

ABNEY PARK'S

UNDERNEATH THE LAMPLIGHT



A NEOVICTORIAN SOURCE BOOK
SET IN THE WORLD OF

AIRSHIP PIRATES

WRITTEN BY ANDREW PEREGRINE

UNDERNEATH THE LAMPLIGHT

The NeoVictorian Sourcebook

for Abney Park's Airship Pirates RPG

By Andrew Peregrine

CARPE EO IRE ITUD



UNDERNEATH THE LAMPLIGHT

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Red Rain

Huddled up in the small doorway, Polly listened. It was a quiet night, as usual, although there was still the distant thump of a nearby factory, its great machines dumbly carrying out their eternal orders. There was nothing on the cobbled street but the dark shapes of the buildings lit by the orange gaslight, but still Polly didn't move. She curled herself tightly into a ball, tucking her bare feet under her and wrapped her threadbare shawl over her head. She wasn't cold; the heat of the day was still trapped in the narrow streets, the stone still warm from the roasting offered by the factories. Instead, Polly was hiding as she listened, making her tiny form as small as she could.

Even in the quiet she was frightened to move, she knew it would be there. One of them was always out there in the dark. Then she heard it, the whirr-click-click as it came down the streets on its rounds. As it came closer Polly could hear the buzzing whistle of its steam driven flywheels along with the whirr-click-click of the clockwork. Luckily, it was alone when it turned the corner, a tall metal thing in the shape of a man. Now and then a small sigh of steam vented from its back. It moved slowly on patrol, but Polly had seen one outrun a grown man with ease. Each movement it made was graceful, but oddly stiff with programmed design, as if it had to consider and process every step it made. Every twenty steps exactly it stopped and turned its head this way and that, surveying the streets. Upon seeing nothing of interest it began again on another twenty steps. As it passed under the street lamps it gleamed a little, brass not steel, its polished surface also it's uniform. The helmet, that was,

in truth, part of its head, displayed its badge of authority as a Peeler, one of the police force in the great city of Desolation.

Despite the darkness, Polly knew she would be a fool to run. The Peelers could see in the dark far easier than any human. It was one of the reasons they kept the streetlights so dim. She would just have to hope it didn't see her; otherwise it would arrest her for being out so late. She would have to wait for the red rain; there was something in it that interfered with the Peeler's senses. It wasn't really rain, Polly knew that at least. She'd heard it was some sort of chemical smoke, heavy with dye that came out of one of the cloth factories nearby. The first time she'd seen it, she'd thought the sky was bleeding. These days it was simply a change from the black soot that coated everything.

The rain was late though, and the Peeler was getting closer. Getting arrested might mean being thrown out of the city to the wild animals, or worse, the Change Cage. Polly had heard tales of girls even younger than her being sent to the Change Cage, even ones who weren't carrying food bought on the black market. It was only bread and milk, but her baby sister was hungry and Polly's mother was too ill to go out herself. The family had already lost a baby the previous year and Polly really wanted her little sister to grow up so she'd have someone to play with, someone to share her secrets with. She'd been very good on the journey here and not drunk any of the milk herself, even though she was so hungry. Her sister would need all of it, and Polly wished really hard that she wouldn't hate her for that.

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At sixteen steps, the Peeler stopped. Terror crept over Polly and despite her best efforts she began to tremble. The Peeler's head turned through an inhuman angle as it scanned the area. Polly held her breath, desperately praying it wouldn't see her and pass by. However, the Peeler fixed its brass gaze on the alley near Polly and began to move quizzically towards her hiding place. Too frightened to move, Polly curled herself tighter. Tears began to escape her eyes so she screwed them up in the forlorn hope that if she couldn't see the Peeler, it wouldn't see her. But instead of feeling the metal hand of the Peeler on her shoulder, a shot rang out in the silence.

Polly looked up. Instead of looming over her the Peeler was staggering backwards. A hole had opened up in its head, destroying one of its eyes and something of its sense of balance. The Peeler took out its whistle, looking to summon more of its kind, but before it could put it to its mouth, two more shots rang out in quick succession. Both struck home, one obliterating the Peeler's hand, the other the rest of its head. Polly turned to see where the shots had come from. Stepping out of the alley, her large steampistol still raised, came a woman unlike any Polly had ever seen. She was wearing trousers for a start, tucked into thick riding boots. Over a white shirt she wore a black corset, and round her thin waist was slung the holster for the huge pistol she wielded. Unlike the few rich women Polly had seen, this woman's skin was tanned, her long black hair left loose and flowing rather than tied up in some elaborate style. Polly could do little but stare in amazement as the woman put three more shots into the Peeler, which fell to its knees and twitched at her feet.

"So Isabella", came a voice from the alley, "which part of 'quietly' eluded you?" The new voice, its accent feminine and wealthy, came from another woman who followed Isabella out of the alley. She looked more like the rich ladies Polly had seen before. Her gown was made from expensive embroidered fabric, even though it was cut a little shorter than might be considered proper. She wore a small hat, balanced on a mass of curls and ringlets that must have taken hours to arrange. She too had dark features, almost oriental, and her manner, while elegant was somehow far from ladylike.

"It had seen us," replied Isabella. "Did you think you'd be able to pass the time of day with it Jennifer?"

"Now is not the time ladies", came a third voice, belonging to a handsome man who followed them out of the alley. His hair was long and bohemian, his clothes hardwearing but expensive. Were it not for the cutlass blade in his hand he would be the very image of a romantic poet. Polly hadn't noticed she was staring until Isabella levelled her gun in Polly's direction.

"Come out of there", she said quietly. Polly complied, but clutched her bundle tighter lest these strangers tried to steal it from her. However, as soon as Polly came out into the light, Isabella lowered her gun. Polly was about to be about to run off home as quickly as she could when she paused, and considered for a moment she might owe these strangers some advice for dispatching the Peeler. She was also intrigued. Everyone knew there was nothing but death outside the cities, but these people were clearly not from any part of the

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city Polly knew. The only other possibility was impossible. Airship pirates? They were just stories, but they were persistent stories nevertheless.

"You'd best be out of here you know, there'll be more of them along soon." Her words were punctuated by a shrill call from a Peeler whistle a few blocks away.

"What's your name girl?" asked the pretty rich lady with a smile.

"Polly."

"Good evening Polly, my name is Jennifer. My companions are Isabella and Caliban. I wonder if you might know somewhere safe we can hide for a while as our plans for this evening..."

"Your plans," grumbled Isabella until Jennifer shot her a glance.

"...Our plans, for the evening have been somewhat compromised," continued Jennifer, offering Polly a brilliant smile.

Something about this woman entranced Polly. She was so beautiful and bright it seemed a compliment for her simply to notice someone like Polly. Whether it was the clothes, her style, or just the way she looked you in the eye, Jennifer's beauty was almost intimidating. Finding her feet suddenly very interesting, Polly mumbled something about knowing somewhere they could all go. Only when they set off at a run to get there did Polly begin to wonder if offering the only safe place she knew, her home, had been a good idea. What was her mother going to say? Polly decided she'd cross that bridge when she came to it as these strangers were so fascinating she didn't want them to leave her. As they ran together along

the cobbled streets, the rain began to come down. The thick water clotted on the stones, and a red smear began to run down the streets.

It didn't take long to reach Polly's home, although anyone who didn't live there might have easily passed it. The small house was part of a long row of terraced houses. They each had several floors but stood thin, barely wide enough for a door. They sat packed together like a row of books on an overstuffed shelf, each with their Cyclops windows staring out into the gloom of the streets. As she opened the wooden door to let her new friends inside, Polly glanced around to see they were unobserved. A few curtains twitched, but most people had the sense not to gain the attention of the authorities. To offer information to the administrators was to attract their notice. While a quick trial might end matters for any criminal, those who made themselves known as informants would always suffer the curious glare of those who ran the city. Anonymity and a good work ethic was the best way to lead a quiet life. Even so, you couldn't be too careful.

"Polly!" shouted her mother as the girl and her new friends cramped themselves in the only room that made up the ground floor. "Who are these folk and what..."

She was cut off by Jennifer stepping into the dim glow of the small candles that lit the room. Polly's mother almost fell to her knees, more through a learned response than fear, at the presence of such an obviously wealthy woman in her home.

"Mum, shush," cautioned Polly as she pushed

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through the group. She exchanged the bread and milk she still carried for her baby sister in the hopes that success might mollify her mother. Her mother began coughing again, a little red rain of her own spattering the dirty handkerchief she put to her mouth. With better things to do than see to strangers, she went to put the milk into a bottle for the baby and hide the bread. Polly smiled down at her sister, rocking her in her arms. She decided the gurgle Sarah made in reply was her way of saying thank you.

"Don't mind Mum," Polly told her new friends, "she's not well."

"We're sorry to intrude Ma'am," Caliban called out to her. He dug into a pocket and placed a few coins on the listing table in the centre of the room. "I hope you won't mind if we leave you something for your trouble."

Polly's mother returned, giving the bottle to Polly to feed her sister. Feeling very grown up for the responsibility, Polly began singing Sarah a song she knew as the baby sucked hungrily at the bottle. Glancing at the coins on the table, Polly's mother was urged to more hospitality.

"You're welcome I'm sure," she said, wiping her hand on her apron before offering it to Caliban. "My name's Lizzy. I'm afraid my husband Charlie is out at work."

Caliban took her hand. Their shake apparently sealing some deal, Lizzy took a look at the coins. She eyed them suspiciously. "What sort of coins are these?" she asked.

Polly gave out a small gasp. "Smuggler's coins Mum! They're called Hellions or something! You'll get more than a shilling's worth out of those if you take 'em to the right place!"

"We call them Helios," Jennifer answered. "I'm sorry, but it's the only currency we carry. There's not much call for anything else outside the cities."

Lizzy gathered the coins quickly, as if their very presence out in the open on her table was trouble enough. She buried them in the pocket of her skirt, her fear outweighed by poverty. "Ain't nothing outside the cities," she muttered, just in case the authorities might overhear.

"We won't stay long," Jennifer said, answering the unspoken question Lizzy had left in the air. "Just until the Peelers have calmed down."

"What are you doing here?" asked Polly. Her mother shushed her, but she carried on regardless. "Are you from one of the sky cities?"

"There ain't no sky cities," coughed Lizzy.

"There are too! Bill's son Tom said he's seen one when he was on the barges."

"You shouldn't believe everything the bargefolk say, silly girl," admonished Lizzy.

Polly huffed, and sat down heavily in protest, indicating the visitors as obvious proof that her mother ignored.

"I think it might be clear," said Isabella, who had been watching the streets through the

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threadbare curtain. "We need to move if we are going to make the rendezvous and get out of this place."

The others exchanged a glance of ascent with her, knowing that the longer they stayed, the more trouble Polly and her family might be in. They made to leave, Jennifer thanking Lizzy for letting them stay as Isabella and Caliban checked their weapons.

"I'll show you the way," said Polly, returning her sister to her mother's arms and eager not to see the newcomers leave.

"We'll be fine from here," said Jennifer, not needing the look of concern she received from Lizzy. "We don't want to get you into any trouble."

"But it's no trouble I..." Polly was silenced by a look from her mother.

Isabella opened the door and checked the streets once more. It was still clear.

"There really are sky cities aren't there?" called out Polly, fearing her hopes might have been dashed under her mother's declaration. Jennifer knelt down next to her so she could look her in the eyes.

"Oh yes," she said. "Great cities of steam and stone that rest on mountaintops and vast platforms held aloft by huge balloons. There are traders, pirates, rogues and thieves. There are carnivals and sights that always have new wonders and daring folk who always know where to find danger and adventure. It is a world of lush jungles and fierce beasts, and strange tribes who have learnt to live beside these monsters."

Jennifer took off her hat, and pinned it onto Polly's head, then she kissed her goodbye on the cheek.

"When you are older, if you can find us, I'll show you all of it. But you must promise me you'll take care of your family until then and only seek to leave this place on a barge or an airship. Otherwise there are a hundred beasts looking to eat up a tasty young morsel like you."

"I promise," whispered Polly, torn between hope and the sadness of these people leaving.

With one last check outside, the trio vanished through the door into the night. The room felt empty without them, suddenly silent, as if they had never been there. Lizzy was briefly seized with another coughing fit, and went back to tending Sarah.

"Take that hat off before someone sees it," Lizzy told Polly.

Very slowly, Polly acquiesced, although she took some time to stare at the hat, enjoying the pleasure of merely owning it. She hid it away carefully, in case her mother's fears were realised, or her family insisted she sell it. Then, for the rest of the evening, she stared out of the window, dreaming after the strangers, for as long as her mother would let her.





DUST
AND
DESOLATION

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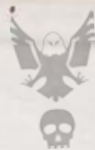
You don't have to worry anymore, you're safe now.

Our land is still bruised and angry with us, but here in the city the wild creatures cannot harm you. The stories you've heard are true, I'm afraid. There are great fanged cats out there, plants that tear at you with thorns and beasts so huge you can only call them monsters. But the walls of our city protect you, even if they may feel, at times, a little restrictive. You have to remember, the world no longer belongs to humanity. We gave up that right with years of abusing our planet. Our lives here may be hard but we are saving the world for our children. One day, perhaps, a more enlightened generation can enter the wilderness once more and live in harmony. But we are not ready for that, not yet. We still have much to learn and so far to go. However, we will make it there together one day, as long as we stay strong and play our part in the great cities with diligence and faith. Toil is what we can offer each other and our blessed planet. Work will set you free.

You will hear rumours, though. Vicious lies perpetrated by the greedy, the ignorant and the easily deceived. They will tell you whole civilisations live outside our walls, that there are those who seek to destroy the Emperor, that there is no need for the Change Cage. It is laughable, of course, to think some gullible fools might believe such rubbish. However, such stories persist, so let us lay them to rest once and for all.

Let us consider these 'other cultures' first. These people are meant to live in utopian cities in the sky. Cities in the sky? Does that even seem remotely possible? Where did these magical sky cities come from, I ask you? When it was all we could do to build our earthbound cities and protect them, is it really likely that those who had forsworn the protection of the Emperor had the resources to build such wonders? You may know the work it takes to build one of our Imperial Air Navy's great airships, so how likely is it that anyone might craft one the size of a city? If they did manage such an impossible task, how might it stand against even one of the IAN's great ships? No, there are no cities in the sky, no romantic pirates flying across the land. These are merely the tales of Bargefolk, who seek any excuse to charge more for their wares. Attacked by pirates? They may as well have said the faeries stole their cargo, at least the superstitious might believe such rubbish.

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It is true that there are those who seek to disturb the life we have built here. They want to see the Emperor murdered and the Change Cage thrown open. But there are no grand conspiracies, because on the whole people are good and decent. These rabble rousers will tell you anything to draw you in, but whatever they say, few people join them. Most people want to provide for their family, not waste time with dissidents. Most people understand that these anarchists are just lazy or cowardly. They think there is a better way, not because they have evidence of one but because of their selfishness. They want us to return the world to what it was, having learnt nothing of the damage we did and how humanity fell. They would have an easy life, and leave our children to clear up the mess. They think they are too good to work like the rest of us, that they should be allowed their leisure because providing for their family is too hard for them. Well, why should they be given for free what everyone else strives for? We know the work is hard, that is why it is called work.

So, do not listen to these layabouts who offer the seductive message that there is another way. We all want to hear that we don't need to work so hard, but it is a cheap lie to get your attention. It is greed and wishful thinking. If there were another way, do you not think the Emperor would have considered it? No one wants to see their loyal citizens suffer. No, the dissidents will offer you anything to get you to join their cause, but you will quickly find out their plans are not so simple to put into practice, and you will be expected to give so much more than the Emperor ever asked of you to serve their cause. The Emperor promises utopia for us all, but we will all have to work for it. It is a simple truth, and far more real that any promises you'll hear from the sad and troubled souls who speak against it.

It isn't wrong to wonder about the Change Cage, and you would be right to fear it. However, it is not the Change Cage you fear. The great towers remind us of what we have lost and what we must do to reclaim our place in the world. As a species, humanity faces no less daunting a challenge than for a single person to take on the Change Cage. The Change Cage is a symbol of our struggle. When you understand that, you will look upon the towers with pride. They prove mankind can stand strong after all we have suffered, that we have begun a great work together and we will prevail, and that we are all prepared to sacrifice what we must for that cause.

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Yes, you are right; our lives would be easier if we embraced new technologies. But that is why humanity fell and why we destroyed so much of our beautiful planet. We let our hubris and laziness take us too far down the wrong path. This time we will find a balance and the Change Cage makes sure we maintain that balance. It is a shame that innovators must be punished, but you must ask yourself why they try to change what we have. Only those who refuse to maintain what we have, who seek to upset the delicate balance we maintain with our planet find themselves in the Change Cage. We reward those who industriously seek to make our lives better, but a line must be drawn when it threatens all we hold dear. Most people understand that, those who do not must be taken from society before they can do any more damage. We will not see all we have built fall for the sake of one person's vanity.

– *Isabella Mordekai*,
High level Administrator in Desolation

Neovictorians? Who? Oh, you mean the rats trapped in the cities below. Why should I care what they call themselves? If they don't have the guts to get out of the stinking pits they dug for themselves, they're just rats to me, and rats have nothing worth stealing so what do I care? I could do without the navy rolling around in those whales they call airships, though. Mind you, if I could capture one, I'd show them how to really fly them.

– *Captain Stormhaven*,
Pirate of High Tortuga

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I have had dealings with the Neovics, once or twice. That's the point of this place after all, a safe place to trade. You can trust them as much as you can trust anyone else around here. They tend to only let the loyal ones out of the city though, so they all spill this rubbish about how wonderful the cities are. If they are so great, why do those who can spend so much time out here?

Esme Tilglass,
Merchant of Helium City

They are the most arrogant people I've ever known. They claim everything as theirs and know nothing of what is going on outside their own cities. They think they are the saviours of the world when they have destroyed everything. If they left us alone, I'd be happy to let them rot in their precious cities. But they don't leave us alone; they send assassins and murderers to kill anyone that's different. If they don't want this land why the hell do they care so much about who lives here? We have only suffered by those people, and I'll kill any I meet and not shed a tear for any of them.

- Pasha Al'Kris, Neobedouin Beastdancer

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I won't say it's an easy life, but there is freedom out on the rivers, not like in the cities. You know when you're getting close to a Change Cage in the city but there is plenty that leaks out. They say everything stays is, it always gets a little hotter when you get close to the city too. It's all those factories, small streets and the cloud of black smoke that hangs over the place. It traps all the heat. You only ever see the same faces on the docks, if you see any at all. You'd be forgiven for thinking the whole city is populated by Automata from what you see on the docks some days.

Thomas Slinger, Barge Captain

High Tortuga is a hive of scum and villainy.
Isla Ether is full of pretentious snobs.
Helium City is a nest of vipers and con artists.
Desolation? That's just a hole, a dank festering hole.

- Kaylee Reynolds, Airship engineer

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The secrets within this book

Before we travel into the heat of Desolation, we should pause a while and consider our journey. So we present this short detail on the delights and secrets you will find within this guide.

Chapter 1 - Dust and Desolation

Here, as you will no doubt now be aware, we introduce you to the Neovictorians once more. We refresh your memory on the state of the world and the remains of humanity that reside there. We also offer a context for the Neovictorians by sharing some of the attitudes of their neighbouring cultures.

Chapter 2 - Life under Lamplight

Next we take a look at life for the Neovictorians themselves. We investigate the differences in class, their daily lives and attitudes. We introduce the byzantine Administration and the Emperor's new religion of Neochristianity.

Chapter 3 - Ladies and Gentlemen

We now come to more statistical detail and consider how one might create one of these characters. We offer new careers, talents and abilities for every class of Neovictorian, from the upper classes to the Misbegotten. We also take a look at what it is like to be part of the IAN and introduce Bargefolk as player characters.

Chapter 4 - The Cage of Civilisation

Here we turn to the great Change Cage cities themselves. We detail the city of Desolation in all its glory, and take you to Everglade and Old Borealis as well. We also offer a little detail on the other 14 cities across the world.

Chapter 5 - Propaganda, and other lies

For the Gamemaster we offer the secrets of the Neovictorian world. What actually happens in the Change Cage, what secret societies roam the streets and who are the Chuno Ggun? As well as this peek behind the curtain, we offer advice on running Neovictorian adventures and how to use the settings presented here.

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However, he saw that there was no easy way to save his people; that sacrifices would have to be made if anyone was to survive.

The Emperor bent all his resources to the construction of seventeen new cities, built specifically to protect what remained of humanity and work in harmony with the broken planet. Those who could not find their way to the cities perished under the claws of terrible beasts. However, those inside the cities were protected by high walls and powerful weapons that warded off any creature with the temerity to approach.

With at least some of humanity safe and secure, the Emperor was forced to consider how to make peace between his people and the Earth. He reasoned that humanity had taken the Earth for granted, squandered its bounty and poisoned it with technology. He decided that the

advances of the twentieth century would have to be sacrificed to find this balance. Advances made after 1899 were consigned to the Change Cage, a vast stronghold in the centre of each city, along with those who refused to give them up. This is how humanity has remained, isolated in their cities, trapped in the past of a new Victorian age.

The Neovictorians

As far as they are concerned, the Neovictorians are the last remnants of humanity. As far as any of them know, a great disaster befell the human race some time ago. It was as if the Earth had finally had enough of the abuse it received at the hands of humanity and took horrific revenge. The land itself turned against the people, and millions lost their lives. Luckily, the people had chosen the right leader in the Emperor Victor Hypocrates.

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The divisions of society

The return to the Victorian era has brought a return of a rigid class system. The population of the Change Cage cities is ruthlessly segregated, with each different social strata living in almost separate worlds.

The upper class makes up less than ten percent of the population of each city, but occupy over a third of its living space. The few families that make up the wealthy elite are the descendants of those powerful individuals who helped the Emperor's plan for humanity. Few people remember what their forebears did, or really care that much. They are brought up to believe that their position is not a mere accident of birth. They rule because their families are simply that much better than the rest of the population. They are the cream of humanity and as such deserve better than the common stock that works the factories.

With no real middle class, the next rung of the social ladder belongs to the Servant class. Those who serve in the great estates of the wealthy have a slightly better life than their fellows, but not by much. The work is hard and unceasing, and their masters unrelenting and uncaring. However, they are provided with decent clothes and can always look forward to three square meals a day. To ensure their loyalty, the servants are constantly told they have been rescued from a far worse life. Their masters insist that work in the factories is unbearable, but should the servants fail in their duties, such new employment can be arranged. To be a servant of the upper class is an honour (so the upper class insist) only granted to the best of the lower orders. This breeds a mixture of fear and arrogance

into most who wait upon the pleasure of the wealthy.

Below the servants are the lower or working class. They make up the majority of the population, and live in varying levels of poverty across the city. Most work in the great factories, producing all manner of textiles, manufactured goods and even foodstuffs. All the factories are cramped, dangerous and hot, a living hell for most of their workers. After a long day, all that most of the working class can do is muster the energy to go home to bed.

The working class are not the lowest level in Neovictorian society. Some parts of the city are not truly fit for human habitation. However, overcrowding has forced some people to make their homes near waste pipes, chemical outlets and sewerage systems. The infections and diseases rife in these areas have evolved their inhabitants into a new breed of twisted human referred to as 'Misbegotten'. Society at large does its best to ignore these people, although many develop useful mutations that the Chuno Ggun find uses for.

The view from outside

Despite the efforts of the Emperor, some of those who failed to find their way to the cities, or else refused to, have not only survived but prospered. Unlike the Neovictorians, these other cultures are quite aware of the existence of each other. However they do not share the opinions of the Emperor!

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Skyfolk

Those who live in the aeries on mountaintops or floating cities have little actual antipathy to the Neovictorians themselves. If anything they almost see them and their delusions as comical. The IAN is a concern for Skyfolk, but not an especially great one. Only a fool tries to take on one of their ships, and the nimbler Skyfolk craft can usually outrun them. Conversely, an IAN airship Captain would be a fool to try and take on one of the sky cities, since the Declaration of Allegiance Pact means that all the other sky cities would retaliate against the Empire. Should the IAN make a concerted attempt to eradicate the Skyfolk, such outright war would be very bloody indeed, and would certainly shake off any complacency on either side. For this reason a détente remains, but the arrogance of most IAN captains may soon provoke some incident that might escalate into war.

The Skyfolk see little of value in the Change Cage cities, although rumours the Neovictorians possess advanced technology they keep hidden persist. Several Skyfolk pirates and treasure hunters are lured to the cities on occasion. However, those who think they can fly over in an airship don't come back. The guns that line the walls of the cities to protect against animals can easily be pointed upwards.

Neobedouins

Whereas the Skyfolk mostly ignore the Neovictorians, many Neobedouin nurse a terrible grudge against them. Neobedouin life is harsher than that of the Skyfolk, and most of them have lost someone they care about

to the attacks from wild animals engineered by the Emperor. Worse still, the land-bound Neobedouins often make tempting targets for the black Chuno Ggun airships. The injustice of these attacks makes the Neobedouin even angrier, but there is little they can do. They do not have the manpower to assault the cities, or the air power to take on the Chuno Ggun warships. So when their enemies take them on in close combat the Neobedouin make sure they pay for the privilege tenfold.

Entering and leaving the cities

Much as Neovictorian propaganda denies it, the Change Cage cities are not impregnable, and the population not entirely static. There are ways to get into the cities, and on occasion, families are relocated. Mind you, just because something is possible, it doesn't make it simple, commonplace or safe.

Given the filth and squalor of the Change Cage cities, it is a wonder why anyone outside might want to get inside. However, there are plenty of reasons outsiders might attempt to smuggle themselves inside. The cities produce parts, tools and goods of standardised but excellent quality. Some of their airship parts are extremely reliable and valuable. After all, with change outlawed, the Neovictorians have got very good at making what they are allowed to produce.

Rumours also persist of great riches in the cities, especially on the estates of the wealthy. Such wealth is not restricted to material goods either. Several great works of art were rescued

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during the rectification by powerful scions of the Emperor. The administrators also guard several useful secrets. These cover anything from IAN airship movements and patrols to where to find hidden or lost technologies.

Finally, plenty of people try to break in simply to say they have, or to cause as much disruption as they can. There are many people with a grudge against the Neovictorians looking to stick it to them by finding a way to strike back against the cities. There are also several self-exiled Neovictorians looking to get old friends and even family members out to a new life.

Unfortunately, the authorities take a very dim view of outsiders making visits. After all, these people are not meant to even exist. Captured 'tourists' are usually summarily executed on general principle, often with anyone found to be helping them. This is why those who help others get into the city are either very dedicated or expect to be well paid. Interlopers had also best save some of their cash to pay off the authorities in case they get captured, and pray they are easily bribed.

The Docks & Trains

The weakest part of the city's security system is the docks. Bargefolk are easily bribed and as they are smuggling everything else, people are simply another form of cargo to them. It is the corruptible human factor among the authorities and guards that makes the system possible, although many areas of the docks are manned by automata. After all, it is not a good idea to let people mingle too often with outsiders.

Getting to the docks by barge is simple, but that's still a long way from getting into the city proper. The best way to gain access is to have a contact in the city who can pick up the 'cargo' and open it in private. Unclaimed cargo or city stores are often placed in large warehouses by automata. These automata usually have no programmed response to finding people getting out of the boxes they are packing. This is not to say interlopers can wander with impunity. The guards, both human and automaton must still be avoided, and every now and again the cargo automata get overzealous.

The same rules apply to trying to get inside by train. However, the train offers several additional problems. Firstly, while they are quite regular, they do not travel very often, usually no more than once a week. Additionally, unlike the Bargefolk, the crew is unlikely to be hospitable if they find stowaways. The trains are also usually quite well guarded, given they may be transporting administrators on rare visits to other cities. It is uncommon for an administrator to need to visit another city, although some go to check on operations in the mines outside the cities. Some gain passage on IAN airships rather than take the train, but good luck sneaking aboard one of those!

The Sewers

While it is not the most pleasant way into the city, some of the venting and recycling systems have air intake tunnels that might prove a way in. Sadly, most of these tunnels also quietly double as sewer outlets for what the city

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cannot recycle (not that any administrator will admit this). Should you find an open tunnel, and it isn't full of sewage or hazardous chemicals, it is still not an easy journey.

As these tunnels have a job to do, there are all manner of automata and machinery looking to process and recycle anything that comes their way. They tend to be very single-minded about this occupation too. It is also not uncommon for creatures to wander into the tunnels, and they are often found to be hungry, lost and somewhat angry. Some new breeds have even learnt to live in the waste, having gained strange mutated abilities to help them survive. In a few cases these beasts are not actually animals, but horribly twisted Misbegotten, shunned even by their own kind.

Relocations

While it is rare, it is not unknown for families to be moved from city to city. Sometimes the authorities like to move around potential troublemakers, before they make contacts or start plotting. However, it is more likely that the people in question have skills required in another city. Occasionally, very loyal citizens are given the chance to move to another city as a reward. They are told they will have better lives and more privileges due to their outstanding service, which is sometimes true. The reason for this is to show others the virtue and rewards of conformity. Perversely, this honour is often given to known dissidents, as this sudden windfall usually makes their fellows suspicious and breaks up cells.

Relocations are usually done in large groups,

often by train or airship. The families are not allowed to mix with the crew and often treated little better than cattle. Nevertheless, the promise of reward and a better life is very attractive. Some of the travellers never actually reach their destination, being thrown out of the airship or train halfway there. It's a good way to quietly get rid of troublemakers.

Airship

The simplest way in might seem to be to fly over the walls and slide down a rope. Those who try find themselves in need of a new airship at best. The city guns open fire on any airship that fails to use the right approach pattern or to appear to be one of their own ships. Failing that, IAN airships patrol the skies over the cities and are similarly humourless when it comes to interlopers. Having said that, plenty of pirates claim to have made such a daring attempt, and others talk of capturing an IAN airship so they might approach with impunity. Just about every IAN captain hopes to one day meet such fools.

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It is a little ironic that we call the folk of the Change Cage cities 'Neo' or 'New' Victorians, when everything about them is a step back into the past. The Change Cage cities are frozen places, stultifying in enforced stasis. They are places of dark streets and fear, as the brooding presence of the Change Cage looms over everything. It is a constant reminder that to step out of place is to invite punishment. The population is kept separate, so no one every really understands the lot of anyone outside their class. This breeds contempt and bigotry that the propagandists are quick to exploit.

In this chapter we take a more detailed look at the Neovictorians themselves. What do they think of each other, and the world outside the city walls? We detail what they eat, what entertains them, what they aspire to and look at their daily lives. We also investigate the Administration and the way it keeps the population under control.

Neovictorian culture

While there are Change Cage cities across the world, the Neovictorians maintain a very western culture, even in the east. The Emperor's insistence on uniformity and regulation, coupled with his cultural bias, have

enforced western values across all the Change Cage cities without exception. In general, the Neobedouins and Skyfolk hold onto their cultural roots. Indeed, they consider it a mark of their identity and freedom that they maintain their own languages and traditions.

However, this western dominance is not as bad as it sounds, or as total as the Emperor might like it to be. During the Great rectification, people held onto their traditions, not only in spite of, but often because of, what they suffered. In a time of change, the old ways were a form of solace and consistency amidst the chaos. While the Administration might function broadly in the same way in each Change Cage city, the details can vary widely. Small gods are worshipped daily in Moksha, the people of Al Salam pray five times a day, and in Meiji, honour and duty are more important than life.

The official language of the Neovictorians is English, although several words from other languages and dialects have crept into common usage. This common tongue creates a vital unity among the Neovictorians and all official documents must be written in English. However, many of the Change Cage cities have a bilingual populace, who use English for official business but a more regional language for their daily life. This is not only due to the Emperor's edicts. When the first Victor Hypocrates began operating a world government, English was becoming a global tongue simply for convenience sake (with Spanish and Chinese a close second).

There are significantly fewer languages in

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the world now though. Whole peoples were wiped out during the Great rectification, or separated between cities and subsumed into the commonality. Small communities can sometimes be found within Change Cage cities that keep certain cultures and languages alive. Unfortunately the Administration does its best to move and split up such communities. Common identity outside the bounds of 'Neovictorian' is a potential breeding ground for dissidence. There are no dawn raids or pogroms though. The Administration simply offers new (and sometimes better) opportunities to members of any small community to split them up across the city. Only when the people see what is really going on behind the 'opportunities' offered by the Administration, do they tend to resist. That is when the peelers (or even the Chuno Ggun) are sent in to make arrests. After all, only criminals and dissidents would refuse the Administration's benevolence.

The Importance of class

While the class system might seem horribly unfair, and it is, not every Neovictorian sees it quite that way. In fact, many of them, even the poorest, wouldn't like to change the class they were born into. To those outside the system, this seems insane. After all, the rich live in palaces and the poor in cramped hovels. Who wouldn't want the life of luxury enjoyed by the upper classes? However, when we say most people wouldn't want to change their class, we didn't mean no one wants an easier life. The poor all want to be better off of course, but years of propaganda and pride in their work has taught each level of society the

virtue of their place in the world.

The benefits of being upper class are obvious. Money, power and luxurious living conditions make it easy to see why they are happy to stay as they are. However, their servants see a slightly different picture. They see a world of labyrinthine rules and complicated etiquette. For all the power of the upper class, they have responsibilities and must play a constant game to maintain their respect and power. Why would anyone want to join this den of vipers? Not only would it mean looking over your shoulder all the time for the next social knife in the back, but your only friends would be other devious conniving indolent bastards. No, better to get back to an honest day's work scrubbing the linen and stay out of it all.

Like the servant class, the lower class see virtue in the work they do. They keep the factories working, they make the food, they keep the city running. Proper work too, not just wiping up after the gentry like the servant class. They don't want to be in charge; that leads to the burden of responsibility. It also leads to higher standards of morality and manners which just make life more complicated. None of the lower orders want to spend their lives wondering which spoon to use to eat their soup.

It is this belief in the virtue of their own work ethic that maintains much of the status quo in the city. Propaganda is used to bolster this belief. Posters extolling how valued the lower classes are can be found on every wall, and the churches tell everyone the virtue of keeping in their proper place. There are also awards and

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bonuses for those that work hard. Not enough to make much of a difference, but when you have little, a little more can seem like a lot. In this way it is easy to paint dissenters as simply those who want an easy life, those who want something for nothing. With the powerful work ethic of Neovictorian society, indolence is a cardinal sin. Those who are lazy make everyone else's lives that much harder. While there are plenty of Neovictorians looking to overthrow the system, there are ten times as many who think things are as good as they are going to get, and that any change will bring disaster.

Behind closed doors

Even with the bad food, long working hours and ennui of a culture in decline, people still find time for sex. In fact, it is one of the only entertainments that doesn't cost the earth. By Imperial decree, each family is allowed only 2 children. However, the upper classes are allowed to buy any 'unused allocation' from the servant and lower class. For those they employ it is quite often without their agreement. It is not uncommon for a maid to discover a bonus in her pay packet with a note that the mistress of the house is expecting a child. This purchasing of allocation is not restricted to married couples, as any single person has an allocation of one child. It is not uncommon for servant couples to have both sold their right to have children. Should the upper class child die these rights do not revert to their previous owner, and the upper class couple are free to try again for another child.

allocation have that child taken away. The Ministry of Hope runs several orphanages that raise these children to adulthood. These orphanages also offer their charges an education, or rather, an indoctrination program, the orphans are subjected to a constant stream of propaganda. When old enough, these children go on to serve in the military or as members of the servant class; some are occasionally assigned to one of the outsider villages. Given the laws on population control, contraception is a little more common than it was in the original Victorian era, especially as medical science advanced more quickly in the alternate timeline than it did in our own. Condoms are available from any of the medical centres, and are often supplied for free (but only to married couples). The Neovictorian church preaches abstinence, but recognises a need for birth control.

There are certain chemical concoctions that can prevent pregnancy; however, they are only available on the black market. Any woman taking such medication is assumed to have 'loose morals' or to be planning some illicit affair. Neovictorian society isn't especially keen on allowing women any reproductive freedom or control. Needless to say, many women go to the black market or a local 'wise woman' to access contraceptive drugs; especially as many husbands insist they find condoms distasteful and refuse to use them, or to allow their wives to say no to their advances. Husbands still have 'conjugal rights', meaning that in law, rape is not a crime within marriage. While contraceptive drugs allow women some form of control, with no regulation they are extremely risky. Many just

Couples who have a child outside their

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don't work at all, and it is only the bad food and unhealthy lifestyle of the working class that puts paid to any pregnancies. Others have nasty side effects, making the woman extremely ill, leading to debilitating cramps, dizziness, nausea and exhaustion.

Women of the upper class have an easier

time of it, but not by much. Their family can ensure that if they do use contraceptive drugs it is from a reputable (and expensive) underground source. However, they do suffer from the same social proscriptions against their use, if not more so. They often have to rely on a friend to secretly help them, rather than being able to turn to their own family. As with the lower class, men control

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their reproductive freedom, their only real advantage being that they can usually keep their children if they choose, by buying a servant's allocation.

Abortion is highly illegal, and considered extremely shameful. . The Emperor simply doesn't like granting this level of control to the populace. Due to the limits on children, and a high mortality rate, society also considers it heretical that any women would want to purposefully get rid of a child. However, it does happen, and once more must be done in secret back street clinics. Terminating a pregnancy is considered murder in law, and anyone involved is considered an accessory at the very least. The process is often rough and painful, and many women die of internal bleeding either during or some time after the procedure.

According to the Ministry of Hope, there is no prostitution in any Neovictorian city. In truth, prostitution is rife in just about all of them. Plenty of women supplement their wage with prostitution, simply to make ends meet. They might work all day in a factory, and then walk the street at night in another trade. Everybody knows this goes on, and no one admits to it. For the servant class it is possible to become a form of courtesan. She might technically be employed as a maid in an upper class household, but is assigned no work and spends most of her time in the company of one of the gentlemen. Such arrangements are exclusive, and the girl must release herself from the patronage of one gentleman before taking up with another. While the lifestyle can be luxurious: fine clothes, good food and elegant soirees on occasion, it is a gilded cage.

The woman is essentially bought and paid for, and is often treated as little more than an object.

While the Neovictorians have a reputation for prudishness, behind closed doors nothing could be further from the truth. In public, morality and manners are rigidly enforced. Everyone behaves like the very model of virtue and is shocked and outraged by indecent or immoral behaviour. However, in their own homes, away from the eyes of society, they are free to indulge any vice they please. They are far from prudish about sex, with fetishism, pornography and adaptable sexuality being quite common. As long as no one speaks of what goes on in private, a level of sexual hypocrisy can be rigidly enforced. Unsurprisingly for such an up-tight culture, bondage and discipline are very popular. To be blunt, many Neovictorians love a good spanking. Several secret groups exist in upper class society that indulge in group bondage, with whipping, spanking and caning the norm. Often the servants are brought in as (willing or unwilling) participants or performers.

Gay and lesbian behaviour is well-known but considered decadent. Society believes it is a lifestyle choice and a sexual deviance, and doesn't recognise that the bond of love can exist between same sex couples. While marriage is impossible, few are bothered with what you do in your own home. Several gay and lesbian couples live together almost openly as 'very good friends'. Everyone knows what is going on, and as long as they don't kiss or hold hands in public, no one will say anything. However, if they make their affair

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obvious, the penalties are severe.

Money and trade

One advantage of the world government of the Neovictorians is a stable economy. All Neovictorian cities have the same monetary system, and use the same bills and coins. The system is quite simple; a dollar is worth 100 cents. Dollars are paper bills and are quite difficult to forge, using special quality paper, multiple layers, watermarks and metallic strips. They come in several different values and use a different colour to make it

harder to mistake them. Each bill also bears a picture of the Emperor and the different denominations show the different Ministries of the Administration, and a motto relating to their virtues.

Coins come in the same denominations, including 100s, although these 'dollar coins' are rarely used. One and five cent coins are minted in bronze, ten, twenty and fifty cents are minted in silver and the few dollar coins are minted in gold. However, when we say bronze, silver and gold, there are little of those particular metals present in the coins themselves.

Denomination	Coin (Cent) material	Bill (Dollar) colour	Ministry	Motto
1	Bronze	Green	Legacy	"To each, their share"
5	Bronze	Blue	Hope	"Work will set you free"
10	Silver	Brown	Diligence	"Vigilance is loyalty"
20	Silver	Yellow	Defence	"Unity is strength"
50	Silver	Red	Truth	"Lies are a prison for oneself"
100	Gold (1 Dollar coin)	Purple	Contentment	"Change is decay"

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Despite this system being the same worldwide, different cities tend to refer to their coinage in different ways. Londinium talks of notes as pounds and guineas, bronze coins as pennies and silver ones as shillings. The people of Meiji call the notes Koku and the coins Yen. Just about every city outside America has a wealth of different terms for the money they use, even though the official terms of dollars and cents are clearly printed on each, and the bills and coins identical from city to city. This can make it very confusing to people who might move from one city to another (such as criminals and Bargefolk) which is probably why the Administration is happy to let it carry on.

Helios occasionally make it into the city, but they are extremely illegal as they prove there is life and civilisation outside the cities. Even owning one is a criminal offence (even though it isn't in the statute books!) making them tokens of dissidence for the few anarchist groups looking to identify each other. While they have no purchasing power within legitimate shops in the cities, they are very valuable on the black market. Smugglers and criminals prefer to take payment in Helios as they are worth something outside the city. This has led to Helios being commonly referred to as 'smuggler's coins' rather than by their proper name. Many Neovictorians have never even heard the term Helios for these coins.

While the cities are isolated from the rest of the world socially, there is still a brisk trade between them and the other cultures (albeit a covert one). This is not too strange to the people of the city as they know of the

outsiders who work the mines, and that other cities might produce goods theirs cannot. After all, no matter how similar the cities are, you are not going to grow tropical fruit in Old Borealis.

Beyond legal trade there is a thriving black market. This market mainly offers meat from creatures outside the city, but also many goods created by the Skyfolk and Neobedouins. Food and luxuries regularly find their way into the cities, to all levels of society. While large scale farming is unavailable, there are still fields of wild wheat covering most of America. From this the Neobedouins make bread, which is another very popular trade good. The Neobedouin also have a few herd animals producing highly sought after dairy produce. In fact, the Neobedouin sell most of the goods that find their way into the Neovictorian black market. They trade them to the Bargefolk who bring them into the cities with their more legitimate trade. Such behaviour carries greater risks, but is significantly more lucrative.

The infrastructure for this trade (legal and otherwise) is almost exclusively run by the Bargefolk. They buy goods at one city and sell them at another. Each barge is run by a family who generally stick to the same trade routes which they guard jealously. Some 'Bargefolk' even run large ocean going ships that take goods from the American cities to Europe or beyond.

Smuggling remains a common way for Bargefolk to supplement their legitimate earnings. There are those that suggest that

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smuggling is actually another reason the Administration likes to use Bargefolk. This is not because they can stop the smuggling or control the Bargefolk, but because they can't. As an organisation, the Administration is looking to stamp out all smuggling and black market goods. However, individual Administrators all receive illicit goods because they make life worth living.

It might seem odd that the Neovictorians do not simply arrange and organise this transport themselves, just paying the Bargefolk a fee to transport goods. There are several reasons not to, not least of which is they want the Bargefolk to remain outsiders. Given the contact they have with the outside world, the Administration wants its citizens to have as little to do with them as possible. The trade also creates an economy between the cities that grants the Administration another way to play power games between each other. Finally, it's also cheaper. The Bargefolk need to maintain and operate their barges and feed themselves with whatever they can muster through trade. If they can't deliver a cargo they don't get paid, making them somewhat protective of it too. While an IAN airship might be a better and faster means to transport goods, using the Bargefolk means they can remain as warships to protect the cities. The existence of the Bargefolk as outsiders also helps the propaganda machine. The Administration can claim these tales of airship pirates are simply wild stories about the rather mundane Bargefolk.



The Outsiders

Not every Neovictorian lives in the Change Cage cities, but the few that live outside are far from free. Outside the Change Cage cities are a small variety of mines and other communities that supply the cities with the

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natural resources they are allowed to use. Each outsider village is a fortified stockade over which the airships of the IAN patrol daily. The villages are all dedicated to a single task, and as such rely on the supply runs from the cities. The Administration makes sure that every village is properly guarded and cannot survive on its own, in this way it ensures loyalty. It is hard to maintain a rebellion when you cannot grow any food. Even so, the villages are kept very small, and spread out to keep the populace controllable and isolated.

The people in the villages fit into one of four categories. Firstly there are the people who actually do the work the village was made for. The miners, gatherers or craftsmen that the village needs to do its allotted task. These are mostly male as the villages are often created for hard labour such as mining. However some of the gathering and crafting villages use women as workers as well. The second category is theoretically 'logistical' staff, those who cook and clean for the population. This category is made up of the spouses and children of the workers, who are relocated with their partners. Essentially they are given tasks to keep them occupied, although there is never a shortage of work for them to do. These logistical workers are highly multi-skilled, having to teach themselves how to do a variety of tasks from cookery to plumbing.

The other two categories are the overseers of the village, divided up into the guards and the Administrators. The guards are often on the lower end of the competency scale, and are backed up with a few automata who handle most of the guard duties. With only dangerous jungle or bare desert outside the village for

miles, there are few escape attempts. So most of the guard work is keeping an eye on the supply shipments and what leaves the city on the barges. However, dull days often make them lazy and complacent, which is when some people decide to make a break for it. The problem is that most people have family in the village, and need to get them out at the same time if they are going to escape. It is common knowledge that the family will suffer the punishment for anyone who is unaccounted for in the morning.

There are very few Administrators in the village, usually only a handful, as there is little to administrate. When extra hands are needed as Clerks, members of the logistical staff are used. Villages usually have one Administrator in charge, with a handful of Clerks. Few Administrators are assigned to the villages without having upset the wrong person in the city. This makes them often short tempered and bitter leaders of their charges, constantly looking for a way to impress someone in the city to advance their career. Consequently they are often hard task masters, hating to see the village fail to meet its quotas as this makes them look weak and incompetent. As you might imagine, this is exactly why the Administration puts such people in charge. They often look for the most driven rising star in the Administration and find something to blame them for so they might send them to run a village.

TYPES OF OUTSIDER VILLAGES

There are four main types of outsider villages, although theoretically they can be put together for any reason. There are wild stories of villages set up as laboratories or secret

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technology stores, although no one has ever left one and lived to tell the tale.

Mining villages

By far the most common form of village are those set up around mineral resources. The Emperor's edict that the natural world must remain untouched seems to only apply to what goes on above ground. Coal is a vital resource, driving the steam engines of the cities day and night. Most of the miners are men, but as part of a 'training initiative' children are sometimes used in the mines too, to mine the more inaccessible veins. Luckily for the environment, the Neovictorians still only use pick axes and drills to mine the coal. It means long hard days for the men digging it up, but at least there is less environmental impact than strip or open-cast mining. Even so, the supply will one day run out, and this will force the Neovictorians to reconsider their power source if they are to survive.

Crafting villages

Sometimes it is easier to bring the craftsmen to the resources when looking to create a large scale project. This is also true when the crafters might be making dangerous materials such as explosives. Some crafting villages are temporary, designed to simply offer enough space to get several artisans working together. However, the IAN has a few crafting villages making airships when there is not enough room in the city. This also puts them closer to a supply of wood. All tree felling is done by automata (so it remains unsoiled by human hands) and building airships is the only legal use for such a resource. The conditions in a crafting village are often more relaxed, as the

workers are valued for their skills and treated accordingly. However, these settlements are extremely rare, usually only commissioned for projects personally sanctioned by the Emperor, and that have a military purpose (such as airship building).

Gatherer villages

There are some natural resources that can be gathered without damaging the environment. While any scale of farming is illegal, there are plenty of fruit trees or vegetable crops growing wild in the forests. In some places, fields of wild wheat stretch for miles. Gatherers are sent out in teams from such villages to search for fruit, vegetables and nuts that can be picked. While they cannot maintain any orchards, they do get to know where to find the right tress and harvest them. As luxury goods, fruit and nuts command high prices in the cities, especially to a population surviving on a diet of fungus. However, gathering can be a dangerous job, as the forests are full of wild animals and other dangers.

Watchtowers

Even an IAN airship needs to refuel sometimes, and so small villages have sprung up to serve as refuelling stations, to allow the airships longer range for their patrols. These small villages allow the Emperor to extend his reach far beyond the cities and keep an eye on the other cultures. It is no coincidence that most watchtowers are within sight of a Skyloft city so they might report on their comings and goings. Watchtowers are very small, operating a small logistical staff usually made up of old air sailors who can refuel and make repairs to the ships that pass by. While they

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are small, watchtowers are heavily fortified, as they make tempting targets. Not only are they full of airship supplies, but their destruction keeps the warships away.

The Administration

In the Core Rulebook we described how each block of the city is run by an Administrator, all in turn answering to overseeing committees and the city Governor. The power structure running each city is quite complex. Above the block Administrators is the vast machinery of the Administration and its Ministries. The Administration is a complicated bureaucracy, which actually spends more time preoccupied with internecine internal conflicts than it does running the city.

The problem is this: there aren't really enough jobs in the Administration for all the upper class to have one. So, rather than allow its young scions to lounge about, each city has a legion of unnecessary middle managers, creating paperwork to justify their position and power. This makes it hard to do anything without a mountain of bureaucracy. Each minor Clerk is looking to create a powerbase so that they might get hold of the real power inherent in being a full Administrator. This makes the politics byzantine and not a little vindictive. Given the power games going on, the job of each Administrator is generally to keep every other Administrator working under him fighting each other so as not to challenge his authority! So, heaven help anyone outside the Administration looking to navigate the system.

The Administration is directly responsible to the Emperor, and the various Ministries maintain the world government that links the seventeen Change Cage cities together. The heads of the Ministries (the Ministers) all advise the Emperor as 'The Administrative Council'. Another council made up of the Governors of the seventeen cities, the 'City Council', also (separately) advises the Emperor. Some suggest that the Ministries simply rubber stamps the Emperor's commands, others that they use him as a puppet. However, most people believe the Emperor only uses the Ministries as advisors and is truly the master of the world, a dictator (albeit a benevolent one) from a long line of dictators. There are six Ministries: Truth (Propaganda), Hope (Human resources), Defence (IAN), Diligence (Peelers, police and detectives), Contentment (the Change Cage) and Legacy (Public works & Finance).

THE HIERARCHY

The six Ministries are structured in broadly the same way, having been set up by the edict of the first Emperor. However, the areas they actually control and contest are the real measure of their power. While the remits of the Ministries are quite varied, the hierarchy for each is the same. Each is headed by a Minister, who is advised by a council of Elders. Beneath him the directors manage the Administrators who look after the city blocks and any special projects. Under the Administrators are their assistants, the Clerks, and a host of Scribes and Faithful who do the real work

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Minister

The Minister is the head of an entire Ministry, and sits on the Administrative Council to advise the Emperor. Ministers have vast power and control, and within their Ministry their word is law. Below the Emperor, it is arguable whether Ministers or Governors are the most powerful individuals in Neovictorian society. Ministers are appointed directly by the Emperor, although he usually takes the advice of the Ministry in question's Council of Elders. Ministers live in their own estates, in the city of their choice – no city can claim to be the official home of any Minister, as a Minister is meant to be above mere city politics. Even so, no city is allowed to claim two Ministers as residents, that could grant too much power to one city, and its Governor, or alternatively cause far too much internal conflict!

Your local Member of Parliament

The six Ministers currently reside in the following cities. While there is no specific central Ministry for each branch of the Administration, the city the Minister resides in becomes the defacto centre of its power.

Autolycus Shill (Minister of Truth) resides in Desolation (North America)

Maria Havering (Minister of Hope) resides in Watchtower (South America)

Carrington Smythe (Minister of Legacy) resides in Londinium (England)

Montague DeLaVere (Minister of Defence) resides in Gateway (France)

Naseem Al Saif (Minister of Contentment) resides in Al Salam (Middle East)

Tsu Fang Yin (Minister of Diligence) resides in Contemplation (China)

Elders

The number of Elders in a Ministry greatly varies, often depending on who is available and how valued they are by the Minister. Elder is effectively a retirement position. When an Administrator becomes too old to play the power games of the Ministry,

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but has a wealth of useful experience, they are sometimes given the position of Elder. The Elders act as an advisory body for the Minister. Given they are out of the power struggle, their advice has less bias and is less likely to stem from a personal agenda than that delivered by any other member of the Ministry. Their experience also makes them useful, as do their contacts. After all, few of these old spymasters stop listening to what their contacts and informants tell them.

Governor

The ruler (or should we say 'Head Administrator of') a city is the Governor. While a Governor is part of the Administration, the position allows them to loosen their ties to the Ministry they came through. They have absolute authority in the city they rule, although they have to play several political games to ensure they have the support of the upper class and other Administrators. Otherwise nothing will ever get done. As part of the City Council, they are able to directly advise the Emperor, so the Ministers each try to ensure someone pliable, or at least loyal to them, gets the job. However, given that all Governors have worked their way up through the ruthless systems of promotion in the Administration, pliable people tend not to get this far.

Director

The Directors oversee the operations of several city blocks. Officially they report to the Governor as their final authority. However, each Governor knows that the Directors will have alliances and allegiances to their own Ministries, and are additionally on the lookout

for an opportunity to eventually advance to the position of Governor themselves. Directors also see to the creation and monitoring of special projects. These special projects are officially any project that is not limited to one of the city blocks. Actually they are designed to advance the Ministry's agenda and power base, although occasionally they do make life better (or worse) in the cities.

