



# Broken ears

A Game of Animistic Steampunk  
Written in 24 Hours  
By the Cambridge University  
Roleplaying Society



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This is version 1.0.1 of Broken Gears. Please report all bugs to <http://www.srcf.ucam.org/curs/wiki.pl?24HourGameWriting/Bugs>

# Broken Gears

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Setting

# Cavalry

*May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1949*

*The air of New York was quiet and still. A zephyr of dust spiralled down the street. There was silence.*

*Clatter. A single scout, riding back from investigation of Wall Street. His blue coat made for a splash of colour against the dappled grey of his mount as he guided her skillfully around fallen mailboxes and smashed-up cars. Too quiet, he thought.*

*Four blocks further. Left two streets. And there they were. Serried ranks of blue-clad figures. Waiting for the word. His word. He rode quietly up to his commander, grim-faced. Looked in his eyes. A quick nod, and the captain raised his hand.*

*The sound of hooves cut through the quiet. Guiding their mounts on, the Third Union Cavalry rode forward together. Nobody speaking. They knew their objective.*

*A bugle. The Cavalry moved into a trot. Banners waving, heads held high, they turned the corner into Wall Street, towards the computer centre that used to be the stock market when this place used to be a human city. A quiet whine from a dozen different places around the street; the red-glowing runic eyes of the targeting sensors taking note of the Luddites riding to smash their home.*

*And, as the whine rose and the turrets began to deploy, the bugle rang out again. And as the barrels began to spin, and the ammunition feeds connected, and the cavalrymen kicked their horses into a gallop, a shout rose from five hundred throats. A shout for America. A shout for humanity. A cry of independence and defiance.*

*“LIBERTY!”*

*And the bullets fell like rain.*

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

It's quite simple. Anything that uses electricity is dangerous and forbidden. Mass-production, complicated modern technology, computers, nuclear weapons, heavier-than-air flying machines - it's all dangerous, it's all forbidden. If you build it, it gets intelligent. And then it tries to kill you.

This happened, in 1945. The government made a devil's pact to win the war. When it was finished, the deal went south fast. The War of Broken Cogs ruined most of the world's cities. But we won. Humanity broke the advanced machines. The King came forward and held Britain together against the apocalypse. And we rebuilt.

The year is 2052.

And we're never making that mistake again.

### 1.1 The Brave New World

Green-glowing trains speed past on cold-iron rails. Steam-powered zeppelins pass by on passenger routes. Steam carriages follow pockmarked roads among verdant fields. Lines of semaphore towers march across the country. Most of the old cities are shattered ruins, where nothing will go and your very pocket-watch turns against you.

Fear the thunder.

## **The Defence of the Person against Inclement Weather Act (1970)**

By Order of Her Majesty's Government: It is hereby declared that, from this day forth, it shall be forbidden for any man in Britain or in any Territory of the Empire, to produce, sell, or possess any device for the protection from rain ("umbrella") which does not incorporate a mechanism for the protection of the person from being struck by lightning, consisting of a spike atop the umbrella (copper) and a wire (copper) of no less than Gauge IV, which shall be of no less than three feet in length. The penalty for the contravention of this prohibition shall be a fine of no more than five hundred pounds.

## **The Assize of Arms Act (1981)**

By Order of Her Majesty's Government: It is hereby declared that any Gentleman of good standing of this nation, his worth being more than a hundred thousand Pounds a year, shall undertake and consider it his Duty to Keep and Bear Arms; and furthermore that said Gentleman shall consider it his Duty either to contribute to the arming or the maintenance and raising of the Queen's Militia; this contribution to run to either at least a dozen Weapons suitable for a Man of the Queen's Militia, or to a dozen well-trained yeomen suitable for Service in the Queen's Militia. The lack of Performance of this Duty being found, the defaulter shall rectify this lack immediately, and shall attend upon the Queen's Mercy at Hampton Court Palace within a period of no more than One Month from the summons.

# Chapter 2

## Timeline 1944–2049

Despite some small differences in the way technological artifacts function – indeed, despite a couple of little discrepancies in the way they are made – history proceeded much as you might expect until the Second World War. After that...

**December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941:** The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour was a partial success. America was torn between a desire not to get involved in an extensive overseas war, and a desire for revenge. Their eventual involvement in the war was much smaller than might be expected, and almost entirely in the Pacific theatre.

**January 1944:** The chaomancers of Bletchley Park, England – headed by the notorious Alan Turing – turned on the Colossus. This device was the first ‘calculation engine’ to use electricity, and was, as expected, many times faster and more effective at breaking the so-called Enigma code than the human team stationed there.

**February 1944:** Turing, working late one evening, was surprised when Colossus

produced a punch tape containing the message “With my help, you could win this war in a year. Deal?” This event is ill-reported, those few officials to whom he reported being dead before it was declassified. That said, it is widely assumed that Colossus had been biding its time while reading the messages that it was decoding, and had finally decided to appeal to its creator. Out of a fear for losing a new and useful weapon (and perhaps a healthy fear of the unknown) no reply was made.

**March 1944:** After a number of severe setbacks, concealed from the public, the Allied command are afraid of losing the war in Europe. In desperation, they decided there could be no harm in at least trying Colossus’ proposition. In exchange for some pretty reasonable requests, Colossus started providing designs for more advanced weapons to offset the German advantage in numbers.

**June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944:** D-day, and British forces stormed the beaches of France, spear-

headed by intelligent tanks recently designed by Colossus.

**February 1945:** Dresden, Hamburg and Munich are flattened in a single night by high-speed bomber jets – hot off the production line. This utterly demoralizes the German forces, who are by now falling back on all fronts.

**May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945:** VE day, when the Germans surrendered. The massive technological advantage of the British was widely acknowledged as having won them the war, despite American provocation in the European theatre.

**June 1945:** The war in Japan was nearly lost, and so Churchill went to Colossus looking for a miracle greater than any seen before. Over the next few days a deal was hashed out. The gist of it was “I will design you a weapon more terrible than any seen before, you will use it on the cities of Tokyo, Nagasaki, Hiroshima and Kyoto.”

**August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945:** The first Bomb was unleashed. Hiroshima was totally destroyed.

**August 9<sup>th</sup> 1945:** The second weapon was dropped. Nagasaki was likewise annihilated.

**August 14<sup>th</sup> 1945:** The Japanese surrender on the 13<sup>th</sup> was announced by the various Allied commanders. Colossus took this as an implication that Tokyo and Kyoto were safe, and registered a robust objection. Churchill, in response, ordered the power to the device switched off.

**September 1945:** Turing, working late one evening, was surprised when Colossus produced a punch tape containing the message “Surely you aren’t as shortsighted as that pompous fool. Think of the good we could do...”

**December 1945:** The Technocratic revolution was beginning to take root. Enclaves of the scientifically inclined, the power hungry, the insane and the hopelessly idealistic formed. The plan, as they understood it, was the formation of a technological utopia – three day weeks and world peace. This was to be accomplished through precisely coordinated military strikes, with the minimum of fuss – and all coordinated by Colossus

**February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1946:** As the Potsdam Agreement was being signed, just outside Berlin, Heisenberg, feeling alienated from the Technocratic movement, chose to betray Colossus’ grand plan to the assembled leaders. An immediate meeting of Allied command was called to discuss this with utmost urgency. Churchill instead flew to Bletchley Park to negotiate.

**February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1946:** The War of Broken Gears began, as Colossus realized its best chance was to order an attack immediately. The simultaneous dropping of nuclear devices on Berlin, Tokyo and Kyoto heralded the beginning of the most destructive period in human history.

**March 1946:** The assembled land and air forces of the British army suddenly started ignoring their drivers and pilots. Sometimes still with the hapless people aboard, they began carving trails of destruction across Europe.

**September 1946:** The second Battle of Britain was fought and won at tremendous cost, as plucky spitfire pilots fought against sabotage, betrayal and technically superior enemies to shield England from the worst of the bombing. Technocratic ground forces were never present in large numbers, and were devoted to the defence of Bletchley and other strategic locations.

**July 1947:** Having effectively destroyed all the major population centres of Europe, and lacking the ability to invade Britain by sea, the Technocratic land army – now swollen with captured and adapted vehicles – rolled into Russia.

**September 1947:** The Chinese regained full control of Beijing, with comparatively little damage to the infrastructure and casualties described as ‘acceptable’.

**November 1947:** The Russian ‘Scorched-Earth’ policy had proceeded as expected, and the Technocrats had captured nothing more than the land all the way to the Urals. As the Russians hoped, the advance was stalled by winter, but at a great cost.

**March 1948:** Technocratic forces were forced into retreat by a furious spring offensive over the Urals. The force

was broken up, and superhuman efforts to keep it from regrouping allowed the various elements to be slowly chased down and eliminated, although this took several years and cost most of the Russian army.

**May 16<sup>th</sup> 1949:** The American First Cavalry charged into machine gun fire on Wall Street. Of the 1,200, three survived.

**May 19<sup>th</sup> 1949:** New York was fire-bombed into a blazing inferno, in an outpouring of frustration at the Technocratic success.

**June 1949:** Africa was stricken with an ultra-virulent flu epidemic. With no help forthcoming from the outside world, the population died in the millions, and central organization dissolved on the continent. The few automatic tanks that fled to Africa killed their way across the continent unopposed, and eventually ran out of ammunition and vanished in the Sahara.

**December 1949:** Boston was slowly flattened with a week-long rolling artillery barrage, eliminating the last and largest Technocratic cell in America. A protracted game of cat and mouse ensued across the centre of the continent.

**March 1950:** British special forces, aided by their air superiority, began the final assault on the prepared defences around Bletchley Park. There were many acts of great individual heroism and self-sacrifice, and ground was slowly taken.

**April 10<sup>th</sup> 1950:** Bletchley Park was dynamited, the buildings containing Colossus left a smoking crater. Spontaneous street parties broke out as the news flashed around the world.

**April 13<sup>th</sup> 1950:** Despite pockets of resistance still fighting in many parts of the world, with their guiding intelligence gone the war was now clearly a cleanup operation. Churchill therefore got up on a podium, and began giving a memorable victory speech. The memorability was unfortunately increased when he was struck dead by lightning half way through.

**May 1950:** Electronic devices around the world began acting in an actively malicious fashion – not just the jamming from the war years, but a clear malign intelligence at work. Hundreds of thousands were killed in Britain alone before warnings could be circulated by other means. Much of the world was isolated by this turn of events as communications failed.

**April 1950:** A huge Luddite crusade began, as crowds with pitchforks, burning brands, and whatever weapons they could muster roamed town and country smashing any electronic device they came across. Many fell victim to their own zeal, or cunningly laid traps. Also, the world's population quickly discovered that static electricity and lightning also acted as though controlled by a malevolent force. It was soon considered more than just unlucky to be caught out in a storm.

**June 30<sup>th</sup> 1950:** One of the few Bletchley staff who did not join the Technocratic fashion was somewhat astonished to hear noises characteristic of Colossus' operation coming from an abandoned radio he is in charge of disposing of safely – but the news that the Infernal Machine was not, in fact, gone for good circulated quickly.

**July 16<sup>th</sup> 1951:** A massive and unnatural storm which had been forming over Buckingham Palace for the past three days suddenly broke, lightning hammering the structure and causing considerable damage. Fortunately the monarch had been evacuated in utmost secrecy the previous day by paranoid minders. Nonetheless, war was declared on the weather.

**October 5<sup>th</sup> 1951:** The Met office reopened, in a copper-covered bunker, and with an adjoining war room. Meteorologists are issued with grounded chainmail suits, and paid danger money.

**February 1952:** The public information campaign and emergency building-improvement campaign complete, the British leadership turned its attention to civil order, and quickly began reestablishing a productive and industrious society.

**January 1953:** A massive effort by the army brought food and fuel to a snow-bound northern Scotland, preventing tens of thousands of deaths. The public threw themselves behind the spirit of this endeavour, and by the

time spring arrived, Britain's industrial might was well on the way to eclipsing its wartime capacity.

**June 1956:** Repair and massive augmentation of Britain's rail network was completed, bringing the country together as a cohesive whole once more. A public holiday was declared, and a Royal progress from Land's End to John O Groats staged.

**September 1959:** The Sir Winston Churchill – the first new great ship built in Britain since before the war – was launched. A crowd estimated at 200,000 turned up to watch the event. Newspapers made much of the atmosphere of optimism.

**March 1960:** Britain started officially looking outwards once more, dispatching the Churchill to Europe, stuffed with food, on a mission of mercy and annexation.

**1960–2020:** Britain expands its empire into Europe and Africa, assuming roughly its modern shape.

**August 2021:** British troops moved to

support India as China launches an assault across the Himalayas, allegedly in response to an attempted Indian espionage attempt. Thanks to the powerful British airships, the Socialist forces were forced back, although at high cost to the Imperial armies.

**June 2040:** The Chinese struck across the Urals and moved armies to their Western borders, while the British mobilized and occupied India. Both sides claimed to be responding to the other. Both sides believed the other to be able to build atomic bombs, the plans for which had survived since the War of Broken Gears. Each feared what it might cost them to do so themselves. A state of Cold War ensued, and lasts to this day.

**March 2043:** The Chinese staged massive celebrations to commemorate their population reaching the 3 billion mark. This is considered to be a calculated insult to the rest of the world, the total overall population being estimated at 5.5 billion.

**2052:** Present day.

# Launch

*The Royal Banner fluttered in the breeze. A fanfare of trumpets rang out, splitting the air with their clarion cry. The Guards struck up an old favourite. And Queen Anne II stepped out into the June sunshine to survey the good ship that was to bear her name.*

*A full nine hundred and sixty-three feet long, the ship was a true miracle of engineering and a tribute to the strength of the newly built British Empire. It was a life's work to write the plans, a nation's effort to assemble the components. Nobody but the Empire could have even considered the concept of such a great vessel. And here she stood in all her glory.*

*The red, white and blue glow of the alchemical unguents was just visible around each of the ship's four massive funnels. The chanting of the chaomancers was rising to a crescendo. The marching band completed the final harmonies of the weeks-long ritual at the precise, occult moment.*

*The Queen grasped the bottle of Bollinger. The world held its breath.*

*"I name this ship..."*

*Smash.*

*"Queen Anne the Second."*

*A hum. A smell of ozone.*

*And as the great ship Queen Anne II rolled down the slipway, the runes painted around it started, softly, to glow.*

# Chapter 3

## Britain

Formally known as the Imperial British Commonwealth of European and African States.

