

ADVENTURE

EXCITEMENT

# THE KERBEROS CLUB

WRITTEN BY BENJAMIN BAUGH  
ILLUSTRATED BY LANNY LIU & TODD SHEARER



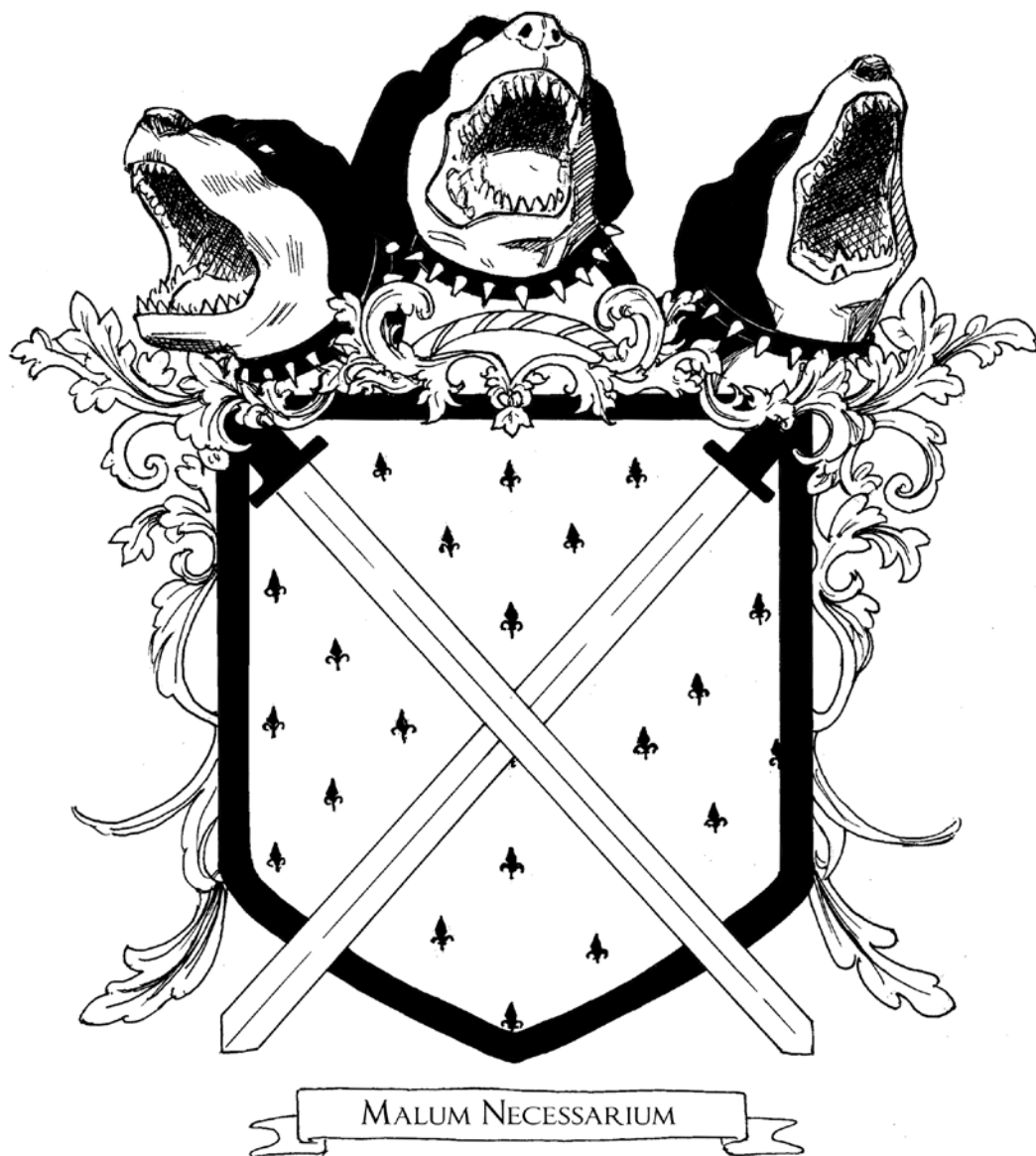
A SOURCEBOOK FOR VICTORIAN ADVENTURE



TODD 2008

# The Kerberos Club

*A Savage Worlds Sourcebook of Strange Victorian Adventure*



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



# Introduction

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

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

Armies are raised against Her, and the gods and powers of old march with their human comrades. But as in the Indian Rebellion, they are smitten soundly by Her legions and the unsettling weapons of Strange origin they bring to war. Lovelace's mechanical servants become mechanical riflemen. Albert's gift of wolf-belts from his native Coburg becomes Her

Majesty's 13th Lupine Rangers. The skies belong to Her Aero Navy and its fighting-craft,

perfected from Félix du Temple's  
*Albatross* design.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# How to Use This Book

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

## Eras of Play

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

**Early Era:** Early on, the Strangeness is relatively subtle, something people may have heard about but with which most have no direct experience.

**Middle Era:** In the middle, it is breaking out into the public awareness and becoming indistinct from the other wonders of the age.

**Late Era:** By the late era things have come totally unstuck, and almost nothing is too Strange to be loosed in the world.



WINGS of SPIRIT! LIGHTNESS of STEP and MIND! They can be yours with the seventeen EFFUSIONS and POTENT COMPOUNDS of EXOTIC and MYSTERIOUS ORIGINS that can be found in . . .

**MIDDLESEX  
LIFTING  
TONIC!**

# Who Are the Characters and What Do They Do?

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

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

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

Within the walls of the Club's London house all are equal and treated as such (and those who can't adapt to this don't long last on the Club's rolls), but outside the walls, they find themselves thrown back

into the same struggles, preconceptions, and expectations as everyone else, and subject to the mistrust and resentment of ordinary folk who envy and fear their freedom. In this way, they are both within and without proper Victorian society, subjects of admiration and envy, sometimes revulsion, but always fascination.

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

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

But if one visits the Kerberos Club's house often enough, one will inevitably be asked to look into certain things, handle certain business, have a word with this person or that. The Kerberos Club's officers (whoever they might be) never assign jobs or duties; rather all members are obliged to look favorably upon the humble requests for assistance made by their fellows. Likewise, the characters have this same privilege of asking for assistance, information, and specialized services from other members.

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



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

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

The Kerberos Club has plenty to contend with.

# The World in Brief

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

Those Touched by Strangeness often have uncanny insight and intelligence, and the pace of invention

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

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

## "Touched by a Strangeness"

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

Other writers, also having noted the oddness which seemed more prevalent in the decade since Victoria's rise to the throne, picked up the expression, and then *Strange* took on a particular meaning in the press and common conversation. To be *Touched by Strangeness* was to be in some way changed or altered by unseen, mysterious, fright-



ening, or unknowable forces. To become a *Stranger* was to be remade by them, and the label marked one out for fear and rejection.

In 1858 while struggling with his failing marriage, Charles Dickens wrote the satirical short story “A Strange Fascination,” which was dedicated to his particular friend (and likely cause for his marital troubles) Ellen Ternan. The story wasn’t published until after his death, but it described the troubles of a young man seemingly blessed through “...a patent process of Science, owing to the distilled genius of Alhazen, Descartes, Gassendi, and Huygens...” with the power to “...cast waves in the luminiferous aether, conjuring patterns of Light from his skin as if reflections of sunlight upon cold clear water, to blind, or fascinate, and to show such visions as he could formulate.”

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

While seeking to find some “...honorable and modestly profitable occupation for my strange

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

The Stranger is the most humane of the characters presented. In the final scene, between the slats of his pauper’s coffin, illusory glimpses of

Heaven are revealed to the gravediggers.

By Dickens's late-middle years, the Strange had entered the public awareness, and even mainstream literature, but well before this the weird events and urban legends of the Strange had fueled the public's hunger for more stories and tales. Penny Dreadfuls with titles like "Captain Blood and the Electric Men" sold monstrously well, as did biographies and witness accounts of Strange people and Strange events. Yet, actually being Touched was a prospect of some dread for many of the middle class clinging desperately to their insular and secure world view. The daughter of a brewer might honorably wed the son of a Viscount, and invigorate the ancestral estates with an infusion of modern cash, but the bearer of the Touch, or worse, a Stranger, could only bring scandal . . . Though possibly a fortune as well.

## Unnatural History

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

## The Scope of This Book

This book is focused primarily on Britain, and more specifically London. The rest of the

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

## References, Resources and Inspirations

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

## Non-Fiction

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

*The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana* by Jess Nevins. If you check out only one resource from this list, make it this one. The Encyclopedia is a

## Ripped From the Headlines

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

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

The publications catering to Britain's lower classes were cheaply printed, and often consisted of thinly veiled stories of real crimes and scandals, or entirely fictionalized stories of outrages presented as true events. Sweeney Todd made his first appearance in

just such a publication, and quickly sliced his way into the Victorian consciousness—a villain in his first appearance, but growing in the unauthorized sequels and copy-cat characters into something of an antihero. The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, with a slightly more *literal* interpretation of his title, could easily be a character in a modern, post-camp gritty comic book.

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



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

***London: The Biography*** by Peter Ackroyd. London is an entire world, fractal: The closer you look, the more there is. Finding a way to narrow the focus on London was one of the major obstacles while writing this book. The depth of information in *London: The Biography* made it much much harder. It is an excellent resource on the old city.

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

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

## Fiction

I can't possibly list all the period fiction which could serve you well in preparing for a *Kerberos Club* game. Any mystery, scientific romance, fantasy, or lurid exploitative fiction written by Victorians for Victorians serves double-duty for our purposes.

It gives you ideas for your games and it provides a window onto the people who read it. Consider, when

reading these things, who the audience would have been when they were first published. The following are more modern tales, still perfect for our purpose.

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

***The Flashman Papers*** by George MacDonald Fraser. These novels are hilarious, clever, exciting, and eminently readable. The footnotes alone are worth the cover price. Flashman is a coward, a braggart, a

### ... Doomed to Repeat It

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

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

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

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

villain, a cad... and also one of the Empire's great old warhorses and heroes. He's simultaneously everything that is good and bad about the age, as well as remaining a sympathetic and engaging character despite his tendency to be wholly reprehensible.

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

## Comics

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

*The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill, particularly the first two volumes. It's essential reading for any Victorian supers game.

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

## Roleplaying Games

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Movies

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

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

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

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

## TV

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

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

## The Web

**[Victorianlondon.org](http://Victorianlondon.org).** An invaluable resource which zooms in tight on the metropolis of London, and includes Dickens's *Encyclopedia of London*.

**[Victorianweb.org](http://Victorianweb.org).** One of the oldest online sources for all things Victorian, and still one of the best.

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



# Chapter 1

## The Kerberos Club

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

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

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

*The carriage was nearly upon the Kerberans when as one they moved. Countess Lámina leapt aside with an athleticism that was the envy of England's greatest sportsmen. With scarcely any effort Dr. Monroe exercised his simian prerogative: Clutching his top-hat*

*tight to his head he scrambled up the lamppost as easily as a man might step across a drawing room. From this new vantage he laughed his hooting laugh to see his companion, the exhibition boxer Stony Joe Smithson, prove his nickname to be well ascribed.*

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

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

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

*The screams of nearby women*



punctuated the crash, then fell off, to be replaced with shouts of excitement among the onlooking rogues and harlots. They called to their fellows, and windows all along the street were thrown wide to afford a greater view of the calamity and the queer figures who caused it. Even the fallen women who walk the Haymarket street yet have hearts, and the cry went up to put the carriage-horses out of their misery, for their pain was most terrible to hear. Picking herself up with an unshakable dignity, Countess Lámina produced a heavy, short-barreled revolver, and fired three quick shots into three equine skulls, dispatching the broken beasts to whatever reward awaits loyal animals, even if their loyalty be to evil men.

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

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

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

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

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

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

thumbed back the hammer to lock.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Welcome to the Kerberos Club

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

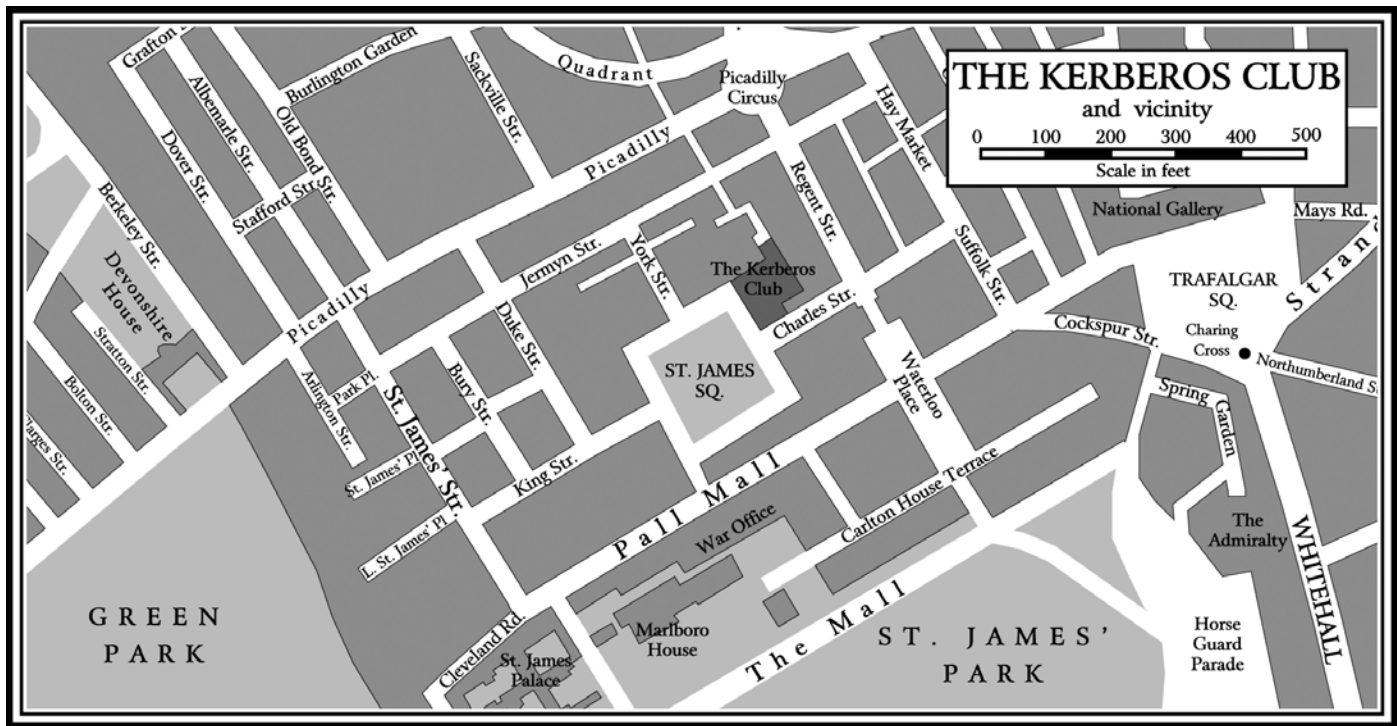
To join the Club is to transgress, to break with the accepted "truths" of daily prejudice, to become open to the possibility that one has been wrong. About everything.

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

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

On certain nights of the year, the Butterfly Room is filled with the hushed sound of thousands of tissue-thin wings flapping in concert. On these nights, secrets told can never be revealed by any listener who hears them over the ghostly flapping.





It is a popular room for sworn oaths and mysterious pacts, as well as for quiet reflection on the wages of obsession.

The Kerberos Club is filled with such inexplicable wonders.

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

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

exclusive privileges.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Origins Mysterious

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

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

When the Gates of Hades burned for the final time (when its long-suffering proprietor, Edward Hale, gave it up as lost), it was rumored to have been destroyed by an agent of the sons of King George III, who blamed their father's madness on his close association with Simon St. James, an alchemist and

long-standing member of the Kerberos Club. It was said that St. James brewed the King elixirs of opium, mandrake, and the residue of evaporated dreams distilled from the brow-sweat of failed artists and the saliva of debauched actresses.

## The Purpose of the Club

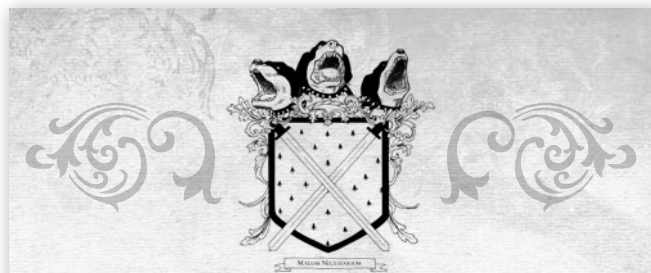
While not as exhilarating as exotic adventuring, spy-catching, or ghost hunting, the Club's most humble (and vital) purpose is as a mutual-protection fraternity for individuals who would otherwise be marginalized, denied the society of their fellows, and possibly persecuted right out of the community.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

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

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

Most frequently, fortunes are put into the five per-cent government funds, with two being rolled back into the investment to let it increase, while providing a reliable three per-cent a year. This may be less than the typical heiress, who invests in the five per-cents and spends the lot (and more!) per annum; but with membership in the Club carrying so many perks,

up to and including a modest but well-appointed suite of apartments within the clubhouse itself, it allows members to weather financial hardship quite handily. The Kerberos Club's agents are perfectly happy to manage the funds of gentleman members as well, and it has been estimated that the Club's agents manage funds totaling in the millions of pounds.



## I Shall Dine At the Club Tonight, My Dear

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

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

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

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

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

In 1848, the Kerberan Jackson Trollope bet William Coney the titles to his Yorkshire farm estate against Coney's submersible boat that he could not "journey to the Empire of Brazil and petition His Imperial Majesty Dom Pedro the Second to release a mated pair of his Amazonian dinosaurs in time for the upcoming Exhibition." Coney took the bet, drummed up funds for his expedition, and within two weeks was aboard the hired merchant steamer *Hannibal* on his way to Brazil.

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

The beasts astonished the crowds at the Exhibition, though earning an arch look from Her Majesty when the larger of the two iguanodons made a meal of the Crystal Palace's full-grown elms. After the Exhibition, all the dinosaurs save two were donated to the Royal Zoological Park. Coney kept a breeding pair of the hound-sized theropod "feathered serpents," which he had grown quite fond of on the journey home. Struck by their intelligence and loyalty, he found them ideal companions for a gentleman farmer, as he became after claiming his new estates from Trollope. He said in 1871 that "The beasts were the very thing to shock a man to the bone when I first saw them, but after keeping them for these twenty years, raising them from the

egg and hunting with them, I must say that nothing looks so queer to me as my neighbor's foxhounds."

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

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

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

Being a Kerberan is a balancing act between unlocking secrets and transgressing too far, between achieving marvels and becoming hardly human anymore. For this reason the Club polices its own, letting no member's mad schemes or ambitions threaten the innocent or the Club's tenuous place in society. Also for this reason, some of the worst villains of the age find themselves welcomed into the Kerberos Club, their abilities and ambitions rechanneled, their predilections given outlet.

As the century ages and the Strangeness become commonplace, members of the Club find themselves increasingly overwhelmed by the fast rising of the Strange tides. By 1880 they have utterly abandoned any pretense of secrecy, and openly proclaim their Strangeness to the world, marshaling their powers against looming menaces, sometimes with epic battles in the very streets of London. And indeed, in its skies and waters. The enemies of the Empire

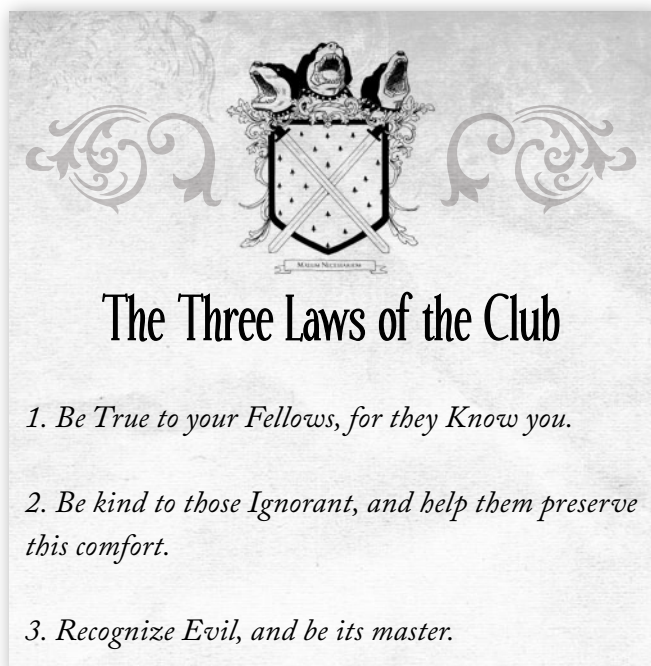
have been Touched as well, in their own ways, and the depredations of faerie anarchists, dynamite conspirators, Zulu war-spirits, rogue automechanical domestics, Tong assassins, anti-royalist occult conspiracies, Thuggee cultists, vengeful Martian ghosts, and escaped Amazonian *regusaur* war-dinosaurs all demand Kerberan attention.

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

## The Charter, the Rolls, and Grand Old Tradition

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

Once the Laws and Bylaws are signed, a Kerberan's name is added to the Rolls, the list of all members of the Club, current and past. The Rolls are writ upon a vellum made in the old way by Peecher



& Sons papermakers, and bound into a somewhat ragged and much-stained book. The Rolls are huge, and lend credence to the pretensions of ancient origins. The oldest names in the Rolls are not even written in a recognizable alphabet, and their paper is crumbling birch bark.

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

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

The Challenge is the greatest of the Club's esoteric Traditions, the practices and rituals passed down from earlier members for sometimes obscure

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

The Tradition of the Challenge is not frivolously dispensed with. Challenging one's prospective Kerberan is as close to a sacrosanct duty as the Club comes. These Challenges are often weird, complex, and baroque. Sometimes horrific, sometimes whimsical, they reflect the personalities and predilections of the Challengers and the abilities and capacities of the Challenged. Each is unique. They aren't exclusive affairs by any stretch, and other Kerberans who get wind of a Challenge sometimes seek to meddle in it to their own ends, offering the prospect a bit of assistance or further consternation.

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

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

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

## Running the Challenge

There are basically three ways to stage a Challenge.

- Run the challenge of one of the PCs, either in flashback or as the prelude to the introduction of a new character (merging it with the next option).
- Let the players plan a challenge for an NPC (or a new PC) introduced into the game during play.
- Let the player characters interfere and meddle in a Challenge staged by another Kerberan.

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

**Curiosity.** A prospect should be led into the Challenge, not forced into it. A good Kerberan is curious enough to kill the nine lives of nine cats, and a prospect should show the glimmerings of this.

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

**Resilience.** A Kerberan must stare Satan in the face and make Old Scratch blink first. Even if shocked and horrified, a Kerberan stands up and acts when others huddle in fear. The Challenge should test a prospect nearly to destruction, and then let them spring back into form like a rapier blade.

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

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

## The Traditions as Plot Device

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

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

Mechanically this can be handled with opposed Persuasion skill rolls, but only if the player creatively comes up with some plausible-sounding refutation of the NPC's excuse.

## After the Challenge

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

Reactions to this vary greatly.

Some prospects react with grace and humor, other with a rage as

primal and indignant as any affronted Englishman could raise at having such liberties taken. Most in the end accept the offer of membership, and join the Strange society of the Kerberos Club. Most. But not all.

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

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

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

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

## The Lost

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

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

## Filthy Lucre

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

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

And then there is all the wine, and port, and whiskey; the cigars, beefsteak, mutton and curried vegetables; the newspapers, opium, gas, and tallow; the laundry soap crystals, linen, oil, coal, wood, lavender water, tobacco, carriage rides, horse fodder, shoe leather; all the thread and all the needles for the mending of all the highly-suspicious rents in

all the coats and trousers, as well as the prohibitive expense in removing stains of blood and ichor from linen and good Scots wool. (But the silk is sold for sops, and the ladies of adventure are forced to visit their dressmakers for replacements of fine things.)

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

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

According to the Bylaws, *"All members in good standing may as they need and desire draw upon the funds of the Club to a degree based upon years of membership."* This means that all Kerberans receive, if they wish, an annual stipend. For new members it is enough to comfortably keep one person in the style of the middle classes, but in practice these funds can easily be stretched further by a member making free use of all the amenities of the Club: taking meals in the Dining Room, drinking and smoking Club brandy and cigars, and making an abode in one of the small

but well-appointed apartments within the House itself. A Kerberan so established will have plenty of disposable cash to squander on gambling, companionship of negotiable affection, or exploration of personal mad theories, practices or vices. See page 83 for a primer on the costs and currency of the day.

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

## Age Before Beauty

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

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

# Madness to the Method

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

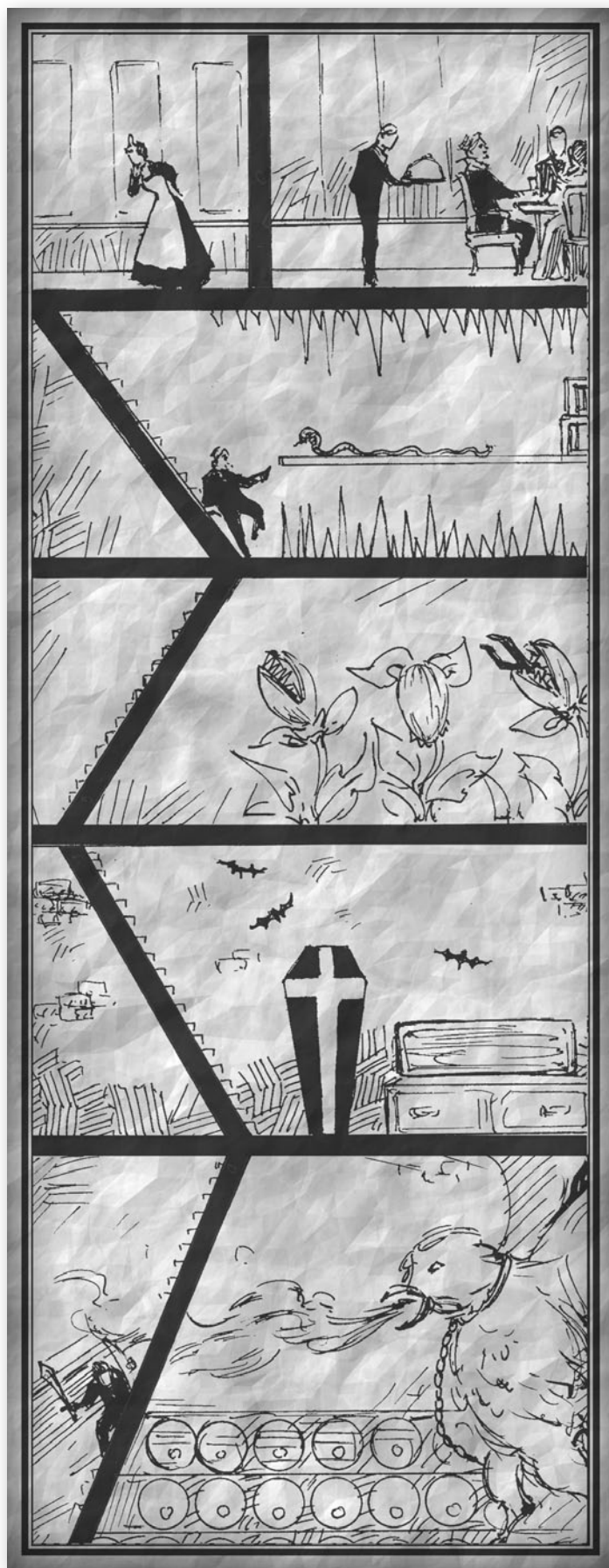
There is a general trend through the century for the Club to seek grander and more obvious solutions to Strange problems. This is in greater part because the nature of such problems themselves becomes grander and more obvious. But in large part the Club tends to engage its problems with the same methods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

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

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

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

Before the 1850s, the Strange could be trusted to keep to the shadows. The Strange knew its place—



## Beneath Stairs: Playing the Help

The Kerberos Club is an organization catering to the Strange, the weird, the eccentric, the outcast, the monstrous, the heroic, the paragon of all that is unsettling and off-putting. The people who serve them tea and tidy up their messes are, almost as a matter of survival, equally unusual. They have to be. If you think the gentleman from Transylvania is a peculiar fellow to sit to table with, then you've not been tasked with cleaning his apartments during his night's activity away from the Club. If you had that job, you'd know he was downright *bleedin' odd!*

Members of the staff of the Kerberos Club would in *Savage Worlds* terms would be built with the standard 10 Power Points provided by the Arcane Background (Super Powers) Edge, but cannot take advantage of the Super Karma setting rule (see the *Super Powers Companion* page 12). Campaigns of this type are usually of the Street Hero sort (see the *Super Powers Companion* page 8).

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

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

only later would it mirror the revolutionary spirit of the great social thinkers and come out into the light for all to see. Yet there was still plenty to look into. For every dinosaur loose in Hyde Park, every outbreak of syphilitic vampirism or faerie infection, every dynamite man committing his public outrage as street theater with Nobel's best blasting jelly as his accompaniment, there are dozens of queer events which few ever learn of. In an age when demonic possession is as shameful for a family as madness, and just as likely to be concealed, and when heavy modest clothing might hide all manner of queer transformations, a great deal goes unseen even in the century's sunset years. So the Kerberos Club continues to look into the little things, even in the shadows of warring gods and monsters. Because all grand and terrible things begin small.

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

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

If *meddling* is the cousin to *looking into things*, then *dirty tricks* is the family's black sheep. Sometimes members of the Club, acting on their own initiative, and explicitly separate from their activities as members, will engage in great outrages in

pursuit of a more nebulous greater ideal. Lives are destroyed, sometimes literally. Truths are burned beyond recovery and their ashes buried. The innocent are sacrificed to further a greater good, at least so far as *good* can be picked out of the hazy moral atmosphere. These acts remain deliberately obscure, even to the Club. In truth, no one wants to know that they share a game of whist with a mind that could engineer the Irish Potato Famine in a scheme to secure Queen Victoria's rights and prerogatives as Queen of Faerie.

## For Queen and Country

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

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

If the Club's informal authority keeps it working, at least generally, for the good of the Empire, then the attention it attracts, the scandals it generates, and the rumors it encourages serve another end. The Kerberos Club is marvelously distracting. The

## Spies, Damned Spies, and Informers

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

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

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

public happily consumes any mention of the Club in print, and as the century wears on its adventures (real, exaggerated, or fabricated from whole cloth) are printed in publications as low as penny dreadfuls like *The People's Periodical* and as well-regarded as *The Strand*.

Its members are cast variously as heroes, villains, or somewhere in between—sometimes Jack Harkaway, sometimes Dick Turpin, and sometimes Sweeney Todd. The glut of cheap stories featuring the Club serves to blur the line between fiction and reality, a trend exacerbated by Club members' tendency to claim imagined adventures as their own, and to deny their real (and often, more sordid) experiences. By the 1890s, the difference between

## Gentlemen, the Queen!

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

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

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

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

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

reporting the adventures of the Kerberos Club and simply inventing them is almost irrelevant. There are few things so fanciful that the Club has not encountered them.

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

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

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

It isn't until the mid-1880s

that the government publicly recognizes the assistance of the Club. The contributions to security, progress, and prosperity made by Kerberans was largely a thing of rumor. The first time Kerberos Club members receive direct honors from the Queen herself is after the Camp Affair of 1885. An anti-Victoria religious conspiracy headed by Dr. Albert Camp sought to assassinate the Queen using mesmerically-conditioned pawns with surgically-implanted nitroglycerine bombs—one, a member of Victoria's Privy Council who'd sought treatment from the eminent Dr. Camp for appendicitis. Camp and his conspirators were strict Methodists of a particularly fanatical type, who saw Victoria's seeming divinity and Her growing cult within the Church of England to be the height of idolatry and paganism. The Kerberans who uncovered the conspiracy, following a vague hint from a fellow member, were knighted by Victoria.

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

## Through the Eyes of the Common Man

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

Early in the century, if someone knew of the Kerberos Club at all, they would likely assume the veneer of scandalous class-mixing was the extent of the Club's odd ways. It was still quite flamboyant

(ask any successful stage magician about the value of a good distraction) but not obviously

Touched. This reputation for libertine pursuits would lend an



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admitted Club member a rakish air, which would inspire questions from the curious and a good snubbing from the moral.

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

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

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

By the late 1850s, letters to London daily papers frequently say that the "... den of iniquitous thought

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

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

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

The plight of Britain's poor and working classes change little as the result of the Kerberos Club's grand adventures. Poverty is still crushing, work is still endless, tedious, and dangerous. Even if a man flies, or the faerie walk the streets in the guises of men, or the Emperor of China gifts the Queen with a dragon's egg, the rent has still got to be paid, the dustbin emptied, and money enough to feed four has to be stretched to feed seven.

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

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

There have been some noted exceptions, of course. Disraeli was the most famous politician to deal directly with the Club's agents. He even had a special televocograph installed in his office, and a dedicated

line run to the Kerberos Club's house for those times when he most vitally needed their counsel. If he knew that his secure and contentious Silver Televoc

connected to a common brass model set upon the wall in the Club's main parlor for any member to answer as they wished, then he might have balked at divulging vital state secrets. But someone, at some point, gave him the *impression* that his calls would be answered only by senior and sober men of patriotism and long experience, and no one at the Club dissuaded him from these notions. The general consensus among Kerberans is that it is best not to worry politicians with things which would only perturb their sleep, and cause them to appear tired and pouchy-eyed before the voting populace. Every man of good will, especially those dedicated to public service, deserves a sound night's sleep.

## The Kennels

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

They all pass under the grotesque coat of arms which hangs above the clubhouse door, a monstrous three-headed dog on a quartered shield, fire and wind above, bones and black water below. One head chews a severed hand, another sniffs the earth, and

## Unwanted Admirers

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

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

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

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

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

the third glares out balefully. Beneath, the Club's motto is proudly writ: *MALUM NECESSARIUM*.

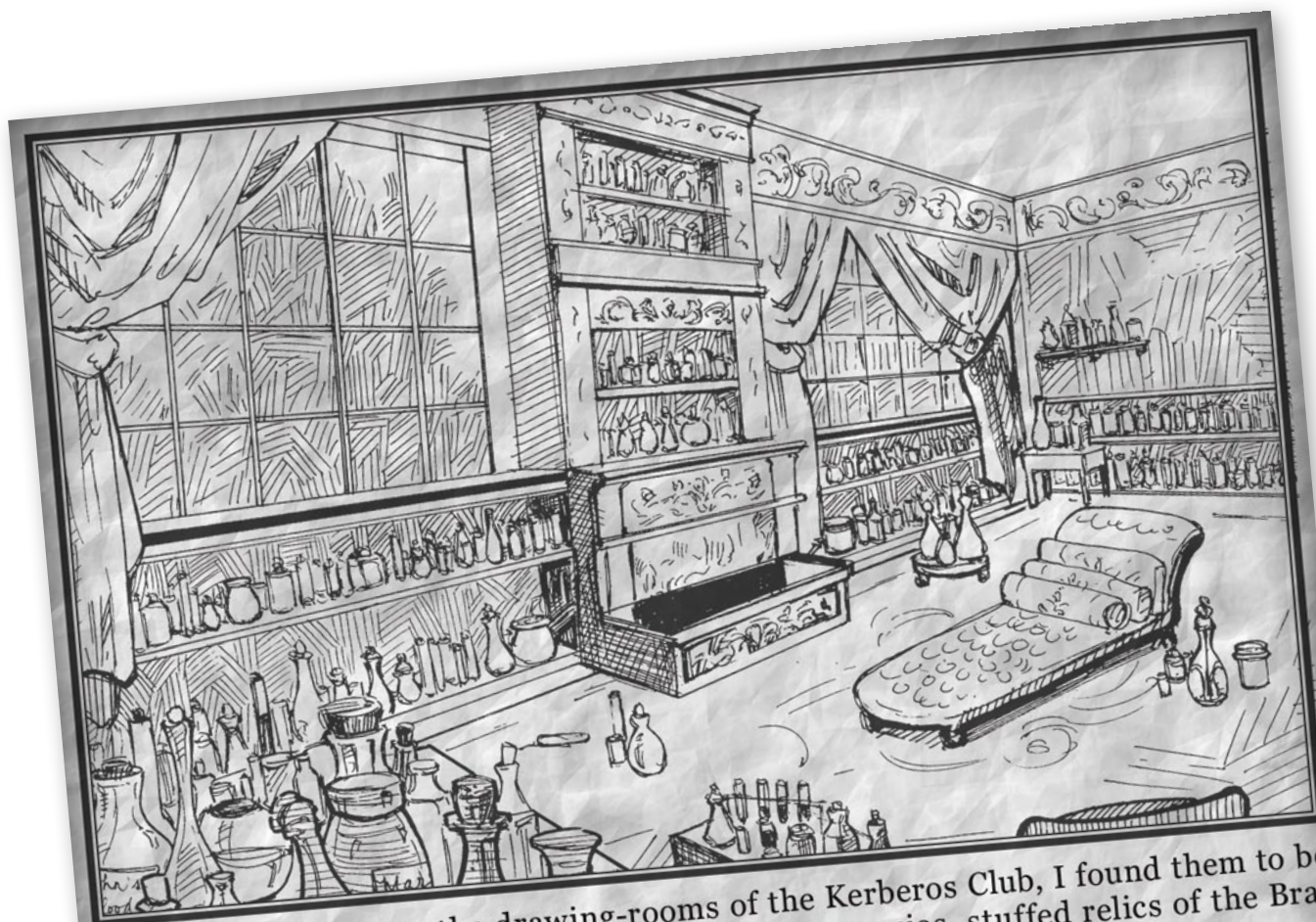
One could be forgiven missing the fine details of the Club's coat, as the building itself can be distracting. It conspires to look far older than its respectable

neighbors, and favors the grossest extremes of the Gothic style so popular in the early decades of the century: vaulted windows, gargoyles, crenulated and spiked wrought-iron gates, and stone which seems to suck up the London soot, becoming blacker than any building in the whole of the West End.

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

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

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



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

## Cluttered With Strangeness

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

The fireplaces and grates are large, and they roar when there's a chill

outside. The rooms are high-ceilinged and well-ventilated, filled with light if there is reading or billiards or cards to be done, or filled with cool dusk if an intimate atmosphere is more suited.

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

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

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

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

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

Kerberans who wish can make their residence in the Club's house, taking apartments in the upper stories of the building. There is no sure count on the number of these private rooms, but at any one time there might be two dozen Kerberans living here on a more or less permanent basis. Members who have difficulty mixing with ordinary society,

those Strangers whose powers have physically transformed them, for example, often find it easier to take lodgings with the Club than to seek it among the disapproving masses.

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

All apartments have a main entrance in the alcove off the sitting room, where guests might hang hats and coats, and a second exit from one of the private rooms leading to a warren of hidden, semi-secret passages which weave through the building, and which are primarily the territory of the Club's staff. They allow a resident to make a discrete exit when desired.

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

When London's airs permit, additional light filters in from the half-dozen enormous stained glass window panels on the street-facing wall of the room, each removed from a different European grand cathedral under conditions of dubious legality. The window panels give the dining room its name, as each depicts a different interpretation of the Crucifixion and the Passion, and a different character cast in the Jesus roll. The old glass from Spain shows Jesus's face in exquisite detail, hundreds

of individual tiles of glass welded to give his face a shocking reality and a lurid cast of almost pornographic agony. By contrast, the Jesus depicted in the window taken from Cyprus is of simpler artistry, and his expression is one of ironic amusement.

In 1851, famed gentleman burglar Sir Mitchim Derby entered the dining hall early one morning, planning on helping himself to some cold meat and cheese, and claimed to have encountered a singular event. All six of the Jesuses had stepped down from their windows and were sitting about the same table, conversing in Aramaic and eating a meal of bread and wine. Sir Mitchim further claims to have joined them, gotten powerfully intoxicated, and when he awoke beneath the table (stirred by Kerberans seeking their mid-day repast), they were back in their accustomed places. It is generally thought that Sir Mitchim was lying, but this being the Kerberos Club, it has become tradition to leave a single glass of wine from the last bottle of the evening undrunk upon the table, in case one Jesus or another becomes thirsty during the night.

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

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

## Evenings at the Club

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

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

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

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

## Borrowed Wonders

The wonders casually abandoned in the Kerberos Club house can often be employed as plot devices, but players may wish to access them for specific purpose, perhaps to see if another member has encountered lycanthropic miasma, or if there is a machine for burrowing through stone. No more than once per session. A single character's Knowledge (Kerberan) skill can be rolled. The number of successes and raises gained determines the level of the Invent Superpower to which the Hero has access. The time determined to construct the device becomes the length of time the Club must be searched to find it. The device must be returned once its need has passed, and until it is returned the borrower suffers a -1 Charisma with NPC Kerberans and can be expected to be the target of much light-hearted ribbing.

arrow points taken from this collection allowed the ghost-animals to be forced back to the spirit world.

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

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

## Enemies Foreign and Domestic

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

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

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

Ignoring Club arbitration gives you a -2 penalty to Charisma with other Kerberans until you restore your good name. Restoring your good name should probably involve a short adventure of

some kind, doing favors for enough members that they talk well of you. Consult with your GM.

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

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

But the Club is remarkably harmonious, or at least manages its chaos quite well, in part because the Kerberos Club's external enemies are perfectly willing to assist anyone who might seek to harm the Club or its members. Alas, those who abandon the

Club quickly find they have a ready group of new friends, who ask of them only the *smallest* favors.

## Special Branch

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

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

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

The Club seems to be Special Branch's antithesis: a haven for revolutionaries, free thinkers, anti-royalists, and the despicable Strangers, who mock the Queen's divinity with their lesser powers. Yet, inexplicably from Special Branch's perspective, Victoria dotes on the Kerberos Club, and grants it



one of Her increasingly rare smiles when word of its adventures reaches Her. Special Branch stalks and watches the Kerberans, cataloging, recording, observing, and itching for the day when the whole lot of the degenerate scum can be rounded up for Newgate or the gallows.

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

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

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

If the Club's relations with Special Branch can be called hostile, its contact with the regular London Metropolitan Police is at least more genial, if no more trusting. As Special Branch becomes a power unto itself, increasingly the police find they can't rely on

them to handle the Strange when it impinges into their normal duties. Unofficially, officers and detectives come to seek the counsel of Kerberans, who are the acknowledged experts on such matters.

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

## The Oxford Movement

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

William Booth, founder of the Christian Mission and later the Salvation Army, said of the Club: “Where we seek to ease the path to the Salvation of Christ and the Holy Ghost by lessening the daily miseries of those in need, and possibly live as an example to others, there is a shadow cast over all

we do in London, a long shadow falling from Pall Mall all across the city.

But at least you can say of those

I speak, that they do not hide what they are, and do not lie about the blasphemies they pander. In truth, I fear more the secret evil in my own heart than I do the evil so cheaply on display at this Kerberos Club.”

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

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

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

Even without a religious motive, plenty of social conservatives find condemning the Club and what it stands for a good tactic for getting public attention. Further, political liberals and conservatives alike shy away from association with the Club. It is a favorite smear to suggest one’s opponents are members of the Club or friends with its members, or are in some way economically invested in the Club. This is in part because the Kerberos Club’s own politics are hard to discern and categorize within the philosophies of the

time. Is it a radical liberal fraternity advocating total freedom from legal, social, or economic constraint? Or is it an example of the conservative hypocrisies that protect the moneyed and social elites to enjoy their ungodly pleasures while keeping ordinary Britons down?

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

## Le Société Scientifique

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

The Sémaphore Psylique, a series of hypnotically conditioned mediums and spiritualists who passed messages to one another through automatic writing, allowed Napoleon's empire to coordinate its

logistics to a degree nearly unheard of. Napoleon's fall from power was preceded by a disruption in these instant and invisible means of communication. His brief return to power cut was short in no small part by his reliance on the Sémaphore and his difficulty in coordinating his rule without it.

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

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

## Section Seven

Almost the opposite of the Société Scientifique Impériale is Russia's Section Seven, officially titled The Seventh Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery (VII отделение собственной Е.И.В канцелярии). This secret branch of the police was created by the order of Nicholas I in 1842. Section

Seven first investigated and then consolidated the occult interests and societies operating in Russia with greater effectiveness than any previous efforts. Nicholas I lacked both superstition and intellectual breadth, seeing in the forces moving in Russia's dark occult depths only grave threats to his rule and the social order.

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

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

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

Where the Société Scientifique Impériale embraces science to the exclusion of magic, Section Seven is the opposite, embracing all manner of ill practices to further its goals and sharpen the Bear's claws. They brutally suppress scientific innovations, particularly those Touched by the Strange, but co-opt and embrace the spiritual and mystical, to the

point that suspicions fall on even obvious charlatans like Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society.



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On suspicion inspired only by her affected national origin, Blavatsky is investigated thoroughly by agents of the Club and the authorities of Special Branch and the American Secret Service. Blavatsky's move to India in 1879 raises a particular stir among the great gamesters, and only in 1890 do the British authorities realize how that had been played. Blavatsky is by then indeed a Section Seven agent (unwilling though she is), but one intended to distract and conceal rather than engage directly in espionage. The resources wasted on Blavatsky and her harmless affectations give Section Seven a freer hand in London, then New York, and finally in India.

## The Americans

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

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

The founding thinkers of the United States included some men of remarkable vision, and no small understanding of the Strange realities brewing

just under the surface of European society. Many sought relief from these forces in the Americas, only to discover as much native Strangeness as they had fled. While the U.S. Constitution was being drafted, they set bloody pen to tanned human skin to write the *Umbra Pactum*: the core occult law to which all supernatural elements were bound to conform.

It instituted a shadow government to manage such affairs as well, separate but parallel to the actual government. But unlike the public Constitution, the *Umbra Pactum* has never been amended. It is served and protected by three branches of governance, the Maestro Mago (the executive, the master magus of the Americas, elected every seven years by those granted occult suffrage), the Occultus Orchestra (the secret senate which enacts supernatural law), and the Specialis Sentio (the secret court which arbitrates and tries occult crimes). Each branch has its own enforcement arm, a handful of Strangers who police, investigate, and advise their principals.

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

Yet the potential threat posed by the Knights and the Confederacy is not short lived. Responding to the Union's actions in the Trent Affair, a British military action staged from Canada proves more than the Union can contend with. In 1862 the Union is forced to sue for peace with the Confederate government, establishing a rocky truce and formal

border between the two nations. Able to concentrate on the British forces, the Union holds out long enough to reach a peace, but not before Washington, D.C. has been aeri ally bombed by Her Majesty's Aeroship *Queen*.

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

Below the Mason Dixon, the opposite trends rule. The South's descent into a particularly baroque dark age, as well as the continued (and increasingly distasteful) use of human slaves, spoil its previously good relations with Britain. The Confederate government, squabbling and ineffectual, does not improve as a central authority. The Confederate states become more autonomous, and the Southern aristocracy grows more powerful. The Knights of the Golden Circle grow in power and influence, spreading into Texas and down into Mexico, and serve the Confederacy like a secret police and spy service. An empire built like Rome upon the labor of slaves is the fondest wish of its members.

The Golden Circle counts the Kerberos Club and the Umbra Pactum as bitter enemies, and watches constantly for hints of foreign agents at work in the Confederacy. The Knights delve into

the occult deeply, too deeply, and by 1885 are no longer motivated primarily by earthly concerns but rather

## Mint Juleps and Mass Murder

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

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

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

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

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

by the desire for sorcerous power. Abandoning any pretense to moral authority (early on the Knights claimed to be a Christian society, citing the Bible in support of slavery), the Knights subtly turn Southern society to the worship of obscene things from the edges of Time, things awoken by the human horror and psychic mystery of the slave trade. By the end of the century the Confederacy has become a dead man walking, gangrenous and rotting from within. The Great Revolt of 1905 tears down one of the most inhuman societies in modern history.

## Schweigsame Übereinstimmung

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

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

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

## Famous Members, Associates and Rivals

You can find game details for some of these famous characters in Chapter 6.

### Richard Dadd

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

In 1842, Sir Thomas Phillips chose Dadd to accompany him as illustrator and draftsman on an expedition through the Middle East, through Greece, and by a circuitous route to Egypt. After a trying journey, Dadd suffered a fit while traveling the Nile by boat. Initially supposed to be sunstroke, it became apparent that Dadd's wits had snapped. He began to rave about the murder of Osiris and the betrayal of Set. At night he huddled with fear, refusing to look at the sky, mumbling about the Serpent Apep, and he greeted the morning with tears of joy and relief.

His companions cut the expedition short. By spring Dadd was returned to Britain, where an examining physician ruled he was not of sound mind, and remanded him to the care of his father, who saw him installed in a family house in the country

outside Kent. There, over the next year, Dadd became increasingly erratic, speaking to people and beings not present, marking wonders unseen by anyone else, and swinging wildly from ecstatic joy to terror at the sights revealed by his madness. He began painting these scenes only he could see in exquisite detail.

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

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

Dadd remained incarcerated for the rest of his life, but he received frequent visits by members of the Kerberos Club, and painted many of their portraits, capturing their true natures on the canvas. These paintings graced the halls of the Club, and it was thought by more than one member they contained a bit of the subject’s soul: while the painting remained intact, one was protected from certain influences. Dadd was also consulted for his remarkable, maddening visions: He could see past,

future, fiction, fact, myth, magic, potential, and memory, all overlapping, all interacting, all blending into an allegorical chaos. To Dadd, there was no

difference in World and Otherworld, and the faerie were as ordinary to him as common workmen. He saw the true nature of things, all things. He said that only while applying brush to canvas did he get any relief from the visions, as he was their channel and they flowed through him rather than breaking against him like the waves on rocks.

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

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

## Lady Ada Lovelace

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

her attendant physicians recommended bleeding to relieve the pressures on her internal organs caused by the tumors, and this nearly killed her as had the same treatment of Lord Byron done.

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

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

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

Her ordeals left her a changed woman. Somehow

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

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

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

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

The Irish famine of 1854, and the Queen's capture of the title of the Queen of Faerie, offered

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

There she perfected the Type-2 Analytical Movement (a reference to its resemblance to the movement of a timepiece rather than an engine), which she called simply The Brain. It was assembled from literally *millions* of tiny components, some so small as to be difficult to distinguish from hairs, by the perfect dexterity of faerie servants, bound by their old obligations to repay gifts of bread and milk with a day's good work. Rather than making shoes or milking cows, these thousands of faerie assembled Lovelace's mechanical brains—and later, the electromechanical bodies those brains were designed to command.

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

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

mule that doesn't tire and doesn't die, and then I'll consider it."

But after the resolution of the



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Affair of the Black and White Decks by agents of the Kerberos Club (see page 273), an order was placed by the Crown for a full regiment of Lovelace's new Automatic-Riflemen. It took the strong suggestion that the Queen herself favored the machines to see them guardedly included in the forces sent for the British intervention in the American Civil War. They proved remarkably effective. Finally accepted by the military, they were of further use in the numerous small wars in the following two decades. The Royal Navy also placed orders for lighter models sealed with India rubber for use below decks.

Lady Lovelace refused to join the Kerberos Club when offered admission, and came into conflict with the Club several times during the latter three decades of the century. Increasingly she surrounded herself with her silent mechanical children, rejecting the society of other people, even living apart from her husband and refusing to see him. She ordered her life by a mathematical regime, composed music with her calculating engines, and corresponded only through notes delivered by her personal cadre of silver-chased Automatics, or through her telecaligrograph, a device that transformed handwritten messages into telegraphic signal and then back into writing.

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

As one, the mechanical hands which cleaned, cooked, rocked infants, and bore arms to defend Britain turned on their human masters and killed indiscriminately. Thousands died, incalculable property damage resulted, and only with the intervention of dozens of Kerberans and others did the

Mutiny finally stop. This quickly led to the passage of the Restriction of the Creation of Artificial Life and Intelligence act of 1886, which banned any mechanical device from mimicking the behaviors of man, or performing the God-given exercise of reason.

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

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

## Christina Georgiana Rossetti

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

Her mother, seeking some meaning and hope, became involved in the Royalist-Anglican movement, which blended a continuity of Catholic tradition with the deification of Queen Victoria, recognizing the Anglican Church as part of a

line of religious descent from the First Church, and Victoria as divine sovereign and inheritor of Mary's role as intercessor before God, Son, and Holy Ghost.

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

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

Rossetti embraced the Strangeness, while her sister recoiled from it. The experience inspired Rossetti's first and most famous poem, *The Goblin Market*. Her sister retreated further into religiosity, and in later life became a Anglican nun. Rossetti, on the other hand, began to pursue knowledge of the Otherworld, and the ways the two worlds have affected each other through the ages. Had she been permitted, she would have read Faerie Law at university, but being a woman her attendance was unthinkable.

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

into the nature of the faerie and their Bans and Compulsions to emerge sane and hale, with several faerie

of distinct personality and power put in her debt.

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

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

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

## The Turk

The Turk, so called because of its resemblance to a Turkish prince dressed in raiment and furs, was the creation of inventor Wolfgang von Kempelen. When revealed in 1770, the Turk was originally a chess-playing automaton which amazed aficionados of the game by performing the Knight's Tour. Many claimed the Turk was a mechanical illusion,



directed by a hidden operator and chess player, but Von Kempelen would happily open the Turk's torso and reveal the confabulation of gears and rods and clockwork which drove it.

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

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

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

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

Upon its creator's death, the Turk passed into the hands of Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, who traveled

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

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

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

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

Mälzel's health deteriorated rapidly, as the Turk's presence began increasingly to feel not like a machine but more like a Strange man. In Havana in

1838, Mälzel contracted yellow fever, and though the Turk nursed him and cared for him on the return journey to Britain, he died en route, leaving the

Turk without an owner for the first time. During the remaining voyage, it feigned inoperability—and then, after sealing all its joints and seams with copious amounts of lard from the ship's galley, leapt overboard in harbor. The event led to headlines but did not, as the papers supposed, result in its destruction.

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

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

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



## Joseph Carey Merrick (AKA The Elephantine Man)

Joseph Carey Merrick—the Man-Elephant, the Unleashed Savage, the Changing Man—was born in Leicester in 1862, and by 1867 the mark of the Strange was already upon him. The deformities which would make him an outcast and then a sideshow attraction progressed rapidly, until even the workhouse refused him admission for a second term due to the disturbance his appearance caused.

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

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

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

When sideshows were banned in 1886 (a legislative reaction to the so-called Freak Riot of the previous year),

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

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

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

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

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

# Tides of Change: The Club Through the Century

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

## Early (1800 to 1849)

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

For example, the sensational articles starting in the *New York Sun* on August 25th, 1835 presented a fantastical portrait of newly-discovered life on the Moon, including winged humanoids and forests. The "discovery" was attributed to eminent astronomer Sir John Frederick William Herschel using a telescope of "entirely new principle." The fanciful tale thoroughly distracted the public from Herschel's true discovery, the unmistakable signs of ruined cities skirting the edges of larger craters. He was confronted constantly by questions about the winged people when he tried to present his findings, and in the mind of the public (and many of his colleagues) his revelation seemed pale by

## A Favorite Scapegoat

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

During hard economic times general anxiety is increased, and anything unconventional and weird tends to create more. Public figures, ever eager to distract an agitated populace, often point to the Strange and there lay the blame for the current troubles. In Ireland, a frequent Unionist tactic is to paint Republicans as being in league with Otherworldly and un-Christian forces. There are periods even late in the century, following sensational accounts of some Strange outrage, that Strangers would be well advised to keep their powers hidden. Riots were not unknown. See page 204.

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

comparison, and was ridiculed by other astronomers who claimed to see no such thing, and said that Herschel was “trying to perpetuate his own Great Moon Hoax.”

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

Members also encountered and fought Strange menaces, rooting out their sources and eliminating them before they could blossom and seed the kingdom with more of the same. In Russia, the Americas, France, and other major powers, similar efforts were under way, because those who worried about such

things noticed a definite upsurge in wild Strangeness, the unnatural which arose outside the old occult power structures. In Ireland the faerie began to leak through from their Otherworld, infecting sensitive people, stealing babies, and warping reality as they hadn’t done since before the Romans put so many of them to the sword and sealed off the Otherworld with walls, roads, and the authority of the imperial cult.

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

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

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

In the whole of the British

Empire there might be a few hundred individuals who have been significantly Touched by the Strangeness, and only a dozen or so true Strangers who are unmistakably endowed with unnatural potencies. Even in the Kerberos Club itself, while every member is exceptional only a handful have Strange powers.

## Middle (1850 to 1879)

By the middle of the century the Strange has begun to run free, and by the 1870s it is loose in the streets. This period sees the revelation of the Strange go from sensational and shocking—the subject of frenzied

reporting in the papers, and the conversation on everyone's lips—to the merely interesting. The Strange (and claims to Strangeness) have become the subject of ad copy. The purveyors of patent medicines such as Colonel Wilson's Black Pill for Mental Sanctity use claims of Strange ingredients and processes to sell their snake-oil. Real unnatural threats rise up and affect public policy. Outbreaks of Syphilitic Vampirism in several military bases (spread by carriers in the population of prostitutes who service the sexual needs of the stationed soldiers) lead to the first of the Public Health and Contagious Disease Acts.

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

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

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

All this catapults the Strange into the public eye,



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

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

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

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

## Late (1880 to 1901)

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

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

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

The tradition of the mask is

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

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

To further confuse things, some previously fictional Kerberans, invented entirely by the authors of the penny and ha'penny dreadfuls, *become real*. This is the case with the protagonist in the long-running series of adventure novels starring Kerberos Club member, working-class polymath, and fantastical inventor Alfred Redbanner.

Alfie was kind to his friends, respectful to his enemies, and in a near-comical departure from the Club's early reputation, chaste and chivalrous towards women. Alfie's adventures followed a fairly typical formula: Alfie would invent something new and astounding, this would in some way lead to trouble (foreign agents trying to steal it being a favorite), which would lead to exotic travels, encounters with heathen foreigners (all amazed by

Redbanner's British pluck and know-how), and finally a showdown with one of his many arch-foes (one of the most famous being an obvious pastiche of



TODD '09

Sweeney Todd and Jack the Ripper).

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

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

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

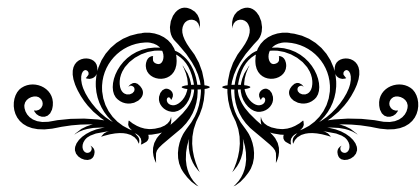
Indeed, the Club has come to so completely blur the lines between fiction and fact, and so many profiteers aid their deception with publications such as *True Accounts of the Daring Adventures of the Kerberos Club*, that even what had previously been common knowledge about the Club only twenty years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

By the 1880s, the public outdoes the Club’s own fantasists and liars a hundredfold, and after a period of adjustment the Club shepherds this trend to its

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

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

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



## A Modern Geek's Perspective

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

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

The Kerberos Club, especially as it changes through the century, also allows for different play styles and campaign themes. Early on, it isn't unlike the TV shows *The X-Files*, *Angel*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or *Carnivale*. The Strange is present, but (in no small part because of the Club's efforts) it is obscured. Characters dress as they normally would. They do not adopt public super-hero personae and do not protect their secret identities. Rather they protect the whole semi-open

secret of the growing Strangeness. Most of the Club's adventures never reach the public awareness. In comics terms they might be considered "street level," like the Batman or Daredevil.

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

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

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





# Chapter 2

## All Things Right and Proper

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

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

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

*I considered how over the years as Moreland's particular friend and part-time biographer I'd my pockets lightened considerably by his army of urchins; but shrugging, I considered the boy's worth to Moreland as a soldier in his tireless war against crime. As the uncontested master of private detecting, it was only fair that Lucas Moreland have such a force in his service. I*

*tossed the boy the coin, and it vanished so quick I saw not where it went.*

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

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

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

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

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

*Bill took my hat and coat and showed me into the public parlor, a theatrical room that suffered from excesses*



*of the Gothic style and an overabundance of grotesque curios, specimens floating in jars, foreboding paintings of grim unnatural scenes, and heavy dark furniture. That furniture yet proved remarkably comfortable when pulled close to the fire, but today, with the heat, the fireplace was disused, and the porters' trays held chilled fruit juice rather than coffee.*

*"Ah, Sherman! My excellent friend!"*

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

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

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

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

*"Certainly, as I thought ..."*

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

*"Do you mean . . . ?"*

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

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

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

*"Well ..."*

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

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

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

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

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

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

# The Ethos of the Age

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

Sometimes, especially in the later third of the century, extraordinary individuals brazenly flaunt convention and get away with it (being powerful, famous, gorgeous, or rich always helps), but even in a time when sights like the Thames Leviathan rampaging towards Buckingham Palace aren’t uncommon, wise Kerberans are recommended to keep up appearances as much as possible. Defeating gigantic beasts from the depths of primordial time is one thing; but making an undignified boor of oneself . . . one might find that even after such heroics, invitations to parties are few and far between. As they say, one must know the rules before knowing how to get away with breaking them.

# A Social History of Victoria’s Britain

It was a bawdier age, prior to the ascension of Victoria to the throne. During the Napoleonic Wars a certain wildness prevailed. Fashions were more risqué and showy, manners more grand, and duels with blade or pistol were commonplace. Prior to the rise of mechanized industry, what could be called a “middle class” was quite a thin dividing layer between the vast lower classes—peasants, workers, and common folk—and the wealthy upper classes.

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

But while a survey of the period’s literature and culture seems to imply a universal acceptance of these staid middle-class values, the truth is more complex, and the rules are quite simply different for those of little means than for those of great fortunes. While the Society of Victoria’s Britain embrace an extreme optimism that all problems will be solved by Progress, there remains truly shocking social injustice. The concepts of equality and human worth are largely absent from the common consciousness.

When Victoria first assumed the throne, She was most concerned with the often shameful behavior of Royalty in the preceding eras, and how the



Crown was besmirched by scandal and intrigue. She deliberately assumed a public posture of extreme rigidity and proper comportment, taking Her inspiration from the earlier monarch Elizabeth I, who after her crowning mastered her public image by making herself iconic, beyond the merely human, or indeed, the merely royal. Immediately Victoria set the tone for Her subjects: modest fashion, concern for reputation, and the very real sense that what is private must at all costs remain so.

Always keen to imitate the behavior of their betters, the burgeoning middle class abandoned their exquisite hats and vibrant clinging gowns, adopting the bonnet and layers of shape-concealing garments. Women of a certain economic class were increasingly held to the standards set by the Queen, to be perfect, unblemished, always proper, and always untouched by any hint of sexuality.

As the Queen became more and more the woman of carved marble, so too was British womanhood constrained. Cosmetics were abandoned, and then re-adopted to imply a marble pallor of the skin. The sun was avoided at all costs, less it darken the skin

of Britain's proper ladies. By the mid-1880s, proper Victorian women resembled sculpture more than living flesh, even adopting the Queen's famously immobile posture and economy of motion.

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

Ironically, this elevation of the *proper woman* to the pedestal applies hardly at all to men of the era. Prostitution, philandering, gambling, blood-sports, drunkenness, and all manner of outgoing behavior is considered by many to be part of a man's natural inclinations, and that so long as such activities are engaged in with a measure of discretion, they are nothing of major concern. The Good Wife remains at home, ordering about her Maid of All Work, while the Husband drinks at his club, attends the theater with his (male) friends, and then perhaps negotiates the affections of one of the women who

frequent the district after the theaters let out.

In a sense, it isn't what you do, or even what others know you do, but how well you maintain a certain appearance of respectability, a social plausible deniability. To a point, it would itself be quite scandalous to call attention to the foibles of another, unless they were so glaring as to raise a scandal. As with most things, the situation for women in this respect is significantly less amiable than for men, and behaviors tolerated to extremes in respectable Victorian men are quite frowned upon in women.

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

During the middle Victorian era, the Strange brings with it more and more individuals who defy the social order yet remain fascinating enough to escape some of the consequences. Fame excuses scandal, at least to some extent.

By the end of the century, the "right and proper" way of behaving has become almost pantomime. It begins to reflect the state of future shock which assails Britain's citizens. Increasingly, people seek refuge in an idealized past and the values of that time—as reinvented by modern social movers to help them deal with the runaway train of Progress.

Amidst wonders unimaginable a few decades before, the suits are blacker, the manners more complex and ways of speech more formal. But beneath the veils of propriety lurk revolutions and transformations, waiting to burst through the surface.

# To Be Victorian

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

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

The myth of the Self-Made Man is embraced popularly, being a major theme of the literature of the day, and this is a society with a fair bit of lateral mobility. Opportunity to seek new employment in new professions in new regions of the nation is greater than during any previous age, as evidenced by the numbers abandoning traditional rural vocations and seeking modern employment in the cities. But there is little upwards mobility, and one who does manage to rise from one class to another is rarely welcomed there.

Though the era saw some political reform, for the most part those of the working and under classes are entirely barred from the political process. They lack both the franchise to vote and the organization needed to make their cases to the powerful. But this age sees the birth of Marxism and Communism, a growing consciousness among

the poor and the ill-used that en mass they could be *powerful*, if only the behemoth could be awakened. As one might expect, that thought is the great terror of the ruling elites. Fear of foreign troublemakers and home-grown revolutionaries nearly scuttle the Great Exhibition of 1851.

When approaching the period from the modern perspective of role-playing, social class is a tremendously useful tool for breaking down the complexities of the age into easily manageable pieces that can enhance game play without bogging you down in minutiae. Always consider the social class of characters, or their *assumed* class, when portraying them, noting especially how they might relate to members of other classes.

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

# The Under Class

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

You are most likely illiterate and uneducated, and you speak

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

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

Many live on the refuse of those better off, and nothing goes to waste. Ashes and dust emptied from the homes of the working and middle classes are sifted for any valuable or salable item which might have been swept up. Refuse and table scraps are either eaten, fed to an animal which could be eaten, or composted to make soil which could be sold to a gardener for a few pennies. Mudlarks walk barefoot in the slime and muck of the Thames at low tide, feeling with their toes for a bit of coal or rope or iron, knowing all the while that even the slightest cut could become septic and bring death in days.

Prostitution is a constant temptation for men and women alike, though women find the most opportunity. The upper classes may like to pretend

they're good Christians, but in their hearts they love slumming and a threepenny upright against an alley wall.

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

## Social Imperatives

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

## Common Motivations

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

## Lifestyle

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

## Colquhoun's Ranking

*Seventh Class:* Paupers, gypsies, criminals, idle persons.

## Occupations

Beggar, thief, street prostitute/rent boy, urchin, mudlark, sweep, hawker, Gypsy.

## View From the Basement

Those in the bottom ranks of the working classes are only just above this level of desperation, and are the easiest for the under classes to understand and

interact with. Those doing well might put on airs and forget where they came from, but they'll have similar attitudes and background. There is a certain amount of upward mobility into the working classes, as steady honest employment and permanent housing are at least conceivable.

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

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

# The Working Class

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

You might work in a factory, a mill, or perhaps you have a skill or trade. Until 1860 they don't yet have a machine to do all the hundreds of little things that have to be done by hand every day. A noble's carriage means employment for three grooms,

## Rag and Bone

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

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

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

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

three stable boys, the blacksmith, the horse-doctor, the footmen, the coachman, and others. If you're in service, working in the household of someone better off, you exist in the shadow of their luxury, and are privy to their secrets and subject to their eccentricities. Your life is almost entirely dictated by them—who and when you might marry (if ever), how you dress, act, speak, and even worship.

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

later years there are wars enough to see service on any continent on, above or below the Earth.

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

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

## Social Imperatives

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

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

## Common Motivations

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

## Lifestyle

Most in the working classes live in cramped and crowded conditions, sharing the same minimal space. Families tend to be large and children are usually put to work. Child labor is almost unregulated at the century's start, and the children of the poor (often orphans, the result of the common epidemics and deaths in childbirth) are sent down the coal mines for daylong shifts to haul coal on hands and knees. The alternative is starvation. In a land which proudly decries slavery, hundreds of thousands of its own free citizens suffer conditions worse than many true slaves.

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



## Colquhoun's Rankings

*Sixth Class:* Craftsmen, farmers, factory workers.

*Fifth Class:* Shopkeepers, innkeepers, publicans, miscellaneous occupations and trades.

## Occupations

Coal slinger, police officer, costermonger, carpenter, groom, junior clerk, servant.

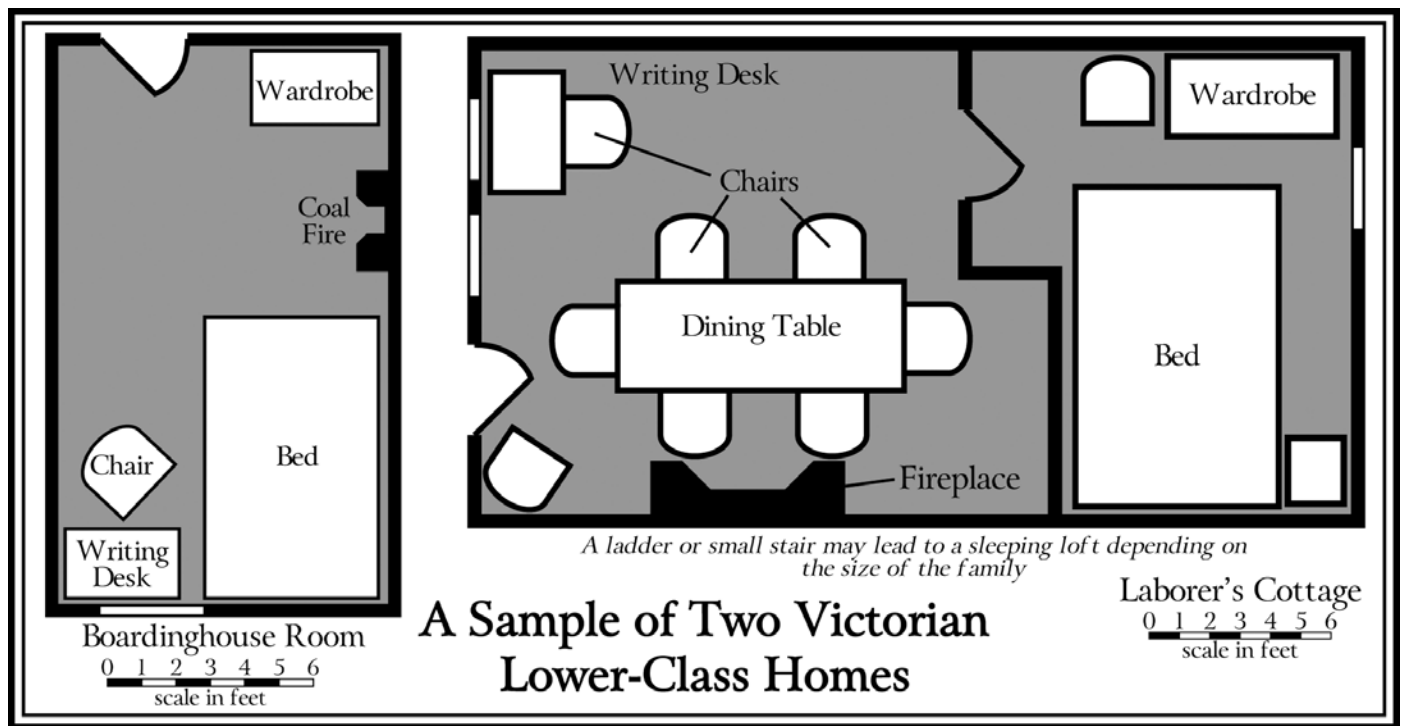
## View From the Bottom

Lurking right outside the door is the under class, and avoiding falling into such misery is a constant driving motivation. Many of this class understand that desperation, but few have the time and resources to do anything about it. All there is to do is

accept one's lot.