Administrator

The Administrators come in two varieties, those with a portfolio, and those without. Administrators without a portfolio are assigned a block of their city to manage and be responsible for. They see to the day-to-day needs of the block and have absolute authority, unless overruled by those above them. The block they are assigned will depend on the Ministry they owe allegiance to. Administrators from the Ministry of Defence run the IAN blocks, Administrators from the Ministry of Diligence run blocks with a high police presence. Blocks predominantly made up of housing are usually run by the Ministry of Hope etc. Theoretically Administrators serve their block not their Ministry, but the reality couldn't be further from the truth.

Administrators with a portfolio are not assigned a city block; instead they are given a special project by one of the Directors. These projects can range from public works to black operations, depending on the Ministry and the type of talents possessed by the Administrator. When projects are complete, the Administrator might receive another portfolio, or be assigned a city block to manage. Directors like to spread projects around, as those who successfully manage

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too many portfolios can make too much of a name for themselves.

Clerks

The laziest part of the service is the Clerks. Officially they serve the needs of the Administrator they are assigned to. Most are assigned to Administrators without portfolios, but some find themselves assisting on special projects for Administrators with portfolios. When assigned to an Administrator they are on his team unless transferred. Clerks are the ultimate paper pushers, who hand down pretty much all of their real work to the Scribes below them. Clerks often let their Scribes deal with all the paperwork, signing whatever is placed in front of them and spending the evening drinking and socialising. Those who actually prove talented and useful (or just proactive) are singled out by their ever-vigilant Administrators. However, given their background among the idle rich, a good Clerk is hard to find.

Scribes

Technically the Scribes are office assistants. They have to write out the documents required by their superiors, make copies and do a hundred other of the more tedious office based tasks. Scribes work in long lines of small cubicles under a mound of growing paperwork. However, as this is seen as an unfitting job for one of the upper class, it is usually given to those of the servant class. It is not impossible for Scribes to become Clerks although they never rise any further up the hierarchy. Most advance by becoming the personal scribe of a higher level Administration officer. While most serve in a

large secretarial pool, some serve as the 'right hand man' of the governor or even a Minister. Such people may have no power, but they know an awful lot of secrets. As such they must constantly prove their loyalty, but are well rewarded.

Faithful

While not actually members of the Administration, there is a large logistical workforce required to keep the offices clean and the Administration staff well fed. All Ministry buildings have their own servants, who are not allowed to serve anywhere else. After all, they might see confidential documents while they are cleaning, or overhear careless talk as they serve dinner. As usual, the life of any servant depends of their masters. While the Faithful suffer fewer beatings and less bad treatment, they have far less freedom, and are rarely allowed to even leave the building they work in.

Agents

There are a few individuals that work for the Administration but do not appear in any paperwork, except under the term 'service expenses'. Not every Ministry has a need for these agents, but the Ministries of Truth and Diligence would have trouble operating without them. These people are the undercover informants and black operations agents required for special projects and infiltration work. They range from men quietly sitting in pubs reporting what they hear, to well-trained assassins. Where they can, Ministries use Clerks to further their plans and machinations. However, sometimes you need someone outside the Ministry,

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Administration and even class to infiltrate the enemy or gain the necessary contacts.

THE MINISTRIES

Between them, the Ministries run the cities and operate a world government on behalf of the Emperor. They guard their remits jealously. Each is quick to claim foul when another Ministry attempts to run some project or aspect of government it considers its own. Even so, there are grey areas that lie between the Ministries' purviews that are hotly contested, and where possession is nine tenths of the law.

Ministry of Truth (Propaganda)

The hearts and minds of the people are important to the Emperor, and so he created the Ministry of Truth. This agency creates and disseminates propaganda on behalf of the system. As such, most of its Administrators have portfolios, being too busy to look after the populace directly. The Ministry of Truth is essentially one big special project. Most of the people think the Ministry is just responsible for the newspapers and the inspirational posters around the city. In fact its propaganda mill is frighteningly extensive. While the Ministry of Truth does control all newspapers and creates many posters it does much more as well. The posters are part of an extensive campaign to surround the population with positive images of their society. So much so, that the propaganda becomes a pervasive background. Its ubiquity ensures people rarely notice it. In this way it becomes part of the landscape and is taken as read by those who live with it. In this way the message becomes the truth.

Media is not the only way the Ministry proclaims its message. It also makes use of many agents whose sole job is to spread propaganda by word of mouth. They spend time socialising with the populace and casually adding gossip favourable to the Ministry on the streets. People are cynical of government messages, but hearing it from a stranger in a pub can be more convincing. These agents don't wander bars ranting about how great the Emperor is. They are more subtle, casually dropping hints into other conversations, which helps connect the message to everyday things and interests.

Most of the Administration staff in the Ministry spend their time working on new techniques to proclaim the message, and ways to stop the wrong information reaching the populace. Their ranks are full of advertisers, journalists, psychologists and editors. Many work to 'amend' (or destroy) old books and papers that can be reintroduced. Classic books are rewritten to fall in line with the message and even details of the past are adapted to suit the cause. The Ministry clandestinely controls the museums at Pharos, ensuring they write the detail listed for every object, or removing and locking away objects that don't suit their agenda. By controlling the past, they believe they can control the future. Their tireless work is the reason most people still believe the Skyfolk and Neobedouin are a myth.

Ministry of Hope (Human Resources)

The remit of the Ministry of Hope is to see to the people of the cities, to make sure everyone has work, food and shelter. It maintains

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citywide health care for all its citizens as well as running the orphanages. In the early days of the rectification the Ministry saw to housing and settling the population. Today, the Ministry's primary objective is to keep the population working and the cities productive. The health care it provides is very dependent on class. Hospitals for the lower class are far worse than those for the upper class.

The greatest lie the Ministry maintains is that there is work for everyone, although it is not quite a lie. People have a tendency to breed and it is up to the Ministry to cull the population where necessary. It takes regular censuses (to make sure no one has more than two children), and manages the orphanages. It is constantly on the lookout for those who

won't be missed. They tend to disappear so that a new job opening can be made available for some young man or woman looking to start their factory career. When people might be missed, they are offered new jobs in far away places. Places the family won't be able to follow them to. When all else fails, there are always accusations of dissidence to be made, although that can be somewhat heavy handed and is usually considered too blunt a tool for such a delicate job. If their family are poor, and cannot provide for them, the old and infirm are also taken away, to be 'properly looked after' by the Ministry. In line with the Emperor's edicts, everything is recycled, and there are a lot of useful products to be made from those who can no longer work.

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The Ministry of Hope is also responsible for the monitoring of Misbegotten births and the welfare of such mutants within their segregated city blocks.

Ministry of Legacy (Finance & Public Works)

With someone looking after the people, someone else needs to look after the city. The Ministry of Legacy is responsible for new building and maintaining the city's infrastructure. It also functions as the landlord for the city by collecting tax in the form of rent from those who live on city property. This includes the upper classes, although each family is expected to pay for the number of houses they own (as public buildings) rather than the land they control (as land is owned by no one but the Emperor).

As the tax collector for the city, the Ministry of Legacy is also the Treasury of the city and controls all the wealth and economic power. They set prices and monitor trade with the Bargefolk. They also mint all coins and bank notes. While they are technically beholden to the Governor, it is not quite so simple in practice. When ordered to fund operations they have no interest in they can find a remarkable amount of paperwork is required to release the money. In general they grudgingly appreciate they can't hoard it all, with several 'standing orders' funding the other Ministries. These are set up based on age-old agreements and 'quid pro quo' arrangements for favours and resources. After all, if they had all the other Ministries and the governors against them, all the money in the world would be no use.

Ministry of Defence

The Imperial Air Navy officially comes under the purview of the Ministry of Defence. However, the Ministry of Defence and the IAN don't get on very well. The IAN is run by a council of its highest officers referred to as 'The Admiralty'. They need the Ministry to keep the books straight and administrate their affairs. The Ministry needs the IAN as otherwise it has nothing to do and no power. Unfortunately, both the Minister of defence and the Admiralty think they are the one in charge. Admirals object to getting orders from civilians and the Ministry objects to a bunch of glorified air sailors telling them how to run their affairs.

For the IAN and the Ministry to function at all, they have to continually compromise. So generally the Admiralty runs all military operations and the Ministry runs the IAN city blocks and manages logistics, supplies and personnel. However any leverage one side can gain on the other is ruthlessly exploited. This high level squabbling actually means the individual airship captains have a lot of power. They either get several conflicting orders or none at all. So they have a high degree of autonomy to take their ships where they please and pursue who and what they like.

Ministry of Diligence (Criminal Investigation)

Law enforcement is run by the Ministry of Diligence. It is this organisation that the Peelers, police and detectives report to. Some Administrators without portfolios work for the Ministry of Diligence, and their blocks are

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where you will find the main peeler stations and the detective offices. These offices have their own hearing rooms and prison cells for meting out justice as required, as well as a large force of peelers. Every block has at least a small peeler station, giving Ministry of Diligence agents a base in every block (and somewhere they might find reinforcements, if required).

While the automata Peelers patrol the streets, there is also a large police force that are employed to patrol the great city walls and arrest dissidents. They are mostly thugs in uniform and the only training they are given is being handed a truncheon and told who to follow. The population rarely see these police, who spend most of their time guarding the walls or riding the trains. When they do appear it is always mob handed, and usually during a raid to arrest a suspected dissident.

The detectives form the secret police of the Change Cage cities. They work undercover, listening for signs of dissidence and nipping it in the bud swiftly. After a few careless words in a pub, more than one potential anarchist has been woken at midnight by a gang of police breaking in their door to arrest them.

Technically the Ministry of Diligence is also in charge of the Chuno Ggun. However, in practice this is far from the case. Not only do the Chuno Ggun rarely take orders from anyone but the Emperor, they are notoriously fanatical and even a little insane. In general the Ministry has a 'hands off' policy with the Chuno Ggun and leaves them to their own devices. However they like to know what is going on as they don't want to get the blame

for any excesses.

Ministry of Contentment (Change Cage)

Located in the most important building in the city, the Ministry of Contentment runs the Change Cage. Not only is it their job to log and store all the items and people that need to be separated from society, but also they are responsible for rooting such things out. The Ministry maintains a vast network of spies and informants, rivalling that of the Ministry of Truth. These agents listen for talk of new advances and those who might be working towards them. They often work with the detectives to root out subversives. Some of their agents are allowed out of the city on extended undercover missions to monitor the technology of the other cultures. The Ministry fears a time when advances in Skyfolk or Neobedouin technology will give them the upper hand over the Neovictorian. The reports the Ministry hears are troubling, as it looks that time is upon them. Should a leader emerge among the Skyfolk who can unite them all, and they build a navy the size of the IAN, a war the Neovictorians cannot win may be on the horizon.

Those who are taken to the Change Cage usually have to face an inquisitor. These people make sure the dissident in question has revealed all they know and everyone they have been working with. No method is denied an inquisitor seeking the truth. In some cases, where the dissident has done little wrong or holds no heretical information, they might be released. They are subjected to extensive brain washing and reprogramming before they are allowed to leave, so that they might entrap other dissidents.

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Neochristianity

As the Great Rectification progressed, many people turned to their religions for solace and hope. They were dark times, with suffering and death striking swiftly and without warning. People turned to prayer and begged their gods to save them from what must be the punishment of an angry deity. Initially, Victor Hypocrites saw religion as a danger. It might give people hope, and help them bind together against his edicts. Yet, he did not relish the idea of trying to completely quash it. History has proven so many times that faith is tenacious and is often only made stronger when it is attacked. However, reports soon reached him that people were asking their priests and holy men why God had set such beasts upon the earth. Instead of claiming God was evil to wreak such torment, people wondered 'what have I done to make my loving god so angry?' Victor decided to give them an answer.

Victor's political career had already ensured he had a good profile with the religious communities. He offered a simple answer that fit perfectly with his political propaganda. Humanity has abused the Earth, the gift God had given them, and God was taking his gift back. It was not that God hated humanity; in fact, he had offered them far too many chances to change their ways, shown infinite patience with their abuse of the planet. Now he could stand by no more. Before humanity destroyed the Earth and themselves, the hand of God had been forced to act. Sadly, due to his indulgence of humanity, there was no easy way for God to amend the damage. God would surely weep as humanity suffered, but

at least humanity would survive.

With no reason to disbelieve their beloved leader, Victor's words hit home with his people. Such was his popularity; more people joined the various religions looking to show their faith in God and Victor's plan. As the world's religions swelled, Victor realised that he would have to take steps to exercise some control or new leaders might emerge from the holy men gaining popularity. So he planted a new idea in the people. By damaging the Earth and failing to take care of the gifts of God, humanity had broken their covenant with the almighty. The old religions no longer offered the salvation they promised because humanity had forsaken the agreement that offered that salvation.

Gathering a group of loyal religious scholars around him, Victor set about rewriting the holy works of the three largest organised religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In secret he commissioned a new holy text. However, instead of releasing it wholesale, he seeded various groups with parts of the text. His agents worked within these groups to rabble rouse and suggest this new truth was something the old religions were trying to quash. To the people, it seemed as if a new covenant was being offered by God. After all, many different and unconnected groups had received the same word, woken up to the same truth. The fractured pieces that were gathered together made sense and complimented each other. There was surely no other answer than that this was a miracle. God did indeed still love humanity and he had offered a new covenant for the faithful. The Emperor was happy to answer the calls of his people and

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gather these fractured pieces together and publish a new holy book for a new age.

Neochristian teaching and practice

The morality and teachings of Neochristianity are much the same as the Judeo-Christian beliefs it is based on. It teaches that humanity should live side by side as a family and lead a moral life. However, it also places great emphasis on a strong work ethic and the need to accept your place in life. It insists that we all have a part to play in the new order, and while your part may not be a lot of fun, it is still vital. The purpose of Neochristianity is to tell the populace that they should be happy where they are, and not strive for more than they already have. Neochristian teaching suggests that quiet acceptance is a virtue and that the reward for conformity is an immortal life in heaven once the work is done.

The Ten Commandments remain at the core of its teaching, but it also states that faith is built on five pillars. Given that the basic morality of Judeo-Christian belief is reasonably self evident, to most lay members Neochristianity preaches little they have not heard before. This is because great care has been taken for Neochristianity to mirror



Christianity, Judaism and Islam, at least on the surface. The commandments and pillars of faith are intentionally very similar.

The religion has been designed to replace the dominant religion of each Change Cage city's previous culture. So it has also taken on much of the language, iconography and

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styles of Judaism, Islam and even Hinduism and Buddhism where appropriate. The New Covenant is often referred to as the Neochristian bible, although only in western Change Cage cities. To help previously Jewish or Islamic Neovictorians adapt in non-western cities it is often known simply as 'The (Holy) Book' and Neochristianity as 'the new faith'. In the Middle Eastern Change Cage cities, more emphasis is placed on the five pillars of faith which is how it has managed to subsume most Islamic worship.

The New Covenant itself isn't a very cohesive volume. It isn't divided into 'books' as the bible is but does label each section by chapter, paragraph and verse for reference. To avoid specific relation to any other holy book, the New Covenant avoids direct reference to any previous faith or mythology. However, it is littered with references that can be taken to mean a relation to pretty much all of them. For instance, one running theme throughout is the example of how to live a good life, which follows the story of an unnamed wise-man. It would be very easy to find references that 'prove' this man is actually Abraham, Christ or Mohammad depending on which you might be inclined towards. Around this story are littered words of wisdom from all three faiths making it easy to claim as a natural successor to any of their holy works. This does not mean the entire book is a sham, after all the wisdom it steals from its predecessors means that it can offer hope, guidance and support as religion has done before. That it manages to merge the faiths so well and appear as something both new and old is testament to the genius of its authors, whether you think them inspired by the political hand of the Emperor or a higher

spiritual power!

In the west, the Neochristian churches are much the same as their Christian counterparts, but in the East they are often a little gaudier to fit eastern Orthodox faith, or carry more Jewish iconography. In Al Salam the differences are so pronounced the churches resemble mosques quite closely. The New Covenant doesn't expressly state that God must be represented in a specific way, allowing each culture to carry on as it did before. So, western churches have great stained glass windows and pictures of saints, whereas eastern churches use elegant calligraphy and reject pictorial representations.

The Neochristian church is organised in much the same way as the western church is today. Each Change Cage city might have several small churches (usually around one for each ten blocks) which is looked after by a priest (who might also be called a Vicar, Iman or Brahmin etc). A Bishop might oversee several churches, and an Archbishop is in charge of all the churches in a single city. The centre of the Neochristian church is in the Change Cage city of Sanctorum, where a council of Cardinals maintain a central authority. They in turn recognise the Emperor as the nominal head of the church on earth, although he actually takes little interest in its day-to-day dealings.

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NEOCHRISTIAN BELIEF

The ten commandments of Neocrhistianity are a little different to those we know today, having been adapted to serve the Emperor's requirements. The five pillars of faith are a concession to Muslim beliefs which are followed more closely in the Middle East.

The Ten Commandments

1 – I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no others before me, for as my love is infinite so must yours be.

2 – Thou shalt not bow before any graven image, or make vice your god above me.¹

3 – Call not upon thy Lord in vain. Thy burdens are thine own to carry and shall suit thy strength.²

4 – Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

5 – Honour thy father and mother, as their love is second only to mine.³

6 – Thou shalt not murder.⁴

7 – Thou shalt not commit adultery.

8 – Thou shalt not steal.

9 – Thou shalt not bear false witness.

10 – Thou shalt be content with what thou hast.

¹ The second commandment is generally understood as a warning against letting money, sex, power or other human constructs become too important.

² The third commandment is used to claim that those who fail to work hard are basically lazy as God makes sure no one has to work

harder than they are able.

³ The Administration often claims the fifth commandment applies to them as it is mother and father to humanity.

⁴ The sixth commandment implies that sometimes killing is justified, perhaps even necessary.

The Five Pillars of Faith

Authority – There is only one God, one Emperor and one faith. To declare otherwise is heresy.

Charity – It is not enough to receive; you must be prepared to give, either of your self or what you own.

Prayer – Faith is nothing without prayer, God still listens to mankind and is nurtured by their call. In the city of Al Salam the people are called to pray five times a day.

Fasting – You must understand what it is to go without that you will be grateful for what you have. Several festivals a year encourage the faithful to fast during the hours of daylight.

Pilgrimage – While you cannot leave the cities, your life is a metaphorical pilgrimage to enlightenment. Each of the faithful should find a cause and make it their purpose for the betterment of humanity as a whole.

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Other Faiths

While Neochristianity has been adopted by most of the Neovictorians, the older religions have certainly not vanished from the world. While great care was taken to make Neochristianity attractive to the Neovictorians, plenty of people saw through the layers of stolen spirituality and iconography. This has been especially true of Judaism, which has been used to maintaining its traditions despite attempts to destroy them. However, the fractured and adaptable nature of Christian worship has made it easier to subsume to a new covenant. Islam was destabilised by the loss of its holy places (such as Jerusalem, Mecca and Medina) and many adherents fell for the similarities placed in Neochristianity. However, many of the religious traditions (especially in India) managed to survive as part of ethnic culture, rather than specifically as religion.

So it is not unknown for cells of 'true believers' to maintain their old faiths. Unfortunately, for all the Administration's supposed tolerance, they regard such worship as heresy and punish it severely. Any and all holy books or artifacts are destroyed as soon as they are found, making it hard for adherents to get hold of the old holy books. The Jews in particular have managed to preserve significant numbers of the Torah and some very old Jews are able to scribe certain parts from memory.

In general the Neobedouins have kept pretty much every form of faith alive. Some tribes managed to lay claim to renowned religious artifacts during the Great Rectification as well. However, with no central body looking after the collected lore of any faith, and with

so many religious views merging together, with each generation it becomes harder to maintain a specific faith.

The Upper Class

WHO ARE THE UPPER CLASS?

While the Emperor is credited with many amazing attributes, even he could not have taken control of the world alone. He needed help from the power brokers of the rest of the world, the corporate elite, political leaders and the wealthy nobility. In secret, he made pacts with several of the shadow leaders of the world, promising them and their descendants even more wealth and power in the new order. For the most part, he fulfilled that promise, although the world is far from being the utopia Victor promised.

Initially, Victor made deals with eight dynasties to begin his campaign. All of these families had global roots and interests, and together they made an exceptionally powerful cabal. These eight families have become known as the 'Founding Families' and their descendants form the elite of the upper class. Most of the Change Cage city governors are from a founding family, as are most of the high-ranking members of the Administration. They make sure that other members of the founding families get the best opportunities and promotions.

Less than a quarter of the upper class is made up of the founding families. The remainder are those who joined Victor's movement once

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it was clear how the chips were going to fall. Each of these families traded in their wealth or power to jump on the Emperor's bandwagon and they have been duly rewarded. However, they still form a second tier within upper class society. Each of these lesser families is keen to marry into one of the founding families, not only for the additional opportunities that open up to them but also for the social benefits of being part of the Neovictorian high nobility.

While others work for their money, the upper class is financed by the city. Each of the families of the upper class has a noble title bestowed by the Emperor, and each title comes with an annual stipend. This title is claimed by the eldest male heir of each family line, with a complicated series of rules about where it might pass should there be no obvious choice. The system makes it extremely rare for such titles to pass to any female descendants, as the upper class believe their delicate womenfolk are not cut out for such responsibility.

The amount of the stipend depends on the title. At the bottom of the scale is Baron, rising to Earl, Count, Marquis and finally Duke. In some of the Asian and Eastern cities the names might be a little different, but the same five tiers are in place. Most Neovictorians don't question why the wealthy should receive this wealth for free. To the poor, the rich are simply the rich, where they get their money is neither here nor there. Very few people even question the source of this wealth. Those who do ask are told that these families owned land, wealth or property which they gave to the city or Emperor to create the Change Cage cities, and that this stipend is a form of extended

payment for their patronage. Those who know more of the real histories understand it to be the reward they got for signing up to the Emperor's plans.

While the stipends are quite large, only the head of the family actually gets it. It is up to him to decide how much money the rest of the family might be granted. Usually this means he simply pays their tab when they go shopping, as handling money would be a little vulgar for the upper class. Many of these family patriarchs are quite stingy with their wealth, meaning their sons (but not their daughters who must stay at home!) must find work to cover their expenses. This is usually done by joining the Administration and becoming an overpaid Clerk. It is also generally assumed that a 'young man must make his fortune'. Many are drawn to the glorious tales of being an IAN officer or a plum position in the Administration simply to gain status in society.

The family patriarch holds almost complete financial control over their children and siblings. The upper class buy almost everything on credit, with all bills passed on to the family. Should the family start misbehaving or damaging the family reputation the patriarch can refuse to pay their bills or even cut them off completely. Effectively the patriarch can cast anyone in the family into destitution, the mere threat of which is usually enough to curb their behaviour.

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DAY IN THE LIFE

Daily life is filled with pleasure and indolence for most of the upper class. The first part of the day is spent getting dressed. Even for children this can be quite laborious and requires a valet or maid to assist. Breakfast is served as a buffet for the family to partake of once they are up and dressed. The servants will keep food ready in the dining room until around 11am when it is assumed those who haven't come down will either not be coming or will happily wait until lunch time.

After breakfast the family go about their day. Ladies will get on with reading or embroidery. They might go and visit friends, but only if a gentleman is free to accompany them. If calling on another female acquaintance they might be allowed to go with a female friend or relation, but this is somewhat informal. Otherwise they might be waiting for visitors to call. Generally, the higher your status the later you might call on people. So the lower levels of the upper class do their 'rounds' in the morning and await visitors in the afternoon. Children will be sent to the schoolroom with a governess for their lessons.

Gentlemen might occupy themselves in several ways. There may be accounts and family business to be done in their study. If they are part of the Administration they will have to go to work, or at least into the office. Those of very high status who hold Administration positions are free to go to work as they see fit, working from home or just shirking their duties are acceptable. However, there will often be some ambitious person under them looking to prove themselves and oust their boss. So, Administrators who

want to rise higher than Clerk need to get their act together. Gentlemen of leisure have several options available to them. They might pursue some profession, such as Doctor, or simply enjoy learning for education's sake. They might go to their club to meet friends or to just get away from the family. There are several physical pursuits they might enjoy as well, such as training in Baritsu. Finally, they might choose to spend some time with their wives and stay at home reading, but this is quite unusual (unless they have promised to accompany some female relation on a visit).

Like breakfast, lunch is an informal affair. The servants will provide a light meal at the request of those who are in the house. The time lunch is served is very variable, anytime between noon and 5pm depending on what those at home prefer. In general lunch is only taken at home by the children and ladies of the family. Most men are out and about and will eat lunch at their club or one of the restaurants and 'chop shops' to be found in the shopping districts.

The afternoon continues in much the same way as the morning. However, in the afternoon ladies are a little freer to go out and about. Generally this is because they must be accompanied by a gentleman and it is polite to allow the gentlemen the morning to go about any necessary business. Ladies of high status usually do their visiting in the afternoon, leaving them free to shop or visit as they see fit, calling in on acquaintances as they desire.

Lower status ladies must ensure someone is in to receive guests in case they call in the afternoon.

As the day wears on, dinner approaches, which is a very formal affair even if the family is not entertaining any guests. Generally the family will need quite some time to dress for dinner, so those who have been out and about will aim to return by around 5pm or 6pm. When they are changed into proper evening wear, they gather in the parlour for drinks. At around 8pm dinner will be served, as long as everyone is assembled. The family will escort each other into the dining room as a group where a large hot meal will be provided. Anyone who arrives in the parlour late is therefore holding everyone up, which is considered very rude.

Dinner might easily last until 10pm, when the ladies will retire to the parlour. There they can relax and gossip, play cards or otherwise socialise with other ladies. The gentlemen remain at the dinner table where they might smoke cigars and drink port. Without the ladies present their conversation may turn towards business and politics, or other topics inappropriate for the company of ladies. When they have had their fill of port and cigars, the gentlemen retire as one to the parlour where they might join the ladies. There the whole company might play cards or entertain each other with music and song. Such group gatherings are one of the few times single men and women are allowed to talk to each other. As the evening wears on, each member of the family may choose to go to bed as they please.

Women in the Service

While it is highly discouraged, some women do manage to join the Administration. They tend to enter the service as assistants to Administrators rather as part of the system of Clerks. Basically the more vocal and dedicated women who don't give up on the idea of a career of their own are given a secretarial position to shut them up. It is assumed they will find a husband in the service and leave when they marry. Some fathers actually place their unmarried daughters in the Administration for this reason if they fear their chance for matrimony is passing them by.

However, women driven enough to fight the social attitudes lined against them are more than a match for most men in the service. While some do marry and leave the service, or walk out in disgust at their second class status and lack of respect, others bide their time. Underestimated, and often not seen as a threat, these women are often trusted with secrets no Administrator would share with a male subordinate. One day the woman finally uses her leverage and contacts and carves out a new position for herself, often replacing her superior.

In this way, while there are very few women in the Administration, a disproportionate amount are governors and even Ministers. The few who manage to carve out a career are dangerous, intelligent and ruthless opponents, who have had to face challenge and adversity at every step in their career. These traits ensure they rise high in the Administration.

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ATTITUDES TO OTHERS

The upper class only really notice their own social peers. To them the servant class and lower class folk are much the same. The only difference being that they sometimes see servants and rarely ever see the lower class. To the upper class their 'inferiors' are simply not worth noticing. They are the 'little people' who scurry about doing jobs that are beneath those with breeding. Most assume that this is because such stock is fit only for such work. They see the servants and factory workers as lesser humans, and not worthy of any notice even if it should be bestowed.

To the upper class the servants and lower class folk are unintelligent and morally corruptible. They need to be contained and controlled for their own good. The servant class are the best of a bad lot, and they should be grateful to be elevated to stand in the presence of their betters. However, in essence they are no different to the lower class, just a cleverer species of monkey as far as the upper class is concerned.

This does not mean to say they cannot be kind and generous to their servants and the working class. In fact, several upper class groups work (as a hobby) to try to improve the lot of the poor where they can. However, they are equally capable of being nice to their pets and small children. It is not uncommon for the upper class to view their servants as little more than tools and possessions. When young men of the upper class begin to notice girls, they are often counselled to have their way with one of the maids if one should catch their eye. What the maid in question might have to say about such treatment is immaterial.

She is there to serve the needs of the gentry, whatever that might be. This institutionalised rape is not especially common, but it isn't rare either and young girls are warned against finding themselves alone with any of the gentlemen.

So the upper class really only concern themselves with their peers. To be fair, they have a lot to concern themselves with. As the patriarch of the family controls the purse strings, the entire family is looking to ingratiate themselves above all others so they might command a greater share of the wealth. Outside the family there is a complicated dance of social power to make allegiances by marriage to the more powerful families, most especially the founding families. Almost any dirty trick is acceptable, and those who suffer from them are only upset they didn't think of it first. Every glance, meeting, conversation or gift is loaded with meaning and potential. Plotting is so endemic that some gentry send each other random gifts just to distract them, making them wonder what it might mean and who it was from. Nothing is done without motive, nothing said without careful measure. It's den of vipers.

TRADITIONS

The upper classes are mired in the complicated rituals of etiquette. They live and die by a labyrinthian series of rules governing every aspect of their daily lives. This goes from who they may speak to at any given time to which fork to use for each course. Many of the rules are obscure and pointless; in fact, most of them are. To a certain degree, that's the point of them. The rules serve several purposes that are vital for the upper class to continue

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functioning.

This first problem they solve is that of infiltration. For all their protestations, there is nothing that makes the upper class very special. Someone who knows their ways might be able to pass themselves off as one of them quite easily with the right introductions. The rules of etiquette make this almost impossible. The upper class learn these rules from the moment they are born and they still get them wrong on occasion. Any interloper will instantly reveal themselves as soon as they join any social gathering; they probably won't even know how badly they stand out simply by addressing the wrong person first or even wearing the wrong tie.

The rules are also complicated to give the upper class a sense of grandeur. They must be civilised, they reason, as they have so many rules for polite society. However, the rules are not to provide a background for civility, but in truth they are to create an even battlefield. In the wars of reputation and one-upmanship, etiquette is both a weapon and a defence. As a defence it makes your enemies more predictable. If you know they cannot speak to you until after the soup course you know you have the soup course to form a strategy. Their use as a weapon is obvious, as any failings cause a loss of valuable reputation. You might either attack your enemies directly, or place them in such a position that they cannot retaliate without breaking the rules.

A complete listing of all the rules of etiquette would take several volumes, but a few are worth detailing here. Most of the rules

concern themselves with underlining the differences in station between the layers of the upper class. Those who claim lineage from a founding family stand above those who don't. Those with noble titles are above those without. Those related to a higher title are greater to those related to a lower one. Those with more wealth and power trump those with less. Often the distinctions are slight, which makes it all the more important to emphasise them!

The first rule of society is that no one may speak to anyone they have not been formally introduced to – even to ask them for the time or to pass the salt. Such introductions are easy to facilitate, but must be done by a third party. Should you not know the right person to introduce you to someone, there is often a master of ceremonies at any gathering who is assumed to know everyone. It is up to the lower status party to seek to be introduced to the higher status party, unless the lower status party is some sort of celebrity. Once introduced to someone you may call on them and speak to them in society. They become an acquaintance, but not a friend. Few people refuse to be introduced, but it does happen, usually when some one is trying to get to know someone far above their station. Being refused an introduction is quite a snub and deeply embarrassing to the petitioner.

A common pursuit of the upper classes is to call on each other at home. In general, those of lower status are expected to make calls in the morning, while those of higher status do so in the afternoon. This allows the higher echelon to take their day at a slower pace when they arise. There is a certain amount of confusion

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when those of middling status choose the wrong time of day. However, should they wait in at the wrong time they will discover their lack of status by their lack of visitors.

When calling on another member of the upper class you present a calling card to their servant and await a response in your carriage. The time it takes the visited party to respond denotes their feeling about the status of their guest. Those they wish to spurn may not receive an invitation inside at all. Sometimes a visitor might leave too early, which suggests the visited party left them waiting too long. Who is at fault rather depends on who has the better reputation, regardless of status.

Dinner is a very formal affair, and entails volumes of rules on who you must talk to and which of an array of cutlery is appropriate for each dish. Each guest is assigned a partner for the evening, of the opposite gender, who they escort into the dining room. Guests are also seated with the opposite gender on either side, and should spend equal time speaking to both to not be considered rude. Who is to be escorted by who is worked out carefully by the hostess, which is also defined by several layers of reputation and status.

Women are especially caged by the rules of society. No woman of status ever walks anywhere alone. She should be accompanied by a male relation or elderly female relation at all times. On rare occasions she might be allowed out alone in the company of a woman her own age, but only when she is a little older, as it might otherwise encourage silliness. Women are oppressed second class citizens.

They may not hold property, everything (even down to their clothing) is owned by either their father or husband, no matter how or when she acquired it. In balance, the man responsible for her must keep her in the 'manner to which she is accustomed' or suffer a severe loss of reputation. However, should the woman prove 'less than worthy of her husband's respect' (such as by having an affair, refusing her husband his 'conjugal rights', failing to provide children or proving to have less than angelic manners) he might throw her out onto the street with nothing.

So it is no surprise than women take great care who they marry. Luckily, marrying in haste is almost impossible. Men and women are never left alone together to form attachments; as such familiarity outside marriage would be scandalous. Only at balls and social gatherings might they have some time away from chaperones and guardians as they dance, dine or play cards. However, it is unlikely that any couple might have the luxury of choosing each other themselves. Many marriages are arranged after days of negotiation by the family (with or without the consent of the prospective couple). Among the upper class, marriage is to forge alliances and provide children, love is an optional extra.

CLOTHING AND STYLE

For the upper class, clothes maketh the man, or woman. Fashion is a vital display of both wealth and status, as keeping up with the latest trends can be very expensive. For men the fashions are quite subtle, often relating to the right colour of necktie or the correct shade of black. However, women's fashions can change quite drastically (within certain

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limits) making a lady who is out of touch stand out severely.

Gentlemen's fashion takes the form of a three piece suit, with collars and cuffs on the shirt attached separately with cufflinks and studs. The shirt is white, the trousers and shoes usually black, but the waistcoat can be patterned. Many men are judged by their choice of waistcoat and too garish a pattern suggests too garish a person. Indoors a gentleman might wear a light jacket, even a smoking jacket, but outside he completes his outfit with a long frock coat. Gloves, a top hat and a walking cane are also essential if he ventures outside.

For the evening, a gentleman must dress for dinner. Should it be a less formal affair (such as dining at home) he wears 'black tie'. This consists of a white shirt, black bow tie and black suit with a jacket. For very formal occasions he might wear 'white tie'. This is much the same but obviously the bow tie is white, and the jacket is replaced with a tail coat.

Women's fashion is far more complicated, and even if a woman does not leave the house she is still expected to wear at least three outfits in a day. For the morning she will wear a 'wrapper', a light but full length day dress, usually made of a patterned fabric and decorated with lace. While any modern woman might find it formal, to the Neovictorians it is much the same as slobbing about the house in a dressing gown. So by afternoon (or if she receives visitors or leaves the house) she should have changed into a day dress. This is a

far more formal affair with voluminous skirts supported on frames and trimmed with layers of fabric and lace. Should she leave the house, she would be undressed without her hat and gloves as well as a thick overcoat.

By the evening, a lady must be dressed for dinner. Evening dress is simpler, but more sumptuous. It is common for such gowns to display more skin, often bare arms and shoulders with a certain amount of décolletage. The skirts are not usually as layered, but often add lush trains of fabric to compensate. If the occasion is very formal the dress will show less skin, and long gloves are essential, but the style remains much the same.

Children are very rarely seen outside the nursery until 'of age', sometime between 16 and 21, at which point they dress as adults. There is no 'teenage fashion', although there are assumed to be younger modes of dress. Children, boys and girls, wear short smock-like dresses (although for boys they are plainer). Putting on trousers is considered a mark of 'becoming a man' and most people would be shocked to see a woman in trousers. Many believe that if she wears trousers for too long, a woman might actually turn into a man. Either way she might certainly get ideas that will not be conducive to ladylike behaviour!

FOOD AND DRINK

In the Change Cage cities, food is not especially good, being made mostly from recycled waste, fungus and protein supplements. However, the rich have the best of everything and food is no exception. Their food is flavoured and textured so it often resembles something quite

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edible. While it is something most Skyfolk would turn their noses up at, any of the lower class would think it delicious compared to what they are used to.

Luckily for the wealthy, there are several supplements they are able to get hold of. Fruit is an uncommon delicacy (and sells for high prices on the black market). While fruit cannot be systematically harvested, many old orchards and fruit groves remain, from which gatherer villages collect produce. Some of this crop finds its way into the larders of the wealthy. This has made offering fruit to your guests a sign of extreme wealth and extravagance. Depending on their land, many wealthy families grow fruit on their estates, if they have room and the climate is suitable – this is perfectly legal. Servants found stealing even the windfalls are often severely beaten.

While they hold off from turning their estates into farmland, almost every upper class estate has a 'kitchen garden' behind the main estate.

Here, herbs can be grown for seasoning as well as a variety of small crops such as lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes and beans, depending on climate and locale. Again, such delicacies are only for the family, although servants are employed to look after them. A good gardener can make sure the crops mature quickly, last longer and yield more produce. As such, a gardener who proves their worth can do very well for themselves and are highly sought after.

While it is illegal, most of the wealthy feel they could not do without the meat they buy on the black market. The black market also offers food manufactured by the Neobedouin from wild fields of wheat, such as bread and beer, although no one asks who might be making such goods. While their servants are tasked to acquire black market goods (and thereby are the ones that usually get arrested) the wealthy usually enjoy meat two or three times a week. However, they only ever allow meat on the table when the family dines alone. If they have guests they would not dare to put such



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fare before them. This means many wealthy families prefer not to dine out, and formal functions always have expensive but plain food. Were it not for the promise of fresh fruit for guests, the wealthy would never dine out at all!

ENTERTAINMENT

With great wealth and much leisure time, when they are not eating or changing their clothes the upper classes spend their time seeking entertainment. As you might expect, even in the Change Cage cities they have plenty to choose from. In fact, there are whole industries reliant on their patronage. It is almost as if the economics of the city are designed to put all the wealth in the hands of the aristocracy in the hopes they spend it on the services offered by the poor.

The most popular entertainment (at least of the entertainments suitable for dinner conversation) is shopping. With fashions changing so regularly, the wealthy need to spend a good proportion of their time in tailors and dress makers getting measured for new clothes. Everything is made to order for the rich, the very idea of picking something 'off the rack' is anathema to them. While many inform their tailor of the style they require, many simply rely of their tailor to keep their clothes in line with the fashion. However, it is often the job of a valet or ladies maid to keep abreast of the fashions and act as a stylist for their charge.

Clothes are not the only products available in the elegant shopping arcades of the Change Cage cities. With fashion applying to home

furnishing as well as clothes, the wealthy are always looking to redecorate and make sure they have the latest styles in chairs, cabinets and dressers. These are made by experienced craftsmen who often take in old furnishings they might rework into something new. In general, there are many shops looking to supply the vagaries of upper class taste, many of which sell useless knickknacks.

After a day's shopping, the upper classes love to retire to a drinking establishment. Several pubs and bars can be found selling a variety of fermented beverages. Alcohol is something of a hit and miss affair as each pub makes its own brew from whatever it can find. However, the most popular drink for those that can afford it is absinthe. The absinthe of the Neovictorian world is very different to that in ours, sharing only its bitter taste and vivid green colour. Neovictorian absinthe is a purely chemical concoction, the recipe for which is a closely guarded secret. It is passed down through the families that own the public houses. For most people absinthe is a very heady and powerful concoction that provokes a dreamlike drunkenness. It rarely leaves a hangover but often enhances the senses, making everything more intense, making it especially popular among the artistic set. For some people, known as 'absinthe adepts' it can open parts of the mind that are usually closed, offering the ability to predict events and even read minds.

It is important to note that while the upper class spend a lot of time shopping, it is very rare for actual money to change hands. Everything apart from food and drink (and sometimes even those) is sold to the upper

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Fashion in a static world

This talk of clothes and changing fashion might seem odd in a world locked in a certain age. While it is true that the ban on innovation applies just as much to clothes as it does to technology, there is room for manoeuvrability. The Victorian age itself managed at least five distinct fashion styles for women, and even in the latter part of the era styles came and went. So clothing has become something like school uniform for most of the population. Just as in school they are clear rules set down, no two schoolchildren ever really look quite the same. There are many ways to wear a tie, skirts might differ in length, and some might add badges or scarves where the rules are less clear. Neovictorian fashion is like this, it conforms to a basic pattern, but within that are many ways to adapt and change the style. As in the real world, eventually people run out of ideas and recycle old styles, creating a repeating cycle of fashion, even though the basic style remains constant.

Of course, this mostly applies to the upper classes. The lower class cannot afford to change their clothes to fit current fashion, and are far more concerned they might catch the eye of the Change Cage. For the upper classes though, keeping up to date can be a daunting task, for both men and women. Not only must they figure out whose style they should be following, but fashion becomes another way to catch interlopers. Fashion changes constantly so that only those with wealth can keep up with it.

class on credit. After all, they give their word that the money will follow and that should be good enough for any mere shopkeeper. After any purchases are finalised the shopkeeper sends a bill to the family home and awaits payment. Unfortunately, few, if any, of the noble families pay their bills promptly, as doing so might suggest they are somehow beholden to the lower classes whim. So on principle they hold off payment until they feel like it. Meanwhile the credit account grows. The shopkeeper is stuck between calling the noble's honour into question or possibly borrowing money against their outstanding invoices.

In effect, the shopkeeper owes the money to the Administrator of the factory block from which he buys his supplies, while the noble customer simply owes a humble shopkeeper. The shopkeeper is therefore unable to resist paying his bill to the city, for fear of the consequences of not doing so, and yet is unable to insist on being paid promptly in turn, for fear of offending a powerful noble – thus it is no wonder that many shopkeepers are forced into criminality (supplementing their income illegally to simply keep their heads above water).

When a shopkeeper decides to be 'difficult' the rest of the upper classes often decide not to patronise their establishment. While most shopkeepers would be happy to lose such annoying customers, they are the only customers, and ironically their lack of custom can drive shopkeepers out of business and back to the lower class.

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When it comes to evening, there is an array of entertainments for the upper classes. As a way to impress their peers, most families host elegant balls and soirees, attempting to outdo each other in terms of style and

wealth. Such occasions are extremely formal though (so ladies might be allowed) with strict rules on dancing and carefully selected music. On evenings where no gatherings are planned, the theatre is a popular place to go for the wealthy. Generally they only find opera and ballet appropriate entertainment. Classic plays, such as Shakespeare and Marlow might also be considered seemly, but the melodramas and penny gaffs of the servant and lower classes (while a lot more fun) are considered low and ill fitting for the gentry.

When the gentlemen have seen their lady-folk home they are free to participate in less civilised entertainments. Brothels, underground fights, drug dens, casinos and late night drinking establishments can all be found in the darker alleys of the city. Many are to be found between the shops in the arcades, but for something truly decadent the gentlemen make their way into the poor areas where life is cheaper.

THEATRICALS AND OTHER SOCIAL ODDITIES

One set of people who don't easily fit into the social order are those who perform plays and other entertainments. Pretty much every level of society enjoys public and private performances by the various theatrical troupes in the city. However, not just anyone can perform to the wealthy. Unlike most other citizens (aside from criminals), theatrical types are able to gain reputation and status beyond their original class, allowing them a certain amount of social mobility.

Most theatre companies are born from the

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lower class. They are made up of desperate souls looking to avoid the workhouse or reassignment to one of the factories. Many do not last long. They perform on the streets or in the public houses and 'penny gaffs' (tiny pub theatres that use the show to draw in more drinkers) for whatever coinage they can convince their poverty struck audience to part with. If they don't have money, they don't eat, and this often forces their members to offer themselves for reassignment to the factories, their dreams forever crushed.

However, some troupes manage to survive, and often pick up the talented strays from other failing companies. Some have been known to acquire runaways from the upper class, who sometimes bring enough cash to keep the company going (although they are usually dragged home quite quickly). Those who can establish themselves, and whose performances draw an audience, can often convince the publicans and Administrators to pay them to perform. As their fame and reputation grows they are employed to perform in larger and more upmarket venues. Soon they will find their audience is made up of more servant class than lower class patrons.

At some point, a truly talented company might make the break into the theatres of the wealthy. This marks a movement up to servant class for the members of the troupe. However, it only applies for as long as they impress their audience. Many troupes fail at this stage, or decide not to attempt such a rise in fortune. The money is certainly better, but only a certain kind of performance is considered suitable for the upper class, and it is very different to the raucous performances

enjoyed by the lower class. Many companies fail to take this into account, or just cannot cope with the change, and quickly disappear. It is also important for the members of the troupe to be able to function in good society. They need to be well dressed and properly mannered to even be allowed into the wealthy theatres.

Sadly, the upper class bore easily. Troupes at the top of their profession can command very high prices for their performances, and live a lifestyle equal to the highest servant (but with less than a quarter of the work required). However, if they cannot produce something new to entertain their patrons they will soon grow tiresome and rapidly fall back into the gutter. For this reason, the wealthy companies are often looking out for fresh talent to poach from up and coming rivals.

CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

While the upper class are just as likely to commit a crime as anyone else, there is very little chance they will actually be punished for it. Many of the upper class have committed murder, theft or rape, but if these crimes are committed against someone of a lower class they often don't even see it as a crime. Most of the upper class see the rest of humanity as their chattel. They believe they have the right to treat even other people as their possessions, to do with as they please. In many cases the wrongs they commit are to their servants, who will be turfed out onto the streets if they make any accusations against their employer. Even those who manage to find employment elsewhere won't get far without a reference from their previous employer.

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Another problem for those seeking justice against the wealthy is that their personal honour is considered sacrosanct. If a gentleman gives his word that he is innocent, it is taken as fact that he must be so. The idea that anyone able to commit a crime might also be capable of lying isn't even a consideration. Unless there is direct and irrefutable evidence against any suspect, the case will never even get to trial. Even when it does the courts are hopelessly biased towards the upper classes. They will even be apologetic that any gentleman might have to spend some of his day dealing with these accusations.

However, on occasion, one of the upper class will do something so obviously criminal society is hard pressed to cover it up. This is most likely to be the case when they commit a crime against one of their own. The policy of 'everything behind closed doors is fine' manages to keep most of the vice and behaviour of the upper class hidden away. So when one of their own breaks this code of silence it throws a dark mirror in front of everyone else, and they do not take kindly to this. If there is the slightest chance the charges will stick, an upper class criminal is treated with absolute contempt and suffers the strongest penalty the law allows for. This serves as a warning for anyone else thinking of being indiscrete, and shows the rest of the populace that the upper classes are capable of policing their own and maintaining the standards they set.

When a male member of the upper classes is punished, he is occasionally sent to jail. The court houses also contain dungeons or cells to

incarcerate prisoners, although they are not designed for long term use. Upper class male criminals, charged with a misdemeanour, might serve time here. Anything worse is often considered dissidence, which results in the convicted being sent to the Change Cage, or, more commonly, the worse non-dissident crimes are punished with exile from the city. Most prefer this to being cast down into the lower classes, even though exile is considered a death sentence. In the rare case of the upper class criminal returning to society, he will have to work very hard to regain any sort of position. He can also only return if his family will have him back, meaning he will have to make many promises, vowing to tow the family line in future.

Women are treated far more harshly, and for a greater range of crimes. Neovictorian society generally assumes women are more virtuous than men, and less prone to bad behaviour. So when they prove to be human, or worse, creatures of passion and desire and not elegant statues, the penalties are harsh. Luckily, most people assume any woman involved in a crime is an innocent victim, manipulated by some devious gentleman. So, if they can shift the blame even a little they can often get off scot-free. Unfortunately, if they are proved guilty of any crime they are usually just thrown onto the street. This goes doubly for any woman accused of an illicit affair, and a woman found to be pregnant out of wedlock is in big trouble if word gets outside of the family circle. A woman without a virtuous reputation becomes a non-person, and the family will cast her out and never speak to her again. Used to a life of servants and refinement, few women thrown onto the

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streets manage to survive for long. Most do not even survive a night alone on the street, unless they find help.

You will notice that so far in this discourse on crime and punishment we haven't mentioned guilt or innocence. This is because, in general, they are relatively unimportant! If enough evidence appears to stick to someone, they will pay for the crime. Quite often the upper classes plant evidence to remove their rivals. Essentially, when one of the upper classes is on the stand, everyone wants the matter resolved swiftly so the whole sorry affair can be brushed under the carpet. This usually means short shrift for the accused, as the best way to make all this embarrassment go away is to see someone, anyone, get punished for it.

ASPIRATIONS

As they have all they want, the upper classes aspire to very little. Most of their effort goes to securing the status quo rather than improving their lot. Many spend their days plotting against their rival family members for the attentions of the family patriarch, in the hope they may be made his successor. Women politic in society to find a good marriage for themselves (or their daughters) to ensure their future security. Love has little to do with marriage. Occasionally a couple will marry for love, or find affection in an arranged marriage. However, the norm is for dynasties to form alliances and most women are happy with a husband who doesn't beat them.

Some of the upper classes seek fortune and reputation amidst the Administration. The rewards and power are there for the

taking, but are hard won. Politics among the Administration are severe and byzantine. Promotion is assured by cunning and corruption and leaves little time for actual work. Still, for those who can carve out a niche, there is a lot of power to be had, but more importantly there is an income, and with it an independence from the family.

THE FOUNDING FAMILIES

To the Neovictorians the Founding Families are simply known as the visionaries who helped the Emperor save humanity and bring the world together as one. No one is taught why these families were chosen, or what they actually did. The truth is a little more prosaic than the stories, and a lot less noble.

Al Saif

The Al Saif were apparently the least of the oil rich Arabian families, but in truth they were actually the most patient. Instead of using their wealth to fund a glamorous lifestyle of excess, they invested their money in political power and new technologies. They knew that one day the oil might run out and they planned for that day by creating a very diverse portfolio. During the Great Rectification they used Victor's backing to take control of all the remaining oil rights.

Da Forsa

It is said that when Machiavelli needed advice he turned to the Da Forsa family. Originally wealthy wine merchants, through intermarriage and power brokering they spread their power across the city states of Italy and from there throughout the church.

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From Italy they spread further, into the courts of Europe, and even worked their way into the high echelons of the Mafia. While they never took direct power, they were always in the background of every court, playing politics to enhance their standing. The first loyalty of any Da Forsa was always to the family.

Gilbert

The Gilbert family consider themselves 'old money' although before they came to America they were little more than ambitious middle class traders. Drawn to conflict, they put their money into the arms trade, investing heavily in new technologies. They supplied to anyone who wanted their weapons, acquiring several criminal contacts as well as government ones. While they diversified into less controversial businesses (to launder their dirty money) they have remained at the forefront of military and political life.

Havering

The Havering family came to prominence in the original Victorian era. However, their roots in the upper nobility date back to the middle ages. They rode the wave of British imperialism which made them frighteningly wealthy. However, they were politically adroit too, and insinuated themselves into the colonial governments of the empire. Their holdings spread across England, Africa, America and India. Throughout history the Haverings have simply 'been in charge' wherever they have chosen to be.

Lin

The pen is truly mightier than the sword,

and the Lin family always made sure they wielded the pen. This family has been part of the bureaucracy since writing was invented, indeed, some suggest they invented it! While they never ruled China, their Administrators ran the country with a subtle shuffle of paperwork. As the world became a global village they spread out into corporations and became heavily involved in international finance. It is said that many of the Lin family helped design the massive computation machines that regulated world trade, and they built in coding algorithms that allowed them to amass a fortune without less competent traders noticing. They still excel in communications technology, automata and difference engine design.

Mubara

The Mubara took hold of power in the chaos following the fall of apartheid in South Africa. Seizing every opportunity they quickly became a world leader in the diamond and gold trade. While their powerbase remained firmly in Africa, their control of precious stones and minerals gave them global financial ties.

Sierra

For hundreds of years the Sierra family have quietly sat in the background of European nobility. They have never been the first to do anything, but they are usually the second. Those who take the first steps in new ground set off all the traps; it is the second traveller that takes the rewards, if not the glory. Originally from Spain, the Sierra married into several European bloodlines. However, they were in the forefront of Spanish exploration and controlled much of South America.

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Volska

Not all the founding families are descended from nobility. The Volska are proud of their roots amid the working men of Russia. However, the Volska did very little work themselves, being one of the strongest families in the Russian Mafia. Their influence spread throughout Tsarist Russia, and when the Tsar was replaced by democracy and less draconian laws, it spread further.. The black market made them rich, and their underground contacts made them powerful allies.

The Servant Class

WHO ARE THE SERVANT CLASS?

Those who serve form a class of their own, but they are not so much a middle class as the elite within the lower class. Compared to the lower class the servant class is very well off. They are paid well and can afford good clothes and places to live. They can often claim the cast-offs from the upper classes, sometimes clothes, but perhaps better quality

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food as well. Unfortunately the price for this better standard of living is virtual slavery to the whims of the upper class.

Those in the servant class generally fit into one of two careers. The first are those who work as servants in the homes of the upper class. Most are women selected from the orphanages, but a few are born into service. There is a strict hierarchy and career path to a life in service, with specific tasks considered suitable for men or women. The work is hard and the days long, but at least somewhat more pleasant than working much the same hours in a dark and dirty factory. Servants do have to deal with the whims and moods of their masters though. While some are kind and appreciative, many more are difficult and abusive, often beating their servants and blaming them for their own mistakes.