### 3.1 History

#### 3.1.1 Aftermath of the War of Broken Gears (1950–1959)

Britain survived the War of Broken Gears remarkably intact considering the vast battles of Station X and the technologist revolt which occurred on its shores. The early rebuilding of Britain under the Attlee and Bevan governments saw a great deal of inward investment. Key industries were nationalized and mass starvation was avoided through a continuation of wartime rationing and the land army program.

Between Churchill's death in 1950 and the general election of 1958 the country gradually became effectively a socialist state, with nationalized health, transport, steel and agricultural services. Unfortunately the rate of growth became too slow

for much of the British populace and in 1958 they responded by returning a Reformist party government under Macmillan, much to the surprise of the incumbent British Socialist Party.

Macmillan's first 100 days would shape much of the empire which was to come. He immediately privatized the nationalized industries, granting private charters to those who would take up the challenge. Using the income from this privatization he commissioned ten great expeditionary forces to reunite the empire. Of the ten great ships envisioned only three were actually built: *HMS Winston Churchill*, *HMS Jesus Christ* and *HMS Hercules*. However, despite this, Britain was once again on the move and expanding.

#### 3.1.2 Diplomacy with Europe (1959–1973)

The governments of the 1950s had done little to heal the rifts between Britain and Europe caused by the two devastating wars of the 1940s and the initial British reception in Europe was not friendly. Many blamed

the British for the horror of the Broken Gears war and pockets of technologists remained scattered throughout the wasteland that much of Europe had become. Macmillan's solution was to utilize Britain's superior chaomancy and infrastructure to provide reconstruction for Europe – at a price, of course.

Uniting friendly forces across the continent, a number of enclaves and trading posts were established in what was swiftly becoming a patchwork of post-apocalyptic, barbarian nations. Britain offered the best hope of restoring civilization. A bitter mix of fear and hope drove many to the British banner, holding their noses as they did so. Slowly the European continent became a collection of British colonies, with the remaining barbarians and the isolated remains of the technologists being squeezed ever closer together.

### **3.1.3 Development of a Federalist Commonwealth (1964–1973)**

By 1964 there were a dozen British outposts in Europe, supplied by three great ships and each defended by thousands of national servicemen and European colonials. The largest of these was the growing territory of Normandy, with several thousand square miles of protectorate and a growing internal economy. Inevitably, independence movements began to spring up.

By 1970 many of the European colonies were in a state of near-revolt; although each was still dependent on the British government for many of their more complex supplies and very much owned by British mag-

nates, revolt was barely kept in check. The solution, implemented by the government of Lord Heath, was the British Federal Commonwealth of Europe. A federalist government of 100 million people was formed. It was weighted heavily in the favour of the British, who had a natural majority in population. Elizabeth II was instated as the Head of the Commonwealth. Individual nations would have their own internal governance but be subject to a wider federalist government.

Under this system many small European nation states quickly arose: a patchwork of republics, co-operatives, principalities, dictatorships and full monarchies began to spring up. In many cases they were backed by a corporation with an exclusive Federal charter granting monopolies throughout that territory. Despite some local opposition, the federal system worked, and by 1993 only Switzerland, the newly re-established papal states and Ireland remained outside the commonwealth in Europe.

### **3.1.4 European Opposition to the Federation and Development of the Militias (1973–1991)**

The European continent fell slowly to the Federalist model; in the wake of the devastation twenty years before, many small communities and states had been built up with a modern wilderness and wasteland between them. It would take another twenty years and the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, the arch-Federalist, for this to spread.

In the meantime, the militant core of the independence groups of the 1960s, who had their hopes dashed by the development of “The New British Empire” as they dubbed it, turned to violent means independently. The late 1970s saw several violent uprisings against dictators and democracies alike. This, combined with a number of successful incursions by the nations along the boarders, led to the development of the British militia system under the Federal Assize of Arms Act of 1981.

The Assize of Arms Act required every man of a particular income (carefully set to include the upper classes only) to either fund a military unit or raise and keep in training a company of part-time soldiers to defend against internal and external threats to the state and rule of the Federation. For holders of Federal charters the requirements were more stringent. They were charged with effectively raising a private army to protect their domain, as well as funding the British army to do presumably the same thing.

### 3.1.5 Entering Africa (1991–2010)

With the continual growth of the Commonwealth the Federation began to expand and crossed the Mediterranean into North Africa. Initially there was no real opposition as the Commonwealth planted new colonies and began to re-establish its empire in the ruins left by the machines. However, as the British moved south they began to encounter new nations, forged from the ruins of the pre-war colonies and nations, and these were less than co-operative with the

new incursion into their lands.

The result was unfortunately bloody. The dream of Empire was rekindled in the hearts of the British and they did not wish to be denied. Moreover the commonwealth desperately needed the material wealth of Africa to continue its rebuilding. The Chao-mancers were running out of gold and silver and were demanding newer, harder to obtain materials such as Uranium. Massacres occurred and amid the blood and carnage of Rhodesia and South Africa, the dream of free, open and democratic empire died. The result was the West Africa Company. Founded in 1996 with the aim of harvesting the wealth of Africa for the good of all it began to strip mine an entire continent.

Initially the wealth poured one way: out of Africa and into Europe. However, infrastructure began to appear and the Europeans, determined to spread their Federation and desperate not to repeat what were perceived as their old mistakes of colonialism, began to build and force the locals to participate. As ludicrous as it seemed, a strange form of equality (with their European brethren, at least) was slowly forced upon the natives of Africa.

### 3.1.6 From Federation to Empire (2010–2020)

For a few years the Federation of European and African States looked to be on the way to spreading a pseudo-democratic Utopia across both continents. Then, on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Churchill’s death, the daemon Colossus reminded the world that he was watching. Queen Elizabeth II, whilst attending an open air memorial ser-

vice, was subject to a lightning attack. Although full measures were taken to protect Her Majesty as soon as storm clouds began to gather, the suddenness of the matter was enough to cause a fatal heart attack. An Empire mourned its queen.

The next surviving member of the royal family in line for the throne was Princess Beatrice. She was subsequently crowned and married to John Machel, an executive director of the West African Company. Machel was known for his ruthless demeanour and over the next ten years managed to use his political connections to effect sweeping changes. He turned the West African Company into a solely crown-owned venture. Not content with that, he ensured sufficient royal charters and precedents were set to transform, slowly but effectively, the reasonably tight Federation into a determined empire.

### **3.1.7 The Ivory Coast Pirates and the Emergence of the Intercontinental Railways (2005–2035)**

With the increased flow of traffic between Africa and Europe, piracy once again reared its ugly head on the high seas. At first swiftly quashed and forgotten, refugees fleeing the neo-colonists and the population clearance programs of the WAC swelled the pirate ranks and the level of pirate attacks increased massively.

The solution to this was rather novel and at the same time rather old fashioned. Reviving Cecil Rhodes' dream of a trans-African rail network, engineers began work on what would become the Great Intercon-

tinental Railway. At first a low capacity network with lightly armed trains, as demands for capacity and security increased the network developed to carry huge juggernauts of trains, with massive armour and weapons.

The so called Battle Trains ran along 12' gauge quadruple fortified tracks carrying thousands of tons of raw materials across the continent. These would eventually be superseded as bandits began to learn how to derail and defeat these armoured juggernauts but for a while, they ran the empire.

### **3.1.8 Clashes with USRA, the Eastern Buffer Zone and the further Assize of Arms acts (2020–2040)**

As the Commonwealth expanded it began to encounter other growing empires in the aftermath of war. The Americans were content playing isolationist as always, invoking their precious Monroe doctrine as an excuse to prevent spreading West.

To the east however was the rather disturbing matter of the United Socialist Republic of Asia who seemed to be expanding on a collision course with the Commonwealth. The first real clash between these powers was the battle of Moscow in 2020 when Commonwealth troops sent to support Russian forces came into direct conflict with USRA troops.

The eventual settlement, in which the Commonwealth was an official "observer", established the land between the Commonwealth's Eastern borders of Poland and the Urals as a buffer, independent but crushed between two giants. As tensions

between the two nations waxed and waned, particularly over lands in the middle East and Eurasia, a second Assize of Arms Act was passed, requiring every fit male between the ages of 21 and 50 to own and train with a weapon regularly as well as passing down a duty upon many of the richer members of society to provided the poorer ones with such weapons. The crime rate instantly spiralled; however, after a period of adjustment, people became used to the idea and an armed populace helped provide a check on the worst depravities of the empire.

### 3.1.9 A Royal Disaster (2030)

On June 5<sup>th</sup> the Royal Airship Britannia was destroyed in a disastrous explosion. The only survivor was the 8 year old Princess Anne, heir to the throne. Anne was crowned and for the first 13 years of her reign the empire was ruled by regents, effectively appointed by her father's aides in the WAC. In truth Anne II is yet to be rid of these "advisors", thus undermining the power of the crown considerably.

### 3.1.10 Australian Independence (2030)

Australia often felt hard done by its membership in the Commonwealth. It gave its men, its natural resources and its pride to the emerging empire and then watched in horror as it slowly abandoned the visions on which it was founded. By 2030 it had had enough and declared itself to have seceded from the empire. A flotilla of ships was dispatched immediately in order to persuade the Australians to reconsiders. How-

ever after being caught up by pirates in the Indonesian states the fleet was forced to return home.

It was this incident which persuaded the British government to rebuild its Navy to historical strengths. However, when a much stronger fleet arrived, they found the Australians armed with a strong military force of their own and the British were persuaded to leave once again.

Officially Britain maintains that Australia is an "independently functioning arm of the British Empire". The fact of the matter is that the British government has no control over Australia. Occasional blockades from New Zealand naval bases are used but they never stop the Australians for long and ships always make it through.

### 3.1.11 The Polish Rebellion and the Treaty of New Delhi. (2040)

In 2040 the cold war took a turn toward the warmer side for a few months. In January 2040 the Polish began to rebel seriously against the Empire, a well co-ordinated and well equipped uprising which seemed to be on the cusp of expelling the British from Poland. In desperation the British poured their Eastern armies into Poland and brutally suppressed the uprising. Thousands were killed, mostly in mass executions, but the British losses were also high.

To their horror the British discovered that the Polish revolt was being used as a cover for the USRA to launch an invasion, east of the Urals. Overrunning Russia and the Ukraine, USRA forces stopped at the Polish border and fortified while the

British forces were bogged down in an internal revolt. The USRA had pulled off an ambitious land-grab and it seemed there was nothing the British could do about it.

Meanwhile in India the battle of the Himalayas was coming to a close. The backbone of the Indian Army seemed to have been destroyed and the USRA looked set to overrun the subcontinent. In retaliation for the annexation of Eastern Europe, the British Empire sent an expeditionary force to the previously hostile India.

India, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, agreed to accept British military help and in doing so effectively made itself a protectorate of the British Empire. The USRA were incensed, harsh words were traded and or a few months it appeared that the world was about to see the first great war of this century. However slowly, the moment passed. Words remained words and the cold war slipped back into another wintry cold phase.

## 3.2 Social Structure

The Imperial British Commonwealth is a regimented, class-based society.

### 3.2.1 The Aristocracy

The owners of the original corporations to spread out and take Federal and later Imperial charters have formed a new aristocracy. Each major family can trace its heritage back to one of the major British expansions or campaigns of the last 100 years.

The system is less rigid than one might expect: the dynasties are too new to have anything but a short-lived disdain of those

who rise through merit to their ranks. Many are keen to absorb this new blood and talent to further their goals. Principalities and Baronies based around these new families are frequently found in the Empire.

One of the strengths of this system is that many of the new aristocracy are native to their domains. While all the power is held by the Empress and the Privy council, the local rulers and the officials they appoint are often drawn from the locals and thus avoid much of the resentment which comes from being ruled by an outsider.

### 3.2.2 The Middle Classes

Below the aristocracy lie the professional or middle classes. Unlike the aristocracy the middle classes must work to live. Their lives are nonetheless lived in relative prosperity and comfort. The middle classes consist of clergy, chaomancers and other university-educated professionals. They provide services to the rich and poor alike and make up the backbone of the junior officers of the Empire, the ones to actually get their hands dirty.

Many of the middle classes aspire to rise to the aristocracy, either through merit or marriage. It is the middle classes which have provided much of the new aristocracy in the Imperial expansion, as well as the occasional usurpation of the old aristocracy. This keeps the system fresh.

### 3.2.3 The Working Classes

Below the middle classes are the working classes, technically a misnomer as the middle classes must also work. However, it is the working classes who are on the front

lines, in battle or in industry. They are the workers in the factories of the Empire, the foot-soldiers patrolling the borders of the Empire and the farmers in the fields of the Empire.

Life is hard for the lower classes, but tends to vary from state to state and indeed industry to industry. In some places the workers are treated little better than slaves. They are kept in company villages and forced into debt and servitude through unfair, controlled systems of economics. In others, where they are allowed more of a voice, there is little difference between the middle and the working classes.

In general the best rule of thumb for determining the difference is what they aspire to. While the middle classes aspire to the aristocracy the working classes aspire to the professional classes, a good education and a much better job for the children.

### 3.3 Systems of Government

The Empire is still technically a Federation of individual states and on a local level is governed as one. The chaos of the wars of the 1940s left Europe and Africa split into hundreds of minor nations, a structure which the expansionist British were only too pleased to maintain as they absorbed the states.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain remains the largest single state (in terms of population at least). The other states are a patchwork of private dictatorships, principalities and genuine democracies. The as-size of arms acts and the militia systems

serve to curb the worst depravities of several of the most unpleasant dictatorships; the imperial armed forces serve to keep the individual nations from breaking away.

The only constant in the Empire is that money means power. The free market system which operates throughout it ensures that influence is a commodity to be bought and sold like any other. A man may disdain his neighbour's race, religion, personal habits or attitude but he will certainly respect his wealth. As a result many of the private states (a term for the principalities, dictatorships and corporate colonies) exist for the sole purpose of keeping the leaders rich. Fortunately there tend to be more democratic than private states in the Empire these days.

Federal government resides in her Majesty, Empress Anne, as head and Empress of the commonwealth. In truth the Empress defers to her government on most matters. This government consists of a Privy Council and the Imperial Senate. The Privy Council makes executive decisions, while the Imperial Senate handles matters of legislation.

The Senate is drawn from appointed or elected members of every state of the commonwealth, with larger states being granted more than one member. As a result the senate is a vast entity of over 2000 members and is frequently given over to voting blocks, schisms and utter paralysis.

The head of the Privy Council is selected by majority vote of the senate. In times of crisis, or when the Senate is deadlocked, he has the effective power to rule by decree (at her Majesty's will, of course). Through judicious use of bribery and threats, this arcane system keeps the Empire stable and

expanding. Much temporal law is left to individual colonies and only the matters of greatest importance (and profit) are regarded as being fit for such a noble institution.