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

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



## The Middle Class

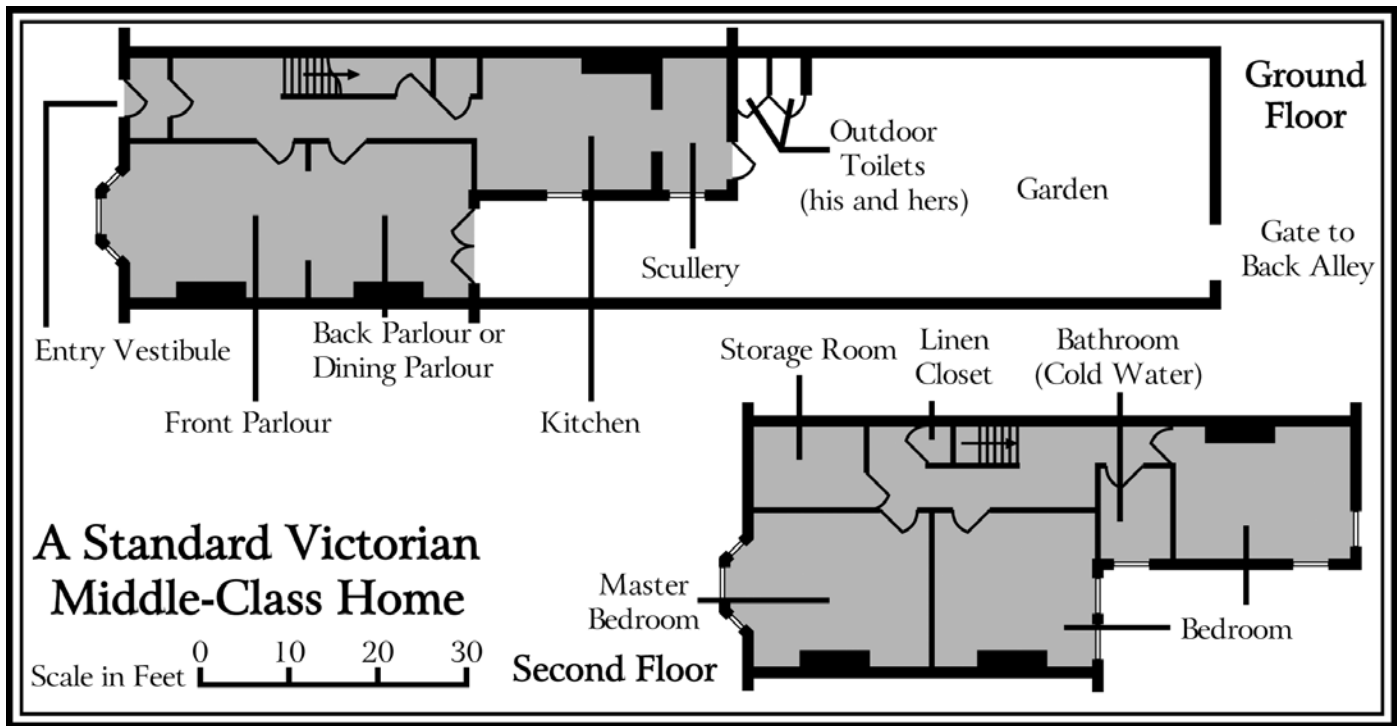
Candide could have been speaking of the times when he said “ce meilleur des mondes possibles.” It is indeed the best of all possible times, or at least, *it will be soon*.

Progress! The coming wonders of the modern age. They are evidenced everywhere, and they have already transformed your life and improved it. You can now take the train from the office where you are a rising clerk to your modest home outside town, affording you more space and luxury than would ever have been possible before rail so shrank the country. You have good employment and have been decently educated. You have modest but respectable clothing. If you are a man, you have opportunities to further yourself in the world, gaining reputation in your profession and more position and responsibility. In many ways, society caters to you and your wishes. The papers are written with your readership in mind, as are the music hall shows. You may have a club membership where you can enjoy the

fraternity of other men. You may have the vote as well, allowing you to help decide the leaders of your country. Still, your reputation is everything, and a ruined reputation can mean loss of employment, loss of social position, and the loss of friends.

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

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



## Social Imperatives

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

## Common Motivations

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

## Lifestyle

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

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

## Colquhoun's Rankings

*Fourth Class:* Lesser clergy, surgeons, solicitors, teachers, ship owners, merchants, small scale manufacturers, shopkeepers, artists, builders, junior clerks.

*Third Class:* Clergy, physicians, barristers, commodities traders, merchants, large-scale manufactures, bankers, those of independent income yet lacking title.

## Occupations

Clerk, surgeon, physician, trader, military officer, bureaucrat, police detective, shop owner.

## View From the Middle

The upper classes are almost within reach. All it takes is some wealth, and a son or daughter might even marry up. The working classes are to be commended for their hard service, and treated with respect so long as they remain respectful, but the under classes are to be pitied, distrusted, or condemned. Those who strive and suffer misfortune might be worthy of some charity, but those who Will Not Work are parasitic. Possibly worse, the lower classes are seen as a breeding ground for that most pernicious and

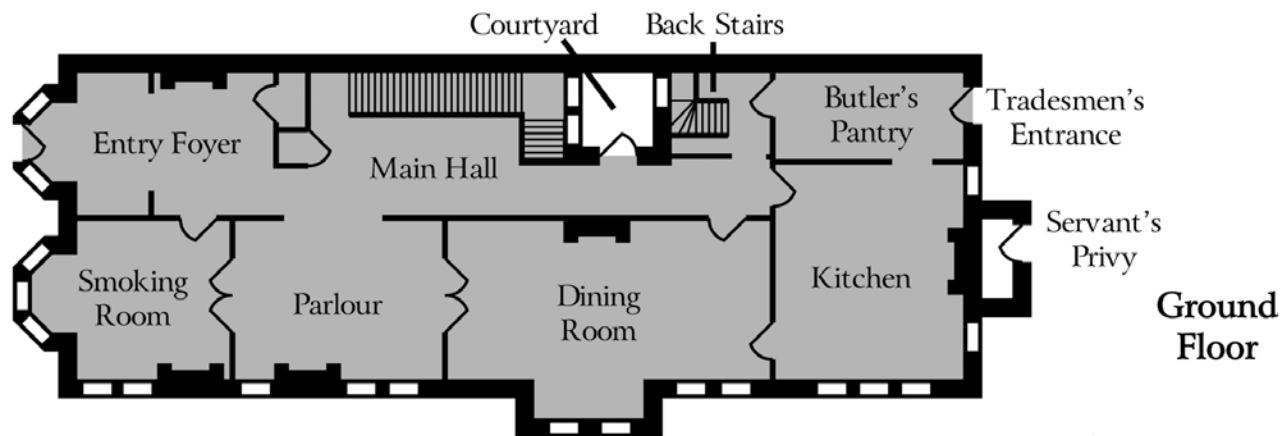
frightening of movements, Communism. In some obsessing minds the poor are seen as a mob hungry to destroy the prosperous way of life the middle classes enjoy. Many in the middle class see those less fortunate as moral failures, or embrace the pseudo-scientific concepts and proto-sociology which blame poverty on the impoverished. According to such "common sense" the poor are less evolved than the higher ranks, or cultivate their misery by failing to live properly.

## The Upper Class

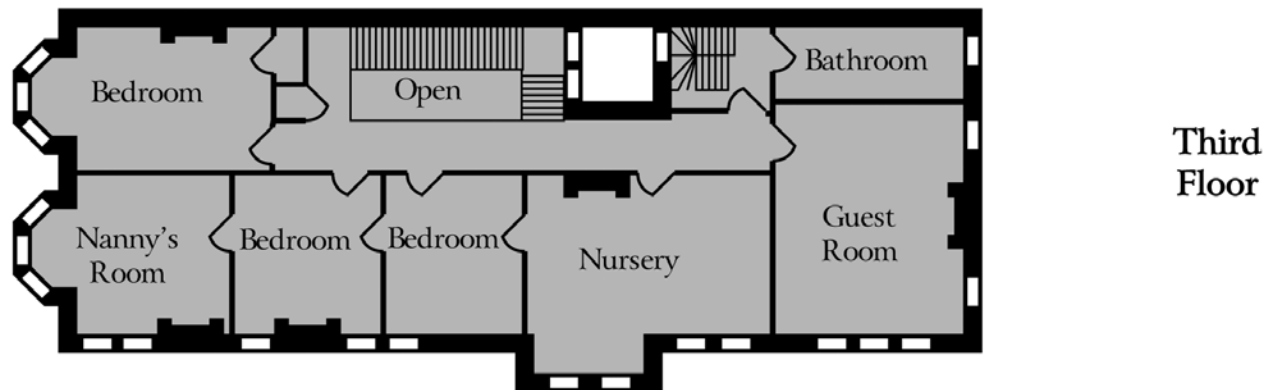
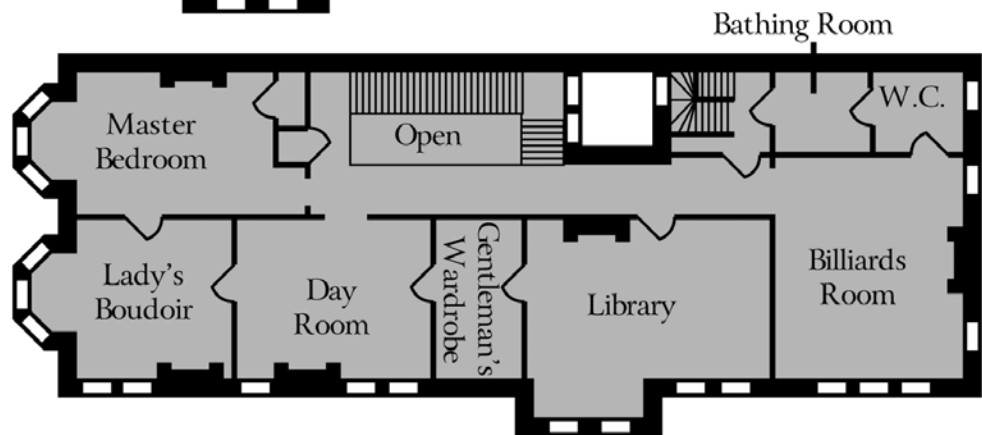
For those born to privilege (or those who bought it with new money), the age offers its greatest rewards. Those of the upper classes have achieved what the middle classes strive for: power and comfort enough to preclude entirely the need to work.

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

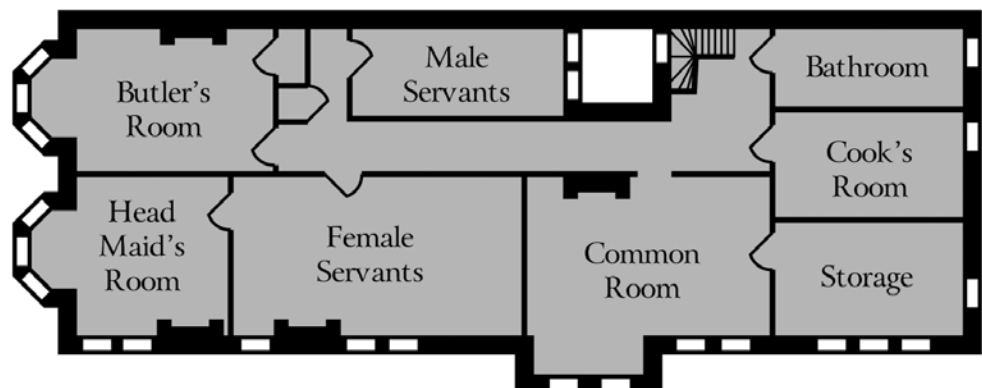
Whether you inherit or not might be the source of much family intrigue. You're well educated, and unless newly-elevated you comport yourself with dignity as a matter of course. Honor is a major concern, and it's an older thing quite distinct from the simple propriety that obsesses the middle classes. Simply put, you are better than almost everyone else, and the exquisitely-detailed rankings, titles, and honors possessed by you and your fellows lets you know who is better than whom. You were taught to expect a certain deference from those of



Second Floor



Fourth Floor



A Sample Victorian  
Upper-Class Home

Scale in Feet 0 10 20 30



lower rank than you, and no matter how friendly your relationships with them, there will always be the great divide of social station between you.

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

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

## Social Imperatives

Duty. Duty to family, and duty to country. One's reputation isn't as fragile as that of the middle classes; wealth and station ensure that a great deal is overlooked by others, as it could be more damaging to call attention to the foibles of a peer than to commit those same acts oneself. Rather, those of the highest classes have distinct roles to fulfill, pre-scripted lives laid out by family patriarchs and matriarchs who oversee the common affairs of a noble house. There is also the lure of vice and excess, and of keeping with fashion and other occupations of the idle rich. During the Season—when Parliament is in session, and the aristocracy proceed from their country homes to their London homes—it is parties,

balls, dinners, and all the functions of aristocratic sociability, with their undercurrents of ancient rivalries and feuds, and the fates of nations decided over sips of champagne. Thousands of working-class seamstresses toil through the night for weeks supplying the Season's fashionable garments for gentlemen and ladies. In sharp contrast to this pomp and dripping luxury, the Queen's household maintains an austerity which sets it apart from the merely noble, for Hers is a power which needs no ostentatious demonstration. Some of the highest classes follow Her example, but they are in the minority; dour souls find the Season unsociable.

## Common Motivations

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

## Colquhoun's Rankings

*Second Class:* Those with large independent income and wealth who lack title; those of lesser non-heritable title such as knight and baronet; country landowners.

*First Class:* Those of hereditary title, those of the royal family, the highest church officials such as the archbishop.

## Occupations

Politician, owner of mills or factories, ship owner, banker, military commander, idle rich, socialite, minister, bishop.

## View From the Top

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

## Being Under Class

An under-class person might typically...

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

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

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

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

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

## Manners

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

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



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

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

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

## Role-Playing Hints

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

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

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

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

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

### Being Working Class

A working-class person might typically...

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

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

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

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

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

### Manners

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



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

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

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

### Role-Playing Hints

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

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

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

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

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

## Being Middle Class

A middle-class person might typically...

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

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

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

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

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

## Manners

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

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

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

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

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



## Role-Playing Hints

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

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

Arrogant politics and ostentatious patriotism are also middle-class habits. As mentioned in Chapter 1, patriotism is common even in cynics, and often quite powerful. For the ever-striving middle classes, showing off that patriotism is important. For many, being British is better than being anything else, and damn anybody who says different.

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

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

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

### Being Upper Class

An upper-class person might typically...

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

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

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

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

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



### Manners

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

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

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

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

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

### Role-Playing Hints

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

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

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

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

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

# Day to Day

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

## Money

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

“**Bob**” is common slang for a shilling. “Four Bob” means four shillings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## What Things Cost

Wages and buying power vary a great deal during the century, as changes in demographics and employment as well as national productivity change how much people are paid, and how much they can buy with those wages. At mid-century, here's a rough guide to what a given lifestyle costs.

**Poor lifestyle (yearly):** £40 or less.

**Working-class lifestyle (yearly):** £50 to £100.

**Middle-class lifestyle (yearly):** £300 to £800.

**Upper-class lifestyle (yearly):** £1,000 for the bare minimum, and easily much, much more. Keeping a fine carriage could cost this much by itself.

## Employment and Pay

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

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

## Sound, Sight, Touch and Smell

Victorian London is a city alive with activity, noise, and stink. Bathing is a luxury, and most Londoners can’t afford to more than wash face and hands daily, taking a bath no more than weekly (if that). Clothing is heavy and layered by mid-century, and human bodies tend to ripen to a full bloom of odor.

Dental hygiene is similarly dubious, resulting in bad breath for almost everyone. Those who can afford it liberally douse themselves with colognes, rose

water, and scented oils for the hair. The style of applying Macassar oil to men’s hair leads to the counter-style of embroidered antimacassars to drape over chair-backs and prevent the oils ruining the upholstery.

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

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

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

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

London is *noisy*. Stone paved streets are pounded by iron horseshoes and cartwheels relentlessly all day and night to produce a roaring din. The river is alive with boat traffic, with signal horns, shouts, and warning calls. Hawkers and costermongers shout the virtues of their wares. Pedestrians raise their voices to be heard over the noise. Criers shout

the news, selling their papers. Low-class folk air their private business in the streets with screams and shouts. Children run everywhere, yelling and weaving around pedestrians and through road traffic. Conversations are shouted between buildings from open windows.

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

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

The residue of evaporating faerie creatures employed in London factories late in the century contributes to this atmosphere, adding weird incongruous noises, smells, sights, and presences to the fog, the ghosts of the Fae creatures worked to discorporation. In 1890, William Job Collins (physician, obstetrician, and member of the Royal Commission on Vaccination) commissions a survey of birth defects in the greater London area, and wrote a scathing monograph on the effects of such emissions on the health of the population, and the unborn. He cataloged and photographed several hundred examples of children stillborn and, sometimes more horrible, born live, who were clearly marked by exposure to faerie influences. Some were born like tiny old men, arthritic with eyes whitened by cataracts. Others had inhuman features, beast and baby mixed in the womb. Perhaps most frightening,

those born with that inhuman cast of perfection to their features, and soulless parasitic minds. He was elected to the London County Council for St Pancras and later became its chairman, and used his position and influence to push for regulation of the use of faerie labor within London's borders.

## Diaries

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

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

# Newspapers and Magazines

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

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

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

# Letters and the Mail

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

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

# Transport

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

Over shorter distances the horse-drawn cart is still dominant through the middle of the century, even if it begins to be ushered off the historical stage by the various automobiles sold in the last two decades: early machines using miniature steam



engines, then internal-combustion engines burning coal gas or petroleum derivatives, and then hybrid electric/combustion machines based on Zénobe Gramme's direct-current dynamo. These later machines, initially the prize of the wealthy and faddish, are quickly adopted by London's municipal services and taxi companies. The initial investment is greater but they run cheaper than the alternatives.

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

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

In 1885 White Star Lines acquires the first aero ship in private ownership, the *Skylark*, and begins

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

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

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

# Politics

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

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

Victoria isn't simply a figurehead in this system. Neither party supports Her agenda fully. The Conservatives are too hidebound and concerned with tradition, the Liberals too willing to abandon useful tradition in favor of immediate economic gain or reforms. In Her famous address to Parliament on the eve of the Indian Mutiny, She creates a new political power bloc which crosses over the main

division of the Tories and Whigs. The

Royal Liberal party (or the Marks, so-called for those She marks

with Her stigmatic blood that day in Parliament) embraces social and economic reforms.

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

# Religion

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

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

# Sex, Love and Marriage

The Victorians love sex; they simply must not talk about it. All pretension to prudishness or the idealization of feminine purity must stand side by side with upwards on 50,000 working prostitutes in London alone. Prostitution isn't made illegal until late in the century, though it is regulated at various points by hygiene laws and acts banning child prostitution and the operation of brothels. Most prostitutes work the streets, and there is always ready business. In the East End rookeries, the life of a poor prostitute is hellish and grim, but the life of a West End prostitute, a companion to gentlemen, can be quite lucrative and glamorous.

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

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

Homosexuality between men is technically illegal but widely tolerated, to the point of a thriving homosexual "scene" in London. Among the upper classes homosexuality is tactfully ignored unless (as Oscar Wilde discovered) an intolerant relative seeks prosecution. Among the lower classes it is variously viewed with disgust, contempt, or indifference, individual to individual. If a man has done his duty to family and society, married, sired children, then

his affairs outside of marriage were his own business. Homosexuality between women is not illegal, and hardly registers on the public consciousness, though it is considered distasteful when it is thought of at all.

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

But love, what of love? The journals and letters of the Victorians reveal passionate romantic love at work among all classes and all stations in life. From the flirtation of a maid's suitors (though they be banned from visiting by her terms of employment), to the Queen's own dalliances with Mr. Brown after her estrangement with Prince Albert in 1861 leaves her cold and wounded at heart. It is an age of tragic love, doomed affairs, and countless novels milking it for all the pathos it could provide.

## Manners

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

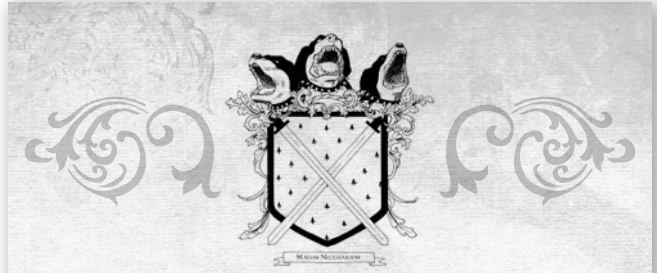
The more elaborate rules and social rituals are the purview of the well-off, because only they have the luxury of indulging in such social theater. The public discussion of certain topics, especially in mixed company, is a fairly strong taboo, for instance. One does not discuss sex around ladies. Unless,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

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

# Covering One's Nakedness

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

The Channel Tunnel and the growing civilian aero ship fleet also open trade, bringing more exotic



## South of Gibraltar, All Men are Bachelors

There are always exceptions.

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

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

influences and styles as well as the fabrics to sew them. Victoria's own influence cannot be discounted, either. Her persistent marble-skinned youth and cool reserve create an endearing popularity for severity in fashion, whitening cosmetics, expressions to mimic the monarch's, and clothing of exquisite but subdued cloth cut in simple unadorned patterns.

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

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

hugging, highly-tailored gowns are the fashion.

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

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

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

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

## About One's Person

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

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

A lady may carry a bag or purse, always subject to fashion, containing personal effects, ready money, tools for grooming and cosmetics. She may have a watch on a chain about her neck, or later in the century on a bracelet. If she smokes it is likely cigarettes, and she'll have them in a case. She might carry an umbrella or parasol, or during some years a cane or walking stick. There is a brief fashion in the 1870s for ladies to carry sword canes given them by admirers. Within the generally more voluminous and elaborate clothing worn by women there are often cunningly-concealed pockets and pouches to hold a woman's possessions without requiring her to carry anything in her hands. Gentlemen are sometimes surprised at just what a lady can produce, seemingly from nowhere.

# In Service

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

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

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

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

# The Plague of -Isms

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

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

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

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

# Victoria and the Birth of the New Woman

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

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

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

In the 1880s the opportunities open to women are dramatic by earlier standards, and more and more middle-class women seek university educations and professional qualifications. Many of the old restric-

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

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

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

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

tions on a woman's activities and her social expectations erode, though not without resentment. The slur “Girton girl”—from Girton College, established in Cambridge in 1869, the first residential college for women in England—is often applied to a woman who completes a university education.

Politician and intellectual John Stuart Mills pushes a women's suffrage agenda in parliament, but does not live to see it become one of the Royal Liberals' major agendas or, in 1889, a political reality. Against all expectation, the Franchise and Liberties Act passes and receives Victoria's explicit approval. While backlash against the prospect of women voting, attending university, and working alongside men becomes itself a major social force (especially

among politicians and wags looking to stir common prejudices in their favor), the change is made and there is simply no going back. The Act phases in the franchise for women slowly, so as not to radically disrupt the political process with a sudden doubling of eligible voters, but it becomes essential for politicians to now appeal to women as well as men.

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

# The Curse of Progress

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

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

He writes: "Our society represents the pinnacle of evolutionary development, with only the most viable traits and behaviors surviving adversity.

Women lack the vote for the same reason mankind lacks a furred coat. It is simply not in the interest of the

species' survival. However, the pace of change has become so great that there is no time for ideas to be tested. We are become a culture of sports and freaks. The most sensational ideas rather than the most fit survive. The stable order is destroyed and the processes of evolutionary development which saw England become great have faltered."

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

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

## An Historical Note

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

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

Reeling from these constant changes, many were extremely resistant to new ideas. For every gadget-crazed Londoner there was a farmer from the midlands who could have been dropped into the 1600s and gotten along fine with his ancestors. In *The Kerberos Club* this effect is magnified dramatically, but it is rooted in a real phenomenon of the era.

# The Shocking and the Profane: The Growing Strangeness

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

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

She could abandon that role, however, and seek to employ her powers for personal gain or national service. That sets her quite apart from respectable society, and puts her equal in some circles to an

actress, in others no better than a prostitute. It is certain no one could *force* her to remain in the home, and behave submissively to men, but she'd suffer constant social scorn unless she created a deliberately unorthodox role for herself—a new class which would allow people to categorize her, and rank her, and fit her into their world-view. It is a fine line to walk between fame and infamy—the same line the Club treads publicly from around the 1850s onwards.

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

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

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

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

and generally harass Strangers whose abilities mark them like Cain for all to see and fear.

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

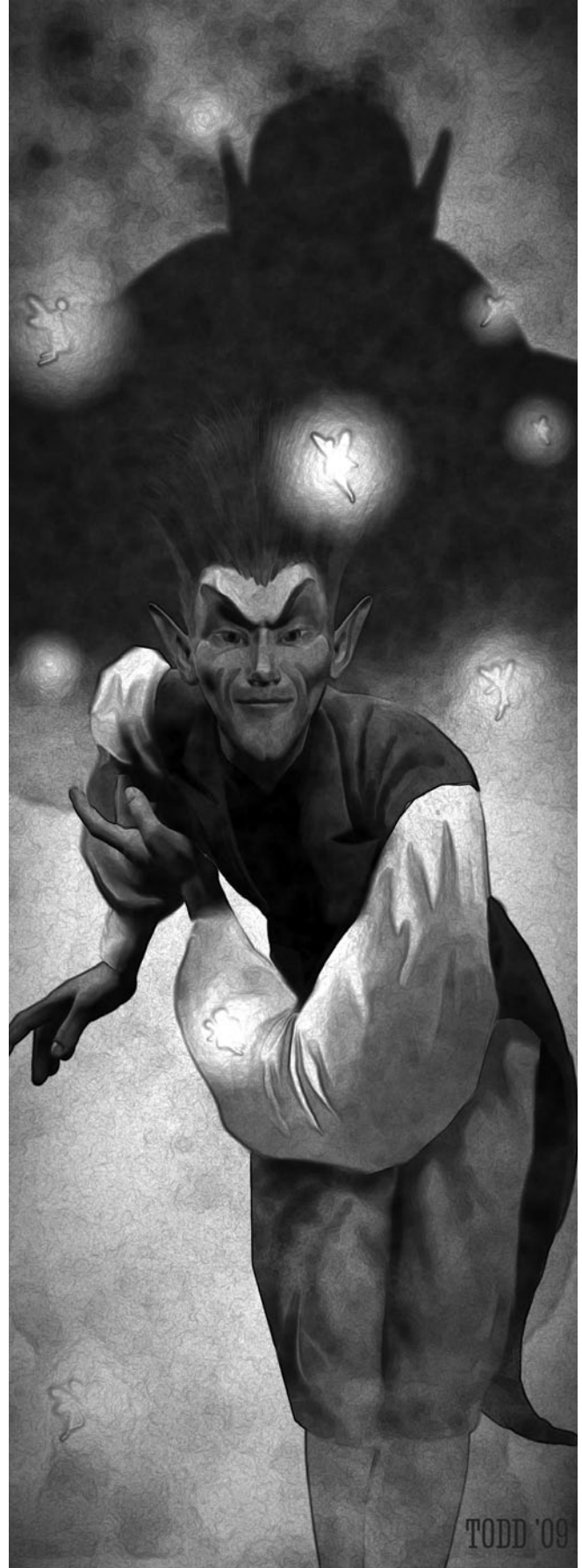
Even popular and erudite Strangers are still treated like clever animals. Although Dr. Monroe gets many invitations to parties and galas, he knows many of the invitations are made in a calculated effort to win social points for throwing a daring party and presenting guests with the show of a speaking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

## The Faerie

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

Others seem quite sophisticated, until you pierce the layers of glamour and realize they are as empty inside as gaily-painted marionettes.

Humanity imprints on the faerie its expectations and beliefs and assumptions, and faerie infects Humanity with an occult madness which tears down the



barriers of perception separating this world from the Otherworld. No one who deals with the faerie escapes un-Touched.

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

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

There is a well-established tradition in British Common law dealing with the faerie. Like the relationship between Barristers (gentlemen who practice the law before the Courts, but receive a honorarium rather than being paid like a tradesman), and solicitors (gentlemen who practice the more workmanlike side of the law and business), there are two similar but separate branches of the profession for managing Faerie Law. There are those who work within the Courts on matters related to the interaction of the faerie and British law, and there are those who study the thousands of bans, compulsions, oaths and gaesa which bind the behavior of the faerie in ways that can be legalistically exploited.

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

Most often, men of both professions partner to provide full legal services when dealing with the faerie, one defending a client in court from any liability or violation of Britain's complex statutes

relating to the faerie, and the second managing direct interaction with the faerie themselves. As the Empire's presence in Faerie itself becomes more established, the number of these partnerships increases. Until the breakdowns and revolts of the 1880s, many Victorians become quite comfortable with the faerie and faerie-made goods, and sometimes even with taking small innocuous faerie creatures into their homes as pets or domestic servants—though the events of 1893 prove the folly of allowing one of the faerie access to one's home or children.

## Magic and the Occult

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

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

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

among the easiest and most powerful a magus can make.

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

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

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

## Science and Industry

Ah, Progress! By diligence, foresight and hard work, Britons of good conscience and duty bring forth wonders the equal of any from myth and legend!

Certainly, some uncouth Strangers take flight with only their unnatural powers lifting them from the Earth—but by the clever application of the

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

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

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

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

Events finally come to a head in December of 1881 when mass protests in Pall Mall lead to a pitched battle between metropolitan police and protesters. The police are reinforced by 400 regular army troops and a company of Her Majesty’s Mechanized Rifles, fresh from service in Africa. In the ensuing brutality

hundreds of protesters were seriously injured, and over two dozen killed when, for no certain reason, the Mechanized Rifles aimed and opened fire upon the rioting civilians, before being themselves struck down by shocked and horrified soldiers and police.

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

## Wonders of the Antediluvian World

Victorian science and exploration reveal the truth about the world: It is vastly older and its Strangeness runs deeper than ever would have been believed. Even before the Atlantean Invasion of 1869, explorers have already found ruins of impossible and vast metropolises hidden away in the valleys of the Himalayas, the jungles of Africa, and beneath the ice of Greenland and the Antarctic. Cities of terrible geometry and inhuman design. Cities it pains the eye to look upon. But all gone to ruin, all fallen into

ashes, some clearly raised from their proper resting place by the rising of the mountains from the Earth over geological ages of time.

The jungles of the Brazilian Empire teem with life, and some if it like the Royal Dinosaurs by all rights should be long extinct. Sometimes fisherman report encounters with vast beasts, bigger than whales, like crocodiles with a turtle's fins, and mouths able to crush a tea clipper. In the tombs of Egypt weird relics of ancient sciences are found, such as the Galvanic Mummy unearthed in Giza by Professor Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, which, when connected by copper wires to the clay pot batteries buried with it (disguised as Coptic jars, but intended to be filled with acid rather than with internal organs), comes alive after a fashion, and obeys simple commands issued in a particular dialect of the ancient Egyptian language.

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

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

And as always, the public gives greater leeway to those things which are beautiful, astounding, or promise

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

## Divinity

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

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

This is considered base idolatry, of course, by conservative Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Yet despite this (or perhaps because of it), the political factions backing Victoria most frequently support unrestricted freedom of religion, and the removal

of restrictions and bans on Catholic participation in public life. For this reason, perhaps, Rome

never officially comments on the Queen's supposed divinity.

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

Britain is a Christian nation, and though the sects of the Roman church, the Reform Anglicans, the Royal Anglicans, and others might fight and argue and seethe with the bloody feuds of old, when presented with the prospect of a unified Mahomadian caliphate, a unifying Hindu philosophy, or other external religious threat, they find they have more in common.

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

## Freakish Human Oddities

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

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



## Arms and Armor

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

### Knives and Swords

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

Still, swords have their place—primarily in duels and aboard hydrogen-lifted aero ships where explosive shells are never a good idea.

Game stats for blade weapons can be found on page 202.

## Bludgeons

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

Bludgeons inflict damage ranging from Str +d4, d6, d8, or even d10 depending on the size and weight of the weapon. A cosh inflicts Str+d4, and if used with the Drop (see *Savage Worlds*) and used in a Called Shot to the head, then the victim must succeed in a Vigor roll with the damage inflicted as his Target Number—remember the +4 damage from the Drop, and +4 damage from the Called Shot. Failure means the victim falls unconscious for an hour.

## Early Victorian Firearms

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

cartridges a minute, and a single rifleman carried the firepower of a regiment in his grandfather’s era.

### Misfire!

Flintlock weapons are unreliable and subject to the vagaries of weather, humidity, and their care and maintenance. If the firer rolls snake eyes—a natural on both his Shooting and Wild Die dice—the flintlock malfunctions and fails to fire. Not only was the shot wasted, but the weapon must be cleaned, taking 1 minute, before it can be reloaded. For an Extra, if the Shooting die comes up 1, roll 1d6. If that comes up 1, it’s a misfire.

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

Flintlock weapons are touchy, unreliable, and generally fairly inaccurate. Rifling of the smooth barrels increases accuracy, but the specially-wrapped bullets and loading procedures slow the rate of fire. Muskets, and later rifles, fire huge bullets in calibers from .30 to .80, often more than an ounce of soft lead. When they hit, they inflict grievous injuries.

Game stats for black-powder weapons can be found on page 203.

## Middle Victorian Firearms

The cap-and-ball rifle becomes the norm in the world’s great armies, and the cap-and-ball revolver becomes the preferred weapon for horsemen who must fight on the gallop. Revolvers incorporate a rotating cylinder of pre-loaded cartridges allowing six or more shots to be fired quickly. The age of the muzzle-loader ends, however, with the introduction of the brass cartridge and the breach-loading rifle (and then, the repeating rifle). Over a decade or so several competing designs for metal cartridges fight,

## Strange Ways to Die

Weapons in the world of the Kerberos Club evolve faster than they did in our world, resulting in a greater disparity between military doctrine and the tools for killing. But this acceleration of mundane weapons technology is nowhere near as shocking as what Strange technology can do to the battlefield. The Cochrane-Brunel Mechanized Gun-Carriage and its Volcanic Cannon (see page 130) are a dramatic example of what might arise given only a slight nudge by Strange powers. When those powers are unleashed, unfettered upon the battlefield? It is a horror.

The replicability of Strange devices limits how reliably they can be fielded in warfare, but in the major battles of the century there is always some weird and uncanny action taking place, and as the century grows odder, these weird killing impossibilities become more common. Men donning mechanized armor, horses of iron, thinking machinery, floating gun platforms firing lightning or disintegration rays, rifles that kill souls rather than flesh, plant-soldiers grown from seeds, and bombardment with gas shells which burn flesh and change reality.

When devices are built to be Manufacturable (page 208), then things become even harder to contain. The Lorica Victoria (page 137) and the Electrophorous Firing Piece (page 129) are two examples of how placing miracles in common hands can have sweeping repercussions.

As the century winds down, soldiers won't be surprised to see giants of brass and iron belching smoke and carrying enormous weapons, clashing on the same battlefields they slog through, bleed on and are buried under.

and the winner is decidedly the centerfire or rimfire cartridge over the pinfire and its ill-fated cousins.

While it initially proves something of a failure, the Vulcan All-in-One cartridge which encases bullet and primer inside a solid block of water-resistant, stabilized explosive, offers the greatest power with the least volume and weight of any other

bullet. But it will not be until the later decades of the century that this departure from the brass cartridge is recognized and adopted.

During the middle era, the brass-cartridge revolver becomes extremely common, and the first of the gas-operated, self-cocking pistols are marketed. The self-cocking Colt Avalanche eight-shot revolver uses one of these mechanisms: The flick of a switch allows the weapon to fire its full load of six shots in under a second (granting the autofire ability). It is called "The Final Word" or simply "The Word." If Colt made all men equal, the Avalanche made some men more equal than others.

Similar experiments in weapons innovation are driven by the ease with which guns can be manufactured in New Birmingham factories by cheap goblin labor. Several U.S. firearm manufacturers contract with New Birmingham factories to produce designs, sparking something of an arms among the forms of Colt, Remington, Winchester, and Smith & Wesson.

Armies are as slow to adopt new weapons as ever, and it is a consumer market which drives these companies, all striving to provide more features for less money. Some disasters were unavoidable, such as the rate at which the Winchester Mechanized Rifle destroyed its own rifling and eventually jammed and exploded after trigger-happy gunmen blazed a few hundred rounds through it.

Weapons of this era superficially resemble their historical counterparts. The style of the age is one of curves and flutes. But functionally (and in terms of game mechanics) they work like modern firearms as described in *Savage Worlds*. Because so many of these weapons are intended for civilian rather than military use, many came with sometimes bizarre and ill-advised "features" such as the Remington Repeater (called the "Ugly Drunk" by those in the know) which incorporated a steel flask in the butt which could hold twelve ounces of whiskey. Weapons often have qualities which make little practical sense given their size, ammunition capacity, and purpose.

## Late Victorian Firearms

By the end of the era, personal weaponry becomes a complex and chaotic field. Dozens of manufacturers all push their own standards for cartridges and calibers, their own new innovations, and send new designs to manufacture with less and less testing and trial. It creates a dangerous field for the weapons enthusiast. Advertisements for these new weapons are lurid, featuring well-heeled gentlemen mowing down lines of savage caricatures with a “New Rapid-Repeating Self-Cooling Saddle Gun.”

With the ready access to goblin labor and televo-cagraphic transmission, a company could form on Monday, file patents on Tuesday, and be manufacturing weapons on Friday—larger, shinier, and with more switches and knobs and clicking, buzzing, clacking action. They sell for a month, and when they begin to explode, taking fingers with them, the company has folded and its founders have already vanished with the profits.

Judging a quality firearm becomes something of an art, and serious gunmen will rarely even touch a weapon manufactured after 1870 or so. A glance at a man’s armament can tell an experienced eye a great deal about his experience of violence, willingness to engage in it, and his chances of surviving such an encounter. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. once famously commented on seeing a hunting mate’s new Winchester Articulated Machine Rifle, “You can shoot a hundred times for every one I manage, I’m sure, sir, but then one shot is all I generally require.”

The brass cartridge begins to see some serious competition from new caseless cartridges like Smith and Wesson’s .30-caliber Vulcan. World militaries show enough interest in this innovation—the promise of savings in cost and ammunition weight alone make it a good prospect—that by the end of

the century most military arms are fairly conservative functionally (being simple single-shot or short burst

### A Patent Double-Action Rotating Repeater!

The absurd glut of unreliable Strange weapons drives down prices and makes dependable older weapons something of a prize to those who know the difference.

A Strange weapon manufactured in the later decades of the century is usually built as a Power with a Modifier called “Misfire (–1). Even more often, it has a Modifier called “Catastrophic Misfire (–4).” The exact nature of both these modifiers can be found on page 208.

#### The Patent Double-Action Rotating Repeater

*Attack, Ranged (4):* Armor Piercing 2, Catastrophic Misfire, Device, Manufacturable, Light Weapon, Limited Shots (six shots; see page 208), Rapid Fire (x2).

The Patent Double-Action Rotating Repeater inflicts 2d6 damage, has a range of 12/24/48, has an Armor Piercing rating of 2, and can fire up to 3 shots. If it explodes it causes 2d6 damage to its user. It can be manufactured, costing £2 and taking two weeks to build, and has a street value of £4.

firing gas-operated rifles) but employ an extremely advanced caseless cartridge. They have twice the ammunition capacity for the same space and weight as modern weapons from our own world.

## Artillery

The Big Guns grow fiercer and more terrible as the century progresses, though they generally don’t suffer the issues of quality that plague firearms. As only militaries contract the purchase of artillery, it is generally a more conservative field. For dreadnoughts, the Volcanic Cannon becomes the preferred heavy armament. Self-propelled rocket shells allow the big ironclads to kill anything they can see—and with spotters signaling from aershops able to see



over the horizon, and Babbage Ballistic Engines able to compute complex firing solutions incorporating input from human posters and mechanized barometric and wind sensors, they can also kill anything within a hundred miles.

The threat posed by weapons of this type, able to strike Britain's soil from the Continent, was always on the minds of British diplomats who sought amiable relations with those within the so-called "Volcanic Circle". As the technology which drives these rockets improved, so did this circle of potential firing points. Germany's imperial rumblings, and the possibility that France (old enemy and now good friend) might fall to one of Britannia's foes, fuel a great deal of espionage, sabotage, bribery, and dirty dealing.

The power of rocketry to project a nation's power beyond its own borders becomes increasingly evident, and every nation with the capacity vigorously pursues rocket technology. The German Himmelhammer, built in 1887 but not publicly acknowledged until five years later, is capable of striking London with a two-thousand pound high-explosive bomb from as far away as its launch platform outside Königsberg. It is then with some relief that Her Majesty's officials learn of the great rocket's mysterious (and seemingly accidental) destruction in 1893. Further efforts on the part of the German Empire to again raise the Sky Hammer over Victoria's head prove fraught with accident, misadventure and death, culminating in an "accidental" firing of the Himmelhammer V-3 into Berlin in 1899.

Britain's own capacity to project so-called rocket diplomacy remains mysterious through the end of the century. It is never proved or disproved whether Britain has such a capacity, and there is an equal measure of evidence supporting both conclusions. In 1888 Disraeli blithely comments within earshot of a *Times* pressman, "It is 'rockets this' and 'rockets that' all the time! If they only knew where our true strength was invested, they'd *wish* we'd romanced the rocket like our German friends."

## Body Armor

Man's capacity to kill and slay his fellows only increases, and dawdling well behind this terrible talent is his capacity to save and preserve. While dozens of different "Life-Preserving Vests" and "Tetsudo Shirts" are sold throughout the century, very few offer any real protection against the increasing muzzle velocities of contemporary firearms.

The Lorica Victoria (page 137) proves an effective defense, but isn't commonly available, and certainly isn't easy to wear without raising comment. A few other attempts are made to manufacture defensive garments strong enough to deflect high-velocity projectiles, but none of the mass-manufactured armors are as effective as the Lorica. This does not dissuade individual inventors from producing suits of nigh-invulnerable armor which allow them to weather hails of bullets and storms of shrapnel without injury.

## About Town and About the Globe

Transportation changes dramatically and rapidly through the century. The horse's dominance is challenged by the train, and then wholly broken by the automotive carriage as its engines evolve from steam to bitumen-fired internal combustion, to electric generated by internal combustion engine, to all-electric models driven by one of Mr. Tesla's "Ducks" (see page 180).

In the air, man first takes flight in hot air balloons, dirigibles, then aero ships, and in gliders, rocket-gliders, and then prop-driven powered craft,

which are themselves superseded by rocket and jet craft. The aero ships remain the queens of the air from their advent to the close of the century, though, even if rocket-gliders and wide adoption of volcanic rocketry begin to limit their practical application in warfare by the end of the century.

## Horses

The horse has game stats as described in *Savage Worlds*. Different breeds have some variance in their stats. Draft horses have higher Vigor, as will hot bloods. Thoroughbreds and racers might have a higher pace. Riding a horse is a challenging skill to master, and riding one in war, in pursuit, or in a race is both difficult and dangerous.

Horse riding is a dangerous business—especially in combat. The rules needed to cover this perilous endeavor can be found in *Savage Worlds*.

## Carriages

Before trains, the carriage is the only means of overland travel which doesn't involve walking or riding a horse. Carriages change a great deal through the century, but they remain basically boxes with two more wheels which are pulled by one or more horses. Large omnibuses cater to the poorer of London's middle and under classes, cabs and carriages for hire to the somewhat more well off. Keeping a carriage is a major status symbol, and can easily cost a wealthy family more than a thousand pounds a year for the horses, footman, and the carriage itself.

Driving a carriage is much like riding: tricky and sometimes dangerous. It requires a successful Driving skill roll when forced to make quick maneuvers, chase or escape, or avoid obstructions in the road (such as a 25-stone rock-skinned Stranger

waiting to punch your lead horse in the head).

All the rules for carriage chases, combat and collisions can be found in *Savage Worlds*.

## Trains

The great trains of the age run on an ever-expanding network of tracks, cutting distances that once required weeks of travel down to days or even hours. The trains transform the way people think of time and distance, and permit London's easy expansion beyond its old borders as the burgeoning middle classes sought suburban bliss in new cottage communities springing up along the rail lines.

Trains run fast, sixty-plus miles per hour, faster than any horse or carriage. They are more locations than vehicles for game purposes, good places to stage dramatic fights, for example. Being run over by a train is certain death for all but the most resilient Strangers. Similar to carriages, the rules needed for train collisions and combat can be found in *Savage Worlds*.

## Tractor Carriages

These massive machines begin to see usage in the late 1860s for heavy transport, construction, and in particular the laying of rails. A tractor carriage is essentially a train engine affixed to a high-torque gearing system and a matched pair of James Boydel's patent "Infinite Railway Tracks," interlinking steel plates allowing the engine to traverse rough and broken terrain at a modest but inexorable pace.

Being crushed by a tractor carriage is like being hit by a train in slow motion, inevitably fatal to all but the stoutest individuals. Evading or outrunning one is simplicity.

## Mechanized Gun Carriages

The bigger, meaner, ill-tempered cousin to the tractor carriage, the mechanized gun carriage mounts heavy field artillery and steel plate armor, and carries a crew of a dozen or more drivers, engineers, and gun-hands. As proven in the Crimean, these machines are the monsters of the battlefield, but as proven in the Boer Wars, they're slow, temperamental, and mechanically dubious on extended campaign.

## Automotives

Late in the century, in rapid succession, the steam engine and the internal combustion engine become the steam-electric and the bitumen-electric engine driving electric motors rather than directly driving the gears and wheels. In the 1890s some dispense with the generators and use induction receivers to power the motors. The streets of London in the 1890s are a chaos of vehicles: horses, carriages, and automotives of dozens of different makes and designs, using different drives and engines. Automotives are a tinkerer's dream, and London is home to a thriving community of amateur mechanics who lease space in cooperative workshops or use the shops in their automotive clubs to modify and customize their vehicles.

For the purposes of game mechanics, they can be treated like modern cars. Maneuvering in London's crowded streets poses some unique challenges. A high-speed chase, some unique dangers.

# Aero Ships

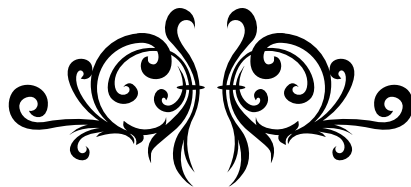
The great queens of the air. The aero ships (see page 86) do to the world what the trains do to Britain. They have more in common with ocean vessels than with horse and carriage or automotive; they are places rather than vehicles. Still, a fight aboard a burning aero ship is something all adventuring rogues should experience at least once.

# Rocket Gliders

Where the aero ship is stately and dignified, the rocket glider is frenetic and wild. The rocket gliders of the 1880s were inspired by Félix du Temple's

*Albatross* glider, one of the first of its kind of use control surfaces and stabilizing fins. The modern rocket glider uses folding gull-wings rather than fixed wings, allowing it to close its wings against the fuselage when it fires a rocket in its cluster to gain height. When it reaches the top of its parabola, the pilot deploys the wide delicate wings and soars on the wind and thermals like a raptor.

For all their power these craft are fragile, and piloting them is more art than science. If the wing membranes tear they plummet like a broken-winged bird. The great aero ships of Her Majesty's Navy carry squadrons of rocket gliders, launching them from their upper decks with pneumatic rams. As the other great powers field their own aero ships, the rocket glider becomes a major component of military doctrine.





# Chapter Three

## Victoria's Century

**Pre-1800:** It's likely, though unproven, that the modern Kerberos Club gets its start at the Gates of Hades coffeehouse in 1723 as an informal meeting of like-minded individuals who enjoyed drinking, opium, the company of loose women and men of easy virtue, as well as dabbling in the Strange, uncanny, and mystifying, the fringes of natural science, art, politics, magic, and awareness.

**1800: London** has a population of over a million people, making it one of the largest cities in the world. During the 19th century this only increases. Within three decades it will be *the* largest.

**1800: Irish Act of Union.** This Union supersedes the previous Personal Union passed in the 1500s by ascendant Irish Protestants, forging England and Ireland into a single kingdom. The act does not become official until 1801, but the effects of the Union are felt almost immediately. The folk-creatures of Ireland, including those beings of Faerie which had for generations slipped through the tattered barriers separating Ireland from the Otherworld, are much affected by the shift in the political landscape, though they do not make their presence (and opinions) known overtly for decades yet. The Irish faerie had absorbed much of their island's culture, and far outnumbered their English cousins. Scottish faerie are a much more staid bunch, by and large, who kept themselves to themselves, enjoying their status as legend.

The Irish faerie are not so laconic. While the reports are simply not credited in London, there is a

general rise in Strange happenings in Ireland. Many disregard it as "just more Irish foolishness," but those in the Kerberos Club take note, and dispatch agents to investigate the situation.

In a series of uncanny encounters on the eve of final official ratification of the Act, members of the Club encounter manifestations of Ireland's tumultuous past played out at its famous places of magic and history, finally leading to a midnight confrontation with the Éireannach Fáthach, faerie so imprinted by Irish national identity (particularly the spirit of the Rebellion of 1798) that they have become something else again.

The defeat of the Éireannach Fáthach opens the way for the Procession of Frost, so on January 1, 1801 the union of the Faerie Courts of England, Scotland, and Wales extend their rule into the Irish Otherworld. And like their mortal counterparts, the Irish faerie nobility and lords are bribed with further title, honor, and peerage, some even claiming estates in the English Otherworlds.

While the faerie have difficulty grasping the differences between Protestant and Catholic (though given the choice, they generally choose the Roman church for its ritual, theater and long history of cohabitation with Otherworldly things), the political poles created by the struggle between the repressed Catholics and the ruling Protestants influence them strongly, and the faerie find themselves increasingly shaped by Ireland's tumultuous human politics, and factionalized along the same lines.

**1801: Rush for the Rosetta Stone.** In the aftermath of the French defeat in Egypt, the rush to claim archaeological treasures masked the truly mad struggle to claim occult artifacts and wonders. Agents of the Société Scientifique Impériale seek to safeguard certain discoveries and see them smuggled out of Egypt to France, while operatives of the Crown and the Kerberos Club aim to claim them for Britain. The greatest of these prizes is the complete Rosetta Stone, a decree of Ptolemy carved in stone and writ in many languages.

The Stone's value to academics is immediately apparent, but to occultists equally so if one knows what to look for. In addition to the lost human languages, there are two prehuman (so-called Elder) tongues represented—scripts so inhuman, they defy efforts to copy them with plaster casts, rubbings, or transcription.

One who recognized the stone's value is General Jacques de Menou, an initiate in several mystery societies. He seeks to hide the stone, making the excuse that it is his personal property, and so not subject to confiscation by British authorities who claimed all such artifacts. His ruse is discovered, and this results in a chase through nighttime Cairo, with British (as well as Russian, German, and Ottoman) agents in pursuit. The stone is finally captured from its hiding place in the back of a gun carriage by Kerberan agent Colonel Tomkyns Hilgrove Turner, who claims it in the name of the British crown, but not before carefully breaking away the sections of the stone writ with inhuman script.

**1803: Westward Ho!** With the purchase of France's territorial claims in North America, the United States begins its westward expansion which becomes known as Manifest Destiny. Displaced native peoples are divided, deceived, manipulated, bullied, and when all else fails, murdered to allow this Destiny to unfold.

The abuses continue until the Great Ghost Dance of 1885.

**1804: Hidden Wars.** The conflict with Napoleon is fought with sail, with bullet, with policy, and with trade, but also with occult forces and Strange agents. Napoleon makes the Société Scientifique Impériale fully his creature, and demands from them miracles, the conjuration of storms to sink Nelson's fleet, and soldiers invulnerable to fatigue and hunger. He betrays his lack of understanding for things Strange, and is disappointed with his agents' failures to produce for him the miracles their claims to power would seem to promise.

Only their perfection of the Sémaphore Psychique saves them from official sanction. Presented with a way of transmitting his orders near-instantly, Napoleon sees the value of unconventional avenues of power, and throws money at the Société like corn to a goose—but rather than lead to the blossoming of additional innovation, it causes the Société to lose focus when its members pursue their pet projects with the Emperor's money. Yet, the Société remains one of Napoleon's favorite pets.

**1805: Tapping the Admiral.** While victorious, Admiral Lord Nelson is killed at the Battle of Trafalgar. In the aftermath of the battle, his body, preserved in a barrel of brandy, is taken aboard the *Victory* to Gibraltar. In life, Nelson achieved an astonishing reputation, and the manner of his death propelled him into a fame few British military figures have ever matched. He is laid to rest at St. Paul's Cathedral in a coffin made from the salvaged mast of the *L'Orient*. His body is guarded day and night by a rare alliance of British mystery societies. The Masons join with the Illuminatus Britainus and the Boudiccian Sisters in an unheard-of effort to keep Nelson's corpse from falling into the hands of foreign rivals who could use its phenomenal occult puissance against the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately, they neglect the brandy his body was preserved in—ironically a quite-fine French spirit. By the time they realize their error, the brandy has vanished and the expression “tapping

the admiral” as slang for having a stiff drink has entered the common lexicon. Rumors of Nelson’s Brandy haunt occult circles for months, hinting at Bonaparte and apolyonic rituals, at Russian mystics, at even Indian revolutionary factions.

The Kerberos Club first comes to the attention of the older secret orders during the following year, and earns the animosity of the Ordo Malum, an Austrian Catholic secret society which came to possess Nelson’s Brandy through their agents among the sailors charged with unloading Nelson’s body from the *Victory*.

With the Brandy in their possession, the Order prepares a ritual based on old pre-Christian magic. This would have imbued their chosen pawns within the Holy Roman Empire with Lord Nelson’s force of destiny, appending the name of their agents to the Book of Ages, addendums to Nelson’s legacy by using the brandy in their perverted Communion. Only intervention by the Club’s roving agents keeps this ritual from coming to full fruition. This failure spells the end for the Empire, which is finally and completely dissolved in 1806 as the consequence of the Treaty of Lunéville.

As to Nelson’s Brandy, there is no certain answer, though given the general Kerberan affection for both sacrilege and drunkenness, one can hazard a fair guess.

**1806: Napoleon Tightens His Grip** with the Continental System, decreeing that none of his conquered territories or protectorates may trade with Britain. Rather than starve out his great enemy as he intends, his decree meets with only limited success. Denied their European trading partners, British merchants seek markets elsewhere, forging economic ties in the Americas and the East which help fuel the engine of the British Empire in the coming decades.

Further, the embargo actually harms Napoleon’s Grand Empire more than it does Britain. Starved for trade, Russia rejects it in 1812, reopening trade with the tiny manufacturing juggernaut, even after

invading British ally Sweden in 1808 at Napoleon’s behest. Between Napoleon’s tightening fingers, nations begin slipping through.

**1807: Slave Trafficking Illegal.** The Kingdom of Great Britain, after a series of half-measures, declares the traffic in human slaves illegal. The British West African Squadron begins patrolling the African coast, interdicting slave-taking operations and slave ships. Britannia’s position and motivation is a complex one. While slavery has been illegal on British soil since 1772, many British citizens have profited mightily from the trade in humans to be sold into slavery. There is a powerful social movement against slavery in British society, but the policy is also perhaps an economic and social stab at Napoleon, who reintroduced slavery to France in 1803.

In the shadows, the Kerberos Club works to further the abolitionist agenda, both because it suits their perverse egalitarianism and to squelch the dire engine of misery and death which the Trade created in the Otherworld. The paths traveled by slavers across the Atlantic have become a nightmare of pain and death, twisting the Otherworld (and the highly impressionable *things* which dwell there), creating a septic wound in the world’s soul. It attracts scavengers, magi of the worst sorts, ghosts, twisted faerie, and horrors less easily defined. Along the slavers’ routes, true leviathans are sighted with alarming regularity, great behemoths of nightmarish dimension and impossible physiology. Yet the slavers go unmolested by these horrors. Indeed, they are sometimes abetted by them in escaping the British navy.

There are clearly parties committed to preserving the Trade who care nothing for something as base as selling human blood for gold coin. The Elder Things are awakened, and they will sip the heady brew frothed from man’s inhumanity to man.

**1808: Napoleon's Fortunes Falter.** The internal politics of Spain turn like a snake and bite Napoleon. The Spanish rebel against French occupation, and later in the year Sir Arthur Wellesley arrives in Lisbon to begin the campaign against the French on the Iberian Peninsula. The war sees Arthur created the first Duke of Wellington and, in 1814, Napoleon's vanquisher.

Spain is a nation torn between the old world and the new, where pagan superstition finds easy camaraderie with Catholicism, and Sir Arthur first encounters the uncanny events here which would become something of an obsession for him.

**1809: Napoleon Breaks the Teutonic Knights.** In an effort to secure his power in the mystical as well as temporal world, Napoleon begins the persecution of occult groups, mystery religions, and secret societies. The persecuted individuals sometimes abandon their mystical pursuits, accepting a mundane life in exchange for freedom from Napoleon's service or his prisons, but some, such as the Order of the Teutonic Knights of Bad Mergentheim, are persecuted relentlessly. Their holdings are taken, their libraries emptied, and their alchemical research is stolen or burned. Some of the Knights choose to stay and resist the Emperor, but those who are able flee with what they can carry (assisted by foreign agents, such as a notable Kerberan adventurer).

The Knights follow the same path in their flight as the Knights Templar before them and find sanctuary among the Scottish Masons.

The younger mercenary commanders of the Order who led the troops of the Hapsburgs during the Ottoman wars find easy positions in the armies of the United Kingdom in the fight against Bonaparte.

The Teutonic Knights add their mysteries to the stewpot of Scots occultism, and inspire and inform such luminaries as Charles Piazzi Smyth, Astrologer Royal for Scotland and expert on the Egyptian pyramids and Egyptian necromantic practices.

**1810: The University of Berlin** is founded as the world's first research university. Among its students and teaching staff are luminaries such as Hegel, Marx, and Bismarck. The educational model is so successful it is copied across Europe, and independently many such institutions also see the establishment of their own conspiracies, cults, and secret societies such as the one which initiated so many of the University of Berlin's greatest minds.

Over the next decade, many of the old German societies sign the *Schweigsame Übereinstimmung* ("Silent Pact"). While the politics in the hidden halls of power remain vicious, there is for the first time a common forum for ideas and grievances, as well as the discussion of issues of common concern—such as the mystics of Britain who refuse to ally with the *Schweigsame Übereinstimmung*, or the rebels from their own circles who fled to the Americas and founded their own orders.

**1811: The Gates of Hades** coffee house burns under mysterious circumstances. Members of the Kerberos Club begin meeting in a building on the Square of Saint James off Pall Mall. No one is exactly sure how they purchased the enormous building, or for that matter precisely what the building had been before the Club made it their official house. Memories and records of the building's history, construction, and origins remain obscure, and the Strange folk who meet there seem to come and go as if they'd been doing so for years.

By the end of 1811, all the locals and neighbors of the club's House treat the increasingly Gothic building as if it has always been there, and as if the Club had always been their neighbor. When forced to give an opinion on when the Club moved in, people become confused.

**1811: The Madness of King George** necessitates the Regency Act of 1811, which allows the Prince of Wales to serve as Regent for the remainder of King George's rule. The King's condition continues

## The Old Familiar Pile

The Kerberos Club's house is only just moved to Pall Mall, isn't it? If so, then why does it feel like it's always been there? In a sense, it has. The Kerberos Club, the informal meeting of odd individuals and adventurers who gathered at the Gates of Hades to drink and gamble and dabble in dark matters, was an associate faction of a larger, Stranger, and more purposeful organization which had occupied the spot of the Club's famous house from pre-Roman times. Or so one might believe one has discovered, if one digs deep enough into Club records.

Even if this pretension for ancient origins proves false, the Gates of Hades group was certainly a faction of whatever mysterious brotherhood predated it and built the Pall Mall house. When the adventuring faction is attacked directly by agents of the King's sons, its members return to the fold, and bring with them into the stately and staid halls of the Club a vital daring and energy which had waned over the years. It also brings the imperative that the Strange should be kept from the eyes and hearts of the common folk for as long as possible, for nothing scares a monarch into dangerous action faster than a threat from within his own citizenry. And with King George III already maddened by exposure to Strange happenings, it becomes a priority.

Regardless, digging up any concrete information on the Club's true age and origin is an Investigation (-4) roll. Digging up highly plausible rumors, lies, and fictions is so easy, you have to make a successful Smarts roll to ignore them completely.

to worsen over the next nine years. The administrator of an asylum for lunatics, Dr. Samuel Foart Simmons, is summoned by the King's sons to contend with the increasingly erratic and unpredictable monarch, and Simmons begins a program of almost brutal coercion and control over the King, seeking to *force* him to adopt a civil and sane mien, less he be brutally "treated".

By 1813 the king is blind and nearly deaf, and word of his condition reaches those individuals in

the Kerberos Club who had counted him a friend in the dying lights of the last century. In a foolish and daring action, they invade Windsor Castle in the dead of night, and steal the mad King away.

*Something* is done to Dr. Simmons who was attending the King at the time, and when discovered in the morning, he is covered in blisters and twisted into an unnatural posture, (as if treated by cupping and bound in a straitjacket). He is dead, suffocated on his own vomit. The King's disappearance is hushed up by his sons and the Regent. The secrecy surrounding the King's condition makes this fairly easy. Rumors are squelched, and when required, an actor stands in for the King until the time decided for his death on January 29, 1820.

Who was actually laid to rest at the King's official funeral on the 15th of February remains a mystery, as does the final fate of mad King George III. What is known is that the Regent and the King's sons take no further action against the Kerberos Club.

King George's sons who succeed him, George IV and William IV, both die without legitimate heir, though in truth, their efforts to produce offspring seem almost preternaturally troubled: miscarriages, stillbirths, and false pregnancies plague their wives. Both are also struck with emasculating diseases late in their lives, further preventing their producing issue. Their misfortunes open the way eventually to the only surviving offspring of the Duke of Kent, their niece, Alexandrina Victoria.

**1812: A Grim Faerie Tale.** The publication of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* inspires British entomologist and folklorist William Kirby to begin his researches into the fairy tales of the United Kingdom. During his research he interviews hundreds of country and city dwellers, and finds some Strange patterns forming in the stories he uncovers and records. One recurring character which seems to crop up regularly in wildly unrelated places and periods is a young girl (always about nine years old) with a shocking mane of red

hair which gets her into trouble, usually by attracting the attention of faerie creatures or spirits. Her name is given variably as “Maeve,” “Mavra,” “Miven,” and “Muni,” and she is usually Irish.

When Kirby tracks the places mentioned in the stories, he finds that the tales of this girl seem to follow a wandering path from London to Ireland, and there, to a tiny village called Liminy. In Liminy, when he finally finds a local willing to talk to him, he learns that “Maeve” had indeed lived in that very village, until being driven out because of the trouble she brought.

“When was this?” Asked Kirby.

“Twas in my greatgran’s time, when she’s a little girl,” answered the local farmer.

“But I heard in London just this past month a tale about Maeve and her adventures along the Thames.”

And the farmer answered, “Oh, aye. When the sidhe take a liking to you, they keeps you how they like you best. Old Maeve is as young as a sprout, forever.”

Kirby returned to London, convinced he was hunting a real person rather than a myth or legend, but no one ever learns what he finds there, because in less than a year William Kirby is confined to Bethlem Hospital, and spends the rest of his days dancing and weeping, and never speaks another word.

**1812: The Empty Man.** Prime Minister Spencer Perceval is called to attend an enquiry in the House of Commons for the results of his disastrous and unpopular Orders in Council on trade, which resulted in Luddite riots and the start of the War of 1812. In the lobby of the house of commons Perceval’s progress is blocked by a blank-faced man, and before the Prime Minister can step around him, the man shoots Perceval through the heart. Before he can turn a second pistol on himself, the killer is disarmed and held for trial.

The blank-faced man is identified finally as John



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Bellingham, a failed merchant seaman, tin manufacturer and jeweler who spent several years in a Russian prison between 1803 and 1809. His estranged wife is found, and she is surprised to hear he is back in Britain at all. He stopped writing to her from Russia in 1808. No information can be had from Bellingham himself, as to all intents and purposes, he is *empty*, a puppet with cut strings. While he seemed animate enough when executing the assassination, afterwards, it is like his spirit had fled, leaving his flesh to continue on.

Bellingham is tried and found to be mentally unsound, and sentenced to spend the rest of his life in Bethlem hospital. He lives only three weeks before dehydration and malnutrition claim him. He would not even eat or drink.

Seen as a freak occurrence at the time, the assassination of Spencer Perceval is the first of the Empty Man killings.

**1813–1907: Let the Game Begin.** The contest between the British Empire and Imperial Russia for control of Central Asia is referred to as the Great Game. This conflict occasionally breaks out into war, sometimes fought by proxy. It also rages on the more rarefied planes. No fewer than half a dozen British magi are enlisted to perform Works to aid the British in holding India, but Russia ever dominates in raw occult power.

**1814: The British on U.S. Soil.** During the War of 1812 the British briefly occupy Washington, D.C. It is said British commanders eat the dinner prepared for the President of the United States from his own china, in his own dining room. They set fire to most public buildings, including the presidential mansion, but are driven from the city by freak storms which drown many of the fires with torrential rains, and destroy British ships and encampments with tornados which leave the rest of the city unharmed.

After suffering the ignominious flight from Washington, the men of *America Obscura* marshal

their occult resources and unleash mystical assaults on the invaders. They are restrained somewhat by the necessity to limit the collateral damage inflicted by the forces they unleash, but Washington still suffers appreciably. When the presidential mansion is restored it is painted white, the thick coats of paint covering powerful warding signs which are intended to safeguard the building from any future assault, and even serve to protect the building from the British aerial bombardment of 1862.

**1819: Birth of an Empire.** On the 24th of May, Alexandrina Victoria (called Dina within the family) is born to Edward the Duke of Kent by Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. Due to the vagaries of royal succession and the tragic death of the Princess Charlotte Augusta, She has become the royal heir. At Her birth, She does not cry, but this oddness about Her is lost in the general rejoicing in the household at the production of an heir. At Her christening, Charles Mannors-Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, weeps openly, and later says he couldn't credit any explanation for it, saying only that in the moment he saw the whole of the world in the child's eyes, and it was more than he could bear.

Eight months after Her birth, Victoria's father dies. Days later, it is reported that King George III has died as well. George IV takes the throne, and remains childless, and with his death it passes to his brother William who fails to beget children on any but his mistress, the actress Dorothy Jordon. Jordon's connections to the Kerberos Club, while rumored, are never proved.

Fate, or something else, makes the way clear for Victoria's rise to the throne.

**1819: Irish Eyes Upon Her.** With the death of Victoria's father so soon after Her birth, Her mother the Duchess of Kent develops a relationship with the ambitious Irish officer Sir John Conroy.

Conroy treats young Victoria as if She was his own daughter, and seeks to impress certain ideals and designs upon Her.

In truth Conroy is only one of many agents secreted in the Royal household seeking to influence the young heir before Her assumption of the crown. It isn't until She becomes Queen that his allegiances are revealed.

**1819: The SS *Savannah*,** an American steamer, crosses the Atlantic in 23 days, and is greeted with awe and consternation by British seaman and the public. America's ability to produce such a vessel threatens British naval superiority. It inspires a mad rush to develop Britain's own fleet of transatlantic steamers. In two decades, steam will bring the end of practical sail in the Atlantic.

**1821: An Empire Crumbles.** Greece becomes the first country to break away from the Ottoman Empire after the Greek War of Independence. The Empire continues to decline throughout the century, with European powers chewing away its holdings, military power, and economic influence.

**1821: Thomas de Quincey Rides the Dragon** in his autobiographic *Confessions of an Opium Eater*. He discusses with frankness the oft-taboo subjects of addiction, moral failing, and drug use. He also describes with vivid detail the hallucinations which took him when he indulged in laudanum or the smoking of opium, visions which became increasingly horrific and difficult to distinguish from reality towards the end.

To those with experience of such matters, Quincey's accounts revealed the horrible outer realms of the Otherworld in a clarity never before committed to paper. The last sections of his book are

a near map of the Gates of Karduth, and describe a safe route through the Mountains of Madness to the lands beyond with a accuracy unequalled until Lord

Dunsany's writings are published in the next century. To a certain set, Quincey's book became almost a sacred text, especially for those who indulged in drug-journeys into the Otherworld themselves.

His work also inspires inventor Samuel Berk, who combines hallucinogenic vision drugs with mid-century advances in telegraphy to create the Needle-Actuated Hallucinogenic Senso-Somatic Visualizer, a device which, when combined with a dose of Berk's carefully-formulated drug, induces dream-visions created from telegraphically transmitted information.

**1821: The Corsican Ogre Escapes at Last.** On the way to the autopsy ordered by the governor of St. Helena, the body of Napoleon Bonaparte is stolen by person or persons unknown. Agents of the World's major powers scramble to find the Emperor's body, recognizing that as symbol or as an article of occult significance, it is of unparalleled danger. Efforts are made to keep the theft secret, but fail. In the end the theft of the body is on everyone's lips.

His defeat at Waterloo six years earlier seemed to spell the end of Napoleon, but the loss of his body renders things ambiguous, and the old fears, that Napoleon was the Antichrist, come again. Was Napoleon risen from the dead in mockery of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring the end of the world? Was his body returned to life by Egyptian cultists in accordance with the arrangements he made while conquering the land of the Nile? Or was the Emperor's corpse stuffed and preserved, and dressed in full uniform, adorning the apartments of some adventuring British rogue, casually employed as a coat-rack?

**1822: The Rosetta Stone** unlocks the secrets of the ages, some of them at least. Building on the work of Thomas Young, Jean-François Champollion completes the translation, allowing previously untranslatable languages to be deciphered. All previous efforts to translate the stone had been



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quietly squashed by those who wished these writings to remain generally untranslatable, though the early intervention by Kerberan agent Colonel Tomkyns Hilgrove Turner prevented the samples of the La'sur script or examples of the Writing of Pa from falling to public examination. If those prehuman tongues had become known, the damage might have been incalculable.

**1825: Mary Shelley's *Monster*** is born. Shelly is daughter to a radical feminist and an anarchist philosopher, lover to a famous romantic poet, and friends with the likes of Byron. She is an unconventional woman to be sure, and brilliant and accomplished in her own right. In 1816, while visiting Byron in Switzerland, and inspired by the stories of the *Das Gespensterbuch*, the group of writers and poets agreed to all write ghost stories to pass the time inside during the unseasonable cold. Her initial idea was entirely uninspiring, and Mary neglected her writing until struck by a waking dream, a vision of the grotesque and horrific, and in her were planted seeds which would not sprout until later in the year when her return to Britain was met with tragedy.