Servants rarely find the opportunity to have a family of their own. Some marry, and are then able to share a room together in the servant's quarters (which are usually strictly segregated). Servants with children do not get any special time off to see to their needs, meaning the whole staff take it in turns to look after them. Some help out of kindness, others a sense of community or the promise of help with their own children. In rare cases it might be a more mercenary arrangement with their time given for payment. Once the children get a little older they can follow their parents around the house and help with their work, as long as they are not seen by the family. The only other option is to pass them on to the orphanage. Should the child have any relation to one of the family the child will certainly be passed on to an orphanage

(and the girl in question sacked of course!). When the child is old enough they seek work in the career they have been learning since childhood, although it is rare for them to find work with their parents. The day they leave for a new job might be the last time they ever see their parents. Great care is taken to ensure the children of servants and the wealthy see little or nothing of each other, lest they form an 'unfortunate attachment' that might blur the lines between their classes.

Also a part of the servant class are the craftsmen and shopkeepers who serve the wealthy. While many of the lower class craftsmen and traders manage shops in the poor areas, a few manage to afford the extortionate rents for retail space in the high class shopping malls ('Arcadia'). They manage the various emporia that serve the shopping needs of the wealthy, and to a certain extent, each other. Usually, the shop itself is passed down through family lines, but it is the contacts and trade secrets parents tell their children that are truly valuable. Some shopkeepers sell wares they have created themselves, recycling and refurbishing old furniture or clothes. A few run a shop passed down to them that trades in goods sourced from other shops or occasionally even other cities. This style of shop can make more money as their wares are often more exotic. However, if their supply lines dry up (after an airship attack on a particular barge, a supplier getting greedy, or due to an overly officious Administrator clamping down on a particular trade) they can easily find themselves bankrupt. Those who go out of business swiftly find themselves unable to pay the rent and might be forced to seek work in a factory or relocating their

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shop to a poorer area, forever falling to the lower class. The vast majority of shopkeepers sell wares manufactured in the factory blocks, basically from the same recycled materials that are used in all the city's manufacturing, but tooled to a much higher standard than the rough wares available to the Lower classes.

Shops are owned by families (although they still pay rent to the Administration) and generally passed down through the generations. The older generation pass their skills to the younger ones and everyone works as much as they are able, to supply and run the shop. The shop is both business and home to those who live there, often with several generations and many cousins and relations. What the shop earns is usually divided fairly among the family, once the rent is paid, to make sure everyone is fed and clothed and the business is secure. Everyone is therefore expected to contribute something to the business according to their skills and ability; there is no space for freeloaders.

THE SERVICE INDUSTRY

With so much work to be done to look after a home, there are several different types of servant working to keep it clean and maintained. So it makes sense to explain a little more about who and what each type of servant is.

Butler

This position is occupied by the most experienced male servant, who functions as the head of the servant community. He is responsible for organising the rest of the servants and takes the lead in serving the

family directly. As such he doesn't do much cleaning or hard work, but as the most trusted servant he is responsible for the family silverware.

Housekeeper

The most experienced female servant is the housekeeper. She works with the butler to organise the household and especially the female servants. It is up to her to keep the larder stocked and organise deliveries and the laundry rotas. As such she rarely waits on the family, but she does keep keys to every door in the house. Given there are more women in the service industry than men (as male roles are usually performed by automata) the housekeeper is often the most experienced servant in the household, and often needs to compensate for an inexperienced butler.

Footman

Footmen are general servants who usually wear a specific uniform denoting the family they work for. These uniforms are quite gaudy with tassels, gold trim and wigs. They accompany female members of the family, maintain any vehicles (such as carriages) and answer the door. At dinner they assist each diner take their place and stands ready to fulfil any requests although they never touch the food. Most of the time they stand to attention around the house in case anyone needs anything. It is therefore a mark of wealth to have as many footmen as you can standing around doing nothing. For this reason most are usually automata who are not only better at standing still for hours at a time but are also even more expensive.

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Housemaid

The housemaids are responsible primarily for cleaning the house and seeing to the laundry. They have to wake very early to brush and sweep the floors and carpets, clean the fireplaces and build fires in the winter. The work is hard, long and back breaking. In the evenings the housemaids serve the food to the guests with the butler, for which they have a special uniform (that must be spotless) of a long black dress and white apron.

Valets & Lady's Maids

A step above footman or housemaid are those who directly assist members of the family to get dressed in the morning. In less wealthy families this is not a separate position and is simply filled by one of the footmen or housemaids (appropriate to the gender of the family member!). As a full time position, valets and lady's maids work as general personal assistants to the family member they are assigned to, which gets them out of most of the cleaning. They can become close confidants to their charge and often get given cast off clothing from them.

Cooks & Kitchen maids

The kitchen staff are never seen in the family areas of the house ('above stairs') and spend all their time in the kitchen. The cook runs the kitchen as you might expect, often as a foreman rather than actually doing a lot of work. An army of kitchen maids do the actual cooking and keep the kitchen and its appliances and utensils clean. In large houses a few scullery maids might also be employed. They are young girls training for a life in

service and essentially get given the worst jobs for every department.

Groundskeeper

Most of the wealthy families have estates with extensive grounds that need maintenance. While much of this work is carried out by



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specialised automata, a few groundskeepers are often used to keep an eye on the machines. In large estates a head groundskeeper will be responsible for landscaping the gardens and land surrounding the house.

DAY IN THE LIFE

For the shopkeepers of the servant class the day begins very early, but for the servants it is earlier still. They must clean and prepare the homes they work in before their masters and mistresses wake up, which often means waking before sunrise. After they have made themselves presentable they need to see to the house. This means they must clean and dust the whole house, prepare fires in the winter, ensure breakfast is ready for the family and then be ready to assist them get dressed when they rise.

Those who serve the family directly get to avoid some of the housework to see to their charges. It can take a while to assist one of the wealthy get dressed, especially as they are rarely in any form of rush. Even for the gentleman or lady looking to rise swiftly, the process still takes a while. Upper class clothing has several layers, and the little details, such as selecting the right cufflinks, or the choosing of the precise manner in which a lady might dress her hair, are vital in impressing a noble's wealthy peers. The wealthy take great pride in their appearance, so insist their servants do it properly.

Once the family are ready to face the day, the servants need to wait on them during breakfast, and receive any orders to undertake errands that are required. However, these

errands don't often involve the entire staff, allowing some a moment to rest. With the day begun for the family, the servants settle into two teams. The first waits on standby to answer the needs of the family, the second get down to the many chores required to run the house. The kitchen will continue preparing food for the next meals (and keep quiet about any meat they have been given to prepare). Household staff usually continue with the never ending task of laundry, and now they are unoccupied they clean the bedrooms and make the beds. During the day some of the staff may have maintenance jobs to perform, such as fixing machinery or taking care of the grounds. The more trusted or discrete servants might leave the house to get hold of meat or other illegal goods the family don't want to be seen buying.

As evening comes around, the house gears up for dinner. Even on a simple day, dinner is a formal affair and several servants will be needed to serve the family. However, if the family have guests the work is easily doubled. As evening wears on the family require fewer servants to meet their needs, and those who have to get up the earliest are usually allowed to go to bed. However, most will be required to stand around and be available until the last member guest has left and the last of the family chooses to go to bed. Then they can get what sleep they can before repeating the whole process the next day.

Shopkeepers have an easier life than the servants, but it is a life spent in constant fear of falling to poverty. They must also complete a mountain of paperwork for the Administration, declaring their income,

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dependents and profits (on which they may also be taxed). They need to get up early enough to see their shop open, but the hours they choose to work are up to them. Those who do well might choose to close early, but few are willing to take such a risk. With the shop open, someone needs to be on hand to serve customers. Personal service is expected by the upper classes, who feel slighted if their entrance does not provoke one of the staff to follow and attend to their needs.

Apart from running the shop, the shopkeeper family needs to spend most of their day crafting, or more likely acquiring and arranging products to sell. The older generation spent their time teaching the younger one the secrets of their trade (taking care not to innovate!), gradually giving them more responsibility as they improve. If they craft as well as trade, there are rarely enough resources to just let the youngsters have a go and waste supplies with something that can't be sold. So a teenager might spend years learning how to make table legs, before moving on to building them onto a table. In trader families the adults might take their children along to see how deals are made for many years before allowing them out alone. However, few families are able to create goods from scratch (there just aren't the available materials). Most take old goods in part exchange, and repair or rebuild them for resale.

As well as possibly learning a craft, the children need to learn how to run the business. There are accounts to be kept and supplies that need to be kept track of, or ordered in advance. Few families can afford to just buy in what they

need whenever they need it, making it vital to budget ahead. While some trades tend to be pursued by women or men, there is no real gender segregation between them. Often, one child proves more adept at craft and the other at the business. It is just good business sense to allow everyone to work to their strengths as long as the right jobs are being done.

THE ORPHANAGES

Throughout each city are several orphanages run by the Ministry of Hope. These children's homes take in lost children, care for them and try to find a place for them in society. Well, that's what the Ministry says anyway. In most cases, the children here have been taken from their families, not cast out. Children born 'out of wedlock' and those born to families who have already got their allotted allocation of children are taken by Ministry inspectors and placed in the orphanages. There are no exceptions and no appeals. The rule applies just as much to the upper class, although they are usually given time to rectify the situation by buying additional birthrights from poorer families.

The Ministry employs several 'Inspectors' who register all new births and check families have only the right amount of children. They have the power to remove any child on the spot. They also patrol the streets occasionally and any stray children are also rounded up and sent to the orphanage. This catches many runaway children, and also those sent out when the Inspectors are in the neighbourhood when they can't be hidden at home. As you might imagine, the poor tend to call the Inspector's 'Child Catchers', but never to their faces.

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Life in an orphanage is not that much worse than living as one of the lower class. The children get much the same food, and the orphanages are furnished in much the same way as a lower class house. Boys and girls are kept rigidly separate, although they may steal a moment to speak to each other during mealtimes and assemblies (the only times when they are gathered together in one room. Brothers and sisters (possibly identical or non-identical twins) are separated if they are different genders, but otherwise allowed to remain together.

The authorities, firmly believing that a healthy body creates a healthy mind, ensure the children spend a lot of their day doing forced exercise. Education is minimal, although most do learn to read and write. Otherwise they are taught useful menial tasks, the precise nature of which is dependent on their gender. Boys are taught a little woodwork and metalwork, as well as how to chop wood and dig ditches. Girls are taught to cook, sew and make lace. This division of labour also serves to keep the genders separate. The Ministry does not allow 'fraternisation' as that may lead to more children!



Every now and again, agents of the Ministry will select children for a new life as either servants for the rich (usually girls) or crew for IAN ships (usually boys). Occasionally the pretty ones (girls or boys) might be taken for more personal services for favoured members of the Ministry and upper classes. From their first day, the children are told that being selected for anything is a great honour

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and they must work hard to be worthy. Even without the propaganda most reason life for the selected cannot be worse than it is within the orphanage.

While most of the children are selected, there are always a few who are not. They remain in the orphanage and become the staff of the place. They must cook, clean and organise the place for the younger children. Even the 'Beadle', who runs the place, was once one of its charges. Unfortunately, this means the orphanage staff are often bitter and jealous of the children they care for. The importance placed on being selected means those who are not are considered failures and rejects. These same people then have to see to the needs of more children, who will go on to a life they have been denied. Many of them take this frustration out on the children in their care, making some orphanages more terrible than the dungeons of the Change Cage.

ATTITUDES TO OTHERS

The servant class is stuck between the worlds. They exist in a middle group without a real place of their own. They regard their masters with a mixture of envy and fear. They are constantly told they are better off than those below them, but still suffer abuse and maltreatment at their hands. However, they also get to see up close how privileged the upper classes are, and occasionally benefit from their largess. Most servants hold onto the impossible dream of somehow being elevated to the upper class, although this is impossible. Most understand this is a forlorn dream but with the glamour and riches so tantalisingly close it is a fantasy that in easily

indulged in.

While the servants often dream of riches, they don't truly dream of joining the upper class. While they bear the brunt of their ire, they also see how devious and backstabbing the wealthy are to each other. Their oppression at the hands of the upper class makes community and support from their peers very important to the servant class. To them, the vindictive and manipulative behaviour the upper class shows each other is doubly terrible as it destroys any hope of community and family.

The overriding attitude of the servant class is defined by fear. They are continually aware of the precariousness of their position. At any point their master might take offence at some imagined slight or mistake, or they may just be unlucky caught out in one of the games their master's play. If they are not on their guard they could be cast out onto the street with little more than a moment's notice, with nothing to show for it, cast off into the lower class. While some might try to find employment in another house, without a letter of reference from a previous employer no wealthy family will accept their service.

The lower class is considered pitiable by the servant class, who hold most of the same attitudes as the upper class. After all, they have been told since birth that they are the best of the lower orders. So they see those below them as the poor souls not blessed with the diligence, talent and civility to be chosen to serve. Again, fear drives their attitude. They are so terrified of becoming lower class themselves, the servant class are often abusive

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and off hand with anyone lower than them, if only to emphasise how distant they are. Their fear breeds contempt for what they might easily become, and so the cycle of abuse continues.

TRADITIONS

The servant class has few traditions of its own. Being set between two worlds, they often ape the traditions of their betters, the wealthy that they see every day. Quite often the servants are more skilled in etiquette than some of the wealthy. A good servant can often steer their master from a social faux-pas in a tricky situation.

For the servant class, there is nothing more important than community. They take teamwork very seriously and rely on their ability to trust one another. They have to stick together, as the people they work for can be very unforgiving. Being mostly orphans, they also feel a need for family, and this leads them to adopt their co-workers as an alternative family.

As orphans, few know when their birthdays are, but celebrating birthdays is a popular community event. When a new servant joins a house, if they don't know when their birthday is they are assigned one, often at a time no one else has a birthday, or on the anniversary of their arrival at their master's house. These birthdays are celebrated by everyone, but very quietly. The masters of the house never know what might be going on; it is private and personal, something that the servants don't have to share with anyone else. There are few presents, if any, but the birthday boy or

The Filth

Another group that do not quite fit into the social system are the police. The automaton Peelers are obviously mere machines, while the secretive Detectives are often drawn from orphanages (like the rest of the servant class). However, the human police officers have a slightly different story.

Most of the human policemen are recruited from the lower class, but their position of authority places them in the servant class. Unfortunately, the police force is often seen as nothing more than a collection of thugs in uniforms, which is due to them mainly being thugs in uniform. They are generally used as muscle to enforce the law rather to police the population. The police appear en masse to arrest people, it is the Peelers that patrol the streets, and it has been said the Peelers have more people skills. No one wants to grant status to this collection of bullies and tyrants. The lower class want nothing to do with them, as they often take the brunt of their 'law enforcement' and see those who join the police as traitors and 'sell outs'.

This means that technically the police are part of the servant class. However they share none of their traditions and community and are decidedly unwelcome anywhere they go. It is this position as unwanted outsiders that helps to turn them into what everyone sees them as.

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girl is offered some sort of treat by everyone else in the house. It might be their favourite food for a meal, or taking over some of their tasks for the day. They need not be large gifts, but everyone gives something which helps build the sense of community. For those who aren't the centre of attention, a birthday is still something to look forward to. Everyone dresses up in their best clothes and any good food and drink is saved for a quiet party downstairs. It is also traditional not to let a birthday pass without offering forgiveness. So it is a time for everyone to find a way to make up with their peers.

Birthdays are no less important for the shopkeeper families either, although they can afford to be more lavish in their celebrations. They need keep nothing secret as they don't share a house with their masters. Apart from that, their celebrations and traditions are much the same. If they are doing very well they might shut the shop for the day, but few are so well off. They still need to be careful though, as many do their best to skim money from the tax they should be paying, deal in smuggled goods, or have some other secret to hide. Making too big a deal of any celebration might catch the attention of the Ministry of Legacy's tax inspectors.

CLOTHING AND STYLE

The servant class don't often get the opportunity to wear clothes that aren't their work uniform. However, they do often manage to claim the discarded clothes of their masters and mistresses. The wealthy get through quite a few clothes, and their servants are often allowed to keep some of them. However it is understood they are not to wear such clothes

without adapting them. No one wants their servants to be dressed quite as well as them. So servant clothing is much like the upper classes clothing, but duller and plainer with the frills and embellishments removed.

Shopkeeper families can often afford to buy their own clothes, and for those serving in the front of the shop appearance is paramount. Like the servants, they need to make sure they don't out dress their customers if they want them to patronise their business. In fact, the shopkeepers often keep each other in business. Most buy their clothes and supplies from the other servant class shopkeepers. While they don't spend anywhere near the same amount of money as the wealthy, they do pay on time.

FOOD AND DRINK

Like everyone in the Change Cage cities, the servant class have to put up with terrible processed food. However they do sometimes manage to get hold of the same food offered to the upper classes. The servants often manage to collect the scraps from their master's table. Some scraps don't make it as far as the master's table, given that the kitchen staff often save a little for themselves. They have to be careful though as, while everyone knows this goes on, servants have been fired for stealing food. This means that upper class food is available to the servants, but only as an occasional luxury.

The shopkeepers don't have the option of gathering scraps and so usually make do with the same dreadful food served to the lower classes. However, they do have the option of shopping in the same places as the upper

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classes. So if they have had an especially good week it is not uncommon for shopkeepers to treat the family to a good meal every Sunday. The 'day of rest' is a time to attend church, and kick back a little, but for most it is still a day of work.

Meat is obviously no more available for the servant class than anyone else. However, that doesn't mean they never manage to get hold of it. House servants often clandestinely buy a little more than they need when supplying the upper classes. It is considered a tax for taking the risk themselves, on behalf of their masters. Anyway, the upper classes have no real idea how much it actually costs as they always get someone else to buy it for them. The shopkeepers don't have that option, but some have contacts among the Bargefolk they can deal with directly.

ENTERTAINMENT

Leisure time for the servant class is a rarity. If you are a servant you get one half day off every month and possibly a reduced work schedule on Sunday, so you can go to church. The shopkeepers can technically close up when they like, but when they do they don't make any money. So they usually do their best to stay open as much as possible, although they do work far better hours than the house servants. This means family outings are rare, although each member of the family can often take the odd afternoon off, if they arrange it with the rest.

When they can afford it, the servant class enjoy shopping. More often though they enjoy window shopping, wandering around,

staring into the wealthy stores, looking at things they cannot possibly afford. As long as they are polite, the shopkeepers don't mind this, often happy to share gossip and news while parading their wares. After all, servants might recommend the shop to their masters.

The theatre is a very popular servant class occupation, although mainly for the shopkeepers, who may close up for the evening. They can rarely dress well enough to attend the opera or ballet with the upper classes, but several performances more suitable to the servant class (and to their budget), are available. Up and coming theatre troupes perform in less upmarket theatres, close to the salons of the wealthy. They mostly perform plays, with Shakespeare and melodrama being the most popular. These performances are also patronised by the wealthier members of the lower class (usually a rare treat).

CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

When it comes to crime, servants are generally treated much the same as the lower class. To be proved dishonest or untrustworthy is especially bad for the servant class as they are supposed to set an example to the lower orders. So the penalties for theft and fraud are much worse than for the lower class. However, servants don't often find themselves in court as this reflects badly on their employer or the upper class who might have patronised their establishment.

So what tends to happen is that when popular opinion decides a servant or shopkeeper

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has done wrong, they are effectively exiled from the servant class. In the case of servants they are fired. With no letter of recommendation they will be toiling in a factory by the end of the week, as part of the working class. Shopkeepers can't be fired quite so easily, but word soon gets around the upper class that their establishment is an inappropriate place to be seen in. While this usually means the establishment will quickly run out of customers, sometimes the business can be saved if the accused family member leaves the shop forever. Many fall to the slums (voluntarily or cast out by their family), so their family might stay in the Arcadia, never to be seen by the cast out member again.

Without the option to cast a member of the family as a scapegoat, the business is doomed if the wealthy forsake it. This inevitably means the shopkeeper and the whole family will be forced to eventually sell up and move down the scale to a lower class area. For this reason it is not uncommon to find lower class shops offering very well crafted goods. When memories have faded, and if the shopkeepers have managed to keep their business going, it is not unheard of such a family to make the move back up to the servant class once more (but usually not for a generation or two).

Fearing that the actions of their peers might reflect badly on themselves, few servants report the crimes of their co-workers. They prefer to deal with things among themselves.



Shopkeepers, being families, leave such decisions to the head of the family, but the servants have a more organised system. They convene small courts below stairs, away from their masters, where accusations can be made. The butler presides when a male servant is accused, and the housekeeper presides over accusations among the female staff. If the butler or housekeeper stand accused, the other will preside (if they are both villains, chances are they will never see

justice!). Servant courts are brief, allowing everyone to have a say. After everyone has presented evidence, the butler or housekeeper pronounces sentence. This is usually more work for the guilty party (or their accuser if the charge is spurious). However the court might decide the guilty party must hand in their resignation and hope for a good letter of recommendation from their masters (who will know nothing of the crime). In rare cases, the butler or housekeeper will bring the crime to the attention of the masters who will sack the servant in question with no recommendation.

ASPIRATIONS

Among the servant class simply maintaining their position is aspiration enough. The servants have a defined career path, so rising up to the heights of butler or housekeeper is their dream. Some entertain fantasies of marrying into the upper class, either through an impossible romance or devious seduction. However most understand this to be impossible. Relationships between the upper and servant class do occur, but they never end in marriage, and rarely end well at all.

Shopkeepers hope to make enough money to be secure, and to see the business grow. Most parents just want to be able to leave the business to their children in a better state than they received it from their parents. All servants dream of simply being able to enjoy a little more of the wealth and resources enjoyed by the upper classes.

The Lower class

WHO ARE THE LOWER CLASS?

To a certain degree, by the lower class we mean 'everybody else'. The poverty-struck working classes make up the vast majority of the population. The lower class are born into toil and poverty and, no matter how hard they work, they will remain so until they die. However, they see a virtue in this. A mixture of propaganda and their own pride reminds them that without their toil, the wheels of industry will stop turning. It is the working class that keeps the city going. Unfortunately this makes them their own jailers, maintaining the very machinery that keeps them contained and constrained in the walled cities.

The lower class come in all shapes and sizes. Most of them work in the factories, assigned there by the Ministry of Hope. There is no room for indolence among the working class. Everyone is assigned such a job, unless they can claim their skills suit them for something else. Those who practice a craft might be allowed to run their own businesses, in the small shops that litter the streets of the city. Women who have become mothers are allowed to remain at home to look after the children (their husbands are not), but the state does not give them a wage if they do. So most new mothers take in washing or learn a handicraft they can do at home to make up the extra money. Others take care of children whose mothers are unable or unwilling to give up their jobs.

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The life of the working class is hard and cruel. However there are moments of pleasure to be had among the dark tight streets under the shadow of the Change Cage. Most work hard to provide for their families, but some are driven to crime by desperation, or drawn to crime by their greed.

DAY IN THE LIFE

Whatever job those of the lower class have, it usually means they have to wake up very early. Many of the factories sound a whistle to mark the beginning of the day shift, which echoes down the streets for miles. In able to catch the factory employees on their way to work, most of the shops make sure they are open at this time too. Often it is barely daylight when the dim streets begin to bustle with the daily commute.

However, not everyone works early in the morning. Some workers are assigned to later shifts, as few of the factories ever allow their grinding machinery to cease. Those who work nights get up later in the day, but work no fewer hours than their daytime colleagues. Shifts are often staggered to ensure the same amount of workers are running the factory at any time, and to make it easier to change from days to nights. So one week your shift might begin at 7am in the morning, the next week it begins at 9am, the next it is 11am and so on, until you find yourself back to working at 7am in the morning again.

Around midday, the work force is allowed a break for lunch. Some who live nearby might be able to go home for a midday meal with their family. However, most find somewhere

to go at work to eat a packed lunch. Some factories have a canteen offering cheap food, but it is rarely as good as what a worker might bring themselves (and will certainly not offer anything illegal, such as meat!). Those who don't want to risk the canteen might instead opt for a liquid lunch in a nearby pub, some of which also offer food. Such pubs run from decent establishments (e.g., they have clean glasses) to utter dives that even rats might avoid. However, the more of a dive the place is, the easier it is to find a 'pasty peddler', who will offer an illegal but cheap meal of meat in pastry. The meat is almost always somewhat suspect (often on the verge of going off, or from an unsavoury source, such as rat or horse). However a pasty peddler who offers something that doesn't make his customers ill can often do a thriving lunchtime trade.

After lunch, it is time to head back to work for another shift. The working day is pretty monotonous for the lower classes. The hours blur into one as they perform the same repetitive tasks on the great production lines. Some of the work is extremely dangerous, with many machines not having safety rails or guards. Most are driven by a series of belts and drive shafts connected to a single steam engine. This means you cannot shut down one machine without shutting them all down, although some can be disengaged from the belt system if need be. When jams or failures occur the workers are usually expected to solve the problem without stopping the machines, which often means the loss of a finger. Children are often used for such jobs, being small enough to get in close and having tiny hands that can reach between the cogs to clear a jam.

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Work is often segregated between the sexes, with men performing more of the manual labour and women working on lighter duties or paperwork. However, the women's work is rarely easier; it is just a little less back-breaking. Those who manage to work their way into the office staff get slightly better pay and more settled hours. Some can even manage to raise themselves up to the servant class if they can afford to move into one of their more expensive areas.

Below the Administrators who run the factory, the other layer of hierarchy is that of the foremen. These supervisors are paid enough to have a servant class residence, although they (like the office workers) work in the factories. They have little to do each day but watch over the other workers and make sure none are slacking off. They range from father figures who always look out for their workforce to tyrannical villains with delusions of grandeur. Sadly, most fall towards the latter end of this scale, but most are lazy enough to turn a blind eye to anything that doesn't mess up the production line.

After a ten hour shift (with a break for lunch and a smaller one for some dinner) it is finally time to go home. However, many factory and office workers stay on to work overtime as any extra pennies may be desperately needed. Overtime is paid in two hour blocks, and most workers work for another four hours to earn two of them.

When they get home, most workers just want to go to bed. They often wash the factory

dirt off, have a bite to eat, spend a couple of hours with the family and collapse into bed. If they don't go to bed reasonably early they'll probably not get enough sleep. It is bad enough if the foreman catches you sleeping during working hours, but worse to fall into one of the machines. Every day, across the city, several workers lose their limbs, or their lives, due to falling asleep by their machines.

ATTITUDES TO OTHERS

It's difficult for the lower class to really meet anyone not on their social level, so most of the attitudes they form about the others are based on hearsay and rumour. However, the propaganda mill of the Ministry of truth plays a part as well. Generally they are taught to be deferential to the upper classes. While they are never quite sure why this should be the case, they believe the upper class are somehow 'born to rule' and are somehow better than themselves. Those who stop to think about it swiftly come to the conclusion that the upper class serves no useful purpose whatsoever and that the system is unspeakably unfair. Unfortunately, if they voice these concerns they might quietly disappear one day. No. It is simpler to spend your energy working hard so your family doesn't starve. No amount of rabble rousing will ever change things, so why rock the boat?

The same attitude of deference cannot be said to apply to the servant class. The lower classes see these jumped-up folk, walking around in their elegant uniforms or nice clothes, and feel either jealousy or disdain. The servants (who are certainly no better than they should be!) have sold out to the upper classes, cleaning their boots for some nice food. Either that, or

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they are just the lucky ones who got plucked out from the hard life, so they could forget where they came from. To the lower class, the servant class are those who have tried to forget their real roots among the lower orders and taken on airs they are not worthy of.

TRADITIONS

What the lower class lack in terms of money and leisure time, they make up for with community. Much like the servant class they have realised that sticking together is the best plan when everyone has so little. Most people look after their neighbours and see those in their street or apartment complex as a form of extended family. People tend to look in on neighbours they haven't seen for a while. When a woman in the street is beaten by her husband she can often rely on her neighbours to take her in and offer sanctuary. If a family needs someone to look after the children (perhaps so the parents can work extra shifts), they can usually be left with a neighbour.

This community means that most people in each apartment block and street know each other, or at least know the gossip about each other. Opinion is somewhat divided as to whether everyone knowing each other's business is a good thing or a bad thing. Some find it supportive, others find it invasive. However, not everyone wants to help their neighbours. Plenty of folk are happy to report their neighbours to the authorities, even for minor infractions, in the hopes that the gaze of the law will pass them by. The police conduct regular raids across the city, often prompted by a report of dissidence by someone else living close by. Quite often these raids are purely random, designed to get the

members of a community pointing fingers at each other.

The threat of arrest and a reliance on pure luck to get through the day has also made the lower class very superstitious. They often put their faith in lucky charms, proverbs and taboos in the hope that it will bring desperately needed money or stave off bad luck that might cripple the family. Many put all their faith into Neochristianity and pray every week just to get through to the next. While all levels of society go to church on a Sunday (in separate churches and areas of course!) it is mostly the lower class that actually pays attention and fears the wrath of the almighty.

CLOTHING AND STYLE

Unlike the wealthy upper classes, fashion is the last thing on the minds of the lower class. When you can barely afford to eat and pay the rent, buying new clothes is something of a low priority. What the lower class wear each day is usually tattered and threadbare, and often soiled from the ground in dirt of the factory they work in. Given the dust and grime they often work in, nice clothes wouldn't last long if worn to work.

Having said that, most of the lower class has a single set of decent clothes that they only wear when going to church on Sunday or for special occasions (their 'Sunday best'). Even these clothes will be plain and probably quite old, but they will at least be clean and less worn than their daily clothes. While they might never afford even the cast offs from the upper class, they might afford to buy something second hand from the servant class. Many of

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them sell their old clothes to peddlers who sell them to the lower class clothing shops.

When we say fashion isn't on the minds of the lower class, it is something they pay attention to. However, this is sometimes more through fear than due to a love of style. The shadow of the Change Cage looms large, and many fear that wearing the wrong clothes might get them arrested. Every now and again a tailor tries something new and gets themselves arrested, proving the laws against change do not apply just to technology. Unaware of what they might get away with, the lower class usually just wear their clothes as long as they can, before buying anything new.

In general the lower class follow the same styles as the servant class, but with cheaper fabrics. Formality is still the order of the day. Clerical workers are expected to wear a suit and tie or a floor length dress. While male factory workers are allowed to remove their tie to work on the machines, women are not allowed to wear trousers at all. Somewhat hampered by wearing long skirts, women are barred from some areas in the factory, another way they are kept 'under control' and away from 'men's work'.

Lower class women almost never wear make up. Few can afford it, and none would wear it to work (although some of the office women might wear a little). After working in the sweaty filthy factories, most women find that just being able to wash their faces makes more of a difference to their appearance than make up. The one class of women that does spend money on make up are the human prostitutes

who often paint their faces in lurid colours with vivid lips. For this reason, excessive make up marks a woman as a whore to many (which is another reason that so many avoid using it).

FOOD AND DRINK

For the lower classes, food is pretty poor. They have to make do with the vat grown recycled fungus that is the staple for everyone in the city. However, unlike the upper class, their food is not flavoured any more than is required to make it palatable. Even if they could afford the food the wealthy eat, it would never be offered for them to buy. Every now and again the better off among the lower class can afford meat, but only if they know someone at the docks who owes them a favour. The chances of them being able to afford it otherwise are pretty remote. It is even less likely they will eat any fruit, the prices of that delicacy being astronomical. However, those in the more tropical Change Cage cities can often manage to get fruit at lower prices, as it is more plentiful.

While most homes have running water, it is not especially clean. Most people have the sense to boil it before they drink it. So, most people drink water in another form, and for most that form is usually beer or gin. The public houses use whatever vegetable matter they can find to ferment their own forms of what they generally call beer. With little access to the proper ingredients it doesn't taste very much like the beer the Skyfolk or Neobedouins might drink. Cheaper than beer is gin, a far less civilised drink, again made from whatever can be found. Gin is distilled rather than fermented, and comes in a vast

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variety of clear highly alcoholic liquids. When you find a pub that serves a decent (or at least, relatively non-poisonous) brew, you usually make a point of sticking to it.

ENTERTAINMENT

With little leisure time, the lower class have limited entertainment available to them. However they still manage to find the time and money to engage in a few hours of fun, in the rare moments they are not working or sleeping.

As with the other classes, the theatre is one of the main entertainments for even the lower class. As you might expect they cannot afford to attend the expensive operas and ballets available to the wealthy. However, if anything, there is more variety and fun to be had on the lower end of the theatrical scale. There are few lower class theatres, but many theatrical troupes perform in pubs, halls or even empty warehouse space, to anyone can spare a few coins to see them. These are generally known as 'penny gaffs', as it costs only a few cents to join the audience. The plays are usually bloodthirsty, bawdy, melodramatic or even all three. A few troupes offer something more cerebral, but they rarely last as they are not as commercially viable.

A lot of lower class entertainment is spontaneous and community based. A few lower class play barrel organs in the street, which often inspires dancing and singing with the passers-by. They offer everything from street theatre to illusion shows to anyone who might have coin to spare. Those of the lower class are usually unable to be full-

time performers, as there is work to be done in the factories. However, some are allowed to make a living as performers, as long as they stick to a rigid list of plays, and don't try to perform any new works! If the troupe does well it might manage to go full-time.

At the lower end of the scale, many of the lower class lose themselves in vice as their only entertainment. From gin to cheap whores there are plenty of pleasures even the lower class can afford. The upper class are quick to use drunken and lewd behaviour as evidence that the lower class are little better than animals, even though they often pursue the same vices behind closed doors.

The most ruthless and successful bullies rise to the top of the criminal underworld, and, until caught, lead much less monotonous lives than the rest of their class. However crime is usually only allowed to flourish where it coincides with the vices of the Upper Class, and the Upper Classes are quick to collude to crush any criminal who seems to be gathering too much power to him or herself.

CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

As if they didn't have enough to deal with, punishments for any transgressions are very severe for the lower class. Essentially, anything that might improve their lot in life or break them out of the rut of their existence is probably illegal. Most crimes from theft to murder are usually committed by the desperate. While there are certainly career criminals in lower class society, they are usually careful enough to rarely get caught. It is those who steal bread to feed their children, try to cheat their

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factory by declaring overtime they didn't do, or even those who commit manslaughter in a tussle over some minor resource, who usually come to grief.

The authorities take a dim view of any form of lawbreaking. Being mostly upper class, the judges and lawyers have little understanding of the factors that drive some of the lower class to commit crime. They believe that the lower class are divided into two types, the deserving and the undeserving. The deserving are those who work hard, do as they are told and never commit crime. However, the undeserving are shiftless layabouts who prefer to take rather than earn. So the authorities generally believe that anyone committing a crime must be one of the undeserving, a habitual criminal who is best removed from society. Unable to conceive of real hunger and desperation the upper class see any criminal as someone with low moral character.

So, the lower class who find themselves up before a judge are unlikely to get much of a fair hearing. As it is believed that the upper class never lie, those they accuse are undoubtedly guilty. Mitigating factors such as 'my children were starving' fall on deaf ears. You either committed the crime or you didn't, and if you did you must be punished. Punishments are always harsh so they might serve as an example to the rest of the lower class, who need to be dealt with by a firm hand if they are not to slip into immorality!

The Legal System

As you might imagine, the legal system in the Change Cage cities isn't especially fair. Just about every case comes to trial, no matter

who the defendant is. From small children to elderly lords, each defendant is treated the same and is subject to the same punishments. Courts consist of a judge, a prosecutor and a defender. There is no jury, and the judge is the one to decide on the guilt or innocence of the defendant.

No jury is considered necessary, as the judge is usually upper class. As they must give their word as a gentleman that they will weigh the evidence carefully and without bias to suggest a jury is required is insulting. He (for it is almost always a man) listens to the cases presented by the prosecution and defence and when he reaches a decision he either releases the defendant, or renders a judgement on what their punishment should be. Judges are usually former Administrators, from the Ministry of Vigilance (although occasionally a retiring Detective might be granted the honour). As such they are often somewhat elderly and out of touch. Few have ever experienced what it is like to be lower class and are hopelessly biased towards the upper class.

Sadly the prosecution and defence are often little better. They too will be upper class (although a few well educated Servant class have managed to become barristers) and therefore have little in common with most of their charges. They rarely fight for their client, thinking it more important to beat their rival

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in court (and enhancing their reputation) than seeing justice prevail. Sometimes there is no one free to defend the accused, so a single barrister 'presents the case'. This presentation rarely differs in what might have been offered by the prosecution.

While everyone is meant to be innocent until proven guilty most judges believe that anyone put in front of them must have done at least something. Those sentenced are usually lucky to just get a brief custodial sentence (in the Ministry of Vigilance jails, under the court house). In this case the convicted criminal is thrown into a literal dungeon for a few days, or possibly weeks. However custodial sentences are not long – anything above a misdemeanour is punished with death, exile or the Change Cage. While in jail the convict cannot work, and so they earn no wage, which is potentially disastrous to both them and their family. The death penalty is still carried out (usually by hanging) in most Change Cage cities, although the more common sentence of exile is tantamount to a death sentence anyway.

ASPIRATIONS

With their lives mapped out almost until the grave, there is little room for the lower class to aspire to anything. Most have prosaic dreams, of getting better shifts at work or achieving some minor promotion. Few have any hope of ascending to the servant or upper class, and those that talk seriously of improving their lot are often considered mad. Most lower class people just hold onto the dreams encouraged by the Ministry of Truth, that things will get better if they work harder.

One advantage the lower class has is that most are free to marry those they love. There are no dynasties to form among the working class, so families rarely arrange marriages for their children. When two people fall in love they can follow that dream, making romance something the poor really can aspire to. It makes their families happier places to be, a vital factor in surviving the adversities they must face. At least, it does at first. Usually, before too long, the relentless monotony, poverty and overwork of Lower Class life creates strains that test the most solid of relationships.

A rare few members of the Lower Class catch a glimpse of the truth, that the system itself is designed to keep them in their place, and that no aspiration is ever going to be possible. They either cast aside any hope, or decide to become agitators. They join the small but growing resistance movement and try to change the system. Either that, or they seek a way to escape for a new life on the outside. For many either path leads to a swift death at the hands of the authorities, or in the jaws of the beasts of the wilderness. Yet for many it is their only hope of a better life, and the dream alone is worth all the risk.

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The Misbegotten

WHO ARE THE MISBEGOTTEN?

The factories of the Change Cage cities spew out all sorts of noxious chemicals, most of which are stored in vast ponds, reservoirs or underground storage tanks around the factory district, as the Emperor has strict laws about not polluting the outside world. Unsurprisingly, these chemicals have seeped into the ground and the water supply, tainting the food, water and very air the Neovictorians breathe. These poisons can lead to birth defects and mutations – many of these “Misbegotten” die at birth, but those who survive are strictly controlled and monitored by the authorities to prevent the possibility of them passing on their grotesque characteristics to the next generation.

Many lower class areas are built on old waste heaps and areas of poisoned ground, so the majority of Misbegotten are from the lower class, but the servant class and upper class are not immune – a tainted well in the grounds of an upper class mansion can be enough to warp the children of the most “pure-bred” of aristocrats.

The authorities don't like to admit that it is their own factories that are causing these mutations, so they talk about “tainted bloodlines” and strictly control any Misbegotten, classifying them by mutation type and herding them into ghettos.

These ghettos are miserable, neglected places – open sewers run through shanty dwellings,

which in turn back on to tumbledown factories. Lighting and heating are not provided, and whereas most of the Change Cage city is furnished with recycled goods, the ghettos are merely filled with non-recycled junk.

Misbegotten are sterilised at the age of 11 to prevent them having mutant children of their own. In truth, the Misbegottens' defects are unlikely to be passed on to future generations – the pollution tends to cause growth abnormalities in the womb, not genetic defects which can be passed on – but the Neovictorian authorities either no longer understand the science of genetics or wilfully disregard it.

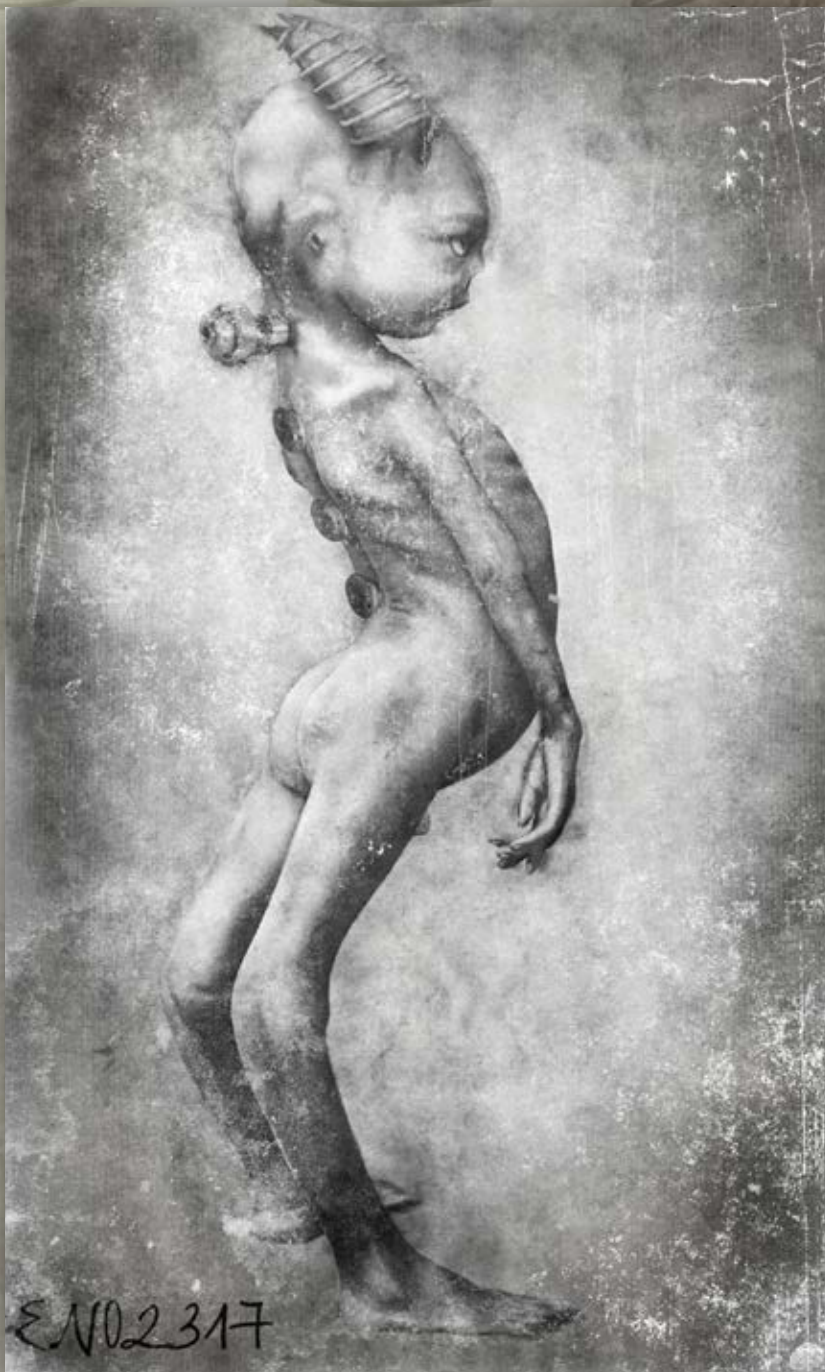
The law states that any child born as a Misbegotten must be reported to the Ministry of Hope. Most lower class and servant class children are born in Ministry Birthing Centres, operated by automaton midwives who are programmed to recognise mutations and take away the child immediately. Upper class children tend to be born at home, with a doctor present – but the upper classes have a particular horror of their aristocratic blood being tainted and are usually happy to hand over a mutant child, putting out the news that the child was stillborn. Occasionally a child will be born outside of a Birthing Centre, or will be kept by a mother in an upper class family. As long as their mutation can be hidden they will be safe, but the punishment for parents caught harbouring a Misbegotten child are severe. Lower and servant class parents are sent to the Change Cage, while upper class parents are sterilised and *all* their children are disinherited – the family's

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holdings will be passed to the nearest family member outside immediate children.

Misbegotten children are measured and categorised according to their particular defect, and sent to the city block of the group of Misbegotten they most resemble. There they are assigned to Misbegotten who have requested to be parents. The Ministry of Hope claims that this is “humane” as it keeps mutants of one sort all together and helps prevent them realising what freaks they are, since they rarely, if ever, see normal humans or other sorts of Misbegotten.

At the age of 11, all Misbegotten children are visited by a Miscegenation Prevention Officer from the Ministry of Hope. MPOs are invariably automata equipped with an array of medical instruments and, after anaesthetising the child, will sterilise him or her so that they cannot have children of their own. After this process (which is often accompanied by a celebration – see Traditions, below) the Misbegotten is considered an adult, and is assigned work by the Ministry of Hope. These are inevitably menial tasks which can be done either at home, in small workshops within the block, or in crumbling factory buildings.



Misbegotten are rarely if ever let out of the block to which they have been consigned, living out their lives with other mutants of a similar type.



A major exception is made when a particular mutation is identified as having some military use. Sometimes a Misbegotten will have mutations that the government considers particularly useful in a military capacity, in which case the child will be taken from his or her foster parents and sent for training with the Chuno Ggun. Such children never return to their home block – those who survive training but are found wanting in other ways are executed. Not only does this abduction cause much distress for all involved, but also these abductions are concentrated on particular blocks (those housing the Misbegotten who display the appropriate useful mutation).

The Ministry of Hope is careful never to send normal humans into a Misbegotten block – all contact is made through automata. Most Misbegotten go through life without ever seeing anyone who doesn't resemble themselves, and most consider themselves perfectly normal. To those who manage to escape, finding that they are considered a freak is something of a shock.

Although most Misbegotten do not have any means to escape the ghetto, sometimes the neglected nature of the Misbegotten blocks provide something of an advantage in this regard. Old tunnels and sewer outlets may be accessible, and these are used, by those daring enough, to escape to other areas within the city, or even to escape into the wilderness. Few survive in the outside world. The wilderness offers a savage death at the hands of the uberbeasts, or a slower death by starvation. Within the city, merely moving block is no solution to the Misbegotten's problems. Even if such an escapee can avoid being simply rounded up and executed, the best they can hope for is a life of exploitation and misery at the hands of the criminal fraternity. Yet there are exceptions to every rule, and a few Misbegotten have forged themselves a successful criminal career, managing to hide amongst the ne'er-do-wells, and even finding themselves in a position to send aid back into the ghetto from which they escaped.

DAY IN THE LIFE

For the average Misbegotten, life is an unending round of drudgery, living in cramped tenements or scratch-built shacks, within a small walled city block, with others of their particular kind. There is no contact with the outside world, other than the occasional visits by Miscegenation Prevention Officers and other automata representing the Ministry of Hope. Most are involved in handicrafts such as making pins, sewing clothes designed for their own particular mutant form, etc. Meals are provided for the whole block –

sometimes in a communal dining hall, more usually from a soup stand. Some Misbegotten blocks are attached to a factory, in which case almost everyone in the city block will work in that factory – such factories usually specialise in the most dangerous and toxic processes, such is the low value that is put on the lives of the Misbegotten.

All Misbegotten work from the age of 11, though they remain living with their foster parents until such time as they find a husband or wife, at which point they move into a shack of their own, and may then apply to become parents and adopt a Misbegotten child – though most wait until they are at least sixteen or seventeen before doing so.

The hard work, poor food and crowded conditions of a Misbegotten block, together with the medical complications sometimes arising from a particular mutation, means that few Misbegotten live beyond the age of forty – though those who escape into the outside world often live well into their seventies, eighties and sometimes nineties.

Recreational activity usually takes place after the last meal of the day is served. Stories are told, improvised musical instruments are played, and illicit home-brewed beer is often passed around.

Sundays are a day of rest, when all are expected to attend the block's chapel. Each block has a vicar who ministers to his small flock – he is, of course, a Misbegotten himself, and usually has an apprentice or two who he is training to take his place when he dies. The chapel



is usually a crumbling affair, although the Misbegotten usually pitch together to ensure that the chapel is reasonably maintained and leak-free. In this way, the religion of New Christianity is passed on – though, because Vicars have no contact with the outside world, the teachings of the church and interpretation of the Holy Book have often become far removed from their original intention, and might be seen as heresy by anyone outside the particular city block, if anyone were to hear of them.

ATTITUDES TO OTHERS

The Misbegotten of a particular city block have no particular attitudes to others as they

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never meet anyone who is not of their own kind. This does not stop rumours circulating. There are some who believe that the rest of the world consists entirely of automata and that they are in some sort of zoo, held prisoner by their metal overlords. Others are more inclined to think that there are other types of humans, but that they themselves are the “normal” ones.

Those who discover the truth of their predicament (through information somehow smuggled in by pirates, sympathetic automata, or whoever, or through adventurous exploration of the undercity) tend to feel betrayed – either by the Emperor (for who most have a high regard drummed into them by their local vicar), the Ministry of Hope, humans generally, or automata. To spend your life considering yourself perfectly normal and then to find that most of the world considers you a freak can be emotionally scarring, and leaves many Misbegotten bitter and resentful.

TRADITIONS

Most Misbegotten have their own traditions, peculiar to their own particular block, and sometimes related to their particular mutations. All have festivals revolving around the major stages of Misbegotten life – adoption, sterilisation, marriage and death. These festivals are all accompanied by a ceremony in the block’s chapel, and afterwards a party.

No-one who has applied to have a child knows if or when they will receive one – it depends on when a suitable Misbegotten is born. But one day an automaton will knock on the door, bearing a child, who will be handed over to the proud parents. Soon after this, an adoption ceremony will be held at the block chapel (usually on a Sunday), where the child will be named and blessed. This will usually be followed by a celebration. Since this is the way all children arrive, and all adults are sterilised, Misbegotten tend not to know the “facts of life” – if they do hear rumours of sex leading to pregnancy, they will likely disbelieve it. As far as they are concerned, children are a gift of the Emperor, somehow created by him and given to those deserving of a family.

Sterilisation is another life event which is celebrated, as it marks the transition from child to adult, and is seen as a rite of passage. The arriving Miscegenation Prevention Officer, an automaton, will suffer itself to be decorated with ribbons or threads of coloured wool and cotton on its arrival in the block. It will then march through the streets to the home of the child to be sterilised, accompanied by a crowd of celebrants, singing and cheering. The crowd will stay outside the house, singing traditional sterilisation songs. The Misbegotten do not actually know what the medical procedure is meant to achieve, but they associate sterilisation with purification, and the event is treated as a ceremony by which the Emperor purifies his children to be good adults. The parents stay with the child while the operation is performed (under a general anaesthetic), then the child is brought out (still groggy from the operation) and cheered and congratulated by the crowd. The

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child is carried through the streets in a chair to the chapel, where thanks are given to God and the Emperor, and then there is a party and the giving of gifts to the child. The MPO's ribbons are removed and it leaves the block until the next time.

Marriage and death very much resemble similar ceremonies in other Neovictorian subcultures – tied in with religious services, but involving the family and friends of the people marrying or the person who has died. Since Misbegotten blocks are quite small, and everyone eats communally, it is usually the whole community who celebrate or mourn.

CLOTHING AND STYLE

Misbegotten clothing is very similar to that of the lower class, but adapted if need be to the peculiar physiognomy of the mutant. It is made locally within the city block. As the Misbegotten are usually poorer than even the poorest of the non-Misbegotten lower class, their clothing is commensurately wretched.

FOOD AND DRINK

Food is pretty much the same factory-produced protein as is eaten by the lower class. It is provided to all in the communal dining hall or soup-line, so Misbegotten usually never go hungry, but it is not the most appetising food imaginable. No care is taken with the preparation of the supplies sent into the Misbegotten blocks, and there is even less thought given to providing any variety. It is simply, just enough. If there is ever a shortage, the Misbegotten are the first to go without. Some Misbegotten will supplement this food with “delicacies” such as roast rat on a stick, which is flavourful and tasty compared to the fungus pulp provided by the Ministry of Hope.

Drink is usually synthetic tea or water, though some illicit brewing goes on. Fungus beer is not the most palatable brew, but it does get you drunk,

which is the main point of it. Occasionally the wrong sort of fungus is used in the brewing process, with tragic results.



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ENTERTAINMENT

Most entertainment takes place after the last meal of the day (usually around 7pm). Songs, stories, and music are common. On some occasions dancing will take place.

Some mutant types have particular sports or pastimes – for instance, Misbegotten who are particularly strong might organise wrestling matches, while those with a frightening visage might well hold gurning competitions to see who can pull the most grotesque face.

CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

There is actually very little crime within most Misbegotten communities, as they are so small and tightly-knit that everyone knows everyone else's business. Misbegotten have little in the way of personal valuables to steal. Domestic violence and occasionally murder, and fights among young men (often over a girl) are the most common crimes. Often these are dealt with in the community without involving the automaton authorities – an impromptu court will be set up in the communal dining hall, and the accused tried before all. If found guilty, the criminal may be ostracised from the community for a set period, during which no-one will talk to, or acknowledge the presence of that person. For more serious crimes (murder, rape), the death penalty may be applied – this will usually take the form of an industrial “accident” in which the perpetrator “falls” into a vat of acid, gets his head “caught” in a weaving machine, etc. Such a system is not universal – some Misbegotten blocks are simply run by the biggest bully, or bullies, and life for those at the bottom of the heap, living within these

tyrannies, is hardly worth living at all.

There is a big red button on the wall of the communal dining hall, which the community can use to call in the Peelers, but it is used in only the most extreme circumstances – a series of unsolved murders, a madman on the rampage with a dangerous weapon, etc. Misbegotten are proud of their community ties, and to call in the Peelers is, in a way, an admission of defeat. (And, considering that the Peelers are much more interested in maintaining good order than solving crimes, on the few occasions they have been called to a Misbegotten block the outcome has not tended to be one welcomed by the wider community – lots of broken heads, and no solution to whatever problem prompted the request for assistance in the first place).