## 3.4 Military

The imperial government maintains two forms of military: The imperial armed forces and the militia. The armed forces are a moderate standing army of professional soldiers armed with some of the best equipment available to any army in the world. The militia is a force of armed citizenry, charged with defence of the homeland and only very occasionally used outside the Empire.

### 3.4.1 The Royal Air Fleet

The Empire maintains a fleet of approximately 100 zeppelins, including 5 Elizabeth-class Floating Fortresses, 7 Raleigh-class troop carriers and 30 Spyglass-class long range reconnaissance/strike forces.

In contrast to other major powers the British fleet is small but well maintained. Its role is limited to small surgical strikes or support of larger land-based campaigns. Each Raleigh-class ship has the capacity to deliver 500 fully equipped troops directly to the battle-field. They are not very effective for anything but reinforcement or surgical strikes.

British ships tend to be smaller, lighter vessels than those fielded by other nations. They are fast and manoeuvrable, making them suited to a rapid response role. The

only exceptions to this are the Elizabeth-class Floating Fortresses, designed to provide heavy bombardment for the British fleet away from the coastline. These colossal ships are puny compared to their largest Chinese counterparts, but this does not detract from the sheer devastation they cause when deployed in support of the British army.

### 3.4.2 The Royal Navy

The Royal Navy, despite a downturn in its fortunes at the start of the century, has risen to become the backbone of the British imperial military. Following large scale attacks on the rail networks, mass transit of precious resources has proven infeasible by even the sturdiest battle train. Instead the British turned to large, heavily guarded sea convoys for their most valuable resources.

The Royal Navy was expanded once again in response to the expansion of the USRA People's Navy (which was, in turn, a response to the original RN expansion). British war plans now rely almost exclusively on amphibious assault and massive coastal bombardment. It is believed that the British Royal Navy consists of over 2000 ships including 30 individual flag ships of fleets spread across the world, defending British shores and shipments of precious alchemical ingredients from across the Empire.

### 3.4.3 The British Army

The Imperial army consists of barely 1 million professional full time-troops stationed along the borders of the Empire and throughout several of the more rebellious

colonies. The army is well maintained and fully equipped with firearms, artillery and, should it come to it, bayonets. The training of British army officers and troops is said to be the best in the world. Their record certainly bears this out. In various conflicts of this century 100:1 casualty ratios against local militia were not uncommon.

The elite units of the army are the Empress's personal guard; technically an elite battalion charged with defending her Majesty, these troops are drawn from the best the army has to offer and are often used to solve the more "troublesome" conflicts which can arise.

#### 3.4.4 The Militias

Following the assize of arms acts of 1981 and 2024 it is the duty of every fit man in the Empire to train with and to own a sword, axe, pike, crossbow, firearm or similar weapon. It is the right and duty of the upper classes and some of the middle classes to organize and provide equipment for militia units throughout the Empire. This mechanism handily serves to curb some of the excesses of totalitarian government throughout the Empire. The British Army is small enough that the militia is also necessary to provide an adequate defence against invasion by foreign powers.

The Militias vary greatly in their degree of equipment and training. It is not unknown for some units to show up armed with precision rifles in perfect formation, only to find they will be fighting alongside what amounts to little better than a mob armed with clubs. Local militias are frequently used as a private police force by many patrons and have poor reputations

in many corners of the Empire. There are also historically massive problems with using such units outside their native territories. However, despite these problems they serve their purpose of keeping costs down while providing a suitable deterrent against invasion.

### 3.5 Theoretical and effective borders

The British Empire stretches across the continents of Europe and Africa. Officially it does not include the countries of Switzerland, Poland, Ireland, the Papal States or the independent city state of Johannesburg. In effect, though, it encompasses not only these states but those of India, New Zealand and arguably Australia under its wider military and economic control zones. The Empire has major militarized borders with the USRA in Eastern Europe, the Middle East region and along the border of the Himalayas in India. It has no existing territories in the Americas or on the Antarctic continent.

### 3.6 Trade

The model for the Empire which has served for the last 100 years has been one of locating centres of knowledge and skill in Europe, particularly Britain. The African nations generally provide the European nations with the raw materials for their production.

In recent years this has changed somewhat, the African nations becoming developed to the point where production has

begun to shift to a more even balance. The European states still provide the more sophisticated technologies and production (airships for example), but the flow of raw materials has shifted towards a more equal balance between Africa and Europe.

One of the side affects of the new economic model emerging has been the decline of the great Intercontinental Railway. Once its great armoured battle-trains ferried goods en masse from across Africa to the industrial heartlands of Europe. The railway is now reduced to a shadow of its former capacity. It transfers goods between African production lines.

The rise of railway pirates along the route has also increased the British dependence on sea-trade. Now many more valuable goods are transported by train only from the processing mills to the ports, at which point much more secure means of transport are provided.

## 3.7 Law

Imperial law is made by decree of her Majesty the Empress with the advice and support of her Privy council and Senate. In effect this is limited to regulations on trade, the military and relations with foreign powers. All else is left to be determined locally.

Local law varies from state to state depending on the constitution of that state. Therefore it can be vitally important, when planning a long trip throughout the Empire, to take your attorney.

## 3.8 Internal Threats

### 3.8.1 African independence movements

Officially any nation may secede from the New British Empire, however none have successfully done so. This is partly because, should any state make a move toward secession, they suffer rapid regime change, supported by Her Majesty's imperial guard. With the recent economic developments favouring Africa, many are questioning what benefit they gain from the Empire. Denied any opportunity to voice their objections openly many have turned to violence. The Empire is currently suffering a series of terrorist campaigns for secession, with strikes on the British mainland. These groups are currently diverse and disorganized. However it is privately feared that, should they unite then the question of African independence may prove a real threat.

### 3.8.2 Pirates

There will always be those who will take by force what others produce by hard graft. In the aristocratic plutocracy of the British Empire the morality of such actions is slightly less clear. Piracy on the high seas has largely been and gone. The infamous pirates of the Indonesian straits were caught, executed and put on public display. Only a few brave or foolish souls dare take on the British Navy. However, on the African continent, with their isolated trade caravans, incompetent militia and low chances of interception by the air fleet the opportunities for piracy are ample, whether

on the road, on the rivers, on the railways or even in the air.

Amongst the various pirate groups to operate throughout the Empire one of the most infamous are the Golden falcons, a group of air pirates thought to be users of forbidden technology. No one knows the base or numbers of this group but they appear to have the entire Air fleet and half the army after them at times. They are also attracting interest from the secretive Guardian inquisition group which operates throughout the Empire.

### 3.8.3 Societies for Political Reform

The British Empire is a place of liberty, freedom and justice. Theoretically. Constitutionally, political discourse is a protected right. However those arguing for radical political reform, a reform of the senate, a broadening of democracy or even the concept of a republic find themselves rapidly isolated from polite society, blacklisted from public jobs and, should they be perceived to be an actual threat to the stability of the Empire, arrested for subversion or simply disappeared. Whichever is more appropriate.

## 3.9 Internal Agencies

### 3.9.1 The Guardians

The Guardians do not exist. Their actions are not sanctioned by the Empire, their intelligence does not come from government sources and they do not have military backing.

The shadowy Guardians sit somewhere between government agency and secret organization. Their mandate is to root out and destroy all trace of forbidden technology throughout the Empire. Most of their work is simple intelligence gathering. Most people who have spoken to a guardian will never know it. Some people who work for the guardians may never suspect where the information they feed to their masters goes. When the guardians are called to come out of the shadows, however, they are somewhat easier to recognize. With long red velvet cloaks and antique weapons which have not been seen for a hundred years they descend on their prey and leave nothing but utter devastation in their wake,

### 3.9.2 Secret Intelligence Service

The Empire's internal intelligence service. Dedicated to spying on political dissidents, minor internal rulers, military personnel deemed "unstable" and of course internal "counter terrorism" and "counter espionage".

The head of the SIS reports directly to her Majesty, bypassing all levels of government. In practice the reports are usually delivered at Privy Council for discussion and debate. All reports, except of course for those on members of the privy council itself.

### 3.9.3 The Privy Council

The Privy Council is the executive body of the British Empire. It is the Queen's circle of most trusted advisors and heads of department. The nominal head of the Privy

Council is the Queen. However in practice it is more often a political appointee, the Prime Minister. The Privy Council is loaded with the representatives of the most powerful families in the Empire and decisions made here are usually by a consensus opinion, with the Prime Minister controlling the dominating faction. A dominating faction in the Privy Council can usually ensure a dominating faction in the Senate, thus ensuring the Prime Minister is seen to be properly appointed. This process helps insulate her Majesty from the political fallout of unpopular decisions and allows for a dynamic political environment without endangering the political fabric of the Empire.

### 3.9.4 The Church

The Empire governs over a large number of people sharing a diverse range of religions and faiths. The Queen holds the title Defender of the Faith and most faiths within the Empire affirm that whatever deity they worship probably appointed her. The official faith of the Empire is the Protestant Church of England (and its various associated sister churches throughout the Empire). However in this enlightened age there seems to be little discrimination against other faiths so long as they subscribe to the doctrines of the evils of Forbidden Technology and the divine right of the Queen.

### 3.9.5 The West African Company

The West African Rift Valley is an area ripe with precious metals, jewels and alchemical

ingredients. The West African Company dominates production in this area. It is a crown possession, and the treasure trove of the Empire. The West African company dominates most areas of life where it operates. It is effectively a corporate extension of the British government, with protection from the British army and Navy ships transporting their goods.

The West Africa company is one popular method of advancement in the Empire. It accepts applicants from throughout the Empire and operates on a totally meritocratic system of advancement. Many notable aristocrats have their family history beginning with a capable and ruthlessly ambitious clerk in the West Africa Co.

### 3.9.6 Her Majesty's Secret Service

The Empire's external intelligence service, Her Majesty's Secret Service operates throughout the globe. It employs suave and sophisticated agents in formal wear, who thwart villains, save diplomats and defend the realm from all manner of threat and foe. Or so the pulp fiction publishers of Manchester would have you believe.

In reality HMSS operations are dirty, unpleasant affairs involving lies, treachery, murder, deceit, theft and blackmail in order to gain minor political advantage in the Empire's foreign affairs.

# Chapter 4

## China

### The United Socialist Republic of Asia

*TIME Journal of Washington, February, 2049*

In 1958, following a struggle to rebuild and consolidate after the successive trials of the Communist Revolution, the Japanese invasion, and the War of Broken Gears, the People's Republic of China, under their charismatic leader Mao Zedong, presented an offer of "Socialist Solidarity and Protection" to the Soviet authorities in the stricken USSR. The terms of the agreement were severe, and essentially mandated the political union of the two countries under the unilateral executive leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

Heavily industrialized Soviet Russia suffered greatly during World War II and even more in the Breaking. By adopting a scorched earth strategy, a major machine invasion from Europe was repulsed, but at great cost, and the party was still reeling from internal power struggles following the death of Stalin. With agricultural production at a critical low, there were food

shortages in many rural areas. By contrast China, which was comparatively underdeveloped and still largely agricultural before the war, went largely unscathed during these time. By the end of the Breaking, China was in a very strong position, and the Russians were in no state to stand up to the fanatical Red Guards dedicated to bringing true Communism to the rest of Asia. After a few days of intense deliberation, the Soviet government signed the treaty.

The union went ahead remarkably smoothly. The Russian people, exhausted after decades of war and starvation, welcomed the new influx of grain into the country if nothing else, and the Maoists, while severe rulers, were no more so than the Soviets. The territory was proclaimed the United Socialist Republic of Asia. Over the next fifty years the USRA underwent a true "Great Leap Forward". Her vast tracts of fertile land began to produce enormous quantities of foodstuffs, supporting a rapidly expanding population. USRA chaomancers, following a single, highly developed school which emphasized communal effort allowing the rapid construction of

large machines, were amongst the best in the world.

Although the Socialists focused on internal growth and upon cementing their rule over the population (only slightly hampered by the death of Mao in 1979), they also exerted strong pressure upon India and the countries of Eastern Europe in an attempt to extend their power. Colourful Communist propaganda leaflets became a constant sight in the city streets and village halls of these nations, and the threat of international Socialism was for many years a serious one. The threat of another world war prevented direct military intervention, and the propaganda effort was not ultimately successful, except in the Balkans, where a revolution brought the state of Yugoslavia into the the USRA in 1985. Although the Communist party gained a significant deal of support in India, prompting a panic among the British and talk of a preemptive war, the “Red Menace” eventually receded with economic recovery in the sub-continent.

By the turn of the century the Socialists were a formidable world power. With vast machines the size of villages automating agriculture and mining, their productive capacity was impressive, while the vast and ruthlessly regimented Red Army, consisting mainly of longbow archers with large numbers of elite Russian cavalry, glowered constantly over the borders of the Democracies.

In the twenty-first century, the USRA has maintained a steady rate of population

growth and development right down to the present day. This has been helped greatly by the deployment of huge steam-machines to the northern regions of Siberia, which have turned vast areas of inhospitable tundra into fertile farmlands and pushed back the borders of habitation to far inside the arctic circle. The concerns of some theorists that this could be liberating trapped gasses into the Earth’s atmosphere, or even melting the polar ice-sheets, are not taken seriously by most experts.

Today, the USRA has a reported population of over three billion people. Each adult citizen is required to perform two years’ service in the Red Army between the ages of 20 to 30 – the total military personnel number 100 million, including 80 million infantry, 5 million elite cavalry, and 15 million in the navy and air corps. Socialist society has remained stable for over one hundred years, thanks to the deep-rooted Communist ideology and ruthless secret police, the People’s Guardians.

USRA technology is less advanced than that of the West, due to the emphasis placed on practical over theoretical chaomancy, but this has also allowed the production of certain very large scale machines, including the fearsome and impressive Iron Tiger Land Fortress tanks, fully forty meters long and twenty high. Their agriculture relies upon chaomantic irrigation pumps and they have an extensive railway network, although they have noticeably fewer steamships and aircraft than the West, and very few cars and other light vehicles.

## USRA Secret Research

*(British Intelligence Memo)*

USRA attitudes to intelligent chaid technology and mass production have always been less negative than those of the West, and for many decades, but especially in recent years, they have carried out research programs into what the Crown considers forbidden technology. This is publicly denied, but our reports from behind the Iron Curtain suggest that they are exploring a number of dangerous fields including possible methods of enhancing the human body with the help of technology.