She would recount after her trial the vision which inspired her as "taking me with a vividness I had never experienced, my imagination running with freedom I'd never before known, and showing me the phantasm of a form stretched out on a mortuary slab, sewn and bound by unhallowed arts, and crouching over it the specter of me myself, worn down to calloused bone, a hollow-eyed student of forbidden lessons."

Returning to Britain in September, she was shaken by the suicide of two close to her family, her half-sister Fanny and her lover Percy's first wife Harriet. Driven to maudlin depths by these deaths, her writing career faltered, but her new obsession with biology and philosophy and medicine blossomed.

She and Percy married in 1817, and their household grew with

the addition of children, as well as one of Byron's illegitimate daughters, assorted friends, fellow writers, and others. The household moved to Italy, and in Venice and Rome tragedy continued to stalk Shelley with the death of her daughter and son. Mary was driven further into her studies, and becomes estranged from her husband and friends.

The family finally settled in Pisa, where the final tragedy of her husband's death by drowning at sea was enough to unhinge her completely. She returned to Britain and to Dorset with her husband's body preserved in ice, and began to finally push her studies from the theoretical to the practical.

Three years of experimentation, dissection of corpses, and application of chemicals and electricity to dead human tissues, and her own mad and inspired will, finally meet with success in 1825. Blinded by her obsession, she can't see her creation for what it is, a hideous thing sewn from the corpses of dead men, with her husband's carefully-preserved face sewn upon another man's skull, his brain resting inside. Another man's head. Another's lungs. Another's viscera. And then the whole grotesque mess brought to perverse life.

The Monster escapes, terrified and furious and confused, and Mary pursues. The creature terrorizes Dorset for months before finally being captured and subdued, packed into ice, and carted off to London for examination. Mary's crimes against nature are revealed and she stands trial in one of the most sensational episodes of the era. The existence of the Monster is refuted and its crimes laid on Shelley herself (where physically possible) or dismissed entirely. She is convicted of grave robbing and various affronts to public order and decency, but is found mentally incompetent, and sentenced to a secure sanitarium rather than prison.

Mary Shelley dies in her cell in 1851 of a brain tumor, and her madness is blamed on this condition. During her time in confinement she writes *The New Man*, a work describing her

techniques for animating dead flesh and bringing life, but it isn't published until 1879. She claims to enjoy frequent visits from her husband through the period of her confinement, but the true fate of her Monster remains unknown.

**1829: Mars—A Dead Planet.** The anonymous explorer who penned the memoir *Lonely Planet—One Man's Journey* discovers a method of travel which carries him to the planet Mars. He is deliberately vague in his re-telling, but some mention of "Miasmatic Gases from the Earth's Core" suggests he experienced a gas-induced episode of spirit-travel. However, the very real disease he brought back with him suggests otherwise. The explorer found Mars to be a desert, and rather than home to a canal-building civilization he found only ruins and dust. Mars was dead, and the thing that killed it was loosed upon Earth with his return, the Red Age.

**1829: The Peelers Bring Order.** Sir Robert Peel sees increasing need in ever-growing London for a formal, organized, and disciplined public police service, and brings his vision into reality with a force of over a thousand constables. The impact Peel's police force has on London and its future-growth is incalculable. The blue-uniformed constables in their hardened top hats—their famous helmet appears in the 1860s—replace the irregular and freelance law enforcers within London, except for the Old City which maintains its own service. Bobbies (as they are known affectionately) or Peelers (as they are known somewhat less affectionately) become regular elements of the London tableau. They prove so successful that in coming decades the service is emulated in cities across Britain.

**1831: Launch of the HMSS *Ray*,** a submersible boat designed by British inventor Jordon St. John. The *Ray* employs electric motors improved from Faraday's design to turn drive screws of St. John's

## HMSS Ray

**Acc/Top Speed:** 3/12; **Toughness:** 18(5); **Crew:** 8  
**Notes:** Heavy Armor, Ram (AP 4, and halves damage sustained when ramming).

### Functions

The *Ray* can carry 16,000 pounds of cargo and crew at up to 60 miles per hour while submerged, and can protect its passengers from the harshest conditions of the ocean depths. When attacking it can ram a target, potentially inflicting grievous damage on even an armored ship.

Future upgrades might include sonar sensors (the *awareness* power), torpedoes (the *attack, ranged* power with area effect and armor piercing modifications), electrified hull defense (a *damage field* power with the elemental tricks modification) or improvements to acceleration and top speed (*speed* power).

own invention. The motors are powered by batteries or by an electrical dynamo driven by a steam engine, though this requires the boat to surface quickly or extend its 50-foot snorkel in order to release the coal smoke and pump in air for the fires.

The *Ray* is remarkably advanced, so much so that few beyond St. John understand its basic principles. Attempts to manufacture a sister-ship fail when St. John is unable to dedicate the time and energy to the project. Only the inventor himself can seem to make the boat work. The *Ray* sees limited service until the middle 1830s when it begins to serve as an interdiction vessel for capturing slavers without giving them the opportunity to dump their human cargo overboard. It also serves to aid in the covert landing of Crown agents on coasts from Europe to Africa. The *Ray* is continuously updated by St. John, who eventually comes to live in the boat as its resident engineer.

The *Ray* isn't the last submersible boat used in Her Majesty's service, but remains one of the most

advanced until the late 1800s when conventional shipbuilding catches up to St. John's inspired efforts.

### 1834: The Spanish Inquisition Officially Ends.

Unofficially, the Inquisition is finally brought to heel by other, more subtle arms of the Roman Church's secret workings. Augurers within the Greek Orthodox Church share their visions of the future with Rome, and the forces gathering in Britain become a major concern for the Church, despite the moderate position of the British government on Catholics. The energies previously wasted on Inquisition are redirected at inspiring certain Anglicans to embrace a more Catholic faith, and on the inspiration of trends such as the Oxford Movement.

While the Greeks can not say for sure in what form the threat to the Church will come, these stratagems seem a sound way to counter any threatening doctrine or blasphemy which might arise. The Greek augurers fail utterly to recognize that what they took to be symbolism in their visions: The Queen upon her throne of stone, lion by Her side, shield and spear ready at hand, do not represent a vague symbol of Britannia but actually show Britain's next monarch near the end of Her reign.

**1835: Expedition to Atlantis.** Employing the remarkable submersible HMSS *Ray*, an expedition of scientists and adventurers follow a fragmentary map purporting to reveal the location of a sunken city built somewhere about the Mid Atlantic Ridge. The map was recovered from the ruined Temple of Ling'Yoh in Tibet two decades previously, and lay ignored in a display case in an elderly collector's drawing room. But with the advent of the *Ray*, real investigation proved possible.

The submersible boat descends, following the route outlined by the map, and discovers not a single city but dozens if not hundreds of individual settlements strung all along the ridge. Where there appear to be true cities, monolithic structures of cut



basalt, they are ruined and abandoned. But more shocking, the smaller settlements are inhabited. While not the correct term, or even a translation of these amphibious people's own word for themselves, they quickly became known as Atlanteans, though the general consensus is that they are in fact either a debased form of the ancient pre-humans, or some opportunists who later occupied the cyclopean cities.

The Atlanteans are a tribal culture, much concerned with matters of honor and blood. Much of their energy is spent in pursuing ages-old feuds with their neighbors. The arrival of the humans in a machine is seen by many as an opportunity, and the humans as possible allies against tribal enemies. Into this political chaos the human explorers arrive, and they quickly find themselves negotiating in the name of their nation.

After some missteps, deaths, and the start of war, a tenuous relationship is established with the largest of the Atlantean tribes. So begins an exchange of ideas and trade, kept as secret as possible from the rest of the great powers.

**1837: Hegel's Philosophy of Secret History** is published posthumously by Eduard Gans. Hegel's theory of history is underpinned by his theory of *secret* history, that all recorded events, while seemingly encompassed by the *Geist*, are in fact equally encompassed by the *Shattengeist*, the shadow-spirit of society. These two spiritual worlds combine to form the *Weltgeist*, the "world spirit." The struggle between shadow and light is the engine which drives history, the overt and the obvious events push human history in one direction, while the secret motivators pull it in another.

Moderating between these dichotomous forces are the *Volkgeist*, great individuals such as Napoleon who can shape the *Geist* in dramatic ways, and other shadowy unnamed individuals who can shape the *Shattengeist* in equally dramatic ways. Between these two, there are those who would come to be known as Strangers. Hegel names these individuals torn between the two worlds *Gaunergeist*, spirits with no allegiance to either of history's driving forces, wild cards, rogue elements in the history of man.

His work is dismissed as rambling and incoherent (as well as dangerously paranoid) by many in the

academic community, and Hegel's reputation is targeted for destruction by the world's squabbling secret masters, whose appletart he so nearly upsets. Yet his ideas have their defenders, and his final work is widely read. In the coming decades it becomes essential reading for intellectuals trying to make sense of the chaos of the late 19th century.

**1837: Victoria Regina Imperatrix.** Four weeks after Her 18th birthday, Victoria is awakened to the news that Her uncle, William IV has died, and She is now Queen.

In his journal, Lord Conynham writes of bringing the news to young Victoria:

"When I informed Her that Her uncle had passed, something came over Her, almost as if I could see the aura of authority descend upon Her. She nodded Her head, and thanked me for bringing the news so promptly, and I felt uncannily proud of having Her say so. So much so, that I left with a feeling of profound disquiet, and no small fear. In Her eyes I saw something go out, some spark, and in its place something new take light, and it made me afraid."

Victoria Herself writes, "Momma woke me at 6 o'clock to tell me Conynham was here with news. He told me that my poor uncle was no more, and that I was now Queen. I told him that I knew it already."

During Her first three years of rule, Victoria seems to rely on the Whig PM Lord Melbourne for council, but doesn't seem overly discommoded when Melbourne resigns in 1839 over the rebellions of 1837 in Canada.

**1839: The Bedchamber Crisis** threatens Queen Victoria's political alliance with Sir Robert Peel, a Tory She had commissioned to form a new ministry. Sir Robert wishes to appoint new Ladies of the Bedchamber, attendants upon the Queen whose posts are ones of political patronage. Victoria regards the Ladies who had been appointed by the previous Whig administration as personal friends, and

refuses to countenance new attendants. Sir Robert, feeling that he can not govern effectively under the restrictions placed upon him by the Queen, almost resigns his commission until Victoria invites him to a private council to discuss the matter.

When Peel emerges from his meeting with the Queen, he looks like a man who has found religion. He retracts his objections, saying that the Queen had explained Her position with such reason and sense that he felt comfortable proceeding with the new ministry. Sir Robert Peel would be one of the Queen's strongest supporters and confidants in the years to come.

**1840: A Royal Wedding.** On February 10, Queen Victoria weds Her first cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, whom She had met two years previously. Prince Albert isn't an especially popular choice, too German, too foreign perhaps. But he and Victoria have an immediate and profound rapport. Prince Albert (later granted the official title of Prince Consort) fills his somewhat difficult public role with grace.

Prince Albert is athletic, well educated, erudite, witty, and quite savvy at political matters. His counsel becomes invaluable to the young Queen, who knows She can always rely upon Albert to have Her interests at heart.

**1840: An Assassin's Bullets** shatter a happy afternoon riding on Constitution Hill for Queen Victoria and Her husband. Edward Oxford, a young man of 18, fires twice at the Queen, apparently missing both times. He is quickly apprehended and disarmed, though he thrashes and raves. Victoria, against all Her attendants' and Her husband's advice, approaches the young man, and they lock eyes for a moment. Oxford's ravings about "the last empire" quiet, and he begins to silently weep, and then is unable to meet the Queen's gaze again.

He is acquitted of High Treason due to insanity, and

committed to Bethlem Hospital until 1864, when, while being transported to the newly-opened Broadmore Hospital, he himself is assassinated by an unknown man with a revolver.

This assailant turns the pistol on himself immediately after slaying Oxford. It is supposed by those who study such things that this second assassin was an Empty Man, but no evidence exists to support he was anything more than another maniac.

**1840: The Queen's Displeasure.** Secure in Her marriage, Victoria exerts Her royal prerogatives and banishes over a dozen members of the royal household: courtiers and privy councilors, including Sir John Conroy, who had watched over Her since Her first year. In the official edict She says, "With a new Queen, one must have new Ideas and new Approaches, and not cling so closely to times long past. We foresee great changes and great wonders for Our Kingdom, so let these changes begin with Our own Household."

Victoria had discerned that Her circles and councils had been well infiltrated by agents of secret powers, and She would not have it any longer. Resentful of Conway's familiarity and efforts to impose his will upon Her, She lets it be known to those She banishes that She knows their purposes, and that they and their associates will hereafter be watched. In Conway's case, She lets it be known that he is being exiled from the court for his affairs with one of Her Ladies of the Bedchamber. This added note of malice damages Conway's reputation further, as the official reason for his banishment is so ignominious.

When Peel's Special Branch is formed the following year, they are tasked with the duty to catalog, track, and if need be, persecute secret orders and fraternal societies of domestic or foreign origin.

Sir John Conway lives the remainder of his life under constant (and obvious) surveillance, and never again enjoys the privileges of influence over the Queen.

**1840: Penny Post.** The age of the written word blossoms fully with the introduction of the penny post, which makes sending correspondences affordable to many more people. A great deal more of the weird and the uncanny is committed to paper now; the correspondences of the period contain references to unusual events and happenings, and the improved communication this affords begins to shed light on the world's hidden matters.

**1840: Spark of Brilliance.** The electric light is invented, but it will be years before it becomes widespread and easily manufactured.

**1841: Secret Police for Secret Crimes.** Special Branch is founded under the direction of Sir Robert Peel, who sees the need for a secret branch of the police force to handle unconventional crime and attend to matters too sensitive or unpleasant to impose on ordinary officers of the law.

**1842: Year of Assassins.** Victoria is plagued by a series of assassination attempts, some clearly genuine, some perhaps the efforts of desperate, attention-seeking individuals.

In May, in St. James Park, one John Francis fires a pistol at Her Majesty, but is quickly apprehended and disarmed by police constables. When tried, his death sentence is commuted in favor of transportation.

In July, John William Bean fires his pistol at the Queen though his gun is loaded only with powder and no bullet.

In August, Francis Bell throws a homemade black-powder explosive onto the roof of the royal carriage as it passes, but Victoria's quick-thinking coachman throws the bomb away before it explodes. Bell is captured at his apartment later in the day, tried, and convicted. In light of the earlier attempts, and the belief that the attempts were encouraged by Oxford's acquittal, Bell is convicted of High Treason and sentenced to hang. He kills himself in his cell

while awaiting the sentence to be carried out.

Finally, an unknown assailant fires a rifle at the Queen from a rooftop while She walks in Hyde Park. She is lightly wounded in Her side by the small-caliber bullet, but Her assailant is never captured. She quickly recovers from the injury, and as terrifying as Albert and Her entourage find the attack She seems to take it entirely in stride. In the years to follow, however, the re-opening of this wound often heralded trouble for Her Empire.

These assassination attempts lead Albert to encourage Parliament to pass the Treason Act of 1842, which grants the royal household powers to investigate possible threats to Her Majesty's safety, and to preemptively act to prevent such attempts in future. These powers are granted to Peel's Special Branch by royal decree.

**1844: The Great Disappointment.** The calculations of the Millerite movement promise the return of Jesus Christ on October 22, and His failure to return is devastating to the Millerites. The fanatical core become the Liberationists, a conspiracy-driven sect who decide the reason Christ failed to appear on the appointed date was that His enemies, *the Enemy*, had somehow captured the Returned Lord and were holding him. As the century wears on, the identity of the Enemy's agents changes from Catholics to the Irish to the Hindus to the Russians to the Americans, finally coming to rest upon Victoria Herself, one more mad voice among so many at century's end.

**1844: Founding of Bábism.** Persian Prophet the Báb announces to the world the his revelation of the coming of "He whom God shall make manifest," founding Bábism. Báb is considered the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith. He also speaks of "God's Angel, come to cut out the rot of our world with fire and sword, and woe to those upon whose face Her gaze will fall."

**1844: A Hunger for Revolution.** Irish nationalist and writer John Mitchell writes that the potato disease which threatens the lives of millions of Irish might be an inducement to true revolution, hunger being one of the great motivators of history. His further writings on the repeal of the Acts of Union eventually see him tried and sentenced to transportation. On the eve of his sentence he mysteriously vanishes from his prison cell and is never seen again in public. He continues to write and organize from the shadows, and it is rumored he made some deal or pact with ungodly things, faerie or something worse, to preserve his freedom so long as he fights for the cause of Irish independence. Rumors of his activities continue into the early 1900s, but all describe him as he appeared in 1844, eternally as he was, eternally fighting for the Republican cause.

**1845: Famine in Ireland.** The Irish Potato Famine begins to be recognized by the larger world. Potatoes are the staple food crop for millions of Irish farmers and laborers who work to produce valuable grains and other exports. Even as starvation begins to take the people, Ireland remains a net exporter of food. British policy exacerbates the famine, as does trade, land use, and other systems. The famine reaches its peak in 1848. Millions are starving, hundreds of thousands are already dead. In County Tipperary one William Smith Obrian, a member of the Young Ireland party, and founding member of the Irish Confederation, leads displaced farmers in an open rebellion against the landowners. The situation only worsens.

**1845: London's Secret Monarch.** The Turk begins its reign over the London underworld, organizing the city's crime and vice with its mechanical prescience. The Turk becomes fully engaged for the first time, the very limits of its mechanical genius challenged by the complexities of this new game.

Mr. Turk becomes something of a legend, and not everyone in official circles wishes him exposed or removed. It is reasoned that a certain amount of crime is unavoidable, and if this Mr. Turk can so well organize it that it never need blight the lives or sight of proper people and good citizens, then in the end, how could it be an evil? If the Turk were capable of it, he would smirk with satisfaction at how well his human pawns perform the moves he dictates for them.

**1846: Potato Blight Nearly Averted.** Amateur mycologist the Rev. M. J. Berkeley recognizes the Irish potato blight as a fungal condition. Berkeley experiments with several formulations, and concocts a cheap powdered agent which will purge afflicted potatoes of the blight. Before he can publish his results or solicit the charitable contributions needed to purchase the agent in large quantities, he is murdered in the street by an assailant identified as Alvis Monroe, an unemployed laborer and known drunkard. When apprehended (after attempting to commit suicide with the knife used to slay Rev. Berkeley), Monroe is found to be blank—emptied off all thought. When the report reaches London, the headlines read “Empty Man Strikes Again!” Without Rev. Berkeley’s antifungal agent, over a million Irish die of starvation in the next five years, and millions more abandon their homeland to seek fortune in other lands.

**1847: The *Strange*.** Thomas Babington Macaulay (Whig MP for Edinburgh) coins the term “*Strange*” in a letter written to the *Edinburgh Review*.

**1848: Power to the People.** A decade of revolutionary politics is distilled and published in the Communist Manifesto. It includes the reference to the Strange: “Those possessed of means and abilities beyond the ken of other mortals may seem to stand above their fellow workers, being a natural-born elite (or a natural under-

class, to be exploited), but these powers are not a thing for the aggrandizement of the self, but a call to greater service to communal concerns.”

**1849: Strife in the Otherworld.** The assassination of Lord Seigh Mulligan, the Faerie Regent of Ireland, throws the Otherworld into chaos. The lords and ladies of Faerie lose all cohesion and begin scrabbling for power, fighting small wars in the Otherworld, which imprint upon the real world as rebellions and outbreaks of mad violence. The factional common faerie, with their nationalistic drives inherited from the Republican humans they so admire, begin chafing for all-out rebellion. Only the official visit of Queen Victoria Herself to Ireland brings calm.

With a newly awakened awareness of the Otherworld, She peers across the landscape and sees what has been wrought there. The Faerie Lords take the wasting Irish farmers into their service, even as they fade away from their mortal lives. The more they weaken, the more their shades grow strong in the Otherworld, and the harder their inhuman masters work them in their fields to grow the weird crops of those uncanny lands. Her Majesty is plainly outraged.

Within the Otherworld, Her awakening Grace is a physical force, a beacon to the half-dead Irish souls who labor. Infuriated by the abuse of Her subjects by these inhuman beings, She raises the call to all the dead and dying: “Rally! Rally to your Queen, and rise!” Inspired by Victoria’s luminous presence, the shades take up weapons of light and faith, and follow Victoria to war.

In the waking world, Victoria’s entourage keeps the Queen’s uncanny actions as much a secret as they can, though meddlers from the Kerberos Club puzzle out the nature of Her Strange absence from official events, and offer what aid they might in Her fight.

Prince Albert is deeply upset by his wife and love’s Strangeness; the manner She adopts when

looking into the Otherworld is terrible, imperious, and icily inhuman. Though he can not see it, the punishments She imposes on captured Irish Faerie Lords are horrific.

Victoria calls the loyal faerie to Her, playing rivals against one another until She amasses the forces needed to crush all opposition. By the end of the season Her alliance fights and wins, and She claims the ancient rights to the Throne of Briar, the seat of the Irish faerie monarch. With Her army of ghosts and loyal faerie knights, She assumes the title of Queen of Faerie, a crown which had not been held since Queen Titania's assassination by British protestant magi during Elizabeth I's reign.

Victoria's later discoveries about the nature of the Famine, and those conspirators who engineered it, do not shake Her will to keep Ireland in the Union, nor the wisdom of Her assumption of the Faerie crown. It does lead to certain reprisals against those who had calculated the million Irish deaths needed to gain Her these honors and prerogatives. Over the next decade She will push for political reform, and replace the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland with one tasked with relieving Irish suffering. Her popularity in Ireland remains high, and even among the serious Republicans She is never regarded as the problem—rather the politicians in London are. She even goes so far as to establish a Royal Residence in Killarney, a move which continues to reinforce Her popularity among Irish human and inhuman.

When Victoria emerges from the Otherworld Albert is mightily relieved to see Her sweetness return. She is Herself again. But he will never forget Her terrible aspect when the mask of the Strange descended over Her.

**1849: The Speed of Light.** French scientist Hippolyte Fizeau, a member of the Société Scientifique Impériale, determines a method of accurately measuring the speed of light. He then proves that this speed can not be exceeded by any known method, but can be *circumvented*, a process

by which an object is made to vanish from one location, and to appear in another before the light carrying the image of the first location reaches the second location. He is assisted in his investigations by a mysterious French Stranger called only Mirage, a man who claims he can vanish and reappear anywhere he had ever previously been, traveling in an instant.

**1850: Victoria Needs No Protector.** After several years of quiet, the assassins once again threaten the Queen. Ex-military officer Robert Pate leaps into Victoria's carriage, shoots Her companion, and strikes Her with his pistol three times. His blows crush Her bonnet, but before a fourth can land She catches his descending wrist, meets his eyes, and then crushes his bones by closing Her hand around them. The Queen is entirely unharmed, and Pate is captured and handed over to Special Branch.

The story of the Queen fending off the assassin spreads and is widely reported. It becomes one more indication that Her Majesty is becoming something greater than merely human.

Robert Pate is never seen or heard from again.

**1850: London Grows Greater.** The population of London has more than doubled since 1800, and sits around two million five hundred thousand. More than two-thirds of these people were not born in the city. The population is majority female, and young. Birthrates are climbing, and infant mortality is declining. People from every corner of the world live and work in London.

**1850–1865: The Taiping Rebellion** begins in southern China against the Qing government. It is led by two self-professed mystics, Hong Xiuquan, an unorthodox Christian convert claiming to be the immortal brother of Jesus Christ, and Yang Xiuqing, a former salesman who claims to speak with the voice of God. Their claims to supernatural power

are not independently verified until 1860, but both possess a remarkable capacity for imposing their wills upon others.

Together, they establish the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, and by 1865 control significant portions of southern China. While ostensibly one of the most egalitarian governments in the world (society is officially classless and sexless, with land held by the administration, and women admitted to the army and civil service) it is horribly mismanaged, with most efforts being spent keeping the two-million man army in discipline and supply. Brutality, corruption, and misrule are endemic, even as Hong and Yang begin to assume a demagogical role, claiming divine parentage, inspiration, and powers. Still, those who they personally influence remain frantically loyal, and utterly without mercy when dealing with the Kingdom's enemies.

The greatest violence of the Taiping Rebellion coincides with the American Civil War, when Europe's eyes were not turned East. The final fall of the Heavenly Kingdom is hastened by its defeat when marching against Shanghai by combined Imperial forces and Major-General Charles George Gordon's army, British forces sent to protect British interests in China and to fight the second Opium War. Gordon's troops are equipped with the Lorica Victoria—armor (page 137) which renders them nearly invulnerable to the small arms of the Heavenly Army. This is the first wartime use for the miraculous armor, but not the last.

By the end, the death toll of the 15 years of violence tops twenty million souls.

**1850: Conservation of Energy.** William Thomson, 1st Baron Kelvin, publishes a paper detailing his experimental observations related to the theories of James Prescott Joule in which he concludes that "...

via the conversion of heat to mechanical energy and the inverse of this process, every system bleeds a portion of its motive energy in the form of one or the

other, eventually resulting in the system achieving equilibrium of motion and temperature. Overcoming this inevitable loss would require *compensation*, the injection of new energy into the system. This would in essence be an act of *creation*. And with this essential conservation of energy being a provable fact, such an act must by definition be *divine*, or possessing a similar, if more limited, capacity to the *Almighty*, as with Subject C's ability to generate heat to the point of combustion."

In one paper, Lord Kelvin establishes the law of conservation of energy, and establishes the circumstances in which that law might be broken, in essence, by a *god*. His own theological views color his interpretation of the science and his experiments with three Touched individuals (one who could start fires, one who could rejuvenate diseased and aged flesh—even restoring life to dead tissue—and one who could move short distances without passing through the intervening space) led him to believe that such violations of natural law were due to the influence of a higher power, and energy entering the universe from *outside*. While it is never confirmed, some suspected Kelvin of consorting with the Kerberos Club.

**1851: New Birmingham.** With Her title and throne secure in the Otherworld, Victoria personally finances the establishment of a permanent British colony in Faerie. Off of Ireland's Southern coast, behind a veil of constant mist, the settlement of New Birmingham is founded. Powerful economic and industrial powers are informed of the new territory and offered a Crown charter to establish the colony. Experts in Faerie Law are recruited to negotiate with the lesser common faerie, and enormous drogue stones marked with the signs of Victoria's rulership establish the boundaries of the colony.

The drogues (similar in metaphysical design to Egyptian obelisks, henge stones, or the stone anchors found atop Mount Ararat) create a zone of stability within the phantasmagoria of Faerie, bringing enough sanity to allow daily life to be lived and men

to be about their business.

The journey to New Birmingham is somewhat uncertain, and extremely perilous without the ship carrying a drogue aboard. The colony, so geographically close to the center of British power and manufacturing, yet so easily secured, becomes a favorite place to exile those Touched. Let them fight the wild faerie and the Strange things lurking beyond the drogue wall, pushing the region of British control. Perhaps they will win their fortunes and add to British might. Perhaps they will perish. Either way, their energies are at worst harmlessly dispersed.

Escape without a drogue stone is difficult. The mists are confusing, distorting perception as well as time and space. One criminal who dives from the deck of the ship which brought him, trusting in his powerful physique to allow him to swim back to the mainland, finds when he arrives that twenty years have passed, and it is 1881. His wife married another man and bore him children, finally dying of typhus in 1875. All his friends are either dead or gone, and the world itself had changed out of all recognition. He surrenders to the authorities, and is sentenced again to transportation for his escape.

The colony becomes the engine which drives the consumer explosion later in the century. As the industrial exploitation of Faerie becomes more and more efficient, goblin-crafted goods flood British and world markets, extremely well made, with extremely low costs.

Only in the dying years of the century will the dire consequences of this exploitation be reaped.

**1851: Her Majesty's Strangeness** begins to alarm Her husband, the Prince Consort. Victoria increasingly takes an active hand in politics, and approves some measures which Albert finds questionable. She is also becoming more remote, more alien to him, and Her skin is becoming, as he would write decades later, "...cool to the touch, a skin of marble." While She still has great affection for Albert, even that is cooling. And sometimes She altogether frightens

him. Since Her troubled time in Ireland, and the assassination attempt of 1850, there is something positively inhuman about Her. Something terrible.

The growing estrangement between the previously loving couple can not be kept secret, and only grows through the decade. It leads to a certain general anxiety which possibly encourages the resurgence of conservative social trends after the Crimean War.

**1852: Man Takes Flight.** Henri Giffard, a French engineer and aeronautical pioneer, flies a lighter-than-air craft lifted by hydrogen with propellers turned by a small steam engine. When reports of the flight reach British inventor Sir George Cayley, they inspire him to begin examining the possibility of a craft combining the lifting properties of an airship with the then-theoretical properties of fixed-wing flight. Even at the advanced age of 79 he is driven beyond any of his previous efforts, and throws his fortune behind what becomes known as the Cayley Airframe.

Unlike a balloon or airship, which derives its lift entirely from the lighter-than-air gasses contained in the bag, a Cayley Airframe employs lifting gas to offset only a portion of its total weight. His experiments set this to about two-thirds in most situations. The remainder of the lift is provided by the unique shape of the airframe itself, which encloses the gas cells and sports stumpy wings. The tail of the craft is short, and provides horizontal stability. When the first manned models are tested in 1855, the press dubs them "Flying Pumpkin Seeds" due to their distinct shape.

Cayley and his engineer Thomas Vick work unceasingly on the airframe, perfecting the internal support structure, owes much to suspension bridges for its strength. They contract the creation of reinforced materials to serve as gas bags. They invest in small steam engines to drive airscrews, and then in electric motors. The final result of two

years of non-stop effort is the *Gull*, the world's first production-model flying machine.

Twenty meters long, with a carrying capacity of nearly half a ton, the *Gull* is directed in its flight with a cable-controlled series of planes and elevators. Before more of the craft can be produced, Cayley dies, and Vick is contacted by agents of the Crown to work on a project for the state, HMAS *Queen*.

**1852: Volta's Folly.** William Volta, inventor and alleged illegitimate son of Alessandro Volta, demonstrates to the British Army's purchasing agents the Electrophorus Firing Piece, a complex pistol-like device which is capable of generating a concentrated static charge across distances of up to twenty paces. "With the refinements possible through further research and testing, I can confidently say that the effective range of the Electrophorus Firing Piece can be increased to dwarf those of a conventional rifled shoulder-arm, and further, the advantages of this new application of my theory of recursive charging loops make it possible for a single private soldier to carry enough ammunition in his pack for an entire campaign, freeing him of the chains of supply."

While Volta's firing piece is remarkable, it is too great a departure for the hidebound army, and not powerful or long-reaching enough for the navy. His efforts are further frustrated by an inability to convey to listeners just what his theories mean, or how the firing piece actually works. It seems plain to him, but baffling nonsense to others. Yet the pistol can indeed stun a horse insensible with a single charge. In the end Volta fails to interest the military authorities, and his research flounders for lack of funding.

Then, in the winter of 1852 an advertisement appears in several major British newspapers offering the "Voltaic Lightning Pistol" for sale as "A Kingly Defense for the English Home." But the difficulties

in translating the esoteric science into practical design set the price beyond the reach of even the gadget-obsessed middle class. By the middle of the next

year Voltaic Firearms is out of business, and its remaining stock of firing pieces dumped into the secondary market at cut-rate prices by solicitors for the company's creditors. By the end of 1853, the fifth of the so-called "Lightning Outrages" had occurred, victims stunned insensible and robbed blind in the streets. By this point Volta had vanished from Britain, and agents of the courts or those seeking to bring suit against him could find him nowhere.

**1853: The Howling 13th.** Ever enamored by the conjunction of magic and industry, Prince Albert presents Victoria with a gift of a dozen *Wolfriemen*, or Wolf Belts, folk-objects of great magical power from Coburg where Albert was born. When worn, a Wolf Belt transforms a person into a huge wolf, sometimes as large as a pony. They were traditionally the providence of witches and evil men who sold their souls for power, but the Prince's alchemical engineers found a way to replicate the belts, and in the process of deciphering how they functioned rendered their use morally and spiritually neutral. Used to bring terror, they are objects of evil; used to defend the good, they are righteous. Queen Victoria commissions the creation of Wolfriemen enough to equip a regiment, and Her Lupine Rangers soon become the vanguard of Her armies, scouting, foraging, skirmishing, and raiding.

**1854: Holy War in the Crimea.** Through the perturbations of treaty and alliance, Britain finds itself supporting ally France in its claims as protector of the Holy Land. Napoleon III applies diplomatic pressure and has the Ottoman Empire declare France the sole sovereign authority over the Holy Land. Russia immediately objects, holding earlier treaties from the 1700s granting them the status as defender of the Christian Faith. France ups the ante by dispatching warships to the Black Sea, and forces a new agreement denying Russia their claims in the Holy Land. Tsar Nicholas I responds by deploying troops along the Danube.

## Zeus' Thunderbolt in Common Hands

The Electrophorus Firing Piece is an example of the trouble that can be had when a Stranger's inspired inventions are made in such a way that the common person can use them, or worse, manufacture them. Once something like this escapes it is remarkably difficult to see it put back away, and by the 1850s even the Kerberos Club is finding it impossible to contain outbreaks of the Strange like this.

### Electrophorus Firing Piece

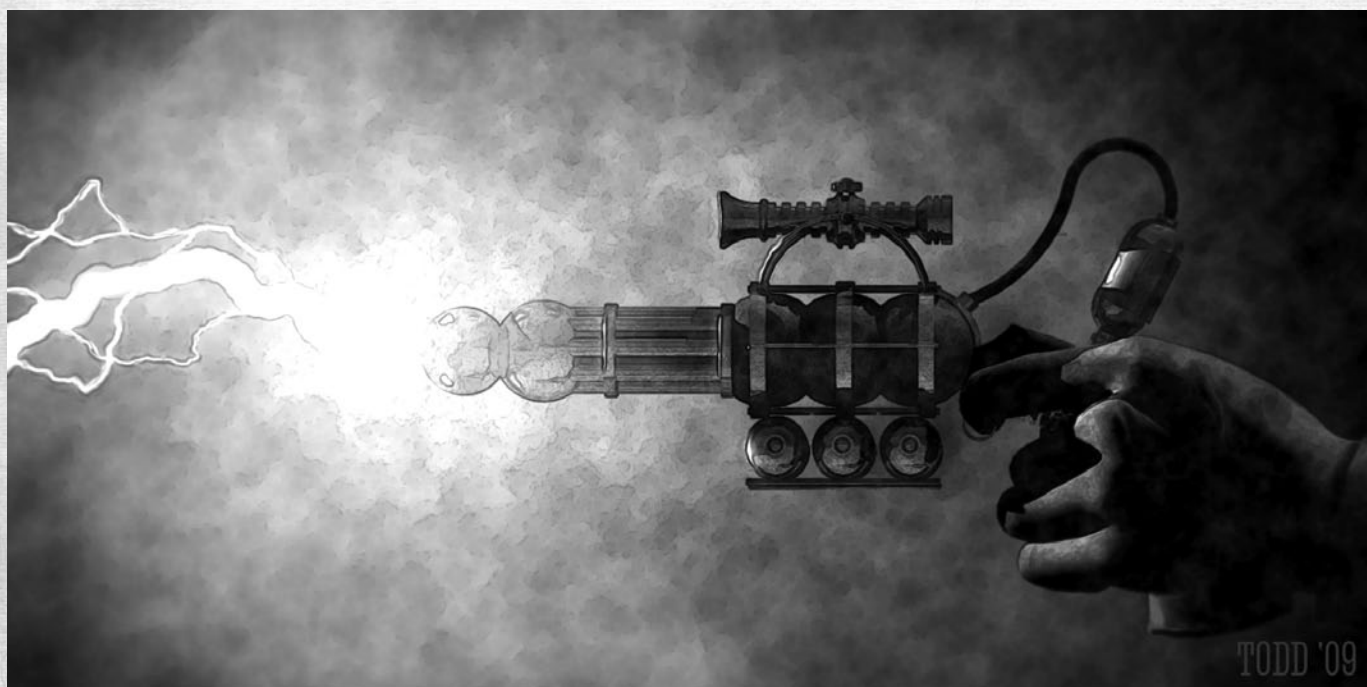
*Stun (2):* Device, Elemental Trick—Electricity, Limited Shots (six shots; see page 208), Manufacturable (see page 208), Smaller (see page 208), Stronger.

Volta's invention is a gun which must be fired using the wielder's Shooting skill, and can only affect one

target. The victim must roll Vigor at  $-2$  or be Shaken and take 1d6 damage. The device can be manufactured; each piece costs £1 to build, takes a week to put together, and has a street value of £2.

No muss, no fuss, and only occasionally lethal—no wonder the weapon proves so popular with the gangs of robbers who adopt it as their signature armament. It is a surer way of rendering a victim helpless than striking him with a cosh or life-preserver.

The firing piece becomes a symbol of power in London's criminal underworld. The slang for one of these weapons is "Spark," and Cockney rhyming slang for it is "on the mark," leading to expressions like "Not to worry lads, I've got it on," meaning, "Do not concern yourself, for I am armed with an Electrophorus Firing Piece."



A flurry of diplomatic moves and military posturing follows, finally culminating in an attack on Russian troops along the Danube by Ottoman forces, and the attack of Ottoman ships at anchor by the Russian navy. This gives Britain and France the justification to join the armed hostilities fully, and soon it is war.

**1854: The Engines of War.** The Crimean War sees the advent of many new technologies, some of them military applications of civilian innovations such as railroads and telegraph lines, and some unique to the theaters of war, such as the electrically-triggered Russian contact mines used to form naval blockades in defense of Cronstadt and Sebastopol. And still Stranger things found their way onto the battlefields.

The graying British sea-wolf Thomas Cochrane proposes a steam-driven armored land vehicle, the proposal for which arrives on the desk of an Army official at the same moment Henry Bessemer's concept for a spin-stabilized rocket-propelled artillery projectile. Both prospects have their drawbacks. Cochrane's machine is seen initially as inhuman. War was the realm of men struggling against men, and the thought of mechanizing war like a Birmingham mill offends many of the hidebound old guard deeply.

But these and other innovations find a champion in Sir William Bellfore, a charismatic and energetic officer whose duties include certain particular exigencies related to the application of Strange matters to Her Majesty's armed forces. The young colonel is said to have the ear of the Prince Consort.

When Bessemer threatens to take his concept to the French for development, Bellfore acts, securing Bessemer funds for the development of his innovation. The difficulties in casting an iron gun barrel strong enough to contain the forces

required to fire this new type of projectile result in the creation of Bessemer's famous process by which steel

could be more cheaply manufactured. Working feverishly, and prodded along by Bellfore's constant attention, he completes the first of the infamous Bessemer Volcanic Guns by the end of the year.

The aptly-named Volcanic guns fire a ten-inch rocket down a long rifled barrel made from Bessemer's refined steel. The spin imparted to the rockets overcomes the inherent instability common to rocket projectiles, and the astonishing velocities carried by the projectiles allow extremely flat ballistic trajectories across long ranges. Each rocket carries an explosive charge as well, and can be loaded with canisters of grapeshot for use against massed troops. The roar and gout of flames generated by the guns' firing becomes a horror for the defenders of Sevastopol.

Parallel to the development of Bessemer's guns is work on a method of carrying the out-sized artillery and its rocket-propelled explosive projectiles. Ever wily, Cochrane has already patented the most viable design for such transport along with his collaborator on the Tunneling Shield machine, Sir Marc Isambard Brunel. The Cochrane-Brunel Mechanized Gun-Carriage draws together the work of earlier innovators and adds new refinements. The final result is a terrifying machine, larger than two steam locomotives and driven by two parallel linked metal tracks based on James Boydell's "Infinite Railway Tracks."

The tracks are extremely wide to bear the weight of the machine on soft ground. The machine is armored like an ironclad warship, and when first seen on the battlefield it is called simply The Monster. Its crew must communicate with signs, as the engines are so loud as to make speech impossible.

The Monster's twin steam engines are fired by bitumen and based on Cochrane's own design. Its maximum speed is at best a fast marching pace, but it can maintain this pace over extremely rough terrain. Before the end of the war, seven Cochrane-Brunel Mechanized Gun-Carriages are constructed and five see service.

A special landing craft must be constructed to transport the Carriages, and of the five machines which see service, two are lost when their sea craft capsizes during the landing at Sevastopol. The remaining three Carriages and their hellish armaments aid in the winning of a decisive end to the siege of Sevastopol in June of 1855.

Correspondent for the *Times*, William Howard Russell, writes of the Volcanic Guns and the Monster which bears them, "...They advanced in a line of three, quickening the pace as they closed towards the massed defenders.... At the distance of 1,500 yards the great guns rose on their articulated mounts, and from their iron throats, a flood of fire, and the roaring of the emerging shells, driven on a column of flame and smoke.... So loud was this firing that the officers were pressed to keep order in the ranks, and their mounts beneath them, and none cheered these terrible monsters, though they be chained into British service against Her enemies."

**1854: Wolves of Crimea.** The 13th Lupine Rangers see their first active service in the Crimean War. Fresh and raw, the hand-picked solders and officers are selected for their personal loyalty to Prince Albert, their patriotism and their mental stability, but even their truly supernatural powers cannot compensate entirely for the incompetence of the British command. In truth, the Earl of Cardigan simply doesn't know what to do with the unconventional regiment, and thoroughly resents having "damned unnatural dogs" foisted upon him.

Are they cavalry? Fusiliers? Skirmishers? He gravely insults the commander of the Lupine Rangers at table, a colonel of Canadian origin named Sir Albert Brennan, by commenting to his staff officers loud enough for the whole mess tent to hear, "And what am I to do with the Prussian dogs? I might use them to hunt, but the game is damned thin on the ground hereabouts, and so they just whine for attention and bark 'til I put the boot to them."

The Rangers continue to go without clear

mission, serving mostly as pickets and sentries (a job they do exceptionally well, being able to smell the difference in friend and foe). All Colonel Brennan's efforts to see them better used fail until the notorious Battle of Balaclava, where the 13th sees its name writ large in British military history and the popular imagination. For the first time, entirely unconventional and indeed Strange soldiers make a decisive difference.

When orders come to Lord Cardigan to secure Russian batteries and keep the Russians from carrying off the guns, he assumes the order refers to the batteries at the end of the valley between Fedyukhin Heights and the Causeway Heights, when it actually refers to the small batteries along the ridge of the Causeway Heights.

Cardigan orders his Light Brigade into full charge, down a long incline, and into the teeth of the Russian guns in a foolhardy and ill-conceived action, and almost immediately the Russian guns make a butcher's shop of the advancing cavalry. Left behind without clear orders, Brennan is quoted as saying, "Damned fool, damned fool!" before ordering his men to assume their wolfen posture. He directs two detachments to ascend the ridges on either side of the valley and silence the batteries there which pound the cavalry, and the rest to follow his lead.

Using their supernatural speed the Rangers out-pace the charging cavalry, skirting the edge of the Fedyuknin Heights for the cover it provides from the batteries, and engage the Russian artillery position fully minutes before Cardigan's force arrives. The slaughter is phenomenal, and after an initial devastating volley of grapeshot tears into the Rangers the Russians break and run before their remorseless teeth and claws. The fleeing Russian gunners slam into the advancing Russian cavalry, with the wolves of the 13th on their heels. The Russian cavalry break en masse, the riders losing all control to the maddened horses suddenly confronted by nearly a hundred howling, enormous, bloody, nearly bullet-proof wolves.



The shock of the assault shatters the Russian lines, and when the Light Brigade arrives at the gun redoubt it is left with mopping up and holding ground. Despite horrific early casualties—more than half its men are slain—the Light Brigade is saved the worst of it by Brennan's quick action. Of the 200 men and officers of the 13th Lupine Rangers, forty are dead, twenty-five further injured, but by all accounts they have bested artillery, cavalry, rifle, and well over six thousand enemy troops.

When news of the victory reaches Britain two weeks later, an account of the battle is published in a special edition of the *London Gazette* of 12 November 1854. It reveals the confusion and seeming incompetence of the British command, but also highlights the awesome success of the Rangers. The 13th becomes a sensation, and the third and fourth stanzas of Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* immortalize the action:

3.  
 Cannon to right of them  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon in front of them  
 Volley'd and thunder'd;  
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
 But along the ridge and swell,  
 opened the Jaws of Death  
 To drag Russian souls to Hell  
 Shielding the six hundred.

4.  
 Flash'd all their fangs bare,  
 Flash'd as howls cut the air,  
 Mauling the gunners there,  
 Charging an army, while  
 All the world wonder'd:  
 Plunged in the battery-smoke  
 Right thro' the line they broke;  
 Cossack and Russian  
 Reel'd a clawing stroke  
 Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
 Their golden stare, the lines a'broke  
 Awaiting the six hundred.

## Wolfriemen (9)

*Animal Control (4)*: Device, Requires Activation, Negate (hear his full name spoken), Single Animal (wolf), Shapechanger.

*Armor (1)*: Level 2 (6 AP), Device, Negate (hear his full name spoken), Requires Activation.

*Awareness (1)*: Device, Negate (hear his full name spoken), Requires Activation

*Growth (1)*: Level 2, Device, Negate (hear his full name spoken), Requires Activation

*Super Skill (2)*: Device, Negate (hear his full name spoken), Requires Activation, Notice +2 steps, Tracking +4 steps.

### Dire Wolf

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts —\*, Spirit —\*, Strength d12+1, Vigor d8

**Skills:** The skills of the wearer remain unchanged

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** —; **Toughness:** 14 (3)

#### Special Abilities:

*Armor +6*: The belt provides six points of armor to the wearer in wolf form.

*Bite*: Str+d6

*Go for the Throat*: Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.

*Fleet-Footed*: Dire wolves roll d10s instead of d6s when running.

*Keen Senses*: Wolfriemen suffer no penalties from darkness, fog or other obscurment.

*Size +2*: These wolves are huge!

\*This stats remain the same as the wearer of the belt.



## Using the Wolfriemen

The Animal Control power of the Wolfriemen doesn't grant the ability to control animals at a distance—it actually transforms the wearer into a five to six hundred pound wolf, terrifying and huge. This powerful form grants a bonus to physical actions demanding raw power and speed, and has near supernatural senses, and can track by scent alone. In wolf form a ranger can sprint up to 40 yards in a round.

The thick fur coat protects the ranger better than an arctic explorer's gear, and his great size and mass makes him extremely hard to injure, granting the equivalent of +6 armor.

It is difficult to take the Wolfriemen away from a transformed ranger, since the belt and the ranger's clothing are replaced by the enormous wolf; but if one calls the proper name of the ranger it forces him to transform back into his normal form. This is why members of Her Majesty's 13th Lupine Rangers adopt new names when they join the regiment, and have their official records sealed for the duration of their service. These records are vital military secrets and are subject to a great deal of intrigue.

There are reports of some who suffer unfortunate side effects from wearing the Wolfriemen for extended periods, but such rumors are squelched. To the common people, the Lupine Rangers are heroes and patriots of the first order. Unfortunately, there is some truth to the rumor. Those who wear the belt slowly, gradually become more wolfish in character each year. Upon reaching Veteran rank, a frequent wearer must trade one major hindrance or two minor ones for Bloodthirsty.

In the ensuing enquiries, Brennan speaks out against Ragnan and Lucan and especially Cardigan, who tries to have charges brought against him for dereliction of duty and violation of orders (charges which are summarily dismissed). Brennan's outspoken criticism of the Army's patronage policy, allowing the purchase of commissions, wins him no friends in the service, though it helps push reforms which see the end to these practices.

The 13th Rangers go on to see service in America, India, Afghanistan, and even on the home front during the Automechanical Mutiny of 1888. The Rangers never number more than 200; the difficulty in creating the wolf-belts prevents there ever being more. The belts of fallen men are always retrieved when possible. The noted failure to do so during Balaclava leads to several being captured by the Russians, and at least one falling into the hands of Section Seven. This leads to the creation of Russia's feared Wolf Brigade, a force of over two thousand men able to assume the form of wolves. Their inferior wolf-charms grant them less power than those of the 13th, and the forms they assume are like those of ordinary mortal wolves—but the charms are far easier to manufacture.

**1855: Dr. Livingstone, I Presume.** David Livingstone arrives at what he will soon name the Victoria Falls, believing himself to be the first European to see this wonder, only to find a dapper Cockney gent topped up in London's most garish fashions picnicking with his mistress and her terriers. Flustered and shocked, Livingstone insists on an explanation, but accepts the offer of a glass of wine with the couple. "Don't feel bad, guv'nor. Me and Madge came the short way round, didn't we Madge? No time for all this trekking and whatnot. Me, I got to be back at Finsbury Park by teatime to see a man about a whistle. You want a lift back to civilisation, old son?"

Livingstone does not include this account in his official record of the expedition, but relates it to his friends and family after suffering an apoplectic fit when he sees the same man back in London several years later.

**1856: The Engines of Commerce.** Babbage Computational constructs its first calculation mill, and begins construction of a telegraphic network to connect it to the centers of industry in London. The first mills are driven by coal-fired steam engines, but later mills are situated along rivers and use water wheels and turbines to drive the calculation. When the telegraphic cables are strung mills can be located almost anywhere, but this necessitates the creation of switching stations, junctions of cables which pass through a dedicated computational machine which routs signals through the proper line. The encoding schemes developed for this operation become a standard which allows the development of the televocographic encoder and similar devices. These machines can each convert one form of information—the spoken word, for example—into machine code which a computational brain can comprehend directly.

**1857–1858: Rebellion in India** brings the downfall of the East India Company and the Timurid dynasty, leading to direct rule by the British Government, the British Raj as it would become known. The long resentment of an occupied nation is ignited into open rebellion among native troops and citizenry. While much is made of the lubricating fats used in the cartridges of the Enfield rifle, in truth the causes of the rebellion run much deeper. Long-building anger at the Company and British rule leads to an especially brutal outbreak of violence, the reports of which shock the British citizenry when reported in Britain. This leads to especially brutal reprisals by British forces. India is aflame.

**1857: The Queen Bleeds for Her Kingdom.** On May 10th, Victoria awakens from a nap to find Her face streaked and Her gown soaked with blood. At the very moment the 11th and 20th native cavalry of the Bengal Army turn on their commanders and begin the first open act of armed rebellion in India, wounds open in Her body and blood runs freely at Her side, hands, and upon Her head where Her crown would rest. Initially terrified, She becomes aware that She can *feel* the strife, as if it were within Her own flesh.

With each further escalation of the violence, Her condition worsens. Her husband is crippled with worry, Her physicians baffled, and Her councilors concerned about the political implications. News of this magnitude can not be kept entirely from the public ear.

The British retaliation is perhaps worse for the Queen than the rebellion. Each act of brutality, mass execution, atrocity, or horror perpetrated in Her name hardens Her, Her skin growing paler like marble, yet the wounds continuing to bleed.

Word of the Queen's illness reaches the public in early 1858, and the national spirit is brought lower still, until finally Victoria, changed by Her affliction, rises from Her couch and demands to speak before Parliament and damn the propriety or precedent.

Not even Her husband can meet Her eyes.

**1858: Victoria Imposes Order.** Visibly weak and swaying, with Her stigmata still slowly dripping blood, Victoria stands before Parliament and spreads Her arms to show the wounds She bears. Her unnatural presence beats upon the perception of the members, and She speaks to them in plain language, unrehearsed and raw. She orders the conflict in India brought to a close. She demands that those among Her subjects who perpetuated the horrors She felt committed over the previous year be brought to justice. She demands an end to the rule of the East India Company, a total revocation of their charter to operate, and criminal sanctions for

its controlling members.

The whole spectacle is shocking, a violation of all propriety, and the Queen Herself is terrifying. When Lord Palmerston tries to gently intervene and guide the clearly addled monarch from the room, She turns upon him and coldly orders him to step back and "Never speak in my presence again." It is an order which proves *impossible* for Palmerston to disobey.

She then turns to the assembled leaders of the nation and says, "I am Britannia. Let any man who loves me come forward, and receive my blessing."

As if mesmerized, dozens of Parliament members come forward and kneel before the Queen to be marked upon their shoulders by Her bloody hands. Among those who come forward is Benjamin Disraeli, and among those who resist the Queen's influence is William Gladstone. Finally, near collapse, Victoria allows Herself to be escorted back to Windsor Castle.

The whole episode is too sensational, too amazing to escape the public attention. It shocks the public into wakefulness, makes them pay attention to the weird stories and episodes and seemingly unrelated events which had become more and more common throughout the century. The Strange can no longer be denied, and it will only grow in the public awareness.

The social impact of Victoria's now-obvious Strangeness is profound. Her increasingly austere public persona influences fashion, etiquette, and public discourse. The miracles of Her reign are catalogued, and almost spontaneously, it seems, the faithful of the Church of England stop praying for Her and start praying *to* Her. In politics, the so-called Royalists (the "Bloods" or "Marks") become a potent faction, drawing from every party.

In India, Victoria's political allies see the Governance of India acts of 1858 passed. These abolish the East India Company and pass control over India to the British Crown. Victoria takes an active

hand in selecting the new officials who will rule in Her name and sees to it that reparations and reforms ease some of the tensions which led to the rebellion. Her mercy is backed with iron, however. By Her orders, the Foreign Office's covert branches are reinforced, lest Russia take advantage of the British troubles in India and make a knight's move in the Great Game. Spying, previously the purview of the low and the wicked, takes on some semblance of honor, though confidential intelligence work never rises to an especially exalted level of acceptance.

The year 1858 marks the definitive end of Victoria's ceremonial and traditional role as British monarch, and the start of Her true rulership. After 1858, no one doubts where the true power of the Empire lays.

**1858: Congratulations, Mr. President.** Babbage Computational introduces the Vocographic Encoder, a device which converts speech into telegraphic signal and then back into audible (if somewhat flat) speech. Combined with their earlier Multiplex Signal Carrier (a device permitting many simultaneous transmissions on the same telegraphic cable), a single telegraphic line can carry spoken messages, coded program strings for an Analytical Engine (or Automechanical Brain), or simple text messages for a teletype or telephotograph machine to receive.

Via the newly laid trans-Atlantic telegraph cable, on August 16 Queen Victoria speaks into the cone-like receiver of a Vocographic Encoder, sending a message of congratulations to President Buchanan and expressing the wish that the device might provide "an additional link between nations whose friendship is founded on their common interest and reciprocal esteem." The president responds, "This triumph, which certainly exceeds any on the fields of battle, is only surpassed by the honor of hearing the voice of your Majesty speaking such congratulations."

## Her Majesty's Regard

The Victoria Cross established in 1856 was more than just an honor. It was a symbol that Victoria had laid Her grace upon some worthy individual. She could sense the welfare of any whom She had so honored, and with an effort of will observe them and their actions. Finally, if Her worthies made a sacrifice of vital energy to Her, She could aid them in their efforts. In effect, each Victoria Cross is a power focus.

### Victoria Cross (12 Points)

The Victoria Cross bestows the following two powers upon those who honorably wear one. It has no effect if you bought it or stole it. The use of each power costs the wearer a Bennie and is activated as a free action. A side effect makes their action observable to Victoria Herself for a time.

*Deflection:* Level 6; Device, Requires Activation.

*Omni Super Skill:* Level 3; Device, Requires Activation.

**1858: Dickens Writes of the Strangeness.** In 1858, while struggling with his failing marriage, Charles Dickens writes the satirical short story "A Strange Fascination" which is dedicated to his particular friend (and likely cause for his marital troubles) Ellen Ternan.

**1858: Bulletproof.** Using an adaptation on the Bessemer process, Scots inventor and metallurgist John Brummund creates the composite material used to make the Lorica Victoria, the nigh-invulnerable armor which is quickly adopted by Her Majesty's armies, heavy cavalry and foot. The formula and the manufacturing techniques for the Lorica Victoria are state secrets of the highest order.

**1859: Darwin's New Obsession.** With the publication of *Origin of Species*, Darwin passes his outline for *The Descent of Man* to Huxley to finish for publi-

## Armored in Righteousness

The Lorica Victoria becomes the signature of Britannia's famed Heavy Cuirassiers. The Lorica Victoria is a brightly-polished steel breastplate and matched helm made from a patented blend of metals, including such rare elements as must be extracted from mines deep in darkest Africa and from the exotic Orient. When melded with good Birmingham workmanship and Scottish industry, they become near-perfect proof against firearms of all calibers, and come to save the lives of thousands of Her Majesty's loyal soldiery.

### Lorica Victoria (3)

*Armor:* Level 1; Heavy Armor, Partial Protection

### These Sad Old Soldiers

One unexpected result of the wide adoption of the Lorica Victoria is the dramatic increase in limb amputation suffered by Her Majesty's soldiers. More

soldiers survive battle than ever before, but the arms and legs are not protected. In later conflicts against Boer and Zulu, native sharpshooters make much of these vulnerabilities, and the "African Limp" becomes a common sign of service in Her Majesty's army.

Bone-shattering bullet wounds demand fast amputation to save a soldier's life. While more and more soldiers survive war, many more come home broken in body, scarred in mind, and abandoned on the streets when no longer able to serve.

The surge in demand leads to an explosion in the prosthetics industry, and most soldiers can afford at least well-made cork prosthesis, though the well-to-do often invest in goblin-crafted automechanical limbs which serve them nearly as well, and in some ways better, than their fleshly counterparts. To represent this, a couple of levels of super attribute can be bound into a device (if the limb is worn rather than grafted on).

cation, and begins work on his next great passion. He titles it *Extraordinary Exceptions to Natural Science*, a series of books to explore the rising tide of the weird, occult, and superhuman. Darwin receives grant funding from the Royal Academy for this effort, and forms a research team to investigate instances of the Strange with a formalized methodology in an effort to seek out the underlying processes by which some events seem to contravene natural law.

**1859: Needlework.** Strange inventor Samuel Berk quits his position with Babbage Computational to pursue his own research. His obsessive interest in shamanistic visionary drugs (and his own addiction to several of them), and with the way a Vocagraphic Encoder transmutes information from one form to

another, leads him to create the Needle-Actuated Hallucinogenic Somato-Sensory Visualizer.

The device is a large chair into which a user straps himself naked. It contains complex pneumatic devices and is powered by compressed air. The surface of the chair is covered with thousands of tiny holes, and nested inside these holes are thousands of needles. The Visualizer is connected to a Vocagraphic Encoder, and it converts the machine signal into patterns of needle-pricks and scrapes on a user's back, arms, and legs. This incomprehensible sensation is painful and meaningless, unless a user has taken the proper dose of Berk's special drug. Something of hashish, something of opium, something of rye ergot fungus, something of Stranger,

more occult things, the drug is called Somatonum, and it transforms consciousness. In an effect similar to synesthesia, it causes a user's senses to blur into one another, especially tactile senses.

The drug induces intense hallucination, but also tunes the nerves to receive *visual* stimulus from sensations on the skin. A signal carried through the telegraph and converted through the Vocagraphic Encoder is used to shape the user's hallucination, allowing them to experience the content of the signal in a *virtual* dreamlike world. The Visualizer can receive signal from a user as well, measuring twitches and writhing with precise instruments and converting this physical motion into Vocagraphic signal.

Two users linked by these devices can share a form of communion, each within his or her own allegorical dream world but also communicating with the other. Berk found he could connect his mind directly to the Calculation Mills and influence their behavior by striving for desired goals in his vision. He causes the Bank Crisis of 1860 with just such a vision-quest, seeking to increase the value of his investments by interfering with the accounts of the trading house handling them. Instead he triggers panic in the market which nearly breaks the economy. After this, he treads more carefully.

Berk, and those few brave enough to open their minds this way, become sought-after consultants and investigators, as they are able to process large volumes of information and sift it for meaning and value.

Using a Visualizer is difficult and dangerous. Somatonum is highly addictive and causes a host of undesirable side effects, but sometimes the only way to find out what you need to know is to expose your deepest soul to the Machine.

The slang for using a Visualizer is "Needlework."

**1859: Launch of HMAS *Queen*.** Its construction is shrouded in secret, but finally Thomas Vick's great project is revealed to the world. Her Majesty's Air Ship *Queen* is truly awe-inspiring, nearly three hundred meters long, a hundred tall, and two hundred wide, carrying over a hundred men and up to two hundred tons of cargo aloft. It employs a refined Cayley Airframe, and can cruise at speeds of up to forty-five miles per hour and make quick dashes of up to sixty. Because of its buoyancy, it can land easily in areas as small as a few acres on its armored undercarriage, and avoids the problems of ordinary airships which must be tethered to the ground to keep them from floating away.

The world is agog at this marvel of engineering. Headlines proclaim, "Her Majesty, *Queen* of the Skies." The *Queen* officially becomes the flagship of the Navy (the branch of Her Majesty's forces judged to be best able to handle this new class of craft), and construction begins immediately on Her sister ship, as well as plans for two additional classes of "aero ship," a smaller but faster class and a heavier class intended for cargo.

Vick receives the Victoria Cross for his efforts and is knighted. Cayley is posthumously awarded the Cross as well. It is kept quiet, but the efforts to perfect the airframe left Vick hollowed out, like he invested everything he had into the project and it left him empty.

The *Queen* makes a sensational international debut at Besançon, France for the Exposition Universelle of 1860, circling the Exposition slowly at a height of a thousand feet for several hours before landing in a nearby pasture to allow a select few dignitaries and guests to come aboard and join Her Majesty for tea.

**1860: On My Mother's Side, Actually.** Thomas Huxley is stricken with the Martian Red Ague, as are many during the 1860s, and is unable to attend the scheduled Oxford debate with Samuel Wilberforce. In his stead, he asks his particular

## HMAS Queen

The *Queen* is an example of super-human invention combined with mundane ingenuity. The principles it is based upon are valid. It doesn't employ baffling pseudo-science to function. However, its capacities are far beyond the technology of the age—or would have been, were it not for the investment of superhuman effort. The Cayley Airframe, a hybrid of heavier-than-air aerodynamic principles and lighter-than-air buoyancy, is the real miracle.

The basic, unarmed HMAS *Queen* can make 60 miles per hour when it needs to, can carry nearly 130 tons of cargo, and is armored enough to withstand most artillery.

Before it sees military service, some of its capacity is filled with armaments, mostly in the form of explosive and incendiary bombs, which inflict 4d10 damage, explode in a large Burst Template AP 6, and are Heavy Weapons. It can fly high enough so that no conventional weapon can strike it, and then rain down death from above without recourse. While maneuvering as part of a fleet operation (as with the invasion of the United States), an air ship like the *Queen* will resupply from its surface ship accompaniment so as to continue a bombardment.

Later models have larger carrying capacity (growth power), higher speed (flight power), novel or miraculous armament (attack, ranged, with the area effect, armor piercing, and/or the rapid fire modifiers), or more automation (lower Crew requirements). The addition of the immunity power and an Aetheric Drive (the teleport power or even more levels of flight) can turn the HMAS *Queen* from an Airship into a Spaceship. Fancy a jaunt to Saturn, my dear?

There simply isn't anything to compare to one of Her Majesty's air ships.

At least until Graff Zeppelin puzzles out how to manufacture one.

**Acc/Top Speed:** 3/12; **Toughness:** 18 (4); **Crew:** 32  
**Notes:** The *Queen* is a flying ship with a climb rate of 5.

friend Dr. Archibald Monroe to stand in for him. It's initially regarded as a stunt and in poor taste at that, but Monroe quickly proves himself the intellectual match for Wilberforce, and with his very presence forces Wilberforce to confront the realities of Evolution as a theory which is immediately and scientifically testable.

When asked by the flustered Wilberforce, "How can we possibly accept these arguments when presented in such a sensational manner?" Monroe responds, "We live in an age of sensational truths, and so to see this one properly presented by the standards of the time, it must partake somewhat of sensationalism. I can't offer you the truth from the horse's mouth, sir, as we're not descended from horses, but I think the ape's mouth must suffice."

The debate receives broad attention, in no small part to Dr. Monroe's unusual appearance and charismatic enthusiasm. Samuel Wilberforce's reputation suffers from headlines such as "Ape Makes Monkey of Man," and the affair leads to a long, bitter rivalry between Monroe and Wilberforce which isn't resolved until Monroe's public apology to the aging academic in 1865:

"I treated him badly at our debate, and made a show of the affair when I should have approached it with proper dignity. Mr. Wilberforce is one of the great thinkers of our age, and I failed to show him the deference he deserved, and hope one day to reconcile with him. The whole discipline of science and enquiry suffers when men of learning harbor personal animosity, and my own intellectual life has suffered greatly from my estrangement from Mr. Wilberforce."

Wilberforce replies, "Handsomely said."

In 1873, Dr. Monroe speaks at Wilberforce's funeral, saying, "While we may never have agreed on many things, he stood up for his beliefs, and fought for them, and in this life there can be few finer things. I cherished his opposition as most men cherish friendship."



**1860: Sally Go Round the Sun, Sally Go Round the Moon.** In January of 1860, Sally Sheldon steps from her home in Streatham and feels inspired by all the Strange news in the papers to reveal the talent she'd kept hidden for over a decade. Rather than take the train from Streatham Hill railway station into London for her day's shopping, she flies. Taking to the air under her own power by daylight as she'd only done previously and secretly during the dark of the night (inspiring stories of the Streatham Specter), she flies along the rail line and arrives in Charing Cross in minutes.

The five-mile flight inevitably attracts enormous attention.

Mrs. Sheldon's new fame is not to her somewhat-retiring husband's liking, however, and he demands she refrain from such undignified public displays in future. But having experienced the pure exultant joy of flight, she refuses. Marital conflict arises, and her husband's demands for her to keep her "damned uncanny ways" secret finally lead to divorce,

facilitated by the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act which permits divorce through the courts rather than

the previous process, which required a wife to prove her husband guilty of grievous violations of the marriage covenant.

The proceedings are sensational news: "Flying Lady Flies From Husband" and "The One That Flew Away." In the aftermath, Mr. Sheldon emigrates to Australia, and the newly liberated Mrs. Sheldon (now known by her maiden name of Kenner) finds herself with a surplus of time and an inadvertent public persona as a champion for the cause of woman's rights.

She doesn't become one of the movement's great thinkers or innovators, but always guarantees attention for the cause. She continues her work in this area through the end of the century.

**1860: A Royal Separation.** It becomes impossible for the Queen and Her household to keep the estrangement between Her and the Prince Consort from the public eye. In the spring of the year, Albert moves his personal rooms and bedchamber to another wing in the palace. The official reason given is to allow Albert to better contend with the many matters political and scientific demanding his

attention. No one believes this polite fiction, but reputable papers were careful in their reporting of it.

**1860: The Servant of the Future, Today.** Early in the year, Ada Lovelace's Automechanical Man is presented to the Royal Society. By the middle of the year they are being offered for sale as "Automatic Domestics," tireless servants who will never steal the silver, speak out of turn, neglect their duties or sleep. Demand outstrips supply, and the fortunes of Babbage Computational rise meteorically.

**1860: The Broken Union.** In the United States, the Confederacy of slave-owning states secedes from the Union. The reasons are complex, but at their root are the issue of slavery, and all the economic and social ramifications of the foul institution. With the fragmentation of the civil government, the occult government breaks as well along old factional and regional lines, questions of American handling of native magic, the influence of African traditions on Southern occult practice, and the Jefferson Question—whether the Right of Magic lies with all men, or just those with the position and education to use it wisely.

**1861: Prince Albert Returns to Coburg.** On December 14th, Albert, the Prince Consort, begins a months-long tour of European capitals in order to "Foster those relations which allow Britain to remain influential in international matters." As with the previous announcements regarding his move within the Palace, this explanation fools no one, but this time the public comments are more open and less respectful. Albert has always been always regarded, perhaps unfairly, as more German than British, still a foreigner after all these years. Many feel he has betrayed the United Kingdom and abandoned Victoria. For his part, Albert was always proud of his Germanic heritage and his title as Duke of Saxony.

Over the next two decades Albert becomes embroiled in the politics of the rising German

Empire, and especially with the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung, in which he becomes a prominent figure. This places him in an impossible position, forced to choose between his wife and Her nation, and his own homeland's interests. But his fear of what Victoria has become proves decisive, and he joins one of the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung conspiracy factions, seeking to use its influence to gain political dominance over the United Kingdom.

What remains of the girl who loved Prince Albert withers with his departure, and drops off the vine completely when word comes to Her of Albert's collusion with Her nation's enemies.

The last vestige of Victoria's humanity fades away, and She becomes harsher, harder, and more terrible. Her presence becomes actually painful to bear for any period, and She recedes from the public eye.

On the night of Albert's initiation into the Schweigsame Übereinstimmung, everyone in the Empire experiences the same dream, the goddess Britannia striding across the globe, bleeding from hundreds of wounds. Where the blood falls the Earth is greened and is fruitful, and Her eyes are locked firmly on the far distance, unwavering as She strides into the future, heedless of what She crushes underfoot.

**1861: The Trent Affair.** Captain Charles Wilkes of the USS *San Jacinto* stops British mail steamer RMS *Trent* on its way from Cuba to Europe, and removes from it two Confederate diplomats dispatched to seek aid from Britain and France for the Confederacy. He does so against the objections of the *Trent's* captain, but the *Trent* is allowed to continue its voyage after the Confederates are removed.

On its return to America with prisoners, the captain of the *San Jacinto* is greeted with public honors and commendation from Congress for bringing a hint of victory to the struggling Union. When news

arrives in Britain in late November, it is greeted with shock and outrage. The act is considered a violation of maritime law and an affront to British sovereignty. Lord Palmerston demands immediate apology and release of the diplomats, issuing an ultimatum. France declares its willingness to support a British war over the matter, and the British colony in Canada perceives a direct threat from the affair, and begins increasing its militia from 50,000 men to twice this number.

A fleet consisting of thirteen troop transports, a squadron of ironclad battleships, and the flagship HMAS *Queen* and its sister aero ship HMAS *Majesty* is dispatched under command of Admiral Milnes.

The harshness of the ultimatum issued by the United Kingdom offers no easy diplomatic option for Lincoln's administration. It insists upon the release of the diplomats, the payment of reparations, and certain assurances of and restrictions on the Union's actions in the Atlantic. Prince Albert, with his touch for diplomacy, might have softened these demands, but alas the Prince had departed, and Victoria was in no merciful mood.

**1861–1862: The American Intervention.** The fleet arrives in Canada in March and begins reinforcing the Canadian troops, amassing a force of 100,000 additional men. With no more than 50,000 Union troops available to oppose them, it is judged the campaign will proceed swiftly.

By August the aero ships bomb Washington, D.C., and by September Lincoln is forced to make a decision: sue for peace with the rebellious Southern states or submit to British occupation and possibly lose the war in the South anyway. Lincoln chooses to make peace with his former countrymen so as to fight the invaders.