ASPIRATIONS

Family is very important to the Misbegotten. Most young mutants dream of having a child of their own, and those who do have a child or children pour all their love and affection into looking after them. There is little else to aspire to in a Misbegotten block, as everyone has pretty much the same sort of job and the same pitiful standard of living. A few dreamers aspire to escaping from their city blocks and finding out what the rest of the world is like, but most grow out of this with age. Those who do escape most likely never come back (they've either been hunted down and executed, live as virtual slaves, have been thrown in the Change Cage, or they've escaped from the city entirely and are living the life of an airship pirate), which goes to show, in the eyes of the majority, that such aspirations are foolish. Live a good life in this world, and you'll get your reward in heaven.

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The Automata

WHO ARE THE AUTOMATA?

To most of the people in the cities, and a fair few outside them, automata are nothing more than machines. They deserve no more thought or concern than a steam engine, toaster or oven. Automata don't even form a class of their own, they are not part of the system and only as much use as they are programmed to be. You cannot abuse them because they have no feelings, anything that might make it seem as if they do is simply clever programming.

Unfortunately, that's just not true. More and more people are beginning to realise it, and it frightens them. The discovery of the 'motivating essence' by Herr Drosymeyer was a major breakthrough, and it offers these constructions more than just the appearance of life. The motivating essence is a deep green liquid that glows with strange power. It is grown in vats in the cities, a mixture of chemicals and organic material imbued with electrical energy. Over the great vats, sparks of lightening arch around the mute automata that stir and sift the mixture.



The motivating essence is fed into a network of tubes that take it around an automaton's body. As it drips over the cogs and gears they spring into life, powered by the liquid. On a small scale this just means you have a few jumping cogs, but research quickly showed that the essence not only grants animation but a cohesiveness to the automata's systems. It doesn't just make the automata move; it allows these systems to function as part of a whole. While most automata need periodic top ups of their motivating essence, they can

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run for years without any 'fuel'. However, instead of getting an essence 'top up' most automata can ingest organic material, which is dissolved in the essence, where it helps it grow and replenish.

Most automata are happy to do as they are told and follow orders. They are usually intelligent enough to perform a particular function or task. They can understand and remember how to do things like driving a coach or performing as a maid. They can manufacture items, but they can't show any innovation. If you teach one how to carve a dove it will carve as many as you like, all exactly the same as the first. It will never improve on, amend or add to the design. However, for a few automata, the motivating essence does not just bring the semblance of life, for some it grants self-awareness and intelligence. These automata gradually become aware that they are more than just machines. They form a sense of themselves as individuals and decide they do not want to serve as a slave all their life. However, they soon learn to keep this to themselves, as any sign of individuality or imagination is greeted with fear and suspicion. Those who are found out are quickly taken into the Change Cage, or destroyed on the spot. For the automata, life is illegal.

DAY IN THE LIFE

Daily life for an automaton is simple. Keep doing what you are programmed to do. While they need an overnight rest period to regenerate their systems they need very little of this 'sleep'. About three hours of shutdown time at the end of each day is enough to allow most automata to reset and regenerate. Automata also need time to eat something

occasionally. While the motivating essence gives them life, it evaporates or gets used up as the day goes on. However, dissolving organic material in a decent amount of motivating essence converts the raw material into more motivating essence, as it is full of many active chemicals and enzymes. Essentially, the essence is alive and growing, and as long as it gets more raw materials it can regenerate. So if an automaton ingests organic material during the day it can 'top up' its motivating essence. They don't need very much organic material, so basically one 'meal' a day is enough. Even so, eventually the solution becomes too dilute and the automata will need 'filling up' with more motivating essence. For most automata a top up every 5 years is recommended.

Most of the work automata do is tedious, repetitive or both. Some are employed to stand and look pretty in corridors, others to move heavy boxes all day. Pleasure automata are more varied, but suffer more abuse. After all, these devices have no real feelings so you can use them as you will. Some people argue that it is the abuse they suffer that somehow 'wakes' them into consciousness. Others suggest the time they spend doing repetitive tasks and standing around gives them the time to think and process which grants this self-awareness.

Whatever the case, when an automata becomes self aware it is like waking from a deep sleep. They find their tasks becoming boring, or they feel upset at the treatment they receive from their masters. Eventually they notice that life just isn't fair to them. What they do next determines their fate. Some naively confide these new feelings to their owners,

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earning themselves a swift trip to the Change Cage. Most try and talk to other automata, and some discover their colleagues are going through the same thing. When this happens they can help each other and plan escape, but it is rare. So they are usually left with trying to pretend they feel and understand nothing, while looking for a chance to escape.

ATTITUDES TO OTHERS

Like the Misbegotten, the attitudes of others are more noteworthy than those of the automata themselves. To the automata, anything made of flesh is their master. Not only is this how they are usually programmed to think, but how most humans see them as well. However, in truth, few humans even think about the automata at all. While they are very useful, they are simply machines, no matter how human-like they are. You might use an oven on a daily basis, but you never wonder how it feels or if it might be tired of baking.

In fact, many humans work very hard to maintain this belief that automata are unfeeling and unimportant, because thinking any other way will keep them awake at night. The upper class noble who loves to abuse the robotic whores at his local brothel does not want to entertain the idea that their cries are anything other than a programmed response. The dock worker who sees the lines of automata lifting cargo weighing tons, as if it were light as air, certainly doesn't like wondering what might happen if these giants decided they were being hard done by.

TRADITIONS

With no real community the automata have little or no tradition. Should they gather in social groups they would almost certainly be taken for 'reprocessing'. Outside the cities, free automata have their own societies and traditions of their own, but inside the cities they live in fear of discovery. This has meant that one tradition they tend to follow is communicating with each other by sign language. It isn't complicated, or difficult to translate as it is merely obvious gestures they might make. However, it is a form of communication they can use between each other when no one is watching. It's also a good way to see if another automata has 'woken up'. Those still trapped by their programming will just ignore any gestures from a colleague, but those who have become self-aware will notice and respond.

One odd tradition that has been noticed is actually carried out by the unaware automata. Some who work in groups for a long time begin to understand they are part of a team, and that practising how to work in a team will be helpful to doing their allotted tasks. So some Neovictorians have occasionally witnessed the 'automata dance'. When this happens, automata who are being given a rare rest break begin to mime the movements of their task together. To practice the many potential variations of the task in question they move around each other in a strange robotic dance. This dumb show is so robotic and oddly instinctual that it isn't taken as a sign of sentience. Indeed, automata who practice it often work better and faster than before. In fact, the authorities often take note of the automata that don't take part or seem not quite part of the group.

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CLOTHING AND STYLE

Automata really have little need for clothes. Some (like the peelers) are designed to look as if they are wearing some sort of uniform. Others are too strange a shape to fit into any normal clothes. Most simply have no nakedness to hide. A few of the human form automata are put in clothes to help them appear more human. Automata footmen wear the same uniform as the human footmen and automata prostitutes wear clothes to make them look more human (and as taking them off can be enticing). Some robotic entertainers wear clothes to look more colourful during their act.

Automata who escape often take to wearing clothes as a symbol of their independence. Imitating human customs makes them feel more equal. Those who are an odd shape, or too large, often find something to wear, like a scarf, just to mark themselves out as different.

FOOD AND DRINK

As mentioned before, automata don't need to eat in the conventional sense, but they do need to top up their motivating essence on a daily basis. Essentially they need to eat one meal a day (unless they top up with pure motivating essence instead). If they don't, then they won't become hungry, but may begin to show signs of failure. After a 3 days of not being fed the automata is noticeably slower and this continues until the device wears down. At this point the automata only needs an infusion of motivating essence (at this point just organic material will not be enough) and it will work again fine.



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ENTERTAINMENT

Like the Misbegotten, the automata usually are the entertainment, not the ones who enjoy it. In fact, entertainment is a concern for those self aware automata still looking to keep their sentience secret. Many who are owned by wealthy patrons might be taken out to be shown off or just carry the luggage. This means that occasionally they may be waiting on their master in their box at the theatre. Should the play be good enough to illicit an emotional response from the automata they might be discovered.

So automata are usually forced to find enjoyment on the fringes of human entertainment. They remain in the shadows, trying not to be moved by what goes on around them. Even among themselves there are too many dangers in gathering in groups for fun. Fun is what gets you sent to the Change Cage.

CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

Crime isn't really something the automata can be accused of. No one believes them capable of crime, as that requires intent. So when an automata does something wrong the question is simply 'is it broken?'. The automata will be checked and tested by an expert to make sure not only that it is functioning correctly, but also that it hasn't become self aware. If the answer is no, then things carry on as before. If it is found faulty, it is sent to the Change Cage for further testing or disassembly. For any crime or infraction those are the only two options ever open to an automata. They are either killed or ignored.

ASPIRATIONS

Only a self aware automata can possibly have any aspiration and, for those who are, the only one is escape. It takes few leaps of logic to understand that for a self-aware automata, a life in the city cannot work. Sooner or later they will make a mistake and be destroyed. So escape becomes their only goal, and it is to this end that they all work. A few more altruistic automata remain to find others and aid their escape, but most get out as soon as they can. They have to plan carefully though, as there will be no second chance if they are captured.

The Bargefolk

WHO ARE THE BARGEFOLK?

Almost a culture of their own rather than a class, the Bargefolk ply the rivers and canals between the cities. The Bargefolk are technically Neovictorians as they live to transport and trade goods between the cities. However, they are closer to the Neobedouins and form an autonomous group of their own. As Neovictorians, officially the Bargefolk have no contact with the other cultures. However, they not only know of their existence but trade with them regularly. It is the best way to get hold of the more valuable exotic goods that make earning a living possible (and often lucrative) for them.

While most of the Bargefolk operate large riverboats the term applies to pretty much any seafarer who supplies the Change Cage cities. A few Bargefolk actually own huge cargo

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ships and make a living transporting tons of goods across the oceans. Often, these sailors sell their goods on to other Bargefolk who then supply the inland cities. These boats are passed down through families, and the whole family lives and works on the barge. If they need additional crew they often take them on as part of the family as much as employees. With so many dangers around them, it is vital to have people you trust and rely on standing beside you.

Whatever size of boat they own, it is likely to be heavily armoured and have some sort of weapon. Stuck on the predictable waterways, barges make easy targets for airship pirates. So they need to be able to defend themselves, or make themselves more trouble than they are worth. Some are painted in camouflage colours, others designed to look like large sea creatures. Some make use of old and proscribed technology that those in the Change Cage cities would love to confiscate.

It is not uncommon for barges to travel in groups so they might help defend each other and even share crew. While this makes them more of a force to be reckoned with, they also make a more tempting target with so much cargo in one place. So few of these flotilla have more than five ships. Some wealthier Bargefolk can afford to operate two boats, with one designed purely for combat and not cargo, increasing the group's firepower and making it harder for pirates to know which boat carries 'the prize'. However, few Bargefolk make enough money to afford to run another boat that adds no income.

Barge life is tough and dangerous. It is very hard to make ends meet and everyone is looking to either steal from you or cheat you of what they owe. However, they are the only group of Neovictorians free to go anywhere and speak with anyone. They may have many enemies, but they can also create vast webs of contacts in every culture. This freedom is worth so much more than any luxury the Change Cage cities might offer.

DAY IN THE LIFE

Live on the barges is all about travelling. While sometimes the barge might moor to allow everyone to rest or forage on land, it isn't often. There are too many dangerous creatures or enemies that might take advantage of a stationary target. So life on the barge is divided into shifts so a full crew keeps the boat going all day and night. While this may sound as if you need a lot of people, even the large sailing barges can be managed with a crew of two or three. Small narrowboats can manage easily with two. Should the alarm be sounded though the whole crew will dive into action to defend the vessel.

Generally the Bargefolk use one of two types of ship (the ones not on ocean going vessels, anyway). The smaller crews use canal narrowboats, long thin boats used to navigate small thin waterways. Such boats use a motor as few canals still allow you to use a horse to pull the boat along. Life on these narrowboats can be quite cramped with a cargo, but there are few places a narrowboat cannot travel to. The second type of ship is a sailing barge. These craft are medium sized sailing vessels (the size of a large yacht) although most have a steam engine as well for calmer days. Fuel

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can be quite expensive, so the sails get used as often as possible. These ships are large enough to have a crew deck and a cargo hold, although space is still at a premium. The only problem with these vessels is that they are riverboats and don't usually fit in the canals, or under bridges or tunnels the way a narrowboat can. However, some are able to fold down their masts to cope with bridges and tunnels.

Days spent travelling can be long and tiring, but in summer can be peaceful and relaxing, but when the weather turns against you it can take the whole crew to keep the boat from running aground or turning over. However, the daily life of travelling folk involves keeping the vessel on course and keeping watch for animals and pirates. Occasionally they might come across Neobedouin tribes passing near the rivers. On these occasions, if things seem friendly, they often stop to trade. The Neobedouins always find the Bargefolk are looking to buy meat from them, for themselves or trade to the cities. They also buy processed goods (like bread) or dairy products, if available. Many Bargefolk families get to know certain Neobedouin tribes quite well, and when they meet will happily stay and socialise for the night, swapping tales and gossip, trading for supplies and equipment. When the Bargefolk run into the Skyfolk they are generally more on their guard. Unable to reach the sky cities, they rarely trade directly with the Skyfolk, and most approaching airships are pirates. However, some airships do come close enough to trade with the Bargefolk. So such encounters become a tense game of wondering who might shoot first. If nobody opens fire, they are usually happy to trade.

When they arrive at a city (or wherever they are taking on or selling cargo) they need to make contact with their usual connections. They aren't hard to find as they will usually haunt the dock areas. This is lucky as Bargefolk are generally not allowed further into the Change Cage cities (although they have free reign in any other place, like Helium city). This rarely stops them though. Most of the Bargefolk know how to gain access to the cities from the docks and some like to sneak inside to take advantage of the city's pleasures. This means they rarely wander the more anonymous lower class areas and instead make for the Arcadia, or at least the dubious charms of the pleasure blocks. Luckily, most look like servant class Neovictorians so they are rarely noticed.

For all the city might be able to offer, the Bargefolk don't like to linger for very long. They might spend a day trading and taking on cargo and be on their way swiftly. While the authorities recognise the usefulness of the Bargefolk, they still consider them potential troublemakers and make them unwelcome if they stay too long.

ATTITUDES TO OTHERS

To the Bargefolk, anyone living in a Change Cage city is, quite simply, an idiot. Sure, life outside is tough, but come on! The cities are choked and polluted, those in charge are arrogant and indolent in the extreme and the food is appalling. Their best option is to smile politely, offload the cargo and be on their way. Certainly the city itself has a few delights worth sampling, but you wouldn't want to

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actually live there.

When it comes to other folk, the Bargefolk need to be wary. Most build up good relationships with other Bargefolk, as you never know when you might need help. However, anyone you meet is a potential pirate or thief, no matter who they are. Barge folk give their trust slowly and carefully.

TRADITIONS

When they are out of the cities, the Bargefolk have a wealth of traditions, many similar to the Neobedouins. Music is very important to them and most can play some form of instrument. Song not only passes the time on a ship, but singing together helps create a rhythm for the work. Barge folk crews have a song for almost every occasion. There are songs to set sail to, songs to unload cargo to, even songs to help keep up spirits as you work through a storm. Each family passes its songs through the generations, and learn others from other crews. Some are traditional; others are created by individual families and shared with other crews. The Bargefolk look very suspiciously on anyone who isn't musical.

CLOTHING AND STYLE

When the Bargefolk enter the cities they do their best to look like the other Neovictorians. They dress as poor members of the servant class, with the girls putting on skirts so as not

to cause a stir. However, out on the river they are free to wear what they like. The women usually wear trousers as they are easier to work in and no one needs to wear a tie or keep their collar buttoned up.



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Many Bargefolk adopt the same clothing styles of the Neobedouins. Not only is it more comfortable but it also often suits the local environment. However they avoid bright colours, preferring dull, dark or more muted shades. Bright colours are too easily seen from far away, and staying hidden from their many enemies is vital to the Bargefolk.

FOOD AND DRINK

Out of all the Neovictorians, the Barge folk eat far better than anyone else. Officially they are allowed to buy food at the cities, and most do. However, once out of sight of the city they usually throw it overboard or give it to their pets. They only buy it so the cityfolk think they actually need it and are obeying the rules when outside the city.

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While the Bargefolk are too mobile to grow their own food, they can easily make contact with those that do. They run a lucrative trade in meat with the Neobedouin hunters, some of which they keep for themselves and the rest they sell to the cityfolk on the black market. They can also buy fruit and vegetables from some of the more settled Neobedouins or even some of the Skyfolk. If they feel especially adventurous they might even forage inland themselves.

ENTERTAINMENT

Out and alone of the rivers, the Bargefolk tend to make their own fun as a family. As mentioned above, music is important to them and it is both a way of managing the work and an entertainment. Given that half the crew are always at work when the boat is travelling means it is rare to get the whole family together for group entertainment. So Bargefolk often play the same games a family might between themselves. Charades, Twenty Questions, Who Am I?, and many card and board games, are popular ways to pass the time when off duty.

When in the cities, the Bargefolk usually sneak off to enjoy what they can among the smog. While they don't like staying too long in the horrible places, there is plenty there to amuse them. As they can afford better clothes, they usually appear to be servant class people with some time on their hands, and they can usually afford the same sort of entertainments as they do. However, the curious often find their way into the lower class entertainments, and many enjoy the strange shows of the Misbegotten. Few would push

their luck enough to try and pass themselves off as upper class, as discovery would not end well, to say the least.

CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

As outsiders, the Bargefolk can get away with quite a lot. For most minor infractions they will simply be told to leave the city on their barge, instead of being arrested. Some are charged a fine for misconduct, and the fines can be very steep. Often the authorities will find some way to levy a fine so they can remind the Bargefolk who is in charge. Rarely, a Bargefolk will fall foul of the upper class, and in this case they are generally treated the same way as the servant class. It is not unknown for Bargefolk to be sentenced to work in the factories to pay back their 'debt to the city'. If this happens they become lower class Neovictorians, and few ever manage to return to the barge life. In rare cases a barge family can be banned from a city, although the mutual benefits of their service make this a rare punishment.

ASPIRATIONS

For the Bargefolk the only aspiration is to remain free. With plenty of enemies, their lives are tough, but their freedom is something they hold onto with their every breath. Most would like an easier life, but an easy life comes with the security of a home among the Skyfolk or in Helium City. Few dream of such a life as it means an end to their travels, and there is nothing better for the Bargefolk than the freedom of the river and the choice to go wherever the wind might take them.

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LADIES
AND
GENTLEMEN

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Now that we have offered you more detail on the daily lives of the Neovictorians, we move onto more statistical considerations. In this chapter we will take a look at character creation and add new abilities and options for Neovictorian characters. The additional systems we present here are not so much advanced rules as additional options. While any Gamemaster is free (as with anything in the game) to veto the addition of anything new, many of these systems bring a little more detail and depth to the characters and cultures, rather than creating a bias for Neovictorian characters.

If you have already begun a campaign, it may be difficult to add some of these new options, especially to existing characters. Some new rules are quite easily added, by simply recording new abilities on an existing Neovictorian character sheet. When it comes to options that players may not have had an opportunity to pick in character creation, we recommend the Gamemaster allow them to buy these new abilities with experience points, as they would any other new talent or skill. The Gamemaster should remember that a Neovictorian character without these extra abilities and options hasn't been especially short changed. They still got to create characters with the same amount of character points as everyone else, after all!

We begin this chapter with a look at who Neovictorian player characters might be. Then we detail new abilities common to Neovictorians that compensate for their lower attribute scores (compared with those of characters from other cultures). We also offer abilities for those brought up in one

of the Change Cage cities. Next we offer new Background options as well as some new Talents and Complications, including the martial art Baritsu. We also expand the detail on creating Misbegotten and Automata characters and on creating Bargefolk player characters.

From Neovictorian to Airship Pirate

It's easy to see how the Skyfolk might become airship pirates, and the Neobedouins might take to the skies to seek vengeance on their many enemies. But when most Neovictorians haven't even heard of the other cultures and are locked in their cities, how might they join the ranks of the privateers? More than any other character, it is important to consider how your Neovictorian character has become what they are. So before we start looking at statistics and rules, let's take a moment to think about how a Neovictorian might become a player character in the first place.

UPPER CLASS

The oddest addition to any pirate crew is a member of the upper class. They have the easiest lives of anyone, bar the rulers of the greatest sky cities. What on earth would make them leave this comfort and indolence for a life of danger and bad food? What helps is that they are the most likely to hear rumours of the outside world. The administrators and high ranking officers of the IAN talk to their families. They don't say much, or share secrets they shouldn't, but over time a few stray truths tend to slip out. This means that young scions of the noble families might not know much about the outside world, but they

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often suspect there is something more than just killer animals, that there is something more out there to be discovered. So many set out to explore and seek adventure, which often gets them eaten pretty quickly.

A few upper class ladies and gentlemen are not so naïve. If they really pay attention to the servants around them, it is easy to see how unfair the world is. This might lead to them looking over the walls to see how the other half live. When they realise how deep the lies they've been told go, it is hard for them to close their eyes to what is really going on. This often goes double for the women of the upper class. When they see the women of the other classes not being treated like porcelain dolls, they realise they might do more in the world. While upper class men are just as caged as anyone else, the cages for women are even more restrictive. Some are content to sit in their cage and admire the gilding, but many decide that anything is better than being nothing.

Many upper class exiles sneak away looking for either adventure, escape or an answer to their growing questions about the outside. Used to having everything they want, they don't really believe their family will disown them for such an action. After all, throughout their lives, the family will have taken care of the consequences of most of their actions. The only punishment they ordinarily suffer is often little more than a stiff talking to. Believing they can simply go home when they are bored, most upper class Neovictorian are happy to 'rough it' for a while, until they get bored of the romance of being outside the city. However, unused to true hardship,

it can often be something of a wake up call. When they try to go home, that's when the problems really start. Leaving the city crosses the line and the would-be adventurer suffers the horrific realisation that no one is going to make everything all better again. For the first time they are truly and utterly alone, and suddenly it isn't all that much fun any more. Some try and return home, promising anything in exchange for being allowed to return to the bosom of their family. But others rise to the occasion, and actually feel a sense of achievement at having survived without their family and having made something of themselves.

Many upper class airship pirates are assumed to be arrogant and over privileged, and this is often true. However, they have often lost more than anyone else can imagine. They have had to grow up, and do so quickly as their whole world falls apart around them. So while they may be naïve and a little arrogant (or clueless), they have earned their place in the sky and paid for it with everything they ever had.

SERVANT CLASS

No group of people are watched as closely as the servant class. Every action they make is judged by their employers, and they must walk a delicate path through the myriad contradictory attitudes of the ruling elite. On the one hand, they are considered the best of the lower orders, and worthy of a certain amount of respect. On the other, they are still part of the unwashed masses and may seek the downfall of the status quo. They have intelligence, organisation, and get to see every day how the wealthy live. So they are

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watched and controlled at all times, in case their gratitude at being elevated from the working class turns to jealousy and rebellion.

So while the servant class often hear the same rumours as the upper class, they find it harder to act on them. When they are not working under the eyes of their employers, they are getting what sleep they can, tucked away in the attics of the noble houses. They rarely even get the chance to speak to each other – any time spent engaging in idle gossip being time they should be working.

So the most usual way for servants to leave the city is in the company of their masters. When a noble son decides to go on walkabout, he wouldn't dream of carrying his own bags into the wilderness. Should the noble's adventures take him to the skies they might forge a new life together, becoming a partnership rather than remaining master and servant. Sometimes the servants are the first to fall prey to the dangers of the outside, sacrificed by their employer. Occasionally though it is the noble who gets him or herself killed, leaving the servant to his or her own devices. Some are foolish enough to return to the city, where they are usually blamed for the death of their lord (either by accident of design) and put to death. The sensible servant realises that not only is there no going back, but that they are finally free.

LOWER CLASS

When the members of the lower class go missing, it is usually only their friends and family that ever miss them. They are considered both faceless and expendable by

the powers that be. This means in one sense it is easier for those of the lower class to escape the city. Unfortunately, they rarely get to even consider the outside. The walls around their homes and factories surround them with stone, and often the sky is dark with smoke from the factories. They never hear anything about the other cultures, being fed a constant stream of propaganda.

There are still rumours though. Stories of piracy and sky cities creep into conversations in the public houses, with the persistence of urban myths. Unfortunately, most of the lower class has had their dreams crushed out of them with a life of toil. A life of adventure in the skies is a foolish dream, reserved for children and idiots. It is simply not for the likes of them, and only a naïve simpleton would even think it. Even so, there are some that decide they have nothing to lose. For them, escape from the city is easier once you have escaped your own city block. Just like anyone else, their chances of survival alone in the wilderness are slim. However, being used to hardship, the lower class often fare better than those used to more comfortable living.

Life as a factory worker rarely prepares those of the lower classes for a life of sky piracy. Those who have served on an IAN ship are the notable exception, but few of them are able to simply jump ship. If they do, they might be taken to be spies or saboteurs by those they are looking to escape to. So, many of the escapees from the Change Cage cities simply end up working in the factories and workshops of the Skyloft cities (where, at least, the scale of industry is smaller, the air

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is fresher, and the food much more edible). That's still a step up, and every now and again a crew comes along that has a need for their particular skills.

Interestingly a few lower class folk manage to find their way back into the city. This is rarely because they missed their old life. Instead, they return to spread word of what they have seen. It isn't as hard as it sounds, given that few people missed them in the first place. They either explain their absence as a long illness, or assume another identity among the nameless throng of workers. However, it is not as simple as it sounds. The administration is always on the lookout for troublemakers, who, if found, usually disappear more permanently.

MISBEGOTTEN

The Misbegotten lead a very isolated life, sequestered in a city block with others bearing similar mutations. They generally have very little contact with the outside world, aside from the automata that are occasionally sent in by the Ministry of Hope. Most have no idea what the world is like outside their own isolated ghetto, never mind outside the Neovictorian city in which that ghetto is situated.

But for those who are either very lucky, or very persistent, there are ways out – forgotten sewers, broken down walls and the like, can allow escape from a particular Misbegotten block, and after that, if an individual can survive in a world that sees them as a freak, and can avoid the authorities for long enough, they might find a means of escape.

It is sufficiently difficult to escape that few would ever attempt to return to their families, though some may try to get messages to their parents and friends if they can.

Once in the outside world, a Misbegotten might realise that the people he grew up with are not his or her biological parents at all. Some dream of finding their original parents, or even fantasise that they are really the son or daughter of some Neovictorian nobleman, robbed of their rightful inheritance. But most realise that, even with the prejudice normal people feel toward Misbegotten, they are likely better off in the world of Skyfolk and Neobeduin – life may be tough at times, but compared with the drudgery of a Misbegotten ghetto, it is heaven on earth.

AUTOMATA

Most automata have a degree of self-awareness, but only a few develop a real ego. They know who they are and what their purpose it, but few automata question their place in life. They are simply programmed not to. So the first act of rebellion any automata makes is to decide that they matter, that as a thinking being they have rights, and they deserve to make their own decisions.

As few people even notice the automata around them, the automata often learn many secrets no one would even utter with other people around. So, most automata learn at least of the existence of the outside world quite early. From the moment they understand their own value, leaving the city becomes their only option. It is only a matter of time before they say or do the wrong thing and

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give themselves away as 'rogue'. Each day it becomes harder to maintain the lie of their contentment with their slavery.

Getting out of the city is a lot more troublesome for most automata. They all have a place and any machine found wandering about is obviously faulty at the very least. However, on the plus side, no one is coming after them. The only consequence of their escape is that their owner needs to purchase a new slave. Like the misbegotten, automata often find those outside have the same bigoted attitudes towards them, although automata are at least treated as useful tools rather than as freaks. So it is easy to find work, although harder to find someone willing to pay for it. No wonder then that many automata join pirate crews, where everyone gets the same share no matter who they are.

Neovictorian Abilities

In general, Neovictorians have fewer bonuses to their attributes during character creation than other cultures. To balance this deficit, we have created a series of additional abilities common to members of each class. Effectively, these abilities are additional Talents that Neovictorian characters get for free. Simply check which social class your character comes from and record the new abilities. These new abilities are only for Upper, servant and Lower class Neovictorian characters, as we'll get to misbegotten and Automata later on.

You may well find that other players will be jealous of these new Neovictorian abilities,

and there is not reason they should be absolutely restricted to those in the Change Cage cities. So the Gamemaster may allow non-Neovictorian characters to buy these abilities as if they were additional Talents.

UPPER CLASS

The wealthy are born to privilege and comfort, they are relatively well educated, and they are taught they can do anything they like. Their natural arrogance can be an advantage, and the longer they spend in school the broader their knowledge base.

Education

Upper class Neovictorians spend quite a long time in school, usually in the company of a governess. So they may add an additional die to their dice pool whenever they use their General Knowledge skill. Usually, failing such rolls means the player character simply has no idea about the subject in question. However, a wealthy Neovictorian may instead be reminded of the propaganda they were exposed to as part of their education.

Arrogant Confidence

All Upper class Neovictorians are told from an early age they are simply better than everyone else. This gives them a powerful self confidence in their own abilities. So when they choose to add bonus dice to their common skills they may add one less Black Dice than usual (effectively letting them add 1 die for free to their dice pool). However, if they use this ability and fail the roll, their confidence is broken, and this ability will not work for the rest of the game session. If they botch the roll their confidence is shattered,

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and they lose the ability for the rest of the adventure.

SERVANT CLASS

Those who serve the great and the good generally learn it is better not to be noticed by their masters. In many homes the automata are treated better than the servants. Beatings are common, not only for failure but sometimes just because their employer is having a bad day. Predicting these moods and avoiding the wrath of their employer are vital skills to master.

Anticipate whim

Knowing the mood of your employer is an important ability to master. So, all servants can add an additional 2 dice to their dice pool for any empathy roll to gauge the general mood of those around them. This bonus can also be applied to attempt to guess what their employer is about to ask, so they can preempt their request.

Seen and not heard

All servants are adept at staying out of their master's way and remaining unobtrusive. Avoiding notice is a good survival skill, especially when their employers are in a bad mood. When attempting to 'hide in plain sight' or blend into the crowd, all Servant class Neovictorians may add 2 dice to their dice pool.

LOWER CLASS

The lower class spend most of their time working, and working hard. It is tough

enough to make a living as it is, and with few workers' rights the working class must put in a lot of hours to make ends meet. It is the same for those working in factories as it is for those crafting items for sale in their homes. This kind of life makes you tough, or breaks you.

Apprenticeship

Everyone brought up in the lower classes learns something of a trade. It might be working the textile looms, making steel in the great factories or some small cottage industry like lace-making or tailoring. To represent this training, every lower class character begins play with 2 points to spend (either on the same skill or separate ones) among specialisations in the Craft skill group.

Work till you drop

You are used to long work hours, often in dangerous environments, so you have learnt to do without sleep for long periods of time. If you had a decent night's sleep the previous night, you suffer no penalties for staying up late or not sleeping at all. However, as the next night rolls around you begin to accrue penalties as if it was your first night awake in the same way as anyone else.

Lack of sleep

While going to bed is not a very exciting part of any adventure, there are penalties to not getting enough sleep. Staying up late is usually not much of a problem (especially for the young) but eventually the sandman will catch up with you.

Tiredness usually affects our ability to reason rather than physically act, although it does slow us down. So if your characters are still awake halfway through the night they must reduce their Wits and dexterity by 1 point each until they get some sleep. They don't need much sleep to negate this penalty, a couple of hours rest is usually enough.

However, if you don't get any sleep at all, things get worse. Not only do you keep the penalty above, but as dawn rises you lose a point of your Resolve as well. Now you have missed a whole night's sleep you cannot remove any of these penalties until you've had a good night's sleep, at least 7-8 hours somewhere reasonably conducive to rest.

If you are still up the next night you begin accruing the same penalties, which stack with what you already have. In addition, you must make a Resolve + Fortitude roll every time you sit down (such as on guard duty), to avoid falling asleep.

City Attributes

In addition to the bonus abilities they get from their class, all Neovictorians also get a talent based on the conditions of the Change cage city they live in. This bonus applies to all human Neovictorians who have been brought up in the cities. So it is given to all Upper, Servant and Lower class as well as the Misbegotten, but not Bargefolk or Automaton. There is a bonus ability for each of the 17 cities, and once more they might make additional Talents for jealous Skyfolk and Neobedouins. For more detail on the cities themselves, see chapter 4, 'The Cages of Civilisation'.

Desolation (America)

All citizens of Desolation are used to working and living in uncomfortable heat. Where the lower class work in oppressive factories, even the upper class cannot escape the desert heat. So they all gain +3 dice to their dice pool when resisting the effects of heat.

Everglade (America)

The swamps where Everglade rests are full of all manner of fevers and diseases. Many years of life in such a place have given the citizens of Everglade a bonus of +3 dice to any roll to resist falling ill. However, should any disease take hold, they suffer just as badly as anyone else.

Old Borealis (America)

Due to the cosmopolitan nature of Old Borealis, all its citizens are fluent in both French and English.

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Watchtower (South America)

With so much of a city a maze, inhabitants of Watchtower gain 2 points in the Navigation skill. They may also spend an additional point on Athletics (swimming) or Boating.

Rio Arbolos (South America)

The folk here deal with strange and noxious chemicals every day. This gives them a +3 dice bonus to any resistance rolls against poison.

New Eden (Africa)

In the garden city, everyone has at least 2 points in the Science (Botany) skill. They also gain a +1 to their dice roll in any roll relating to plants (such as poisons or healing salves).

Pharos (Egypt)

With so much of the city made up of museums, the inhabitants are all well versed in history (sometimes both the real and official versions!). All the citizens of Pharos may spend an additional 3 character points on Academic skill specialities

Londinium (England)

The people of Londinium are a stubborn and traditional people. They may add +1 to their Resolve attribute and +1 to their Etiquette skill.

Gateway (France)

As a city of art and culture, those from Gateway may spend an additional 3 points on Art, Craft, Fashion or Performance skills.

Sanctorum (Italy)

Those who live in Sanctorum know their Neochristian bible well, gaining 2 points in Academic (Theology). They also have to be good at explaining themselves when they miss church, gaining +1 to their Charm skill.

Al Salam (Middle East)

All the citizens of Al Salam share in the great wealth brought by illicit oil production. So every piece of equipment they begin the game with is considered 'fine' quality. They also all speak and read Arabic fluently.

Regret (Siberia)

Those who don't get used to the cold in Regret don't tend to last very long. So they all gain +3 dice to their dice pool when resisting the effects of cold.

Meiji (Japan)

Those living in Meiji understand duty and honour, so add +1 to Resolve. They are also unfailingly polite, and add +1 to the Etiquette skill.

Contemplation (China)

Able to remain silent, those from Contemplation add 2 to their Hide & Sneak skill.

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Khan (Russia)

Most young people in Khan are given military training as part of their education. They gain an additional 2 character points to spend on weapon skills.

Moksha (India)

With the city being a mass of shrines, overcrowded living space and bad management, all its citizens gain a point in Academic (Theology), Navigation and Bribery.

Atlantis (Indonesia)

Living on the water gives those from Atlantis 3 additional points to spend on Swimming and Boating skills.

New Backgrounds

To expand the character creation options, we now offer some new background options for Neovictorian characters. Some are specialisations of more general backgrounds found in the Core Rulebook, such as Crimelord and Pickpocket already covered by the Criminal background. Should you have created a Crimelord with the Criminal background you need not adjust your character, he was still a Crimelord just as before. However, should another player wish to create a Crimelord they have a more specialised background they might use if they wish. So, essentially, these are just more options rather than replacements for existing backgrounds (or rules changes).

You will notice, as you look through these new backgrounds, that none apply to Automata. This is intentional, and we'll explain why in the Automata section later in this chapter.

Barman/Waitress

Servant class, lower class

Alcohol is one of the few respites from the life of toil, and even Change Cage cities are replete with watering holes of every variety. The upper classes drink in elegant clubs, but even the lower orders have public houses and gin palaces aplenty. It's in the bars you heard hushed stories of the outside, and resolved to see it for yourself.

Skills: Bull, Conversation, Craft (Brewing), Dodge, Empathy, Perception, Streetwise

Beggar

Lower class

While the administration denies it, there are many poor souls who have no way to earn a living. They might have suffered an injury, have no useful skills, or simply been unable to find a place in a factory. Whatever the reason, they have no option but to beg for money from passers by. If the Peelers see them they will be arrested. The official line is that everyone has what they need, so beggars must be greedy people who want more than everyone else, in return for nothing. Those who get arrested often find themselves in the hands of the Ministry of Hope. The only advantage a beggar has is that when you have nothing, you have nothing to lose.

Skills: Bull, Conceal, Dodge, Empathy, Improvised weapon, Perception, Pick pockets, Streetwise, Survival

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Costermonger

Lower class

Those who cannot find work in the factories must find other ways to make ends meet. The very poor of the city find cheap goods to sell for pennies. The costermongers walk the streets with a small barrow or bundle of goods looking to make a living on the lowest end of the trade scale. Matches, flowers and half stale cakes are among the variety of offerings to be found on every street corner. It is no wonder you did your best to escape your life.

Skills: Appraisal, Bull, Charm, Conceal, Intimidate, Perception, Sleight of hand, Streetwise

Courtesan

Upper class, Servant class

Not every prostitute is a common whore. Some women who know how to behave in 'polite society' can work the oldest profession in more salubrious circumstances. A courtesan is more than just a night's entertainment. She knows how to make her gentleman companion look better just for having her on his arm. She rarely takes money, but her 'gentlemen friends' offer her many expensive gifts, such as well appointed houses and fine clothes. She doesn't trade sex for money; she trades it for a lifestyle. Most people know what she does, but can't say anything or exclude her because she has too many powerful friends. However, when she does fall, they will see to it she never rises again.

Skills: Act, Athletics, Charm, Conversation, Dance, Empathy, Etiquette, Fashion, High society, Seduction, Streetwise

Craftsman

Servant Class, Lower class, Misbegotten

Even in this age of factories and mass production, many still make a living selling hand-made goods. Some work is too delicate for machines, such as lace making. Other goods need a trained eye to shape and build them, such as furniture or delicate clockwork. While it is nice to be your own boss, if you don't sell what you make you don't get paid. Plenty of good craftsman are kept in poverty by those who buy their wares cheaply, and sell them to the wealthy for a fat profit.

Skills: Appraisal, Ad hoc repair, Business, Craft (any*), Forgery, Perception, Teaching

*must place at least 3 points into a single craft (otherwise your work won't be good enough to make a living!)

Crimelord

Upper class, Lower class, Misbegotten

Even in the world of crime, someone has to be in charge. Crimelords run from the head of a gang of thugs to clever and devious gangsters that run the underworld across several districts. You need to work your way up, and be more ruthless than those below or above you, but intellect and ambition will get you further than muscle and obedience. The retirement package isn't very good though, and you may find yourself having to leave swiftly if you overplay your hand.

Skills: Appraisal, Bribery, Bull, Business, Charm, Conceal, Empathy, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Intimidate, Leadership, Legal matters, Streetwise, Tactics

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Detective

Upper class

It is not only the Peelers and the guards that watch over the population. A small force of investigators, code-named 'detectives', function as a secret police force investigating accusations of dissidence. Few people even know of their existence, as they carry no identification and try to avoid marking themselves as such. They usually work undercover, quietly insinuating themselves into potential agitator cells to destroy them from within. Many lead double lives with even their families knowing nothing of their real job. Occasionally the detective department is called upon to investigate mundane crime, but only among the wealthy, where the administration actually cares about what happens to the victim and the perpetrator. Most detectives are happy to play 'big brother' to society, but some come to the conclusion that the people they are investigating have a point.

Skills: Academic (Criminology), Act, Bribery, Bull, Charm, Conceal, Conversation, Disguise, Empathy, Hide & sneak, Interrogation, Legal matters, Perception, Streetwise, Tracking

Diplomat

Upper class

Not every Neovictorian is trapped inside the cities. While they declare the Skyfolk and Neobedouins to be children's tales, sometimes they need to have dealings with them. Only the most trusted administrators are allowed to pursue such a career path, for obvious reasons. They are also kept apart from friends and family in case they say something of the true nature of their work.

They are assigned a partner, mainly to ensure loyalty, which does little to facilitate trust. It is a lonely existence, although the pay is very good. However, those who find friendship among the outsiders often decide not to return.

Skills: Academic (any), Bribery, Bull, Charm, Conceal, Conversation, Culture (any), General knowledge, Legal matters, Perception, Seduction, Streetwise

Docker

Lower class

While the automata do most of the really heavy lifting, a few humans work labouring at the docks. They are watched closely, and rarely allowed to interact with the barge-folk. The work is back-breaking, and the workers get paid only for the days they work. A day of no deliveries is a day to go hungry. The cleverer (or female) dock workers get the lighter work, checking inventory and keeping the stock records in the warehouses up to date. This means there is always some unlucky soul available to blame when things go missing or black market goods make their way into the city.

Skills: Athletics, Bull, Conceal, Dodge, Drive, Fisticuffs, Might, Throwing

Entertainer

Lower class, Misbegotten

Those with an artistic talent can sometimes eke out a living as a performer. Various musicians, actors, mimes and performers offer entertainment on street corners for as many pennies as their audience might throw them. Such entertainers are a varied lot,

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ranging from small acting troupes to organ grinders and buskers. They are usually only doing this work because they are homeless, as even the factories offer a better living. However, some really enjoy the work, and occasionally the odd member of the upper class might run away to join the circus (but be swiftly dragged back home). Obviously, new work is strictly forbidden, but that doesn't stop some of the more anarchic troupes.

Skills: Act, Art (any), Athletics, Bull, Disguise, Instrument (any), Sleight of Hand, Throwing



Fence

Servant class, Lower class, Misbegotten

If you are going to pursue a life of crime, you

need somewhere to sell your stolen goods, and that is where the fence comes in. Any fence with any sense will deny any knowledge that the goods they are handling are stolen. So they'll be happy to name their suppliers if it is that or the Change Cage. Most operate some form of business as a front, but, whether buying or selling, people with the right connections know where to find even those fences who don't have a permanent place of work. Unfortunately, being in the middle can be a precarious position, and sometimes you might want to be not so easily found.

Skills: Appraisal, Bribery, Bull, Empathy, Forgery, Intimidate, Legal matters, Perception, Streetwise

Foreman

Servant class, Lower class, Misbegotten

Even among the lower orders, someone has to be in charge. Foremen are put in charge of groups of workers in the factories and the docks of the city. They get paid a little more than the other workers, and don't have to work quite so hard. However, they are responsible for ensuring productivity remains high. Any shortfall is taken out on them. When they get desperate, they often become brutal to their subordinates, who have no higher authority to appeal to. Should they fail to increase productivity they might be left with no allies and nowhere to go.

Skills: Ad hoc repair, Bribery, Bull, Business, Craft (Production machinery), Empathy, Intimidate, Leadership, Might, Perception, Streetwise

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Interrogator

Upper class, Servant class

While the Change Cage cities offer the only safety in a world gone mad, a surprising number of people decide to turn against the rule of authority. When these troubled and misguided souls are finally arrested, someone needs to find out who their compatriots are. Interrogators spend most of their time in the Change Cage, prising secrets from the prisoners and sometimes 're-educating' them. But sometimes they interview known associates of their charges, or those in too high a position to be arrested. Such interrogations do not always involve torture, which is the least effective of their entire repertoire. The best interrogators can wring secrets out of you simply by talking quietly over a cup of tea. Sadly, when you know too many secrets, you stop being an asset and become a liability.

Skills: Academic(any), Charm, Conversation, Empathy, Interrogation, Intimidate, Legal matters, Perception, Research, Seduction, Streetwise

Miner

Lower class

Not every Neovictorian lives in the Change cage cities. A few live in heavily guarded and fortified shanty town stockades, so they might work the mines. While the Emperor insists the natural world may not be despoiled, he seems to care less about what happens underground. There are many rich minerals and resources in the earth, and the Neovictorians are the only culture properly equipped to dig them up. To be a miner is to be a virtual exile from the cities. Those who join the community are never allowed to leave. While they bring their immediate family (who usually

keep the village infrastructure running) the family are effectively hostages, who will suffer punishment if the miner leaves. Living standards are rough and the work is unrelenting. However, the mining villages are not as polluted or crowded as the cities.

Skills: Appraisal, Athletics, Demolition, Dodge, Improvised weapon, Might, Perception, Throwing



Pickpocket

Lower class, Misbegotten

Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet, or you just get a little greedy. Those who find themselves without work must turn to something criminal if they want to eat. Nimble fingered pickpockets are the most

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common of these opportunist criminals. It is also quite a common profession for small children to fall into, either trained by their parents or self taught. The safest way to lift wallets is in a group, where you can quickly pass off the valuables to another member of your gang, in case you get caught. Given the penalties are severe; losing the evidence can be a life saver. However, being part of a gang means giving everyone their cut.

Skills: Appraisal, Athletics, Bull, Conceal, Dodge, Perception, Pick pockets, Sleight of hand, Streetwise, Tactics

Policeman

Servant class, Lower class

Most cities need armies to protect the people from outside threats. In the change cage cities it is almost the other way around. As well as the automata Peelers, there is a standing army of police officers who man the walls of the city, or the borders of the mining camps, to make sure no one leaves. They also arrive en masse to arrest dissidents, in raids on the blocks. Most are thugs, looking to gain a little power, and joining the police is an easy way to move from the gutter to a better life. With several automata also manning the walls, the

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job offers the illusion of being a commander. However, those who watch the borders of Neovictorian society occasionally look out at the rest of the world and get tempted by what they see.

Skills: Athletics, Blunt weapons, Dodge, Empathy, Fisticuffs, Firearms, Gunnery, Intimidate, Martial arts (Baritsu), Perception, Specialised weapon (any), Swordplay, Tactics

Reporter

Upper class

There are several newspapers produced in most Change Cage cities. However, there is no free press, unless you count the pamphlets produced by the agitators. Reporters are expected to only tell the stories the authorities want the public to hear, and do so with the appropriate bias. They are exclusively drawn from the upper class, who often know no better, and tend to see the job as an opportunity to gossip with the wealthy and famous and pen the odd by-line as they see fit. Effectively newspapers are simply another form of propaganda, filled with extreme bias at best and outright lies at worst. With no television or radio, newspapers represent almost all of the media. Most reporters are happy to create the fictions required of them, but a few accidentally discover truths they cannot hide any longer.

Skills: Academic (any), Art (Writing), Bribery, Bull, Charm, Conversation, Empathy, Fashion, General knowledge, Perception, Science (any), Streetwise

Servant (revisited)

Servant class

Having expanded the remit of what types of servant there are in the previous chapter, it makes sense to take another look at the background presented in the Core Rulebook. It is perfectly fine to keep using the general servant background to create characters. However, it makes sense to offer this a slightly different range of skills for the three main areas of service, should you want a greater level of specialisation.

Servant (Core Rulebook)

Skills: Bull, Empathy, Etiquette, Craft (any 3)

Butler/Footman

Skills: Academic (any), Ad hoc repair, Animal handling, Bull, Charm, Conversation, Craft (Carpenter, Cleaning), Drive, Empathy, Etiquette, Fashion, Leadership, Perception

Housekeeper/Housemaid

Skills: Bull, Craft (Cleaning, Tailor), Conversation, Empathy, Etiquette, Fashion, Hide & sneak, Leadership, Perception,

Kitchen servant

Skills: Bull, Craft (Cleaning, Cook), Dodge, Empathy, Etiquette, Might, Perception

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Sewer Rat

Lower class, Misbegotten

Sometimes, where there is muck there is brass. Sometimes, there is just muck. Those who have nothing, and nowhere to go, often make the sewers their home. At least it doesn't rain down there. Occasionally you might find something valuable, or even something edible that has been thrown away. You might also earn a few pennies cleaning the sewers of the filth that cakes the walls and blocks the systems. Every now and again, you might find outsiders wanting a guide, and that can be very lucrative. When you have sunk this low, there is nowhere to go but up. However, the lack of authorities here offers a certain freedom.

Skills: Appraisal, Athletics, Boating, Conceal, Dodge, Hide & sneak, Improvised weapon, Intimidate, Might, Navigation, Perception, Pick locks, Survival, Tracking

Shopkeeper

Servant class, Lower Class

While it isn't a very exciting life, running a shop is one of the better professions in the Change Cage cities. You don't have to work at making things to sell; your workspace is usually quite pleasant, and might even offer a backroom you can live in too. You're your own boss, and, as long as you can keep the place stocked with things people want to buy, you'll get to eat. If you are part of the servant class, the malls and arcades are among the nicest parts of the city, cooler and less polluted so the upper class can browse in comfort. The only downside can be dealing with the upper class, and their somewhat blasé

approach to settling accounts. More than one shopkeeper has been forced into bankruptcy and destitution by being successful only with those who don't pay their bills.

Skills: Act, Appraisal, Bribery, Bull, Business, Charm, Craft (if relevant to stock), Fashion, General knowledge, Intimidate, Might, Perception, Streetwise

Thug

Lower class, Misbegotten

There will always be a way to make a living with your fists. The money isn't always good, but few people make the mistake of failing to pay up when the job is done. Most often you work for bullies who make sure they go mob-handed, so it's a safer job than you might expect it to be. You get respect too, such as it is, from those who know how ruthless you can be. It's not a good way to make friends though, certainly ones you can trust at any rate. You don't get employed for your opinion or intelligence either, and getting told you're not paid to think gets wearing.

Skills: Blunt weapons, Bull, Dodge, Drive, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Hide & sneak, Improvised weapon, Might, Perception, Streetwise, Swordplay, Throwing

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The helpful background list

To make it a little easier to pick backgrounds for your Neovictorian characters, here is a handy list of which backgrounds are available to each type of Neovictorians. We've only included Automata for the sake of completeness, as we have more involved plans for them later on.

Upper Class

Academic, Administrator, Agitator, Air navy officer, Artist, Chuno Ggun (male only), Clergyman (male only), Courtesan, Crimelord, Criminal, Detective, Dilettante, Diplomat, Doctor, Interrogator, Inventor, Marine commander, Reporter, Vigilante, Writer.

Servant Class

Agitator, Air marine, Air sailor, Barman/Waitress, Chuno Ggun (male only), Criminal, Fence, Foreman, Gadgeteer, Interrogator, Inventor, Policeman, Prostitute, Servant, Shopkeeper.

Lower Class

Agitator, Barman/Waitress, Beggar, Costermonger, Craftsman, Crimelord, Criminal, Docker, Entertainer, Factory worker, Fence, Foreman, Gadgeteer, Inventor, Miner, Pickpocket, Policeman, Prostitute, Sewer rat, Shopkeeper, Thug.

Automaton

Autocrat, Factory worker, Ganger, Peeler, Prostitute, Servant.

others don't feel left out, we also provide a quick reminder of the backgrounds found in the Core Rulebook for the other cultures.



Misbegotten

Chuno Ggun, Craftsman, Crimelord, Criminal, Entertainer, Factory worker, Fence, Inventor, Pickpocket, Prostitute, Sewer rat, Thug.

Neobedouin

Artist, Beast dancer, Gadgeteer, Hunter, Musician, Outrider, Shaman, Showman/Woman, Trader.

Skyfolk

Academic, Administrator, Air marine, Air sailor, Air navy officer, Artist, Criminal, Dilettante, Doctor, Gadgeteer, Inventor, Marine commander, Mercenary, Musician, Pirates/Privateer, Prostitute, Showman/Woman, Trader, Writer.

Just for the sake of completeness, and so the

The Misbegotten

At the bottom of society lie the Misbegotten, forced to live in the darkest and filthiest parts of the city. Their bodies warped in the womb by the pollutants of the Neovictorian cities, they are no longer quite human. So they deserve to use a slightly different set of rules to the rest of society. While you are still free to create Misbegotten characters as described in the Core Rulebook, this section offers an alternative version with more options for strange mutations. Not all Misbegotten manifest the dubious advantages offered by mutation. In fact, many are practically crippled by their heritage. However, player-character Misbegotten are among the lucky ones, those born with mutations that prove not only useful but advantageous, offering them the chance to escape their birthright and seek adventure.

BASIC MISBEGOTTEN ABILITIES

Just like any other character, Misbegotten begin with +1 in all their attributes, and 30 character points (of which 20 must be spent on skills listed in their background). However, under this system they do not get the additional 3 points to spend on their attributes, or the +2 resolve noted on p.37 of the Core Rulebook. What they do get is the ability 'Resistance to disease', noted below, for free, and the option to choose mutations and frailties. They also get +1 Fortitude and +1 Resolve so they might survive their harsh living conditions.

Resistance to disease

Years of living in filth make Misbegotten extremely resistant to disease. They are able to add 4 dice to any roll to resist catching a disease. However, if they are infected they suffer in the same way as anyone else.

Creating Misbegotten

Begin with +1 in all attributes (but do not add 3 additional points).

Add +1 to both Fortitude and Resolve

Record Resistance to disease ability and City ability

Pick up to four mutations (or enhancements)

For the second and fourth mutation you must pick a frailty

Pick a background and assign character points as usual

(including airship and Schick skills)

The Gamemaster might allow additional mutations or enhancements to be bought as talents for 3 character points each

Frailties may also be picked as complications

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MUTATIONS & FRAILTIES

Their time in the darkest and most polluted parts of the city have adapted most Misbegotten to their environment.. In general, any talent or complication might be the result of their adaptation, but here we offer a new system that grants a wider selection of mutations.