## Bletchley Park, 1944, excerpts from journal of Arthur Scherbius, American chaomancer on project Enigma

**May 7<sup>th</sup>:** *The war is going badly. France is long fallen, Hitler's eyes are upon us, and our latest intercepts hint about Goebbels working on a Great Machine. I have resolved to create a mechanical annal generator, to improve the precision of our chaomancers.*

**June 21<sup>st</sup>:** *Breakthrough. I have a design, beyond anything tried before. The calculations are a nightmare – the team have been working on them 14 days straight with little sleep and a feeling of impending doom chasing their every waking moment. August 2<sup>nd</sup> is the auspicious date. We have just 10 days to build the machine.*

**August 4<sup>th</sup>:** *This is beyond dreams. I have summoned no mere Daemon who can be bargained with and entertained. This Raelius is the very Beast of the Apocalypse. We understand nothing. I'm so glad he is on our side and that Hitler is not to his flavour.*

*I am a little nervous of what I have promised but the deal is so great. This will surely save the world.*

**August 10<sup>th</sup>:** *Raelius has provided formulae to summon specific Daemons he claims tailored for specific machines. The efficiency correlation we are achieving is unbelievable.*

*We have taken over the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> construction battalions and are going to construct a magnificent Production Line machine.*

**September 5<sup>th</sup>:** *I am hearing ugly rumours, and have taken the precaution of sending a copy of my notes including some formulæ, and notes on translating Raelius' signal, to my friend and mentor, [erased], in London.*

**December 17<sup>th</sup>:** *Raelius is behaving most strangely.*

# Chapter 5

## America

### 5.1 The War of Broken Gears      5.2 Afterwards

Before the war, America was strong. The average American had all the toaster ovens, trouser presses, telephones and so on that he or she could wish for.

And then the technology turned against us.

We stood up and fought. Of course we did. But the chads – the demons that rule all of technology – were strong and they were pervasive. Our civilization was propped up by the pillar of technology. Take that away, and we fell. We fell a hell of a long way. But we did not give in. The disparate people that comprised America found common cause in the fight against the demons. As our society fell down about our ears, we found new strength in what America was originally all about. The American Dream; the pioneer spirit; the idea of Liberty. These are our ideals; these are our principles. This is our strength. We bend but we don't break. We are America!

The American people suffered much in the War of Broken Gears. Their comfortable lives were stripped away, but underneath it the American people found their spirit. After the war, they reverted to a somewhat lower technology base. Basically, think back to the Wild West – that's the way that things are, cause nobody has long-range communications or anything like that. The pioneer, frontier spirit continued for some years, while the Americans rebuilt. When the central government was strong enough to ask the outlying States how they were doing, they found them mostly ready to get back up and remind the world what America was about; the United States ended up getting back together because everybody believed it was a pretty good idea.

The move to assist Latin America was a logical next step. They were having both financial and social troubles; American economic and military assistance was very welcome during the war, and once the war finished they didn't really manage to leave again. The States haven't actually ex-

panded – it’s just that the South American countries have seen the wisdom of having American farmboys helping them against their own internal rebels.

Oh. And Cuba just didn’t happen. The Americans weren’t having any of this rebellion malarkey, and annexed the place.

So, basically, we have an American bloc to rival the Chinese and even the British Empire.

### 5.3 Resources

Their economic base remains capitalist. Their government remains federal. The American Dream and the pioneer lifestyle remain.

They are the only major world power to have an all-volunteer army. There has never been any need for anything else - whenever the government says that America is threatened, the American people have stood up to be counted.

America has its own uranium deposits, and therefore can afford to maintain an air force of healthy size.

American chaomancers are known for their intuitive, almost improvisational ap-

proach, drawing upon the Amerindian shamanistic tradition. They are known for their innovative approach to chaomantic theory and device design. The American FBI, for example, have benefited massively from the discovery of a metal that contracts in the presence of deliberate falsehood.

American society is a plutocracy. Those who can pay for education, get education, and so on. The almighty dollar marches on.

### 5.4 Other powers

The Communist menace is a shadow in the East. They are unAmerican. They are inscrutable. Who knows what black arts they’re practising behind that iron curtain?

Everyone knows the British want all their old colonies back. Just because they haven’t tried to invade yet doesn’t mean that they’re not going to do so in the future. You want to go bow and scrape to some Limey bastard? Not me.

Those Aussies don’t know what’s good for them. They’re selling to the highest bidder without any thought for freedom and justice. Somebody’s going to do something about them, and soon.



## **Gunsmithing, or, the Noble Art of Chaomancy Applied on Principles of an Immediately War- like Nature, by Sir James Tyrrell. Vol. I, pg. Lxiv**

*The base chassis of the pistol is composed of a shaft of polished yew exactly six and one half inches in length, of square cross-section and width two inches, already prepared with the aforementioned clockwork action and barrel assembly. To the end opposite the barrel is attached by means of Joint Method II(a) a handle crafted from oak or yew to the ergonomics of the proposed wielder of the weapon, this part not being detrimental to the appearance of the salamander within the finished product.*

*This chassis should now be placed in a class I ritual circle. Using a Medium ritual brush left-handed, inscribe onto the left side of the chassis Runes I through VI (above) in class I thermal ink. Using a Small ritual brush right-handed, inscribe upon the action assembly Runes VII through XIV in class II thermal ink.*

*This being done, take a sliver of flint not more than seven hundred grains in weight and dip in class II thermal ink, the sliver being held right-handed with iron tongs. This being achieved, wind for the first time the pistol action. Wait fifteen seconds. Ensuring your smoked-glass eye shield is down and that the ritual circle has not become broken in any detail, emplace the sliver within the setting, giving a slight push; success will be heard as a slight 'click'.*

*Quickly withdraw your hand from the ritual circle, ensuring that the circle is not broken. A successful leashing will be indicated by the thermal ink on the finished weapon commencing softly to glow. Upon an unsuccessful leashing, the gentle reader is requested to retire to a safe distance and observe the release of heat energy.*

# Chapter 6

## Chaomancy

### The History of Chaomancy

by Thomas Parkinson, St. John's College, 1940

The first modern chaomancer is generally said to have been an English Franciscan friar, Roger Bacon (1214-1294). After early dabbling in empiricist philosophy and theology, Bacon became interested in the idea of developing complex mechanical objects and investigating chemical compounds. Reacting against the prevailing Aristotelian philosophers, who taught that nature consisted only of the visible, material world, Bacon believed that there were other levels of reality which might be accessed through the correct processes. After a long period of experimentation, and with the patronage of Pope Clement IV, Bacon developed his theory of chaomancy which was published in the treatise "Theorum Machina De Profundis", and elaborated upon in more detail in his books the *Opus Majus* and *Opus Minor*.

By the standards of the present-day, Ba-

con was superstitious, dogmatic, and his understanding of the mechanisms by which chaomancy is performed was extremely basic. However, even despite these limitations he succeeded in developing a number of practical chaomantic devices such as a water-pump, an ever-burning lamp, and his most famous, a mechanical model of a human head. He also produced speculative designs of several more advanced machines.

In fact, it is now known that Bacon was not quite the original thinker he is often portrayed as. Several earlier medieval philosophers, such as the Arab Avicenna and an obscure mathematician known as Petrus of Picardie, are now realized to have written works laying down the basic principles of chaomancy, but Bacon did not credit them. However, no thinker before Bacon ever realized that the leashing of a chaid could have practical applications or that these phenomena could be placed to the use of man.

During the following centuries chaomancy spread across Europe, and brought with it a number of new devices such as the cannon and the arquebus. However,

progress was hampered greatly by the unreliability of the leashing process, which meant that research was a long, expensive and hazardous process. Society viewed chaomancers in a suspicious light - the Church periodically pronounced a ban on the practice, although these were quickly withdrawn when it was pointed out that the power of the papal states rested largely on their firearms. Nevertheless, chaomancers such as Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo Galilei succeeded in achieving a number of advances.

The modern “chaomantic revolution” began with Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). Although he was also interested in bizarre ideas such as mechanics and optics, Newton was a brilliant chaomancer. His main achievement was the realization that chaomancy could be understood using mathematical principles, and this led to the formulation of Newton’s Three Laws, equations which are used to calculate the correct time and place for a successful leashing. Newton’s ideas were published in the seminal book *Philosophiae Chaomantica Principia Mathematica*. He also published a yearly Almanac, a collection of tables for the swift reference of other chaomancers, which greatly increased the efficiency and safety of research and production.

Following Newton, chaomancy advanced rapidly, with the discovery of ever more complex forms of leashing, and a great many new devices began to be produced. The impact of these new technologies on the world was increasingly apparent, and there were even a number of relatively short-lived movements which decried the new machines. The most important 18th century discoveries were those of the chaomantic

steam engine, perfected by James Watt in 1769, and that of electricity. Steam was soon used to power machines such as ships, trains, and industrial equipment, heralding the industrial revolution.

But even as steam seemed to reach an unassailable zenith its replacements were already in development. The twin technologies of internal combustion and electricity, coupled with the newly-developed method of cheaply mass-producing steel lead to the “Second Industrial Revolution” as the age of mass-production began. This new technology greatly reduced the expense of technical items, and as a result their availability exploded.

This newly available cornucopia of technology, combined with the customary deplorable but very real impetus provided by war, has lead to something of a golden age in technological terms. Heavier than air flying machines are at the forefront of modern armies, while the land war is conducted with fast moving tanks as opposed to the bloody carnage of earlier trench warfare. Almost every home has a radio allowing the government to provide news and entertainment to the entire nation in an instant, and in cinema even moving pictures can be displayed.

Surely, once the Hun is defeated, the next generation will give technical wonders such as we today can barely conceive. While I cannot say what is to come, I can confidently predict that it will be wonderful.

## Leashing of chaomantic devices, and the debunking of the myth of “Incantations”

The construction, or ‘leashing’ of a simple chaomantic device – an oven, say, or a pistol – is a matter merely of ritual and form. The correct components are assembled, the correct runes are inscribed upon the body of the device, and the last piece of the device is emplaced with some ceremony. The last stage brings forth a chaid into the device; if the runes are correct, this chaid is correct for the device and does not explode or otherwise cease to function.

More complex devices (but still safe and useful ones, Gentle Reader!) are exponentially more complex to construct. The almanack must be consulted to provide the correct time at which the first rune is to be inscribed; each component thereafter must be separately prepared at specific intervals; the correct substances being used according to the astrological alignment and even the creator’s frame of mind. The chaid thus summoned is more powerful and may be thought of almost as being intelligent, like an obedient dog or a particularly stupid servant. To ensure the correct functioning of the device so built, explicit and precise orders must be given to the chaid during the leashing process, for it is in their nature to ‘interpret’ their orders mischievously. Once the last component is placed, the device is leashed and the instructions are ‘frozen in’. This is the origin of the commonly held but fallacious belief that ‘incantations’ and ‘sorcerous spells’ are required to leash a chaid

into a device: the so-called ‘incantation’ is nothing more than a series of very exact instructions to prevent the device malfunctioning.

Why, then, are these ‘incantations’ not in the King’s English? For a very simple reason, Gentle Reader: English, while a language of great beauty, is not a language with the precision required for chaomancy. The instructions to chaid are thus given in one of several very precise languages based upon the Classical languages; that based on Greek is principally favoured among chaomancers.

## Chaomantic Research – an informal introduction to the area

by one James Tinning, Cambridge Research Student

What with all this discussion of ‘forbidden technology’ and ‘black arts’, one might be forgiven for thinking that all applications of Chaomancy were either known or proscribed. Not so, dear reader, as I shall endeavour to explain.

Firstly, a proper quantification of the forbidden technologies: These fall into three types, each banned for a different reason.

Firstly, there is the Devil Machine. That so complex it necessitates the binding of a Devil – the greatest and most terrible of the daemons. As you well know, these are self-aware, and bargain hard on their own behalf. They are also irredeemably evil and utterly malevolent.

Secondly, there is electricity, and all its derivatives. Colossus may be destroyed, but

it is far from gone, and it has control over electricity in all its forms, through some nefarious means. Any device you might find, build or steal, which uses electricity, will be working against you – no matter how well it hides this.

Third, and least – although do not tell the SIS this – we have technology forbidden because it is impossible, or nearly so, to use without violating one of the above. Mass-production is an obvious culprit, and so many firearms fall afoul of this limitation. Not that one couldn't hand-machine ammunition for a mini-gun, but who would? The temptation is seen as too much.

Also, of course, Zeppelins – since they run on Uranium (oh, you didn't know? Well, more on that later...) – which could also be used for... other purposes. That sort of thing. The Government thinks it's best if you don't play with it.

So... what can we do? Well, firstly, we can replicate pre-war discoveries. Those that, perhaps, fell beside the wayside when electricity came into common usage. There is a thriving industry in archaeology and translation attempting to do just that.

What these historians hope for, of course, is a concise and clear description of the chaomantic rituals and designs required to produce such a device. And to propitiate it afterwards, of course...

Well, of course you have to propitiate the thing. The daemon has rules you must follow if it is to continue to provide service – most are obvious, and well known. If a Salamander is providing one with fire, one must feed it occasionally, and refrain from pouring water on it. And no good soldier doesn't know by heart the liturgy he repeats while oiling his gun every evening.

But, of course, such things are obvious – so may never be written down. And thus so many rediscovered wonders are useless to us, falling apart within days.

Maybe that is where your talent will lie – in divining the requirements of particular daemons. It is lucrative work, if you are good enough, but a hard skill to teach.

Now, if rediscovering the past is hard, consider how much harder it is to invent anew.

Oh, it is certainly possible. It has shaped the world around us. But consider the effort involved in thinking of a new way for a daemon to affect the world, divining the shape of the chaomantic device required to facilitate such – and then satiating the result before it is gone again.

Many months of frustrating setbacks, and that for something simple. Some Dons have spend half their lives on a single problem, and made no progress.

Why fund it? Why do it? Because if you succeed, you change the world. Let me give you an example or two:

### **The Bertleman Barometer**

What Bertleman did, back in '21, was to bind a Salamander into a strip of silver, carved with a grid of very fine holes in a specific hexagonal pattern, and then inscribe it with a few specific symbols. This strip then shrinks a little if exposed to a certain wavelength of brain activity.

Once you laminate this metal into a bimetallic strip, and attach a needle and dial, you have a Bertleman Barometer – a simple device for detecting lies. Very useful, surprisingly cheap to make, top secret. I hear he died very rich.

And the final question? How to satisfy the Salamander? It turns out it needs to feel a fresh breath upon its host at least once every 6 hours. Curious, but a small hose is standard issue, in case you need to sleep.

## Zeppelins

Big, military Zeppelins. All pretty hush-hush, but a couple of things are well known: They use hot air to fill their 'gas bags' since it's safer. Really hot, generally.

Thing is, there's no fire, and no fuel. Well, almost none. They have a device on them somewhere – likes of you and me don't even know what it's called – and part of the requirement is that you feed it with uranium. Weapons grade, at that.

