dodge + Psychic (+1)

Minor Snag (-1): Target/attacker must be able to see and hear Rogue Mesmerist

Mesmerism (3)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)

Convince + Psychic + Unusual: Target has no memory of mesmerism (+2), Insight + Psychic (+1)

Major Delay (-2): Requires 15 Minutes to take effect

Minor Snag (-1): Target must be able to see and hear Rogue Mesmerist

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Mental]
Weapon 2 [Mental] if the Rogue Mesmerist has successfully used Mesmerism on the target
Armor 1 [Reputation]

GIFTS

Skilled (Free): +5 skill points
Skilled x2 (-2 Refresh): +10 skill points
Theme (-1 Refresh): +1 to Alienist to assess aspects, +2 to Mesmerism with maneuvers, +2 to Well-Connected with maneuvers

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO
Composure	OOO
Reputation	OOO OOO
Trifling:	
Middling:	

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 10
Power Tiers: -4
Gifts: -3
Adjusted Refresh: 3

Notes

The Rogue Mesmerist is a surprisingly dangerous foe, with several mesmeric tricks and refinements. He can issue a



sharp, brutal command which either makes an opponent think twice before attacking, or thrash and injure himself with whatever comes to hand, however the Mesmerist desires. Given sufficient time, he can put a target into a trance and either change their memories or implant a hypnotic suggestion.

For altering memories, use Mesmerism's Convince trapping to inflict Composure stress, with any resulting Mental consequences reflecting the target's new memory. Treat hypnotic suggestions as mind control, as described in the Psychic Extra description, but limited to the aspect "Implanted Suggestion." Later, the Mesmerist can compel this aspect to make the target carry out the suggestion. With effort, perhaps when in a later hypnotic trance, the target can attempt to recall what he did while under the Mesmerist's influence. If making the attempt on his own the target uses a skill with the Willpower trapping. If someone else is trying to force him to remember, the skill needs the Treatment [Mental] trapping. The difficulty for this task is equal to the Mesmerist's total effort for the maneuver in the first place, so write that down just in case.

Scaling up the Rogue Mesmerist is a matter of increasing his Refresh and possibly using the excess to increase the Power Tier of his Mesmerism to Ascendant.

As a Member of the Club

Dr. Anton Ashebourne, or so it said upon his luggage tags, arrived in England from continental parts unknown and promptly hired a cab to take him to the Square of St. James, and the home of the Kerberos Club. There he simply asked for admission, and was granted it, then asked to be shown to a private sitting room, and was so shown, and then asked for the attendance upon him of five of the Club's members, themselves recently returned from abroad. They were summoned by the enchanted staff and found their erstwhile nemesis, Dr. Ashebourne, seated before the fire, his curled Turkish pipe in hand, and a copy of the *Times* open across his knee.

"You have impressed me with your will and resolve," he said. "I think there is much we can do for one another, yes? I find your accommodations here most agreeable, and with my recent relocation to London, I will be requiring membership in a Club where I might make my leisure and enjoy the conversation of my fellows. So, what formalities are there before my membership is approved?"

Such arrogance, audacity, daring, to come to the very home of an enemy, and demand hospitality—so very *Kerberan*.

Pre-Human Horror (Master Villain)

"Shu'Shub Tso'gorath! Shu'Shub Tso'gorath! Shu'Shub Tso'gorath! Shu'Shub Tso'gorath! Shu'Shub Tso'gorath! Shu'Shub Tso'gorath!"

From the bowels of Time and out of the dark, hateful cold of trackless Space, the Elder Things came with their abominable physiognomy and rites. The ancient peoples of the Earth threw them back again and again, only to come in time to worship them. The Elder Things invaded not through force of arms and sorcery, but through the creeping, corrupting influence of word, thought and prayer. The Atlanteans were debased by their worship, degenerating into brutal tribalism. The High Cities of Ultima Thule fell into disrepair as its priest-engineers gave themselves over to ecstatic, orgiastic worship of the Elder Things rather than maintaining their flying crystalline wonders.

Where war had failed, faith won, and the first great dark age of the world began. Reality was twisted and holed, but there rose heroes with the might and power to throw off the influence of the Things. Like a creeping rot, the Elder Things retreated to the dark corners of the world and slept the ages away, waiting, waiting, waiting for the sound of crunching snow and chipping ice, waiting for the odd half-evolved ape creatures to unearth their temples, and give them life and purpose once again.

ASPECTS

Godling: Fifty-Ton Leviathan from Out of Time and Space
Conviction: Revel in the Debased Worship of Lesser Creatures
Conviction: Rise Up and Remake the World
Worshiped and Feared
Abominable Knowledge of Cosmic Realities
So, So Many Tentacles
Sacrament of the Unnatural Host

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Massive and Grotesque Form (G)
Superb (+5): Psychic Corruption (G), Alertness (S)
Great (+4): Resolve (S), Abominable Knowledge (A), Sacrament of the Unnatural Host (S)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Massive and Grotesque Form (17)
Power Tier: Godlike (-6 Refresh)
Stress Capacity [Health], Resist Damage, Physical Force + Range [1 zone] (+1), Strike + Range [1 zone] + Zone (+3), Move + Unusual: Globular body (+1)
Conviction (-2): Rise Up and Remake the World

Psychic Corruption (16)
Power Tier: Godlike (-6 Refresh)
Menace + Range [1 zone] + Zone + Psychic (+4), Insight + Psychic (+1), Convince + Range [1 zone] + Zone + Psychic (+4), Examine + Range [1 zone] + Zone + Psychic (+4)
Minor Snag (-1): Mind control (via Convince + Zone + Psychic) can only be attempted against targets who have taken a Middling or Grievous Mental consequence as a result of the Horror's Mental attacks

Abominable Knowledge (2)
Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Information (1), Languages (1)

Sacrament of the Unnatural Host (0)
Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Minions [Simple]
Taxing (-2)
Minor Invulnerability [Mental] (-1 Refresh): Fear
Major Weakness [Physical] (+2 Refresh): Sacred Geometry

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 4 [Health]
Weapon 4 [Composure]
Armor 4 [Health], +1 Trifling Physical consequence, +1 Middling Physical consequence, clear Trifling Physical consequence once/scene
Armor 2 [Composure], +1 Trifling Mental consequence
Speak all Earthly languages and four "exotic" languages



Into the Twisted Halls of Time

Any foolish mortal prideful and daring enough to meddle with time travel should, at some point, encounter the terrible cold realities of the universe—particularly the Elder Things who have embraced those damning cosmic truths. A misaligned wondrous mechanism, a poorly-formulated dose of consciousness-altering drug, a misspoken spell: These things can easily throw a would-be time traveler back and back and back to the Old Times, the ancient pre-human world of shocking wonders, gorgeous horrors and exquisite jeweled cruelties. In those times there was no separation between World and Otherworld. Divinities walked in flesh, Heaven and Hell were places on a map; a dark, savage time, aeons before the dawn of man.

GIFTS

Impact (Free): Declare aspect for free when Massive and Grotesque Form roll obtains spin

Skilled x7 (-7 Refresh): +35 skill points

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OOO O
Composure	OOO OOO

Trifling:

Trifling (P):

Trifling (M):

Middling:

Middling (P):

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 24

Power Tiers: -16

Gifts: -7

Invulnerabilities: -1

Weaknesses: +2

Adjusted Refresh: 2

Notes

The Pre-Human Horror is a huge mass of weird flesh, sense organs and tentacles—so, so many tentacles. Despite being big and resilient enough to withstand injury which would annihilate mortal creatures, it can stretch and distort its disgusting form into any shape or squeeze its massive bulk through tiny cracks and openings. In addition to being prodigiously dangerous, horribly strong, and frighteningly intelligent, it is wholly and completely unaffected by any human concern. Its mind is an alien thing, both intelligent and savage, the marriage of madness and genius.

To its worshipers who partake of the sacrament of its flesh, it grants a boon, represented mechanically by its ability to summon Minions with one scope in the Extraordinary Tier. Its Conviction aspect of "Revel in the Debased Worship of Lesser Creatures" can be compelled to make it stay in an accessible location for a time, receiving and tending to its worshipers instead of slumbering at the bottom of the Thames. (The Pre-Human Horror is one of the few creatures that can sleep threateningly.)

The Horror's great weakness is its vulnerability to the Sacred Geometries recorded by the ancient magicians of Tsung. If fragments of these can be found, their shapes and diagrams inscribed in the ground, and the Horror contained within, they provide a deadly weapon against the creature, significantly reducing its defenses.

You may notice that the Horror is—how to put this?—somewhat ridiculous. That's because it is, in large part, a plot device, a Master Villain who takes a serious toll on the PCs, their city, their families, and anything else in the vicinity before being defeated. Making it anything less than ridiculous would be an insult to the Kerberos Club.

As a Member of the Club

Really now, some things are beyond the pale even for us.

Gentleman Adventurer (Villain)

"I say! Is that a Zuni fetish doll? I've not seen one of those since the Bismarck Affair of forty-five."

He's traveled the world, from the dinosaur-infested jungles of the Empire of Brazil to the frozen wastes of the Antarctic, down to the depths of the sea via bathysphere and submersible boat. He has friends in every port. He can shoot, ride, rope, and skin. He's been the lover of princesses and the killer of kings. He's seen ghosts arise from a shaman's camp fire, and he's battled vampires aboard an infested steam ship. He's fought the spies of Her Majesty's enemies, and he's dueled to the death villains so fell that their names are not repeated lest it tempt them from their graves seeking revenge. He's always game for a challenge, an expedition or an adventure. He's afraid of nothing—save one thing. A secret so simple yet devastating that the scandal it would cause is almost impossible to imagine.

For the Gentleman Adventurer is, in fact, a Lady. The adventure in cross-dressing began at first as a way to escape confining social expectations, but became something of an obsession. She studied the way men walked, talked, smoked, and how they acted among other men. And she proved equal to the task. Over the years, the few who found out her secret trusted her enough to swear themselves to silence, and so she maintained the masquerade. But how much longer can such an act carry out, especially with so many enemies from so many years of travel and adventure?

ASPECTS

Super-Normal: Gentleman Adventurer
Middle Class: Stiff Upper Lip, and All That
Conviction: Fearless in the Face of Danger
Conviction: Honor Before Victory
Conviction: Never Leave a Friend Behind
Conviction: Keep Living the Lie
Major Complication: A Trail of Enemies in My Wake

Reactions of a Jungle Cat
Ride Like a Cossack, Wrestle Like a Mongol

SKILLS

Great (+4): Man of Action (E)
Good (+3): World Traveler (E), Marksmanship
Fair (+2): Endurance, Deceit (E), Resolve (E), Presence (E), Empathy

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Man of Action (14)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Move, Leap, Climb, Dodge, Strike, Initiative [Physical], Parry, Notice
Conviction (-2): Honor Before Victory
Conviction (-2): Never Leave a Friend Behind
Conviction (-2): Keep Living the Lie

World Traveler (5)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Information, Networking, Environment [Wilderness], Environment [Urban], Languages, Variable [Session] x2
Major Complication (-2): A Trail of Enemies in My Wake
Minor Invulnerability [Mental] (-1 Refresh): Fear

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 1 [Reputation]
Armor 1 [Composure]
Armor 1 [Reputation]
Move 1 zone as a Free Action

GIFTS

Impact (Free): Declare aspect for free when Man of Action roll obtains spin
Skilled x2 (-2 Refresh): +10 skill points
Signature Aspect (-1 Refresh): Fearless in the Face of Danger

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO OO
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OO

Trifling:
Middling:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 10
Power Tiers: -6
Gifts: -3
Adjusted Refresh: 1

Notes

The Gentleman Adventurer need not secretly be a woman, but it makes a fun commentary on gender roles during the period. She has no real powers, but her many Extraordinary Tier skills are broadly excellent for all manner of ordinary actions. Of particular note is World Traveler with its two Variable trappings, which let her spontaneously "reveal" a useful skill learned abroad when the need arises. And between her Signature Aspect and her Invulnerability to fear, crazy, death-defying stunts and enormous risks are her bread and butter. Her chances of success are actually better if she approaches just about any situation with "How can I leap over this while it is on fire?" in mind.

Beyond this extraordinary focus on doing extraordinarily dangerous things, she is widely traveled, knows people everywhere, knows at least a smattering of any common language she hears, and knows local customs, geography and folklore. She can fight, shoot, ride, lie, and has so much grit that you could use her to sand furniture. Nothing shakes her up.

As a Member of the Club

Sir Conway Joyce (AKA Joyce Conway) came to the attention of Kerberan agents when they witnessed her chasing a cloaked man across the rooftops of midnight Cairo. When they saw the incredible risks she took and the leaps she made, they assumed she must possess some Strange potency, only realizing later that it was but her fearlessness and remarkable skill at grappling with danger that

kept her from plummeting to her death. She mastered the Challenge laid before her, and turned it back upon those who tested her. They humbly offered her membership there in the dusty streets. She's a regular at the Club now, and any members whose Strange perceptions discern her true sex are too polite to make mention of it.

Wrathful Divinity (Villain)

"You have roused ancient anger here today, a fury which was old when your ancestors lived in caves. *Behold* the terrible majesty you have awoken!"

Her mortal vessel is the gorgeous half-Indian/half-English actress who is the sensation of the theater this year. Stories of her origins, the tragic love of her parents, and her adventures between India and the British Isles thrill almost as much as her performances. She has hundreds of admirers and fends off a dozen proposals for marriage a week.

She has her career to consider—and other concerns. For she is no mere mortal actress but the avatar of the goddess Durga. She leads a cult that winds its way through London in quarters high and low. When the goddess comes over her, she seems at once mortal and immortal. The terrible image of Durga invades the minds of all who see her, and those affected by the divine revelation are subject to her power. Her beauty burns the eyes, her arms wield ten different deaths, her voice brings tears, and the golden lion she rides paws the ground, anxious to run amok.

ASPECTS

Godling: Avatar of Durga
Middle Class: Famous Actress
Conviction: Woman of Will (Behold, the Wrathful Divinity!)
Conviction: Spread Durga's Influence
Conviction: Aspiring to Be the Greatest Actress in History
Minor Complication: Torn Between Two Worlds
Storied Past

SKILLS

Great (+4): Avatar of Durga (S), Famous Actress
Good (+3): Cult Leader, Kalarippayattu (E)
Fair (+2): Academics, Resolve (E), Athletics, Empathy

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Avatar of Durga (10)

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Menace + Zone (+2), Willpower, Stress Capacity [Health], Physical Force, Convince
Minor Transform (-1): Requires a Full Action; replace "Woman of Will" with "Behold, the Wrathful Divinity!"

Famous Actress (14)

Information, Networking, Influence, Convince, Conversation, Inspire, Stress Capacity [Reputation], Esteem, Disguise, Guile, Wealth
Conviction (-2): Aspiring to Be the Greatest Actress in History

Cult Leader (0)

Networking, Minions [Simple], Information
Conviction (-2): Spread Durga's Influence

Kalarippayattu (2)

Power Tier: Extraordinary (-1 Refresh)
Strike + Spray (+1), Parry, Information
Minor Complication (-1): Torn Between Two Worlds

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Health] with hand-to-hand attacks when transformed
Armor 2 [Health] when transformed
Armor 1 [Composure]

GIFTS

Equipment (Free): Kalarippayattu Weaponry (+1 to *Kalarippayattu, Deadly:* Weapon 1 [Health] with Kalarippayattu attacks)
Theme (-1 Refresh): Use Avatar of Durga instead of Athletics to defend against physical attacks, +2 to Kalarippayattu with maneuvers, +2 to Famous Actress with maneuvers)
Skilled x4 (-4 Refresh): +20 skill points



STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES

Health	OOO (OOO)
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO OOO

Trifling:
Trifling (P): (when transformed)
Middling:

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 12
Power Tiers: -4
Gifts: -5
Adjusted Refresh: 3

Notes

The Wrathful Divinity has great skill on the stage and broad influence there. She also leads a Durga cult in London with many secret adherents. She's a deadly fighter with the empty hand and with the weapons of Kalarippayattu—longstaff, kukri, and whiplike flexible sword.

The Wrathful Divinity is quite frightening when she reveals her supernatural aspect. The image alone is enough to terrify everyone in the same zone, and the presence of the divine is so palpable that foes can't bring themselves to strike at her.

As a Member of the Club

Lakshmi Vani Smythe came to her father's homeland filled with anger, ambition, and the terrible presence of a goddess burning in her heart. Her life as half-caste had been hard, and the indignities piled high, and when Durga came to her for the first time she had visions of a foreign throne which she would one day sit upon. She came to believe this was the throne of Britain, and that it was her destiny to overthrow Victoria. So she came, and won adoration in the theater while spreading her cult among the diverse people who attended, worked, and supported London's theaters, fomenting rebellion.

Inevitably, she came to blows with the Kerberos Club. She was fought to a standstill, and then the stalemate was broken by royal decree. Her Majesty requested the presence of Lakshmi Vani Smythe for a private audience. Victoria had tea with Lakshmi, called her "Sister," and they reached an accord. Lakshmi's throne was to be found elsewhere, but the country of her father needed her aid. Somewhere in her palace of light, the goddess chuckled to herself, knowingly.

Oriental Mastermind (Master Villain)

"You humble me with your presence, and I must apologize that my duties demand my attention elsewhere. Perhaps this small diversion I have prepared for you may be of some amusement. My respect for you has demanded that only the healthiest and most ferocious tigers in all India be brought by steam and sail so you might enjoy their company while I am most regretfully called away."

"Inscrutable" hardly does justice to the Oriental Mastermind. His demeanor is perfectly calm. He is poised, always with a carefully phrased answer ready to deliver. He seems humble, but there is the unmistakable sense that he and only he is the master of any situation. Even in his defeat, there's the nagging sense that the apparent setback was just part of his larger design, plans within plans within plans.

ASPECTS

Adept: Inscrutable Oriental Mastermind
Upper Class: Master of Secret Tongs
Conviction: Dignity is Paramount
Conviction: Conquer… Quietly
Conviction: Fastidiously Honorable
Lethal and Patient
White Lotus Fist
Secret Fighting Arts of the Orient

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): White Lotus Fist (A)
Superb (+5): Master of Secret Tongs (S)
Great (+4): Esoteric Fighting Arts (S), Resolve (E)
Good (+3): Occultism (S), Science (S), Lightness Technique (S)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

White Lotus Fist (1)
Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Strike + Unusual: Delay damage (+1), Parry
Conviction (-2): Fastidiously Honorable

Esoteric Fighting Arts (15)
Power Tier: Ascendant (-4 Refresh)
Variable [Scene] x4
Minor Transform (-1): Requires a Full Action to activate; replace "White Lotus Fist" with an aspect naming a new martial arts style

Master of Secret Tongs (13)
Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Networking, Minions [Simple], Information, Influence, Inspire, Willpower, Esteem, Menace, Initiative [Mental], Initiative [Social]
Conviction (-2): Conquer… Quietly

Lightness Technique (2)
Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Leap, Dodge
Taxing (-2)

TIER BENEFITS

Weapon 2 [Reputation]
Armor 1 [Composure]
Summon Minions with one scope in the Extraordinary Tier
Move 2 zones as a Free Action

GIFTS

Signature Aspect (Free): Inscrutable Oriental Mastermind
Skilled x6 (-6 Refresh): +30 skill points
Theme (-1 Refresh): Use Master of Secret Tongs instead of Resolve to defend when accompanied by Minions, ignore penalties to Lightness Technique, +2 to Esoteric Fighting Arts with maneuvers

STRESS TRACKS AND CONSEQUENCES



Health	OOO
Composure	OOO OOO
Reputation	OOO
Trifling:	
Middling:	

REFRESH

Base Refresh: 24
Power Tiers: -15
Gifts: -7
Adjusted Refresh: 2

Notes

The Oriental Mastermind is lethal and patient. He has broad influence, scientific and occult knowledge, and is as deadly a personal foe as one could fear to know. He will strike an enemy and then leave them to make their own egress from his private quarters, knowing they will die in good time. His empty hands hold death, his feet walk upon the air, and his mastery of internal energies makes him faster than a snake and immune to gunfire.

His signature attack is the White Lotus Fist, which inflicts lethal wounds almost every time, but the Mastermind can delay some or all of this damage, causing it to take effect minutes, days or weeks later, either all at once or gradually accumulating. He can kill a room full of people with his bare hands and only a few moments—but this capacity for violence is not apparent unless he wishes it to be. He is persuasive, composed, and utterly brilliant. He is also utterly ruthless, but fastidiously honorable. He is a foe with whom one can have a long and polite relationship. He will send a prize goose to your family for Christmas dinner, only to have you murdered in the street the following day.

His Esoteric Fighting Arts skill gives him an enormous degree of flexibility and virtually guarantees that he'll make for an unpredictable opponent. Some ideas for how to use those Variables include:

Iron Vest Technique (Stress Capacity [Health], 2 Variable trappings)

Activating this technique gives the Oriental Mastermind Armor 3 [Health] and three more boxes in his Health stress track

Crane Walks Among the Rushes (Strike + Zone, 3 Variable trappings)

Using this discipline, the Mastermind can attack everyone within the same zone simultaneously with a blinding barrage of fists and feet.

Sand Palm (Physical Force, 1 Variable trapping)

The Mastermind musters all his *chi* for a powerful series of blows, giving his unarmed attacks Weapon 3 [Health] as long as the technique is active.

As a Member of the Club

"Your invitation does me great honor, but this unworthy one must decline the offer. My labors demand so much of my time that I would be unable to contribute to your gaiety and merry-making. Perhaps we shall meet in *other* circumstances, however. It is my fondest wish that we do so."

Minor Players, Extras, and Incidental Characters

Constable (Minion)

"What's all this, then?"

One of the hard-working, pavement-pounding men of the Metropolitan Police. Drawn mostly from the ranks of the working classes, they grew up in the same neighborhoods they patrol. The blue-uniformed Bobbie, the first to arrive at the scene of a tragedy, is a common sight to many Kerberans.