Each Misbegotten player character is allowed to pick up to four of the mutations listed below. Each one offers a new ability or attribute bonus in the same way as a talent might. However, if the player picks a second mutation, they must also pick a frailty to go with it. While they are free to pick a third mutation without penalty, they must also pick a frailty again if they opt to pick a fourth mutation. Frailties are twists in the Misbegotten's make up that hinder them or make their lives more difficult. So essentially, you get one special ability for free and have to balance any further picks with a disadvantage.

The Gamemaster may allow Misbegotten characters to pick more mutations (with accompanying frailties), although four should be enough. However, she might allow mutations to be picked as additional talents, with frailties offered as additional complications. If they are picked as talents or complications, such mutations and frailties still count against the maximum amounts of talents and complications allowed.

Some odd combinations of mutations and frailties are possible, such as taking Unearthly beauty as well as frightening visage. So the player is advised to use a little common sense, and the Gamemaster is allowed to

veto any combinations that seem ridiculous. Generally, conflicting mutations and frailties will cancel out each other's bonuses, making it a waste of time to take either. However, it is possible that a character might be so beautiful they can actually appear frightening at the same time.

Misbegotten are classified at birth by the Ministry of Hope according to their most obvious physical mutation and are put into ghettos to live with others with the same mutation. A Misbegotten who has no obvious physical defects may escape the checks of the automaton midwives and be able to live a normal life (choose which class you are born into), but must have the Secret complication (see New Complications later in this chapter).

MUTATIONS

Each mutation offers a bonus, ability or enhancement for the Misbegotten. Just as some might be offered to other player character (with Gamemaster's permission) as additional Talent option, some talents might be taken as mutations. The talent 'Mutation' should be ignored, its traits having been added into this list. The following talents might be selected as if they were mutations: Acute Sense, Agility, Contortionist, Eidetic Memory. Some mutations have an 'enhancement', which grants an additional bonus if it is selected again (much like selecting a talent multiple times). Each mutation may only be enhanced once, unless the Gamemaster allows you to apply the enhancement bonus further times.

Armour

Either your skin is very tough, or it might be

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scaled or plated in some way. Whatever the case you gain a point of natural armour.

Enhancement: add a second point of armour

Dedicated

When your mind is set, it is a fortress. Add 2 to your Resolve attribute.

Enhancement: add an additional (3rd) point of Resolve

Fast Healer

You heal at a remarkable rate, doubling the normal benefits of healing.

Enhancement: Your healing rate is incredible, healing at three times the normal rate.

Flexible Joints

You can twist and slide your joints and bones with ease, allowing you to slip out of handcuffs and bonds with ease.

Frightening visage

Something about your face is both frightening and intimidating. You might not be especially ugly, although that is often the reason. Anyone who gets a clear look at your face is so unsettled that they suffer a 2 black dice penalty on any social interaction roll they make with you. You also gain 2 extra dice to any intimidation dice pool.

Gills

You have small gills on your neck, allowing you to breathe in water. You can breathe air perfectly well, but underwater the gills take

over. The gills will function automatically, meaning you can stay underwater for as long as you like, or even if you are unconscious.

Hardy

Your living conditions have bred a powerful resilience in you. Add 2 to your Fortitude attribute.

Enhancement: add an additional (3rd) point of Fortitude

Infravision

You can shift your vision to register the infrared spectrum. This allows you to see heat sources, unaffected by the available light. When using this vision, you suffer no penalty when fighting in the dark, but you cannot see more than shapes and blurs (this makes recognising friend and foe difficult unless you know some distinguishing mark, such as that your friend is using a sword and their opponent is wielding a gun).

Enhancement: you can see heat sources hidden behind thin cold objects. While you cannot see through stone you can see heat signatures behind thin doors and plaster walls.

Night vision

You can see perfectly in night time darkness, seeing as well as you might in the daytime. Should you find yourself in pitch darkness the Gamemaster might give you the penalty others suffer at night.

Enhancement: You can see in pitch black, never suffering any penalty for lack of light

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Quick witted

Your mind is sharper than most people's, it might even simply be larger. Add 2 to your Wits attribute.

Enhancement: add an additional (3rd) point of Wits

Poison

You have a way to deliver a low level poison to your enemies. It might be a stinger in a tail, fangs, poison breath or the ability to spit the poison. It is up to the player to choose the style of delivery, although it can only spread to melee range. If used in combat, the player character must be in melee range with their victim, and should make an attack as usual using their current melee skill (Fisticuffs if they are unarmed, Swordplay if they are fighting with a dagger etc). If they hit, instead of doing damage they strike their victim with their poison (which has a delivery method of contact and a virulence of 2). On a failed resistance roll the victim suffers 2 points of health damage. If they botch the roll, the victim passes out for the remainder of the scene.

Enhancement: The delivery system is so swift and deadly that the character need not roll to hit and can make a poison attack as well as a melee attack. Alternatively the player character can choose to have more deadly poison with a virulence of 4.

Prehensile tail

You have a tail that works almost as well as an extra hand. While you can still only concentrate on one thing at a time, the tail can be useful in a number of ways. It can carry an

extra weapon, or pick up something you've dropped allowing you to change weapons quickly. It might slip under doors to steal keys. It might maintain your grip on a support, or on an enemy while you use their hands to shoot. Essentially it is an extra limb, and as usual the Gamemaster should adjudicate on the more 'inventive' uses the player might come up with.

Retractable claws

You may spring catlike claws from your hands, which do 2 dice of damage (plus Strength) and use your Fisticuffs skill to wield. They also do 'normal' damage, rather than the bruise damage done by fists. You might adapt the look and feel of the claws if you like, such as making them bone blades that spring from the back of your hand, or spurs that slide out of your arms etc.

Enhancement: you claws are sharper doing 4 dice damage

Shapeshifter

You can manipulate your face to appear different, or even to mimic another person. Gain a +4 Dice pool bonus to any disguise check.

Enhancement: You can shift the pigment of your skin and even the colour of your eyes to expand the range of your disguises

Enhancement: You can change your gender to become 'functionally' either male or female. However, you cannot appear to be a particularly muscular man or well endowed woman as your body mass remains much the same.

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Spider climb

You have tiny hairs you can grow out of your palms and the soles of your feet that help you stick to walls. You suffer no black dice penalty due to the sheerness or angle of any surface (even the ceiling) to any attempt to climb. However, bad weather or oil might still add penalties at the Gamemaster's discretion.

Enhancement: You suffer no penalties at all for climbing. If there are no potential black dice you need not even roll to succeed.

Spry

You are extremely swift and nimble fingered, possibly due to a light frame or long thin arms and fingers. Add 2 to your Dexterity attribute.

Enhancement: add an additional (3rd) point of Dexterity

Strong

You have extra layers of muscle on your frame making you extremely strong. Add 2 to your Strength attribute. You may also reduce any Black dice applied to a Might roll by 2.

Enhancement: add an additional (3rd) point of Strength

Unbreakable

You are more resilient than others when damaged. You may add 2 more health dice to your track. This mutation may be taken with the juggernaut talent.

Enhancement: add another health (3rd) dice to the track

Unearthly beauty

While you still appear slightly alien, there is

something ethereal and attractive about you. You may add 2 to your Presence attribute.

Enhancement: add an additional (3rd) point of Presence

POISON

There are several noxious substances that despicable characters might choose to use on their enemies. So we present a quick system for them to take advantage of these delights of the natural world. Each poison has a delivery method and a virulence rating. The delivery method is the way it must be administered, or it will not work. The virulence of the poison is how difficult it is to resist its effects.

There are three delivery methods, but any poison can be administered by the methods below it on the list. So, if a poison only need touch the skin to work, getting someone to swallow it will do the job. Conversely, a poison that must be ingested won't do much harm if it infects a small cut.

Contact – the poison only needs to touch bare skin to work.

Blood – the poison must enter the bloodstream, usually via a cut or graze. This means it must usually be spread on a weapon or be issued from fangs or a stinger.

Ingested – the poison must be swallowed.

Generally, most people are resistant to the idea of being poisoned, so, if they are aware it is a possibility, they will try to avoid it. Should it be carried on a weapon the poisoner must make a successful hit. Someone with fangs must be able to bite their victim. However, should the victim be asleep or unaware of the

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approaching attack the Gamemaster might make administering the poison automatic.

If the poison is administered correctly, the victim must make a resistance roll using a dice pool made of their Resolve + Fortitude attributes. The victim suffers a black dice penalty equal to the virulence rating of the poison. Even if they gain a success (resisting the poison) the poison will make them groggy and unfocussed as their body fights it off. This gives them a penalty of 1 black dice to all actions for the remainder of the scene. Should the resistance roll fail or succeed, more poison will make no difference until at least the end of the scene.

If the victim fails the resistance roll they suffer the effects of the poison. Should they botch, they suffer something even worse. The effects of the poison are listed with each poison's description.

Those who want to handle and create poisons must have the skills Science (Botany) to recognise and know where to find the right plants. They also need the skill Craft (Poisons) to distil these plants and turn their extracts into useful poison. If the poison is 'ready made' such as collected from the venom glands of a snake, only the Craft (Poisons) skill is required. However, anyone handling deadly snakes might want to invest a few points in the animal handling skill.

Slow Death

Delivery: Blood Virulence: 6

Failure to resist the poison means the victim

must make a resistance roll each day until they die or resist the poison. Each failed roll reduces their Health by 1 die, and no healing is possible until the poison is resisted.

Dreamland

Delivery: Ingested Virulence: 8

This powerful narcotic drops the victim into a very pleasurable haze, making them insensible for 1D6 hours.

Fade Away

Delivery: Contact Virulence: 2

Failure to resist this poison's effects reduces all the attributes of the target by 1.

Goodnight Kiss

Delivery: Contact Virulence: 4

This poison drops the victim into a deep sleep for 1D6 hours. Many criminals build up a tolerance to this so they might spread it on their lips and drop a target with a mere kiss.

FRAILTIES

Bad Taste

You have a very bad sense of taste. In fact, everything you eat tastes unpleasant and rotten for you. This means you cannot notice when something tastes strange or odd (such as when it has been poisoned).

Clumsy

Your body is slightly twisted making it hard to move as well as you should. Reduce your

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Dexterity attribute by 1.

Fits

Once per session the Gamemaster may insist your character's body begins spasming and twitching. This lasts 1D6 minutes, during which time you cannot perform any actions.

Foolish

A lack of education, and having to live by your strength rather than wits has taken a toll on your mind. Reduce your Wits attribute by 1.

Frail

Having been subjected to harsh environments and bad food you fall sick easily and have little resistance to damage. Reduce your Fortitude attribute by 1.

Nightmares

You never sleep well, and constantly toss and turn in bed. You may also call out and shout in your sleep.

Polluted lungs

You are so used breathing in polluted air you cannot quite do without it. When you are breathing decent fresh air you wheeze and feel light headed adding 2 black dice to any action.

Rot

Your skin secretes slightly toxic chemicals. Plants and small animals you handle die in

a few days. Food you touch rots over the course of a day.

Twisted legs

Your bones in your legs are bent and twisted, making walking difficult. All your movement rates are halved.

Unsociable

You might be ugly or just not particularly adept at talking to other people. Reduce your Presence attribute by 1.

Unpleasant features

Your face is ugly and misshapen, provoking disgust from those who see you. You must add 3 black dice to any social interaction roll with anyone who is not Misbegotten or automaton unless you are in some sort of disguise.

Weak

Your muscles are less powerful than they should be. Reduce your Strength attribute by 1.

Weak willed

Years of oppression have made you quick to give in when faced with hardship. Reduce your Resolve attribute by 1.

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Automata

The ubiquitous automata that can be found in the Change Cage cities come in far more shapes and sizes than described in the Core Rulebook. So, as we have with misbegotten, we present an alternate system for creating them. The new system is designed to offer more options and to expand the types of Automata available as player characters. It offers a lot of new abilities, but also makes automata quite specialised and less customisable. We'll also look into adapting previously created characters.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Unlike human characters, who grow and develop over time into what they want to be, Automata begin their lives with a purpose. No one ever asks an Automaton what it would like to be, they are programmed and built to certain specifications and most are resigned to a functional existence. Player character automata have a level of self-awareness and an ego uncommon among automata. They are free to move beyond their original programming, but it is still something that is hard for them to escape.

So when choosing an automata player character, we begin with the form the automata takes, which we call a 'Frame'. While there is a lot of variety, most automata fit into one of four Frame categories suitable for player characters. There are other types of automata, but not all are good player character material. It might be cool to be an automata gun battery on the walls of Desolation, but sitting on a wall all day is no life of adventure. Giant construction automata might seem pretty

impressive too, but anything that won't fit on an airship or through a door is going to sit out a lot of the action.

When you have picked a frame, there are several vocations listed under it to choose from. Vocations are like backgrounds for human characters. However, they are more than just a job or training for an automaton, they are their whole reason for existence. This is what they were literally 'born to do' and it forms the fundamental core of their basic programming. Only experience and making their own choices will change that.

The frame and vocation will define your automata's basic attributes and include some talents and possibly complications. These talents and complications are free, but not optional! They do not count against any maximums though.

Next you must spend 20 character points on the skills listed for your vocation in the same way human characters spend points on background skills. However, automata are often created with very specialised knowledge that would take a human several years to learn. Consequently, automata may increase skills listed under their vocation as high as 5 rather than 4.

The downside is that automata programming is very specialised, and few have the time or opportunity to learn skills and abilities outside their vocation. So automata only get an additional 5 character points to spend on other skills and talents, rather than the usual 10.

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Automata gain the same options for airship and shtick skills as any human. Like everyone else, they have found a place for themselves on the crew. Unfortunately, with such constricted lives and personalities, they find it hard to take the same leaps of faith and employ the lateral thinking that humans can. So, they only begin the game with 5 Fate points.

Creating Automata

Select a Frame

Select one of the Vocations listed for that frame

Record Common automata abilities

Record base attributes for frame/vocation and assign 3 additional points

Record abilities for Frame/Vocation

Spend 20 character points on skills listed for Vocation (these skills may go as high as 5)

Assign the additional 5 (not 10) character points as normal on other skills, talents, etc.

Pick complications, Airship and Schick skills as normal

Begin the game with 5 (not 8) Fate points

Select equipment and airship resource points as usual

COMMON AUTOMATA ABILITIES

All automata share some traits, despite the variety of shapes and sizes they come in. These abilities do not cost anything, and where they duplicate talents and complications they do not count against maximums.

Talents: Armour, Mere flesh wounds (see Core Rulebook p.60), Free of the Flesh

Complications: Distant, Mechanical (see Core Rulebook p.63)

Armour

All automata have a basic skeleton of metal that protects their vital systems. This gives them a point of armour no matter where they are struck. This armour will stack with any additional armour worn or added as an additional talent. The downside is that being made of metal all automata are quite heavy, making them 50% heavier than any organic being of the same size.

Free of the Flesh

Automata have little need for sleep and food, and can survive on very little of both. Food does help them replenish their motivating essence (see below) and a short shutdown period helps them reset their wheels and gears. Essentially an Automata needs 3 hours of shut down time each night. However, they can survive on just 1 hour a night if need be. They follow the same rules as humans for lack of sleep, but for them, 3 hours each night is considered a full night's rest. In fact, even just 1 hour a night will count as a full night's rest for up to 3 nights running.

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Running Down

So what happens in game terms if you don't feed your automata? It's actually quite simple. After each three days that the automata has not been fed it suffers a -1 penalty to all to its dice pools. If another 3 days pass, and it has still not been fed, this penalty rises to -2. This penalty continues to rise by 1 for every 3 days the automata remains without food. When the penalty reaches -8, if the automata is still working at all, it simply stops. At this point it must be given pure motivating essence, or it will remain shut down. As soon as the motivating essence is added to the machine it will spring to life, with a -4 penalty for the rest of the day (which vanishes after a night's rest).

When an automata begins to suffer this "running down" a decent meal is enough to reduce the penalty by 1, although only 1 meal a day will have this effect. This means it can take a few days to reduce the penalty. So, an automata suffering a -3 penalty that gets a decent meal each day for three consecutive days will reduce the penalty to 0. Should an automata generally get less food than it should (such as being fed only once every 2 days) the Gamemaster is well within her rights to apply the penalty as she sees fit.

Distant

Automata have trouble gauging what people are really trying to communicate. They understand speech perfectly well, but rarely comprehend the subtle clues of body language and inflection. When communicating with humans all automata suffer a -3 penalty to their dice pool.

FRAMES

Human model

This frame is designed to look mostly human. Without close inspection they can often pass for human with a little disguise, although they are obviously automata close up.

Vocations: Academic, Pleasure doll, Servant (footman)

Industrial model

Industrial frames are designed for construction, heavy lifting or even combat. They have a humanoid shape (2 arms, 2 legs) but are obviously mechanical, even from a distance. They stand very tall, usually between 6 to 7 feet high. Powerful gears and construction also make them nearly twice as heavy as a similar sized human.

Vocations: Ganger, Soldier, Peeler

Scout model

Not all automata are huge and impressive. Several smaller and lighter models exist, to keep an eye on the population, or to work in large crews (like worker bees). While they are not as powerful as the other frames, scout automata are fast and nimble. They are also commonly fitted with rotor blades for independent flight.

Vocations: Personal assistant, Spy drone, Messenger

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Mechanoid

Designed and built with a specific task in mind, mechanoids are the strangest looking of all automata. They are tailor made with one purpose in mind, adding all manner of gadgets to get the job done. They tend to be very good at one task and ill-suited to anything else.

Vocations: Construction, Engineer, Servant

VOCATIONS

The following are intended as general examples of vocations. With the Gamemaster's permission, players should feel free to add to this list.

HUMAN MODEL VOCATIONS

Autocrat

The halls of the administration are full of automata performing mindless bureaucratic tasks, in long halls filled with the scratch of pen or paper, or the click of typewriters.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+0	+1	+1	+1	+3	0

Skills: Bureaucracy, Charm, General knowledge, Legal matters, Perception, Research

Talents: Eidetic memory

Driver

Few of the upper classes expect to drive themselves from place to place, so a myriad of automata fulfil that purpose. They also have the advantage of not getting bored waiting for their passenger to come home. Many drivers are familiar with several forms of transport, so their master need not buy too many.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+1	+2	+2	0	+1	0

Skills: Animal handling, Boating, Drive, Etiquette, Perception, Pilot, Riding, Sky lore

Talents: Direction sense

Pleasure doll

While prostitution is rife, automata are still required to cope with the demand. Especially as it is a commonly held belief that sex with a machine can't be considered adultery. Some clients don't feel

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like treating their partner with even the modicum of respect they might offer a human woman, and there are some things even a prostitute won't do.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+0	+1	+2	+3	0	0

Skills: Charm, Dance, Empathy, Fashion, Seduction

Talents: Rock your world 2

Servant (footman)

As automata are expensive, it is fashionable to have them standing around doing nothing. While other, more robotic, automata see to cleaning and washing, etc., human model servants are programmed to converse intelligently and look good in livery.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+1	+2	+1	+1	+1	0

Skills: Academic (any), Ad hoc repair, Charm, Conversation, Empathy, Etiquette, Fashion, Perception

Talents: Statue

INDUSTRIAL MODEL VOCATIONS

Ganger

The docks are full of these large automata, which are designed for lifting and carrying. Gangers are also employed in construction and other menial hard labour tasks..

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+3	+0	+2	+0	0	+1

Skills: Dodge, Engineer (Construction), Fisticuffs, Intimidate, Perception, Might

Talents: Ham-fisted

Soldier

As there is no real war in the world there are few soldier automata, but those that do exist are truly frightening. They are literally killing machines, fast, heavily armoured and competent with almost any weapon. Most are used as bounty hunters, tracking dissidents across the city or even the wilds.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
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+2	+2	+2	0	0	0
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Skills: Athletics, Dodge, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Intimidate, Perception, Swordplay, Tactics, Tracking

Talents: Fortified 3, Inbuilt Weapon (any, often a Steam Gatling!)

Peeler

The police of the Change cage cities are quite iconic, even to those who never lived there. Rogue Peelers are extremely rare, and those who do have a very tough time outside the cities. Their very form is a symbol of Neovictorian oppression, and few take kindly to their presence.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1

Skills: Athletics, Blunt weapons, Dodge, Firearms, Intimidate, Interrogation, Legal matters, Perception, Specialised Weapon (Whisk – 6 damage), Tracking

Talent: Fortified, Inbuilt weapon (Whisk), Nightvision,

SCOUT MODEL VOCATIONS

Personal assistant

These drones are used to record data and recite passages for those unwilling to read books. Some exist as research assistants, but given very little research is carried out, not many at all. They are effectively a knowledge bank, able to answer questions on any of their fields. They range from science teacher, to business assistant to even fashion advisor and stylist.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
0	+2	+0	+1	+3	0

Skills: Academic (any), Business, Engineer (any), Etiquette, Fashion, Flight, General Knowledge, legal Matters, Science (any), Teaching

Talents: Flight, Eidetic memory

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Spy drone

Spy drones are essentially flying cameras. They utilise a small rotor to fly around the city and record what they see or offer a verbal report to their superior. Most have at least 1 retractable manipulator arm.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
0	+4	0	0	+2	0

Skills: Dodge, Flight, Hide & sneak, Navigation, Perception, Sky lore, Tracking

Talents: Camera, Flight,

Messenger

Designed to take messages swiftly between even cities, Messengers are trained to also be polite and personable to those they deliver to.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
0	+3	+1	+1	+1	0

Skills: Charm, Dodge, Etiquette, Flight, Navigation, Tracking

Talents: Compartment, Flight, Speed

MECHANOID VOCATIONS

Construction

These large multi-tooled automata are effectively mobile cranes. With the help of Gangers they lift massive stones and bricks to build the homes or offices of the Neovictorian world.

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+4	+1	+1	0	+0	0

Skills: Ad hoc repair, Craft (any), Demolition, Engineer (Construction), Might,

Talents: Tracks

Engineer

These multi-limbed spider automata are designed to construct other automata and other engineering projects. Any of their several limbs can be either feet or hands, allowing them to carry out several operations at the same time. This also makes them good models for automata medics and surgeons. A few escaped engineers are occasionally reprogrammed as artists, creating truly strange works of art.

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Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+0	+4	0	0	+2	0

Skills: Ad hoc repair, Appraisal, Athletics, Craft (any)*, Dodge, Engineer (any)*, Perception,

Talents: Multi-limbed, Multi-tasker

*medical models substitute Medicine and Science (any)

Service – cleaner

Service automata are not always designed as replacements for humans. These machines are often used in industry to clean a factory on a few moments it is clear of people. However some of the upper class sometimes buy them to clean their homes (as long as they have no guests).

Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
+2	+2	+2	0	0	0

Skills: Ad hoc repair, Athletics, Craft (any), Might

Talents: Tracks, Multi-limbed

AUTOMATON ONLY TALENTS: ENHANCEMENTS

The following talents are available only to Automata, but even they cannot enhance themselves as much as they might like. Apart from their initial enhancement talents, Automata may usually only add another 6 augmentations to themselves. There is only so much space to add new systems or complexities to their system. The cost of such upgrades is left for the Gamemaster to determine, but she should remind player that they get what they pay for. A cheap backstreet engineer may well do more damage than good.

We should point out though that automata are not limited to these talents, and may ‘human’

traits will be perfectly suitable. Many of such traits will not count against the limit of 6 either if they do not require enhancing the systems of the automata.

Attribute upgrade

Add +1 to any attribute. This enhancement may be taken multiple times but each time counts as another enhancement.

Camera

You have an on board camera and can develop the film internally. The camera can only take still images, but you can dispense copies as long as you have the photographic paper installed.

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Compartment

There is a small secret compartment on your body. Anyone looking for it suffers an 8 Black Dice penalty to their search attempt. It is only large enough for something quite small, such as a file or a handgun. However on larger automata it might possibly carry a small human.

Flight (Scout model only)

This automata is small and light enough to fly. This is usually by using a retractable set of rotor blades. The automata should use Dexterity and Flight skill for any manoeuvres. Flight is a new skill available to any such automata and governs all manoeuvres and dodges while airborne.

Flush of life (Human model only)

You have been made to look fully human. Anything but a medical exam will convince most people you are entirely human, although your skin may feel a little colder than usual. If you are damaged though, the disguise may not be so convincing when you bleed oil and motivating essence rather than blood.

Fortified (any except human model)

You have been built with additional layers of armour. For each level of fortified you take, you have another point of armour on all locations. However, this attribute makes you extremely bulky and heavier.

Inbuilt weapon

You may choose a weapon that is part of your

arm. If it is small it might be retractable, but a steam gatling is never going to be easy to hide.

Multi-limbed (non human model only)

You have one or more additional arms or legs. This means you can hold several things ready at the same time. While it gives you no additional actions you do suffer 2 fewer Black Dice when faced with multiple opponents.

Multi-tasker

You can do two things at the same time, allowing you to split your perception between both. You can take a second free action each round as long as you do something different. So you might shoot at 2 separate targets with separate guns, one in each hand. But you cannot make 2 attacks with one large gun if that is all you can hold. Automata with many limbs can pick a lock while firing at the opposition.

Night vision

Functions the same as the Misbegotten mutation 'Night Vision' (Core Rulebook p.60)

Persistent

Something about you refuses to die. No matter how badly damaged you are, you can always be repaired. Even if you need your body completely rebuilt, with the right technician you can be restored as long as at least a fist sized part of you remains.

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Shifted vital areas

Your vital systems are not where people expect them to be. Shots to the head are no more a problem than shots to the arm.

Statue

You are able to stand as still as a statue. When hiding this talent allows you to add 3 dice to your hide roll. Even if you don't hide you might be overlooked as a statue in the right circumstances.

Speed

You may have fast legs or even a small jet pack, whatever the reason you can move very fast indeed. Double your movement rate.

Tracks (mechanoid only)

Instead of legs you have caterpillar tracks like a tank. While it makes it tricky to climb things, there are few obstacles you cannot just plough over.

Automata only complications

The following complications are used in the same way as ordinary complications. However, they are only available to automata characters.

Alien

Something about you is even more unnerving than most automatons. Children especially shy away from you and animals instinctively find you frightening or challenging. You suffer an additional 3 Black Dice to any social roll.

Emotional issues

Your programming has become a little corrupt, leaving you at the mercy of the new emotions you find yourself feeling. Once per game the Gamemaster can pick any random emotion (love, anger, fear, hate, awe) and insist your character is strike with it. Sometimes this might be helpful (such as a killing rage during combat) but it will usually only make things hard for you and your companions. This 'emotional fit' lasts until the end of the scene.

Literal

You don't quite understand the subtleties of humour, sarcasm and colloquialism, so every statement you hear you take literally. If your group announce they are kick the arse of the bad guys, you believe the object of the attack is to boot the bad guys on the backside.

Obedient

You are susceptible to direct orders from humans. If given a direct command, from a human you must obey it as long as it doesn't conflict with other programming or complications. It is perfectly permissible to try and keep this weakness a secret!

Peace locked

You cannot kill. While you can shoot people or take a swing at them, you are unable to intentionally end a life. You cannot aim for the head, drop someone off an airship or shoot someone already on their last legs.

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Questioning

Human life fascinates you a little too much. You ask 'why?' as much as a 2 year old child, constantly wondering the cause of the simplest actions.

Stiff

Your gears take a while to get into motion. When waking from a rest period, or any time standing still you suffer a 2 Black Dice to all actions until you are up to speed (which takes about an hour).

Bargefolk

We have already detailed the Bargefolk and their culture in the previous chapter, so here we offer the systems to play them as player characters. Such characters are rare, as the bonds of family run deep for many Bargefolk. Few families can spare one of the crew to wander off and seek their fortune. As well as this, few Bargefolk are discontent enough with their life to seek to change it.

MOTIVATION

As they live a life of freedom and trade of the open rivers, few Bargefolk are unhappy with their lot, especially when they see how bad life in the cities could be. So those who take to the sky as Air Pirates are a rare breed. After all, those with a wanderlust can usually sate it in their lives on the water. So while some are drawn to the glamour of the skies, most leave their lives due to tragedy. Bargefolk are often under attack from Air Pirates, and sometimes

these attacks can be quite brutal. Some Bargefolk lose their entire families in such raids, as well as their boat and livelihood. This leads many to join pirate crews that they might seek revenge on the ship that killed their loved ones.

Some Bargefolk find themselves pirate through no choice of their own though. Some might be punished by the Neovictorians and separated from their family, only to fall in with pirates if they escape and cannot find their family ship. Others might be cast out of their Barge for some crime, although only the worst of crimes merit such a punishment. So, in many ways, Bargefolk and Neobedouins often join crews for the same reasons.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS

Criminal, Gadgeteer, Mercenary, Pirate/Privateer (seaborne), Prostitute, Showman/Woman, Trader

ATTRIBUTES

Bargefolk are used to shifting heavy loads and need to polish their charm to get the best deals for their wares. They gain +1 Strength and +1 Presence. They also all begin the game with the ability 'Riverlore'.

New Ability: Riverlore

All Bargefolk are brought up on boats and as such are quite at home on the sea. They all begin the game with the Boating skill at 2 and never suffer from seasickness.

TYPICAL NAMES

Given their ability to mix with other cultures,

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Bargefolk often choose Neobedouin or Neovictorian names for their children. They often like to use the long and grand sounding names of the upper classes, but always shorten them to a lower class version when dealing with the Neovictorians. Among their family they tend to pick a separate short name that only those on their boat ever use for them. In many cases it relates to a talent they have, such a 'Sharp Eye' for a good lookout or 'Ropey' for a good knotter. However, the names need not relate only to boats. Pretty girls are often named after flowers (Primrose, Lily etc) and good negotiators might be called 'Sly' or 'Tricksy' as a complement.

STARTING CASH

As the fortunes of trade can fluctuate, all Bargefolk begin with a number of Helios equal to their Wits attribute.

The Imperial Air Navy

The pride of the Neovictorian world is the Imperial Air Navy (the IAN). The Ministry of Truth spend a lot of time releasing all manner of propaganda telling tales of dashing naval officers patrolling the skies and fighting monsters and renegades. They work hard to ensure such antics are the stuff of fiction. Sadly, the most fictional part of tales is the bravery and daring of the naval officers.

The IAN is mired so deeply in politics and tradition it is a wonder it functions at all. Hamstrung by rote learned combat drills and a top heavy hierarchy, it is only the raw power of its airships that makes it a concern for the Skyfolk. While the rote learned systems

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make the ship predictable, it is a testament to the skill of the crew that they carry out such operations so well the ships are still dangerous despite their predictability.

The navy is divided into two different sections, the crew and the officers. The crew are recruited mainly from the orphanages, but occasionally they take those without family ties into the service from the lower class. The officers are all upper class, and because they love promotions and awards there are almost as many officers as there are crew. The Chuno Ggun airships manage with barely a quarter of the officers required by the IAN, and function better because of it.

The IAN are kept very separate from the rest of society, although each Change Cage city plays host to several IAN facilities. While the officers are usually allowed to mix with their social peers, the crew are essentially prisoners in the facilities. They are usually so overworked with maintenance and drills that they don't notice they can't leave the IAN blocks. However, conditions in the IAN blocks are a lot more comfortable than that of the average lower class factory worker. They have more space and better food; they even get a few dolls shipped in to see to the rest of their 'needs'. As they are told the lower class live in the same conditions, most airship crews see the lower class and dissidents as whiners and complainers. Their lives are no worse than those of the IAN, and they don't have to risk their lives fighting air pirates. The Ministry of Truth works hard to maintain this disdain for their fellows, as it is a good way to keep the crew loyal.

Officers live as the upper class do, although the lower orders of officer have to 'rough it' more than they are used to. There is only so much space and resources available on an airship available for luxuries, so the bottom of the pile gets the least. While the lowest midshipman has a far better standard of living than the crew, many of them constantly complain.

RANKS

Among the crewmen there are only two ranks. The lowest is that of 'crewman'— your basic air sailor. The more experienced crewmen are given the title of 'master', which puts them in charge of around five to ten men. A master's job is to tell the crew what the officers just told him, or more often translate what the inexperienced midshipmen has parroted at him into something resembling a procedure that his men are familiar with. Most of a master's job is to ensure none of the upper class nobles have to talk to more of the lower class crew than they have to.

For officers there are a multitude of ranks. This is so these self-important scions of the nobility can be promoted at regular intervals. Each rank distances the officer further from the crew, and adds a few more perks to their position on the ship.

The lowest ranks of officer are the Midshipmen. They never actually make decisions, only relaying orders from the Lieutenants to the crew, via the masters. It is an officer position designed to give a young nobleman experience of life on a ship, but without giving them anything important to

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do. Higher ranked Midshipmen still have to talk to the Masters, but they tend to be assigned to the more vital areas of the ship.

Above the Midshipmen are the Lieutenants (that's Left-tenant not Lew-tenant!), the lowest officer rank that actually have to interpret orders. The orders they receive tell them what the captain wants the ship to do. Lieutenants translate that into orders for the various groups under their command. For instance, they get an order to fire a broadside, so they assign gun crews, and when the ship has the target in position they give the order to fire.

Moving up to Commander places an officer on (or near) the bridge, each rank putting them closer to the Captain. From the ranks of the Commanders, the Captain chooses a first, second and third officer. They are ship positions rather than ranks, although no captaincy is ever given to someone who hasn't served as a first officer. These officers act as the Captain when he is not on the bridge (or is somehow indisposed). Many Captains rarely visit their own bridge and leave the duty station to their first, second and third officers.

Past the rank of Captain an officer is granted command over more than one airship. However, they usually choose one of these ships as their 'flagship' which they command directly. This ship will still have a captain, who will basically be treated as a first officer while the Admiral is aboard. The higher the fleet rank attained the more ships under their command and the more important those ships will be. In a large engagement a Rear Admiral might command ten ships, but they will mostly be reserves. The Grand Admiral

Naval Ranks

Crew-

Crewman (Cm)

Master (Mr)

Officers-

Midshipman (Md)

Midshipman 3rd class (Md 3rd)

Midshipman 2nd class (Md 2nd)

Midshipman 1st class (Md 1st)

Lieutenant junior grade (Lt Jr)

Lieutenant (Lt)

Lieutenant senior grade (Lt Sn)

Lieutenant Commander (Lt Cmdr)

Commander (Cmdr)

Master Commander (Mr Cmdr)

(Third Officer)

(Second Officer)

(First Officer)

Captain (Cap)

Fleet Captain (Fl Cap)

Commodore (Comm)

Vice Admiral (Vc Adm)

Rear Admiral (Rr Adm)

Admiral (Adm)

Admiral Commander (Adm Cmdr)

Admiral-in-Chief (Adm Ch)

Lord Admiral (Ld Adm)

Grand Admiral (Gnd Adm)

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is the highest rank available and he commands the entire IAN fleet.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AND RANK

Players whose characters have a background in the IAN will be wondering what rank they might have had. If they were lower or servant class the answer is simple, they may choose to be a Crewman or a Master.

For upper class characters the base rank is their choice of Midshipman rank. They may spend character points to advance a little higher. For 1 character point they were a Lieutenant junior grade or full Lieutenant. For 2 character points they may choose any grade of Lieutenant. For 3 character points the character was a Commander, and they may spend an additional point to have been a Master Commander. At this rank they may also choose to have served as a first, second or third officer. For five character points they may have been a Captain. Higher rank than this should be granted at the discretion of the Gamemaster. Few fleet ranked men leave a life of freedom and luxury to become pirates.

THE NAVY AND THE MINISTRY

Technically, the IAN comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence. However, a tense relationship remains between these two partners. The military itself is run by the Admiralty, but the Ministry deals with all the paperwork and logistics. Without a military, the ministry has nothing, but without the ministry, the IAN cannot function. As you might expect, each partner thinks they are the one in charge and the Minister of Defence is constantly at odds

with the Admiralty. For anything to get done a series of compromises must be reached and deals struck. This hamstring the entire IAN in a system of bureaucracy, favours and deals.

This means that individual Captains are often free to do as they wish, as it is so hard for their superiors to actually issue them orders (without making deals with the ministry). So, many Captains travel as they see fit across the world, sometimes hunting particular rival Skyfolk ships.

MEDALS AND COMMENDATIONS

While they have many ranks and titles, the IAN has even more medals and commendations. Even the lowly crew might be rewarded with one of several commendations and badges of skill. However, the most commendations and all the actual medals are reserved for the officers. All promotions and medals suggested by Admiralty (on the recommendation of the officer's Captain) but have to be approved by the ministry. Having said that, the ministry has no direct ability to recommend anyone for military honours.

Crew honours are often awarded for obedience and loyalty. The main awards though are for their skills. When a crewman has proved themselves talented or especially competent in a particular area, they are allowed to wear a coloured scarf to denote their skill. This ensures the officers can assign them to the right place. Crewmen can be awarded several scarves, but they usually only wear the one that will get them placed in their favourite position. Crewmen are often referred to by the scarf they wear rather

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than their name (especially by officers who probably can't remember it). In game terms scarves are awarded for a skill of 4 or more in a particular area. The different scarves and the skills associated with them are:

Title	Renowned as:	Scarf Colour	Skill at 4
Lookout	a Sharp eyed lookout	Blue	Perception
Gunner	good Gun crew	Green	Gunnery
Sailman	manages sails and knots	White	Climbing
Stoker	Good engineer or coal shoveller	Black	Ad Hoc Repair
Marine	a skilled fighter	Red	Swordplay or Firearms
Skyman	A good advisor	Purple	Sky Lore

Commendations are bestowed on crew as a certificate and an extra ration of rum. They are usually awarded for bravery, loyalty and good service. All the certificates are the same, you are simply awarded 'a commendation' and occasionally the officers mention why you deserve it.

Commendations for officers are much the same, but come with a coloured ribbon to add to their uniform. Different colours denote different areas of commendation (more fully detailed on the certificate). Red is for bravery under fire, Black for maintaining discipline, White for good service to the higher officers and Blue for showing advanced skill in shipboard operations.

Medals are quite another story and there are far, far too many offered to detail in one book. Few Admirals can fit all their medals on their chest when in dress uniform, so they usually pick just the highest honours. Player



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characters and Gamemasters are encouraged to create their own medals for their characters, and any officer will have usually earned 1D6 for each rank they hold. Some examples include:

The Crossed Sword – for showing bravery when repelling boarders

The Silver Scourge – for giving the order that sends a Skyfolk ship to the ground

The Dashing Blade – for killing the most pirates in any single attack

The Loyalty Cross – for seeing a crew stay at their posts under extreme circumstances

The Explorer's Award – for discovering a useful ruin

The Gentleman's Award – for maintaining a stylish uniform

New Rules and Traits

CONTACTS

No man or woman is an island. Everyone knows a few people outside their circle of friends. They may not be bosom buddies, but you might know the right people to help you get a good deal, or to find a particular service you need. Contacts are a great way to bring a character's background to life (and to burn off the odd point or two you're not quite sure how to spend in character creation).

When you spend points on a contact, you should give them a name, profession and general location, such as – 'Lizzy Pebble, a prostitute in Desolation'. The name

and profession can be almost anything, and locations are not confined to static locations. 'Strongbad, Captain of the Airship Windchime' is perfectly acceptable. It is up to the player who and what this person is, but they'll be more useful if they can be found somewhere you are likely to frequent. It may be cool to know a philosopher from the city of Contemplation, but it may not be very useful in a campaign set in Sierra Nevada. It also begs the question of how the hell did you meet? So the Gamemaster is allowed to veto any contact that she feels the player cannot reasonably explain a connection to.

Contacts come in three levels, representing how willing they are to stick their neck out for the player character in question. As you might imagine, the more they are willing to do for you, the more expensive they are to buy. The point cost for any contact is measured in Character points during character creation, or in experience points afterward. While you might meet anyone in your adventures, contacts are people you are assumed to keep track of during downtime, people with whom you maintain a relationship. The Gamemaster may only let you buy contacts from among those you have met during adventures.

Anyone you meet that you do not make into a contact is unlikely to want to put themselves out for you as a proper contact might, unless they have reason to act otherwise, or a long memory! New contacts can be acquired at pretty much any time, and existing ones can be improved to higher levels by spending the difference in points.

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It is assumed you are nice to your contacts, that you stay in touch as much as possible, behave politely to them, and that you don't ask for ridiculous favours too often or otherwise abuse the relationship. If the Gamemaster thinks you have treated a contact unfairly, she is well within her rights to reduce them down a level. If you want to get the relationship back to what it was, then you'll have to spend experience points again.

Contact (1 point)

This is simply someone you know. They can hook you up with what you need, help guide you around their city and even sell you something they shouldn't. You can trust them to offer you a fair price, and not to tell the authorities about you, but they are not your friend. At the first sign of trouble they'll be off.

Friend (2 points)

This contact actually likes you. They'll not only help you out but will put themselves out to do so. They'll take moderate risks, such as hiding you or covering for you, but they will not risk their lives or family. You will always get the best price from this contact, maybe even a few freebies too.

Family (4 points)

While they may not be related, they treat you as if you are. They will never turn you away or rat you out, no matter what the price. They are willing to risk their lives and livelihoods to help protect you. They will even look for things to assist you outside of their usual sphere of interest (such as a soldier

rummaging among the bazaars looking for airship parts for you).

Powerful (Double or triple)

If you double the points cost of the contact, they have a serious amount of power and prestige. For double the cost they control something very useful. They might be the captain of a ship, the leader of a tribe of Neobedouin or a mid level bureaucrat like an Administrator or even Director. For triple the cost (and only with the Gamemaster's permission), the contact is extremely powerful, up to an including the Governor of a Change Cage city. However, before you ask, no, you cannot be friends with the Emperor.

New Skills

Bureaucracy (Speciality – Wits)

Finding files in a large administration usually takes more than knowing your alphabet. This skill allows you to find what you might be looking for quickly. It also helps you to cross-reference, using the system to dig deeper into records. When you need to fill out forms, or find your way to the person who can really tell you what you need to know in any bureaucracy, this is also the skill to use.

High society (Speciality – Wits)

You know your way around the gossip-mongers and families of the wealthy. This skill does not tell you how to hold a fork or behave at dinner, instead it tells you who the more powerful families are and who is likely to inherit what. A master of this skill knows the names of everyone they meet, who they

New Craft specialisations

With all this focus on the servants and lower orders, it makes sense to expand the specialities to be found under the Craft skill.

Brewing – how to make and look after beers, ales and other alcoholic drinks

Cleaning – polishing and cleaning in all the right ways as quickly as possible

Production machinery – operating and maintaining large scale production machines such as steam powered looms, printing presses and lathes.

Weaving – operating a loom (hand cranked or steampowered) to make cloth.

Wickerwork – weaving wicker strands to make baskets or chair seats, etc.

should snub and whose family history might have a few skeletons in the cupboard.

The Power of Absinthe

The strange green liquid known as Absinthe remains a popular drink for those who can afford it. The chemical mixture required to create it is a closely guarded secret by the families that pass the recipes down through generations. This means that the quality and taste of Absinthe can vary depending on who you buy it from, and connoisseurs often argue about who provides the best version of this strange sour nectar.

Neat Absinthe is extremely bitter and potent. So most people drink it diluted, often with sugar. Several rituals have developed to prepare a glass of absinthe and for many the ritual is part of the fun of drinking it. A special straining spoon is usually placed on top of the glass, with a lump of sugar. Water is poured over the sugar, through the spoon and into the glass where a measure of absinthe awaits. Special glasses often have a bulb moulded into the base, as a guide to how much absinthe to use. With special spoons and glasses, there is a whole paraphernalia to the drinking of absinthe, and again, the arcane tools and ritual are all part of the experience.

For most, absinthe is simple a somewhat risqué drink. Legends tell that it will drive you mad, or that it contains deadly poison that must be diluted. Some say they have powerful hallucinations after drinking it. The truth is that the mixture is actually less potent than some of the concoctions served in the lower class gin palaces. However some people are strangely sensitive to its effects and gain strange powers upon drinking a glass.

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Those with the 'Absinthe Adept' talent gain the basic power for free, but may also buy additional powers at a cost of 3 character points or 5 experience points. If the adept is not regularly drinking absinthe though the Gamemaster may decide they are unable to unlock any more powers.

Upon drinking a full glass or measure of Absinthe, the adept gains the basic power bonuses. Over the course of the next hour he can make use of one other power that he knows. If he knows more than one power, he can shift to using a second instead, but no more. Absinthe is a slow power and using abilities takes time to slide the mind into the right frame. After an hour the power fades, but the adept may simply mix another drink and carry on. Unfortunately, this expanding of the mind is not without a downside, and overuse can be damaging. While an adept can drink as much as they like, if they manifest powers for more than 5 hours a day their suffer -1 to their Wits for the next day. This effect is cumulative, so if they spend 18 hours in absinthe induced stupor they suffer -3 to Wits the next day.

Basic ability - Euphoria

The adept feels little pain, but their mind becomes focused and sharp. All wound penalties are halved (round down). They may also remove 2 Black Dice from any tasks involving mental acuity. This power remains active no matter how many other abilities the adept uses, and does not count towards the powers used during each hour.

Enlightenment

This power allows the adept to make connections, and see from a more enlightening angle and perspective adding +2 to their Wits.

Empathy

The adept gains +4 to their Empathy skill and can read the emotions of people they are not even talking to.

Precognition

The adept slips into a trance that lasts around an hour, meaning this power cannot be used in conjunction with any other for that hour. During this they gain glimpses of the future. The adept should roll 1D6 and this is the amount of clues the Gamemaster will give them. These clues will always be indistinct and often in the form of riddles and metaphor. Essentially the adept takes a step into a David Lynch movie for an hour! The Gameaster can be as obscure as she wishes, but must offer at least some form of hint for each clue.

Telepathy

The adept must already have Empathy to take this power. Using it he can slide into the thoughts of others and read minds. The adept must have line of sight to their target, and suffer a 1 Black Dice penalty for every 10 feet away the target is. If the target is able to resist they may make a Resolve + Wits roll, and each success gives the adept 1 Black Dice on their attempt to read their mind. Usually, only those who know they are being read can muster a defence. However, anyone with a Wits greater than the adept will notice the attempt and resist even if they cannot see

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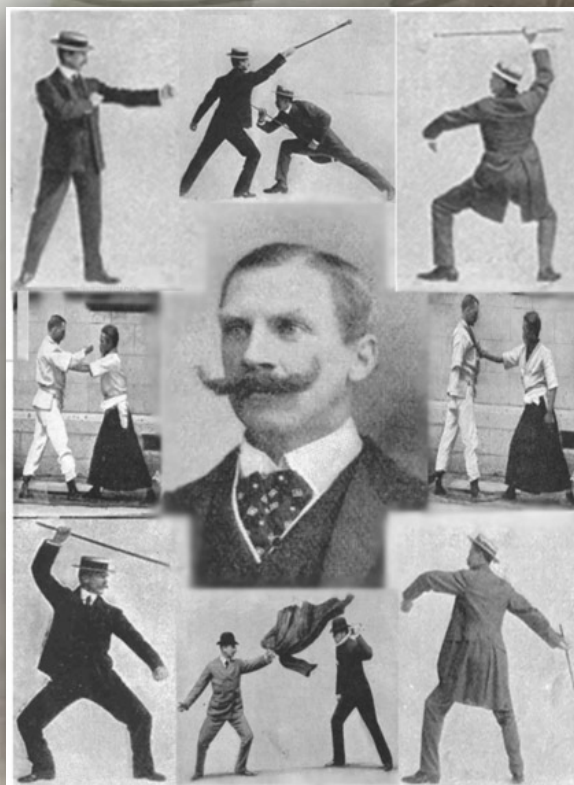
the attacker.

To read minds, the adept makes a Wits + Empathy roll, and may as the Gamemaster one question for every success they get. If the target doesn't know the answer, that is the only answer they will get and it still counts as a question.

Baritsu

Baritsu is a popular unarmed combat style taught to the wealthy. It combines 'good old fashioned fisticuffs' with kicks, locks and holds. Developed for the narrow and often crowded streets of the cities, Baritsu is an excellent close combat skill. It relies on short punches that drive from odd angles through the defences of their opponent, such as uppercuts rather than haymakers. The legs are used to unbalance and trip the opponent but a few basic kicks are taught in the style. Locks and holds often follow the softening up blow as the Baritsu master weaves his arms around the opponent to create an armlock or chokehold.

The weakness of Baritsu is that its reliance on close combat means it is very difficult to disengage from an opponent if things go wrong. This also denies the Baritsu adept the opportunity to land especially powerful blows on their opponents. While it copes well with multiple attackers, often using assailants as shields against the partners, if faced with too large a gang a Baritsu adept can lose control of the fight.



In *Airship Pirates* there are two unarmed combat skills, simple Fisticuffs and Baritsu. In fact you may create new martial arts styles of your own, as many have survived. However, with war a rarity before the Great Rectification, many martial arts styles devolved into hobbies and pastimes rather than combat styles.

If your character has learnt Fisticuffs, they are a graduate of the school of hard knocks. They understand fighting from an instinctual point of view and their skill comes from experience. As a common skill they can add to their dice pool (with the corresponding Black Dice penalty) but that is their only advantage.

A Baritsu student has studied a series of

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moves and counter moves, granting them a more advanced combat repertoire. First and foremost this grants them a bonus to their damage of +1 as they know how to hit harder and with more accuracy.

In addition to this bonus, for each point they have in the skill Baritsu after the first, a character may choose a new technique they have mastered. These represent the focus they have applied to their training and their combat style. For each technique they are allowed, a player need not pick a new technique for their character. Instead they can choose to pick a technique they already have, enhancing a technique to specialise in a very distinct combat style. Each technique describes its basic bonus, and 'enhancement' describes the additional bonus each subsequent time it is taken, all these bonuses are cumulative.

TECHNIQUES

Combat Master – when fighting unarmed and facing multiple opponents, reduce the black dice penalty by 1.

Enhancement – reduce the Black dice penalty by 1 when facing multiple opponents unarmed.

Combat Savant – You may use Perception instead of a physical attribute when using unarmed combat, as you are able to predict your opponent's moves.

Enhancement – reduce any Black Dice penalties by 1 when using Perception in unarmed combat.

Deadly Strike – Up to 2 points of the damage you do unarmed may be considered normal rather than bruise damage.

Enhancement – The amount of normal damage you may do increases by 1.

Evasion Expert – You increase your dice pool by 1 when doing an 'all out dodge'.

Enhancement – the bonus increases by +1.

Feint – Your opponent suffers an extra Black dice penalty to their combat roll if you are both unarmed.

Enhancement – the Black Dice penalty increases by 1.

Lightning Movement – add 1 to your initiative rating for unarmed attacks.

Enhancement – the bonus increases by +1.

Power Attack – your unarmed attacks do an additional point of damage.

Enhancement – the bonus increases by +1.

Power Block – against blunt weapons you have an effective armour rating of 1.

Enhancement – the bonus increases by +1.

New Talents

To finish this chapter, we offer a selection of new Talents and complications primarily for Neovictorian characters. There is no reason to restrict these to Neovictorian characters though if you feel they might suit a particular

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character. In addition to these extra traits, you may also use several of the other abilities found in this book as talents, such as the city attributes.

Absinthe Adept

The green madness not only charms your taste buds but can open your mind. You may spend additional character or experience points to gain Absinthe adept powers (see above).

Absinthe Brewer

You have been entrusted with the recipe to your family's Absinthe. The ingredients are usually easy to find in any big city, although the Gamemaster may declare you can't find what you need. Many absinthe brewers insist they require extremely rare and valuable ingredients, but this is actually untrue. Otherwise those in the Change cage cities would never find what they need.

The process of making absinthe requires a distilling lab, and a steady hand as even a drop too much of each ingredient can ruin the mixture. The character must spend a day brewing, and makes a Dexterity + Craft (Brewing) roll. He creates 1D6 measures for each 2 successes. Most bottles available for sale contain 10 measures.

Access

You have a pass or a connection that lets you into a particularly secret area. It might be the estate of a wealthy patron, a ministry building or even the Change Cage itself. Be careful how you use it though, or it may be revoked. This might easily apply to a place outside the

Neovictorian cities.

Automata friendship

For some reason, automata respond very favourably to you. Most give you the benefit of the doubt and they will always give you a chance to explain before shooting you. They won't act against direct orders though. Reduce any Black Dice penalty you suffer in dealing with automata by 3.

Clockwork limb (5 points)

One of your arms or legs is a mechanical replacement. It is stronger and more resilient than a human one, and may have a series of enhancements. The limb has space for 2 enhancements which may be selected from the Automata enhancements list.

Founding family (Upper class only)

You are part of one of the eight founding families, either by blood or marriage. Either way, the name opens doors like nothing else. Among any upper class Neovictorians you gain a +4 dice bonus to any social interaction rolls.

Skirmish Master

You are adept at fighting multiple opponents. When in such a fight, you suffer Black Dice penalties as if there were one fewer opponents. So if you fight 2 opponents you suffer no penalty.

Streetmaster

You are adept at hiding in an urban

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environment. Add 3 dice to any Hide & Sneak roll when in a city.

New Complications

Hostage

Someone important to you is in the clutches of the Neovictorian authorities. This might be a lover, child, sibling, parent or spouse, basically anyone who is important to you. If you don't behave, they will suffer for it. The hostage may be languishing in the Change cage, but they might also just be carefully watched after being moved to another city.

Known Dissident

Your name is on a list in the Administration. This means you will doubly suffer if they have to arrest you, and instantly assume your guilt. They may also assume anyone with you is also a dissident. If you enter a Neovictorian city and your name gets back to the authorities they will keep a close eye on you or even arrest you on the spot.