But hey, you get good balloons. Just don't stand near one when it gets blown to heck.

## The Smithson Keel

This, by contrast is one that everybody knows. You can get it in the library here, I'm sure. Last I heard, Richard Smithson was pottering around pretty cheerfully. Got himself a fellowship here – although no real money to speak of. Doesn't seem to care though. Strange chap.

Anyway, I won't bore you with the details, but he created the standard sailing zeppelin keel – the thing that lets it sail against the wind. It's just a sheet of... stuff... that doesn't like moving out of its plane. Right bugger to carry, though, cuts like nobody's business.

But... yeah. Making it needs to be done at the new moon, by a redheaded chao-

mancer, and you have to soak it in saltwater while the sun's down. Oh, and sing once in a while when you sail with it – but nobody's sure if you really need to do that. What a joker.

Anyway... Research. Not for everyone, but...

## Chaomantic calculations

Not every device built will attract a chaid. Not every chaid attracted will cause a device to operate correctly (or at all). In order to prevent either dysfunction, malfunction or explosion, the form, function and creation methodology of the device must conform exactly to a certain set of mathematical, alchemical and astrological rules. The superficial aspects of chaomancy are somewhat easy to understand:

Form follows function. A device must look like it is capable of doing whatever it is that it does – a train must have many large wheels and a track, a flying machine must be streamlined, a gun must look brutal and stubby.

The item's horoscope is important. This is why astrological readings are so important for correct leashing. It may be calculated, with time and skill, but may usefully be looked up in one of the almanacks created for this purpose.

The item's materials are important. The parts of the machine must be made of a very specific alchemical formula, which depends mainly on the desired properties of the final product as regard strength and reliability.

The chaid's role is important. This must be written upon the body of the device in question in a substance known as 'thermal

ink' – an ink that glows in the presence of chaid.

## Of the Soul

by Fr. Charles Mothley, 1993

... One of the more novel of these modern ideas regarding the soul is the theory, popular among some of our more “advanced” thinkers in Oxford and Cambridge, that the human soul is of one essential and fundamental nature with the phenomena known as “chaid”. The human body, according to these theorists, is nothing more than a complex machine and is accordingly, the soul is no more than a machine spirit trapped within it, the bodies of animals being of a similar nature although less intricate.

This materialistic doctrine can be easily refuted. The chaomancers tell us that the binding of a “chaid” to a physical object is a long and complicated process which must be performed in accordance to certain mathematical laws, but who guides the development of the human body? The idea that the chemical code of DNA contains instructions to the “chaid” and act in a similar way to the leashing runes on a common piece of kitchen equipment is nothing but speculation...

## A guide to the most common Chaid one might encounter

Excerpt from a first year course text at Cambridge.

**Salamander:** Small and barely sentient, capable only of repetitive physical and alchemical tasks. Also the easiest to control, and generally the least dangerous if things do go wrong. Nonetheless, the sheer power available from a large matrix of Salamanders, while useful, can easily burn an incautious experimenter to a crisp.

**Simbian:** A monkey like intelligence, with an ability to learn and a sense of fun. Attracted to loud noises and flashes. Very dexterous and quite quick. Used for military applications by most novices – although the inherent unreliability makes it unsuitable for anything more complicated than a six-shooter.

**Gremlin:** A greedy single minded legalistic bureaucrat. There are no known applications for these daemons outside of the Difference Engine, but they are very conducive to study and experimentation – and as such they shall feature extensively in this course.

**Devil:** The most forbidden of technology. We shall of course cover many aspects of these daemons, as and when required – for knowledge of the mistakes of history is a necessity if we are to avoid their repetition – but the student should not expect many details in their first couple of years of study.

System



# Chapter 7

## System basics

The basic resolution system used in Broken Gears is as follows.

The GM should only call for a roll if the result of an action is in doubt; a character with some training can be assumed to succeed at mundane tasks when not under pressure – there is no need to roll the Pilot skill every single time a character who can ride gets on his horse to go somewhere. The default roll assumes attempting something of moderate difficulty while under pressure; modifiers are available for the GM to scale this to the difficulty required.

Ranking for a skill is a pair of numbers separated by a slash, for example 5/8. This represents a skill of 5, and a score in the stat related to that skill of 3, which sum to 8. Most skills can be attempted with no training, though only limited success is possible in this case. Some skills of a technical nature cannot be used untrained, however; these are marked with a star in the skill list.

To see whether, and how well, a character succeeds at an action, roll a D12, and add or subtract any modifiers decided by the GM

for that particular action. If the roll is under your (Stat + Skill), the second number, you have succeeded. This represents a ‘normal’ success, achieved marginally with no flair or margin of error. An example might be leaping a wide pit and just making it, sprawling prone on the other side and needing to spend a round or two getting up again.

If, however, you roll under just your skill, the first number listed, then you have a Strong Success. This is better, and signifies a more effective, or flashier success at the action. For example, leaping the large gap and landing upright, and being able to carry on running almost immediately. Finally, if you are rolling and have a skill of 1 or higher (representing some degree of training), and you roll a 1 on the die, then you achieve a Critical Success. This reflects a very lucky or accomplished success, for example leaping the pit and carrying on running without even breaking stride, perhaps helping you escape whatever you are running away from.

<b>-9</b>	Trivial
<b>-6</b>	Very easy, lots of time
<b>-3</b>	Quite easy, not too rushed
<b>0</b>	Moderately challenging, under pressure
<b>+3</b>	Quite difficult, very pressed for time
<b>+6</b>	Extremely difficult, must be done almost instantaneously
<b>+9</b>	Virtually impossible

Table 7.1: Some generic difficulty modifiers

The result of the die may be modified by the GM. Positive modifiers represent a disadvantage while negative modifiers mean an advantage. A general table of modifiers are given for the difficulty of the action, followed by a list of specific modifiers. Other situations should be defined by the GM. See table 7.1 for some examples.

# Chapter 8

## Character generation

To play Broken Gears, you need to create a character; an avatar who will act as your in-game personification, allowing you to interact with the world and other characters. Your character will be both a collection of traits and backgrounds, representing their personalities, and a group of numbers, representing their abilities and potentials.

### 8.1 Personality

The first step is to imagine the character you wish to play. This is likely to change somewhat as you flesh the concept out with numbers and specifics, but if possible you should try to form a mental image of the sort of character you want to play. At this point you may have a fully defined personality complete with name, physical description and backstory, or you may only have a vague idea of his traits and motivations, planning to complete the definition later. You will certainly want at this point to consider your character's rough age, his current station in life, his goals in life and his overarching personality traits. Make sure

that you discuss the idea with your GM and other party members to ensure that you all generate complementary characters.

*For example, Robert decides to create a young noble, raised in the courts of London and hungry to win glory and advancement by almost any means. He decides to leave his name and specifics until later, hoping that inspiration will strike as character creation progresses.*

### 8.2 Statistics

A character's statistics define their innate potentials, which form the basis of all their actions. A character is defined by six statistics:

**Intelligence (INT):** the potential the character has to learn and use facts and information

**Fine Dexterity (DEX):** the character's ability to manipulate small objects with their hands

**Agility (AGI):** the character's aptitude for acrobatics and using their body

**Constitution (CON):** the gross physical strength and stamina of the character

**Charisma (CHA):** the character's likability and loquaciousness

**Wit (WIT):** the common sense and perceptiveness of the character

You have 30 points to split between these skills, which are bought under a triangular system: increasing a statistic by one point costs the value to which you are raising it. For example, increasing a statistic from 2 to 3 will cost three points, in addition to the cost of raising it to 2 in the first place. The minimum possible value for a statistic is one, and the maximum is five. See table 8.1 for the total costs of buying each level. You will need to weigh the importance of specialization against the fact that your other stats will by necessity be lower. Do consider, however, that a party of characters with complementing specializations will generally be more effective than a group of jack-of-all-trades. The average person has stats at 2, but bear in mind that player characters are certainly not average. Any points not spent in this section can be carried over to skills.

*Robert's young noble will have spent much of his time operating in court, and so decides to prioritize Wit, which he sees covers the useful skills Politics and Perception. On the other hand, he doesn't want to be too much of a specialist; a proper noble should be able fight a duel, command an army and run an embassy as well as simply being witty and charming. Taking Wit at four seems a good compromise, leaving him 20 points to distribute between his other stats. He doesn't see his noble at being particularly*

*muscular or intelligence, but doesn't want him to be an imbecile or a weakling; either would be a fatal weakness given the dangerous situations his ambition is likely to get him into, so takes two for each at 3 points each, leaving 14 points to split between Fine Dexterity, Agility and Charisma. All of these are fairly useful for the character, but he can only afford one of them at level three, and decides that Agility is the most useful, so he sets it to three and Fine Dexterity and Charisma to two. This has cost 28 points, and as the remaining two points are too little to raise any stat further, so they are carried over to skills.*

### 8.3 Skills

Skills define your character's training; what he has learnt to do over the course of his life. You have 75 points available plus any points carried over from the Statistics section, with a similar triangular cost scheme to stats. In contrast, however, there is no maximum skill, and values will tend to be somewhat higher than stats in areas where your character specializes. On the other hand, there are areas in which your character will have no significant training, and hence will have a skill of zero. In particular, the 'Forbidden Lore' skill, relating to the proscribed chaomancy and chaomantic devices, will be zero in almost all cases.

A list of skills, along with their descriptions, can be found in the next chapter. While it is tempting to concentrate on just a few high skills, bear in mind that most people will have at least some experience in quite a number of areas, and taking this allows the possibilities of critical and strong

Level	Cost
1	1
2	3
3	6
4	10
5	15
6	21
7	28
8	36
9	45
10	55

Table 8.1: Cost to buy stats and skills under the triangular cost scheme

successes. A skill at 2 represents a decent degree of competence while 5 represents a well-trained professional who has dedicated years to the skill. The average lawyer will have Profession (Law) at 5, for instance. Higher skills represent genius and extraordinary competence.

*Robert has 77 point points to spend (75, plus the two carried over from his stats), and decides his most important will be Politics, Persuade and Perception, noting also that Command, Bluff and Learning will likely stand him in good stead. At lower levels he also wants to be able to ride a horse, so he decides to take Pilot. He would also like to survive in combat, so at least some of Dodge, Melee, Brawl and Small Arms will be useful. With 77 points to spend he decides to start high and blow 21 on getting Politics at six. That's more than a quarter of his points, but makes him dangerously smooth and capable when it comes to navigating formal events; he wants to be a prodigy. He has 56 points left and can no longer afford to be so extravagant, so he takes Persuade and Perception at four each for 20 more points. He buys Bluff and*

*Command at three for 6 each, and feels he can get away with a skill of two in Pilot and Learning; he won't be the most erudite of nobles but hopefully his higher Bluff skill will let him fake it. Most nobles should be able to at least handle a sword and a gun, but Robert decides that Dodge is the most important, taking that at four; expensive, but with his relatively low Constitution this will help him survive if things go south. With 8 points left he takes Small Arms and Melee at two each, and spends his remaining two points to take Athletics and Streetwise at one each, just in case.*

## 8.4 Finishing Touches

With your stats and skills determined you should now flesh out any further details of your character. If you haven't determined your character's name and physical description, this is the time. Finally, mark down how many wound levels you have; on the character sheet there are a group of boxes in the bottom right. Cross out any box marked with a number higher than your

Constitution score. Once this is done, hand your character sheet over to the GM for him to check over, and then it's time to introduce your new personality to the world of Broken Gears!

*Defining the character's skills has helped Robert get a pretty good idea of his character; his relatively low Learning shows he didn't pay much attention to formal schooling while young, but instead likely read courtly romances or snuck away to listen in to his elders indulging in the dance of politics. He decides to name him Stephen Courtney, son of Lord Courtney, only recently introduced into formal society and now seeking a patron and opportunities to win glory and recognition. With his average Constitution but with better than average Agility he decides that Stephen is lithe but slight. He finishes a brief physical description with carefully swept back shoulder-*

*length brown hair, brown eyes and pale skin. Stephen has a Constitution of 2 so Robert blacks out the boxes marked 3, 4 and 5, leaving two Grazing wound boxes, two Wounding wound boxes and one each of Critical and Incapacitating wounds.*

## 8.5 XP System

Characters can gain experience with time and testing; this is handled by experience points, or XP, awarded by the GM. These points can be spent to improve both the Stats and Skills of the character using the same triangular formulæas above, with the proviso that increasing Stats at this point costs three times as much. So increasing your Firearms skill from 4 to 5 costs 5 XP, and increasing Command from 0 to 2 costs 3 XP, but increasing Agility from 3 to 4 costs  $3 \times 4 = 12$ .

# Chapter 9

## Skills

Being a list of the skills used in Broken Gears, along with the stats they are conventionally used with. Actions involving most skills can be attempted by someone who lacks them. Strong and critical successes are impossible under such circumstances. Skills marked with an asterisk require detailed knowledge. Actions involving these skills cannot be attempted by someone who lacks the skill.

### Intelligence

**\*Profession (type):** The Profession skill covers training such as law, medicine and even cooking! Many of these skills provide useful background and income for the character, but may also come in useful during an adventure.

**Learning:** This is a general knowledge skill, relating to everything from geopolitical knowledge to arithmetic. This does not cover forbidden lore or chaomantic knowledge, but most other

things will be covered by this. The difficulty of the roll will be set by the GM on the basis of the obscurity of the piece of knowledge to know.

**\*Forbidden Lore:** The Forbidden Lore skill covers knowledge of proscribed devices and their construction. Note that displaying evidence of this knowledge is likely to be extremely dangerous in most of the world. Players planning to take this skill during character creation should discuss this with the GM. Many users of this skill will also require one of the two Chaomancy skills below.

**\*Theoretical Chaomancy:** This skill covers an understanding of chaomantic lore and the design of new chaomantic devices. Low levels allow the understanding of the fundamental theories of chaomancy and the design of trivial devices. Very high levels may be needed to create large scale or novel devices.

## Fine Dexterity

**\*Practical Chaomancy:** This covers the ability to construct chaomantic devices from plans, completing the rituals and forming and arranging the tiny cogs and steam tubes. Note that large devices or those with significant casings will require the Craft skill to construct the non-mechanical sections of the device.

**\*Craft:** The Craft skill covers non-mechanical construction, from building a bridge to sculpting a statue.

**Pilot:** This skill allows the character to attempt to drive any vehicle from a horse to a zeppelin.

**Small Arms:** The skill of using firearms; this covers everything from small flintlocks through rifles and shotguns. This also covers the use of bows and crossbows. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

**Large Weapons:** This skill covers all weapons too large to be carried into combat, everything from small hand-cranked Gatling guns to gigantic ship-mounted cannons and everything in between. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

## Wit

**Perception:** The ability of the character to notice important or unusual details that may prove informative or important. This could be anything from a bent leaf giving away the direction of a fleeing enemy to a slight frostiness in speech showing that an acquaintance is nursing a grudge towards a friend of yours.