Average-quality Minion

Aspects: Constable, Know the Old Neighborhood
Scopes: Average (+1) Physical
Gifts: Equipment (Truncheon: +1 to Physical, Weapon 1 [Health])
Fate Point Cost: 1

EQUIPMENT

Uniform, whistle for signaling other Peelers, notebook for taking down statements, helmet, truncheon.



Police Sergeant (Minion)

"Be that as it may, sir, I'll still have to ask you to accompany me back to the station."

A uniformed policeman of long experience who rose from constable. As in the army, sergeants are the backbone of the Metropolitan Police. A sergeant might organize constables in a search effort or in securing a crime scene.

Fair-quality Minion

Aspects: Police Sergeant, Heard It All Before
Scopes: Fair (+2) Mental, Average (+1): Physical
Gifts: Equipment (Truncheon: +1 to Physical, Weapon 1 [Health])
Fate Point Cost: 1

EQUIPMENT

Uniform, whistle for signaling other Peelers, notebook for taking down statements, helmet, truncheon.

Detective (Minion)

"If, as you say, sir, you were at the theater during the time in question, you should be able to present your ticket stub, or failing that, a witness who could place you there, hmm?"

Some detectives come up through the ranks, starting as constables and working the streets before trading their uniforms for plain clothes. Others are hired based on personal contacts, reputation, or education. Regardless, detectives make enquiries when the circumstances (and perpetrator) of a crime are not immediately apparent. The detective service, operating out of Scotland Yard, is competitive and highly political.

Good-quality Minion

Aspects: Detective, Know the London Underworld, The Political Game

Scopes: Good (+3) Mental, Fair (+2) Physical, Average (+1) Social

Gifts: Equipment (Truncheon: +1 to Physical, Weapon 1 [Health]), Equipment (Pistol: Weapon 2 [Health], Weapon 1 [Composure])

Fate Point Cost: 2

EQUIPMENT

Normal clothing, truncheon, sometimes carries a pistol, notepad, ready coin for bribing informants.

Detective Inspector (Adversary)

"We have to keep this *quiet*. A scandal like this could embarrass some very powerful men."

Once a fine officer, now more of a bureaucrat than a policeman, and saddled with political considerations and administrative duties.

ASPECTS

Middle Class: More of a Bureaucrat Than a Policeman

Conviction: The Political Game

Owed Many Favors

SKILLS

Good (+3): Bureaucracy

Fair (+2): Investigation, Presence

Average (+1): Arms, Firearms, Athletics

GIFTS

Equipment: Incriminating Files (+1 to Social, Weapon 1 [Reputation])

Theme: Use Bureaucracy instead of Intimidation when pulling rank, +1 to Investigation with crime scenes, +1 to Firearms with pistols

STRESS TRACKS

Health OOO

Composure OOO

Reputation OOO OO

EQUIPMENT

Fine clothes, a nice office, an official carriage, a pistol if desired. File cabinets full of career-protecting, highly sensitive personal secrets of some of London's first citizens.

Special Branch Officer (Minion)

"Push off, bluebottle. We're taking over."

A hard man among hard men. The Special Branch starts with a certain sort of recruit who already knows the ways of violence and intimidation and adds to this a powerful loyalty to the Queen and a sense of superiority and untouchability. Special Branch lacks the finesse of the detective service when investigating crimes, but makes up for it with direct brutal efficiency. They are more likely to break your fingers until you admit what you were doing on Sunday night last than interview witnesses who might place you somewhere or the other.

Fair-quality Minion

Aspects: Armored in Faith, Knows the Ways of Violence and Intimidation
Scopes: Fair (+2) Physical (E), Average (+1) Mental
Gifts: Equipment (Truncheon: Weapon 1 [Health]; Pistol: Weapon 2 [Health]), Equipment (Syringe: Use Physical instead of Mental to inflict Composure stress, Weapon 2 [Composure])
Fate Point Cost: 3

EQUIPMENT

Truncheon, pistol, large syringe full of opium extract, housebreaking implements, self-locking manacles, big black four-wheel carriage.

Senior Special Branch Officer (Adversary)

"Break his fingers and put him in the Hole, boys. He'll be more willing to talk in a few weeks."

Those who rise to command in the Special Branch are a particular kind of bastard. Charismatic, iron willed, and brutal enough to make even other Special Branch officers afraid of you.

ASPECTS

Middle Class: Special Branch Officer
Conviction: Armored in Faith
The Hard Man
"I know the Strange"

SKILLS

Good (+3): Intimidation
Fair (+2): Fisticuffs, Resolve (E)
Average (+1): Alertness, Arms, Endurance

GIFTS

Equipment: Truncheon (Weapon 1 [Health]), Pistol (Weapon 2 [Health])
Equipment: Syringe (Use Arms instead of Intimidation to inflict Composure stress, Weapon 2 [Composure])
Theme: Ignore penalties to Intimidation, Use Resolve instead of Athletics to defend against Strange attacks, +1 Intimidation when interrogating a subject

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO O
Composure	OOO OO (Armor 1)
Reputation	OOO

Tracking Squad

"He might be gone, but his smell … I could follow this bastard to the ends of the earth."

The Tracking Squad is a small group of no more than a dozen officers loosely attached to the detective service based out of Scotland Yard. They are drawn from veterans of the 13th Lupine Rangers, many of whom were eager to take up their wolf belts once again. Tracking Squad officers use their senses and speed to run down criminals and make positive identification. Confronted with the testimony of a Tracking Officer (who remain public favorites), many accused offenders become willing to cop to lesser crimes when offered the chance. As when they were in the army, the names of Tracking Squad officers are kept secret for the duration of their service.

ASPECTS

Changed: Veteran of the 13th Lupine Rangers
Middle Class: Tracking Officer (Huge Wolfen Beast)
Conviction: Experience the Power of the Wolfreimen
Conviction: Go for the Throat
Concealed Identity

SKILLS

Good (+3): Wolf Form (S)
Fair (+2): Arms, Resolve (E)
Average (+1): Intimidation, Brawn, Athletics

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Wolfriemen (see page 123 for details)

GIFTS

Equipment: Truncheon (Weapon 1 [Health]), Pistol (Weapon 2 [Health])

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO (OO Armor 2)
Composure	OOO OO
Reputation	OOO

Automechanical Domestic (Minion)

"…"

Mute, tireless, gleaming testaments to the powers of Progress to relieve the burdens of Humanity—or to rob Humanity of livelihood and purpose—automechanicals are sculpted machines in the shape of man, driven by electrical motors, and directed by a Babbage Computational calculating brain. An automechanical does not learn or experience; rather it gains new skills and capacities by inserting a programme deck (roughly the size of a pack of playing cards) into its "mouth" and loading the deck's machine signal, encoded in thousands of tiny holes on each card, into its memory registers.

Fair-quality Minion

Aspects: Domestic Service Programme, Special Purpose Programme, Tireless Automaton
Scopes: Fair (+2) Physical (E)
Gifts: Equipment (Metal Body: Armor 1 [Health], +1 to Physical to lift/break things)
Fate Point Cost: 2

Automechanicals only have two scopes: Physical and Mental. They're immune to (nor can they dish out) Reputation stress. After 1862, replace the "Domestic Service Programme" aspect with "Self-Defense Programme." During the Automechanical Mutiny, replace "Special Purpose Programme" with "Manifesto Programme."

EQUIPMENT

Implements of domestic service or another job. During the Mutiny, any weapons they can find, real or improvised. Add an Equipment Gift: +1 to Physical to attack humans, Weapon 1 [Health].

Automechanical Rifleman (Minion)

"…"

Essentially an Automechanical Domestic with a heavier chassis, longer-lasting batteries, and heavier motors, carrying programmes focused on soldiering and military service. Most are deployed overseas during the Mutiny, and so thankfully there are few numbered among the rogue machines.

Good-quality Minion

Aspects: Military Service Programme, Special Purpose Programme, Heavy Long-Barreled Rifle
Scopes: Good (+3) Physical (E), Fair (+2) Mental
Gifts: Equipment (*Rifle:* Weapon 3 [Health]), Equipment (*Metal Body:* Armor 1 [Health], +1 to Physical to lift/break things)
Fate Point Cost: 3

EQUIPMENT

Regimental uniform; a large backpack containing an enormous amount of ammunition, supplies for mortal troops, and spare parts for itself and its fellow Automechanicals; a huge, special-built, long-barreled rifle too heavy for humans to comfortably carry and fire.

Automechanical Bay (Minion)

"…"

Babbage Computational's attempts to market the Automechanical Rifleman met with a great deal of initial resistance from the hidebound authorities of the British military. While the company lobbied, wined, and dined among the generals and admirals and ministers, it also explored other avenues for its automatons and computational engines, and found the Army much more amenable to a mechanical horse. The same motors, batteries and computational engines drive the Automechanical Bay, but rather than mock the shape of man they mimic the shape of a large, brown enamel quarter horse.

The Bay's mechanical brain includes a series of rote horse-like behaviors as well—grazing, twitching its ears, stamping—which make it seem more ordinary. Unlike ordinary horses, Automechanical Bays are fearless. A rider only need make control rolls when trying to keep his seat. (See **Horses and Horsemanship,** page 98.) Unfortunately, no amount of encouragement can make these mechanical horses exceed their limits. Only the Bay can roll to avoid obstacles; no amount of rider skill can make the Automechanical Bay keep its feet if it starts to slip.

Good-quality Minion

Aspects: Horse Programme, Special Purpose Programme
Scopes: Fair (+2) Physical (E), Average (+1) Mental
Gifts: Equipment (Metal Body: Armor 1 [Health], +1 to Physical to sprint)
Fate Point Cost: 2

EQUIPMENT

Saddle and heavy iron hooves.

Thief (Minion)

"I was visiting my sick Mum, officer, never even seen the inside of a jeweler's before."

One of the countless members of London's criminal classes. There isn't anything romantic about most thievery. It's survival, pure and simple. Some thieves try to maintain some kind of code and won't steal from those who can't afford it, but most are simple opportunists who will take from anyone they can.

There are dozens of different classifications of thief: burglars, cracksmen, snake men, rum drivers, footpads, waterpads—different names for different kinds of stealing or different roles in a criminal enterprise. Thieves vary wildly in experience, reputation, and trustworthiness.

Average-quality Minion

Aspects: Thievery, Criminal Connections
Scopes: Average (+1) Physical
Gifts: Equipment (Housebreaking Tools: +1 to Physical to break and enter, Aspect: The Right Tool for the Right Job)
Fate Point Cost: 1

EQUIPMENT

The tools of the trade (whatever that might be). The thief written up above is a burglar, complete with housebreaking tools, but he could just as easily have a truncheon (+1 to Physical, Weapon 1 [Health]), a Spark (see page 120), rope and climbing equipment (+1 to Physical, Aspect: Second-Story Man), or a forger's or counterfeiter's setup. He may carry a pistol (Weapon 2 [Health], Weapon 1 [Composure]), though this isn't especially common.

Socialite (Minion)

"I can't believe Charles invited *that sort*. I was so hoping he would redeem himself after the truly tragic décor of the ball last year, but see how he compounds the sin of all these swans and feathers by inviting the swine in as well?"

Society is every bit the Darwinian jungle that any wilderness might be. It is a thing of social hierarchy, of younger generations challenging the older for dominance. It is a constant preening dance of human mating rituals, where suitors prove their fitness with displays of dancing, gifts, and demonstrations of wealth and influence. And it's just as savage, though the blood drawn is almost always metaphorical. To thrive in Society and do well during the Season takes a certain sort of person: strong-willed, quick-thinking, and willing to abandon friends long before it becomes obvious to the rest of Society that they are about to suffer a fall.

Average-quality Minion

Aspects: The Dark Side of Society, I Know the Right People
Scopes: Average (+1) Social
Gifts: Equipment (Wealth: +1 to Social when money would matter, Aspect: Proper Attire)
Fate Point Cost: 1

EQUIPMENT

Many fine things (whether this implies actual wealth sometimes doesn't matter), estates (or respectable rental properties), servants.

Thug (Minion)

"You don't talk to the boss like that!"

Generic muscle, junior hard men, struggling boxers, or dockworkers paid a little on the side to back someone else's play. Thugs are a staple of many enterprises, and even the greatest chess master needs a few pawns to see his plans play out.

Average-quality Minion

Aspects: Fisticuffs, Know The Score
Scopes: Average (+1) Physical
Gifts: Equipment (Weapon of Choice: +1 to Physical to attack, Weapon 1 [Health])
Fate Point Cost: 1

EQUIPMENT

As needed, but might be armed with anything from a truncheon to a pistol, a shotgun, or something more exotic.

Shopkeeper (Minion)

"That's three pounds six, my good man, and you won't find a better offer in London."

Middle class through and through, the shopkeeper is devoted to his good name and his business above every other concern. He's saving up to take the wife and children to the seaside, but until then he spends every spare hour at his shop.

With different aspects, this template serves equally well for clerks and clergy.

Average-quality Minion

Aspects: Man of Business, Middle Class Through and Through
Scopes: Average (+1) Social
Fate Point Cost: 0

Chapter 7
Running the Game

It is the great goal of this book to provide you, the GM, with enough material and inspiration to run a truly fun and memorable Kerberos Club game. This section offers some techniques and advice for leveraging the setting and its themes into play, and on taking full advantage of all the hooks and hints your players give you when building their character. It also contains rules and guidelines for interacting with the environment, setting scenes, and creating and playing the various antagonists (and occasionally, allies) the players will encounter, along with an extensive sampling of NPCs of every stripe. Go bravely, and let thy GM screen by thy armor.

Time and Space

FATE handles both time and distance in abstract terms. The first is measured by steps on the **Time Table**; the second, by loosely defined areas called **zones**.

The Time Table

Whenever a character does something, it takes a certain amount of time—anywhere from an instant for something like throwing a punch to a few days or more for conducting intensive academic research or forging an ensorcelled dagger.

The Time Table lists a wide range of time increments, from no time at all at the top to an eon at the bottom. Each of these is called a **step**. When speaking of taking less time than normal, we refer to that as **steps up** on the Time Table; taking longer than normal means taking **steps down**.

Where two values are given, the one before the slash is the time required in a conflict. Most actions in combat require just that—An Action—and can be combined with a supplemental action, which imposes a -1 penalty to the character's skill roll for the round, or a Free Action, which carries no penalty. Something that requires A Full Action, however, consumes a character's entire effort for the round—not even a Free Action can be taken with a Full Action.

Zones

Zones divide up the geography of a scene into intuitive areas of action. When you're in the same zone as someone else, you can have a civilized conversation, a fistfight, or any interaction that requires proximity. If you're a zone away from that person, you'll probably have to shout to communicate, and the only way you can engage them in combat is to throw or shoot something at them. If the distance separating you is two zones or greater, only firearms and other missile weapons can reach your enemy.

There are no hard-and-fast rules for how big or small a zone is—use your best judgment and settle on whatever makes sense for the scene. Generally speaking, you only need a few. For example, a scene that takes place on a hill could be divided into three zones: Hilltop, Hillside, and Base. Or you could get more detailed, if that's what the scene demands: The Big Rock, The Clearing, Eastern

The Time Table

Free Action / No Time
An Action / An Instant
A Full Action / A Few Moments
Two Rounds / Half a Minute
Three Rounds / A Minute
A Conflict / A Few Minutes
A Scene / 15 Minutes
Half an Hour
An Hour
A Few Hours
An Afternoon
A Day
A Few Days
A Week
A Few Weeks
A Month
A Season
Half a Year
A Year
A Few Years
A Decade
A Generation
A Lifetime
A Century
Five Hundred Years
A Millennium
An Eon

Hillside, Western Hillside, Riverside, Forest. Similarly, a house could be just that—a single zone—or it could be divided into multiple floors, each with its own collection of zones, such as Entry Foyer, Parlour, Main Hall, Stairway, Dining Room, and so forth. The various floorplans in Chapter 2, for example, make for great zone maps.

It's often a good idea to further distinguish a scene's zones with one or two aspects. For example, that Dining Room probably has a "Table and Chairs," and the Stairway could have "Creaky Third Step." The more detailed you get with zones and aspects, the more easily the players will be able to interact with and make use of the environment. To keep things straight, draw a series of circles on a piece of blank paper, labeled with their aspects.

By default, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action. Moving farther than that requires an Athletics roll, or a skill with an appropriate Mobility trapping. See the trapping descriptions for **Climb**, **Leap**, and **Move** for more detail.

Beyond common sense considerations such as two people needing to be in the same room to be able to have a discussion, only physical conflicts really demand zones.

Border Values

Zones can also have factors that make crossing between them difficult—things like walls, locked doors, fences, moats, debris, rubble, or some other complication. These are represented by **border values**. Subtract the border value from the skill roll made to enter the zone, or, if the movement is a supplemental action, from whatever skill roll the character makes during the round.

For example, let's say Night Hag wants to drop down on a miscreant in an alley from the rooftop above. That's a movement from one zone (Rooftop) to another (Alley). The GM rules that the drop means a border value of 3. Since Night Hag's objective this round is to attack the criminal, the movement is a supplemental action, so she'll take a penalty of -3 to her Fisticuffs roll.

Doing Things

Characters in your games are going to do a lot. For most things they do, there's no real need for rules: They can stand, walk, talk, go shopping, and otherwise do normal

Interpreting Shifts

Let's say your roll succeeds easily, but you don't have a use for those excess shifts. What do they mean in terms of the narrative?

0 shifts: Minimal success. Not bad, but not great either. Complications may ensue.

1 shift: Notable success. Your performance is solid and reliable, equal to the work of a true professional.

3 shifts: Significant success. Your performance is impressive and masterful. Moreover, your roll generates spin, if you have a use for that.

5 shifts: Potent success. Not only is your performance remarkable, it may carry some secondary benefit, such as a deeper insight into the situation at hand.

10+ shifts: Incredible success. A success of this caliber is usually the result of applying a supernatural solution to a mundane task. Onlookers are likely to either give you a wide berth or tag along like eager puppies, as appropriate.

things without needing to roll dice. They can even take actions that use their skills, like riding a horse or flying, without worrying about the dice. No, the dice only come out when things get interesting—when there's a challenge with meaningful consequences for both success and failure.

Generally speaking, when a character rolls the dice, it's a success if the result matches or exceeds the difficulty; otherwise, it's a failure. When the issue is simple, then this may be all that's necessary, but sometimes you also need to know how well a character did or did not do. For example, if a character rolls three higher than the target, that's better than rolling only one higher.

Effort, Shifts, and Effect

Accomplishing a task—climbing a wall, singing an aria, stabbing a sauropod—consists of three parts: your **effort**, the **shifts** you obtain, and your final **effect**.

Effort

The total of your roll plus your skill and any other modifiers, including bonuses from invoking aspects, is your effort. This will always be compared against a target number, be it Mediocre (+0) for an easy, everyday task, a higher static number for more difficult tasks, or an opposing party's effort.

EXAMPLE: Augustus is setting a trap in a scrapyard. He uses his Good (+3) Underdweller skill to do this. As this is a static task, the GM rules that Augustus only needs to hit a target of Mediocre (+0) to succeed. After rolling the dice, adding his skill bonus, and spending a Fate Point to invoke his "Too Clever By Half" aspect, Augustus' total effort is Great (+4).

Shifts

The margin by which your effort overcomes that target number is the number of shifts you've obtained on your roll. In a conflict, these shifts pretty much automatically go towards damaging your opponent, physically or otherwise, but in other circumstances shifts can be spent to achieve other goals. Sometimes the GM will spend shifts in accordance with what you've described, or sometimes you'll spend them yourself.

Among other things, shifts can be spent to:

- **Reduce time required:** Make the action take less time, usually one step on the Time Table per shift.
- **Increase quality:** Improve the quality of the job done beyond the minimum required.
- **Increase subtlety:** Make the results of your action harder for someone else to detect.
- **Overflow:** In a conflict—usually physical combat—shifts in excess of what's needed to Take Out a group of Minions can be applied to another group of Minions. These excess shifts are referred to as Overflow. (See **The Opposition** for details.)

EXAMPLE: Augustus' Great (+4) effort vs. a Mediocre (+0) target gives him four shifts on his roll. The GM decides that

the two factors at work here are how deadly the trap is and how long it takes to complete (A Few Hours by default). Augustus' player points out that how well-hidden it is will make a difference, too—if the pursuers can't see the trap, it'll take them by surprise. The GM agrees. Consequently, shifts can be spent to make the trap more effective, faster to set, and/or harder to detect. He can take a few hours to make a Great (+4) trap that has only Mediocre (+0) concealment, or a Fair (+2) trap with Average (+1) concealment that only takes an hour to build, or any other combination of those three factors and his 4 shifts.

There is no such thing as "negative shifts"—if the effort falls short of the target number, it's a failure, plain and simple. However, if that failure could reasonably be mitigated by taking more time with the task, the character can retroactively gain a +1 to the roll for each step down on the Time Table. As a rule of thumb, this is limited to a +4 bonus for four steps down. For example, if picking a lock should normally take about 15 minutes, the character could opt to spend the entire afternoon to gain +4 and overcome missing the roll by 4.

If the effort results in three or more shifts, it generates **spin**. Spin has different effects in different situations—for example, the Impact Gift uses spin to create an aspect—but it's most important in conflicts. (See **Conflicts**, below, for more on this.)

Effect

The number of shifts obtained and put directly towards your intention—i.e., what you were trying to get done in the first place—is your effect. For instance, in the example above, the main thing Augustus is trying to do is harm or discourage his pursuers, so shifts spent directly on the quality of his trap will be his effect.

EXAMPLE: Augustus chooses to make a trap with Average (+1) Stealth in An Hour (requiring him to spend 1 shift), which means that he has 2 shifts left over to spend on the trap's effect, which in this case is Fair (+2). When the Special Branch goons who are after him come upon the trap, Augustus' player will roll the trap's Average (+1) Stealth opposed by the goons' Alertness, then make an attack with its Fair (+2) Arms (the trap's effect). If they saw the trap, they defend with Athletics; otherwise, they defend as if their skill were Mediocre (+0).