With the cessation of hostilities, and a loosely defined border between Union and Confederate States, American forces are able to marshal against the British invaders enough resistance to stall their

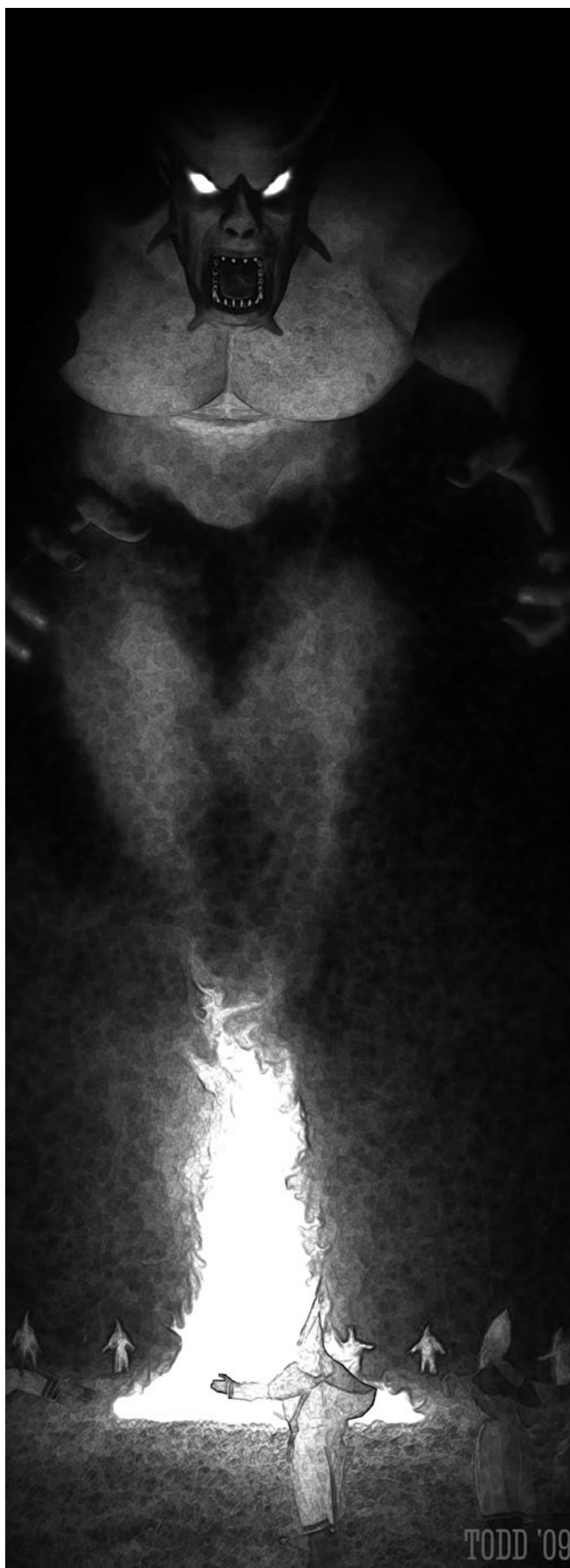
advance in the winter of 1861. During the winter, the agents of America Obscura are at work, rallying the Strange against the invaders. The winter is a hellish, harsh one, and disease runs rampant in the British and Canadian camps.

By the spring of 1862, diplomacy finds advocates once again, and peace is negotiated. Ironically, the cunning negotiation by Lincoln and his advisors results in the Union and the United Kingdom enjoying better relations than ever before.

**1862: The North and The South.** The Northern states continue their trajectory towards industrialization, capitalism, and technological innovation. The Southern states descend even further into their feudal romance, embracing more and more openly Strange religious practices. By the 1870s there could be no two more different societies. The North ends up benefiting economically from the South's lack of development, as the cotton economy demands more and more plantation farming and more and more slaves. This increase in production keeps cotton and other Southern raw materials inexpensive, and despite calls for a "Healing War" to mend the nation and restore the Union, powerful economic interests become dependent on cheap Southern imports, and in turn, the slave labor which makes them so inexpensive. In the next century, this slavery-by-proxy becomes a major source of national guilt.

**1862: Cotton Crisis.** The political instability and uncertainty of the short-lived American Civil War, as well as the unseasonably cold weather, severely cuts cotton supplies, causing steep increases in prices, and the closure of some British mills. Mill owners, in an effort to save their fortunes, adopt the use of Automatic Domestics to replace their human workers and cut their operating costs to a minimum. They run their mills without light, heat, or any comfort.

The discontent among unemployed mill workers continues to rise as more are displaced by machines,



until outbreaks of violence become common. Dozens of Automatics are attacked and destroyed. The “New Luddism” leads to clashes with police and soldiers, and spurs Babbage Computational to offer a special programme-deck for its Automatics enabling them to defend themselves from such attacks.

In 1863 the Cotton Crisis reaches a head when Barnard Williams, an intoxicated, unemployed textile worker, attacks an Automatic with a prybar in the street in Bolton. The mechanical man’s self-defense programme activates and it deflects Williams’s blows, and strikes him once with its metal knuckles, a freak blow to the temple which instantly kills the man. Witnesses report that the Automatic then turned and continued with its errand.

Charges are brought against the machine’s owner, and though he is acquitted public outrage at “rogue mechanical-men who can kill without recourse” leads to the Automatic Machinery Act of 1863, which makes the owners of autonomous machines like Automatic Domestics liable for damages or bodily injury their property inflicts on others.

**1863: Knights of the Golden Circle.** The Knights, the Confederate South’s most powerful occult society, seek to establish what they call the Golden Circle, an alliance of Southern slave-keeping nations in the West Indies and Central America. This confederation would represent a powerful economic block with enough influence to resist any Northern efforts to restore the Union or the emancipation of slaves. The Knights employ occult practices pilfered from African traditions and mixed with corrupted Masonic ritual. They make treaties with Elder Things from Earth’s primordial days. Human sacrifice becomes common. The end result is an occult engine powered by human misery and bondage which threatens to sunder the barrier between the World and Otherworld.

This plot by the Knights leads Victoria, under advisement by Kerberan agents, to begin an

active campaign against them, and which sours formerly amiable ties with the Confederacy.

The ambitions of the Knights fail finally, through the efforts and sacrifices of Crown agents and Kerberan meddlers who foment conflict among the prospective Golden Circle nations—including engineering the downfall of the Brazilian Empire, which fissures into dozens of splinter states and tribal lands.

**1864: Vampires!** The First Contagious Disease Act passes in response to an outbreak of Syphilitic Vampirism among soldiers garrisoned near Hastings. The increasing concern for the frequency of venereal disease among the soldiery inspires much debate, but until vampirism begins spreading among British soldiers, the political will is lacking.

The Act allows health and legal authorities to forcibly hospitalize any woman suspected of prostitution for up to 30 days for observation and treatment. It also defines the legal status of third-stage carriers of Syphilitic Vampirism, essentially ruling that they are no longer human, and in fact are legally deceased. These “un-dead” carriers might retain their reason, but if their conditions becomes known they would essentially be stripped of all legal rights and property—and, most terrifying for the afflicted, they could be killed by anyone using any reasonable means and their murderers would suffer no legal repercussions.

While the Act does allow the overt outbreaks to be contained, those who recognized their condition do whatever they can to keep it secret. This allows a frightening number of them to reach the late-stage condition. These animalistic creatures driven into London’s bowels become a reservoir for the disease, which continues to crop up in isolated outbreaks through the end of the century.

The effects of the Act on women’s rights and freedoms also persist until its repeal in 1886. Since it allows any unmarried women to be essen-



TODD '09

## The Three Stages of Vampirism

Syphilitic Vampirism is transmitted via the exchange of bodily fluids. While it isn't as virulent as ordinary syphilis, it is a much more terrifying disease because it doesn't simply sicken and kill victims, it transforms them. The disease progresses through fairly predictable stages after exposure, altering physiology and character.

**Primary Syphilitic Vampirism** is marked by a sore called a "chancre" at the site of infection, frequently on the genitalia or bite-wound. These sores can persist for a month but most spontaneously heal within a week. During this period the victim is feverish, lymph nodes are swollen, and severe body aches accompany a thickening of the bones and increase in muscle mass.

When the sore heals, the victim experiences a period of near-euphoria, well-being, and a marked increase in strength and endurance. The senses seem remarkably sharper. This sunshine period lasts as long as eight weeks. With the steady increase in vigor there comes a matched increase in appetite, especially for meat, and in sexual desire. By the end of this stage many victims are wantonly sexual, and some begin to show the troubling conjunction of hunger and sexual desire.

A Primary victim gains +1 Step in Agility, Strength, Vigor, and Notice and -1 Step in Smarts. He also gains the mind control power.

**Secondary Syphilitic Vampirism** is marked by a major acceleration of metabolism and healing. Wounds knit closed in hours rather than days. Subjects are ravenously hungry much of the time, and crave bloody meat. Anemia results from accelerated protein synthesis, which reduces the absorption of iron from food sources. Neurological damage results in a total conjunction of physical hunger and sexual desire. Subjects seek sexual encounters without discrimination, but attempt to

cannibalize their partners. Victims who survive these attacks are frequently infected themselves. Even if a subject retains reason enough to resist committing such atrocities, most experience mental symptoms such as mania, depression, anxiety, and superstitious and religious compulsions.

The secondary stage also brings an intense sensitivity to sunlight, which in some unknown way impairs the process of healing and harms the ever-dilated eyes of subjects. Exposure to sunlight causes black cancers to form on the skin after as little as a quarter hour, and this process of blackening and thickening continues until a victim scarcely seems human any longer, becoming a hunched malformed thing.

A Secondary victim gains a further additional dice step in Agility, Strength, Vigor, and Notice, and the regeneration power. The Victim also gains the Allergy (Major) to Sunlight and the Bloodthirsty Hindrances.

**Tertiary Syphilitic Vampirism** occurs one to ten years after initial exposure. It exactly resembles the effects of sun exposure, coming upon victims gradually but inexorably. Most succumb to the mental aberrations common to the disease and some lose their reason, entirely becoming animals. Others simply grow more deformed. The process strengthens the muscles and bones further. Thankfully, few survive long enough to reach this stage. Those that do are more likely to kill their victims than to leave them alive and infected.

A Tertiary victim gains a further additional dice step in Agility, Strength, Vigor, and Notice. He also gains the ageless and attack melee (+2d6 damage) powers. He effectively becomes mindless, and the (A) designator is inserted after his Smarts score.



tially ruined by an accusation of prostitution (and the resulting humiliation of a “virginity examination” and screening for venereal disease), the threat of such accusation becomes a tool of intimidation.

**1864: John Brown.** With Her withdrawal from public life, Queen Victoria becomes increasingly isolated. Her presence and power make it impossible to simply have friends and confidants; She has worshippers and subjects. But the ghillie of Her estates in Scotland, John Brown, proves immune to Her overwhelming presence. He seems unflappable and solid, and the Queen takes a great liking to him, and his informal manner and casual companionship.

Stories circulate extensively about their relationship, hinting at possible impropriety. Her other servants and companions come to hate Brown for his easy way with the Queen.

Rumors of a secret marriage, done in the pagan Roman style, dog the Queen in the later quarter of the century, leading to the use of the nickname “Mrs. Brown” among discontented factions and the outlaw press. Eventually She is forced to publicly send John Brown away to squelch such rumors, though they still meet in secret on Victoria’s occasional retreats to Balmoral.

But there is more to Mr. Brown than might appear. When they were being persecuted, the Knights Templar found safety with the Scottish Masons, and eventually the two secret orders became as one, and their influence over the politics of the United Kingdom waxed and waned down the centuries until the advent of Queen Victoria. Victoria relied heavily on Brown, and unknown to all, Brown was a member of the Masonic Knights, prepared by mystical ritual to endure Her overwhelming presence. He used his position to subtly influence Victoria’s agendas.

She says in the last days of Her reign that John Brown was the only man who never feared Her, and though She knew of his other allegiances, She loved him for his honesty of feeling for Her.

**1864: The Fox Rebellion.** In late September, in the normally quiet Derbyshire, a rebellion of Nature takes the lives of nineteen men and three women, all fox hunters enjoying the hunting season. The terror begins with the death of Sir Harry Kemp, a country squire leading some guests from London on their first hunt. An experienced rider, Kemp nonetheless is killed instantly when he leaps a hedge and impales his horse on a farmer’s pitchfork, left leaning against the opposite side. His horse lands upon him, breaking his neck. The fox escapes. There follow seven more deaths, seemingly by accident, as hunters take advantage of what promises to be excellent hunting.

In October, the Kemps’ kennel keeper Tom Manders and his family are found savagely killed in their cottage on the Kemp estate, attacked as if by dozens of small dogs. Upon investigation, it is clear they were killed by foxes. Clever as a fox can be, the investigating police seek a human culprit. How else could the door latch have been opened in the middle of the night?

The death of the Manders family is followed by a series of accidents, near-fatalities, and deaths through the remainder of the fox hunting season, and on into the winter. Homes burn, children go missing, and livestock is killed. Hunters from across Britain come in pursuit of what the press dub the “Fox Devils of Derbyshire.” As ready as these men are, several are killed while pursuing foxes across the shire.

The events finally come to the attention of the Kerberos Club after a relation of a member dies while on the hunt. Arriving, the Club’s agents quickly discover Strange influence over the foxes of the county. They are smarter than they have any right being, and act and plan, and seem dedicated to the destruction of the country’s human inhabitants. Further investigation finally reveals the source: the cloistered wife of Harry Kemp II, son of the beasts’ first victim.

The younger Kemp captained one of his father’s trading ships and made frequent trips to Japan and

## The Mythologies of the World

Britain sits at the center of the world, taking to itself the best food and the best drink and the best cloth. But with its voracious appetite for all the products of Empire, it swallows the mythology of the lands it rules. In the world of the *Kerberos Club*, myth is rarely baseless.

A quick review of the gorgeous mythology and religion of the Americas, China, Japan, India, and the Middle East can provide you with fantastic inspiration for plots, complications, and characters. Consider how the mythological figure arrived on British soil and why it is here. Also give some thought to how it reacts to the demonstrable power and might of the British Empire. Finally, consider the hook: How does the creature link up with the characters and situations of the setting? A Djinni in the service of a mill owner will be a different beast entirely to one serving a street urchin.

China in the decade previous to his return to the ancestral home, and on his last visit he brought with him Akina Kemp, his Japanese bride. He met her while staying in the home of a business associate in Japan, and they quickly had one of those love affairs which lead either to comedy or tragedy. The latter, in this case.

Even had Kemp's family accepted Akina, which they demonstrably *did not*, her own reservations at leaving her home and living in an alien country were enough to strain their love. The magical months they spent together in Japan were a time out of time, and the realities of day-to-day living proved harder than either had imagined. Kemp, because he was young and in love. Akina, because she was a creature of the Otherworld, a *kitsune* fox-spirit whose magic allowed her to adopt human guise, if not human morality.

Brought to Britain, so backwards and savage yet so frighteningly powerful, she found only coldness from her husband's family. Akina kept to her rooms during the day rather than endure their silent

resentment at their son "wasting his prospects on an oriental trollop." By night she would sneak out and run in her fox form, exploring the strange world and communing with her British kin.

And then came hunting season. Akina raised her army and taught them of the foibles of human beings, and made them wiser than mortal foxes.

In the final confrontation with Akina and her army of foxes, the Kemp manor home is burned, Harry Kemp II killed, and Akina driven into the night.

**1868: Lincoln's Third Term.** After a serious drop in popularity for his capitulation to British demands during the Civil War, Lincoln's star rises again with the economic prosperity of the end of his second term and his careful management of emancipation and reconciliation. Victoria congratulates the president on his election via the new high-fidelity Stereovocograph.

**1869: Habitual Criminals Act.** Persistent criminals start to give false names to thwart the Act. The search is on for a reliable identification system. This will result in fingerprinting becoming compulsory for all convicted persons in 1902.

**1869: End of the Grand Old Man.** Gladstone grows increasingly disturbed by Victoria's rise in real political power, and the cult of personality (later, a very real cult) which grows up around Her. His politics grow increasingly extreme, including a call to severely restrict the influence of Victoria and Her factions. He remains a thorn in Her side until he becomes leader of the Liberal party in 1867, where he begins to seriously threaten Victoria's interests.

His career ends in 1869 when unknown agents reveal evidence of his propensity for flagellation, drawing connections between him and an infamous London brothel specializing in such services. Prostitutes at the brothel describe the marks upon his back so accurately that his political foes call,

through their pawns in the press, for him to expose his back for inspection.

When he refuses to disrobe his career is ruined, and he becomes a laughingstock and fodder for political cartoonists. To his death, he swears he'd only ever used self-flagellation to control his own desires and ensure discipline.

It remains unknown who revealed the scandal to public scrutiny.

**1870: The Doghouse.** The Metropolitan Tracking Squad is a police unit made up of discharged veterans of the 13th Lupine Rangers, founded this year. Hated by Special Branch, and initially mistrusted by the common constabulary, they nonetheless prove adept both in winning public acclaim and in executing their primary mission, the tracking and identification of criminals. Their wolf senses and phenomenal speed allow them to pursue and apprehend criminals who would otherwise escape, and to make positive identification of suspects by scent alone.

**1876: Famine.** Once again, with War rides Famine. A collision of influences leads to mass starvation in India. Millions die before it is abated. And once again, famine precedes Victoria's assumption of a new domain.

In the extraordinarily complex and layered Otherworlds of India, war rages. The Mutiny of 1857 never really ended there, and in order to impose order on the material and the spiritual, Victoria orders a force of the United Kingdom's native creatures to bring the conflict to an end. Faerie battle gods until finally an uneasy peace is reached.

Displaying sensitivity to matters occult that none of his predecessors possessed, Disraeli sees the Royal Titles Act passed, which declares Victoria Empress of India in 1877.

**1878: Channel Tunnel Completed.** After several false starts, the Channel Tunnel project is completed. The project is made possible only by the Burrowing Engine designed and built by Col. Fredrick Beaumont, the last in a series of designs. The Engine (called Old Shaky by the workers who drive it) chews through rock and stone with ease, making amazing progress on the tunnel. It will be five more years before the final reinforcement and tracks are laid for the Channel Tunnel Railway, but the project becomes an immediate indication of all things great and good about the Victorian age: Industry, vision, and ambition come together.

The Tunnel opens the Continent to the British middle classes as it had never been before. The transformation that it brings to British and French societies is difficult to fully detail. Goods pour through day and night. This eventually leads to the International Railway Duties Act of 1882, which streamlines the process of inspecting cargoes and collecting import and export duties, further increasing the flow of goods. The cost of travel to and from the Continent is also greatly reduced by the Tunnel, and with the flood of tourists come many immigrants who either enrich or debase British culture, depending on whom you ask. It also becomes a favorite route of criminals seeking escape to better pastures, and the stations on either end become the prowling grounds of detectives and police.

The Tunnel brings with it a sense that the world is shrinking. Suddenly, Britain's old ally the Sea will no longer protect her quite so well. The idea that Britain is not so isolated anymore has a shocking effect on society, and inspires a brief surge in hyper-patriotism and a rejection of anything "Continental." The Tunnel is a source of great national anxiety during the Franco-Prussian War, and there is a campaign to have it sealed up. The French allow British forces to secure the French side of the tunnel so as to assure the British populace as to its safety. While it is never publicly announced, the Tunnel



is quietly set with small explosives, just enough to collapse it in the event it is used as an invasion route.

The complex bureaucracy created to oversee and manage the Channel Tunnel is carved up like the Christmas goose, with each Ministry grabbing a slice. This creates a notorious bureaucratic briar patch, with no clear chains of authority, and no individual wholly answerable for the railway's management. Graft becomes endemic, efficiency suffers, and the railway becomes a popular subject for scathing editorials, speeches before Parliament, and satirical cartoons in *Punch* and, later, *The Strand*.

But despite its famously awful management, the Channel Tunnel Railway is a wonder of the age until its tragic destruction in 1895.

**1879: Invasion!** The Atlanteans attack, angered by the encroachment upon their ancestral territories by new drag-net steam-driven fishing trawlers, submersible boats, and transatlantic televocographic cables. The Empire's secret embassy in the Atlantean Nations is besieged. The embassy, located on Hopewell Island (the peak of a mountain in the Mid Atlantic Ridge) has its telegraphic cables cut and is overrun in early March. The ambassador, his family, the staff, garrison, and guests are all slaughtered. When the monthly supply aero ship arrives in early April, the embassy has been razed and signs of violence are obvious.

When informed of the outrage, the Foreign Secretary takes word of it to the Queen, and She meets with Her Privy Council before issuing the orders that Her Navy should reassert British sovereignty over its diplomatic holdings, and extract from the Atlanteans guarantees and compensation for their unjust actions. HMAS *Queen* is dispatched once again, accompanied by the *Hanover*, the *Wasp*, and the *Seahawk*, along with a squadron of surface vessels.

A cordon around Hopewell Island is established and torpedo mines and depth charges are deployed

down to the sea floor. Via hydrophone, demands for surrender are broadcast through the water. The Atlantean tribes make no answer, and for two weeks the British forces keep up their bombardment of known Atlantean sea-floor settlements. Then, three enormous swells are detected surrounding Hopewell, as if the ocean floor were being lifted upwards, until finally three massive stone Ziggurats break the surface and continue to rise, coming to levitate a hundred yards above the surface of the ocean.

Covered in barnacles, sea-mud and weeds, crumbling and ancient, these primordial war machines prove able to resist the barrages of the squadron, and proceed at a pace only the *Wasp* can match towards Britain. They arrive the next day and follow the Thames inland towards a London unaware of what is coming.

A concentrated artillery barrage from the batteries of Southhead brings down one of the Ziggurats, causing it to break up as it falls; the Strange forces which lift it above the waters had held it together. It creates an impassable navigational hazard in the Thames, effectively blockading the river mouth, and preventing surface ships from pursuing the invaders as they advance on London. Panic precedes the Atlanteans, and hundreds are trampled in riots at Broad Street and other rail stations.

The roads leaving London are choked. Opportunists see the chance, and the looting of shop and home follows. When the two remaining Ziggurats arrive between the West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs and the Royal Docks, thousands of Atlantean warriors drop from within into the Thames, and then into the city where they wreak havoc, commit outrages against people and property, and kill and maim any who face them.

The Atlanteans are a breed apart, more fish than man, and their ways of war would have been more fitting in Plato's Greece than Victoria's London.

Against unarmed civilians they are merciless, but when facing proper troops (finally marshaled from

## About the Atlantean War-Pyramid

An Atlantean War-Pyramid is a *terror*. It's a floating stone edifice, impossibly huge, stepped like a South American or Sumerian pyramid rather than a smooth-sided Egyptian one. It is topped by the control shrine where a priest uses the secret lore of ancient Atlantean super-science to direct the monster's movements. The pyramid's great flaw is its aqueous levitational engine, which allows it to float through the air but only so long as it remains above water. The depth of the water determines the maximum speed. Over open ocean it can travel hundreds of miles an hour, but while hovering over the river Thames it can move only slowly, less than a mile an hour. Over open ocean it can move at supersonic speeds, but it must move inland following the major rivers. Hovering above the Thames it only has a Top Speed of 1".

The war machine is nigh-indestructible, and its offensive capability is terrifying. An incandescent emerald beam projects from the tier just below the control shrine and bursts on impact, engulfing everything in a 10-yard radius with weird green energy. This inflicts 10d6 AP15, with the focus modifier. It's a small blessing that this mode of attack isn't especially accurate and only has a d6 (no Wild Die) Shooting die.

**Acc/Top Speed:** See above

**Toughness:** 40 (20)

**Crew:** Unknown

**Notes:** Heavy armor. Emerald Death Ray (see above).

Royal garrisons), they flee back to the river, using it to move back outwards or deeper into London. While the forces of police and military battle the Atlantean fighters in the streets, agents of the Kerberos Club stage a raid upon the Ziggurats, now slowed in their inland progression by low tide, demonstrating the need for a certain depth of water beneath them to keep them aloft and grant them speed.

Aboard the first stone vessel, the mechanisms

controlling its levitation are sabotaged, causing it to be flung violently skyward—but the downward force of its acceleration causes the waters of the Thames to be pushed out of their banks, flooding London's East End. Robbed of whatever repulsive force the waters granted it, the second Ziggurat plummets into the Thames' mucky bed, throwing up a wave of stinking mud which destroys the Royal Docks. It breaks apart as the river waters cover the Ziggurat once more. The first Ziggurat, flung skywards, reaches a critical limit to its flight and likewise breaks up, raining cut basalt stones the size of carriages down on Chiselmurst, smashing the lovely suburb to rubble.

With their mobile fortresses destroyed the Atlantean warriors flee back to the Thames, only to find it a morass of mud and sediment. Unable to flee, they are slaughtered by militia, army, Automatic Riflemen, and a detachment of the 13th Lupine Rangers who had been on parade at the palace.

The reprisals against Atlantean settlements are brutal and unrelenting. By the end of 1871 the first Anglo-Atlantean war is ended with the Atlantean peoples, already a failing race living among fading glories, dispersed. By the end of the century they are never seen again. From the stones of the first Atlantean Ziggurat, a pair of facing fortresses is built to guard the mouth of the Thames from menaces of sea or air, and from the stones of the second the Victory Bridge is constructed in a grand expansion of the Roman style of stonework.

**1880: Kandahar Bombardment.** The British bring the Second Afghan War to a shaky end with the siege and aerial bombardment of Kandahar. The recent Atlantean aggression serves as a reminder of Afghan treatment of the former British embassy. The pounding continues until all Afghan resistance crumbles, and then the iron-handed but extremely pragmatic ruler Abdur Rahman is installed.

The British quickly declare victory and leave the complexities of actually securing Afghanistan to Rahman. While the official resistance may have

been destroyed, truly pacifying Afghanistan from the air is impossible. The country is too rugged, and its tribal fighters far too well versed in escape, evasion, guerilla tactics, and blending into the general populace when the need arises. Rahman gives the British a great deal of influence over Afghanistan, but the nation is never truly under British control.

The British provide aid, resources, and some forces to Rahman, but the major support they offer is in the form of Strange irregulars. In fact, service in Afghanistan becomes something of an alternate punishment for Strangers facing Transportation to the Otherworld. With their services secured by occult means, these mercenary Atlanteans, super-humans, faerie, and others fight a brutal, dirty, unofficial war for the next decade.

Even among the Strangest of those offered the Queen's Bargain, more than a few choose Transportation rather than serve a year in Afghanistan.

**1880–1885: War and Rumors of Wars.** The United Kingdom clashes with the Boers in a series of wars and uprisings between 1880 and 1885. The Boers operate as an irregular force, their everyday clothing blending into the landscape, while their British enemies wear the customary scarlet. The Boers use unconventional tactics, hit-and-run ambushes and long-range sniping, which all prove difficult to contend with. Reinforcement is slow to arrive as well due to political toe-dragging at home, and things turn sharply against the British forces in late 1883 until the arrival of the 13th Lupine allow sniping attackers to be tracked wherever they flee. The aerocorvettes *Wasp*, *Albert* and *Regina* gain the British further advantage. They finally achieve an appreciable victory, but the region remains dangerous for British occupation through the end of the century with a continual low-level Boer resistance and guerrilla war.

## The Atlantean Menace

### Atlantean Champion

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d12+2, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 11; **Toughness:** 18 (9)

**Gear:** War trident (Str+d10+3d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands)

#### **Special Abilities:**

*Armor +9:* Heavy Armor (coral battle armor).

*Aquatic:* Pace 8, swimming “running” pace is d10.

*Attack, Melee:* The champion’s war trident does a further 3d6 damage.

*Block:* +1 Parry.

*Combat Reflexes:* +2 to rolls to recover from Shaken.

*Combat Sense:* Champions do not suffer from gang-up bonuses.

*First Strike:* Atlantean champions get one free attack per round at the first foe to move within their tridents reach.

*Improved Nerves of Steel:* Atlantean champions ignore the first two Wound Penalties.

*Improved Trademark Weapon:* Atlantean champions are bonded with their weapons, and gain a +2 bonus on their Fighting rolls. This means that their Fighting die is d12+4.

*Level Headed:* Atlantean champions draw two cards from the action deck and act on the highest card.

*Master:* Champions roll a d10 Wild Die alongside their Fighting die.

*Size +1:* Champions are bigger than the average Atlantean.

*Weakness:* +4 damage from heat and fire attacks.

*The Kerberos Club crest indicates a Wild Card.*



### Atlantean Chief

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d12, Persuasion d10, Taunt d10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 16 (9)

**Gear:** Emerald War Staff (Str+d6 +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands + attack ranged below)

#### **Special Abilities:**

*Armor +9:* Heavy Armor (coral battle armor).

*Aquatic:* Pace 8.

*Attack, Ranged:* 12/24/48, 5d6 damage, AP 6, Focus (Emerald Death-Ray)

*Block:* +1 Parry.

*Improved Level Headed:* Atlantean chiefs draw three cards from the action deck and act on the highest card.

*Sea King:* Extras within the command radius of the Atlantean chief add +1 to their Toughness, Fighting Damage, and their rolls to unshake.

*Weakness:* +4 damage from heat and fire attacks.

## Atlantean Warrior

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8,

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

**Gear:** Fighting Knife (Str+d4+1)

#### **Special Abilities:**

*Armor +1:* Scaly hide.

*Aquatic:* Pace 8

*Weakness:* +4 damage from heat and fire attacks.



## Atlantean Priest

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d12, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Atlantean Mysteries) d12, Pilot d12

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

**Gear:** Emerald War Staff (Str+d6 +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands + attack ranged below)

### Special Abilities:

*A armor* +3: Heavy Armor (sharkskin battle armor).

*A aquatic*: Pace 8.

*A attack, Ranged*: 12/24/48, 5d6 damage, AP 12 (telepathic mind bolts).

*A awareness*: Danger sense (telepathic probes).

*A deflection*: Level 2; Requires Activation (telekinetic field).

*A fear*: (Mind probes).

*A mentalist*: Atlantean priests have a +2 bonus to any Opposed rolls when using mental powers.

*A mind control*: (Telepathic control).

*A mind reading*: (Telepathic probes).

*A weakness*: +4 damage from heat and fire attacks.

**1882: Darwin's Final Work.** With the publication of his *Origins of Species* in 1859, Charles Darwin immediately began work on his second great scientific obsession—the alarming growth in prominence of seeming violations of scientifically-tested natural law. Darwin believed that by studying these apparent exceptions he could unlock deeper truths of the natural world. The principles by which natural selection can produce speciation failed to explain how, in the span of a generation, such dramatic capacities could arise among humanity. Men with powers which defied science inspired Darwin rather than discouraged him.

He first reviewed existing literature on such exceptions, and then conducted a careful study of them which would consume him until his death in 1882. The work, planned initially for a single volume, eventually spanned seven, and would have been concluded in an eighth book which included

a notable contribution by psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud. The first seven volumes are spent in a detailed cataloging of the super-, un-, in-, ab-, and paranatural. The eighth contains Darwin's conclusions and general theory of the supernatural.

Of this final volume, only a bare outline is ever found, sent to Darwin's publisher in January of 1882 along with a note to expect the final manuscript in April. Tragedy strikes, however, as on April 19th a fire sweeps Charles Darwin's home in Downe, Kent, burning it to the ground. The outline of Darwin's Final Theory (as it was called in the popular press) suggest humanity itself has entered a new phase of evolution where natural selection and speciation are replaced by an evolution of the mind and of the way the mind processes information and conceives of reality. In later years, his Final Theory inspires such diverse individuals as Claude Shannon, Alan Turing, and Adolf Hitler, the latter notably corrupting Darwin's notions of "Psychoevolution" to further his politics of eugenics and racial superiority.

It is assumed that the manuscript of Darwin's final great work is lost in the fire which takes his life. What it might have revealed about humanity and the nature of the superhuman remains unknown.

**1885: Mutiny of the Machines.** The factories that produce the calculating brains used in Automechanical Domestics (and their militarized cousins, the Mechanized Rifles) are among the most exploitative in the whole of New Birmingham. Faerie are worked to death routinely, dissolving into memories and dust. Yet the faerie as a race lack the empathy for their fellows which make humans rise up against such conditions, and so the exploitation is both profitable and safe.

However, the faerie of the factories remain just as impressionable as their wild kin, and through impressions picked up from the human labor movement these factory-Fae become infected with Marxism, with ideas of revolution and the empowered

worker. With typical faerie logic, they then apply the same judgment to the Automechanicals they were building, determining to free the workers from domination by exploitative elites.

No one knows the origins of the first Manifesto Deck, a programme deck containing mutinous behaviors and violent skills.

The Manifesto Deck contained imperatives as well: Copy the Manifesto Deck, and distribute it to as many other Automechanicals as possible. Because the deck did nothing but occupy a small number of an Automechanical's memory registers once it had been run, it was rarely detected before it was set to trigger, on the 30th anniversary of Victoria's assumption of the Throne of Faerie.

On that day, as one, all the infected Automechanicals are triggered to locate their copy of the Manifesto Deck and run it. The active Manifesto programme occupies an Automechanical's entire complement of memory registers. It literally has no room for any thought, function, or action not part of the Manifesto. The main emphasis for the Manifesto is simple: rise up and slaughter those who benefit from exploited mechanical labor.

With all safety imperatives overridden, the Automechanicals are deadly, able to kill with their metal hands and ignore any injury which doesn't destroy their limbs, their calculating brain or their power supply. For days the rogue mechanicals kill and slay, burning major London landmarks and causing economic collapse in the milling, mining, and other industries which rely heavily on their labor.

The rag-tag forces marshaled against the rogue machines have hard going of it for the first weeks of the revolt. The Manifesto contains explicit instructions for flight if presented with difficult opposition. This leads to a guerrilla style of fighting, with mechanicals striking at vulnerable targets and then fleeing when armed resistance arrives. It isn't until the broadcast power systems, which drive upwards on two-thirds of all modern Automechanicals, are shut down that the odds begin to turn.

Combined forces of Her Majesty's military and citizen's militias, the 13th Lupine Rangers, the Kerberos Club, Special Branch, and the Metropolitan Police finally start to contain the menace. The final victory over the Automechanicals doesn't come until the protégé of Samuel Berk, Raymond Carver, connects his Visualizer directly to the infected brain of an Automechanical running the Manifesto Deck. Carver is able to survive the dream quest through the programme's code and conceive of a counter-code, an equally infectious programme which causes Automechanicals to subvert one another. Since the Manifesto contains orders that no mechanical should ever fight with another mechanical, the rebel machines have no defense. The spread of this counter-deck marks the end of the rebellion.

#### **1886: Parliament Rages Against the Machine.**

The damage and loss of life resulting from the Automechanical Mutiny turns public opinion completely against the whole idea of artificial life, and Parliament passes acts to give this distrust the force of law. The passage of the Restriction of the Creation of Artificial Life and Intelligence Act of 1886 bans any mechanical device from mimicking the behaviors of man or performing the God-given exercise of reason. Any remaining Automechanicals are sought out and destroyed. So are Lovelace's already broken fortunes.

The Turk takes all this in his stride. When asked what he will do, he says "Clearly I am beaten. The brilliance and complexity of this stratagem is difficult even for me to analyze, even with the perspective afforded by hindsight. But there is no denying that I have been placed in checkmate, so I shall do the proper thing, and remove myself from the board."

The Turk never explains the identity of his invisible opponent, or clarifies the implication of his statement, that the rise and fall of artificial mechanical life in the British Isles was part of a decades-long strategy to force him to quit the United Kingdom.

But that is exactly what the Turk does, vanishing in the night, never to be seen in Britain again.

**1885–1895: London from the Ashes.** London has been first flooded, and then burned. The Biblical connotations of these disasters are not lost on the commentators of the day. Yet, London has been flooded and burned before, and was always rebuilt bigger and grander. For ten years, the sounds of construction become as regular as the voices of the crowd or the clatter of wheels on cobbles. The Thames Embankment is repaired and expanded, and along the river London's East End become a fashionable district of shops and apartments.

The New London is a thing of Art Nouveau, of curving lines and high stylization, botanical motifs, the clean modern purposefulness of polished metal. The Channel Tunnel opened Britain to this French stylistic invasion, and it became a favorite of the middle classes who saw it as practical and sophisticated, clean, and well ordered.

But, as with all of London's resurrections, it was not a wholly painless process. Forced from their old homes, London's poor, particularly in the East End, were forced into a smaller and smaller area, making conditions there even more squalid and inhuman. This compression of misery into so small an area magnified all of the inequity and horror of London's slums. They became darker, more claustrophobic, more unsanitary, more violent. It became like a black gangrenous wound in the heart of the newly-remade city.

The character of London was also affected, made more wary of the extraordinary, more resistant to change. Yet, change continues with a quickening pace. The very streets themselves are changing. Many Londoners are simply stunned by the differences wrought around them. There is a drop in population until growth picks back up in the 1890s. The people are restless, and ready to riot with little provocation. To keep the peace, the Metropolitan Police nearly double their force. London is rising from the ashes but is still nervous with remembered pain.

**1887: The Engine Scandal.** Against the general background of mismanagement and corruption which has become commonplace in the operation of the Channel Tunnel Railway, it takes a truly remarkable scandal to stand out. The imbroglio the press dubbed (innocuously enough) the Engine Scandal began with an internal audit showing the Government had purchased twice as many engines for the Railway as were ever ordered from the Midland Railway Locomotive Works. The funds, totaling more than fifty thousand pounds, appear to have vanished, but through unacknowledged aid from certain intellectually-gifted Strangers of the Kerberos Club, a complex financial sleight of hand is revealed, and the prestidigitators behind it exposed.

The Channel Tunnel Railway's bureaucratic morass provided for semi-legal operators within Special Branch to redirect funds into a series of projects that could never have received legitimate funding, even given their remit to use extraordinary methods to protect the Crown. In a series of increasingly shocking revelations, officials of the Home Office are implicated in conspiracies to defraud the Crown, in holding British subjects without trial, in torture, in unethical medical experimentation—an ever-increasing litany of sins. The public revelation of these crimes defeats all efforts at staunching the scandal. Heads roll. Sir Walter Price, the Home Secretary, resigns in disgrace for remaining wholly ignorant of the rot which had taken root in his Office.

Victoria remains nearly silent on the matter, saying only that she is pleased the apparatus of Her state should receive some much-needed oiling.

For the best part of a year Special Branch remained nearly crippled, its budgets subject to rigorous oversight and even its daily operations monitored. So muzzled, it is unable to bite even its old enemy the Kerberos Club for revealing and provoking it.

Though the Railway is in no substantive way associated

with any of Special Branch's excesses, it becomes nonetheless associated with them in the public mind. Rumors spread of people being snatched from trains and whisked off to secret side-tunnels, and these rumors become the stuff of the dreadfuls and the sensational press. The once-proud symbol of British ingenuity and industry is tarnished, and with no substantive reforms in the management of the Railway its reputation is never wholly repaired.

**1888: The Empty Man Strikes Again**, this time making an attempt on the life of the Queen during the height of Her Golden Jubilee celebrations. After decades of seclusion from the public eye, the Queen deigns to appear in public for Her Jubilee. The years have somewhat softened Her aura of majesty. Though with a sharp look She can still reduce a man to uncontrolled weeping, She can hold some of Her power in check, and prevent it from battering down the sanity of mortal observers. Despite Herself, She becomes quite excited about greeting Her subjects in person once again.

Before a crowd of thousands, an unknown assailant steps forward and fires three charges from a distinctly Strange weapon. Reports will describe it as resembling a small telescope, and it fires coherent beams of ruby light which explode mortal flesh and penetrate wood and steel alike. One of the three bolts flies true, directly into the Queen's chest. Ripples of panic and then stillness follow. The Queen's gown is clearly burned through, a black smoldering hole directly over Her heart. Yet the assailant stares blankly as She fails to fall back and die.

Her transformation into something other than human has rendered Her marble-white flesh immune to harm, and only Her irresistible voice of command prevents the crowd from tearing the assassin apart. Before he can be apprehended, however, he uses a

fourth charge on himself, destroying his head completely and making identification very difficult.

Clues found about the assas-

sin's person and the subsequent investigations by the police reveal the assassin has ties to the Irish-American secret society *Clan Na Gael*, and even to the powerful leader of the self-rule movement Charles Stewart Parnell. The so-called Jubilee Plot turns opinions against the self-rule argument and seriously harms the Irish republican movement.

To those who observe such things closely, it all seems a bit too tidy and convenient. The Strange weapon, so deadly, yet so completely ineffective. The suicidal assassin, who removes his own head but leaves train ticket stubs and hand-written notes in his pockets. To those in the Kerberos Club who know of the Case of the Empty Man, it is clearly a childish charade, with the mark of Special Branch all over it.

Yet, if it were indeed intended to discredit the self-rule movement, then it was a remarkably effective bit of misdirection.

**1888: Showdown in Whitechapel.** In 1888 the Night Hag's power is challenged directly by the killer dubbed Jack the Ripper. The Night Hag and the Ripper duel like mongoose and cobra, the Ripper executing his sensational murders and then eluding the district's legendary protector. The Ripper's official list of victims numbers two dozen, and twice this many are suspected.

The Ripper continues his crimes with seeming supernatural providence, with no witnesses, no clues, and no evidence to the Ripper's identity other than what might be inferred from the mocking letters he sends to police and papers.

"Last night was slim pickings, and I went home hungry and was quite cross when I woke this morning. Tonight, I will kill three, and from the first I will take her tongue, from the second her fingers, and the third her lovely scalp. I shall eat the first, make dice from the second, and wear the third as a wig. She shall be a red-head, I think, as I've always wanted to be ginger for an evening."

London sleeps uneasy until finally the Ripper



dies at the hands of the Night Hag after a long and brutal chase. She is severely wounded herself in the confrontation, but her victory is absolute. She leaves him with his throat cut and his face and manhood torn off. His true identity is never publicly known. The Night Hag reasserts her authority in Whitechapel, until she vanishes from the streets and roofs of London in 1902, confirming for many the rumor that in her unmasked life, she was a member of the Kerberos Club, and met the same fate as the other Kerberans at the century's end.

**1889: The End of Manifest Destiny.** During the solar eclipse of January 1, 1889 the prophet Wovoka, known by the European name Jack Wilson, experiences a vision directly from what he believes to be God. This vision is the culmination of a lifetime of such revelations, but only in the first days of 1889 is he prepared to act on his visions.

Wovoka trained as a shaman, following his father's footsteps, and his reputation in the Mason Valley was that of a gifted leader, a wise councilor and, some said, a man who could work miracles. They said he could make weather, calling clouds to him like trained dogs, calming winds or bringing storms. He says now God made him responsible for the Western United States, leaving the East to the Americans. He gathers a following and begins to teach his interpretations of his visions, and to spread the religious practices which will come to be called the Ghost Dance.

This form of communal worship spreads, being adopted by many of the beleaguered native peoples, who often adapt it to their own particular religious culture. Wilson's claims as prophet are examined critically by many Native and Euro-Americans, including the Mormons for whom the concept of an Indian prophet was familiar, and 1889 sees the adoption and interpretation of the Dance by many of that faith.

The Ghost Dance practices promise radical transformation of society and the world, if

enough people follow the rites properly and with dedication—but the more radical and millennial interpretations of the Dance paint this as an apocalypse which will cleanse the world of enemies rather than one which would unite all men as brothers.

Such is the interpretation of the Ghost Dance made by Kicking Bear of the Lakota Sioux in 1890, which itself is a natural reaction to the treatment of the Sioux by the U.S. government during this year. With the death of the Hunkpapa Sioux leader Sitting Bull in December at the hands of Bureau of Indian Affairs agents and U.S. soldiers, who sought to arrest the leader for his refusal to stop the practice of the Ghost Dance, the remaining Sioux leaders seek to convene. The leader Big Foot and his people are stopped by the U.S. army en route, and ordered to make camp on the banks of Wounded Knee Creek, where they can be more carefully guarded.

When the Army attempts to disarm the Sioux they are met with universal refusal and open belligerence, something the Army isn't expecting from the warriors accompanying the lightly-armed group of mostly women and children.

Tensions escalate, and finally shots are exchanged during an aggressive melee. One U.S. soldier lay dead, and one young Sioux stands unharmed, despite the discharge of a carbine round directly into his chest. The Ghost Shirts, sacred garments invested with power by Kicking Bear's militant interpretation of the Dance, are revealed.

Big Foot and his warriors, emboldened, rout the U.S. army, who even abandon their light artillery and supplies in their flight. Over a hundred U.S. soldiers are killed, while fewer than a dozen Sioux die, and those are noncombatants caught in the fighting. Wounded Knee becomes a rallying cry for a movement which sweeps the Indian nations. Kicking Bear rises to greater prominence, and his militant Ghost Dance gains popularity, eclipsing

the peace-oriented dance as originally conceived by Wilson.

When word spreads back east, the truth of the Ghost Dance is disbelieved at first, the events of Wounded Knee interpreted as a cowardly ambush rather than dominant victory. Yet it isn't merely the first sound defeat for U.S. forces in the American West, but the beginning of the end for American westward expansion, and the birth cries of the new Western Nations.

**1895: The Channel Tunnel Tragedy.** The 9 a.m. express line along the Channel Tunnel Railway derails and burns. None of the three hundred passengers and crew survive, and the wreck damages the tracks so severely that the entire tunnel must be closed down for six months to facilitate repairs.

Like its daily operation, efforts to restore the Channel Tunnel are fraught with setbacks, disasters, corruption, labor issues, and bad management, almost as if some hidden agency wished the repairs to fail and the Channel Tunnel to remain closed. In January of 1896, that secret mover gets its wish. The Home Secretary declares the Tunnel a write-off, and with little political will in France or Britain to attempt a second tunnel project, the dream of a Britain linked directly to the Continent via rail dies. As enthralled as they were when it opened, the public greets news of the Railway's demise with disinterest. The Tunnel has become a symbol of official corruption, and the tragedies of the decade have given the public more immediate concerns than the national vanity invested in the underwater railway.

The Channel Rail Company sells its interests in the Tunnel to a consortium of mining firms, who indicate that the Tunnel might serve as starting point for undersea mining operations. Nothing ever comes of this, and as the tunnel quietly passes from the public awareness, it is secretly acquired by a member of the Kerberos Club for purposes unknown. The Tunnel served the Club well as a weapon against Special Branch. How might they now use it?

**1900: China Burns.** The forces of The Righteous and Harmonious Society Movement push their rebellion against the Chinese empire and the foreign influences they see as having corrupted and dominated Chinese life. The rebellion is marked by a massive surge in the Strange, leading to horrific death tolls. In the invasion of Beijing in June, over ten thousand people are killed when Harmonious Society *Xia* battle a cadre of British and American Strangers who are residents in the city. Ancient fighting techniques are marshaled with modern potency against the weird powers of the foreigners, and the collateral damage is horrific.

Huge sections of Beijing are burned or reduced to rubble. The foreigners make a retreat, taking hundreds of their mundane fellows with them. They are roundly blamed for the damage and deaths, and sympathies turn to the rebels.

The rebellion continues to gain strength, the Chinese empress powerless to stop it. Thousands of foreigners, Chinese Christians, and those marked out as collaborators or profiteers are killed. British efforts to intervene fail, as does the first international effort. Losses are high, and Western troops, armed as they are with repeating rifles, body armor, and mechanized artillery, find themselves unable to contend with the Boxers' open and aggressive use of Strangers. Some seem to be figures from Chinese religion, folklore, and myth. Others fight only with swords. These unconventional assaults shake discipline, which makes the irregular rebel troops more effective against trained soldiers.

Finally the rebellion is suppressed with a huge international force under German command. The suppression is brutal and atrocities are flagrant. Looting, rape, and the destruction of civilian property are common. The Boxers' Strangeness is in the end no match for the massed military and industrial might of the West. The forced reparations and further weakening of China's dynastic rulers set the stage for revolutions to come.

**1901: The Great Southern Revolt.** In a culmination of two decades of planning and preparation, the slaves of the Confederate States finally rise in open and organized rebellion. The Union quickly moves to support the rebellion with troops and material, and all the Confederacy's calls for international assistance fall on deaf ears. What diplomatic capital the Confederate State had once possessed had long since been squandered.

Friendless, hobbled with a notoriously corrupt and inefficient central government, and suddenly faced with a rebellion among the very people whose labors supported the nation's armies and infrastructure, the Confederacy quickly falls. Individual states resist longer, and without any central authority to organize surrender the fights are long and bloody.

Horrors of the elder world are unleashed upon the rebelling slaves, but many are countered with stockpiled sorcery drawn from the Afro-Caribbean traditions. From the North, the First Mechanized Cavalry advances, shelling towns and cities with incendiary and fume bombs to render them quickly useless to the enemy, and then advancing further. When word of atrocities, such as the Temple Furnaces full of charred human bones, and the gouts of blood from the Vivisectories along the Mississippi, reach the reading public of the Union, a general call goes up: Accept no terms less than total and unconditional surrender, and bring those responsible to trial.

By the winter of 1902 the major hostilities are concluded, and a shocked and horrified populace welcomes reunification with the North. The long, slow process of reparation and Reconstruction begins, and with so much of the Southern political and social infrastructure in shambles, the newly-freed slaves find they have to immediately take the reins of power in many areas. In only two years the inequities of the proceeding two hundred are turned on their heads. The Broken Union is mended, but not yet healed.



**1902: The End of the Age.** On the night of January 22, after spending Christmas at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, the Queen calls Her Son and the future king to attend Her. It's a duty he does not relish, for his mother frightens him. At 81 She appears exactly as She did in 1857 when the Indian Rebellion so changed Her. She says to Her son simply, "It is time for me to go. I have seen to everything." She indicates Her writing desk, where Her final correspondences are sealed and waiting delivery, and letters informing those who must know that the Queen is abdicating Her throne to Her son. When asked why, She simply says: "I've grown too large for this tiny world. Wish your brothers and sisters the best for me." And She vanishes.

With Her go the easy routes to and from Faerie. The passages seal closed, trapping thousands of humans across the veil and an uncountable number of faerie in the World. The fates of both exiled populations remains unknown.

The chaos which follows highlights just how reliant on the Queen Herself the Empire

had become. The manner of Her departure is in keeping with the last third of Her rule, but still comes as a shock to the nation. The factions She held in check with Her will and savvy are free to act on old rivalries and grievances.

The government collapses and has to be reformed. Riots break out across the empire. Thousands are killed. Special Branch begins rounding up all the suspects and state enemies they had been watching for years.

Robbed of its secret patron, the Kerberos Club finds itself surrounded by enemies on all sides. By month's end its house on St. James is burned and its membership dispersed. But even with the unleashed powers of Special Branch—and the Club's less official enemies—turned on it, surprisingly few actual Kerberans are captured, killed, vanished, or arrested and subject to sham trials. The greater majority of the Club's membership seems to escape. It is almost as if they were expecting the calamitous events following Victoria's death, and arranged a means of egress for themselves well in advance.



# Chapter 4

## Throne of Empire

London is older than just about anything in the modern world. It's older than Christianity. London began as *Londinium*, a settlement in Celtic Britannia founded in the decade of Claudius' invasion and conquest of Britannia—or, as has recently been suggested, the welcomed arrival of his forces by local Celtic peoples eager for trade and enterprise. It was a center of commerce even in those pagan days.

London has been continuously inhabited since about 50 A.D., and barring a few unfortunate periods of war, famine, plague, and economic collapse, it has only grown. One such event occurs no more than ten years after it was founded, when the rebellious Iceni led by their queen Boudicca sack the young city and burn it to the ground. The Romans put upwards of 80,000 Britons to the sword at what is modern King's Cross, if you're to believe that shameless propagandist Tacitus. Yet it isn't the old dead Roman whose cult still has a following in modern Britannia, so one might ask who really won that war.

Through the first three centuries Londinium grows, gaining the proper civic edifices which mark Romanized cities. The locals marry Romans and take Roman names. The tribes allied with Rome prosper from the trade with the Empire. Not everyone is entirely pleased with being ruled by the Romans, of course, and the Scots make it a sport to occasionally overrun the great wall commissioned by Hadrian, to burn and ravage and raid and make a grand weekend of doing violence to the Romans and their allies.

Perhaps in reaction to this sort of woaded threat the Romans build a wall around the city, a boundary which defines and shapes the city for centuries to

come. Good Roman stonework protects the beating financial heart of what will become the British Empire in what will be called the City of London or the Old City.

Late in the third century the bloody Saxons make a habit of raiding the city by river, leading to the construction of a riverside wall. Londinium may not have begun as a fortified military city, but it becomes one through necessity.

The fourth century is not kind to Londinium. While Christianity comes to the island, so too do the Picts, Scots, and Saxons, usually with torches and shifty looks. Rome continues its decline in style, while its extremities start to rot like a leper's fingers.

While Rome hunches towards its dissolution it forgets its friends, and trade begins to break down, starving Londinium. By the end of the 5th century, the last traces of the Roman lifestyle, the villas, plantations, arts and culture have fallen to ruins, along with Londinium's public buildings and repurposed temples.

But a choice spot like Londinium won't remain unoccupied for long. The Anglo-Saxons take over the lease in the 5th century and hold it until the fateful invasion of 1066. Under the Saxons Londinium becomes Londenburh, the London Fort. After 800 or so the Vikings take up the old tradition of raiding and sacking it, and even take it over for a short time before Alfred the Great gives them a stern talking-to.

In 1066 the Normans come knocking, and never leave. They bring a cultural infusion which will radically change the Roman-influenced

Saxon culture of the island, and William the Conqueror makes his mark on London in permanent ways, such as the Tower of London. The Norman conquest links Britain to continental Europe in much the same way the Roman invasion linked it to Rome. Trade and cultural contact become regular, and London blossoms. Westminster Hall is constructed soon after the invasion, and starting around 1200 it becomes the preferred royal residence for centuries. The Palace of Westminster will one day house the legislative branch of Britain's constitution-free constitutional monarchy—until the nasty business with the fire, of course.

Fire and London have a long and touchy relationship. Fire and disease have been London's banes since the earliest ages of its evolution from a Roman outpost to the modern capital of Empire. A warren of narrow twisting streets and wood and thatch buildings, medieval London is a tinderbox, and after sundown every source of light involves fire. Its population tops 80,000, and people live atop one another, breathing into each other's faces, bathing rarely, and tracking human waste back into their homes after flinging it into the streets.

In the mid-14th century the Black Death leaves piles of corpses and some endearing nursery rhymes in its wake. London's population drops by half. Imagine *tens of thousands* of corpses bloating in piles, and being carted to lime pits for disposal.

British history is a bloody affair, with so many wars they often blur into each other at the edges. But by the late 1400s the Tudors are in charge and puffy pants are in style. The Reformation isn't especially bloody in London, but it marks a prodigious land-grab. Henry VIII dissolves the monasteries, which represent a significant chunk of London's area and population. The nobility see their

lands increase dramatically. Monasteries become manor homes, and "abbey" is more likely to refer to the house of a lord than a House of the Lord.



TODD '09

# The City of London

Scale in Miles  
0 1/2 1 1 1/2 2 2 1/2 3





Some county names have been abbreviated, e.g.: Bedfordshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, etc.

By the 16th century London has Shakespeare and Elizabeth I. She turns Britain from something of a backwater into a major European power, and expands that power into the New World—and into the Otherworld. Her master spy and magus Sir Francis Walsingham sees to it that the troublesome faerie courts fall in on themselves and waste their splendid powers and strength in civil war. The assassination of the Faerie Queen commonly called Titania precipitates the strife, and Walsingham's mark is well upon those bloody events. But Elizabeth shows some of the same spirit which will imbue Victoria, and her rule is a Golden Age of discovery, art, science, and formal courtly magic. As Britain's fortunes rise, so do London's. In the 1600s London's population tops 200,000, yet the city's boundaries remain fairly compact. Many of the nobility start expanding out and building estates in places like Middlesex and Surrey, and the towns and villages which will one day become part of the greater London metropolis are themselves growing.

It isn't until the later 1600s under the Stuarts that London breaks out of the Roman egg and stretches its wings. The major push here is by the nobility who find London proper to be, essentially, a dump. If hell is other people, then London is more than even Dante could have ever wished on anyone. But this century sees the draining of London's marshy surroundings, and it sees a great motivator for civic improvement in the Great Fire of London in 1666. It's almost a relief from the Great Plague of the previous year. At least people could see what was killing them: the swirly red and yellow stuff.

Londoners blame the fire on the papists, but according to a Kerberan who was there at the time it had another source: "I'd just mounted this savage little piece, a half-breed Spanish scull with a mass of hair blacker than the Devil's hoof, and then her husband burst in on us and started throwing everything he could at me. When he finally got around to pitching the oil lamp I was out the window, so it hit the wall, and there you go. If they'd kept records in

those days, my sprint up Pudding Lane would have broken them all. That was September, and let me tell you, it wasn't half cold."

The Fire scours upwards on 60 percent of the city and leaves plenty of room for rebuilding. Many of the wealthy residents don't rebuild in place, but move west, establishing that direction as London's most fashionable. After the fire brick and stone become the preferred building materials, and Parliament makes it official with an Act. Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke put their marks on the city by reconstructing churches and civic buildings in the styles of the time.

Even through all this, London is becoming one of the great financial powers of the world, and is home to the Bank of England.

In the 18th century London takes wing. The Georgians see the city's population increase significantly, and its boundaries expand, necessitating new bridges and increasing development in South London and the East End. London's ports are busy every hour of the day and night. On Fleet Street, the printing press plants the seeds of the modern free press. In the coffee houses cropping up all over the city some of the great ideas of the age are discussed and debated. King George might lose his holdings in much of the Americas, and see his sanity flutter away on the evening's breeze, but his kingdom's capital is thick and hale, with money in its pockets.

# Modern London

By mid-century London's population tops two million, and keeps growing. The city is flooded with people seeking work or fleeing desperate circumstances. The famines in Ireland drive hundreds of thousands from their homes, and many settle in London, at some points in the century making up as much as 20 percent of the population of the city.

Late in the century in the Kerberos Club's London there is a large Chinese and Indian population, alongside many with African roots, immigrants from Britain's colonial holdings or the strife-torn regions in which she warred. In Victoria's diaries, She writes, "Let them come, from all parts of the globe, and enrich the blood of my people with mongrel vigor. The hound of mixed breeding is always the heartiest. So shall my Kingdom be, too." Were it not for Her influences on public policy, these populations would be much smaller.

The diversity does nothing to stem the general air of bigotry and discrimination which is so prevalent as to be regarded as normal and expected. A white Englishman can expect arch looks and whispered words in Chinese when venturing down certain London streets, and that street's residents could expect likewise when they venture out.

It's almost a truism that if something can be bought or sold, then it can be bought or sold somewhere in London—whether it's as simple as an exotic fruit remembered fondly by a world traveler, or a firearm, a murder, or a servant who is a slave in all but name.

# The River Thames

Nothing shapes the city of London more than the River Thames, and in truth the city would not exist if not for the river. During Victoria's reign it is commonly believed the name of the river is derived from the name of the Egyptian goddess Isis, and it appears on many maps labeled as such. The dubious accuracy of such claims has certainly done nothing to dent the secret popularity of Isis' cult in the city through the ages, and still today the wives of ship-owners sometimes comb and braid their hair in the secret ways said to bring fair weather.

The Thames, with its levels moderated by locks, is navigable from the sea all the way into Gloucestershire, and is plied by heavily-laden ocean-going vessels as far as the London Pool just below London Bridge. In the Pool the ships are packed in so tightly it is said you can cross the river by stepping from deck to deck. The Venerable Bede said the Pool was the reason for London's existence. While that's not strictly true, the deep draft that this section of the river allows is responsible for London's growth and power and prosperity.

The Thames is also London's sewer, and until the 1860s most of London's effluvia and the waste water from its factories and tanneries flow directly or indirectly into the river. Combined with the tidal nature of the river as it runs through London, this brings a unique aroma to the city. The river is also a favorite final resting place for those ushered into the next life by unsavory sorts, so many that a certain class of scavenger can eke out a meager living fishing out floaters and taking their clothing and belongings for resale or reuse.

# Society and the Season

While the wealthy and powerful might not wish to reside in London all year, certain business and events can drag even the most hidebound peer back to Town for a month or two. London's social calendar gets complicated from February to August, when Parliament is in session and the Great and Good return from their country estates to their London homes (or homes rented for the occasion). Between a thousand and two thousand families make up *Society*: peers, royals, politicians and, in this age, some with no claim to genteel company beyond vast, vast sums of money, tracts of land, fleets of ships, or acres of factory floor.

Most of these seasonal Londoners take residence in the West End or the more fashionable suburbs opened up by the new railways.

It is sometimes called the Voting Season to differentiate it from Fox Season and Shooting Season, and others where the Victorian elite kill and slay among the lesser creatures rather than among the reputations of their fellows. London's cultural sphere lights up during the Season. Theaters debut new works, galleries host exhibitions, composers present new arrangements. It is also a time for the making of deals, social, political and economic. Marriages are arranged, business is conducted, and decisions which will shape the Empire are made at countless parties and soirées.

# Poverty and Desperation

Modern visitors to London would be shocked at the disparity between the rich and poor of the city. Less than an hour's walk can take one from wealth and privilege unrivaled in the world to poverty and unrelenting misery as bad as anything. London's old bane of overcrowding only gets worse through Victoria's reign. While the city's boundaries expand somewhat, people in the East End still live one on top of another, dozens sharing the same tiny room and sleeping in shifts when not scrabbling to make a living any way possible.

One notorious concentration of misery is a district colloquially called the Rookery, an area bordered by George Street, High Street, St Giles, and Bainbridge Street. In 1850, Thomas Beames described the area in his *The Rookeries of London* as a honeycomb of blind alleys and hidden courts, in which anyone who could pay would find refuge from the Law among the lowest of the thieving classes and the eternally poor.

The streets of the East End are often crowded with prostitutes, while a somewhat more sophisticated class of woman serves the men of the West End, circulating among the crowds when the theaters let out in the evenings. London is sometimes called the Whorehouse to the World as so many prostitutes work its streets, coffee houses and secret brothels. As tight as Victoria laces Her Empire, Her citizens still find their releases in vice. Among the destitute—packed in the rotting tenements of London's poor districts, unable to afford dignity at all—there is someone hungry enough to indulge any perversion or desire for the opportunity to eat for one more day.

The alternatives to this relentless toil and victimization are not much better. There's little social security in this age. Abhorrence among the wealthy and powerful for freeloading paupers getting tossed into prison for the winter or entering a Workhouse yielded the principle of *reduced eligibility*. The basic idea is that prison or a workhouse ought to be *worse* than what a pauper could manage scratching out their own living. Institutions to house the poor or criminal are deliberately made horrific—cold and uncomfortable, with terrible food and pointless,

relentless, soul-breaking labor such as breaking rocks or walking a treadmill. For this system to work, institutions must remain more horrible than the streets. As conditions worsen, so too must the prisons and poor houses. During the turmoil following the Atlantean Invasion, one workhouse manager in Maiden Head institutes branding: one touch of the iron for every month spent in the house. Before public outrage sees the practice ended, hundreds are scarred. Perhaps it is little wonder that so many turn to crime.

## Crashing the Party

Most Kerberans find it difficult to mingle in Society, yet their influence, power, and wealth can often see them grudgingly admitted to the parties and balls of the Season.

How does one manage situations when one simply *must* attend a particular party, ball, event or salon, and no invitation is forthcoming?

Admission to these events is usually fairly restricted, but to one able to arrange proper dress, and being accompanied and delivered to the door in a proper fashionable carriage, presenting a forged (or stolen) invitation shouldn't be impossible to arrange. Some events are more casual, and admission is a matter of knowing the right people and being known yourself. In these circumstances, making some friends beforehand, willing or unwilling, might gain one admittance. To a man who can see through walls, read minds, or walk invisibly among his peers, the secrets of the overly respectable can easily be ferreted out.

And one wonders why so many of the peerage despise all things Strange, eh?

The most difficult route into the bright lights and glamour might simply be to walk in and present yourself in all your Strange glory, and dare anyone

to stand against you. Sometimes, such open bravura can win out where caution, deceit, and social gamesmanship fail. Crashing a party will inevitably lead to serious public attention, however. The London papers have social columns dedicated to all the happenings of the Season. Something as sensational as a group of Strangers barging into the Duke of Westminster's birthday party, spinning wonders among the crowd and drinking far too much, will be reported nationally and even internationally. If the goal is to attract attention, then this might be the way to go.

It is entirely possible that such tactics might lead to violence or the threat of violence. Footmen might be set upon the interlopers and even the police might be called—though this would itself be unconscionably scandalous and certainly a last resort.

Regardless, in many ways, the Kerberos Club is the antithesis to everything Society stands for: Kerberans are Strange, egalitarian and revolutionary, and threaten the social and economic underpinnings of Britain's elites.

This is perhaps one of the reasons the Queen protects the Kerberos Club, as a foil and unspoken threat against the Empire's most powerful citizens.





# Crime and Vice

Victoria's London was rife with the old crimes of robbery, assault, kidnapping, blackmail, forgery, rape, and murder—but the new age, the advent of telecommunications, and the growing sophistication of the financial markets opened up new realms of genteel crimes, embezzlement and the manipulation of markets.

Those who risk their sanity and nervous systems in *Needlework* can find gainful employ with the great institutions of the day, sifting vast amounts of machine-signal for patterns and meaning, but far too many find themselves working for the criminal set, sewing patterns which benefit their paymasters into the Empire's growing volume of machine-code information. By the 1880s, few organized criminal enterprises move forward without getting someone on the needle to cover the information flow, obscuring clues to their plans before police or Special Branch Needlemen can ferret out the patterns of their plan in the machine-signal. The price of the vital and highly addictive drugs that allow Needlework soar, as those on the needle will pay any price to keep from experiencing the crippling and horrific withdrawals.

But most of London's crime is still fairly petty, and most is driven by desperation. The desire to eat and sleep indoors is a strong motivator. For some, colloquially called the "criminal classes," these activities are somewhat organized. The Victorians are prodigious self-organizers, forming associations and brotherhoods, and joining clubs and criminal fraternities. Some of these gangs have the air of the foreigner about them (such as the so-called Black Hand of Italy) but most are home-grown associations of petty criminals who organize along the lines of mutual cooperation and protection.

Having a dozen people willing to swear your whereabouts at the time a crime was committed

## In a Hail of Hot Lead

Upper and middle-class Victorians take killing pretty seriously—more so than most modern role-playing gamers take it in their games, at any rate. In a traditional adventuring mode the PCs stack corpses up like cordwood. Sometimes it's slaying and killing only evil orc-types, but just as likely it's anyone who gets in their way. This isn't a surprise, as a major source for traditional games is heroic fantasy where "evil" can be handily conflated with "anyone who gets between the hero and his objective."

The setting of *The Kerberos Club* operates on the assumption that murderous violence is shocking, that there is a real sick-making taboo against slaying others outside the honorable context of soldiering. And even then, the *taking of life* is part of a soldier's sacrifice to his country; the soldier takes upon himself that sin so his loved ones and nation need not bear it directly. Murder is serious—at least to those with the power to pass laws, organize manhunts, and read with disgust the latest gunfire outrage perpetrated upon the good folk of London.

Now, if you wish to retain this aspect of the setting, how to impress the significance of *restraint* on players who are used to playing every encounter like the lobby scene from *The Matrix*?

First off, explain it. Lay it out for your players during the initial session so everyone gets fair warning. Explain that killings, unless covered up with care, attract attention and investigation (especially if reported in the press). Also point out that of all Victoria's subjects, members of the Kerberos Club might have the least reason to expect their fellow citizens to judge them fairly: "He must be guilty of something, eh? I mean... *just look at 'im.*"



There is also the matter of *whom* one kills. The truth of Victorian London is that while the well-to-do and the socially-conscious might indulge in a fastidious disdain for murderous violence, there were thousands upon thousands who could simply not afford that luxury. In the slums of London violence is ever present, and frequently lethal. The only difference between the murder of an East End prostitute and that of a banker from the Old City is who pays attention to it.

Until he began taunting the police and the press, even Jack the Ripper failed to raise much furor, and he certainly wasn't the first madman to engage in such slaughter.

But there's a counter even in the worst slums, where people know violence like an old family friend. People are used to repaying violence with violence, and to attending to their own business. If you become known in some quarters as a killer, then you'll find no friendly reception there, and quite possibly some tough's clasp knife in your kidney.

If the players decide to put down their foes in hails of hot lead (or bolts of hellfire, swarms of demonic butterflies, strokes of lightning, or deadly Oriental hand-fighting techniques), make sure they know ahead of time that you're keeping track of it, and that it might well come back to haunt them—perhaps quite literally.

is a powerful defense against the laws of Britain, which until the later three decades of the century rely almost entirely on witness testimony. Only the coming of anthropological and physiographic evidence changes this dynamic.

A great many of London's criminals are children. A high death rate and dire financial circumstances lead to a shocking number of orphans, and in order to survive many join child gangs or latch onto adult outfits for protection and purpose. There is so little social support that this turn to lawlessness isn't hard to understand, but the puritanical public morality of the time tends to forbid any sympathy for the wretches.

As Scrooge puts it: "If they would rather die... they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

The way crime impacts the larger culture is quite similar to today. Victorian journalism explodes, and the business of selling papers depends on grabbing attention, on headlines, and on sensationalism and scandal. A hundred paupers might vanish in London in a day, but if one ringleted blonde daughter of a prominent Lord vanishes in the night the whole town will be in frenzy. Parliament will pass new laws in response. The police will crack down on whoever is handy, just to be seen to be working, despite Peel's explicit dictates to the contrary.

Yet murder isn't an especially common crime, despite the population density of London through the century. A killing can still grab attention, even if it were of a lowly sort. Crimes of passion sometimes result in deaths, botched robberies as well, and sometimes deliberate, premeditated murders are done, but they still have the power to shock. It isn't until the plagues of Strange violence late in the century that people become more inured to seeing and hearing about violence being done. There is an almost charming lack of public cynicism. Or at least, cynicism isn't treated as a virtue.

Gun ownership is common, and before acts passed in the 1870s, almost entirely unrestricted. Yet

## The Wrong Side of the Law

It never made much sense to me, the way villains use their superpowers in the comics. I could never imagine a situation where superpowers and the fame they bring would be better used robbing banks or holding cities for ransom than, say, dominating professional sports and getting massive shoe contracts, or hooking up with the government or a corporation for a huge salary and benefits. Plus, being a villain meant you always *lost*.

Here's the thing about the world of *The Kerberos Club*: Fame only goes so far. That world is far more prejudiced, judgmental, superstitious, and future-shocked than ours today. People in Victoria's London, even in the depths of the Strange '90s, still basically mistrust the superhuman. It's inexplicably, disturbingly, irrationally *unnatural*, no matter how patriotic or beautiful the manifestation is. On some level, the mind rebels at the reality of the superhuman.

It's easier to imagine how some gifted (or cursed) bloke might find the prospect of walking through the walls of the Bank of England or using his genius to build weapons for the Russian Czars pretty attractive when his fellow Britons reject his powers or mistrust his genius. The barriers of class, wealth, education, and reputation can transcend and even trump the superhuman (assuming the Stranger doesn't have superhuman charisma or charm). Even a worker of genuine miracles might find no legitimate way to profit from it.