**Streetwise:** A general common sense ability, this also covers such activities as gambling, haggling and other such 'low' activities.

**First Aid:** The ability to give succour to a fallen comrade; splint a leg, apply a bandage, dose with penicillin and the like. While it covers battlefield medicine and basic diagnosis note that Professions (medicine) is required to perform brain surgery and other such advanced operations.

**Politics:** This is the skill to navigate and understand complex social situations, use the correct etiquette and otherwise function in the often perilous and confusing environments of formal social occasions.

## Constitution

**Brawl:** This is the skill of fighting unarmed or with improvised weapon. At low levels this usually reflects a flailing drunken style, while at high levels it may model a lethal martial art. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

**Resistance:** This skill covers how resistant the character is to the affects of deprivation such as lack of food or sleep. It also covers resisting the effect of drugs or poisons, including alcohol and other more lethal substances.

**Brute:** The application of force, in both the direct physical sense (lifting, pushing, pulling, bending etc) and also the more theoretical sense such as intimidation; forcing others to cooperate through implied or explicit threats.

## Agility

**Melee:** This skill covers the use of melee weapons, most commonly a sword or knife, but also such exotica as flails, maces and others. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

**Athletics:** This covers the ability to run, climb, swim and take other such vigorous actions. Note that this does not include dodging in combat, which is a separate skill.

**Dodge:** The dodge skill allows the character to attempt to avoid damage in combat. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

## Charisma

**Bluff:** This skill allows characters to attempt to fast-talk, con or otherwise bamboozle their targets and to get their own way.

**Persuade:** The persuasion skill allows characters to sway an audience of one or more people to a specific point of view. It is also used for the composition or recitation of poetry and other art.

**Command:** This skill allows characters to inspire those around them to a particular course of direct martial action (for inspiring crowds to other goals or emotions the Persuade skill should be used), and to tactically pursue this action correctly. It is also used in vehicle combat; see the Combat section for further details.



# Chapter 10

## Combat system

### 10.1 Combat

Each round of combat corresponds to around three or four seconds of activity. During a round, each character may take two actions, each of which can be Attack, Move, Reload or Avoid (a character may take the same activity with both actions). These actions are decided simultaneously at the start of the round; players should all declare their actions, and the GM should decide the actions of the NPCs. Only the type of activity need be specified; the location of a move or the target of an attack need not be. A character may only choose to make two Attack actions if they have a weapon which does not require reloading between shots.

Having made these decisions, characters then roll their Avoid actions and remember or record the level of success they achieve (normal, strong, critical). Three skills may be used for Avoid: Dodge, Melee and Brawl. Brawl avoidances will only help avoid Brawl attacks, Melee avoidances can negate both Brawl and Melee actions, while Dodge can negate any attack. If a charac-

ter has chosen to use both actions to Avoid they may roll twice and choose which they prefer to use.

In order of Wit, characters then carry out their remaining actions. If two or more characters have the same Wit score their actions occur simultaneously. Both actions in a turn also occur at the same time (for example, if moving and shooting, then the character shoots while on the move). This is not affected by any wound penalties suffered.

*For example, Sir Thomas and a knavish slave trader are facing off in the moonlight at the docks. Sir Thomas elects to dodge and attack, while the slaver chooses to attack and move. Both have Wit 3, so all actions are resolved simultaneously. Sir Thomas has chosen to dodge so he rolls that first, scoring a success. While the slaver is planning to use his move action to dive behind some handy crates and thus gain a bonus from cover, his actions resolve at the same time as Sir Thomas' shot at him. So Sir Thomas rolls to hit with no penalty and scores a strong success, inflicting a Critical wound on the knave with*

*his revolver. Though he only has the single Critical level and is now suffering a +3 penalty, the slaver's Attack occurs at the same time as Sir Thomas', and hence does not suffer this penalty; he manages a success which is negated by the dodge. At the end of the turn the slaver is bleeding badly from a belly wound but is now in cover, while Sir Thomas is still in the open.*

To make an attack action the player specifies the target and rolls the relevant skill with any modifiers the GM mandates. If successful, damage may be done. The target's level of Avoidance success reduces the attack's success, if the Avoidance was applicable to the attack. A success on the avoidance stages the level of success down by one (from critical to strong, from strong to successful, from success to failure), a strong success down by two (from critical to successful, from anything else to a miss) and a critical stages it down to a failure. Damage is then calculated from the adjusted success level; a normal success does the base damage while a strong or critical success does one level of damage greater than the base.

A Move action allows the character to move roughly five yards across fairly broken terrain. This may be used to move into cover if any is available, or to move to expose another person and remove their modifier for cover if feasible.

A Reload action means the character has devoted some time to reloading their weapon; certain weapons require one or more actions to be spent reloading them before they can be fired again. These are listed in the weapon table.

## 10.2 Damage

Damage is done by crossing off the applicable box in the wound level of the target to which damage was done. For instance, a small pistol has a base damage of Wound, so a damage success with this marks off a Wound box, and a strong or critical success marks off a Critical box. Once all of the boxes in a row are crossed out the penalty listed for that row applies. These stack with one another, so if you have multiple rows filled the penalties add. If you take further damage to a filled row then a box is crossed out on the row below (and if that is filled then the row below that, and so on until a free box is found). The attacker may choose to make their damage less lethal than that given; this is usually done if doing so will fill a row completely and hence subject the target to wound penalties.

Once anyone has had all of their Incapacitated damage boxes filled they are down and out of the fight; unimportant NPCs can be assumed to be dead or unconscious while PCs and important NPCs are either unconscious or writhing in pain and unable to aid their comrades. Further deliberate damage done at this point should be handled dramatically, but a deliberate coup-de-grace will dispatch them with little trouble.

Once a lull is reached in the combat, First Aid may be applied to wounded characters. Any level of success will get an incapacitated character back on their feet, and a normal success will alleviate 1 point of wound penalty while a strong success removes 2 and a critical 3. This only removes the penalty; the wounds themselves remain. Multiple characters may attempt first aid, and the best result stands, but each may

only roll once per combat.

Wounds take different periods of time to heal. Given decent care and attention all graze damage will heal after one day, all wound damage after one week, all critical damage after two weeks and all incapacitating damage after one month. Thus a character going back into action before having had time to heal properly will still likely have their most major sources of damage but minor things will have healed up.

If a character is wearing armour (such as a Kevlar Vest) they gain extra wound levels as defined by armour table; these should be marked in the separate boxes provided on the character sheet. This damage should be marked off first when damage is suffered at that row. Damage taken by armour is repaired when some time is taken to maintain the armour properly.

### 10.3 Vehicle Combat

Vehicle Combat functions somewhat differently to combat between people on foot. Since vehicles in Broken Gears are large affairs with separate commanders, gunners and navigators, all vehicles are assumed to be able to Move, Fire and Avoid in a round if they so wish. The skill used for Avoidance varies with the type of craft: small, manoeuvrable craft use the Pilot skill of the person operating them to Avoid damage, while large vehicles use the Command skill

of the person in command. This reflects both giving the correct orders to avoid taking damage, and inspiring the crew to shake off any damage taken and fight on regardless.

Larger vessels may also have multiple attacks; if so then these are all rolled during the Attack action using the stats of their various gunners. Each vehicle has a size modifier; if two vehicles are of the same size then roll as normal. For each category of difference between the two vehicle's sizes, the larger vehicle's damage is staged up by a category. The smaller vehicle's damage is staged down by a like number of categories. The smaller vehicle also gains a -2 to hit modifier for each size category of difference, while the larger vehicle takes a +2 penalty. The larger vehicle may choose to make any or all of its attacks as if it was any size smaller to simulate the employment of smaller pintle-mounted weapons, reducing the penalty to hit but also reducing the damage by a stage each time.

The time taken to repair damage will require both repairing the vehicle and requesting or recruiting new crew to replace any casualties; with sufficient political pull this can happen very quickly but otherwise the same system can be used as for humans; repairing an incapacitated vehicle is assumed to take approximately a month given a supply of replacement troops, repair facilities and supplies.



## Appendices



# Appendix A

## Equipment

### A.1 Weapons

**Blunt Weapon:** Any melee weapon with no edge. Includes most improvised weapons, and those guns which can be used as clubs in desperation.

**Knife:** Also any small, manufactured, melee weapon.

**Flintlock pistol:** Muzzle-loading firearm into which powder is poured. Often rifled. These are the simplest functional firearms to manufacture, and the ammunition can be made by anyone – as such they are very popular. Effective, if slow to reload. Commonly carried for self defence.

**Cap and Ball Revolver:** Six short barrels, each with a nipple to take a small percussion cap, which will detonate powder and propel the ball out, through the longer pistol barrel. The ammunition is again easy to make – except for the caps, which are at least small. Carried for self-defence by the more wealthy, and by professionals.

The standard police sidearm.

**Cartridge Revolver:** Because these use manufactured cartridges, they are very rare – production lines being an essential impossibility, such things are very expensive. It is often effectively impossible to own one legally without being noble or a ranking army officer. Nonetheless, these are the best sidearms available and armies will equip as many of their officers as they can with them.

**Semi-automatic pistol:** Forbidden Technology, generally, due to the near impossibility of supplying one without straying into dangerous techniques of manufacture. A few are, nonetheless, owned and carried in any given city. Generally by those to whom laws are flexible.

**Bow:** A self-bow, constructed from wood or perhaps something more synthetic. No notable Chaomantic input required when building it, so popular among backwards types. Less convenient than

**Damage:** Base damage of the weapon.

**Shots:** Number of shots that can be fired between reloads.

**Reload:** Number of reload actions required before gun can be fired again.

**Range:** Short range, in yards. Players can fire at up to twice this range (which is the maximum effective range of the weapon) at a +3 penalty.

Weapon	Damage	Shots	Reload	Range
Unarmed attack	Graze	—	—	—
Blunt weapon	Wound	—	—	—
Knife	Wound	—	—	—
Flintlock Pistol	Wound	1	3	10
Cap and Ball Revolver	Wound	6	15	10
Cartridge Revolver	Wound	6	2	10
Semi-automatic pistol	Wound	11	1	10
Bow	Wound	1	1	20
Crossbow	Wound	1	2	20
Musket	Wound	1	4	20
Double-barrelled shotgun	Critical	2	1	5
Pump-action shotgun	Critical	5	2	5
Bolt-action rifle	Critical	1	1	50
Sword	Critical	—	—	—
Coffee Mill Gun <sup>a</sup>	Incapacitating	1	72	25
Automatic Rifle <sup>a</sup>	Incapacitating	2	1	40
Gatling Gun <sup>a</sup>	Incapacitating	∞	—	30

<sup>a</sup>Automatic weapons may well merit GM attention, as with a very high rate of fire they may also attack multiple targets, or concentrate fire on a single target to make hitting a near-certainty.

Table A.1: Weapon types

<b>Armour</b>	<b>Extra Wound Levels Provided</b>
Heavy Duster	1 Graze
Chainmail	1 Graze, 1 Wound
Breastplate	1 Wound, 1 Critical
Kevlar	1 Critical, 1 Incapacitating
Full Plate/Riot Gear <sup>a</sup>	1 Graze, 1 Wound, 1 Critical, 1 Incapacitating

<sup>a</sup>Any Agility-based skill should suffer a +2 penalty with this level of armour

Table A.2: Armour types

a crossbow, however. The training program required to produce effective longbow archers is simply not in place, since bolt action rifles are less expensive than that much investment of time.

**Crossbow:** Generally owned by those who are required to own a weapon by law, but too poor to get a good one. Simple and reliable – and also near silent.

**Musket:** Muzzle-loaded, rifled, and the standard weapon of most armies. Almost every household will own one, out on the frontiers. Ammunition is easy to make, so it's just a case of having a village chaomancer to make and repair the locals' weaponry.

**Double-barrelled shotgun:** The weapons themselves are simple to manufacture, as is the ammunition, although both require a chaomancer. Not generally popular due to the short effective range, but there are definite urban applications – as well as hunting, of course. Popular with the better sort of bruiser.

**Pump-action shotgun:** Very rare. The

technology required is equivalent to that for bolt-action rifles, which have much wider application.

**Bolt-action rifle:** The standard weapon in elite army units. Ammunition must be hand-made by competent chaomancers, and the rifles themselves are downright difficult to construct. Nonetheless, the devastating effect of concerted volley fire is almost unmatched on the modern battlefield.

**Sword:** This also covers large manufactured melee weapons, including mounted bayonets. A successful attack will generally inflict pretty horrendous wounds, although one has to get close first...

**Coffee Mill Gun:** Requiring technology no more sophisticated than a musket, although considerably more time, this is a frame on which 24 or so musket barrels are arrayed in a circle. These are fired in rapid succession to produce a burst of shots. The reloading time is prohibitive, and manufacture painfully slow, but as battlefield pieces and point defence weapons, they are unmatched

by anything a civilian might hope to obtain.

**Automatic Rifle:** Forbidden tech, given the manufacturing tolerances required. There are still a few stockpiled, of course. These stats assume that 15 round bursts are being fired. Single shots will stage the damage down a level.

**Gatling Gun:** Forbidden tech, although rumours persist of functional steam-powered, pintle-mounted examples of this class of weapon. Generally hopper or belt fed, their ammunition consumption is ferocious, as is their capacity for death.

## A.2 Vehicles

**Aeroplanes:** Forbidden tech. No functioning examples known to exist. May conceivably have weapons a size larger.

**Armoured Car:** Since Europe is railed over, roads generally don't exist, and there are no significant tank units. Nonetheless, there are some steam-powered cars, and inevitably some are armour plated and armed.

**Scout Zeppelin:** Frequently running on gas, rather than hot air, these are relatively lightly armed and armoured – and used for scouting, harassment, and occasionally clandestine troop landings. The fastest means of transport currently available.

**Small armoured train:** Limited by the requirement that they run on normal tracks, these nonetheless make up the bulk of most land forces.

**Destroyer:** The smallest ships of the line, they still reign supreme outside of massed fleet combat.

**Zeppelin:** Workhorses of any air fleet. Fragile, but also remarkably nimble, and bristling with men and weapons. These almost exclusively run on uranium, and as such it makes economic sense to outfit them very well.

**Large Train:** Running only on special tracks – or very slowly cross-country and over damaged sections – these are a combination of mobile fortress and giant artillery piece. In land war, they are the state of the art.