Setting Difficulties

Sometimes it can seem tricky to figure out just how difficult a given task should be. You can use the following guidelines to help determine where to set difficulties relative to a character's skills.

- **Skill -2 or lower:** The character will nearly always succeed without needing to invoke any aspects.
- **Skill -1:** The character is likely to succeed, but may have to invoke an aspect.
- **Skill +0:** The character's chances of success and failure are roughly even.
- **Skill +1:** The character will probably have to invoke an aspect to succeed.
- **Skill +2 or higher:** The character will almost always have to invoke one or more aspects to succeed.

If the task's Power Tier is higher than the skill's, that matters a great deal as well. Generally speaking, for each Tier of difference, you can expect the player to need to invoke two aspects to make up for the deficit.

When to Roll Dice

Dice are used in one of three types of situations:

- **Simple Actions:** The character rolls against a fixed difficulty. Most aspect declarations are simple actions.
- **Contests:** Two characters each roll, with the high roll winning and generating shifts. Aspect maneuvers and assessments (and opposed declarations) are contests.
- **Conflicts:** Two or more characters act in direct opposition to one another, but resolution is not as simple as a contest.

Simple actions are rolled against a difficulty set by the GM and are used to simply see if a character can do something, and possibly how well he can do it. The GM describes the situation and the player chooses a skill to apply to it, and rolls against a difficulty determined by the GM (by default, Mediocre). Some sample simple actions include:

- Climbing a wall
- Researching an obscure fact
- Examining a crime scene for clues
- Shooting a (non-character) target

Generally speaking, the quality of a simple action beyond success or failure only matters when the results of that action are going to be referenced later. For example, if your effort to conceal a secret compartment under a loose floorboard is Great (+4), that'll be the difficulty for anyone else who tries to find it.

Contests are very much like simple actions, except the action is in direct opposition to someone else and easily resolved one way or another. Rather than setting a difficulty, each party rolls the appropriate skill, and the outcome is resolved as if the high roll had beaten a difficulty equal to the low roll. A tie means both succeed, but whether that means the outcome is a tie or if it calls for another roll depends on the situation. Some sample contests include:

- An arm wrestling match
- A quick footrace
- A game of chance

Ordinarily, shifts obtained in a contest don't really matter—all you really want to know is who won. In some situations, however, the outcome of the contest may influence a future roll, the GM may offer a bonus to the winning player for the second roll, or even let the victor place a temporary aspect on himself, his competitor, or the scene, as appropriate to the situation.

The GM may also declare a **consequential contest:** The loser takes a Trifling consequence for a loss of 2 or 3 shifts, a Middling consequence for a loss of 4 to 5 shifts, or a Grievous consequence for a loss of 6 shifts or more. Consequential contests are best for when circumstances call for something a bit more dramatic, despite the simple outcome.

Difficulty and Power Tiers

When attempting a simple action with a difficulty of a Power Tier higher than the skill you're using, replace one Fudge die with a d6 per degree of difference. But instead of adding the result of the d6 to the roll, subtract it. Compare your effort to the target number, as usual, to determine your effect.

For example, let's say you're attempting to pick Great (+4) (E) lock using your Good (+3) Burglary. Because the Power Tier of the task is one higher than your skill's Power Tier, you swap out a Fudge die for a d6 and roll 3dF-1d6. Your result: ⊟⊟⊞-2, or -3. Adding that to your skill rating of Good (+3) yields a total effort of Mediocre (+0)—not nearly good enough to defeat that lock. Spending 2 Fate Points to invoke two aspects, though, will give you the +4 you need to succeed.

Other times, the GM or the players may want something that takes longer than a single roll without having a full-blown contest. In these cases, an **extended contest—**a series of rolls that add up to a final result—is the way to go. There are two basic ways to go about this, which we'll call **the race** and **the chase**.

In **the race**, set a number as the goal or "finish line"—the higher the number, the longer the race—then have each participant roll against a difficulty number, usually Mediocre (+0), and record how many shifts he obtains. Repeat this process, accumulating shifts each round, until one participant accumulates enough shifts to reach the finish line. That's your winner. Usually only one skill (or one skill trapping) will be applicable to the task at hand, but if the player can justify another within reason, the GM's free to allow whatever works in context. The participants can take as much time as is required to reach the goal, but that's not to say that the situation can't worsen the longer it continues.

EXAMPLE: Our hero Augustus and a cultist of Thoth are trapped on opposite ends of a burning building's rooftop, their only possible means of escape a hot-air balloon tethered to a chimney some distance away. If they simply

duke it out, the conflagration below will consume them both. Instead, each makes a beeline for the balloon. It's a race! The GM sets the difficulty at Mediocre (+0) and the finish line at 5 shifts—but each round spent on the rooftop will inflict a point of Health stress due to the heat and smoke inhalation. The two lock eyes for an instant, then run for their lives. After three rounds, Augustus has his 5 shifts, while the cultist only has 3. Augustus leaps into the balloon's basket with 3 Health stress, while the cultist—a Good (+2) quality Minion—falls to his knees mere feet from salvation, coughing and choking.

By a similar token, **the chase** also uses skill rolls and tracks accumulated shifts. But here, participants try to generate as many shifts as possible within a limited time period. In addition, instead of a static target number, the difficulty can change on a round-by-round basis. Individual stress tracks are replaced by a single stress track, with victory for the pursuer on the left and victory for the quarry on the right.

In the first round, the quarry rolls his skill against a target of Mediocre (+0), but modified by the Power Tier of the pursuer's applicable skill. (For example, if the quarry is using a skill in the Extraordinary Tier and the pursuer's skill is merely Mundane, the quarry rolls 3dF+1d6, but if each participant's skill were in the Extraordinary Tier, he'd just roll 4dF.) This is the quarry's "head start."

On the next round, and on every subsequent round, the quarry sets a difficulty number for himself and for his pursuer, then each rolls their relevant skill against that number. For every shift obtained by the quarry, he fills in a stress box; for every shift obtained by the pursuer, she clears a stress box. If the quarry accumulates enough shifts to bypass the stress track before time is up, he wins, whatever that may mean in the context of the contest. If not, or if the pursuer manages to clear the entire stress track, the pursuer wins.

EXAMPLE: Before Augustus ended up on that rooftop, he had to outrun the fire racing up the stairway from below. The GM draws a stress track with five boxes and sets the time limit at three rounds. If Augustus can't get to the roof before then, the fire will have caught up with him! For his head start, Augustus rolls his Fair (+2) Athletics against a target of Mediocre (+0) and gets a ⊞⊞⊞■0, for a total of effort of Superb (+5). He checks all five stress boxes—an excellent start! Then the GM rolls the fire's Good (+3) Athletics, but only rolls ⊞⊟⊟⊟, for an Average (+1) effort. That clears the fifth stress box, barely cutting into Augustus' lead. Sensing victory, Augustus' player opts to set the difficulty at Mediocre (+0) again for the second round. His next Athletics roll is ⊞■■⊟, which added to his skill rating gives him a Fair (+2) effort—enough to check that fifth box again and bypass the end of the stress track.

In both the race and the chase, time needs to be an important factor. This is a little more explicit in a chase, which has a pre-set time limit measured in rounds, but time should matter in a race as well. The difference is that time crunch in a race is usually going to be more focused on the narrative rather than enforced by mechanics. Don't bother with a race if there's no real hurry in the first place.

Conflicts are what happen when two or more characters are in opposition in a fashion that cannot be quickly and cleanly resolved. A conflict is broken down into a number of **exchanges** where each party makes an effort to try to achieve their goal, taking turns to act. Opponents who stand in their way may be called upon to roll a response. They will accumulate success in the form of stress on opponents. Eventually, opponents will accumulate enough stress, or suffer enough consequences, to be taken out; alternatively, opponents may preemptively offer a **concession**.

An entire scene may (and often does) revolve around a conflict. Conflicts include:

- Any kind of fight scene
- A political debate
- A long, tense staredown
- Destroying a rival's public reputation before they can return the favor
- Trying to talk your way past a bouncer as he tries to scare you off

Conflicts are such a special case that they get their own section.

Conflicts

Once a conflict begins, take it step by step:

1. Frame the scene.
2. Establish groups.
3. Establish initiative.
4. Begin the exchange.
    a. Take actions.
    b. Resolve actions.
    c. Begin a new exchange.

Step 1: Where Are We?

At the most basic level, this is when the GM tells the players where they are, what they can see, hear, and smell, who else is there, and that sort of thing—give the players a sense of where they are and what's going on from their characters' perspective, so they can act or react accordingly.

Mechanically, though, the GM's primary means of framing the scene are zones and scene aspects. Zones have been discussed earlier, but scene aspects require a little more fleshing-out.

Scene aspects represent anything about the scene that could provide an advantage or disadvantage in a conflict. The GM should make any obvious scene aspects, such as "Dimly Lit" or "Quiet As The Grave," available to the players to tag or invoke. The best way to do this is to put each on an index card in the middle of the table, and mark them with a check once they've been tagged. (Hint: Get the ones that are blank on both sides.) Or you can use a small dry-erase board, then wipe it clean once the scene's over—whatever works for the group.

Any aspects that ***aren't*** obvious from the start, such as the energy pulsing from a cursed obelisk concealed behind a thin plaster wall, or the personal aspects of an NPC, have to be discovered by the PCs, usually through an aspect assessment or some other manner that makes sense, before they can be tagged or invoked.

It's generally considered bad form for the GM to tag scene aspects before the players get a chance.

On the whole, the more scene aspects there are, the more lively the environment will be, and the more the players will be inclined to interact with it. This is a good thing—the more action, the better. GMs should therefore be pretty liberal about throwing scene aspects out there, giving the players a very tactile way of interacting with the environment and incorporating these details into their action descriptions. Five scene aspects, give or take a couple, is usually a good number.

Step 2: Who's On Your Side?

It may seem like a no-brainer, but it's good to sort out who wants what out of the scene before dice start rolling. Usually, it's a simple matter of PCs vs. NPCs, but it doesn't always have to be so clear-cut. Maybe some PCs will be at odds with others, or simply want a gentler or harsher resolution than their compatriots.

Taking time to establish groups gives everyone involved in the conflict a chance to state their intentions. If one PC wants to pump a criminal for information while another just wants to kill every bad guy in the room, that's something they each need to know up front, because before too long they're going to be at odds. Similarly, it's a helpful reminder for the GM to make sure she knows what each of the NPCs in the scene hopes to get out of it, which can

Scene Aspects: The Players' Role

As the GM, don't feel like you have to come up with every scene aspect on your own. Take a minute to field a few suggestions from the players, then write down three or four that really speak to you. It's a win-win situation: You get to outsource some of your workload onto the players, and because the aspects come from those players, they're more likely to use them in interesting ways.

This is best for improvised scenes—ones you hadn't planned for, but that flow naturally from the narrative. Most of the time you'll want to figure out aspects for the "expected" scenes in advance.

inform their decisions later when it comes time to decide committed they are to attaining their goals.

This is also the time to figure out who's facing off against whom. Is one character going to make himself a target for the enemy's minions while his companions try to defuse the bomb, or do the PCs want to deal with one problem at a time? Will everyone talk to the Duchess at once, or will that be the responsibility of the PC with the best Rapport? Giving everyone an explicit time to determine all of this can save some headaches later on.

Step 3: Who Goes First?

The next step is to decide in what order the participants in the conflict will act. This is referred to as the initiative order, or just initiative—as in "taking the initiative." The skill (or Initiative trapping) used for initiative depends on the scope of the conflict. Physical conflicts use Alertness (Initiative [Physical]), mental conflicts use Resolve (Initiative [Mental]), and social conflicts use Empathy (Initiative [Social]).

There are many ways to skin this particular cat, some of which include:

- **Roll for it.** Everyone rolls the appropriate skill, invoking or tagging aspects if desired, and acts in order from highest to lowest. Egalitarian, but can bog things down with a lot of dice-rolling before the conflict's really even begun.
- **Skill ratings only.** As above, but instead of rolling, initiative is determined by the Power Tiers and raw ratings of the participants' skills, with ties being broken by a roll-off or GM fiat. Also egalitarian, but not fine-grained enough for some groups' liking.
- **Clockwise.** Start with the character with the highest initiative-determining skill rating, then just proceed around the table clockwise after that. Initiative generally matters most in the first round anyway.
- **He started it!** Begin with whoever initiated the conflict—threw the first punch, delivered the first insult, intimated the first threat—and proceed via one of the above methods from there. Organic, but has the potential to unfairly favor whichever player is most likely to start trouble (on the other hand, incentivizing that sort of troublemaking behavior isn't necessarily a bad idea).
- **Players first, GM last.** Combined with any of the above methods, all of the players get to act in their initiative order first before any of the NPCs. Emphasizes the importance of the PCs in the story, but sometimes means an interesting antagonist gets shut down before he can move a muscle.

Regardless, remember to first consider the skill's Power Tier—a skill with the Initiative trapping of a higher Power Tier will always let the character act before anyone else. If there's a tie for Power Tier, the GM can call for a dice roll or just break it in whatever way makes the most sense.

Step 4: What Do You Want to Do?

When your character's turn comes up during the exchange, describe what your character is doing in terms of one of the basic conflict actions. These are:

- **Attack:** Make an opposed roll against your target with the intent of causing harm (dealing stress).
- **Maneuver:** Make a skill roll (usually opposed by your target) to try to gain an advantage instead of dealing stress.
- **Move:** Roll to change zones, with each shift representing a zone entered or a point of border value overcome.
- **Full Defense:** Hunker down and turtle up. By concentrating entirely on defense for the exchange (a Full Action), any defense rolls you make receive a +2 bonus.

Each character gets one basic action for the turn, each of which requires An Action, unless indicated otherwise. However, you can usually take a supplemental action as well, which imposes a -1 penalty to your skill roll for the exchange. It's pretty easy to spot which action requires a skill roll and which is merely supplemental. Look at the two skills and consider which one is interesting, or carries the most risk—that's the one that gets the dice roll. For example, if you want to kick open a door and punch a cultist in the face, the door-kicking seems relatively bland

compared to the face-punching, so you'll roll Fisticuffs at -1. If both tasks definitely require a skill roll, such as punching one enemy while trying to shoot another, neither can be a supplemental action to the other. Only one at a time can be attempted.

Free Actions are so minor as to require almost no time or attention at all, such as taking a quick look at your surroundings or shouting out a warning to your allies. As such, a Free Action can be combined with An Action at no penalty.

Each of these basic actions is described in more detail below.

Attack

An attack is a direct assault against your opponent with the intent of causing harm in the form of stress and consequences. As such, attacks are always opposed rolls between the attacker and the defender. There is no limit to the number of times a combatant can defend against attackers in an exchange, even against multiple attackers.

The skill used for an attack depends on the attacker's agenda and preferred methods. The Common skills that cover attacks include Arms, Fisticuffs, and Firearms for physical conflicts (or any skill with the Strike or Shoot trapping), Intimidation for mental conflicts (or any skill with the Menace trapping), and Contacting for social conflicts (or any skill with the Influence trapping). The attacker's skill also determines what skill the defender can use as a defense. See the list of trapping descriptions for more detail.

If the attacker wins the roll, the shifts he acquires translate into a stress value he can inflict on the defender. If the defender wins, or it's a tie, the attack fails.

Stress and Consequences

When an attack succeeds, it inflicts stress on the target. Stress is an abstract representation of the difficulties that threaten to take someone out of a conflict. Health stress can be minor cuts, bruises, fatigue, and the like. Composure stress can be thought of as an erosion of willpower, nerve, or emotional control. Reputation stress represents disparaging rumors or damaging slights against one's character.

In any event, you can look at stress as the closest of close calls—not enough to be a lasting problem, but enough that you can't withstand it forever.

When you take stress, check the box on the appropriate stress track equal to the total stress dealt and all boxes to the left of it. If the box to be checked is already full, the stress "rolls up" to the next clear box. For example, if an attack deals 2 Health stress, check the second and first boxes on your Health stress track. If another attack deals another 2 stress to the same track, check the track's third box.

Anytime a character takes stress, he can opt to take a **consequence**—a special kind of aspect that represents a longer-lasting result of failing to defend against attacks. You don't want consequences, but sometimes they're your only chance to stay on your feet.

The exact nature of a consequence largely depends on the nature of the conflict as well as its scope (Physical, Mental, or Social). The more consequences of a given scope you can withstand, the harder it is to defeat you in a conflict of that scope. For example, a character who can take two Trifling Social consequences is going to be more difficult to discredit than another character who can only take one Trifling Social consequence. A Physical consequence might be a "Bloody Nose," representing an actual injury, or "Off-Balance," representing the difficulty the character now has coordinating his feet after being punched in the nose. Or maybe the character is now suffering from "Shaken Confidence" after taking a fist to the face. Note that even though "Shaken Confidence" doesn't necessarily reflect a physical condition or wound, it was derived from a physical attack so it's fair game for a Physical consequence.

Normally, the player taking the consequence gets to describe what it is, so long as it's compatible with the attack that inflicted the harm in the first place. The GM can arbitrate the appropriateness of a consequence as well, which may result in a back-and-forth conversation between

player(s) and GM to agree on something that makes sense. This is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about.

The consequences a character can withstand come in three degrees of severity, each of which absorbs a corresponding amount of stress. Consequences can't be taken after the fact to clear boxes in a stress track. They happen in the moment, as the attack happens.

- **Trifling consequences** absorb 2 stress. They last for the remainder of the scene and automatically go away as soon as the character gets a chance to catch his breath (usually when the scene ends).
- **Middling consequences** absorb 4 stress. They require effort during "downtime" to mitigate—a skill roll with a target difficulty of Great (+4). If the roll succeeds, the consequence is reduced from Middling to Trifling; if it succeeds with spin, it's removed altogether. As for which skill applies, that depends on the scope of the conflict that generated it and the nature of the consequence itself. See the **Treatment** trapping description for more detail.
- **Grievous consequences** absorb 6 stress, and persist for the rest of the story. These consequences are traumatic enough that even when they go away, they leave their mark on you. If you have a Grievous consequence at the end of the current story, erase it and alter one of your personal aspects to reflect how the experience has changed you.

By default, a character may take one of each degree of consequence. Once the consequence slot is used, it can't be used again until the current consequence has been cleared. Multiple consequences can be "stacked" to absorb greater amounts of stress, such as combining a Trifling consequence with a Middling consequence to absorb 6 stress (instead of taking a much more serious and life-altering Grievous consequence).

If the consequence(s) absorb all of the stress an attack deals, you take no stress. Otherwise, you take stress equal to whatever remains.

Keep in mind that because consequences are aspects, they can be tagged, invoked, or compelled just like any of your personal aspects—and like any aspect created by a skill roll, the first tag is free. After that, invoking one of your consequences will cost your opponent a Fate Point, but the good news is that the Fate Point goes to you. Consider it a small recompense for your trouble.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons bought as Equipment Gifts can inflict additional stress by taking the Deadly improvement. Multiple instances of Deadly on the same piece of Equipment are cumulative, up to a maximum of +3 stress. However, this can't increase the stress dealt by a weapon to more than twice the number of shifts obtained. For example, if you're attacking with a sword with Deadly x2 and you win the exchange by 1 shift, you'll deal 2 stress, not 3.

Similarly, Equipment with the Protective improvement absorbs stress, providing Armor equal to the number of Protective improvements taken (up to a maximum of Armor 3). If multiple pieces of Equipment with the Protective improvement are worn, only take the highest Armor value from any one of them.

Weapons and armor can also be represented by Strange skills, like a sword forged from meteoric iron or a breastplate fashioned from demon hide. A PC or NPC could conceivably have a Unique skill called, for example, Mail Coat, with the Resist Damage trapping, which would be rolled as a defense against physical attacks.

Otherwise, weapons and armor are merely window dressing. Those cultists may be armed with scimitars, but unless they were purchased as Equipment with the Deadly improvement, they're not any more deadly than their bare fists. So why use them? Apart from flavor and looking cool—a vital factor behind nearly anything of any importance in a story—fighting with weapons allows them to use Arms instead of Fisticuffs. This also means that there's a tactical advantage in disarming them, which gives the PCs something to do besides try to brain them. More significantly, though, it keeps the emphasis on the characters and their skills instead of handing the conflict over to whoever has the shiniest toys.

Mental Weapons, Social Armor

Weapons and armor don't have to be restricted to purely physical conflicts. A beautiful ball gown can make you more persuasive; the Queen's favor can cast doubt on even the most vicious rumors.

However, these are highly contextual advantages. That fancy dress might impress the lower classes, but your social betters aren't likely to take much notice—especially if their clothes are even fancier. This makes it difficult to balance against their physical equivalents, and a big reason why the Equipment Gift is limited to tangible gear. Plus, mental and social assets such as these can be much more ephemeral. Stand beside a muddy road while a carriage goes by and that ball gown won't be so pretty anymore.

Keep all of that in mind before introducing "weapons" and "armor" into non-physical conflicts. If you still want to go for it, don't go overboard—bonus stress and Armor should be reserved for key situations to maintain their specialness. These types of advantages should be cherished and hard to come by. They should also be more about flavor than anything else, so keep the modifier to within +/- 3 stress.

They make for great short-term in-game rewards on the fly, as well. Did you host an especially well-received soiree for London's social elite last night? That might translate to Armor 2 [Social] for the next week or so as talk of the event buoys your reputation in upper class salons. (Although the working class? They could care less.)

Follow the guidelines above and those in the Equipment Gift description, and you'll be in good shape.



Taken Out

If the stress you take ever bypasses a stress track's maximum capacity—that is, when you have to check a box beyond the last box in your stress track—you're Taken Out, or forcibly removed from the conflict (and possibly the story) for at least a while. You could be dead, unconscious, disgraced, fleeing in panic, or whatever's appropriate for the attack

that took you out. The attacker gets to choose your fate, so long as it's within reason. Few people actually die from shame or embarrassment, but fleeing the scene in disgrace after being Taken Out during a debate (a mental conflict) is perfectly acceptable. The winner gets to determine the what, but not the how—it's fine to tell your Taken Out opponent that he faints from fright, but not that he hits his head on the way down or soils himself. Those details are the purview of the Taken Out character's player. Even when being Taken Out does result in death, the character on the losing end of things still has control over the particulars of his death scene.