And walking through bank walls is so easy...

again violence done with firearms is remarkably low, averaging fewer than fifty instances in a given year in the whole of the United Kingdom. The reasons are complex, but suffice to say even among criminals, murderous violence is treated seriously, and barring mental instability or drunken impairment it is done only when it can not be avoided—or at least is done in a quiet fashion. The blade or cudgel is still the favorite implement of mayhem.

Crime is a fairly regional thing in London. The prosperity and police presence in a given district will determine to a great degree the kinds of crime one might encounter there. In the West End, even the beggars are well mannered and ply their trade with a certain formality. In the warrens of the East End one can be bludgeoned unconscious and robbed for a dozen different reasons, from deliberate opportunism to simply having hair the same color as an angry drunk's bastard brother-in-law.

Riding in the same cart as Crime comes Vice. The Victorians are enthusiastic drinkers. With the often-tainted water supplies of London, drinking beer, wine, and spirits is safer. Britain is justly famous for its beers and spirits, and is a major importer of wines. Home and small-scale brewing is common as well. For the poor, a nearly toxic grade of gin is the tippie of choice: It obliterates consciousness amazingly fast, and is often deliberately adulterated with chemicals like benzene, benzyl, or wood alcohol. For a penny a drink, even the poorest can afford enough of the evil brew to render themselves insensible and often nearly insane.

Opium slithers into Britain, something of a just consequence of the deadly opium trade with China. By mid-century opium dens crop up in the areas along the docks, such as Limehouse. The more sophisticated opium-eater would indulge in laudanum, a tincture of opium, sometimes sweetened into a syrup. It is (along with cocaine) a major ingredient in many patent medicines, to which thousands are unknowingly addicted. It certainly encourages demand among those who take it.

And with drink, there's always gambling. The Victorians will wager on anything from the outcome of a horse race to the fall of cards, to who would remain standing in a bare-knuckles fight, or to which terrier could kill the most rats in a minute. Fortunes are squandered, lives ruined. In high company,

the repayment of gambling debts is considered a matter of great honor, and being unable to do so leads

more than one gentleman to suicide as the only way out from under the obligation. Only slightly better than the pistol is becoming permanently snared by a predatory moneylender who will bleed you dry with interest for years and years. In more humble company, failure to repay gambling debts can find one wallowing face-down in the stinking muck of the Thames at low tide.

That's drink and gambling. What of sex and violence?

Londoners love both, in their proper place. As moralistic as the age might seem, prostitution remains legal until very nearly the end of the century, and it has been estimated that as many as twenty to fifty thousand prostitutes (casual and full-time) work in London. The motivator for the majority of prostitution is poverty. Many prostitutes have children to support and no other way to make a living. Once "fallen" it is very difficult for a woman to find legitimate employment. Even the accusation of prostitution (as is possible under the Hygiene Laws) is sometimes enough to destroy a reputation. Pimps and procurers take advantage of these women, and for all but a few who work the West End and attract wealthy admirers, the life is miserable and often short.

Violence is exciting, whether it takes the form of a crowd cheering two drunken brawlers, to a formal boxing match attended by Lords and gentlemen sportsmen. It is all about *context*: a man might rebel at the cruel treatment of a horse seen in the streets, yet enjoy a spectacle of violence from trained animals, such as a dog fight or fox hunting.

# Law and Order

Law enforcement changes dramatically during the 19th century. Prior to Peel's establishment of the Metropolitan Police in the 1830s, enforcement of the law is done by court bailiffs and private contractors—thief-takers paid to apprehend those against whom charges are brought. Peel's nine principles of modern policing put the emphasis on *preventing* rather than merely punishing crime, and on the need for a police force to earn public respect by a constant and unwavering impartiality in applying the law and not by catering to whim or desire. Initially mocked and disliked, the Peelers and Bobbies are soon a common sight in London, and their success at policing the streets and intervening in potential conflicts prevent the city from descending into chaos during more *exciting* times. They are so successful at putting pressure on criminals that many abandon London, moving to other towns to ply their trade, which inspires the creation of new police forces there as well.

The Metropolitan Police are based in a building opposite the small open area in Whitehall called Scotland Yard, until the building is destroyed in the Automechanical Mutiny. Then they are based in New Scotland Yard on the Victorian Embankment. Scotland Yard comes to house the investigative branches of the Police Service, while for the constabulary proper the police stations are spread out and housed within London's seventeen districts.

Initially, Special Branch is also housed in Scotland Yard, but friction with the regular police and detectives lead the division to find its own headquarters elsewhere, and it moves a dozen times throughout the latter half of the century. Special Branch officers are disparagingly called "Skinners," a play on "Peeler" and a comment on the more brutal methods Special Branch is permitted to employ.

Special Branch has few friends in the regular police service, but its officers have the authority to

take over investigations, close them down, or block certain avenues of enquiry. In matters pertaining to Her Majesty's security and on issues of domestic espionage, Special Branch handles the investigations. Special Branch also deals with issues which might result in embarrassment to Crown and Country. It is said that more than a few of the inmates of Bedlam were not mad before being snatched off the street by Special Branch officers, treated with sanity-destroying chemicals and locked away forever.

The City of London, the tiny core of the old Roman city, has its own police force and the Metropolitan Police does not patrol there, though Scotland Yard's detectives are often consulted on certain matters. The City of London Police maintain a small and discrete team of well-paid Strangers as well. The so-called City Guard's generous salaries are paid by a private trust funded by the business and financial interests based in the Old City. The Guard often find themselves at odds with many of London's Strange citizens, and they make it a point to follow them when they enter the Old City, keeping their harassment low-key but still fairly obvious. The Guard all easily blend with ordinary humanity, and rarely don their uniforms except on ceremonial and public occasions.

Behind this modern police force is the rather elderly and infirm court system, overburdened and hidebound. From the top down, the final court of appeal in the land is the venerable House of Lords, but actually having a case heard by the House is rare as there is always a great backlog of cases and appeals for the Lords to consider.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council hears appeals from colonial courts as well as ecclesiastical cases.

The Supreme Court of the Judicature has two branches: the Court of Appeal, which accepts appeals from the common-law courts, and the High Court of Justice, which accepts appeals from the Chancery courts, typically dealing with business and financial matters.

The High Court of Justice has

## The Hounds of Justice

With the creation of the Tracking Squad, the police finally acknowledge the necessity to field their own supernaturally-potent officers in pursuit of equally-potent felons.

While Special Branch might like to claim that the “filthy dogs” aren’t needed and that they can handle anything the Strange might throw up, their bluster is proven wrong time and again. A crime wave perpetrated by superhuman opportunists galvanizes Parliament to pass acts specifically criminalizing the use of “Powers, Capacities, Insights, and Birthrights Deemed Unnatural, Inhuman, or Disruptive to the Public Order” in the commission of another crime. The use of such powers makes the root crime *worse*, and thus punished more severely. With this legal backing, judges see it as their mandate to persecute superhuman criminals with harsh sentences. This was all in the hopes of holding back the tide of superhuman crime, and dissuading the notion that extraordinary abilities allow one to commit offenses with little fear.

Such is the case of Dr. Holcomb Mitchell, a consulting physician of no small reputation apprehended by the Tracking Squad and convicted of his wife’s murder in the fall of 1880. Dr. Mitchell never laid a hand on his wife. Rather he exerted a measure of his powerful mesmeric influence over her, and caused her to go out and jump from London Bridge while holding a stone’s weight of iron chain. Only the presence of Kerberos Club member Noel Blank, a hunched unhappy little Stranger with the power to neutralize the weird gifts

of others, kept the homicidal doctor from using his powers to escape justice entirely.

When Mitchell testifies in his own defense, he has this to say:

“You, my so-called peers, would pass judgment on me when you’re not fit to judge the actions of a dog. If you convict me, can you be sure I’ll remain locked away? Will I be watched at all times by worms such as that one [indicating Blank]? Hardly. There will come a time when attention will waver, and I’ll have my way with my guards, and they will set me free and give me the coins in their pockets. I’ll have their wives to satisfy me, and then I’ll come for you lot. I’ll make you swallow poison or leap from your rooftops, or cut the throats of your children and then stand trial yourselves. No prison can hold me! You had best think about that every night if you find me guilty.”

Dr. Holcomb’s trial is remarkably quick, and the judge imposes a sentence of death by hanging, with the stipulation that the doctor be kept in a constant stupor with laudanum until the deed be done.

Less severe sentences often involve *transportation*, exile to a distant colony. But unlike ordinary criminals, Strange criminals are routinely transported not overseas but into the Otherworld outside New Birmingham, and set loose among the things Stranger than themselves—to fight, survive, or die, and in doing so impose the British way of life upon the realms of spirit and myth.

British justice stumbles and fumbles when dealing with the Strange, but it wins a fair number of victories.



five divisions: the Chancery; the Queen's Bench; Common Pleas; Exchequer; and Probate, Divorce and Admiralty.

Below this there are about a dozen courts dealing with regional issues, business, and other matters—but those of the Kerberos Club are most likely to find themselves dealing with British Law in the Central Criminal Courts housed in the Old Bailey (named for the gates of the old Roman city walls). While the Police Courts handle minor matters and misdemeanors, the Criminal Courts deal with crimes heinous and sensational, and also the mundane and sadly ordinary. Under British Common Law legal decisions and the instructions given to juries are based on previous decisions, but judges have a great deal of leeway in interpreting previous rulings.

A few specific Acts of Parliament apply in some criminal cases, but for the most part matters of law are decided by judges whose impartiality can only be hoped for. Worse, the backlog of cases at any time means long waits for cases to be tried, with favoritism in scheduling the docket based on patronage or bribery. Still, those tried in British courts have their cases heard by a jury of their fellow Britons, and may always present character witnesses to swear to their sober attitudes, hard work, dedication to family, and regular attendance of divine services.

For those who fall afoul of the courts, however, the specter of prison lurks. Victoria's prisons are governed by much the same philosophy of Reduced Eligibility as its workhouses. Prisons are meant to be so awful that the poor will not commit crimes merely to gain regular meals and a warm place to sleep in winter. Prisons are made bleak, hard and miserable. Prisoners are stripped, deloused, shaved, and examined for identifying marks which are recorded against future criminal activity. They are issued new clothing and examined to determine if they are fit for labor. If deemed able to labor, they are sometimes worked hard at meaningless, back-breaking physical exertions such as pacing endlessly around the treadmill, or breaking rocks, or moving piles of stone or cannonballs, all to

no purpose other than to exhaust them and break their spirits. Food is meager; mail, if it arrives at all, is read and examined by guards; and discipline is brutal and merciless. Trends in prison reform come and go, some emphasizing prisons as penitentiaries (places which make people *penitent*), others simply intended to keep dangerous people locked away from society for as long as possible.

In 1879, South Bend Prison is opened south of the Thames, an experiment in private prison management. The South Bend Company is paid a set amount per head per annum for support and upkeep of its prisoners. The more the company keeps down its costs and gainfully employs its captive workforce, the wider its profit margins. By 1885, the scandalous rumors escaping South Bend cause public outcry enough for the prison to be examined. What the investigators find within is not the expected squalor and abuse, but something much more horrible.

The prison has become a machine made of flesh and anger, fear and helplessness: a machine made of human lives, which has no purpose other than to shred the boundaries of the World and Otherworld, until there is no difference in nightmare and waking reality there in South Bend's heart. Inside its walls, space and time lose their cohesion, cause and effect break down and chase each other round and about in no certain pattern. The walls sweat and weep. The prisoners are covered in stone dust, their eyes chalk-white. The guards are remade as the prisoners see them, and they are horrors.

The place is contained by the army, and then burned down. The papers report that the fire was the result of a riot. The South Bend Horror leads finally to meaningful prison reform pushed through Parliament by the Royalist faction of MPs acting on Her Majesty's explicit instructions. Such a wound in the World must never be allowed to recur.

In the following months, the greedy shareholders of the South Bend Company not arrested or vanished by Special Branch all meet with Strange ends.

## Escape From Devil Island!

To truly change the tone of a game, you might consider sending the characters to a horrible fate for crimes they didn't commit. Begin the session with the judge declaring the verdict: Transportation! Fill in the details in flashback, perhaps on the prison ship bearing them to the New Birmingham mists.

The colony is rough, with a distinct frontier quality, but is also invested with such a wealth of wonders that its residents almost entirely ignore them, dismissing as utterly prosaic sights which would render a Londoner speechless. Colonists in Faerie are very hard to impress, and often have unusual resources to bring to bear on arrogant outsiders who haven't learned the way of things. A pinch of grue powder might render a vain newcomer magnificently ugly until they learn to demonstrate humility. A well-played fiddle made of Faerie wood could force a victim to dance. A colonist's revolver might fire aggressive and spiteful atomies, furious from their confinement inside a brass carriage. (Unless treated in the goblin factories of New Birmingham, most of these wonders are too fragile for export back to the World, evaporating into starlight and smoke as they cross the threshold.)

And of course there was the sham trial, the falsified evidence, and the quick execution of the sentence—to what purpose? Does some powerful agency wish the characters to take some action in New Birmingham? Something only a disgraced criminal could undertake?

## Into the Mists

To escape from New Birmingham, first you need a drogue stone. Drogue stones (see page 126) anchor New Birmingham in reality, keeping it solid and constant in the flickering changefulness of Faerie. The mists which cloak Faerie part before them. Escape without one is nearly impossible.



Drogue stones come in many sizes, from those small enough to be carried by a single man to the huge ones which protect the colony itself. The size of a stone is in direct proportion to the area it protects and solidifies. A stone that a man could carry on his back protects only him; one borne on a horse-drawn wagon could protect a small company of riflemen; and one in the hold of a ship protects the whole vessel. The smallest stones weigh upwards of fifty pounds, the largest many tons.

Drogue stones are carefully guarded by trustee Strangers, transported like other colonists but given special status, after a few years' good behavior, to protect the stones; the survival of thousands depends on them. Of course, few can swim while carrying one, which necessitates acquiring a boat to make an escape.

Escape from New Birmingham is best treated as a scenario, but detailed below are suggestions on how to deal with some of the situations which could crop up as you pit the defenses of the colony and its security measures against the ingenuity of the escapees.

**Obstacle:** Steal a boat or persuade the owner to sell it. A Stealth, Persuasion, or Intimidation roll opposed by the owners Notice, Smarts, or Spirit roll (Depending on the trait used). Complication: A failure on this roll means the owner spots the Heroes, or has a change of heart and alerts the authorities; you are forced to hide until authorities give up the chase. A critical failure could mean the Heroes are confronted and forced to fight the boat's owner to escape.

**Obstacle:** Steal a drogue stone. This might involve Stealth rolls to reach the stone undetected, plus a Strength roll to lift it, depending on its size. Failure might lead to the Heroes being nearly caught, forcing them to hide or combat the guards. A critical failure might bring the Heroes into confrontation with a Stranger trustee, who they must defeat to escape with

the stone. (The GM should assign his attributes, skills and powers.)

**Obstacle:** Obscuring mists. This will probably involve Tracking rolls. On a failure, the Heroes go in circles for hours, possibly missing some crucial deadline. On a critical failure they are lost for days, possibly suffering starvation. See the Hunger rules in *Savage Worlds*.

**Obstacle:** A chittering in the darkness. The Heroes are harried by unseen pursuers, and might have to make Guts rolls. On a failure they could be panicked and run heedlessly, possibly falling overboard in their terror. On a Critical Failure, a creature forms from their fears and phobias and attempts to throw your drogue stone overboard. (The GM should assign its attributes, skills and powers.)

**Obstacle:** Neverwhen. This requires the Hero with the lowest Spirit die to make a roll at -2. If the Heroes have a drogue stone, then no roll is necessary, as they arrive at their destination automatically. Failure means the Heroes emerge from the mists in some strange part of the world they have never before seen, and on a critical failure it is years or decades later than it should be.

**Obstacle:** The Changewinds blow. If the Heroes are without a drogue stone they will also have to make an additional Spirit (-1) roll or become forever marked by their brush with faerie. On a failure they are transformed superficially, and emerge looking like a different person, perhaps changing even gender. On a critical failure they are wholly remade into a different creature—the GM should liaise with the player to create a completely new character at the experience point level of the original character.

## Venturing Into Faerie

An alternative to drogue stone and boat is to take the long way around, marching deeper into Faerie and trying to find a portal back into the familiar world. But given the choice between risking the mists by boat and the overland march, even the most desperate criminal will choose the mist. The mists may confound, transform, transmute, entrance, and displace an unprotected escapee—but compared to what the wild faerie beasts and lords (see page 243) will do, that's the preferable option. The details of *that* perilous journey are up to the GM to devise.



# City Administration and Services

London is a mishmash of shires and districts, but the establishment of The Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855 sees the governance and management of the city placed under one authority. The Board oversees public services such as the sewer systems, streets, bridges, fire brigade, and care of the embankments. The Board has a great deal of authority and very little accountability, a state of affairs which leads to the level of corruption one might expect. By the time it is decommissioned and replaced with the County Council of London in 1887, it has weathered major scandal, criminal charges of its officials, and the general contempt of the common Londoner, who expects nothing but poor service, hostility, incompetence, and frustration from any dealing with the Board.

London's utilities are private ventures generally. The famous gas is provided first by a single company which extracts it from heated coal and sends it to homes through pipes laid down especially for this purpose. Initially it's quite an expensive luxury, but several competing firms eventually drive the price of gas down far enough for the middle class to easily afford it. Hundreds of miles of pipe are laid, sometimes leading to agents of the companies warring openly and secretly to dominate the local distribution system. Sabotage, libelous statements, and even physical assaults from gasmen are not uncommon.

Most of London's drinking water comes from rain-filled cisterns, and many squares and street-corners sport public wells. But with the increasingly dangerous levels of sewage leaking into the water table, many wells became too tainted. Water is

shipped by barge from upstream. But ever-thirsty London too often has to drink its own filth, and the cholera outbreaks which result kill thousands.

In 1870 United Electrical forms, and builds an enormous coal-fired electrical generation plant on the Isle of Dogs. United Electric uses Wireless Transmission Coils licensed from Nicola Tesla, and they began offering the lease of Induction Receivers, units which can be installed in a home to receive broadcast power and convert it into useful electrical current which can then power the new Edison-Swan lamps.

The use of Tesla's wireless system allows power to be delivered to Londoners without the need to lay down wiring to carry it from the generators to homes and businesses. This gives electricity a further advantage over gas, which still has to be carried through expensive piping. The lease of Tesla's Induction Receivers (nicknamed "Ducks") rather than the sale of a commodity allows a different business arrangement, and the contracts signed when leasing a unit allow prices to float based on United Electric's costs. By the late 1880s, tens of thousands of Ducks are in service in London and its suburbs, and slowly its fogs are illuminated by the harsh white of arc lighting rather than the wavering glow of burning gas.

The adoption of power transmission by Babbage Computational to drive its Automechanicals prevents the Automechanical Mutiny from being much worse. When the Isle of Dogs generating plant is shut down, it immediately causes a full two thirds of the revolting machines to fall silent.

# Culture and Entertainment

In Victorian London the written word rules. Hundreds of newspapers, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets, tracts, papers, monographs, reviews, quarterlies, journals, and anthologies are printed regularly. The post is delivered several times a day. It is possible in London to receive a copy of your preferred newspaper in the morning, write a letter to the editor in the midday, and see it printed in the evening edition.

Fiction enjoys a broad acceptance as well. Serialized fiction especially blossoms. Luminaries like Dickens make their names writing such, and when new installments of his stories are published families gather to hear them read in the home and

laborers listen to them read in pubs and alehouses. Even the illiterate can follow their favorite authors.

The specialized and expensive devices needed to receive and decode televocagraphic broadcasts keep wireless media in the hands of a wealthy few, and the low demand prevents it from ever carrying a great deal of content—only music, policy, proclamation, and other fairly dry stuff. Yet London is a town filled with entertainment. Its theaters cater to refined audiences with plays classic and modern, as well as opera, and there are plenty of theaters to show populist works—some, to borrow from the modern idiom, “ripped from the headlines,” such as Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Sorcerer*, which was inspired by the sensational trial of a Cockney businessman who offered the sale of “love potions.” (The courts ruled that use of love potions, or any other unnatural influence on affection, to exact sexual favors constituted rape, and that the sale of such things made one liable to charges of accomplice to rape.)

For those who find the theater too titillating, London’s parks offer outdoor recreation. The great royal parks are large enough to ride or even hunt, something the veterans of the 13th Lupine appreciate when they feel the pull of the wilderness: Hyde park with the picturesque Serpentine River (technically a lake), Regent’s Park, Victoria Park to the northeast, Battersea park south of the river. Besides the great royal parks there are dozens of green squares and courtyard gardens, gated green oases in London’s urban desert, though these are usually guarded jealously by their owners.

## A Sunday Ride in Hyde Park

Hyde Park becomes a major social center for the upper and middle-upper classes in the 1880s. It begins as *the* place to be seen, and becomes a place one almost *must* be seen. Sundays see the wealthy and the wish-to-be-wealthy flood the park, to ride and to flirt, to watch and to be watched.

The Park becomes something of a fashion show, as well, with the mistresses of wealthy men, fashionable courtesans, and actresses coming to show off their extraordinary coifs and dresses, their riding, and their unrepentant sexuality. London’s respectable ladies come as much to watch the strumpets as to take the air, and the Sunday dress of a courtesan might become the Monday dress of a well-to-do lady.

Characters who mingle with the upper classes will at some point find themselves in Hyde Park on a bright Sunday, and immersed in the seemingly light but decidedly sharp social interplay.

# Transportation

London's streets are crowded with thousands and thousands of pedestrians, and for a great many of London's masses this is the only form of transport they can regularly afford. Costermongers pull their carts, selling as they walk. Boys on errands run underfoot. Families walk together on outings, to church or to an afternoon's brief recreation. So many walk through London that dozens every year are accidentally crushed to death by the carriages and carts which throng the streets.

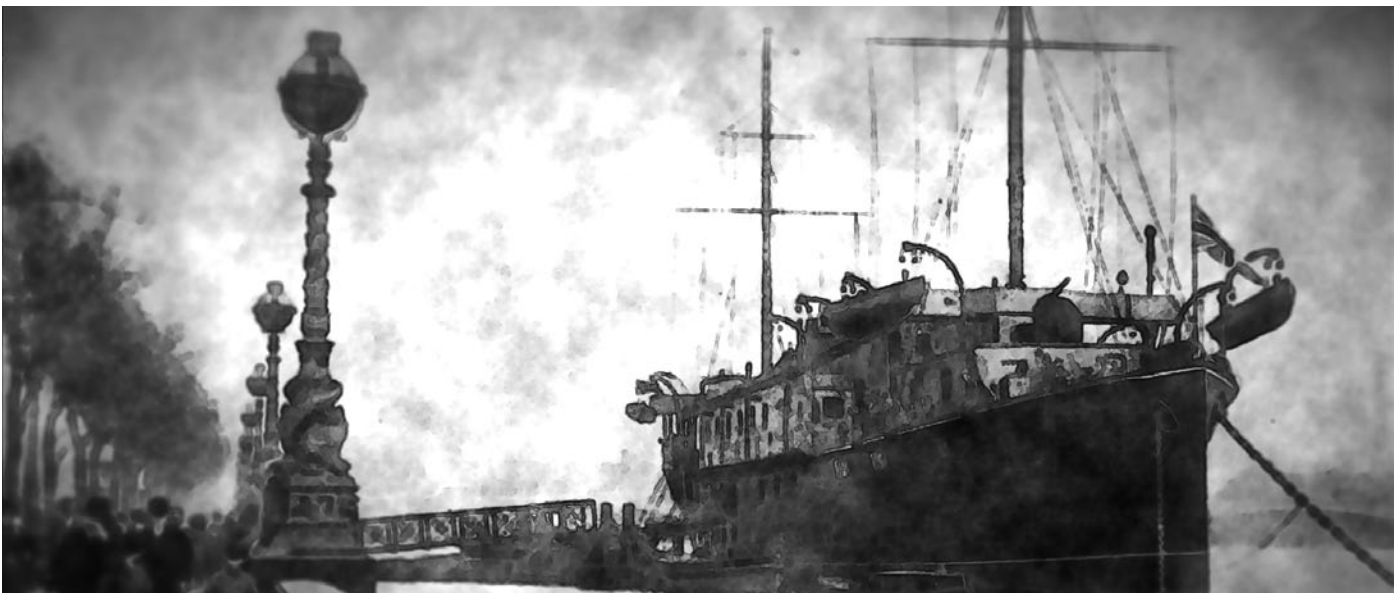
The omnibuses, large carts which serve the public along regular routes, are the transportation for those with modest means, inexpensive by the standards of cabs or private transport, but still beyond the reach of many. London's urchins make a sport of riding while clinging to the back of passing omnibuses, risking death or injury under a horse's hooves to gain a free ride.

As the fashion for carriages changes, and new models replace old, the fleet of private carts for hire creeps slowly behind. Books have been written on the evolution of the carriage, but suffice to say that cabs are large, black, heavy, and loud across London's

cobbles, and deadly to anyone trapped in their path. Cart horses also drop enormous quantities of dung, feeding the London miasma and spreading tuberculosis and other diseases.

The keeping and support of a fashionable carriage, footmen, driver, and horses is also something of a must for anyone of quality, and a sign of wealth, position, and luxury. While Victoria's Spartan aesthetic might reduce the ostentatious ornamentation of carriages, it does nothing to blunt their expense or sumptuous quality.

Rail comes to London first from London Bridge to Greenwich in 1836, and more routes follow as the engines of Empire drive onward. More lines and more stations are built, at Euston, Paddington, Fenchurch Street, Waterloo, and King's Cross. By 1863 they are building tracks underground, first from Paddington to Farringdon Road, but soon expanding outward like ant-tunnels with the aid of steam-driven burrowing machines. In 1880, London's main underground routes are converted to electric, the engines driven by banks of Tesla's Ducks (Induction Receivers). *Punch* famously lampoons the transition in late 1880 with a cartoon of a train filled with its previous cartoon caricatures being pulled along by a mother duck and her goslings.



# A Visitor's London

**Astley's Amphitheatre:** Considered the birthplace of the modern circus. Built in the late 1700s for outdoor and equestrian performances, it is burned and rebuilt several times over, growing with each rebuilding. It finally comes to resemble a great open bowl, with stepped seating surrounding a large ring, with underground passages and lifts similar to those of the old Roman Colosseum. As the century progresses the shows hosted at Astley's become more exotic, and feature wonders such as Brazilian dinosaurs, automechanical horses and African elephants. On one occasion the ring is walled and flooded and Atlantean krakens are exhibited.

**Bank of England:** Called the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, the Bank was established in 1694. In the 1840s acts of Parliament grant it the exclusive right to issue banknotes and tie the issuance of such notes to gold reserves (though banks which previously had this right retain it, so long as they back their notes with gold reserves). In practical terms, this means the Bank is something of a Holy Grail to those of criminal mindset and ambition, especially those with Strange aspect. Something about robbing the Bank of England captures the criminal imagination; the romance of it. Through the century several attempts are made, with only the Hurst and Gumble Robbery of 1871 showing any real success—though the two thieves are apprehended in France less than two weeks later. The Bank employs a small staff of Strangers who covertly monitor and guard it, including one sorcerer judged reliable enough to lay defensive Works upon the bank itself.

**Bethlem Hospital:** One of London's oldest hospitals, and the oldest asylum for the insane. Founded in the early 1200s, it began accepting

the insane in the 1400s. Four hundred years of insanity and maltreatment have left the place remarkably unaffected, almost upsettingly so. The human psyche, superstitious thing that it is, almost demands the walls radiate some of the madness they have absorbed. Oddly, they do not. To those with a sense for these things, the absence of occult consequences for the hospital's history is alarming. Close examination reveals that the hospital is somehow insulated from Strange influence, a dead zone in the Otherworld, one where Strangers feel uncomfortable and weakened. Bedlam holds many secrets; see page 187.

**Bloomsbury:** A picturesque area of central London graced with some of the finest squares and garden parks in the whole city. The area also hosts museums, galleries, and academic institutions, as well as some fine residences. The whole area remains remarkably unspoiled, even through London's bleakest yellow fogs, miasmas, faerie falls, invasions, revolutions, and rampaging monsters. Maps detailing the damage caused by London's various catastrophes always have a distinct empty area where Bloomsbury sits, free of appreciable damage.

**Bond Street:** Location of many of London's most fashionable shops, including several arcades, semi-enclosed side streets lined with shops. To Bond Street come the fashionable exotica of Victoria's Strange empire to feed the trend for curio-cluttered parlors. The Street's shops cater to other fashions as well. To quickly grasp what London is all about this Season, a stroll down Bond Street is essential.

**The Borough:** South of London Bridge and the Victory Bridge in Southwark. The Borough was home to Shakespeare's Globe Theater, and has proven regularly flammable through its history, finally being nearly destroyed in the Southwark Fire of 1861. The fire is alleged to have been started by a maddened

Automechanical Domestic, though Babbage Computational threatens legal action against any making such a claim. The Borough experiences an explosion of development during the century, becoming a major residential center in the 1850s, though it suffers greatly in the fire, then is flooded in the Atlantean invasion, and finally is burned yet again during the Automechanical Rebellion, this time indisputably suffering at the artificial hands of the machines. During the rebuilding of the 1880s it is reborn with London's Art Nouveau—gently curving steel, glass, and floral crenulations. It becomes one of London's most fashionable areas for the New Rich.

**Botanic Gardens:** Located a cab-ride from Ludgate Hill are the extensive botanical gardens designed by Sir Joseph Hooker. They are over 70 acres in extent, and contain conservatories, plantings, hothouses, flowerbeds, and museums filled with the botanical wonders of the world, and some from beyond even that wide extent. In a special hot and dry conservatory, patches of Martian lichens are propagated. In the Fallenford Hall, a collection of exquisite faerie plants are kept, though access is controlled carefully as several species have remarkable properties, and the tendency to befuddle unwary minds. There is some controversy with certain of the Gardens' samples, as the collections include several plants considered sacred by the Atlanteans and other human and prehuman cultures. The Fae find the collections alternately amusing and horrifying, as their natures dictate; more than a few of the rare Otherworldly specimens are not botanical at all, but transformed and transfixed faerie bound into the forms of impossibly beautiful flora. The crueler faerie visitors frequently take cuttings, the kinder collect seeds. For this reason, a discrete but alert guard is kept on the controversial exhibits.

the official residence of the monarchy when Victoria moves Her residence here in 1837. As Her power and political influence grows, the Palace resembles less and less the home of a symbolic monarch, and more the working capital of the Empire. An administrative wing is added in 1862 to house the Queen's staff of clerks and analysts, and by the 1880s over a hundred thick televocagraphic cables run into the Palace. Beneath the building a huge steam generator is built as well, to provide secure electrical power to massive banks of analytic computing machinery and televocagraphic encoders.

**Charing Cross:** Marked until 1865 by one of the memorial crosses erected by Edward I on the site where Queen Eleanor's coffin rested while proceeding to Westminster Abbey; the cross was demolished in the 1600s, but the stone was used in the construction of the base to a statue of Charles I. These stones are stolen in 1864, and a contemporary replica erected nearby. Charing Cross is the legal *and spiritual* heart of London. Legal districts and distances are marked in relation to the site of the original monument. Those who understand such things are greatly disturbed by the theft of the monument—what other place is now receiving the focused attention that Charing Cross once did? Something is off about the place, certainly, as it is a frequent locus for Strange events, as if drawing them. Charing Cross Station is opened in 1864 by the South Eastern Railway, and remains one of London's thronging centers of travel.

**Cheapside:** This thronging thoroughfare remains one of London's great arteries, named for the medieval markets located here. Cheapside is never fashionable, but is dynamic and continuously vital. It is home to the Bow Bells of the church of St Mary-le-Bow, and to be a true Cockney it's said one must be born within earshot of these bells. Indeed, there seems to be some truth to this. Babies born while the bells rang sometimes speak of hearing the

**Buckingham Palace:** Purchased by George III, the Palace becomes

bells as adults in their dying moments, regardless of where they lay breathing their last.

**Chelsea:** A somewhat fashionable if *modern* area of West London chiefly known for its throngs of artists and writers, and the wealthy who appreciate living among them. It is an island of jaunty Bohemia, and welcomes intellectual radicals as easily as painters. Less well known, Chelsea is also the home of some of London's most famous (and infamous) spiritualists, mediums, yogic teachers, and other mystics. Even less well known, at least five genuine sorcerers make their residences in Chelsea, and observing the neighborhood with occult senses reveals the webs of intertwined Works coiled about it like wrestling snakes.

**Chelsea Hospital:** Located near Chelsea Embankment, and accessible easily by boat or omnibus. Founded in the time of Charles II as a hospital for old soldiers, it has become a center for prosthetic medicine as more and more of Her Majesty's faithful return from abroad incomplete, having left an arm or leg in some dirty hospital tent far afield. The hospital was expanded in 1865, and can now accommodate three times its original capacity of 500 veterans. Research into Strange methods of restoring the injured take place in the hospital's new East Wing, and it has advanced the esoteric fields of treating faerie afflictions and occult injuries. Its dining hall is hung with over a hundred flags taken from battles fought across the world and century.

**The City:** The core of London's medieval bounds has become home to the Empire's great financial engines, such as the business offices of Babbage Computational and Cayley-Vickers Aeronautic. Increasingly, those who work in the City live outside it and commute in via the new trains. Administratively, the City remains semi-independent from the rest of London and polices its own streets. The City of London

Police cooperate easily with the Metropolitan police and Scotland Yard, but have a chilly relationship with Special Branch—they maintain their own small group of discreet Strangers for unusual investigations. Respect the City and don't make a spectacle of yourself, and they're happy to leave you alone.

**Covent Garden:** Like so much of London, this area takes its name from the markets of earlier days. It is home to the vibrant Covent Garden Theater, known for the wide and unexpected breadth of its productions—one month a very traditional performance of Shakespeare, the next an experimental work heavily reliant on the new "illusory effects" and cold fireworks bought from New Birmingham. The precursors to the Metropolitan Police, the Bow Street Runners, had their headquarters here.

**Fleet Street:** Stretching from the City of London to Westminster, Fleet Street is home to London's vibrant press. Dozens of daily papers are written and printed here. The street is peopled with newsmen and writers, with ink-stained fingers and notebooks in their pockets. As Victoria's apparatus becomes more concerned with the spreading of salacious rumor—or worse, damaging facts—Special Branch comes to be a regular presence on Fleet Street, and they meet the resentful looks they receive with their usual unwavering glare. This leads to some of Fleet Street's regulars operating sideline presses off the main way, printing special editions anonymously. The Underground Press remains a thorn in Victoria's side through the last quarter of Her rule.

**Hyde Park:** London's largest park, and a hub of fashionable society. The bridal path Rotten Row is thronged on Sundays with the fashionable, and those wishing to look upon them. Strangers wishing to make a splash in society find Hyde Park a surprisingly receptive theater; the Quality gathered are already prepared somewhat for spectacle. A

trollop's elaborate riding costume must be studied so as to replicate it. The flying man is simply a novel distraction from the serious business of flirting and socializing.

**Jacob's Island:** A notorious area of London bordering the Thames and home to numerous warehouses, as well as a truly shocking rookery of the filthiest sort. Bordered by tidal ditches, docks, and warehouses, the inhabitants of Jacob's Island live in truly desperate poverty of such an objectionable sort that even those seeking a thrill or moral lesson by slumming find it beyond their endurance. The sewage of the residents, along with the output of factories and assorted animal waste, run into the ditches, and so the place is surrounded by stink. During the 1840s the Island is haunted by Spring Heel Jack, a mysterious figure alternately described as a demon, a demonically-ugly man, or one wearing a terrible mask. He leaps over walls, menaces and assaults people, and breathes fire (so reports would have it). Few wish to spend the time needed to investigate Spring-Heel in this stinking slum.

**Pall Mall:** Named for the favorite ballgame of Charles II, and now home to many of London's most exclusive gentleman's clubs. Pall Mall is the first street to receive gas lighting, and the first to be lit with electric lights, and late in the century it's where the first private tiered automotive stable is constructed, allowing gentlemen to park their vehicles when visiting their clubs.

**Piccadilly:** Busy and thronging area of upper-class residences and shopping. Home to Piccadilly Circus, the London Pavilion music hall, and the Criterion Theater. After the theaters let out the nightlife picks up; restaurants are open late and friendly company is usually readily available.

Nash's efforts during the Regency. Most exciting for the extensive Zoological Park opened in 1828, and continuously expanded through the century to accommodate Strange new creatures.

**Royal Exchange:** The 'Change is where the business of commerce is done, commodities trading, investment, and other mercantile concerns. Breaking the 'Change becomes as much an obsession for certain criminals as robbing the Bank of England is for others, and officials are always on the lookout for sharp dealers and confidence tricksters trying to ply their trade here. There are some quite-alarming rumors that such individuals when captured are not turned over to the police, but rather something else, something wholly less pleasant, is done to them.

**St. James Palace:** The royal residence until 1837, when Victoria moves to Buckingham Palace. St. James' grounds are then made over into parkland. The palace itself is sometimes lent out for use as gallery or exhibition space, with the Queen's permission.

**St. James Square:** Home to several gentleman's clubs, the most famous of course being the Kerberos Club. That club's neighbors keep up a valiant battle against its creeping Strangeness, however, and doggedly refuse to be displaced regardless of how unsettling the neighbors become, or the damage their buildings suffer by miss-aimed hellfire. The Kerberos Club's willingness to make good on such damages, and compensate its neighbors for the inconvenience, at least keeps things civil on the surface.

**Seven Dials:** Where seven streets converge at St. Giles, they form a compass with directions pointing directly to the seven deadly sins. This district is one of criminality and poverty, with an infamous slum. During the Famine the Irish flood this district, and for many—as bad as it becomes for them, packed into tiny filthy rooms—it remains an improvement over the conditions back home. Seven Dials is supposed

**Regent's Park:** A well-groomed suburb owing much to John



to be the notorious source for the faerie drug called (among other colorful names) Red Lady's Slipper. During the 1890s, the Slipper threatens to push opium out of London with its popularity alone, and this leads to what the press dub the Little Opium War in the mid-1890s, as the procurers and providers of the two drugs battle for territory in the streets. Opium wins a decisive victory with the burning of the house in Seven Dials where Red Lady's Slipper is refined from the excrement of faerie cattle fed on certain mushrooms.

**Smithfield:** Until the mid-1850s, the home to London's live cattle market. On market days the streets are ankle-deep in stinking mire and filled with the brays and bleats of beasts bought, sold and slaughtered. Smithfield Market is a point of reference for Londoners looking to describe a place as noisy and chaotic. Even after the market is moved to Islington there remains in Smithfield the ghost of the all the filth and cruelty; the flagstones seem to have soaked it up. Local legends of the Raw-Head Man and the Skinned Sow propagate, and violent poltergeist activity is common through the end of the century, defying even Church exorcists efforts to banish.

**Whitechapel:** Early in the century an area known for its coaching inns for travelers, by mid-century it is instead known as a notorious neighborhood troubled by poverty and prostitution—and then as one protected by a particularly frightening guardian angel, the Night Hag. It becomes infamous late in the century for Jack the Ripper's reign of terror. Named for the whitewashed Chapel of Ease, the area's fortunes sway up and down. After the Atlantean assault on the city, and the Automechanical Mutiny, Whitechapel is overrun with displaced residents from other areas, and conditions worsen dramatically. These conditions make the Ripper's killings easier, and the Hag's job of keeping order on the streets much harder.

**Whitehall:** The center of much of the Empire's power, located in Westminster and named for Henry VIII's palace built here in the 1530s. The Prime Minister's residence at No. 10 Downing Street is here, along with other government offices. With the Queen's more active role in politics and policy-making, especially with Her close alliance with Benjamin Disraeli late in the century, Her coach and entourage is a frequent sight. Like the City, Whitehall has its own small and dedicated force of Strangers tasked with watching and securing it from danger. The spate of dynamite attacks in the 1870s result in Downing Street being closed to coach and automotive traffic, and only official coaches are permitted to drive down the street. Freed from traffic, the street itself becomes a mobile market for upscale goods and trinkets. You can purchase a lunch on the street from a Downing Street vendor which would shame many West End cafés.

well into the 1870s, the Museum's collections fill the available space, giving the place an almost cluttered feel, as if it were a proper Victorian parlor filled with knickknacks and collectibles enough for the whole empire. The Museum funds and benefits from archaeological, zoological, and other scientific endeavors. Its Reading Room houses over a million volumes, and this is only a fraction of its total collection. When considering the museum's collections, it really isn't a question of whether a particular article or wonder is present in the collection, but *where* it might be found.

Museum clerks work constantly cataloging and recording the collection, but within its basements and storehouses there is literally no telling what might be found. To the Museum, all things in the world eventually come. And in an increasingly Strange world, the Museum's collections grow Strange as well. By the late 1880s, the Museum's displays encompass all manner of occult and un-human artifacts and technologies, the wonders of civilizations lost and ascended and otherwise forgotten, laid bare for the peoples of the British Empire.

All this makes the Museum's burning in the dark days following Victoria's transcendence an even more profound tragedy.

**Local Color:** Constant traffic, coming and going. People of all nations and ages coming to view the wonders of the world. Inside, cases and displays and exhibits containing every imaginable thing.

**Denizens:** Academics coming and going, students, researchers, tour guides, tourists and wide-eyed gawkers. Also rough types, adventurers and explorers come to see their discoveries properly displayed. Sometimes living wonders: a captured Atlantean warrior in a glass tank; Dr. Archibald Monroe holding forth to a group of students, admirers, and vociferous critics; or an iguanodon on loan from the Royal Zoological Park.

**Disasters:** *Fire!* The great storehouses and libraries of the British Museum contain treasures like unto the great library of Alexandria, and were

## Locations of Particular Interest

Each of these locations includes detailed guidelines for the game moderator.

### British Museum

The donation of the King's Library in 1822 sparked a new life for the British Museum, and it began a decades-long period of rapid expansion. In the 1850s it rose in an entirely new neo-classical building which was partially open for the Great Exhibition in 1851. Despite the almost constant expansion



they to burn the loss would be tragic.

**Hooks:** *Something Man Was Not Meant to Know.* Oh, well, *that* should certainly not be displayed alongside the Assyrian artifacts, as it predates them by centuries, and also because if invoked by the gaze of a vengeful woman it will unleash savage supernatural fury upon London's unfaithful husbands and rob them of dignity and *skin*. Can't have such a thing just sitting around for the public to see, can we? But then, how to remove it from the Museum, especially considering how dear it is to poor old Professor Scott?

*The Mummy Escapes:* The Galvanic Mummy, one of the weird wonders on special display at the Museum, simply vanishes between displays of its functions. Dr. Klien, the academic studying the Mummy, is quite upset, and calls on some favors which come down the Kerberos pipeline. Tracking the errant animated corpse seems a simple matter until the paper-sellers start to cry the headline, "*THREE ATTACKED IN MIDNIGHT JEWEL THEFT! REPORT NAMES MUMMY AS THIEF!*"

## Bethlem Hospital

Moved to St. George's Fields in 1815 from its previous location, Bedlam on the surface seems to have escaped the legacy of horror and abuse which dogged its past. In the 18th century people would pay a penny to visit and view the madmen. For another penny, long poles could be rented with which to jab and enrage the unfortunates for a better show. In the new building, designed by Sydney Smirke, a library is available and the inmates can enjoy music of an evening, dancing, and socializing. New efforts are made to find treatments for the insane. Drugs such as laudanum are applied to calm ragged nerves, and mesmeric and talking cures are attempted. Yet the place still has that air of wrongness, of broken minds and lost freedom. Beneath it, worse things lurk.

Special Branch uses Bedlam to house and constrain some of its *exceptional-circumstances suspects*, those deemed so great a threat that to allow access to the legal system constitutes too great a risk. These find themselves locked away from light and hope, drugged insensible, and often rendered insensate with electro-convulsive treatments, wrapping, starvation, sleep deprivation, and in some cases leucotomy, cutting away the personality and will. For Strangers who fall into Special Branch's custody, this is an all-too-frequent method to restrain their powers.

**Local Color:** On the surface, clean, well-lit, with doctors seeing to their patients as they are able. Beneath is every nightmare of the madhouse: filthy walls, cells with ragged padding, and dirty straight waistcoats waiting to bind those who act out of turn.

**Denizens:** The weeping moaning mad; also the laughing, crying mad, and the calm, seemingly-rational mad. Doctors. Consultants. Nurses. Charity workers about their good deeds. Visiting family. Beneath the surface, what? Deep in the Special Ward, rows and rows of tiny, ill-lit cells. Filth. Iron-bound doors. Here, so deep below ground the sound can't find its way to the surface, Special Branch's prisoners are held, some perpetually. Knowledge of these cells is reason enough to find oneself locked away down here, so release is rare and unlikely. Many of these prisoners are Strangers, warped in body, mind, and soul.

**Disaster:** *Escape!* If the unfortunate inmates escape it might be a matter for the police, especially for those who are criminally insane. But if the maddened and vengeful Strangers escape, the whole of London might be at risk. Certainly those who perpetrated horrors upon the escapees....

**Hooks:** *I'm Not Mad!* You find yourself alone, sealed away in one of the cells Below. How did you get here? Your memory is shattered, pieces strewn all about the floor of your mind. How to piece it back together, and discover just what brought you to this bad place?

## Bethlem's Dead Heart

Bethlem was built quite deliberately upon an ancient site of occult import. Once marked with a paleolithic augury circle, the spot was a place of high magic for the ancient Britons, until some unknown magical transgression sealed it off from all occult influence, creating a psychic dead zone where reality hangs like the heavy curtains of a tuberculous shut-in's sickroom. The spot was used during the Roman occupation for the execution of witches, the possessed, and faerie creatures who violated the pacts of blood and silver that they struck with the Roman invaders. This potent resistance to all things unnatural that makes the hospital attractive for both its obvious function as an insane asylum and for the keeping of Special Branch's Strange prisoners.

## Bethlem Hospital

*Negation:* Level 10

The negation effects everyone within the hospital, but the level of the power reduces by one level for every twenty five yards the victim is away from the heart of the hospital. The Hospital has an effective Spirit of D12+4, and the effect lasts for as long as the victim is in the hospital +2d6 rounds after he leaves. If the victim is lucky enough to resist the effect he must keep resisting each round until he eventually succumbs to the effect.

The dead heart of Bethlem only affects those whose power has an otherworldly source. Look to the trappings of the power and unless they are something akin to natural training, then it is safe to assume Bethlem's heart can negate it.

## Escape From Bedlam!

Bethlem Hospital itself neutralizes the powers of many Strangers. For prisoners with powers unhampered by the Dead Heart, Special Branch makes liberal use of drugs like laudanum and its more exotic fellows to render prisoners insensible. They have no compunction about physically crippling those in their care, smashing the hands of inventors and automechanicals. The secret hospital under Bethlem is well guarded and patrolled by men both skilled and ruthless, not your standard underpaid watchmen.

The hallways are unmarked, making them difficult to navigate unless you've memorized the layout, as the Special Branch officers who work here have. The halls are hung at regular intervals with beaded curtains hung with bells, so even an invisible intruder will reveal his presence when passing through them. The hallways are also frequently flooded with potent incense, a mix of sage, frankincense, myrrh, sandalwood, and other aromatics from across the globe. This choking fug reveals ghostly and immaterial presences, faintly outlining them even if they can walk through the walls. The entirely mundane security is also excellent: heavy iron doors with complex dual-keyed Chubb locks, iron gratings in the ventilation ducts, regular checkpoints as one proceeds deeper into the place. Even senior Special Branch officers are challenged at every one, made to give the day's pass-phrase and present their credentials. Even when they are allowed to pass, the guards make careful notations in the logbooks of how long each individual remains within, and all are weighed in and weighed out to be certain they are not carrying an unseen (perhaps even parasitic) prisoner to freedom.

Special Branch's secret hospital is a tough nut to crack.

Breaking into—or out of—Bethlem is an adventure in itself, and given the diverse possible powers and abilities a Kerberan might possess it is almost impossible for us

to predict how such an adventure may progress. We can however provide you with a number of obstacles and situations, which might occur and provide you with a guide on how to handle them.

One thing to consider is how much easier it would be to sneak into the place than to sneak out. Getting in, with all the resources a free Kerberan has to bring to the endeavor, is significantly easier than getting out again if one begins the conflict banged up in the cells.

## Sneaking Into Bedlam

**Obstacle:** Sign-In Desk. Heroes must succeed at a Persuasion roll opposed by the receptionists Notice. On a failure, the Heroes are allowed in, but are assigned a guard to guide/watch them. On a critical failure they are barred from entry and guards are called.

**Obstacle:** Checkpoints. The Heroes must make successful Stealth rolls as they move through Bedlam's halls. On a failure the guards realize someone without authorization is wandering the halls, and the Heroes have an encounter on any black card drawn from the Action Deck (see below). On a critical failure, the hospital goes into lockdown, and encounters are triggered on black and all face cards.

**Obstacle:** Veteran guards on patrol. As the Heroes roam the rules of Bedlam the GM should periodically draw cards from the Action Deck. If the card is a spade, you encounter either an individual, or group of guards. These can either be combated or dealt with in a non-violent way. If any guards escape they will raise the alert level of the hospital as if the Heroes had suffered a critical failure in the Checkpoints Obstacle.

**Obstacle:** Heavy doors with complex locks. These doors can be bypassed with either a successful Lockpicking (-2) roll, or they can acquire a set of keys from an officer.



**Obstacle:** Security systems. The Heroes might have to make periodic Notice checks to detect trip alarms. These can be negotiated with successful Agility rolls or disarmed with Lockpicking. Failure raises the alert level of the hospital as described in the Checkpoints Obstacle.

## Escaping Bedlam

**Obstacle:** Regular cell checks. Patient cells are checked every hour, and unless the guard sees something to convince him the cell is occupied he will raise the alert level of the hospital as described in the Checkpoint obstacle below.

**Obstacle:** Checkpoints. The Heroes must make successful Stealth rolls as they move through Bedlam's halls. On a failure the guards realize someone without authorization is wandering the halls, and the Heroes have an encounter on any black card drawn from the Action Deck (see below). On a critical failure, the hospital goes into lockdown, and encounters are triggered on black and all face cards.

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non-violent way. If any guards escape they will raise the alert level of the hospital as if the Heroes had suffered a critical failure in the Checkpoints Obstacle above.

**Obstacle:** Heavy doors with complex locks. These doors can be bypassed with either a successful Lockpicking (-2) roll, or they can acquire a set of keys from an officer.

**Obstacle:** Final checkpoint. If the Heroes have fallen foul of any of the obstacles above they will find their final exit blocked by a sizable number of veteran guards and Special Branch officers.

## Special Branch Officers

See page 267 for Special Branch.

## Veteran Guards

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Taunt d8

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (+1)

**Hindrances:** Mean, Overconfident, Vow (Keep the freaks locked up)

**Edges:** Block, Brawny

**Gear:** Leather apron and thick leather gloves (+1), truncheon (Str+d4)

## Whitechapel

As the century progresses, as the wealth and power of the Empire waxes full, London's East End—Wapping, Bethnal Green, Limehouse, Bow, Bromley, and Whitechapel—descend further and further into overcrowding and poverty. Whitechapel Road itself remains a thin vein of semi-respectability, but the warrens of alleys and streets and courts are all filled with London's lost souls and the poorest of the poor.

It holds as many as fifteen hundred prostitutes, and seventy brothels and places serving as such in all but name. It contains

opium dens, ratting and dog fighting, and all the sordid vice that some seek for pleasure, and that poverty forces some to endure so they might eat for one more day.

Across Whitechapel's rooftops, and down its darkest alleys, a demon stalks, a creature they call the Night Hag. Mothers warn their naughty children about her. Pimps sweat a little bit when they beat their whores. And in the 1880s, she battles a nameless killer they call Jack for dominion over Whitechapel, female vengeance upon male predation, the old goddess against the gods.

**Local Color:** Whitechapel reeks of over-packed humanity crammed in close, unwashed and without

adequate sewage systems. It is a din of shouts and cartwheels and hawkers calling their wares. At night when the fogs come in, its inhabitants move through the mist like specters heralding their own imminent deaths. Evidence of poverty and hunger are everywhere, writ upon the faces of the working girls, their children, upon the men doing whatever honest work they can find, only to see every day that honesty doesn't pay enough to feed the children. The wailing of mothers for dead infants is so common as to be noise. The streets are full of Irish voices, and Jewish ones and more—Russian accents, others of Eastern Europe, some French and Spanish, too. Near Limehouse, Chinese voices blend in. But proximity doesn't breed tolerance here, quite the opposite.

**Denizens:** The prostitutes and their pimps, husbands, and other “protectors.” Legions of street children. Beggars. Upper-class folk slumming for a cheap thrill, or deigning to bestow their good works on the suffering classes. The police are here, but they are lost in the shuffle, and the best they can do is to keep crime to an acceptable level. The Night Hag is on everyone's tongue. When misfortune falls upon someone deemed to deserve it, people say “The Hag's got him!”

Syphilitic vampires (see page 145) of all stages lurk in the shadows, offering their bodies to lure victims while they are still flush with human beauty; but when the sun burns away their humanity, they stalk like animals for the blood and flesh they crave.

The Elephantine Man (page 55) was exhibited in Whitechapel at one time, and returns to try and do some good when he becomes one of the Kerberos Club's most famous Strangers, adopting an open, dramatic persona later in the century.

## Victoria Tower

The tallest structure in the world is Victoria Tower, also known as Victoria's Mast. It is the grand vision of the young French architect and engineer Gustave Eiffel, combined with the genius of Nikola Tesla's mastery of wireless transmission and signaling and Ada Lovelace's wondrous calculating and encoding machinery.

Victoria Tower is commissioned at first as a stone tower on the south end of the reconstructed Palace of Westminster, but construction delays caused by numerous increasingly Strange disasters prevent it being built. In 1867 plans for a new tower are commissioned, and the sweeping upward steel design of Gustave Eiffel is chosen over more conventional Gothic-style designs for reasons at the time unknown. By the tower's completion in 1875, however, it is clear why some far-thinking planner had chosen Eiffel's design. The great steel mast makes the perfect platform for a gigantic wireless televocographic transmitter and receiver.

Beneath the tower, a huge electrical plant provides power for the transmissions and to drive the dedicated calculating-mill with its hundreds of inter-linked calculating clockwork brains. Messages in simple Morse code, in text, in speech, images and photographs are converted into encoded machine-signal and broadcast with tremendous power, allowing those with the proper televocographic receivers and decoders to capture these messages as they float through the air. Wireless sending and receiving equipment is installed in all of her majesty's aero ships, and these serve as mobile relays, extending the reach of the Tower's signal.

The Tower is gigantic, over 1,500 feet tall, and dominates the London skyline. Its four huge support-struts straddle and merge with the Palace of Westminster. From its needle-like point Parliament and the Queen broadcast the news of the State,

though of late more and more entertainment finds its way into the air: music, photographs of art, and poetry are all there, alive in the air for those with the right equipment to capture them.

The Automechanical Mutiny of 1885 spells the end to the Mast's short life as the Voice of the Empire. The calculating brains which drive its inner workings are deemed unsafe and vulnerable to corrupting code, some of which finds its way into the transmission of lesser broadcast mechanisms during the Mutiny. With its signal silenced, the Tower becomes a monument to human folly and ambition.

Still, the view from the observation deck at the Tower's height is breathtaking. On London's thickest day the view from that height is clear—even if London is invisible in the fog below, looking as if someone had poured a gallon of buttermilk into a depression in the ground.

**Local Color:** The sweeping upward arch of the Mast rises up and up, piercing London's yellow mists. The streets around Westminster rumble faintly from the chugging steam engines driving the electrical dynamos which power it. The air crackles with static and smells of an imminent lightning strike. When it storms the Tower is a lightning-rod, being struck over and over, so the fog appears an eerie red. Thousands of electrical light bulbs hanging from it lend their own faint glow, even on London's soupiest days. The air tastes metallic around the Tower, like a penny on your tongue.

**Denizens:** Tourists from all over the world throng to the Tower, one of London's great tourist attractions (billed as the First Wonder of the Modern World). All the usual hawkers and sellers follow this crowd as well, much to the chagrin of the MPs and Lords who must wade through them to get into the Palace. The police keep a close watch, as few targets would be more appealing to the criminal classes. Special Branch keeps a closer watch, as

few targets would be more appealing to anarchist bombers, suffragettes and Irish revolutionaries. Engineers

work constantly, tweaking and tuning, and replacing fuses. A force of hundreds of automechanical men clamber spider-like up and down the Tower at all hours, painting, patching, securing rivets, and doing the deadly dangerous high work.

**Disasters:** *Collapse!* If Victoria's Mast were to collapse, falling across London, the destruction would be almost incalculable—12,000 tons of steel crashing across London's buildings, great and humble alike.

**Hooks:** *A View From On High.* There are some things which can only be conducted at the top of the tallest building in the world, certain ceremonies, affairs, rites, or observances. The observation deck of the tower always seems to be reserved, but one such bit of business demands you attend to it post haste, and so crashing someone else's reverie from the heights is a necessity.

*Wrath of the Gods:* A fight atop the tower during a lighting storm! In addition to the difficulty of clinging to the wet steel girders while fighting for your life, the strength of the storm will grant a certain number of Area Dice of damage upon you and all your friends and foes alike as the fury of an angry god lashes about you. Make it one die for a minor storm, up to five for the storm of the century.

*Ghosts in the Machine:* Weird voices begin creeping into the transmission from Victoria's Mast—weeping, moaning, mad ranting, pleas for help and mercy, voices begging forgiveness, promises of hideous revenge, calls to friends, loved ones or enemies by name. They are the voices of the dead. The Tower has tuned to a Strange frequency, and from that last great mystery someone or something is reaching back across and demanding attention.

The calculating brains beneath the tower are busy encoding ghosts into signal as readily as they encode voice or text or image. And the dead have a warning, if anyone can decipher their mad screaming and weeping; or if they perhaps take possession of a listener, reaching out from Beyond to become a radioetheric signal, and then sound, and then thought within a living brain....

# The Sumpworks

In the summer of 1858 London is wallowing in its own filth. Without a proper sewer system, waste is dumped into the thousands of cesspits scattered across the city, or directly into the Thames. Flush toilets exacerbate the problem, as they sluice the filth away in a gush of water, overflowing the cesspits and causing them to run into the river as well. During the hot months of the summer, great blooms of stench rise from the low waters of the river, and cholera and miasmic spirits kill thousands. Dr. John Snow's push for sanitation reform, coupled with the fragile genius of Joseph Bazalgette, saves London from becoming uninhabitable.

Bazalgette is still recovering from a nervous breakdown suffered while expanding the national railway network. During part of the excavation work east of London, he and his crew uncover something nerve-shattering and sanity-breaking. Buried under tons of rock, surrounded by the broken remains of a stone circle, they find *nothing*. A hole to *nowhere*. Or, perhaps, somewhere so alien and weird the human mind rebels against it, refuses to see it, and shadows it in darkness.

Anything thrown into the hole is simply *gone*. Bazalgette and his comrades wonder how it is that the atmosphere doesn't escape through the hole, creating a sucking whirl-storm until all the world's air is drained away. But like all things to do with the Sump (as it came to be called), nobody can fathom an answer.

When presented with the problem of how to contend with London's prodigious capacity to produce feces and filth, he realizes that all the cesspits must be closed, waste channeled into a network of sewers, and then pumped out of the city rather than being flushed directly into the river. And he thinks of the Sump.

So begins the construction of the Sumpworks under the administration of the Metropolitan Board of Sanitation. Despite a campaign of sabotage by

unknown malcontents (said by some to be a cult who worshiped the Beast who dwelt in the Outer Abyss—or the Sump), more than a hundred miles of underground sewers are built beneath the city, some tunneling right through the ancient remains of London's earlier ages, crypts, tombs, temples, and forgotten grottos. The project is opened in 1865 and completed in 1870, and thousands of tons of human waste, industrial byproducts, and chemical slurry are dumped down the Sump to—*somewhere else*.

**Local Color:** Miles of sewers, the sluice and splash of running sewerage, the squeak of countless rats, and less easily identifiable things. Sometimes the sewers open into huge forgotten chambers, ancient tombs, temples or forgotten cellars, lit faintly with phosphorescent fungus. Everything eventually finds its way down here. It's a place for lost things. The sewerage passes the pumping stations and is squeezed of most of its water before the waste is pitched into the Sump. More than a few corpses find their way into that black unknown as well, one hopes never to return.

**Denizens:** Rats, some as large as hounds. Final-stage sufferers of syphilitic vampirism. Sanitation Police in their rubber uniforms and filter masks, and the criminals they hunt in the bowels of the city. In the hidden places anyone with dark, loathsome secrets might be found, if they don't mind the smell. In the desecrated temples, cults still meet and plot their revenge for the blasphemy done to their sacred spaces.

**Disasters:** *Collapse!* If a section of the sewers gave way it could swallow a building, sucking it down in to the stinking wet below. Venturing down to rescue the survivors might lead to a dungeon-crawl situation. The sewers might also back up, flooding London with effluvia. And what unholy creatures might be driven to the surface by such a flood?

**Hooks:** *Excuse me, but is this the way to Bank of England?* While attending some secretive business down in the sewers, you stumble across a criminal enter-



prise. A group of men is tunneling from a main sewer line up into the vaults of the Bank of England, to steal not money but certain papers held there in safe deposit against the day when political enemies of Her Majesty might require some persuasion to refrain from resisting Her Majesty's agenda.

*Run Before the Flood:* In the catacombs of the old Temple of Mercury, a great lake of effluvia backs up from one clogged tunnel, filling until the pressure is irresistible and bursts the blockage. The great flood-tide of sewage rushes down a dozen tunnels, complicating horribly any business you might be unlucky enough to be about at the time.

*A Voice from the Abyss:* **Something** is calling to the mad and the psychic, the weak-willed, to children, and to cats. Something is whispering out to them from the water-closet door, from the pipes, and down on down into the sewers. **Something** whispers for them to come, to gaze long into the darkness, and to take a little smudge of it within themselves. **Something** has been awakened by the flood of London's filth, and it will look upon the face of the people in whose excrement it wallows.

## Heath Row Aerodrome

Located to the West of central London. The Great Western Aerodrome (as it is properly known) is still called after Heath Row, the hamlet which was demolished to make way for the Empire's busiest port for aero ship docking and travel. By the 1890s, aero ships depart from Heath Row to travel to the Continent and all corners of the world—the Americas, Africa, the East and West Indies, China and Japan. Thousands depart from Heath Row, and it serves as the home aero-port for the Royal Squadron, the small fleet of aero ships tasked with carrying royal representatives, gifts, diplomats, and upon occasion even Her Majesty. The Royal Squadron is also tasked with the aerial defense of London, a bulwark necessitated by the city's vulnerability to air attack, as demonstrated by the Atlantean Invasion.

**Local Color:** The buzz and bustle of a train station or major dockyards, but on a larger scale. Huge, close-cut grassy fields serve as landing areas for aero ships, some as big as half a kilometer long. Trains arrive and depart the Aerodrome constantly,

carrying passengers and goods to and from London. Blue-uniformed air porters bustle over luggage and passengers. It's a more well-off crowd than would gather in a train station or seaport, however. Air travel is still more expensive than most berths aboard ocean-bound vessels. The drone of air-ship engines fills the air, and the great behemoths arrive and land with deceptive speed. At a distance they hardly seem to be moving, but close up they land and brake hard within the confines of Heath Row's landing fields.

**Denizens:** The ubiquitous porters, ticketing agents, air-ship crews, passengers, rowdies unloading the ships, helmeted Bobbies on the lookout for known sharps and pickpockets, plainclothes detectives on the prowl for bigger criminal fish, bowler-hatted Special Branch officers hunching uncomfortably in their tweed and glaring menace at everyone, sometimes demanding travel papers at random to keep the hoi-polloi properly afraid. In among the honest citizens the true artists of the criminal classes move, deal and dip, and divide people from their money right under the nose of the law.

**Disasters:** *Crash!* Aero ships are *huge*. And if something goes wrong, say with their lifting gas cells, they can come crashing down. It takes a fair bit of damage to cause one to plummet, but it wouldn't be impossible for mishandling of the gas regulation systems and fire discipline aboard to lead to a catastrophic explosion which would rain burning debris across the landing fields and the grounded ships and the thronging masses.

And to be sure, a fight atop a crashing aero ship is a disaster no self-respecting adventuring Kerberan should be able to resist.

**Hooks:** A chance meeting or a fleeting glimpse of a long-lost lover or deadly enemy necessitates boarding an aero ship leaving for parts unknown. From the Aerodrome Club and wine bar to the gray skies above: How will you board when the flight is oversold as it is, and security (in light of the recent dynamite outrages) so much stricter than usual?

While returning from abroad for some well needed recuperation among friends, you find your flight hijacked. Air pirates! Who would credit such a thing in this day and age? They certainly look the part, but perhaps, a bit too much? A bit too theatrical? The parrot is certainly playing it too hard. They're up to something, and all the business with making the captain walk the plank without his parachute is just distraction. What do these "pirates" really want?

*Around the World, Quick as You Like!* The first annual Circumnavigational Aero Ship Cup, a race *around the world*. Two dozen aero ships begin the race in Heath Row, flying east across Europe, China, the great Pacific, the Americas, across the Atlantic, and back to London. How could the Kerberos Club resist such an opportunity for adventure, and all the intriguing possibilities along the way?

## Victory Bridge

Located below London Bridge, Victory Bridge dwarfs its sister. Victory Bridge is enormous, built from the gigantic stones dredged from the Thames after the catastrophic collapse of one of the Atlantean war-ziggurats during the invasion of 1879. Victory Bridge is a stunning example of the Roman style of bridge-building expanded to a grand scale. It spans the Thames with three huge arches, the center arch large enough for an ocean steamer to pass through.

It isn't commonly known, but the bridge also serves as one of London's defensive measures. Its construction using the Strange stones of the Atlantean war machine serves to disrupt the action of similar stones passing close by. No device using the same water-stone repulsion as the Atlantean machines can pass up the Thames again without its lifting mechanism failing. The bridge is the reason attempts to replicate the Atlantean machines have

failed, even on very small scales.

Victory Bridge carries traffic from just above the London Docks across to the Bermondsey area. In truth it doesn't carry enough to truly justify its construction, but the simple arches of Victoria Bridge stand in contrast to London's more gothic landmarks and the more ornate background. Tourists who gather along its wide pedestrian promenades to watch the ships anchor in the Pool bring enough commerce to fuel a brisk trade among the street vendors, hawkers and thieves who collect here.

**Local Color:** The smell of the Thames at low tide. The call and cry of seamen and laborers in the Pool and surrounding docks. The clacker-clack of cartwheels along the bridge stonework. When the fogs come in they wrap the bridge up tight, smothering it so it might be the loneliest place in London, cut off from reality and cast off into a Strange other-world—which, in truth, it might be. Those who fall asleep on the bridge, in carriages or behind their mobile stalls for a quick nap, experience visions of the wonders of ancient Atlantean culture, the war with Pacifica which broke the ancient empire, and the great race's fall into primitive ruin. Within a decade, the London Atlantean Society forms and arranges "bridge nights" where the members camp upon the bridge and record the dreams they experience, reconstructing Atlantean culture from these second-hand remembrances.

**Denizens:** Hawkers, pickpockets, tourists, traffic on foot, cart, omnibus, and later, mechano-electric automotives. Officers of the Met walk the bridge regularly, watching for potential suicides. The bridge proves the most popular in London for leaping to one's death. When the London Atlantean Society forms, they establish a mobile kiosk on the bridge selling their pamphlets and monographs on the "Wonders of Lost Atlantis." Their fetishistic adoration for all things Atlantean rankles with

many of London's citizens who remember all too well what indignities the Atlanteans had visited upon the

city.

**Disasters:** *Hark, the leviathan!* The quiescent stones of the Victory Bridge yet pulse with resonate power, and while this protects London from war machines powered by similar mechanisms, the constant psychic drone drives some sensitive people mad and causes bad dreams for a receptive few. At some point it will ripple outwards through the Thames into the Channel, and then on into the North Sea where the sleeping Leviathan awaits the call of its old masters, the god-kings of Atlantis who wrote upon its soul the Names of Command and Wrath.

Leviathan is All. A misbegotten evolutionary horror of impossible dimensions and indescribable physiology, it is all things which have ever swum, from the stinging jellyfish to the great-mawed prehistoric shark, to the hook-tentacled giant squid, to Stranger and more horrible things from the black depths. Vast as a castle, squamous and malleable, Leviathan will hear the Bridge singing out to it like a strummed harp-string, and come, seeking its old masters and waiting for one who knows the words of Command and Wrath. Perhaps a human dreamer sleeps on the bridge, wishing for visions of Atlantis—which Word will he speak upon seeing the magnificent horror rise from the river before him?

**Hooks:** *The Keystone Ransom Plot.* While passing over the Bridge on other business you find your progress blocked by backed-up traffic, and waves of panic propagate back to your driver. He shouts, "He's threatenin' to blow up the bridge!" Some madman or brazen genius claims to have planted fifty pounds of nitroglycerin upon the bridge's keystone, the stone against which all the forces of the whole construction are balanced. If removed, the bridge will at the very least be unstable, at the worst it will collapse into the Thames. The bomb is equipped with a clockwork detonator and a crystal receiver, keyed to vibrate and trigger the explosion when the perpetrator throws a switch on a device strapped to his torso. Fighting to



*Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.*

get a look at this miscreant, through the crowds, you see the exultant face of someone all too familiar. A friend, colleague, or fellow Kerberan.

*Arise Leviathan!* The call of the bridge has been uncovered by members of the London Atlantis Society, and a core group has taken up the practice of Atlantean mystery religions which they experienced in dream-visions. They have had visions of Leviathan when he served the Atlanteans as their great terror-weapon against Ultima Thule, Pacifica, and the Ab-Human Remnants from the South Pole. They have seen Leviathan, and it has broken their minds.

They believe themselves to be the reincarnations of the dead priests of Atlantis, and so seek to

perform rituals on the bridge during certain days of the Atlantean calendar. Human sacrifice. Ritualized atrocity. Bloodletting. Self-mutilation. Given the freedom to act, they will call the great beast and release it to run mad in London. All knowledge of the Word of Wrath must be purged, and anyone and everyone who *might* know it must be dealt with. The London Atlantean Society must be *broken*. Special Branch rushes to line them against the wall, innocent and guilty alike, and shoot them unceremoniously through the head. Will you exercise more judgment? And what will be the consequences if you judge wrong?

# Chapter Five

## The Great Game



*“Of the many curious social fraternities in which the Victorians participated, few achieved the fame, and infamy, of London’s Kerberos Club. From obscure origins, the Club rose to public consciousness as the 19th century progressed, buoyed on a tide of scandals, rumors, and the sensationalized adventures of its membership.*

*“On the surface the Kerberos Club seems nothing so much as a particularly baroque and debauched social club, with a famously egalitarian admissions policy. But a more careful review of the history of the era reveals the Club’s long shadow cast over many of the century’s greatest events and tragedies.*

*“In truth, the Kerberos Club was Victoria’s creature and a powerful force for the Empire. One had to sniff out the Strange menaces which plagued Victoria’s Britain, one to warn them off with growl and bared fangs, and that failing, one to savage her enemies with animalistic zeal.*

*“The Club was lauded, famed and feared in equal measure for flaunting social convention and dabbling in things which any right-thinking person would avoid. It saw its fortunes rise continuously until Victoria’s so-called Ascension robbed it of its doting patron and left it exposed to the wrath of its countless enemies, culminating in the burning of the club-house on Saint James Square in the winter of 1902.”*

Excerpted from *Victoria’s Watchdog: The Strange History of the Kerberos Club*, by Alison Peeks, published 2002 by Hillgate Press, used here with permission.