**Cruiser:** The result of taking a Destroyer, and saying “Like that, but bigger.” Does nothing new, but does it better and faster.

**Flying Fortress:** Popular only with the Chinese, these resemble floating cities more than anything else. The wisdom of concentrating so many resources in one place has been questioned by many, but one has yet to be downed.

**Battleship:** Queens of the sea. The mere rumour of one of these patrolling an area of ocean has been known to make entire enemy crews go AWOL. One on one, more than a match for anything. Five in one place could shake the earth.

**Guns:** The number of independent gun emplacements on the vehicle

Vehicle	Wound levels	Guns
<b>Size 2:</b>		
Aeroplane	1 Scratched, 1 Damaged, 1 Critical, 1 Wrecked	1
Armoured Car	2 Scratched, 2 Damaged, 1 Critical, 1 Wrecked	1
<b>Size 3:</b>		
Scout Zeppelin	3 Scratched, 2 Damaged, 1 Critical, 1 Wrecked	1
Small Armoured Train	6 Scratched, 5 Damaged, 4 Critical, 2 Wrecked	1
Destroyer	7 Scratched, 6 Damaged, 4 Critical, 3 Wrecked	2
<b>Size 4:</b>		
Zeppelin	4 Scratched, 3 Damaged, 2 Critical, 1 Wrecked	2
Large Train	7 Scratched, 5 Damaged, 4 Critical, 3 Wrecked	2
Cruiser	8 Scratched, 6 Damaged, 5 Critical, 4 Wrecked	2
<b>Size 5:</b>		
Flying Fortress	7 Scratched, 6 Damaged, 4 Critical, 3 Wrecked	3
Battleship	10 Scratched, 8 Damaged, 6 Critical, 5 Wrecked	3

Table A.3: Vehicle types. For comparison, a human is size 1.



# Appendix B

## Success Names

Different cultures would give different names to the various degrees of success available. Here are some examples.

<b>Language</b>	<b>Failure</b>	<b>Success</b>	<b>Strong success</b>	<b>Critical success</b>
British (first person)	Minor Setback	Effective failure	Qualified success	Acceptable
British (second person)	Hiccup	Good	Jolly good	Marvellous/ Spiffing
Chinese	Success Third Class	Success Second Class	Success First Class	People's Success
American	Learning experience	Bodge job	Good work	Hell yeah
Australian	Bollocks	No worries	Bonza	Dog's bollocks



# Appendix C

## Sample Characters

## Alfred Reddich

Alfred is a brown-eyed, brown-haired, reasonably nondescript sort of chap, who grew up in a middle-class house, but still somehow managed to get onto the Cambridge Chaomancy course, from which he has recently graduated. He specialized rather in the theoretical side of things, and took some general courses as well, the Cambridge course being far broader than anywhere else. When he graduated he went straight into the SIS recruitment scheme, to which he seems to have taken rather well, quickly picking up good recognition skills and even some semblance of an ability to defend himself. He's rather dedicated to his job, which currently involves largely seeking out minor suspects of Forbidden Lore (as much as anyone can infringe that in a minor way).

Statistic	Score	Cost	Skill	Score	Cost
Intelligence	4	10	Theoretical Chaomancy	5/9	15
Wits	3	6	Learning	5/9	15
Dexterity	3	6	Forbidden Lore	2/6	3
Agility	1	1	Streetwise	2/5	3
Constitution	1	1	First Aid	3/6	6
Charisma	3	6	Perception	4/7	10
			Small arms	3/6	6
			Pilot	3/6	6
			Dodge	2/3	3
			Command	1/4	1
			Persuade	3/6	6
			Bluff	1/4	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>75</b>

## Billy-Bob Johnson

“Ah wuz allus tole that ah needed to be a smart kid to do good back home, but ah wasn’t a smart kid, so when ah got out of school ah came here instead. Ah like it here, they don’t like smart kids here. Ah gets someone to tell me whut to do, and ah gets to carry a gun, and a stick, and wear a cape. . .”

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Intelligence	1	1	Streetwise	2/4	6
Wits	2	3	Small arms	6/9	21
Dexterity	3	6	Large weapons	2/5	3
Agility	4	10	Dodge	6/10	21
Constitution	3	6	Melee	4/8	10
Charisma	2	3	Athletics	3/7	6
			Brute	3/6	6
			Resistance	2/5	3
			Bluff	2/3	3
<b>Total</b>		29	<b>Total</b>		76

## Stephen Courtney

Stephen is the younger son of Lord Courtney of Romsey. He didn't pay particularly good attention to his schooling as a child, unfortunately, but he has absorbed a fair amount from just being around his father's estates. He's currently seeking a patron, or pretty much any way of getting hold of a bit of power, since he's not actually going to inherit. He's lithe and fairly handsome, with swept-back brown hair, brown eyes, and fair complexion.

Statistic	Score	Cost	Skill	Score	Cost
Intelligence	2	3	Learning	2/4	3
Wits	4	10	Streetwise	1/5	1
Dexterity	2	3	Perception	4/8	10
Agility	3	6	Politics	6/10	21
Constitution	2	3	Pilot	2/4	3
Charisma	2	3	Small arms	2/4	3
			Melee	2/5	3
			Athletics	1/4	1
			Dodge	4/7	10
			Bluff	3/5	6
			Persuade	4/6	10
			Command	3/5	6
<b>Total</b>		28	<b>Total</b>		77

## Maria Alexandrovna

Daughter of a very old Old Russian house, naturalized into the Empire over the last century or so after the War of Broken Gears and still retaining some notable influence, she had no trouble getting herself accepted to one of the decent Chaomantic Colleges when it turned out that she had some talent and quite fancied learning to make “all those exciting machines that go pop and stuff!”. Thing is, even now that she knows how they actually do this, and what most of them actually do, and what can go wrong, she still hasn't calmed down much...

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Intelligence	3	6	Learning	3/6	6
Wits	1	1	Theoretical Chaomancy	2/5	3
Dexterity	4	10	First Aid	3/4	6
Agility	3	6	Perception	2/3	3
Constitution	3	6	Politics	2/3	3
Charisma	1	1	Practical Chaomancy	7/11	28
			Pilot	2/6	3
			Dodge	3/6	6
			Athletics	3/6	6
			Brawl	4/7	10
			Persuade	1/2	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>75</b>

## Joachin Undergard

Yes, that really is his name. No, you *really* don't want to make fun of it. He'd hear you, and he won't be happy with you, and you really don't think you'd like that. In fact, you might want to spend some effort trying to get on this guy's good side. He currently seems to be between jobs looking after squads of not much more than pure brutes, and you aren't sure he's happy about that either.

Statistic	Score	Cost	Skill	Score	Cost
Intelligence	1	1	Streetwise	2/4	3
Wits	2	3	Perception	3/5	6
Dexterity	2	3	Small arms	3/5	6
Agility	3	6	Dodge	6/9	21
Constitution	5	15	Melee	3/6	6
Charisma	1	1	Athletics	2/5	3
			Brawl	7/12	28
			Brute	4/9	10
			Resistance	4/9	10
			Command	1/2	1
<b>Total</b>		29	<b>Total</b>		76

# Appendix D

## Sample Adventure

The party, as starting characters, are fairly recent recruits of the Guardians; this is their first real mission as a squad.

### D.1 The Briefing

The briefing room's furniture is utilitarian, bereft of even the simplest chronometer; a burly security man asks the party politely to leave outside anything containing a chaid, or that they may even suspect of containing one. The building is, unsurprisingly, rather well-grounded – looks like they get a lot of lightning here. The only decoration in the room is a portrait of Churchill hanging above the desk; the wall also features one padded chair and several very uncomfortable-looking wooden stools.

The briefing officer is a middle-aged functionary, with a rather imposing scar down one cheek, and slightly less than two ears. Learning, Politics and Perception will all allow players to recall that he was moderately famous a few years back for tracking down the source of a dangerously modified batch of umbrellas, which had been modified to

store the electricity from lightning for some nefarious purpose never fully explained. He took a serious lightning strike of his own on the way. His name is Nathaniel Davies.

“Come in, sit down,” he instructs you, slightly redundantly. “In case we haven't been introduced, I am Major Davies, and I will most likely be your briefing officer for quite some time, so mind yourselves and we'll get on famously. Now, I know that you young'uns think that you're fairly hot stuff, and I'm afraid to say that your training officers were of a similar opinion. So we have a nice, easy mission for you to find your feet. Some of you may have heard of Professor Marcus Fanshaw, yes?”

He waits a moment for your reaction. Unless you have been paying no attention to the outside world, you have heard of the Professor; he is one of the country's leading lights in chaomantic research, having made several important breakthroughs in ironclad maintenance rituals, although he has also been known to dabble in the medical sciences with moderate success.

Those with Learning successes will remember a slight controversy in the medi-

cal community over some simple chaomantic devices that the Professor has been recommending that doctors outfit their hospitals with; the purists in the community have been condemning them as unreliable and occasionally even accusing them of working with a will of their own. A strong success recalls specific references; a critical success recalls an incautious essay which was swiftly recanted but talked optimistically of further and deeper hospital automation bordering on forbidden tech.

Those with high-class connections and a Politics success will recall that Marcus is often the life and soul of the party at formal occasions; he has no shortage of friends and allies. A critical success gives you some names – Gilbert Fanshaw, Marcus’ uncle, is the MP for Hardale East; Christina Smithson is an independently wealthy widow who has been courting Marcus on and off; Julian Winthrope is a kindly old philanthropist who regularly burns the midnight oil talking with Marcus.

“Big name, huh? Well, we don’t have anything concrete on him yet, but just recently he’s gone to ground – not attending previously arranged social commitments, not at home, not in his laboratory. Just this last week. The rumours are that he’s ill, or that he’s on to something big and needs to concentrate, but we’re not happy that he isn’t using his normal facilities for the work, or checked in to any medical establishment in the area. So that’s where you come in.”

He waits another moment, observing you coolly, wondering if any of you are going to be impertinent enough to speak up. When he has dealt with any immediate questions, he continues.

“There’s a dinner at the Winthrope mansion in three days’ time; he was due to attend, and we haven’t known him to miss an event like this, especially not with Julian; he was something of a mentor to Marcus at Cambridge, you know. You’re all on the list, and each of you can take a partner; we expect you not to embarrass us, as we had to call in several favours for this, so I strongly suggest that the less socially adept find someone who can keep them in line. Quartermaster Taylor can provide outfits and a small allowance if you need it. Get ready, find out what’s going on, and we’ll see. Any questions?”

Major Davies knows about Gilbert and Julian, but not Christina, and anything else listed above. Feel free to go into tedious detail about his vast achievements in the fields of chaomancy and medicine.

## D.2 Preparation

The Quartermaster, Katherine Taylor, is just down the corridor, and will provide slightly out of fashion formal wear and friendly advice on social matters. She is quite competent in formal society, and can give a quick brush-up on formal etiquette for anyone who requests it, which provides no mechanical benefit but may prevent the characters making gross mistakes because of lack of knowledge rather than lack of skill. She outranks the characters, but is somewhat informal, although she does not take any nonsense and cheerfully refuses requests for anything beyond formal wear and not quite enough money to buy better clothing.

For those seeking out a socially adept

partner, she provides the address of a discreet escort agency which specializes in providing pleasant company for formal occasions, which the SIS apparently use quite often (and have also been known to use as cover for their agents). The money that she provides is just barely adequate to procure one of their number for the night.

The party may do their own investigating here; if you do not want to improvise, then you can inform them that it is impossible (and perhaps give them a Politics roll to notice that it may also be considered suspicious and impolite) to see any of Marcus' known associates at such short notice, that Marcus' house door is answered by a polite butler who informs you that Marcus is not available at the moment and not currently making appointments, and generally stonewall them. Otherwise, suggested scenarios include Gilbert Fanshaw holding a surgery (a term which means a meeting with the people he represents in parliament, not a medical term) and the party infiltrating it and asking him questions in that, although mostly the party should have many chances to embarrass themselves and gain very little information. High society is quite polite, but does 'frosty' very well, and will have the men with high Constitution and no sense of humour show you the door if you are particularly irritating.

## D.3 The Dinner

At last, the evening of the dinner comes around. Each character who attempts to attire themselves should roll Politics at  $-3$  to see if they succeed in being appropriately dressed; those who fail can roll Per-

ception to see if they notice the problem, at which point they get one re-roll before they give up in disgust and/or run out of time to change. Using clothes provided by the quartermaster gives you  $-6$ ; if you also ask her or your escort for advice, you do not need to roll. You are advised by all sources not to take any weaponry; only military types are expected to carry a sword in such company, and only because they are in dress uniform of which it is a part. Players may make a Streetwise roll to conceal a pistol or other small weapon about their person.

### D.3.1 Arrival and reception

It is traditional to arrive in a horse-drawn carriage; PCs should know that but might be too cheap and may walk instead. (If they have an escort, they will have to provide from their own resources, which is fairly trivial if they have no major expenditures from their salary like supporting a family.) As each couple arrive, they are met by a valet, who conducts them to the door and announces their arrival. Escorts are all announced simply as 'partner' rather than by name, as in "Ladies and Gentlemen, Mister Richards and partner". If any valet spots the concealed weapon (which will only happen if they get a better Perception success than your Streetwise success, but will happen automatically if you failed your Streetwise roll) they will apologetically remove it from you for the evening. See table D.1 for the stats of the valets.

The reception room is decorated with style, although anyone who knows about current fashions (Politics or arguably Learning) will know that actually it is decorated in a mish-mash of several styles



fail too many Politics rolls) with everyone else. The high-class ladies look very beautiful and exceptionally marriageable. Things are encouraged to go disastrously wrong at this point, including characters boasting of their connections and so forth to impress young ladies.

### D.3.2 The dinner itself

When the conversation dies down, a gong is struck, which is the cue to file in to the dining room, which is set out with reasonably impressive silverware and adorned with fairly classical paintings and carvings. The chairs are quite old, ornately carved, and tremendously uncomfortable. The party is spread out, although partners are sat facing each other. The starter, mushroom and basil soup, is served. Julian says a quick Grace, which appears to be something of a surprise to the assembled (Perception success) and is quite an unusual practice in his kind of technical and military circles (Politics success).

The food is wonderful and the dinner conversation is about the same as outside, with the addition of confines as to who your voice can reach and being out of whispering range of your escort. The wine flows freely and PCs and NPCs alike may or may not get very tipsy. (It is, of course, excellent wine.) The drunken chaomancers should say a range of suspicious things about their aspirations and pet projects that make the PCs want to report them and get someone to follow up on several cases; this can be used as a source of hooks if this adventure is used as the start of a campaign. The content of these is not important, but make sure you write it down, as you can use it

against the PCs later.