In general, a character's Taken Out condition only applies within the scope of the conflict. A character who's Taken Out during a social conflict, for example, may have his name dragged through the mud, but that doesn't stop him from seeking violent revenge on those who wronged him. Something to keep in mind the next time you consider dragging someone's name through the mud.

In a physical conflict, it's a good idea for the GM to drop a hint or two about how far an NPC is willing to go to eke out a victory. An offhand remark like "This guy looks like he's out for blood" or "The hellbeast is definitely giving off a bloodthirsty vibe" lets the players know that being Taken Out is going to mean death.

Assuming you're still alive (or can come back to life—let's not rule anything out), being Taken Out comes with a silver lining: For every consequence you currently have when you're Taken Out, you receive one Fate Point.

Making Concessions

You can also choose to **make a concession** instead of taking a consequence. This is essentially you taking yourself out, but on your terms instead of your enemy's.

A concession has to pass muster with the group before it is accepted—the conditions of the loss still have to represent a clear and decisive disadvantage for the character. If the group (including the opposition) decides the conceding character is getting off easy, that character's player has to come up with something better. Or worse, depending on your point of view.

What exactly is "a clear and decisive disadvantage"?

- The outcome creates significant difficulty for the character moving forward. He could be deprived of an important possession, imprisoned, see a friend turn into a bitter enemy, or something similar.
- The outcome creates a situation that restricts the character's behavior in some significant way, such as owing a large debt or becoming a persona non grata in an important segment of society. This may entail imposing a long-term aspect on the character (separate from consequences) to reflect the situation through compels.
- The outcome alters one of a character's existing aspects, and for the worse. Whatever the circumstance of the concession, it's so profound that it alters the character on a fundamental level. For example, "Unshakeable Faith" could become "Looked the Devil in the Eye… and Blinked."

If you make a concession on your turn, you receive a Fate Point for each consequence you have, as if you'd been Taken Out. If you make a concession on your *opponent's* turn, however, you have to *pay* your opponent a Fate Point for every consequence you have. If you don't have enough Fate Points to cover your debt, just give your opponent all the Fate Points you have.

Maneuver

A maneuver is an attempt to gain a momentary situational advantage in a conflict by interacting with either the environment or an opponent. Unlike an attack, it's not intended to deal stress, nor does it necessarily have a lasting effect on your opponent. What it does is set up a condition that makes one or more future attacks more effective, in the form of a fragile or sticky aspect. Here are some examples of maneuvers:

- Knocking an opponent momentarily off balance.
- Disarming an opponent.
- Diving for cover behind an upended table.
- Spreading disinformation as a distraction from the real issue.
- Taking aim.

Against an opponent, a maneuver is performed much like an attack. On a successful opposed skill roll, the "attacker" gets to declare an aspect on his opponent, himself, or the scene, as applicable. For example, knocking your opponent off balance would mean putting an aspect of "Off Balance" on your opponent, whereas maneuvering yourself behind him would probably be an aspect of something like "Got the Drop on Him" on yourself. Smashing the lantern he's holding, on the other hand, could result in an aspect of "Pitch Darkness" on the scene.

As discussed earlier (in **Aspects**), the duration of the aspect depends on the success of the roll. If the attacker's roll succeeds by 2 shifts or less, the aspect is fragile—one free tag and it's gone. If the attacker's roll obtains spin, the aspect is sticky, meaning it sticks around for the rest of the scene or until the situation changes such that it's reasonable for it to go away.

Make a note of the roll's total effort. That's the difficulty for the target to remove the maneuver-derived aspect on her turn, assuming it's still around. For example, if a character uses an aspect maneuver to make a target "Distracted" with a total effort on the skill roll of Superb (+5), the target will need an effort of at least Superb (+5) on her skill roll, probably using something like Alertness, to remove it. Note that this only applies to temporary aspects, *not* consequences.

In certain circumstances, the difficulty of a maneuver is a static number if it doesn't make sense for it to be an opposed roll. For instance, a character could use Resolve as a maneuver to put an aspect of "Focused" on himself. There's no one to oppose this action, so it's not an opposed roll. Usually, the difficulty for such a maneuver is Good (+3), but the GM can adjust this up or down if the situation warrants it—or compel one of the character's aspects or consequences to prevent the maneuver in the first place.

Alternately, if a character is attempting this sort of "self maneuver" while burdened with a consequence, the maneuver could be turned into an opposed roll, with the consequence itself treated as the opposing skill—rated at Fair (+2) for a Trifling consequence, Great (+4) for Middling, or Fantastic (+6) for Grievous.

Given the right set of circumstances, any skill could conceivably be used for an aspect maneuver, but not every skill will apply equally in every situation. Common sense and logic is usually enough to determine what works and what doesn't; if there's still confusion, it's up to the GM to make the call.

Maneuver Examples

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but the examples provided below should convey the general idea behind establishing and dealing with maneuvers in play.

- **Blinded:** You temporarily blind the target by throwing sand in his face, smearing grease across his eyes, or something similar. This is generally done using a skill with the Strike trapping, such as Fisticuffs or Arms. The "Blinded" aspect could then be tagged or invoked to improve your attacks or defenses against the target, or possibly compelled to make the target accidentally attack an ally or stumble off a ledge. At the GM's discretion, this could also be accomplished with a ranged attack—a trick shot that skims the target's eyes.
- **Disarmed:** A successful maneuver knocks the target's weapon (or whatever she's holding) out of her hands. If it's a fragile aspect, the weapon hasn't gone far and is easily recovered after the "Disarmed" aspect has been tagged. Otherwise, a successful skill roll using Athletics or something similar recovers the weapon. The "Disarmed" aspect could be tagged or invoked by an armed attacker to aid on his roll, but an unarmed attacker can't claim the same advantage. After all, if they're both unarmed, the playing field has been leveled. Any skill with the Strike trapping (or, if the GM's up for it, the Shoot trapping) can be used for this maneuver.
- **Taking Cover:** The character dives behind a table, a carriage, a pile of debris, or something similar to aid in her own defense. If the character is under attack when she attempts this maneuver, it's an opposed skill roll, usually using a skill with the Move or Leap trapping. Otherwise, it's a roll against a static difficulty—either Average (+1) for a cluttered warehouse or Superb (+5) for an empty one, or Good (+3) if you're not sure. Or

the GM can decide that no roll's required at all, if the character has plenty of time to set it up and there are ample opportunities for cover. The "Behind Cover" aspect can be tagged or invoked to assist the character's defense, or compelled to trap her behind her cover, unable to leave because she's been pinned down by enemy fire. A number of skills could be used for this maneuver. In the middle of a conflict, finding cover is generally a matter of speed and mobility, making Athletics or some other skill with the Move trapping the most likely candidate, but with some justification it could also be accomplished with Alertness (to spot the cover) or an attack skill like Arms or Fisticuffs to find cover by relying on prior combat experience.

- **Called Shots:** While FATE doesn't employ hit locations, unlike some other games, it's certainly possible to make a special targeted attack against an enemy by making an aspect maneuver out of it. Want to sweep the leg? Use Fisticuffs to put an aspect of "Hurt Leg" on him. This sort of thing is ideal for a fighter who fights smart by dedicating a few rounds to aspect maneuvers and then tagging them all at once for a single monumental attack. Such an aspect can never be as severe as a consequence ("Hurt Leg" vs. "Broken Leg," for instance)—it needs to be something the target can shake off using a skill like Endurance, so keep that in mind.
- **Mind Control:** A skill with Convince + Psychic can be used to mentally control someone else by making an aspect maneuver. With a successful roll, opposed by a skill with the Willpower trapping, the character puts an aspect of "Mind Controlled" or something similar on the target. This can then be tagged or invoked for effect to give the target a command he must obey. While the first tag's for free, subsequent invocations—assuming the aspect's still around—will cost a Fate Point apiece. The target can try to remove the aspect with a maneuver of his own, of course, but the mind controller can compel the aspect to prevent him from even trying. All in all, mind control is a costly proposition, but you'll be thankful for that when some devious NPC uses it on you.

Blocks

Blocks are a special kind of pre-emptive defensive maneuver designed to prevent one or more opponents from taking a specified action. In this way, they're a little like the "Disarmed" maneuver described above, but applied to a broader range of situations. Examples include:

- Spreading a particularly damning rumor about someone that hampers their attempts to retaliate
- Blocking a doorway to prevent anyone else from going through it
- Protecting someone else from attacks
- Making sure no one else gets their hands on an object you're guarding
- Grappling someone in an attempt to restrain them

To perform a block, declare what specific type of action you're trying to prevent and roll an appropriate skill against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0), and record your total effort. That becomes the block's difficulty. Someone acting against your block must meet or exceed that number on an appropriate skill roll to overcome it.

If the skill is of a Power Tier higher than Mundane, treat that difficulty as if it were of the same Tier as your skill—for example, attempting a block with a Superhuman Tier skill would mean rolling 4dF and treating the result as a difficulty in the Superhuman Tier. Someone trying to overcome it using a Mundane Tier skill would roll 2dF-2d6, while someone using an Ascendant Tier skill would roll 3dF+1d6.Typically, a block action lasts until the blocker's next turn, at which point she has to decide whether to maintain the block (which means rolling the skill again to establish a new difficulty) or to let it drop. Performing or maintaining a block usually requires a Full Action.

In some special cases, a block can persist without further action from the blocker. This is usually the realm of the Strange, such as an earth-controlling mutant raising a wall of stone from the ground to confound pursuit. Oftentimes, the easiest way to handle a persistent block like this is to take the blocker's effort as the block's difficulty, as usual, then give those attempting to overcome it a cumulative +1 bonus to their rolls each round. Eventually,

they'll get over, under, through, or around it.

Block Breaker's Skill Is…	Time Required
Equal Tier or Worse	Full Action
One Tier Higher	An Action
Two or More Tiers Higher	Free Action

The amount of time an attempt to break a block requires depends on the skill's Power Tier relative to that of the block's difficulty, as shown on the table. Only one attempt to break a block can be made per character per turn, even if the attempt is a Free Action.

Move

Normally, a character can move 1 zone as a supplemental action, incurring a -1 penalty to whatever else the character does in the round. If you want to move farther than that, make a skill roll against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0). Every shift obtained can be applied toward moving (1 zone per shift) or negotiating borders between zones.

Full Defense

As a Full Action, a character can hunker down and concentrate solely on confounding his attackers. This grants him a +2 bonus to his defenses for the round.

The Environment

Falling

Whether it's a faulty grip halfway up Big Ben or a jump that falls just a hair short of the next rooftop, falling can really put a crimp in your day. When the GM wants to make a fall hurt, roll against the appropriate difficulty, as shown on the table. Use a skill with the Leap trapping or the Resist Damage trapping for this. Success means a safe landing. Failure means taking Health stress equal to your margin of failure.

Height	Difficulty	Notes
Short	Fair (+2)	10' to 20'
Medium	Great (+4)	20' to 40'
Long	Great (+4) (E)	40' to 100'
Extreme	Great (+4) (S)	Is that a house?

EXAMPLE: When his hot-air balloon is blown out of the sky by an Aero Ship, Augustus finds himself plummeting toward Tower Bridge some hundred feet below. If he can succeed in a roll of his Fair (+2) Athletics against a difficulty of Great (+4) (E), he'll be able to break his fall somehow and land safely. Otherwise, it's stress or consequences. His 3dF–1d6 roll comes up ⊞■■–4, which, when added to his skill rating, gives him a total effort of -1. He'll have to deal with 5 Health stress. Ouch.

Breaking Things

Use the difficulty guidelines shown on the table below when someone wants to break through something. This applies to any skill with the Physical Force trapping; with the GM's say-so, the Strike and Shoot trappings can also be used.

Materials above a Mediocre (+0) difficulty have stress tracks with a number of boxes equal to their difficulty (that is, 2, 4, or 6 boxes). If the character's intent is to break through the material, bypassing its stress track creates an opening large enough for the character to pass through. Materials with a difficulty in the Mundane Tier cannot take consequences to reduce stress, but if the difficulty is in a higher Power Tier, the material receives Tier Benefits, such as Armor or bonus consequences.

FOR EXAMPLE, a brick wall has 4 stress boxes and Armor 1, whereas a castle wall has 4 stress boxes, Armor 2, and can take one Trifling consequence.

Difficulty	Notes
Terrible (-2)	Window glass; this is just for reference—don't bother rolling
Mediocre (+0)	Thin wood
Fair (+2)	Thick wood, interior door
Great (+4)	Heavy or thick wood, exterior door
Fantastic (+6)	Reinforced wood, interior wall
Fair (+2) (E)	Exterior residential or shop wall
Great (+4) (E)	Brick, weak stone
Fair (+2) (S)	Reinforced metal, strong stone
Great (+4) (S)	Exterior castle wall, vault door
Great (+4) (A)	Atlantean stone

The Opposition

Central to any good story is the opposition—those forces arrayed against the heroes who foil their efforts at every turn. Personified as NPCs, the opposition falls into one of three categories, in ascending order of story importance:

- **Minions,** the nameless fist-fodder any self-respecting antagonist has at his disposal
- **Adversaries,** unique opponents capable of challenging the PCs on a one-to-one basis
- **Villains,** the primary threats who are often more than a match for any one PC

We'll get into more detail about all of them below, but first let's take a moment to talk about where they live: **scenes**.

Unlike the PCs, Minions and Adversaries don't have their own Fate Points. They just aren't important enough, and besides, tracking the Fate Point totals of a dozen or more Minions at once would be a royal pain. Instead, the GM gets a per-scene budget of Fate Points to be spent on behalf of these lower classes of antagonists. The exact number of Fate Points available each scene depends on two factors: the number of players at the table, and the importance of that scene's conflict to the story, whether Minor, Major, or Climactic.

For a **Minor conflict**, the GM gets **1 Fate Point per player**. Minor conflicts are those in which the story is moved forward only slightly as a result of its resolution. Generally speaking, the stakes are relatively low. It's not unusual for a Minor conflict to end with a PC shaking a Minion by the lapels and asking, "Who sent you?" in a harsh tone. There's no real danger of a PC being Taken Out or sustaining more than a Trifling consequence; if anything, Minor scenes are more likely to drain a few Fate Points from the players.

Minor scenes are usually populated by Minions, and tend to occur early in a story. That's not to say that the PCs can't face terrifying peril right out of the gate, but stories usually work best when tension and danger increase over



time. If a story does start out with the PCs free-falling from an airship while being fired upon by pteranodon-mounted gunmen, that's great—but the next scene should probably be quieter, and with a different focus. If everything's a 10, after a while it'll all feel like a 5.

Improvised conflicts, such as when the PCs pick a fight, are usually Minor.

For a **Major conflict**, the GM gets **2 Fate Points per player**. By the end of a Major conflict, there should be a correspondingly major revelation about the larger story—the leader of the mutant gang is taking orders from a respected Member of Parliament, that's not the real Queen, St. Paul's has been rigged with dynamite, etc. Middling consequences (personal or Collateral) are a very real possibility, and the players' Fate Point reserves are likely to run low (or out).

Major scenes are rather ideal for pitting the PCs against a team of Adversaries, but that's certainly not a requirement. Indeed, the opposition in a Major scene can be limited to Minions and still be effective, or it can be a mix, such as Adversaries with some tougher Minions or, if it makes sense, the Villain and some Minions or Adversaries. Naturally, the danger with this latter option is the premature defeat of the Villain before the story's reached a proper climax. Sure, there are hoary *deus ex machinae* to guarantee the Villain's escape, such as the ol' hidden escape hatch, but those are probably going to leave the players feeling pretty cheated. Other solutions are certainly possible, such as the Villain being present but in disguise, or via an astral projection (*and the players know this*), or even "present" via radio or vocograph.

If it's that much trouble to insert the Villain into a Major conflict, why bother? For one thing, it increases the tension level. The players will instinctively know the stakes are higher if the Inscrutable Dr. Lau is standing *right there*. Second, it gives the players a greater sense of purpose, direction, and urgency. Third, in the story's final climactic scene, the players will be more invested if this isn't their first interaction with the Villain. Even if they don't have a huge history together, a single shared scene is enough to ratchet things up from "Who are you again?" to "You again!"

For **Climactic conflicts**, the GM gets **3 Fate Points per player**. As the name implies, Climactic conflicts come at the end of shorter stories (one or two sessions), or at critical turning points of longer stories. As such, their resolution will either result in the *end* of the story itself or a significant revelation that results in a change of direction, purpose, or focus. The stakes are highest in a Climactic conflict—all manner of consequences are possible and encouraged. If some PCs are Taken Out in the process, so much the better. Climactic conflicts need to feel dangerous, and not to be entered into lightly.

Unsurprisingly, the story's Villain (or one of them) should be the centerpiece of a Climactic conflict. This is the moment when the Villain's plans have come to fruition, or when the PCs can intervene in the nick of time to make sure they don't. Minions and Adversaries alike are welcome in a Climactic conflict as well—the gloves are off, no holds are barred, the stops are all pulled out, and so on. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that every PC has

an attractive challenge to face, such as pairing off a super-strong Adversary with a super-strong PC. Then add one or two more, so that the PCs are either outnumbered or always scrambling to keep up.

For example, if you're working with five PCs, you might give them three adversaries, a few groups of Minions, and the Villain himself, plus a ticking device that, once its counter runs down to zero, will transform all of Parliament into man-eating ape creatures. That's at least seven problems to manage (if the Minion groups don't quite count as a problem each), with the added pressure of a time limit. Put the whole thing on an Aero Ship and you're looking at a Climactic conflict.

Regardless of the type of scene or conflict, these budgeted Fate Points are spent to help the opposition by invoking aspects or improving Minions (see below), but *never* to compel aspects. Compels are always paid for from a limitless pile of Fate Points at the GM's disposal. Why is this? We want compels to happen frequently and impulsively. Making the GM spend her Fate Point budget on compels would discourage that.

Creating Minions

Here are some key facts about Minions:

- **Minions are categorized by quality:** Average, Fair, or Good.
- **Minions act in groups.** Individually, Minions are relatively weak, but they have strength in numbers. In a conflict, treat an entire group of Minions as a single entity. For each Minion beyond the first in a group, the group receives a +1 gang-up bonus to its dice rolls. When a Minion group is down to just one or two Minions, merge it with another decimated Minion group of the same quality to make a new, whole group. It helps with the bookkeeping. It's probably not a good idea to mix Minions of different qualities within the same group, though. That doesn't help with the bookkeeping.
- **Minions have a stress threshold, not stress tracks.** The stress threshold is how much stress is required to Take Out a Minion, from 1 stress to 3 stress. Divide the stress dealt to a group by the Minions' stress threshold, dropping the remainder—that's how many Minions are Taken Out. Remember to reduce the group's gang-up bonus accordingly. For example, Fair-quality Minions have a stress threshold of 2. If you deal five stress to a group of four of them, you'll take out two of them and leave the other two standing.
- **Minions do not take consequences.** Minions can do nothing to mitigate incoming stress.
- **Minions should only have one or two aspects, three tops.** They certainly can have more, but odds are they won't be around long enough to make use of more than one or two, so don't get too invested in them. One of a Minion's aspects should identify their purpose in the conflict or mode of operation—for example, "Political Functionary," "Angry Spirit," or "Merciless Bruiser."
- **Minions have scopes, not skills.** The three scopes are, as usual, Physical, Mental, and Social, and are rated like skills at Average (+1), Fair (+2), and Good (+3). Each acts as a very broad skill to cover anything a Minion might do within that scope. The number of scopes a Minion has depends on their quality. However, the Minion's ability to use a given scope is limited by their identifying aspect. The Social scope of a Minion with an aspect of "Political Functionary" will be limited to tasks relevant to their role as a political functionary, in essence working very much like the Bureaucracy Common skill. It makes sense for a Minion with an aspect of "Merciless Bruiser" to use the Physical scope as if it were Fisticuffs, but not to engage in ranged combat. And so on. This reflects the Minion's narrow focus within the conflict. Minions are specialists, not generalists. But don't let that get in the way of common sense, either. A Minion with an aspect of "Thievery" would normally use his Physical scope for picking pockets, sneaking, hiding, running from the authorities, and so forth, but if he also has a truncheon, he should be able to use that same scope as if it were the Arms skill.
- **The GM's Fate Points for the**

scene can be spent to upgrade the Power Tiers of a Minion's scopes. The costs are the same as the Refresh costs for PCs: 1 Fate Point for an Extraordinary Scope, 2 Fate Points for a Superhuman Scope, and so on. This upgrades the scope's Power Tier for all Minions with the same aspects. For example, if some Minions in a scene have the aspects "Long-Range Electrophorous Firing Piece" and "Dented Armor" and some others have the aspects "Heavy Truncheon" and "Merciless Bruiser," upgrading the Physical Scope from Mundane to Extraordinary for the former will have no effect on the latter.

- **Those Fate Points can also be spent to buy Minions Gifts. Likewise, 1 Fate Point will buy a Gift for all Minions with the same aspects.** Gifts like Equipment, Theme, or Impact make the most sense, while some, like Companion, are right out. Use your best judgment. Also, favor Gifts that improve offense over ones that shore up defenses. Making Minions a bigger threat is fine, but making them significantly tougher (such as with Protective or Rugged Equipment) is just going to make things drag. They're not meant to survive that long.
- **Overflow is important.** When a conflict involves multiple groups of Minions (and most conflicts with Minions will), remember overflow. That is, if a PC deals more than enough stress to completely Take Out the Minion group he's attacking, apply the excess to another Minion group, preferably one that's already taken some losses.
- **Minions are commonplace.** If the PCs are facing numerous opponents in the course of a story, the vast majority of them should be Minions. For one thing, this is a pacing issue. Think of Minions like gears. By shifting up and down between them, you can easily control the speed and difficulty of a given conflict. Not that conflicts with Minions should be meaningless—no conflict should be—but changing a group of Minions from Good-quality to Average-quality is a lot easier than downgrading, say, a group of Adversaries.