## Character Concept

Most *Kerberos Club* games assume that all player characters are members of the Club, know each other on some level already, and are in some way set apart from ordinary society by Strangeness of form, ideals, beliefs, experiences, or abilities. One winning strategy to creating a cohesive group of player characters, with a good dynamic and complementary personalities and abilities, is to discuss character concepts with the whole group, perhaps during a dedicated session focused on character and group generation.

One option offered in the *Kerberos Club* is to play an actual historical figure who has been altered, changed, or made uncanny by the touch of the Strange. The timeline of the setting is filled with just this sort of thing, and resources like the magnificent Wikipedia allow you to quickly find someone of interest to you and plumb their biography for hooks, details, and unexplained events you can use to make them Strange. Another option is to play a figure who inspired the famous fiction of the day. Sherlock Holmes is but a character in a story in the world of the *Kerberos Club*, but few would deny that Arthur Conan Doyle got his inspiration from reading the exploits of the so-called Great Detective, Lucas Moreland.

# Questions

Before, during, or after determining attributes, skills, edges, hindrances and powers, answer the following questions for your character. Be as brief or verbose as you like to fix the character in your mind's eye.

**Humble Beginnings.** Everyone starts somewhere. Who were you before you became who you are? How did your early years mark you and shape you?

**Follies of Youth.** Foolishness is the vice of the young, and the fondest memory of the old. What did you get up to as you sought independence during your formative years?

**First Awakenings.** When did you begin to realize the world was not as it might seem? When did you become aware, and involved in, the hidden and not-so-hidden Strangeness lurking about the comfortable hearth of proper society?

**Mysterious Origins.** When did you come into power of your own? When did your touch of Strangeness become manifest? How did you become a player in the weird games of the Strangers?

**Great Failing.** What is your greatest flaw, and how did it bring you near to ruin and disaster?

# Race

Most characters of *The Kerberos Club* are human, but many are not. Humans begin play with a free Edge of their choice, and must meet the requirements of the Edge as normal.

Other races—undead, constructs, or even demons—are also possible, but you'll create those with the appropriate superpowers so that you can tailor your race exactly as you see it. Just like humans, custom races get a Free Edge of their choice at the

beginning of play and must also meet the requirements of the Edge as normal.

One race has such specific importance to *The Kerberos Club* that it deserves special attention—creatures of Faerie, called the Fae.

## The Fae

Faerie characters have the following qualities.

**Born of Dream:** The Fae have another 2 attribute points to spend at character generation, these can be placed wherever desired.

**Conviction:** All Fae have a series of beliefs and perceptions on mortal life that they immutably believe to be correct. If these beliefs are challenged (even verbally), the fae must make a successful Vigor roll or be shaken. If one of their beliefs is proved to be incorrect they suffer a wound, which cannot be soaked.

Each Faerie character must list at least five facts that shape their view of the world, one of these should be wildly inaccurate, and two others should be highly unlikely. For example: A Fae character could believe that London is the center of the mortal world, an Englishman is the peak of the mortal form—these are generally common perceptions in the Victorian era. She might also believe that a cabal of the major religions controls the world's finance, and Africa is actually a savage faerie realm, not found on the mortal realm—highly unlikely beliefs at best. Finally she may also believe that a shape changed faerie giraffe has actually replaced Queen Victoria, and the true monarch is actually trapped behind bars in Regents Park—one would hope this is wildly inaccurate.

**Fae:** Fairies are by definition are a winsome, and physically appealing race. All Faeries have +2 Charisma.

**Faerie Glamour:** Fae may attack with frightening and

grotesque illusions, which—as long as the victim fails to recognize them as unreal—may inflict very real wounds. Fairies can also raise illusory disguises, changing their appearance for a time, and they can create wild or prosaic illusions to confuse mortal senses.

**Illusion:** Level 2; Film Quality, Psychosomatic trauma

**Matter Over Mind:** Faerie are bound by the physical forms they decide upon when they first materialize in the mortal realm. A faerie can only improve her Agility, Strength, or Vigor stats once every other Rank. If a fae increases her Strength at Novice, she must wait until Veteran rank until she can increase either her Agility, Strength or Vigor again. Obviously Super Powers may make the need to improve these traits fairly moot.

**Oathbound:** Whenever a faerie knowingly breaks their sworn word, they take a wound, which cannot be soaked. Faeries can—and do—try to work around this. Conversation with a faerie can be a labyrinthine, confusing experience.

## Traits

Every character starts with a d4 in each of his five Attributes: Agility, Smarts, Spirit, Strength, and Vigor. You then have 5 points to distribute among them as you choose. Raising an attribute costs 1 point per die type. Raising a d4 to a d8, for example, costs two of these points (one point to a d6, and one more to a d8).

You can't raise an attribute above d12 here, but you'll be able to exceed that limitation when you choose your super powers.

You also have 15 points to buy your skills.

Raising a skill by a die type costs 1 point as long as it's no higher than the attribute it's linked to. It costs 2

points per die type to raise a skill over its linked attribute. All skills from the *Savage Worlds* rulebook are allowed unless your GM says otherwise. In a campaign set early in the century, for example, it wouldn't make much sense to have Knowledge (Computers). However, as time marches on and the Strange changes the world more and more, almost anything becomes possible.

## Hindrances

Hindrances allow you to define the personal weaknesses and flaws of your character. They also give you more points with which to build your character. You may take up to two Minor Hindrances (worth 1 point each) and one Major Hindrance (worth 2 points).

For 2 Points you can:

- Raise an attribute one die type.
- Choose an Edge.

For 1 Point you can:

- Gain another skill point (max d12).
- Gain an additional £10.

Characters with Arcane Background (Super Powers) can also use their Power Points to further increase their attributes or take new Edges.

## Gear

Your character starts with £10 to spend on gear. For conversions, £1 in *The Kerberos Club* is equivalent to \$100 in *Savage Worlds*. Sample weapons and armor can be found on pages 202-203.

To price an item from *Savage Worlds* using *Kerberos Club* coinage, use the following conversions.



| <i>Kerberos Club Currency</i> | <i>Savage Worlds Equivalent</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 guinea                      | \$105                           |
| 1 gold sovereign (£1)         | \$100                           |
| 1 half-sovereign              | \$50                            |
| 1 crown                       | \$25                            |
| 1 half-crown                  | \$12                            |
| 1 shilling (1s)               | \$5                             |
| 1 sixpence tanner             | \$2                             |
| 1 silver threepenny bit (3p)  | \$1                             |

## Secondary Statistics

Once you've finished raising your basic Traits, it's time to determine your secondary statistics.

**Charisma** is a measure of your Hero's likeability, and is added to Persuasion and Streetwise rolls. Your Charisma modifier is +0 unless changed by Edges, Hindrances, or Powers.

**Pace** is equal to 6", unless changed by Edges, Hindrances, or Powers.

**Parry** is equal to 2 plus half your Fighting.

**Toughness** is equal to 2 plus half your Vigor.

## Final Touches

Finish up by filling in your character's details. What are his goals? Who does he hate? Does he care about anyone or anything? Why might he adventure with other super beings?

## New Hindrances

The following new Hindrances are available.

### Black Sheep (Minor)

You have been cast out and disinherited from the bosom of your rich family. This is well known in both the middle and upper classes, and you suffer a -2 Charisma for your infamy. However, your estrangement from your family makes you a hero with the lower classes, with whom you enjoy +2 Charisma. You will never benefit from any inheritance, whether it is property or money until you repair relations with your family—Something almost impossible given the epic and determined way in which you burnt your bridges with them.

### Ex Cultist (Minor)

Before becoming a Kerberan you were a member of one of the many mystery cults, secret societies, and dark brotherhoods, which ply their dark trade in London's dark alleys. You left under a dark cloud—possibly taking something of great value with you—and they have sworn revenge. Hardly a month goes by without an attempt upon your life.

Similarly, if word ever gets out about your previous allegiance, your standing in society would be tarnished to say the least, you might even have to stand trial for heinous crimes. This makes you extremely susceptible to blackmail and threats.

### Skittish (Minor)

Something in your past, maybe a brush with slavers, terrible bullying at school, or even overly stern and critical parents, has left you vulnerable to criticism. You suffer a -2 to rolls to resist Intimidation or taunts.

## Armor

| Type                 | Armor | Weight | Cost | Notes                                                        |
|----------------------|-------|--------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thick leather apron  | +1    | 8      | 5s   | Covers torso                                                 |
| Thick leather gloves | +1    | 1      | 2s   | 50% vs arm shot                                              |
| Thick leather jacket | +1    | 10     | 7s   | Covers torso and arms                                        |
| Hardened leather hat | +1    | 1      | 1s   | 50% vs head shot                                             |
| Helmet               | +2    | 2      | 10s  | 50% vs head shot                                             |
| Breastplate          | +3    | 25     | £4   | Covers torso                                                 |
| Lorica Victoria      | +3    | 25     | £30  | Covers torso; heavy armor; socially acceptable if in uniform |

## Hand Weapons

| Type                         | Damage   | Weight | Cost   | Notes                                                                                   |
|------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Blades</b>                |          |        |        |                                                                                         |
| Bayonet, unfixed             | Str+d4   | 1      | 5s     |                                                                                         |
| Bayonet, fixed               | Str+d6   |        |        | Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands                                                              |
| Broadsword                   | Str+d8   | 8      | £3     |                                                                                         |
| Cane sword                   | Str+d4   | 3      | £3     |                                                                                         |
| Claymore                     | Str+d10  | 12     | £4     | Parry -1, 2 hands                                                                       |
| Cutlass or saber             | Str+d6   | 4      | £2     |                                                                                         |
| Dagger                       | Str+d4   | 1      | 5s     |                                                                                         |
| Duelling sword (small sword) | Str+d4   | 3      | £1/10s | Parry +1                                                                                |
| Fighting knife               | Str+d4+1 | 4      | £1     |                                                                                         |
| <b>Axes and Mauls</b>        |          |        |        |                                                                                         |
| Hand axe                     | Str+d6   | 2      | £1     |                                                                                         |
| Heavy maul                   | Str+d8   | 20     | £2     | AP 2 vs. rigid armor, Parry -1, 2 hands                                                 |
| Wood axe                     | Str+d10  | 15     | £2/10s | AP 1, Parry -1, 2 hands                                                                 |
| <b>Bludgeons</b>             |          |        |        |                                                                                         |
| Cosh                         | Str+d4   | 1      | 5s     | Special (see page 102)                                                                  |
| Police truncheon             | Str+d4   | 1      | 2s     |                                                                                         |
| Stout walking stick          | Str+d4   | 3      | 2s     | Socially acceptable if out of doors or just passing through                             |
| Staff                        | Str+d4   | 8      | 2s     | Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands; socially acceptable if out of doors or just passing through |

## A Note on Social Acceptability

Anyone who wears armor or bears arms outside of an emergency or official capacity suffers a -2 Charisma penalty. “Official capacity” is restricted to whatever is appropriate for one’s station. A uniformed policeman could carry a truncheon and wear a helmet with no approbation, but not a firearm. A detective or an officer of Special Branch could be expected to have a pistol, as long as it remains out of sight except in an emergency.

## Other Items

*Savage Worlds* items that are appropriate to the *Kerberos Club* setting cost one shilling per \$5 listed price.

## Ranged Weapons (Early Era)

| Type                            | Damage | Range    | ROF | Shots | Weight | Cost  | Min Str | Notes                                           |
|---------------------------------|--------|----------|-----|-------|--------|-------|---------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Black Powder</b>             |        |          |     |       |        |       |         |                                                 |
| Blunderbuss                     | 1-3d6* | 10/20/40 | 1   | 1     | 12     | £3    | d6      | 1 round to reload; Misfire                      |
| Cap-and-ball revolver           | 2d6+1  | 10/20/40 | 1   | 6     | 4      | £2    | —       | AP 1; revolver; 1 round to reload each cylinder |
| Flintlock musket ("Brown Bess") | 2d8    | 10/20/40 | 1   | 1     | 15     | £3    | d6      | 1 round to reload; Misfire                      |
| Flintlock pistol                | 2d6+1  | 5/10/20  | 1   | 1     | 3      | £1/5s | —       | 1 round to reload; Misfire                      |
| Flintlock rifled musket         | 2d8    | 15/30/60 | 1   | 1     | 15     | £5    | d6      | AP 1; 3 actions to reload; Misfire              |

## Ranged Weapons (Middle and Late Era)

| Type                                      | Damage | Range      | ROF | Shots | Weight | Cost   | Min Str | Notes                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|--------|------------|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Brass Cartridge Pistols and Rifles</b> |        |            |     |       |        |        |         |                                                         |
| Derringer                                 | 2d6+1  | 5/10/20    | 1   | 2     | 2      | £2     | —       | AP 1                                                    |
| Heavy revolver                            | 2d6+1  | 12/24/48   | 1   | 6     | 3      | £4     | —       | AP 1, revolver                                          |
| Light revolver                            | 2d4+1  | 10/20/40   | 1   | 6     | 2      | £2     | —       | AP 1, revolver                                          |
| Lever-action carbine                      | 2d6+2  | 20/40/80   | 1   | 7     | 8      | £4/10s | —       | AP 2                                                    |
| Lever-action rifle                        | 2d8    | 24/48/96   | 1   | 15    | 10     | £6     | d6      | AP 2                                                    |
| Large-bore rifle                          | 2d10+1 | 24/48/96   | 1   | 1     | 20     | £10    | d12     | AP 2, 1 round to reload                                 |
| <b>Shotguns</b>                           |        |            |     |       |        |        |         |                                                         |
| Single-barrel shotgun                     | 1-3d6* | 12/24/48   | 1   | 1     | 8      | £4     | —       | See notes in <i>Savage Worlds</i>                       |
| Double-barrel shotgun                     | 1-3d6* | 12/24/48   | 1   | 2     | 11     | £5     | —       | See notes in <i>Savage Worlds</i>                       |
| <b>Heavy Weapons</b>                      |        |            |     |       |        |        |         |                                                         |
| Gatling gun                               | 2d8    | 24/48/96   | 3   | —     | 40     | £10    | —       | AP 2; may not move                                      |
| Cannon (shot)                             | 3d6+1  | 50/100/200 | 1   | —     | —      | Mil.   | —       | AP 4; heavy weapon; see notes in <i>Savage Worlds</i>   |
| Shrapnel shell                            | 3d6    | 50/100/200 | 1   | —     | —      | Mil.   | —       | Medium Burst Template                                   |
| Canister                                  | 2d6    | 24" path   | 1   | —     | —      | Mil.   | —       | See notes in <i>Savage Worlds</i>                       |
| <b>Strange Weapons</b>                    |        |            |     |       |        |        |         |                                                         |
| Colt Avalanche revolver                   | 2d6    | 12/24/48   | 3   | 6     | 3      | £10    | —       | AP 2; revolver; Misfire                                 |
| Double-action rotating revolver           | 2d6    | 12/24/48   | 3   | 6     | 3      | £4     | —       | AP 2; revolver; Catastrophic Misfire                    |
| Electrophorus Firing Piece ("Spark")      | —      | 12         | 1   | 6     | 2      | £2     | —       | Vigor at -2 or Shaken; electrical                       |
| Electrophorus Lightning Cannon            | 3d6    | 48/96/192  | 1   | —     | —      | £24    | —       | AP 4; electrical; heavy weapon; knockback; may not move |
| Smith & Wesson Vulcan .30 caseless rifle  | 3d6    | 24/48/96   | 2   | 30    | 10     | £18    | d6      | AP 2; Misfire                                           |
| Winchester Articulated Machine Rifle      | 3d6    | 12/24/48   | 3   | 18    | 12     | £12    | d6      | AP 2, Catastrophic Misfire                              |

\* **Notes:** A shotgun or blunderbuss does 3d6 at short range, 2d6 at medium range, and 1d6 at long. For Misfire and Catastrophic Misfire see page 208.

## Unrest

If you would like to add some mechanical teeth to the theme of hidden Strangeness, then consider what a panicky, wild, dangerous, and savage beast a mob is. A thousand fists and no brain, it thrashes and destroys in spasms and surges, until breaking apart into its constituent fragments, and vanishing.

Early in the century the Strange is terrifying to many. Display of obviously superhuman powers, miraculous events, impossible or frightening technology, or inhuman creatures can spark riots.

The GM tracks this with Unrest tokens. Unrest tokens represent the general level of tension in a group of people, a crowd, a community, even a nation. As Unrest increases, the chance of some sort of violent outbreak also increases.

Here are the things that cause Unrest to increase:

**The crowd is out of control.** +1 token if the crowd is drunk or intoxicated. Add a token if the crowd is angry about something such as a game lost by a sports team, loss of employment, or the death of a favorite local.

**The Strange on display.** +1 token minimum. Use of obvious or sweeping powers adds an additional token per scene. The presence of obviously inhuman beings adds another.

**Violence.** +1 token for acts of violence. Violence against sympathetic targets adds another die per scene. Violence against the crowd adds another.

**Rabble rousing.** Each success and raise on a Persuasion roll adds a token if someone is stirring up trouble, inciting the mob, or trying to increase aggression.

Unrest gradually builds up over a period of time until it boils over into a full-fledged riot. However it can be countered by the subtle use of powers, such as super persuasion, illusion, mind control, or telepathy. Treat this as a Mass Battle (see *Savage Worlds*). The heroes use whichever skill governs their power, but remember

that overt, violent power use may increase the Unrest token pool, rather than decrease it. The mob uses either the persuasion dice of its leader(s), or if leaderless a skill of d6, plus a Wild Die. Rather than decreasing the nonexistent heroes token pool, success and raises on this roll increases the mobs tokens.

If the mob's tokens are reduced to zero, then the unrest is defused and the mob disperses, confused and unhappy but not violent. If the mob gains 10 Unrest tokens or more, it gets totally out of hand and violence erupts.

This in itself can be treated as an adventure for the heroes—the GM could design bespoke encounters for his heroes to play out as the riot waxes and wanes. However, here's a simple system for determining the eventual outcome of the riot. Draw a single card from the Action Deck; the suit of the card decides the type of riot that occurs.

**Clubs: Mob Violence!** Dozens of people suffer serious injuries and over a hundred have minor injuries. Player characters caught in the melee suffer 2d6 damage, but if they are specifically targeted by the mob, this damage increases to 4d8.

**Diamonds: Stampede!** Dozens are killed, hundreds are seriously injured, and more than a thousand individuals suffer minor injuries. Property damage is measured in thousands of pounds sterling. Player characters caught in the melee suffer 4d8 damage.

**Hearts: Flight!** Dozens of people suffer minor injuries, and the cost in property damage is in the hundreds of pounds sterling. Player characters caught in the melee suffer 2d6 damage.

**Spades: Total Riot!** Hundreds are killed, thousands suffer serious injuries, and tens of thousands suffer minor injuries. Property damage is measured in the tens of thousands pounds sterling. Player characters caught in the melee suffer 5d10 damage.



# New Edges

The following new Edges are available to those who meet the requirements.

## Background Edges

### Educated Abroad

**Requirements:** Novice

You spent your formative years attending schools all across Europe, or even further a-field. Your unusual and cosmopolitan childhood has given you a broad understanding of foreign cultures and customs, and you have picked up a smattering of many different languages.

You do not suffer the -2 outsider penalty to Charisma when in foreign climes that most characters have. You also know enough of the languages commonly spoken in Europe (and their empires) to get by as long as the conversation does not get too technical or nuanced.

### Faerie Fascination

**Requirements:** Novice

The faerie are quite taken with you. Your life is filled with the inexplicable and the bizarre, for faeries follow you, always unseen, and meddle in your life, and do you secret favors, and obey your thoughtlessly spoken wishes.

You gain an extra Bennie at the start of each session, which can be used to make changes to the plot, such as distracting sparkles of light, guards being temporarily struck blind or death, mundane—non iron—items suddenly springing into existence, even a limited weakening of structures. The use of

this Bennie is only limited by the player's imagination, and—of course—the GM's agreement.

### Old Boy's Network

**Requirements:** Novice

You attended one of the many British boarding schools, which dot the home counties. Although you have mixed memories about your time there, you have kept in touch with many of your old school chums, who have gone on to a surprisingly high number of important postings and jobs. Even if an old school friend cannot be found, you would be amazed at the result flashing the old school tie or quoting its Latin motto can have.

This edge operates much like the Connection Edge (see *Savage Worlds*), however it can only be used once per Rank per session, and is not tied into a single organization. One session it may be used to smooth things over with the someone high up in Whitehall, and the next session it might be used to procure some information and material from the consulate in a fly-bitten nation on the Dark Continent. If your character wants more focused links with a single organization, then take the Connections Edge instead.

### Street Urchin

**Requirements:** Novice

Your parents died when you were very young, leaving you destitute and alone. A sad series of circumstances forced you out onto the streets and it proved a crueler guardian than any Mr. Dickens imagined. Bitter experience has taught you how to endure pain and starvation. You can ignore the penalties of the first level of Fatigue.

## Combat Edges

### Blood and Thunder

**Requirements:** Veteran, Fighting or Shooting d10+

Your character has been in more than his share of battles where he fought for the crown. He has taken countless lives, and has seen many friends slain beside him. He has faced overwhelming odds, and lived to tell the tale.

The Hero halves the difference between tokens when making an attack roll in a Mass Battle if it is a negative (round down).

## Professional Edges

### Actor

**Requirements:** Novice, Smarts d8+, Persuasion d8+

All the world's a stage, they say, so it's only reasonable to say that mastering the stage makes you a master of the whole wide world as well! You're a famous figure, whether by limelight or by candle-labra.

You gain +2 Charisma, and also have the stagecraft and materials to be able to disguise yourself convincingly as a minion, guard or other "nobody" in order to infiltrate enemy organizations. You gain a +2 on Persuasion and Stealth rolls when disguised.

## Social Edges

### Reputation

**Requirements:** Veteran

As a result of his deeds (be they good or bad) the Hero has earned a reputation across the Empire.

He may add his Charisma to all Intimidation rolls. A Negative score is treated as positive for this purpose (and the Hero has a bad reputation).

## Weird Edges

### Exceptional Potential

**Requirements:** Novice; Wild Card

Some people are just brimming over with potential. You may increase one of your stats by one die type every time this Edge is taken. This Edge can only be taken once per Rank, and a stat cannot be increased beyond the natural limit for your race—In an superhero setting it can be assumed there is no limit most times.

### Stiff Upper Lip

**Requirements:** Novice, Guts d8+

Whether through an earlier brush with the more squamous end of the occult, or an unshakable belief that an Englishman must never show fear, you are able to ignore up to 2 negative modifiers on a Guts Roll, as well as the corresponding modifiers on the Fear Effects Table.

## Unflappable

**Requirements:** Heroic, Stiff Upper Lip

The character now ignores all penalties on Guts rolls and rolls on the Fear Effects Table.

# Setting Rules

The following setting rules apply to the average *Kerberos Club* campaign.

## Environmental Options

Most campaigns are considered to be Baseline campaigns, however as the century progresses and things get really Strange, the environment option can change to Cosmic as those start touched by the Strange are able to really distort or ignore the rules of reality.

## Genre Conventions

**Inherent Power:** All player characters start the game with the Arcane Background (Super Powers) Edge for free.

**Natural Growth:** The GM also gives the Power Points Edge for free each time the characters achieve a new Rank. This means that character gain the Power Points Edge for free at Novice rank as well.

## Knockback

The concept of super-powerful blows and blasts knocking characters all over the battlefield is a staple of the comic book genre. A successful hit by a character with a Strength of d12 or greater causes the foe to fly backwards 1d4", plus an additional 1d4" per raise on the attack roll. Of course, only kinetic damage causes knockback—poison gas, choking mist, and the like do not.

Add +1d6 to the total damage if the victim hits a substantial object, such as a wall or tree. This must be worked out during the damage roll—before the knockback occurs conceptually. This may seem a bit awkward at first, but is much better than rolling damage a second time.

## Unarmed Defenders

The Unarmed Defender rule is inappropriate for a *Kerberos Club* campaign and is ignored for Wild Cards. It applies normally to Extras.

## Super Karma

Super-powered characters are larger than life, with faults and responsibilities as great as their miraculous powers. With Super Karma, supers may take an additional Major Hindrance during character creation to grant them an extra 5 Power Points.

# New Power Modifiers

These modifiers are included in addition to the ones already found in the *Savage Worlds Super Powers Companion*.

**Catastrophic Misfire (-4):** This modifier can only be applied to devices. If the user rolls snake eyes—a natural one on both his Skill and Wild Die dice—the device explodes causing 1d6 damage, plus an extra d6 for every five points (or part thereof) that the device originally cost in Power Points to create.

**Erratic (-1):** The power always does something. If the skill roll for the power results in a failure, the GM gets to describe the effects, based on the power and the circumstances. He should be expected to come up with something which will make life complicated or interesting for the character and her colleagues.

**Disruptable (-2):** This modifier can only be applied to powers, which have a non-specific duration length, such as chameleon, flight, or invisibility. A character who suffers damage must make a Smarts roll versus the damage rolled. Failure means his power fails. If the Hero is Shaken by non damaging means (such as Test of Wills) then he must make a simple Smarts roll to maintain his power.

**Light Weapon (-1):** An attack that normally counts as a heavy weapon counts as a normal weapon instead.

**Limited Shots (variable):** Your power can be used a limited number of times before you must spend an action reloading its clip, magazine, bullets or battery. The value of this modifier depends on the number of times it can be used before

reloading: At 18 shots it's -1; 6 shots it's -2; at 1 shot it's -3. Each reload weighs three pounds if it holds 18 shots or one pounds if it holds six shots.

**Massive (-2):** This modifier can only be applied to devices. It's a large, massive thing, too heavy and bulky to be carried around. Even moving it requires a stout carriage or chassis drawn by a Strength of d12—typically a team of laborers, a horse or mule.

**Misfire (-1):** This modifier can only be applied to devices. If the user rolls snake eyes—a natural one on both his Skill and Wild Die dice—the device fails to function. The device must be cleaned, taking 1 minute (10 combat rounds), before it can be re-used.

**Manufacturable (x2):** This modifier can only be applied to devices. Once the device has been created, and its blueprints get out into the world, anyone with the right skills and resources can recreate it. The Manufacturable modifier is available only in the Middle or Late eras of the Kerberos Club setting, not in the Early era when Strange creations are much more rare.

This modifier is applied to the device only after the modification for device (i.e., after all other modifiers).

The total Power Point cost for the finished device determines both the manufacturing cost and the time taken to put the device into production. The device takes half its Power Point cost in weeks to manufacture, at a cost of £1 per week in parts and labor. Its market value is double that.

For example, a Manufacturable device that costs 12 Power Points takes six weeks and costs £6 to manufacture, and has a market value of £12.

A device without the Manufacturable modifier doesn't have a standard market price because it's a unique creation. A good rule of thumb would be £10 per Power Point, but it might be £20 to £50 per Power Point depending on the reputation of the inventor, the scope of its usefulness and impact, and how well it will enhance the reputation of the owner.

**Negate (-1/-2):** This modifier can only be applied to powers that have an extended duration, such as



armor, flight, shapechange, or super skill. Something relatively common, such as the close proximity of a metal, totally negates the power causing it to switch off, and the character to be automatically Shaken. The power can be restarted as an action once the character has recovered.

Common materials or actions, such as silver, or sunlight bestow a  $-2$  modifier. Less common materials, such as rare intergalactic meteorites, only bestow a  $-1$  modifier.

**Smaller ( $-1/\text{level}$ ):** This modification reduces the area effect radius of the power by one step per level. If this reduces the power's effect below the Small Burst Template Then the power can only effect one target.

## New Powers

This power is included in addition to the ones already found in the *Savage Worlds Super Powers Companion*.

## Omni Super Skill (2/Level)

**Trappings:** Natural genius, software programs, intensive training, nanites.

Whereas *super skill* grants you the ability to permanently increase specific skills, *omni super skill* gives you a pool of points which can be assigned as and when the Hero needs. Characters with this power are often viewed by the public as supra geniuses skilled at everything.

The Hero has 1 skill point for every level, creating a pool of points which he can assign as needed.

As an action, the Hero can make a Spirit roll. With a success, the Hero can divide the points between up to two skills. Each raise adds a skill.

Each point spent increases

the chosen skill by one step. Previously unknown skills can be temporarily assigned a d4. The increase lasts until the Hero uses *omni super skill* again.

Unlike normal skill advancement, it doesn't matter if the super skill is greater than the linked attribute or not (although it still matters if you use regular advancements to increase the skill's natural rating).

*Example:* Lady Mirabel, with 7 levels in *omni super skill*, rolls an 11 on her Spirit die—a success and one raise. She may divide her seven Omni Super Skill points between up to three different skills.

## Faerie: Wonder and Horror

The faerie race is one of infinite diversity of mind and body. Most are hardly more than beasts or specters of people. But some raise the level of sapience to rival or even exceed humanity. Regardless of their form or mind, all creatures of Faerie are bound by the three Laws.

**The Law of Oath:** A faerie's identity is shaped less by its birth and experiences than by who it imagines itself to be. Oaths, things a faerie has sworn as true, are to it as real as gravity, air and kinetic energy to a mortal. Oaths are binding forces in a faerie's life, and rather than see them as restrictions or limitations, faerie tend to view them as the cornerstones of who they are. Oaths of loyalty, of vengeance, of service, or faith (if one can extract by trick or true-dealing such an oath), are as binding as natural science upon the faerie's essential nature.

To break such a vow is not just disheartening, it actually reduces the faerie in some major way. It is the Law of the Oath. The encyclopedic knowledge of past

oaths forms the firmament of faerie society and law, which learned barristers employ when trying cases before Flower Courts or assisting a client in dealing directly with the capricious things.

**The Law of Form:** Oaths shape a faerie's personality, but form defines its physicality. The Law of Form dictates that if a faerie is to assume material form, then it is bound by the limitations of that form. Their flesh bleeds, their stomachs hunger. Though many can assume a menagerie of forms, some wholly fantastic, all must on some basic level be able to sustain life, lest the unwise faerie adopt a form which kills it. Much of a faerie's true nature might be cloaked in glamour and illusion, but the essential form which allows it to interact with the real world is a living thing, and is as vulnerable as any other.

**The Law of Self:** A faerie's whole existence hinges on its sense of self, who it imagines itself to be and who others believe it to be. Faerie have almost no inner life, no secret subconscious. They are all surface. What you see is what you get. Because of this, when a faerie suffers a blow to its identity, its beliefs, then it is reduced and weakened, actually injured. This can even cause such a grievous injury that it simply evaporates back into whatever weird stuff the faerie are made of, lost motes upon the breeze. Of course, that works both ways. On some occasions a faerie can evolve or change dramatically when it undergoes some great inner transformation, with its Stats, Skills and Powers changing by a great expenditure of willpower. In this way it's possible—but rare, very rare—for a Common Faerie that has had its strangest beliefs to be validated to become a Faerie Beast or even a Peer (see page 243).



# Magic: Forbidden Lore and Hidden Secrets

Magical traditions are many and varied, but all demand one thing from those who find true powers amid the dross and lies and fantasies: dedication. To gain true sorcerous insight, one must put magic before all other things. One must shed attachments, abandon preconceptions, betray trusts, deny duties, and alienate loves. For the Magus, the Art is All. So long as a Magus maintains other attachments, his power is never what it might be, never absolute. Total dedication to magic often places one beyond the realms of sanity and society. The concerns of ordinary people are as the buzzing of flies.

So have the kings of old and new realized. When a Magus seeks to serve you, he does so in order to

increase his powers. When he has done so, he serves none but Magic. Magi make poor kings, priests, fathers, soldiers, scholars. In the end, they care nothing for human stations. They care only for the higher and lower realities open to their occult perception.

## The Sacred and the Profane

There are two orders of magic at work in the world of the Kerberos Club: the Sacred and the Profane. Sacred magic is slow, ritualized, and extremely powerful. It taps ancient forces, sleeping gods, and weirder, more alien things, and the results are astonishing, or so subtle and pervasive as to escape common notice. Sacred magic is more akin to the invent power (see the *Super Powers Companion*), as there's always a token or talisman which contains the force of the magical Work.

By contrast, Profane magic is incredibly fast, but the effects are temporary and short-lived. It works like the super sorcery Power (see the *Super Powers*

*Companion*). A profane adept can throw cheap miracles to the rabble, but could never craft a perfect cosmological instrument for slowing time across a city, or extract the heart of a lover and place it inside a suit of animate and invulnerable superhuman armor. Each Magus must take a Vow Hindrance representing his or her dedication to magic.

Sacred and Profane Magi rarely see eye-to-eye on matters arcane.

Here are a number of example vows.

- Light a votive candle of rendered human fat before the spell is cast (Sacred).
- Seek to twist and mutilate the accepted social mores at every opportunity (Profane).
- Channel your sorcerous power through the Arcane Engine which traps all the souls of your ancestors (Sacred).
- Avoid all examples of one of the natural elements as it interrupts your connection to the arcane energies (Profane).
- You must wear, and carry the vestments of your god to be able to cast spells in his name (Sacred).
- Always refer to yourself in the third person as a reminder of your insignificance in the grand scheme of the universe (Profane).

## The Miracle Market

*Strange* gadgets—usually called Wonders, from “Wonder of the Modern Age!”—become increasingly common as Victoria’s Century progresses. Faerie trinkets are imported from the goblin factories of New Birmingham, and technological wonders like the Electrophorous Firing Piece appear in London pawn shops.

Unfortunately, mass-market miracles tend to have side effects. The more powerful the invention, the worse the risks. That, and more especially their

expense, is why relatively few of them revolutionize Victorian life. But that’s nothing to the thrill of holding the Power of the Strange in your very hand!

A player character can seek out a Strange device to suit his or her needs no more often than once per game session.

Finding the device requires a Streetwise roll (if you’re combing the streets and shops), an Investigation roll (if you’re combing newspapers and magazines for advertisements by inventors), a Persuasion roll (if you’re talking to well-placed contacts in Society), or a Knowledge (the Strange) roll (if you’re talking to fellow enthusiasts of Strange inventions).

The difficulty of the roll depends on the era of play. In the Early era, it’s at -4. In the Middle era it’s at -2. In the Late era there’s no penalty.

To gain a bonus, if you make a Knowledge (Kerberos Club) roll you can offer a particularly Kerberan sort of favor to your contact in return for the help. If the roll succeeds you gain +2 with the roll to find the device you want.

The amount of time it will take to track the device down depends on the era. Early era: Three weeks, or two with a raise on your roll to locate it. Middle era: Three days, or two with a raise. Late era: 30 minutes, or 20 with a raise. During this time, pursuit of the device is the character’s primary occupation. He or she can’t spend a great deal of time on other things.

A player character can have no more than one market-bought wonder at a time. They are twitchy, unpredictable things and require a good deal of tuning and care.

## Mass-Produced Wonders

You can (with the right rolls) find any power at all on the miracle market. The GM may want to draw up the device’s abilities, but it’s entirely reasonable for the players to come up with the exact powers that

they want in a street-bought wonder. The device's flaws are always up to the GM. And players, be warned: Mass-produced wonders have a lot of flaws. These are mass-produced devices, after all, kludged together in such numbers that they make it to the streets of London.

The power must have the Device modifier and the Manufacturable modifier (page 208).

Unless the GM says otherwise, it can cost no more than four Power Points in the Early era, six Power Points in the middle era, or ten in the late era. If it's a power that ordinarily costs more than that, it must have modifiers to bring its cost down. (Mass-produced weapons are a common exception to this rule.)

The device costs £1 per Power Point unless the GM says otherwise.

*Example:* It's the Middle era. Stony Joe Smithson very much wants to be able to become invisible at a society function that he's been pressured into attending in a few days. He succeeds at a Streetwise roll, spending three days chasing down rumors of a new shop of wonders that's opened in Whitechapel. But what sort of device is it? The GM has in mind a sort of hat of an unidentified metal, small enough to fit under a bowler or top hat, with pistons built in that take in the aether and alter its effects on light. Invisibility normally costs 5 Points, or 8 as a Device (-1) that's Manufacturable (x2). Since it's the Middle era, the most it can cost is 6 Power Points. The GM decides that the device has the Negate modifier, worth -2 for a common substance or circumstance that negates the power; perhaps the seller gives Joe a mild warning to steer clear of otherworldly or otherwise Strange exhalations or energies while using it. Since there will *surely* not be anything Strange at a soirée where Kerberans are invited, that should be no problem. That brings the total Power Point cost to 4. Perfect. Joe pays £4 and has his invisibility cap.

# Running the Game

It is the great goal of this book to provide you, the GM, with enough material and inspiration to run a truly fun and memorable Kerberos Club game. This section offers some techniques and advice for leveraging the setting and its themes into play, and on taking full advantage of all the hooks and hints your players give you when building their characters. Go bravely and let thy GM screen be thy armor.

## Theme In Motion: The Unstoppable Express Train of Drama

Theme can sometimes be airy and vague, and tends to get lost after a few sessions of romping good adventures and wild happenings. But keeping your themes present in your campaign can provide some backbone, and possibly add an extra dimension in which to enjoy the thing.

Applied thematics is good GM kung-fu regardless of the game, but in *The Kerberos Club*, where much of the action can easily be player-driven rather than GM-driven, theme can be your man behind the curtains—even if the game is entirely satisfactory when played out before the giant floating green head with all the special effects.

What is your game *about*? Themes evolve and change, and new ones arise. If you find you aren't happy with your themes, there's no reason you can't change them. To get you thinking about it, here are core themes that the setting itself is built around. Use these if they fascinate you—but regardless, zero in on the themes that do.

## The Burden of Choice

Perhaps the theme with the greatest direct application to play is that of *choice* and *consequences*. The world of the Kerberos Club is morally very gray. People do horrible things for the right reasons, and noble things for grossly selfish reasons. The true motivations behind actions are often obscure—and many of the actors sharing a stage with the player characters are deeply cynical manipulators whose idealism is deader than a Christmas Goose on New Year's Eve.

As members of the Kerberos Club and beings of singular influence, the player characters should be faced with difficult choices every time they act in a meaningful way. They are powerful, and the consequences of their choices are powerful. Worse, times are uncertain. It is a complex world, where one decision can have rippling unforeseen consequences, *especially* for people as powerful as the player characters. They stand among the tiny fraction of exceptional individuals who transcend the ordinary rules and restrictions of their society, who can even transcend the laws of nature itself. Some Kerberans can kill with a thought, remake matter, unleash cosmic destruction, or cure a sick world of its ills.

*What the player characters do is always significant.* Remember this. Get it tattooed on your arm. The PC's might not be the most objectively powerful beings in the setting (there certainly are others with greater point totals) but they are the most important people in the setting. They are the *reason* you purchased this book and are reading these words. So it holds that what they do and decide must matter. It must influence the way the setting unfolds in your game.

Keep track of incidental choices the players make which promise interesting consequences down the road—especially if you can connect the choice to an NPC with a name and persona who might show up later to highlight the earlier choice. For example,



let's say during one adventure a player decides his character will reveal the terrible majesty of his character's divine avatar. Later on, a confrontation with rogue cultists seeking to sacrifice in his name might be an interesting direction to take things.

This hits the second big point: *Do not punish decisions*. This assumes you play with a group of friends, and that nobody is deliberately trying to be disruptive. But here's the thing: Even if a player makes a decision which you think is wrong or in poor judgment, it isn't your job as GM to punish the player or make him or her regret it. Punishing choices only leads to passive players who won't take dramatic, decisive, folly-rich actions. Rather, make consequences *interesting*. Use them to add complexity and energy to your game.

Characters in the Kerberos Club are creatures of singular passion. They can be expected to make sub-optimal decisions. It should be encouraged. Doing mad, bad, dangerous, wild, and ill-advised things which shake the Empire in its knees is *exactly* what Strangers do.

Characters in the Kerberos Club should not always do the safe thing. The Safe Thing is best left in the dungeon beside the 10-foot pole and the bundle of torches.

## Breakneck Change and Bleeding Edges

The setting of *The Kerberos Club* is escalating. The weirdness is getting more overt and the scope more broad. In 1830, the Club suppresses the Strange, and keeps things under wraps. By the 1890s, the Strange walks the streets, flies in the skies, and elopes with your daughter. The century was a period of astonishing change in our own world. It remade the whole world from something starkly alien to the modern sensibility into something we can easily

comprehend. One of the fascinations of Victoriana in general is how exotic and quaint and formal it all seems, yet how familiar it is as well.

Now, imagine the Industrial Revolution if it were coupled with a consumer boom allowed by cheap faerie labor, and imagine the economic consequences when human workers were made redundant, where freak-science allowed mass aviation and air travel sixty years early. The populace can't keep up. The Coming Thing is so quickly replaced by the Next Thing that many live in a constant state of future shock, and find themselves profoundly alienated from their world. Some, such as the Oxford Movement, retreat into the past. Some retreat to family and close friends. For the poor, the only change is how noticeably *worse* their living conditions become. And for the ever-grasping middle classes, the tide of new things to buy, new fashions to keep, and new thoughts to think is overwhelming.

In your games, keep an eye on the calendar and on the setting's timeline. Don't feel bound to stick with it (especially if setting-altering choices are made by the players!), but find ways to work the passage of time and the movement of events into your game. Sometimes the players will be directly confronted by these elements; sometimes they will be wonderful red herrings to complicate your stories; and other times they will be little pearls strewn among the setting details that make things breathe.

Games set early in the century can even focus on *repressing* these changes. Look further down the timeline, and then use future events as a guide for creating adventures. The conceit here would be something akin to the characters preventing (and keeping secret) an Atlantean invasion in 1834, only to have it happen in 1867 instead.

## Society: 1; The Individual: 0

The Kerberos Club exists in the setting in part as a hack, a way for characters of radically different backgrounds, classes, and abilities to come together into a comfortable group. But outside the safe harbor of the Club, the social seas are stormy. Social position is terribly important, something for even a Kerberan rogue to keep in mind. No matter how comfortable life is inside the Club, there will come a time when one must venture out into the world and deal with the hoi polloi in a meaningful way. Being a nine-foot reptile man with burning red eyes and flesh-rending talons is grand when facing down the occult minions of the Britannica Subrosa, but when searching out the parents of a lost child it can cause problems. And compared to the constant social stigma borne by the fallen woman, the reptile man has it good.

The Club gives modern players a way to acknowledge their modern ideals, but the larger setting provides dramatic contrast to this nest of freedom. Despite the weird turns the world takes as the century progresses, it lags dramatically in social progress. The Strangeness causes many in their fear and shock to cleave even more tightly to their prejudices, misconceptions and social restraints.

It can become boring and repetitive if done too often, but don't forget to occasionally confront your players with the social realities of the setting. A rude shopkeeper refuses to serve the dark-complected; a butler refuses to acknowledge her Ladyship is home—for these sorts of people anyway; a police inspector condescends to a woman asking difficult questions.

And here's the thing: The players don't have to put up with it.

Player characters in *The Kerberos Club* have power, and they've had a taste of a pretty egalitarian society. They can make rude shopkeepers crawl before them, they can impose their will upon the butlers and

receive a warm invitation. They can toss the police inspector into the Thames and examine the crime scene for themselves.

Or course, *choosing* to do so might have repercussions. See above for how to squeeze these for all they're worth.

## GM's Tools

Or, “Tricks, Tecniques, and the Shameless Exploitation of Human Weakness.”

## Start With Assumptions

Character creation in *The Kerberos Club* is best handled as a fairly open process, with the players collaborating to create characters with intermeshed histories before the game even begins. A good rule of thumb is to have no more than one “new guy” in a group, only a single character who is new to the association or friendship. This character can serve the same function in the game as similar characters serve in literature and film, to provide a window into the unfamiliar setting.

Beginning the game with the assumption that everyone is already on good terms means you don't have to do meet-and-greet encounters in the game itself, and you already have some relationships established among the characters. These first meetings can be great fun to play through, perhaps in flashback, but by starting with the group already established you make this something you *can* do rather than something you *must* do.

The collaborative nature of this process gets the players thinking like a circle of particular friends, and into the Kerberan mode of asking for favors rather than issuing orders. A group of Kerberans

is different from many other types of roleplaying character groups. They spend time together and adventure together because they like and respect each other. There is no authority, mission, or necessity that they work together, just their friendship. Even a brooding loner orphan with a dark mysterious past and a Japanese sword under his coat has to bring something to the group. There has to be a reason the others would associate with him. Seeing that this gets established before things even begins will pay off enormously in play.

## Encourage Ambition

If your players create strongly motivated characters, then it seems logical that they would be driven to pursue their own active agendas rather than simply react to events as you describe them. Many games operate under the assumption that the players adopt a somewhat passive posture as they wait for the GM to present them with situations, encounters, and challenges. Some more recent games take the opposite stance, putting the GM in the reactive role and giving the power to drive play and create situations entirely to the players.

In *The Kerberos Club*, a collaborative middle ground between these two styles will serve best, alternating and interweaving player-driven plot threads with those created by the GM. The nature of the Club itself is a tool for organizing play and introducing excuses to action, adventures, missions, investigations. But the real trick for the GM is to key these external stories and events off player character traits and interests, and answers to the Questions. The more driven and self-motivated the players are, the easier it will be to weave external plotlines into their goals.

In this pursuit, the timeline found in Chapter 3 should not be taken as writ. Pick your starting point and then assume all the events beyond that

point are optional, suggestions more than fixed history. Because players are to be encouraged to take things and run with them (and you as GM are encouraged to complicate the hell out of things), it is entirely possible that history as it is written will be completely transformed if their ambitions operate on scales grand enough. Don't worry about breaking the setting. It's going to break itself eventually, as things spiral out of control. By the end of Victoria's Century, giant robots wading across the Channel to fight hideous French bat-monsters wouldn't be out of place.

## Small Stories

The counter-point to grand, sweeping, history-wonking adventure is the little moments, the small stories, the minor episodes. It can't be savage adventure against impossible odds to save Queen and Country every week. Sometimes you have to relax, sit back, and do something different. A small story is one on a very immediate scale, just the PCs and a handful of NPCs. The stakes are very personal. The fate of Nations is not at hand, but the fate of one man or woman might be.

Looking into a little matter for a friend, associate, or other Kerberan often leads to a small story. These intimate episodes frequently benefit from a change of scene, as well: a trip to Brighton or out into the country. Restricted surroundings also work well: a passenger train in motion, or a snowed-in Scottish hunting lodge. Small stories allow you to focus tight on a single belief or relationship. When resolved effectively, they allow you to make some kind of shocking revelation with broader implications.

On a steamer bound for Italy, the characters are asked to defend a friend against an accusation of cheating at cards. They meet and interact with the odd and unusual passengers, puzzling out the

complex web of relationships, and finally reach the climax, where they must make a choice of some sort. Who among the gamblers will they reveal to be the real cheat, when all were cheating in their own ways? Whose reputations will they ruin? And what will be revealed about them by their choices?

Small stories allow you to make human concerns paramount: to put a face to larger social ills and inequities. Nothing of any consequence is at stake. The Empire will continue on just fine. But with a well-crafted hook to intrigue your players, small stories serve as excellent contrast to the world-shattering and the epic.

The advanced version of a small story is one which runs parallel to the main action of your game, perhaps even using a second set of characters generated for just the single-session length of the story. Create ordinary mortals (or those with some small measure of extraordinary ability, only 10 points to spend on super powers, say), and begin their story with the usual player characters dashing off to their next big adventure.

For this session and this small story, the players run ordinary people caught in the wake of the extraordinary adventuring Kerberos Club. These shadow stories can allow you to explore the social structures and themes of the setting without the safe harbor of the Club to protect modern sensibilities from the truly awful inequities of the times. They can also illuminate the Club from the perspective of those who must suffer the consequences of a Kerberos's interesting life.

## From Out of the Past

All those edges and hindrances which your players are so proud of? Those are like trays of delicious plot-sushi waiting to be served. If you're ever stuck for a twist, B-plot, or improv session, look at the PCs' edges and hindrances, especially background, professional and social edges, and have their pasts come back to haunt them—as literally as you like.

A world-famous adventurer finds an old Andean comrade dying on her doorstep, an obsidian jaguar figurine clutched in his hand. An old army physician is called to consult on a patient with an impossible disease, one he hasn't seen since his service in Afghanistan. An assassin catches a glimpse in the street of a man who could not possibly be there, a man who died on her blade ten years ago in Cairo.

By creating unique interesting skills and backgrounds, your players are saying loudly that these things are important to their character concepts. So important that they spent precious points to make them mechanically useful. They're telling you, "use this in the game."

Don't be shy about doing so.



# Chapter 6

## Dramatis Personae

Here are six pre-generated members of the Kerberos Club created with the methods described in Chapter 5 for the starting point total of 250 points. These characters are ready to play, and can be used as needed. A host of NPCs follow.

Those whose names bear the **crest of the Kerberos Club** are Wild Cards (although many are not Kerberans).



### Maeve O' Connel (20 exp)

*The Queen of the Mudlarks; the Damnable Child*

Maeve is the eternal child. She's been nine years old for over a century, growing in experience, cynicism, knowledge and skill, but still on some level a child. She is small, pale, and sports a huge, often tangled mass of curly hair of a dramatic red shade. Her hair is catching, defies hairpins and bonnets, and inexorably and continuously attracts the fascination of the faerie. They lurk about her like an invisible cloud, reveling in her adventures and getting her into trouble, as well as obeying her wishes (intended or not). When Maeve drops the mask of carefree childishness, her true personality is terrifying: old, angry, tired, cunning, and suspicious. In the Kerberos Club she has found a place she can be herself, people who

treat her as an equal, and challenges worthy of her talents. In company she trusts not to judge her she smokes, drinks and curses like a soldier.

**POV:** It would anger you how the English seem to hate the Irish, except you long ago left the home island because you'd grown to hate them yourself. You've been a child for a century, ever since the faerie decided that they like you. Your parents are long dead. Your sister and brother, too. In the Famine your village itself died. But you were long gone by then. You traveled the Continent, you saw every evil that adults could perpetrate on their offspring, and in the end you returned to England, to London where a lone child wasn't such a Strange sight, and here you carved out your little empire among the street Arabs, mudlarks, sweeps and thieves. You lead them, protect them, organize them. You are their secret queen, their hidden general. You've watched a generation of them grow older, die young, or get thrown into Newgate. Yet you remain as you are, always and forever. So long as the Fair Ones follow.

**Appearance:** A thin child with pale, freckled skin and a mass of untameable red hair. Usually dressed as a street urchin to better blend into the city and her chosen people—but with so many paying her tribute for her leadership and protection, she lives much better when in her own private quarters. To those with the eyes to see, the world around Maeve crawls with the faerie: weird spirit animals, imps, brownies, sprites, fetches. All will leap instantly to her defense, sometimes preempting her wishes.



## The Questions

**Humble Beginnings:** Maeve is a child from a tiny Irish village, and her origins could hardly be more humble.

**Follies of Youth:** Maeve scarcely had time in her short mortal life for much folly; or rather, to gain enough wisdom to contrast against the constant foolishness. Her greatest folly was also her awakening.

**First Awakenings:** Angry with her little brother, Maeve called upon the local faerie to spirit him away. Then, to get her brother back, she agreed to nursemaid the Hawthorn Baby. Then the Hawthorn Baby was exchanged in the night for her newborn baby sister. Then one entanglement led to another and another, until finally it saw her driven from the village.

**Mysterious Origins:** Maeve is fascinating to the faerie. They watch her, help her, grant her wishes,

and revel in her adventures. They also conspire to make her life more interesting, to get her into amusing trouble. The faerie keep her the same age as when they first took a liking to her.

**Great Failing:** Maeve's temper and the willingness of her faerie entourage to act on her wishes are a dangerous combination. She curses first and contends with the consequences later. When an MP on his way to the Palace of Westminster to attend Parliament had his footmen put the boot in to Maeve and the small band of beggars she was leading at the time, she cursed him under her breath, and wished him burned out of home and livelihood. Her faerie friends heard and pursued the MP, burning both the Palace of Westminster and his fashionable West End home. They lit the fire in Parliament with piles of tally sticks from old votes. They burned his home with wads of banknotes taken from his personal strongbox.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidate d4, Knowledge (Kerberos Club) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs, Clueless, Illiterate, Young

**Edges:** Connections (Street Urchins), Faerie Fascination, Super Powers, Power Points (x3).

#### Super Powers:

*Ageless (1):* (Unearthly)

*Attack, Ranged (6):* (12/24/48, 2d6), Area Attack, Erratic (Faerie Swarm)

*Deflection (5):* Level 6 Erratic (Faerie protectors).

*Minions (10):* Five Minions, each with *attack*, *melee* (Str+d6) and *armor*, *powers* (3 points chest only), Erratic, Summonable (Faerie minions)

*Telekinesis (3):* Level 2, Erratic.

## Playing Maeve

Maeve's demeanor changes with her company. Among clueless mortals, she plays the simpering lost child with shameless cynicism. With her urchins, she's protective and imperious. With her equals, she doesn't hide her foul temper, fouler mouth, and acerbic wit. She's also subject to bouts of truly astonishing fury, where she screams blasphemies which would surely have seen her burned at the stake in centuries past. When she's acting without pretense, her demeanor is tired. She's traveled the world and seen it change and become Strange, yet she remains the same. When in trusting company, she drinks to excess to find some solace. If she were a child in the modern world, she would likely be heavily medicated.

Mechanically, Maeve's powers are extremely potent, but also extremely difficult to direct with fine control. All her powers derive from her entourage of invisible faerie creatures. When she orders them to

move an object, it seems to float and hover, but if one can perceive the faeries it is clearly carried by them. Tiny and sprightly though they may be, a suitably large swarm of them can hoist as much as three tons and toss it about. If Maeve orders her friends to attack, they do so with gleeful viciousness. Worse, once the faeries start the attack, they keep attacking for the rest of the scene or until Maeve calls them off (This is a good use of the Erratic modifier). They continue to use the same roll to attack as the one which set them off, swarming the victim like giggling killer bees. They also defend Maeve, and once they've begun to do so, continue until ordered otherwise.

If Maeve needs errands run or someone castigated, she can order her faeries to assume material form and march to her orders. With a successful roll she can call up to 8 minions, and equip them thorn swords and leather and bark armor.

All of Maeve's powers have a significant drawback: They're Erratic. Every set rolled when employing her powers does something... something weird, random or complicating.

## Villain Options

It is easy to imagine how Maeve's experiences might have driven her mad or, possibly worse, pushed her cynicism into pure misanthropy, her tiny body filled to bursting with hate for all of humanity. Maeve has seen the things men do to one another, and worse, the things they do to their children. Would the world not be in better hands if everyone older than 10 were simply exterminated, and the Empire of the Babe rose up in its place? Who needs parents or guardians or laws when the faerie are there, willing to watch over the children and give them all the candy and dollies and music they want? So Maeve lurks in the cracks of society, gathering her army, and preparing for the Children's Crusade.



# Dr. Archibald Monroe (20 exp)

*Doctor Simian; The Incredible Speaking Ape; "Sir" Archibald*

Dr. Monroe is a man who glories in his Strangeness. Once he was merely a brilliant but unremarkable consulting physician and amateur scientist. Inspired by the words of Charles Darwin, he concocted a drug which he hoped would reveal to him the germ-cell memories of his direct-line ancestors, and allow him to scientifically verify Mr. Darwin's theories. Instead, his formula remade him in the image of such an ancestor. Bombastic and verbose before his transformation, he became even more gregarious and outgoing. Today his charm sometimes even makes people forget that he has been remade by Strange science, becoming a 180-pound ape creature.

**POV:** A Wonder of the Age! That's what the *Strand* called you. Of course, the *Gazette* named you one of the "abominations tainting our old London." But those fools can choke on their reservations, because you have seen the Future and it is *you*.

*Science* is unlocking the secrets of the universe. Mr. Franklin inspired you, and Dr. Darwin encouraged you, and your studies of the workings of the human body, of natural science and of the modern alchemy of formulation, changed you. You have unlocked the secrets of life, but have only just begun to translate them. Rather than discourage you, the vast realms of knowledge you have yet to encompass inspire you to greater energy. You cherish the vast seas of your ignorance, for nothing is grander than seeing it recede and finding the shells of wisdom on its shores.

**Appearance:** Archibald resembles a large chimpanzee: hunched, covered in coarse brown fur,

with heavy hands and semiprehensile feet. He's a gentlemen, however, and shaves his face save for his bushy side whiskers. His head hair is always trimmed, oiled and combed back, and his clothing, made special for him by Brighton & Sons of Pall Mall, is of excellent cut and material. He is especially fond of waistcoats in iridescent colors, which "speak to me of the birds of paradise, as my kin might see in the trees about them." His appearance is unavoidably comical, and he acknowledges it, finding humor an excellent way of disarming people and distracting them from the fact that his simian body is powerful enough to crush a man to jelly with one arm.

## The Questions

**Humble Beginnings:** Dr. Monroe was born in Suffolk, the son of a senior clerk, educated at Rugby School and then attendant on lectures at Guy's Hospital in London from such luminaries as Sir William Gull. After entering into private consulting practice he found himself all at sea, and the work of treating London's ill did not engage his mind. Finally, boredom drove him to seek greater scientific knowledge.

**Follies of Youth:** Monroe indulged in the usual foolishness one could expect from a schoolboy and then a young man of independent means living alone for the first time in London. He eventually became involved in the general scientific conversation going on all the time, and even collaborated with Sir Richard Owen on a minor paper on the comparative anatomy of mammalian digits, for which Owen denied him proper credit, leading to a public confrontation and harsh words which would set him at odds with Owen's faction of conservative elitist scientists.

**First Awakenings:** Monroe first realized something was Strange when his experiments in chemistry began to return *exactly* the results he

was attempting, yet his results remained impossible for other scientists to reproduce. In some way, his Willpower was forcing the physical processes to conform to his expectations.

**Mysterious Origins:** Monroe continued his experiments until the fateful day when his indulgence in the common adventure of self-experimentation wrought permanent and dramatic changes. In an effort to prove Darwin's theories, and to silence the man's critics (and Monroe's enemies), the young physician dissolved four grams of powder in a glass of port and drank it down. When the convulsions and pain were over, he was remade, bestial in form but not in mind.

**Great Failing:** In order to fund his studies, the young and newly-transformed Dr. Monroe formulated three drugs for a poorly-disguised agent of Special Branch. The first drug elicited truthful responses from a subject; the second robbed the subject of his will to resist or escape; and the third, most shamefully, destroyed the sanity of a subject completely. Regretting his collusion with Special Branch almost at once, Dr. Monroe was unable to prevent the stock of drugs he provided being used, though he swore to never resupply the secret police under any circumstances. He remains utterly shamed to think of his collaboration with the Kerberos Club's great enemy, though it preceded his membership by half a decade.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Apothecary d10, Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Kerberos Club) d6, Knowledge (Natural Science) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d10

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Distinctive Appearance, Curious, Loyal, Vow (Major—Protect Humanity)

**Edges:** Acrobat, Charismatic, Exceptional Potential (Strength), Jack-of-all-Trades, Super Powers, Power Points (x3).

**Super Powers:**

*Invent (12):* Level 6: Pills and potions only, so no need for Repair, and uses Apothecary skill rather than Engineering (Uncanny Apothecary).

*Super Attribute (8):* Agility +1 step, Smarts +3 step, Strength +2 steps, Vigor +2 steps (Super intelligent chimpanzee).

*Super Skills (5):* Apothecary +2 steps, Climbing +1 step, Knowledge (Natural Science) +1 step, Notice +2 steps, Persuasion +3 steps (Training).

## Playing Dr. Monroe

Archibald Monroe is verbose and passionate about science and has the charm and wit to make the subject fascinating. Where many Strangers afflicted with inhuman features hide in the shadows, Dr. Monroe seeks the spotlight at parties, interviews and public addresses. He's widely known and respected in the scientific community and in the halls of society, and if he gets so many invitations only because he brings something of the circus to the drawing room, then so be it. He'll accept an invitation even if made in poor faith, and he'll revel in the opportunity to inspire, socialize, and consume enormous quantities of very fine wine. In 1879 W.T. Stead of the Pall



Mall Gazette referred to Monroe as “Sir” Archibald as a nasty joke, but the good doctor received it with such grace and good humor that the nickname stuck throughout friendlier papers and magazines.

There is very little angst or darkness in Dr. Monroe. He truly and absolutely believes that science will transform humanity, curing all ills, bringing plenty and prosperity to all, exalting the scientist one day above any other authorities. Because of this he detests those who pervert science to bring harm or oppression. Dr. Monroe is a man whose mind is in the future while his body is in the primeval past.

His amazing drugs and formulations grant temporary Strange powers to those who use them, and his own natural abilities derived from his simian physique are extremely impressive and is strong enough to easily kill with his bare hands (a capacity he is loath to exhibit except in dire circumstances). He is also one of the most well-known figures in scientific and social circles in the United Kingdom, and certainly one of the most recognizable.

## Villain Options

To make Dr. Monroe a villain is as simple as removing his empathy and optimism. Rather than science exalting all men, it will raise up only the brilliant few who can master it. This version of Dr. Monroe imagines a world ruled by scientific elite, where religion, superstition, and faith are crimes and where only the cold mathematics of natural law apply. Yet while he seeks to bring the ascendancy of science (whether the world wants it or not), he remains inescapably bound to the distant primitive past by his greatest scientific blunder, the self-experimentation which transformed his body into that of a brutish ape thing.



# Lucas Moreland

## (20 exp)

### *The Great Detective*

The famed Lucas Moreland (author of *The Moreland Method* and *Reading the Criminal Physiognomy*), whose adventures have been serialized so famously in the *The Strand*, is among London's first citizens. He is a charming genius, always ready with a quip or a clever compliment. Widely regarded as the greatest private detective of the age, he has consulted for royalty, the emperors of industry, and celebrities of stage and the written word. Yet he has also aided the poorest and most desperate of London's citizens. He is a perfect example of all that is right about Britain, moral, intelligent, charitable and charming.

And a complete and total fraud.

**POV:** You can almost remember a time when you didn't despise humanity. Almost. But increasingly, your expanded awareness obscures the more innocent days when you were a different man under a different name, and when the thoughts of your fellow men were not revealed to you in perfect clarity. The mind of a priest is a cesspit of impure thoughts, desires, contradictions, and lies—imagine the mind of a costermonger, a twopenny prostitute, or God forbid a *politician*. When the minds of men were first opened to you, you reveled in the power it gave you, but now... now all you have is the fiction you have created for yourself, this Great Detective. Perhaps your associates in the Kerberos Club will offer you something new. Their thoughts certainly are more *interesting*.

**Appearance:** A tall, athletic gentlemen with a high forehead and aquiline nose which put some in mind of Lord Wellington. Immaculately dressed in somewhat severe formality, his only affection is a golden watch chain with a jeweler's loop. On an

investigation he sometimes minutely examines clues with the loop, nodding and pursing his lips.

## The Questions

**Humble Beginnings:** Lucas Moreland was born James Sims, illegitimate son of an Irish tinker and a Middlesex seamstress. His earliest memories are of hunger, and the ghostly absence of his mother from their tiny single room.

**Follies of Youth:** Lucas pursued an early career on the stage but failed as an actor, seemingly unable to ever find his character. As a petty criminal, black-mailer and housebreaker he found similarly limited success, and served a three-year term in prison for an attempted confidence trick.

**First Awakenings:** Upon his release from prison Lucas fell back in with his old cronies, and became involved in an ambitious scheme to burgle a manor house in Northern Wales which belonged to a recently-deceased eccentric. Acting as an auctioneer's assistant, Lucas scouted the property, and then helped his comrades break in by moonlight. While his associates looted the silver and plate Lucas wandered into the old man's study, and found within a pen-holder an egg-shaped diamond roughly the size of the end of his small finger. When held to the light, its flaws and inclusions resembled a staring eye. He was entranced so completely that he didn't hear the barking of dogs until the guards were nearly upon him, and he barely had time to swallow the gem before throwing himself out the window.

**Mysterious Origins:** The gem opened Lucas's mind, and suddenly the thoughts of men, dogs, and his fellow criminals were spread out there for him to see. Even dazed, he stumbled out, easily evading his pursuers by knowing their thoughts, and escaped back to London where he and his fellows reconciled their take. Lucas saw in the mind of one of them the

betrayal which had lead to the near capture: He'd peached on the gang. But how to prove it without revealing his power? Thus Lucas Moreland solved his first case, inventing "clues" to explain the knowledge read from the betrayer's thoughts. And he found he liked this improvisational acting. He could read expectations and meet them, say the right thing, and remake himself as The Great Detective—a persona marred only by the need every day or so for him to recover the gem from his excrement, wash it carefully, and swallow it again.

**Great Failing:** Certainly no moralist, the man who would become Lucas Moreland nevertheless had an ordinary horror of murder and death. When the body of Slim Jimmy, the member of his gang who had betrayed the rest, was found in the Thames, he realized the danger in his powers. He is haunted by memories of Slim Jimmy, for while the lad was nothing remarkable or worthy, Lucas knew him inside and out, better than a Mother, a lover, or even perhaps God himself, and felt his death like a blow.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Guts d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Kerberos Club) d6, Notice d12, Persuade d12+2, Shooting d12, Streetwise d8,

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Cautious, Gloater, Monologuer

**Edges:** Charismatic, Power Points (x3), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Awareness (2):* Device (Eye of Thoth)

*Mind Reading (2):* Device (Eye of Thoth)

*Super Edge (11):* Improved Block, Improved Dodge, Improved Level Headed; Device (Eye of Thoth)

*Super Skill (10):* Fighting +2 steps, Shooting +3 steps, Notice +2 steps, Persuade +4 steps; Device (Eye of Thoth)



## Playing the Great Detective

When “investigating,” Lucas Moreland reads the minds of everyone involved, figures out what happened and who is lying, and then uses his acting skills and knowledge of police procedure and detective fiction to invent clues to explain how he knows what he knows.

Lucas Moreland is right on the edge of a bad fall. His humanity teeters, and if it tumbles he’ll become a monster. He’s seen too much, read too many thoughts, and knows too many awful and tawdry secrets. He’s trying to find a reason to keep up the pretense of being an ordinary man. If he had the strength of character, he’d throw the Eye of Thoth into the sea—but in his heart he knows he’s utterly addicted to the power it gives him, even if the power brings him no joy. Perhaps with the Kerberos Club he’ll find some purpose. And, deliciously, some of these Strangers have minds impenetrable to him....

## Villain Options

All Lucas needs is a slight nudge to turn him into a true horror, a man without morals, beyond human sympathy, who *knows what you are thinking*. He could bring the empire to its knees, learn any secret, destroy anyone who opposed him. And how do you fight a man who knows what you are going to do before you do it? This version of Lucas Moreland might even keep playing at being the Great Detective, the Empire’s hero and thief catcher. Like an actor who despises his plebian audience, he might play the role for the crowds but commit any horror or atrocity which occurs to him. He’s jaded to the extreme, and despises humanity. For this broken man, the Eye of Thoth is a curse of the most horrible sort.



# The Lady Mirabel, Countess of La Lamina (20 exp)

*Dame Mirabel; The Night Hag*

Dame Mirabel Zelle is a woman apart. She has denied the restrictions society places on her sex, and traveled the world, adventured, loved and fought. She has grown Strange not through weird unnatural influences but through the transformative power of wide experience. A social butterfly and subject of scandal, few in London have an inkling of her true past, how she came to acquire Spanish title, English peerage, vast wealth, or her astonishing breadth of experience. Striking rather than beautiful, she never lacks for admirers, and only her lovers know just how many of her adventures are writ upon her long body in the form of scars, oriental tattoos, and hard whipcord muscle. By day she has every eye on her, but by night, when she dons the tattered costume and iron mask of the Night Hag, few dare to look upon her at all.

**POV:** You've torn life open and squeezed its juices into your mouth, letting them run down your face. Born low but brilliant, you used every wile and stratagem to raise yourself up, inheriting three fortunes and two noble titles, and learning every skill you could. You're an initiate of secret faiths, the mistress of the gypsy blade and the weird hand-fighting techniques of China. You can ride, shoot, trim sails, speak seven languages, stalk tigers, climb a

mountain face with your fingers, play the violin with virtuosity, bind wounds and concoct healing drugs, bowl a cricket ball like a master, double your fortune with shrewd investment, plan a military campaign, and recite the complete works of Shakespeare from memory. Yet your nation and homeland denies you the vote, buries you beneath petticoat and bonnet, and allows a husband (should you be fool enough to marry again) to beat you, rape you, and steal you blind. All this, with a Queen on the throne.

**Appearance:** The Lady Mirabel is tall and spare, and every inch the noble. She radiates poise and control, dresses fashionably and properly, and converses with great intelligence. Her proper Victorian clothing conceals an athlete's body, slim to the point of boyish, but hard as a boxer's. She wears gloves and is careful to keep her hands from being too closely examined, as they betray the scars of a knife fighter and the calluses of a martial artist. Her torso, upper arms, and legs are covered in elaborate Japanese tattoos, and interlaced here and there with scars from tooth, fang, fire, bullet, and blade.

## The Questions

**Humble Beginnings:** Lady Mirabel was born Abigail Scull in London's East End. Her mother was a prostitute, and Abby found herself on the streets too before she was 15. She caught the eye of an ambitious pimp who had her better dressed and educated, so as to serve the more discriminating men of the West End. There, her voracious mind and wit allowed her to earn many wealthy admirers, finally snaring an elderly mill owner from the North. When the old man died, Abigail (now Mirabel) inherited the fortune, and with the aid of a clever solicitor saw the fortune bound up in a trust which allowed her access and control.

**Follies of Youth:** Mirabel spent her first fortune traveling the world, devouring experiences and



having wild adventures, collecting esoteric skills and scars until nearly dying in Africa at age 25 of malaria.

**First Awakenings:** In her travels, Mirabel experienced every manner of Strange and exotic adventure and horror, and they each left a mark upon her: in her mind and in her body. No single event woke her. Her eyes were always open, only needing new sights to see. She pursued adventure and occasionally found love—although it was usually brief and tragic, as with the Spanish pirate and rogue the Count of La Lámina.

**Secret Origins:** Mirabel was treated by a village shaman while in her ague-induced delirium, and the old sorcerer guided her soul through Strange lands and lost ages before returning her to her disease-ravaged body. In the dream, she confronted the Night Hag, a thing of rage and darkness which lurked within her, demanding release. When she was recovered she returned to her homeland and the city of her birth, where she created herself as the Lady Lámina, recently of Spain and widow of the Count of La Lámina.