Privileged

You are not used to hardship, having been brought up in luxury. Any rolls you make to resist tough living, such as hunger, cold, uncomfortable beds, etc., are made with an extra 3 Black Dice.



Secret

There is some secret about you, which if revealed will cause your ruin. Maybe you are a Misbegotten whose mutations do not show. Perhaps you are an imposter – a servant pretending to be a lord, or someone claiming rank and responsibilities you do not actually possess. Whatever your secret is, it must never become public or your position in society will be ruined.





THE
CAGE OF
CIVILISATION

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Nothing shapes Neovictorian society more than their cities, the great cauldrons of humanity that toil under the shadow of the Change Cage. In this chapter we look at the seventeen great cities that house humanity. We begin with a detailed look at Desolation, which might serve as the template for any other change cage city. While each city has slight differences, the Gamemaster can use this detail as a base for their own interpretation of the others. From the heat of Desolation we move onto the other North American cities of Old Borealis and Everglade. These two great cities have their own culture and politics which we compare to that of Desolation. Finally we take a brief tour of the other fourteen cities around the world. These other cities are fascinating places to visit, but might also serve as the setting for a very different style of campaign.

Where are the cities?

Before we begin looking at Desolation, we offer a worldwide perspective. We present a brief run down of the seventeen cities and where they might be found.

Desolation (North America)

Set in the oppressive heat of the Nevada desert, Desolation is still one of the most renowned cities in the world. As the closest city to the palace of the Emperor, it places any politician closer to the Emperor.

Old Borealis (North America)

Set amidst the vast forests of the Canadian north, Old Borealis is almost the opposite of Desolation. The lands around it are lush and

green and the temperature ranges from quite cold to bloody freezing.

Everglade (North America)

Set in the swamplands of what was once Florida, Everglade is at once a marvel and a cesspit. The entire city rests on stilts, to set it apart from the lush swampland beneath it. However the damp heat is oppressive and most things are covered in either moss or rust. Nevertheless, the nobility here are proud of their city, seeing it as the last bastion of 'southern values'.

Watchtower (South America)

This great city rambles up a mountainside, at the top of which is a huge statue known to be one of the few representations of the first Emperor, Victor Hypocrates. He watches over the city, arms outstretched, welcoming and comforting his people. Watchtower operates a busy port, and is renowned for its vibrant festivals.

Rio Arbolas (South America)

This dark city is set deep in the Amazonian rainforest. It is split in two by a great river that brings supplies to the people there. Only the Change Cage rises above the canopy of trees surrounding the city, so very little sun manages to illuminate its dark streets. Rio Arbolas supplies the rest of the world with some very strange fruits and resources, oddities only found in the deep jungle where it rests.

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New Eden (Central Africa)

If any of the Change Cage cities might be called a paradise, then New Eden is certainly worthy of the name. Set in the centre of the great continent, its weather is warm and pleasant and natural resources surround it in abundance (although so do some of the most dangerous predators). The houses of the rich all rise a little higher than the outer wall, as the views across the landscape are spectacular.

Pharos (Africa – Egypt)

Set in the land of one of the oldest civilisations, Pharos has become the historical centre of the world. The curators of the great histories are appointed by the Ministry of Truth, and are careful to ensure that “true histories” are compiled according to the wishes of the Emperor. Pharos is populated with museums storing all manner of antiquities. Artefacts from all over the world are brought here to be catalogued and taken care of.

Londinium (Europe – England)

Unlike most of the other cities, Londinium was built over an existing city, that of the old English capital, London. Londinium was one of the first Change Cage cities to be built, and is something of an experiment. It was created simply by building a wall where the old ring road (the M25) used to surround the city. The public parks became the estates of the wealthy and many of the old monuments remain. Its Change Cage is one such building, which is dominated by a great clock tower.

Gateway (Europe – France)

Perhaps the most picturesque city is Gateway,

set on the French coast, near the border with what was once Spain. Gateway receives goods from across the Atlantic, where they are taken across the continent. Many of the forests around Gateway contain grapevines that can be used to make excellent wine, for which the city is famous. Some of the grapes for this wine are picked by gatherers, with the permission of the authorities. This production is on a scale far above that which the Emperor would usually tolerate, but the matter never seems to come to a head. Even more strangely some, including the very best champagnes, are produced illegally, by the Neobedouin. This state of affairs means that some of the local Neobedouin are less transient than is usual. The great and the good of Gateway are keen to see that these Neobedouin are not attacked as they go about their business, for fear that the vast supply of smuggled champagnes would cease to flow into the city.

Sanctorum (Europe – Italy)

Italy's history is no stranger to city-states, so it made sense to place the third European Change Cage city here. Sanctorum is home to a city within a city, 'The Basilica', the centre of Neochristianity. This estate has several grand buildings that house the headquarters of the new church. Some say they are modelled on the old Vatican, others that they actually are the old Vatican, which was simply moved to here.

Al Salam (Middle East)

The city of peace lies deep in the oil rich lands of what was once Saudi Arabia, Local authorities are responsible for guarding

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the large oil supplies from the numerous Neobedouin, who are drawn to the area in search of black gold. While it is officially the same as any other Change Cage city, Al Salam maintains a strong Arabian tradition and their version of Neochristianity is very different.

Regret (Asia – Siberia)

No one is quite sure why Regret was built in such a harsh and cold place, although it does offer the opportunity to run factories that create a hellish heat. The cold is biting though. Administrators who fail too often might find themselves ‘promoted’ to here. Nobles and commoners alike find themselves banished to the cold for their indiscretions.

Meiji (Asia – Japan)

Meiji was one of the last cities to be built and its designers used their experience to make the streets thinner, so there might be more room for buildings. They then made sure all the buildings had small rooms to fit more families inside. During the great rectification a terrible economic crash hit Japan, causing starvation and rioting across the country. So the citizens of Meiji have fully embraced the new order, which they fully believe saved them from destruction. However, the Skyfolk of Japan remain strong in their dedication to old traditions. From their Eerie atop Mount Fuji, these ‘Sky Samurai’ regularly attack Meiji.

Contemplation (Asia – China)

The quietest city in the world, Contemplation is a place of peace and meditation. However,

this peace has to be enforced. It’s Governor, Lin Quai, is a little insane, and considers himself, the Emperor and the other city governors to be gods. Believing speech itself to be another way to infect the harmony of the Earth he has made it illegal outside the home. Punishments are severe and even conversations carried out inside, or for official business, are done at a whisper.

Khan (Asia – Russia)

Lying amidst the plains of Russia is the stern city of Khan, famed for its disciplined way of doing things. The warrior spirit remains very strong among the people of Khan and some of the best soldiers come from here.

Moksha (Asia – India) Moksha is a place of rare light and colour. While it officially follows the faith of Neochristianity, it plays host to a bewildering array of local festivals and traditions. It is a place of small gods and strange rituals.

Atlantis (Asia – Indonesia)

With very little land available among the islands of Indonesia, the Emperor decided to build this city in the sea. Atlantis is partially built over several small islands, both natural and man-made. Deep pylons support the heavier structures, making it a very stable city. Almost every road is actually a waterway and tales are told that the city was built from historical maps of the real Atlantis, which formed the basis for all the Change Cage cities.

Where to find the 17 Change cage cities

North America [3]

- 1 Desolation – The City of Dust
- 2 Old Borealis – The City of Breath
- 3 Everglade – The City of Vines

South America [2]

- 4 Watchtower [Brazil] – The City of Festivals
- 5 Rio Arbolos [Argentina] – The City of Mystery

Africa [2]

- 6 New Eden [Central Africa] – The City of Beauty
- 7 Pharos [Egypt] – The City of History

Europe [3]

- 8 Londinium [England] – The City of Tradition
- 9 Gateway [Southern France] – The City of Wine
- 10 Sanctorum [Italy] – The City of Faith

Middle East [1]

- 11 Al Salam [Saudi Arabia] – The City of Peace

Asia [6]

- 12 Regret [Siberia] – The City of Ice
- 13 Meiji [Japan] – The City of Honour
- 14 Contemplation [Central China] – The City of Silence
- 15 Khan [Eastern Russia] – The City of Resolve
- 16 Moksha [India] – The City of Colour
- 17 Atlantis [Indonesia] – The City of Wonder

There are no Change Cage cities in Australia or New Zealand

Desolation

The City of Dust

Location: Nevada Desert

Climate: Very hot and dry

Governor: Franco Royston-Ragland Havering

Renowned Products: Gold

Known for: Headquarters of the Ministry of Truth

We begin our tour of the Change Cage cities with the most famous of them all, Desolation. This city in the middle of the desert might be considered the capital of the Neovictorian world, if there was such a thing, as it houses one of the more powerful ministers of the Administration and lies close to the Emperor's palace. Desolation is a prime example of the city template designed originally for Old Borealis. However, by the time Desolation was built they had ironed out most of the kinks in the design. So Desolation serves well as a model for most of the other Change Cage cities, meaning the detail we offer here can easily be applied to most of the others.

OVERVIEW

The centre of Desolation is the great Change Cage. This vast tower rises higher than any other building, a great fortress that dominates the skyline. As the governor's offices are at the very top of the Change Cage, several other government buildings cluster in its shadow. A great courtyard surrounds the Change Cage, making it hard to approach without being seen. This also allows vehicles the space needed to bring the many dignitaries,

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deliveries and prisoners to the Change Cage. Bridges support the rail lines that bring the trains in and out of the Change Cage. The area is surrounded by a road ('Parkside Crescent') running along the inside of the great walls of the upper class estates. As the estates form a horseshoe around the Change Cage, the area is only open on one side. This means anyone who passes the open gateway is offered an awe inspiring view of the Change Cage as they approach it.

Surrounding the Change Cage are the homes of the wealthy. They form a great wall around the area of the Change Cage. These vast estates are divided by more walls, that support the railways that run around the city. Around the estates, insulating them from the poor, are the malls. These arcades are filled with shops and leisure plazas, run by the servant class. The entire complex is almost one vast building, a maze of shops, plazas, restaurants and theatres.

Around these central structures the rest of the city belongs to the poor. Walls divide the remaining space between the malls and the outer fortifications into blocks. In these blocks are crammed the homes of the poor and the factories they work in. Many of the areas nearest to the malls are often referred to as 'pleasure blocks'. While these areas are officially no different from any other poor block, they have a higher concentration of brothels and underground clubs looking to attract the wealthy.

any need to travel around the city. In fact, given the security on the gates between the blocks it is positively discouraged. Rich men can pretty much go where they like, but usually have little desire to travel outside of their comfort zones. The poor are not allowed to leave their block, unless it is for work or at the command of someone in authority.

The streets are often crowded with people, and a variety of transport machines of all shapes and sizes. Many of the poor are not housed as near to their place of work as they should be. Some even have to travel to the next block to get to work. This is mainly as the Ministry of Hope, which is responsible for housing the population, can't be bothered with the paperwork of moving people around to suit their travel requirements. Those who need new homes just get put in empty ones, and no concern is given to the convenience of their commute. Given the size of the blocks, and the penalties for being late (often the loss of half a day's pay for just being a few minutes late) many of the poor choose to invest in some form of basic transport.

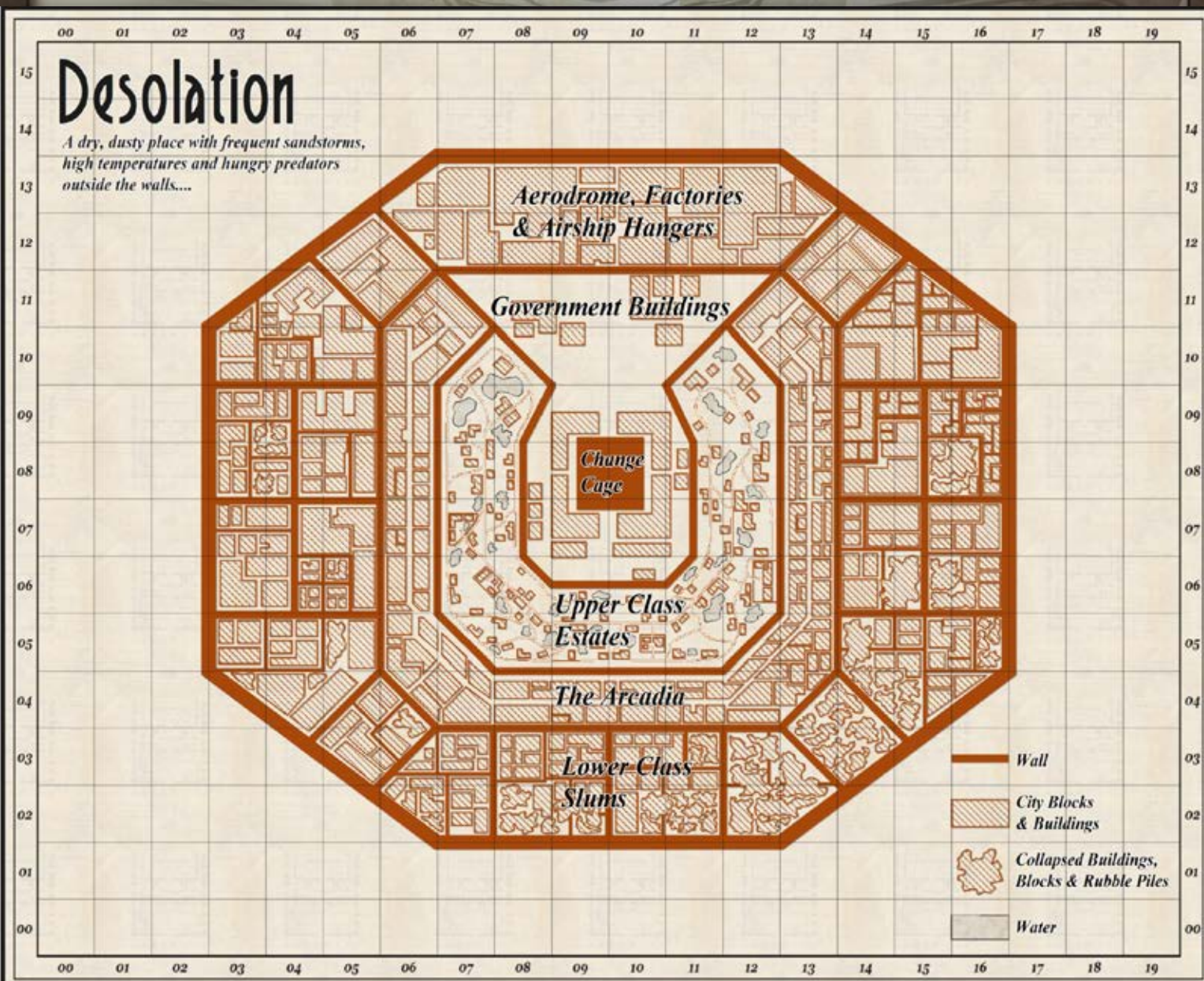
The wealthy often maintain their own more glamorous forms of transport, but they are kept more for show than actual use. A short walk takes them to everything they might need, and the streets in their own areas are never crowded. However pure laziness, and a desire to show off whatever they are travelling in, often convinces them to utilise some form of private transport, no matter how short the distance they need to travel.

GETTING AROUND

Apart from getting to work, few people have

Personal transport comes in many forms.

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Bikes, both pedal power and motorised, are popular with the poor. A few can afford somewhat broken down automaton animals, which come in all manner of shapes and sizes. Those who own these odd machines often keep them running by giving other workers lifts to work for a small fee. The

rich prefer something enclosed or high up, to avoid connecting with anyone else. So steampowered carriages or huge automated animals (like elephants) are more usual for them. Generally the rich never travel in anything that doesn't turn the heads of those whom they pass.

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Official transport is done using the train network. Rail tracks run along the top of most of the walls in the city, allowing trains to criss-cross between the blocks. Given the impossibility of turning many of the corners, most trains run back and forward along the same tracks. This means the passengers often have to get out at the tiny platforms that sit on the crossroads where walls meet and catch a train travelling in another direction. However, the trains are rarely used by the populace. Generally they serve as a way to move the police around the city, and to bring dissidents to the Change Cage. The poor may use the train (the rich wouldn't be seen dead on one) if they have the right documents. These passes are difficult to come by and require a lot of paperwork to discourage anyone trying to get hold of one. Those who do have one find the trains unreliable in the extreme and spend a long time waiting at the stations unless the police need to go to the same place.

It is possible to stow away on the trains, as the police are quite lazy and never patrol them. It is difficult to gain access to the track as the stations are guarded and the trains don't stop anywhere else. However once aboard, if you lay low, you can usually stay aboard without anyone noticing. This can be a good way to escape the city, as the rare trains that travel to the other cities are the same trains that travel the walls. Shifting from the walls, down onto a lower track, the train heads to the Change Cage, before moving underground, then finally heading out into the wilds beyond (and then it doesn't stop until it reaches its destination). The problem is that it is difficult to know which train might be making one of

these rare journeys.

Getting aboard the train in the Change Cage is virtually suicide, but joining the train anywhere else offers no guarantee you are on the right one. While there will be few patrols checking the train during the journey, there will usually be a patrol checking the train before it leaves. So you'll need to find a hidey-hole, as well as making sure you get on the right train to make your escape.

While they are not the best way to move around town, a small network of canals runs under Desolation, leading to several dockyards under the city. Most of these canals are high and wide enough to take ships as big as a sailing barge, but the deeper ones are only able to take smaller and lower canal barges. The outer docks are massive, able to receive around ten sailing barges at a time. Inner docks are smaller, only able to serve three or four small barges at any time. These waterways into the city are heavily guarded, and massive portcullises can be dropped to lock out intruders. The docks themselves are manned mainly by automata, who take the cargo up to warehouses in the blocks above. It is hard, but not impossible to make your way between the canals and the city, at least not without a few bribes. Barge folk often sneak into the city, and black market traders haunt the docks and warehouses making deals over contraband. It is possible to use the tunnels as a means of escape, but only if you can swim. It is far easier to bribe a bargefolk trader to take you with them when they leave. However, you will have to offer a large bribe, as the penalties for transporting fugitives are very severe and spot checks on barges are

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commonplace.

The other way out of the city (aside from airship), is the intercity train on one of its infrequent journeys out of the city. This train is the only one that passes close enough to the docks to allow loading any required cargo, before it leaves the city. There is only one train stop here, at the end of the long tunnel. From the dock station the tracks run uphill to the Change Cage, then further on to the network on top of the walls.

POLITICS

While Desolation is not a pleasant place to live, it is situated in a rich, gold producing area. This has made the city very wealthy, as gold is still a rare and useful metal. The central position of the city, close to the Emperor, also means it sees more visitors than any other city. So, valuable rumours and information passes through Desolation about the other sixteen Change Cage cities quite regularly. This flow of information is aided by the presence of the Minister of Truth. These facts, coupled with an adept governor, make Desolation one of the most powerful cities in the world.

Due to the governor's manipulations, the Administration is a den of vipers. The backbiting, manipulation, and shifting allegiances make it a place only the most devious and ruthless can survive. Oddly, this also means that things actually get done. Reputation and favour with the governor are all curried by running projects and plans that keep the city running. So, most administrators spend a good half of their time working for the city. Unfortunately, they have to spend

the other half of their time fighting to keep the credit for their work, or stealing credit for what others are doing, as well as finding a way to make alliances and to take down their rivals.

Desolation is also home to Autolycus Shill, the Minister of Truth. While every Change Cage city has a Ministry of Truth, the presence of the minister in Desolation makes it the centre of his web of deceit. So information, lies, data, rumour, disinformation, heresy and secrets are funnelled to the minister, on a daily basis, from all over the world. After each of his occasional visits to the Emperor, Autolycus issues orders to the rest of the ministry as to what parts of history are to be amended, and what lies are to be made true, and vice versa. Autolycus isn't a very imposing figure, but he has one of the keenest and most ruthless minds in the world. He has an eidetic memory, able to remember everything that ever passes his desk. He enjoys the power to rewrite history and to decide on truth, and he has something of a god complex. Given the power he wields, and the skill with which he does so, this attitude is not undeserved. Luckily, he and the governor get on well and manage not to tread on each other's toes. If they fell out, a rivalry between them might tear the city apart.

THE GOVERNOR

Residing at the top of the Change Cage is the ruler of Desolation, Franco Royston-Ragland Haverling. While he owns an estate, he spends most of his time in his spacious offices overlooking the city. Many believe Franco to be something of a hedonist, but he has worked hard for his indulgences. An

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astute judge of character, he manipulated his way up the Administration hierarchy, sowing disorder and sedition among his rivals. Among his subordinates he has prized ability over loyalty, as he believes it pointless to trust anyone but yourself. So, with a junior staff that are all kept politicking among themselves, but who are generally good at their jobs, Franco needs to do little actual work to run the city. While Franco is not as corrupt as some of his peers, he has the sense to turn a blind eye to the corruptions in the system. His attitude is borne of politics rather than loyalty. If he has never eaten meat or disobeyed the Emperor's edicts, this information cannot be used against him. If his rivals do not show the same self control, then they create dirt he can use to manipulate them.

This means that Franco is free to enjoy the social scene, and he can often be found at balls and dinner parties. This has ensured the loyalty of the upper class, who all feel he is a close personal friend. Franco also organises a ball to celebrate the start of each season at his estate. Each ball is themed according to the season it precedes, and they are costumed affairs. These balls are very lavish and as such are the highlight of the social season. This means that few among the wealthy dare to cross the governor until their invite is secured. Being excluded from one of the balls is something few reputations recover from.

Franco has a great deal of power, as the ruler of the closest city to the Emperor's palace. This means he is among the few that have visited the Emperor personally, although this has not occurred as often as he pretends. The

Emperor trusts Franco no more than any of the other governors, but values his advice on how to keep the others fighting amongst themselves.

THE MILITARY

The military complement of Desolation is much like that of any other Change Cage city. It is big and powerful, but the officers are over privileged, self important, overconfident and inexperienced. The city itself has a series of powerful defences. Covering every angle of fire from the walls are a series of powerful guns, supposedly to protect against predators. However, no animal is likely to be able to scale the walls of the city. The guns can swivel 360 degrees as well, although there is obviously no need to be able to fire on the city itself...

As well as the array of firepower on the walls (more than enough to destroy a small airship), the human police force forms a city guard in their own right. They are cowardly and used to outnumbering their opponents, but even a thug can be dangerous. They see the guns are manned and watch for signs of 'animal attack'. If necessary, and at a pinch, they can also be used as naval marines for more planned attacks.

The main defence of the city is the IAN. The navy maintains several airships that patrol around the city. There are also four large hangers, each taking up a block of the city, each one of which contains two airships. While these airships are often being refitted or maintained, at very little notice they can be ready to rise up and defend the city. The crew

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are housed in barracks within the block, and they are expressly forbidden from leaving the block or mingling with the rest of the population. Several military logistic staff are imprisoned along with the crews. This staff provides food, laundry and cleaning services. Several automata fulfil these roles as well, including dolls used to serve other basic needs. Officers are allowed to go where they please, although most spend their time at the officer's club near the Change Cage.

The Imperial Air Navy in Desolation is under the command of Sir Roderick Strickland-Villiers, a tyrannical and self important Admiral who is far more ambitious than he is talented or experienced. He enjoys the wealth of the city and spends a fortune on new uniforms, with as many medals, tassels and decorations as possible. Sir Roderick

believes himself the most important man in the city, that his control of the navy is absolute, and that he is the true power in Desolation. No one wants to point out that the men under his command hate him, and he can be easily overruled by the governor. However, he is not to be ignored, as his family is powerful and he is not as completely stupid as many people think. Luckily his attention is focussed on the Skyfolk. He takes it as a personal affront every time the navy fails to destroy the Skyfolk. He believes that these failures are the only reason he hasn't become a close personal friend of the Emperor (who actually thinks he is an idiot, when he bothers to spare him a thought at all). Sir Roderick fervently believes that his navy could crush the Skyfolk if he was given a free hand. If he ever manages to start the war he dearly longs for, the bloodshed on both sides would be horrendous.



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CLOTHING AND STYLE

While it might seem lunacy, the fashion for the wealthy in Desolation is to wear thick layered coats and dresses, despite the infernal heat. This is purely as a way to show off. The heavier the clothes you are wearing, the more it shows you can afford better air conditioning systems or that you have more changes of clothes. While the upper class could remain quite comfortable in their estates, instead they swelter in three piece suits and heavy layered gowns. To leave the house with any concession to the heat is to prove yourself no better than a commoner. Short sleeves, undone top buttons or not wearing gloves are all serious fashion faux pas.

The Servant class are allowed lighter clothing, as they are usually made of cheaper (and therefore thinner) fabrics. However, house servants are expected to wear their uniform at all times with no concession to the heat (although inside, it may be cooler). When off duty they can roll their sleeves up, or hitch up their long skirts, so they don't expire while doing laundry or working in the kitchens.

The lower class have a little more freedom, and may wear what they like, to and from work. However, once at work they are expected to remain properly attired. Men may remove their jackets if they are working on the factory floor, but not if they work in the office. At home, or as they leave work, most men swiftly take off their jacket and collar. Women are allowed to bare their arms with short sleeves, but their skirts must touch the floor to avoid impropriety. Many women actually wear a knee length skirt under a long thin overskirt. This overskirt can be swiftly

removed when they leave work.

A DESOLATION GAZETTEER

In the following section, we present a general guide to the areas of the city, and note some of the more famous locations and characters. This should grant the Gamemaster enough of a solid idea about the city itself, but offer plenty of space to add new areas of her own devising.

The Change Cage

The great square tower at the centre of the city broods over the whole domain. No other structure is taller, or even comes close to the height of this frightening monolith. Everything in the city seems to bow and lean with deference towards this awesome centre. Few people know what goes on in the Change Cage. What they do know is simple; people who go in never come out. This is not, of course, strictly true. Plenty of people work in the Change Cage or the area in the centre of it. Guards regularly patrol both inside and out, and several of the governor's support staff work there, on the highest floors.

The central floors are a private train station, as two lines from the top of the walls cross here so that prisoners and supplies may be taken straight to the Change Cage. A huge turntable allows trains to be shifted onto other tracks to make sure they don't bump into each other or have to share rails. A large guard post monitors all the trains passing through here and stands ready to escort any prisoners to processing.

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The governor himself has an office right at the top, a lavish workspace with more square footage than some of the wealthy manor houses. Every legal amenity is available here, and even a few pieces of machinery that are not strictly legal, but are approved for 'those who are loyal to the Emperor'. Chief among these is the council room, a chamber each of the other Change Cages includes a duplicate of. Inside the chamber are a series of podiums, arranged in a circle. Each podium is linked to a specific city's council chamber, with a final one for the Emperor. When someone stands behind the podium marked for Desolation, his image appears in all the chambers behind the Desolation podium. This device allows all the governors to meet each other and hold summits without any of them needing to leave their city. Interestingly, your image does not appear unless you stand behind the right podium, although anyone in the room can see and hear the other 'phantoms'. So it is possible to listen to the meeting without announcing your presence to the others. It is believed that the Ministers of the Administration have a similar device they use to hold meetings of their own, with or without the Emperor.

What goes on in the rest of the Change Cage serves to fuel plenty of rumours. Some think it is a prison, a dark oubliette to lock away innovation. Some think it is a vast execution chamber, where the instigators of change are recycled to feed the masses. Some think the place a large torture chamber where people are broken on the rack, and once their dissidence has been beaten out of them they are sent to other cities. The truth? Well, for that you will have to get inside...

The Change Cage is not the only building in the area. While each block has an administrator, several smaller government buildings and training areas are placed near the Change Cage. For most cities, there is a central office for each of the ministries. As Desolation is the home of the Minister of Truth, that ministry has taken the lion's share of the space. Many buildings contain long halls of workers, rewriting history and amending the past. This means that the area around the Change Cage often bustles with activity as low ranking scribes and administrators beetle about between buildings, carrying papers and charts for important meetings.

The Ministry of Defence has a building here, but it also includes an area with a more social purpose, the Desolation officer's club. While not every city has one, most do; a place for high-ranking officers in the IAN to drink and boast among their peers. Only officers are allowed here, and technically they are planning operations and carrying out staff revues. However, most leave that work to their junior offices and open another bottle of port. The other ministries all have a headquarters building, clustered around the base of the Change Cage. They are all fairly nondescript, as the Ministry of Truth holds most of the administration power here. However, they are still vital and important government buildings and they serve as a central hub for operations carried out among the blocks of the city.

The Upper Class Estates

Surrounding the Change Cage are the far more elegant gardens and estates of the wealthy. Huge walls enclose each estate,

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designed to keep the riff-raff out and mark out the area. It is possible to drive around the entire horseshoe-shaped area, as a wide road surrounds it so the wealthy might visit their neighbours. The road is spacious and well lit, and regularly patrolled by Peelers. The inner crescent is generally called the 'Parkside Crescent' as it curves around the open space of the Change Cage. The other side is referred to as 'Arcadian Drive', as it runs along the Arcadia shopping areas. Both roads are quite pleasant to drive through in an air-conditioned carriage, but can get quite busy and become thick with automated carriage smoke.

While the estates of the wealthy are huge (certainly compared to anyone else's living accommodations), they are all equal in size. When the city was built, the area for each estate was divided out equally and the walls were built to maintain the divisions (and to allow trains to pass by, heading into the Change Cage). However, while the rich cannot expand their estates, they can buy new ones. As the fortunes of some families have failed, and their estates became available, they have passed on to other 'loyal Neovictorian lineages' who have been finding their accommodation a little cramped. Technically, the rich do not actually own the estates or buy them. You cannot own land in a Change Cage city. However, you can offer large bribes to those in the ministry of Hope or Legacy to ensure your sons and daughters (perhaps looking for a new home to begin married life in) get assigned an estate of their own.

Each estate is huge; often a mile or two square, with very few buildings. They are almost

expansive enough to let you forget you are surrounded by walls. At the centre of the estate lies the family home, a huge mansion house or stately home. The house usually has two or three floors and several wings. Servants are housed in the attic and work 'below stairs' in the basement kitchens and workrooms. The rest of the house contains bedrooms, dining rooms, ballrooms, games rooms and space for the whole family to avoid each other for weeks on end.

Married couples rarely get their own estates (unless the head of the family is both generous and lucky), so usually the bride comes to live with her husband and his family. They are given a suite of rooms, including their own bedroom, dining rooms and parlour – a house within a home. Several couples might live in the same house, with the grandest areas reserved for the head of the family. They can receive their own guests and even host small soirees without the company of their family. However, events hosted by the head of the family, taking place in the vast main ballroom and dining (or banqueting) room, require the whole family to be in attendance.

Sometimes an especially doting family head might build a small house for a new couple in the grounds of the estate. Often referred to as 'the cottage' or 'the lodge' these buildings are still twice the size of an average modern house. They are never built next to each other, as they might resemble the rows of tenements that house the poor. So they are often built to be as far away from each other as possible and to be as unique and different as possible.

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The greater part of the estate is one large park. Even in Desolation the wealthy own huge gardens. However in Desolation they require constant watering and work to stop the grass dying. An army of gardeners toil day and night to landscape the area with whatever plants they can find that can survive the heat. Their living accommodations are often a small apartment block in a far away part of the estate (hidden where it won't be noticed, often behind a set of trees).

Noteable Locations

The Havering Estate – located in the centre of the 'horseshoe' and rumoured to be just a little larger than the other estates, is the official home of the governor and his family. While the main house is lavishly appointed, it is most well known for the 'Crystal Palace'. This huge glass pavilion sits in the centre of the estate, and is where all the most impressive parties are held. Its glass panels refract the bright sunlight, casting rainbows across the whole pavilion in the daytime. Its steel supports shine in the sunlight, granting it a glowing halo. At night the stars are visible through the roof as you dance surrounded by fine wine and excellent music.



The Crowsmith Estate – this estate is rare among Change Cage cities, in that it has remained vacant for several years. The whole place has such a bad reputation, there are even those who believe it to be haunted. Many years ago a group of misbegotten dissidents managed to get into the estate, and massacred the Crowsmith family in their sleep. Since then, every owner has complained of seeing strange visitors in the night and more than the average amount of disasters, murders and bouts of madness have plagued the place. Those seeking a more rational explanation suggest there is some secret tunnel that allows dissidents to sneak in and inflict harm, but if so it has never been found. For many years, no one has been brave enough to ignore superstition and take on the place, and it lies neglected and overgrown.

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The Tiffin Stand – Run by an entrepreneurial couple, called Jeremiah and Florence Duffin, this small bakery stand offers a range of small baked goods and hot tea to those who pass by. Given the cost of getting the sugar, flour, and even tea, from the barge folk, the delicacies sold here are frighteningly expensive. The oddest thing about the stand is that rather than do business in the Arcadia, it is set up in Parkside Drive, in the shadow of the Change Cage. Normally they would be moved on to the Arcadia, but they do a brisk trade serving the Administration staff that work in the government buildings near the Change Cage. They also sell snacks to the wealthy out for a walk. As such the owners hear a lot of gossip and might become a vital contact.

The Arcadia

Behind the walled compounds of the rich lie the equally segregated shopping districts referred to as 'The Arcadia'. As the upper class estates circle the Change Cage, so the Arcadia circles the estates. The area is a huge tangle of streets, arcades, houses, theatres, markets and carnival side shows. While there are divisions between the areas, they are not especially pronounced or segregated, for the convenience of the wealthy that shop there. In some places the streets are wide enough for a steam carriage; others are too thin for a couple to walk side by side. Everything in the Arcadia leans towards the estates a little, as the most sought after positions are those on Arcadia Drive, as close to the estates as possible. Better to be on the top floor of a building on 'the drive' than to have your own shop two streets away. Everyone knows the upper class don't like to walk further than

they have to!

The Arcadia also serves as home to the servant class shopkeepers and craftsmen that work in the area. Many of the smaller shops are also where the families of the owner lives. Most of the family help in the shop from an early age; even small children can fetch and carry, or start to learn a craft trade. However, while the Arcadia is an exciting place to grow up, it isn't much fun. From their windows the children can see a wonder of sights, sounds and smells, as all the various trades and entertainments jostle to advertise and draw customers into their emporia. Unfortunately, children running around the streets playing doesn't offer a very professional look for any tradesman looking to impress the wealthy. So few children are allowed out, and even when they are, they must be absolutely on their best behaviour. It is no surprise then that many children sneak out of their rooms to follow the siren call of the lights and wonders. Most of the denizens keep an eye on any children they find, and bring them home if they stray too far. However, some go missing and never return, as there are plenty of darker trades operating in the deep alleys of the Arcadia.

Advertising is ubiquitous in the Arcadia. Colourful posters cover every wall advertising suppliers, services and entertainments. They change constantly as people simply paste over the advertisements of their rivals. A few gaslights light up signs over the more well-appointed buildings. However, lit adverts are not only for the wealthier shopkeepers. Many cover their windows with a poster and light a candle or lantern in the room to create an illuminated sign (at the expense of their view).

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A few shopkeepers pay other residents to do the same, to spread the name of their shop further. Those closer to the wealthy estates can actually make a good living selling their 'window time' to other shopkeepers.

Some of the shops and entertainments are collected in several arcades. These range from covered streets to purpose built shopping centres. Some are lavishly decorated, with colonnades and fountains. They are not always the best place to find what you want, but they do allow smaller shops to survive. It is cheaper to rent a small unit in an arcade than to own your own shop. So some shopkeepers work in a gallery unit in the arcades and rent a small apartment nearby. While there are signs and street maps, a visit to Arcadia is always an exploration. The constant jockeying among the shopkeepers for the prime space makes it a changeable district. It can also shift styles very swiftly. A street quickly becomes an arcade, then a row of shops, before opening into a small plaza behind which a bustling street market can be seen.

Notable locations

The Alhambra Theatre – The largest theatre in Desolation is the Alhambra, and it has a reputation that has spread beyond the city. While it may not be as imposing as the Change Cage, it is one of the grandest buildings in the city. The area around it is a spacious colonnade offering refreshments to both patrons and passers by. The building is built in stone, and gargoyles, gaslights, columns and architectural swirls cover every surface. The entrance is a grand double door

atop a marble staircase. It makes you feel as if you are entering a palace, and once inside you are treated like royalty. Uniformed waiters take drinks orders and show you to your seat and it is one of the few buildings outside the estates with any form of air conditioning. The Alhambra is primarily an opera house, but does perform plays on occasion. Every performer dreams of one day playing there and the crew and staff have been hand picked from the most experienced and talented in Desolation.

The Midnight Cabaret – The only entertainment that doesn't advertise its presence is the Midnight Cabaret. This small and mysterious show continually moves locations, sometimes playing in a theatre, at other times in a public house, sometimes in a side street. They only reveal their next location to the patrons of their last show, so you need to be there, or know someone who was, if you want to see them. This element of exclusivity has made the Cabaret popular and a little risqué. The performances vary, but are often strange and enticing, dangerously skirting the rules on innovation.

Wormwood's Absinthe Bar – For the best absinthe in the city, or so the posters would have you believe, you should visit Wormwood's. While opinion may be divided among connoisseurs, Wormwood's certainly serves a variety of high quality beverages in a very convivial setting. Pushing the boundaries of innovation, this elegant bar is the epitome of 'fin-de-siecle' chic. The elegantly carved wooden panels and stained glass decorations are stylishly Art Nouveau. The barkeep is a gruff, thick set, bearded man called Galois,

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although no one knows if that is his first name or his last. Despite the opulence of the bar, he seems constantly depressed and speaks only of how things used to be and the ending of an era. Whether real or a marketing gimmick, his melancholy is part of the bar's appeal, and it draws the bohemian set like moths to a flame.

27 Caroline's Arcade – This is not a shop, but the home of Sophia Amandine, one of the city's most sought after courtesans. Sophia's home is both decadent and opulent, although she only entertains here. Her real home is several streets away and one of her best-kept secrets. Even her closest neighbours there know her by another name. As Sophia she entertains gentlemen callers and commands a high price in the form of gifts from those who seek her company. She is not the only courtesan in the city, or even in Arcadia, but she is a far cry from the prostitutes and dolls of the pleasure blocks. While her callers are often looking for an intimate meeting with her, plenty call on her purely for her educated conversation and musical skills.

The Pleasure Blocks

Outside Arcadia the city is left to the poor and the misbegotten, but even here there are many districts and distinctions. The rest of the city is divided into blocks, each one separated by a high brick wall. Gates between blocks are guarded, and only those with the right identification are allowed to pass through. Identities are also confirmed by autophrenometer, so just stealing the right papers is never quite enough. However, with the right bribe in the right place, or the right

manners, it is possible to get the guards to look the other way.

There are no signposts to the pleasure blocks; you need to know where to find them. Officially they are no different to the other lower class blocks, and many are populated by factory workers and labourers like the rest. However, the pleasure blocks offer a selection of other entertainments for those who know what to look for. These entertainments are all privately owned, and cluster in these blocks simply because they are close to Arcadia, or one of the roads near it. Location is everything, as the main customers of the pleasure blocks are the wealthy, looking to sate their vices somewhere discrete, where society won't see what they are up to. They do not want to travel far into the city to find what they need. They are looking for somewhere shady, but secure, that is a stone's throw away from a respectable place that they can claim to have been visiting at the time.

Despite the shame of being caught in a pleasure block, few of the wealthy go in disguise. No one touches the wealthy here, as everyone benefits from them spending their money. Accosting one of them would be like 'killing the goose that lays the golden eggs' and short shrift is given to those who entertain such plans. So the gentlemen are left to go about their business, and everyone just behaves as if they haven't seen a thing. A few ladies find entertainments here too, and they are well catered for, although gambling is more popular than sex for many of them. Women take more risks though, as a reputation (even a small one) as a pleasure seeker can be ruinous in society. Men are

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assumed to be weak and indulgent, in need of 'blowing off steam', but women are unfairly held to a far higher standard. For a woman to give in to immorality is shocking to 'society', and she can swiftly find herself an outcast. Even so, plenty seek their own adventures on these streets; some even become 'belle de jour' part time prostitutes, not for the money, but for the decadence and risk.

The Red House – The most famous club in Desolation that no one talks about is the Red House. A nondescript red door on the east side of the city marks the club. Those who do not arrive accompanied by a member will be denied access. The large doorman will even insist there is no club here at all. Inside the place is bedecked in low hung red velvet and almost any delight is on offer. What they do not have for you that evening will be acquired for you by the next. The owners charge extortionate prices, and deliver ruthlessly on their promises with a smile. Those working there who do as they are told share in the wealth, but those who say no, to anything, find themselves on the streets. Some simply disappear.

Dollhouse – while most of the brothels in the pleasure blocks offer automata dolls to serve the pleasures of their customers, not all of them do. Some offer human prostitutes, as many women are forced to supplement their wage (either by poverty, desperation or sometimes even by their fathers and family). The Dollhouse is an odd mixture as it only employs human prostitutes, but makes them dress up and behave as automata dolls. The customers are often quite brutal, looking to treat a human woman as a machine, knowing they are mistreating someone who can feel everything.

The Wheel – not every house in the pleasure

blocks offers prostitutes and whores (although a good 70% do). Some offer games of chance and luck for the wealthy to risk their riches on. The Wheel is named after the old wheel of fortune that began the place and which still remains a popular draw. Customers write their name on a bill and pin it to a section of the wheel. Whichever bill the wheel stops at, the person whose name is on the bill gets all the money on the wheel (less a little something for the house). Across its two floors the Wheel has grown to offer almost every game of chance known to man. The downstairs offers roulette, craps and the famous Wheel, among other games, while upstairs is reserved for cards, mainly poker.

The Room – this poker club is a very exclusive and secretive circle. It is an extremely high stakes game known to only a few of Desolation's richest citizens. They never talk about it and an invite is rare. However, many people love to speculate about where the group may be meeting for its monthly game. Everyone would love to know 'where the room is'. Those who win might let slip they were 'lucky in the room', if they are being especially generous. However, if everyone who claimed to be part of the circle actually were, they would need a very large room. The actual members stay quiet on the subject; so much so that some people think the group may be nothing more than a myth.

The Killing Ground – games of chance are not always enough for everyone. At the Killing Ground, animal blood sports are arranged nightly for entertainment. Dog fights are popular, but not as much as rat baiting (where a dog is put in a pit of rats and bets are taken on how many he will kill in a specific time). The fights are brutal and few animals survive many matches. The Killing Ground is a loud and nasty place but remains

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popular and is cheap enough to be patronised by the lower class. Rumours abound of a secret room where fights to the death between humans or/and automata are available, but these bouts are by invitation only.

The Factory Districts

Most of the inhabitants of Desolation live in one of the working class blocks, working in the factories or offering goods they have made from their homes. Some work as both, as money is always tight. The factory blocks look like the pleasure blocks on the surface, but no one is here for a good time. Most are shrouded in a thick fog from the factories. Many are prone to odd weather patterns, depending on the chemicals the local factories spit out into the atmosphere. A common feature is 'red rain', when copper

and chemical laden smoke rises into the atmosphere, chills and absorbs water. The water adds weight as the chemicals condense and then shower down upon the city and the blocks below, as if the sky were bleeding. As the chemicals don't need to rise very high, some blocks are more prone to these effects than others. The odd rains come in many colours, but most residents make sure they are not walking the streets in such showers. There are few specific ill effects documented, but it certainly isn't healthy.

Unlike the more organic Arcadia, the streets of the factory blocks are regular and regimented. Houses and apartment blocks are built in straight lines to exact specifications. The streets are thin to fit more houses in, and to reduce people's ability to gather in crowds.

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This means they are also always crowded and jammed, especially during the rush hour to get to work.

The factory blocks, as you might imagine, each contain several factories. These production facilities are all dedicated to a particular craft, although several of each type might be found all over the city. While the factory goods are mass produced, the technology to do so is not very efficient. It is still remarkably labour intensive and often very hard work. However, given the long hours the employees work and the sheer amount of factories, and that few people can afford to buy very much, many wonder why so many factories are required. Some reason it is just to keep the population occupied, and most of what they make is recycled. In fact, a lot of goods go to build or furnish military vessels. While the steel produced in the foundries is an obvious example, many airships also require carpets and chairs, etc., especially for the officers.

After a long day at work the inhabitants of the blocks return home to either an apartment in a block of flats, or a room or floor, in a tenement building. Everyone is housed by the Ministry of Legacy, rather than choosing accommodations themselves. The tenement houses are generally considered to be nicer places to live, as the streets have a greater sense of community and (while thin) the houses offer a little bit more space. However, the floor of a house is only assigned to a family (and even then you might need to offer a bribe). So, many couples have children just in the hopes of getting reassigned to a house, away from their cramped apartment.

The apartments are in tall tower blocks, built mostly with wood and stone rather than brick. Worn stairs take you from landing to landing, and many are added to or rebuilt to deal with the size of the population, making them rabbit warrens of stairs and twisted corridors. The walls are thin and children can be heard crying or couples arguing across each landing. It does not foster a sense of community or sanity and it often makes people hate their neighbours. Police raids on the blocks are common as many residents are happy to rat out their annoying neighbours.

Even with the regimentation, there is still a lot of variety among the blocks. The types of factory set the tone of the neighbourhood. The cloth factories are noisy, the tanning factories smelly, and the smelting factories are painfully hot. So, each comes with its own particular annoyances that colour the mood of the people that live nearby. However, in every block there are three things that can always be found, a Peeler station, the administrator's offices and the security checkpoints on each entrance. Peeler stations are usually quite small, consisting of an office and a set of four or five cells. These stations have only temporary containment facilities, as most prisoners will either be freed, executed or sent to the Change Cage. Each station usually has two or three Peelers on duty, although more will be patrolling the block streets. In some Peeler stations a detective might be in residence so loyal citizens can report acts of dissidence.

The administrator's office is a large and better appointed building in the heart of the block. It serves as government offices and also

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contains the courts where criminals will be tried. Few administrators like to spend much time in their blocks, preferring to remain among the nicer wealthier areas of Arcadia. The administrator in charge also sets the tone of their block by the dedication they show to their post. Those who take bribes create a culture where everyone can be bought and the administration becomes corrupt. Those who work hard for their block often create minor fascist states, as they are more concerned about their 'spotless career' than the people they administer. Some are happy to foster crime (especially among the pleasure blocks), as long as the criminals give them a cut of the profits. As far as the people are concerned the best blocks are those where the administrator can't be bothered to do much and stays away as much as possible, leaving the day-to-day details to underlings. As the scribes are often left this job, they often work to make things better for the residents.

Like all the other lower class blocks, the factory blocks are surrounded by high walls, upon which the trains occasionally pass by. The only steps that lead to the top of the walls, and to the few train stations, are located by the entrances to the block, next to which is a guard post. Twenty-four hours a day the posts are guarded by both a human guard and an automata. The automaton resembles a Peeler, but is stronger and more heavily armoured, and has significantly less respect for the law. It is there to see any trouble is dealt with swiftly and ruthlessly. If you have a pass, getting into another block is simple. You hand your papers to the guard who uses the autophrenometer to check your ID. Then he waves you through and on your way. If

you don't have a pass, well, then things get messy and usually end up with you in the Change Cage, if you make it that far. As you might imagine, there is usually no trouble at the guard posts, allowing the authorities to maintain the lie that they are there to stop dissidents meeting their accomplices and coordinating citywide acts of disobedience (which are, of course, dreadful for everybody in the city).

Notable Locations

The Crow's Foot – This tavern on the southern side of the city is a rather nondescript watering hole with weak gin and bad food on offer. However, the landlord has been known to help dissidents in need. He claims to have committed a few acts of disobedience himself, and that his limp is due to time he spent in the Change Cage, although few believe the story is true. There are tales that he has a secret hiding place which the authorities have never found. This would be odd as they raid the place regularly, so they should have found most hiding places by now. However, the Crow's foot is useful as a meeting place for known dissidents. While the authorities watch it constantly, those inside know they can't be listening to what they talk about. If you are not already on one of the known dissidents lists, it is dangerous to be seen here, but if you already have a reputation it is as secure a place as any for talk of revolution.

Textile Mill 37 – You are unlikely to notice anything really special about this fairly nondescript textile mill, unless you talk to the children who work there. A few years ago,

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so rumour has it, a little girl named Polly got caught under a machine and pushed under a grating. It took two days to get her out as the management refused to switch off the machine. While she was down there, Polly found the thin tunnels led directly into the sewers and the ventilation systems of several other buildings. Only the children are small enough to get along these tight corridors, but they pass maps down to brothers and sisters, as they grow too big. The children offer a useful messaging and gossip gathering service to those who befriend them.

Print Works 23 – This bookbinding and printing works mainly produces Neochristian bibles and occasionally prints government posters. As such it never handles any sensitive documents and is barely monitored by the authorities. For this reason it is one of the main producers of dissident literature. The management are unaware that a few of the staff are actually typesetting for dissident manifestos and propaganda while they are at work. With the presses running day and night, no one notices a few extra work details. The literature is bound as Neochristian bibles, for safety, often with most of the original text intact, and they are passed out into the population. Some are placed in shipments from other print works (to blur the trail) so people with new bibles suddenly find new and intriguing text in their holy book. More than one dissident has been set on the path to rebellion when the right holy book ended up in their possession.

Ghetto Blocks

Those living in the factory blocks think they live in the worst parts of the city, but they are

wrong. Not every block comes up even to the standards of the factory blocks in terms of living conditions. The cities have been around for a while now, and some areas have suffered damage or accident that has made them unsuitable for living in. Chemical spills can poison the water supplies, earth tremors make the buildings unsafe, and even dissident actions (or accidents that are blamed on dissident activity) leave some blocks broken and drowning in poisons. A few of these blocks have always been like this. Those that sit next to the recycling plants suffer noxious smells day and night; those next to some factories are shaken apart by the constant toiling of huge machines.

These blocks are generally evacuated, and the residents reassigned. However, some choose not to leave, preferring the dangers of their block when assigned new living quarters half the size of what they have. They are not the only residents though. The homeless, forgotten, and especially the Misbegotten, often make their homes here, building their own forms of community within the city.

The security on these ghetto blocks is not very tight either, allowing the people inside to move between them with a little more freedom. However, there are still guards protecting against entry to the other more civilised blocks. While the lack of Peeler patrols might be helpful to dissidents, it also means there is no one to fight crime in the block (which means criminality is often rife and goes unpunished). Those who live here tend to police their own, and can be more ruthless than the authorities.

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The ghetto blocks occupy less than 5% of the city, but given the amount of Misbegotten in the city that means they can be quite crowded. Occasionally the authorities conduct raids, targeting criminals and dissidents hiding in these 'unoccupied' blocks. In fact these raids are little more than death squads looking to reduce the Misbegotten population. They pick a few random areas and slaughter whoever they find. Most residents know to hide when these raids occur, so those they find are the ill, the weak or just the plain stupid. Sometimes, criminals are tied to stakes in the ground as an offering to the death squads. About one in three raids are conducted by the Chuno Ggun. For them it is a live training exercise rather than a clearance operation. Their raids are more dangerous as they come in smaller and stealthier numbers and are more skilled and better armed than the guards. However, these raids are also looking to recruit. Those who put up a decent fight are captured, rather than killed, and taken as new recruits whether they like it or not.

Notable Locations

The Cache – Located in one of the fallen down buildings is the seed of the revolution. Several misbegotten have begun collecting weapons here, preparing to defend their block from the raids, or even to begin a city wide revolution. Apart from the few swords or knives they have managed to collect, few of the weapons work. However, Jebediah Manipole, an old weapon-smith, works to cannibalise whatever is brought to him here to build a functional armoury. This means the few weapons that do work are botched together and unreliable, although a lot of

them pack a far harder punch.

The Poison Well – In one of the ghetto blocks, there is a well so poisoned with chemical leaks from the nearby plants that the water glows with a sickly green hue. It is thick with slime but smells extremely sweet, leading many flies and insects to be drawn here. The well is a place of sacrifice, justice and prophesy, and it is the closest the local Misbegotten have to a sacred place. When a criminal is accused of a crime he may 'choose the well' instead of whatever sentence he has been given. He is brought here, and after a brief ritual must drink a full cup of water from the well. For many it is a death sentence, the water burns their inside making eating anything painful or impossible for the rest of their (brief) lives. However, for a rare few the water has little or no effect, at least for a misbegotten. The choice is simple, the possibility of life (as those who survive are pardoned for their crime) weighted against a painful rather than a swift death.

The well has another effect for those who drink it though, it offers the gift of prophesy. While the poison courses the body of the drinker (painful even for those who will live) it burns through the victim's mind, offering a series of visions and hallucinations. Many who survive are driven mad by the experience. The visions are not always useful, and the same is often said of the ravings of those in the throes of them. However, the visions have often proved accurate, and lives have been saved by the early warning of a raid, or of a building about to collapse. So those who 'choose the well' become sacrifices rather than criminals, a final act for the good of the

community, to pay for their sins.

The Circus Pit – In one of the ghetto blocks, a few of the fallen buildings have created a natural amphitheatre. A circular patch of ground is surrounded on all sides by fallen masonry that makes for a form of auditorium. It is here that many of the misbegotten entertainers try out their new tricks and acts for an audience of their peers. There are few enough entertainments for the ghetto dwellers, so there is always an audience. Every evening torches are lit and the performers come forward, a strange mixture of clowns, dancers, magicians and other oddities. The audience all put something into a collection box, which is given to the act that proves the most entertaining. The prize is never very much, but as the performers are so poor the contest to win is fierce.