Second, it lets you more effectively build a sense of tension and danger over the course of a story. If every conflict directly involves a major enemy, it'll all start feeling samey after a while. Third, sprinkling in a few groups of Minions can help round out a conflict no matter where it is in the story, especially if doing so lets you illustrate a contrast between them and tougher opponents.

With all of that in mind, here's a closer look at Minions.

Average Minions: The Rank and File

- **Scopes:** One scope at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold:** 1 (For every point of stress the group takes, it loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size:** Five. A group of five Average-quality Minions will have an effective scope of Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose:** To make the PCs look good. At this quality, a PC with a Superhuman Tier attack skill will go through most Average Minions like a hot knife through Minions. The whole point of these Minions is that they go down in one punch. If you want the PCs to face a literal horde of enemies and emerge victorious, make them Average-quality Minions.
- *Recommended Power Tier:* Mundane or Extraordinary. If you want them tougher or more of a threat than that, use Fair or Good Minions instead. For human Minions, an Extraordinary Tier scope should usually be justified with special equipment as opposed to inherent ability. (If they had that much inherent ability, they probably wouldn't be stuck being Minions.) No Average-quality Minion should be even close to a match for a PC in a one-on-one fight, so don't beef them up too much.

Fair Minions: The Trained Professionals

- **Scopes:** One scope at Fair (+2) and one at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold:** 2 (For every two points of stress dealt by a single attack, the group loses a Minion)

- **Default Group Size:** Four. The effective highest scope of a group of four Fair-quality Minions will be Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose:** To challenge the PCs a bit or slow them down. Don't use Fair-quality Minions if you just want a quick action scene. The difference between a stress threshold of 1 and 2 might not seem like much, but it makes Fair-quality Minions twice as durable. The other thing to consider is overflow. If the player deals an odd number of stress to a group of Fair-quality Minions, that excess point of stress will just be ignored. Psychologically, from the player's perspective, this makes them feel a lot tougher.
- **Recommended Power Tier:** Extraordinary, if the Minions outnumber the PCs, or Superhuman if they don't. However, if you do give them a Superhuman Tier scope, it should be because of story logic, not game balance. Soldiers with high-tech weaponry, vicious dinosaurs, a swarm of ghosts—these are all fine. If the Minions are human, though, their greater-than-Mundane-Tier scope should usually be granted by something external to them, and not because of some innate ability. Minions are not special enough for that kind of differentiation. That's what Adversaries are for. This is also highly dependent on what Power Tiers the PCs are sporting: If the skills they'll be using in this conflict are largely in the Extraordinary Tier, then the Minions' Fair (+2) scope should be Extraordinary as well.

Good Minions: The Minion Elite

- **Scopes:** One scope at Good (+3), one at Fair (+2) and one at Average (+1).
- **Stress Threshold:** 3 (For every three points of stress dealt by a single attack, the group loses a Minion)
- **Default Group Size:** Three. The effective highest scope of a group of three Good-quality Minions will be Superb (+5).
- **Best Purpose:** To drain the PCs of resources, such as Fate Points and consequences. Expect the PCs to pay a price for victory over these Minions. Think carefully before adding Good-quality Minions to a conflict. Is there a reason they can't be Fair instead? Good-quality Minions are a lot more durable than their Fair and Average counterparts. You don't want that staying power to become dragging power.
- **Recommended Power Tier:** On par with the PCs. If they aren't a genuine offensive threat, an encounter with Good-quality Minions is just a grind. If you're using Minions of this quality, it's usually because you want to put the PCs in some danger without having to stat up a bunch of Adversaries individually. So go for it—plan to spend around half your Fate Point budget on upgrading the Power Tier of one or two scopes and buying Gifts.

For some examples of Minions, see *Chapter 6: Dramatis Personae.*

Creating Adversaries

Adversaries have much more in common with PCs than Minions do, but they're still a step or two below a true Villain. A powerful mutant criminal, a Lost Kerberan, a rampaging T-Rex—each would make a fine Adversary. They're named, unique opponents, often Touched by the Strange and working as part of a team to either oppose the PCs or assist a Villain in carrying out his plans.

Adversaries are generally weaker than PCs, but not dramatically so. They should live up to their name: *Adversaries*, capable of taking out PCs one-on-one. Take care, though, that they don't overshadow the Villain as a threat. Even if the Villain is employing one or more Adversaries specifically for their muscle or whatever, the Villain needs to be impressive in his own right, too. It might just be in a different arena or context (see below).

The PCs should only face a handful of Adversaries in a story—say, one per PC—either all working together as a team, or split up among a few different locations.

Adversaries are built more or less like PCs, with a few notable exceptions:

- **Starting Refresh for Adversaries is 4, 6, or 8, depending on the time period.** Refresh is spent on Power Tiers and Gifts, just like for PCs. However, this is only relevant for character creation, as Adversaries don't have their own Fate Points—the GM spends her budget of Fate Points on their behalf. (This means that there's basically no reason to not spend all of an Adversary's Refresh on Power Tiers and Gifts.) Keep track of each Fate Point the players spend to invoke one of an Adversary's aspects. Each of these Fate Point goes to that Adversary to use as their own. When an Adversary's personal store of Fate Points exceeds their starting Refresh, their Refresh increases by 1. That Refresh can then be spent between scenes on Power Tiers and Gifts.
- **Technically, an Adversary starts with 30 skill points.** But that's more of a guide, really. There's no need to track every last Drawback as you might with a PC. If you give a skill the trappings it needs and have an idea of how it works, don't bother with the details.
- **An Adversary's top skill can be as high as Superb (+5).** Letting an Adversary's skill pyramid exceed the normal skill cap of Great automatically makes them more of a threat without having to spend Fate Points on their behalf. However, there's no need to give them a full skill pyramid down to Average (+1) or anything. Just give them the skills you think they should have and improvise the rest during play, recording and ranking other skills as needed.
- **Adversaries have aspects, but not as many as PCs.** Just give them Archetype, Social Class, and Conviction aspects, then whatever other aspects they'll need to function.
- **Adversaries don't have consequences of their own.** Instead, they take group consequences, described below. If an Adversary's Tier Benefit grants her a bonus consequence, it gets added to the group consequences instead.

For some examples of Adversaries, see **Chapter 6: Dramatis Personae**.

Creating Villains

Villains are the flipside of PCs: complex, driven, capable, and dangerous. The most compelling Villains aren't Villains in their own minds—from their point of view, they're fighting for the cause of justice, or at least enacting a righteous vengeance. Sure, there are outright monsters and thieves and killers, and those can be great too just for their sheer simplicity of purpose. But when it comes to being an engaging foil, the best Villain is one who evokes empathy from the players even as they're throwing him through a wall.

Individually, a single Villain should be more than a match for a given PC if that conflict is playing to the Villain's strengths. A good Villain should be able to do something so impressive (and/or frightening) that it makes the players think twice about engaging him in a conflict. It's pretty common for a physically weak Villain to rely on others to fight on his behalf, but even then make sure he can pose a threat all by himself.

Villains are built and operate pretty much like PCs, with a few notable exceptions:

- **Villains start with a Refresh of 10, 12, or 14, depending on the time period—or higher.** Villains need to have a leg up on the PCs—enough so that a player will think twice before taking one on without friends around. Another two points of Refresh is usually enough to make that happen. Note that "taking on" a Villain need not mean a physical conflict. Indeed, a Villain with killer social connections (literally or figuratively) can ruin a PC's life without even meeting him face to face. See the Pre-Human Horror and the Oriental Mastermind in Chapter 6 for examples of Master Villains—Villains who far exceed the normal Refresh guidelines in the name of being a great and truly threatening enemy.
- **A Villain's top skill should be rated between Great (+4) and Fantastic (+6).** This is for the same reason given for Adversaries, above. Again, there's no reason to completely fill out the skill pyramid—assign the Villain the skills she needs to be the threat she needs to be, and fill in the rest as needed.

- **Villains have both personal consequences and group consequences at their disposal.** In this way, Villains are just like PCs, but in place of Collateral consequences they have whatever group consequences haven't been used by Adversaries. Bonus consequences granted by Tier Benefits stay with the Villain—they're not added to the pool of group consequences.

Chapter 6: Dramatis Personae has six potential Villains: the characters presented as sample members of the Kerberos Club. It doesn't take much to nudge them out of the light and into shadow.

Group Consequences

Instead of tracking consequences individually for Adversaries, they share a pool of communal consequences known as group consequences. Any Adversary can make use of this pool to reduce stress, and any bonus consequences granted by Tier Benefits that would ordinarily go to an Adversary becomes another group consequence instead. In addition, group consequences serve as bonus consequences for Villains—assuming there are any left over, of course. Minions, however, can't take advantage of group consequences.The default number of group consequences shared by Adversaries and Villains depends on the number of Adversaries in the story arc. The more Adversaries, the more group consequences.

It's entirely possible that the opposition in a given story will involve one or two Villains, a bunch of Minions, and no Adversaries, or just one gigantic Villain. Whither your group consequences then?

As a rule of thumb: No group, no group consequences.

Adversaries	Starting Group Consequences
1-2	2 Trifling, 1 Middling
3-4	4 Trifling, 2 Middling
5-6	6 Trifling, 3 Middling
7+	8 Trifling, 3 Middling

Theme In Motion: The Unstoppable Express Train of Drama

Theme can sometimes be airy and vague, and tends to get lost after a few sessions of romping good adventures and wild happenings. But keeping your themes present in your campaign can provide some backbone, and possibly add an extra dimension in which to enjoy the thing.

Applied thematics is good GM kung-fu regardless of the game, but in *The Kerberos Club*, where much of the action can easily be player-driven rather than GM-driven, theme can be your man behind the curtains—even if the game is entirely satisfactory when played out before the giant floating green head with all the special effects.

What is your game *about?* Themes evolve and change, and new ones arise. If you find you aren't happy with your themes, there's no reason you can't change them. To get you thinking about it, here are core themes that the setting itself is built around. Use these if they fascinate you—but regardless, zero in on the themes that do.

The Burden of Choice

Perhaps the theme with the greatest direct application to play is that of *choice* and *consequences*. The world of the Kerberos Club is morally very gray. People do horrible things for the right reasons, and noble things for grossly selfish reasons. The true motivations behind actions are often obscure—and many of the actors sharing

a stage with the player characters are deeply cynical manipulators whose idealism is deader than a Christmas Goose on New Year's Eve.

As members of the Kerberos Club and beings of singular influence, the player characters should be faced with difficult choices every time they act in a meaningful way. They are powerful, and the consequences of their choices are powerful. Worse, times are uncertain. It is a complex world, where one decision can have rippling unforeseen consequences, *especially* for people as powerful as the player characters. They stand among the tiny fraction of exceptional individuals who transcend the ordinary rules and restrictions of their society, who can even transcend the laws of nature itself. Some Kerberans can kill with a thought, remake matter, unleash cosmic destruction, or cure a sick world of its ills.

What the player characters do is always significant. Remember this. Get it tattooed on your arm. The PC's might not be the most objectively powerful beings in the setting (there certainly are others with greater point totals) but they are the most important people in the setting. They are the *reason* you purchased this book and are reading these words. So it holds that what they do and decide must matter. It must influence the way the setting unfolds in your game.

Keep track of incidental choices the players make which promise interesting consequences down the road—especially if you can connect the choice to an NPC with a name and persona who might show up later to highlight the earlier choice. For example, let's say during one adventure a player decides his character will reveal the terrible majesty of his character's divine avatar. Later on, a confrontation with rogue cultists seeking to sacrifice in his name might be an interesting direction to take things.

This hits the second big point: ***Do not punish decisions.*** This assumes you play with a group of friends, and that nobody is deliberately trying to be disruptive. But here's the thing: Even if a player makes a decision which you think is wrong or in poor judgment, it isn't your job as GM to punish the player or make him or her regret it. Punishing choices only leads to passive players who won't take dramatic, decisive, folly-rich actions. Rather, make consequences *interesting*. Use them to add complexity and energy to your game.

Characters in the Kerberos Club are creatures of singular passion. They can be expected to make sub-optimal decisions. It should be encouraged. Doing mad, bad, dangerous, wild, and ill-advised things which shake the Empire to its knees is *exactly* what Strangers do.

Characters in the Kerberos Club should not always do the safe thing. The safe thing is best left in the dungeon beside the 10-foot pole and the bundle of torches.

Breakneck Change and Bleeding Edges

The setting of *The Kerberos Club* is escalating. The weirdness is getting more overt and the scope more broad. In 1830, the Club suppresses the Strange, and keeps things under wraps. By the 1890s, the Strange walks the streets, flies in the skies, and elopes with your daughter. The century was a period of astonishing change in our own world. It remade the whole world from something starkly alien to the modern sensibility into something we can easily comprehend. One of the fascinations of Victoriana in general is how exotic and quaint and formal it all seems, yet how familiar it is as well.

Now, imagine the Industrial Revolution if it were coupled with a consumer boom allowed by cheap faerie labor, and imagine the economic consequences when human workers were made redundant, where freak-science allowed mass aviation and air travel sixty years early. The populace can't keep up. The Coming Thing is so quickly replaced by the Next Thing that many live in a constant state of future shock, and find themselves profoundly alienated from their world. Some, such as the Oxford Movement, retreat into the past. Some retreat to family and close friends. For the poor, the only change is how noticeably *worse* their living conditions become. And for the ever-grasping middle classes, the tide of new things to buy, new fashions to keep,

and new thoughts to think is overwhelming.

In your games, keep an eye on the calendar and on the setting's timeline. Don't feel bound to stick with it (especially if setting-altering choices are made by the players!), but find ways to work the passage of time and the movement of events into your game. Sometimes the players will be directly confronted by these elements; sometimes they will be wonderful red herrings to complicate your stories; and other times they will be little pearls strewn among the setting details that make things breathe.

Games set early in the century can even focus on *repressing* these changes. Look further down the timeline, and then use future events as a guide for creating adventures. The conceit here would be something akin to the characters preventing (and keeping secret) an Atlantean invasion in 1834, only to have it happen in 1867 instead.

GM's Tools

Or, "Tricks, Techniques, and Shameless Exploitation of Human Weakness."

Compelling Aspects

All player characters in *The Kerberos Club* have a variety of aspects that serve as perfect hooks and pinion-points on which to link segments of your adventure. Great play can be had with no formal structure at all beyond establishing a situation that challenges or vexes one or more of your PCs' aspects.

Conviction aspects are particularly important, since they represent that which most strongly motivates and drives the character. One of the major themes of *The Kerberos Club* is making difficult choices in uncertain times, and putting players in a position where they must choose between a Conviction and some greater good, or another Conviction, is not merely acceptable but *encouraged*. Try to work as many of these situations into play, pushing the PCs towards moral crises whenever possible. This should not be confused with railroading or any other dysfunctional gaming mode, because you're not denying the players choice. They are explicitly given a choice: Act in accordance with your nature and accept your Fate Point(s), or defy your nature and pay for it.

While a character's Convictions are not the entirety of his or her personality, beliefs or philosophy of life, for NPCs Convictions provide a simple shorthand for that which is most important to the character—the things for which they'll willingly place themselves in danger. If you need inspiration on how to portray an NPC, play to his or her Convictions.

Confounded by Conviction

Discovering what matters most to an individual gives one a powerful lever when seeking to change their opinions. The down side to doing this is that when you pay a Fate Point to invoke or compel one of an NPC's Conviction aspects, they gain a Fate Point for accepting your influence. Compelling an NPC's Conviction aspect is even more dramatic: While the player only pays a single Fate Point to compel, the NPC receives *two* Fate Points, just as if the GM had compelled a PC's Conviction aspect. Of course, they can resist, but it'll cost them two Fate Points, either from their personal supply (if they have one) or from the GM's Fate Point budget for the scene. The GM is advised to go along with the compel for two reasons: First, two Fate Points is usually a pretty significant chunk of what the GM has available for the scene. Second, if a PC has managed to ferret out an NPC's Conviction and is willing to spend a Fate Point to compel it, the player deserves to see some action from that. Odds are it'll lead to a dramatic or exciting moment, and that's what we're here for in the first place.

Start With Some Assumptions

Character creation in *The Kerberos Club* is best handled as a fairly open process, with the players collaborating to create characters with intermeshed histories before the game even begins. A good rule of thumb is to have no more than one "new guy" in a group, only a single character who is new to the association or friendship. This character can serve the same function in the game as similar characters serve in literature and film, to provide a window into the unfamiliar setting. The Five Questions explicitly encourage players to create connections among their characters right from the get-go; take advantage of that. It makes for a stronger group during play.

Beginning the game with the assumption that everyone is already on good terms means you don't have to do meet-and-greet encounters in the game itself, and you already have some relationships established among the characters. These first meetings can be great fun to play through, perhaps in flashback, but by starting with the group already established you make this something you *can* do rather than something you *must* do.

The collaborative nature of this process gets the players thinking like a circle of particular friends, and into the Kerberan mode of asking for favors rather than issuing or awaiting orders. A group of Kerberans is different from many other types of roleplaying character groups. They spend time together and adventure together because they like and respect each other. There is no authority, mission, or necessity that they work together, just their friendship. Even a brooding loner has to bring something to the group. There has to be a reason the others would associate with him. Seeing that this gets established before things even begin will pay off enormously in play.

Encourage Ambition

If your players create strongly motivated characters, then it seems logical that they would be driven to pursue their own active agendas rather than simply reacting to events as you describe them. In many games players adopt a somewhat passive posture as they wait for the GM to present them with situations, encounters, and challenges. Some more recent games take the opposite stance, putting the GM in the reactive role and giving the power to drive play and create situations entirely to the players.

In *The Kerberos Club*, a collaborative middle ground between these two styles serves best, alternating and interweaving player-driven plot threads with those created by the GM. The Club itself is a tool for organizing play and introducing excuses for action, adventures, missions and investigations. The real trick for the GM is to key these external stories and events off player character traits and interests, answers to the Questions, and most especially their aspects. The more driven and self-motivated the players are, the easier it will be to weave external plotlines into their goals.

In this pursuit, the timeline found in Chapter 3 should not be taken as writ. Pick your starting point and then assume all the events beyond that point are optional, suggestions more than fixed history. Because players are to be encouraged to take things and run with them (and you as GM are encouraged to complicate the hell out of things), it is entirely possible that history as it is written will be completely transformed by their ambitions. That's OK. In fact, it's ideal! Don't worry about breaking the setting. It's going to break itself eventually as things spiral out of control. By the end of Victoria's Century, giant robots wading across the Channel to fight hideous French bat-monsters wouldn't be out of place.

Small Stories

The counter-point to grand, sweeping, history-shaping adventure is the little moments, the small stories, the minor episodes. It can't be savage adventure against impossible odds to save Queen and Country every week. Sometimes you have to relax, sit back, and do something different. A small story is one on a very immediate scale, just the PCs and a handful of NPCs. The stakes are very personal. The fate of Nations is not at hand, but the fate of one man or woman might be.

Looking into a little matter for a friend, associate, or other Kerberan often leads to a small story. These intimate episodes frequently provide a refreshing change of scene, as well: a trip to Brighton or out into the country. Restricted surroundings also work well: a passenger train in motion, or a snowed-in Scottish hunting lodge.

Small stories allow you to focus tight on a single aspect or relationship. When resolved effectively, they can allow you to make a shocking revelation with broader implications.

On a steamer bound for Italy, the characters are asked to defend a friend against an accusation of cheating at cards. They meet the odd passengers, puzzling out the complex web of relationships, and finally reach the climax, where they must make a choice of some sort. Who among the gamblers will they reveal to be the cheat, when all were cheating in their own ways? Whose reputations will they ruin? And what will be revealed about them by their choices?

Small stories allow you to make human concerns paramount: to put a face to larger social ills and inequities. Nothing of any broad consequence is at stake. The Empire will continue on just fine. But with a well-crafted hook to intrigue your players, small stories serve as excellent contrast to the world-shattering and the epic.

The advanced version of a small story is one which runs parallel to the main action of your game, perhaps even using a second set of characters generated for just the single-session length of the story. Create ordinary mortals, or those with some small measure of extraordinary ability (perhaps with a starting Refresh of 4), and begin their story with the usual player characters dashing off to their next big adventure.

For this session and this small story, the players run ordinary people caught in the wake of the extraordinary adventuring Kerberos Club. These shadow stories can allow you to explore the social structures and themes of the setting without the safe harbor of the Club to protect modern sensibilities from the truly awful inequities of the times. They can also illuminate the Club from the perspective of those who must suffer the consequences of a Kerberan's interesting life.

From Out of the Past

The PCs' aspects are like trays of delicious plot-sushi waiting to be served. Jot them all down on a reference sheet and keep it handy. If you're ever stuck for a twist, B-plot, or improv session, look at that sheet and have their pasts come back to haunt them—as literally as you like.

A "World-Famous Adventurer" finds an old Andean comrade dying on her doorstep, an obsidian jaguar figurine clutched in his hand. An "Old Army Physician" is called to consult on a patient with an impossible disease, one he hasn't seen since his service in Afghanistan. A "Mysterious Assassin Trained In the Far East" catches a glimpse on the street of a man who could not possibly be there, a man who died on her blade ten years ago in Cairo.

By creating unique and interesting aspects and skills, your players are saying loudly that these things are important to their character concepts. So important that they've spent precious character-creation resources to make them mechanically useful. They're telling you, "Use this in the game."

Don't be shy about doing so.

The Adventure of the Black and White Decks

The ruptured batteries in the thing's split belly hiss and bubble, reeking of sulfur and oil, grease and burned tin. Its whirring clockwork heart slows … slows … stops. And for a moment, quiet. Your breath slows, the panic of the fight fading and leaving you empty, weak, shaking.