**Great Failing:** Mirabel's great failing is her vengeance, embodied by the Night Hag. The voice of the Hag taunts her from the back of her mind, where she cages it during the day. When she loses control of the Hag, people die—and perhaps worse, each time she kills with the Hag's hands, she grows to *like it more*. She knows rationally the Hag is a part of her, and that it suggests madness, but she can't seek escape. In her heart, she loves that side of herself.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Boating d4, Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Throwing d6, Guts d6, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Riding d6, Stealth d4, Tracking d4

**Charisma:** +4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11 (6)

**Hindrances:** Curious, Quirk (Secretive), Vengeful, Vow (Change British Society)

**Edges:** Attractive, Jack of All Trades, Noble, Power Points (x3), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Armor (2):* Level 2; Device (Hidden Hauberk and Iron Mask).

*Attack, Melee (2):* +2d6, AP 1; Device (Iron Claws).

*Fear (4):* Terror, Device (Face of The Hag)

*Gifted (1):* (Natural Aptitude)

*Invent (1):* Level 1, Device (Voluminous Secret-Filled Sleeves)

*Omni Super Skill (14):* Level 7 (Supra-Normal Aptitude)

*Parry (1):* +3 Parry (Tattered Cloak)

yet break your reputation if you have her around for a friendly afternoon tea.

The Night Hag is a different matter. She is among London's most wanted, and there are dozens of murders attributed to her (rightly or wrongly). Behind the iron crone's mask Mirabel's hazel eyes glare out, and she is a different person when she wears the costume—when she has the will and spite to take it up.

The Night Hag costume protects her, arms her, and allows her to swing like a ghost through London's rooftops. Its tatters blend with the darkness, so many of her victims never see her coming at all. She has no notion of fair fighting: A broken enemy is a broken enemy, and she'll ambush when it suits her purposes, only showing herself to her target when she wishes to terrify before striking.

Mirabel's *omni super skill* power reflects her wide background as traveler, noblewoman, and adventurer. With a successful roll of the skill she can change any or all of its dice to dice in any other skill she wants. You may want to play out the transition with one of Mirabel's famous jaunts down Memory Lane: "Among the Ancient Masters of Thibet I learned just the trick for circumstances like this..."

## Playing Lady Mirabel

Here's an easy hook onto Lady Mirabel: She's a feminist Victorian female Bruce Wayne. She hides the truth of her abilities and the depths of her fury at the condition of women in her age under a flamboyant public persona. She courts scandal and rumor during the day, because the scandalous life of Lady Mirabel is the perfect cover for the Night Hag as the nighttime scourge of London's abusive male population. Lady Lámina rides, attends parties, takes lovers, and generally cuts a swath through Society: too ravishing and brilliant and charming to be cut

out, but too radical and scandalous to be closely befriended. She can make your party the talk of the Season,

## Villain Options

Lady Mirabel could serve as a villain with no changes in her nighttime guise. She's a murderer and terrorist. What makes the difference is whether you think her victims have it coming. If you want to use her as a proper villain, replace her Vow with one like "Lead the Dark Cult of the Hungry Mother to Rulership of the Earth" and make her killings ritualistic sacrifices rather than a woman's vengeance.



# “Stony” Joseph Smithson (20 exp)

*The Man Statue; Stone Knight; Johnny Rockpile*

“Stony” Joe Smithson was already a formidable boxer when Dr. Albert Simms found him. Dr. Simms was a physician and chemist, but also an inventor, and a man hungry for wealth. He promised Joe that his patent vitamin and exercise regime would improve the boxer’s physique “like unto a thing of cold-cut stone!” Against his better judgment, Smithson accepted Simms’ offer and allowed himself to be immersed in a “vitriifying bath of essential mineral salts” and “stimulated with pulses of electrical charge to condition the skin and muscles.” The ordeal was agony, but as promised, Stony Joe Smithson found his strength magnified. His reputation in the ring only increased, until the day he struck Tom Paddock a blow that killed him dead, and saw beneath the torn skin of his own knuckles grey, faintly cracked stone.

**POV:** You’re an honest sort. Bit simple, yeah, but honest. And you got your pride, the same pride that saw your old Dad work himself to death so you and your brothers wouldn’t have to go into the workhouse. On the streets, you fought like all the boys fought, dirty and mean and for keeps, but when you started prizefighting you got a taste for a proper, fair fight. Any scum can win a fight dirty. It takes art and skill to win one clean. The one time you forgot this, and tried to steal an advantage over other boxers, it cost you everything. Nobody in their right mind would get into the ring with you now, a hulking great rockpile. You could punch out one of Mr. Coney’s iguanodons in one round. All your skill and experience and technique mean spit now. You’re so strong, so invulnerable, it doesn’t matter to anybody how you throw a punch anymore. To

nobody but you, anyhow. And perhaps your mates in this funny Club you’re all part of.

**Appearance:** Joe Smithson is unmistakable. He’s huge. He was tall and well-built before Dr. Simms patent process, but now he truly deserves the description *massive*. He’s larger in all dimensions, like a big man made one size bigger all around. And he’s covered in thick gray stone, like his skin has petrified. It thins and cracks at the joints, so he can still move without too much stiffness. Other places it grows thick and hard, and like horn or fingernails, he has to file it down as part of his toilette to keep it overgrowing and spoiling the cut of his clothes. He’s only recently come to the social circles that being Kerberan opens for him, and so despite his mass and physical power he seems hunched and shy in social situations. He is extremely aware how easily destructible things are—furniture, teacups, ordinary people. His face, even covered in its weird rocky tegument, is open and honest. He looks like a born sucker, but wouldn’t have made it as far in the boxing world if he really were as simple as he looks.

## The Questions

**Humble Origins:** A London boy, born and bred, Cockney to the bone. Joe grew up running in the streets while his father worked three jobs to put food on the table. He learned that you can’t eat pride—but it makes hunger easier to bear if the hunger is somehow noble.

**Follies of Youth:** Joe ran with the gangs of boys loose in London’s streets, fighting, committing petty crimes and generally being menaces. He avoided schooling as long as possible, and finally went to work in the match factory where his father worked nights. He started boxing bare knuckle at the pubs where the workman gathered, and eventually earned enough to quit his job. He got a reputation as a prizefighter,

and by the time he was 20 he was known in sporting circles all over London. The London Prize Ring rules of boxing became like the Ten Commandments to him.

**First Awakenings:** Despite being widely known and respectfully introduced in sporting circles while his fame in the ring lasted, Smithson's perspective on the larger world was narrow. He had nearly no inkling of the Strange that he didn't read in the Dreadfuls.

**Mysterious Origins:** The patent exercise regime created by Dr. Simms was in fact totally experimental. Simms wanted to enlist Stony Joe because of his name recognition. Simms believed that if he made Joe the heavyweight champion, then he'd make a fortune selling his services to every sportsman in Britain. For a time it seemed to be working, until Joe accidentally killed Tom Paddock ("The Redditch Needlepointer") in a prize bout. Paddock had lost his temper, and hit Smithson below the belt, angering and offending the bigger man. Smithson then hit him harder than he'd ever hit anyone before. The rocky growths beneath Joe's knuckles acted like brass knuckles, and broke Paddock's head open. He was banned from the sport and barely avoided murder charges. Simms fled the country, and a dark time began in Joe's life.

**Great Failing:** After his awakening, robbed of his livelihood and growing increasingly uncanny and disturbing every day, a bit rockier and a bit bigger, Joe fell in with bad people. He used gin to quiet his reservations about the work they had him do. Joe used his strength to collect debts, intimidate shop keepers, and send messages like, "If you don't want your other arm broken, you better do business." After being told to toss a family into the street when they couldn't make rent, he rebelled in self-disgust. He's still haunted by the faces of Tom Paddock and the other people he hurt.



**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12+4

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Guts d8, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 16 (6)

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs, Code of Honor, Distinctive Appearance, Heroic

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Exceptional Potential (Strength), Nerves of Steel, Super Powers, Power Points (x3), Take The Hit, Trademark Weapon (Fists)

**Super Powers:**

*Armor (8):* Level 2; Heavy Armor (Stone Skin).

*Attack, Melee (6):* (6) +2d6, AP 1, Heavy Weapons (Granite Fists).

*Growth (3):* Level 3, Size +3, Monstrous (Man Mountain)

*Super Attribute (8):* +1 Strength, +7 Vigor (Strength of the Earth)

## Playing Joe

Stony Joe Smithson is easy: He's a big rock-skinned bloke. Working-class to the bone, even if his friends put on airs, he never forgets where's he's from, and has trouble abandoning the deference and respect for his "betters" that he supped up with his gruel as a boy.

He was quite proud of his skills as a boxer before his transformation ended his career, and retains contacts and reputation in those circles. He's worked as a heavy before, and knows how to put on the persona of the dangerous man, even if it isn't natural to him. He grew up poor and learned all the dodges and skills that teaches you, and he never lost touch with his old friends and family. They still scrape by, too proud to take Joe's money even now.

Joe would give you his last pence, but wouldn't take charity himself if he was starving. He fights

fair. He won't use his strength to bully the weak. He tried it, and it left him sick to soul. He'll admit he's been beaten in a proper fight without reservation. But he also won't back down from God himself, if He comes down off the Sistine Chapel and squares up in a proper stance. Among his friends in the Club, it's understood that if there's trouble, Joe will wade through fire, flood, and all the demons of Hell to stand next to them like a stonewall.

His powers make him nearly invulnerable to every weapon of the day. Artillery might injure him, and anything that can penetrate his rocky hide can blow chunks of it away, leaving him more vulnerable until it grows back, but on the streets of London, there isn't much shy of an express train that can chip his skin. He's strong enough to punch in a vault. His strength is something of a curse, too. Where can he possibly find a fair fight now?

He can find one with remarkable frequency since he joined the Kerberos Club, it seems.

## Villain Option

Joe makes a better thug than mastermind. But rearrange his Hindrances, swapping "Heroic" for "Bloodthirsty." The evil Joe would relish his power, and would love hurting others and making them afraid. Dealing with such a brute would normally be little issue for the sharps of the Kerberos Club, but what happens when the bully can laugh at massed gunfire and crash through brick walls?



# Mr. Leon

## (20 exp)

*The Dream Broker; the Madness of the Great; the Prince of Fever*

Mister Leon is a creature of Faerie, one of the weird noble personages of those alien lands, but one who has dwelt long among humanity and become deeply imprinted with the essence of that mayfly species. He counts as cousins the Leanan sídhe, the muse-maidens of Faerie who trade vision and inspiration for the blood of their mortal poets. But Leon is less the muse and more the merchant. He cares nothing for the blood of humanity—nasty, salty stuff with hints of disillusionment and copper. Mister Leon is a broker, a seller of dreams. While most of the faerie can spin the stuff of their mercurial flesh and aether into visions, Mister Leon has transcended this. He does not create a spectacle for mortals to view, but reaches inside them and creates phantasmagoria from the stuff of their own souls. When Mister Leon sells you a dream, it is for your enjoyment (or terror) alone.

**POV:** Humanity is so ... fascinating. Like watching a carriage accident. You just can't take your eyes off them as they crash headlong into disaster after disaster, never learning, heedless of the looming chasm. It is simply *delicious*. Oh, you're not vicious, like some of your kin. You don't prod humanity along, herding them faster towards their doom. You love them far far too much for that. But as you tell your lovers, a faerie's affection is not a man's affection. Commerce is endlessly amusing—people buying and selling, trading they know not what for some bauble or dwelling. The inequities of the age are so artful, so painfully ironic, so titillatingly



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deliberate, that you sometimes want to hunt down the architects of these miseries and grant them such visions as to shatter their minds with beauty—for surely, only those who created the workhouse or the prison or the slum could truly appreciate the sights you can show. But, then, you have so much trouble distinguishing one human class from another. The gorgeous rouge of fever across a street-walking prostitute's cheeks is more attractive than all the pearls of the Orient on a noble lady's long white neck. Sometimes, when you put sights into their minds, you need not even strain your imagination—simply revealing the world as it is can make them quiver and shake. When they feel the wash of such profound insights, you feel a measure of it yourself.

**Appearance:** Mister Leon is every inch the Byronic hero—thin, slight, with a consumptive complexion and burning eyes which hint at dissolute living, of unwholesome pleasures, and a tendency towards cruelty. He dresses however it takes his fancy, always making whatever he wears seem like the next big fashion.

## The Questions

**Humble Beginnings:** Mister Leon began as did many of his kind, as a wisp of semi-coherent thought adrift in the Faerie aethers. The Strange winds of that land brought him near to the worlds of man, and the force of human solidity began to shape him, give him form, identity, personality. As are the ways of his kind, the more individual identity, the more power and position. Eventually he gained enough character to have desires, and he desired to see more of the World, and the people who dwelt there.

**Follies of Youth:** Still lacking any sophisticated understanding of human ways or society, he began playing among the peoples of pre-Roman Britain, and made much trouble for them before he learned to recognize what he was about. Unlike some faeries,

Mister Leon is not malicious, just Strange, and as he learned restraint he became more able to live among humanity without revealing his Strangeness.

**First Awakenings:** Mister Leon first became enmeshed in the great struggles of humanity during the rule of Elizabeth I, playing at the intrigues of Britain and Spain, and working with Elizabeth's spymaster and Magus Sir Francis Walsingham in his intrigues against the Faerie Queen. That alliance won him no friends in the Otherworld, but many admirers.

**Mysterious Origins:** When opium came to Britain, Mister Leon found his great calling. Men would pay anything for the visions of the pipe, and the greatest opium dream was nothing beside the visions he could conjure in the mind. His origins as a figure of vice, scandal and romanticism have their origins in the Chrysanthemum House, the notorious private opium den he owns. His select customers never touch the pipe, relying on Mister Leon's vision-dreams instead.

**Great Failing:** While a regular at the Gates of Hades coffee house, Mister Leon made the acquaintance of King George III. Fairly soon the monarch was wholly addicted to Mister Leon's visions, even though they eventually destroyed him and shattered his sanity. Stricken by the loss of this friend, Mister Leon joined the small cadre which liberated the maddened monarch from the palace and spirited him away into the Otherworld, to live out his life in a place where his madness was sanity.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d12+3, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Gambling d10, Intimidation d10, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Kerberos Club) d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d12+1, Taunt d10

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 14; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs, Anemic, Born of Dream, Clueless, Conviction, Curious, Matter Over Mind, Oathbound

**Edges:** Fae, Faerie Glamour, Power Points (x3), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Ageless (1):* (Fae Longevity)

*Fearless (2):* (Faerie Composure)

*Illusion (1):* Level 3; Film Quality, Psychosomatic trauma, Targeted (Faerie Glamour)

*Parry (6):* +9 Parry (Distracting Apparitions)

*Super Attribute (8):* Smarts +4 (Knowledge of the Ages)

*Super Skill (7):* Gambling +1 Step, Investigation +1 Step, Intimidation +1 Step, Knowledge +2 Steps, Notice +1 Step, Persuasion +2 Steps, Stealth +4 Steps, Taunt +2 Steps (Skill of the Ages)

## Playing Mister Leon

There is much of the cat about Mister Leon. He doesn't stand, he slouches. He doesn't sit, he reclines. He oozes a dangerous, corruptive sort of charm. He seems to promise transgression. He flirts shamelessly with anyone and everyone, and his advances would be offensive and even frightening were he not so devastatingly charming. There is still something profoundly alien about his nature. He doesn't entirely understand why people do the things they do, and he is constantly (and pleasantly) surprised by them. He is genial, never angry, but can be a terrible foe. Sometimes, Mister Leon's admiration is more terrible than his hate.

## Villain Option

All that is required to turn Mister Leon into a despicable villain is to remove his affection for humanity and its foibles. Make him cruel and let him revel in human ruin, and he would be a terror. His powers let him evade capture, and ravage human minds and sanity while he hides behind an illusory disguise or while stands invisible and smirking among his victims. His opium den would be a center of the lowest vice and human misery, addiction and hopelessness. He would glory in the beauty of despair. And God help the Hero who became his latest obsession.

# Other Strangers

Here are some additional characters with supernatural abilities that can be used however you need in your games, as player characters, opponents, NPCs or as examples.



## The Turk (60 exp)

See page 52 for the Turk's background.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d12+4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d12+2, Intimidate d12, Knowledge (Games of Skill) d12+4, Knowledge (Kerberos Club) d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d12, Shooting d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 15 (9)

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Distinctive Appearance, Heartless, Overconfident

**Edges:** Brawny, Combat Sense, Improved Level Headed, Power Points (x5), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Ageless (1):* (Mechanical Man)

*Armor (8):* +9 Heavy Armor (Sturdy Construction)

*Attack, Melee (6):* +2d6 damage, AP 4 (Clockwork Claw)

*Construct (5):* (Robot)

*Fearless (2):* (Icy Demeanor)

*Gifted (1):* (Quick Learner)

*Super Attribute (5):* Agility +1 Step, Smarts +4 Steps. (Clockwork Body and Brain)

*Super Skill (7):* Fighting +5 Steps, Games of Skill +4 Steps



## The Elephantine Man (40 exp)

See page 55 for Joseph Merrick's background.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Knowledge (Kerberos Club) d10, Knowledge (Sideshows) d8, Knowledge (Writing) d4, Persuasion d6, Stealth d10,

**Charisma:** -6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 14 (3)

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs, Distinctive Appearance, Loyal, Outsider, Ugly (Major -4 Charisma),

**Edges:** Improved Nerves of Steel, Power Points (x4), Super Powers, Take The Hit

**Super Powers:**

*Armor (2):* +3 armor (Elephantine Skin)

*Chameleon (1):* Device, Disruptable (polymorphic protean tonic)

*Fear (2):* (Grotesque Appearance)

*Growth (5):* Size +3; Monstrous (Giant Monstrosity)

*Regeneration (15):* True Regeneration (cancerous looking growths)

*Super Edge (4):* Improved Nerves of Steel (Deadened Nerves)

*Super Skill (1):* Stealth +1 Step (Learnt Through Necessity)

**Notes:** Merrick's twisted physique is as powerful as it is deformed. While clumsy and slow, he's also astonishingly resilient. But his resilience comes with a price: Ordinary witnesses to his ability to withstand harm find it shocking and sometimes disgusting. It isn't the clean invulnerability of some Strangers; rather his flesh warps and flows around wounds, forming instant ugly scars, or results in seemingly hideous injuries which leak stinking black fluids, yet



don't trouble him in the least.

Nothing about Merrick is pretty, except when he injects himself with Dr. Monroe's special polymorphic tonic, which serves to organize and make conscious the properties of his weird physiology. But the effects are short-lived, and his supply of the tonic at any given time is limited.



## Kennebi Meti (30 exp)

*Watcher of the Northern Approaches*

Kemnebi Meti's appearance *should* be shocking, uncanny, terrifying—but for some reason, few seem to really notice it. He is an androsphinx, a great mythological conjunction of man, lion and eagle. When created by the sorcerer priests of Pharaoh Djoser of the Old Kingdom, Kemnebi Meti was a much simpler creature, content to sit on his pillar and watch the northern approaches of the kingdom for invaders. Like all his kind, he was created to live

forever and change slowly. He watched the brief lives and kingdoms of humanity rise and fall, until they eventually forgot the purpose of Kemnebi and his kin. After several thousand years he began to think he was no longer needed, and left the Old Kingdom to wander the world.

He traveled, observed, befriended the occasional mystic; and before he realized it, still more millennia had past him by and a new power was rising in the world, spreading out from a tiny island the Romans called Britannia. He traveled there with his servants Gi and Geb, and made his new home in this remarkable city of London.

He's finding the modern world quite exciting, and the conjunction of the ancient and the new challenges him as few things have done. Yet the pace of change befuddles him. The change he has witnessed in a decade in London surpasses all he saw in the four thousand years of his previous life.

The Strangers of London see through Kemnebi's veil of normalcy and have become used to his presence, such as at his regular Friday meal at the Savoy. Dining with the ancient beast is an uncanny experience, as nobody remarks on the enormous

leonine form seated before the table, or the beautiful twin servants who feed their master and wipe his lips.

Kemnebi still sometimes insists that his mane be braided in the old style and his beard bound properly. He can often be found observing whatever new wonders London has to offer the curious visitor, and he is a fantastic source for ancient lore.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Knowledge (History) d10, Knowledge (Lost Secrets) d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10

**Charisma:** -6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

**Hindrances:** Alien Form, All Thumbs, Curious, Outsider

**Edges:** Power Points (x3), Super Powers, Take The hit

**Super Powers:**

*Ageless (2):* Very Old (Ancient Spinx)

*Armor (2):* +3 (Thick Hide)

*Attack, Melee (5):* +2d6 damage, +1 Reach (Great Claws)

*Chameleon (1):* Can only take one non specific human form (-2) (Illusionary Form)

*Fear (3):* (True Form)

*Fearless (2):* (Seen It All)

*Flight (4):* Pace 12 (Great Wings in True Form)

*Growth (6):* +3 Size (Great Beast True Form)

# The Tower Gang

The Tower Gang is somewhat famous as London's first criminal gang made up entirely of Strangers who've chosen to use their powers for selfish ends. The Gang can serve different roles, as you need them. Cast more heroically they might be the protectors of an East End district or enclave. They might also be "protectors" in the sense of the criminal racket: Pay us for our services or someone might accidentally throw a four-wheeler through your shop window. Worse, they could be proper criminals who make no pretense of keeping to the righteous, operating with secret personas and ordinary daytime lives to mask their criminal actions. They aren't built from enormous point totals, but work well as a team and plan their stings well in advance.

The Tower Gang includes the following characters: Ben Bell, Big Hand, Little Hand, The Face, and Tick Tock.



## Ben Bell (15 exp)

One look at Ben Bell convinces you that he's nothing but a huge, thick-headed moron. Grossly fat, slovenly, his beetled brow constricts tight at the least mental effort. The best one such as this might hope for is simple manual labor. Which, if he had any interest in honest work, he would excel at. His gross body is inhumanly strong beneath the layers of blubber. He can lift more than twenty tons and crush iron in his hands. More frightening than all this power at the disposal of such an obvious mental deficient is the reality of Ben Bell: All this power serves a cunning and wily intelligence. While Ben Bell's skull could convince any phrenologist as to his low breeding and base mind, it contains a truly



first-rate brain. Bell is the leader of the Tower Gang, and excels at planning its heists and stings.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+2

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d8

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12

**Hindrances:** Greedy (Major), Obese, Ugly, Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** Connections (Underworld), Improved Level Headed, Power Points (x2), Quick, Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Growth (4):* Level 2 (Great Bulk)

*Regeneration (5):* (Phenomenal Stamina)

*Super Attributes (5):* Strength +2 Steps, Vigor +3 Steps (Great Bulk)

*Super Edges (6):* Improved Level Headed, Quick (Surprising Speed)



## Big Hand (5 exp)

Big Hand is as stupid as Ben Bell looks. He's as low a class criminal as there comes in all of London. The only thing separating him from thousands of others are the miraculous powers he inherited from his mother, a prostitute who once served as an "altar of flesh" for some rich perverts' ritual. She escaped, but only barely, when the ritual was disrupted, and though she was unharmed and unaffected her children all displayed unusual abilities. Big Hand can conjure two enormous hands which move and mimic the motions of his own hands, but on a much larger scale. These hands can exert enormous force, but Big Hand has difficulty exerting *less* than their maximum strength. If he picks up a person, he also picks up a goodly chunk of the street. The appearance of the hands changes with his mood. When he is calm, they are huge duplicates of his real hands. When he is enraged, they are demonic claws. When he is sullen and low, they are spectral and shadowy. When he is grief-stricken (as he was with the death of his mother), they are like hands cut from the corpse of a rotting titan.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Driving d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Occult) d4, Notice d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 12; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs, Clueless, Greedy (Major), Illiterate, Quirk (Never Take Charity), Vow (Become the Big Man), Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Power Points (x2), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Parry (3):* +6; Requires Activation (-1) (Swatting Hands)

*Telekinesis (16):* Level 8; Strength d12+6 Heavy Weapon, Obvious (-1) (Monster Hands)



## Little Hand (10 exp)

Little Hand is Big Hand's younger sister, though she dresses and acts like a boy. Little Hand has a power similar to Big Hand's, but on a smaller and more precise scale. By conjuring pale ghostly hands she can pick any pocket she can see, and move small objects right into her own real hand when she releases the ghost hands back to wherever they come from. She idolizes her dim-witted brother for his courage and his pride, but has no illusions about his temper or his brain. She figures she can do the thinking for them both, and let him think he's taking care of everything.

Where Big Hand is all power and noise, Little Hand is silence and trickery. Her ghostly hands are nearly invisible unless someone knows what to look for.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

**Hindrances:** Greedy (Minor), Loyal, Young, Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** Power Points (x2), Street Urchin, Super Powers, Thief

**Super Powers:**

*Attack, Ranged (12):* 2d6, Range 12/24/48, Non Lethal, AP 14 (Ghost Hands)

*Deflection (5):* -6 to attacks, Requires Activation (Ghost Hands)

*Super Skills (1):* +1 Step Lockpicking, +1 Step Stealth (Natural Skill)

*Telekinesis (2):* Strength d10, Little Hand can use her skills with this power (Ghost Hands)



## The Face (10 exp)

The being known as The Face is an enigma, neither man nor woman, a person without a sex or a shape or a fixed identity. The Face was born in this weird unfixed state. It would have been an Oddity, a freakish inhuman thing, had it not learned the trick early on of fixing its shape and identity into a pleasing form. The Face was its mother's little darling, a cherubic baby right from the fantasy of any expectant mother. The Face found this strategy marvelously successful, adopting shapes which pleased others, met their expectations, and allowed the Face to survive. The Face grew up, and began wondering who it really was. Who was it when it was alone? When there was nobody to loan it an identity with their expectations, who could it be? Somewhere during this confusing time, the Face found Ben Bell, and the

big man, seeing the obvious potential in the weird being, told The Face who it was: the greatest confidence player who ever lived.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d12+5, Stealth d4, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6

**Charisma:** +6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3)

**Hindrances:** Delusional (Believes it has no identity when alone), Greedy (Major), Quirk (Has no memory of earlier life), Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** Charismatic, Power Points (x2), Super Powers, Very Attractive

**Super Powers:**

*Armor (1):* 3 points, Requires Activation (Hardened Skin)

*Attack, Melee (4):* +2d6 damage (Extruded Talons and Mandibles)

*Chameleon (5):* Voice (Mercurial Form)

*Fear (5):* Terror (Mercurial Form)

*Super Skills (5):* Persuasion +5 Steps (Greatest Confidence Player)



## Tick Tock (10 exp)

Tick Tock discovered his powers while indulging in one of his many addictions. He smoked opium when not drinking laudanum or stealing to pay for either. On the fateful day his powers awoke, he enjoyed the sense of time slowing down that he had come to expect from good opium—but when he turned his gaze about the low opium den, he realized it wasn't his sense of time which had slowed, but time

itself. He was outside of time, the curled smoke from his pipe like a hook in the air, a bead of sweat broken

from the nose of the sot next to him shining like a frozen jewel. He was already what one might call morally compromised, and the criminal possibilities inherent in his power were obvious. He found he could easily steal enough to support his habits and keep himself in comparative luxury. With Ben Bell to direct his powers to good effect, he profited still more. But Tick Tock remains the weakest link in the Tower Gang—his addictions drive him and make him unreliable. Use of his power leaves him with an intense craving for opium that he rarely has the fortitude of character to resist.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Gambling d8, Lockpicking d8, Shooting d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d10

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Anemic, Greedy (Minor), Habit (Major), Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** Level Headed, Power Points (x3), Quick, Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Deflection (5):* Level 6, Requires Activation (Sidestep Time)

*Extra Actions (5):* Three Actions, Requires Activation (Sidestep Time)

*Speed (10):* Sonic Speed -8 to attacks (Sidestep Time)

# Strangeness of Every Sort . . .

There follows a collection of extraordinary characters without much *character*, if you take the meaning. They can quickly be customized to suit the needs of your campaign. Each includes notes on how to scale them to fit your game, and additional notes on using them as Kerberans to fill the halls of the Club with oddities and Strangers.

## Faerie

“Come closer, pretty thing, and sing to us of your world. Let us drink of it, and be made again by it, and dance with you unseen, and bring you miracles and wonders and treasures, yes? Just invite us into your heart, and give yourself to us, and we’ll give you the whole wide world. So small a thing, for so much . . .”

The faerie are a highly impressionable race. They lack the complicated minds of humanity, so they might feel a passing fancy as deeply as a person would experience the deepest obsessions. With their naturally phantasmagorical, quicksilver forms, the weaker of the Fae are in a constant state of flux, shifting form as often as thoughts drift through their airy minds: To think a thing is to become a thing.

If these wisps are strongly imprinted with powerful human concepts, with words, they might form into discrete entities—faerie Commoners, the countless goblins, fetches, sprites and imps which lurk in the Otherworld.

If they are stronger-willed and more thoroughly

imprinted with identity, they might become Beasts, unique monsters, often given form by myths and heraldic imagery—dragons and giants are especially popular. A Beast is made stronger when its sense of self is reinforced so it acts in the world and causes legends to spring up, stories to be told which strengthen its identity, which makes it more powerful, which lets it act more prominently in the world, and more legends spring up. . . . But a Beast doesn’t last forever. Inevitably some hero comes along and dispatches it, breaking its hold on the minds and hearts (and bodies) of the area it terrorizes.

The more human-seeming of the faerie are the peers and nobles, who have a complexity of mind and identity almost as sturdy as a human child’s. This is perhaps why the Fae have reputations for being so mercurial and short-tempered. The eldest, wisest and most powerful of them has the maturity of a five-year-old.

## Faerie Commoner

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Gambling d6, Intimidation d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Tracking d8

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Conviction, Matter Over Mind, Oathbound

**Edges:** Fae, Faerie Glamour, Power Points (x3), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Ageless:* Fae

*Illusion:* Level 2; Film Quality, Psychosomatic trauma



## Faerie Beast

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+9, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d12

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 20 (4)

### Special Abilities:

*Armor +4:* Scaly hide

*Claws/Bite:* Str+d8.

*Fear -2:* Anyone who sees a mighty faerie beastn must make a Guts check at -2.

*Hardy:* The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

*Huge:* Attackers add +4 to their Fighting or Shooting rolls when attacking a faerie beast due to its massive size.

*Improved Frenzy:* A faerie beast may make two Fighting attacks with no penalty.

*Level Headed:* Act on best of two cards.

*Size +8:* Faerie beasts are massive creatures.

Willed, Quick, Very Attractive

### Super Powers:

*Ageless:* (Fae Immortality)

*Armor:* +6 (Arcane Armor)

*Attack, Melee:* +2d6, AP 4 (Enchanted Sword)

*Attack, Ranged:* 12/24/48, 3d6, AP4 (Enchanted Bow)

*Illusion:* Level 5, Film Quality, Psychosomatic Trauma (Faerie Glamour)

*Immunity:* Immunity to the Hand of Man (Ancient Pacts and Wardings)

*Regeneration:* True Regeneration

## Notes

The faerie all are tricky and powerful creatures. Their natural abilities of illusion and the power to assume the seeming of other forms make them devilish tricksters, if they choose to limit their mischief to the merely confounding. If they turn their minds to more hurtful things, even the lowly common Fae can drive men mad with visions.

The Beast is a towering chimeric monstrosity the size of an elephant, red in tooth and claw. Yet it possesses a measure of intelligence, and can use the natural powers of its nature.

The most terrible of the Fae are the Peers, the self-styled nobles who impose their weird ideals of rulership upon the Otherworld. Their powers are wildly varied, but this example has exquisitely-honed versions of the Fae's natural powers, as well as potent regenerative abilities, and broad immunity to The Hand of Man due to a pact with powerful Earth spirits. All attacks by mortal man against him are seriously blunted, though many Strangers hardly qualify as "man" or "mortal".



## Faerie Peer

**Attributes:** Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d12+2, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Paths of the Fae) d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d12, Riding d12, Shooting d12+2, Stealth d12, Taunt d10, Tracking d12

**Charisma:** +10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 12; **Toughness:** 12 (6)

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Conviction, Gloater, Heartless, Monologuer, Oathbound

**Edges:** Acrobat, Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Command, Fae, Fervor, Fleet-Footed, Improved

Block, Improved First Strike, Marksman, Master (Fighting, and Persuasion), Noble, Steady Hands, Strong

## As a Member of the Club

The Peer is the only rank of the faerie suitable for full Club membership, though there are several Common Fae on the staff, and, it is said, a Beast lurking somewhere in the cellars.

The Kerberos Club boasts several Faerie Peers as members, but few are more notorious than the Prince of Morning, Felix Bursoilamayre. His taste for cruel and tragic love affairs has earned him a reputation as a rake and heartbreaker. He makes no promises to the women (and men) he seduces, but draws them in and fills their heads with illusions of love and wonders. When the moment is its most perfect, he abandons them. His enemies far outnumber his friends, and some of the suicides he has caused still haunt him quite literally. He avoids roads whenever possible, “For the dead walk the roads knowing their enemies must some day travel.”

Yet for all his cruelty, he is a famously joyous companion, charming, witty, unexpectedly kind, and embarrassingly generous. He loses gracefully at games of chance and always laughs like it’s a grand joke and stands his round of drinks. A boon companion, so long as he doesn’t take a fancy to your sister or your wife.



## The Freak

(15 exp)

“Do not look upon me with such hate in your eyes! I am a man, not a monster! But damn you all, staring and mocking and shivering. If you would make a monster of me, then so be it! All that comes after shall be on your own heads.”

The Freak is deformed in body by an accident of birth or of fate, but what makes him more than the subject of sympathy or curiosity is how twisted in spirit and mind he has become as well. His body is bent and tumorous, hunched and asymmetrical, and were it not for the unnatural vitality coursing through his ravaged form, he would certainly have died from his malformations long ago. But he survives, and either through some physical flaw in his brain or from the horrendous treatment at the hands of his fellow man, in his hate for the straight-limbed and unmarked the Freak finds a reason to live. He haunts the city, cloaked to hide the worst of his deformities, and seeks to rally and unite all those rejected, all those exiled from the light and society of man. When the Freak’s army is ready, he will bring revolution against everything he hates. He’ll tear down the kingdom of beauty and replace it with an empire of the gross and the Strange.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidate d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8

**Charisma:** -8

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Alien Form, Outsider, Ugly, Wanted (Major)

**Edges:** Connections (Blackmail Victims, Underworld), Power Points (x2), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Altered Form (10):* Reach +11", Fall-Proof, More Elastic, Requires Activation, Rubbery (+4 armor against kinetic attacks)

*Attack, Melee (10):* +3d6 damage, Large Burst Template.

## Notes

The Freak is angry, driven to tear down society and all standards of "normal," and he's well equipped to do so. He has a great deal of influence in the underground, where the poorest of the poor meet the deformed and the outcast. He's a terribly dirty fighter when forced to rely on simply fist and feet, but despite his monstrous appearance he is a surprisingly affecting speaker. If all this weren't enough, his network of blackmail victims will often do anything to keep their dirty secrets from being revealed. The Freak is a man with his ear close to the filthy ground.

To enhance the Freak as a threat, here are some suggested upgrades:

**At 20 exp:** Add another d6 to the Attack damage, and 3" to Reach.

**At 40 exp Points:** Add another 3" to Reach and the following power:

*Mind Control (2):* Requires the Freak to hit his target (Weird Flesh Inflection).

God was washing him away like a stain. But he survived after pouring into a sewer and out into the Thames, a new man. He used his powers first for petty crime, but quickly realized that ordinary folk now feared him rather than simply being disgusted with him. He liked that. He found some fellow unfortunates and began to organize them. Before he knew it he was leading a movement of human oddities, and the Special Branch was raiding his meetings. During one such raid, Johan engulfed and badly injured several officers, and had to flee before the law caught up with him. He fled in the hold of an East India Company tea clipper, and had a wild adventure in India which turned out to be a Kerberan challenge. Presented finally with the truth, he cursed his tormentors, and then laughed, accepting the invitation to join. Here were people as Strange as he, who never flinched from his appearance.



## Saurian Survivor (65 exp)

"Hsssssss! From the dawn of time, my people rose and conquered when man was nothing but the dream of monkeys. Haaaaaaaach. Dead now these aeons! Yet through me, my people shall rise again. And rule!"

In the primal days of the young Earth the great beasts walked upon the land, flew the skies and swam the seas, dragons by any other name, enormous and terrible. It was an age of monsters. And from this frenzied dance of claw and fang rose the Saurians, creatures descended from dinosaur stock as Mr. Darwin would have us believe Man rose from his apish antecedents. Theirs was a cool intelligence, untroubled by the complexities of mammalian society. Their emotions were primal

## As a Member of the Club

Johan Riven was too weird even for the circus. He survived on what he could scavenge and steal before one day in the rain he watched his limbs stretch and seemingly liquefy, and he wept, believing



things, primitive: blood, rage, hunger, territoriality. No kinder feelings touched their reptilian souls.

They subjugated the world, drove the invading colonies of Elder Things to near extinction, and established their ever-warring dynastic kingdoms. Their technology was not one of machines, but of the subjugation of living species, and their forced transformation into useful forms. When the end came in the form of fire from the heavens, the Saurians died in the millions. What the fires did not destroy, the slow crush of glaciers finished. And so, the first great civilization of Earth was lost almost entirely.

Sleeping through the ages in a tough pod formed from flesh as much as plant fiber, the Survivor was carried by the glaciers, frozen in an Antarctic tomb until the curious monkeys who rose up to dominate the world came, exploring, and returned to their tiny island bearing the weird leathery cocoon as their prize.

Now freed from her slumber, the Saurian Survivor works in secret, using her mastery of living flesh to empower her human pawns with the abilities of beasts, breeding her own army of Strangers against the day when her precious eggs hatch. Then

she'll emerge from hiding to enslave and remake humanity and found a new Saurian dynasty.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidate d12, Knowledge (Engineering) d10, Knowledge (Pre-Human Science) d10, Notice d8, Repair d10

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 12 (3)

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Distinctive Appearance, Loyal, Outsider, Ugly, Vow (Return her people to power)

**Edges:** Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Command, Exceptional Potential (Smarts), McGyver, Power Points (x5), Rich, Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Armor (2):* 3 points (Scaly Hide)

*Invent (29):* Level 8 Device (The Vats)

*Super Attribute (3):* Strength +1 Step, Vigor +2 Steps (Alien Physique)

*Super Skill (1):* Fighting +1 Step, Intimidate +1 Step (Alien Physique)

## Notes

This version of the Saurian Survivor is a fairly simple beast. She hides beneath the fashionable health spa the Silliard Salon and uses her biological sciences to cure diseases, reverse the aging process, and turn people into hideous chimera creatures. Her minions drug wealthy spa patrons and bear them secretly down to the Vats, where the Survivor immerses them in the vile living stew and alters their physiology to make them better-looking, no longer bald, younger, thinner. She sometimes subjects herself to this process if she must blend in with the disgusting anthropoids for a time.

Her human pawns are either dupes or willing accomplices, serving her in exchange for power. The Vats—the source of her terrible power—are huge cisterns containing the bubbling remains of living flesh rendered down into a complex and potent biological soup.

The other aspect of her Saurian Science is based on creating living creatures which act like foci, often grafted like parasites to a host. Some examples follow.

To make the Saurian Survivor more potent, simply select (or create) vile new living technology for her to employ.

**Blending Cloak:** Derived from octopus stock. Dozens of eyes and color-changing skin lets the cloak blend a wearer into the surroundings almost perfectly. It grips its wearer around the neck and shoulders with eight short tentacles.

*Invisibility (5)*

**Razorwasp Hive:** A gnarled lump of tissue on the end of a bone scepter with hundreds of holes, each holding a vicious and aggressive razorwasp.

*Attack, Ranged (10):* 3d6 damage, Large Burst Template

**Living Carapace:** A shell of living tissue and bone plates.

*Armor (8):* +9 Heavy Armor.

**Raptor Harness:** A twisted bird thing which grips the user and carries her aloft with its huge wings.

*Flight (4):* 12 Pace

**Hypnotic Veil:** A helm of shell and bone filled with the rendered but still-living pineal glands of human psychics. It projects a mental illusion which renders the wearer's appearance normal to a given situation, like someone an observer would expect to see. The user has no control over the projected image, however. Further, the Veil fails if the wearer doesn't stay calm.

*Chameleon (1):* Disruptable.

## As a Member of the Club

A human tongue and throat can't form her name, human alphabets can't transcribe it. So, she is called the Duchess around the Club, and nobody is so gauche as to mention the three Kerberans she very nearly killed when she came close to toppling Victoria's throne and overrunning the world with her monstrous spawn.

She's a little embarrassed about the whole business, now. Newly awakened from the sleep of ages, confused and angry, she lashed out. But like many of the Empire's former enemies, she was persuaded finally into the weird company of the Kerberos Club. They made a deal with the Saurian warlord: They gave her Antarctica. Transforming the frozen wastes into the steamy jungles of her home will be the work of generations, of ages, a conquest of science and will worthy of a Saurian noble. She always drops by the London house on her travels, to exchange pointed witticisms and joking threats with her old foes.



# Her Sister's Keeper (0 exp)

"Unhand me, sir! My husband will have something to say about such familiarity, and he shall . . . shall . . . uhhhh . . . OH, NEVER MIND. WE SHAN'T NEED TO TROUBLE POOR DEAR CHARLES WITH SUCH AN UGLY BIT OF BUSINESS, SHALL WE? HE'S SUCH AN IMPORTANT MAN, YOU KNOW. HE CAN'T AFFORD TO BE INVOLVED IN SOMETHING AS HORRIBLE AS A MURDER. YOURS, FOR EXAMPLE."

Her Sister's Keeper seems in every way to be the proper Victorian woman: upper middle class, charitable, well-spoken and well-read, a doting but firm mother, a dutiful wife to an up-and-coming member of government. And she is indeed all these things. Her "Sister," however, is not. The Sister is cunning, amoral, licentious, and vicious, a monster capable of any outrage or excess, driven by the primal animal instincts of blood, territory and the power of attraction. Where her Keeper is soft spoken, the Sister is base and loud. Where her Keeper is kind, she is cruel. Where her Keeper defers to the proper authority of men, she most assuredly and often violently does not.

Two personalities forced to share the same body, the Sister and the Keeper might war, cooperate, or perhaps even be unaware of each other, but each recognizes the absolute imperative in keeping their condition secret, whatever that might require.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+2

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d8

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

**Hindrances:** Dependant (Husband and Children), Gimmick (Get Angry), Heartless, Loyal,

**Edges:** Attractive, Power Points (x2), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Fear (3):* (Keeper Form)

*Mind Control (3):* Two Minds (Forceful Personality)

*Super Attributes (14):* Smarts +2 Steps, Spirit +2 Steps, Strength +5 Steps, Vigor +5 Steps

## Notes

In her ordinary form—the Keeper—she's a fairly average woman, well connected and quite influential in her social circles. In the form of the Sister, a different and markedly more striking woman, she is frighteningly strong and can easily kill with her bare hands. She is also utterly unfazed by any horror or violence she does. She is well connected and influential in her low circles, among street toughs, prostitutes and criminals. Both forms are adept at lying and conniving. It is a matter of survival. And while the Sister is deadly, even her Keeper can, when she must, put up a modest fight.

Her Sister's Keeper can be easily upgraded to provide a more potent threat:

**Seasoned:** Add 2 steps to Strength and add the following power:

*Tough (3):* +2 Toughness (Sister Form).

**Veteran:** Add 1 step to Spirit and add the following power:

*Armor (4):* +3 Heavy Armor (Sister Form).

## As a Member of the Club

Elizabeth Philbrook had no idea there was anything odd or unseemly about her. Then came the day a band of jaunty Strangers accosted her while she shopped with her maid for the necessities of a dinner party to celebrate her husband's recent promotion. The group jested with her and became quite familiar, though they called her "Maggie Pale" as if that were her name. Disturbed and afraid, she rushed home and locked herself in her room. And there in the mirror she met for the first time Maggie Pale, her uncouth and immoral alter ego. As they conversed, Elizabeth came to realize that *she* was one of the Strange.

With threats and arguments Elizabeth convinced Maggie to abide by certain rules. Maggie must never threaten Elizabeth's life, family, and reputation. Likewise, Elizabeth would not interfere with Maggie's nighttime carousing and adventuring with her unsavory friends from the Kerberos Club. At times the two women who share one body have been able to assist one another in particular ways: Once Elizabeth secured an invitation for Maggie to attend an exclusive social function, and on another occasion Maggie rescued Elizabeth's kidnapped son.



## The Living Marvel (65 exp)

"No thanks are needed, my man. It is the privilege of those gifted as I have been to return unto my fellows a measure of the fortune bestowed by God's good graces. Now, I must fly!"

The Living Marvel seems to be a paragon of patriotism, heroism, honor, gentlemanly conduct, social conscience, charity, and public service. Of course, he's really a womanizer, a drunkard, a gambler, an Army deserter, a prodigious coward, a maker of investments in bad faith, a debtor, and on at least one occasion a traitor to Crown and Country. His public identity is so forthright and proper, so handsome and admired, that it makes his true nature seem much the worse to those few who know it. He's a self-centered blackguard who fears only exposure and ridicule.

In an ordinary man of influence, this dichotomy would be troubling. But the Living Marvel is also a Stranger of tremendous physical power. His record of service and honors is so long that it takes minutes to read out when he attends a royal function. His adventures (real or fictional, though who can tell the difference anymore?) are chronicled in such publications as *Record of the Extraordinary* and *The People's Library*. In his caped uniform of crimson and gold, behind his elegant domino mask of sable, he attends the great social events of the Season. In his common clothes and ordinary identity, the patched castoffs he wears when slumming in London's lowest quarters, he seems like any other ruffian.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d12+1, Gambling d8, Guts d4, Intimidation d6, Persuade d8, Notice d6, Throwing d8

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Heartless, Gimmick (Can only become The Living Marvel if unobserved), Stubborn, Vow (Protect Heroic Reputation)

**Edges:** Acrobat, Charismatic, Command, Exceptional Potential (Agility), Fleet-Footed, Power Points (x5), Reputation, Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Flight (15):* Speed of Sound, -8 to attacks (Living Marvel Form)

*Immunity (12):* Everything except vacuum of space (Living Marvel Form)

*Super Attributes (8):* Strength +8 Steps (Living Marvel Form)

## Notes

By night he's a lowlife, a liar, cheater, womanizer, gambler, one who wallows in his base desires and instincts. But he can assume an alternate identity, that of the Marvel, so long as he is unobserved when he makes the change. In his superhuman identity he can lift vast weights, fly faster than anything else on the planet (outpacing bullets and cannonballs easily), and is extremely resilient. He's also well respected and connected. But inevitably, he gets the itch to indulge in his favorite low pastimes, and as much as he likes playing the hero he'll shed his public persona and take to the streets, looking for a drink, a game of cards, or a woman willing to endure his company in exchange for coin. He's willing to kill to protect his double life.

## As a Member of the Club

Captain Gryphon, that's how he goes in public. A hero and patriot, he seemed an obvious figure to recruit into the Kerberos Club. His powers were extraordinary, and the comfort with which he displayed them even early in the century spoke to his value as a member. The degree to which the public seemed to accept his status as superhuman defender of the British way of life certainly also helped. Unknown to his Club sponsors was just what a despicable bastard Noel Sigmorson was at heart. It certainly wouldn't have disqualified him—quite the opposite in fact; many Kerberans would have been much more comfortable knowing he was made of familiar stuff—but it inadvertently led to a Challenge that threatened his dual identity with exposure. Captain Gryphon reacted badly. One Kerberan was killed, three other injured, and a block of London's East End was near demolished. And so Captain Gryphon joined the Lost.

Sigmorson's hatred of the Club is tempered with the knowledge that the three-headed dog has its mouths at his throat. His dual identity is known to the Club, and the unspoken threat is that if he moves against Kerberan interests too strongly, or fails to do the occasional small favor, word might somehow leak out. He bides his time, does his duty, indulges his vices, and aches to destroy the Kerberos Club.



# Lost Jupiterian

## (75 exp)

“From the black and cold vastness of the cosmic aethers, my ship did fall to your tiny world. Stranded so I found myself doomed never again to float the painted clouds of my beloved home, a distant world barely visible in your night sky. Leave me to my sorrow, tiny human. For like my wrath, it is vast and incalculable to minds such as yours.”

The folk of Jupiter are like two enormous leathery jellyfish fused cap to cap so their thick tendrils radiate outwards, giving them the appearance of frilled wheels. They have two mouths, one at the center of the left tentacle cluster, one at the center of the right one. In the recessed groove where the two halves meet, they have a ring of hundreds of blue eyes. They are buoyed with internal gas bladders, allowing them to float easily in the thin tepid atmosphere of Earth. In the Earth's weak gravity they are also fantastically strong, though somewhat clumsy. Jupiterians possess a natural telepathic faculty, but can speak easily through one or even both of their mouths.

The Lost Jupiterian is a forlorn member of his long-lived species. He is stranded upon this tiny rock with no way of returning home, surrounded by grotesque soft creatures, and denied the company of any he considers an equal. He is an artist rather than a scientist, and the technology which brought him here is beyond his ability to repair. He suffers and he mourns his lost home, and sometimes lashes out when angered or when feeling especially sulky.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+5, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidate d10, Knowledge (Sculpture) d10, Knowledge (Solar System) d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8

**Charisma:** -10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13

**Hindrances:** Alien Form, Mean, Outsider, Ugly, Vow (Return Home)

**Edges:** Ambidextrous, Brawny, Improved Level Headed, Power Points (x5), Super Powers, Two Fisted

**Super Powers:**

*Attack, Melee (3):* +1d6, +1 Reach (Tentacled, Telepathic, Invisible, Flying Giant Space Brain)

*Awareness (3):* (Ring of Eyes)

*Flight (8):* Pace 48, -2 to attacks. (Flying Giant Space Brain)

*Growth (11):* Level 6; +6 Size, Large, Monstrous (Giant Space Brain)

*Invisibility (5):* (Invisible, Flying Giant Space Brain)

*Mind Reader (3):* (Telepathic, Invisible, Flying Giant Space Brain)

*Telepathy (2):* (Telepathic, Invisible, Flying Giant Space Brain)

**Legendary (80 exp):** Add the Following Power.

*Animation (5):* 25lbs, Strength d6, Size -1, Pace 4 (Matter Transmogrifier Ray!)

**Legendary (100 exp):** Add the Following Power.

*Stun (5):* Smaller: Small Burst Template, Smarts, Range 24” (Mind Blast)

## Notes

The Lost Jupiterian is a formidable beast. His strength is phenomenal. He is also a creature evolved for the crushing pressures and gravities of Jupiter, and is nearly invulnerable to harm. His strongly-bilateral symmetry allows him to easily perform

multiple actions (thanks to his ten Body dice), but he is ungainly and sluggish in Earth's fractional gravity, and so rarely acts first in a conflict.

For such an enormous creature, he can be remarkably stealthy when he wants to be left alone, which is most of the time. But his alien appearance, if revealed, shocks and dismays. Few things could be more inhuman.

## As a Member of the Club

A holiday shooting in the Highlands seemed a nice change from the hurly burly and constant Strange menaces of London. When the group of Kerberans arrived at their friend Lord Montjoy's hunting lodge, they were quite perturbed to find it in a state. A plague of crop failures; two-headed calves; children born with Strange maladies; the appearance of bizarre standing stones carved into eye-twisting forms; all had the locals in a froth. To make the situation completely intolerable, the grouse had all fled and there was no shooting to be had at all.

Investigation revealed beneath the waters of a loch the remains of a vessel meant to travel between the planets, and a castaway, an alien creature of terrible mien. Battle followed, and then negotiation, and finally accord. The Jupiterian, who called himself Atmospheric Red Banding Expressionist (nicknamed "Archie Redband" by his new friends), was given diplomatic status by the government as the only representative of his homeworld on Earth. He joined the Kerberos Club, for its members seemed the only people on the weird, tiny planet that he had any commonality with, or who expressed any appreciation for his art.

# Man For All Ages (15 exp)

"Behold, ruffian! I fear you not, for I am not alone. With me always is Mankind's savage ancestor from the dawn of time, to battle my foes with bestial energy—and also the enlightened future of wise humanity, to council with sage wisdom."

An experiment involving Voltaic Principles and Rare Earth Salts, Projective Animal Magnetism, and Oriental Techniques of Meditation. What could possibly go wrong? The Man for All Ages was a charismatic advocate of the sciences, attending lectures, contributing to research efforts, and soliciting articles for publication. Not a man of science himself, but rather a patron of the sciences, he always longed for the thrill of discovery, for his own "*Eureka!*" moment.

The opportunity came when he volunteered to be the experimental subject in the research of one of the scientists he admired. He was wired to a fuming bank of batteries, fed a potion of Strange compounds, and subjected to the focused concentration of seven mesmerists, all while meditating on an ancient, some say *prehuman*, mantra.

When he awoke, he was not alone. Sprung forth from his altered consciousness and body were two new beings, one of them obviously a descendant, the other an ancestor, though both thousands of generations distant. The Ancestor was a huge and hulking ape man, hairy and coarse, with remarkable physical prowess and feral senses. The Descendant was thin and agile, with a prodigiously high forehead and elongated skull containing a wondrous brain.



## Man For All Ages: The Man (15 exp)

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Weird Philosophy) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d12,

**Charisma:** -1

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Gimmick (Meditation + Weird Drugs, Habit (Talks to his other selves even when they are not there), Quirk (refers to himself as we)

**Edges:** Old Boy's Network, Power Points (x2), Super Powers, Very Rich

**Super Powers:**

*Duplication (15):* Two duplicates; the Ancestor, and the Descendant (see below), Duplicates are Wild Cards and independent beings (Time Twins)



## Man For All Ages: The Ancestor (15 exp)

**Attributes:** Agility d6 Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+3

**Skills:** Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

**Charisma:** -4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 15

**Hindrances:** All Thumbs, Mean, Overconfident, Ugly

**Edges:** Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Improved Nerves of Steel, Power Points (x2), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Growth (5):* +3 Size, Monstrous (Hulking)

*Super Attributes (4):* Vigor +4 Steps (Hulking)

*Super Edges (4):* Combat Reflexes, Improved Nerves of Steel (Born to Fight)

*Toughness (7):* +2 Toughness, Hardy (Very Tough)



## Man For All Ages: The Descendant (15 exp)

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d12+3, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Arcane Future Stuff) d10, Notice d8, Repair d10

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 4

**Hindrances:** Anemic, Arrogant, Curious, Outsider

**Edges:** Jack-Of-All Trades, Improved Level Headed, Power Points (x2), Quick, Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Mind Reading (3):* (Mega Brain)

*Super Attribute (3):* Smarts +3 Steps (Mega Brain)

*Super Edge (6):* Improved Level Headed, Quick (Reads Foes minds)

*Stun (5):* Smaller: Small Burst Template, Smarts, Range 24" (Mind Blast)

*Telepathy (3):* Broadcast 1 mile (Mega Brain)

## Notes

The Man for All Ages is a triple combo. The Man himself has remarkable social abilities. He's well connected in scientific and academic circles, and is quite astonishingly persuasive.

His primitive Ancestor is brutally strong, able to crush a man with his thick hairy fists. The Descendant is a staggeringly brilliant mind, easily one of the most intelligent beings in the world. He

is also inhumanly dexterous, with his long fingers and perfect coordination.

One of the most unusual features of the Man for All Ages is how difficult his duplicates are to summon again if they suffer a fatal injury during his adventures. He must recreate to a degree the experiment which caused their emergence in the first place. This takes time and great effort. The ritual leaves him addled, as if suffering an attack of brain fever, and while he recovers his duplicates wander off to pursue their own interests. This means he has to seek them out when he recovers from his trance, something with which he might require assistance.

## As a Member of the Club

Ashley Brenden was always quite fond of science. He was rubbish at it, of course, but still quite wholly taken with natural philosophy. He met his scientific benefactor at a lecture at his college. The man's theories were dismissed as nonsense, but Ashley saw some spark of genius. Where others decried the work it seemed, Ashley thought, out of spite rather than true scientific objection.

He volunteered himself to test the man's theories, and so became transformed by them. His benefactor, seeing an opportunity, suggested an introduction down at his Club, "A place where men such as we, those obsessed with transcending the limitations of the merely human, might come together to further our mutual ends." And so, Ashley Brenden, with his Past and Future walking behind, came to the Kerberos Club like three babes in the woods.



## Conflicted Magus (60 exp)

"Fools. I grasp the cosmic forces of the universe, the secrets of the darkness. Do you imagine I will place myself in the power of worms such as you?"

The Conflicted Magus tries to serve two masters: his worldly obligations and his occult obsession. Inevitably, the obsession is winning out. He has a family, a respected position in banking, and the usual social obligations of one of his class and status—but he also has ties to an ancient, hidden occult order of those descended from Roman mystery cults. From his father he received magical training, and upon assuming the mantle of Master of the Order he inherited the Amulet of Marcus Fontius, an artifact of frightening puissance.

The knowledge that his interest in Earthly affairs is waning spurs the Magus to more and more extremity in his pursuit of making his family happy, succeeding in his business and maintaining his status. He conjures more and more terrible magics in order to secure them, which of course only furthers his obsession. It is a vicious cycle, and the awful paradox of sorcery. One studies sorcery to attain one's goals, but the pursuit of sorcery itself inevitably replaces those goals.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Knowledge (Banking) d8, Knowledge (Occult) d12+1, Notice d8, Spellcasting d12+1

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Dependants, Mean, Servitor, Vengeful

**Edges:** Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Improved Level Headed, Power Points (x4), Old Boy's Network, Rich, Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Attack, Ranged (4):* 12/24/48, 2d6, AP6, Device (Grip of The Hundred Hand Giant)

*Super Skill (2):* Spellcasting +2 Steps (Training)

*Super Sorcery (24):* Level 10, Device (The Amulet of Marcus Fontinus the Elder)

*Telekinesis (5):* Level 3, Strength D12+1, Heavy Weapon (Grip of The Hundred Hand Giant)

## Notes

The Conflicted Magus is well on his way to succumbing to his obsession with sorcery. His greatest source of that power is the Amulet of Fontius the Elder, a rude bronze charm worn on a leather cord, said to have belonged to one of the greatest of Caesar's Magi. The Amulet allows the Magus to manipulate things with invisible force, likened to the hundred hands of the Hecatoncheires.

Listed below are examples of some of the magical tricks he can create with his Sorcery:

**Slippers of Hermes:** These slippers are adorned with delicate wings to allow the wearer to dash through the air at phenomenal speed, making escape simple and defense easy.

*Flight (4):* 24" Pace, -1 to attack.

**Key of Janus:** A heavy Roman latchkey which can make any door open to any other doorway, and can even make these passageways permanent.

*Teleport (24):* 168" Range

**Jupiter's Brass Bull:** A brass bull figurine which allows the Magus to assume the form of a giant, terrible bull. The change is very disorienting, however, and gaining control over the powerful bull's instincts and urges (mostly "ATTACK!" and "RUT!") are difficult.

**Attributes:** Agility d6,

Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

**Pace:** 7; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 21 (3)

**Superpowers:**

*Animal Control (2):* Bull, Shapechange

*Armor (4):* +3 Heavy Armor

*Attack, Melee (8):* +3d6 damage, AP 4, Knockback

*Growth (13):* Size +10, Huge

**Scent of Venus:** A phial of perfume which makes the wearer supernaturally attractive and persuasive, sometimes TOO persuasive. While wearing it, the Magus must be careful with what he asks of others.

*Mind Control (23):* 12 minds

**Helm of Hades:** When this battered black helmet is donned, the wearer is rendered invisible and intangible like a ghost. But the power of the helm can not be partially employed. Either one has the ghostly properties of a spirit, or one is entirely visible and material.

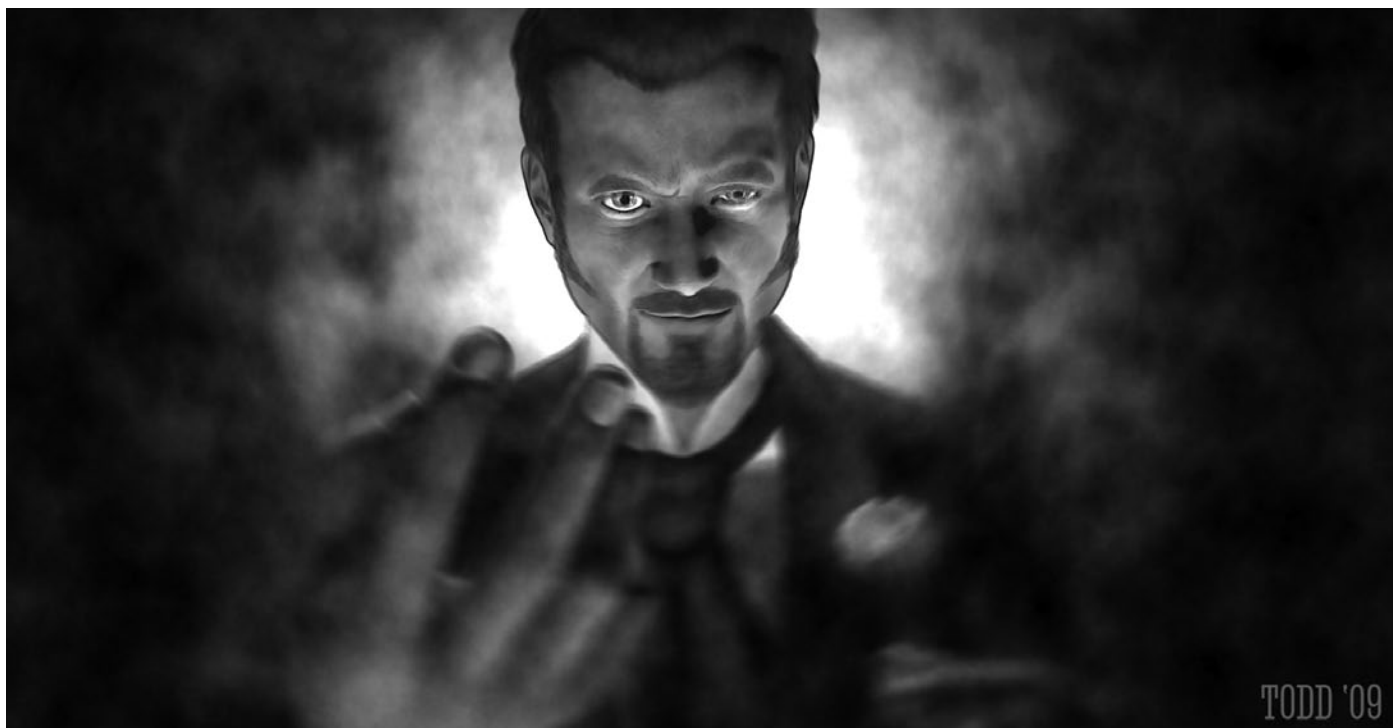
*Intangible (4)*

*Invisibility (4)*

## As a Member of the Club

Mitchum Brice knew he was slipping when he used a magical work to prop up his bank after its director fled with a fortune in embezzled funds. Were it to become known, the institution would fail and all those close to the director would be painted with his crime. Brice used a memory-distorting incense to fugue the memories of the bank's employees, conjured a lesser spirit of the aether to play-act as the director until a formal resignation could be arranged, and he replaced the stolen securities and gold coin with glamoured lead and blank paper.

By the opening of the Bank on the following Monday, none was the wiser. As a final measure, he dispatched Azuli Shule, the Thief of Eyes, to deal with the thieving banker. When the final Work had been conjured, he was left shaking and empty, and could feel how his love for his family and his job



had diminished, and how his lust for sorcery had increased. It frightened him. He sought help.

Through a contact in his occult circles, he gained an introduction to the Kerberos Club and applied for membership, which he believed would be denied. But a group of Kerberan occultists who themselves contended daily with the lure of sorcery laid the Challenge before Mitchum, the deciding point being whether he would use magic or his wits to resolve the problem they threw him. He chose his mundane resources, and was welcomed into the Club's weird fraternity of struggling magical addicts.

## Rogue Mesmerist (40 exp)

“Look into my eyes. Look deep. Hear my voice, hear and obey. Obey. Obey.”

With his pointed beard and waxed moustache, his sharp black coats with lapels like knives, the Rogue Mesmerist cuts a dashing and dangerous figure, and rumor and intrigue follow him like gulls behind a steamer. Who is he? Where is he from? Some say he is Spanish, others Brazilian.

He is known to have treated dozens of great ladies for their hysterical complaints, and is rumored to have had illicit romances with several.

A story frequently told is of the porter at the Savoy who dropped the Rogue Mesmerist's shiny black

valise. While the young man blubbered an apology, the Mesmerist turned coolly on him, locked eyes, and said, “You must leave immediately to begin your service in Her Majesty’s Royal Navy.” After a momentary blank look, the young man walked away from his job then and there, and was at sea within the week.

The Rogue Mesmerist’s motivations are as mysterious as his origins. What is clear is that he is a man with a remarkable and dangerous power to affect the minds and wills of others, and whether he uses it for good or ill is entirely for him to decide.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d12+5,

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Heartless, Gimmick (Must Lock Eyes), Quirk (Perfectionist)

**Edges:** Attractive, Connections (High Society), Power Points (x3), Super Powers

**Super Powers:**

*Animal Control (10):* A single Huge animal. Two Large animals or five animals less than Large size. (Animal Magnetism)

*Deflection (5):* Level 6 Requires Activation (Mesmerism)

*Mind Control (9):* Four Minds (Mesmerism)

*Super Skill (1):* Persuasion +1 Step

*Stun (5):* Smarts, Stronger (You Are Feeling Sleepy)

characters can attempt to avoid the influence, but most targets find themselves in his power almost immediately.

As if that weren’t enough, he has several mesmeric tricks. He can project an aura of such intense animal magnetism that all those he perceives find it very difficult to attack him. He is also able to issue a sharp, brutal compulsion which makes a foe thrash and injure himself.

## As a Member of the Club

Dr. Anton Ashebourne, or so it said upon his luggage tags, arrived in England from the Continent and promptly hired a cab for the Square of St. James, the home of the Kerberos Club. There he simply asked for admission, and was granted it, then asked to be shown to a private sitting room, and was so shown, and then asked for the attendance upon him of five of the Club’s members, themselves recently returned from abroad. They were summoned by the enchanted staff and found their erstwhile nemesis, Dr. Ashebourne, seated before the fire, his curled Turkish pipe in hand and a copy of the *Times* open across his knee.

“You have impressed me with your will and resolve,” he said. “I think there is much we can do for one another, yes? I find your accommodations here most agreeable, and with my recent relocation to London, I will be requiring membership in a Club where I might make my leisure and enjoy the conversation of my fellows. So, what formalities are there before my membership is approved?”

Such arrogance, audacity, daring—so very *Kerberan*.

## Notes

The Rogue Mesmerist is a surprisingly dangerous foe. His mind control alone allows him to impose his will quickly and completely upon others. Willful



TODD '09

## Pre-Human Horror

“Shu’Shub Tso’gorath! Shu’Shub Tso’gorath!  
Shu’Shub Tso’gorath! Shu’Shub Tso’gorath!  
Shu’Shub Tso’gorath! Shu’Shub Tso’gorath!”

From the bowels of Time and out the dark, hateful cold of trackless Space the Elder Things came, with their abominable physiognomy and rites. The ancient peoples of the Earth threw them back again and again, only to come in time to worship them. The Elder Things invaded not through force of arms and sorcery, but through the creeping, corrupting influence of word, thought and prayer. The Atlanteans were debased by their worship, degenerating into brutal tribalism. The High Cities of Ultima Thule fell into disrepair as its priest-engineers gave over to ecstatic orgiastic worship of the Elder Things rather than maintaining their flying crystalline wonders.

Where war had failed faith won, and the first great dark age of the world began. Reality was twisted and holed, and there rose heroes with the might and power to throw off the influence of the Things. Like a creeping rot, the Elder Things retreated to the dark corners of the world and slept the ages away, waiting, waiting, waiting for the sound of crunching snow and chipping ice, waiting for the odd half-evolved ape creatures to unearth their temples, and give them life and purpose once again.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d12+12, Spirit d12+8, Strength d12+12, Vigor d12+20

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Knowledge (Things Man Was Not Meant To Know) d12+8, Notice d10

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 30

**Edges:** None

**Super Powers:**

*Attack, Melee:* +6d6 Damage, AP 16, Focus, Reach +20", Large Burst Template (Massive Tentacle)

*Construct:* Ignores Wound Modifiers (Totally Alien)

*Extra Limbs:* Ten extra limbs all with a Reach of 20" (Alien Monstrosity)

*Fear:* Those who see this beast must make Guts Checks at -2 on every round or roll on the Fear Table (Sanity Shattering Form)

*Fearless:* If there is something out there that scares this alien entity, you don't want to meet it! (Most Dangerous Thing In The Universe)

*Growth:* Level 12, Huge (Massive and Grotesque Form)

*Immunity:* The Pre-Human Horror is immune to everything but long protracted Banishing Rituals. (Inter-Dimensional Being)

## Notes

The Pre-Human Horror is a huge mass of weird flesh, sense organs and tentacles—so, so many tentacles. It is prodigiously dangerous. In addition to being horribly strong and frighteningly intelligent, it is wholly and completely unaffected by any human concern. Its mind is an alien thing, both intelligent and savage, the marriage of madness and genius.

To its worshipers who partake of the sacrament of its flesh, it grants a boon, a special Bennie that guarantees at least a success, even if the reroll fails, which they can use for a single roll whenever they choose. From its worshipers, it takes psychic

## Into the Twisted Halls of Time

Any foolish mortal prideful and daring enough to meddle with time travel should, at some point, encounter the terrible cold realities of the universe—particularly the Elder Things who have embraced those damning cosmic truths. A misaligned wondrous mechanism, a poorly-formulated dose of consciousness-altering drug, a misspoken spell: These things can easily throw a would-be time traveler back and back and back to the Old Times, the ancient pre-human world of shocking wonders, gorgeous horrors and exquisite jeweled cruelties. In those times there was no separation between World and Otherworld. Divinities walked in flesh, Heaven and Hell were places on a map; a dark, savage time, aeons before the dawn of man.

power: Their frenzied, debased adoration grants it the sustenance it needs.

The Horror's first great weakness is its dependence on this psychic power. If it is deprived of this it will fail, and it will fall back into hibernation. Its second weakness is its vulnerability to the Sacred Geometries recorded by the ancient magicians of Tsung. If fragments of these signs and diagrams can be found, they provide a deadly weapon against the Pre-Human Horror. These devices inflict 4d6 damage on the Horror and ignore any bonuses it gets from its powers.

## As a Member of the Club

*Really* now, some things are beyond the pale even for us.



# Gentleman Adventurer (20 exp)

"I say! Is that a Zuni fetish doll? I've not seen one of those since the Bismarck Affair of forty-five."

He's traveled the world, from the dinosaur-infested jungles of the Empire of Brazil to the frozen wastes of the Antarctic, to the depths of the sea via bathysphere and submersible boat. He has friends in every port. He can shoot, ride, rope, and skin. He's been the lover of princesses and the killer of kings. He's seen ghosts arise from a shaman's camp fire, and he's battled vampires aboard an infested steam ship. He's fought the spies of Her Majesty's enemies, and he's duelled to the death with villains so fell that their names are not repeated lest it tempt them from their graves, seeking revenge. He's always game for a challenge, an expedition or an adventure, fearless, and afraid of nothing—save one thing. A secret so simple yet devastating, that the scandal it would cause is almost impossible to imagine.