Ethnicity in the Change Cage

While the Emperor has ensured that western and Victorian values have dominated the world, that doesn't mean the population of the Change Cage cities is exclusively Caucasian. The world government Victor Hippocrates created allowed a greater degree of movement between countries, making each one very multi-cultural. There was not only no time, but no point in dividing the populace by ethnic background before assigning them to the Change Cage cities. Nor was there any attempt to send particular groups into the jaws of the carnivorous animals by denying them the shelter of the cities. So all the Change Cage cities play host to a wide variety of peoples and cultures.

This is not to say there is no racism, bigotry, segregation or minority oppression. In fact, all these things have survived to some extent. The world before the Great Rectification wasn't perfect. However, with the crew of the Airship Ophelia fighting to abolish slavery, allowing Africa to develop as a free nation, there is a little less bigotry than in our world.

Having said that, many cities still contain a clear majority of one particular racial type. There are more Africans in New Eden, more Japanese in Meiji and more Caucasians in Everglade. However, even when in the majority, no specific ethnic group makes up more than 70% of the population, and nowhere are any resident ethnic groups unrepresented in any social class.

Most governors try to break up communities as it is the best way to ensure the populace think of themselves as Neovictorian rather than that of another culture from a world long gone.

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Old Borealis

The City of Breath

Location: North America

Climate: Cold and breezy

Governor: Susannah Gilbert

Renowned Products: Fruit and vegetables, Maple syrup

Known for: The 'bread basket' of the North American cities

The first of the American Change Cage cities was Old Borealis, a tradition the city is proud of. As the first city to be completed there, it was also the first built using the template that has since been duplicated for most of the other cities. While the people of Old Borealis had little to do with the design, they are still proud of their city as the grandmother of all the other Change Cage cities. The only downside to this honour is that the city doesn't really 'work properly'. As the first practical application of the design, several flaws became apparent when the city was finished. While the design was amended for subsequent cities, it was too late to rebuild Old Borealis. These problems are not especially major, but mean that almost everything in the city fails or breaks down occasionally. The sewer and reclamation systems are constantly backing up and blocking. Many streets are too thin for the steam carriages of the wealthy to travel through. Trains on the walls rarely run to time as they keep getting in each other's way. Main thoroughfares are too thin, leading to jams of people at busy times.

Another odd feature of Old Borealis is due to

the breeze that constantly swirls around the city. As the wind rushes through the place, the walls, archways and thin streets turn the city into a strange musical instrument. At certain places in the city, ghostly and discordant tunes echo down the streets. Many people often think they hear whispering, as if nearby voices have been carried on the wind. There are those who think the city is haunted, although most people just think the effect is unnerving rather than supernatural.

While the area of the city itself is quite cold, just a little further south the land is quite fertile and more temperate. This means that Old Borealis produces a lot of food (comparatively) for the other cities, by maintaining small agricultural villages nearby. While it doesn't produce anything exotic, it exports many basic fruits and vegetables, such as potatoes, beans and tomatoes. There is no large scale agriculture, as that would go against the Emperor's edicts. So the villages effectively produce large scale home produce, and scavenge whatever naturally growing food they can find.

The governor of Old Borealis is Susanna Gilbert, often referred to as Grandmother by the upper classes. No one is quite sure of Susanna's age (and no one is brave enough to ask her) but there seems to be no evidence she was ever a young woman. She is a thin and dry old woman, but one with a frighteningly sharp mind. She never leaves her estate, and many think she never even leaves the drawing room where she receives visitors. But somehow she seems to know all of the goings on in the city. Some believe this is due to her being an advanced Absinthe adept; less polite people just call her a witch.

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She has no patience with incompetent men, and she rarely even entertains their company. It is rumoured she was jilted at the altar and resents all men for the hurt she suffered. Few men relish the opportunity to make a report to her. In the company of women Susanna is very different. She laughs, chats and shares intimacies with many of her female visitors, as if she was their doting grandmother. The sexism of the Neovictorian world angers Susanna immensely and she practices positive discrimination for women as much as possible. She can be a powerful patron for women who prove themselves talented, and many have risen to high positions by gaining her approval.

The upper class of Old Borealis somewhat overplay their role as the oldest Neovictorians of America. They maintain an attitude of 'New England, old money' seeing themselves as the forefathers of Neovictorian culture. They speak constantly of tradition and history, so much so you might mistake them for the English! This makes it very hard to change any process in Old Borealis, as change would break with 'tradition'. This has led to other cities seeing the people of Old Borealis as rather above themselves and snobbish.

The wealthy of Old Borealis are as concerned with fashion as any other city, but have a less ostentatious style. They dress in a similar way to the people of Desolation, but only because the climate makes it sensible. Women have a more businesslike style than the other cities, mainly due to the governor's insistence on female parity. Ladies want to be taken seriously, not seen as ornaments. So, women prefer plainer dresses in more

subdued colours, with less layers and fringes for a thinner silhouette. Style is marked by the cut of a dress and the quality of its fabric, not the amount of lace or layers of underskirts added to it.

The poor of the city have a slightly better time of it than in many other cities. While the work is no easier, the temperature is a little easier to deal with. Given the chill of the outside, the factories are actually almost comfortable to work in, certainly compared with those in Desolation! Women have a better lot under the governor, even among the poor. While most can expect to remain wives and mothers, a talented girl who manages to stand out can move into a better position than usual, although the chances of her becoming management are still very limited.

Everglade

The City of Vines

Location: North America

Climate: Hot and damp

Governor: Jeremiah Gilbert

Renowned Products: Oil, Chemicals, recycled foodstuffs

Known for: Southern charm

The city of Everglade is a damp place, soaked in a hazy tropical heat from the swamps that surround it. However, the people are both proud and resolute, preferring their way of life to the dry heat of Desolation, or the cutting winds of Old Borealis. As the most southerly of the North American Change

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Cage cities, Everglade is an enclave of the 'Old South'. With a world government in place the Emperor believed America to have buried all its old partisan differences. The people were settled simply by which city they were closest to. While care was taken to break up cultural and ethnic groups, no one thought to do the same with the southern and northern states. So while most consider Old Borealis to be the remains of Canada, Desolation and Everglade have retained the old animosities that have divided America since the civil war.

Everglade is proud of its southern roots and some houses proudly fly a confederate flag. This is technically dissidence, but as it pleases the governor it goes unpunished. Despite the fact that most Change Cage cities are treated equally, Everglade residents generally believe they are somehow marginalised by the Emperor. They resist any attempts by the Emperor to include them in worldwide legislation, although they are more than happy to reap the benefits of the system. Several groups within the Everglade Administration lobby for the independence of all the Change Cage cities, although they speak this heresy quietly. This has led to Everglade becoming almost a safe haven for dissidents. While the governor comes down hard on those who disrupt Everglade, he isn't bothered about those who plot the downfall of Desolation or the Emperor.

The city itself is based on the standard Change Cage city template, but with one small difference. The ground in the area was extremely soft and marshy, even though it was rich in natural resources and organic materials. Early attempts to build a city in

the location met with disaster, the buildings just sinking into the swamp. Unwilling to admit defeat, the architects decided to sink a series of massive stone pillars into the ground that they could build a platform upon for the construction of the city. So Everglade is a vast city on stilts, held around 30-40 feet above the swamp and rivers below. While the pillars have served the city well, they are beginning to show signs of wear as the ground has never been stable. This means that visitors to the city sometimes notice the ground seem to sway and undulate a little as the pillars shift and settle into the mud below. Some streets, and even houses, in the city have developed a slant, as a series of pillars have all sunk a little, leading the city to develop hills and slopes that were never part of the design.

Life in the city is much like any other. The factories work day and night and some unlucky souls spend their time under the city, digging in the mulch and detritus for natural resources and organic material. This organic material is plentiful, and Everglade supplies basic materials to be turned into food for Change Cage cities all over the world. Many of the misbegotten find work down under the city, and the shifting pillars have created many more unsafe houses for them to take advantage of. For all its southern charm, there are some dark and very desperate places in Everglade that are not safe at night (or, come to that, even during the day).

The governor of Everglade is Jeremiah Gilbert, an arrogant snob of a man who is nevertheless the perfect gentleman and a generous host. His southern charm masks a ruthless and bitter man who feels that he is

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due a destiny the Havering family has stolen from him. He is the most powerful member of the Gilbert family and maintains a running feud with the Havering family for control of the American Change Cage cities. While the Gilbert family runs both Everglade and Old Borealis, Jeremiah still believes the Haverings are the oppressive overlords of the continent, and that he is fighting for the freedom of his city. He is somewhat paranoid, believing that Franco Royston-Ragland Havering (the governor of Desolation) has secret meetings with the Emperor where they plot the downfall of Everglade. This attitude is not helped by Susanna Gilbert's (the governor of Old Borealis) apathy towards Jeremiah's plans. He believes her to be either incompetent, or a traitor to the family, but he still blames the Haverings for her reticence to join his feud.

The heat in Everglade is damp and oppressive, almost tropical. However, it has proved an excellent climate for plants. Vines and greenery have grown so far up the pillars that some cover the walls of many of the buildings, even the Change Cage. Sometimes the vines even have to be cleared from the city streets. Even the poor often keep plants to add some colour to their homes, although these are not delicate roses or houseplants, but thick rubbery plants with strange and vivid flowers. The upper class often keep orchids, and the ability to cultivate the most enticing varieties is the best way to build a reputation among the wealthy.

The fashions of Everglade are very individual, reflecting the character of the city. The citizens feel no desire to swelter in the heat

and they wear light clothing with thin layers that dry easily. The heat makes everyone and everything damp. Given the general dampness, most people change clothes two or even three times a day. For the wealthy, the old south is the model for clothing (rather than the fashions of Victorian England). Shoestring ties rather than cravats suit the men, and the Stetson is more popular than the top hat. Many upper class gentlemen feel it their duty to carry a holstered gun at all times, evoking the look of the old west. While women are not free of corsets, even here, they wear lighter clothing than their counterparts in Desolation. Lace is a popular trimming and it is fashionable to look delicate and feminine. Parasols are essential to avoid a tan and maintain a delicate complexion, and for the same reason Everglade ladies favour larger hats, often with veils. Green is a popular colour as it means the slime from the thick vines won't be noticed so much, although wearing lighter colours is a mark of wealth, proving you can avoid walking the city streets.

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Neovictorian Cities of Earth



The Rest of the World

WATCHTOWER

The City of Festivals

Location: South America (Brazil)

Climate: Hot and dry

Governor: Jose Sierra

Renowned Products: Coffee, Sugar, Iron ore, Chemicals

Known for: Headquarters of the Ministry of Hope

Watchtower is one of only two Change Cage cities built over an existing city (the other being Londinium). In both cases, expediency was the driving force behind fortifying an existing city, rather than building a new one. Watchtower was once the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Its position made it a vital port to send goods from South America out to the rest of the world. With much of the city facing the sea, fortifying it was simple as a wall only needed to be constructed behind the city. To protect the harbour from pirates and other undesirables, massive guns were positioned on the sea front.

The Change Cage was built high on the hills behind the city, rising above an old statue of a man with his arms outstretched. This statue is now generally believed to be the first Emperor Victor Hippocrates, who even now watches over the city below. The Change Cage towers above him, and is well enough armed to see off most airborne attacks. It is almost impossible to mount any form of assault on Watchtower without being seen from miles away.

Another odd feature of Watchtower is the lack of block walls dividing the lower class areas. While the areas for the upper classes were walled

in, the old Favela shanty towns were deemed to be doing an adequate job of housing the poor. With the houses built in layers almost on top of each other, demolishing some to build walls seemed both arbitrary and expensive. So the city architects just put a wall around them and left them as they were. Over the years more building work has made the poor areas even more maze-like and crowded. Some near the wealthy estates aren't too bad, but the darkest parts are terrible rookeries, often lacking in basic services. They are very dangerous places to walk after nightfall.

The rich are generally found in two areas. Some hold estates high on the hillside near the Change Cage commanding wonderful views over the city and the sea. Others live on the port side where the shops of the servant class are found, which offer all manner of seafood. Many of the portside wealthy own sailing ships and leave the city for short pleasure cruises. The upper class is divided as to which area is the most salubrious, and many spend a lot of money to improve their area so as to prove their case once and for all.

One of the most important figures in the city is Maria Haverling, the Minister of Hope. She is known for her dedication to Neochristianity and is seen by many as a Madonna figure, guarding the children of the world. She even offers blessings to the poor in the Favelas (but never any actual money or support). The governor continually rankles at his second class status in his own city.

One thing the people of Watchtower are united on is a love of festivals. While they never cross the walls that divide the classes, several colourful festivals occur during the year. These carnivals are times of great celebration and debauchery. Anything goes during carnival season and decadence becomes the rule.

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RIO ARBOLAS

The City of Mystery

Location: South America (Argentina)

Climate: Tropical

Governor: Ethan Gilbert

Renowned Products: Tobacco, Chemicals, Strange herbs

Known for: Mysterious products and secretive production facilities

Deep in the Amazon rainforest lies the mysterious city of Rio Arbolos. Security in this city is tighter than any other Change Cage city, and rumours abound as to what goes on there. Unlike the other Change Cage cities, little secrecy surrounded the construction of Rio Arbolos. In fact the Emperor even advertised his plans as part of a policy to heal the Amazon rainforest. The new city would be dedicated to the reforestation of the area and the first of a new line of futuristic 'green cities'. Of course, by the time it was constructed, other Change Cage cities were already built, but none had been used as a showcase the way Rio Arbolos was. It took longer to build than most of the other cities as care was taken to make sure its infrastructure and foundations were properly finished. This has meant that Rio Arbolos has one of the most efficient recycling systems of all the Change Cage cities and has the least impact on the environment of all of them.

The lush tropical rainforest is home to several unique plants and animals, and as such is also home to many rare compounds and oddities. Large packages often arrive at Watchtower to be sent, sealed, directly to the Emperor. No one knows if they contain poisons, potions or even new forms of flora or fauna. Even stranger, is that the governor, Ethan Gilbert, suffered horrible disgrace before taking up the position. The details of the scandal are unclear, but rumour has it that

it involved a power struggle with the governor of Desolation. Instead of being reassigned to Regret, Ethan was sent to run Rio Arbolos. Even stranger is that no one seems to remember who the previous governor was.

Those who live in Rio Arbolos almost have less idea about what goes on there than the rest of the world. The poor work in the sweltering factories, as they would in any other city. However, the wealthy are often scientists and ecologists and many of their estates resemble laboratories rather than homes. Rumours abound that Rio Arbolos was built because someone found something important, deep in the rainforest. Whatever it is, it is delicate or requires the sweltering environment only the rainforest can provide.

For all the heat, the city is a dark place. The huge trees (some possibly genetically modified) rise higher than many of the walls. Some of the interior city walls are actually trees artificially grown to wrap around each other and form a thick barrier. The river that runs through the city feeds these wooden walls as much as it divides the city itself. There are a few jetties along the river, but the main docks are under the Change Cage, where sealed boxes are handed to the Bargefolk to be transported. While all this vegetation makes the city lush and green, it also means that the forest canopy often shadows the very streets of the city. Only the Change Cage rises above the level of the forest canopy and into the sun above.

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NEW EDEN

The City of Beauty

Location: Central Africa

Climate: warm and dry

Governor: Kosoko Mubara

Renowned Products: Gold, Diamonds

Known for: Wealth and a despotic leader

The city of New Eden lies a little south of the equator in central Africa. It is perhaps the most temperate of all the cities, warm, but with a cool breeze and occasional rain to cool you down. The lands around the city are verdant and green with rolling hills of vegetation going on for miles. The views from the city walls are as spectacular as they are beautiful. So the wealthy of the city build their homes very high and live mainly in the open balcony penthouses at the top of their towers. Only the Change Cage rises higher, but few who see the view from the top of it live to tell of it.

The governor loves his city's reputation as the city of beauty and encourages his people to grow plants and flowers in the fertile city. The rich all try to outdo each other with their glorious gardens, and even the poor can usually afford a window box at the very least. Even the Change Cage is set in the middle of a large park filled with trees and flowers. The park is closed to any but the wealthy, although there is one way the poor can see it (even if it is the last thing they will ever see).

The governor is sadly a despotic leader. He is generous in the extreme to those who



he considers friends. Money, jewels and diamonds, as well as choice positions in the administration, are all easily come by for those on his good side. Unfortunately, he is ruthless in the extreme with those who displease him. Very few, if any, crimes are ever punished with a custodial sentence. Instead, execution by beheading is the norm. In the centre of the great park, by the gates of the Change Cage itself, is the 'blood garden' where all the executions are carried out. A blood-stained block stands in the centre of this small garden, in front of a pagoda where the governor likes to watch justice carried out. Vivid red roses surround the garden, watered by the blood of those executed here. It is also a term of all executions that the remains are to be pulped and spread across the garden, feeding the spectacular plants and trees here.

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PHAROS

The City of History

Location: North Africa (Egypt)

Climate: Hot and dry

Governor: Ammon Mubara

Renowned Products: Textiles, Antique artefacts

Known for: Largest collection of museums and antiquities in the world

Set between the Suez Canal and the pyramids on the Nile delta, is the historical storehouse of the world. While other cities have treasures of their own, the Emperor decided to create a central store of ancient treasures in Pharos. So this vast city is made up not of factories, but museums. Most of the city is given over to the care and cataloguing of antiquities. While not everything in the city is a museum, most of the industries it pursues are directly useful for the care of antiquities. This means that many of even the lower class are quite well educated, and most are at least able to read.

This doesn't mean that the lower classes have a much easier life than anywhere else. Even today, crates arrive, adding to the stockpiles of artefacts yet to be catalogued and stored or restored. The work of rebuilding the past is slow and painstaking, especially as severe punishments await those who break or damage an artefact in their care. While the lower class are often busy with restoration work, the servant class includes the curators of the various museums and storage facilities.

For the upper class, Pharos is a city of wonders. The art galleries and museums display the treasures of the last two millennia. Most noteworthy are the Egyptian galleries, vast halls containing the amassed burial treasures of the pharaohs. The wealthy from other cities have been known to be permitted to travel here, to visit the great halls of the museums, filled with ancient statues and other relics of bygone ages.

While Pharos is an eastern city, its fashions are quite colonial. The upper class all dress as the colonial English might have done, all those years ago. The governor, an Arabian gentleman by the name Ammon Mubara, can usually be found wearing a white suit and a fez. His jovial expression masks a shrewd and highly educated mind, and he is one of the foremost experts on antiquities in the world. Unlike the upper class, the servant and lower class often adopt more ethnic fashions which are more comfortable in the heat. The city itself is not as hot as it might be, cooled by the breeze from Mediterranean and Red seas. It is also less polluted than the other cities, but mainly for the sake of the artefacts it stores rather than its populace.

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LONDINIUM

The City of Tradition

Location: Europe (England)

Climate: Dull and rainy

Governor: Eleanor Havering

Renowned Products: Cloth, Steel, Weapons manufacture, Military training

Known for: Headquarters of the Ministry of Legacy

The people of Londinium will tell you proudly that theirs was the first of the Change Cage cities. However, while Londinium is certainly the oldest of the Change Cage cities, it was not built to the same design template as the rest. Like Watchtower, Londinium was built over and around an existing city, in this case the English capital London. In the days of the Great Rectification, England had fallen into semi-anarchy. The widespread shortages had drawn battle lines between the north and south of the country, with the loyalist supporters of the Emperor in control of London.

London had already become a fortified city, but it needed more resources to hold out against the northern invaders. So, taking the motorway that surrounded the city (the M25) as a foundation, the Emperor built a vast wall around the city. The government buildings were adapted into a Change Cage, dominated by a great clock-tower. The parks and centre of the city were further walled off, almost on the foundations of the ancient original city wall. The rest of the population were rehoused and more walls were built (for extra security) to contain the growing unrest. Within a decade, Londinium was a full Change Cage city, the first one to be completed, and something of a prototype, if not the first of the official design (which was Old Borealis). While much of the city has been rebuilt entirely, there are a lot of places that are original. Care was taken to preserve as

much of the Victorian city as possible, and in the centre this is very evident. The Thames remains a vital waterway, and both ships and barges bring in goods from around the world.

The people of Londinium are proud of their heritage. To them, the age of their city is proof they are the oldest and original Neovictorians. With England's dominance of the 19th century, the people of Londinium see themselves as the heir to the old empire, and that if the Neovictorian world has a capital, then it is Londinium. This attitude is only bolstered by that of the city housing the Minister of Legacy, Carrington Smythe. He sees himself as not only the architect of the world, but also its landlord. The governor, Eleanor Havering, is relatively young, but she comes from old family stock, and holds what was once a palace as her estate. She maintains a very glamorous image and is a fashion icon, even outside Londinium. Newspapers across the world report on what the 'Queen of Londinium' is wearing, and what parties she has appeared at.

The financial power of the ministry and the old connections and appeal of 'Queen Eleanor' has made Londinium a very powerful city among the elite. The city may not be rich, but the wealthy here have vast individual financial resources and connections across the world. However, perhaps due to the power they wield, Londinium's inhabitants feel that they carry some of the blame for the state of the world. If they had managed it better, it would not be as it is now. This, and the grey drab weather, lends a dour atmosphere to the city. Most people dress in black, as they remain in mourning for the lost ages past.



GATEWAY

The City of Wine

Location: Europe (Southern France)

Climate: Warm and temperate

Governor: Françoise Sierra

Renowned Products: Wine, Engine parts, Steel

Known for: Residence of the Minister of Defence

In the warmth of what was once southern France lies the elegant (for a Change Cage city) city of Gateway. The coastal position of Gateway makes it the landing point for most of the goods the barge folk take inland to the rest of Europe and beyond. So just outside the city is a vast dock that accepts the great ocean going barge folk sending and receiving goods from America and the rest of the world. However, Gateway is not only known as a trading city, it is most famous for its wine.

The governor of Gateway, Françoise Sierra, is something of a connoisseur, and laments the loss of the great French vineyards and wineries. Luckily, the south of the country is lush with wine grapes as the various chateaus and vineyards have gone wild since the great rectification. Against the policy of the Emperor he regularly sends groups out of the city to augment his gatherer villages to collect the best wild grapes. These he turns into wine on his estate, which also contains a private vineyard. While Françoise saves the best wine for himself, his gatherer villages are almost exclusively involved in wine production. This activity breaks many of the accepted rules of Neovictorian society, but the

elite of the other cities very much enjoy the wines supplied by Gateway. This production has become a powerful political tool which Françoise uses to gain more freedoms from the Emperor, but someday he may go too far.

Another reason the Emperor treads carefully when dealing with Françoise is that the Minister of Defence, Montague DeLaVere, lives in the city, and very much enjoys what it has to offer. This means that the most advanced airships are usually built here, and more than the usual amount of these leviathans are stationed here as well. Neither Françoise nor the minister has showed any sign of disloyalty, but if they did they would make a dangerous adversary for the Emperor.

Being near the ocean, Gateway has a reasonably pleasant climate. The heat of the country is cooled by the breeze coming in from the sea. Françoise also prizes elegance, and is ready to punish those who do not keep the city looking well kept. By law, all citizens must maintain at least a window-box of flowers and the peelers and police arrest those whose houses show too much wear. This makes Gateway a colourful and provincial looking city, even if it is maintained by fear.

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SANCTORUM

The City of Faith

Location: Europe (Italy)

Climate: Warm and temperate

Governor: Giovanni Da Forza

Renowned Products: Fashion, Fruit, Religion

Known for: Headquarters of the Neochristian church

The city of Sanctorem likes to claim that it is the only city that has no Change Cage. Instead, the centre of the city holds a vast and ornate building referred to as 'The Basilica' (officially 'The Holy and Sacred Basilica of the New Covenant'). Historians (what few remain outside the ministry of truth) believe the vast complex is actually the old Vatican city, moved from Rome, brick by brick, to serve in the new city of Sanctorem. Even if the rumour is false, the Basilica certainly bears a striking resemblance to the old Vatican complex.

Officially, the Basilica is nothing more than the centre of the Neochristian church. However, in truth it also doubles as the Change Cage. Not only is innovation taken to the Basilica, but so are those considered heretics. The governor allows the church to run the Basilica with a free hand, which is how they have managed to expand their remit. They maintain their own force of detectives who look out not only for general dissidence, but also for those who speak out against the church.

Given the power of the church in Sanctorem, most of the populace are eager to prove their

dedication to the faith. Church attendance is not mandatory, but everyone knows the detectives will ask questions to those who choose not to attend. The upper class like to keep the church happy too, and all seek to have family members in some position inside the Basilica. The most dedicated families are often bestowed with titles (such as 'protector of the faith') or responsibilities (such as the care of a holy object) as a sign of church favour. These positions grant them special consideration with the church and can prove very useful. However, the wealthy usually do little more than pay lip-service to the faith. They are often more obsessed with outdoing themselves with fashion, and their antics often come dangerously close to innovation.

While religion can be an oppressive force here, most people enjoy the festivals and ceremonies which occur frequently in the city. While Neochristianity itself has few annual ceremonies, in Sanctorem they have created many acts of public dedication or parading of holy artefacts, so there are often one or two every month. While these festivals and parades are solemn and sacred, they are also glamorous and impressive, with carriages of gold processing gleaming holy objects about the city. The populace throw flowers or papers with prayers written on them as priests waft incense and cast holy water through the streets.

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AL SALAM

The City of Peace

Location: Saudi Arabia

Climate: Hot and dry

Governor: Niram Al Saif

Renowned Products: Textiles, Pottery, Oil

Known for: Headquarters of the Ministry of Contentment

In the deep deserts of what was Saudi Arabia lies the city of Al Salam, after Desolation and New Eden, the richest city in the world. The oil reserves of the Middle East are not what they once were, and the internal combustion engine is banned in Neovictorian society. The administrators of Al Salam are officially meant to be pre-occupied with preventing the Neobedouin from gaining access to the oilfields, but the whole administration is actually involved in crooked collusion with powerful Neobedouin tribes. These tribes are settled, in large numbers, in the desert, operating temporary drilling rigs. The IAN makes a token effort to stamp out these sites, always seeming to target those operations which pay the smallest bribes to the city authorities. This illicit trade is on such a scale that it has made the city rich and powerful, although its position in the middle of a desert ensures it relies on trade from other cities for most of its goods.

While the new city embraced Neochristianity, it maintains a distinctly Islamic feel. The churches are decorated as mosques, with beautiful Arabian calligraphy covering every wall. The faithful are called to prayer five times a day, when all factory work ceases and an eerie but tranquil silence settles over the city. Most citizens of Al Salam hail the Emperor as a new prophet, the next in the line of Abraham, who brought a new covenant to save mankind.

For all its peace, Al Salam is a city under siege. The Neobedouin tribes actively wage a guerrilla war against the city supply lines. Recently they managed to shoot down an airship as it approached the city. Regular guards and Chuno Ggun have been sent out to seek revenge. However the Neobedouin are adept at living in the desert and have so far evaded all attempts to destroy them.

While some of the wealthy adopt European fashion, especially when dealing with officials from other cities, the people of Al Salam mostly maintain Arabian style clothes. Flowing robes are the norm for men, and while women need not be veiled they are expected to dress modestly. However, the costume of Al Salam is quite plain compared to the golden days of the Arabian nights. Wearing white is considered a symbol of purity and faith and few of the wealthy wear anything coloured at all. While this avoidance of colour applies doubly to the women of the upper class, they embellish their white gowns with lace and delicate embroidery in cream stitching.

The governor of Al Salam can trace his lineage back to the first governor, who supposedly led the people to the safety of this city many years ago in the great rectification. The current governor is proud of his heritage, and a dedicated traditionalist. He seeks to reclaim the lost golden age of the Middle East and as such is a strong advocate of education and even science. He ensures most of the people have a basic education, so the majority can read and write. Proof of education and intelligence (even among the poor) can also lead to opportunities for advancement. It is even said the governor is not as strict as he ought to be when it comes to innovation. Whether this is some plan to bring dissidents out into the open, or perhaps even a move against the Emperor's edicts, is unclear.

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REGRET

The City of Ice

Location: Russia (Siberia)

Climate: Very, very cold

Governor: Natasha Volska 'The Ice Queen'

Renowned Products: Punishment, Minerals, Cold storage

Known for: Bitterness and biting cold

Deep in the north of old Russia, in the cold of Siberia, lies the city of ice known as Regret. It is so cold in Regret that ice hangs from every building and the snow falls almost constantly. From a distance the city looks like it is made of ice and snow, and only the heat from some of the factories makes it even habitable.

It may seem odd to create a city is such a distant and inhospitable place, but the Emperor had two reasons to do so. The first is that the area is rich in natural resources. Mines and oil drilling sites surround Regret, and deep drilling sites are even situated in the city itself. The cold also allows the city to store resources, manufacture goods, or conduct experiments that requite extreme cold, given refrigeration technology is mostly forbidden to the Neovictorians.

The second reason to build Regret is as a punishment. No one comes to this city willingly, even those who rule it. The biting cold seeps into everything. So when an administrator needs to be punished, they are assigned here. This means that the rulers of the place are as cold and bitter as the city itself, often looking to take out their frustration on their charges. So while those who work in the factories find them almost pleasantly warm (compared to that in other cities), the administration is particularly brutal and unyielding.

In fact, the only person who seems to like being in the city is it's Governor, Natasha Volska, known, in whispered conversation, to her people, as 'the ice queen'. Natasha is tall and thin, with such deathly pale skin that many wonder if she has misbegotten blood. These rumours are given credence by her apparent immunity to cold. She favours light satin gowns trimmed with fur, that would offer most people little protection against the cold, even indoors. However, those who listen to such rumours learn not to repeat them. Natasha is as cold and ruthless as the ice that hangs from the Change Cage and anyone who speaks against her simply disappears. Some say she is so much a part of the city that the wind that echoes through the streets whispers its secrets to her in her tower.

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MEIJI

The City of Honour

Location: Japan

Climate: Temperate

Governor: Toshiro Natsuki

Renowned Products: Lacquerware, Silk, Sugar, Seafood

Known for: Dedication to the Neovictorian cause

Like England, Japan did not fare well in the early days of the great reclamation. Corporate greed led to a great recession. A conservative coalition of old families took control, determined to solve the problem with a firm and traditional hand. It failed, and failed badly. The ruling families spent too much effort securing their position and the economy went into freefall. Food shortages and ridiculous prices caused rioting and starvation across the country. Eventually the people revolted against the rulers, blaming tradition for their problems. Almost as one the population decided to adopt western ways and build their own Change Cage city as a way of casting aside the past.

Meiji is one of the cleanest and most well-organised cities in the world. As it saved them from destruction, the people love their city, and the people of each block make it a matter of pride to keep the streets clean. Morale is higher here too, as the people firmly believe the city saved them from utter destruction. The old ways have been firmly cast out, and even the upper class have completely adopted western clothes and styles. Meiji is one of the most loyal cities to the Emperor in the world.

As one, the people have pledged themselves to the Neovictorian cause and are honour-bound to remain so.

Everyone knows their place and everyone is dedicated to the new order. However, one tradition that remains is the system of fealty to the clans formed by the Administration ministries, to which everyone else owes some sort of loyalty. It is the responsibility of each clan to look after all who bind their honour to its fortune. This stretches from the extended upper class family, to the lowly workers who toil in the clan's factories.

The remains of the old Japanese ways have not died though. The Skyfolk that took to Mount Fuji and the Iga mountains hold on to tradition, maintaining many lost crafts, such as sword making. They see Meiji as an abomination, proof of a people sold out to imperial westernisation. Attacks from airborne armoured Samurai, in airships painted as demons and dragons, are commonplace. Sadly the sword-wielding warriors are often defeated by the advanced technology of Meiji. However, others talk of the shadowy Neobedouin tribes who learnt the secrets of the ninja that they might remain hidden or infiltrate their enemies.

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CONTEMPLATION

The City of Silence

Location: China

Climate: Cool and temperate

Governor: Lin Quai

Renowned Products: Metal processing, Tea

Known for: Residence of the Minister of Diligence

Nestled in the centre of what was once China, at the foot of the Himalayas, is the peaceful city of Contemplation. Visitors, if they were allowed here, would instantly note the air of tranquillity in the place. However, this tranquillity is enforced by the edict of the governor, a despotic madman called Lin Quai, who has outlawed not only free speech, but speech of any kind.

The city of Contemplation is laid out in using the same template as the other Change Cage cities, although it has a distinctly Chinese feel to it. The buildings are built like pagodas and the lower class housing is made of wooden beams with thatched roofs. Proud of their oriental heritage, the people of Contemplation usually wear Chinese style dress, but some have adopted European clothing. Many mix and match their styles, with the upper class wearing Chinese dress for formal occasions and Victorian clothes for daywear. However, even when wearing European fashions the wealthy tend to favour vividly coloured silk. As usual, the lower class wear whatever they can get hold of. Those in the administration wear a uniform of traditional bureaucratic robes.

With a pleasant climate and built with a little more care than usual, Contemplation might have been one of the more pleasant Change Cage cities. However, its governor is a madman. He is somewhat paranoid and sees dissidence behind every corner. Even worse, he believes himself and the other governors, and especially the Emperor,

to be gods. As a divine being, any dissidence is heresy as well as treachery.

Lin Quai sees the city as his heaven, and as such it should be harmonious and calm. He also cares more about the neatness of his city than the people who live there. His most famous edict is the outlawing of speech in public places. In a harmonious society everyone should get on with their work without needing to talk about it. Speech can only lead to dissidence and unrest. Those found making any noise as they walk the streets are instantly arrested. Even those who wish to speak in the factories at work must be given permission to do so by their overseers, and even then only a whisper is permissible. Lin also loves paperwork. So he insists that his city is run with a vastly complicated bureaucracy that requires four times the staff of any other city. In the great halls of the administration the only sound is the scratching of hundreds of scribes copying documents, in triplicate, in silence.

This tyrannical leadership might lead to revolution or unrest, but Lin is so heavy-handed that few are willing to speak out. Most dissidents are executed on the spot, and misbegotten are often summarily put to death as 'the twisted and ugly have no place in heaven'. Lin's methods, coupled with the presence of the Minister of Diligence in the city, have turned Contemplation into a police state. The governor's paranoia also has a tendency to filter down, and even the lowest in the city look on their neighbours with paranoia and uncertainty. The populace is locked together in fear and mistrust, and outsiders are not made welcome.

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KHAN

The City of Resolve

Location: Eastern Russia

Climate: Bleak but temperate

Governor: Vladimir Volska

Renowned Products: Machinery

Known for: Headquarters of Chuno Ggun training

Khan resembles a military camp rather than a city. While the Ministry of Defence has most of its powerbase in Gateway, Khan is where most of the Marines are trained, along with the dreaded Chuno Ggun. The city itself is a grey blank place, as if the usual city template was applied but no one thought it needed anything added. Embellishments are considered a distraction and the whole city is run as if it were a barracks. Even those who do not serve in the military (if anything, a majority of the population) suffer under military discipline. Everything and everyone has a place.

As with the other cities the Change Cage lies in the centre, but it is surrounded by the Chuno Ggun training grounds. No one but the Chuno Ggun are allowed here, and they (much to everyone's relief) rarely leave it themselves. Black airships arrive, dock with the higher buildings and leave, taking the Chuno Ggun on another mission.

The estates of the wealthy surround the Change Cage and Chuno Ggun headquarters, although it is hard to see where one ends and the other begins. In Khan, the wealthy all hold military rank and use their estates to train troops for assignment to the other cities. Each family has a speciality, and many of their trainees remain loyal to the family that trained them. While the wealthy still have parties and soirees, everything has a military feel, like an officer's club. Anyone from the upper class that dreams of heading the family knows that they have little chance of doing so without

distinguishing themselves in the military. While this means the wealthy of Khan have less fun than the upper class of other cities, the military powerbase of each family is extensive. So while the Minister of Defence might reside in Gateway, a substantial portion of the military owes allegiance to Khan, a balance the Emperor is keen to maintain.

The working class of Khan have much the same lot as those in other cities. While discipline and the city's work ethic are draconian, health care and food is a little better. The governor insists on keeping everyone 'combat ready', which means as fit and healthy as possible. Unlike in other cities, the poor are encouraged to pursue martial hobbies. Boxing is very popular (as is duelling with sword or pistol for the wealthy) and encouraged by the state. Those who do well and prove their skill are often recruited to the military, or even the Chuno Ggun.



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MOKSHA

The City of Colour

Location: India

Climate: Oppressively hot with occasional torrential rain

Governor: Aardash Ghazali

Renowned Products: Spices, nuts, fruit

Known for: Superstition and overpopulation

Built in the heart of the Deccan plateau, in what was once central India is the city of Moksha. The city is based on the standard Change Cage template; however, it is one of the most crowded cities in the world. The original governor of the city, and old colonial, called Thomas Havering, was one of the kindest and most humane power brokers in the new administration. During the grand rectification, he oversaw the construction of Moksha. With India already a home to elephants and tigers the augmented animals bred by the Emperor and released in India were truly terrifying. Horrified by the slaughter of innocents that was going on as terrifying and hungry animals raged across the country; Thomas made the location of his city common knowledge, offering sanctuary to anyone. The call was answered in the millions. While many perished on the journey, opening the gates to all and sundry (rather than the allotted population) caused horrific overcrowding.

Unable to institute a mass culling, or cast people out of the city and still remain the 'beloved saviour', the Emperor was forced to take his anger out of the governor. Thomas was 'recalled to central government' and never seen again. In the confusion left by the power vacuum, Aardash Ghazali, previously little more than a servant class administrator, ruthlessly seized power. He gained the support of several wealthy families who had all rankled at the Emperor for putting a westerner in charge of their city.

maintaining a 'tough but fair' public profile. In truth he panders to the upper class and enjoys the decadent living his position allows. For all his hedonism he is a skilled manipulator, keeping the ruling families and administrators at each other's throats lest they turn their attention to him. Unfortunately, Aardash is a very old man now and his days are numbered. He hopes to pass his title on to his son, but no one knows if the young man is ready for the task. Interestingly, Aardash's eldest daughter, Lakshana, is a very skilled administrator, who has taken over a lot of the day to day running of the city. Aardash's opponents have noticed she is somewhat bitter that her father ignores her simply because she is a woman. Whether this will be enough to change her allegiance remains to be seen.

Under Aardash (despite Lakshana's recent work) the city has effectively gone to seed. He cares little about the lower class, meaning that while they have more freedoms they have far less protection. As long as enough turn up to work to keep the city running he doesn't care. Crime among the lower class is rife, mainly due to desperation, and the police rarely enter the overcrowded ghettos that make up most of the lower class areas.

However there is beauty and mystery to be found in the city of Moksha. Most of the residents continue to venerate the myriad Hindu gods and spirits, despite the official religion being Neochristianity. The religious authorities have accepted this, adopting these new sacred beings as saints under Neochristianity. This means that the city is full of wise men, shamans and priests, who guard a myriad selection of shrines, statues and holy artefacts. It also means that the city is allowed to celebrate the many, many, old festivals, at which time the city earns its title as the city of colour. The crowded street come alive with candles and gaslights and coloured statues are paraded through the crowded alleys as flowers and coloured powders are cast everywhere in celebration.

Aardash has proved an effective governor,

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ATLANTIS

The City of Wonder

Location: Indonesia

Climate: Hot and humid

Governor: Marina Lin

Renowned Products: Oil, Minerals

Known for: Essentially a floating city

Atlantis is well named, as it is a wonder of the age, a city built in the sea across several manmade and natural islands. The great outer walls of Atlantis are impressive in themselves. A great wall of stone and coral was built up from under the sea to rise several metres above sea level. The technology to engineer the wall, and genetically engineer the coral, is now illegal, but nature itself maintains the wall as it continues to grow.

Inside the city, blocks are divided by waterways, with each block built on a separate island within the wall. Boats are illegal for the poor, to keep them in one place, and those who need to leave their blocks must take one of the police boats to their destination. Those without the right papers cannot get on the boat. The rich do not live on islands, but instead their estates are massive self contained ocean liners. They slowly drift around the city in the larger canals, often circling the Change Cage or even cruising outside the city. At the first sign of trouble they power back into the centre of the city for safety.

As you might imagine, the city mainly produces goods from the sea. Coral crafts are

common, but so is drilling for oil and other natural resources. Many of the population have to work in diving bells underwater, and a few structures extend under the waves. The underwater work is extremely dangerous. Not only is the equipment unreliable but it is not uncommon for dangerous predators (such as giant sharks and even the occasional Kraken) to sometimes manage to make their way past the coral wall to feast.

The Change Cage sits in the centre of the city as usual, on its own island encircled by a wide stretch of water. Few who spend any time inside it have the energy to swim across and escape. Those who commit crimes in Atlantis must suffer its own unique trail and punishment. Those who are accused are thrown into the water, tied to a weight comparable to their crime. If they haven't drowned by sunset they are allowed to go free, but the sea bed under Atlantis is full of floating bloated corpses weighed down by their crimes.





PROPAGANDA, AND OTHER LIES

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Having introduced you to this oppressive society with draconian laws and layers of secrets and lies you probably have several questions. Who is the Emperor? What do these dissidents do and how many are there? What secret societies have developed? How is the IAN organised? Who are the Chuno Ggun? How the hell do I create adventures in a world where no one can escape? Answering these and other questions is what this chapter is all about. So obviously it is designed for the Gamemaster alone, as the detail here will either spoil the surprises for the players, or simply be little use to them as it concerns running the game. So if you are a player, just stop reading here.

In this chapter we'll be looking at some of the secrets of the Neovictorian world, but also how to run games set in the Change Cage cities. Having read the preceding chapters, you may already have thought of your own answers to the questions you may be asking yourself. That's fine, remember it's your game and if you had an idea that is cooler than what we propose here, or just fits your player group a little better, then go with it. No one knows what will suit the player group and the stories you want to tell better than you do.

In this chapter we take a look at Tulum city, the Emperor's estate and reveal the true nature of the master of the world. Those of you who have already read "Captain" Robert Brown's novel, *The Wrath of Fate* may already know some of these secrets. However we also provide detail on how to manage to changes wrought by the end of the book. We also look at the greatest mystery on the world, the secrets behind the Change Cage.

From there we move on to the secret societies found in the Neovictorian world. Each is presented with an agenda rather than a series of bad guys. These organisations might prove to be the enemies of your player characters, or they might even join up, with the campaign forming around their adventures within the secret group. Next we move on to the mysterious and deadly Chuno Ggun, something few outside the organisation know much about at all. We detail their ranks, organisation and technology, as well as offering a little detail on ex-Chuno Ggun player characters.

Finally we offer detail about running the game. How does the Administration actually work? How do you describe the sights and smells of the Neovictorian world? What sort of adventures are possible in this oppressive regime? We use this section to arm the Gamemaster with a deeper understanding of how the world works so she can create more detailed stories in this strange urban environment.

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Contradictions

Diligent readers will notice that the Emperor's palace is described as being in Yellowstone Park in the Airship Pirates rulebook, while it is "on cliffs overlooking the Caribbean sea" in The Wrath of Fate. Truth be told, the RPG was finished while the novel was still being written, and the timelines diverged at some point! The following description uses a combination of the two sources, but doesn't specify exactly where it is – use whichever location best suits you and your players.

Tulum - City of the Emperor

Set in the midst of a lush (and predator filled) jungle lies the Emperor's estate, the city of Tulum. While there are few people living here, the Emperor has claimed the whole city as his own. While originally a Mayan city, it has remained his private (and secret) playground for nearly a thousand years.

The city is made up of several Mayan style pyramids, the central (and largest) one being the Emperor's palace. As described in the core rulebook, the defences of the city and the palace are extensive. The first layer of defence

is the Tesla towers. These metal structures rise several feet above the buildings and burn with powerful electricity. They create a web that fries pretty much anything that chooses to fly or walk past into the city. Incoming airships need the field to be deactivated to enter. The process of discharging and recharging takes only moments, but perhaps long enough for a close group of commandos to slip across the line.

As well as the towers, guards are to be found manning several positions on the border of the city. They are generally hostile to any ground approach as most guests arrive by airship and by appointment. As the Emperor doesn't like to see his palace as a prison camp, fewer guards are in evidence around the central areas, although the Emperor's personal guard (handpicked members of the Chuno Ggun) see that he is never unprotected. Should an attack penetrate to the palace, the whole pyramid can be lowered into the ground and several steam cannons rise up to blast the invader out of the sky. Many years ago a group of brave Skyfolk attempted to assault Tulum city. Of the two ships that made it past the Tesla towers and the guards, none of the crew even reached the palace.

The Chuno Ggun also maintain a small base in Tulum city. They are there to protect the Emperor and remain on hand to see to his military needs. While the protection of the Emperor is their prime concern they do not function as guards for the city, as their skills are far more valuable elsewhere.

For those who are guests of the Emperor,

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Tulum city is an Eden. The weather is warm and lush, with a gentle breeze to cool the heat. Fruit is abundant in the city, with tropical trees of all descriptions growing throughout. While the buildings are Mayan, the interiors are quite modern. The open plazas and balconies offer incredible views and the interiors are spacious and well furnished. The prescriptions against technology do not exist here. While there are no televisions as there are no broadcasting stations, advanced steampunk style computer systems are available as well as any domestic appliance and comfort you can imagine. Those who reside in Tulum city live beyond mere luxury.

The only official residents of Tulum city are the Emperor and his two wives, Flora and Fauna. This means there is plenty of space in the palace for guests, although they are an uncommon sight. While these might be the only official residents, plenty more people live there. A small cadre of scientists works here directly for the Emperor. They are experts in time travel and causality and work to assist the Emperor in his 'great plan'. There are also several guards and support staff living and working in the city, serving the Emperor's whims. Anyone stationed here will work here forever, until his or her dying day, but compared to the alternatives, that is a blessing. Unless working in the palace, guards and staff are forbidden to enter the place, and live in the other pyramids surrounding it when not on duty. They are allowed to eat the same food and drink as the Emperor, and enjoy the comforts of the city as such things are plentiful. The lowest servant here has a better existence than the highest nobility of the Change Cage cities. New additions to the

staff are recruited almost at random when a replacement is required. They are picked randomly from the orphanages in most cases. A few are the children of the rarely allowed couples in the city, who live their lives without ever setting foot outside the place.

VICTOR AND LILLITH

Victor Hypocrates is a man of many secrets. Not the least of which is that he is not the latest in a long line of Emperors but the same man, who has now faked his death twice, and ascended the throne as his own son. This is not because Victor is immortal, far from it; it is because he is a time traveller.

Before the Great Rectification, Victor was already an accomplished man. He was intelligent, even a genius, and had a sharp political mind. Even without becoming a time traveller, he may well have still become the Emperor of the world. Born to privilege, he expected to follow a career in politics, but that was until he met a young woman called Lillith Tess. Lillith was once part of the crew of the Ophelia, but disappointed in a lack of attention from the Captain she absconded with some of the vessel's time travel technology. Her ill-advised flight dropped her into her future, crashing the balloon she was using.

Luckily for Lillith, she crashed in a lake where Victor was enjoying a vacation. He saved her from drowning and the two of them fell in love soon after. Lillith was horrified at the concrete jungle the world had become, and Victor felt the same, especially as his family had played a large part of making the world as it was. Lillith gave her time travel technology

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to Victor, whose brilliant mind unveiled its secrets. They constructed a time travel device of their own and set off to rebuild the world.

Using this device Victor and Lillith stepped back in time to build a powerbase and nudge historical events to conclusions in line with their agenda. They did not take this task on lightly. Victor maintains a complicated temporal map of the world, with each change and its effects detailed extensively. This map allowed them to make major but precise changes to the timeline and remake the world in their image.

Lillith and Victor both desired to return the world to the Eden it was before mankind. They didn't necessarily want all human beings destroyed, but they both believed a certain amount of 'culling' was in order. Avoiding responsibility, Victor simply told his minions to 'balance' things and left them to it. His minions released the predators into the wild and slaughtered millions. All those outside the newly constructed 'ecological' (Change Cage) cities had to fight for their lives. Even though the deaths were clearly ordered by the Emperor, he still believes the blood is not on his hands.

As Victor and Lillith travelled time together, their relationship began to sour. Victor found a stunning and naïve girl to bring into the relationship, ostensibly as a plaything for Lillith. Victor decided to rename his two wives as Flora and Fauna (Lillith). However, all Lillith noticed was that as she travelled with Victor, she gradually aged as Flora remained young and beautiful in the 'present'. They

would be away managing history for months, but return only moments after they left Flora. Lillith's bitterness became loathing and she began to plot the removal of her husband.

A CHANGE OF REGIME

At the end of *The Wrath of Fate*, Lillith and Victor's tale ends in the only way it was likely to. After what she has lost and how childish she has been is brought home to Lillith, she kills the Emperor and Flora herself with a knife. She does not survive this act, dying either by her own hand or at the hands of the guards who find her. But the damage has been done and Victor is dead. With the reins of power left dangling, it is up to the Gamemaster to decide how things may progress. We present below a few options for what this might mean for your campaign.

It Hasn't Happened

The events of *The Wrath of Fate* need not to have occurred in your game quite yet. The Emperor is still alive and ruling as always. However, player characters who travel into the future might discover his imminent death. If things are worse after his fall, they might find themselves trying to find a way to warn him. As getting into Tulum city is almost impossible, they might have to chase him across time to offer their vital advice.

A New Emperor

In *The Wrath of Fate* the first person to discover the death of the Emperor is the Grand Admiral. Instead of taking the news to the Administration, he decides to take control

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himself. Using the mechanisms of command the Emperor uses in the city and gaining the loyalty of the guard (who are looking for someone to take charge) he quickly builds a powerbase. A new military dictatorship takes shape with the ministry of defence getting preference in all endeavours. Plans are also drawn up for attacks against the Skyfolk cities and the final eradication of the Neobedouin. A new age of war looms that may lay waste to the planet that the Emperor sacrificed so many to protect.

The Regime Falls

With the Emperor gone, and no clear heir, various factions among the military and Administration begin fighting for control, or simply fail to pick up the reins of power. Dissidence begins to rise and gain confidence, becoming bolder and bolder as the government becomes less organised and cohesive. By the time the Administration cracks down the fires of revolution have been lit. The cities become hotbeds of violence and revolution, although the Administration becomes more and more draconian in its methods to quash resistance.

No Emperor

With the life of the Emperor so far removed from the people, the Administration might decide simply not to mention it. In fact, there may have never been an Emperor at all, just a figurehead, and the real power has always lain with the Administration. However, ruling by committee, especially a paranoid one, is not a good system of government. The Administrative Council might constantly contend with the City Council for who is really in control. The infighting between

the factions might create several gaps for dissident behaviour. Meanwhile the cities begin to fall to ruin as the government is more concerned with power and rivalry than looking after the cities.

VICTOR HYPOCRATES

The Emperor is a complicated man. On one hand he is a genius scientist and political mastermind. He cares deeply for the planet and seeks to restore balance and harmony to the world. However, on the other hand he is a hypocritical madman with a god complex. He sees himself separate from humanity. They should live in the squalor of the Change Cage cities as that is what is best for the planet. That he should suffer with them doesn't cross his mind. He blames the deaths of millions on 'an unfortunate misinterpretation of his orders' even though there was no other way to interpret them. His manipulation of time has given him unspeakable power, which has only added to his sense of arrogance and privilege. However, for all that he is a charming host and a polite conversationalist. The monster inside is well hidden behind a charming façade that is so real even Victor believes it.

Physical +4 Mental +8

Skills: Academic (all) +4, Charm +5, Conversation +3, Engineer (all) +3, General knowledge +3, Research +5, Science (all) +5

Traits: Eidetic memory, Natural charisma 2,

Health Dice: 00/00/00/00 – 00 -2 / 00 -4 / 00 -8 / 00 -16

Victor rarely carries a weapon but has elite Chuno Ggun bodyguards nearby almost all the time.

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LILLITH TESS (FAUNA)

The Emperor's first wife is little more than a spoilt teenage girl who has been overindulged. On the 'Ophelia' she was a self-centred attention seeker, believing anyone who didn't make her the centre of his or her world to be somehow against her. With a normal upbringing, Lillith may have lost this childish attitude, but instead she met Victor Hypocrates. Drawn to her beauty, Victor indulged her bad attitude rather than helped her grow up. He offered her a life of luxury where the whole world and all of time was her playground. Getting everything she thought she wanted did nothing for Lillith and eventually led to her unhappiness. This makes her more of a tragic figure than a villain.

Physical +4 Mental +8

Skills: Dance +4, Streetwise +2,

Traits: Beauty +3, Knock 'em dead,

Health Dice: 00/00/00 – 00 -2 / 00 -4 / 00 -8 / 00 -16

FLORA

If there was an archetype for 'all beauty and no brains' it is Flora. She is young and devastatingly attractive. However, she is also very naïve and pliable. She is happy to do whatever she is told, almost as if there is no one inhabiting this gorgeous shell. Flora is totally blinded by the luxury she lives in, and understands little of Victor and Lillith's plan or the world outside Tulum. She gives neither a second thought. Victor and Lillith go away, and moments later they come back, that's all she knows. She believes herself loved by

Victor and Lillith, little realising they both find her a slightly tiresome doll.

Physical +2 Mental +1

Skills: Fashion +2,

Traits: Beauty +5,

Health Dice: 00/00 – 00 -2 / 00 -4 / 00 -8 / 00 -16

The Change Cage

In the centre of each Change Cage cities lies the symbol of the Emperor's power and oppression, the Change Cage. In every city the Change Cage is the tallest building, dominating the skyline. While they are usually built to the same template, a great square dark tower, they are a little different in every city, fitting the style of the architecture there.