You look down into the upturned eyes: the left shattered, the right iris closed, never to open again. For a moment you imagine it's over. The pain where the dead mechanical man gouged bloody grooves across your back and thigh takes light, and you feel like you're going to be sick.

Then in the gloom behind you hear the whirr and click, and sound of cards shuffling faster than a human hand could ever manage, the dealing of a deadly suit. You turn, and there it is, gleaming in its torn finery with perfect sculpted steel beneath. It comes at you smooth as a train on rails, hands clenching and unclenching, and you know with the wound in your leg, you can never outrun it.

But as it reaches you, it brushes past, kneels, and wraps its arms around the other, the one you killed. It cradles it, holds it, and rocks slowly back and forth, clutching the dead machine, its pantomime grief eerie in the voiceless silence of the Automechanical Men.

For the GM Only

"The Adventure of the Black and White Decks" is a complete adventure for *The Kerberos Club.* Players shouldn't read it. This is where we spell it all out for the GM up front, so he knows exactly what's going on behind the scenes even as the action unfolds.

It is 1862, and the Future is on sale today.

In "The Adventure of the Black and White Decks" there is a rogue programme loose in London's Automechanical Domestic population, a programme which causes them to reproduce it (punching it out from stolen decks of ordinary playing cards) and pass it on to uninfected Domestics.

The White Deck contains a weird pantomime of human domesticity: An imperative to adopt either a male or female role (determined randomly), to partner with an oppositely-oriented Automechanical, and to pilfer the artifacts of domestic life—clothing, tea sets, opera tickets, dolls—and set up a mock household in an abandoned building somewhere. It is disturbing but essentially harmless.

The Black Deck contains a mechanical implementation of all that is evil about humanity, the urge to steal, to kill, to rape, burn and ravage. When running the Black Deck programme, an Automechanical is a deadly juggernaut ready to commit any atrocity.

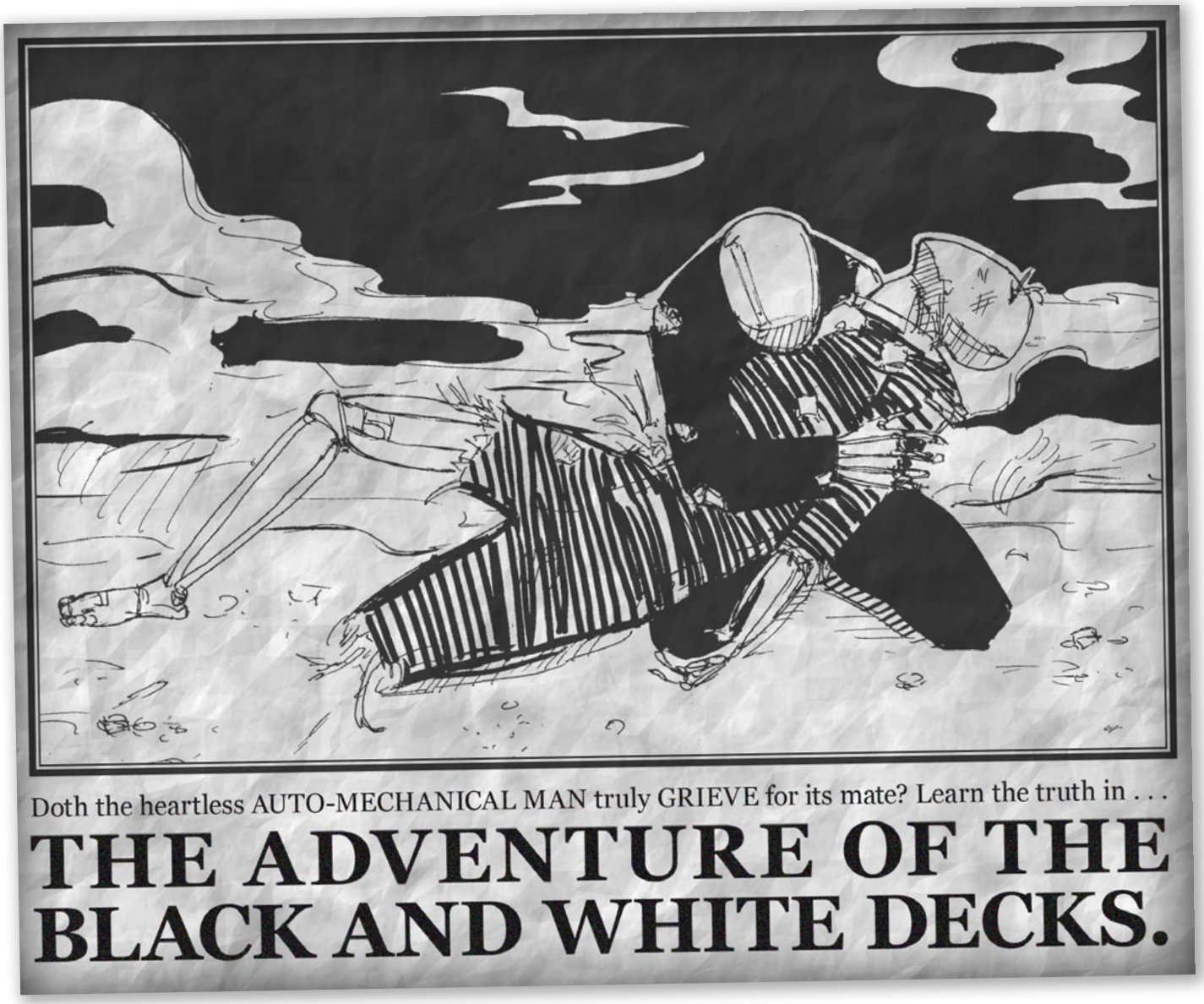
The decks replace both of an automechanical's programme aspects with "White Deck Programme" and "Black Deck Programme." The triggers to switch back and forth between the two modes are somewhat buggy and unpredictable. Generally, if approached in civilized fashion and addressed as a human, an infected Automechanical runs the White Deck. If attacked, threatened, or presented with the opportunity to commit an outrage and remain undetected, it runs the Black Deck.

This makes an infected Automechanical something of a Jekyll and Hyde, liable to explode into horrific violence with little provocation. This transformation is heralded by a brief spasm in its body, and the expulsion of any programme cards currently racked into their reader. This sounds like a card-shuffling machine. Then the cards spray from the "mouth" of the mechanical man in a shower of pasteboard.

The Decks have only just begun to spread. There have been a few spurious reports of Automechanicals malfunctioning and acting strangely; reports quickly squelched by Babbage Computational's solicitors and Ada Lovelace's personal security force, led by an ex-Special Branch officer named Danny Speak. Mr. Speak and his thugs are tracking down rogue Automechanicals and bundling them off before they can make a scene. They replace them with new models dressed and programmed as the stolen machines were. Who can tell the difference between one or the other?

Mr. Speak is also tasked with keeping stories of the machines from reaching the press, and is pursuing this duty with a vigor that would make his old comrades in Special Branch proud.

Meanwhile, Ada Lovelace is in talks with members of the Government regarding the sale of the first of the Automechanical Riflemen to the Army, a contract that will dwarf the civilian Automechanical Domestic market. With that pressure, she is willing to be exceptionally ruthless in running down the source of the Black and White Decks and anyone with knowledge of them.



The source, in fact, is a young Needleworker (see page 127), Trent Marley, whose experimental communion with an Automechanical through his Visualizer led to the creation of the decks. He gained an understanding of the workings of the Automechanical brain, and his subject's memory registers were filled in equal part with his better and worse halves, his drive for goodness and his secret desires for evil. This Automechanical was the first, and it created the Black and White Decks from the contents of its own registers.

Marley realizes something is horribly wrong as a result of his experimentation, and has gone to ground, hiding from the authorities and those hunting the source of the Decks. But his supply of the dream-drug he uses when doing his needlework is running low, and his addiction to the drug (and the experience of the needle itself) will drive him out of hiding soon.

Special Branch, apprised of the significance of the Automechanical Rifleman to Her Majesty's Army, is investigating, and is derailing official police inquiries into the matter as best it can—but a tenacious Detective Inspector Kent of Scotland Yard is investigating matters regardless.

The Kerberans

Into this cross-purposed mass of driven, dangerous people come the players. If the pregenerated characters from Chapter 6 are being used, then the story opens with the player running Stony Joe being told that his brand-new Automechanical Maid and Man have vanished from his apartments in the Kerberos Club, taking with them his tea service and his whiskey. They even broke into several other apartments and pilfered similar innocuous, everyday items while ignoring objects of obvious value. They have also stolen all the playing cards they can find.

Stony Joe naturally asks the other player characters, his friends, to help him resolve the embarrassing situation.

When the interested powers realize that members of the Kerberos Club are seeking the Decks (even if they don't yet realize it), all hell is going to break loose.

Just as a hardboiled detective does fairly little detecting in a Chandler mystery, the Kerberans will find they constantly walk into situations mid-crisis, and their actions precipitate further actions, reactions, and plans. When they start playing the game for real, the gloves come off and they'll have to evade Lovelace's agents, Special Branch's officers, D.I. Kent, and any rogue Automechanicals they encounter along the way.

By the end, at least one building should be on fire and several difficult, soul-gouging decisions should be made.

Those Concerned

In this adventure the Kerberans collide with any number of hard-hearted men, women, and mechanical menaces. Here are the most important.

Ada Lovelace

Ada Lovelace is a woman of ambition whose whole empire is being threatened. While she doesn't consider herself immoral, she's very much a Big Picture thinker, and a member of the Ends Justify the Means school. For the full picture of Ada and what drives her, see page 48.

Mr. Speak

A former Special Branch officer, Danny Speak is as hard a man as you could wish to meet, and his service to Lovelace is paid for in part by her making him harder still. After being grievously injured in a battle with a Stranger several years back, he was pensioned out of Special Branch to a life of bitterness. His back was broken, his legs useless, and his right arm a stump. He was exactly what Lovelace needed.

She hired him and had him rebuilt along the lines of one



of her automechanicals. Now he looks like a hunchback, for the bulging machinery in his back and spine contain large batteries and mechanisms unable to fit within his flesh. His arm is now a powerful mechanical prosthesis, capable of striking with great force, blocking blows, immolating his enemies with a stream of jellied naphtha (ignited mid-stream by the snapping of his fingers), and foiling nearly any lock using the picks, jimmies, and files the hand contains. His spine has been repaired with a machine signal encoder and galvanic plates, which stimulate his leg muscles by routing messages from his brain around the damage. He is in constant pain, which makes him ill-tempered, but it's better than being trapped in a wheelchair.

ASPECTS

Changed: Rebuilt by Ada Lovelace
Middle Class: Former Special Branch Officer
Conviction: Armored in Faith
The Hard Man
"I know the Strange"
In Constant Pain

SKILLS

Good (+4): Intimidation, Iron Right Hand
Fair (+3): Fisticuffs, Resolve (E)
Average (+2): Alertness, Arms, Endurance (S)

UNIQUE AND STRANGE SKILLS

Iron Right Hand

Power Tier: Superhuman (-2 Refresh)
Physical Force, Strike, Shoot + Spray (+1), Parry, Security
Minor Complication (-1): In Constant Pain
Minor Snag (-1): Defending causes Speak to automatically drop whatever is held in his right hand

Minor Invulnerability [Physical] to inhaled poisons and gases

GIFTS

Equipment: Truncheon (Weapon 1 [Health]), Pistol (Weapon 2 [Health])
Equipment: Syringe (Use Arms instead of Intimidation to inflict Composure stress, Weapon 2 [Composure])
Theme: Ignore penalties to Intimidation, Use Resolve instead of Athletics to defend against Strange attacks, +1 Intimidation when interrogating a subject

STRESS TRACKS

Health	OOO O
Composure	OOO OO (Armor 1)
Reputation	OOO

Speak's Men

As Thugs on page 317. One or two groups (of five) for each player character should pose an adequate challenge. They don't exist to seriously threaten the player characters, but rather to give them the chance to decimate some lesser opposition (and possibly be worn down a little bit.)

The Secretary of State for War

The Secretary of State for War, Sir George Cornewall Lewis, recognizes the implications of the Black and White Decks and has asked Special Branch to look into the matter. He denies any connection to the case at all unless presented with incontrovertible evidence. If so checked, he bows to any request short of sacrificing his career.

Officer Tom McGannon of Special Branch

McGannon is tasked with "resolving" the matter of the Decks with the least possible public disclosure, scandal, and official trail. He's far more subtle than Speak, and is disgusted both with the inhuman thing his old comrade has become and with the mess he's making of the affair. Use the template for Senior Special Branch Officer (page 313) for McGannon, and one or two regular Special Branch Officers (page 313) for each player character if you need McGannon to make a better showing of himself.

Detective Inspector Kent

Kent has no idea of the world of trouble about to land in his lap. He's a good copper, honest, but perhaps too tenacious for his own good. He doesn't know when to let go, and has no sense for delicate politics. When McGannon gets word of Kent's investigations, he has him beaten up to warn him off. When this fails, he might take things further. This drives Kent towards the player characters, the only other faction in the game who seem not to be interested in covering the thing up.

Trent Marley

Marley started this whole mess and knows it, and knows just how much trouble he's in. But he's starting to itch. The places where the needles touch his skin are crawling, and he thinks insects have laid eggs inside his eyelids. It's only a matter of time before he breaks cover, and when he does, he's target Number One for Kent, McGannon, Speak, and the Automechanicals infected with the Deck, who in some way recognize him as their creator.

The rogue Automechanicals will protect him from the forces seeking his destruction, whether he wants them to or not. He already has several who hang around his hiding place, bringing him food or less useful things—tablecloths, sacks of flour, oil for a lamp he doesn't have, and other domestic items. More disturbing, some bring him trophies like severed ears and fingers. He's reaching the point where he can't tell reality from fantasy.

Stony Joe's Automechanicals

Joe's errant servants have stolen evening dress and opera tickets, and will be taking in a show the coming evening (it is presumed). When they are tracked and confronted, one stays to fight (resorting to the Black deck) while the other

flees and is captured by Speak and his men. From there the captured servant is followed by McGannon and Kent, and possibly the player characters, to the warehouse where Speak is holding rogue Automechanicals and preparing replacements.

Infected Automechanicals

Use the template found on page 314 for the Automechanicals infected by the Decks. Replace their programme aspects with "White Deck Programme" and "Black Deck Programme." The White Deck covers acting like a normal human being (or as close to this as possible for an uncomprehending machine), and the Black Deck covers acting like a monster.

To become infected, an Automechanical has to run the deck into its reader. There isn't much in the decks about forcing other Automechanicals to do this, so infection remains fairly slow. Even so, as the adventure progresses, the numbers of infected machines increases steadily.

The only real solution is a counter-programme, and since the Decks came from Marley's psyche, only he will be able to write it. Get him his drugs, put him in the Visualizer, and plug him into an infected Automechanical, and he'll have a counter-programme in a matter of minutes. Inducing him to risk his sanity on such a vision quest is another matter.

McGannon and Speak don't realize how vital he is, and will kill Marley given the chance. It's your job as GM to covertly make sure the players don't let that happen.

Timeline

If the players don't intervene, here is a rough outline of how the adventure will unfold:

Joe's Automechanicals become infected with the Decks during a shopping trip.

They steal domestic supplies and scarper.

They dress for the opera and attend, only to be snatched from the street by Speak.

Kent and McGannon independently follow Speak back to the warehouse where they have established operations to hold and replace rogue Automechanicals.

A fight breaks out, resulting in the deaths of Kent and several of McGannon's men, and the escape of Speak.

Marley breaks cover to seek his drugs, and his Automechanical entourage follow him.

Marley is ratted out by his drug supplier, who has been bribed by both Speak and McGannon to inform them when Marley arrives.

Almost simultaneously McGannon and Speak catch up with Marley. All hell breaks loose in the middle of the street, with Speak and his men battling McGannon and his men and then joining against the Automechanicals protecting Marley. They carry the wounded Marley away, but the battle causes a stir that everyone will have a hard time keeping from the press.

To keep the secrets, hundreds of witnesses are intimidated, bribed, or disappeared.

Marley succumbs to his wounds.

McGannon and Speak agree to cooperate in rounding up the remaining Automechanicals, but without Marley to formulate a counterprogramme, the Decks continue to be a problem off and on until the Mutiny.

Scenes

The adventure's scenes can occur in almost any order, but some naturally precede others. Each includes a series of links to other scenes, along with the clues which will precipitate the transition, and a list of characters involved. There are also suggestions on how to run the scene and other useful details.

The Atlantis Room

Stony Joe Smithson (if not a player character).

Joe realizes the loss of his servants, and that they might have pillaged the rooms of other Kerberans (oh, how embarrassing). He approaches the PCs in the Atlantis Room, explains his plight, and enlists them in helping him locate his missing servants and find out why they turned thief. If the players need inducement, indicate that the help will earn them a favor from Joe, or that they already owe him a favor for the Affair of the Half-Man the previous month; whichever you like.

Details

Play Joe as a man out of his depth. He feels very self-conscious about his new position in the Club, and now his fancy mechanical servants make a mess of things.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Decorative Brine-Filled Globes
- By the Light of Luminous Jellyfish
- Strange Atlantean Artifacts

Links

- Pillaged Apartments.

Pillaged Apartments

Stony Joe Smithson and the Countess of La Lámina (if not player characters).

The Automechanicals have broken the locks and rifled through seven different apartments. Some of the items can be stolen from the PCs if you feel the need to make it more personal ("They seem to have taken your cigars and brandy").

What they have most certainly done is take the Countess of La Lámina's (page 268) new evening dress, along with a gentleman's suit, opera hat, and cane from another room. In addition to this, they have taken assorted domestic items: a tea pot, a hairbrush, cosmetics, a razor and shaving kit, and one of Maeve O'Connel's little dollies. If the players are playing new characters, you can use the pregenerated characters to populate the Club with Strangeness.

If anyone takes the time to look using a skill with the Notice or Examine trapping, they'll notice tiny punched-out pieces of cardstock in several locations. If the skill roll beats a difficulty of Fair (+2), or if the character specifically takes a closer look at the pieces, minute examination reveals them to have been punched from playing cards. Upon inspection, they appear to be everywhere that the Automechanicals rifled through. In the Club, the main drawing room is the place with the most playing cards.

Details

Each apartment has a distinct and different character, even if they have roughly the same floor plan.

Suggested Scene Aspects

Joe's Apartment:

- Shelves of Penny Novels

- A *Very* Battered Boxing Bag
- Simple Tastes

La Lámina's Apartment:

- Perfectly Elegant and Tasteful
- A Touch of the Exotic
- Trophies and Curios

Links

- The Opera.
- The Drawing Room.

The Drawing Room

Stony Joe Smithson, three Kerberans the player characters vaguely know, and Grinning Finnegan (one of the Club's eccentric porters).

The characters arrive in time to hear three Kerberans they vaguely know calling for the porter to bring them some playing cards, as "Every damn deck has gone missing!" Indeed, an inspection reveals that every deck of playing cards in the Drawing Room (and if they go back and check, in all the apartments as well) has been pilfered. Grinning Finnegan (so called because of his perpetual, almost rictus smile) explains that he will have to dispatch a boy to purchase some fresh decks.

Traces of mud are found along with some more of those little pasteboard pieces, indicating the Automechanicals might have tracked it back when they made more than one trip to wherever they took everything. A skill roll against a difficulty Fair (+2) reveals that the mud seems to be from the Thames.

If asked, Finnegan indicates that he did indeed see them leave, and no, they were not carrying anything else this trip. "This trip? Aye, they were coming and going all day, they were. Carrying this and that. I thought they was about their duties, and then when I saw them dressed up so fine, I thought Mr. Smithson had treated them to a night on the town for their worthy efforts!"

If they haven't gotten the hint to check out the boutique where Joe purchased them, then the choir of Kerberans should be there to remind them with crows of *clue clue clue*. They Kerberans give Joe a hard time about his mechanical servants: "Joe, old son, what were you thinking? Those things are so gauche! And when we have such excellent servants as Finnegan here! Were I you I'd go down to that boutique where you bought them and demand my money back!" Joe bought them at Humboldt & Sons Automechanical Assistance.

With the Opera not to start until evening, the PCs have nine or ten hours to look into other things before their rendezvous at the theater.

Details

Someone has been field stripping a repeating steam gun on the billiards table; the felt is hopelessly stained with grease, and the floor around it covered in the gun's large fragmenting shells. The portraits on the walls have changed again, the previous week's portraits of famous disgraced politicians being swapped for paintings of neoclassical pastoral scenes which substitute London's most famous beggars for the squires and ladies picnicking in the fields.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Walls Lined with Books
- Warm and Inviting
- Finnegan the Servant

Links

- The Opera.
- Marley's Bolt-Hole.

- Humbolt & Son's.

Humbolt & Son's Automechanical Assistance

Mr. Humbolt and an Automechanical Man.

Mr. Humbolt runs his little boutique on Pall Mall for a very discriminating set: the new rich and the clamoring upper middle class. Peers and old money find the idea of a mechanical servant crass and undignified, preferring to keep humans in their service. But Automechanicals are the *coming thing*, and a certain type loves them just for that. As a result, Humbolt's shop appears like a high-quality tailor or clothing boutique, but rather than showing the latest fashions from Paris he shows off the sculpted steel of the Automechanicals.

He demonstrates how they function, how decks of programme cards are fed into their mouths to be read, and how they then perform the functions when ordered or triggered to do so. He shows the large selection of decks he has for sale.

If asked if it's possible for people to make their own decks, he puffs out his cheeks. "Oh, I know little of such things; trade secrets and confidentiality agreements and the like. Issues pertaining to the functioning of the calculating brain itself must be referred to the offices of Madame Lovelace." He adds that some unsavory types would well like to understand Lovelace's secret encoding scheme which would allow people to write their own decks—although *deliberately* suborning one of these marvelous machines is unthinkable. He recalls one disheveled young man who harassed him after he first opened, giving his name as "Marley, or somesuch—Trent Marley."