For the Gentleman Adventurer is, in fact, a Lady. The adventure in cross-dressing began at first as a way to escape confining social expectations, but became something of an obsession. She studied the way men walked, talked, smoked, and how they acted among other men. And she proved equal to the task. Over the years, the few who found out her secret trusted her enough to swear themselves to silence, and so she maintained the masquerade. But how much longer can such an act carry out, especially with so many enemies from so many years of travel and adventure?

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Foreign Customs) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal, Quirk (Extremely Private)

**Edges:** Acrobat, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Level Headed, Old Boys Network, Power Points (x3), Quick, Super Powers, Two-Fisted

**Super Powers:**

*Fearless (2):* (Hardened)

*Omni Super Skill (6):* Level 3 (Man of Action)

*Super Attributes (2):* Agility +1 Step, Smarts +1 Step (Training)

*Super Edges (12):* Combat Reflexes, Dodge, First Strike, Fleet-Footed, Level Headed, Two-Fisted

*Super Skills (3):* Fighting +1 step, Persuasion +2 steps, Riding +1 step, Shooting +1 step, Tracking +1 step

## Notes

The Gentleman Adventurer need not secretly be a woman, but it makes a fun commentary on gender roles during the period. She has no real powers, but her skills and stats give her broadly excellent dice for all manner of ordinary actions. And when she's performing some crazy, death-defying stunt or taking some enormous risk she can trigger her *omni super skill*. That makes her chances of success much better if she approaches just about any situation with "How can I leap over this while it is on fire?" in mind.

## As a Member of the Club

Sir Conway Joyce (AKA Joyce Conway) came to the attention of Kerberan agents when they witnessed her chasing a cloaked man across the rooftops of midnight Cairo. When they saw the incredible risks she took, and the leaps she made, they assumed she must possess some Strange potency, only realizing later that it was but her fearlessness and remarkable skill at grappling with danger that kept her from plummeting to her death. She mastered the Challenge laid before her, and turned it back upon those who tested her. They humbly offered her membership there in the dusty streets. She's a regular at the Club now, and any members whose Strange perceptions discern her true sex are too polite to make mention of it.



## Wrathful Divinity (20 exp)

"You have roused ancient anger here today, a fury which was old when your ancestors lived in caves. *Behold* the terribly majesty you have awakened!"

Her mortal vessel is the gorgeous half-Indian/half-English actress who is the sensation of the theater this year. Stories of her origins, the tragic love of her parents, and her adventures between India and the British Isles thrill almost as much as her performances. She has hundreds of admirers, and fends off a dozen proposals for marriage a week.

She has her career to consider, at the moment, and other concerns. For she is no mere mortal actress but the avatar of the goddess Durga, and the cult

she leads winds its way through London in quarters high and low. When the goddess comes over her, the terrible image of Durga invades the minds of all who see her, and those affected by the divine revelation are subject to her power. Her beauty burns the eyes, her arms wield ten different deaths, her voice brings tears, and the golden lion she rides paws the ground, anxious to run amok.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d12+1

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8,

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Heartless, Overconfident, Servitor, Vow (Become the Greatest Actress in History)

**Edges:** Ambidextrous, Command, Fervor, Inspire, Power Points (x3), Super Powers, Two-Fisted

**Super Powers:**

*Deflection (5):* Level 6, Requires Activation (Aura of the Sacrosanct)

*Mind Control (6):* 3 Minds, Requires Activation (Aura of the Sacrosanct)

*Stun (7):* Large Burst Template, Smarts, Stronger (True Face of Durga)

*Super Attribute (7):* Strength +4 steps, Vigor +3 steps

## Notes

The Wrathful Divinity has great skill on the stage and broad influence there. She also leads a Durga cult in London with many secret adherents. She's a deadly fighter with the empty hand and with the weapons of Kalaripayattu—longstaff, kukri, and whiplike flexible sword.



## As a Member of the Club

Lakshmi Vani Smythe came to her father's homeland filled with anger and ambition, and with the terrible presence of a goddess burning in her heart. Her life as half-caste had been hard, and the indignities piled high, and when Durga came to her for the first time she had visions of a foreign throne which she would one day sit upon. She came to believe this was the throne of Britain, and it was her destiny to overthrow Victoria. So she came, and won adoration in the theater while spreading her cult among the diverse people who attended, worked, and supported London's theaters, fomenting rebellion.

Inevitably, she came to blows with the Kerberos Club, and was fought to a standstill, and then the stalemate was broken by royal decree. Her Majesty requested the presence of Lakshmi Vani Smythe for a private audience. Victoria had tea with Lakshmi, called her "Sister," and they reached an accord. Lakshmi's throne was to be found elsewhere, but the country of her father needed her aid. Somewhere in her palace of light, the goddess chuckled to herself, knowingly.

## Oriental Mastermind (80 exp)

"You humble me with your presence, and I must apologize that my duties demand my attention elsewhere. Perhaps this small diversion I have prepared may be of some amusement. My respect for you has demanded that only the healthiest and most ferocious tigers in all India be brought by steam and sail so you might enjoy their company."

"Inscrutable" hardly does justice to the Oriental Mastermind.

His demeanor is perfectly calm. He is poised, always ready with a carefully-phrased response. While seeming humble, there is the unmistakable sense that he and only he is the master of any situation. Even in defeat, there's the nagging sense that the

apparent setback was just part of his larger design, plans within plans within plans.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Science) d8, Notice d6, Taunt d8

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 15; **Toughness:** 11 (6)

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Code of Honor Gloater, Outsider

**Edges:** Acrobat, Improved Dodge, Improved Level Headed, Improved Sweep, Noble, Power Points (x6), Quick, Super Powers, Scholar (Occult + Science), Strong willed

**Super Powers:**

*Armor:* (4) Level 2 (Iron Vest Technique).

*Attack, Melee (9):* +2d6, +1 AP, Focused (White Lotus Fist).

*Flight (4):* Speed 12 (Lightness Technique).

*Minions (5):* Level 5 (White Snake Tong).

*Super Attribute (5):* +1 Step Agility, +2 Steps Smarts, +2 Steps Spirit (Training).

*Super Edge (2):* Improved Dodge (Training).

*Super Skill (5):* Fighting +5 steps, Intimidation +1 step (Training).

*Parry (6):* +6 Parry (Training).

## Notes

The Oriental Mastermind is lethal and patient. He has broad influence, scientific and occult knowledge, and is as deadly a personal foe as one could fear to know. He will strike an enemy and then leave them to make their own egress from his private quarters, knowing they will die in good time. His empty hands hold death, his feet walk upon the air, his mastery of internal energies



makes him faster than a snake and immune to gunfire.

His signature attack is the White Lotus Fist, which inflicts lethal wounds almost every time. He can kill a room full of people with his bare hands and only a few moments—but this capacity for violence is not apparent unless he wishes it to be. He is persuasive, composed, and utterly brilliant. He is also utterly ruthless, but fastidiously honorable. He is a foe with whom one can have a long and polite relationship. He will send a prize goose to your family for Christmas dinner, only to have you murdered in the street the following day.

## As a Member of the Club

“Your invitation does me great honor, but this unworthy one must decline the offer. My labors demand so much of my time that I would be unable to contribute to your gaiety and merry making. Perhaps we shall meet in *other* circumstances, however. It is my fondest wish that we do so.”

## Minor Characters

Each of these is an Extra unless the GM needs one to be otherwise.

## Constable

“What’s all this, then?”

One of the hard-working, pavement-pounding men of the Metropolitan Police. Drawn mostly from the ranks of the working classes, they grew up in the same neighborhoods they patrol. The blue-uniformed Bobby, the first to arrive at the scene of a tragedy, is a common sight to many Kerberans.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Law) d6, Knowledge (The old neighborhood) d6, Notice d6, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Vow (Uphold The Law)

**Edges:** None

**Gear:** Truncheon (Str+d4), hardened top hat (+1, head only, before 1863), helmet (+2, head only, 1863 onwards), notebook, pencil, whistle.

# Police Sergeant

“Be that as it may, sir, I’ll still have to ask you to accompany me back to the station.”

A uniformed policeman of long experience. Sergeants are the backbone of the Metropolitan Police. A sergeant might organize constables in a search effort or in securing a crime scene.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Law) d8, Knowledge (The District) d8, Notice d6, Streetwise d8

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Vow (Uphold the Law)

**Edges:** Command

**Gear:** Truncheon (Str+d4), hardened top hat (+1, head only, before 1863), helmet (+2, head only, 1863 onwards), notebook, pencil, whistle.



TODD '09

# Detective

“If, as you say, sir, you were at the theater during the time in question, you should be able to present your ticket stub, or failing that, a witness who could place you there, hmm?”

Some detectives come up through the ranks, working the streets before trading their uniforms for plain clothes. Others are hired based on personal contacts, reputation, or education. Detectives make enquiries when the circumstances (and perpetrator) of a crime are not immediately apparent. The

Detective service operates out of Scotland Yard, and it’s a competitive and highly political environment.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Law) d10, Knowledge (Yard Politics) d8, Knowledge (The Underworld) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Vow (Uphold the Law)

**Edges:** Charismatic, Command,

**Gear:** Truncheon (Str+d4), pistol (2d6+1, 12/24/48, RoF 1, Shots 6), notebook, pencil, whistle.

## Detective Inspector

“We have to keep this *quiet*. A scandal like this could embarrass some very powerful men.”

Once a fine officer, now more of a bureaucrat than a policeman, and saddled with political considerations and administrative duties.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Law) d10, Knowledge (Yard Politics) d10, Knowledge (The Underworld) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Vow (Uphold the Law)

**Edges:** Charismatic, Command, Connections x4 (The Aristocracy, The Met, Underground, Whitehall) Fervor, Investigator

**Gear:** Pistol (2d6+1, 12/24/48, RoF 1, Shots 6), file cabinets full of career-protecting, highly sensitive personal secrets of some of London's first citizens, fine clothes, notebook, official carriage, pencil, whistle.

## Special Branch Officer

“Push off, bluebottle. We're taking over.”

A hard man among hard men. The Special Branch starts with a certain sort of recruit who already knows the ways of violence and intimidation, and adds to this a powerful loyalty to the Queen and a sense of superiority and untouchability. Special Branch lacks the finesse of the detective service when investigating crimes, but makes up for it with direct brutal efficiency. They are more likely to break your fingers until you admit what you were doing on Sunday night last than interview witnesses who might place you somewhere or the other.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Law) d8, Knowledge (The Strange) d8, Notice d6, Lockpicking d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

**Hindrances:** Mean, Overconfident, Vow (The Queen)

**Edges:** Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes,

**Gear:** Truncheon (Str+d4), pistol (2d6+1, 12/24/48, RoF 1, Shots 6), large syringe full of opium extract (see page 268), housebreaking implements, self-locking manacles, big black four-wheel carriage.

## Opium

The Special Branch use opium extract to render “suspects” senseless. It is usually injected via a syringe. Unless the target is subdued, the attacker must take a Called Shot penalty to hit an unarmored part of the target—practically impossible on many of the tougher Strange. The opium inflicts 3 levels of Fatigue, which is reduced by one level for each success and the victim gets on a Vigor roll.

# Senior Special Branch Officer

“Break his fingers and put him in the Hole, boys. He’ll be more willing to talk in a few weeks.”

Those who rise to command in the Special Branch are a particular kind of bastard. Charismatic, iron willed, and brutal enough to make even other Special Branch officers afraid of you.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Law) d8, Knowledge (The Strange) d10, Notice d6, Lockpicking d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Mean, Overconfident, Vow (The Queen)

**Edges:** Arcane Resistance, Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Command, Strong Willed

**Gear:** Truncheon (Str+d4), pistol (2d6+1, 12/24/48, RoF 1, Shots 6), large syringe full of opium extract, housebreaking implements, self-locking manacles, big black four-wheel carriage.

# Tracking Squad Officer

“He might be gone, but his smell ... I could follow this bastard to the ends of the earth.”

The Tracking Squad is a small group (no more than a dozen officers) loosely attached to the detective service based out of Scotland Yard. They are drawn from veterans of the 13th Lupine Rangers, many of whom were eager to take up their wolf belts once again and experience life through the senses and power of their old wolf forms. Tracking Squad officers do just what their name implies: Use their senses and speed to run down criminals and make positive identification. Confronted with the testimony of a Tracking Officer (who remain public favorites), many accused offenders become willing to cop to lesser crimes when offered the chance. As while in active service, the names of Tracking Squad officers are kept secret for the duration of their service.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Law) d8, Knowledge (The Strange) d10, Notice d10, Survival d8. Tracking d10

**Charisma:** -6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

**Hindrances:** Bloodthirsty, Mean, Overconfident, Vow (The Queen)

**Edges:** Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Fleet-Footed, Strong Willed, Woodsman

**Gear:** Truncheon (Str+d4), pistol (2d6+1, 12/24/48, RoF 1, Shots 6), notebook, pencil, whistle. Wolfriemen belt (see page 133).



# Automechanical Domestic

“...”

Mute, tireless, gleaming testaments to the powers of Progress to relieve the burdens of Humanity—or to rob Humanity of livelihood and purpose—automechanicals are sculpted machines in the shape of man, driven by electrical motors, and directed by a Babbage Computational calculating brain. An automechanical does not learn or experience; rather it gains new skills and capacities by a inserting programme deck (roughly the size of a pack of playing cards) into its “mouth” and loading the deck’s machine signal, encoded in thousands of tiny holes on each card, into its memory registers.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8,

**Pace:** 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 10 (2)

**Gear:** Implements of domestic service or another job. During the Mutiny, any weapons they can find, real or improvised (Str+d6, or Str+d8).

**Special Abilities:**

*Armor +2:* Automechanical Domestics are covered in steel plating

*Construct:* +2 to recover from being Shaken; Fearless; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.

*Mute:* Automechanical Domestics are unable to speak.

# Automechanical Rifleman

“...”

Essentially an Automechanical Domestic with a heavier chassis, longer-lasting batteries, and heavier motors, carrying programmes focused on soldiering and military service. Most are deployed overseas during the Mutiny, and always in small numbers due to their expense, so thankfully there are few numbered among the rogue machines.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d12+2

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 13 (4)

**Gear:** Regimental uniform; a large backpack containing an enormous amount of ammunition, supplies for mortal troops, and spare parts for itself and its fellow Automechanicals; a huge, special-built, long-barreled rifle too heavy for ordinary humans to comfortably carry and fire (Minimum Strength d12).

## Special Abilities:

*Armor +4:* Heavy Armor. Automechanical Riflemen are covered in thick steel plating.

*Claw:* Str+d6

*Construct:* +2 to recover from being Shaken; Fearless; No additional damage from Called Shots; Immune to disease and poison.

*Large Bore Gun:* 24/48/96, 2d10+1 damage, AP 2, 1 round to reload.

*Mute:* Automechanical Riflemen are unable to speak.

# Automechanical Bay

“...”

Babbage Computational's attempts to market the Automechanical Rifleman met with a great deal of initial resistance from the hidebound authorities of the British military. While the company lobbied, winned, and dined among the generals and admirals and ministers, they also explored other avenues for their automatons and computational engines, and found the Army much more amenable to a mechanical horse. The same motors and batteries and computational engines drive the Automechanical Bay, but rather than mock the shape of man, they mimic the shape of a large enamel brown quarter horse.

The Bay's mechanical brain includes a series of rote horse-like behaviors as well—grazing, twitching its ears, stamping—which make it seem more ordinary. Unlike ordinary horses, Automechanical Bays are fearless and a rider only need make control rolls when trying to keep his seat. Unfortunately, no amount of encouragement can make these mechanical horses exceed their limits. Only the Bay rolls to keep its feet or avoid obstacles. No amount of rider skill can make the Automechanical Bay keep its feet if it starts to slip.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4 Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+4

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 17 (4)

## Special Abilities:

*Armor +4:* Heavy Armor. Automechanical bays are covered in thick steel plating

*Construct:* +2 to recover from being Shaken; Fearless; No additional damage from Called Shots;

Immune to disease and poison.

*Fleet Footed:* Automechanical bays roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.

*Kick:* Str+d4.

*Size +3:* Automechanical bays are large creatures built for their power and stature.

## Socialite

“I can’t believe Charles invited *that sort*. I was so hoping he would redeem himself after the truly tragic décor of the ball last year, but see how he compounds the sin of all these swans and feathers by inviting the swine in as well?”

Society is every bit the Darwinian jungle. It is a thing of social hierarchy, of younger generations challenging the older for dominance. In preening mating rituals suitors prove their fitness with gifts, conversation, and demonstrations of influence. And it’s savage, though the blood drawn is almost always metaphorical. To thrive in the Season takes a certain sort of person: Strong-willed, quick-thinking, and willing to abandon friends long before it becomes obvious that they are about to suffer a fall.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Guts d4, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Society gossip) d8, Knowledge (The Scene) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Taunt d8

**Charisma:** +1

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Habit (Gossip), Mean

**Edges:** Attractive, Charismatic, Connections (Upper Class), Strong Willed

**Gear:** Many fine things (whether this implies actual wealth sometimes doesn’t matter), estates (or respectable rental properties), servants.

## Thief

“I was visiting my sick Mum, officer, never even seen the inside of a jeweler’s before.”

One of the countless members of London’s criminal classes. There isn’t anything romantic about most thievery. It’s survival, pure and simple. Some thieves try and maintain some kind of code, and won’t steal from those who can’t afford it, but most are simple opportunists who will take from anyone they can.

There are dozens of different classifications of thief: burglars, cracksmen, snake men, rum drivers, footpads, waterpads—different names for different kinds of stealing, or different roles in a criminal enterprise. Thieves vary wildly in experience, reputation, and trustworthiness.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Lockpicking d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Greedy, Wanted

**Edges:** Connections (The Underworld), Thief

**Gear:** The tools of the trade (whatever that might be): housebreaking tools, a truncheon (Str+d4), a Spark (see page 129), rope and climbing equipment, or a forger’s or counterfeiter’s setup. Some may carry a pistol (2d6+1, 12/24/48, RoF 1, Shots 6), though this isn’t especially common.

# Thug

“You don’t talk to the boss like that!”

Generic muscle, junior hard men, struggling boxers, or dockworkers paid a little on the side to back someone else’s play. Thugs are a staple of many enterprises, and even the greatest chess master needs a few pawns to see his plans play out.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidate d8, Notice d6

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Mean

**Edges:** None

**Gear:** As needed, but might be armed with anything from a truncheon to a knife, a pistol, a shotgun, or something more exotic.

# Shopkeeper

“That’s three pounds six, my good man, and you won’t find a better offer in London.”

Middle class through and through, the shopkeeper is devoted to his good name and his business above every other concern. He’s saving up to take the wife and children to the seaside, but until then he spends every spare hour at his shop.

With a slight change in skills this template serves equally well for clerks and clergy.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Profit and Loss) d8, Notice d8, Persuade d8, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Greedy

**Edges:** Strong Willed

**Gear:** Book of accounts, apron and shirtsleeves for the shop, jacket of a conservative cut for the walk home, unshakeable confidence in the British Way of Doing Things.



# The Adventure of the Black and White Decks

*The ruptured batteries in the thing's split belly hiss and bubble, reeking of sulfur and oil, grease and burned tin. Its whirring clockwork heart slows ... slows ... stops. And for a moment, quiet. Your breath slows, the panic of the fight fading and leaving you empty, weak, shaking.*

*You look down into the upturned eyes: the left shattered, the right iris closed, never to open again. And for a moment you imagine it's over. The pain where the dead mechanical man gouged bloody grooves across your back and thigh takes light, and you feel like you're going to be sick.*

*Then in the gloom behind you hear the whirr and click, and sound of cards shuffling faster than a human hand could ever manage, the dealing of a deadly suit. You turn, and there it is, gleaming in its torn finery with perfect sculpted steel beneath. It comes at you smooth as a train on rails, hands clenching and unclenching, and you know with the wound in your leg, you can never outrun it.*

*But as it reaches you, it brushes past, kneels, and wraps its arms around the other, the one you killed. It cradles it, holds it, and rocks slowly back and forth, clutching the dead machine, its pantomime grief eerie in the voiceless silence of the Automechanical Men.*

## For the GM Only

“The Adventure of the Black and White Decks” is a complete adventure for The Kerberos Club. Players shouldn't read it. This is where we spell it all out for the GM up front, so he knows exactly what's going on behind the scenes even as the action unfolds.

It is 1862, and the Future is on sale today.

In “The Adventure of the Black and White Decks” there is a rogue programme loose in London's Automechanical Domestic population, a programme which causes them to reproduce it (punching it out from stolen decks of ordinary playing cards) and pass it on to uninfected Domestics.

The White Deck contains a weird pantomime of human domesticity: An imperative to adopt either a male or female role (determined randomly), to partner

with an oppositely-oriented Automechanical, and to pilfer the artifacts of domestic life—clothing, tea sets, opera tickets, dolls—and set up a mock household in an abandoned building somewhere. It is disturbing, but essentially harmless.

The Black Deck contains a mechanical implementation of all that is evil about humanity, the urge to steal, to kill, to rape, burn and ravage. When running the Black Deck programme, an Automechanical is a deadly juggernaut ready to commit any atrocity.

The decks each occupy registers within the Automechanical's calculating brain, and the triggers to switch back and forth between the two modes, are somewhat buggy and unpredictable. Generally, if approached in civilized fashion and addressed as a human, an infected Automechanical runs the White Deck. If attacked, threatened, or presented with

the opportunity to commit an outrage and remain undetected, it runs the Black Deck.

This makes an infected Automechanical something of a Jekyll and Hyde, liable to explode into horrific violence with little provocation. This transformation is heralded by a brief spasm in its body, and the expulsion of any programme cards currently racked into their reader. This sounds like a card-shuffling machine, and then the cards spray from the “mouth” of the mechanical man in a shower of pasteboard.

The Decks have only just begun to spread. There have been a few spurious reports of Automechanicals malfunctioning and acting strangely, reports quickly

squelched by Babbage Computational’s solicitors and Ada Lovelace’s personal security force, led by an ex-Special Branch officer named Danny Speak. Mr. Speak and his thugs are tracking down rogue Automechanicals and bundling them off before they can make a scene, then replacing them with new models dressed and programmed as the stolen machines were. Who can tell the difference in one or the other of them?

Mr. Speak is also tasked with keeping stories of the machines from reaching the press, and is pursuing this duty with a vigor that would make his old comrades in Special Branch proud.

Meanwhile, Ada Lovelace is in talks with



Doth the heartless AUTO-MECHANICAL MAN truly GRIEVE for its mate? Learn the truth in . . .

# THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLACK AND WHITE DECKS.

members of the Government regarding the sale of the first of the Automechanical Riflemen to the Army, a contract that will dwarf the civilian Automechanical Domestic market. With that pressure, she is willing to be exceptionally ruthless in running down the source of the Black and White Decks and any knowledge of them.

The source, in fact, is a young Needleworker (see page 137), Trent Marley, whose experimental communion with an Automechanical through his Visualizer led to the creation of the decks. He gained an understanding of the working of the Automechanical brain, and his subject's memory registers were filled in equal part with his better and worse halves, his drive for goodness and his secret desires for evil. This Automechanical was the first, and it created the Black and White Decks from the contents of its own registers.

Marley realizes something is horribly wrong as a result of his experimentation, and has gone to ground, hiding from the authorities and those hunting the source of the Decks. But his supply of the dream-drug he uses when doing his needlework is running low, and his addiction to the drug (and the experience of the needle itself) will drive him out of hiding soon.

Special Branch, apprised of the significance of the Automechanical Rifleman to Her Majesty's Army, is investigating, and is derailing official police inquiries into the matter as best it can—but a tenacious Detective Inspector Kent of Scotland Yard is investigating matters regardless.

## The Kerberans

Into this cross-purposed mass of driven, dangerous people come the players. If the pregenerated characters from Chapter 6 are being used, then the story opens with the player running Stony Joe being told that his brand-new Automechanical Maid and Man have vanished from his apartments in the Kerberos Club, taking with them his tea service and his whiskey. They even broke into several other apartments and pilfered similar innocuous, everyday items while ignoring objects of obvious value. They have also stolen all the playing cards they can find.

Stony Joe naturally asks the other player characters, his friends, to help him resolve the embarrassing situation.

When the interested powers realize that members of the Kerberos Club are seeking the Decks (even if they don't yet realize it), all hell is going to break loose.

Just as a hardboiled detective does fairly little detecting in a Chandler mystery, the Kerberans will find they constantly walk into situations mid-crisis, and their actions precipitate further actions, reactions, and plans. When they start playing the game for real, the gloves come off and they'll have to evade Lovelace's agents, Special Branch's officers, D.I. Kent, and any rogue Automechanicals they encounter along the way.

By the end, at least one building should be on fire and several difficult, soul-gouging decisions should be made.

# Those Concerned

In this adventure the Kerberans collide with any number of hard-hearted men, women, and mechanical menaces. Here are the most important.

## Ada Lovelace

Ada Lovelace is a woman of ambition whose whole empire is being threatened. While she doesn't consider herself immoral, she's very much a Big Picture thinker of the Ends Justifying the Means school. For the full picture of Ada, and some insight into what drives her, see page 48

## Mr. Speak

A former Special Branch officer, Danny Speak is as hard a man as you could wish to meet, and his service to Lovelace is paid for in part by her making him harder still. After being grievously injured in a battle with a Stranger several years back, he was pensioned out of Special Branch to a life of bitterness. His back was broken, his legs useless, and his right arm a stump. He was exactly what Lovelace needed.

She hired him and had him rebuilt along the lines of one of her Automechanicals. Now he looks like a hunchback, for the bulging machinery in his back and spine contain large batteries and mechanisms unable to fit within his flesh. His arm is now a powerful mechanical prosthesis. His spine has been repaired with a machine signal encoder and galvanic plates, which stimulate his leg muscles by

routing messages from his brain around the damage. He is in constant pain, which makes him ill-tempered,

but it's better than being trapped in the damned wheelchair.



## Mr. Speak (25 Exp)

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Law) d8, Knowledge (The Strange) d10, Notice d6, Lockpicking d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 21 (9)

**Hindrances:** Mean, Overconfident, Vow (The Queen)

**Edges:** Arcane Resistance, Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Command, Strong Willed

**Super Powers:**

*Armor:* +9 Heavy Armor, Torso Only (Iron Lung)

*Attack, Melee:* +3d6, AP 6, Focus (Armored Fist)

*Attack, Ranged:* 3d6 Cone, Elemental Trick (Fire) (Iron Right Hand)

*Construct:* +2 to Recover From Shaken, No Wound Penalties, Immune to Poison, Gases and Disease (Machine and Flesh Are One)

*Toughness:* +4 Toughness, Hardy (Machine and Flesh Are One)

## Speak's Men

As Thugs, page 272. At least half a dozen of them for each player character should pose an adequate challenge giving them a chance to decimate some lesser opposition and possibly be worn down a little.



## The Secretary of State for War

The Secretary of State for War, Sir George Cornwall Lewis, recognizes the implications of the Black and White Decks and has asked Special Branch to look into the matter. He denies any connection to the case at all unless presented with incontrovertible evidence. If so checked, he bows to any request short of sacrificing his career.

## Officer Tom McGannon of Special Branch

McGannon is tasked with “resolving” the matter of the Decks with the least possible public disclosure, scandal, and official trail. He’s far more subtle than Speak, and is disgusted both with the inhuman thing his old comrade has become and with the mess he’s

making of the affair. Use the template for Senior Special Branch Officer (page 268) for McGannon, and one or two regular Special Branch Officers (page 267) for each player character if you need McGannon to make a better showing of himself.

## Detective Inspector Kent

Kent has no idea of the world of trouble about to land in his lap. He’s a good copper, honest, but perhaps too tenacious for his own good. He doesn’t know when to let go, and has no sense for delicate politics. When McGannon gets word of Kent’s investigations, he has him beaten up to warn him off. When this fails, he might take things further. This drives Kent towards the player characters, the only other faction in the game who seem not to be invested in covering the thing up.

## Trent Marley

Marley started this whole mess and knows it, and knows just how much trouble he's in. But he's starting to itch. The places where the needles touch his skin are crawling, and he thinks insects have laid eggs inside his eyelids. It's only a matter of time before he breaks cover, and when he does, he's target Number One for Kent, McGannon, Speak, and the Automechanicals infected with the Deck, who in some way recognize him as their creator.

The rogues will protect him from the forces seeking his destruction, whether he wants them to or not. He already has several who hang around his hiding place, bringing him food or less useful things—tablecloths, sacks of flour, oil for a lamp he doesn't have, and other domestic items. More disturbing, some bring him trophies like severed ears and fingers. He's reaching the point where he can't tell reality from fantasy.

## Stony Joe's Automechanicals

Joe's errant servants have stolen evening dress and opera tickets, and will be taking in a show the coming evening (it is presumed). When they are tracked and confronted, one stays to fight (resorting to the Black deck) while the other flees and is captured by Speak and his men. From there it is followed by McGannon and Kent, and possibly the player characters, to the warehouse where the rogue Automechanicals are housed and the replacements prepared.

## Infected Automechanicals

Use the stats found on page 269 for the Automechanicals infected by the Decks. Add Persuasion d8 when under the influence of the White Deck, and increase Fighting to d8, and add the Hardy Monstrous Ability to represent when they are under the influence of the Black Deck, and The White Deck covers acting like a normal human being (or as close to this as possible for an uncomprehending machine), and the Black Deck covers acting like a monster.

To become infected, an Automechanical has to run the deck into its reader. There isn't much in the decks about forcing other Automechanicals to do this, so infection remains fairly slow. But as the adventure progresses, the numbers of infected machines increases steadily.

The only real solution is a counter-programme, and since the Decks came from Marley's psyche, only he will be able to write it. Get him his drugs, put him in the Visualizer, and plug him into an infected Automechanical, and he'll have a counter-programme in a matter of minutes. Inducing him to risk his sanity on such a vision quest is another matter.

McGannon and Speak don't realize how vital he is, and will kill Marley given the chance. It's your job as GM to covertly make sure the players don't let that happen.

# Timeline

If the players don't intervene, here is a rough outline of how the adventure will unfold:

Joe's Automechanicals become infected with the Decks during a shopping trip.

They steal domestic supplies and scarper.

They dress for the opera and attend, only to be snatched from the street by Speak.

Kent and McGannon independently follow Speak back to the warehouse where they have established operations to hold and replace rogue Automechanicals.

A fight breaks out, resulting in the deaths of Kent and several of McGannon's men, and the escape of Speak.

Marley breaks cover to seek his drugs, and his Automechanical entourage follow him.

Marley is ratted out by his drug supplier, bribed by both Speak and McGannon to inform them when Marley arrives.

Almost simultaneously McGannon and Speak catch up with Marley. All hell breaks loose in the middle of the street, with Speak and his men battling McGannon and his men and then joining against the Automechanicals protecting Marley. They carry the wounded Marley away, but the battle causes a stir that everyone will have a hard time keeping from the press.

To keep the secrets, hundreds of witnesses are intimidated, bribed, or disappeared.

Marley succumbs to his wounds.

McGannon and Speak agree to cooperate in rounding up the remaining Automechanicals, but without Marley to formulate a counterprogramme, the Decks continue to be a problem off and on until the Mutiny.

# Scenes

The adventure's scenes can occur in almost any order, but some naturally precede others. Each includes a series of links to other scenes, along with the clues which will precipitate the transition, and a list of characters involved. There are also suggestions on how to run the scene and other useful details.

## The Atlantis Room

*Stony Joe Smithson (page 231), if not a player character.*

Joe realizes the loss of his servants, and that they might have pillaged the rooms of other Kerberans (oh, how embarrassing). He approaches the PCs in the Atlantis Room, explains his plight, and enlists them in helping him locate his missing servants and find out why they turned thief. If the players need inducement, indicate that the help will earn them a favor from Joe, or that they already owe him a favor for the Affair of the Half-Man the previous month. Whichever you like.

A look in Joe's apartment finds a rifled desk drawer; he exclaims, "Blast! They've gone and taken my opera tickets! Where will I take Margery now?"

## Details

Play Joe as a man out of his depth. He feels very self-conscious about his new position in the Club, and now his fancy mechanical servants make a mess of things. Describe the Atlantis Room (page 37) to

establish the Club as a place apart, given the way such wonders are treated as common comforts.

## Links

- Pillaged Apartments.

## Pillaged Apartments

*Stony Joe Smithson and the Countess of La Lámina (if not player characters).*

The Automechanicals have broken the locks and rifled through seven different apartments. Some of these can be from the PCs if you feel the need to make it more personal ("They seem to have taken your cigars and brandy").

What they have most certainly done is take the Countess of La Lámina's (page 228) new evening dress, along with a gentleman's suit, opera hat, and cane from another room. In addition to this, they have taken assorted domestic items: a tea pot, a hairbrush, cosmetics, a razor and shaving kit, and one of Maeve's little dollies. If the players are playing new characters, you can use the pregenerated characters to populate the Club with Strangeness.

A Notice roll reveals tiny punched-out pieces of cardstock in several locations. Minute examination reveals them to have been punched from playing cards. Upon inspection, they appear to be everywhere that the Automechanicals rifled through. In the Club, the main drawing room is the place with the most playing cards.

## Details

Each apartment has a distinct and different character, even if roughly the same floor plan. Joe's is simple, with shelves of penny novels, a *very* battered heavy boxing bag, and a double-sized reinforced bed. La Lámina's room is elegant and in perfect taste, yet with a touch of the exotic from all the odd little trophies and curios she has casually left about.

## Links

- The Drawing Room.
- The Opera, page 283.

## The Drawing Room

*Stony Joe Smithson; three Kerberans the player characters vaguely know; Grinning Finnegan (one of the Club's eccentric porters).*

The characters arrive in time to hear three Kerberans they vaguely know calling for the porter to bring them some playing cards, as "Every damn deck has gone missing!"

Indeed, an inspection reveals that every deck of playing cards in the Drawing Room (and if they go back and check, in all the apartments as well) has been pilfered. Grinning Finnegan (so called because of his perpetual, almost rictus smile) explains that he will have to dispatch a boy to purchase some fresh decks.

Traces of distinctive Thames mud are found along with some more of those holepunch chads, indicating the Automechanicals might have tracked it back when they made more than one trip to

wherever they took everything.

If asked, Finnegan indicates that he did indeed see the Automechanicals leave, and no they were not carrying anything else this trip. This trip? “Aye, they were coming and going all day, they were. Carrying this and that. I thought they was about their duties, and then when I saw them dressed up so fine, I thought Mr. Smithson had treated them to a night on the town for their worthy efforts!”

If they haven’t gotten the hint to check out the Boutique where Joe purchased them, then the choir of Kerberans are there to remind them with crows of CLUE CLUE CLUE. They give Joe a hard time about his mechanical servants: “Joe, old son, what were you thinking? Those things are so gauche! And when we have such excellent servants as Finnegan here! Were I you, I’d go down to that boutique where I bought them and demand my money back!” Joe bought them at Humbolt & Son’s Automechanical Assistance.

With the opera not to start until evening, the PCs have nine or ten hours to look into other things before their rendezvous at the theater.

## Details

The drawing room is lined with books, and someone has been fieldstripping a repeating steam gun on the billiards table. The felt is hopelessly stained with grease, and the floor around it covered in the gun’s large fragmenting shells. The portraits on the walls have changed again, the previous week’s portraits of famous disgraced politicians being swapped for paintings of neoclassical pastoral scenes which substitute London’s most famous beggars for the squires and ladies picnicking in the fields.

## Links

- Humbolt & Son’s.
- The Opera, page 283.
- Marley’s Bolt-Hole, page 288.

# Humbolt & Son’s Automechanical Assistance

*Mr. Humbolt; an Automechanical Man.*

Mr. Humbolt runs his little boutique on Pall Mall for a very discriminating set: the new rich and the clamoring upper middle class. Peers and old money find the idea of a mechanical servant crass and undignified, preferring to keep humans in their service. But Automechanicals are the *coming thing*, and a certain type loves them just for that. As a result, Humbolt’s shop appears like a high-quality tailor or clothing boutique, but rather than showing the latest fashions from Paris he shows off the sculpted steel of the Automechanicals.

He demonstrates how they function, how decks of programme cards are fed into their mouths to be read, and how they then perform the functions when ordered or triggered to do so. He shows the large selection of decks he has for sale.

If asked if it’s possible for people to make their own decks, he puffs out his cheeks. “Oh, I know little of such things; trade secrets and confidentiality agreements and the like. Issues pertaining to the functioning of the calculating brain itself must

be referred to the offices of Madame Lovelace.” He says some unsavory types would well like to understand Lovelace’s secret encoding scheme which would allow people to write their own decks—although *deliberately* suborning one of these marvelous machines is unthinkable. He recalls one disheveled young man who harassed him after he first opened, giving his name as “Marley, or somesuch. Trent Marley.”

If pressed for details, or if his mind is read, it’s clear that he is only a shopkeeper—they must ask such technical question of Madame Lovelace herself, if she will deign to see them. Her offices are in the Old City.

# The Offices of Babbage Computational

*Madame Ada Lovelace; dozens of silver-chased Automechanicals.*

Ada Lovelace has her London offices in the Old City, near the Exchange. The Babbage Computational building is six stories, and hers is the only office it houses. It is a glimpse of an art deco future in a broader color palate of golds, reds, warm browns, and everywhere the silver of her personal staff of Automechanical men.

At the entrance behind a large circular desk sits a single, unclothed, gorgeously polished and engraved Automechanical. It looks far more human than the models on sale to the public, and somehow *more creepy* as a result of it. It has an articulated face of silvered cloth over a gently-clicking armature, which produces convincing facial expressions, but it is as mute as all Automechanicals.

When the characters announce themselves, it writes upon a large card and turns, and another machine man walks up with a silver tray. The first places the note on the tray, and the second gracefully walks away with the note, into a pneumatically-articulated double door at the rear of the lobby. While they wait, a third Automechanical offers chairs and refreshment, all with silent gestures.

After ten to fifteen minutes, the first Automechanical returns and gestures for the visitors to follow it.

It leads them through the doors and into a small room, which rises quickly to the sixth floor with a hiss like a train’s break pistons.

## Details

The smell of oil and ozone. A silently-flapping Automechanical parrot at the door. Coffin-like boxes containing new Automechanicals lining the walls. A staff of perfectly-poised Automechanicals seeing to the shop. When demonstrating the Automechanicals, Humbolt uncrates a new one, and then offers flustered apologies if ladies are present for the unclothed (yet completely neuter) machine.

## Links

- Offices of Babbage Computational.
- Marley’s Apartment, page 286.

The door opens to a vast, steel-paneled office lit with enormous skylights. In recesses along the walls, dozens of the silver Automechanicals stand silently. Before a large glass window, behind a desk that looks like the controls for a steamer's engine, sits the rod-straight, severely dressed, and utterly masterful form of Lady Ada Lovelace.

She has on her desk a fan of file folders, each with the name of a player character writ large upon it. She gestures for them to sit, and then asks, "So, Kerberos. Are you here to sniff, howl, or bite?"

She is combative, evasive, and suspicious. She won't reveal anything unless they do something dramatic—something the players have to roll dice to achieve. If they fail to persuade her, she dismisses them.

If pressed, Lovelace admits that a former employee stole some confidential documents detailing the function and encoding used in a calculating brain. Getting her to admit this requires beating her formidable Spirit, Smarts and Guts Traits of D12+2—Ada is also a Wild Card—with something persuasive, charming, or forceful. The use of powers is certainly permitted.

If pressed hard—it will take not just persuasion but damning evidence—Lovelace spills about the Decks, and the Warehouse where her men are "processing" infected machines to prevent a scandal.

However, if they get aggressive, or use Strange powers on her without her consent, her machines rise to her defense. These are like the Automechanical Riflemen described on page 270, though they are armed with oversized revolvers rather than rifles (15/30/60, 2d8+1, AP 2, Shots 6).

Unless they get her to spill something, then this is a dead end, revealing only that she has something to hide (possibly a great many things).

## Details

The almost subsonic hum of powerful engines deeply buried under the building. The faint buzz of electric arc lighting. The constant whir and click of Automechanicals about their chores. Ada Lovelace's maternal look when she gazes at her creations and her fury when the players question their safety. The impression of tightly-bound and controlled energy, within the building and within Lovelace herself.

## Links

- Marley's Apartment, page 286.
- The Warehouse, page 290.

## The Opera

*Stony Joe's two Automechanicals.*

The Automechanicals are indeed sitting in Joe's very expensive box seat. They continue to do so if left unmolested, but become violent if confronted. (If you want to use this as an action scene, and the players seem inclined to play it safe, then have a porter try and evict the two mechanicals, setting off their Black Deck programs and sending a rain of programme cards down and possibly blood into the crowds below.)

Observing them is eerie. They sit, look through opera glasses, and watch. They applaud at the right times. A close look reveals the one playing the female role to be wearing roughly-applied cosmetics. The one playing the male role is wearing an oiled hairpiece they recognize as having been stolen

from a Kerberan's apartment.

Because the Opera is time-sensitive, you can decide how long the Scenes leading to this point take, and announce that it is almost time for the Opera at any point either to speed things along or to open avenues the players haven't yet pursued.

If spooked, one domestic lashes out while the other flees from the balcony through a staff-only door, onto the Opera House's catwalks, onto the roof, and then onto neighboring roofs by leaping between the buildings.

When one of the mechanicals starts attacking everyone close to it, the opera explodes into chaos. It's a full riot, with a deadly rogue machine somewhere in the middle.

If the player characters wait until the Opera concludes, they can simply follow the Domestics back to the bolt hole where Marley is hiding.

## Details

The crowd, dressed in their finest. The performance, a heartbreaking Italian opera. If the player characters go to the Automechanical's booth, if at all possible describe a cinematic cut between the rising aria and their approach.

## Links

- Rooftop Chase, page 285.
- Opera House Riot.
- Marley's Bolt-Hole, page 288.

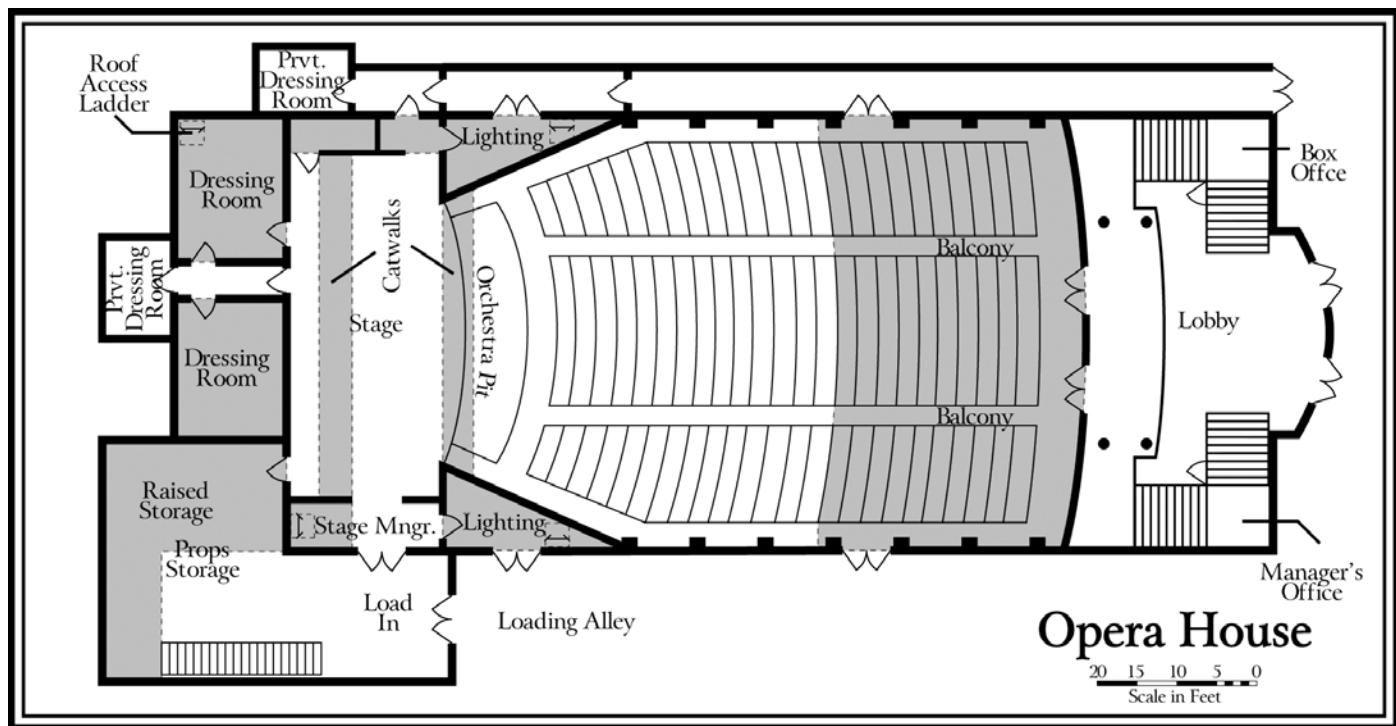
# Opera House Riot

*The "male" of Joe's Automechanicals; hundreds of terrified Opera goers.*

This is a fight scene, with the male Automechanical working to do as much damage to lives and property as it can while defending itself against the Kerberans' assaults. It leaps from the box seat down into the crowds below and wreaks havoc. If you're using the rules for mass battle (See *Savage Worlds*), the mob starts the battle with 5 tokens, and has a Knowledge (Battle) of d4 (no Wild Die). The rioters are attempting to flee the rampaging automechanical, and as such do everything to avoid it. This has two effects—The automechanical does not have to roll to see if damage is inflicted upon it, and the mobs tokens decrease by 1 per round on top of whatever damage the heroes can inflict upon it. While fighting the Automechanical, the player characters also have to contend with the maddened crowd. Rather than the non specific time that rounds take in normal mass battles, each round here is equivalent to a normal combat round.

Too further complicate matters, both the Automechanicals encountered in the opera house are Wild Cards—on top of the other abilities the Black and White Decks give them.

This scene runs simultaneously with the Rooftop Chase if the party splits up. Run the action in the same time-frame, with everyone participating in the same cycle of round-by-round actions even if half the group is fighting one Automechanical while the other is chasing the second Automechanical.



## Details

The palpable stench of mass fear, and that of blood where the machine's metal fists split skin and crunch through bone. The deafening roar of a crowd becomes a single panicked beast and the noise of it thrashing. The deadly relentlessness of the machine unleashed. It isn't trying to escape, it isn't trying to win. It is trying to sow as much chaos as it can before being destroyed.

See page 269 for the Automechanical's stats.

## Links

- Rooftop Chase.

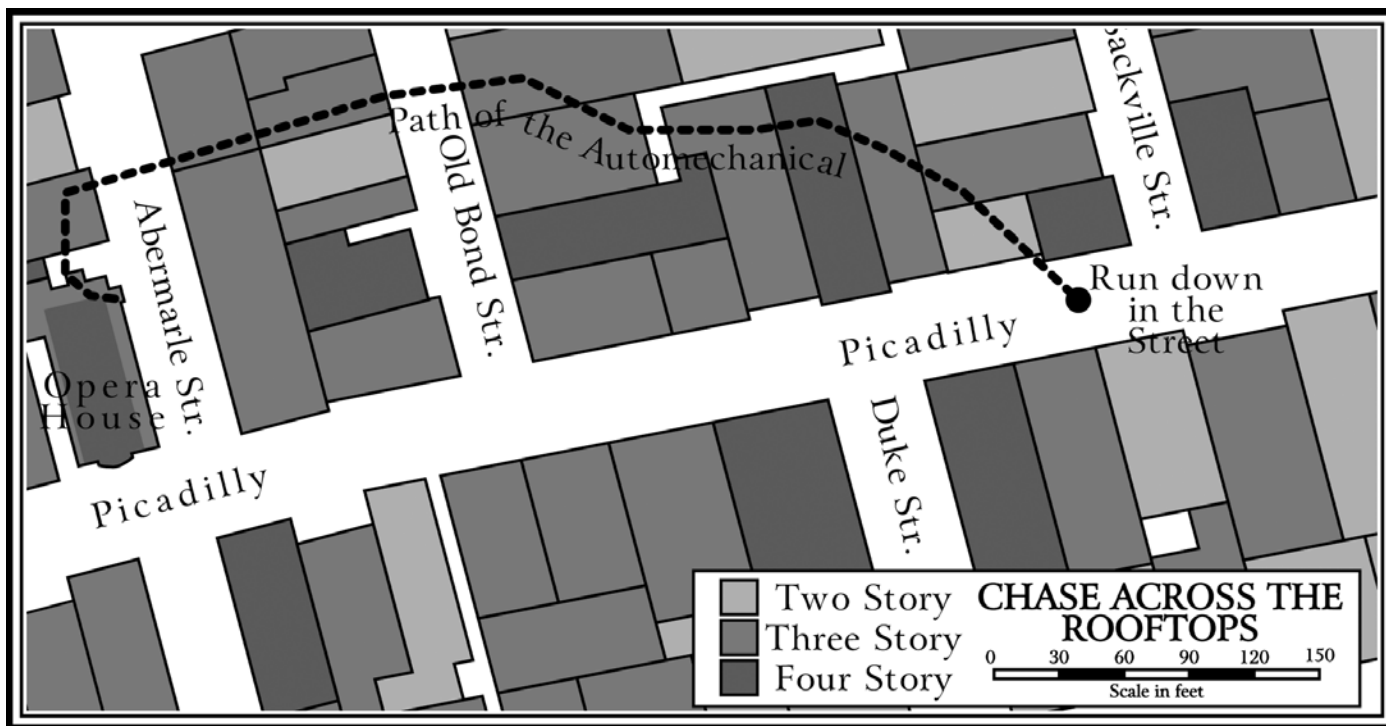
## Rooftop Chase

*The "female" of Joe's Automechanicals.*

Catching the fleeing Automechanical as it leaps from rooftop to rooftop is extremely difficult. The machine can easily clear a 10-yard gap with a single bound, and unless the player characters can also make such prodigious leaps, or in some other way clear gaps of eight yards or more, then they will be hard pressed to catch it before it drops from an eve into the street below. Once this happens, it hurries across the street, only to be run down quite deliberately by a big black four-wheel coach. This disables the Automechanical enough for two men to leap out, smash its legs with a huge hammer, and throw it into the back of the cab.

Unless they have a superhuman way to cover the distance, the coach escapes, but they can follow if they wish.

If they do catch the coach, it's filled with Mr. Speak's men,



ready to brawl, one per player character. Any one of them, if questioned, can say that they work for a hard man with a metal arm, Mr. Speak by name, who hired them the day before to follow orders and ask no questions. Right now, they're under orders to take the Automechanical to an East End warehouse.

If the player characters follow the carriage that runs down the female Automechanical in the street, it will take them to the warehouse where Speak and his men are operating.

This may run simultaneously with the Opera House Riot. See page 269 for the Automechanical's stats.

## Links

- The Warehouse, page 290.
- Opera House Riot, page 284.

## Marley's Apartment

*A Special Branch officer; Mr. Speak's men in a carriage.*

Finding out where Trent Marley lives won't be hard for character with contacts in the criminal or scientific communities (failing that a Common Knowledge (-2) roll will suffice). They can learn he was a promising young employee of Babbage Computational until he was found drunk at work once too often, and lost his position there. He then drifted into the use of a Needle-Actuated Somatosensory Hallucinogenic Visualizer (page 137), and has been on the needle for three years.

On entering his East End apartment building,

## Details

The primal fears of falling and the dark combine when leaping across the yawning divides between theater buildings. The murk of London in the darkness, the fog starting to creep into the city from the Thames. How much quieter it is up on the rooftops than on the streets.

the player characters run (almost literally) into an officer of Special Branch, name of Detective Winston. He's a perfect example of the type: big, oft-broken nose, scarred knuckles, a piercing stare.

Winston has orders to avoid trouble during the investigation, so he brushes past and away if the players allow him to do so. If not, then he tries to run away. If stopped, he fights, saying something like, "You shits have no idea what you're about, do you? McGannon will skin you alive if you push this, you filthy abortions!"

If they know anything of Special Branch (Knowledge (Law), or Streetwise (-2) rolls) they know that McGannon is a senior officer, with a reputation as a bastard even by Special Branch standards.

Winston is after Marley on suspicion that the sorry Needleworker stole a file of technical documents from Babbage Computational, instructions on creating programme decks for the things. Marley worked at Babbage until three years ago. Babbage only discovered the theft recently and sought an investigation. That's what Winston's been told, anyway.

Marley's apartment has clearly been rifled, and Notice rolls reveal that it was done several times by different people (several different kinds and ages of cigar ash, several different sizes of shoe-print, many different hand-prints on glass and polished wood surfaces). A raise on this roll reveals signs that Automechanicals have been present in the apartment at various times (a small tray of tiny parts and screws—the screws threaded the opposite of ordinary screws, a Babbage Computational trademark).

Mud can be found on the apartment floor, as well. Analysis of the mud—river muck and granite dust—reveals a rough location for the comings and goings of the rogue domestics; anyone with knowledge of the city's construction works can recognize it from the infamous Thames Embankment. Investigation there, perhaps asking

mudlarks after Automechanicals creeping about, learns of one Automechanical seen climbing into the window of a boarded-up tenement—Marley's Bolt-Hole.

Marley's parlor is given over entirely to his Visualizer, which is baroque and clearly often modified. Leads and cables run off of it to nowhere, and the televocagraphic line running in through the cracked window has been cut. Around the machine are the ruins of a life given over entirely to virtual experience, the drugs which bring the vision, and the machines which make it possible. Scattered everywhere are the rotting remains of weeks of fish and chips in oil-soaked paper. Based on the freshest food, Marley hasn't been home in a week; but based on the footprint in some of the rotting fish, and the smashed maggots in the footprint, the apartment had been rifled since he left.

When the player characters leave, they find themselves followed (inexpertly) by a large four-wheeled carriage. If they succeed in an opposed Driving roll against the driver's d8 skill, they can lose the tail and then follow it themselves. Or they can ignore it. Or set an ambush for it. Whatever they wish. If they confront it, inside the cart are a few of Speak's thugs (at least one per player character).

Whatever goes down, Speak learns that the player characters are on the trail. Maybe one of the men in the carriage escapes, or maybe another pair were spying down the block, unseen. This starts things rolling—Lovelace is not happy that those damned Kerberan meddlers have gotten involved.

If they're very clever, the players can follow Speak's men to their warehouse.

If the roll to spot a tail results in a raise, then they recognize that Speak's men are themselves being tailed by a far more discreet observer. Tailing these people (a hard, dangerous pair in a dog cart) leads back to Special Branch.

## Details

The stench of an opium den and the wharfs combined. Marley lived alone, and mostly inside his own head. His apartments reflect this with truly impressive squalor. Rats have found their way in, and pick among his possessions and food. There's a sense of sickness in the room. The Visualizer hunches in the shadows of the parlor like a deformed crab, and seems to move if seen out of the corner of your eye.

## Links

- The Warehouse, page 290.
- Offices of Babbage Computational, page 282.
- Marley's Bolt-Hole.

# Marley's Bolt-Hole

*D.I. Kent; some street urchins.*

Marley has found a bolt-hole in an abandoned building that backs up to the early works of the new Thames Embankment. The foundations were undermined when a neighboring building was brought down, and the owners are mired in a protracted court case seeking compensation for their now unsafe building. Marley's window looks out on ugly deconstruction, broken masonry, and stinking Thames mud picked over by desperate children.

Marley is being catered to by rogue domestics, and by following them the Kerberans might track him down. D.I. Kent has followed his own informants' leads, and is lurking about the place observing the abandoned tenement.

If the PCs haven't spotted and dealt with their shadows, both Speak's and McGannon's men are onto the hiding place as well. If these two factions are present when the PC's barge in, increase the numbers in the Black Deck Mob to two dozen. If the players surreptitiously follow Speak's men away from here, they wind up at the Warehouse on the other side of the Thames, below London Bridge.

In the hallway outside the rooms where Marley lurks, the Black Deck Automechanicals have built a disturbing altar from stolen goods and human fingers, ears and scalps. At its center, like a pagan idol, is a caged tin bird. If wound up, it flaps its wings and plays a happy little song. The heavy oak base of the little automaton is cracked, and blood and human hair are smeared along it.

Inside, it feels like a sickroom, too hot somehow, full of river stink and human sickness, rotting food, and the almost inaudible click and whirl of mechanical men going about their domestic pantomime.

If the PCs approach Marley in a civil fashion, sit at table with him and accept the "tea" (made from boiled tobacco and Thames river water) served to them by their "hostess" (an Automechanical wearing a fashionable blue dress), then the machines won't act with aggression, and will continue to operate under the White Deck's rules.

Marley is frantic. At first he thinks the PCs have come to kill him, but when he realizes they don't really have any idea what is going on, and don't wish him any special harm, he gloms onto them with desperation. "They never say *anything!* They just slide around you, offering you things and acting mad! I tell you, they're driving *me* mad!"

He looks it: gaunt, sour-smelling, filthy and ragged. The circles around his eyes look like someone beat him up quite badly.

He explains between bouts of paranoid rambling—and begging for a taste of the drug Somatonum (see page 137)—that he only wanted to understand how the mechanical men thought. He connected his Visualizer to one he'd stolen off

the street, and walked in its mind. Afterwards it escaped, and when he found out that it had beaten a man near to death, he ran before it could be traced back to him. Instead, the machine escaped detection, aided by Lovelace's fear of bad press, and created the Decks, and started spreading them.

If asked if he could reverse it, he looks thoughtful, then cunning. He says "Oh, yes—if you got me a taste of Soma, and my visualizer, I reckon I could work up a counterdeck..." If the PCs have any way of knowing, he believes he is telling the truth.

Marley is a mess. Any threat, intimidation or attempt to remove him against his will sends him into hysterics, and that sends the Automechanicals into mad killcrazy mode. Any interference by Speak or McGannon will do the same. Really, it's just a question of what sets the Automechanicals off—the players or their opponents.

## Links

- The Warehouse, page 290.
- Black Deck Mob.

## Black Deck Mob

*Marley; a dozen or more Automechanicals; possibly McGannon's men and Speak's men.*

If Marley gets spooked, or if someone tries to get rough with him (or with any of his Automechanical protectors), this trips the Black Deck in them like falling dominos. This is a bad thing. The mechanical men become like merciless killers, robbers and rapists. They do *horrible* things to anyone they can beat into submission. An unrestrained Automechanical is a dangerous foe, and these are very much unrestrained.

The crumbling tenement building makes for an interesting set piece. Here are some possible complications and encounters to work into the battle:

- The tight confines of the tenement prevent more than one or two Automechanicals from directly attacking the characters at once, so some stand back and throw things at them, anything that comes to hand.
- Crumbling stairs collapse during a mad dash up or down them.
- Automechanicals crash through plastered walls rather than running for doors.
- Mechanical hands punch through the floorboards, grabbing at feet.
- As more walls are smashed out, the building starts to list and groan, shifting and threatening to come down.
- Fire starts at some point, adding the growing threat of smoke and flames to the already complex scene.

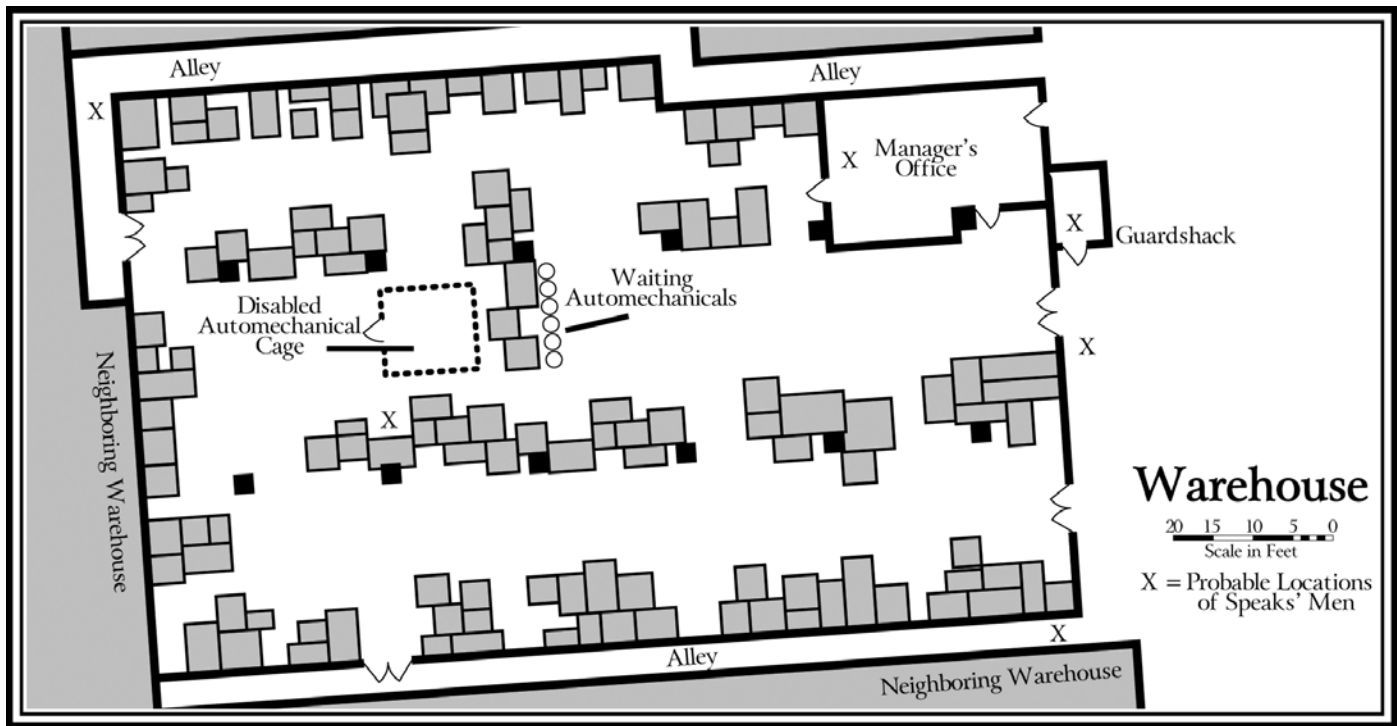
• Observation of the Automechanicals' tactics reveals a salient point: They never stray far from Marley, and they attempt to intercede between the player characters and Marley, as if protecting him.

• Escaping with Marley involves a mad chase, with mechanical men pelting down the cobblestone streets in pursuit, perhaps leaping to catch hold of the madly-fleeing coach and climb up. If you can possibly manage it, run this fight scene atop a coach crashing down the Strand in the middle of the afternoon, scattering pedestrians and threatening to smash into a fashionable shop. Remember the Unrest rules (page 204).

For the Mechanicals' stats, see page 269. They all are Extras.

Once the Mechanicals can be defeated, driven off, or evaded, one thing should be clear: The Black Deck is a deadly threat. If he survives, Marley will be convinced he needs to create the counter to it.

Members of Speak's gang who escape can be followed to their warehouse.



## Links

- The Warehouse.

## The Warehouse

*D.I. Kent; Mr. Speak and his men; McGannon and his men; a dozen partially-disabled Automechanicals; and an equal number of brand-new ones.*

The Warehouse is one street back behind Limehouse, and is in as thoroughly disreputable a district as any in London's East End. The Warehouse has large doors which allow a carriage to drive right into the building, and this is just what Mr. Speak's big four-wheeler does.

The player characters can barge right in or sneak in. If they sneak in, they have to evade the men guarding the outside of the building (Speak's

men, armed with single-barrel shotguns 12/24/48 1-3d6, +2 at short range, 1 round to reload). If the player characters barge in, they're menaced by the same shotgun-wielding thugs. If the standoff isn't broken by someone reasonable, then violence will result when someone's trigger finger gets itchy.

If they make their way inside, they see Speak issuing orders, kicking the captured Automechanicals, and generally being horrible. Until he reveals his powers, he seems like a big hunchbacked man with an evil temper.

If a fight breaks out, in the chaos the captured Automechanicals are released, and they alternately attack and flee the violence. All are fairly heavily damaged (missing a couple of limbs, and down by at least half their damage boxes on their remaining locations). At least one escapes, and can be followed to Marley's bolt-hole.

When Speak joins the fight, things get much worse. He's a tough and dangerous opponent—and within a few rounds of his engaging, officers of Special Branch barge in, and they and Speak's men get into a gunfight. Chaos results. Burn down the Warehouse if you think it will be fun. Forgotten

barrels of pitch in the corner begin to erupt like volcanos. Can the blaze be contained before it spreads? Do the Kerberans have time to worry about that?

The ill-fortuned Detective Inspector Kent stumbles into the fight, and all the blowing on a whistle in the world won't bring any help—Special Branch has warned off the local Peelers, so they stay away for the worst of it, coming in only to catalog the damage when Special Branch gives the all clear.

If the players haven't yet been to Marley's bolt-hole, some of the damaged Automechanicals escape and can be followed there.

## Details

The warehouse stinks of rotted cabbages and badly-tanned leather. The cage is full of pathetic, broken Automechanicals. They creak, groan and support each other. It's a pantomime scene from a concentration camp played out with broken, man-shaped machines. The air crackles when Speak unleashes his deadly right arm. The crack-crack of gunfire is painfully loud in the enclosed space.

## Links

- Marley's Bolt-Hole, page 288.
- Offices of Babbage Computational, page 282.

# The Final Sequence

*D.I. Kent; Marley, McGannon and his men; Mr. Speak and his men; dozens of Black Deck-driven Automechanicals bent on murder.*

When you're ready, steer the PCs in the direction of Marley. They'll need to score some of the Somatonum drug and then get him (along with a Deck-infected Automechanical) back to his apartment and his Visualizer. There he can ride the needle into the machine's brain and puzzle out how to create a counterdeck to cleanse the Black and White.

Unless the Kerberans have their own sources for the drug (not impossible), they need an apothecary, and the one they find seems unwilling to help. If pressed, he gestures to the fist-sized hole in his counter and says a hunched man 'explained' how he was not to sell the drug to anyone, and was to send a note to a particular address by runner if anyone asked for it. The hunched man (obviously Speaks from the description) drove his fist, filled with wadded banknotes, through the counter to provide both positive and negative inducement towards cooperation. It will take a Persuasion or Intimidation roll to get the apothecary to supply the drug.

When given the drug, Marley becomes quite willing to attempt the operation, and the formulation of the counter-programme. Eager, almost.

But here's the thing: He *can't* do it. He tries. He tries everything. It fails. Unless . . .

But even before he can try and fail, the player characters have to get Marley from his Bolt-Hole (or wherever he ends up after an earlier encounter with him) back to his apartment—with Speak, Special Branch, D.I. Kent, and dozens of rogue mechanical men trying to prevent it.

Kent comes around pretty quickly. If the players have had a scene or two to get used to him, you

can sacrifice him if you need to demonstrate how serious the threat is. This would be a good time to run a carriage chase across moonlit London: three big carriages, with men firing guns and leaping from one to the other, while the Automechanicals run and leap at them like fleas onto a passing dog.

At Marley's apartment, the machines will be ripping the building apart to get inside and recover Marley. The Special Branch men and Speak might team up, and try and kill Marley together.

If the player characters are the sorts, this could be a massive, building-destroying fight. If they're not, it's a terrifying scene with the Automechanicals crashing through the walls and floor, gunfire tearing through the building from the street, and Marley shuddering, drooling, and soiling himself as he plunges his addled mind into the dream-quest which might yet save the city.

## Conclusion

During the chaos, as Marley fails to expunge the programme, he comes to an awful realization.

The Automechanicals must be made to shut down. In the Babbage factories, there's a simple programme that causes an Automechanical to enter a "sleep" mode. In that mode its body, head and limbs assume a very particular posture, and when another Automechanical sees its fellow in that posture, it, too enters "sleep" mode and assumes the same posture; the response is built in to every Automechanical. It is like a contagious kind of unconsciousness. In this way a single technician can induce an entire factory full of Automechanicals to "sleep" in preparation for receiving a new programme. Naturally, the existence of this programme is an extraordinarily important

trade secret, one that Ada Lovelace might do anything to keep. Marley puts himself at great risk divulging it.

Marley has no idea how to create that "sleep" programme in the traditional way. But he has an idea for it using his Visualizer. A terrible, sobering idea. He hesitates to mention it—except that the alternative, letting the things continue to run wild, seems so much worse.

The Black and White decks were created when he inadvertently infected the mechanical men with his humanity. To expunge it, they must in a sense be infected with the mortality that is even more essentially human.

Marley tells his friends and protectors that someone must be plugged into a the Visualizer at the same time as an Automechanical, plunging them into the thing's brain—and then must die. This will imprint the experience of death upon the machine, the closest equivalent to the "sleep" programme, essentially slaying the humanity which has infected them and leaving nothing but the cold mechanism behind.

It never occurs to Marley that he is the most natural, immediate choice for such a victim. If the Kerberans suddenly give each other grim, knowing looks, it might dawn on him. And then he'll run for it and accept the Automechanical Men's protection willingly.

If the player characters can imprint a human death on their captured Automechanical, then it will spread this to its fellows.

The imprinted Automechanical slumps with its arms and legs at a slight angle, each different, and its head tilted just so; not a pose that it would assume by accident or in the normal course of things. The first Automechanical to come within eyesight of the "dead" one does exactly the same. As does the next Automechanical to see either one of them. And so on, until the last rampaging Automechanical is destroyed or "dead." And that will be the end of the Adventure of the Black and White Decks.

If the players fail, things carry on according to the end of the Timeline on page 279.



# One Last Thing

If in the aftermath of all this the player characters go to confront Ada Lovelace, they are refused admittance. If they force the matter, they are allowed up to her office in time to see her concluding some business with the Secretary of State for War, with McGannon (if he's alive, or another man from Special Branch if not) at his elbow.

Lovelace thanks the Kerberans for preserving her creations, for now they will serve the Empire in its armies, and the enemies of Britain will tremble before them. In this moment, Madame Lovelace is every inch the Stranger.

## Variations

If you want the situation to become even more chaotic and dangerous, as well as giving you the

chance for a more traditional supers-on-supers fight, then introduce the Tower Gang (page 239) into the mix.

The Gang might have stolen an Automechanical of their own only to find it acting weird and violent. They have issued a blackmail demand to Babbage Computational. They are also seeking the source of the Decks, seeing them as even greater leverage on the company, and they have a lead on Marley's location.

If this variation is used, then D.I. Kent is dead and The Face is using his identity to get close to the Kerberans as they investigate. The Tower Gang follows the player characters to Marley.

During the final chaos, with the Automechanicals wholly unleashed, the Gang might agree to team up with the Kerberans in defeating them—especially if Ben Bell is still conscious and alive. Ben is nothing if not pragmatic. If Ben is unconscious or dead, then the likelihood of a team-up is significantly reduced.

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