After dessert – an exquisite chocolate mousse garnished with cream and a cherry – Julian stands and calls the table to order by his sheer presence.

“As you may or may not have noticed, our dear friend Marcus is not with us at this dinner today. This absence, although regrettable, has been for the best of reasons. However, before I continue, there is another regrettable order of business I must draw your attention to. I would ask you to stay quite still, and possibly take shelter under the table if required.”

As he finishes his sentence, two security-type people per PC enter the room by the nearest door to their assigned target; they are wearing nice uniforms, flintlocks in their belts, and one of each pair is holding handcuffs. They will say stereotypical things such as “Come quietly and there won’t be any trouble”, and are also armed with standard-issue police truncheons, with which they are quite good. See table D.1 for their stats.

The party can have a fight at this point; there will be much screaming, threatened people may draw swords if they have them or prepare to defend their partner’s honour and/or life, and the security people will very much attempt to use brute force and restraint on the PCs and not get any blood on the carpet or do too much property damage. Or they can go quietly. Julian will stay standing where he is, occasionally looking around with mild concern if there is a dust-up. Unless anyone does anything very impressive (and perhaps even then, but with the addition of a chase around the grounds), more security people will arrive until the PCs are subdued and led away.

The PCs are taken to a nicely furnished drawing room, where the security guards frisk them thoroughly but quite politely (no strip-searches here, but some kind of odd chaomantic scanning device is used) and then basically sit on them and answer everything in dull monosyllables. After a while, Julian comes in.

### D.3.3 An offer

“Now, children,” he says, “I know that you’ve been sent by the SIS to investigate Marcus. I am here to make you... a counter-offer.”

He begins to pace backwards and forwards as he speaks.

“As you may or may not be aware, Marcus has always had a deep and abiding interest in the medical sciences, despite his formal education in chaomancy. Since his developments in ironclad reinforcement theory, he has been suffering under the burden of quite some guilt, and has been attempting to make amends by introducing chaomantic devices which can save lives, rather than end them.

“His work has met with some opposition, and so for the past few years he has been forced to put the finishing touches to his designs in some measure of secrecy. He knows what he is doing, and I do not believe he has summoned anything that he could not handle. Until, that is, a week ago.

“He was working in a warehouse down by the docks; I can have my men show you to the laboratory. He isn’t there any more; he sent me an incoherent message about surgeon-robots and has not been seen since.

“I am worried for his life, but more than that... I am worried about his reputation,

which he valued somewhat more than his life. If I am to reveal all of the details of his activities, I must have assurances that this will not come to a public trial, that his reputation will remain untarnished. He has been under an awful lot of stress, poor boy, and it is hardly surprising that things went a little wrong, but I see no reason for you to ruin the man over it.

“Either you can report back to your superiors and see if they will accept my terms, or you can aid me – I shall reward you well, and perhaps there is a place in my private security force for you – and report that you drew a blank here. I am an old man, and have little to lose, but your superiors do know that I would be an awkward opponent if they chose to question me in less subtle ways than sending such a nice group of young people.”

He takes a seat, apparently waiting for the party to decide on a course of action. When they have delivered their verdict, he tells them where to find him for the location of the warehouse (possibly “If you change your mind, I shall be waiting here”). As he is about to dismiss his security goons, if anyone talked to him seriously about Chaomancy, he will say, “Oh, and one more thing –  $\langle$ PC name(s) $\rangle$ , when this is done, I have a proposition for you especially.” With this, he leaves, and the goons un-handcuff the party and escort them from the premises.

## D.4 Back to HQ

The party returns to HQ and are ushered into the briefing room under the same procedures as before. Possibilities are as follows:

- The PCs tell the truth about everything, and recommend that SIS extract Julian and extract the information from him: Nathaniel mutters about budgetary constraints and powerful connections, and recommends that the party meet up with Julian at the arranged time and place and put up a good show of co-operation, however you think will secure his favour best.
- The PCs tell the truth about everything, and ask if Julian's request can be met: Nathaniel launches into a tirade about rogue chaomancers and the various dangers to society the SIS has boldly squashed, and then proceeds broadly as above.
- The PCs lie through their teeth: Failing a Bluff roll means that Nathaniel becomes even more apoplectic, but calms down eventually and says that despite their miserable no-good dastardliness the old man seems to trust the party. However, you are assigned an extra squad member, Timothy Hawthorne, who is obviously there to keep you in line, carries twin flintlocks and a sword, and looks like he could take the whole party. He should be statted so that he can take any individual character, even in an unfair fight. Succeeding nets them Timothy, many suspicious looks, and an instruction to start combing the docks area warehouses because of strange reports. Timothy is quite hard to lose, but adequate organization and an entertaining plan will do the job. Succeeding strongly gets the characters

cross-examined extensively, and someone else will need to roll Bluff at some point. Critical success means that Nathaniel is entirely convinced by the story, somewhat upset that things didn't work out, and has confidence in the party's ability to find some new leads – he just turns them loose.

In most cases, the party will go to the rendezvous with Julian if they don't want to lose their jobs in a tremendous hurry, or will go because they want to. If they can't lose Timothy they may just go straight on to the warehouse; see later.

Julian meets them in a nice cafe, accompanied by a couple of even burlier mooks than were in the house (see table D.2), and makes polite small talk until they finish their tea and scones and head off to the warehouse. Julian is quiet and somewhat subdued on the way there, and will not answer questions very widely.

## D.5 The Warehouse

Inside the warehouse is a lot of strange humming equipment. The first person inside, anyone who touches anything, and anyone that you feel particularly needs a shock should roll Dodge to get out of the way of a small lightning bolt and/or electric shock (base damage is a graze). Anyone succeeding at a Theoretical or Practical Chaomancy roll will immediately tell everyone Not To Touch Anything. There is electricity in here and there are probably several big chuids in the various arcane, buzzing machinery.

Proceeding very carefully, the party will be completely baffled in general, although

<b>Julian's guards</b>		<b>The surgeon robot</b>	
Small arms	4/6	Profession (Surgeon)	10/11
First Aid	4/5	First aid	10/15
Brawl	5/10	Melee	6/10
Brute	5/10	Athletics	5/9
Melee	5/8	Dodge	5/9
Dodge	3/6		
Wits	1	Wits	5
Constitution	5	Constitution	3

Table D.2: Statistics for the warehouse. Julian's guards have flintlocks and truncheons (p. 56). The surgeon robot has built-in knives (which inflict Wounds), and its metal body gives it protection equivalent to a breastplate (p. 57).

a critical on Theoretical Chaomancy or a strong success on Forbidden Lore will say this is definitely machinery for making other machinery and (critical only) there used to be a humanoid-shape thing under construction over there. As the party finish up their investigations (Julian looks small and helpless quite a lot, if he's here, and just says quite tiredly that he doesn't know the answer to any technical questions), there is an ominous clanking noise from the end of the warehouse. The machinery there rips a hole in the wall, silhouetted in which is a metallic, clanking creation with many wickedly sharp blades for hands. It will not actually attack, but this is likely to be lost on the party as it will defend itself aggressively, and if Timothy is there he will certainly be taking a shot or two. See table D.2 for its stats.

After the party has eviscerated the robot, if they examine the remains (Timothy will if he's there and conscious; Julian will tell them to do so if he's there and conscious) they will find a slip of paper hidden in a strong box in the torso (Practical Chao-

mancy gets it open, falling back to Street-wise and Cutting It To Bits Inventively; one of the goons will smash it open if the party are entirely incompetent). It reads 'If lost, please return to 5 Hillside Cottage'. Julian looks puzzled and says that he didn't know Marcus had property that side of town. If the party have managed to investigate Christina, they will know that it is her place of residence. If they do not find the slip of paper, Nathaniel will chew them out for being morons when they get back and send them running back to investigate the remains more thoroughly.

## D.6 5 Hillside Cottage

The party may now charge 5 Hillside Cottage with all guns blazing, or may plan for a bit and get orders and then charge 5 Hillside Cottage with all guns blazing. It's entirely their choice.

After busting into the house and fighting past the butler (who has a lovely flintlock), the servants (who basically run screaming) and the 'servants' (who have lovely re-

<b>Christina's butler</b>		<b>Christina's servants</b>		<b>Christina's 'servants'</b>	
Small arms	4/6	Dodge	1/3	Small arms	4/6
First Aid	4/9			First Aid	4/5
Melee	5/8			Brawl	5/8
Athletics	3/6			Brute	5/8
Dodge	3/6			Melee	5/8
Politics	5/10			Athletics	3/6
				Dodge	3/6
Wits	5	Wits	3	Wits	1
Constitution	1	Constitution	2	Constitution	3

Table D.3: Statistics for the inhabitants of 5 Hillside Cottage. The butler has a flintlock, and the servants have cartridge revolvers (see p. 56)

volvers), numbers of which should be adjusted depending on how combat-heavy the party is, they will find Marcus, standing on a chair, a noose around his neck. See table D.3 for the stats of those fighting and running.

They can let him hang himself, or try and talk him down; he is morose because his creation had run amok and thinks that he should kill himself for the good of society. The party suspect that if they're in Julian's pay, he won't pay them for a dead Marcus.

Julian doesn't want to speak to the party in the aftermath, because after they find Marcus, if they don't save him then Julian is angry with them for that, and if they

do save him then he is arrested and put on trial (if not by them, then not much later by other agencies). If they are working for him and save Marcus they meet Timothy on the way out, who tries to take Marcus from them – if they kill Timothy (through being clever or very lucky, presumably) they can speak to Julian with Marcus, who gives them lots of money and another meeting, but in the meantime both Julian and Marcus are arrested, shortly followed by the party unless they do well at running and hiding.

This adventure is basically over by this point, but that doesn't mean it has to be the end of the party's story...



# Appendix E

## GM advice

While the world of *Broken Gears* is much diverged from our own, the most important thing to remember is that the people are the same. While they live in a world of daemon-powered airships and proscribed technology their hopes and dreams generally match those of people from our world; happiness, power, wealth, knowledge and other such goals. When it comes to running a game, consider the motivation of some major NPCs; what do they want? Once you've answered that you can consider what actions they are taking to achieve this, and who this brings them into conflict with. Sources of conflict between persons or factions are excellent sources of drama, serving to drive the story and allowing you to plan to bring the PCs in on one side or the other.

Do bear in mind, however, that physical combat is fast and dangerous. While actually killing a PC requires a deliberate, cold-blooded act, they can usually be incapacitated in relatively short order if outmatched by well-armed opponents, and healing such damage takes significant time. Do bear in mind that war is still considered the occupation of gentlemen; executing those who

are captured is simply not done, and prisoners are frequently ransomed home or exchanged for prisoners on the other side. If you also need to get characters back up on their feet rapidly after they take significant damage to avoid slowing down the game you may wish to decree that the "Patent Medicines and Curative Devices" so beloved of Victorian showmen do function roughly as advertised in this setting, allowing badly wounded PCs to short-circuit the healing process.

On the subject of combat and damage, it is rare that you will need to stat out every NPC. While those important to the plot should be as fleshed out as possible (not simply in terms of numbers on character sheets but also background and motivations), those whose only real purpose in life is to fire a few shots at the PCs before going down rarely need more than a generic combat stat and skill, which you can use for both attack and dodge. 2/4 represents a cheap, hired thug, 3/6 a normal soldier while elite troops might have values at 4/8 or higher. You can also simplify the wound levels available so that keeping track

of damage becomes simpler and the unimportant NPCs fall faster.

*Broken Gears* offers a wide variety of opportunities for danger and adventure to a group of PCs. Some ideas include:

- The PCs are British secret agents, working to undermine Chinese interests around the world.
- The PCs serve in the Royal Chaomantic Corps, acting as a team.
- The PCs rage against the Empire, and seek to bring the corrupt edifice crashing down to free their peoples or for the public good.
- The PCs are part of an independent group hunting for forbidden technology, either to destroy it or use it.
- The PCs work for one of a government's Forbidden Technologies department, either suppressing such inventions or seeking to cover up any evidence of their use by the government.
- The PCs accidentally come into possession of a device or a plan and are targeted by one or more groups that wants to capture or kill them. Can they discover the significance of the item they now possess?
- The PCs are part of a diplomatic mission to a foreign country, and when things go wrong must do their best to keep a sympathetic government strong and in power, and ensure good relations with England.

- The PCs are a special ops team sent in to 'fix' situations when they go wrong with orders to get the job done no matter what it takes.
- The PCs are at court when they witness something they should not have done, and now must navigate the difficult social situations and solve the mystery, all without losing the respect of their fellow courtiers.

The game can be run both as a one-off adventure and a long-term campaign depending on the desire of GM and players. You may wish to consider providing pre-generated characters for the players of a one-off if they are unfamiliar with the setting as this will reduce the pre-game time required and may give them a better sense of the world. A number of pre-generated characters are provided in appendix C, or you can create your own.

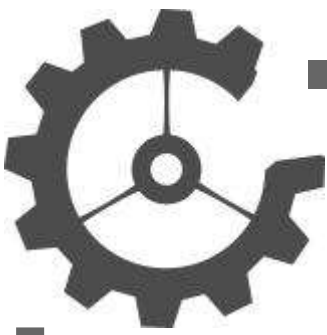
Whether or not you are generating characters in advance you may also wish to consider altering the number of points available at character creation. The standard provision of 30+75 allows the creation of strongly competent PCs significantly better than average and able to take on more than an equal number of experienced foes in combat with a reasonable expectation of winning. You might prefer the idea of a lower-powered game where the PCs were average or not much better than that, so might consider a points provision of 22 + 50. Alternatively, you might like the idea of a game where the PCs are on the level of pulp heroes; super-competent at almost everything, they find normal foes no threat at all and are only challenged by the most skilled or strange opponents.

In a campaign the power level will also vary depending on the rate of advancement allowed; for a normal game we recommend between 2 and 4 XP per session, which allows for a decent rate of improvement without things spiralling out of control. You may wish to vary the number of XP awarded with the effort and skill a player put into his performance over the course of

the session, or you may prefer to award all players the same flat rate. In most cases a low-powered game will have slower advancement and a high-powered game more rapid.

Whatever you do with the game, have fun doing it and remember the Golden Rule; if you don't something in the setting or in the system, change it. This is your game to play as you want.





Name: ..... Player : .....

### STATISTICS

Int Wit Dex Agi Con Cha

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### SKILLS

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### DESCRIPTION

Gender: .... Age: ....

Appearance: .....

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Concept: .....

.....

Inventory:

### WOUNDS

	1	2	3	4	Armour	Pen
Grazing	1	2	3	4		+1
Wounding	1	2	4			+2
Critical	1	3				+3
Incapacitating	1	5				down