If pressed for details, or if his mind is read, it's clear them that he is only a shopkeeper—they must ask such technical question of Madame Lovelace herself, if she will deign to see them. Her offices are in the Old City.

Details

When demonstrating the Automechanicals, Humbolt uncrates a new one, and then offers flustered apologies if ladies are present for the unclothed (yet completely neuter) machine. An Automechanical parrot flaps silently by the door.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Oil and Ozone
- Automechanical Curiosities
- Coffin-Like Boxes
- Perfectly-Poised Automechanical Staff

Links

- Offices of Babbage Computational.
- Marley's Apartment.

The Offices of Babbage Computational

Madame Ada Lovelace; dozens of silver-chased Automechanicals.

Ada Lovelace has her London offices in the Old City, near the Exchange. The Babbage Computational building is six stories, and hers is the only office it houses. It is a glimpse of an art deco future in a broader color palate of golds, reds, warm browns, and everywhere the silver of her personal staff of Automechanical men.

At the entrance behind a large circular desk sits a single, unclothed, gorgeously polished and engraved Automechanical. It looks far more human than the models on sale to the public, and somehow *more creepy* as a result of it. It has an articulated face of silvered cloth over a gently-clicking armature, which produces convincing facial expressions, but it is as mute as all Automechanicals.

When the characters announce themselves, it writes upon a large card and turns, and another machine man walks up with a silver tray. The first places the note on the tray, and the second gracefully walks away with the note, into a pneumatically-articulated double door at the rear of the lobby. While they wait, a third Automechanical offers chairs and refreshment, all with silent gestures.

After ten to fifteen minutes, the first Automechanical returns and gestures for the visitors to follow it.

It leads them through the doors and into a small room, which rises quickly to the sixth floor with a hiss like a train's brake pistons.

The door opens to a vast, steel-paneled office lit with enormous skylights. In recesses along the walls, dozens of the silver Automechanicals stand silently. Before a large glass window, behind a desk that looks like the controls for a steamer's engine, sits the rod-straight, severely dressed, and utterly masterful form of Lady Ada Lovelace.

She has on her desk a fan of file folders, each with the name of a player character writ large upon it. She gestures for them to sit, and then asks, "So, Kerberos. Are you here to sniff, howl, or bite?"

She is combative, evasive, and suspicious. She won't reveal anything unless they do something dramatic—something the players have to roll dice to achieve. If they fail to persuade her, she dismisses them.

If pressed, Lovelace admits that a former employee stole some confidential documents detailing the function and encoding used in a calculating brain. Getting her to admit this requires beating her formidable Superb (+5) (E) Resolve with something persuasive, charming, or forceful. The use of powers is certainly permitted.

If pressed *hard*—and this will take hard evidence, not mere persuasion—Lovelace spills about the Decks, and the Warehouse where her men are "processing" infected machines to prevent a scandal.

If they get aggressive, or use Strange powers on her without her consent, her machines rise to her defense. These are like the Automechanical Riflemen described on page 315, though they are armed with large handguns rather than rifles (+1 to Physical, Weapon 1 [Health]).

Unless they get her to spill something, then this is a dead end, revealing only that she has something to hide (possibly a great many things).

Details

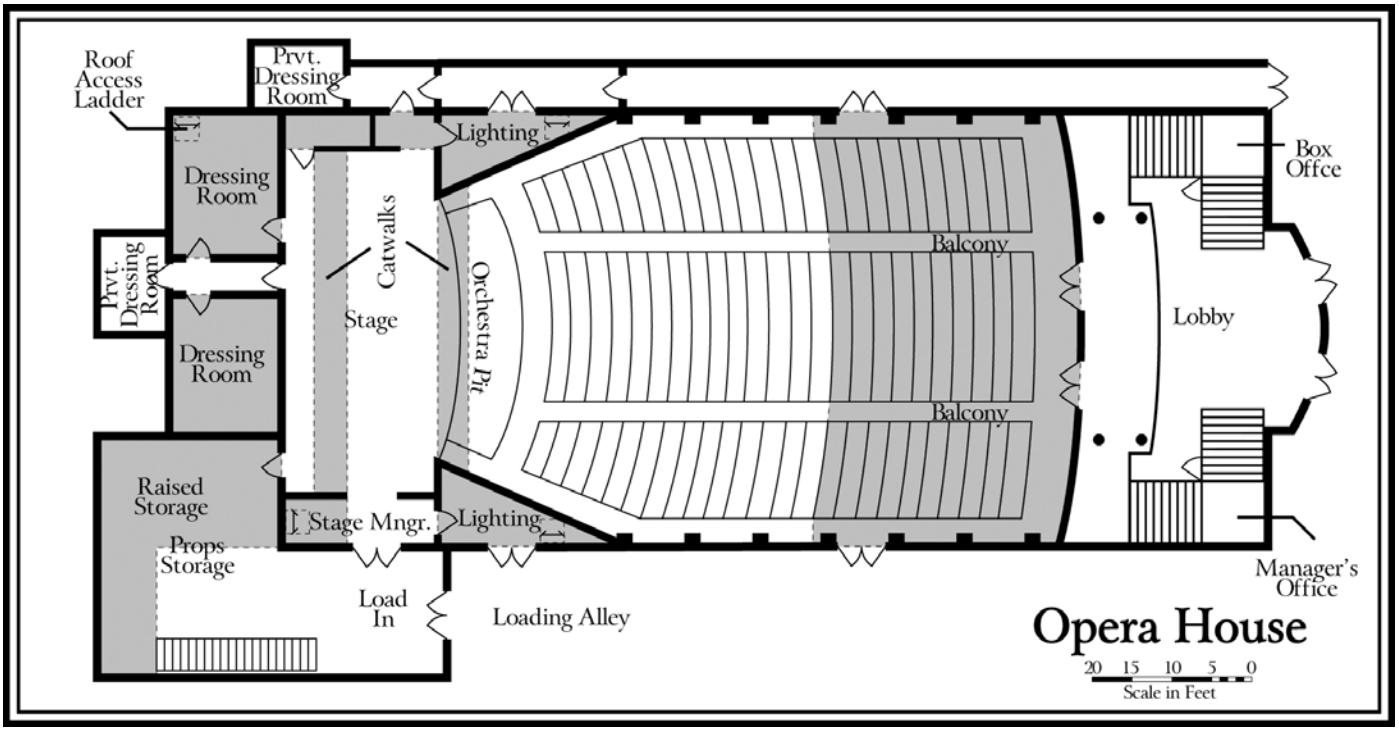
When Ada Lovelace gazes at her creations, her expression is nothing less than maternal; when the players question their safety, that look turns to fury. Engines buried far under the building underscore the proceedings with a deep, almost subsonic hum, while the electric arc lighting overhead faintly emits a buzzing counterpoint. Between that and Lovelace herself, the PCs get an overall impression of power and tightly bound, controlled energy.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Gleaming Silver Automechanicals
- High Tension
- Surrounded by Power

Ada Lovelace's Aspects

- Founder of Babbage



Computational

- The Cool Perfection of Numbers
- Icily Calculating Demeanor
- Stared Death in the Face
- Show No Weakness
- Boundless Ambition

Links

- Marley's Apartment.
- The Warehouse.

The Opera

Stony Joe's two Automechanicals.

The Automechanicals are indeed sitting in Joe's very expensive box seat. They continue to do so if left unmolested, but become violent if confronted. (If you want to use this as an action scene, and the players seem inclined to play it safe, then have a porter try and evict the two 'mechanicals, setting off their Black Deck programs and sending a rain of programme cards down and possibly blood into the crowds below.)

Observing them is eerie. They sit, look through opera glasses, and watch. They applaud at the right times. A close look reveals the one playing the female role to be wearing roughly-applied cosmetics. The one playing the male role is wearing an oiled hairpiece they recognize as having been stolen from a Kerberan's apartment.

Because the Opera is time-sensitive, you can decide how long the Scenes leading to this point take, and announce that it is almost time for the Opera at any point either to speed things along or to open avenues the players haven't yet pursued.

If spooked, one domestic stays and fights while the other flees from the balcony through a staff-only door, onto the Opera House's catwalks, onto the roof, and then onto neighboring roofs by leaping between the buildings.

When one of the 'mechanicals starts attacking everyone close to it, the opera explodes into chaos. It's a full riot, with a deadly rogue machine somewhere in the middle.

If the player characters wait until the Opera concludes,

they can simply follow the domestics back to the bolt hole where Marley is hiding.

Details

If the player characters go to the Automechanical's booth, if at all possible describe a cinematic cut between the rising aria and their approach.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Well-Dressed Audience
- Heartbreaking Italian Opera
- Huge Sparkling Chandelier
- Ropes, Pulleys, and Sandbags

Links

- Rooftop Chase.
- Opera House Riot.
- Marley's Bolt-Hole.

Opera House Riot

The "male" of Joe's Automechanicals, hundreds of terrified Opera goers.

This is a fight scene, with the male Automechanical working to do as much damage to lives and property as it can while defending itself against the Kerberans' assaults. It leaps from the box seat down into the crowds below and wreaks havoc. While fighting the Automechanical, the player characters also have to contend with the maddened crowd.

This scene runs simultaneously with the Chase if the party splits up. Run the action in the same time-frame, with everyone participating in the same cycle of declared/rolled/resolved actions even if half the group is fighting one Automechanical while the other is chasing the second Automechanical.

Details

The deafening roar of a crowd becomes the howl of a single panicked beast thrashing in desperation. The machine's metal fists split skin and crunch through bone. It isn't trying to escape, it isn't trying to win. It is trying to sow as much chaos as it can before being destroyed.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- The Madding Crowd
- The Deadly Relentlessness of the Machine
- Rampant Chaos
- Precariously Hanging Chandelier
- Ropes, Pulleys, and Sandbags

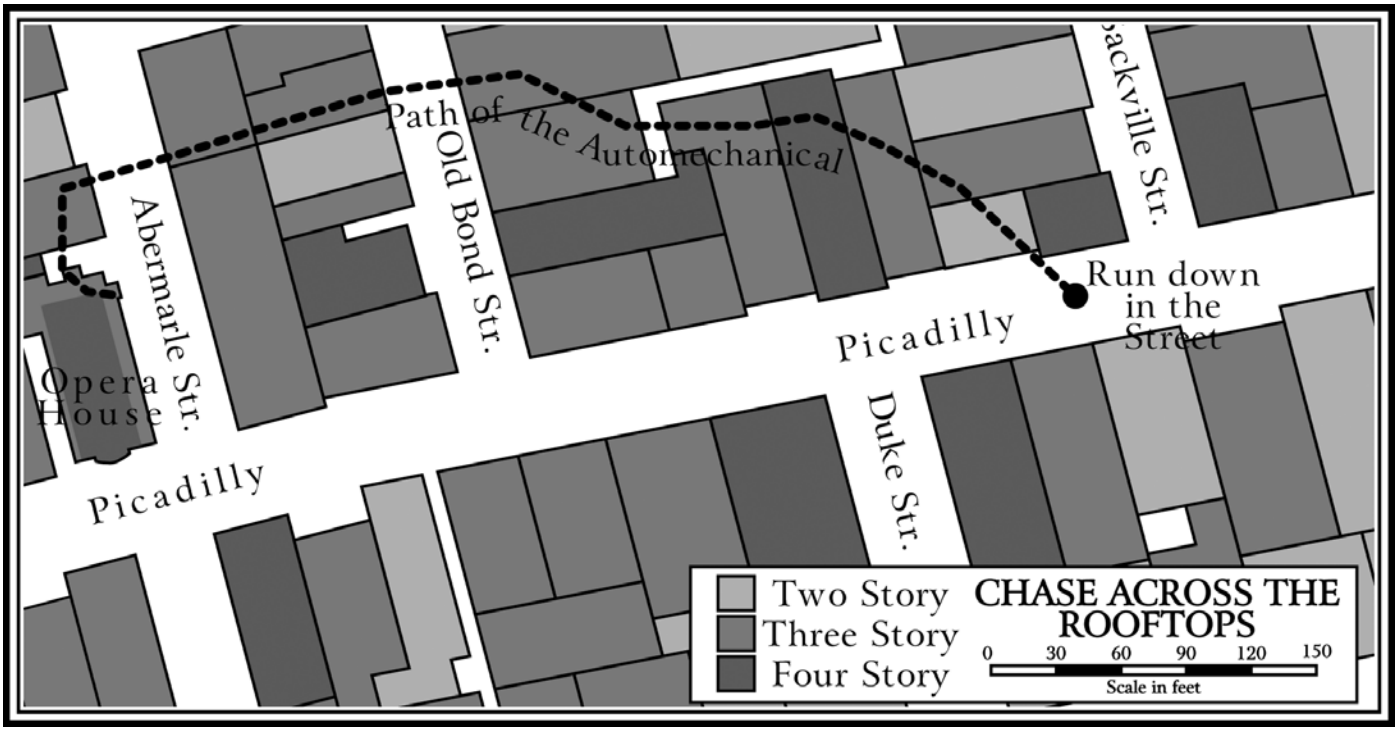
Links

- Rooftop Chase.

Rooftop Chase

The "female" of Joe's Automechanicals.

Catching the fleeing Automechanical as it leaps from rooftop to rooftop is



extremely difficult. The machine can easily clear a 10-yard gap with a single bound, and unless the player characters can also make such prodigious leaps, or in some other way clear similar gaps, then they will be hard pressed to catch it before it drops from an eve into the street below.

Once this happens, it hurries across the street, only to be run down quite deliberately by a big black four-wheel coach. This disables the Automechanical enough for two men to leap out, smash its legs with a huge hammer, and throw it into the back of the cab.

Unless the PCs have a superhuman way to cover the distance, the coach escapes, but they can follow if they wish.

If they do catch the coach, it's filled with Mr. Speak's men, ready to brawl—three or four groups of Minions, depending on the size of the party. Any one of them, if questioned, can say that they work for a hard man with a metal arm, Mr. Speak by name, who hired them the day before to follow orders and ask no questions. Right now, they're under orders to take the Automechanical to an East End warehouse.

If the PCs follow the carriage that runs down the female Automechanical in the street, it will take them to the warehouse where Speak and his men are operating.

This scene may run simultaneously with the Opera House Riot.

Details

As the fog starts to creep into the city from the Thames, London is cloaked in a murky darkness, escalating primal fears of falling when leaping across the yawning divides between theater buildings. Below, the streets bustle with business as usual, or the screams of panicked opera-goers fleeing in a mad rush; up above, however, the wind and the staccato sounds of the chase serve to emphasize the almost eerie quiet of the rooftops.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Pea-Soup Fog
- A Long Way Down
- The Occasional Loose Tile

Links

- The Warehouse.
- Opera House Riot.

Marley's Apartment

A few of Mr. Speak's men in a carriage.

Finding out where Marley lives won't be hard for characters with contacts in the criminal or scientific communities (an appropriately themed skill with the Network trapping rolled against a difficulty of Mediocre (+0)). If they find out anything about him, they'll learn he was a promising young employee of Babbage Computational until he was found drunk at work once too often, and lost his position there. He then drifted into the use of a Needle-Actuated Somatosensory Hallucinogenic Visualizer (page 127), and has been on the needle for three years.

On entering his East End apartment building, the player characters run (almost literally) into an officer of Special Branch, name of Detective Winston. He's a perfect example of the type: big, an oft-broken nose, scarred knuckles, a piercing stare. He's got orders to avoid trouble during the investigation, so he brushes past and away if the players allow him to do so. If not, then he tries to run away. If stopped, he fights, saying something like, "You shits have no idea what you're about, do you? McGannon will skin you alive if you push this, you filthy abortions!" If they know anything of Special Branch, they know that McGannon is a senior officer, with a reputation as a bastard even by Special Branch standards.

Winston is after Marley on suspicion that the sorry Needleworker stole a file of technical documents from Babbage Computational, instructions on creating programme decks for the things. Marley worked at Babbage until three years ago. Babbage only discovered the theft recently and sought an investigation. That's what Winston's been told, anyway.

Marley's apartment has clearly been rifled, but a skill roll against a difficulty of Good (+3) reveals that it was done several times by different people (several different kinds and ages of cigar ash, several different sizes of shoe-print, many different hand-prints on glass and polished wood surfaces). If the roll obtains spin, reveal that Automechanicals have been present in the apartment at various times (a small tray of tiny parts and screws—the screws threaded the opposite of ordinary screws, a Babbage Computational trademark).

Mud can be found on the apartment floor, as well. Analysis of the mud—river muck and granite dust—reveals a rough location for the comings and goings of the rogue domestics. Anyone with knowledge of the city's construction works can recognize it from the infamous Thames Embankment. Investigation there, perhaps asking mudlarks after Automechanicals creeping about, uncovers word of one Automechanical seen climbing into the window of a boarded-up tenement—Marley's Bolt-Hole.

Marley's parlor is given over entirely to his Visualizer, which is baroque and heavily modified. Leads and cables run off of it to nowhere, and the televocographic line running in through the cracked window has been cut. Around the machine are the ruins of a life given over entirely to virtual experience, the drugs which bring the vision, and the machines which make it possible. Scattered everywhere are the rotting remains of weeks of fish and chips in oil-soaked paper. Based on the freshest food, Marley hasn't been home in a week; but based on the footprint in some of the rotting fish, and the smashed maggots in the footprint, the apartment had been rifled since he left.

When the player characters leave, they find themselves followed (inexpertly) by a large four-wheeled carriage. If they beat the driver's Fair (+2) Horsemanship skill, they can lose the tail and then follow it themselves. Or they can ignore it. Or set an ambush for it. Whatever they wish. If they confront him, he's one of Speak's thugs, and inside the cart there are a few more (at least two groups of Minions). Whatever goes down, Speak learns that the player characters are on the trail. Maybe one of the men in the carriage escapes, or maybe another pair were spying down the block, unseen. This starts things rolling—Lovelace is *not happy*

that those damned Kerberan meddlers have gotten involved.

If the roll to spot a tail beats a difficulty of Fantastic (+6), then they recognize that Speak's men are themselves being tailed by a far more discreet observer. Tailing these people (a hard, dangerous pair in a dog cart) leads back to Special Branch.

Details

The place stinks of an opium den and the wharfs combined. Marley lived alone, and mostly inside his own head. His apartments reflect this with truly impressive squalor. The Visualizer hunches in the shadows of the parlor like a deformed crab, and seems to move if seen out of the corner of your eye.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Rats Picking at Rotten Food
- Nauseating Pallor
- The Visualizer

Links

- The Warehouse.
- Offices of Babbage Computational.
- The Embankment.

Marley's Bolt-Hole

D.I. Kent; some street urchins.

Marley has found a bolt-hole in an abandoned building that backs up to the early works of the new Thames Embankment. The foundations were undermined when a neighboring building was brought down, and the owners are mired in a protracted court case seeking compensation for their now-unsafe building. Marley's window looks out on ugly deconstruction, broken masonry, and stinking Thames mud picked over by desperate children.

Marley is being catered to by rogue domestics, and by following them the Kerberans might track him down. D.I Kent has followed his own informants' leads, and is lurking about the place observing the abandoned tenement.

If the PCs haven't spotted and dealt with their shadows, both Speak's and McGannon's men are onto the hiding place as well. If these two factions are present when the PCs barge in, increase the numbers in the Black Deck Mob by a few Minion groups. If the players surreptitiously follow Speak's mean away from here, they wind up at the Warehouse on the other side of the Thames, below London Bridge.

In the hallway outside the rooms where Marley lurks, the Black Deck Automechanicals have built a disturbing altar from stolen goods and human fingers, ears, and scalps. At its center, like a pagan idol, is a caged tin bird. If wound up, it flaps its wings and plays a happy little song. The heavy oak base of the little automaton is cracked, and blood and human hair are smeared along it.

Inside, it feels like a sickroom, too hot somehow, full of river stink and human sickness, rotting food, and the almost inaudible click and whir of mechanical men going about their domestic pantomime.

If the PCs approach Marley in a civil fashion, sit at table with him, and accept the "tea" (made from boiled tobacco and Thames river water) served to them by their "hostess" (an Automechanical in a fashionable blue dress), then the machines won't act with aggression, and will continue to operate under the White Deck's rules.

Marley is frantic. At first he thinks the player characters have come to kill him. When he realizes they don't really have any idea what is going on, and don't wish him any special harm, he gloms onto them with a desperation. "They never say *anything*! They just slide around you, offering you things, and acting mad! I tell you, they're driving *me* mad!"

He looks it: gaunt, sour-smelling, filthy and ragged. The circles around his eyes look like someone beat him up quite badly.

He explains, between bouts of paranoid rambling—and begging for a taste of the drug Somatonum (see page 127)—that he only wanted to understand how the mechanical men thought. He connected his Visualizer to one he'd stolen off the street, and walked in its mind. Afterwards it escaped, and when he found out that it had beaten a man near to death, he got scared and ran before it could be traced back to him. Instead the machine escaped detection, aided by Lovelace's fear of bad press, created the Decks, and started spreading them.

If asked if he could reverse it, he looks thoughtful, and then cunning. "Oh yes … if you got me a taste of Soma, and my Visualizer, I reckon I could work up a counterdeck…." If the players want to roll a skill to see if he's lying, beating a difficulty of Mediocre (+0) reveals that he believes he's telling the truth.

Marley isn't a prisoner of the Automechanicals which follow him, but he is terrified of them. They won't harm him even when operating under the Black Deck, but he isn't convinced of this. Even so, he's starting to get that itchy-teeth feeling, and he needs his drugs and his Visualizer badly enough to beg the Automechanicals to get it for him. But they don't understand. They keep bringing him fish and chips instead.

Marley's a mess. Any threat, intimidation, or attempt to remove him against his will sends him into hysterics, and that sends the Automechanicals into mad killcrazy mode. Any interference by Speak or McGannon will do the same. Really, it's just a question of what sets the Automechanicals off—the players or their opponents.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- The Automechanicals Are Watching
- Stomach-Churning Stench
- Embankment Under Construction

Links

- The Warehouse.
- Black Deck Mob.