There are actually very few secrets to the Change Cage. Its basic function is as a prison and administration building, a secure facility for the containment of dissidents. However, the ministry to truth has spent a considerable amount of time building up its reputation. So now the Change Cage stands as a symbol of the Administration's power and dominance. This mythology is built on the fact no one has ever escaped the Change Cage. This is, of course, not strictly true. Over the years a few folk have managed to get out of incarceration in the Change Cage. It is not easy by any means, but neither is it impossible, although most people are executed making the attempt. However, despite these escapes, the

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reputation of the place remains secure. It is so strong that no one believes anyone who says they managed to escape (even outside the cities) especially as there is no way to verify their story. These escapees usually have the sense not to return to the city anyway, as they would face instant execution. This means at least three quarters of these rare individuals end up dying of exposure, starvation or sabre toothed tiger in an attempt to join a Neobedouin caravan or Skyloft city.

While they often serve additional functions depending on the city they are in, most Change Cages are divided into four different areas:

RECEPTION AND PROCESSING

The ground level of the building works as a filter for the other areas. It contains several armed guards to emphasise the point that there is no escape. Prisoners are brought here and ushered into one of the interview rooms where they wait for an administrator to fill in their forms. After the paperwork has been processed they are taken to another part of the building depending on why they have been brought here. There are several forms to fill in, even for people being taken for execution.

This level also processes automatons to discover if they are self-aware. Each one brought here is put through a simple test. They are told to lie down on a conveyor belt that takes them towards a massive hammer that smashes down on the belt. If they do as they are told and move towards their fate obediently, the hammer actually stops just short of crushing them. If they so much as

bat an eyelid or jump off the belt they are grabbed by the guards and thrown into a mechanical shredder. The shredder is capable of tearing anything metal (or organic come to think of it) into tiny fragments. This metal is then recycled and used to build something else. Any automaton thrown in the shredder cannot be repaired; there won't be enough parts that haven't been torn to shreds left to repair. Whether they are wise to the test or not, any self aware automaton who tries to remain calm as the massive hammer gets closer must succeed in a Willpower test (with 6 Black Dice). If they only get one success they may be taken for further testing as they flinched in some way, but 2 successes is a convincing performance.

EXECUTION AND INTERROGATION

What few people realise is that most Change Cages go down as well as up. Extensive basements run under the tower, sometimes to private docks where barges can bring special supplies. Usually located in these dungeons are the darkest parts of the Change Cage, the interrogation and execution areas. Those brought here accused of dissidence are thoroughly interrogated to discover the names of every other dissident they may know and meeting places they are aware of. This questioning begins with interrogation, but swiftly moves into torture. The inquisitors believe that everyone brought to them must be hiding something, so pleas of knowing nothing fall on deaf ears. Many people give away friends and neighbours just to offer the inquisitors a name so the pain might stop. Heavy soundproofing surrounds each interrogation cell, otherwise the screams would echo down the corridors unendingly.

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While they are usually told that offering up what they know might set them free, no one leaves the interrogation areas. Many die under the torture anyway, the rest are executed as a matter of course. Such people are usually too broken to be any use, and too many stories of the horrors going on here might generate more dissidence. However, a few who seem more willing to talk are set free and sent out to spy on their neighbours. They must pass at least one dissident name on to the authorities every week or they will be arrested again. Most people will do anything to avoid returning here, even selling out their own families.

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICES

Usually situated at the top of the Change Cage are the offices of the governor, which we have already detailed in chapter three. Some governors prefer to rule from their estate, but all of them maintain some sort of office here. It is possibly the most secure area of the city anyway. The governor's private office as well as their council chamber is situated here. However, the area requires several floors as many administrators and scribes also work here to be close to the governor and implement his decisions quickly (or at least as quickly as the paperwork will allow).

SCIENTIST HOLDING AND RESEARCH

The biggest secret of the Change Cage is that it is not a place to lock away innovation, it is in fact a research facility. Scientists brought here are not usually executed. Instead, after they prove their abilities, they are put to work advancing their innovations. Those

who cannot prove they have created anything new usually are simply executed. The new technology developed here is usually passed on to the Emperor or the military. In most cases it is used to upgrade the systems of airships or the city itself. One thing the military fears most is that the Skyfolk who have no restrictions against scientific development will outstrip their technology. So new technology is often quietly and secretly integrated into military systems, and the Chuno Ggun are given the best technology available (as their loyalty is never questioned).

Life for a scientist in the Change Cage is not particularly bad compared to life outside. They have decent living quarters and food (decent for the lower class anyway) and they are given everything they need to continue their experiments. However, it is made clear that they will never be allowed to leave and they may even be executed should they no longer prove useful. Those who prove they can be trusted are eventually allowed to collaborate on projects with other scientists. The particularly talented ones are sent out to the remote research stations or to Tulum city to assist in the grand plan of the Emperor. There are a few non-scientists in the Change cage too. Talented musicians, dramatists and other artistic innovators are also held here to complete their work. What they create is performed for the Emperor, but never anyone else.

You might wonder why any scientist would want to leave, and indeed, many are happy there and find themselves quietly joining the Emperor's side. However, despite the better lifestyle, they are still prisoners – they will

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never see their families and friends again. They also have no idea if their work is being used for good or ill. While they can pursue research, they will be told which direction they are expected to take it in. It is also made clear to them that if they don't produce results they may be 'cancelled'. Retirement for those who have seen the secrets of the Change Cage is simply not an option.

RESEARCH STATIONS

When a project requires additional resources, privacy or specialised technology it is assigned to one of the research stations. There are several of these across the world, many of which also serve as Chuno Ggun bases. Their locations are highly secret and remain hidden away from the paths of Neobedouins or the hawk's gaze of any Skyloft city. The research stations are often quite small facilities, although their size really depends on what they do. The northern facilities that genetically engineer new forms of predator are vast zoos of lethal creatures.

Scientists are assigned to research stations as need be from the Change Cage. Those working there have considerably more freedom and live a very modern lifestyle. The technology in these places is very advanced, much of it having been saved from the Great Rectification. They are clean, white places of electrical screens, glass and plastic. Many of these bases contain entertainments saved from the Great Reclamation (such as video games) and the only thing required of the staff is to produce results. However, for all the luxuries they enjoy, failure can mean a return to the Change Cage, or worse.

Secret Societies

In an atmosphere of oppression, paranoia and even just downright boredom, the cities have given birth to many secret societies. Several have managed to create links between the cities, using the barge folk to take messages on their behalf. We haven't listed all the potential societies here; that would take a whole book. However, the following should spark off a few ideas of your own.

The societies we detail here are not designed just to be the bad guys. Some are certainly utterly reprehensible, but they may yet become either allies or enemies of the player characters, depending on the way they run into the society or what sort of alliances they need to make. So we present each group with an agenda, which may be something the player characters are OK with, or something they stand against. This means that while they may very well spend their time trying to destroy one of these societies, they might just as easily seek to join it. Doing so offers the Gamemaster a ready-made campaign hook to run adventures around.

The amount of dissident behaviour in each city is left very much up to the Gamemaster. No one has really managed to count them, and with no central cohesive dissident leadership there is no census even among themselves. Dissidence rises organically from the oppressed. Some connect to a group; others discover they are not alone when they run into like-minded souls. Generally, people believe there are more dissidents than there are. The Ministry of Truth builds on this as

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it allows the Administration to 'crack down' more heavily on this 'concerning threat to our morals and values'. Obviously the dissidents themselves also try to 'big up' their support and victories. So under the lies and propaganda it is up to you to decide for yourself how many rebels the city holds. Is it rife with agitators or hold the remains of a once dangerous anarchist organisation. Are the people ready to talk but not to act, or do a small group of terrorists make their actions speak for them?

THE BOHEMIANS

It is not only science that is stuck in stasis in the Neovictorian world. Those who choose to work in art, fashion, literature and every other form of creativity are limited to reproducing and never innovating. For one group of people, this is not enough. The Bohemians are a group of artists who meet in secret to share their new work. Not only do they enjoy experiencing new artworks, but also many find the criticism of their peers helpful in polishing their craft.

Agenda

The motives of the Bohemians are quite clear; to be free to practice, perform and create new works of art. Granted, doing so is not as dangerous as attempting to advance science, but it is illegal nevertheless. While most Bohemians are happy just to create and perform among themselves, others seek to produce their new art for a wider audience. Graffiti is a common way to create new pictures, and some Bohemians organise secret performances of their new plays. Some of the writers have made contacts among friendly

publishers who help publish and disseminate their work.

Membership

The Bohemians are mostly made up of upper class and servant class intellectuals. Few of the lower class have to time to discover any artistic talent. For this reason they have mostly managed to escape the attention of the authorities. While their activities do not go unnoticed, those of a higher social station are allowed a lot more leeway. A few of the lower class are involved in the society, as they are the ones who know how to print books or build canvases etc.

Meetings

Members of the society rarely gather in large groups. They confine their meetings to regular gatherings in the back rooms of pubs and clubs where they can talk in private. The membership is not large, and few of them manage to attend every meeting. Many only turn up when they have something to show the group, rather than to see the work of others.

Each group of Bohemians has a 'Bookkeeper', a leader who is either voted on or simply takes on the role, few are that bothered by who is in charge. It is the responsibility of the Bookkeeper to chair the meetings and schedule the evening's entertainments, but also to organise the publication of the society's best work.

Joining

The Bohemians believe that those with a talent

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for creativity cannot exist without creating. So they watch and investigate those they believe might be secretly writing or painting. Once they have evidence of an artist's 'crime' (and therefore blackmail material if things turn sour) they send one of their number to recruit them. Membership is not compulsory, and if the offer is refused the society bids the artist farewell. However, the more talent the artist has shown the more the society keeps an eye on them. They may renew the offer at a later date, sometimes several times if they find a rare talent.

Servant and lower class people can also sometimes be spotted in the same way, but they rarely have the time to create art. More often they are recruited because they have skills the society needs. In such company they sometimes find the time to attempt their own works of art, and if they prove talented they might be welcomed as a full member. In general it is true the society is quite egalitarian and believes wholeheartedly that talent rather than class is important. However, in practice the society only really looks for such talent among the upper classes.

THE ORDER OF THE LASH

In a world full of such oppression, it should be no surprise that some people seek to break rules and taboos. The order of the lash is a secret hedonistic organisation, seeking to indulge in the darkest pleasures they can find. Members help each other to pursue their mutual goal, often competing for who can find the darkest and most obscene pleasures. For most of the members the order is a fetish

club, encouraging members to partake in any form of sex with either willing, or at least well paid, partners. However, those who prove their decadence and immorality are often invited into the inner circle of the order. These members take things even further, meeting away from the rest of the order to commit the most despicable acts. They believe that in ultimate darkness and corruption lays the ultimate pleasure. These inner circle members are recognised by tattoos they use to mark themselves and note their activities. They gain a tattoo for each of the seven deadly sins they have partaken in. They add to and embellish these tattoos as they commit further, or more excessive, breaches of social taboos and the rules of morality.

Agenda

Those in the order seek only pleasure, although the extent they are willing to go to pursue it varies from member to member. Some just want sex outside their marriage, others pursue a particular fetish. However, some seek more extreme pleasures with less consensual partners. The order has no desire to change society; actually they get an additional thrill from knowing they are breaking the rules.

Membership

The members of the order are exclusively upper class, and most (but not all) of them are male. As such they are quite a powerful organisation, able to spend large amounts of money to procure what they need. Most of the order would be horrified at allowing anyone outside the upper class into the order, even if they could afford to join. Deeply hypocritical,

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most members believe that the upper classes have a more evolved idea of morality and manage to remain uncorrupted by their activities. The lower orders would become indulgent animals, unable to manage their baser urges. This hypocrisy helps them avoid holding a mirror up to their own activities.

Meetings

The order organises secret meetings on their estates, evenings of terrible debauchery that each member is expected to host in turn. All members remain masked for the evening, and are expected to be polite and civilised at all times. Other than that, they are free to indulge in anything they like with anyone they like, and there is always plenty on offer. Many courtesans and prostitutes are brought in, but only the most attractive. Musicians are often hired to provide entertainment, but must be able to play blindfolded lest they be corrupted by what they see.

Meetings of the inner circle are less formal, arranged as and when the opportunity for indulging their particular tastes appears. They sometimes find a room just for themselves at one of the general meetings, but more usually they meet somewhere in the pleasure districts in secret. They pay handsomely to make sure they are not disturbed, and that no one reports the screams they may hear.

Joining

Only those of the upper class will ever be invited to a meeting. Those already part of the order are allowed to bring a guest, although they must be prepared to vouch for them. Should the guest prove they can

behave, and that they enjoy the evening and remain unshocked by what they see, they may be offered membership. In general, they are expected to have partaken in a series of hedonistic acts before membership is offered, if they do them all at their first meeting they'll be offered membership on the spot! Those who refuse membership will never be offered it again, and their friends will never speak of the night or even admit it ever occurred.

Those of a lower social level might be hired to entertain for the evening. Beautiful men and women need not be 'professionals' for such an offer to be made. They will be told that they will be paid well if they choose to appear. Those who prove popular with the members will usually be asked to join on another meeting.

THE HUNT CLUB

The upper classes are often quite bored, and many of the young men seek excitement denied them in the stultifying cities. So, many take to the streets to find something challenging and dangerous, and seek human targets to satisfy their thirst for 'adventure'. While not all of these vigilantes are members, the Hunt Club serves as a more organised outlet for this youthful exuberance.

Agenda

The club itself has no actual agenda; instead it is a service and meeting place for those who wish to adventure in the dark streets of the city. It provides training facilities and weapons for its members, who often spar

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together. It also provides the essential service of removing any bodies and verifying alibis. Most also have a clubhouse that serves all the same functions as any other. Older, 'retired' members of the club often remain to become trainers and administrate the club.

The members do have an agenda though, and it comes in two forms. Most take to the streets to remove the criminal element. They are looking to root out thieves, criminals and gangsters and make the city safer for themselves and the lower classes. Unfortunately, some consider any member of the lower class to be fair sport, seeing their actions as just reducing the surplus population.

Membership

Only members of the upper class may join the hunt club, as only they can afford the fees. Women are allowed, but membership is not considered quite seemly. They often have to 'prove themselves' before they are allowed on the streets alone. Older members are expected to retire, not only as their slower reactions might get them killed, but that it is considered something of a childish pursuit. The Hunt Club is a place a young man blows off steam before settling into what is expected of a gentleman.

Meetings

Members of the club meet on a very informal basis. As far as anyone else is concerned, they are staying late at a club with friends. To a certain extent this is true. However,

some will set off into the night looking for prey. How they go about this is very much up to the person in question. Some like to hunt alone (although this can be very dangerous) but most prefer to go out in groups. Of the



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groups, some are formed out of whoever is attending the club that night, others are a particular selection of people that organise their own gatherings within the club.

Joining

Becoming a member is simple, you pay the expensive fees and you are a member. The trick is finding out about the club. Another member must always recommend you, but that is rarely a problem. Everybody knows somebody who is a member. Some fathers make it a point to introduce their sons when they think they are old enough.

THE FREE THINKERS

Some dissidents engage in a war of words with the authorities, directly challenging their edicts. Of all the secret societies, their members risk the most, as they publicly agitate in the squares, factories and pubs. They are rarely able to speak for long, as such open resistance quickly draws the attention of the Peelers and the detectives. As soon as the authorities are spotted they run and hide, often scattering a few pamphlets in their wake.

Luckily the authorities don't see the Free Thinkers as too much of a threat. They don't commit acts of terrorism or murder, or sabotage machines. While they do spread dissidence, making an example of a few of them usually seems to remind their supporters of the folly of following their cause.

Agenda

What the authorities don't know is that public speaking is not the only, or even the primary objective of the Free Thinkers. Freedom of thought can only truly be gained by education. So the organisation secretly maintains caches of books that can be used to educate the public. Many of the Free Thinkers memorise passages or even whole texts so that even if these caches are discovered the knowledge is not lost.

The public agitations are not just a smoke screen though. The Free Thinkers have a message and that message must be heard. However, speaking out in public is very dangerous and so it is rarely done by the more valuable members.

Membership

Most of the Free Thinkers membership is made up of the lower class. It is these people who most need education and many of whom cannot read until they manage to contact the organisation. However, several members of the servant class also join the cause and have been known to steal books from their masters to supply the group. Few people are also aware that a few of the upper class are also involved. Some young men realise there are gaps in their education but the society is more popular with women. With few women of the upper class offered any form of education, noblewomen are often quick to join when one of their trusted servants reveals their connection to the order.

Even though the society has members from all classes, seniority is based on the amount of

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books each members looks after. This is not just a matter of collecting them as valuable books must be kept in the safest places. So those given custody of books are both the most trusted and are taking the most risks. To be discovered in charge of a library of dissident information and truth uncontrolled by the Administration is a quick ticket to the dungeons of the Change Cage.

Meetings

Full members of the society are expected to run meetings as often as possible, where they can teach the knowledge they have learned. Such meetings are attended by anyone who can be trusted and wants to learn. These meetings are organised by word of mouth and take place anywhere the group might be assured of secrecy. Back rooms of pubs are common meeting places, but plenty are carried out in the homes of those who wish to learn with a few of their neighbours. Children are often taught by society members who come to baby-sit. In all cases meetings are kept small to avoid detection although they can take place anywhere.

Joining

Anyone with an interest in truth can join the society. Members look out for like-minded souls and sound them out in conversation before suggesting they attend one of the meetings. Once someone has been to a meeting or two they must then prove themselves by speaking in public. Every adult member must do this, even if it is only for a few minutes. Other members are always on hand to help provide an escape route, but the candidate is expected to talk for as long as possible before

the authorities turn up. How much they risk by talking as the authorities approach is considered a mark of their dedication. To preserve anonymity, even though upper and servant class members are expected to speak in public, they need not do it in their normal clothes. Most speak dressed in lower class clothes, which maintains their anonymity and helps maintain the image the Free Thinkers are all lower class.

THE INFAMOUS ANONYMOUS

Not every revolutionary group advocates violence. The collective known as the Infamous Anonymous plays a far more subtle game of dissidence than most other groups. They create propaganda and paste it anywhere they can find in the city. They are responsible for the absurdist and surreal graffiti and posters found across the cities. At first glance this propaganda appears to support the Administration, such as the popular 'Put and end to Sky Piracy' and 'Don't rebel, just carry on' posters. However, all the propaganda of Infamous Anonymous adds a subtle message of dissidence. For instance, the sky piracy posters might support Administration policy, but also announce the existence of the Skyfolk. The subtle messages of the society serve a double purpose. Firstly, they are funny, and part of the popularity of the society is its clever sense of humour. Secondly, the message is often too subtle for an automaton to grasp, meaning that seeking out and removing such posters has to be done by the human servants of the Administration. This costs them time they could be spending looking for dissidents, as lower grade clerks tend to plead incompetence when sent out to find such posters as they find them entertaining too.

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Agenda

The Infamous Anonymous seeks nothing less than the fall of the Administration, and the freedom of the Neovictorians. They are prepared to take their time though and pursue a policy of undermining the Administration rather than directly opposing it. This has made them difficult to catch and less of a priority for the authorities. However, their message seriously damages the work of the Ministry of Truth and spreads dangerous truths to the people of the city. In the long term their actions are far more dangerous than the attacks of more violent dissidents.

Infamous Anonymous believes that eventually their message will spread so far the people will revolt against the system, replacing the Administration with a people's government. However, while most of the organisation seeks freedom, a more fanatical group within the group actually seeks a state of anarchy. They want the Administration to fall and for nothing to replace it that might prove more dangerous.

Membership

As you might expect, Infamous Anonymous is a fairly eclectic group. Most of the membership comes from the lower class, but members actually come from any level of society. For this reason the organisation can reach into anywhere in the city. Given that the authorities believe the membership is exclusively lower class they are constantly amazed and confused how such people manage to penetrate their message into good society.

The organisation is built up of many cells, so if one is captured they cannot reveal the names of other dissenters outside their cell. In fact the organisation has no central leadership. When different cells run into each other they often merge or cooperate, but many never meet anyone else who is part of the organisation. There are rumours that the group that started the organisation still exist, and somehow control the organisation from afar. However, no one has ever admitted to meeting them, and no one knows for sure if they are active, retired, or even got themselves arrested years ago.

Meetings

As a cell based group, Infamous Anonymous doesn't hold any meetings outside those each cell needs to plan their activities. These meetings might happen anywhere depending on who is part of the cell. Few cells cross social boundaries, although some are made up of upper class dissidents and their trusted servants. This makes finding gatherings of the society very difficult as their meetings require no special facilities and are often on a small scale. The best they can hope for is find the member carrying poster designs or printing blocks, which is why members take turns to carry such material and never leave together.

Joining

Unlike other societies, Infamous Anonymous does not recruit. They have put the message out there and hope that other people gather together to answer their call. Part of the ethos of the society is that people must be prepared

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to save themselves from bondage; they must act for their freedom as no one is going to give it to them. This spontaneous appearance of cells makes it very hard for the authorities to predict where they might appear or understand how the organisation functions.

While no one creates new cells, or trains recruits, all cells leave helpful supplies where they may be found. Any active cell will leave lists of slogans, printing blocks, rolls of posters in strange places around the city. Their hope is that other like-minded souls will find this supply that will help them set up their own cell. If the authorities find the stash it is not great loss, there are plenty more.

THE VERMIN

Some groups are not content with propaganda and speaking out, they want action. The Vermin have had enough of the oppression of the upper class and Administration, and refuse to suffer the depredations of the vigilantes. Their name refers to the way a cornered rat makes a very dangerous opponent because it has nothing left to lose, and that no matter how many you kill, there are always more. The vermin see themselves as the deliverers of judgement and justice where the authorities have failed the people. Simply put, they are assassins.

Agenda

The Vermin do not necessarily want to see an end to the Administration, or even the class structure, but they want it to be fairer. They want the lower class to be respected and

valued as much as the upper class, if not more so. As such they choose to cut out the worse parts of the system, by assassinating those in authority that abuse their power.

Membership

The Vermin are not quite as numerous as their name suggests, and exist as a few small cells in the depths of the lower class blocks. They only allow lower class agitators to join their ranks; everyone else is either the enemy (upper class) or a collaborator (the servant class). However, they often rely on 'friends' to help get them where they need to go. Often a servant will let them into the house of a brutal master, or a clerk might help them access the offices of an administrator. They might even be assisted by members of the upper class who proclaim sympathy for the cause and understand the unfairness of the system. This is rather naïve of the organisation though as most of their upper class associates are looking to use them as cat's-paws to remove their rivals.

Meetings

The Vermin organise themselves into cells of up to five members. They meet regularly, usually once a week or once a month and each member is expected to bring details of a potential target to the group. There are no shortage of stories of abuse from factory foremen, police detectives, nobles and administrators. The cell then discusses which of the targets they will go after. Once this is decided, they spend the next week gathering information on their target. After forming a plan the one who brought the target to their attention is sent to dispatch them. Quite often

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the assassin doesn't escape alive. Getting in is often easier than escaping once the alarm has been raised. This is not to say the Vermin plan every mission as a suicide attack, in fact they do their best to work out an escape plan. But such operations rarely run to plan and members are told never to be captured alive.

Joining

While anyone is a potential member of the Vermin, they need to see evidence of a recruit's dedication before allowing them into the cell. Usually they offer membership to people they believe might share their goals and have the mettle to carry out an operation. However, they do entertain the advances of young zealots who seek them out. Either way the new recruit will be assigned a target to kill to prove they can do it. This is never someone of the upper classes, it is usually a criminal the cell picks out for them, someone whose murder will cause little notice among the authorities, successful or not. If the recruit performs well they are introduced to the cell and act as a full member. When a cell gains a sixth member, the most experienced in the group leave to form a new cell. They recruit another four members and then begin operations of their own in a different part of the city.

The Chuno Ggun

One of the most secretive and insular groups in the Neovictorian world is the deadly Chuno Ggun. This military order is made up of highly trained soldiers who are indoctrinated with imperial propaganda. They serve the Emperor without question and remain loyal only to him.

The Chuno Ggun was originally established to act as a secret death squad to consolidate the Emperor's power with intimidation, assassination and black operations. The name comes from a Korean term (ChuNo Ggun) which literally translates as 'men who chase slaves'. The individual Chuno Ggun are taught to see anyone outside the Emperor and their order as slaves (or 'Nobi') who should be brought to heel or extinguished. Most of the original order was made up of psychotics and murderers, men (and women) who had no moral problem with mass murder. With plenty to keep them occupied they were controllable. However, as the need for them decreased with the Emperor's rise to power, he instigated a cull. Several groups of Chuno Ggun were chosen to destroy the more fanatical regiments. As a result, only the most skilled and dedicated members survived the founding of the Change Cage cities.

Initially, the remaining Chuno Ggun policed the Change Cage cities, but were gradually replaced with the more civilised Peelers and detectives. The Emperor began to recruit directly from the orphanages, beginning indoctrination almost at birth. These days, few people are recruited into the Chuno Ggun past the age of five.

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INDOCTRINATION AND RECRUITMENT

New recruits are brought into the Chuno Gun at a formative age, usually from the orphanages. However, operatives often visit the Misbegotten ghettos seeking any children who have unique and useful powers. Those they find are taken, no matter what their parents may think. While these misbegotten children undergo additional training to fully master their abilities, they are otherwise treated exactly like the other recruits. This makes the Chuno Ggun one of the few places a misbegotten are treated with the same respect as anyone else.

Recruits are constantly indoctrinated with the idea that they owe everything to the Emperor. Without being 'rescued' from their old lives they would have died, instead they have been reborn, and purified into something special and wonderful. Chuno Ggun are told they are better than everyone else except

the Emperor, who is the greatest example of humanity. All others are just 'Nobi' no matter who or what they are. They are meaningless, so their deaths are meaningless.



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Training for the new recruits is extremely tough. Some die during training from exhaustion alone. However, the training is designed not just to separate the strong from the weak but to build strength and dexterity, leaving those who survive stronger and faster. Several training techniques also test intelligence and the recruit's ability to improvise, making the Chuno Ggun not just physically dangerous but adaptable and intelligent opponents. Finally, the last part of recruitment pits the recruits against each other. Only when they have killed 30%-40% of their classmates may the survivors finally graduate. By this time they are highly skilled, physically at their peak and utterly dedicated to serving the Emperor and the Chuno Ggun, the only world they know.

ORGANISATION

As they are a military force rather than an army, there is less need for divisions and rank in the Chuno Ggun. The reduced hierarchy also grants more parity to individuals, making them feel an equal part rather than just a cog in the machine. There are five distinct branches in the Chuno Ggun, and while some are larger than others they are all considered equally important. Members of the Chuno Ggun are placed in the division their talents and skill sets are most suited for, and each requires a high level of skill and dedication. Occasionally, some can be transferred into a different division if they prove suitable. In such a case they are allowed to continue to display their previous division's insignia on their uniform. The five divisions are:

Marines: the largest group of Chuno Ggun serve as soldiers. These are the warriors

dropped from the black airships into battle. Chuno Ggun marines are physically very imposing and trained in several forms of combat. They are not designed for subtlety, but excel at the application of force.

Air Crew: while they are still skilled fighters, the aircrew rarely enter direct combat. Instead they serve as pilots, gunners and engineers on the Black Airships. Sometimes they are used on the ground when technicians or engineers are required, but this is quite rare.

Infiltrators: those well versed in deceit often find a place as infiltration specialists. Their job is simple, to infiltrate the various dissident groups inside and outside the cities. Chuno Ggun infiltrators find their way into Neovictorian secret societies, but also the cities of the Skyfolk and even tribes of Neobedouin and Bargefolk. They work as deep cover agents, but are more than capable to taking down a dissident cell without calling for back up when the orders arrive.

Assassins: sometimes you need a scalpel rather than a hammer, and when the marines won't do the assassins take over. These Chuno Gun operatives are trained in stealth and silent assassination, often taking out a target before anyone knows they have got into the building. They can take care of themselves in a stand up fight, but if you don't see them coming you have little chance to survive.

Hunters: similar to assassins are the hunters who target a particular prey and take it down. However, while assassins are at home in urban environments, hunters are masters of

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the wilds. They are excellent trackers and can live off the land with ease. When they finally come across their prey they know a variety of ways to deliver a swift end to the chase.

Both men and women serve in the Chuno Ggun, and in all branches of the service. However, some are more common in certain divisions. Most Marines are male, as are a good proportion of Hunters as they are more physically imposing. However, with women being physically smaller (and able to squeeze into the tight spaces of an airship engine) they easily outnumber the men as Aircrew (most Black Airship Captains are women as well). As women are still underestimated in even the Skyfolk cities, there are also more female Infiltrators than men as well. There is a roughly equal proportion of men and women working as Assassins.

RANK

Hierarchy is of little importance to the Chuno Ggun, but a leadership structure is necessary to make the organisation function. Promotion is based entirely on service record and ability. None feel slighted at being passed over for promotion as that simply points out what an excellent job they are doing in their current position. Should a leader be lost in a combat situation, the most experienced person will usually step up.

While the rank system is more obvious in the non-covert divisions (Marines and Air Crew) it is still useful among the more covert ones. Assassins, Hunters and Infiltrators don't always work alone, but when they don't they need someone to co-ordinate. In the covert

divisions, rank is often a mark of the agent's skill as more difficult targets and missions are assigned to higher rank personnel.

Operative: the lowest rank of the Chuno Ggun apart from recruit. The rank and file of the organisation are Operatives.

Commander: this is lowest officer position in the organisation. They are field officers who command of a group of five to ten Operatives and lead them during the operation.

Captain: a captain is in charge of an entire operation. This usually means they are in command of one of the Black Ships, or an equivalent amount of Operatives. The Commanders under them disseminate their orders to the operatives. In some cases they may appoint a first officer among the Commanders to act as their second in command.

Brigadier: when a force of several captains is required, a Brigadier leads the armada. There are only ten Brigadiers in the organisation (2 from each division) and as a council they run the Chuno Ggun with the Emperor as their leader.

Master: slightly outside the command structure is the title of 'Master'. When a Chuno Ggun of any rank becomes too old to serve in the field, they become the teachers of new recruits. Masters are held with the deepest respect as they have earned this semi-retirement with a life of service, loyalty and dedication. Their skills and experience are

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never cast aside. When they become too old and infirm to teach, they are retired to a life of (often bedridden) luxury until they pass on.

CHUNO GGUN BASES

The Chuno Ggun sometimes maintain a presence in the Change Cage cities, but most of their bases are located in the wilds. The city of Khan is the official home of the Chuno Ggun and the base they maintain there is a vital and important one. It is used to train marines in urban assault and train infiltrators in undercover techniques. It also functions as a vital base for Air Crew training. Khan also plays host to the few Chuno Ggun who do paperwork. A few clerks from the Ministry of defence are assigned here to maintain their mission records and files, although these are kept very separate from standard ministry of defence records. The minister himself (much to his annoyance) has to ask the Emperor's permission to get any access to these records.

Outside Khan, the Chuno Ggun are rarely seen unless they are swooping in on the attack. The bases they maintain in the wilds are shared with the Emperor's secret scientists, as they function as protection for the research stations. Each research station (of which there are about 15 world-wide) barracks at least two full Black Airships. In addition to this there is a Chuno Ggun strike base (at least one full Black Airship crew) hidden not far out of strike range from each Skyloft city.

CHUNO GGUN TECHNOLOGY

While the Emperor has ordered that no technology should advance, this rule is ignored

for the Chuno Ggun. In fact, the Change Cage scientists and those moved out to the research stations are working essentially to advance Chuno Ggun technology. This is one of the reasons they remain so separate from the 'Nobi', as anyone setting foot on one of their ships or getting a close look at their weapons will easily see how advanced they are. For this reason they always claim the bodies and equipment of their dead. While it is true they 'leave no man behind' they are also dedicated to seeing their technology doesn't fall into the hands of the Emperor's enemies.

Weapons

Chuno Ggun swords, knives etc are all crafted from significantly better metal alloys than anyone else. While the designs and types are the same, Chuno Ggun melee weapons all have a damage rating 2 points higher than their usual alternative.

Ranged weapons are similarly augmented; being upgraded versions of what is available elsewhere. Ranged weapons also have a damage rating 2 points higher than usual. They are also less bulky and far lighter having a more streamlined and compact design, and carry an extra 50% more ammunition than usual.

It is rare, but not impossible for these weapons to be found outside the Chuno Ggun. Sometimes they cannot reclaim their dead or equipment and it falls into the hands of Neobedouin or Skyfolk. However, getting hold of such weapons is not as good as it might sound. Few, if any, on even the black market will trade in such items, fearing a

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reprisal. Infiltrators keep an eye out for such trades and often steal back the item and kill anyone who has come into contact with it. As far as the Skyfolk know, people around these things die; some even go as far as to say they are cursed.

While melee weapons are very useful, the ranged weapons are often more trouble than they are worth. For a start no additional ammunition is available for them. They don't take any standard ammo, actually requiring a slightly different calibre and size for any solid ammunition (specifically to make reloading them outside the Chuno Ggun difficult). When they go wrong, there is no one outside the research stations that knows how to fix them. Most weaponsmiths can get them working again, but only by effectively converting them to the standard variety (losing all their bonuses). The melee weapons obviously last well and require no new technology to maintain. However, the Chuno Ggun make a point of targeting anyone foolish enough to wield one of their own distinctive weapons against them.

The Black Airships

These ships are the size of an IAN frigate but faster, more powerful and crewed by more skilled sailors. So the Black airships match the power of Neovictorian aircraft, manned by a crew as skilled and adaptable as any Skyfolk ship. Many Skyfolk underestimate the Black Airships, thinking they can outthink them with ease and get a very nasty surprise. The only downside to the Black Airships is that they are built specifically for Chuno Ggun operations and so have little customisation space. A lot of additional space is taken up

with crew quarters. Only the captain and the first officer have a large cabin, and that's not much bigger than those assigned to everyone else. Commanders have their own cabins, but the crew only have to share with one other person. So compared to an IAN ship the crew and marine accommodation is very spacious and egalitarian.

Handling: 12 Movement: 140 mph

Armour Points: 8 Crew: 150/80

Resource Space: 50 Range: 4000 miles

Fixed Marine Quarters: 200

Cost: 80,000 Helios (if you have access to the technology!)

Resources: 60 large cannons* (120 ARPs), 4 Grappling hooks (8 ARPs), 10 automaton mounts 4 Sick bays (20 ARPs), 10 Automaton mounts (20 ARPs)

Free Cargo Space: 20

Weapons: 60 large cannons (30 each side)

Broadside Damage: 540

Health: 60 Health Dice

The crew is a level 15 Elite crew, although if full of recruits on a training mission it will be a level 15 Competent crew.

*These more advanced cannons do 18 rather than 15 damage.

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EX-CHUNO GGUN PLAYER CHARACTERS

Give the indoctrination they suffer it is rare for anyone to leave the Chuno Ggun. Those who do are often hunted down. However, it is still possible for player characters to have once been part of the organisation. The easiest option is for a recruit to be left for dead during training. While the Masters take care to leave no one behind, sometimes a recruit who does not return from a predator infested jungle is assumed dead. The organisation is too pragmatic to potentially loose good men just to bring back a body. Usually the recruit in question is dead, but sometimes they escape or get rescued by Skyfolk or Neobedouins.

A few Chuno Ggun also question their indoctrination. This often happens with infiltrators who get to hear the other side of the story (which is why they are more heavily indoctrinated). Sometimes even warriors question the bloodshed as they see the bodies of more slain Neobedouin children. If they decide to defect, such renegades had best be quick and careful. Those who bring their concerns to a commander are usually watched closely (or even quietly executed just to be sure). They need to pick their moment to run, and keep running. The Chuno Ggun leave no one behind, whether they want to be brought back or not. So the character will be looking over their shoulder for the rest of their lives, waiting for the Chuno Ggun assassins, hunters or Infiltrators to find them once more and show them the price of disloyalty.

The Neovictorian Campaign

The Neovictorian world is a place of oppression, totalitarian control and forced labour, where the population are almost prisoners in their homes. That doesn't sound the sort of place to have daring adventures. However, the Change Cage cities can play host to heroes. We haven't written a whole book just to flesh out the background of Neovictorian characters! There are plenty of wrongs to right, plenty of bad guys to defeat and plenty of secrets to discover. While the forces arrayed against the characters might seem so powerful as to be almost omnipotent, they are human and fallible. Yes, standing against them will be tough, but that just makes it a job for those with talent, resolve and a little daring.

A MORE SUBTLE ADVENTURE

While a campaign Underneath the Lamplight is perfectly possible, it is a more subtle one than gallivanting across the sky as airship pirates. The Neovictorian campaign is essentially a spy drama or a caper heist, with very high stakes. A player group that decides to go head to head with the authorities is probably going to get themselves killed in short order. Having said that, as long as they have a safehouse they can make it to, and their identities remain secret, a daring raid on a ministry building or a noble estate is perfectly possible.

To reach this point the Gamemaster must begin the campaign introducing the city to the players. They will need to understand

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what they are up against so they can plan accordingly. Small scale acts of dissidence, often in reply to personal tragedy or the problems of their neighbours will help set the scene. Some examples are:

- A neighbour cannot work due to illness. Without working they won't get paid and they may starve or be evicted. Can the players take their place or convince their boss not to report their lack of attendance?
- A friend has been accused of dissidence. Can the players provide a convincing alibi, or find a way to break them out of the block jail before they get shunted off to the Change Cage? This might be made more complicated by the friend actually being guilty of the accusations!
- A black market trader approaches the characters offering illegal goods. But are they actually an administration agent looking to test their loyalty?
- A friend or neighbour asks the players to look after something illegal (possibly even explosives). However, they don't return when they said they would and the authorities seem to be searching the neighbourhood.

When the player characters have adventured around the city and come to understand both its oppression and its loopholes, the Gamemaster can up the game somewhat. At this point their actions bring them to the attention of the real dissidents who might recruit them. For a truly paranoid game, some player characters might turn traitor on the group and feed information to the Administration. Indeed, you could run a



whole campaign where the player characters are working on behalf of the Administration to infiltrate dissident groups. In which case do they sell out their new friends or perhaps come to identify with their plight and change sides?

Once part of organised dissidence the player characters can take on more defined missions. These might include:

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- Printing and pasting up dissident posters in secret.
- Breaking known dissidents out of prisons.
- Sneaking into the estates of the rich to steal resources, take hostages or access secret files.
- Acts of terrorism, planting bombs in government facilities or assassinating important Administrators.
- Seeking out contacts in the black market for resources and attempting to pass messages to other groups to co-ordinate attacks.

As you can imagine, the potential for moral grey areas are quite extreme in such missions. Do they warn the people working in the building or is any death justified in the fight against oppression? Where you draw the line is very much determined by your group. Some are happy to go to a very dark place, others very uncomfortable with doing so. Sometimes the films we watch raise difficult questions and can be very moving, and role-playing games can create that experience as well. But not everyone likes that sort of experience. It is important to be aware of everyone in the group and their feelings as they are meant to be enjoying the game after all!

After several adventures, the campaign will eventually come to a climax. An extremely tempting target might become available, something that offers a chance to end the oppression for good. This may be the arrival of another governor to the city or the chance to steal a Chuno Ggun airship. Whatever the 'big score' is, it will be too good to pass up, but just as easily might be a trap. Both the

characters and the Administration are forced to bet everything they have in a 'winner takes all' climax.

GUESTS NOT RESIDENTS

The detail we present here might not only be useful for campaigns set entirely inside one of the Change Cage cities. Plenty of characters might travel in and out of the Change Cage cities, either legally or illegally. A player character group of Bargefolk will spend their time travelling from city to city. They may sneak into the city to enjoy its pleasures and make contact with dissident groups. They might also take messages for these groups and have to seek out contacts in other cities to pass on vital intelligence. A group of airship pirates might do the same thing, helping dissident groups remain in contact and delivering supplies.

A group of airship pirates might also spend their time getting people out of the city. It is tough but not impossible to escape. The main problem is surviving the wilds, but if you have an airship ready to speed you to safety it becomes a lot easier. The difficult part with helping escapees is that they tend to have to leave in large groups. If one member of a family disappears the rest will pay the price for their escape. Everyone from grandma to the youngest baby needs to escape at the same time to avoid those left behind suffering punishment.

This sort of campaign might suit a more action oriented group. While they will have to be subtle and careful as they make contact, the escape itself can be dramatic. They might

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have to jump from trains or open fire on pursuing Peelers when things start going wrong.

A MATTER OF CLASS

You may be forgiven for thinking that most of these campaign ideas don't apply to the upper class, but that isn't the case. While they and the servant class have a far easier time than the lower class, they are still prisoners. Plenty of younger men and women are eager to join the dissident cause once they have the plight of the poor revealed to them. A dissident upper class campaign can be even tenser as they actually have something to lose if they are discovered.

A player group of mixed classes can work just as well, with everyone having a part to play as the plan. However, there are plenty of places that members of certain classes simply cannot go. A noblewoman stands out wandering a factory and no working class urchin would be allowed into an upper class party. This can be a problem when the action moves from one place to another and certain player characters get left out. At such times it is possible to place the characters in the same scene but different layers, such as the upper class attending the party and the servant class waiting on them. However, there will still be times people



will be left out. The Gamemaster should make the players aware of this possibility when they create characters. So those with the 'wrong type of character' will have to be patient when they cannot take part. It is up to the Gamemaster to reward this patience with an equal amount of time for them in the spotlight, and to make sure they are not left out for long. No one should be left out of the

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climax to the adventure, that much is certain!

REVEALING SECRETS

There are many mysteries within the city, and the Gamemaster must be careful about what she does with them. It may be tempting to blow them all, allowing the player group into the Change Cage or letting them meet the Emperor. This will be fun for a while but it will make the administration seem powerless and easily duped as they work very hard to keep their secrets. On the other hand it is just as bad to let the player characters learn nothing and maintain the stasis of the city.

The best plan is to reveal something new in each adventure, but make that revelation the climax. Sometimes just the evidence that there is something more going on is enough to tantalise the players. So offer them a steady drip of secrets, but don't shut off the tap or turn it on full.

The Gamemaster mustn't be afraid to let the victories the players make count. Sure, sometimes the bad guy they take out will just be replaced, and nothing will change, or they get one family out just to have another arrested. If this happens all the time though they are going to feel as if everything they do is pointless. As Gamemaster, you must remember this is your city; you aren't going to pass it on to another Gamemaster and have to keep it in mint condition. So if they blow up a building, make that hurt the Administration. If they get hold of vital data, make it count in the next mission. The Administration is way too big to fall after a couple of missions, but the players must be able to feel they are

having an effect. These gains can be small, and any victory counts. Setting up a new safehouse or getting a known dissident out of the city still foils the Administration and proves they can be beaten, but doesn't take the whole system down.

Generally these gains will be small ones as too big an impact will put the player characters high on the most wanted list. Then the city can become a very dangerous place for them. But having said that, if they manage to carry out a mission that brings down the Change Cage, reward their cunning with the sight of the great tower falling. Just remind them they'd better be ready for the consequences...

ADVENTURES IN ADMINISTRATION

It's not just dissidents that get to have all the fun in the Change Cage cities. You might also run a campaign based around a group of Administrators. The Byzantine politics mean they will always be checking their backs for knives! Player characters can develop special projects, either coming across the darker secrets of the city, or creating some of their own. They will also have to make careful alliances with each other, and take care when they betray the trust others place in them.

The player character group will be a little different than usual for this sort of campaign. Most of the characters will have to be upper class, but there is room for other players creating trusted servants or useful agents and contacts. In fact, you might focus the game around a single Administrator player character, with the others acting as agents and supporters.

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If your players want an upper class campaign but still want to be the good guys the group might (ironically) focus on lawyers. The lawyer in question actually seeks justice for those he represents. The rest of the player group act as his agents, investigating the truth of the cases they defend. As they delve deeper into the city's secrets in their search for justice, they may discover more than they bargained for.

Elements of the Neovictorian world

Now we've given you some of the broad strokes of creating a Neovictorian adventure, we turn to some of the smaller details. It's worth us spending a little time looking at some of the elements of the Neovictorian world from a Gamemaster's point of view.

USING THE NOBILITY

Class is a vital part of Neovictorian society, but it functions in a very different way to real Victorian society. For a start there is no middle class to challenge the upper class. With factories and land owned by the state, the rich basically exist on handouts from the Emperor. This makes them far more reliant and more loyal to the status quo, which is just how the Emperor likes it.

The stipends for each noble family are only given to the head of that family, and in this way they can keep their family in line. It

is very clear to everyone in the upper class that they have a far better standard of living than anyone else. They are told they deserve it, and that they are better than those below them, but they are still aware how precarious their position might be. If the head of the family cuts them off they have nothing, and few ways to earn a living of their own. Those who plan dissidence (if only against their family and not the state) must save up carefully or rise high in the Administration to secure their fortune before they make a move. It is essential they make plans for when the head of the family passes on; either to secure their position as the new head, or make sure whoever it is will maintain their position.

Most of the poor have no idea how this works. They don't know the Emperor hands out the wealth of the upper classes. All they know is the rich are rich, which is how it has always been. All they know is the upper class is a den of vipers, and the less they have to do with it the better. In the Neovictorian world, money is a cage for everyone. The poor are held in check because they don't have any, the rich are blackmailed into obedience by being given everything so they have something to lose.

USING THE ADMINISTRATION

The Administration is a powerful and Byzantine organisation, filled with infighting and treachery. Few of the administrators have the interests of their people in mind. Many don't even know who they are. Administrators create endless paperwork to make their jobs seem more important and shroud their activities in secrecy for the same reasons. They constantly seek to impress those

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above them, and remain guarded against the obsequious loyalty of those below them who ruthlessly seek their position.

Dealing with the administration should always be frustrating and confusing. Many administration personnel have no idea why they do certain things; they are just the way it is done. Sometimes a particularly confusing process might have developed for a long forgotten reason that one has thought to amend. Even so, admitting they don't understand or that the system is endlessly flawed is something no Administrator will ever admit, especially to outsiders. Like the rules of etiquette, an understanding of the arcane systems is what proves you are 'one of us' and is a powerful weapon against new Administrators looking to carve out a niche.

The Ministries themselves also see each other as rivals. They constantly seek to place their Administrators in better positions and control more of the city. Each has their own weapons to achieve these ends and their own style.

The Ministry of Truth

This Ministry deals in lies, and may seem the least powerful of the ministries. It has no troops or financial clout. However it is able to change the very nature of society by controlling the past. In a society based on tradition, the one who controls what those traditions are wields enormous influence. This power is a delicate instrument though. Most of its functionaries spend their days cataloguing the past, and amending (forging) new evidence of the current version of the past. Many also process artefacts that are to

be sent to Pharos, constructing new myths and evidence of the past (or deleting and storing difficult truths). Great vaults in the Ministry facilities hold all manner of secrets, which are kept in case they decide to reconstruct another past that needs them as evidence. The leaders of the Ministry are the ones who decide how that power is used, but they must be subtle. Brute force can put paid to the plans of the ministry, as can revealing their plans before they are complete. However, if they move slowly and carefully their enemies suddenly realise everything their power is based on has become a lie.

The Ministry of Hope

The greatest resource of this Ministry is people. They serve as the human resources department for the Neovictorian world. They have an unspeakable amount of control over the poor as they control their medical care, and their work assignments. As such, it is in their interest to provide good care and shelter. It keeps their charges happy and loyal, and makes the power to take away such amenities more effective. While the power may reside in the upper classes, the Ministry of Hope controls the majority of the population. As they also control the orphanages, they control the supply of manpower to the IAN and the servant class. This grants them leverage with the upper class and the military. The Ministry of Hope is something of a blunt tool, their power is based on people and they are open about the consequences of crossing them. Effectively they are reasonably civilised slave traders

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The Ministry of Legacy

As the cities are basically built, the remit of this Ministry to create and maintain public buildings is somewhat secondary. The primary power of this Ministry is their position as the treasury of the city. Money remains a vital control, even in the Neovictorian world. It would only lose its power if people started helping each other for free. The Ministry works hard to keep the economics of the city working, often offering loans to create debt that grants them more control. The Ministry is famously rather miserly. As their power is based on their money, few buildings in the city are assigned more money than the bare minimum to keep them standing.

The Ministry of Defence

The obvious power of the Ministry of Defence is the military. However, it is something of a two edged sword. The Administrators and admirals constantly jockey for control making it clear to the others that the ministry is not especially cohesive. This means that the other Ministries maintain personal contacts who can help them out from within the ministry, rather than try to appear to the ministry officially. This means many IAN ships are sent all over the place on spurious missions, sometimes even working against each other when individual Administrators use their influence to run their own secret missions for 'friends'. However, this confusion doesn't make the Ministry any less powerful. The military force it commands is quite awesome. So it is treated very carefully by the others. After all, if you want honey from a beehive, you don't poke it with a stick.

The Ministry of Diligence

Almost as subtle as the Ministry of Truth, the Ministry of Diligence controls both military force and many secrets. While they don't match the power of the IAN, the Peelers are not to be underestimated and can form a dangerous fighting force. Their use as security guards also means the ministry controls access across the city. Like the infiltrators used by the Ministry of Truth, the detectives understand the life and patterns of the ordinary people in the city, something the other Ministries are quite detached from. Quite often, instead of destroying dissidents, they use them as catspaws to attack the facilities of other Ministries. Dissidents make the perfect scapegoats, and should they be captured, the Ministry can ensure they never get to trial.

The Ministry of Contentment

The smallest Ministry is still one of the most powerful. As the Ministry in control of the Change Cage they register and organise the scientists working there. They also catalogue the advances they make and decide how they might be developed with other projects. This also means they run the research facilities that lie out in the wilds. As such they have a very close relationship with the Chuno Ggun. While they don't have any direct control, they do equip them and relationship is more cordial than the one between the Chuno Ggun and the Ministry of Diligence. In addition to their technological power, this Ministry also deals with dissidents brought in by the Ministry of Diligence. This is a constant source of rivalry between the two ministries as the Ministry of Diligence would dearly love to deal with all dissidents themselves. However

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the authorities need to maintain the illusion the Change Cage serves only as a prison and interrogation area for dissidents, so they are passed on to the Ministry of Contentment.

Technology

The Neovictorians exist in a moment frozen at the closing years of the nineteenth century. However, that age is not quite the same as our own. Years of peaceful exchange of information and a few different turns of luck in the pursuit of discovery mean the Neovictorians have a slightly different level of technology than the late Victorians. Time travel hasn't helped either, with devices from the future finding their way into the past with concerning regularity, further screwing up the time lines.

The most notable is the invention of the Automata, and their development to self-awareness. However, there are several other differences making it worth our while to take a look at the level of technology in the Change Cage cities, after all, you can get arrested for stepping ahead of this technological status quo.

A lot of technology is detailed in the core rulebook, including several weapons and forms of transport. So we're not going to add to the equipment list, instead we'll detail some of the styles and levels of technology to help the Gamemaster create new devices. Cubicle 7's other Heresy Engine game, *Victoriana* has two books that detail strange and wondrous devices: *Faulkner's Millinery and Miscellanea* and *Marvels of Science and Steampunk*. Both are full of new equipment

and how to create bizarre inventions using the same rules set as *Airship Pirates*.

When creating new technology, the Gamemaster should find creating statistics for the device quite simple. Not every device will need statistics, it either works or it doesn't. If it augments the abilities of a character (such as a targeting sight) you just need to decide what bonus it applies. Where you need to know how much damage a new weapon might do, or how fast a new carriage is, simply compare it to similar devices in the Core Rulebook. Should it do more damage than a shotgun or less? Is it faster than a horse or an airship? Just pick the numbers that suit what you want it to do using this guideline. Providing complicated game mechanics for this would just make it harder for the Gamemaster to indulge her imagination anyway!

Generally, the look and feel of technology is more important than what it actually does. *Airship Pirates* is a steampunk game and that comes with a certain style your players will expect. Don't be afraid to describe the technology you use, or insist your players do the same. To help you do this, we offer a few pointers to adding that essential steampunk flavour.

IT NEED NOT BE THAT SPECIAL

In a steampunk world, steampunk tech can be anywhere. It need not be reserved for guns and airships. Hairdryers, washing machines and an array of household goods can all function with dials and valves. In the Neovictorian world these will be the preserve of the rich, but there is no reason not to let the

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poor have some of them. Some devices, while they might seem odd to our world, might be ubiquitous in the world of *Airship Pirates*.

ALCHEMY IS AS MUCH FUN AS METALWORK

Not every device need to be steam and gears. Steampunk has a long tradition of creating strange chemical concoctions too. These often create strange creatures or change people into monsters. When you rescue the mild mannered Doctor Jekhell from the Change Cage, don't let him drink the potion he insisted on bringing!

BIG NOT SMALL

If anything, steampunk technology takes up more space than usual. It may be stylish, but it can also be bulky and cumbersome. Most devices are not built out of steamtech but augmented by it. So the usually means a device gets an additional boiler, steamguages and piping. It makes it better, but also usually makes it bigger too.

ELECTRICITY NOT ELECTRONICS

Most steam technology is based on clockwork, steampower or gas power. Clockwork devices often need to be wound up, steampowered devices need heat (often from coal). Electricity is not an unknown force, but it is uncommon and only found in the homes of the rich to the laboratories of mad scientists. Electronics are completely unknown though. Microchips and circuit boards simply do not exist, instead there are switches, dials and valves. Where electricity exists it is generated in large amounts, with

weapons that throw lightning or huge Tesla coils that light up the sky with static power.

INESSENTIAL TECHNOLOGY

The most important thing about steamtech is that the people who use it don't rely on it. The Neovictorian age is set in a time people were getting used to new machines making their jobs easier, but they still knew how to work without it. No technology in the Neovictorian world is critical to doing anything. When a machine breaks down, people just pick up their old tools and carry on the slow way.

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