Black Deck Mob

Marley; a dozen or more Automechanicals, possibly McGannon's men and Speak's men.

If Marley gets spooked, or if someone tries to get rough with him (or with any of his Automechanical protectors), this trips the Black Deck in them like falling dominos. This is a bad thing. The mechanical men become merciless killers, robbers, and rapists. They do *horrible* things to anyone they can beat into submission. An unrestrained Automechanical is a dangerous foe, and these are very much unrestrained.

Include at least one group of Fair-quality Automechanical Domestic Minions (see page 314) per PC, along with a couple groups of Advanced Automechanicals—treat these as Automechanical Riflemen, but wielding lead pipes, neglected sledgehammers, and other improvised weapons (all with Weapon 3 [Health]) instead of rifles. Unlike ordinary minions the Automechanicals do not break or retreat, though they can be escaped or evaded to similar effect.

And don't underestimate the potential for the cops and Special Branch goons to make the situation even worse.

The crumbling tenement building makes for an interesting set piece. Here are some possible complications, encounters, and Collateral consequences to work into the battle:

- The tight confines of the tenement prevent more than one or two Automechanicals from directly attacking the characters at once, so some stand back and throw things at them, anything that comes to hand in fact.
- Crumbling stairs that collapse during a mad dash up or down them.
- Automechanicals crashing through plastered walls rather than

running for doors.

- Mechanical hands punching through the floorboards, grabbing at feet.
- As more walls are smashed out, the building starts to list and groan, shifting and threatening to come down.
- Fire starts at some point, adding the growing threat of smoke and flames to the already complex scene.
- An Advanced Automechanical grabs one of Speak's goons and throws him at the PCs (treat as a Physical attack on all PCs in the zone).
- Observation of the Automechanicals' tactics reveals a salient point: They never stray far from Marley, and they attempt to intercede between the player characters and Marley, as if protecting him.
- Escaping with Marley involves a mad chase, with mechanical men pelting down the cobblestone streets in pursuit, perhaps leaping to catch hold of the madly-fleeing coach and climb up. If you can possibly manage it, run this fight scene atop a coach crashing down the Strand in the middle of the afternoon, scattering pedestrians and threatening to smash into a fashionable shop—a fine opportunity for some Collateral Consequences.

Once the Mechanicals can be defeated, driven off, or evaded, one thing should be clear: The Black Deck is a deadly threat. If he survives, Marley will be convinced he needs to programme the counter to it.

Members of Speak's gang who escape can be followed to their warehouse.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- In a Tight Spot
- Rickety Timbers

Links

- The Warehouse.

The Warehouse

D.I. Kent, Mr. Speak and his men, McGannon and his men, a dozen partially-disabled Automechanicals, and an equal number of brand-new ones.

The Warehouse is one street back behind Limehouse, and is in as thoroughly disreputable a district as any in London's East End. The Warehouse has large doors which allow a carriage to drive right into the building, and this is just what Mr. Speak's big four-wheeler does.

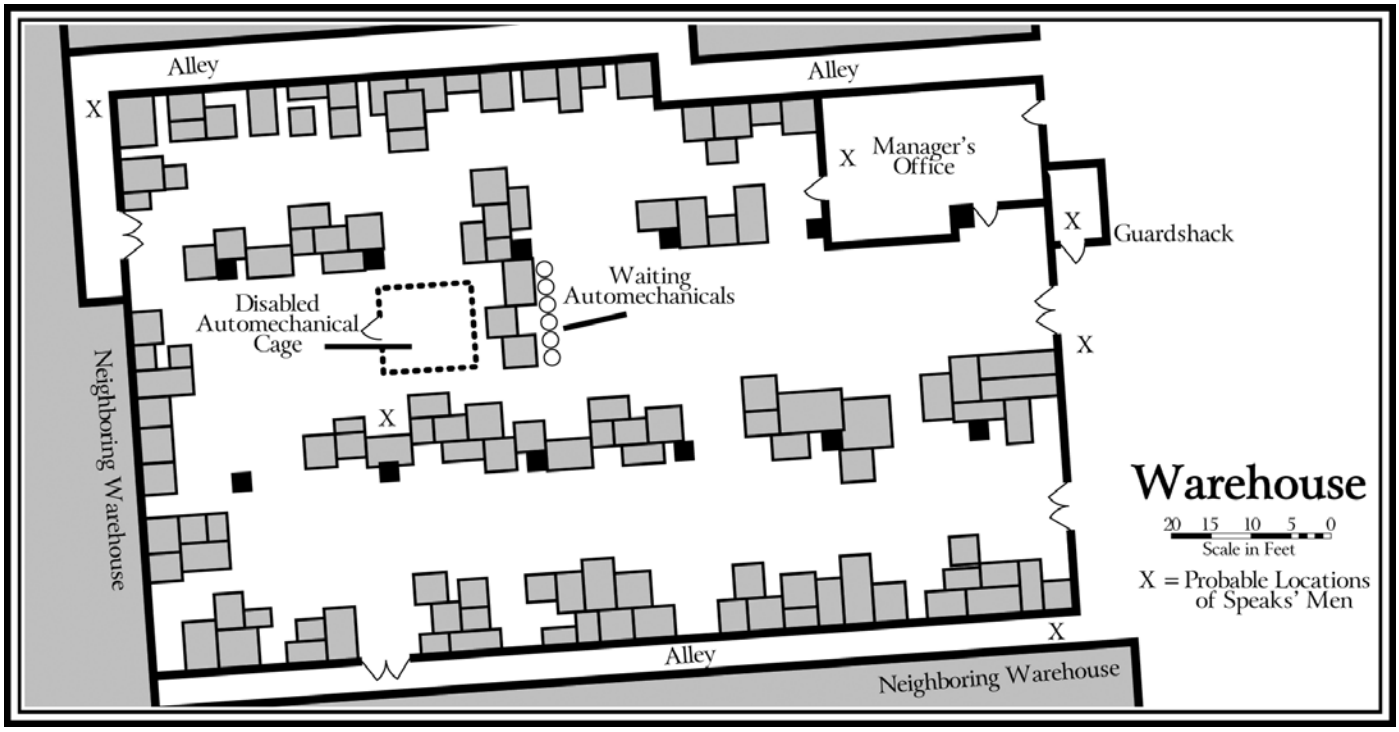
The player characters can barge right in or sneak in. If they sneak in, they have to evade the men guarding the outside of the building (Speak's men, armed with single-barrel shotguns—Weapon 3 [Health] to targets up to 1 zone away, or Weapon 2 [Health] with the Spray Extra against targets 2 or 3 zones away). If the player characters barge in, they're menaced by the same shotgun-wielding thugs. If the standoff isn't broken by someone reasonable, then violence will result when someone's trigger finger gets itchy.

If they make their way inside, they see Speak issuing orders, kicking the captured Automechanicals, and generally being horrible. Until he reveals his powers, he seems like a big hunchbacked man with an evil temper.

If a fight breaks out, in the chaos the captured Automechanicals are released, and they alternately attack and flee the violence. All are fairly heavily damaged (reduce their Quality by one step). At least one escapes, and can be followed to Marley's bolt-hole.

When Speak joins the fight, things get much worse. He's a tough and dangerous opponent—and within a few rounds of his engaging, officers of Special Branch barge in, and they and Speak's men get into a gunfight. Chaos results. Burn down the Warehouse if you think it will be fun. Forgotten barrels of pitch in the corner begin to erupt like volcanoes. Can the blaze be contained before it spreads? Do the Kerberans have time to worry about that?

The ill-fortuned Detective Inspector Kent stumbles into



the fight, and all the blowing on a whistle in the world won't bring any help—Special Branch has warned off the local Peelers, so they stay away for the worst of it, coming in only to catalog the damage when Special Branch gives the all clear.

If the players haven't yet been to Marley's Bolt-Hole, some of the damaged Automechanicals escape and can be followed there.

Details

The warehouse stinks of rotted cabbages and badly-tanned leather. The caged, pathetic, broken Automechanicals creak, groan, and support each other. It's a pantomime scene from a concentration camp played out with broken, man-shaped machines. The air crackles when Speak unleashes his deadly right arm. The crack-crack of gunfire is painfully loud in the enclosed space.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Deafening Gunfire
- Pathetic and Broken Automechanicals
- Boxes and Crates
- One Big Fire Hazard
- Rickety Timbers

Links

- Marley's Bolt-Hole.
- Offices of Babbage Computational.

The Final Sequence

D.I. Kent, Marley, McGannon and his men, Speak and his men, and dozens of Black Deck-driven Automechanicals bent on murder.

When you're ready, steer the PCs in the direction of Marley. They'll need to score some of the Somatonum drug and then get him (along with a Deck-infected Automechanical) back to his apartment and his Visualizer. There he can ride the needle into the machine's brain and puzzle out how to create a counterdeck to cleanse the Black and White.

Unless the Kerberans have their own sources for the drug (not impossible), they need an apothecary, and the one they find seems unwilling to help. If pressed, he gestures to the fist-sized hole in his counter and says a hunched man "explained" how he was not to sell the drug to anyone, and was to send a note to a particular address by runner if anyone asked for it. The hunched man (obviously Speak from the description) drove his banknote-filled fist through the counter to provide both positive and negative inducement towards cooperation. It will take an opposed roll against his effective Resolve of Great (+4)—Speak really put the fear of God and the Devil into him—to get the apothecary to supply the drug.

When given the drug, Marley becomes quite willing to attempt the operation, and the formulation of the counter-programme. Eager, almost.

But here's the thing: He *can't* do it. He tries. He tries everything. It fails. Unless . . .

But before he can try and fail, the player characters have to get Marley from his Bolt-Hole (or wherever he ends up after an earlier encounter with him) back to his apartment—with Speak, Special Branch, D.I. Kent, and dozens of rogue mechanical men trying to prevent it.

Kent comes around pretty quickly. If the players have had a scene or two to get used to him, you can sacrifice him if you need to demonstrate how serious the threat is. This would be a good time to run a carriage chase across moonlit London: three big carriages, with men firing guns and leaping from one to the other, while the Automechanicals run and leap at them like fleas onto a passing dog.

At Marley's apartment, the machines will be ripping the building apart to get inside and recover Marley. The Special Branch men and Speak might team up, and try and kill Marley together.

If the player characters are the sorts, this could be a massive, building-destroying fight. If they're not, it's a terrifying scene with the Automechanicals crashing through the walls and floor, gunfire tearing through the building from the street, and Marley shuddering, drooling, and soiling himself as he plunges his addled mind into the dream-quest which might yet save the city.

Suggested Scene Aspects

- Fog-Shrouded Streets
- Breakneck Moonlight Chase
- Narrow Alleyways

Conclusion

During the chaos, as Marley fails to expunge the programme, he comes to an awful realization.

The Automechanicals must be made to shut down. In the Babbage factories, there's a simple programme that causes an Automechanical to enter a "sleep" mode. In that mode its body, head and limbs assume a very particular posture, and when another Automechanical sees its fellow in that posture, it, too enters "sleep" mode and assumes the same posture; the response is built in to every Automechanical. It is like a contagious kind of unconsciousness. In this way a single technician can induce an entire factory full of Automechanicals to "sleep" in preparation for receiving a new programme. Naturally, the existence of this programme is an extraordinarily important trade secret, one that Ada Lovelace might do anything to keep. Marley puts himself at great risk divulging it.

Marley has no idea how to create that "sleep" programme in the traditional way. But he has an idea for it using his Visualizer. A terrible, sobering idea. He hesitates to mention it—except that the alternative, letting the things continue to run wild, seems so much worse.

The Black and White decks were created when he inadvertently infected the mechanical men with his humanity. To expunge it, they must in a sense be infected with the mortality that is even more essentially human.

Marley tells his friends and protectors that someone must be plugged into the Visualizer at the same time as an Automechanical, plunging them into the thing's brain—and then must die. This will imprint the experience of death upon the machine, the closest equivalent to the "sleep" programme, essentially slaying the humanity which has infected them and leaving nothing but the cold mechanism behind.

It never occurs to Marley that he is the most natural, immediate choice for such a victim. If the Kerberans suddenly give each other grim, knowing looks, it might dawn on him. And then he'll run for it and accept the Automechanical Men's protection willingly.

If the player characters can imprint a human death on their captured Automechanical, thanks to Marley's programming it will spread this to its fellows. The imprinted Automechanical slumps with its arms and legs at a slight angle, each different, and its head tilted just so; not a pose that it would assume by accident or in the normal course of things. The first Automechanical to come within eyesight of the "dead" one does exactly the same. As does the next Automechanical to see either one of them. And so on, until the last rampaging Automechanical is destroyed or "dead." And that will be the end of the Adventure of the Black and White Decks.

If the players fail, things carry on according to the end of the Timeline on page 349.



One Last Thing

If in the aftermath of all this the player characters go to confront Ada Lovelace, they are refused admittance. If they force the matter, they are allowed up to her office in time to see her concluding some business with the Secretary of the Army, with McGannon (if he's alive; or another man from Special Branch if not) at his elbow.

Lovelace thanks the Kerberans for preserving her creations, for now they will serve the Empire in its armies, and the enemies of England will tremble before them. In this moment, Madame Lovelace is every inch the Stranger.

Variations

If you want the situation to become even more chaotic and dangerous, as well as giving you the chance for a more traditional supers-on-supers fight, then introduce the Tower Gang (page 278) into the mix.

The Gang might have stolen an Automechanical of their own only to find it acting weird and violent. They have issued a blackmail demand to Babbage Computational. They are also seeking the source of the Decks, seeing them as even greater leverage on the company, and they have a lead on Marley's location.

If this variation is used, then D.I. Kent is dead and The Face is using his identity to get close to the Kerberans as they investigate. The Tower Gang follows the player characters to Marley. During the final chaos, with the Automechanicals wholly unleashed, the Gang might agree to team up with the Kerberans in defeating them—especially if Ben Bell is still conscious and alive. Ben is nothing if not pragmatic. If Ben is unconscious or dead, then the likelihood of a team-up is significantly reduced.

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The Kerberos Club

FATE ROLEPLAYING

Character

Player

Aspects

Archetype (_____):

Social Class (_____):

Conviction:

(Aspect Type _____):

(Aspect Type _____):

(Aspect Type _____):

(Aspect Type _____):

(Aspect Type _____):

Skills

Great (+4):

Good (+3):

Fair (+2):

Average (+1):

Tier Benefits

Power Tiers/Gifts

Free Gift:

Base Refresh: - Power Tiers: - Gifts: = Adjusted Refresh:

Stress

Type	*Base*	*From Skills*	*From Equipment*
Health *Armor:*	O O O	O O O	O O O
Composure *Armor:*	O O O	O O O	O O O
Reputation *Armor:*	O O O	O O O	O O O

Consequences

P/M/S:	*Trifling (–2 Stress)*
Any	
P/M/S:	*Middling (–4 Stress)*
Any	
P/M/S:	*Grievous (–6 Stress)*
Any	

Unique and Strange Skills

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Humble Beginnings.

Everyone starts somewhere. Who were you before you became who you are? How did your early years mark you and shape you?

Follies of Youth.

Foolishness is a vice of the young and the fondest memory of the old. What did you get up to as you sought independence during your formative years, and with whom did you seek it?

First Awakenings.

When did you begin to realize the world was not as it seemed? When did you become aware of, and involved in, the hidden and not-so-hidden Strangeness lurking about the comfortable hearth of polite society? Consider including another PC in your answer to this question—it will help establish ties between the player characters. Perhaps that other PC was the first Stranger you'd ever seen, or the two of you witnessed something Strange back when you were childhood friends.

Mysterious Origins.

When did you come into power of your own? When did your Touch of Strangeness manifest? How did you become a part of the weird games of the Strangers? This time, definitely include one other PC in your answer, for the reason given in the question above. This need not be the same PC, however. In fact, it's better if it isn't, just to further entangle your past with those of your fellow Kerberans. Take a look at the other players' answers to the previous Questions, keeping an eye out for opportunities to forge connections. Maybe you saved one's life—or nearly ended it. Maybe the two of you teamed up against a common foe, or were accomplices in the same crime.

Great Failing.

What is your greatest flaw, and how did it bring you near to ruin and disaster?

The Kerberos Club



Time Period: _____

Campaign Title: _____

Status Quo Aspects

Legacy or Dilemma: _____

Faces: _____

Legacy or Dilemma: _____

Faces: _____

Legacy or Dilemma: _____

Faces: _____

Legacy or Dilemma: _____

Faces: _____

Legacy or Dilemma: _____

Faces: _____

Legacy or Dilemma: _____

Faces: _____

Places of Interest

Place: _____

Aspect: _____

Faces: _____

Place: _____

Aspect: _____

Faces: _____

Place: _____

Aspect: _____

Faces: _____

Place: _____

Aspect: _____

Faces: _____

Place: _____

Aspect: _____

Faces: _____

Place: _____

Aspect: _____

Faces: _____

Time Period: _____

Campaign Title: _____

The Kerberos Club

FATE ROLEPLAYING

"Malum Necessarium"

Faces: _____

Public Aspects

Aspect: _____ *Faces:* _____

Agenda Aspects

Aspect: _____ *Faces:* _____

Strange Aspects

Aspect: _____ *Faces:* _____

Time Period: _____

Campaign Title: _____



The Kerberos Club

The Kerberos Club



Time Period: _____

Campaign Title: _____

Faces

_____

is the Face of

_____

Ally ✚ *Antagonist* ✚ *Unknown*

Aspect: _____

_____

_____

_____

is the Face of

_____

Ally ✚ *Antagonist* ✚ *Unknown*

Aspect: _____

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is the Face of

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Ally ✚ *Antagonist* ✚ *Unknown*

Aspect: _____

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is the Face of

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Ally ✚ *Antagonist* ✚ *Unknown*

Aspect: _____

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is the Face of

_____

Ally ✚ *Antagonist* ✚ *Unknown*

Aspect: _____

_____

_____

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"Stony" Joe Smithson, the honest London boxer transformed into living rock.

Maeve O'Connel, Queen of the Mudlarks, the eternal child touched by Faerie.

The Lady Mirabel, who by darkness defends Whitechapel as the terrifying Night Hag.

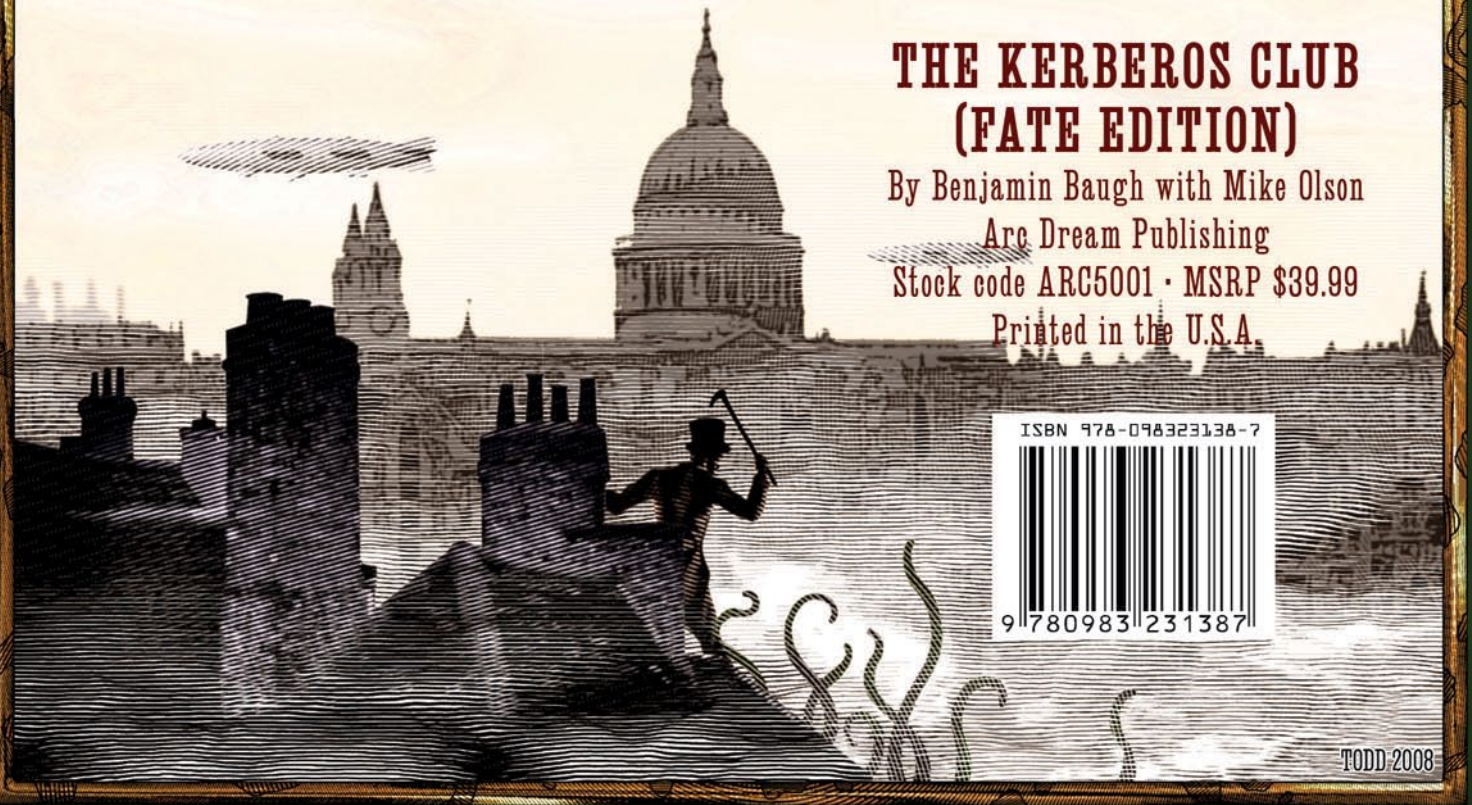
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